

**The country house in English women's
poetry 1650-1750: genre, power and
identity**

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Abstract

The country house in English women's poetry 1650-1750: power, identity and genre

This thesis examines the depiction of the country estate in English women's poetry, 1650-1750. The poems discussed belong to the country house genre, work with or adapt its conventions and tropes, or belong to what may be categorised as sub-genres of the country house poem. The country house estate was the power base of the early modern world, authorizing social status, validating political power and providing an economic dominance for the ruling elite. This thesis argues that the depiction of the country estate was especially pertinent for a range of female poets. Despite the suggestive scholarship on landscape and place and the emerging field of early modern women's literary studies and an extensive body of critical work on the country house poem, there have been to date no substantial accounts of the role of the country estate in women's verse of this period. In response, this thesis has three main aims. Firstly, to map out the contours of women's country house poetry – taking full account of the chronological scope, thematic and formal diversity of the texts, and the social and geographic range of the poets using the genre. Secondly, to interrogate the formal and thematic characteristics of women's country house poetry, looking at the appropriation and adaptation of the genre. Thirdly, to situate the selected poetry both within and against the extensive and formally published male-authored canon and the more general literary and historical contexts of the early modern period. Across these related strands of discussion, the study has two important implications for our understanding of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century poetry: it adds to our knowledge of women's poetic practices of the period and extends and complicates our understanding of the country house genre.

Each chapter highlights a particular engagement with the genre responding to a complex of historical contexts, literary trends and personal circumstance. Chapter one will explore the contexts which prompt the emergence of the country house poem and the shape and detail of the genre, 1600–1650. It also examines where the specific gendered contexts of women's writing practices are relevant to the selection of texts. Chapter two focuses on the thematic and formal interplay in Katherine Austen's manuscript miscellany 'Book M' and role the country house genre plays in exploring and negotiating women's relationship to property. Chapter three shares many of the same historical and literary contexts but from a different religio-political standpoint and focuses on Lucy Hutchinson's manuscript collection 'Elegies'.

Chapter four examines the appropriation and re-positioning of the country house genre in the poetry of Anne Finch and Jane Barker, arguing that as the post-

Restoration period began, the motivation to explore the country house as a symbol of legitimate political power, a location and symbol of retirement and retreat and the site of financial and cultural investment did not wane, but was reworked by Finch and Barker to explore their political sympathies for the Stuart monarchy. Chapter five explores the use of the country house genre by poets associated with Whig political sympathies: Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and Anne Ingram. Largely unaffected by socio-economic or political marginalisation, both Montagu and Ingram enter into a public, and politically inflected, debate on the importance of taste. Chapter six explores two writers, Mary Leapor and Mary Chandler, who belong to an emerging body of writers of mercantile or labouring class. The discussion will focus on Leapor's 'Crumble-Hall' and Chandler's *A Description of Bath* and the contexts of consumerism and tourism to which both poems respond.

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A version of my reading of Leapor's poem in chapter six is published as, 'Visiting the Country House: Generic Innovation in Mary Leapor's "Crumble-Hall."' *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 34.1, (2015), 51

Introduction

This thesis examines the depiction of the country estate in English women's poetry of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The poems I shall discuss belong to the country house genre, work with or adapt its conventions and tropes, or belong to what Alastair Fowler categorises as the distinct sub-genres of the country house poem.¹ Despite the suggestive scholarship on landscape and place and a broad body of critical work on male-authored examples of the country house genre, the corpus of female-authored country house poems remains largely absent from critical studies.² Furthermore, in contrast to male-authored poems, they are frequently unavailable to the modern general reader. Even wide ranging studies of the genre, such as, Fowler's anthology, *The Country House Poem*, includes only five poems by three women: Aemilia Lanyer, Margaret Cavendish and Anne Finch.³ More importantly, to date, there are no substantial accounts of the role of the country estate in women's verse of this period. This thesis will argue that there has been a collective critical failure fully to appreciate the appropriation and adaptation of the country house genre by female writers in the century and a half following the genre's emergence.

This critical position opens up several areas of potential research and this thesis will, therefore, have three main strands. Firstly, to map out the contours of women's country house poetry – taking full account of the chronological scope, thematic and formal diversity of the texts, and the social and geographic range of the poets using the genre. As Constance Jordan notes, '[i]nvestigators of the past lives of women as

¹ *The Country House Poem: A Cabinet of Seventeenth-Century Estate poems and Related Items*, ed. by Alastair Fowler (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994), pp. 1-29 (pp. 14-16).

² The scholarship on landscape is extensive. The following studies cover the substantive points: Denis E. Cosgrove, *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape* (London: Croom Helm, 1984), pp. 1-8; Malcolm Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); John Dixon Hunt and Peter Willis eds., 'Introduction', *The Genius of the Place: The English Landscape Garden 1620-1820* (London: Paul Elek, 1975), pp. 1-46; John Dixon Hunt, *The Figure in the Landscape: Poetry, Painting, and Gardening During the Eighteenth Century* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989); James Turner, *The Politics of Landscape: Rural Scenery and Society in English Poetry 1630-1660* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1979); Chris Fitter, *Poetry, Space, Landscape: Toward a New Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995) and Ian Robertson and Penny Richards eds., 'Introduction', *Studying Cultural Landscape*, (London: Arnold 2003), pp. 1-6.

³ *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, pp. 1-29.

individuals and in communities have been astonished by the wealth and diversity of relevant evidence.⁴ This thesis will demonstrate that country house poetry is only one of many such items of evidence. It also aims to offer a broader picture of generic instantiation. However, I do not propose to offer a definitive narrative of the genre's development as genre is more accurately understood as an on-going process rather than a linear progression.⁵

Secondly, this study will interrogate the formal and thematic characteristics of women's country house poetry, looking at the appropriation and adaptation of the genre's motifs and *topoi*. The depiction of the country estate, like landscape poetry more generally, allows a range of female poets to explore issues of identity and questions of genre within the shifting constraints of the social, political and economic asymmetries of the period. It might well be argued that other genres and poetic modes provide a similar forum for such a discussion; as Nigel Smith notes, 'the identities and allegiances created during the Civil War and its aftermath survived by being inscribed into a number of genres concerned with the land, landscape, cultivation and fishing.'⁶ However, I shall contend that the specific contexts of the period 1650–1750 indicate a particular thematic relevance of the country house, its relationship to power, its role in constructing various and varying identities, and its association with major poets of the period.

Thirdly, I will situate the corpus of women's poetry identified above both within and against the extensive and formally published male-authored canon and the more general literary and historical contexts of the early modern period. Rather than challenge existing critical interpretations, I aim to broaden the discussion of women's country house poetry. By excluding the non-canonical from our readings we risk an inaccurate and incomplete understanding of the literary period as well as polarised readings in terms of gender which emphasise either discontinuities or

⁴ Constance Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism: Literary Texts and Political Models* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), p. 1.

⁵ John Frow, *Genre* (London, Routledge, 2005).

⁶ Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England, 1640-1660* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1994), p. 12. See also William A. McClung, 'The Country-House Arcadia', in *The Fashioning and Functioning of the British Country House*, ed. by Gervase Jackson Stops and Gordon Schochet (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 1989), pp. 277–287 (p. 154).

correspondences.⁷ At the same time, I do not intend to establish an alternative, female-authored country house canon, but rather aim to explore the correspondences and continuities of poetic practice across the genre. These continuities are visible synchronically between writing peers regardless of gender. They are also visible diachronically as a response to existing texts. To consider the corpus of texts discussed here as a discrete body of texts would risk occluding this important and revealing dynamic. The resulting discussion will not only address the critical void pertaining to women's country house poetry but also extend, complicate and update the critical work on the country house genre and on women's poetic practices more generally. Critical analyses of the male-authored country house canon explore in depth the issue of various forms of identity with regard to socio-political power structures and literary genre. An extension of these theoretical and methodological approaches to the body of work produced by women seems, then, both timely and relevant. Overall, I shall challenge studies of the country house genre which exclude women poets and argue instead that the work of women poets was not only integral to but also shaped the genre and its cultural impact in key ways.

The country house poem

The country house poem is critically regarded as a composite and prescriptive depiction of a particular country estate, offering an exemplar of good governance, moral virtue and aesthetic discrimination.⁸ More broadly, the country house poem also presents the estate – its owning dynasty, its architecture and designed landscape, and its social economies – as a model for the state at large. Although Alastair Fowler regards the term 'country house poem' as a misnomer, preferring instead the more specific label 'estate poem', reflecting the genre's predominant thematic focus on parkland and gardens, he judges it a small yet significant genre with three main phases. These phases – up to 1640, 1640-1660 and 1660 to the early eighteenth

⁷ Typical of this emphasis on discontinuities is Maureen Quilligan's assertion. 'Completing the Conversation', *Shakespeare Studies*, 25 (1997), 42-49 (p. 47).

⁸ *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, pp. 1-29.

century – each respond to a different complex of socio-political and economic conditions, events or cultural contexts, each in turn using a slightly different balance of forms and *topoi*.⁹ At its most basic level the country house poem functions to establish, or maintain, a myth of an ideal community and it does so against a prevailing climate of cultural anxiety or conflict, which the genre often occludes and elides.¹⁰ Whilst the exact complexion or composition of the myth promoted and the anxiety negotiated changes, the basic function of the country house poem remains.

For Charles Molesworth, the genre is more simply defined as: '[a description of] the house and grounds of a man's estate and the activities which transpire there and in so doing reflect the virtue and character of the owner.'¹¹ This simple definition, however, does not fully explain the ideological function of the genre indicated by many commentators. It also fails to include the many poems which do not directly depict a country estate but discuss a component part, associated or analogous structures, or related concern. Many of these more oblique depictions engage in a slightly different manner with the main concerns of the country house poem. These concerns may include the contested ownership of property, the uses of the country estate to fashion a political retreat or social retirement, changing tastes in architecture and garden design, the shifting role of a landed class in political and cultural discussions and the growing trend for tourism. Furthermore, Molesworth's brief description does not account for the presence of women on the country estate as owners, residents or writers. The body of poetry depicting the country house is, then, defined by its attention to a particular topography. It speaks, however ambivalently, to a sense of 'rootedness and fixity.'¹² Yet this concern with place must be balanced by something

⁹ I shall use the former term whilst noting Fowler's comments. Alastair Fowler, 'Country House Poems: The Politics of a Genre', *The Seventeenth Century*, 1 (1986), 1-14 (p. 1).

¹⁰ Robert Markley, "'Gulfes, Deserts, Precipices, Stones": Marvell's "Upon Appleton House" and the contradictions of "nature"', in *The Country and the City Revisited: England and the Politics of Culture, 1550–1850*, ed. by Gerald Maclean, Donna Landry and Joseph P. Ward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 89–105; Kari Boyd McBride, *Country House Discourse in Early Modern England: A Cultural Study of Landscape and Legitimacy* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 1-16.

¹¹ Charles Molesworth, 'Property and Virtue: The Genre of the Country-house Poem in the Seventeenth Century', *Genre*, 1.2 (1968), 141-157 (p. 145).

¹² Gerald Maclean, Donna Landry and Joseph P Ward eds., 'Introduction: the country and the city revisited, c. 1550–1850', in *The Country and the City Revisited: England and the Politics of Culture, 1550–1850*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 1-23.

broader. As Gerald Maclean, Donna Landry and Joseph P. Ward note, 'no place can ever be wholly abstracted from the social relationships, capital flows, cultural representations, and global forces that late-twentieth century theorists have come to call space.'¹³ Poetry which explores and legitimates this dynamic is, thus, central to any understanding of the society from which it emerges.

Many of the poems examined in this thesis belong to one of the sub-genres identified by Fowler.¹⁴ Yet, as Kari Boyd McBride points out, it is more accurate to regard the country house poem not just as a literary genre but as a part of a much wider discourse.¹⁵ The country house poem is just one form in which the discourse can be manifested to establish and validate power and authority: 'the metonymy for English male aristocratic hegemony.'¹⁶ As with the poems belonging more clearly to the genre, the wider discourse does not merely or passively reflect or describe the estate and its historical period, but also attempts to navigate and at times bypass worrying socio-economic shifts. Whether understood as a poetic genre or as a wider discourse, these ways of understanding and representing the country house can resist, explore and accommodate change and as such, the genre or discourse is closely tied to its historical contexts. However, as land increasingly became a sign rather than the source of political and social legitimacy, the discourse became detached from the country house.¹⁷

As a significant strand of early modern poetry, country house poetry has received a great deal of critical attention and has been well represented in all types of modern anthology, most notably Fowler's *The Country House Poem*.¹⁸ It is also a

¹³ Maclean, Landry and Ward, 'The country and the city revisited', p. 1.

¹⁴ *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, pp. 14-16.

¹⁵ Mc Bride, *Country House Discourse*.

¹⁶ McBride, *Country House Discourse*, pp. 4; 11. See also McClung, 'The Country-House Arcadia', p. 277.

¹⁷ McBride, *Country House Discourse*, pp. 9; 12.

¹⁸ *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler. Other more general anthologies reflect a critical bias towards the country house poems of the first six decades of the seventeenth century which was established in large measure by G.R. Hibbard's essay, 'The Country House Poem of the Seventeenth Century' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 19.1/2 (1956), 159-174. General anthologies include: *The Penguin Book of English Pastoral Verse*, ed. by John Barrell and John Bull (London: Penguin, 1974); *The Penguin Book of Renaissance Verse*, ed. and selected by H. R. Woudhuysen and David Norbrook (London: Penguin, 1992); *The New Oxford Book of Seventeenth-Century Verse*, ed. by Alastair Fowler (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991). General anthologies

common feature of early modern published anthologies and collections and miscellaneous or literary manuscripts, including those authored by women. In particular, a cursory survey of early modern women's verse in poetic collections and miscellanies, manuscripts and the periodical press of the time indicates a small but significant engagement with the country estate and related concerns. More specifically, the verse of the period 1650-1750 seems to yield a significant number of country house poems by women. More generally, Richard Quaintance has noted a burgeoning of estate poetry during the 1730s which is supported by Ronald A. Aubin's *Topographical Poetry in XVIII-Century England* which details several categories of topographical genres, including the estate poem.¹⁹ Although this later and female-authored body of poetry does not fit neatly with critical accounts, it demonstrates a persistent, if shifting, engagement with the genre.

Despite the lack of substantial accounts of the role of the country estate in women's verse of the early modern period, there are, however, some exceptions and a small number of country house poems by women have been the subject of more sustained study. Lanyer's 'The Description of Cooke-ham' (1611) is now recognised as an important early example of the genre, potentially written before Ben Jonson's 'To Penshurst' (1616), often regarded as the first instance of the English country house poem.²⁰ Similarly, Mary Leapor's 'Crumble-Hall' (1751) has received extensive attention and is often viewed as a satirical appropriation of the genre. What characterises both of these examples is their status as anomalous counterparts to a conventional male-authored country house canon. In selecting texts to form the primary focus of each chapter, I have considered several criteria which have informed the omission of female-authored texts from existing critical analyses: texts which illustrate the broadening formal and thematic aspects of the country house genre from

covering the eighteenth century avoid this critical bias. These include: *Eighteenth-century poetry: an annotated anthology*, ed. by Christine Gerrard and David Fairer (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999),.

¹⁹ Quaintance, Richard, 'Who's making the scene?: Real people in eighteenth-century topographical prints', in *The Country and the City Revisited: England and the Politics of Culture, 1550–1850*, ed. by Gerald Maclean, Donna Landry and Joseph P. Ward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 134–159, (p. 137). Robert A. Aubin, *Topographical Poetry in XVIII-Century England* (New York: Modern Language Association, 1936).

²⁰ Aemilia Lanyer, *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum* (London: Richard Bonian, 1611) and Ben Jonson, *The Forest* (London, 1616).

1650; the use of manuscript and other less formal publication modes; the broad chronological scope of country house verse produced by female poets; and the increasingly wide demographic range of female poets active across all publication modes.²¹ The corpus of poetry selected for inclusion in this study is a diverse, yet as I shall argue, significant body of poetry which ranges chronologically from Katherine Austen's 'Book M' (c. 1664–1668) to Leapor's satirical appropriation of the country house poem 'Crumble-Hall' (1751). This thesis will also include readings of texts by Lucy Hutchinson, Jane Barker, Finch, Mary Wortley Montagu, Anne Ingram, and Mary Chandler.

The critical account of women's country house poetry is complicated by several factors which will be explored throughout this thesis. Firstly, although the boundaries of the country house genre are thematically rather than formally defined, the genre includes a variety of forms and modes as Fowler explains at length in the introduction to his anthology. This is not always acknowledged in the critical studies, suggesting that the more formally heterogeneous examples have thus escaped critical study.²² Austen's manuscript collection is formally diverse and includes a central poem 'On the Situation of Highbury' which discusses her relationship to a family estate which was the subject of a lengthy legal case.²³ Working clearly within the country house genre, the surrounding manuscript items pick up and extend the central theme of property ownership. In turn, the form of the other pieces — prophecy, poetic meditations, domestic letters and various devotional items — stand in a dynamic and informing relationship to the central poem. This formal complexity, in tandem with the scribal and domestic nature of the text, has ensured that the majority of analyses focus on the religious or gendered aspects of the text rather than Austen's precarious relationship to property. Hutchinson's 'Elegies' illustrates a similar formal and thematic interplay between the country house poems and the other items devoted to her late husband.²⁴

Furthermore, many critical accounts are bounded by a narrow thematic focus, reliant on a monolithic model of the country house. In literary terms the country

²¹ Elaine Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity: English Women's Writing 1649-1688* (London: Virago, 1988), p. 1.

²² *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, p. 1.

²³ Katherine Austen, 'Book M' (c. 1664), BL Add MS 4454, British Library.

²⁴ Lucy Hutchinson, 'Elegies', MS DD/HU₂, Nottinghamshire Archives.

house is generally taken to mean a large aristocratic building: a hall, abbey, park, or manor. This simple definition excludes many smaller or different buildings which do not at first glance relate to the country estate but which engage with similar concerns or are used in a similar fashion, for example to access patronage, to seek or express political power or display cultural status. Throughout this thesis I am using as my starting point Richard Wilson and Alan Mackley's broad definition of the country estate to include both the houses of 'the territorial magnates' and those of 'the small country squires.'²⁵ As such, it includes a far broader demographic range within its range and reflects not only the historical contexts of broadening land ownership and increasing investment in estate design and improvements but also the widening social base of poetic practices.²⁶ However designated, for Richard Gill it is 'much more than a house in the country.' Indeed,

[t]he country house is even more than an ancestral home and family seat: it is – or at least has been – a social, economic, and cultural institution, inextricably linked with the surrounding landscape and profoundly affecting not only those living under its roof but those within its purview as well.²⁷

Given this broad and symbolic application, I shall also include texts which depict buildings other than a conventional country house regardless of size or ownership. These alternative spaces include gardens, garden houses and temples, and convents or other religious institutions which resemble the country estate.

As Fowler's preferred term of 'estate poem' implies, gardens have always been a theme of country house poetry, picking up on the allusions to a 'vision of Britain as a hortulan Eden' in the earliest examples and modulating to reflect the emergence of garden design by the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.²⁸ Park poems, such as, Edmund Waller's 'At Penshurst', expand this motif into a related form of verse

²⁵ Richard Wilson and Alan Mackley, *The Building of the English Country House* (London: Continuum, 2000), p. xvii.

²⁶ Wilson and Mackley, *English Country House*; Valerie Rumbold, 'Rank, Community and Audience: The Social Range of Women's Poetry', in *Women and Poetry, 1660-1750*, ed. by Sarah Prescott and David E. Shuttleton (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 121-139; Donna Landry, *The Muses of Resistance: Laboring-class Women's Poetry in Britain, 1739-1796* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

²⁷ Richard Gill, *Happy Rural Seat: The English Country House and the Literary Imagination* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1972), pp.3-4.

²⁸ *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, p. 3

which became more pertinent as the fashion for landscaping took hold. Although Susan Groag Bell explores the horticultural activities of various women during the eighteenth century, she asserts that '[f]ew eighteenth-century women ever comment on landscape gardening.'²⁹ The evidence of many of the poems discussed in this study would suggest this is inaccurate. As chapters four and five explain, Finch and Ingram comment at length on garden design in ways which anticipate the later texts explored by Stephen Bending.³⁰ Other types of buildings are most notably visible in Barker's convent poems which are discussed in chapter four. These use the *topoi* of the country house poem overlaid onto the spaces of the convents in Northern France where Barker spent many years in exile alongside the court of James II. She also applies a similar generic grid to other religious spaces associated with her conversion to Roman Catholicism prior to her move into exile in 1689.

Taken together, the narrow formal and thematic definitions mean the corpus of verse 'available' for discussion is small. Heather Dubrow, G.R. Hibbard and William A. McClung share a list of seven country house poems: Jonson's 'To Penshurst' and 'To Sir Robert Wroth' (1616); Thomas Carew's 'To Saxham' (1631-32) and 'To My Friend G.N. from Wrest' (1639); Robert Herrick's 'A Country Life: to his Brother Mr. Thomas Herrick' (1648) and 'A Panegyrick to Sir Lewis Pemberton'(1648) and Andrew Marvell's 'Upon Appleton House'(1681).³¹ This reluctance to categorise poems as belonging to the country house genre may also relate to the tendency to inaccurately regard the genre as operating in the pastoral mode. Although some of the pastoral tropes share similar territory with the country house poem, the genre is, as Fowler points out,

²⁹ Susan Groag Bell, 'Women create gardens in male landscapes: A revisionist approach to eighteenth century English garden history', *Feminist Studies*, 16.3 (1990), 471-493, p. 471.

³⁰ For a more comprehensive survey of women's engagement with gardening practices see Stephen Bending, *Green Retreats: Women, Gardens and Eighteenth-Century Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

³¹ Heather Dubrow, 'The Country House Poem: A Study in Generic Development', *Genre*, 12 (1979), 153-179 (p. 154); G.R. Hibbard, 'The Country House Poem of the Seventeenth Century' *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 19.1/2 (1956), 159-174 (p. 1); William A. McClung, *The Country House in English Renaissance Poetry* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1977), p. 18. Six of these poems are included in Fowler's anthology.

unambiguously georgic.³² Not only does this narrow focus limit the corpus of poetry, it also produces a very narrow time frame for the genre.

The narrow chronological frame also excludes almost all examples of female-authored country house texts. Although some country house texts by women exist before the time frame of this thesis, most notably Lanyer's 'The Description of Cookham,' the majority of women's texts which engage with the country estate, either real or imagined, seem to emerge after 1650. The Civil War period is important in several respects. The country estate was an important component of martial and political conflict and the subsequent arbitration process at the Restoration. Furthermore, women enjoyed a significant amount of agency relating to the management of estates during this period in the absence of fathers and husbands, either at war, deceased or in exile.³³ This active role of women in estate management continued after the Restoration period as is demonstrated by the later chapters of the thesis.³⁴ Matters of estate management were also accompanied by a female interest in the design and upkeep of gardens. Ingram and Montagu both left letters which indicate not only the importance of their visits to various country estates owned by their fathers, relatives or friends, but also the role they played in their design or subsequent use.³⁵ Beyond a direct interest in gardening or architecture, the country estate was also an important site of literary and social activity for women, mostly based on family networks but frequently involving epistolary or literary exchanges.

³² *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, pp. 4-5.

³³ Joanne Wright, 'Going against the Grain: Hobbes's' Case of Original Maternal Dominion', *Journal of Women's History* 14.1 (2002), 123-148 (pp. 127-137).

³⁴ Bell, 'Women create gardens'; Elizabeth V. 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. by Helen Hills (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 99-114.; Alice T. Friedman, 'Architecture, Authority, and the Female Gaze: Planning and Representation in the Early Modern Country House', *Assemblage*, 18 (1992), 40-61.

³⁵ Robert Halsband ed., *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966); *Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts*. Vol 15, part 6 (London: HMSO, 1870).

Scope and outline

The analyses of the selected corpus of texts will be presented in chronological order with each chapter highlighting a particular engagement with the genre responding to a complex of historical contexts, literary trends and personal circumstance. Chapter one will explore the contexts which prompt the emergence of the country house poem and the shape and detail of the genre, 1600–1650. In this chapter I will also examine where the specific gendered contexts of women’s writing practices are relevant to the selection of texts and the methods applied. I shall also outline the methodological and theoretical implications for the thesis of the existing critical material. In the five chapters which follow, I present case studies of different uses of the country house genre revealing, diverse and individual responses to personal circumstance and broader literary and historical contexts. Chapter two focuses on Austen’s manuscript miscellany ‘Book M’ compiled and composed in the mid-1660s. Although many of the items are devotional in tone and content, the manuscript focuses on Austen’s extensive property portfolio. The country house poem ‘On the Situation of Highbury’ located towards the end of the manuscript examines her relationship to a component of this portfolio, a country estate on the outskirts of London.³⁶ However, the manuscript as a whole offers a glimpse into a contested claim on this estate relating back to the 1650s. Austen uses a range of literary forms to explore and legitimate her claim on Highbury. The central poem and the surrounding items demonstrate the thematic and formal interplay possible in a manuscript miscellany. The chapter will focus primarily on this topographical poem but I shall extend my discussion to include the surrounding manuscript items which reflect similar concerns regarding property ownership.

Chapter three shares many of the same historical and literary contexts but from a different religio-political standpoint. I shall focus my analysis on Hutchinson’s manuscript collection ‘Elegies,’ reading these alongside her biographical texts.³⁷ Both sets of texts detail the life of her husband Colonel John Hutchinson and, crucially, her

³⁶ Austen, ‘Book M’, fol. 104^r.

³⁷ Lucy Hutchinson, *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson*, ed. by N. H. Keeble (London: Phoenix, 1995).

own autobiographical narrative. In a fashion similar to Austen, Hutchinson uses the combination of forms, in her case elegy and country house poetry, to explore her position as the widow of a regicide and to negotiate her relationship to the family estate in Nottinghamshire. This chapter will focus on Hutchinson's attempts to access a politically and socially precise and public voice, albeit one which at times ventriloquizes earlier and contemporary royalist voices.³⁸ Hutchinson's appropriation of this rhetoric also forms part of a much wider engagement with the country house and its uses as a site of retirement which, I shall argue, is visible in the poetry of the 1660s and 1670s.

Chapter four will examine the appropriation and re-positioning of the country house genre in the poetry of Finch and Barker. I shall argue that as the post-Restoration period began, the motivation to explore the country house as a symbol of legitimate political power, a location and symbol of retirement and retreat and the site of financial and cultural investment did not wane, but was reworked with different emphases or for different locations and contexts. Both poets examined in this chapter were loyal to James II and willing to accept exile and marginalization as a consequence of this loyalty. The genre offers Finch and Barker a symbol of an ideal, albeit a temporarily lost ideal, and a desired religio-political and social community. The country house poem also offers a literary space into which both can retire to reflect on and reconsider the events of the Restoration. This discursive site becomes in their texts a space where, and through which, community and connection can be fostered. The flexibility of the genre allows Finch to explore the country estate as a reflection of her own personal circumstances as a non-juror in *de facto* exile on her husband's family estate at Eastwell and as guest at other estates belonging to an extended family and friendship network. For Barker, the country house genre is perhaps a more surprising match for her personal circumstances as she was never part of an aristocratic circle centred on a country estate. However, as a Catholic exile in St Germain-en-Laye, Barker reworks the country house genre to explore her residence

³⁸ Examples include poems written by *inter alia* Margaret Cavendish, Hester Pulter, Mildmay Fane, Robert Herrick, Katherine Philips, and Abraham Cowley.

and relationship to various convents and religious establishments both in Northern France and London.

In chapter five I will explore the use of the country house genre by poets associated with Whig political sympathies: Montagu and Ingram. Although only Montagu is well known as a Whig writer, both belonged to social and family networks which were explicitly Whig in allegiance.³⁹ However, as a reading of their poetry will reveal, this is far more complex an identification than often suggested, as both Montagu and Ingram had social and literary associations with significant Tory figures, including Pope, and their writing lives spanned the period when factions within the Whig party significantly complicated the two party system. These two poets demonstrate many continuities of concern, if not political affiliation, with Finch and Barker. Yet, they also show a far more straightforward appropriation of a public poetic voice by female writers. Largely unaffected by socio-economic or political marginalisation, both Montagu and Ingram enter into a public debate on the importance of taste. The poems by Montagu and Ingram are far more conventional than many discussed in this study and can be placed in a literary dialogue with those of their male peers, such as Alexander Pope, Matthew Prior, James Thomson and Gilbert West.

The previous chapters of this study examine the texts of women who belong to elite sections of early modern society: the aristocratic, the gentry and the wealthy urban landowner. Yet increasingly, women from the mercantile or labouring classes were both literate and erudite, active writers across a range of genres and publication modes.⁴⁰ Chapter six will explore two writers who belong to these broad demographic and literary categories. I will focus primarily on Leapor's 'Crumble-Hall' (1751) which

³⁹ For Rae Ann Meriwether, Montagu's engagement in 'the public, primarily male arena of English politics' was strengthened further by her extensive travels with her husband during their early married life. Rae Ann Meriwether, 'Transculturation and Politics in the Works of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu' *Studies in English Literature*, 53.3 (2013), 623-641, p. 624. See also Mary Jo Kietzman, 'Montagu's Turkish Embassy Letters and Cultural Dislocation,' *Studies in English Literature* 38.3 (1998), 537-551.

⁴⁰ In *Virtue of Necessity* Hobby interrogates the wider conditions affecting the writing lives of women, stressing the thematic and formal breadth of early modern women's texts as indicative of both constraint and opportunity. See also Rumbold, 'Social Range of Women's Poetry', pp. 121-139.

has attracted a good deal of critical attention.⁴¹ However, this scholarship does not, as I shall argue, always reveal the sophisticated ways in which Leapor engages with the country house genre, especially the new contexts to which it needs to respond and adapt. I shall also briefly consider Chandler's *A Description of Bath* (1733) which in its own right forms part of a broader trend for topographical poems depicting and promoting the benefits of the spa town in particular.⁴² For the purposes of this chapter, I shall use it to explore and illustrate the emerging contexts of consumerism and tourism to which Leapor's poem also responds.

⁴¹ Mary Leapor, 'Crumble-Hall', in *Poems upon Several Occasions. By the late Mrs. Leapor, of Brackley in Northamptonshire. The second and last volume* (London: J. Roberts, 1751), pp. 111-12.

⁴² Mary Chandler, *A description of Bath: a poem. In a letter to a friend* (London: J. Roberts, J. Jackson; J. Gray, J. Leake and S. Lobb, 1733).

Chapter one

Poetry, women and the country house, 1600-1660

The country estate was the powerbase of the early modern world: it authorised social status, validated political power, provided an economic dominance for the ruling elite and was the site of substantial cultural and financial investment. Indeed, the country house was a social necessity for the elite, whether born or self-made, despite the importance of the Court located in London.¹ It could be, however, a ruinously expensive requirement of social status, especially in the event of a royal visit.² The significance of the country estate also lay in the interpersonal relationships associated with its ownership, use and design. These relationships were crucial to the ownership of the estate through marriage and inheritance.³ The spaces and landscapes of the country estate were important for constructing and maintaining social circles, political allegiance or communities of faith. Lastly, cultural affiliations were formed in the design of the house or gardens and in the representation of these through poetry or painting. These relationships, whether familial, social or professional, as much as the topography or detail of the estate, were important to the development of the country house genre.

In this chapter I will examine the broad contexts which prompted the emergence of the country house poem and the genre's main characteristics and forms. I shall concentrate on the period 1600-1660, which covers the earlier and the best known poems regarded as canonical examples. These also fall into the first two phases identified by Fowler.⁴ Later examples will be examined alongside the primary female-

¹ Richard G. Wilson, 'The Landed Elite', *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. by H.T. Dickinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 158-157 (p. 189).

² McBride, *Country House Discourse*, p. 66. For a poetic discussion of this cost see Richard Flecknoe's 'On Welbeck, The Duke of Newcastle's House, Where He so Royally Entertained the Last King', in, *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, p. 173. See Gordon Mingay, 'Agriculture and Rural Life', *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. by H.T. Dickinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 141-157 (p. 151).

³ Christopher Clay, 'Marriage, Inheritance, and the Rise of Large Estates in England, 1660-1815', *Economic History Review*, 21.3 (1968), 503-518.

⁴ *The Country House Poem*, ed. Fowler, pp. 18-21.

authored poems which form the discussion of this thesis. In so doing, I aim to establish two things. Firstly, I intend to highlight the link between poetry depicting a country estate and the socio-economic, political and cultural conditions of its production. For Dubrow the 'country house poem exemplifies [the] relationship between literary history and literary forms.'⁵ This discussion will allow the remaining thesis to explore the continuing relevance of the country estate to poetry as it is reworked to accommodate new and changing circumstances. Some of these adaptations take account of specifically gendered contexts, but many respond to shifts in political and social contexts, complicated by political faction or inflected by religious difference, or to new phenomena, such as travel and tourism, consumerism and collecting, and the development of the English landscape garden. Each of the following chapters will explore the more detailed and specific contexts to which the selected texts and poets respond. Secondly, I will also examine the early and best known country house poems at this stage, as many of the later examples engage in a literary dialogue with the earlier texts. I shall also use this chapter to outline the critical response to women's country house poetry and women's writing of the period. These inevitably have theoretical and methodological implications for this thesis, which will also be discussed.

The country estate, 1600-1660

There are many reasons why the depiction of rural landscapes in general, and country house spaces in particular, were resonant during the early modern period. On the most basic level, as Joan Thirsk reasons, any society whose primary means of production is agriculture will accord land and its various uses and spaces significant attention.⁶ However, the large scale socio-economic shifts of the early modern period

⁵ Dubrow, 'The Country House poem', p. 153

⁶ Joan Thirsk, 'Making a Fresh Start: Sixteenth-century Agriculture and the Classical Tradition', in *Culture and Cultivation in Early Modern England: Writing and the Land*, ed. by Michael Leslie and Timothy Raylor (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992), pp. 15-34. Mingay estimates that by 1700 45% of England's population were employed in agriculture. 'Agriculture and Rural Property', pp. 141-142.

altered the exact nature of this significance. McBride states that by the time of the first country house poems, agricultural change had been ongoing for two centuries. These changes included enclosure and crop rotation, intensification of sheep farming and the leasing of demesnes to individual farmers, thus diluting the financial risk for the large landowner, the professionalization of farming and by the sixteenth century the appointment of estate managers. The latter change was also accompanied by detailed mapping of estates and property portfolios.⁷ By the early seventeenth century the country house poem became another form of mapping the country estate.

Although land, most notably the country estate and its associated landscapes, remained an important component of economic production, both despite and because of the Agrarian Revolution, land ownership was also central to political and cultural power structures.⁸ Yet again this position changed; not only were there material alterations in land use and significant architectural and gardening developments, but there were also shifts in the social and cultural understanding of rural landscapes.⁹ Landscape became, therefore, more than mere commodity; it became a way to manipulate feelings and behaviour.¹⁰ These included the shifting relationship of the ruling elite to land and land ownership and the broader shifts in society, which became increasingly mobile, urban and mercantile.¹¹ Therefore, whilst rural property, including the country house, continued to legitimate social and political authority, it

⁷ McBride, *Country House Discourse*, pp. 18-19; 68-69.

⁸ John Guillory, *The English commonplace: lineages of the topographical genre*, *Critical Quarterly*, 33.4 (1991), 3-27, (p. 5). Douglas Chambers outlines the importance of the country estate and its role in forestry after the Civil War. Chambers examines John Evelyn's *Sylva* as indicative of this activity, significant economically and symbolic politically. Chambers, 'The Legacy of Evelyn's *Sylva* in the Eighteenth Century', *Eighteenth Century Life*, 12.1 (1988), 29-41, (p. 29).

⁹ Alan MacFarlane, *Marriage and Love in England: Modes of Reproduction, 1300-1840* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986); Richard Wilson and Alan Mackley, 'The Building of the English Country House', *History Today*, 51.7 (2001), 41-; Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1977); E. Mercer, 'The Houses of the Gentry', *Past and Present*, 5 (1954), 11-32; G. Aylmer, 'The Meaning and Definition of "Property" in Seventeenth-Century England', *Past and Present*, 86 (1980), 87-97; Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973).

¹⁰ Roger Turner, *Capability Brown and the Eighteenth-century English Landscape* (Chichester: Phillimore, 1999), p. 19.

¹¹ Stephen Daniels, *Fields of Vision: Landscape Imagery and National Identity in England and the United States* (Cambridge: Polity, 1993). Turner, *Capability Brown*, p. 14 and Karen Harvey, 'Gender Space and Modernity in Eighteenth-Century England: A Place Called Sex', *History Workshop Journal*, 51 (2001), 159-179.

was less and less the preserve of an aristocratic elite. The country estates, in particular, became, as Dennis Cosgrove notes, 'a critical arena of cultural production and of cultural tension between factions of the ruling class.'¹² The early modern period recognised several forms of spatiality. These forms were sometimes older perceptions of a physical place: a geographic area or a socio-political community. Or, they may have been much newer forms: space regarded as property or as part of an exchange economy. As Andrew McRae asserts:

Although conservative commentators continued to invoke the rhetoric of community, pre-existent models of social and spatial order became naggingly irrelevant, and in the interstices of a besieged ideology there emerged new models of subjectivity and society.¹³

Out of this shifting and conflicting sense of space and the individual's or community's relationship to it, the country house genre emerged. It is therefore unsurprising to see a poetic genre focusing on the country estate emerging at precisely this point.

In addition to these broad economic and socio-political changes, the early modern period also saw theological and philosophical shifts which subtly altered the perceived relationship between mankind and the natural environment. Doctrinal shifts, in particular the decline in Calvinist depictions of an abject humanity in a punitive wilderness, were slowly mitigated by a more Arminian inflected perception of wilderness as both a punitive and a redemptive space. As a result, representations of landscape became an increasingly dominant motif of early modern literature and art. Malcolm Andrews charts this growing resonance of landscape to visual art, arguing that it both reflected societal changes and took account of technical artistic developments, such as perspective.¹⁴ In literature the emergence of country house poetry, prospect poetry and the widespread use of the pastoral and georgic modes indicate similar phenomena. By the latter half of the seventeenth century these exact

¹² Cosgrove, *Social Formation*, p. 198.

¹³ Andrew McRae, 'The peripatetic muse: internal travel and the cultural production of space in pre-revolutionary England', in *The Country and City Revisited: England and the Politics of Culture, 1550–1850*, ed. by Gerald Maclean, Donna Landry and Joseph P. Ward (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 41–57 (p. 50).

¹⁴ Andrews, *Landscape and Western Art*. The link between landscape painting and loco-descriptive poetry is noted by Guillory, 'The English commonplace'. See also John Barrel, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730–1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

contexts had of course changed, resulting in a growing number of poetic forms using landscape. The development of gardening as an artistic practice also meant that there were thematic changes to the country house genre and its depiction of the wider estate landscapes. As Paula Backscheider and Catherine Ingrassia observe:

During the Restoration and eighteenth century a number of compelling and contradictory conceptions of the relationship between humankind and nature coexisted, many developed within the poetic kinds.

They add that '[t]he phrase nature poetry oversimplifies and flattens the reality of the diverse kinds poets wrote and the work the poems do.'¹⁵ This study takes account of this generic and formal scope, but crucially also addresses the interplay between kinds and modes associated with landscape and those not.

The importance of the country estate for women

The more general shifting contexts of the early modern period were accompanied by a perceptible, if complex and frequently problematic, change in the position of women vis-à-vis land and landscape in general and the country estate in particular. The material relationship of women to land is complicated and brought into focus by both the fluctuating socio-political and legal status of women during the early modern period and by more specific events and conditions of the Civil War and Restoration. This meant that many women were not only active in the management of estates, but were also owners of land in their own right.¹⁶ This presents a complex picture for both contemporary and modern commentators. Thus, Moira Ferguson reiterates a conventional wisdom:

In common law, married women possessed no civil rights: They could not own property, make wills, testify in courts, serve on juries, or obtain

¹⁵ *British Women Poets of the Long Eighteenth-century: An Anthology*, ed. by Paula R. Backscheider and Catherine E. Ingrassia (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009), p. 534.

¹⁶ Amy L. Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 1995); J. Greenberg, 'The Legal Status of the English Woman in Early Eighteenth Century Common Law and Equity', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 4: 1975: pp. 171-182; and Susan Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property in England, 1660-1833* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990). Compare to McBride's argument that the professionalization of farming removed women from estate management, *Country House Discourse*, pp. 68-69.

divorces [...] Their children, like their bodies and personal property, belonged to their husbands.¹⁷

However, the reality was far more complex. Amy Erickson, Susan Staves and Janelle Greenberg quite clearly refute this complete erosion of female rights or agency in ways which support the picture suggested by the poetry of the period.¹⁸ As Jordan demonstrates, it is relatively easy to compile a list of socio-legal restrictions on women's property rights but how these were enacted in reality and how they were experienced across geographical, social and historical boundaries is less straightforward.¹⁹ Margaret Ferguson, A.R. Buck and Nancy Wright point to a 'variety of societal constructions that analysed different roles for women and constituted diverse models of property and ownership.'²⁰ Women's problematic position vis-à-vis property and the financial and legal acuity necessary to circumvent the most stringent limitations on their position and property, and their role as legal actors, is visible in their poetic depictions of the house.²¹ Erickson states that there remain few first-hand accounts of women and their relationship to property.²² This thesis will argue that women's country house poetry provides, in some measure, this missing account of 'women as subjects of property and as political agents.'²³

The use of the spaces of the country house on display in the poetry and other contemporary documents also provides a complex yet intriguing picture, which at times confounds the simplistic view of women as 'politically subordinate, economically dependent, and legally incapacitated.'²⁴ McBride elaborates on this basic idea:

Most aristocratic women were constricted – either actually or symbolically – by country houses and a country house discourse that demanded their

¹⁷ Moira Ferguson, 'Introduction', *First feminists: British Women Writers 1578-1799* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985), pp. 1-50 (p. 3-4). See also Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism*, p. 4.

¹⁸ Erickson, *Women and Property*; Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property*; Greenberg, 'Legal Status of English Women'.

¹⁹ Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism*. See also Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity*, pp. 1-2.

²⁰ Margaret W. Ferguson, A.R. Buck and Nancy E. Wright, eds., *Women, Property, and the Letters of the Law in Early Modern England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), p. 5. See also Greenberg, 'Legal Status of the English Woman'.

²¹ This stands in contrast with Greenberg's view that a woman's 'own likely internalization of the prevailing ideology meant that she herself probably failed to perceive the nature and extent of her disabilities', 'Legal Status of the English Woman', p.179.

²² Erickson, *Women and Property*, p. 223.

²³ Ferguson, Buck and Wright, *Women, Property*, p. 5.

²⁴ Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism*, p. 21.

confinement – indeed, depended on their presence – within limited spaces while effacing their significance to the articulation of that space.²⁵

At stake here, then, is the contested notion of the country house as a gendered space and a similar concept of specifically gendered genres. The idea of women being restricted to a physical or literary space is unsustainable in the light of existing scholarship.²⁶ However, I shall argue in what follows, that the far more complicated reality of gender and class asymmetries is usefully explored by the poets in this study within a discursive space which blurs the boundaries of public and private. Contrary to Jürgen Habermas' conception of the public sphere, the creation of discursive spaces, such as the country house poem, through combination, adaptation and innovation seems to be a means for female poets to enter public debate regardless of physical, social or geographic location.²⁷ Elsewhere, Margaret Cavendish explored the discursive nature of specifically political debates in her utopian *The Description of a New World, Called The Blazing World* (1666):

Since it is in your power to create such a world, what needs you to venture life, reputation and tranquillity, to conquer a gross material world? [...] why should you desire to be Empress of a material world, and be troubled with the cares of that attend your government? whenas by creating a world within yourself, you may enjoy all both in whole and in parts, without control or opposition.²⁸

For the poets discussed in this study, the spaces of the country estate are material and imagined in equal measure, a place where forms of power can be tangentially accessed.

The challenge to Habermas is supported by Beat Kümin's assertion that political spaces were increasingly textual in nature and that 'the 'public sphere' consisted of

²⁵ McBride, *Country House Discourse*, p. 79.

²⁶ Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *The Historical Journal*, 36.2 (1993), 383-414.

²⁷ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, trans. by T. Burger (Oxford: Polity, 1989). See also Terry Eagleton's assertion that, 'in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the European bourgeoisie begins to carve out for itself a distinctive space, one of rational judgement and enlightened critique rather than of the brutal ukases of an authoritarian politics.' *The Function of Criticism: From "The Spectator" to Post-Structuralism* (London: Verso, 1984), p. 9.

²⁸ Margaret Cavendish, 'The Description of a New World, Called The Blazing World' in *The Blazing World and Other Writings*, ed. by Kate Lilley (London: Penguin, 2004), pp. 119-225, (p. 186).

temporary or thematic intensifications of debate [...] rather than informed and institutionalized reasoning among the aspiring bourgeoisie.²⁹ For Brian Cowan it is more important to understand that ‘every era had its own public sphere.’ He continues: ‘it has often been taken for granted that coffeehouses were considered off limits for women’ and that this has been overplayed.³⁰ Another way to think about this, however, is to consider other spaces, such as the country estate, functioning as a form of ‘coffeehouse’ for female writers. While the presence of female writers in country estates cannot be taken as evidence of active or equal participation in political or literary activity associated with the country house, it is suggestive of women being able to participate in such activities. Furthermore, as David Norbrook indicates, Habermas’s narrative has been challenged due its failure to take account of the events and textual debates of the Civil War period. Norbrook explains that, ‘on both sides of the Channel, the mid-century saw not a smooth onward march toward a bourgeois public sphere but extreme oscillations between different communicative forms.’ He continues:

[The] narratives of seventeenth-century women’s disappearing into a private sphere do draw our attention to important constraints, but they run the risk of patronizing a period of extraordinary energy and creativity.³¹

The same holds true for writers of the eighteenth century, despite Kathryn Shevelow’s analysis, which draws attention to the paradox of an expanding female participation in print culture which was coincident with a culture which ‘steadily enclose[ed] them within the private sphere of the home.’³² As the imaginary spaces created by

²⁹ Beat Kümin, ‘Introduction’, in *Political Space in Pre-Industrial Europe*, ed. by Beat Kümin (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 5-15 (p. 6).

³⁰ Brian Cowan, ‘What was Masculine about the Public Sphere? Gender and the Coffeehouse Milieu in Post-Restoration England’, *History Workshop Journal*, 51 (2001), 127-157, (p. 128).

³¹ David Norbrook, ‘Women, the Republic of Letters and the Public Sphere in the Mid-Seventeenth Century’, *Criticism*, 46.2 (2004), 223-240 (pp. 223; 230; 235). See also Joad Raymond, ‘The Newspaper, Public Opinion, and the Public Sphere in the Seventeenth Century’, in *News, Newspaper, and Society in Early Modern Britain*, ed. by Joad Raymond (London: Cass, 1999), pp. 109-140.

³² Kathryn Shevelow, *Women and Print Culture: The Construction of Femininity in the Early Periodical* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 1. See also Claudia Thomas Kairoff’s assertion that, ‘[b]y the 1720s, few women were publishing politically charged verse; an ideal of femininity withdrawn from public concerns had gained wide acceptance.’ Kairoff, ‘Eighteenth-century women poets and readers’ in *The Cambridge Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, ed. by John Sitter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 157-176 p. 160. Compare Lawrence Klein, ‘Gender, Conversation, and the Public Sphere’, in *Textuality and Sexuality: Reading Theories and Practices*, ed. by Judith Still and

Cavendish and the domestic spaces inhabited by both Hutchinson in the Restoration and Leapor in the mid-eighteenth century, country house poems can challenge 'the master narrative of women's history, the story of the emergence of separate spheres for men and women.'³³

The contexts relating to women's problematic social position in the early modern period have been widely and lengthily discussed, but those relating to the house as a social and economic space deserve closer examination.³⁴ It has already been observed that the country house poem and associated architectural developments focus on the shift from the house as a public and communal space, to one that was increasingly private.³⁵ Indeed, Dubrow writes that country house discourse 'in particular, [attempts] to control the relationship between inside and outside.'³⁶ Although this analysis is related to male examples, this dynamic can be applied more widely. Women's country house poetry shows a keen interest in the boundaries between the interior and the exterior, the private and the public and the shifting perceptions of this notionally polarised dynamic. Rather than a dichotomy, Elizabeth Eger, Charlotte Grant, Cliona O'Gallchoir and Penny Warburton regard the public/private distinction in the early modern period as comprising 'shifting multivalent categories rather than mutually exclusive' spheres.³⁷ Therefore, despite the majority of female social and economic activity being physically located within a domestic space, this did not necessarily preclude access to a public discourse or wider agency.³⁸ The debate on female access to, or exclusion from, a public sphere, as

Michael Worton (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), pp. 100-115 (pp. 101-2) and Cowan, 'Gender and the Coffeehouse Milieu'.

³³ Cowan, 'Gender and the Coffeehouse Milieu', p. 131.

³⁴ See Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism*; Joan Kelly-Gadol, 'Did Women have a Renaissance?', in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, ed. by Renate Bridenthal et al. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987), pp. 175-201.

³⁵ Karen Harvey, 'Gender Space and Modernity in Eighteenth-Century England: A Place Called Sex', *History Workshop Journal*, 51 (2001), 158-179 (p. 159).

³⁶ Heather Dubrow, 'Guess Who's Coming to Dinner?: Reinterpreting Formalism and the Country House Poem', *Modern Language Quarterly*, 61.1 (2000), 59-77 (p. 68).

³⁷ Elizabeth Eger, Charlotte Grant, Cliona O'Gallchoir and Penny Warburton eds., *Women Writing and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 8. For a similar analysis of the public/private distinction across historical and cultural boundaries see Susan Gal, 'A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction', *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 13.1 (2002), 77-95.

³⁸ Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres?', p. 400. David Norbrook discusses a feminist critique of Habermas which questions the value of an inherently masculinist public sphere as well as its

defined by Habermas, is complex, with little agreement on the extent of any limits on female engagement.³⁹ However, the polarised positions adopted by many commentators are perhaps too abstract and fail to take adequate account of precise contexts and circumstances.⁴⁰ The contended notion of the public sphere has become for Cowan 'so capacious, and its constituent parts so variegated, that it is difficult to make generalizations about it.'⁴¹ In the terms of this thesis, these polarised positions also fail to capture the extent to which the country house could offer support and vital access to networks for women attempting to enter into public debate, whether political, socio-economic or literary. For example, for both Barker and Finch the country estate or its conventual alternative is vital to their negotiation of their own identities as writers and individuals during periods of exile or retreat.

In my consideration of the public/private distinction, I shall be working with a theoretical model outlined by Susan Gal.⁴² Although formulated to examine and understand modern central European society, Gal's insistence on contextualization makes it a useful model for analysis across cultural and historical boundaries. She asserts that although the public/private distinction both performs and is theorized as a binary, it is, in reality, constantly and inconsistently redefined. This redefinition – or to use Gal's term, re-iteration – is dependent on historical and cultural context, personal circumstance, and relative subject position. The relationship between public and private spaces is thus explained as neither dyadic or as a spectrum but rather a series of re-articulations. For Gal, the ideological and differential dynamic stands apart

pertinence to early modern women, Norbrook, 'Women, the Republic of Letters and the Public Sphere', *Criticism*, 46.2 (2004), 223-240 (p.224). See also Marie Fleming, *Emancipation and Illusion: Rationality and Gender in Habermas's Theory of Modernity* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997).

³⁹ Margaret C. Jacob, 'The Mental Landscape of the Public Sphere: A European Perspective', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 28.1 (1994), 95-113. For a comprehensive account of the feminist challenge to Habermas see Joan Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988).

⁴⁰ See: Habermas, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*; C. Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Oxford: Polity, 1988); *Women Writing and the Public Sphere*, ed. by Eger, Grant, O'Gallchoir, and Warburton; Norbrook, 'Women, the Republic of Letters', pp. 223-40; Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres', pp. 383-414.

⁴¹ Cowan, 'Gender and the Coffeehouse Milieu', p. 132.

⁴² Gal, 'Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction.'

from individual experience and social reality.⁴³ It is, I shall argue, both this separation of ideology and experience and the mutability of the distinction which is pertinent within women's country house poetry. This model allows the garden and the house, nominally private and domestic spaces, to be redefined and represented as public discourse. In addition, where a model of a spectrum may read the garden as a liminal space, Gal's model allows it to be read as public and private space – both simultaneously and in turn.

The importance of the landscapes of the country house for women writers is also framed by cultural conventions which link women to nature.⁴⁴ This link between woman and nature becomes political when the control of both is advocated in the name of patriarchal governance, as Barbara Lewalski explains.⁴⁵ The country house poem, in particular, describes a rural idyll where control of woman and natural environment is analogous to, and for the good of, both estate and state. This is perhaps most clearly visible in James I's exhortation to the aristocracy 'An Elegy Written by the King Concerning his Counsel for Ladies and Gentleman to Depart the City of London According to his Majesty's Proclamation' (c. 1622):

Ladies in honour grace the Court, I grant;
But 'tis no place for vulgar dames to haunt.
The country is your orb and proper sphere:
There your revénues rise; bestow them there.
Convert your coach-horse to your thrifty plough:
Make money of your sheep, your corn, your cow
And think it not disparagement nor tax
To acquaint your fingers with the wool and flax;
[...]
Play the good housewives, waste not golden days
In wanton pleasures which do ruinate
Insensibly both honour, wealth, and state.⁴⁶

⁴³ Gal, 'Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction', pp. 80-84; 79.

⁴⁴ Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism*. See also Erickson, *Women and Property*.

⁴⁵ Barbara Lewalski, 'Re-writing Patriarchy and Patronage: Margaret Clifford, Anne Clifford, and Aemilia Lanyer', in *Patronage, Politics, and Literary Traditions in England 1558-1658*, ed. by Cedric C. Brown (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991), pp. 59-78.

⁴⁶ James I, 'An Elegy Written by the King Concerning his Counsel for Ladies and Gentleman to Depart the City of London According to his Majesty's Proclamation', in., *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, pp. 101-2, lines 27-34; 42-44. The original text for this poem is BL Add. MS 28640.

A major thrust of the genre centres on the anxieties surrounding social and economic mobility, and the call for a return to a pastoral past implicit in the genre focuses, as Hugh Jenkins notes, 'on the potential, and potentially dangerous, mobility of female figures.'⁴⁷ Paradoxically, this claim to patriarchy makes the genre fraught with problems and potential for the female writer. Yet, as for their male counterparts, the spaces and landscapes of the country estates were also a vital means for female poets to explore and fashion a socio-political self, to negotiate the shifting, and frequently problematic, contexts and conditions of the early modern period, and to access a poetic voice and the associated structures of patronage, coterie or publication networks.

The country house genre, 1600-1660

Most critical analyses attempt to provide a more specific context for the development of the genre and thus a range of dates for both the emergence and span of the genre have been posited.⁴⁸ Most clear in this respect is Hibbard:

After 1660 this kind of poem was no longer written, because the way of life it reflects, and out of which it grows, was on the decline. The function of the great house changed, and to this change in function there corresponded a new style of architecture.⁴⁹

This statement and others like it produce a very narrow and thematically monolithic canon of country house poems.⁵⁰ The emergence of the genre, however, is linked to various and sometimes conflicting contexts, some quite broad, such as the demise of monasticism or of feudal hospitality, others more specific, such as the architectural changes seen in the prodigy houses of the late sixteenth century. The early examples focus primarily on the house as a symbol of aristocratic status and roles, rather than as a lived space – its architecture an emblem and index of socio-political legitimacy. The attention to exterior spaces tends to be to those beyond the immediate environs of

⁴⁷ Hugh Jenkins, *Feigned Commonwealths: The Country-House Poem and the Fashioning of the Ideal Community* (Pittsburgh, PA.: Duquesne University Press, 1998), p. 24.

⁴⁸ Dubrow, 'Reinterpreting Formalism', p. 68.

⁴⁹ Hibbard, 'The Country House Poem', p. 159.

⁵⁰ McClung, *The Country House*, p. 18. See also Hibbard, 'The Country House Poem'.

the house, focusing on the landscape as agricultural or hunting spaces or as the site of dynastic buildings. In contrast Lanyer's 'The Description of Cooke-ham' differs from many other early examples of the genre in its focus on female characters and its emphasis on an entirely natural environment.⁵¹

The genre does not, however, always develop solely in response to shifts in design or use of the country estate, but also in relation to the demographic and geographical spread of its ownership. Quaintance explains that by the 1720s it was clear that 'stylistic initiatives in landscape design had been diffused and diversified among an oligarchy usually distant from court in miles, taste, and ideology.' He continues: 'the vistas unfolding at Castle Howard, Stowe and other seats proceeded to offer individualized perceptions of social, political, and country space.'⁵² This relevance of the discourse to poets beyond the handful of recognised examples lasted until at least the mid-eighteenth century as the later chapters of this thesis demonstrate. The continuing resonance is accompanied by a shifting focus on different aspects of the uses or design of the country estate or house and by the coincident literary contexts which prompt formal modulations across nearly two hundred years of poetic production. Furthermore, it is also clear, as Gill, Jenkins and Malcolm Kelsall all argue, that the country house remained the locus of a cluster of socio-political concerns long after its resonance in poetry waned.⁵³

As Dubrow reminds us, the development of a genre and, thus, its exact dating is not necessarily linear. Thus, Herrick may be more satirical in the manner of Joseph Hall than either Jonson or Carew.⁵⁴ Dubrow's analysis does not, however, include female authored poems and it replicates the time frame of an exclusively seventeenth-

⁵¹ Aemilia Lanyer, 'The Description of Cooke-ham', in *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler. All subsequent references will be to this text and will be cited parenthetically by line number. This poem is, not only the first example of the country house poem written by a woman, but is also possibly the first example of the genre itself. It was composed sometime between 1609 when Anne Clifford married Richard Sackville and October 1610 when the text was registered for publication. It alludes to the residence of Margaret and Anne Clifford at Cooke-ham, a royal manor in Berkshire, leased from the crown by Margaret's brother, William Russell. This occurred during Margaret's estrangement from her husband, George, the 4th Earl of Cumberland.

⁵² Quaintance, 'Real people in eighteenth-century topographical prints', p. 134.

⁵³ The movement of the country house trope into fiction has been widely discussed. See Gill, *Happy Rural Seat*; Jenkins, *Feigned Commonwealths* and Kelsall, *Great Good Place*.

⁵⁴ Dubrow, 'The Country House Poem', p. 168.

century canon, offering little challenge to the implications of Hibbard's limited canon, which is by default male-authored. For McBride, the genre and wider discourse grew in significance, flourishing for only a short time, despite the fact that the conditions needed to shape the genre had existed for centuries, rather than emerging fully formed during the early seventeenth century as many critical models suggest. These conditions include classical literary models, country houses and feudal socio-political arrangements. However, she crucially does include Lanyer's 'The Description of Cooke-ham' in her analysis. Importantly for McBride it is a genre or discourse which offers resistance to existing landscape and domestic arrangements by focusing on a nostalgic representation of feudal socio-economic patterns.⁵⁵ Dubrow argues something similar: '[t]hrough both content and form, country house poems engage with the pressures [of early modern society], attempting in particular to control the relationship between inside and outside.'⁵⁶ The walls of both the estate and the genre are to a certain extent permeable:

And though thy walls be of the countrey stone,
They're rear'd with no mans ruine, no mans grone,
There's none, that dwell about them, wish them downe;
But all come in, the farmer, and the clowne.⁵⁷

As such, it is not a discourse which is concerned with wealth, but rather a set of shared values – albeit a set of values which are shaped by the privileges of wealth. It was also a discourse which required agency: it was not enough to own land; one had to behave like a land owner.⁵⁸ Crucially, this implicit requirement to act has implications for women, not just those depicted in the poetry, but also for the female poet. If the genre balances behaviour with ownership, the precarious relationship of women to property both real and moveable may not be an insurmountable obstacle to acting appropriately as defined by the discourse.

⁵⁵ McBride, *Country House Discourse*, pp. 1-2; 106.

⁵⁶ Dubrow, 'Reinterpreting Formalism', p. 68.

⁵⁷ Ben Jonson, 'To Penshurst' in *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, pp. 53-56, lines 45-48.. All subsequent references will be to this text and will be indicated parenthetically in the text by line number.

⁵⁸ McBride, *Country House Discourse*, p. 3.

Fowler identifies three main phases of the country house poem: up to 1640, 1640-1660 and 1660 onwards. Early examples dealt with the perceived decline in housekeeping, the Residence Proclamations exhorting the aristocracy and gentry to be active stewards of their estates, and the trend in architecture to large and expensive designs as a display of power and wealth exemplified by houses built by Robert Smythson at Longleat and Wollaton.⁵⁹ The second phase is, as Fowler asserts, less concerned with hospitality as it is dwindling as a social practice. In its place the Civil Wars and exile, in both internal and external forms, mean that tropes of retirement came to the fore.⁶⁰ These examinations of the nature and need for retirement are influenced by a broader classical idea about rural retreat, or the *beatus ille* tradition. This has been explored at length by Maren-Sofie Røstvig who charts and explains the shift in mode of this classical ideal.⁶¹ The pressures of the Civil Wars also brought changes in the uses of the country estate, and according to Mary Ann McGuire, '[t]he attitude toward nature expressed in 'Amyntor's Grove' indicates broad changes in conceptions of the country house and of the landed aristocrat.'⁶² To summarize McGuire's argument, the earlier version of nature seen in 'To Penshurst' had idealized nature and had implied a beneficial relationship between estate and house. The depiction of rural plenitude, or use of the *sponte sua* motif – in which the landscape and fauna of the estate become animated in spontaneous service to the owner – was held in place by the socio-political structures of the house.⁶³ However, for the mid-

⁵⁹ *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, p. 18. Smythson built numerous expensive houses for the aristocracy. See McClung, *The Country House*, pp. 46-66. Between 1603 and 1624 there were repeated demands issued by James I to his subjects to return to their estates. See Mc Bride, *Country House Discourse*, pp. 93-97.

⁶⁰ *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, pp. 19-21. See also Bronwen Price, 'Verse, Voice, and Body: The retirement mode and women's poetry 1680-1723', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 12.3 (2007), 5.1-44.

⁶¹ Maren-Sofie Røstvig, *The Happy Man: Studies in the Metamorphoses of a Classical Ideal. 1700-1760* 2 Vols. (Oslo and New York: Oslo University Press/Humanities Press, 1971). The first editions of these two volumes were originally published in 1954 and 1958 and represent an early critical engagement with women's country house poetry.

⁶² Mary Ann C. McGuire, 'The Cavalier Country-House Poem: Mutations on a Jonsonian Tradition', *Studies in English Literature*, 19 (1979), 93-108 (p. 104).

⁶³ Fowler explains the importance of this classical motif to the country house genre and the related trope of the Golden Age, noting the significance of Virgil's *Georgics*, and the English translations of the same, for the ubiquity of these analogies. *The Country House Poem*, pp. 11-17. See also McClung, *The Country House*, pp.118-122.

seventeenth-century poets, such as Richard Lovelace and Carew, the country house as an indoor setting became estranged from the surrounding parkland.⁶⁴ This polarising move was anticipated by some decades by Lanyer's 'The Description of Cooke-ham.'

In the third, and for Fowler last phase of the genre, the idea of the country estate as political microcosm gains more prominence. Self-mastery in Horatian terms is a key idea in this regard with 'later estate poems sometimes carry[ing] implications far beyond the lives of a small elite.'⁶⁵ At the same time, the estate continues to be a key site for retirement and the literary expression of these sentiments. Again Røstvig's survey takes account of the shifting mode of the *beatus ille* tradition and argues that there was a return to a Stoic conception of retreat, albeit a mitigated one.⁶⁶ However, the extended phase identified by Fowler does not, in contrast to Røstvig's study, differentiate between the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century.

There is no one poetic paradigm for the country house genre, but rather a range of formal and thematic models which combine to make a coherent yet still flexible and broad based mode of writing.⁶⁷ The genre is both an evolution of earlier and classical literary forms and a radical departure from these same forms. Most notable of these are: verse satire, the epigram, epideictic epistles, and the pastoral and georgic modes.⁶⁸ Crucially, many of these appeared as products of the revival of Latin poetry during the Renaissance, both in the original and in translation.⁶⁹ Different *topoi* are linked to different classical authors; Horace with retirement and the *beatus ille*, Virgil with pastoral and georgic description, Pliny with descriptions of the virtuous man and Martial with praises of individual houses or people. Furthermore, these different tropes are associated with different forms of writing, Martial's epigrammatic praises with the country house, Pliny's treatment with the letter and Horace's discussions of retirement with the ode. In the transition to the country house genre these

⁶⁴ McGuire, 'The Cavalier Country-House Poem'.

⁶⁵ *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, p. 21-23.

⁶⁶ Røstvig, *The Happy Man*, Vol 1, pp. 229-278 and Vol 2, pp. 9-26; 241-246.

⁶⁷ Dubrow, 'The Country House Poem', p. 155.

⁶⁸ Dubrow, 'The Country House Poem' For McClung the influences of the genre are largely classical and include: Seneca's *Epistle XIX*, Hesiod's *Works and Days*, Martial's *Epigrams*, Juvenal's satires, Virgil's *Eclogues* and *Georgics*, Horace's *Epode II*, and Pliny's *Epistle II*. *The Country House*, pp. 7-8.

⁶⁹ McClung, *The Country House*, p. 39.

associations were uncoupled and remade. Kelsall argues that the classical models on which the genre is based are themselves concerned with nostalgia and a disappearing, if not vanished world:

The literature of the country house in the Roman world has its roots in the myth of the original virtuous yeomanry. That literature is written, however, by the citizens of a sophisticated, metropolitan centred, empire [...] [F]or Varro, writing in the first century BC, the countryside was already suffering from gentrification. The rich build for ostentation, not for use, he complained.⁷⁰

Nostalgia, prompted by social anxieties, is of course a central impetus behind the country house genre. At times it retains the motif identified by Varro, yet elsewhere the nostalgic glance inherent in the genre is more general or associated with social hierarchies or literary practices.

Dubrow notes that despite being associated with numerous and diverse genres, the country house poem is 'readily categorized as an epideictic poem about a place.'⁷¹ However, by combining the epistle with a new genre frequently addressed to an estate, the problem of offensive flattery to an individual could be avoided whilst retaining indirect praise sufficient to fulfil the obligations of both patronage and the ideological functions of the discourse:

If [...] many epideictic epistles undercut their praise of the addressee's modesty by offering very immodest praise, the country-house poem as developed by Jonson and his followers relies on the negative formula, a kind of understated compliment, to praise architectural understatement and social unpretentiousness. The medium becomes the message.

Dubrow continues:

The country-house poems embody and exemplify the balanced discrimination that they recommend. Their speaker is not, like the persona of formal verse satire, an embittered outsider whose judgment may well be warped but rather literally and figuratively an insider to world of the country house.

In addition, she notes that most of the early analyses of the genre neglect not merely the formal aspects of the verse but also the more specific influence of verse epistles.⁷²

⁷⁰ Kelsall, *The Great Good Place*, pp. 11-12.

⁷¹ Dubrow, 'The Country House Poem', p. 153.

⁷² Dubrow, 'The Country House Poem', pp. 161; 175; 155.

This neglect has possibly had a major impact on the gender profile of the verse discussed and on the categorization of some poems. This will be addressed by this thesis specifically in my examination of Finch's use of the epistle to engage with country house discourse.

Country house poetry is often associated with the pastoral mode and Dubrow asserts that the country house genre involves 'writers working [to] dovetail two versions of pastoral: the vision they evoke is at once as down-to-earth as the farms depicted in georgic poetry and as ideal as the Arcadias portrayed in other types of pastoral.'⁷³ Another way to think about this is, for Dubrow, that the genre offers an alternative to the full pastoral mode in its discussions of the *beatus ille* tradition:

For this sub-genre advocates a life that is not totally removed from the disturbing social realities of its age but rather represents the best that a society can hope to achieve and perhaps even a realistic blueprint for it.⁷⁴

McClung conceptualises the use of pastoral in the country house poem in a similar fashion as an 'evolving type of Arcadia' or as 'quasi-pastoral.'⁷⁵ However, for Fowler, the categorisation of the mode of the country house poem as, at least loosely, pastoral, is problematic since '[p]astoral knows nothing of buildings, or gardens, or estates. In fact the estate poem belongs to a mode in direct contrast with pastoral: namely, georgic.' Conventional pastoral imagery presents several problems, not least because estate management needed to be sustainable, not merely harmonious. Similarly problematic, for Fowler, is the equation by others of the *sponte sua* motif with an illusion of common interest between man and nature.⁷⁶ Instead, Fowler sees these depictions of nature as founded on a superabundant nature, 'harmoniously controlled' by man.⁷⁷

For McBride, country house discourse intersects with the moral economies of the pastoral mode, but with differences in function. Both efface labour but in different ways. Where pastoral, despite being politically framed, deals in the universal, the

⁷³ Dubrow, 'The Country House Poem', p. 177. See also Anthony Low, *The Georgic Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), p. 280 and McClung, *The Country House*, p. 139.

⁷⁴ Dubrow, 'The Country House Poem', p. 176.

⁷⁵ McClung, 'The Country-House Arcadia', p. 277.

⁷⁶ Fowler, 'Country House poem', p. 4 *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, pp. 16-17.

⁷⁷ Fowler, 'Country House poems', p. 8.

generalized rather than the actual, country house poems concern themselves with the particular. They describe a specific place and real owner. Beyond that they also concern themselves with the details of a working estate, albeit one which is heavily idealized. McBride claims that the discourse concerns itself with the 'disposition of space and of people and objects in that space, both within and without the country house itself.' As such, the poetry clearly sits within the georgic mode.⁷⁸ Indeed, as Fowler indicates, all of the main themes and tropes of the country house poem belong properly within the georgic mode: hospitality, retirement, estate management and reconstruction, *sponte sua*, hunting, moral virtue, contrast of ostentation with proper use, gardens, idealized labour, seasonal cycle.⁷⁹ There were, as Fowler points out, several early, if somewhat looser examples of the georgic mode from the late sixteenth century, for example George Chapman's translation of *The Georgicks of Hesiod* (1618). Fowler also links this to the shift in attitude to work, affected by the rise of Protestantism. It is therefore, in Fowler's view, a literary and theological shift rather than one relating to material changes to agriculture or architecture: 'Long before the agricultural reforms of the Augustans, English georgic poetry was encouraging landowners to involve themselves in husbandry.' Ultimately, in understanding the genre in terms of a georgic mode of writing, the coherence of the genre begins to appear.⁸⁰

For Molesworth, the central impetus of the genre is slightly different and 'rests fundamentally on [...] two themes, the panegyric of the owner and the description of the estate as a *locus amoenus*.'⁸¹ This impulse to praise rests not only on its prescriptive function but also on the close links to patronage relationships. However, despite the positive, and frequently idyllic, image suggested by the term *locus amoenus*, the motif can be inverted, as in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, to connote violence or disruption.⁸² It is also, for Robin Sowerby, not so much 'an image of perfection but

⁷⁸ McBride, *Country House Discourse*, pp. 6-7. See also McClung, *The Country House*, p. 15.

⁷⁹ Fowler, 'Country House poems' p. 5.

⁸⁰ Fowler, 'Country House poems', pp. 6; 1.

⁸¹ Molesworth, 'Property and Virtue', p. 146.

⁸² Stephen Hinds, 'Landscape with Figures', in *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, ed. by Philip Hardie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 122-140 (pp. 125-129).

[...] an image of vulnerable perfection which is constantly juxtaposed with the imperfection of the fallen world'.⁸³ In this way the genre can also be implicitly satirical, both thematically and in its formal influences.⁸⁴ But, like its classical antecedents, this satire is doubled: it attacks the neighbouring estates for mismanagement and lack of discrimination and implicitly critiques the city in its praise of rural life. It is a genre, then, with a 'double text: praise of the enduring values of the country house, and criticism of the men who subvert them.'⁸⁵ As McBride claims:

Aemilia Lanyer, Ben Jonson, and other Jacobean poets used country house discourse to undermine the socio-economic structure that the discourse articulated; yet paradoxically like the aristocrats they immortalized in their poems, these poets depended on a reinscription of country house values for the expression of their own legitimacy.⁸⁶

McClung asserts the importance of Joseph Halls's satire *Virgidemiae* (1598) which outlines the decay in country house values.⁸⁷ Although most closely linked to the perceived shortcomings of Renaissance landowners: 'spendthrift heirs, nouveau riche squires, and houses that incorporate stone from monasteries,' the satirical edge of the country house poem is perhaps most clearly identified with the later examples by Pope and Leapor.⁸⁸

The country house poem is known for several major topics. Fowler uses these to formulate several sub-groups of country house poem. These include poems concerned with: invitations and welcomes; entertainment; visits and thanksgivings; retirement, parks and groves; closets and galleries; building and reconstruction; hunting.⁸⁹ However, this thematic grouping, just as much as the contextual or formal approaches to the genre, does not offer a particularly helpful way to respond to individual poems. This is because many of the poems incorporate a number of key topics in an individual manner. Others break the thematic associations with specific

⁸³ Robin Sowerby, *The Classical Legacy in Renaissance Poetry* (London: Longman, 1994), p. 198.

⁸⁴ Dubrow, 'The Country House Poem', p. 155.

⁸⁵ McClung, *The Country House*, p. 1.

⁸⁶ McBride, *Country House Discourse*, pp. 107-108.

⁸⁷ McClung, *The Country House*, p. 1.

⁸⁸ Dubrow, 'The Country House Poem', p. 155.

⁸⁹ *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, pp. 14-16.

forms or modes. As a result I propose a different way to think critically about the country estate and its role in the country house poem.

Firstly, the country estate may be considered as a place which maps the changes in attitude to objects as commodities and objects as part of a spatial or topographical description. Although studies related to the rise of the novel have discussed the move to particularisation at length, the poetic counterpart to this trajectory has received less attention.⁹⁰ The relationship of this move from a narration of detail to description proper, articulated by Cynthia Wall, has also not been considered with reference to the emergence, development and ultimate demise of the country house poem.⁹¹ Despite being topographical or biographical in mode, the early country house poem is evocative rather than explicit in realist detail. This two-dimensional aspect of the country house poem fills the space between the allegory of Spenser's 'House of Pride' and the novels of Jane Austen. As Wall asserts, early readers needed no detail to be provided as all had a stock of cultural images on which to draw.⁹² The country house poem is replete with such cultural images: beneficent nature or *sponte sua*; great hall hospitality; hunting; heraldry; gardens and architecture.

Secondly, the country estate may also be understood spatially as a place where social and family ties, political allegiances, religious affiliations and cultural tastes may be established or maintained. Thirdly, it may be conceived as property, a material object to be bought, sold and inherited or built, designed and improved. The genre functions, at this level, as a rubric for thinking about the tenuous relationship between some individuals – in this thesis women – to both real and moveable property. Lastly, the house or estate may be viewed as a symbol of something much more important or larger and thus operates as political metaphor, social paradigm, or cultural index. Symbolically the genre often works by presenting the estate as a microcosm of the

⁹⁰ See Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (London: Pimlico, 2000); Michael McKeon, *The Origins of the English Novel, 1600-1740* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988).

⁹¹ Cynthia Wall, 'The Rhetoric of Description and the Spaces of Things', *Eighteenth-Century Genre and Culture: Serious Reflections on Occasional Forms, Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 15.1 (2002), 261-79.

⁹² Wall, 'The Rhetoric of Description', p. 266.

state.⁹³ This works on all thematic levels and is most associated with its political contexts. The translation of the estate or household into the state is a commonplace of contemporary political theory.⁹⁴ Although John Norden exempts the aristocracy from physical labour, he argues keenly for the necessity for the property owning classes to ‘husband’ the estate as a part of their wider duties to local communities and the nation:

Hee that in respect of his greatnes of birth or wealth, will pretend a priuiledge of idelnes, or vaine and vnprofitable exercises, doth discover his forgetfulness, or neglect of the dutie in earth, which euery, man, euen the greatest oweth vnto the Common-wealth, his owne family and posteritie.⁹⁵

This political function of the country house poem draws on two related ideas, that of the body politic and of the family as a political metaphor. However, as Jenkins explains, ‘the longevity of the analogy and the diversity of its users might suggest this seemingly straightforward engendered representation of the body politic and its relation to the household actually marks a complex negotiation.’⁹⁶ For this thesis, the gendered complexity at work is key since frequently the female (body) is the emblem of the (male) owner’s virtue. As McBride explains, the genre is also a schema for social and gender duties, rights and responsibilities whereby noble praxis demanded control of both estate and wife.⁹⁷ Although most of the canonical examples sit most clearly in the last of these poetic functions, for many of the poems discussed in this thesis the first three categories are as important.

Unsurprisingly, the discussion of the genre is inherently hierarchical along both gender and class lines.⁹⁸ McRae notes that ‘orthodox Tudor ideology assumed that geographical stability would accompany social stability.’ In this way the country house

⁹³ *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, p. 5.

⁹⁴ Hugh Jenkins, ‘From common wealth to commonwealth: the alchemy of “To Penshurst”’, *Clio*, 25.2 (1996), 165. See also Mary Lyndon Shanley, ‘Marriage Contract and Social Contract in Seventeenth Century English Political Thought’, *Western Political Quarterly*, 32 (1979), 79-91.

⁹⁵ John Norden, *The surueyors dialogue Diuided into fiue bookes* (London: Hugh Astley, 1607), unpag.

⁹⁶ Jenkins, ‘From common wealth to commonwealth’, p. 165.

⁹⁷ McBride, *Country House Discourse*, p. 1; 5.

⁹⁸ Jacqueline Pearson, ‘“An Emblem of Themselves, in Plum or Pear”: Poetry, the Female Body and the Country House’, in *Write or Be Written: Early Modern Culture and Cultural Constraints*, ed. by Barbara Smith and Ursula Appelt (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 87-104, (p. 88). See also McBride, *Country House Discourse*, p. 4. McBride adds a third category, that of race, to her discussion of country house discourse.

genre privileges dynastic patterns of ownership and strictly observed social hierarchies:

Knowing one's 'place' involved observing interlinked codes of values and conduct, including a supposedly rigid political hierarchy, an associated distribution of control over land, and values of patriarchy which impinged upon both family and commonwealth.

Although relating to a broader discussion of cultural anxiety regarding travel, McRae's words provide a succinct description of the impetus and content of the early country house poem. Furthermore, he makes clear the link to the country estate as a focus of these interconnected discourses: 'the system was spatially underpinned by the model of the manorial estate, a 'little commonwealth' knit together by moralized bonds of duty and responsibility.'⁹⁹ Geoffrey Whitney's poem to his landlord Richard Cotton provides a very early example using the common metaphor of the hive:

The master bee within the midst doth live,
In fairest room, and most of stature is;
And everyone to him doth reverence give,
And in the hive with him do live in bliss:
He hath no sting, yet none can do him harm,
For with their strength, the rest about him swarm.¹⁰⁰

This commonwealth is also gendered, as Whitney's poem applies the conventional, if incorrect, assumption that the central authority of the hive was male. For McRae, and for the genre, the ownership of property and the interlocking obligations of an older social model seem to provide a bulwark against social change and the increased mobility of individuals. Despite the generic changes prompted by socio-political shifts, the genre maintains some of these Tudor ideals in its nostalgic glance and its focus on history and dynasty. It also places emphasis, albeit with some variation on 'knowing one's place' and the necessity of duty.

McClung links the emergence of the genre to the decline in traditional sources of charity after the dissolution of the monasteries and the simultaneous decline in

⁹⁹ Mc Rae, 'The peripatetic muse', p. 43.

¹⁰⁰ Geoffrey Whitney, 'Patria Cuique Cara: To Richard Cotton Esquire', in *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, pp. 31-32, lines 7-12.

feudal households.¹⁰¹ This is tied to the prevalence of literature of complaint by writers, such as Gervase Markham:

In former ages, [...] Potentates and Gentleman of worth spent their whole Rente and Revenues in Hospitality and good Housekeeping [...] to compare [...] the pleasures of their golden days, when Gold was so smally regarded, with the miserie of this latter, nay last age, were able in my judgement, to wring teares out of the eyes of Adamant.¹⁰²

At the same time, for McClung there was an idealization of England during the Renaissance period which figured the newly powerful nation state as Arcadia.¹⁰³ As such, the genre is simultaneously optimistic and pessimistic, nostalgic and forward looking — a dual approach to a range of social, political and economic shifts. However, regardless of the exact tone, the resonance of hospitality does wane after 1650 and it features in the later country house poems in a residual or more symbolic fashion.¹⁰⁴

An important feature of many poetic representations of hospitality, whether presented in its original conception as a form of charity, a social duty for all landowners, or as a newer idea of social interaction, is the staging of social hierarchies. The presence or absence of hospitality seems not to relate to the dating of the poem, but rather to the circumstances of poet and patron. Therefore, Fowler remarks that Jonson, the commoner, presents an egalitarian form: ‘the same beer and bread and self-same wine / That is his lordship’s shall also be mine’ (63-64).¹⁰⁵ Similarly for Herrick in ‘A Panegyrick to Sir Lewis Pemberton’, ‘all [...] find equall freedome, equall fare.’¹⁰⁶ In contrast Carew, a poet and courtier praises the more rigid social arrangements at Wrest Park:

Some of that ranke, spun of finer thred
Are which the Women, Steward, and Chaplaine fed
With daintier cates; Others of better note
Whom wealth, parts, office, or the Heralds coate
Have sever’d from the common, freely sit
At the Lords Table, whose spread sides admit

¹⁰¹ McClung, *The Country House*, p. 22.

¹⁰² Gervase Markham, *A Health to the Gentlemanly profession of Servingmen: Or, the Servingman’s Comfort* (London: W. White, 1598), G3.

¹⁰³ McClung, *The Country House*, p. 25.

¹⁰⁴ Aubin, *Topographical Poetry*, p. 26.

¹⁰⁵ Fowler, ‘Country House Poems’, p. 10.

¹⁰⁶ Robert Herrick, ‘A Panegyrick to Sir Lewis Pemberton’, in *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, pp. 106-109, line 60.

A large accesse of friends to fill those seates
Of his capacious circle, fill'd with meates.¹⁰⁷

Although Fowler is silent on the place of women, Carew's text suggests a defined intersection of class and gender operating in many country houses.

Also central to the poetic discussion of hospitality is the motif of a natural cornucopia.¹⁰⁸ Kelsall explains it thus:

All things serve the fortunate master [...] as an image of the natural fecundity of the countryside which celebrates its lord *sponte sua*: of its own volition. This is an act of Nature, simple, unembellished. The garden is not only a foil to the house, though the contrast is aesthetically pleasing, it is also a justification of the sophistication, riches and power of the country gentleman and his dwelling.¹⁰⁹

In Jonson's 'To Sir Robert Wroth' this idea is described as 'with unbought provision blest.'¹¹⁰ For McClung the *sponte sua* motif is central and pervasive: 'from vegetable to overlord, each component of the estate willingly does that which must be done, finding, indeed, fulfilment of identity in performing the act.' This is evinced by the genre's use of active verbs and the depiction of the house as an 'active agent of virtue.'¹¹¹ This natural plenitude translated into domestic or culinary generosity is linked to virtue. Of course both are more directly linked to estate or house management and belong more clearly to a georgic mode than the related Golden Age analogy suggests.

Despite the link to individual virtue and the epideictic frames of many country house poems, sometimes the poems do not clearly identify the virtuous members of the family responsible for the abundance of nature on the estate. In these cases, the dynamic of the estate works in reverse, with nature improving the owner, rather than the other way round.¹¹² This is evident in Carew's 'To Saxham':

Yet, Saxham, thou within thy gate
Art of thyself so delicate,

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Carew, 'To my friend G.N. from Wrest', *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, pp. 89-91, lines 38-48.

¹⁰⁸ Dubrow, 'The Country House Poem', p. 162.

¹⁰⁹ Kelsall, *The Great Good Place*, p. 24.

¹¹⁰ Ben Jonson, 'To Sir Robert Wroth', in *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, pp. 63-65, line 14.

¹¹¹ McClung, *The Country House*, p. 118-120.

¹¹² McClung, *The Country House*, p. 139.

So full of native sweets that bless
Thy roof with inward happiness,
As neither from, nor to thy store
Winter takes aught, or spring adds more.
The cold and frozen air had sterved
Much poor, if not by thee preserved (5-10).

Such poems, McClung argues, indicate how 'the economics of the country house itself furnish the model for good conduct, and the master is subordinated to the larger system of the estate.'¹¹³ Richard Braithwaite, like many commentators, stresses the need for hospitality as an index of aristocratic duty. Yet, the actual need for hospitality was by this point more symbolic than economic:

This moved his Highness of late, to declare his gracious pleasure to our gentry: that all persons of ranke and quality should retire from the City, and returne to their Countrey; where they might bestowe that on Hospitality, which the liberty of the time; too much besotted with fashion and forraine imitation, useth to disgorge on vanity¹¹⁴.

As with many of the central tropes of the discourse the retrospective glance employed hides the historical reality which prompts the discussion at hand. As McBride argues, the fear of unrest in the shires following enclosure and the problem of declining court resources were as much behind James's and others' demands as anxieties about the decline of hospitality.¹¹⁵

The motif of hospitality is also linked to the changes in the design and function of the houses themselves. In particular the great hall had fallen out of everyday use.¹¹⁶ As McClung explains:

The decay of manorial hospitality may antedate the decline of the hall in architectural importance, but that decline was conspicuous in the architecture of Jonson's day and might well suggest a correlation.

By the early seventeenth century, the majority of manor houses and larger country houses had been significantly altered according to changing tastes and individual requirements. These were *ad hoc* creations with little overall coherent design. This organic development of the older, and admired, houses is figured by Jonsonian

¹¹³ McClung, *The Country House*, p. 142.

¹¹⁴ Richard Braithwaite, *The English Gentleman* (London: 1630), p. 37.

¹¹⁵ McBride, *Country House Discourse*, p. 97.

¹¹⁶ Fowler, 'Country House Poems', p. 11. See also Hibbard, 'The Country House Poem', pp. 161-162

tradition as naturally evolving space.¹¹⁷ McClung suggests that the prodigy houses, clearly and coherently designed for the likes of Elisabeth Shrewsbury and by architects, such as Smythson, were the target of the country house poem, providing the negative exemplar for the genre more widely.¹¹⁸ As the anonymous writer of 'All Hayle to Hatfeild [sic]' observes of the Cecil family estate, which is 'not a mightie pile or costly guilding', but illustrates 'the owners wisdom; to bee neate / (which is a better praise than to bee greate).'¹¹⁹ As Fowler explains, the ornate and meretricious designs became a byword for waste and the inappropriate use of wealth.¹²⁰

For Jacqueline Pearson, women and those of the labouring classes typically are conspicuous by their absence or marginal role in the majority of country house poems.¹²¹ Despite this claim, there are instances of female representation in the genre, not least in Jonson's 'To Penshurst' and Lanyer's 'The Description of Cookeham'. However, the models of social and political economy on display rely on the control and thus silencing or obscuring of not only the reproductive potential of women, but also the productiveness of the estate's labourers. Instead, the fertile landscape of the country house poem conventionally gives spontaneously and generously as if in thanks or recognition of the virtue of the owning dynasty. For Jenkins, the estate and the woman as emblem of that estate or 'house, 'must be a *hortus conclusus*, sealed off from the corruption surrounding it; yet at the same time, it must also be open as an emblem to the 'real' commonwealth, which includes those very corrupt or potentially corrupting elements.'¹²² According to McGuire, in 'To Saxham' Carew figures the dyad of inside and outside as the opposition of dark and

¹¹⁷ McClung, *The Country House* pp. 46; 51-52.

¹¹⁸ McClung, *The Country House*, p. 63. Other such houses include Longleat, Theobalds, Holdenby, Hatfield, Audley End and Wollaton.

¹¹⁹ Anon, 'All Hayle to Hatfeild' in Tom Lockwood, "'All Hayle to Hatfeild": A New Series of Country House Poems from Leeds University Library, Brotherton Collection, MS Lt q 44 [with text]', *English Literary Renaissance*, 38.2 (2008), 270-303 (pp. 278-286), lines 11; 13-14. All subsequent references will be to this text and will be indicated parenthetically by line number.

¹²⁰ Fowler, 'Country House Poems', p. 4.

¹²¹ Pearson, 'Poetry, the Female Body and the Country House', pp. 87-104 and Williams, *Country and the City*.

¹²² Jenkins, 'From common wealth to commonwealth', p.165.

light whereby 'the Crofts maintain Saxham as an island of light, securely separated from surrounding darkness'¹²³:

Those cheerful beams send forth their light
To all that wander in the night,
And seem to beckon from aloof
The weary pilgrim to thy roof (35-38).

This isolation is, however, a symbol of their lack of political authority as newly made members of the aristocracy: theirs is a power which can only take effect within the estate walls and cannot radiate outwards as it does in other examples.

The importance of property, and its role as a social and political marker, pertained throughout the early modern period. However, its exact role and significance did alter as the period progressed.¹²⁴ McBride asserts that at the end of the sixteenth century property was the main source of wealth and sole criterion for political authority for the ruling aristocratic elite, whilst by the end of the seventeenth century property conferred status and authority but was no longer the main source of wealth:

Country house discourse articulated economic, social, and political power in relationship to the landscape at a time when the valence of the land, of titles, and of legitimacy in general were in flux, enabling and inflecting an evolution to new cultural forms and norms for nearly two centuries.¹²⁵

In effect, political authority no longer stemmed solely from landed wealth but could also derive from mercantile activity.¹²⁶ These commercial funds were often used to purchase land to this end resulting in an active land market and a subsequent concentration of land into the hands of fewer families.¹²⁷

The poetry included in this thesis points, however, to a continuing concern with property by women, despite the social and legal constraints regarding ownership and

¹²³ McGuire, 'The Cavalier Country-House Poem', p. 99.

¹²⁴ As G. E. Aylmer outlines, there was little consensus in the early seventeenth century even over the definition of property as a legal concept. G. E. Aylmer, *The Meaning and Definition of 'Property' in Seventeenth-Century England, Past and Present*, 86 (1980), 87-97.

¹²⁵ McBride, *Country House Discourse*, p. 16.

¹²⁶ McBride, *Country House Discourse*, p.142. R. Wilson and A. Mackley, *The Building of the English Country House, History Today*, 51.7 (2001), 41-47 note that by the eighteenth century, the country house could no longer be built from rental income alone but required other sources of income, possibly from advantageous marriage, to meet the financial burden.

¹²⁷ Clay, 'The Rise of the Large Estates', p. 503.

control. Although property provided women with no direct access to either political power or to the franchise, it did allow indirect political influence, financial independence and security and a sense of socio-economic identity as individuals.¹²⁸ As McBride notes, country house discourse as a whole is concerned with the arrangement of people and objects. Whilst she acknowledges the importance of the interior space, this is neither represented by the content of the majority of the 'canonical' examples nor by the critical commentary associated with this 'canon'. However, McBride does not extend this discussion to the house itself as an object subject to disposal or exchange, a dynamic which is visible in women's poetic depictions of the house.¹²⁹ As Erickson notes, 'virtually every death and every marriage involved a transfer of property, and the ways in which property was distributed shaped the structure of society.'¹³⁰ This was especially important for women, whose access to the house as a source of wealth and financial security was often problematic, and whose lives were directly influenced by the disposal of space within its walls. It should also be noted that the reverse dynamic also exists: that the patriarchal structure of early modern society re-informed and reinforced the social and legal practices regarding property.¹³¹

More broadly, early examples of the genre reflect the longstanding threats to small feudal estates which had been evident on many fronts: from capitalism, social mobility, agricultural revolution, agricultural depression, plague, and the dissolution of the monasteries. Gradually the older discourse of a feudal moral economy was replaced with a newer discourse of trade and by the end of the seventeenth century the main index of status was wealth not dynasty. The threat to the privileged position of established aristocratic dynasties is explored in many texts of the period. Norden is typical:

In respect of their posterities, that are to becom the more great by their greatnesse. And how can they do thus, vnlesse they looke into, vse the meanes of the increase and preseruacion of their greatnesse?¹³²

¹²⁸ Wright and Ferguson *Women, Property and the Letters of the Law*, pp.3-4.

¹²⁹ McBride, *Country House Discourse*, p. 6.

¹³⁰ Erickson, *Women and Property*, p. 4.

¹³¹ Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property*, p.6.

¹³² Norden, *Surueyor's dialogue* unpag.

Although the idea that nobility is derived from a relationship to land ownership remained a dominant one throughout the early modern period, it was gradually eroded by political and theological debates which privileged ideas of equality.¹³³ Lanyer questions the idea of the heritability of virtue, offering instead an alternative vision of a society where 'Titles of honour which the world bestowes, / To none but to the Virtuous doth belong.'¹³⁴ This claim allows women, as similar claims had allowed men of lower status before them, to acquire status where they had previously been dynastically and legally exempted.

The role of dynasty was further altered by the Civil War, as McBride explains: 'regicide broke an important link between lineage and legitimacy that had already been compromised by economic and social change for over a century.' This link was to be further eroded by the Glorious Revolution.¹³⁵ Yet dynasty and dynastic ambitions remained central to many examples of the genre and to the wider discourse focusing on the rights and responsibilities of land owners, prompting a nostalgic attempt to reconstruct the earlier set of values while allowing for newer contexts and possibilities. Indeed, as McClung argues, the subject of the country house poem is always the families who build and manage the estates depicted.¹³⁶ This is illustrated amply by Tom Lockwood in his exposition of eight manuscript poems dating from the 1620s and addressed to the Cecil family and their estate at Hatfield.¹³⁷

The importance of dynasty is also linked to the genre's attempts to articulate history. This, for Molesworth, means:

Seeking to go beyond mere recording and preserving, and even beyond establishing chains of cause and effect, this higher activity of history attempts to explain man to himself by recreating in an experiential, vital way the actuality and value of the historical past.¹³⁸

¹³³ McBride, *Country House Discourse*, p. 47.

¹³⁴ Aemilia Lanyer, 'To the Ladie Anne', in *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*, (London, 1611) pp. 25-26, lines 41-42.

¹³⁵ McBride, *Country House Discourse*, pp. 140-142; 167.

¹³⁶ McClung, *The Country House*, p. 3.

¹³⁷ Lockwood, 'A New Series of Country House Poems'. Lockwood notes that of the eight poems, five are addressed to members of the family.

¹³⁸ Molesworth, 'Property and Virtue', p. 142.

The role and value of history, however, had several precedents. George Puttenham explores this in *The Arte of English Poesie* (1589):

There is nothing in man of all the potential parts of his mind (reason and will except) more noble or more necessary to the active life then memory; because it maketh most to a sound judgement and perfectly wordly wisdom, examining and comparing the times past with the present, and, by them both considering the time to come, concludeth with a stedfast resolution what is the best course to be taken in all his actions and advices in this world.¹³⁹

The country house genre addresses itself to both strands and the opening lines to 'All Hayle to Hatfeild[sic]' are typical:

Should Cronicles, wherein thy founders name,
Stands like a statue in the house of fame,
should all records into one flame bee turn'd
all historie, by chance or enuie burn'd,
should after tymes hold in suspition
what they receiue from graue Tradition
should memorie decay and letters bee
henceforth forbidden to posterity
yet whilst the world retaynes but ludging eyes
Hatfeild shall speake him most profound most wise.

As Molesworth asserts, such estates develop the pedigree of the family concerned as much as the other way round.¹⁴⁰ This dynamic offers a parallel to the mutually informing dynamic between owner and estate visible in the discussion of fertility and abundance. The country house poem memorialises the past and present owners of the estate in literary form, preserving their exemplary stewardship as a positive model for future generations. However, the genre also expresses a keen interest in heraldry and other symbols of dynastic importance.¹⁴¹ For some estates and poets these symbols are straightforward and unproblematic badges, coats of arm and mottos. Elsewhere, poets use natural images and a poetic diction of growth to express dynastic importance or aspirations to such; the trees of the estate stand as metonym for the family tree.

¹³⁹ George Puttenham, 'Historical Poesie', *the Arte of English Poesie* (London, 1589), p. 31.

¹⁴⁰ Molesworth, 'Property and Virtue', p. 144.

¹⁴¹ *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, pp. 7-8.

The representation of women in the country house poem

Implicit in country house discourse is a power which is both male and aristocratic. As a result female residents of the country estate, much like the labouring classes, are rarely visible unless clearly attached to dynastic or reproductive roles.¹⁴² John Barrell explains that the depiction of an idealising landscape can only exist as a radical simplification entailing the depopulation of such spaces.¹⁴³ The female writer of the country house poem offers the chance to repopulate the estate, if only in the body of the writer herself. However, as this thesis will demonstrate, there remain several problems for the female writer. Access to all the spaces of the estate may be limited by contentious ownership, political circumstances or social class. Once access is resolved, there remain further difficulties regarding the conventions, functions or associations of such spaces. The patriarchal authority summoned by the genre is located in the control of both nature through estate management and women through marriage and law.¹⁴⁴ However, for Pearson, '[t]he relationship between nature and culture becomes problematic precisely at the site of the female body.' This conflation is clear to see in the poet's play on words in 'All Hayle to Hatfeild': 'It is they Scituation I should blaze=on, / thy other beauties are too bright to gaze=on.'(79-80) Furthermore, the cultural associations of the female to nature through her reproductive role, whereby woman is seen in terms of nature and nature is feminized, complicate the legitimization of political authority by control of nature and by carrying with it the threat to order represented by female sexuality. Thus, the genre becomes significant for the female poet. The use of nature as a poetic muse creates a discursive space between the two poles of female representation. As Pearson explains, male authority is linear both through dynasty and in social hierarchies. Conversely, female potency runs horizontally, from private to public and back again. The female body is positioned at the intersection of these two axes, forming a disruption to genetic and

¹⁴² Pearson, 'Poetry, the Female Body and the Country House', p. 94.

¹⁴³ John Barrell, *English Literature in History 1730-1780: An Equal, Wide Survey* (London: Hutchinson, 1983), p. 87. See also Williams, *Country and the City*, p. 32.

¹⁴⁴ Pearson, 'Poetry, the Female Body and the Country House', p. 88.

social layering. The female body both ensures and challenges (male) political authority.¹⁴⁵

Dubrow sees this slightly differently: 'Country house poems [...] use formal and other devices to remind us what cannot be contained' to explore 'the tension between the drive to incorporate would-be enemies within and the impulse to wall them out.'¹⁴⁶ These stresses are clearly social, theological and political, but we must also consider the tensions generated by gender. Importantly, whilst the physical and generic walls may exclude the obvious threats to both social and literary order, the female, either as a representation or writer, offers a menace from both within and without these sets of walls. As Herrick makes clear:

Nor has the darknesse power to usher in
Feare to those sheets, that know no sin.
But still thy wife, by chaste intentions led,
Gives thee each night a Maidenhead.¹⁴⁷

Here the wife's two roles as reproductive and virtuous centre of the estate conflict in a possibly disordering manner. As Dubrow notes, 'the bodies of women in these poems are not necessarily impermeable, any more than their houses or their genre is.'¹⁴⁸

This engagement with issues of both gender and class requires, therefore, a careful rhetorical strategy. In 'The Description of Cooke-ham' Lanyer uses a complex re-articulation or re-iteration of the public / private distinction to reflect the true nature of physical and discursive spaces to which Lanyer as a poet had access and which are inflected by social class. Lanyer uses the distinction in a variety of ways in order to achieve her rhetorical aims. She maps the public / private distinction onto another binary, that of the interior and the exterior. By overlaying the public and private with the territory of the house and garden, she converts the normally continuous domestic environment of the country estate into an opposition. Lanyer's garden, then, is not necessarily a domestic space and indeed, she never refers to it as a

¹⁴⁵ Pearson, 'Poetry, the Female Body and the Country House', pp. 89-90; 92.

¹⁴⁶ Dubrow, 'Reinterpreting Formalism', pp. 72-73.

¹⁴⁷ Robert Herrick, 'A Country Life: To his Brother, M. Tho: Herrick' in *Hesperides, or, the Works both humane and divine of Robert Herrick Esq.* (London: John Williams and Francis Eglesfield, 1648), pp. 35-39 (p. 37).

¹⁴⁸ Dubrow, 'Reinterpreting Formalism', p. 74.

garden, stressing instead its wild and natural features. Rather than regard the garden as an extension of the house, Lanyer makes the gendered opposition between nature and culture explicit.

Lanyer also locates her female characters within an entirely natural environment, rejecting the house almost completely. This allows her to set up an alternative community, in parallel to that normally articulated by country house poetry. Within this equivalent country house world, Lanyer retains the central features of the genre, including the hospitality motif. Here, however, the hospitality is not predicated on the commodification and control of a feminized landscape. Instead, Amy Greenstadt argues, it is an intellectual and spiritual reciprocity with nature where '[t]he intersection of class and spiritual hierarchies is materialized in the position of the oak tree on the Cookham estate':

Where being seated, you might plainely see,
Hills, vales, and woods, as if on bended knee
They had appeared, your honour to salute,
Or to preferred some strange unlook'd for sute (67-70).

The tree, like Margaret Clifford herself, is prominent in the surrounding landscape, yet also the site of a spiritual and, for Greenstadt, amatory, vision which could equalize the differences on show.¹⁴⁹ Although this has the effect of reinforcing the binary associations of the female with nature, Lanyer can also make a fruitful contrast or comparison by locating her female characters within nature. By directing her focus away from the physical house at Cooke-ham, Lanyer can comment on its associations to male authority and patrilineage. She can also offer an alternative vision; this female community of Christian virtue imagined by Lanyer exists outside of the house, and its interests of property, status and dynasty are held in place by social and political codes. For Lanyer, house has two distinct meanings here and she rejects both.

The distance set up by Lanyer between the female characters and the house, also offers comment on the legal and social constraints on women's property ownership and inheritance. As such, it foreshadows Anne Clifford's protracted legal battle over the inheritance of her father's estate. At Cooke-ham, Lanyer's three

¹⁴⁹ Amy Greenstadt, 'Aemilia Lanyer's Pathetic Phallacy', *The Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 8. 1 (2008), 67-97 (p. 70).

women dwell, instead, in a natural environment which reciprocates their virtue. Lanyer describes the relationship between Margaret Clifford and her environment in mutual terms:

And Philomela with her sundry layes,
Both You and that delightfull Place did praise.
Oh how me thought each plant, each floure, each tree
Set forth their beauties then to welcome thee!
The very Hills right humbly did descend,
When you to tread upon them did intend
And as you set your feete, they still did rise (31-37).

This relationship is underscored by the central conceit of the pathetic fallacy: Margaret Clifford's departure from Cooke-ham on her return to the marital home prompts a withering and diminishment of the estate. Lanyer writes:

Nay long before, when once an inkeling came,
Me thought each thing did unto sorrow frame:
The trees that were so glorious in our view,
Forsooke both flowers and fruit, when once they knew
Of your depart, their very leaves did wither,
Changing their colours as they grewe together (131-136).

The Clifford women cannot own this estate but can 'rest' at Cooke-ham which is 'honour'd in supporting' Margaret and Anne and by extension the poet. Margaret can also be 'Mistris of this place' (46; 11); theirs is a matrilineal and righteous community predicated on closeness to nature and Christian virtue, rather than material ownership. Yet this position is clearly a utopian vision, one which in reality is complicated and ultimately unable to withstand the pressures of the outside world and its heterosexual and increasingly capitalist economies, with Lanyer noting that Margaret's 'occasions call'd [her] so away, / That nothing there had power to make [her] stay' (147-148). Lanyer uses the house / garden distinction to make this private reality a public debate.

According to McBride, country house poems conventionally make explicit the link between a woman's body and the estate, held in place by women's and nature's reproductive roles. The genre and the discourse require both to be domesticated since both are vulnerable to sexual or criminal trespass. Within the discourse the fencing in

of one's property becomes not only legitimate but also necessary.¹⁵⁰ Women appear in the canonical country house poems as child bearers and child rearers, emphasising their role in providing both dynastic structures and a moral centre for the estate. Marvell's 'Upon Appleton House' is conventional in this respect:

The young Maria walks tonight
[...]
She, that already is the law
Of all her sex, her age's awe.
See how loose nature, in respect
To her, itself doeth recollect;
And everything so wisht and fine,
Starts forthwith to its *bonne mine*.
The sun himself, of her aware,
Seems to descend with greater care.¹⁵¹

As Jenkins notes of 'To Penshurst': 'by making the estate's lady the poem's central figure, Jonson can mediate between the poem's opposing poles of inside and outside, positive and negative, nature and culture. Thus, it is fitting that she, rather than her husband, greets King James at the poem's culmination.'¹⁵² For Jenkins, the female figures of Penshurst enter the poem at exactly the points at which the natural hierarchies are stretched to breaking. Whether labour or the natural relationships are 'extracted', to use Raymond Williams' term, or are merely elided, they do come under pressure.¹⁵³ According to Jenkins however, the female figures reconvert the strained relationships, either between man and nature or between social classes, to a natural footing. He concludes that, 'nature and culture do not simply come together in provision and consumption; nature literally merges with human society through the women, whose 'emblems' are the very fruits they bear.'¹⁵⁴

By contrast, Lanyer extends the boundaries of the spaces implied by the genre and those associated with acceptable female behaviour. The garden depicted by Lanyer, here, is not the formal Jacobean garden, located close to the house and regarded as an extension to the interior architectural space. By locating the characters

¹⁵⁰ McBride, *Country House*, p. 117.

¹⁵¹ Andrew Marvell, 'Upon Appleton House: To My Lord Fairfax', in *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, pp. 281-294, lines 651; 655-662.

¹⁵² Jenkins, 'From common wealth to commonwealth', p. 165.

¹⁵³ Williams, *The Country and the City*.

¹⁵⁴ Jenkins, 'From common wealth to commonwealth', p. 165.

in a wider landscape of streams, woods, briars and brambles, Lanyer observes several things. She notes the flexibility of the domestic environment, allowing the female characters to extend the socially prescribed physical and discursive spaces. She also allows for a greater vista to be claimed by the speaker and the Clifford women. The poem claims, for Margaret, a perspective of thirteen shires; although this is not a physical possibility, the claim is for social and political authority. By including the speaker within this scene, Lanyer also appropriates a literary authority for herself. The country house genre offers Lanyer, as it does her male peers, a formally public space in the guise of a thematically private one. However, it also provides, through an interrogation of the relationship between public and private, a discursive space which is both flexible and ideologically resonant. This discourse, in turn, reflects the complex social, political and economic contexts of the period. The country house poem offers Lanyer a fertile exploration of the shifting and conflicting discourses of the public / private distinction. By extending the definition of the domestic to incorporate the most distant parts of the estate, the poem extends the range of female authority.

The female poet and the country house genre

For the female poet, as for their male counterparts, literary genres, such as the country house genre, which focus on the representation of and engagement with the concerns of landscape and property are also a vital means to explore and fashion a socio-political self, to access an authoritative poetic voice and to negotiate the shifting, and frequently problematic, contexts and conditions of the early modern period. For the female poet the depiction of a country estate may be especially pertinent. Firstly, the use by a female poet of a poetic genre linked explicitly to the authorization of social and political power through land ownership, estate management or design, is an important element in the construction of an authorised and authorising poetic voice. McBride discusses this at length in relation to Lanyer's 'The Description of Cooke-Ham'.¹⁵⁵ Elsewhere the concept of appropriating an empowered voice through generic

¹⁵⁵ McBride, *Country House Discourse*, pp. 107-123.

choice and adaptation is central to many discussions of women's poetic practices of this period.¹⁵⁶ Few commentators, however, make the link to land and land ownership explicit. This validation of the poetic voice may work equally through direct representation of a privileged landscape or through appropriation of a privileged poetic perspective. Female writers also operated within traditional and evolving patterns of patronage relationships, accessing power through professional or cultural association. It should perhaps be noted, that this legitimising and democratising dynamic plays an equally important role in the increasingly wide range of country house poets, providing 'a potential for future social praxis along bourgeois egalitarian lines.'¹⁵⁷ Secondly, the access or transfer of power associated with the country estate through personal relationships raises several concerns for the female poet. The problematic legal position of wives in particular is widely noted, yet clearly women did enjoy property and its power through familial relationships and social connections beyond the immediate family.¹⁵⁸

There are to date no substantial accounts of the role of landscape – its ownership, design or disposition – in women's verse of the early modern period. In particular, little attention has been paid to female-authored country house poetry. This gap in scholarship is complex in form. The biases of existing, and frequently dated, scholarship on the country house genre, outlined above, shape the omissions and partial treatment of female-authored texts, both as a body of work and as individual examples of the genre. However, its shape is also formed by the theoretical and methodological biases and conventions of early modern women's literary studies discussed below.¹⁵⁹ The scant attention paid to female-authored country house

¹⁵⁶ *British Women Poets*, ed. by Backscheider and Ingrassia, pp. xxiii-xxxviii.

¹⁵⁷ Valerie Wayne, 'Assuming Gentility: Thomas Middleton, Mary Carleton and Aphra Behn', in *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450-1700*, ed. by James Daybell (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 243-256, (p. 254).

¹⁵⁸ Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism*. Naomi Tadmor discusses the importance of property across all three models of family identified in her discussion: household family, lineage family and family as a circle of kin. Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship and Patronage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

¹⁵⁹ Sasha Roberts, 'Women's Literary Capital in Early Modern England: Formal Composition and Rhetorical Display in Manuscript and Print', *Women's Writing*, 14.2 (2007), 246-269.; Elizabeth Clarke and Lynn Robson, 'Why are we "Still Kissing the Rod"? The Future for the Study of Early Modern Women's Writing', *Women's Writing*, 14.2 (2007), 177-193.

poetry, both in female and landscape focused studies is reflected, or perhaps more accurately reflects, its under representation in general, landscape, and female-authored anthology selection and the publication of texts by early modern women. Although this may be partially due to the status, albeit continually rising, of early modern women's writing within literary studies, this is still a surprising and pertinent omission.¹⁶⁰ A closer look at the inclusion of women's texts – whether country house, landscape or general – indicates there are clearly omissions, limitations and biases which are replicated in the focus of critical discussions. There are few landscape specific anthologies and where these do exist they are both dated and exhibit significant gender bias.¹⁶¹ For example, even Fowler's anthology is now over twenty years old and of its seventy seven poems, only five are by (three) women.¹⁶² More general anthologies are also marked by gender bias but are also flawed by problems of periodization, an attachment to an established canon and reliance on published rather than manuscript texts. However, with reference to this study, the main problem is one of focus, which, particularly in its selection of women's texts, privileges amatory or divine subjects.

Anthologies devoted to women's verse are not without problems also.¹⁶³ Alongside familiar problems of periodization and date, many reproduce the thematic biases of general anthologies. They also privilege aristocratic and published poets, thus maintaining the recently established female canon. As a result they do not fully take account of the wide range of writing practices and formal and thematic scope available in early modern women's texts. I would suggest that as such, many women's anthologies exist in a mutually informing dynamic with early modern women's studies which focus on constraints on women's writing rather than the range and literary strategies evinced by the extant texts. Similar omissions are evident in the modern

¹⁶⁰ Clarke and Robson, 'The Future for the Study of Early Modern Women's Writing', pp. 177-193.

¹⁶¹ For example *The Penguin Book of English Pastoral Verse*, ed. by Barrell and Bull; *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler

¹⁶² *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler.

¹⁶³ *Kissing the Rod: An Anthology of Seventeenth Century Women's Verse*, ed. by Germaine Greer, Susan Hastings, Jeslyn Medoff and Melinda Sansone (London: Virago, 1988); *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets*, ed. by Roger Lonsdale (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); *Early Modern Women Poets: An Anthology*, ed. by Jane Stevenson and Peter Davidson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

publication of women's poetry where complete collections are rare and partial collections limited to the default canon of newly recuperated poets, such as Finch, Katherine Phillips and Leapor. Thus, although women's writing in general enjoys significant critical attention and a more representative appearance in anthologies and single-authored collections devoted to the period, women's country house poetry remains unavailable or critically under-represented.

The body of critical work on women's country house poetry reproduces the omissions and biases of the primary material on which it is based. It should be noted, however, that although many are dated, there are many attempts to remedy biases in thematic focus, methodological approach and attention to the full range of writing practices and practitioners in current early modern women's literary studies. The details of existing work on country house poetry and the relevant aspects of women's literary studies will be discussed below. However, it is important at this point to note several things: firstly, the need to take into account the range of poets engaging with country house poetry and its wider discourses; secondly, the thematic and formal complexity of the genre and its ability or tendency to reflect quite directly its immediate contexts; thirdly, the range of publication modes and associated support structures, such as patronage, coteries or family connections, within which the genre operates. It is precisely this breadth and complexity which much of the body of critical study ignores, flattens or occludes. As Bacscheider and Ingrassia note: '[a]lthough women's poetry has long been studied as a source of information about women's lives than as artistic expression, it is still relatively neglected and underused and under-interpreted as biographical, historical, and social evidence.' They continue:

The recovery of women's writing and of information about women's lives remains an important, ongoing endeavour of feminist literary critics and historians [...] a recognition of the evidence they offer about women's poetic practices, their lives and feelings, and the times in which they lived.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ *British Women Poets*, ed. by Bacscheider and Ingrassia, pp. xxxii; 291.

I would suggest, however, that women's country house poetry can also offer us a valuable insight into the use of form and genre and, by extension, of wider literary contexts.

Nonetheless, the omissions in the critical coverage of women's country house poetry relate to several other matters beyond the interrelated concerns of gender and canon formation. The narrow generic definition employed by many commentators excludes many potential examples of the genre. These omissions relate most significantly to poems from the last half of the seventeenth century and the eighteenth century which may exhibit slightly different thematic or formal features from those outlined above, in response to changing contexts and literary trends. Whilst the boundaries of any genre cannot be endlessly elastic, any genre, such as the country house poem, which is formally heterogeneous and thematically diverse at its inception is liable to imaginative reworking.¹⁶⁵ Furthermore, the narrowly defined discussions of Hibbard and McClung *inter alia* do not take account of the wider literary practice of adaptation of classical forms and modes for satirical ends or social critique.¹⁶⁶ Many of the poems included in my discussion either adapt existing forms for satirical purpose, such as Leapor's 'Crumble-Hall' (1751), or reveal significant thematic and formal interplay with other genres and forms, such as Austen's use of the meditation and Hutchinson's of the elegy.¹⁶⁷ In this the female poets in this study are not necessarily using poetic genre and mode in a characteristically female manner, but rather in line with their male counterparts. However, it is futile directly to compare Renaissance examples of the genre with those of the Restoration or early eighteenth century. Furthermore, any attempt to map generic development is, as Robert D. Hume explains, similarly fraught with difficulties.¹⁶⁸ This study will, therefore, discuss individual poetic decisions in response to particular conditions or concerns.

¹⁶⁵ Dubrow, 'Reinterpreting Formalism', p. 65.

¹⁶⁶ Patricia Meyer Spacks, *Reading Eighteenth-Century Poetry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), pp. 27-28.

¹⁶⁷ *British Women Poets*, ed. by Backscheider and Ingrassia, p. 296.

¹⁶⁸ Robert D. Hume, *Reconstructing Contexts: The Aims and Principles of Archaeo-Historicism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

In turn, this will highlight the key features of the genre, its ability to be both universal and particular simultaneously, making it especially useful to poets well beyond the boundaries of existing discussion. For David Hill Radcliffe, form and genre are vital components of literary analysis for this period. As he asserts:

Even quite sophisticated concepts of ideology tend to presuppose homogeneous structures of values which social groups very seldom exhibit. By contrast, generic differences presuppose oppositions within social and literary structures. In the eighteenth century generic kinds articulated differences of party, gender, religion and rank – differences which belie assumptions about uniformity.¹⁶⁹

Thus, for Radcliffe, it is clearly valuable to the writer to be able to combine genres as this exhibits social and literary complexity, whilst for the critic a combination of, or contrast in, ideology within a text may indicate a conflict of values or complexity of meaning. Furthermore, as Dubrow notes, the inattention to genre, or failure to take account of the inherent formal complexity of the country house poem seen in much of the related critical commentary, raises the more general point of the need for formal analysis.¹⁷⁰ This is a pertinent question for the country house genre but also for women's literary studies, as Dubrow explains:

The country house poem offers an ideal test case for studying the potentialities and problems of formalist criticism. Engaging as it does with questions about orderly edifices, social and architectural, it figures many issues that I have been examining, and its indisputable embeddedness in contemporary political and social tensions clearly invites an exploration of the relationship between literary forms and social formations. That exploration is, however, complicated by how this subgenre both encourages and resists generalizations.¹⁷¹

I shall return to the need to account for the nuances of genre and form and the related need to offer sophisticated formal analysis of women's poetry in the section on theoretical and methodological implications.

The final features of the genre which not only account for the limitations of existing critical analyses but also shape this study are the production contexts associated with it: publication mode and patronage networks. Again, both raise

¹⁶⁹ David Hill Radcliffe, 'Genre and Social Order in Country House Poems of the Eighteenth Century: Four Views of Percy Lodge', *Studies in English Literature*, 30 (1990), 445-465 (p.446).

¹⁷⁰ Dubrow, 'Reinterpreting Formalism', p. 61.

¹⁷¹ Dubrow, 'Reinterpreting Formalism', p. 67. See also Dubrow, 'The Country House Poem', p. 153.

concerns regarding gender as both have, to a different and varying degree, inherent gender biases during the early modern period. As with the editorial and anthological decisions discussed above, much of the critical work privileges the published texts of a small number of poets. Fowler, however, notes the vast and ultimately unknowable number of texts which exist in manuscript form.¹⁷² Research for this thesis indicated that country house poetry by women exists in both manuscript and published form in a pattern which mirrors that of women's general publishing trends.¹⁷³ As with the more general trend, the modes of manuscript, publication and the periodical press are overlapping categories with poets using one or all according to circumstance or preference.

Personal literary manuscripts, for example Hutchinson's *Elegies* and Hester Pulter's *Poems Breathed forth by the Noble Hadrassas* and miscellaneous family documents, such as Austen's *Book M*, exhibit a thematic concern with landscape, property and related matters. Although only a small number of the individual poems may be defined as country house poems, there are many more which reveal the widespread appeal of the wider country house discourse. These manuscripts also clearly reveal the thematic and formal interplay so critical to any understanding of the genre. Similarly, more overtly public manuscript verse, such as Barker's *A Collection of Poems Referring to the Times* and Marie Burghope's presentation poem 'The Vision', suggest a wide ranging engagement with tropes of the country house poem.¹⁷⁴ Manuscript remains an important feature of country house poetry well into the eighteenth century. Much of this verse, like the majority of women's poetry of the early modern period, was included in diverse and domestic documents, further highlighting the thematic links and conflation of literary, legal and economic discourse visible in the genre itself. Much of the poetry appears as a single poem in a differently focused verse or prose manuscript. In turn, property related prose items – legal papers, wills, accounts – or – graphic items – plans, maps and drawings – frequently appear in primary verse collections. For example, the collected manuscript of John

¹⁷² *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, pp. 1-29.

¹⁷³ *British Women Poets*, ed. by Backscheider and Ingrassia, pp. 697-698.

¹⁷⁴ Marie Burghope, 'The Vision', in *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Poetry*, ed. by Jill Seal Millman and Gillian Wright (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), pp. 194-213.

and Anne Buxton contains verse, legal papers, accounts and a plan of the estate at Shadwell.¹⁷⁵ Similarly, the papers of the Molyneux family of Teversal in Nottinghamshire comprise poetry, recipes, marriage settlements, wills and inventories.¹⁷⁶ Aside from the blurring of property and poetic discourses, the mode of manuscript production itself can also be revealing, offering a valuable insight into the socio-economic circumstances of early modern women.¹⁷⁷

Conventional printed collections of verse – whether single or multiple authored – are also an important component of women’s engagement with the country house. This study will look in detail at Chandler’s *A Description of Bath* (1733) as an example of this. Yet, as noted above, the narrow generic criteria used to define the country house poem have often meant that such poems are overlooked as examples of the genre. Finally, the periodical press is important in any consideration of the genre of the mid-eighteenth century or beyond, which, like the continued use of manuscript, is frequently unheeded. Again, this is not only due to availability of existing work but also to questions of gender, further complicated by the overlapping categories of class and aesthetics. However, as Aubin’s list of texts demonstrates, the periodical press was a key site of publication for all types of topographical verse from the early eighteenth century onwards.¹⁷⁸

Patronage is a vital component of the country house genre; not only does it enable its production; it also gives it its distinctive epideictic tone. It also points up, in ways which may be conscious or not, the socio-economic and aesthetic hierarchies on display in the poems and represented by the genre. Although generic definitions tend to focus on the Renaissance models of patronage – male and aristocratic in nature –

¹⁷⁵ Buxton papers, Cambridge University Library, ms. 122/29-66.

¹⁷⁶ Papers of the Molyneux family (1677-1866), Nottingham University Library, ms. MOL. 221 and ms. MOL. 247.

¹⁷⁷ Deborah Aldrich-Watson notes the pertinence of verse manuscript to our understanding socio-political contexts in addition to the literary considerations in her discussion of the manuscript verse of the Tixall circle. Deborah, Aldrich-Watson, ‘Introduction’, *The Verse Miscellany of Constance Aston Fowler: A Diplomatic Edition*, ed. by Deborah Aldrich-Watson (Tempe, Arizona: Arizona Center for Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies, 2000), pp. xix-lxiii. See also *Early Modern Women’s Manuscript Poetry*, ed. by Jill Seal Millman and Gillian Wright (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 2.

¹⁷⁸ Aubin, *Topographical Poetry*.

other models are equally pertinent.¹⁷⁹ This reliance on one model implicitly excludes non-canonical examples, such as Lanyer's 'The Description of Cooke-Ham', even where they fall clearly within the chronological and generic boundaries. However, the aristocratic and male model, which by the end of the seventeenth century had all but disappeared, was replaced by other forms of patronage and support. Some of these may, indeed, have been more accessible to female writers but are part of a much wider literary trend for all writers. For women, their increasing agency within intellectual circles allowed for greater access to individual female patrons. It should be noted, however, that female patrons did not support solely female writers. Nevertheless, many female poets relied on male family members for intellectual and literary support. Many husbands, fathers, and brothers have been noted as playing key roles of mentor, editor or amanuensis.¹⁸⁰ The use of family support is important because it brings with it certain questions over the status of the text where typically the poet appears, if at all, as a guest in the country house. The use of familial patronage places the poet within the dynasty on display. Notwithstanding the complicated legal and social position of women vis-à-vis their male relatives, this does significantly alter the power relationship between poet and estate owner. It also blurs the boundaries between biographical and autobiographical details.

Critical models of women's writing

The past quarter of a century has seen a substantial increase in the study of eighteenth-century women writers; yet for all of this industry and important work done on the recuperation of both writers and texts, there remain not only gaps and biases in this scholarship but also persistent and, at times, distracting or limiting methodological frameworks. The resulting analyses do not necessarily reflect the full corpus of writers and texts, or the range of writing modes or generic contexts on

¹⁷⁹ For scholarship on forms and uses of patronage see Dustin Griffin, *Literary Patronage in England, 1650-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Arthur F. Marotti, 'Patronage, Poetry, and Print', in *Patronage, Politics, and Literary Traditions in England, 1558-1658*, ed. by Cedric C. Brown (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1991) pp. 21-46; Lewalski, 'Re-writing Patriarchy'.

¹⁸⁰ Among these are Finch and Barker

display in women's texts of the period, even when the initial scholarship, which focused on the recovery of texts and biographical information, was replaced by a concern for feminist analyses and attention to other forms of identity. Indeed, John Guillory identifies the impetus of canon reformation as central to this shift towards readings concerned with a marginalised experience.¹⁸¹ Although more recent studies have attempted to place the female writer in a credible historical context, this has largely meant the context of female literary or production contexts.¹⁸² There have recently, however, been significant attempts to explore the full implications of poetic form or genre.¹⁸³ Despite these distinct phases of scholarship, the focus of earlier studies frequently persists, and the attention to biography remains a feature of studies of eighteenth-century women writers, raising several challenges to our understanding of them as poets and to our perception of their texts as part of a much broader literary engagement.

As Sarah Prescott notes, the majority of these earlier studies focus on the novel, and despite important studies by Carol Barash and Backscheider *inter alia*, the field of women's literary studies is still largely dominated by fiction.¹⁸⁴ Other studies

¹⁸¹ John Guillory, *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), p. 10.

¹⁸² Margarete Rubik summarises the phases of early modern women's literary studies succinctly in her 'Introduction' in *Women's Writing*, 19.2 (2012), 135-144 (pp.136-7). See also Clarke and Robson, 'The future for the study of early modern women's writing.'

¹⁸³ Roberts, 'Women's Literary Capital'. In the same volume, Alice Eardley makes a similar claim for critical attention to form in 'Recreating the Canon: Women Writers and Anthologies of Early modern Verse', *Women's Writing* 14.2 (2007), 270-289.

¹⁸⁴ Sarah Prescott, *Women, Authorship and Literary Culture, 1690-1740* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), p. 1; Carol Barash, *English Women's Poetry, 1649-1714: Politics, Community, and Linguistic Authority* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996) and Paula R. Backscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets and Their Poetry: Inventing Agency, Inventing Genre* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005). See also Ursula Appelt, *Write or be Written: Early Modern Women Poets and Cultural Constraints* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001); Isobel Armstrong and Virginia Blain, *Women's Poetry in the Enlightenment: The Making of a Canon, 1730-1820* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1999); *Women and Poetry 1660-1750*, Sarah Prescott and David E. Shuttleton eds. (Houndmills: Macmillan Palgrave, 2003). For studies on the novel see for example Ros Ballaster, *Seductive Forms: Women's Amatory Fiction From 1684-1740* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992); Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: the Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace, 1670-1820* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994); Laurie Langbauer, *Women and Romance: The Consolations of Gender in the English Novel* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1990); Deborah Ross, *The Excellence of Falsehood: Romance, Realism and Women's Contribution to the Novel* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1991); Jane Spencer, *The Rise of the Woman Novelist: From Aphra Behn to Jane Austen* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986); Dale Spender, *Mothers of the Novel: 100 Good Women Writers Before Jane Austen* (London and New York: Pandora Press, 1986); Janet

focus clearly on texts which explore and promote female agency and a positive model of female community such as, Mary Astell's *A Serious Proposal to the Ladies* (1694) or Barker's *A Patch Work Screen* (1723).¹⁸⁵ Not only was poetry the most popular literary genre for female writers, it was also the most frequently published of all genres used by women during the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹⁸⁶ However, although poetry is the dominant mode for all writers regardless of gender throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, for Backscheider there has not yet been such a consideration of poetic practices, both professional and personal, in the light of analysis of female writers and texts, as there has been for fiction.¹⁸⁷

The study of women's poetry frequently explores the same poets, texts and themes. Furthermore, the same few poets and poems are examined with an eye to the poetry as an expression of female sexuality and gendered experiences. There has been insufficient attention paid to the full range of forms and themes embraced by women's poetry, including country house poems, which may at first glance have little to say about female identity.¹⁸⁸ This omission may relate not only to a desire to produce feminist readings, but also paradoxically to the failure to challenge contemporary and modern orthodoxies regarding the formal and thematic characteristics of women's poetry. Prescott is clear on the fruits and the pitfalls of feminist agendas which have fuelled historical recovery, yet which cannot always adequately account for the variety of writer and text recovered:

It is becoming increasingly apparent that the work of individual poets cannot always be defined as conservative or progressive at a time when affiliations to respective, but sometimes non-commensurate ideologies concerning the fixity or otherwise of class and gender structures do not necessarily conform to modern expectations.¹⁸⁹

Todd, *The Sign of Angellica: Women, Writing and Fiction, 1600-1800* (London: Virago Press, 1989) and Cheryl Turner, *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).

¹⁸⁵ Rebecca M. Mills, "'That tyrant custom': the politics of custom in the poetry and prose of Augustan women writers', *Women's Writing*, 7.3 (2000), 391-409. See also Hilda Smith, *Reason's Disciples, Seventeenth-Century Feminists* (London, University of Illinois Press, 1982).

¹⁸⁶ Backscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets*, p. xvii. See also Judith Stanton, 'Statistical Profile of Women Writing in English from 1660 to 1800', in *Eighteenth-Century Women and the Arts*, ed. by Frederick Keener and Susan Lorsch (New York: Greenwood, 1988), pp. 247-254.

¹⁸⁷ Backscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets*, p. Xiv.

¹⁸⁸ Kairoff, 'Eighteenth-century women poets and readers', p. 1.

¹⁸⁹ Prescott, *Women, Authorship and Literary Culture*, p. 2.

Furthermore, as Margaret Ezell points out, the persistence of a 'nineteenth century model of narrative historiography' has important implications for women writers:

Women who do not fit the pattern of development signposted by the special events get labelled 'anomalies' or are defined as doing something different and less important (writing 'closet' literature), or [...] they are simply left out.¹⁹⁰

The country house poems included in this study have then frequently been regarded as anomalous, such as Leapor's 'Crumble-Hall', or simply disregarded as incidental to a body of work which may explore gendered contexts, such as marriage or education. More generally, this nineteenth-century model of female authorship, coupled with a late twentieth-century focus on readings which privilege identity and difference, has resulted in a small 'canon' of female writers and texts. As a result, I prefer to use Barbara Lewalski's term 'newly important', since the texts themselves, and their relationship to their male-authored counterparts, have not changed, merely our perception and organisation of them.¹⁹¹

There remain two further problems with the critical models used to explain and explore women's writing practices of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The first relates to the production contexts of women's writing during this period. Although considerable work has been done on the use of manuscript by Ezell and others, the full extent of the persistence of manuscript into the eighteenth century has not yet been fully addressed.¹⁹² This work does challenge older male-centred critical approaches in its redefinition of what constitutes a literary text and is important to the study of all writers regardless of gender or social class. However, the

¹⁹⁰ Margaret J.M. Ezell, *Writing Women's Literary History* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), p. 13; 18.

¹⁹¹ Barbara Kiefer Lewalski, *Writing Women in Jacobean England* (London and Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 1.

¹⁹² Elizabeth Clarke, 'Beyond Microhistory: The Use of Women's Manuscripts in a Widening Political Arena', in *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450-1700*, ed. by James Daybell (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp.211-227; Margaret J. M. Ezell, 'Domestic Papers: Manuscript Culture and Early Modern Women's Life Writing', in *Genre and Women's Life Writing in Early Modern England*, ed. by Michelle M. Dowd and Julie A. Eckerle (Aldershot and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 33-48; Margaret J. M. Ezell, *Social Authorship and the Advent of Print* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999); Harold Love, *Scribal Publications in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993); Arthur F. Marotti, 'Manuscript, Print and the Social History of the Lyric', in *The Cambridge Companion to English Poetry, Donne to Marvell*, ed. by Thomas N. Corns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 52-79.

use of manuscript is only one context which bears consideration; the forms of patronage and subscription prevalent during the period must also be explored. Again, important work has already been completed on this aspect of female literary production but most relates to fiction and to two periods – the Renaissance and the late eighteenth century – which most clearly demonstrate the traditional aristocratic models and the more fully developed forms of subscription patronage.¹⁹³ The period 1650-1750 is in this, as in other respects, a transitional phase. Yet, for Dustin Griffin ‘evidence survives to demonstrate that the female ‘professional’ writer did not have to await the decline of the patronage system.’ The sources of patronage identified by Griffin include the traditional court or aristocratic patron, aspiring members of the gentry or professional classes and male members of the literary establishment.¹⁹⁴ However, many of the poets and texts discussed in this thesis often have a less conventional relationship to patronage, often accessing family or religio-political networks to draw on similar support and guidance. Furthermore, in contrast to Griffin’s conceptualization, the poets I shall be discussing often seek preferment from those whom they do necessarily identify as superiors.¹⁹⁵ Finch is forced to accept support from family and friends during her period as non-juror and Ingram’s poem addressed to her father participates in what I shall term familial patronage, addressing, but not necessarily soliciting, support from her father.

Lastly, the scholarship on women writers of the period 1650-1750, and of the early modern period more generally, is still frequently methodologically focused on female experience, however defined, rather than on the text itself. As Sasha Roberts notes, the resulting readings take account of biography and context at the expense of formal analysis.¹⁹⁶ This in turn reveals two further tendencies: the conflation of writer and text and the shying away from questions of form as too deeply imbricated in

¹⁹³ I understand patronage to refer to political, economic, social or literary support or preferment sought by individuals. See Griffin, *Literary Patronage*.

¹⁹⁴ Griffin, *Literary Patronage*, pp. 3-9; 189; 191.

¹⁹⁵ Griffin, *Literary Patronage*, p. 14; Susan Fitzmaurice, ‘Politeness and modal meaning in the construction of humiliating discourse in an early eighteenth-century network of patron-client relationships’, *English Language and Linguistics*, 6.2 (2002), 239-265 (p. 261).

¹⁹⁶ Roberts, ‘Women’s Literary Capital’.

existing and male models of literary and critical practice.¹⁹⁷ As Prescott asserts: ‘this tendency to view women’s writing as analogous to the woman writer herself [means] that both the work and the writer herself are judged by criteria which replicate traditional misogynist notions of women as either virgin or whore.’¹⁹⁸ Whilst this reliance on biography does indeed lead to such problems in much of the early scholarship, it does not justify the exclusion of biographical data from literary analysis and in chapter seven I explore this dilemma at some length with regard to Leapor. Instead, care must be taken to ensure that the category of woman is inclusive and fully representative of the full range of female experience evidenced by the poetry under discussion.

Theoretical and methodological implications

The disjunction between the existence of country house poems and related verse by women and the existing scholarship has not only prompted the central question of this study but also has implications for the methodological and theoretical framework of the study. It indicated the need for contextualization, as the genre responds so clearly to its economic and socio-political background. The more precise contexts of women’s historical experiences and writing practices must also be considered. In addition, as a formally complex and thematically heterogeneous genre, attention to the forms and influences of the poetry is called for. Lastly, as much of the existing work on women’s country house poetry does not offer extended close reading of the texts, this study will consider the textual alongside the generic, contextual and biographical detail of each poem.

A genre, such as the country house poem which is so formally and generically complex, requires an analysis of this aspect of its poetic function. As Dubrow states:

[The country house poem] engaging as it does with questions about orderly edifices, social and architectural [...] and its indisputable embeddedness in contemporary political and social tensions clearly invites an exploration of the relationship between literary forms and social formations.

¹⁹⁷ Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity*, p. 25.

¹⁹⁸ Prescott, *Women, Authorship and Literary Culture*, p. 19.

However, Dubrow also notes that this invitation is not always accepted:

[This] is particularly evident in discussion of a subject very germane to the country house tradition, generic norms [... which] are often represented as ahistorical, much as form is seen as divorced from material and political realities.

For Dubrow the study of form is frequently seen as 'antithetical to a host of values and practices currently celebrated in the academy' because 'its emphasis on a delight wholly unrelated to the conceptual, the moral, or the material world outside the object of art, not only denies but also disguises the relationship between art and the political.'¹⁹⁹ However, the assumption that aesthetics can be understood as trans-historical is for Dubrow misleading:

Its suggestion that all will share that response when confronted with true beauty denies historical contingencies, social conditions, and identity politics, while the very concept of beauty is determinedly essentialist in the sense of that term used by literary critics.²⁰⁰

For this thesis the reasons for attending to these contingencies are manifold. Most importantly, the concept of genre as a process rather than a static and fixed form must be addressed.²⁰¹ Furthermore, the relationship of a shifting set of generic norms must be explored against a shifting set of historical contexts, both responding to each other in turn. Lastly, the problems of gender difference must also be considered, not only across the historical period described, but also across socio-economic and geographical boundaries, and religious and political differences. The problem here is not only, what is a country house poem, but who is a poet?

As Backscheider and Ingrassia argue:

[Women] poets are deeply knowledgeable about genre conventions, and in order to express different experiences and responses from those men describe, they blend, mix, and juxtapose poetic kinds.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ Dubrow 'Reinterpreting Formalism', pp. 67; 65; 60. See also Dubrow, 'The Country House Poem', p. 153.

²⁰⁰ Dubrow, 'Reinterpreting Formalism', p. 61.

²⁰¹ Rick Altman, *Film/Genre* (London: BFI, 1999), pp. 62-68 and Frow, *Genre*, p. 2.

²⁰² Backscheider and Ingrassia eds., *British Women Poets*, p. 296.

Whether this poetic dexterity is used by female poets primarily to explore and express different experiences or whether the impetus to adapt genre is a specifically female practice is perhaps open to debate. As Felicity Nussbaum argues:

Women's writing in eighteenth-century England ventriloquates [*sic*] male ideologies of gender while it allows alternative discourses of 'experience' to erupt at the margins of meanings. [It] is one location of these contradictions that both produce and reflect historicized concepts of self and gender while sometimes threatening to disrupt or transform them.²⁰³

This is a debate to which this study will in due course contribute. Nonetheless, the attention to genre and form is surely necessary. As Lewalski asserts in 1993:

[Women's poetry] urgently needs to be read with the full scholarly apparatus of textual analysis, historical synthesis, and appreciation in play, since they come before us bare and unaccommodated, without the accretion of scholarly and critical attention through the ages that so largely determines how we understand and value literary works.²⁰⁴

Speaking more generally of early modern women's texts, Lewalski's argument seems to be largely unheeded, especially with regard to genres, such as country house poetry, which do not focus directly on female sexuality. Even in 2007, Roberts was still making similar calls for detailed textual analysis of female authored texts.²⁰⁵

Again Dubrow is clear:

Gender also figures in the academic misinterpretations of formalism, playing a role more subterranean but no less significant than that of other patterns. [...] Surely it is relevant that the formal as it is generally conceived has characteristics often gendered female and associated with the female subject position, though it is at once intriguing to speculate and impossible to determine to what extent formalism is demonised because it is feminized as opposed to vice versa.²⁰⁶

This raises two points in relation to women's country house poetry: first, any methodological frame must give due attention not only to considerations of genre but also to close reading; second, the theoretical frame must take account not only of the

²⁰³ Felicity Nussbaum, 'Eighteenth-Century Women's Autobiographical Commonplaces', in *The Private Self*, ed. by Shari Benstock (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), pp. 147-172 (p. 149).

²⁰⁴ Lewalski, *Writing Women*, p. 1-2.

²⁰⁵ Roberts, 'Women's Literary Capital'.

²⁰⁶ Dubrow, 'Reinterpreting Formalism', p. 64.

female writer, and of the political concerns and function of the genre, but also the feminized aesthetics on display in the texts themselves.

Both the need for consideration of genre and for evidence from textual analysis raises questions of contextualization. Currently both of these strands of literary discussion are not only seen as overlapping, but are frequently seen as trans-historical and undifferentiated practices. However, the form of a poem was of 'special significance at a period in which writers were highly conscious of tradition and convention – whether they chose to comply with the norms or transgress them.'²⁰⁷ Furthermore, generic choice can be seen as a political decision, as Backscheider and Ingrassia point out: '[t]he perceived value of the different forms and their clearly marked expectations is an inescapable context for any poet and represents the vital discourse surrounding the composition of poetry.'²⁰⁸ This political decision can then reflect not just gender but socio-political differences, as in Finch or Ingram's work. It may also reflect geographical location and economic contingencies, as in Chandler's decision to employ the country house genre in 1730s Bath.

Despite the pressing need for formal analysis outlined above, the study of country house poetry needs to be supported and framed by contextual information. As Kevin Sharpe and Steven Zwicker assert:

To become sensitive to the full range of linguistic stances and associations and to discern their oscillations across the decades of the century and all its modes of discourse must be the common objective of historical and critical enquiry. [...] The archaeology of languages is therefore both a historical and a literary science.²⁰⁹

If the claims for a literary science are left to one side, it is clear that not only is historical enquiry fruitful and mutually beneficial to critical studies, it is also essential. This is true of any text, in any period, as 'no thinker or writer operates in a vacuum' and '[t]o be understood properly, things must be considered within historical contexts.' However, beyond this general call for what Andrew Reynolds terms

²⁰⁷ Bill Overton, 'The Verse Epistle,' *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry* ed. by Christine Gerrard (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 417-428, (p. 241).

²⁰⁸ *British Women Poets*, ed. by Backscheider and Ingrassia, p. 5.

²⁰⁹ Kevin Sharpe and Steven Zwicker, ., 'Politics of Discourse: Introduction', in *Politics of Discourse: The Literature and History of Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. by Kevin Sharpe and Steven N. Zwicker (Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 1987), pp.1-20 (pp. 2-3).

‘mundane historicism,’ this study has further calls on the information provided by contextualisation.²¹⁰ The genre of country house poetry, however prescriptive in its impetus, is also descriptive in nature. It is also a genre which responds in very direct ways to the ideological and material environment. Lifted from these contexts, not only are the topographical and biographical aspects less clear, but the details of the wider debates are not fully revealed. As a genre which deals implicitly with concerns of property, political power structures and social hierarchies, it is clearly pertinent that any woman writer using or adapting the genre will explore through its tropes and forms, the tenuous or less privileged position of women in this regard. The historical contexts of gender are therefore important. Furthermore, it is paramount that this contextualisation take full account of the social diversity, geographical location, socio-political position and confessional identity of each writer.

Although according to Reynolds, the need for contextualisation is non-contentious, the exact nature of this historical endeavour is less clear.²¹¹ Reynolds enumerates five basic forms of historicism, yet is at pains to note that although the more radical forms, influenced by post-structuralist theories of knowledge and language, may be interesting, they may not achieve much: the idea that, ‘[t]here are not absolute ahistorical values of any kind, rather all ideals are local and relative to a particular historical culture and period’ must be balanced by Reynold’s observation that ‘the very idea of a fact may be said to be a social construction, but what the facts are – once we have our language and practices in place – are not, at least not wholly.’²¹² Hume is rather clearer on the possibilities and the relevance of factual historical information. Indeed, his historical method, Archeo-historicism, stands and falls on this requirement.²¹³ For Hume, ‘[g]enuine historical scholarship demands that the central questions underlying the investigation should be potentially answerable with factual evidence.’²¹⁴ The central question for this study is: did women use the

²¹⁰ Andrew Reynolds, ‘What is Historicism?’ *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, 13.3 (1999), 275-287, (p. 276).

²¹¹ Reynolds, ‘What is Historicism?’

²¹² Reynolds, ‘What is Historicism?’, pp.278; 282.

²¹³ Hume, *Reconstructing Contexts*, p. 41; x-xi.

²¹⁴ Robert D. Hume, ‘The Aims and Limits of Historical Scholarship’, *The Review of English Studies*, 53.211 (2002), 399-422, (p. 411).

country house genre and if so where are these poems and what are they like? Yet, this is only one part of this study which also aims to examine the poetry as a response or dialogue with historical and literary contexts and in turn requires the construction of these contexts. For Hume this must rely heavily on evidence and where that is not available, limitations or gaps must be acknowledged. However, for Hume, these gaps do not invalidate scholarship: '[h]istorical evidence [...] provides the foundation of evidence on which speculative analysis can be employed. Differentiating between the two is crucial to good historical practice.'²¹⁵

Yet for Hume, 'historicism is no cure-all.' On a practical level, evidence of the kind desired by Hume is rare for the early modern period. On a more theoretical level, any context constructed must be regarded as partial and provisional: 'a context is not a 'fact' but a 'hypothesis', albeit one built from facts' and '[t]he most crucial principle of context-reconstruction is that no a priori assumptions are admissible.'²¹⁶ Perhaps most crucially for this thesis, all historical methods struggle with accommodating difference and diversity:

A historical method that cannot comfortably accommodate radical diversity in reader response will generate procrustean enforcement of generalities. [...] Whatever the inadequacies of the contexts we build, there is no excuse for founding them on a priori generalizations.²¹⁷

It is precisely this point that 'all writers and works possess a multiplicity of contexts' which much scholarship on early modern writers fails to address, repeating the same oversimplified claim that women were: 'politically subordinate, economically dependent, and legally incapacitated.'²¹⁸

It is, therefore, necessary to provide detailed and multi-faceted contexts which are directly relevant and chronologically proximal to the literary texts; this study cannot provide such details across a century. Moreover, any attempt to provide such a broad contextual picture would be doomed to failure. I shall therefore provide detailed contexts in each chapter where relevant to the discussion. As Hume explains,

²¹⁵ Hume, 'Historical Scholarship', p. 413.

²¹⁶ Hume, *Reconstructing Contexts*, pp.10; 69-70 and Hume, 'Historical Scholarship', p. 63.

²¹⁷ Hume, *Reconstructing Contexts*, p. 65.

²¹⁸ Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism*, p. 21.

the reconstruction of contexts for a wide period invites the error of proposing a literary history: 'Archaeo-Historicism flatly denies the plausibility of 'literary history' so called: only very limited explanatory narratives can be justified.' This is partly because such an endeavour would be unmanageably large and complex but crucially because, for Hume, historicism cannot deal in causal explanation.²¹⁹ This thesis can, therefore, reveal detailed and yet isolated examples of the country house genre, responding to their immediate contexts, without extrapolating this to a complete history of the country house genre by women. That said, this does not invalidate claims that these poems instantiate important phases of genre, albeit not conceived as progressive.

In setting out the methods, aims and limitations of Archaeo-historicism, Hume is also at pains to allow for a theoretical impetus.²²⁰ However, for Hume, this use of theory should come at the correct point in the process and not be allowed to dictate the central questions of the thesis. As with a priori assumptions and 'procrustean generalities' regarding the contexts, no theory must serve as a method: 'no legitimate method of inquiry can be allowed to contain the answers to its own questions.' What Hume can allow and does advocate is 'applicative reading', an interpretation of the text with a regard to modern concerns. As with the limitations of historical method, theoretical perspectives must be duly acknowledged.²²¹ Indeed, theory is not just allowable, it is clearly necessary in Hume's historical methodology since historicism alone 'rarely deal[s] effectively with specific texts [...its practitioners] tend to fall into the trap of operating as though background controls or delimits the meaning of particular texts- which it does not.' Hume is in fact quite unequivocal here: '[t]exts have meaning, but that meaning is actuated only in readers or audiences.' Not only must the critic attend to diversity in the writers but also in their audiences, a notoriously difficult task. Although no advocate of New Historicism – with its selective application of co-texts – Hume is clear that the strength lies in 'its insistence upon recognising ideological conflict and subversion in its subjects' and 'that we should be conscious of our own ideological slants and agendas as we conduct historical

²¹⁹ Hume, *Reconstructing Contexts*, p. xi.

²²⁰ Hume *Reconstructing Contexts* and Robert D Hume, 'Texts Within Contexts: Notes Toward a Historical Method', *Philological Quarterly*, 71.1 (1992), 69-100.

²²¹ Hume, *Reconstructing Contexts*, p. 153; 181.

investigation and textual interpretation.²²² Therefore, where it is clear that the country house poem needs context for any convincing reading to emerge, it also needs context in order to apply theoretical ideas more persuasively. A detailed picture of the contexts of an individual female writer, rather than a broad brush discussion of early modern women, allows for a much more sophisticated and theorised reading of gender to emerge from the texts.

The rationale for using historical information combined with an account of literary context, formal and textual analysis and a theorised critical position has been established. Nonetheless, this multi-faceted and interdisciplinary approach does have implications for this thesis. Therefore, this study does not propose to offer an exhaustive or even detailed picture of the historical or literary contexts, 1650-1750, against which these poems may be considered. This is neither feasible nor particularly helpful. This thesis will, therefore, provide much closer historical information in each chapter, information which is relevant historically, biographically and thematically to each writer and text. Each text has been chosen to illustrate a particularly noteworthy use of the country house genre. Furthermore, there is no attempt in this thesis to produce a survey of women's country house poetry, but a more detailed examination of key texts, demonstrating the key findings which relate to: the range of poets, the chronological extent of genre, the varied modes of publication, the breadth of themes or *topoi* and formal heterogeneity or interplay. Lastly, there is no claim here to produce a history of the genre written by women, at least not one which proposes a progressive or alternative development of the genre.²²³ Instead, the examples of country house poems are perhaps better understood as a constellation of individual examples than any organic image implying growth or evolution. This study aims to bring to critical view the most significant elements of this constellation of female-authored country house texts to be viewed together and against the larger body of country house and landscape verse.

Any time period used to delineate literary study is always to some extent arbitrary, shaped by practical considerations and framed by existing critical and

²²² Hume, 'Texts Within Contexts', pp. 81; 83-84.

²²³ Hume, 'Texts Within Contexts', p. 88.

historical models. This presents several problems: it risks reproducing these critical models, including the corpus of texts used and any methodological biases and it does not allow for a reconsideration of generic development or the historical contexts to which the literary text may be responding. With regard to the scholarship on country house poetry, many studies end in 1660, and even those, including Lanyer's 'The Description of Cooke-ham' (1611) within their analysis cannot include the bulk of female-authored country house texts, as these appear after 1650. Even more inclusive and broader studies, such as Fowler's, do not take full account of women's texts.²²⁴ This is not only due to an apparent bias in selection criteria for the anthology, but largely because of its early eighteenth-century end point. Again this fails to bring to critical view the significant strand of women's country house poems in print, periodical and manuscript after this date. This thesis, therefore, uses the corpus of texts to define its timeframe.

There remains, however, one final problem relating to the extent of coverage and the coherency of such a broad discussion. As Zwicker suggests, the Restoration may appear to have little in common with the socio-political or cultural contexts of the mid-eighteenth century:

What sort of intimacy might it have had with the next century, which began by repudiating the restoration as a sink of moral corruption, spiritual regression and political tyranny?²²⁵

Yet as Zwicker goes on to explain, although the movement towards Romanticism and the revolutionary philosophies of the later eighteenth century has its roots in the Enlightenment, its development exhibits a dialectical rather than a lineal progression. The period to 1750 has, then, more in common with the preceding centuries than its immediately following decades.²²⁶ Kathryn King supports this assertion in her discussion of Barker, a writer who lived through the early eighteenth century, viewing

²²⁴ Even though Fowler notes the problem of periodisation in the introduction to his anthology, it still replicates conventional gender biases: out of a total of 77 poems, Fowler's anthology includes only 5 poems by 3 different women poets. *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, pp. 1-29.

²²⁵ Steven N Zwicker, 'Recent Studies in the Restoration and the Eighteenth Century', *Studies in English Literature*, 44.3 (2004), 639-688, (p. 639).

²²⁶ Zwicker, 'Recent Studies', p. 640-641 Barrel and Bull eds., *The Penguin Book of English Pastoral Verse*, pp. 300; 427-433.

political incidents and personal circumstances through the prism of seventeenth century Royalist politics.²²⁷ Furthermore, the political fallout from the 1640s and 1650s and the revolution of 1688-9 continued until well into the eighteenth century. Lastly, whilst the country house poem does reflect social, political, economic and artistic changes, we must also be careful to take full account of the theological or political outlook or indeed personal circumstances of the poet concerned. For example, although broadly writing at the same time, Austen and Hutchinson have very different views on the role of the country house. By contrast, the several decades separating Lovelace, Carew and Hutchinson, do not see a marked difference in the range of country house *topoi* used. As such, gender, like political conviction or theological belief, is one, but only one, consideration in the appropriation of country house genre and discourse.

²²⁷ King, Kathryn, *Jane Barker, Exile: A Literary Career, 1675-1725* (Oxford: Clarendon, 2000), p.9.

Chapter two

The country house as property: Katherine Austen's 'Book M'

This chapter will examine the role that the country house genre plays in exploring and negotiating women's relationship to property. The period 1650-1670 saw a number of high profile legal campaigns to restore property lost in various phases of the Civil War and Restoration. These battles were not the preserve of any particular political or theological grouping; all sides had property confiscated, all wanted it restored. However, alongside more celebrated attempts to regain family estates, such as that conducted by Cavendish and her husband the Duke of Newcastle, many were much more modest in scope. There were many more, for which the legal struggle was not directly the result of conflict or political difference, but rather a more mundane legal matter complicated by personal circumstances. Investment in, or the inherited ownership of, property was a vital means for many individuals, not of the highest rank, to protect themselves financially.¹ Austen's legal difficulties, which are revealed in her manuscript 'Book M' (1664-1666), are on the face of it a mundane and domestic problem. However, as the manuscript also demonstrates, the conflicted ownership of family property is central to her identity and financial security as a widow.² It is also more broadly indicative of a concern with correct property ownership and building which characterises many of the country house poems of the Restoration. These broader concerns will also be examined in chapter three. I shall, in what follows, consider Austen's manuscript as an expression of the changing and conflicted socio-economic positions of women in the 1660s and the related use of discourses associated with the country house to negotiate an identity against these shifting positions. The chapter will explore two interrelated, mutually informing dynamics: that between country house discourse and the historical and gender contexts of the

¹ Nicolas Rogers, 'The Middling Orders', in *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. by H.T. Dickinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 172-182, (p. 174).

² Katherine Austen, 'Book M', BL Add. 4454. All subsequent references will be to this text and will be indicated parenthetically in the text by folio number.

1660s, and between country house genre and other literary forms and discourses within a manuscript context.

Austen's 'Book M' is a diverse collection of items in her own hand which details a two year period of her widowhood and includes autobiographical notes, letters, family records, the recording of her dreams, religious meditations and over thirty poems mostly on religious topics. It was written primarily between 1664 and 1666 with a few later additions and amendments. The manuscript is one of a series of texts produced by Austen to which she alludes throughout the manuscript, although it is the only one known to have survived. Although many of the items are devotional in tone and content, the manuscript also focuses on Austen's extensive property portfolio. This focus on economic activity culminates in a country house poem, 'On the Situation of Highbury,' located towards the end of the manuscript, which examines her relationship to a country estate owned by the Austen family on the outskirts of London (fol. 104^r).

'On the Situation of Highbury' is a short yet complex poem which balances Austen's claims for social and economic mobility through the articulation of an identity as both poet and owner of the country estate. I include the poem in its entirety here:

So fairely Mounted in a fertile Soile
Affordes the dweller plesure, without Toile
Th'adjacent prospects gives so sweet < rare> a sight
That Nature did resolve to frame delight
On this faire Hill, and with a bountious load
Produce rich Burthens, makeing the aboad
As full of Joy, as where fat Vallies smile
And greater far, here Sickenes doth exhile
'Tis an Unhappy fate to paint that place
By my Unpollishet Lines, with so bad a grace
Amidst its beauty, if a streame did rise
To clear my muddy braine and Misty Eyes
And find a Hellicon t'enlarge my muse
Then I noe better place then this wud choose
In such a Laver and on this bright Hill
I Wish parnassus to adorne my quill (fol. 104^r).³

Pamela Hammons argues that throughout the poem, Austen figures herself as a proper widow, one who emphasises her decorous passivity whilst validating her poetic voice

³ <> denotes amended text.

through the appropriation of the country house genre.⁴ However, it seems more accurate to describe Austen's construction of herself as a propertied widow. In describing the estate at Highbury, Austen re-conceptualises the boundaries not only of her own financial and social position but also of widowhood and gentry status. This re-conceptualisation is threefold. Austen reworks the *topoi* of country house poetry which are inherently patriarchal, aristocratic and backward glancing to suit her own circumstances.⁵ Austen also allows the themes of the genre to bleed into the surrounding texts. Lastly, she integrates the formal aspects of meditation and prophecy into her country house poem. As such, the manuscript may be regarded as providing an additional and frequently missing component of what is largely a fragmented, biased and unreliable account of women's complex property transactions during this period.⁶ As I shall argue, Austen's 'Book M', like other examples of the genre authored by women, made these transactions, in Pamela Hammons's terms 'legible to the rest of society.'⁷

Although not all details of Austen's life are known, several key events and facts are recorded in her own manuscript 'Book M' and official documents.⁸ Austen was born in 1629, the eldest daughter of Robert Wilson, a London cloth dealer, and his wife Katherine. Wilson died when Austen was still young, leaving his wife to manage the family estate and seven children.⁹ Her mother Katherine Wilson married John Highlord, an Alderman in the City of London and Committee member of the East India

⁴ Pamela Hammons, 'Katherine Austen's Country House Innovations', *Studies in English Literature*, 40.1 (2000), 123-136 and Pamela Hammons, *Poetic Resistance: English Women Writers and the Early Modern Lyric* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p.168.

⁵ Lewalski, *Writing Women*, p. 210.

⁶ The problems of constructing an accurate history of women's lives due to the framing of contemporary documents by an androcentric society are discussed by Valerie Frith, 'Introduction', *Women and History: Voices of Early Modern England* (Concord, ON: Irwin, 1995), pp. ix-xviii. See also Sara Heller Mendelson, "'To shift for a cloak": Disorderly Women in the Church Courts', *Women and History: Voices of Early Modern England*, ed. by Valerie Frith (Concord, ON: Irwin, 1995), pp. 3-17 (p.5-7).

⁷ Hammons, *Poetic Resistance*, p. 3.

⁸ See Robert Wilson, PROB 11/182/55; Thomas Austen, PROB 11/285/329; Katherine Austen, PROB 11/375/79 and Corporation of London Record Office MS. 93C and 94A.

⁹ Robert Wilson's will (PROB 11/182) is dated 1640. It describes him as a draper living at Saint Mary Colechurch in the City of London.

Company.¹⁰ Despite being short-lived – Highlord died in 1641 – this second marriage secured and possibly enhanced Katherine Wilson Highlord’s financial and social status and at Wilson-Highlord’s death in 1648, she was able to leave substantial bequests to her three daughters.¹¹ In 1645 Austen married Thomas Austen by whom she had two sons and a daughter. Thomas Austen died in 1658 and his death occurred close to those of both his father and brother. Possibly as a result of legal complications in and between these three wills, Austen was involved in two simultaneous law suits over family properties: a country estate at Highbury, also known as New Barrow, and the Red Lion tavern in Fleet Street.¹² ‘Book M’ documents the progress of these two legal procedures and provides an account of several years of Austen’s widowhood, including her consideration of remarriage to physician Alexander Callendar. Austen died in 1683 without remarrying and yet was able to leave substantial wealth and property to her three children and a family more secure in their ownership of a gentry identity.¹³ Despite detailing the same biographical data, Austen’s personal and official records often diverge and, as Hammons notes, Austen’s self-presentation is frequently contradictory.¹⁴ She is at once: an active and able business woman; a devout Anglican; a prophet; a devoted mother; and a vulnerable and troubled widow. In this chapter I shall examine the apparent disjunction between the conventional picture of a pious and vulnerable widow and the active owner of property simultaneously visible in the text. I shall also argue that Austen uses the mutually informing nature of literary

¹⁰ Sarah Ross, ‘“And Trophes of his praises make”: Providence and Property in Katherine Austen’s *Book M*, 1664-1668’, in *Early Modern Women’s Manuscript Writing: Selected Papers from the Trent/Trinity Colloquium*, ed. by Victoria E. Burke and Jonathan Gibson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 181-204, (p.182).

¹¹ Ross, ‘Providence and Property’, p.183.

¹² The estate of Highbury, located in modern Islington, was previously owned by Sir Allen Apsley, father of Lucy Hutchinson. Apsley acquired the estate in lieu of payment from the Crown for his role as Victualler of the Navy. Barbara J. Todd, ‘“I do no injury by not loving”. Katherine Austen, A Widow of London’ in *Women and History: Voices of Early Modern England*, ed. by Valerie Frith (Concord, ON: Irwin, 1995), pp. 207-237 (p. 211); Ross, ‘Providence and Property’, p.183.

¹³ Todd notes that Thomas Austen’s family were of a similar social class to Austen’s and that the family were finally elevated to the aristocracy when her grandson was made a baronet. Todd, ‘Katherine Austen’, pp. 209-210. See also Barbara J. Todd, ‘Property and a Woman’s Place in Restoration London’, *Women’s History Review*, 19:2,(2010), 181-200.

¹⁴ Pamela Hammons, ‘Widow, Prophet, and Poet: Lyrical Self-Figurations in Katherine Austen’s *Book M* (1664)’, in *Write or be Written: Early Modern Women Poets and Cultural Constraints*, ed. by Barbara Smith and Ursula Appelt (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2001), pp. 3-25.

tropes and forms within a miscellaneous manuscript to articulate a complex identity which holds in tension disparate and contradictory elements in a manner which authorises her social aspirations, economic agency and poetic voice within culturally prescribed boundaries.¹⁵

Central to Austen's, and my own, discussion is her country house poem, 'On the Situation of Highbury.' Sarah Ross claims it to be the only secular and topographical poem in the manuscript.¹⁶ However, I shall argue that the themes and motifs of country house discourse are visible across the entire manuscript and that the religious content and form of many of the manuscript items comprising 'Book M', have to a large extent obscured the secular aspects of the text.¹⁷ Whilst Austen's projection of herself as a prophet is important in religious, social and literary senses, her use of poetry to express and explore social and economic concerns should not be overlooked.¹⁸ Other poems in the manuscript allude to Austen's property transactions and the importance she attaches to financial security, commercial activity and inheritance. These themes are also evident in the surrounding prose items. I shall argue that the themes of property and its concomitant socio-political authority are refracted through the country house genre into and from all the individual manuscript items.

I shall trace this thematic insistence, regardless of genre or form, arguing that the country house genre proved especially pertinent to Austen, but also more generally to poets of the 1660s. 'On the Situation of Highbury' may be regarded as belonging to a wider generic shift within country house poetry following the Civil

¹⁵ Elizabeth Clarke notes the more general ventriloquizing effect of manuscript which allows for the discussion of female concerns within an apparently patriarchal framework. Clarke, 'Beyond Microhistory', p. 212.

¹⁶ Ross, 'Providence and Property'. p. 191.

¹⁷ Todd, Ross and Raymond Anselment focus primarily on the devotional aspects of the manuscript, whilst this study does not intend to refute these analyses, it seeks to enlarge the reading to incorporate the importance of economic and commercial identities within that of Protestant. See Todd, 'Katherine Austen'; Ross, 'Providence and Property' and Raymond A. Anselment, 'Katherine Austen and the Widow's Might', *The Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 5.1 (2005), 5-25.

¹⁸ Clarke notes that the journals and manuscripts of Anglican and higher class women frequently contain more secular and material details alongside the more conventional devotional items. Clarke, 'Beyond Microhistory', p. 217.

Wars.¹⁹ The Restoration, for Alastair Fowler at least, marked a departure in country house poetry which saw new emphases: on the estate as a 'political or moral microcosm' of national significance or as a site of substantial financial and cultural investment.²⁰ Although country house poetry is typically seen to focus on the stewardship, design and maintenance of the country estate in this period, existing critical commentary allows for few examples of the genre, by either male or female poet, which concentrate primarily on the house as a material object – its ownership, exchange or inheritance – beyond that implicit in the representations of patrilineal and dynastic power structures inherent to the country house genre. However, although still few in number, a proportion of poetry from the 1660s, and by women, depicts the estate as a commodity and explores the problematic ownership of the country house estate following the Civil War and its cycles of destruction, sequestration and restoration.²¹ The country estate was also seen as part of the conscious and unconscious redistributive nature of the Civil War and the move toward economic and social mobility.²² Part of this anxiety may have been prompted by the number of women petitioning for confiscated estates on behalf of their families or themselves.²³ The anxiety provoked by these property exchanges is visible in the Restoration examples of the genre. As I shall argue in chapter three, Hutchinson's 'Elegies' bears the traces of the tensions between property ownership and social mobility, tensions which she negotiates only with some difficulty. Although on the other side of the religio-political divide, for Austen, these anxieties seem equally pressing, if less immediately difficult.

¹⁹ See *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, pp. 1-29 and Smith, *Literature and Revolution*, pp.1-48.

²⁰ *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, pp. 21-29.

²¹ Fowler's anthology includes 17 poems (out of a total of 77) from the period 1660-1685, including Marvell's 'Clarendon's House-Warming', pp. 307-310; Abraham Cowley's 'On the Queen's Repairing Somerset House', pp. 339-341; Thomas Otway's 'Windsor Castle, in a Monument to our late Sovereign, King Charles II...', pp. 383-386, and Edmund Waller's 'On St James's Park, As lately Improved by His Majesty', pp. 187-192.

²² Smith notes an association during the 1650s of the excesses of Protectorate policies with property, greed and religious intolerance. Smith, *Literature and Revolution*, p. 69; p. 139. See also Hammons, 'Widow, Prophet, and Poet', p.15.

²³ Hobby, *Virtue of Necessity*, p. 14.

Katherine Austen: agent of property

Austen was an agent of property in all senses: she managed numerous estates, including twelve new houses she had built near Covent Garden as an investment. In addition to the case relating to the estate at Highbury, Austen was in litigation with her sister-in-law over the title to an inn, the Red Lion on Fleet Street, and was also an investor in the East India Company to which she had family links.²⁴ Austen was, therefore, not only concerned with the protection of her family home, or the inheritance of her sons and daughter, but her own investments and financial security beyond the immediate domestic arena.²⁵ However, Austen was also a pious Anglican, loyal Royalist, respectable widow and she aspired to join the increasing ranks of the gentry.²⁶ Through the texts of 'Book M', both individually and in combination, Austen integrates these multiple positions in a way which suggests that rather than being in conflict, these polarities were merely component parts of a larger and multi-faceted identity.

These pluralities are visible throughout 'Book M' and meet at the central country house poem which provides a textual negotiation of these apparent discontinuities within Austen's identity. Although its opening lines may declare a lack of reader, Austen's text is neither private nor transparent.²⁷ She writes:

Whoso euer shal look in these papers and shal take notice of these personal occurrences: wil easily discerne it concerned none but my self: and was a private exercise directed to my self. The singularity of these Conceptions doth not aduantaige any (fol. 4^v).

This opening statement simultaneously articulates the presence of a potential reader and clarifies Austen's literary ambitions which form an integral part of her social and political identity.²⁸ Nigel Smith explains the importance of manuscript for royalist communities as two-fold: the need to distance oneself from the 'scurrility' of print and the reinforcement of overlapping political, religious and social networks through literary circulation. Austen's self-presentation expresses an acknowledgement of

²⁴ Todd, 'Katherine Austen', p. 211. Ross, 'Providence and property', p. 182.

²⁵ Todd, 'Property and a Woman's Place'.

²⁶ Todd, 'Katherine Austen' and Ross, 'Providence and Property.'

²⁷ Hammons, *Poetic Resistance*, p. 4.

²⁸ Smith, *Literature and Revolution*, pp. 28-31.

cultural anxieties and gender constraints and Austen's own attempts at outlining a social and economic position not necessarily in accord with her actual circumstances. As Hammons explains, 'Book M' functions as a 'refutation of her culture's pervasive stereotyping of widows and as a deflection of attention away from her economic and social ambitions.'²⁹ This dual expression of self is prompted by several things: partially by the frustrations of the legal system and by the ambivalent figure of the widow – a precarious yet dangerously active role – one which is anomalous culturally yet often economically advantageous. Widows had used poetry to explore this ambiguous position before. Several years before Austen was writing, Martha Moulsworth wrote following the death of her third husband:

But in the Meane Tyme this msut be my care
of knittinge here a fourth knott to beware
A threefold cord though hardlie yett is broken
Another Auncient storie doth betoken
thatt seldome comes A Better; whie should I
Then putt my Widowehodd in jepopardy?
The Virgins life is gold, as Clarks us tell
The widows silvar, I love silvar well.³⁰

As Austen's mother had shown, widowhood could be difficult but also a rare moment of female agency.

Throughout the early modern period married women had restricted legal rights under the legal concept of coverture. This legal disability, judicially, socially and religiously sanctioned, positioned women in the relation to their husband as servant to master, or child to parent.³¹ Furthermore, as a *feme covert*, a married woman was regarded in the same terms as various subordinate categories:

Men out of the realm, or in prison, [...] infants, [...] ideots out of their right mind, or without al understanding, as those that are borne dumb, deafe, and blind, or having other imperfections.³²

²⁹ Hammons, 'Widow, Prophet and Poet', p.8.

³⁰ Martha Moulsworth, 'The Memorandum of Martha Moulsworth Widdowe', in *Early Modern Women Poets*, pp. 127-129, lines 101-109.

³¹ Jordan, *Renaissance Feminism*, p. 4; Tim Stretton, 'Women, Property and the Law', in *A companion to Early Modern Women's Writing*, ed. by Anita Pacheco (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), pp. 40-57.

³² Sir Henry Finch, *Lavv: Or, a Discourse Thereof in Foure Books: Written in French by Sir Henry Finch Knight, His Maiesties Serieant at Lavv. and done into English by the Same Author* (London: Miles Flesher for John More, 1636), p. 26.

The status of *feme covert* precluded her owning, inheriting or contracting a will in her own right.³³ All money and property transferred to the husband on marriage, making it an important form of financial gain for men.³⁴ Mary More, writing ostensibly to her daughter, was at pains to caution women against this aspect of marriage. She writes:

And here I cannot but take notice of ye practice of men in our time, who make it their business to raise themselves by estates with Wives. [...] And sure our Laws are cruel to Women in this case [...] it being lawfull in England for a girle of 12 years of age to marry, thereby giving her husband all her estates, it being very considerable, none can believe any one marrys that child but for her estate, nor can any Reason be given for that Law, but to empower ye Man and enslave the Woman.³⁵

Although for women, moveable property was lost permanently, real property, such as leases, were recoverable if the husband had not lost or disposed of them in his lifetime.³⁶ Freehold or copyhold property was held by the husband who could use any profits for the duration of a marriage; he could not, however, dispose of these without his wife's consent.³⁷ This applied equally to property brought into the marriage by the wife or inherited during the marriage.

A spinster's position was more favourable; as *feme sole*, she could own, inherit and exchange property in her own right.³⁸ Her economic wellbeing was related to the money provided for her portion or dowry either directly or through inheritance. Widows also had a more advantageous legal position than wives, regaining their status as *feme sole* on the death of a husband. Contemporary commentators, like Moulsworth, noted this new found authority of the widow:

³³ The medieval period allowed wives' wills in line with Roman civil law on which ecclesiastical law was based. Of the wills made by women, constituting roughly 20-25% of all wills in the period, 1650-1750, roughly 80% were made by widows. Erickson, *Women and Property*, p.139-204. See also G. Meriton, *The Touchstone of Wills, Testaments and Administrations* (1668), p. 44.

³⁴ Greenberg, 'The Legal Status of the English Woman', p. 172 and Clay, 'Rise of Large Estates', pp. 503-4.

³⁵ M. More, 'The Woman's Right', in *The Patriarch's Wife: Literary Evidence and the History of the Family*, ed. by M. Ezell (Chapel Hill, University of Carolina Press, 1987), p.198. Erickson notes that this text was circulated privately in the 1670s. Erickson, *Women and Property*.

³⁶ Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England*, p.24; Greenberg, 'The Legal Status of the English Woman in Early Eighteenth Century Common Law and Equity', p. 174; Finch, *Lavv*, p. 42.

³⁷ Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England*, p. 25.

³⁸ Greenberg, 'The Legal Status of the English Woman', p. 175. See also Amy Froide, *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Why mourne you so, you that be widdowes? Consider how long you have been in subjection under the predominance of parents, of your husbands, now you may be free in liberties, and free *proprii iuris* at your owne law.³⁹

However, the disposal of the husband's estate via probate or intestacy law meant that this return to legal rights was not necessarily accompanied by financial security. In reality, many widows were poor and lived in much reduced circumstances, since the provision of dower, even in the more equitable ecclesiastical or manorial courts, was meant to be for subsistence rather than financial independence.⁴⁰

These theoretical disabilities in law, however, did not necessarily accord with the reality.⁴¹ There existed several legal and customary loopholes or arrangements available to protect women's rights and economic status in marriage and widowhood.⁴² Just as primogeniture does not reflect the reality of inheritance practices, coverture is, likewise, an inadequate description of marital property relations. Many contemporary commentators responded to the legal status of women in less polarised terms. More articulates the blend of rights and responsibilities within marriage, arguing for a more equitable but not equal status for women, one where actions and affairs are ordered 'to ye utmost of our Power and Skill, to tend to ye Comfort and good liking of both' (p. 193). Similarly, William Perkins and Jeremy Taylor both make clear that women have right to an, albeit limited, financial agency and entitlement with regard to property. Perkins in *Christian Oeconomie, or Household Government* (1609) argues:

There are some things which are proper to her selfe, and not part of her dowry which she brought unto her husband. And these she may claime as her owne, because either they were reserved upon the match made betweene them, or else are peculiar unto her by their mutual consent, and of them she may lawfully giue, without her husbands knowledge.⁴³

Similarly, Taylor stresses the mutual ownership of property, although he does reserve the right of disposal for the male partner:

³⁹ T.E. *The Lawes Resolutions of Women's Rights* (London, 1632) p.232.

⁴⁰ Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England*, p. 155.

⁴¹ Greenberg, 'The Legal Status of the English Woman', p. 171; Susan Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property*, p. 253.

⁴² Clay, 'Rise of Large Estates', pp. 503-518. Compare Greenberg's more negative analysis regarding women's property rights.

⁴³ William Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie, or Household Government* (1609), p.175.

So are the riches of a family, they are a woman's as well as a man's; they are hers for her need, and hers for ornament, and hers for modest delight, and for the uses of religion and prudent charity.⁴⁴

On a more practical level, the prevalence of early modern marriage settlements qualifies any simple idea of women's legal annihilation within marriage.⁴⁵ Probate documents of the period give a clear picture of women's financial management and role as executrices in the year following the death of their spouse. This stands in contrast to the passivity required of them both in their role as *feme covert* and in society generally.

The right to inherit and dispose of property, real and moveable, was complex for all women. Daughters rarely inherited real property if sons were alive and if they did so it was usually a smaller amount.⁴⁶ However, when no male heir existed, many daughters did inherit in line with the canons of descent laid out by common law, rather than the estate transferring to a collateral male heir. Female inheritance was customarily composed of moveables or money for the portion rather than of land or leases. The relatively close value of land and moveables until the mid-eighteenth century meant that this was not necessarily an inequitable arrangement.⁴⁷ Austen and her two younger sisters inherited money rather than property from their mother's estate. Indeed, Austen regards it as a significant sum which provides the basis for her increasing wealth and property portfolio:

Blessed Alderman (Highlord) How doe I revere thy memory who wast the foundation in great part of my second and later fortune. (My own fathers being the happy instrument to raise me to my marriage without other assistance) (fol. 79^v).

Despite the manuscript's concern with her financial troubles and the potential loss of Highbury through litigation, Austen is clearly wealthy and in a position to lend others

⁴⁴ Jeremy Taylor, *Eniautos, a course of sermons for all the Sundaies of the year* (1653), p. 230.

⁴⁵ See: T. Smith, *De Republica Anglorum* (1583), p.105 and Perkins, *Christian Oeconomie* p. 175.

⁴⁶ Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England*, p.61; S. M. Okin, 'Patriarchy and Married Woman's Property in England; Questions on Some Current Views', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 17(2): 1983/4: p. 127. However, this was not always the case. Jane Barker seems to have inherited the family estate at Wilsthorpe despite the fact that her younger brother was alive and living with his family in London. Kathryn King and J. Medoff, 'Jane Barker and Her Life (1652-1732): The Documentary Record', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 21(3): November 1997: p. 16-38.

⁴⁷ Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England*, pp.63; 65-66.

money.⁴⁸ Indeed, the manuscript as a whole exhibits frequent slippages between the positions of conventional modesty and social and economic ambition.

Although frequently the main beneficiary of a man's will, widows did not automatically inherit the entirety of their husband's estate. Wives were entitled to dower, commonly one third of the estate.⁴⁹ In comparison, the widower was entitled to the use of all of his wife's property during his lifetime. The legal position of women was further complicated by the range of jurisdictions available in the early modern period and by a process of rationalisation from the Reformation onwards.⁵⁰ This rationalisation of the legal system during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries removed the restriction to one third. Yet, in practice, this removed the right to one third for many women.⁵¹ Common law was, for women, the harshest jurisdiction enforcing male rights and ensuring primogeniture. Despite the otherwise stringent constraints on women's property interests inherent in common law, it is important to note that it theoretically preferred a lineal female heir, to a male collateral heir. However, as Christopher Clay highlights, many wealthy families used strict settlements to entail away estates to younger sons or collateral heirs to preserve the family name and estate intact.⁵² In contrast to ecclesiastical and equity courts, common law and manorial jurisdictions primarily ensured the rights of the male heir.

In 1665 Austen considered remarriage to Callendar.⁵³ Although Barbara Todd conjectures that, regardless of Callendar's death of the plague in October 1665, Austen had already decided to reject this offer of marriage.⁵⁴ Like many widows, Austen carefully weighs the financial and the social benefits of remarriage; she compares her mother's positive experience with social disapproval and clear financial

⁴⁸ Austen discusses a bad loan made to Mr C. at Fol. 52^r-53^r.

⁴⁹ Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property*, p. 27-55.

⁵⁰ Aylmer, 'Meaning and Definition of "Property"', p. 87. Greenberg sees these jurisdictions as complementary rather than in conflict, a position which opposes that of Erickson and Staves.

⁵¹ Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England*, p.170. In contrast, Greenberg fails to make this distinction, 'Legal Status of the English Woman', p.174.

⁵² Clay, 'Rise of Large Estates', p. 504. See also Mary Murray, 'Primogeniture, Patrilineage, and the Displacement of Women', in, *Women, Property and the Letters of the Law in Early Modern England*, ed. by Wright et al (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), pp. 126-7. The case of Anne Clifford in the early seventeenth century exemplifies this practice.

⁵³ Anselment, 'Katherine Austen', p. 12.

⁵⁴ Todd, 'Katherine Austen', p. 210.

risks. As with her shifts between modesty and ambition elsewhere in the manuscript, Austen treads carefully here. Austen is acutely aware of her regained autonomy yet is careful to mitigate this through her use of conventional devotional and conduct items. She writes: 'Perhaps I might change my condition after I have answered some designs' but quickly adds that 'Neither is it riches I want [...] 'Tis a person whose soule and heart may be fit.' She concludes: 'A rich woman must not marry with a person of meane fortune' (fol. 50^r). Elsewhere she is clearer still:

If I could have a fortune [that] would entice a person of honour, yet I am not so in love with it [as] to be ready to part with [a fortune] and know for what extravagance it was sold (fol. 49^r).

However, for Austen it is not just a case of loss of personal wealth or legal rights; the question of inheritance seems paramount. She sees herself not just as a conduit for patrilineal inheritance, something remarriage may subvert, but an important part of the chain in her own right. Writing to her younger son Robert, she outlines her own role:

We do receive [a great deal] by a reverend memorial and respectful regard. And you are to look back to the springs of your fortune. And though they have glided by your worthy father and grandfather Austen, yet for as much as your estate came particularly from my portion from my good father, your grandfather Robert Wilson, and my unparalleled father in law [step-father] Alderman Highlord 'tis fit you pay homage to their memory and merit (fol. 93^r).

In this, Austen proffers an alternative form of female dynasty, one based on property rather than just genetic inheritance or the teaching of virtue. Although she could have used a marriage settlement to safeguard her existing estate for her children in line with contemporary practices, Austen feels the improvement of the estate to be one of her key roles as mother and widow. She writes:

When I deduct the Legacy my Dear mother left me ... I have added to our estate by Gods great blesing upon me these seaven yeares of my widdowhood such another estate as was left to me and my children And if we inherit Highbury is as much as any one of those two parts (fol. 105^r).

She, therefore, decides to 'not give credit to [Callendar's] words' (fol. 95^r). Remarriage would risk both a loss of control over the family's business ventures and the inheritance of the estate by her children.

Austen also responds to the social disapproval of remarriage of widows.⁵⁵ This was pervasive and bolstered by conduct literature and religious writings, most notably those of St Paul, who writes in praise of widowhood over remarriage: '[h]onour the widows that are widows indeed.' (1 Tim. 5. 3). However, the widow was a highly ambivalent figure, both vulnerable and due a certain veneration and yet capable of provoking widespread cultural anxiety. Both Pauline doctrine and contemporary texts note this ambiguity. St Paul's letter to Timothy continues:

But the younger widows refuse [to remain widows]: for when they have begun to wax wanton against Christ, they will marry (1 Tim. 5. 11).

Austen herself asks that she may 'early see at what all [Callendar's] addresses and winning flattering discourses tend to' and that God may intercede:

Shield me as with a garment, and give [her] a cautious prudence to behave and acquit myself that I may not do a dishonourable folly to sully and disparage the fair prosperities of my life(fol. 90').

Here Austen sums up the complicated rules of widowhood, the need to appear sexually virtuous and socially decorous whilst maintaining control.⁵⁶ For contemporary commentators, theological, secular and literary, the perceived threat posed by the widow was not only sexual but also socio-political.⁵⁷ Although technically the unmarried woman held a similar autonomous position within society, permitted and frequently displaying financial and commercial acumen through investment, loans and domestic management, it is the widow who provokes the most anxiety. This anxiety, however, bears little relation to social or legal reality. Widows had much to lose from marrying and were probably only willing to do so if left penniless by the conditions of a husband's will or the stringent application of intestacy law.⁵⁸ Austen makes clear that, as a widow, she must also make provision for her own security and happiness:

I wish I may rightly understand of things and consider my condition may be happy if I will help to make it so. For surely I must put in my helping hand, as God will not aid me with his (fol. 40').

⁵⁵ Todd notes not only a general disapproval of remarriage but also a drop in the rate of remarriage. Barbara J. Todd, 'The remarrying widow: a stereotype reconsidered', in *Women in English Society 1500-1800*, ed. by Mary Prior (London and New York: Routledge, 1985), p. 54-92 (pp. 56-72; p. 80).

⁵⁶ Anselment, 'Katherine Austen', p.6.

⁵⁷ Hammons, 'Widow, prophet and poet', p.8 and Anselment, 'Katherine Austen', pp. 5-6.

⁵⁸ Anselment, 'Katherine Austen', p.13.

The widow in Austen's eyes was open not only to moral danger but also in danger of losing the little financial security and property interests she may have accrued from her husband's will and separate arrangements prior to marriage.

Austen writes at length on her concerns over the limited autonomy of widows vis-à-vis property and the additional burdens this presented to both herself and her mother. Here, she takes a typically doubled and ambiguous position. Adopting the posture of the conventional and pious vulnerable widow, she simultaneously complains of the legal and political difficulties placed on women and yet hints at her own business acumen and activity. She writes:

How was my own mother's strong nature worn out by too much stirring and walking, and the many cares and businesses which a great family gave occasion to her [...] Dear mother, thou hadst a great estate and a great burden too (fol. 51').

Her mother's inheritance appears substantial yet problematic within the cultural constraints imposed on women. Austen also indicates the particular problems of the Civil War and Restoration periods and a cultural anxiety regarding property and the concomitant shift towards common law favouring patrilineal forms of inheritance. She compares her mother's and her own experience of widowhood with that of previous generations:

I observe what a long and healthy age my grandmother Rudd lived (above 80) and Mr Smith of Aldermanbury, 90, and parson Wilson about 80... I attribute the chief part of their long life to the quiet of their minds, never engaged in anything [that] disquieted or disordered that peace within them (fol. 51').

These cultural anxieties combined with personal circumstance are visible in Austen's appropriation of country house discourse more widely in the manuscript and in the specific generic innovations in 'On the Situation of Highbury.'

'Book M': the manuscript

Katherine Austen wrote her manuscript between 1664 and 1666; although there is evidence that she continued to revise it until 1682.⁵⁹ The extent of these revisions is debatable, however. There is one item dated 1682, yet throughout there is no mention of her properties in Covent Garden or Fleet Street, following the fire of 1666. Contemporary maps from 1667 indicate that Fleet Street was largely destroyed by fire. Given Austen's detailed account of her property portfolio throughout the manuscript, this would appear a significant gap.⁶⁰ I would suggest that these matters were probably dealt with in one of the other lettered notebooks to which she alludes. The addition of the item from 1682 can, then, be regarded as an exceptional amendment, rather than marking the full range of Austen's literary output.⁶¹

Although 'Book M' is frequently referred to as a commonplace book, I shall for the purposes of this discussion use the term manuscript miscellany. In the strictest terms, Austen's manuscript cannot be categorised as a commonplace book, since it is not primarily a book of transcribed verse and prose but rather a collection largely of her own composition.⁶² However, the diverse nature and organising principles of commonplace books are apparent in 'Book M' and are an important aspect for any analysis. The use and juxtaposition of diverse poetry and prose items, combined with the manuscript feature of possible revision allows Austen to create a multiple voiced and complex text which is both potent and fluid.⁶³ This flexibility inherent in diversity of form and textual revision, provides Austen the opportunity to hold in fruitful tension several positions: that of vulnerable widow and agent of property, that of decorous

⁵⁹ Hammons, 'Country-House Innovations', p.123 and Todd, 'Katherine Austen', p. 207. However, Ross claims the primary writing period extended to 1668. Ross, 'Providence and Property'.

⁶⁰ *Leake's Survey of the city after the great Fire of 1666*, engr by W. Hollar (1667).

⁶¹ Todd, 'Katherine Austen', pp. 207-209.

⁶² There is one copied poem, 'Out of a poeme of Doc. Corbets: to his friend when she might be a widow', fol. 71^v (possibly misattributed); detailed references to Jeremy Taylor's 'Of Contentedness', fols. 36^r-38^r and a sermon on the Last Judgement, fols. 30^r-31^r; an account based on Izaak Walton's *The Life of Dr John Donne* and *The Life of Sir Henry Wotton*, fols. 11^r-12^r; a meditation drawn from Thomas Fuller's *The Holy State*; and a sermon presented mostly verbatim by Daniel Featley, fols. 17^r-20^r.

⁶³ Alison Shell notes that many women's manuscripts were mutilated as a form of revision. Alison Shell, "'Often to my self I make my mone': Early Modern Women's Poetry from the Feilding Family", in *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Writing: Selected papers from the Trinity/Trent Colloquium*, ed. by Victoria E. Burke and Jonathan Gibson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp.259-278 (p.269).

member of the gentry and social climber, and finally that of recipient and bequeather of property, both real and textual.

The value of commonplace books per se, and the miscellaneous single-authored verse manuscripts which in many ways resemble them, is in the potential insight offered into the reading, writing and critical practices of the writer or compositor.⁶⁴ It is not only the content which is important, but the use of poetic form or prose genre, the revisions evident in others' and the writer's own work, and the order and layout of the individual items within the larger document. The ordering of items can provide a comment on preceding items and thus a narrative of the self. The commonplace book was used as a pedagogic tool during the entire early modern period, for its ability to teach a method of recognising, acquiring and organising socially prescribed sentiments and knowledge.⁶⁵ These were arranged thematically when used in an educational context. However, Austen, like many of her adult contemporaries, arranges her individual manuscript items along occasional or autobiographical lines. The manuscript is a highly occasional text: each item, whether prose or verse, meditation or autobiographical detail, is marked as proceeding from an occasion, event or particular context. Occasional lyric poetry, more generally, is seen by Wendy Wall as produced through channels of exchange rather than through the force of a seemingly autonomous creative energy.⁶⁶ In this way, Austen provides the reader with a running contextual guide to the impetus behind the texts and a commentary on her experiences.

Austen was also part of the key demographic for commonplace books, both the manuscript and printed forms, in this period and shows an awareness of these literary practices.⁶⁷ She also had access to the reading and copying practices of Oxford and the Inns of Court, through her husband and later her son.⁶⁸ She was, moreover, part of the

⁶⁴ Victoria E. Burke, 'Anne Bowyer's Commonplace Book (Bodleian Library Ashmole MS 51): Reading and Writing Among the "Middling Sort"', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 6.3 (2001), 1.1-28, pp. 1-5.

⁶⁵ Burke, 'Anne Bowyer's Commonplace Book', pp.6; 12.

⁶⁶ Wendy Wall, *The Imprint of Gender: Authorship and Publication in the English Renaissance* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), p.36.

⁶⁷ Burke, 'Anne Bowyer's Commonplace Book', p 7; Hammons, 'Widow, Prophet and Poet', p.6 and Marotti, 'Social History of the Lyric', pp.70-71.

⁶⁸ Ross, 'Providence and Property', p.188-190 and Marotti, 'Social History of the Lyric', p.57-61.

potential audience for the print versions of such commonplace books which appeared at mid-century – that is urban, wealthy and of mercantile or middling class.⁶⁹ However, it should be noted that Austen's text does not overtly participate in what Arthur Marotti refers to as 'an ongoing social discourse': it is not part of a cycle of reading, writing and revision in the manner of a conventional literary manuscript forming the output of a literary coterie.⁷⁰ 'Book M' does not engage directly with the texts of others as commonplace books do, but rather interrogates wider social, economic and political concerns.⁷¹ Although, Hammons notes that 'Austen's commonplace book [is] prefaced with qualifying remarks specifying its personal, private nature, [and it] seems the epitome of an asocial document', it is clear that 'social concerns are central to these works, and the composition of lyrics is instrumental to the negotiation of those concerns.'⁷² These social concerns include her economic identity as a primary and integral component.

Manuscripts must also be considered as important items of property in their own right, to own, will and exchange with others through circulation and inheritance.⁷³ As Victoria E. Burke and Jonathan Gibson note, many manuscripts form part of an open ended cycle of production across personal, geographic and generational boundaries.⁷⁴ It may, then, be pertinent to consider Austen's text as part of her wider property portfolio which she intends to bequeath to her children and subsequent generations. Indeed, many of the items constitute conduct advice for and letters to her children. This phenomenon was not unusual during this period with many women regarding their texts, both manuscript and print forms, as a bequest. Dorothy Leigh entitles her

⁶⁹ Burke, 'Anne Bowyer's Commonplace Book', p.4-12.

⁷⁰ Arthur Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), p.135.

⁷¹ For a wider discussion of this social element of women's lyric in non-coterie contexts see Hammons, *Poetic Resistance*. More widely, Smith asserts that all early modern texts '[express] part of a national and a social identity [and...] constitute a dynamic play of power relationships.' Smith, *Literature and Revolution*, p. 5.

⁷² Hammons, *Poetic Resistance*, p. 6 and Marotti, 'Social History of the Lyric', p. 55.

⁷³ Compare Marotti, 'Social History of the Lyric', p. 69.

⁷⁴ Victoria E. Burke and Jonathan Gibson, 'Introduction', in *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Writing: Selected papers from the Trinity/Trent Colloquium*, ed. by Victoria E. Burke and Jonathan Gibson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 1-7, (pp.2-3). For example MS Osborn c. 55, the commonplace book of the Dighton family of Gloucestershire, running from c.1729-1856 and compiled by various family members, including several women.

1616 publication in just such terms: *The Mothers Blessing. Or the godly counsaile of a gentle woman... left behind for her Children..., profitable for all parents to leave as a legacy to their Children.*⁷⁵

The individual items of 'Book M' are formally heterogeneous but can usefully be read as a composite text: one which is at once contradictory yet nevertheless addresses similar concerns across its generic boundaries. In this it echoes Austen's own identity which is multiple yet coherent. This is in part due to its miscellaneous and domestic nature and its lengthy and piecemeal production contexts. It also reflects the shifting and conflicted contexts of the 1660s, for the population as a whole, for women and on a very immediate level for Austen herself. Indeed, it might be argued that Austen specifically uses a composite and heterogeneous means of composition to negotiate these shifting circumstances and to locate herself carefully. This results in a piecemeal text between whose component parts there is both a thematic insistence and formal interplay.⁷⁶

'On the Situation of Highbury'

'On the Situation of Highbury' is a short sixteen line poem located towards the end of the manuscript (fol. 104^r). It was written in 1665. It is also the only topographical poem in the collection and is identified by most commentators as a country house poem. Hammons suggests that Austen selects the genre of country house poetry to validate her poetic voice and bolster her self-figuration as a socially mobile member of the mercantile class in transition to the gentry.⁷⁷ There are further reasons for Austen's decision to include a topographical poem within a composite document which, on the surface at least, is preoccupied with devotional and domestic matters.

⁷⁵ Dorothy Leigh, *The Mother's Blessing* (1616). See also Lucy Hutchinson *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson*, ed. by N. H. Keeble (London: Phoenix, 1995).

⁷⁶ For Smith, generic heterogeneity is a common characteristic of the mid seventeenth century. Although Smith describes a powerful mutual influence between different discourses of the period, based on the disruptions of civil unrest, the formal and discursive interplay within Austen's text is particularly forceful and related to personal and social disturbances. Smith, *Literature and Revolution*, pp. 10; 5; 56.

⁷⁷ Hammons, 'Country-House Innovations', pp. 123-136.

However, the content of the wider manuscript does not necessarily contradict the generic concerns of 'On the Situation of Highbury.' Instead, the themes of property are reiterated in the surrounding items, albeit with a focus on the estate as a commodity, necessary for social mobility and political power. The literary decisions surrounding the poem are revealing: in what they show of the contexts and circumstances of composition, about the themes and forms of the rest of the manuscript items and about Austen herself. This poem, rather than being a formal and thematic anomaly, is, in fact, an integral and influential item within the larger text and should be read in tandem with other items.

The poem belongs to a phase of the country house genre identified by Fowler as one characterised both by a focus on the estate as a site of contemplation and by a shift of emphasis from the depiction of an idealised socio-political economy based on feudal models to the prescription of a microcosm allowing for nascent capitalism and colonialism. This newly drawn social and political order was based much more on the ownership of property and financial and commercial activity than had previously been the case.⁷⁸ The shift towards social and political authority based on property ownership and wealth rather than aristocratic pedigree resulted in two conflicting positions: the rise of a mercantile class which could access power through their increasing wealth and property portfolios, and the rise of the large scale and grandly designed estates of the aristocracy. These grand estates were funded by nascent capitalism, yet designed to retain class differentials.⁷⁹ As a result, the main concerns of country house discourse – property, propriety and power remain pertinent despite the move away from older, traditional models of political power, social organisation and economic modes of production. The country house was now often defined more in terms of commodity and exchange rather than stewardship and dynasty.

Alongside the genre's new focus on property ownership, it also responded to the wider cultural anxieties about the estate as something liable to improper

⁷⁸ *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler p. 21.

⁷⁹ Wilson and Mackley, *Building of the English Country House*.

ownership or confiscation.⁸⁰ Waller articulates this anxiety in 'Upon Her Majesty's New Buildings at Somerset House':

While peace from hence, and you were gone,
Your houses in that storm o'erthrown,
Those wounds which civil rage did give,
At once you pardon, and relieve.
Constant to England in your love,
As birds as to their nests are spoiled,
There, the next spring, again they build.⁸¹

Alongside Waller, Mildmay Fane and Cavendish also engage with the genre to articulate this anxiety about correct property relations.⁸² Cavendish's 'A Dialogue between a Bountiful Knight and a Castle Ruined in War' is clear: 'By wars I'm now destroyed, all right's o'erpowered: / Beauty and innocency are devoured.'⁸³ For the Castle speaking here, the destruction is wrought by the loss of its owner and its confiscation by troops. Referring to the Newcastle estate at Bolsover, the poem describes the destruction of the castle which after sequestration was sold. The estate only returned to the family when it was bought by Cavendish's brother-in-law.⁸⁴ 'On the Situation of Highbury' does not directly engage in the discussion of property taken during the conflict and following Interregnum, but it does reflect a wider cultural concern for property to be returned or retained by rightful owners as part of a restored socio-political order.⁸⁵ In Austen's terms, these properties are 'hazard' (fol. 72^v).

Austen's use of the genre is, however, selective and innovative. She retains some of the central concerns and *topoi* to make it recognisably a country house poem. She also makes significant changes, in ways both similar to her contemporaries and due to her own particular circumstances and beliefs. The poem at sixteen lines is

⁸⁰ Austen, fol.67^v and Hammons, 'Widow, prophet, and Poet', p. 15.

⁸¹ Edmund Waller in *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler pp. 197-199.

⁸² See Mildmay Fane's 'A Happy Life', 'To the Countess of Rutland, upon Her New Re-edifying of Belvoir after It Had been Ruined by the Late Civil War', and Margaret Cavendish's 'A Dialogue between a Bountiful Knight and a Castle Ruined in a War' and 'Nature's House' in *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler pp.223; 255-257; 315-318.

⁸³ Margaret Cavendish, 'A Dialogue between a Bountiful Knight and a Castle Ruined in War', in *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, pp. 315-316, lines, 17-18.

⁸⁴ *The Country House Poem*, ed. Fowler, p. 317.

⁸⁵ Hammons, 'Country House Innovations', p.124.

significantly shorter than many examples of country house poetry. This may be in part due to the location of the poem within a larger text; it need not expound at such length since it is textually supported by the other pieces. Austen uses a mixture of juxtaposition, formal influence and thematic reiteration to embed the shorter poem within the manuscript and thus present a carefully and coherently constructed articulation of an actual and aspirant socio-economic identity. The mutually informing dynamic of the manuscript allows the reader to discern the proximity of domestic accounts, prophecy and meditation in this poem. It is also possible to see the themes of the country house genre in the devotional, conduct and prophetic items.

The poem remains, however, recognisably a depiction of an idealised county estate which is productive, ordered and, most importantly, able to inspire poetry. Furthermore, it privileges a description of a natural environment at Highbury. Yet, all these elements of country house genre are to some extent adapted and complicated by Austen. This is a landscape where the country estate is valued for its potential profit rather than its historical significance, its ownership is privileged over its maintenance and design and where there is no social hierarchy on show. In addition, this is a landscape where neither patron nor dependent poet is clearly visible. As poet and owner, Austen is both subject and object of this country house poem.

The poem comprises two parts, the first a depiction of the estate and, the second, an exploration of Austen's role as poet with Highbury as her muse. Here she claims her verse to be 'Unpolished Lines' and her faculties denuded: 'My muddy braine and Misty Eyes.' However, in invoking Highbury as a source of poetic inspiration, Austen uses the economic, social and artistic value of the estate to elevate herself 'on [to] this bright Hill.' Although, all country house poetry does to some extent ascribe value to the poet both by association and through the patronage networks surrounding the genre, Austen's claims are somewhat different. The value lies neither in the aristocratic pedigree of the owner nor in the relationship of the patron and aspiring poet, nor again in the social order of Highbury.⁸⁶ Instead, the merit of the estate is located in Austen's own, albeit tentative, relationship to the estate.

⁸⁶ Hammons, 'Country House Innovations', p. 126.

As part of this personal and economic relationship Austen rejects the hospitality motif, so common to the earlier examples of the genre. Certainly, this reflects a much wider shift away from hospitality as something inherent to a feudal based social economy: as the seventeenth century progressed, the lack of hospitality within the genre becomes more pronounced as it becomes culturally less relevant.⁸⁷ However, the lack of hospitality is also pertinent to Austen's own situation. Firstly, she is simultaneously owner and poet at Highbury. This country house has no guests. Although the dating of the poem is difficult, it appears in the manuscript at a point which suggests the leasehold had been secured. This means that Austen could consider herself the owner of Highbury. Secondly, she is not a member of the aristocracy but rather has aspirations to rise to the gentry, to secure an inheritance for her children and to live a financially secure widowhood. She, therefore, has no need to validate her social position through displays of hospitality. Thirdly, despite the importance of property to Austen visible at virtually every point of the manuscript, there appears to be no importance attached to these properties as family homes. Crucially, we never see inside any of Austen's properties. They are investments and not domestic spaces. At no point throughout the manuscript does Austen mention any of her properties as anything other than an object to exchange or bequeath.

The implication is that property is for short and long-term profit, to protect her in her widowhood, to enable her to continue an 'active public life' and to increase the inheritance available for her children (fol. 105^v).⁸⁸ Notably, however, Highbury is part of an inheritance to which Austen intends personally to add:

When I deduct the legacy my dear mother left me (at her decease) and sever it from my husband's estate, I have added to our estate by God's great blessing upon me these seven years of my widowhood such another estate as was left to me and my children...I do reckon our estate is 3 parts;
First what my husband left
2nd what by God's extraordinary blessing added
3rd that long expectation the discourse of many, the interruption of more [i.e. Highbury and other inherited properties] (fol. 105^r).

⁸⁷ *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, pp. 1-29.

⁸⁸ Austen, fol. 105^v.

In this way she articulates an alternative country house dynasty based not on aristocratic lineage but on economic value.

Austen retains the conventional generic distinction between dwelling and ownership which defines the socio-political models seen in Jonson's 'To Penshurst' and Carew's 'To My Friend G.N. from Wrest'. Austen's Highbury is clearly an 'abode' which '[a]ffordes the dweller pleasure.' However, in contrast to these early seventeenth century examples, she does not maintain the emphasis on aristocratic stewardship of a country estate which the word 'dwelling' implies. Instead, this distinction, introduced in the opening lines, is belied by the economic diction of the poem which can also be seen in surrounding manuscript items.⁸⁹ Thus, the estate is described as having 'a boutious load' which will '[p]roduce rich Burthens' sitting within 'fat vallies.' This implies that, for Austen, the estate at Highbury is to be considered firstly as a source of profit and secondly as a key component of her portfolio of investments which will, in time, be bequeathed to her children.

This 'fertile' estate is therefore discussed for its economic value and its potential for profit both here and throughout the manuscript.⁹⁰ In another item, 'On that day Highbury came out of lease, Michaelmas: 1665', the estate is described as 'those pleasant fields of a fair inheritance', echoed in the poem by Austen's use of 'fairly Mounted', 'this fair Hill' and 'pleasure' (fol. 103^v). Although the poem retains the sense of the leisure and pleasure to be had from the country house, Austen does not emphasise this in a conventional manner. The sense of financial value is further emphasised by Austen's equation of the estate to a landscape painting. It is a view which 'Nature did resolve to frame delight' and which as poet, she attempts 'to paint.' The status of Highbury as landscape art simultaneously commodifies it and ascribes it a value. Although she replaces 'rare' with 'sweet' in line three, the idea of value derived from scarcity remains. This is extended by her appropriation of the country house genre which validates not just her as owner but the estate itself.⁹¹ Furthermore, this profit is 'without Toile' and 'full of Joy.' Whilst the typical country house poem is

⁸⁹ For example, Austen includes accounts and discussions of the profitability of the properties in Covent Garden. See Austen, fols. 99^v-100^r and fol.

⁹⁰ Austen, fol. 51^v; fol. 48^r; fol. 61^r-61^v.

⁹¹ Hammons, 'Country House Innovations', pp. 130; 123.

characterised by a beneficent nature which gives up its produce willingly, there is usually an intimation of georgic activity. Austen includes no natural produce in her description, nor does she depict the flora or fauna of Highbury. Instead, Austen converts the *sponte sua* motif into economic discourse. At Highbury the work is not agrarian, but commercial in nature. It is also, importantly, Austen's own work. Her agency is on several axes here: in pursuing the legal suit for Highbury; in her commercial acuity; in retaining control of her wealth by remaining a widow; and in celebrating her estate as a poet.

Austen, in her rejection of the hospitality motif, privileges the commercial aspects of the estate. This is not an estate where agriculture for entertaining or self-sufficiency is important. This lack of georgic features, which Fowler notes is the proper mode of all country house poetry, is replaced by a more specifically economic diction.⁹² The echoes of agriculture remain in the word 'fertile', but this is equally pertinent to the commercial tone of Austen's writing. There may be agricultural activity on this estate but it is not in itself important. The two key features of the estates are its value as land and its productive and profitable features which will allow Austen to boost her wealth. There are also no agricultural workers or local people in this estate landscape. Instead, the landscape is bare and any industry is implied by the wealth of the estate. It is an idealised form of commercial work resulting from a landscape burdened with riches which affords both wealth and ease. She mentions in a diary entry for March 20th (1666) her financial investment in the estate at Highbury where she has expended thirty three pounds in 'fee farm and to fit it up by gates and fences &c.' (fol. 109^v). The landscape at Highbury is then improved, profitable and seemingly empty of traditional agricultural activity.

Also implied is the legal work in which Austen has engaged to retain the estate. She writes in 'Of Newington Barrow [Highbury]. Hazard 1665':

If there is such a power can take away that which the Lawes of the Land dus affirm to us, I know noe other remedy than to prepaire my self to work for my living(fol. 72^v).

⁹² *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, pp.16-19.

'On the Situation of Highbury' sets up a contrast between the ease and pleasure 'without Toile' afforded by the profit from Highbury and other investments and the dis-ease or 'Sickenes' which it 'doth exhile.' Whilst the provision of negative exemplar standing outside of the idealised country house environment is conventional within the genre, Austen's is one associated with illness and toil. Austen describes both her widowhood and the accompanying legal fight for Highbury and the Red Lion tavern as a time characterised by disease and troubles. She writes regarding the Committee of Parliament:

It proved a very troublesome time to me. For I was sicke of an exceeding cold in my head made me to be almost deafe and dumbe. And going to West[minster] about 6 times. I was exceeding ill and more unfit to contest with such a business than ever I had been before. That now it was a huge burden (fol 61').

This also has a consequence for her family. She continues:

The 11 of Feb. My son was very ill [that I feared] he was in a consumption, and very dangerous by a cake of phlegm backed at his stomach. That day also was discovered to me what potent trains was laid to get at his estate. And my own faintness and weakness became insupportable (fol. 61').

These images of illness leach from the surrounding items into the country house poem, replacing the social and political disorder more commonly seen outside the country house gates.

Contrary to earlier examples of the genre, the distance between poet and estate is not due to the poet / patron relationship but rather to Austen's legal and social relationship to Highbury. Austen uses the conventional visual diction of the discourse to negotiate this tentative relationship, allowing a partial presence which modulates into a more direct one toward the end of the poem. However, where Jonson validates Lord Lisle's status through a vicarious use of a proprietorial gaze and elevated prospect, Austen's claims this for herself as owner and poet. This more concrete position within the estate landscape is signalled by Austen's use of the first person in the second half of the poem. Although Austen begins the poem with an unnamed 'dweller', the combination of Highbury's wealth, elevated position and

poetic inspiration, allow Austen to claim rightful ownership of both the estate and the poetic text. It is, however, still a conditional claim: She writes:

[...] if a streame did rise
To clear my muddy braine and Misty Eyes
And find a Hellicon t'enlarge my muse
Then I noe better place then this wud choose.

Despite a successful outcome in Parliament, Austen continues to be troubled by her relationship to the estate. This is perhaps partially associated with her need to present herself as a vulnerable widow in accord with cultural conventions. As Hammons explains of Cavendish's 'Dialogue between a Bountifull Knight and a Castle', an explicit claim to property ownership had to be carefully negotiated by female poets. Cavendish erases herself from her poem to draw attention to the fact that the estate in question was to be stipulated in her jointure.⁹³ It also relates to the economic function she assigns to the estate. Its ownership alone is not enough; the estate must provide financial and social benefits, to cleanse, elevate and enlarge her position. 'On March 20th 1666' she considers her property investments:

'Tis true then my buildings were most of them finished and the other out of lease. Yet accidents and general troubles and the unseasonable former year of drought and mortality have gave an interruption, so that at this time instead of profit they are a Hydra, a cormorant of a double head [which] devours all I can procure (fol. 109^v).

As her mother before her, Austen knows property, like her widowed status, to be an ambiguous factor in her life. It provides wealth, status and agency, yet is difficult to acquire, retain and manage as a woman. The preceding manuscript item explains Austen's legal success, yet the ownership of Highbury is still expressed in tangential terms.⁹⁴ The legal battle may have been won, but the access to property is still not straightforward.

Unlike in earlier examples of country house poems, there is no articulation here of a socio-political model along either class or gender lines. Where Marvell and Jonson depict the female as an integral part of a fertile and reproductive landscape which in

⁹³ Pamela Hammons, 'The Gendered Imagination of Property in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century English Women's Verse', *Clio* 34.4 (2005), 395-418 (p. 397).

⁹⁴ Austen, 'On that day Highbury came out of Lease, Mic. 1665', fol. 103^v and 'Is't true indeed, to me and mine', fol.104^v.

turn prescribes a commodified and yet dynastically important function for the female members of the owner's family, Austen does not. The poem is free from such conventional gender models. Indeed, it is an unpopulated landscape, save for the poet herself. Austen, as potential or actual owner, appears only as a poet or as a commercially distant owner with a validating and proprietorial gaze. Austen also rejects the historical value of the country house and the associated aristocratic pedigree of the owning dynasty. This is replaced with a newer model of an economic dynasty which includes female family members beyond the role of mother as a conduit for genetic material, family property and political power.⁹⁵ The appropriation and innovation of the genre informs, in turn, the complex articulations of the whole manuscript text. In this way, the themes and concerns of the country house genre are visible in the meditations, prophetic writing, other poems and prose items either addressed to her children or autobiographical in nature. Similarly, the occasional nature and structuring principles of meditative texts, the, albeit ambivalent, appeal for a female voice of prophecy and the self-presentation of the prose items are visible in the country house poem. The poem, like the text as a whole, balances carefully innovation with appropriation, female agency with social decorum and property with propriety.

'Book M': the negotiation of modesty and ambition

The items surrounding and preceding 'On the Situation of Highbury' not only reiterate the key themes of the country house poem, that of rightful ownership and economic activity, but also carefully mitigate the ambition seen here and elsewhere in the manuscript. In turn, the other items in the manuscript have an influence on Austen's adaptations to the country house genre. Central to Austen's innovations to the country house poem is the informing presence of religious meditations in both verse and prose. As Todd notes, there are fifty meditations in total, mainly responding to

⁹⁵ Hammons, 'Country House Innovations', p.125.

personal events and comprising a personal memoir of the period 1664-1666.⁹⁶ Whilst the themes of the country house genre are evident throughout these devotional items, it is perhaps the formal influence of the meditation on 'On the Situation of Highbury' which is of greatest significance.⁹⁷ Firstly, the occasional nature of 'On the Situation of Highbury' stands in contrast to the more usual epistolary or epideictic forms of country house poetry.⁹⁸ Furthermore, the influence of the surrounding meditation allows for both event and location to be considered simultaneously. Although contemporary definitions of situation emphasise location rather than circumstance, the occasional nature of the poem suggests that Austen is also meditating on the legal events surrounding her acquisition of Highbury.⁹⁹ Secondly, the structuring principles of both textual meditations and the devotional practice on which they are based are also visible in the country house poem.¹⁰⁰ This is a 'threefold structure of composition, analysis and colloquy' which works 'as a fundamental organizing impulse deep within [seventeenth-century religious] poetry.'¹⁰¹

Austen opens her 'meditation' on Highbury with a depiction of the estate in a fashion which echoes the 'composition of place' outlined by Louis Martz as integral to the religious meditation and to the religious poetry which flows from this practice. As with the devotional texts, Austen strives to present the scene in concrete detail through 'similitude [and] visualization.' This visual imagery is, for Martz, central to the poetry of Donne and Herbert and it is perhaps pertinent that Donne is one of the few poets to whom Austen makes direct reference.¹⁰² After establishing the scene in vivid terms, Austen proceeds to an abstract analysis of the estate, its value, and her

⁹⁶ Todd, 'Property and a Woman's Place', p. 190.

⁹⁷ Compare Anselment, 'Katherine Austen', p. 7.

⁹⁸ *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler.

⁹⁹ See Edward Phillips, *The new world of English words, or, A general dictionary containing the interpretations of such hard words as are derived from other languages...together with all those terms that relate to the arts and sciences...: to which are added the significations of proper names, mythology, and poetical fictions, historical relations, geographical descriptions of most countries and cities of the world.../collected and published by E.P.* (London: E. Tyler for N. Brooke, 1658).

¹⁰⁰ Louis L. Martz, *The Poetry of Meditation: A Study in English Religious Literature of the Seventeenth Century* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1962). See also B. K. Lewalski, *Protestant Poetics and the Seventeenth-Century Religious Lyric* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp.147-178.

¹⁰¹ Martz, *Poetry of Meditation*, pp. 39-43.

¹⁰² Martz, *Poetry of Meditation*, pp. 25-70.

enlarged and elevated position regarding it. The poem concludes in a conversational manner, again reflecting the tone of religious meditative practices which engage in a colloquy with God or Christ. Although Austen does not speak with a divine figure but rather between her two alternative positions as estate owner and poet, the poem does have a conversational element.

Elsewhere in the manuscript, Austen uses the meditation structure to draw a lesson from an occasion relating to property to make a more general or devotional point. Indeed, this characteristic informs many of her meditations. Whilst I would not argue against the religious content of Austen's writing and the sincerity of her religious faith, this is a consistent feature of Austen's use of the meditation form. As Todd argues:

Her strongest theme is God's Providence. The reconciliatory parts of her meditations interpret the afflictions imposed by her adversaries into blessings of Christian faith, and thus serve to justify her public actions.¹⁰³

In a letter to her children, Austen discusses the cost of inheriting properties and draws a specific lesson:

Let the example following divert your wishes and your [envy] at the estates of friends. Your [great] uncle Field had an estate of 800£ per annum and no children so that your father's mother and her sister Mrs Duffield had expectation of his estate to come to their children. When he died he left to [his] sister's younger son an estate of reversion after his wife... Yet my observation took notice that if he had not left him anything it would [have] been better. First 2200£ it cost the widow's life and so much in finishing it that had the purchase and finishing money been laid out on any new purchase would have come to as much (fol. 51^v).

From this observation about familial property experiences, Austen draws out the lesson that her children should '[s]uspend all craving and expectation. Go on in your own way of industry...leave the rest to god and he will do better than your own projects can' (fol. 51^v). Despite this commonplace Anglican theme of leaving things to God's infinite wisdom, Austen is consistently arguing for the agency of the individual or of herself as a widow; this tension is a notable feature of Protestant meditations from the 1650s onwards.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ Todd, 'Property and a Woman's Place', p. 191.

¹⁰⁴ Martz, *Poetry of Meditation* pp. 153-174.

The visual diction of prophecy and the claims for a specifically female voice are also visible in Austen's country house poem. Indeed, the estate itself provides the means for Austen to achieve both. The wealth of Highbury allows her the leisure and ease to contemplate: the elevated position of Highbury, 'So fairly Mounted', affords 'prospects [giving] so sweet <rare> a sight.' Ultimately, however, it is the beauty and virtue of the estate which 'clear [her] muddy braine and Misty Eyes' and provide 'a hellicon t'enlarge [her] muse.' As with meditation, Austen continues to discuss property within a notionally religious genre, but this was not unusual and there are several precedents for the discussion of property related issues in prophetic texts.¹⁰⁵ The prophet Eleanor Davies includes references to her own property concerns in her prophetic texts in a way which is similar to Austen's own merging of property and prophecy. In *The Writ of Restitution* (1648), Davies writes:

And accordingly a *Supersedis* issued out, delivered to the Sheriff then in being; the Tenants nevertheless outed of possession by the now under-Sheriff of that county about three moneths ago: whereupon he cald and appearing, demanded of whom, how those doors came to be opened.¹⁰⁶

Austen attempts to analyse her dreams in the manner of a prophet with regard to her property deals and negotiations. In 'My Dream on 2nd of January' she attempts to construct a dream as a good omen regarding the Committee of Parliament scheduled for the middle of February, 1665 and referred to throughout the manuscript. She compares her dream of a wedding with the scene which was later to confront her in Parliament. She claims similarities in both the details of the room and people present:

And when I came into the room it was the same as I saw in my dream, the situation of the room the same with the table. And as soon as I cast my eye on Sir John Birkenhead I was confident he was the very same man I saw my husband with.¹⁰⁷

These similarities are reassuring to Austen despite her previously negative reading of the number of stairs in her dream which caused her to note that 'indeed I was troubled

¹⁰⁵ Smith notes that, *inter alia*, Elizabeth Warren used economic metaphors consistent with a wider tradition in Christian theology. Smith, *Literature and Revolution*, p. 125.

¹⁰⁶ Eleanor Davies, 'The Writ of Restitution', *Prophectic writings of Lady Eleanor Davies*, ed by E.S. Cope (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 239-244 (p.242).

¹⁰⁷ Austen, fol. 61 v. Todd notes that Sir John Birkenhead was acting as Austen's agent in the suit to secure Highbury. Todd, 'Katherine Austen', p. 232.

that some unhappy adventure would come to pass in as I dreaded every day wishing February out' (fol. 61^v).

Regardless of the positive stance Austen claims for her dream, she is in no doubt that in representing a marriage contract, it indicates a possible loss of property, and in a way which stands in contrast to the prevailing male attitude that marriage can bring an immediate and convenient property portfolio. For Austen, as for all other women, marriage was less financially fruitful:

This business was a wedding, for it was a contract, a confederacy to take away our estate. And I shall no more be of that opinion generally observed in dreams that a wedding foretells a burying and a burying a wedding. But that it is a danger of conspiracy against one as this was to us (fols. 61^v-61^r).

Here she reads contracts of any kind as deleterious to women, and by extension her family as representative of a less privileged social class. The contracts Austen refers to here extend perhaps beyond the marriage contract mentioned but also the contract of a will. Austen's claim throughout the manuscript is that her husband's will allowed for her ownership of the lease of Highbury. This contract between the deceased and the courts has, in Austen's eyes, been broken. In 'Of New Barrow hazard, 1665', Austen continues on this theme:

If there is such a power can take away that which the laws of the land does affirm to us, I know no other remedy than to prepare myself to work for my living, for I must expect all that I have may be gone (fol. 72^v).

As an Anglican, Austen's approach to writing 'Book M' seems two-fold: to articulate an agency along socio-political lines, yet retaining a sense of religious, political and social decorum.¹⁰⁸ Whilst I would not want to deny religious content and its importance for a devout Anglican, the use of prophecy is an interesting choice.¹⁰⁹ Furthermore, as Hammons notes, the use of prophecy was not transgressive per se, yet often represented an ambiguous literary option.

Smith explains that prophecy is closely associated to Puritan forms of worship and alongside extempore preaching, prayer and confessional narratives, contributes 'towards a version of selfhood which ultimately put[s] the individual believer above

¹⁰⁸ Anselment, 'Katherine Austen', p.7 and Hammons, 'Widow, Prophet, and Poet', p. 15.

¹⁰⁹ Hammons, *Poetic Resistance*, p.2.

the claims of state religious compulsion.’ This largely Puritan element is rendered all the more remarkable by its use after the Restoration when the associations of female prophecy with political disruption were evident. Yet, as Smith indicates certain Anglican communities, including Austen’s London, had been forced during the Interregnum to adopt ‘the expression of private versions of selfhood.’¹¹⁰ It may be possible that the Puritan traces visible in Austen’s text relate to this circumscribed worship of the 1650s. This ventriloquizing effect is seen more widely in Anglican texts of the time, for example, in the writing of Taylor, one of Austen’s few cited authors.¹¹¹ For Hammons the dangers were clear for Austen of ‘the potential association of prophetic activity with disreputable persons: the urban rabble and outspoken women.’¹¹² Hobby goes further, claiming that prophecy ‘quickly became unacceptable in the land of restored monarchy.’¹¹³ In response to this uncomfortable association, Austen presents her prophetic voice carefully: she does not invert social hierarchies in her prophetic pieces in the same way as many radical female writers of the immediate Civil War period do, and she also distances herself from the conventional image of a female prophet.

Yet, prophecy also allows for ‘the relating of public to private worlds’ in a manner which Austen can fruitfully use.¹¹⁴ The text then speaks in two directions at once in an attempt to ‘[underwrite] her ambitions with divine power.’¹¹⁵ It uses prophecy to argue for agency and a female voice, yet the themes and commonplaces of the devotional and other pieces are in keeping with Austen’s status as a relatively wealthy and well educated widow. It is perhaps her status as widow which pulls these two disparate strands together. However, even within a manuscript and family context, Austen’s text is disruptive of social and religious decorum. The distinction between prophet and unruly woman is a nice one; as Phyllis Mack observes: ‘female

¹¹⁰ Smith, *Literature and Revolution*, p. 123; 127.

¹¹¹ Smith cites Taylor’s *Holy Living* (1652) in this regard. Smith, *Literature and Revolution*, p. 127-9.

¹¹² Hammons, ‘Widow, Prophet, and Poet’, p. 15.

¹¹³ Elaine Hobby, ‘Prophecy, enthusiasm and female pamphleteers’, *The Cambridge Companion to Writing of the English revolution*, ed. by N.H. Keeble (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2001), pp. 162-178 (p. 163).

¹¹⁴ Smith, *Literature and Revolution*, p. 123.

¹¹⁵ Hammons, ‘Widow, Prophet, and Poet’, p. 14.

visionaries were frequently depicted as tramps in both the sexual and economic sense.¹¹⁶ Austen, however, shows herself to be sensitive to such observations: 'If men doe listen to Wispers of fear, and have not reason, and observation Enough to confute trifles [...] Every old woman shal be a prophetes' (fol. 25r). Part of Austen's resistance is a literary intervention, a claiming of literary authority in addition to religious, socio-political and economic validation and status. 'Book M' works for Austen as a resistance to the social text of widow – a role which made women legible or visible to wider society.¹¹⁷ Austen challenges this socio-economic categorisation throughout the manuscript and at the same time replaces the normative figure of the widow with one which is active and ambitious, providing a 'realistic blueprint' for widowhood during the Restoration.¹¹⁸

Whilst 'On The Situation of Highbury' is the only poem in the manuscript to be categorised as a country house poem or more generally topographical, there are numerous poems which deal with the Highbury estate or with property more generally. 'Upon Courtiers at the Committee of Parliament striving for Highbury the 14th February that I was there:' relates directly to Austen's legal battle to secure the lease for herself and her three children. This battle was protracted and involved her active participation at the highest legal level. However, the title is unclear. It is not made apparent exactly who is striving, Austen or the Committee of Parliament, to take control. Austen seems to be under no doubt that the estate was legally hers, yet the title may indicate the claim of Parliament in securing the lease back into the hands of the Crown. It is also unclear at the beginning of the poem whether the oppressors are aimed at Austen herself as a woman or as a member of the mercantile class, albeit one who is wealthy. At the same time, Austen consoles herself with the providential nature of this 'time now men of power / Do seek our welfare to devour.' It is told by 'Wise Solomon' and will be resolved in Heaven 'Where we are freed from envies chase.' However, the uncertainty resolves when Austen clarifies that her position as a widow is her paramount problem:

¹¹⁶ Phyllis Mack, *Visionary Women: Ecstatic Prophecy in Seventeenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p.57.

¹¹⁷ For a discussion of this 'legibility' see Hammons, *Poetic Resistance*, pp. 3-4.

¹¹⁸ Dubrow, 'Country House Poem', p. 176.

Men never think their wives may be
Necessitate by misery
Or their children be a prey
When they are gone away.
I hot resented widows' tears
Before I was distressed with fears.
This retribution do I find
To meet with all the world unkind (fol. 60^r).

Furthermore, Austen's statements indicate ambivalence, not only about contracts and their potential to discriminate and disable along both class and gender lines, but also perhaps about marriage itself.¹¹⁹

As with many widows, Austen chose never to remarry. For Austen, marriage appears to be a confederacy against women:

A time there is to be oppressed.
Such is this time now men of power
Do seek our welfare to devour
Confederated in a League
By an unjust and Dire intrigue (fol. 59^v).

For Austen as an Anglican, 1665 did not represent a particularly oppressive political moment and it is hard, therefore, to sustain a directly political reading of this statement. Indeed, Austen poses herself the same question:

Shall it be that my lord and king's [return] must prove a fatal blast to our estate? It cannot be. Yet if we are condemned by his clear judgement (and not by the violence of our craving Adversaries [i.e. Parliament]) I submit. Since he is returned in peace I sacrifice life and fortune, and let that blessing on a dying nation take all that I can offer (fol. 72^v).

Austen makes a fine distinction here between the restored Charles II and his parliament with whom she was in direct legal battle.¹²⁰ She also uses the present tense when describing her sacrifice; she is already sacrificing life and fortune and this is no abstract discussion in Austen's eyes. It is perhaps more accurately to be viewed, like much of Austen's commentary, as an expression of anger and frustration along gender and class lines.

Lastly, the surrounding prose items – accounts, letters and conduct pieces – bear similar themes and yet provide an innovative impetus to the county house poem.

¹¹⁹ Hammons, 'Widow, Prophet, and Poet', p. 11.

¹²⁰ Compare Hammons, 'Widow, Prophet, and Poet', p. 12.

Whilst the economic diction of the accounts is reproduced in the discussion of Highbury's merits, the formal properties of the accounts are also present. Where Austen lays out in detail her income and outgoings, 'On the Situation of Highbury' lists Highbury's profitable features in a manner resonant of an estate agent. Thus, it has an elevated position, a fertile and trouble free soil, good surroundings, priceless views, and offers a good and 'bountious' profit. The manuscript functions not only as a discursive space in which to provide spiritual accounts but also financial ones. Austen proves herself active in legal and economic terms and she relates them as a duty to her social station. Her financial difficulties stem not only from the legal fees but the failure to lease her investment properties at Swan Lane in Covent Garden 'so that at this time instead of profit they are a hydra, a cormorant of a double head [which] devours all I can procure' (fol. 110^r). The image of being devoured or consumed by her troubles, whether financial or legal, is a constant one in Austen's text. She attempts to read her troubles providentially, to see her legal victories and earthly wealth as an indication of Protestant virtue and royalist sympathies, but often the tone is despairing and frustrated.

The nature of the manuscript text allows Austen to amend the inaccurate or unseemly features of her writing, presumably on rereading. Thus, in contrast to the numerous references to her rightful ownership of the estate at Highbury, other property and inherited wealth, she occasionally amends references to the property as hers to a more inclusive family ownership: 'This day that I have fears of the loss of my son, of the loss of ~~my~~ his land' (fol. 61^r). As Raymond A. Anselment asserts:

The abiding interest in her children's welfare above her own desire for independence distinguishes Katherine Austen's prudent attitude toward both widowhood and remarriage. If she harbours any ambitions, they are bound to this fundamental concern with her family's welfare.¹²¹

Whilst these claims for Austen's disinterest cannot be totally dismissed, we see here Austen changing the text to emphasise this maternal concern. However, the occasional amendments reveal in their deletions the more instinctive tone of ownership and socio-economic ambition which pervades the whole manuscript.

¹²¹ Anselment, 'Katherine Austen', p. 11.

I have argued in this chapter that 'On the Situation of Highbury' belongs to a small, diverse and scattered body of country house poetry which bears closer consideration for several reasons.¹²² Firstly, taken together, this body of poetry represents a shift from previously explored patterns of country house poetry, based, as this is, on a predominately male-authored, aristocratic and early-seventeenth-century sample. The country house poems of the Restoration, such as Austen's 'On the Situation of Highbury,' exemplify the shift away from key tropes, for example hospitality, the depiction of a beneficent landscape or the claims for frictionless socio-political relationships. By the Restoration the nostalgic depictions of feudal households were no longer pressing, yet it is wrong to assume the genre disappears. Instead, it focuses on the estate as a site of investment in response to the years of the Civil War when the country estate was not just a site of political retirement, but also a pawn in the military and social conflicts. For Austen, however, the country house is not just a site of investment, it comprises her investment: in a lengthy legal battle, in her careful textual accommodation of a clearly articulated ambition and in financial terms, the estate provides the basis for future family wealth.

I have also demonstrated how Austen's text treads a careful path between conventional claims for modesty and the articulation of economic ambition and social aspiration. The combination of country house genre and manuscript miscellany in 'Book M' allows Austen to articulate personal property issues within and without the confines of the country house genre. This is seen throughout the manuscript but is best exemplified by the sole country house poem where the complexities of Austen's own position, both circumstantial and contextual, which are evident throughout the text, inform her appropriation and innovation of the country house poem. The manuscript suggests a gendered experience of property which is reflected in both the content of the verse itself and in Austen's selection and use of genre and poetic form. Austen's appropriation and adaptation of landscape discourses across a range of

¹²² Ascertaining the exact number of women's country house poems is, of course, impossible, given the number produced in manuscript form, often as a single poem within a large and diverse text. For figures relating to the number of published items by women in the seventeenth century see Patricia Crawford, 'Women's Published Writings 1600-1700', *Women in English Society 1500-1800*, ed. by Mary Prior (London: Routledge, 1985), pp. 211-231; 265-282.

poetic forms may function to highlight and negotiate the legal and social asymmetries surrounding real property. This poetic negotiation, in turn, allows for an exploration and articulation of ambition for Austen and her children along clear socio-economic lines.¹²³ 'Book M' is part of Austen's bid to join the property owning and economically secure gentry.

To accommodate her social ambitions and economic activity, Austen reconceptualises several boundaries. Firstly she reworks the *topoi* and dynamics of the country house genre, modifying an inherently aristocratic and backward glancing genre which relies on the asymmetrical, yet mutual relationship of patron and poet. She retains the authorising voice and privileged poetic perspective in her role as both poet and patron. This not only alters the poetic voice of the genre but functions to accommodate her broader social ambitions and provides a reworking of the social text of the widow. However, in removing the *sponte sua* motif and emptying the landscape at Highbury of all residents, guests or labourers, Austen presents a property which functions solely to provide financial security and profit. For early modern women, in particular, the problematic relationship with all forms of property – real, moveable and investment – was most acutely visible at the principal points and modes of transfer: by dowry; marriage settlement; will; court judgement in cases of intestacy; or by commercial contract. These modes of exchange, like much of early modern women's writing, were occasioned by birth, marriage or death.¹²⁴ Both literary text and legal document were, then, occasional, prompted by the same life events and, as I have argued, frequently display similar themes and anxieties.

Lastly, like much of the women's poetry of the early modern period, Austen's examination of her position and her portfolio was produced in manuscript form, in a diverse and domestic document. This physical proximity further highlights the thematic links and the apparent conflation of literary and legal or economic discourses within the items. As such, Austen's text may be regarded as providing an additional account of the frequently invisible nature of women's complex property transactions

¹²³ Hammons, *Poetic Resistance*, p. 164.

¹²⁴ Shell, 'Poetry from the Feilding Family', pp.259-278. See also the Feilding family commonplace book, Beinecke Library, Yale University, Osborn Ms. b 226.

during this period. Aside from the blurring of property and poetic discourses, the mode and conventions of manuscript production itself can also be revealing, offering a valuable insight into the socio-economic and political circumstances of early modern women.¹²⁵ Both the text and the individual often resist homogeneity, complicating any simplistic picture of early modern women.¹²⁶ It is into this tradition that Austen's 'Book M' fits. Indeed, it might be argued that Austen specifically uses a composite and heterogeneous means of composition to negotiate these shifting circumstances and to locate herself carefully. This results in a piecemeal text between whose component parts there is both a thematic insistence and formal interplay.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ Deborah Aldrich-Watson notes the pertinence of verse manuscript to our understanding socio-political contexts in addition to the literary considerations in her discussion of the manuscript verse of the Tixall circle. 'Introduction', pp. xix-xxi. See also Clarke and Gibson, 'Introduction', p. 2 and Sara Pennell, 'Perfecting Practice? Women, Manuscript Recipes and Knowledge in Early Modern England', in *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Writing: Selected papers from the Trinity/Trent Colloquium*, ed. by Victoria E. Burke and Jonathan Gibson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 237-258 (pp.239-246).

¹²⁶ Burke and Gibson, 'Introduction', p. 2.

¹²⁷ Although Smith describes a powerful mutual influence between different discourses of the period, based on the disruptions of civil unrest, the formal and discursive interplay within Austen's text is particularly forceful and related to personal and social disturbances. Smith, *Literature and Revolution*, pp. 10; 56.

Chapter three

Lucy Hutchinson's 'Elegies': the fashioning of a religio-political retirement

The country house poetry of the 1640s and 1650s is seen by Fowler, amongst others, as characterised by a focus on the country estate as a site of retirement, a refuge from conflict and political upheaval.¹ Indeed, the genre can be seen as fulfilling the need, identified by Jerome de Groot, to negotiate a path through the chaos of civil war.² The Restoration, however, for Fowler at least, marked a departure in country house poetry which saw new emphases on the estate as a 'political or moral microcosm' of national significance or as a site of substantial financial and cultural investment.³ On the evidence of Fowler's and other anthologies, this may appear an accurate assessment.⁴ Nonetheless, I want to suggest that for some in the 1660s, there remained a pressing need to 'elaborate a rationale of retirement' and that the country house genre may have provided an effective means to do so.⁵ That this additional body of country house poetry remains largely absent from modern anthologies and critical analyses, may relate equally to critical trends and methodologies, the gender, social status or political affiliation of the poet and the fact that many of these poems were produced and remained in manuscript form.⁶

¹ *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler. See also McGuire, 'The Cavalier Country-House Poem'; Hibbard, 'The Country House Poem'; Jenkins, *Feigned Commonwealths*; McClung, *The Country House*.

² Jerome De Groot, *Royalist Identities* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), p. 8

³ *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, pp. 21-29.

⁴ Out of a total of 77 poems, Fowler's anthology includes seventeen examples of the Restoration country house poem most of which reflect these emphases. By contrast the number of poems, 1640-1660, is 33 and before 1640, 24. Other more general anthologies reflect this bias towards the country house poems (as defined by Fowler) of the first six decades of the seventeenth century: *English Pastoral Verse*, ed. by John Barrell and John Bull includes ten early and only one Restoration example; *Renaissance Verse*, ed. and selected by H. R. Woudhuysen and David Norbrook includes eleven early and one later example; *Seventeenth-Century Verse*, ed. by Alastair Fowler has fifteen from before 1660 and seven written after.

⁵ *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, pp. 19-20.

⁶ For example, Heather Dubrow's generic framework is founded on assumptions of a male canon, 1613-1660, 'The Country House Poem'. See also Molesworth, 'Property and Virtue', p. 155.

The conventional critical observation of country house poetry of the mid-seventeenth century is that it relates to royalist retirement or to the confiscation or destruction of property by the parliamentary forces. Pulter's 'The Invitation into the Country', outlining a secure rural retreat in contrast to the dangers of the city in 1647 and Cavendish's poem on the destruction and rebuilding of Bolsover castle, 'A Dialogue between a Bountiful Knight and a Castle Ruined in War', exemplify these thematic concerns.⁷ However, the genre may equally apply to the retreat and property concerns of those of all political persuasions.⁸ Furthermore, despite assertions that the genre disappears in 1660, it may also respond to ongoing property settlements and rebuilding programmes of the 1660s.⁹ I shall, therefore, argue that rather than being associated with specific architectural trends, as Hibbard proposes, the country house poetry of the Restoration period, like that of the early seventeenth- and early eighteenth- centuries, is re-invigorated by building activity more generally and responds to wider property concerns, such as contested ownership and estate stewardship and maintenance. As the use of the genre during the Restoration appears to be much more extensive than critical commentary or anthology selection would

⁷ Hester Pulter, 'The Invitation into the Country to my D:D: MPP 1647 when his sacred Maj:^{tie} was at unhappy home', *Poems Breathed forth By The Nobel Hadassas*, MS Lt q 32, Brotherton Collection, Leeds University, fols 4^v-7^r.; Cavendish, 'A Dialogue between a Bountiful Knight and a Castle Ruined in War', in *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, pp. 315-317. See also Cavendish's 'Nature's House', pp. 318-319 and Mildmay Fane's 'To the Countess of Rutland, upon Her New Re-edifying of Belvoir after It Had Been lately Ruined by the Late Civil War', pp. 255-258.

⁸ Annabel Patterson, 'The very name of the game: theories of order and disorder' in *Literature and the English Civil War*, ed. by Thomas Healy and Jonathan Sawday (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 21-37 (p. 29). Hutchinson herself discusses the destruction and confiscation of property on all sides throughout the biography of her husband, 'The Life of John Hutchinson of Owthorpe, in the County of Nottingham, Esquire'. In particular see pp. 119; 121; 143; 192. This is published together with her other texts, 'To my Children' and 'The Life of Mrs Hutchinson, written by herself' in *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson*, ed. by N. H. Keeble (London: Phoenix, 1995). Hereafter, I shall use *Memoirs* as the shortened title except for the two fragments. Subsequent references for all three texts will be to this edition and will be cited parenthetically by shortened title and page number. Poems which suggest, but do not fully demonstrate, the genre's political breadth include Andrew Marvell's 'Upon Appleton House' and 'Upon the Hill and Grove at Bill-borow: To the Lord Fairfax', Fairfax's own 'Upon the New-Built House at Appleton', and Fane's poem to a prominent parliamentarian, 'Thorp Palace: a miracle'. All are included in Fowler's *The Country House Poem*, pp. 281-294; 302-304; 328-329, and 220-221. Many more exist beyond the scope of modern anthologies, in both manuscript and contemporary print collections; for example William Prynne's 'A Poetical Description of Mount-Orgeuil Castle', *Mount-Orgeuil; or, Divine and Profitable Meditations* (1641).

⁹ Hibbard, 'The Country House Poem', p. 159. See also Wilson and Mackley, *Building of the English Country House*, pp. 49-52; 200-206.

suggest, I shall demonstrate that this literary engagement with the country house and related concerns fulfils a similar and yet much broader and more persistent desire to negotiate order from chaos than that identified by de Groot.

To illustrate this alternative and potentially much wider engagement with the genre itself and the related discourses and tropes, I shall focus my analysis on Lucy Hutchinson's manuscript collection 'Elegies', reading these alongside her biographical texts.¹⁰ Both sets of texts detail the life of her husband Colonel John Hutchinson and, crucially, her own autobiographical narrative. They also explore and, to a certain extent, attempt to negotiate their relationships vis-à-vis the family estate in Nottinghamshire. This chapter will explore the appropriation of country house discourse and poetic genre by Hutchinson to access a politically and socially precise and public voice, albeit one which at times ventriloquizes earlier and contemporary royalist voices.¹¹ Hutchinson's appropriation of this rhetoric forms part of a much wider engagement with the country house which, I shall argue, is visible in the poetry of the 1660s and 1670s. It will also examine the adaptations to the country house genre which allow Hutchinson to reconceptualise the spaces of the country house and of retirement and the associated, yet conflicting, discourses of authority and defeat. Lastly, it will explore the combination of country house *topoi* with elegy to reinterpret and redraw the social, political and religious spaces of the Restoration period.

Lucy Hutchinson

Hutchinson (1620-1681) was born into the wealthy and well-connected and royalist Apsley family. Her father Sir Allen Apsley was knighted in 1604, appointed Lieutenant of the Tower of London in 1617, and served as Victualler of the Navy.¹² She married

¹⁰ In addition to the biographical texts outlined above in note eight, I shall be using the text of Hutchinson's 'Elegies' included in David Norbrook, 'Lucy Hutchinson's *Elegies* and the Situation of the Republican Woman Writer (with text)', *English Literary Renaissance*, 27 (1997), 468-521. Subsequent references to the 'Elegies' will be to this text and will be cited parenthetically by page and line numbers. The original manuscript is held by Nottinghamshire archives, DD/HU₃ ('Elegies').

¹¹ Examples include poems written by *inter alia* Margaret Cavendish, Hester Pulter, Mildmay Fane, Robert Herrick, Katherine Philips, and Abraham Cowley.

¹² *Memoirs*, ed. by Keeble, pp. vii-viii.

John Hutchinson in July 1638 and the couple lived in London before moving to the Hutchinson family estate at Owthorpe, Nottinghamshire in 1641. Both husband and wife were devout Independent Puritans and committed republicans.¹³ John served as governor of Nottingham during the Civil War, between 1646 and 1660 was MP for Nottinghamshire, and was a signatory to Charles I's death warrant.¹⁴ However, despite this high profile republican identity, a position her texts suggest she maintained after the Restoration, Hutchinson continued to have strong family and friendship links to royalist individuals, communities and associated literary coteries.¹⁵ The most important of these was with her brother Sir Allen Apsley, who was active in protecting the Hutchinson family after the Restoration.¹⁶ Nonetheless, John Hutchinson was imprisoned in the Tower of London in 1663, following the Derwentdale Plot (or so-called Northern Rising), and was later moved to Sandown Castle in Kent.¹⁷ This imprisonment was due more to his significant role as Parliamentary leader and later MP during the Civil War and Interregnum, since any involvement with the plot was never proved and John Hutchinson was never brought to trial. Whilst not exempted from the Act of Oblivion, his presence at large was considered too problematic for the Restoration authorities.¹⁸ Apsley was crucial at this point. In the *Memoirs* Hutchinson explains this:

¹³ Hutchinson discusses her and her husband's precise theological position at various points during the *Memoirs*. For example, pp. 42-43; 53-54; 210. See also Hutchinson's translation *On Theology* (1817) of John Owen's *Theologoumena Pantodapa* ([London], 1661) and her *On the Principles of the Christian Religion* (1817). See Katherine Narveson, 'The Source for Lucy Hutchinson's *On Theology*', *Notes and Queries*, 36.1 (1989), 40-41.

¹⁴ *Memoirs* ed. by Keeble, p. ix. See also N. H. Keeble, ' "The Colonel's Shadow": Lucy Hutchinson, women's writing and the Civil War', in *Literature and the English Civil War*, ed. by Thomas Healy and Jonathan Sawday (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 227-247 (p. 227); David Norbrook, 'Elegies', p. 469.

¹⁵ Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, p. 47. See also Jerome De Groot, 'John Denham and Lucy Hutchinson's Commonplace Book', *Studies in English Literature*, 48.1 (2008), 147-163 (pp. 150; 156); David Norbrook, 'Lucy Hutchinson and *Order and Disorder*: The Manuscript Evidence', *English Manuscript Studies, 1100-1700*, 9 (2000), 257-291. David Norbrook, 'Lucy Hutchinson versus Edmund Waller: An Unpublished Reply to Waller's *A Panegyrick to My Lord Protector*', *The Seventeenth Century*, 11.1 (1996), 61-86; *Order and Disorder*, ed. by David Norbrook (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), pp. xii-lviii (p. xv).

¹⁶ David Norbrook, 'The Writing Shadow: Lucy Hutchinson and The Literature of English Republicanism', pp.6-9.

¹⁷ Gaby Mahlberg, 'Historical and Political Contexts of *The Isle of Pines*', *Utopian Studies*, 17.1 (2006), 111-129 (p. 122).

¹⁸ *Memoirs*, ed. by Keeble, p. ix. See also Keeble, 'The Colonel's Shadow', p. 227.

Not long after, the Colonel's brother, Mr George Hutchinson, came down, for to allow the Colonel leave to walk by the sea side with a keeper, which order Sir Allan Apsley and his lady had at length procured with some difficulty and sent him (p. 326).¹⁹

Despite this and other interventions by Apsley, John Hutchinson died on 11 September 1664, probably as a result of this imprisonment.

The twenty four poems comprising Lucy Hutchinson's manuscript, written to lament the death of her husband, were, with one exception, written over a period of several years during the late 1660s and early 1670s.²⁰ This was a productive writing period for Hutchinson as she completed – but did not publish – several other texts: *The Life of John Hutchinson of Owthorpe, in the County of Nottingham, Esquire* and two fragments, 'The Life of Mrs Hutchinson, written by herself' and 'To My Children'. These texts, although generically distinct, bear many similarities of tone, rhetoric and theme to the collection of elegiac poems and engage with the wider concerns and discourses of the country house: for example, the ownership, stewardship and improvement of the country estates, aristocratic duty and rural retirement. They will form part of this discussion alongside the 'Elegies.' In particular, the *Memoirs*, like the 'Elegies', celebrates the life and justifies the actions of John Hutchinson and the religio-political cause to which he was committed.²¹ Hutchinson notes this dual purpose in 'To my Children':

But that I am under a command not to grieve at the common rate of desolate women, while I am studying which way to moderate my woe, and if it were possible to augment my love, can for the present find out none

¹⁹ See also Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, pp. 311-312 and p. 282.

²⁰ According to family member and editor Julius Hutchinson, only the third poem in the collection predates John Hutchinson's death, being written during his imprisonment in the Tower of London in 1664. *Memoirs*, ed. by Keeble, p. xxx. Norbrook notes that some of Hutchinson's verse and the manuscript of the autobiography have been lost since the edition prepared by Julius Hutchinson in 1806. See Norbrook, 'Elegies', 468-521.

²¹ The actions of John Hutchinson during the late 1650s are open to question, especially regarding possible agreements with royalists to preserve his life and his letter of recantation. Hutchinson's roles in both are similarly unclear. See Derek Hirst, 'Remembering a Hero: Lucy Hutchinson's *Memoirs of her Husband*', *English Historical Review*, CXIX.482 (2004), 862-691. Robert Mayer, 'Lucy Hutchinson: A Life of Writing', *Seventeenth Century*, 22.2 (2007), 305-339 (p. 322); Keeble, 'The Colonel's Shadow'; Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, ' "Paper Frames": Lucy Hutchinson's *Elegies* and the Seventeenth-Century Country House Poem', in *Anne Clifford and Lucy Hutchinson: Ashgate Critical Essays on Women Writers in England, 1550–1700, Volume 5*, ed. by Mihoko Suzuki (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. 455-467 (pp. 456-457).

more just to your dear father nor consolatory to myself than the preservation of his memory (p. 16).

However, as N. H. Keeble argues, Hutchinson's larger aim in the prose texts is to 'attempt to perceive and accept god's purpose in and after the Restoration,' a purpose which is both theological and political.²² This multiple purpose is also visible in several of the 'Elegies'. In 'An Epitaph: XV: :th' she writes:

The Consecrated Attomes treasurd here
A temple once of loue & Honor were
W:^{ch} in Their Shining veyle appeard so bright
As cheard The good & paynd y^e feeble Sight
Wherefore did y^e Lewd world attempt in vaine
T'obscure or quench That w:^{ch} Convinct Their staine
While his whole life one fixt designe persued
T'advance Gods glory & The Publique good
His Acts & Sufferings both w:th Victory Crownd
From heauen equall testimony found (p. 515, 1-4).

Here, she moves in just a few lines from personal lament to religious and political statement.

Despite the fact that superficially the 'Elegies' appears a private text – the poems concern her husband and remained in manuscript form – they are overtly political. However, it should be noted that the use of manuscript is no indication of intention or intended readership during this period.²³ For many republicans at this point any publication was highly problematic.²⁴ Yet more generally, print publication was no guarantee of an extensive readership, nor did it confer cultural legitimacy.²⁵ Furthermore, despite a critical consensus which still categorises women's writing and, more specifically, elegies as largely private and domestic, Hutchinson's texts

²² *Memoirs*, ed. by Keeble, p. xxi. See also Norbrook, 'Elegies', p. 469; Mayer, 'Lucy Hutchinson'.

²³ For a wider discussion of the use of manuscript see Love, *Scribal Publications*; Arnold Hunt, 'The Books, Manuscripts and Literary Patronage of Mrs. Anne Sadleir (1585-1670)', in *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Writing: Selected papers from the Trinity/Trent Colloquium*, ed. by Victoria E. Burke and Jonathan Gibson (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 205-236; Burke and Gibson, 'Introduction', pp. 1-7; Ezell, 'Domestic Papers'; Margaret J. M. Ezell, 'From Manuscript to Print: A Volume of Their Own', in *Women and Poetry, 1660-1750*, ed. by Sarah Prescott and David E. Shuttleton (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 140-160; Clarke, 'Beyond Microhistory'.

²⁴ Susan Cook, '“The story I most particularly intend”: The narrative style of Lucy Hutchinson', *Critical Survey*, 5.3 (1993), 271-277 (p. 272); *Order and Disorder*, ed. by Norbrook, p. xiii.

²⁵ For discussion of manuscript versus print texts see Love, *Scribal Publications*; Marotti, 'Social History of the Lyric' and Ezell, 'Domestic Papers.'

significantly blur the boundary between private and public voices.²⁶ As such, Hutchinson's 'Elegies' owe far more to the earlier Civil War elegies of royalists and to the classical models on which these were based.²⁷ This dual function, the simultaneous lament for personal loss and record of momentous events, is, as Bakscheider notes, an inherent feature of classical elegy.²⁸ Hutchinson herself alludes to her larger purpose:

That resplendent body of light, which the beginning and ending of his life made up to discover the deformities of this wicked age and to instruct the erring children of this generation, will through my apprehension and expression, shine as under a very thick cloud, which will obscure much of their lustre; but there is need of this medium to this world's weak eyes ('To My Children', p. 16).

In this she echoes Antonio Aloni's categorisation of early Greek elegy which outlines three main functions of the genre: 'to tell the present of the past, with the aim of formulating a model of reality', to build a monument of 'individuals and communities (interpreted both as groups and as political bodies)' and to exhort to action.²⁹

Crucially, however, Hutchinson also uses both biographical and poetic texts to identify and validate her own part in the republican cause to which she was fully committed, incorporating a discussion of herself alongside that of her husband. In this, Hutchinson is, of course, not unusual and, as Bakscheider asserts, 'many elegies were written in such a way as to establish the greatness of the author; by placing themselves first and as the real subject of the poem.'³⁰ However, Hutchinson also extends the generic boundaries of both elegy and (auto)biography into country house discourse

²⁶ For discussions of this problem see *inter alia* Clarke and Robson, 'Still Kissing the Rod'; Bakscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets*, pp. 268–315; *British Women Poets* ed. by Bakscheider and Ingrassia, pp. 208–210. Despite arguing for women's wide engagement in literary production, Kairoff uses the elegy as an example of a private and feminine literary genre. 'Eighteenth-century women poets and readers', p. 157.

²⁷ Bakscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets*, pp. 268–315; Antonio Aloni, 'Elegy: Forms, functions and communication', in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek Lyric*, ed. by Felix Budelmann (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 168–188 (pp. 168–170; 183); Alastair Fowler, 'Genre and Tradition', in *The Cambridge Companion to English Poetry, Donne to Marvell*, ed. by Thomas N. Corns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 80–100 (pp. 85–86).

²⁸ Bakscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets*, p. 279 and Stephen Harrison, 'Ovid and genre: evolutions of an elegist', *The Cambridge Companion to Ovid*, ed. by Philip Hardie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 79–94 (pp. 79–18). Aloni notes the threnodic and public function of the elegy's metric form from the fifth century BCE, 'Elegy', pp. 179–180.

²⁹ Aloni, 'Elegy', p. 183.

³⁰ Bakscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets*, p. 277.

which allows her to extend and complicate her discussion further. Hutchinson uses representations of the landscapes and spaces of Owthorpe to assist and reflect this translation from biography to autobiography and from a focus on an individual to a broader historical narrative and yet further to a discussion of contemporary political and religious theory. Furthermore, the precise poetic voice offered by the country house genre works, not only to chart, but also to rework personal loss, political defeat and the fall of mankind. Moreover, it does so in ways which challenge many critical assumptions based on gender and on analyses of republican writers after the Restoration.³¹

Hutchinson's texts are also frequently marked by a tension between biography and autobiography and between the written and the writing self.³² Accordingly, the *Memoirs* includes her own story, albeit one told for the most part in the third person. There are, however, points in the text at which the boundary between the two blurred:

The Colonel was never superstitious of dreams, but this stuck a little in his mind, and we were therefore seeking applications of it, which proved nothing in the event, but that having afforded one, I know not whether the dream might not be inspired ('To My Children', p. 295).

The use of the first person singular and plural here complicates the status of the text as biography. Conversely, the seemingly private texts of the 'Elegies' construct a very public statement of political belief, lamenting both her husband and the republican cause.³³ The 'Elegies' also include autobiographical elements, not just in the portrayal of the mourner, but also in reference to her own theological and political actions of the previous decades. Most notable of these is the reference in 'These verses transcribed out of my other Book J:H' to John Hutchinson's letter of recantation passed to the authorities, and possibly written, by Hutchinson:

If I on thee a private glance reflect
confusion does my shamefull eyes deject

³¹ In his introduction to *Order and Disorder*, Norbrook notes the 'common modern assumptions about gender and writing: that women's writing will be personal, emotional, self-expressive.' *Order and Disorder*, ed. by Norbrook, p. xiii. See *inter alia*: Norbrook, 'Elegies'; De Groot, 'Lucy Hutchinson's Commonplace Book', 147-163.

³² Mayer, 'Lucy Hutchinson', p. 325.

³³ Norbrook, 'Elegies' and Scott-Baumann, 'Paper Frames'.

Seeing y^e man I Love by me betrayd,
by me who for his mutual help was made.
Who to preserve thy life ought to haue dyed,
& I haue killd' thee by my foolish pride (p. 491, 33-38).

However, the tension between the self and the other produced by this blurring of boundaries between genres and authorial voices is central to Hutchinson's wider project of reversals and reinterpretation discussed below. Thus, her role in her husband's recantation at the Restoration, a move which ensured his inclusion in the Act of Oblivion, is both identified and obfuscated.

Hutchinson's texts are in this way also marked by gender. However, as I shall argue, Hutchinson privileges the political and theological over concerns of gender and my own analyses reflect this emphasis. Keeble, however, claims that Hutchinson 'plays a very slight part in his history' and '[f]or all her republican radicalism, Lucy Hutchinson's sexual politics remain entirely conservative [and in her texts] forward, assertive or strong-minded women are reprimanded.'³⁴ He also asserts that '[t]he concerns of the *Memoirs* are overwhelmingly those of masculine discourse: war, politics and patriarchal religion.'³⁵ Yet, as my reading will show, it is precisely at these apparently masculine points in the biographical narrative and the 'Elegies' that Hutchison inserts herself. Crucially, where she does emphasise her agency, it is, as Norbrook claims, allied to the articulation of a political or theological position:

Hutchinson's writings are in a fundamental sense passionately personal, but the passion was informed by a complex and coherent set of political and religious ideas.³⁶

Although the 'Elegies' are far more personal in tone than her biographical texts, 'the personal and the political are never clearly separable for Lucy Hutchinson.'³⁷ Therefore, whilst many of her texts show a conventional belief in the inferior social

³⁴ *Memoirs*, ed. by Keeble, p. xxv. See also Hirst, 'Remembering a Hero'.

³⁵ *Memoirs*, ed. by Keeble, p. xxiv.

³⁶ *Order and Disorder*, ed. by Norbrook, p. xiii.

³⁷ Norbrook, 'Elegies', p. 470.

and political position of women, Hutchinson's writings also show us a woman who was well educated, widely read and politically adept.³⁸

The content of her biographical and autobiographical pieces, in particular, gives the reader glimpses of a complex and at times contradictory individual, glimpses which frequently shift between these two opposing positions. As Thomas Healy and Jonathan Sawday explain: '[t]he author of the *Memoirs* was no passive register of a male voice and authority. Instead, two Lucy Hutchinson's emerge from her act of pious remembrance.'³⁹ Thus, her claims that she barely pre-exists her meeting with her husband: 'She that was nothing before his inspection gave her a fair figure' do not bear scrutiny.⁴⁰ This picture of conventional obedience and silence is belied elsewhere by her list of far from modest accomplishments:

I was taught to speak French and English together [...] By that time I was four years old I read English perfectly, and having a great memory, I was carried to sermons; and while I was very young could remember and repeat them so exactly [...]. When I was about seven years of age, I remember I had at one time eight tutors in several qualities, languages, music, dancing, writing and needlework; but my genius was quite averse from all but my book ('*The Life of Mrs Lucy Hutchinson*', p. 14).

The representation of conventional female subordination is also somewhat undone by the sophistication, range and erudition of her other texts; for example, Hutchinson completed one of the first English translations of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* in the 1650s and later composed the epic poem, *Order and Disorder* (published in part in 1679).⁴¹ Indeed, the very existence of her writings undermines her stated belief in women's duty of obedience and modesty and allows Keeble to write of the 'tension between, on the one hand, dutiful wife and, on the other, creatively bold writer [which] is negotiated by the narrative device of splitting the identity of Lucy

³⁸ Pamela Hammons, 'Polluted Pallaces: Property in Lucy Hutchinson's *Elegies*', *Women's Writing*, 13.3 (2006), 392-415 (p. 392); Mayer, 'Lucy Hutchinson', p. 306-7; Hirst, 'Remembering a hero', p. 682.

³⁹ Thomas Healy and Jonathan Sawday, 'Introduction: "Warre is all the world about"', in *Literature and the English Civil War*, ed. by Thomas Healy and Jonathan Sawday (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 1-17 (p. 13).

⁴⁰ Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, p. 51.

⁴¹ Lucy Hutchinson, *De Rerum Natura* (Written late 1640s and 1650s) and *Order and Disorder* (first five cantos published 1679). For dating see Jonathan Goldberg, 'Lucy Hutchinson Writing matter', *English Literary History*, 73 (2006), 275-301.

Hutchinson into two.’⁴² In the ‘Elegies’, however, I shall argue that the combination of country house discourse and elegy allows Hutchinson to hold together this apparent conflict.

Hutchinson’s appropriation of country house discourse

As noted above, Hutchinson’s texts of this period, both verse and prose, are to greater or lesser extent informed by discourses of the country house: its social and political valency both as a source of authority and a site of retreat; its currency as literary discourse and the poetic forms and structures associated with these literary representations. As such, many depict the estate at Owthorpe, and other property owned by the Hutchinson family, in some detail. This reflects the role of private property in military and political conflict during the 1640s and 1650s and the lasting association of property with the political debates of the 1660s.⁴³ It also, more specifically, reflects not only Hutchinson’s own physical location during the period of mourning but also the periods of John Hutchinson’s political retirement to the family estates. Crucially, these periods of retirement were prompted by both Cromwell’s ‘mutable reign’ and the Restoration of Charles II. As Hutchinson explains:

During the late protector’s times Colonel Hutchinson, who thought them greater usurpers on the people’s liberties than the former kings, believed himself wholly disengaged from all ties but those which God and Nature, or rather God by nature, obliges every man of honour in to his country [...]. Therefore he stayed at home, and busied himself in his own domestic employments and, having a very liberal heart, had an house open to all worthy persons of all parties (*Memoirs*, p. 255; 265).

The two periods under discussion, of political exile and mourning, can be understood as chronologically distinct yet emotionally comparable and prompted by similar political and personal experiences: both deal with loss and a subsequent retreat from society.⁴⁴

⁴² *Memoirs*, ed. by Keeble, p. xxvi.

⁴³ Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, pp. 280-1; p. 173. Indeed, Hutchinson discusses the role of property throughout this text.

⁴⁴ Norbrook, ‘Manuscript Evidence’, p. 274.

Although only three of the 'Elegies' are conventional country house poems: 'To the Gardin att O: 7:th', 'On my Visitt to WS w:^{ch} I dreamt of That Night xi:th', and 'Musings in my evening Walkes at O 12:th', several more work within and with the themes and tropes of country house discourse in ways which reflect the pivotal role of the country estates during the Civil War and Restoration periods. Hutchinson consistently stresses the social and political importance of the country estate under John Hutchinson's management, its dynastic significance and also its function as a retreat and haven. In this she uses the genre like many of her royalist contemporaries, such as Fane or Philips. Importantly, however, the retreat of many royalist supporters was, during the Restoration at least, as Philips claims, '[a] Chosen Privacy.'⁴⁵ Elsewhere Philips claims:

In this retir'd and humble seat,
Free from both war and strife,
I am not forc'd to make retreat,
But choose to spend my life.⁴⁶

For Hutchinson, however, retirement was a social and political necessity, one which through her poetry she attempts to convert to spiritual virtue.

As in the biographical texts, the 'Elegies' contain and rework many of the major themes and tropes of country house poetry: aristocratic hospitality, the importance of dynasty, the value of appropriate and timely management of the country estate, the desirability of the rural estate against the vice of the city, and the exemplar of estate and owner as a paradigm of good governance. This country house discourse bleeds in to the other genres with which Hutchinson is working in a way which hints at its valency at precisely this historical moment. As I have discussed with reference to Austen, the motifs of country house poetry seem to have been vital to the Restoration writer in ways which the existing critical analyses do not always suggest.⁴⁷ Fowler notes the rise in number of cabinet poems at this mid-century point and articulates a link to political retirement.⁴⁸ He does not, however, extend his discussion to the

⁴⁵ Katherine Philips, 'La Grandeur d'esprit', in *Poems by The incomparable Mrs K.P.* (1664), pp. 171-176.

⁴⁶ Philips, 'A Country Life', in *Poems by The incomparable Mrs K.P.*, pp. 177-182.

⁴⁷ Compare Scott Baumann's analysis of Hutchinson's use of country house sub-genre which argues that Hutchinson is unusual in her topicality, 'Paper Frames', p. 462.

⁴⁸ *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, pp. 1-29. Fowler's introduction indicates the contexts of the Civil War and associated political upheavals as a significant factor in the shaping of the genre.

republican poets of the period, nor to retirement and exile after the Restoration. Neither does he consider the growing numbers of women using and adapting the genre which may also account for this growing trend. The discourse may have been applicable to a far wider range of individuals and communities than the inherently patriarchal and conservative list of topics suggests.

The last half of the seventeenth century saw a cyclical series of political conflicts which removed political factions both from power and their power base, the country house. Hutchinson makes clear her indignation at the confiscation of land, property and wealth at the Restoration:

An order came down from the Secretary, commanding certain pictures and other things the Colonel had bought out of the late King's collection, which had cost him in ready money between £1,000 and £1,500, and were of more value; and these, notwithstanding the Act of Oblivion, were all taken from him (*Memoirs*, p. 291).

Hutchinson was ultimately to lose most of the family estate, including Owthorpe, despite lengthy legal battles. In the *Memoirs*, she is at pains to stress not only the legitimate ownership of this art collection, but also John Hutchinson's legal status as innocent of the charge of regicide. A link between property and ownership is maintained by John Hutchinson himself in *Imprisonment and Usage of Colonel John Hutchinson*. Describing his arrest in 1663, he writes of the subsequent search of Owthorpe: 'the rest of the arms, which I had of old, having been all taken away immediately after the act of oblivion, which I conceive, left me as rightful a possessor of my own goods, as any other Englishman.'⁴⁹

For Hutchinson, in the elegy 'Another on The Sun Shine', it is the monarch who oversees this removal of property:

Now Thy conning lookes They dred no more
[Because] Thoe makst Their pleasant gardins growe
And Chearishest y^e fruitfull seeds They sowe
In feilds w:^{ch} unto Them descended not
By Violence bribery & oppression gott (p. 490, 22-26).

⁴⁹ John Hutchinson, *Imprisonment and Usage of Colonel John Hutchinson, of Owthorp, in the County of Nottingham, Esq. now close Prisoner in the Tower of London* (1664), unpaginated.

This stands in contrast to the uses and the confiscation of property by Parliamentarians during both the Civil War and the Interregnum which Hutchinson largely regarded as lawful, moderate and to the good of the commonwealth:

The army was reduced to 21,000 who prosecuted the war not with design of gain and making it their trade, but to obtain a righteous peace and settlement to the distracted kingdom, and accordingly it succeeded in their hands.⁵⁰

In particular, she uses the trope of hospitality to explore and validate ownership and highlight the frequent difficulties surrounding this. This applies equally to the Civil War period outlined in the memoirs and the problems of retaining the estate at the Restoration:

And when they marched out at any time the Governor [John Hutchinson] [...] was forced to give them much from his own house, especially when any of them were sick or wounded, and to lend monies to those that were necessitous, which run him into a great private debt, besides many thousands of pound as which he engaged himself in with the other gentlemen, taken up for the supply of the garrison and the carrying on of the public service. [...] He was not so cruel as some others were to their tenants to make them pay over again those rents with which the enemy forced them to redeem themselves out of prison withal, but lost the most part of his rents all the while the country was under the adverse power, and had some small stock of his own plundered and his house, by the perpetual haunting of the enemy, defaced, and for want of inhabitation rendered almost inhabitable (*Memoirs*, p. 119).

The *Memoirs* outlines in some detail Hutchinson's debts incurred during the Civil War and Interregnum, which later put at risk the family estate.⁵¹ The ownership of Owthorpe continued to be difficult for Hutchinson as John Hutchinson's heir and the 'flickers of female desire and agency [...] and the spectre of female ownership' which

⁵⁰ Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, p. 162. See also p. 173; p. 228. In contrast, the surviving archive material makes clear that this confiscation of property was not universally welcomed. For example, MS DD/FJ/11/1/8/37 (1644), Foljambe of Osberton (additional deposit): Deeds and Estate Papers, Nottinghamshire Archives 'Certificate by Francis Pierrepont and other members of the committee of Parliament for Nottinghamshire that Wm. Clarkson of Kirton advanced 'for the publique service of the Parliament' £30 on 1st June 1644, plate to the value of £16 1s 11d on 2nd Oct. 1644, and on the 24th July 1644 'one glead coloured gray golding unto Colonell John Hutchinson [Governor of the Castle of Nottingham] worth the summe of Thirteene pounds, which doe in all make the summe of fiftie nyne pounds one shilling and eleven pence...' Sigs. Endorsed: 'What Will. Clerkson in time of war was forced to advance for the parliament in 1644 viz. £69 [sic] John Clerkson's lands in Richester in Lancashire.'

⁵¹ Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, pp. 118-119. The level of expenses is borne out by various state papers of the period. For example, SP 46/95/fo 118 (1649 Apr 25).

Pamela Hammons reads in the poems are prompted perhaps as much by financial worries and the political implications of retaining or losing ownership of the estate as by a wish for agency more generally.⁵² In contrast with Austen's case, there appear to be no legal constraints on Hutchinson's ownership of Owthorpe and other family properties.

Beyond the overt discussion of political and property concerns, Hutchinson uses the country house discourse in prose and verse texts to construct John Hutchinson as a typical Renaissance gentleman and political hero. The *Memoirs* and 'To my Children' depict him as falconer, accomplished musician, art collector, military tactician and consummate politician, to the extent that Keeble can write with some justification that Hutchinson 'has stolen the royalists' clothes: John Hutchinson excels at precisely accomplishments upon which the royalists prided themselves.'⁵³ The texts also incorporate the discourse's focus on the importance of hospitality as an index of aristocratic responsibility and Christian virtue, on the cultural need for an educated and discriminating ruling elite and on the stabilising force of dynasty whereby the genetic and material inheritance of the elite is assured through marriage and the transfer of property.⁵⁴ Importantly, however, Hutchinson retains clearly articulated social hierarchies in ways which echo her sexual politics and, perhaps, explain her choice of a genre so closely linked to both patriarchal and aristocratic values. In the fourth elegy, Hutchinson describes two paintings. John Hutchinson is presented very clearly, not only as a political martyr but also as a model of civic and spiritual virtue.⁵⁵ He is a figure with '[a] true-borne Princes Lyneaments / [...] Whose Soule [Stoopt] not to servile Things / But triumpht ouer foyld Kings' and his defence comprised '[f]irme Courage' and 'Innocence' (p. 494, 2; 5-6; 8).

⁵² Hammons, 'Polluted Palaces', p. 392.

⁵³ Hutchinson, 'To My Children', p. 19; *Memoirs*, p. 45; 255. Keeble, 'The Colonel's Shadow', p. 230.

⁵⁴ Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, p. 285. This passage expresses regret at John Hutchinson's inability, following the Restoration, to extend hospitality and charity to family, acquaintances and members of the household.

⁵⁵ The portrait is presumed by Norbrook to be that of John Hutchinson by Robert Walker, *Order and Disorder*, ed. by Norbrook, p. xv. It is perhaps important to note that John Hutchinson bought a substantial art collection from the former royal collection.

The textual portrait continues in the fifth elegy, 'On the Picture in Armour', where Hutchinson constructs a blazon of John Hutchinson as both gentleman and political hero:

This table faintly represents That face
Where glorious fiercenesse dwelt wth Charming grace
Lighting oft darted from y:^t angrey Eie
Whence oftner did loues gentle arrowes flie
Majestick greatnesse had a noble Throne
Vpon Those browes but sate not Their alone
For humble Curtesie held y^e same seate
And kept y^e proud from mixing wth y^e great
Those lipps were wisdomes gates w^{ch} neuer did
Vnseasonably disclose nor keepe her hid
When Injurd truth & feeble Innocence
Calld for her Just and powerfull defence (p.495, 1-12).

Whilst this picture is clearly a positive one, the use of a blazon draws attention to Hutchinson's own relationship as a writer to the power and status articulated. She is clearly, as writer and owner of Owthorpe, the owner of these images, holding the authority to observe and describe not just John Hutchinson but also Owthorpe itself.⁵⁶ John Hutchinson's art collection not only defines the subject and location of these cabinet poems, but is key to Hutchinson's re-appropriation of political authority; firstly, in John Hutchinson buying some of the former royal collection, secondly, in her legitimating presentation of him, and finally, in presenting herself as owner of these visual and textual representations.

Part of Hutchinson's articulation of dynastic structures is the presentation of herself ostensibly, and conventionally, as a conduit for genetic and material property. As Hammons argues:

She seems to acquiesce to the masculinist early modern English view that the ideal woman should act either as if she were male-owned property herself or as if she were merely a vehicle for the transfer of property between men.⁵⁷

Yet, Hutchinson's understanding of dynasty also includes herself as an agent to protect these interests, in ways which go beyond Hammons's claims for her self-construction

⁵⁶ Hammons, 'Polluted Palaces', p. 404.

⁵⁷ Hammons, 'Polluted Palaces', p. 393.

as 'a subject of property.'⁵⁸ In so doing she can incorporate her own narrative into the larger history she presents, making the case for her own role, whilst not disturbing the overarching patriarchal structures implicit within dynasty and the associated cultural acts of marriage and inheritance. As with the inheritance of the proprietorial gaze implicit in the art collection discussed above, Hutchinson places herself in the chain of ownership in the role of steward.

This self-presentation is one which hints also at a particularly active involvement both in estate matters during the 1640s and 1650s and following John Hutchinson's death, and in political and religious decisions within the marriage. In *Memoirs*, Hutchinson indicates her envisaged role after John Hutchinson's death:

He left a kind message to his wife: 'Let her', said he, 'as she is above other women, show herself, in this occasion, a good Christian, and above the pitch of ordinary women.' He commanded his daughter that was present to tell the rest, that he would have them all guided by her counsels; and left with his brother the same message to his eldest son (p. 330).

This self-representation also, crucially, includes herself as a steward of theological and political theory and practices, passing these on to her children in textual form.⁵⁹ Like Austen, Hutchinson has proved a competent and active housekeeper and wife, often in the absence of a male family member.⁶⁰ It is Hutchinson who preserves the family property on many occasions and she takes care to indicate this.

Hutchinson, however, presents her limited agency carefully, distinguishing herself from the estate in ways which county house poetry conventionally does not. In 'To the Gardin att O', she makes a distinction between her agency within the limits of marriage and associated patriarchal asymmetries and that of the landscape which is ultimately transferable and fickle:

Annother Gardiner & another Spring
May into ye new grace & new lustre bring
While beauties seedes doe yet remaine aliue
But ah my Glories neuer can reviuie (p.500, 35-38).

⁵⁸ Hammons, 'Polluted Palaces', p. 404.

⁵⁹ Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, pp. 210-221 discusses her role in the family's position vis-à-vis paedobaptism.

⁶⁰ Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, p. 270-271; p. 26. Hutchinson also discusses her mother-in-law Margaret Biron in similar terms, p. 34.

Her role is thus both more enduring – through forms of inheritance – and both more substantial and significant. Despite the conflation of herself and the garden at the beginning of the poem, she marks a departure between the two after a year of mourning when the garden reverts to its natural and fecund state. In mourning the garden plants ‘rise Chargd wth weeping dew / And missing him shrink back into Their drooping heads’, but following this customary period, the material property of John Hutchinson can, like the Restored nation, revert to its former carnal activities (p. 499, 18-20). Neither garden nor nation is, for Hutchinson, loyal to their former guardians and the use of the pathetic fallacy is continued to express this shift of allegiance. In John Hutchinson’s absence, the natural world reflects the perceived degeneracy of Restoration society in the absence of republican governance:

Tell me too sadely how y:^r noblest Plant
 Degenerates if it vsuall Culture want
 There Spreading weeds w:^{ch} while his watchfull eies
 Checkt Their ~~penetrating~~ pernicious growth durst neuer rise
 Let y:^m orerun all y:^e sweete fragrant bankes
 And [hide] what growes in better ord:^d rankes (p. 499, 25-30).

Not only does Hutchinson associate the Restoration with an uncontrolled sexuality, but also with a perceived and, for Hutchinson, dangerous social mobility which threatens to ‘orerun’ society.⁶¹

The social mobility which she regards as so dangerous is, in the *Memoirs*, linked to Royalist and Cromwell’s rule: ‘[t]he officers of the army had made themselves as fine as the courtiers, and everyone hoped in this change to change their condition, and disowned all things they had before adored.’ Yet she also ties this to the new regime of the Restoration: ‘every ballad singer sung up and down the streets ribald rhymes made in reproach of the late commonwealth and of all those worthies that therein endeavoured the people’s freedom and happiness.’ (*Memoirs*, p. 278). The sexual aspect of Hutchinson’s discussion, implied by ‘ribald rhymes’, is even more evident in her original choice of ‘penetrating growth’ which is *sous rature* in the manuscript

⁶¹ See Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, p. 243: ‘For at that time the Major-General, who was but a mean man’s son and of a mean education and no estate before the war, had gathered an estate of £2,000 a year, besides engrossing great offices and encroaching upon his under-officers, and maintained his coach and family, at a height as if they had been borne to principality.’

poem. Hammons argues that the images of fertility function to code female sexuality negatively: 'it remains the case that the lyrics point repeatedly to the widow's lack of patriarchal surveillance.'⁶² However, this analysis fails to take account of the political contexts to which Hutchinson is responding. The depiction of the garden as luxuriant and lascivious conveys, equally, the idea of a political and spiritual wilderness.

Similar ground is covered in the eleventh elegy, 'On my Visitt to WS w:^{ch} I dreamt of That Night'. Here the pastoral idyll is firmly in the past, distanced by chronology and dream; the house is empty: '[n]o other pleasant object greets our Eies' and '[n]othing but dessolation now is found.' For Hutchinson again:

[...] new Inhabitants may restore
The grace and beauty This Place had before
I a Polluted Pallace must remaine
No ornaments can decke me vp againe (p. 508, 46; 48; 51-54).

This customary year, '[w]hen to his worthy memory Thou Then / hast offerd one yeares fruite Thou mayst again / In gawdy dresses to Thy next Lord shine' (p. 500, 41-43), is perhaps also a reference to that time during which widows were presumed not to marry, a period that coincided with the construction of a full inventory of property by the courts.⁶³ The *Elegies* function as a form of inventory for Hutchinson here, yet they do not mark a return to society but rather function as a spiritual accounting. Instead, Hutchinson as loyal widow and republican remains secluded at Owthorpe, marked by mourning and sexual inactivity:

But Could I call back hasty flying time
The vanisht glories y:^t ~~deceit~~ once my Prime
To me That resurrection would be vaine
And like vngathered flowers would die againe (p. 500, 47-50).

In this way she keeps the genetic and material property of Owthorpe intact and uncontaminated, equating, quite clearly, the control of her sexual activity with the control of Owthorpe. Unfortunately, her control was insufficient and Hutchinson lost

⁶² Hammons, 'Polluted Palaces', p. 399.

⁶³ For a discussion of the procedures and protocols of the first year of widowhood see Erickson, *Women and Property* and Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property*.

Owthorpe and other family property due to debts incurred during the conflict of the previous decades and financial and legal impositions at the Restoration.⁶⁴

However, perhaps the most significant feature of country house discourse for Hutchinson is its structuring dynamic which uses a complex of binary oppositions to frame and prompt its socio-political discussion, the most pertinent of which are the two pairings, inside/outside and private/public.⁶⁵ In reality, only inside/outside is fully dyadic, yet as McBride notes, country house discourse attempts to negotiate the, at times, awkward relationship between the two interrelated concepts.⁶⁶ Thus, despite the importance of hospitality, there often appears to be a gap between those inside the estate and those left standing at the gates. In reality, the boundaries of the country house and the country house poem itself are flexible and, to a certain extent, permeable. They both allow for mobility and change whilst maintaining a fiction of an idyllic and stable community. This differential dynamic which emphasises stasis whilst allowing for mobility is used by Hutchinson to explore the realities of her circumstances and political fortunes, both of which she presents in polarised terms. However, as a close reading of the poems will show, Hutchinson reverses the direction in which she reads these apparent oppositions by locating the outside, inside, moving the speaker closer to the realities of loss and defeat. She also uses the elasticity of both the estate and the poetic form to simultaneously withdraw to a personal space yet expand and complicate her discussion of death and loss, to incorporate life and victory.

The other pairing, private/public, consists of more accurately relational concepts, which Gal argues, can be part of a spectrum, pertaining simultaneously and contingent on circumstance, context and chronology.⁶⁷ Hutchinson uses this shifting and complex relationship between the concepts of private and public to achieve a nuanced poetic voice. Crucially, this discursive precision is also a far better reflection of contemporary conceptions of the private and the public, which was far more

⁶⁴ *Order and Disorder*, ed. by Norbrook, p. xvi.

⁶⁵ Dubrow, 'The Country House Poem', p. 167.

⁶⁶ McBride, *Country House Discourse*, p. 6.

⁶⁷ Gal, 'A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction.'

complex than has been previously stated.⁶⁸ This relational dynamic also allows Hutchinson to translate private spaces to public voice in a way which often elides the problematic considerations of gender. Taken together this simultaneous use of dyad and spectrum allows Hutchinson to present a complex map of her own circumstances at Owthorpe and also of the wider contexts of the 1660s. This will be discussed in greater detail below.

Hutchinson's adaptation of the country house genre

Hutchinson, however, does not only appropriate the discourse and associated poetic forms, but adapts them to suit her personal circumstances, historical contexts, and her wider exploration of social, political and spiritual verities as she understands them. The most significant change is in the spaces depicted in the 'Elegies.' These are the interior and secluded spaces of Owthorpe. This is a shift which rather than reflecting constrained and limited experience based on gender, relates to the constraints of Civil War and the Restoration settlement for Parliamentarians to which the poems both refer. Although, later in the century and into the next, the house becomes a more prominent feature of country house poetry for both economic and aesthetic reasons, Restoration country house poems are still predominantly estate poems as categorised by Fowler.⁶⁹ Hutchinson moves the focus away from the wider estate landscape, to a much closer emphasis on the house and secluded parts of the garden. There may be several reasons for this, not least the physical environment of Owthorpe itself and Hutchinson's life there. However, this reading of the interior focus as part of a constrained and female experience is perhaps at best partial. The linking of interior space to a private sphere is to a certain extent undone by Mary Thomas Crane's

⁶⁸ *Women Writing and the Public Sphere, 1700-1830*, ed. by Eger, Grant, O'Gallchoir, and Warburton; Kelly-Gadol, 'Did Women have a Renaissance?'; Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres'; Paula, R. Backscheider, 'Introduction', in *The Intersections of the Public and Private Spheres in Early Modern England*, ed. by Paula R. Backscheider and Timothy Dykstal (London: Prose Studies, 1995), pp. 1-21.

⁶⁹ *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, pp. 1-29.

analysis.⁷⁰ More convincing are Norbrook's political analyses which highlight the retirement trope commandeered to republican ends.⁷¹

The treatment of Owthorpe in the 'Elegies' is one which privileges the personal experience of its spaces rather than the prospects of or from the house: in 'Another on The Sun Shine' she rejects the conventional view from the house, turning the speaker's back from the widow. In 'To the Gardin att O: 7:th', the usual visual dynamic is reversed, with the garden regarding a reluctant speaker: 'Poore desolate Gardin smile no more on me' (p. 499, 1). Similarly, in 'Second To the Sun Shineing into her Cham:', the speaker asks '[b]right [day] starre looke not in at me' (p. 489, 1). Indeed, the central dynamic is one of withdrawal and seclusion rather than physical engagement with the wider estate, a redrawing of the estate boundaries. The speaker requests that: 'Let me and my Just greifes alone' (p. 489, 15). Furthermore, the spaces depicted by the poems are mostly the personal spaces of Owthorpe, the house and the immediate garden areas, rather than a wider parkland. Indeed, where the garden is represented it appears to be a walled one: 'empaled [...] from y^e comon Ground / [with ...] walls w:th shining frutetrees Crownd.' (p. 499, 11-12). Similarly, the interiors shown to the reader are domestic apartments rather than the more public areas of the house.

Three of the poems depict the paintings on the walls of the house and two are written from the perspective of Hutchinson's own chamber.⁷² She, therefore, not only presents her mourning and the analogous retirement of John Hutchinson as one which is circumscribed spatially and socially, but also one which moves ever inwards. Despite being in retirement, Hutchinson's speaker claims she must 'yet into a darker Covert fly' (p. 492, 6) to avoid the

[...] prying beames
From looking one those silent Streames
Which from our Eies in Secrett fall
Wayling a publick funeral (p. 489, 21-24).⁷³

⁷⁰ Crane, 'Illicit Privacy'.

⁷¹ Norbrook, 'Elegies'.

⁷² See 'Upon two pictures'; 'On the Picture in Armour'; 'On the Picture of y^e Prisoner'; 'Second to the Sun Shining' and 'Another on The Sun Shine'. The title of the second elegy makes it clear it is 'her Cham:' and that this is a place where 'those silent streames which from our Eies in Secrett fal.'

⁷³ Hammons, 'Polluted Palaces', p. 402 links the use of covert here to the legal status of *feme covert*.

In 'Another on the Sun Shine', Hutchinson retreats physically, politically and religiously from Restoration England with its 'impudent suters', 'Gawdy Masker', 'common bawd[s]' and 'gay courtiers' who 'wilt thrust into this darke roome' (pp. 492-493, 7; 11; 17; 35; 37). The estate gates can clearly not contain the threat here. She mourns and regrets here not just her personal loss, but also her religio-political loss and anticipates the threats to her and her nation's safety and salvation.⁷⁴ This interior trajectory is prompted by the Restoration and personal loss, but also precipitated by theological belief. This religious aspect of retirement and retreat, not only reflects Hutchinson's own and more general moves towards unmediated forms of religion but also the threatened position of dissenting communities following the Restoration. However, as Gal explains, the private or personal can be constantly reiterated to the public, according to context.⁷⁵ Therefore, although Hammons claims the retreat seen in these poems speaks to a disempowered and female position, Hutchinson may be negotiating for herself a position of strength through a rejection of a fallen and politically corrupt world.⁷⁶ Although the spaces depicted may appear private, it is the complex of personal and political which Hutchinson seeks to access.

The rejection of the wider or wilder landscape is, perhaps, also linked, more generally, to Hutchison's puritan beliefs. The fecundity and disorder of the landscape represents, not merely Restoration political order, but also the fallen condition of mankind. Nature is for the puritan mind deeply ambiguous – an inescapably yet deeply dangerous correlative of mankind's fallen condition. It may be ordered by the divine, but the reflection of divine authority in the natural world is liable to misreading.⁷⁷ Nature is, thus, a trap of idolatry to the unwary. To this end Hutchinson's move ever inwards – she hedges herself about, physically and textually here – may attempt to avoid the false images of the wider world. These risk escaping from the order she tries to impose upon it through poetic form, religio-political belief

⁷⁴ Hammons reads the 'staind beames' here as a sodomitical attack on JH in prison, see 'Polluted Palaces' p. 401. I would question this claim and would suggest a less literal reading – an attack on Cavalier and restoration rhetoric of sexuality. This political reading is supported by Norbrook, 'Elegies', p. 469.

⁷⁵ Gal, 'A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction'.

⁷⁶ Hammons, 'Polluted Palaces', p. 402.

⁷⁷ Norbrook, 'Elegies', p. 475.

and material estate improvements. This religious belief in ‘the vanity of carnal reason and the reality of the Fall’, is, as Katherine Narveson explains, in keeping with Hutchinson’s wider theological position, visible in her translation of a treatise by Congregationalist John Owen.⁷⁸ However, there are glimpses in the poems that an appropriate form of nature appreciation is possible. Divine grace can recuperate this inherently fallen and carnal world for the elect:

Till God into himselfe his Creature tooke
Who all Things elce w:th God like eies now viewd
And seeing y:^m in God Saw They were good
Thus was delighted in The Creature Streames
While They were guilt w:th y:^e Creators beames (p. 488, 40-44).

Most importantly, the reader, like Hutchinson herself, must learn to read the world carefully and correctly.

Many of the poems in the collection use light and dark as a central metaphor to discuss this need for a correct vision. Yet, the requisite illumination is, more accurately, true divine light in contrast to false, earthly forms. Hutchinson is conscious of the differences between these two visions of the world. As Norbrook states, ‘the Puritan saint must be capable of at once seeing the image and seeing beyond it, of effecting an inner iconoclasm.’⁷⁹ In ‘On The Spring 1668 xiv’ she writes:

The Shining rays That guild The Skeyes
And glad all other mortalls Sight
Add but more payne to my bleard Eies
And driue me from y:^e torturing light (p. 513, 5-8).

She continues in a similar vein, turning her attention to the consequences for others of this failure to use divine light as guidance:

That Sun That now so flatters you
And in y:^r Virgins bosomes playes
Will Shortly change your pleasant hiew
And Scorch you w:th his burning rayes (p. 513, 25-28).

This false light, ‘[a]n artificiall heate and light’ is both an ungodly perspective and a reference to Charles II (pp. 501; 5). Elsewhere, the darkness of death, defeat and the fallen condition throw into contrast both the ‘impure light’ of the Restoration where

⁷⁸ Narveson, ‘Lucy Hutchinson’s *On Theology*’, p. 41.

⁷⁹ Norbrook, ‘*Elegies*’, p. 472.

‘glorious Idolls blaze’ and the ‘Shining host [...] / At whose approach our mists shall fly away’ (p. 493, 39; 44; 52). Hutchinson’s speaker warns, that when ‘thou wilt Thrust into this darke roome’,

By Thyne owne light read Thy most certeine doom
Darknesse shall shortly quench Thy impure light
And Thou Shalt Sett in Euerlasting Night
Those whome Thou flattriest shall see y^e expire
And haue no light but Their [owne] funerall fire (p. 493, 38-42).

The association of rural retirement with royalist political experience and poetic output during the Interregnum may have tainted this trope for republicans. Yet, on closer examination, the desire for a rural idyll may match more closely Hutchinson’s particular and personal religio-political position, especially by the 1650s. The disenchantment of John Hutchinson with Cromwell and other Parliamentarian leaders during the late 1650s was shared by Hutchinson, to the extent that John Hutchinson was regarded by his contemporaries as shifting his position as far as supporting the Restoration settlement. The London based court of Charles II was, however, for Hutchinson, a focus of sustained derogation and attack. The poems attempt to make clear the link between vice and corruption and the Restoration socio-political order located in London and in the figure of Charles himself.

However, in her discussion of rural retreat, Hutchinson is asking less for a re-pastoralization of England, but rather a more extreme form of retirement and associated polity:

At y^e emission of Their powerfull Ray
Th’old Sorcerers Strong [enchantments] fled away
The Groues y^e Pallaces the Pleasant Pooles
Arbours sweetes musick beauties feast y:^tfooles
Charm’d by y^e mighty witch reale Esteeme
Appeard a loathsome dunghill unto him (p. 487-488, 29-34).

This cannot be fully represented by the traditional landscapes of the country house tradition, where a beneficent and female landscape is open to the control of patriarchal society. Hutchinson, although not necessarily arguing against patriarchy with its integral hierarchies of gender and class, provides a different country house map. This map is far more domestic and interior in focus. It is also simultaneously a

tightly constrained space, hemmed in by political reality, religious belief and personal grief and economic problems, yet also one from which a political and theological statement can be articulated.

Hutchinson also reworks the gendering of nature seen in country house tradition. Although it remains implicitly female, moving from virgin to prostitute in 'To the Gardin att O', the virtuous centre of the estate is not held in place by matriarch or daughter. This is in contrast to poems, for example by Jonson and Marvell, where the political and economic authority resides in the hands of the male owner and his (male) heirs.⁸⁰ Rather, Hutchinson locates the virtuous centre of the estate in her late husband, who becomes, through the use of the blazon, the estate itself, whose 'whole fabrique was a pallace built' (p. 495, 21). She also attempts to place political and economic agency more firmly into her own hands both as writer and widow. We occasionally see a similar re-distribution of merits in the *Memoirs*, where although John Hutchinson is the hero, she, albeit disguised by the use of the third person, makes important decisions regarding the estate at Owthorpe, the family's theological shift away from paedobaptism, the appointment of a chaplain and finally in saving John Hutchinson following the Restoration by writing and sending a letter of recantation on his behalf.

The gendering of the country estate also conventionally positions the female figure with and in nature.⁸¹ Hammons reads Hutchinson's depiction of the garden at Owthorpe as blurring herself with the real estate in a manner which supports the contemporary patriarchal understanding of women and nature both as property to be owned, controlled, and exchanged.⁸² However, it is important to note that Hutchinson eschews the conventions of the subgenre, frequently locating her speaker not in a natural and naturalising environment but rather in the built and socio-political spaces of the country house. It may, therefore, be possible to read this discussion of the garden at Owthorpe in terms of political and theological debate rather than expression of a gendered reading of nature. Hutchinson presents John Hutchinson's cultivation of

⁸⁰ Jonson, 'To Penshurst', *The Country House Poem*, pp. 53–62 and Marvell, 'Upon Appleton House', in *The Country House Poem*, pp. 281–294.

⁸¹ Pearson, 'Poetry, the Female Body and the Country House'.

⁸² Hammons, 'Polluted Palaces'.

the estate in the 1650s as a true nurturing of the restored liberties provided by the Civil War and a politically inflected act. As Norbrook asserts:

For Lucy Hutchinson enclosure symbolized the exercise of political controls in two directions: against the incursions of the lower classes, but also against the anarchic self-will of the monarchy.⁸³

John Hutchinson's death, like the loss of the Good Old Cause, had left the (e)state as a vulgar and unkempt place with the restored monarchy part of this gaudy disrepair. For Hutchinson the fruits of the true rebellion, now lay 'like vngathered flowers' and '[t]he trees about The Gardin Stand / Drooping for want of y:^t kind hand' (p. 500 50; p. 509, 9-10). Whilst Hutchinson may include herself here, it is as part of a betrayed and lost nation.

As part of her re-working of the genre and discourse, Hutchinson does not populate her country estate. 'On my Visitt to WS' depicts an estate where '[t]hose Actors left an empty stage / The Nobler liuing gusts y:^t filld those roomes / Are now withdrawne & shut vpe in their Tombs' (p. 507, 24-26). Where conventionally the country estate is peopled by, albeit passive and silent workers and leisured owners and guests, Hutchinson's poetic speaker is a lone figure, '[w]ith vnseene teares & vnheard [groanes]' (p. 509, 1). Indeed, absence is a far more pertinent focus of the collection than presence: 'No tapstrey now decks This naked roome / But what comes from y:^e Spiders dusty loome' (p. 508, 43-44). All that is left of the material and human world at Owthorpe is a voice. This absence of owner and estate workers is a thematic characteristic of much of women's country house poetry from Lanyer onwards. Austen, Cavendish, Burghope and Finch, and to a lesser extent Leapor, all depict country estates which are empty. For Hutchinson, however, this is less a reflection and erasure of a problematic social order, but rather the representation of a trajectory and spatial constraints imposed by political exile and puritan thought. The iconoclasm, noted by Norbrook, has been brought to bear on the spaces of the country estate. The poems represent an individual's emotional, political and spiritual journey across the spaces of the country estate.

⁸³ Norbrook, *'Elegies'*, p. 477.

Reversals and re-interpretation

Hutchinson's choice of the elegy must also be considered alongside her appropriation and adaptation of country house discourse, since this literary decision provides her with another set of generic codes to frame and shape her discussion. Elegy, specifically those addressed to her husband and other close family members, frequently prompts a critical reading of such women's poetry as private, based as it is on other female examples from the late seventeenth- and early eighteenth century. Yet, Hutchinson is working much closer to classical and more contemporary Royalist models of elegy which are publicly orientated and closely linked to the construction of history or myth. As Bacscheider notes, the elegy was originally a verse form rather than thematic genre which used alternating hexameter and pentameter couplets, the hexameter allowing for a more narrative aspect and the pentameter contemplation. The dominant model had, however, by the late seventeenth century become more typically iambic pentameter quatrains.⁸⁴ Hutchinson's use of elegy is more closely identified, in both form and content, with the earlier and highly politicised models. She typically uses couplets and frequently uses both hexameter and pentameter forms, allowing for both historical narrative and personal reflection.

From the 1650s, elegy was regarded by some republicans as contaminated by the mythologizing of the Stuart monarchy and the construction of Charles I as a martyr. As a verse form, it was frequently seen as characterised by a lament not only for the Stuart monarchy but also a lost civilisation. Whereas republican or non-royalist elegy still contained an element of the panegyric, this is usually substantially reworked. Thus, the elegies for Cromwell tend to praise when not overtly satirical. As Smith notes, 'Leveller elegy finds the genre a fit vehicle for the model of simple patriotic virtue upon which so much Leveller propaganda relied', indeed, the propaganda function is never fully surrendered. Hutchinson combines both of these modes, lamenting a death and political defeat, yet simultaneously constructing John Hutchinson as a republican martyr.⁸⁵ Both the 'Elegies' and the *Memoirs* are characterised by hyperbole and images of martyrdom. However, the combination with

⁸⁴ Bacscheider, *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets*, pp. 268-315.

⁸⁵ Smith, *Literature and Revolution*, p. 287-292.

country house poetry and its inherent hierarchies allows Hutchinson to simultaneously distance herself from such levelling forms of the elegy and the panegyrics to Cromwell.

The elegy, like country house discourse is, of course, also informed by a dyad, life and death. By combining the two sub-genres and overlaying these onto the spaces of Owthorpe, Hutchinson can reread these most basic of concepts through reversal and the shifting of boundaries between them. Hutchinson, therefore, takes the two basic binaries with which country house poetry and elegy work: inside and outside and life and death and their associated hierarchies of class and gender. She then uses these as analogies to other oppositions which reflect her personal circumstances and historical contexts. Crucially, she does not remove the binary logic or flatten the hierarchies at play. Instead, she reads against the grain. In this way, she makes a case for a very specific, discriminating and ultimately divine way of seeing the world. It is through this reading, or more accurately rereading of the world, that redemption, both political and theological, can for her be achieved. Hutchinson demands of herself and asks of her reader to read or look in different and far more discriminating ways.

The reversal of the informing binaries of country house discourse and elegy provides Hutchinson with the means to create a complex and frequently doubled perspective. This doubling is vital to her simultaneous critique of royalist enemies and the dictatorial ambition of Cromwell during the later 1650s.⁸⁶ Indeed, in the *Memoirs*, Hutchinson reserves some of the most vitriolic attacks for the supporters of Cromwell, equating the arbitrary rule of Charles I and Cromwell:

In the interim Cromwell and his army grew wanton with their power, and invented a thousand tricks of government which when nobody opposed, they themselves fell to dislike and vary every [day] [...] The Cavaliers, in policy, who saw that while Cromwell reduced all by exercise of tyrannical power under another name, there was door opened for the restoring of their party, fell in with Cromwell, and heightened all his disorders; who at last exercised such an arbitrary power that the whole land grew weary of him (p. 256).

This doubling is also important in the backwards and forwards glance which the collection as a whole achieves, allowing for a nostalgic glance backwards politically and

⁸⁶ Mihoko Suzuki, 'Introduction', in *Anne Clifford and Lucy Hutchinson: Ashgate Critical Essays on Women Writers in England, 1550-1700. Volume 5*, ed. by Mihoko Suzuki (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), pp. xiii-xxx (p. xix).

personally to the 1640s whilst simultaneously looking forward to a future defined by moral and spiritual virtue.

To illustrate this use of reversal, doubling and reinterpretation a consideration of three key oppositions and the associated metaphors will serve: life/death; defeat/victory and Fall/redemption. In the first elegy 'Leaue of yee pittying friends; leaue of in vaine', Hutchinson writes 'For 'twas not he; 'twas only I that died' and 'My substance into y^e darke vault was laide' (p. 487, 4; 7). Whilst this is clearly a rhetorical stance to emphasise the depth of grief felt, it also plays a part in Hutchinson's wider scheme of reversals. The *Memoirs* similarly confuses or rather reverses life and death. Hutchinson closes her narrative with a description of the ghosts inhabiting Sandown castle. These hauntings, contrary to expectations, begin before the death of John Hutchinson and, after his death; the castle is visited not by an apparition of the dead man but rather of his living wife.⁸⁷ The poems also depict a material space where the living speaker is suspended or reduced to inertia, by a combination of grief, loss and the fallen condition. As with the images of darkness, this inertia simultaneously points up both the sexual activity of the wider world and the true life to come at death. In the second poem of the series, 'These verses transcribed', Hutchinson converts death and defeat:

ah! Why doth death its latest stroke delay
if we must Leaue y^e light, why do we stay?
by slow degrees, more paynefully to die,
& languish in a Long calamitye (p. 490, 1-4).

Thus, she reads it as a form of retirement, rather than regarding retirement as a political and social death.

Throughout the collection of poems Hutchinson emphasises the moral and political virtues of earthly seclusion, isolation and darkness over a public life, sociability or the light. Indeed, Restoration polity 'pollutes' the divine light and associated political order. The poetic speaker shuns this carnal and courtly light, as representative of the corruption of the Restoration political order and mankind's fallen condition. Hutchinson clearly associates tyranny with the fallen condition:

⁸⁷ Hutchinson, *Memoirs*, p. 336.

Bright [day] starre looke not in at me
Thou canst not in Thy Circutt see
A spectacle of greater woe
And Those wrongs That haue made me soe
Ware in Thy guilty p^rsence done (p. 489, 1-5).

Hutchinson also revisits and re-charts the political landscape, re-labelling the Restoration as a rebellion, the Civil War as the Restoration and re-imagining the exile and imprisonment suffered by herself, her husband and other republicans as liberty:

[...] he free in prison remand
And in y^e *Bloody Tower* with triumph reignd
Dispising his oppressors rage while They
By lusts enslaud in sadder [Thralldome] lay (p. 488, 53-56).

In the series of two poems on the portraits of John Hutchinson and a third which presents a portrait of a prisoner, Hutchinson works again with the paradoxes of the Civil War and the Restoration. For her the republican cause aimed '[n]ot to destroy but to restore' (p. 494, 10), whilst the Restoration is a period of rebellion and vulgarity, against a true political order and divine grace. Similarly, the figure of John Hutchinson is seen as regal and even imperial in ways in which Charles II is never seen in Hutchinson's works:

A true-borne Princes Lyneaments
No Vulgar hands Sett on his Crowne
Nor could They cast his Empire downe
Whose Soule [Stoopt] not to servile Things
But triumpht ouer foyld Kings (p. 494, 2-6).

Hutchinson also works to convert the fallen reality of Restoration England, where the fall is both political and spiritual damnation, to a form of political order and more pressingly, spiritual redemption:

The effect of humane Passion shuch as mine
Which ends in woe & death; But Loue devine
Whose Sacred flame did his pure bosome fire
With more Stupendious working doth aspire
Vntill it life & Victory Compleates (p. 487, 11-15).

Throughout, Hutchinson works with the paradoxes of earthly life which will be by 'this pure flame [...] burnt away' until mankind is 'rich with Vniuersall Losse.' Ultimately, this conversion of damnation to salvation returns Hutchinson back to the elegy and the

discussion of life and death: 'This sweetly carried of expiring breath / And brought him new life in approaching death' (pp. 487-488, 23-24; 67-68).

Although she often figures the world as a reversal of divine order, as her reality and experience as one of the godly is at odds with that of the majority and the reprobate, she goes beyond mere reversal. In effect, she constructs a series of reversals which together form a series ultimately leading to human redemption and divine order. Chaos becomes stability, death life, darkness light, retirement expansion, privacy public authority, rebellion a return to Eden. Paradoxically, the inwards and downwards trajectory of the 'Elegies' is written to be read as an expansion and upwards movement. Nonetheless, Hutchinson makes clear that these dyads can only be reversed by continual interpretation not only of the world but also of history, one's own spiritual journey and of her own texts.

As Aloni argues, the elegy has three main functions: to memorialize an individual, to record momentous events and to exhort others to action⁸⁸. It is also possible to outline three similar functions of the country house genre: to praise an owner and their estate, to describe the material and social spaces of that estate, and to prescribe a political economy by reading the estate as a microcosm of the state. As I have demonstrated, Hutchinson uses these analogous functions of both genres to map the events of the 1640s and 1650s, the life of John Hutchinson and her personal circumstances in the 1660s onto the domestic spaces of Owthorpe, to eulogise an individual, to record events and to articulate a religio-political statement. If, as Keeble claims, Hutchinson has stolen the royalists' clothes on behalf of John Hutchinson; she seems also to have stolen for herself the royalist map of the 1640s and 1650s to which De Groot refers, in order to pick a path through a politically and socially defined retirement⁸⁹. Furthermore, in the 'Elegies,' Hutchinson articulates very clearly a public statement on three levels of ascending importance for her: personal, political and theological⁹⁰.

⁸⁸ Aloni, 'Elegy', p. 183.

⁸⁹ Keeble, 'The Colonel's Shadow', p. 230 and De Groot, *Royalist identities*, p. 20-25.

⁹⁰ Compare with Hammons analysis which emphasises the personal. See Hammons, 'Polluted Palaces'.

The country house genre offers Hutchinson a thematically focused poetic space to discuss political and social retirement, whilst indicating her ongoing religious and political commitments. Similarly, it allows her to discuss the defeat of the republican cause and the death of her husband in ways which do not preclude his construction as a republican martyr and Renaissance hero. Most crucially, perhaps, it also allows her to highlight the importance of property to herself and others, both as a widow and political actor. By combining the discourses of the country house with the elegy, Hutchinson can achieve even more. She incorporates her own narrative into the lament for her husband in a manner similar to her blurring of biography and autobiography in the prose texts. In so doing, she can both identify and validate her own part in the republican cause and outline her important role in securing both a political and spiritual future.

However, Hutchinson does not just appropriate these genres; she adapts and substantially reworks them, not least in her decision to combine the two. This allows her to examine and reinterpret the structuring oppositions on which both the wider discourses of the country house and Restoration society were to a certain extent predicated. Hutchinson's texts, then, attempt to reread and rework existing historical, political and theological analyses through the appropriation and reconfiguration of existing literary and political discourses, rhetorical positions and the boundaries which attempt to define these. The country house map which Hutchinson constructs is, thus, both more domestic in focus and flexible in its discussion. Hutchinson moves the boundaries of the country house (genre) allowing her poetic speaker to remain within the house or enclosed parts of the garden. She also depicts an emptied landscape, resisting the association between herself as a woman and nature. Both generic alterations allow her to retain an agency in relation to the estate itself, its moveable property and the political cause associated with its previous owner. Furthermore, from the domestic and interior spaces of the estate, Hutchinson's speaker can offer a cautionary reading of the wider estate and by extension both Restoration England and man's fallen condition.

It is in the reversal of the structuring binaries that most of Hutchinson's reworking is located. This allows her to use the private spaces of the estate to articulate a public statement, and to force a reconsideration of her own, and the reader's, conception of death and life, defeat and victory, Fall and redemption. By reading the complex of binaries at work in the genre as a series of reiterations which are contingent on context or interpretation, Hutchinson extends her discussion from that of a particular period of private grief located in a specific place to one which transcends the individual, the immediate location and the historical moment. Hutchinson's use and reworking of the themes and dynamics of the country house genre not only provides Hutchinson with a potent and flexible literary space from which to articulate an authoritative and precise statement, but also reveals much about the wider uses of the country house genre and discourse during the 1660s.

The Restoration prompted a more general reconsideration of many boundaries: literary, social, political, economic and, whilst many commentators understood, and continue to understand, these boundaries as the dividing line between opposing positions, the reality was far more complex. Indeed, these and other texts of the period belie any sense that the Restoration was a simple reversal of political fortunes and an accompanying return to a stability predicated on fixed and polarised positions. For Hutchinson, this period was characterised by more than a reversal, it was a series of relocations and a period of reworking and rereading the world, in order to make sense of it, to validate herself and her religio-political community, and to ensure her own spiritual salvation. As such, Hutchinson's prose and verse are marked as much by a Civil War past as by a Restoration present. This simultaneous focus on the past and the present is something which the country house genre accommodates. Indeed, McBride argues that it is one of its central functions.⁹¹ However, as my close readings have demonstrated, Hutchinson also adapts the chronological focus of the genre to discuss the future; and, as such, Hutchinson's use of elegy accords with Aloni's categorisation, that of including a prospective view.⁹²

⁹¹ McBride, *Country House Discourse*, p. 18; pp. 35-36.

⁹² Aloni, 'Elegy', p. 183.

Hutchinson's appropriation and reworking epitomises a more general concern with the country house during the period, following widespread destruction and sequestration of property. The wider use of the genre, as seen in Hutchinson's prose texts, also points to the ongoing connection between ownership and political and social legitimacy during the period. This is in contrast to many analyses which consider the use of the genre to be almost exclusively a royalist practice and of little importance after 1660. The country house poem is also frequently regarded as almost exclusively a male and aristocratic written and orientated genre. Yet, the existence and range of country house poetry in the Restoration, by both male and female poets belies these critical analyses and the complexion of modern anthologies. This includes, to some extent, even the most inclusive, such as that edited by Fowler. There does, however, appear to be a more conclusive break in the use of the genre between 1685 and the late 1690s. In many ways, the reworking of the genre both in terms of tropes and in the formal and generic interplay seen in Hutchinson's 'Elegies,' may offer some clue to this apparent gap. The movement of the genre, thematically and formally, and often at the hands of a very wide range of poets is discussed in subsequent chapters.

In conclusion, I have suggested in this chapter that Hutchinson's 'Elegies' simultaneously uses the country house genre in ways similar to earlier royalist examples and subtly reworks the spaces of the genre for republican purposes. Thus, she mimics earlier attempts to negotiate a position of strength from defeat and to prescribe order onto chaos. Indeed, the critique of Cromwell's power means there is a chronological and political overlap here. However, the poems also offer a reconsideration of the spaces of the country house, and the boundaries which define them, allowing her to redraw the social, political and religious spaces of the Restoration period for herself as an individual and as a republican. She, thus, conflates a public discussion of the social, economic and political impact of landownership with a private exploration of grief; a public biography of a republican hero with a personal portrait of her husband; and a conventional picture of herself as a pious and obedient wife with that of an intelligent educated and politically forthright woman.

Chapter four

The country house poem, 1690-1720: exile and community in the poetry of Anne Finch and Jane Barker

This chapter will examine the appropriation and re-positioning of the country house genre in the poetry of Anne Finch and Jane Barker. As chapters two and three have shown, the Restoration is perhaps best understood as a process which was complex and experienced very differently by many poets. Unsurprisingly, such a large scale phenomenon is visible not only in the poetry of the period, but in that of a much longer timeframe. As Christine Gerrard asserts:

Poets of the first three decades of the new century carried with them the legacy of the post-Civil War and Restoration years in their shared preoccupation with party politics and dynastic certainties.¹

As a result the poetry of the period 1690-1720 exhibits a similar focus on the country house to that of the period 1660-1689. The country estate remained, historically and in the poetry, not only as a marker of power, wealth and social status, but also as a site where these indices merged and where power of all sorts could be displayed, influence sought and connections or alliances made or maintained. It is a paradox of the country house genre that its attempts at the inscription of the ideal of order and of belonging make it an ideal space to describe and explore disorder, loss and disconnection. Thus, the country house poetry of this period, including that by Finch and Barker, is marked by exile and defeat, by retirement and retreat, but also by friendship, connections and agency.

Both Finch and Barker were loyal to James II and willing to accept exile and marginalization as a consequence of this loyalty. I shall argue that the genre offers them both a symbol of an ideal and temporarily lost polity and a desired religio-political and social community. It also provides a literary space into which both can retire and reflect on and reconsider the events of the Restoration. This discursive site

¹ Christine Gerrard, 'Introduction', in *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, ed. by Christine Gerrard (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 1-3 (p. 2).

also becomes in their texts a space where and through which community and connection can be fostered. The flexibility of the genre allows Finch to explore the country estate as an abstract symbol of dynastic, patrilineal power and aristocratic governance which was, for her, threatened by the political settlement after 1689. It also allows a reflection of her own personal circumstances as a non-juror in *de facto* exile on her husband's family estate at Eastwell and as guest at other estates belonging to an extended family and friendship network. The symbolic and actual spaces of Eastwell, Longleat and other estates depicted in her poetry allow Finch to establish a counter space where appropriate behaviour is privileged, in stark contrast to courtly or urban mores seen elsewhere. Her poetry also gives a glimpse into and enacts the social and literary relationships which she established on and between various estates. For Jane Barker, the country house genre is perhaps a more surprising match for her personal circumstances as she was never part of an aristocratic circle centred on a country estate. Nonetheless, as a Catholic exile in St Germain-en-Laye – 'a religious, political, and artistic rebel' – Barker appropriates and reworks the central tropes of the country house genre to explore her residence and relationship to various convents and religious establishments both in Northern France and London.²

In this period, however, the ways in which the country estate ensured and enacted political power changed. The derivation of monarchical and civic power was reconsidered in the aftermath of the 1688 revolution and in the preceding political debates from the late 1670s.³ Although the influence of contract theory, especially that exemplified by John Locke's political philosophy, has been widely asserted, Gerrard argues that the conceptions of monarchy changed less than previous scholarship allows; William, Anne and later Hanoverian monarchs all claimed to rule by divine right, even if this divine right had been 'aided' by constitutional changes, such as the Glorious Revolution or Act of Settlement.⁴ This more complex view of monarchical

² Rivka Swenson, 'Representing Modernity in Jane Barker's *Galesia Trilogy*: Jacobite Allegory and Patch-Work Aesthetic', *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture*, 34 (2005), 55-80 (p. 55).

³ Alan Downie, *To Settle the Succession of State: Literature and Politics, 1678-1750* (London: Macmillan, 1994), pp. 31-62.

⁴ John Locke, *Two Treatise of Government* ed. by Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Christine Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry, and National Myth, 1725-1742* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994), pp. 188-189. Mark Goldie, 'Priestcraft and the Birth of

power can be seen in the country house poem of the period. Where the early seventeenth century examples of the country house poem stressed dynastic stewardship and its associated duties as the legitimating aspect of political power analogous to divine right monarchy, the newer conceptions of monarchy, exemplified by Locke's political philosophy, changed the way both the monarch and the property owner were understood. Ownership was now the key to power; property and the uses of property underpinned the constitution.

As Fowler indicates, Finch and Barker are not alone in finding the country estate not only a location for their social and literary activities but also a resonant and useful image beyond 1688.⁵ The country estate remained a symbol of appropriate governance and importantly the ideas and structures espoused by the discourse were claimed by most political commentators:

Just so long as they belonged to the privileged elite, there was a great deal of common ground between the vast majority of Whigs and Tories [who were] massively conservative and shared an ideology of order and hierarchy. [...] The common objective of the politics of the propertied members of each party was to perpetuate their privileged position in society.⁶

As David Eastwood comments, 'Landed acres, increasingly manicured and stylized, were a good metaphor for the effortless control by a landed elite.'⁷ Given the universal appeal of the discourse, these same acres could, however, also offer the poet a satirical target, as Matthew Prior's 'An Epitaph' shows. Here a lack of stewardship or moral guidance leaves an estate without any of the markers of good governance:

He car'd not what the footmen did:
Her Maids she neither prais'd, nor chid:
So ev'ry Servant took his Course;
And bad at first, they all grew worse.
Slothful Disorder fill'd His Stable;
And sluttish Planty deck'd Her table.⁸

Whiggism', in *Political Discourse in Early Modern Britain*, ed. By Nicholas Phillipson and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 201-231. James Tully, *A Discourse on Property: John Locke and his Adversaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

⁵ *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, pp. 21-24.

⁶ Downie, *Succession of State*, p. 2.

⁷ David Eastwood, 'Local Government and Local Society' in *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. by H.T. Dickinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 40-54 (p. 40).

⁸ Matthew Prior, 'An Epitaph' *Poems on Several Occasions* (London, 1718), pp. 281-283.

Whilst offering a broad challenge to mismanagement, on a domestic and political level, the poem may offer an indictment of the changing demographic of property ownership in ways which will be fully realised in Leapor's 'Crumble-Hall' as I shall discuss in chapter six.⁹

Fowler includes four poems from this period in his anthology, including Dryden's 'To my Honour'd Kinsman, John Driden of Chesterton in the county of Huntingdon, Esquire.'¹⁰ This poem written in 1699 exhibits similarities with the texts of both Finch and Barker: all three poets are to a certain extent forced to '[shun] Civil Rage' (3) and seek refuge away from a hostile political environment. Yet this appeal to rural peace is commonplace in many texts. The retirement poem was, as Jennifer Batt argues, very popular in the early-eighteenth century:

Taking their cue from passages in Virgil, Horace and other classical authors, poems in this mode express a speaker's desire to be transported from their current stressful location to a simpler, more tranquil rural environment.¹¹

Like Finch and Barker, Dryden must also accommodate this hostile environment where the position of theological and political outsider is always contingent on others in ways which transcend a simple desire for rural simplicity. Here Dryden appeals to his relative and namesake, but one who does not share his political viewpoint.¹² Indeed, the poem seems to make a broader political point about governance which has less to do with the addressee than Dryden's own religious and political allegiances. The poem therefore negotiates the formal boundary between the prescription of an ideal order and the praise of hospitality embedded in the genre and implicit in patronage structures. Thus, Dryden tells his namesake:

No Porter guards the Passage of your Door;
T'admit the Wealthy, and exclude the Poor:

⁹ Leapor, *Poems upon several occasions*.

¹⁰ John Dryden, 'To My Honour'd Kinsman, John Driden, of Chesterton in the County of Huntingdon, Esquire', in *Fables ancient and modern; translated into verse, from Homer, Ovid, Boccace, and Chaucer: with original poems. By Mr. Dryden* (London, 1713), p. 115-125. All subsequent references will be to this text and will be indicated parenthetically by line number.

¹¹ Jennifer Batt, "'It ought not to be lost to the world": The transmission and consumption of eighteenth-century lyric verse.' *The Review of English Studies, New Series*, 62. 255 (2011), 414- 432 (p. 417) A comprehensive survey of this genre in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries can be found in Røstvig, *The Happy Man*.

¹² *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler p. 393.

For God, who gave the Riches, gave the Heart
To sanctifie the Whole, by giving Part (36-39).

Yet he continues:

Well-born, and Wealthy; wanting no support,
You steer betwixt the Country and the Court:
Nor gratifie whate'er the Great desire,
Nor grudging give, what Publick Needs require (127-130).

Dryden implies, if not necessarily in expectation of his own preferment, that with wealth and property ownership comes a social duty to give to the deserving. Fowler notes that Dryden records a gift of a turkey and a goose from Dryden's cousin after the publication of the poem in 1699.¹³

This generic focus on aristocratic governance and patrilineal inheritance is one which Finch and Barker, like Dryden, use to position themselves politically and religiously in distinction to the dominant political order. Batt is clear that such idyllic rural retreats are used in many poems of this mode as a contrast to and critique of a corrupt courtly or civic life.¹⁴ In Virgil's *Georgics II*, the speaker's expressed desire for relocation to the shady valleys of Haemus is followed by an explicit statement of the benefits of a retired and simple life:

Blest too is He, who knows the rural Gods,
Pan, old Sylvanus, and the rural Nymphs.
Him nor the Fasces of the State can move,
Nor Regal Purple; nor the Hate which reigns
'Twi'th faithless Brothers; nor the Dacian Pow'rs,
Descending from the Danube leagu'd in Arms;
Nor Rome's Affairs, nor Kingdoms doom'd to fall.¹⁵

However, the genre also emphasises the country estate as a site of leisure and contemplation – a retired space which is both instructive and restorative. As John Pomfret makes clear, his choice is for 'a private Seat' and 'a Clear and Competent Estate.' He continues in a more explicit vein:

A little Garden, grateful to the Eye,
And a cool Rivulet run Murmuring by:
On whose delicious Banks a stately Row

¹³ *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, p. 393.

¹⁴ Batt. 'Eighteenth-century lyric verse', p. 417.

¹⁵ Joseph Trapp, *The Works of Virgil: Translated into English Blank Verse*, 3 vols (1731), I, p. 165.

Of shady Lymes, or Sycamores, shou'd grow.
At th' end of which a silent Study plac'd,
Shou'd with the Noblest Authors there be grac'd.
Horace and *Virgil*, in whose mighty Lines,
Immortal Wit, and solid Learning Shines.¹⁶

The retirement trope makes the country estate a resonant image for many more poets of all or no political persuasions and many religious identities.¹⁷ For Batt the impetus of many of these poems may be understood as 'an escapist longing.'¹⁸

The major and foundational contributor to the debate on retirement poetry is Røstvig, whose main thesis is that with the rediscovery of Horace in the sixteenth century, English poets began to incorporate his motif of the *beatus ille* or happy man explored in *Epode II Satire II.6*, and *Epistle I.10* into their poetry. These poetic discussions include Horace's main themes of ownership of an estate, the importance of friendship, material contentment and freedom from urban or public life.¹⁹ However, by the early eighteenth century this longing for a rural experience is not necessarily understood as a desire for permanent residence, merely an intellectual or social recuperation or a mode of thinking which could be accessed anywhere.²⁰

Expressions of retirement whether inspired by a classical tradition, or as Michael Edson argues by closer Protestant concerns, are not only a reflection of personal circumstance, whether political or social, but also a more general philosophical move to didacticism.²¹ Elizabeth Singer Rowe makes clear this sense of improvement in her letter dated 1697:

Sir, I am unwilling to lose an opportunity of telling you, that my inclinations to solitude are neither the effects of melancholy, or ill-nature, or the narrow principle of believing I was born wholly for myself; much less do they arise from any affected delicacy, or ambition of being thought better and wiser than other people. I aspire to no character above that of a reasonable creature. But you know, Sir, there are nobler inducements to

¹⁶ John Pomfret, *The Choice* (London: I. Nutt, 1700), pp. 1-9.

¹⁷ Bronwen Price, 'Verse, Voice, and Body: The retirement mode and women's poetry 1680-1723', *Early Modern Literary Studies*, 12.3 (2007), 5.1-44.

¹⁸ Batt. 'Eighteenth-century lyric verse', p. 414

¹⁹ Røstvig, *The Happy Man*, Vol 1, pp. 48-9. Michael Edson, 'A Closet or a Secret Field': Horace, Protestant Devotion and British Retirement Poetry', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 35.1 (2012), 17-41 (p. 18).

²⁰ Røstvig, *The Happy Man*, Vol 2.

²¹ Edson, 'British Retirement Poetry.'

retirement than these; and if I tell you, that I chuse it as the greatest improvement of my reason and morals, and the best method I can find to be happy, I hope you'll grant that I have given you a very fair account of those resolutions.²²

Singer Rowe was, like Finch, part of a coterie based at Longleat, near her home in Frome. The coterie is evidenced by numerous letters to Lady Worsley and others who are part of Finch's wide circle. Like Finch, Singer Rowe communicated by letter, poetry and verse epistle. These shared connections existed despite Finch and Singer Rowe's differing religious and political allegiances. This perhaps tells us much about the common claims to a virtuous retirement as a political and religious statement in the period and the ability of literary ambition to transcend difference in a bid for patronage or mentor.

Hibbard identifies patronage as a central feature of country house poetry, arguing that, as a whole, it is a genre belonging to a marginalised or socially inferior poet, dependant on an economic or social patronage.²³ These explicit and overlapping discourses of political, professional and literary patronage were, of course, not always available to female poets. As a result, many women's country poems are written within less formal patronage contexts, either without an addressee or directed towards family members, rather than to a socially distant patron. It should be noted, however, as Griffin argues, that these less formal or, what might be termed, familial patronage networks should still be regarded in terms of an exchange economy predicated on mutual benefit.²⁴ For Finch and Barker this support – social and literary patronage – was essential not only to their experience of loss or defeat but also to their literary ambitions. For both, the act of writing was closely associated with their own presence at a country estate or convent or with writing for the owners or stewards of such institutions. Both writers work with a paradox summed up neatly by Sarah Fyge Egerton in her poem 'The Retreat' from 1703:

The poor mistaken World who places Joys

²² Elizabeth Singer Rowe, 'Letter V', *The miscellaneous works in prose and verse of Mrs. Elizabeth Rowe. The Greater Part now first published, by her Order, from her Original*. Vol. 2 (London, 1739), pp. 26-29 (pp. 27-28). Singer Rowe makes similar claims in 'Letter I', pp. 219-220.

²³ Hibbard, 'The Country House Poem.'

²⁴ Griffin, *Literary Patronage*, pp. 10, 14-19.

In splendid popularity and Noise,
When after all its Search it must conclude,
'Tis in a Friend, and a well-chosen Solitude.²⁵

Both Finch and Barker write of retirement and imply solitude yet invoke the networks — held in place by appropriate property ownership — which these spaces of retirement represent for them.

Finch: the country estate and the building of a political community

Finch is with some justification the most well-known of all female poets of the early modern period.²⁶ Her poetry was well regarded in her lifetime and she 'enjoyed the friendship of major contemporaries throughout her productive career as a poet.'²⁷ As a result, the scholarship on Finch is far more substantial than that on the majority of her contemporaries.²⁸ However, the extent of contemporary critical acclaim was not matched by the publication of her work. There was no collected edition of her poetry from her death in 1720 until the edition by Myra Reynolds in 1903.²⁹ Although the inclusion of some of her texts in an edition selected by Wordsworth did bring her work to the attention of a wider audience, his selective editorial decisions meant the poems were seen 'out of their original poetic and cultural contexts.'³⁰ Unfortunately Wordsworth's selective use of Finch's texts is reproduced in later editions and only

²⁵ Sarah Fyge Egerton, 'The Retreat', *Poems on several occasions, together with a pastoral*. By Mrs. S.F. (London: J. Nutt, 1703), pp. 31-33.

²⁶ Barash, *English Women's Poetry*, pp. 127-129.

²⁷ *The Anne Finch Wellesley Manuscript Poems: A Critical Edition*, ed. by Barbara McGovern and Charles Hinnant eds. (Athens Ga. and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1998), p. xv.

²⁸ For a summary of contemporary reception of Finch's poetry see Barash, *English Women's Poetry*; Carol Barash, 'The Political Origins of Anne Finch's Poetry' *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, 54 (1991), 327-351; Barbara McGovern, *Anne Finch and Her Poetry: A Critical Biography* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992); Prescott, *Women, Authorship and Literary Culture*; Jane Spencer, 'Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea (1661-1720): Sorrow into Song', in *Women and Poetry 1660-1750*, ed. by Sarah Prescott and David E. Shuttleton (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 60-69.

²⁹ *Wellesley Manuscript*, ed. by McGovern and Hinnant, p. xvi. In addition to McGovern and Hinnant's edition, major editions of Finch's work include: *The Poems of Anne Countess of Winchilsea. From the Original Ed. of the 1713 and from Unpublished Manuscripts*, ed. by Myra Roberts (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1903).

³⁰ Carol Barash, 'Political Origins' p. 328. *Poems and extracts chosen by William Wordsworth for an album presented to Lady Lowther, Christmas, 1819*, ed. by Harold Littledale (London, 1905).

recently have efforts been made to restore both the missing passages and the missing sense of context to Finch's work.³¹ Finch's poetry was initially published anonymously in several miscellanies. A collected edition, *Miscellany poems on several occasions* was finally published in 1713.³² However, Finch continued to write and circulate her poetry in collected manuscripts and more informally in letters.³³

Finch began writing whilst lady in waiting to Mary of Modena and she was careful not to draw undue attention to this potentially problematic activity.³⁴ She notes in a preface to a privately circulated manuscript of her poems that she feared ridicule as a 'Versifying maid of Honour.'³⁵ Yet, the court environment fostered by James II's second wife was encouraging to a writer, such as Finch.³⁶ The problem, it would appear, was less the discovery of her poetic aspirations than its revelation to a more hostile world beyond the court and its associates. Throughout her writing life, Finch relied on the support of a community which shared certain values: loyalty to the Stuart monarchy; Tory political sympathies; and High Church Anglicanism. For Barash this 'politically oppositional community of pro-Stuart women' in the tradition of the *femme forte* is central to Finch's work.³⁷ However, this thriving culture is not exclusively female, as an examination of the extensive body of manuscript verse attests: many of her poems are addressed to male relatives, friends or literary contemporaries. Barbara McGovern and Charles Hinnant are right to point out the number of women in Finch's various overlapping networks, which stands somewhat in contrast to her careful avoidance of 'any polemical arguments on behalf of women's equality' or to 'defend the rights of women to inhabit the then almost exclusively

³¹ Editions which reproduce Wordsworth's omissions include: *Poems by Anne, Countess of Winchilsea, 1661-1720* ed. by John Middleton Murry (London, 1928); *Selected Poems of Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea*, ed. by Katherine Rogers (New York, 1987) and *Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea: Selected Poems*, ed. by Denys Thompson (Manchester, 1987).

³² Anne Finch, *Miscellany poems on several occasions* (London, 1713).

³³ I shall be using the 1713 version of all poems where available. Otherwise I shall use the McGovern and Hinnant edition or the Reynolds edition if the poem is available only from this source.

³⁴ Barash, *English Women's Poetry; Wellesley Manuscript*, ed. by McGovern and Hinnant, p. xvi; McGovern, *Anne Finch; Spenser; Anne Finch* p. 61.

³⁵ *Poems*, ed. by Reynolds, p. 8.

³⁶ Barash, 'Political Origins' p. 330; Barash, *English Women's Poetry*, p. 262.

³⁷ Barash, 'Political Origins' p. 346; Barash, *English Women's Poetry*, p. 262.

masculine republic of letters.’³⁸ The preface to one of the manuscript collections makes no comment on the gender but rather the importance of others to the production and circulation of her verse: ‘Carelessly scatter’d or consum’d; [my poems] are grown by the partiality of some of my friends.’³⁹ As McGovern warns in her critical biography, Finch’s texts are not concerned with gender alone: ‘a variety of social issues complicate gender issues, so that [...] one must avoid viewing history as a monolithic patriarchal hegemony.’⁴⁰ Furthermore, this privileging of community is also not an exclusively Tory or Jacobite trope, nor indeed a politically inflected one.⁴¹

Finch was born in 1661 in Sydmonton, Hampshire, the daughter of Sir William Kingsmill and Anne Haslewood. Both paternal and maternal families were noted Royalists. The Kingsmill estate left to Finch’s brother on the death of her father in 1661 was substantial and provided for the education of all the Kingsmill children, including both daughters Bridget and Anne. Nonetheless, Finch’s early life was troubled by custody and inheritance battles following the death of her mother in 1664. Anne and Bridget lived with their paternal grandmother in London until just prior to her death in 1672 and eventually with their paternal uncle, William Haslewood, at his estate at Maidwell, Northamptonshire.⁴² The sense of displacement experienced as a child was unfortunately echoed in her adult life.⁴³ Despite being a maid of honour to Mary of Modena from 1682 and marriage to courtier Heneage Finch in 1684, their apparently happy early married life was later blighted by the consequences of their political loyalty to James II in 1688 and their subsequent decision to become non-jurors.⁴⁴ Non-jurors, or those who refused to take the Oath of Allegiance to William and Mary, were barred from holding public office.⁴⁵ This difficult position for the

³⁸ *Wellesley Manuscript*, ed. by McGovern and Hinnant, p. xxxii.

³⁹ Finch, ‘The Preface’ in *Poems*, ed. by Reynolds, p. 7.

⁴⁰ McGovern, *Anne Finch*, p. 3-4.

⁴¹ Michael Gavin, ‘Critics and Criticism in the Poetry of Anne Finch’ *ELH*, 78.3 (2011), 633-655 (p. 634).

⁴² McGovern, *Anne Finch*, p. 8-19.

⁴³ McGovern and Hinnant note that the eventual inheritance of Eastwell was involved in complicated litigation lasting 8 years and only resolved months before Finch’s death in 1720. *Wellesley Manuscript*, p. xvii.

⁴⁴ McGovern states that the earliest of Finch’s poems, prior to 1689, attest to her marital happiness. *Anne Finch*, p. 29.

⁴⁵ J. C. D. Clark, *Samuel Johnson: Literature, Religion, and English Cultural Politics from the Restoration to Romanticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1994), p. 137.

couple was exacerbated by Heneage's arrest in 1690 for treason, following his attempt to join James II in exile in France.⁴⁶ Despite being released due to lack of evidence after almost a year of imprisonment and court delays, this overt display of support for the Jacobite cause led to two decades of isolation.⁴⁷ As Wes Hamrick explains, 'for Finch, the Revolution of 1688 was both a national calamity and the cause of substantial personal misfortune.'⁴⁸ This calamity seems to have had a lasting effect on Finch and, as Barash argues, it is clearly visible in the sense of marginalisation articulated in poems, such as 'A Fragment' and 'A Petition for Absolute Retreat'.⁴⁹

For Whigs, and subsequent supporters of William and Mary, the 1688 revolution and its political resolution posed few problems in distinguishing between sovereigns *de jure* or *de facto*. As Alan Downie explains, for Whigs 'James II had tried to undermine the constitution, therefore it was only right and proper that he had been replaced by another at the people's behest.'⁵⁰ Yet for Tories and supporters of the Stuart monarchy, such as Finch and her husband, the decision to become a non-juror and stay in England rather than follow the King into exile as Barker did was not only a difficult religio-political resolution, it was also accompanied by practical and financial considerations. Many, not least the Dean of St Paul's, William Sherlock, managed to find an accommodation which allowed them to swear allegiance whilst leaving intact their belief in a divinely appointed monarch:⁵¹

And then it is plain, that our old Allegiance and old Oaths are at an end, when God has set over us a new King: for when God transfers Kingdoms, and requires our Obedience and Allegiance to a new King, he necessarily transfers our Allegiance too.⁵²

Non-jurors such as Finch could not do so and were thus removed from court and forced to rely on family and like-minded friends to support them in both practical and

⁴⁶ McGovern, *Anne Finch*, p. 53-64; Spenser, 'Anne Finch', p. 61.

⁴⁷ *Wellesley Manuscript*, ed. by McGovern and Hinnant, p. xvii.

⁴⁸ Wes Hamrick, 'Trees in Anne Finch's Jacobite Poems of Retreat', *Studies in English Literature*, 53.3 (2013), 541-563, (p. 544).

⁴⁹ Barash, 'Political Origins' p. 344-45; Barash, *English Women's Poetry*, pp. 262-271. Both poems are published in *Miscellany Poems*.

⁵⁰ Downie, *Succession of the State*, p. 39; Brian Hill, 'Parliament, Parties and Elections (1688-1760)' *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. by H. T. Dickinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006) p. 62.

⁵¹ Downie, *Succession of the State* p. 38-39.

⁵² William Sherlock, *The Case of Allegiance due to Sovereign Powers, Stated and Resolved* (London, 1691), p. 2-3.

emotional ways. Many also directly reflect and examine the experience of retirement and its accompanying sense of marginalization. For McGovern and Hinnant, the later poems exhibit a 'continuing sense of political estrangement.'⁵³ This sense of displacement is, however, negotiated by Finch through her appropriation of the country house genre, enacting the forging of political and social networks through their formal status as epistles, panegyrics and invitations.

The poetry which forms the main discussion of this chapter spans this immediate period of retirement and the later part of Finch's life when the couple had returned to live partially in London following the Tory election victory in 1710.⁵⁴ Heneage Finch eventually inherited his family estate at Eastwell in 1712 which helped restore their financial situation.⁵⁵ Despite the return to society this represented, the poetry continues to examine the role of the county estate, its inhabitants, and activities play in the construction, protection and circulation of a contentious political identity.⁵⁶ As McGovern and Hinnant acknowledge, many of the later poems from the Wellesley manuscript, like those published in the 1713 *Miscellany poems on several occasions*, are not overtly inflammatory nor do they offer a direct response to the Hanoverian court. They do, however, betray Finch's Jacobite sympathies through reference to individual Jacobite loyalists and the use of common motifs, such as the oak tree.⁵⁷

Barash argues that some of Finch's poems are overtly supportive of the Stuart monarchy and present a clear Jacobite polemic.⁵⁸ Others, however, offer a more generalised challenge to the new political order. Finch describes the broader impact of the events of 1688 in her poem, 'Fragment':

Removed those Powers, whom justly she revered,
Adhered to in their Wreck, and in their Ruin shared.

⁵³ *Wellesley Manuscript*, ed. by McGovern and Hinnant, p. xxiv.

⁵⁴ *Wellesley Manuscript*, ed. by McGovern and Hinnant, p. xviii; Gavin, 'Critics and Criticism'.

⁵⁵ Spenser, 'Anne Finch' p. 62; Barash, *English Women's Poetry*, p. 259; Ann Messenger, 'Publishing Without Perishing: Lady Winchilsea's *Miscellany Poems of 1713*' *Restoration*, 5.1 (1981), 27-37.

⁵⁶ Gavin, 'Critics and Criticism' p. 642.

⁵⁷ *Wellesley Manuscript*, ed. by McGovern and Hinnant, p. xix-xxii. For a discussion of the oak motif see Hamrick, 'Anne Finch's Jacobite Poems'; Paula R. Backscheider, *Spectacular Politics: Theatrical Power and Mass Culture in Early Modern England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 17-18.

⁵⁸ Barash, 'Political Origins'.

Now by the wheels inevitable Round,
With them thrown prostrate to the humble Ground,
No more she takes (instructed by that fall)
For fixed or worth her thought, this rolling ball:
Towards a more certain Station she aspires,
Unshaken by Revolts, and she owns no less Desires.⁵⁹

As Barash suggests, the title refers not to the brevity or unfinished status of the poem, but rather the diminished social standing felt by Finch to be a consequence of the removal of James II from the throne. Elsewhere, in 'A Pindarick Poem Upon the Hurricane in November 1703, referring to this Text in Psalm 148. Ver. 8 Winds and Storms fulfilling his Word', a similar sense of devastation and disorder is on display:

What are thy glorious Titles, and thy Forms?
Which cannot give Security, or Rest
To favored Men, or Kingdoms that contest
With popular Assaults, or Providential Storms!
Whilst on the Omnipotent our Fate depends,
And They are only safe, whom He alone defends,
Then let to Heaven our general Praise be sent
Which did our farther Loss, our total Wreck prevent.⁶⁰

Hamrick notes that 'as politically inflected emblems of shade and protection, Finch's trees invoke the Virgilian pastoral tradition and its attendant themes of exile and leisured retirement, but often they work allegorically as specifically Jacobite images.'⁶¹ In 'Upon an improbable undertaking' from the Wellesley manuscript such imagery is clear:

With verdant bough and mimick grace
Another Oak its body rais'd
And for a while was own'd and prais'd
But time which all discovery brings
Distinguishing 'twixt knaves and Kings
Withers the bough and dries the trunk
The planters grieved to see it shrunk
Totring and tending to decay.⁶²

⁵⁹ Finch, 'Fragment' in *Miscellany poems*, pp. 280-282 (p. 280).

⁶⁰ Finch, 'A Pindarick Poem Upon the Hurricane in November 1703, referring to this Text in Psalm 148. Ver. 8 Winds and Storms fulfilling his Word' in *Miscellany poems*, pp. 230-247 (p. 247).

⁶¹ Hamrick, 'Anne Finch's Jacobite Poems', p.541; Virgil, *Eclogues*, in *Eclogues. Georgics. Aeneid: Books 1-6*, trans. H. Rushton Fairclough (London: William Heinemann, 1926), pp. 2-77.

⁶² Finch, 'Upon an improbable undertaking' in *Wellesley Manuscript*, ed. by McGovern and Hinnant, p. 45.

The repetition of 'bough' speaks to a causal link between the offer of the crown to William and the withering of James II's and his supporters' hopes. If the allegory were not clear enough, the unusually sparse capitalisation of only 'Oak' and 'Kings' leaves the reader in no doubt. For Hamrick, 'the replacement "oak" in the poem turns out not to have been an oak tree at all but dry, barren Timber,' resulting in a conventional Jacobite representation of William of Orange as an unnatural usurper.⁶³

In spite of this, a fact less obvious in critical accounts is the number of Finch's texts which engage with the country house as a personal retreat from, or bastion against, a hostile political environment. They also explore the country estate as a source of support, practical and emotional, from a community of extended family and friends who shared a common interest or political viewpoint, and as a key site of poetic production and circulation, where literary support may be available to, or offered by, Finch as I shall discuss below. Hamrick argues:

The wooded paths of Eastwell are an immediate source of inspiration, but the poem also imitates and revises John Pomfret's 'The Choice,' which is itself derived from the 'happy man' tradition associated with Horace. [...] Whereas Pomfret, like Horace, figures retirement in terms of an idealized retreat from the city to the countryside, in Finch's poetics, retreat and retirement are equally an escape from the 1688 Revolution that lies not in the city but in the not-so-distant past.⁶⁴

This chronological framing of retirement in Finch's work, similar to that which I shall explore in Barker's texts, may account for the continuing use of the retirement mode beyond the period of her internal exile. Finch, like Barker, uses the spaces of retirement not only as a refuge, a place of recuperation and re-orientation, a social and literary space, but also a site of contemplation and memory.

Finch's 'Upon My Lord Winchilsea's Converting the Mount in His Garden to a Terrace, and Other Alterations and Improvements in his House, Park, and Gardens' works with the formal and thematic conventions of the country house genre in a fairly direct manner.⁶⁵ The relationship between public and private operating within the

⁶³ Hamrick, 'Anne Finch's Jacobite Poems', p. 546.

⁶⁴ Hamrick, 'Anne Finch's Jacobite Poems', p. 551-2.

⁶⁵ Anne Finch, 'Upon My Lord Winchilsea's Converting the Mount in His Garden to a Terrace, and Other Alterations and Improvements in His House, Park and Gardens' in *The Country House Poem*, ed. by

genre is flexible enough for Finch to articulate a complex and finely nuanced position in terms of both class and gender. However, Finch largely effaces gender throughout the poem, preferring instead to emphasise her political stance. This, of course, stands in contrast to much of Finch's poetry which does engage with female agency and authority or the use of 'women's community as a political trope.'⁶⁶ Here she uses the depiction of the Finch family estate to make a public and overtly political statement. The alterations at Eastwell Park in Kent, to which the poem alludes, coincided with the accession of Anne and thus provide both a symbolic and timely comment on the reign of William and the accession of Anne. Hamrick asserts that '[a]s a more responsible steward of Eastwell, Charles, the [third] Earl of Winchilsea brings about a "restoration" of the estate, much as the Stuart Queen Anne in *Windsor-Forest* represents proper stewardship of the British nation'⁶⁷:

Here Ceres' Gifts in waving Prospect stand,
And nodding tempt the joyful Reaper's Hand,
Rich Industry sits smiling on the Plains,
And peace and Plenty tell, a STUART reigns.⁶⁸

There are, then, several chronologically disparate landscapes to be understood simultaneously in the poem.

Although addressed to a member of her husband's family, the poem also depicts Finch's own marital home; according to Fowler, Finch and her husband lived at Eastwell Park from the early 1690s. As with most country house poems, the political authority vested in Winchilsea's aristocratic status allows a direct translation of the private into the public - the estate, effectively, becomes the state, Eastwell Park a microcosm of England.⁶⁹ However, the family relationship between poet and patron complicates this position, partially translating the public back into the private or

Fowler, pp. 395-397. All subsequent references will be to this edition and will be indicated parenthetically by line number.

⁶⁶ Barash, 'Political Origins' p. 329.

⁶⁷ Hamrick, 'Anne Finch's Jacobite Poems', pp. 548-9. NB the numbered sequence of the earls of Winchilsea is as McGovern explains liable to some confusion. In contrast to Fowler, I am adopting McGovern's ordinals: Thomas, 1st earl (1633-39); Heneage, 2nd earl (1639-89); Charles, 3rd earl (1689-1712); Heneage, 4th earl (1712-).

⁶⁸ Alexander Pope, *Windsor-Forest*, *Pastoral Poetry and an Essay on Criticism*, ed. by E. Audra and Aubrey Williams (London: Methuen, 1961), pp. 145-194 (p. 152).

⁶⁹ Fowler notes the increased incidence of the estate poem used as microcosm of the state from the restoration onwards, *The Country House Poem*, p. 21.

personal. It allows Finch to present a biographical description of the Finch family whilst locating herself within this same topographical space and, by extension, its associated political community. Throughout the poem she uses the first person plural to underscore her own connection, if only through marriage, to the politically resonant spaces of Eastwell. Finch draws parallels between the previous alterations to the estate by the second Earl of Winchilsea and the reign of William III. Indeed, the link is a direct one since the second Earl voted for the accession of William in 1689. For the Royalist Finch, William's reign deformed both the physical and political landscapes of Eastwell and England. The mount raised during this period must, therefore, be reduced by Charles, the third Earl who 'removes a mountain, to remove a fault' (8). In his influential essay *Upon the Garden of Epicurus or Of Gardening in the Year 1685* (orig pub.1692), William Temple, who was a key figure in garden design, explains that the state of English gardening had improved significantly during the reigns of Charles II and James II.⁷⁰ Typically a Temple garden should be arranged to adjoin the house:

The best figure of a garden is either a square or an oblong, and either upon a flat or a descent. [...] The beauty, the air, the view makes amends for the expense, which is very great in finishing and supporting the terras-walks, in levelling parterres, and in the stone stairs that are necessary from one to the other.⁷¹

'Upon my Lord Winchilsea' describes something very similar – an English garden of residual Italian Renaissance style.⁷² The landscape and architectural alterations described by Finch – the levelling of the mount, the addition of enlarged windows to the house and 'the new wrought gardens' not only 'give a new delight' and 'eager view' but also undo 'every fault that in the old was found' (65; 60; 66).

There is, here, a direct equation between estate and state management and, as with other examples of the sub-genre, the need for good taste in garden and architectural design translates directly to political judgement. In Finch's eyes, the

⁷⁰ William Temple, *Upon the Garden of Epicurus or Of Gardening in the Year 1685* (1692), p. 80, p. 87.

⁷¹ Temple, *Garden of Epicurus*, p. 91. Temple names Moor Park in Surrey as the epitome of this style of garden.

⁷² Christopher Hussey, *English Gardens and Landscapes, 1700-1750*. (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1967), p. 21.

second Earl had neither taste nor judgement and his landscape garden is proof that 'where power is absolute' and judgement arbitrary, the estate suffers:

And the robbed palace sees, what most she feared,
Her lofty Grove, her ornamental shield,
Turned to a desert and forsaken field. (32; 42-44)

In contrast, however, is the situation under the third Earl:

No longer now, we such destructions fear,
No longer the resounding axe we hear,
But in exchange behold the fabric stand
Built and adorned by a supporting hand; (47-50)

Earlier in the poem she makes a direct association between the third Earl and the Roman Empire and the Augustan ideals represented by this:

And as old Rome refined what ere was rude,
And civilized, as fast as she subdued,
So lies this hill, hewn from its rugged height,
Now levelled to a scene of smooth delight (15-18).

Finch, thus, articulates a public statement, reading the improvements on the Eastwell estate as a metonym for the political transition from William to Anne. For Hamrick, the oak's Stuart symbolism and the act of destruction are then 'straightforwardly juxtaposed with the later improvements by the third earl.'⁷³

Yet, however clear the analogy, the chronology on display in the poem complicates the simple juxtaposition claimed by Hamrick. Eastwell Park seems out of kilter with the rest of the nation: the Restoration period, positive elsewhere for Finch, is seen as destructive at Eastwell and the 1690s and first few years of the eighteenth century see the reverse. Indeed, at one point she seems to reverse the dynamic of the retirement trope: asking for protection of Eastwell, rather than merely praising the refuge it offers:

Oh! may Eastwell still with their aid increase,
Plenty surround her, and within be peace.
Still may her temperate air his health maintain,
From whom she does such strength and beauty gain.
Flourish her trees, and may the verdant grass
Again prevail, where late the plough did pass: (72-77)

⁷³ Hamrick, 'Anne Finch's Jacobite Poems', p. 548.

Despite the protection afforded by the newly improved stewardship of Eastwell, Finch's social, political and literary activities are, in c. 1700 when she wrote this poem, still contingent on the good will of others.

The poem also describes a privileged yet secure vista over the estate, negotiating the generic impetus to describe power and agency and the desire or necessity for refuge:

And now we breathe and now the eager view
Through the enlarged windows takes her way;
Does beauteous fields and scattered woods survey,
Flies o'er th'extended land, and sinks but in the sea. (60-63)

This negotiation is echoed in 'To the Right Hon Frances Countess of Hartford who engaged Mr Eusden to write upon a wood enjoining him to mention no trees but the Aspin and no flower but the King-cup' where the judicious management of her host allows a similar view:

A Silvan Scene to all the muses known
With Brakes and clustred Hazell under grown
To which no gate the entrance shou'd deny
Nor spacious tract direct the wandring eye
But slender paths and winding still shou'd lead
The eager steps to a new discover'd shade.⁷⁴

The poem as a whole acts as an inventory of trees on the estate and reflects not only the importance of silviculture to the contemporary economy but also the refuge offered by a wooded estate landscape.

Gently chiding her host, the Countess of Hertford, Finch argues for the need for a varied and full landscape of trees:

Had Eusden been at liberty to rove
Wild and promiscuous he had form'd your grove
Of all the Sons of Earth that ever grew
From the lightsome Beach down to the sable Yew
To which a walk of limes shou'd have convey'd
From the throng'd Palace to the lonely shade. (19-24)

⁷⁴ Finch, 'To the Right Hon Frances Countess of Hartford who engaged Mr Eusden to write upon a wood enjoining him to mention no trees but the Aspin and no flower but the King-cup' in *Wellesley Manuscript*, ed. by McGovern and Hinnant, pp. 31-36, lines 44-49. All subsequent references will be to this poem and will be cited parenthetically by line number.

The protection afforded against 'some peevish wind' (10) is obvious and continues several lines later: 'That rest is proffered by the yeilding bough / Invites to rest and does that rest allow' (58-59). The repetition of 'rest' underscores the sense of refuge offered here. Yet for Finch the argument stands equally for poetic practice as the poem constructs a list of pastoral ideals.

In this poem Finch uses the *sponte sua* trope to outline the natural hospitality of her host:

The Hawthorn pride of May and Wintery store
For Birds who reap not yet are never poor
Sleek Holly varnish't with an Indian gloss (91-93)

Whilst this depiction of a beneficent landscape is seen in so many country house poems, Finch's articulation of natural hospitality demands further attention. The hospitality is available even in a winter scene, suggesting the hostile conditions for non-jurors following 1689 and the warmth of her host's welcome. The natural cornucopia on display is also less concerned with conventional culinary or agrarian matters but again with the trees of the estate. Given Finch's and others use of the oak to stand as the Stuart monarchy, this opens the passage to a more politically inflected meaning. This refuge is then at once symbolic as with 'Finch's depiction of protective groves and storm-battered oaks draws from seventeenth-century sylvan pastoral and from Royalist allusions to Virgil's *Eclogues*.'⁷⁵ The sense of refuge is also somewhat more practical. Trees secure a private space for owner and guest, offering a metonym for the actual hospitality visible in the texts and their production or circulation contexts.

In both poems Finch describes a garden landscape which is located in the style and economy of the late seventeenth century, reflecting the arguments of John Evelyn's *Sylva: Or A Discourse of Forest-Trees, and the Propagation of "Timber" In His Majesties Dominions* (1664).⁷⁶ As Hamrick points out, Evelyn 'explicitly connects the Restoration to the proper management of England's oak forests, hailing Charles II as 'God of the forest-trees, King of the grove' and attributing the depletion of England's

⁷⁵ Hamrick, 'Anne Finch's Jacobite Poems', p. 541.

⁷⁶ Hussey, *English Gardens*, p. 15. See also Douglas Chambers, 'Evelyn's *Sylva*', p. 29.

oak forests to Cromwell and the Civil War.⁷⁷ In this Evelyn was also influenced by the Hartlib circle, including John Beale, and the need after the Restoration to reafforest for economic reasons.⁷⁸ This attention to gardens is unsurprising as Parry explains that the royalists in particular were very interested in gardening as an extension of their political thought. Evelyn for example in *Elysium Britannicum* outlined 'a plan for a life lived entirely in the hortulan mode.'⁷⁹ Despite working and writing in the mid-seventeenth century, Evelyn had a significant influence on the development of the landscape garden of the eighteenth century. His work anticipates that of William Kent and Charles Bridgeman who in turn prefigure Lancelot Brown with *Sylva* 'provid[ing] the moral and aesthetic justification for what was to become a basic element of eighteenth-century landscape design.'⁸⁰

Both poems straddle the period between the expansive view dominant by 1730 and the older garden landscape characterised by ancient groves of trees and gardens of graceful symmetry.⁸¹ Yet, as Christopher Hussey cautions:

To regard the Bridgemannic garden as a merely transitional form between the geometric gardens and landscape beauty, though historically true, is to ignore its specific qualities and the theory of synthesis that underlay it and which it expresses. Its rather naïve form, its rendering of the grand manner in homely vegetation, its stilted acknowledgement of surrounding country, certainly stop short of absolute statements of either ideal; but so does English Palladian in comparison with Continental baroque and neo-classical architecture.⁸²

⁷⁷ Hamrick, 'Anne Finch's Jacobite Poems', p. 543.

⁷⁸ Douglas Chambers, "'Wild Pastorall Encounter": John Evelyn, John Beale and the Renegotiation of Pastoral in the Mid-seventeenth Century', in *Culture and Cultivation in Early Modern England: Writing and the Land*, ed. by Michael Leslie and Timothy Raylor (Leicester and London: Leicester University Press, 1992), pp. 173-194 (p. 177). For Beale's wider ideas see *Nurseries, Orchards, Profitable Gardens and Vineyards Encouraged* (1677).

⁷⁹ Graham Parry, 'John Evelyn as Hortulan Saint', in *Culture and Cultivation in Early Modern England: Writing and the Land*, ed. By M Leslie and T Raylor (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1992), pp. 130-150 (p. 134)

⁸⁰ Chamber's 'Evelyn's *Sylva*', p. 32

⁸¹ Elizabeth Wheeler Manwaring, *Italian Landscape in Eighteenth Century England: A Study Chiefly of the Influence of Claude Lorraine and Salvator Rosa on English Taste* (London: Frank Cass, 1925), pp. 121-122; Hussey, *English Gardens*, pp. 37-38

⁸² Hussey, *English Gardens*, p. 37-8

The synthesis is visible in the doubled chronology of 'Upon My Lord Winchilsea' which means that both landscape types are visible in the views over fields and woods of the wider parkland and surrounding land.

In this doubling, the use of landscape reflects Finch's need to negotiate conflicting positions: the need for refuge and the desire for power. As Carol Fabricant notes, the need for privacy existed simultaneously with that for extended views: this was due not only to aesthetic considerations but also to capitalist and patriarchal imperatives.⁸³ Alice T. Friedman discusses the use of spatial design as a means to control what is seen and who is the spectator.⁸⁴ Although Friedman's analysis focuses on architectural design of the early seventeenth century, the control sought by early eighteenth century garden design may be regarded as analogous. By the 1710s Stephen Switzer can confidently define the English garden as:

Adorn'd with magnificent Statues and Waterworks, full of long shady Walks and Groves; neither does it altogether exclude the Use of private Recesses, and some little retired Cabinets; this seems to be the general Idea of the Plan or Ichnography of a well-contrived Seat. [...] It also directs, that all adjacent Country be laid open to View, and that the Eye should not be bounded by High Walls, Woods misplac'd.⁸⁵

Whilst the poems discussed thus far explore quite generalised religio-political positions, the role played by various estates and their owners and residents also attests to the very practical nature of Finch's retirement. This was a pressing financial necessity, not merely a general stance vis-à-vis urban or court culture. They are very real spaces of financial and emotional support during a period of great difficulty for Finch and her husband. The gratitude felt by Finch is apparent in many poems and seems to have extended beyond the period in which they were dependent on the good will of others. In the preface to the folio manuscript Finch remembers the enforced removal from London:

⁸³ Carole Fabricant, "'Binding and Dressing Nature's Loose Tresses": The Ideology of Augustan Landscape Design', *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 8 (1979), 109-135 (p. 118).

⁸⁴ Friedman, 'Architecture, Authority, and the Female Gaze'.

⁸⁵ Stephen Switzer, *Ichnographia rustica: or, the nobleman, gentleman, and gardener's recreation. Containing directions for the general distribution of a country seat, into rural and extensive gardens, parks, paddocks, &c. And a general system of agriculture, illustrated with great variety of copper-plates, done by the best hands, from the author's drawings. ... By Stephen Switzer, gardener for several years servant to Mr. London and Mr. Wise. Vol. I* (London, 1718) p. xviii-xix.

An utter change in my Condition, and Circumstances, remov'd me into the solitude, & security of the Country, and the generous kindnesse of one that possest the most delightfull seat in itt; envited him, from whom I was inseparable, to partake of the pleasures of it.⁸⁶

Immediately after the removal of James II to exile in Northern France, Finch and her husband stayed with Lord Hatton, a Tory politician who had an estate at Kirby in Northamptonshire and to whom Heneage Finch was related. This relationship between host and guest, co-supporters of James II, is still evident in several of the poems of the Wellesley manuscript from some years later.⁸⁷

The circle of Finch's friends and family, outlined through the epistolary nature of many of Finch's poems, was large.⁸⁸ The verse which reflects this coterie of friends and family bears many similarities with Philips' verse of friendship and a broader Cavalier tradition, and it is perhaps no coincidence that Finch uses the poetic name Ardelia, one used previously by Philips for one of her circle.⁸⁹ This circle included Hatton; Lady Weymouth, Heneage Finch's sister; Thomas, Viscount Weymouth, her husband; Lady Worsley, their daughter; Lady Carteret, her daughter; Frances Seymour, countess of Hertford, Heneage's great niece; and friends of the family: Lady Ann Tufton, Arabella Marrow, Catherine Fleming.⁹⁰ From this, the Finches would appear to have moved largely in non-juring circles. This picture is strengthened by their wider acquaintances, including Thomas Ken the non-juring former bishop of Bath and Wells who lived at Longleat and is mentioned in 'Upon the Hurrincane'. However, they were not exclusively to non-juring contacts: some of their circle were supporters of William. Indeed, Finch's literary associations were of all denominations and allegiances.

The use of epistles by Finch is also particularly revealing. As Backscheider and Ingrassia comment, 'During the eighteenth century, poetry was an inherently social and sociable form whether it was read, recited, or [...] composed extemporaneously.

⁸⁶ Finch, 'The Preface' in *Poems*, ed. by Reynolds, p. 8.

⁸⁷ Finch, 'To the Right Hon.^{ble} the Lord Viscount Hatton by way of excuse for my having not in sometime replied to his last copy of verses in which he gives himself the name of Corydon not approved by me who in this Poem offer at an imitation of Madame Deshouliers in her way of Badinage'(undated) and 'To the Hon.^{ble} Mrs. H----n', in *Wellesley Manuscript*, ed. by McGovern and Hinnant, pp. 99-102.

⁸⁸ In the Reynolds edition 17 are epistles. In the *Wellesley Manuscript Poems* there are 18.

⁸⁹ Barash, *English Women's Poetry*, p. 281.

⁹⁰ *Wellesley Manuscript*, ed. by McGovern and Hinnant, p. xxxi-xxxii.

The popularity and pervasiveness of poetry as text and social act suggest the important cultural function it served.⁹¹ For McGovern and Hinnant the form 'answered to Finch's sense of the loss of an ideal corporate community.'⁹² This is described by Finch in a poem praising the invention of letter writing as a means '[t]o baffle Absence, and secure Delight.' Although the poem focuses on letter writing as an indispensable part of courtship and loving relationships, the extent to which Finch uses the letter over the last two decades of her writing life would seem to attest to its importance for her. When combined with the use of the country house genre, the construction of an imagined community based on shared values and activities becomes more overt yet is retained within the walls of a private space. Letter writing is also a social activity: the letters here describe social events which take place in the various country estates but also comprise this activity. Epistolary verse enacts a form of politeness and displays appropriate manners which underscore Finch's construction of an ideal political economy.

In many of Finch's poems letter writing, alongside creative writing, replaces hunting or feasting in its representation of an estate's social activity. The literary activity cements the sense of political and familial identity discussed above and there is a sense of sharing exhibited in poems. The epistolary nature of the poems makes these connections explicit, and epistles lay bare the patronage relationships to which they speak. These are at times fairly conventional attempts to share literary values with her literary peers. However, elsewhere, the relationship on display is potentially a far more hard-nosed bid for financial support where poetry forms part of a gift exchange. 'To the Right Honourable Frances Countess of Hartford', 'To a Lady who having desired me to compose something upon the foregoing Subject prevail'd with me to speak the first four lines extempore and wou'd have had me so proceed in the rest which I sent to her at more leasure, with the following verses' and 'To the Right

⁹¹ *British Women Poets*, ed. by Backscheider and Ingrassia, p. 10.

⁹² *Wellesley Manuscript*, ed. by McGovern and Hinnant, p. xxxi.

Hon:^{ble} the Lord Viscount Hatton' all attest to the contingent position of the non-juror.⁹³

'To The Honourable Lady Worsley at Long-leate, Who Had Most Obligingly Desired my Correspondence with her by Letters' is addressed to a Finch family member; Frances Worsley, granddaughter of the third Earl of Winchilsea.⁹⁴ As in 'Upon My Lord Winchilsea', Finch locates herself physically within the poem by dint of the family connection, converting a public and biographically detailed text into one which includes personal details of the poet. Finch uses her poetic persona, Ardelia, to pinpoint this autobiographical link, writing that 'The joys Ardelia at Long-leat did know.'(98) Other poems by Finch, notably 'A Description of One of the pieces of Tapistry at Long-leat' indicate that she visited the estate often.⁹⁵ Both poems stress the ties of extended family, placing Finch within a kinship community centred on the Thynne estate at Longleat. This, of course, may not be an accurate depiction of Finch's relationship to Worsley; however, the poem identifies the speaker closely with the addressee in several ways. Whilst the family link and other poems locate Finch at Longleat, the reference to correspondence also places Finch in close social proximity to the extended Thynne family. The poem has numerous references, both in the title and throughout the poem, to this correspondence and its mutual dynamic. Thus, through the exchange of letters, Worsley's prose is responded to and complemented by Finch's verse. This exchange is important for Finch:

Could but the wit that on her paper flows
Affect my verse, and tune it to her prose:
Through every line a kindly warmth inspire
And raise my art, equal to my desire!
Then should my hand snatch from the Muses' store
Transporting figures ne'er exposed before (37-42).

⁹³ Finch, 'To the Right Honourable Frances Countess of Hartford', 'To a Lady who having desired me to compose something upon the foregoing Subject prevail'd with me to speak the first four lines extempore and wou'd have had me so proceed in the rest which I sent to her at more leasure, with the following verses' and 'To the Right Hon:^{ble} the Lord Viscount Hatton' in *Wellesley Manuscript*, ed. by McGovern and Hinnant, pp. 31-36; 78-79; 86-88.

⁹⁴ Anne Finch, 'To Lady Worsley at Long-leat', in *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, pp. 399-402. All subsequent references will be to this text and will be cited parenthetically by line number.

⁹⁵ Finch, 'A Description of one of the pieces of Tapistry', in *The Poems of Anne Countess of Winchilsea*, ed. by Reynolds, pp. 7-50.

This implies a desired social connection between Finch and Worsley, a relationship which is mutual. Finch underscores this sense of social identification through the repeated use of the first person plural. Thus, it is 'our famed Long-leat' which to 'our sight appears' (46, 48). In this mutuality, the correspondence mimics the dual benefits and constraints of conventional patronage relationships, which is, for Finch, a 'comon Act' (9). As with the complementary elements of prose and verse, the poem maintains a fine balance between the epideictic conventions of patronage and the articulation of a personal connection to Worsley and Long-leat and between biography and autobiography.

In both poems dealing with the Thynne family estate at Longleat, Finch offers praise not only of the magnificence of the estate but also the discriminating presence of its owners. Longleat is:

Magnificently great, the eye to fill,
Minutely finished for our nicest skill,
Long-leat, that justly has all praise engrossed,
The stranger's wonder and our nation's boast ('To Lady Worsley', 49-52)

Where earlier country house poems tread a difficult path between praise for an estate and caution against overblown manifestations of pride, Finch has much less trouble. Fowler notes this easing as a wider phenomenon, as 'architectural grandeur [became] more acceptable' as estates grew larger and design more important.⁹⁶ Indeed, Finch goes further than a standard encomium in her desire for Thynne to be celebrated beyond the walls of the estate and the boundaries of her poem:

His genius who th'original improved,
To this degree that has our wonder moved,
Too great appears, and awes the trembling hand
Which can no colours for that draught command.
No syllables the most sublimely wrought
Can reach the loftier image of his thought,
Whose judgment placed in a superior height
All things surveys with comprehensive sight,
Then pitying us below stoops to inform us right,
In words which such convincing reasons bear (72-81).

⁹⁶ *The Country House Poem*, ed. by Fowler, p. 21-22.

Although using the modesty *topos* in a fairly conventional fashion here, the extent to which Finch prostrates herself before the owner of Longleat does bear comment as she, unlike the conventional guest-poet in the manner of Jonson, is of similar social status to Lord Weymouth and his family. That Finch need not by birth or rank offer such hyperbole, is, I would argue, testament to her need and enduring gratitude for the financial and emotional support offered by the coterie located at Longleat.

Finch's inclusion of herself within the depiction of Longleat and of Worsley is also, perhaps, politically informed. By comparing the political and social retreat of the Finches at Eastwell Park: 'Ardelia's seat / Fit only for the wretch oppressed by fate', to that of Worsley at Longleat, Finch is making not just a socially motivated identification but a political comparison (3-4). As in Lanyer's 'A Description of Cooke-ham', the friendship invoked provides an alternative location for an ideal community not reliant on architecture or ownership. Finch's hostess is the main component of the hospitality offered. In fact, poetry replaces the house as the constructed environment which is celebrated. This sense of a political community is further supported by the poem's manuscript form which addressed a substantial yet carefully targeted readership. In addition, I would suggest that the emphasis on familial rather than economic patronage allows Finch to naturalize the royalist political economy represented by Eastwell and Longleat.

The poems also engage with a much more general understanding of retirement as a literary trope and, for Deborah Kennedy and Edson *inter alia*, a spiritual practice. Yet Finch's use of the retirement trope does not necessarily fit the early critical picture of the Horatian tradition outlined by Røstvig in *The Happy Man*.⁹⁷ For Edson, the retirement poetry of the 1690s onwards borrows not from a secular classical ideal but a native Protestant piety, with the term retirement carrying a clear religious meaning by 1700.⁹⁸ The main difference for Edson is that after 1690 meditation often displaces husbandry as the goal of retirement, a dislocation apparent in poems as early as the

⁹⁷ Røstvig, *Happy Man*, Vols 1 and 2.

⁹⁸ Edson, 'British Retirement Poetry', pp. 17-18; p. 21; Deborah Kennedy, 'The Radiant Throne: Religion and the Poetry of Anne Finch, Countess of Winchilsea.' *Women's Writing*, 18.3 (2011), 423-440.

1680s.⁹⁹ As Joshua Scodel observes, the Horatian interest in husbandry comes under 'strain' in the Earl of Roscommon's 'Ode upon Solitude' (1684).¹⁰⁰

Yet, as Edson argues:

To stress the devotional contexts as well as associations of retirement poetry in this way is to imply neither that all eighteenth-century retirement verse derives from religious ritual nor that readers of the time always read religious meanings into such poems. However, given the increasingly devout readership of retirement verse after 1690, many Britons would have encountered these poems as part of devotional practice or at least attributed to them spiritual significance, including even those poems that appear to later readers wholly secular.¹⁰¹

Finch's main contribution to this retirement tradition is widely regarded as 'A Nocturnal Reverie', which McGovern describes as depicting a nature which provides 'a temporary retreat from the world so that the spirit can renew itself.'¹⁰² This poem is usually read as a text which counters the normative claims of patriarchy, but Kennedy is at pains to reveal the more devotional aspects of the poem.¹⁰³ Whilst this poem and others clearly speak to a contemporary tradition of Christian inflected Horatian verse, exploring and producing spiritual contemplation, I would suggest that the extent to which Finch emphasises the political aspects of the estate at Eastwell should also be noted. For Edson 'A Petition for Absolute Retreat', 'like so many other retirement poems that address personified Solitudes, ... appears at first glance secular, but in diverting readers from "worldly things" it can be seen to perform an essentially religious function.'¹⁰⁴ What is clear about Finch's articulation of retirement at Eastwell or other estates is that it is crucially rural and in opposition to urban spaces and mores, is populated by a largely yet not exclusively female coterie of like-minded individuals and incorporates political, spiritual and literary conceptions of the motif.

⁹⁹ Edson, 'British Retirement Poetry', p. 19.

¹⁰⁰ Joshua Scodel, 'Lyric Forms', in Steven N. Zwicker (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to British Literature 1650-1740* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.133; Wentworth Dillon, earl of Roscommon, *Poems on Several Occasions* (London, 1714), p.19.

¹⁰¹ Edson, 'British Retirement Poetry', p. 27.

¹⁰² McGovern, *Anne Finch*, p. 82.

¹⁰³ Kennedy, 'Radiant Throne', p. 431.

¹⁰⁴ Edson, 'British Retirement Poetry', p. 28.

Barker: relocated country house discourse

For King, the critical interest in Barker's diverse poetic output is located in her 'willingness to enter into and probe the oddities of her position as a spinster whose allegiance to elite male learning, an ambiguous (for women) poetic heritage, an outlawed religion, and an increasingly discredited political ideology which took her well outside the ordinary sphere of the country gentlewoman.'¹⁰⁵ If we leave to one side, the problems of defining this 'ordinary sphere of the country gentlewoman', it is still clear that Barker's poetry frequently engages with the concept of being outside religious, cultural and political norms. I shall argue in this section that the tropes and structures of the country house genre allow Barker to explore this 'singularity and insistence on her otherness.'¹⁰⁶ Barker's status as outsider is most frequently discussed with reference to her experience of political exile with the Stuart court in Northern France from 1689 to 1704.¹⁰⁷ However, her status as a convert to Catholicism and her tenuous social position as a spinster are perhaps equally pertinent frames to discuss her poetry. Indeed, for Barker this period of exile represented, not only a political experience, but also exerted a profound influence on her confessional identity and social and economic status. In moving to St Germain-en-Laye, Barker removed herself from the physical and cultural spaces of her early life into new material and religious environments. These newer landscapes included not only the socio-political communities of the extended Stuart court, but also the religious communities centred on the convents of Pontoise and Maubuisson. However, Barker's status as outsider predated her move to France as, the poetry in her earliest published collection suggests.

Barker was born in 1652 at Blatherwick, Northamptonshire. The family lived here until 1662 when they moved to hold the lease to the manor house and surrounding land in Wilsthorpe, Lincolnshire. It was to this estate that Barker returned in 1704 after her period of exile in St Germain-en-Laye. Barker had been named as

¹⁰⁵ *The Poems of Jane Barker: The Magdalen Manuscript*, ed. by Kathryn R. King (Oxford: Magdalen College, 1998), p. 22.

¹⁰⁶ King, and Medoff, 'Documentary Record', p. 17.

¹⁰⁷ Barash, *English Women's Poetry*, pp. 174–208.

heir to the estate in the new and extended lease in 1675, presumably in the place of her late elder brother, Edward. She resided at Wilsthorpe until at least 1717.¹⁰⁸ Barker's poetry first appeared in a printed collection, *Poetical Recreations*, published by Benjamin Crayle in 1687. However, the poems probably circulated in manuscript form prior to publication.¹⁰⁹ In exile in Northern France, Barker produced two manuscripts, one a presentation version intended for the son of James II, whom, as a Jacobite, she regarded as the legitimate Prince of Wales, and the other a more substantial collection in three parts now held by Magdalen College Library.¹¹⁰ I shall argue that both form an integral part of Barker's bid to secure social and economic patronage and negotiate the broader effects of exile. The earlier published poems seek social, intellectual as well as financial associations, whilst those written in exile directly address the convent communities, the Jacobite connections which supported and frequented these same communities, the exiled community in St Germain-en-Laye and the Jacobite community remaining in England.

The manuscripts collection included revised versions of many of the earlier published poems, a section of overtly polemical verse and a selection of poetry written whilst in exile. The reverse trajectory of publication to manuscript displayed here is, as Leigh A. Eicke explains, a characteristic of political and social conservatism which is visible in Finch's return to manuscript circulation after the publication of *Miscellany Poems* in 1713. It also speaks to Barker's need to build her role for herself in an exiled community through the circulation of poetry and the presentation of a complete manuscript.¹¹¹ On her return from France, Barker again used earlier poems, embedded in her novels, most notably *Love Intrigues* (1713) and *A Patchwork Screen for the Ladies* (1723).¹¹² It should be noted that of all the poems revised for inclusion

¹⁰⁸ King, Jane Barker; King and Jedoff, 'The Documentary Record'.

¹⁰⁹ Kathryn R. King, 'Jane Barker, *Poetical Recreations*, and the Sociable Text', *ELH*, 61 (1994), 551-70, p.551.

¹¹⁰ Leigh A Eicke, 'Jane Barker's Jacobite writings', in *Women's Writing and the Circulation of Ideas: Manuscript Publication in England, 1550-1800*, ed. by George L. Justice and Nathan Tinker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 137-157 (p. 138); *Poems of Jane Barker*. Ed. by King, pp. 1-23.

¹¹¹ Eicke, 'Jacobite Writings' p. 141.

¹¹² Jane Barker, *A Patch-Work Screen for the Ladies; or, Love and Virtue Recommended: In a Collection of Instructive Novels* (London: E. Curll and T. Payne, 1723) and *Love Intrigues: or, The History of the*

in the novels, all but six belong to *Poetical Recreations*. These remaining six belong to the first two sections of the Magdalen manuscript, largely written in exile and, whilst these are obviously informed by the conditions and circumstance of exile, they do not deal directly with political issues. It is significant that Barker's process of revision was gradual, with the Magdalen College manuscript poems representing a transitional phase of production. This suggests that the motivation to revise *Poetical Recreations* is not entirely associated with Barker's experience of political exile. Furthermore, Barker's decision to exclude the polemical verses from her later novels indicates, to a certain extent, that her dissident identity lay elsewhere.

In *Poetical Recreations* Barker explores a sense of being an outsider in many of the poems. Although Eicke argues that Barker describes her relationship to her brother's Cambridge circle in positive terms through the use of scribal forms and the emphasis on collaborative features of composition, the relationship remains tenuous and the audible poetic voice is frequently characterised by distance or loneliness.¹¹³ Barker also belonged to an increasingly isolated loyalist community, an experience that informs the later novels. For example, in *Love Intrigues* Galesia's father 'lost a very honourable and profitable Place at Court: after which he retired into the Country, leading a very private, or rather obscure Life, just above the contempt of Poverty.'¹¹⁴ Importantly, the landscapes of rural Lincolnshire are central to these and later poems.

'A Farewell to POETRY, WITH A long Digression on ANATOMY' plays with the motifs and conventions of the country house poem, despite not overtly depicting a landscape. Here she mimics the country house genre with its focus on the country estate and the moral economy prescribed by its socio-political order.¹¹⁵ This highly unusual poem takes an anatomical tour through the body in much the same way that a country house poem tours an estate, with Barker retaining and modulating the themes and forms of the genre whilst shifting the focus towards a medical discourse.

Amours of Bosvil and Galesia (London: E. Curll and C. Crownfield, 1713). All subsequent references will be to these texts and will be cited parenthetically by page number.

¹¹³ Eicke, 'Jacobite Writings', p. 138.

¹¹⁴ Barker, *Loves Intrigues*, p. 84.

¹¹⁵ Jane Barker, 'A Farewell to Poetry, with a Long Digression of Anatomy', in *Poetical Recreations* (London, 1688), pp. 96-106. All subsequent references to this text will be cited parenthetically by line number.

Accordingly, a medical dynasty of Aristotle, Hippocrates, Galen and Socrates replaces the more conventional aristocratic antecedents and the architectural diction is retained in the description of the body in terms of a house. Thus, the speaker is shown how 'th' Foundation is first laid', 'how Pillars of strong Bones are made' and '[h]owth' Walls consist of carneous parts' (*PR*, 17-19). Barker also keeps the carefully delineated social hierarchies conventionally articulated by the genre, with the brain occupying a privileged position over the female body. Thus, 'The Nerves descend' and 'do dispence / To ev'ry member, Motive Pow'r and Sence' (*PR*, 23-24). Similarly, the hospitality motif is kept in the description of the stomach and, like that offered by the country house owner, its function is predicated on a control of the natural or female environment. It is pertinent that Barker chooses to submit a female body to anatomical observation, thus echoing the controlling depiction of a feminized landscape by the male poet or artist.

Barker's speaker allies herself with the contemporary medical authorities, William Harvey and Richard Lower. Barker's distant blood relationship to the latter is made explicit and the use throughout the poem of 'we' underscores this positive identification. However, there are, again, tensions within this identity and the speaker stands simultaneously in a position of visual authority whilst locating herself by means of her gender within the scene. *A Patchwork Screen* articulates a similar tension: Galesia explains that since her 'Time and Thoughts were taken up in *Harvey, Willis*, and such-like Authors' she had become 'an useless member in [her] rural assemblies.' Furthermore, the poem notes the deficiencies of modern science which 'some things miss[es] and some things hit[s] by chance / For we at best do but in Twilight go' (*PWS*, p. 83). The reference to darkness here compromises the idea of the visual appropriation of the landscape or body. In the later version, again in *A Patchwork Screen*, Barker intensifies this compromised position, replacing 'some Things' with 'most Things' (p. 91). She also adds several lines, raising questions about the abilities of medicine. She writes: 'Such Rarities we found in this Third Place / As put ev'n Comprehension to Disgrace' (*PWS*, p. 89).

The female speaker considers the male medical fraternity divided in opinion and lacking a definitive authority. As Andrew Wear notes, Barker was correct in this assessment of contemporary medical scholarship, which was often torn between traditional theories and practice and newer empirical models and authorities, such as Willis and Harvey often challenged.¹¹⁶ She continues:

Here's Cavities, said one; And here, says he
Is th' Seat of fancy, judgement, memory
Here, says another, is the fertile Womb (*PWS*, p. 89).

Not only is Barker's speaker distanced from the formal medical community by means of her gender, she also seems to have reservations because of her faith. For Barker, God is the transcendent light which can illuminate the doctors' twilight. The use of landscape themes and conventions combined with the pattern of revision and retention allows Barker to reflect cultural shifts in medical practice. More importantly, however, it also allows her to articulate her own position, one which is characterised by conflict and an overriding sense of exile. As she writes of Galesia, Barker describes a position where 'genius plac'd her in a corner, where she might see and hear all that pass'd.'¹¹⁷ Yet, this position does not necessarily allow her to take an active role. King and Barash rightly identify exile as a defining aspect of Barker's life, but the complexity and location of these exilic tensions may be much broader and persistent. Crucially the idea of being an outsider existed for Barker before her conversion and move to Northern France.

In exile she revisits the landscapes of her early life in Wilsthorp as a site of meaning and memory. She does this from two vantage points: gardens and convents. Both stand in Barker's verse in the stead of a country house. Convents were similar in many ways, as they offered both refuge and hospitality to guests and were often sites of intellectual and artistic production and circulation.¹¹⁸ For Barker, the convents of Northern France – theologically and politically inflected spaces – were central to her experience of exile and her own developing identity as a convert to the Catholic faith.

¹¹⁶ Andrew Wear, *Knowledge and Practice in English Medicine, 1550-1680* (Cambridge: CUP, 2000), pp. 434-73.

¹¹⁷ Jane Barker, *The Lining of the Patch Work Screen: Design'd for the Farther Entertainment of the ladies* (London: A. Bettesworth, 1726) p. 275.

¹¹⁸ McBride, *Country House Discourse*.

Their depiction is also part of a wider Jacobite honouring of individuals and institutions which supported the exiled king and his supporters.¹¹⁹ Yet, they were also important to Barker's social identity and position within the exiled community of St Germain-en-Laye. As Cosgrove explains, any landscape, real or imagined, not only reflects its culture, but also functions as a way to explore and understand our relationship to the world.¹²⁰ This relationship is also, according to Catherine Brace: 'not passive but [operates] as part of the intricacies of social relations, including identity formation' and this 'identity is complex, fluid and dynamic, always in a state of flux.'¹²¹ The use of convent spaces in Barker's poetry can be seen as an attempt to explore the multiple implications of exile and the accompanying need to negotiate a shifting and problematic relationship to home on both a personal and theological level.

I shall focus first on the poem 'Fidelia having seen the Convent at St James' from Barker's manuscript collection, *Poems on several occasions, in three parts*.¹²² Although many of the poems depicting the conventual communities of St Germain-en-Laye have been critically considered by Toni Bowers and Tonya McArthur amongst others, this particular poem has received little critical attention and is to date unavailable in print. The collection was written and revised during this period of exile.¹²³ The first two sections of the manuscript frequently use Barker's poetic persona *Fidelia*; this persona was linked to this period of exile, yet refers specifically to her conversion to Catholicism, which occurred prior to her move to France.¹²⁴ The last part of the manuscript comprises a revised selection of poems from Barker's earlier published miscellany *Poetical Recreations* (1687).¹²⁵ In the opening section of the manuscript, 'Poems Referring to the times', Barker makes clear what she sees as a connection between the poetry contained within both the time and place of writing;

¹¹⁹ Eicke, 'Jacobite Writings' p. 146.

¹²⁰ Cosgrove, *Social Formation*, p. 1-8.

¹²¹ Catherine Brace, 'Landscape and Identity', in *Studying Cultural Landscapes*, ed. by Iain Robertson and Penny Richards (London: Arnold, 2003), pp. 121-125 (pp. 121-2).

¹²² Jane Barker, *Poems on several occasions, in three parts* MS 343, fols. 13^v-14^r. Transcriptions of the poems are my own. Text amended or added at a later date is indicated by <>. Subsequent references will be to this text and will be cited in the first instance parenthetically by fol.

¹²³ Kathryn R. King, *Jane Barker*, p. 102.

¹²⁴ For the date of Barker's conversion see *inter alia*, *Poems of Jane Barker*, ed. by King, p. 20 and Carol Barash, *English Women's Poetry*, p. 174.

¹²⁵ King, *Jane Barker*, p. 31.

they are in Barker's words, 'Occasionally writ according to the different circumstance of time and place' (fol. 7'). However, whilst the convent landscapes of many of these poems afford sites of contemplation, they are also crucially spaces to examine past and often difficult events and complex issues of faith and political allegiance.

Although not conventional country house poems, I would like to suggest that many of Barker's convent poems exhibit a similar engagement with the structures or imaginative reworking of the *topoi* of the country house genre, as for example, the poem discussed above. Specifically, the poems engage with the genre's use of space as an index of socio-economic status and political authority, its role in the construction of various and varying identities, its concern with boundaries and belonging, and its function as a legitimating poetic genre. It is through the depictions of and perspective from these convent spaces that Barker not only works to reposition herself and the larger Catholic community, but also to relocate the boundaries between herself and the various religious communities which this comprised. As Bowers notes, the Jacobite cause, as with all political groupings, was neither a stable nor a homogenous category, making it difficult for Barker to identify with one specific community.¹²⁶ Barker herself alludes to this complexity of political identification in the preface to *A Patchwork Screen for the Ladies* (1723) and as Eicke suggests, it may be responsible for the multiple personae in this and *The Lining of the Patchwork Screen* (1725).¹²⁷ Claire Walker outlines similar tensions within and between the religious communities of Northern France, especially those close to St Germain-en-Laye which accommodated the mutual support network of the exiled Stuart court and the English convents.¹²⁸ To some extent, Barker's perception of conventual and social communities of Catholics reflects similar tensions, and the use of country house discourse allows her to explore and negotiate this. Therefore, a reading of the poems which takes into account the

¹²⁶ Toni Bowers, 'Jacobite Difference and the Poetry of Jane Barker', *ELH*, 64 (1997), 857-869 (p. 857).

¹²⁷ Eicke, 'Jacobite writings', p. 145.

¹²⁸ Claire Walker, 'Loyal and Dutiful Subjects: English Nuns and Stuart Politics', in *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450-1700*, ed. by James Daybell (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp. 228-242, (p. 236).

use of the country house genre may reveal the contingent sense of belonging which underpins many examples of the genre, including those by Finch.¹²⁹

Nevertheless, the convent poems of the manuscript collection suggest at first glance an unambiguous social and theological relationship between Barker and the various communities of St Germain-en-Laye. In this, Barker would not be unusual, as Walker demonstrates, in her discussion of the role of English convents, for religious and political exiles and dissidents alike.¹³⁰ Often an enclosed space, the convent, like the country estate, may afford simultaneously a haven from a threatening wider world and a sense of belonging to a specific and ideal community. However, where several poems point quite clearly to Barker's, albeit temporary, residence at Pontoise, in virtually all of these convent poems Barker's poetic speaker has few companions, except the abbess of Pontoise and her niece.¹³¹ She also seems to be a passive observer of convent life.¹³² As McArthur explains, the convents of Northern France established from the late sixteenth century were 'all founded, managed, and inhabited by Catholic women, primarily English and aristocratic.'¹³³ Yet, McArthur sees Barker's convents in the novels as 'centers of political and cultural resistance.' These allow 'women an alternative to marriage and motherhood and serving as spaces within which single and married women found fellowship and retreat, education and spiritual direction'.¹³⁴ The convent poems, however, present a more distant and solitary poetic voice, possibly explained by the specific demographic of the seventeenth-century convents in Northern Europe. Although Barker moved to Northern France in 1689, it is more accurate to describe her living alongside rather than with the exiled court. As Jeslyn Medoff and King comment, there are few documents to attest to her residence in St Germain-en-Laye, suggesting a marginal position vis-à-vis the Stuart court and the

¹²⁹ For example Lanyer's 'The Description of Cooke-ham', Hutchinson's *Elegies*, Leapor's 'Crumble-Hall'.

¹³⁰ Walker, 'English Nuns', pp. 228-242.

¹³¹ 'To My dear CosenColl – [...]', fol. 47^r - 48^v.

¹³² See 'To Madam Fitz James, on the day of her profession, at Pontoise', fol. 45 and 'To her Royal Highness the Princess Lewis Marya, princess of Bavaria, Abess of the Royal Monastery at Maubuisson.', fol. 62^r -63^v.

¹³³ McArthur, Tonya Moutray, 'Jane Barker and the Politics of Catholic Celibacy', *Studies in English Literature*, 47.3 (2007), 595-618 (p. 597).

¹³⁴ McArthur, 'Politics of Celibacy', p. 597.

wider exiled community there.¹³⁵ Furthermore, as King explains, not only was Barker distanced by the ideological fissures which characterized the Jacobite community in France and England, she was also estranged from the exiled court by marital status and social class.¹³⁶ Thus, these convent spaces represent Barker's dilemma in exile: a sense of social alienation existing simultaneously with complex religious and political self-identification.

The poems of Barker's earlier published collection, *Poetical Recreations*, are largely domestic in focus and the landscapes, where visible, are those of the area around the Lincolnshire family home at Wilsthorpe: many depict conventional rural, often pastoral, landscapes and deal with the associated ideas of retirement and solitude.¹³⁷ The other feature of the published collection noted above is that these poetic landscapes represent an attempt by Barker to appropriate conventionally male discourses and practices associated with her elder brother, and other male relatives and acquaintances.¹³⁸ However, whilst many of these acts of appropriation cluster around the idea of landscape, the rural environment of Lincolnshire does not seem to offer Barker easy answers and the published collection as a whole exhibits many tensions and ambiguities regarding this Lincolnshire home and her relationship to it and its various coteries and networks. I would like to suggest that a similar and problematic act of appropriation occurs in many of Barker's manuscript poems. Whilst many of the poems refer explicitly to the female communities at Pontoise and Maubuisson or use their implied location as a perspective to consider past events and personal circumstances, many exhibit similar tensions. Furthermore, 'Fidelia having seen the Convent at St James' intriguingly refers to a community of Benedictine monks. James II set up this order at the Royal Chapel, St James's Palace and it was crucial to the conversion of many to the Catholic faith.¹³⁹ The poem does echo those

¹³⁵ King, *Jane Barker*, p. 119. See also Medoff and King, 'Documentary Record', p.22.

¹³⁶ King, *Jane Barker*, p. 142.

¹³⁷ For example, 'A Virgin Life', pp. 12-13; 'An Invitation to my friends at Cambridge', pp. 1-4; 'A Prospect of a landskip', pp. 20-23 in Jane Barker, *Poetical Recreations*,

¹³⁸ Sharon Young, 'Exilic identity in Jane Barker's poetic (re)creations of landscape', *Worcester Papers*, 6 (2008), 8-18.

¹³⁹ *The Galesia trilogy and selected manuscript poems of Jane Barker*, ed. by Carol Shiner Wilson (Oxford: OUP, 1997), p. xxiii.

in the collection which describe the Benedictine and Cistercian convents of Northern France. Nevertheless, the decision to describe an English and male community suggests both distance and community and a glance to past rather than present experience.

Although there is little in the way of natural landscape visible in the poem, Barker implies landscape both through the evocation of an earthly paradise and the use of motifs associated with the country house genre. Barker makes claims for the convent as Paradise: 'If there be a terrestrial Paradise, / 'Tis here where man, man<'>s follies can dispise, / And make his thoughts above ambition rise.' Whilst the rhyme suggests the cycle of fall and salvation, the use of a triplet in these opening lines draws attention to the convent as an earthly Eden, rather than a conventional paradisaal garden. As Nicole Pohl argues, women's utopian discourse of the period focuses on the ideal in terms of social relationships rather than material space.¹⁴⁰ Crucially, then, this is also a social space:

Where virtue takes the place of noble birth,
And wisdom's vallu'd more than shining earth,
Where patience and humility injoy,
The Honor's due to their great dignity,
And are not servants to necessity <.> .

The society here, like that of the country house, offers refuge from the iniquities and troubles of the outside or fallen world: 'In perfect Joy, Love, peace, and innocence, / Secluded from this world's impertinence <.>' There is also the sense here that the cloistered community, like the country house, may offer a social example to the outside world. Again the Benedictine community is perceived as a social space in this regard and Barker ends the poem with the observation that, 'Were all the world like these bles'd souls resign'd, / The fall wou'd be small loss to humane kind.'

More important perhaps, is the role of the community in supporting the recently converted.¹⁴¹ The genre's implied, but not necessarily accurate, model of a

¹⁴⁰ Nicole Pohl, *Women, Space and Utopia, 1600-1800* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), pp. 1-15.

¹⁴¹ Elsewhere, Barker writes in praise of other converts to the Catholic faith: 'To Her Royal Highness the Princess Lewis Marya, Princess of Bavaria Abbess of the Royal monastery of Maubison, new years day 1700'. For a detailed discussion of this poem see Niall MacKenzie, 'Jane Barker, Louise

socially inclusive hospitality is retained here by Barker: 'Where all the vertues keep up their just rights, / At once command and serve their proselytes.' However, it is unclear whether Barker includes herself at this point beyond the conventional generic role of poet-guest. As the title of the poem suggests, *Fidelia* has only seen, yet not necessarily participated in the life at St James. Indeed, the poem consistently avoids the first person, stressing instead 'All day they sing' and 'Their whole lives.' In this the poem reflects others where the speaker is a non-participant, such as 'To Madam Fitz James, on the day of her profession, at Pontoise' and 'To her Royal Highness the Princess Lewis Marya, princess of Bavaria, Abess of the Royal Monastery at Maubuisson.'

Barker then shifts more clearly to the country house genre and its use of hospitality as an index of socio-political virtue: 'Prudence [attending] the porter at the gate / <Whilst Justice does,> on the superior wait; / Healthfull temperance in the Kitching dwells.' Here, however, Barker translates the political implications of hospitality into a religious dimension. In this alternative country house the occupants are not merely virtuous but abstract virtues. The use of the abstract here allows Barker to elide the gender of the inhabitants of the community at St James, offering access to the exemplary community for female convert and visitor. The inhabitants are attended by other abstractions of virtue: Chastity, Fortitude and Temperance. Whilst the social hierarchies of the genre are retained here, the focus shifts to female and familial relationships:

Her daughter Chastity serves in the cells<.>
Stout Fortitude's a champion to them all,
Whilst the three sisters Theological,
Make <'>em live here as Adam e'er the fall.

This model is clearly gendered, reflecting Barker's own religious self-identification with female celibacy and a rejection of heterosexual and reproductive relationships. Again the triplet draws attention to the key point, that of an alternative social network which is both harmonious and virtuous. The regularity of rhyme and meter throughout underscore this. In contrast, many of the other convent poems struggle to maintain a harmonious order, interrupted as they often are by political discussion. We should

Hollandine of the Palatinate and "Solomon's Wise Daughter", *The Review of English Studies*, 58.233 (2007), 64-72.

also note, however, that the community presented here, unlike the other convents depicted in the manuscript, is also largely empty of human society or at least of female human society. From the position of exile, this particular spiritual home is no longer viable for Barker, except through memory.

Barker's convent poems deal with the retirement trope so common to the country house genre. In this they resemble the 'heroism of renunciation which pervades Jacobite writing.'¹⁴² Writing, which in this respect differed from more general treatments of retirement, by this point was characterised by a move away from a classical understanding of the trope.¹⁴³ If the convent is a refuge from, and alternative to, the wider world, only through Barker's retrospective glance, other poems in the collection may complicate this further. In these *Fidelia* speaks explicitly from one landscape type to another, both geographically and historically. However, as in the convent poems, the tone and language of these poems do not necessarily speak to a sense of belonging, even to an exiled community. The articulation of loss and distance here seems to suggest a much deeper sense of exile.

In 'A dialogue between *Fidelia* and her little nephew *Martius* as they walk in Luxembourg. Disguised as a shepherdess or country maid' *Fidelia* begins by describing her native Lincolnshire in conventional pastoral terms: 'Come sit down, I'll tell thee how ith'fenn, / We fed our flocks upon the banks of the Glenn' (64^r-67^v). This idyll becomes immediately linked to royalist political retirement:

My father and his brother Cavaliers,
Stuck to their king as did their ancestors,
Wives portions, and paternal means they spent,
To serve the King against the Parliament,
Thus for their Loyalty being both undone,
Were forc'd to quit the court, the camp, and town,
They sold their swords and other warlike things,
As did their wives, their petycotes and rings,
And therewithall, bought equipage for plows,
Betook themselves, to mannage sheep and cows,

For Chambers, the pastoral mode was closely associated with Stuart idealism which accounts for Hutchinson's wariness of a call for re-pastoralization. This association of

¹⁴² Mackenzie, 'Jane Barker', pp. 66.

¹⁴³ Edson, 'British Retirement Poetry'.

the pastoral, however, undergoes a reversal during the reign of William III when the pastoral tropes become reattached to ideas of virtuous retirement, in contrast to the perceived tyranny of William's London based court.¹⁴⁴

Despite the move towards the georgic mode we see in the last two lines, *Fidelia* continues her nostalgic evocation of an earthly and political paradise:

Here we as in a little Can'an liv'd,
And for our former manna never griev'd.
Here milk and hony, did not only flow,
But we'd a little kind of Eden too,
Well furnish'd with good fruit, fresh herbs, gay flowers,
Fountains and grass plats, walks and shady bowers,

This idyll cannot be sustained, however, as apparently nearer political events cloud the nostalgic view:

My flocks decay'd, my barns and houses fell,
My lands grew barren, in fine nought went well,
Thus helpless, friendless, destitute forlorn,
Twi't debtors, creditors, and lawyers torn,
I wander'd on, in hopes of better chance,

On closer inspection, this sense of marginalization and accompanying loss of vision is more than political, but is complicated by Barker's personal circumstances: notably the death of her elder brother and parents. Thus, whilst *Fidelia* can now claim the family estate as her own, as the shift from 'we' to 'I' at this point indicates, the wider political contexts and personal circumstances mean she must still negotiate 'the world's labyrinth'.

However, the move to France seems not to have provided a refuge from this:

[...] here we wander vagabons alone,
not knowing any, or to any known,
And all methinks do our acquaintance shun.

Barker has moved from the rural idyll of royalist Lincolnshire to the troubles of the Restoration and to the loneliness of exile. Again, the exclusion suggested by this last line may be more than politically determined. The pastoral perspective suggested by the poem's title cannot be sustained; the present landscape is not that of rural plenitude, but a garden which provides neither protection from the 'world's labyrinth'

¹⁴⁴ Chambers, 'Wild Pastorall Encounter' pp.173-176; 188-9.

nor affords clear or perfect vision of the past. Both poems attempt to offer a vision of an alternative world using the convent as a model or a prospect. As with the previous poem, the garden here may offer temporary physical refuge from a socially and politically hostile world, but does not afford a clear, available or necessarily comforting view. The community or network afforded by these spaces is similarly partial and contingent and, if we consider Fidelia's status as shepherdess, it is clear this is merely a temporary disguise. Importantly, the depiction of or a perspective from either space gives us no direct sight of her current circumstances, nor Fidelia a clear or consistent view of the past. The only vision of the future lies with her sleeping nephew, Martius.

The convent offers Barker a potential resolution to her perceived status as an isolated outsider. Not only does the convent offer a material refuge and a religio-politically inflected space, but as Walker notes, the convents in Northern France were active in the patronage networks clustered around prominent royalist and Jacobite individuals.¹⁴⁵ For Barker, as for the poet of the country house genre, this patronage network promised not only social preferment, but one which is sanctioned by established sources of power and not in conflict with her confessional or political identity. However, I have also argued that, through an imaginative reworking of the *topoi* of the country house poem to explore the spaces of the convent, Barker attempts to rewrite her circumstances, re-capturing her vision of England, tentatively re-imagining a terrestrial paradise, and her relationship to it. This process of relocation, whether it is understood as the negotiation of belonging or the articulation of distance, is realized in many ways: historically, geographically, politically, and socially. Yet, this process remains in many respects a re-imagining which cannot fully account for the relationship between Barker and the overlapping religious, political and social communities with which she identified. Although the experience of political exile is central in many ways to all of Barker's texts, an analysis of her poetic landscapes points to a much wider, more complicated and more persistent sense of being 'outside the ordinary sphere.' King argues that Barker's verse written in exile attempts to situate herself with new communities of faith and allegiance, whilst

¹⁴⁵ Walker, 'English Nuns', pp. 232-236.

simultaneously distancing herself from older ties with the result that it is characterised by a persistent sense of exile rather than belonging.¹⁴⁶ However, a reading of the poems which foreground landscape and place may suggest a continuing yet difficult attachment by Barker to various and varying communities.

As I have argued in my discussion of Hutchinson's texts, the country house genre of the restoration period was still closely linked to Cavalier culture with its focus on retirement and friendship made concrete by the realities of Civil War, exile and political defeat. However, as I have argued in this chapter, the poetry of the post-Restoration period is also characterised by expressions of exile and community. For Finch and Barker, as for many poets in the last years of the seventeenth century and the early decades of the eighteenth, the epideictic and epistolary features of the earlier country house poem were easily reworked to explore and describe the intellectual, social and politically inflected coteries of the period. Furthermore, the motivation to explore the country house as a location and symbol of retirement and retreat and a symbol of legitimate political power did not wane, but was reworked with different emphases for different locations and contexts. As a result the poetry of the period 1690-1720 exhibits a similar focus on the country house to that of the period 1660-1689.

Finch, Barker and other Tory or Jacobite poets working with the genre in this period between the revolutionary upheavals of 1688 and the end of Anne's reign found it a useful means to offer praise in hope or gratitude for all forms of patronage and support, whilst retaining an authorised poetic voice. Whilst both Finch and Barker are marginalised by their political affiliations, exilic tensions are more clearly visible in Barker's texts. In her early published verse, Barker replaces the country estate with the human body, using the tour structure of the genre to stake several claims to intellectual pursuits whilst revealing a social and religious identity which foreshadows the poetry of exile. In the poetry written in exile, Barker revisits the landscapes of her early life in Wilsthorp as a site of meaning and memory from two vantage points: gardens and convents. Both are used in Barker's verse in the place and as a symbol of

¹⁴⁶ King, *Jane Barker*, p. 21.

the country house. For Barker, the convents of Northern France were central to her experience of exile and her own developing identity as a convert to the Catholic faith. Convents of the period functioned in similar ways to the early country house, offering both refuge and hospitality to guests and were often sites of intellectual and artistic production and circulation.¹⁴⁷ Beyond the practical support, however, the convent and their garden spaces were a crucial space of reflection for Barker – a place to remember the Civil War and associated political injustices. The use of convent spaces in Barker’s poetry can then be seen as an attempt to explore the multiple implications of exile and the accompanying need to negotiate a shifting and problematic relationship to home on both a personal and theological level. There is also a clear sense in Barker’s work, that the cloistered community, like the country house, may offer a social example to the outside world.

Finch in contrast, makes a more successful attempt to include herself within the spaces and networks she describes, reflecting her class position and the more prominent role she played in the religio-political community she celebrates. Hamrick explains Finch’s position in 1689:

In permanent exile from the world she had known before the revolution, Finch found comfort and security during this period at the wooded estates of her friends and along the shady paths of Eastwell, the Winchilsea family property¹⁴⁸

To find this comfort, Finch negotiates her sense of displacement through the appropriation of the country house genre, re-enacting the forging of political and social networks through their formal qualities. This sense of a political community is further supported by the poem’s manuscript form which provided a substantial yet carefully targeted readership. Finch, thus, establishes a counter space to a politically hostile society. This space is one predicated on the ownership of country estates by her extended family, replacing the family estate lost to her and her husband through their status as non-jurors. Furthermore, the friendship invoked and the poetry which cements it provides an additional discursive counter-space not reliant on architecture

¹⁴⁷ McBride, *Country House Discourse*.

¹⁴⁸ Hamrick, ‘Anne Finch’s Jacobite Poems’, p. 545.

or ownership. Finch's host or hostess becomes the main component as much as a symbol of the hospitality offered.

The genre also allowed Finch and Barker a means to articulate a specific or more generalised polemic which legitimated certain hierarchies or modes of power. It also afforded a way of speaking about the hostile environment – political, theological or social – in which they found themselves. In Barker's reworking she may be considered quite innovative in using conventual spaces and the human body on which to overlay the discourses of the country estate. Nonetheless, for many using the genre, its formal complexity offers similar flexibility and a resonant discursive space or rubric to discuss such issues as political defeat or a perceived difficult relationship to the property owning class, as discussed above in chapters two and three. It is the paradox of the genre that its attempts at the inscription of order and belonging make it an ideal space to describe and explore disorder, loss and disconnection. For both poets, the country house or its theological equivalent offers a site of retirement. Yet as Hamrick points out with reference to Finch, 'retreat and retirement are as much a function of personal memory as they are of geography.'¹⁴⁹ As I have argued, this can be applied equally to Barker's constructions of retreat.

¹⁴⁹ Hamrick, 'Anne Finch's Jacobite Poems', p. 552.

Chapter five

Political gardening: the country house genre, 1715-1732

As I have discussed in the previous chapters, the country house poem functions to provide, or maintain, a myth of an ideal community and it often does so against a prevailing climate of cultural anxiety or conflict. I have also argued that the genre offered rhetorical strategies to Royalist or Republican, Anglican or Presbyterian alike: to explore political or religious events and circumstances, to offer an ideal community as a paradigm and to position the poetic voice vis-à-vis the estate described. In the previous chapter I discussed how Finch and Barker also used the representation of the spaces of the estate or convent to garner support and express gratitude to extended political, theological and friendship groups. This chapter will explore the use of the country house genre by those associated with Whig political sympathies: Montagu and Ingram.¹ Although only Montagu is well known as a Whig writer, both belonged to social and family networks which were explicitly Whig in allegiance.² However, as a reading of their country house poetry reveals, this is far more complex an identification than is often suggested by critical readings; both Montagu and Ingram had social and literary associations with significant Tory figures, including Pope, and their writing lives spanned the period when factions within the Whig party complicated the two party system.

The term Whig is a broad one which initially characterised a popular and urban dissent towards a court based establishment, which supported the Revolution settlement of 1688, the subsequent rule of William III, and the Hanoverian succession. In the 1680s the Whig poets had offered a satirical riposte to the lewdness and

¹ Both of these women had titles and changed their names on marriage. To avoid confusion I shall, as in other chapters, use only their married surnames when referring to them. For Ingram who is referred to by either of her married names, I have decided to use the name of her second husband, as this was her name on writing the text which this chapter discusses. I shall also, as elsewhere, not use their titles.

² For Ann Meriwether, Montagu's engagement in 'the public, primarily male arena of English politics' was strengthened further by her extensive travels with her husband during their early married life. Meriwether, 'Transculturation and Politics', p. 624. See also Kietzman, 'Cultural Dislocation'.

corruption they perceived in the court. After 1689 Whig poetics became a defence against counter claims to William's reign and a means to celebrate the reformation offered by William and Mary: 'the poet was no longer a satirical scourge of the public world but a defender of the new moral regime.'³ John Dennis is clear about this new role for poetry in matters of public virtue:

Since Religion is the only solid Foundation of all Civil Society, it follows, that whoever endeavours to re-establish Poetry, makes a generous Attempt to restore an Art, that may be highly advantageous to the Publick, and beneficial to Mankind.⁴

Yet, as Abigail Williams argues, the Whig project was larger in scope and married political and artistic life: '[t]hey [...] saw themselves as part of an ambitious project to remodel and reform English literary culture alongside the contemporary transformation of political and social life.' Indeed, as Williams points out, the expenditure of the Whig grandees was not confined to any one medium and their contribution via patronage to architectural and gardening arts was significant in the early decades of the eighteenth century.⁵

Ingram's father, the third earl of Carlisle invested substantially in the house and garden at Castle Howard. This was, according to Kerry Downes, the act 'not of a philosopher or connoisseur but of a politician or magnate.'⁶ Indeed, Carlisle, as a Whig minister during two Whig administrations, was an important Whig political figure. John Vanbrugh was the architect of choice as fellow member of the Kit-Cat club and his baroque style is integral to the design of Castle Howard, Blenheim Palace, Kimbolton Castle, Claremont and Stowe. However, Whig taste, like its politics, was varied and constantly changing to accommodate events and fashions. Eventually the baroque of Vanbrugh was replaced by the neoclassical designs exemplified by Colen Campbell and Kent. The one persistent feature, however, is the grandeur of the designs that, for

³ Abigail Williams, *Poetry and the Creation of a Whig Literary Culture, 1681-1714* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 124.

⁴ John Dennis, *The Grounds of Criticism in Poetry* (London: George Strahan and Bernard Lintott, 1704), p. 127. See also John Dennis, *The Advancement and Reformation of Modern Poetry* (London: Rich. Parker, 1701).

⁵ Williams, *Whig Literary Culture*, p. 2; 8; 232.

⁶ Kerry Downes, 'Vanbrugh over Fifty Years', in *Sir John Vanbrugh and Landscape Architecture in Baroque England 1690-1730*, ed. by Christopher Ridgway and Robert Williams (Stroud: Sutton, 2000), pp. 1-11 (p. 11).

Williams, expresses not only a desire to rival the grandeur of earlier court buildings but also the lavish patronage structures associated with monarchy.⁷ This point is emphasised by the Earl of Shaftesbury in *Characteristicks* (1711):

'Tis expected that they who are high and eminent in the State, shou'd not only provide for its necessary Safety and Subsistence, but omit nothing which may contribute to its Dignity and Honour. The Arts and Sciences must not be left patron-less.⁸

This 'public style' or display of aristocratic magnificence was, however, more about power than it was show. As a result, the conventions of the country house genre offer the early eighteenth-century poet an ideal means to differentiate between the two.⁹

For Williams, the rhetorical strategies and structures of Whig cultural politics are characterised by what Zwicker terms the 'politics of contest.'¹⁰ This is remembered most clearly in the derogation of Whig writers as hacks and dunces by key Tory writers, such as Dryden and Pope.¹¹ However, as Williams points out, 'the distinctions between high and low culture that seem so central to the construction of [this] Tory myth are far less stable than they seem.'¹² As the analyses of this chapter reveal, reading solely through this oppositional lens masks the common ground which is shared by many writers of the first few decades of the eighteenth century. In the poems discussed here, this common ground is not merely political but is also found in the aesthetic spaces of the country estate. As Williams explains, '[the] attempts by writers such as Joseph Addison and Shaftesbury to create the polite face of modern Whiggism were in part determined by their opponents' attacks. These Whig ideologues would promote sociable discourse that was ostensibly beyond differences in rank.'¹³ Of course, the Whig party included in its ranks many of the aristocratic and

⁷ Williams, *Whig Literary Culture*, pp. 233-4.

⁸ Anthony Ashley Cooper, Earl of Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks of men, manners, opinions, times. In three volumes.* (London: John Darby, 1711), p. 227.

⁹ Griffin, *Literary Patronage*, p. 36.

¹⁰ Williams, *Whig Literary Culture*, p. 5. Stephen Zwicker, *Lines of Authority: Politics and Literary Culture, 1644-1689* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), p. 7.

¹¹ Williams, *Whig Literary Culture*, pp. 22-55. However, as Williams points out, Tory critique of Whig writers and texts was by even the late seventeenth century dated. By the time of Scriblerian satire it was a largely anachronistic if persistent feature of the politicization of aesthetic debates.

¹² Williams, *Whig Literary Culture*, p. 32.

¹³ Williams, *Whig Literary Culture*, p. 35. See also Lawrence E. Klein, 'Sociability, Solitude, and Enthusiasm', *Huntingdon Library Quarterly*, 60 (1997), 153-178; John Mullan, *Sentiment and*

landowning elite, making the Tory insistence on class distinction surprising, and raising the likelihood that shared themes of aristocratic patterns of ownership and investment, the country estate as a site of retreat, and associated obligations to estate and nation, are visible in both Tory and Whig texts.

The binary dynamic of a two-party political system was complicated by the emergence of a dissident Whig faction which waxed and waned from the early years of oppositional political discourse in the 1680s to the dominance of Robert Walpole's administration in the 1720s and 1730s. Although there were differences between the Country Whigs of the late seventeenth century and the Patriot opposition of the 1720-1730s, there was alongside mainstream Whiggism a constant if shifting presence of radical Whig polemic. Whether this dissenting faction was largely conservative in nature, as J. C. D. Clark claims, or had more radical objectives, as Mark Goldie argues, is perhaps still unclear.¹⁴ Indeed, Williams acknowledges that the poetry, far from revealing the truth of either argument, complicates it. It should not be viewed 'as part of a generalized or uniform political programme but as a series of evolving definitions of Whiggism which continued to be shaped by their engagement with other texts.'¹⁵

However, this dissident faction, at times in a loose coalition with the Tory party, meant that occasionally Whig individuals could experience marginalization even at a time when the party held power. Such a marginal position is visible in the letters of Carlisle which detail his retirement to Castle Howard during periods of Whig governance.¹⁶ For J. G. A. Pocock this period was one where 'the categories Old Whig and Tory begin to penetrate one another.'¹⁷ Thus, for Gerrard, 'the 'Country' theme of rural retirement, albeit a hallmark of the 'Poetry of Conservatism', could also find expression in poems written by opposition Whig poets throughout the Walpole

Sociability: The Language of Feeling in the Eighteenth Century (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1994).

¹⁴ J.C.D. Clarke, *English Society 1688-1832: Ideology, Social Structure and Political Practice during the Ancien Regime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp. 6-7 and Mark Goldie, 'The Roots of True Whiggism, 1688-94', *History of Political Thought* 1 (1980), 195-236.

¹⁵ Williams, *Whig Literary Culture*, p. 15.

¹⁶ *Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts*. Vol 15, part 6, Appendix 6 (London: HMSO, 1870).

¹⁷ J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History: Essays on Political Thought and History, Chiefly in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 240.

period.’ By the 1720s the oppositional faction was often labelled as ‘patriot’ and was concerned with the national interest and war with Spain for economic and trade reasons; yet, this stance was still culturally framed and, as Gerrard notes, ‘[at] its core lay a strong sense of cultural patriotism: an acute anxiety about Britain’s role and future as a model of artistic achievement.’¹⁸ This was often understood in the context of a promised resurgence of literary patronage under Prince Frederick. Thomson’s preface to *Winter* (1726) indicates this cultural aspiration: ‘let POETRY, once more, be restored to her antient Truth, and Purity [...] and POETS, yet, become the Delight and Wonder, of Mankind.’¹⁹

The community of Whigs is, then, far more complex than it might appear. As Sharpe and Zwicker write:

The labels ‘Whig’ and ‘Tory’ of course, do not begin to do justice to the complexity of political organization or political behaviour at the close of the seventeenth century: differences within parties, the struggle for office, local suspicions of the center, enduring commitments to one national interest – all these complicate any simplistic picture of two parties. But by the close of the seventeenth century, party must serve as the starting point for any discussion of such complexities. Dispute and fragmentation, once anathematized as the roots of dislocation, [had] now become the norms of political and social life.²⁰

Whiggism is not homogeneous even at its inception and becomes more fissured from 1725 as the oppositional alliance between Country Whigs and certain Tories started to coalesce. Yet as J.A. Downie explains, the failure of the Tories to cooperate formally with the disaffected Whigs meant that Walpole’s position remained largely unthreatened.²¹ By the period of Walpole’s political ascendancy the opposition may be more helpfully considered as a hybrid opposition, including: Tories and independents, and dissident Whigs who had shifted their loyalty away from Walpole and the Hanoverian court. This dissident faction only became a consistent feature of oppositional politics after Walpole established his virtual monopoly on power in the early 1720s.²² Montagu and Ingram as writers and individuals were part of this shifting

¹⁸ Gerrard, *Patriot Opposition to Walpole*, pp. 74; 48-49.

¹⁹ James Thomson, *Winter. A Poem. By James Thomson* (London: J. Milan, 1726), p. 12.

²⁰ Sharpe and Zwicker, ‘Politics of Discourse’, p.6.

²¹ J.A. Downie, *A Political Biography of Henry Fielding*, (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2009), p. 3.

²² Gerrard, *Patriot Opposition to Walpole*, p. 19.

political territory – allied to mainstream Whig politics but frequently politically more complex and nuanced in their texts. They were both close to powerful Whig figures, through familial and marital ties and personal friendships. Montagu was a close friend of Walpole’s mistress Maria Skerrett, and an associate of Lord Hervey, Walpole’s agent and fixer in Parliament.²³ Ingram was not only the daughter of the third earl of Carlisle, but was, with her husband, part of the circle which formed around the Prince of Wales, a figurehead for the Patriot Opposition.

The early eighteenth century country estate: the association of political discourse with artistic taste

As in earlier periods, the ownership of a country estate, even a modest one, not only ensured political agency through the franchise, but was also a site from which to engage in social or cultural activities which gave indirect power and influence. As a result, the use of the genre to praise or satirise the owner was especially pertinent. It allowed the poet to access power, social connections and financial rewards, or to do so obliquely by derogating their own or their patron’s political enemies. The direct access to power and influence afforded by the country estate was accompanied by less overt political considerations. The appropriate use of wealth in building and maintaining a county estate was seen by Montagu and Ingram, no less than by Jonson, as an index of governance and continued to be a topic of both political and poetic debate. Despite alterations in tone to accommodate changing tastes in design, the use of riches remained a key trope of the genre during this period. Pope’s *An Epistle to the Right Honourable Richard Earl of Burlington* (1731), the most celebrated and analysed country house poem of the period, addresses directly the use of riches.²⁴ However, as T.G.A. Nelson correctly asserts, it does so in the context of three related trends of the

²³ Isobel Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu: Comet of the Enlightenment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) p. xx.

²⁴ Alexander Pope, *An epistle to the Right Honourable Richard Earl of Burlington. Occasion'd by his publishing Palladio's designs of the baths, arches, theatres, &c. of ancient Rome. By Mr. Pope.* (London: L. Gilliver, 1731). I shall be using the text in *Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, ed. by Fairer and Gerrard, pp. 142-147. Subsequent references will be cited parenthetically by line number.

early eighteenth century: the adoption of Palladian forms of architecture; the fashion for a particular style of landscape gardening advocated by Addison and Pope himself; and the contemporary passion for collecting.²⁵ The poem offers an anti-hero in Timon, the epitome of bad taste, prodigality and lack of either artistic or socio-political discrimination. For Nelson at least, the poem also contains hints that Burlington himself may suffer some of Timon's failings exemplified in his unquestioning adoption of Palladianism so associated with the Whig establishment.²⁶

Not only did the design of the country estate suggest erudition and aesthetic discrimination – or lack thereof – it also denoted substantial wealth. It required a great deal of money to maintain a country estate, the necessary retinue of staff and the associated lifestyle and commitments.²⁷ Gordon Mingay's estimate is of a minimum fortune of £10,000.²⁸ Coupled with the low rents and stable agricultural prices in the late seventeenth and first half of the eighteenth century, the costs of running a country estate were claimed as evidence that its owner was politically disinterested, incorruptible and not reliant on the vagaries of trade or financial markets.²⁹ Indeed, as Wilson notes, the average estimated by Mingay hides the amount of wealth accumulated by a small number of very powerful families, such as those owning Chatsworth, Woburn, Castle Howard or Longleat: 'the growth of the large estate and increasing wealth of their owners was abundantly evident after 1660.'³⁰ The poetry of the period also reflects the substantial cultural investment in architecture, art and garden design from 1685-1735, especially given the effect of land taxes introduced during the period to fund war campaigns. For example, Wilson

²⁵ T.G.A. Nelson, 'Pope, Burlington, Architecture, and Politics: A Speculative Revisionist View', *Eighteenth-Century Life* 21 (1997), 45-61. For further critical commentary on Pope's *Epistle to Burlington* see: Philip Ayers, 'Pope's *Epistle to Burlington*: The Vitruvian Analogies', *Studies in English Literature*, 30 (1990), 429-444; James R. Aubrey, 'Timon's Villa: Pope's Composite Picture', *Studies in Philology*, 80 (1983), 325-349; James Noggle, 'Taste and Temporality in "An Epistle to Burlington"', *Studies in Literary Imagination*, 38.1 (2005), 117-135.

²⁶ Nelson, 'Pope, Burlington', p. 46.

²⁷ Wilson, 'The Landed Elite', p. 161. See also Turner, *Capability Brown*, p. 15.

²⁸ Mingay, 'Agriculture and Rural Life', p. 151.

²⁹ Turner, *Capability Brown*, p. 17.

³⁰ Wilson, 'Landed Elite', p. 160.

estimates that between 1699 and 1738 the third Earl of Carlisle spent £78,000, of which half was spent on the extensive gardens.³¹

Despite these prohibitive costs, for the early eighteenth century the landscape of the country estate was particularly significant; as Stephen Daniels asserts, although estates remained an important socio-political power base, this position was changing; society was increasingly mobile, urban and mercantile.³² Therefore, whilst property continued to legitimize social and political authority, it was no longer held exclusively by an aristocratic elite and the country estate became, as Cosgrove notes, 'a self-sufficient world, a microcosm of the mercantilist state.'³³ The early eighteenth century saw significant developments in garden design and garden technologies that were prompted by artistic trends on a European scale and also the growth in the country house market, as villas and estates were developed close to London and around provincial centres, such as Bath and York.³⁴ Part of this trend was for the building of art galleries, places to display famous and prestigious names in European art.³⁵ After Pliny's letters were translated in 1728 by Robert Castell as *The Villas of the Ancients Illustrated* they became a major source for the English recreation of the Roman villa, both as an architectural style and a cultural ideal.³⁶ This influence fed into and was no doubt informed by the context of tourism and travel emerging at this point, which was visible in the letters of writers, such as Pope and others interested in garden design, including Carlisle, many of his correspondents, and Montagu. As Kelsall writes of the Pliny letters:

³¹ Wilson, 'Landed Elite', p. 159; 166.

³² Stephen Daniels, *Fields of Vision*, pp. 80-111. See also Damie Stillman, 'The Neo-Classical Transformation of the English Country House' in *The Fashioning and Functioning of the British Country House*, ed. by Gervase Jackson-Stops, Gordon J. Schochet, Lena Cowen Orlin and Elisabeth Blair MacDougall (National Gallery of Art: Washinton DC, 1989), pp. 75-93 (p. 75).

³³ Cosgrove, *Social Formation*, p. 196 and H.T. Dickinson, 'Introduction,' *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. by H.T. Dickinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. xv-xviii (p. xvi).

³⁴ Judith Roberts, 'Stephen Switzer and Water Gardens', in *Sir John Vanbrugh and Landscape Architecture in Baroque England 1690-1730*, ed. by Christopher Ridgway and Robert Williams (Stroud: Sutton, 2000), pp. 154-171 (p. 154). Manwaring notes this 'frenzy for improving and building which began in early in the [eighteenth] century.' *Italian Landscape*, p. 62. See also Stillman, 'Neo-Classical Transformation', pp. 75-93.

³⁵ Manwaring, *Italian Landscape*, p. 62.

³⁶ Robert Castell, *The villas of the ancients illustrated*. (London: R. Castell, 1728).

The descriptions are the first 'guidebooks' to country houses to be written, but the very fact that such a guide should be composed is indicative that the houses themselves are intended as the outward signs of the inner values of their owner. The moral tradition and the architectural are intrinsically one.

For Kelsall, 'Pliny's letters represent the apogee of the villa life of the efflorescent empire.'³⁷ We might make this statement work equally for early eighteenth-century Britain, as not only do the gardens recreate the landscape features of the ancients, but they do similar ideological work. Indeed, the valency of these two coincident ideas may have prompted the translation of the earlier work at this precise point.

The move to design gardens beyond the immediate usefulness of the space is prompted by many trends: artistic fashions, architectural developments, technological improvements and agricultural changes which allowed for, or demanded, larger park type gardens which ran visually into the surrounding agricultural land. The development of various technologies was also prompted by the move to remodel houses and gardens on existing estates, as these estates found new owners or as existing owners' fortunes allowed.³⁸ Before and immediately after the Restoration, the taste for gardens was French in style and Le Nôtre was an important influence.³⁹ The formality of this style of gardening is summed up by Francis Bacon's essay 'Of Gardens' (1625):

The garden is best to be square, encompassed on all the four sides with a stately arched hedge. The arches to be upon pillars of carpenter's work, of some ten foot high, and six foot broad; and the spaces between of the same dimension with the breadth of the arch. Over the arches let there be an entire hedge of some four foot high, framed also upon carpenter's work; and upon the upper hedge, over every arch, a little turret, with a belly, enough to receive a cage of birds: and over every space between the arches some other little figure, with broad plates of round colored glass gilt, for the sun to play upon.⁴⁰

³⁷ Kelsall, *Great Good Place*, p. 16; 20.

³⁸ Roberts, 'Stephen Switzer', p. 155.

³⁹ Mara Miller, 'Gardens as Political Discourse in the Age of Walpole', *Politics, Politeness and patriotism. Papers presented at the Folger Institute Seminar*, ed. by Gordon J. Schochet *et al* (Washington DC: Folger institute, 1993), pp. 263-280 (p. 264). See also Manwaring, *Italian Landscape*, p. 121-122.

⁴⁰ Francis Bacon, *The Essayes or Counsels Civill and Morall of Francis Bacon* (London: Hanna Barret, 1625), pp. 266-279 (p. 271).

By the late-seventeenth century, the growing interest in gardens was not primarily aesthetic, as in Bacon's vision, but practical. William Temple considered gardens as enclosures and Evelyn's interest was as much architectural and practical as pictorial.⁴¹ Most importantly, the size and scale of gardens were not especially valued and the extended prospect was only to become an ideal later in the eighteenth century.⁴² We might also note that the need to have large parkland to show and produce wealth was not yet paramount; for the seventeenth-century aristocratic families, power resided in dynasty and connections as much as pure wealth or land ownership.⁴³ However, between the 1690s and the 1720s the formal landscape design started to disappear, replaced in the first instance by a model inspired by, but distinct from, the French style which we see in the poetry of Finch.⁴⁴ Ultimately it was displaced by what we now call the 'English landscape garden', pioneered by Kent, Bridgeman and Brown.⁴⁵ As Batty Langley notes in *New Principles of Gardening* (1728), the late-seventeenth century had left an impression that English gardens consisted only of parterres and formal walks, 'with the best of Grass and Gravel of any People whatsoever.'⁴⁶

In poetry, a similar association between political discrimination and artistic taste is long standing. It is an inherent part of the genre's function and one which both Montagu and Ingram use. Yet, as the grand tour became a more pronounced feature of a young man's education, this point was made explicitly clearer in much of the associated literature. Richard Lassell's travel guide of 1670, *Italian Voyage*, does exactly this:

So the nobleman by long travelling, having enlightened his understanding with fine notions, comes home like a glorious sun, and doth not only shine bright in the Firmament of his Country, the Parliament-House, but also blesseth his inferiors with the powerfull influence of his knowing spirit.⁴⁷

⁴¹ Chambers, 'Evelyn's Sylva', p. 29.

⁴² Manwaring, *Italian Landscape*, p. 121-122.

⁴³ Turner, *Capability Brown*, pp.14-15.

⁴⁴ The exact and timing nature of this shift is, however, irregular as Bending points out, *Green Retreats*, pp. 9-15.

⁴⁵ Miller, 'Gardens as Political Discourse', pp. 263-280 (p. 269). See also Quintance, 'Real people in eighteenth-century topographical prints', pp. 134-15 and David Jacques, 'The Formal Garden', in *Sir John Vanbrugh and Landscape Architecture in Baroque England 1690-1730*, ed. by Christopher Ridgway and Robert Williams (Stroud: Sutton, 2000), pp. 31-48 (p. 32).

⁴⁶ Batty Langley, *New principles of gardening* (London: A. Bettesworth et al, 1728), p. iii.

⁴⁷ Richard Lassells, *Italian Voyage* (London: Richard Wellington, 1698, unpaginated).

For Barrell, this association between property, aesthetic discrimination and political legitimacy arrived via Florentine republican theory to become, by the mid-eighteenth century, a central 'function of [an individual's] ownership of landed property' by allowing for freedom from employment, providing stability and demonstrating erudition.⁴⁸ For Manwaring, in contrast, it was due to the influence of Italian landscapes seen in the landscape painters of the seventeenth century and increased travel to Italy.⁴⁹ Shaftesbury is an early commentator of this shift:

I shall no longer resist the Passion growing in me for Things of a *natural* kind; where neither Art, nor the *Conceit* of Caprice of Man has spoiled that genuine Order, by breaking in upon that *primitive State*. Even the Rocks, the mossy Caverns, the irregular unwrought *Grotto's*, and broken Falls of Water, with all the horrid Graces of the Wilderness it-self, as representing NATURE more, will be more engaging, and appear with a Magnificance beyond the formal Mockery of Princely Gardens.⁵⁰

Italian landscapes, whether painted or real, were becoming the dominant model for painters, designers and commentators alike. Part of this shift was the accommodation of architecture into landscape design, often in the form of classical temples and statuary, ruined or complete, as well as the use of water features – usually irregular bodies of water to add colour and variety to a scene, or jets d'eau, cascades and other hydraulic features of the Italian garden. This use of water differed from its earlier application as a landscape feature, which was of regular bodies of water and fountains within symmetrical parterres and terraces.⁵¹ Importantly the larger, often serpentine, lakes could also function as an invisible boundary in keeping with the growing distaste for hedges, walls and fences. The development of the English landscape garden grew from the adoption of Italian models.

⁴⁸ John Barrell, 'The public prospect and the private view: The politics of taste in eighteenth-century Britain', in *Reading Landscape: country-city-capital*, ed. by Simon Pugh (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 19-40 (pp. 28-29).

⁴⁹ Manwaring, *Italian Landscape*, p. 4; 9.

⁵⁰ Shaftesbury, *Characteristicks. Vol II*, p. 393-4.

⁵¹ Roberts, 'Stephen Switzer'.

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu

Sandra Sherman considers Montagu a 'politico-literary woman, isolated from purlieus of power but still aspiring towards politics and creative political discourse.'⁵² However, as her biography indicates she was well connected and, at times, close to centres of literary and political power. Montagu was born in 1689, the daughter of Evelyn and Mary Pierrepont. In this same year her father was elected as a Member of Parliament for the constituency of East Retford in Nottinghamshire, where he took his seat with the Whig party. As the youngest son, her father did not expect to succeed to a title but did look forward to a substantial inheritance from his grandfather.⁵³ However, by 1690 both his elder brothers were dead and Pierrepont became Earl of Kingston, and his daughter Lady Mary.⁵⁴ Montagu's mother died young and the care of her and her younger siblings fell to her paternal grandmother at West Dean, near Salisbury.⁵⁵ Montagu's later childhood was spent between her father's house in Piccadilly and the family estate at Thoresby in Nottinghamshire.⁵⁶ Importantly for Montagu, the houses provided extensive libraries which allowed her to supplement the limited education she received from her governess.⁵⁷ After her grandmother's death the elder children returned to the care of their father at Thoresby; her younger sibling became her grandmother's heir and was placed under the care of her aunt Lady Cheyne.⁵⁸ Despite her changing personal fortunes, Montagu met many of the leading political figures of the period, as she acted as hostess for her father in her mother's absence.⁵⁹ These figures included Charles Howard, Earl of Carlisle – father of Ingram – Joseph Addison,

⁵² Sandra Sherman, 'Instructing the "Empire of Beauty": Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and the Politics of Female Rationality' *South Atlantic Review*, 60.4 (1995), 1-26 (p. 8).

⁵³ Robert Halsband also points out that Ingram's paternal grandmother was the cousin of Sir John Evelyn the diarist: *The Life of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956), p. 3. See also Grundy, *Mary Wortley Montagu*, p.1-2.

⁵⁴ Grundy, *Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 8.

⁵⁵ Halsband, *The Life of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 1-2. In 1706 he became Marquess of Dorchester and took a seat in the House of Lords, p. 7; Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 8

⁵⁶ Halsband, *The Life of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 4. He further notes that this an imposing house designed in the Palladian style by William Talman which informed Montagu's own taste for classical architecture.

⁵⁷ Halsband, *The Life of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 5.

⁵⁸ Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 10-12.

⁵⁹ Grundy, *Mary Wortley Montagu* p. 15.

Richard Steele, William Congreve and Dr Samuel Garth, all of whom were prominent members of the Whiggish Kit-Cat Club.⁶⁰

In 1712 Montagu married Edward Wortley (1678-1761) whom she had met through her friendship with his sister Anne Wortley.⁶¹ Like her father, Wortley was a Member of Parliament, elected for the Borough of Huntingdon in 1705. However, the courtship was uneasy and subsequent marriage not condoned by her father due to a disagreement about an entail to Wortley's will.⁶² Instead, her father arranged a marriage to the Honourable Clotworthy Skeffington, whose marriage contract had far more generous terms for Montagu.⁶³ At the last moment, Montagu eloped with Wortley.⁶⁴ After her marriage she continued to circulate in the same Whiggish intellectual circles as before, despite the break with her father caused by her elopement, as Wortley moved in very similar social circles to her father; both counted Addison and Steele as friends.⁶⁵ This circle also included Lord Carlisle's daughters, one of whom was Anne Ingram. Several of her letters from her early married life, when she stayed in Yorkshire, detail this friendship. In 1714, Wortley and Montagu moved to London, where Montagu made the acquaintance of Pope and John Gay and wrote satirical verse, such as *Six Town Eclogues* (1714-16), which shows their influence.⁶⁶ Despite these important connections, Wortley's political career was not stable.

⁶⁰ Halsband, *The Life of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 7-8; Grundy, p. 75; *Eighteenth-Century Poetry*: ed. by Fairer and Gerrard, p. 178-9. See also Grundy, *Mary Wortley Montagu*, pp. 3-5. Grundy notes that her granddaughter Lady Louisa Stuart called her 'Whig to the teeth – Whiggisima', p. 3.

⁶¹ Edward Wortley Montagu used his two surnames variously, although Montagu was consistent in her use of Montagu. I have, therefore opted to use Wortley alone when referring to him.

⁶² Halsband, *The Life of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 9; 10-28;

⁶³ Grundy notes that the provision for Montagu included £300 pin money per annum. When she had previously claimed to be able to live as a single woman on only her £200 allowance, this sum does indeed seem generous. *Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 51; 48.

⁶⁴ Grundy, *Mary Wortley Montagu* p. 35-56. As MacFarlane notes the English legal system required no consent by parents for the betrothal and marriage to be binding in contrast to most of Europe. MacFarlane, *Marriage and Love*, pp. 124-125.

⁶⁵ Valerie Rumbold, *Women's Place in Pope's World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 17. Halsband notes that Wortley and Addison both served as godfather to Steele's daughter. Robert Halsband, 'Addison's *Cato* and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu', *PMLA* 65.6 (1950), 1122-1129 (p. 1124).

⁶⁶ Grundy, *Mary Wortley Montagu*, pp. 75; 80; 82-86. Montagu was a close friend of and in frequent correspondence with Pope from c. 1715. See Robert Halsband, 'Pope, Lady Mary and the *Court Poems* (1716)', *PMLA*, 68.1 (1953), 237-250; Grundy, *Mary Wortley Montagu*, pp. 87-98; Rumbold, *Women's Place in Pope's World*, p. 131-2.; *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, ed. by Robert Halsband, 3 vols (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966).

Initially he negotiated a post at the treasury with his cousin Lord Halifax. He then was elected unopposed as Parliamentary candidate for Westminster. Yet Wortley's, and by extension Montagu's, fortune did not last long as Halifax died in May 1715 and was replaced by Walpole, to whom Wortley took a dislike; his Treasury career subsequently faltered. Several further events curtailed this *beau monde* existence. In 1715 Montagu contracted smallpox which cut short her reign as a court beauty, and whilst she was convalescing a copy of her first eclogue 'Roxana' was circulated at court; whilst her social reputation was compromised, her position as a writer did not suffer to the same degree.⁶⁷ In 1716 her husband was appointed ambassador to Turkey, where she accompanied him.⁶⁸ The couple returned to England in 1718 but the marriage foundered and the couple increasingly led separate lives.

Nevertheless, Montagu continued to engage in both literary and political matters. She remained committed to Whig politics and later anonymously produced a pro-Walpole periodical, *The Nonsense of Common-sense*, for a short period in 1737-8.⁶⁹ As her support for Walpole hardened and her role as a court wit became more important, her friendship with Pope became ever more difficult.⁷⁰ According to Valerie Rumbold this was further exacerbated by Pope's impossible desire to be treated as a potential lover.⁷¹ Pope remained on friendly terms with Montagu after her return to England in 1718. Following Pope's move to Twickenham in 1719, Montagu and Wortley rented a house nearby, finally moving to Savile House in 1720. Montagu participated in the gardening boom, epitomised by Pope's gardening activities, and

⁶⁷ Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 78; 94; 103. 'Roxana' was later retitled Monday and formed the first of the Six Town Eclogues.

⁶⁸ Grundy, *Mary Wortley Montagu*, pp. 99-103. The details of her travels and stay in Turkey were written up by Montagu as the Embassy Letters using her letters, journal and other documents and published posthumously in 1763. During this period she also wrote poetry, some of which was included with her letters home.

⁶⁹ Meriwether, 'Transculturation and Politics', p. 629. Although journalism was a key component of political debate, especially during the height of Whig dissent in the 1730s, the extent to which it was effective has been challenged. See Simon Varey, 'The Growth of Capitalism and the Rise of the Press in the Age of Walpole', in *Politics, Politeness, and Patriotism. Papers Presented to the Folger Institute Seminar*, ed. by Gordon J. Schochet et al (Washington DC: Folger institute, 1993), pp. 245-262. (p. 245).

⁷⁰ Montagu was also a friend of Walpole's mistress Maria Skerret. Grundy dates this friendship from 1720. *Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 225.

⁷¹ Rumbold, *Women's Place in Pope's World*, p. 143.

despite limited resources, her letters detail some expenditure on the garden at Savile House.⁷² However, despite their shared literary and horticultural interests, by 1728 her friendship with Pope was over – a fact shared with many readers through Pope’s satirical attacks on her during the 1730s.⁷³

After the return from Turkey, political matters for Montagu were complicated by social connections. As Grundy explains, she returned to find a split between George I and the Prince of Wales, which made her attendance at royal events difficult. Furthermore, her personal friends James Craggs and Walpole seemed to occupy opposing positions in Whig circles during the Stanhope Sunderland ministry. Eventually Montagu’s court connections became weaker as Wortley’s career faltered. However, by the mid-1730s Wortley had become an assiduous anti-government speaker and allied to the oppositional faction within the Whig party.⁷⁴ Given the uneasy marital relationship it is tempting to see Montagu’s political position defined by her opposition to Wortley as much as her own support of Walpole since, as Ros Ballaster reminds us, Wortley had always been far more critical of Walpole than his consistently supportive wife.⁷⁵ Yet as Grundy makes clear, it is more complicated than simple opposition. Wortley had written ‘On the State of Affairs when the King Entered’ to express his disillusionment at the promotion of Walpole. His regret at the death of several of the Whig junta - Halifax, Wharton and Somers - was exacerbated by the survivors, Stanhope and Sunderland, breaking with Walpole and his ally Townshend. These events happened mostly during Wortley’s embassy to Turkey and brought about his early recall and led to his subsequent failure to secure a government position.⁷⁶

Montagu wrote prolifically and from an early age, yet few texts were published in her lifetime as she sought a solution to ‘her internal conflict between class pride and

⁷² Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, pp. 181-186.

⁷³ *Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, ed. by Fairer and Gerrard, p. 178. See also Rumbold, *Women’s Place in Pope’s World*, pp. 131-145; Robert Halsband, ‘Court Poems (1716)’, *PMLA*, 68.1 (1953), 237-250 and Grundy, *Mary Wortley Montagu*, pp. 270-286.

⁷⁴ Grundy, *Mary Wortley Montagu*, pp. 180; 316-317.

⁷⁵ Ros Ballaster, ‘The Economics of Ethical Conversation: The Commerce of the Letter in Eliza Heywood and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu’, *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 35.1 (2011), 119-132 (p. 123).

⁷⁶ Grundy, *Mary Wortley Montagu*, pp. 317; 112-113.

literary ambition.⁷⁷ She also probably wrote much which has survived neither the intervening years nor her probable instructions to destroy some of the more personal or contentious items.⁷⁸ Many of her poems are concerned with topical events and people who belonged to her own social circle.⁷⁹ This circle was comprised of overlapping social, political and literacy networks, including Congreve, an older and respected friend; Hervey, who circulated her poems in manuscript and proved a lifelong friend; and Abbe Antonio Conti, with whom she shared an interest in scientific and theological matters. Yet as Grundy points out, it was Pope who was central in many respects to Montagu's writing life. He wrote numerous letters to her and engaged in mutual circulation of her and others' manuscripts.⁸⁰ Given the political and social connections these individuals represented, most of her verse is implicitly party political. However, much of the critical attention on her work does not explore this party political dimension to any great extent. Instead, it focuses on her perceived animus against men in general and Pope in particular. Whilst this is an important feature of her work, little attention has been placed on her political essays or the poetry which displays a more complex position on gender as part of a discussion on wider political issues. A notable exception is Sherman's account of Montagu's essays in *The Nonsense of Common-Sense*.⁸¹

Although, Montagu 'typically pushed the boundaries of proper 'feminine' behaviour during her early life – in her self-education, her elopement with Wortley, and her writing', many of her early texts are largely conventional.⁸² She, like Finch, wrote poetry and prose fiction and from an early age, and in the period before her marriage at the age of twenty three she also undertook an ambitious translation of Epictetus. Like the translation, much of this early work favours, according to Isobel

⁷⁷ *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Romance Writings*, ed. by Isobel Grundy (Oxford: Clarendon, 1996), pp. ix-xxvii (p. ix). See also Kairoff, 'Eighteenth-century women poets and readers', p.161. Her earliest texts were collected in a manuscript entitled 'The Entire Works of Clarinda', now collected into the Harrowby MS, Sandon Hall, Stafford.

⁷⁸ *Essays and Poems and Simplicity, a Comedy*, ed. by Robert Halsband and Isobel Grundy (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), pp. v-xxi (p. vii).

⁷⁹ *Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, ed. by Fairer and Gerrard, p. 178.

⁸⁰ Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 181; 198.

⁸¹ Sherman, 'Politics of Female Rationality'.

⁸² Meriwether, 'Transculturation and Politics', p. 626.

Grundy, genres and modes associated with female writers, and bears similarities with the work of Philips and Behn, employing ‘a range of typical late-seventeenth-century forms, praising friendship, the countryside, true love, and the renunciation of ambition.’⁸³ This period of literary activity was also conducted within a coterie context based on the court, which features in her ‘Account of the Court of George I’ and is clearly visible in her eclogues.⁸⁴ During her later life in exile in Europe, Montagu produced little poetry, or at least poetry which is extant. She is perhaps as well known for her letters written to friends and family whilst in Turkey, 1717-1718, which were rewritten for posthumous publication.⁸⁵

Montagu’s texts, however, take a more explicit move to political matters and genres during and after her return from Turkey in 1718.⁸⁶ As Grundy explains: ‘the experience of registering and describing a society as Other than that of the Islamic empire fed [Montagu’s] critique of English institutions.’⁸⁷ From this point until her return to Europe in 1739 – prompted by her relationship with Algarotti and a mutual separation from Wortley – Montagu produced a range of texts in a variety of genres and forms, using a range of poetic personae, and yet her political position remains quite consistent. Some of these texts were as a response to her changing and ultimately fated relationship with Pope and Gay with whom she had previously been

⁸³ *Essay and Poems*, ed. by Halsband and Grundy, pp. vii-viii.

⁸⁴ Grundy notes that amongst Montagu’s writing associates was Mary Monck, *Essays and Poems*, ed. by Halsband and Grundy, p. viii. ‘Account of the Court of George I’, in *Essays and Poems*, ed. by Halsband and Grundy, pp. 82-94.

⁸⁵ Montagu, *Letters of the Right Honourable Lady M---y W----y M-----e: written, during her travels in Europe* (London: T. Beckett, 1763). Ballaster notes that this text was the only one Montagu prepared for publication herself, although it did not appear in print until after her death in 1763, ‘The Economics of Ethical Conversation’, p. 124. Some of the fourteen addressees included in the text had been recipients of letters originally. Those omitted included her father, Congreve and figures close to the king, presumably for reasons of propriety. The material was edited, sharing it between the addressees to avoid original duplication and to ensure the content fitted the ‘recipient’, Grundy, *Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 199. These published letters do not include the verse letter addressed to her uncle who is included in my discussion below; however, it had been anonymously published in 1720 and was to be included in later collections of her poetry. Montagu, ‘VERSES Written in the Chiosk at Pera, overlooking Constantinople, December 26, 1718. By a Lady.’, in *A New miscellany of original poems, translations and imitations. By the most eminent hands, viz. Mr. Prior, Mr. Pope, Mr. Hughes, Mr. Harcourt, Lady M. W. M. Mrs. Manley, &c. Now first Published from their Respective Manuscripts. With some Familiar Letters by the late Earl of Rochester, never before Printed.* ed by Anthony Hammond (London: T Jauncy, 1720), pp. 95-101.

⁸⁶ Meriwether, ‘Transculturation and Politics’, p. 630.

⁸⁷ *Essays and Poems*, ed. by Halsband and Grundy, p. xiii.

close.⁸⁸ Others, such as ‘An Epistle to Lord Bathurst’, respond more directly to political events, debates and personalities.⁸⁹ In this discussion I shall focus on this period of varied textual production. This political aspect to her writing culminated in her anonymously published newspaper *The Nonsense of Common-Sense* (1737-1738) designed as a clear counter to the better known Tory publication *Common-Sense*.

Both of the country house texts that I have chosen to discuss are epistolary in nature – one physically a letter written in verse and the second a poem written as a letter. As Bill Overton observes: ‘Montagu was especially adept at assuming different epistolary voices and, as a writer of much higher social rank than [many poets], and one who did not normally allow her verses into print, she faced fewer constraints.’⁹⁰ Montagu uses the epistle to good effect in ‘Epistle from Mrs. Yonge to her husband’ and ‘Epistle from Arthur Gray to Mrs. Murray.’⁹¹ Yet the appeal of the epistle was more widespread in the politically fraught landscape of the early eighteenth century as it amounts to ‘[w]riting a discursive essay in the form of a letter [which] enables a poet to solve the problem of tone by specifying a particular addressee.’⁹² Chapter four explored how Finch drew together a supportive network of allies and friends through the dynamics of a literary coterie. One of her main weapons in this endeavour was the poetic epistle, which allowed Finch to participate and represent the friendships and exchange networks that comprised non-juring communities and that echoed ideologically and generically similar relationships of the mid-seventeenth century. However, as Williams explains, the epistle, like the country house poem, was equally useful for Finch’s political opponents: ‘[giving] an idealized poetic form to the sociable network of influence that underwrote Whig literary culture, and implied a set of shared responses to contemporary affairs of state.’⁹³ It might then be more accurate

⁸⁸ *Essays and Poems*, ed. by Halsband and Grundy, p. x; xii.

⁸⁹ *Essays and Poems*, ed. by Halsband and Grundy, pp. 242-244.

⁹⁰ Overton, ‘The Verse Epistle’, p. 424.

⁹¹ Montagu, ‘Epistle from Arthur Gray to Mrs. Murray.’ in *Six town eclogues. With some other poems. By the Rt. Hon. L. M. W. M.* (London: M. Cooper, 1747) and ‘Epistle from Mrs. Yonge to her husband’, in *Essays and Poems*, ed. by Halsband and Grundy, pp. 230-232.

⁹² Overton, ‘The Verse Epistle’, p. 422.

⁹³ Williams, *Whig Literary Culture*, p. 118.

to argue that the epistle was the result of an oppositional political structure, allowing all sides to target a reader and to frame their panegyric or critique.

‘Constantinople. To [William Feilding]’

The original text of this poem was sent as a verse letter to her uncle William Feilding, a frequent correspondent of Montagu. The poem was circulated quite widely after her return.⁹⁴ It was first published in *A New Miscellany* by Anthony Hammond in 1720.⁹⁵ On publication it was given the slightly different and more descriptive title of ‘VERSES Written in the Chiask at Pera, overlooking Constantinople, December 26, 1718. By a Lady.’⁹⁶ It was composed as a verse letter on Boxing Day 1717 during her stay in Turkey during Wortley’s embassy there. By the time she wrote the letter, she knew that she was to return to England, as Wortley had been replaced as ambassador following political changes in London; when Walpole was replaced by Stanhope and Sunderland in the summer of 1717, Wortley was recalled.⁹⁷ Wortley’s objective as ambassador had been to broker a peace treaty between the Turkish and Austrian empires - a difficult mission that he did not have sufficient time to attempt fully. Whilst in Turkey, Montagu and Wortley occupied the ambassador’s residence in Pera, across the Bosphorus from Constantinople. The chiask or kiosk of the later title was a small garden building or summer house in the grounds of the ambassadorial palace, built in the seventeenth century.⁹⁸ The palace grounds also included a chapel built by

⁹⁴ Grundy, *Mary Wortley Montagu*, pp. 197-198. Aside from the original letter, the original for the poem is in Harrowby MS., 256. 2-4. Dated 26 December 1717.

⁹⁵ As it was revised slightly for publication I shall be using the manuscript version in Halsband and Grundy’s *Essay and Poems*, pp. 206-210. All quotations will be taken from this text unless otherwise stated. All subsequent citations will include lines numbers parenthetically in the text.

⁹⁶ In addition to the 1720 edition where it is published without attribution, it was subsequently published in *An additional volume to the letters of the Right Honourable Lady M---y W---y M-----e: written during her travels in Europe, Asia, and Africa ...* (London: 1767) and *The poetical works of the Right Honourable Lady M-y W-y Me.* (London: 1781).

⁹⁷ Grundy, *Mary Wortley Montagu*, pp. 154-156.

⁹⁸ Meriwether, ‘Transculturation and Politics’, p. 623; Halsband, *The Life of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 55.

Wortley's predecessor on the model of St George's Chapel Windsor, and a terrace with a vista over the Bosphorus to Constantinople and the mountains beyond.⁹⁹

As with many country house poems, Montagu's poem also engages with two apparently opposing ideas: retirement to and a prospect view from the estate. The kiosk offers a space to the speaker to reflect on the retreat offered by the residence, Pera and the wider area, in contrast to a number of opposing spaces visible from or imagined in this personal space. As a result the poem belongs in part to the retirement genre.¹⁰⁰ Although not a conventional country estate, the spaces offered by the ambassador's residence at Pera function in a similar fashion and Montagu's poem accordingly appropriates the genre to depict them. These spaces are privileged in several ways: reflecting a classical European past in its architecture; luxurious and comfortable, well away from the heat and hazards of the city; and reserved for a small community of privileged individuals. The area beyond the palace was a residential area used predominantly by European diplomats. Although both retirement and prospect tropes reflect privilege and power, Montagu's use of both is open to several readings. The poetic speaker presents multiple and composite prospects for the reader to consider. This opposition between city and country retreat inherent in the country house poem is thus amplified to make several points which have social and political implications.

The poem starts by invoking a rural retreat: 'Give me, Great God (said I) a Little Farm. / In Summer shady and in Winter warm,' (1-2). The concept of such a rural retreat, which bears many similarities to Horace's *Satire II*, was identifiable in earlier poems by Montagu, most notably 'My Wish' which opens in a very similar vein: 'Give mee, my God, some close obscure retreat.'¹⁰¹ However, the location here is explicitly a farm, placing the retreat at some distance from the palatial splendour of the ambassador's residence, albeit from the space of the kiosk or summer house. The opening few lines crucially allow Montagu to introduce three themes which she examines across the poem: seasonal changes, fertility and diversity or multiplicity.

⁹⁹ Grundy, *Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 152.

¹⁰⁰ Isobel Grundy, 'Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *Six Town Eclogues and Other Poems*' A Companion to Eighteenth Century (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 184-196 (p. 188).

¹⁰¹ Montagu, Harrowby MS. 251.13.

She continues: 'Where a clear Spring gives birth to a cool brook / By nature sliding down a Mossy rock' (3-4). Despite the apparent mismatch between the 'Little Farm' and the actual location of the retreat, the emphasis is squarely placed on the aesthetics of the retreat, underscored by conventional modesty of Horatian retirement. Montagu's ideal is:

Not artfully in Leaden Pipes convey'd
Nor greatly falling in a forc'd Cascade
Pure and unsull'd winding through the Shade. (5-8)

This triplet reinforces the artless nature of her preferred retreat and introduces the third and most important theme of the poem, namely the deleterious effect on nature of some forms of culture. Montagu is not opening up a direct contrast between nature and culture here, but questioning the appropriateness of some of the manifestations of manmade space. With a reference to contemporary gardening trends that demanded expensive and showy hydraulics, Montagu harnesses the negative formulation of many country house poems to signpost a discussion of aesthetics which encompasses political and social implications.

The poem then moves onto a description of two opposing landscapes, neither agricultural but both politically inflected. When considered together the implications are magnified by the comparison. Across the two descriptions, Montagu uses the same topics to emphasise contrast: fields, plants, birds and streams in that order. She starts by stating:

Our frozen Isle now chilling winter binds,
Deform'd with rains and rough with blasting winds,
The wither'd woods grown white with hoary froast
By driving storms their verdant Beauty's lost,
The trembling birds their leafless coverts shun
And seek in Distant Climes a warmer sun,
The water Nymphs their Silenc'd urns deplore,
Even Thames benumb'd, a river now no more;
The barren meadows give no more delight,
By Glistening Snows made painful to the Sight (10-19)

This statement accords with the date of composition as Boxing Day and as Halsband and Grundy note, Montagu's most recent memory of England was the particularly cold

winter of 1716.¹⁰² However, the passage also shares similarities with the opening of Pope's 'Winter. The Fourth Pastoral' in its evocation of winter: 'Behold the groves that shine with silver frost, / Their beauty wither'd, and their verdure lost.'¹⁰³

The tenuous relationship between Montagu and the English landscape, which is revealed by her use of the pathetic fallacy, could perhaps be understood as a reflection of her personal unhappiness or loneliness, yet it seems to suggest a more specifically political reading when considered alongside her letters which are contemporary to this poem. Ann Rae Meriwether argues that the experiences of living in Turkey changed Montagu's view not only of Turkey and the surrounding area but of England itself. Citing the letter describing Montagu's experiences in the baths, she states:

[By] stepping away from her own subject location as an English traveling woman, she is temporarily able to look at herself through the eyes of the foreign woman. In so doing she discovers a critical outlook on her own culture.¹⁰⁴

Drawing on the work of Tzvetan Todorov, Christine Berberich explains how 'traveling is a means of assessing the self: of not merely looking at a land and at a culture but to reflect on the person of the observer.'¹⁰⁵ A similar cultural dislocation or refocusing appears to be operating in this poem.

As Meriwether continues: '[Montagu] discursively "others" the domestic condition, so that her readers are forced to shift their own positions relative to British politics.'¹⁰⁶ For Grundy the last three lines of the poem offer a clue to what is troubling Montagu: 'in the balmy midwinter sunshine, London stood for exhausting complications' of family, social, political and literary networks:¹⁰⁷

Censorious Folly, noisy Party rage,
The Thousand Tongues with which she must engage
Who dare have Virtue in a vicious Age (109-111)

¹⁰² *Essays and Poems*, ed. by Halsband and Grundy, p. 207.

¹⁰³ Alexander Pope, 'Winter. The Fourth Pastoral' *The Works of Mr. Alexander Pope* (London: Bernard Lintot, 1717), pp. 29-34, lines 9-10.

¹⁰⁴ Meriwether, 'Transculturation and Politics' p. 626.

¹⁰⁵ Christine Berberich, 'Writing England, Finding the Self: Jonathan Raban and the Travelogue as Identity Tool' in *Process: Landscape and Text*, ed. by Catherine Brace and Adeline Johns-Putra (Amsterdam and New York: Rodolpi, 2010), pp. 267-283 (p. 268).

¹⁰⁶ Meriwether, 'Transculturation and Politics', p. 637.

¹⁰⁷ Grundy, *Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 159.

As is evident from the earlier *Six Town Eclogues*, Montagu frequently despaired of London society and often preferred a sociable but retired existence. This final passage of the poem, which focuses on the desire for a retreat speaks, to her frustrations at the behaviour of many at court and the futility of ‘party rage’ which we see so clearly in her *Eclogues*. Grundy suggests it may also mark her increasing desire to distance herself from the literary circles represented by Pope and Gay; yet at this point Montagu’s relationship with Pope was still cordial if somewhat strained by his increasingly desperate and erotically charged correspondence with her. Moreover, the poem has verbal echoes of Pope’s own poetry.¹⁰⁸

An important feature of Montagu’s politically inflected depiction of England is the Thames. For Montagu it is ‘benumb’d, a river now no more’ and its banks ‘barren meadows’ that ‘give no more delight’ (18-19). Her presentation of the harshness of winter is far more negative than Pope’s who dwells on the ‘kind rains’ and ‘vital moisture’ (15) and uses a more melancholic or elegiac mode. As with Finch’s ‘Ode Upon the Hurricane’, the deformation of the English landscape here is extreme and potentially due to the socio-political climate as much as actual atmospheric conditions.¹⁰⁹ In a letter to her sister, countess of Bute, Montagu makes a similar comparison between London and Constantinople and the Thames and the Bosphorus as that of the poem:

And indeed, the pleasure of going in a barge to Chelsea, is not comparable to that of rowing upon the canal of the sea here, where for twenty miles together down the Bosphorus, the most beautiful variety of prospects present themselves.¹¹⁰

In the same letter we also see the same descriptions of fertility, variety and plenitude linked to the Asian side of the Bosphorus:

The Asian side is covered with fruit trees, villages, and the most delightful landskips in nature; on the European, stands Constantinople, situated on seven hills. – the unequal heights make it seem as large again as it is (tho’ one of the largest cities in the world) shewing an admirable mixture of gardens, pine and cypress trees, palaces, mosques, and publick buildings,

¹⁰⁸ *Essays and Poems*, ed. by Halsband and Grundy, p. xii.

¹⁰⁹ Finch, Anne, ‘Upon the Hurricane’, in *Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, ed. by Fairer and Gerrard, pp. 26-35.

¹¹⁰ Montagu, ‘Letter XLI. To the Countess of B---’ in *Letters Vol 3*, pp. 11-12.

raised one above another, with as much beauty and / appearance of symmetry as your ladyship ever saw in a cabinet adorned by the most skilful hands, where jars shew themselves above jars, mixed with canisters, babies, and candlesticks. This is a very odd comparison; but it gives me an exact idea of the thing.¹¹¹

In contrast the poetic speaker is in a similar place to that described by Montagu above:

Summer reigns with one Eternal Smile,
And Double Harvests bless the happy soil.
Fair fertile fields, to whom indulgent Heaven
Has ev'ry charm of ev'ry season given.
No killing cold deforms the beauteous year,
The springing flowers no coming winter fear. (20-25)

The poem offers a contrasting yet composite vision of the surrounding countryside, similar in many respects to the descriptions of her journey to Constantinople, especially the countryside around Adrianople, and a brief stay in Belgrade village outside Pera which was prompted by an outbreak of the plague in Constantinople.¹¹²

In a letter to Pope she writes:

The heats of Constantinop'e have driven me to this place, which perfectly answers the description of the Elysian Fields. I am in the middle of a wood, consisting chiefly of fruit trees, watered by a vast number of fountains, famous for the / the excellency of their water, and divided into many shady walks, upon short grass, that seems to me artificial; but, I am assured, is the pure work of nature – within view of the Black-sea, from whence we perpetually enjoy the refreshment of cool breezes, that make us insensible of the heat of the summer.¹¹³

This moderate and harmonious landscape is similar to many of the landscapes celebrated by Whig and Tory garden commentators alike. Addison, for example, recognized that 'the beauties of the most stately garden or Palace lie in too narrow a compass, the Imagination immediately runs them over, and requires something else to gratify her; but in the wide fields of nature, the sight wanders up and down without confinement and is fed with an infinite variety of images.'¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ Montagu, 'Letter XLI', in *Letters*, p. 12.

¹¹² Grundy, *Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 154; 140. *Complete Letters Vol 1*, ed. by Halsband, pp. 311; 331-2; 340-1; 344; 397.

¹¹³ Montagu, 'Letter XXXVI. To Mr Pope. Belgrade-Village, June 17, O.S. [1717]' in *Letters*, pp. 124-5.

¹¹⁴ Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, no 412 June 23, 1712. See also Addison's *A letter from Italy, to the Right Honourable Charles, Lord Halifax. By Mr. Joseph Addison. 1701. Together with The mourning muse of Alexis. A pastoral. Lamenting the Death of our Late Gracious Queen Mary. By Mr. Congreve. 1695. To which is added The despairing lover* (London: H. Hills, 1709).

Montagu's speaker then changes the perspective away from the wider landscape to a closer focus on the surrounding plants and the alliterative '[f]air, fertile, fields.'(22) The overabundant fertility of the surrounding environment is evident but its precise nature is outlined in a triplet:

But as the Parent rose decays and dyes
The infant buds with brighter colours rise
And fresh Sweets the Mother's-Scent Supplies (26-28)

The key idea here is not just continuity but progression and expansion. This triplet echoes Matthew Prior's 'Celia to Damon': 'And when the Parent Rose decays, and dies; / With a resembling Face the Daughter-Buds arise.'¹¹⁵ Prior emphasises the similarities across generations:

The Vine arises from its Mother's Juice;
When feeble Plants, or tender Flow'rs decay,
They to their Seed their images convey
Where the old Myrtle her good Influence sheds,
Sprig of like leaf erect their filial Heads; (98-102)

In contrast, Montagu's lines work to establish the sense of growth and improvement: the buds are brighter and the scents fresher. The expansiveness evoked here finds a parallel in the length of the description which is much longer than that of the pinched winter scene.¹¹⁶

This focus on fertility may reflect Montagu's imminent confinement at the time of composition, but the concept of improvement is a focus of contemporary political debate. Coupled with the emphasis on expansion and profit implied by Montagu's lines, these reveal a particularly Whiggish politics driven by economical imperative as much as political ideology. Montagu underlines the political implications of her depiction by moving from an exposition of reproductive plenitude, to the riot of colour around her:

Near them the Vi'let glows with odours blest
And blooms in more than Tyrian Purple drest,
The rich Jonquils their golden gleem display
And shine in glory emulating day. (29-32)

¹¹⁵ Prior, 'Celia to Damon' in *Poems*, pp. 87-93, lines, 103-4. All subsequent line references will be cited parenthetically in the text.

¹¹⁶ In the version in *Essays and Poems* the opening passage runs to 10 lines and the description of summer is 18 lines long.

The richness of colour again moves the reader from the idea of natural bounty and richness to the splendour of political power; the colours chosen – purple and gold – have clear associations with imperial and monarchical power.

The poem then turns the reader's attention to the view from the kiosk: 'Here from my Window I at once survey / The crouded City, and Resounding Sea' (38-39). This shift of attention to the poetic speaker's gaze, accompanied by a return to the first person, establishes a link between the glories of political power and the idea of personal authority. This focus is emphasised by the view:

In Distant views see Asian Mountains rise
And lose their Snowy Summits in the Skies.
Above those Mountains high Olympus tow'rs
(The Parliamantal seat of heavenly Powers). (40-43)

The perspective offered by the kiosk is comprehensive and extensive; an appropriate analogue to Montagu's own socially and physically privileged position within the ambassadorial estate. It is also a static view and whilst this reflects contemporary garden design in the use of fixed viewpoints or *coups d'oeil* from the house or other significant features of the estate, it might also suggest the confinement to the place experienced by Montagu in the last months of her pregnancy or the experience of exile. However, a more general sense of restraint is not visible in Montagu's letters, many of which document her forays into Constantinople and her meetings with many local people.

After redirecting our attention, the poem moves onto another pair of opposing landscapes. The description which follows imagines the scene – the city of Constantinople – from two chronologically different points: a Muslim present and a Christian past. The speaker finds much to admire or fear in the Constantinople of the present: 'New to the sight, my ravish'd Eyes admire / Each gilded Crescent and each antique Spire' (44-45). Yet the immediate and terrifying awe inspired by the magnificent dimensions of the city is transient, especially when compared to the sublimity of the mountains which frame the view. Like the 'Lofty Structures, once the Christian boast', the magnificence of the city is empty of meaning: 'Their Names, their Glories, and their Beautys lost' (48-49). For all its splendour, Constantinople is a city of

'Altars bright with Gold, with Sculpture grac'd, / By Barbarous Zeal of Savage Foes defac'd' (50-51). This indictment suits Montagu's complex understanding of Turkey which found fault with its public political systems but had a deal of sympathy for its apparently patriarchal social structures. It is perhaps worth noting that Montagu afterwards admitted that these lines were not an accurate record of historical fact.¹¹⁷

This comparison makes an important if not particularly surprising religio-political point:

How art thou falln, Imperial City low!
Where are thy Hopes of Roman Glory now?
Where are thy Palaces by Prelates rais'd?
Where preistly Pomp in Purple Lustre blaz'd? (56-59)

As readers we already know where the gold and purple of past splendours are now to be found: the natural spaces around Constantinople. The glory is not gone but relocated and ultimately recoverable. This passage also presents a commonplace reflection of the vanity of human ambition. Dryden reflects in a similar fashion on the ruins of classical civilization:

The *Sylvan* Scenes of Herds and Flocks,
And fruitful Plains and barren Rocks,
Of shallow Brooks that flow'd so clear,
The Bottom did the Top appear;
Of deeper too and ampler Flouds,
Which as in Mirrors, shew'd the Woods;
Of lofty Trees with Sacred Shades,
And Perspectives of pleasant Glades,
Where Nymphs of brightest Form appear,
And shaggy Satyrs standing neer,
Which them at once admire and fear.
The Ruines too of some Majestick Piece,
Boasting the Pow'r of ancient *Rome* or *Greece*,
Whose Statues, Freezes, Columns broken lie,
And though deface't, the Wonder of the Eie,¹¹⁸

Yet, Montagu makes a slightly different point: hers is a Christian past, not the more common Roman or Greek civilization which is regretted. For Grundy, the poem's focus

¹¹⁷ *Essays and Poems*, ed. by Halsband and Grundy p. 208. *Complete Letters* Vol. 1, ed. by Halsband, pp. 398-9.

¹¹⁸ John Dryden, 'To the Pious Memory Of the Accomplisht Young LADY Mrs Anne Killigrew, Excellent in the two Sister-Arts of Poësie, and Painting. An ODE,' *Poems by Mrs. Anne Killigrew* (London: Samuel Lowndes, 1686), unpaginated, lines 108-122.

on the changes wrought by time finds a parallel in the seasons which also feature in the text's comparison of Turkish and English contexts.¹¹⁹

'Griev'd at a view which strikes upon [her]Sigh', the poetic speaker again shifts the focus of the poem to a more human scale: 'In Gaudy Objects I indulge my Sight' (76, 79). Where previously summer had followed winter, in this passage richness and gaiety contrast the emptied buildings of previous civilizations. The passage finally returns to a scene of beauty and delight which finds a close parallel in the evocation of summer earlier in the poem:

The gilded Navy that adorns the Sea,
The rising City in confusion fair,
Magnificently form'd irregular,
Where Woods and Palaces at once surprise,
Gardens, on Gardens, Domes on Domes arise
And endless Beauties tire the wandring Eyes, (93-98)

The concluding triplet of these lines summarises well the key concepts of landscape design that dominated Europe at this point and are elucidated in Pope's *Essay on Criticism* (1711).¹²⁰ The aesthetic of variety in colour, texture and landscape type, or *concordia discors*, is clear and neatly summed in the oxymoron 'confusion fair.' Yet this landscape is for the speaker less soothing than the retreat symbolised by the kiosk. It is crucially a non-European landscape, for all its European aesthetic credentials, its sublime scale, its colourful novelty and its authorising structures; it cannot match the ambassador's residence in the suburbs of Pera:

No Knave's successful craft does Spleen excite,
No Coxcomb's Tawdry Splendour shocks my Sight,
No Mob alarm awakes my Female Fears
No unrewarded Merit, nor Envy hurts my Ear (101-105).

This final contrast complicates the opening passages considerably – opening the poem up to a reading which can simultaneously critique and praise all the spaces on view: England and Turkey; Christian past and Turkish present; City and country retreat.

The complexity of the vistas available and the location of the speaker at the edge of the estate occlude an important point for Montagu about the residence at the

¹¹⁹ Grundy, 'Six Town Eclogues', p. 188-189.

¹²⁰ Alexander Pope, 'An Essay on Criticism', *Selected Poetry*, ed. by Pat Rogers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp. 1-20.

centre of the estate which is physically, socially and culturally distanced from its surrounding communities. It is a *hortus conclusus*, which whilst providing safety and retirement, cannot offer all that a well-managed country estate should offer. In thinking about what a conventional country house poem may include in its discussion, we are left with the impression of an emptied centre. This residence has seemingly no inhabitants, no labourers, no hospitality nor indeed any social relationships, yet, as an ambassador's residence this seems unlikely to be the case. Nonetheless, for Montagu, a woman in what can best be described as a semi-official function, her role and participation are invisible in the poem. All of the positive aspects of a country estate are located for Montagu either in the kiosk, at the edges of its social operations or outside the walls of the residence.

'An Epistle to Lord Bathurst'¹²¹

Much of what is missing from Montagu's description of the residence at Pera, is also absent from her description of Lord Bathurst's estates at Cirencester Park and Richings.¹²² The poem was first published in Dodsley's *Collection of Poems* (1748) as 'Epistle to Lord B-----t' but was probably written in late 1725.¹²³ It is addressed to Allen, Lord Bathurst (1684-1775) who was a close friend of Montagu.¹²⁴ He was also for many years one of Pope's closest friends, and lived a hedonistic lifestyle, fathering many illegitimate children.¹²⁵ Bathurst was also one of the members - alongside, Harley, St John, and Arbuthnot - of the Tory group the Brothers' Club, intended as a counter to the Whigs' own Kit-Cat club.¹²⁶ Landscape gardening was only one of many of his interests – a passion shared to a certain extent with Montagu but more clearly

¹²¹ *Essays and Poems*, ed. by Halsband and Grundy, pp. 242-244. All subsequent references will be to this text and will be cited parenthetically by line number. The poem was first published in Dodsley's *Collection of Poems* (1748) as 'Epistle to Lord B-----t'. It is also in Harrowby MS. 256.14-16.

¹²² Chambers notes that Pope lent Bathurst £2000 for the improvements to the garden at Cirencester. See Douglas, 'Evelyn's *Sylva*', p. 35.

¹²³ *Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, ed. by Fairer and Gerrard p. 186; Grundy, *Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 244

¹²⁴ Grundy, *Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 190; 244.

¹²⁵ See letter from Pope to Bathurst dated early 1725. Alexander Pope, 'To Robert Digby. May 1722', in *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope. Vol II* ed. by George Sherburn (Oxford: Clarendon, 1956), p. 292.

¹²⁶ Williams, *Whig Literary Culture*, p. 230.

with Pope, who gave him advice on gardening matters and at times mocked his gardening schemes.¹²⁷ Bathurst himself was well aware of the arbitrary nature of landscape fashions as his letter to Pope dated 13 September 1719 shows: 'These (my Lord) are our Men of Taste, who pretend to prove it by tasting little or nothing.' He continues by evaluating the Duke of Chandos as a 'zealous yet charitable Planter, and has so bad a Taste, as to like all that is good.'¹²⁸

'An Epistle to Lord Bathurst' is often viewed less as a country house poem than as a comment on Montagu's relationship with Pope or Algarotti. Yet, if written in 1725, it cannot comment on either – she had not yet met Algarotti – and her friendship with Pope was still on reasonable terms. Alternatively, as Grundy explains, it may well reflect on the fickleness of men in love, as it was written after a brief and rather unsatisfactory affair with Bathurst in early 1725.¹²⁹ However, it may also be a comment on another unknown and unsatisfactory affair between Montagu and another man, or indeed an observation on the relationship between two third parties, such as the unsatisfactory state of her sister's marriage.¹³⁰ Regardless of the subjects of the poem, the tone fits with other poems and letters about personal relationships written by Montagu during this period.¹³¹ Perhaps more interestingly, it is, as I shall argue, a response to mutually concerning trends in taste and a broader social comment on aesthetic practices as an analogue for social and political practices. As Morris Brownell argues, even the innocuous activities of architecture and landscape gardening provided ample scope for satirical comment within the tropes of the country house genre.¹³² As such, it is a prescient counterpart of Pope's more celebrated and later epistles – not only to Bathurst personally but also to Burlington.

¹²⁷ Pope wrote numerous letters to Bathurst but some written to others are less generous to Bathurst. Pope, 'To Robert Digby. May 1722', *Correspondence. II*, pp. 115-116; 'Pope to Robert Digby. 12 August 1725', *Correspondence. II*, pp. 314-315.

¹²⁸ Pope, *Correspondence of Alexander Pope. II*, p. 13-15.

¹²⁹ Grundy, *Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 354. Halsband and Grundy's note to the poem in *Essays and Poems* suggests a liaison between Mrs Howard and Bathurst as a possible topic, p. 242.

¹³⁰ Grundy, *Mary Wortley Montagu*, p. 239.

¹³¹ Grundy, *Mary Wortley Montagu*, pp. 246-247. *Complete Letters, II*, ed. by Halsband, pp. 48-50; 53; 51; 456; 458.

¹³² Morris Brownell, 'Poetical Villas: English Verse Satire of the Country House, 1700-1750', in *Satire in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. by J.D. Browning (New York and London: Garland, 1983), pp. 9-52.

The poem starts with a conventional if ironic apostrophe: ‘How happy you’ which echoes the many poems of the *beatus ille* tradition. However, it quickly moves onto less conventional ground. It describes with telling irony the extent of Bathurst’s artistic endeavours: ‘Plans, schemes, and models all Palladio’s art, / For six long months have gain’d upon your heart’ (3-4). This six month scheme is not undermined by the complexity of the design, although Montagu is less than encouraging about the overall effect of the many aspects of the design; Bathurst’s ‘inclination fails and wishes freeze’ because of ‘the dull workman’s slow-performing hand’ which ‘But coldly executes his lord’s command’ (11-12). The real reason for Bathurst’s decision to ‘quit the grove, so lately [he] admir’d’ becomes apparent as the poem progresses — Bathurst is fickle: ‘Full of new projects for almost a week’ (34). A similar expenditure of money and time and subsequent change of heart is displayed by Villario in Pope’s *Epistle to Burlington*:

Behold Villario’s ten-years toil compleat;
His Quincunx darkens, his Espaliers meet,
The Wood supports the Plain, the parts unite,
And strength of Shade contends with strength of Light;
A waving Glow the bloomy Beds display,
Blushing in bright diversities of day,
With silver-quiv’ring rills mæander’d o’er —
Enjoy them, you! Villario can no more;
Tir’d of the Scene Parterres and Fountains yield,
He finds at last he better likes a Field. (79-88)

Montagu’s satire is directed not at the landscaping details or the extent of Bathurst’s plans for his estates but rather at his capricious and uneven handling of estate matters. This fickleness is visible in all aspects of his life. In her derogation of Bathurst’s fickleness and compulsion for the latest trends, Montagu gives a clear indication of contemporary developments in architecture and gardening. Yet Montagu is not necessarily challenging Bathurst alone; as with many country house poems, the particular example of estate, design or owner, reveals a larger model.

Sherman’s discussion of the analogue of female behaviour and economic behaviour provides a good model to read this poem’s discussion of aesthetics.¹³³ It

¹³³ Sherman, ‘Politics of Female Rationality’.

argues for less passion, less grandiosity and more sense and greater perspective in all things: architecture, gardening, and personal relationships. Bathurst's behaviour is of a piece – his personal life is an analogue of his vaunting yet capricious ambitions in his estate management. As in her essay in *The Nonsense of Commonsense*, Montagu does not see behaviour of any kind as incorrigible; where she chides inappropriate female behaviour, she does so to correct it. In the essay she argues for women to learn to prefer woollen clothes over imported silks:

The support for the poor, [is] reduc'd now to a very low ebb by the Luxury and ill taste of the Rich, and the Fantastic mimicry of our Ladys, who are so accustomed to shiver in silks, that they exclaim on the Hardships of Warmth and Decency.¹³⁴

This is an argument not just against luxury or typically female acquisitiveness, but a positive one for a product which is British in origin and thus would promote the British economy; buying cloth or clothing is not inherently wrong but buying the wrong type of cloth is injurious to the nation.¹³⁵ In a similar fashion, Montagu is arguing in 'An Epistle to Lord Bathurst' that Bathurst could change his behaviour, alter his capricious ambitions for landscape novelties into a sustainable management of his estates. Both texts argue for an appropriate use of wealth and taste, and the application of reason to address these faults.

Richard Braverman argues that after 1715, georgic became the dominant mode for Whig rhetoric: '[t]he georgic as the literary mode that serves the emergent civil society consonant with the Whig notion of a commercial imperium.'¹³⁶ This use of georgic and its central figure the husbandman is key to Montagu's use of country house discourse to frame her argument about Bathurst's behaviour: his personal behaviour as much as his landscape designs is neither viable nor sustainable. As with all country house discourse, the individual lesson is applicable much more widely and the same ideas regarding rational behaviour and the rejection of luxury appear in other texts by Montagu which deal with diverse topics. As Braverman explains: the

¹³⁴ *Essays and Poems*, ed. by Halsband and Grundy, p. 106-7.

¹³⁵ Sherman, 'Politics of Female Rationality', p. 2.

¹³⁶ Richard Braverman, *Plots and Counterplots: Sexual Politics and the Body Politic in English Literature, 1660-1730* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 242.

husbandman can restore the fortunes of the (e)state by investing in economic and dynastic terms.¹³⁷ For Montagu this appeal to sustainability through investment in appropriate personal, economic activity and cultivation in all its senses, is undermined by Bathurst's infidelities and his capricious designs. As Braverman continues:

The social and economic connotations of cultivation are ultimately subordinate to its political ends because georgic has political resonance through the analogy of state and estate, where cultivation translates desire and power into a politics of containment at odds with the courtly heroic idiom.¹³⁸

It is important to note that Bathurst's estate is not fruitful, is not authorised either by dynastic appeal or labour – actual or cultural, nor is it legitimised by a single prospect view. It compares unfavourably with later poetic landscapes in Thomson's *The Seasons*:

And what a various prospect lies around
Of hill, and vales, and woods, and lawns, and spires,
And towns betwixt, and gilded streams; till all
The stretching landskip into smook decays!¹³⁹

For Braverman 'the varied elements of the Thames valley culminate in the prospect of an ordered 'landskip' in *Summer*, the estate of nature becomes a symbol of the commercial order stewarded by the landed elite.'¹⁴⁰ In contrast to Montagu's depiction of Bathurst's estate Cirencester Park, the accretion of elements here is appropriate to the whole. Yet Bathurst's estate resembles an ill-considered heap of conflicting effects.

Bathurst's behaviour and design are also out of step with emerging ideas about estate management seen in the texts of writers, such as Stephen Switzer.¹⁴¹ David Jacques describes the shift towards the merging of profit and pleasure:

The essence of [Switzer's] approach was that estate management, rather than the idle pleasures of gardens, is the key to both the pleasurable and

¹³⁷ Braverman, *Plots and Counterplots*, p. 247.

¹³⁸ Braverman, *Plots and Counterplots*, p. 248.

¹³⁹ James Thomson, *Summer. A poem. By James Thomson* (London: J. Millan, 1727), lines 530-33

¹⁴⁰ Braverman, *Plots and Counterplots*, p. 272.

¹⁴¹ Stephen Switzer is one of the most important writers on horticulture of the period. His major texts include: *Ichnographia rustica: or, the nobleman, gentleman, and gardener's recreation* (London: D. Browne, 1718); *The practical fruit-gardener* (London: Thomas Woodward, 1724) and *An introduction to a general system of hydrostaticks and hydraulicks*, (London: T. Astley, 1729)

profitable enjoyment of the countryside. He still saw a place for regular gardening, but he felt that too much expenditure had gone into the embellishment of whole estates.¹⁴²

This moderate behaviour and careful or sustainable management is the focus of Montagu's poem written to 'John Duke of Marlborough' (wr 1722, pub 1731):

His temperate valour form'd no giddy scheme,
No victory rais'd him to a rage of fame;
The happy temper of his even mind
No danger e'er could shock, or conquest blind.
Fashion'd alike, by nature and by Art,
To please, engage, and interest, every heart.
In public life by all who saw approv'd,
In private hours by all who knew him lov'd.¹⁴³

Also missing from his attitude to his estates, is a sense of continuity or stewardship, a sense of duty normally located in charity or implied by hospitality. His use of actual and social riches is called into question. This contrasts, as I shall discuss below, with Carlisle's long-term planning and the sense of stewardship and dynastic longevity on display in Ingram's poem. Montagu also uses Bathurst's removal to London to pursue power and pleasure as an exemplary contrast with a more virtuous country life in a manner which echoes most examples of the genre. Employing the country city opposition in this way provides Montagu with an implied ideal which neither Bathurst nor his estates can supply. As satire, this poem is complex. It is an *ad hominem* attack but its implications are much wider and its targets multiple. As with Sherman's discussion of Montagu's complicated gender politics – arguing that her seemingly anti-feminist stance allows room for the recuperation of female behaviour to the benefit not just of the individual women but also of the national economy – the individual is challenged but not necessarily written off as 'incorrigibly malign.'¹⁴⁴ Instead, the poem proposes an appropriate behaviour which is both aristocratic and intellectual in tenor. Bathurst is satirised here not for his artistic endeavours but his inability to pursue them with any consistency or coherent plan.

¹⁴² David, Jacques, *Georgian Gardens* (London: Batsford, 1983), p. 18.

¹⁴³ Montagu, 'John Duke of Marlborough' in *Essays and Poems*, ed. by Halsband and Grundy, pp. 224-5, lines 7-14.

¹⁴⁴ Sherman, 'Politics of Female Rationality', p. 9.

Although both of Montagu's poems discussed in this chapter rework the genre, they are in some ways far more conventional than those discussed so far in this thesis. This is partially because both poems can be placed in a literary dialogue with her male peers, such as Pope and Prior. This relationship is indicated not only by the thematic treatment of retirement and the association of political discrimination with aesthetic taste but also by the mode and form of the texts. In 'Constantinople. To [William Feilding]' the close association of country house genre with the epistle comes to the fore and complicates the conventional picture offered by the coterie in texts by Finch. A satirical reworking of the genre is clear in Montagu's 'An Epistle to Lord Bathurst', making it as much a literary statement as it is a discussion of Burlington's aesthetic taste or practices. However, unlike those of her male peers, Montagu's two 'estates' are ultimately empty and unavailable to her. The residence at Pera has no inhabitants, no labourers, nor any visible social relationships. All of the positive aspects of a country estate are located for Montagu either in the kiosk at the edges of its social operations or outside the walls of the residence. Likewise on Bathurst's estate, the space is emptied of meaning by Bathurst's caprice and inappropriate behaviour. Montagu implies a sense of fullness or an ideal rather than offer a negative depiction. To do this she must relocate this empty centre in the figure of Bathurst to a corrupt and corrupting London. In neither case can Montagu fully access a meaningful country estate.

Anne Ingram

Ingram was the second daughter of Charles, Lord Carlisle born in c. 1696. Her early life was spent at Castle Howard and Montagu's letters record her connections with local families, including that of Montagu, whose father was a friend of Carlisle.¹⁴⁵ She married Richard Ingram, Viscount Irwin in 1717. The couple suffered substantial losses in the South Sea bubble in 1720 and although he was appointed Governor of Barbados,

¹⁴⁵ 'Introduction' in *Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts*. Vol 15, part 6, (London: HMSO, 1870), pp. 27-30. See also the Carlisle family correspondence, 'The Manuscripts of the Earl of Carlisle', in *Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts*. Vol 15, Appendix part 6, p. 71.

Irwin died shortly afterwards from smallpox. In 1736 Ingram was appointed Lady of the Bedchamber to the Princess of Wales, although family correspondence suggests her long term association with court circles. Despite family objections, Ingram remarried to Colonel William Douglas in 1737.¹⁴⁶ As a poet, she is perhaps best known for her poem 'Epistle to Mr. Pope, Occasioned by his Characters of Women' (1736), a response to Pope's 'Epistle to a Lady, on the Characters of Women' (1735).¹⁴⁷ However, little has been written about her country house poem, 'Castle Howard' published anonymously in 1732.¹⁴⁸ The poem describes the Howard family estate in North Yorkshire, designed over three decades by her father. Although Carlisle was a Whig, it is unknown how loyal Carlisle was to the Whig administrations to which he belonged. In 1710 Carlisle was included on a list drawn up by Robert Harley, of Whig politicians with whom the Tories might do business.¹⁴⁹ The letters between Carlisle and prominent members of the Whig party indicate that Carlisle was not always willing to return to London for key votes which threatened the position of the government.¹⁵⁰ What is clear from family archives and correspondence is that he was linked socially and politically to a loose grouping or country faction, a faction which was against what it saw as the New Whig ideology of bourgeois individualism and mercantile wealth, and, at the other end of the political spectrum, Jacobite theories of absolute monarchy. As Stuart Sim and David Walker note, although this split in the Whig party became more overt as the century progressed, the cracks and accompanying alliances were visible from the 1690s onwards.¹⁵¹ This split corresponds to the design and construction period of Castle Howard under the third Earl.

¹⁴⁶ *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets*, ed. by Lonsdale, pp. 149-150.

¹⁴⁷ Anne Ingram, 'An Epistle to Mr. Pope, Occasioned by his Characters of Women', *Gentleman's Magazine*, 6 (1736), 745.

¹⁴⁸ Downes describes Ingram's poem as 'indifferent verses [...] largely concerned with the representation of landscape, but they also stress the seriousness of Carlisle's retirement.' Kerry Downes, *Vanbrugh*, Studies in Architecture, Vol. XVI (London: A. Zwemmer, 1977), pp. 20.

¹⁴⁹ Carlisle was initially listed as a Whig in 1690 by Lord Carmarthen and generally exercised his favour in local elections for Whig candidates; however, he is listed in Harley papers as a Country supporter. See 'Howard, Charles, Visct. Morpeth', in *History of Parliament Online*. <<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org>> [Accessed 21 October 2014].

¹⁵⁰ 'The Manuscripts of the Earl of Carlisle', in *Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts* p.144-5.

¹⁵¹ Stuart Sim and David Walker, *The Discourse of Sovereignty, Hobbes to Fielding: The State of Nature and the Nature of State*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003, pp. 165-180.

The material landscape of Castle Howard is a transitional Baroque mixture of formal elements with the newer, but not yet dominant 'natural style.' This is retained in Ingram's poem.¹⁵² Despite Mara Miller's assertion that the English landscape garden from 1730 onwards was emblematic of the rights of the landowner rather than an absolute monarch to control the extent and type of plant, Ingram's poem negotiates a path between the derogated formality of French or Italian gardens and the newer expansive style.¹⁵³ As such, her political statement is perhaps even stronger than that of her father. Where the design elements indicating a country Whig garden were to some extent shared by all commentators regardless of political affiliation in the first two decades of the eighteenth century, by 1732, this formality was much more closely linked to Tory or patriot Whig sympathisers. Although Levine claims the design to be essentially a Whig creation in the name of progress and enlightenment, I shall argue that the landscapes of Castle Howard can be read as an expression of the early stages of the Country opposition, and that the timing of Ingram's country house poem marks a shift in oppositional rhetoric in response to Walpole and participates in the later, but related, dissident Whig tradition.¹⁵⁴

The country faction sought a mixed constitution with two major criteria for political authority: a landed wealth significant enough to ensure political disinterestedness and incorruptibility and an aesthetic discrimination to ensure appropriate use of this wealth and its concomitant political power. The aristocratic owner of a significant and well-designed country estate was thus the ideal governor. The ideal estate owner would, according to Pope's *Epistle Burlington*, 'consult the genius of the place in all', gaining 'all points, who pleasingly confounds / Surprises, varies, and conceals the bounds' (204-5). Jacques notes that this concept of a more varied, natural and appropriate landscape which stresses the melding of classical

¹⁵² Neil Levine, 'Castle Howard and the Emergence of the Modern Architectural Subject', *Journal of the American Society of Architecture*, 62.3 (2003), 326-351, (p. 326).

¹⁵³ Miller 'Gardens as Political Discourse', p. 273.

¹⁵⁴ Levine, 'Castle Howard', pp. 347-348.

models with an open and agrarian landscape is found in writings by Addison, Timothy Nourse, and Switzer.¹⁵⁵

The landscapes of Castle Howard are available to the modern reader in several forms: the contemporary designs and engravings from its inception in 1699 to its completion much later in the eighteenth-century, the landscape as it currently exists, and the poem written by Ingram. As I shall argue below, the initial design bears all the hallmarks of a general Whig position, unsurprising given Carlisle's and Vanbrugh's affiliations and associations. However, over the course of its implementation the design may have been subject to amendment or at least a re-focusing of its political elements, reflecting both the trajectory of the oppositional rhetoric and Carlisle's own political position. Finally, the most compelling description surviving is the poem, which may further move the landscape into a Patriot oppositional position. This reading will demonstrate not only the political inflection of landscapes – the political gardening of the period – but also the ways in which landscapes can be re-interpreted to different political aims. It may be difficult to ascribe Carlisle's garden design at Castle Howard to a specific strand of political thought, given the shared ground between all political parties, which fostered an oligarchic and largely paternalistic view of governance. However, the poem by his daughter can be more closely linked to the, albeit loose, coalition of the Patriot opposition of the 1730s. Gerrard places Ingram and her husband, Irwin, as supporters of Prince Frederick, a key figure in the Whig dissident movement.¹⁵⁶ Her letter to her husband in 1735 places her clearly in Frederick's circle:

I delivered your message to the Prince [...] he should one day be able to make you a visit at Castle Howard. He has a great inclination to make a progress, but I believe that will never be allowed till he is king, his popularity having already given offence; so nothing will be suffered to increase that.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁵ Jacques, 'The Formal Garden'. Alongside Switzer, Nourse was a significant horticultural writer of the period. His major work is *Campania Foliæ. Or, a discourse of the benefits and improvements of husbandry* (London: Thomas Bennet, 1706) originally published in 1700.

¹⁵⁶ Gerrard, *Patriot Opposition to Walpole*, p. 196.

¹⁵⁷ Cited in Gerrard, *Patriot Opposition to Walpole*, p. 196.

The collections of letters sent by various members of the Carlisle family also give very elaborate particulars of Court and Parliamentary business.¹⁵⁸ One of these series consists of the letters of Ingram, relating chiefly to the differences between George II and his son Frederick, in whose household she held the position of lady-in-waiting to the Princess Augusta.¹⁵⁹ The picture gained is complex – family members do not always agree, whilst Carlisle and others change their minds to suit events and circumstances. Furthermore, Carlisle and Ingram’s acquaintances are wide and cover the whole political spectrum.

Castle Howard

The Castle Howard estate was designed largely by Vanbrugh and Nicholas Hawksmoor. The initial design in 1699 by leading architect William Talman was rejected in favour of that by Vanbrugh, like Carlisle, a member of the Kit-Cat club.¹⁶⁰ Work started on the house in 1701 and continued throughout the eighteenth century. However, most of the major decisions were taken in the initial design, begun shortly after Carlisle acquired the lease on the estate at Henderskelfe from his grandmother in 1698.¹⁶¹ The two phases of construction under discussion here, of the house from 1701 to 1715 and of the garden from 1715, coincide with Carlisle’s retirement from active political life: he served very briefly as First Lord of the Treasury in both 1701/2 and 1715.¹⁶² The landscape design of Castle Howard is, then, coincident with the waxing and waning of both Carlisle’s personal fortunes and those of the Country Whigs. The date of the poem, however, relates to the emergence of the Patriot opposition to Walpole in the 1730s. My reading of the different iterations of the landscape focuses on three main factors: the siting and orientation of the house within the topography; the perspective

¹⁵⁸ Letters include those between the younger son, daughters, and sons-in-law of Charles Howard, third Earl of Carlisle, between 1718 and 1758, mostly addressed to their father, but partly to their brother the fourth Earl, *Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts* Vol 15, pt 6.

¹⁵⁹ *Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts*, Appendix 6: Letter dated 18 January, 1729 from Ingram to Carlisle, p. 55. See also p. 158; 165; 172; 180.

¹⁶⁰ Downes, *Vanbrugh*, pp. 12-23. Downes also notes the participation of gardener George London from an early stage in the design, p. 28. See also Levine, ‘Castle Howard’.

¹⁶¹ Downes, ‘Vanbrugh’, p. 4-6; Downes, *Vanbrugh*, , pp. 26-39.

¹⁶² Downes, *Vanbrugh*, p. 20; 33.

offered from the house and, in turn, from other architectural elements of the garden; and, finally, the use of both classical and gothic elements within the design to make visual associations with an historical and contemporary political ideology.

The design, in keeping with contemporary ideas about using the genius of the place, did not radically alter the topography of the estate nor remove the trees from the hillside which had sheltered the original castle. Nonetheless, it did change the orientation of the house from an east/west to a north/south axis.¹⁶³ This had two consequences. Firstly, it allowed two prospects with views across a wider agricultural landscape with a garden in the foreground. Secondly, in retaining the original approach route to the house, that is running east to west, it kept the house largely hidden from view. The two views from the house allow a doubled prospect over Carlisle's extensive estate, offering evidence of his wealth and thus of his political disinterestedness. The prospect to the north, today, includes a view over a lake; although this is a later addition, this lake was included in the earlier designs. It functions to move the eye outwards to the wider estate in the same fashion as the serpentine rivers and lakes in the landscape paintings of Claude Lorrain or Nicolas Poussin. John Dixon Hunt and Peter Willis explain that 'the idealized visions of the countryside around Rome' in such Italianate landscape painting 'established an intricate relationship of water, distant hills, buildings, [...] bridges and trees.'¹⁶⁴ Downes notes that Carlisle completed the grand tour in his twenties, where perhaps he acquired a taste for landscape aesthetics.¹⁶⁵ Otherwise, this prospect is empty of architectural features, stressing the natural yet varied landscape. It is, however, replete with aesthetic and moral directions.

The view from the south includes a parterre, opening out to a similar agricultural landscape, originally termed a wilderness. Initially, an open rectilinear grassed area with classical statuary, the parterre now includes later additions, including a fountain. The use of statues throughout the garden is an important, if not

¹⁶³ Downes, *Vanbrugh*, p. 29.

¹⁶⁴ Hunt, and Willis, 'Introduction', p. 12.

¹⁶⁵ Downes, 'Vanbrugh', p. 10.

an unusual feature of gardens at the time.¹⁶⁶ By the mid-seventeenth century the importance of statuary or 'marbles' had been noted by John Raymond in *Il Mercurio Italico* (1648) who declared that these 'speak Roman history more palpably than any Author.'¹⁶⁷ The important feature again is the open prospect over a substantial and largely natural and varied landscape. As Addison writes in *The Spectator*:

Fields of corn make a pleasant prospect ... and if the natural embroidery of the meadows were helped and improved by some small additions of art A man might make a pretty landscape of his own possessions.¹⁶⁸

The association of landscape and property are clear here. By extension, Castle Howard's open vistas speak not only to wealth but to political power validated by land ownership and aesthetic judgement.¹⁶⁹

The axial approach to the estate underscores the importance of the prospect from, rather than to, the house, a feature which I will discuss again with regard to the main architectural features of the garden. This route also creates the sense of an exclusive environment surrounding the house and the garden, providing a correlative to social and political elitism inherent in the country Whig rhetoric. The exclusivity is underlined by the fortified appearance of the walls and two gatehouses featuring crenellated curtain walls, turrets and bastions.¹⁷⁰ The reasons for the trend for fortified gardens were numerous and came to the fore with Vanbrugh's design at Blenheim. As Robert Williams explains, the fashion for military features not only served to commemorate significant military victories, such as Blenheim, but was also considered ornamental and a suitably modern counterpart to older classical designs.¹⁷¹ With the exception of the family mausoleum and a distant pyramid, few architectural

¹⁶⁶ Hunt and Willis, 'Introduction', p. 8. Gervase Jackson Stops notes that by the early eighteenth century the long galleries of many country houses were being used to display statuary in a similar way: 'A British Parnassus: Mythology and the Country House' in *The Fashioning and Functioning of the British Country House*, ed. by Gervase Jackson-Stops, Gordon J. Schochet, Lena Cowen Orlin and Elisabeth Blair MacDougall (National Gallery of Art: Washington DC, 1989), pp. 217-238 (p. 229).

¹⁶⁷ John Raymond, *Il Mercurio Italico* (London: Humphrey Moseley, 1648), p. 78.

¹⁶⁸ Addison, *The Spectator*, No. 414, June 25, 1711.

¹⁶⁹ Barrell, 'The public prospect', pp. 19-20.

¹⁷⁰ Hunt and Willis note that this fortified aspect of the design persisted as a feature of gardens until well into the eighteenth century. 'Introduction', pp. 6-7.

¹⁷¹ Robert Williams, 'Fortified Gardens', in *Sir John Vanbrugh and Landscape Architecture in Baroque England 1690-1730*, ed. by Christopher Ridgway and Robert Williams (Stroud: Sutton, 2000), pp. 49-70 (pp. 50-55).

features are visible from the house. This not only serves to privilege the open landscape, connoting wealth and its appropriate use, but also forces the eye to move outwards, echoing the dynamic of political power emanating from the estate. The visitor is thus forced to move through the landscape to the other built elements in the same way that the viewer must work to move through a landscape painting.¹⁷² The visual dynamic here is centripetal, rather than of visual association around and across the landscape, such as exists at Stourhead or Stowe.

The major architectural feature is the Temple of the Four Winds, designed by Vanbrugh and modelled on Palladio's Villa Rotonda. It is approached via a grassed slope lined by statues leading the visitor to a raised platform. The view from the temple is again outwards to the wider estate and agrarian landscape, since the location affords no view back to the house. However, as with the prospect from the house, the agricultural landscape is empty of workers or farm buildings and is effectively a pastoral scene – even if one transposed to North Yorkshire. This emphasis on an ever expanding open prospect over Carlisle's extensive property is also suggested by the construction of a belvedere on the N.E side of Wray wood. (The view back to the house is restricted by the trees of Wray wood.)¹⁷³ Both aspects of the design here function to control the perspective and manipulate the experiences of the viewer.¹⁷⁴ The wood originally incorporated neo-classical features, such as fountains and statuary. As with the forced movement of the visitor through the garden to the Temple of the Four Winds, the layout of the wood, cut through with maze-like paths, forced the visitor from one element to another, in a prescribed yet apparently natural

¹⁷² Vanbrugh explained the desirability of a prospect view to include built elements in his rationale for keeping the former royal hunting lodge at Woodstock in the design for Blenheim Palace. 'Reasons Offer'd for Preserving some part of the Old Manor, 11 June 1709' in *Sir John Vanbrugh and landscape Architecture in Baroque England, 1690-1730*, ed. by Christopher Ridgway and Robert Williams (Stroud: Sutton, 2000), p. 191: 'That Part of the Park which is Seen from the North Front of the New Building, has Little Variety of Objects Nor dos the Country beyond it Afford any of Vallue, It therefore Stands in Need of all the helps that can be given, which are only Five; Buildings, And Plantations.'

¹⁷³ The use of trees at Castle Howard was praised by the anonymous author of the poem *The Rise and Progress of the Present Taste in Planting Parks, Pleasure Grounds, Gardens etc.* (1767); although as Douglas Chambers points out, the incorporation of woodland and forest into landscape design had been widespread since the Restoration when championed by *inter alia* John Evelyn. Chambers, 'The Legacy of Evelyn's *Sylva*'.

¹⁷⁴ Turner, *Capability Brown*, p.18.

fashion, providing 'a private and natural turn', deemed essential to all gardens by Stephen Switzer.¹⁷⁵ The fountains were supplied by a cistern which, although renovated at a later date, retains its original position.¹⁷⁶ From here, as from the Temple of the Four Winds, the view is not of the House but of the Obelisk on the main approach.

The classical features of the garden function as political and social validation. The classical element to republican thought which underpins that of the country Whig is implied by the classical, and often Roman, elements of Castle Howard's design. In addition to the Temple of the Four Winds, the major classical element of this initial phase of the garden is the family mausoleum. This is one of the few features visible from the house and introduces not just the idea of a classical political authority but also the importance of aristocratic lineage to that authority. The importance of dynasty to Carlisle, but also to all other landowners, is clearly stated in the inscription on the obelisk:

If to perfection these plantations rise
If they agreeably my heirs surprise
This faithful pillar will their age declare
As long as time these characters shall spare
Here then with kind remembrance read his name
Who for posterity perform'd the same.¹⁷⁷

Its significance is underscored by the fact that it is the only building originally designed to be visible from the Temple of the Four Winds.¹⁷⁸ This dynastic element of Castle Howard's design is visible in the pyramid on the horizon also seen from the South side. This ancient form of mausoleum contains a bust of the founder of the Howard dynasty.

The landscape design, then, focuses on three main elements which underpin the country Whigs' political philosophy. It offers views over an extensive and agrarian property holding which is viewed from an aristocratic and protected space. This garden space is improved by the additions of classical architecture and statues which,

¹⁷⁵ Switzer, *Ichnographia Rustica*, Vol. II, p. 197.

¹⁷⁶ Roberts describes the developments of water technologies during this period and its impact on design. 'Stephen Switzer', pp. 154-171.

¹⁷⁷ Cited in Downes, *Vanbrugh*, p. 20.

¹⁷⁸ John Dixon Hunt, 'Emblem and Expressionism in the Eighteenth-Century Landscape Garden', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 4. (1971), 294-317 (p. 298).

in turn, validate and specify a republican and paternalistic philosophy. The location of these elements within the landscape and the use of platforms, lakes, parterres, and belvederes to move the eye or the visitor outwards through the landscape, suggest the movement of political power radiating from the house and its owner. The same dynamics are visible in Ingram's poem. It reproduces this effect through description but also through a perspective which continually moves away from the house. It also uses sensory and spatial diction to highlight the variety within the landscape design and to give the impression of movement. In effect, the poem enacts rather than merely describes the estate. It can also be argued that in its use of genre, formal properties and the timing of its publication, it reiterates or strengthens Carlisle's political and aesthetic choices.

'Castle Howard'¹⁷⁹

The descriptive elements of Ingram's poem legitimate Carlisle and Castle Howard's political authority in the same manner as the material architecture and statuary. The depiction includes all of the architectural features discussed above and, furthermore, makes clear their associations to both a classical republican past, 'the Happy times of Rome and Greece, [...] That Golden Age' (70-72) and to Carlisle's aristocratic past and political future. Thus, the Mausoleum is 'Sacred to the immortal Vert'ous dead' (155) and the pyramid, an equally important monument:

Sacred to piety and filial Tears.
Here to his Sire did grateful Carlisle raise,
A certain Record a more lasting Praise,
Than Volumes writ in Honour to his Name;
Those often die, being made the Sport of Fame:
The Moth, the Worm, and Envy, them annoy,
But Time can only Pyramids destroy. (147-153)

Carlisle, himself, is associated with the tradition of aristocratic service. Ingram claims:

To serve Mankind is your peculiar End,
And make those happy who on you depend.

¹⁷⁹ Ingram, *Castle-Howard, the seat of the Right Honourable Charles Earl of Carlisle. To whom this poem is humbly inscribed*. (London: E. Owen, 1732). All subsequent line references to this poem will be given parenthetically in the text.

Your Children, Servants, Friends, this Blessing share,
And feel the Bounty of your constant Care. (25-28)

As with the vista from the house, this dynamic moves outwards from the immediate household. Although this notion of service is, of course, implicit within the country house genre, Carlisle's position vis-à-vis the Court and the City associated with the self-interest of New Whiggism is made explicit:

Till from the Court and City you withdrew,
A Life of rural Pleasure to pursue.
Soon you resign'd what others most desire;
Nor cou'd Ambition your cool Temper fire:
The Statesman's Schemes you left to those who durst be great, (31-35)

Certainly Carlisle's letters show a reluctance to engage in the day to day trading of contemporary politics. In turn, these political assertions are supported by the pastoral elements of the poem. Despite its presentation of an idealised rural scene, pastoral poetry is historically and thematically linked to both a retirement from political life and political commentary. Castle Howard's landscapes are, similarly, at once idealised yet founded in politics. The poem makes clear this separation of self-interested politics and the pastoral idyll of Castle Howard:

That no unruly Passions shou'd invade
The Breast of those who wander in this Shade:
No jealous Thoughts, nor no corroding Care,
Nor Politicians Schemes shou'd enter here. (284-287)

More importantly, perhaps, the poem uses the country house genre to take the reader on a tour of the estate. Although this is a typical motif, it is often an imaginary and thus static tour, viewed from the privileged position of the house itself. Ingram's poem, however, moves the reader through the landscape and away from the house, using a spatial diction to infer topography, a sense of direction and landscape detail. Thus, Ingram describes the movement which '[leads] through the park, where lines of Trees unite' and 'By gentle Falls the docile ground descends, / Forms a fair Plain, then by Degrees ascends.' (108; 110-111) Thus, Ingram's poem follows the dynamic of its material counterpart, with the impetus outwards towards an open prospect and a wider political authority: 'From ev'ry Place you cast your wand'ring Eyes, / You view gay Landskips, and new Prospects rise.' (92-93) This disinterested vision is appropriate

since nature 'is the cheapest, and most perfect Guide.' Ingram also argues the views are 'proper', indicating both ownership and a sense of decorum. (117; 96; 233)

The sense of movement is underscored by the use of sensory diction. In many ways the poem echoes the contemporary practice of describing country house visits in letter form as entertainment and education for friends and relatives. There are numerous examples of such letters in the correspondence of the Howard family, most notably between Carlisle and both Vanbrugh and his son-in-law Thomas Robinson. All three men were interested in garden design and give knowledgeable, if critical, accounts of various estates.¹⁸⁰ The poem is also full of colours and textures, allowing the estate to be experienced by the reader. Thus: 'There a green Lawn bounded with Shady Wood, / Here Downy Swans sport in a Lucid Flood.' (94-95) The importance of water to gardens of the period is well documented by contemporary writers and Ingram's couplet reflects quite closely John James' comments of 1712:

'Tis a double Satisfaction: Water there being, as it were, in its centre; besides the Verdure of the Trees Serves as a Ground to set it off, and improves the very Whiteness of the Water; the Purling and Murmur of it strike the Ear too the more agreeably with the stillness and Echo that reigns in the Woods.¹⁸¹

The poem also offers a sense of variety and layering which the landscape of the period demanded, so that 'Hills rise on Hills; and to complete the Scenes, / Like one continu'd Wood th' Horizon seems.' (100-101) This vision is derived from '[...] a genius, where the Heart / Dictates from Nature rather than from Art' (9-10) since '[...] Nature charms most in Variety.' (113) As with the labyrinthine paths of Wray wood or the location of the Temple of the Four Winds, the reader must move to experience the open prospect.

The dating of the poem is also significant; published anonymously in 1732, it had probably been circulated to close associates prior to publication, as was common practice. Thematically, it differs little from those written by Ingram's male counterparts, which depict the large country estates of the period, such as Pope's *Epistle to Burlington* and *Of the Use of Riches, an Epistle to the Right Honorable Allen*

¹⁸⁰ *Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts*, Appendix 6, p. 41; 84-85; 91-92; 142-143. See also the numerous letters of a similar nature in *Correspondence of Alexander Pope*.

¹⁸¹ John James, *The Theory and Practice of Gardening* (London: George James, 1712), pp. 202-203.

Lord Bathurst (1733) and Gilbert West's poem *Stowe, the gardens of the Right Honourable Richard Lord Viscount Cobham* (1732). Ingram's poem coincides roughly with Walpole's ascendancy to the position of Prime Minister in 1730, following a period of uncertainty after the accession of George II in 1727. It also coincides with the start of a period of difficult relations between the king and Frederick, Duke of York, around whom the Patriot Opposition coalesced. Gerrard describes the Patriot position of the 1720s onwards thus:

A civic-humanist tradition of Commonwealth thought and argument which had supplied a platform for Country oppositions to the Court since the 1670s. Patriotism was a civic virtue, an ideal of selfless public activity which found its noblest embodiment in the classical hero Cato. It was the duty of citizens to place public interest before private self-interest.¹⁸²

This sense of civic duty is clearly visible in the correspondence of Carlisle with the Duke of Kingston who wrote to Carlisle that '[a] man who has a disinterested mind will search the good of his country, and is capable of judging what is so, is always wanted.'¹⁸³

Viscount Cobham's garden at Stowe features a patriot design which was built during Cobham's political 'retirement' after his ejection by Walpole from the Lord's in 1733.¹⁸⁴ During the 1730s he spent his time promoting his younger relatives and associates (he was childless) into positions of political influence and power and with designing his landscapes, described by Gerrard thus:

An overtly political landscape, an allegory of Patriot Whig principles manifest in the architectural design of buildings such as the Gothic Temple of Liberty; the temple of British Worthies with its formidable array of Protestant Whig thinkers, heroes, and monarchs; the Temple of Ancient Virtue with its pantheon of ancient Greek patriots; and the corresponding and ironic Temple of Modern Virtue, whose headless bust of a recognizably Walpolian figure graphically embodied the recent decline in modern civic virtue.¹⁸⁵

It is perhaps this slightly more specifically politically inflected type of space which is implied by Ingram's poem. Ingram's correspondence with her father indicates an at

¹⁸² Gerrard, *Patriot Opposition*, p. 5.

¹⁸³ 'Letter dated 10 December 1710, from Duke of Kingston to Earl of Carlisle', in *Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts*, Appendix 6, p. 20.

¹⁸⁴ Levine, 'Castle Howard', p. 326.

¹⁸⁵ Gerrard, *Patriot Opposition*, p. 36.

best ambivalent attitude to Walpole, alongside an attachment to the circle around Prince Frederick. In February 1729, she wrote to her father about Walpole's growing unpopularity: 'Your Lordship may think I hear this from disaffected people, but 'tis really the universal conversation of all sorts of people who are not tied by interest to be silent.'¹⁸⁶ It is telling that she associates an interested faction with tacit support for Walpole.

The thematic emphases and didactic intent are more defined than Carlisle's more generalised appeal to civic virtue located in classical and aristocratic authority, which not only characterised country opposition but was claimed by all strands of political debate. The alliance of Tories and Country Whigs argued for what Sim and Walker describe as 'an aristocratic supremacy modelled on a senate and underpinned by both classical and seventeenth century republicanism.'¹⁸⁷ This core concept of aristocratic republicanism is reflected in Carlisle's library collection; Carlisle owned, if not read, works by Cicero, John Milton, and Algernon Sidney as well those of his nearer contemporaries, Steele, Jonathan Swift and Robert Molesworth.¹⁸⁸ The debt to classical thought is exemplified by Molesworth writing of the Roman Empire: 'all Europe was beholden to these people for introducing or restoring a constitution of government for excelling all other that we know of in the world.'¹⁸⁹

The fact that Ingram's husband Irwin lost considerable sums of money in the South Sea bubble may also be important in the more pointed political inflection of the poem. This seems to move the Old or Country Whig rhetoric of the garden design toward a more visible dissent in Ingram's poetic enactment of the physical space. As Simon Varey explains, those who lost money were understandably concerned with Walpole's governance. However, beyond this concern at a lack of oversight, the allegations of corruption exacerbate the political claims. The idea that some people made money at the expense of others is the real problem; few Whigs had problems with wealth *per se*. As *Cato's Letters* makes clear: 'A free People are kept so, by no

¹⁸⁶ 'Letter dated 6 February, 1729 from Ingram to the Earl of Carlisle', in *Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts*, Appendix 6, p. 57.

¹⁸⁷ Sim and Walker, *Discourse of Sovereignty*, p. 166.

¹⁸⁸ *Essays and Poems*, ed. by Halsband and Grundy, p. vii.

¹⁸⁹ Robert Molesworth, *An account of Denmark as it was in the year 1692* (London: [s.n.], 1694), p. 39.

other Means than an equal Distribution of Property; every Man who has a Share of Property, having a proportionable Share of Power.’¹⁹⁰ Varey asserts:

The losers were [...] surrendering their wealth, prosperity, and thus their liberty and their share of power to Walpole and his kind. By doing so, they were losing their rights as well as their money. An appeal to the ancient constitution might then be a disguise for an appeal to the envious who wanted to recover their money.¹⁹¹

Indeed, as we saw in Montagu’s challenge to Bathurst, riches were not problematic for Whigs, nor necessarily was ostentatious use of wealth; instead, in both Montagu’s ‘Epistle to Lord Bathurst’ and Ingram’s ‘Castle Howard,’ it is appropriate behaviour which is important.

Ingram’s poem, unlike those by any other poet in this study, depicts her own father’s estate. It explores the complex relationship between a married daughter and her childhood home, a relationship which generally is not based on ownership, either actual or potential. Castle Howard had not been Ingram’s home since early childhood as her parents were estranged; nevertheless, Ingram includes herself within the physical, political and social spaces of her father’s estate. Despite being published anonymously, the poem still converts biographical and material details surrounding the building and design of Castle Howard, into an, albeit oblique, autobiographical statement. Ingram locates herself at Castle Howard in several ways not just through the family link of father and daughter. Firstly, although Ingram, unlike Finch, does not rely heavily on the use of the first person, the poem’s sensory and spatial diction stresses the speaker’s physical presence in the scene. Thus:

So far extended, and so great the Space,
Magnificence in ev’ry part we trace.
Before the House you view a large *Parterre*,
Not crouded with the Trifles brought from far:
No Borders, Alleys, Edgings spoil the Scene, (182-186)

Furthermore, although both the material and artistic landscapes of Castle Howard are inherently elitist, they crucially include those with family or political links to Carlisle: so that his ‘Children, Servants, Friends, this blessing share, / And feel the Bounty of [his]

¹⁹⁰ John Trenchard, *Cato’s Letters Vol. I* (London: W. Wilkins, 1723), pp. 11.

¹⁹¹ Varey, ‘The Growth of Capitalism’, p. 254-255.

constant Care.’ (25-26) In contrast, Ingram’s speaker notes that ‘Diana more to bless her fav’rite Grove, / Added this other Mark of partial Love.’ (282-283) Ingram also locates herself dynastically and, by extension, politically at Castle Howard through the poem’s emphasis on the Howard family and its detailed depiction of the estate’s mausoleum and other classical buildings.

It can be argued that the poem both depicts and enacts the politically resonant landscape design of Castle Howard, forming an argument for the landed aristocrat as the ideal senator, one exhibiting aesthetic and political discrimination but above all disinterestedness due to a substantial, landed wealth. To this end, Ingram compares Carlisle to Aeneas:

So much his noble Progeny he priz’d;
Only to future Prospects cou’d attend,
Since from his Line the Caesars shou’d descend (177-179)

The dynastic theme and biographical details of the poem necessarily include details of Ingram’s own history but can also be read as a positive identification with her father’s political allegiances to an Old or Country Whig grouping. In writing her family history, she not only supports Carlisle’s political affiliations but stresses her own part in the ruling elite, both past and future. The emphasis on family rather than political or economic relationships also supports a political ideology increasingly wary of, if not independent from, systems of patronage. Ingram makes this distinction clear in the opening lines of the poem, claiming ‘neither Foe or Flatt’rer is here, / I bring the Tribute of a Muse sincere.’ (19-20)

In design and in poetic form, the landscapes of Castle Howard speak to a very specific political position of the first three decades of the eighteenth century, and the publication of this poem, like those of Ingram’s contemporaries, represents a phase of country house discourse in the face of New Whig ideology and dominance. In merging biography and autobiography, Ingram interrogates the links between the personal and political inherent within the country house genre. She also uses a synthesis of family and patronage relationships to explore and articulate a political discourse which is simultaneously validated yet naturalised by the family relationship at the core of the

poem. Ultimately, Ingram locates herself not only within the topography of the estate and the biography of its owner, but also within a larger political community.

In conclusion, the readings of this chapter have revealed several aspects of the country house genre and of poetry more generally in the 1720s and 1730s. It has demonstrated that the country house genre, so frequently linked to Royalist or Tory poets and rhetoric, offered a generic space for those of a Whig position.¹⁹² Although these two poets demonstrate many continuities of concern if not political affiliation with Finch and Barker, they also show a far more straightforward appropriation of a public poetic voice by female writers. Largely unaffected by socio-economic or political marginalisation, both Montagu and Ingram enter into a public debate on the importance of taste. For the Whig writers discussed in this chapter, the use of the genre seems unproblematic in ways which Barker's texts discussed previously do not. The poems by Montagu and Ingram are far more conventional than many discussed in this study and can be placed in a literary dialogue with those by their male peers, such as Pope, Prior, Thomson and West. The dialogue between these two writers is at times also evident in the mode and form of the texts. The satirical mode is clear in Montagu's 'An Epistle to Lord Bathurst'; it is as much a literary statement as it is a discussion of Burlington's aesthetic taste or practices. Yet, the poem written during her time in Turkey allows for the country house discourse to be made visible. Read in tandem, the close association of country house genre with the epistle comes to the fore and complicates the picture offered by the coterie texts by Finch

The appeal of the country house genre is, however, not founded in political allegiance alone. It is part of a literary trend for retirement poetry which transcended political or theological difference. Whilst political aspects are important in the texts of both poets, personal aspects are also visible. Although most frequently associated with biographical detail in its use of satire or panegyric, autobiographical elements intrude and contribute in the work of both Montagu and Ingram. The blurring of biographical and autobiographical is most notable in Ingram's poetry. This not only allows Ingram to make claims to an estate and associated dynasty which legitimated

¹⁹² Gerrard, *Patriot Opposition*, p. 74.

her social position, it also gives her an opportunity to overlay a later political rhetoric onto an earlier politically inflected design. This may be understood as a reflection of a changing political climate or a personal, and politically informed, comment by Ingram herself.

Montagu, Ingram and Pope are seen by many critics to belong to a final flourish of country house poetry before either the refocusing of poetry to other matters and concerns in response to shifting literary and historical contexts or the relocation of country house discourse to the emerging novel.¹⁹³ The apparent disappearance of the genre after the mid-1730s may be linked to a perceived failure of this discourse to oppose or account for the ascendancy of Walpole. Thereafter, oppositional poetic discourse moves away from the landscapes of the country house as a site of political authority, to more georgic and wider landscapes, such as those in Thomson's *The Seasons*.¹⁹⁴ This apparent demise of the country house genre may also reflect Linda Colley's remarks about the shifting focus on the relationship between duties and rights with regard to the common people.¹⁹⁵ The waning of feudally conceived notions of service, *noblesse oblige* and hospitality which this newly reconceptualised relationship entailed may have rendered the central motifs of the discourse irrelevant, if not obsolete. Alternatively, it may have made the genre available for satiric comment, as in Leapor's 'Crumble-Hall', or left it as a residual discourse in regionally published collections, such as Chandler's *The Description of Bath* (1734), published in Bath, or to the expanding periodical press.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ See Kelsall, *Great Good Place*; Hibbard; McBride.

¹⁹⁴ Discussed by Braverman in *Plots and Counterplots*.

¹⁹⁵ Linda Colley, "'What is to be expected from the people?': Civic Virtue and the Common Man in England, 1700-1760", in *Politics, Politeness, and Patriotism. Papers Presented at the Folger Institute Seminar*, ed. by Gordon J. Schochet with P. E. Tatspaugh and C. Brobeck (Washington DC: Folger Institute, 1993), pp. 197-208.

¹⁹⁶ See Aubin, *Topographical Poetry*.

Chapter six

Visiting the country house: generic innovation in Mary Chandler's *A Description of Bath* and Mary Leapor's 'Crumble-Hall'

The previous chapters of this study have examined the texts of women who belong to the upper reaches of early modern society: the aristocracy, the gentry and the wealthy urban landowner. Yet increasingly women from the mercantile or labouring classes were literate, erudite and active writers across a range of genres and publication modes.¹ This chapter will explore two writers who belong to these broad demographic and literary categories. First I shall consider Chandler's *A Description of Bath* (1733) which in its own right forms part of a broader trend for topographical poems depicting and promoting the benefits of the spa town in particular.² However, for the purposes of this chapter, I shall use it to explore and illustrate the emerging contexts of consumerism and tourism. I will, however, focus primarily on Leapor's 'Crumble-Hall' (1751) which has attracted a good deal of critical attention.³ This

¹ In *Virtue of Necessity* Hobby interrogates the wider conditions affecting the writing lives of women stressing the thematic and formal breadth of early modern women's texts as indicative of both constraint and opportunity. See also Valerie Rumbold, 'Social Range of Women's Poetry', pp. 121-139.

² Mary Chandler, *A description of Bath: a poem. In a letter to a friend* (London: J. Roberts, J. Jackson; J. Gray, J. Leake and S. Lobb, 1733) I shall be using the title *A Description of Bath* throughout to denote the 1733 edition and to distinguish it from the slightly amended and extended 1738 edition titled *The description of Bath, a poem. Humbly Inscib'd To Her Royal Highness the Princess Amelia. By Mrs. Mary Chandler. To which are added, several poems by the same author* (London: James Leake, 1738). See also Aubin, *Topographical Poetry*, pp. 174-177; 333-350. Examples of poems depicting a spa town or resort include: Peter Causton, *Tunbridgialia: or, the pleasures of Tunbridge. A poem. In Latin and English heroic verse. Written by Peter Causton Merc.* (Tunbridge Wells, 1705); John Tewkenor, 'The Second Dialogue: Tunbridge-Wells and Place Described' in *Metellus his dialogues the first part, containing a relation of a journey to Tunbridge-Wells: also a description of the Wells and place: with the fourth book of Virgil's Aeneids in English / written under that name, by a gentleman of this nation, sometime gentleman commoner of Christ-Church in Oxford* (London: Thomas Warren, 1693), pp. 41-79; John Byrom, *Tunbridgiale, a poem: being a description of Tunbridge. In a letter to a friend at London. By the Author of My time O ye muses, &c. spectator, vol. VIII.* (London: W. Meadows, 1726).

³ Mary Leapor, 'Crumble-Hall', in *Poems upon Several Occasions. By the late Mrs. Leapor, of Brackley in Northamptonshire. The second and last volume* (London: J. Roberts, 1751), pp. 111-122. A version of my reading of Leapor's poem is published as, 'Visiting the Country House: Generic Innovation in Mary Leapor's "Crumble-Hall."' *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 34.1, (2015), 51-64.

scholarship does not, as I shall argue, always reveal the sophisticated ways in which Leapor engages with the country house genre, especially the new contexts to which it needs to respond and adapt. I shall also argue that the emphasis on collecting is also suggestive of a rhetorical aspect of the country house poem, which 'collects' a variety of objects, spaces and vistas within its composite picture.

By the eighteenth century the country house genre also reflects a change in emphasis from the house as a socio-political space associated with the governance of an aristocratic elite, to one more closely reflecting domestic life and the experience of a broader range of individuals:

The country-house poem occupies the uneasy, shifting ground between the popular, residual and communal ideology and a more egalitarian, emerging bourgeois novel of the mid-eighteenth century.⁴

Although the extent of this shift may be overplayed, it draws attention to the country house as an increasingly domestic, smaller, private space and one which is recognisable in 'Crumble-Hall' and other poems of the period.⁵ Richard Gwinnett's 'Bereford: a Poem' (1731) is a conventional country house poem, but contains an extended description of the interior of the house:

Ascending Steps, into the Hall you come,
That noble spacious, and delightful Room;
Where State, and just Proportion both conspire,
To make the nicest Architect admire.
Fretwork Above, and Painting exquisite;
Below, Italian Marble charms the Sight,
And Windows double row'd admit the Morning Light
[...]
In Order duly plac'd, you next behold
Gay Rooms of State, and Walls of shining Gold:
Rooms so delightful and convenient too,
They doubly please upon a stricter View;
Which makes it here impossible to tell,
Whether their Use or Ornament excell:⁶

⁴ Jenkins, *Feigned Commonwealths*, p. 12.

⁵ McGuire, 'The Cavalier Country-House Poem'.

⁶ Richard Gwinnett, 'Bereford: a Poem,' in *Pylades and Corinna: or, memoirs of the lives, amours, and writings of Richard Gwinnett Esq; Of Great Shurdington in Gloucester shire; and Mrs. Elizabeth Thomas Junr. Of Great Russel Street, Bloomsbury. Containing, the letters and other miscellaneous pieces, in Prose and Verse, which passed between them during a courtship of above sixteen years. Faithfully published from their Original Manuscripts. Attested By Sir Edward Northey, Knight. To which is prefixed, The life of Corinna. Written by her self.* Vol. 1 (London, 1731), pp. 153-176 (p. 163; 165).

With all these shifts, the interior spaces and objects become far more prominent in country house poems as the eighteenth century progresses.

While this idea of space is important to the country house poem, with the text's form defined by its attention to a particular topography and structure that gestures to the estate's owners, this concern with place and the individual is balanced by something broader. Indeed, the significance of the genre in the eighteenth century more generally lies not only in its depiction of space and property, but also in its ability to allow for the consideration of detail and specificity alongside wider socio-political discussion – to once again accommodate multiple perspectives, multiple ways of seeing. It is this multiplicity, or multi-valency, inherent to the country house poem, which I will argue, is at the heart of 'Crumble-Hall'; by paying attention to the ways in which Leapor utilises this multi-valency I will offer a corrective to recent criticism, which has focused on the dissonance between Leapor's poem and the conventions of the country house poem. In what follows, I will argue that 'Crumble-Hall' is not so much a satiric undercutting of the country house genre, but a playful and inventive exploration of the possibilities – and limitations – of the form

The country house poem: a shift in focus

By the time Leapor (1722-1746) wrote 'Crumble-Hall', the country house poem had been used to respond to a range of different events or contexts across more than a century. Some of these events were, as this study has demonstrated, inflected by individual biographical details, such as personal circumstance, gender or location; yet many country house poems and the broader discourse related to them are pertinent to a much wider readership or cohort of writers. Much of the critical commentary relating to the country house poem discusses the contexts and poetry of the seventeenth century, when the genre emerged, despite the fact that the country estate remained 'a potent symbol of class relations and domestic ideology in

eighteenth- and nineteenth-century British literature.⁷ By the mid-eighteenth century both the ideal and reality of feudal-style hospitality, which is so central to and visible in seventeenth-century examples, had all but disappeared, to be replaced in the genre by the fashion for collecting curios, art and furniture, and the related phenomena of consumerism.⁸ All of these developments were, as Barbara Benedict and Wilson and Mackley demonstrate, increasingly important cultural and economic trends from the beginning of the eighteenth century, reflecting much wider socio-economic shifts towards an urban or urban-orientated society, increasingly able to afford and access consumer goods, works of art and books.⁹ It was also a society which was interested in consumption more widely: as a leisure activity in its own right and as an impetus to visit estates where commissioned pieces and collections could be viewed alongside improved landscapes and modish architectural projects.

Not only could broader sections of society afford newly available luxuries, it was increasingly seen as economically essential: 'rectitude and thrift had no need for a market economy' but as Roy Porter explains, the new free market needed customers.¹⁰ For Porter this conspicuous consumption was closely linked to the acquisition of power and prestige, despite the widespread and long-standing appeals from church, government and society more broadly to reject greed and ostentation.¹¹ These exhortations are certainly important to earlier examples of the genre which challenge luxury and display. Nonetheless, the shift in the economic model is eventually reflected in country house poetry, with ostentation allowable if not actually

⁷ Elizabeth Veisz, 'Writing the Eighteenth-Century Household: Leapor, Austen, and the Old Feudal Spirits,' *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, 30.1 (2011), 71-91, (p. 71).

⁸ An exception to this is Chandler's 'To Mrs. Stephens', in *The description of Bath*, pp. 51-56. Valerie Rumbold, 'The Alienated Insider: Mary Leapor in "Crumble Hall"', *British Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 19 (1996), 63-76 (pp. 65-66). Jon Stobart, explores the development of consumerism in the regions of England in 'Leisure and Shopping in the Small Towns of Georgian England: A Regional Approach', *Journal of Urban History*, 31.4 (2005), 479-503.

⁹ Barbara Benedict, "'The 'Curious Attitude'" in Eighteenth-Century Britain: Observing and Owning', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 14 (1990), 59-98; Wilson and Mackley, *English Country House* and Peter Borsay, 'Introduction', in *The Eighteenth-Century Town 1688-1820*, ed. by Peter Borsay (Harlow: Longman, 1990), pp. 1-38.

¹⁰ Roy Porter, 'Enlightenment and Pleasure', *Pleasure in the Eighteenth-Century*, ed. by Roy Porter and Marie Mulvey Roberts (London: Macmillan, 1996), pp. 1-18, (p. 6). This view of consumerism as an essential component of a free-market economy is theorized by Bernard Mandeville in *The Fable of the Bees: or Private Vices, Public Benefits* (1714).

¹¹ Porter, 'Enlightenment and Pleasure', p. 5.

privileged. Røstvig explores this at length with reference to the *beatus ille* tradition, explaining it as a shift from Stoic austerity to Epicureanism.¹² Certainly the emergence of an economy reliant on consumer goods and leisure prompted widespread concern exemplified by Montagu's essay on the female consumer and the trade in luxury imported fabrics.¹³ Partially this anxiety may be explained by the implied social mobility of emerging 'middle-class' customers, who, as Janet E. Mullins explains, thus 'established themselves as consuming members of a polite society.'¹⁴ The retail trade in clothing and items, such as millinery, were especially important in allowing this social transformation to occur:

The new sophisticated urban economy can be seen as a munitions factory in the pursuit of status. When milliners, drapers, mercers, jewellers, and so forth, dispensed their luxury products, it is hard to imagine their customers were unaware of the uses to which they could put their purchases.¹⁵

These anxieties may also relate to the gender of the purchaser; for Neil McKendrick women were 'the paradigmatic consumers of fashionable goods' who prompted the "consumer revolution" of the mid-eighteenth century.¹⁶ McKendrick's analysis of consumerism as gendered activity is, however, challenged by others, including Vickery, who asserts that 'men were as acquisitive as women.'¹⁷ What is perhaps pertinent with regard to a broader social concern is the increasing freedom many women had to participate in shopping as an economic activity. Yet, equally concerning to many was

¹² Røstvig, *The Happy Man*.

¹³ Mary Wortley Montagu, 'The Nonsense of Common-sense. Friday, December 16, 1737' in *Essays and Poems*, ed. by Halsband and Grundy, pp. 106-7.

¹⁴ Janet E. Mullins, 'Cards on the Table: The Middling Sort as Suppliers and Consumers in the Eighteenth Century', *Canadian Journal of History*, 45.1 (2010), 49-81, (p. 52).

¹⁵ Peter Borsay, 'The development of provincial urban culture c. 1680-1760' in *The Eighteenth-Century Town: A Reader in English Urban History, 1688-1820*, ed. by Peter Borsay (Harlow: Longman, 1990), pp. 159-187 (p. 177).

¹⁶ Neil McKendrick, 'The Consumer Revolution of Eighteenth Century England' in, *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England*, ed. by Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J.H. Plumb (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), pp. 9-33 (p. 25).

¹⁷ Amanda Vickery, 'His and Hers: Gender, Consumption and Household Accounting in Eighteenth-Century England' *Past and Present*, 1. Supplement (2006), 12-38, (p. 15). See also Margot Finn, 'Men's Things: Masculine Possession in the Consumer Revolution' *Social History*, 25.2 (2000), 133-155.

the social aspect of shopping as a process whereby women could meet others in a semi-public space, often beyond the direct control of family members.¹⁸

On one level, of course, these contexts of consumerism and collecting indicate a focus on the country house and its interior spaces and material objects, whether consumer goods or collectables. This is clearly visible in 'Crumble-Hall' and other poems of the period. Indeed, as the house and its contents become increasingly important to the country house genre, the need or desirability for an open and hospitable house wanes.¹⁹ Thus, Fane's 'A peppercorn rent Sent to my Lord Campden for the loan of His House at Kensington' (1651) is an encomium on Campden and his taste regarding furnishings, fittings and art works. Although furniture and other moveable property are still largely absent from Fane's depiction, there is a reference to Campden's collection which Fane can 'survey at ease.' This collection is:

What travellers by land and seas
With toil and trouble seek to gain,
[...]
Nothing within its compass falls
But either on the stairs or walls
Hang trophy like to represent
The figure of each continent;²⁰

In a more conventional vein, Charles Cotton's 'Chatsworth' (1681) retains the idea that interior detail cannot be incorporated into the genre:

For sure a vain and endless work it were
T'insist upon a particular.
And should I be so mad to go about
To give account of everything throughout –
The rooms of state, staircases, galleries,
Lodgings, apartments, closets, offices;
Or to describe the splendours undertake
Which every glorious room a heaven make,
The picture, sculpture, carving, graving, gilding –
T'would be as long in writing as in building.²¹

¹⁸ Stobart, 'Leisure and Shopping', p. 487; Helen Berry, 'Polite Consumption: Shopping in Eighteenth-Century England', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 12 (2002), 375-394, (p. 379).

¹⁹ Aubin, *Topographical Poetry*, p. 26.

²⁰ Mildmay Fane, 'A peppercorn rent Sent to my Lord Campden for the loan of His House at Kensington, 9 February, 1651' in *The Country House Poem*, ed. Fowler, pp. 235-245.

²¹ Charles Cotton, 'Chatsworth' in *The Country House Poem*, ed. Fowler, pp. 373-382.

However, the poem also points out the changing nature of the country house as a site of increasingly large and diverse collections of paintings and curios and as a stage for newly bought or commissioned furniture.²² These, in turn, attracted the tourism associated with country house visiting to which Leapor explicitly refers through the role of her speaker. With this shift, of course, the house also becomes the site of possible satire, since taste in furniture and art was now an index of discrimination in a similar way to what architecture and landscaping had been previously.

Mary Chandler and the development of the spa town.

Collecting and consumerism were also coincident with, and important for, the development of a tourist trade, which included the newly developed leisure industry found in numerous spa towns and a trend for country house visiting by tourists not linked to an estate by family or friendship ties.²³ The broader taste for travel is visible in, and potentially responsible for, Chandler's *A Description of Bath*.²⁴ Chandler (1687-1745) was the daughter of a dissenting clergyman and was largely self-educated. She remained unmarried, claiming that a childhood accident had left her unsuited to marriage and that she was reliant on her business for economic survival.²⁵ She was a

²² In Chandler's poem 'To Mrs. Stephens' we glimpse the interior of a Sodb'ry House, Gloucestershire which is conventionally of 'Wide Dimension, well proportion'd Height, / With pleasing Awe command and charm the Sight.' Once inside the house the poetic voice points out the artwork. Chandler, *The Description* (1738), pp. 51-56, lines, 31-32. All subsequent references to this poem will be cited parenthetically by line number.

²³ Borsay locates the start of a discernible tourist trade in Bath to the last decade of the seventeenth century. 'Provincial urban culture', p. 161.

²⁴ Chandler, *Description of Bath* (1733). I shall be using this first edition throughout; subsequent references will be cited parenthetically by line number. David E. Shuttleton notes that the poem was re-titled in 1734 when the poem was addressed to Princess Amelia and by 1767 had been republished eight times. Later editions included some additional poems which are mostly occasional in nature. Shuttleton, 'Mary Chandler's *Description of Bath* (1733): the poetic topographies of an Augustan tradeswoman', *Women's Writing*, 7.3 (2000), 447-467. Later research by Shuttleton and Sarah Prescott finds that an earlier version of the poem appeared in *Ralph's Miscellany* in 1729: 'Mary Chandler, Elizabeth Rowe, and "Ralph's Miscellany": Coincidental Biographical and Bibliographic Findings', *Notes and Queries*, 48.1 (2001), 31-34. For biographical detail see Shuttleton, 'Mary Chandler's *Description of Bath*' and *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets*, ed. by Lonsdale, pp. 151-152.

²⁵ Linda Veronika Troost, 'Geography and Gender: Mary Chandler and Alexander Pope', in *Pope, Swift and Women Writers*, ed. by Donald C. Mell (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996), pp. 67-85 (p. 67-68).

milliner whose topographical poetry reflects the broad scope of the clientele of her business located opposite the Pump Room in the rapidly expanding area in the centre of Bath.²⁶ Geographically central, Chandler's shop was also in the middle of the expanding leisure industry of the spa town — part health resort, part social venue, part retail centre —and to a network of genteel customers. Helen Berry observes that shops, such as Chandler's, were 'crucial features of the urban landscape, the venues for the interaction of social relationships, leisure and commerce' where shopping became 'the performance of the Addisonian model of politeness.'²⁷ As a milliner and purveyor of small luxury goods, Chandler would have welcomed many wealthy female customers into her shop both to buy goods and to socialize. Amanda Herbert asserts that although associated with male hedonism, as seen in the satirical spa town poems of the late seventeenth century, such spaces as Chandler's shop, were crucial to female socialization.²⁸ These customers would include the wealthy landowners from the estates surrounding Bath, similar to that of Ralph Allen depicted in her text, as well as tourists from outside the area and local residents.²⁹

This clientele is glimpsed in Samuel Chandler's description of Chandler in Robert Shiel's *The Lives of the Poets of Britain and Ireland* (1753):

The hurries of the life into which her circumstances at Bath threw her, sat frequently heavy upon a mind so intirely devoted to books and contemplation [...Bath] too often furnished her with characters in her own sex that were extremely displeasing to her.³⁰

²⁶ Prescott and Shuttleton, 'Mary Chandler', p. 31. For further details on the development of Bath as the premium spa resort see P.J. Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns, 1700-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), pp. 51-65; David Wheeler, 'Jane Austen and Eighteenth-Century English Spa Culture', *English Studies*, 85.2 (2004), 120-133; Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660-1770* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) and R.S. Neale, *Bath 1680-1850: A Social History* (London: Routledge, 1981).

²⁷ Berry, 'Polite Consumption' (p. 377. See also Mullin, 'Cards on the Table'.

²⁸ Amanda E. Herbert, 'Gender and the Spa: Space, Sociability and Self at British Health Spas, 1640-1714', *Journal of Social History* (2009), 361-383 (pp. 362-363).

²⁹ Anne Borsay, 'A middle class in the making: the negotiation of power and status in Bath's early Georgian General Infirmary, c. 1739-65', *Social History*, 24.3 (1999), 267-284 (p. 282).

³⁰ Robert Shiels, *The lives of the poets of Great Britain and Ireland, to the time of Dean Swift. Compiled from ample materials scattered in a variety of books, and especially from the Ms. Notes of the late ingenious Mr. Coxeter and others, collected for this Design, by Mr. Cibber*. Vol. 5 (London: R. Griffiths, 1753), p.346.

David E. Shuttleton argues that her poetry ‘largely confirm[s] her own eagerness to repudiate the world of fashionable female consumption (upon which she was nonetheless economically reliant), and embrace a pious, pastoral retreat.’³¹ This is clearly visible in ‘To Mrs Stephens’ one of several poems added to *A Description of Bath*, in the 1738 edition:

Thou, Sodb’ry House, my lov’d, my sweet Retreat!
And all the beauties, that surround the Seat;
Where Nature smiles in all her fertile Pride (1-3).

In choosing the trope of Horatian retirement wedded to topographical depiction, the poems share many features with the country house poem which are predicated on the distinction between country and city environments.³² However, despite the negative attitude suggested by her brother’s description, it was clearly in Chandler’s own interest that Bath flourished as a retail and cultural centre.³³ Unlike her contemporary and acquaintance Rowe, Chandler cannot afford to renounce the world in the manner of classical retirement or subscribe wholly to the idea that ‘the ability to prefer contemplative solitude to urban depravity is the chief touchstone of moral excellence.’³⁴ Whilst Chandler may have liked to be able to engage in the contemplative aspects of retirement championed by Rowe and many other poets of the period, her reliance on an urban business is clearly and somewhat ruefully expressed in ‘My Wish’:

Would Heav’n indulgent grant my Wish
For future Life, it should be this:
Health, Peace, and Friendship I would share:
A mind from Bus’ness free, and Care;
A soil that’s dry in temp’rate Air;
A fortune from Incumbrance clear,
About a Hundred Pounds a Year;
A House not small, built warm and neat,

³¹ Shuttleton, ‘Mary Chandler’s *Description of Bath*’, p. 451.

³² Several of the poems in the later edition of *A Description of Bath*, which included additional poems, are clearly operating in the conventions of the genre. Most notable are: ‘To Mrs Stephens’, pp. 51-56; ‘My Wish’, pp. 65-67; ‘On Mr. B——’s Garden. To Mrs. S——’, pp. 70-72; ‘To Mrs. Jacob, On her Seat call’d The Rocks, in Gloucestershire’, pp. 73-75. See Røstvig, *The Happy Man*, vol. 2, pp. 89-139.

³³ As R.S. Neale observes, Bath did indeed flourish with a new commercialized leisure industry as and the pre-existing reputation as a centre for medical treatments: Neale, ‘Bath: ideology and utopia 1700-1760’, in *The Eighteenth-Century Town: A Reader in English Urban History 1688-1820*, ed. by Peter Borsay (Harlow: Longman, 1990), pp. 223-242 (p. 227).

³⁴ Røstvig, *Happy Man*, vol. 2, p. 109.

Above a Hut, below a Seat;
With Groups of Trees beset around.³⁵

These longings for retreat notwithstanding, *A Description of Bath* has more pragmatic concerns. It functions as an advertisement for the town, and, as Elizabeth Child points out, the publisher James Leake, to whose premises Chandler devotes a whole stanza of the second and subsequent editions, had much to gain from its circulation. Accordingly, Leake was closely associated with seven editions of the poem.³⁶ It is also, however, a means of promoting her own millinery business by skilfully using the panegyric mode of the country house genre to emphasise the social aspect of her own business premises in a manner reminiscent of a country house. In turn, this serves to influence the wealthiest of her customers both as potential millinery and literary customers and potential patrons.³⁷

Passages from Chandler's poem were frequently used to supply images to fix Bath in the eighteenth century consumer and tourist's consciousness as the premier spa town in England.³⁸ Despite a well established reputation as a health resort and centre for leisure, the tourist trade was not necessarily assured and was liable to fluctuations due to weather, harvest and war.³⁹ The need to sell Bath in this way was

³⁵ Chandler, *The Description of Bath* (1738), pp. 65-67, lines 1-10.

³⁶ Elizabeth Child, "'To Sing the Town': Women, Place, and Print Culture in Eighteenth-Century Bath", *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, 28 (1999), 155-172 (p. 158). The stanza in question is as follows: 'But see thro' yonder Door a safe Retreat; / These rest secure, amidst the Wise and Great: / Heroes of ancient, an of modern Song, / The bending Shelves in comely order throng. / Hither, ye Nymphs, attend the leading Muse, / With her the Labours of the Wise peruse; / Their Maxims learn, their Precepts be your Guide, / Think virtuous Knowledge Woman's truest Pride: / One Hour thus spent, more solid Joys shall give, / Than the gay Idler knows, or Fools conceive.' *The Description of Bath* (1738), lines 265-274. Leake's shop is clearly identified by a footnote.

³⁷ Although the publication details of the 1733 edition and the first expanded edition of 1738 give London as the place of publication, both editions are clearly marked as products of Bath with two of the booksellers, J. Leake and S. Lobb, identified as 'Booksellers in Bath.'

³⁸ As Corfield notes, the customers attracted to Bath were in the first half of the eighteenth century drawn largely from the South of England due to limitations in infrastructure. The competition for customers facing Bath was predominately from the spa towns located around London: Islington, Streatham, Epsom, Dulwich, Hampstead, and, slightly further afield, Tonbridge Wells. Despite their convenience, these towns could eventually not compete with the diversity of facilities and the fashionable society offered by Bath. The development of Bath as a retail centre was also facilitated by the canalization of the Avon from 1727. *The Impact of English Towns*, pp. 51-65. See also Borsay, 'Provincial urban culture', p. 173 and Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town, 1660-1770* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), p. 32.

³⁹ Neale, 'Ideology and utopia', p. 227.

also perhaps more pressing prior to the first guidebook published in 1742.⁴⁰ Chandler's economic and literary activity there was concurrent with the tenure of its most famous master of Ceremonies, Richard 'Beau' Nash. Nash did much to define and develop the social activity associated with the 'season' and Chandler celebrates this newly fashionable resort as the epitome of genteel society, reflecting her ideal customer. The poem opens with a survey of its history, taking pains to emphasise its classical pedigree: 'The Romans well this ancient Story knew, / Minerva's Statues their Devotion drew' (27-28). This is followed by an evaluation of its natural benefits:

Bless'd Source of Health! Seated on rising Ground
With Friendly Hills by Nature guarded round;
From Eastern Blasts and sultry South secure
The Air's balsamic, and the Soil is pure. (70-73)

From line 103 onwards Chandler presents eighteenth-century Bath as she knew it, or rather as she might like it to appear to prospective tourists and the wealthy regional population. Chandler starts with the Abbey and as the section progresses, it sounds increasingly like a tourist guide:

Rich Colourings on the Windows charm the Sight,
Through which the Morning, sheds a solemn Light.
The Marble's Altar's with rich Paintings grac'd,
And near, Dead Saints in Effigie are plac'd (135-138).

Alongside the antiquarian interests of the Abbey, Chandler presents the facilities at the Baths.⁴¹ These offer the tourist health benefits which can be tempered by the leisure activities at the 'stately Rooms for Pleasure' or newly built Assembly Rooms:⁴²

⁴⁰ Wheeler, 'English Spa Culture', p. 121. In 1742 John Wood, Bath's most notable architect of the period published *An essay towards a description of the city of Bath. In two parts. Wherein its antiquity is ascertained: its situation, mineral waters, and British works described: the antient works in its neighbourhood, the Gods, places of worship, religion and learning of the Britons occasionally consider'd: the rise of the British druids demonstrated: the devastations committed by the Romans at Bath, their encamping on the hot-waters, and their turning their camp into a city fully set forth: and the works of the Saxons, and their successors briefly related. Illustrated with thirteen octavo plates, engrev'd by Mr. Pine. By John Wood, architect* (Bath: W. Frederick, 1742). This covers all the aspects of Chandler's text but at great length. This text acknowledges Chandler's contribution to the reputation of Bath as a centre for health, p. 18.

⁴¹ There were three baths in operation by mid-century: the King's Bath for invalids; the Queen's Bath for ladies; and the Cross Gate Bath for mixed, but regulated, bathing. See Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns*, p. 53. A first-hand account of the baths is given in Celia Fiennes, *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes*, ed. by Christopher Morris (London: Cresset, 1947), pp. 18-20.

Where Musick warbles and the dancers bound,
While the high Roof re-echoes to the Sound,
And some new Beauty's Health is toasted round (192-195).

This leisure activity, so important to Bath's charms, sits at the centre of Chandler's poem with the triplet drawing attention to three interrelated aspects of its sociability: dancing, music and refreshment.

Chandler goes on to depict two more of Bath's more famous attractions, namely its status as a marriage market where 'blooming Virgins kindle am'rous Fires' (196) and its gaming tables: 'Th'important Business of the Fair, Quadrille / Employs those hours that dancing cannot kill' (200-201). Mullins argues that gaming was a significant and lucrative part of the leisure industry of the spa towns as they developed throughout the eighteenth century, replacing the country estate as a key venue for such activity.⁴³ It was not, however, an association which escaped the attention of the satirists, nor did the attendant vice of prostitution.⁴⁴ This was noted early in the development of the spa as a leisure resort with *A Mornings Ramble: OR, Islington Wells Burlesqt* an early example:

To ease my Pain, and take the Air,
I did to *Islington* Repair;
Where every Whore, and every Rogue,
Meet at the *Wells* so much in Vogue:
Resolving with my self to stay,
And drive an Hour or two away.
I entred in, and viewed the Place,
With every squeamish Breeding Face,
Of City Wives, who thither come,
Whilst their poor *Cuckolds* wait at Home.⁴⁵

The physical shift from country estate to town of many leisure activities was coincident with the 'commercialization of polite leisure' which increased accessibility by reducing its price and increasing the supply.⁴⁶ This phase in development is described by J.H.

⁴² The first Assembly Rooms in Bath were built in 1708 by Harrison. See Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns*, pp. 54-57.

⁴³ Mullins, 'Cards on the table', p. 50. See also Neale, 'Ideology and utopia', p. 225.

⁴⁴ Herbert, 'Gender at the Spa', p. 361.

⁴⁵ Anon, *A Mornings Ramble: OR, Islington Wells Burlesqt* (London: George Croom, 1684), lines 5-14. In a similar vein is John Wilmot, Lord Rochester's 'Tunbridge-Wells, a satyr', *Poems on several occasions. By the R.H. the E. of R.* (London: A.B., 1712), pp. 152-158.

⁴⁶ Borsay, 'Introduction', p. 35.

Plumb as a 'transitional stage between private and fully public entertainment.'⁴⁷ However, despite the reputation of Bath for a disregard of social hierarchies – what Peter Borsay regards as 'controlled contexts in which people of different persuasions could mix together,' the fashionable venues operated a *de facto* admissions policy based on social and financial criteria.⁴⁸ According to Shuttleton, Chandler's *A Description of Bath* participates in this:

A historically, politically and indeed gender-specific ideological intervention in so far as it actively constructs an ethically prescriptive topography of sociability, portraying Bath as a model landscape for the enactment of an emerging Enlightenment ideal of civilised, consumerist pleasure.⁴⁹

The social institutions of Bath were, then, similar in function and disposition of space to the country estate, and Chandler's topographical poem shares many features with the country house genre.

Yet the text ultimately turns away from the heady atmosphere of Bath's Assembly Rooms and the private entertainments, which threaten to appal young women's 'Cheeks with Fear, or [redden] them with Hope', to the more salubrious scenes from the hills surrounding Bath. As important as the urban passages are to offering a tantalising picture of Bath, whether as an Enlightenment ideal or hardnosed business proposition, the poem derives authority from the prospect position offered by the hills:

A cool Recess, the Muses chosen Seat,
From Crouds, the empty Noise a blest Retreat!
The lovely Landskip, and the Silver Stream
Inspire the Poet, and present the Theme (217-220).

These environs of Bath are also the location of the 'Seats unnumbered' ('To Mrs Stephens', 68), homes of some of the most important of Chandler's and the town's customers. Readers of Chandler's poem would have no doubt recognised features of their own gardening aspirations in the topography of the poem: the use of pastoral elements to allude to classical learning and the foundations of nearby Bath; the use of

⁴⁷ J.H. Plumb, 'The Commercialization of Leisure in Eighteenth-Century England', in *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England*, ed. by McKendrick, Brewer and Plumb (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982), pp. 266-288 (p. 282-3).

⁴⁸ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 279.

⁴⁹ Shuttleton, 'Mary Chandler's *Description of Bath*', p. 452.

a prospect view to project authority and the rejection of the formality of earlier garden designs, exemplified by garden writers, such as Switzer and Nourse. Without this patronage of metropolitan, local and rural grandees, Bath's status would have been diminished in this early phase of its development.⁵⁰

Last, and most notable in Chandler's promotion of Bath as a centre of economic, social and literary activity, is the closing section of the poem, devoted to a description of nearby Prior Park, the home to local entrepreneur Allen.⁵¹ Prior Park was designed by John Wood, architect of many of Bath's most important buildings, for the owner of the quarry where most of the stone to build Bath originated.⁵² As Shuttleton observes, this estate itself functioned as an elaborate advertisement for the town.⁵³ Working in a mode similar to Pope's *Epistle to Burlington*, Chandler's description of Prior Park presents its owner as a model of aesthetic and civic virtue:

These Works shall tell thy Praise to Latest Times.
Prophetic here the Muse shall build thy Seat,
Great like thy Soul, in ev'ry Part compleat! (231-233)

Crucially, however, the building works of Bath seen from this prospect point must serve Chandler as a model of Prior Park, since the house was at this point unfinished and the garden unlandscaped: the poem is thus 'prophetic' and Chandler accordingly uses the conditional tense.⁵⁴ In the later poem 'On Mr. B——'s Garden. To Mrs. S.', Chandler returns to a similar theme:

A Palace, Centre of the Garden Stands,
No common structure rear'd by vulgar Hands
But shews a Master's Skill, a Work complete
And speaks the Founder's Name and Fortune Great
The Stately Front commands th'admiring View;
Grand in its Design, and its Proportion true:
No costly Folly, no expensive Waste;
Strong, but not heavy; noble, but not vast;

⁵⁰ Corfield, *Impact of English Towns*, p. 57.

⁵¹ Prior Park was in the process of being built on Allen's estate at Widcombe when Chandler's poem was written. Shuttleton, 'Mary Chandler's *Description of Bath*', p. 454. For biographical details on Allen see Troost, 'Geography and Gender', p. 69.

⁵² Borsay, 'Provincial urban culture', p. 171. As Chandler's poem also makes clear, Allen was responsible for the Cross post which allowed an improved postal service to and from Bath, lines 267-269. See Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 34.

⁵³ Shuttleton, 'Mary Chandler's *Description of Bath*', p. 454.

⁵⁴ Troost, 'Geography and Gender', pp. 67-69.

Finish'd with Judgement, furnish'd with a taste⁵⁵

As this poem continues she converts the aesthetic discrimination into civic philanthropy:

But here true Happiness is understood,
The noble manly Joy of doing Good;
Here sterling Truth, calm Temperance, and Love,
Lead from these Pleasing Scenes to those above (28-31)

In the process, she effectively eliminates the need for charity by drawing a line between taste and good works.⁵⁶

The passage, which imaginatively constructs Prior Park, also explores the trope of retirement claimed by Chandler across her texts. As Røstvig argues, by this point in the eighteenth century, the Horatian tradition had modulated into one which negotiated the commercial and political realities of the time. Retirement for Addison and other commentators is not an indulgent or solitary activity, but a public and moral duty.⁵⁷ The appeal of the *beatus vir*, however, transcended Whig philosophy and attracted all political and religious allegiances in the same way that the trope of retirement was not the sole property of Royalists or Anglicans in the mid-seventeenth century.⁵⁸ Where the leisure activities of Bath offered its tourists and local residents the chance to enact an Addisonian model of politeness, Allen's estate represents the landscape ideal, *concordia discors*:

On this fair Eminence the Fabric stands,
The finish'd Labour of a thousand Hands,
The Hill, the Dale, the River, Groves, and Fields,
Vary the Landskip which thy Prospect yields (234-237).

⁵⁵ Chandler, *The Description of Bath* (1738), pp. 70-72, lines 1-11. All subsequent references to this poem will be cited parenthetically by line number. The Mr B of the title may be the husband of the Mrs Boteler mentioned in the poem in the same edition 'To Mrs Boteler. A description of her Garden', pp. 28-31. The two poems show comparable artistic ideals and present a similar horticultural description.

⁵⁶ Shuttleton, 'Mary Chandler's *Description of Bath*', pp. 454-455; Williams, *Country and the City*, p. 59

⁵⁷ Røstvig, *Happy Man*, Vol. 2, pp. 15-17. See also Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, 'The True use of Retirement and Study. To The Right Honourable Lord Bathurst' in *Letters on the study and use of history. By the late Right Honourable Henry St. John, Lord Viscount Bolingbroke* (Dublin: John Smith, 1752), pp. 148-177. The latter text was published sometime earlier but was still current by 1730s as there were ten subsequent editions.

⁵⁸ Røstvig, *Happy Man*, Vol. 2, p 20.

This mirrors '[t]he Park, the Grove, the Terras, and the Greens; / Fountains, Canals, Cascades form tow'ring Slopes' offered at Mr B——'s estate (13-14). There are also echoes of a similar but clearly Popean aesthetic in Chandler's *Description*:

Thy taste refin'd appears in yonder Wood,
Nor Nature tortur'd, but by Art improv'd
Here cover'd Walks with open Vistos meet,
An Area here, and there a shady Seat (242-245)

These virtues visible in both poems, however, demonstrate a shift downwards demographically from the aristocratic norm of the country house genre; Allen is shown clearly as a business man and entrepreneur responsible for both the material and cultural foundations of Bath. Many of Chandler's other addressees are most likely from the gentry or mercantile classes. A similar devolutionary shift is visible in Leapor's 'Crumble-Hall' although, as we shall see, Leapor's text offers a more complex and critical analysis of such demographic changes.

Mary Leapor

Attention to form and genre is essential to reaching a more nuanced understanding of 'Crumble-Hall.'⁵⁹ The poem has attracted a considerable proportion of the critical interest shown recently in female or labouring-class poets of the eighteenth century.⁶⁰ Much of that criticism, however, is characterised by a persistent attention to Leapor's biography, often to the exclusion of other equally pertinent aspects of the poem.⁶¹ As a result, the broader social and political implications of the country house genre are

⁵⁹ I shall be using the text from the original publication in *Poems upon Several Occasions. By the late Mrs. Leapor, of Brackley in Northamptonshire. The second and last volume* (London: J. Roberts, 1751), pp. 111-122. Subsequent references to this poem will be indicated parenthetically by line number.

⁶⁰ Aside from Donna Landry's *The Muses of Resistance: Laboring-Class Women's Poetry in Britain, 1739-1796* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) important studies of Leapor's work include Richard Greene, *Mary Leapor: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Women's Poetry* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993); Caryn Chaden, 'Mentored from the Page: Mary Leapor's Relationship with Alexander Pope', in *Pope, Swift and Women Writers*, ed. Donald C. Mell (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1996), pp. 31-47 and Susan Goulding, 'Reading "Mira's Will": The Death of Mary Leapor and the Life of the Persona', *Modern Language Studies* 42.3 (2002), 69-89.

⁶¹ Goulding, 'Life of the Persona', p. 69. This is a broader problem for the study of labouring class poets. See Donna Landry and William J. Christmas, 'Introduction', *Criticism*, 47.4 (2005), 413-420.

not recognised by many readings of 'Crumble-Hall', which locate the impetus for Leapor's adaptations of the genre in personal circumstances. These include Leapor's dismissal from Edgcote House by the Chauncy family, the phenomenon of enclosure in her native Northamptonshire, and her more positive experience as a female servant for the Jennens family at Weston⁶². As Susan Goulding points out, Leapor 'demonstrates a paradox of women's literary history in general: we probably would not know much if any of Leapor's work were it not for the biographical apparatus, but that same apparatus has qualified attention to Leapor as a poet.'⁶³ I accept that biographical information is pertinent, especially in a reading of 'Crumble-Hall,' our understanding of which would be impoverished without the information about Leapor's background and employment at the Weston and Edgcote estates. I would contend, however, that the critical consensus over the poem's satirical or otherwise unconventional features is based less on close attention to the generic principles of the country house poem, or to the use of genre in 'Crumble-Hall', than on biographical details.

The problem of biography is not only one for women writers but may also limit the account of labouring class poets of both genders. *The Magazine of Magazines* from April 1751 included an advertisement for the second volume of poetry by Leapor. This promised

the native wood-notes wild of Molly Leapor [...] being the daughter of a gardener at Brackley in Northamptonshire, and unassisted by art and culture, was indebted for most of her sentiments and poetry to the strength of her own genius.⁶⁴

⁶² Aside from the texts noted above, important readings of "Crumble-Hall" include Donna Landry, 'Mary Leapor Laughs at the Fathers: Reading "Crumble Hall"', in *British Literature 1640-1789: A Critical Reader*, ed. Robert Demaria Jr. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), pp. 218-232; Landry, 'The Labouring-Class Woman Poets: "Hard Labour we most chearfully pursue"', in *Women and Poetry 1660-1750*, ed. Sarah Prescott and David E. Shuttleton (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp.223-243; Valerie Rumbold, 'Mary Leapor (1722-46): Menial Labour and Poetic Aspirations', in *Women and Poetry 1660-1750*, ed. by Sarah Prescott and David E. Shuttleton (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), pp. 88-94; Vassiliki Markidou, "'And let the grove, if not the parlour stand": Home, Memory and Gender in Mary Leapor's "Crumble-Hall"', *Home Cultures*, 6 (2009), 163-178; Jeannie Dalporto, 'Landscape, Labor, and the Ideology of Improvement in Mary Leapor's "Crumble-Hall"', *The Eighteenth Century*, 42 (2001), 228-244; Veisz, 'Writing the Eighteenth-Century Household'; David Fairer, 'Mary Leapor, "Crumble-Hall"', in *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, ed. Christine Gerrard (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), pp. 223-236.

⁶³ Goulding, 'Life of the Persona', p. 71.

⁶⁴ Heidi Van de Veire, 'A note on Mary Leapor's reputation,' *Notes and Queries* 44.2 (1997), 205-206.

As with Bridget Freemantle's carefully worded preface, this stresses her natural talent, her untimely death and her lowly status.⁶⁵ This 'creates a character from Leapor's life', which frequently cannot always be supported by historical fact. However, this persona is used to construct her as a representative of her gender and class in ways which are not necessarily reflected in her poetry. This paradox ultimately sees the elision of person with persona in ways which obscures the role of poetic speaker. As Goulding cautions, we need to think more carefully about the construction of the poetic persona Mira, rather than the promotion of Leapor as labouring-class poet.⁶⁶

The critical reliance on biographical information risks leaving unchallenged the contemporary, and crucially posthumous, presentation of Leapor's work as that of 'a young unassisted genius' and daughter of a gardener.⁶⁷ This presentation suggests a limited engagement with genre and form that, to some extent, has been accepted by recent critics at face value. Bridget Keegan's comment offers a rare corrective, when she observes that Leapor, like other 'labouring-class poets [,] responded to mainstream poetic conventions. [... She] worked within them but also transformed them.'⁶⁸ A failure to acknowledge and critically engage with these aspects of Leapor's work risks accepting at face value the contemporary literary persona created for her by Bridget Freemantle in her prefatory essay 'To the Reader.' Similarly, many readings of 'Crumble-Hall' focus on gender and Leapor's labouring-class origins to frame their analysis. Vassiliki Markidou, for example, starts her argument by emphasising Leapor's lowly station as well as her lack of education and employment.⁶⁹ Whilst I do not seek necessarily to challenge those readings which privilege biographical detail or a concern with forms of identity, I would argue that these factors can, when weighed too heavily, obscure the extent to which Leapor may be engaging with broader issues and literary forms rather than her own personal circumstances.

⁶⁵ Richard Greene and Ann Messenger note the promotion of Leapor as natural genius by Freemantle, Jennens and others. *The Works of Mary Leapor*, ed. Richard Greene and Ann Messenger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. xvi.

⁶⁶ Goulding, 'Life of the Persona', p. 83; 87.

⁶⁷ Bridget Freemantle, 'To the Reader', in *Poems upon Several Occasions*, unpaginated.

⁶⁸ Bridget Keegan, 'Rural Poetry and the Self-Taught Tradition', in *A Companion to Eighteenth-Century Poetry*, ed. Christine Gerrard (Oxford: Blackwell, 2006), 563-576, (p. 563).

⁶⁹ Markidou, 'Home, Memory and Gender', p. 164.

An emphasis on biographical contexts does not adequately account for Leapor as a poet, producing readings that are limited in coverage or take a polemical stance that cannot always be sustained by the very biography claimed as a starting point. Rumbold is at pains to make this very point, arguing that to read 'Crumble-Hall' in this way might 'import into 'Crumble-Hall' biographical and social factors which Leapor chooses to exclude from the text.'⁷⁰ Most notable in this regard is Landry's reading in *The Muses of Resistance*, which foregrounds Leapor as a radical spokesperson for both her gender and her social class.⁷¹ Whilst we can be sure she left her employment at Edgcote House, we can only surmise how Leapor may have responded to this event. In the same way, we may accept Freemantle's claim that she had only a limited number of books in her possession at her death, but this fact does not preclude her accessing books from the library at Weston Hall or borrowing them from Freemantle.⁷² Although readings that underplay Leapor's education certainly conform to contemporary constructions of her and fit neatly with radical political readings, they do little to explore the formal and generic scope of eighteenth-century women's poetry or of 'Crumble-Hall' as an example of a country house poem.

Such critical analyses of Leapor's poetry illustrate a larger issue of the still-incomplete account of women's literary history. The past quarter of a century has seen a substantial increase in the study of eighteenth-century women writers. Among other things, this work has revealed that, as Backscheider and Ingrassia have claimed, '[women] poets [from this era] are deeply knowledgeable about genre conventions, and in order to express different experiences and responses from those men describe, they blend, mix, and juxtapose poetic kinds.'⁷³ Indeed, a survey of the generic decisions apparent in Leapor's work indicates she was adept in the use and adaptation

⁷⁰ Rumbold, 'The Alienated Insider', p. 63.

⁷¹ Landry, *Muses of Resistance*, pp. 78-119. Landry later asserts (with William J. Christmas) that 'to subordinate if not bury entirely, formal and aesthetic questions in favour of social and political ones is to be once again complicit in tying labouring class writers so tightly to their social difference from polite culture that their achievements cannot be appreciated artistically, but only sociologically.' Landry and Christmas, 'Introduction', p. 414.

⁷² Greene, *Mary Leapor*, pp. 158-178; Landry, 'Labouring-Class Woman Poets', p. 236.

⁷³ *British Women Poets*, ed. by Backscheider and Ingrassia, pp. 296.

of a wide range of genres and verse forms.⁷⁴ Yet this skill in using and adapting existing forms and genres is not necessarily linked to either gender or class, as Backscheider's and Ingrassia's claims (quoted earlier) suggest. Whether this poetic dexterity is used by female poets primarily to explore and express different experiences, or whether the impetus to adapt genre is a specifically female practice, is open to debate. As Colie explains, the importance of genre lies in its complexity and fluidity, which allows the reader to glance the frame or scaffolding onto which the writer was attempting to fix or even distance her text.⁷⁵ Therefore, whilst markers of class or gender are important, an engagement with the ways in which writers like Leapor used literary convention may reveal a great deal about the broader political or satirical contexts in which these writers were interested.

'Crumble-Hall'

Leapor's country house poem 'Crumble-Hall' offers an intriguing tour of a country estate. As readers we accompany the poem's speaker around the house, viewing its delights and treasures much as eighteenth-century tourists accompanied the housekeeper of grand estates on a tour to view new buildings, fashionable décor, and collections of curios acquired on travels in Europe and beyond.⁷⁶ Our tour guide, however, is Mira, not the housekeeper of Crumble Hall, but a housemaid and Leapor's frequent poetic persona. Mira guides us expertly through the building, enthusiastically pointing out the various architectural details and the numerous objects that fill the house. The tour gradually reveals that Crumble Hall is not a conventional grand estate: its architecture is dated, its layout unfit for eighteenth-century living, its contents worn or unloved, and its servants unaccustomed to operating within conventional social boundaries. In keeping with this last quality, readers are given a glimpse of a below-

⁷⁴ Rumbold, 'Mary Leapor', p. 88; Fairer, 'Mary Leapor', p. 223.

⁷⁵ Rosalie Colie, 'Genre-Systems and the Functions of Literature', in *Modern Genre Theory* ed. David Duff (Harlow: Pearson, 2000), pp. 148-166 (pp.152-163).

⁷⁶ Benedict, 'Curious Attitude'; Wilson and Mackley, *English Country House*, pp. 47-108 and Rumbold, 'The Alienated Insider'.

stairs world rarely accorded to either the eighteenth-century tourist or the reader of a country house poem.

It is unsurprising, then, that critical discussion of the poem generally focuses on Leapor's satirical appropriation of the country house genre. Landry argues that it represents 'a significant transformation of the genre',⁷⁷ while Rumbold regards it as 'an obviously unusual contribution to the country house poem' which contains 'a total refusal of the larger meanings customarily created in estate poems.'⁷⁸ On a thematic level these observations are perhaps fair. Fowler suggests 'estate poem' as a more precise term, since the genre is generally concerned with a poetic depiction not of the house itself, even less with its contents or servants, but of the wider estate or parkland, in service of praising the owners.⁷⁹ However, the model offered by the country house poem is built on a myth. Whilst this idyll is based on several binaries – inside/outside, public/private, country/city, or ideal/real – in practice this structure is always in danger of collapsing into a far more complex series of iterations, as 'Crumble-Hall' amply demonstrates.⁸⁰ As such, the country houses represented in this poetic mode are illusory, operating within a broader climate of cultural anxiety or conflict which country house poetry strives to negotiate or elide. Jenkins describes the tensions inherent within the genre as 'a complex series of mediations' that include the anomalous and tenuous position of the poetic speaker (typically a guest rather than either insider or outsider) and a time frame modulating between past, present and future.⁸¹ As a result this kind of poetry is engaged in a complex negotiation of harmony and anxiety, celebration and satire. This complexity is not always fully acknowledged by the critical responses to 'Crumble-Hall', which tend to reproduce or reverse the apparent oppositions of the genre. Rumbold's claim, for example, that 'Crumble-Hall' is a 'refusal of the larger meanings' usually found in the form would

⁷⁷ Landry, *The Muses of Resistance*, p.107.

⁷⁸ Rumbold, 'The Alienated Insider', p. 66.

⁷⁹ *The Country House Poem*, ed. Fowler, pp. 1-29.

⁸⁰ Jenkins, *Feigned Commonwealths*, p. 9; Gal, 'A Semiotics of the Public/Private Distinction', pp. 77-79.

⁸¹ Jenkins, *Feigned Commonwealths*, p. 12.

seem to illustrate this tendency of the poem to reproduce a binaristic, even bifurcating, vision in its readers.⁸²

Unsurprisingly for a genre concerned with stability and power, the country house poem presents an inherently hierarchical discussion along both gender and class lines.⁸³ Typically, in the majority of country house poems women and those of the labouring classes are conspicuous by their absence or enjoy only marginal roles.⁸⁴ Indeed, the models of social and political economy on display rely on the control, and thus silencing or obscuring, of the reproductive potential of women as well as the economic production of the estate's labourers.⁸⁵ Instead, the fertile landscape of the country house poem conventionally gives spontaneously and generously as if in thanks or recognition of the virtue of the owning dynasty. However, as Linda Colley notes, the expectation of an obedient and biddable servant class was under increasing stress by the mid-eighteenth century, due in great part to economic pressures which meant servants and labourers were an 'endangered resource.'⁸⁶

At first glance, fertility, order and harmony are not easy to detect in Leapor's poem; the house is cluttered, chaotic and dirty; the servants are garrulous and under no obvious control; and the grounds offer little in the way of produce. Perhaps more importantly, the poetic speaker is both a servant and a female. However, despite its unusual features, 'Crumble-Hall' engages with many conventions of the country house poem. It is through its closeness to the traditional genre that the poem delivers its critique of the genre and the ideology the genre buttresses. For example, the poem discusses at length the hospitality offered by the house, metaphorically but also literally. Hospitality is written into the actual edifice of the house, which comprises

... a gallant Show
Of mimic Pears and Carv'd Pomegranates twine
With the Plump Clusters of the spreading Vine (36-38).

⁸² Rumbold, 'The Alienated Insider', p. 66.

⁸³ McBride, *Country House Discourse*, p. 4.

⁸⁴ Pearson, 'Poetry, the Female Body and the Country House', pp. 87-104.

⁸⁵ Williams, *Country and City*, pp. 5-6.

⁸⁶ Linda Colley, "'What is to be expected from the people': Civic Virtue and the Common Man in England 1700-1760", in *Politics, Politeness, and Patriotism. Papers Presented at the Folger Institute Seminar*, ed. by G.J. Schochet with P.E. Tatspaugh and C. Brobeck (Washington DC: Folger Institute, 1993), pp. 197-208, (p. 6).

This is in a house where the ‘hospitable Door / Has fed the Stranger, and reliev’d the Poor’ (13-14). Although the agency of Crumble Hall’s owners is downplayed and the past tense is clear, Leapor retains the conventional generic discussion of hospitality as an indicator of political legitimacy for some estate owners and as evidence of the social bonds of earlier socio-political models. Furthermore, whilst the servants are certainly presented as noisy, ‘unwieldy’ (133), largely female, and unsupervised, they can be seen as variations on the ‘stable, hierarchical, and ‘natural’ commonwealth that the ideal country estate embodies’ noted by Jenkins.⁸⁷

At Crumble Hall this commonwealth comprises servants who replace the legitimate proprietors of the estate in their skill, sense of responsibility, and ownership. Thus, Sophronia is the ‘sage’ of the kitchen who presides over the food with ‘learned knuckles’ (115). This is perhaps unsurprising as Simon Varey explains that the cursory instructions given in contemporary cooking manuals suggest a high level of skill was required of the cook in producing nutritious, attractive and economically viable dishes for the entire household.⁸⁸ However, for most households, this task was completed in conjunction with the housekeeper or the mistress of the house, neither role in evidence at Crumble-Hall. Furthermore, it is ‘Grave Colinettus’ who is ‘anxious for his new-mown hay’ rather than the estate’s owners (122). Crucially, though, ‘Crumble-Hall’'s formal and thematic complexities indicated by the presence of both expected generic tropes and significant deviations, are held together under the same poetic ‘roof’, just as the building in Leapor’s poem succeeds – just about – in containing conflicting and disparate objects, people, and spaces.

‘Crumble-Hall’ is a combination of adaptations of existing tropes, a complication of traditional oppositions and hierarchies, and a reworking of earlier concerns to reflect new and pertinent trends that concerned not only the owners but also the staff and visitors to country estates. In her adaptation Leapor negotiates several conventions of the genre that imply, but do not necessarily sustain, the sort of binary dynamic typically seen in country house poetry. Firstly, she re-positions Mira,

⁸⁷ Jenkins, *Feigned Commonwealths*, p. 148; 12.

⁸⁸ Simon Varey, ‘The Pleasures of the table’ in *Pleasure in the Eighteenth-Century*, ed. by Roy Porter and Marie Mulvey Roberts (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1996), pp. 36-47 (p. 46).

her poetic speaker, inside the house rather than in the garden or parkland. However, this relocation does not necessarily mean that Leapor retains the opposition between house and garden that underpins the country house poem. Instead, the conventional social and generic boundaries between the disparate spaces of the estate are breached: the plough is seen in the house; hospitality is on display in the kitchen; and reading takes place in the servants' quarters, not the library. In addition, not only is Mira re-positioned, but her role as speaker is subtly renegotiated in a further mediating gesture: instead of the speaker occupying the traditional position of guest, she is an employee.

The repositioning of the poetic speaker in turn dramatically alters the relationship of the poetic speaker to the sources of anxiety identified by the poem. Where conventionally the boundary of both the estate and the genre are carefully policed to ensure the perceived social threat is kept outside the bounds of the estate (and the poem), here Mira and the reader are directly confronted by various problems represented by the estate and its owners: landscape improvement, absent proprietors, and a misuse of wealth and position. By relocating the poetic speaker and placing her inside the house, Leapor ensures that Mira is physically distanced from the wider estate and the local agricultural landscape, including its material practices. In this way, Leapor creates a gulf between the house and its owners, as well as the land and community beyond, to which they have a responsibility. This distance is both physical and visual. The interior of the house is dark and labyrinthine:

Safely the Mice through yon dark Passage run,
Where the dim Windows ne'er admit the Sun.
Along each Wall the Stranger blindly feels;
And (trembling) dreads a Spectre at his Heels (52-55)

From the 'nether world' (108) of the kitchen, Mira and her fellow servants can see nothing of the surrounding estate. Neither, however, can the owners—either because of the dirt, their personal shortcomings, or their increasing detachment from the local community. Elizabeth Veisz explains:

Social alliances that had linked communities vertically, from lords to tenant farmers, in relations of mutual obligation, gradually and unevenly gave way to greater geographical and social mobility and the rise of an aspiring middling rank that would in time come to see itself as a class linked

horizontally to others of similar economic standing across geographic boundaries.⁸⁹

This breaking of well-established ties to a particular community is evident in the poem: the owners are absent physically and emotionally from Crumble Hall. Only Mira and her readers, masquerading as tourists, are allowed a brief glimpse of the estate and surrounding landscape from the roof: 'Here a gay Prospect meets the ravish'd Eye: / Meads, Fields, and Groves, in beauteous Order lie' (105-6). Although fleeting, this privileged perspective is allowed on account of Mira's role as guide or poetic speaker, not her status as servant: as Keegan argues, 'the elevated view belongs to those with social and economic opportunities and the poets who wrote for them' and is clearly visible in Chandler's *A Description of Bath*.⁹⁰ We might also add to this list those who were educated enough to see the landscape in the correct way—in this case the discriminating reader and putative tourist. As a result, this view is not available physically or aesthetically to the house's owners or its other servants.

The poem ends with a more direct engagement with the estate's landscape: the grove whose 'rev'rend Oaks' which 'have known a hundred Springs' (173) and are now threatened by agricultural changes and developments in landscape design.⁹¹ Leapor's use of the binary structure compares an ancient, well managed agricultural and social system with the dirt and greed of the house, reversing the expectations of the genre where disorder is found outside the estate. The contrast or comparison, however, cannot be sustained. The translation of ideal and real onto nature and culture, past and present, which the earlier sections of the poem have introduced, collapses at this point. This is a threatened landscape which has an uncertain future:

But hark! what Scream the wond'ring Ear invades!
The Dryads howling for their threaten'd Shades:
[...]
Whose rev'rend Oaks have known a hundred Springs;
Shall these ignobly from their Roots be torn,
And perish shameful, as the abject Thorn;
While the slow Carr bears off their aged Limbs,
To clear the Way for Slopes, and modern Whims; (165-6, 172-6)

⁸⁹ Veisz, 'Writing the Eighteenth-Century Household', p. 72.

⁹⁰ Keegan, 'Rural Poetry', p. 564.

⁹¹ Dalporto, 'Ideology of Improvement', p. 229.

Although Mira alone can visualise this scene '(Tho' not discover'd but with Poet's Eyes)' (168), she too must rely on her imagination to realise it fully. She is not present in the landscape, nor does she view it from the house. Mira must 'let frolic Fancy rove' (156) in order to see and hear this landscape.

Leapor's reworking of the genre's inherent binaries is, then, more complex than a simple inversion of inside and outside, past and present. Mira also offers comment on the interior of the house, yet the opposition between inside and outside cannot be mapped onto the usual model of ideal and real, past and present. Even in Crumble Hall's apparently negative moral economy, embodied by the awkward architecture, the dirt, and the disorder of the servants, there is still room for Leapor to present a sophisticated and, at times, ambiguous satire. Her ideal is not clearly articulated along spatial, historical, or socio-political lines, and the stable comparison traditionally offered by the genre is fragmented. Ultimately, the only positive model depicted is located in a distant and now inconvenient past, in the alternative hospitality of the kitchen or well beyond the boundaries of Crumble Hall.

McBride claims that the emergence and longevity of country house discourse more widely can be accounted for by its ability to—or indeed its central function of—negotiating such conflicting positions.⁹² Indeed, the central country house motif of feudal hospitality is, by its very nature, simultaneously inclusive and exclusive, speaking to both a feudal past and a worrying social mobility of the present. In general terms, the country house poem treads a difficult path between wonder at the magnificence of the country house and scepticism at its usefulness and cost. Leapor's poem is similarly torn, but here the path negotiated integrates conflicting positions for which the diverse objects and interior spaces of the house not only reflect the shifting conceptions of the country house, but also act as a metaphor for the way in which the country house poem holds together disparate or opposing ideas. Leapor may satirise but does not offer a fully articulated alternative. Instead, she suggests a more complex path between an idealised yet irrelevant past, and a threatening future; or between the mismanagement of the estate by an absent gentry class and by an unwieldy but

⁹² McBride, *Country House Discourse*, p. 8-9.

enterprising servant class. The ideal centre of the poem, if it exists at all, is located in Mira herself—the only character with ownership of the spaces and vistas of Crumble Hall, who also suggests Leapor’s ownership of the genre. The ambivalent status of the poetic speaker may hover between that of her co-servants and her employers, yet Mira identifies herself more with the aspiring and potentially discriminating visitor to whom she speaks directly. Although Leapor finds fault with many aspects of the house, its owners, and its inhabitants, the use of the country house poem holds together these often conflicting statements in a way that suggests the idea of the country house, if not this particular example, still holds something of value for Leapor, as it does for Mira and the unnamed visitor.

For Leapor, tourism and collecting not only replace and modify earlier themes, such as hospitality, but may also be considered as activities or discourses which operate, according to Benedict, as organising frameworks to collate, arrange, and present disparate ideas or objects in a coherent manner.⁹³ In this way, they operate very much like the country house poem itself. Ultimately, all these discourses provide a means for dealing with incongruent and conflicting elements. In Leapor’s hands the country house poem can be seen as an attempt to make sense of conflicting political positions and personal experiences, rather than as a refusal of the genre. Whilst Rumbold argues that Crumble Hall cannot be seen ‘as an ordered whole [...] but as an assemblage of features which can be related, if at all, only at a local level,’ David Fairer sees the display of diverse objects and rooms differently: ‘Crumble-Hall’ is ‘rambling, full of characters and crammed with detail,’ where ‘there is no fixed angle of vision, but a series of glimpses, and the reader feels almost physically the variety of spaces that are drawn to our attention.’⁹⁴ As Mira asks:

Would you go farther? — Stay a little then:
Back thro’ the Passage — down the Steps again;
Thro’ yon dark Room — Be careful how you tread
Up these steep Stairs — or you may break your Head (94-7).

This question is one of several digressions that break up the tour, just as the incoherent architectural design and the heavy punctuation in these passages

⁹³ Benedict, ‘The Curious Attitude’ p. 65.

⁹⁴ Rumbold, ‘The Alienated Insider’, p. 66; Fairer, ‘Mary Leapor’, p. 225.

emphasise these discontinuities. In her use of directions, Leapor resembles both Ingram and Thomson in their attempts to replicate the experience of a space and the 'co-presence of all varied elements of nature.' However, here the effect is purposefully disjointed and lacking the 'unity' and 'coherence' identified in Thomson's text by W.B. Hutchings.⁹⁵

It is a house full of objects, some new, some dirty and neglected, and some broken and discarded. It is a house 'furnish'd amiably, and full' of unremarkable domestic objects: armchairs, china, and kitchen utensils. It also houses:

Old Shoes, and Sheep-ticks bred in Stacks of Wool;
Grey Dobbin's Gears, and Drenching-Horns enow;
Wheel-spokes – the Irons of a tatter'd Plough (99-101).

As with the awkward layout of the house, seen by Markidou as symbolic of patriarchal oppression and a rejection of 'the idealized view of the patriarchal country house constituting a model of order, serenity, and fulfilment,' the presence of so many objects is significant.⁹⁶ In contrast to Markidou, I would suggest that the digressive, cluttered trajectory described by Mira attempts to hold together, rather than reject, this dislocated literary and social economy. For Leapor's poetic speaker, there seems to be no alternative to using the collating framework of the genre to make sense of the different parts and thus hold together her observations.

Much has been made of 'Crumble-Hall' as a critique of the Chauncy family, their planned improvements to Edgcote House and its parkland, and the gender and social relations represented by such estates. The poem also has been seen by many as a commentary on Leapor's dismissal from Edgcote.⁹⁷ However, an analysis of the poem as an engagement with the tropes and structures of the country house genre reveals a more complex picture. The poem seems to offer Leapor a useful framework for organising her critique and articulating a particularly complex political position, which integrates disparate elements into a coherent whole. Leapor's satire ultimately

⁹⁵ W.B. Hutchings, "'Can Pure Description Hold the Sense of Place?': Thomson's Landscape Poetry' in *James Thomson: Essays for the Tercentenary*, ed. by Richard Terry (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2000), pp. 35-65 (pp. 55-7).

⁹⁶ Markidou, 'Home, Memory, and Gender', p. 169.

⁹⁷ See Landry, *Muses of Resistance*, pp. 78-119; Greene, *Mary Leapor*, pp. 158-178; Dalporto, 'Ideology of Improvement', pp. 229 and Markidou, 'Home, Memory and Gender', pp. 164-166 and 171-176.

lies in the fact that these activities, like the design and management of the mid-century country estate, are only tenable if accompanied by erudition. Crucially, however, Leapor includes all inhabitants in this requirement: servants and owners, reader and poet; only Mira is found sufficient. The traditional country house poem presents an ideal whilst offering an implied comparison to a negative example elsewhere. In 'Crumble-Hall' Leapor provides us with the negative, if rather complex, model of a country estate, and it is perhaps the implied comparison allowed by the genre that the reader should consider most closely. This ideal may be located in the alternative economy of the servants' hall or in an older form of landscape design. At the centre of this ideal stands, not the owner but Mira, as poet, as servant, and as sole proprietor of the prospect over house and garden.

'Crumble-Hall' is often regarded as a late and atypical country house poem. However, as I have argued, it may more accurately be seen as belonging to a much wider, yet largely critically un-regarded, body of country house poetry of the mid-eighteenth century. This poetry increasingly includes the house as an integral part of its discussion both as a site for display of collected artworks, furniture or other luxury goods and as a destination for the tourist. As Mullins observes, the improvements in infrastructure allowed a shift in perception whereby 'travel *for* leisure blurred into travel *as* leisure.'⁹⁸ This change in attitude and logistic possibility influenced the developing tourist trade to both spa towns and country estates, reflected in Chandler's *A Description of Bath* and her later poems. I have also argued that broader, hitherto largely ignored cultural contexts are revealed through Leapor's specific use of the country house poem. These assertions suggest we may need not only to re-examine the relationship between 'Crumble-Hall' and the country house poem, but also to expand our understanding of this genre.

Key to this reconsideration of genre is the manner in which it can hold together disparate parts in a negotiated, if provisional, whole. In Chandler's *A Description of Bath* we saw the analogous Addisonian model of landscape – a vista of diverse elements seen from an elevated prospect. For Chandler this prospect point is Prior

⁹⁸ Mullins, 'Cards on the Table', p. 76.

Park, home of Ralph Allen, entrepreneur and putative ideal man. However, as Røstvig asserts and Chandler points out, this ideal man must, like the ideal improved landscape, exhibit diversity in his mode of living and thinking. Allen is a retired gentleman of some means and, simultaneously, a local business man responsible for and closely associated with the development of Bath as a tourist centre. In Leapor's poem there is no ideal man and indeed this is part of her critique of the landowning classes. However, something similar is to be seen in the person of Mira, equally at home in the kitchen with her fellow servants or in conversation with the socially superior visitor. Furthermore, the text itself, as a country house poem, exhibits the same flexibility in its thematic and formal diversity.

My reading of 'Crumble-Hall' also indicates that we need to consider further the importance of generic contexts to the critical discussion of Leapor's poetry and to labouring-class poetry more generally. Although many studies focus on biographical contexts, I have argued that this emphasis on personal detail does not adequately account for Leapor as a poet; as Goulding suggests, 'the hardships a working-class woman faced are present throughout Leapor's poetry, but equally important is the final result.'⁹⁹ A critical study of Leapor's engagement with genre and poetic form will, then, extend and complicate our understanding of her poetry and reveal her response to contexts beyond her immediate circumstances and milieu. Furthermore, such readings may shed light on the critical understanding of mid-eighteenth-century poetry and poetic practices. For all of the important work done on the recuperation of marginalised writers and texts, there remain not only gaps in this scholarship but also persistent and, at times, distracting or limiting methodological frameworks. The resulting analyses do not necessarily reflect the full range of writers and texts, or the variety of writing modes and generic contexts on display in women's writing of the period, even when early 'recovery' scholarship was replaced by a concern for feminist analyses and attention to other forms of identity. Attention to genre and form is, then, surely necessary and overdue.

⁹⁹ Goulding, 'Life of the Persona', p. 76.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have examined the depiction of the country house and estate in women's verse of the period 1650-1750. Despite the emerging field of early modern women's literary studies and an extensive body of critical work on the country house poem, there have been to date no substantial accounts of the role of the country estate in women's verse of this period. In response to this collective critical failure to address the role of the female poet in the development of the genre in the hundred and fifty years following its emergence, my readings detail the appropriation and adaptation of the country house poem by a range of poets. My account has two important implications for our understanding of late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century poetry.

Firstly, it adds to our knowledge of women's poetic practices of the period in several ways. On the most basic level, it offers readings of poems and poets for which or for whom there is little existing analysis. Poems, such as Ingram's 'Castle Howard', have been noted but not subject to critical reading. Similarly, Chandler's *A Description of Bath* has only recently been brought to our attention. The thesis also adds to the scholarship on poems, such as Leapor's 'Crumble-Hall', for which there is a relatively large body of work. Although I have not necessarily sought to challenge these critical responses, I have argued that a contextualised reading of genre can offer a corrective addition to readings reliant on biographical material. Between these two poles of critical reception lie the majority of the poets discussed in this study. For these poets the critical account is partial, albeit growing, and shaped by feminist methodologies. As a result, the analysis relies on texts which privilege female experience or clearly reflect gendered contexts, for example marriage or education. In choosing to focus on the country house poems of poets, such as Finch, Hutchinson and Montagu, I have brought additional texts to critical attention. I have thus extended and complicated our understanding of the work of these poets.

The second implication of my argument is for the way we think about the country house poem. The most significant changes in this respect is to the time frame, to the type of poets appropriating the genre and to the publication mode employed. Although Fowler's anthology indicates an extended timeframe and the wide range of formal and thematic applications of the broader country house discourse, the scholarship on the country house poem remains, to a large extent, reliant on the verse of Jonson, Herrick, Carew, Marvell, and Pope as a late outlier. This thesis challenges this canon in many ways and I have argued that not only do female poets engage with the country house genre but that they do so in ways which challenge our critical understanding of it.

An initial survey of early modern women's verse in poetic collections and miscellanies, manuscripts and the periodical press of the period indicates a small but significant poetic engagement by women with the country estate. The relevance of this discourse to poets, beyond the handful of canonical examples, lasted until at least the mid-eighteenth century as the later chapters of this thesis demonstrate. Indeed, even a cursory survey of miscellanies and periodicals suggests that the genre continues beyond the timeframe of this study. However, with such a long trajectory, the genre, so closely linked as it is to its social and political contexts, must be reworked or adapted to remain viable. Some of these adaptations take account of specifically gendered contexts, but many respond to shifts in political and social contexts, complicated by political faction or inflected by religious difference. The poems also respond to newer cultural phenomena, such as travel and tourism, consumerism and collecting, and the development of the English landscape garden. As a poetic genre, which is so thematically and formally heterogeneous, this is easily achieved and each of the poets discussed in this thesis use this generic flexibility to articulate with some precision an ideal community which reflects not only their historical situation but also their individual circumstances.

My selection of poets demonstrates the increasingly wide demographic range of female poets active across all publication modes. The readings devoted to Austen, Hutchinson, Barker, Chandler and Leapor illustrate the emerging critical consensus that

women's writing of the time is not the sole prerogative of the leisured aristocratic or gentry woman. Indeed, the country house poems written by these five poets highlight the extent to which writing was not only juggled alongside other duties and tasks but was also an important component of these responsibilities. Although Finch, Montagu and Ingram conform more fully to the conventional picture of the female poet, all three articulate in their poetry a sense of being outsiders. The country house poem at all social levels allows the female poet to negotiate difficult positions whether understood socially, politically or religiously.

I have also contended that in readings women's country house poetry, the persistence of manuscript in women's writing is revealed. Manuscript remained an important feature of verse by women well into the eighteenth-century. Much of this verse, like the majority of women's poetry of the early modern period, was often in diverse and domestic documents, further highlighting the thematic links and conflation of literary and legal or economic discourses. Many poems appear as a single poem in a thematically diverse verse or prose manuscript. Austen's and Hutchinson's texts illustrate the importance of manuscript to women's writing and reading practices. They also demonstrate the way in which collected texts, such as the commonplace book, can allow for thematic and formal interplay between quite different forms and discourses. Conventional printed verse is also an important component of women's engagement with the country house. This comprises both single- and multiple-authored collections. Yet, as with manuscript verse, titles and poetic forms may be initially misleading to the reader, cataloguer and critic alike. In turn, this influences the extent to which women's country house poetry is unavailable to general readers and to students of women's writing.

There is no one poetic paradigm for the country house genre, but rather a range of formal and thematic models which combined to make a coherent yet still flexible and broad based mode of writing. Importantly, the genre is both an evolution of earlier and classical literary forms and a radical departure from these same forms. However, as it is developed beyond the 1660s, the country house poem also enacts a radical departure from its own early model epitomised by Jonson, Herrick, Carew and

Marvell. These generic shifts are both thematic and formal in nature. They are also prompted by historical condition and events, such as the cycles of political victory and defeat experienced by many of varying political or theological persuasions. As this thesis explains, by the time Leapor wrote 'Crumble-Hall', the country house poem had been used to respond to a range of different events or contexts across more than a century.

Although the conventional critical observation of country house poetry of the mid-seventeenth century is that it relates to royalist retirement, the need for political retirement beyond this date or political demographic is not fully addressed with reference to the country house poem. In my discussion, this use of the genre to describe, validate or offer thanks for a retreat from a hostile political or theological environment is important. I have outlined across this thesis how the country house poem responds to ongoing cycles of political arguments and skirmishes of the 1680s and 1690s and the political factionalism of the 1720s and 1730s. From Hutchinson's articulation of a very precise religio-political retirement in the mid-1660s, to Barker and Finch's use of the genre to negotiate external or internal exile, and finally to Ingram's rationale for her father's retreat to his estate at Castle Howard, the country house poem retains a resonance through its ability to incorporate the broader retirement trope in to its discussion. Whilst cultural, religious and personal aspects of this trope are important, the political impetus to retirement is frequently downplayed in discussions of women's poetry. Alongside more overtly political texts, women's country house poems, such as those by Finch, Barker, Montagu and Ingram, offer an additional account of women as political agents.

Importantly, the country house poem equates property ownership with the status of gentry and aristocracy.¹ The late seventeenth century saw a number of high profile legal campaigns to restore property lost in various phases of the Civil War and Restoration. These were not the preserve of any particular political or theological grouping; all sides had property confiscated, all wanted it restored. They were, however, more broadly indicative of a concern with correct property ownership and

¹ McGuire, 'The Cavalier Country-House Poem', pp. 93-94.

building which characterises many of the country house poems of the Restoration. There were numerous examples, for which the legal struggle was not directly the result of political affiliation, but rather a more mundane legal matter. For early modern women, in particular, the problematic relationship with all forms of property was most acutely visible at the principal points of transfer: by dowry, marriage settlement; will; court judgement in cases of intestacy; or by commercial contract. These modes of exchange, like much of early modern women's writing, were occasioned by birth, marriage or death. Both literary text and legal document were, then, occasional, prompted by the same life events and, as I have argued, frequently display similar themes and anxieties.

This thesis starts its contextual discussion with the economic and legal discourses of Austen's manuscript and in the final chapter I return to economic concerns as a context for the country house poem in the 1730s and 1740s. Chandler's *A Description of Bath* forms part of a broader trend for topographical poems depicting and promoting the benefits of the spa town in particular. However, it also illustrates the emerging contexts of consumerism and tourism and the role this plays in the generic development of the country house poem at this point. With these socio-economic shifts, the interior spaces and objects become far more prominent in country house poems as the eighteenth century progresses. By the mid-eighteenth century both the ideal and reality of feudal-style hospitality which is so central to and visible in seventeenth century examples had all but disappeared, to be replaced in the genre by the fashion for collecting curios, art and furniture. All of these developments were increasingly important cultural trends, reflecting much wider socio-economic shifts towards a society increasingly able to afford and access consumer goods, works of art and books and interested in consumption more widely. In turn, these shifts were also an impetus to visit estates where furniture, artwork and collections could be viewed alongside improved garden landscapes and fashionable building projects.

Regardless of the exact concerns or contexts to which the poetry responds, the country house poem is also known for and critically categorised by several major topics, such as hospitality, dynastic claims and architectural developments. However,

as I have argued, this thematic focus is not particularly helpful in responding to individual poems, since many are thematically diverse, incorporating a number of key topics. Other poems may adapt the genre considerably to discuss buildings and activities only obliquely related to the country estate. Furthermore, the formal diversity of the genre, no less than the wider discourse, often obscures and complicates the thematic discussion. As a result I have proposed a different critical paradigm for thinking about the country house poem. Firstly, the house or estate may be viewed symbolically and thus operating as a political, social or cultural metaphor. This is the most conventional mode of the country house poem and to a greater or lesser extent all of the examples covered by the thesis operate in this fashion. However, the genre may also be understood spatially as a place where various communities and identities may be established or maintained. Yet, as this thesis has demonstrated, there remain several problems for the female writer. Full access to all the spaces of the estate may be limited by contentious ownership, political circumstances, social class and gender. If this problematic access can be resolved, there remain further difficulties regarding the conventions, functions or associations of such spaces. Lastly, the country estate may be conceived as property or material object, which may be bought, sold or inherited.

Across the chapters of this thesis I have examined poems which have promoted the country estate as a symbol of personal independence, refuge, appropriate governance, religious community, dynastic power and economic credibility. In a less positive fashion the country house is for Montagu and Leapor a symbol of inappropriate behaviour, lack of artistic taste and unsuitability for power. For Hutchinson and Barker the country estate symbolises refuge from the vagaries of the seventeenth-century's political conflicts. Whilst Hutchinson, like Austen, also sees the estate as property guaranteeing her social status as much as providing an analogue to her religio-political position, Barker's relationship to the estate is more complicated and abstract. For Barker, the genre's appeal to a community characterised by older concepts of hospitality, makes it open to reworking as a symbol of exile.

At the same time, the flexibility of the country house genre allows Finch to explore the country estate as an abstract symbol of aristocratic governance which was for her threatened by the political settlement after 1689. This is then established by Finch as a counter space where apt behaviour is lauded in contrast to urban, and crucially Whig, mores seen elsewhere. Her poetry written on and between the various estates also gives a glimpse of the social and literary relationships which she established through her writing. The association of political discrimination with that of artistic taste is long standing and an inherent part of the genre's function. In early eighteenth-century Britain not only do the gardens recreate the built environment of the classical ideal seen in landscape painting of the period, they do similar ideological work – displaying erudition, wealth and discernment. In a positive fashion, the texts of Finch and Ingram are written in response to these mutually concerning trends offering comment on aesthetic practices as an analogue for social and political power. In contrast Montagu's 'An Epistle to Lord Bathurst' is, as I have argued, a satirical counterpart to the symbolic model seen in the conventional country house poem. Finch, Montagu and Ingram all enter into a public debate on the importance of taste. As such, their poems enter a dialogue with the verse of their male counterparts like Pope, West, Thomson and Prior.

I have asserted in this thesis that the country house depicted in women's verse of the period 1650-1750 is frequently understood not only as a resonant symbol, but also as a space to which women had access and which offered a range of relationships, activities and voices to the female poet. Primarily this space is associated with retirement, offering Hutchinson, Finch and Barker a safe space in which to reconsider a bleak future. Hutchinson's 'Elegies' for example uses the country house genre in similar ways to earlier royalist examples, subtly reworking the spaces of the genre for republican purposes. In these poems she mimics earlier attempts to negotiate a position of strength from defeat and to prescribe order onto chaos. However, the poems also offer a reconsideration of the spaces of the country house, and the boundaries which define them, allowing her to redraw the social, political and religious spaces of the Restoration period.

Both Finch and Barker were willing to accept exile and marginalization as a consequence of loyalty to the Stuart monarchy. In exile the country house, or its conventual analogue, provides a literary space into which both can retire and reflect on and reconsider the events of the Restoration. Although occasionally displaying the solitary and marginalised experience visible in Hutchinson's 'Elegies', Finch and to a lesser extent Barker, also present a space where, and through which, community and connection can be fostered. For Finch and Barker this support – social and literary patronage – was essential not only to their experience of exile but also to their literary ambitions. For both writers the act of writing was closely associated with their own presence at a country estate or convent, or with writing for its owners or stewards. Finch and Barker, unlike Hutchinson, write of retirement implying solitude, yet they constantly invoke the networks which these spaces of retirement represent. What is clear about Finch's articulation of retirement is that it is populated by a coterie of like-minded individuals. The convent offers Barker a potential resolution to her perceived status as an isolated outsider. Not only does the convent offer a symbolically important refuge, it also represents patronage networks clustered around prominent royalist and Jacobite individuals. For Barker, this community promised not only social advancement, but a network sanctioned by her confessional or political identity.

The last main strand of discussion in this thesis has argued that women's country house poetry provides, in some measure, the missing account of women as subjects of property and that the significance of the country estate also lay in the interpersonal relationships associated with its ownership, use and design. These relationships were crucial to the ownership of the estate through marriage and inheritance. Women's tenuous position in relation to property is visible in many of the poems studied in this thesis. Austen's manuscript reveals the financial and legal acuity necessary to circumvent the most stringent limitations on their position and property. In describing the estate at Highbury, Austen re-conceptualises the boundaries of her own financial and social position by reworking the themes of country house poetry. As such, the manuscript may be regarded as providing an additional and frequently

missing component of what is largely a fragmented and unreliable account of the complexity of women's property transactions during this period.

Whether the country estate is perceived or used as a symbol, space or as material property, the use of the country house genre shares one key feature across the different readings of this thesis. In all cases, the formal and thematic complexity rather than diluting the focus of the genre, provides its strength. The effectiveness and longevity of the genre more generally lies in its ability to allow for the consideration of detail and specificity alongside wider socio-political discussion. It allows the poet to accommodate multiple perspectives and multiple ways of understanding. In my reading of Leapor's 'Crumble-Hall' I argue that the contextual fashion for collecting and acquisition is also suggestive of a rhetorical aspect of the country house poem, which 'collects' a variety of objects, spaces and vistas within its composite picture. Although I discuss this explicitly with regard to Leapor's satirical appropriation of the genre, this conception of the genre as a rubric for responding to and understanding often conflicting conditions or circumstances is visible across nuanced positions articulated by all the poets considered.

In Austen's 'Book M' the central country house poem sits within a commonplace book and the manuscript as a whole offers the reader a collage of positions which mimic the formal complexities of the genre. In a similar fashion Hutchinson's 'Elegies' collect various modes of writing together, all of which speak to the concerns of country house discourse. Thus, Hutchinson conflates and merges elegy with topographical descriptions, biographical account with autobiographical detail and pastoral with georgic. Hutchinson's individual elegies and the country house poems allow her to explore a very complex religio-political position which is also visible in the use of the genre by Barker. In Finch's texts the use of the collating rubric of the genre is apparent in the networks evoked by the poetry. This is evident not only in the content which speaks of friendship and kinship, but also the epistolary form of many of the poems. Finch also uses the genre to explore aesthetic shifts which increasingly privileged the qualities of mixture or diversity. In their depictions of the landscaping on various estates, Ingram and Montagu also incorporate diversity as an integral and

important feature of their poetic landscapes. In Chandler's *A Description of Bath* the analogous model of landscape, *concordia discors* is offered as an ideal. It is presented as a vista of diverse elements seen from an elevated prospect. By contrast Leapor rejects, or cannot find, this model; instead, she fills Crumble-Hall with interior and material counterparts.

The analyses of this thesis have revealed that the common ground of the country estate was shared by many writers of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century. In the poems discussed here, this common ground is not merely political but is also found in the religious and aesthetic spaces of the country estate. The country estate as a site of retreat or as a symbol of duty to estate and state are visible in both Tory and Whig texts. These politically informed texts of the early eighteenth century are seen by many as belonging to a final flourish of poetry which uses the country estate to make a wider cultural comment. The waning of the genre from the 1660s and its disappearance after the mid-1730s have been widely discussed. However, the critical accounts of this generic demise are, as this thesis has revealed, only partially accurate. The country house poem remains a significant if small strand of poetry in women's verse of the eighteenth century. This body of work is heterogeneous in nature and located in many places. Often it is in manuscript collections, or in regionally published collections, such as Chandler's *A Description of Bath*. Most significantly it is to be found in the expanding periodical press. Although the chronological frame of this thesis has precluded an examination of these texts, this may be a fruitful avenue for further study.

The poets in this thesis do not just appropriate the country house genre; they adapt, substantially rework and combine it. This reworking challenges the accuracy of retrospective critical and bibliographic designations. The failure to include these differently categorised poems within critical analyses results in the country house poem being critically regarded as a male genre, written by and for men. This assertion is supported by the selection of poems for Fowler's otherwise inclusive anthology. Although, as Lewalski indicates, the discourse does serve the interests of patriarchy, this in itself may provide a reason for women to work within this discursive space,

forcing a 'rewriting of [...] patriarchal norms to place woman at the center.'² Furthermore, the inherent generic complexity and discontinuity, as Ann Bermingham argues, 'registers the inconsistencies within ideologies and pinpoints the places where their totalizing world-view threatens to unravel.'³ Indeed, far from being an exclusively male discourse, the country house poem, or its themes in other poetic forms, is pertinent both to women's experiences of the socio-political and legal asymmetries and constraints of the period and to their lives as poets.

I have argued throughout this thesis that the poetry attempts to reread and rework existing historical, political and theological analyses through the appropriation and reconfiguration of existing literary and political discourses, rhetorical positions and their boundaries. In so doing, they create a country house 'map' which is varied in focus and flexible in its discussion. It is in the reversal of the structuring binaries that most of the reworking is located. This allows the private spaces of the estate to articulate a public statement. By reading the complex of binaries at work in the genre, as a series of reiterations which are contingent on context or interpretation, the poets extend their discussion from that of a particular experience located in a specific place to one which transcends the individual, the immediate location and the historical moment. Although the poets I have discussed alter and rework the genre, I have not argued that this is indicative of a progressive generic development. Instead, I have presented it as a broader picture of generic instantiation, as I understand genre as a continual process rather than a linear development. In addition, rather than challenge existing critical interpretations, I have sought to broaden the discussion of women's country house poetry by including a range of poets and texts. I have challenged existing studies of the country house genre which exclude women poets and argued instead that the work of women poets was not only integral to, but also shaped, the genre and maintained its cultural impact in important ways.

² Lewalski, *Writing Women*, p.210.

³ Ann Bermingham, *Landscape and Ideology, The English Rustic tradition, 1740-1850*, (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1986), p.4.

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