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**HOUSEHOLD WORDS:  
TEXTUALISING SOCIAL RELATIONS IN THE CORRESPONDENCE  
OF BESS OF HARDWICK'S SERVANTS, c. 1550-1590**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis collects, transcribes, and, with reference to household documents and contemporary literature, annotates and interprets the surviving correspondence of a constellation of seven upper servants who at various points in the second half of the sixteenth century were stationed at or moved between several country houses and estates of which Bess of Hardwick was mistress. The thesis finds that the extant correspondence of Bess's servants falls into two categories: (1) letters of management exchanged between Bess and five of her household and estate officers (Francis Whitfield, James Crompe, William Marchington, and Edward Foxe at Chatsworth House, Derbyshire and nearby estates in the 1550s-1560s, and Nicholas Kynnersley at Wingfield Manor, Derbyshire in the late 1580s) and (2) letters seeking practical and political patronage, written in the early 1580s by two of Bess's gentle-born personal attendants, William Marmyon and Frances Battell, to contacts outside Bess's itinerant (and at that time politically vulnerable) household.

Close literary, linguistic (historical pragmatic), and material readings reveal that all these letters adapt and surpass conventional expressions as they engage in practical problem-solving, complex interpersonal exchanges, and domestic politics. The thesis argues that the manuscript letters materialise dynamic verbal performances of their writers' specific social roles and relationships — the mistress-servant relationship foremost among them. Each writer simultaneously registers and renegotiates his or her own experience of the mistress-servant relationship through the combination of diverse epistolary features, which include verbal etiquette and page layout, degrees of directness or circumlocution, complexity of syntax, tone, use of emotive language, discourses of pleasure and displeasure, personalised content (which ranges from in-jokes to empathy to distinctive pen flourishes), and explicit expressions of authority or loyalty, as well as job-specific terminology and subject matter. Frequency of correspondence, modes of delivery, and the afterlives of letters are shown to carry further social significance.

The correspondence of Bess of Hardwick's servants acts as a touchstone for the complex role of letter-writing in the formation of social selves and the performance of domestic duties in sixteenth-century England. By accurately transcribing these letters, interpreting them using a unique combination of literary, linguistic, and visual analysis, and reconstructing from these letters and additional archival sources the careers of several servants of one mistress, this thesis opens up new material, perspectives, questions, and methods for early modern cultural studies.

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Special thanks to David Durant for making his unpublished notes and transcripts from Bess's account books available for consultation in Nottingham University Library (NUL) and for permitting me to photograph them for my own reference. I am thankful to the staff of NUL, Sheffield Archives, Lambeth Palace Library (LPL), and The National Archives (TNA) for their helpfulness on my visits — in particular Katy Mair, who went out of her way to ensure my short time at TNA was both productive and enjoyable. I am also grateful to TNA, NUL, LPL, and the Archives nationales, Paris for providing images of letters in their collections and to the Folger Shakespeare Library for making images freely available online. I would

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>Bess of Hardwick's Letters</i>	<i>Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c. 1550-1608</i> , ed. by Alison Wiggins, Alan Bryson, Daniel Starza Smith, Anke Timmermann and Graham Williams, University of Glasgow, web development by Katherine Rogers, University of Sheffield Humanities Research Institute (April 2013) <www.bessofhardwick.org>
CEEC	Helsinki Corpus of Early English Correspondence
CELL	Centre for Editing Lives and Letters, University College, London
Chatsworth	Chatsworth House and/or estate
CUP	Cambridge University Press
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> online
EETS	Early English Text Society
f(f).	folio(s) of manuscripts
Folger	Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C.
Hardwick	Hardwick New Hall unless otherwise noted
Hardwick MSS	Hardwick manuscripts in the Devonshire Collection at Chatsworth House
HMC	Historical Manuscripts Commission
<i>HMC Middleton</i>	<i>HMC, Report on the Manuscripts of Lord Middleton Preserved at Wollaton Hall, Nottinghamshire</i> (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1911)
LPL	Lambeth Palace Library
ID 99 [example]	ID numbers assigned to letters in the <i>Bess of Hardwick's Letters</i> edition; these are used in the thesis to refer to letters to and from Bess
MS(S)	manuscript(s)
NUL	Nottingham University Library, Department of Manuscripts and Special Collections
<i>OED</i>	<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i> online
OUP	Oxford University Press
r	recto
Sheffield	Sheffield Castle and/or Manor (as letters rarely specify which of the two is meant)
sig(s)	signature(s) of unpaginated early printed books
SP	State Papers
SP (Dom)	State Papers, Domestic
TNA	The National Archives, Kew
UP	University Press
v	verso
VARIENG	Research Unit for Variation, Contacts and Change in English, University of Helsinki

## LIST OF LETTERS, IMAGES AND TRANSCRIPTIONS

The thesis provides original transcriptions, but, for ease of reference, letters that are also included in the *Bess of Hardwick's Letters* edition are identified by the ID numbers used in the edition.

ID 99: Folger, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (82)

Bess of Hardwick in London to Francis Whitfield at Chatsworth,  
14 November [1552].

Figures 1a-d: pp. 10-13

Transcription: pp. 89-92

ID 101: Folger, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (84)

Bess [location unidentified] to Francis Whitfield at Chatsworth,  
20 October [1561].

Figures 2a-b: pp. 14-15

Transcription: pp. 106-107

ID 100: Folger, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (83)

Bess at the royal court to James Crompe at Chatsworth,  
8 March [1560-1564].

Figures 3a-c: pp. 16-18

Transcription: pp. 110-11

ID 17: Folger, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (18)

James Crompe at Chatsworth to Bess in London,  
20 November [c. 1565].

Figures 4a-c: pp. 19-21

Transcription: pp. 124-26

ID 18: Folger, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (19)

James Crompe at Chatsworth to Bess in London,  
27 February [1566?].

Figures 5a-c: pp. 22-24

Transcription: pp. 126-29

ID 47: Folger, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (57)

William Marchington at Chatsworth to Bess [location unidentified],  
13 January [1560-1565].

Figures 6a-b: pp. 25-26

Transcription: pp. 147-48

ID 28: Folger, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (31)

Edward Foxe at Chatsworth to Bess [location unidentified],  
8 December [1559-1567].

Figures 7a-c: pp. 27-29

Transcription: pp. 160-63

NUL, Middleton MSS, Mi C 15

[William] Marmyon at Chatsworth then Sheffield to Sir Francis Willoughby  
at Wollaton Hall, 24 & 28 October [1581?].

Figures 8a-d: pp. 30-33

Transcription: pp. 185-89

TNA, SP 53/13, ff. 14r-15v

Frances Battell at Chatsworth to Lady Elizabeth Paullat in Clerkenwell,  
London, 23 March 1584.

Figures 9a-b: pp. 34-35

Transcription: pp. 217-18

ID 37: Folger, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (44)

Nicholas Kynnersley at Wingfield Manor to Bess [location unidentified],  
5 November 1588.

Figures 10a-b: pp. 36-37

Transcription: pp. 230-31

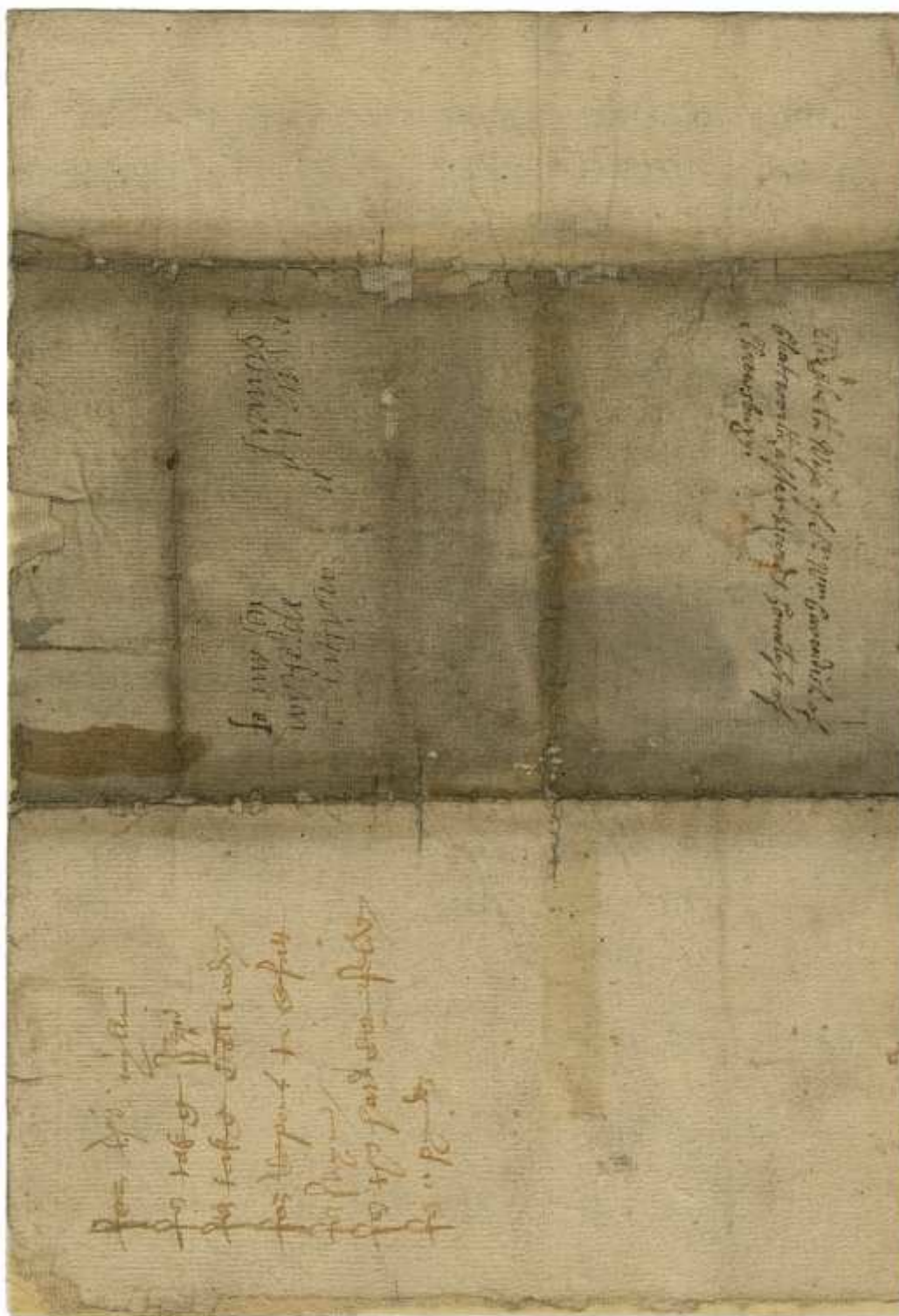
ID 38: Folger, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (45)

Nicholas Kynnersley at Wingfield Manor to Bess [location unidentified],  
22 April 1589.

Figures 11a-b: pp. 38-39

Transcription: pp. 231-32

## LETTER IMAGES



**Figure 1a.** ID 99, f. 2v. Bess to Francis Whitfield, 14 November [1552]. Superscription in Bess's own hand, with notes added in two other hands. Reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

X. 4. 628  
 (12)  
 02

I have spoken to your wife  
 for the chylles or benches that you  
 wrote to me of and she ys contente  
 that you shall take some for  
 your wife by the appointment  
 of newgate. so that you take  
 care as I will be sure no  
 harme shall be done at  
 Chertysworth. I pray you take  
 well to attendance at Chertysworth  
 till my wifes comynge whiche  
 whiche I hope shall be shortly  
 and you shall receive to your comynge  
 brougham to take to the priories  
 and all other things at pentecost  
 let the warden make here for the  
 fourteenth for my owne drinking  
 and your master and so that I  
 have good store of yet for if I like  
 of any good here or of any other or wale  
 I will buye, nobody so muche  
 as I will do you. cause the  
 store in my hole comynge to be

29

**Figure 1b.** ID 99, f. 1r. Bess to Francis Whitfield, 14 November [1552]. Her own hand. Reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.



made men rather to plaster down or burne  
 and at the windows were the glass  
 is broken to the window and at the  
 window the window is closed and  
 at the window the window is closed  
 my sister Jane and my sister Jane  
 and my sister Jane and my sister Jane  
 to have amongst you if yet between  
 you lacke of house as well as  
 of house to have any house  
 that the little window to have  
 in case as the little window. I wolde  
 be let to have any house so much  
 of my house and I can assure you  
 I can not but yet to have my  
 sister so much. As I wolde not  
 have any superfluous or waste of any  
 house. so the wife wolde I have have  
 to have that which is needful for  
 and necessary. at my house which I  
 shall know more. and I can I will hope  
 as I shall have more. I wolde have  
 you to give to my window from  
 me and from my house with and to

**Figure 1c.** ID 99, f. 1v. Bess to Francis Whitfield, 14 November [1552]. Bess's hand.  
 Reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

my sister maye forgive me and my love  
as hereafter foloweth fyre to the sundry  
frome me ten shyllynges. and frome  
my sister Jane. shyllynges. so that my  
frome me ten shyllynges. and frome  
my love is fore pence. so that you  
the wolle you please send to them  
ten shyllynges and fore pence  
make my sister Jane pence of yet  
and I have pence yet to them from  
if you have noother money take  
so much of the rent at your house  
till my sister Jane and I have payed  
my debts and shyllynges at my comyn  
will. and shyllynges. and shyllynges  
sayle to the shyllynges done accordingly  
I have you save well frome London  
the xij of November

your mystry  
J. James: mystry  
that I have returned  
the shyllynges and shyllynges  
that he sente me by the shyllynges





**Figure 2a.** ID 101, f. 2v. Bess to Francis Whitfield, 20 October [1561]. Superscription in Bess's hand, with endorsement in Whitfield's hand and a later note in another hand. Reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

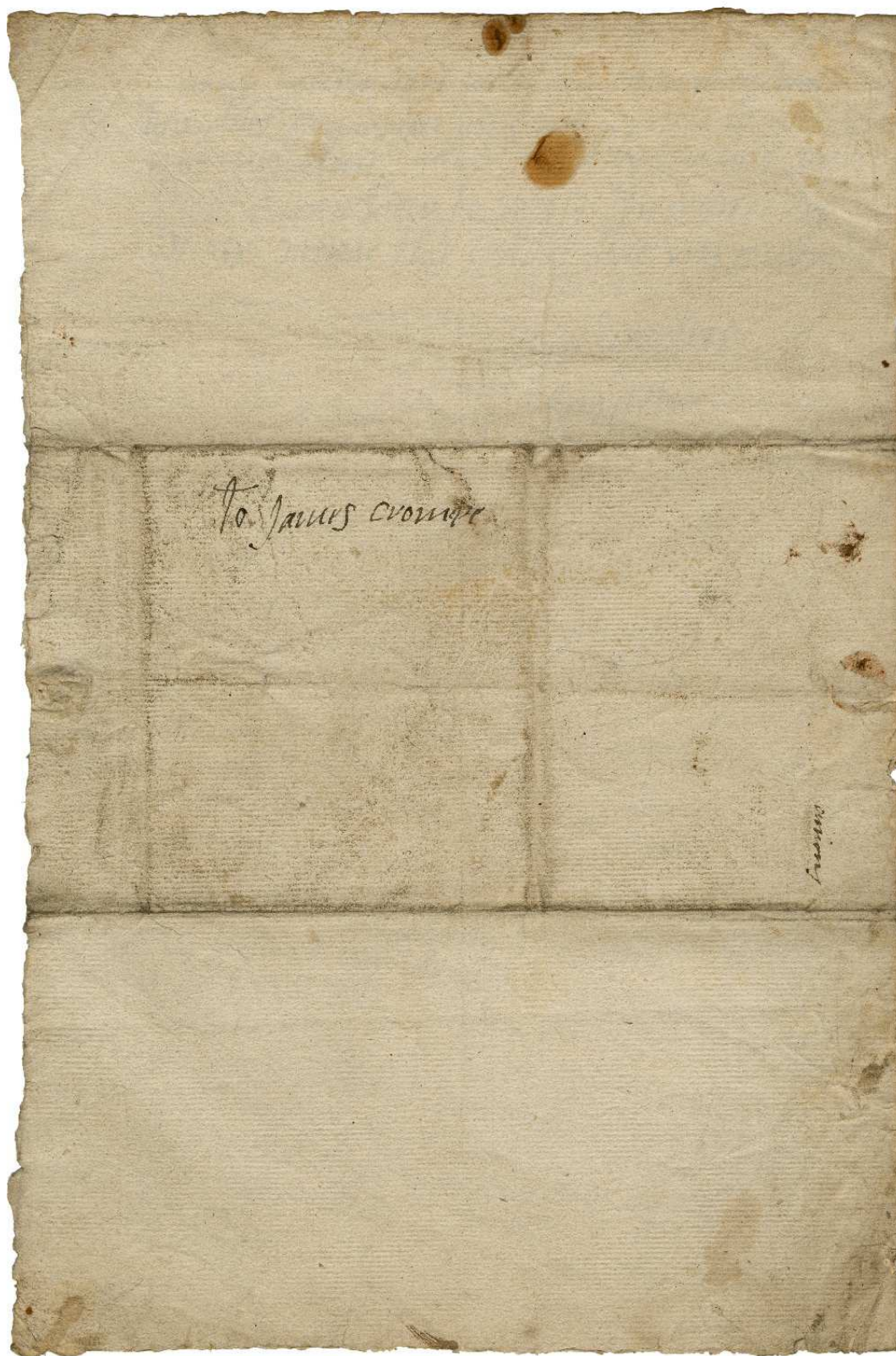
31  
 Francis I will not now have the  
 powder which comes I have been  
 at a great charge I hope yet  
 not material if it be. I will  
 for the sake be made & in  
 yet or no for I am sure the  
 powder might be got after  
 the powder be spent and if yet  
 be so I will yet be there and  
 the powder might be made in  
 any at any time. I am sure  
 for the sake would be the  
 will powder for yet I am sure  
 the powder might be made in  
 force. yet of powder do I hope  
 better the cost of the  
 powder. I am sure I will  
 shall have the next commodity  
 in to my mind I will send  
 well - I am sure you have as a  
 powder the cost of powder.

your most  
 Obedt

I will best know and I am sure  
 I am sure the cost of powder.

**Figure 2b.** ID 101, f. 1r. Bess to Francis Whitfield, 20 October [1561]. Bess's hand.  
 Reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.





**Figure 3a.** ID 100, f. 2v. Bess to James Crompe, 8 March [1560-1564]. Superscription in a scribal hand, with a later note in another hand. Reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.



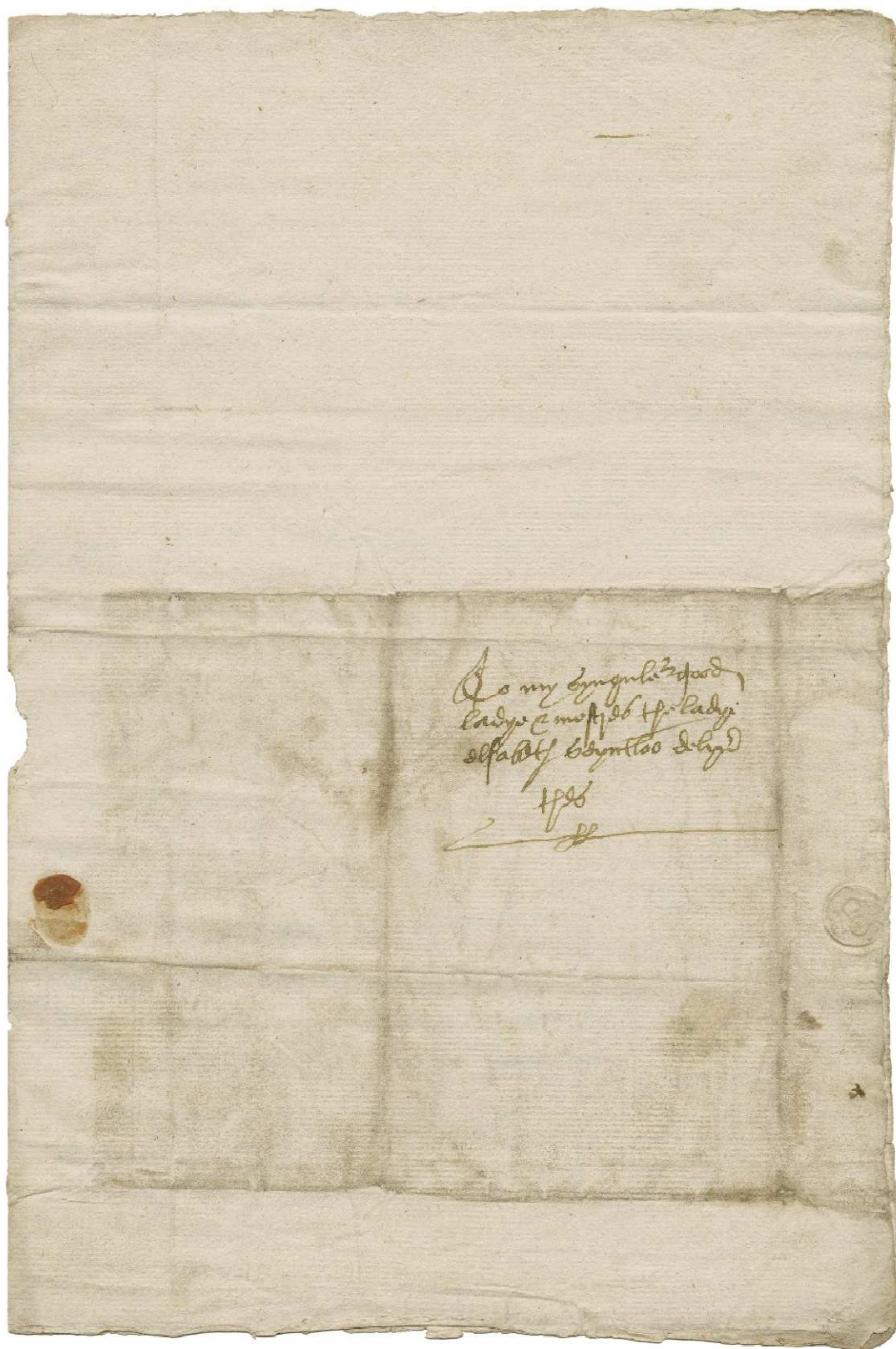
Crompe I do vnderstande by your letters that w<sup>th</sup> sayth he  
 well, dep<sup>nt</sup> at any lade day next I w<sup>ll</sup> that you shall  
 have <sup>him</sup> bruden y<sup>ng</sup> nably gachon to adoyle at the same day  
 for sure I w<sup>ll</sup> troste none to his p<sup>ro</sup>mes and w<sup>th</sup> he old  
 felt you that he ys & may peny behid of another for w<sup>th</sup>  
 done to in carndyssh or me he doth lye lyke a false knave  
 for I am moste sure he d<sup>ed</sup> never make any thyng for  
 me but y<sup>e</sup> vaines to stande vpon the lye I do very wel  
 lyke your sendynges sawyers to penture and medeplecke  
 for that well f<sup>or</sup>dermy workes and so I pray you y<sup>e</sup> any  
 other thyng that w<sup>ll</sup> be ahelp to my byldyng Let yt  
 be done and for tomas mason yf you can l<sup>et</sup> w<sup>th</sup> he  
 ys I would very gladly he w<sup>th</sup> at chateworth I w<sup>ll</sup>  
 let you know by my next letters what w<sup>th</sup> thoman  
 mason shall begine our f<sup>ir</sup>st when he doth come  
 and as for the other mason w<sup>th</sup> Sir James would  
 you of yf he w<sup>ll</sup> not c<sup>o</sup>plye his w<sup>th</sup> you know  
 he ys no more mane for me and the masons w<sup>th</sup>  
 w<sup>th</sup> I have to do ys not much and tomas  
 mason w<sup>ll</sup> very well over se that w<sup>th</sup>  
 I p<sup>er</sup>son Sir James ys much mystryked for  
 his v<sup>er</sup>edyn but I thynke his w<sup>th</sup> ys such  
 that he w<sup>ll</sup> make small acount of that w<sup>th</sup>  
 I would have you to tell my ar<sup>th</sup> l<sup>et</sup>ter  
 that I would have the l<sup>et</sup> garden w<sup>th</sup>  
 ys by the new w<sup>th</sup> howe made agarden thys  
 yere I care not w<sup>th</sup> l<sup>et</sup> bestow any grate so  
 ther of but to sowe yt w<sup>th</sup> at Rynde of carbes and  
 flowers and some pece of yt it makes

**Figure 3b.** ID 100, f. 1r. Bess to James Crompe, 8 March [1560-1564]. Scribal hand.  
 Reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.



I have sende you by this career in that  
 bundles of garden seeds and together to wellem  
 marlyngtons house and by the way you  
 shall know how to use them in every  
 parte from the counte the way of march  
  
 your mysters  
 I Semirlo

**Figure 3c.** ID 100, f. 1v. Bess to James Crompe, 8 March [1560-1564]. Scribal hand.  
 Reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.



**Figure 4a.** ID 17, f. 2v. James Crompe to Bess, 20 November [c. 1565]. Crompe's own hand. Reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.





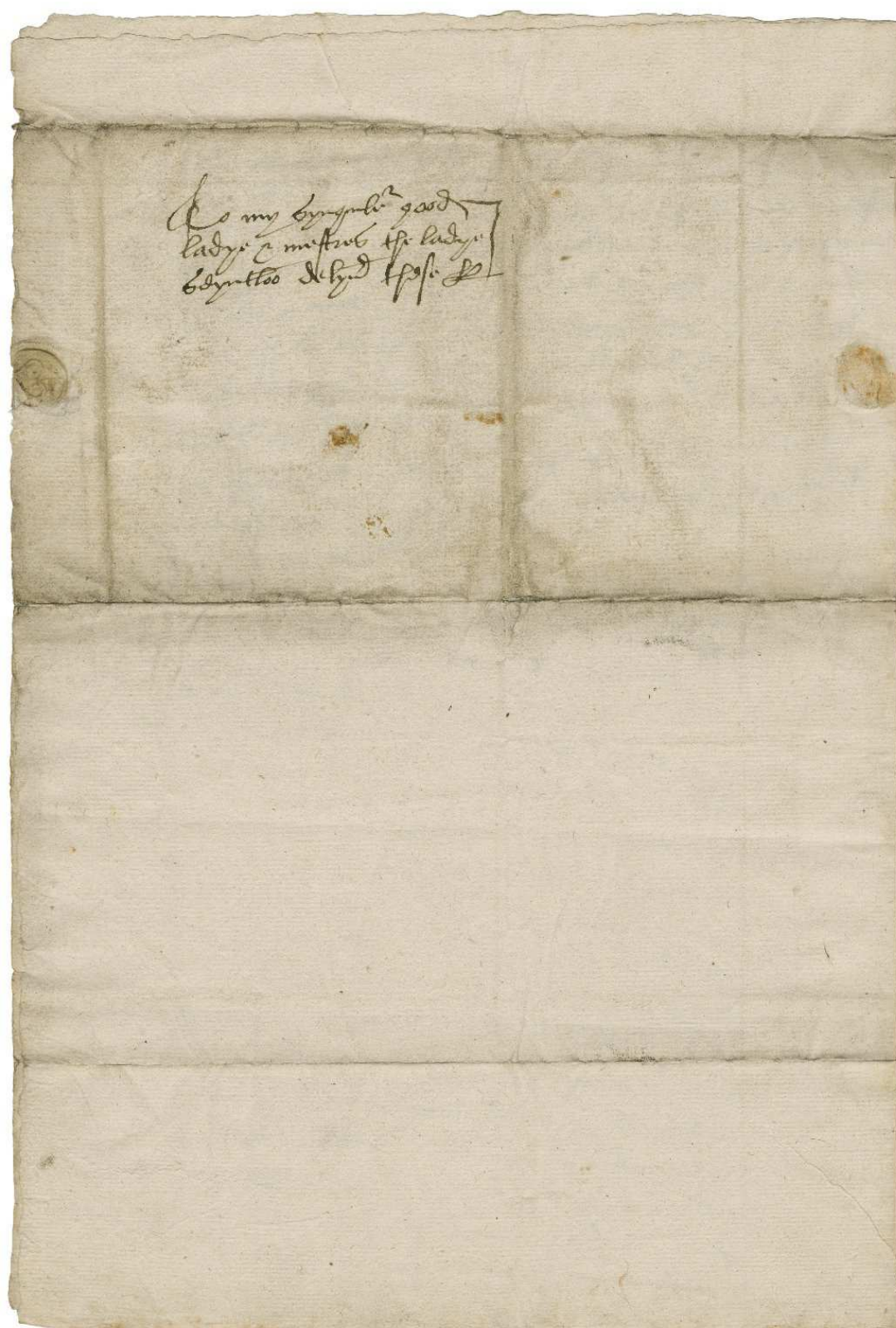


It so oft I ffele alownd no ltt<sup>r</sup> fro yo<sup>r</sup> ladyship  
 the more it was of the cloke of wepday of the  
 cary<sup>r</sup> com<sup>r</sup> in it to gath<sup>r</sup>ment so that I had myghte  
 but my ltt<sup>r</sup> ltt<sup>r</sup> yo<sup>r</sup> com<sup>r</sup> I ffele but yo<sup>r</sup> ffein  
 cloke ltt<sup>r</sup> ltt<sup>r</sup> yo<sup>r</sup> com<sup>r</sup> to me after I ltt<sup>r</sup> yo<sup>r</sup>  
 ltt<sup>r</sup> yo<sup>r</sup> ffein of the ffein wylt com<sup>r</sup> more after  
 my ffein of ab yo<sup>r</sup> ffein year. by ltt<sup>r</sup> ltt<sup>r</sup> ltt<sup>r</sup> not  
 of yo<sup>r</sup> wylt take it of you ab yo<sup>r</sup> maye year by the  
 ltt<sup>r</sup> take yo<sup>r</sup> adoyment in that ltt<sup>r</sup> ffein it ab  
 the ffein yo<sup>r</sup> com<sup>r</sup> for yo<sup>r</sup> ab yo<sup>r</sup> ltt<sup>r</sup> yo<sup>r</sup> ffein yo<sup>r</sup>  
 ltt<sup>r</sup> in ltt<sup>r</sup> the ffein ltt<sup>r</sup> the ffein of yo<sup>r</sup>

by yo<sup>r</sup> ltt<sup>r</sup> ffein  
 James Crompe

you ffein to ffein of the ffein ffein that maye ffein  
 it not ffein

**Figure 4c.** ID 17, f. 1v. James Crompe to Bess, 20 November [c. 1565]. Crompe's hand.  
 Reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.



**Figure 5a.** ID 18, f. 2v. James Crompe to Bess, 27 February [1566?]. Crompe's hand. Reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.











[illegible]



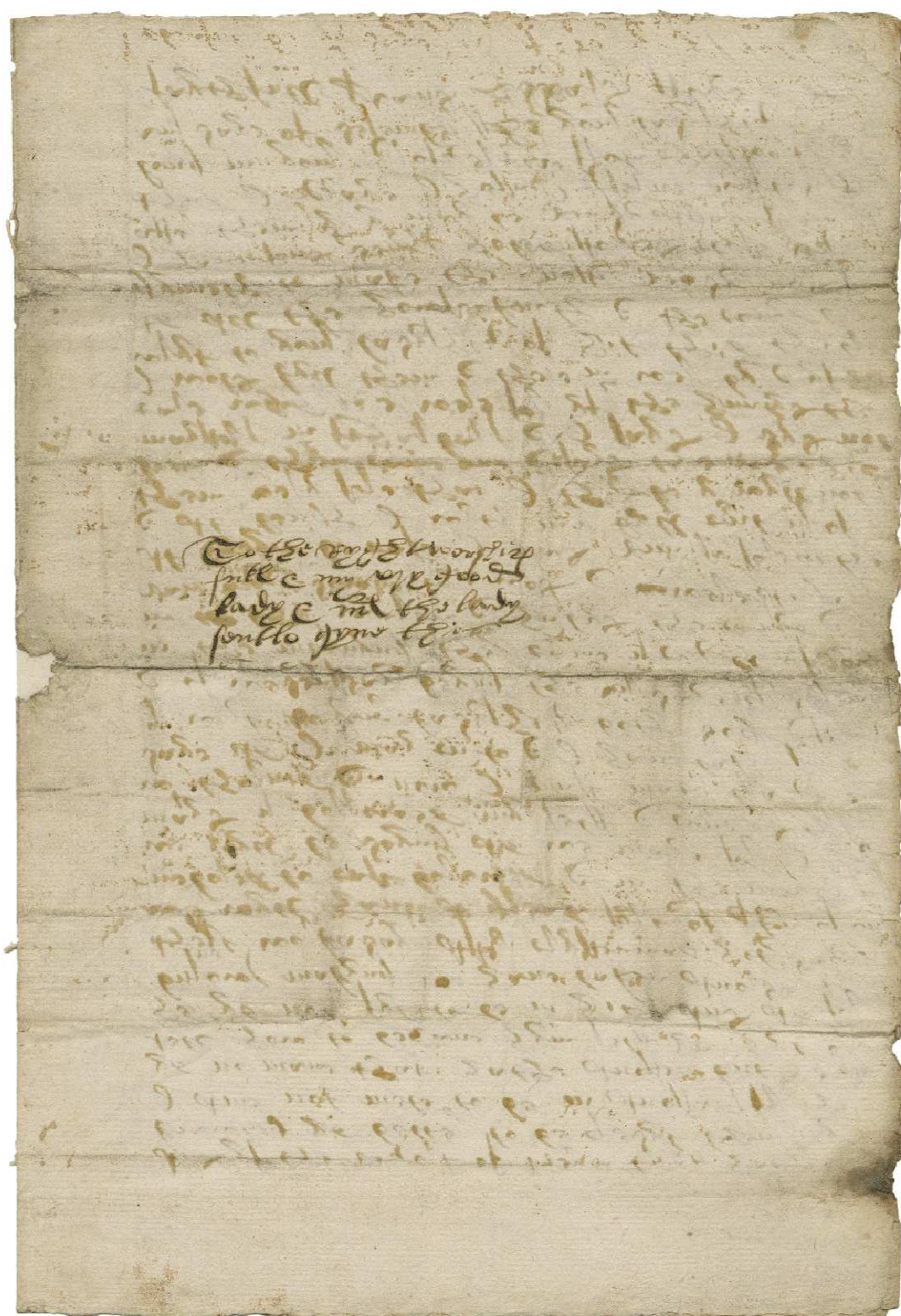
I am agrieved no further all that  
 for the fact open your young waste  
 I hope and the do eat it well out as  
 not for it no more made of dar in bar  
 for the fact for day 6 out of go to the  
 following place to your family but  
 it no for 6 writing to the out  
 no good letter by I might say in a row  
 greatly no enough to send out all my  
 letter must enough of being the  
 I kept to for from of the word  
 the way of the January

your humble servant W<sup>m</sup>  
 Marchington

I am in your debt for the  
 good words of the fact for the  
 what at the by the way of the fact  
 more with your own reckoned your a  
 pack of words the word of the fact  
 the fact well know that so far from  
 your own pack by the way of the fact  
 I am at the way of the fact for the fact  
 so that for the fact not way of the fact  
 for the fact for the fact in the fact

**Figure 6b.** ID 47, f. 1v. William Marchington to Bess, 13 January [1560-1565].  
 Marchington's hand. Reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.





**Figure 7a.** ID 28, f. 2v. Edward Foxe to Bess, 8 December [1559-1567]. Foxe's own hand. Reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.



[illegible]

**Figure 7b.** ID 28, f. 1r. Edward Foxe to Bess, 8 December [1559-1567]. Foxe's hand. Reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.



And of the report of them that saye me  
 knowyng ye better to be good then myne  
 I am not mete to be in Annes wyf for  
 ye no maner that saye Annes but so can  
 tell how to become hym self in yet of all  
 so ye not yet to be in Sic. And do for  
 by your makinge we have taken Annes that  
 the first wednesday after Christmas daye  
 we will have a great sort of men of our  
 nobles to our house & in the morninge  
 we will be doinge as we maye for I have  
 mayd if becomen my self & comen to some  
 yet to some & now I must make hazzard  
 daye do I maye into & I have taken from  
 I report to your ladyship both daye & forme  
 & of wednesday beinge the vij daye of December  
 in the morninge they came in the house of some  
 in the house & entred the house & I  
 was verye drewe the word & was Annes  
 At that time to saye I had from so far out from  
 & at length I wrote my bill out in of  
 them verye soon that I wrote & wrote not  
 how & then came one & sayd the word & I  
 mayest in this waye & I sayd I dyd not  
 take the word the word for if the word the  
 I would tell them & they in verye by & of the  
 report to your ladyship of yet the word the word  
 do all the house house & the word the word  
 hymself to make the word the word the word  
 I have found some good word the word  
 after them if I maye be made against maye  
 the word I have I have I have I have I have  
 long in your report from the word the word  
 vij daye of December the word the word  
 faythfull & hand Edward Foxe

**Figure 7c.** ID 28, f. 2r. Edward Foxe to Bess, 8 December [1559-1567]. Foxe's hand.  
 Reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.

Hi Ladie give  
 Marmion 70 Anny  
 How long & leasy  
 of H. W.  
 "Cariton"  
 He is capon to some place  
 with H. W.

Co. feingt w. f. f. f.  
 Co. Francis Willoughby  
 Ringt. a. r. d. i. c. a. r.  
 Letter of Marmion  
 who was to Comber  
 then E. of Shrewsbury  
 and some place with  
 Sir W. Raleigh difference  
 between the and Ladie  
 I. whitte. & Ladie was  
 Marmion  
 that Marmion should not Marmion answer  
 their should be shirt in and letter Marmion  
 from servants about Her  
 that it was long of His wife and Marmion  
 that His allowance for Her & Marmion  
 Scott was abated this letter was writ from  
 Sheffield.

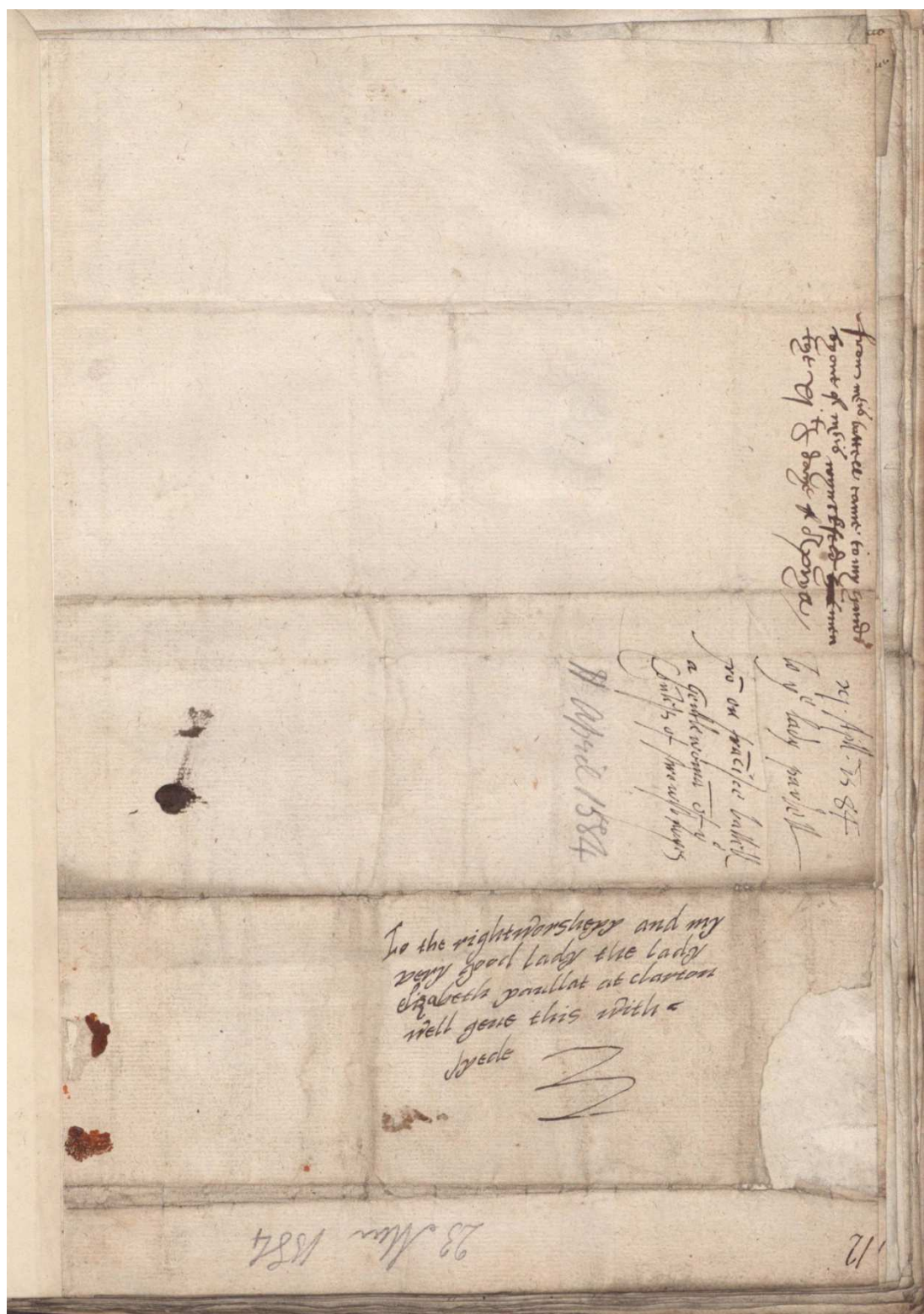
**Figure 8a.** NUL, Middleton MSS, Mi C 15, f. 2v. [William] Marmion to Sir Francis Willoughby, 24 & 28 October [1581?]. Superscription in Marmion's hand, with summaries of the letter's contents in another hand. Reproduced by permission of Manuscripts and Special Collections, The University of Nottingham.












**Figure 9a.** TNA, SP 53/13, f. 15v. Frances Battell to Lady Elizabeth Paullat, 23 March 1584. Superscription in Battell's hand, with endorsements in Lord Burghley's hand and another hand and an archivist's notes of the dates of original sending and final receipt. Reproduced by permission of TNA.



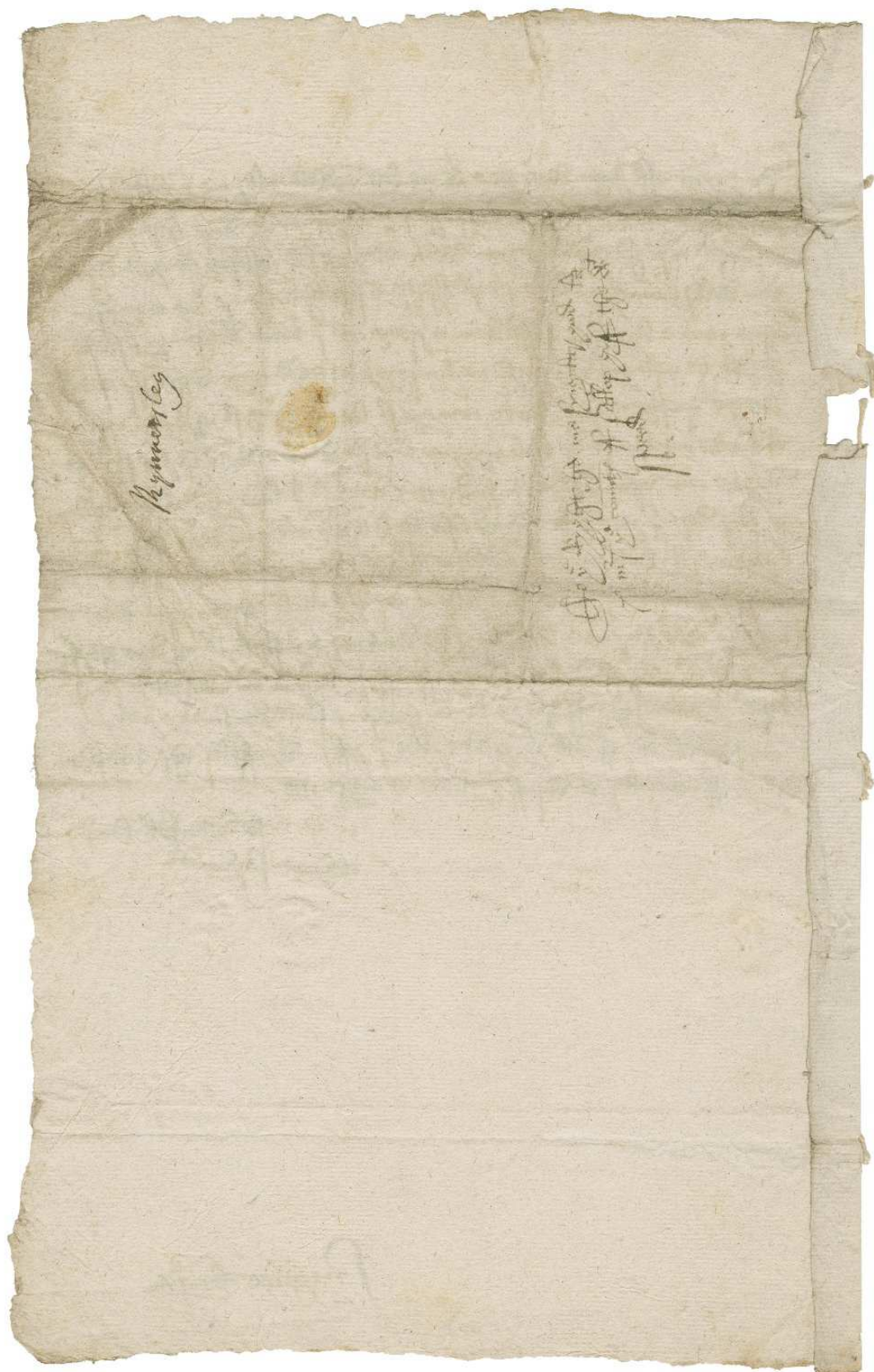
149

my selfe most humbly recommended to your good ladyship, my  
 lady commendeth her to your ladyship, her honor doth this all daye  
 to your ladyship have sent you a paire of knives & most humbly  
 be praych your ladyship to excepte my good will here in, in which  
 is my great enemy, and hath fowled my lady and is most  
 hartely bent against me, my lord, seizes me hard speech of arie  
 to my great discredeth if it should be believed of my friends as your  
 ladyship is one of my good friends that I make most account of  
 and if it pleas your ladyship to understand the cas of my lord's  
 hard dealing with me is that the scotyshe queene can not flyde  
 me for how can she flyde me, when she is with all hatred bent  
 against my good lady and I have been plaine with the scotys  
 and since that tyme my lord doth not like of me but as with  
 all hatred bent against me, the words that the scotyshe queene  
 servants sayde to me and to others of my lord's servants when  
 that but none made ancer but at this sayd they that the scotyshe  
 queene should be queene of england, when to a miche this  
 were changed before that tyme should come to pass, and all that so  
 thought I could not but make this ancer natchly it ded  
 so much grieve me to hear thes words, and I am bound in duty  
 and consience so to ancer, and since that tyme my lord  
 doth hardly deal with me, I have attend upon my lady this  
 too year and her honor likes will of my services and I would be  
 contunue his hard speech of me I can not flyde it no longer, my  
 lord ded not writ to my lady this halfe year but one letter  
 and that was all of me, that it was shame for her honor to  
 kepe me with amarrish words that is to much to write of  
 and one of my offences that my lord doth alage to me is this  
 because I ded pite my honorables lady's and in cas of great  
 wick is to be pitted and lamentable is god foward it in  
 his good tyme, and this I most humbly take my leafe frome  
 Chadworth the xxiii daye of march

  
 your ladyship  
 to use at comyns  
 Frances Battell  
 37

**Figure 9b.** TNA, SP 53/13, f. 14r. Frances Battell to Lady Elizabeth Paullat, 23 March 1584. Battell's own hand. Reproduced by permission of TNA.

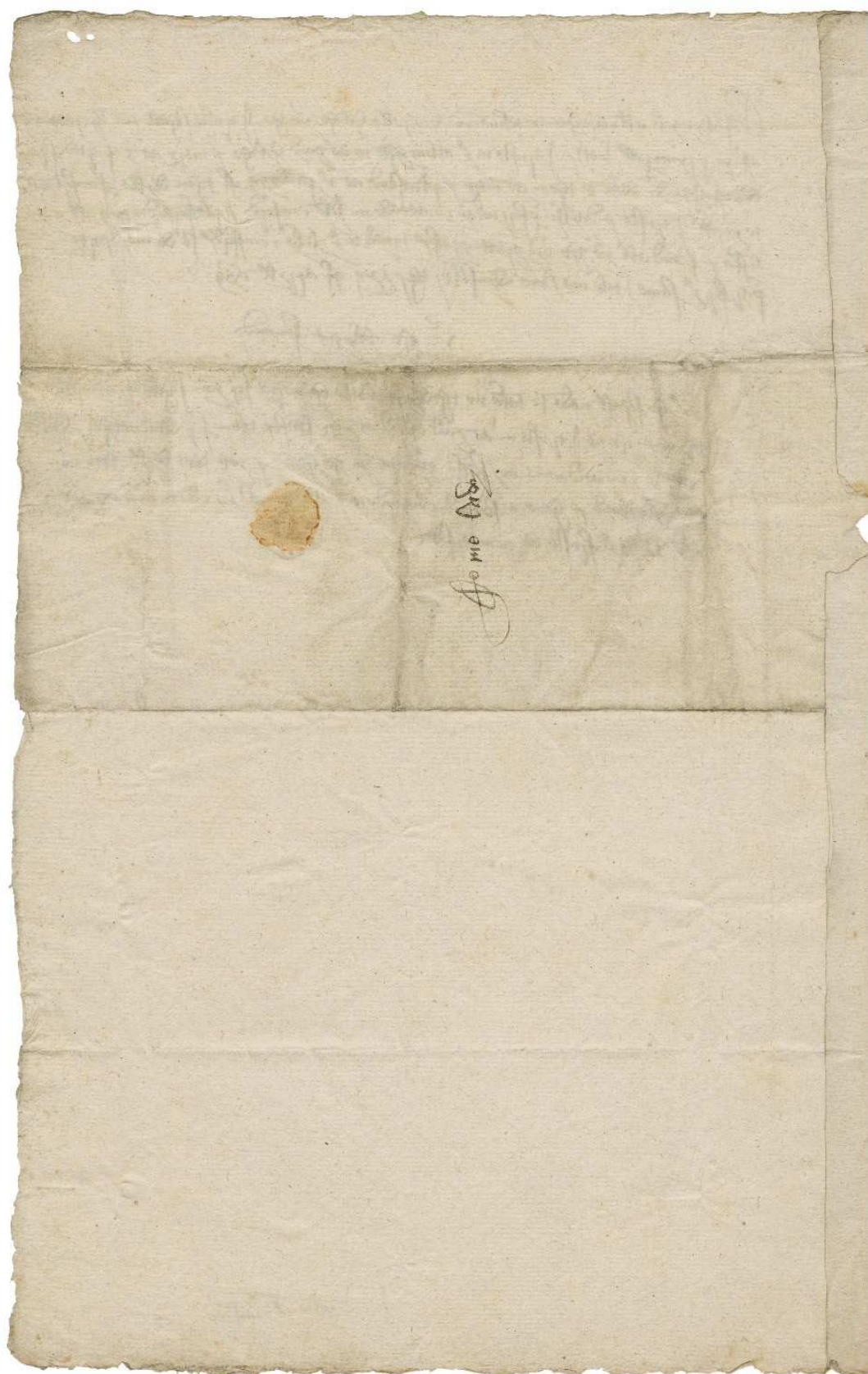




**Figure 10a.** ID 37, f. 1v. Nicholas Kynnersley to Bess, 5 November 1588. Superscription in Kynnersley's hand, with note of sender in another hand. Reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.







**Figure 11a.** ID 38, f. 1v. Nicholas Kynnersley to Bess, 22 April 1589. Kynnersley's hand. Reproduced by permission of the Folger Shakespeare Library.



## TRANSCRIPTION POLICY

### Aims and Rationale

Since the original letters that are the focus of this thesis are not only in manuscript form but also in Early Modern English, a non-standard state of the language, they require a transcription policy for conversion into type. The full transcriptions of these eleven letters are my own and were produced for the thesis. Quotations from other letters (in Early Modern English and French) are also my own transcriptions unless otherwise noted. I consulted a number of catalogues, guides to textual editing, and editions in the process of searching for the extant correspondence of Bess's servants and devising my transcription policy. These works are included in the bibliography.

The purpose of the transcriptions in this thesis is to provide accurate and readable texts for analysis. Since the letters are analysed for the social significance and interplay of their various linguistic and visual elements, a policy of semi-diplomatic transcription has been adopted as the best means of capturing relevant features of the manuscript originals. As is shown in Chapters 1, 3, 4, and 5, minute features of language and material form can be crucial to the interpretation of a letter, and it is therefore one of the aims of this thesis to demonstrate the importance of close analysis of letters in their original manuscript form, which is facilitated by the detailed transcriptions.

The transcription policy set out here also applies with slight modification to quotations from Bess of Hardwick's many household account books. Since quotations from the account books are brief and intended to contextualise the letters, the manuscript layout of entries is not preserved.

### References and Annotations

Full transcripts are accompanied by key information including sender and recipient, date, place of writing and destination, either the *Bess of Hardwick's Letters* ID number (when applicable) or the current repository and shelfmark of the manuscript, and the foliation, script, and scribe (when known) of each part of the letter. Footnotes provide glosses on archaic or technical words, modernise words with potentially confusing spellings, give additional information about people and places mentioned, and record damage to the manuscripts. All dictionary definitions quoted in glosses are taken from the most recent version of the *OED*.

## Layout and Spacing

The page layout and most visual features of the manuscript letters, including the use of blank space, have been preserved in the transcripts. Line breaks and single blank lines have been retained. Multiple blank lines are replaced by an editorial note: *6 lines blank*, for example. When blank space is used within a handwritten line to indicate a pause or change of topic, proportionate space is left in the typescript. Subscriptions and signatures appear in spatial relation to the preceding letter-text and to the edges of the text block as they do in the manuscripts. However, it has not been possible to reproduce the original ratio of text size to paper size, and sometimes a single line of handwriting runs over onto a second line of type. When this happens, the second line is indented.

The writing on the address leaf is transcribed before the body of each letter, and the presence of pen flourishes is indicated by the note [*flourish*].

## Spelling and Punctuation

Original spellings have been preserved, including the occasional use of <y> for /th/ sounds and the complementary distribution of <i> and <j>, <u> and <v> according to their positions within a word.<sup>1</sup>

Word division has not been regularised in transcriptions when unusual divisions appear to be intentional. For example, several writers habitually write the indefinite article as one word with the noun that follows it. This spacing is too pronounced to be accidental and may indicate that the two words were thought of as a single unit.

Original punctuation has been preserved. Whereas Marmyon uses commas, forward slashes, and periods (often in combination with blank space) to signal pauses and the introduction of new topics, Kynnersley and the scribe of letter ID 100 use no punctuation at all. Battell often uses horizontal strokes to fill space at the end of lines; these have been transcribed as em-dashes.

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<sup>1</sup> Here in the transcription policy, graphemes (letters of the alphabet) are placed within single angle brackets, allographs (variously shaped realisations of graphemes) between double angle brackets, and phonemes (minimal units of speech sounds) between forward slashes, following the typographical conventions for linguistics given in Simon Horobin and Jeremy Smith, *An Introduction to Middle English* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP), p. 42. In the actual transcriptions, angle brackets do not appear and forward slashes are a form of punctuation.

## Capitalisation

Capitalisation was not standardised in the sixteenth century. In the manuscripts, capitalisation overlaps with other palaeographic features, such as some writers' use of alternative allographs for <a>, <h>, <l>, and <r>, usually when they occur in word-initial position. These transcriptions do not distinguish between different lowercase allographs, but they use uppercase type to represent capitals wherever they appear in handwriting that clearly distinguishes between capital and lowercase. This includes the rendering of capital <<ff>> in the manuscripts as <<F>> in the transcriptions. Some writers use only the capital forms of certain graphemes; these allographs are rendered in lowercase type since capitalisation appears to be coincidental.

## Abbreviations and Contractions

In the manuscripts, abbreviations and contractions are signalled in a number of ways. Where they use Latinate or vernacular abbreviation marks that consistently represent particular graphemes, these marks are replaced with those graphemes in plain type. However, where Latin abbreviation marks for <er>, <re>, and <ro> are used to represent <r> alone or <r> with a different vowel, the mark is transcribed as <r> in plain type with any implied vowels expanded in italics.

Other forms of abbreviation or contraction are expanded entirely in italics, with the exception of personal names or initials, which are typed as written, and contractions that remain current, such as 'm<sup>r</sup>' and 'm<sup>rs</sup>', which are lowered but not expanded. (However, it ought to be remembered that 'mr' and 'mrs' represent the titles 'master' and 'mistress', used for employers and members of the gentry.)

When expanding abbreviations and contractions, early modern spellings that are sufficiently well attested and stable are preferred over standard Present Day English spellings. When a writer consistently uses a particular spelling for a given word, his or her preferred spelling is used in expansions in his or her letters. For example, Crompe consistently spells 'master' as 'mastur', so 'askolemast<sup>r</sup>' can be confidently expanded to 'askolemastur' (*a schoolmaster*). However, when it is impossible to know how a word would have been spelled if written out in full, expansions are given in standard Present Day English. For example, since Foxe's letter includes the abbreviation 'rec' but not the full word, the Present Day spelling of 'received' is used in the expansion.



When letters are quoted for analysis, special formatting and deletions have been removed to facilitate ease of reading, except where palaeographic features or deletions are under discussion. When whole words or phrases are italicised in quotation, it is to draw attention to them in the analysis.

### **Insertions, Deletions, and Illegibility**

Insertions are enclosed in ^carets^. Illegible writing is indicated by the note [*illegible*]. Deletions, when legible, are typed with ~~striketrough~~; when not legible, their presence is indicated by the note [*illegible*]. When graphemes appear to have been omitted from a word accidentally or when damage to a manuscript has removed or made some illegible but the full word can be reconstructed, the missing or damaged text is supplied within [brackets]. When reconstruction is impossible, the missing text is represented by ellipses within brackets: [...].

### **Numbers, Dates, and Money**

Numbers, including dates and sums of money, are transcribed as they appear, in a mixture of Arabic and lowercase Roman numerals and often with some use of superscript ('vij<sup>th</sup>', for example). Standard abbreviations for the Latin terms for pounds, shillings, and pence ('l' or 'li' for *librae*, 's' for *solidi*, and 'd' for *denarii*) have not been expanded.



## Introduction

### **Servants' correspondence**

This thesis offers a richly detailed microhistory of the epistolary exchanges of seven servants and their mistress in the second half of the sixteenth century. As the first study to focus exclusively on the correspondence of early modern servants and to consider the social language, materiality, and afterlives of servants' letters, it breaks new ground in both subject matter and approach. The thesis develops a unique interdisciplinary methodology that combines textual editing with archival and other primary research and an innovative form of close reading. Furthermore, it builds on insights and methods from several academic fields in order to situate the letters in their precise material and circumstantial as well as their wider social historical, ideological, and political contexts, while exposing the complexities and richness of letters as a genre and of these letters in particular. The thesis is informed by and contributes to some of the most recent and exciting developments in social, literary, linguistic, and cultural historiography.

The thesis collects, transcribes, annotates, and interprets all of the extant letters written and received by individuals who can be shown to have been servants of Bess of Hardwick. Thus, although it is a small group of letters — eleven in total — it is the sum of their surviving correspondence. Three of these letters were written by Bess and the remaining eight by six of her servants, all of whom were literate upper servants, privileged either by offices of responsibility, which often involved supervising lower servants on Bess's behalf, or by their proximity to the mistress as her companions and confidantes. Although the term 'servant' might seem to imply a life of thankless drudgery, these particular servants were members of a domestic elite.

The servants that Bess corresponded with were some of the household and estate officers left as her deputies at her main residences while she was temporarily absent. Four of these men were based at Chatsworth House, Derbyshire in the 1550s-1560s. Francis Whitfield and James Crompe were both stewards, who shared overall responsibility for the house, its inhabitants, and supporting estates. William Marchington was another estate officer who also had access to the house, while Edward Foxe, as warrener, had the specific job of looking after the rabbits on the Chatsworth estate. Bess's correspondence with these men concerns the management

of the household and estates, repairing and remodelling the house itself, other business affairs including potential land purchases, and rumours that Whitfield and Foxe were negligent in their duties while she was away. Nicholas Kynnersley, the fifth officer who corresponded with Bess, sent his letters to her from Wingfield Manor, Derbyshire in the late 1580s, a time of domestic upheaval for Bess and her household due to the breakdown of her marriage with George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury. In making arrangements for the safeguarding of the property and of Bess's domestic authority there, Kynnersley's letters support Bess's cause in highly practical ways.

In addition to the correspondence exchanged between Bess and her officers, two of the gentle-born personal attendants who travelled with her from house to house in the early 1580s, William Marmyon and Frances Battell, wrote letters to their friends and potential patrons outside the household. In these letters they draw attention to their vulnerability, as Bess's loyal servants, to persecution from her husband, and they seek practical and political support. While centred on their domestic circumstances and the mistress-servant relationship, these two letters are politically charged forays into the battle over their own, Bess's, and Shrewsbury's reputations.

Letters include the fullest, the most explicit, and the most complex expressions of social identities and negotiations of mistress-servant relationships to be found amongst archival sources. Unlike short statements of fact in list form (such as financial accounts and household inventories) or entirely formulaic texts mediated by professionals outside the home (such as legal documents), letters consist of extended prose that by its very nature is interpersonal and subjective and that, when written by household members about their duties and experiences, offer unrivalled insights into how they perceived and conducted themselves and how they wished to be perceived and responded to, according to their specific domestic positions and circumstances. Letters explicitly register and reinforce the hierarchical relationships between authors and addressees through formulaic terms of address and conventional opening and closing formulae, while also allowing scope for more personalised and socially dynamic content, including self-performances, characterisations of recipients and mutual acquaintances, and rhetorical interventions that attempt to persuade even socially superior recipients to think and act in desired ways. Letters do not merely record social history, they actively shape it.

Through its analysis of this particular set of correspondence, the thesis contributes to our knowledge of Bess's life and begins to reshape her reputation. Furthermore, it opens up servants' letters as objects of enquiry in their own right, bringing servants' correspondence into the nexus of the dynamic and rapidly growing field of interdisciplinary epistolary studies.

Letters cannot be understood apart from either the sociohistorical conditions and particular circumstances in which they were written and circulated or what they hoped to accomplish; interpretation must take account of these factors, which exert powerful influence over how letters were composed as texts, produced as manuscripts, and delivered as material objects. The letters studied in this thesis, despite their many differences according to sender, recipient, occasion, and objective, share the over-riding condition of having been written from within a mistress-servant relationship that structured most aspects of their writers' daily lives, including, the thesis argues, their epistolary practices and even their self-perceptions due to evident internalisation of their continually performed social roles. It is helpful at this point to provide an overview of the role that letter-writing itself played in managing household and estate resources and relationships, to explain the sociohistorical basis for the thesis's central argument.

For the sixteenth-century upper gentry and nobility, householding was characterised by plurality and mobility. Ownership of multiple properties and the practical and political needs to move between them and the royal court meant that great landowners and their core staff were frequently on the move and much of the business of running country houses and estates had to be conducted from a distance, through correspondence with delegated officers left behind. In this context, letter-writing was a goal-orientated activity: letters were intended to accomplish things in the material and social realms and sometimes in the political realm as well. Not merely — or straightforwardly — a way of getting things done, letters were also sites of social interaction and performance. The social signs embedded in both the language and material features of early modern manuscript letters constitute further dimensions of the letters' functions.

The thesis demonstrates that in their correspondence of household and estate management and other domestically focused letters Bess and her literate officers and attendants took advantage of the opportunities that letter-writing provided for them to build up a hierarchical but potentially cordial working relationship; to enact through both the language and visual-material features of their letters their respective social



roles within the domestic hierarchy; and, finally, to voice their needs and opinions and solicit specific responses from their letters' recipients. Given, first, the dialogic dynamic of correspondence in which the identity of the addressee and his or her relationship to the writer very much influence what is written and, second, the social inequality between mistress and servants, the overarching objectives of the thesis are to discover the means by which each writer simultaneously enacts his or her designated social role and constructs an individual epistolary voice from within the mistress-servant relationship and, further, how self-performance operates as a persuasive force in letters created under these conditions.

Based on close readings of the letters in Chapters 3-5, the thesis makes two key arguments. First, that each letter-writer's self-performance as a worthy holder of his or her particular domestic position is built up through the accumulation of conventional and original verbal and visual expressions; second, that such self-performance adds to the persuasiveness of his or her letter(s) because it increases the writer's credibility as an individual while also triggering assumptions about mutual benefit and expectations of reciprocity between mistress and servant, author and addressee. We see service exchanged for patronage, trust for trust (and distrust for distrust) through the exchange of letters. Of course, inequalities and disjunctions also emerge. Servants are clearly expected to express devotion to the mistress in their letters to her and others, while she is entitled to take their willing service for granted but must explain what in particular she wishes them to do. In addition, their letters show some of Bess's servants negotiating for promotion, a return to her favour, and ongoing financial support after leaving her service. In these scenarios, it is clear what the servant writers wish to gain but not always equally clear how the proposed arrangements would benefit their mistress. On a grander scale, the letters written by Bess's attendants in the 1580s depict drastic disruptions to the domestic harmony of the conglomerate household of Bess, Shrewsbury, their prisoner-guest Mary Queen of Scots, and their respective servants, revealing the interconnectedness of domestic and national politics and calling for intervention. But all letter-writers, whatever their particular circumstances and agenda, construct their social identities with reference to the mistress-servant relationship in which they participate, and each letter makes the ongoing development of this relationship part of the business in hand.

Thus, early modern letters of household and estate management and even letters sent by servants to contacts outside the household were both practical and performative, using socially significant linguistic and material components jointly to

attempt to persuade recipients to think and act according to senders' wishes. The letters studied in this thesis demonstrate that, perhaps surprisingly, this is as true of upper servants writing to their mistress and other potential benefactors with advice, requests, or apologies as of her writing to them with instructions, praise, or rebukes.

### Who was Bess of Hardwick?

Bess of Hardwick's biography has been written and rewritten several times since her death in 1608. Several modern biographies provide a wealth of detail about many aspects of her life, but the main events can be summarised briefly.<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth (Bess) Hardwick was born sometime in the 1520s — her birth date is disputed — probably at her father's modest manor house at Hardwick, Derbyshire. Both her parents, John and Elizabeth Hardwick (née Leake), came from gentry families of only local importance. Bess had several siblings, and all were still young children or infants when their father died in 1528. As the only son, James, was less than two years old at that time, the boy's minority was spent in a long wardship, which placed the whole family in a precarious situation, deprived of income from and control over the Hardwick lands. Elizabeth's remarriage to another local gentleman of limited means, Ralph Leche, and the birth of three more daughters cannot have brought greater financial security, yet Bess too was soon married to a member of the local gentry, Robert Barley or Barlow, in what looks like a desperate attempt to set these two minors on a path towards social and financial stability. However, Barley died soon after, leaving Bess a teenaged widow. Yet from these uncertain beginnings, she went on to marry and outlive three prominent men at the Tudor royal courts: Sir William Cavendish (married 1547, died 1557), Sir William St Loe (married 1559, died 1565), and finally Sir George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury (married 1567 or 1568, died 1590), who was commonly believed to be the wealthiest nobleman of his generation and who gained additional notoriety as the longest-serving custodian of Mary Queen

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<sup>2</sup> Maud Stepney Rawson, *Bess of Hardwick and Her Circle* (London: Hutchinson, 1910); E. Carleton Williams, *Bess of Hardwick* [1959] (Bath: Cedric Chivers for The Library Association, 1977); David N. Durant, *Bess of Hardwick: Portrait of an Elizabethan Dynast* [1977], rev. ed. (London: Peter Owen, 2008); Mary S. Lovell, *Bess of Hardwick: First Lady of Chatsworth* [2005] (London: Abacus, 2006). Bess has also been the subject of two slighter biographies, Alison Plowden, *Mistress of Hardwick* (London: BBC Publications, 1972) and Kate Hubbard, *A Material Girl: Bess of Hardwick, 1527-1608* (London: Short Books, 2001), and appeared in biographical anthologies including Crichton Porteous, *Great Men of Derbyshire* (London: The Bodley Head, 1956), pp. 72-87 and Pearl Hogrefe, *Women of Action in Tudor England: Nine Biographical Sketches* (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State UP, 1977), pp. 59-81. She also has her own entry in the *ODNB*: Elizabeth Goldring, 'Talbot, Elizabeth [Bess of Hardwick], countess of Shrewsbury (1527?-1608)', *ODNB*, OUP, 2004-2013 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26925>>.

of Scots during her English captivity. During Bess's adult marriages, she bore and raised six children (all with Cavendish), bought and co-managed numerous properties in Derbyshire, and supervised the rebuilding of Chatsworth House and the old Hardwick Hall. In her final widowhood, she completed her most ambitious building project of all, a new Hardwick Hall overshadowing the old. She also founded a dynasty of sorts, as her daughter Elizabeth Cavendish married into the Stewart royal family, and Bess's male descendants went on to become dukes of Devonshire, Newcastle, and Portland.

This is how Bess's life trajectory is typically told, with a focus on her serial marriages and the ever increasing wealth and status they brought her. However, Bess's marriages alone cannot adequately explain her rise from the ranks of the impecunious lower gentry to countess, landowner, and matriarch. The first turning point in her life was her time in the service of Lady Zouche, which allowed her to make connections beyond her place of birth, to experience court life, and ultimately to gain the acceptance of the elites whose culture she by then shared. Bess may have met Barley while both were serving (and being socialised) in Lady Zouche's household, and she met her next two husbands during periods in which she and they were serving at the royal court. In that sense, Bess's career ran in parallel with those of her second and third husbands, who likewise won royal favour and social prominence beyond their birth status through their dedicated service. Although this thesis focuses on the correspondence exchanged between Bess as mistress (rather than as waiting gentlewoman) and her own household and estate servants, it is worth bearing in mind that in Tudor England service as well as marriage bound people together and could contribute to upward mobility.

Nevertheless, one of the most influential sketches of Bess's life and character remains that by Edmund Lodge in *Illustrations of British History* (1791), which presents her as a thoroughly selfish social climber who made a career of marrying up and getting as much as she could from each husband in turn, in each case to the detriment of his own family and the promotion of hers. The death of one husband merely freed her to set her sights higher for the next of her four 'conquests'.<sup>3</sup> Lodge does not attribute Bess's success to feminine charms. Rather, he calls her 'a woman of masculine understanding and conduct' and claims that she was a very persuasive

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<sup>3</sup> Edmund Lodge, *Illustrations of British History, Biography, and Manners [...] from the Manuscripts of the Noble Families of Howard, Talbot, and Cecil [...]* 3 vols (London: G. Nicol, 1791), p. xvi.



talker.<sup>4</sup> It seems that Lodge would not consider competitive acquisitiveness a character flaw in a man. But for a woman to intrude on male prerogatives for the acquisition and disposal of wealth, property, and natural resources turns her into ‘a merchant’ and marriage into a business deal in which she drives a hard bargain.<sup>5</sup> In late eighteenth-century genteel society, it was simply unthinkable that a wife could behave in such a way. But in the households of the sixteenth-century gentry and nobility (hereafter ‘elite households’), the mistress of the house was the master’s chief delegate, outranking upper servants but responsible with them, down through the line of command, for the smooth management of the master’s complex and diverse domestic affairs. When Bess’s third husband, Sir William St Loe, addresses her as the ‘cheyff oversear off my worcks’ it is in a tone of affection and appreciation, not alarm (letter ID 59).

Nevertheless, Lodge’s anachronistically derogatory character sketch of Bess furnished material for Joseph Hunter’s in *Hallamshire: The History and Topography of the Parish of Sheffield in the County of York* (1819) and continues to retain some currency: John Guy’s biography of Mary Queen of Scots derives its descriptions of Bess’s character directly from Lodge.<sup>6</sup> Echoes of Lodge’s voice can be heard in the full-length biographies of Bess by Maud Stepney Rawson (1910) and E. Carleton Williams (1959), which present her as larger than life in her personal and dynastic ambitions, in her building projects, and in her capability to carry out her grand designs through a combination of cold calculation and extreme risk-taking.<sup>7</sup> Whereas Rawson and Williams vacillate between admiration and criticism of their subject, the more recent biographies by David N. Durant (1977) and Mary S. Lovell (2005) are consistently sympathetic and rather less melodramatic.<sup>8</sup> Although all major accounts

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<sup>4</sup> Lodge, p. xvii.

<sup>5</sup> Lodge goes on to list further examples of what he obviously considers her masculine behaviour: ‘She was a builder, a buyer and seller of estates, a money lender, a farmer, and a merchant of lead, coals, and timber’ (p. xvii). The final activities listed pertain to the exploitation of the natural resources on her estates.

<sup>6</sup> Joseph Hunter, *Hallamshire: The History and Topography of the Parish of Sheffield in the County of York* (London: Richard and Arthur Taylor, 1819), pp. 62-63, 69; John Guy, ‘My Heart Is My Own’: *The Life of Mary Queen of Scots* (London: HarperCollins, 2004), pp. 441-42, 448-49.

<sup>7</sup> Maud Stepney Rawson, *Bess of Hardwick and Her Circle* (London: Hutchinson, 1910); E. Carleton Williams, *Bess of Hardwick* [1959] (Bath: Cedric Chivers for The Library Association, 1977).

<sup>8</sup> David N. Durant, *Bess of Hardwick: Portrait of an Elizabethan Dynast* [1977], rev. ed. (London: Peter Owen, 2008); Mary S. Lovell, *Bess of Hardwick: First Lady of Chatsworth* [2005] (London: Abacus, 2006). Bess has also been the subject of two slighter biographies, Alison Plowden, *Mistress of Hardwick* (London: BBC Publications, 1972) and Kate Hubbard, *A Material Girl: Bess of Hardwick, 1527-1608* (London: Short Books, 2001), and appeared in biographical anthologies including Crichton Porteous, *Great Men of Derbyshire* (London: The Bodley Head, 1956), pp. 72-87 and Pearl Hogrefe, *Women of Action in Tudor England: Nine Biographical Sketches* (Ames, Iowa:

of Bess's life have quoted from her correspondence (in Lodge and Hunter's editions), none pay close attention to her language, specific epistolary practices, or how the dynamics of her position as the mistress of an elite household and numerous estates shaped her domestic and linguistic behaviour. But, as this thesis demonstrates, these aspects of her life richly reward careful consideration.

From the time of her marriage to Sir William Cavendish in 1547 until her death some sixty years later, Bess remained the mistress of an elite household, responsible for the management of its material and human resources, whether she was married or widowed, and regardless of the identity of her husband. Some of her earliest-serving officers, including Whitfield and Crompe, remained with her after Cavendish's death in 1557 and her remarriage to Sir William St Loe in 1559. The correspondence between Bess and Crompe indicates that their long-term working relationship was a mutually satisfying one. It is possible that long-serving officers like Crompe not only assisted with administrative continuity over times of great change in Bess's life and domestic arrangements but also developed greater attachment to the mistress, each other, and the particular houses and estates where they served than to the sequence of masters (and their servants) who came and went — even though nominally (and perhaps more than nominally) Bess's servants were subsumed into the household of each new husband and placed under his authority, as was Bess herself.

While the thesis seeks to forefront the words, experiences, and epistolary practices of Bess's upper servants, its historically attuned close readings of domestic letters also shed considerable light on Bess's performance of her mistress role, both directly in her own letters to her Chatsworth stewards (which are the focus of Chapter 3) and as represented in the letters written by her officers and attendants (analysed in Chapters 4 and 5). From these readings, it becomes apparent that Bess was an active and astute household manager, who could keep track of complicated details and large numbers of people. Furthermore, she used a range of different styles when writing to the Chatsworth stewards with instructions. The social significance of her stylistic variation in these letters is considered in Chapter 3. Letters written by Bess's upper servants either to or about her reveal that she also performed her mistress role through retaining attendants of gentle birth and exercising various forms of patronage. These findings strongly suggest that Bess derived important

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Iowa State UP, 1977), pp. 59-81. She also has her own entry in the *ODNB*: Elizabeth Goldring, 'Talbot, Elizabeth [Bess of Hardwick], countess of Shrewsbury (1527?-1608)', *ODNB*, OUP, 2004-2013 <<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26925>>.

aspects of her social and political identity from her role as the mistress of a great household — and not only from being the wife of increasingly wealthy and prestigious husbands.

Relevant biographical details, including reminders of her marital status at particular times, are given in each chapter to help contextualise the readings of individual letters. Because Bess's surname and titles changed with each of her marriages and it would be disorientating to call her by several different names over the course of the thesis, she is referred to simply as 'Bess'. That is the version of her name used in the modern biographies and in the *Bess of Hardwick's Letters* edition, so it provides consistency across as well as within individual studies.<sup>9</sup> In contrast with the familiarity implied by using her nickname, the thesis considers Bess in her dignified and authoritative role as the female deputy head of a large-scale domestic institution. In the letters studied here, she is seen as one individual interacting with others within the framework provided by household hierarchies and practices that placed the mistress above the upper servants but necessitated that she work with some of them quite closely.

Thus, although women's histories have clearly shown that early modern aristocratic women's roles and opportunities were largely defined by their relationships to male family members, especially their husbands, the importance of the entire household unit — as an institution that needed to be carefully managed, as a symbol of the social status and honour of its head, and as a venue for political engagement — in determining the self-perceptions and behaviour of all its members, including the mistress and her upper servants, is not to be underestimated.<sup>10</sup> Close readings of the domestic letters written by Bess and her officers and attendants reveal how their respective mistress and servant roles were represented and enacted in their correspondence, and they remind us just how important mistress-servant relations were to social identities and epistolary practices in this period.

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<sup>9</sup> *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c. 1550-1608*, ed. by Alison Wiggins, Alan Bryson, Daniel Starza Smith, Anke Timmermann and Graham Williams, University of Glasgow, web development by Katherine Rogers, University of Sheffield Humanities Research Institute (April 2013) <[www.bessofhardwick.org](http://www.bessofhardwick.org)>.

<sup>10</sup> For example, Barbara J. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women 1450-1550: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers* (New York: OUP, 2002); Froide, Amy M., 'Marital Status as a Category of Difference: Singlewomen and Widows in Early Modern England', in *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800*, ed. by Judith M. Bennett and Amy M. Froide (Philadelphia: U of Pennsylvania P, 1999), pp. 236-69.



## Methodology

This thesis has a four-part methodology, the first stage of which was the choice of material and overall interpretive approach. This thesis offers a microhistory of servants' correspondence that uncovers the specific ways in which a small group of servants to the same mistress textualised their relationships with her and others through their correspondence. Letters by their very nature textualise social relations, which they simultaneously represent and enact in linguistic and material forms. Letters written and received by servants offer a unique perspective on social history that leads to valuable insights into the construction of domestic social relations otherwise hidden from view. Like much of women's history, the thesis is in part an effort to recuperate the voices and reconstruct the everyday experiences of a social group that has been marginalised in traditional historiography (though the thesis reveals that in the households in which they served, these particular servants were not so much marginalised as medial, placed between the mistress and the lower servants in the domestic hierarchy).

Microhistory offers a particularly appropriate framework for studying the performance of social relations in servants' manuscript correspondence, as this mode of historiography is characterised by the choice of unusual or traditionally overlooked subjects that can bring to light previously obscure aspects of social or cultural history; by an interest in how non-elite individuals exercise agency within social or circumstantial constraints; by close, qualitative analysis of often archival material; and by dense and highly particular historical contextualisation.<sup>11</sup> The fact that very few letters have survived is no obstacle to this type of analysis. Indeed, the advantage of working with a small number of letters is that it allows for fine-grained, historically informed, holistic analysis of each one. As the readings in Chapters 3-5 demonstrate, a single letter can encapsulate a longer-standing relationship between sender and addressee. Furthermore, comparisons and cumulative findings can, by the

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<sup>11</sup> Precise definitions of microhistory are still contested, but most would agree that Robert Darnton's *The Great Cat Massacre and Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (London: Allen Lane, 1984), Carlo Ginzburg's *The Cheese and the Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller*, trans. by John and Anne Tedeschi (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980), and Natalie Zemon Davis's *The Return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 1983) are classic examples. Of these, Davis's work is now the most widely respected, probably because it is the least eccentric. This thesis is in fact more similar to Davis's *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), as both study a range of individual voices working to achieve particular outcomes within the rhetorical parameters of unequal social relations and a single genre. The fullest and most recent account of microhistory is Sigurður Gylfi Magnússon and István M. Sziijártó's *What Is Microhistory? Theory and Practice* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

end of the thesis, contribute to wider historiographical debates and point to a number of areas where further research is needed.

After selecting the material and overall interpretive approach, the second stage was transcribing and annotating the letters. This thesis studies original sent letters as whole objects, comprised not only of words and discourses but also of the material forms in which they took shape and were circulated, and from which letters as a genre derive a great deal of their meaning. Accordingly, it includes images and full, accurate, annotated transcriptions of all eleven extant letters written and received by individuals known to have been in Bess's service. The new transcriptions provide a solid basis for detailed textual analysis, while the notes assist interpretation by glossing difficult words and providing additional information about the people and places mentioned. The inclusion in the thesis of the images on which the transcriptions are based enables readers to compare the two and to see for themselves the visual features that are referred to in the interpretation of these manuscript letters.

The transcriptions and images are integral to the analysis of the letters. Whereas images are grouped together for convenience, transcriptions are integrated into Chapters 3-5, where they are analysed in chronological order. This structure allows for narrative continuity across these core chapters while also demonstrating interpretive continuity from transcription through analysis — that is, the placement of the transcriptions at the beginning of each section of analysis reflects the fact that the interpretive process begins in the act of transcribing (if not earlier) and is subsequently developed further and made more explicit in the reading that follows. The new transcriptions included in the thesis were made with the particular type of analysis to be undertaken in mind, as described in the Transcription Policy, above.

The importance of starting with transcription — or careful reading and viewing — of the original before moving on to written analysis can be demonstrated by observing the results when this step is omitted. Until quite recently researchers working on Bess of Hardwick had limited access to her correspondence and related letter collections, either in the original manuscripts (which, as sent letters, exist in single copies) or in photographic or accurate typographical reproductions.<sup>12</sup> Instead, they relied on a combination of (mainly nineteenth-century) calendar entries — which sometimes include full transcriptions of letters but more often blend summary,

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<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of the circulation and current whereabouts of the extant letters sent and received by Bess, see Alison Wiggins, 'Locating the Letters', in 'Editing Bess of Hardwick's Letters', in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters* [accessed 21 November 2013]

<<http://www.bessofhardwick.org/background.jsp?id=186>>.

paraphrase, and quotation without clearly distinguishing the editor's words from the writer's — and eighteenth- and nineteenth-century editions, which include misreadings, bowdlerisations, silent elisions, and modernisations.<sup>13</sup> Studies based on such sources necessarily miss the potential significance of many features on the visual-palaeographical-linguistic spectrum, such as layout, folds, and seals, the appearance of the handwriting, original spellings, abbreviations, corrections, and original punctuation, as these are usually suppressed in editions. Worse, works based on these editions carry over mistranscriptions and make errors of interpretation that could have been avoided by looking at the manuscripts.

For example, in their biographies of Bess, Rawson, Williams, and Lovell all quote from Hunter's mistranscription (or perhaps bowdlerisation) of a letter to Bess from her main delegate at Wingfield Manor.<sup>14</sup> From Hunter's printing of 'scolle' for 'stolle', Williams understandably extrapolates that 'The servants found [Bess's grand-daughter Arbella] quite unmanageable' since 'in the Countess's absence, her steward Nicholas Kinnnersley reported, "She went not to the school these six days therefore I would be glad of your Ladyship's coming"'.<sup>15</sup> The graphemes <c> and <t> are easily mistaken in secretary script, but in the context of the whole letter (which refers to Arbella's improved appetite) and of what we know of her education (by private tutors), 'stolle' (*stool*, short for *close stool*, the sixteenth-century equivalent of a toilet) is by far the likelier reading. In this passage, one grapheme can change our perceptions of two people's characters: Arbella was not unruly after all, nor was Kynnersley at his wits' end trying to control her.

Another minor error from the same letter illustrates the fact that modernisations of spelling, like misreadings or bowdlerisations, can sometimes replace one word with another. In the first edition of Hunter's *Hallamshire* (1819), as in the manuscript letter, the words 'the' and 'ye' are both spelled 'y<sup>e</sup>', but in Rawson and Lovell's quotations, which cite the 1869 edition as their source, 'y<sup>e</sup>' is (arbitrarily?) replaced with either 'the' or 'you', leading to awkward readings like,

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<sup>13</sup> Calendars typically consulted include the SP (Dom) and the HMC series and, from the 1960s and 1970s onwards, *A Calendar of the Shrewsbury and Talbot Papers in Lambeth Palace Library and the College of Arms*, vol. 1 ed. by E. G. W. Bill and Catherine Jamison, vol. 2 ed. by G. R. Batho (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1966 and 1971) and the *Catalogue of Manuscripts of the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C.*, 3 vols (Boston: Hall, 1971). Some of Bess's letters are edited, with various degrees of mutilation, by Lodge and Hunter. Hunter (1783-1861) had access to the letters now forming the Cavendish-Talbot MSS in the Folger (X.d.428 (1-203)) when they were 'in the collection of manuscripts made by the late John Wilson, esq.' (1719-1783) of Broomhead Hall, near Sheffield, and before they were acquired by Sir Thomas Phillipps (1792-1872) (Hunter, p. 78).

<sup>14</sup> Hunter, p. 90; *Bess of Hardwick's Letters* ID 37.

<sup>15</sup> Williams, p. 217.



‘so that he might come upon you sudden and find you away’, whereas ‘come upon the sudden’ (that is, come suddenly) is equally valid on palaeographic grounds and more likely what was meant.<sup>16</sup> One final cautionary tale: Lovell was clearly working from the *Calendar of State Papers Relating to Scotland and Mary, Queen of Scots* and not from the manuscript or a published edition of the letter in question when she wrote that ‘One of Bess’s gentlewomen, Frances Battell ... wrote ... to a friend and claimed that the Shrewsburys’ differences had first begun when Bess spoke her mind to the servants of the Queen of Scots’.<sup>17</sup> In fact, the letter makes quite clear that it was Battell who spoke up and that she was referring to the origins of Shrewsbury’s dislike of herself, and not of Bess. This misinterpretation of events was made possible by ambiguities in the calendar entry, where speakers are either unidentified through point-form omission of the grammatical subject (such as, ‘Has been plain with the Scots’) or identified ambiguously as ‘she’. This mistake directly affects how Bess and one of her servants are characterised by Lovell; what is so striking about Battell’s letter is her degree of political engagement, here attributed to her mistress.

Ten out of eleven of the transcriptions in the thesis were made from high-resolution colour digital images (nine from the Folger’s digital collection and one from The National Archives), which enabled close observation not only of the handwriting (including the manual writing habits of individual correspondents) but also of other visual features, such as the distinctive design of the seal that Crompe uses in both his letters to Bess, which may have been his own device, and the socially significant layout of Foxe’s letter to her. The remaining letter was transcribed from a black and white but nevertheless quite legible printed image (from Nottingham University Library). All transcriptions were checked for accuracy against published editions (most of which were considerably less precise), including *Bess of Hardwick’s Letters*, with which the thesis is contemporary and has the most in common in terms of editorial approach and attention to detail.<sup>18</sup>

The third stage of the methodology was to develop a method of close reading that combines and builds on the strengths of relevant research specialisms. The

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<sup>16</sup> Rawson, p. 313; Lovell, p. 358.

<sup>17</sup> *Calendar of State Papers Relating to Scotland and Mary, Queen of Scots, 1547-1603*, vol. 7: 1584-1585, ed. by William K. Boyd (Edinburgh: H. M. Register House, 1913), p. 49, item 46; Lovell, pp. 286-87.

<sup>18</sup> Of the nine letters also included in the *Bess of Hardwick’s Letters* edition, three were previously edited by Hunter: IDs 37, 99, and 101. Another letter in the thesis, NUL, Middleton MSS, Mi C 15, is fully transcribed in *HMC Middleton*, pp. 152-55; and, finally, SP 53/13, ff. 14r-15v is quoted, not quite in full, in John Daniel Leader, *Mary Queen of Scots in Captivity* (Sheffield: Leader & Sons; London: George Bell & Sons, 1880), pp. 551-52, from a calendar or edition that he has not fully cited.

thesis's integration of full, tailor-made transcriptions of letters with close literary, historical pragmatic, and material analysis is a departure from previous practice. It is common for epistolary studies to quote selectively from a large number of manuscript letters in order to demonstrate a pattern, or to analyse data sets from letters included in linguistic corpora far removed from the manuscript originals, or to interpret a smaller number of letters found in (usually nineteenth-century) printed editions. When analysis is based on new transcriptions, as is increasingly the case amongst historicist researchers, these tend to be tucked away in an appendix if included at all. Exceptionally, James Daybell's most recent monograph, *The Material Letter in Early Modern England* (2012), opens with a transcription, images, textual and material interpretation, and meticulous reconstruction of the resources, personnel, and timelines involved in the composition and multi-stage circulation of a single manuscript letter — an approach remarkably similar to (and developed contemporaneously with) that taken in this thesis.<sup>19</sup> But whereas Daybell's monograph goes on to survey many aspects of epistolary practice, the thesis maintains the same concentrated focus and innovative methodology throughout its core chapters.

For its interpretive method the thesis develops a customised version of close reading that combines historical pragmatic analysis of particular linguistic features with consideration of wider rhetorical strategies and of visual-material features of the letters. The basic technique of close reading derives from New Criticism and involves attending in detail to the language and formal features of literary texts so as to minimise the extent to which one imposes one's own ideas onto texts in the name of interpretation. New Criticism as a movement sought formal and thematic unity in literary texts, which were considered to be purely verbal works of art, abstracted from their material manifestations in manuscripts and printed books and equally set apart from other quotidian realities and historical processes. Although the letters studied here were not produced as rarefied aesthetic objects but, on the contrary, are entirely preoccupied with the business of everyday domestic life (and, moreover, exist in single manuscript copies which resist being turned into abstractions), they nevertheless share many features in common with literature, making this an appropriate reading technique to adopt (and adapt). The letters studied in this thesis all make use of several formal features of the epistolary genre. Genre-specific

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<sup>19</sup> Daybell, *The Material Letter in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 1-10. The letter in question is Hatfield House, Cecil Papers 88/58, written by Robert Cecil to Sir Francis Darcy on 23 September 1601.

linguistic features include superscriptions, salutations, valedictions, subscriptions, and signatures, while visual-material features such as handwriting (italic or secretary, one's own or a scribe's), disposition of blank space, folding, and choice of seal also comprise elements of form that further signal that these texts are letters and that further add to their social meaning. Moreover, these letters embed literary techniques such as characterisation and narrative within what could be conceived of as extended monologues in which authors perform themselves before readers. They can thus be read for voice and style as well. The fact that the letters are goal-orientated means that they are thematically driven although, covering multiple topics in rapid succession, they lack the unified focus sought by New Critics.

It will be apparent by this time that letters as a genre challenge the limiting assumptions of New Criticism. So too do subsequent movements within literary and broader cultural studies, where ideas about the nature of literature and its relationship to history and material culture (including, of course, history of the book) have been revolutionised over the last thirty years by the rise of New Historicism and Cultural Materialism. However, when stripped of its aestheticism and adapted to take account of current theoretical orientations, close reading remains an indispensable interpretive method. (Its continued usefulness is implicitly acknowledged in the paradox that at the same time as texts are increasingly being interpreted as material objects, non-textual objects are increasingly being 'read' and history itself described as competing 'discourses'.)

In the thesis the method of literary close reading is adapted to include analysis of the letters' visual-material features and of how the letters functioned and circulated as material objects laden with historically specific social significance. While some features that the letters share with literary texts (genre conventions, characterisation, narrative, tone, and voice) are considered, these are interpreted alongside their linguistic and material features in the context of how they contribute to each letter's agenda. The practical and persuasive purposes of each letter are taken to constitute the epistolary equivalents of theme. With its holistic approach to close reading, the thesis contributes to the sociology of epistolary texts (more specifically early modern servants' correspondence) and to the reintegration of manuscript studies within literary and social history. It also helps to expand the emerging field of historical pragmatics, which is currently dominated by politeness theory, speech act theory, and quantitative analyses of very narrow form-function pairings extracted from large linguistic corpora. By contrast with such approaches, the thesis integrates



some of the findings and methods of existing historical pragmatic studies of letters into more holistic, qualitative readings and a research agenda that also includes reconstructing the specific historical circumstances in which the letters were written and circulated.

The analysis of the letters extends beyond their authorially produced significance by tracking the methods of delivery and additional uses of some of these manuscript letters after they left their writers' hands and control. While internal references to professional carriers or other servants as letter bearers give hints about the frequency and logistics of correspondence, endorsements on the outer address leaves of letters are particularly helpful in reconstructing the journey that individual letters took from writer to addressee to storage or reuse or further circulation — yet another dimension of the practical and social functions of early modern servants' correspondence.

As the fourth and final stage of the thesis's methodology, close readings of the letters are informed by two layers of historical contextualisation. Through supplementary research in Bess's household account books and inventories, it has been possible to reconstruct to varying degrees the household positions and careers of several of the servants who wrote, received, or were mentioned in the letters. Discoveries about writers' and recipients' household positions, particular responsibilities, relative wages, length of service, and who did and did not have chambers of their own at Chatsworth at the times inventories were made build up a fuller picture of the social and economic relations in the household. These details make an important contribution to the letters' interpretation. Furthermore, the meticulous reconstruction of servants' working lives from documentary sources help to make the thesis a richly layered microhistory as opposed to a series of close readings.

Finally, contemporary didactic literature about household management, treatises setting forth servingman ideals, and representations of servants in Shakespeare's plays are brought to bear on the interpretation of the letters, placing them in a wider historical context. This two-pronged method of historical contextualisation enables detailed interpretations of individual letters to grow out of the particular domestic and interpersonal contexts in which they were written and circulated, which in turn are shown to form part of wider epistolary and domestic practices, ideologies, and discourses.

## Overview of chapters

Chapter 2 surveys existing scholarship on early modern English letters and on country-house service in Tudor England, placing the micro-study of the correspondence of Bess of Hardwick's servants that follows in relation to the interconnected historiographical and wider scholarly developments that it draws on and contributes to most directly.

Bess's letters and reputation are the subject of Chapter 3, which first problematises oft-repeated claims that Bess's overbearing voice gives a clear indication of her character and then offers alternative readings of her three extant letters to her Chatsworth stewards, Francis Whitfield and James Crompe. These readings reveal that Bess's epistolary performances of her mistress role were varied and were shaped by social pressures as well as by privileged discourses, and that as material objects her letters were considered of practical value to her servants for reasons of their own.

In Chapters 4 and 5, servants' letters take centre stage. Chapter 4 analyses what remains of the other side of the Chatsworth correspondence, the surviving letters written to Bess by her officers James Crompe, William Marchington, and Edward Foxe. Here the emphasis is on how each officer combines formulaic epistolary etiquette with efforts to direct his mistress to think and act in specific ways. It argues that frequent and directive letter-writing was a duty of officers, especially stewards, that gave them the opportunity to demonstrate their devotion and competence, but to varying degrees. The three officers' different voices, including their levels of self-consciousness, reflect their different relationships with Bess and their internalisations of their respective offices.

Chapter 5 considers the rather more dramatic letters that three of Bess's upper servants wrote to her and others concerning the tumultuous state of affairs at a sequence of houses during the breakdown of the Shrewsburys' marriage in the 1580s. Writing as gentle-born attendants to seek help from other members of the gentry, William Marmyon and Frances Battell nevertheless present themselves very much as servants, whose trials have arisen due to their devotion to their mistress. Marmyon's professed hatred of Shrewsbury and Battell's empathy with Bess demonstrate how gender scripts performances of personal loyalty, while Battell's letter further reveals the troubling political implications of domestic factionalism and re-alliances in the Shrewsbury-Stewart household. The two letters that Nicholas Kynnersley wrote to Bess during her separation from Shrewsbury also employ language that is more

emotive than that of the earlier officers. His letters highlight issues of domestic espionage, security, and defence — the practical side of holding the manor for Bess during her absence.

Findings across all the letters are synthesised at the end of Chapter 5 and in the Conclusion (Chapter 6), which also suggests areas for future research.



## Contextualising servants' correspondence

### Introduction

The rapidly expanding field of epistolary studies is a meeting place for scholars working within and across several neighbouring disciplines, including social and political history, women's history, literature, manuscript studies, linguistics, and, increasingly, digital humanities. Letters are particularly well suited for interdisciplinary study due to their complex nature as multi-functional circulating textual objects of interpersonal exchange, which defy easy categorisation as either historical documents or literary texts and whose manuscript materiality contributes to their meaning. Indeed, as James Daybell and Andrew Gordon observe in their introduction to the most recent issue of *Lives & Letters*, 'The expanding appreciation of the nuanced complexities of the early modern letter has stretched beyond conventional disciplinary boundaries' as in the last ten years the field has come to be characterised by shared interests.<sup>20</sup>

This chapter outlines the current state of research on both early modern English letters and household service in Tudor England, placing the micro-study of the correspondence of Bess of Hardwick's servants that follows within the historiographical and wider scholarly developments that it draws on and contributes to most directly.

### Approaches to early modern English letters

Thanks in large part to the impact of New Historicism and Cultural Materialism on historicist research across the humanities, the study of letters has been transformed since the early 1990s from an exercise in straightforwardly extracting information from letters deemed important historical or literary sources into a much more dynamic and sophisticated field of enquiry. What can now be called early modern epistolary studies attracts scholars from many different disciplinary backgrounds and has come to consider as a matter of course how letters' forms (both linguistic and

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<sup>20</sup> James Daybell and Andrew Gordon, 'New Directions in the Study of Early Modern Correspondence', *Lives & Letters: A Journal of Early Modern Archival Research*, 4.1 (2012), 1-3 <[journal.xmera.org/volume-4-no-1-autumn-2012/articles/editorial.pdf](http://journal.xmera.org/volume-4-no-1-autumn-2012/articles/editorial.pdf)> [accessed 6 January 2014] (p. 1). See also their 'Select Bibliography: The Manuscript Letter in Early Modern England', pp. 8-35 <<http://journal.xmera.org/volume-4-no-1-autumn-2012/articles/bibliography.pdf>>.

material) and the conditions (both material and social) in which they were produced, circulated, and read contribute to their functions and meanings.

The rapid growth of epistolary studies in the last fifteen years has seen a proliferation of articles, essay collections, monographs, editions, digital projects, and conferences and even the establishment of a research centre dedicated exclusively to the study of early modern letters (CELL). Over its short history, research topics within epistolary studies have ranged in scope from the Latin letter-writing practices and manuals of individual humanists like Erasmus to the reconstruction of pan-European, multilingual correspondence networks.<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, letters written in English have received particularly sustained attention and have been approached from a number of angles. While some studies focus on epistolary theories and letter-writing manuals (also known as epistolographies), others seek to elucidate the relationship between theories and practices, while yet others focus on historically specific methods of composing, materially producing, and circulating manuscript letters.

Although scholars differ in their views of how far and in what ways Latin and English printed manuals and model letters may have influenced the production of actual, sent letters in English, all agree that the major development in epistolary theory and practice over the sixteenth century was the humanists' classicising reformation of the medieval rhetorical art of letter-writing, the *ars dictaminis*. Jonathan Gibson has identified two separate humanist traditions that, along with the *ars dictaminis*, provided the theoretical framework for early modern letter-writing: early modern rhetorical theory and the revived classical theory of the familiar letter.<sup>22</sup> Whereas the *ars dictaminis*, as an essentially impersonal mode of correspondence associated with royal, governmental, and ecclesiastical administration and with legal matters, had relied on formulaic phrases and had emphasised the social distance between senders and recipients (for example, through the use of formal titles and socially graded terms of address), humanists from Petrarch to Erasmus were inspired by the rediscoveries of Cicero's familiar letters to reimagine the art of letter-writing as an art of conversation and a means of constructing friendship and intimacy

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<sup>21</sup> Lisa Jardine, *Erasmus, Man of Letters: The Construction of Charisma in Print* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1993); 'Cultures of Knowledge: Networking the Republic of Letters, 1550-1750', an interdisciplinary digital research and cataloguing project based at the University of Oxford, which began in 2009. Further information is available on its website: <<http://www.culturesofknowledge.org>>.

<sup>22</sup> Jonathan Gibson, 'Letters', in Michael Hattaway, ed., *A Companion to English Renaissance Literature and Culture* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 615-19.

between individuals. Furthermore, whereas the *ars dictaminis* was built of set phrases that were memorised and written out by rote in predictable combinations (a process that aided administrative efficiency), Erasmus's treatise *De conscribendis epistolis* (1522) urged the writers of familiar letters to exercise invention, personalising their rhetoric so as to reflect not only the relative social status of correspondents but also their degree of intimacy, to make the most of any common ground or emotional bonds between them, and to tailor their language to the particular occasion and objective of each letter.<sup>23</sup> In practice, as Judith Rice Henderson and James Daybell have observed, the familiar letter could cover the full spectrum of topics that fell outside the remit of the public-orientated letter types derived from the three categories of classical oratory: the 'deliberative' or 'persuasive', the 'demonstrative' or 'encomiastic', and the 'judicial'.<sup>24</sup> The term 'familiar letter' refers not only to the revived subgenre's comparatively private subject matter but also to its personalised rhetorical style and its underlying ideology, which offered an alternative way of conceptualising what — and whom — letters were for.

Lynne Magnusson has persuasively argued that Erasmus's epistolary theory both reimagined social relations and made new sorts of relationships possible through the language of letters.<sup>25</sup> The prime example in this regard is friendship, which could be created or reinforced between educated men via the 'pleasures style' that constructs social equality and reciprocity of both affection and practical assistance. As a standard textbook in the grammar schools, Erasmus's *De conscribendis epistolis* was likely the most widely disseminated of any Latin letter-writing manual in sixteenth-century England.<sup>26</sup> Yet despite its theoretical ideal of constructing social equality through correspondence, the manual's emphasis on rhetoric, its use in formal education, and most of all the fact that it was written in Latin ensured that it reached an exclusive audience. Men from the lower social

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<sup>23</sup> Desiderius Erasmus, *Opus de conscribendis epistolis* (Basle: J. Froben, 1522). The standard edition for anglophone scholars is 'On the Writing of Letters/*De conscribendis epistolis*', trans. and ed. by Charles Fantazzi, in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, vol. 25, ed. by J. W. Sowards (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1985), pp. 1-254.

<sup>24</sup> Judith Rice Henderson, 'On Reading the Rhetoric of the Renaissance Letter', in Heinrich F. Plett, ed., *Renaissance-Rhetorik/Renaissance Rhetoric* (Berlin and New York: de Gruyter, 1993), pp. 143-62 (pp. 149, 151); Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England* (Oxford: OUP, 2006), pp. 18-19.

<sup>25</sup> Lynne Magnusson, *Shakespeare and Social Dialogue: Dramatic Language and Elizabethan Letters* (New York: CUP, 1999), Chapter 3, 'Scripting Social Relations in Erasmus and Day'.

<sup>26</sup> Daybell, *Material Letter*, p. 56; Alan Stewart, *Shakespeare's Letters* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), p. 14. See also Henderson, 'Humanism and the Humanities: Erasmus's *Opus de conscribendis epistolis* in Sixteenth-Century Schools', in Carol Poster and Linda C. Mitchell, eds, *Letter-Writing Manuals and Instruction from Antiquity to the Present* (Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 2007), pp. 141-77.

orders and women from all but the highest typically did not have access to Latin tuition; although literacy in English was on the rise, it too was the result of unequal educational opportunity. For the unschooled in particular, instruction in letter-writing was gained informally through reading letters or hearing them read, through trial and error, guidance or criticism from relatives and friends, or through consulting printed epistolographies.<sup>27</sup> Those who could read English but not Latin did not have the means to conduct epistolary relationships on the Erasmian model until the final third of the sixteenth century, when his ideas were popularised through letter-writing manuals in English and, increasingly, incorporated into English correspondence.

The earliest epistolographies in English were works of textual and cultural translation, bringing European, humanistic theories and models for letter-writing to readers of English who came from diverse but generally non-elite backgrounds. With the exception of Abraham Flemming's *A Panoplie of Epistles* (1576), which offers translations of the familiar letters of Cicero and other classical orators as models for composition, sixteenth-century English epistolographies tend to be less concerned with formal rhetoric than their Latin precursors, but they nevertheless share Erasmus's preoccupation with the practical rhetoric of epistolary social relations.<sup>28</sup> According to Magnusson, Erasmus personalised epistolary rhetoric by recognising that since 'persuasion requires the rhetorical construction of *ethos* to shape the writer's image and *pathos* to shape the reader's response', to write persuasive letters must involve 'the self-conscious construction of relationships'.<sup>29</sup> Whether or not they explicitly acknowledge this pragmatic principle, English epistolographies and sent letters alike build upon it.

The first epistolography in English, William Fulwood's *The Enimie of Idlenesse* (1568), is a translation and adaptation for an audience of London 'Marchants, Burgesses, [and] Citizens' of the French manual *Le stile et manière de composer, dicter, et escrire toute sorte d'epistre, ou lettres missives, tant par response, que autrement* (1566).<sup>30</sup> Like courtesy books, English epistolographies were aimed at readers of middling status who were eager to attain social polish, credibility, and preferment by adopting the etiquette of their social superiors. For this reason, these manuals tend to juxtapose principles for familiar letter-writing with

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<sup>27</sup> See Daybell, *Material Letter*, pp. 53-63.

<sup>28</sup> Abraham Flemming, *A Panoplie of Epistles* [...] (London: Ralph Newberie, 1576).

<sup>29</sup> Magnusson, *Social Dialogue*, p. 68.

<sup>30</sup> William Fulwood, *The Enimie of Idlenesse* [...] (London: Henry Bynneman for Leonard Maylard, 1568), [sig. A.vii].



more rigidly status-conscious language derived from the *ars dictaminis*. For example, Magnusson has argued that although Fulwood provides clear instructions for writing in the familiar style with the utmost decorum, his examples are often characterised by the sorts of laboured formalities and hypercorrections typical of discourse that aims too high and overshoots the mark, paradoxically revealing the writer's lower social status.<sup>31</sup> Angel Day's *The English Secreterie* (part 1, 1586) also demonstrates contradictory impulses, exercising early modern rhetorical *copia* in a manner that recalls dictaminal precedents when it lists well over a hundred examples of salutations, valedictions, subscriptions, and superscriptions.<sup>32</sup> Yet this manual also encourages correspondents to exercise their own judgement and invention elsewhere in their letters.

Tensions between convention and invention and between competing linguistic registers can also be found in sent letters of the period. Daybell has observed that since a formal occasion could be 'a moment of social anxiety', 'The more formal the occasion of writing, the more closely letters followed templates of protocol, since not to do so would be considered inappropriate, a social affront. Thus, royal letters, letters of petition and recommendation, condolence letters and legal correspondence and other sub-genres of officialdom, rigidly conform to the rules of rhetoric', unlike familiar letters exchanged between intimates.<sup>33</sup> As observed by Peter Mack, early modern business letters tend to follow formal protocols and choose conventional subject matter, but this thesis reveals that letters exchanged between employers and servants can also evoke familiarity and trust through the use of comparatively simple and direct language seasoned with occasional expressions of sincerity or even affection.<sup>34</sup> In some cases, business correspondents do appear to be emotionally invested in what they are writing, whereas in others they evidently deploy affective language merely as a stylistically available means of persuading recipients to comply with their wishes.

In John Browne's *The Marchants Avizo* (1589), a manual that addresses the multifaceted needs of Bristol merchants' inexperienced sons and apprentices trading overseas, both correspondence and friendship are entirely instrumental.<sup>35</sup> This manual evinces little interest in either epistolary style or social relations, but

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<sup>31</sup> Magnusson, *Social Dialogue*, pp. 117-21.

<sup>32</sup> Angel Day, *The English Secreterie* [...] (Robert Waldegrave for Richard Jones, 1586), pp. 23-34.

<sup>33</sup> Daybell, *Material Letter*, p. 69.

<sup>34</sup> Peter Mack, *Elizabethan Rhetoric: Theory and Practice* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), p. 116.

<sup>35</sup> John Browne, *The Marchants Avizo* [...] (London: Richard Field for William Norton, 1589).

nevertheless, as Magnusson has argued, its model letters adopt Erasmian discourses of friendly reciprocity for the purely practical purpose of securing necessary assistance from experienced English merchants abroad.<sup>36</sup>

By contrast, most of the servants' letters studied in this thesis conform to the humanistic ideal of achieving epistolary sincerity, intimacy, and reciprocity through comparatively informal language, even while these letters also maintain appropriate levels of verbal respect (whether formulaic or inventive) for their socially superior recipients. In fact, the letters of Bess of Hardwick's servants reveal that the Erasmian model of epistolary familiarity, designed to strengthen horizontal rather than vertical relationships, aligns surprisingly well with contemporary ideals for employer-servant relations, since reciprocal duties, mutual benefits, and emotional solidarity were considered hallmarks of orderly households. Although it is impossible to determine whether or not any of Bess's male officers had received a grammar-school education, their surviving letters reveal that all but one of her upper servants (including the gentlewoman Frances Battell but excluding the warrener Edward Foxe) were able to effectively combine the ideals of familiar correspondence and of faithful service, modifying discourses of friendship to suit the hierarchical and highly practical but undeniably familiar relationship between servant and employer. Their letters thus stand at the cross-roads between sociability and business, familiarity and formal deference. They also provide insight into how such letters were written and operated in the absence of printed instructions or models.

Most of the surviving correspondence between Bess and her household and estate officers was written before the publication of any epistolographies in English. James Crompe, Francis Whitfield, William Marchington, and Edward Foxe had no manuals to follow for the sort of letter-writing required by their positions. They probably learned on the job. The first printed book to target servants as letter-writers and potential consumers of self-improvement literature was Walter Darell's *A Short discourse of the life of Seruingmen* (1578).<sup>37</sup> Darell's treatise, which offers moral and practical guidance for servingmen, opens and gives its title to a compilation that also includes entertaining and moralising verses composed by Darell, model letters collected by him, and finally an anonymous translation of 'The treatise of Master Ihon Della Casa [...] intituled Galateo, of fashions and maners', which was added by

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<sup>36</sup> Magnusson, *Social Dialogue*, pp. 128-32.

<sup>37</sup> Walter Darell, *A Short discourse of the life of Seruingmen* [...] (London: Ralphe Newberrie, 1578).

the printer or bookseller.<sup>38</sup> This particular combination of texts within a single volume indicates that by the late 1570s there were enough literate male servants to form a niche market for printed books and that as a social group servingmen were considered to be especially in need of improving their morals, manners, and letter-writing skills. There was a reason for this: since their duties involved them in a steady stream of interactions with their social superiors, both in person and on paper, in which servingmen would be further disadvantaged by making any *faux pas*, they could be expected to welcome guidance. The model letters included in Darell's compilation are headed 'Certeine Letters verie necessarie for Seruingmen' and include several examples of letters from servants or clients to their 'singular good Lord[s]' and 'singular good maistresse[s]'.<sup>39</sup> When Bess's Chatsworth steward James Crompe wrote to her in the previous decade, he used a compound term of address that combines these elements: 'my synguler good ladye & mestres' (IDs 17, 18). But despite the similarity of their address formulae, Darell's model letters of petition and thanks and Crompe's letters of management have little in common stylistically since they exhibit different levels of formality and rhetorical elaboration. Crompe and Bess's other Chatsworth officers write in a far simpler and more direct style than that of Darell's examples (which closely resemble courtly letters), and there is no evidence that any of Bess's servant correspondents ever read printed epistolographies or books of advice to or about servants — most of which were, in any case, published after they penned their surviving letters. However, both these genres of didactic literature inform my readings of their letters, as the precepts taught in them drew on and contributed to wider ideologies and cultures of epistolarity and service in which Bess's literate servants actively participated. Further reference is made to particular texts, including Darell's, at relevant points in the chapters that follow.

Whereas this thesis breaks new ground with its sustained attention to servants' correspondence, it also builds on a large and growing body of scholarship and is particularly indebted to studies of women's correspondence. Letters composed by women were among the first to be studied in a way that recognises the complexities of letters as a genre and that makes concerted efforts to understand early modern letters, and women, in their historical contexts. Underlying this work

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<sup>38</sup> Darell's portion of the volume is not paginated but includes signatures. Della Casa's courtesy text, although the final piece in the compilation, begins on page 1, which indicates that it had been typeset and printed separately but was then bound in with Darell's work to form a single volume. This compilation and Flemming's *Panoplie* were both printed for the bookseller Ralph Newberie.

<sup>39</sup> See Darell, sigs C.iiij.-E.iiij.

are the twin agenda, inspired by the rise of women's history on the one hand and the expansion of literary studies to include non-fiction prose and the materiality of texts on the other, of recuperating both the letter form and women's writing within this genre as fit objects of study. Daybell's work has been particularly instrumental in bringing women's letters into the mainstream of early modern epistolary studies. His first monograph, *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England* (2006), provides an immensely useful thematic survey of women's epistolary practices, while the edited collection *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450-1700* (2001) brings together insightful case studies by a number of scholars on the letters of several individual or related women and on widespread features of women's letter-writing in the period.<sup>40</sup> In addition, *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450-1700* (2004), also edited by Daybell, includes several essays that reveal the diverse political uses to which women put their correspondence.<sup>41</sup> Within and beyond these important volumes, the letters of several noblewomen and gentlewomen have been the subject of numerous articles, doctoral theses, and editions in recent years.<sup>42</sup> Scholarship on early modern women's letters is unified by prevailing interests in how letters contributed to women's social relationships and, conversely, in the varied practical and political goals that could be pursued through epistolary relations.

A second area of growing interest in English epistolary studies is the materiality of manuscript letters. As a recent development, the focus on materiality is absent from the two foundational literary monographs on early modern letters, Lynne Magnusson's *Shakespeare and Social Dialogue: Dramatic Language and Elizabethan Letters* (1999) and Gary Schneider's *The Culture of Epistolarity: Vernacular Letters and Letter Writing in Early Modern England, 1500-1700* (2005), which are both primarily concerned with interpreting the language of letters.<sup>43</sup> Due to the limited accessibility of manuscript letters in North America compared with Britain and to the scarcity of digital resources for epistolary studies before the late 2000s, Magnusson and Schneider relied on printed editions that had varying editorial policies and that represented few non-textual features of letters — thus keeping the emphasis very much on text, albeit in editorially mediated forms. Another

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<sup>40</sup> James Daybell, ed., *Early Modern Women's Letter Writing, 1450-1700* (Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001).

<sup>41</sup> James Daybell, ed., *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450-1700* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004).

<sup>42</sup> Many of these are listed in the bibliography.

<sup>43</sup> Gary Schneider *The Culture of Epistolarity: Vernacular Letters and Letter Writing in Early Modern England, 1500-1700* (Newark: U of Delaware P, 2005).



characteristic of their literary and print-based approach was to study English printed epistolographies as texts in their own right and as part of a culture of epistolarity that included theory and instruction as well as practice. These research contributions are extremely valuable and continue to provide a foundation for historicist, literary, and linguistic studies of letters.

More recently, and perhaps especially in Britain, there has been growing awareness of the value of consulting manuscript originals, both to ensure textual accuracy and to interpret letters more holistically, since in manuscripts visual-material as well as textual details are available for consideration. Those who have consulted large numbers of manuscript letters have observed that not only the linguistic but also the visual etiquette of the *mise-en-page* set forth in epistolographies were unevenly applied in practice.<sup>44</sup> While the more formal subgenres of letters were more likely than others to follow the guidelines laid out for them, formulae for opening and closing letters and writing the address were adhered to far more often than any other prescriptions.<sup>45</sup>

The turn towards material culture in epistolary studies has discovered that visual-material features of manuscript letters can contribute to their social meanings, not least by enabling scholars to reconstruct the complex processes by which letters were created and circulated. Alan Stewart and Heather Wolfe's exhibition catalogue *Letterwriting in Renaissance England* (2004) includes colour images and descriptions of now obsolete writing tools as well as colour images and transcriptions of twenty-six manuscript letters from the Folger Shakespeare Library's holdings, which allow readers to observe the handwriting, use of space, fold-lines, seals, tears, and dirt that all contribute to both the form and the history of these letters as objects.<sup>46</sup> Picking up on A. R. Braunmuller and Jonathan Gibson's groundbreaking studies of the social significance of blank space in manuscript letters, Stewart and Daybell amongst others have gone on to consider many additional visual-material features and uses of letters as objects: Stewart the deployment of letters as socially and thematically significant stage props in *Shakespeare's Letters* (2008) and Daybell

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<sup>44</sup> Stewart suggests that 'Then as now, it seems experts vigorously dispensed "how-to" advice in an attempt to bring some order to an activity that was, in reality, wonderfully miscellaneous, even chaotic' (p. 14).

<sup>45</sup> Daybell, *Material Letter*, pp. 63-73. See also James Daybell, 'Scripting a Female Voice: Women's Epistolary Rhetoric in Sixteenth-Century Letters of Petition', *Women's Writing*, 13 (2006), 3-22.

<sup>46</sup> Alan Stewart and Heather Wolfe, *Letterwriting in Renaissance England* (Washington, DC: Folger Shakespeare Library, 2004).

the production, delivery, reception, functions, and afterlives of manuscript letters in *The Material Letter in Early Modern England* (2012).<sup>47</sup>

Of course, concern with how modes of production, dissemination, and reading relate to the forms and functions of texts is nothing new to book historians or to medievalists accustomed to working with manuscripts.<sup>48</sup> This line of enquiry has proven to be a valuable addition to early modern epistolary studies as it has revealed the often highly collaborative nature of composing and penning, delivering, reading or hearing, storing or recirculating, and, ultimately, destroying or archiving manuscript letters. These processes are highlighted throughout *The Material Letter*, and there and elsewhere the implications of the interpersonal relations involved in each stage of a letter's existence have been shown to be far reaching. For example, in scribally penned letters, it can be difficult to know whether the words were composed by the signatory, the scribe, or a combination of both.<sup>49</sup> Yet even when letters were dictated to a highly trusted scribe or written in the signatory's own hand they cannot be assumed to offer unmediated access to the signatory's thoughts. Before the establishment of a reliable postal system and modern notions of privacy, letters were prone to be lost, misdelivered, intercepted, or delivered in the form of being read aloud to the addressee and assembled company. (Such contingencies are frequently represented in literature and drama of the period as they make for a good story.)<sup>50</sup> Correspondents needed to be careful about what they set down in writing. Katy Mair has demonstrated that Anne Bacon adapted the tone and contents of her letters according to how much she trusted the bearers who would deliver them.<sup>51</sup> And

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<sup>47</sup> A. R. Braunmuller, 'Accounting for Absence: The Transcription of Space', in *New Ways of Looking at Old Texts*, ed. by W. Speed Hill (Binghamton, NY: Renaissance English Text Society, 1993), pp. 47-56; Jonathan Gibson, 'Significant Space in Manuscript Letters', *The Seventeenth Century*, 12 (1997), 1-9.

<sup>48</sup> Daybell's *Material Letter* is very much in the tradition of the essays collected in Jeremy Griffiths and Derek Pearsall, eds, *Book Production and Publishing in Britain, 1375-1475* (Cambridge: CUP, 1989).

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, Graham Williams, 'Whose Language? Letters Written by Scribes', in *Bess of Hardwick's Letters* <<http://www.bessofhardwick.org/background.jsp?id=179>> [accessed 23 January 2013]. Imogen Julia Marcus, 'An Investigation into the Language and Letters of Bess of Hardwick (c. 1527-1608)', PhD thesis, English Language, University of Glasgow, 2012, devises a method of scribal profiling that combines palaeographic and linguistic analysis in order to identify which letters written in Bess's name were composed and penned by Bess herself.

<sup>50</sup> For example, in the final scene of *Twelfth Night*, Feste, after a deliberate delay, delivers Malvolio's letter of complaint to Olivia by performing it aloud in a voice and demeanour intended to mock the steward's alleged madness and thus to invalidate his pleas for justice (William Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night, or What You Will*, ed. by Keir Elam (London: Arden Shakespeare, 2008), 5.1.281-305). Precarious postal conditions inspired an entire genre of fiction framed as letters that were lost and found by the way (Stewart and Wolfe, p. 147).

<sup>51</sup> Mair, Katy, 'Material Lies: Parental Anxiety and Epistolary Practice in the Correspondence of Anne, Lady Bacon and Anthony Bacon', *Lives & Letters*, 4.1 (2012), 58-74 (pp.59-60, 69-72)

as studies of the afterlives of letters have shown, they could also be forwarded by the addressee to others, copied out and circulated in multiple manuscripts, or even printed — by any of these means reaching a wider audience than originally intended, with unpredictable consequences.<sup>52</sup>

In addition to these reasons for exercising caution in epistolary self-expression, contemporary notions of decorum contributed to a fairly impersonal style marked by conventional formalities, particularly for addressing the recipient in the superscription on the outside of the folded letter, the salutation or initial greeting, and the valediction or farewell. Apart from familiar letters on the Erasmian model, which intentionally create epistolary intimacy between correspondents figured as absent friends, early modern English letters tend to be formal in register and practical in outlook, their rhetoric directed towards persuading the recipient to help the sender achieve stated or implied objectives. That does not mean, however, that early modern letters were entirely devoid of originality or that they offer no access to the sender's inner world; rather, it means that they offer mediated, highly purposeful representations of the sender's thoughts, actions, and character, in which originality and convention can either work together or be held in tension. This thesis finds that Bess's upper servants perform their social identities through a combination of adapting epistolary conventions, fulfilling societal expectations, and personalising their letters in various ways. Moreover, their letters demonstrate the impossibility of fully separating inner selves from outer selves, as these correspondents appear to have internalised their social identities.

Since letters are by their nature interpersonal, the ways in which they textualise social relations is a particularly fruitful area of research, which underlies all studies of letters in one way or another. Two very different approaches have been taken to the study of epistolary social relations. Both are primarily concerned with language although consideration of how manuscript features contribute to social meaning is increasingly being integrated into both.<sup>53</sup> The first approach is essentially social historical in outlook and is interested in how particular individuals, families, or

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<<http://journal.xmerra.org/volume-4-no-1-autumn-2012/articles/mair.pdf>> [accessed 23 November 2012].

<sup>52</sup> For example, Mair, 'Material Lies', pp. 72-74; Joel Swann, 'The Second Earl of Essex's "Great Quarrel" and Its Letters', *Lives & Letters*, 4.1 (2012), 133-51 <<http://journal.xmerra.org/volume-4-no-1-autumn-2012/articles/swann.pdf>> [accessed 9 January 2014]. See also Daybell, *Material Letter*, Chapter 7: 'Copying, Letter-Books and the Scribal Circulation of Letters'.

<sup>53</sup> See, for example, Daybell, *Material Letter*, Chapter 4: 'Interpreting Materiality and Social Signs' and the essays in Marina Dossena and Ingrid Tieken-Boon van Ostade, eds, *Studies in Late Modern English Correspondence: Methodology and Data* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2008) and Päivi Pahta and Andreas H. Jucker, eds, *Communicating Early English Manuscripts* (Cambridge: CUL, 2011).

social groups managed their relationships through letters. There is a strong narrative undercurrent here, as semi-biographical studies abound and even the widest social historical surveys of early modern letter-writing tend to present findings in the form of engaging and memorable anecdotes. Nearly all existing studies of women's letters take this approach, which characterises historicist (including literary) epistolary studies more widely.

The second, more circumscribed approach to the study of epistolary social relations is primarily linguistic in focus. Letters are one of several genres (or 'text types') whose language has been frequently analysed from the perspective of historical pragmatics, a new discipline that, like epistolary studies, emerged in the mid-1990s. Historical pragmatics has been recently defined by two of its leading practitioners, Andreas Jucker and Irma Taavitsainen, as 'the study of patterns of language use in the past and the way in which these patterns change over time'.<sup>54</sup> More specifically, historical (like modern) pragmatics 'studies language not as an abstract entity but as a means of communication that is being used by people interacting in specific situations, with specific intentions and goals and within specific contexts'.<sup>55</sup> According to this formulation, the historical pragmatic approach to language exactly mirrors current approaches to early modern letters outside the field of linguistics. In practice, however, the particular research questions and methods typically employed by historical pragmaticists have little in common with those of mainstream epistolary studies. Within historical pragmatics, research interests cluster around how specific socially significant linguistic forms and functions — especially terms of address, speech acts, and politeness or impoliteness — are deployed in letters and other genres of writing produced in or across various eras and on further processes of language change like grammaticalisation and pragmaticalisation.<sup>56</sup> There is often an emphasis on quantitative research, using

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<sup>54</sup> Andreas H. Jucker and Irma Taavitsainen, *English Historical Pragmatics* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2013), p. 2.

<sup>55</sup> Jucker and Taavitsainen, *English Historical Pragmatics*, pp. 1-2.

<sup>56</sup> Jucker and Taavitsainen's *English Historical Pragmatics* constitutes an overview of the current state of the field. Historical pragmatic studies of early modern English letters include Terttu Nevalainen and Helena Raumolin-Brunberg, 'Constraints on Politeness: The Pragmatics of Address Formulae in Early English Correspondence', in *Historical Pragmatics: Pragmatic Developments in the History of English*, ed. by Andreas H. Jucker (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 1995), pp. 541-601; Helena Raumolin-Brunberg, 'Forms of Address in Early English Correspondence', in *Sociolinguistics and Language History: Studies Based on the Corpus of Early English Correspondence*, ed. by Terttu Nevalainen and Helena Raumolin-Brunberg (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1996), pp. 167-81; Minna Nevala, "'You're modor send a letter to the': Pronouns of Address in Private Correspondence from Late Middle to Late Modern English", in *Variation Past and Present: VARIENG Studies on English for Terttu Nevalainen*, ed. by Helena Raumolin-Brunberg, Minna



linguistic 'data' gleaned from large electronic corpora (where words are far removed from their original linguistic, material, and wider historical contexts), and on tracing changing patterns of language use.

Historical pragmatics borders on several other branches of linguistics (including historical linguistics, pragmatics, historical sociolinguistics, and corpus linguistics), with which it currently maintains stronger methodological ties than have yet been formed with other (more deeply historicist) approaches to letters, textuality, and social relations. Furthermore, historical pragmaticists have experienced difficulties communicating their findings to the wider academic audience that could benefit from them. In part this is the result of their tendency to present amassed linguistic data, which has little inherent interest to non-linguists, rather than tapping into more dynamic examples of interpersonal verbal exchanges and presenting them in a more historically grounded manner that would indeed bring the 'specific situations, [...] intentions [and] goals' of correspondents to the fore. A second barrier to communication is the use of technical terminology that is incomprehensible to non-specialists. For all of these reasons, historical pragmatics has to this point remained very much a specialism within linguistics, largely self-isolating from developments in interdisciplinary epistolary studies despite much common ground.

However, there have been a handful of studies that, by using qualitative historical pragmatic analysis, sometimes combined with other methods, have reached a wider audience. Magnusson's work, among the first to incorporate linguistic analysis into literary readings of early modern letters, has been particularly influential. At a time before historical pragmatics had fully emerged as a socio-historically orientated alternative to theoretical modern pragmatics, Magnusson brought Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson's politeness theory, Pierre Bourdieu's economic model of linguistic exchange, and speech act theory to bear on interpersonal exchanges within historical texts, in response to her realisation that literary studies on its own lacked adequate tools 'for the close analysis of language as

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Nevala, Arja Nurmi, and Matti Rissanen (Helsinki: Société Néophilologique de Helsinki, 2002), pp. 135-59; Susan M. Fitzmaurice, *The Familiar Letter in Early Modern English: A Pragmatic Approach* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2002); and Graham Williams, 'Pragmatic Readings of the Letters of Joan and Maria Thynne'. For studies of historical speech acts and linguistically constructed social relations outside of letters, see the essays in Andreas H. Jucker and Irma Taavitsainen, eds, *Speech Acts in the History of English* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2008) and David A. Postles, *Social Proprieties: Social Relations in Early-Modern England (1500-1680)* (Washington: New Academia Publishing, 2006).

social action and interaction'.<sup>57</sup> The resulting readings evince a keen sensitivity to how linguistic style and historically specific experiences of social stratification and intersubjectivity interact within particular genres and circumstances. Magnusson's publications have influenced much subsequent work on early modern English letters, including Susan M. Fitzmaurice's *The Familiar Letter in Early Modern English: A Pragmatic Approach* (2002), which provides literary-pragmatic readings of letters from the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Both Magnusson and Fitzmaurice are regularly and deservedly cited in non-linguistic historicist studies. A recent example of historical pragmatics being used in combination with other analytical tools to good effect is Graham Williams's work on the letters of the Thynne women. In his doctoral thesis Williams combines pragmatic with palaeographical analysis to track how the Thynne family's epistolary relationships changed, sometimes subtly, sometimes dramatically, according to factors ranging from scribal mediation to major life events including elopement, inheritance, and widowhood.<sup>58</sup>

Williams's approach exemplifies the current trend within historical pragmatics, observed by Jucker and Taavitsainen, of considering more deeply the relationships between the material and linguistic forms and functions of historical texts. Research methods inherited from modern linguistics are beginning to be reassessed and refined to allow for new manuscript-based approaches and a return to qualitative, historically contextualised analysis alongside quantitative, corpus-based approaches.<sup>59</sup> These are welcome developments that should help historical pragmaticists working on letters to build more common ground and communicate more easily with colleagues in other disciplines, to the benefit of epistolary studies as a whole. It is one aim of this thesis to assist the rapprochement between historical pragmatic and wider epistolary studies by including qualitative historical pragmatic analysis within historically informed literary and material readings of manuscript letters.

This thesis engages with many of the latest and most substantial developments within epistolary studies outlined above. Most importantly, inspired by

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<sup>57</sup> Magnusson, *Social Dialogue*; 'Widowhood and Linguistic Capital: The Rhetoric and Reception of Anne Bacon's Epistolary Advice', *English Literary Renaissance*, 31 (2001), 3-33; and 'A Rhetoric of Requests: Genre and Linguistic Scripts in Elizabethan Women's Suitors' Letters', in *Women and Politics*, pp. 51-66 (quotation from p. 52). Penelope Brown and Stephen C. Levinson's *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage* [1978] (Cambridge: CUP, 1987) has subsequently been shown to be historically and culturally specific, as are ideas of what constitutes verbal politeness; see, for example, Richard J. Watts, *Politeness* (New York: CUP, 2003), especially Chapters 2 and 4.

<sup>58</sup> Williams, 'Pragmatic Readings of the Letters of Joan and Maria Thynne'.

<sup>59</sup> Jucker and Taavitsainen, *English Historical Pragmatics*, pp. 33-35.

the considerable contributions to knowledge made by scholarship on women's letters, it opens up for study the correspondence of another marginalised yet ubiquitous social group: household and estate servants. As with women's letters, the main obstacle to studying early modern servants' letters may not be that they are too few but that they tend to escape our notice unless we intentionally look for them. Although, as a focused microhistory of the correspondence of one particular group of servants, this thesis does not attempt to seek out the letters of servants in other households let alone to calculate the total number of letters penned by early modern English servants that still survive in public and private archives, it may be noted here that when servants' letters do survive, it is more likely to be because their contents pertain to their masters' (or mistresses') business than for any other reason. Administrative letters sent by servants to their employers and intentionally preserved at the time of receipt are likely to have remained buried amongst other documents in the family papers ever since. In addition, sociable or petitionary letters written by servants to recipients other than their employers may, as this thesis demonstrates, be discovered amongst the papers of neighbouring families or even in the State Papers. An advantage of researching servants' letters, then, is that the majority of those that still exist should be relatively straightforward to find if sought.

That being the case, the fact that hitherto so few studies of either early modern letters or early modern servants have turned to servants' own correspondence is surprising, particularly given increasing scholarly interest in letters and in servants as two manifestations of a larger movement that claims 'the everyday' as a fit subject for research. This thesis is the first study to focus exclusively on early modern servants' correspondence as such. While D. R. Hainsworth's excellent 1992 social history of late Stuart estate stewards is based almost exclusively on extensive master-steward correspondence and even includes a chapter on master-steward relations, it is typical of traditional historicism in that it treats letters as primary sources from which information about history can be gleaned, rather than as part of history in themselves.<sup>60</sup> Within (New Historicist) epistolary studies, Magnusson's "'Power to hurt": Language and Service in Sidney Household Letters and Shakespeare's Sonnets' is the only previous study to include analysis of a servant's correspondence.<sup>61</sup> Magnusson's close readings of selected letters exchanged between

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<sup>60</sup> D. R. Hainsworth, *Stewards, Lords and People: The Estate Steward and His World in Later Stuart England* (New York: CUP, 1992).

<sup>61</sup> Magnusson, *Social Dialogue*, pp. 35-57.

Sir Henry Sidney's secretary Edmund Molyneux and other members of the Sidney family form only part of a wider argument about the relationship — across genres — between language use and writers' socially constructed subject positions. Of all Magnusson's work, this essay in particular has inspired the present thesis, which takes up both servants' correspondence as a research area and the question of how the textualisation of unequal social relations in letters reinforces the particular subject positions of writers.

However, the thesis differs from Magnusson's study in many respects. First, it focuses exclusively on servants' correspondence, keeping both servants and letters centre stage and reconstructing in some detail that culture of epistolarity that pertained specifically to upper servants. In order to build up this picture, the thesis provides close and densely historicised literary-pragmatic-material readings of all the extant letters sent and received by Bess of Hardwick's literate servants. This approach attends to socially significant visual-material as well as linguistic features of each letter, revealing how diverse features interact within particular letters and across the correspondence as a whole. The thesis's consideration of manuscript materiality extends from providing new transcriptions for analysis (rather than relying on potentially inaccurate printed editions) to reconstructing processes of delivery and frequencies of correspondence, whose logistics are shown to contribute to the different textures of the mistress-servant relationship experienced by different correspondents. With the aid of household account books and inventories, the thesis reads the correspondence of these servants within the very particular historical contexts of their individual service positions, duties, length of service, and relationships with other household members and contacts as well as with their employer. The depth and particularity of historical research undertaken in the thesis make it not just a series of close readings but a microhistory of servant correspondence in Bess of Hardwick's household. This methodology yields different and much fuller conclusions about servant (and mistress) epistolary subjectivity and social practices than Magnusson's exploratory essay, to which the thesis remains much indebted.

In the thesis, close work on a small collection of servants' correspondence is used to ask, and answer, what the intersection between service and epistolarity can tell us about both. More than a case study, the thesis presents the correspondence of Bess's servants as a touchstone for the complex role of letter-writing in the formation of social selves and the performance of domestic duties in sixteenth-century England.



For literate upper servants, service is shown to be inseparable from epistolarity. Their respective service positions clearly shaped the content, rhetoric, and frequency of servants' letters. For some, letter-writing was a duty; for others, it allowed them to access the patronage of valuable contacts outside the household. Furthermore, focusing on servants' correspondence reveals how epistolary practices of the time — such as delivery by professional carriers or servant bearers, use of endorsements, and recirculation of letters — were adapted by upper servants to suit their particular circumstances not only as individuals but also as a social group whose epistolary performances and very identities, the thesis argues, were grounded in their service positions and their relationships to their employer. By examining the role of correspondence in maintaining relationships, shaping subjectivities, and expressing historically and rhetorically conditioned emotions, the thesis not only builds on important previous work in epistolary studies but also answers Daybell and Gordon's recent call for further investigation of 'the letter as a technology of the self, its relationship to early modern subjectivities and the construction of emotions'.<sup>62</sup> Finally, the interpretation of letters is grounded in not only the particular historical circumstances in which each letter was written but also the wider historical context of service in elite households.

### **Country-house service in Tudor England: A historiographical review**

The historiography of early modern domestic and estate service before the Restoration is a complicated one, spread very thinly over several overlapping subdisciplines and specialisms, with only a handful of recent studies dedicated exclusively to servants. Servants are to be found — if diligently sought — in scattered references in works of economic history, social history, and women's history. Economic histories of domestic service (as opposed to agricultural labour) in this period are extremely rare. Social history includes a range of well established and lively research areas that, hypothetically, relate to servants and household relations: the social structure of early modern England, the lives of the nobility and gentry, the history of the family, the (alleged) rise of privacy and development of separate spheres, and historical demography. Much of women's history runs in parallel, placing women in relation to men within the contexts of political and economic systems, patriarchal families or feminine domestic spheres, and increasingly, in socio-economic or socio-political networks beyond the household. At the same time,

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<sup>62</sup> Daybell and Gordon, 'New Directions', p. 3.

works of women's history routinely enumerate the ways in which even aristocratic women were systematically debarred of legal rights and economic opportunities enjoyed by their male counterparts. But servants (male and female), despite comprising up to seventy percent of the population of fifteen- to twenty-four-year-olds and living within about forty percent of all households or 'families' in early modern England, have received very little attention (let alone retrospective moral support) in social historical studies of the pre-Restoration period.<sup>63</sup>

What P. W. Fleming observed in 1989 remains true:

The early modern 'family' was not only a kin group, but comprised all those who regularly shared the same roof as the head of the household. And yet, among all that has been written on this subject, [...] servants have been neglected, even though contemporaries regarded them as fully part of the *familia*. Without servants, the family at all but the lowest levels of society would have been unable to function.<sup>64</sup>

Tim Meldrum put it even more bluntly in 2000: 'If "invisibility" fails to characterise domestic service in terms of contemporary [early modern] sources, it is relevant — in the light of the plethora of publications on modern service — to the relative historiographical myopia evident for the period before 1800'.<sup>65</sup> And yet, when compared with the dearth of publications on the sixteenth century, those on the long eighteenth century could be deemed a 'plethora'. Meldrum's own study of London households from 1660 to 1750 helpfully problematises grand narratives about the feminisation and commodification of service, increasing domestic privacy, and the rise of the middle class that are too often taken for granted by domestic and women's historians of later periods.<sup>66</sup> However, Meldrum's study too is orientated towards the end of the 'early modern' period, not only in its coverage but also in its rebuttals of arguments back-projected onto the eighteenth century by historians of the 'modern' nineteenth. Of 'early modern' servants, those of the sixteenth century in particular continue to fall through the cracks.

The typically unsettled nature of the servant experience throughout the early modern period — moving in adolescence from parental homes to those of (usually

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<sup>63</sup> Statistics are from R. C. Richardson, *Household Servants in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2010), p. 63.

<sup>64</sup> P. W. Fleming, 'Household Servants of the Yorkist and Early Tudor Gentry', in *Early Tudor England: Proceedings of the 1987 Harlaxton Symposium*, ed. by Daniel Williams (Woodbridge: Boydell, 1989), pp. 19-36 (p. 19).

<sup>65</sup> Tim Meldrum, *Domestic Service and Gender 1660-1750: Life and Work in the London Household* (Harlow: Pearson, 2000), p. 6.

<sup>66</sup> Meldrum, pp. 6, 10, 16, 41-42, 74-76, 84, 195-96, 208-9.

successive) employers before (ideally) marrying and forming households of their own in their late twenties — is mirrored by the fact that servants have not found a settled home in histories of the family and early modern domesticity.<sup>67</sup> Lawrence Stone's *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (1977) has been much criticised for its methods and findings regarding the affective quality of relationships between husbands and wives, parents and children, but the near invisibility of servants — who are mentioned only nine times in 687 pages — has passed without comment and been only slightly improved upon in subsequent studies of the early modern English family.<sup>68</sup> Ralph Houlbrooke's *The English Family 1450-1700* (1984) includes an eight-page section on 'Service, apprenticeship and higher education' tucked into the chapter on parents and children.<sup>69</sup> In *The Family and Family Relationships, 1500-1900: England, France, and the United States of America* (1994), Rosemary O'Day criticises the work of Peter Laslett and other historical demographers whose decision to exclude servants from their categories of household structure and calculations of average household size set the tone for later histories of the family.<sup>70</sup> Her more qualitative comparative survey of family relationships does include domestic servants, in a small way, in a six-page section on 'Servants' followed by another eight pages on 'Servants and Children'.<sup>71</sup> Yet, ironically, she takes pains to exclude servants from familial relationships, arguing that although the term "servant" described a relationship rather than a job', the affective bond between parents and children was missing from the purely hierarchical bond between employers and servants.<sup>72</sup> Although this is a point worthy of serious consideration, it results in servants being marginalised in her study, just as, in her view, they must have been emotionally peripheral to the kin groups whom they served; the question of employer-servant relations is shut down rather than explored. Will Coster's *Family and Kinship in England 1450-1800* (2001), admittedly a slim volume,

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<sup>67</sup> R. C. Richardson, *Household Servants*, pp. 64, 222.

<sup>68</sup> Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977). For a summary of the critiques of Stone's argument that families lacked affective relationships before the seventeenth century, see Will Coster, *Family and Kinship in England 1450-1800* (Harlow: Pearson, 2001), pp. 12-15.

<sup>69</sup> Ralph A. Houlbrooke, *The English Family 1450-1700* (Harlow: Longman, 1984), pp. 171-78.

<sup>70</sup> Rosemary O'Day, *The Family and Family Relationships, 1500-1900: England, France, and the United States of America* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1994), p. 11 in particular, but the whole first chapter, 'The World That Slips through Our Fingers', is a response to Laslett's *The World We Have Lost* (London: Methuen, 1965) and to Laslett and Richard Wall, eds, *Household and Family in Past Time* (Cambridge: CUP, 1972).

<sup>71</sup> O'Day, pp. 175-80, 181-88.

<sup>72</sup> O'Day, pp. 175, 185.

includes a token three pages on 'Service and Apprenticeship' and mentions servants briefly in other sections.<sup>73</sup> As these examples make clear, historians of the family's interests remain squarely on 'the family' in the sense of individuals related by blood or marriage, especially those who lived together in a nuclear family, rather than on the more inclusive early modern concept of family as all those (kin and non-kin) ordinarily living and working together under the authority of the head of the household.

As Ann Kussmaul explains in her classic study of agricultural servants in early modern England,

to read that servants were part of the early modern family is to be tempted to think that they did not belong there, that they were not 'proper' members. To do so is to ignore both the early modern *mentalité* and the development of the meaning of 'family' before 1600. Slaves, *famuli*, were the original *familia*, a group of *famuli* living under one roof [in ancient Rome]. 'Family' later came to include all those, not just the slaves or servants, who lived under the authority of the *pater familias*; later still, the husband joined the 'family' of wife, children, and servants.

Early modern English had no word whose meaning was 'only kin', or 'all in the household except the servants'. 'Family' included them all.<sup>74</sup>

That said, at our moment in social and linguistic history, the word 'household' (a near equivalent to 'family' in Early Modern English) is better able than the word 'family' to foreground the presence of servants in the domestic unit and so it is the term used in this thesis. Despite the regrettable anachronism, the word 'family' is used in the thesis interchangeably with 'relatives' and 'kin'. In these uses, the thesis follows the standard practices of the two most relevant and most closely related specialisms within social history: history of the family, and history of the household.

By contrast with their near absence from histories of the family, servants are extremely visible in studies of late medieval elite households — where, indeed, it was the duty of many to be so. Kate Mertes's *The English Noble Household 1250-1600: Good Governance and Politic Rule* (1988) examines in detail the economic, administrative, political, religious, and familial operations of elite households.<sup>75</sup> C. M. Woolgar's *The Great Household in Late Medieval England* (1999) covers some of the same ground, but with a greater emphasis on hospitality and aesthetics, while

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<sup>73</sup> Coster, pp. 54-56 and, for example, 30-32.

<sup>74</sup> Ann Kussmaul, *Servants in Husbandry in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: CUP, 1981), p. 7.

<sup>75</sup> Kate Mertes's *The English Noble Household 1250-1600: Good Governance and Politic Rule* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988).



Fleming's paper 'Household Servants of the Yorkist and Early Tudor Gentry' (1989), quoted above, provides a brief introduction to the conditions and practices of service in gentry households specifically.<sup>76</sup> Between them, these three studies outline the key shared characteristics of service in elite (noble and gentry) households at the end of the middle ages and in the early sixteenth century.<sup>77</sup>

Elite households in this period, unlike those of later centuries, were ruled and inhabited mainly by men. Because of their large scale, complex administration, and need to reflect the magnificence, civility, and authority of the lords or masters who typically headed them, elite households were both showpieces for conspicuous consumption of many kinds and extremely hierarchical, with fine gradations between dozens of service positions, complicated ceremonial protocols and, in the largest households, detailed written regulations governing the conduct of household members. The top-ranking servants were literate, numerate, and well connected. They came from social backgrounds similar to their lords', sometimes had estates of their own and held multiple household or government appointments, and could expect to use their service roles to further their own careers and those of their relatives and friends through the workings of household-based networks of patronage.

In this context it becomes most clear that there was no single servant class in the sixteenth century. Elite households needed servants from all social levels, just as young people from all social levels needed or wanted resources that service in a great household could provide — food, shelter, clothing, education, wages, customary perquisites, patronage and protection — although these resources were meted out unevenly, according to servants' respective ranks. So, for example, the cut of livery varied according to the wearer's social status although all were in the lord's colours. The social side of service in elite households is further complicated by the fact that aristocratic and gentry families tended to place their children of both sexes in each others' households for their education and socialisation, which included ceremonial service to the lord and lady and serving as companions to any of their children still at home. Furthermore, although servants in elite households came from a variety of social backgrounds and many served only in their youth, such households also required experienced administrators, chaplains, legal professionals, political allies,

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<sup>76</sup> C. M. Woolgar, *The Great Household in Late Medieval England* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1999).

<sup>77</sup> In addition, Alexandra Shepard, 'Family and Household', in *The Elizabethan World*, ed. by Susan Doran and Norman Jones (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), pp. 352-71 provides a good overview of the main issues in the historiography of 'family' and 'household' at various social levels.

and fit adult companions for the lord. Men of sufficient rank and skill could be retained in these positions for long periods of time, effectively making a career of service that could border on friendship, or they could move on to other households or government offices while remaining within their former master's sphere of influence. In such cases, there were no clear boundaries between service, patronage, politics, and sociability.

By comparison with men, very little is known about the roles of women in elite households except in relation to their fathers, husbands, and sons. For example, Barbara Harris's *English Aristocratic Women 1450-1550: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers* (2002), an important work of women's history and the one most relevant to the study of women in the elite household, is, as its title suggests, concerned primarily with family relationships rather than those between mistress and servants, while the careers in question are those of female courtiers in the queen's household. At the opposite end of the social scale, Marjorie Keniston McIntosh's *Working Women in English Society, 1300-1620* (2005) provides an unusually detailed account of female servants in middling households.<sup>78</sup> The essays in Susan Frye and Karen Robertson's edited collection, *Maids and Mistresses, Cousins and Queens* give a good indication of just how varied female domestic relationships could be across the centuries, household types, and social levels that comprised early modern England, while the essays in *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450-1700* (2004), mentioned above, demonstrate that elite women were often politically active in the period.<sup>79</sup> However, the roles of elite mistresses in domestic management and in political patronage when at home are in need of further exploration, and so too are the roles of her female attendants and any resident non-nuclear kin. These last are typically ignored in social histories because, due to the strangle-hold of the nuclear family model, they are believed *a priori* not to have existed. In Bess of Hardwick's household, at least, resident female kin are very much in evidence, which suggests that the vexed question of family/household composition may require revisiting yet again. Chapters 3, 5, and 6 of this thesis begin to fill several of the remaining gaps in scholarship by carefully examining the various and complex domestic and political roles performed by Bess, her sister, her aunt, and her

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<sup>78</sup> Marjorie Keniston McIntosh's *Working Women in English Society, 1300-1620* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005), pp. 46-61.

<sup>79</sup> Susan Frye and Karen Robertson, eds, *Maids and Mistresses, Cousins and Queens: Women's Alliances in Early Modern England* (New York: OUP, 1999). Laura Gowing's *Gender Relations in Early Modern England* (Harlow: Pearson, 2012) is also helpful.

female attendant Frances Battell, as represented in their letters, the letters of Bess's male household and estate officers, and Bess's household accounts and inventories.

One way in which Bess's sixteenth-century elite household was decidedly typical was in its propensity to be divided across and to move between multiple properties. Mertes observes that in the sixteenth century there was an

increasing tendency for the household to spend much of its time split into sections: a small part with the lord; another group on "board wages", effectively unemployed; and small groups of servants stationed at the lord's major seats, caretaking, forwarding food or possessions to the lord as requested and showing hospitality to visitors in his absence.<sup>80</sup>

It was on just such occasions of geographical dispersal that Bess corresponded with the household and estate officers left to manage Chatsworth (letter IDs 17, 18, 28, 47, 99-101) and Wingfield (IDs 37, 38) on her behalf while she was elsewhere.

Long after the establishment of the family and the household as specialisms within social history, early modern servants themselves have recently begun to sustain interest. The last fifteen years have seen a growing number of monographs and edited collections specifically about early modern servants. Most of these studies, like Meldrum's, focus on the post-Reformation period and the eighteenth century, but a few include some coverage of the sixteenth century. R. C. Richardson's *Household Servants in Early Modern England* (2010) provides a useful overview of the changing social and economic conditions, ideologies, perceived problems, and literary representations of servants from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. Richardson too is more at home in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries than the sixteenth, but he does use sixteenth-century material in nearly every chapter. It is a good thing that he does, since both other existing servant studies that cover the early period are aimed at a general audience and so, although useful on particular points, they lack the depth of academic social histories and add little new knowledge.<sup>81</sup> Keith Wrightson's *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain* (2000), which opens with three chapters on household economies and the economic relationships that grew out of households in the period c. 1470-c.

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<sup>80</sup> Mertes, p. 190.

<sup>81</sup> Alison Sim, *Masters and Servants in Tudor England* (Stroud: Sutton, 2006); Jeremy Musson, *Up and Down Stairs: The History of the Country House Servant* (London: John Murray, 2009).

1550, is meticulously researched.<sup>82</sup> These recent publications notwithstanding, little is known of servant-employer relationships in the sixteenth century.

But despite the lack of a historiography to call their own, sixteenth-century servants can pop up in unexpected places. For example, two older works of political biography may well contain the most extended accounts of individual sixteenth-century servants to be found outside this thesis: Richard C. Barnett's 1969 *Place, Profit, and Power: A Study of the Servants of William Cecil, Elizabethan Statesman*, which compiles scattered documentary references into mini-biographies of several of Cecil's servants, and Alan G. R. Smith's 1977 book-length biography of Sir Michael Hickey.<sup>83</sup> Hickey was one of Cecil's secretaries, who went on to have a political career of his own. The emphasis in both these works is on male political networks, patronage, and office bearing rather than domestic service per se or servants' own words. Although Smith's biography of Hickey is based on Hickey's extensive surviving correspondence, there are no close readings. There is still a need for further investigation into the careers, experiences, and language use of servants of both sexes who lived and worked in elite households of the Elizabethan period.

Finally, the one subdiscipline in which the study of sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century servants is really and truly thriving is Shakespeare studies. Since the publication of Mark Thornton Burnett's groundbreaking monograph, *Masters and Servants in English Renaissance Drama and Culture: Authority and Obedience* (1997) there has been an explosion of interest in servants in early modern drama.<sup>84</sup> In addition to a growing number of essays on servants in particular plays, several monographs have been published in the last ten years. Clearly inspired by Burnett's approach, Michael Neill's *Putting History to the Question: Power, Politics, and Society in English Renaissance Drama* (2000) considers representations of service and other power relations in a wide range of early modern drama, but subsequent studies have focused almost entirely on servants in Shakespeare's plays. In 2005, Neill edited a special section of the *International Shakespearean Yearbook* on *Shakespeare and the Bonds of Service*, and in the same year or shortly thereafter most of its contributors published monographs on the subject: Linda Anderson's A

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<sup>82</sup> Keith Wrightson, *Earthly Necessities: Economic Lives in Early Modern Britain* (New Haven: Yale UP, 2000).

<sup>83</sup> Richard C. Barnett, *Place, Profit, and Power: A Study of the Servants of William Cecil, Elizabethan Statesman* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1969); Alan G. R. Smith, *Servant of the Cecils: The Life of Sir Michael Hickey, 1543-1612* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1977).

<sup>84</sup> Mark Thornton Burnett, *Masters and Servants in English Renaissance Drama and Culture: Authority and Obedience* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997).

*Place in the Story: Servants and Service in Shakespeare's Plays* (2005), Judith Weil's *Service and Dependency in Shakespeare's Plays* (2005), David Evett's *Discourses of Service in Shakespeare's England* (2005), and David Schalkwyk's *Shakespeare, Love and Service* (2008).<sup>85</sup>

The interpretations of servants' correspondence made in this thesis are informed by many of the individual studies and broader movements within social, women's, and literary history surveyed here. Their particular historiographic approach, however, is that of microhistory. As is apparent from this review, the artificial divisions between 'late medieval' and 'early modern' periods and between subdisciplines of history leave sixteenth-century households and their inhabitants betwixt and between. In the absence of a coherent historiographic tradition, microhistory offers a promising way forward. Where grand narratives are tentative or lacking, detailed work on a carefully chosen particular case can open up new material, perspectives, and questions that can ideally be used as a basis for further study. As previously mentioned, microhistory is as an especially suitable method by which to study a small collection of letters written and received in the sixteenth century by the servants of one mistress, to see just what these letters, in their particular domestic and interpersonal contexts, can tell us about many of the areas where wider historical knowledge of servants' and women's lives and self-perceptions are currently lacking. For their part, servants' letters are ideal materials for microhistory due to the very obvious constraints imposed on language by unequal social relations on the one hand and by epistolary conventions on the other. Here the interests of historical pragmatics and microhistory converge: under such conditions, how did servants express themselves and exercise agency? And how, by contrast, did their mistress exercise epistolary authority? The answers lie in the detailed analysis found in Chapters 3 to 5.

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<sup>85</sup> Michael Neill, *Putting History to the Question: Power, Politics, and Society in English Renaissance Drama* (New York: Columbia UP, 2000); Michael Neill, ed., *The Shakespearean International Yearbook*, 5: *Shakespeare and the Bonds of Service* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); Linda Anderson, *A Place in the Story: Servants and Service in Shakespeare's Plays* (Newark, Delaware: U of Delaware P, 2005); Judith Weil, *Service and Dependency in Shakespeare's Plays* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005); David Evett, *Discourses of Service in Shakespeare's England* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005); David Schalkwyk, *Shakespeare, Love and Service* (Cambridge: CUP, 2008).



**‘Deliver thys at chattysworthe’:  
Bess’s letters of household management, c. 1552-c. 1564**

### **Introduction**

This and the following chapter take as their primary material the cluster of extant letters and related documents pertaining to the everyday running of Chatsworth House and supporting estates in the 1550s and 1560s, when Chatsworth was Bess’s main place of residence outside of London and the home of her children and other relatives. Letters of management were exchanged between Bess and several other co-managers of Chatsworth: her two consecutive husbands during this period (Sir William Cavendish, who died in October 1557, and Sir William St Loe, whom Bess married in August 1559 and who died in February 1565) and at least four household and estate officers who were responsible for carrying out a wide range of important tasks on their behalf. The surviving letters exchanged between Bess and these officers are the focus of these two chapters, but reference is also made to letters that Bess received from Cavendish and St Loe. Written in order to manage over long distances both the material and the human resources needed to maintain this large country house and its subsidiary estates, the surviving letters are rich in the practical, persuasive language of everyday domestic interactions.

In these letters, Bess and her correspondents breathe life and immediacy into what appear to have been conventional discourses of domestic service. In the process, they deploy a range of rhetorical techniques for self-representation, narration, expressing opinion and emotion, and, ultimately, controlling the actions of the letters’ recipients. It is possible to trace through this set of correspondence the typical features of and variations within what Shakespeare’s fictional steward Malvolio called the ‘prerogative of speech’ unique to each social position within the gendered domestic hierarchy: we see Bess verbally enacting her authoritative yet dependent role as mistress of the house, male officers performing conventional lip-services as part and parcel of their duty, and husband-masters figuring the marriage relationship as one of domestic service with their wife as their right-hand man as it were.<sup>86</sup> Through close readings of Bess’s Chatsworth correspondence, these chapters argue that in letters of household management linguistic features as varied as word choice, verb form, and sentence structure invoke the household position, particular

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<sup>86</sup> *Twelfth Night*, 2.5.68-69.

duties, gender, and relative social standing of correspondents as a means of exercising social and material control over the household and estate. Of particular note are directive speech acts (including giving orders, warnings, and advice); the interactions between style, emotion, and tone; and discourses of service that illuminate and reinforce culturally prevalent hierarchical concepts of pleasure and displeasure, (non-)imposition, reciprocal duty, and humble obedience. Whenever appropriate, the letters are interpreted in the light of financial accounts and household inventories, two other genres of manuscript domestic writing that represent the activities and role at Chatsworth of household members who feature in the letters.

While the next chapter focuses on the four extant letters that Bess received from Chatsworth officers, this chapter focuses on the three surviving letters that she wrote to them, analysing the socially attuned language through which she crafts her voice as mistress and exercises her 'prerogative of speech' to direct, reprimand, and praise the addressees, Chatsworth stewards Francis Whitfield and James Crompe. The analysis draws attention not only to the many rhetorical features that mark her language as authoritative, but also to the ways in which she writes out of conventionally under-acknowledged dependency upon these men. Recognising typical ideologies and conventional discourses of service enables us to see how in their letters of household management Bess and her officers resourcefully adapted the concepts and language available to them in their respective roles as mistress, stewards, and estate officers. Given the ways in which Bess's expressions of displeasure in her earliest extant letter to Whitfield have been used by unsympathetic historians and biographers to shape her popular reputation as a shrew, this chapter argues that closer and more culturally sensitive readings of Bess's letters of household management can lead to a reassessment not only of her language but also of her character.<sup>87</sup>

In the course of these readings, significant differences in how Bess verbally relates to her two stewards are interpreted in the context of their records of service in the financial account books, building up a picture of their shifting responsibilities at Chatsworth in parallel with the different dynamics of their working relationship with Bess as portrayed in her letters to them and Crompe's to her. Along the way, hints

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<sup>87</sup> See, for example, Lodge, p. xvii; Hunter, pp. 78, 62-63, 69; Rawson, p. 9; Hubbard, pp. 24-25, 33. Guy, pp. 441-42, 448-49, 454-55 reinforce the prejudiced views of Bess put forward by Mary Stewart and elaborated by Lodge in the eighteenth century. The strained domestic relationships between Bess, her husband George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury, their political prisoner-guest Mary Stewart, and their respective servants are the subject of letters by two of Bess's attendants, William Marmyon and Frances Battell; these letters are analysed in Chapter 5.

about the activities and symbolic importance of one of Bess's sisters at Chatsworth lead to an exploration of the ways in which domestic duties were normally distributed amongst upper servants depending on gender and appointment (as officer or attendant) but could be reconfigured when the need arose.

The chapter concludes with a consideration of what certain material features of Bess's letters to Whitfield and Crompe — handwriting, endorsement, and reuse — can reveal about how these letters were received and preserved at Chatsworth and beyond and of how the servants who received and preserved them have also had a hand in shaping the mistress's reputation.

**Bess of Hardwick in London to Francis Whitfield at Chatsworth,  
14 November [1552] (ID 99)**

*address leaf, f. 2v*

*superscription: italic script, Bess's hand*<sup>88</sup>

to my sa[ruante] francys  
wytfelde [delive]r thys at  
chattysw[orth]e

*contemporary note: secretary script, unidentified hand (possibly Whitfield's)*

for the myller  
for taking shepe  
for taking Coll woodes<sup>89</sup>  
for Capons to be fatt  
for swyne /  
for the hard Cornefeldes  
for a pynder<sup>90</sup>

*later note: unidentified hand*

Elizabeth Wife of Sir Wm Cavendish of  
Chatsworth, afterwards Countess of  
Shrewsbury.

*letter, f. 1r*

*italic script, Bess's hand*

francys I haue spoken *with* your mayste[r]<sup>91</sup>  
for the clyltes<sup>92</sup> or bordes that you

<sup>88</sup> Three words have been reconstructed as the superscription was partly removed when the letter was opened.

<sup>89</sup> A similar phrase appears in an account book entry in Bess's hand: 'Item delyuered to willame lowen apone areconyng for heuyng of cole wood ouer and aboue iiij<sup>s</sup> payd by plates x<sup>s</sup>' (Folger, X.d.486, f. 8v).

<sup>90</sup> 'pinder, *n.*', 'A person in charge of impounding stray animals', in *OED* <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/144093>> [accessed 27 June 2012].

<sup>91</sup> Sir William Cavendish (1508-1557).

<sup>92</sup> 'cleat, *n.*', '1. A wedge [...] 4a. A short piece of wood (or iron) nailed on transversely to a piece of joinery, in order to secure or strengthen it', in *OED* <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/34099>> [accessed 27 June 2012].

wrete to me of and he ys contente  
 that you shall take some for  
 your nesecyte by the apountemente  
 of neusante.<sup>93</sup> so that you take  
 seche as y wyll do hyme no  
 saruese aboute hys byldynge at  
 chattysworthe. I pray you loke  
 well to all thynges at chattysworthe  
 tyll my aunes<sup>94</sup> comynge whome<sup>95</sup>  
 whyche I hope shalbe shortely  
 and yn the meane tyme cause  
 bronshawe<sup>96</sup> to loke to the smethes  
 and all other thynges at penteryge  
 lete the brewar make bere for me  
 fourthewith fore my owne drynkyng  
 and your mayster and se that I  
 haue good store of yet<sup>97</sup> for yf I lacke  
 ether good bere, or charcole or wode  
 I wyll blame nobody so meche  
 as I wyll do you. cause the  
 flore yn my bede chambe[r] to be

f. 1v            made euen ether *with* plaster claye or lyme  
 and al the wyndoyes were the glase  
 ys broken to be mendod and al the  
 chambers to be made as close and ~~wur~~  
 warme as you cane. I here that  
 my syster Iane<sup>98</sup> cane not haue ~~thyme~~

<sup>93</sup> A master carpenter, according to Basil Stallybrass, 'Bess of Hardwick's Buildings and Building Accounts', *Archaeologia*, 64 (1913), 347-98 (p. 352).

<sup>94</sup> Marcella Linacre, a widowed sister of Bess's mother. She lived with Bess from at least September 1548 and received the highest wages at 20s per quarter (see Folger, MS X.d.486, f. 11r and v). She may have had her own chamber at Chatsworth, beside that of Bess's mother, in the mid-1560s (White, vol. 2, p. 402, n. 37). Marcella Linacre is also mentioned in a letter to James Crompe, Bess's other Chatsworth steward at the time (ID 100), and she received a letter from Bess's son William Cavendish dated 23 February [1569] (Folger, X.d. 428 (21)). If she ever wrote to Bess or others, these letters have not survived.

<sup>95</sup> *home*.

<sup>96</sup> Apparently an understeward at 'penteryge' (Pentrich), another estate in Derbyshire.

<sup>97</sup> *it*.

<sup>98</sup> Bess had two sisters named Jane: her elder, full sister Jane Boswell or Bosville (née Hardwick) and her younger, maternal half-sister Jane Kniveton (née Leche). 'My syster' first appears in account book entries in March 1549, the same month as Whitfield (Folger, X.d.486, f. 11r and v), and a 'Mistress Jane' appears in the Cavendishes' London accounts for 1552-1553 (Hardwick MS 1, ff. 42v, 49v, 53r. As I have not seen the originals, references to the Hardwick MSS are as found in David N. Durant's notes and transcripts, NUL, MS 663). From the 1560s onwards, there are scattered references to 'Mistress Kniveton' in the Chatsworth and Hardwick accounts, reaching a high concentration in the Hardwick accounts of the 1590s. Household inventories made in 1601 record that Mistress Kniveton had her own chamber at Chatsworth and at Hardwick Old and New Halls (The National Trust, *Of Household Stuff: The 1601 Inventories of Bess of Hardwick* (London: The National Trust, 2001), pp. 27, 39, 56). The earliest Chatsworth inventory, from 1559, is not organised by room, and that of the mid-1560s does not list a chamber dedicated to her use, but it is an incomplete draft and she most likely had one. See White, vol. 2, pp. 373-74, 389. Since Jane Kniveton demonstrably lived with Bess for much of their adult lives, the early sources, including this letter, more likely refer to her than to Bess's full sister Jane Boswell. Jane Kniveton also appears in a handful of other letters: IDs 62, 75,

thynges that ys nedefoulle for hare<sup>99</sup>  
 to haue amongste you yf yet be trewe  
 you lacke agreat of honyste as well as  
 dyscrescyon to deny hare any thyng  
 that she hathe amynde to beyng  
 yn case as she hathe bene. I wolde  
 be lothe to haue any stranger so yoused  
 yn my howse. and then assure your  
 selfe I cane not lyke yet to haue my  
 syster so yousede. lyke as I wolde not ~~haue~~  
 haue any superfleuete or waste of any  
 thyng. so lyke wysse wolde I haue hare  
 to haue that whyche ys nedefoulle ~~for~~  
 and nesenary. at my comynge whome I  
 shal knowe more. and then I wyll thynke  
 as I shall haue cause. I wolde haue  
 you to geue ~~to~~ to my mydwyffe frome  
 me and frome my boye wylle.<sup>100</sup> and to

f. 2r      ^my^ syster nurse frome me and my boye  
 as hereafter folowet fyrste to the mydwyffe  
 frome me tene shylllynges. and frome  
 wylle fyue shylllynges. to the nurse  
 frome me fyue shylllynges. and frome  
 my boy iij fore pence. ss so that yn  
 the wolle<sup>101</sup> you mouste geue to them  
 twenty thre shylllynges and fore pence  
 make my syster Iane preuye of yet  
 and then paye yet to them four[th]  
 with<sup>102</sup> yf you haue noother money take  
 so meche of the rente at penteryge  
 tyll my syster Iane that I wyll geue  
 my dowter<sup>103</sup> somethynge at my comyng  
 whome and prayinge you not to  
 fayle to se all thynges done accordyngely  
 I bede you fare well frome london  
 the xiiij of nouember

your mystrys

217 and Folger, X.d.428 (7, 40). As with Marcella Linacre's, any letters that Jane may have written have not survived.

<sup>99</sup> *her*.

<sup>100</sup> Possibly Bess's second son, William Cavendish, born December 1551. If so, these gifts made on behalf of the eleven-month-old would likely symbolise thanks and patronage towards two servants whose duties were to care for infants like him. Alternatively, 'my boye wylle' could hypothetically refer to a page, but it is more of a mystery why these payments would be given on a serving boy's behalf. Both senses of the word 'boy' were current at this time; see 'boy, *n.*<sup>1</sup> and *int.*', senses A.1.a.(a) and A.3.a. in *OED* <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/22323>> [accessed 19 March 2013].

<sup>101</sup> *whole*.

<sup>102</sup> The word is divided by the edge of the page, where the final letters of 'fourth' (or possibly 'fourthe') were partly ripped away when the letter was opened.

<sup>103</sup> Bess's eldest daughter, Frances Cavendish, born June 1548.



tyll Iames crompe<sup>104</sup>      Elyzabethe Cauendysssh  
 that I haue resauyed  
 the fyue ponde and ix<sup>s</sup>  
 that he sente me by heue alsope<sup>105</sup>

***'yn my howse': Bess's authoritative language as mistress***

This earliest of Bess's letters of household management is also the earliest dated surviving letter composed by Bess and written in her own hand.<sup>106</sup> It is also one of the most frequently quoted and misunderstood of her letters. First printed in 1819 (with some errors of transcription) in Joseph Hunter's history of the earls of Shrewsbury at Sheffield Castle, it appears after a distinctly unflattering portrayal of Bess embedded in the account of the life of her final husband, George Talbot, the sixth earl, from whom she was estranged for much of their marriage.<sup>107</sup> Hunter's depiction of Bess as rapaciously demanding owes much to another history of the Talbot earls of Shrewsbury found in the introduction to Edmund Lodge's 1791 *Illustrations of British History, Biography, and Manners [...] from the Manuscripts of the Noble Families of Howard, Talbot, and Cecil*. Lodge, influenced by Shrewsbury's own representations in some of the letters included in this anthology, gets the ball rolling by claiming, among other things, that Bess used 'intreaties' and 'threats' to manipulate each of her successive husbands to sacrifice their own best interests to her aggrandisement.<sup>108</sup> Bess's use of language and her personal reputation have been linked ever since, with her letters to Shrewsbury and Whitfield in particular cited as evidence of her character. Maud Stepney Rawson and Kate Hubbard, two modern biographers of Bess, have quoted this letter to Whitfield as an example of Bess's 'characteristic' — that is, personal and typical — authoritarian style and implied, in a move that recalls Lodge and Hunter, that this style amounts to a character flaw.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>104</sup> The postscript is written around Bess's signature so that her name remains prominent. She signs this early letter quite low on the page. When older and more elevated in society, she habitually signs her letters higher as a visual sign of her social status and perhaps of greater self-confidence.

<sup>105</sup> Hugh Alsop, a carrier of Derby who had transported some of the Cavendishes' belongings from London to Chatsworth in 1551 (Lovell, p. 73). He later carried letters and messages between Bess and her subsequent husband, Sir William St Loe; see ID 59.

<sup>106</sup> An earlier version of my analysis of this letter has been published as 'Enacting Mistress and Steward Roles in a Letter of Household Management: Bess of Hardwick to Francis Whitfield, 14 November 1551', *Lives & Letters*, 4.1 (2012), 75-92 <[journal.xmerra.org/volume-4-no-1-autumn-2012/articles/maxwell.pdf](http://journal.xmerra.org/volume-4-no-1-autumn-2012/articles/maxwell.pdf)>. I have since modified my conclusion about the list on the address leaf.

<sup>107</sup> Hunter, pp. 78 and 62-63, 69.

<sup>108</sup> Lodge, p. xvii.

<sup>109</sup> Rawson, p. 9; Hubbard, pp. 24-25, 33.

In raising this point, it is not my intention to defend Bess's honour, but to suggest that such readings lack attention to her modulation of voice in this letter and across her correspondence and that they also lack awareness of the styles available to Bess in her historically conditioned social roles as the lady of the house writing to a male officer in her family's employ or as an estranged wife writing to her husband. What Rawson and Hubbard do, however, recognise is that the language of letters constitutes a self-representation. Their commentaries imply that self-revelation is unintentional on the part of the writer, whose statements are nevertheless open to incriminating interpretation. Yet early modern letters were self-consciously performative of social roles, and what may appear characteristic of an individual when viewed in isolation can be seen to form part of a larger pattern when viewed in its cultural context.<sup>110</sup> This section analyses Bess's earliest surviving letter of household management, paying special attention to the various ways in which she verbally represents the recipient's duties and enacts her own mistress role.

Francis Whitfield was one of two joint household and estate stewards at Chatsworth, an office of considerable responsibility and prestige.<sup>111</sup> (The other was James Crompe, recipient of letter ID 100 and author of IDs 17 and 18, discussed below.) Bess's style in this letter, though consistent in reinforcing her authority over Whitfield, changes considerably as she moves between instruction, rebuke, threat, and reminder. Her more usual matter of fact tone, comprised of simple sentences and direct orders, gives way to a complex syntax of indirect and conditional statements even as her words gain emotional force in expressing her displeasure. By comparing the linguistic features of Bess's two main modes of writing in this letter, it becomes apparent that both are rhetorical performances of her mistress role: Bess writes to the steward to impress upon him her pleasure in the form of instructions and her displeasure in the form of reprimands, explanations, and warnings, with the expectation that he will dutifully act according to her stated wishes. Displeasure appears to require a degree of elaboration unnecessary when giving practical instructions, for it involves more complicated social and emotional negotiations. (The greater length and rhetorical complexity involved in expressing displeasure

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<sup>110</sup> For the idea that individual voices speak from historically specific 'social scripts', see Magnusson, *Social Dialogue*.

<sup>111</sup> On the high status of household stewards as their masters' personal representatives, see R. B., 'Some Rules and Orders for the Government of the House of an Earl' [c. 1605], printed and attributed to Richard Brathwait in *Miscellanea Antiqua Anglicana* (London: Robert Triphook, 1816-21), part 8 (pp. 3-6). The title page for the anthology states that this text is 'From an Original MS. of the Reign of James I', but this manuscript has not been identified. On the wide-ranging responsibilities of estate stewards, see Hainsworth, *Stewards, Lords and People*.

helps explain why this particular mode of writing has attracted the attention of later readers of Bess's letters and contributed so much to her reputation.) Bess's discourse of displeasure is not only more complex syntactically but also more reflective of social concerns through accumulating references to domestic hierarchies, rules of hospitality, and representations of how Whitfield is to manage the social side of provisioning. By referring in the course of the letter to several aspects of Whitfield's supervisory duties, from repairing the building to caring for her sister, Bess's letter urges its recipient to play out his own multifaceted role as steward. To manage the country house efficiently and according to the mistress's wishes, both she and the steward must play their parts.

A summary of the domestic circumstances in which Bess wrote to Whitfield and of his service up until that time may be helpful. The letter is dated 14 November only, but both its subject matter and entries in household financial accounts suggest that she wrote it in 1552, while staying with her husband, the courtier Sir William Cavendish, in a rented house in London.<sup>112</sup> This was shortly after Cavendish had given up one country house and estate, Northaw Manor in Hertfordshire, and purchased another, the dilapidated Chatsworth in Derbyshire, the ancestral seat of Bess's relatives and childhood neighbours, the Leches.<sup>113</sup> Whitfield appears to have been in the Cavendishes' service since at least 1549. Account book entries for the years 1549-1553, many of them in Bess's hand, present him as a chief officer responsible at Northaw and/or Chatsworth 'for the howse' as a whole and also for the important task of purchasing foodstuffs for the London household.<sup>114</sup> The same duties are represented in this and the only other surviving letter from Bess to Whitfield (ID 101), which are explicit about his responsibility for overseeing the maintenance of both Chatsworth House and its inhabitants.

In this first letter (ID 99), Bess breaks down in some detail what this responsibility entails as she lists the preparations to be made for the return to Chatsworth of her aunt Marcella Linacre and of herself with her husband. The tone of these opening instructions is businesslike, perhaps brusque, for the style is direct and concise and the syntactic organisation is comparatively simple: a series of direct

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<sup>112</sup> Hardwick MS 1 records some of the Cavendishes' London expenses in December 1552, by which time Whitfield had joined them (ff. 15r, 50r and 52r).

<sup>113</sup> For the details of these land transactions, see Durant, *Bess*, pp. 14, 18-19.

<sup>114</sup> Whitfield first appears in the Cavendishes' household accounts being paid his 20s half-year's wages on Lady Day 1549 (Folger, MS X.d.486, f. 11v). Subsequently, there are frequent entries for 'Items geven to francys to lay out for the howse' (ff. 14r, 15r, 16r and v, 17r). For Whitfield's financial transactions in London, see Hardwick MS 1, ff. 15r, 50r and 52r.

orders given in the form of imperative verbs. Bess writes with the assurance that Whitfield will obey; she does not belabour this point. It is worth noting that almost all of Bess's commands are directed at Whitfield only as an intermediary; he is not their final recipient. As an overseer, he will pass these orders down to Bronshawe at Pentrich and to the builders and lower servants at Chatsworth; his own job is to 'cause' each of them to work and to 'loke' over what they do. Thus, although Bess issues these directives in the most forceful grammatical form, the context, far from demeaning Whitfield, invites him to share in her verbal authority by passing her orders down to others. Their pragmatic function as routine instructions to a fellow manager renders Bess's direct orders to Whitfield less aggressive than their grammatical form in itself suggests.

By contrast, where Bess holds Whitfield personally responsible, her tone sharpens. The first instance occurs when Bess adds an afterthought to her orders about the beer: 'and se that I haue good store of yet for yf I lacke ether good bere, or charcole or wode I wyll blame nobody so meche as I wyll do you.' This passage and the subsequent one about the alleged neglect of Jane seem to have had particular impact on later generations of readers, however Whitfield himself may have responded upon reading them for the first time. The beer passage is selected for quotation in four out of the six published discussions of the letter that do not print it in full.<sup>115</sup> Biographers Maud Stepney Rawson, E. Carleton Williams, and Mary S. Lovell give both passages special mention, though the latter appears more interested in Bess's drinking than in her language. In addition, Williams likens an incident in which Bess allegedly 'hurled abuse' at another servant, John Dickenson, to the way she 'berated' Whitfield in this letter, while Kate Hubbard comments on the 'peremptory tone' that 'she used towards her steward.'<sup>116</sup> Certainly, these two passages sound harsh to modern ears. But James Daybell reminds us that Bess's tone is not unique to her but rather an indication of her social position and, moreover, that it is used to express particular disapprobation: 'The authoritarian manner with which Bess delivered these orders is characteristic of other letters from aristocratic women

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<sup>115</sup> These are Stallybrass, pp. 351-52; Williams, pp. 23-24; Hubbard, pp. 24-25; and Lovell, pp. 79-81. Three works print the letter in full: Hunter, p. 78; Rawson, p. 9; and James Daybell, 'Lady Elizabeth Cavendish (Bess of Hardwick) to Francis Whitfield (14 November 1552)', in *Reading Early Modern Women*, ed. by Helen Ostovich, Elizabeth Sauer and Melissa Smith (London: Routledge, 2003), pp. 193-95. The discussion that does not quote this passage is Plowden, p. 17, while Durant, *Bess*, p. 26 incorporates information from this letter without mentioning the letter itself.

<sup>116</sup> Williams, p. 133, citing Hunter (1869 edn), p. 116. Williams's account is based on a misunderstanding of the letter in question (ID 84). There are many reported speeches in this letter, and Williams appears to have misattributed Shrewsbury's 'vehement coller & harde speches' to Bess, who (not Dickenson) was actually their target. Hubbard, p. 33.

to servants, though its severity is heightened by her displeasure at the poor way in which her sister Jane was treated at Chatsworth'.<sup>117</sup> Indeed, early modern employers of both genders regularly adopt an angry, authoritarian tone of writing as a rhetorical strategy for coercing their stewards, as D. R. Hainsworth's work on seventeenth-century estate stewards demonstrates.<sup>118</sup>

Similarly, the specific threat, 'yf I lacke ether good bere, or charcole or wode I wyll blame nobody so meche as I wyll do you', is an expression of the mistress-steward relationship in that it refers to Whitfield's particular duty to supply consumables for the household under her authority. Nobody *would* be more to blame than Whitfield — unless it were Bess herself as his supervisor. Beer seems to have been a particularly valued commodity, and the troubles of another early modern mistress, Lettice Kinnersley, clarify the pressures on household managing wives to ensure a good supply. On 14 September [1608?], Kinnersley wrote to her brother for help when, as she narrates, her husband had taken the 'charge of the house' away from her, dismissed her servants and confined her to her chamber because the beer had run out.<sup>119</sup> Bess's language to Whitfield, then, was informed not only by his duties but by hers as well: as mistress, she passes down to the steward the pressure and potential blame that she herself would experience from her husband, their master, should anything be lacking. Worry may have fuelled her fiery manner of coercing Whitfield in this sentence.

For all its force of personal blame, Bess's threat is just that: a threat of potential blame, not the act of blaming outright. The future more vivid conditional statement, 'yf I lacke [...] I wyll blame [...] you', paints a picture of hypothetical future events with greater immediacy than would a future less vivid construction (if I were to lack, I would blame you). It is the grammar of Bess's statement that makes the hypothetical future feel real and present, giving her words their undeniable edge. In effect, the statement functions as a warning by giving Whitfield a foretaste of her displeasure but also allowing him the opportunity to act so as to avoid its full force.

In this letter, the switches from a matter of fact tone to a more pointed one that targets Whitfield personally would have performed the important rhetorical functions of getting his attention and motivating him to solve the problems raised.

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<sup>117</sup> Daybell, 'Lady Cavendish to Francis Whitfield', p. 194. Much of this analysis was inspired by Daybell's brief commentary.

<sup>118</sup> Hainsworth's social history, *Stewards, Lords and People*, is based on extant correspondence between a number of estate stewards and their masters.

<sup>119</sup> Folger, MS L.a.598.



The traditional view that Bess addressed Whitfield with undue aggression in this letter simply to relieve her own unreasonable feelings fails to take into account the reasons that made expressing displeasure towards a servant a practical and socially acceptable thing to do. Furthermore, Bess's displeasure in this letter appears to stem from vulnerability; her apparently confident words may well mask anxious dependence on the steward in matters of some importance.

The second point in the letter when Bess holds Whitfield personally responsible is particularly fraught, both socially and linguistically. Like the beer passage, it is constructed of complex syntax that does not occur when she is giving straightforward directives. Once again, Bess is writing about social dynamics that pertain to both Whitfield's responsibilities as steward and her own standing in the household at Chatsworth when she broaches the subject of the rumour she has heard in London that her sister Jane's needs are being left unmet. The rhetoric of Bess's lengthy rebuke, no less than her earlier instructions and threat, relates to Whitfield's specific duties in the household: providing and overseeing. Even as she takes him to task for alleged neglect in these areas, Bess must use caution, for she continues to rely on his considerable services. The linguistic result is a mixed rhetoric of restraint and anger effects. Bess opens this section with controlled civility, employing an indirect statement and a conditional clause to position in the realm of rumour and possibility, rather than fact or her own firm belief, the implicit accusation that the Chatsworth staff under Whitfield have neglected her sister Jane's needs: *'I here that my syster Iane cane not haue thynges that ys nedefoulle for hare to haue amongste you yf yet be trewe [...]'*. The syntax of Bess's statements carefully distances the accusation from Whitfield himself, even though, as they both knew, any lack of 'nedefoulle' items was ultimately a failure of duty on his part.

But Bess's displeasure in this passage is about more than lack of provisions; it is about disrespect to the family and Whitfield's alleged failure to maintain a high level of respect for her sister amongst the other staff. The hypothetical language with which Bess opens the subject of Jane's treatment recalls her earlier warning to Whitfield and paves the way for a high-impact accusation: *'yf yet be trewe you lacke agreat of honyste as well as dyscrescyon to deny hare any thyng that she hathe amynde to'*. Once again, the cautious 'if' clause is outweighed by the conclusion, which here topples over into outright blame as Bess moves from the subjunctive to the indicative mood. At the same time, her accusations appear to shift from the group to the individual, as the prepositional phrase 'amongste you', which implicates the

entire staff, gives way to 'you' — Whitfield specifically.<sup>120</sup> Bess holds him ultimately responsible for allowing this neglect. Whitfield's position as steward both permits him to assume his employer's authority in his dealings with lower servants and exposes him to her wrath when those beneath him fail to comply with her wishes.

The lengths to which Bess goes in elaborating her displeasure, explaining what she expects from Whitfield, and threatening him with her imminent return would have indicated to him that she takes any disrespect towards her sister as a very serious matter. The rhetoric of the letter reaches its climax in the statement, 'I wolde be lothe to haue any stranger so yoused yn my howse. and then assure your selfe I cane not lyke yet to haue my syster so yousede.' This is Bess's fullest expression of outrage. Its effectiveness derives from word choice, shared knowledge of domestic protocol, and a forcefully one-sided representation of Jane's nebulous position.

It is significant that Bess elides Jane's elite servant status and insists that she be treated with respect because of their blood relation and the unspecified 'case' that she has recently been in. Jane's presence at Chatsworth in the 1550s appears to have been open to multiple interpretations — and still is. In his biography of Bess, David N. Durant states that in her retinue 'her sister, Jane Leche, [...] acting as gentlewoman, [...] was paid a wage of £3 per year', and Lovell echoes this assertion.<sup>121</sup> While several account book entries for 'my syster' written in Bess's hand testify to Jane's presence in the household from 1549 and Jane's high wages — half-again Whitfield's — register her high status, the earliest accounts do not name her position or give any indication of her regular duties.<sup>122</sup> Since it was usual for women of gentle birth to serve as companionate attendants to other gentry or aristocratic women, including their relatives, and this was a comparatively elevated and well paid service position, it seems safe to assume with Durant and Lovell that this was Jane's primary role at Chatsworth in the early 1550s.

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<sup>120</sup> By this time, 'you' had largely displaced 'thou' in speech and correspondence as the default singular form of the second person pronoun, relegating 'thou' to an indication of particular disrespect or familiarity (Terttu Nevalainen, *An Introduction to Early Modern English* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh UP, 2006), pp. 78-79). Although expressing anger, Bess does not insult Whitfield with the term 'thou'.

<sup>121</sup> Durant, *Bess*, p. 16; Lovell, p. 59.

<sup>122</sup> Folger, X.d.486, ff. 11r and v, 16v, 21v, 27r. In the first of these, Jane is 'geuen' 2s 'when she crystenyd boteleres chylde'; perhaps this was a gift for her to pass on to James (the) Butler's child as godmother. In any case, it was clearly an isolated incident. The wage entries on f. 16v show that Jane and a male servant, Myntereg, were both paid 15s per quarter, the second highest recorded wages in Bess's household at that time, while Whitfield was one of four men paid 10s per quarter and another two were higher paid at 13s 4d. These last may have been gentlemen attendants.

Matters are complicated, however, by Bess's absence in November 1552, by the suggestiveness of Jane's additional duties later in the decade and beyond, and by her near relation to her employer. To take the first question first: what was an attendant to do when not in attendance but left behind in the country while her mistress was in London? Lovell suggests that Jane's 'case', mentioned in the letter, may have been giving birth to her first child while secluded at Chatsworth. This is a highly plausible suggestion, but it is impossible to verify: the dates of Jane's marriage and of her children's births are not recorded, and the early accounts refer to 'my syster' and 'Mrs Iane' without either maiden or married name.<sup>123</sup> The traditional understanding of Jane's role while Bess was away is that she was acting as her sister's delegate. Durant states, 'In Bess's absence from Chatsworth, she left her sister Jane in charge of the household with Francis Whitfield, her bailiff, responsible for running the estate'.<sup>124</sup> Neither the accounts nor Bess's letter to Whitfield makes this an obvious conclusion. If anything, Bess's letter shows that Jane was not in charge of the household but that Whitfield acted as a household as well as an estate steward.<sup>125</sup> Whereas textual representations of Whitfield's many duties abound, Jane's activities in this period are off record.

While not waiting on Bess or outright managing Chatsworth House, Jane may nevertheless have represented her sister there in various ways. Later in life, the matron Jane Kniveton was a person of undeniable importance in her sister's household. In the well documented 1590s, Jane had servants and labourers of her own at Hardwick Hall, while from 1580 through the 1590s accounts present her taking an active role in managing Bess's finances; for example, she receives loan repayments, keeps track of 'obligations' (amounts owed to Bess by third parties, mainly for livestock purchased from her estates), and distributes largesse.<sup>126</sup> The greater density of references to Mistress Kniveton's financial transactions towards the end of the century probably reflects her increasing importance in Bess's

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<sup>123</sup> Lovell, pp. 80-81. This would account for the presence of a midwife and (wet)nurse at Chatsworth, both of whom Bess instructs Whitfield to pay at the end of the letter. However, these payments do not necessarily mean that Jane had recently given birth; the Cavendishes seem to have routinely delayed wage payments and to have employed a midwife year round. The Mistress Jane of the London expenses in December 1552 (Hardwick MS 1, ff. 42v, 49r, 53r) could refer to either sister of this name.

<sup>124</sup> Durant, *Bess*, p. 26. Daybell follows Durant on this point ('Lady Cavendish to Francis Whitfield', p. 194).

<sup>125</sup> On the not entirely strict distinction between estate stewards and bailiffs, see Hainsworth, pp. 17-18. To complicate matters further, Whitfield's dual appointment as household and estate steward appears to have been shared with Crompe.

<sup>126</sup> See, for example, Hardwick MS 5, ff. 16v, 17r and v; Hardwick MS 7, ff. 102r, 112v, 149r; Hardwick MS 8, ff. 24r, 116v, 146r, 150r; Hardwick MS 10, f. 17v; and Hardwick Drawer 143, f. 14v.

establishments and possibly also more thorough record keeping as time went on. No Chatsworth accounts survive from 1551-1558, but in the account book Bess kept when in the London area most entries for income from rent collections from 'our ladysse daye' 1558 to 'shroftyde' 1559 are marginally annotated and initialled by Bess, 'to my syster. E'; these notes indicate that Jane was entrusted with nearly the full year's rents, presumably because she was conveniently stationed at Chatsworth while the widowed Bess was away.<sup>127</sup>

On this occasion, Jane appears to act as her sister's receiver, a high ranking household post. According to an early seventeenth-century set of guidelines for aristocratic household government, the receiver ranked second only to the chief-officer triumvirate of steward, treasurer, and comptroller. The semi-anonymous author of these guidelines, 'R. B.', suggests the receivership could be filled by one of these officers, 'being men of experience', as a secondary function 'and thereby free the Earl from those fees that belong to' the receiver.<sup>128</sup> These statements indicate that the receivership was considered a position of prestige and some expertise. As a part-time job, it could be held jointly with another household office, but it is not what one would expect to find a waiting gentlewoman doing in her spare time.<sup>129</sup>

Perhaps gentlewomen did ordinarily engage in administration to a greater degree and of a greater variety than has been recognised, particularly in smaller gentry (as opposed to aristocratic, male-dominated) households. In this specific case, Jane was following in her sister's footsteps, for Bess had previously received rents on behalf of Sir William Cavendish: the opening page of the earliest Cavendish account book to survive is headed in Bess's handwriting, 'My hosbande half yeres rentes due at mychelmas yn the second yere of the rengne of our souereygne lord kyng edward the vj<sup>th</sup> resauuyd by me', and the next several pages list the rents received by wife and husband separately.<sup>130</sup>

As Barbara Harris and Amy Froide, amongst others, have observed, early modern English wives and widows typically accrued responsibility and prestige in the domestic realm.<sup>131</sup> Bess's social position as wife and mistress clearly gave her considerable authority and responsibility in the sphere of domestic — including

<sup>127</sup> Hardwick MS 3, f. 17r. On Cavendish's death and Bess's subsequent whereabouts, see the somewhat differing accounts in Durant, *Bess*, pp. 30, 32-33 and Lovell, pp. 106, 111, 113-14, 147-48.

<sup>128</sup> R. B., p. 3.

<sup>129</sup> Rents were collected half-yearly or quarterly by the bailiff's men and then handed over to the receiver; consequently, the receiver's services were not required year-round.

<sup>130</sup> Folger, MS X.d.486, ff. 2r-7r (f. 2r).

<sup>131</sup> Harris, *English Aristocratic Women 1450-1550*; Froide, pp. 236-69.

financial — management. The only surviving letter from Cavendish to his wife is a brief note concerned purely with business (ID 13). He writes from Chatsworth to Bess in London, bidding her pay one ‘otewell Alayne’ the remainder of what they owe him ‘for certayne otys’ (oats). Cavendish explains that Alayne ‘is desyrus to receyue the rest at london’ and that ‘you knowe my Store and therefore I haue appoyntyed hym to haue it at *your* handes’. Bess had ready access to her husband’s cash and was entrusted with dispensing it. Following Cavendish’s death and Bess’s remarriage to Sir William St Loe, the latter likewise wrote letters to her that acknowledge her importance in managing his domestic affairs both at Chatsworth and in London. St Loe’s three surviving letters, IDs 59-61, are more overtly affectionate than Cavendish’s one (although Cavendish’s is the source of the nickname ‘besse’). In ID 61, St Loe playfully addresses his wife as ‘my honest swete chatesworth’, identifying her with the house over which she presided in his absence. Another of his letters, ID 59, explicitly states where she, as wife and mistress, fit into the early modern domestic hierarchy: ‘my owne good sarvantte and cheyff oversear off my worcks’. St Loe’s tone is appreciative, with perhaps another touch of playfulness. For Bess to be her husband’s chief overseer of Chatsworth places her above everyone but him in prestige and responsibility. She is figured as his right-hand man. At the same time, St Loe of course knew that Chatsworth had been Bess’s residence and responsibility prior to their marriage, and so calling her his ‘servantte’ there may be intentionally cheeky.

What emerges overall from Bess’s household accounts and correspondence with other household and estate managers is, first, that she was ultimately responsible for overseeing the management of her husbands’ — and, when widowed, her own — houses and estates, including their finances. Second, that she was aided not only by male officers but also by her sister and widowed aunt. It seems that Cavendish delegated to Bess and Bess to Jane financial responsibilities they would exercise themselves whenever possible; thus, when undertaking financial transactions on behalf of close relatives, Bess and subsequently Jane were more like personal representatives than household officers and were considered to outrank the officers. Whereas R. B.’s treatise assumes that the receiver will be an officer and a gentleman, the account books indicate that, at least on occasion, the practice in the Cavendish household was to rely on its numerate and trustworthy gentlewomen.

Financial responsibilities aside, Jane would unavoidably represent Bess at Chatsworth simply by being her sister. The same appears to hold true for Bess’s aunt.



In bidding Whitfield earlier in the letter to 'loke well to all thynges at chattysworthe tyll my aunes comynge whome', Bess portrays another of her female relatives as a symbolic and hands-on representative of the ruling family at the heart of the household. Bess's wording suggests not only that Whitfield must make everything ready for the arrival of another member of the family but also that upon her arrival aunt Linacre will relieve the steward of his duty to 'look to all things' by taking it upon herself; as a widow, she would be an experienced household manager in her own right. Both aunt and sister represent the family and specifically the mistress by virtue of their blood relation to her and by using their skills on her behalf.

When chastising Whitfield for the neglect of Jane, Bess emphasises what makes her different from others at Chatsworth and thereby deserving of special attention: Jane's 'case' and especially her superiority as Bess's sister. Bess stresses the social distance between Whitfield and Jane instead of their similar status as elite servants. In her statement, 'I wolde be lothe to haue any stranger so yoused yn my howse and then assure your selfe I cane not lyke yet to haue my syster so yousede', Bess elides Jane's service roles in order to emphasise instead that, like a guest, she is someone to be served. According to the rules of hospitality, Bess's own reputation would be involved in the treatment of her guests. If Jane had been a guest neglected by the household staff, not only she but Bess would have been dishonoured; how much more so given that Jane, as the mistress's sister, was her symbolic representative? Bess's standing in her own household would be undermined by such disrespect, and she reasserts her authority through rhetorical anger effects, particularly in this sentence, where the phrase 'yn my howse' pointedly enacts her rule while the interjected clause 'assure yourself' adds a threatening edge to her already forceful expression of displeasure.

The verb 'assure' was often used for emphasis in Early Modern English. When used in correspondence to emphasise displeasure, it allowed the writer to assume an air of power over the addressee and could sometimes harbour a threat. For example, in September 1595 Bridget Willoughby wrote a vengeful letter to Master Fisher, an associate of her father, Sir Francis Willoughby, accusing him of slandering her and her husband to her father and warning him, 'tho' at this instant I have no better means of revenge then a little ink and paper, *let thy soul and carkes be assured* to hear and tast of these injuries in other sort and terms then from and by the hands of

a woman'.<sup>132</sup> Sir Philip Sidney on 31 May 1578 threatened his father's secretary, Edmund Molyneux, '*I assure yow before God, that if ever I know yow do so muche as reede any lettre I wryte to my Father, without his commandement, or my consente, I will thruste my Dagger into yow*'.<sup>133</sup> Bess's use of the verb phrase *assure yourself* is not deadly; rather, it appears calculated to coerce without antagonising. Leaving her warning implicit rather than making it explicit allowed Bess to convey displeasure in a way that is nevertheless forceful. Neither Sir Philip Sidney's nor Bridget Willoughby's outright threats of physical violence were directed at their own servants, but rather at men serving and trusted by their fathers; the grown-up children's frustrating lack of direct power over these men may have induced them to take this desperate verbal measure. Bess, by contrast, can assure Whitfield of her displeasure in the comparatively subtle manner appropriate to a mistress writing to an officer under her own authority and with whom she has an established, if sometimes unsatisfactory, working relationship.

Bess's warning is founded on the premise that an employer's expressed will or pleasure determines the actions of servants, an assumption that appears to underlie the discourses of service in early modern letters. In a culture in which orders were regularly communicated as the master or mistress's 'pleasure', a servant's prime duty, regardless of specific responsibilities, was to please. Robert Cleaver's Puritan bestseller, *A Godlie Forme of Householde Gouvernement* (1598), makes this explicit and demonstrates that it was the model even in middling urban households:

Seruants must take heede that they doe not wittingly and willingly anger or displease their masters, mistresses, or dames: which if they do, then they ought incontinent and forthwith to reconcile themselues vnto them, and to aske them forgiuenes. They must also forbear them, and suffer their angrie and hastie words<sup>134</sup>

In Bess's highly wrought statement of displeasure, she claims personal ownership of the house and the associated right to dictate the behaviour of those living there, yet she explicitly commands the steward only to understand and be certain of what she 'cane not lyke'. The clear implication is that he must take action, based on this knowledge, to realign household affairs with the mistress's pleasure, but she

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<sup>132</sup> HMC Middleton, p. 577.

<sup>133</sup> Arthur Collins, ed., *Letters and Memorials of State* (London: T. Osborne, 1746), vol. 1, 256. For an analysis of other letters exchanged between Molyneux and members of the Sidney family, see Magnusson, *Social Dialogue*, Chapter 2.

<sup>134</sup> Robert Cleaver, *A Godlie Forme of Householde Gouvernement: For the Ordering of Private Families, according to the direction of Gods word* (London: Felix Kingston for Thomas Man, 1598), p. 380.

specifies neither what he must do to achieve this outcome nor what the consequences will be if he does not.<sup>135</sup> To put this in the terms of linguistic pragmatics, Bess fails to perform directive speech acts when it matters most. Instead, she reverts to complex and indirect statements that Whitfield must decode before he can decide on an appropriate course of action. This rhetorical strategy is made viable by their shared understanding of the ideologies and associated discourses underpinning domestic service.

Another example of indirect threat concludes this section of Bess's letter: 'at my comynge whome I shal knowe more. and then I wyll thynke as I shall haue cause'. Although Bess's position gives her a right to issue direct orders and use 'angrie words' as she sometimes does, it also enables her by merely 'blam[ing]' or 'thynk[ing]' ill of her steward to indicate that he had failed in duty and reprisals could follow. The historically specific social relation between mistress and chief officer allows her the option of writing to him in a somewhat elliptical manner that by implying he will comply with her wishes pressures him to do so. This approach is more sophisticated than making outright demands or threatening specific punishments, but it exerts a similar coercive force. Furthermore, explicitly threatening Whitfield with only her displeasure works to Bess's advantage by sparing her from the need to follow through with any specific course of action it would be unpleasant or inconvenient for her to perform against him: far better to use vague scare tactics and anger effects in the hope he will mend his ways.

Between Bess's assertions of displeasure comes a passage with a rather different tone and rhetorical tactics. Here she offers a pointed reminder of what specifically she can reasonably expect from her steward: 'lyke as I wolde not haue any superfleuete or waste of any thyng. so lyke wysse wolde I haue hare to haue that whyche ys nedefoulle and nesenary'. Servants' opportunities and perceived proclivity for wasting their employers' resources were of widespread concern, as testified by the steady stream of avaricious and wasteful hirelings that march across the pages and stages of early modern advice literature and drama.<sup>136</sup> If Whitfield

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<sup>135</sup> In the final section of the letter, however, Bess instructs Whitfield to communicate and co-operate with Jane in paying the nurse and midwife and in passing on a message for Bess's daughter Frances.

<sup>136</sup> For example, Henry Percy, ninth earl of Northumberland narrates for his heir a cautionary tale of his own substantial financial losses as a young man due to the greed and incompetence of his servants (Petworth House, Leconfield MS 24/1). In Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, the retained knight Sir Toby and fool Feste neglect their duties and waste their lady's resources, while more sinister characters such as Iago in *Othello* and De Flores in Middleton and Rowley's *The Changeling* show how easily negative stereotypes of dishonest, ambitious, and predatorial male servants shade into each other and

'lacke agreat of honyste', however, it is not through the usual servant vices of theft or carelessness. All of Bess's directives in this letter urge the steward to make sufficient provisions available and not to skimp. In this context, Bess's juxtaposition of the entirely standard wish 'not [to] haue any superfleuete or waste of any thyng' with the accusation that Whitfield lacks honesty by failing to provide necessary goods invokes the stereotype of the dishonest, wasteful servant only to suggest that Whitfield errs too far the other way. The steward's unwillingness to spend Bess's money on her dependent sister's needs can be seen as dishonest in that it robs Jane of the goods and respect to which she is entitled, while it simultaneously misrepresents Bess's own intentions toward her, making it look as though Bess does not care about her sister's well-being. Bess anticipates Whitfield's self-defensive protest that he is an honest, trustworthy steward, and she dismantles it in advance, stating clearly that although conscientious thrift is a highly valued quality in a servant, it must be exercised within the bounds of obedience and respect and without compromising the quality or extent of provision, particularly for members of the family.<sup>137</sup> Jane, like Bess, ought to be given 'any thyng that she hathe amynde to'; her wants, no less than Bess's, are to dictate (her fellow) servants' actions.

Bess assertively reminds Whitfield of his duty to her one final time in the valediction: 'prayinge you not to fayle to se all thynges done accordyngely I bede you fare well'. Whereas children and servants traditionally wish blessings such as good health upon their socially superior correspondents, Bess, as mistress, wishes the steward to obey in full. In the phrase 'prayinge you not to fayle', the verb 'prayinge' may appear to be a conventional politeness marker that implicitly acknowledges the writer's dependence on the reader, but in this instance it emphasises not humble entreaty but rather the urgency of Bess's directives. Bess depends on Whitfield to fully meet the material needs of the Chatsworth household and furthermore to maintain its social and symbolic order. Like the examples of culturally specific subtext discussed above, the mistress's dependency on the servant is nowhere explicitly acknowledged, but it underlies the force and urgency of her every sentence.

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become instruments of tragedy. William Bas fights back against the bad reputation of servingmen in the verse treatise *Sword and Buckler, or, Serving-mans Defence* (London: for M. L., 1602).

<sup>137</sup> This sentiment is echoed by the job description drawn up for Sir Francis Willoughby's butler c. 1572, which concludes, 'The discrecion of that officer is to foresee that no filching of bread or beer be suffer'd, nor yet any want where reason doth require may be greatly both for his master's profit and worshipping, for it is an office both of good credit and great trust' (*HMC Middleton*, p. 541).

**Bess of Hardwick [location unidentified] to Francis Whitfield at Chatsworth, 20 October [1561] (ID 101)**

*address leaf, f. 2v*

*superscription: italic script, Bess's hand*

Too my saruante francys wyttfelde

*endorsement: secretary script, Whitfield's hand*

my ladis letter for my nagges

*later note: unidentified hand*<sup>138</sup>

Elizabeth Lady Saintlow (Daughter of John Hardwick of Hardwick Esquire) afterwards Countess of Shrewsbury. She Built Chatsworth, Hardwick, & Oldcotes, in Derbyshire.

*letter, f. 1r*

*italic script, Bess's hand*

francy[s] I wyll nott now haue the  
 pourche boched<sup>139</sup> seyng I haue bene  
 att so greatt chargos I thynke yet  
 nott materyall yf the batelmente  
 for the sydes be made thys  
 yere or no for I am sure the  
 batelmente mouste be sett oupe after  
 the porche be couered and yf yet  
 be so then wyll yett be dreye and  
 the battylmente ~~be~~ may be sett  
 oup att any tyme. the batylment  
 for the teryte wolde deface the  
 wolle<sup>140</sup> pourche for yett ^ys^ nether of  
 one begenes moldynge<sup>141</sup> nor of one  
 stone. yett of bothe do I lyke  
 batter the creste beyng of the  
 same stone. I am contented you  
 shall haue the nage comende  
 me to my aunte lynycar fare  
 well francys yn haste as a  
 peryrs<sup>142</sup> the xx of october  
 your mystrys  
 ESeyntlo  
 tyll besse knolles<sup>143</sup> and franke<sup>144</sup> thatt

<sup>138</sup> This note is in the same hand as the note on the address leaf of letter ID 99.

<sup>139</sup> 'Botch, v.<sup>1</sup>', '1a. *trans.* To make good or repair [...] 2. To spoil by unskilful work; to bungle', in *OED* <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/21841>> [accessed 22 September 2012].

<sup>140</sup> *whole*.

<sup>141</sup> 'Moulding/molding, n.<sup>1</sup>', '2a. *Archit.* A raised or incised ornamental contour or outline given to an arch, capital, cornice, or other linear feature of a building', in *OED* <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/122833>> [accessed 22 September 2012].

<sup>142</sup> *appears*.

<sup>143</sup> Elizabeth Knollys, born 1549.

<sup>144</sup> Frances Cavendish, Bess's eldest daughter, born 1548.



I saye yf they pley ther uergenalles<sup>145</sup>  
that the are good gerles

*postscript down left margin: Bess's hand*

I thynke Iames crompe ys  
att ~~of~~ houll<sup>146</sup>

*ff. 1v and 2r blank*

### ***Business as usual?***

This second letter from Bess to Whitfield has attracted less attention, at least in part because it was not printed by Hunter. When it is referred to by biographers, it is primarily for the information it contains about the rebuilding of Chatsworth House.<sup>147</sup> The Folger catalogue dates it c. 1560, but Lovell demonstrates that Bess was actually at Chatsworth on 20 October 1560 and suggests the letter was written in October 1561 when Bess was in London.<sup>148</sup> By this time, Sir William Cavendish had died and, after a two-year period of widowhood, Bess had married another courtier, Sir William St Loe, in 1559.<sup>149</sup>

In terms of language use, Bess's 1561 letter to Whitfield resembles neither the straightforward directive style nor the complex, rhetorically heightened style found in her previous letter. Instead, it has the most in common with the passages where she stated her wishes as implied directives. Letter ID 101 consists largely of statements of Bess's own mental activity: 'I wyll nott now haue the pourche boched', 'I thynke yet nott materyall', 'I am sure', 'I lyke batter', 'I am contented', 'I thynke'. Not only do verbs of mental activity appear in high numbers, they also condition how many other actions or states of being are to be perceived. Each of these verbs occurs in a main clause introducing a dependent or relative clause that contains further details; in this way, Bess's wishes and opinions precede and colour the interpretation of the letter's information. Even statements made in the third person, which on that account appear more objective, include words like 'deface' that pronounce Bess's judgement. What is particularly striking about this letter is the way in which Bess consistently imposes her perspective on the letter's contents and, thereby, on its

<sup>145</sup> 'Virginal, *n.*', 'A keyed musical instrument (common in England in the 16th and 17th centuries), resembling a spinet, but set in a box or case without legs', in *OED* <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/223736>> [accessed 22 September 2012].

<sup>146</sup> Possibly Kingston upon Hull, Yorkshire.

<sup>147</sup> For example, Durant, *Bess*, p. 47 and Lovell, p. 179. For a further description of the second Chatsworth House, under construction in this letter, see Stallybrass, p. 351.

<sup>148</sup> Lovell, pp. 179, 513 n. 14.

<sup>149</sup> See Durant, *Bess*, pp. 30, 33-34 and Lovell, p. 147.

recipient. Once again, the underlying assumption is that Whitfield will translate the mistress's wishes into obedient action. This is quite obviously the letter's purpose.

Bess's language in letter ID 101 represents their mistress-steward relationship as more stable and satisfactory than in letter ID 99. There are no threats or other outright expressions of displeasure here. Although Bess opens this letter by quite bluntly and perhaps impatiently expressing to Whitfield her concern that repairs to the porch not be rushed into after her (and St Loe's) already considerable financial outlay, the very fact that Bess neither lays blame nor belabours the point suggests that she was at this time comfortable enough with the steward to communicate her opinions directly and with confidence — confidence, that is, not only in her right to express her wishes but also in his obedience and competence to see them carried out.

Like letter ID 99, letter ID 101 also includes ancillary social negotiations: an act of patronage and messages to be passed on to female relatives and children. Whereas in letter ID 99 Bess acted as an intermediary patron between steward and master, passing on request and reply, here in letter ID 101 she writes to Whitfield as the one who has decided in her own right to grant his requested nag, apparently without consulting her husband. Bess now appears to consider the staff and resources at Chatsworth to be at her own disposal. This is a logical implication of being St Loe's spouse and chief delegate, entrusted with the management of Chatsworth on his behalf. But it also reflects the fact that by 1561 Bess had been mistress of Chatsworth for a decade, including two years as sole head of house during her widowhood, whereas St Loe was a relative newcomer who spent most of his time at the royal court. His three surviving letters to Bess all complain of the geographical and emotional constraints placed on him by his service to the queen and other London business; he would rather be at Chatsworth with his wife. In his absence, Bess was in sole charge.

Whitfield's persistence in asking for things from his employers and Bess's willingness to further and/or grant his requests suggests that this dynamic was an accepted aspect of steward-employer relations; although not directly work related, it cemented the unequal social bond, akin to that of medieval vassal and lord, by providing opportunities for the exchange of honour and goodwill as well as of material goods. It was a win-win situation that allowed Whitfield to obtain desired items and affirmation and Bess to act and be perceived as lady bountiful — albeit within the limits of moderation. In letter ID 99 Bess specifies that Whitfield may have only the wood that is of no use to the master carpenter, and both there and in

letter ID 101 she uses the granting of requests rhetorically, as sugar to coat the denser and less palatable passages of instruction, blame, and explanation.

In all three of her surviving letters to household officers, Bess includes messages for them to pass on to her female relatives at Chatsworth. This appears to have been her usual practice, presumably prompted by a genuine desire to greet and share in the life of her family by any means available and possibly also by the expectation that she would do so.<sup>150</sup> However, as with request granting, Bess could use these messages to manipulate. In her earlier letter to Whitfield, Bess had made a point of instructing him to make a number of payments on her and 'her boye' Will's behalf, to inform her sister Jane of this, and to pass a message through Jane to Bess's daughter Frances — a complex manoeuvre that simultaneously highlighted Jane's role as a well integrated member of the family with some control over its finances and insisted that Whitfield co-operate with her on both levels. Letter ID 101 also instructs Whitfield to interact with female members of the household, young and old: 'comende me to my aunte lynycar' and 'tyll besse knolles and franke thatt I saye yf they pley ther uergenalles that the are good gerles'. As there is no apparent tension between the parties and the tone of these messages conveys straightforward goodwill, these appear to be routine communications. In both letters, bidding Whitfield to bear messages was a way for the absent Bess to ensure that the male officer and the women and children of her family communicated with one another, strengthening these core relationships. (As we shall see, Bess also corresponded with James Crompe and William Marchington about her children in a way that strongly suggests that officers were responsible for the children's well-being.)

All the interactions between Bess and Whitfield performed in letter ID 101 — whether pertaining to work, patronage, or family life — are presented as ordinary, requiring no special style or explanation. In the subscription, however, Bess does something extraordinary. She offers a mild apology: 'in haste as a peryrs'. It is hard to identify which feature(s) of the letter she assumes Whitfield will interpret as indicative that she wrote in a hurry. This letter is shorter and less discursive than the earlier surviving one, but both move quickly from topic to topic and both are penned in a large and somewhat messy form of Bess's handwriting that could be as much a sign of speed as of social prestige. Without further letters to Whitfield to compare

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<sup>150</sup> We see from other letters that children were duty bound to write to their parents; while heads of family would not owe letters to their children, siblings, and more distant kin in the same way, it is easy to imagine that those relatives could take offence if not at least greeted in any letters to other household members, especially as letters were often read communally rather than privately.

them with, it is impossible to know whether or in what way(s) Bess was deviating from her standard practice here. The tone of this letter could be interpreted as impatient, and perhaps she has left some of his questions unanswered, or answered more peremptorily than usual. Apologising for 'haste' may have been a short-hand way for Bess to apologise to the steward for other things, saving both her face and time by not enumerating them. Although it may be unusual for an employer to apologise to a servant, Bess does so in a way that, by being both vague and indirect, maintains her dignity as mistress.

**Bess of Hardwick at the royal court to James Crompe at Chatsworth,  
8 March [1560-1564] (ID 100)**

*address leaf, f. 2v*

*superscription: italic script, unidentified scribal hand*

To Iames crompe

*later note: unidentified hand*

curious

*letter, f. 1r*

*italic script, unidentified scribal hand*

crompe I do vndearestande by your leters that worth<sup>151</sup> sayth he  
well departe at our ladeday next I wyll that you shall  
haue ^hym^ bundon yn ^a^ noblygacyon<sup>152</sup> to avoyde at the same day  
for sure I wyll troste nomor to hys promes and were<sup>153</sup> he doth  
tell you that he ys [*illegible*] any peny behend ~~of an olde~~ for work  
done to mr cauendyss<sup>154</sup> or me he doth lye lyke afalse knaue  
for I am moste sure he ded neuer make any thyng for  
me but ij vaynes to stande vpon the huse I do very wel  
lyke your sendeynges sawyers to pentrege and medoplecke<sup>155</sup>  
for that well funder my workes and so I pray you yn any  
other thyngs that well be ahelp to my byldeynge let yt  
be done and for tomas mason<sup>156</sup> yf you can here were he

<sup>151</sup> Unidentified; he appears to have been a tenant craftsman.

<sup>152</sup> 'obligation, n.', '1. The action of constraining oneself by oath, promise, or contract to a particular course of action; a mutually binding agreement [...] a formal promise. Obs. 2. Law and Finance. A binding agreement committing a person to a payment or other action; the document containing such an agreement; a written contract or bond [...]', in OED <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/129688>> [accessed 17 October 2012]. The letter does not specify whether Worth is to be bound by oath or by signed document, but the latter may be implied inasmuch as he has already said he will leave but Bess finds his spoken promise insufficient. It seems that a written obligation could be considered as having greater legal force than a spoken one.

<sup>153</sup> *where*, either referring to the passage in Crompe's letter in which he reports Worth's speech or as a variant of *whereas*.

<sup>154</sup> Sir William Cavendish, who had died in 1557.

<sup>155</sup> Pentrich and Meadowpleck, two lesser estates in Derbyshire.

<sup>156</sup> Stallybrass surmises this may be Thomas Roberts without offering further explanation (p. 352). Hardwick MS 2, the account book covering the wage payments to agricultural labourers and builders at Chatsworth from October 1559-October 1560, does not record any payments to a mason of this

ys I would very gladely he were at chattesworth I wyl  
 let you know by my next leters what worke thoma[s]  
 mason shall begine one furste when he doth come  
 and as for the other mason wyche sur Iames<sup>157</sup> towld  
 you of yf he wyll not aplye hys worke you know  
 he ys no mete mane for me and the masons work  
 wyche I haue to do ys not mucche and tomas  
 mason well very well ouer se that worke  
 I perseue sur Iames ys mucche myslyked for  
 hys relegyn but I thenke hys wesdom ys suche  
 that he well make smale acounte of thatt mater  
 I woulde haue you to tell my aunte Lenecke  
 that I woulde haue the letell garden weche  
 ys by the newe ~~wor~~ howse made agarden thys  
 yere I care not wether she bestow any grate coste  
 ther of but to sowe yt *with* al kynde of earbes and  
 flowres and some pece of yt *with* malos

f. 1v        I haue sende you by thys carerer<sup>158</sup> iiij ~~bud~~  
 bundeles of garden sedes all wreten *with* wellem  
 marchyngtons<sup>159</sup> hande and by the next you  
 shall know how to youse the[m] yn euery  
 pynte frome the courte the viij of march<sup>160</sup>

your mystres  
 E Seyntelo

*rest of page blank (approximately 20 lines)*

f. 2r blank

### ***'ahelpes to my byldeynge': Bess's appreciative language***

Like Bess's 1552 letter to Whitfield (ID 99), her letter to Crompe on 8 March [1560-1564] (ID 100) is printed in Hunter's *Hallamshire*.<sup>161</sup> Yet despite some striking

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name, but a Thomas Owtering, mason, is paid 2s for 6 days' work on three occasions through September and October 1560 (ff. 24r, 29r, 30r). He does not appear to have been the mason in charge, however; a few other masons joined the work earlier and were better paid. The recruitment of 'tomas mason' and/or the writing of this letter may have occurred in a later year.

<sup>157</sup> Unidentified. With the title 'sir' he could have been either a knight or a priest. Hunter surmises he may be a member of the Foljambe family, which 'suffered much for their attachment to the old profession' (p. 79 n. 1).

<sup>158</sup> *carrier*, a professional transporter of goods, including letters, between London and provincial cities and towns. For further information, see, for example, Alan Stewart, *Shakespeare's Letters* (Oxford: OUP, 2008), Chapter 3: 'Shakespeare and the Carriers' and David Hey, *Packmen, Carriers and Packhorse Roads: Trade and Communication in North Derbyshire and South Yorkshire* (Leicester: Leicester UP, 1980).

<sup>159</sup> William Marchington, another estate officer and author of letter ID 47. For the garden and its relation to the old and 'newe howse[s]', see Trevor Brighton, 'Chatsworth's Sixteenth-Century Parks and Gardens', *Garden History*, 23.1 (Summer 1995), 29-55.

<sup>160</sup> The Folger catalogue dates this letter 8 March [1560?]. In fact, could have been written in any of the years during which Chatsworth House was being rebuilt; Bess's spring-time whereabouts in these years is not known, and other internal references are undatable.



statements regarding Worth, it does not appear to have contributed significantly to Bess's shrewish reputation. Rawson introduces it as 'highly typical for the good lady's literary style and her attitude towards her employees', but otherwise, like her roughly contemporary letter to Whitfield (ID 101), it has attracted attention mainly for what it says about the rebuilding and landscaping of Chatsworth.<sup>162</sup> However, this letter offers much of social and linguistic interest. Bess's manner of writing to this second Chatsworth steward shares several linguistic features with her letters to Whitfield yet differs significantly from them in tone. It is apparent, then, that extra-linguistic social dynamics are impacting Bess's voice. The two recipients of her extant letters of household management appear from these letters and contemporary household accounts to have shared overall responsibility for the Chatsworth house and estate and to have collaborated on a regular basis, but when their textual remains are compared more closely, it appears that Crompe may have been more highly esteemed by their long-term employer.

Crompe's service, like Whitfield's, dates from the spring of 1549 if not earlier; the two men are recorded side by side and paid the same wages (ten shillings per quarter) in the earliest extant account book for the Cavendishes, and both go on to serve them in their London house in the early 1550s and at Chatsworth.<sup>163</sup> Crompe's early duties appear to have been mainly financial; this impression could be biased by the nature of the documentation, but it is striking that there is no mention at all of material goods with reference to him at this time, unlike entries for Whitfield. Like Whitfield, Crompe makes a number of payments on his employers' behalf, for which he is later reimbursed, but in 1550 he buys a gelding from Cavendish for £2.0.0 — a whole year's wages — and in 1552 he lends Cavendish £2.13.4.<sup>164</sup> Crompe must have had savings of his own, and he appears to have assisted with the Cavendishes' cash flow, a responsibility that Bess refers to in the post-script of letter ID 99: 'tyll Iames crompe that I haue resauyed the fyue ponde and ix<sup>s</sup> that he sente me by heue alsope'. In addition, Crompe was sent to 'Calys' (presumably Calais) on Cavendish's business in 1550 and submitted a claim for expenses upon his return.<sup>165</sup> In the following decade he appears to have been based at Chatsworth as a steward,

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<sup>161</sup> Hunter, p. 79.

<sup>162</sup> Rawson, p. 22; for example, Durant, *Bess*, p. 47 and Lovell, pp. 170-71.

<sup>163</sup> Folger, MS X.d.486, f. 16v. Crompe's first appearance is on f. 6v, paying £10 to Bess on 31 April 1549. The London accounts are in Hardwick MS 1.

<sup>164</sup> Folger, MS X.d.486, ff. 8v, 16v, 18v, 30r; Hardwick MS 1, f. 40r.

<sup>165</sup> Folger, MS X.d.486, f. 19r and v.

co-supervising with Whitfield the rebuilding of the house and with another officer, William Marchington, the management of the estates. As an extension of his agricultural management role, Crompe also travelled to regional markets to sell livestock and wool grown on the estates, an important source of income. This may have been what took him to Hull in 1561 (in the post-script of letter ID 101), and in the post-script of a letter to Bess c. 1560 Marchington implies that he saved Crompe from being cheated in a wool deal at Derby (ID 47, analysed in Chapter 4). Nevertheless, Crompe was entrusted with increasing financial responsibilities as time went on; in the early 1580s he is recorded paying over the rents, arrears, debts, and wool money he has collected, repaying Bess's creditors, and transporting staggering sums — from £100 to £1000 at a time — from Bess to her son William.<sup>166</sup> Making one of these transfers in 1583 is his last recorded act of service.

As the Chatsworth accounts come to an end shortly thereafter, it is possible that he continued to serve Bess for even longer than the thirty-four-year span in which he can be traced through the domestic archive. Whitfield's last appearance is in Bess's letter of 1561 (ID 101), but as there are no surviving Chatsworth accounts for 1559-1578, he too may have served longer than the twelve years for which he remains on record. Given the gaps in the archive, it is impossible to know whether Whitfield and later Crompe left Bess's service due to dissatisfaction, old age, or death. Hainsworth has observed that estate stewards rarely lost their jobs, even when levels of mutual dissatisfaction were high; in the seventeenth-century letter collections he has studied, employers prefer to vent their rage upon their chief officers than to dismiss them — a circumstance that would make the job more stressful but not threaten its security.<sup>167</sup> Bess's practice, a century earlier, fits this model: despite her strong expressions of displeasure to Whitfield in 1552, they weathered the storm and he remained in her service for another nine years at least. Although it is possible that Crompe was more highly favoured and Whitfield quit or was dismissed at some point after 1561, the way in which Crompe appears to have gradually taken over many of Whitfield's duties and to have remained in service much longer could, alternatively, suggest that Whitfield was an older man who retired or died earlier.

When Bess wrote to them in the early 1560s, both men were based at Chatsworth as chief officers, most likely stewards. Whereas Whitfield had appeared

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<sup>166</sup> Hardwick MS 5, ff. 17r, 27r, 29v, 30r, 31v, 33r, 34r and v.

<sup>167</sup> Hainsworth, p. 253.

to manage the house, its inhabitants, and the estates supporting it a decade earlier, by this time some of these responsibilities were shared with or made over to Crompe. It is obvious from Bess's letters that both men were responsible for overseeing the rebuilding of Chatsworth House, and her letter to Crompe (ID 100) also indicates that he now managed the human and natural resources at Pentrich and Meadowpleck. When Bess wrote from Bromham to Sir John Thynne on 25 April 1560 to request the services of the expert plasterer he had at Longleat, she bid 'if he doo goo presently the next way' to Chatsworth, 'Let hym enquire for my servaunte Iames Crompe who shall appointe hym what is there to be donne'.<sup>168</sup> Crompe was clearly based at Chatsworth and the officer whom Bess had delegated to superintend work on the interior of the house at least. In order for him to do his duty to her satisfaction, they would have needed to carry out a regular and detailed correspondence, of which only the few letters in this and the following chapter have survived. Lovell's account of this period registers Crompe's ascendancy by not mentioning Whitfield at all: 'Bess spent the entire winter of 1559-1560 in London with Sir William [St Loe], while the industrious major-domo, James Crompe, looked after Chatsworth, running the estates [...] and overseeing the building works.'<sup>169</sup> Durant asserts that Crompe was in charge of the building work at Chatsworth with Whitfield as his stand-in:

In Bess's absences from Chatsworth, James Cromp, Bess's servant from the time she had married Sir William Cavendish, was left in charge. She sent frequent instructions to Cromp on how the work was to be done and where the masons were to be found. When Cromp was away on other business, Francis Whitfield, another old Cavendish servant, was directed.<sup>170</sup>

Certainly this is a possibility. Another is that the burden of regular correspondence with the mistress of the house was shifting from Whitfield to Crompe; there is some evidence, to be considered in the following chapter, that letter-writing was an important part of Crompe's stewardly duty at this time. In fact, as there are no household accounts surviving from this period, the handful of letters exchanged between Bess and her Chatsworth officers are the main source from which to reconstruct their duties and relationships.

Amidst these changes, Whitfield may have continued to act as household steward. Yet, oddly, he is not recorded in the Chatsworth inventories as ever having

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<sup>168</sup> ID 113, quoted from the edition as I have not seen the original.

<sup>169</sup> Lovell, pp. 150-51.

<sup>170</sup> Durant, *Bess*, p. 47.

had his own room in the house, as Crompe eventually did.<sup>171</sup> Whitfield may have had a house of his own in the neighbourhood so that he was not required to live onsite, or special provision may have been made for Crompe as a married man or as a sign of Bess's favour. Very few upper servants who were not also relatives are recorded as having had their own rooms at Chatsworth at this time, so the allocation of space and increased privacy was clearly a privilege.<sup>172</sup> In any case, the discernible inequalities in the two stewards' workloads and living arrangements are matched by Bess's different modes of writing to them in her three extant letters of household management.

Perhaps the most noticeable feature of her letter to Crompe is that her vigorous expressions of displeasure are directed not at him but entirely at a third party: the tenant-craftsman Worth, whose behaviour, in Bess's opinion, belies his name. By contrast with Worth (and Whitfield), she praises Crompe openly and warmly, using discourses of pleasure and collaboration — perhaps even of friendship — when writing of their shared business.

Bess's words concerning Worth are far harsher than any used towards Whitfield. When Worth claims she has not paid him for all his past work, she asserts, 'he doth lye lyke afalse knaue. for', she explains, 'I am moste sure he ded neuer make any thyng for me but ij vaynes to stande vpon the huse'. What Bess sees as Worth's dishonesty in claiming pay for imaginary work allegedly performed years before (when her husband Cavendish was still alive) could also have damaged her reputation in the community if he were believed; the injustice and danger of Worth's claims, perhaps as much as the money involved, bring out Bess's angry, defensive, and distrustful response. Although Worth has said he will move off her land later that month, Bess insists that Crompe 'haue hym bundon' in a legally enforceable promise to do so, as 'I wyll troste nomor to hys promes'. Bess has obviously had a long history of dissatisfactory interactions with this tenant and occasional employee and is

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<sup>171</sup> Crompe's chamber is recorded in the 1601 inventory of Chatsworth but not in the incomplete draft inventory that Gillian White dates to c. 1565-1567, during his actual time of service (*Of houshold stuff*, p. 27; White, "'that whyche is nedefoull and necesary": The Nature and Purpose of the Original Furnishings and Decoration of Hardwick Hall, Derbyshire', PhD thesis, History of Art, University of Warwick, 2005, vol. 2, pp. 390-92). Crompe's may have been one of the rooms left out of the draft inventory, or another room, included in the inventory, may have been assigned to him at a later date.

<sup>172</sup> In the incomplete draft inventory of Chatsworth's contents made in the mid-1560s, specific chambers are assigned to Bess's mother, Elizabeth Leche (who, like aunt Marcella Linacre and sister Jane Kniveton, also helped with domestic management), possibly to her aunt Linacre (if 'Ellens chamber' was hers as White suggests), to the cook, and to one of St Loe's upper servants named Mousall (White, vol. 2, pp. 401-2, 413, 412). Four other rooms were shared by unnamed servants (White, vol. 2, pp. 398, 400, 405, 411). Jane Kniveton and her growing family almost certainly had their own quarters as well.

as eager to see him go as he is to leave. The fact that Bess opens the letter with this matter suggests it may have been the most urgent piece of business on her mind at the time of writing.

Despite her outrage with Worth and her desire that Crompe take immediate action to ensure his departure, Bess writes to Crompe in such a way as to register her respect for him and to re-enforce their good working relationship. By using a discourse of pleasure to state what she would like Crompe to do, Bess courteously casts him as a trusty collaborator whom she is confident is on her side. As in her letters to Whitfield, Bess writes to Crompe of her wishes as an indirect means of giving instructions: '*I wyll that you shall haue hym bundon yn a noblygacyon*'; '*yf you can here were [tomas mason] ys I would very gladely he were at chattesworth*'; and '*I woulde haue you to tell my aunte Lenecke that I woulde haue the letell garden weche ys by the newe howse made agarden thys yere I care not wether she bestow any grate coste ther of*'. Although this is an ordinary way for her to direct both stewards, it is striking that there are no straightforward instructions in this letter. The closest thing to a direct order is the clause 'let yt be done'. The verb 'let' can be interpreted as an imperative meaning 'permit' or 'allow', but, even so, the function and arguably the form of the whole clause is that of a jussive subjunctive, which proposes rather than demands a course of action. Bess's use of the passive voice and impersonal construction with 'it' further distances the proposed work from those who would be doing it and even from Bess as speaker.

Of course, 'let it be done' has come to be a widely used, perhaps even clichéd, idiom for giving orders precisely because it creates this airy sense of distance, which frees the elevated speaker from attending to the nitty-gritty realities and subordinate persons involved in carrying the orders out. In this instance, however, Bess appears to be using the distancing technique for a different reason: courtesy. The indirectness of the clause gives her instruction a light touch; it is appropriate that she refrains from placing undue verbal pressure on Crompe, since, in effect, she is encouraging him to do her a favour. This becomes clear when reading the clause in the context of the whole sentence: '*I do very wel lyke your sendeynges sawyers to pentrege and medoplecke for that well furder my workes and so I pray you yn any other thyngs that well be ahelpe to my byldeynge let yt be done*'. Bess begins by praising Crompe's good judgement and initiative in the matter of the sawyers and then proceeds to ask him, using the courteous phrase 'I pray you', to go beyond the call of duty in continuing to exercise these character traits on her behalf.



Another reason for Bess's use of indirect directives throughout letter ID 100 is that the complex nature of the business in hand requires complex syntax (i.e., contextualisation and explanation in subordinate clauses), unlike simple orders such as 'fix the windows'. In this respect, Bess's style to Crompe resembles the passages in her letters to Whitfield in which she expresses complex thought patterns through complex syntax. The tone of those passages in letter ID 99 is overwrought, and again this is the case in letter ID 100 when she is writing of Worth. In the remainder of the letter to Crompe, however, Bess's complex and indirect directive style communicates not anger or anxiety but, rather, friendly feeling.

Another feature in common with Bess's letters to Whitfield is the high number of statements of her mental activity: eleven in letter ID 100 to Crompe, including those that double as expressions of her wishes. As in letter ID 101 to Whitfield, these statements of her perspective shape how the characters and events she represents are to be interpreted by her reader, while they also contribute to her complex syntax and discursive style. However, as we have seen, the significance of some of the three letters' other identical linguistic features can differ from letter to letter, and from recipient to recipient, according to what is being said about whom to whom. The same set of linguistic forms — collectively, style — can have a different impact because it is the interplay of each letter's content and context with its style, rather than style alone, that determines its tone.

Whereas the tone of Bess's letters to Whitfield varies from the seriously displeased to the neutral, the tone of her letter to Crompe is consistently friendly towards him. When complaining of Worth, it is as to a trusted colleague; when confiding in him her opinion of 'sur Iames', which does not appear to bear directly on household business, it is as to a friend. When writing of Crompe's own performance as estate steward, she is approving and courteous. Bess's discourses of pleasure in this letter communicate not only her wishes but also that she is indeed pleased. If Bess's harsh words towards Whitfield in 1552 have been taken as evidence of her character, so too ought the fact that a decade later Bess represented his counterpart, Crompe, as a trusty and well-beloved steward and wrote to him in a register that is businesslike but also familiar, with even the occasional hint of deference. This friendly and appreciative Bess is a far cry from the 'proud, furious, selfish, and unfeeling' caricature found in Lodge's influential *Illustrations*.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Lodge, p. xvii. Cf. Guy, pp. 441-42, 448-49.

## **Conclusion: Material matters**

Although so few of Bess's letters to servants have survived, the presence of handwriting other than her own on the three extant letters is illustrative of the communal nature not only of producing and reading early modern correspondence but also of domestic management. The preceding analysis has stressed the interdependence and necessary collaboration of mistress and stewards when it came to household and estate management. There is a further layer of collaboration evident in Bess's letter to Crompe: that between herself and her scribe. Unlike the two letters to Whitfield (IDs 99 and 101), which are written and signed by her own hand, letter ID 100, although composed in Bess's voice, is completely scribal, even down to the signature.<sup>174</sup> It may have been written to dictation or recopied from a draft or notes; if the latter, Bess may not have been present to sign the final copy herself before it was sent. Whatever Bess's reasons for not manually writing and signing the letter herself, one certain result would be that Crompe would recognise that the handwriting was not hers. He may well have known whose it was. This scribe, who could have been another servant or a relative of Bess, may have written other letters or documents to which Crompe had access; literate household members would be likely to work together to some degree, whether or not stationed at the same house at all times. If it was a known hand and the letter sealed with Bess's seal, its authenticity would not be questioned. Furthermore, the letter sustains Bess's voice too thoroughly to have been entirely composed by the scribe: it includes many expressions of Bess's own opinions and feelings that are too emphatic to have been composed by anyone else.

The use of a scribe does complicate the picture of Bess's domestic correspondence, as it is impossible to know exactly how the collaboration worked or how Crompe would have responded to receiving a scribal letter. The letter does not apologise or otherwise explain why Bess has not written in her own hand; she may have communicated with Crompe via a scribe regularly, such that this practice no longer required comment. In any case, the language of Bess's letter to Crompe stresses her approval of and confidence in him and thus closes the social distance created by the interposition of the scribe between them. Furthermore, the scribal

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<sup>174</sup> Although the scribe's hand is quite similar to Bess's, they can be distinguished, and the differences are most apparent in the large, confident autograph signature of letter ID 101 compared with the smaller and somewhat stilted scribal 'signature' of letter ID 100. Bess's name is also spelled differently in the two signatures: 'E Seyntelo' in ID 100 and 'ESeyntlo' in ID 101. These differences in spelling and visual impact are significant since Bess developed a stable, iconic signature for each of her married names.

hand reminds us that quite often more than the named sender and recipient were involved in the production and circulation of letters in this period: scribes or secretaries could be involved in composing or physically writing, folding, and sealing letters; servants or professional carriers were always needed to deliver them to their addressees; and, once received, they could be reused or circulated further still.

Notes written on Bess's two surviving letters to Whitfield, added after their delivery at Chatsworth, offer tantalising glimpses of how they functioned as both texts and material objects within the country house. These clues as to how Whitfield and possibly other Chatsworth administrators encountered and perceived Bess's missives pose wider questions regarding the symbolic status of her letters of household management, domestic record-keeping practices, and the long-term preservation of Bess's correspondence.

Bess's second letter to Whitfield is endorsed by him, 'my ladis letter for my nagges' (ID 101). Although she does indeed grant him a nag (clearly upon request), this was hardly her main purpose for writing. Whitfield's endorsement — the only certain sample of his handwriting — indicates both his intention to keep this letter on file and that his reasons for doing so were more personal than professional. This letter may have been preserved in the first instance not due to routine filing or because it contained important information that Whitfield and the builders may need to consult again, but more likely as evidence of his right to the nag(s) should that be questioned.

By contrast, the note added to Bess's earlier extant letter (ID 99) does not relate to the letter's contents and may not have been written by Whitfield. This note, which concerns estate farming and finances, is in a contemporary secretary hand whose letter formation and duct resemble those of Whitfield's endorsement of letter ID 101, but that sample of his writing — a mere six words — is too small to determine with certainty whether or not this note was also penned by him. Further difficulties are added by the circumstance that the two notes were written with different pens, inks, and levels of care. Whereas the endorsement of letter ID 101 is neat and legible, comprised of thin and controlled pen strokes, the writing on the address leaf of letter ID 99 appears to have been written in haste and with a pen in need of trimming. If the note on letter ID 99 was not written by Whitfield himself, he probably, after reading the letter, left it open in a shared workspace where it was

accessible to other clerks or estate officers.<sup>175</sup> In that scenario, Bess's words may not have been read by the anonymous administrator who jotted down on the address leaf a to-do list of agricultural payments to be made or recorded in full elsewhere; his contact with the letter was primarily as a physical object — scrap paper within reach — on which to inscribe a text of his own. The address leaf's reuse, whether by Whitfield or one of his colleagues, suggests once again that, for all her command of language, letters from the mistress were not necessarily received or preserved with special respect at Chatsworth and that their practical value was assessed by those into whose hands they fell and according to criteria unconnected to the purposes for which they were written.

These two notes coupled with the low survival rate of Bess's letters of household management compared with her familial and political correspondence suggest that her letters were received by the Chatsworth staff as ephemeral texts devoid of symbolic or more than short-term practical value. How ironic, then, that in these two letters Bess's authoritative words and the marks of relative disregard for them have been preserved together — and partly through the agency of a later servant. It is thanks to 'one Swifte', a servant of Bess's daughter Mary Talbot who considered the Talbot family's 'evidences and writings' worth saving from governmental confiscation, that so many pieces of Bess's intermingled correspondence have become objects of interest, picked over and selectively preserved as they passed through the hands of centuries of booksellers and private owners before entering the Folger Shakespeare Library in 1961.<sup>176</sup>

It is by considering side by side the linguistic and material features of Bess's extant letters of household management that we can build up a picture of her routine

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<sup>175</sup> The handwriting of the note does not match that of any other household member whose writing has been identified. However, there are many unidentified hands in Bess's account books, and possibly a match may be found there.

<sup>176</sup> Quotations are from a letter from James I's Lords of the Council to George Lassels and Francis Cooke, 28 June 1619, printed in Hunter, p. 97; the original manuscript belonging to the eighteenth-century collector John Wilson of Broomhead Hall is untraced. The letter, which urges its recipients to retrieve the papers in question, relates that Swifte had spirited them away from Sheffield and Worksop and placed them in the safe keeping of his sister, wife of a Mr. Bosseville of Gunthwaite, Yorkshire. The Folger's guide to the Papers of the Cavendish-Talbot family, available at <<http://findingaids.folger.edu/dfocavendish.xml>>, records that a Mr. Bosville of Gunthwaite sold the manuscripts to Wilson and that they were subsequently purchased by Sir Thomas Phillipps. In all likelihood, the later Mr. Bosville was a descendant of the earlier one. This is also the family into which Bess's full sister Jane had married — another example of overlap between kinship and service. Finally, G. W. Bernard has observed that the Swyfts were traditionally servants of the Talbots. The Swifte who rescued the Cavendish-Talbot MSS was probably related to the Robert Swyft who had been in the service of George and then Francis Talbot, fourth and fifth earls of Shrewsbury, in the first half of the sixteenth century (G. W. Bernard, *The Power of the Early Tudor Nobility: A Study of the Fourth and Fifth Earls of Shrewsbury* (Brighton: Harvester, 1985), pp. 156-57).

epistolary performances, her domestic authority and collaborations, and, with the aid of household accounts, the roles of various servants in both running the house and shaping the mistress's reputation there and thereafter — a picture that is at once more accurate, complex and surprising than that sketched out by some of her biographers.



**‘To my synguler good ladye & mestres’:  
Chatsworth officers’ letters, c. 1560-c. 1566**

**Introduction**

This chapter continues the analysis of letters of household and estate management begun in the previous chapter, looking now at the other side of the correspondence: letters written to Bess by Chatsworth officers. The four surviving letters were written by three of these managers — James Crompe, William Marchington, and Edward Foxe — each in secretary script and his own handwriting; each reports back to the mistress concerning details of running the house and supporting estates in her absence. But beyond these basic similarities, they are far from uniform. The three writers held different offices and, thus, had different responsibilities and relationships to Bess. These differences are apparent in the self-performances and social negotiations found in their letters to the mistress. The officers’ letters make varied use of contemporary epistolary conventions, and they differ in tone, style, and persuasive purpose; likewise, they are characterised by different rhetorical tactics and ways of verbally performing service. Each writer’s voice, like his handwriting, can be distinguished from the others. Crompe’s two letters show him working through a series of concerns and offering strongly worded stewardly advice; Marchington’s letter is essentially a progress report, but with an aspirational twist; and Foxe’s letter displays the most overtly rhetorical and official language and layout, as he surrounds self-justification with formal deference. Altogether, the surviving correspondence between Bess and her Chatsworth officers demonstrates that the business of writing was in large part the business of self-assertion.

In the letters studied in this chapter, the three officers use a remarkable range of rhetorical strategies to attempt to influence Bess even as they acknowledge their own subordination to her wishes. Although these men had the same epistolary conventions available to them and each would have wanted to present himself as favourably and his wishes as persuasively as possible, their surviving letters demonstrate that, on these occasions at least, each officer took a different approach to writing to the mistress. The following analysis focuses on the distinct ways in which Crompe, Marchington, and Foxe in their extant letters of management make use of the resources available to them to navigate between service and agency, deference and urgency as they offer information and advice, place requests, address Bess as

social superior and employer, represent the actions and characters of others, and perform their own personae as faithful officers with particular duties and concerns at the time of writing.

Inasmuch as each officer's epistolary self-performance is undertaken in response to a particular perception of Bess as audience and authority, the different and sometimes inconsistent ways in which she is characterised across and within these letters further contribute to the complex image of Bess that began to emerge from the analysis of her own letters of household management in the preceding chapter. Rather than a coherent and static portrait of an individual, the Chatsworth correspondence offers a sequence of crowded action shots in which Bess and her officers respond to a series of situations. Furthermore, in their continual acknowledgement of Bess's superior social status and authority over the house and estates, the officers' letters address and represent Bess in her role as mistress, decorously emphasising the hierarchical social relation between writer and recipient rather than the recipient's individual personality. The social framework that sets Bess above the officers also allows Crompe and Marchington to address her somewhat collegially as a co-manager of Chatsworth; their letters include several linguistic and visual features that narrow the gap between mistress and men and give the impression — whether by accident or design — that these two officers enjoyed a mutually satisfactory working relationship with Bess. By contrast, when Foxe, writing in response to allegations of negligence, moves beyond formulaically deferential phrases he becomes entangled in a less than flattering portrayal of Bess.

The different ways in which the three officers' letters represent Bess, themselves, and each other reveal not only differences in their personalities and in their circumstances at the time of writing (especially levels of security or anxiety about how Bess may perceive them, and, hence, about their job security) but also the unequal opportunities that their particular offices offered for developing a good working relationship with the mistress. Once again in this chapter, historically informed close readings of language and materiality lead to a reassessment of Bess's social role within her own household while also revealing that early modern estate officers could choose from among a range of styles, conventions, and rhetorical techniques when managing their relationship with the mistress of the house by letter.

Taken together, the Chatsworth officers' letters open up the linguistic, literate, and interpersonal sides of domestic and estate management, revealing that letter-writing was an essential but complex requirement of bearing office on an early

modern estate. This chapter analyses the letter(s) of each officer in turn, considering how deferential terms of address for the mistress and less formulaic linguistic features relate to one another and collectively represent the mistress-officer relationship, including, crucially, each writer's self-representation and epistolary performance of duty. Numerous factors including the range of conventions for early modern letter-writing, the linguistic resources of Early Modern English, early modern ideologies of service, and the practical purposes of correspondence inform the interpretation of each officer's epistolary performance. The conclusion then summarises each officer's self-presentation and portrayal of Bess in response to Lynne Magnusson's call for a 'stylistics of the early modern subject' that maps out 'how words match up with social relations, how words delineate subject positions'.<sup>177</sup> Building on her ground-breaking work in this area, this chapter demonstrates how the language and layout of Crompe, Marchington, and Foxe's letters to the mistress of the house use different combinations of epistolary conventions and more creative linguistic strategies to construct their historically specific subject positions as household and estate officers. Furthermore, close analysis reveals that despite the similarities of their positions and of the social scripts available to them, each officer through his stylistic choices creates a unique persona and representation of his own working relationship with Bess that are in keeping with his particular circumstances and likely history of interaction with her. As Crompe and Marchington's letters make explicit reference to the regularity and logistics of the flow of correspondence between Chatsworth and the absent Bess, it is possible to reconstruct to some degree the rhythms of correspondence between Bess in London and the Chatsworth officers, especially Crompe. The steward's more frequent contact with the mistress by letter accounts in large part for the unselfconscious ease of his epistolary style compared with Marchington and Foxe's highly self-conscious productions.

**James Crompe at Chatsworth to Bess of Hardwick in London, 20 November [c. 1565] (ID 17)**

*address leaf, f. 2v*

*superscription: secretary script, Crompe's hand*

To my synguler good  
ladye & mestres the ladye

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<sup>177</sup> Magnusson, *Social Dialogue*, p. 36. Magnusson offers an excellent model of how this can be done in Chapter 2, "'Power to hurt': Language and Service in Sidney Household Letters and Shakespeare's Sonnets", pp. 35-57.

elsabeth seyntloo delyver  
 thes  
 [flourish]

letter, f. 1r

secretary script, Crompe's hand

mastur harry<sup>178</sup> with wyllyames<sup>179</sup> shall com vppe so sone as whe can  
 set them furthe he hathe nobotes<sup>180</sup> that wyll kepe owte water  
 so that there most be apeyre<sup>181</sup> made for mr harrye abowte tewseday  
 he shalbe with you god wylling as tocheing mastur charles<sup>182</sup> mastur  
 wyllyam cavendyshe<sup>183</sup> seythe that yf you sent hym to tydsewall<sup>184</sup>  
 all the larning that he nowe hathe shall do hym smalle plesure  
 for the skolemastur that he shulde goo to wyll teche hym aftur  
 anothur sorte so that he shall for gete thes techeinges wyche  
 he hathe had bothe at mr Iackeson<sup>185</sup> teyler<sup>186</sup> & wyllyames yf you  
 do meane to sent mr charles to x<sup>187</sup> oxforde let hym not goo to  
 tydsewall / mr wyllyam cavendyshe had of late alettur From  
 teyler from oxforde where he dyd wrytte that yf your ladyshippe  
 stode nede of askolemastur he wyll com to you to chatteseworth  
 I shall staye charles for going to tydsewall tyll I knowe forthur  
 of your plesure mr w candyshe<sup>188</sup> wyll se that he shall apleye  
 his boke tyll your plesure be knowon yf mr w/candyshe maye  
 be kepte were<sup>189</sup> larning his<sup>190</sup> he wyll be larnyd for he dothe stodye  
 & apleye his boke daye & nyght there ^nede^ none to call on hym  
 for going to his boke / I shall sent you all the moneye I  
 can gete chortely<sup>191</sup> aftur seynt tandrose daye<sup>192</sup> your fatte

<sup>178</sup> Henry Cavendish (1550-1616), Bess and Sir William's eldest son.

<sup>179</sup> Apparently the Cavendish boys' current tutor at Chatsworth.

<sup>180</sup> *no boots*.

<sup>181</sup> *a pair*.

<sup>182</sup> Charles Cavendish (1553-1617), Bess and Sir William's youngest son.

<sup>183</sup> William Cavendish (1551-1626), Bess and Sir William's middle son; perhaps Crompe refers to him by full name in order to distinguish him more clearly from 'wyllyames'.

<sup>184</sup> Tideswell, Derbyshire, where a grammar school had been founded in 1559 ('Tideswell', *Peak District Online* <<http://www.peakdistrictonline.co.uk/tideswell-c153.html>> [accessed 29 December 2012]).

<sup>185</sup> Henry Jackson, another of the Cavendish boys' tutors and a former fellow of Merton College, Oxford. Around 1567 he was accused of defaming Bess by spreading slander against her family, and Elizabeth I, the Privy Council, the archbishop of Canterbury, and ecclesiastical commissioners were all involved in calling him to account. Two draft letters concerning the incident are summarised by Mary Anne Everett Green, *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, XIII: Elizabeth, Addenda, 1566-1579* (London: Longman & Co., et al., 1871), pp. 39-40, items 102-103. Images of the manuscript letters are available through *State Papers Online* <<http://gale.cengage.co.uk/state-papers-online-15091714.aspx>> [accessed 19 February 2013].

<sup>186</sup> Apparently another of the Cavendishes' former tutors, who had moved to Oxford.

<sup>187</sup> Crompe appears to have made a false start at the word 'oxforde', borrowing the <o> of 'to' and following it with <x> before catching his mistake and starting over.

<sup>188</sup> William Cavendish.

<sup>189</sup> *where*.

<sup>190</sup> *is*.

<sup>191</sup> *shortly*.

<sup>192</sup> St Andrew's Day, 30 November.

wethurs<sup>193</sup> are not yet solde it is not tym to syll them as yet  
 your lambes are not solde / wyne is allweyes dere at london  
 I do perseue / the pavyer<sup>194</sup> hathe nomore to do here but that pese<sup>195</sup>  
 before the garden dore then he dothe goo from ense<sup>196</sup> to mastur  
 sotton<sup>197</sup> he most pave *with* hym as I here

*f. 1v* I thought I shulde a Receuyd no lettur From *your* ladyshippe  
 this wycke it was xj of the clocke of wenseday or<sup>198</sup> the  
 caryer<sup>199</sup> com *with* it to chattesewort / so that I had wrytton &  
 sent my lettur before yours cam / I haue sent you here in  
 closyd lyttones<sup>200</sup> lettur wyche cam to me aftur I Receuyd *your*  
 lettur *your* geyne of the forest wyll com [*illegible*] moche aftur  
 my seyinges as you shall perceue by lyttones lettur lytton *with*  
 othurs wyll take it of you as you maye perceue by his  
 lettur / take *your* advysement in that behalf for sure it is  
 the thyng vnmete for you as cryst knowyth who preserue *your*  
 ladyshippe in helyth From chatteseworth the xx<sup>t</sup> of novembr<sup>201</sup>

by your obedyent seruant  
 Iamys Crompe [*flourish*]

you had nede to haue sir Rychard<sup>202</sup> here seing that marchanton<sup>203</sup>  
 is not here [*flourish*]

*rest of page blank (approximately 10 lines)*

*f. 2r blank*

### James Crompe at Chatsworth to Bess of Hardwick in London, 27 February [1566?] (ID 18)

*address leaf, f. 2v*

<sup>193</sup> *wethers* (castrated rams).

<sup>194</sup> *pavior*.

<sup>195</sup> *piece* (of land).

<sup>196</sup> *hence*.

<sup>197</sup> Probably John Sutton, who appears in IDs 18, 20, 27, 154, and 216 as a messenger and agent, involved in confidential match-making, financial, and legal negotiations from the 1560s to 1600.

<sup>198</sup> *ere*.

<sup>199</sup> Stewart, *Shakespeare's Letters*, Chapter 3, 'Shakespeare and the Carriers', provides a clear and compelling account of how professional carriers operated in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, including the logistics of how they collected and delivered letters.

<sup>200</sup> Unidentified. Lytton's letter and the others referred to by Crompe have not survived.

<sup>201</sup> The Folger catalogue dates this letter c. 1565-1566, which is likely accurate. William Cavendish left for Clare Hall, Cambridge at Michaelmas 1567, and around the same time Jackson was being tried in ecclesiastical court for having allegedly slandered the family; since William is at home and Crompe mentions Jackson without reproach, this letter most probably precedes the autumn of 1567.

<sup>202</sup> This could be Richard Wennesley, who was in the Cavendishes' service throughout the 1550s and their steward at Pentrich by around 1556 (ID 51 and Hardwick MS 1, f. 3r). As such, he would have the right experience to fill in for Marchington. Another, less likely, possibility is Sir Richard Slak, described as a servant of Sir William Cavendish in an account book entry of 29 December 1551 (Hardwick MS 1, f. 11r).

<sup>203</sup> William Marchington.

*superscription: secretary script, Crompe's hand*

To my synguler good  
ladye & mestres the ladye  
seyntloo delyuer these [*flourish*]

*letter, f. 1r*

*secretary script, Crompe's hand*

I haue Receuyd the [*illegible*] & the bokes for mr wyllyam  
candyshe<sup>204</sup> *with* the othur bokes ./ hocke<sup>205</sup> as I do here ys lothe to  
departe owt of the howse at shotell there wylbe sute made  
for hym there to Remayne as I take it: he hathe had warning  
to avoyde nowe before *our* ladye daye / dyckynes<sup>206</sup> shalbe *with* your  
*ladyshippe*

at london god wylling on sondaye the x<sup>th</sup> daye of marche next  
*with* as moche moneye as I can gete ethur he shall com *with* the  
caryer of derbye or *with* the caryer of tutburye I am indowte  
you shall not haue your moneye of ~~the~~ mr sturle<sup>207</sup> nowe to  
serue *your* turne for your payment Iohn Sotton hathe spok[e]n ~~with~~  
bothe *with* Iohn sturle<sup>208</sup> & *with* sir auntony sturle<sup>209</sup> ther ansewers yo<sup>f</sup>u  
shall haue by Iohn suton / you dyd wryte that you wolde  
not haue the inde of the grete galery next the grete chamur<sup>210</sup>  
selyd<sup>211</sup> but aportall ther to be made ~~he~~ Iamys Ioyner is in hande  
*with* the portall he had onse framyd the seleing worke somparte  
therof his<sup>212</sup> altoryd for the portall not moche I do not vndurstante  
your mening for the cornyshe<sup>213</sup> I am sure you wyll haue  
the cornyshe to be as the Rest is & of lyke heyght let me  
knowe *your* plesure forther ther in the meane seson he shall goo  
forewarde *with* the portall you most haue aportall at the //  
coming in to the galery as nycolas<sup>214</sup> tellyth me / let me knowe  
wethur he shall do the seling fyrst or the portall / I shall  
asserten you by dyckynes of the close<sup>215</sup> y<sup>f</sup>ou shulde purchase of

<sup>204</sup> William Cavendish, Bess and Sir William's second son.

<sup>205</sup> Apparently a tenant at 'shotell' (Shottle), Derbyshire.

<sup>206</sup> Another Chatsworth servant, who also appears in Edward Foxe's letter (ID 28), below. In the accounts for the 1590s, a Richard Dickyns serves as an estate officer based at both Hardwick and Chatsworth, though most of his business appears to have been conducted off-site. Like Crompe, he was involved in the purchase of livestock, but more frequently he was on the road, travelling far and wide to audit, collect rents, seize the goods of some tenants who failed to pay and arrest others (Hardwick MS 7, ff. 40r, 43r, 56r, 58r-v, 64v, 70r, 72r, 75r, 77v, 79r, 81r, 82r, 83r, 84r; Hardwick MS 9a, f. 6v). With three decades intervening, this may or may not be the same man as in Crompe and Foxe's letters. The Dyckynes/Dycons of the letters acts as a messenger delivering money and important information to Bess in London; if it is the same man, he could have built on his experience of financial responsibility, travelling, and bearing bad news to work his way up to a higher-ranking post, possibly bailiff. If there were two servants with this surname, they may have been father and son or uncle and nephew.

<sup>207</sup> Unidentified.

<sup>208</sup> Unidentified.

<sup>209</sup> Unidentified.

<sup>210</sup> *chamber*.

<sup>211</sup> Wood-panelled. See 'ceil/ciel, v.', 2. a., *OED* <www.oed.com> [accessed 1 January 2013].

<sup>212</sup> *is*.

<sup>213</sup> *cornice*.

<sup>214</sup> Unidentified, but seemingly another servant.



wattewodde<sup>216</sup> you most take hede howe you dele *with* hym for  
 he is acraftye yomon as I am tolde / but for this close I  
 shall lerne that I can / yf it be all Redye fownede by  
 presentment<sup>217</sup> of xij men to be consyld lande<sup>218</sup> then the matter  
 is ~~sure I wene~~ the betur for you to dele *with* /

*f. Iv* I do nat here nothing from harry cokes wyffe<sup>219</sup> I do thyngke she  
 shall Remayne quyet where she is / tyll your ladyshippes comyng hom  
 I dyd sent hyr worde to com & tell me yf she were molestyd  
 but she is not that I do herof<sup>220</sup> / ~~[illegible]~~<sup>r</sup> I haue not harde from  
 hyr this monyth & more I haue sent hyr worde that I wolde  
 com & speke *with* the man<sup>221</sup> that dothe howe<sup>222</sup> the howse yf  
 nede Requyryd / so that harry coke shall haue no nede to  
 trobull hym selffe for that / your ladyshippes mothur<sup>223</sup> mr[s] leneger<sup>224</sup>  
*with all*  
 the chyldr[e]n<sup>225</sup> be in helyth & merye thanckes be geuen to god  
 who pres[eru]e<sup>226</sup> your ladyshippe From chatteseworth the xxvij<sup>te</sup> of  
 Febrarye<sup>227</sup> by your obedyent seruant \_\_\_\_\_

<sup>215</sup> 'An enclosed place, an enclosure [...] In many senses more or less specific: as, An enclosed field (now chiefly local, in the English midlands)' ('close, *n.*<sup>1</sup>, I. 1. a. and 2., *OED* <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/34604>> [accessed 26 March 2013]).

<sup>216</sup> Unidentified.

<sup>217</sup> 'A statement on oath by a jury of a fact known to them' ('presentment, *n.*', 2. a., *OED* <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/150712>> [accessed 30 December 2012]).

<sup>218</sup> 'Land privily held from the king by a person having no title thereto: used *esp.* of lands that had been monastic property before the Reformation. *Obs.*' ('conceaied, *adj.*', b: 'conceaied land, *n.*', *OED* <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/38068>> [accessed 30 December 2012]).

<sup>219</sup> Unidentified. The Chatsworth agricultural accounts for 1560 include several entries for weekly wage payments to 'cocks wyffe', Elizabeth Cocke, and Isabel Cocke for their work as labourers (Hardwick MS 2, ff. 2v, 17v-28v, 31r). It is clear from this letter that Harry Coke and his wife live on Bess's land and under her steward's protection.

<sup>220</sup> *hear of*.

<sup>221</sup> Unidentified.

<sup>222</sup> Unclear. Possibly *owe* in the sense of 'own'. The *OED* records 'howe' as one of several Middle English spellings of the word, so Crompe may be preserving this older spelling ('owe, *v.*', *OED* <<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/135482>> [accessed 26 March 2013]).

<sup>223</sup> Elizabeth Leche. Durant and Lovell have stated that she lived amongst her extended family at Chatsworth in her second widowhood, referring to this letter and two others from c. 1560 as evidence (Durant, *Bess*, pp. 36, 46, 52; Lovell, pp. 151, 179). More solid evidence of Mistress Leche's residency is provided by a partial inventory of the contents of Chatsworth House made in the mid-1560s, which shows that she had a chamber of her own by that time. See White, vol. 2, pp. 391, 401.

<sup>224</sup> Marcella Linacre, Bess's maternal aunt. This name was misread 'm<sup>r</sup> ledger' by Durant, who took it to be that of another tutor (Durant's index card headed 'Mr Ledger', NUL, MS 663/3/5). The mistake made its way into print in Lovell, p. 151. Although the title as abbreviated by Crompe does not include an <s>, the surname is quite clearly 'leneger'. Given the context, it much more likely refers to Mistress Linacre herself, who is known to have lived during her widowhood at Chatsworth with Bess's other female relatives and children, than to a male relative of her late husband.

<sup>225</sup> These could be any of Bess's unmarried children, Jane Kniveton's children, or other children then at Chatsworth to receive their education in Bess's family (such as Bess Knollys in letter ID 101).

<sup>226</sup> Crompe neglected to cross the descender of the <s> to indicate abbreviation. This omission, like the <e> missing from 'chyldren' in the previous line, suggests that he wrote quickly and may not have read the letter over before sealing it. Corrections found elsewhere in his two letters appear to have been made during the process of composition and not at a later stage.

<sup>227</sup> This letter could have been written in either 1560 or 1566, given the reference to 10 May being a Sunday. Other internal evidence for the date, such as the receipt of books for William Cavendish and

Iamys Crompe [*flourish*]

*rest of page blank (approximately 15 lines)*

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### **Introduction**

The breadth of subjects treated in Crompe's letters shows the range of his supervisory responsibilities at Chatsworth in the 1560s: managing Bess's cash flow, including the sale of livestock raised on the estates; directing and keeping track of craftsmen working on the house and grounds; evicting some tenants and looking after others; seeing to the physical and educational needs of Bess and Cavendish's sons; protecting Bess's land and land rights; and promoting her best interests in his interactions with others. All in all, Crompe's position as an Elizabethan household and estate steward combined the roles of financial agent, land agent, gentleman farmer, building contractor, head of human resources, informant, adviser, and family friend. As we saw in the previous chapter, a few of his duties, such as financial management and supervising the builders, were shared with Whitfield at one time; others, pertaining to farming and land management, overlapped somewhat with those of Marchington. The remaining duties referred to in Crompe's letters seem to have belonged to him alone. The sheer range of his responsibilities, as well as the personal nature of some of them, testifies to the great trust reposed in him.

How Crompe writes to Bess concerning his duties not only represents his performance of them but also constitutes a further performance. In Bess's absences from Chatsworth, she could not physically see his and others' activities, but correspondence enabled officers to assure her that her will was being done and her best interests pursued. More than merely favourable reports of their own actions,

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the employment of a joiner named James, do not clarify matters tremendously. St Loe's London account book records that he purchased books for the Cavendish children later in 1560; these cannot be the books mentioned in the letter (Chatsworth House, Devonshire MSS, St Loe Notebook, pp. 21, 61). Wage payments for builders at Chatsworth begin in the spring of 1560; a few joiners are listed, but none named James (Hardwick MS 2, from f. 10r on). This account book ends that autumn, and there are no surviving Chatsworth accounts for 1566. To complicate matters further, a 1564 letter to Bess from an unidentified correspondent compliments her on having nearly completed the rebuilding of Chatsworth (ID 62). Thus Crompe's letter, in which building is very much underway, falls outside the traditionally understood date span for the rebuilding of Chatsworth House (April 1560-late 1564). Either the apparently complete accounts for the winter of 1560 have significant omissions or, despite appearances in October 1564, the building work continued until 1566 or beyond. In the light of the painstaking detail of the 1560 accounts and the nature of the work referred to in this letter, I am inclined to believe that the second explanation is the most likely and that Crompe wrote the letter on 27 February 1566.

however, officers' letters allowed them to perform directly for her eyes or ears certain specifically linguistic duties, such as giving information, advice, and deference and asking and answering questions — all of which were necessary for carrying out her business. Dutiful, competent writing was both a component and a sign of the competent performance of other duties.

Throughout his two letters, Crompe demonstrates his skilful dedication as a steward and correspondent — and all the more convincingly because his usual matter-of-fact, confident writing style appears to be unselfconscious rather than a rhetorical strategy to win trust. Both Crompe's straightforward style and the simple manuscript layout of his letters mirror Bess's own letters of management. These features contribute to the confident tone of Crompe's letters and to the impression that he and Bess both valued directness in business communication. Yet, again like Bess, when Crompe writes of matters of great importance or urgency he alters his style to increase the persuasive force of his exhortations. Crompe's ardent advice-giving — a particularly striking feature of his missives — is only one manifestation of his strong and active presence in his two letters, and this analysis examines in particular how the steward's agency is enacted and interacts on a verbal level with Bess's authority across the surviving pieces of their correspondence.

### ***Letter conventions and self-representation***

Crompe's letters acknowledge Bess's authority and social superiority over him most clearly in their most formal, conventional elements: the superscription, subscription, and valediction. The superscription appears on the outside of a folded and sealed letter and was intended to be read by the bearer as well as the recipient; susceptible to being seen by others along the way, it was a semi-public place for the sender to formally address the recipient in terms that would exercise epistolary etiquette by correctly representing the hierarchical relation between the correspondents. In the superscription, the sender would perform authority, equality, or deference at the same time as fulfilling the practical function of instructing the bearer to whom to deliver the letter. As letter-writers did not usually include their own names on the outside of their letters, the sender's identity may not always have been known until the letter was opened; in such cases, the social significance of the superscription would become clear at that point. However, servant bearers and professional carriers alike would know who entrusted the letters to them for delivery, and senders could also potentially be identified by their (or their scribe's) handwriting, or by seals or

other symbols on the outside of the letter packet.<sup>228</sup> This is the case with Crompe's surviving letters, which are autograph, bear the same seal, and follow the superscription with a distinctive pen flourish, which appears again after his signature inside. After years of working and corresponding with Crompe, Bess would have recognised his handwriting, flourish, and seal and known that these letters were from him before she broke the wax or even read the superscriptions. When she did read them, she would find the deferential formulae perfectly matched to the hierarchical relationship between herself and her steward.

Crompe's two superscriptions are nearly identical, and they follow conventional phrasing for addressing a letter to a woman of elevated rank ('To my synguler good ladye') and to one's female employer in particular ('& mestres') before identifying the exact recipient by title and name ('the ladye elsabeth seyntloo' in ID 17 and 'the ladye seyntloo' in ID 18). Finally, both superscriptions include the instruction to the bearer, 'delyuer these'. As Stewart and Wolfe point out, to show an appropriate level of respect, a social inferior had to address a male social superior by more than just 'my lord' or even 'my very good lord', as these were terms used between socially elevated equals.<sup>229</sup> For that reason, addressing someone as 'my lord' or 'my lady' did not imply, as we might expect, that the speaker or writer was socially inferior or owed allegiance to that particular lord or lady. More was needed. In Crompe's superscriptions to Bess, the additional word 'synguler' is a conventional means to register extra respect. Not until the word 'mestres' does it become entirely clear that the writer of these letters is literally in the service of the recipient, but this word casts the whole phrase in a new light. If 'my synguler good ladye' is also 'my [...] mestres', then her alleged goodness could refer specifically to her goodness as mistress over the writer, while 'synguler' could either praise her unique worth, act as an adverb to intensify 'good', or profess the writer's exclusive loyalty to her as the one and only mistress he serves.<sup>230</sup> When Crompe used the phrase in the 1560s, 'my singular good lady' was one of several conventional formulae of address for gentlewomen used in letters from members of the gentry and above; the steward's addition of 'and mestres' adapts it for use by a social inferior, but the whole

<sup>228</sup> In *Romeo and Juliet*, Lord Capulet entrusts a servingman with delivering oral invitations to the ball and hands him a written guest list (called a 'letter' in the stage direction, 1.2.62). In this instance, the illiterate messenger is in no doubt about who composed the document he bears but he cannot read to whom to deliver the message.

<sup>229</sup> Stewart and Wolfe, p. 35. See also pp. 38-39.

<sup>230</sup> See 'singular, *adj.* (and *adv.*) and *n.*', senses A. I. 2. b., II. 8. a., III. 9. a. and b., 10. c., and 14, *OED* <www.oed.com> [accessed 21 December 2012].

superscription, although deferential, remains comparatively easy in tone and positive in its implicit depiction of the relationship between writer and recipient. Unlike the more stiffly formal superscription, 'Right worshipful and my very good lady and mistress', that introduces Foxe's offended letter of self-defence (ID 28, analysed below), Crompe's superscription may express more genuine regard for her.<sup>231</sup>

Turning now to the inside of his letters, Crompe's subscriptions are equally conventional in form, using a set phrase to express the social relation between himself and Bess: 'by your obedyent seruant Iamys Crompe'. Yet although this is a standard subscription, it is interesting that Crompe neither includes the word 'humble' nor represents humility visually in the page layout. To subscribe himself 'your humble obedient servant' would have been an equally appropriate option, given sixteenth-century doctrines of servant humility, and indeed Marchington subscribes himself Bess's 'humble seruant' (ID 47). The absence of 'humble' from Crompe's formula allows 'obedient' to stand tall, as a point of honour rather than obsequiousness.

Furthermore, the *mise en page* of Crompe's subscriptions contributes to his confident self-presentation as a co-manager with Bess. In both letters Crompe's subscription and signature are placed around half-way down the page, immediately following the main text. As Gibson and others have pointed out, early modern epistolographies urge social inferiors to indicate deference by signing in the bottom right corner of the page; the greater the amount of white space intervening between the end of the letter proper and the subscription, the greater the deference, as this spacing visually represents the social distance between the elevated addressee and lowly signatory.<sup>232</sup> Gibson terms this phenomenon 'significant space'. Not all correspondents followed this advice in practice, and in any case the Chatsworth letters all predate the publication of the first of these manuals in English, William Fulwood's 1568 *Enimie of Idlenesse*.<sup>233</sup> Thus it is unclear whether the high placement of Crompe's signature is significant or not — or, rather, *what* it signifies. In light of the (later) epistolographies, this layout could be interpreted as arrogantly closing the gap between himself and his employer. However, since spacing conventions were only just developing at this time and were associated with formal

<sup>231</sup> This discussion builds on Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg's 'Address Formulae'.

<sup>232</sup> Braunmuller, 'Accounting for Absence', pp. 53-56; Gibson, 'Significant Space', pp. 1-9; Stewart and Wolfe, pp. 35-44; Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers*, pp. 47-50; Stewart, pp. 49-58. These all quote from a number of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century epistolographies.

<sup>233</sup> William Fulwood, *The Enimie of Idlenesse: Teaching the maner and stile how to endite, compose and write all sorts of Epistles and Letters* (London: Henry Bynneman for Leonard Maylard, 1568).

and courtly letters rather than with business writing, it is much more likely that Crompe was either unaware of the possibility of using white space to indicate deference or considered it unnecessary in a letter of this kind.<sup>234</sup> He probably opted for the simplest manuscript layout, in keeping with his concise epistolary style and the businesslike nature of their correspondence. Nevertheless, Crompe's utilitarian approach to language and layout reflects Bess's own and, by doing so, subtly reinforces their collegiality rather than social distance.

Finally, the steward's signatures are followed by his neatly drawn pen flourish, which appears again after the post-script in letter ID 17 where it functions like a second signature, visually identifying the writer and bringing the letter to a close. Overall, the formal elements of Crompe's letters convey a surprisingly strong sense of self while remaining dutiful. His valedictions make the most of the greater stylistic flexibility of this element, showing more creativity and sincerity than was possible in the tightly formulaic superscriptions and subscriptions.

In both of Crompe's letters, the valediction flows out from the last sentence of the main body of the letter as a natural continuation of its thought and syntax. The end of letter ID 18 reads, 'your ladyshippes mothur mrs leneger with all the chyldren be in helyth & merye thanckes be geven to god who preserue your ladyshippe', followed by the place and date of writing, the subscription, and Crompe's signature with flourish. The end of letter ID 17 follows a similar format, moving from the final point of discussion, via a reference to Christ, into the valediction and other closing elements: 'take your advysement in that behalf for sure it is the thyng vnmete for you as cryst knowyth who preserue your ladyshippe in helyth'. A generation earlier, John Husee, a trusted servant of the Lisles, sometimes used the same structure for valedictions in his letters to Lord and Lady Lisle. For example, he ends a letter to Lord Lisle on 12 September 1536 with the valediction, 'as God knoweth, who send your lordship with my lady long life with much honour and once your heart's desire'.<sup>235</sup> Crompe and Husee's valedictions follow the custom of wishing good health and other blessings to social superiors and would have constituted an important part of their letter-writing duty, but the way Crompe frames these good

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<sup>234</sup> Gibson notes that spacing does not appear to have been part of the medieval art of letter-writing (p. 9 n. 39), so it seems that space began to be significant during the first two thirds of the sixteenth century.

<sup>235</sup> Muriel St Clare Byrne, ed., *The Lisle Letters: An Abridgement [...] Selected and Annotated by Bridget Boland* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1983), p. 284.



wishes makes them appear especially sincere, and even, in the case of letter ID 17, urgent.

The sincerity effect in both of Crompe's valedictions is achieved jointly by their relation to the topics and expressions immediately preceding them and by the characterisation of God as actively engaged, like the steward, in preserving Bess and her interests. In letter ID 18, Crompe's interjection 'thanckes be geven to god' expresses emotional investment in the wellbeing of Bess's kin, which then naturally spills over into good wishes towards Bess herself. In letter ID 17, sincerity is constructed with unusually heightened rhetoric to convey a sense of urgency, for the valediction concludes a passage in which Crompe warns Bess of a plot to divest her of her 'geyne of the forest' (discussed in more detail below). Again, the last line of the letter and the valediction work as a single unit of thought: in this case, a plea to Bess to take action to uphold her rights. Here Crompe enlists Christ's supreme and loving knowledge of what would be damaging to Bess in support of his own directive that she not allow her adversaries to carry out their intentions. This rhetorical manoeuvre lends greater authority to Crompe's advice while also conveying heightened concern for her wellbeing. In this way, Crompe is able simultaneously to issue an explicit order to his superior and to imply that he is compelled by love and duty to do so. This valediction relies on affect as a means of persuasion, and Crompe's performance of duty in both valedictions is emotionally engaged rather than distantly deferential.

By contrast with his respectful but self-confident superscriptions and subscriptions and his dynamic adaptations of the valediction form, Crompe dispenses with salutations altogether. Writing of courtly letters, Stewart and Wolfe observe that the 'neglect or misuse of any of these parts could potentially lead to misunderstanding or offense'.<sup>236</sup> Both of Crompe's surviving letters to Bess open without any formal greeting — not so much as her name or title to reciprocate the perfunctory 'crompe' and 'francys' with which her letters of management begin. Is this a faux pas? Does it indicate lack of respect? In light of Crompe's apparent concern to protect Bess's interests, probably not. Having given her her titles in the superscription, he gets down to business without further ado, opening both letters with news she would be eager to hear: how her children are doing. Marchington's letter, below, does exactly the same. Of the admittedly small sample of surviving letters of household management addressed to Bess in this period, only Foxe's opens

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<sup>236</sup> Stewart and Wolfe, pp. 35-36.

with a greeting of any kind, and he had particular reasons to be anxious to please. It would seem, then, that a salutation was not considered a necessary part of an officer's epistolary duty.

Crompe's levels of formality and deference when addressing Bess in the conventional opening and closing elements of letters appear to be somewhat uneven. As we have seen, his superscriptions are exemplary, employing a well attested deferential formula. His subscriptions are also conventional and deferential, though not as humble as they could have been. The pen flourishes and use of his own seal visually reinforce Crompe's authorship, while the less scripted nature of valedictions allows more scope for developing an individual voice; here he takes the opportunity to express conventional faithfulness and duty in the form of apparently genuine and pressing concern for Bess and her relatives' wellbeing. The directness with which he orders Bess to 'take [her] advyement' regarding the forest is matched by the way his letters get down to business without a salutation and lack deferential spacing.

Crompe's juxtaposition of customary deference in some places, lack of it in others, and general tendency to downplay ceremonious humility may appear somewhat odd. These apparent inconsistencies point to the challenges of writing in a particularly utilitarian letter genre to a social superior with whom he had a close and secure working relationship, while still attempting to retain some of the humble trappings of servant discourse. But it should also be remembered that in this period it was possible for linguistic postures of obedience and self-assertion to be held simultaneously and sincerely, particularly by men in positions of responsibility, who operated at a high level and were often of gentle birth themselves. Hainsworth states that by the seventeenth century estate stewards tended to be 'men of substance, education and experience drawn from the ranks of gentlemen, or at least from the substantial yeomanry' and that the higher the master's status, the higher he looked for a steward.<sup>237</sup>

Crompe was clearly confident that he was entitled to write to Bess as vigorously as he did, whether by virtue of his own family background, his office, their long-term relationship, or the genre of these particular letters. There is no stylistic evidence of self-consciousness, as there probably would be if he either feared or intended to be inappropriate. Rather, Crompe's bluntness, like Kent's in *King Lear*, could be read as a sign of sincere willingness to serve, taking a stylistic and moral stand against the self-seeking flattery of excessively deferential

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<sup>237</sup> Hainsworth, pp. 23 and 24.

language.<sup>238</sup> Crompe's stylistic choices could be based on a sense of what was generically as well as socially appropriate: although sycophantic language was a hallmark of early modern court culture (and its representations on stage) and of letters of petition, it had little place in ordinary letters of household management, for which everyday language was usually sufficient. Crompe expresses his duty towards Bess through conventional formalities where they are required — especially on the outside of letters — but just as much through his forthright style and formatting on the inside, which honour her by considering her above petty flattery or offence and well able to recognise the worth of his unornamented statements. To his credit, Crompe had a long history of faithful service and the respect of his employer (as witnessed by her surviving letter to him) to build on. The confident tone and presentation characteristic of Crompe's letters to Bess appear to be based on mutual trust and a preference for substance over lip service.

### ***Directive speech acts and stewardly advice***

The steward's confidence is especially evident in one of the most striking features of his epistolary language — his repeated use of directive speech acts. Notwithstanding their long-established relationship of trust and tradition of blunt communication, it may be surprising that Crompe would write to his employer and social superior in this overtly coercive and potentially presumptuous manner. However, these directives appear in pragmatic and generic contexts that make them allowable and even desirable: giving expert advice and asking for further instructions within household correspondence. Offering advice in particular was an expected and valued part of a steward's letter-writing duty in this period. Hainsworth observes that in letters to their masters seventeenth-century stewards

were not slow to offer advice because this was a most important part of their duties. [...] Where advice was not volunteered lords were quick to demand it, and they did not complain if the advice they received was lengthy and detailed. [...] Since [...] landlords saw 'with others' eyes', the flow of advice was as necessary as the flow of intelligence.<sup>239</sup>

Crompe's office would have required him to advise Bess on a regular basis, and given the fulsomeness of his surviving epistolary advice, he appears to have taken

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<sup>238</sup> For an insightful analysis of Kent/Caius's faithful (but somewhat problematic) verbal performance of duty see Stewart, *Shakespeare's Letters*, Chapter 5: 'The Matter of Messengers in *King Lear*'.

<sup>239</sup> Hainsworth, p. 256.

this duty seriously and to have found it consistent with — indeed, an enactment of — obedient service. In the wider contexts of early modern cultures of service and letter-writing as well as the interpersonal context of the particularly strong mutual trust and understanding between Bess and Crompe, his frequent and forceful directive language should be read as persuasive and dutiful rather than presumptuous. Indeed, the more forceful or affective his means of expression, the stronger the impression of sincerity, as though he identified with her and fervently desired what, with his expert judgement and experience, he considered to be for her good. Seeking to persuade the mistress and requiring further information from her would both impose upon her and could, therefore, be considered rude. However, both verbal actions were necessary for Crompe's exercise of duty and do not appear to have required special justification.<sup>240</sup> The steward's directive speech acts illustrate the importance of looking at verbal interactions in their specific historical circumstances and not imposing our own ideas of politeness onto the past.

There are several directives scattered across Crompe's two extant letters, some functioning as advice, others as requests for decisions, but all regarding pressing business. In one of two particularly urgent admonitory passages in letter ID 17, Crompe strenuously advises Bess concerning the education of her youngest son, Charles Cavendish, then approximately twelve years old. The passage is prominently placed near the opening of the letter and developed at some length to build up a persuasive case:

as tocheing mastur charles mastur wyllyam cavendyshe seythe that yf you sent hym to tydsewall all the larning that he nowe hathe shall do hym smalle plesure for the skolemastur that he shulde goo to wyll teche hym aftur anothur sorte so that he shall for gete thes techeinges wyche he hathe had bothe at mr Iackson teyler & wyllyames yf you do meane to sent mr charles to oxforde let hym not goo to tydsewall / mr wyllyam cavendyshe had of late alettur From teyler from oxforde where he dyd wrytte that yf your ladyshippe stode nede of askolemastur he wyll com to you to chatteseworth I shall staye charles for going to tydsewall tyll I knowe forthur of your plesure

Throughout this passage, Crompe frames his advice as that of Bess's beloved son William, interweaving narrative and reported speech into his forceful argument that Charles should not be sent to the new grammar school at Tideswell. The argument

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<sup>240</sup> Again, a parallel can be seen in John Husee's letters to his employers. Beyond managing a great variety of their practical affairs, he also offers both Lord and Lady Lisle quite forceful advice, on one occasion even criticising their attitude towards a comparatively minor misfortune and urging them to develop patient resignation (*Lisle Letters*, pp. 191-92). This is a more personal and explicit imposition than anything found in the Chatsworth officers' letters but, like theirs, it is made without apology.

functions in two ways: to justify the interim decision Crompe has made to keep Charles at Chatsworth, and to influence Bess's final decision. Presenting William as the orator from whom the persuasive rhetoric of Crompe's writing derives lends greater authority to Crompe's advice and decision regarding Charles than if he had presented the case as of his own devising. Whatever Crompe's own credentials may have been, he takes advantage of Bess's particular regard for her second son and emphasises William's insider knowledge as a young man of academic promise already well connected at Oxford. It is William's confident statement that if Charles were to go to Tideswell he would lose the benefit of his former studies that opens Crompe's discussion and sets up for all that follows. Crompe does not state William's source of information about Tideswell, but it may well be Teyler, as it is William's receipt of a letter from the now Oxford-based former tutor that provides a suitable alternative to the objectionable school: Teyler is willing to return to Chatsworth to tutor Charles. In the meantime, Crompe assures Bess, Charles's education will not be neglected, for his elder brother 'wyll se that he shall apleye his boke'.<sup>241</sup> Although discussing Charles's schooling, Crompe stresses William's studiousness in order to establish William's authority in academic matters: 'yf mr w/candyshe maye be kepte were larning his he wyll be larnyd for he dothe stodye & apleye his boke daye & nyght there nede none to call on hym for going to his boke'. Although Crompe's heavy emphasis on William's opinions, information, and activity is for a persuasive purpose, it simultaneously displays the steward's pride and trust in Bess's favourite son (and ultimately in Teyler as well) over an outsider to the household, the Tideswell schoolmaster. In this way, the passage builds solidarity with Bess, her son William, and the household more widely.

Amidst the flurry of reported speech and information derived from William, Crompe delivers his own exhortation to Bess: 'yf you do meane to sent mr charles to oxforde let hym not goo to tydsewall'. Like Bess's use of conditionals in letter ID 99, Crompe's functions as a warning. The 'if' does not imply any real doubt about Bess's intentions for Charles; rather, it sets up a syllogism to present the logical necessity of keeping him away from Tideswell so that he will be able to attend Oxford as Bess desires. However, despite the apparent objectivity of its logical structure, the conditional sentence is written from Crompe's point of view and it

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<sup>241</sup> It is not clear why the Cavendishes would need a second tutor, unless for occasions such as this when the boys were not all together in one place. The wording of Teyler's letter, as reported by Crompe, suggests that Teyler himself did not know whether or not Bess currently 'stode nede of askolemastur' at Chatsworth.

addresses Bess directly. The interpersonal nature of the sentence adds immediacy, initially capturing Bess's attention with the direct address 'you' and then delivering an urgent exhortation in the 'let' clause.

In pragmatic terms, the clause 'let hym not goo to tydsewall' is a directive speech act since it seeks to control Bess's action. Furthermore, it appears to be grammatically imperative, a direct order to his employer: in effect, 'do not permit your son to go to that school!' Crompe's bold language here is matched by another imperative at the end of the same letter, regarding Lytton's attempt to impinge on her land rights: 'take your advyement in that behalf' (ID 17, discussed further below). In both cases, imperatives function as strong admonitions rather than literal orders. In these directive speech acts, the steward advises and exhorts his employer through direct address and with a forcefulness that communicates urgency.

It is worth pointing out that if these same imperatives had been issued by Bess to Crompe, they would indeed be orders. The difference between an instruction and an exhortation is not linguistic form but who says it to whom, under what circumstances. Indeed, both Crompe and Bess use the 'let' construction — the latter, as we have seen, when instructing Whitfield to 'let the brewar make beer for me forthwith' in letter ID 99 and in letter ID 100 in the directive 'let it be done' when pre-authorising Crompe to act in any way that will further her building works. However, the correspondence between Bess and her Chatsworth officers suggests that some forms of directives may have been considered slightly more appropriate for her use, as mistress, than for theirs. Crompe directs Bess using imperative verbs, but he does not, in the two surviving letters at least, write 'I would that you [...]' or in any way use the discourse of pleasure to command as she does. Marchington does use a 'would' construction once, but with reference to Bess's wishes as well as his own: 'I wold know your ladyshipes pleasure' (ID 47, below). It may be that discourses of wishes and pleasure, although constructed of indirect statements, were considered more authoritative than direct orders because they invoke the speaker's entitlement to be obeyed whereas imperatives express only the strong desire to be obeyed. Furthermore, the comparative subtlety and stylistic refinement of the discourses of wishes and pleasure would indicate the writer's elevated social standing in the ranks of the well educated and courteous; these discourses operate within a higher register than direct commandments. On the other hand, Bess's position as mistress entitled her to issue direct orders to her officers, and their offices would have entitled them to command the servants under them. With regard to



directives, ultimately it is the power of the writer rather than a particular linguistic form that confers obligation.

For this reason and especially for their occurrence within the context of loyal stewardly advice-giving, Crompe's imperatives would not likely have been considered presumptuous detractions from Bess's decision-making authority. Indeed, both the imperatives considered so far — 'take your advysement' and 'let hym not goo' — imply that she has the ultimate decision-making power. Likewise, Crompe's decision, made on his own authority, to keep Charles at home under the tutelage of his brother while the tutor Williams is teaching Henry in London, is only provisional, subject to Bess's final decision (which he implicitly requests): 'I shall staye charles for going to tydsewall tyll I knowe forthur of your plesure'.

Some of Crompe's other directives similarly request and defer to Bess's 'plesure', in keeping with their respective household roles. There are two examples in a passage in letter ID 18 about the reconstruction of an important room of Chatsworth House. Having done his best to make sense of Bess's written instructions in her previous letter(s) and a further message concerning her wishes passed on to him by another servant, the steward twice requests Bess to clarify what she wants done:

I do not vndurstante your mening for the cornyshe I am sure you wyll haue the cornyshe to be as the Rest is & of lyke heyght *let me knowe your plesure* forther ther in the meane seson [Iamys Ioyner] shall goo forewarde with the portall you most haue a portall at the // coming in to the galery as nycolas tellyth me / *let me knowe* wethur he shall do the seling fyrst or the portall /

Although he cannot entirely avoid a subtext of criticism, the steward does not state that there is anything wrong with the mistress's piecemeal and somewhat confusing instructions, which have already led to the joiner needing to alter some of the wood panelling he had just installed in order to accommodate another doorway. Instead, Crompe tactfully reports that the panelling has been altered and then requests further instructions regarding what to do next. Understandably, he is reluctant to carry on with more work that may have to be redone. As in the matter of Charles's education, Crompe makes an interim decision to ensure continued progress while he awaits Bess's reply — James Joiner will continue with the first portal — and expresses his directive to her using imperative 'let'.

However, unlike 'let hym not goo to tydsewall', 'let me knowe' functions not as urgent advice but as a request. Furthermore, whereas the former 'let' clause was a

direct and forceful way for Crompe to exhort Bess not to allow Charles to embark on a substandard education, the 'let' clauses of request are politely circumlocutive. In bidding Bess 'let me know', Crompe asks her to permit him to be informed of her 'plesure' — a deferential alternative to using a more forceful and impatient imperative like 'tell me'. Although these two requests concern pressing business, they are expressed using a formula that invokes the social hierarchy by presenting the writer as a humble supplicant, eager to receive instructions that he may obey. In referring to Bess's 'plesure', Crompe explicitly acknowledges her right to have her wishes carried out, and his specific questions require no further elaboration to persuade her to reply quickly and clearly: the knowledge that he and the builders are ready and waiting to materialise what she envisions would be incentive enough.

Nevertheless, by asking for clarification about the chronology for the joiner's upcoming tasks, Crompe lets Bess know that he can manage the remodelling of her house to her satisfaction only if he receives clear, detailed, and timely instructions from her. Hainsworth observes that stewards were typically reluctant to act without express instructions, whatever the nature of the business in hand. He writes, 'seventeenth-century stewards constantly behaved as if they were afraid to use their initiative. [...] Constantly they besought their masters for direct orders, for decisions, for permission to take actions which were clearly necessary and often dangerous to delay'.<sup>242</sup> Yet at other times, as we have seen, Crompe takes it upon himself to make decisions of some importance, such as withholding Charles from school and sending sawyers to work at Meadowpleck without prior permission (letter IDs 17 and 100). In the latter case, Bess praises the steward's initiative and gives him *carte blanche* to do anything that he considers beneficial to her building works. This would have been, in Hainsworth's words, a 'marked exception', and although Crompe may have taken up the privilege with his usual self-confidence on some occasions, when it came to the great gallery, what would in fact 'further [Bess's] workes' (ID 100) was uncertain, prompting him to ask for more detailed instructions.<sup>243</sup>

Whether acting on his own initiative or obeying specific orders, Crompe's deeds — including speech acts — are presented in his correspondence with Bess as acts of service to her; in both her letters and his, he is portrayed as an agent, she as the authority on whose behalf he labours. This portrayal is apparent in the three remaining instances in which Crompe performs advisory directives as part of his

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<sup>242</sup> Hainsworth, p. 254.

<sup>243</sup> Hainsworth, p. 255.

stewardly service. Two of these do not use imperatives, but rather take the form of statements of fact: 'you had nede to haue sir Rychard here seing that marchanton is not here' (ID 17) and 'you most take hede howe you dele with [Wattewodde] for he is acraftye yomon as I am tolde' (ID 18). Grammatically these are presented as pieces of information, but their pragmatic purpose is obviously to prompt Bess to act. In the statement about Sir Richard, the word 'nede' explicitly indicates urgency. In pointing out Bess's need, the steward performs the service of protecting her affairs, which would suffer while Chatsworth was short-staffed.

The warning about Wattewodde, like all of Crompe's directives, is intended to maintain Bess's best interests. Like the previous example, it takes the form of a statement of fact, but it comes straight to the point with the overtly directive 'must'. Crompe's use of the auxiliary of obligation rhetorically stresses the importance of taking heed when dealing with the crafty yeoman by grammatically requiring Bess to do so. Nevertheless, this warning about Wattewodde is neither as forceful nor as urgent as the warning about Lytton in letter ID 17. Examining the two side by side reveals a number of differences that give Crompe's warning about Lytton greater rhetorical impact in keeping with the circumstances. These two passages further testify to the steward's adept use of the linguistic resources available to him in the exercise of his duty.

Crompe urges Bess to beware of Lytton and his cronies as follows:

I haue sent you here in closyd lyttones lettur [...] your geyne of the forest wyll com moche aftur my seyinges as you shall perceue by lyttones lettur lytton with othurs wyll take it of you as you maye perceue by his lettur / take your advysement in that behalf for sure it is the thyng vnmete for you as cryst knowyth who preserue yowr ladyshippe in helyth (ID 17)

This passage shows Crompe at his rhetorically most forceful. Here, the steward calls to his aid not Bess's favourite son, but her spiritual master, the Son of God, and surrounds his directive with intensifying language and a supporting stage prop, as it were: Lytton's self-incriminating letter.<sup>244</sup> Not content merely to enclose Lytton's letter for Bess's perusal, Crompe draws her attention to the important information it confirms — that Lytton and others intend to deprive her of her 'geyne of the forest' — and, in a sixteenth-century equivalent of 'I told you so!', he pointedly reminds her that he has warned her about this before: the matter 'wyll com moche aftur my seyinges'. In his attempt to persuade Bess to take appropriate action to prevent this

<sup>244</sup> Crompe does not say how Lytton's letter came into his hands. Although enclosed in Crompe's letter to Bess, it has not survived among her papers.

anticipated harm, Crompe issues his directive warning in the form of an imperative verb, '*take* your advyement in that behalf'; intensifies the warning with the explanation 'for sure it is the thyng vnmete for you'; and invokes the caring omniscience of Christ to yet further stress the need for her to protect her land rights. As Bess is under no obligation to obey an imperative issued by a servant, however well respected, the steward develops an unusually complex and forceful rhetorical appeal to her material wellbeing to convince her that it is necessary for her to take her advisement immediately.

Like the warning about Lytton in letter ID 17, the warning about Wattewodde in letter ID 18 is expressed as a directive and occurs within a passage that outlines both the potential problem and what can be done to avoid it:

I shall asserten you by dyckynes of the close you shulde purchase of wattewodde you most take hede howe you dele with hym for he is acraftye yomon as I am tolde / but for this close I shall lerne that I can / yf it be all Redye fownede by presentment of xij men to be consylyd lande then the matter is ~~sure I wene~~ the betur for you to dele with

However, this warning differs from the one about Lytton in several ways, which, combined, reduce its urgency. The imperative directive to 'take your advyement' concerning Lytton is in response to an immediate threat. Structurally it is surrounded by modifiers that rhetorically intensify the unusually impassioned warning, and it is placed at the end of the letter, where it is sure to be noticed. By contrast, the directive concerning Wattewodde occurs in a context of explanations and promises that indicate that any potential danger is not immediate. As the purchase of Wattewodde's enclosed field is an ongoing negotiation, Bess must be careful in her dealings, but Crompe expects there will be time for him to look into the legalities and instruct Dyckyns about what to say to their mistress, for Dyckyns to travel from Derbyshire to London and speak with her, and for her to deliberate on the information he imparts before deciding whether or not to close the deal. Furthermore, Crompe's original conclusion was that if the land is found to be legally purchasable, all will be well: 'then the matter is sure I wene'. Then, probably to avoid blame if anything were to go awry, he modified his statement to be more tentative, replacing the words 'sure I wene' with 'the betur for you to dele with'. Finally, this passage is not in a prominent place within the letter; it is towards the end, but not the final point. All in all, the steward does not seem to have been as worried about dealing with Wattewodde as about the threat posed by Lytton.

As we have seen, the epistolary context of each of Crompe's directives — whether warnings or requests — expresses the same level of urgency as is communicated more subtly by the particular formulation of each one. This coincidence adds to the apparent sincerity of Crompe's writing voice, as it suggests that all his stylistic choices, whether they appear to be intentionally persuasive or unconscious, share a common source: genuine concern for Bess's welfare, which differs in intensity according to the circumstances. Crompe's letters show him exercising not only his duty to obey the mistress but also his prerogative to direct her to some degree, through offering often urgent advice and requesting instructions. For a steward, these activities went hand in hand and were essential components of correspondence.

### ***Objective and subjective modes***

This analysis has focused so far on Crompe's self-confident adaptation of opening and closing epistolary conventions and on how, in the main body of his letters, he uses directives to negotiate between his dutiful agency and Bess's authority. However, the steward's more usual epistolary style is neither deferential nor persuasive but informative, comprised of statements of fact that appear to be independent of social factors. But appearances can be deceiving. In such statements, Crompe's tone is matter of fact, but the knowledge he communicates derives from his own expertise and position within the Chatsworth establishment. Interspersed with the steward's seemingly objective statements is the occasional observation of his own, which he signals by a verb of mental activity. The following passage from letter ID 17 includes both elements of Crompe's factual style: 'I shall sent you all the moneye I can gete chortely aftur seynt tandrose daye your fatte wethurs are not yet solde it is not tym to syll them as yet your lambes are not solde / wyne is allweyes dere at london I do perseue'.

As a list of updates, the statements in this passage are not joined either syntactically or by punctuation, but neither are they grouped haphazardly. Their juxtaposition suggests an underlying connection: that Crompe may be responding to a series of questions posed by Bess in a previous letter, all of which tended toward the greater question of how to raise ready money from the estate so that she could have more cash at her disposal while in London. Crompe promises to send what he can raise by sales of unspecified goods or chattels at a St Andrew's Day fair, but she is not to expect any income from the wethers or lambs just yet. Although statements

such as 'it is not time to sell them' are presented as straightforward facts, it is Crompe's specialist knowledge that enables him to make definitive statements about such matters. The steward's entirely matter of fact tone does not draw attention to himself or his expertise, yet the choice to keep himself out of such sentences actually adds to their authority. Furthermore, Crompe's statement 'it is not time to sell them as yet' fulfils the pragmatic function of explaining his own conduct to the mistress. She seems to have asked very specific questions. In his answers, the steward states the facts without apologies or wordy explanations. His businesslike style in such passages resembles Bess's own. By reflecting their shared prioritisation of accuracy and efficiency over social niceties, Crompe's factual style strengthens the collaborative rather than the hierarchical social bond between them.

Crompe's final comment in this passage deviates somewhat from his more usual styles. Unlike the confident statements based on his first-hand experience or forceful advice based on his strong sense of what would be detrimental to Bess and her relatives, this statement is ambiguous both in tone and in pragmatic intent. '[W]yne is allweyes dere at london I do perseue' is cast in the form of his own observation although it could be either an impression he has received at second hand from reading the letter(s) and/or accounts that Bess has recently sent him or a recollection from when Crompe used to manage the London household's finances in the early days of Bess and Cavendish's marriage. In letter ID 17, Crompe uses the tag 'I do perceue' to mark the second-hand knowledge derived from reading, and on that grounds it could potentially suggest a lesser degree of certainty, much like the similar tags 'I do here' and 'as I here', even as it professes conviction.

Whether expressing conviction or lack thereof, the phrase 'I do perceue' in this sentence turns an otherwise objective statement into a subjective and potentially critical one — perhaps to suggest that Bess's London household spends too much on wine. The statement would be bound to invoke Crompe's professional knowledge of wine prices, and it could act as either an implicit warning that she look to her accounts or as a friendly commiseration.<sup>245</sup> Its openness to multiple interpretations allows Crompe's comment on the high price of wine to both criticise and sympathise with his employer, and maybe even to tease her. Ironically, the verb of mental activity 'perceive' does not allow readers to perceive which mental activity it

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<sup>245</sup> Crompe appears to have maintained an interest in sourcing good quality and good value wine for her households throughout his period of service. In a letter of circa 1570 to George Talbot, earl of Shrewsbury, whom Bess had married in 1567, she offered to send Crompe to choose better wine for her London household to replace the weak and stale tasting sack that Shrewsbury had just sent her (ID 184).

represents. Whether Crompe is very much in the know and posing as an ingénue for ironic effect or offering genuine condolence or thinly veiled criticism, the 'perceive' phrase is a more self-conscious and slippery use of language than is found in his typical informative and directive modes of writing.

This statement is the exception to the rule, for, as we have seen, Crompe is characteristically forthright, whether offering Bess his own strong opinions in the form of advisory directives, requesting further instructions from her, or getting on with routine Chatsworth business with matter-of-fact efficiency. While Crompe's simple, businesslike style appears to be his default epistolary mode, in matters of particular urgency, such as Lytton's scheming and Charles's education, this style gives way to persuasive language and development that are too marked to be unintentional. Yet even in these rhetorically heightened passages, the steward's rhetoric is neither aureate nor apologetic, but comparatively straightforward: just persuasive enough to (hopefully) get the job done. Crompe's writing takes an explicitly self-referential turn mainly when he expresses uncertainty, as in the passage about the great gallery at Chatsworth or when relating second-hand news whose accuracy he cannot verify, such as the identity of the pavior's next patron, which he sets off with the proviso 'as I hear' (letter ID 17). Likewise, although he consistently acknowledges Bess's authority in the main body of his letters, Crompe refers to his own subordinate status most explicitly in the most formal and conventional elements, the superscriptions, valedictions, and subscriptions; yet even these, as we have seen, are by no means self-effacing in their linguistic and manuscript presentation.

To conclude, in his two extant letters, the steward reports, reasons through, seeks clarification, and offers advice about a series of pressing topics. In the process he records for Bess's benefit — often in the form of strenuous warnings — his own perspective on the situations he is required to manage. Crompe's confident epistolary voice blends apparent objectivity with subjectivity, just as it combines conventional phrasing with creative adaptation. Crompe's advisory rhetoric is firmly grounded in apparently sincere if also self-assured expressions of dutiful service, and his matter-of-fact style when not issuing directives lends authority to his opinions. Whether warning, informing, or requesting information, signing his name with a flourish or sealing his folded letters with his own matrix, Crompe's confident epistolary performance reflects and reinforces a positive and collegial working relationship with his long-term correspondent and 'synguler good ladye and mestres'.



**William Marchington at Chatsworth to Bess of Hardwick [location unidentified], 13 January [1560-1565] (ID 47)**

*no address leaf*

*letter, f. 1r*

*secretary script, Marchington's hand*

At this present mrs Fraunces mrs Elezabeth mrs mary<sup>246</sup>  
with mrs knytons chyldren<sup>247</sup> be all well amend[ed]<sup>248</sup>  
god be prayed but I do Iudge that my lyttull  
masters<sup>249</sup> do not prosper well in lear[n]ing for that te[...]<sup>250</sup>  
ale<sup>251</sup> & garrard be not Frenedes your ladyshyp  
doth well know ther fasyons ther is All the  
tymb[e]r got home From hadon<sup>252</sup> / lyndoxe parte, & part  
from barlow the drawghtes haue bene so  
occupied with loadyng of hedge wod & vj lodes  
of marle from assheford yat<sup>253</sup> the other  
busynes of loadyng of tymber cowlde not go  
so well forward but I trust I shall se all  
shortlye home / we haue alRedye hedgit  
& dychet the neyth[e]r orchard & for plantes  
we shall I trust haue ynow<sup>254</sup> to fynesshe  
all / cokin<sup>255</sup> & newall<sup>256</sup> syns be fore chrestemas  
where<sup>257</sup> not here I do dowt lest Iohn newall  
be syck At hys Frenedes / halleys<sup>258</sup> for this  
chrestemas tyme haue don lytull At ther  
work but now they begyn to Applye it  
hard / I haue sent by this carryer iiij

<sup>246</sup> Bess and Cavendish's three daughters.

<sup>247</sup> Jane and Thomas Kniveton's children, Mary and George. The young Knivetons appear to have grown up with their cousins and George at least to have entered Bess's service in his adulthood. He was paid half-yearly wages from Christmas 1591 to midsummer 1599, while he, his sister, and mother are listed together as recipients of monetary New Year's gifts from the early 1590s until 1600 (Hardwick MSS 7, 8, 9, and Drawer 143). The Chatsworth inventory from the 1560s lists the contents of a nursery, which would have been shared by the Cavendish and Kniveton children (White, vol. 2, p. 413).

<sup>248</sup> The edge of the paper is torn here.

<sup>249</sup> The Cavendish boys.

<sup>250</sup> The final letters are messy and partially torn away at the edge of the page, but the full name could be Teyler, the tutor, which would make sense in the contexts of the sentence and the period in which this letter was composed.

<sup>251</sup> Ale and Garrard are unidentified. They may have been the boys' governors or chamber servants.

<sup>252</sup> (Nether or Over) Haddon, Lindop Wood, Barlow, and Ashford were additional landholdings in Derbyshire.

<sup>253</sup> *that*.

<sup>254</sup> *enough*.

<sup>255</sup> Labourers with this surname appear throughout the Chatsworth estate accounts for 1559-1560, 'Rychard cockyn', 'Willyam cockyn', and 'John cockyn' in the first half of the volume and 'Roger cockyn' in the second half (Hardwick MS 2). Marchington could be referring to any of these men, who were almost certainly related.

<sup>256</sup> Unidentified. This may be the John Newall referred to in the following line.

<sup>257</sup> *were*.

<sup>258</sup> Unidentified. They were probably a family of tenant-labourers like the Cockyns.

pottes ij of them tonnes / & ij *with covers* /  
 & for thomas alen<sup>259</sup> he hath done all hys  
 taxed work so that I wold know *your*  
 ladyshyp[es] *pleasure* wherin I may set hym a  
 work by the daye or by the great<sup>260</sup>

*f. Iv*        syns chrestemas we haue geven all *our* cattell  
 hey /As fatte oxen kyne yong beastes &  
 shepe And they do eat it well but as  
 yet ther is no wast made I dar Answare  
 for ther is few days but I go to the  
 foddering places to spye faultes but I  
 se non thus leaving to trowbull  
*your* good ladyshyp I wysshe my mr<sup>261</sup> & you  
 health *with* encrease to honour And all my  
 lyttull mrsters<sup>262</sup> encrease of learning Which  
 I trust to see From chattesworthe  
 the xiiijth of this Ianvarye<sup>263</sup>

your humble seru[a]nt Wm  
 Marchyngton

ther is iij yonge calves god send them  
 good spede / at chattesworth Iames crompe  
 was at derby wherin I perceyve that mr  
 more<sup>264</sup> wold haue over reckened hym a  
 pack of wolfe wheras I<sup>265</sup> the sheperd thomas  
 bely<sup>266</sup> doth well know that he hade from  
 hense xxij packes *which* xvj<sup>xx</sup> stone<sup>267</sup> & vj /  
 Iames<sup>268</sup> at this wryting was sumwhat syck  
 so that he doth not wryte att this tyme  
 for he ley swetyng in bedd /

*final 1-2 lines blank*

<sup>259</sup> Wage payments for the labourer 'Thomas alen' appear throughout Hardwick MS 2 (1559-1560). Like other labourers and craftsmen on the Chatsworth estate, he was paid weekly according to the number of days he had worked.

<sup>260</sup> That is, without or with a contract, known as a 'bargain-in-great' (Durant, 'Introduction', *The Building of Hardwick Hall*, vol. 2, p. 1 as in 50).

<sup>261</sup> Sir William St Loe.

<sup>262</sup> Marchington began by writing the contraction 'mr<sup>s</sup>', then decided to write the word 'masters' out in full. Probably he realised that the contraction 'mrs' for 'masters', which he had used earlier in the letter, could be mistaken for 'mistress'.

<sup>263</sup> The Folger catalogue dates this letter c. 1560. From Marchington's references to the Cavendish boys as 'my lyttull masters' and valediction to 'my master & you', he must have written it during Bess's marriage to St Loe. There is no internal or external evidence to establish the date more precisely.

<sup>264</sup> Apparently a wool dealer.

<sup>265</sup> Either Marchington changed what he was going to say mid-sentence and forgot to cross out this word, or he forgot to add 'and' after it.

<sup>266</sup> Nothing more is known about him.

<sup>267</sup> 320 stone (16 times 20).

<sup>268</sup> Presumably Crompe.

**'Spy[ing] faultes': Eye service and epistolary self-promotion**

William Marchington's one surviving letter shares much in common with Crompe's two in both subject and style. Both men provide updates about a wide range of topics, usually moving from one to the next in rapid succession and employing mainly indicative, factual statements. If anything, Marchington's style is even more factual than Crompe's, for he offers no overtly persuasive passages. Between the opening updates on the children and the familial valediction, Marchington's letter reads very much like a progress report. The officer informs Bess about recent and ongoing work on four of her minor estates as well as Chatsworth, whence he writes. The tasks he mentions relate to land management and animal husbandry, demonstrating his specialist knowledge of both, and Marchington appears to have been solely an estate officer, unlike Crompe and Whitfield who combined indoor and outdoor stewardship. Nevertheless, he interacted like them with Bess's relatives — particularly the children and women — as well as with other servants.

Marchington's letter adds to the impression given by Bess and Crompe's correspondence that he and Crompe worked together to manage the estates. As we have seen, Bess sent to Crompe as an enclosure with letter ID 100 some seed packets labelled by Marchington to be passed on to Aunt Linacre for a new garden at Chatsworth, and Crompe requests Bess in letter ID 17 to send someone to help him there in Marchington's absence. Furthermore, a letter to Bess from St Loe written on 24 October c. 1560 directs her to let none of their servants except Crompe and Marchington ride any of the stabled horses, and only then when they needed to travel at speed; nags were good enough for ordinary use and for everyone else (ID 61). This special permission is testimony to Crompe and Marchington's shared high status and (partial) success in winning the trust of their master, who, as the queen's captain of the guard, seems to have had a keen professional interest in horses.<sup>269</sup>

The only other extant domestic text in which Marchington is mentioned is an account for rents received at Chatsworth at Lady Day and Michaelmas 1558, where his name appears once in each list as a collector of rents, alongside four other men including Whitfield and Wennesley (who may be the Sir Richard whom Crompe requests to fill in for Marchington in letter ID 17).<sup>270</sup> No records of Marchington's

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<sup>269</sup> St Loe had been captain of the guard to Princess Elizabeth, and she confirmed his appointment soon after she was declared Queen (Lovell, pp. 125, 115, 137). Lovell provides a full account of St Loe's background and career on pp. 116-39; see also Durant, *Bess*, pp. 33-34. St Loe's letter (ID 61) includes further instructions regarding the care of the horses at Chatsworth.

<sup>270</sup> Hardwick MS 3, f. 17r.

wages or any other financial transactions in which he was involved have survived. The letters and account that do remain show us that he was an important officer, jointly responsible with other Chatsworth-based officers for many aspects of estate management, and that he worked especially closely with Crompe. Marchington's letter reports on a number of his particular supervisory duties: overseeing the bringing in of natural resources such as timber and marl; the creation and maintenance of field boundaries; the raising of sheep and cattle; and, finally, keeping the workforce honestly occupied.

Marchington's letter to Bess includes not only a task-orientated progress report, but also performance reports concerning several servants and labourers at Chatsworth, some but not all of whom were under his authority. Though factual in presentation, Marchington's statements are by no means objective when he writes about people, himself included. Whereas Crompe's voice is unobtrusively self-confident and non-judgemental, even when writing of an unsatisfactory tenant in letter ID 18, Marchington's is marked by a tendency to assert his own industry and attentiveness by means of pointing out — and even seeking out — the failings of others. Throughout his letter of estate management, Marchington exploits the expectation that letters of this kind will include a great deal of information: he fills it with self-promoting intelligence, using criticism as a means of rhetorically aligning himself with the mistress against other of her household and agricultural servants.

While some of the individuals named by Marchington are documented nowhere else, Chatsworth estate and building accounts from autumn 1559 to autumn 1560 help to identify two of these men. Four men with the surname 'cockyn' appear as labourers in the wage lists, as does 'thomas alen'. For the first several months recorded, Richard, William, and John Cockyn work and are paid only sporadically, whereas from his appearance in July 1560 until the end of the accounts in October, Roger Cockyn's wages are recorded nearly every week.<sup>271</sup> The 'cokin' of Marchington's letter could have been any of these men or one of their relatives. Thomas Alen seems to have been particularly diligent, for he appears in nearly every wage list in the volume, receiving forty-nine weekly payments over the course of the year.<sup>272</sup> Although Marchington's letter may have been written in another year, the way in which he represents the different labourers' varying levels of application is similar to how those who also appear in the financial records of 1559-1560 are

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<sup>271</sup> This shift in July 1560 occurs on Hardwick MS 2, f. 16r.

<sup>272</sup> Alen's earnings are recorded on all but five of the folios containing writing in Hardwick MS 2.

represented there. The wording of Marchington's update on the whereabouts of Cokin and Newall implies that they were free to leave the estate for extended periods without requiring special permission and that Marchington did not have particularly close dealings with them; likewise, three of the Cockyns in the account book are not regular workers. They and Newall may have been tenants who were welcome but not obliged to work on the estate. The Halleys, on the other hand, appear to have been labourers from whom Marchington expected continual hard work, for he reports that over the Christmas season they 'haue don lytull At ther work but now they begyn to Applye it hard'. They and Newall do not appear in the accounts. By contrast, Thomas Alen's dedication is reflected both in his continuous wage earning as a day labourer in 1559-1560 and in Marchington's letter, which reports that Alen has finished all the work assigned to him and asks whether Bess would like to give him a contract — an arrangement that would reward and secure a hard worker for an extended period.

There is nothing extraordinary about an officer reporting on the doings of tenants and labourers on an estate for which he is partly responsible; this would be a routine component of his duty. However, Marchington's final report of this nature is a rhetorically charged performance, as he explicitly draws attention to his own industry as a supervisor and implicitly aligns himself with the master and mistress in the process. He writes that all the cattle at Chatsworth have been feeding heavily since Christmas, 'but as yet ther is no wast made I dar Answare for ther is few days but I go to the foddering places to spye faultes but I se non'. It sounds as though Marchington had noticed the rate at which the feed was disappearing and, suspecting that the farm servants were wasting it, made a point of going round nearly every day to observe them — and to be observed by them, thus encouraging them to work with careful honesty. Marchington states that he has gone for the very purpose of 'spy[ing] faultes', and he can account for the labourers' conscientiousness only by reference to his own. He casts as negative an ultimately favourable report on the work of lower estate servants and uses their service to set off to advantage his vigilant performance of his own duty as supervisor.

Marchington's distrust of those feeding the cattle is in line with what appear to have been two widespread phobias among early modern servant-keepers: waste and poor work ethic (often termed 'eye service'). We saw in the previous chapter that both waste and its opposite, lack of sufficient provision, could be considered forms of disrespect towards the heads of the house, their relatives and guests. Eye service — good service that lasts only so long as the master is looking — was another

potential form of disrespect. Characterised as the combined product of fear of punishment if seen to be negligent and desire to win praise without developing integrity, eye service is warned against in several printed works of advice on domestic relations in circulation in early modern England — not least the Pauline epistles. Ephesians 5:22-6:9 and Colossians 3:17-4:1, the two roughly parallel passages that outline how wives and husbands, children and parents, servants and masters ought to treat one another, proved particularly influential on English Protestant thought concerning domestic relations and household management.

The concept of eye service appears in both these passages, but the precise phrase only in Colossians, quoted here from Tyndale's translation of the New Testament:

Seruauntis be obedient vnto youre bodyly masters in all thingis: not with eye service as men pleasers / but in synglenes of herte fearynge god. And whatsoeuer ye do / do yt hertely as though ye did it to the lorde / & not vnto men / remembrynge that of the lorde ye shal receaue the rewarde of inheritaunce / for ye serue the lorde Christ. But he that doth wronge / shal receaue for the wronge that he hath done: for there ys no respecte off persons. ye masters do vnto youre seruauntis that whych ys iust and egall remembrynge that ye haue also a master in heauen.<sup>273</sup>

Subsequent translations rely heavily on Tyndale's, and the term 'eye service' appears in every major English Bible translation disseminated during Bess's lifetime and also in the King James Bible, published three years after her death. Despite the very considerable cultural differences between the Roman-ruled Middle East of the first century and Tudor England, eye service as a concept translated well and remained easy to understand as an ongoing practical problem of domestic management. (As we shall see, the interpersonal and spiritual dimensions of eye service were less consistently taken into account in the early modern period.) If masters through the centuries were concerned about how to get servants to work as diligently in their absence as in their presence, for servants the idea that their service was unto Christ and would earn for them a heavenly inheritance as children of God offered ample spiritual motivation to work with whole-hearted integrity. Paul further specifies that masters are to treat their servants fairly. Both sides win.

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<sup>273</sup> *The new Testament* [...] [Antwerp: Widow of Christophell Ruremond of Endhouen, 1534]. The first edition was published in 1525. Tyndale's translation does not include verse numbers, but in the Geneva New Testament (1557) and subsequent translations this passage appears as Colossians 3:22-4:1.

Furthermore, there is an affective aspect to Paul's directions to servants and masters, as it is placed within the context of family relationships, the underlying idea being that servants are extended family, metaphorical children of the *paterfamilias*. This Roman understanding of family lasted as long as domestic service itself and was reinforced in early modern England by the high proportion of child and teenaged servants. Most lower servants and many personal attendants from higher up the social ladder were not career servants (as were household and estate officers) but rather underwent a period of youthful service as part of their education before establishing their own families. Consequently, servants were typically presented as children in didactic literature of the period and in the interchangeable use of words like 'puer', 'boy', 'man', and 'servingman' to refer to male servants without clearly delineating their ages and degrees.<sup>274</sup>

Continuities in the familial configuration of domestic service allowed Biblical passages on family relations such as this one to be absorbed whole-heartedly into ideologies and discourses governing domestic service in early modern England. These ideas were not explicitly taken up in printed treatises on household relations until the end of the sixteenth century, but they had always been available to the Biblically literate (including church- and chapel-goers who would hear the New Testament epistles read aloud, as well as those who could read for themselves). Biblically based printed treatises, the earliest of which is Robert Cleaver's 1598 *Godlie Forme of Householde Gouernment*, portray idealised servant-master relations in a way that contrasts with the suspicion of servants expressed in Marchington's letter and in other manuscript texts produced in connection with the management of specific noble or gentry households and estates in the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Read together, the spiritual and secular texts are seen to propound opposing models for domestic relations in early modern England, which tend to align with the interests of different ranks of masters. Whereas the printed treatises were written mainly by Puritan clergymen in London and attempt to shape godly — but perhaps especially urban, middling — households into a familial ideal, manuscript texts produced by or on behalf of social elites, such as Sir Francis Willoughby's

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<sup>274</sup> On servants as members of the family and as young people to be educated, see R. C. Richardson, *Household Servants*, pp. 63-64, 221-23; Musson, pp. 3-4, 39-41; and Kussmaul, p. 3. A good example of the jumbled conflation of adult and child male servants is Hugh Rhodes's *The boke of Nurture for men, seruauntes, and chyldren, with Stans puer ad mensam, newly corrected, very vtile and necessary vnto all youth* (London: Thomas Petyt, [1545]). This book combines John Russell's 'Book of Nurture' (c. 1460) with a translation of the Latin treatise *Stans puer ad mensam* ('The boy waiting at table'). For a summary of Russell's text and its social context, see Musson, pp. 23-32; it is edited in Frederick J. Furnivall's anthology, *The Babees Book* [...] (London: EETS, 1868).



ordinance for servants at Wollaton Hall c. 1572 and Henry Percy, ninth earl of Northumberland's advice to his heir a few decades later, are concerned with reinforcing domestic hierarchies and maintaining masters' financial and social control over vast landed and human resources.<sup>275</sup> All domestic advice texts, however, propose ways to ensure that servants work diligently.

For the clergymen authors expounding the passages on family life in Ephesians and Colossians, the servant-master bond was not merely social but also emotional and spiritual, producing eternal consequences. In the passage from Colossians quoted above, the words 'herte' and 'hertely' indicate that servants ought to be truly devoted to serving their masters as an expression of their even greater devotion to Christ. Picking up on spiritual principles and affective language attached to service in such passages, the Puritan writers argued that early modern servants owed their masters not obedience but *hearty* obedience: willing, loving, hard working service that went even beyond the call of duty. In return, masters were to treat their servants with justice and paternal affection, raising them like their own children (some of whom may well have been in service in other families). This was also in the masters' spiritual best interests since their treatment of their earthly servants was seen as a form of service to Christ, who would judge masters and servants equally, with 'no respecte off persons' (Colossians 3:25).<sup>276</sup>

In Marchington's report on the cattle feeding, he asserts that he and those under his watchful eye are meeting the demands of what was considered, from both practical and spiritual perspectives, a most important aspect of early modern service: a vigorous work ethic. However, there is a marked difference in attitude and approach between the Chatsworth officer's and the preachers-turned-authors' means of bringing about diligent service. Whereas the Puritans teach that servants are members of the family who, with sufficient teaching and encouragement from the Word of God, could choose to serve with loving devotion, Marchington professes no great faith in the good will of those serving under him. Instead, he takes a cynical but

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<sup>275</sup> Selections from the Wollaton household ordinance are printed from an early eighteenth-century transcript in *HMC Middleton*, pp. 538-41 and Alice T. Friedman, *House and Household in Elizabethan England: Wollaton Hall and the Willoughby Family* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 185-87. The original manuscript has not survived. Northumberland composed three manuscript works of paternal advice in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries (Petworth House, Leconfield MS 24/1-2), which have not been fully edited.

<sup>276</sup> Previous discussions of the Puritan treatises present them as forms of social control without taking adequate account of the idealistic, comparatively egalitarian, and affective qualities of their precepts: Mark Thornton Burnett, 'Masters and Servants in Moral and Religious Treatises, c. 1580-1642', in *The Arts, Literature and Society*, ed. by Arthur Marwick (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 48-75 and Richardson, *Household Servants*, Chapter 6: 'Servants, Godly Households and Social Engineering'.

immediately effective approach: placing himself, as Bess and St Loe's representative, where lower servants can perform eye service to him. Marchington's vigilance results in the same high level of diligence commended by the Puritan authors, but without the love, trust, and spiritual benefits. Marchington operates according to a secular ideology that sees lower servants as inherently wasteful and negligent, requiring constant supervision rather than reformation.

The officer's suspicion is in line with his master's and that of other socially elevated servant-keepers, notably Northumberland, whose voluminous paternal advice includes a cautionary tale of the ravage of his inheritance by his late father's servants during his own minority.<sup>277</sup> Northumberland urges his heir to distrust servants in general and to manage his own affairs as much as possible. Similarly, Sir Walter Raleigh advises his heir, 'Know what thou hast, what everything is worth that thou hast, and see that thou art not wasted by servants and officers'.<sup>278</sup> Willoughby's household ordinance takes the practical step of outlining individual servants' specific duties so they can be held accountable. Unlike the printed Puritan manuals, which present practical and spiritual dimensions as interrelated and which take the servants' benefit into account as well as the masters', secular guides to household relations tend to be (hand)written from the master's resolutely this-worldly perspective and concerned more with using and controlling servants than nurturing them. These rather elite works differ from the treatises in social demographic, material form, and dissemination (as manuscripts for use within a single household) as well as in outlook. In the paradigm of the secular-minded masters, eye service is considered preferable to the more dangerous self-serving deceptions of which servants are capable. Constant supervision such as Marchington's is recommended as the means of ensuring that eye service is performed when deeper devotion is unthought of. For an example close to home, St Loe's letter to Bess granting Marchington and Crompe the right to ride stabled horses in emergencies goes on to instruct her, 'yow mvst cawse svm to overse the horskepar for thatt he ys verye well learnyd in loyteryng' (ID 61).

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<sup>277</sup> This part of Northumberland's advice, composed c. 1595, has been edited twice: by G. B. Harrison, *Advice to His Son. By Henry Percy, ninth Earl of Northumberland* (London: Ernest Benn, 1930), from a seventeenth-century copy of Leconfield MS 24/1, and, in a slightly abridged form, by James Heywood Markland, 'Instructions by Henry Percy, ninth Earl of Northumberland, to his son Algernon Percy, touching the management of his Estate, Officers, &c. [...]', *Archaeologia*, 27 (1838), 306-58, based on a transcript of Leconfield MS 24/1 made by one 'Mr. Malone' (p. 306).

<sup>278</sup> Sir Walter Raleigh, *Instructions to His Son*, in Louis Booker Wright, ed., *Advice to a Son: Precepts of Lord Burghley, Sir Walter Raleigh, Francis Osborne* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1962), p. 27. See also R. C. Richardson, 'The Generation Gap: Parental Advice in Early Modern England', *Clio*, 32.1 (2002), 1-25.

Although not addressing the question of eye service in particular, Bess's letters to Whitfield and Crompe frequently pronounce judgement on those whose work ethic disappoints. In letter ID 99, she expresses her strong displeasure with Whitfield's reported lack of provision and respect for her sister, while in letter ID 100 she writes angrily that the tenant Worth is outright lying if he claims to be owed for any work he has emphatically not done. In the same letter, she dismisses the idea of hiring the mason that Sir James has recommended; understandably, she would rather recruit someone whose work she knows to be satisfactory than someone with a reputation for being lazy. Written in response to letters such as these and in the wider context of early modern religious and secular ideologies of service, which emphasise strong work ethic while the secular ideology in particular also encourages suspicion on the part of masters and managers, it is hardly surprising that Marchington's letter picks up on and reiterates a prevailing attitude of judgementalism towards other servants and announces that he is exercising his supervisory duties with vigour.

While Marchington's watchfulness successfully protects the estate against any damages that could be caused by wastefulness or laziness in those he supervises, it also places him in the position of master — both physically and psychologically. The officer stands in for St Loe, overseeing the work of other estate servants while their master is at court; but beyond this he also writes from a master's mindset of superiority and suspicion. His position as an officer allows Marchington to transcend the working conditions of lower servants, to act as and align his thoughts with those of the master, and thus to elide the fact that he remains a servant himself. When writing to the mistress, Marchington performs not only service to her but also conscious superiority over other servants, emphasising what he has in common with Bess and distancing himself from those beneath him in status or performance. In this way, Marchington's letter is both socially aspirational and a product of his particular subject position as a high-ranking officer: that is, a surrogate master.

Marchington's criticism of other servants pervades his letter, extending to those for whom he was not personally responsible and providing further opportunities for him to rhetorically align himself with the mistress. Immediately following the initial good news that Bess's daughters, niece and nephew are 'well amended' (either in health or studiousness), he adds, 'but I do Iudge that my lyttull masters do not prosper well in learning for that tey[...] ale & garrard be not Frenedes your ladyshyp doth well know ther fasyons'. The first of the individuals named here could be Teyler, the Cavendish boys' tutor much mentioned in Crompe's letter ID

17, but otherwise these servants and their educational responsibilities are unknown. They may have been governors or personal attendants to Bess's sons, but whoever they were, they would not have been under Marchington's authority. Yet he not only criticises them but sets up his criticism so as to build rapport with Bess at their expense. Marchington's statement that she 'doth well know ther fasyons' functions to imply that he is intimate enough with Bess to know and share her thoughts. The officer rhetorically aligns himself with the mistress and sets the two of them apart from these three quarrelsome individuals whom they both know and judge. Although Marchington's criticism could also function as an implicit warning that the boys' education is suffering and something ought to be done about it, his specific wording downplays the negative effects of the servants' falling out by characterising their unfriendliness to one another as habitual and not damaging enough to warrant intervention. Marchington's statement about Te----, Ale, Garrard, and the Cavendish boys is not really about any of them, but about himself: the statement allows him to impress Bess with his superiority and, sharing a moment of complaint with her, as with a friend, to strengthen their social bond through this rhetorical construction of intimacy. Instead of offering an apparently sincere warning to Bess, as Crompe does regarding the Tideswell school, Marchington concentrates on building up his own persona and social status in relation to these other servants and to Bess.

Finally, Marchington implicitly criticises his closest colleague in his post-script report on Crompe's misadventure when wool trading in Derby: 'Iames crompe was at derby wherin I perceyve that mr more wold haue over reckened hym a pack of wolfe wheras I [and?] the sheperd thomas berly doth well know that he hade from hense xxiiij packes which xvj<sup>xx</sup> stone & vj'. Marchington's use of the tag-clause 'I perceyve' and lack of reference to his own whereabouts suggest that he was not at Derby to witness this event, but rather has obtained the information second hand — likely from Crompe himself upon his return. However, because the verb 'perceive' denotes personal observation and understanding (whether gained directly or indirectly), it conjures up the image that he was there and was actively involved in resolving the problem. Although the verb phrase 'wold haue' indicates that the crisis was in fact averted, Marchington does not explain his own level of involvement (if any) beyond seeing Crompe off. Instead, he focuses on knocking his co-officer down a peg or two. Although Marchington does not explicitly criticise him, the very act of reporting an incident in which his colleague nearly made a costly blunder is a criticism in itself, the more so since Marchington inserts a positive portrayal of

himself into the narrative and Crompe is unable to tell his own side of the story for, as Marchington explains, 'Iames at this wryting was sumwhat syck so that he doth not wryte att this tyme'. Marchington assumes that Bess would be expecting a letter from Crompe, probably because they corresponded regularly through the weekly carriers.<sup>279</sup> Marchington may have been writing on Crompe's behalf and taken over the steward's other estate duties during his absence in Derby and subsequent illness. If so, the experience may have given Marchington added incentive for assuring Bess that he was perfectly capable of managing her affairs. Marchington's explanation of Crompe's physical incapacity excuses the latter from writing, but it simultaneously provides Marchington with the opportunity to represent Crompe's mistake as evidence of his mental incapacity compared with Marchington's own astuteness.

The pervasiveness of criticism throughout Marchington's letter gives the impression that this cast of thought and style proceeds not merely from imitating his employers but rather from internalising a certain model of what it means to be an effective manager, combined with the challenges presented by not being at the very top of the service hierarchy. Marchington repeatedly represents the shortcomings of others as a means of asserting his own diligent service and innate superiority, as though his service as an officer consisted solely in 'spy[ing] faultes' and he were eager to impress. From this point of view, Marchington's letter itself functions as a form of eye service — a visible demonstration of his diligence, and the only kind of service that Bess can see without being physically present to supervise him. The social pressures unique to his position would account for Marchington's rhetorical efforts to present himself as having inside knowledge, keen judgement, and exemplary work ethic — qualities Bess would value and hopefully reward. Marchington's voice constructs the persona of an officer who is exceptionally diligent, but also distrustful and competitive. His self-performance powerfully reflects his social position as a high-ranking servant whose management role and outlook had much in common with those of his employers, yet who remained subordinate to them and partially in the shadow of another officer, his closest colleague.

The aspirational tale telling that so characterises Marchington's one surviving letter is notably absent from Crompe's two, which enact faithful stewardly service mainly through advice and other forms of verbal trouble shooting that emphasise

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<sup>279</sup> The regularity and logistics of the officers' correspondence with Bess are reconstructed in the final section of this chapter.

Bess and her children's wellbeing rather than his own performance of duty towards them. Crompe's model of managerial service appears to be more devotional than Marchington's in that it is focused on the mistress's good rather than on himself and how he measures up compared with others. Crompe's position as steward, which authorised him to write bluntly, joined with his focus on Bess's wellbeing and wishes, seems to have allowed him to perform his epistolary duties with a level of unselfconscious confidence absent from Marchington's self-promoting rhetoric.

Unlike Crompe's letters, Marchington's is not overtly persuasive; it offers no advice or warnings and uses no imperatives. Marchington's persuasive rhetoric is both more subtle and more socially orientated than Crompe's, as he seeks to affect the mistress's attitude towards himself and others rather than to convince her to take any specific course of action. Marchington's two-part strategy involves on the one hand distancing himself from inferior and rival servants through criticising them and on the other drawing closer to Bess by aligning his opinions and values with hers. Whereas Crompe's letters use his office and friendly intimacy with Bess as a basis for bluntly imposing his views upon her, Marchington's letter carefully constructs an image of intimate like-mindedness while refraining from making any further impositions.

Both officers, however, perform the directive speech act of requiring further instructions from the mistress. Whereas Crompe in such cases uses the imperative but still deferential construction 'let me know', Marchington performs the directive using the discourse of wishes: '& for thomas alen he hath done all hys taxed work so that *I wold know your ladyshypes pleasure* wher in I may set hym a work by the daye or by the great'. Unlike Crompe's imperatives and use of 'must', the wording of this directive downplays its urgency and does not presume to place Bess under grammatical obligation to do what he says. In these respects, it is quite elegant and deferential, in keeping with Marchington's use of the terms of address 'your ladyshyp' and 'your good ladyshyp', conventional apology for 'trowbull[ing]' her with his letter, and subscription as 'your humble seruant'. However, in framing 'your ladyshypes pleasure' as what Marchington himself 'wold' know, his statement assumes that Bess will grant his wish, just as he will grant hers, once known — that is, he places his own and his employer's wishes on an equal footing. Although this wording flattens out the social hierarchy by suggesting that mistress and servant shared each other's rights and obligations, it was probably acceptable in the context of collaborative management, like Crompe's more forceful formulations. Early

modern household and estate officers must have needed to ask their absent masters and mistresses for decisions on a regular basis, with limited linguistic means for doing so within the bounds of strict etiquette. It is interesting to see that Crompe and Marchington express the same need using different constructions, but it is hard to know how much significance to attach to these few examples. A wider study of officers' letters from the period would likely reveal patterns of language use the precise social significance of which could be interpreted with more certainty.

Although the social messages encoded in their discussions of various practicalities and, in particular, their epistolary self-performances as trustworthy officers differ, both Crompe and Marchington claim common ground with Bess in their letters. Crompe uses the prerogative of speech afforded by his privileged position as a steward to address the mistress with unceremonious urgency when giving advice and warnings intended to protect her best interests — an important part of his duty and likewise the office of a friend. Whether matter-of-fact, persuasive, or potentially ironic, his language suggests familiarity with Bess and confidence that, knowing and trusting him, she will not be offended. Marchington, by contrast, uses his office and letter-writing duty to maintain and potentially enhance his place in her good opinion and to bring to light ways in which they are alike. He overtly draws attention to his own status and performance as a personal representative of Bess and St Loe by claiming superiority over other servants, but his rhetorical techniques also include more subtly aspirational ones. He frames as a familiar aside to Bess his derogatory remark about her sons' servants and uses the construction 'I wold know' to display his refinement of style and, perhaps, to implicitly claim entitlement to have his wishes met.

**Edward Foxe at Chatsworth to Bess of Hardwick [location unidentified],  
8 December [1559-1567] (ID 28)**

*address leaf, f. 2v*

*superscription: secretary script, Foxe's hand*

To the ryght worship  
full & my v[e]ry good  
lady & mistres the lady  
sentlo gyue this

*letter, f. 1r*

*secretary script, Foxe's hand*



Ihesus<sup>280</sup>

Ryght worshipfull & my very good Lady thys shall be  
 to Lett your good Ladiship vnderstand that I *received*  
 A letter from your good ladyship the whych dyd  
 dyscoreg me wery sore Although yt were not treu  
 And wheare As<sup>281</sup> your ladyship sayd that your  
 frendes therabowt dyd let your ladyship vnder=  
 stand that I weare muche Abrode Abowt me  
 pleasuer be iij dayes to gether yt ys not true  
 for I were neuer Absent ij dayes then iij neuer syns  
 your ladyship went but at my fathers At  
 wakes<sup>282</sup> that me father & serten of my frendes  
 met me there & I went of sundaye i[n] the  
 mornyng After I had bene in the waren  
 & came Ageyn of mundaye At nyght & last  
 one to walke the waren when I were Absent  
 And wheare your ladyship sayd that your  
 nebores dyd tell you that I were neclygent in  
 lowkyng to the waren / But I dyd well know  
 that the<sup>283</sup> had not so lyttell honesty to wryte  
 to your ladyship Any such vntruth But And yf  
 dycons<sup>284</sup> wold not haue had yt known he  
 showld not haue Rejoyced & sayd to my frendes  
 yat yt were hys letter that mayd me to be  
 so Rebuked At your Ladyshipes hand wherfor  
 I thynk my selffe very vnfortunat to haue such  
 one As he ys to make me to haue Rebukes  
 vnworthy And I do not care what Any can  
 wryte Agaynst me so that I do my duty vnto  
 my offes<sup>285</sup> that I haue charge vppon that  
 when the that hath knowleg shall see  
 my doynge the whych I trust shall be fatles<sup>286</sup>  
 And when your ladyship were At chatsworth  
 your selffe the were yat towld you yat there were  
 not xx copeles<sup>287</sup> of conys in the grownd but  
 lyke as ther knowleg were so the spake & now  
 ye<sup>288</sup> maye see ther selffes Ahundereth<sup>289</sup> copel at a tyme

<sup>280</sup> *Jesus*. The more usual abbreviation is 'Ihs', semi-transliterated from the Greek to the Latin alphabet, with <h> representing the Greek letter *eta* <η>, the capital of which is <<H>>.

<sup>281</sup> *whereas*.

<sup>282</sup> Unidentified. Foxe may have lived in the lodge in the warren; it contained bedding for one in 1601 and possibly earlier (*Of household stuff*, p. 30).

<sup>283</sup> *they*.

<sup>284</sup> Another servant, probably the 'dyckyns' of Crompe's letter ID 18. His letter, mentioned here, has not survived.

<sup>285</sup> *office*.

<sup>286</sup> *faultless*.

<sup>287</sup> *couples*.

<sup>288</sup> *they*.

<sup>289</sup> *a hundred*.

& doth saye there ys conys very great plenty

*f. 1v blank*

*f. 2r* And yf the Report of theym that hath no  
knowleg ys better to be credyt then myne  
I Ame not mete to be in An offes/ for there  
ys no mane that hathe Anoffes but he can  
tell how to behaue hym selff yn hyt<sup>290</sup> or ell[se]<sup>291</sup>  
he ys not fyt to be in hit / And As for  
burowes makynge we haue taken Anorder that  
the<sup>ne</sup>xt workadays After crystenmas holydayes  
we wyll haue A great sort of serten of our  
nebores to cast borowes & in the mentyme  
we wyll be doying As we maye for I haue  
mayd ij borrowes my selff & couered theme  
with thornes & now I must make trapes euery  
daye As I may cum to & I haue taken syns  
I wryt too your ladyship both doges & [illegible]  
& of wedensday beyng the vij daye of desembr<sup>292</sup>  
in the mornynge ther came ij copell<sup>293</sup> of hownd[es]  
in to the warden & huntied the conies & I  
Ran vp & downe the wod & [illegible] were Angary  
At theym be case I had Run so sore at them  
& At leng[t]h I wyth my byll<sup>294</sup> cut iij of  
them very sore that I thynke ye wyll not  
lyue & then came one & sayd the were his  
maysteres mr fyharbares<sup>295</sup> & I sayd I dyd not  
care whos the were for yf the huntied ther  
I wold kyll them & there mr wer by & yf he  
wryt to your ladyship of hit this the truth  
As All the howse knoth & the conys be  
gyneth to make ther nestes Ready now for  
I haue fond deuere<sup>296</sup> holes stoped close vp  
after them yat ye may be Ready Agaynst march  
thus I praye Ihesus preserue your ladyship  
long in your prosperytie from chatsworth the  
viij daye of desember // Be your ladyshipes own  
faythfull servand Edward Foxe [*flourish*]<sup>297</sup>

<sup>290</sup> *it.* Like Crompe, Foxe sometimes adds an <h> at the start of words beginning with vowels.

<sup>291</sup> Here and elsewhere the final letters are worn away at the edge of the page.

<sup>292</sup> 7 December did not fall on a Wednesday in any year during which Bess was Lady St Loe; Foxe must have made a mistake (or used a non-standard calendar), and there is no other specific internal evidence by which to date this letter.

<sup>293</sup> *couples.*

<sup>294</sup> Probably a bill-hook rather than the military weapon.

<sup>295</sup> Unidentified. Two servants of a Thomas Fitzherbert, esquire, were examined in January 1592/93 for the crime of killing the Queen's deer across the county border in Staffordshire (LPL, Shrewsbury Papers, MS 700, f. 95). If Thomas was related to the Master Fitzherbert whom Foxe encountered, the Fitzherbert family seems to have made a habit of poaching.

<sup>296</sup> *diverse.*

<sup>297</sup> Foxe's flourish here resembles Crompe's.

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***Dignity and self-defence***

Edward Foxe's letter is both the most overtly rhetorical and the most overtly deferential of the Chatsworth officers' letters to the mistress of the house. It is also the most narrowly focused, since, unlike Crompe and Marchington's wide-ranging communications, it sticks to one topic, namely Foxe's faithful exercise of his duties as warrener while Bess has been away. This narrowness of focus is partly owing to the comparative narrowness of Foxe's office, which was apparently restricted to the care of the conies on the Chatsworth estate, whereas, as we have seen, Marchington and especially Crompe's duties were far broader in scope. However, the particular circumstances in which Foxe wrote — narrated within the letter itself — clearly influenced both scope and style, as the whole letter develops a single argument: that Foxe is worthy to continue in his office and to be restored to Bess's favour. Protestations, progress reports, narratives, deference, and sulking all contribute to the warrener's self-defence.

This letter has a particularly difficult remit. In replying to the latest letter he received from the mistress, Foxe must respond to allegations of negligence (which originated in a letter she received from another servant, Dycons) and to the possibility that an outsider may also have complained to her about him. Foxe's letter cannot conceal his indignation and worry, but it does demonstrate the efforts he took to remain respectful towards his social superiors. The warrener addresses Bess in particularly deferential terms throughout, is careful not to explicitly accuse her of being unfair to him, and likewise does not directly accuse Master Fitzherbert of poaching (although this is a clear implication of his narrative). Foxe uses several rhetorical strategies, of which deference is one, in the attempt to clear himself and demonstrate his dedicated and competent service as warrener.

Foxe bookends his letter with deferential formulae that simultaneously honour Bess and express subservience and goodwill towards her. Terms of address are especially elaborate and close packed in the superscription, salutation, and notification, paying her a great deal of respect before he goes on to write in his own defence. Setting up the letter in this way allows Foxe to build up social credit which he can then draw on as the letter progresses through its challenging subject matter. Bess is to bear the warrener's manifest deference in mind as she reads on.

Yet in form alone, Foxe's honorifics for Bess are not necessarily any more deferential than Crompe's. In their study of the pragmatics of address formulae in the Helsinki Corpus of Early English Correspondence, Terttu Nevalainen and Helena Raumolin-Brunberg find that the modifiers 'my', 'singular', 'good', 'right', and 'worshipful' all appear regularly in sixteenth-century introductory address formulae.<sup>298</sup> Crompe's superscriptions 'To my synguler good ladye & mestres' and Foxe's 'To the ryght worshipfull & my very good lady & mistres' are equally conventional. Foxe's more elaborate, double-barrelled construction may sound particularly ingratiating, but it can also be read as formal and dignified. Although Crompe and Foxe's formulae are equally conservative, based on late medieval epistolary practice, Foxe's adheres in its structure and wording more closely to the official letters issued by Chancery that served as models for English-language personal correspondence from about 1420 until finally overtaken by more familiar styles some two centuries after Erasmus famously revived the Classical notion of the familiar letter as a conversation between absent friends.<sup>299</sup> Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg observe that 'right worshipful', the first of Foxe's two terms of address for the mistress, was used in 'official language, usually with reference to the gentry', including in letters from one member of the gentry to another.<sup>300</sup> Rather than especially deferential, 'right worshipful' would likely have been understood as especially formal, showcasing Foxe's good breeding. The pragmatic significance of the warrener's particularly formal, official manner of addressing his employer in this letter (in both superscription and salutation) may not be to present him prostrate and repentant before her but rather to create emotional distance, allowing him to honour her in a formulaic way — at arm's length, as it were — while upholding his own dignity to a greater degree than if he had chosen simpler and less stiff address terms.

Nevertheless, the high concentration of honorifics at the start of Foxe's letter does suggest he was particularly concerned to appear deferential. Following the elaborate, formal superscription, Foxe continues to perform deference to Bess on the inside of his letter, repeating 'Ryght worshipfull & my very good Lady' as the salutation and also including a notification that addresses her twice as 'your good

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<sup>298</sup> Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg, pp. 555-58.

<sup>299</sup> For the development of English-language official and personal (i.e., not royal/governmental) letters in the fifteenth century, see Malcolm Richardson, 'The *Dictamen* and Its Influence on Fifteenth-Century English Prose', *Rhetorica*, 2 (1984), 207-26. Stewart provides a helpful summary and critique of the standard historiography of early modern letter-writing in *Shakespeare's Letters*, pp. 12-14. See also Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers*, pp. 17-23.

<sup>300</sup> Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg, pp. 558, 574.

Ladiship'. The warrener's use of these and other formulae show his reliance on epistolary form and etiquette to make a good impression. Whereas Crompe and Marchington's letters had no need of salutations, Foxe exploits the salutation's pragmatic potential and then goes on to introduce the subject of his letter through a notification formula ('thys shall be to Lett your good Ladiship vnderstand that [...]') and exposition ('wheare As') — another two conventional components that are absent from Crompe and Marchington's letters.<sup>301</sup> All in all, Foxe's formal style is exemplary; it is by the book.

After these introductory formulae, Foxe addresses Bess as 'your ladyship' ten times, compared with only one instance each of 'you' and 'your selffe'. Foxe uses the neutral pronouns only where repetition of the deferential 'your ladyship' would be particularly cumbersome. It is clear that 'your ladyship' is Foxe's default term of address for his employer, varied only in order to further emphasise his deference for her (in the opening formulae) or to save his communication from being obscured by excessive wordiness. Crompe's use of terms of address is exactly opposite: his letters average eleven uses of 'you' but only three of 'your ladyshippe'. Marchington's letter uses direct address far less often than either Foxe or Crompe's, but it shows a slight preference for 'your ladyshyp'. The varied practices of the three officers suggests that there were no hard and fast rules about the use or forms of direct address in the body of letters, although conventional formulae were clearly expected to appear in superscriptions, salutations, valedictions, and subscriptions. If, then, there was a certain freedom of choice about address terms, it is significant that Foxe's honorific forms are densely packed and Crompe's are thinly spread. Crompe's whole style is more self-confident and less self-conscious than Foxe's, having nothing to prove. The steward's apparent lapses in epistolary etiquette can be interpreted as a choice not to stand on ceremony when writing routine business letters. By contrast, Foxe's emphasis on verbal formulae of all kinds contributes to his self-presentation as a solicitous — and anxious — officer.

Beyond his prominent display of deference, Foxe deploys a number of rhetorical strategies to re-establish his place in Bess's favour and secure his continued position as her warrener. These strategies include protestations of innocence backed up with examples of his diligence; an extended progress report that further demonstrates his commitment and competence (and includes the story of his

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<sup>301</sup> For a list and examples of typical formal components of fifteenth-century (and later non-humanist) English-language letters, see Malcolm Richardson, '*Dictamen*', pp. 213-14.

encounter with Master Fitzherbert's dogs); a counter-accusation that deflects blame from Bess and her purported informants; and standing on his offended dignity. It is quite the performance.

Foxe introduces his grievance and begins his self-defence in the opening statement: 'Ryght worshipfull my very good Lady thys shall be to Lett your good Ladiship vnderstand that I received A letter from your good ladyship the whych dyd dyscoreg me wery sore Although yt were not treu'. Structurally, the notification formula provides a convenient way for Foxe to state explicitly the claim that the rest of his letter will support and develop. Furthermore, the notification sets the tone for Foxe's self-presentation, another important dimension of his rhetorical performance. In essence, Foxe is notifying Bess not so much that he has received her letter as that what it says is 'not treu' and has upset him. The exposition goes on to specify what he finds objectionable while clarifying that he does not hold Bess herself responsible: 'wheare As your ladyship sayd that your frendes therabowt dyd let your ladyship vnderstand that I weare mucche Abrode Abowt me pleasuer be iij dayes to gether yt ys not true'. In contradicting the report that Bess has received about his negligence, Foxe uses repetition to make his thesis statement very clear from the beginning: 'yt ys not true'. In order to support this claim, he goes on to state that he was absent from Chatsworth for only two days and that, far from neglecting the warren, 'I went of sundaye in the mornynge' only 'After I had bene in the warden', 'came Ageyn of mundaye At nyght', and was the 'last one to walke the warden when I were Absent And wheare [i.e., when] your ladyship sayd that your nebores dyd tell you that I were neclygent in lowkyng to the warden'.

Foxe's argument so far is not entirely satisfactory. Although he seeks to establish that he was diligently at work when allegedly negligent, his account acknowledges that he did leave the warren unattended for the better part of two days — just not three. Furthermore, contradicting (perhaps sarcastically and certainly not convincingly) a report that Bess has believed could in itself give offence. To bolster his argument, Foxe goes on to provide more and stronger evidence of his work ethic and also to discredit his accuser, whom he knows to be his fellow servant Dycons and not, as Bess has written, her neighbours. In order to accuse Dycons, Foxe must first clear the innocent neighbours of any involvement, but this involves him in a further complication. He writes, 'But I dyd well know that the[y] had not so lyttell honesty to wryte to your ladyship Any such vntruth', that is, that they were too honest to fabricate such slander. The purpose of this statement is to suggest that the

real perpetrator of the tale against Foxe is dishonest and malicious; however, it outright contradicts Bess's statement.

Foxe's letter so far has (unintentionally) characterised its powerful addressee as gullible, unduly harsh, and dishonest. His self-defence states that Bess has rebuked him unfairly, and it implies not only that she has been worked upon by his detractor but also that she has lied to protect the informant's identity. Although Foxe makes an effort to shift the blame from Bess herself to the one who has maliciously misinformed her, the letter's unflattering portrayal of its recipient suggests that Foxe wrote it with greater attention to his own needs than to hers — probably a tactical error under the circumstances.

Whereas these problematic representations of Bess remain on the level of subtext, Foxe explicitly blames Dycons for the scolding he has received, citing the irrefutable evidence of the culprit's own boast: 'But And yf dycons wold not haue had yt known he showld not haue Rejoysted & sayd to my frendes yat yt were hys letter that mayd me to be so Rebuked At your Ladyshipes hand'. Having turned the tables on his accuser, Foxe continues to characterise himself as an innocent and sorrowful victim of Dycons's malice, no doubt seeking to undermine Bess's trust in his antagonist and to re-establish her trust in himself: 'wherfor I thynk my selffe very vnfortunat to haue such one As he ys to make me to haue Rebukes vnworthy'. Foxe's self-defence becomes more convincing and tactful once he ceases to refer to Bess's letter and the specific allegations it contains and begins instead to redirect her attention from his (and her own) shortcomings to those of his accuser.

Foxe strengthens his position by insisting — albeit somewhat defiantly in keeping with his pose as the injured party — that, contrary to accusations that he has rendered eye service only, he remains as committed to his office when Bess is absent as when she is present to examine the results of his labour: 'And I do not care what Any can wryte Agaynst me so that I do my duty vnto my offes that I haue charge vppon that when the[y] that hath knowleg shall see my doynge the whych I trust shall be fatles [...]'. The syntax breaks down at this point but the message is clear: Foxe may be slandered and discouraged, but he will continue to work with integrity until such time as his dedication is recognised. In the same vein, he cites another occasion when he was falsely accused: unnamed ill-wishers had reported to Bess that he had allowed the number of conies to diminish to twenty couples. Foxe comments scornfully, 'but lyke as ther knowleg were so the[y] spake', for now his detractors can see for themselves that there are one hundred couples. Here Foxe writes with the



confidence of an expert dismissing the pettiness of the ignorant, a stance that highlights his superior knowledge and character. Then, standing on his dignity as an officer, he reminds Bess that he is the specialist and authority at Chatsworth on all matters related to the warren, and so she ought to trust him — or else dismiss him and have done. He writes, 'And yf the Report of theym that hath no knowleg ys better to be credyt then myne I Ame not mete to be in An offes/ for there ys no mane that hathe Anoffes but he can tell how to behaue hym selff yn hyt or ellse he ys not fyt to be in hit'. The challenge to dismiss him is purely rhetorical, a dramatic way of getting Bess's attention and prompting her to reconsider the situation and her own attitude towards Foxe with his expertise firmly in mind.

This last statement marks the transition into the final stage of Foxe's rhetorical self-defence, the extended progress report that comprises the remainder of the main text of his letter. Here the warrener seeks to demonstrate both his expertise and commitment to his office by detailing the recent and upcoming activities of his team of estate servants and himself in particular. For example, he reports that they have already begun making burrows and traps and that they have made arrangements to hire extra labourers to help 'cast' more burrows immediately after the Christmas holidays. In this passage, Foxe narrates his accomplishments in detail, using technical vocabulary such as 'cast' and mentioning, for example, that after making two burrows he 'couered theme with thornes'. By drawing attention to the terminology and practices specific to his office, Foxe verbally parades his specialist knowledge and competence as warrener.

Alongside these technical micro-narratives, the progress report includes a narrative with dramatic sweep and heightened rhetoric, when Foxe relates his encounter with four hunting hounds, their keeper, and their owner, whom he found hunting (i.e., poaching) in Bess's warren. Foxe's moment to shine comes in this action scene, in which he valiantly chases and combats the hounds, 'At length [...] cut[ting] iij of them very sore that I thynke ye wyll not lyue'. Then, when challenged by their owner's servant, Foxe boldly declares, in the hearing of the owner himself, 'I dyd not care whos the were for yf the huntyd ther I wold kyll them'. In this story, Foxe acts as a manly and faithful warrener should, determinedly protecting his employers' property, come what may.<sup>302</sup> As the most engaging and explicit example

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<sup>302</sup> In the household accounts for 1549, a Thomas Waryner is one of eight men (Whitfield being another) paid to buy bows and arrows (Folger, MS X.d.486, f. 12r). It is not clear who was to use this equipment or for what purpose, as archery could have been practised to defend the house and grounds (including the coneyes), or to hunt (again including the coneyes), or to train yeomen on the estate for

of Foxe's dedication in action, this narrative argues for his right to remain in his office and be restored to Bess's good opinion more effectively than anything that has gone before. It is a strong point with which to rest his case.

Nevertheless, the particular motivation for Foxe to include this triumphant story appears to have been anxiety that the hounds' owner, Master Fitzherbert, may have complained to Bess about her warrener's conduct, which could lead him into further trouble just as he was seeking to clear himself of Dycons's allegations. Immediately after recording his threat to kill any hounds found hunting Bess's rabbits, Foxe adds, '& there master wer by & yf he wryt to your ladyship of hit this the truth As All the howse knoth'. Foxe seems to fear that his armed defence of Bess's conies could be interpreted as over-zealous, perhaps since the hounds would have been worth more than their prey. Foxe is careful to state that the hounds were loose and 'huntyd the conies' — it was a clear case of poaching, not mere trespass. Insisting that the hounds were hunting indicates both that the conies were in immediate physical danger and that Master Fitzherbert was legally in the wrong — two factors that ought to justify Foxe's actions.

Finally, Foxe concludes his letter with a valediction and subscription that reinforce his overall message in a number of ways. Rather than wishing Bess and her close relatives good health as Crompe and Marchington's valedictions do, Foxe selects a blessing that further supports his argument that he is dedicated to protecting her assets: 'thus I praye Ihesus preserue your ladyship long in your prosperytie'. At the same time, this valediction elegantly brings the letter to a close, creating formal unity by mirroring the formulaic deference of the letter's opening and also echoing its first word: 'Ihesus'.

Whereas the function of the valediction is clear, the presence of Jesus's name, decontextualised at the top of the page, set apart both spatially and syntactically from what follows, can be interpreted a number of ways. Several scholars have observed this feature in other letters, but it remains little understood. For example, Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg write that 'many letters [in the CEEC] include, before the form of address, an invocation like *Jesus* and *Emanuel*', and Daybell has suggested that 'This form of invocation may in some cases indicate the Catholicism of the letter-writer' since 'a number of examples of letters written by recusant women

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military service if required. However, this entry parallels Foxe's portrayal of himself as an earnest defender of Bess's property in the way it associates male servants, including another warrener, with conscientious and necessary violence.

employ this method of letter-heading'.<sup>303</sup> Beyond quite possibly communicating the writer's confessional stance, an invocative heading like 'Ihesus' could have at least three possible pragmatic functions. First, it could call down divine blessings on the recipient as an expression of goodwill, a function shared with the valediction. Second, by analogy with contemporary practices of signing legal documents and swearing oaths before witnesses and also of swearing 'by God' (etc.) in informal contexts as a means of emphasising the truth or sincerity of what one says, the written invocation 'Jesus' at the head of a letter could call on him to witness what is written and thus to vouch for its accuracy or to hold the writer accountable. If used in this way, the heading would emphasise the writer's full commitment to what he or she has set down, and the reader would be advertised from the first word that the letter's contents are not to be taken lightly. Third, the invocation could be exclusively writer-oriented, acting as a prayer for help with the act of writing and/or for a favourable outcome, particularly in difficult circumstances such as Foxe's. Because it is so cryptic and disconnected, the heading could fulfil any of these functions, either singly or in combination.

In Foxe's use, the layout adds yet further dimensions of possible meaning. The word 'Ihesus' appears at the top centre of the first page, within the writing space but separated by blank space on all sides since the salutation begins flush left two lines lower. This formatting sets Jesus apart, placing him in what appears to be a position of honour, before and above Bess and the business in hand, in a space and a moment of his own. Apparently both pragmatic and genuinely devotional, this invocation and its placement allow for a brief time of reflection or communion before the commencement of the letter proper — a deep breath before plunging in. The blank space beneath Jesus's name cues a temporal pause, adding a rhythmic dimension to the cognitive-spiritual experience of writing and reading.

As with this invocation that opens the letter, the subscription that brings it to a close adds further meaning through both lexical content and spacing, if rather less evocatively. Having responded to all known and potential threats to his good character and position and demonstrated his expertise and commitment to his office through several examples, Foxe asserts his faithfulness and serviceableness to his employer one last time in the subscription: 'Be your ladyshipes own faythfull servand Edward Foxe'. Foxe's signature ends the last line by fitting perfectly in the bottom right corner of the text block. Although its placement is determined by the

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<sup>303</sup> Nevalainen and Raumolin-Brunberg, p. 562; Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers*, p. 56.

length of the letter, which leaves only this space free for the signature, its humble position is nevertheless a visual counterpart to the deferential address formulae with which the letter opened. Gibson notes that in his opinion 'the use of significant space did not form part of the *ars dictaminis*', the letter-writing tradition that has heavily influenced Foxe's formal style.<sup>304</sup> Socially significant spacing is, however, codified in the first letter-writing manual in English, William Fulwood's 1568 *The Enimie of Idlenesse*, and in all subsequent manuals, indicating that English epistolary practices continued to develop in the untheorised period from the late middle ages until the emergence of guides such as Fulwood's in the late sixteenth century. It is by looking at ordinary letters from this intermediate period, such as the correspondence studied here, that we can begin to trace these developments and fill in the gaps in the historiography of the earliest of 'early modern' letters.

Unlike Crompe and Marchington's, Foxe's spacing appears to measure out social hierarchies systematically. He places Jesus first and foremost, at the top centre of the first page, honoured with blank space on all sides; Bess a little lower but at the very start of the main body of the letter, with her honorifics taking up nearly the whole first line; and himself tucked humbly in the bottom right corner of the final page. The visual format of Foxe's letter subtly reinforces the extended verbal rhetoric of address formulae and argumentation, allowing the officer to perform his duty on an extra-linguistic level. Whether or not it succeeded in persuading Bess of his dedication as warrener, Foxe's letter continues to testify to his familiarity with the socially significant formal epistolary structures — both verbal and visual — available in the years before they began to be codified in print.

### **Conclusion: Practicalities and persuasion**

Reading Crompe, Marchington, and Foxe's letters of management side by side and in the light of contemporary epistolary conventions and ideologies of service has allowed a number of patterns and variations to emerge. Stewart and Wolfe have pointed out that in early modern England 'letterwriting was a very goal-oriented activity' as opposed to a primarily sociable one; this statement is certainly true of the correspondence between Bess and her Chatsworth officers.<sup>305</sup> As we saw in the previous chapter, Bess writes to her stewards with a mixture of quite straightforward instructions and, when required, reprimands and praises that are syntactically and

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<sup>304</sup> Gibson, p. 9 n. 39.

<sup>305</sup> Stewart and Wolfe, p. 35.

socially more complex, as she seeks to persuade them to dutifully comply with her wishes. Bess's epistolary enactment of her mistress role is geared towards practical outcomes: mended windows, matching battlements, the recruitment of a hard-working mason, and increased respect and care for her sister, to name but a few examples. The present chapter demonstrates that the same is true of the officers' epistolary performances of service. Crompe, Marchington, and Foxe's letters all contain a steady stream of mundane but essential information: reports on the progress of rebuilding the house, details of land management, and the care of cattle and conies. The information conveyed by the officers' letters would be of practical value to Bess, enabling her to see 'with others' eyes' and to respond with further instructions or other forms of intervention as necessary.<sup>306</sup> Hainsworth observes that 'absence of body did not imply absence of mind' on the part of early modern landowners; rather, 'stewards were likely to be rebuked if they sent less than a letter a week' — that is, if they failed to report on estate affairs "by the return of every carrier".<sup>307</sup>

From the officers' point of view, writing to the mistress provided an opportunity to influence her perception of events and individuals, including themselves — to cause her to see developments at Chatsworth through *their* eyes — and also to perform service to her in epistolary form, their dutiful writing representing by both synecdoche and mimesis their wider exercise of dutiful service in her absence from the estate. Their letters to Bess are as much about persuasion as information. In both of his surviving letters to Bess, Crompe gives her ardent advice, seeking to influence her decisions and actions. Marchington's letter seeks to influence her perception of him and a number of other Chatsworth servants with whom he contrasts himself in order to make a good impression. Finally, Foxe's seeks both to convince her that he is worthy to remain in office and to turn her against his detractors. What is particularly striking about the three officers' portrayal of Bess in their letters to her is that they all assume that she can be influenced. Rather than the domineering matriarch who comes down to us in popular history, she appears in their letters as someone potentially susceptible to persuasion. Her household and estate officers address her not with resigned subservience but assertively, with a range of

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<sup>306</sup> The quotation is from Hainsworth, p. 256.

<sup>307</sup> Hainsworth, pp. 1, 2; the quotation within a quotation is from a letter from William Thynne to Sir James Thynne, 27 September 1658 (Longleat House, Thynne Correspondence, vol. IX, f. 47). The Chatsworth correspondence demonstrates the same attitudes and practices a century earlier.

rhetorical and representational strategies intended to shape her perceptions and decisions.

As the mistress-addressee whom the three officers seek to influence, Bess is the focus of much of their writing. However, whereas Crompe's advice urges Bess to act according to her own good as he sees it, Marchington and Foxe's persuasions are more self-serving. This essential difference helps account for the differences in how Bess is represented by each writer. In Crompe's letters, Bess is depicted as a mistress who has the last word but is willing to listen to reason, values advice, and does not need to be flattered. By contrast, Foxe presents her as somewhat capricious: fearsome but easily influenced (by his enemies and potentially by himself in turn). Marchington's letter depicts Bess differently again, as a fastidious and suspicious manager who shares his disdain for lazy, wasteful, or quarrelsome underlings. Yet in presenting themselves as faithful and diligent officers, all three presuppose that she will recognise and value good service. What we see in the officers' letters is how they perceived Bess, and, in the case of Marchington and Foxe's letters especially, how they wished to be perceived by her.

Whereas most of the representations of Bess found in the officers' letters appear to have been incidental, the officers' self-representations clearly contribute to the persuasive goals of their letters. In order to be believed, each writer constructs for himself the persona of a loyal, diligent, and trustworthy officer, thereby building up social credit and credibility. So, for example, all the officers follow the epistolary convention of using deferential forms of address to formally honour the gentle-born mistress whom they serve, yet employing particular terms and, in the case of Crompe and Marchington's letters, manuscript spacing that are not overly humble. In their formulaic performance of epistolary etiquette, the three officers remain dignified, in keeping with their elevated positions within the Chatsworth hierarchy. Furthermore, each officer reports on the specific progress he has made about the mistress's business, demonstrating good work ethic and using technical language that demonstrates his expertise as well.

Whereas the rhetorical efforts of both Foxe and Marchington focus on convincing Bess of their worth to her as estate officers, Crompe's usual style is unselfconscious and matter-of-fact and is exchanged for a persuasive mode of writing only when external threats to her and her children's wellbeing prompt him to offer her earnest advice. These passages demonstrate Crompe's loyalty and personal investment in Bess's best interests by the urgency of their language, including the

use of imperative verbs, and the lengthier and more complex rhetorical development that he gives to these matters compared with the other topics dealt with more briefly in his letters. Due to their lack of self-promoting rhetoric, both Crompe's informative and persuasive styles of writing give the impression that he is a trustworthy steward who is genuinely focused on Bess's needs rather than his own. Whereas Marchington and Foxe's letter-writing appears consciously self-performative of their roles as estate officers, their positive self-representations central to their overall rhetorical aims, Crompe's writing constitutes an act of service in which positive self-representation is coincidental but still contributes to the credibility of his information and the persuasiveness of his advice.

Crompe and Marchington's letters appear to be the self-confident products of having internalised their roles as managers, who, owing to the nature of their offices, shared values with and enjoyed greater access to the mistress than most other servants. Although as men they would not have had the daily, intimate access to Bess's person and conversation that her gentlewomen would have had, the officers would have come into contact with her more regularly and worked with her more closely than lower estate servants would have. Crompe especially, as a household as well as estate steward, would have had many opportunities to interact with her in person as well as by letter. Sharing the tasks of managing and supervising other members of the household and estate would have necessitated collaboration not only among the officers but also with Bess, who, as mistress, was both their employer and their colleague. As we have seen, both Crompe and Marchington present themselves to Bess in writing as simultaneously her servants and her near equals. It was their specific offices that allowed them to do so. Marchington's epistolary voice echoes the suspicious voices of masters and mistresses, including both Bess and her husband St Loe, in ways that appear to be the unconscious outpouring of ideologies concerning servants and supervision that he had internalised through his experience of working as their representative, a surrogate master. Crompe's letters too appear to be written out of having internalised and long inhabited his official role, but in Crompe's case this phenomenon is more congenial: his letters interpret and enact the role of a faithful steward as a counsellor and family friend. Although, like Marchington's office, Crompe's involved much supervision of others, it also placed him next in authority to Bess and privileged him with opportunities to develop a working relationship with her that was characterised by mutual respect, perhaps affection, and blunt communication. Crompe's office, in allowing for a more secure



and emotionally invested relationship with the mistress, allowed too for the use of earnest and direct language, free from the self-promoting rhetoric that Marchington and Foxe found necessary.

The three officers' letters demonstrate the interconnectedness of office-bearing, subjectivity, and letter-writing. Furthermore, the frequency and logistics of conducting a correspondence between the country estate and London can be shown to have influenced the officers' epistolary self-representations. Although so few of the officers' letters of management have survived, there are indications within these letters that they originally formed part of a larger body of correspondence written and sent during the periods in which Bess was away in London. Most of the extant letters exchanged between Bess and her Chatsworth officers refer explicitly to other letters received, forwarded, promised, or expected, which no longer appear amongst the Cavendish-Talbot Papers, the archives at Chatsworth, or in other repositories. For example, letter IDs 99, 100, and 28 open with the notification of letters received, to which they proceed to reply but which no longer exist; letter ID 18 refers to something that Bess wrote in a previous letter to Crompe, and letter IDs 101 and 17 also read very much like replies to lost letters. Bess promises Crompe in letter ID 100, 'I wyl let you know by my next leters what worke thomas mason shall beginne one furste when he doth come', and both Crompe in letter IDs 17 and 18 and Marchington in letter ID 47 request that she send further instructions, presupposing that she will reply to their letters. None of Bess's replies now exist, but the officers' certainty that she would write back promptly was most likely based on their experience.

The correspondence between Bess and her Chatsworth officers was greatly facilitated by the use of professional carriers. Stewart, amongst others, has illuminated the impact of carriers on the social landscape of early modern England.<sup>308</sup> Their set routes, weekly schedules, low rates, and relative security made carriers an attractive means of delivering letters, goods, and even people between provincial towns and London. The logistical benefits of their system allowed the carriers to make an important contribution to the rise of letter-writing in this period and hence also to the maintenance of relationships and carrying out of business over long distances. These benefits were not lost on Bess, and references in the surviving letters of management indicate that the carriers were her preferred means of having letters transported between London and Chatsworth at this time.

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<sup>308</sup> Stewart, *Shakespeare's Letters*, Chapter 3, especially pp. 117-31.

All three of the extant letters exchanged between Bess and Crompe and also Marchington's letter to her mention the use of professional carriers to transport the letters in question along with other goods. Bess closes letter ID 100 to Crompe with the information that 'I haue sende you by thys carerer iij bundeles of garden sedes all wreten with wellem marchyngtons hande and by the next [carrier-borne letter] you shall know how to youse them yn euery pynte'. Similarly, in letter ID 47, Marchington mentions that along with the letter 'I haue sent by this carryer iiij pottes ij of them tonnes / & ij with covers'. In letter ID 18, Crompe writes that when he sends Dyckyns to Bess with her spending money and further information about Wattewodde's close, Dyckyns will travel with either the carrier of Derby or the carrier of Tutbury (probably for safety in numbers as he will be carrying cash). Crompe's statement suggests that Derby and Tutbury were the towns nearest Chatsworth at which carriers stopped and that the unspecified carriers mentioned in the other letters were most likely either of these two. Having two local carriers would have allowed Bess and her officers to send letters and goods without having to wait a full week for a single carrier to complete his round. This would be particularly convenient in a real emergency — though there remained the faster alternative of dispatching a servant or neighbour on horseback — or, as in this instance, when Bess had requested a delivery and would have wished to receive it sooner rather than later.

Letter ID 17 sheds further light on the regularity of Crompe's correspondence with Bess and their use of multiple bearers. In this case, they encountered two logistical problems: delays and letters crossing on the road. He writes, 'I thought I shulde a Receuyd no lettur From your ladyshippe this wycke it was xj of the clocke of wenseday or the caryer com with it to chattesewort / so that I had wrytton & sent my lettur before yours cam / I haue sent you here in closyd lyttones lettur wyche cam to me aftur I Receuyd your lettur'. Crompe's wording suggests that Bess wrote to him every week by carrier and that the carrier conveniently delivered straight to Chatsworth House rather than merely into the nearest town along his route. In this instance, however, the non-appearance of the carrier at his usual day and time caused Crompe to believe that Bess had not written that week. The steward did, however, assume that Bess would still expect a letter from him, so he wrote and sent one by another bearer, perhaps the other local carrier or a servant. Finally receiving Bess's letter, Crompe felt compelled to write again, probably to explain why his previous letter did not respond to the points raised in hers, to respond to those points, and to warn her of the news about Lytton, whose letter had come into his hands only after

he had sent his first letter and received Bess's. It is not clear whom Crompe employed to bear this second letter (ID 17) and its enclosure, Lytton's letter, or how Lytton's letter came into his hands. The carrier who brought Bess's letter to Crompe may have already left the neighbourhood by the time Crompe received Lytton's letter. In this complicated scenario, the delayed delivery of one letter resulted in the exchange of three letters, the forwarding of another, and the use of at least two — likely more — bearers.

Particularly relevant to the social dynamics of their correspondence is Crompe's expectation that he and Bess must write to one another at least once every week. This accords with both Stewart's depiction of the social significance of the carriers' weekly rounds and Hainsworth's observation that stewards in particular were expected to keep up a steady and detailed correspondence with their masters, writing by the return of every carrier or more often as the need arose. The postscript to Marchington's letter confirms that Bess expected to hear from Crompe by the carrier who bore Marchington's letter. Marchington's explanation that Crompe could not write to her because he was too ill excuses Crompe from his letter-writing duty on this occasion, and it also suggests that Marchington may be writing in Crompe's stead. There is no indication in his letter of how often Marchington corresponded with the mistress or of whether or not she was expecting a letter from him as well as from Crompe. However, Marchington's updates cover the activities of the last month, which suggests that he did not write to Bess as often as Crompe did. If he had fewer opportunities for writing to the mistress, perhaps Marchington was the more eager to present himself to advantage in this letter — and all the more so if he was filling in for his highly favoured colleague.

As Magnusson reminds us, a single letter does not stand alone but rather is informed by both the larger social structure and the history of past interactions between writer and recipient; reception influences production, and the relative social positions of writer and recipient further influence both the writer's subjectivity and the social scripts available to him or her.<sup>309</sup> We can see in the Chatsworth officers' surviving correspondence that the differing frequencies and levels of success of each officer's past epistolary interactions with the mistress has affected his self-representation.

The rhythm of correspondence between Bess and Crompe appears to have been determined by a combination of the availability of carriers and his particular

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<sup>309</sup> Magnusson, *Social Dialogue*, p. 37; 'Widowhood and Linguistic Capital', pp. 5-6, 9-11, 17-22, 27.

office as steward, which bestowed upon him the duty and privilege of writing to the mistress more frequently than the other Chatsworth officers. The steward's regular correspondence with Bess provided him with the opportunity to continue to develop or reinforce a trusting working relationship with her in her periods of absence over the years of his service. Crompe's unobtrusively confident epistolary style in his two surviving letters appears to be the product of a long history of satisfactory interactions with Bess, both in person and on paper.

Whereas Marchington may aspire to a similar relationship and career, Foxe's letter gives the impression that his relationship with the mistress was one of frequent dissatisfaction on both sides. Several times beset by accusations of negligence, Foxe writes self-defensively with a history of distrust impinging on his argument. Just as Crompe's epistolary voice appears to be conditioned by long-term trust and successful communication, Foxe's is conditioned by past strife. Although Foxe tries to turn past wrongs to his advantage by pointing out to Bess just how mistaken his accusers were and are, his continued reference to and involvement in inter-servant conflicts would be unlikely to recommend him to her favour. Foxe refers to having written to Bess before, but their past interactions, epistolary or otherwise, must not have been consistently positive enough to induce her to give him the benefit of the doubt when confronted with Dycons's tale-telling letter.

Although all four surviving letters of management written to Bess by Chatsworth estate officers attempt to influence her thoughts or actions in some way, each officer's unique style and persuasive goals are shaped by his past and present experiences, which include the particular duties, mindset, and privileges associated with his office. The service hierarchy in which Crompe, as steward, appears to have been the most frequent letter writer joined with the logistics of the carrier system to give him the advantage of weekly contact and collaboration with Bess during her periodic absences from the estate over a number of years. The assertive earnestness of Crompe's letters is produced by and further reinforces his trusting relationship with Bess and his position as her chief delegate. Marchington and Foxe's opportunities for epistolary contact with the mistress and thus for building up or maintaining favour with her during her absences appears to have been more limited, with the effect that their letters must work harder to impress her — particularly Foxe's, which counters allegations of neglect of his duty. While Foxe's self-centred rhetoric focuses on clearing himself of blame, Marchington's opportunistically concentrates on promoting himself by criticising others, including Crompe. In

Marchington's attempts to align himself with Bess against her other servants can be heard the voice of an individual who will not settle for being in the second rank of officials. Their letters show that the three officers inhabited distinct subject positions, shaped by their particular offices and past interactions with Bess and others at Chatsworth; although they shared some duties and privileges as officers, these were not meted out equally, and their writing styles and rhetorical agenda reflect the difference.

The findings in this chapter have wider implications for both historical pragmatics and epistolary studies. Magnusson has compellingly argued that social interactions are to a high degree scripted by the relative social status of the participants and the availability of socially appropriate means of expression. Noting that the speaker of Shakespeare's sonnets addressed to the Young Man and a letter to Sir Philip Sidney from his father's secretary, Edmund Molyneux, not only represent a particular social situation with similar psychological realism but also share a number of rhetorical features, she concludes that Molyneux and the speaker of the sonnets shared the same subject position and used the same social script (especially evident in sonnet 58): there were only so many linguistic options available to subservient men writing to correct their superiors.<sup>310</sup> The letters of the Chatsworth officers contribute to our knowledge of what scripts, or particular linguistic formulations and letter conventions, were available to men in their positions in the mid-sixteenth century, a time of great social change and also changing epistolary theory and practices.

To summarise, the Chatsworth officers' letters reveal a surprising range of contemporary epistolary practices and linguistic constructions for performing the same necessary speech acts. Foxe's letter adheres most closely to both late medieval and emerging early modern formal conventions for performing verbal and visual deference. Beyond using particularly elaborate address formulae for Bess throughout his letter, Foxe also greets her in a formal salutation, a feature that is lacking in Crompe and Marchington's letters. Furthermore, Foxe's letter includes a notification, exposition, valediction, and significant spacing that honours Jesus first, Bess next, and places himself (as represented by his signature) in a position of humility. The presence of these features gives the impression that Foxe was *au fait* with both the official manner of writing letters inherited from the middle ages and recent developments in manuscript presentation that provided further opportunities to

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<sup>310</sup> Magnusson, *Social Dialogue*, p. 36.

encode social relations on the page. By contrast, Crompe and Marchington's letters include deferential terms of address for Bess and valedictions that express dutiful goodwill towards her, but they lack salutations and sign their names high on the page, perhaps indicating that it was not normally necessary to use 'significant space' in letters of household and estate management at this time.

Although Foxe's position as a servant writing to defend himself and correct his employer's perspective is the same as that of Molyneux and the speaker of Shakespeare's sonnets to the Young Man, his rhetoric, unlike theirs, does not simultaneously say and unsay, make and unmake his argument.<sup>311</sup> His style is not recipient-focused, concerned to avoid giving offence, but rather self-focused, concerned to inform her that he has been offended by her belief in the slanderous reports about him. It would seem, then, that individuals writing from the same subject position had more than one social script available to them (although their persuasive efficacy cannot be vouched for).

Crompe's letters are of particular interest for their directive speech acts — a feature we may not have expected to find in letters written by a servant, however elevated. But Crompe's privileged position as a steward enabled him to offer a number of directives to the mistress, many of them expressed in the form of imperative verbs, the most coercive grammatical construction available. Rather than straightforward orders, which would indeed be presumptuous, his directives function as advice (especially warnings) and as requests for further instructions. Crompe's letters exemplify Hainsworth's conclusion that advice-giving was one of the most important and valued of a steward's many duties. The presence of requests for further instructions in both Crompe's letter ID 18 and Marchington's letter suggests that this too was a regular and necessary feature of letters to one's employer. The fact that the two officers construct their requests differently, Crompe using an imperative 'let' and Marchington a circumlocutive reference to his wish to know, again demonstrates the relative freedom of expression within social scripts. This freedom could be attributed in part to the value placed on invention in early modern rhetoric as well as to individual writers' differing degrees of familiarity with the recipient.

Although letters of household and estate management are not what we or humanist epistolographers would consider 'familiar' (in a classical sense) and are heavily invested, in their most formulaic features at least, in maintaining the status quo, they nevertheless provided officers with opportunities to construct social

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<sup>311</sup> See Magnusson, *Social Dialogue*, pp. 50-51, 53.

identities, perform and represent service, develop a writing voice that reflected their station and experience, and, ultimately, negotiate for a firm and dignified place within complex but nevertheless somewhat flexible domestic hierarchies.



## **A house divided: Upper servants' letters and loyalties, c. 1581-1589**

### **Introduction**

By contrast with the correspondence concerning the routine management of Chatsworth analysed in Chapters 3 and 4, the letters studied in this chapter offer fresh perspectives on a notoriously turbulent era for Bess and her household — the politically charged breakdown in the 1580s of her marriage with George Talbot, earl of Shrewsbury — and are wider ranging in their social, geographical, and political scope. Close readings of the letters written by Bess's servants concerning the collapse of normative domestic relations allow us to see the micro-dynamics of the situation, including subtle shifts in allegiance and the layering of interpersonal politics within and beyond the household, which have previously been glossed over despite their wider importance. In particular, this approach alerts us to the political implications of Shrewsbury's domestic alliance with his prisoner-guest, Mary Queen of Scots, while his wife was marginalised and ultimately banished from his presence. Furthermore, the readings presented in this chapter uncover the interconnections between domestic relations and politics at the social level of upper servants, revealing in detail how they used letter-writing to express their allegiances, seek assistance for themselves and their mistress, and protect her reputation and assets as well as their own. These readings thus offer a more politically attuned and socially nuanced picture of life in the Shrewsbury-Stewart household than those presented in Bess and Mary's respective biographies, while also contributing to wider historiographic debates about gender and politics in sixteenth-century elite households.

The letters of Bess's gentle-born attendants William Marmyon and Frances Battell and her officer Nicholas Kynnersley demonstrate very clearly that private and public, domestic and political, female and male spheres were not separate but, rather, overlapped in complex ways within and beyond the household. Employer-servant relations structured allegiances, which were voiced by male and female household members not only in semi-public confrontations or private commiserations within the household but also in the letters they strategically sent to their friends and potential patrons in the locality and in London. Amanda Vickery has incisively critiqued the metaphors of separate spheres often applied to women's history of the late Georgian

and Victorian periods while, for the sixteenth century, Natalie Mears has demonstrated the existence of a political culture beyond the Privy Council and royal court of Elizabeth I.<sup>312</sup> Building on their work as well as on existing scholarship on early modern households, this chapter finds the notion of separate domestic, apolitical (female) and public, political (male) spheres to be entirely inappropriate for discussing sixteenth-century elite households, which evidently combined social and economic with political functions and which were inhabited and run by larger numbers of men than of women, though, as the thesis demonstrates, the mistress and her women could take active roles in both domestic management and domestic politics. Whereas social historical surveys of late medieval and early modern elite households and their servants tend to stress the predominance of men and male-orientated politics, women's history has highlighted the role of the mistress in household and estate management and, to a lesser degree, in political patronage.<sup>313</sup> The micro-study of epistolary representations of the Shrewsbury-Stewart household presented in this chapter draws on both traditions and reveals the complex interplay of gender and status in the power struggles enacted in this highly politicised household. The Shrewsburys' domestic politics are shown to exemplify to an extreme degree the Elizabethan concept of the household as inherently political, a microcosm of the state.<sup>314</sup> Furthermore, the disorders in this particular household are shown to have threatened the security of Elizabeth's rule.

The interventions made by Marmyon, Battell, and Kynnersley's letters can be understood only in the context of the major changes that had taken place in Bess's domestic circumstances since the time of the Chatsworth correspondence. St Loe had died in February 1565, and Bess ended her third widowhood around three years later, when she wed an old acquaintance, George Talbot, sixth earl of Shrewsbury (c. 1522-1590).<sup>315</sup> Bess and Shrewsbury's Derbyshire lands were adjoining, and Lovell points out that, as neighbouring landowners, they and their families were already associated through a number of legal and sociable transactions, including the co-

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<sup>312</sup> 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; Natalie Mears, *Queenship and Political Discourse in the Elizabethan Realms* (Cambridge: CUP, 2005).

<sup>313</sup> The traditional social historical approach is exemplified by Mertes's *English Noble Household* and Musson's *Country House Servant*, while Ward's *English Noblewomen* and Harris's *English Aristocratic Women* focus, as their titles suggest, on the domestic and wider roles of elite women.

<sup>314</sup> Alexandra Shepard's chapter on 'Family and Household' in *The Elizabethan World*, ed. by Susan Doran and Norman Jones (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), pp. 352-71 provides a good introduction to this concept (p. 352).

<sup>315</sup> The exact dates of St Loe's death and of Bess and Shrewsbury's wedding are not known. See Lovell, pp. 185-87, 200 and Durant, *Bess*, pp. 48-49, 54-56.

signing of title deeds, a legacy left to Shrewsbury's father by Bess's, and the fifth earl's standing as godfather to Bess and Cavendish's daughter Temperance, born in 1549.<sup>316</sup> The parties were suitably situated and acquainted, and each would have gained, by their marriage, access to the other's lands and income during their lifetime, though after death their respective properties would go to their children by their previous marriages. Bess brought with her the Cavendish lands in Derbyshire and the St Loe lands in Somerset. For his part, Shrewsbury was not only a Derbyshire magnate but one of the wealthiest aristocratic landowners in England, with considerable estates and grand houses in several counties plus three London houses. Shrewsbury's prominence, especially in the North of England, was further enhanced by the many high offices he held. This marriage raised Bess from gentlewoman to countess, increasing her status and public profile. Her half-sister at the royal court, Elizabeth Wingfield, reported to her in a letter of 21 October [1567] that Elizabeth had spoken approvingly of Bess and Shrewsbury for a good hour, declaring 'I haue bene glade to se my lady sayntloa but now more dyssirous to se my lady shrewsbury' (ID 96). Several affectionate and co-operative letters exchanged by the Shrewsburies in the first decade of their marriage have survived, but by the late 1570s their relationship was under considerable strain for a number of reasons, not least of which was Shrewsbury's burdensome custodianship of Mary Stewart, the exiled refugee Queen of Scots, who had lived in his houses and at his expense since January 1569.<sup>317</sup>

Marmyon and Battell's letters, written in the early 1580s, exhibit the impact that the presence of Mary and her numerous servants, combined with the growing antagonism of Shrewsbury towards his wife and her dependents, had on the household as a whole. By contrast with the distinctly gender- and status-based resources and opportunities available to Shrewsbury as an aristocratic male landowner and head of house with an armed retinue at his disposal, letter-writing was a comparatively gender-neutral and egalitarian political and sociable activity in which Shrewsbury, Bess, and their literate servants too could all participate. The ability of Bess's gentle-born attendants to pen letters to friends and patrons outside the household, informing them of their plight and criticising Shrewsbury in the

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<sup>316</sup> Lovell, p. 195; Durant, *Bess*, pp. 17-18. As George Talbot did not inherit the title until over a decade later, the 'earl of Shrewsbury' who served as Temperance's godfather was George's father, Francis.

<sup>317</sup> For example, compare IDs 66, 203, 71, 172, 183, 188 from 1568-1578 with IDs 150, 119, 116, 117, 176, 154 from 1584-1587. On Shrewsbury's appointment as guardian of Mary Stewart and early arrangements for her reception, see letter IDs 65, 66, 107, 164.

process, levelled the playing field. Kynnersley too writes of the earl with suspicion, and his letters to Bess detail practical steps to be taken to prevent further damage to her reputation and affairs.

Taken together, the four letters analysed here reveal the importance of a good reputation in maintaining privilege within and influence beyond the household and demonstrate the role that servants' letters could play in these matters. Through their written words, all three upper servants offer Bess fervent emotional support while also acting as informants, shapers of reputation, and representatives in the wider world. At the same time, their letters reveal their own and Bess's comparative vulnerability in a house divided by factionalism. The analysis in this chapter focuses on the varied ways in which Marmyon, Battell, and Kynnersley rhetorically perform their social identities as loyal dependents and supporters of Bess during the upheavals of the 1580s. Of particular interest are how they use emotive and judgemental language to construct heightened sympathy with their mistress, how they represent her needs and position alongside their own, and how they use characterisation for persuasive purposes. In addition, Marmyon's rhetoric of requests and dual loyalties and the political reuse of Battell's ostensibly personal letter to a female friend are also examined. Finally, Kynnersley's two letters, which combine features characteristic of the Chatsworth officers' letters with the intensified loyalty expressed in Marmyon and Battell's missives, are used to draw together several of the thesis's findings.

**[William] Marmyon at Chatsworth then Sheffield to Sir Francis Willoughby at Wollaton Hall, 24 & 28 October [1581?] (NUL, Middleton MSS, Mi C 15)**

*address leaf, f. 2v*

*superscription: secretary script, Marmyon's hand*

To the right worshipf[u]ll  
Sir Francis willoughby  
Knight

*4 lines originally blank*

hast

*later note (on back of letter packet when folded): unidentified hand*

His Ladie gives  
Marmion 40<sup>l</sup> Annuity  
He begs 2 leases  
of F: W:  
in Carlton/  
He is eager to come live

with Sir F:W:

*later note (surrounding and following the superscription): same unidentified hand*  
 a tedious  
 letter of Marmyons  
 who was to leave  
 the Earl of Shrewsbury  
 and come live with  
 Sir F:W: about differences  
 between His Lor<sup>d</sup> of shrewsbury<sup>^</sup> and Ladie  
 Question whither ye Lord were  
 [j]ealous of Marmion  
 that unlesse she would put Marmion away  
 she should be shut up and have none of  
 Her <sup>own</sup> servants about Her  
 that it was [*illegible*] of His wife and Marmion  
 that His allowance for Keping ye Quene of  
 Scots was abated this letter was writ from  
 Sheffield.

*letter, f. 1r*

*secretary script, Marmyon's hand*

Right worshipfull my specyall earnest desyre hathe bene a longe tyme that  
 once I might be dissolved/ and bestow myself altogether at Wollaton/<sup>318</sup>  
 which soyle and the soyles master I have alwaies vnfaynedly loved.  
 at last I prayse god I have my desyre fully satisfyed/ for  
 cyvill warres will entertainge Sheffield howse and that Skottys[h]  
 regiment<sup>319</sup> vnlesse Marmyon be removed I am sorie with all  
 my harte to see my Lady in suche daunger/ and that she takethe  
 my departure in so ill sorte/ that howse is a hell/ and her  
 Ladyship ~~be~~ <sup>beinge</sup> furnished with few or rather not one about her  
 which faythfully love and honor her in deede/ the sequeale  
 is in doubt to breede afterclappes/ and she suspectes  
 no lesse.  
 I tould your worship at your being last at haddon<sup>320</sup> of a broyle  
 or kynd of tragedy betwixt my Lord and Lady of late/ wher  
 as alwayes in maner heretofore/ my Lord hathe made me playe  
 a parte/ so I thinke the tragedy would not hould if I  
 be lefte out. I now perceave by her Ladyship the fallinge out was  
 excedinge./ and lickly to be perillous/ if she take not her seconde  
 counsell and square the accyon<sup>321</sup> by wisdom. his Lordship chargethe  
 her and me to be devysors for the disablyng of his sarvice to her  
 maiestie./ that we are advertysers against him/ and weere  
 the onely cawse that abatement was made of his allowance  
 for the Lady of Skottlandes<sup>322</sup> dyat. that she makes

<sup>318</sup> Sir Francis Willoughby rebuilt Wollaton Hall on a grand scale later in the 1580s. It is now within the Nottingham city limits.

<sup>319</sup> Mary Stewart's Scottish retinue. At times there were three substantial households — Shrewsbury's, Bess's, and Mary's — under one roof.

<sup>320</sup> Probably Haddon Hall in Derbyshire, a seat of the Manners family.

<sup>321</sup> *action*

<sup>322</sup> Mary Stewart. Marmyon does not refer to her as queen.

me her right hande as it weere/ whome I ^he^ cannot  
 abide: and knowing that I hate him/ Whervpon  
 he made surely a very honorable conclusion. that if  
 she would not remove me/ he could never be brought  
 to thinke that she loved him/ neyther would he ever take he[r]  
 for his wyfe/ but he would remove me/ and  
 shutt her *Ladyship* vp/ without suffring eny sarvantes  
 about her than of his owne placing. with dyvers  
 other ydle wordes tending muche to noughty purposes/  
 my *Lady* desyred ~~me~~ him to send for me/ and charge me himself  
 but that was as bittar as gall/ and no waye but  
 she must dispatche me.  
 Yet or<sup>323</sup> ever I departe/ his *Lordship* shall well perceyve that  
 I dare bouldly take my leave, and answer the vniust  
 and most vyle accusacion/ which I warrant yow will kind[le]  
 coales/. notwithstanding I am sure/ his *Lordship* will ende m[o]s[t]  
 quyetyly with me/ and not suffer my departure/ but by  
 his leave/ I will strayne curtesie/.  
 The lease my *Lady* gave me must goe thoroughe my *Lordes* handes  
 if I will have a perfecte state/ and I may as well  
 seeke to remove the towar of London as compas eny suche  
 goodnes/ so as it hathe pleased her *Ladyship* to bestowe  
 of me a yearely anuity of xl<sup>li</sup>. a yeare/ to be had out of  
 mr williame Cavendyshes Landes/ and he to be my paymaster  
 wherof I lyke well.

f. 1v Yf I would goe to the Innes of courte/ or sarve eyther my *Lord* Treasurer  
 or my *Lord* of Leycester/<sup>324</sup> she will other wayes be benefycyall  
 to me/ I answered/ that I am warned to clyme no more  
 vpon the hills wher the wyndes blowe ofte roughe/ but  
 will bestow myself in some quyet Dale/ very earnest she  
 was to know my intencion which would not be gotten forthe  
 but referred all as it would best lyke my father to bestow me.  
 She offers me to take what counsell I will chewse for the  
 makeinge of my Anuety/ onely a proviso must be that I  
 must not sell it. and she is well pleased that I  
 bestow myself whersoever I best lyke. and that  
 is in good faythe with no man in England/ but onely with  
 Sir Fr. Willoughby and so shall she know before  
 I departe. Yt is good your worship take heede/ how yow  
 suffer me to sett one fute within your howshould/ for before  
 god yow shall have muche adoe to remove me from  
 yow. I fynd me able to do yow good sarvice:  
 and this I trust yow hould yourself assured [*illegible*]  
 that I wilbe to the last day of my lyfe a most faythefull  
 man towards yow and all your cawses: and thoughe I  
 speake it/ me thinkes Wollaton howse should not be

<sup>323</sup> *ere*

<sup>324</sup> The Lord Treasurer at this time was William Cecil, Lord Burghley (1520/21-1598), while 'my Lord of Leycester' was Robert Dudley, earl of Leicester (1532/33-1588). As both were long-time friends of both Bess and Shrewsbury, Bess may have thought that Marmyon could influence them in her favour.

without a Marmyon.

And now Sir my humble sute is not onely for entertaînement/<sup>325</sup>  
 but having fully assured myself of your goodnes towards me by some  
 good turne towards the better inabling me to live/ ~~in~~ I am  
 to beseche your worship/ to bestow of me a lease in reversion of  
 harry averyes farme/ and Smawles tenement in Carleton<sup>326</sup>  
 which tenement I sould yow vpon my arrerages in account  
 vnto your worship/ boothe being layde together will make  
 a prety livinge/ ther be vij . vij . or viij yeares to  
 expyre/ and than if it might stand with your pleasure  
 to thinke me worthy therof/ I and all my pore frendes must  
 think our selves specyally bound to rest with all dutyfull  
 sarvice most faythfully at your worships devocion.  
 Yt wilbe iij weekes before I shall dispatche from  
 hence/ which tyme yow shall receive from my Lady a lette[r]  
 of the maner of my departure and see moreover the assurance  
 of her honorable dealing with me. and if I might  
 be settled with your worship/ and have this lease made me before my  
 goinge  
 to my father in Lawe/<sup>327</sup> it would be suche a comfort to them/ as he  
 will stand the rather my good father/ whan he seethe I am settled  
 to live. he is a man not lickly to lyve longe/ and my  
 possibilty of great part of his living and welthe is very great.

f. 2r I hope [b]efore vij or eight yeares be ended yow will think my  
 request well bestowed/ [~~several words illegible~~]  
 [~~several words illegible~~] I beseche your worship  
 lett me heare by this bearer<sup>328</sup> somewhat of your determynacion/  
 whome I send over to my father/<sup>329</sup> wherby to acqynt him how  
 this matter fallethe out: and to make request ^vnto him^ for some  
 money to discharge dettes before my departure.  
 my Lady promisethe to countenance his cawse against Browne<sup>330</sup>  
 by all the meanes she may. I will know whether she be  
 mynded to proceede for Peverell Fee.<sup>331</sup>  
 my Lady goethe not to Sheffield before Saterdag next/  
 which I think a longe tyme vntill I feele my Lordes pulses.  
 I will seeke and doubt not but to obtayne his favor and  
 good opinyon. Before god/ ther is great murmuringe  
 bothe here/ and at Sheffield about my goinge away/  
 and every one thinkes becawse they have knowne as great  
 disquyetnes heretofore sundry tymes betwixt vs/ that this

<sup>325</sup> That is, reintegration into Willoughby's household.

<sup>326</sup> Now a suburb of Nottingham, Carlton is seven miles east of Wollaton Hall. Nothing more is known of Harry Avery or Smawl.

<sup>327</sup> Unidentified.

<sup>328</sup> Referred to in the postscript as 'my man'. As a gentleman, Marmyon had at least one servant of his own.

<sup>329</sup> Probably his wealthy father-in-law.

<sup>330</sup> Unidentified, and the nature of the 'cawse' is not known. Marmyon's lack of explanation implies that Willoughby already knew about this contention and likewise about Bess's interest in obtaining Peverell Fee, mentioned in the next sentence, whether or not these matters related to his own affairs.

<sup>331</sup> Possibly the land, in Derbyshire, on which Peveril Castle stands.

wilbe in lyke maner overblowne/ But they  
 wilbe deceived/ for I take my *Ladys* offer/ and  
 her setting me at liberty to sarve wher I please/ to  
 be a doble benefitt. and in deede all thinges  
 considred it may well be thought inconvenyent that  
 she kepe me longer/ my *Lordes* frantick speches fully  
 considred. yt is the best happ that  
 ever yette/ hathe bene offred me since I came to  
 the state of a man. I beseche *your* worships  
 good consideracion of my hvmble sute/ and  
 not to refuse Marmyon/ who never willingly  
 departed from yow but is most ioyfull  
 if he may in this sort returne vnto yow.  
 I am in hast and therfore trust yow will  
 pardon this rude and tedious letter/  
 I pray god kepe yow in helthe/  
 Chattsworthe the xxiiij<sup>th</sup> of October

god send me good luck.  
 my *Lord* makes men beleve  
 that he will feight with  
 me in his owne parson/  
 but use/ makes his feight/  
 terrible perfecte. I dare  
 gage my lyfe whan it comethe  
 to serching/ he will not suffer  
 my departure./ but I wilbe  
 found resolute.

*down the left margin*

my man should have bene with *your* worship iiij<sup>f</sup> dayes agoe but I altred  
 my mynd/ ~~to~~ vntill  
 we came to Sheffield. Sir I reckon me one of *yours*. Sheffield the  
 xxviiij<sup>th</sup> of  
 October/.

## Introduction

A striking feature of Marmyon's voice is his conscious self-worth as he seeks to reinstate himself at Wollaton. Punning on the word 'bestow', the serving gentleman offers himself as a costly gift to his former master, Sir Francis Willoughby, desiring the lease of two properties in return for unspecified 'good sarvice' and explaining that he is weary of strife and eager to 'bestow myself in some quyet Dale' — specifically, Wollaton — for safe keeping.<sup>332</sup> The fact that Willoughby did in fact choose to welcome him back into his house and service (whether or not he also

<sup>332</sup> See 'bestow, v.', senses 1-3, 6 in *OED*

<<http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/18218?rskey=4FI6mP&result=2#eid>> [accessed 26 January 2014].



granted the lease) reveals that Marmyon's boldness was rather effective and, by implication, acceptable. One purpose of this analysis is to elucidate the wider contemporary attitudes and practices alongside the particular circumstances that allowed the servingman to write as he did and to meet with at least partial success.

Unlike Bess's letter-writing servants whom we have encountered in previous chapters, William Marmyon is known from external sources to have been a gentleman by birth and profession, and his epistolary style reflects his social status and experience. Marmyon's letter to Willoughby constitutes not only a request for the renewed employment and patronage that would enable him to leave Bess's service, but also a flamboyant performance of his persona as a needy but nevertheless audacious gentleman servant. Marmyon's rhetoric of requests is best interpreted in the light of his family background, career and reputation, and of late sixteenth-century writings on the 'gentlemanly profession of servingmen', whose latter-day feudal ideals animate — and help to explain — Marmyon's self-performance and requests.<sup>333</sup> In turn, Marmyon's letter sheds new light on the prerogatives, pressures, and opportunities — linguistic as well as socioeconomic — experienced by younger sons of the gentry when pursuing a career in country-house service. In particular, his epistolary performance confirms that self-focused supplication was an acceptable and effective method for men in his position to seek employment and related patronage from existing members of their social networks and that feudal-inspired discourses and practices retained greater currency at the end of the sixteenth century than is generally recognised.

As Marmyon's letter covers — and jumps between — several subjects, it may be helpful to summarise its underlying argument and structure before moving into more detailed analysis. The letter as a whole is designed to convince Willoughby that, despite his intervening years in Bess's service, Marmyon's first and lasting love and loyalty are to the master of Wollaton and that he therefore has a right to return and to benefit from Willoughby's bounty. This argument is built up in pieces through a series of rhetorical moves. First, Marmyon declares that his love for Willoughby as his former master is genuine and undiminished by his time away and that he has long desired to return to Wollaton — dutiful, flattering sentiments that he strategically repeats. Next, he demonstrates the impossibility of remaining any longer in Bess's household due to Shrewsbury's antagonism. The servingman rehearses Shrewsbury's

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<sup>333</sup> The quotation is from the title of one such work, I.M.'s *A Health to the Gentlemanly profession of Seruingmen* (London: W.W., 1598).

accusations, threats, and shortcomings at some length, sarcastically criticising what he presents as the earl's dishonourable speeches and intentions. Marmyon's account of Bess's and his own peril in the combined household at Sheffield and his oft-professed willingness to confront Shrewsbury man to man form the dramatic prelude to a comparatively 'tedious' account of Marmyon's financial situation and requests for additional material support.

The entire letter is focused on Marmyon's own needs, wishes, and image, showing little real consideration for either of his employers. Although he professes sympathy for Bess and faithful love for Willoughby, these protestations serve the purpose of securing a smooth transition from one household to the other while maintaining Marmyon's own dignity and increasing his income. He is notably vague on the subject of his services but specific when it comes to his finances. Furthermore, Marmyon seizes every opportunity to present himself as a bold and witty gentleman who is highly valued by his current employer despite the hatred of her husband. The letter thus reveals the writer's contradictory impulses to display independence of spirit and to acknowledge material dependence. This uncomfortable juxtaposition reflects Marmyon's circumstances as a gentleman apparently without income-generating land of his own and thus compelled to serve more prosperous neighbours with whom he otherwise had much in common: shared values, lifestyle, and a history of familial social and/or business interactions. The complexity of Marmyon's ever shifting, multilayered voice — assured, teasing, conventional, sincere — is not merely idiosyncratic. It enacts on paper the paradoxes inherent in a landless serving gentleman's position. At the same time, it reveals the liberties which such men could take in expressing their own needs and opinions. It is the combination of Marmyon's social background and prior association with Willoughby and their shared understandings of what they could expect from each other as master and servingman that enabled Marmyon to write as audaciously as he did.

### ***Marmyon's family background, career, and reputation***

Marmyon's facetious remark 'thoughe I speake it/ me thinkes Wollaton howse should not be without a Marmyon' is not as presumptuous as it may sound to an outsider, for it builds on the fact that the Marmyons were an established gentry family in Nottinghamshire who had been connected with the Willoughbys since the thirteenth century through land transactions and intermarriage as well as, more

recently, through service.<sup>334</sup> The Willoughby family papers include several references to Marmyon's forebears, revealing, for example, that his grandfather Henry Marmyon had been a bailiff on Willoughby estates in the 1530s.<sup>335</sup> There was ample precedent for 'a Marmyon' to consider the Willoughby home his own. Moreover, since William Marmyon had already lived and served at Wollaton Hall before entering Bess's service, he could ground his request of Sir Francis on their prior connection as individuals as well as on the long association of their families. These circumstances render Marmyon's statement nothing worse than a cheeky in-joke, an engaging way of making the case that Wollaton is the place where Marmyon belongs.

Marmyon frequently deploys an audacious, semi-ironic tone to convey his own opinions and wishes — a rhetorical strategy that allows him to build up and capitalise on the impression that he is in some sense friends with his former and future master (sufficiently intimate with Willoughby to rely on his goodwill and to joke with him) while at the same time registering the social distance between them by drawing attention to the possibility that his forwardness could be considered inappropriate. In the clause 'though I speake it' he humorously acknowledges that perhaps these words would be better spoken by someone else. But he does not retract them. Constructing intimacy with his former master is one of Marmyon's most frequent verbal tactics for assuring Willoughby that he, rather than Bess, is the main object of his loyalty.

Marmyon needed to insist on his continued devotion to Willoughby and to stir up the latter's feelings of fellowship in order to counter the impression that Marmyon was a purely mercenary career servant. Although (or perhaps because) the economics of domestic service were in transition towards a capitalist model with ever higher rates of servant mobility, Marmyon considered it important to use feudal language of love, loyalty, and mutual obligation when writing of his relationship with Willoughby — that is, to establish their relationship as that of lord and retainer, rather than bourgeois master and mere hireling. Marmyon's feudal language emphasises that his lasting allegiance is to Willoughby and thus strengthens his claim to Willoughby's patronage. It also registers their place amongst the elite, flattering

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<sup>334</sup> Friedman, pp. 43-44, 201 n. 29.

<sup>335</sup> The Willoughby family papers are catalogued in *HMC Middleton* and now held in the NUL. The reference to Henry Marmyon is from *HMC Middleton*, pp. 313-14.

Willoughby while boosting Marmyon's own image so that he appears more entitled to the long-term support he desires.

Marmyon's argument was strengthened by the traditional ties between their families, but Durant's unpublished research reveals that Marmyon's family also had prior connections with Bess's family, the Hardwicks. Durant's notes on the Marmyons compile references from a range of legal documents of the reign of Henry VIII, showing that Henry Marmyon (Gent. or Esq.) in particular had frequent, if not always friendly, dealings with the Hardwicks in the 1520s-1540s.<sup>336</sup> Named in the 1528 will of John Hardwick, Bess's father, as one of several men entrusted with his lands and their profits until his infant son, James Hardwick, came of age, Henry Marmyon later defended his claim in both Chancery and Star Chamber from the counter-claims of Bess's full sister Jane (née Hardwick) and her husband, Godfrey Boswell, amongst others. Henry Marmyon also made a controversial sale of corn to Jane and Mary Hardwick and contended with Ralph Leche, Bess's step-father, over the profits from a manor that was part of the wardship of Robert Barley, who had married Bess when they were both minors; this manor may have been part of her marriage jointure after Barley's death in 1544. In some of these cases, Henry Marmyon was joined by a John Leek, who was probably a relative of Bess's mother (Elizabeth Leake), while a Sir Edward Willoughby was another of the trustees of James Hardwick's lands. From the nature and dates of his interactions with the extended Hardwick family, it is likely that this Henry Marmyon was William Marmyon's grandfather, the Willoughbys' bailiff.

Despite the not entirely positive nature of the interactions between Henry Marmyon and the extended Hardwick family during Bess's youth, she kept up a connection with the Marmyons in her later years. A Gabriel Marmyon witnessed a settlement of lands by Bess and Shrewsbury on her sons William and Sir Charles Cavendish on 20 September 1576; Bess employed William Marmyon in the early 1580s; and in the mid-1590s she made a series of small payments to 'Mrs marmion her man' for delivering goods to Hardwick Hall.<sup>337</sup>

The Hardwicks, Leeks/Leakes, Leches, Barleys, Marmyons, and Willoughbys were all local gentry families, connected by business and social interactions, marriage, and patronage as well as by litigation. Members of these families must

<sup>336</sup> NUL, MS 663/3/5 (index box H-T). I have not been able to trace the original documents from Durant's abbreviated citations.

<sup>337</sup> NUL, MS 663/3/5; Hardwick MS 7, ff. 57v, 109r, 112r, 161v.

have known each other for most of their lives.<sup>338</sup> William Marmyon's family background made him well placed to serve with any of the neighbouring gentry, and he had probably used pre-existing connections to obtain his positions with Willoughby and then with Bess. Although the Marmyon family was most closely associated with the Willoughbys, connections with the Hardwicks and the fact that Marmyon had previously left Willoughby in order to serve Bess — who was by that time a well connected and wealthy countess, who could be counted on to provide for and promote the further careers of her followers — meant that he needed to work harder to re-establish Willoughby's pre-eminence in his affections and allegiance before he could ask for renewed patronage.

Although Marmyon claims that he had 'never willingly departed' from Willoughby's service, the actual circumstances in which he left Willoughby's household for Bess's are not recorded. From his letter, he seems to have been driven back to Willoughby by a combination of necessity and small-scale opportunism once it had become clear that his prospects were blighted by the discord between Bess and her yet more powerful husband. Marmyon's experience of Shrewsbury's antagonism may have made him fear he was on the losing side and that even if he could smooth things over for the time being, it would be in his best interests to ally himself for the long term with someone better able to reward him. Willoughby was the obvious choice to fall back on as he was wealthier than most of the other local gentry and Marmyon had served with him before, apparently to their mutual satisfaction. It is unclear whether or not Marmyon was aware that Sir Francis and his wife were also edging towards separation at this time; if he did know, he may have concluded from his experience at both Wollaton and Sheffield that he would receive greater benefit from siding with the husband in such a scenario. However, his letter stresses his desire for peace and stability: 'I am warned to clyme no more vpon the hills wher the wyndes blowe ofte roughe/ but will bestow myself in some quyet Dale'. Marmyon appears to have prospered under Sir Francis's renewed favour — albeit not without stirring up greater strife.

Unlike young heirs who usually spent a short period in service as part of their education and socialisation, Marmyon's ten or more years of service in Willoughby and Bess's households looks like the career of a landless younger son who depended on the favour of his employers for his maintenance in the lifestyle to which he was

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<sup>338</sup> In addition, Marmyon's reminder of a conversation he had had with Willoughby when they were at Haddon reveals that they were both on visiting terms with the Manners family.

accustomed. Marmyon's career path as a gentleman attendant did not run smooth; Shrewsbury was not the only enemy he made in the process of competitively seeking and capitalising on his employers' goodwill. The earliest reference to Marmyon in connection with the Shrewsburys mentions him without complaint, however. It appears in the postscript of a letter written by Shrewsbury to Bess on 21 June 1580: 'I pray you tell gylbard I wold have him be of wedensday At bakewell & marmyon with him' (ID 78). The only other record of Marmyon's time with Bess is his own letter, probably written in 1581, by which point he was involved in the 'cyvill warres' between Shrewsbury and Bess and on the brink of returning to Wollaton.<sup>339</sup> Marmyon's two periods of service with Willoughby were well documented at the time, though most contemporary accounts of his activities at Wollaton were lost or destroyed at some point after they were used as sources for a few passages in Cassandra Willoughby's family history, 'An Account of the Willughby's of Wollaton', written 1702-c. 1720.<sup>340</sup> According to Cassandra, Marmyon's service at Wollaton in the 1570s and 1580s was marred by his active involvement in stirring up discord between husband, wife, and heir.

William Marmyon had entered Sir Francis's service by 1572, in which year he was included in a wage list and implicated in slandering Sir Francis's wife, Lady Elizabeth (née Lyttleton).<sup>341</sup> In the wage list, his name is placed as the fifth man from the top, and his pay was fifteen shillings per quarter — the same as Jane Kniveton's had been at Chatsworth twenty years earlier. The top man on the Wollaton list, Henry Willoughby, was paid £1.13.4 per quarter as the steward, and his status, like Jane's at Chatsworth, was likely boosted by being related to the head of house. In her study of Sir Francis's Wollaton, Alice T. Friedman identifies the three men listed between Henry Willoughby and Marmyon as the gentleman of the chamber, the controller, and the head gardener.<sup>342</sup> More than thirty men are listed below him and were paid at a lower rate, but Lady Willoughby's two gentlewomen were paid

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<sup>339</sup> The NUL manuscripts catalogue dates this letter 1570-1583. As Marmyon was recorded at Wollaton in 1572 and the Shrewsburys' marriage did not show signs of tension until the late 1570s, he must have written the letter towards the end of this date range. Marmyon was back at Wollaton by 1584, but in any case Bess and Shrewsbury were living entirely apart after June 1583, so it had to have been written before then. Marmyon mentions in the first part of the letter, written on 24 October, that Bess and her household will move to Sheffield on Saturday at the earliest; he writes the second part from Sheffield on 28 October, which was a Saturday in 1581. They may have changed their travel plans, but there is no way of knowing and a date of 1581 fits with what we do know of Bess's and Marmyon's life events.

<sup>340</sup> NUL, Middleton MSS, Mi LM 26-27. Most of the first volume, which covers the sixteenth century, is transcribed in *HMC Middleton*, pp. 504-610.

<sup>341</sup> *HMC Middleton*, pp. 313-14, 541-42.

<sup>342</sup> Friedman matches the top four names in the wage list with their household positions, p. 42.

slightly more than Marmyon at one pound per quarter. He seems, then, to have ranked below the chief officers and the top three attendants but above everyone else. Friedman observes that Marmyon shared some accounting duties with another second-tier servant, but he may have served about Willoughby's person as well, in this way building up the familiarity with the master that his epistolary style evokes and that Cassandra and later commentators found objectionable.<sup>343</sup>

After his period with Bess, Marmyon reappears at Wollaton in the building accounts from September 1584, which record that he twice received from one Roger Colyar the sum of £40 for Willoughby's use.<sup>344</sup> Whereas the 1572 wage list names him as William Marmyon, he is referred to in the 1584 entry as 'Mr Marmyon', the courtesy title 'Master' acknowledging his gentlemanly status. In the same year, Cassandra records, he was involved in yet another family drama, this time turning against Sir Francis's son-in-law and heir, Percival Willoughby.

As a fairly high ranking servant, apparently without an onerous office to keep him fully occupied, Marmyon would have enjoyed a certain amount of prestige and leisure time — or, to use the terms of contemporary moralists, vainglory and idleness. Historians of the Willoughby family have shared this derogatory view, unanimously characterising Marmyon as an ambitious but otherwise idle trouble-maker — a real-life example of the vicious, insinuating servant as seen onstage in villains like Shakespeare's Iago.<sup>345</sup> According to Cassandra Willoughby's history of her ancestors, Marmyon was one of several male upper servants who conspired to win Sir Francis's trust and favour by telling him slanderous lies about his wife and son-in-law with a view to advancement at their expense. She writes, 'There is in this year, A.D. 1572, a long and very particular account in writing of a scene of great villany laid by Ithel, Catesbie, Marmyon, Pardia, Barthol and Widdison, all servants of Sir F Willughby, who had plotted together to defame their lady, and thereby make a breach between her and Sir Francis'.<sup>346</sup> Perhaps seeking to protect the reputation of her ancestress or the sensibilities of her readers, Cassandra neither transcribes nor summarises the 'very particular account'. She does, however, mention another

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<sup>343</sup> Friedman, p. 42.

<sup>344</sup> In his research notes, Durant cites this entry as 'Wollaton building accts Vol 2 1584' (NUL, MS 663/3/5, index card for 'Marmyon'). The volume in question may be NUL, MS Mi A 60/2.

<sup>345</sup> Burnett points out that in the opening scene of *Othello* Iago refers to himself as a servant and complains that he will never be able to rise to his master's status for 'Preferment goes by letter and affection / And not by old gradation, where each second / Stood heir to th'first' (*Masters and Servants*, p. 1, quoting *Othello*, 1.1.35-37). Marmyon exemplifies the 'by letter and affection' approach.

<sup>346</sup> *HMC Middleton*, p. 533.

document that corroborates Marmyon's part in defaming his master's wife: 'There is a letter from Sir John Lyttleton to [his son-in-law] Sir F Willoughby, dated June, 1572, in which he made great complaints of two of Sir F W's servants, viz., Catesbie and Marmyon, who, he writes, spread slanderous reports of his daughter'.<sup>347</sup>

Cassandra recounts in more detail Marmyon's involvement in the servant conspiracy against Percival Willoughby and his highly favoured Italian-language tutor, the Frenchman Francis Conrados, in 1584. In this instance, Marmyon began as the injured party. Cassandra observes that the trouble started when Percival moved to Wollaton and bestowed special honours upon Conrados. The marked favour shown to the foreign newcomer must have stirred up the jealousy of Sir Francis's men and offended their sense of entitlement as long-serving, local supporters of the head of the household. Percival suggested, amongst other unwelcome innovations, that his man Conrados share Marmyon's chamber. When Sir Francis refused, Percival suggested the chamber of another of Sir Francis's upper servants, Thomas Cludd. These requests were most likely felt to be a particularly vivid and obnoxious symbol of Conrados and his master's intrusion into the spaces and privileges of Sir Francis's gentlemen. Marmyon and Cludd took offence, and Sir Francis's other gentlemen assisted them in pressuring Percival to dismiss Conrados. Once that had been accomplished, they bribed the disaffected tutor, ere he departed, to write a letter to Percival, in which he accused his erstwhile master of ingratitude and moreover of intending to murder Sir Francis so as to inherit sooner. This letter they ensured was delivered to Sir Francis instead of to Percival. At least, that is the account given by Conrados (after the fact, when under pressure to confess) as summarised by Cassandra.<sup>348</sup>

Cassandra's 'Account' reads for the most part like a factual narrative, but it is not impartial. For one thing, sources such as Conrados's confession are taken at face value without considering how the circumstances in which they were written colour their representation of events: Conrados's confession was evidently written under duress and with the intention of shifting the weight of blame from himself to others. Furthermore, Cassandra's own interpretations and assumptions are woven into and between her summaries of her sources. Her narrative voice may be naïve when presenting rhetorically charged sources as factually true, yet it is almost always judgemental when writing of Sir Francis's male servants. She states that 'Marmion

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<sup>347</sup> *HMC Middleton*, p. 533.

<sup>348</sup> *HMC Middleton*, pp. 560-63.



was an ill man, as appears from his endeavour to asperse his Lady, and cause the separation which was between Sir Francis and his Lady'.<sup>349</sup> In the same passage, she exposes the undutiful opportunism of the whole 'cabal' of Sir Francis's servants who had conspired against Lady Elizabeth in the 1570s and then proposes that they had decided to make trouble for Percival at the earliest opportunity:

[Marmyon, Dracot, Cludd] and I believe many more of Sir Francis's servants had very little regard to the interest of their master or his family, but made it their chief care to enrich themselves, which, I believe, they found more easie for them to doe when Sir Francis lived by himself then when his Lady or any of his children lived with him. [...] This unlucky request which Sir Percivall made in behalf of Conrados, his man, gave them but too good an opportunity to put in practice what I believe they might resolve by any means to bring to pass<sup>350</sup>

Whereas the servants' actions are blameworthy, Percival's is merely unfortunate, a hapless slip. As mistress of Wollaton herself, Cassandra consistently comes down on the side of the ruling family, blaming the servants as much as possible for the tensions between husband, wife, and heir — as Lady Willoughby's father and daughter had done before her.<sup>351</sup> Cassandra depicts her ancestors as favourably as their actions allow: Lady and Percival Willoughby were the victims of serving gentlemen's slander and Sir Francis was too easily influenced by these same men, whom he trusted, 'never suspecting the designs which those villains had upon him'.<sup>352</sup> Certainly, in a domestic environment in which the master's favour was everything, the mistress's and heir's losses could be the gentlemen's gain, at least in the short term. But the Willoughbys' own interpretations of events may owe as much to prejudice or expediency as to experience.

Nevertheless, Marmyon's self-presentation in his letter to Sir Francis is compatible with Cassandra's portrayal of him as a trouble-maker. The two lost documents from 1572 that she summarises agree in naming Marmyon as a prominent verbal antagonist of Lady Willoughby. If true, these accounts indicate that he already had a history of taking advantage of marital disputes and slandering an employer's spouse before he entered Bess's service. Once there, he became involved in her conflicts with Shrewsbury and slandered the earl in his letter to Willoughby. Indeed,

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<sup>349</sup> *HMC Middleton*, p. 560.

<sup>350</sup> *HMC Middleton*, p. 560.

<sup>351</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 3, Bridget Willoughby, Sir Francis and Lady Elizabeth's daughter, wrote to Master Fisher, another of her father's men, accusing him of slandering Percival to her father (*HMC Middleton*, p. 577).

<sup>352</sup> *HMC Middleton*, p. 561.

talking about him behind his back is one of the things that Shrewsbury accuses Marmyon of: 'his Lordship chargethe [Bess] and me to be devysors for the disabling of his sarvice to her maiestie./ that we are advertysers against him/ and weere the onely cawse that abatement was made of his allowance for the Lady of Skottlandes dyat'. Although it says nothing against Shrewsbury as the custodian of Mary Stewart, Marmyon's letter does indeed 'advertise against' him by pointing out his failings as a husband and master: Shrewsbury's distrust of his wife, attempts to control her and her servant through manipulation and dishonourable threats, yet ultimate unwillingness (Marmyon predicts) to follow through with dismissing him. The servingman characterises the earl as unable to govern himself and his household effectively. Although Marmyon claims that he was an unwilling actor in the 'tragedy betwixt my Lord and Lady of late/ wher as alwayes in maner heretofore/ my Lord hath made me playe a parte', the serving gentleman's defamation of Shrewsbury's character, his acknowledgement of their mutual hatred, his glee at the prospect of standing up to him and 'kindl[ing] coales' of further strife, and his track record of exacerbating marital discord at Wollaton all undermine this claim. Whether Marmyon instigated trouble at Sheffield or not, the very penning of this letter constitutes an act of aggression, albeit an indirect one, and supports Cassandra's claim that he was in the habit of speaking ill of his employers' relatives behind their backs.

If Marmyon's career at Wollaton and confessed enmity towards Shrewsbury strongly suggest he was more active than he admits in the disputes between Bess and her husband, Shrewsbury too was acquiring a reputation for pugnacity — to which Marmyon snidely alludes in the postscript: 'my Lord makes men beleve that he will feight with me in his owne parson/ but use/ makes his feight/ terrible perfecte'. Marmyon was not alone in accusing Shrewsbury of aggression. As we shall see, Battell's letter to Lady Elizabeth Paullat of 23 March 1584 complains that the earl verbally abused her due to her sympathy with her mistress. Durant and Lovell's biographies of Bess recount a number of occasions when the earl's estate officers threatened, sued, or violently attacked Bess's sons, servants, and tenants on disputed lands, their activities amounting to a campaign against her local supporters at all levels of society.<sup>353</sup> Furthermore, political historian Stephen E. Kershaw argues that

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<sup>353</sup> Durant, *Bess*, pp. 120-21, 139-40; Lovell, pp. 308-10, 312.

Shrewsbury's dealings with his own tenants of Glossopdale were regarded even by the standards of the time as unduly exploitative and intimidating.<sup>354</sup>

It would seem, then, that Shrewsbury and Marmyon were well matched in disposition and 'use', though Shrewsbury's socioeconomic position gave him the advantages of prestige, authority, and the manpower needed to enforce his lordship over potential dissidents. Unable really to fight a duel with Shrewsbury 'in his owne parson' or even to remain in the household after the earl's ultimatum to Bess, Marmyon's only available means of retaliation was to cut down his formidable opponent's reputation. Writing of Shrewsbury in a derogatory manner allowed Marmyon to assert his own superiority and portray himself as an offended gentleman who is freely choosing to go elsewhere and is eager to confront his accuser ere he depart. Marmyon's rhetoric puts a positive spin on the realities of his situation, his verbal bravado presenting to Willoughby the serving gentleman's idealised self-image and a narration rife with wish fulfilment. Had he really been able to hold his own against the earl, he would have had no need to write in this way — nor, for that matter, to have written at all.

Picking up on Marmyon's swaggering style and heavily influenced by Cassandra's 'Account', Nottingham historian Richard S. Smith cites the letter as an illustration of gentlemen retainers' 'pride, self-importance, and capacity for interfering in the affairs of their employers', since they 'had no real function' to keep them occupied 'other than to attest the wealth and importance of the household they adorned'.<sup>355</sup> While it is easy to see the basis for these statements, they do not take into consideration either the reasons Marmyon may have had for presenting himself as he did or the extent to which employers' and gentle servants' affairs were necessarily intertwined. For one thing, Durant points out that Marmyon could not remain neutral in domestic politics and that his alliance had real consequences for him: 'In the disaccord between master and mistress it had become impossible to avoid taking sides and in doing so Marmyon had become the target of Shrewsbury's displeasure'; he wrote to Willoughby when 'his position had become too precarious' for him to remain any longer in Bess's service.<sup>356</sup> Marmyon's language of loyalty to Willoughby and expressions of sympathy for Bess attest that upper servants were

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<sup>354</sup> Stephen E. Kershaw, 'Power and Duty in the Elizabethan Aristocracy: George, Earl of Shrewsbury, the Glossopdale Dispute and the Council', in *The Tudor Nobility*, ed. by G. W. Bernard (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1992), pp. 266-95.

<sup>355</sup> Richard S. Smith, *Sir Francis Willoughby of Wollaton Hall* (Nottingham: City of Nottingham Arts Department, 1988), p. 13.

<sup>356</sup> Durant, *Bess*, p. 117.

expected to ally themselves politically and emotionally with their employer, such that Marmyon's verbal antagonism towards Shrewsbury reinforces his dutiful (if temporary) allegiance to Bess. For Friedman, Marmyon's letter highlights another important area of overlap between employers' and servants' affairs: finances. She writes, 'It is [...] revealed in Marmion's letter that the competition for the lord's favour was in fact a contest for substantial financial stakes: the rewards were not simply approval or protection but livings and annuities'.<sup>357</sup> Taking sides and making necessary financial arrangements would not have been considered 'interfering' by Elizabethan standards, but the sheer audacity with which Marmyon engages in these activities is a key component of his persona.

Marmyon emerges from the historical record as a gentleman of good family and connections but no lands of his own, a developed sense of self-worth, an engaging writing style, and a gift for gaining the trust and support of his employers, whatever the cost to others. Whatever we may think of Marmyon as an individual, his letter to Sir Francis Willoughby exemplifies the disjunction between limited resources and attitudes of entitlement that must have shaped the experiences of countless gentlemen servants.

### ***Of leases and loyalties: Marmyon's rhetoric of requests***

Marmyon's requests for a place at Wollaton and additional support from Willoughby depend for their persuasiveness upon constructing his relationship with his former master as a continuous and mutually beneficial alliance, amounting almost to friendship and so strong that Marmyon's service to another has not severed it. To achieve this effect, Marmyon's self-representation juxtaposes traditional language and postures of service with more lively and entertaining statements that could have engaged Willoughby's attention, sympathy, and sense of humour and thus built up valuable rapport with him. As Marmyon's letter is grounded in his current circumstances and needs, depictions of his relationships with Bess and Shrewsbury serve the purpose of explaining to Willoughby why Marmyon wishes to return to him at this particular point in time. Thus, although Marmyon expresses sympathy for Bess, he depicts his loyalty to her as impermanent, brought to an end by Shrewsbury's antagonism and his own 'erdest desyre' to serve Willoughby instead. Marmyon's epistolary self-performance as a dutiful yet lively companion for

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<sup>357</sup> Friedman, p. 60.

Willoughby and his representations of Bess and Shrewsbury are integral to his rhetoric of requests.

Marmyon's rhetorical strategy for convincing Willoughby not only to take him back but also to provide him with 'a pretie livinge' involves frequent and conventional references to his own steadfast loyalty and willingness to serve — often enlivened, however, with a touch of irony or a dash of audacity that undercuts or exaggerates these conventions, playfully acknowledging their artificiality while at the same time constructing intimacy with Willoughby through humour. However, the letter both opens and closes with apparently earnest professions of loyalty to Willoughby, while placed at the centre is Marmyon's request for the specific tenancy that he desires in addition to a renewed position in Willoughby's household. The servingman's declarations of loyalty are arranged so as to support this petition, first by paving the way for it and then by expressing his future gratitude and reinforcing his worthiness to receive the desired properties as a reward for continued loyalty and future services. Whereas the first half of the letter focuses on Marmyon's joy at the prospect of returning to Wollaton, which he appears to consider already settled, the second half is littered with reminders about his 'humble sute' for the properties in Carlton — the request he is less certain Willoughby will grant.

Marmyon depicts his relationship with Willoughby positively from the start, opening with the respectful salutation 'Right worshipfull' and proceeding to express his continued devotion to Willoughby in emotive language that supports his explicit claims to sincerity: 'my specyall earnest desyre hathe bene a longe tyme that once I might be dissolved/ and bestow myself altogether at Wollaton/ which soyle and the soyles master I have alwaies vnfaynedly loved. at last I prayse god I have my desyre fully satisfyed'. This passage conveys Marmyon's longing for Wollaton as his home and for Willoughby as his master, explicitly asserting that his desire to return is sincere, intense, and of long duration. Furthermore, he uses a discourse of plenitude to stress both the wholehearted nature of his devotion and the positive outcome of the less than ideal situation in which he now finds himself: his desire to place himself 'altogether' at Wollaton is 'fully satisfyed' now that he is being released from Bess's service. The phrases 'at last' and 'I prayse god' further intensify the emotional dynamic of Marmyon's statements, enhancing their apparent sincerity.

The tone of this passage is serious, giving the impression that the writer is in earnest, as he claims. Yet the rapid pace with which it is succeeded by an ironic explanation as to why he can now return to Willoughby's service casts a shadow of

suspicion back over what had first appeared. The second sentence continues, 'for cyvill warres will entertaigne Sheffield howse and that Skottysch regiment vnlesse Marmyon be removed'. Here Marmyon acknowledges that he is being driven out of the combined household of Bess, Shrewsbury, and Mary. The term 'cyvill warres' exaggerates the scale of their domestic disputes, playing on the contemporary trope that the household was a microcosm of the commonwealth while implying that the key players at Sheffield are over-reacting to one another. His phrasing additionally suggests that they are exaggerating Marmyon's involvement, essentially making him their scapegoat. In such unsatisfactory circumstances, his statement that his 'desyre' is 'fully satisfied' appears ironic, while his inability to remain at Sheffield any longer makes it all too obvious why he is suddenly declaring such ardent devotion to Willoughby.

The next time the serving gentleman professes loyalty to Willoughby, he does so with emphatic showmanship but again follows up with an amusing twist — in this case, a teasing warning that Willoughby may live to regret taking him back. He writes that Bess

is well pleased that I bestow myself whersoever I best lyke. and that is in good faythe with no man in England/ but onely with Sir Fr. Willoughby and so shall she know before I departe. Yt is good your worship take heede/ how yow suffer me to sett one futt within your howshould/ for before god yow shall have muche adoe to remove me from yow.

Here Marmyon's verbal performance of devotion to Willoughby veers from the dramatic to the comic. The joke does as much to build rapport as does the emphatic declaration that Willoughby is the only man in England whom Marmyon is willing to serve. In this passage, as throughout the letter, Marmyon presents himself as a free agent, able to choose where next to 'bestow' himself in service. In the unexpected twist of warning Willoughby about himself, Marmyon plays on the prerogative of upper servants and friends to offer counsel, while at the same time acknowledging that his own wishes, not Willoughby's, are the driving force behind his return to Wollaton. Marmyon envisions a comedic role reversal in which the master's will is dominated by the servingman's. Marmyon's joke rests on his assumptions that Willoughby does want him back and his removal will remain purely imaginary. The quip shows Marmyon's confidence both that Willoughby will appreciate his wit and, more importantly, that he will have no real objection to the prospect of sharing the same roof with him for the foreseeable future. Furthermore, the statement 'yow shall

have muche adoe to remove me from yow' reiterates, even in jest, that Marmyon's loyalty is for the long term.

This is the message that Marmyon goes on to reinforce, now using conventional discourses of service: 'I fynd me able to do yow good sarvice: and this I trust yow hould yourself assured that I wilbe to the last day of my lyfe a most faythfull man towards yow and all your cawses'. Whereas Marmyon had previously focused on his own wish to return to Wollaton, here he states what Willoughby needs and can expect from him as a servant. Marmyon promises to uphold what was seen as the traditional, increasingly rare, and single most important virtue in a servant: complete and lasting faithfulness. As before, he stresses the fullness of his dedication, stating that he will be 'most faythfull' in 'all' of Willoughby's affairs 'to the last day of my lyfe'. These statements emphasise the social inequality of their relationship and bring greater seriousness to the negotiation for his return to Wollaton. However, the passage is vague about Marmyon's actual duties — 'good sarvice' and faithfulness being abstract concepts — which could suggest that his duties would be the same as they had been before and so did not need to be enumerated and/or that he had little interest in the tasks assigned to him and would rather focus on his idealised persona. Moreover, his seriousness is again short-lived: Marmyon concludes this passage with the half-joking summary of his argument so far, 'and thoughe I speake it/ me thinkes Wollaton howse should not be without a Marmyon'.

The next paragraph marks the turning point when Marmyon changes the subject from his return to Wollaton to his request for additional support in the form of two properties in nearby Carlton. He introduces this request with the declaration that he is certain Willoughby will do more for him than merely welcome him back into his household:

And now Sir my humble sute is not onely for entertaînement/ but having fully assured myself of your goodnes towards me by some good turne towards the better inabling me to live/ I am to beseche your worship/ to bestow of me a lease in revercion of herry averyes farme/ and Smawles tenement in Carleton [...] boothe being layde together will make a pretty livinge/

Marmyon reminds Willoughby that he used to own the tenement in question but had sold it to Willoughby in lieu of paying his 'arrerages in account vnto your worship'. It sounds as though Marmyon had owed Willoughby money and, unable to repay it, had either sold the tenement to Willoughby for less than it was worth or forfeited it

as surety. It may, then, have been financial necessity that had prompted Marmyon to leave Willoughby's service for a new start in Bess's; such circumstances would explain his claim that he 'never willingly' left Wollaton. Marmyon is neither embarrassed by his poor financial management nor worried that it may disqualify him from Willoughby's service or favour. He writes candidly about his debts and prospects and takes it for granted that Willoughby will do him 'some good turne towards the better inabling [him] to live'.

This statement is not quite as presumptuous as it may sound. Kershaw observes that 'Grants of land [...] were a fairly common alternative in the period to paying decent wages' and that servants made 'dutiful, grateful' tenants who were unlikely to cause trouble for their landlord master and could even report back to him about any trouble brewing amongst the other tenants.<sup>358</sup> For these reasons, landowners in the late sixteenth century found it advantageous to grant tenancies to some of their own servants alongside more independent freeholders. Marmyon's assurance that Willoughby will do something for him in this line is not preposterously self-centred; rather, it is founded upon his knowledge that such grants were mutually advantageous and constituted good practice. By stating that he believes Willoughby will do him this 'good turne', the servingman simultaneously presents Willoughby as and pressures him to be a man who exercises good lordship in his dealings with his dependents.

Marmyon's request for particular properties likewise demonstrates his wider knowledge of the housing market as well as of how to turn his own circumstances to advantage. Having already looked into the matter, he notes that 'ther be vj . viij . or viij yeares' remaining in the current lease to Avery and/or Smawl before Willoughby would be able to grant a new, combined lease to another tenant. Economic historian R. W. Hoyle states that by the 1570s competition for tenancies was so fierce that 'it had become the practice to buy a new lease well before the end of the old to prevent an interloper from securing a lease in succession to the sitting tenant'.<sup>359</sup> Marmyon was proposing to become just such an interloper — yet, from another point of view, his position as the owner's servant-to-be and the fact that he had previously owned one of these properties would have strengthened his claim to the tenancy. Marmyon may have felt that his past ownership gave him a continued claim to the dwelling,

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<sup>358</sup> Kershaw, pp. 274-75.

<sup>359</sup> R. W. Hoyle, 'Rural Economies under Stress: "A world so altered"', in *The Elizabethan World*, ed. by Susan Doran and Norman Jones (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), pp. 439-57 (p. 440).



just as he argues that his prior residence at Wollaton gives him a right to return. In any case, the servingman's early request for the lease indicates his knowledge of the market and of the fact that he could reasonably expect (and therefore request) 'a pretty lyving' from his master. It also reflects his prudent desire, evident throughout the letter, to settle all the details of his future housing and finances before quitting Bess's household. Although Marmyon's request for the tenancies is undeniably bold, from a sixteenth-century perspective it would be considered reasonable, even wise. Whether or not Willoughby granted them, however, remains unknown.

Marmyon's request and the wider practice of engaging household servants as tenants raise another question: why would live-in servants need houses and properties of their own? Their marital and social status seem to have been the determining factors. It has been noted that the vast majority of live-in servants at this time were single and that their sleeping arrangements were haphazard; it was rare for lower servants to have even shared rooms and for upper servants to have rooms of their own.<sup>360</sup> Married servants were few and would typically have needed to house their spouses and children off-site, preferably nearby. In addition, not all servants were required to be in attendance at all times, and it would have been more convenient for them — especially for upper servants with dependents — to have houses of their own to go to than to be forced to rely on the hospitality of their extended families or friends.<sup>361</sup> As we have seen, Marmyon was granted the privilege of his own chamber at Wollaton and must have spent much of his time there, but as his wife is mentioned neither in the household accounts nor by Cassandra Willoughby, it is unclear whether she lived with him or elsewhere. Marmyon may have wished to use the tenement in Carlton, only seven miles from Wollaton, as lodgings for his wife within easy visiting distance and as a second home for himself when not needed at the Hall. He may have intended to work the farm part-time, or to sublet one or both of the properties and put the rents towards his other living expenses or clearing his debts. If keeping the farm in-hand, he could have reduced expenditure by feeding his wife and farm servants with the crops, produce, or

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<sup>360</sup> R. C. Richardson, *Household Servants*, pp. 63, 97.

<sup>361</sup> John Hall's examination shows just how little time this gentleman servant needed to spend in attendance and how much he relied on his friends. After leaving Shrewsbury's service in 1567 because 'he misliked my Lord's marriage with this wife' [Bess], Hall nominally entered the service of Lord Montacute in London but spent most of the next four years with friends in Staffordshire before fleeing to Scotland, where he was captured and interrogated in May 1571 regarding his alleged involvement in a plot to free Mary Stewart from his former master (HMC, *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Marquis of Salisbury* [...] (London: Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1883), vol. 1, pp. 499-501).

livestock raised there and earned additional income through selling the surplus. In any of these scenarios, he would have benefited from holding the tenancy.

Although Marmyon opened his request for the lease with confident assertiveness, he concludes it with conventional expressions of humility and obligation appropriate to a dependent: 'if it might stand with your pleasure to thinke me worthy therof/ I and all my pore frendes must think our selves specyally bound to rest with all dutyfull sarvice most faythfully at your worships devocion'. Later he changes the tone yet again, joking that as the current lease runs out so far in the future, Willoughby will have plenty of time to consider his request and he will have plenty of time to prove himself worthy of such a reward: 'I hope before vij or eight yeares be ended yow will think my request well bestowed'. Then, bethinking himself how it would be to his financial advantage to receive a decision from Willoughby as soon as possible, he adds, more earnestly, 'I beseche your worship lett me heare by this bearer somewhat of your determynacion/ whome I send over to my father/ wherby to acqynt him how this matter fallethe out: and to make request vnto him for some money to discharge dettes before my departure' in three weeks. In addition, Marmyon pressures Willoughby to 'settle' their business quickly as gaining a stable position and income would significantly increase Marmyon's favour with his wealthy father-in-law and consequently his chances of inheriting from him; the situation is urgent as his father-in-law 'is a man not lickly to lyve longe'.

As Willoughby would have nothing to gain by making a hasty decision, Marmyon must have trusted that Willoughby was genuinely concerned about his welfare and that what Marmyon stated was important to him would become important to Willoughby for his sake. The letter assumes a mutuality of interest and support between them: if Marmyon, as a gentleman servant, is expected to show undying loyalty and faithfulness to his master in all things, he expects a generous portion of patronage in return. The rigour with which Marmyon pursues the practical benefits of such an arrangement does not mean that his rhetoric is entirely hollow: if it had had no foundation in reality, it could hardly have convinced Willoughby that their master-servant relationship had been a good one and was worth reviving. Marmyon's rhetoric of requests depends upon Willoughby's satisfaction with their interactions up to this point — interactions that were probably heavily influenced, like Marmyon's letter, by shared assumptions about the nature of his service, status, and lifestyle requirements as a gentleman.

In sum, Marmyon's letter makes three requests of Willoughby: first, that he allow Marmyon to return to his service at Wollaton; second, that he provide him with additional support in the form of the lease of two properties in Carlton; and, finally, that he decide the two first questions in Marmyon's favour as quickly as possible. Each of these requests is made in a manner that reveals Marmyon's confidence that Willoughby will express his 'goodnes towardes [him] by some good turne towardes the better inabling [him] to live'. Yet Marmyon is nevertheless careful to engage and enhance Willoughby's goodwill through such varied rhetorical strategies as flattery, ironic humour, references to social ideals and contemporary good practices, vivid storytelling, and promises of good service and endless gratitude. By combining discourses of service with those of friendship, Marmyon's letter represents and contributes to a mutually satisfactory relationship between a master and servant who, as gentlemen, were near equals in birth status though not in prosperity.

Yet, due to their financial inequality, Marmyon's epistolary efforts to consolidate Willoughby's good opinion of him are also, by necessity, efforts to convert immaterial favour into material benefits. Thus Marmyon closes the letter with a succinct reminder about his requests and credentials: 'I beseche your worships good consideracion of my hvmble sute/ and not to refuse Marmyon/ who never willingly departed from yow but is most ioyfull if he may in this sort returne vnto yow'. Marmyon's declaration that he had left Wollaton against his will and is eager to return parallels and reinforces his opening profession of undiminished love for Wollaton and Willoughby and 'ernest desyre' to return to them. In both cases, Marmyon bases his claim to Willoughby's support not on a track record of good service but rather on his professed loyalty and wish to return. However, the phrase 'in this sort' implies that Marmyon would be rather less joyful to return to Willoughby if the latter failed to grant him the requested lease. In other words, Marmyon's continued satisfaction depends on receiving tangible support in exchange for his intangible expressions of loyalty and promise to render unspecified 'good sarvice'. The fact that Willoughby agreed to this exchange at least in part (by receiving Marmyon back into his household) indicates that even hypothetical loyalty, love, and service were enough to trade on. Just as Marmyon trusted that Willoughby would express favour by providing material support, Willoughby trusted that Marmyon would supplement his lip service with deeds when once reinstalled at Wollaton.

The letter ends by reasserting in the second postscript the serving gentleman's dedication to his chosen master: 'Sir I reckon me one of yours'. Unlike similar preceding declarations, this one presents their negotiations as so far advanced that there is no going back — and, by doing so, pressures Willoughby to follow through. The fact that this statement was written from Sheffield four days after the rest of the letter suggests that Marmyon's affairs took a decisive turn since he arrived there. By comparison, the rest of the letter appears to have been merely testing the waters. In this sentence, Marmyon verbally bestows himself upon Willoughby. Although the final decision still rests with Willoughby as master, he would indeed 'have much ado to remove' Marmyon from him after this.

### ***Arranging affinities: The affective politics of attendance***

Marmyon presents his relationship with Bess in parallel with his relationship with Willoughby, performing allegiance to Bess and receiving her continued patronage much as he professes allegiance to Willoughby while seeking his material support. To declare loyalty simultaneously to two unrelated individuals is a delicate business, the more so when declarations concerning the one are embedded in declarations to the other and, furthermore, involve writing ill of a third authority figure. While his dealings with Bess and her husband may seem to have little to do with Willoughby or even to reduce Marmyon's chances of favourably impressing him, in the social logic of the time they may well have supported Marmyon's agenda of returning to Wollaton and were no doubt intended to do so. The gentleman servitor's account of his time in Bess's service and enumeration of her various efforts to secure his future wellbeing fulfil three rhetorical functions. First, these details explain to Willoughby why Marmyon needs to leave Bess's service. Second, they assure him that he is leaving on good terms with her and is valued by her (although not by her husband) as a good servant. And, finally, they indicate that Marmyon would not be entirely dependent on Willoughby's generosity, as he will continue to receive an annuity from Bess after he leaves her service.

Along the way, Marmyon's expressions of solidarity with Bess and unsympathetic characterisation of Shrewsbury reveal that he considered such attitudes and rhetoric to be part of his duty as Bess's serving gentleman. Furthermore, his consistently pejorative commentary on the earl's conduct suggests that Marmyon either internalised his employer's cause, making Bess's enemy his own, or harboured a grudge against Shrewsbury on his own account — perhaps both.

The structures of service and the volleys of slander exchanged between household members make both interpretations plausible. Marmyon's letter highlights the emotional and verbal support that gentry companions could provide and suggests that these immaterial services were especially important in times of adversity. In addition, by presenting his hatred for his lady's adversarial husband as part of his duty towards her, Marmyon demonstrates that he considered it more important to uphold his social bond with Bess — the individual to whom he owed allegiance — than to bow to Shrewsbury's potentially higher authority as a nobleman and the head of the combined household. For Marmyon at least, allegiance was more important than either obedience (which he never mentions) or hierarchy.

In emphasising mutual trust, benefit, and camaraderie rather than respective authority and submission as the basis for employer-servingman relations, Marmyon recorded an outlook shared by contemporary printed defences of servingman gentility. Walter Darell and I.M.'s works in particular stress the physical and cultural proximity between servingmen and their lords. I.M.'s *A Health to the Gentlemanly profession of Seruingmen* (1598) explicitly distinguishes servingmen from 'seruile' servants and places them firmly in the ranks of the elite:

Euen the Dukes sonne preferred Page to the Prince, the Earles  
seconde sonne attendant vpon the Duke, the Knights seconde sonne  
the Earles Seruant, the Esquires sonne to weare the Knights lyuerie,  
and the Gentlemans sonne the Esquiers Seruingman: Yea, I know at  
this day, Gentlemen younger brothers, that weares their elder brothers  
Blew coate and Badge<sup>362</sup>

He stipulates that servingmen must be 'men of witte, discretion, gouernment, and good bringing up, considering their [...] Maisters serious busines, waightie affayres, and worldly wealth, was for the most part committed to their custodie and care'; 'men of v[a]loure and courage, not fearing to fight in the maytenance of their Maisters credite'; 'men fine, neate, and nimble, in regarde of their nearenes about their Maister, his apparel and cates'; and finally, 'men of qualitie to be seene in haulking, hunting, fyshing and fowling, with all such like Gentlemanly pastimes'.<sup>363</sup> Darell's *A Shorte discourse of the life of Seruingmen* (1578) strikes a similar note, naming 'Godlinesse, Clenlinesse, Audacitie, and Diligence' as the 'especiall pointes [...] whereby to knowe a Seruingman'.<sup>364</sup> While it is dangerous to assume that

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<sup>362</sup> I.M., sigs C2, B3.

<sup>363</sup> I.M., sigs B2[v]-B3.

<sup>364</sup> Walter Darell, *A Shorte discourse of the life of Seruingmen* [...] (London: Ralph Newberrie, 1578), sig. A.iiij.

prescriptive literature determines social practice, Marmyon's self-fashioning very much resembles this model. To put it another way, it is possible that he cultivated the persona of a fashionable servingman 'type' of the late sixteenth century, which was also described and idealised in Darell and especially I.M.'s treatises and exaggerated on stage in plays like *Twelfth Night* (first performed in 1601). Self-respect, homosocial bonding with masters, and willingness to fight employers' enemies all feature in Marmyon's letter as well as in the treatises. When it comes to audacious language, Marmyon's cheeky missive to Willoughby is paralleled by the sparkling repartee between 'servingman' Viola-as-Cesario and Countess Olivia, who recognises from Cesario's manner of speaking (and deportment) that 'he' must be a gentleman.<sup>365</sup>

In keeping with the feudal ideals governing the behaviour of Darell and I.M.'s servingmen and Marmyon's representation of his relationship with Willoughby, he depicts his relationship with Bess as one of mutual loyalty and fellow feeling. Referring to the 'cyvill warres' in the triple household at Sheffield allows Marmyon both to present himself as a loyal ally of his lady — fighting alongside her against the false accusations and threats levelled at them by her husband and 'that Skottish regiment' — and to explain why, notwithstanding their close association, he must now leave her service. The first time Marmyon mentions Bess he expresses sympathy for her and fears about her future:

I am sorie with all my harte to see my Lady in suche daunger/ and that she take the my departure in so ill sorte/ that howse is a hell/ and her Ladyship beinge furnished with few or rather not one about her which faythfully love and honor her in deede/ the sequeale is in doubt to breede afterclappes/ and she suspectes no lesse.

Marmyon's language is affective: he is 'sorie with all [his] harte' that once he leaves Bess's household she will have no supporters left to 'faythfully love and honor her in deede' as he has done. His wording establishes a link between inner emotional states and outer behaviour, arguing that 'love' must be both felt and acted upon 'in deede' in order to constitute effective service. It is significant that Marmyon characterises acts of service as acts that demonstrate personal devotion to the one served; by forefronting affective connection rather than obedience, he elevates himself as a fit and valuable companion, able to share in his lady's sufferings, sustain her reputation, and by his presence shield her to some degree from her household enemies — activities that reinforce his prestige as a gentleman.

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<sup>365</sup> *Twelfth Night*, 1.5.281-85.

Marmyon shows himself to be unavoidably engaged in Bess's conflict with her husband on account of his position as her 'right hande' man. Although he characterises himself as an unwilling actor habitually dragged into the domestic tragedy by the earl's accusations, his vigorous counter-attacks on the earl's character throughout the letter show him to be a willing participant in the war over reputation. The bulk of the servingman's account derives from a conversation with Bess in which she related to him what Shrewsbury had said to her during a heated argument. It is hardly an impartial account, but, as a partial one, Marmyon's narrative simultaneously summarises and critiques Shrewsbury's points so as to reveal the earl's anxiety about his wife's independence (especially her political influence and her close alliance with a male member of her household) and to portray him as threatened, jealous, manipulative, dishonourable, and a bit pathetic compared with Marmyon himself, who writes with a deal of bravado.

The serving gentleman opens the subject of why he must now leave Bess's service by reminding Willoughby, 'I tould your worship at your being last at haddon of a broyle or kynd of tragedy betwixt my Lord and Lady of late'. Later he mentions that his fellow servants at Chatsworth and Sheffield think that 'becawse they have knowne as great disquyetnes heretofore sundry tymes betwixt vs/ that this wilbe in lyke maner overblowne/ But they wilbe deceived/ for [...] it may well be thought inconvenient that she kepe me longer/ my Lordes frantick speches fully considred'. What makes this 'disquyetnes' different from previous episodes is the serious nature of Shrewsbury's 'frantick speches'. The earl's specific allegations against his wife and her servingman and the threats by which he seeks to control them portray their close domestic relationship as a sinister political one — that of conspirators spreading stories abroad to discredit him and prevent him from fulfilling the requirements of his guardianship of Mary Stewart. Marmyon lists the earl's accusations as follows:

his Lordship chargethe her and me [1] to be devysors for the disablyng of his sarvice to her maiestie./ [2] that we are advertysers against him/ and [3] weere the onely cawse that abatement was made of his allowance for the Lady of Skottlandes dyat. [4] that she makes me her right hande as it weere/ whome he cannot abide: and knowing that I hate him/

Shrewsbury's first three accusations are politically hard-hitting, characterising Bess and Marmyon as treacherously disloyal to him as the husband/head of household and as a royal servant; thus, by extension, they are treacherously disloyal to Queen

Elizabeth. His final charge, against Bess only, has less to do with the wider socio-political structure linking household and state. It reads as a statement of spousal betrayal: by associating with and promoting someone whom Shrewsbury hates and who hates him, Bess shows how little concern she has for her husband's wishes and wellbeing. This attitude translates into not only lack of duty, but also lack of love. Although he falls short of accusing her of adultery, Shrewsbury's combined allegations present Bess as having betrayed him on every other level, aided and abetted by her servingman.

However, it is not Shrewsbury's 'vniust and most vyle accusacion[s]' but his threat that necessitates Marmyon's departure. Here again the dynamics of marriage, domesticity, and politics are intertwined as Shrewsbury uses the word 'love' to launch a power struggle with his wife in which her servants, prestige, independence, and ability to participate in political culture are at stake — mirroring to some degree Shrewsbury's claim that his own reputation and political action were endangered by her behaviour. Marmyon summarises the earl's threat with scathing contempt:

Whervpon he made surely a very honorable conclusion. that if she would not remove me/ he could never be brought to thinke that she loved him/ neyther would he ever take her for his wyfe/ but he would remove me/ and shutt her Ladyship vp/ without suffring eny sarvantes about her than of his owne placing. with dyvers other ydle wordes tending mucche to noughty purposes/

A later note on the letter's address leaf poses the 'Question whither ye Lord were jealous of Marmion', as the ultimatum that Bess dismiss him if she wishes to retain her own place in her husband's household and affections certainly gives that impression — as does Marmyon's portrayal of himself as the better man. Bess does seem at this time to have had a more trusting relationship with her servingman than with her husband, but most likely Marmyon's gender merely exacerbated the situation; Shrewsbury could have made the same accusations and threat concerning a female servant, and he later took exception to Bess's gentlewoman Frances Battell. Although in this passage Shrewsbury identifies Marmyon as the greatest barrier between himself and Bess and pressures her to demonstrate her wifely love by dismissing him, sexual rivalry is not the issue here. While Bess and Shrewsbury's emotions were no doubt involved in their cycles of quarrelling, seeking support from others, and potential reconciliations, their respective honour and power were also at stake since the state of their marriage and household governance affected their political identities and opportunities.



A reduced retinue or one of her husband's choosing would diminish Bess's prestige and political power, both symbolically and actually, within the household and beyond it.<sup>366</sup> Shrewsbury, acting on behalf of Elizabeth's government, had used a similar tactic against Mary many times before, cutting back her ever-swelling retinue whenever its size posed a political or financial threat.<sup>367</sup> Following one such purge in 1571, Mary wrote to her dismissed attendants to assure them, 'si le ne vous ay pas este si bonne maistresse que vos necessités le requéroint, dieu m'est tesmoin que la bonne vollonté ne m[']ja Iamais manqué, mais les moyens' ('If I have not been as good a mistress to you as your needs required, God is my witness that I have never lacked goodwill, but means').<sup>368</sup> In an act of secondary patronage intended to make up for her own inability to provide for them, she directs her former servants to present this letter to several relatives and representatives in France whom she believes may be able to support them (and, through them, her political cause). In fact, despite Mary's incessant letter-writing and the speedy publication in Paris of a version of this particularly moving letter, her plight was largely ignored in France.<sup>369</sup> Now, ten years later, Shrewsbury threatens to put his wife in a similar position: robbed of her independence and of much of her prestige and dignity, unable to be as good a mistress to her former servants as their merits deserve or needs require, and with a reduced network of supporters through whom to spread her influence or seek redress.

A further complication arises from Bess's initial response to her husband's threat: 'my Lady desyred him to send for me/ and charge me himself but that was as bittar as gall/ and no waye but she must dispatche me'. If in one sense Marmyon is

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<sup>366</sup> The same principle can be seen in *King Lear*. After his abdication, Lear's miniature retinue reflects his socio-political insignificance. His lack of a large body of armed retainers ensures that he cannot regain power over the kingdom, and it parallels his loss of power over his own mind and destiny as the play progresses.

<sup>367</sup> Leader, pp. 33-35, 84-87, 201-03, 206-07, 209.

<sup>368</sup> 'La Reyne D'Escosse, A Ses Seruiteurs bannis d'auec Elle', 18 September 1571, Paris, Archives nationales, Carton des rois, K 96 No 2/6 (my transcription and translation). This is a copy in a letterbook; the original, apparently sent with the servants from Sheffield Castle, does not survive. The whole letter is edited from this copy in Prince Alexandre Labanoff, *Lettres, instructions et mémoires de Marie Stuart, reine d'Écosse* [...] (London: Charles Dolman, 1844), vol. 3, pp. 378-82 and translated in William Turnbull, *Letters of Mary Stuart, Queen of Scotland, Selected from the 'Recueil des lettres de Marie Stuart' [...]* by Prince Alexander Labanoff [...] (London: Charles Dolman, 1845), pp. 222-24.

<sup>369</sup> *Copie d'une lettre de la Royne d'Escosse, escripte de sa Prison de Cheifeild, touchant ses aduersitez, & le bannissement de ses fidelz Seruiteurs* (Paris: Aldus/Robert Coulombel, 1572). No copies of the first edition now survive, but a facsimile was printed in Milan by F. Rusconi for P. A. Tosi in 1836, the only known copy of which is Edinburgh, National Library of Scotland, Ry III f. 21/11.A.28/2159. For Mary's lack of support in France during her captivity, see Alexander S. Wilkinson, *Mary Queen of Scots and French Public Opinion, 1542-1600* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

caught in the crossfire between Shrewsbury and Bess, in another she is caught between the two men. The fact that Bess wants Shrewsbury to accuse Marmyon directly shows that she does not wish to be responsible for dismissing a servant who provides valuable moral support and thus merits her continued patronage. She takes her responsibility as mistress seriously, but Shrewsbury turns her customary obligations towards her servingman into a point of contention in their marriage, raising the stakes by claiming that Bess and Marmyon are his political enemies and forcing her to choose between the two men. Shrewsbury sets up Bess's decision about Marmyon as a litmus test for her attitude towards her husband and her right to be treated as his wife. If Bess will not love and obey Shrewsbury, neither will he cherish her but will strip her of privileges, forcefully reassert his mastery over her and the household, and limit her contact with the outside world so that she can no longer work against him. The threatened consequences of spiting the earl are so dire that it would be worth feigning compliance in order to avoid them — the test is set up such that it can prove nothing.

As is apparent from Marmyon's request to return to Willoughby's service, Bess did in fact 'square the accyon by wisdom' and chose to let Marmyon go rather than lose what little remained of her husband's goodwill and her other privileges. However, she continued to exercise good lordship towards Marmyon — behind Shrewsbury's back — by offering him continued financial support and help with finding a new position. Marmyon reports to Willoughby that although Bess could not provide him with a lease without Shrewsbury's consent, she offered him an 'annuity of xl<sup>li</sup>. a yeare/ to be had out of mr williaime Cavendyses Landes' and promised that 'Yf I would goe to the Innes of courte/ or sarve eyther my Lord Treasurer or my Lord of Leycester/ she will other wayes be benefycyall to me'.

It may seem strange that Bess would continue to support a former servant once he had left her service, but at her social level doing so was considered good practice as it could preserve a mutually beneficial relationship. For ill or elderly former servants, pensions, bequests, or places in almshouses provided income and/or housing that could no longer be earned, while such charity also contributed to the former employer's reputation for good lordship.<sup>370</sup> For gentlemen like Marmyon, whose social standing, education, and contacts made them potentially valuable allies, long-term contributions towards maintenance secured their continued goodwill and a

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<sup>370</sup> I.M. argues that elite masters ought to look after their former servants until death (sigs C4[v]-D). Bess provided for servants in her will and founded almshouses in Derby (White, vol. 2, pp. 422-23).

place within their former employer's 'affinity'. Although this term is typically applied by historians to a medieval lord's socio-political network of supporters and not seen as a feature of sixteenth-century society, the arrangements that Bess and Mary made with their favoured former attendants demonstrate that the affinity system of patronage was still very much alive and, furthermore, was being promoted by ladies as well as lords.<sup>371</sup>

Like Mary, Bess recognised that tying a former gentleman of hers into her wider political networks could be particularly beneficial. Placing Marmyon with the Lord Treasurer or earl of Leicester would strengthen Bess's pre-existing ties with whichever of these men became his new master and would facilitate the flow of goodwill, information, and political support back to her. Placing him at the Inns of Court would give Marmyon a potentially useful legal education and also the opportunity to widen his social network and attach himself to another prominent master.<sup>372</sup> Servants could be circulated as gifts between employers, though presumably only with their consent. For his part, Marmyon professes himself happy to leave Bess's service under the circumstances and to accept her annuity but not her efforts to place him 'vpon the hills wher the wyndes blowe ofte roughe': he has already decided to return to Wollaton rather than pursue a more ambitious but uncertain career. In his bid to appear the master of his own destiny, Marmyon goes so far as to claim that he considers 'my Ladys [...] setting me at liberty to sarve wher I please' as 'the best happ that ever yette/ hath bene offred me since I came to the state of a man'.

In order to effect his transition from Bess's service to Willoughby's, however, Marmyon needed one last thing from her: a letter of recommendation. He informs Willoughby, 'Yt wilbe iij weekes before I shall dispatche from hence/ which tyme yow shall receive from my Lady a letter of the maner of my departure and see moreover the assurance of her honorable dealing with me'. Unlike similar letters received by Bess from the earl of Essex and the countess of Kent (IDs 24 and 32), which recommend as servants bearers who are unknown to their prospective employer, the letter that Marmyon promises Bess will write to Willoughby will focus on her 'honorable dealing' with him, since all parties were well acquainted. If this

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<sup>371</sup> See Mertes on lords' affinities, pp. 124-26. Harris provides examples of noblewomen's participation in their husbands' affinities and in factional violence in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries (pp. 200-1, 205-8).

<sup>372</sup> The example of Bess and Marmyon shows a high degree of continuity with the retaining and patronage practices of fourteenth- and fifteenth-century noblewomen. See Ward, pp. 129-42.

letter was ever written, it has not survived, but its intended functions can be imagined. The proposed letter from Bess would satisfy Willoughby that she and Marmyon were parting on good terms — she was not dismissing him on a whim or for any fault of his — and would also confirm the grant of the annuity. Such a letter would corroborate Marmyon's story, uphold his and Bess's reputations, and strengthen the friendship between all three parties.

**Frances Battell at Chatsworth to Lady Elizabeth Paullat in Clerkenwell,  
23 March 1584** (TNA, SP 53/13, ff. 14r-15v/pp. 9-12)<sup>373</sup>

*address leaf, f. 15v/p. 12*

*superscription: italic script, Battell's hand*

To the rightworshepp and my  
very good lady the lady  
elizabeth paullat<sup>374</sup> at clarcon  
well<sup>375</sup> geue this with  
spede. [*large flourish/underlining*]<sup>376</sup>

*endorsement (written with letter packet open): secretary script, unidentified hand*

from mris battell came to my hands  
by one of mris wynckfeld<sup>377</sup> [~~his~~] men  
the xj<sup>th</sup> daye of Apryll /

*endorsement (on back of packet when folded): italic script, Burghley's hand*

xj . Aprill . [*flourish*] 1584  
To ye lady pavlett  
from on francisce battell  
a Gentlewoman of ye  
Countess of shrewsburies.

*later notes in pencil: unidentified archivist's hand*<sup>378</sup>

23 Mar 1584  
11 April 1584

*letter, f. 14r/p. 9*

*italic script, Battell's hand*

my duty most humbely remembred to your good ladyship. my  
ladye commends her to your ladyship, hvr honor doth wis all hapine^s^  
to your ladyship I have sent you a pare of knifes I most humbely

<sup>373</sup> This letter is discussed briefly by Williams, p. 162; Durant, *Bess*, p. 118; and Lovell, pp. 286-87. A modernised and perhaps abridged edition is quoted at length in Leader, pp. 151-52, but not fully referenced.

<sup>374</sup> A relative, whether by birth or marriage, of several Tudor courtiers and administrators.

<sup>375</sup> Clerkenwell, London.

<sup>376</sup> These pen strokes appear to have been added hastily and for emphasis.

<sup>377</sup> Elizabeth Wingfield, Bess's half-sister at the royal court.

<sup>378</sup> These notes restating the dates of writing and final receipt appear on different parts of the page.

be shuch<sup>379</sup> you ladyship to excepe my good will her in/ mr ~~bu~~ lewes<sup>380</sup> —  
 is my ~~get~~ great ennimy: and hath Abused my lady and is [*illegible*]  
 most—  
 hatfully bent Ague[n]st me/ my lord geues out harde spech of me  
 to my great discredeth if it showlde beleued of my frend[*illegible*]s as  
 your  
 ladyship is one of my good f[r]ends that I make most Account of—  
 and if it pleas your ladyship to vnderstand the cas of my ~~lor~~ lords  
 harde dealleng with me is that the Scotyhes queene can not Abyles  
 Abyde  
 me for how can she Abyde me, when she is with all hatred bent A  
 ganst my good lady and mistress/ I haue ben plane with the Scotys<sup>381</sup>—  
 and sincs that tyme ~~mj~~ my lord doth not lyke of me but [*illegible*] is with  
 all hatred bent Aguenst me/ the words that the Scotyshe queene  
 seruants sayde to me and to othars of my lords seruants whar—  
 thvs but none made anser but I/ this sayd thay that the Scotyshe  
 q<sup>r</sup> queene showld be queene of england whar to I made this—  
 ancer that it whar better that the scotyshe queene ~~whar who~~  
were hanged befor that tyme shoulde com to pas, and all that so  
~~that~~ thought/ I coulde not but make this ancer rachly it ded  
 so much gr[e]ue me to hear thes words/ and I am bound in ~~douy~~  
 duty and conshanc so to ancer/ and sincs that tyme my lord—  
 doth hardly deal with me/ I haue attended vpon my lady this  
 too year and her honor lykes will of my serues and I woulde be—  
 most hartyli sori to part with her honor but if my lord doo—  
 contunoo his hard spech of my I [*illegible*] can not Abyde it nolonger/  
 my—  
 lord ded not writ to my lady this halfe year but one letter  
 and that was all of me/ that it was A shame for her honor to ~~k~~—  
 kepe me with [*illegible*] maniothar words that is to much to writ of  
 and one of my offences that my lord doth alege to me is this  
 because I ded pitte my honorables ladys and mistress caus of greaf  
~~w~~e wich is to be pitted and lamentable it ~~iz~~ is god Amend it in  
 his good tyme/ and this<sup>382</sup> I most humbelly take my leafe frome  
 chacworth the xxiiij daye of march

your ladyship  
 to vse at comman^d^

fraunces Battell

*ff. 14v and 15r/pp. 10-11 blank*

<sup>379</sup> *beseech.*

<sup>380</sup> Master Lewes appears to have been one of Shrewsbury's men.

<sup>381</sup> Mary Stewart's Scottish servants.

<sup>382</sup> *thus.*

***'Bound in duty and conshanc': Structures of loyalty in the Shrewsburys' domestic politics***

Two and a half years after Marmyon's depiction of the 'cyvill warres' at Sheffield, the gentlewoman Frances Battell's letter to Lady Elizabeth Paullat represents continued domestic discord as the conflicts between husband and wife were exacerbated by their prisoner-guest, magnified by servant loyalties into outright factionalism, and all in all amounted to a dangerous political situation. Battell's main purpose of writing is to convince her 'frend' Paullat that, as a deeply loyal servant to Bess and subject to Queen Elizabeth, she is innocent of whatever Shrewsbury and his followers may be saying to discredit her, but she states her case in a way that casts a shadow of doubt over Shrewsbury's own emotional and political allegiances.

Like Marmyon, Battell presents Bess and herself as victims of Shrewsbury's malice, but the attendants' letters differ in that Battell forefronts the role of Mary and her retinue in contributing to Shrewsbury's antagonism. Whereas Marmyon refers only in passing to 'that Skottyshe regiment', Battell argues that the discord between Shrewsbury and Bess is exacerbated by Mary's 'hatred' for Bess and by Shrewsbury's tendency to appease rather than confront the Scottish queen. Furthermore, Battell claims that she earned Shrewsbury's ill will through both her sympathy for her beleaguered lady and her bold denunciation of what she considered the treasonous speech of some of Mary's servants. In Battell's letter, she and Mary's retinue perform loyalty to their respective mistresses and queens in a politically charged exchange that shows just how thin and permeable the boundary between domestic politics and state politics could be. In addition, Battell's account of the earl's 'hatred' for his wife and her gentlewoman participates in a war over reputations that extends well beyond the walls of the Shrewsburys' houses and is fought by means of rumours, allegations, suggestions, and explanations circulated by letter and word of mouth throughout not only Bess and her husband's socio-political networks but also those of their gentry servants. Through her loyalty, literacy, and effective use of female friendship, Battell may have had a hand in prompting governmental intervention in the Shrewsburys' affairs in the summer and autumn of 1584.

Battell's letter reveals the interconnections between her concerns as an individual and the semi-public political contests in which she found herself as one of Bess's waiting gentlewomen. Although Battell addresses Paullat as 'one of my good frends that I make most Account of' and substantiates that claim through the

circulation of courteous words and gifts, the letter's prime function is not to be sociable but rather to use female sociability as a means of maintaining Battell and her mistress's good name in the face of disparagement from their domestic-political enemies. By the time that Battell wrote to Paullat, Bess and her servants had been keeping house at Chatsworth for nine or ten months; their absence from the Shrewsbury-Stewart household would have spared them from fresh outbreaks of face-to-face confrontation but not from loss of income, power, and reputation in the long term. Battell recognised the importance of turning to a contact outside the conflict (and near the royal court) for affirmation and informal advocacy.

As Battell and Paullat are virtually unknown outside this letter, the nature of their prior relationship cannot be reconstructed. Battell appears in only one other document, many years later, when Bess's household accounts record that Mistress Battell was given 40 shillings on 16 June 1601 — a sum too small for an annuity but that could be quarterly wages or a reimbursement or gift.<sup>383</sup> This payment demonstrates that Bess and Battell maintained a long-term association, but it says nothing more about the gentlewoman or her interactions with Paullat. And Paullat is almost equally elusive. The name Elizabeth ran in this upwardly mobile family, whose male members included courtiers, soldiers, colonial administrators, and aristocrats; the 'Lady Elizabeth Paullat' to whom Battell wrote in March 1584 could have been any of the wives or daughters of that name who were alive at the time or, potentially, one of several women whose first names are not recorded.<sup>384</sup> What is certain is that the addressee of Battell's letter was related, whether closely or distantly, to both William Paulet, first marquess of Winchester, a distinguished courtier who had immediately preceded Burghley in the office of Lord Treasurer, and Sir Amias Paulet (II), who, as the English ambassador in Paris in 1576-1578, had opposed Mary Stewart's supporters there. Sir Amias would go on to become her final and strictest custodian in 1585, a few months after Shrewsbury's retirement from the post. Elizabeth Paullat may well have moved, as her kinsmen did, in elite court and Protestant circles, and their political and religious allegiances may have further recommended her to Battell as someone likely to be unsympathetic to Mary and able to gain the ear of government officials. The fact that the letter is directed to Paullat in

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<sup>383</sup> Hardwick MS 8, f. 134r.

<sup>384</sup> See in particular the *ODNB* entries for Sir Amias Paulet (1457-1538), William Paulet (1474/75?-1572), Sir Hugh Paulet (b. before 1510, d. 1573), Sir Amias Paulet (c. 1532-1588), and Sir George Paulet (1553-1608).

London indicates that she was geographically well placed to promote Bess and Battell's reputation at court. She was an ally worth having.

Battell opens her letter by consolidating the existing friendliness between herself, Paullat, and Bess. The waiting gentlewoman expresses her own and her mistress's goodwill towards Paullat, drawing her attention to the gift of knives sent with the letter and emphasising the value she places on Paullat's friendship. Whatever the circumstances of their prior connection, Battell presents her relationship with Paullat as a cordial but unequal one, in keeping with their apparent disparity in rank and Battell's posture as a supplicant for Paullat's continued approval. Although both writer and addressee were gentlewomen, they appear to have been at opposite ends of the gentry spectrum. Battell directs the letter to 'Lady' Elizabeth Paullat and addresses her throughout the letter as 'your ladyship'; Burghley's endorsement likewise calls her 'Lady Paulett' while the anonymous endorsement notes that the letter came from 'Mistris Battell'. Furthermore, Battell consistently chooses formulae that emphasise her own humility. In the salutation, she 'most humbely rememb[ers]' her 'duty' to Paullat, and she goes on to 'most humbely be shuch' her 'to excepe my good will'. She takes her leave 'most humbely' and subscribes herself 'your ladyship[']s] to vse at command'.

Battell's humble self-representation registers her respect for Paullat and contributes to the letter's overall argument without being unduly self-demeaning. Although the subscription may appear especially subservient, several members of the gentry and aristocracy use variations of this formula when writing to Bess, so the offer to be commanded was probably understood as a polite expression of willingness to help a friend or acquaintance — the sixteenth-century equivalent of saying, 'Let me know if you need anything'.<sup>385</sup> This subscription would consolidate a good relationship and repay in some measure whatever a letter asked of its recipient. In Battell's letter, courteous expressions of humility show her good breeding, her goodwill towards Paullat, and her respect for the social order. Through them, Battell presents herself as an exemplary member of the lower gentry who knows her place and is worthy of Paullat's continued friendship and a good name in society.

Battell's social identity is not, however, defined primarily by her family background, social graces, or friendships but by her role as Bess's gentlewoman.

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<sup>385</sup> The letters in question are IDs 25, 26, 27 and 170 from Hugh Fitzwilliam; ID 173 from Arthur Curzon; ID 225 from William Cecil, Lord Burghley; ID 43 from 'Jo. L.'; ID 46 from Roger Manners, earl of Rutland; and ID 19 from George Clifford, earl of Cumberland. This formula does not appear in Bess's outgoing letters.



Battell represents her relationship with Bess as the driving force behind her attitudes, language, and behaviour to others and as the standard by which she must be judged. So closely intertwined are the experiences of Battell and her mistress that no distinction is made between their causes: mistress and maid share the same friends, enemies, sufferings, and needs. In writing to her own friend about her own difficulties, Battell is writing to Bess's friend about Bess's difficulties as well. In the opening greetings, even their words mingle as they express shared goodwill towards Paullat: 'my duty most humbely remembred to your good ladyship. my ladye commends her to your ladyship, hvr honor doth wis all hapines to your ladyship I have sent you a pare of knifes I most humbely be shuch you ladyship to excepe my good will her in'. Bess's commendations, enveloped within Battell's, constitute a further gift and a further request: that Paullat think (and, ideally, speak) well of Bess too.

Like their greetings, the sufferings of maid and mistress mingle in Battell's account. She mentions early in the letter that 'mr lewes is my great ennimy: and hath Abused my lady and is most hatfully bent Aguenst me'. This statement suggests that Battell feared Paullat may have heard something to her discredit from him already. Lewes functions much like Battell herself, as a supporting character in the quarrel between lord and lady, and he is not her main concern. The letter's main purpose is to contradict the 'harde spech of me' that 'my lord geues out [...] to my great discredeth if it showlde [be] beleued of my frends'. Battell explains that 'the cas of my lords harde dealleng with me' is threefold. First, Shrewsbury disfavours her because 'the Scotyhes queene can not Abyde me'; Mary's hatred of Battell stems from her hatred of Bess, 'for how can she Abyde me, when she is with all hatred bent Aganst my good lady and mistress'? The gentlewoman represents her mistress in the minds of her mistress's enemies. Second, 'I haue ben plane with the Scotys — and sincs that tyme my lord doth not lyke of me but is with all hatred bent Aguenst me'. Battell's interpretation of Shrewsbury's reaction to her outspokenness hints once again that the earl favours Mary in the household and perhaps, more dangerously, in the larger political sphere as well. Finally, Shrewsbury objects to Battell 'becase I ded pitte my honorable lady and mistress caus of greaf'. In sum, the earl is hard on the gentlewoman not because she is a bad servant but because she is a good one, fully engaged in her mistress's cause and inconveniently vocal about her loyalties as both servant and subject.

In order to convince Paullat that whatever Shrewsbury may be saying about her is untrue since she has only done her duty, Battell reinforces her good service to Bess throughout the letter. At one point she explicitly asserts that their mistress-servant relationship is a mutually satisfactory one: 'I haue attended vpon my lady this too year and her honor lykes will of my serues and I woulde be most hartyli sori to part with her honor'. Battell's phrase 'most hartyli sori' parallels Marmyon's expression of sympathy for Bess, 'I am sorie with all my harte to see my Lady in suche daunger'. Whereas, sympathy notwithstanding, Marmyon was happy to leave, Battell states her desire to remain with Bess if possible. She continues, 'but if my lord doo contunoo his hard spech of my I can not Abyde it nolonger'. Whether Battell intended to write 'his hard spech of my lady' or 'of me' is unclear, but either way her emotive language expresses loyal solidarity with Bess and attempts to convince Paullat that they both need her help.

Battell's most forceful expression of sympathy for Bess also functions in this way. She relates that in the last six months Shrewsbury wrote to his wife only once, and only to complain about Battell and call for her dismissal. Durant and Lovell state that the couple had last cohabited the previous summer but had parted apparently on good terms, with Bess and her servants paying what was intended to be a short visit to Chatsworth as Shrewsbury had promised to send for her again soon.<sup>386</sup> Shrewsbury did not send for her, however, and they had been living apart for nine or ten months by the time Battell wrote to Paullat. Since there was no formal separation and Bess repeatedly sought reconciliation as well as redress, Battell seems to have considered it Shrewsbury's duty to honour Bess as his wife, just as it was her own duty to honour her as mistress.<sup>387</sup> Battell declines to repeat the full ream of abuse in the earl's (lost) letter to Bess as it 'is to much to writ of' — wording that suggests it is either too long or too upsetting for her to relate in its entirety. Shrewsbury's main point was 'that it was A shame for her honor to kepe me'. While his selectively reported writing resounds with judgemental terms such as 'shame' and 'offences', Battell's terms suggest innocence: 'honor', 'pitte', and 'greaf'. More broadly, while his language attempts to sever social ties, Battell's strengthens them by foregrounding the close connection between mistress and gentlewoman and reaching out for Paullat's friendship. She writes with conviction that, contrary to the earl's

<sup>386</sup> Durant, *Bess*, p. 119; Lovell, pp. 303-04.

<sup>387</sup> Bess and Shrewsbury's correspondence during their marital discord are letter IDs 116, 117, 119, 176, 186, 202, and 229. Her letters seeking the intervention of friends on her behalf are IDs 149 and 153 to Walsingham and IDs 150, 152, 156, 230, and 231 to Burghley.

opinion, Bess's 'caus of greaf [...] is to be pitted and lamentable it is'. Period. Through the future passive participle 'is to be pitted', which implies that pity *must* be felt, Battell presents her own reaction to Bess's grief as the only valid response and invites Paullat to feel the same. The addition 'god Amend it in his good tyme' expresses further solidarity with Bess and implies that she could do with help from her friends. Battell's letter as a whole stands as a testimony to her mistress's patient endurance and to Battell's own good character and service, contradicting Shrewsbury's slander of them both.

Central to the gentlewoman's self-defence is the idea that Shrewsbury's antagonism towards her is founded jointly on her solidarity with her mistress and her vocal opposition to the political ambitions of the Scottish queen and her entourage. As we have seen, Battell uses emotionally charged language to convey her own loyalty to Bess. Shrewsbury and Mary too are characterised by strong emotion, being 'with all hatred bent Aganst my good lady' and her gentlewoman. Battell's political language is equally emotive. She relates that when 'the Scotyshe queene seruants sayde to me and to othars of my lords seruants [...] that the Scotyshe queene shoulde be queene of england [...] I made this ancer that it whar better that the scotyshe queene were hanged befor that tyme shoulde com to pas, and all that so thought'. The initial comment by Mary's servants was incendiary, and Battell's rebuttal is hot with indignation. Unlike Shrewsbury's servants, who say nothing, Battell takes up the gauntlet to defend her queen from what she sees as the presumption of theirs. The exchange is intensely loyal but far from diplomatic.

Battell acknowledges to Paullat that her answer may have been ill judged, but she insists that it was both heartfelt and dutiful: 'I coulde not but make this ancer rachly it ded so much greue me to hear thes words/ and I am bound in duty and conshanc so to ancer'. She claims that her response to the political threat was a rash rather than a rational one: she did not need to craft a conscientious reply, it simply burst from her lips. That Battell's answer was uncalculating proves that her loyalty is genuine: she had internalised her duty to such a degree that it was a natural impulse to act on it when stimulated.

Mary's servants and Battell do not seek to protect themselves but speak their loyalties openly and with conviction; by contrast with Shrewsbury's servants, they are willing to stand by their respective queens regardless of the consequences. Battell's fervent words resound in the silence of Shrewsbury's servants. She states that Mary's servants had addressed their words to her and 'othars of my lords

servants [...] but none made answer but I'. More than Battell, whose position as Bess's servant placed her at a further remove from royal service, Shrewsbury's servants were duty bound to help their lord preserve Elizabeth's safety and rule by keeping Mary in check. Although they may have been reluctant to cause a stir or simply caught off guard, their failure to voice their loyalty is highly suspect, especially when contrasted with the gentlewoman's ready rebuttal.

The fact that Battell, Mary's servants and Shrewsbury's were together in one place suggests that the confrontation occurred in one of the larger rooms at a time when the entire household was present — most likely the hall during mealtime, which was the most ceremonious part of the day but also potentially the rowdiest. In this setting, the servants' showdown would constitute a dramatic public performance of their loyalties and could ignite further conflict, verbal or physical, that would further undermine Shrewsbury's authority in his own house. Given the high stress and high stakes of the earl's responsibility for keeping Mary a secure prisoner while simultaneously maintaining her in a semi-royal style, an outburst of this sort would be the last thing he wanted to hear over the dinner table. Whereas the earl's policy may have been to say as little as possible that could be used against him by either Elizabeth's government or Mary, Battell's retort could easily have escalated the 'cyvill warres' within his house. On the other hand, silence was open to sinister interpretation and her letter exploits that potential.

Although Battell does not record the immediate aftermath of her loyal outburst, she notes that 'sincs that tyme my lord doth hardly deal with me'. She does not outright accuse Shrewsbury of countenancing treason, but comments such as these are highly suggestive. Her letter hints that Shrewsbury's greater diplomacy may indicate less certain loyalty, or at any rate insufficient strictness, and that his emotional alliance with Mary against his wife could likewise indicate a politically dangerous favouritism towards the Scottish queen.

If Mary's presence in England inherently threatened national security, her presence in Shrewsbury's houses inherently threatened his domestic peace and his reputation in the world beyond their walls. The earl's task of guarding the former Scots queen placed him in a vulnerable position: it was a position of trust that, paradoxically, opened him up to extreme distrust. If Shrewsbury were believed to be overly sympathetic to Mary — as could more easily occur during his wife's absence — Elizabeth's life could be endangered and his reputation for loyalty certainly would be. There is no evidence that Elizabeth and her ministers ever believed Shrewsbury

to be attached to Mary in a treasonable (or, despite contemporary rumours to this effect, a sexual) manner, but even minor favours or slips in domestic security could raise suspicions at best or lead to political disaster at worst — for example, if Mary were to be rescued through his laxity. In addition, it simply looked bad that he and a foreign queen with a reputation for beauty, charm, and political intrigue were cohabiting while his wife was forbidden to enter any house where they were residing. To this picture Battell adds that Shrewsbury and Mary were united in their hatred of Bess and implies, moreover, that Shrewsbury sought to keep the peace by allowing Mary's pretensions to the English throne to go unchecked — claims that cast Shrewsbury in a very negative light not only as a husband but also as a subject in an office of the highest responsibility. Shrewsbury's alienation of his wife did him no favours. It contributed to a politically unstable situation, damaged his reputation by encouraging rumours of sexual impropriety and less than complete loyalty, and allowed Battell to deploy her own loyalty to Elizabeth in Bess's cause.

Battell may have been a particular asset to her mistress because she was so decidedly loyal to both her and Elizabeth and because she had at least one well placed contact of her own, who could, if she chose, promote Bess's cause in the capital. Battell forefronts her own conduct and wishes when writing to Paullat, but since her experiences and perspective are so closely associated with Bess's and since Shrewsbury's domestic politics were of national importance, her letter takes on socio-political functions beyond those of seeking sympathy from a friend. The Shrewsburys' affairs were much talked of amongst their acquaintance, and although Battell does not explicitly ask Paullat to counter derogatory remarks about herself and Bess or to circulate news of their situation (or Shrewsbury's), she probably expected her to do so if she was convinced they were being persecuted. This type of informal patronage was important, for if the Shrewsburys' mutual friends at court — especially those in high places such as the earl of Leicester, Lord Burghley, and Sir Francis Walsingham — could be brought to favour Bess, they might be inclined to help reconcile her to her husband and persuade him to restore her lands, income, and position as mistress of his household.

Paullat took the hint. The letter bears two endorsements that show it was circulated beyond its original recipient. The first endorsement looks like a covering note added before the letter was passed on to another reader: 'from mris battell came to my hands by one of mris wynckfeld men the xj<sup>th</sup> daye of Apryll'. The wording 'came to my hands' gives the impression that this endorsement was written not by

Paullat or a secretary of hers but by someone else through whose hands the letter passed on its way to its final recipient, Lord Treasurer Burghley, whose autograph endorsement notes sender, addressee, and date of receipt. Whoever forwarded the letter to Burghley may have been motivated by concern for Bess and her gentlewoman, or by the knowledge that the Shrewsbury-Stewart household's political instability would be of grave concern to him. Indeed, Burghley seems to have been most interested in the information about Mary. The letter came to be regarded as a piece of political intelligence: passages of greatest political significance were underlined, either by Burghley or for his benefit, and he kept the letter on file amongst the state papers, where it still remains as evidence of her servants' claim that the Queen of Scots 'showld be queene of england'. And thus a serving gentlewoman's letter to a female friend enters the official record of England's national political history.

Battell's contribution to the historical record is important, for her letter brings home the fact, still too easily overlooked, that servants' and women's social ties linked the domestic and political spheres in a number of ways — first and foremost in the household, but beyond it as well.<sup>388</sup> As we have seen, the household was theorised as a microcosm of the state and tended to reinforce social order through its hierarchically structured relationships. Furthermore, the heads of elite households were often involved in local and national government, whether through office holding (for men) or informally through exercising patronage and influence (for men and women). Since ties of marriage, hospitality, and clientage were what enabled households and states to function, the participation of women and servants was clearly necessary. Although the composition and factionalism of the Shrewsbury-Stewart household made it exceptional, its dramatic qualities illustrate particularly vividly just how intertwined domestic and state politics could be in practice, as the configuration of relationships between employers and servants of both sexes had far-reaching political implications. Furthermore, Battell's letter and its recirculation bring to light the role that she — a woman, servant, and member of the gentry — and other gentlewomen and (male) servants played in bringing Shrewsbury's domestic affairs to the attention of the government.

Battell's letter portrays domestic and political allegiances as mutually constitutive in the Shrewsbury-Stewart household and claims that Shrewsbury and

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<sup>388</sup> Harris's *English Aristocratic Women* and Mears's *Queenship* bring to light the role of female courtiers in furthering their relatives' affairs, but knowledge of the political significance of sixteenth-century servants remains extremely limited.

Mary's shared 'hatred' for Bess is the cause of its other disorders. Breaking the husband-wife alliance that enabled them to rule the household together diminishes the authority of both as servants take sides and oppose one another. Neither spouse retains authority over the entire household, and the ensuing disorder reflects badly on the master and mistress. As the wife is sidelined, the husband-master loses his helpmate and gains not a replacement second-in-command but a woman who is his political enemy but has the potential, as a queen, to rule over him. The gendered domestic hierarchy is thrown into utter chaos and political stability with it.

Nowhere is this more apparent than in the altercation that transforms the great hall from a place of ceremonious order into a verbal battlefield. Since, as Battell's self-presentation makes clear, servants are bound to support their employer in thought, word, and deed, when they engage in political discourse in her letter they appear to speak for their mistress or master as well as for themselves. Whereas the silence of Shrewsbury's servants in response to the claims made by Mary's suggests that their master may be as non-committal as they are, Battell's defence of Elizabeth's rule seems to voice Bess's devotion to the English queen as well. Under normal circumstances, servants speaking as their employers' mouthpieces ought to reinforce household and, thus, political order, but the domestic and political unity of the Shrewsbury-Stewart household is fractured by the presence of the Scottish queen and her retinue and by Shrewsbury's higher tolerance for them than for his wife and her attendants.

Throughout the letter, Battell represents herself and her mistress as united but marginalised. Perhaps the only unreservedly loyal English subjects when under Shrewsbury's roof several months before, they have since then been undeservedly debarred from their positions in the earl's household and stripped of their good name. Without its mistress in her rightful place to stay the course, Battell implies, Shrewsbury's household is drifting into dangerous waters and itself becoming a threat to the political stability of the English nation. Battell's letter argues that the best way to re-establish domestic and political order in the Shrewsbury-Stewart household is to re-establish the mistress. The scenario laid out in Battell's letter is a compelling example of the inseparability of domestic and national politics, and of the role of women (ranging in status from lower gentry to monarchs) and servants (of both sexes) in fusing them.

Finally, the production and circulation of the letter trace further connections between domestic and political realms, again involving women's and servants'

agency. First, the letter itself functions as an extension of the Shrewsburys' domestic politics, being a politically charged response to Shrewsbury's slander, written by its target, his wife's servant, and addressed to her well connected friend in London for the purpose of stirring up support. Furthermore, a network of literate and politically active gentlewomen and male servants were involved in bringing the letter to its final recipient. It was first delivered to Paullat, who then passed it to Elizabeth Wingfield, Bess's half-sister. As Wingfield's own surviving correspondence makes clear, she maintained an active interest in Bess's reputation at court, reporting on more than one occasion the queen's favourable remarks about Bess, including a promise to support her in her dispute with Shrewsbury.<sup>389</sup> Wingfield would thus be a good person for Paullat to contact to ask for further particulars about Bess's situation or for advice about how to act on her behalf. Following their consultation, one of Wingfield's men delivered the letter to its third recipient (perhaps one of Burghley's secretaries), who annotated it and gave it to Burghley himself within three weeks of being written. It was gentlewomen's socio-political networks and male servants' diligence that made this possible.

Battell's appeal to Paullat foreshadows in some ways the letters of petition that Bess was to write to Walsingham and Burghley over the next few years.<sup>390</sup> Both women present themselves as virtuous and helpless victims of Shrewsbury's malice who deserve the sympathy and require the intervention of their friends. But whereas Bess was in a position to write directly to men in high office to ask them for specific favours, Battell, as a relatively obscure gentlewoman, did not have direct access to powerful men. Nevertheless, when her letter to Paullat reached Lord Burghley, what she had to say was taken seriously because Mary remained an ongoing political threat.

Although Burghley may have been most interested in the passages evincing that Mary still claimed a right to the English throne, Battell's argument that Shrewsbury and Mary had formed an alliance of sorts against Bess — a story corroborated in part by Bess's own letters complaining of her husband's treatment of her — may have contributed to the decision later in 1584 that governmental intervention was required in the Shrewsburys' affairs. After fifteen years of keeping Mary with inadequate governmental support, during which time the Shrewsburys' marriage, finances, and quality of life had deteriorated considerably, suddenly over

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<sup>389</sup> IDs 96, 97, 98.

<sup>390</sup> IDs 149, 150, 152, 153, 156, 230, 231.



the summer to winter of 1584 inquiries were made into the (by then year-old) rumours of an affair between Shrewsbury and Mary, Mary was removed from Shrewsbury's custody, and a commission was set up to examine Shrewsbury and Bess's grievances against one another and attempt to reconcile them.<sup>391</sup>

**Nicholas Kynnersley at Wingfield Manor to Bess of Hardwick [location unidentified], 5 November 1588 (ID 37)**

*address leaf, fol. 1v*

*superscription: secretary script, Kynnersley's hand*

To ye Ryght honorable me syngular good lady  
& mistres ye countes off Sallop<sup>392</sup> gyff the[s] with  
speed.

*later note: unidentified hand*

Kynnersley

*letter, fol. 1r*

*secretary script, Kynnersley's hand*

Thes nyght after Iohn was gone with me letter ezabell told me yat  
gylb[e]rd  
dyckensson<sup>393</sup> came to hur [i]n ye bachowsse & axed yff your honor  
were here & she  
answared no & he axed when you went away & sed yesterday he axed  
when  
you well com agyne she answared shortly as she thowght. & lett at nyght  
there came a boye from sheffeld in a grene cote<sup>394</sup> & talked with them in  
ye stable  
& sed he moste goo very yerly in ye mornynge to sheffeld agyn what  
^you^<sup>395</sup> hes meanynge  
be thes questyons & ye lacky comynge so lette & goynge so yerly in ye  
mornynge  
I knowe not except yt be to bryng me lord worde off your absence here &  
so yat he  
myght com vppon ye soden & fynd you a weay so I leve yt to your  
honores wysdom  
to conseder off yt as you thynke beste bot I thynke good you were here.  
mr

<sup>391</sup> See Durant, *Bess*, pp. 124-25, 132-38 and Lovell, pp. 322-25, 338.

<sup>392</sup> *Salopia*: Shropshire. Whereas the English titles 'earl and countess of Shrewsbury' use the city name, their Latin equivalents use the county name. Here Kynnersley blends the two forms.

<sup>393</sup> John was likely a servant of Bess or Kynnersley. Isabel appears to have been a lower servant at Wingfield. Gilbert Dickenson was one of Shrewsbury's servants and the son of his Sheffield bailiff, William Dickenson. Shrewsbury made bequests to both Gilbert and William Dickenson in his will dated 24 May 1590, of which William was a witness (Nottinghamshire Archives, Portland of Welbeck (4<sup>th</sup> deposit): Deeds and Estate Papers, 157 DD4P, Talbot DD/4P/46/1).

<sup>394</sup> Another of Shrewsbury's servants. His green coat could be livery.

<sup>395</sup> This confusing addition may be an attempt to turn the statement into a question about how Bess interprets the situation.

knyveton<sup>396</sup> ryd by to day to sheffield as I was told & called not as I was  
 told *which* I marvell off. me lady arbella<sup>397</sup> at viij off ye clocke thes  
 nyght was  
 mery & eates hur meat well bot she went not to ye stolle yis vj days  
 therefore  
 I wold be glad off *your ladyshipes* comyng yff there were no oyer<sup>398</sup>  
 matter bot yat so I  
 beseke ye allmyghty preserue *your ladyship* in helthe & send you sonne a  
 good &  
 comfortdable end off all *your* great trobles & g[r]effes wynffeld<sup>399</sup> thes  
 Twysday  
 ye v off novembar at viij off ye clocke at nyght 1588 [*flourish*]  
 your honores moste dewtyfull bound  
 obedyent sarvand

*approximately 9 lines blank*

Nyholas Kynnersley

**Nicholas Kynnersley at Wingfield Manor to Bess of Hardwick [location unidentified], 22 April 1589 (ID 38)**

*address leaf, fol. 1v*

*superscription: secretary script, Kynnersley's hand*

To me lady.

*letter, fol. 1r*

*secretary script, Kynnersley's hand*

Besekyng ye allmyghty to preserue *your* honorable helthe. *your honor* I  
 truste shall receive here part  
 off *your* pryncypall luelles<sup>400</sup> I truste in ye allmyghte in as good helthe &  
 mery as ye<sup>401</sup> parted from  
 wynffeld *which* was to them as mery & pleasand as ye recevyng off them  
 wylbe Comfortable

<sup>396</sup> There were at least seven Master Kniveton in Bess's circle. The families were related through the marriage of Bess's half-sister Jane to Thomas Kniveton, and most of the male Kniveton served either Shrewsbury or Bess at some point. It is unclear which of them is being referred to here.

<sup>397</sup> Arbella Stuart (1575-1615), Bess's granddaughter from the marriage of her daughter Elizabeth Cavendish and Darnley's younger brother, Charles Stewart, earl of Lennox. Both her parents had died before Arbella was seven years old. She did not inherit the Lennox title and, as an orphan without lands of her own, was entirely dependent on her grandmother and other relatives, including the royal ones (Mary Stewart, Elizabeth I, and James VI and I) who preferred to keep her in check. The main events of Arbella's life are summarised in the *ODNB*, and several book-length biographies have been published in recent years.

<sup>398</sup> *other*.

<sup>399</sup> (North or South) Wingfield Manor, one of Shrewsbury's Derbyshire estates.

<sup>400</sup> *jewels*. As Kynnersley goes on to say that the jewels were in good health and happy to leave Wingfield, he must be using the word as a metaphor for people Bess treasures, probably including Arbella.

<sup>401</sup> *they*.

to your ^ladyship^ which I truste & daylly prefor<sup>402</sup> meay conteneu in  
 lyke comfort & plessure duryng all your  
 lyffe & send all your honores oyer great greffes torned to ye lyke  
 comffordes so *with* me harty  
 prar for ye same I take me leaue wynfeld thes xxij off apryll 1589  
 [*flourish*]

your honores obedyent seruand

your honor shall nede to take no thowght botte be merye for you shall  
 fynd all  
 thynges here I truste in as good order as you leafte them for wee nether  
 wyll  
 yeld to comandment nor forsse except your honores hand & yett wee  
 wyll lett your  
 honor vnderstond & haue a second comandment by on off your owen  
 men vnder your  
 hand leaste ye fruste be counterfott

*approximately 17 lines blank*

Nycholas Kynnersley

### ***Espionage and obedience***

By the time that Nicholas Kynnersley wrote these two letters to Bess, Elizabeth's ministers had compiled an entire volume of state papers with notes, petitions, claims, responses, and royal orders pertaining to the controversy between Shrewsbury on one part and his wife with her younger sons on the other.<sup>403</sup> In a process of arbitration spanning 1585 to 1587, their affairs had been thoroughly and repeatedly examined by a team of government officials, lawyers, and Midlands neighbours charged with the task of bringing about the reconciliation and cohabitation of husband and wife.<sup>404</sup> During this time, Mary had been ensnared in the Babington Plot, tried, and executed for treason. As Earl Marshal of England, Shrewsbury gave the signal to the headsman, but his 'cyvill warres' did not expire with his former charge. Lands, income, household goods, and reputations all continued to be points of contention.

Much of the controversy concerned the disposal of the income from the lands that Bess had brought to the marriage. As Cavendish's widow, she had had a life interest in at least seventeen Derbyshire properties, but they came under

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<sup>402</sup> *pray for.*

<sup>403</sup> TNA, SP 12/207.

<sup>404</sup> The Lord Treasurer Burghley, Principal Secretary Walsingham, Lord Chancellor Bromley, two Chief Justices, the earl of Leicester, Sir Francis Willoughby, John Manners, and Elizabeth herself were all involved in the mediation at one time or another. The summary that follows is based on Durant and Lovell's biographies unless otherwise noted.

Shrewsbury's control by legal default upon their marriage in 1567/68.<sup>405</sup> However, in 1572 Shrewsbury signed a document reinstating her life interest in and control over the Cavendish lands for the purpose of providing for her younger sons, who had no lands — and therefore no income — of their own. This arrangement allowed Bess to pass on the income from these lands to her sons William and Charles while retaining for herself an unusual amount of financial and managerial independence; it also saved Shrewsbury from paying for her sons' upkeep (and debts). As economic and interpersonal pressures mounted in the years that followed, however, each spouse came to regard the other as the wealthier, and Shrewsbury claimed that by buying additional lands for her sons Bess had broken the terms of the agreement and proven that the Cavendishes did not need this income from the transferred lands as much as he did.

In 1583 the earl and his men began aggressively to assert his lordship over his wife's lands, tenants, estate servants, and sons, using intimidation, legal action, and sometimes outright violence from which Bess could not protect them. Most dramatically, one day in July 1584 Shrewsbury rode out from Sheffield to Chatsworth with forty armed men to claim the house for himself and, nominally, Henry Cavendish, Bess's estranged heir.<sup>406</sup> Bess fled to Hardwick, but her son William put up a resistance, for which he was briefly imprisoned on a charge of insolence and insubordination. Since Shrewsbury's service as the host-jailer of Mary Stewart required him to employ armed guards at home and he also retained gentlemen, the earl had a small private army at his disposal which he could deploy against his wife and her supporters. Furthermore, one of Shrewsbury's estate officers, Nicholas Booth, routinely rode the countryside with ten armed men in the earl's livery, attacking Bess's servants and demanding that tenants on disputed lands pay rents to them rather than to Bess's officers. Tenants who had already paid Bess and refused to pay twice were threatened, evicted, or had their animals impounded. Booth and his men also attacked Charles Cavendish and damaged one of his properties.

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<sup>405</sup> In a document dated 25 October 1594 and revised 1603, Bess settled 17 properties in which she had a life interest as Cavendish's widow on their sons Henry and Sir Charles and their heirs (Nottinghamshire Archives, Portland of Welbeck (4<sup>th</sup> Deposit): Deeds and Estate Papers 157 DD4P, Talbot DD/4P/46/2). Not all the Cavendish properties are included: Chatsworth, Pentrich, and Meadowpleck are missing and may technically have been already inherited by Henry although he never lived at Chatsworth. The list does not include Hardwick either, as Bess had bought it from her brother. All told, she probably had some control over or claim to about 20 properties of her own during her marriage with Shrewsbury, excluding his properties to which she had access.

<sup>406</sup> Forcibly occupying a rival's house seems to have been a symbolic gesture by which lords could publicly humiliate local opposition. Harris cites several examples from the 1440s-1530s (pp. 205-8).

By collecting the rents from her lands and simultaneously ceasing to pay her allowance, Shrewsbury had cut off both of Bess's sources of income and severely curtailed her independence and ability to perform good lordship over her dependents. Furthermore, he was pursuing her sons and servants through the law courts. Bess's repeated appeals for reconciliation and cohabitation may have been prompted as much by pressing practical considerations as by ideals or affection; her letters of petition to Walsingham and Burghley emphasise material needs and emotional distress about equally, while the various sets of terms drawn up in 1586-1587 for the blended family's potential reconciliation likewise intertwine material considerations, honour, and amity.

Elizabeth had attempted to resolve the disputes by ordering, in the first instance, that Shrewsbury keep Cavendish lands worth £500/year but allow Sir Charles and William to enjoy the remainder of the disputed lands in peace; that he pay over to them the rents and profits he had collected since April 1584; that he drop the law suits against them and Bess's servants; and that he cease to displace farmers and tenants on Cavendish lands.<sup>407</sup> Later orders shift the focus from her sons to arrangements intended to provide for Bess herself while edging the couple back towards cohabitation. These are the arrangements that brought Bess's household to Wingfield Manor. Details differ across the three documents that focus on Bess and Shrewsbury's places of residence; although presented as a series of definitive statements — the queen's orders — they are highly intertextual and capture particular moments in what was obviously an ongoing process of negotiation.<sup>408</sup> What they have in common is designating Wingfield as the place where Bess was to live for an extended period (not consistently specified), during which time Shrewsbury was to visit her regularly. He was free to live at any of his other properties and was expected to summon Bess to join him from time to time; after her initial residence at Wingfield, she was free to move between Wingfield, Chatsworth, and Hardwick and the earl was expected to visit her. He was also to pay for her household charges and provide fuel while they were living apart. Although Bess was not required to remain at Wingfield at all times, this manor is most closely associated with marital reconciliation in the documentation, so living there may have come to

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<sup>407</sup> TNA, SP 12/207, items 7 and 13.

<sup>408</sup> TNA, SP 12/207, items 22, 23, and 60.

symbolise Bess's willing availability to cohabit with Shrewsbury in compliance with the queen's explicit wishes.<sup>409</sup>

There are no signs of harmonious cohabitation in Kynnersley's letters. Neither Bess nor Shrewsbury is at Wingfield Manor; instead, their respective servants are engaged in spying on one another there during Bess's brief absences. Bess had already complained in letters to Burghley on 6 October 1586 and 6 October 1587 that her husband was not keeping the queen's orders: he had visited her only thrice at Wingfield (for one night each time), never sent for her to join him at any other house, and ceased to send provisions and fuel for her household's use (IDs 152, 156). Kynnersley's letters, by contrast, indicate neither lack of provisions at Wingfield nor desire for Shrewsbury's presence. Rather, his letter of 5 November 1588 (ID 37) expresses the fear that the earl may return unannounced, having sent two of his servants ahead to ascertain how long Bess would be away. Kynnersley's warning suggests he believed that Shrewsbury and Bess had given up on the possibility of actually living together and had settled for a charade of being willing to do so. The underlying logic of his advice seems to be that if Shrewsbury were to suddenly appear at Wingfield and find Bess away, he could claim that he had tried to visit her and the fault was hers for not being there. Kynnersley urges Bess to return immediately to avoid giving Shrewsbury this advantage or the opportunity to make further mischief in her absence.

Like Crompe and Marchington, Kynnersley performs his role as an officer by providing Bess with pertinent and timely information and advice, showing foresight and taking initiative to maintain her best interests. But the domestic atmosphere of Wingfield in the late 1580s was far different from that of Chatsworth in the 1560s. Like Bess's attendants Marmyon and Battell, Kynnersley expresses solidarity with Bess more often and more explicitly than her Chatsworth officers of twenty years before. Across his two letters, Kynnersley offers the mistress his sympathy, prayers, advice, intelligent and dedicated obedience, deferential language and deferential manuscript layout. Furthermore, acting as Bess's deputy in her absence, Kynnersley focuses on keeping himself and her abreast of suspicious comings and goings at Wingfield and on upholding her authority there despite any commandments, force, or trickery of her husband's. The officer's letters provide glimpses into the workings

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<sup>409</sup> TNA, SP 12/207, items 22 and 23 record Elizabeth's exhortations and hopes for the couple alongside rules for their conduct.

not only of domestic loyalty but also of domestic espionage as they participate in the intrigues they describe.

Kynnersley's earlier surviving letter, ID 37, is the more urgent of the two. Written at eight o'clock in the evening of 5 November 1588, after he had already dispatched one letter to Bess by a servant named John, this letter provides important information that Kynnersley has only just learned: two of Shrewsbury's servants have come from Sheffield and held suspicious conversations with some of Bess's servants in the outbuildings. Gilbert Dickenson, the son of Shrewsbury's Sheffield bailiff, seems to have come specifically to enquire whether or not Bess were home and how long she was likely to be away. Then, late in the evening, a boy in a green coat, whom Kynnersley did not know by name, came to stay the night without performing any business. It seems that neither of the earl's servants presented themselves to Kynnersley; instead, they furtively engaged Bess's lower servants in conversation in the bakehouse and stables. However, the fact that 'ezabell' and the stablehands answered discreetly and quickly informed the officer of their conversations indicates that they were conscientious. In order to maintain the security of the household and exercise his other duties as a manager, Kynnersley would need up to the minute information about the doings of the earl's servants as well as the conduct of the servants under his own authority as Bess's representative. Bess's upper and lower servants at Wingfield appear to have been alert to danger, co-operative with one another, and quick to act in their mistress's best interests. The officer lost no time in warning Bess about the earl's servants' suspicious behaviour and advising her to return immediately. Not waiting until the next morning, he wrote to Bess at night and must have sent another servant out to deliver this letter in the dark. The superscription too urges haste: 'To ye Ryght honorable me syngular good lady & mistres ye countes off Sallop gyff thes with speed'.

Since the purpose of this letter is to convince Bess to return to Wingfield immediately, it is short and to the point. After informing her of what has happened since he wrote earlier that day, Kynnersley offers his own interpretation of the situation and deferentially but firmly urges her to return. His advice, like Crompe's, acknowledges Bess's prerogative to make up her own mind even while attempting to persuade her to do what he believes would be best for her. His language is deferential as he 'leve[s]' the matter for her 'to conseder off yt as you thynke beste' and refers to Bess's cogitations as 'your honores wysdom'. However, the open-endedness with which he refers to Bess's ultimate decision is abruptly contrasted with his own ready

conclusion: 'bot I thynke good you were here'. Paradoxically, the officer explicitly ascribes wisdom to the mistress while implying that she is free to act foolishly if she chooses. The statement that, in his opinion, she had better return functions as a directive speech act politely but firmly advising her to exercise her freedom in accordance with what he perceives would be wise.

In the second half of the letter, Kynnersley offers two further pieces of information in support of his argument that Bess should return. The first is that Master Knyveton was seen riding past Wingfield in the direction of Sheffield but 'called not [...] which I marvell off'. Kynnersley's statement is cryptic but may refer to his expectation that Knyveton, as a relative of Bess's, would stop to pay his respects; riding past without a word may have appeared rude or suspicious, especially as he was evidently on his way to see Shrewsbury. The situation is complicated, however, by the possibility that the Master Knyveton in question was in Shrewsbury's service and may have owed him, rather than Bess, his first allegiance. But it is worth noting that Kynnersley does not appear to object to the mere presence of Shrewsbury's servants at Wingfield; what he objects to is their apparent lack of legitimate business while there. Knyveton's failure to stop in at Wingfield to pay his respects to his kinswoman may have appeared as suspicious to Kynnersley as the unexpected and unexplained visits by Dickenson and 'ye lacky'.

Finally, Kynnersley urges Bess to return due to the continued ill health of her granddaughter Arbella. Like Crompe and Marchington, Kynnersley informs Bess about the wellbeing of her young relative(s); doing so seems to have been conventional in letters from officers to employer and can appear tacked on, but Kynnersley incorporates news about Arbella into his overall argument. He writes that although she 'was mery' and ate well that evening, 'she went not to ye stolle yis vj days'. She seems to have been suffering from digestive problems and he suggests she might benefit from her grandmother's care and company: 'therefore I wold be glad off your ladyshipes comyng yff there were no oyer matter bot yat'. This formulation of the directive simultaneously suggests that Bess would be doing her faithful officer a favour by returning and reinforces the necessity that she do so: Arbella requires her attention, as does the other matter of preparing for Shrewsbury's potential visit.

By contrast with this focused, serious, and withal urgent letter, Kynnersley's only other surviving missive to Bess (ID 38) is frothy with compliments and gives the impression it was written in high spirits and at comparative leisure. Only in the postscript does it get down to business. The main body of this letter, written as a



covering note to be sent with 'part off your pryncypall Iuelles', consists of a sequence of congratulations and best wishes upon the 'comford & plessure' she will receive from them. As Bess sometimes referred to Arbella as her 'Iuell', the jewels that Kynnersley is sending her are probably her thirteen-year-old granddaughter and other young relatives.<sup>410</sup> He hopes that these human treasures will arrive 'in as good helthe & mery' as they were when leaving Wingfield, 'which was to them as mery & pleasand as ye recevyng off them wylbe Comfortable to your ladyship'. Unlike his earlier letter which plunges straight into business without even a greeting, this one opens with a formal salutation and consists mainly of courteous phrases.

Although these social niceties do not refer directly to the business of managing Wingfield, they do perform an important aspect of Kynnersley's duty as an upper servant: solidarity. Through these phrases, the officer demonstrates that he knows how Bess values her family, and he enters into their joy on being reunited. He appears nearly as carefree as he urges Bess to be in the first line of the postscript: 'your honor shall nede to take no thowght botte be merye'. In other statements, however, he constructs solidarity with her in ways that acknowledge not everything is as it should be in the bigger picture. Both the main text of the letter and the postscript move from sharing in Bess's joy to sharing in her troubles. Before the subscription, Kynnersley's good wishes gradually shift from congratulations to sympathy. Having written that the receipt of her jewels 'wylbe Comfortable to your ladyship', he goes on to state that he trusts and daily prays that she 'meay contenew in lyke comford & plessure duryng all your lyffe', with 'all your honores oyer great greffes torned to ye lyke comffordes'. Through these statements the officer not only expresses sympathy with Bess by acknowledging that her 'greffes' are 'great' and hoping that her circumstances will change such that they are replaced by 'comford & plessure', but he also attempts to be a part of the solution by petitioning 'ye allmyghte' on her behalf in his 'daylly' and 'harty' prayers. Unlike Battell's not terribly hopeful wish that 'god Amend' Bess's cause of grief 'in his good tyme', Kynnersley presents himself as actively seeking God's patronage for his mistress and trusting that her lot will improve. He uses the word 'trust' four times in this letter and three times tells Bess that he is praying for her. As we have seen, prayers typically feature in valedictions as a conventional way of expressing goodwill towards the addressee. The rather elaborate valediction of Kynnersley's letter ID 37 fits this model, comprising its only formal statement of solidarity with Bess: 'so I beseke ye

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<sup>410</sup> For examples of Bess calling Arbella her jewel, see IDs 144, 162.

allmyghty preserue your ladyship in helthe & send you sonne a good & comfordable end off all your great trobles & greffes'. In letter ID 38 Kynnersley places his prayers for Bess in the salutation and main body of the letter as well, which emphasises his emotional and spiritual engagement with his employer's affairs and more than fulfils the letter's essentially sociable function of paying his respects.

In the postscript of letter ID 38, Kynnersley enacts his role as a household officer in a different way: by engaging with a very important practical consideration concerning the management of Wingfield in Bess's absence. The sudden shift in content and purpose after the subscription gives the impression that, having written the first part of the letter out of courtesy as it would be rude to send Bess her 'Iuelles' without an accompanying message from him, the officer then realised it would be unwise to give her the impression that while he is sympathising with her present joy he is neglecting his ever-present responsibility to remain alert at his post. Far from it. He explains that Bess 'nede to take no thowght botte be merye' because her servants are taking thought on her behalf.

Specifically, they (or perhaps Kynnersley alone) have devised a method by which to distinguish between incoming letters containing orders from Bess and counterfeit letters with orders not from her. Whether the servants' troubleshooting arose from foresight, paranoia, or experience, they perceived themselves to be in danger of being sent and of obeying false orders that were contrary to Bess's real intentions. The solution proposed in Kynnersley's letter is that upon receiving any written instructions, even in what looks like Bess's own handwriting, they will inform her and ask her to confirm any genuine orders by writing a second time with her own hand and delivering this 'second comandment by on off your owen men' whom they would recognise. This multi-stage process of authentication would be rather onerous, feasible only if Bess were at no great distance from Wingfield, her orders were not urgent, and she were healthy enough to pen her own letters when required. It also places Bess under obligation to go to twice as much trouble as usual to instruct her officer(s). Kynnersley makes no apology for this imposition, clearly believing it to be necessary. In its favour, the scheme demonstrates the Wingfield servants' initiative, attention to detail, and determination to maintain the highest standards of security and obedience during Bess's absence. The officer boasts on their behalf, 'wee nether wyll yeld to comandment nor forsse except your honores hand'. The postscript to Kynnersley's letter ID 38 functions to assure Bess that her

Wingfield servants, himself included, can be trusted to remain heroically loyal and painstakingly obedient in the face of adversity.

Kynnersley stresses obedience more than any of Bess's other servant correspondents. The highest concentration of references occurs in the postscript of letter ID 38. In the first place, the officer assures the mistress that her wishes will be meticulously carried out during her absence, such that when she returns she will 'fynd all thynges here [...] in as good order as you leafte them'. His next statement — that Bess's servants at Wingfield 'nether wyll yeld to comandment nor forsse except your honores hand' — and the care they take to distinguish commandments in her handwriting from forgeries show their readiness to obey her written orders once authenticated. All in all, Kynnersley presents himself and Bess's entire Wingfield staff as dedicated to upholding her authority during her absence. His language verges on the martial, evoking images of siege in the words 'yeld' and 'forsse'; he depicts the manor and Bess's authority as under attack but staunchly defended by himself and her other servants, who will submit themselves to none but her. The officer is like the governor of a castle, resolved to hold it for his liege. In effect, Kynnersley's letter assures Bess that her obedient servants are determined not to let Shrewsbury take over Wingfield as he had done Chatsworth nearly five years before. The inherent danger of the situation intensifies the officer's expressions of loyalty, raising them towards the heroic.

In addition, the subscriptions and spacing of both his letters foreground his obedience and deference to Bess as the mistress he serves. In letter ID 38 he subscribes himself 'your honores obedyent seruand' and in letter ID 37 as 'your honores moste dewtyfull bound obedyent sarvand'. In both cases he refers explicitly to his servant status and to his exemplary performance of this role: he is 'obedient', 'moste dewtyfull', and 'bound' to her by ties of loyalty and obligation. His subscriptions and signatures simultaneously humble (and praise) himself as servant and honour Bess as mistress. Most explicitly, the title 'your honor', which Kynnersley uses in combination with 'your ladyship' throughout his letters, is conventional but particularly deferential as it suggests greater social distance and attributes virtue to his social superior. Furthermore, Kynnersley positions his subscriptions and signatures on the right side of the page, honouring Bess with blank space to the left and above his signatures, which are tucked humbly in the lower right corner of the page. Kynnersley's choice of verbal and spatial epistolary conventions, like the deferential language, empathy, honest advice, and problem solving seen

elsewhere in his letters, performs obedient loyalty to Bess on the handwritten page. Through all these features of his letters, Kynnersley presents himself as a dedicated, trustworthy, socially refined yet courageous household officer who can be relied upon to uphold Bess's authority at Wingfield Manor, undeterred by espionage, deception, or armed attack.

### **Conclusion: Service and epistolarity**

Kynnersley's two letters confirm many of the conclusions about early modern mistress-servant relations and correspondence drawn from the other letters examined in this and previous chapters. Writing as a trusted officer like Crompe and Marchington, Kynnersley engages like them with practical problems of management and enacts on paper a good working relationship with Bess as he reports on his supervision of other servants, troubleshoots on her behalf, and offers her ardent advice. Writing also like Battell and Marmyon as an upper servant in a period of intense domestic disputes, intrigue, and insecurity, Kynnersley, like them, emphasises solidarity with Bess. His letters to Bess, like the two attendants' letters to their gentry friends outside her household, place him firmly in Bess's camp in the prolonged 'cyvill warres' in which all three servants were necessarily involved.

Due to their overarching similarities with the letters of Bess's other upper servants, Kynnersley's can be used to highlight a number of specific aspects of servants' epistolary duty. First, his letters confirm the findings in Chapter 4 that it was an officer's duty to keep up a frequent correspondence with the mistress when she was absent from home. Kynnersley refers in letter ID 37 to having written another letter to Bess earlier that day; his reference to Arbella's not having used the stool in six days indicates that Bess had been away for at least that long, so the earlier letter may have been a routine, perhaps weekly, update which letter ID 37 supplements with urgent information and advice. Although it was unusual for an officer to write to the mistress twice on the same day, it was ordinary and indeed expected that experienced officers would warn and advise her on matters of importance, as we see in Crompe and Marchington's letters as well.

On the other end of the spectrum of epistolary service, Kynnersley's letter ID 38 shows him careful to miss no opportunity of cordially sending her his best wishes. It may have been expected that officers, like children and grandchildren, would pay their respects in epistolary form at every opportunity. Neglecting to do so was probably considered undutiful. Bess's step-daughter Katherine Herbert, countess of

Pembroke, opens a letter to Bess with the statement, 'I am loathe to lett passe any fitt messenger, without visiting your ladyship with my lettres' (ID 196), while Bess's granddaughter Aletheia Howard, countess of Arundel, begins one with an apology for not having written sooner: 'Madam., I must hombley carue pardon of your ladyship for defering so loing the presinting my duty, which I had loing seinces done if my lords accasions would haue permitted him to haue attinded you' (ID 237). Since Kynnersley was sending Arbella to join Bess, he had no such excuse: Arbella and her travelling companions were ready bearers for his letter, which functions (until the postscript) much like a greeting card accompanying the (living) gift.

Although both of Kynnersley's surviving letters are occasion-specific, the lost letter mentioned in letter ID 37 indicates that he wrote to Bess under ordinary circumstances as well. Unlike with Crompe, whose use of professional carriers reveals that he wrote to the mistress weekly during her absences from Chatsworth, how often Kynnersley wrote to her during her absences from Wingfield cannot be reconstructed. He does not appear to have used the carrier system for delivery but to have sent other servants as bearers. Thus, he was not tied to a weekly routine, but if Bess were to be absent for extended periods, she would likely have wished to receive regular updates, particularly given the household's vulnerability. Wingfield may have been further from the carriers' routes than Chatsworth, but in any case using servants as bearers had two advantages. First, it allowed for more frequent correspondence and speedier delivery in an emergency (as with letter ID 37). Second, Kynnersley makes clear that using servants to deliver letters was a means of increasing the security of Bess's correspondence. Sending letters to Wingfield by 'on off [her] owen men' who was known to her other servants there would further authenticate Bess's orders since, unlike her handwriting, her man could not be forged.

Kynnersley's readiness to write to the mistress in all circumstances and his proposed method of authenticating her letters to him demonstrate that he took seriously his task of corresponding with her about the state of her affairs at the house in his keeping. Kynnersley's letters to Bess confirm the impression given by those of her former Chatsworth officers Crompe, Marchington, and Foxe that letter-writing was an important part of a household or estate officer's duty and constituted an expression of his faithfulness.

Kynnersley's letters share several other similarities with those of the Chatsworth officers. For one thing, Crompe, Marchington, and Kynnersley all report

to Bess on the state of her relatives in the household. In letter ID 17 Crompe first informs her that he is having new boots made for her son Henry and then updates and advises her on her younger sons' education. In letter ID 18 he reports that he has received the books for her son William and that 'your ladyshippes mothur mrs leneger with all the chyldren be in helyth & merye'. Marchington writes, 'At this present mrs Fraunces mrs Elezabeth mrs mary with mrs knytons chyldren be all well amended [...] but I do Iudge that my lyttull masters do not prosper well in learning' (ID 47). Kynnersley is concerned that although 'me lady arbella at viij off ye clocke thes nyght was mery & eates hur meat well' she does not seem to have fully recovered her health (ID 37). Five months later he is pleased to report that she is in 'good helthe & mery' (ID 38). In addition, Bess chastises Whitfield for the neglect of 'my syster Iane' Kniveton in letter ID 99 and passes on messages to her 'aunte Lenecke' and daughter Frances through him and Crompe in letter IDs 101 and 100. It is clear from these statements that officers were responsible for the care of their employer's kin — especially women and children — who remained behind when Bess was elsewhere. In the absence of the household head(s), these relatives symbolically represented the ruling family without, however, being in charge. It seems that in Bess's household the officers, as the mistress's official representatives in her absence, ordinarily carried the highest authority and the weightiest responsibility although the women in their care could also assist in financial and other management and were to be treated with the utmost respect. Seeing to the needs of Bess's kin and reporting on their wellbeing were important parts of the officers' domestic business.

Of course, the officers' correspondence with Bess also reflects their responsibility for supervising lower servants and others living, working, or visiting at the houses and estates in their care. Each officer reports and advises on matters pertaining to his own specific supervisory remit, with the partial exception of Marchington, who freely and rather opportunistically comments on the performance of a fellow officer as well. Like Marchington, Kynnersley keeps his eyes and ears open, alert for any signs of trouble. However, whereas Marchington uses the negligence of fellow servants as leverage for his own advancement, Kynnersley exercises diligence for the purpose of protecting the property and its inhabitants from the incursions of Bess's husband and his servants. Whereas Marchington writes disparagingly about Crompe behind his back, Kynnersley encourages strong communication and solidarity amongst household members, as well as between them

and Bess. In letter ID 37 the Wingfield officer keeps a sharp look-out over the comings and goings of Shrewsbury's servants but appears to trust Bess's lower servants with whom he works. Kynnersley further acknowledges the dedication of Bess's entire Wingfield staff by using the pronoun 'we' to assert their united obedience in the postscript of letter ID 38.

As a literate officer corresponding with the absent mistress, Kynnersley presents himself as a spokesman for the household. His letters reveal that he had wide-ranging responsibilities. Since he does not mention any other officers at Wingfield and no accounts survive for the household at this date, it is possible but not certain that he was the only one there while Bess was away; if so, he would have exercised a steward like breadth of responsibility at these times, whether or not his particular office was that of steward when Bess and her full household were present. His later career shows Kynnersley to have been loyal and versatile but offers no further clues as to his office in the late 1580s. Kynnersley remained in Bess's service for another twelve years at least and became involved in managing the Wingfield, Chatsworth, and Hardwick estates; his activities requiring additional financing — which ranged from harvesting corn to managing an ironworks — are recorded in Bess's household account books for 1591-1601.<sup>411</sup> He was also one of several witnesses to the version of her will drawn up on 27 April 1601.<sup>412</sup> In the meantime, Kynnersley's surviving letters from 1588 and 1589 show him balancing attention to detail with seeing the big picture. Like Crompe's letters to Bess, Kynnersley's perform the stewardly functions of deferentially upholding the mistress's authority in her absence, offering her timely information and warnings, praying for her health and wellbeing, and taking the initiative to solve practical problems.

Added to these most officer-like features of Kynnersley's letters are a heightened loyalty to Bess and deep distrust of her husband — features in common with the letters of Bess's gentle-born attendants, Marmyon and Battell. The letters of these three individuals demonstrate especially clearly that it was an upper servant's duty to serve not only with outwardly obedient actions but also with words that spring from genuine feelings of sympathy and devotion. Just as 'eye service' — performing one's menial work only when the master is looking — falls short of the mark set for lower servants, so too acts of service without (verbally expressed) love fall short of the mark set for upper servants, perhaps particularly in times of trial.

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<sup>411</sup> Hardwick MSS 7, 8, and 9.

<sup>412</sup> TNA, PRO PROB 11/111. He signs on f.192r.

While it is enough for lower servants to work with conscientious diligence, upper servants' greater intimacy with their employer allowed — and required — them to enter into each other's inner worlds to a much greater degree. Furthermore, different degrees of intimacy were available to officers, who supervised and thus spent their time moving between the various areas of the house and/or estate, and chamberers, the personal attendants who were based in the comparatively private rooms of their employer. The conditions of their employment determined servants' opportunities for developing a trusting relationship with the mistress or master they served. From the surviving letters written by Bess's upper servants, it seems that intimacy with Bess and encountering adversity from her husband jointly motivated the more explicit, emotionally heightened expressions of loyalty found in the letters of the 1580s. The Chatsworth officers' professions of duty and goodwill are quite tame by comparison, but they were written at times of domestic harmony, in the 1560s when Bess was widowed and then happily married to St Loe; she and her officers were free from the disputes and power struggles that would erupt during her final marriage and have such an impact upon the daily lives, work, and domestic relationships of all in her service.

Kynnersley's writing style bridges the gap between the officers' and attendants'. While Bess's other officers express dutiful concern for her wellbeing through a combination of carrying out her wishes (to varying degrees), giving ardent advice, and offering their prayers or best wishes for her health in their letters' valedictions, verbal expressions of solidarity are more pronounced in Kynnersley's epistolary service. His valedictions are by far the most elaborate, and they make use of emotionally heightened vocabulary, such as 'comford & plessure', 'greffes', and 'beseke'. Whereas Crompe and Marchington's valedictions sound friendly and Foxe's rather stiff, Kynnersley's strike a deeper chord by offering commiseration and more urgent prayers. Furthermore, as we have seen, Kynnersley does not confine his statements of solidarity with Bess to the outer edges of his letters; letter ID 38 consists entirely of empathetic rejoicings and sorrows until the postscript, which contains his most explicit statement of dedicated loyalty, when he assures Bess that the Wingfield servants will yield to none but her. Kynnersley's distrust of Shrewsbury, apparent in both letters, adds another layer of empathy to his service: like Marmyon and Battell, he seems to see Shrewsbury as Bess does. Combining elements from the Chatsworth officers' letters with those of Bess's attendants,



Kynnersley's letters express solidarity with Bess through both advising courses of action that will uphold her best interests and entering into her perspective.

Kynnersley's interactions with Bess would have been similar to those of Crompe and Marchington two decades earlier: occasioned by and focused on their co-management of one of her houses and estates. Regular dealings in person and on paper would have given them the opportunity to develop a good working relationship that may have bordered on friendship, as seems to have been the case with Bess and Crompe. What makes Kynnersley's relationship with Bess different from those of his earlier Chatsworth counterparts is that the fraught domestic conditions of the 1580s made high levels of mutual trust essential for survival. It had become necessary for upper servants not only to do their duties but also to state their loyalties, verbally identifying themselves as Bess's supporters. This was a risky business, since Bess's most outspoken servants were likeliest to be targeted by Shrewsbury for dismissal. For those truly dedicated to Bess, however, such persecution would be a badge of honour. (This is also how Mary urges her attendants to think of their dismissal at Shrewsbury's hands in 1571: 'ie [...] prie ce bon dieu [...] que vous vous consoliés, puisque vostre bannissement est pour le bon seruise qu'aves faict a moy vostre princesse, & maistresse: car cella pour le moins vous sera tres grand honneur, d'avoir donné si bonne preuue de vostre fidelité a vne telle nécessité'. (I pray God, who is good, [...] that you will be consoled because your dismissal is for the good service that you have done me, your princess and mistress: for this at least will be a great honour to you, to have given such good proof of your faithfulness on an occasion of such adversity.)<sup>413</sup> Both Kynnersley and Marmyon boast that they are more than a match for the earl; but whereas Kynnersley's bravery would be exercised in defence of Bess's authority and property, Marmyon appears to be most concerned about upholding his own honour and amending his declining career prospects. By contrast with these two men, Battell presents herself and her mistress almost as co-martyrs, elevated by their sufferings. Adversity may have forged stronger than usual emotional connections between the mistress and her most trusted servants, who shared in her dangers; it certainly prompted more explicit statements of loyalty to her. These are not evenly distributed throughout their letters, however, as their degrees of intimacy with Bess differed according to their respective service positions and genders.

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<sup>413</sup> Archives nationales, Carton des rois, K 96 No 2/6 (transcription and translation mine).

Bess's personal attendants had greater opportunities than her officers to develop emotional intimacy with her. As members of the gentry who served largely as companions and who travelled with her as she moved between residences, attendants spent the most time in the mistress's presence — some of it in relative privacy. They had the greatest access to her conversation, and thus to her thoughts and feelings. Furthermore, on social and ceremonial occasions, a mistress's retinue provided her visual back-up, adding to her splendour while being subsumed by her social identity. Their job as members of the gentry who were also servants was to simultaneously enhance and blend in with her public image, to merge their interests with hers while providing her with emotional and political support. For all of these reasons, attendants were most likely to identify and be identified with the person they served. It comes as no surprise, then, that Bess's attendants would speak up for her or that Shrewsbury would try to injure Bess by slandering or dismissing her attendants.

But just as subtle gradations of office could influence how particular male officers enacted their social identities in writing, as we saw in Chapter 4, so too differences in gender could enable attendants of the same social status to inhabit and write from different subject positions. While attendants of both sexes shared most of the same duties and opportunities, female attendants had the additional tasks of serving about the mistress's person in her most private moments; they helped her get dressed and undressed, for example, and some may have slept in the same room. These menial duties, which allowed gentlewomen to have exclusive access to the mistress's presence when she was at her most relaxed and vulnerable, turned the waiting women into an inner elite. It was a position of great trust and prestige. Furthermore, due to their similar social background and education, gentlewomen were likely to become the mistress's closest friends and confidantes within the household. They had the most in common with her to begin with and, in addition, the greatest opportunities for developing emotional intimacy.

As we have seen, the gentlewoman Frances Battell identifies particularly strongly with Bess throughout her letter to their mutual friend Paullat. Whereas Marmyon's letter to his former master fluctuates in its loyalties as he negotiates to leave Bess's service and return to Willoughby's, Battell's letter to Paullat sustains the most intense solidarity with Bess. Marmyon does express pity for Bess and, at the time of writing to Willoughby, is in the process of being dismissed on account of his loyalty to her. But Marmyon's representations of Bess and her husband are coloured not only by his position as one of her attendants but also by the fact that he is on the

brink of leaving her service; thus, he frames his allegiance to Bess as a thing of the past, ephemeral by contrast with his emotional ties to Willoughby, which he presents as deep and enduring. By contrast, Battell, like Kynnersley, is determinedly loyal to Bess. While the officer acknowledges Bess's 'great troubles & greffes' and works hard to prevent further losses at the house in his care, the gentlewoman takes things emotionally deeper while also using her advantages as a member of the gentry to reach out to a potential ally outside the household of her service.

The gentlewoman's letter depicts an exceptionally strong bond between herself and her mistress. In Battell's letter, the two women share friends and enemies, political allegiance, marginalisation within and ultimately banishment from Shrewsbury's household. They suffer for each other's sake. As Battell inherently represents her mistress's interests at Sheffield (and is vocal about her loyalty to Queen Elizabeth), she becomes a target for the hatred of Shrewsbury and Mary; later, during the Shrewsburys' separation, the earl rebukes Bess on account of her gentlewoman's loyal sympathy, completing the circle. Battell's statement, 'I am bound in duty and conshanc so to ancer', though referring to her defence of her queen, applies just as much to her verbalised loyalty to Bess. She owes both women her entire allegiance. But in order to be entire, her allegiance transcends obligation, becoming emotionally intuitive. The gentlewoman presents her emotional response to treason against the queen and to mistreatment of her mistress as an essential component of her loyalty to both women in authority over her. In both cases, Battell is moved by grief as well as by duty and conscience. She writes, 'it ded so much greue me to hear' Mary's servants state she should be queen of England, and likewise, 'I ded pitte my honorable lady and mistress caus of greaf'. Battell's pity, which emphasises Bess's vulnerability while implying she is innocent, imbues Bess with an aura of sanctity. The gentlewoman's letter expresses not merely duty but empathy and devotion.

Battell's loyal feelings and speeches are, of course, conditioned — conditioned by her upbringing as an English subject and her position and experience as a gentlewoman in Bess's service. As a woman of gentle birth and socialisation, Battell would have had much in common with Bess. Unlike the Chatsworth officers, Kynnersley, or even Marmyon, Battell was placed where she could develop the deepest friendship with the mistress, and where her loyalty would ensure that she shared in her mistress's sufferings to the full. However, in their banishment from Sheffield, the women could console one another and perhaps strategise together how

to convince their mutual friends, such as Paullat, to come to their aid. Unlike Marmyon, Battell does not appear to have, and claims she does not desire, an alternative to remaining with Bess. She is almost her mistress's second self.

In this and the preceding chapter, analysis of the extant letters written by six of Bess of Hardwick's upper servants has highlighted the wide range of duties, experiences, and epistolary styles pertaining to the officers and attendants serving her at Chatsworth in the 1560s and at Sheffield, Chatsworth, and Wingfield in the 1580s. Chapters 4-5 have argued that in their letters these literate upper servants simultaneously represent and perform afresh their duty to their mistress. Stewards especially were expected to render epistolary services, but their surviving letters show all Bess's upper servants using letter-writing to manage their relationship with her as a key component of their service. But, as their letters reveal, no two servants, and therefore no two mistress-servant relationships, are alike. Building on Magnusson's compelling argument that the similar psychological states expressed by different speakers in dramatic dialogue, lyric poems, and historical letters can be traced back not only to the speaker's individual character but also to his or her historically specific subject position, the analysis of Crompe, Marchington, Foxe, Marmyon, Battell, and Kynnersley's letters presented in the thesis draws connections between the service position and epistolary performance of each. Specifically, it is argued that servants' subject positions consisted of a combination of their particular service positions, gender, and experiences and that each of Bess's upper servants textualises his or her subjectivity in the language and sometimes the frequency and layout of his or her letters, while at the same time operating within evolving epistolary conventions and expectations about servants' attitudes and verbal deportment. In addition, as each letter has a persuasive purpose, writers' stylistic choices and self-representations in relation to Bess are shown to reflect the circumstances in which they were writing and what they hoped to achieve by doing so. As this thesis has demonstrated, historically contextualised meticulous close reading of early modern servants' letters can tell us much about early modern service, early modern letters, and how they interact.

## Conclusions and future research

This thesis has identified, transcribed, and interpreted the surviving correspondence, written and received, of a constellation of seven upper servants who at various points in the second half of the sixteenth century were stationed at or moved between several of the country houses and estates of which Bess of Hardwick was mistress. These individuals would be unknown to history were it not for the preservation of some of the letters and other manuscripts that they produced, received, or in which they were mentioned in the exercise of their duties. Of the several genres of domestic writing of which samples survive, the letters provide the greatest insights into the experiences, attitudes, and gender- and status-inflected performances of individual servants in their specific service positions, while also revealing the sorts of linguistic and visual-material forms that epistolary self-expression and social interaction could take in this period. In the process of recuperating and interpreting these servants' and their mistress's epistolary voices, social relations, and working lives the thesis makes several original contributions to knowledge — beginning with the selection of material and methodology.

Although early modern women's letters have received extensive and insightful treatment by a number of scholars in recent years and there is currently a surge of popular and academic interest in servants of many periods, this is the first study of servants' correspondence in early modern England.<sup>414</sup> As such, it brings together the insights from a number of fields while opening up a new area for research within interdisciplinary epistolary studies and social and cultural history more broadly. The innovative selection of material and the complex nature of letters as text-bearing objects of social exchange has necessitated the development of an appropriate methodology, which begins with transcription and annotation and then combines literary close reading with linguistic (especially historical pragmatic) analysis and what Daybell terms 'material readings' of manuscript letters. The multifaceted interpretation of each letter is grounded in meticulous research in domestic archives (particularly household account books), which has made it possible to reconstruct in some detail the specific positions, duties, and careers of

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<sup>414</sup> Magnusson led the way in 'Power to Hurt', but that study presents selections from one servant's correspondence with his master's kin as examples of a subject position not exclusive to servants and of a social script not exclusive to letters. The thesis is much indebted to Magnusson's ground-breaking work but differs in focus as it is entirely dedicated to servants' epistolary practices and includes material as well as linguistic analysis.

individual letter-writing and -receiving servants and also to shed light on the roles of many other people mentioned in their correspondence — most notably, Bess's half-sister Jane Kniveton. Due to the small number of surviving letters exchanged between Bess, her servants, and their other contacts, it has been feasible to present and analyse whole letters (rather than selected linguistic features, passages, or full texts but not their material forms) in the contexts of the specific domestic, biographical, interpersonal, and political circumstances in which each was written and circulated. This microhistoric approach would be untenable in a study of a large number of letters, but it has the advantage of ensuring that interpretations grow out of careful, first-hand observation and provide a thorough and balanced assessment of how each letter's particular combination of forms contributes to its practical and social functions. Historically attuned close readings of the letters are not, however, the end point of interpretation. Rather, they make it possible to take the next step and compare in detail how several correspondents from broadly similar social backgrounds enact their particular service-based identities in their letters — and thus to discover patterns of difference and also the common threads running through the correspondence.

Building on the synthesis of findings begun in the conclusion to Chapter 5, which mapped out the intersections of service, identity, and epistolary practices, the remainder of this section consolidates another set of interconnected findings, these ones concerning social change and the roles of women in sixteenth-century elite households. Setting the mistress-servant relations as enacted in the letters in the context of the historiography of early modern country houses and domestic service, it becomes apparent that Bess's household does not fit the models currently available. Rather, Bess and her servants' experiences and self-performances contest prevalent narratives of feudal decline and class struggle, while simultaneously exposing the varied practical and political roles of gentlewomen in domestic affairs.

There is a consensus amongst social historians that the noble households of the late middle ages and early sixteenth century were populated mainly by men and fulfilled political as well as social and other functions.<sup>415</sup> In such households, domestic and military service could be combined, while retaining and political patronage certainly were. However, by the sixteenth century most of a lord's supporters within and beyond his household were not his vassals; remuneration for

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<sup>415</sup> Mertes, pp. 5-6, 75-182; Woolgar, pp. 1-2, 14, 34-36; R. C. Richardson, *Household Servants*, pp. 222, 223.

services typically took the form of food and lodging, wages, annuities, livery, and promotion to additional offices but not feudal land tenure, so this system of patronage is often termed ‘bastard feudalism’.<sup>416</sup> Women of all ranks were in the minority in elite households. They occupied somewhat ambiguous social positions outside the hierarchies and daily ceremonials that were clearly delineated for and regulated the experiences of male household members, and they physically occupied fewer rooms, experiencing little freedom of movement.<sup>417</sup> Female servants did not hold offices (in households or government), and they do not seem to have worn livery. For all these reasons, women, and especially female servants, are often invisible in the historical record and sidelined in traditional social historical surveys of households and service in the late middle ages and sixteenth century. In domestic histories even aristocratic women have tended to be presented (in some cases by their absence) as inherently apolitical, set apart from the networks of patronage and allegiance that so preoccupied their fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons — or in any case not central to the story being told.<sup>418</sup>

Where women appear in numbers is in accounts of the feminisation and commodification of service over the early modern period.<sup>419</sup> Whereas most existing studies of ‘early modern’ servants focus on urban households of the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Mertes’s study of medieval noble households ends with the depoliticisation and emasculation of elite households, which she dates from the accession of Henry VII. Mertes argues that as elite households lost their local political functions due to the consolidation of central government under the Tudors large numbers of male servants were no longer needed and households ‘were allowed to decay [...] from social institutions to purely domestic establishments’ staffed mainly by women.<sup>420</sup> Sixteenth-century landowners increasingly split their time (and their servants) between their country houses and London, where they could pursue political ambitions at the royal court and Parliament but could not bring their entire

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<sup>416</sup> Mertes, pp. 124-26, 132, 136-37; Woolgar, pp. 9, 31, 45; R. C. Richardson, *Household Servants*, pp. 84, 96-98, 101-2, 107-8.

<sup>417</sup> Kari Boyd McBride, ‘Introduction: The Politics of Domestic Arrangements’, in *Domestic Arrangements in Early Modern England*, ed. by Kari Boyd McBride (Pittsburgh: Duquesne UP, 2002), pp. 1-14 (p. 8). Women are barely mentioned in R.B.’s otherwise thorough set of job descriptions for members of noble households c. 1605, and Meldrum points out that ‘housewifery’ had a ‘liminal place in the early modern discourse of work’ (p. 140).

<sup>418</sup> For example, in Mertes and Musson’s studies.

<sup>419</sup> For example, Mertes, pp. 188-93; R. C. Richardson, *Household Servants*, pp. 66, 222; Musson, p. 54; Bridget Hill, *Servants: English Domesticity in the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

<sup>420</sup> Mertes, p. 188.

retinue.<sup>421</sup> Households gradually lost their status as ‘the nexus of local control and patronage’, household service as a profession became less and less attractive to gentlemen, and the end of feudal households as a feature of English society was ensured by the increasing number of female servants after 1550, ‘whose roles could seldom have been more than wholly domestic’.<sup>422</sup> By the end of the seventeenth century, Mertes concludes, ‘The household was as politically impotent as the women who staffed it’.<sup>423</sup> Certainly that is the impression given by subsequent studies of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century households, which not only demonstrate but assume apolitical, contractual employer-servant relationships and high numbers of female servants; but these studies tend to focus on urban and middling households which were not based on feudal models and ideals.<sup>424</sup> Although the two segments of this broad historiographical narrative — the ‘medieval’ and the ‘early modern’ — are based on solid research and convincing in isolation from one another, there are many intriguing gaps waiting to be filled. In particular, what were the domestic roles of women in the sixteenth century, and were they ‘wholly’ domestic as Mertes assumes? To what degree did elite women engage in domestic politics and bastard feudal patronage? Answers to these and other questions would problematise and add greater complexity to the grand narrative.

Groundbreaking women’s and gender histories such as Ward’s *English Noblewomen in the Later Middle Ages* (1992), Harris’s *English Aristocratic Women 1450-1550* (2002), Frye and Robertson’s edited collection, *Maids and Mistresses, Cousins and Queens* (1999), and Meldrum’s *Domestic Service and Gender 1660-1750* (2000) are beginning to fill our gaps in knowledge about women’s domestic and associated roles, particularly those of elite women in the earlier period and of maidservants in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Yet as coverage is uneven, much remains to be done if the questions posed above are to be answered.

Some aspects of the weakening of bastard feudal domestic relationships were perceived during the sixteenth century — but not the gendered ones. For example, I. M.’s *Health to the Gentlemanly profession of Seruingmen* (1598) provides a mixture of nostalgic and satirical social commentary on changing master-servant relations in country houses. Writing in the persona of an unemployed, gentle-born former attendant, I. M. laments (perhaps with tongue in cheek) that the traditional social and

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<sup>421</sup> Mertes, pp. 188-90.

<sup>422</sup> Mertes, pp. 190, 191.

<sup>423</sup> Mertes, p. 191.

<sup>424</sup> For example, Hill, Meldrum, and R. C. Richardson’s monographs.



political bonds between lords and their male retainers had been shattered, such that there was no longer room for worthy gentlemen like himself in the profession. He perceived that service was becoming commodified: as households engaged in less (politicised) hospitality than formerly, competition for fewer service positions grew fierce and servingmen were no longer required to share their masters' elite status. He complains of masters hiring farmers' sons who will work for less (or even pay for the privilege of serving a nobleman) but who lack the social polish necessary for the exercise of their ceremonial and verbal duties.<sup>425</sup> But I. M. makes no mention of women. In his view, households were still thoroughly masculine institutions at the end of the sixteenth century, though less socially exclusive than formerly. Indeed, of the diverse and voluminous didactic literature about household service written in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, not one text gives the impression that elite households were being overrun by female servants. It appears, then, that the feminisation of households, in the sense of increasing numbers of female servants, occurred not during but after the perceived depoliticisation of elite households and commodification of service — that is, that social change was not cataclysmic but gradual and that in the sixteenth century women were not a domesticating force in elite households in the way posited by Mertes.<sup>426</sup> The preliminary findings presented by Harris and in this thesis indicate that a comparatively small number of elite women could fill a range of domestic and associated roles, patronage not excluded. At least some mistresses and their gentlemen and gentlewomen constructed their relationships on a bastard feudal model that emphasised the socio-political importance of the household.

The correspondence studied in this thesis opens up the domestic experiences of several sixteenth-century gentlewomen — Bess, her attendant Battell, her sister and attendant Jane Kniveton, and to a lesser extent her widowed mother and aunt — and the mistress-servant relations of Bess and her male officers and attendant, providing rich material for an assessment of the domestic and political roles of these particular women and servants. The letters that Bess exchanged with her Chatsworth officers reveal that she surrounded herself with female relatives, related through (and including) her mother, who performed a number of practical and symbolic functions within the household. Her half-sister Jane is shown to have exercised on an ad hoc

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<sup>425</sup> I.M., sig. E3[r-v].

<sup>426</sup> The prevalent view that urban service was increasingly feminised and commodified over the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is challenged by Meldrum's findings (pp. 6, 10, 16, 74-75, 182, 195-96).

basis the financial responsibilities that would normally pertain to a receiver, one of the chief officers of elite households, as well as serving as one of Bess's attendants and helping, with her mother, aunt, and the officers Whitfield, Crompe, and Marchington, in the care of Bess's children (as well as her own, born and raised in the house). In addition, during Bess's absence from Chatsworth in November 1552, Jane came to symbolise her elder sister and the dignity of the mistress's side of the family. Jane thus represented her sister-mistress on a number of levels, and as the account books testify she became a person of increasing importance in Bess's household in the following decades, particularly when based at Hardwick in the 1590s. At Chatsworth, Aunt Linacre performed some of the same functions as Jane. As a female relative of Bess, she too represents the mistress and her family in letter ID 99 and was authorised to exercise supervisory powers on her absent niece's behalf. She does not appear to have been involved in the financial management of the household, but she does oversee some of the gardening (ID 100).

Looking at Bess's own epistolary self-performances as mistress and at how she is represented in the letters written by her servants gives a new perspective on the link between language, social structure, and individual identity and leads to a reassessment of Bess's character and social practices. In brief, the thesis finds that Bess took her responsibilities as a household manager and employer seriously, keeping track of many details of household and estate business and directing the work of the officers under her authority. She was capable of building good working relationships with upper servants of both sexes and of inspiring friendship and fierce loyalty in those who worked with her most closely. To her Chatsworth officers Bess expressed gratitude (within the parameters of socially-scaled discourses of pleasure) as well as displeasure, and she was well aware of the socio-political advantages of being a 'good ladye & mestres' (ID 17). In the 1580s she seems to have taken pains to preserve her honour and reputation as a landowner, employer, and patron as much as circumstances would allow. Even though her attendants were liable to be slandered or dismissed by Shrewsbury, Bess managed to retain her own affinity and political contacts.

Against the backdrop of perceived social change, Bess and her upper servants stand out as staunchly but unselfconsciously conservative. Their letters reveal no awareness of what some of their contemporaries and subsequent historians represent as sweeping and disastrous changes in hiring practices and employer-servant relations. In the correspondence studied in this thesis, the feudal ideal of long-term

master-servant relationships marked by reciprocal duties and mutual benefits does not appear to be in decline. The surest sign that it is thriving is that all the letter-writers take it for granted, including the women who were theoretically outside its homosocial male system.

Alongside their other immediate and practical objectives, all the letters studied in this thesis demonstrate their writers' desire for a mutually satisfactory, long-term mistress-servant relationship. Far from depicting service as inherently demeaning (a later development of the worrying trends observed by I. M.), all of Bess's upper servants emphasise in their letters the dignity of their respective positions and show themselves willing to serve and to reap the rewards or pay the price of devoted service. Crompe and Kynnersley succeeded in maintaining long-term and exemplary service; their correspondence with Bess portrays and contributed to mutually beneficial relations, while account book entries demonstrate their service to have been of particularly long duration. Even when mistress-servant relations were at their worst, as in letter IDs 99 and 28, Whitfield and Foxe continued to pursue the relationship that provided them with not only the necessities of life but also a well respected place in society and, in Whitfield's case, the additional perks of Bess's patronage. Whitfield's continued appearances in the household accounts after 1552 and letter ID 101, which he received from Bess nine years later, testify that he weathered the storm of her displeasure and continued to request and receive desired resources. The sole purpose of Foxe's letter is to convince Bess that he is worthy to remain in her service. On the other hand, Marmyon's loyalty to Bess cost him his job and Battell feared that the same fate may befall her.

Even when leaving Bess's service, Marmyon remained a member of her wider affinity by receiving the annuity from her son William. Bess's (indirect) financial support of her former servingman and her repeated offers to help him find another place are presented in his letter to Willoughby in a way that indicates it was usual for employers to provide ongoing patronage to satisfactory former attendants. The question is not whether Bess will continue to assist Marmyon, but how. Besides the annuity, she proposes to place him where he could strengthen her political network as well as further his career. These disparate scenarios from the letters all highlight the reciprocal responsibilities and benefits of early modern employer-servant relationships, as inherited from bastard feudal lord-retainer relationships and

adapted to suit particular circumstances — including, of course, the circumstance that the lord was a lady.<sup>427</sup>

The positive attitudes of Bess's officers and attendants towards their places in society and Bess's own efforts to be (and to be perceived as) a good lady and mistress to them call into question the validity of materialist scholarship that focuses exclusively on unwilling subjection and celebrates subversion and rebellion as appropriate responses to unequal power relations. In its critique of such approaches and values, the thesis aligns more closely with Evett's *Discourses of Service in Early Modern England* (2005), which argues that service requires the exercise of servants' free will and thus that masters' authority rests on servants' willing obedience, and with Schalkwyk's *Shakespeare, Love and Service* (2008), which reveals the interconnectedness of concepts of love and service in Shakespeare's theatre, than with Burnett's *Masters and Servants in English Renaissance Drama and Culture: Authority and Obedience* (1997), which emphasises conflict.

Bess and her servants constructed their relationships according to late feudal ideals of good lordship and servant loyalty and seem to have been willing to perform their respective duties towards one another as a matter not merely of obligation but of honour and, in some cases, trust and affection. The officers' dignified self-performances in their letters reflect the continued social value of their positions and uphold the ethical value of even 'bastard' feudal relationships. The letters written by her attendants Marmyon and Battell engage more fully in domestic politics and patronage, in keeping with their gentry background, their service roles as companions, and the politically charged atmosphere of Bess's household in the 1580s.

Contrary to expectation, the gentlewoman Battell's letter is the most overtly political in the collection. As discussed in Chapter 5, this letter reveals not only the deep interconnections between domestic and national politics, but also the fact that Bess and Battell's homosocial female relationships — with each other, but also with their female kin and friends — provided the means of bringing their shared domestic difficulties to the attention of a male minister of state. The interpersonal bonds of love, loyalty, and shared experience between Bess and Battell very much resemble those ideally pertaining between a lord and his favourite retainers, and were formed

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<sup>427</sup> The thesis follows Ward in referring to the exercise of 'good lordship' by ladies; further research into noblewomen's roles as landowners and political patrons and the terms in which their activities were referred to by contemporaries is required to determine the degree to which 'good ladyship' existed as a parallel concept.

under similar domestic conditions. Marmyon's letter to Willoughby depicts a similar interpersonal bond between them as master and man, while his request for a lease from Willoughby (since Bess could not grant him one after all) faintly echoes feudal land tenure in centuries past. These two letters demonstrate continuity with late medieval lord-retainer relationships, crossing historiographically constructed temporal and gender boundaries. They reveal that elite households could remain politically important in the later sixteenth century; that mistresses could retain servants and affinities of their own; and that gentry servants of both sexes could engage in political discourse, the pursuit of patronage, and the trade in social (which translated to political) credit.

A fuller reassessment of the relationship between bastard feudalism and the interpersonal politics of domestic service in the sixteenth century, bringing gender to the fore, would be a welcome addition to women's history, to the growing scholarship on early modern servants, and to ongoing debates about the nature and extent of social change in early modern England. In the meantime, the correspondence studied in this thesis shows that in Bess's household at least the distribution of socio-political power between men and women was in constant renegotiation throughout the second half of the sixteenth century, due to a number of factors: the high proportion and high status of women, including female relatives, who were household members; Bess's active role in household management, not only when widowed but also during her adult marriages; and the conflicts between Bess, Shrewsbury, Mary, and their respective servants in the 1580s. Further studies of women in sixteenth-century elite households would reveal the extent to which the practical, symbolic, and political domestic roles played by Bess and her household women were exceptional or typical of wider patterns of social practice.

### **Directions for future research**

There is likewise a need for further studies of early modern servants' letters. While this thesis has used the correspondence of several servants of one mistress to open up a number of historically and socially specific patterns of epistolary self-performance and identity formation, the extent to which these patterns hold across a wider set of servants' letters awaits further case studies. Once the correspondence of servants

(and their employers) in many different households have been examined in detail, it will be possible to synthesise findings into a bigger picture of servant epistolarity.<sup>428</sup>

Other material within Bess and Shrewsbury's papers would also reward further study. The letters that Bess and her upper servants exchanged with one another could be compared with those that Shrewsbury exchanged with his upper servants, particularly Thomas Baldwin, well over one hundred of which are preserved in the Shrewsbury and Talbot Papers in Lambeth Palace Library. The parallel correspondence between Shrewsbury and his officers Baldwin, Nicholas Booth, and Thomas Strynger about the events of the 1580s would be especially interesting and could elucidate how Shrewsbury and his men attempted to maintain his authority and reputation in the face of not only the conflicts with his wife and the rumours of an affair with Mary, but also legal battles with politically active tenants. Such an investigation would pick up on some tangential observations made and questions posed in the process of researching the background to Chapter 5 of the thesis, and it would allow for comparisons to be made between how husband and wife (as lord and lady who were rivals for resources and credibility) managed their male upper servants, household functions, wider patronage, and public image through correspondence. Bess's very limited correspondence with her husbands' servants (including Baldwin) could also be compared with her correspondence with her own servants and Shrewsbury's with his.<sup>429</sup>

Building on both the thesis and the *Bess of Hardwick's Letters* edition, which identifies which of Bess's outgoing letters were penned by the same scribes, another future project could be to try to match the handwriting of unidentified scribes with hands found in her account books. Such a study would reveal another dimension of literate service and textual production within her household by tracking the careers and locations of particular scribes through the anonymous paper trails they left behind; it may also enable some scribes to be identified by name and/or household position.

Finally, another worthwhile area for future research would be the plethora of sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century manuscript and printed texts offering advice, instructions, regulations, and social commentary on household relations and

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<sup>428</sup> Vickery, pp. 396, 414 and Meldrum, p. 210 point out the usefulness of micro- and local case studies to build up a bigger picture that captures complexity and diversity.

<sup>429</sup> Bess received letter ID 50 from St Loe's servant William Moulso and letter ID 33 from John Kniveton, who may have been a servant of Shrewsbury; Bess wrote letter ID 190 to Baldwin and added post-scripts to three of Shrewsbury's letters to him (IDs 193, 194, and 195).

management, several of which have been referred to in this thesis. In recent years, literary and social historians working on early modern servants have dipped into some of these texts and genres in order to illustrate particular points (an approach that the thesis has also taken), but apart from the Puritan treatises they have not yet been studied in their own right. The sheer volume and variety of such texts (some of which were written by servants and specifically for servant audiences) would richly reward a systematic approach. The resulting publication would increase awareness of this material; facilitate its use in future literary and historical studies; and add greatly to our understanding of competing or shifting ideologies and discourses of service, how servants might have been trained, the management of specific elite households, and contemporary perceptions of social change.

In the meantime, studying servants and letters together in this thesis has opened up a new area for interdisciplinary research and offered a unique perspective on epistolary social relations, in which literate servants are at the centre. The close and densely contextualised readings of correspondence presented in Chapters 3-5 test and refine existing historiographies of both service and letter-writing, demonstrating that a greater depth and subtlety of knowledge can be attained by a microhistoric approach that builds on findings and combines research and interpretive techniques from several disciplines. It is hoped that the primary texts presented and analysed, methods developed, and conclusions drawn in this thesis will encourage ever more integrated approaches to epistolary studies and will inspire others to seek out and examine the textual traces of other early modern servants who engaged in domestic duties as authors and scribes, readers, bearers, annotators and preservers of letters, documents, and printed books.

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