

NEGOTIATING INTERESTS: ELIZABETH MONTAGU'S POLITICAL  
COLLABORATIONS WITH EDWARD MONTAGU; GEORGE,  
LORD LYTTTELTON; AND WILLIAM PULTENEY, LORD BATH

Elizabeth Stearns Bennett, B.A., M.A.

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APPROVED:

Marilyn Morris, Major Professor  
Denis Paz, Committee Member  
Laura Stern, Committee Member  
Guy Chet, Committee Member  
Deborah Needleman Armintor, Committee  
Member  
Richard B. McCaslin, Chair of the Department  
of History  
Michael Monticino, Dean of the Robert B.  
Toulouse School of Graduate Studies

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This dissertation examines Elizabeth Robinson Montagu's relationships with three men: her husband, Edward Montagu; George Lyttelton, first baron Lyttelton; and William Pulteney, earl of Bath to show how these relationships were structured and how Elizabeth Montagu negotiated them in order to forward her own intellectual interests. Montagu's relationship with her husband Edward and her friendships with Lord Lyttelton and Lord Bath supplied her with important outlets for intellectual and political expression. Scholarly work on Montagu's friendships with other intellectual women has demonstrated how Montagu drew on the support of female friends in her literary ambitions, but at the same time, it has obscured her equally important male relationships. Without discounting the importance of female friendship to Montagu's intellectual life, this study demonstrates that Montagu's relationships with Bath, Lyttelton, and her husband were at least as important to her as those with women, and that her male friendships and relationships offered her entry into the political sphere.

Elizabeth Montagu was greatly interested in the political debates of her day and she contributed to the political process in the various ways open to her as an elite woman and female intellectual. Within the context of these male friendships, Montagu had an opportunity to discuss political philosophy as well as practical politics; as a result, she developed her own political positions. It is clear that contemporary gender conventions limited the boundaries of Montagu's intellectual and political concerns and that she felt the need to position her interests and activities in ways that did not appear transgressive in order to follow her own inclinations. Montagu

represented her interest in the political realm as an extension of family duty and expression of female tenderness. In this manner, Montagu was able to forward her own opinions without appearing to cross conventional gender boundaries.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Since the 1970s, scholarship on Elizabeth Montagu (1720-1800) has focused primarily on her friendships with other intellectual women within the Bluestocking circle.<sup>1</sup> Throughout her life, Montagu maintained a variety of relationships and friendships with men of her acquaintance, yet scholars have passed over these relationships while considering the structure and significance of her female friendships. This study investigates Elizabeth Robinson Montagu's relationships with three men: her husband, Edward Montagu; George Lyttelton, first Baron Lyttelton; and William Pulteney, earl of Bath. I have selected these three relationships because each was intellectually and emotionally significant to her. My particular interest is how these relationships were structured and how Elizabeth Montagu negotiated them in order to forward her own intellectual interests.

Without discounting the importance of female friendship to Montagu's intellectual life, I contend that Montagu's relationships with Bath, Lyttelton, and her husband were at least as important to her as those with women, and that her male friendships and relationships offered her entry into the political sphere. I show that Elizabeth Montagu was greatly interested in the political debates of her day and that she contributed to the political process in the various ways open to her as an elite woman and female intellectual. Within the context of these male friendships, Montagu had an opportunity to discuss political philosophy as well as practical

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<sup>1</sup> Although Elizabeth Montagu's birth date is commonly reported to be 1720, she was actually born in 1718, as christening records show. 1720 is the year her sister Sarah was born. See Betty Rizzo, *Companions without Vows: Relationships among Eighteenth-Century British Women* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1994), n.15, 351. In this study, I consider her year of birth to be 1720 since it is the commonly accepted date and is used in nearly all the secondary sources.



politics; as a result, she developed her own political positions. As I demonstrate, Montagu represented her interest in the political realm as an extension of family duty and expression of female tenderness. In this manner, Montagu was able to forward her own opinions without appearing transgressive. To better assess Montagu's intellectual and political relationships with her husband Edward and with Lyttelton and Bath, I consider both the structure and the emotional content of the relationships. This study illuminates aspects of Montagu's intellectual and emotional life that have hitherto been neglected and places my findings within current scholarly debates concerning separate spheres, gender relations, and the extent of female political involvement in the eighteenth century.

My investigation is based primarily on correspondence between Montagu and these three men, much of it unpublished. Montagu was an indefatigable letter writer and her voluminous correspondence spans nearly seventy years. My research is limited to a period of about twenty-one years, 1742 to 1763. These dates correspond to Elizabeth's marriage to Edward Montagu in 1742 and the end of the Seven Years War in 1763.<sup>2</sup> While this period encompasses nearly the entirety of Elizabeth's friendship with Lord Bath (1760-1764), it does not cover the whole of the Montagu marriage (Edward died in 1775), nor the complete record of her friendship with Lord Lyttelton (c. 1752 to his death in 1773). The years between 1742 and 1763, however, are significant because they saw the establishment and development of these three important relationships. This period also provides plenty of scope for investigating Elizabeth's political interests and involvements. Edward was most active in Parliament prior to 1760, Lyttelton was at his political height in 1755 as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Lord Bath was busily paying court to George III after his accession to the throne in 1760. Britain was at war for much of this period. The backdrop of political and military drama occasioned by such events as the Jacobite

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<sup>2</sup> To minimize confusion when discussing the Montagus, I will refer to their given names rather than their surname.

rising of 1745, the 1757 execution of Admiral Byng for the loss of Minorca, William Pitt the Elder's rise to power, and the 1763 Peace of Paris produced extensive commentary from Elizabeth and her male correspondents. The years between 1742 and 1763 do represent some measure of political cohesion as they roughly encompass the years of military struggle following Walpole's fall and the subsequent establishment of empire confirmed by the 1763 peace treaty.

The bulk of Elizabeth's correspondence with Edward, Lyttelton, and Bath is housed at the Huntington Library and forms the backbone of this inquiry. A significant cache of letters between Elizabeth and Lyttelton was removed from the larger Montagu collection before its sale to the Huntington Library in the early twentieth century, and it now resides at Houghton Library, Harvard. This study considers those letters as well. There are several Montagu letter collections in various British libraries, but they contain few letters between Elizabeth and the three men considered in this study.

The familiar letter became a popular form of communication in England following the establishment of a relatively reliable government-sponsored Post Office in the early 1650s. Several important studies have addressed the ways letter writing promoted conscious self-fashioning and provided a platform for public performance.<sup>3</sup> Correspondents understood that personal letters might be circulated among people other than the named recipient(s), and letters were often crafted with this in mind. The popularity of the epistolary novel in the eighteenth century attests to the intrinsic imaginative possibilities represented by the familiar letter. It also demonstrates the fine line between objective truth and subjective self-representation as well as the shifting boundaries between public and private space. For genteel and aristocratic women, correspondence offered a chance to engage in intellectual life and present literary skills within

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<sup>3</sup> Howard Anderson, et al., *The Familiar Letter in the Eighteenth Century* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1966); James How, *Epistolary Spaces: English Letter Writing from the Foundation of the Post Office to Richardson's Clarissa* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2003).

conventional boundaries.<sup>4</sup> Although didactic emphasis on the suitability of letter-writing for women was aimed at containing female writing, many women found ways to refashion the genre into a vehicle for self-expression and intellectual exploration.<sup>5</sup> With Madame de Sévigné as a model, women might imagine their own letters published, perhaps even arrange them for posthumous publication as Lady Mary Wortley Montagu did with her Turkish Embassy Letters.<sup>6</sup>

Depending on the correspondent and situation, Elizabeth Montagu used her personal letters as a platform to showcase her literary knowledge and skill, and she unquestionably indulged in the imaginative self-representation inherent to letter writing. These unpublished epistolary performances and self-conscious representations as well as her seemingly unguarded commentary provide important information about the way she negotiated male friendships.<sup>7</sup> As Dena Goodman has demonstrated with correspondence between elite eighteenth-century French women, letter-writing was an important means for women to construct and develop friendships with other women. These epistolary friendships provided a measure of intellectual freedom as well as an opportunity for self-reflection and expression.<sup>8</sup> This was also true of Montagu's epistolary relationships with men.

#### Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Accounts Prior to 1970

Numerous accounts of Elizabeth Montagu have been published since her death in 1800, and they naturally reflect the preoccupations and values of the time at which they were written. Studies on Elizabeth Montagu and the Bluestockings issued before 1970 generally fall into two

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<sup>4</sup> Ruth Perry, *Women, Letters, and the Novel* (New York: AMS Press, 1980), 63-91.

<sup>5</sup> Dena Goodman, *Becoming a Woman in the Age of Letters* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2009), 264, 333.

<sup>6</sup> Cynthia Lowenthal, introduction to *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and the Familiar Letter* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 1-6; Robert Halsband, "Lady Mary Wortley Montagu as Letter-Writer" in Anderson, 49-70. Halsband notes that although as a young woman Lady Mary admired Madame de Sévigné's letters, late in life she dismissed them as only superficial "tittle-tattle. . . well-gilt over by airy expressions and a flowing style," 50. Lady Mary's later opinion was not generally held; among the educated elite, Madame de Sévigné's letters were considered to be a model of taste and style. See Goodman, *Becoming a Woman*, 148-50.

<sup>7</sup> There is no evidence that Montagu made any arrangements for posthumous publication of her letters.

<sup>8</sup> Goodman, *Becoming a Woman*, 247-331.

categories: either they portray Elizabeth Montagu and her circle in a kind of heroic manner, depicting them as exceptional women, or they disapprove of Bluestocking pretensions to learning. Whatever the orientation, these accounts emphasize the Bluestockings' connections to prominent men and treat them primarily as auxiliaries to male action, whether in politics or literature. As the most socially prominent and wealthy of the Bluestockings, Elizabeth Montagu has often been singled out for special attention, perhaps in part because of the large amount of correspondence she left behind. Early interpreters faced the challenge of reconciling Montagu's womanhood with her intellectual activities. Some friendly accounts overcome this by emphasizing her strict morality, her obedience to her husband, and her general reliance on male guidance. Commentators praise Montagu's domestic skills alongside her proclivity for learning, much as Samuel Johnson famously observed of Elizabeth Carter: "My old friend, Mrs. Carter, could make a pudding, as well as translate Epictetus from the Greek, and work a handkerchief as well as compose a poem."<sup>9</sup> Unfavorable interpretations of Montagu's literary pursuits portray her as pretentious and overly ambitious or simply irrelevant.

There are three major published collections of Elizabeth Montagu's correspondence taken from letters now housed at the Huntington Library and Houghton Library. In 1809 and 1813, Elizabeth Montagu's nephew and heir Mathew Montagu issued a four-volume collection of his aunt's correspondence.<sup>10</sup> In the preface to the collection, Montagu provides a short biographical sketch of Elizabeth describing male influences on Elizabeth's intellectual and

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<sup>9</sup> Samuel Johnson quoted in Norma Clarke, *Dr. Johnson's Women* (London: Hambledon and London, 2000), 27.

<sup>10</sup> The Montagus' only child, a son, died in infancy. At Edward's death in 1775, Elizabeth inherited the majority of her husband's fortune. Although no records of the settlement survive, it is likely that she acted as trustee for their adopted heir, her nephew Mathew Robinson, who was only thirteen in 1775. See J. V. Beckett, "Elizabeth Montagu: Bluestocking Turned Landlady," *The Huntington Quarterly* 49/2 (1986):150. In 1829 Mathew Robinson Montagu inherited from his brother Morris Robinson-Morris the title of fourth Baron Rokeby. See G. Le G. Norgate, "Morris, Matthew Robinson-, second Baron Rokeby (1713–1800)," rev. S. J. Skedd, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., Lawrence Goldman, October 2007, <http://www.oxforddnb.com>. Citations are to the online edition.

character development. Montagu credits Elizabeth's father Mathew Robinson as the family fount of artistic and conversational talent from whom Elizabeth inherited her gifts. According to Montagu, Elizabeth's father was proud of her accomplishments and encouraged sallies of wit between them.<sup>11</sup> Later, explains Montagu, Elizabeth accepted the divine revelations of Christianity through her friendships with Gilbert West and Lord Lyttelton. Montagu makes clear the importance of her religious conversion: "It was reserved for the influence of the steady principles of Christianity, to correct the exuberant spirit of her genius, and to give the last touches of improvement to her character."<sup>12</sup> Montagu selected and edited Elizabeth's letters to showcase her literary friendships and interests. Many letters are not included and many are out of sequence, but of those letters included, his editing is surprisingly judicious. Comparison of Elizabeth's manuscript letters to Montagu's published versions shows that generally Montagu excised small portions detailing health, meals, travel arrangements, finances, and other mundane and household matters; no doubt Montagu found these details trivial. Other than indirectly, by selecting, editing and arranging letters, Montagu offers no further interpretation of his aunt's life following his brief biographical introduction.

In 1906, Mathew Montagu's granddaughter Emily Climenson published a two volume edition of Elizabeth's letters from 1720-1761 including biographical information and commentary. Climenson's admiration for her great-great aunt is everywhere apparent, and her editing reflects a concern to properly illuminate Elizabeth's character as well as to depict her wide-ranging friendships and literary accomplishments. In Climenson's interpretation, men are central to Elizabeth's character development. After arguing that Elizabeth was not converted to pious Christianity by Gilbert West but rather that she embraced religion from an early age, she

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<sup>11</sup> Mathew Montagu, ed., *The Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu, with some of the Letters of her Correspondents*, 4 vols. (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1809. Reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1974), 1: 4-5.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

describes Elizabeth's integrity as a reflection of her male relationships:

Adored by men of all opinions, and liking their society, she was the purest of the pure, as is amply proved by the letters of Lord Lyttelton, Dr. Monsey, and others, but she was no prude with all this. Her worthy husband adored her, and no wife could have been more devoted or obedient than she was. His was a noble character, and doubtless influenced her much for good.<sup>13</sup>

Climenson also shows an antiquarian interest in eighteenth-century life, so many of her letter excerpts are meant to convey information about past customs, fashions, and habits. As Climenson admits in the preface, due to the size of the letter collection, much of Elizabeth's commentary on contemporary events and on literary subjects is left out. Climenson's editing is sometimes creative and she occasionally patches excerpts together from multiple letters without letting the reader know.

Climenson bequeathed to Reginald Blunt both the Montagu letters and the request to complete her memoir of Elizabeth Montagu. Blunt's two volumes of correspondence and commentary cover the years 1762-1800.<sup>14</sup> Blunt's assessment of Montagu is less complimentary than Climenson's. In the introduction, he half-heartedly defends her against Sir Walter Scott's charge that "Mrs. Montagu's letters' merit is in inverse proportion to the pains she takes with them."<sup>15</sup> Blunt does not in essence disagree with Scott's criticism, but does explain that modern interest in her letters is historical and biographical. Accordingly, Blunt's stated intention is to omit Montagu's personal expression and opinion from the published text: "the epistolary fireworks, the sententious reflections, and the learned disquisitions, thought they could not be entirely excluded, have been remorselessly blue-pencilled . . . the aim of their editor has been to conserve the references to well-known people and stirring events rather than the witticisms and

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<sup>13</sup> Emily J. Climenson, Preface to *Elizabeth Montagu: The Queen of the Bluestockings*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1906), 1: ix.

<sup>14</sup> Reginald Blunt, *Mrs. Montagu: "Queen of the Blues." Her Letters and Friendships from 1762 to 1800*, 2 vols. (London: Constable and Company, 1923).

<sup>15</sup> Sir Walter Scott quoted in Blunt, *Mrs. Montagu*, 1: 6.

reflections of their chronicler.”<sup>16</sup> Like Climenson, he often melds several letters together without alerting the reader, and he supplies narrative between excerpts drawn from excluded letters. Comparison of Blunt’s commentary with the unpublished letters shows that he often misreads and misinterprets the correspondence, sometimes from obvious carelessness. Blunt’s edition of Montagu letters is the least reliable of the major collections.

Other published collections include John Doran’s 1873 biography of Elizabeth Montagu which contains letters outside of the original Montagu collection. These consist primarily of correspondence between Elizabeth, Sarah Scott, and their brother William Robinson and his wife Mary. Doran’s account is meant to present Elizabeth Montagu as an exceptional woman while at the same time illustrating fashionable life in the eighteenth century.<sup>17</sup> To provide supplementary information and quotations, Doran relies heavily on the Mathew Montagu edition of letters. R. Brimley Johnson’s *Bluestocking Letters* (1926) are reprints of correspondence previously published elsewhere. Johnson views Montagu and her circle as exceptional women, competent and worthy to associate with the learned men of their day: “Always ladies, not pendants; they regarded life with intelligence and common sense, formed their own opinions . . . and accomplished something toward an ideal of a gay and frank comradeship with brilliant and learned men.”<sup>18</sup>

Many nineteenth-century accounts of Elizabeth Montagu offer interpretations similar to those of Doran and Johnson. In these, Montagu represents an exceptional woman who excels in intellect yet retains her feminine qualities.<sup>19</sup> Most early twentieth-century commentaries accept

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 7-8.

<sup>17</sup> John Doran, *A Lady of the Last Century (Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu): Illustrated in her Unpublished Letters; Collected and Arranged, with a Biographical Sketch, and a Chapter on Bluestockings* (London: Richard Bentley and Son, 1873. Reprint, AMS Press, 1973).

<sup>18</sup> R. Brimley Johnson, introduction to *Bluestocking Letters* (London: John Lane The Bodley Head Ltd., 1926), 7.

<sup>19</sup> For example, see Anne Katharine Elwood, *Memoirs of the Literary Ladies of England from the Commencement of the Last Century*, 2 vols. (London: Henry Colburn, 1843; Reprint: New York: AMS Press, 1973), 1:44-65.

the notion that Montagu possessed an exceptional mind, but call her femininity into question by pointing out supposed defects in her personality. René Huchon complains that Montagu's most defining characteristics were "vanity, ambition, the desire of making her real or assumed superiority felt," and that vanity led her to display her learning too readily.<sup>20</sup> He also describes her as emotionally cold and unable to love.<sup>21</sup> John Busse repeats the charge that Montagu was incapable of love.<sup>22</sup> Further, he claims that Montagu's literary accomplishments, although admired by some of her contemporaries, amount to little: "Mrs. Montagu has left us nothing of importance."<sup>23</sup> Other sources also exhibit reservations about Montagu's lasting significance. In his review of Climenson's edition of Montagu letters, Basil Williams judges Montagu's letters generally "dull and pedantically written." More dismissively he writes, "There is very little in them which cannot be gleaned with much more amusement from Horace Walpole."<sup>24</sup> Chauncey Brewster Tinker refers to Montagu's learning as "amateurish" and describes her literary assemblies as stiff and self-serving.<sup>25</sup> In Tinker's view, bluestocking gatherings were less successful than the Parisian salons because they failed to adequately detect and support extraordinary men of letters.

Several post-war studies focus on Montagu's role as a patron and philanthropist.<sup>26</sup>

George Phillips points out that Montagu's annual May Day feast for the London chimney sweeps astonished public opinion because direct participation in humanitarian projects was at that time

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<sup>20</sup> René Huchon, *Mrs. Montagu and Her Friends, 1720-1800: A Sketch* (London: John Murray, 1907), 27; 36.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 41.

<sup>22</sup> John Busse, *Mrs. Montagu: Queen of the Blues* (London: Gerald Howe Ltd., 1928), 13.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>24</sup> Basil Williams, review of *Mrs. Montagu, the Queen of the Bluestockings* by Emily Climenson in *English Historical Review* 21/83 (1906): 594.

<sup>25</sup> Chauncey Brewster Tinker, *The Salon and English Letters: Chapters on the Interrelations of Literature and Society in the Age of Johnson* (New York: MacMillan, 1915), 140.

<sup>26</sup> Most post-war and modern attention has centered on the Montagu collection at the Huntington Library. W. Powell Jones discusses the contemporary surge of interest in Elizabeth Montagu's unpublished letters in "The Romantic Bluestocking, Elizabeth Montagu," *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 12/1 (1948): 86-87.



unusual.<sup>27</sup> Katherine G. Hornbeak examines Montagu's patronage of the unlettered poet James Woodhouse, who worked as Montagu's steward at her residences of Sandford Priory and Montagu House for nearly twenty-two years. To illuminate Woodhouse's experience under Montagu's patronage, Hornbeak makes use of Woodhouse's posthumously published works (1896) in which he portrays Montagu as vain, calculating, parsimonious, and fault-finding. Although Hornbeak admits that Montagu may have found Woodhouse difficult, she appears sympathetic to Woodhouse's complaints.<sup>28</sup> By repeating Woodhouse's claims that Montagu was vain and pretentious, Hornbeak underscores charges made by earlier scholars. Montagu's supposed vanity about her learning and wealth implies female weakness and lack of real merit.

#### Modern Interpretations of the Bluestockings: Ideological Models

Modern scholarship on Elizabeth Montagu and other Bluestocking women has been driven by several impulses, not least of which is the desire to identify them as serious intellectuals and authors in their own right. Feminist scholars influenced by the women's movement of the 1970s have attempted to restore the writings and histories of eighteenth-century women writers and intellectuals marginalized in traditional accounts. These scholars have given considerable attention to the Bluestockings. As discussed above, nineteenth and early twentieth-century interpretations tend to portray Montagu and her circle as exceptional women, and they focus particular attention on their association with contemporary literary and political men. Modern scholars have naturally wanted to show that Montagu and the Bluestockings were not simply auxiliaries to male action as these early accounts imply. One consequence of this has been a de-emphasis on the male/female friendships that existed within the larger Bluestocking

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<sup>27</sup> George L. Phillips, "Mrs. Montagu and the Climbing-Boys," *The Review of English Studies* 25/99 (1949): 239.

<sup>28</sup> Katherine G. Hornbeak, "New Light on Mrs. Montagu" *The Age of Johnson: Essays Presented to Chauncey Brewster Tinker* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), 349-61. Not surprisingly, Hornbeak studied under Chauncey Brewster Tinker.

circle. Sylvia Harcstark Myers' pioneering work *The Bluestocking Circle* established the paradigm of female intellectual life supported by nurturing friendships with like-minded women. In this work, the first serious modern published study of the Bluestocking women, Myers argues that the bluestockings drew support and encouragement for their intellectual endeavors from a network of female "chosen friends."<sup>29</sup> Myers situates her account within the development of feminist scholarship and she builds on ideas presented in Evelyn Gordon Bodek's 1976 work, "Salonnières and Bluestockings: Educated Obsolescence and Germinating Feminism." Bodek, Myers explains, recognizes fundamental importance of female friendship to Bluestocking endeavors and emphasizes the Bluestocking sense of female solidarity.<sup>30</sup> The central importance of female friendship to bluestocking accomplishments has continued to dominate scholarship on Montagu and her circle.<sup>31</sup> Conceptual theories of patriarchy and separate spheres that were developed during the establishment of the field of women's history assume inherent gender animosities, and this has also encouraged a tendency to focus on female/female relationships.

Separate spheres has been an important structural model for feminist studies and women's history. As a conceptual framework, the idea of separate spheres was developed as an organizing category to explain gender oppression. According to this model, women of the past lived in a comparative "golden age" of communal labor and shared social status within the family unit until the advent of capitalism. The industrialization of the eighteenth century has

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<sup>29</sup> Sylvia Harcstark Myers, *The Bluestocking Circle: Women, Friendship and the Life of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 60-81. Myers recognized that Montagu developed friendships with men, but she downplays their importance; see 177-206.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid, ix; Evelyn Gordon Bodek, "Salonieres and Bluestockings: Educated Obsolescence and Germinating Feminism" *Feminist Studies*, 3/3-4 (Spring/Summer, 1976): 185-99.

<sup>31</sup> For example, see Elizabeth Eger, ed., introduction to *Elizabeth Montagu*, vol 1 of *Bluestocking Feminism: Writings of the Bluestocking Circle, 1738-1785*, ed. Gary Kelly (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999), lx-lxi. Eger writes, "Carter and Montagu shared the experience of making successful incursions into spheres dominated by men, and they relied on each others support and friendship in a world hostile to learned women. Carter and Montagu developed an emotional relationship of rare intensity, a sort of rational or platonic love for each other which was grounded in their shared Christian principles (lxi)."

been identified as a turning point for women as their work was eliminated and marginalized by the transition to a manufacturing economy. Women were increasingly restricted to a clearly differentiated domestic private life, celebrated and supported in contemporary didactic literature, while men inhabited the public realm of politics and professions. By the mid-nineteenth century, women were confined to an “upholstered cage” of domesticity while at the same time forging bonds of sisterhood. Amanda Vickery’s challenge to this model has resulted in much scrutiny regarding its usefulness. Vickery points out that separate sphere ideology derived from nineteenth-century conduct manuals has been anachronistically applied to the study of eighteenth-century women by scholars looking for the foundations of modern female oppression. She argues that female association with domesticity is an ancient trope of western society and thus nothing new in eighteenth and nineteenth-century discourse. Further, she raises questions about the relationship between prescriptive literature and actual practice.

Vickery also contends that misinterpretation of the work of Jürgen Habermas has resulted in mistaken assumptions about the relationship between gender and a public/private dichotomy.<sup>32</sup> Habermas’s *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, translated into English in 1989, has been used extensively by feminist scholars mapping gender-bound social structures for developing interpretations of the public and private spheres. Habermas, who originally published his work in 1962, was reacting to post-war negative interpretations of Enlightenment rationality as exploitative and ultimately restrictive of freedom. His theory posits that the ideals of the Enlightenment brought into existence the “public realm,” what today is called public opinion. According to Habermas, the public realm was a free space existing

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<sup>32</sup> Amanda Vickery “Golden Ages to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women’s History,” *The Historical Journal* 36/2 (1993): 383-414; introduction to *The Gentleman’s Daughter: Women’s Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 1-12.

outside of establishment politics where men could debate the common good.<sup>33</sup> Critics of Habermas note that he almost entirely excluded women from his notion of the public sphere. Additionally, critics argue that his view is too static, and that the public and private spheres should be viewed as constantly shifting and overlapping categories.<sup>34</sup>

Lawrence Klein, building on Vickery's influential analysis of separate spheres theory, points out that assigning gender significance to eighteenth-century public/private distinctions is fraught with hazards. In eighteenth-century practice, the terms "public" and "private" varied in meaning, so that no one interpretation can be applied to every usage. Similarly, understandings of "public" and "private" have changed over time. Klein argues that we need to know what the concepts meant to contemporaries in order to properly map the intersection of gender with public and private space. Scholarly assignment of women to the private sphere and men to public space may not accurately describe eighteenth-century gender relations, Klein suggests.<sup>35</sup> Eve Tavor Bennett points out that eighteenth-century usage of the words "public" and "private" was significantly different than modern usage and that conceptually, the words did not signify binary opposition.<sup>36</sup>

Nuanced approaches to the public/private divide, however, have been useful in pointing out ambiguities in the relative masculinity and femininity of public and private space. Harriet Guest, in *Small Change*, warns that rejection of the vocabulary of public and private can lead to a kind of particularism which embraces diversity and pluralism, but stands resistant to analysis of

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<sup>33</sup> Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 10-11.

<sup>34</sup> John Brewer, "This, That, and The Other: Public, Social and Private in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in *Shifting the Boundaries: Transformation of the Languages of Public and Private in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Dario Castiglione and Leslie Sharpe (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1995), 1-21; Elizabeth Eger, et al. eds., introduction to *Women, Writing, and the Public Sphere, 1700-1830* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 7-9.

<sup>35</sup> Lawrence E. Klein, "Gender and the Public/Private Distinction in the Eighteenth Century: Some Questions about Evidence and Procedure," *Eighteenth Century Studies* 29/1 (1996): 97-109.

<sup>36</sup> Eve Tavor Bennett, *The Domestic Revolution: Enlightenment Feminisms and the Novel* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 128, 130.

change. Guest maintains that a methodological framework encompassing gendered conceptions of public and private space is useful in showing the cumulative effect of small changes in the private behavior and social activities of eighteenth-century women, such as newspaper reading, letter-writing, and shopping. She argues that small changes in reading practices or consumption patterns over time enabled women to imagine themselves public citizens. As part of her analysis, Guest evaluates the public reaction to the intellectual accomplishments of Elizabeth Carter and Elizabeth Montagu. In some accounts they were hailed as products of British progress and superiority; in others, they were portrayed as worrisome signs of national effeminacy and decay. For both women, private virtue □□or vice□□ had public implications. Guest shows the fluidity of the discourse surrounding their intellectual activities which points to the complexity and ambiguity of public and private boundaries.<sup>37</sup>

Deborah Heller demonstrates how the ambiguity of public/private distinctions provided Bluestocking women an avenue to engage in the public discourse that was part of Enlightenment culture. In this study, Heller uses ideas about gendered space to illuminate the structure and significance of Bluestocking assemblies. She contends that Bluestocking salons, held within private homes, operated as public venues for women to engage in and even direct rational conversation. Within the confines of the salon, female participants had the authority to converse rationally and freely with male guests as well as guests of differing rank. In this sense, Heller argues, Bluestocking women can be considered “co-architects of the public sphere.”<sup>38</sup>

While the separate spheres model has undergone considerable scrutiny and refinement, it remains a major category of women’s studies. The assumption of inherent gender animosities

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<sup>37</sup> Harriet Guest, *Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 95-110.

<sup>38</sup> Deborah Heller, “Bluestocking Salons and the Public Sphere,” *Eighteenth-Century Life* 22 (1998): 60. Dena Goodman makes a similar argument about the French salonnières in “Enlightenment Salons: The Convergence of Female and Philosophic Ambitions,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 22 (1989): 329-50.

that underlies separate spheres and other public/private models has been one of the impediments to the study of eighteenth-century male/female relationships in general and, I believe, to the in-depth study of Elizabeth Montagu's friendships with men. It is unquestionably true that Montagu developed close and satisfying friendships with other women. Several important studies that have demonstrated that her relationships with other women intellectuals such as Elizabeth Carter and Sarah Scott provided considerable support and encouragement to her as she engaged in literary pursuits and other projects considered by contemporaries as outside the feminine sphere.<sup>39</sup> This does not mean, however that Montagu failed to draw support and encouragement from her male friends for her intellectual endeavors, nor does it mean that her male friendships were less important to her. Even studies that do not explicitly invoke the language of separate spheres imply underlying tension in their assumption that Montagu preferred female friendships and found them more fulfilling than other relationships. For example, Eve Tavor Bannett concludes that Montagu, like her sister Sarah Scott, felt most comfortable with other women.<sup>40</sup> Susannah Riordan explains that female friendships mattered most to the Bluestocking women: "As adult women the Bluestockings also benefited from the friendship of sympathetic male intellectuals. Yet their mutual friendship and support is perhaps still of greater importance."<sup>41</sup> The primacy of Montagu's female friendships is implicit in other

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<sup>39</sup> For example, Bannett, "The Bluestocking Sisters: Women's Patronage, Millennium Hall, and 'The Visible Providence of a Country,'" *Eighteenth-Century Life* 30/1 (2005): 25-55. Jane Magrath, "'Rags of Mortality': Negotiating the Body in Bluestocking Letters," in *Reconsidering the Bluestockings*, ed. Nicole Pohl and Betty Schellenberg (San Marino: Huntington Library Press, 2003), 235-56. Myers suggests that Montagu's most important female relationship was with Margaret Harley Bentinck, duchess of Portland. She argues that Montagu's experience as Lady Margaret's companion at Bulstrode presented her the possibility of intellectual friendship and pursuits within a domestic setting. See *Bluestocking Circle*, 21-44. Although Myers mentions the potential for both male and female friendship within the domestic framework, she is most concerned with the female networks that supported Bluestocking intellectual endeavor.

<sup>40</sup> Bannett, "Bluestocking Sisters," 36.

<sup>41</sup> Susannah Riordan, "Bluestocking Philosophy: Aspects of Female Aristocratic Thought in Eighteenth-Century England" (unpublished PhD dissertation, Cambridge University, 1995), 131.

studies that consult mainly her correspondence with other women.<sup>42</sup>

Gender and sexuality studies have also affected the way scholars approach Bluestocking friendships. Lillian Faderman's *Surpassing the Love of Men* describes what she calls "the battle of the sexes" that raged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Intellectual women were susceptible to ridicule and censure should they display their learning in ways considered inappropriate and, as Faderman points out, negative views about female intellectual capacity and its relationship to female sexuality reach far back into western tradition. Faderman argues that in the eighteenth century only women could be counted on to take seriously the intellectual endeavors of other women. The attendance of other intellectual women at Bluestocking assemblies, according to Faderman, was far more important than the participation of men such as Edmund Burke and Samuel Johnson.<sup>43</sup> Faderman also describes the eighteenth-century fashion for romantic friendships between women, which she attributes, in part, to female alienation from men. She suggests that Montagu and Elizabeth Carter carried on an intense romantic friendship that sustained Montagu through a "disagreeable marriage."<sup>44</sup> Although Myers objects to the characterization of Bluestocking friendships as homoerotic, Susan Lanser has recently suggested that widening our understanding of same-sex desire to encompass the use of erotic language in correspondence demonstrates that sexual desire was at least a component of Bluestocking female friendships, including those of Elizabeth Montagu.<sup>45</sup> Whatever the case, scholarly focus on bluestocking same-sex partialities has deflected interest in their relationships with men or has cast them in a negative light.

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<sup>42</sup> See, for example, Emma Major, "The Politics of Sociability: Public Dimensions of the Bluestocking Millennium," in *Reconsidering the Bluestockings*, 175-92.

<sup>43</sup> Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York: William Morrow, 1981), 86-88. Faderman does not mention Lord Lyttelton or Lord Bath who not only regularly attended assemblies but also were arguably part of the Bluestocking nucleus.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, 131-32. Interpretations of the Montagu marriage will be attended to in Chapter 2.

<sup>45</sup> Susan S. Lanser, "Bluestocking Sapphism and the Economies of Desire," in *Reconsidering the Bluestockings*, 257-75.

## New Perspectives on Eighteenth-Century Women and Gender Relations

While theoretical models inspired by academic feminism have yielded valuable results, especially in terms of reestablishing a female past and recognizing literature produced by women, continued reliance on such models may be obscuring other important facets of female experience. Recent scholarship has suggested that models like separate spheres which assume inherent gender animosities may be distorting our view of eighteenth-century women's writing as well as the structure of male/female intellectual exchange.<sup>46</sup> Several recent studies have called for more subtle analysis of gender relationships that take into account such factors as rank, age, location, religion, and even variables in personality. As Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus point out, the historian's choice of sources will determine his or her understanding of gender relations. Scholars that rely primarily on prescriptive literature will focus more on conceptualizations of proper behaviors and perceived deviancies. Historians who look at the experiences of individuals are more likely to examine how differences in gender played out in daily life.<sup>47</sup> While both approaches have validity, studies which consider individual experiences can contend with such variables as age and religion as well as identify disparities between prescription and actual practice.

Amanda Vickery's work *The Gentleman's Daughter* is an example of a study which considers the individual experiences of eighteenth-century women and takes into account contemporary understandings of social space. Vickery explicitly rejects the vocabulary of separate spheres, contending that contemporary women did not make sense of their lives in the

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<sup>46</sup> Betty Schellenberg, "Beyond Feminist Literary History? Re-historicizing the Mid-Eighteenth Century Woman Writer" in *Women and Literary History: "for there she was,"* ed. Katherine Binhammer and Jeanne Wood (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2003), 74-91; Kathryn R. King, "Cowley among the Women: or, Poetry in the Contact Zone," in *Women and Literary History*, 43-63.

<sup>47</sup> Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus, ed., introduction to *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities* (London: Longman, 1997), 25.



ways indicated by the separate-spheres framework. Instead, she suggests, women identified themselves in various ways as functioning members of families and society, and interpreted their lives using such concepts as duty, love, fortitude, resignation, economy, propriety, and gentility. Vickery places particular emphasis on the ways social position shaped women's lives. Like Elizabeth Montagu, most of the women in Vickery's study belonged to provincial gentry families of moderate estate. In eighteenth-century parlance, they were "genteel." While she acknowledges the constricting and sometimes cruel nature of institutionalized patriarchy, she argues that the women of her study did not question this feature of society. Women did not categorize themselves as an oppressed group, but rather interpreted their lives within the prevailing conventions.<sup>48</sup>

In her recent study of eighteenth-century women writers, Betty Schellenberg contends that too much emphasis on the separate-spheres model has obscured the very real agency women writers possessed as actors in the literary marketplace. As she points out, interpretations that rely on the separate spheres framework characterize any female writing and publishing as transgressive. This assumption has prompted literary scholars to scour novels written by women for supposed representations of gender discrimination. In Schellenberg's opinion, focus on the disembodied text in combination with concentration on conduct literature has led to misrepresentations of eighteenth-century female writers. Her approach is to situate women in a historical context of contemporary print culture. Whether or not women chose to create an authorial identity for themselves, like Fanny Burney, or wished to remain personally obscure, like Sarah Scott, women writers actively promoted their works through various methods and showed considerable savvy in negotiating with male booksellers and printers. Like Vickery, Schellenberg complains that separate spheres analysis projects women as victims. She also

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<sup>48</sup> Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*, 1-12.

warns that it promotes a tendency to portray women writers as heroic or exceptional, much as in early accounts.<sup>49</sup>

Norma Clarke, in *Dr. Johnson's Women*, addresses eighteenth-century gender relations without resorting to the language of separate spheres, although she does not explicitly enter the debate. In this collective biography of eighteenth-century women writers, Clarke demonstrates that it was possible for female intellectuals to astutely negotiate the largely male world of letters. She observes that while women writers were certainly subject to discrimination with respect to formal social structures, “the sexes mixed on relatively equal terms” in the world of letters:

Many [women] imagined themselves as writers and received confirmation of the acceptability of that sense of self from family, friends, teachers, booksellers and readers. Women of every degree, single, married, widowed, wealthy and poor, educated and semi-literate, leisured and labouring, sought the realm of print. Some became celebrated; most did not. Books were status symbols. To be a successful writer was to reach the top of a hierarchy open to talent.<sup>50</sup>

Clarke's study takes factors such as social rank and personality into consideration to demonstrate the possibilities of male/female intellectual exchange. Clarke focuses on women writers who were friends or acquaintances of Samuel Johnson, but she does not present them as satellites of Johnson's brighter literary star; rather, she shows them to be independently successful authors. Johnson, she argues, considered them in this light. With regard to the uneasy acquaintance between Johnson and Elizabeth Montagu, Clarke points out that Montagu was socially and materially superior to Johnson, and that she did not feel obligated to bow to his literary authority. The relationship was one of rivalry for literary influence, which was not determined by gender difference. After the final break between him and Montagu, Johnson acknowledged Montagu's social and literary power in a remark to Boswell: “Mrs. Montagu has dropped me. Now, Sir,

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<sup>49</sup> Betty Schellenberg, *The Professionalization of Women Writers in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 1-22.

<sup>50</sup> Norma Clarke, *Dr. Johnson's Women* (London: Hambledon and London, 2000), 9.

there are people whom one would like to drop, but would not wish to be dropped by.”<sup>51</sup>

Like the studies referenced above, this inquiry sets aside the vocabulary of separate spheres and will concentrate on the actual structure of the relationships between Elizabeth Montagu and her male friends. Models that assume intrinsic gender hostilities can only obscure our view of male/female interaction in the eighteenth century. I situate Montagu in a historical context that takes into consideration her social rank and personality alongside her gender to illuminate the ways she negotiated intellectual relationships with men. As I show, these friendships gave her an outlet for her interest in politics and public affairs.

#### Elite Women and Eighteenth-Century Political Culture

Recent work on early modern women and political culture has done much to demonstrate that elite women had considerable access to the political arena. New scholarship suggests that elite women routinely participated in political affairs in ways accepted under prevailing conventions. James Daybell shows that in the sixteenth century, Elizabeth Talbot, Countess of Shrewsbury, was actively involved in correspondence networks to gather and disseminate news about parliamentary business, court faction, war, and possible armed rebellions.<sup>52</sup> In another study, Karen Britland contends that Queen Henrietta Maria, Charles I’s French consort, widely regarded as frivolously disconnected from political realities, was in fact engaged in transmitting her cultural and political positions through her staging of court entertainments.<sup>53</sup> Early modern women were certainly exhorted not to meddle in political affairs in prescriptive literature ranging from religious sermons to marriage manuals. The limitations of female education and patriarchal

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<sup>51</sup> Samuel Johnson’s remark to James Boswell quoted in Clarke, 145.

<sup>52</sup> James Daybell, “‘Suche newes as on the Quenes hye wayes we have mett’: the News and Intelligence Networks of Elizabeth Talbot, countess of Shrewsbury (c.1527-1608)” in *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450-1700*, ed. James Daybell (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), 114-131.

<sup>53</sup> Karen Britland, *Drama at the Court of Queen Henrietta Maria* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 13-14.

views about family and state also discouraged women from broadcasting their political opinions. Yet, as Lois Schwoerer suggests, by the late seventeenth century, the circulation of new, more positive ideas about the women, the growth of female literacy, and the example of female queens created a climate more receptive to women publicly voicing their political ideas through the medium of print.<sup>54</sup>

Several new studies on elite eighteenth-century women and politics illustrate the specific ways women participated in the nation's political life. Although women were unable to sit in or cast votes in Parliament (by custom, not statutory law), female members of powerful aristocratic families played a vital role in the political process. As Judith Lewis points out, eighteenth-century political power was based on land ownership and patronage, and many aristocratic women were landholders in their own right or were a conduit to large properties. The vagaries of the unreformed electoral system which allowed large landholders to control a variety of parliamentary seats by custom, influence, patronage, and even bribery combined with the ambiguities of the unwritten British constitution to provide opportunities for female political involvement. Lewis argues that in the spaces between requirement and custom women found areas for action: "We usually find our female patriots in those interstices, exercising power despite apparent lack of voting or property rights."<sup>55</sup> The familial nature of eighteenth-century politics and the desire to forward family interests prompted many women to enter the electoral fray in a variety of ways: canvassing, extending hospitality, organizing and participating in

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<sup>54</sup> Lois Schwoerer, "Women's Public Political Voice in England, 1640-1740" in *Women Writers and the Early Modern British Political Tradition*, ed. Hilda Smith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 59-63. Hilda Smith argues that use of seemingly inclusive language, what she identifies as a "false universal," actually served to marginalize women in societal and political contexts. Falsely universal language was extensively used in political and educational treatises to depict male maturation and its relationship to citizenship and the state. See *All Men and Both Sexes, Gender, Politics, and the False Universal in England 1640-1832* (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 1-11. It may be, however, that the ambiguities of language gave women some flexibility to engage in public political activity or to imagine themselves full citizens.

<sup>55</sup> Judith Lewis, *Sacred to Female Patriotism: Gender, Class, Politics in Late Georgian Britain* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003), 15.

events such as balls and parades, and gathering relevant news. Some aristocratic women, such as the duchess of Rutland and the duchess of Devonshire, gained reputations as political hostesses and placed themselves in the center of partisan political maneuvering and strategy.<sup>56</sup>

Most of the women highlighted in recent studies on elite women and political culture were members of politically powerful aristocratic families. Some of these women held peerages in their own right or were directly linked to peers as spouses or siblings. As Lewis, Chalus, and others have convincingly established, these women could hardly escape the political functions that came with their rank. Elizabeth and Edward Montagu were not titled aristocrats, but they were wealthy, landed, and socially prominent; both came from families with aristocratic connections. Edward Montagu sat in Commons for Huntingdon, a seat controlled by his first cousin, the earl of Sandwich. Elizabeth's elder brother Mathew held a seat for Canterbury. Although not directly part of a politically powerful family, the Montagus certainly had a measure of political influence and authority. Elizabeth Eger suggests that Edmund Burke's appeal to Elizabeth Montagu to help him secure a placement in Ireland may indicate that eighteenth-century women held more financial and political power than has been recognized.<sup>57</sup> At the very

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<sup>56</sup> The most detailed studies of female political involvement in the eighteenth century are Lewis, *Sacred to Female Patriotism* and Elaine Chalus, *Elite Women in English Political Life c. 1754-1790* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005). Both Lewis and Chalus have published a variety of articles on the subject. See Lewis, "1784 and All That: Aristocratic Women and Electoral Politics in Vickery, ed., *Women, Privilege and Power: British Politics, 1750 to the Present*, ed. Amanda Vickery (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 89-122; and Chalus, "My Minerva at My Elbow": The Political Roles of Women in Eighteenth-Century England" in *Hanoverian Britain and Empire: Essays in Memory of Philip Lawson*, ed. Richard Connors, Clyve Jones, and Stephen Taylor (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1998), 210-28; "That Epidemical Madness": Women and Electoral Politics in the Late Eighteenth Century" in Barker and Chalus, ed., *Gender in Eighteenth-Century Women*, 151-78; "Elite Women, Social Politics, and the Political World of Eighteenth-Century England," *The Historical Journal* 43/3 (2000): 669-97; "To Serve my friends": Women and Political Patronage in Eighteenth-Century England" in Vickery, *Women, Privilege and Power*, 57-88. Other studies which examine eighteenth-century women and politics are Stella Tillyard, *Aristocrats: Caroline, Emily, Louisa, and Sarah Lennox, 1740-1832* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1994); Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana: Duchess of Devonshire* (New York: Random House: 1998); and Sarah Richardson, "Well-neighbored Houses": the Political Networks of Elite Women, 1780-1860" in *Women in British Politics, 1760-1860: The Power of the Petticoat*, ed. Kathryn Gleadle and Sarah Richardson, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 57-73.

<sup>57</sup> Eger, introduction to *Elizabeth Montagu*, lxiii. Riordan also makes this observation in "Bluestocking Philosophy," 41.

least, it shows that Burke considered Elizabeth to hold some degree of political influence. As I will show, Elizabeth paid close attention to parliamentary and court political matters and acted in the ways open to elite women to forward both her family's situation and her own intellectual positions.

It is true that women were excluded by custom from exercising formal political power and that didactic literature vigorously discouraged female "meddling" in public affairs. Moralists worried that "petticoat influence," or sexually charged, illegitimate female power, would weaken the body politic.<sup>58</sup> Women were advised to devote themselves to the cares of household and family. But because the affairs of the household and family very often intersected with political concerns in elite families, women fulfilled their familial roles by stepping into political ones. As long as women's political activities could be interpreted as supportive to male interests, and thus non-threatening, the elite political classes accepted and even expected female political involvement. Women considered to be reaching beyond the scope of familial advancement were severely criticized.<sup>59</sup> Some scholars have suggested that increasing stridency in conduct literature can be interpreted as an indicator of male anxiety concerning expanding female roles.<sup>60</sup> A recent work on women in eighteenth-century periodical and newspaper biography supports this contention that women's public roles and opportunities were expanding rather than contracting during this period.<sup>61</sup> In any case, these studies underscore the porosity of

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<sup>58</sup> Anna Clark notes that in the *Persian Letters*, Montesquieu argued that female political influence destabilized the state because it undermined the distinction between private interests and public good. His remarks include the explicit warning that sexual temptation contaminates the state. Clark, *Scandal: The Sexual Politics of the British Constitution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 7.

<sup>59</sup> Chalus, *Elite Women and English Political Life*, 25-27. Lewis argues that female political activity was normative in the upper classes. See *Sacred to Female Patriotism*, 40.

<sup>60</sup> Vickery, "Golden Ages," 400; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 281.

<sup>61</sup> Stephen Howard, "'A bright pattern to all her sex': representations of women in periodical and newspaper biography," in *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles, Representations and Responsibilities*, ed. Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (London: Longman, 1997), 249.

the public and private spheres in the early modern period and further establish the problematic nature of gendered public/private polarities.

### Elizabeth Montagu and Politics: Historiographical Perspectives

It is true that Elizabeth Montagu's primary intellectual pursuits revolved around literature, and naturally scholars have given much necessary attention to these activities. As a result, Montagu's political interests are less widely known, although some scholars have given it acknowledgement. Barbara Schnorrenberg, for example, observes that while "it was apparently never a primary subject at her assemblies, Elizabeth Montagu was always interested in politics."<sup>62</sup> In general, studies which have considered the political implications of the activities of Elizabeth Montagu and other Bluestocking have been concerned with conceptual issues rather than how these women approached the political arena in concrete and specific ways. I believe this is, in part, a consequence of scholarly focus on female/female correspondence and the underlying assumption that the Bluestockings consistently identified themselves as distinct from other literary and intellectual men because of gender.

Recent interest in identifying a Bluestocking philosophy or feminism underpinning the friendships and assemblies of the Bluestockings has prompted some scholars to consider them from a political angle. Gary Kelly writes that the "Bluestocking movement was feminist inasmuch as it promoted the interests of women within the established social, economic, and cultural order," and he places this movement in the context of both the "Renaissance tradition of the 'learned lady,' and the "libertarian upper-class and professional middle-class traditions of the 'Old Whigs,' classical republicans, and eighteenth-century 'commonwealthmen.'"<sup>63</sup> Kelly and others writing about Bluestocking feminism are concerned to explain the seeming paradox

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<sup>62</sup> Barbara Brandon Schnorrenberg, "Montagu, Elizabeth (1718–1800)," in ODNB online, May 2009.

<sup>63</sup> Gary Kelly, general introduction to *Bluestocking Feminism: Writings of the Bluestocking Circle: 1738-1785*, 6 vol. (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999), xiv.

between Bluestocking forays into the male preserves of intellectual study, writing, and publishing and the conservative social and political stances held by Bluestocking women, including Elizabeth Montagu.<sup>64</sup>

Harriet Guest, working within a Habermasian framework, suggests that Bluestocking participation in the public sphere of letters was just a short jump from the public political realm because both presupposed “the fictitious identity of the two roles assumed by the privatized individuals who came together to form a public: the role of property owners and the role of human beings pure and simple.”<sup>65</sup> Guest contends it was the need to keep the public sphere of letters separate and distinct from the public sphere of politics that produced an ambivalently political Bluestocking feminism.<sup>66</sup> But while Guest acknowledges a political edge to Bluestocking activities and notes that individual bluestockings such as Elizabeth Carter and Elizabeth Montagu showed interest in the world of high politics, she posits that the Bluestockings remained emotionally detached from major political issues because they “apparently did not want to imagine themselves as having a role to play in the political world, as opposed to the world of letters.”<sup>67</sup> The real political significance of the Bluestockings, according to Guest, is the way they deployed sociability to turn away from the divisiveness of the political world and create a public space for educated women.

In an article exploring the political implications of bluestocking sociability, Emma Major goes a step further than Guest and argues that from the late 1760s, Montagu and her circle defined themselves in a political fashion by conceptualizing their own polite society as patriotic.

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<sup>64</sup> The extent to which Bluestocking women embraced a “feminist consciousness” is a related question. Sylvia Meyers explores this issue in *The Bluestocking Circle*, 121-150. Meyers concludes that while the Bluestocking women were becoming aware of their inferior place in society and hoped for better education and opportunities for women, they had no sense changing the existing political and legal structure in order to bring this about.

<sup>65</sup> Jürgen Habermas quoted in Harriet Guest, “Bluestocking Feminism,” in *Reconsidering the Bluestockings*, 63.

<sup>66</sup> Guest, “Bluestocking Feminism,” 63.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.



Their melding of patriotism and politeness allowed the bluestockings to assume a pose of public responsibility. Major argues that Montagu personally identified with the public nation and that she felt invested in its fate. She also contends that Montagu's views regarding public morals and civil order had roots in hierarchical Anglican ideology. Major's conclusions are based primarily on readings of correspondence between Elizabeth Montagu and Elizabeth Carter, Elizabeth Vesey, and Sarah Scott.<sup>68</sup> Like most studies of the Bluestockings, this one concentrates on woman-to-woman exchange, but it does demonstrate that Montagu and her circle felt themselves engaged in the public political realm.

Susannah Riordan's unpublished study of Bluestocking philosophy considers the question of Bluestocking attitudes towards politics. Riordan argues that Bluestocking women, including Elizabeth Montagu, maintained aristocratic views towards social and political issues, and she persuasively demonstrates that the core group of Bluestocking women came from families with direct aristocratic connections. As women with aristocratic values, the Bluestockings viewed the social and political hierarchy (as well as the inevitable brokering of interest to support it) as natural and divinely inspired. Significantly, she recognizes that Elizabeth Montagu and other Bluestocking women acted in informal ways to support their husbands' political ambitions, but Riordan qualifies their political involvement: "The bluestockings seem to have regarded politics as an unfortunate necessity, mundane and potentially ignominious, beneath the dignity of the refined mind and elevated soul."<sup>69</sup>

Riordan argues that the Bluestockings disliked party politics because they "considered party spirit improper and ridiculous in a woman."<sup>70</sup> Riordan's perspective reflects her interest in

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<sup>68</sup> Emma Major, "The Politics of Sociability: Public Dimensions of the Bluestocking Millennium," in *Reconsidering the Bluestockings*, 175-92.

<sup>69</sup> Riordan, "Bluestocking Philosophy," 39.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

the way Bluestocking women articulated their political views to other women, and she is certainly correct in her assessment that the Bluestockings often downplayed interest in politics to their female friends. Elizabeth Montagu's correspondence with her husband, and other male friends such as Lyttelton and Bath, sheds a different light on Montagu's political activities and demonstrates that she engaged in the political world not merely due to a sense of family duty, but because she took an intellectual interest in the political realm.

#### Elizabeth Montagu: New Questions

Elizabeth Eger contends that “supportive friendship between men and women, in which female intelligence was valued and encouraged, was vital to the early development of the Bluestocking Circle.”<sup>71</sup> Although Eger focuses on female friendship as a framework for Bluestocking achievement, her suggestion that supportive male/female friendships helped to enlarge the intellectual possibilities for Bluestocking women bears investigation. Elizabeth Montagu's large amount of extant correspondence with her husband and other men provides an excellent opportunity to examine the way male friendship contributed to her intellectual and political opportunities. In Chapter 2, I examine the Montagu marriage and argue that despite past negative representations of this union, the Montagus established a partnership based on friendship, esteem, and shared goals. I demonstrate that Edward's acknowledgment of Elizabeth's intelligence, practical judgment, and talent for writing served to support Elizabeth's intellectual activities. In Chapter 3, I show how Edward relied on Elizabeth for assistance and encouragement in his political career as a Member of Parliament. Elizabeth acted as Edward's confidante and advisor and provided encouragement by loyally supporting Edward's political principles. As I demonstrate, Elizabeth's interest in politics grew throughout their marriage.

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<sup>71</sup> Elizabeth Eger, “The Bluestocking Circle: Friendship, Patronage and Learning” in *Brilliant Women: 18<sup>th</sup> -Century Bluestockings*, ed. Elizabeth Eger and Lucy Peltz (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 29.

When Elizabeth's ideas diverged from Edward's in 1760, Elizabeth deployed a strategy that cleverly manipulated language in order to follow her political inclinations while still appearing to be in concord with Edward's stance.

Chapter 4 investigates various facets of Elizabeth's friendship with Lord Lyttelton. I consider the emotional and intellectual content of their relationship as well as their collaboration on *Dialogues of the Dead* (1760). I suggest a political interpretation for this work and argue that Elizabeth's dialogues are a public articulation of her political values. In Chapter 5, I show that her friendship with Lord Bath provided Elizabeth with further opportunity for political involvement through epistolary political discussion. Although Elizabeth characterized her rapt interest in politics as nothing more than a reflection of her tender feelings for Bath, it is clear from her letters that she thought extensively about public affairs and held firm opinions. As I demonstrate, Elizabeth attempted to use her friendship with Bath to forward her own political ideas. Lyttelton's several endeavors to obtain political assistance from Bath through Elizabeth's friendship with Bath further illustrate the political component of this relationship. In my conclusion, I discuss how my findings fit into the existing scholarship on Elizabeth Montagu and suggest directions for further research.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE MONTAGU MARRIAGE

Elizabeth Robinson Montagu's marriage to Edward Montagu has long perplexed scholars.<sup>1</sup> The nearly thirty-year age difference, Elizabeth's lack of enthusiasm for marriage prior to their engagement, and the long and frequent separations of the couple throughout their marriage have led many to conclude that the marriage, though perhaps not overtly unhappy, was emotionally and intellectually flat. Indeed, we know from Elizabeth's own testimony to her friend the duchess of Portland that she was apprehensive about her marriage to Edward:

Mr. Freind will tell your Grace that I behaved magnanimously; not one cowardly tear, I assure you, did I shed at the solemn altar; my mind was in no mirthful mood indeed. I have a great hope of happiness; the world, as you say, speaks well of Mr. Montagu, and I have many obligations to him which must gain my particular esteem; but such a change of life must furnish one with a thousand anxious thoughts.<sup>2</sup>

The Montagu marriage was not a love match, but it was companionate in the sense that both Elizabeth and Edward showed respect and affection for each other, and they regarded their marriage as a partnership in pursuit of shared goals. Like most eighteenth-century couples, the Montagus expected their marriage to produce children, but the early tragic death of their only child altered this prospect. Elizabeth's overwhelming grief likely made it impossible for her to consider another pregnancy.<sup>3</sup>

As a childless couple, the Montagus had to create another model for their marriage.

While it is true that Edward did not share in many of Elizabeth's literary pursuits, he supported

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<sup>1</sup> To minimize confusion when discussing the Montagus, I refer to their given names rather than their surname.

<sup>2</sup> Mathew Montagu, ed., *The Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu, with some of the Letters of her Correspondents*, 4 vols. (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1809. Reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1974), 2: 174. Rev. William Freind, who performed the wedding ceremony, was married to Elizabeth's cousin, Grace Robinson Freind.

<sup>3</sup> Sylvia Harcstark Myers, *The Bluestocking Circle: Women, Friendship and the Life of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 101-2.

and encouraged her independent study and talent for writing. Edward also solicited Elizabeth's involvement in his business and political affairs, and their collaboration in these matters provided them with a set of shared goals. Elizabeth proved to be a shrewd businesswoman, and she showed considerable practical and theoretical interest in politics. Edward clearly wished Elizabeth would share his retired habits as well, and he occasionally tried to curtail her travel and activities to bring this about, especially in the last decade of their marriage. Nevertheless, Elizabeth had considerable scope for maneuver, and in the roughly twenty-year period considered here (1742-1763), she generally managed to arrange circumstances to her liking.

As is true in any age, marriages in the eighteenth century were fraught with issues of power, responsibility, obligation, and expectation. In theory, if not always in practice, eighteenth-century husbands and wives each had very clear roles to play within the context of marriage, and these roles were explicitly sex and gender based. As moralists never tired of pointing out, wives were to subordinate themselves under the authority of their husbands. This was not merely the rhetoric of moral and religious injunction; it was a fact of law. Legal disparity combined with social inequality put married women at a disadvantage when it came to negotiating individual marriage relationships.

As a woman with intellectual interests generally thought of by contemporaries as outside a woman's normal sphere, Elizabeth Montagu faced particular challenges. In this chapter, I delineate how Elizabeth and Edward negotiated their relationship with attention to Elizabeth's interest in literature and their collaborations in business. Political collaboration, another important facet of the Montagu marriage, is discussed in Chapter 3. I argue here that from 1742-1763, Elizabeth and Edward forged a mutually satisfactory partnership based on shared goals, and that Elizabeth gained confidence to assert her own ideas without appearing to cross

conventional gender boundaries. I also demonstrate that the Montagu marriage was not as intellectually and emotionally sterile as typically represented. As I describe the reciprocity of their relationship, I argue that Edward was supportive of Elizabeth's intellectual curiosity and that that he found pleasure in her intellectual display. An outline of recent historical trends regarding eighteenth-century marriage in general and the Montagu marriage in particular provides contextual background for my discussion.

#### Eighteenth-Century Marriage in England: Historiographical Perspectives

In the eighteenth century, all women were expected to marry. At almost all levels of society, marriage was the conduit for the transfer of property between families and generations, and the family was both a basic economic and social unit. A woman was expected to provide some sort of portion to the marriage, which could range from cash to business and farm equipment to land. From the working and middle ranks to the upper reaches of society, marriage was used to cement family alliances, to augment fortunes, and to climb in social standing. A woman's marriage prospects were directly related to the dowry portion her family was willing or able to raise for her. Genteel women with small or nonexistent portions were particularly disadvantaged because their social rank limited their choice of acceptable occupations outside that of wife. Marriage provided a woman with status, and ostensibly, with material support independent of her natal family. Marriage settlements often involved protracted negotiations between families that included provisions for jointure and pin money. In theory, these were meant to supply a wife with some amount of separate property that would support her in the event of a husband's death as well as provide spending money above what was essential for basic food, clothing, and shelter. The laws concerning marriage contract were complex and sometimes contradictory, and because the essence of marriage law was to facilitate the conveyance of

property through the male line, marriage settlements did not always serve to protect women adequately.<sup>4</sup>

Given the centrality of marriage to a woman's life, early modernists have evaluated female experience within marriage from several angles. Feminist scholars have focused on the patriarchal character of the institution of marriage, while others have considered the relative affective bonds of spousal and family life. The most recent studies are concerned with questions such as courtship and women's choice of husband, the scope of women's work and responsibilities within the family, and the extent to which wives displayed personal agency and developed areas of familial power despite contemporary rhetoric which encouraged female submissiveness.

Women's studies in general have been influenced by feminist scholarship which characterizes marriage as inherently oppressive to women. Carole Pateman's work has been particularly influential in framing the way marriage relationships have been evaluated within historical and literary studies. In her reassessment of classic contract theory texts, Pateman argues that since women were not party to the original agreement whereby men transformed their natural freedoms into the freedoms of civil security, women necessarily lack the ability to freely enter into contract and are therefore the subjects of contractual arrangement, not independent agents. The marriage contract, in Pateman's view, is a type of labor contract that creates a domestic division of labor in which women are subordinate to men. Pateman's use of the public/private dichotomy and the language of separate spheres to describe the subjection of women in marriage demonstrate the way these models have been used to highlight inherent

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<sup>4</sup> Susan Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property in England, 1660-1833* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990), 25, 95-100, 131-46, 229-30.

opposition and division within the marriage structure.<sup>5</sup> Lawrence Stone's work on early modern marriage and family has also shaped debate about women and marriage. Stone argues that prior to the eighteenth century family, and spousal relations were distant and emotionally austere. Sometime during the eighteenth century, according to Stone's thesis, family relations became warmer and more affectionate as spouses sought companionship and romantic love in marriage.<sup>6</sup> This presumed rise of companionate marriage in the eighteenth century has provoked much debate, not only regarding its merit as a model, but also its implications for women's status and power within marriage. Stone's model of the rise of companionate marriage, along with ideological structure of separate spheres, has shaped much of the scholarship on eighteenth-century marriage. In the most recent studies, these models have served primarily as points from which to respond.

Studies of eighteenth-century marriage are obviously limited by sources of evidence which typically include court documents, sermons, conduct manuals, contemporary literature, memoirs, manuscript letters, and diaries. As always, choice of evidence has ramifications for the conclusions drawn. Joanne Bailey, in *Unquiet Lives: Marriage and Marriage Breakdown in England, 1660-1800* divides historians of marriage into two camps: pessimists and optimists. Pessimists, who tend to rely more on prescriptive literature, point out the inherently oppositional characteristics of marriage, while optimists tend to emphasize spousal mutuality. Both views are possible because contemporary culture promoted the idea of harmonized partnership while insisting that women were subordinate to men.<sup>7</sup> Recent historical studies evaluating eighteenth-

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<sup>5</sup> Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 6-7; 116-19.

<sup>6</sup> Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977), chapters 7-9. Randolph Trumbach presents a similar argument in *The Rise of the Egalitarian Family: Aristocratic Kinship and Domestic Relations in the Eighteenth Century* (New York: Academic Press, 1978), 69-117.

<sup>7</sup> Joanne Bailey, *Unquiet Lives: Marriage and Marriage Breakdown in England, 1660-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 3-11.



century marriage downplay theoretical models and instead investigate individual marriages in order to better evaluate the variables that affected power dynamics within the marriage structure. These variables include expectations and attitudes related to gender, but can also take into account other factors such as personality, relative social rank and wealth, religion, occupation, and age. While a case-study approach can limit the scope of the conclusions reached, it reduces the distortions common to rigid models and broad generalizations. The most recent works have focused on marriages within particular social ranks, or even more narrowly, on specific families.

Margaret Hunt, in *The Middling Sort*, argues that married couples in trade and the professions shared in a distinct commercial culture that encouraged some measure of partnership to build and sustain financial security – or at least stave off financial ruin.<sup>8</sup> In Hunt's analysis of a late eighteenth-century couple, Faith and William Gray, she notes that the couple shared in the trauma of near-bankruptcy brought about by the actions of a business associate, but also in their commitment to charitable endeavors. Both subscribed to the virtues of duty, discipline, and hard work. While it is not clear if Faith directly assisted in William's business, she provided a range of supporting services including extensive entertaining of business clients. Her family also provided both cash and labor during William's business crisis. Hunt concludes: "One of the most striking things about Faith Gray's married life is how poorly it harmonizes with any notion of a separate sphere for women. Instead, her story suggests powerfully the extent to which middling men and middling women shared in a common culture."<sup>9</sup> Without discounting the very real legal and social disadvantages of eighteenth-century women, Hunt shows that wives in middling commercial families very often positioned themselves as partners in bringing about the

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<sup>8</sup> Margaret Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender, and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 147-71.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 169-70. Regarding the companionate marriage debate, Hunt does not make any claims about the relative felicity of eighteenth-century marriage and family life. Rather, she takes the position that individual relationships contain elements of both tension and harmony: see 7-8.

financial success of the family. Bailey's detailed work on eighteenth-century middling marriage presents similar conclusions. Bailey argues that the division of household labor and responsibilities were not as gendered as has typically been asserted, and that wives regarded family maintenance as a dual activity. This arrangement forged co-dependency between spouses that was intensified by emotional needs and expectations. Bailey also asserts that while women were excluded from institutional power, many had access to considerable power within their own households.<sup>10</sup>

Amanda Vickery, in her study of eighteenth-century Lancashire gentlewomen, addresses the seeming conflict between companionate marriage and material advantage. She argues that families encouraged marriageable daughters to consider the material circumstances of would-be husbands along with considerations of character and temper. Despite the contemporary glamorization of romantic love, parents with marriageable daughters worked to limit social acquaintances to suitors acceptable to them. Vickery argues that women from these ranks were often "free" to choose a husband only from a limited pool of candidates. Contemporaries thought that a good match encompassed at least a component of family advancement. While mutual affection was an additional blessing, most agreed that it was not the sole basis for a successful marriage.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, since "the length of a man's rent-roll remained the ultimate aphrodisiac," women found it convenient to combine romantic thoughts with more prosaic considerations.<sup>12</sup> Regarding power relations inside marriage, Vickery contends that compatibility and affection played a determining role in the way couples negotiated power relations. However, she notes the difficulties in measuring the relationship between conjugal

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<sup>10</sup> Bailey, *Unquiet Lives*, 193-94.

<sup>11</sup> Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 40-41.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 82.

love and gender power; while romantic emotion might temper gender inequalities, it could just as easily support them. Vickery also maintains that wifely declarations of submission and deference constitute little proof that women privately subscribed to male superiority. She points out that women sometimes attempted to resist their husbands' authority by using tactics such as shaming their spouse with exaggerated obedience; naturally, their success varied individually.<sup>13</sup> Women also might deploy the language of wifely submission to deliver criticism or to demand redress for a husband's marital misconduct, as Ingrid Tague argues.<sup>14</sup>

Stella Tillyard's biographical narrative of the four Lennox sisters, daughters of the third Duke of Richmond, provides a detailed portrayal of aristocratic marriage in the eighteenth century.<sup>15</sup> The sisters were wealthy, well-educated and well-connected, but like nearly all women of their time, marriage was the central defining feature of their lives. As aristocratic women, they were expected to marry men appropriate to their wealth, rank, and family political leanings. Tillyard demonstrates the surprising latitude the sisters were able to take while maneuvering marriage situations to their own liking, even braving family disapproval and social scandal to do so. Caroline Lennox dramatically eloped with Henry Fox, a man her parents strongly disapproved of as a suitor for their daughter, and she withstood the tremendous scandal that ensued after their marriage. Emily Lennox, whose more conventional marriage to James Fitzgerald, first duke of Leinster, produced nineteen children, carried on an extra-marital liaison with her children's tutor and later married him with minimal disgrace.

Without addressing the separate spheres or companionate marriage debates directly, Tillyard evaluates each marriage with respect to romantic love, companionability, and division of

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<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 83-85.

<sup>14</sup> Ingrid H. Tague, "Love, Honor, and Obedience: Fashionable Women and the Discourse of Marriage in the Early Eighteenth Century," *The Journal of British Studies* 40/1 (January 2001): 96; 100-2.

<sup>15</sup> Stella Tillyard, *Aristocrats: Caroline, Emily, Louisa, and Sarah Lennox, 1740-1832* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1994).

domestic duties. Not surprisingly, she finds that each sister's experience varied considerably depending on personality and circumstance. Louisa Lennox dutifully made the best of an unaffectionate and childless marriage by focusing on the interior decoration of the large house on their country estate. Her younger sister Sarah rebelled against a loveless marriage to Sir Charles Bunbury by carrying on an indiscreet affair with Lord William Gordon (by whom she had a daughter) and ultimately separated from her husband amidst tremendous scandal. Tillyard's work also underscores the permeability of the public/private divide in the eighteenth century and intersection of elite marriage and domestic life with high politics. Tillyard makes clear the political roles that Caroline and Emily Lennox played as hostesses of Holland House and Carton House respectively, and she also emphasizes the sisters' interest in, and engagement with, public affairs and their families' place within them.

Taken together, recent inquiry into eighteenth-century marriage indicates that many women forged relationships with husbands that gave them some opportunity to act, if not independently, then with some joint purpose regarding the advancement of the family. It remains difficult for historians to make generalizations regarding the companionate nature of eighteenth-century marriage relative to other times because case studies show that actual experience varied widely. While contemporary literature championed marriage based on romantic love, financial considerations remained at the foundation of most marriage arrangements. Moral injunctions for wives meekly submit to their husbands did not necessarily reflect actual female attitudes, and many women found ways to appear dutiful without actually following their husband's wishes. Finally, most women accepted the social and political framework in which they lived, but it seems that many women carved out areas of personal power and were able to engage in activities normally thought outside a woman's sphere by

voicing adherence to certain conventions and values, such as duty to family or feminine modesty. My own research on the Montagu marriage supports these general findings.

### The Montagu Marriage: Previous Interpretations

In general, scholarly interest in the Montagu marriage has been limited to contextualizing Elizabeth's intellectual activities associated with the Bluestocking circle. Myers suggests that Elizabeth's choice of Edward as a husband allowed her the necessary opportunity to live part of the year in London and also gave her some control over her own time. Edward's wealth and rank contributed to Elizabeth's ability to access like-minded friends. As Myers explains, "A woman who married and could not live in London or could not afford to visit in the season seems to have been unable to maintain a 'bluestocking circle' friendship."<sup>16</sup> Eve Tavor Bannet mentions Elizabeth's marriage to Edward as the source of her wealth and social position that allowed her to engage in extensive patronage activities.<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Eger similarly identifies Edward as the origin of the financial and social freedom that allowed Elizabeth to develop the sorts of female friendships that Eger argues provided Elizabeth with the necessary emotional and intellectual support to engage in literary pursuits.<sup>18</sup> Eger contends that Elizabeth's shrewd management of Edward's collieries "allowed her the financial freedom to become an influential cultural patron."<sup>19</sup>

Scholars also have discussed how Elizabeth's management of Edward's personality

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<sup>16</sup> Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, 120.

<sup>17</sup> Eve Tavor Bannet, "The Bluestocking Sisters: Women's Patronage, Millenium Hall, and 'The Visible Providence of a Country,'" *Eighteenth-Century Life* 30/1 (2005): 34-35.

<sup>18</sup> Elizabeth Eger, ed., introduction to *Elizabeth Montagu*, vol 1 of *Bluestocking Feminism: Writings of the Bluestocking Circle, 1738-1785*, ed. Gary Kelly, 6 vols. (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999), lix. Eger writes, "her [Montagu's] correspondence with Elizabeth Carter stands out as the defining relationship of her life. In the intimate literary space of this correspondence, Montagu celebrated a friendship of profound spiritual and intellectual importance, which fed into, and helped define, her broader sense of female literary community." Eger takes the position that Elizabeth found the greatest intellectual and emotional satisfaction through female friendship, specifically with Elizabeth Carter. By neglecting to treat Elizabeth's male relationships, including her marriage, Eger indicates that she does not consider them important factors in Elizabeth's intellectual life.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, lxii.

affected her intellectual activities. Norma Clarke maintains that while Edward was “difficult, churlish, and bad-tempered,” he nevertheless gave Elizabeth freedom to pursue her own literary interests in exchange for outward deference to his wishes.<sup>20</sup> Lillian Faderman argues that Elizabeth’s discontent with Edward and her marriage led her to seek female friends with intellectual interests.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Myers suggests that the Montagu marriage became strained in the aftermath of Elizabeth’s grief from the death of their infant son, and that Elizabeth gravitated toward literary studies as a distraction from her deteriorating marriage.<sup>22</sup>

As several studies point out, Elizabeth sometimes found the contemporary duty of wifely submission oppressive and irritating. Some scholars have characterized this as the expression of a willfully controlling personality.<sup>23</sup> Myers, however, has usefully examined Elizabeth’s ability to appear to follow the strictures of obedience while at the same time exerting her own will. Myers points out that Elizabeth felt constrained by her husband’s control over her ability to travel and visit friends. In one instance, Edward refused permission for Elizabeth to visit Frances Boscawen because in his view, Elizabeth spent too much time away from their home at Sandleford. Outwardly appearing to submit, Elizabeth said she would write Boscawen to explain his denial. Afraid of appearing foolish, yet not wanting to relent totally, Edward said she could visit for three days. Elizabeth refused this offer as inadequate, then requested Edward frank her letter telling Boscawen of Edward’s refusal to let her visit. She wrote to her sister that Edward

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<sup>20</sup> Norma Clarke, *Dr. Johnson’s Women* (London: Hambledon and London, 2000), 149.

<sup>21</sup> Lillian Faderman, *Surpassing the Love of Men: Romantic Friendship and Love Between Women from the Renaissance to the Present* (New York: William Morrow, 1981), 131-32.

<sup>22</sup> Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, 104-05; 186-87, 246.

<sup>23</sup> See for example Betty Rizzo, *Companions without Vows: Relationships among Eighteenth-Century British Women* (Athens and London: The University of Georgia Press, 1994), 121. Rizzo claims that Elizabeth treated her position of wife as a role to play; she acted dutifully obedient and obliging despite Edward’s demanding and fractious behavior. According to Rizzo, Elizabeth’s essential character can be described as “resolute, resourceful, utterly determined, hard, and vindictive,” 113. Bridget Hill contends that “submissiveness did not come easily to Elizabeth Montagu. She wanted to be in a position of power, and she resented being controlled” in “The Course of the Marriage of Elizabeth Montagu: An Ambitious and Talented Woman without Means,” *Journal of Family History* 26/1 (January 2001): 7.

appeared to hope that she would again ask permission for the visit, but she acted “with great indifference & was determined either to have my pleasure or give a signal mark of obedience to his noble exertion of prerogative.”<sup>24</sup> Vickery repeats this example as an instance of a woman acting with exaggerated obedience to make her own wishes explicit.<sup>25</sup>

Bridget Hill’s analysis of the Montagu marriage requires particular attention because it is the only study focused entirely on the relationship between Elizabeth and Edward, and it is widely cited. Hill argues that Elizabeth deliberately chose Edward for his wealth and social position because her letters indicate intense interest in Edward’s finances and possessions.<sup>26</sup> Conceding that many marriages in the upper classes were frankly mercenary, Hill asserts that Elizabeth possessed a life-long hostility toward the idea of marriage for love because she had never personally experienced love.<sup>27</sup> Hill argues that Elizabeth’s letters to a variety of correspondents demonstrate dissatisfaction with her life and loneliness in her marriage. Although outwardly successful in terms of her financial and social advancement, Elizabeth’s marriage was in fact a failure because she was unhappy in it. According to Hill, the root cause of her unhappiness lay in a combination of personality defects. Hill’s assessment of Elizabeth’s character is worth quoting in full:

Perhaps such discontent can be traced to certain fundamental weakness in her character: her consuming love of wealth and the increasingly ostentatious display of it in entertaining, in building, and in dress, particularly after Edward died. A second was her

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<sup>24</sup> Quoted in Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, 139.

<sup>25</sup> Vickery, *Gentleman’s Daughter*, 85.

<sup>26</sup> Hill, “Marriage of Elizabeth Montagu,” 6. Edith Sedgwick Larson also remarks that Elizabeth married Edward for his money and notes her overwhelming preoccupation with wealth: “It [money] was always important to her and dictated her marriage choice as well as her most compelling interests once she was locked into that marriage.” See “The Personal Charity of Elizabeth Montagu” in *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture* published for the American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies, vol. 16, ed. O. M. Brack, Jr. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), 199.

<sup>27</sup> Hill, “Marriage of Elizabeth Montagu,” 4. In contrast, Myers argues that as a young unmarried woman Elizabeth consistently disparaged the role of romantic love in courtship because she felt that it was “only a pretence offered by a man to marry a woman whom he had actually chosen on other grounds,” *Bluestocking Circle*, 86. Myers further argues that Elizabeth’s small fortune relative to her social rank, combined with her awareness that it limited her choice of husband, prompted her cynicism about romantic love as a basis for marriage, *Bluestocking Circle*, 92-93.

need for constant admiration and devoted dependence; a third, her love of control over others. But perhaps above all, the weakness that made happiness inaccessible to her was her inability to love – not in the sense of romantic love, but as simple human affection.<sup>28</sup>

Hill accurately describes the wide age difference between Elizabeth and Edward, their failure to procreate, and the frequent separation of the couple over many years. This information is found in many accounts, and there is little doubt that Elizabeth found Edward an attractive marriage candidate due to his financial situation and social standing. Although there is no evidence to support her contention, Hill also hints that because Edward was nearly thirty years older, Elizabeth may have hoped he would die and leave her a wealthy and independent widow.<sup>29</sup> The only extant evidence of the initial marriage settlement comes indirectly from the correspondence. We know only that Elizabeth's portion was somewhere between £1000 and £1500, and that it was eventually paid to Edward by Elizabeth's father; no document concerning a jointure for Elizabeth has ever come to light.<sup>30</sup> A woman's long-term financial security depended in large part on the contractual settlement negotiated before marriage, and she was dependant on the male head of her household to make equitable arrangement for her. Theoretically, fathers would strike the best deals possible for their daughters, but this was sometimes not the case.<sup>31</sup> Wealthy husbands did not always make provisions for their wives, as

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<sup>28</sup> Hill, "Marriage of Elizabeth Montagu," 14. Many older accounts propose the idea that Montagu lacked emotional depth. Reginald Blunt declares Montagu's personality somewhat cold: "She had neither the warmth nor the emotion which are generally implied in that highest tribute [his own grudging fondness for his subject]." Blunt also repeats Hester Chapone's observation to Elizabeth Carter that Montagu was "an ignoramus in love," and he suggests that her ability to love was stunted by the death of her young son. See *Mrs. Montagu "Queen of the Blues": Her Letters and Friendships from 1762-1800*, 2 vols. (London: Constable and Company, 1923), 2: 352, 362. John Busse more directly alleges that Montagu was devoid of profound feeling: "She could not love; could not give herself up to another. And worse still, she could not sympathize with the *affaires* of her friends." See *Mrs. Montagu: Queen of the Blues* (London: Gerald Howe Ltd., 1928), 13. Hill relies heavily on Busse in her interpretation.

<sup>29</sup> Hill, "Marriage of Elizabeth Montagu," 6.

<sup>30</sup> Myers presents evidence that Elizabeth and Sarah had each been promised portions of £1,500; Sarah may have only received £1000 due to the failure of her marriage: see *Bluestocking Circle*, 96, 138. Larson estimates the paid dowries at £1000 each in "Personal Charity of Elizabeth Montagu," 204. As Hill points out, amounts of this level were small potatoes indeed compared to the duchess of Portland's portion of £20,000: see "Marriage of Elizabeth Montagu," 5.

<sup>31</sup> Staves, *Married Women's Separate Property*, 116-17.



Elizabeth well knew. When the second husband of her friend Elizabeth Vesey died, he left his widow without income, though he supplied his mistress with £1,000.<sup>32</sup>

Hill's study creates the impression that Elizabeth's only satisfaction in her marriage came from financial gain and the opportunity to display her wealth. She argues that Elizabeth desired not just companionship, but devoted dependence from her husband, and that Edward did not comply. Finally, she says, the death of their only child left her with no distraction from an unhappy and unfulfilling marriage. Hill proposes that Elizabeth's desire for the adulation and dependence, which was not supplied by her marriage, prompted her literary pursuits and her domination of the bluestocking circle. "Through the bluestockings," Hill suggests, "she [Elizabeth] may well have found some compensation for her husband's frequent absences."<sup>33</sup>

Susannah Riordan's study of "Bluestocking philosophy" provides some useful ways to reassess Elizabeth's attitude toward her marriage. She cautions that modern ways of conceptualizing love have led to misunderstandings regarding Bluestocking attitudes toward love and marriage. Riordan points out that the bluestocking women seemed to separate the concept of love into three distinct categories: erotic, romantic, and platonic love, or *philos*. Mention of erotic love is largely absent in their writings, and Riordan explains that the Bluestockings considered erotic love a masculine quality: "they did not believe women to have a sexual nature which it was necessary for them to rise above."<sup>34</sup> In the Bluestocking mind, one type of love might flourish without necessitating the presence of another type. Riordan argues that the Bluestockings distrusted romantic love based on superficial factors such as beauty and charm

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<sup>32</sup> Susannah Riordan, "Bluestocking Philosophy: Aspects of Female Aristocratic Thought in Eighteenth-Century England" (unpublished Ph. D. diss., Cambridge University, 1995), 197.

<sup>33</sup> Hill, "Marriage of Elizabeth Montagu," 9.

<sup>34</sup> Riordan, "Bluestocking Philosophy," 180.

because they felt it was fleeting.<sup>35</sup> As Vesey wrote to Elizabeth upon the occasion of Dorothea Gregory's marriage to a poor man of whom Elizabeth disapproved, Gregory had been "only mistaken in believing that Love is an evergreen."<sup>36</sup> The Bluestockings believed good marriages were based on "genuine knowledge and appreciation of other's qualities which would allow friendship – or *philos* -- to flourish when love faded."<sup>37</sup> Elizabeth's declaration to Elizabeth Carter, often cited as evidence of Elizabeth's unhappy marriage, that "you and I, who have never been in love," may refer only to giddy and fickle romantic love, not to genuine lasting affection.<sup>38</sup> According to Riordan, the Bluestockings' ideal in marriage was a partnership of "relative equality based on the culture of friendship."<sup>39</sup>

Aside from Hill, who characterizes the Montagu marriage as both a symptom and a cause of Elizabeth's alleged neuroses, most scholars suggest only the structural advantages and disadvantages of the union for Elizabeth, but provide little detailed analysis of the actual relationship. Scholarly attention to the later years of the Montagu marriage has been useful, but it may be distorting our view of the earlier years of the relationship. Elizabeth doubtlessly found it difficult to deal with her aging husband toward the end of their marriage, and she may even have felt estranged from him, as Myers and others suggest. Elizabeth's letters to her sister and other friends from the 1770s (Edward died in 1775 at the age of 84) recount her exasperation with Edward's demanding and petulant behavior.<sup>40</sup> Certainly Elizabeth resented Edward's desire to limit her activities. But as Riordan points out, "the final years of such a marriage do not necessarily reflect its beginning."<sup>41</sup> Riordan notes that Elizabeth's letters to Edward at the

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 188.

<sup>36</sup> Elizabeth Vesey quoted in Rizzo, *Companions without Vows*, 121.

<sup>37</sup> Riordan, "Bluestocking Philosophy," 188

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 179.

<sup>40</sup> Hill, "Marriage of Elizabeth Montagu," 14.

<sup>41</sup> Riordan, "Bluestocking Philosophy," 179.

beginning of their marriage show genuine affection.<sup>42</sup> Likewise, Myers contends that in the beginning of their marriage, Elizabeth found Edward a pleasing companion and enjoyed their time together.<sup>43</sup>

There is little information about Edward Montagu outside of the Montagu correspondence, and as I have shown, Edward has featured only as a shadowy background figure in accounts of Elizabeth's literary career. While scholars have given little attention to Edward in general, I believe it is important to understand Edward's intellectual, political, and social universe as we try to interpret Elizabeth's relationship to it. An outline of what we know or can surmise about Edward provides the best means to achieve this end.

#### Edward Montagu

Edward Montagu was born in 1692, the second son of Charles Montagu and the grandson of Edward Montagu, first Earl of Sandwich. He was the first son of Sarah Rogers, daughter of John Rogers of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, by which connection he later inherited properties in Northumberland.<sup>44</sup> He took a degree from Clare College, Cambridge in 1710 and apparently entered Lincoln's Inn that same year though he did not pursue a career in law.<sup>45</sup> His father Charles sat in commons for the city of Durham in James II's first Parliament (1685) and in William III's third through sixth Parliaments (1695-1701).<sup>46</sup> As these details demonstrate, Edward grew up in a family of landed property with a place in public life. As the son of a

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, 100-1

<sup>44</sup> Emily J. Climenson, *Elizabeth Montagu: The Queen of the Bluestockings*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1906), 1: 111. Climenson says that Edward's maternal grandfather purchased the estate of East Denton, including its collieries, in 1689 for £10,000.

<sup>45</sup> Romney Sedgwick, *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1715-1754*, 2 vols. (London: Published for the History of Parliament Trust by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1970), 2: 266.

<sup>46</sup> British History Online, "A list of the Commons: Third Parliament of King William (1695-98)", *The History and Proceedings of the House of Commons : volume 5: 1713-1714 (1742)*, 75-81. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=37698&strquery=charles+montagu>. Subsequent parliamentary lists for William's reign and for James II's First Parliament may be found at the same URL, 82-95; 53-60.

gentleman, he completed the expected level of education at one of England's ancient universities. As a second son, he probably entered Lincoln's Inn to prepare himself for a legal career or for a role in public life as an MP for one of the family seats. He evidently did not find it necessary to pursue law for financial reasons. When Elizabeth married him 1742, he owned two landed estates in Yorkshire at Allertorpe and Theakstone, as well as a house in Dover Street, London.<sup>47</sup> He leased his chief seat of Sandeiford Priory in Berkshire in 1730 from the Dean and Chapter of Windsor. He inherited property and collieries in Newcastle after the death of a maternal relative in 1758, but the inheritance was divided and remained in litigation until a settlement in 1765.<sup>48</sup>

Emily Climenson describes Edward as a studious man based on Elizabeth Carter's comments that Edward was "a man of sense, a scholar, and a mathematician."<sup>49</sup> Older sources sometimes refer to Edward as a mathematician, but more recent studies identify him primarily as a man of property and business.<sup>50</sup> As befitted his social and financial position, Edward procured a seat in commons representing the borough of Huntingdon and served from 1734-1768. The seat was under the influence Edward's cousin John Montagu, fourth earl of Sandwich (b. 1718). Edward first ran for office in the general election of 1733, replacing his first cousin Edward Wortley Montagu in the seat.<sup>51</sup> Despite Sandwich's chronic financial difficulties, he managed to maintain control over the Huntingdon borough and Huntingdonshire seats throughout his political career. From 1741, the year that Sandwich began to take an active role in

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<sup>47</sup>Climenson, *Elizabeth Montagu*, 1: 111-12.

<sup>48</sup> J. V. Beckett, "Elizabeth Montagu: Bluestocking Turned Landlady," *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 49/2 (Spring 1986): 150, 152.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 111.

<sup>50</sup> For example, Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, 97.

<sup>51</sup> Sedgwick, *HoP*, 2: 266-67. Wortley Montagu was returned for his father's seat at Peterborough that year (554).

electioneering, Edward never faced a contested election.<sup>52</sup>

Edward identified himself an independent Whig, and he was a principled man who refused to abandon his beliefs for convenience. His correspondence shows that he was sympathetic to the patriot opposition that opposed Walpole. He was suspicious of government encroachment on traditional English “liberty,” and he was particularly alarmed about Hanoverian and continental influence in English affairs. In these views, Edward was a quintessential country Whig. In every recorded division list, Edward voted against successive administrations. Edward’s insistent opposition became problematic for Sandwich during the election of 1747 because Sandwich and his patron the duke of Bedford were then serving as part of the government. Sandwich wrote about this embarrassing predicament to Thomas Pelham Holles, duke of Newcastle:

I have obligations to Mr Montagu, the present member for Huntingdon, that will put me under great difficulties how to set him aside without subjecting myself to his reproach . . . However, if I am upon the spot, I don’t at all doubt that I can make him easy, and name anyone in his room that will cut the same part in public matters that I shall, which he never can be brought to do, since, though he is a very honest man, he will always be an opposer of all Administrations.<sup>53</sup>

Sandwich communicated much the same to Bedford, but in the end supported Edward’s candidacy.<sup>54</sup>

As letters from his final years show, Edward became be querulous and difficult in old age. In the earlier correspondence consulted for this study, Edward emerges as a deliberate, thoughtful, and cautious man. A source outside the Montagu correspondence discusses Edward’s temperament and views in detail, and although it must be approached with care, we can glean some information from it. James Woodhouse, a shoemaker poet that Elizabeth

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<sup>52</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, *The Insatiable Earl: A Life of John Montagu, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Sandwich* (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993), 89-91.

<sup>53</sup> John Montagu, fourth earl of Sandwich quoted in Sedgwick, HoP, 2: 267.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

promoted for a time then later hired as steward for Sandleford Priory, describes the personalities of Edward and Elizabeth in his work *The Life and Lucubrations of Crispinus Scriblerus*.

Woodhouse apparently nursed a variety of grievances against Elizabeth, who he portrays as self-centered, controlling, pompous, mean-spirited, and parsimonious. His *Life* was not published until 1896, long after Woodhouse and both Montagus had died.<sup>55</sup> Because Woodhouse's verse is aimed at castigating Elizabeth's personality and behavior while at the same time defending his own, we must take his account with a very large grain of salt. His depiction of the Montagu marriage is meant to reveal Elizabeth as mercenary and uncaring; to do this he contrasts her temperament and actions to those of Edward. It is a cruel portrait of Elizabeth, but there are some grains of truth in Woodhouse's words. Woodhouse did not work for the Montagus until after 1764 and probably did not start work on his verse until after 1788, but his verse does provide some information that seems likely, or is corroborated by other sources.

Setting aside the negative hyperbole, Woodhouse claims that Edward and Elizabeth possessed very different personalities. According to Woodhouse, Elizabeth was talkative and gregarious while Edward was retiring and taciturn, a man who preferred quiet domesticity to glittering assemblies. Woodhouse calls him "modest—unaffected—studious—plain," and characterizes him as "a thoughtful Owl."<sup>56</sup> Edward was not a religious man, and Woodhouse asserts that Edward (in contrast to Elizabeth) disliked the courtly privilege that attended the Church of England, and that he considered religious rites to be superstitious tricks.

The most interesting assertion Woodhouse makes, however, is that Elizabeth and Edward

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<sup>55</sup> Katherine G. Hornbeak, "New Light on Mrs. Montagu," in *The Age of Johnson: Essays Presented to Chauncey Brewster Tinker* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), 349-50. Hornbeak's article discusses the relationship between James Woodhouse and Elizabeth Montagu based on Woodhouse's book of verse as well as letters from the Huntington's Montagu collection.

<sup>56</sup> James Woodhouse, *The Life and Poetical Works of James Woodhouse (1735-1820)*, ed., R. I. Woodhouse, 2 vols. (London: the Leadenhall Press, 1896), 1: 139.

verbally argued about politics as well as religion. Their “fierce contentions” reflected their differing personalities and ideological orientation:

Kings, and their Creatures were His warmest hate—  
But she ador’d a Court, and courtly State.  
She lov’d a Drawing-room, and pompous Prig—  
He look’d aloof, an independent Whig.  
She lov’d Kings, Queens, and all the regal Clan,  
He was an upright, plumb Republican.<sup>57</sup>

Edward was certainly not a republican in the sense that he wished to do away with the monarchy. His strong belief that private property must be protected from the encroachment of the crown was a value contemporaries associated with republicanism, but it did not necessarily indicate adherence to republicanism. The revolution settlement of 1688 limited monarchy in way that people such as Edward could reconcile their belief in the sanctity of private property with royal prerogative.<sup>58</sup> It is true that Edward never went to court for ideological reasons, but Elizabeth did begin to attend court drawing rooms after the ascension of George III in 1760. Their epistolary exchange regarding Elizabeth’s desire to go to court will be examined in Chapter 3. The idea that they vehemently argued about ideological differences, as Woodhouse suggests, is tantalizing, but uncorroborated by any other source. Considering Elizabeth’s outward show of deference to Edward in her letters, it seems unlikely that she would verbally defy him, especially in the presence of their steward.

The Montagu correspondence reveals Edward as a kind and tolerant man, although within a paternalistic framework. He took an interest in his tenants and was generous to them in times of disaster.<sup>59</sup> Edward seems to have encouraged Elizabeth’s interest in less fortunate relatives, such as the motherless Botham girls, who he supplied with spending money during a visit to

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>58</sup> Paul Langford, *Public Life and the Propertied Englishman, 1689-1789* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 508.

<sup>59</sup> Beckett, “Bluestocking Turned Landlady,” 152-53.

London.<sup>60</sup> He maintained a correspondence with the Montagu family black sheep, Edward Wortley Montagu, son to his cousin of the same name (known as Mr. Wortley) and to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Edward thought Wortley Montagu cruelly treated in his father's will, and called Mr. Wortley "unworthy of being a Father."<sup>61</sup> He wrote to Elizabeth that if Mr. Wortley had "done kindly" by his son, Wortley Montagu might have "yet made some figure in life." Wortley Montagu's dire financial situation, unrelieved by his wealthy father's will, forced him to live abroad. Edward concluded, "I cannot but reflect with horror on his cruel and unrelenting parent."<sup>62</sup> Edward's letters from the period during his own son's short life (1743-44) show him to be a doting and loving father.

#### The Montagu Marriage

Elizabeth and Edward married on August 5, 1742. Dr. William Freind, husband to Elizabeth's cousin Grace Robinson, performed the ceremony.<sup>63</sup> The correspondence reveals nothing regarding the courtship between them, and it is possible that letters detailing their prenuptial period were later removed and destroyed.<sup>64</sup> Prior to her marriage to Edward, Elizabeth had no shortage of suitors but was skittish about marriage. Various admirers expressed interest in courting Elizabeth, but she summarily rejected them.<sup>65</sup> Possibly fueled by a realization that her marriage chances were limited by her small portion, Elizabeth exhibited a conflicted cynicism about the motivations that led to marriage. She compared matrimony to a commercial exchange, but at the same time, she criticized women who married without regard to financial considerations. She satirically mocked her own fitness for marriage, remarking that she

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<sup>60</sup> MO 2461 Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, November 4, 1762; MO 1944 Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, November 13, 1762.

<sup>61</sup> Climenson, *Elizabeth Montagu*, 2: 231.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 231-32.

<sup>63</sup> Climenson, *Elizabeth Montagu*, 1: 30, 114.

<sup>64</sup> Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, 95.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 94; Climenson, *Elizabeth Montagu*, 1: 108-10; PO 10, Dr. Edward Young to Margaret Cavendish Bentinck, duchess of Portland, February 13, 1740.



would make a silly wife and an extremely foolish mother.<sup>66</sup> Elizabeth was surely aware that her high level of education, her intellectual interests, and her wit might be considered unattractive attributes to some potential husbands. Peter Shaw, society physician and friend to Margaret Cavendish Bentinck, duchess of Portland, may have hit a nerve when he teasingly remarked that Elizabeth should consider marrying a parson to avoid appearing better educated than her husband.<sup>67</sup> Elizabeth's tart reply to the duchess, though jocular, reveals her awareness that exercising her intellect might lead to a power struggle within a marriage relationship. It also shows that Elizabeth had no intention of laying aside her own interests to pursue domestic duties in the kitchen, as Elizabeth Carter famously did:

I am determin'd not to marry any Man whose occupation will not allow me to have the last word as well as the first, secondly for being wiser than my husband if there is a necessity I shall acquiesce in it most readily, between Man & Wife is the Contention for superiority of sense, now that being once determined there is one cause of that Matrimonial evil call'd Argumentation laid aside: then as to making Puddings & Custards I had rather marry a Cannibal that would eat me than a glutton that must have his meat of my dressing.<sup>68</sup>

Part of the joke was the pejorative meaning sometimes attached to the word "parson" in the mid-eighteenth century. But the relatively low rank of a parish clergyman certainly added to Elizabeth's negative reaction to the idea marrying one. As Myers suggests, Elizabeth likely had hopes of marrying above her own rank.<sup>69</sup> Elizabeth's jocular and sardonic comments about marriage led her mother to worry that her attitudes might harm her chance of marrying at all. Elizabeth reassured her that she was willing to marry, "but till I can meet with a Deserving Man who rightly thinks the price of a Virtuous Woman above Rubbies I shall take no other obligation

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<sup>66</sup> Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, 92-94.

<sup>67</sup> PO 54-55, Elizabeth Robinson to Margaret Cavendish Bentinck, duchess of Portland, June 19, 1741.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>69</sup> Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, 94

or name upon me but that of being . . . your most Dutifull Daughter.”<sup>70</sup>

It is uncertain how Elizabeth became acquainted with Edward. Climenson suggests that Elizabeth probably met or renewed an acquaintance with Edward in Yorkshire, where Elizabeth’s father also owned property. According to Climenson, Elizabeth traveled there with her parents in the spring of 1741.<sup>71</sup> Myers disagrees and argues that the courtship must have occurred in London because Edward was residing in Dover Street in the spring of 1741, as several letters to Edward from Edward Wortley Montagu indicate.<sup>72</sup> It is very possible Elizabeth became acquainted with Edward through her older brother Morris Robinson. Robinson, based in London, served as Edward’s legal counsel and business advisor for many years. There is, however, nothing in the correspondence to confirm this supposition. In any case, the letter record reveals nothing about the match until after Elizabeth and Edward were betrothed. In letters to the duchess of Portland, Elizabeth admitted to melancholy moods and fretted about her impending change of situation.<sup>73</sup> Myers is probably close to the truth when she states that “her wish to marry a well-off, disinterested man, and her parents’ concern that she marry coalesced, and in spite of her anxieties Elizabeth became Mrs. Montagu.”<sup>74</sup>

Many scholars have assumed that because Elizabeth was not romantically in love with Edward at the time of their wedding (or any time over the course of their marriage), her sole purpose for marrying Edward was to establish herself in a financially advantageous position.

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<sup>70</sup> Elizabeth Robinson quoted in Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, 94-95.

<sup>71</sup> Climenson, *Elizabeth Montagu*, 1:110.

<sup>72</sup> Myers, 95-96

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 97. Climenson claims that Elizabeth’s mention of a “Mr. M----” being converted to dancing might refer to Edward Montagu; see 1: 111. This seems unlikely. The reference comes from a letter Elizabeth wrote to her sister then in Wiltshire while she was in London with the duchess of Portland: “I suppose you have taken leave of balls for some time; nothing but Orpheus’s harp, which made trees dance, could make you a ball at Horton. My brother Tom takes the triumph of Mr. M----’s conversion to dancing, from your eyes, to give it to white stockings. Do such strange effects come from the hosiers? His love is in its infancy, according to Prior, since it is now in his heels.” See Montagu, *Letters*, 2: 168-69. This passage indicates that Mr. M ---- was somebody who admired Sarah, not Elizabeth.

<sup>74</sup> Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, 97.

There is no doubt that Elizabeth sought financial security and a high standard of living, but this does not mean that she had not consulted her feelings concerning Edward. Her letters prior to her betrothal show that she considered romantic love an unreliable indicator of long-term happiness in marriage. Instead, she placed much more emphasis on esteem and respect between husband and wife. Elizabeth seems to have regarded the duchess of Portland's affectionate marriage to be ideal, as Myers argues, but a passage from one of her letters shows that Elizabeth believed the affection between the duke and duchess to be based not only on romantic love, but also on mutual esteem: "In an agreement made perhaps by blind love or sordid Interest, as Modern Matrimony generally is, some few indeed like the Duke & your Grace have made esteem & not interest their motive, but oh how rare meet now such Pairs in Love & honour join'd."<sup>75</sup>

In letters to Edward throughout the period of this study, Elizabeth repeatedly described esteem, obligation, and gratitude as the true basis for her affection. Though now an archaic expression, to contemporaries the word "esteem" carried a sense of emotional regard.<sup>76</sup> Early in their marriage, Elizabeth assured Edward that "every occasion & every moment makes me with more love, & esteem, & gratitude your affectionate And Faithfull & Obedient Wife."<sup>77</sup> She wrote constantly of her esteem and affection as well as her respect for Edward's honest character. She wrote of her "greatest pleasure" she had in the account of Edward's prudent handling of business affairs and of the joy one of Edward's letters brought her: "three sheets of paper most agreeably fill'd with whatever could give content to my affection and esteem."<sup>78</sup>

Elizabeth wrote to Edward of her pride in being married to a man publicly known for his

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<sup>75</sup> PO 49, Elizabeth Robinson to Margaret Cavendish Bentinck, duchess of Portland, c.1740; Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, 93.

<sup>76</sup> Riordan, "Bluestocking Philosophy," 189.

<sup>77</sup> MO 2160, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, January 2, 1742/43

<sup>78</sup> MO 2377, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, January 1759.

honesty. She assured him that his support of a friend's bid for Parliament lent honor to his friend's candidacy due to Edward's unparalleled and "unblemish'd integrity."<sup>79</sup>

In the hierarchical society of the eighteenth century England, people of both sexes considered themselves bound to one another by reciprocal favor and obligation, condescension and gratitude. Elizabeth's emphasis on her obligation and gratitude to Edward served to underscore the ties of their marriage. Elizabeth felt grateful to Edward for accepting her with a small dowry, and she seems to have admired it as a mark of Edward's integrity. Not long after their marriage, Elizabeth declared her approval of Edward's public conduct and associated it with his honorable acceptance of Elizabeth as his wife: "how happy I am in being sure I shall always be proud of him who I must ever love, who has given me a hand unbribed, & a heart uncorrupted, who from the World takes nothing but the advantages of observation & experience, innocent of all its ways, though not unknowing of them; this is integrity."<sup>80</sup>

Nearly ten years later she wrote that her pride in Edward's prudent and upright character was "a point of highest importance to a tender & faithful wife," and she hoped that Edward found her admiration of him, in addition to her own conduct, to be satisfactory compensation for her small portion:

some circumstances give the union of Man & wife a tenderness beyond friendship, but none do more dignity strengthen & bind it than the communication of credit & character: & I hope in this respect I have Not brought so mean a dowry as in wealth; indeed you want no additions of that kind but you might have been diminishd by a vain & foolish companion, had it been possible for beauty to have dazzled you so much as to make a choice of such an one.<sup>81</sup>

In another instance, Edward sent a detailed report to Elizabeth of the fortune they could expect upon the death of his gravely ill Newcastle relative, and Elizabeth responded with satisfaction at

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<sup>79</sup> MO 2411, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, 1760.

<sup>80</sup> MO 2160, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, January 2, 1742/43.

<sup>81</sup> MO 2255, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, July 9, 1752.

the prospect of great affluence. She wrote to convey her gratitude to Edward for the wealth he supplied her through their marriage and for the virtue he brought with it.<sup>82</sup> Elizabeth seems to have been troubled not only by her slight dowry, but also by her father's reluctance to pay it. One letter indicates that she asked Edward to send her a record of his accounts from his banker to make sure her father had transferred the agreed sum.<sup>83</sup>

Elizabeth explained her service and assistance to Edward and his family as expressions of gratitude and obligation. When Edward thanked Elizabeth for arranging to place one of his impoverished cousins in Admiral Boscawen's care as a midshipman, Elizabeth demurred, "alas how can I ever merit thanks for you who cannot repay you my obligations, I shd be ye most ungrateful of creatures if I wd not do everything in my power for ye remotest relation of yours."<sup>84</sup> She may have had her small dowry in mind when she pledged to faithfully assist Edward in his undertakings: "I shall endeavor to make every action of my life subservient to the end of serving you: and if I can contribute toward making you happy, it will gratify my Pride in a more pleasing way than all the gifts of fortune can do."<sup>85</sup> In this instance, Elizabeth was corresponding with Edward about his business at his Yorkshire estates, and she used the conventional language of subservience and duty to position herself as an advisor to his affairs. In response to Edward's account of his farming and leasing matters, Elizabeth offered advice drawn from her father's Yorkshire estate experience.<sup>86</sup> She worried that Edward might not welcome her recommendations, but Edward reassured her: "upon no occasion whatsoever, I shall quarrel with you giving me advice, who have so good a right to do it & are so wise and faithful a

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<sup>82</sup> MO 2283, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, July 25, 1753.

<sup>83</sup> MO1814, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, July 20, 1751

<sup>84</sup> MO2354, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, November 20, 1758.

<sup>85</sup> MO2185, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, October 12, 1746.

<sup>86</sup> MO2188, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, November 4, 1746.

counciller.”<sup>87</sup>

Both Elizabeth and Edward frequently used the language of friendship to describe their tender feelings to one another. Contemporary literature commonly described friendship as an appropriate vehicle for marital affection. Friendship in marriage might be cemented by emotional attachment, appreciation, sense of duty, and mutual purpose.<sup>88</sup> To Elizabeth, marital friendship was a conduit of goodwill and considerate attention between spouses. Soon after taking her marriage vows, Elizabeth assured the duchess of Portland that Edward was “too sincere and kind a friend not to rejoice at your friendship to me.”<sup>89</sup> A decade later, she wrote to Edward bemoaning Lady Sandwich’s crumbling marriage which was devoid of the sort of friendship Elizabeth enjoyed in marriage: “the tender friend, the faithful guardian, the kind protector, all these I have found in you.”<sup>90</sup> To emphasize the reciprocity of their relationship, Elizabeth characterized herself as a sympathetic friend to Edward.<sup>91</sup> Edward expressed satisfaction with Elizabeth’s attentiveness to his concerns: “The greatest Happiness I Ever enjoy’d was confer’d by you & I have always found you a faithful friend & councillor to me, & partaker of both my joys & Griefs.”<sup>92</sup>

Elizabeth looked to marital friendship for support in times of sorrow. The death of the Montagus’ only child, an infant son they called “Punch,” was a severe blow to both parents. Elizabeth felt especially devastated. She wrote the duchess of Portland expressing worry that the Edward’s departure on business would sink her spirits lower, as she had relied on her “good

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<sup>87</sup> MO 1770, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, November 11, 1746.

<sup>88</sup> Naomi Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England: Household, Kinship, and Patronage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 192-93.

<sup>89</sup> Montagu, *Letters*, 2: 240.

<sup>90</sup> MO2309, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, June 8, 1754.

<sup>91</sup> MO 2160, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, January 2, 1742/43.

<sup>92</sup> MO183, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, July 30, 1752.

friend” to rally them.<sup>93</sup> After the death of Elizabeth’s brother Thomas Robinson in 1748, Elizabeth again acknowledged her dependence on Edward’s friendship for emotional support.<sup>94</sup> Elizabeth and Edward’s most ardent declarations of friendship, gratitude, esteem, and affection are found in the correspondence from early in their marriage, but they continued to address each other with respect and affection throughout the period considered here. Although it seems likely that some of their words were perfunctory and little more than conventional niceties, the letters between Elizabeth and Edward demonstrate that they felt some level of affection for each other.

If Edward were ever angry or irritated with Elizabeth, we do not have any direct record of it. Nearly all of Edward’s surviving letters are to Elizabeth and he did not rebuke her in any of the extant correspondence. We do have evidence of Elizabeth’s pique aimed at Edward. She occasionally expressed her annoyance in letters to her sister, and in several instances she complained to friends. The circumstances of her displeasure seem to have stemmed primarily from the personality differences pointed out by Woodhouse: Edward preferred quiet retirement, and Elizabeth desired the conversation of sophisticated company. After the death of “Punch” in October 1744, Elizabeth began to experience ill health in the aftermath of her grief. In 1745, she began to visit the fashionable rural spa of Tunbridge Wells to take the waters. Social life at Tunbridge Wells revolved around small private assemblies and outings, rather than organized public events such as those at Bath.<sup>95</sup> Elizabeth enjoyed the society at Tunbridge Wells, but Edward did not. In July 1756, Elizabeth wrote to her sister that she wished Edward would go to Sandleford instead of accompanying her to Tunbridge Wells because she would be embarrassed “with one who is determined not to be amused.”<sup>96</sup> By the end of August, Edward had joined

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<sup>93</sup> MO 380, Elizabeth Montagu to the Duchess of Portland, October 23, 1744.

<sup>94</sup> Montagu, *Letters*, 2: 244.

<sup>95</sup> Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, 177.

<sup>96</sup> MO 5756, Elizabeth Montagu to Sarah Scott, July 1756.

Elizabeth at Tunbridge, and she reported to her sister, “Mr Montagu is weary of the place, for which there is a remedy which it would not be civil to mention, viz that he might go to some other, but his manner of life every where takes in a good deal of ennui I do not know that he wd find much advantage from shifting the scene.”<sup>97</sup>

Several letters to Gilbert West from 1755 indicate Elizabeth’s irritation at having to accommodate herself to Edward’s travel schedule. Although she observed that it was Edward’s prerogative to decide where they should reside, it clearly annoyed her, as her acerbic comments demonstrate:

As Mr. Montagu has an undoubted right to choose what place he shall be in, I feel it most fit and proper to listen to the winter’s wind all day, and the hooting of owls all the evening. I have lately acquired the constant society of a screech-owl, who has taken up his residence under my dressing room window, and utters such a number of melancholy notes, I have been tempted to ask it, whether it stays in the country against its inclination.<sup>98</sup>

In another letter she complained to West that Edward “does not yet tell me when we are to go to town, and I am tired of the vegetable world.”<sup>99</sup> If Elizabeth did make a declaration of submission to Edward at the outset of their marriage, as Riordan suggests may have occurred, she did not always acquiesce to his wishes with good humor.<sup>100</sup>

According to Hill, one of the great problems in the Montagu marriage was their frequent separations. While it is true that the Montagus resided apart throughout much of their marriage, it does not appear that their separations arose from marital discord, nor does it seem that they produced lasting conflict. Some separations were due to Edward’s business that took him into Yorkshire and Northumberland. Edward did not like to travel by coach, and he generally rode on

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<sup>97</sup> MO 5759, Elizabeth Montagu to Sarah Scott, August 31, 1756.

<sup>98</sup> Montagu, *Letters*, 3: 338-39. Elizabeth met West through her cousin, Lydia Botham. Lydia’s husband and West were cousins.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 281.

<sup>100</sup> Riordan, “Bluestocking Philosophy,” 193.



horseback to his destinations and between engagements once there.<sup>101</sup> His style of traveling would not have been considered suitable for Elizabeth, nor does it seem that she had any particular desire to accompany him. Indeed, she positioned herself as a dutiful wife and encouraged Edward to attend to business rather than remain at her side because his efforts benefited them both.<sup>102</sup> Edward seems to have regretted at least some of their partings, and he characterized his diligence to northern business as a way to show his true affection for Elizabeth. He assured her that if his business was successful, “I shall be sufficiently paid & receive the greatest reward I desire, if plenty & affluence can put it in my power to contribute to your happiness & afford me an opportunity to shew the true & sincere love & esteem I have for you.”<sup>103</sup>

Other separations originated from Elizabeth’s desire to spend part of each summer at Tunbridge Wells, a place that Edward disliked. In the early years after their son’s death, Edward accompanied Elizabeth to Tunbridge in an effort to improve her health. He endured at least one of their prolonged stays with equanimity because of his concern for her welfare.<sup>104</sup> By the early 1750s, Edward declined to escort Elizabeth during her lengthy visits to Tunbridge and stayed at Sandleford or made business trips to London or Northumberland. During the summer of 1755, however, Elizabeth did not visit Tunbridge at all, but stayed in Sandleford with Edward. It seems probable that Edward requested or demanded her presence there, and Elizabeth considered it her duty to remain with him. Although she felt that Edward was happier at Sandleford, she complained about the lack of society: “I have not any person in the neighborhood whose

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<sup>101</sup> Climenson, *Elizabeth Montagu*, 1: 194.

<sup>102</sup> MO2255, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, July 9, c. 1752.

<sup>103</sup> MO1863, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, August 10, 1753.

<sup>104</sup> Montagu, *Letters*, 3: 87-88.

conversation can give me any amusement.”<sup>105</sup> She began to feel resentful, as her letters to West demonstrate. It is unclear whether Elizabeth communicated this to Edward, but she did resume visiting Tunbridge the following summer.

While at Tunbridge, Elizabeth emphasized her weak and uncertain health as well as the healing effects of the Tunbridge waters in letters to Edward. It is possible that Elizabeth employed this strategy to underscore the necessity of her visits there. Edward seems to have been disappointed that Elizabeth chose to spend her summers at Tunbridge rather than at Sandleford with him.<sup>106</sup> A letter from Elizabeth to her sister Sarah in 1755 suggests that Edward, although not a very sociable man, did not like to be left alone. After returning from a trip to the Boscawen’s country home of Hatchlands, Elizabeth explained to Sarah that their friend Dr. John Gregory remained with Edward at Sandleford to provide companionship during her absence.<sup>107</sup>

Although it seems that the Montagus were satisfied with their frequently separate arrangements, they often wrote of their desire to be reunited. During one of her trips to Tunbridge, Elizabeth wrote Edward about her impatience with his absence: “nothing could keep me in tolerable humour during this separation, but the daily progress I make towards better health.”<sup>108</sup> Elizabeth’s expressions of longing for Edward’s company during her visits to Tunbridge were apparently born of a sense of propriety. In a letter to her sister she explained, “in marriage there is a bienseance in people importuning each other for their company, so I solicit him to go, that he may do or refuse with proper dignity . . . in any other friendship one should say Tunbridge will make me well, it will make you sick, I shall go Thither & you will go

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<sup>105</sup> Ibid., 309.

<sup>106</sup> MO 1880, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, July 22, 1756.

<sup>107</sup> MO 5744, Elizabeth Montagu to Sarah Scott, July 27, 1755.

<sup>108</sup> Montagu, *Letters*, 3: 233.

to Sandlesford or where you please till I have drunk the waters.”<sup>109</sup> Since Edward often traveled north on business while Elizabeth made her visits to Tunbridge, it appears they created a mutually accepted fiction that their separations were necessary due to Elizabeth’s health and Edward’s business.

### Aesthetic and Literary Interests

Several months after their marriage, Elizabeth asked Edward to pardon in her “some ignorance, and excuse the absence of learning.”<sup>110</sup> As letters between Elizabeth and the duchess of Portland show, Elizabeth was well-read prior to her marriage, but she did not have benefit of formal instruction, nor did she read Latin with fluency. Elizabeth’s exposure to higher learning through her connection with Cambridge intellectual Conyers Middleton, her maternal grandmother’s second husband, is well known. Middleton and Elizabeth maintained a correspondence after Elizabeth’s grandmother’s death in 1731, and at some point after their marriage, Elizabeth introduced Edward to Middleton.<sup>111</sup> Elizabeth apparently felt some anxiety about writing Middleton; certainly she wanted his approval for her skill in letter writing. Significantly, Elizabeth appealed to Edward for support and encouragement. She sent Edward a letter she had written to Middleton and asked him to read it before forwarding it. She directed him to burn it if he did not like it and thought it was “nonsense.”<sup>112</sup> Edward evidently sent it to Middleton, because when Elizabeth sent him another letter meant for Middleton, he replied, “I question not but that the Dr will approve of it as much as he did yr former such yr brother Tom says he was very proud of it & shew’d several of his friends.”<sup>113</sup> Edward seems to have been

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<sup>109</sup> MO 5756, Elizabeth Montagu to Sarah Scott, July 1756.

<sup>110</sup> MO 2160, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, January 2, 1742/43.

<sup>111</sup> Middleton knew of Edward, but did not know personally him before Edward’s marriage to Elizabeth in 1742; see Montagu, *Letters*, 2: 177. Correspondence shows that Edward and Middleton became personally acquainted some time before 1747: see MO1783, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, July 8, 1747.

<sup>112</sup> MO 2143, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, October 16, 1742.

<sup>113</sup> MO1712, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, November 23, 1742.

pleased with Middleton's approbation of Elizabeth's letters. Several years later, Edward reported that Middleton "reciev'd your letter with wch he seem'd well pleas'd, he said it was very kind & polite as your manner of writing always us'd to be—I told him you was sure to do your best when you writ to him."<sup>114</sup>

Early in their marriage, Elizabeth and Edward spent time together in study and conversation. She reported to the duchess of Portland, "we walk, ride, chatt, & read together, & are as suitable in temper & opinions as you will often see two people."<sup>115</sup> Elizabeth must have considered Edward sympathetic to her interest in literature and her desire to increase her knowledge. During their first major separation, Elizabeth asked Edward to send her several books, including Edward Young's *Night Thoughts* and the earl of Shaftesbury's *Characteristics*.<sup>116</sup> He wrote back promising to send his copy of Shaftesbury if he could locate it among his books.<sup>117</sup> In another instance, Elizabeth wrote to Edward from Tunbridge that she spent part of every morning reading. During this separation Edward acknowledged Elizabeth's enthusiasm for reading by shipping her some books she had left in London.<sup>118</sup>

Although Elizabeth clearly enjoyed the society at Tunbridge Wells, she informed Edward that extensive reading made her stay there less dull.<sup>119</sup> Elizabeth sometimes sent Edward critiques of her reading material, such as one letter in which she gave a lengthy report on Arrigo Caterino Davila's *History of the Civil Wars of France*.<sup>120</sup> Edward occasionally communicated his readings to Elizabeth as well. During one of Elizabeth's sojourns at Tunbridge, Edward described to Elizabeth his enjoyment of their gardens at Sandleford and recounted his reading of

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<sup>114</sup> MO 1783, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, July 8, 1747.

<sup>115</sup> Quoted in Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, 100.

<sup>116</sup> Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, 99.

<sup>117</sup> MO 1717, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, December 21, 1742.

<sup>118</sup> MO 2177, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, August 30, 1745; MO1749, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, August 24, 1745.

<sup>119</sup> MO 2329, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, August 5, 1756.

<sup>120</sup> Montagu, *Letters*, 3: 236-39.

James Thomson's *Seasons* during his outdoor reflections.<sup>121</sup> In general, however, Elizabeth's correspondence with Edward contains little information regarding literary interests, and no lively exchange of literary opinion that is found in letters with other of her correspondents, such as Elizabeth Carter and George, Lord Lyttelton.

At some point during the first decade of their marriage (probably sooner rather than later), it became clear to both Elizabeth and Edward that their taste in intellectual endeavor differed. Elizabeth acknowledged their dissimilar preferences in a letter from Tunbridge:

We have a good deal of company here, but I am sorry to say not of the kind most agreeable to you: there is Sir G. Lyttelton and his brother the Dean, ye famous Mr Garrick the Bishop of London & some others of ye same cast, not so much philosophers as Men of reading, but such or the gay flippant & ignorant must be my society. I am not qualified for ye conversation of Men of science, nor would it suit my inclination to be so much with people of a gay character.<sup>122</sup>

Edward apparently spent much time in seclusion while at Sandleford, deep in serious study.<sup>123</sup> Presumably he applied himself to mathematics and science, as Elizabeth's words imply.

Yet Edward appreciated Elizabeth's writing skills, and he encouraged her talent. Very early he wrote to Elizabeth that "Nothing is more agreeable to me than your kind and ingenious letters."<sup>124</sup> Edward especially liked Elizabeth's written depictions of nature, and in one letter he praised her "fine and elegant" description of the seasons: "It added to, & height'd the enjoyments of this youthful time of year (as your Italian Poet calls it) to me."<sup>125</sup> Elizabeth responded with pleasure at Edward's compliments of her "little talent of writing."<sup>126</sup> Edward was particularly effusive in his approbation of Elizabeth's description of some bucolic scenes that referenced

Virgil:

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<sup>121</sup> MO 2445, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, July 1761.

<sup>122</sup> MO 2255, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, July 9, c. 1752.

<sup>123</sup> Montagu, *Letters*, 3: 294-95; MO 2323, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, July 20, 1755.

<sup>124</sup> MO1714, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, November 30, 1742

<sup>125</sup> MO1847, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, May 13, 1753. Edward refers to Elizabeth's letter, MO 2269, May 10, 1753.

<sup>126</sup> MO 2278, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, July 12, 1753.

I think you possess [a talent] in a higher degree than any body of describing and painting what you see. Whatever either in nature or art is beautiful is made more so by your pen, & the observations you make never fail to be just & natural. The oftener I read your letter the better I like it, & could not be better entertain'd tho I was to read any of Virgil's Pastoral works.<sup>127</sup>

There is no record of Edward's opinion of Elizabeth's first published venture in Lyttelton's *Dialogues of the Dead* (1760), but while at Tunbridge in 1760, Elizabeth sent Edward a gleeful report of the admiration expressed by a "man of witt & learning."<sup>128</sup> Elizabeth's remarks suggest Edward's (at least tacit) approval of her enterprise. Although Edward did not share Elizabeth's literary tastes, the correspondence shows that he supported her program of reading and that he encouraged her writing.<sup>129</sup>

#### Business Affairs

The letter record demonstrates that Edward considered Elizabeth a partner in his affairs, especially after the death of their son when it became clear that they would likely remain childless. As was often the case in the eighteenth century, Edward relied on extended family members to assist him in his business dealings. For many years, Elizabeth's brother Morris Robinson, an attorney in London, provided Edward with legal and financial advice.<sup>130</sup> After 1744, Edward increasingly solicited Elizabeth's advice for business, financial and legal matters. In 1746, Edward asked Elizabeth and her brother Morris to consider how best to invest their rent receipts for the year.<sup>131</sup> Edward worried about the decline of stocks, but appears to have liked the idea of investing in India bonds. Elizabeth's reply indicates that she not only directed the purchase of India bonds through her brother, but that she was part of the decision-making

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<sup>127</sup> MO 1876, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, c. June 28, 1754.

<sup>128</sup> MO 2384, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, August 6, 1760.

<sup>129</sup> Myers remarks that Edward felt proud of Elizabeth's *Essay on Shakepear* in *Bluestocking Circle*, 119.

<sup>130</sup> See for example MO2345, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, March 2, 1758. This letter shows that Edward had authorized Morris Robinson to make decisions at his own discretion.

<sup>131</sup> MO 1769, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, November 7, 1746.

process to do so.<sup>132</sup>

Writing from Newcastle in 1753, Edward filled his letters to Elizabeth with details of the business and legal dealings regarding his elderly cousin's Northumberland properties that Edward stood to inherit. Throughout the years considered here, Edward kept Elizabeth abreast of all matters concerning this estate. Elizabeth occasionally gave unsolicited advice, but delivered it in a deferential manner. After telling him how to deal with a matter concerning some of the other heirs to the Newcastle estate, she declared, "I only hint this as my opinion you always know so well what is proper to be said on affairs of consequence I do not pretend to direct."<sup>133</sup> Edward sometimes authorized Elizabeth to handle matters independently. In a letter that likely refers to the Newcastle inheritance due to his sister, Jemima Montagu Meadows, Edward gave Elizabeth full authority to act: "I prefer not to give any directions to you who are so much better fitted to conduct & manage so important & difficult an affair than I can be."<sup>134</sup> Edward's letter indicates that he and Elizabeth had conferred several times on this matter.

Edward began to rely heavily on Elizabeth's judgment and advice, especially regarding their property and collieries in Northumberland. Elizabeth worried that Edward might consider her opinions to be meddlesome, and in one case she attributed Edward's epistolary silence to annoyance with her interference: "I fear I have said something in some of my letters which has displeased you, & made you wish for a less frequent correspondence . . . I am sure I never meant to direct a judgment I know to be better & more acquainted with business than my own."<sup>135</sup>

Edward, however, seems to have desired Elizabeth's participation in their business matters.

Before his journey to Newcastle in August 1760, Edward wrote to asked her to comment "freely

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<sup>132</sup> MO 1772, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, November 18, 1746; MO1774, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, November 23, 1746; MO 2189, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, November 1746.

<sup>133</sup> MO 2339, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, November 1757.

<sup>134</sup> MO 1895, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, November 17, 1758.

<sup>135</sup> MO 2380, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, January 18, 1760.

& without reserve” on a letter he had written to a Newcastle business associate.<sup>136</sup> Elizabeth expressed pleasure at Edward’s request and sent him her thoughts on the matter at large.<sup>137</sup> Edward wrote about his longing to see her and to “have some discourse” with her regarding their affairs.<sup>138</sup> After arriving in Newcastle in early September 1760, Edward sent Elizabeth reports about the land and collieries, but stated that he would wait for her arrival there to make any decisions.<sup>139</sup> After Elizabeth joined him in mid-September, she and Edward together worked to settle their business concerns, which included legal problems regarding the property division and improvements to their new holdings. At the end of October, Edward left Elizabeth to manage the conclusion of their affairs.<sup>140</sup> During her stay in Newcastle, Elizabeth described Edward to her friends as a diligent and prudent businessman.<sup>141</sup> Earlier she had expressed to Edward her admiration of and confidence in his business skills, concluding, “On the whole if you was not my Husband I would chuse you to act for me in a difficult affair.”<sup>142</sup>

Despite evidence in the letters that Edward trusted Elizabeth to manage his business operations, Elizabeth felt that Edward did not respond positively to advice that went contrary to his own opinion. She wrote to her sister in 1767 that she had long avoided pressing Edward to improve the collieries because he was “averse to trouble” and her suggestions made him angry.<sup>143</sup> Several scholars have described Elizabeth as Edward’s “executive arm” in the period prior to the mid-1760s, and it is certain that Elizabeth did not transact business as a free agent,

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<sup>136</sup> MO 1909, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, August 2, 1760.

<sup>137</sup> MO 2382, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, August 3, 1760; MO2383, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, August 3, 1760. These letters were likely mailed the same day, but have been catalogued separately.

<sup>138</sup> MO1914, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, August 21, 1760.

<sup>139</sup> MO 1919, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, September 1760.

<sup>140</sup> MO 1404, Elizabeth Montagu to George, Lord Lyttelton, October 31, 1760

<sup>141</sup> MO 3039, Elizabeth Montagu to Elizabeth Carter, October 24, 1760; MO1404, Elizabeth Montagu to George, Lord Lyttelton, October 31, 1760.

<sup>142</sup> MO 2382, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, August 3, 1760.

<sup>143</sup> Quoted in W. Powell Jones, “The Romantic Bluestocking,” *The Huntington Library Quarterly* 12/1 (November 1948): 97.



though she apparently had an extensive supervisory role.<sup>144</sup> Elizabeth Child has conducted the most complete modern study on Elizabeth's role as a businesswoman, but in her account of Elizabeth's increasing management responsibilities, she relegates Edward to a shadowy background. She also notes Elizabeth's frustration with Edward's apparent overcautious behavior.<sup>145</sup> Whatever Elizabeth's later complaints about Edward, we should recognize that Edward solicited Elizabeth's active involvement in their business affairs and he that valued her opinion. Surely this contributed to her self-assurance and competence as a businesswoman, a role few eighteenth-century women of her rank and wealth played. As Child notes, Elizabeth gained a great deal of confidence in her business acumen, and as early as 1763, wrote to Lord Bath about her firm grasp of the industry of the north.<sup>146</sup> Elizabeth's later role and success in business is beyond the scope of this study, but Edward's respect for her intelligence and judgment may have, at least in part, allowed her to imagine herself a woman of business.

The letter record from the period 1742 to 1763 demonstrates that Elizabeth and Edward developed in their marriage a working partnership based on mutual respect and esteem. Though perhaps lacking in romantic love, the marriage seems to have proved satisfactory to both parties on a number of levels. For Elizabeth, marriage to Edward provided her with an elevated social rank and financial security, as many scholars have pointed out. As I show, the relationship also supported Elizabeth's intellectual interests. Edward's apparent respect for Elizabeth's intelligence and judgment as well as his admiration for her writing skills surely bolstered Elizabeth's confidence in her own capabilities. Edward reliance on Elizabeth's assistance to conduct his business affairs must also have contributed to her self-confidence. In the next

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<sup>144</sup> Elizabeth Child, "Elizabeth Montagu: Bluestocking Businesswoman" in *Reconsidering the Bluestockings*, ed., Nicole Pohl and Betty Schellenberg (San Marino: Huntington Library Press, 2003), 162-64.

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>146</sup> *Ibid.*

chapter, I show how Edward solicited Elizabeth's collaboration in political matters pertaining to his seat in the House of Commons. I also delineate the ways in which Elizabeth's political opinions began to diverge from Edward's and how she was able to make her own political statement while at the same time appearing to adhere to Edward's principles. Elizabeth's outward deference to Edward shows her desire to conform to conventional expectations, but as her political ideas began to alter in 1760, she manipulated deferential language to forward her own agenda.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE MONTAGU MARRIAGE: POLITICAL COLLABORATION

Not long after the Montagus married, Elizabeth had difficulties with a servant named Harry, who declared he would not take orders from Elizabeth in Edward's absence. Harry did not want to be instructed by an inexperienced young woman, but with Edward's assistance, Elizabeth gained control of the situation. She characterized the struggle to Edward using political language:

[Harry] design'd the stronger Will should rule, & mine being back'd with the mighty circumstance of power came off Conqueror, & I believe may govern for the future without making a Rebellion . . . if he had considered civil policy and the order of the World, he would have recollected those who have neither strength, nor skill, nor excellence of any sort, govern thousands that have all those things.<sup>1</sup>

In another instance, Elizabeth quipped that she was likely to receive unfavorable comments about her appearance from aristocratic women whose husbands disliked Edward's voting pattern: "I am afraid Mr. Montagu's continuing to vote against the ministry will hurt my complexion as bad as another lying-in."<sup>2</sup> This comment refers to an earlier incident in which Lady Grace Carteret, countess of Granville, told Elizabeth that lying-in had spoiled her face, a remark Elizabeth believed to be politically motivated.<sup>3</sup>

Both examples illustrate the entwined nature of eighteenth-century politics and society, but they also highlight Elizabeth's keen understanding of this fact. Even prior to her marriage,

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<sup>1</sup> MO2142, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, c. September 1742.

<sup>2</sup> Mathew Montagu, ed., *The Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu, with some of the Letters of her Correspondents*, 4 vols. (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1809. Reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1974), 2: 282.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 252. Lady Grace (d. 1744) was the mother of John Carteret, second earl Granville: see John Cannon, "Carteret, John, second Earl Granville (1690–1763)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, May 2006, <http://www.oxforddnb.com>. Citations are to the online edition. Elizabeth's remarks to the duchess of Portland date from 1743.

Elizabeth was familiar with the intersection of high politics and polite society, as her published correspondence with the duchess of Portland attests. In this chapter, I argue that marriage to Edward presented Elizabeth with a range of new opportunities to engage with the political realm, which included acting as Edward's political confidante, advisor, and occasionally, his agent.<sup>4</sup> Elizabeth also carefully screened and interpreted political news for Edward's use, pursuits largely stimulated by her enthusiasm for public affairs. As was the case in business matters, political affairs provided Elizabeth and Edward a basis for shared interests and goals. I contend that Elizabeth's political assistance to Edward inspired Elizabeth's escalating interest in politics and that her engagement grew throughout the years considered here (1742-1763). Edward's dependence on Elizabeth for advice and support, as well as his appreciation for her judgment and analytical skill, reinforced Elizabeth's growing self-confidence in managing political matters.

Recent scholarship demonstrates that eighteenth-century women drawn from the elite landed classes routinely carried out a range of informal political functions to forward family interests.<sup>5</sup> The close connection between the landed family economy and the political nation gave women considerable scope for informal power and influence in politics.<sup>6</sup> A few women from elite political families clearly operated in full partnership with their husbands in political undertakings, but did so under the cover of fulfilling duty to family. A woman who *appeared* to step out of the familial boundaries and seemed to act as politician in their own right received strident criticism, as duchess of Devonshire discovered in 1784.<sup>7</sup> Although Elizabeth's

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<sup>4</sup> Elaine Chalus, *Elite Women in English Political Life c. 1754-1790* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005), 52-74. Chalus has usefully categorized the various ways in which elite women participated in politics.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*; Judith S. Lewis, *Sacred to Female Patriotism: Gender, Class, and Politics in Late Georgian Britain* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>6</sup> Lewis, *Sacred to Female Patriotism*, 11-37.

<sup>7</sup> Chalus, *Elite Women*, 17, 27; Lewis, *Sacred to Female Patriotism*, 132-45. For additional analysis of the way gender constructions were used in public discourse surrounding the 1784 election, see Lewis, "1784 and All That: Aristocratic Women and Electoral Politics" in Amanda Vickery, *Women, Privilege, and Power: British Politics, 1750 to the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), 103-120.

intellectual engagement with public political debate seems to have gone beyond the boundaries of her husband's direct concerns, she portrayed her interest as not only motivated by family duty, but also consistent with Edward's attitudes and intentions.

Edward's stance was solidly country Whig: he worried that foreign influence (especially Hanoverian) was eclipsing traditional propertied interests and undermining the associated values of liberty and public virtue; he railed against heavy taxation; and he remained convinced of the corruption of successive government administrations. Edward was sympathetic to the patriot opposition, but was always skeptical about their ability to effect reform.<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth consistently conveyed her agreement with Edward's political stance and frequently included in her letters platitudes about morality and political virtue that were reflective of country Whig ideals. She continued to espouse these values in correspondence with Edward throughout the years considered here, but it is not clear that she shared his determination to maintain an anti-administration stance. At the accession of George III Elizabeth lodged her political loyalty with the new king and his court, but Edward remained aloof from the new regime and continued to profess independence. Through examination of the exchanges between Elizabeth and Edward pertaining to Elizabeth's presentation at court, I will demonstrate how Elizabeth was able to follow her own political agenda while not appearing to oppose Edward and his political position. Reviewing Elizabeth and Edward's correspondence chronologically as well as topically will serve not only to illustrate the variety of circumstances in which the couple collaborated politically, but it will also illuminate the development of Elizabeth's increasing engagement with the political sphere and her eventual divergence from Edward's staunch political independence.

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<sup>8</sup> Bob Harris describes the threads of country Whig ideology in *Politics and the Nation: Britain in the Mid-Eighteenth-Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 67-78.

## Advice and Assistance

As was true of many eighteenth-century men, Edward relied on his wife for practical help with his political career. As MP for the borough of Huntingdon, Edward actively solicited Elizabeth's election advice and turned to her as a discreet confidante for his political views and problems. Elizabeth dutifully offered her advice and opinions, and Edward appears to have valued her judgment. Some of her reflections served as loyal affirmations of Edward's political attitudes, but in at least one instance, she stood by her evaluation of election matters though it differed from Edward's. The correspondence also illustrates a variety of other ways that Elizabeth supported Edward's election bids: she selected his wardrobe for electioneering; she befriended Lady Sandwich, his patron's wife; and on one occasion she represented Edward at a Huntingdon ball in Edward's absence.

In November 1742, Edward traveled to London for the parliamentary session, but Elizabeth remained at Allertorpe in Yorkshire because she was by then pregnant and it was considered unsafe for her to travel.<sup>9</sup> Elizabeth soon wrote to ask Edward about developments in parliament and assured him of her satisfaction in his role of "contributing to the welfare, happiness, and Liberty of many."<sup>10</sup> Edward sent Elizabeth a copy of the king's address to both houses as well as a detailed account of the regarding the British hire of Hanoverian troops, a measure he passionately opposed.<sup>11</sup> In her sympathetic response, Elizabeth echoed Edward's belief that bad government was rooted in mankind's baseness and corruption, and she applauded Edward's efforts to prevent evils from befalling the nation.<sup>12</sup> Edward gloomily predicted that motions to investigate Walpole's conduct would come to nothing and that the country was

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<sup>9</sup> Sylvia Harestark Myers, *The Bluestocking Circle: Women, Friendship and the Life of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 97.

<sup>10</sup> MO 2144, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, November 14, 1742.

<sup>11</sup> MO 1711 Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, November 20, 1742.

<sup>12</sup> MO 2147, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, November 23, 1742.

quickly succumbing to the forces of tyranny and arbitrary power.<sup>13</sup>

Elizabeth, like Edward, supported the efforts of the patriot opposition which was then coalesced around Frederick, Prince of Wales. When Edward reported that Richard Temple, Lord Cobham was expected to resign from the Army and that his protégés Pitt and Lyttelton were likely to be dismissed by the Prince, Elizabeth expressed admiration for the “Patriots” and distain for Frederick: “I rejoyce Lord Cobham designs to be one of the worthies at Stowe . . . Mr Pitt & Mr Lyttelton will shine with double Lustre if they are displaced: as for the absolute you mention, may he be the slave he deserves to be but never the tyrant he desires to be.”<sup>14</sup> Edward considered Carteret’s administration to be far more dangerous (in retrospect) than any of Walpole’s had been. He bestowed effusive praise on Pitt for his opposition and declared that Pitt was “a greater man than any I have ever sat with & if he preserves his integrity will be transmitted to posterity in the most illustrious of Characters.”<sup>15</sup>

Edward clearly wanted Elizabeth to share in his engagement with public affairs. Besides sending Elizabeth detailed accounts of parliamentary business and other political news, Edward kept Elizabeth abreast of the latest pamphlet literature. He posted her a copy of “Mr Harveys lucubrations,” likely John, Lord Hervey’s *Miscellaneous Thoughts* (1742), a defense of Walpole’s crumbled administration.<sup>16</sup> According to Edward’s letter, Elizabeth’s brother Morris also sent Elizabeth current political pamphlets, although whether they were solicited or not is unclear.<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth showed her appreciation for these communications, as well as her concord with Edward’s views, by assuring him of her sympathetic friendship while denouncing a “Great

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<sup>13</sup> MO 1714, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, November 30, 1742.

<sup>14</sup> MO 2148, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, November 28, 1742. Elizabeth references Edward’s letter of November 25, 1742 (MO 1713).

<sup>15</sup> MO 1717 Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, December 21, 1742.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*; Reed Browning, “Hervey, John, second Baron Hervey of Ickworth (1696–1743),” in ODNB online, May 2008.

<sup>17</sup> MO 1717, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, December 21, 1742.

Patriot long honored & loved by his Country” who had accepted a title:

These pestilent examples infect publick manners and publick corruption first poisons the mind of the Great, & teaches them to admire false greatness . . . The Orator who knows Truth the soul of Eloquence does his parts great wrong in chusing a bad side of the question, but warm in the pursuit of power he forget that the power of being loved, and the power of making himself believed, are to the shining part of his character more honourable additions than Wealth & sway.<sup>18</sup>

Unfortunately this letter is incomplete, so it is not clear to whom Elizabeth refers.

Between June 1743 and September 1744, the short life span of the Montagu’s only child, the correspondence between Elizabeth and Edward focuses almost entirely on their infant son. But by November 1744 Edward began to re-engage in epistolary political discussion with Elizabeth and from London forwarded to her a series of gloomy political forecasts. Elizabeth, however, showed little interest in political topics. Depressed and anxious, she set out for Tunbridge Wells in August 1745.

The political fallout from the Pretender crisis of 1745 seems to have reignited Elizabeth’s attention to public affairs. In September, Edward warned Elizabeth of rumors about a military rising to place the young Pretender (grandson of the deposed James II) on the throne, and he wrote that he had contributed £100 to a subscription army to fight the Pretender’s forces.<sup>19</sup> Elizabeth and her sister Sarah remained in Tunbridge Wells, although Elizabeth wanted to join Edward in the north. At the end of October, Elizabeth and Sarah proceeded to Mount Morris in Horton, their Mother’s country estate.<sup>20</sup> In a passage that illustrates Edward’s wish to confirm their unity as a couple, Edward wrote to Elizabeth, “My absence has not been voluntary & I hope

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<sup>18</sup> MO2160, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, January 2, 1743/44.

<sup>19</sup> MO1754, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, September 17, 1745; MO 1755, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, September 27, 1745.

<sup>20</sup> Emily J. Climens, *Elizabeth Montagu: The Queen of the Bluestockings*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1906), 1: 205, 213.



you approve of my Conduct not only on this but on every other occasion.”<sup>21</sup> Possibly he worried that his decision to remain in Northumberland, and away from his wife, seemed to favor public duty over private obligation. Elizabeth loyally supplied Edward with assurance of her approbation of his actions during the crisis and his devotion to public service.<sup>22</sup>

Edward involved Elizabeth in his political concerns by inviting her to comment on his political reflections. Writing Elizabeth from London at the beginning of the 1745/46 parliamentary session, Edward worried that the Pretender crisis would trigger an expanse of government by ministers hoping to use the opportunity to advance ministerial and crown power. Elizabeth reinforced Edward’s position with the observation that Edward would likely find parliament complaisant to ministerial demands due to lingering fears from the crisis.<sup>23</sup> Edward expressed his dismal thoughts about the direction of the nation, but assured Elizabeth that he found consolation in her company and comfort from the knowledge that he had “never assisted to bring my country into slavery but opposed it as far as my little capacity went.”<sup>24</sup> Elizabeth’s remarks to William Freind show that she shared Edward’s interpretation of the political situation as fallout from general corruption:

I hope the misfortunes that are now fallen on this Country will show to the Powerful & Great that whatever schemes are built upon the narrow base of Cunning, fraud, & artifice, can never be lasting and secure; & that they will therefore lay the foundation on firmer Principles of Truth & justice.<sup>25</sup>

Throughout 1746, Edward continued to express to Elizabeth his low opinion of ministerial exploits, complaining of excessive taxation and the secrecy of the administration.<sup>26</sup>

Edward enlisted Elizabeth’s support during the delicate negotiations surrounding his

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<sup>21</sup> MO1760, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, October 8, 1745.

<sup>22</sup> MO 2178, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, October 20, 1745.

<sup>23</sup> MO 2182, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, October 25, 1745.

<sup>24</sup> MO 1763, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, October 26, 1745.

<sup>25</sup> MO 1034, Elizabeth Montagu to William Freind, December 26, 1745.

<sup>26</sup> MO 1777, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, November 1746.

election bid of 1747. Mid-century, the Huntingdon franchise encompassed something under two hundred freeman, all of whom needed to be persuaded to support individual candidates.<sup>27</sup>

Edward depended on Sandwich to sustain his election bid with his influence as well as financial support. Unfortunately, Edward's unbending opposition to the administration, of which Sandwich was part, made it problematic for Sandwich to support Edward. His own patron, the duke of Bedford, considered Edward a liability. Nevertheless, Sandwich agreed to pay £500 to defray Edward's election costs and to do the same for Kelland Courtenay, who was running for the second seat.<sup>28</sup> Courtenay, who was Sandwich's brother-in-law, expressed willingness to act as a government supporter.<sup>29</sup> Edward expressed satisfaction with the arrangements to Elizabeth, calling Sandwich's behavior "handsome and generous."<sup>30</sup> He conveyed to Elizabeth his hope that he appeared worthy of Sandwich's generosity.<sup>31</sup>

Edward's missive to Elizabeth about the affair shows that Edward seems to have been aware of Sandwich's awkward position. His solicitation of Elizabeth's approval for his conduct illustrates his reliance on Elizabeth's political judgment:

[Sandwich] would leave it to me what proportion of the Expence I should be at, to wch I answer'd I came here not to do any harme to his Lordships interest & would comply with his proposal – I thought this way of acting to be wisest in my condition, & it will give me pleasure to receive your approbation who are the most discreet & faithfull councillor on all occasions.<sup>32</sup>

Edward gratefully acknowledged Elizabeth's dutiful response, thanking her for a "letter full of the kindest affection to me and the justest observations in every one of which I entirely agree

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<sup>27</sup> Jeremy Gregory and John Stevenson, ed., *The Longman Companion to Britain in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Longman, 2000), 88.

<sup>28</sup> MO 1778, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, June 18, 1747.

<sup>29</sup> Romney Sedgwick, *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1715-54*, 2 vols. (London: Published for the History of Parliament Trust by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1970), 1: 587.

<sup>30</sup> MO 1778, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, June 18, 1747.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

with you & shall make use of them at a proper time.”<sup>33</sup> Elizabeth also lent loyal support to Edward by sending him “a frock with gold loops” to impress his electors.<sup>34</sup> Edward was pleased with the clothes which he described as “very handsome & well chosen according to yr never failing custom.”<sup>35</sup> Edward appears to have considered Elizabeth an asset to his election prospects as he hinted that she might attend a Huntingdon election ball.<sup>36</sup>

Edward continued to rely on Elizabeth’s encouragement for his efforts to sustain popularity among his constituents. Between the election years 1747 and 1754, Edward made yearly trips to the Huntingdon Races, usually at Sandwich’s request. Attendance at the races was necessary to keep his electors loyal, but it was also an opportunity for Edward to maintain good relations with Sandwich, on whom his seat depended. Sandwich, an aristocrat of slender means, worked assiduously to keep his candidates on good terms with their constituencies. Contested elections were very expensive for candidates and their patrons because electors had to be treated and feted more vigorously than usual. The Huntingdon Races were an important venue for Sandwich and his electoral contenders to charm their constituents.<sup>37</sup> The festivities also provided other opportunities for impressing the local gentry and large landholders as various assemblies and dinners accompanied the races.

The correspondence indicates that Edward did not enjoy going to the races, but felt obligated to appear in front of his constituency, especially at Sandwich’s behest. Elizabeth upheld the importance of Edward’s attendance. In July 1750, Elizabeth declared it impossible for Edward to be absent from the proceedings: “it wd not be agreeable to prudence & reason to

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<sup>33</sup> MO 1779, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, June 21, 1747.

<sup>34</sup> MO 2191, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, June 23, 1747.

<sup>35</sup> MO 1780, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, June 25, 1747.

<sup>36</sup> MO 1782, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, July 2, 1747.

<sup>37</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, *The Insatiable Earl: A Life of John Montagu, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl of Sandwich* (London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1993), 88-90.

disoblige The Corporation & disgust any friends on such occasion as you have always endeavored to oblige & serve them in points essential.”<sup>38</sup> Elizabeth generally stayed at Tunbridge during the races, but she was anxious for news of the proceedings. In Edward’s account of 1751, he sent details of the betting and the ball, but questioned whether Sandwich’s efforts were essential to maintaining his interest: “whether these things may absolutely necessary to preserve or promote an Election Interest I will not take it upon me to determine.”<sup>39</sup>

While Elizabeth did not attend the Huntingdon Races, she found other ways to buttress Edward’s political interest. She cultivated a friendship with Lady Sandwich, who she seemed genuinely to like. She kept up a correspondence with Lady Sandwich, and in September 1749 traveled to Sandwich’s seat of Hinchbrook to visit her. By chance, Huntingdon had just elected a new mayor, and Elizabeth made plans to attend the celebratory ball. Not knowing about the event in advance, Elizabeth had not brought a gown suitable for the ball. She wrote to Edward that she had sent for a gown and petticoats so that “I may not offend your Constituents.”<sup>40</sup> Edward expressed pleasure that Elizabeth would have to opportunity to meet the entire corporation at the mayor’s supper and ball.<sup>41</sup> The day after the ball, Edward wrote of his conviction that her presence in Huntingdon was beneficial to him: “I am sure you cannot have done my interest any but a great deal of good.”<sup>42</sup>

In her report of the ball to Edward, Elizabeth explained that her clothes had not arrived in time and that she was obliged to borrow some accessories from Lady Sandwich to embellish her plain gown. Her remarks to Edward underscore the importance of rich dress in the theater of

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<sup>38</sup> MO 2224, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, July 13, 1750.

<sup>39</sup> MO 1816, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, August 2, 1751.

<sup>40</sup> MO 2220, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, September 26, 1749.

<sup>41</sup> MO 2221, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, September 27, 1749; MO 1803, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, September 28, 1749.

<sup>42</sup> MO 1804, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, September 30, 1749.

political positioning: “I did as well as I could, & Ld Sandwich told them [Edward’s constituents] I had endeavor’d to be better dressd.”<sup>43</sup> It appears that Sandwich used the occasion of Elizabeth’s presence at Hinchbrook to entertain electors and to promote Edward’s interest. Elizabeth wrote to Edward that the household expected “many of the Corporation” to dinner and that she was meant to make visiting rounds to constituents with Lord and Lady Sandwich. In addition, she attended church with constituents the day after the ball; she reported to Edward that she had thus far “danced and prayed with yr Corporation.”<sup>44</sup>

Elizabeth kept up her friendship with Lady Sandwich throughout the breakdown of the Sandwich marriage in the early 1750s. The couple parted in 1755 due to Lady Sandwich’s mental disorder, which, from a modern perspective, seems to have been rooted in severe post-partum depression.<sup>45</sup> Elizabeth appears to have blamed Sandwich for the breakup, and she visited Lady Sandwich and her sister in 1757 at Windsor Castle, the place of Lady Sandwich’s confinement.<sup>46</sup> Elizabeth called Sandwich “extravagant & vicious,” and predicted that his behavior would result in dire political consequences: “The riot & expence at his house is very great & indeed I fear he will be totally undone. He loses his interest in ye Country & is fallen into contempt.”<sup>47</sup> Despite her low opinion of Sandwich’s personal behavior, she did not attempt to sever Edward’s political connection with Sandwich, though she appears to have worried that Sandwich’s reputation might have deleterious effects on his political influence, and thus, on Edward’s parliamentary seat.

Elizabeth provided Edward with advice pertaining to the political negotiation that

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<sup>43</sup> MO 2222, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, October 1, 1749. For the significance of female dress at election events: see Chalus, *Elite Women*, 197.

<sup>44</sup> MO 2222, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, October 1, 1749.

<sup>45</sup> Rodger, *Insatiable Earl*, 71.

<sup>46</sup> MO 2333, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, June 1757.

<sup>47</sup> MO 2343, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, November 16, 1757.

naturally surrounded the races, and the correspondence shows that Edward valued Elizabeth's opinion. Just prior to the races of 1752, Edward wrote to Elizabeth of his concern that "something may be mov'd relating to the next Election upon wch occasion I must have my thoughts about me."<sup>48</sup> Based on a series of letters from June 1753, it appears that Edward thought Sandwich might use the occasion of the races to set financial terms of the upcoming election which would shift a greater financial burden to Edward. He wrote to Elizabeth to express his fear as well as to voice his desire for her counsel. Edward chose to omit details in his letter, preferring instead to wait for their meeting so the matter could be fully discussed between them: "of this more when we shall have the Happiness to meet for I have already profited by & much value yr Judgment."<sup>49</sup>

Edward increasingly invited Elizabeth's involvement with his political affairs. Just prior to the races of summer 1753, Edward reported to Elizabeth his fear that an opposition might be mounted against his seat in the upcoming election of 1754, and that Sandwich would expect him to cover the additional costs associated with a contested election. In addition to conferring with her brother Morris, Edward turned to Elizabeth to advise him as he negotiated his position with Sandwich. Edward wanted to minimize his own financial exposure without offending Sandwich.

The exchange between Edward and Elizabeth is worth quoting at length because it demonstrates Edward's regard for Elizabeth's advice and judgment, even when Elizabeth's opinion differed from his own. Responding to a letter from Elizabeth (now missing from the extant correspondence), Edward thanked Elizabeth for both her thoughts on the matter and for pertinent information Elizabeth had gathered from outside sources:

I am very much oblig'd to you for the attention with wch you have consider'd the matter wch seem'd to give me some disturbance. But I cannot see the thing in quite the same

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<sup>48</sup> MO 1838, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, July 14, 1752.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

way you do, & think it may be attended with several bad consequences besides what you heard mention'd. Pray is not such a method of proceeding a kind of throwing the Gauntlet & inviting an opposition, a person or persons that are rich whether they be supported by the ministry or not may they not set up & who then is to bear the Charge & burthen of the Contest?<sup>50</sup>

In her reply to Edward, Elizabeth maintained her opinion that an opposition was not likely, and that she did not believe that Sandwich would require Edward to bear additional expenses if one should appear. Moreover, Elizabeth believed that Edward needed to settle the matter with Sandwich directly, as he was the only person who could allay Edward's fears. She delivered this message in direct language softened only with a few references to Edward's upright character:

I think the declaring ye candidates for H——n [Huntingdon] may draw Ld S—— [Sandwich] into expence but I cannot see that so early an ingagement of The constituents could provoke an opposition & it has long been my opinion. I know not how well grounded that no opposition to Lord S—— could avail. I do not doubt yr acquitting yr self well, but for my part, I cannot imagine that in case of an opposition more mony will be expected of you than is agreed for. if you have any doubts upon the subject it will be best to make his Lordship explain. Your good sense & prudence are better arms than cunning and I fear not that you will be a sufferer in any scheme.<sup>51</sup>

Apparently taking Elizabeth's advice, Edward met with Sandwich in London a few days later to discuss election strategy. He relayed some of the details of the meeting in a letter to Elizabeth, although held back some information he considered too sensitive for written correspondence. As Elizabeth suggested, Edward conveyed his concerns to Sandwich about a possible opposition:

About seven last night his Lordship call'd on me when after some discourse the matter was settled intirely between us. I hope in such a manner as you will approve when I tell you the particulars. I took the liberty to let his Lordship know the inconveniences that I thought might possibly happen, but he was firm in his opinion that this was the best way to hinder opposition, said that Lord Fitz Williams & Mr Wortley were to do the very same thing at Peterborough next Week, upon wch reasons as also a considerable concession his Lordship made wch I care not to mention in a letter I submitted to his Lordship.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> MO 1848, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, June 12, 1753.

<sup>51</sup> MO 2272, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, June 13, 1753. Mathew Montagu excised this portion of the letter published in Montagu, *Letters*, 3: 236-40.

<sup>52</sup> MO 1849, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, June 16, 1753.

This exchange makes very clear the extent to which Edward relied on Elizabeth for her judgment and advice concerning his political maneuvering. It also demonstrates that Elizabeth had begun to formulate her own interpretations of political situations (albeit within narrow confines) and that she communicated them to Edward.

In the early 1750s, Elizabeth developed some friendships during visits to Tunbridge Wells that spurred her interest in public affairs. Her friendship with Gilbert West, introduced to her through a family connection, provided Elizabeth with friendly access to West's circle, which had ties to government and high politics.<sup>53</sup> West's circle included George and Charles Lyttelton as well as William Pitt the Elder. Elizabeth knew of Pitt and George Lyttelton from their patriot exploits of the 1740s and thought highly of them. Through West, Elizabeth developed friendships with both men as well as with Lyttelton's brother Charles. Elizabeth communicated her pleasure in these new relationships in letters to Edward that describe a variety of outings and conversations with West, Pitt, and the Lyttelton brothers.<sup>54</sup> Elizabeth found her friends' connections with public life stimulating. In a letter to West, Elizabeth compared Pitt to the Greek orator Demosthenes: "whom in talents, perhaps, he equals, and in grace of manners and the sweet civilities of life, I dare say, excels."<sup>55</sup> Elizabeth considered her new connections to be potentially beneficial to Edward. She introduced Edward to her social circle during one of Edward's visits to Tunbridge. Edward later wrote to express satisfaction with his exchange with Pitt: "I heartily wish the compleat recovery of Mr Pitt & with pleasure reflect in the few hours I past in his conversation."<sup>56</sup> Elizabeth became a conduit of goodwill between Edward and Pitt as

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<sup>53</sup> Climenson, *Elizabeth Montagu*, 1: 278. West was cousin to Lydia Lumley Botham's husband; Lydia was Elizabeth's cousin on her father's side. West was also cousin to George Lyttelton through the Temple family. Elizabeth and West developed a close friendship that lasted until 1756, the year of West's death.

<sup>54</sup> Montagu, *Letters*, 3: 233-43

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 244.

<sup>56</sup> MO 1870, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, September 15, 1753.



she transmitted salutations between them.<sup>57</sup>

Elizabeth's enthusiasm for discussing political news grew during 1753 as her ties to West and his circle solidified. In an effort to keep Edward abreast of current affairs, Elizabeth sent Edward detailed reports of news she had gleaned in London as well as her own interpretations. As the following exchange demonstrates, Elizabeth's positive attitude toward opportunities posed by political maneuverings differed from Edward's characteristic gloomy outlook. Significantly, as her engagement with politics was escalating, Elizabeth portrayed her concern with political events as nothing more than neutral observation:

I heard some time ago that Mr Fox had bespoke the place of Pay Master in case of accidents, & I doubt not of a desire in many persons of consequence to make head against the P—ms [Pelhams], yet if one considers how they have increased in power on every exigency, & how rash in conduct & lost in reputation some of their opponents are, one is apt to doubt what will be the event of such an opposition, however an opposition we shall see, for our late state of passive obedience is unnatural & cannot last, as a disinterested person I shall have some pleasure in looking on, especially as some good usually arises & some evils prevented by this sort of spirit.<sup>58</sup>

Edward's reply signaled recognition of Elizabeth's real interest in the matter: her friendship with West and his circle. At the time of this exchange, Pitt was Paymaster and his political rival Henry Fox was attempting to undermine him. Edward replied with a dismal reading of the situation:

Whoever is in or out things will go on in the same way they have done (that is from bad to worse) these several years. The fault lies in our constitution wch as Lord Bollingbroke says ought every now & then be reduc'd to it's first Principles wch I fear can only be effected by some great revolution . . . As to yr acquaintance with Mr P---- [Pitt] if he should do otherwise than well I doubt now but many may be desirous to succeed him.<sup>59</sup>

By 1756, Elizabeth began to take a more active role in procuring news for Edward,

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<sup>57</sup> See, for example, the postscript of MO 1875, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, June 16, 1754: "If you see Mr Pit return my thanks for his remembering me & make my best Complements to & congratulate Mr West in my name."

<sup>58</sup> MO 2269, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, May 10, 1753.

<sup>59</sup> MO 1847, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, May 13, 1753.

whether solicited or not. Her remarks written from Sandleford to her sister Sarah about Edward's interest in politics perhaps reflect her own feelings:

I believe we shall go up to the meeting of the Parliament Mr Montagu has an appetite for politics & when was there greater agitation in the political World! besides the first & last days of a Minister are to him what some wicked poet says of the first and last days of a marriage. I suppose Mr Foxe has by this time resign'd in the due & accustomed forms. If the french were not formidable Enemies all these ambitious contentions would be very entertaining.<sup>60</sup>

In December 1756, while political turmoil delayed the opening of the parliamentary session, Elizabeth travelled to London to procure the news for Edward, who remained at Sandleford.

### Gathering and Interpreting News

Elizabeth's growing enthusiasm for public affairs is best illustrated by her pursuit of political news and her interpretation of this information for Edward's consumption. Among the elite, "news" comprised both political and social elements, and interested parties gathered news from a variety of sources including newspapers, pamphlets, and social contacts.<sup>61</sup> There was a great deal of material to filter. By mid-century, London had eighteen newspapers: six tri-weeklies, six weeklies, and six dailies.<sup>62</sup> Pamphlets and essay papers, arguably more influential than newspapers in shaping public debate, flooded London, especially during times of political controversy.<sup>63</sup> Social calls, assemblies, and dinners from contacts (whose reliability had to be discerned) provided other sources for information. Among the ruling elite, even reports of deaths, marriages, alliances, and quarrels had political significance.<sup>64</sup> Elizabeth performed the tasks of gathering and screening news with shrewdness and zeal.

Elizabeth depended on several regular sources for up-to-date political news. Charles

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<sup>60</sup> MO 5761, Elizabeth Montagu to Sarah Scott, October 27, 1756.

<sup>61</sup> Chalus, *Elite Women*, 59.

<sup>62</sup> Hannah Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society, 1695-1855* (New York: Longman, 2000), 29.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>64</sup> Chalus, *Elite Women*, 82.

Lyttelton, Dean of Exeter, was one of these. In a letter dated November 19, 1756, Lyttelton expressed dismay that Elizabeth had not yet arrived in London. He wrote her a detailed account of who was likely to accept various ministry positions, and of his brother's request for a peerage. He also included reports of rumors and news gleaned from the "Publick Papers." It is evident that Lyttelton anticipated a lively discussion on political matters, for he wrote: "I make no Reflections on all these Events till we meet, (tho they would afford many), for reasons I need not point out to you."<sup>65</sup> Elizabeth relayed a report to Edward in December which included the information that the king wished the Hessian and Hanovarian troops to return home, and that Pitt, Temple, and Grenville were working subversively against Newcastle. As the letter makes clear, Elizabeth gathered this news from visits with George Lyttelton and with Samuel Torriano, secretary to John Gilbert, Archbishop of York.<sup>66</sup> The final line of the letter underscores Elizabeth's heavy reliance on verbal intelligence from regular sources: "I expect the Dean of Exeter and Lady Frances Williams this afternoon, if they have any news I will insert it."<sup>67</sup>

Lady Frances Williams was another frequent supplier of news.<sup>68</sup> Lady Frances circulated in London society in the 1750s, but it is not clear exactly when or how she and Elizabeth formed a friendship. Elizabeth considered Lady Frances a very reliable source of information, and it is likely that Lady Frances opposed the political position of her estranged husband, Sir Charles

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<sup>65</sup> MO 1249, Charles Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, November 19, 1756.

<sup>66</sup> Montagu, *Letters*, 4: 45-48; Arthur Hill Cash, *Laurence Sterne: The Later Years* (London; New York: Methuen, 1986), 79. Elizabeth seems to have met Torriano at Tunbridge in 1750, possibly through her acquaintance with West: see Climenson, 2 : 72

<sup>67</sup> MO 2331, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, December 1756. This line does not appear in the published version of the letter; see Montagu, 4: 48.

<sup>68</sup> Lady Frances (née Coningsby) formally separated from her husband in Sir Charles Hanbury Williams in 1742 after developing advanced syphilis transmitted by him. Her treatment for the disease was widely talked of in London society. The couple had married in 1732, and Williams entered Commons in 1735, aligning himself with Henry Fox in 1737. Williams along with Fox supported the old corps Whigs loyal to Walpole. Williams advanced himself politically by producing satiric verse attacking Walpole's opposition, specifically targeting George Lyttelton and William Pulteney. After their separation in 1742, Lady Frances maintained custody of the couple's two daughters. In 1749, Williams facilitated their eldest daughter's unofficial betrothal to William-Anne Hollis Capel, the Earl of Essex, to whom Williams had family and political ties. The marriage took place in 1754. See Mary Margaret Stewart, "Williams, Sir Charles Hanbury (1708-1759)," in ODNB online, January 2008.

Hanbury Williams, given her personal hostility to him. In a letter to Edward during the Mordaunt controversy of 1757, Elizabeth declared her intention to hold the letter until she had talked with Lady Frances: “I expect Lady Frances Williams here presently & as she has good intelligence of what is going forward I will not seal my letter till I have enquired whether she can add more news than I have sent you.”<sup>69</sup> Lady Frances also brought printed news to Elizabeth, as another letter indicates.<sup>70</sup>

In addition to these sources, Elizabeth also gathered information from visits and correspondence with Anne Donnellan, a friend made prior to her marriage through the duchess of Portland ; Joseph Emin, an Armenian freedom fighter whose cause was championed by a variety of English aristocrats including George Lyttelton; and after 1760, William Pulteney, Lord Bath. There was also a political angle to her friendship with Frances Boscawen, who she met at Tunbridge in 1750, the same summer she met West and Torriano.<sup>71</sup> Frances Boscawen is best known for her activities as a Bluestocking literary hostess and as part of the inner circle of Elizabeth’s Bluestocking friends.<sup>72</sup> Her marriage to Edward Boscawen, however, put her in direct contact with information about the military and political maneuvering during the Seven Years’ War, and she passed some of this intelligence to close friends.<sup>73</sup> Elizabeth duly reported to Edward any news learned from Boscawen. In the instance of Boscawen’s recall from the fleet in 1757, Elizabeth wrote, “Mr. Boscawen will be busy enquiring the cause of his being recalled, he has merit, & a powerfull family, & I hope they (his enemies) cannot oppress tho they may oppose him. Do not mention this affair but let me know what you think of it & if you hear any

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<sup>69</sup> MO 2343, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, November 16, 1757.

<sup>70</sup> MO 2338, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, November 2 or 3, 1757.

<sup>71</sup> Climenson, *Letters*, 1 : 277

<sup>72</sup> Elizabeth Eger, “Boscawen , Frances Evelyn (1719–1805),” in ODNB online, January 2008.

<sup>73</sup> Until his death in 1761, Edward Boscawen was one of the most important military commanders in the British Navy. A was a rear-admiral from 1747-1755, he advanced to vice-admiral in 1755, and made admiral in 1758. See Clive Wilkinson, “Boscawen, Edward (1711–1761),” in ODNB online, January 2008.

thing on ye subject.”<sup>74</sup> Elizabeth’s comments to Edward demonstrate the intersection of eighteenth-century military affairs with political intrigue. While the military forces became increasingly professionalized during the eighteenth century, government retained oversight of the military through administrative offices controlled by the ministry appointees.<sup>75</sup> Military service naturally had political implications.

During the late summer and fall of 1757, as British forces suffered setbacks on all major war fronts, Elizabeth kept Edward apprised of the latest news. The letters between Edward and Elizabeth in August show that Edward worried that Hanover, propped up by British subsidies to the Hanoverian and Hessian militaries, was likely to fall to the French and that it would lead to Britain’s ruin. Edward’s remarks reveal his deep and abiding misgivings about the connection between the British crown and Hanover, but if Elizabeth shared these opinions, she did not say. As more news of British military failures reached England, Elizabeth travelled to London in late October to seek medical attention while Edward remained at Sandleford waiting for the parliamentary session to open in December.

The failed Rochefort expedition of 1757, and the public uproar that accompanied it, prompted Elizabeth to send a series of detailed reports on the subject to Edward. The controversy turned on the alleged misconduct of the military commanders, particularly General Sir John Mordaunt and Admiral Sir Edward Hawke, as well as the ministers who supported the initiative, Newcastle and Pitt. The exchanges between Elizabeth and Edward regarding this affair are worth close examination because they illustrate a number of things: the scope of Elizabeth’s news gathering, her keen engagement with political events as she interpreted

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<sup>74</sup> MO 2334, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, August 1, 1757.

<sup>75</sup> For a discussion of the growth of civil administration in Britain and its relationship to the military, see John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money, and the English State, 1688-1783* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), 64-87.

information and formulated opinions, and Edward's appreciation for her effort and judgment.

Elizabeth amassed information about the Rochefort affair through visits with friends including Lady Frances Williams, Frances Boscawen, and Samuel Torriano. Elizabeth sent Edward her initial estimation of the incident: "I find the blame of the World falls heavily on Sr J—M— [Sir John Mordaunt]." <sup>76</sup> She informed Edward that Hawke had signed a declaration that it was too hazardous to attempt a land attack, although he apparently disagreed with the contents of the document. <sup>77</sup> Elizabeth took care to assert the accuracy of her intelligence in addition to declaring her outrage at Hawke's attempt to throw blame on others:

It shd seem to me he is a double Coward that does not own his cowardice, you will perhaps doubt one of these facts but it is publicly & universally [known] that he did sign the Council of War & now condemns it. Mr Torriano ask'd a friend & relation of his how these inconsistencies happen'd & he answerd Sr Edwd said he had done a silly thing in signing the resolution, but he was told the Ditches were full of water by ye land officers. This is a poor excuse if they had told him Rochefort was full of Salamanders wd he have set his hand to that too! Was it not his business to know ye fact before he approved ye resolution upon that fact? <sup>78</sup>

Elizabeth knew it was important to establish the accuracy of her information and the integrity of her informants. When she reported to Edward what she heard regarding the arrangements prior to the expedition and how the commanders viewed their chances of success as the enterprise was being planned, she referred to Torriano's information as highly reliable: "Mr Torriano says he had it from undoubted authority that his Majesty asked each of ye Generals by themselves whether they really liked to go." <sup>79</sup> The final lines of Elizabeth's report demonstrate that the way news trickled into her household by way of callers. She wrote to Edward that she would leave her letter unsealed until the final post bell in case she should hear

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<sup>76</sup> MO 2338, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, November 2 or 3, 1757.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.; Peter Douglas Brown, *William Pitt, Earl of Chatham: The Great Commoner* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1978), 157.

<sup>78</sup> MO 2338, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, November 2 or 3, 1757.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.

further information. Evidently she did, because she subsequently included an update from Frances Boscawen about the state of Admiral Holburne's supposedly sunken fleet. This news corrected information written earlier in the letter.<sup>80</sup>

In addition to sending Edward news reports gleaned from reliable contacts, Elizabeth also perused the newspapers, essay-journals, and pamphlets circulating through London to supplement her accounts. This was done principally for a reading of public opinion rather than to ascertain a set of facts. Public debate following the failed Rocheforte expedition centered on laying blame for the debacle. The London periodicals generally supported Pitt and compared him favorably to the past administration under Newcastle during the Byng episode.<sup>81</sup> Elizabeth sent Edward a published ode she thought well-written, but she remarked of it, "our Countries miseries should make us grave, not witty & jocose."<sup>82</sup> Several odes circulated in London during the controversy, so it is not clear which one Elizabeth meant. Edward later thanked Elizabeth for the ode, telling her that he had passed it along to a friend.<sup>83</sup>

In the same letter containing the ode, Elizabeth also informed Edward of a printed letter by Thomas Potter which publicly defended Pitt by recounting Pitt's grief at the failure of the expedition. The letter, printed in a newspaper, was brought to Elizabeth's home by Lady Frances. Elizabeth did not forward it to Edward along with the ode; it does not appear that Lady Frances left her copy of the letter with Elizabeth.<sup>84</sup> The letter was clearly aimed at exculpating Pitt from blame and boosting his public support. Potter was an MP and had worked for Prince Frederick following Pitt's and Lyttelton's departure from his court. Potter became friendly with

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<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Robert Donald Spector, *English Literary Periodicals and the Climate of Opinion During the Seven Years War* (The Hague: Mouton & Co., 1966), 52.

<sup>82</sup> MO 2338, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, November 2 or 3, 1757.

<sup>83</sup> MO 1892, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, November 6, 1757.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

Pitt though both men's association with the society at Stowe, and in the mid-1750s, Potter acted to establish support for Pitt from the old tory rump in parliament who had opposed former Whig administrations.<sup>85</sup> According to Elizabeth, Potter's letter was first posted at James Leake's bookshop in Bath, and was subsequently printed in the London newspapers.<sup>86</sup>

Aside from the fact of the letter's existence, Elizabeth made no further comment to Edward about it. The sequence of letters shows she soon after joined Edward at Sandleford, and it is likely that they discussed the matter verbally. She shared her low opinion of Potter's letter with George Lyttelton, who was estranged from Pitt by 1757. Her letter to Lyttelton about this affair illustrates not only her rapt attention to political events, but also the political component of her friendship with Lyttelton, a point that will be discussed in Chapter 5.

The rage of public opinion over the expedition appalled Elizabeth, but the administration's apparent desire for public absolution as signaled by Potter's letter disgusted her further. She fumed to Lyttelton: "I doubt not but the mayor and aldermen of Bath, their wives, children, apprentices, and journeymen, have wept over it. Is not this kissing the dirty hem of the dirty garment of low and plebian popularity?"<sup>87</sup> Elizabeth called the letter "pathetic," and contended that it was a meaningless gesture: "If the failure of the expedition shall appear to be owing to the backwardness of our army, there will be no occasion for all this farce; if the project was rash, and ill advised, this mournful epistle will not excuse it."<sup>88</sup> Potter's reputation for debauchery and licentiousness no doubt added to Elizabeth's disapproval.<sup>89</sup>

Although Edward did not solicit information about the expedition debacle from

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<sup>85</sup> Brown, *William Pitt*, 83, 91, 125-26, 133.

<sup>86</sup> MO 2338, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, November 2 or 3, 1757; Montagu, *Letters*, 4: 64.

<sup>87</sup> Montagu, *Letters*, 4: 64.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 4: 64-65.

<sup>89</sup> Many contemporaries blamed Potter for leading his friend John Wilkes to engage in similar behavior: see R. D. E. Eagles, "Potter, Thomas (1718?-1759)," in ODNB online, January 2008.



Elizabeth, he was pleased to receive it. He praised her considerable effort: “You have been very diligent in picking up news & sending me an Account of what is said about the last unhappy Expedition.”<sup>90</sup> Edward’s assessment of the situation illustrates the importance contemporaries placed on news accuracy and source integrity and it demonstrates that Edward considered Elizabeth adept at filtering information from various suppliers:

What you mention concerning Sr E. H. [Sir Edward Hawke] I never heard any thing of before, it is so infamous that if not attested by unquestionable evidence it would seem incredible, It was generally said & beleiv’d that sending him out again with Admiral Boscawen was clear proof that they had nothing to impute to him that was faulty, but if the above be true, nothing of that sort can be concluded.<sup>91</sup>

In response to Edward’s praise, Elizabeth portrayed her efforts as motivated by Edward’s desires: “I know you must desire to hear what is said in Town of Sr. J:M — & how matters are likely to go.”<sup>92</sup> Throughout November of 1757, Elizabeth continued to send Edward details of the Rochefort controversy as well as a dispute concerning the Irish Parliament. Despite her attempt to represent her interest as a reflection of Edward’s concerns, the extent of her comments and the forcefulness with which she expressed her opinions shows her absorption in public affairs. Edward again commended Elizabeth for her diligence and skill in gathering accurate news: “You have been very good in collecting & sending me news, & I beleive you have it from so good Hands that if I was in town I could hardly pick up any better information.”<sup>93</sup> Considering that that Edward, a man of high rank as well as an MP, was able to move in circles closed to Elizabeth, this was indeed high praise.

### Diverging Interests

Elizabeth’s letters to Edward in November through December 1758 and January 1759

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<sup>90</sup> MO 1892, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, November 6, 1757.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> MO 2336, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, November 8, 1757.

<sup>93</sup> MO 1893, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, November 15, 1757.

show that her interest in politics had moved beyond Edward's electoral concerns and desire for current news. In November, Elizabeth left Northumberland for London while Edward remained to work on colliery business. Edward's letters illustrate his complete immersion in the business of his northern properties. He admitted to Elizabeth, "I have addicted my self to business & nothing else since you left me," and stated that he intended to continue to do so for the remainder of his stay.<sup>94</sup> Elizabeth's letters to Edward demonstrate her engagement with parliamentary politics although Edward neither requested information nor commented on her reports. It is quite possible that Edward was not as enthusiastic about Pitt's war policy as Elizabeth seems to have been. In June 1758, Pitt had reversed his previous policy of refusing to send any British troops to defend German lands. The new popularity in Britain of Prince Frederick and the Hanoverian army, owing to a series of German victories, smoothed away any real opposition to this change of course, although it meant a substantial increase in war costs for Britain.<sup>95</sup> Elizabeth wrote approvingly of Pitt's stance: "Mr Pitt spoke very well at the opening of the Parlm<sup>t</sup> the K— [King] is much pleased with ye turn of ye speech, & ye publick with him does not find much fault tho it ws declaring strongly for what us'd to be calld german measures, however we had better make war with spirits than by halves."<sup>96</sup>

Though Edward maintained silence regarding public affairs, Elizabeth enthusiastically continued her communications of news and commentary. The letters from these years clearly illustrate Elizabeth's political stance on a variety of topics. She showed confidence in Pitt's leadership and honesty: "Mr Pitt has a personal dignity that supports open measures, & I am glad he does not learn ye political art of prevarication. He has ye peoples intire confidence & I hope

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<sup>94</sup> MO 1899, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, November 28, 1758.

<sup>95</sup> Brown, *William Pitt*, 174-75.

<sup>96</sup> MO 2356, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, November 25, 1758.

he will use it to good ends, they will at least know to what ends While he speaks out.”<sup>97</sup>

Although we can only guess at Edward’s reaction, he was likely horrified by Elizabeth’s description of the spending and taxation initiatives debated in Commons as members considered how to fund Pitt’s war strategy. “Poor Legge look’d distress’d,” she reported to Edward, “no one knows how these great sums are to be raised, taxes on Dogs and publick diversions are talk’d of.”<sup>98</sup>

Elizabeth worried about the strain on the treasury. She aimed her suspicion not at Pitt, who she regarded as a man of great wisdom and personal integrity, but at Pitt’s supporters in parliament, such as William Beckford. MP for London, Beckford was a sugar planter with large estates in Jamaica.<sup>99</sup> Elizabeth described Beckford’s fervent speeches in which he declared that Britain must pay whatever the cost for victory. She remarked wryly to Edward, “I wish then it were to be paid for in sugar Canes.”<sup>100</sup> Of Pitt, she declared, “I really believe Mr Pitt means to do his Country service by these great armaments & expeditions, but what these headlong politicians mean I cannot guess.”<sup>101</sup> Perhaps in an effort to show her agreement with Edward’s negative views of profligate public spending, Elizabeth lamented, “I wish we may not be at that eve of the day which you have long foretold in regard to ye public funds. In former times the opposition used to check ye profusion & extravagances of Ministers, now it is reversed, & the ministers will hardly be able to restrain ye people.”<sup>102</sup>

King George II died on October 25, 1760, and his grandson George III ascended to the throne. On October 29, Elizabeth sent Edward an account of the king’s death and evidently

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<sup>97</sup> MO 2357, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, November 28, 1758.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Lewis Namier and John Brooke, ed., *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons, 1754-1790*, 3 vols. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 2: 75.

<sup>100</sup> MO 2377, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, January, 1759.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> MO 2365, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, December 19, 1758.

thought the accuracy of her information would prove diverting to Edward. Unfortunately, her account is missing from the correspondence, but she assured Edward that she included it “for yr amusement as it is very authentic.”<sup>103</sup> Although she fretted about a wave of Scots, “from peers to pedlars,” heading for London in search of handouts from the new king and his court, Elizabeth had a favorable opinion of George III, and reported to Edward that the young king seemed eager to please and had treated all the royal family, including the late king’s mistress, very kindly. She also assured Edward that her father and brother Morris did not think there would be a division on any measure in parliament, so that he needn’t drop his business matters and hasten to London.<sup>104</sup> Although Elizabeth seems to have shifted her opinion somewhat about so-called “German measures,” and took a practical view of exigencies due to war, Edward continued to be adamant that Britain’s potential ruin lay in its connection with Hanover. Elizabeth sent him reading material that supported his own thinking. Edward thanked her for sending him a pamphlet called *Considerations of the German War* and registered his approval of its contents: “it is in my opinion the best Pamphlet that has been writ [in] a long time. Whoever is the Author he is a great master of reason . . . If he is right I am sorry for England that has so long been, & as far as I see is to continue going on in so ruinous a Plan.”<sup>105</sup>

Although Elizabeth wished to appear in concord with Edward’s attitudes, her desire to be presented at court created a problematic situation. Like Edward, Elizabeth displayed an aloof loyalty to George II, but she showed an enthusiastic admiration of George III almost as soon as he came to the throne in October 1760. Edward maintained his independence from the new regime making it difficult for Elizabeth to publicly demonstrate her loyalty to the king. To

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<sup>103</sup> MO 2400, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, October 29, 1760.

<sup>104</sup> MO 2402, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, November 14, 1760; MO 2403, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, November 18, 1760.

<sup>105</sup> MO 1923, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, November 19, 1760.

overcome this problem, Elizabeth represented herself to Edward as reluctantly obliged to attend court and she purposely interpreted his ambivalent response to her request for permission as an indication of their unity on the subject. In this way, Elizabeth was able to assert her own political agenda while at the same time appear to be following Edward's wishes. Elizabeth continued to position her court attendance as an unpleasant obligation to avoid seeming in conflict with Edward's views. Nevertheless, Elizabeth's desire to go to court marked a shift in her attitude toward the monarchy as well as a break from Edward's staunch independence from court.

Late November 1760, Elizabeth wrote Edward for permission to be presented at court and cleverly framed the situation in a way that made it difficult for Edward to object. She presented her case for going court to Edward in language that assumed his approval of this enterprise, although there is nothing in the letter record to indicate that she and Edward previously discussed the matter. She also indicated that all London society, including Tories with Jacobite leanings, planned to visit court to kiss hands, so that her absence might be read as disloyalty to the new regime. The subject came up, Elizabeth told Edward, at a large gathering in which she was asked when she was to be presented at court. Elizabeth answered that Edward intended her to go as soon as he arrived in London. According to Elizabeth, Frances Boscawen observed that Lady Bute might present her at court, "as we are relations & visited."<sup>106</sup> Elizabeth explained to Edward that she rejected this idea from concern that she might appear a courtier. Elizabeth suggested to the gathering that Lady Cardigan, another Montagu relative, might take her instead. As the head of the Montagu family, Lady Cardigan was "a person who went as a great independent Lady to pay her duty to her sovereign without Being a courtier."<sup>107</sup> The

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<sup>106</sup> MO 2404, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, November 1760.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

problem, explained Elizabeth, was that her suggestion had been somehow relayed to Lady Cardigan, who was now eager to take her. Elizabeth wrote that she awaited Edward's instructions. Although Elizabeth professed apathy about the matter, her words demonstrate a barely concealed desire for Edward's affirmation:

I will not go with her till I have your answer whether I shall or not, for if you have changed your mind upon it, I am perfectly indifferent. When I was young and handsome I thought myself furniture for a drawing room, for as Milton says Beauty is nature's boast, and shou'd be shewn, at Court & feasts & high solemnities, where most wonder at ye workmanship, but now I shall be of as little consequence as any chair or stool in ye drawing room but as perhaps there is not a Gentlewoman in London who does not go to Court I shd do it as I would wear a hoop or any other fashionable mode. It seems if I am to go to Court I must not appear any Where till I have kiss d hands which makes in necessary if done to be done soon, but I shall await yr orders: and I beg you to speak freely, for as you have made me thank God in a situation to be free & independent, it is not of ye least consequence to me whether I be deem[d] affected or disaffected, a Jacobite or a friend to the Hanoverian succession.<sup>108</sup>

Significantly, Elizabeth appealed to Edward's independent principles by declaring herself politically independent through her marriage. The core of her argument lay in the issue of public appearances; this was not, as Elizabeth framed it, a matter of personal preference, it was a question of public duty and attention to polite convention. As Elizabeth knew, it would be difficult for Edward to instruct her to ignore her obligation or to flout a prevailing notion of well-bred society.<sup>109</sup>

Edward was clearly ambivalent about the matter; on one hand, he did not plan on attending court due to long-standing principle; on the other, he did not want to prevent Elizabeth from enjoying court society. Edward's priority was to maintain his position of independence from crown or ministerial influence, and he was unsure if Elizabeth's presence at court might undermine his stance. Edward's answer to Elizabeth indicates his regard for Elizabeth's

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<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

<sup>109</sup> Betty Rizzo maintains that Elizabeth became an expert at manipulating Edward through his weaknesses, one of which was fear of social criticism: see *Companions Without wows: Relationships among Eighteenth-Century British Women* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1994), 124.

judgment, but also shows that he that Edward understood the personal desire behind Elizabeth's request. In his reply, he did not explicitly give Elizabeth permission, but rather stated his reasons for his habitual avoidance of court, then left the decision to her. His response demonstrates his uncertainty, but also his respect for Elizabeth as an individual capable of choosing her own course:

At present I can only say that if you mean nothing more than paying yr duty to our new Sovereign I see no harm in it & I think Lady Cardigan of all others the properest person to introduce you; but if you go further before you give your attendance at a Court I wish you would take the consequences into yr most serious consideration . . . If I should be still so unhappy as out of dislike to ye present measures not to alter my ways of Acting & not appear at Court would it be proper for you to be attendant? Indeed it seems to me that it would not, but if you can make out the contrary out of any sound Principles of reason I will readily submit. I have for many years liv'd in a state of Independency . . . & acted not with them whose politics they thought endanger'd the Liberties & good of their Country, am j to alter now, or maintain the same conduct I hitherto have done? Whilst I flater'd my self that we were in the same way of thinking & that my conduct met with yr Approbation I did hardly suffer any thing. I then thought, & still reflect with the utmost sense of gratitude on the sacrifice you make me in yr early bloom by giving up all the pleasures & gaiety of a Court& it was the greater because you had all the advantages of beauty & sense to shine & make a figure there. I think that capacity is not so far gone as you in yr modesty are pleas'd to say & I may add in some sense perhaps improv'd . Either at a Court or any where else I wish you every thing that is good, that you may long enjoy that good will & esteem which yr merit has acquir'd you, & leave the rest to yr own Candid & impartial consideration. I hope you will favour me with an answer to this as soon as you can pardon the Liberty wch you have so freely given & I have taken.<sup>110</sup>

Elizabeth's response to Edward's letter manipulated Edward's espoused views to make it seem as though it was Edward's idea that she attend court. Although it is clear from his letter that Edward was reluctant for Elizabeth to attend court, Elizabeth replied to Edward's letter as though he had suggested the idea: "I mention'd to Morris that I believed you design'd I shd go to Court, & he thought it right I shd do like other people. . . . my own way of thinking coincides so

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<sup>110</sup> MO 1924, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, November 23, 1760.

much with yours I have no merit in acquiescence.”<sup>111</sup> Elizabeth also solidified her own argument by situating it as her brother’s wise advice; that is, if other people of corresponding rank and fashion were visiting court, then Elizabeth should do likewise. Equally remarkable, Elizabeth enlarged the scope of her proposed court activities by treating her new intention as a required element of the court presentation already sanctioned by Edward. Her original proposition--that she should be presented at court as courtesy to the new king--had now transformed to include regular visits to court: “As you seem not to object to my kissing hands I will do it, & I promise you that whenever you shall have in ye least Wish I should cease to go to the drawing room I shall most readily comply, & in the mean time go very sparingly, for it seems to me as a want of dignity in people whose situation in independent, & whose rank is not great, to be often haunting a Court.”<sup>112</sup> Still, she represented herself as disinclined to go, and informed Edward of her retort to Lord Bath that she had “no great fancy” for kissing hands at court.<sup>113</sup> Her proclamations of reluctance were meant to demonstrate solidarity with Edward’s independent principles and served as a convenient camouflage of her own inclinations.

Elizabeth’s burgeoning friendship with William Pulteney, earl of Bath unquestionably added to her desire to attend court. Bath, who had long since destroyed his political credibility by accepting an earldom in the wake of Robert Walpole’s resignation in 1742, attended court often and was on friendly terms with various members of the royal family. Elizabeth certainly wanted to associate with Bath’s court milieu, however much on the fringes it might be.

Moreover, as I will show in Chapter 5, Elizabeth’s letters to Bath indicate a strong identification with the king and court because she believed George III personified the country ideal of an

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<sup>111</sup> MO 2407, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, 1760. Between MO 2404 and 2407, there are several intervening letters from Elizabeth to Edward; none mention the court. Elizabeth was obviously waiting for a reply from Edward, which took him some time to compose, as he says in MO 1924.

<sup>112</sup> MO 2407, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, 1760.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid.



impartial virtuous ruler. In fact, George III and his court were consciously adopting a country Whig stance that combined a theoretical anti-party position with the king's personal dislike of Newcastle and the old corps Whigs who had relied on the old Whig/Tory division for power.<sup>114</sup>

Although Elizabeth created a fiction that Edward sanctioned her visits to court, she understood that Edward remained skeptical of the court and the new regime and continued to position himself as a country Whig, independent of party and court. Her letters to Edward indicate her loyalty to his integrity and independence, but at the same time she subtly attempted to influence his views about the king. She represented the king in ways Edward would find attractive, such as pointing out the weakness of his German orientation: "The Pamphlet I sent you has made a great impression on the publick, & the present K— [King] not being so partial to Hanover as his predecessor it is thought Mr Pitt will not exact all force of the Nation on ye german side of ye war."<sup>115</sup> From Newcastle, Edward signaled in letters to Elizabeth that he clung to his old belief that Britain's connection to Hanover was at the heart of English political woes, but he recognized that Elizabeth's views had shifted on this subject: "I have possibly said more upon these matters than I ought or in wch you may agree with me. However, you cannot deny my being consistent with my self, & if I err will excuse it, since I have so little or no opportunities to be inform'd."<sup>116</sup> As Edward contemplated another bid for parliament, he wrote Elizabeth of his belief that ministerial authority was eclipsing the role of parliament so as to render it useless. He wryly remarked that he would not alter his long-standing opinions without overwhelming proof of their invalidity: "if that should be the case I ought to give them up, & might do without being put to much shame since I have so many of my betters to keep me in

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<sup>114</sup> John Brewer, *Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 53.

<sup>115</sup> MO 2413, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, c. December 20, 1760.

<sup>116</sup> MO 1930, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, January 18, 1761.

countenance.”<sup>117</sup>

Despite their divergence of opinion regarding the king and his administration, Edward and Elizabeth found common ground on other political issues. Edward continued to rely on Elizabeth’s judgment in negotiating his election terms with Sandwich. Sandwich visited Elizabeth in London to ask her to relay his request to Edward to stand for Huntingdon in February 1761. Elizabeth offered advice: “I think if you like it it would be more polite to write his Lordship he is in Pall Mall but you may enclose a letter & I will send.”<sup>118</sup> Edward preferred Elizabeth to forward his letter once she had approved it. He asked her to compose an answer to Sandwich if she did not like the one he sent.<sup>119</sup> Edward also happily delegated to Elizabeth the task of turning down a friend’s request to forward a letter of supplication to Lady Bute.<sup>120</sup> As always, Elizabeth sent Edward extensive commentary of ministerial policies as well as gossip, such as noting that “Fox was personally well with his R:H: [Royal Highness] Ld S: [Sandwich] has plainly prefer’d Madrid to the Lodge at Windsor & is not personally well with his Great Friend [likely Bedford].”<sup>121</sup> Both seemed to favor an end to the expensive war, but Elizabeth more quickly expressed approval of the peace settlement than did Edward, who preferred to suspend judgment until all details were made public and fully considered.<sup>122</sup>

Elizabeth wished to demonstrate to Edward her continued adherence to their shared country principles. She expressed in explicitly country terms her disgust with Cumberland, Pitt, and Newcastle for colluding against Bute. A minister, she opined, should be replaced the “moment he encroaches on the liberty of the people, & the sacred rights of a Constitution of

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<sup>117</sup> MO 1931, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, January 25, 1761.

<sup>118</sup> MO 2435, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, January 22, 1761.

<sup>119</sup> MO 1931, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, January 25, 1761.

<sup>120</sup> MO 1615, Messenger Monsey to Edward Montagu, July 31, 1761; MO 2448, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, August 1761.

<sup>121</sup> MO 2464, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, November 23, 1762.

<sup>122</sup> MO 2463, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, November 19, 1762; MO 1943, Edward Montagu to Elizabeth Montagu, November 11, 1762.

Government cemented with the blood of Patriot Martyrs for the liberties of their Country.”<sup>123</sup> She did not consider, however, that Bute had committed any offense. Moreover, she declared that disregard for crown prerogative tended to establish aristocracy, “more to be fear’d by the Great Commoners of this Country in the most honorable rank of which my Dear worthy Husband stands than any other danger in the present period.”<sup>124</sup> Elizabeth’s political loyalties had shifted: once partial to Pitt as a true patriot, she now considered him a political opportunist and viewed the king and Bute as the defenders of the constitution.

By using the language of country Whiggism, Elizabeth possibly hoped to reconcile her own position with Edward’s rigid stance. Certainly she wanted Edward to approve of her new friendship with Lord Bath with its attendant court associations. As she urged him to run again for Commons in 1761, she mentioned Bath’s admiration for him: “I wish you could have heard what Lord Bath said of you ye other day to a Person I know. No higher encomium could be made to any man & it was done I assure you with warmth & tenderness, you see therefore those who do not act up to ye rules you do, respect them.”<sup>125</sup> This remark suggests that Edward, as many did, considered Bath’s acceptance of a peerage in 1742 to be a betrayal of both his opposition principles and patriot colleagues. She made considerable efforts to establish goodwill between her husband and Bath, even at one point suggesting that Bath wanted to explain the circumstances of his past conduct to Edward so that he might better understand his situation.<sup>126</sup> Bath did his best to assist Elizabeth in her effort to ideologically connect her court appearances with Edward’s absence from court. In a letter to Elizabeth, Bath recounted a conversation with the king in which he mentioned Elizabeth’s intended visit to court. According to Bath, the king

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<sup>123</sup> MO 2464, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, November 23, 1762.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> MO 2411, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, 1760.

<sup>126</sup> MO 2444, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, July 12, 1761.

registered pleasure at this and then inquired after Edward:

He [George III] asked after Mr Montagu likewise hoping to see him. I told him that he was not a great Courtier, & was going to his Corporation, where he was chosen Mayor, & at his return was to take a northern Journey; but I said, tho he did not come to Court; I hoped his Mat y [Majesty] had 5 or 4 hundred such honest & sincere friends in his Court as Mr Montagu was, who would never ask him for any Employment, and yet serve him in all honest Measures, with as much Duty Zeal & Affection, as he that enjoy'd the greatest or most lucrative place, in his Majestys gift.<sup>127</sup>

In Bath's rendering, Elizabeth and Edward's completely different responses to court attendance were merely two sides of the same coin. In this sense, Elizabeth's court attendance might be read as an emblem of Edward's independent loyalty to the crown, not a departure from country values. Given the habitual political exchange between Edward and Elizabeth, we can assume Elizabeth shared Bath's report with Edward as they prepared for their departure from London to Northumberland on October 7, 1763.

Within the political realm, Elizabeth and Edward found common ground for intellectual connection as well as practical collaboration. At the outset of their marriage, Edward welcomed Elizabeth's loyal encouragement in his frustrated dealings in parliament, and Elizabeth willingly complied with Edward's desire to make her his confidante and advisor. Throughout the years considered here, Elizabeth showed an escalating interest in the political realm. While Elizabeth's letters show that values closely matched Edward's country Whig position, in 1760 her interpretation of these principles made a diverging turn as she invested her confidence in George III and his closest advisor, the earl of Bute. Elizabeth viewed the king as the true defender of British liberty, but Edward remained skeptical of the court as well as the king's ministers and maintained an independent stance. Because Elizabeth continued to espouse the language of patriot principles and to support Edward's independency, she was able to establish her own political position in a way that did not appear to undermine Edward's. Elizabeth's

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<sup>127</sup> MO 4435, William Pulteney, Lord Bath to Elizabeth Montagu, September 27, 1763.

interest in politics went beyond her husband's parliamentary seat, and at least some of her interest seems to have stemmed from her connection with other men with ties to patriot politics, particularly George, Lord Lyttelton, and William Pulteney, Lord Bath.

## CHAPTER 4

### DIALOGUES: THE FRIENDSHIP OF ELIZABETH MONTAGU AND GEORGE, LORD LYTTTELTON

The friendship between Elizabeth Montagu and George, Lord Lyttelton (1709-1773) is well known by scholars, but it remains largely uninvestigated. The most visible mark of the friendship is Montagu's contribution of three dialogues to Lyttelton's *Dialogues of the Dead* (1760). While academic feminism encourages the scholarly assessment of Montagu's literary accomplishments as well as her female support network, this focus unfortunately thrusts her equally important male relationships far into the background. In addition, modern interpretations of the Montagu/Lyttelton friendship are largely secondary assessments, dependent on the interpretations of other questions. For instance, scholars who view female friendship as the driving force of Bluestocking intellectual attainment are apt to see the Lyttelton friendship as peripheral and to characterize the *Dialogues* collaboration as a limited opportunity that led to Montagu's independent literary authority.

Sylvia Harcstark Myers, in a work that established female friendship as a paradigm for Bluestocking studies, describes the Montagu/Lyttelton friendship as one based on intellectual values. According to Myers, their literary exchanges regarding mutual reading and Lyttelton's work on his history of Henry II fostered Montagu's literary self-confidence. Although Myers is careful to note the reciprocity of the friendship, she considers the relationship to be essentially a mentoring arrangement. Regarding *Dialogues of the Dead*, Myers merely mentions that Lyttelton anonymously published three of Montagu's dialogues as part of the greater work. Later on, Myers explains, Lyttelton along with Elizabeth Carter encouraged her more ambitious

*Essay on Shakespear* (1769).<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Eger, editor of a recent volume of Montagu's published works and selected unpublished dialogues and letters, is more explicit than Myers in characterizing Montagu's contribution to the *Dialogues* as confidence-building exercise.<sup>2</sup> Eger's scholarly focus centers on the *Essay on Shakespear* and Montagu's friendship with Elizabeth Carter.<sup>3</sup> Besides noting the existence of friendship between Montagu and Lyttelton, Eger provides little analysis of the relationship.

Scholars working on the Montagu marriage tend to evaluate the emotional content of the friendship and to juxtapose it against her supposedly affectionless marriage. The idea that Montagu was sexually frigid and emotionally stunted—at least in her marriage—affects the way scholars view the Lyttelton friendship. Most deny or overlook any serious emotional attachment between Montagu and Lyttelton. In one of his letters, Horace Walpole repeated a gossipy innuendo that that Lyttelton and Montagu engaged in romantic liaisons under the pretext of collaborative study of Henry II. Myers dismisses the idea of romantic attachment between the two and argues that Walpole found the gossip humorous because it was so unlikely.<sup>4</sup> She contends that the Montagu marriage was deteriorating by the mid-1750s, and she implies that Montagu looked to Lyttelton for direction in the studies she undertook as a distraction from domestic frustrations.<sup>5</sup> Betty Rizzo, in contrast, cites Walpole's gossip as contributing evidence that the Montagu/Lyttelton friendship may have had a romantic element. Rizzo claims that there was a serious attachment between the two that may have originated from a meeting in London in 1740 before either married. Montagu's remarks to her sister about Lyttelton prior to 1742

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<sup>1</sup> Sylvia Harcstarck Myers *The Bluestocking Circle: Women, Friendship, and the Life of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 192, 194-95.

<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Eger, ed. *Elizabeth Montagu*, vol. 1 of *Bluestocking Feminism: Writings of the Bluestocking Circle, 1738-85*, ed Gary Kelly (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999), 117.

<sup>3</sup> Eger, "'Out rushed a female to protect the Bard': The Bluestocking Defense of Shakespeare," *Reconsidering the Bluestockings*, ed. Nicole Pohl and Betty Schellenberg (San Marino: Huntington Library Press, 2003), 127-51.

<sup>4</sup> Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, 184.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 182-87.

indicate that she deeply admired him.<sup>6</sup> While useful, Rizzo's comments about the Montagu/Lyttelton relationship are limited and are meant to demonstrate that if Montagu ever felt passion, it was strictly outside of her marriage.

Bridget Hill, in her work on the Montagu marriage, explains Montagu's friendship with Lyttelton and with Bath as symptomatic of her desire for admiration and devotion. According to Hill, friendship with men was just one of the strategies Montagu used to surround herself with an enraptured following. Montagu also structured her relationships with other women and with dependent young girls to meet this need. Hill notes, however, that Lyttelton encouraged Montagu to write and to publish, and characterizes the relationship as one of "mutual admiration and intellectual exchange."<sup>7</sup> Like Myers, Hill suggests that Montagu poured her energies into study as a diversion from marriage difficulties and that Lyttelton welcomed the role of her guide. Hill also rejects any notion of romantic attachment between Montagu and Lyttelton. Montagu, she asserts, was uninterested in a liaison.<sup>8</sup> Since Hill's primary objective is to demonstrate the mercenary nature of the Montagu marriage as well as to outline Montagu's character defects, her analysis of the Montagu/Lyttelton friendship is limited to general remarks that support her thesis.

With focus on other concerns, scholars thus address the Montagu/Lyttelton friendship only as it relates to these other matters, and the consequent brevity of remarks creates the impression that the friendship was of limited consequence. The enormity of the Montagu collection, which is far from fully investigated, partially explains this distortion. Large parts of the correspondence have yet to be treated by any scholarly account. The fact is, Montagu regarded Lyttelton as a close friend and there is a great deal of extant correspondence between

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<sup>6</sup> Betty Rizzo, *Companions without Vows: Relationships among Eighteenth-Century British Women* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994), 119-20.

<sup>7</sup> Bridget Hill, "The Course of the Marriage of Elizabeth Montagu: An Ambitious and Talented Woman without Means," *Journal of Family History* 26/1 (January 2001): 10.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*



them.<sup>9</sup>

I make several points in this chapter. One is that the Lyttelton/Montagu friendship was more complex than a simple mentoring relationship, and that while it is true that Lyttelton encouraged Montagu, he in turn looked to Montagu for sympathy and intellectual support. Without denying that Montagu's friendship with Lyttelton increased her literary self-confidence, I suggest that friendship with Lyttelton gave Montagu an additional outlet for her political interests, particularly in their collaboration on *Dialogues of the Dead*. By contextualizing Montagu's essays within the work, I demonstrate that her colloquies may be evaluated as an articulation of her political voice. I also consider whether Montagu ever felt romantic love for Lyttelton, as this question has arisen in many secondary accounts. By considering a manuscript poem found in the Montagu Collection at the Huntington Library, I argue that it is likely that she did have romantic feelings for Lyttelton prior to her marriage to Edward Montagu. Although these feelings seem to have abated by the 1750s when the friendship developed, it is certain that Montagu felt an emotional connection to Lyttelton.

#### Literary and Political Career of Lord Lyttelton

It is virtually impossible to separate Lyttelton's literary ambitions from his political career. As is true of many eighteenth-century authors, Lyttelton's literary creations were expressions of his political values and objectives. Lyttelton is a marginal figure in modern eighteenth-century studies, but he was well known as a statesman and literary man in his own day.<sup>10</sup> The eldest son of a wealthy landed gentleman, Lyttelton was educated at Eton College

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<sup>9</sup> According to the British Historical Manuscripts guide for the Huntington Library, there are 116 extant letters from Lyttelton to Montagu in the Montagu Collection. The only other figures whose letters surpass this amount are Edward Montagu (439 letters), Sarah Scott (367 letters), and William Pulteney, Lord Bath (283 letters). See Mary Robertson, ed., *Guide to British Historical Manuscripts in the Huntington Library* (San Marino: Huntington Library Press, 1982), 334-37.

<sup>10</sup> Biographical information for Lord Lyttelton can be found in Rose Mary Davis, *The Good Lord Lyttelton: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Politics and Culture* (Bethlehem, PA: Times Publishing Company, 1939) and in Christine

and Christ Church, Oxford. Although he was an ambitious scholar and writer, he did not take a degree. As was expected of a young man of his rank and wealth, Lyttelton made a grand tour through Europe to complete his education after leaving Oxford. In 1733, Robert Walpole dismissed Lyttelton's uncle Richard Temple, first viscount Cobham, from his ministerial post and his regiment as part of a general purge of a rival Whig faction that demanded investigation into the South Sea company. Cobham went into opposition, and gathered young supporters around him, a group comprised primarily of his nephews. "Cobham's Cubs," also known to contemporaries as "the cousinhood" and the "Boy Patriots," included Gilbert West, Thomas Pitt (who was married to Lyttelton's eldest sister), William Pitt, Richard Grenville, and George Grenville. Literary men such as Alexander Pope and James Thomson, who received patronage from Cobham, promoted the patriot cause through their writings. By 1735, Lyttelton had joined Cobham's circle. He was elected to Commons in a by-election of 1735 for the Pitt family borough of Okehampton and retained this seat until 1756.

Ambitious to distinguish himself, Lyttelton produced a variety of literary works in the 1730s including a series of pastoral eclogues, *The Progress of Love* (1732), *Observations on the Life of Cicero* (1733), *Letters from a Persian in England to a Friend at Ispahan* (1735), and *Considerations Upon the Present State of Affairs at Home and Abroad* (1739). Aside from the eclogues, Lyttelton's work displays admiration for the political ideas of Henry St. John, viscount Bolingbroke, which were articulated in his publication, *The Craftsman*. Bolingbroke's primary preoccupation was the rise of a new moneyed interest (personified by Walpole), which

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Gerrard, "Lyttelton, George, first Baron Lyttelton (1709–1773)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, January 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com>. Citations are to the online edition.

he believed was subverting the traditional hierarchical and landed order of England.<sup>11</sup>

Lyttelton's friendship with Pope, begun in the late 1720s, likely drew Lyttelton to Bolingbroke's ideas.<sup>12</sup>

Under Cobham's leadership, his "Cubs" coalesced around the court of Frederick, Prince of Wales. During the 1730s, Lyttelton cultivated a friendship with Frederick and in 1737 became secretary to the prince. As other opposition groups gravitated toward the prince's court, Lyttelton encouraged Frederick to patronize poets and writers such as Richard Glover, David Mallet, William Shenstone, and James Thomson to articulate the patriot agenda. Opposition figures outside the Cobham circle, notably William Pulteney, (later earl of Bath); John Carteret (later second Earl Granville); and Philip Stanhope, earl of Chesterfield were sometimes at variance with the Cobhamite wing, especially after Lyttelton warned Frederick that a parliamentary motion by Pulteney to increase the prince's civil list might be unpopular.<sup>13</sup> By 1739, Lyttelton, Pope, and Chesterfield were actively blocking efforts by Pulteney and Carteret to influence the prince.<sup>14</sup> When Walpole fell from power in 1742, the Cobham circle largely deserted Frederick, who supported the new administration.<sup>15</sup> Lyttelton remained in Frederick's court until the prince dismissed him in 1744 due to Lyttelton's acceptance of a place as a lord of the Treasury in Henry Pelham's administration. Despite his official place, Lyttelton supported Pitt (who had yet to gain office) in his harassment of the Government. When Pitt gained an

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<sup>11</sup> Isaac Kramnick, *Bolingbroke and His Circle: The Politics of Nostalgia in the Age of Walpole* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 10.

<sup>12</sup> Pope probably introduced Lyttelton to Bolingbroke in the late 1720s; Lyttelton and Bolingbroke maintained a regular correspondence in the late 1730s. See Davis, *Lord Lyttelton*, 35; 108.

<sup>13</sup> Gerrard, "Lyttelton," ODNB.

<sup>14</sup> Davis, *Lord Lyttelton*, 109.

<sup>15</sup> Pulteney was the key figure in negotiating an understanding between Prince Frederick and the new administration led by Pulteney's ally Lord Carteret: see Stuart Handley, M. J. Rowe, and W. H. McBryde, "Pulteney, William, earl of Bath (1684–1764)," in ODNB online, October 2007.

office in the ministry in 1746, Lyttelton transferred his allegiance entirely to the administration.<sup>16</sup>

Lyttelton continued in his position as a lord of the Treasury until Pelham's death in 1754. He accepted the position of cofferer of the household under Newcastle's administration in March 1754, but Pitt was not invited to join the ministry in any other capacity besides that of paymaster.<sup>17</sup> Concerned about the resulting tension that arose between himself and Pitt, Lyttelton attempted to mend a breach between Newcastle and the duke of Bedford, an ally of Pitt, as a way of bringing Pitt closer into Newcastle's orbit. Lyttelton's efforts backfired; both Bedford and Newcastle were annoyed by Lyttelton's uninvited interference, and Pitt furiously broke his friendship with Lyttelton. Richard and George Grenville, Lyttelton's cousins, took Pitt's side in the quarrel as their sister Hester was now married to Pitt. Lyttelton seems to have believed the argument resulted from his allegiance to Pelham and Newcastle while Pitt was outside the ministerial circle.<sup>18</sup> Lyttelton found Pitt's politically driven shifting alliances between Newcastle and Fox disturbing, but he apparently was unable to discern Newcastle's penchant for double-dealing.<sup>19</sup> In November 1755, Newcastle came to an understanding with Fox, who he appointed as Secretary of State (south), and engaged Lyttelton as Chancellor of the Exchequer in place of Henry Legge. Newcastle also dismissed Legge's ally Pitt from his office of paymaster. Lyttelton's tenure at the Exchequer lasted only one year. By November 1756, Pitt gained the upper hand against Newcastle and formed an administration with the duke of Devonshire. Pitt dismissed Newcastle's supporters, including Lyttelton, and replaced them with

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<sup>16</sup> Romney Sedgwick, *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1715-1754*, 2 vols. (London: History of Parliament Trust by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London, 1970), 2: 232-33.

<sup>17</sup> Peter Douglas Brown, *William Pitt, Earl of Chatham: The Great Commoner* (London: George Allen and Unwin, Ltd., 1978), 97. According to Brown, Newcastle was wary about providing Pitt with too great a power base. King George II's intense dislike of Pitt also influenced Newcastle against appointing Pitt to a position that required direct interaction with the king.

<sup>18</sup> Davis, *Lord Lyttelton*, 234-36. Davis argues that Lyttelton "tended to rank position and rank higher than personal ability." Thus, Lyttelton transferred his allegiance from Frederick to Newcastle without consideration of Pitt, at that time a struggling politician (247).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 239-40.

his own. Lyttelton accepted from the king the peerage of Baron Lyttelton of Frankly on November 18, 1756. Although he worked his connections assiduously, Lyttelton was effectively put out to pasture in the House of Lords and never again held office.<sup>20</sup> Meanwhile, Pitt's weak position made it necessary to form a coalition ministry with Newcastle a year later.<sup>21</sup>

Lyttelton published two well-received non-political works in the 1740s: the *Monody* (1747), a poem dedicated to the memory of his recently deceased wife, and *Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul* (1747), an essay which argued for the rationality of Christianity and warned against religious enthusiasm. Upon becoming a peer, Lyttelton redirected his frustrated political ambitions toward the production of literature, and published his collaboration with Elizabeth Montagu, *Dialogues of the Dead* (1760) and a work he started while serving Prince Frederick in early 1740s, *A History of the Life of Henry the Second* (1767).<sup>22</sup> Both of these works exhibit concern with the moral underpinnings of political society and were explicitly meant to edify their readers with examples of virtuous principles and the ridicule of vice. While the *Dialogues of the Dead* is not usually treated by scholars as a political work, I contend that it was designed to deliver instructive moral content to the political elite as a way to reform political society. The aim of the *Dialogues* is consistent with contemporary ideas about

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<sup>20</sup> According to Gerrard, Lyttelton declined ministerial office after 1756 because he preferred a "back-seat role." See "Lyttelton," ODNB. It is clear, however, that Lyttelton hoped for return to government position and tried to maneuver to bring this about. Deeply disappointed that Newcastle did not offer him a ministerial position in his subsequent administrations, Lyttelton turned to their mutual friend Phillip Yorke, first earl of Hardwicke to complain that he felt neglected. It is true that Lyttelton later turned down the offer made by Newcastle and the duke of Cumberland to become First Lord of the Treasury, but Lyttelton wanted to avoid slighting Pitt and Temple, to whom he was newly reconciled. Newcastle extended the offer during a flap over the 1765 Regency Bill. King George III, angered by the provisions of the bill, made overtures to Pitt in an effort to overturn George Grenville's ministry. Pitt and Temple refused to serve with the other candidates in the proposed administration, so Newcastle and Cumberland hurried to find viable alternatives and identified Lyttelton as suitable. In the end, a new administration could not be put together and the Grenville ministry stood. In 1766 Pitt disappointed Lyttelton again by declining to offer Lyttelton a position in his ministry, although he had earlier announced his intention to do so. See Davis, *Lord Lyttelton*, 347-57.

<sup>21</sup> Marie Peters, "Pitt, William, first earl of Chatham [Pitt the elder] (1708–1778)," in ODNB online, May 2008.

<sup>22</sup> Lyttelton first mentioned this project in a letter to Alexander Pope during the time of his service to Prince Frederick. His letter shows that he wished his finished product might instruct his countrymen and the Prince of Wales, "in whose service I chiefly design it." See Davis, *Lord Lyttelton*, 114-15.

the relationship between private morality and the health of the body politic.

Lyttelton was a competent poet and writer, not a brilliant one, and he was a less competent politician. He possessed few original ideas, and his work reflects strains of thought common in the eighteenth century. Lyttelton's typicality has made him uninteresting to modern scholars. Unflattering contemporary assessments of his work and his character have further dampened scholarly curiosity.

#### Assessments of Lord Lyttelton

As I point out in the Introduction, academic feminism encourages scholars to work within models that emphasize female agency and solidarity in the midst of western patriarchal society. Naturally, scholars of eighteenth-century women reject representations typical of older works which depict women as auxiliaries to male achievement or as extraordinary female worthies. The desire to portray the deep and important female friendships among Bluestocking women has led to scholars to consider their male friendships as of lesser significance. Although much of the scholarly inclination to overlook the Montagu/Lyttelton friendship seems driven by feminist concerns, Lyttelton's dwindled reputation as a man of letters and a political figure likely contributes to academic indifference to the friendship and their collaboration on *Dialogues of the Dead*.

There are few modern studies focused on Lyttelton's political career and literary ventures. The only scholarly biography of Lyttelton remains Rose Mary Davis's 1939 account. Two studies by Dustin Griffin mention Lyttelton's patronage of figures such as William Shenstone, Henry Fielding, and James Thomson, but provide little detail of his involvement with these writers.<sup>23</sup> Christine Gerrard situates Lyttelton's patronage of poets in the cultural and

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<sup>23</sup> Dustin Griffin, *Literary Patronage in England, 1650-1800* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); *Patriotism and Poetry in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

political context of Prince Frederick's opposition court, in which Lyttelton served as Frederick's secretary.<sup>24</sup> Gerrard argues that although Lyttelton was genuinely interested in the arts and steered worthy poets Frederick's way, Frederick possessed independent artistic tastes and was not overly influenced by Lyttelton. Moreover, Frederick was consciously fashioning his court as a haven for the arts in contrast to his father's court.<sup>25</sup> Still, Gerrard suggests elsewhere that Lyttelton's patronage activities outweigh his political career in lasting significance.<sup>26</sup> Isaac Kramnick links Lyttelton's political career and literary ventures more clearly in his study of Bolingbroke's political ideas. He argues that two of Lyttelton's early literary works, *Letters from a Persian in England to a Friend at Ispahan* (1735) and *Considerations Upon the Present State of Affairs at Home and Abroad* (1739) were significant and influential statements of opposition political thought in the 1730s. *Letters from a Persian* was one of the most popular political works produced during George II's reign, and ministers in Walpole's administration considered Lyttelton the most effective spokesman for Bolingbroke's ideas.<sup>27</sup> Like Bolingbroke, Lyttelton decried the new economic order and looked back to the Elizabethan age as a golden era of constitutional balance.<sup>28</sup>

Lyttelton's other works, which encompass a variety of genres including poetry, essay, history, and dialogue, are rarely considered by modern scholars. Lyttelton's poetry, popular through first half of the nineteenth century, is generally fallen into obscurity although two of his pieces, *Song* (1734) and the *Monody* (1747), are included in the *Oxford Book of Eighteenth-Century Verse*.<sup>29</sup> Frederick Keener examines Lyttelton's *Dialogues* in a critical history of

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<sup>24</sup> Gerrard, *The Patriot Opposition to Walpole: Politics, Poetry, and National Myth, 1725-1742* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 40-44, 62-64.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 62, 64-65.

<sup>26</sup> Gerrard, "Lyttelton," ODNB.

<sup>27</sup> Kramnick, *Bolingbroke*, 230.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 230-32.

<sup>29</sup> David Nichol Smith, ed. *The Oxford Book of Eighteenth-Century Verse* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 308-12.

English dialogues of the dead (of which Lyttelton's volume was the most famous), but his assessment is essentially negative. Keener notes that Lyttelton's dialogues "pleased many but did not please long," due to the unevenness of the collection and the weakness of the first five colloquies.<sup>30</sup> Keener complains that Lyttelton's insistence on stiffly adhering to moralistic Whig principles work to the detriment of the pieces and dampens any sparks of humor.<sup>31</sup> Lyttelton maintains a reputation as a humorless, even priggish man. In his study of John Montagu, fourth earl of Sandwich, N.A.M. Rogers declares that members of the House of Lords, except for "the bishops and the pious Lord Lyttelton," were likely amused, not shocked, as Sandwich read aloud John Wilkes' scandalous *Essay on Women* to the chamber.<sup>32</sup>

Tepid modern assessments of Lyttelton's work and personal character arise in part from unflattering contemporary critiques, some of which were undoubtedly politically motivated. As modern discussion of Lyttelton often includes mention of these sources, it is worth reviewing the charges that they make. John, Lord Hervey and Horace Walpole each deride Lyttelton in their memoirs. As both were loyal to Robert Walpole, we must consider that at least some of their scorn originated from Lyttelton's public opposition to Walpole in the 1730s while part of Cobham's circle. Walpole's posthumously published *Memoirs of the Reign of King George II* (1846) contains an overall negative account of Lyttelton as a politician and as a man. Walpole found Lyttelton not only duplicitous and self-serving, but also ridiculous:

Absurdity was predominant in composition: it entered equally into his politics, his public pretences, his private conversations . . . yet he was far from wanting parts; spoke well when he had studied his speeches; and loved to reward and promote merit in others. His political apostasy was as flagrant as Pitt's: the latter gloried in it; but Lyttelton, when he

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<sup>30</sup> Frederick M. Keener, *English Dialogues of the Dead: A Critical History, An Anthology, and A Check List* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), 78-80.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 80-81. Keener's assessment echoes an earlier comment on Lyttelton's *Dialogues* by S.C. Roberts. Roberts remarks that a "solemn strain of conscientious Whiggism" run throughout Lyttelton's colloquies: see *An Eighteenth-Century Gentleman and Other Essays* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1930), 17.

<sup>32</sup> N.A.M. Rodger, *The Insatiable Earl: A Life of John Montagu, 4<sup>th</sup> Earl Sandwich* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1993), 104.



was forced to quit virtue, took up religion, and endeavored to persuade mankind that he had fixed his views on heaven, when he had gone to the greatest lengths to promote his earthly interest; and so finished his absurdity, that he was capable of believing himself honest and agreeable.<sup>33</sup>

In his own memoirs of the reign of George II, also published posthumously, Hervey derided Lyttelton's unpleasant voice, his wooden style of public address, and the trite content of his writing. He asserted that Lyttelton's ideas were "generally borrowed from the commonplace maxims and sentiments of moralists, philosophers, patriots, and poets, crudely imbibed, half digested, ill put together, and confusedly refunded."<sup>34</sup> Lord Chesterfield, in letters to his son published a year after Lyttelton's death, commented negatively on Lyttelton's awkward mannerisms, although he did admit to valuing his "parts, learning, and virtue."<sup>35</sup>

Tobias Smollett viciously ridiculed Lyttelton's literary reputation in *The Adventures of Peregrine Pickle* (1751) with a burlesque of the *Monody* and a cruel parody of Lyttelton in the character of Sir Gosling Scrag. Smollett abused Lyttelton for his disagreeable voice and dress in addition to his literary pretensions as an author and patron. Smollett's grievance with Lyttelton originated from a perceived slight, and Smollett furiously revenged himself on Lyttelton in print.<sup>36</sup> Unfortunately for Lyttelton, the burlesques were funny and cleverly rendered. Though Smollett removed the portions ridiculing Lyttelton in the 1754 addition of *Peregrine Pickle* and later attempted to redeem himself by authoring a glowing review of *Dialogues of the Dead*, his

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<sup>33</sup> Horace Walpole, *Memoirs of the Reign of King George III*, 3 vols., ed. Henry Vassal-Fox, Lord Holland (London: Henry Coburn, 1846. Reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1970), 1: 202-3. Lyttelton was one of the most zealous and acrimonious opponents of Robert Walpole. As Davis points out in *Lord Lyttelton*, it is no wonder his son Horace maintained resentful feelings for Lyttelton, though Lyttelton came to count Horace as a friend (118-19).

<sup>34</sup> John, Lord Hervey quoted in Davis, *Lord Lyttelton*, 17. Hervey's *Memoirs of the reign of George the Second*, ed. J. W. Croker, 2 vols, appeared in 1848. A fuller version of Hervey's work, *Some Materials Towards Memoirs of the Reign of George II*, ed. Romney Sedgwick, appeared in 1931.

<sup>35</sup> Philip Dormer Stanhope, fourth earl of Chesterfield, *Lord Chesterfield's Letters*, ed. David Roberts (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 157.

<sup>36</sup> Howard Swazey Buck, *A Study in Smollett: Chiefly "Peregrine Pickle"* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1925), 100-12.

parodies nevertheless portrayed Lyttelton as a silly man to a wide audience.<sup>37</sup>

Samuel Johnson's inclusion of Lyttelton in his *Lives of the English Poets* (1781) demonstrates Lyttelton's contemporary appeal, but Johnson was ambivalent about Lyttelton's literary merits and he perpetuated notions about Lyttelton's dithering personality. In his *Lives*, he admitted that Lyttelton's verses from his Eton days were considered by others very good, but then gave unfavorable marks to Lyttelton's earliest published works, the *Progress of Love* (1732) and *Letters from a Persian in England* (1735) because they "cant of shepherds and flocks, and crooks dressed with flowers."<sup>38</sup> Lyttelton's last major work, *A History of Henry the Second* elicited ambiguous remarks from Johnson, who preferred to concentrate on Lyttelton's foolishness during the publication process rather than the substance of the work.<sup>39</sup> Johnson noted that the *Dialogues of the Dead* were "very eagerly read," but went on to explain that they seemed to be the product of "leisure than of study, rather effusions than compositions." Johnson complained, "The names of his persons too often enable the reader to anticipate their conversation; and when they have met, they too often part without any conclusion." He also referred to him as "poor Lyttelton" for writing a note of gratitude to Smollett for his praise of the *Dialogues* in the *Critical Review*. Johnson called them "acknowledgements which can never be proper, since they must be paid either for flattery or for justice."<sup>40</sup> According to Horace Walpole, who thoroughly enjoyed the controversy that erupted over Johnson's published judgments, it was the reference to "poor Lyttelton" that incensed Montagu and caused a rift

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<sup>37</sup> I have profited from conversations with O. M. Brack on this subject.

<sup>38</sup> Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets*, vol. 3, ed. George Birkbeck Hill (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1905), 446.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 453-54. Boswell reported that Johnson told King George III, who had inquired about the *History*, that he thought Lyttelton's style "pretty good, but that he blamed Henry II rather too much." He also said that Johnson laughed at Lyttelton's anxiety over the publication of his *History*. In another conversation, Johnson remarked to Boswell that Lyttelton's *History* was laden with "the most vulgar Whiggism." James Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 382, 516, 740.

<sup>40</sup> Johnson, *Lives of the English Poets*, 451-52.

between her and Johnson.<sup>41</sup>

“To The Memory Of A Most Unhappy, Yet Living Lady. . . ”<sup>42</sup>

As discussed in Chapter 3, we do not know exactly when they met, but it seems probable that Montagu and Lyttelton’s friendship dates from the early 1750s, and they were likely introduced by Gilbert West at Tunbridge Wells. The extant correspondence between them does not begin until 1755. Although the friendship did not develop until the 1750s, Montagu may have been introduced to Lyttelton in the early 1740s while she served as a companion to the duchess of Portland. An unpublished manuscript poem in the Montagu collection at the Huntington Library suggests that Montagu may have been in love with Lyttelton prior to her marriage to Edward Montagu in August 1742. The poem appears to have been written by Montagu, and although cryptic, it does dispel the notion that Montagu was devoid of passionate feeling as some have charged.

Montagu’s verse is titled “To the Memory of a most unhappy, yet living Lady: a Monody; addrest to y<sup>e</sup> Hon. G. Lyttleton Esq<sup>r</sup>.” It is a direct response to Lyttelton’s *To the Memory of a Lady Lately Deceased: A Monody* which Lyttelton wrote to mourn the death of his wife, Lucy Fortescue Lyttelton. Lyttelton’s *Monody* was written sometime in August 1747 and

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<sup>41</sup> Horace Walpole, *The Letters of Horace Walpole, Fourth Earl of Orford*, 16 vols., ed. Mrs. Paget Toynbee (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1903), 11: 409-10. Although never close friends, Montagu and Johnson traveled in the same literary circles and had friends in common, such as Elizabeth Carter. Walpole noted gleefully that although no open altercation had erupted, a great tension existed between the two: “at a blue-stocking meeting held by Lady Lucan, Mrs. Montagu and Dr. Johnson kept at different ends of the chamber, and set up altar against altar there.” Walpole exploited the occasion for his own enjoyment: “she told me as a mark of her high displeasure, that she would never ask him to dinner again. I took her side and fomented the quarrel.” Walpole liked to poke fun at what he thought were Montagu’s pretensions. In a letter to the countess of Upper Ossory he wrote, “I was much diverted with your setting Mrs. Montagu on her head, which indeed she does herself. . . She is one of my principal entertainments at Mrs. Vesey’s” (11: 368-369).

<sup>42</sup> See appendix A for a transcription of Montagu’s poem, MO 6913. Appendix B provides a complete transcription of Lyttelton’s *Monody*.

was first published October 30, 1747.<sup>43</sup> Montagu's poem is dated January 1, 1747. Most certainly, Montagu mistakenly failed to add "48" to her notation. In a letter to Elizabeth dated November 14, 1747, Edward Montagu promised to send her a pamphlet on Lord Lovat's trial and Lyttelton's verses.<sup>44</sup> As Lyttelton's *Monody* was attracting a great deal of attention shortly after its publication, we can assume the verses to which Edward referred were Lyttelton's published *Monody*.

Montagu's poem pre-dates her documented friendship with Lyttelton.<sup>45</sup> The first instance of written exchange between them is a joint letter of April 1754 originated by Archibald Bower and containing some lines by Lyttelton. Like Bower, Lyttelton referred to Montagu as "Madonna," indicating an already familiar friendship.<sup>46</sup> The rest of the extant correspondence between Montagu and Lyttelton falls between 1755 and 1773, the year of Lyttelton's death. Prior to their documented friendship, Montagu was familiar with Lyttelton's writings, and it is possible that she was introduced to him while she resided with the duchess of Portland before she

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<sup>43</sup> Davis, *Lord Lyttelton*, 135. The *Monody* was printed several times in 1747. A. Millar and M. Cooper in London published two folio editions and George Faulkner in Dublin published an octavo edition in November 1747. I am grateful to James E. May for sharing this valuable information from his forthcoming essay.

<sup>44</sup> Emily Climenson, *Elizabeth Montagu: The Queen of the Bluestockings. Her Correspondence from 1720-1700*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1906), 1: 253.

<sup>45</sup> The bulk of extant correspondence between Elizabeth Montagu and George, Lord Lyttelton resides in the Montagu collection at the Huntington; the earliest surviving instance of exchange between the two friends dates from 1755. Houghton Library also houses a small portion of correspondence between Montagu and Lyttelton; the earliest of these letters is dated 1758. It is likely that the Houghton letters were originally part of the collection bequeathed by Emily Climenson to Reginald Blunt, as many of them contain Climenson's handwritten notes. Possibly Blunt lent or gave letters to friends of similar interests. In Blunt's edition of Montagu's letters, he admits to passing along a portion of the Lyttelton/Montagu correspondence to Maud Wyndham who was at that time writing a memoir of the Lyttelton family, published in 1924. See Reginald Blunt, *Mrs. Montagu: "Queen of the Blues."* *Her Letters and Friendships from 1762 to 1800*, 2 vols. (London: Constable and Company, 1923), 1: 358. Wyndham must have retained the letters as Davis refers to this collection in her 1939 biography of Lyttelton.

<sup>46</sup> Climenson, *Elizabeth Montagu*, 2: 50. Archibald Bower was a religious controversialist who converted to Protestantism from Catholicism after serving as a Jesuit priest. He wrote a *History of the Popes* that attacked papal supremacy, but his work was surrounded by controversy when letters supposedly written by him revealed a continued inclination toward Catholicism. Bower denied he had written the letters. Lyttelton was a friend to Bower and used his influence at court to obtain for Bower the position of keeper of Queen Caroline's library in 1748. See Geoffrey Holt, "Bower, Archibald (1686x8–1766)," in ODNB online, January 2008. It is not known why Bower and Lyttelton referred to Montagu as "Madonna." Climenson surmises that the title originated with Bower, as his first surviving letter of 1753 addresses her using this name (2: 16).

was married. William Bentinck, second duke of Portland, was friendly with members of the Patriot opposition to which Lyttelton then belonged. While staying with the Portlands, Montagu wrote to her sister that “Mr. Grenville, one of the Princes’s court, dined with us today . . . He invited the Dutchess to come see him, and to make a tour to Lord Cobham’s, Oxford, &c. to which the Dutchess is well inclined.”<sup>47</sup> Montagu attended a court assembly at St. James’s in 1740 at which Lyttelton was present and she found him more appealing than any other man. In a letter to her sister Sarah Scott she wrote, “Mr. Lyttelton was, according to Polonius’ instruction, ‘rich, not gaudy; costly, but not exprest in fancy.’”<sup>48</sup> In 1741 Montagu twice recommended writings by Lyttelton to her correspondents. To her sister she wrote, “However the Muses, fair ladies and Mr. Lyttelton, a fine gentleman, will entertain you more agreeably. The verses were written at Lord Westmoreland’s: I think they are pretty. Either I am very partial to the writer, or Mr. Lyttelton has always something of an elegance in all his compositions, let the subject be ever so trifling. . . . Happy is the genius that can drink inspiration at every stream, and gather similes with every nosegay!”<sup>49</sup> In a letter to the duchess of Portland, Montagu recommended Lyttelton’s pamphlet “Observations on Cicero” to complement the Duchess’s reading of Conyers Middleton’s *Life of Cicero*. She warmly praised Lyttelton: “what will justly give it better credit than my recommendation, is the name of the author; it was wrote by Mr. Lyttelton.” She remarked that it provided a contrasting viewpoint to Middleton’s work. “It is a very little book,” she informed the duchess, “but I think wrote with great spirit and elegance.”<sup>50</sup>

Lyttelton married Lucy Fortescue on June 15, 1742 and Elizabeth married Edward

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<sup>47</sup> Mathew Montagu, ed. *The Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu, with some of the Letters of her Correspondents*, 4 vols. (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1809. Reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1974), 2: 54. “Mr. Grenville” refers either to George or Richard Grenville, both first cousins to Lyttelton.

<sup>48</sup> Montagu, *Letters*, 1: 126.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 133.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 178-79.

Montagu on August 5, 1742. As I have discussed in the chapter on the Montagu marriage, nothing is known of the courtship between Elizabeth and Edward, there being no mention of Edward prior to their marriage in any of the extant correspondence. We have seen that some scholars, notably Bridget Hill, attribute this reticence to Elizabeth's lack of real affection for Edward, arguing that Elizabeth married Edward for purely mercenary reasons. It is just as possible that Elizabeth, disappointed that Lyttelton was no longer an eligible prospect (remote as it was), quickly married a suitable candidate after Lyttelton removed himself from the marriage market.<sup>51</sup> Elizabeth's professed skittishness about marriage may very well have been a stalling technique that allowed her time and space to position herself for an advantageous marriage, as marriage to Lyttelton certainly would have been viewed.

Interpretation of this poem is problematic, not least because of the cryptic language and imagery Montagu uses. Some of her verses are obscure and difficult to comprehend. Still, some of her references are distinguishable. The second verse of stanza II refers directly to a passage from *The Spectator*, no. 379, May 15, 1712. In *The Spectator* story referenced, a man finds Rosicrucius's tomb and upon entering it, discovers a seated statue and a blazing lamp. As the man advances toward the lamp, the statue stands up and raises a truncheon. When the man gets close to the lamp, the statue swings down the truncheon and smashes the light to pieces. Upon closer investigation, the man and some companions find that the statue has been rigged to move by clock spring under the flooring. The men find that Rosicrucius had reinvented the perpetual lamp of antiquity, but because he wanted no one else to benefit from his discovery, he designed his tomb to destroy the lamp should it be uncovered. In stanza II, verse one, Montagu describes her tumultuous grief; she then shifts in verse two to the scene of the discovery and destruction of

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<sup>51</sup> Rizzo suggests that from Lyttelton's perspective, Montagu's small dowry would have made her an ineligible marriage candidate in *Companions without Vows*, 119.

Rosicrucius's perpetual lamp. Montagu likely drew upon the imagery of secret knowledge and discovery to illustrate the secrecy of her sorrow and her determination (like Rosicrucius) to keep her secret from becoming common knowledge.

Lacking corroborating evidence, we cannot be absolutely sure to whom Montagu refers in her invocation of "Eleonora" in stanzas V and IX. While the name "Eleonora" appears in two eighteenth-century literary works with which Montagu would certainly have been familiar, it seems most likely that Montagu drew her inspiration from John Dryden's elegy of that name. James Thomson and Tobias Smollett published plays containing an Eleonora, but neither of these heroines seem to fit within the context of Montagu's verse. In Thomson's *Edward and Eleonora* (published in 1739 but not acted until some years later), Queen Eleonora demonstrates her selfless devotion to her husband Edward I by endangering her own life to save his. In the end, Eleonora's life is saved and she is happily reunited with her adoring husband. Neither Thomson's story nor language show congruence with Montagu's representation of "Tyrant Eleonora."<sup>52</sup> Smollett's play *The Regicide* also contains a virtuous Eleonora, but the drama was not published until May 1749, well after the time that Montagu's verse appears to have been written.<sup>53</sup>

The publication dates of Dryden's elegy *Eleonora*, as well as the content and language of the poem, make it a likely candidate for consideration. Dryden's panegyric *Eleonora* was first published in 1692 and was reprinted in 1709. It was likely included in various miscellanies and other literary compilations in the early eighteenth century. The poem was written at the request of James Bertie, first earl of Abingdon after the unexpected death of his wife Eleonora, Countess of Abingdon. This was a paid commission, and Dryden did not know the earl of Abingdon or

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<sup>52</sup> James Thomson, *Edward and Eleonora*, in *The Plays of James Thomson*, ed. Percy G. Adams (New York: Garland Publishing, 1979).

<sup>53</sup> Buck, *A Study in Smollett*, 102.

Eleonora, the subject of his poem. The poem presents Eleonora as an ideal woman. She is variously treated as a pious Christian, devoted mother, loyal friend, and a constant and obedient wife. Dryden's poem draws heavily on scriptural language, particularly from the Book of Proverbs, to illustrate Eleonora's transcendence from woman to angelic spirit.<sup>54</sup> Montagu's verse also incorporates religious imagery and scriptural language. Montagu may have referred to "Tyrant Eleonora" to demonstrate frustration with her own attempt to become an ideal woman like Dryden's Eleonora. Or perhaps, if it is true that Montagu was at one time in love with Lyttelton, "Tyrant Eleonora" might be a reference to Lucy Lyttelton, whose many virtues Lyttelton catalogues in his *Monody*, and with whom Montagu may have felt a rivalry. Like Lucy Lyttelton, the Countess of Abingdon was a young woman who left behind young children and a grieving husband upon her death.

Montagu clearly used Lyttelton's *Monody* as a guide for her own verse. She borrowed extensively from it, often replicating its language and imagery while turning phrases to fit her own situation. For example, Lyttelton claims that his sorrow at the loss of Lucy exceeds Petrarch's misery at the death of Laura. In stanza XV he addresses Petrarch:

What were, alas! Thy Woes compar'd to Mine?  
To Thee thy Mistress in the blissful Band  
Of Hymen never gave her Hand:<sup>55</sup>

Montagu similarly declares to Lyttelton in stanzas I and VIII that by comparison, her own suffering surpasses Lyttelton's. In another instance, Montagu directly borrows from Lyttelton's language. Stanza IX of Montagu's poem begins, "Altho' a Brother (tender Name! / Our Persons, Tempers, Tastes y<sup>e</sup> same,)." These words echo the last line of stanza XVIII in Lyttelton's *Monody* in which Lyttelton describes the similarities between him and Lucy: "Our Studies,

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<sup>54</sup> William Myers, *Dryden* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1973), 138.

<sup>55</sup> George Lyttelton, *To the Memory of a Lady lately Deceased, A Monody* (Dublin: Printed by George Faulkner, in Essex Street, 1747), 12.



Pleasures, Tastes the same.”<sup>56</sup> Montagu replicates Lyttelton’s verse form by indenting lines with less than ten syllables, and like Lyttelton, she alternates use of couplets with rhyming of non-adjacent lines. Montagu’s liberal use of rhetorical question and exclamation, as well as classical imagery, also evokes Lyttelton’s work.

The title of her poem, “To the Memory of a most unhappy, yet living Lady: a Monody; addrest to y<sup>c</sup> Hon. G. Lyttelton Esq<sup>r</sup>” is a direct reference to the title of Lyttelton’s work: *To the Memory of a Lady Lately Deceased: A Monody*. This play on the title gives us a clue to its rhetorical purpose: to claim for Montagu a superior depth of sorrow in comparison to both Lyttelton’s and Lucy’s circumstances. Stanzas I and II suggest this comparison and also propose an ancillary intent, which is to comfort Lyttelton by revealing to him Montagu’s intense distress while at the same time comforting Montagu through her own confession. Stanza II reveals that although Montagu had hidden and suppressed her sorrows, Lyttelton’s *Monody* gave fresh life to her grief and prompted a disclosure of her hidden emotional discord.<sup>57</sup> Montagu speaks directly to Lyttelton in the first two stanzas and again in stanzas VIII and IX. The internal stanzas appear to shift in voice between Lyttelton and the muse. In the central section of the poem, Montagu refers to herself in the third person as “Maria,” though why she should choose this name is unclear.

Just as Lyttelton calls out to the muses regarding his wife’s untimely death, “Where were ye, Muses, when relentless Fate / From these fond Arms your fair Disciple tore,” Montagu also calls upon the muses, but she does this in Lyttelton’s voice, cleverly replicating his device: “Say, Muse, O say; is loved Maria dead? / Say, is her Spirit to its kindred Angels fled?”<sup>58</sup> Though

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 14.

<sup>57</sup> The phrase “fifteen moons” was sometimes used idiomatically in literature dating from the 1730s-40s to indicate a moderate but indeterminate length of time. Thank you to James E. May for pointing this out.

<sup>58</sup> Lyttelton, *Monody*, 6-7; Montagu, stanza IV.

Maria is not dead, she is severely disordered, and the muse ascribes Maria's misery to love for Lyttelton:

“The Wounds (replies ye Muse) were given by You.  
“For Love of You y<sup>e</sup> mourned Maria raves;  
“And Death alone your hapless Captive saves.”

In this verse and elsewhere, Montagu depicts herself as suffering from a living death from which real death would bring relief. In verse one of stanza IV, the muse declares, “Death, cruel in Delay, alone can save/ Maria in y<sup>e</sup> shelter of y<sup>e</sup> Grave.” Stanzas III and VII of Montagu's poem expand on this theme of living death, and are grim reflections of Lyttelton's verses which mourn Lucy's disappearance from Hagley, Lyttelton's country seat recognized by contemporaries for the beauty of its grounds. Lyttelton in stanza V cries out, “O Shades of H ---- y, where is now your Boast? / Your bright inhabitant is lost,” and he illustrates the depth of this loss by showing the deep connection Lucy felt to Hagley:

From an admiring World she chose to fly;  
With Nature there retir'd, and Natures God,  
The silent Paths of Wisdom trod,  
And banish'd ev'ry Passion from her Breast,  
But those, the Gentlest, and the Best,<sup>59</sup>

In stanza III, Montagu contrasts herself with Lyttelton's departed “bright inhabitant” by inverting the comfortable shades of Lyttelton's verse into a scene of gloom:

Amid yon' melancholy Shade  
Whence Night her thickest Veil spread,  
Fit Mansion of y<sup>e</sup> silent Dead,

In this setting, Maria's despair is fully evident: her eyes display “an horrid Glaze,” her lips are bereft of their former beauty and wit, and her breast is devoid of warmth and compassion. Her hands, once spreading happiness, are now closed in anguish. Montagu returns to this setting in stanza VII:

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<sup>59</sup> Lyttelton, *Monody*, 5-6.

To her distempered Soul  
Nor H \_\_\_\_\_y's much-loved Shades Delight Afford,  
Nor all y<sup>e</sup> grateful Tribes her Bounty fed,  
Nor, once her best Repast, y<sup>e</sup> holy Board.  
Before her eyes sad Visions roll

In the *Monody*, Lyttelton finds consolation that the muses will remember and celebrate Lucy for her beauty, charm, and goodness. By way of contrast, Montagu depicts herself as the more unfortunate, consigned to a life of misery and unable to openly mourn. Lucy is safely in her grave and Lyttelton elegantly displays his misfortune, but Montagu suffers in silence. While Lyttelton's poem addresses one specific sorrow, the loss of his beloved wife Lucy, Montagu speaks of her own "varied woes" in stanza I. One of her sorrows was surely unrequited love coupled with the pain of silence, but several passages suggest other difficulties. Stanza VI seems to point to a wavering of faith, and possibly refers to Lyttelton's pamphlet, *Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul*, published in May 1747.<sup>60</sup> Stanza IX is particularly perplexing; it is unclear to whom she is referring and whether she means death to be literal or figurative.

Ultimately, interpretation of this poem must remain speculative as there are few clues in Montagu's correspondence to illuminate its meaning. Still, the verse demonstrates several important points. Based on this glimpse into Montagu's interior life, we must conclude that she possessed deep feelings. Strong belief in duty and propriety likely guided her to suppress her natural emotions and passions. As the poem clearly demonstrates, she found this suppression painful. Without corroborating evidence we cannot be completely certain of the exact nature of Montagu's feelings for Lyttelton, but it is very clear that Montagu felt a strong emotional connection to Lyttelton and his writings.

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<sup>60</sup> Montagu refers directly to this work in stanza I.

## Dialogues of the Dead

In 1760, Elizabeth Montagu made her debut as a published author with her anonymous contribution to Lyttelton's *Dialogues of the Dead*. In the preface, Lyttelton disclosed the fact that the final three dialogues of the work were written by another hand, but he declined to name the author who he described only as a friend. Montagu's literary associates took care to preserve her anonymity: Edmund Burke even transcribed her essays so that Montagu's handwriting would not be detected when the manuscript went to print.<sup>61</sup> Among the London literary set, however, word quickly spread that these essays were the Montagu's work. The *Dialogues* received generally favorable reviews, but Montagu did not publicly acknowledge her contribution to the project until 1777. In that year, she included her three dialogues in a new edition of her *Essay on Shakespear*.<sup>62</sup>

Unfortunately, the extant correspondence does not shed much light on their collaboration on the *Dialogues*, but analysis of Montagu's pieces in the context of the larger work does suggest that Montagu understood the political implications of the project. Although Lyttelton's *Dialogues of the Dead*, when they are considered at all, are not generally reckoned a political work, both the content and context of the work suggest that Lyttelton intended them to convey political and moral "truths" to his audience.<sup>63</sup> It is not a stretch to suppose that Lyttelton, forced out of political office, turned to literature to make his political voice heard, much as he had done in the 1730s when his political career was beginning. Nor is it a stretch to suppose that Montagu recognized the political aspects of Lyttelton's venture and sought to add her own voice to the call for a moral regeneration that would invigorate the nation. Eger identifies a nationalist impulse

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<sup>61</sup> Myers, 192.

<sup>62</sup> Eger, *Elizabeth Montagu*, 117-18.

<sup>63</sup> Dale Edward Richardson identifies Lyttelton's *Dialogues* as a work meant to illuminate for contemporaries the ethical ideals at the foundation of political society: see "Civic Piety in Lyttelton's *Dialogues of the Dead*," (unpublished Ph. D. diss., Princeton University, 1971), 1-20.

driving Montagu's defense of Shakespeare from the dismissive remarks made by Voltaire.<sup>64</sup> Similar nationalist concerns may have inspired Montagu's dialogues. Montagu's colloquies strive to inculcate moral and social values aimed at revitalizing the political nation. From Montagu's correspondence, we know that like her husband, she believed that England was in danger of surrendering its traditional "liberty," and that she supported political groups, like the Patriot Whigs, that seemed to be proposing reform. It is certain that she saw in the genre the potential for direct political comment because she used the form to make a specific political statement in one of her unpublished dialogues.

In the preface to the *Dialogues*, Lyttelton situates his work as the latest example in a succession of earlier versions of the genre, including the seventeenth-century titles of Fontenelle and Fénelon which were published in the seventeenth century. Fénelon wrote *Dialogues of the Dead* with an explicitly political purpose in mind, which was to provide an educational text for the duke of Burgundy, a potential heir to the French throne. Fénelon's masterwork *Télémaque* is better known as an educational text, but the *Dialogues* were also meant to convey moral and political lessons to the young duke.<sup>65</sup> Lyttelton, in the characters of Plato and Fénelon, defends the platitudinous nature of Fénelon's *Dialogues* and applauds his efforts to instruct his young charge in morals proper to a ruler. In the character of Fénelon, he declares, "one cannot too strongly imprint on the Minds of those who are born to rule over Nations the most simple Truths: because as they grow up, the Flattery of a Court will try to disguise and hide from them those Truths, and to eradicate from their Hearts the Love of their Duty, if it has not taken there a very deep Root."<sup>66</sup> Lyttelton's volume was intended, like Fénelon's, to instruct future leaders in the

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<sup>64</sup> Eger, "The Bluestocking Defense of Shakespeare," 147.

<sup>65</sup> Nannerl O. Keohane, *Philosophy and the State in France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 332-43.

<sup>66</sup> George, Lord Lyttelton, "Dialogue III" in *Dialogues of the Dead*, second edition (London: Printed for W. Sandby, 1760; reprint, New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1970), 18-19.

moral values that would invigorate the polity. In the fourth edition of the *Dialogues*, Lyttelton added to the preface a clear statement of this intention.<sup>67</sup> Even a casual perusal of the *Dialogues* shows that Lyttelton's greatest preoccupation lay with the connection between moral and material values and statecraft. Contemporary politics was also on his mind. In at least two of the dialogues, Lyttelton (who was in 1760 estranged from Pitt) makes sly swipes at Pitt's war policy.<sup>68</sup>

The *Dialogues of the Dead* was not just a literary exercise; it was meant as a guide book with practical application. The focus of the dialogues as a whole is the identification of virtue, with the aim of reforming the public manners that formed the foundation of political affairs. As Bob Harris notes, a major task of the country interest (with which both Lyttelton and Montagu identified) was recreating "a social and moral basis for a cohesive, prosperous, and *powerful* Britain."<sup>69</sup> Montagu's dialogues must be considered within the context of Lyttelton's larger project, which was to instruct readers in the political implications of morality. Indeed, Montagu's dialogues deliver the same social and political messages found in Lyttelton's work.

Montagu did not, of course, overtly address political matters in her published dialogues. Instead, she couched her messages in the language of morality and virtue in a way that underscored their importance to the political nation. Eighteenth-century prescriptive literature routinely counseled women against meddling in political affairs, and women were clearly excluded from institutional politics. But as I point out elsewhere, recent research demonstrates that elite women routinely participated in the political culture of the nation in a variety of informal ways. As I show, Montagu provides as an example of an elite woman who aided her

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<sup>67</sup> Davis, *Lord Lyttelton*, 311.

<sup>68</sup> Lyttelton, "Dialogue XVIII," and Dialogue XXIII," in *Dialogues*, 16-22, 241-59.

<sup>69</sup> Bob Harris, *Politics and the Nation: Britain in the Mid-Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 69.

husband's political career by acting as a confidante and advisor and by gathering and transmitting political news. Montagu participated in political life in the avenues open to her as the wife of a member of parliament. Adding her colloquies to those of Lyttelton can be viewed as an articulation of her political voice as her ideas about the relationship between personal morality and public life developed. Lois Schwoerer shows that women writers of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries did begin to voice political opinions, but they came at them from a religious or moral angle because it made their public commentary more acceptable.<sup>70</sup> In her published dialogues, Elizabeth Montagu similarly voiced her political views by addressing moral and societal values underlying the political nation. Montagu fully understood the political implications of this approach; in her letters, she frequently turned to moral platitudes to convey her assessment of public affairs.<sup>71</sup>

Both Lyttelton and Montagu used the language of virtue to convey their views, and the way they constructed their messages was consistent with new ideas about good citizenship and its relationship to the state. Shelley Burtt, in her study on the political language of virtue, has suggested an alternative to J. G. A. Pocock's thesis regarding classical republican virtue, or civic humanism. According to Pocock, Augustan writers either clung to civic humanism despite public apathy and inauspicious social conditions, or they gave up the vision of public virtue altogether, trading it in for an emphasis on the sociability and manners of the private individual. Burtt argues that the notion of public virtue was "transformed rather than eclipsed."<sup>72</sup> Publicly oriented virtue that required drastic self-subordination for the public good was replaced by a

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<sup>70</sup> Lois Schwoerer, "Women's Public Political Voice in England, 1640-1740" in *Women Writers and the Early Modern British Political Tradition*, ed. Hilda Smith (Cambridge, U.K., New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 61.

<sup>71</sup> See for example Montagu, *Letters*, 4: 62-63.

<sup>72</sup> Shelley Burtt, *Virtue Transformed: Political Argument in England, 1688-1740* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 34.

more privately oriented virtue in which the good citizen supported the polity by exhibiting proper character traits such as honesty, frugality, and industry.<sup>73</sup> Montagu's and Lyttelton's colloquies in *The Dialogues of the Dead* exhibit this transformation of classical civic humanism in which private morality and virtue have implications for the public good. Although livelier and more humorous than most of Lyttelton's colloquies, Montagu's essays exhibit the same concern for these weighty matters.

Montagu's dialogues begin with a conversation between Hercules and Cadmus, the mythological originator of Greek letters. They are arguing about the ultimate superiority of each one's contribution to society. Hercules naturally boasts that heroic action trumps pedantic and sedentary study of useless philosophers, while Cadmus argues that letters encourage useful arts and promote lasting fame (a point of interest to Hercules). Cadmus expounds on the elevation of mankind's condition through study rather than action and points out that mechanical power, agricultural advancements, navigational tools, and explanation of "much of the great operations of Nature" were produced by men who "have never quitted their closets." Cadmus slyly tells Hercules that he should be glad that the muses present "to Heroes such a noble recreation, as may prevent them from taking up *the distaff*, when they lay down *the Club*." Hercules boorishly responds with the pronouncement that a worse task than any imposed on him would be to "*read through a great Library*, and I would serve it as I did the Hydra, *I would burn it as I went on*, that one chimera would not rise from another, to plague mankind." In this exchange, Montagu, through Cadmus, argues that letters do not suppress heroic action, but rather they serve to glorify and properly moderate it.

At the end of the dialogue, Cadmus answers Hercules's charge that "Wit and Learning

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<sup>73</sup>Ibid., 32-35. According to Burt, this was the Court Whig answer to the Country Whig argument about the vital relationship between real property and public virtue. Court Whigs argued that *good management of any type of property* was more important to the safeguarding of liberty than the simple possession of real property.



are often made subservient to very bad purposes.” Cadmus says that “Wit and Fine Talent” naturally gravitate toward virtue and that the benefits of letters outweigh any risks. He also points out the connection between the virtuous individual’s study of letters and the healthy state: “The study of History will teach the warrior and the Legislator by what means Armies have been victorious, and States have become powerful; and in the private citizen will inculcate the love of liberty and order. The writings of the Sages point out a private path of Virtue, and shew that the best empire is self-government, and subduing our passions the noblest of conquests.” Finally, Cadmus argues that letters moderate the character of a state: “Letters keep a frugal temperate nation from growing ferocious, a rich one from becoming entirely sensual and debauched.”<sup>74</sup> Through the words of Cadmus, Montagu is clearly arguing that private virtue molded through the proper study of letters provides a sound foundation for the political nation.

Montagu’s second and third dialogues develop the theme of private virtue. Montagu’s second dialogue is an exchange between Mercury and Mrs. Modish, “a modern fine Lady.” Of Montagu’s dialogues, this one is most commonly cited, possibly because it deals with proper female behavior. In this piece, Mercury takes Mrs. Modish to task for her neglect of her husband and daughters while she busied herself in silly diversions in pursuit of her greatest ambition: “to be thought *du Bon ton*.” The dialogue is light and humorous, but Montagu’s message is that Mrs. Modish has abandoned her primary role, which is to properly educate her daughters. After Mrs. Modish protests that her daughters have had the finest instruction in dancing, music, drawing, and French, Mercury disgustedly exclaims, “So their religion, sentiments, and manners were to be learnt from a dancing-master, music master, and a chamber-maid! Your daughters must have been so educated as to fit them to be wives without conjugal affection, and mothers

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<sup>74</sup> Montagu, “Dialogue XXVI” in Lyttelton, *Dialogues*, 291-99.

without maternal care.”<sup>75</sup> Mrs. Modish has neglected her duty to inculcate in her daughters the private virtues that Montagu elsewhere argues are so necessary to a healthy nation.

In the final dialogue, Montagu further explores the relationship between letters and private virtue in an exchange between Plutarch and a “modern Bookseller.” As they meet, the bookseller reproaches Plutarch for nearly ruining his business because no one would purchase his large inventory of Plutarch’s *Lives* from his shop. Misunderstanding the bookseller’s point, Plutarch agrees that the lives of recent great men must provide more relevant “Patterns of Virtue” than his own work. He is horrified to learn that study of great men is no longer in vogue, and that modern readers prefer fiction and sensational accounts of true crime. The bookseller explains, “Most of young men having deserted to the Fools, the Party of the Learned is near being beat out of the field; . . . but our men of the world should read our New Books, which teach them to have no Virtue at all. No book is fit for a Gentleman’s reading which is not void of Facts and of Doctrines, that he may not grow a Pendant in his morals or conversation. I look upon History (I mean *real* History) to be one of the worst kinds of study.” Speaking through the bookseller, Montagu allows that some fiction can be beneficial to the individual as an example of virtuous behavior: “In the supposed Character of Clarissa . . . one finds the dignity of Heroism tempered by the meekness and humility of Religion . . . In that of Sir Charles Grandison, a noble pattern of every private Virtue, with sentiments so exalted as to render him equal to every public Duty.”<sup>76</sup> As in her first dialogue, Montagu insists that private virtue informs public action, and thus has implications for the vigor of the state.

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<sup>75</sup> Montagu, “Dialogue XXVII” in Lyttelton, *Dialogues*, 300-5.

<sup>76</sup> Montagu, “Dialogue XXVIII” in Lyttelton, *Dialogues*, 306-20.

Montagu also composed two unpublished dialogues.<sup>77</sup> In her published pieces, Montagu restricted herself to platitudinous exploration of private virtue and public good, but her unpublished dialogues have a different tone. Her dialogue between Cleopatra and Berenice, for instance, presents a cynical view of romantic love between men and women. Comments from the correspondence suggest that this dialogue was composed after the publication of Lyttelton's volume, probably sometime in 1761.<sup>78</sup> Montagu apparently sent this dialogue to Lyttelton, Lord Bath, and Elizabeth Carter, but claimed to Bath that she had no interest in its publication.<sup>79</sup>

The other dialogue recounts a conversation between Pitt the Elder and Simeon Stylites, an early Christian ascetic. The content suggests a composition date of sometime prior to October 1761 when Pitt resigned from ministerial office. It is unclear whether Montagu circulated this manuscript among her friends, but it seems likely. A comment in one of Lyttelton's letters suggests that she occasionally sent close friends original literary compositions meant to be passed around to other friends.<sup>80</sup>

In the dialogue between "Mr. Secretary" Pitt and Simeon Stylites, Montagu is explicitly critical of Pitt's actions which seemed to undermine the Patriot principles he publicly declared to hold. As Simeon meets Pitt in the underworld, he tells Pitt to set aside his oratory and speak to him plainly, as one charlatan to another. Simeon compares his own popularity as a pillar saint to Pitt's popularity as a war minister, and he explains that when a man is elevated to a high position where none can observe his actions, the mob finds it easier to worship him. Pitt protests that he

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<sup>77</sup> These are reproduced in Eger, *Elizabeth Montagu*, 133-39. Eger mistakenly attributes to Montagu a third dialogue between Peter Pindar and James Boswell. This dialogue comes directly from Pindar's work, *A Poetical and Congratulatory Epistle to James Boswell* (1786). Thank you to O. M. Brack for help with this matter.

<sup>78</sup> MO 4233, William Pulteney, Lord Bath to Elizabeth Montagu, April 28, 1761; MO 4218, William Pulteney, Lord Bath to Messenger Monsey, July 25, 1761.

<sup>79</sup> MO 4512, Elizabeth Montagu to William Pulteney, Lord Bath, c. 1761. A letter from Edward Young dated May 26, 1761 suggests that she may have also sent one of her dialogues to him: see Climensson, *Elizabeth Montagu*, 2: 240-41.

<sup>80</sup> MO 1300, George, Lord Lyttelton, to Elizabeth Montagu, September 17, 1762.

truly worked miracles: “I perswaded Republicans give money to the K: of Prussia. I convinced the H: of Commons that troops sent to Embden were not design’d for Germany. I made AntiHanovarians and enemies of Germany send men we could ill spare, & money we could ill raise, to the aid of Prince Ferdinand.”<sup>81</sup> The greater miracle, however, lay in Pitt’s manipulation of public opinion: “I gain’d honour every day by disgrace being thrown upon measures to which I assented in [and] which I assisted. The oftener I alter’d my opinion the more I was esteemed for my consistency, and the oftener my present actions contradicted my former promises the more I was praised for my probity. Had I not miraculous powers Sir?”<sup>82</sup> Montagu’s stance in this dialogue is consistent with her views about Pitt recorded in her letters. Although the dialogue remained unpublished, it demonstrates two things. First, it shows that she understood the potential for political commentary in the genre, and secondly, it confirms that she closely followed and cared about parliamentary politics and national policy.

The *Dialogues of the Dead* attracted a great deal of attention in the press. Critical opinion was generally favorable, and demand for the work quickly outstripped the initial press run. A second edition appeared in less than a week after the first edition went on sale.<sup>83</sup> A third edition appeared later in 1760 and a fourth in 1765.<sup>84</sup> The exchanges between Montagu and Lyttelton regarding the success of the work and Montagu’s contributions to it will be considered below as I evaluate how Montagu and Lyttelton articulated Montagu’s intellectual abilities and literary ambitions.

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<sup>81</sup> Eger, ed., *Elizabeth Montagu*, 139.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>83</sup> William B Todd, “Pattern in Press Figures: A Study of Lyttelton’s *Dialogues of the Dead*,” in *Studies in Bibliography: Papers of the Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia*, ed. Fredson Bowers, VIII (Charlottesville, 1956), 232. Samuel Richardson printed these editions.

<sup>84</sup> Davis, *Lord Lyttelton*, 310.

## Friendship in Letters

As was true of many eighteenth-century friendships, Montagu and Lyttelton relied on epistolary exchange to extend their relationship. Except for the yearly convergence in London for the parliamentary session, the landed elite's nomadic existence between country houses and London town homes made it difficult for friends to be often in the same place at the same time. Moreover, Lyttelton's domestic arrangements hindered friendly visits with Montagu. Lyttelton lost his wife Lucy in 1747, but in 1749 he remarried one of Lucy's closest friends, Elizabeth Rich.<sup>85</sup> The second marriage was unhappy and ended in a permanent separation in 1759.<sup>86</sup> Montagu did not like Lady Lyttelton and did not cultivate a friendship with her.<sup>87</sup>

After Lyttelton's separation from Elizabeth Rich and the completion of his new house at Hagley in October 1759, Lyttelton began to invite guests to house parties at his country estate. Montagu probably avoided visiting Hagley without Edward as a matter of decorum. Several letters in her correspondence with Bath suggest that a married woman visiting the country home of an unattached man without her husband present could ignite rumors questioning her chastity.<sup>88</sup> The Montagus visited Hagley very infrequently, likely due to Edward's reluctance to socialize. Montagu saw many of her friends, including Lyttelton, at Tunbridge Wells during her annual pilgrimages there. Montagu also received visits from Lyttelton at her country estate of Sandleford and at her Hill Street house in London. On visits to Sandleford, Lyttelton usually brought a companion, such as his son or another friend, and Edward was generally at hand to act as host. Lyttelton's London home was also in Hill Street, and if they were both in residence,

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<sup>85</sup> Maud Wyndham, *Chronicles of the Eighteenth Century, Founded on the Correspondence of Sir Thomas Lyttelton and his Family*, 2 vols. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1924), 1: 241-43.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 2: 279.

<sup>87</sup> Climenson, *Elizabeth Montagu*, 2: 11.

<sup>88</sup> See MO 4231, William Pulteney, Lord Bath to Elizabeth Montagu, 1761; MO 4589, Elizabeth Montagu to William Pulteney, Lord Bath, 1763.

Lyttelton could easily call on Montagu. Still, much of their friendship was carried on in personal letters.

In the following account I consider their relationship in letters between 1756, the earliest point in the extant correspondence which shows frequent exchange between the two, and 1763. I assess the perimeters of their friendship with regard to attitudes about gender, family matters, and intellectual pursuits. The political aspect of their correspondence is considered in the following chapter. I argue that Montagu and Lyttelton developed a close and affectionate (although not passionate) bond that found expression in intellectual exchange and emotional support. Montagu and Lyttelton drew encouragement from one another as they pursued their individual literary ambitions, and they delighted in the success of their collaborative work, *Dialogues of the Dead*. Lyttelton trusted Montagu as confidante regarding family matters, especially those to do with his children, Tom and Lucy. Montagu enjoyed the opportunity to mentor Lyttelton's children, especially Tom, who was born very near the time of her own son "Punch." Lyttelton regarded Montagu as a resource for soothing encouragement for his literary ventures in the aftermath of his crumbled political career. Montagu, in turn, looked to Lyttelton as a sounding board for her criticism of Sophocles' plays and their comparison to the work of Shakespeare.

Besides issues of decorum, Montagu's friendship with Lyttelton brought up other problems related to sex and gender. The idea that women possessed inferior bodies and minds was a commonplace assumption in eighteenth-century thought. Intellectual traditions in medicine, theology, and philosophy going back to antiquity provided a basis for such thinking. While *querelle des femmes* literature circulating in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries challenged older notions of female inferiority, intellectual women faced censure if they appeared

too forward in promoting their work or ideas.<sup>89</sup> A woman might be criticized as immodest, which implied sexual impropriety, or as masculine, which denoted gender deviancy. Montagu and Lyttelton based their relationship as much on intellectual exchange as on common values and reciprocal affection. The question is: how did they position Montagu's intellectual prowess and literary ambitions in a way that did not suggest female indecency?

Lyttelton evidently found intellectually confident women off-putting if their manner was not properly feminine. In a letter to Montagu he described Mary Pitt as "less a Witt than her Sister, but more a Woman; and I don't like a Man in Petticoats. A Lady's Understanding should be of the feminine gender, and so should her heart too."<sup>90</sup> The fact that Lyttelton related these opinions to Montagu indicates that he found her wit and learning compatible with true femininity. Montagu was carefully discreet in presenting her intellectual abilities. She did not, for instance, publicly admit to writing the final three dialogues in Lyttelton's volume until 1777, and she even induced Edmund Burke to transcribe her handwriting to disguise her authorship before the work went to press.<sup>91</sup> Lyttelton approved of Montagu's reticence, as his commendation of her work shows: "I appeal to him [the moon] if, like the Lady who assisted me in my Dialogues, [did she not] illuminate the World with her beams, tho she modestly hid her face."<sup>92</sup>

In letters to Lyttelton, Montagu emphasized her feminine vulnerability in various ways. She accentuated her poor health to Lyttelton, and he unfailingly responded with gallant concern for her frailty. In Chapter 2 I suggest that Montagu found her health problems a convenient way

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<sup>89</sup> Lieselotte Steinbrugge, *The Moral Sex: Woman's Nature in the French Enlightenment*, trans. Pamela E. Selwyn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) provides a useful study of eighteenth-century ideas about woman's nature.

<sup>90</sup> Houghton bMS ENG 1351, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, August 1, 1764.

<sup>91</sup> Eger, *Elizabeth Montagu*, 117-18; MO3035, Elizabeth Montagu to Elizabeth Carter, c. May 1, 1760.

<sup>92</sup> MO1300, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, September 17, 1762. Lyttelton mistakenly wrote, "she did not" instead of "did she not," but the context of this passage clearly shows that he meant the latter.

to justify a yearly trip to Tunbridge Wells, a place she clearly enjoyed for its social aspects. She may also have found it useful to cultivate a reputation for invalidism to underscore her essential femininity.<sup>93</sup> Montagu's body was demonstrably weak, yet she possessed a robust mind. This dualist formulation harkened back to earlier Cartesian discourse that emphasized the separate nature of the mind and body. Intellectual women could claim that since the mind was separate from the body, it had no sex and was therefore free of the physical limitations of the female constitution.<sup>94</sup> Lyttelton contrasted Montagu's physical delicacy against her sturdy intellect. Commending her for an improvement in health he declared, "I begin to respect your Constitution, which before I always thought your only weak Part. May it continue to strengthen, till your Body is as vigorous as your Mind, and then you will be fitt to be Queen of the World."<sup>95</sup> Lyttelton identified Montagu's weak health as an obstacle to masculine studies: "When your eyes are well remember your Engagement to me and the Muses. But the sharp air of Parnassus would hurt them now."<sup>96</sup> In a sort of circular reasoning, he attributed her physical feebleness to mental over-exertion, and he gallantly advised a cessation of study: "Till you have brought them [your eyes] to close every night for eight hours, pray give them some respite from your reading and writing. They will serve you better when they return to their work."<sup>97</sup> Lyttelton also fretted that Montagu's health might be impaired by too heavy a work load comprised of business accounts and politics: "I am vext that you have an Election at Newcastle to add to your fatigues. Pray, lose a vote or two rather than your Health."<sup>98</sup> Lyttelton's protests about Montagu's

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<sup>93</sup> Illness in women, particularly depression and other mental disorders, was often attributed to nature and power of the uterus.: see Merry E. Wiesner, *Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 27.

<sup>94</sup> Erica Harth, *Cartesian Women : Versions and Subversions of Rational Discourse in the Old Regime* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), 81.

<sup>95</sup> MO1290, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, October 11, 1760.

<sup>96</sup> MO1286, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, August 2, 1760.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> MO1290, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, October 11, 1760.



demanding activities reflect the contemporary attitude that intellectual endeavor undermined female health.<sup>99</sup>

Lyttelton surely considered Montagu's epistolary preoccupation with rural beauty to be charmingly feminine. He reported to Montagu that he found Mary Pitt's taste for pastoral scenery a particularly pleasing quality.<sup>100</sup> Montagu also displayed her femininity by appealing to Lyttelton's masculine strength. When one of their mutual acquaintances, Joseph Emin, alarmed Montagu with his foolhardy boasts, Montagu asked Lyttelton to step in: "I wish your Lordship would write to him. He takes my letter very kindly, though it run[s] directly against the grain of his heroism, but he may think what I say to him is dictated by the weakness and timidity of an effeminate mind. He knows your Lordship's is capable of no fear, but that 'which is the beginning of wisdom.'" <sup>101</sup> Lyttelton assured Montagu of the value of her feminine softness: "He wants your gentle Wisdom to be always near him, both to counsel and to mitigate his rash and ferocious Heroism."<sup>102</sup> Montagu sometimes made light of her femininity while at the same time underscoring her adherence to womanly manners. In a letter to Lyttelton regarding his frustration over building delays at Hagley, she wrote, "With all the tenderness of my sex, so sensible to vanity and friendship, I enter into your mortification, and as I cannot alleviate my vexation by swearing, I think I will beg of you to get the governor to scalp Mr. Lovell."<sup>103</sup>

Lyttelton reconciled Montagu's femininity with her intellectual strength by categorizing her as an exceptional woman. This was a common contemporary technique for explaining

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<sup>99</sup> Jacqueline Pearson, *Women's Reading in England, 1750-1835: A Dangerous Recreation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 4.

<sup>100</sup> Houghton bMS ENG 1351, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, August 1, 1764.

<sup>101</sup> Montagu, *Letters*, 4:223. Emin was Armenian freedom fighter patronized by a handful of English aristocrats including Lyttelton.

<sup>102</sup> MO 1284, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, October 6, 1759.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 283. Lyttelton's brother William Henry was governor of South Carolina 1755-1760 and governor of Jamaica 1760-1766. Montagu's comments are dated August 27, 1760.

women who excelled in areas normally reserved for men.<sup>104</sup> In a postscript to a letter written by Archibald Bower, Lyttelton declared, “There is as much difference between your Genius and that of your Sex as between a murmuring Stream and the Ocean.”<sup>105</sup> He praised her in as “an Ornament to your Sex.”<sup>106</sup> He frequently called attention to her remarkable level of learning as well as her uncommon brilliance, both kept modestly hidden: “Take care, Madonna, that you do not lose this letter, for this quotation will discover the secret of your understanding Latin. But you may as well own that secret; for your criticisms upon Sophocles will soon lay you under the worse imputation of understanding Greek.”<sup>107</sup> Lyttelton clearly believed Montagu’s erudition to be above what most women could achieve. Lamenting her absence at one of his house parties attended by a Greek scholar, Lyttelton remarked, “If you was hear [sic], he would sing translations of Greek chorus to you; made by himself from Sophocles and Euripides; but his present female audience is not worthy of such Notes.”<sup>108</sup> In another instance he lauded Antonio de Solis as an author “worthy to be read by you who are as intimate with Tacitus and with Livy as other Ladies are with Crebillon and La Fayette.”<sup>109</sup>

Lyttelton considered Montagu’s blend of feminine virtue and exceptional learning to be a valuable resource for instructing his children, particularly his son Tom, for whom he had high aspirations. He approached Montagu about establishing a friendship with his son:

I hope and expect, from the talents he seems to be endowed with by nature, and from his mother’s blood, which runs in his veins, that he will far outgo his father in the career of virtue and honour. An early acquaintance with the Madonna will be a further advantage, if she will be so good as to favor him with it, which will form his mind to all that is worthy and noble, and make him amends for the loss of a mother whose instruction she alone can ever supply.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> Myers, *Bluestocking Circle*, 182.

<sup>105</sup> MO639, Archibald Bower and George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu quoted in Myers, 182.

<sup>106</sup> Houghton bMS ENG 1351, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, September 6, 1762.

<sup>107</sup> Montagu, *Letters*, 4: 279.

<sup>108</sup> MO1301, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, October 2, 1762.

<sup>109</sup> Houghton bMS ENG 1351, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, August 17, 1758.

<sup>110</sup> Montagu, *Letters*, 4: 35.

The exchanges between Lyttelton and Montagu about Lyttelton's children further illustrate how both conceptualized masculinity and femininity and also demonstrate how Montagu acknowledged her role as an exceptional woman.

Montagu welcomed Lyttelton's recognition of her remarkable talent and female virtue, and she obliged him by launching an epistolary relationship with his son. In one of her early letters to Tom, she urged him to study the ancient authors. Her language demonstrates conventional ideas about masculine superiority: "I hope you will not . . . fall into the study of les belles lettres, as we call our modern books, I suppose from the same courtesy as the weakest part of the rational species is styled the fair sex, though it can boast of few perfect beauties, and perhaps the utmost grace and dignity of the human form is never found in it."<sup>111</sup> Montagu thus categorized contemporary literature as feminine and inferior and classical literature as masculine and superior. By demonstrating her knowledge of, and preference for, classical authors, Montagu placed herself in the superior camp.

Montagu's attentions to Tom pleased Lyttelton greatly. He transcribed a passage from one of Tom's letters to his tutor at Eton to show Montagu the depth of Tom's admiration for her:

Though you have not the happiness of being personally known to that Lady, I doubt not that the Voice of Thousands has made you acquainted with her extraordinary Talents, her Genius, her Wit, and her admirable Erudition. She embellishes every subject she speaks or writes upon, but the most happy flow of Eloquence; and, by the exquisite nicety of her perceptions, throws new light and new grace on the most common place topics. She is really possess of the true Philosopher's Stone; for under her touch every thing becomes Gold.<sup>112</sup>

By transmitting to Montagu his son's flattering words, Lyttelton confirmed his own opinion of her as an exceptional woman.

Lyttelton adored his son but was less fond of his daughter Lucy. Messenger Monsey,

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., 87.

<sup>112</sup> Houghton BMS ENG 1351, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, September 6, 1762.

society physician who customarily teased his friends, apparently professed himself enamored of Lyttelton's daughter. Lyttelton responded: "You may be in love with her [Lucy] if you please, but my Son is my passion. He is indeed the Joy of my Heart, which overflows with delight at the Praises he receives from every Creature wherever he goes."<sup>113</sup> Lyttelton was continuously dissatisfied with Lucy, who he compared negatively to her mother: "Her face and figure will turn out very well if awkward tricks do not spoil them. Perhaps time may improve her in many respects, but it will never make her a *Lucy Fortescue*."<sup>114</sup> Lyttelton also compared Lucy unfavorably to her brother, and he thought her unable to benefit properly from the influence of Montagu's brilliance. He confided to Montagu, "I keep all your letters for the benefit of my son. My daughter's genius I fear will not enable her to profit much by them; but your conversation, which you will let down to her pitch, may be of great service to her."<sup>115</sup> Montagu occasionally wrote kind inquiries about Lucy, and Lyttelton felt grateful for her concern. He believed contact with Montagu's conversation might improve his daughter's manners, but he remained dubious about her capabilities: "you are so kind to offer me assistance in smoothing and polishing her rustic virtues. It is with the mind as with the body: no culture can add an inch to its natural height, but it may be taught not to stoop beneath its proper stature, and to be amiable though not exalted."<sup>116</sup>

Montagu's ideas about the problems faced by exceptional women are best seen in her comments to Lyttelton regarding his disappointment in Lucy. In one letter she declared,

Your Lordship often laments you daughter is not a beauty and a genius, because you see beauties and wits when they smile and sparkle. But did you know the vexations of

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<sup>113</sup> Houghton bMS ENG 1365, George, Lord Lyttelton to Messenger Monsey, September 2, 1758. Messenger Monsey was a physician and friend to Lyttelton, Bath, and Montagu and was known for his wit and his eccentricities: see J. F. Payne, "Monsey, Messenger (*bap.* 1694, *d.* 1788)," in ODNB online, January 2008.

<sup>114</sup> Lyttelton quoted in Davis, *Lord Lyttelton*, 261.

<sup>115</sup> Montagu, *Letters*, 4: 330.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.*

vanity, and the languours of pride in retirement, you would thank the gods for not having given her too many charms, and too many pretensions to admiration. I have known very few women in my life whom extraordinary charms and accomplishments did not make unhappy.<sup>117</sup>

Montagu's remarks do not necessarily indicate that she placed herself in the category of extraordinary, as she was referring in this passage to a woman of exceptional beauty and charm that she had observed at Tunbridge Wells. She warmed to this theme, however, and a short time later made further pronouncements on Lucy's fitness for domestic life which do indicate that she may have had her own experience in mind:

Your Lordship's forming care will polish her virtues, till they are smooth and soft, and never idly wish to make them bright and dazzling. Extraordinary talents may make a woman admired, but they will never make her happy. Talents put a man above the world, and in a condition to be feared and worshipped; a woman that possesses them must always be courting the world, and asking pardon, as it were, for uncommon excellence."<sup>118</sup>

The collapse of Lucy's first betrothal in 1763 provides another glimpse into Montagu's thoughts about the female condition. Lyttelton conveyed his disappointment in the affair to Montagu, and also included a rare compliment to his daughter: "I can't say enough of the discretion and Dutifullness of my good girl on this occasion."<sup>119</sup> Montagu responded with advice to Lyttelton concerning Lucy that seems to draw from her own experience and her personal feelings about marriage. She counseled Lyttelton to allow Lucy to remain unmarried until her late twenties:

I think a certain Young Lady must be so happy under the protection of her excellent Father, I would change her condition as late as possible. Poor Girls are sadly deceived by the words House of their own, being their own Mistress, &c. Alas their house and they have a Master! I know the being call'd an old Maid is terrible to them; but a Woman of Merit, family, and fortune may Marry at eight and twenty; she will then have gather'd the flowers of gayety and pleasure; may without self denial live a retired domestick life, her character will be more respectable, her Understanding more improved, her conduct more Uniform, and she will be more likely to gain the esteem of her Husband and is much fitter to educate her children: A point of great consequence to the later Season of life when she

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 270-71.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., 311.

<sup>119</sup> Houghton BMS ENG 1351, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, November 17, 1763.

is to reap the harvest of seeds education sowed in their minds.<sup>120</sup>

It may be that Montagu regretted her own early marriage; certainly her language suggests dissatisfaction with the wifely duty of submission. When Montagu was a young woman her lack of fortune had made it impossible to do what she advised for Lucy. Her words demonstrate what she considered an ideal for financially secure young women, and they correspond to the ideas presented in her dialogue between Mercury and Mrs. Modish described above.

As I argue, Montagu had strong feelings for Lyttelton that are represented in her unpublished poem. Whatever passion she may have felt for him in the 1740s seems to have abated by the mid-1750s, when the extant letters begin. Montagu exhibited friendly affection and concern, but her letters show no sign of suppressed passion. Montagu engaged in pretend love-affair exchanges with Messenger Monsey and Lord Bath, but she did not do so with Lyttelton. Lyttelton playfully assumed the role of slighted lover in one letter as he exclaimed, “But is not this love for Jolly Men the effect of your Passion for Ld Bath? Indeed Madam, I fear it is, and when I am weighed in the balance against his Lordship I shall be found very wanting. The Devil take him for having so much Witt with so much Flesh.”<sup>121</sup> Lyttelton occasionally inserted himself into the epistolary banter between Montagu and Monsey. To Monsey he wrote, “Tell Mrs M. I am so well I should grow fatt, if it were not for the Envy I feel for you on the account of the Passion which she has own’d for you in the love Letter you sent me.”<sup>122</sup>

Lyttelton displayed gallant affection and admiration for Montagu. In one letter he queried, “with what other friend does my Mind or my Heart love so much to converse?” In letters to Monsey, Lyttelton self-consciously attempted to replicate Monsey’s wit. But as Lyttelton explained to Montagu, his admiration for her overcame all desire to tease her as

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<sup>120</sup> Houghton BMS ENG 1365, Elizabeth Montagu to George, Lord Lyttelton, November 22, 1763.

<sup>121</sup> MO1290, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, October 11, 1760.

<sup>122</sup> Houghton BMS ENG 1365, George, Lord Lyttelton to Messenger Monsey, July 24, 1758.

Monsey did: “I hope Monsey will rag you, and I wish I could learn from his Style. But when I have a mind to abuse you, some of your graces or your Virtues come stealing upon my Memory, and I stand, like Satan in Milton at the sight of Eve, bereft of all my Malice.”<sup>123</sup> Lyttelton felt grateful for Montagu’s friendship. In one letter, as he fretted about her health, he declared: “I, Madame, for whose Health you have often exprest so kind a concern, and whom your Friendship has comforted under so many Vexations.”<sup>124</sup> On both sides, the letters show mutual affection, respect, and regard, but no evidence of romantic attachment.

Common literary interests formed a cornerstone of the friendship. Montagu and Lyttelton regularly shared books and traded literary opinions. Lyttelton lent Montagu books that he thought she would enjoy, and he unfailingly remarked upon her literary judgments.

Regarding her opinion of author Antonio de Solis, he replied, “Your Praises of him are just, and so is your censure.”<sup>125</sup> In the same letter, responded with gallantry about her enthusiasm for Cortez: “I am not surprised at your Passion for Cortez. C’est un coup de Sympathie. You know very well I often have told you that none but a Conqueror should presume to lay siege to your Heart.”<sup>126</sup> Lyttelton was pleased by Montagu’s interest in books he had read, and he valued her comments. After sending Montagu several volumes to read, he remarked, “I am glad you were so amused with Busbequius’s Letters . . . Have you also read Strada’s Prolusions which I lent you? I wish to know your opinion on them.”<sup>127</sup>

Montagu sent Lyttelton unsolicited views as well, such as her opinion of Voltaire. Her words are worth quoting at length because they demonstrate her belief that good literature should elevate human sentiments and actions. Her remarks on Voltaire follow an account of Pitt’s

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<sup>123</sup> Houghton bMS ENG 1351, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, November 17, 1763.

<sup>124</sup> MO 1276, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, August [?], 1757.

<sup>125</sup> Houghton bMS ENG 1351, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, August 17, 1758.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> MO1284, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, October 6 [?], 1759.

attempt to deflect blame from himself in the wake of the Rochefort affair, discussed in Chapter 3:

I am so averse to thinking of these things that I cannot bear to read Voltaire's works, of which I just got the new edition; every time England is mentioned it costs me a groan. I am not indeed a great admirer of Mr. Voltaire. I liked his account of the King of Sweden; but now he writes history as a philosopher, as too many philosophers do he leaves truth for system, and l'esprit de l'histoire, which he affects to give us, is trop alembiqué [sic] for me. I am diverted to find him taking all opportunities of giving modern poetry and history the preference to ancient. As to the common uses of life, the Public Advertiser is as much better than the Siécle de Louis Quatorze as that is preferable to Livy, Thucydides, or Tacitus. It is more useful perhaps, to know my host at the Blue Boar in Piccadilly died of eating too many oysters, than how Marshal Turenne was killed in the trenches; but to raise the genius and to mend the heart, one should place in view examples of heroic virtue of which modern times are not so well furnished.<sup>128</sup>

It may well be that statements such as these, that clearly defined Montagu's attitudes about the relationship between literature and society, prompted Lyttelton to include her in his *Dialogues of the Dead* project.

There are few references to the *Dialogues* in the extant correspondence prior to the volume's release in April 1760. A letter fragment from Lyttelton to Montagu suggests that Lyttelton sent drafts of his dialogues for her review.<sup>129</sup> Unfortunately, the letter record provides no evidence of how the two worked together on this project. After publication, Montagu and Lyttelton reported instances of approbation of the work and complimented each other for their accomplishment. Very likely from a sense of decorous female modesty, Montagu sometimes belittled her own work in comparison to Lyttelton's. She explained to Lyttelton that when a solicitor of her acquaintance expressed disappointment when she denied authorship of the final three dialogues, she "pointed out the superiority the other dialogues had over them & he has now read your Lordships and admires them."<sup>130</sup> Other remarks show that she felt great satisfaction in

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<sup>128</sup> Montagu, *Letters*, 4: 66-67. Montagu's letter is dated October 23, 1757.

<sup>129</sup> MO1285, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, c. 1759.

<sup>130</sup> MO1398, Elizabeth Montagu to George, Lord Lyttelton, August 27, 1760.



hearing praise of the work. In a letter describing a visit with Edward Young, she merrily reported that she heard “the Dialogues of the Dead praised in the highest degree & with taste & judgment & a most delicate sense of their moral merits.”<sup>131</sup>

Lyttelton’s comments reveal his high opinion of Montagu’s work and well as his pride in their joint collaboration. In August 1760, Montagu informed Elizabeth Carter that the *Dialogues* had been translated into French by two different authors, but that she had not yet seen them.<sup>132</sup>

Lyttelton supplied Montagu with information about the translations. He reported that he had seen those of Des Champs of Montagu’s three pieces: “They are as well done as the Poverty of the French tongue will admit. But such eloquence as yours must lose by being transposed into any other language.”<sup>133</sup> In another letter he fumed that a bad translation of the *Dialogues* had hurt the reception of the work on the continent:

The enclosed will inform you just how much they have sufferd by the French Translator in Holland. Robbing an author of his Fame in this manner is as bad as robbing him of his Money by a forged Note, and in the Kingdom of Parnassus would doubtless be a capital Crime. I wish the ill impression that Foreigners have received from this horrid Translator may be got over by Mmr. Deschamps, who will do me and my Associate more Justice. Poor Associate! I am more concernd with her Fame than my own.<sup>134</sup>

Montagu replied characteristically by minimizing the value of her work while emphasizing the superiority of Lyttelton’s:

I see the first translation is sold in Town, and if I was there I should have the curiosity to buy it, indeed I pity your Lordship upon the occasion but I don’t feel at all for your Associate. I have a general compassion for the Associate, one so poor they cannot be robb’d, but I lament that your treasure is thus despoil’d, and it is by no means in Mr Deschamps power to restore all Mr Joncour has depriv’d your Lordship of. We will prove you have been injured, but cannot redress you.<sup>135</sup>

Montagu’s outward deference to Lyttelton’s literary excellence underscores her belief in

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<sup>131</sup> MO1400, Elizabeth Montagu to George, Lord Lyttelton, September 21-22, 1760.

<sup>132</sup> MO3037, Elizabeth Montagu to Elizabeth Carter, August 27, 1760.

<sup>133</sup> MO1286, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, August 2, 1760.

<sup>134</sup> MO1290, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, October 11, 1760.

<sup>135</sup> MO1403, Elizabeth Montagu to George, Lord Lyttelton, October 21, 1760.

contemporary ideas about polite female modesty, at least for outward show, and it doubtless endeared her to Lyttelton, who surely thought it charming.

In exchange for Montagu's deference, Lyttelton attempted to offer genuine literary guidance. In this sense, he posed as a mentor. His first endeavor to rebuff criticism of Montagu's dialogues unfortunately hit a negative note:

I am surprised that Sr Sydney Smith should think your Dialogues obscure. It makes me less vain of his approbation of mine. Certainly there is nothing dark in your style, unless it be, as Milton says, dark with excessive Bright. The Beams of Wit, like those of the Sun, may overpower the light if they press upon it too thick, and too fast. I sometimes have found them do so in your Letters, but the thoughts in your Dialogues, tho frequent and full, are very distinct and clear.<sup>136</sup>

It may be that Lyttelton felt uncomfortable with Montagu's dialogues being judged alongside his own. Upon reflection, Lyttelton seems to have considered his words insensitive. Whatever the case, Lyttelton hastily amended his estimation in a subsequent letter filled with gallant sentiments:

None of your Letters are obscure to me, and those I thought rather too great a crowd of images in them were not written to me. I am glad your three Dialogues are so well liked in Scotland, where the Author is not known. Those who know you and believe they are your's are hardly fair Judges. Your form and manners would seduce Apollo himself in his Throne of Criticism on Parnassus.<sup>137</sup>

Montagu appealed to Lyttelton as a mentor when she sought validation from him for her first serious foray into literary criticism. In letters between August 7 and October 31, 1760, Montagu sent to Lyttelton a series of extended criticisms of the plays of Sophocles as well as comparisons of these plays to the dramas of Shakespeare.<sup>138</sup> Lyttelton supplied plenty of positive reaction to her opinions, and as a way of encouragement, he made specific comments

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<sup>136</sup> MO1292, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, October [?], 1760.

<sup>137</sup> MO1291, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, October, 18, 1760. The context of this letter places it after MO1292, not before as the numbering indicates.

<sup>138</sup> Houghton bMS Hyde 7, Elizabeth Montagu to George, Lord Lyttelton, August 7, 1760; MO1398, Elizabeth Montagu to George, Lord Lyttelton, August 27, 1760; Montagu 4:293-303; (September 10, 1760).

about her various points.<sup>139</sup> For instance, he professed himself “charm’d” by Montagu’s comparison of Sophocles with Shakespeare, and declared his agreement with her observation that “the moral Reflexions in Shakespear’s Plays are much more affecting by coming Warm from the Heart of the interested persons, than putt into the mouth of a Chorus, as in the Greek Plays.”<sup>140</sup> There are numerous examples of Lyttelton’s supportive commentary in this series of letters. The connection between this exchange and Montagu’s publication of her *Essay on Shakespear* (1769) is beyond the scope of this study, but the letters do suggest that Montagu drew confidence from Lyttelton’s praise and reflections on her criticism.

Montagu offered literary support to Lyttelton as well. When Lyttelton displayed insecurity about public opinion of his *Dialogues* in letters to Montagu, she responded with encouragement. Considering his desire resume a significant place in public life, Lyttelton must have hoped his work would be well-received by those with political influence. He confided to Montagu, “I presume Lady Hervey really likes them [the *Dialogues*], for otherwise she would not have sent them to him. Ld Chesterfield’s warmth in their Praise has secured her vote in their favour, in spite of Horace Walpole and of Ld Bath.”<sup>141</sup> Lyttelton also wished for approbation from philosophical quarters. He worried that David Hume did not like the work because Hume had not responded to Lyttelton’s gift of copy of the book. “Silence is censure,” he fretted to Montagu, “and I don’t wonder at it; for my Dialogue between Locke & Bayle is Censure upon him; and besides, as he is fond of new ways of thinking, he cant be much pleased with my old Dunstable Notions. I have lately read some of his Essays, which I greatly admire.”<sup>142</sup> As it

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<sup>139</sup> Houghton bMS ENG 1351, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, August 11, 1760; MO1287, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, August 14, 1760; MO1289, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, August 23, 1760; 1291, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, October 18, 1760.

<sup>140</sup> MO1291, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, October 18, 1760.

<sup>141</sup> MO 1292, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, October [?], 1760. This manuscript is a fragment, so it is not clear to whom Lady Hervey sent the *Dialogues*.

<sup>142</sup> MO1291, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, October, 18, 1760.

happened, Montagu was able to reassure Lyttelton on this matter:

Dr. Gregory in talking of Mr. Hume, said he had a great respect for your Lordship. The dialogue of Bayle and Lock, could not be agreeable to him. I imagine the essays your Lordship likes, are on moral and political subjects: his metaphysical ones appear to me far finer than cobwebs. Dr. Gregory says Mr. Hume told him he spent an evening with me at Mr. Ramsay's, and he had received very favorable impressions of me, and, I find, said much more of me than I deserve. The Doctor told him I was not of his freethinking system, but Mr. Hume thinks that no fault in a woman.<sup>143</sup>

Montagu's reply to Lyttelton, though couched in the language of polite modesty, illustrates pride in her reputation as female intellectual. In another instance, she juxtaposed female brilliance against male intellectual repute when she declared confidently to Lyttelton: "I am afraid my Works will make a poor figure besides theirs [Elizabeth Carter and Hester Chapone]. I shall desire not to measure my sword with the Amazons, there are some Infantry at Cambridge, and near the Inns of Court, with whom I can better contend."<sup>144</sup> In this comment, Montagu pays tribute to women authors, but also exhibits confidence in her own literary skills compared to those of men.

Lyttelton's insecurities, generated in part from his political failure, prompted Montagu to dispense cheering encouragement for Lyttelton's great literary project, his history of Henry II. As mentioned above, Lyttelton began this project in the 1740s while in the service of the Prince of Wales. After his forced retirement from political office in 1756, he returned to this endeavor. Montagu flattered Lyttelton with florid compliments of his literary worth and proclaimed the lasting value of history:

if there be one [Hagley oak tree] more noble than the rest, the honor of having shaded

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<sup>143</sup> Montagu, *Letters*, 4: 320-21. This letter from Montagu to Lyttelton is dated October 31, 1760.

<sup>144</sup> MO1423, Elizabeth Montagu to George, Lord Lyttelton, October 29, 1762. Since Montagu was at this time working on her *Essay on Shakespear*, it appears likely she referred in part to William Warburton, who resided at Lincoln's Inn, and whose annotated edition of Shakespeare appeared in 1747. In 1750 Warburton published a supplement to the edition consisting of criticism and a glossary. Warburton's work on Shakespeare was widely disparaged. See B. W. Young, "Warburton, William (1698-1779)," in ODNB online, May 2007. Montagu may also have been referring to Samuel Johnson, who lived near the Inns of Court, although Johnson's edition of Shakespeare did not appear until 1765. The reference to Cambridge remains obscure.

Lord Lyttelton while he wrote his History of Henry the Second will be ascribed to it, and every genius devoted to the daughters of memory will make a pilgrimage thither. Chaucer's and Sydney's oaks grew in the light soil of fancy and fable, and like mere beauties flourished awhile, then faded. The historical plants have their root in the terra firma of truth and wisdom, and are for ever preserved with veneration.<sup>145</sup>

One of Lyttelton's letters suggests that he requested Montagu's assistance with his history of Henry II.<sup>146</sup> In another, he informed Montagu that he was working diligently on the project, as she had apparently urged.<sup>147</sup> He considered her a confidante for his literary ambitions. In one letter he transcribed a portion of a letter from Philip Yorke, first earl of Hardwicke, praising the manuscript of the work Lyttelton had sent to him. Lyttelton gleefully reported, "Have I not some reason, Madonna, to be vain of such an Approbation from such a Judge with regard to that part of my History where I most distrusted myself? Indeed it does please me, and I think it will please you."<sup>148</sup> Montagu continued to reassure Lyttelton of his place in posterity: "Future ages will enquire under what oak you planned your History or wrote your Monody?"<sup>149</sup>

Lyttelton seems to have found Montagu's interest stimulating. It occurred to Lyttelton that his work might appeal to intellectual women such as Montagu. He wrote to Montagu about his intentions: "I think I must write a Preface to this part of my Work [regarding law], and tell the Ladies, that, however uncouth they may think it, I wrote it purely for them; that, as they now excell in other Learning, they might not be ignorant of this profound Science, but understand l'Esprit des Loix."<sup>150</sup> Although Lyttelton acknowledged that some women might be competent to read history and law, his remarks about his daughter in the same letter show that Lyttelton did not consider female intellectual competence necessarily widespread, or even very desirable: "I

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<sup>145</sup> Montagu, *Letters*, 4:227. This letter from Montagu to Lyttelton is dated 1759.

<sup>146</sup> MO1286, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, August 2, 1760.

<sup>147</sup> MO1290, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, October 11, 1760.

<sup>148</sup> MO1287, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, August 14, 1760.

<sup>149</sup> MO1403, Elizabeth Montagu to George, Lord Lyttelton, October 21, 1760.

<sup>150</sup> MO1290, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, October 11, 1760.

did not know her domestick virtues before, but I assure [you] they are very great. She seems to have no mind of her own.”<sup>151</sup> Montagu appears to have understood Lyttelton’s underlying message that his history would be aimed only at certain ladies. She wrote to Elizabeth Carter, a well-known female classicist who had produced a highly regarded translation of Epictetus, that Lyttelton was flattered by Carter’s enquiry of his work: “He is indeed writing for you and such as you.”<sup>152</sup>

It is very clear from the letter record that Montagu and Lyttelton felt deep regard and affection for one another. As I have shown, Lyttelton reconciled Montagu’s intellectual capacity with her sex by categorizing her as an exceptional woman. In this way, he could recognize Montagu’s abilities without having to challenge contemporary notions about female inferiority. Although it appears likely that Montagu felt passion for Lyttelton in the 1740s, she showed no signs of romantic attachment in her letters. For Montagu, friendship with Lyttelton, a prominent man of letters, provided an outlet for her intellectual interests. It was not, however, a simple mentoring arrangement. The friendship was reciprocal in the sense that both Montagu and Lyttelton drew support and encouragement from each other.

I also argue in this chapter that Montagu’s contributions to Lyttelton’s *Dialogues of the Dead* can be viewed as political texts. As I show in Chapter 3, Montagu engaged in the political arena in the ways open to her as an elite woman married to a member of parliament. The letters between Montagu and her husband demonstrate Montagu’s keen interest in national politics and public policy. Letters between Montagu and Lyttelton as well as Montagu and William Pulteney, Lord Bath further establish Montagu’s interest in politics independent of her husband’s parliamentary seat. The following chapter examines the political aspect of her friendships with

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Montagu, *Letters*, 4: 210.

Lyttelton and with Lord Bath.

## CHAPTER 5

### ELIZABETH MONTAGU, MALE FRIENDSHIP, AND THE POLITICAL REALM

As I show in Chapter 3, Elizabeth Montagu participated in the political process as it related to her husband Edward's parliamentary career, and she showed considerable interest in the wider political discourse of national affairs. Montagu took the initiative in gathering and interpreting political news for her husband, and Edward relied on her opinions and advice. Montagu's engagement with public affairs went beyond the boundaries of Edward's parliamentary concerns. I demonstrate in Chapter 4 that Montagu took the opportunity to publicly articulate her political attitudes by contributing to George, Lord Lyttelton's *Dialogues of the Dead*, a work meant to instruct readers in the moral foundation of a healthy polity. In this chapter, I examine the political aspect of Montagu's friendships with Lyttelton and with William Pulteney, earl of Bath, from 1760-63, the first three years of George III's reign. I illustrate how Montagu's male friendships served as a vehicle for her interest in the political nation independent from her husband's affairs. By examining Montagu's attitudes in letters to Lyttelton and Bath, I demonstrate that Montagu's shift in political loyalty from the patriot cause and William Pitt the Elder to the court of George III was not an abandonment of patriot principles, but was based on her belief that George III's reign signaled a fulfillment of these principles. I also point out that although Montagu professed detachment from politics in letters to female friends such as Elizabeth Carter, her letters to male friends demonstrate a lively engagement with public affairs.

Recent works by Judith Lewis and Elaine Chalus provide convincing evidence that elite eighteenth-century women routinely played a variety of roles in the promotion of their families'



political interests.<sup>1</sup> My discussion in Chapter 3 of Montagu's assistance to her husband in his parliamentary career supports this research. Elite women were expected to forward their families' political interests, but as Chalus points out, "there was no neat dividing-line between family and politics, and the step from familial duty to political involvement was often small and readily justified."<sup>2</sup> Yet women who appeared to operate politically in forwarding an agenda outside the boundaries of family interest encountered severe criticism.<sup>3</sup> In this chapter, I discuss how Montagu's friendship with Bath provided her with an outlet for political expression in the gray area between family duty and direct political involvement. The extant correspondence from 1761 to Bath's death in July 1764 shows frequent, sometimes daily, written exchange between Montagu and Bath. Politics comprised a significant portion of their letters, and for Montagu, discussion through personal correspondence was a medium for political participation in much the same way that coffee house conversation and circulation of printed news and gossip served as outlets for informal political expression in wider eighteenth-century society.<sup>4</sup> In Bath, Montagu found a source for fresh and reliable political news as well as a like-minded confidante for her political opinions.

Montagu also discussed public affairs with Lyttelton, and I demonstrate how Lyttelton hoped to leverage Montagu's friendship with Bath for political ends. Lyttelton and Bath moved in the same circles, with many friends in common, but Bath remained aloof from Lyttelton's attempts to develop a closer acquaintance. No doubt Bath held a grudge against Lyttelton for his

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<sup>1</sup> Elaine Chalus, *Elite Women in English Political Life c. 1754-1790* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005); Judith S. Lewis, *Sacred to Female Patriotism: Gender, Class, and Politics in Late Georgian Britain* (New York and London: Routledge, 2003).

<sup>2</sup> Chalus, *Elite Women*, 26.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 27-29.

<sup>4</sup> Ann C. Dean, *The Talk of the Town: Figurative Publics in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2007), 35-36. Dean discusses the ways talk, print, and manuscript overlapped to enlarge the figurative political space of the eighteenth century.

supposed role in Bath's political downfall in 1742.<sup>5</sup> Montagu's management of Lyttelton's requests for assistance and her ambivalence about direct female action in political matters outside the family structure family highlight the significant obstacles posed by gender ideals that eighteenth-century women encountered. That Montagu felt conflicted by gender ideals and patriotic ideals is further illustrated in her correspondence with Bath.

Modern accounts of Elizabeth Montagu provide little information about and interpretation of Montagu's friendship with Bath. Sylvia Myers suggests that Montagu wished to know a great statesman in his retirement and that friendship with Bath satisfied this desire. She also contends that Montagu's emotional closeness to Bath was "as far as she dare go in establishing an emotional tie in opposition to her husband."<sup>6</sup> Bridget Hill characterizes Montagu's friendship with Bath in the same way she interprets Montagu's friendship with Lyttelton: a relationship structured to meet Montagu's neurotic need for praise and admiration.<sup>7</sup> Other studies on Montagu either briefly mention the friendship but offer no analysis, or they pass over it altogether. Myers is the only scholar of Bluestocking activities to comment on a possible political facet to the Montagu/Bath friendship. An essay by Jeremy Black, however, regarding changes and continuities in eighteenth-century political life draws extensively on correspondence between Montagu and Bath, thus implicitly suggesting a political component to the friendship.<sup>8</sup> To properly assess the political context of the Montagu/Bath friendship, as well as Lyttelton's association to it, it is first necessary to outline Bath's political career and his involvement in the opposition to Robert Walpole.

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<sup>5</sup> An outline of Bath's political career is provided below.

<sup>6</sup> Sylvia Harestarck Myers *The Bluestocking Circle: Women, Friendship, and the Life of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 193.

<sup>7</sup> Bridget Hill, "The Course of the Marriage of Elizabeth Montagu: An Ambitious and Talented Woman without Means," *Journal of Family History* 26/1 (January 2001): 10.

<sup>8</sup> Jeremy Black, introduction to *British Politics and Society from Walpole to Pitt, 1742-1789*, ed. Jeremy Black (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1990), 1-28.

## Political Career of William Pulteney, Lord Bath

William Pulteney (1684-1764) is nearly as shadowy a figure in eighteenth-century history as Lyttelton. Many contemporaries regarded the youthful Pulteney as a rising star among the Whigs, but like Lyttelton, Pulteney played politics badly and ended his career as a marginal figure in the House of Lords. There are few modern scholarly works centered on Pulteney, due in large part because Pulteney ordered the destruction of his personal papers upon his death. These papers included full written texts of his parliamentary speeches, much admired by contemporaries for their wit and persuasiveness.<sup>9</sup> It is unfortunate that these manuscripts have been lost, for it seems likely that Pulteney's papers would have shed light on his controversial political maneuverings and given modern historians a more solid sense of his motivations and personality.

Pulteney began his parliamentary career in 1705 as a Whig MP for Hedon in Yorkshire and quickly became closely aligned with Robert Walpole. He served as secretary-at-war from 1714-17, an appointment earned by his loyalty to the Whigs during Queen Anne's reign. Pulteney resigned from office under the Stanhope-Sunderland administration in 1717 to follow Walpole into opposition. During this period of opposition, Pulteney did not support all of Walpole's initiatives and seemed to regard Walpole as a rival. During negotiations in 1720 for the formation of a new Walpole ministry, Walpole passed over Pulteney for office. Pulteney took offense to Walpole's disregard, but found his disappointment partially eased by being made lord lieutenant of the east riding of Yorkshire. In addition, the crown granted a conversion of the

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<sup>9</sup> Stuart Handley, M. J. Rowe, and W. H. McBryde, "Pulteney, William, earl of Bath (1684–1764)," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, October 2007, <http://www.oxforddnb.com>. Citations are to the online edition. Further biographical information about Pulteney can be found in Romney Sedgwick, *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1715-54*, 2 vols. (London: Published for the History of Parliament Trust by Her Majesty's Stationery Office, 1970), 2: 375-76.

Pulteney estate lease (London) into a freehold.<sup>10</sup> Pulteney still hoped for high office and apparently intrigued separately with John Carteret and Charles Townshend in an effort to weaken Townshend while strengthening Pulteney's own position. In 1725 Walpole, who for good reason did not trust Pulteney, again passed him over and named the duke of Newcastle to replace Carteret as secretary of state (south), a place Pulteney wished to obtain. Furious, Pulteney retreated into a permanent seventeen-year opposition against Walpole with the objective of ejecting Walpole from office.<sup>11</sup> Pulteney's resentment and resulting hatred of Walpole drove him to become one of the most vociferous and vicious critics of Walpole's administration.

Although Pulteney earlier had refused to join Walpole in supporting Tories in 1718 on a bill to reduce the standing army, he now made an alliance with Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke, a Tory with Jacobite associations. Together, Pulteney and Bolingbroke founded the *Craftsman* in 1726 as a journalistic vehicle to attack Walpole and his ministry. Both men were major contributors to the paper. Pulteney's association with Bolingbroke was always uneasy; the two were never on good personal terms and Pulteney disagreed with Bolingbroke's desire to keep Britain out of the continental war that began in 1733.<sup>12</sup> Although contemporaries considered it the most important newspaper in circulation, and it attracted a great deal of attention, the *Craftsman* did not achieve Pulteney's goal of bringing down Walpole, nor did it affect policy in any decisive way.<sup>13</sup> Pulteney hoped to displace Walpole at the accession of George II in 1727 as he had carefully cultivated the Prince of Wales prior to George I's death, but the new queen, Caroline, strongly supported Walpole. Moreover, as a result of his constant

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<sup>10</sup> H. T. Dickinson, introduction to *A Proper Reply to a Late Scurrilous Libel; Intituled, Sedition and Defamation Display'd* (1731) by William Pulteney, ed., Dickinson (New York: AMS Press, 1998), xi. Dickinson's comment that Pulteney was "bought off" seems a correct assessment.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, xi-xii.

<sup>12</sup> Dickinson, *Bolingbroke* (London: Constable and Company, 1970), 245.

<sup>13</sup> Simon Varey, "The Craftsman," *Prose Studies: History, Theory, Criticism* 16/1 (April 1993): 58-59.

harassment of Walpole and the ministry in print and in the House of Commons, Pulteney lost his position of lord lieutenant in Yorkshire and was received coldly at court.<sup>14</sup>

Undeterred, Pulteney continued throughout the 1730s as a prominent leader in the opposition, which consisted of a variety of competing and sometimes overlapping groups. Richard Temple, first Viscount Cobham, led a wing of the opposition after he broke with Walpole in 1733. As discussed in Chapter 4, Lyttelton belonged to Cobham's circle, which styled itself a patriot force. "Cobham's Cubs" became attached to the court of Frederick, Prince of Wales after the Prince quarreled with his father, George II, in 1737. With Cobham on one side, Pulteney and Carteret on another side, and Philip Stanhope, the earl of Chesterfield mingling between both factions, each side competed for influence at Leicester House. For a time, the resulting friction over the management of Frederick distracted opposition leaders from the larger purpose of unseating Walpole. Ever opportunistic, Pulteney exploited public outrage in 1738-39 over the Jenkin's ear episode and, along with other opposition elements, supported calls for war with Spain. Walpole resisted war and negotiated a trade agreement with Spain at the Convention of Pardo in January 1739. By October 1739, the force of public opinion drove Walpole to declare war on Spain. Pulteney repeatedly called for parliamentary investigation into Convention of Pardo proceedings, contending that Walpole's corruption had undermined Britain's position. Pulteney's popularity rose during the war, as did the reputation of the opposition in general.<sup>15</sup> In January 1742, Walpole lost control of the House of Commons, and by February of that year accepted a peerage, signaling his retirement from active politics.

George II requested Newcastle and Philip Yorke, first baron Hardwicke, to construct a ministry that included Pulteney as head of the Treasury, but Pulteney refused to take office and

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<sup>14</sup> Handley, et al., "Pulteney," ODNB.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

accepted instead a seat in the cabinet. Although Pulteney later explained his refusal as a result of weariness of public affairs, it is possible that he was worried about a backlash for accepting a place after having acted the patriot outsider so long.<sup>16</sup> In any event, he provoked a much larger outcry by accepting a peerage in July 1742 than he might have done by merely accepting an office. Many contemporaries considered Pulteney's elevation to the House of Lords as a betrayal of the patriot cause, a cynical surrender of principles for personal gain. Walpole's enemies had hoped to further discredit the former first minister through a parliamentary investigation, but Pulteney's acceptance of a peerage signaled an end to his part in the persecution of Walpole. Pulteney claimed that the Cobham faction of Lyttelton, Pitt, and the Grenvilles undermined him in negotiations with the old corps Whigs and that he accepted the title as a repositioning technique.

Pulteney's strategy damaged his political reputation and credibility irreparably as it unleashed a flood of violent criticism against him. Charles Hanbury Williams, a writer of satirical verse and an ally of Henry Fox, wrote some of the most effective and damaging pieces.<sup>17</sup> Pulteney, now Lord Bath, continued to harbor ambitions for office. When the Treasury became vacant in 1743, Bath applied to his ally Carteret for the position. Carteret, however, could not sway the king from his preference for Henry Pelham. By 1746, George II felt oppressed by the ministerial combination of Pelham and the duke of Newcastle, Pelham's brother. The king turned to Bath to form an administration. Bath accepted the office of Treasurer, but relinquished the seals two days later for lack of support from the Pelhams and their followers in parliament.<sup>18</sup> Now in the House of Lords, Bath played a negligible role in

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<sup>16</sup> Sedgwick, HoP, 2:376; Handley, et al., "Pulteney," ODNB.

<sup>17</sup> Handley, et al., "Pulteney," ODNB. Williams was the estranged husband of Elizabeth Montagu's friend, Lady Frances Williams.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

national politics following this last effort to obtain government office.

### Assessments of William Pulteney, Lord Bath

Bath's modern reputation suffers from unflattering appraisals of his character by those who knew him personally. The perennially quotable Horace Walpole, youngest son of Robert Walpole, hated Bath for his long and bitter campaign against his father. In his *Memoirs*, Walpole recounts the scandal of Bath's elevation to peerage and the humiliation of his two-day ministry in a disparaging evaluation of Bath's character:

Who does not know that Mr Pulteney was the great rival of Sir Robert Walpole, whose power he so long opposed, at last overturned, and was undone with it? Who does not know that his virtue failed, the moment his inveteracy was gratified? Who does not know that all the patriot's private vices, which his party would not see when he led them, were exposed, and, if possible, magnified by them the instant he deserted them? Who does not know that he had not judgment or resolution enough to engross the power, which he had forfeited his credit and character to obtain? and who does not know that his ambition, treachery, irresolution, timidity and want of judgment were baffled and made advantage of, by a man who had all those vices and deficiencies in a stronger proportion – for who does not know the Duke of Newcastle?<sup>19</sup>

Chesterfield, Pulteney's erstwhile fellow patriot, describes Bath in his *Characters* as a witty and intelligent man dominated by "jarring passions," including avarice and ambition, which clouded his judgment and led to his political downfall.<sup>20</sup>

The most unsavory representation of Pulteney, however, arises from the episode surrounding his written attack on John, Lord Hervey in a pamphlet of 1731. Hervey, who had once been Pulteney's friend, remained loyal to Walpole despite Pulteney's urging for Hervey to join the opposition. In his *Memoirs*, Hervey's characterization of Pulteney closely resembles that of Chesterfield:

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<sup>19</sup> Horace Walpole, *Memoirs of George II*, ed. John Brooke, 3 vols. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 1: 80.

<sup>20</sup> Philip Stanhope, *The Letter of Philip Dormer Stanhope, Earl of Chesterfield; including Numerous Letters Now First Published from the Original Manuscripts*, ed. Philip Henry Stanhope, Lord Mahon, 5 vols. (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1892), 2: 470-73.

He was changeable in his wishes, vehement in the pursuit of them, and dissatisfied in the possession. He had strong passions; was seldom sincere but when they ruled him; cool and unsteady in his friendships, warm and immoveable in his hate. . . .<sup>21</sup>

Hervey became a leading court writer in the press war between the opposition and Walpole's administration. Hervey and William Yonge, a Walpole supporter in Commons, co-authored an anonymous pamphlet, *Sedition and Defamation Display'd* in 1731 to defend the ministry's arrest and prosecution of the *Craftsman*'s printer, Richard Francklin. The dedication, written by Hervey, derided the characters of both Bolingbroke and Pulteney. Hervey portrayed Pulteney as a man ruled by his passions and driven by his jealousy of Walpole.

Hervey's indictments infuriated Pulteney, who mistakenly believed that Hervey alone wrote the entire pamphlet. Pulteney promptly responded with his own anonymous pamphlet, *A Proper Reply to a Late Scurrilous Libel: Intituled, Sedition and Defamation Display'd*. The pamphlet was a venomous personal attack on Hervey which, even today, seems shocking in its maliciousness. In it, Pulteney questioned Hervey's sexuality by caricaturing his effeminacy and his well-known relationships with other men. Using explicit metaphorical language, Pulteney accused Hervey of sodomy, then a capital crime. Hervey challenged Pulteney to a duel as a way of defending his honor, and Pulteney accepted. Both men were slightly injured in the duel, but Hervey's reputation fared rather better than Pulteney's in the aftermath of the affair. Hervey, a slight and effeminate man, appeared courageous for his physical challenge of Pulteney, a larger and more robust individual. Pulteney, on the other hand, seemed to justify the criticism of his detractors by the impetuosity and viciousness of his written attack on Hervey. Pulteney tried to suppress his pamphlet once he discovered Hervey was not the sole author of *Sedition and Defamation Display'd*, but the damage was already done.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Hervey quoted in Dickinson, introduction to *A Proper Reply*, xiii.

<sup>22</sup> Dickinson, introduction to *A Proper Reply*, vii – viii; xvi-xx.



## Political Friendship

By the time Elizabeth Montagu established a friendship with Bath in 1760, the scandals of his political career were long past. Still, they were not forgotten. As I point out in Chapter 3, Montagu felt it necessary for Bath to explain his past deeds to her husband, that Edward might better understand Bath's position. It is clear from Montagu's allusions to the scandal that Edward felt contempt for Pulteney's actions in 1742.<sup>23</sup> A letter from early 1744, though incomplete, suggests that Montagu similarly was outraged by Pulteney's actions.<sup>24</sup> As I will demonstrate, Bath remained sensitive about his political reputation and overreacted when Elizabeth encouraged him to enter the political fray in 1763. Their exchange at this time is a mark of Montagu's desire to influence political debate by way of her friendship with Bath, and it also underscores the fact that intense interest in politics formed an important component of their relationship.

It is not clear how the friendship between Montagu and Bath began. In November 1758 Montagu remarked to her husband that the death of Lady Bath rendered Lord Bath openly joyful.<sup>25</sup> Her information probably came from her sister Sarah Scott, who lived at this time in the town of Bath as a friend and companion to Lady Barbara Montagu, daughter of the earl of Halifax. Scott's friendship with Lady Bab (as she was known) acquainted her with Lord Bath, but it does not appear that Montagu's friendship with Lord Bath arose from this connection.<sup>26</sup> Climenson observes that Montagu must have known Lord Bath in a "superficial society way"

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<sup>23</sup> MO 2411, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, 1760; MO 2444, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, July 12, 1761.

<sup>24</sup> MO2160, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, January 2, 1743/44.

<sup>25</sup> MO 2352, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, November 16, 1758.

<sup>26</sup> Eve Tavor Bannett, "The Bluestocking Sisters: Women's Patronage, Millennium Hall, and 'The Visible Providence of a Country,'" *Eighteenth-Century Life* 30/1 (2005): 26, 50-51, n. 12.

since she attended a large assembly given by Lady Bath in 1753.<sup>27</sup>

The extant correspondence between Montagu and Bath begins in March 1760, just before the publication of *Dialogues of the Dead*. Messenger Monsey, a society physician known for his wit and buffoonery, seem to have played a part in the development of the friendship. Starting about 1757, Montagu carried on a correspondence with Monsey full of banter and joking references to their pretend love affair. Letters between Montagu and Bath from December 1760 pick up this theme of pretend passion, with Monsey as part of their supposed love triangle.<sup>28</sup> Montagu obviously enjoyed the repartee with Bath, and she was surely charmed by his wit. Even Bath's detractors recognized his cleverness and winning social graces.

The letters between Montagu and Bath contain a mixture of subject matter common to eighteenth-century correspondence: references to mutual acquaintances, descriptions of travel and daily activities, and the inevitable discourses about personal health. Montagu and Bath shared literary opinions, but to a much lesser degree than Montagu and Lyttelton. Bath showered Montagu with extravagant praise for her letter-writing style as well the superiority of her conversation, taste, and knowledge.<sup>29</sup> Montagu frequently voiced gratitude for Bath's friendship and her unworthiness for his condescension. Although partially dictated by convention, her declarations of appreciation reveal genuine attachment to Bath. She instructed him to "Consider me, as I consider myself, as your sincere, faithfull (and if you allow me so familiar a term) as your most Affectionate friend."<sup>30</sup> Montagu regarded Bath as an intimate confidante. Thanking Bath for refusing Monsey access to her letters, she confessed, "I write &

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<sup>27</sup> Emily Climenson, *Elizabeth Montagu: The Queen of the Bluestockings. Her Correspondence from 1720-1700*, 2 vols. (London: John Murray, 1906), 2: 29, 189.

<sup>28</sup> Mathew Montagu, ed., *The Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu, with some of the Letters of her Correspondents*, 4 vols. (London: Printed for T. Cadell, 1809. Reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1974), 4: 331-37, 339-45.

<sup>29</sup> MO 4231, William Pulteney, Lord Bath to Elizabeth Montagu, March 1761 and Houghton bMS Hyde 7 (1), William Pulteney, Lord Bath to Elizabeth Montagu, May 9, 1763 are two of many examples of Bath's style of complimenting Montagu.

<sup>30</sup> Houghton bMs 1365 (144), Elizabeth Montagu to William Pulteney, Lord Bath, August 8, 1762.

speak to you my most unreserved thoughts on every thing and every person, & if he was indulged in possessing himself of my letters in so violent a manner, his indiscretion might be very mischievous.”<sup>31</sup> Although the letter record provides considerable scope for analysis of the emotional content of the Montagu/Bath relationship, my remarks will be limited to their exchanges regarding politics and public life.

As I suggest in Chapter 3, Bath’s closeness to the royal family and frequent attendance at court doubtlessly contributed to Montagu’s desire to attend court drawing rooms. The court of George III and the turmoil of ministerial and parliamentary affairs became a focus for discussion between Montagu and Bath. As I point out in Chapters 3 and 4, Montagu became disenchanted with Pitt after 1760 and transferred her political allegiance to George III and John Stuart, third earl of Bute. George III and Bute consciously strove to portray the new reign as departure from factional politics with the establishment of virtuous non-party government, a central tenet of country Whig ideology.<sup>32</sup> The king, tutored in country Whig ideals by Bute, represented himself as moral and virtuous ruler who would lead his nation by example.<sup>33</sup> George III and Bute considered the new king to be taking up the patriot mantle of his father, Prince Frederick.<sup>34</sup>

George III’s reformist stance, with its underlying premise of “trickle-down” virtue, appealed to Montagu. Indeed, the court’s ideological position is consistent with the country Whig ideals put forth by Montagu and Lyttelton in *Dialogues of the Dead*. In letters to Bath,

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<sup>31</sup> MO 4551, Elizabeth Montagu to William Pulteney, Lord Bath, October 31, 1762. In this letter, Montagu called Monsey a “blab,” and asserted that his indiscretion “almost amounts to madness.”

<sup>32</sup> John Brewer, *Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 47-48; 53.

<sup>33</sup> John Brooke, *King George III* (London: Constable & Company, 1972), 55-58. Brooke denies that Bute used Bolingbroke’s *Idea of a Patriot King* as a teaching text, but the ideas of Bute and George III regarding the necessity of a virtuous monarch seem very close to Bolingbroke’s notions. According to Brooke, Horace Walpole was responsible for a rumor that later grew into “a legend that King George III was educated by disciples of Bolingbroke in ‘arbitrary’ principles of government,” 37.

<sup>34</sup> Bob Harris, *Politics and the Nation: Britain in the Mid-Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 99-101.

Montagu gave full expression to her support of the king and Bute as well as the political and moral principles she believed they represented. Montagu's ideas about the relationship between a virtuous monarch and a healthy polity were highly conventional and drawn entirely from the discourse of country patriotism. Montagu believed George III to be the true engine of national reform, an honest patriot ruler who would root out corruption and revive traditional public virtue. She vehemently denounced popular and press criticism of the king's favorite, Lord Bute. Eighteenth-century opposition writers regularly blamed ministers for corruption and foolish policies, but upheld the fiction that the king could do no wrong. Montagu understood well that criticism of Bute was essentially an attack on the political efficacy of George III since the two were so closely associated.<sup>35</sup>

Early in George III's reign, press complaints about Bute were mostly limited to fringe publications that focused on Bute's supposed sexual affair with Princess Augusta, George III's mother. When Pitt resigned in October 1761 and Bute's domination of the ministry became apparent to all, the onslaught of print literature hostile to Bute prompted a vigorous press war between the opposition and the ministry and court. John Wilkes's publication the *North Briton* joined the *Monitor* in skewering Bute, while ministry-sponsored periodicals, Tobias Smollett's *Briton* and Arthur Murphy's *Auditor* defended Bute and attempted to smear his opponents. Pamphlets augmented the printed fray, and excerpts from publications representing both sides appeared in the daily newspapers.<sup>36</sup>

Montagu was contemptuous of the press attacks on the ministry partially because she

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<sup>35</sup> George Nobbe, *The North Briton: A Study in Political Propaganda* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1939; Reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1966), 205.

<sup>36</sup> John Brewer, "The Misfortunes of Lord Bute: A Case-Study in Eighteenth-Century Political Argument and Public Opinion," *The Historical Journal*, 16/1 (March 1973): 11-12; Karl Schweizer, "Lord Bute and the Press: the Origins of the Press War of 1762," in *Lord Bute: Essays in Re-interpretation*, ed. Karl Schweizer (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1988), 89-90.

believed they undermined the natural social order. In September 1762 she reported to Lyttelton:

Every species of abuse comes forth in print or pamphlet, and all the garetter scribblers are treating the character of great persons with a Scurrility nothing but Shameless vice could Utter. I do not wonder that wretches sunk in infamy and poverty should be guilty of these Outrages, but I am surprized their works should be bought up in the manner they are. . . . I wish that the luster which our amiable young King must appear in, might create a proper respect in the minds of his beholders. But all mankind are philosophers, and pride themselves in having a contempt for rank and order, and imagine they shew themselves wise in ridiculing whatever gives distinction and dignity to Kings and other Magistrates, not considering, that the chains of opinion are less galling than those of law, and the great beast of the Multitude must be bound by something.<sup>37</sup>

Montagu maintained her position that denigration of the ministry (and the king, by implication) by the press was dangerous it tended to diminish the natural authority of the ruling elite. In 1763, she shared with Bath her concern that the office of the king had been reduced by the “scurrility & abuse” hurled about by the “scribblers.”<sup>38</sup>

Montagu also worried that the frequent change of ministerial offices between 1761 and 1763 undermined government authority. She argued that the constant reshuffling of ministers denoted a “giddy administration” beset with “Vertigo.”<sup>39</sup> She voiced her concern to Lyttelton: “I wish we had a settled Administration for these frequent changes make government contemptible.”<sup>40</sup> As Montagu wrote to Bath, an unstable ministry signaled weakness and invited civil disobedience: “The safest road to power is opinion, respect teaches obedience. Inconsistent actions, variable council, shifting systems give an air of levity very unfavorable to those who should wish to establish authority by opinion rather than force.”<sup>41</sup>

To Bath, she was explicit about her support for Bute. Her remarks demonstrate acute understanding of the political situation: press disparagement of Bute implied a critique of the

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<sup>37</sup> MO 1420, Elizabeth Montagu to George, Lord Lyttelton, September 23, 1762.

<sup>38</sup> MO 4594, Elizabeth Montagu to William Pulteney, Lord Bath, October 28, 1763.

<sup>39</sup> MO 4546, Elizabeth Montagu to William Pulteney, Lord Bath, October 17, 1762.

<sup>40</sup> MO 1421, Elizabeth Montagu to George, Lord Lyttelton, October 21, 1762.

<sup>41</sup> MO 4583, Elizabeth Montagu to William Pulteney, Lord Bath, May 2 [?] 1763.

king, and in addition, it gave George III pain since he considered Bute to be his “dearest friend” and most valuable advisor.<sup>42</sup> She explained her position:

I heartily wish all things may settle at last to our amiable young Monarch’s control & happiness, private & publick. There were strange whispers in the very drawing room, and a gentleman whose family are very well provided for in the court, had the assurance to ask me, almost in the presence, if I did not care for the famous Monitor. I treated the question and the questioner with all the contempt they deserved. Your Lordship knows I am a well-wisher to my Lord B— [Bute] & I hope his enemies will not be able to hurt him.<sup>43</sup>

In June 1762, during a period when the king was ill, Montagu treated press hostility toward Bute and the government as injurious to the nation. She complained that “the vile race of scribblers abusing his [the king’s] government,” had maligned the ministry without considering the potential seriousness of the situation if the king were to die. “The Monitor and the North Britton grow more scurrilous and impudent than ever,” Montagu informed Bath. She believed that certain factions stood behind the opposition publications with the aim swaying public opinion against Bute.<sup>44</sup>

In the same letter of June 1762, Montagu referred to Newcastle in code, noting that “000 is grown very popular.”<sup>45</sup> In May 1762, at the same time that Bute took over the ministry as sole leader after Newcastle resigned, Montagu and Bath began using a code for certain ministers and members of the court. The explicit nature of their comments combined with the knowledge that letters delivered by post were commonly subject to tampering must have prompted Montagu and

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<sup>42</sup> James Lee McKelvey, *George III and Lord Bute: The Leicester House Years* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1973), 82. McKelvey provides a good summary of George III’s neurotic attachment to Bute prior to 1760 (82-102).

<sup>43</sup> MO 4521, Elizabeth Montagu to William Pulteney, Lord Bath, May 29, 1762.

<sup>44</sup> MO 4526, Elizabeth Montagu to William Pulteney, Lord Bath, June 15, 1762.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* Internal evidence from the letters shows that “000” stood for Newcastle; see MO 4255, William Pulteney, Lord Bath to Elizabeth Montagu, May 26, 1762; MO 4521, Elizabeth Montagu to William Pulteney, Lord Bath, May 29, 1762. The May 26<sup>th</sup> letter is the first instance in the extant letter collection in which a code appears. Reginald Blunt provides a key to the code, which he claims was written by Bath, but it is not clear where Blunt came across this. Blunt’s code doesn’t seem to correspond with most of the ciphers used in the extant manuscript letters. See Blunt, *Mrs. Montagu: “Queen of the Blues.” Her Letters and Friendships from 1762 to 1800*, 2 vols. (London: Constable and Company, 1923), 1: 19-20

Bath to devise a code to mask their remarks from unsympathetic eyes. People routinely left out letters of names in correspondence as a way to protect themselves lest a letter go astray or end up in the wrong hands, but the implementation of a code seems remarkable, especially as neither Montagu or Bath were directly involved in the political struggles of the time. The code doesn't appear to have been used consistently or for very long a period, but it does indicate that Montagu and Bath considered (at least for a while) their political commentary and gossip might be potentially awkward if made public.

Both Montagu and Bath articulated anxiety about the possibility that faction might overwhelm the king and his ministers, and in so doing, destroy the British nation. The idea that faction was detrimental to good government was common currency in mid-eighteenth century political discourse.<sup>46</sup> Montagu believed that faction was one of the greatest threats to Britain's stability and strength, especially in the midst of war. As she conveyed to Bath, Montagu viewed the king's independence as the foundation of British political health and honor: "I should grieve to see my Sovereign subdued by a Faction; I should equally lament to see him rule by one; both are derogatory to his glory, destructive to his peace, & unsafe to his interests."<sup>47</sup> She worried that if the king died unexpectedly, the resulting factional competition for power would throw Britain into turmoil. During the king's illness in June 1762, Montagu kept Bath informed of George III's recovery, and expressed her fears of disaster should the king's health deteriorate:

I hope the guardian angel of Great Brittain will watch over him. It is dreadful to think the state we should be in, if any harm happen'd to him. The reins of government would be loosen'd and faction would be quite Unmuzzled, and what would become of us!<sup>48</sup>

Bath concurred with Montagu's assessment: "what a calamitous stroke at this time, would his Death have been! If her Majesty had been brought to bed of a Prince, a Minority of twenty one

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<sup>46</sup> Brewer, *Party Ideology*, 44.

<sup>47</sup> MO 4590, Elizabeth Montagu to William Pulteney, Lord Bath, October 19, 1763.

<sup>48</sup> MO 4524 Elizabeth Montagu to William Pulteney, Lord Bath, June 9, 1762.

years, in a nation like this, full, of faction, overwhelm'd with Debt, & no peace concluded, must have ended in ruin."<sup>49</sup> Over a year later, Montagu continued to fear the results of factional discord: "The Demons of cabal & faction have taken possession of us, & God knows what will be the consequence if any publick calamity should make the smother'd discontents break forth."<sup>50</sup>

Montagu believed that desire for personal gain drove faction and violated the public good. In a letter to Bath from 1763, she railed at the motives and the short-sightedness of politicians engaged in factional discord:

I detest those who sacrifice their King & their Country at this critical juncture to their private views, & certainly the opposition at this time is most mischievous in regard to our affairs, it blasts the Olive that should have crown'd Britannias brows when she laid down her laurels at the feet of fair Peace at the same time, if the present ministry can only maintain itself by shifts & expedients, & obtain present quiet at the expence of future prosperity, tho they are more courtly in their manners they are not more loyal in their conduct; for what is a year or two to a King whose conduct is to be registerd for ages to read, & long posterity to judge of?<sup>51</sup>

Montagu considered party loyalty to be disrespectful to the king. In Montagu's opinion, fidelity to the monarch should supersede any factional attachment. In October 1762, she explained her position to Lyttelton:

I own I was never more disgusted with any Administration before. I love our Sovereign Lord the King, and if I could not serve him, I would not let him serve me, if I was a great Man. He should not for my sake pick up the dirty rags of every party to make a Motly ill sorted government. Where is that Ancient Spirit of loyalty which once inspired our English Nobility, when they borrowed the Robes of Royalty to front the dangers in battle and turn them from the person of their King?<sup>52</sup>

Montagu's views adhere to country ideals which were essentially backward-looking in their

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<sup>49</sup> MO 4260, William Pulteney, Lord Bath to Elizabeth Montagu, June 15, 1762.

<sup>50</sup> MO 4590, Elizabeth Montagu to William Pulteney, Lord Bath, October 19, 1763.

<sup>51</sup> MO 4590, Elizabeth Montagu to William Pulteney, Lord Bath, October 19, 1763.

<sup>52</sup> MO 1423, Elizabeth Montagu to George, Lord Lyttelton, October 29, 1762.



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Cognizant that she was operating in the vague political area between family interest and personal agenda, Montagu felt it necessary to justify her interest in public affairs to Lord Bath. She insisted that her concern derived not from personal zeal for politics, but from tender feminine affection for friends and family. Shortly after Britain prevailed in taking Havana, Montagu wrote to Bath that her real pleasure in the event came from supposing that Bath's son, Lord Pulteney, would soon be reunited with his father:

I should think myself endued with the greatest degree of publick spirit, if I could attribute my joy on our taking the Havannah, to the love of my Country's interest and glory; but by the vivacity of my Sentiments and the joy I feel in those inmost recesses of my heart, which the interests of a friend alone can reach.<sup>54</sup>

In one letter written from Newcastle, Montagu thanked Bath for sending her the "present history of the World," while airily feigning indifference by proclaiming that her real interest was not in the news itself, but in the hand that wrote it. She then proceeded to respond to his political news at great length.<sup>55</sup> At the end of this letter, she explicitly explained the source of her attention to public affairs:

I have a great deal of female patriotism, it is not in me an original affection as it is in you, your Lordship loves England for its own sake, I love it better for yours; . . . Women rise from the love of their friends & family to that of their Country, for our minds are not form'd for great & extensive objects & if I was ask'd whether I had a true & sincere love for mine, I should answer yes, for who has a more true & sincere respect, esteem, & affection for My Lord Bath.<sup>56</sup>

In this passage, Montagu claimed her friendship with Bath as the foundation for her patriotic feelings and her desire for Britain to prosper. In this way, Montagu represented her engagement in political exchange as nothing more than feminine sensibility. As Ingrid Tague points out,

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<sup>53</sup> Isaac Kramnick, introduction to *Bolingbroke and his Circle: The Politics of Nostalgia in the Age of Walpole* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), 4-7.

<sup>54</sup> MO 4242, Elizabeth Montagu to William Pulteney, Lord Bath, October 3, 1762.

<sup>55</sup> MO 4590, Elizabeth Montagu to William Pulteney, Lord Bath, October 19, 1763.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*

despite the widespread involvement of aristocratic women in public affairs, “such activities continued to exist in uneasy tension with ideals of femininity that demanded women’s total exclusion from the public realm.”<sup>57</sup> Montagu’s statement serves as a renouncement of political activity based on her own independent thinking which might be construed as immodest “meddling” or unfeminine.<sup>58</sup>

Lyttelton hoped for political gain from Montagu’s friendship with Bath, and he endeavored to work through Montagu to gain access to Bath’s political influence at court. Lyttelton affected contentment with his forced political retirement, but it is clear from the correspondence that he wished to return to active public life, and he carefully monitored the political scene to discern possible opportunities for doing so. When news reached Lyttelton in early October 1761 that Pitt was about to resign from office due to disagreements over Spanish war policy, he quickly wrote to Montagu to ask her Bath’s opinion of the ministerial kerfuffle and what the fallout might be. Lyttelton’s desire for position in a new administration inspired his interest: “Mr James Grenville will, probably, lay down with his Brothers, which will make a vacancy at the Cofferer’s Office, one of the few that I might take, if there was an inclination to bring me into employment.”<sup>59</sup> Lyttelton hoped that his request for Bath’s advice would reach Montagu before Bath departed from the Montagus’ country home at Sandleford, but the letter arrived too late. Lyttelton was morose that Montagu had not been able to speak with Bath about his situation: “It might at least have given an occasion of mentioning me to the King: And I have reason to desire that as he has heard my Enemies speak of me, he may also hear my Friends.”<sup>60</sup> Lyttelton then credited Montagu with helping to reconcile him to political realities: “But perhaps

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<sup>57</sup> Ingrid Tague, *Women of Quality: Accepting and Contesting Ideals of Femininity in England, 1690-1760* (Suffolk, UK: The Boydell Press, 2002), 213-14.

<sup>58</sup> Chalus, *Elite Women*, 29.

<sup>59</sup> MO 1295, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, October 5, 1761.

<sup>60</sup> MO 1296, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, October 8 & 10, 1761.

I must content myself, for the rest of my life, with those retired pleasures, which you praise me for being able to relish as well as the more turbulent joys of ambition.”<sup>61</sup>

Still, Lyttelton hoped that Bath might assist him at court by representing him as “a Man of Some Consequence.”<sup>62</sup> He informed Montagu that although he wasn’t likely to find employment in the present circumstances, he wished to lay a foundation for the possibility of a future appointment.<sup>63</sup> Montagu did not mention Lyttelton’s aspirations until sometime in 1762 when Bath was to have a private meeting with the king. Montagu praised Bath for aiding the king and advised what Bath should tell him. The extravagance of her expression clearly illustrates the intensity of her engagement with the political scene and her desire for influence:

The genius of great Brittain has always inspired your eloquence, raise your voice to day as Demosthenes did when he spoke of by the sea shore, Not that you have soaring waves or roaring multitudes to harangue; but the whispers of Courtiers leave a hissing in the ears of K—s that makes them more deaf to truth than the most boisterous and blustering noises could do. Give a hint that honest men are the only safe Councillers, & reputable men the only powerfull ministers.<sup>64</sup>

A few sentences later she added casually, “Pray take some opportunity to mention our friend Lord L——n as a man of abilities and character.”<sup>65</sup>

Although dating problems obscure the exact sequence of some of the letters, it appears that Montagu felt she had overstepped the bounds of female propriety as well as social rank when she asked Bath to speak to the king on Lyttelton’s behalf in addition to suggesting a message for the king. Her anxious deference to Bath in a subsequent letter implies that he had taken offence at her request. She tried to lighten the apologetic tone of her letter with humor, but her distress is apparent:

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> MO 1297, George, Lord Lyttelton to Elizabeth Montagu, October 14, 1761.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> MO 4560, Elizabeth Montagu to William Pulteney, Lord Bath, c. 1762.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

I was pain'd at the apprehension of your imagining I could so abuse your goodness, & misunderstand myself, as to pretend to dictate to your Lordship in any thing. I know the unfortunate have few friends, & to speak the truth on their behalf is one of the duties of humanity, but if the advocate pretends to direct the judge he ought to be sent to Prison (unless he is a Member of Parliament). . . I am sure you was very good that you would even speak to me when you apprehended I had been so impertinent & saucy. . . . Alas! all your kindness to me has only made me sensible how little I deserve so great honour & wish I could be as worthy as I am gratefull.<sup>66</sup>

In November 1762, Lyttelton again asked Montagu to intercede with Bath, this time in a matter regarding Charles Yorke, the second son of Lord Hardwicke. As a way to earn political interest with Hardwicke, who was estranged from Bute, Lyttelton was attempting to obtain for Hardwicke's son the position of Lord Chancellor through discussions with Bute and Charles Wyndham, second earl of Egremont.<sup>67</sup> Lyttelton evidently hoped Bath might say some words to the King in Yorke's favor. Montagu mentioned the matter to Bath, "casually in discourse," but evidently did not approach the subject directly as she wrote that Bath's inability to act was only her opinion, not Bath's stated position.<sup>68</sup> Montagu's response is worth quoting at length because it demonstrates both a desire to assist Lyttelton and pride in her connection with Bath, but also a wary ambivalence about the propriety of female intervention in political matters outside her family interest:

With all possible regards to Mr Yorke I mentioned to my friend [Lord Bath] what had been reported, & he assured me he had never seen ye ——since ye birthday, nor had written to him, or had any commerce or communication Nor would he ever speak on certain subjects to —— without concerting with Mr Yorke what should be said. He spoke with the greatest regard of the family, & the deepest regret of the great loss they and the publick are likely to sustain. He sees the difficulty of forming any system on account of the great numbers of the persons who expect to be consider'd. I think if a reasonable scheme could be form'd, it would not want his assistance. . . . I assure you I found the greatest regard in his mind for Mr Yorke, & a most warm & affectionate zeal for yr Lordship. I deplore the untowardness of the times when publick spirit, wisdom, experience, authority, rank, & fortune all united are not a match for the unhappy state of

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<sup>66</sup> MO 4569, Elizabeth Montagu to William Pulteney, Lord Bath, c. 1762.

<sup>67</sup> Rose Mary Davis, *The Good Lord Lyttelton: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Politics and Culture* (Bethlehem, PA: Times Publishing Company, 1939), 275.

<sup>68</sup> MO 1424, Elizabeth Montagu to George, Lord Lyttelton, November, 1762.

things. My friend has all these but I do not know what he can do. Solomon says an old wise man wd have saved ye City, but he was poor & no one listen'd to his voice; we live in worse days, & the voice of the rich wise man would not be attended to amidst the barking of so many various factions. . . . I heartily wish to see every thing happily establish'd, & it would give me the greatest pleasure to have my friend the instrument, but as my capacity is limited to very narrow bounds, I will own to yr Lordship, the peace, & quiet, & happiness of my friend is my first consideration. If I had been born at Rome or in Sparta I might have had more publick spirit, tho I much doubt it, for I think Men were made to take care of the World, we are only to mitigate their cares & soften and sweeten the social & domestick life. Pray burn this letter, for I wd not have it dropt . . .<sup>69</sup>

In light of Bath's prior reaction to Montagu's political maneuvering at Lyttelton's behest, some of Montagu's skittishness may have been due to fear offending Bath.

Despite Montagu's stated ambivalence about female political action, several episodes drawn from the letters demonstrate that she wished for the opportunity to influence political society. In a letter to Bath from 1763, she imagined at length how she might act as tutor to the Prince of Wales and declared that she would "banish Machiavels politicks," and teach the prince that "Honesty is the wisdom of the heart."<sup>70</sup> Montagu also composed a letter to the *Chronicle* in 1762 regarding the foolishness of erecting public parks in honor of private societies.<sup>71</sup> There is no evidence that Montagu intended to publish the piece, and it does not appear in either the *St. James Chronicle* or the *London Chronicle* in the years surrounding its composition. Still, it shows that Montagu envisioned herself acting in the public political sphere. The most remarkable example of Montagu's desire to influence public debate, however, comes from a letter from Montagu to Bath dated October 30, 1763.<sup>72</sup> In it, Montagu enjoined Bath to enter the fierce debate surrounding the peace settlement on the side of the king and his administration.

Montagu's sense of duty to the national good seems to have overcome her fear of Bath's

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> MO 4589, Elizabeth Montagu to William Pulteney, Lord Bath, October 16, 1763.

<sup>71</sup> MO 3000, Elizabeth Montagu, "To the Chronicle," 1762. This letter is reproduced in full in Elizabeth Eger, ed. *Elizabeth Montagu*, vol. 1 of *Bluestocking Feminism: Writings of the Bluestocking Circle, 1738-85*, ed Gary Kelly (London: Pickering and Chatto, 1999), 167-68.

<sup>72</sup> MO 4595 is reproduced in full in appendix C.

displeasure in this instance, because she directly and repeatedly exhorted Bath to take action as an elder statesman. Montagu aimed her florid language at inspiring Bath to enter the parliamentary skirmish:

If there was in this Kingdom a man blest with the powers of divine eloquence, an eloquence ever consecrated to the service of his Country, if this man had all the dignity [of] fortune & title, all the weight and authority wisdom & experience can give, all the superiority acquired by victory & triumph is contention in a Senate; if with all these solid & splendid advantages he rose up in the H—of L—for such a purpose, how would the spirit of faction shrink before him! With what attention would the souls of his audience hang on his lips. When the eye saw him it would bless him, & the ear would give witness unto him. How would all that is honest in his hearers be call'd forth, encouraged, & enlightend. How would all that is base or seditious creep, tremble, sculk, & blush at its unmask'd deformity!<sup>73</sup>

Throughout the letter, Montagu praised Bath for the genius of his eloquence and the power of his virtue. Her flattering remarks are consistent with the admiration and deference she accorded him in other letters, but Bath took offence at Montagu's entreaty and scolded her for engaging in false flattery.

Bath's angry response to Montagu's letter highlights Bath's sensitivity about his past political embarrassments followed by his marginalization in public affairs. Bath's stinging reply does not address the core issue of Montagu's request that he take a public stand. He avoided this topic altogether and instead lashed out at her for sending him a letter filled with "fulsome flattery," which he interpreted as "a secret sort of abuse."<sup>74</sup> Bath's outburst of anger and his impetuous response to Montagu is reminiscent of his reaction to the pamphlet he supposed written by Hervey many years before. Bath was likely ashamed at his reduced role in political life, and Montagu surely touched a nerve when she exhorted him to "Speak, write, redress," on

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<sup>73</sup> MO 4595, Elizabeth Montagu to William Pulteney, Lord Bath, October 30, 1763.

<sup>74</sup> MO 4446, William Pulteney, Lord Bath to Elizabeth Montagu, November 2 & 3, 1763. The lines quoted here come from the portion of the letter dated November 3.

behalf of the king's administration.<sup>75</sup> A letter from Bath to Montagu written a few days later supports this supposition. Bath must have regretted his quick temper and angry reply to Montagu, and he made an attempt to explain his position:

I do not like any thing we are doing, or likely to do [in parliament]; I shall take no publick part, blaming in my heart, the violence, & virulence of such an opposition to our good K—and not hoping for much good from the Abilities of our present set of Ministers. I own it is shameful to appear in such times as these, an inglorious Neuter, but at my time of day, & where there is so little probability of doing any good, ones may be excused for not meddling & for ought I know, the Wisest way, may be to sit still, and see what Time and Events may produce.<sup>76</sup>

Montagu did not directly answer Bath's angry missive of November 3, as Bath had instructed her to remain silent about the matter. She did, however, make it clear that he had hurt her with his accusations. In the two letters following her receipt of Bath's letter, Montagu wrote to Bath of her low spirits and lethargy.<sup>77</sup> She also informed Bath that their friend Monsey was inexplicably angry with her, and her words seem loaded with double meaning. While asking Bath to assist her in putting Monsey at ease, she conveyed the delicacy of her own feelings:

The Sensitivity of my own heart teaches me to be fearfull of wounding the tenderness of Anothers. I should be the most inexcusable of any person in the World if I was not, who suffer so exquisitely myself from any appearance of Unkindness from those I love.<sup>78</sup>

Significantly, she did not completely back down from her stance in the face of Bath's anger. In a letter of November 18, Montagu soothed Bath by agreeing with his decision to remain politically inert, and also expressed her belief in his political honor. At the same time, she maintained her position that Bath had a duty to speak publicly should the occasion warrant it:

You give me also a true representation of the state of things at present in a few words; & I believe we are in that unfortunate situation in which human wisdom cannot help us. On

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<sup>75</sup> MO 4595, Elizabeth Montagu to William Pulteney, Lord Bath, October 30, 1763.

<sup>76</sup> MO 4450, William Pulteney, Lord Bath to Elizabeth Montagu, November 11 & 12, 1763.

<sup>77</sup> MO 4597, Elizabeth Montagu to William Pulteney, Lord Bath, November 9, 1763; MO 4598, Elizabeth Montagu to William Pulteney, Lord Bath, November 11, 1763. Montagu had not yet received MO 4446 (November 2 & 3) when she composed MO 4596, Elizabeth Montagu to William Pulteney, Lord Bath, November 4, 1763.

<sup>78</sup> MO 4597, Elizabeth Montagu to William Pulteney, Lord Bath, November 9, 1763.

such occasions the wisest statesmen do the most prudent physicians practice, they watch symptoms & wait till in their language the distemper explains itself. The law which punish'd Citizens who were restless during civil strife always seem'd to me to be made in the rashness of patriotick zeal, there is a period in which it is necessary to take a part, but ye commencement of contention is not always, nay perhaps is rarely, the moment. If such a time should come, I am sure your Lordship will neither overlook it, nor neglect it."<sup>79</sup>

These examples of Montagu's engagement with the political world through her male friends give counter balance to the prevailing scholarly view of Montagu as aloof from politics. Scholarly attention to Montagu's female friendships supports this perception of Montagu because in correspondence with close female friends, she downplayed her concern for public affairs. In a letter to Elizabeth Carter, for instance, Montagu declared that "we are neither of us fond of nice political discussions, so I will content myself with saying in general that our young monarch gives us the fairest hopes of a happy reign."<sup>80</sup> In the same letter, Montagu stated her full support of Lord Bute and opined that the king's regard for Bute demonstrated George's good judgment and sobriety: "it does great honor to a young monarch to shew more affection to the man who certainly has formed his mind and manners, (a thing to be done only by grave advice and serious lessons) than to idle and gay companions his own age."<sup>81</sup> This favorable view of George III and Bute is consistent with her statements to Bath and Lyttelton, and it serves as a reminder that Montagu possessed a strong interest in public affairs, however much she might try to disguise it. In another instance, she wrote Carter a few lines about Pitt's disapproval of the peace negotiations in November 1762, but pronounced herself indifferent to the proceedings. She wrote of her desire to be with Carter "in some sweet valley in Italy enjoying bright sunshine and retirements, for fogs and wickedness make this country very unpleasant."<sup>82</sup> Montagu's

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<sup>79</sup> Houghton bMS Eng 1365 (144), Elizabeth Montagu to William Pulteney, Lord Bath, November 18, 1763.

<sup>80</sup> Montagu, *Letters*, 4: 359.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 359-60.

<sup>82</sup> MO 3088, Elizabeth Montagu to Elizabeth Carter, November 26, 1762.



assertion of political indifference to this matter is disingenuous considering that her letters to her husband and to Bath from the same time are full of details of the peace and her opinions about the political turmoil surrounding the negotiations.<sup>83</sup> In a wider context, Montagu's frequent treatment of the political world in letters to her male friends, Lyttelton and Bath, as well as to her husband, contradict Montagu's assertions of disinterest in public affairs.

Montagu's friendships with Bath and Lyttelton allowed Montagu the opportunity for political involvement outside her husband's parliamentary concerns. It is clear from the correspondence discussed in this chapter that political exchange was an important component of the bond between Montagu and Bath. Furthermore, it is clear that Lyttelton recognized this facet of their relationship and attempted to use it for his own ends. Montagu gave full expression to her political opinions in letters to Bath, and it is in these letters that her ideas regarding the reforming power of monarchy under George III are most explicitly stated. Through her friendship with Bath, Montagu saw potential for political influence. Her letters show both a desire to influence public affairs as well as ambivalence about the propriety of a woman acting outside her family's interest. Although Montagu behaved warily when asked by Lyttelton to petition Bath on his behalf, she acted with confidence when she entreated Bath to speak out on behalf of the king. Montagu's strong belief in the promotion of public good surely accounts for her self-assurance in this instance. In answer to Bath's justifications for avoiding conflict, Montagu conceded to Bath the importance of properly timed political action, but she did not ultimately excuse him from it. This discussion of Montagu's friendships with Lyttelton and Bath provides just a few examples from the wealth of material in the correspondence. Although it is by no means exhaustive, it does demonstrate Montagu's engagement with the political realm

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<sup>83</sup> MO 2463, Elizabeth Montagu to Edward Montagu, November 19, 1762; MO 2465, Elizabeth Montagu to William Pulteney, Lord Bath, November 26, 1762.

through the vehicle of her male friendships.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSION

Elizabeth Montagu's relationship with her husband Edward and her friendships with Lord Lyttelton and Lord Bath supplied her with important outlets for intellectual and political expression. Scholarly work on Montagu's friendships with other intellectual women has demonstrated how Montagu drew on the support of female friends in her literary ambitions, but at the same time, it has obscured her equally important male relationships. Feminist concerns and structural models that stress gender inequalities accounts for the emphasis on female/female relationships, but they have created the impression that Montagu's intellectual activities were carried on primarily with other women or were more meaningful when shared with other women. Moreover, emphasis on Montagu's correspondence with female friends diminishes politics as an area of intellectual exchange because Montagu downplayed her interest in public affairs when writing to women in her literary circle that were outside her family.

One of the difficulties facing scholars is the sheer enormity of the Montagu letter collection at the Huntington Library, which contains 6, 923 pieces. Additional smaller caches of Montagu letters reside in libraries in both the United States and Britain. Elizabeth Montagu was one of the great letter writers of the eighteenth century; the volume of her correspondence rivals that of Horace Walpole. Unlike Walpole's letters, however, most of Montagu's letters are unpublished, and her letters have been of interest mainly to specialists in women's literary history. Considering the size of the collection, Montagu's letters have received limited scrutiny and much work remains.

While scholars have shown how Montagu's friendships with other intellectual women provided a support network for her literary ambitions, little inquiry has been made into the structure of her relationships with men. This study is a first attempt to assess the structure of three of Montagu's important male relationships and to establish the way she negotiated them to forward her intellectual interests, which included politics. It is clear that contemporary gender conventions limited the boundaries of Montagu's intellectual and political concerns and that she felt the need to position her interests and activities in ways that did not appear transgressive in order to follow her own inclinations. At the same time, Montagu obtained significant encouragement and approbation from her husband and from George, Lord Lyttelton and William Pulteney, earl of Bath, regarding her intelligence, judgment, and talent for writing. This can only have added to Montagu's confidence about her own capabilities, and must have served to supplement the support she received from female friends in her literary endeavors.

Of Montagu's male relationships, her marriage has been of most interest to scholars because it elevated Montagu's her material prospects and gave her the necessary resources to pursue literary interests, but it has generally been given only cursory attention or has been portrayed in a negative light. In fact, while it is true that Elizabeth and Edward did not found their marriage on romantic love, they formed a domestic partnership based on the contemporary values of friendship, esteem, and respect. In letters to Edward, Elizabeth used the language associated with these values to signal her regard and affection for her husband. Edward reciprocated these sentiments. When it became clear to Elizabeth and Edward that their tastes in literature and society differed, Edward (perhaps somewhat grudgingly) allowed Elizabeth to develop an independent circle of friends and intellectual interests during visits to Tunbridge Wells. Their separations during Elizabeth's sojourns at Tunbridge came about due to Edward's

dislike of the place and Elizabeth's need for social and intellectual stimulation, but they explained these partings as a necessary consequence of Elizabeth's poor health and Edward's pressing business affairs. Edward undeniably admired his wife, and he facilitated her interest in intellectual matters by encouraging her wide reading. He expressed admiration for Elizabeth's writing talent and he relied on her practical judgment in business affairs.

Elizabeth's marriage to Edward also opened up opportunities to collaborate with him in the political realm. Elizabeth not only discussed political events with Edward, she became directly involved in Edward's political career as an MP as his confidante, advisor, and as the circumstances demanded it, his proxy at social events aimed at his constituency. Elizabeth's growing intellectual engagement with political affairs can be determined by the zest with which she collected and interpreted political news for Edward. Even as Edward became detached from parliamentary concerns and increasingly absorbed in the business of their coal mines, Elizabeth actively engaged in procuring accurate political news and sent detailed reports and commentary to Edward during his visits to their Northumberland collieries. Like Edward, Elizabeth consistently espoused country Whig values, but took her convictions in a different direction after the accession of George III in 1760. Elizabeth strongly identified with the political ideals broadcast by the new king and his advisor, the earl of Bute. While Edward remained aloof from the new regime, Elizabeth desired to attend court, a dramatic departure from Edward's anti-court attitude. She worked to bring this about without appearing to deviate from Edward's independent stance.

Montagu's friendships with Lyttelton and Bath offered her additional opportunities to engage with political affairs. There is no evidence of any romantic attachment between Montagu and Lyttelton during the years of their friendship, but a poem written by Montagu that predates it

suggests that Montagu may have been in love with Lyttelton from afar prior to her marriage. The meaning of the poem cannot be appraised with any certainty, but it does dispel the notion that Montagu was devoid of deep emotional feeling. Collaborating with Lyttelton on *Dialogues of the Dead* gave Montagu an opportunity for public expression of the country Whig values she shared with Lyttelton. Her emphasis on the public ramifications of private morality reflects a core philosophical principle of Whig thought. In one respect, Montagu's contribution to Lyttelton's work is evidence of Lyttelton's mentoring of Montagu as a serious writer, but the correspondence shows a more complex relationship. While it is clear that Montagu drew encouragement from Lyttelton for her literary endeavors, Lyttelton found Montagu's friendship beneficial in a variety of ways. He relied on Montagu for support for his writing projects and for advice in his role as a father. In addition, Lyttelton attempted to leverage his friendship with Montagu in order to gain political assistance from Bath.

In Bath, Montagu found a source for fresh and reliable political news as well as a like-minded confidante for her political opinions. It is in her letters to Bath that Montagu's ideas regarding the reforming power of monarchy under George III are most explicitly stated. Montagu also discussed political affairs with Lyttelton, but to a lesser degree than with Bath. Lyttelton's recognition of the political component of Montagu's friendship with Bath is illustrated by his attempted to use it to forward his own stalled career. Montagu's management of Lyttelton's requests for assistance and her ambivalence about direct female action in political matters outside the family structure highlight the significant obstacles posed by gender ideals that eighteenth-century women encountered. That Montagu felt conflicted by gender ideals and patriotic ideals is further illustrated in her correspondence with Bath.

There is vast opportunity for more investigation of Montagu's male friendships, even within the narrow confines of the three relationships considered here. The Montagu marriage, which ended with Edward's death in 1775, needs assessment to cover its entire thirty-three year span. Similarly, the friendship between Montagu and Lyttelton would be further illuminated by analysis of their correspondence from 1764-1773, the year of Lyttelton's death. The intellectual content of Montagu's literary discussions with Lyttelton pertaining to Sophocles and Shakespeare, as well as their impact on her later *Essay*, has not been fully treated. Nor has the emotional attachment between Montagu and Bath been explored. In addition, Elizabeth maintained friendships and correspondences with other men over her lifetime, such as Gilbert West, and these warrant investigation. By putting aside models that emphasize gender animosity, and investigating the structure and scope of male/female friendship, scholars can better evaluate how limitations imposed by gender might be managed or circumvented. In addition, investigation of these relationships will reduce distortions to our picture of social relations between the sexes and will aid in constructing more accurate portrayals of women's lives. As Lois Schwoerer writes in the introduction to her biography of Lady Rachel Russell, "Treating Rachel and [her husband] William together helps us to understand each of them better."<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lois Schwoerer, *Lady Rachel Russell: "One of the Best of Women"* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1988), xviii.

APPENDIX A

“TO THE MEMORY OF A MOST UNHAPPY, YET LIVING LADY: A MONODY;  
ADDRESS TO Y<sup>E</sup> HON. G. LYTTLETON ESQ<sup>R</sup>.”

THIS ITEM IS REPRODUCED IN FULL BY PERMISSION OF THE HUNTINGTON  
LIBRARY, SAN MARINO, CALIFORNIA



To the Memory of a most unhappy, yet living Lady: a Monody; addrest to y<sup>e</sup> Hon. G. Lyttleton  
Esq<sup>r</sup><sup>581</sup>

I.

O! Thou in whom such various Gifts conspire,  
The Statesman's Caution, & y<sup>e</sup> Poet's Fire;  
The X<sup>n</sup>'s firmness, & y<sup>e</sup> Lover's Heart;  
The Shepherd's Plainness, & a Tully's Art:--  
Around whose Temples in mixt Lustre shine  
The Beams of Wit, & those w<sup>ch</sup> proved thy Paul divine:  
Incline thy Ear,  
Thyself shalt soon confess  
That in my Verse such varied Woes appear,  
Comparison can make Affliction less.

II.

Full fifteen Moons have seen my Sorrows rise,  
Nor with y<sup>f</sup> Wanes decay;  
The Tides of Grief stil deluged thro' my Eyes,  
Tho' boisterous Seas y<sup>e</sup> lessning Moon obey.  
Nor yet I spoke--  
At length aroused by your affecting Strain,  
My Sorrow new Enforcements gain,  
And thro' y<sup>e</sup> Chains of Silence all impetuous broke.  
Thus in some Recevoir y<sup>e</sup> Stream  
Slowly rises to it's Height:  
And delays it's downward Flight,  
While it trembles to y<sup>e</sup> Gleam.  
But if some Gale it's convex Surface sweep,  
Precipitate it falls, it falls adown y<sup>e</sup> Steep.

Or as Story tells  
In y<sup>e</sup> Recess of unfrequented Cells  
Where y<sup>e</sup> perpetual Lamps are plac't  
To dispense a feeble Light  
Machines with human Form sublimely grac't  
Surprise th' Inquirer's Sight.  
For soon as human Steps advance y<sup>f</sup> Way;  
As loth it's Treasures to betray  
The Statue strikes y<sup>e</sup> Lamp, & all is lost in Night.

So I y<sup>e</sup> Sound of thy Poetic Feet attend,  
Nor longer watch y<sup>e</sup> glimring<sup>582</sup> Lamp of Life

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<sup>581</sup> MO 6913.

<sup>582</sup> In the original document, Montagu denoted a double "m" by drawing a line over a single "m." These have been written as a double "m" in this transcription.

Resolved my treasured Grief at once to spend,  
And bid tired Nature cease her useless strife.

III.

Amid yon' melancholy Shade  
Where Night her Thickest Veil has spread,  
Fit Mansion of y<sup>e</sup> silent Dead,  
Behold y<sup>e</sup> loved Maria laid.  
A trembling Lamp it's feeble Light supplies;  
Now see it upwards bound:  
Now, See! it sinks, it dies;  
Again behold it rise  
And shed an Horror on y<sup>e</sup> Scene around.  
Those Eyes which lately did dispense  
The Gleanings of superior Sense;  
Those Eyes which lately did inspire  
Chast Joy & elegant Desire;  
Are now distorted with an horrid Glaze.  
Those Lips where late Persuasion wont to stray  
And Wit to play  
Which oft' with Smiles deceived y<sup>e</sup> Summer's Day,  
Nor Beauty now, nor Wit, nor Eloquence do share.  
That Breast  
Which ever heaved a Sigh  
For Virtue when distrest;  
Which ever swelled with gen'rous Joy  
When suffering Merit was redrest;  
Can now no more those pleasing Transports boast,  
All, all it's temp'rate Warmth is lost.  
Those Hands w<sup>ch</sup> open still were found,  
To spread y<sup>e</sup> Streams of Happiness around:  
Now closed Express  
Anguish in Excess.

IV.

Say, Muse, O say; is loved Maria dead?  
Say, is her Spirit to its kindred Angels fled?  
"Ah! no--(y<sup>e</sup> Muse replies.)  
"But mad Imagination triumphs here,  
"While Reason from her Empire flies,  
"And Phrenzy's motley Trains appear.  
"Death, cruel in Delay, alone can save  
"Maria in y<sup>e</sup> Shelter of y<sup>e</sup> Grave."

Declare, O Muse, what Wretch supremely curst,  
Of all Mankind do eminently worst,

Has y<sup>s</sup> fair Work of Heaven undone,  
And drove imperial Reason from her Throne.  
    “If Fame speak true,  
“The Wounds (replies y<sup>e</sup> Muse) were given by You.  
“For Love of You y<sup>e</sup> mourned Maria raves;  
“And Death alone your hapless Captive saves.”

V.

Support me guardian Spirits of y<sup>e</sup> Air,  
    With your attendant Care,  
While I to Heaven’s Almighty Power appeal.  
He can alone my Innocence reveal:  
And how by bright Maria’s Beauties fired  
    Which outward Lustre did dispense,  
I traced internal Excellence:  
    How I her Soul admired  
    And proudly dared to emulate  
Her Virtues which adorned y<sup>s</sup> low, imperfect State.  
    But long e’er This, full many a rolling Year,  
    Upon y<sup>e</sup> Volume of my Heart  
    In Characters which cause eternal Smart  
Did Tyrant Eleonora’s Name appear----

VI.

Daughter of Memory, recall y<sup>e</sup> Time,  
When last I saw Maria’s Grief  
Incapable of all Relief-----  
Why were my Accents taught to flow  
In Strains which wak’t Maria’s Woe?  
Why strove I to adorn y<sup>e</sup> Preacher’s Part  
    With Forces stolen from Art?  
Action & Eloquence were y<sup>n</sup> a Crime.  
    When I approacht y<sup>e</sup> lovely Maid,  
The sacred Viands trembling in my Hand:  
    In what Disorder was She laid!  
Reason no more retained supreme Comand.  
    What Comfort c<sup>d</sup> I offer of my Store?  
The holy Cup held Life----but Death was given before.

VII.

To her distempered Soul  
Nor H----y’s much-loved Shades Delight afford,  
Nor all y<sup>e</sup> grateful Tribes her Bounty fed,  
Nor, once her best Repast, y<sup>e</sup> holy Board.  
    Before her Eyes sad Visions roll,  
More sad y<sup>n</sup> in Romance were ever read.

As when y<sup>e</sup> Sun has hid his Head,  
     The Twilight long remains  
     And chears y<sup>e</sup> Plains;  
 So here, tho' mad Imagination reigns,  
     Fair Virtue's Semblance is not fled.  
 Sometimes, Maria seems employed to give  
     To y<sup>e</sup> Wretched her Relief:  
     Sometimes an horrid Smile  
     Wou'd beguile  
     Her excessive Grief.  
 Oft' my last Action does her Thought command;  
 Ful oft' y<sup>e</sup> sacred Cup seems trembling in my Hand.  
     Disordered, furious tho' She lie's  
     Some Gleams of Gentleness adorn her Eyes.  
     Thus when some Angel from above  
 Comissioned, does afflict a guilty Land,  
     At Heaven's supreme Command:  
 Tho' Majesty severe contract his Brow,  
 And his Eyes dart y<sup>f</sup> keep Regards below,  
 Yet thro' y<sup>e</sup> Cloud of Wrath does flow  
 The Radiance of celestial Love.

### VIII.

O Lyttelton, confess  
 Thy Griefs y<sup>n</sup> mine do prove  
     Incomparably less:--  
 I'm ruined by excess  
     Of Tears & Love.  
     Thus on Greenland's wintry Coast  
     The hopeless Traveller is lost:  
 While in some Parts with painful Heats He glows,  
 The rest are all benumbed with deep-incumbent Snows.  
     O! c<sup>d</sup> y<sup>s</sup> honest Verse impart  
     The Vastness of it's Author's Woe;  
 O! c<sup>d</sup> y<sup>se</sup> copious Tears w<sup>ch</sup> ceaseless flow,  
 Express y<sup>e</sup> Pangs of my distracted Heart:  
 You, Lyttleton, sh<sup>d</sup> almost cease to grieve,  
 Another's greater Woes sh<sup>d</sup> your's relieve.

### IX

Altho' a Brother (tender Name!  
 Our Persons, Tempers, Tastes y<sup>e</sup> same,)  
 With every Virtue, every Grace  
 Supremely blest, has lately run his Race,  
 And hastened his immortal Crown to claim:  
 No more for Him I raise y<sup>e</sup> Mourner's Voice,

For rather, in his Triumph I rejoice.  
Freed from y<sup>e</sup> Bonds of dull Mortality,  
    He now can see  
With Angel's scorn my Eleonora's Cruelty,  
    And more y<sup>n</sup> Female Pride.  
    No more a Tear shall swell his Eye,  
    No more his Breast shal heave a Sigh,  
For mine & poor Maria's Woes, w<sup>ch</sup> did his Heart divide  
    As y<sup>e</sup> fair waxen Tapers give  
    More powerful Fragrance when they lose y<sup>f</sup> Flame.  
    So tho' y<sup>e</sup> much-loved Youth has ceas't to live,  
    He more expands y<sup>e</sup> Odor of his Fame.  
    But poor Maria, like y<sup>e</sup> Taper tost  
    Amid y<sup>e</sup> Tempest of y<sup>e</sup> thickest Night,  
        Scarcely preserves y<sup>e</sup> trembling Light,  
Her Substance wasted, & her Lustre lost.

Jan. 1<sup>st</sup> 1747

This is my only Copy

APPENDIX B

TO THE MEMORY OF A LADY LATELY DECEASED, A MONODY

THIS ITEM IS REPRODUCED IN FULL BY PERMISSION ON DEGOLYER LIBRARY,  
SOUTHERN METHODIST UNIVERSITY, DALLAS, TEXAS

To the Memory of a Lady lately Deceased, A Monody.<sup>583</sup>

By Mr. Lyttelton

Dublin: Printed by George Faulkner in Essex-street, M, DCC, XLVII (1747)

I.

At length escap'd from ev'ry Human Eye,  
From ev'ry Duty, ev'ry Care,  
That in my mournful Thoughts might claim a Share,  
Or force my Tears their flowing Stream to dry,  
Beneath the Gloom of this embow'ring Shade  
This lone Retreat, for tender Sorrow made  
I now may give my burden'd Heart Relief  
And pour forth all my Stores of Grief,  
Of Grief surpassing ev'ry other Woe  
Far as the purest Bliss, the happiest Love  
Can on th' ennobled Mind bestow,  
Exceeds the vulgar Joys that move  
Our gross Desires, inelegant, and low.

II.

Ye tufted Groves, ye gently falling Rills,  
Ye high o'ershadowing Hills,  
Ye Lawns gay-smiling with eternal Green,  
Oft' have You my LUCY seen!  
But never shall you now behold her more:  
Nor will she now with fond Delight  
And Taste refin'd your Rural Charms explore.  
Clos'd are those beauteous Eyes in endless Night,  
Those beauteous Eyes where beaming us'd to shine  
Reason's pure Light, and Virtue's Spark Divine.

III.

Oft' would the Dryads of these Woods rejoice  
To hear her Heav'nly Voice,  
For her despising, when she deign'd to sing,  
The sweetest Songsters of the Spring:  
The Woodlark and the Linnet pleas'd no more;  
The Nightingale was mute,  
And ev'ry Shepherds Flute  
Was cast in silent Scorn away  
While all attended to her sweeter Lay.  
Ye Larks and Linnets now resume your Song,

---

<sup>583</sup> Transcription from the 1747 Dublin edition pamphlet at DeGolyer Library, Southern Methodist University, Dallas, Texas, DA814.5.C66 1747.

And thou, melodious Philomel  
Again thy plaintive Story tell,  
For Death has stopt that tuneful Tongue,  
Whose Music could alone your warbling Notes excel.

IV.

In vain I look around  
O'er all the well-known Ground  
My LUCY's wonted Footsteps to descry;  
Where oft' we us'd to walk,  
Where oft' in tender Talk  
We saw the Summer Sun go down the Sky;  
Nor by yon' Fountain's Side  
Nor where its Waters glide  
Along the Valley, can she now be found:  
In all the wide-stretch'd Prospect's ample Bound  
No more my mournful Eye  
Can ought of her espy,  
But the sad sacred Earth where her dear Relics lie.

V.

Shades of *H-----y*, where is now your Boast?  
Your bright Inhabitant is lost.  
You she preferr'd to all the gay Resorts  
Where female Vanity might wish to shine,  
The Pomp of Cities, and the Pride of Courts.  
Her modest Beauties shunn'd the public Eye:  
To your sequester'd Dales  
And flow'r-embroider'd Vales  
From an admiring World she chose to fly;  
With Nature there retir'd, and Nature's GOD,  
The silent Paths of Wisdom trod,  
And banish'd ev'ry Passion from her Breast,  
But those the Gentlest, and the Best,  
Whose Holy Flames with Energy Divine  
The virtuous Heart enliven and improve,  
The Conjugal, and the Maternal Love.

VI.

Sweet Babes, who, like the little playful Fawns,  
Were wont to trip along these verdant Lawns  
By your delighted Mother's Side,  
Who now your Infant Steps shall guide?  
Ah! where is now the Hand whose tender Care  
To ev'ry Virtue would have form'd your Youth,  
And strew'd with Flow'rs the thorny Ways of



Truth?

O Loss beyond Repair!  
O wretched Father, left alone  
To weep Their dire Misfortune, and Thy own!  
How shall thy weaken'd Mind, oppress'd with Woe,  
And drooping o'er thy LUCY's Grave,  
Perform the Duties that you doubly owe,  
Now she alas! is gone,  
From Folly, and from Vice, their helpless Age  
to save?

VII.

Where were ye, Muses, when relentless Fate  
From these fond Arms your fair Disciple tore,  
From these fond Arms that vainly strove  
With hapless ineffectual Love  
To guard her Bosom from the mortal Blow?  
Could not your fav'ring Pow'r, *Aonian* Maids,  
Could not, alas! Your Power prolong her Date,  
For whom so oft' in these inspiring Shades,  
Or under *Campden's* Moss-clad Mountains Hoar,  
You open'd all your sacred Store,  
Whate'er your ancient Sages taught,  
Your ancient Bards sublimely thought,  
And bade her raptur'd Breast with all your Spirit  
glow?

VII.

Nor then did *Pindus*, or *Castalia's* Plain,  
Or *Aganippe's* Fount your Steps detain,  
Nor in the *Thespian* Vallies did you play;  
Nor then on \* *Mincio's* Bank  
Beset with Osiers dank,  
Nor where § *Clitumnus* rolls his gentle Stream,  
Nor where through hanging Woods  
Steep || *Anio* pours his Floods,  
Nor yet where † *Meles*, or ‡ *Ilissus* stray.  
Ill does it now beseem  
That of your Guardian Care bereft  
To dire Disease and Death your Darling should be  
left.

IX.

Now what avails it that in early Bloom,  
When light, fantastic Toys  
Are all her Sex's Joys,

With you she search'd the Wit of *Greece* and *Rome*,  
 And all that in her later Days  
 To emulate her ancient Praise  
*Italia's* happy Genius could produce;  
 Or what the *Gallic* Fire  
 Bright-sparkling could inspire,  
 By all the Graces temper'd and refin'd;  
 Or what in *Britain's* Isle,  
 Most favour'd with your Smile,  
 The Pow'rs of Reason and of Fancy join'd  
 To full Perfection have conspir'd to raise?  
 Ah what is now the Use  
 Of all these Treasures that enrich'd her Mind,  
 To blank Oblivion's Gloom for ever now consign'd!

X.

At least, ye Nine, her spotless Name  
 'Tis Yours from Death to save,  
 And in the Temple of immortal Fame  
 With golden Characters her Worth engrave.  
 Come then, ye Virgin sisters come,  
 And strew with choicest Flow'rs her hallow'd  
 Tomb.  
 But foremost Thou, in sable Vestment clad,  
 With Accents sweet and sad,  
 Thou, plaintive Muse, whom o'er his *Laura's*  
 Urn  
 Unhappy *Petrarch* call'd to mourn,  
 O come, and to this fairer *Laura* pay  
 A more impassion'd Tear, a more pathetic Lay.

XI.

Tell how each Beauty of her Mind and Face  
 Was brighten'd by some sweet, peculiar Grace!  
 How eloquent in ev'ry Look  
 Thro' her expressive Eyes her Soul distinctly spoke!  
 Tell how her Manners by the World refin'd  
 Left all the Taint of modish Vice behind,  
 And made each Charm of the polish'd Courts agree  
 With candid Truth's Simplicity,  
 And uncorrupted Innocence!  
 Tell how to more than manly Sense  
 She join'd the soft'ning Influence  
 Of more than Female Tenderness!  
 How in the thoughtless Days of Wealth and Joy  
 Which oft' the Care of other's Good destroy,

Her kindly-melting Heart,  
To ev'ry Want, and ev'ry Woe,  
To Guilt itself when in distress  
The Balm of Pity would impart  
And all Relief that Bounty could bestow!  
Ev'n for the Kid or Lamb that pour'd its Life  
Beneath the bloody Knife,  
Her gentlest Tears would fall,  
As She the common Mother were of All.

XII.

Nor only Good, and Kind,  
But Strong and Elevated was her Mind:  
A Spirit that with noble Pride  
Could look with superior down  
On Fortune's Smile, or Frown;  
That could without Regret or Pain  
To Virtue's lowest Duty sacrifice  
Or Int'rest's or Ambition's highest Prize;  
That injur'd or offended never try'd  
Its Dignity by Vengeance to maintain  
But by magnanimous Distain.  
A Wit, that temperately bright,  
With inoffensive Light  
All pleasing shone, nor ever past  
The decent Bounds that Wisdom's sober Hand,  
And sweet Benevolence's mild Command,  
And bashful Modesty, before it cast.  
A Prudence undeceiving, undeceiv'd,  
That nor too little, nor too much believ'd,  
That scorn'd unjust Suspicion's coward Fear  
And without Weakness knew to be sincere.  
Such LUCY was, when in her fairest Days  
Amidst th' Acclaim of Universal Praise  
In Life's and Glory's freshest Bloom  
Death came remorseless on, and sunk her to the  
Tomb.

XIII.

So where the silent Streams of *Liris* glide,  
In the soft Bosom of *Campania's* Vale,  
When now the Wintry Tempests all are fled,  
And genial Summer breathes its Western Gale,  
The verdant Orange lifts its beauteous Head:  
From ev'ry Branch the balmy Flow'rets rise,  
On ev'ry Bough the golden Fruits are seen,

With Odours sweet it fills the smiling Skies,  
The Wood-Nymphs tend it, and th' *Idalian* Queen:  
But in the Midst of all its blooming Pride  
A sudden Blast from *Appenninus* blows  
    Cold with perpetual Snows:  
The tender, blighted Plant shrinks up its Leaves,  
    and Dies.

XIV.

Arise, O *Petrarch*, from th' *Elysian* Bowers  
    With never-fading Myrtles twin'd,  
    And fragrant with Ambrosial Flowers,  
Where to thy *Laura* thou again art join'd;  
Arise, and hither bring the Silver Lyre  
    Tun'd by thy skilful Hand  
To the soft Notes of elegant Desire,  
    With which o'er many a Land  
Was spread the Fame of thy disastrous Love:  
    To me resign the vocal Shell,  
    And teach my Sorrows to relate  
    Their melancholy Tale so well  
    As may ev'n Things inanimate  
Rough Mountain Oaks, and desert Rocks, to  
    Pity move.

XV.

What were, alas! Thy Woes compar'd to Mine?  
To Thee thy Mistress in the blissful Band  
    Of *Hymen* never gave her Hand:  
The Joys of wedded Love were never thine.  
    In thy Domestick Care  
    She never bore a Share,  
    Nor with endearing Art  
    Would heal thy wounded Heart  
Of ev'ry secret Grief that fester'd there:  
Nor did her fond Affection on the Bed  
Of Sickness watch thee, and thy languid Head  
Whole Nights on her unweary'd Arm sustain  
    And charm away the Sense of Pain:  
    Nor did she crown your Mutual Flame  
With Pledges dear, and with a Father's tender  
    Name.

XVI.

O Best of Wives! O dearer far to me  
    Than when thy Virgin Charms

Were yielded to my Arms,  
How can my Soul endure the Loss of Thee?  
How in the World, to me a Desert grown,  
Abandon'd, and alone,  
Without my sweet Companion can I live?  
Without thy lovely Smile,  
The dear Reward of ev'ry virtuous Toil,  
What Pleasures now can pall'd Ambition give?  
Ev'n in the delightful Sense of well earn'd Praise,  
Unshar'd by Thee, no more my lifeless Thoughts  
could raise.

XVII.

For my distracted Mind  
What Succour can I find?  
Or whom for Consolation shall I call?  
Support me, ev'ry Friend,  
Your kind Assistance lend  
To bear the Weight of this oppressive Woe.  
Alas! each Friend of mine  
My dear, departed Love, so much was thine,  
That none has any Comfort to bestow.  
My books, the best Relief  
In ev'ry other Grief,  
Are now with your Idea sadden'd all:  
Each fav'rite Author we together read  
My tortur'd Mem'ry wounds, and speaks of  
LUCY dead.

XVIII.

We were the happiest Pair of Human kind!  
The rolling Year its varying Course perform'd,  
And back return'd again,  
Another, and another smiling came,  
And saw our Happiness unchang'd remain:  
Still in her Golden Chain  
Harmonious Concord did our Wishes bind;  
Our Studies, Pleasures, Tastes the same.  
O fatal, fatal Stroke,  
That all this pleasing Fabric Love had rais'd  
Of rare Felicity,  
On which ev'n wanton Vice with Envy gaz'd  
And ev'ry Scheme of Bliss our Hearts had form'd,  
With soothing Hope, for many a future Day,  
In one sad Moment broke!  
Yet, O my Soul, thy rising Murmurs stay,

Nor dare th' All-wise Disposer to arraign,  
Or against his supreme Decree  
With impious Grief complain.  
That all thy full-blown Joys at once should fade  
Was his most righteous Will, and be that Will  
obey'd.

XIX.

Would thy fond Love his Grace to her controul,  
And in these low Abodes of Sin and Pain  
Her pure exalted Soul  
Unjustly for thy partial Good detain?  
No--- rather strive thy groveling Mind to raise  
Up to that unclouded Blaze,  
That heav'nly Radiance of eternal Light,  
In which enthron'd she now with Pity sees  
How frail, how insecure, how slight  
Is ev'ry mortal Bliss,  
Ev'n Love itself, if rising by Degrees  
Beyond the Bounds of this imperfect State,  
Whose fleeting Joys so soon must end,  
It does not to its sov'reign Good ascend.  
Rise then, my Soul, with Hope elate,  
And seek those Regions of serene Delight,  
Whose peaceful Path, and ever open Gate,  
No Feet but those of harden'd Guilt shall miss.  
There Death himself thy LUCY shall restore,  
There yield up all his Pow'r ne'er to divide you  
more.

The *Mincio* runs by *Mantua*, the Birth-place of *Virgil*. § The *Clitumnus* is a River of *Umbria*, The Residence of *Propertius*. || The *Anio* runs through *Tibur* or *Tivoli*, where *Horace* had a Villa.  
† The *Meles* is a River of *Ionia*, from whence *Homer*, is supposed to be born on its Banks, is called *Melesigenes*. ‡ The *Ilissus* is a River at *Athens*.

*FINIS*

APPENDIX C

ELIZABETH MONTAGU TO WILLIAM PULTENEY, LORD BATH, OCTOBER 30, 1763

THIS ITEM IS REPRODUCED IN FULL BY PERMISSION OF THE HUNTINGTON  
LIBRARY, SAN MARINO, CALIFORNIA

Elizabeth Montagu to William Pulteney, Lord Bath, October 30, 1763 [Newcastle]<sup>584</sup>

My Lord,

In less than an hour after my letter to your Lordship went to the post, Mr Montagu sent me an account from our Porter that there was no longer any hopes left from me of seeing again in this World our most valuable friend. He is gone to eternal happiness and immortal friendships, ours is the loss. I will say no more on this melancholly subject.

I hope your Lordship is come back to Town better for your exercise, & recreated by the beautiful objects the autumnal season presents; & that you had good sport when you went a shooting. I should not be sorry, if you prolonged your stay at Maidenhead bridge a few days, as the weather was fine on thursday, friday, & saturday. I am afraid your Lordship had bad weather the beginning of the week. I have been returning ye visits of my Country Neighbours taking the opportunity of the good weather. I go out with less reluctance when I have not any thing of business to hinder be because, if I stay at home, I have always have company in the mornings. Your Lordship says, you wish some of his M—ys [Majesty's] friends would make an honest defence of his Measures in a speech in Parliament; I wish so too. If there was in this Kingdom a man blest with the powers of divine eloquence, an eloquence ever consecrated to the service of his Country, if this man had all the dignity [of] fortune & title, all the weight and authority wisdom & experience can give, all the superiority acquired by victory & triumph in contention in a Senate; if with all these solid & splendid advantages he rose up in the H—of L—for such a purpose, how would the spirit of faction shrink before him! With what attention would the souls of his audience hang on his lips. When the eye saw him it would bless him, & the ear would give witness unto him. How would all that is honest in his hearers be call'd forth, encouraged, & enlightend. How would all that is base or seditious creep, tremble, sculk, & blush at its unmask'd deformity! And if, après the speech in defence of his M—ys measures, & the most obnoxious might be excused at least from the difficulties & embarrassments of his government from Tribunitian insolence on one hand, & the craft of an old minister on the other, some serious, bold, & free exhortations were publishd, and schemes of reformation proposed; past faults candidly acknowledged, future dangers fairly stated, with what gratitude & admiration would the present age behold, & posterity look back on these Patriotic efforts! Oh that I could throw the papers into a certain window,

Pulteney then sleep'st, awake & see thyself:

Shall Brittain ----- speak, write, redress.

This I would do, not to seduce him into conspiracy but that he might dash conspiracy; not to incite to treason but to prevent rebellion; not to invite him to meetings with men of such purposes that they must hide their faces even from darkness, but to dispose & defeat seditious cabals, I had rather the Duke of Marlboroughs helmet had been made a housewives skillet the morning of the battle of Blenheim, than a certain person should stay at home in his indolent night cap the first day of the business in the H: of L—& if he is there, with such powers in the field, to stand neuter during the important contention would be unpardonable. The triumphs of Appius Claudius's youth were not so glorious to him as his speech in the Senate when he was old & blind. He exhorted his Countrymen to a dangerous war; & war however successful is still attended with many calamities, the trophies of victory are stain'd with blood & tears, & the

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<sup>584</sup> MO 4595.



general Commonwealth as well as its warriors receives many wounds & bears many scars. Far happier is the task of defending a Peace that is just, honorable, and necessary, and to shew you that my Senator is not quite in the pitiable condition of Appius Claudius, I must transcribe part of a letter I received by the last post, from an old & intimate friend of mine, who had the honour of dining at ye Hotel of a great man in Piccadilly. "I never saw such eyes in my life, I had never taken such notice of them till that time, owing to the situation he was in, being placed between the light & me, & I never saw any equal them in vivacity, & what is surprizing, with a luster undiminished by age. So it is with his mind, &c." I leave out what might appear compliment, but I will transcribe what may be exhortation, "Surely it is in his power to be a Father to his Country; if in the danger it is in, he does not exert himself, he will have much to answer for." These remarks on the eyes were made by a man. Your Lordship knows women never look you full in the face, so all I know is, that sideways I have sometimes been struck by a gleam of the lightening which has explained to me what Homer meant by his bold expression of eyes that Flash'd intolerable day. Will the eyes of a Lynx will you yield to the palm of a blind Orator? The eyes are the windows of the mind, & such is the lightening of your eloquence, it is not the false glitter of a rhetoricians tinsel phrases, but the light of genius, which like the light of the sun illuminates & warms. Speak, write, redress.

Postscript.

I am this moment made very happy by your Lordships unexpected goodness, your gracious bounty of a letter from Maidenhead Bridge, I rejoyce in your health & good stomach, & am glad you will stay and persue this healthfull amusement of shooting a few days longer. I am truly rejoyced that M<sup>r</sup> Domvile has made a will, I feard he w<sup>d</sup> not from what I had heard; but thank God he has acquitted himself of this important duty, without which I should have thought something undone that ought to have been done. Mr Butler is not the nephew I meant but it is a nephew still, so I am satisfied. I am glad he remember'd his faithful servant, & has left her in an independent state; a faithful servant is a valuable friend, & when the moment comes that destroys distinctions should be considered as such, & not only their wants but comforts sh<sup>d</sup> be provided for. I shall miss this worthy man terribly when I come to London, but a great uneasiness is taken off my mind by his having closed a worthy life by a worthy act. I am better than well by the delightfull account of your Lordships health. My love to your chaise horse whose distinction I am satisfied of. Pray in your next answer as Brutus does, am I entreated then to speak, &c Mr Chace Prices salmon was a tribute worthy to be offerd to the Lord Lieutenant. I fancy he has read ye new play of le droit du Seigneur, & has a mind to gather the quit rents in your absence. I believe it would be a stewardship much to his taste. It [one and one-half lines crossed out]<sup>585\*</sup> wonder which of our witts is well enough red in the Psalms to borrow a bon mot from them. Among the serious, I have heard the lamentations and denunciations of all the sad & woeful Prophets on the same occasion. Black are the clouds gathering around us, but what sometimes threatens to burst in thunder on ones heads descends in fruitfull showers. I will hope the best, & if my noble friend is the instrument of good to this Country I shall be most happy. May he still shine with undiminish'd luster! I am sure he will do what wisdom & what virtue require, & I shall know what is best by what he determines, so for whatever has ye air of presumption forgive

---

<sup>585</sup> These lines were probably crossed out by Mathew Montagu, who sometimes edited Montagu's letters as he prepared them for publication. Emily Climenson, who also edited the letters for publication, generally made her marks in a different colored ink

me, & believe me with most perfect respect my Lord Your Lordships Most obliged & gratefull  
Hbl Sevt  
Mr M applies patiently & diligently to his affairs but I cannot see any hope of a speedy  
conclusion.

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