

True Relations: piecing together a family divided by war¹

Butt though your beste freinde hath been latlye Sick yett trewlie I beleve hee will hardlye [d]ye untill hee sees you in better condition which is the only thinge hee longes for in this worlde for your sake & your layde freinde heer And then hee cares nott howe soone heee dies for hee is nott verye much in love with this worlde nor hath hee anye greate reson to bee inamorde with itt.²

This letter, addressed to a 'Noble Sir' and signed simply 'Your Moste pationate & Faythfull freinde', is an ardent missive from an exiled father to the son who has returned home. That William Cavendish, marquis (later duke) of Newcastle, cannot admit his identity is indicative of his displaced status during the Interregnum. Newcastle, a prominent royalist, had left England in 1644 after his defeat by parliamentary forces at the battle of Marston Moor, taking his young sons Charles and Henry with him. He settled close to the Stuart court in Paris where he married one of Queen Henrietta Maria's ladies-in-waiting Margaret Lucas, a young woman thirty years his junior. Charles and Henry returned to England where they were reunited with the three sisters that had been left behind, Jane, Elizabeth and Frances. In 1648 William and Margaret moved to Antwerp where they remained until the Restoration. One of the few royalists to be declared a traitor by parliament, William could not return home on pain of death. His correspondence with his sons during this period reveals the desperation of the exiled patriarch, not only attempting to control his offspring and his property from a distance, but also to secure the funds vital to his survival.

A detailed examination of the Cavendish correspondence offers up a wealth of information, not only on seventeenth-century family relationships, but also on the changing structure of an upper-class royalist family during a time of political and religious upheaval. While William's role as paterfamilias was compromised by his exile and his subsequent financial dependence on his children, his daughters gained new levels of independence and his sons of responsibility. This inevitably brought about conflict and dissent between the generations. As Ralph Houlbrooke has demonstrated, for early-modern parents 'individual security and authority were often felt to depend on the continued control of resources'; to lose control of those resources placed one in a dangerously weak position.

There was an old and deep-rooted belief that it was foolish for the old to put themselves into the power of their children, ... Daniel Rogers ... urged parents not to trust their children:

¹ I am grateful to my two anonymous readers and Jan Broadway for their helpful remarks about this article.

² Nottingham University Manuscripts and Special Collections (hereafter Nottingham), Pw1.78.

Love must descend not ascend: its not naturall (saith *Paul*) for children to provide for parents, but for parents to provide for them, therefore invert not providence ... be sure to hold stroake sufficient in your hand, for the securing of love and duty from your children.³

William's letters reveal a man desperately attempting to prove to his children that, despite all appearances to the contrary, providence has not yet been inverted. Meanwhile, loving and affectionate bonds are evident between the siblings, although these are again complicated by the power dynamics of primogeniture and the fact that the eldest brother now stood in as head of the family.⁴

The Cavendishes, in particular the female members, were a powerfully literate family. Margaret Cavendish, duchess of Newcastle (1623-73) has become well known for her prolific authorship; publishing between 1653 and 1668 twenty-one works in total, ranging in genre and theme from poetry to orations, natural philosophy to drama. William was unusual in supporting his wife's literary career. He too was a published dramatist and the author of an opulent and extensive manual on horse training, in addition to writing a manuscript book of advice for the future Charles II.⁵ William's daughters also wrote, but did not publish. Before marriage Jane (1622-69) and Elizabeth (c.1627-63) co-authored the play *The Concealed Fancies*, a pastoral masque and a collection of poems bound together in two presentation manuscript volumes.⁶ As wives they wrote nothing more for public consumption, but Elizabeth continued to write private meditations and prayers, often highly personal reflections on the births and deaths of her children.⁷ William's sons Charles (c.1626-59) and Henry (c.1630-91), along with their youngest sister Frances (d.1678), were the exceptions in

³ Ralph, A. Houlbrooke, *The English Family 1450-1700* (London: Longman, 1984), 229; D. Rogers, *Matrimonial Honour* (London, 1642), 92-3 quoted in Houlbrooke, 190.

⁴ The fractured nature of the family relations is reflected in the dispersal of their correspondence. The Cavendish Family Papers were deposited from Welbeck Abbey by the 7th duke of Portland in 1949; a second additional deposit was received in 1968. The entire Portland (Welbeck) Collection was accepted by the state in lieu of estate duty in 1986. On the duke's express commands the papers were divided up between Nottingham University, Portland (Welbeck) Collection, (political and family correspondence) Pw1 and PwV; Nottinghamshire Archives Office (Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire and Northumberland estate papers) and the British Library (Harley family papers), Add. Ms. 70499: Cavendish Papers 1604-1659; Add. Ms. 70500: Cavendish Papers 1661-1695.

⁵ William Cavendish, *Method et Invention Nouvelle de dresser les Chevaux* (Anvers: Jacques van Meurs, MDCLVIII); Bodleian Library, Ms. Clarendon 109.

⁶ There are two manuscript compilations written by the sisters, one at Oxford the other at Yale, both contain the same poems. See Alexandra G. Bennett, "Now let my language speake": The Authorship, Rewriting, and Audience(s) of Jane Cavendish and Elizabeth Brackley', *Early Modern Literary Studies* 11.2 (September, 2005) 3.1-13 [<http://purl.oclc.org/emls/11-2/benncav2.htm>, accessed 30 May 2007]; Marie-Louise Coolahan, 'Presentation volume of Jane Cavendish's poetry' in Jill Seal Millman & Gillian Wright (eds.), *Early Modern Women's Manuscript Poetry* (Manchester; Manchester University Press, 2005), 87-96; Nathan Comfort Starr, 'The Concealed Fancies: A Play by Lady Jane Cavendish and Lady Elizabeth Brakley', *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* Vol. 46 No. 3 (1931), 802-838.

⁷ British Library (hereafter BL), Egerton Ms. 607, 'True Coppies of certaine Loose Papers left by the Right Noble Elizabeth Countesse of Bridgewater Collected and Transcribed together here since Her Death Anno D'm 1663'.

this literary family, confining their writing activity to business and personal letters. Charles was evidently an entertaining correspondent however, writing weekly to his sister Jane Cheyne. In 1656 she informed him:

I am infinitely indeted to you & must bee allways so for your pleasant witty letters, not being able to answer them in the same stile of good humer & fancy, they are the best & onely company that I have in Mr Cheynes absence.⁸

In addition to written communication, important information would have been relayed by word of mouth. Margaret returned to England in 1651, ostensibly to petition parliament for her husband's estates, she remained in London with her brother-in-law, Sir Charles Cavendish until 1653. Servants may also have acted as messengers. However, in 1659 William wrote to Henry telling him not to send the family servant Charles Eagle to Antwerp because of the expense this would incur for both of them, 'letters will do', he insisted.⁹ In fact, William had been forced to make do with letters for some years. Although travel between England and Europe was quite common during this period it is noteworthy that, apart from one visit made by Henry in 1650, none of William's children made the journey to the Newcastles' residence in Antwerp. In c.1654 (the year of Charles' marriage to Elizabeth Rogers) William had pleaded with his eldest son for a visit.

my erneste petition to you & my Ladye – which is I maye have the greate coumphorte & hapines to see you & your Incomperable Lady heer I am confidente the protector will give you leave & itt woulde bee the greateste satisfaction to mee in the worlde to receve thatt coumphorte before I dye & I am confidente neyther off you will repente the jurneye so with my services to your selfe & your sweet & moste Excelente Ladye I rest pationatlye.¹⁰

In what is probably a reply to this letter, Charles explains that, although he and his wife had planned a journey and would have 'performed our resolution had not the passage beene attended with many more dangers than it was to be', they will instead continue to hope that they will see William in England. A rather convenient excuse perhaps; William could of course only return to England in the event of a royalist victory over the Protectorate. Charles is proving his loyalty to the Crown by asserting his belief in this outcome, however unlikely this seemed at the time. Meanwhile, the Nottingham county archives show Charles was kept busy trying to raise revenues through the felling of timber, selling of land and collecting of

⁸ Nottingham, Pw1.86; Pw1.87.

⁹ BL Add. Ms. 70499, fol. 356r. Readings of these letters must also take into account fears of interception by parliamentary agents. One of William's letters was intercepted and published in a parliamentarian newsletter, *Severall Proceedings in Parliament*, 18 -25 September, (London: Robert Ibbotson, 1651), unpaginated, Thomason Tract 120:E.787.

¹⁰ Nottingham, Pw1.79.

rents, while also dealing with extra taxes imposed for delinquency. This was done, in part, to fund his father and the penniless young woman William had married in exile.¹¹

William's displacement as a father is emphasised by the fact that Henry found a more effective and more openly loving father figure in his father-in law, William Pierrepont. Pierrepont was one of Oliver Cromwell's most trusted advisors; he was also a second cousin which may explain why, in 1653, he was willing to marry his daughter Frances to the second son of a sequestered royalist.

After the death of his wife Pierrepont wrote to Henry 'My wife did heartily love you as her owne child'. When, in the same year, Henry and Frances both became ill, Pierrepont wrote again to Henry. 'I most heatily thanke you for your most reall and most affectionat love to my daughter your wife and to mee you manifest the same in all your Achons In truth I doe most sycorly and affectionatly love you'.¹²

Pierrepont was also able to advise and advance Henry politically, something Henry's own father was certainly not in a position to do.

when your owne and your wifes health will permit to goe see my Lord president Lawrence and to present your owne and my humble service to him and to let him know your wifes and your own great sicknes hitherto prevented you therin and to desire him to goe with you to my lord Protector and you then to let my lord Protector know thos causes which hindred yew from sooner waiting upon him. I beseach yew let him know my acknowledgment of my most great obligments to his highness and of my most devoted humble service to him. I know you expect noe rasons for my desires.¹³

Henry clearly followed this advice since Pierrepont wrote again telling him he was:

very glad you have been wⁱth my Lord President and acquainted him wⁱth the reasons why you did not before come to him and sooner desired to have waited upon my Lord Protector ...I hope your name will not be in the Excheq bill for sheriff of Derbyshire and that not being in the bill my lord Protector will not himself put you in I have done what I can herin and shall of further occasion bee.¹⁴

The office of Sheriff, being expensive, time-consuming and often involving unpleasant work, had never been popular. Under Cromwell it ceased even to carry the status it had enjoyed under Charles I. Pierrepont may well have been attempting to keep Henry out of this office

¹¹ There is no record of Margaret's dowry, a relatively modest £2000, ever being paid. At the time of her marriage her mother claimed that sequestration had deprived her of the necessary funds, although she was discharged in 1644 after paying a fine of only £20.

¹² Nottingham, Pw1. Pw1.373, 11 July 1657; Pw1. 376, 10 October 1657.

¹³ Nottingham, Pw1. 377, 14 October 1657.

¹⁴ Nottingham, Pw1. 378.

for financial reasons. He may also have been sensitive to the potential conflict of loyalties (his own brother, the marquis of Dorchester, was a royalist). The role of sheriff would have placed Henry in a difficult position, in service to the Protector and council of state, he would have been expected to assist the very county committees that had sequestered his father's estates. In addition to having to take the Oath of Engagement (something he may already have been obliged to do), he would also have to keep a record of everyone else in his county who did so.¹⁵ As a preserver of Cromwell's peace he would certainly have found himself on the opposite side to his father.

William Cavendish also recognised the value of Pierrepont's role in his son's life. In 1659 he would write to Henry 'bee verve erneste with your Father-In-Lawe to advise & helpe you in itt, [the buying back of family goods] for I knowe hee is both wise & loves you'.¹⁶ Pierrepont's influence extended to Henry's older brother. In April 1656 Henry wrote to Charles telling him that 'Father Pierrepont thanked Whaly for his kindness to Charles and assured him he could not be for a juster business.' Ten days later he wrote again:

My Father Pierrepont and all the rest of your Cosens here presents their humble service to you and my deare sister and I told him how desirous you were to bowle with him at my Lord Clares and he saith he will wayte of you most willingly'.¹⁷

The extended family network seemed to be functioning very well in William's absence.

William's letters to his sons never convey the affectionate love Pierrepont expresses for Henry, being preoccupied instead with family politics or finances. He may have shared Pierrepont's sentiments but was prohibited from writing in such dotting terms as he attempted to evade detection by parliamentary censors. Again this awareness of other, potentially dangerous readers, creates a barrier between father and son. Using the code name John Forrest when writing to Charles, he manages to sign off as 'Your moste reall & Affectionate loving Friende'. He chose a similarly arboreal pseudonym, Robert Deane, in his correspondence with Henry. (Given the fact that William had once been a steward of Sherwood Forest it seems unlikely these names would have given Thurloe's men too much trouble in deciphering). With Henry however, rather than being 'Your Moste pationate & Faythfull freinde' he is simply 'Your moste faythful Servante Ro: Deane' or even just 'Yors Ro: Deane', suggesting his mind is set purely on the business to hand.

Nevertheless, many of William's letters do show a high level of concern about the nature of the family's relationships. William is always anxious that his sons think well of him and of Margaret and that their relationships with their sisters are cordial. While this may be largely

¹⁵ See Jean Mather, 'The Civil War Sheriff: His Person and Office', *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (1981), 242-261.

¹⁶ BL Add. Ms. 70499, fol. 351v.

¹⁷ BL. Add. MS. 70499, fols 341-42.

attributable to the fact that William relied on his children financially, a genuine desire for family harmony is also expressed.

In letter Pw1.78 (undated) William justifies to his eldest son why he had tied up two thirds of his estate for paying off his debts and providing for 'the younger children'. Presumably this was a precaution William had taken at the beginning of the civil wars. If William had died before Charles reached twenty-two, Charles, as his heir, could have been made a ward of Court, laying the whole family vulnerable to all the abuses of that system, where courtiers could buy wardships and cream off all the profits from their ward's estates. As Christopher Durston has written regarding the corrupt use of the Court of Wards, 'on the eve of the Civil War the Crown's ancient feudal right to the custody of the estates of minors remained both a lucrative royal enterprise and one of the most grievous complaints of landed society'.¹⁸ What William could not have foreseen was that the Court of Wards would come to an end under the Long Parliament in 1645. Now his expatriate status made it impossible for him to alter those protective financial arrangements. For Charles, however, who in 1655 was being pursued through Chancery for debts owed since 1643 (rightfully belonging to his father), William's explanation must have been of little comfort.¹⁹ William becomes increasingly distressed, his state of mind reflected in the decreasing legibility of his handwriting (which is of course why printed letters are never as revelatory as their holograph originals) as he urges his son to ignore his detractors.

this was then neyther unkinde or foolishe for you butt with the Greateste care done & kindness to you in the worlde & this off my sole is moste trewe which Mr Butt can justlye a fime & those that goes aboute to make you beleve otherwise are Parasiticall Sicophanticall Rascalls Foolish Knaves for whoe coulde see such calamities afore hande nott after a thinge is don which everye Naturall foole knowes, & can twattle off butt lett nott your good nature bee abusde by such quarter witted Rascalds agaynste your beste freinde ... , take heed of them for theye thatt will so falsleye accuse your Father will deceve you – weare your [beste] freinde in condition you woulde finde his love to you as much as the [care] off his famelye & then you woulde finde your selfe with for Title & Estate equal with anye bodye therfore you maye harteleye praye for his life for your owne sake (& better times & nott sett upp with the woefull Game you have to playe.²⁰

William, the 'best friend' referred to here, writes with frustration at the impotence imposed by exile. The woeful game Charles has to play was presumably the appeasing of parliament

¹⁸ Christopher Durston, *The Family in the English Revolution* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 60.

¹⁹ Nottingham, Pw1.130.

²⁰ Nottingham, Pw1.78.

and the type of denial expressed in his petition for a discharge of delinquency.²¹ The letter goes on to allude to some dissention between siblings, probably a disagreement between Charles and Jane over the payment of her dowry, of which Charles would now be the executor. While most of Elizabeth's substantial dowry had been paid on her marriage to the earl of Bridgewater in 1641; by the 1650's, after the seizure of the family estates, the Cavendish resources were much depleted. At least part of Jane and Frances' portions were still owed at Restoration.²²

Exile and sequestration meant that William could no longer, as was usual among early modern patriarchs, manage the portions of his daughters or the jointures of his son's wives. The only control he had over his finances and his children were through the internalised traditions of obligation and duty, and if he had earned and kept it, through the bonds of love; bonds he must invoke by epistolary means. Certainly at the close of this letter William's involvement appears to stem from predominantly loving, as opposed to financial, concerns. He comes across as nothing more than a concerned parent attempting to reconcile factious children.

For the diference betwixte thatt Gentlewoeman & her Brother I can onlye saye this thatt shee thinkes shee hath reson to take itt a litle unkindlye thatt shee is nott used as kindlye as her sister was havinge the same justice, therefore I desier you will agree as you aughte together kindlye & lovinglye & I knowe shee will doe anye thinge thatt is reson for matter off time to accommodate you & your afayres & I am as confidente you will doe anye thinge that is juste & reasonable for her & I praye agree & bee kind one to another, & then God will bless you.²³

The next letter in this series takes on a very different tone, revealing a more unpleasant paternalism; William will not relinquish his authority without a fight.²⁴ He is writing to Charles about Jane's intended marriage to Charles Cheyne.

For her mariage I writt her two letters as much agaynste itt as posible I Coulede & such argumente as I am shure non can justlye anser them & they weare verye sharpe - & writt further to her that shee had forgotten mee iff she thought eyther Sr Hou: or the Captain coulede or durste move in any thinge off thatt Nature & those litle polises woulde not doe for I was beyonde them – these letters I am shure she never shewde you – I tolde her this Gentleman made love to her portion & all the ill sonetts &

²¹ The 'Discharge of the Delinquency of Ch. Mansfield' claims that Charles and his mother had in 1642 asked William to allow Charles to 'returne back to the Parliament, which was denied, & that he did andeavor by all means to procure his fathers leave to travell beyond the seas which was also denied', Nottingham, Pw1. 644 (1653).

²² Nottingham County Archives, DD.4P 35/18-19.

²³ Nottingham, Pw1.78

²⁴ These letters are undated and their cataloguing numbers do not necessarily reflect the order in which they were written.

Romansicall long discourses was to thatt – Butt when I began to consider with my selfe her yeares & paseges which I woulde willingly forgett & my Condition & beinge heer made mee give my consente to her to chuse whom shee pleased – Butt this woulde nott serve butt I muste give him my consente so I writt sharplye to her agent & tolde her though shee was in love with him I was nott nor woulde never give my consente to a man thatt I knewe nothinge off, eyther off his person parts or estate so it was enough to give her any contente to chuse after this I had a chateringe letter & so shee had free libertye to doe what shee pleased.²⁵

Although this letter does not refer to Jane by name, the reference to her 'yeares & paseges' indicate that it is Jane, not her younger sister Frances who was married in the same year. Moreover Frances was married to an earl and not therefore a man whose 'parts or estate' William would know nothing of. William continues that, from Cheyne's letters, he sees that Cheyne is bound up by 'scholar's rules', in addition to being 'formall travellde'. William generally disapproved of scholars and learning, 'the great studdy & learning for kinges & wise men is not to reade bookes, but to reade men,' he advised Charles II.²⁶ His dismissive tone regarding travel seems somewhat hypocritical since he was a well travelled man himself. Neither was William averse to penning some pretty 'ill sonnets', as can be seen in his copious outpourings to Margaret during their courtship. Cheyne's royalist credentials are not hugely impressive, perhaps something William held against him. Cheyne went abroad in 1643 in order to avoid participation in the Civil War, William insisted his own sons accompanied him into battle.

Jane, who was two years older than her stepmother, was by now in her early thirties. She had spent the previous ten years salvaging what she could of the family estates, funding her father in his exile and petitioning for the pardon of both William and her brothers, not to mention taking charge of the garrison at Welbeck. William acknowledges 'her yeares and paseges' whilst admitting that he would prefer to forget them, a note of resignation bordering on despair creeps in as he writes that penury and exile have forced him to give consent to whoever she chooses. With the next sentence however his indignation is rekindled; Jane it seems would not accept this desultory consent for herself only, but also wanted her father to give his consent to her suitor. Despite her father's anger she gains the liberty to do as she pleases. Perhaps as a reaction to this loss of paternal authority William goes on to assert his power over the household servants and his masculine bond with his son. William's main concern here appears to be the honour and reputation of his family and possibly the potential loss of financial support his daughter's marriage might incur. Cheyne is not a

²⁵ Nottingham, Pw.1. 79. Lucy Worsley suggests that 'Sr Hou:' and 'the *Captain*' were William's 'senior servants in Antwerp, Sir Hubert Cartwright and Captain Mazine', Lucy Worsley, *Cavalier: A Tale of Chivalry, Passion and Great Houses* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), 196.

²⁶ Bodleian, Clarendon Ms. 109, fol. 79r.

wealthy enough match and his gifts are only given in the expectation of winning them all back: 'for his bountie in juells his marriage gives them all to him agen' William writes cynically. It is unusual that, as an unmarried daughter, Jane appears to have been one of the wealthiest members of the family. William at the beginning of this letter tells his son: 'you muste looke into itt [her marriage] since shee hath moneye to give & you have none'. Perhaps this wealth was a result of being her grandmother Lady Ogle's favourite, 'who, to this Lady *IANE* did in her life and at her death give particular Testimonies of an extraordinary Affection'.²⁷ William's brother Sir Charles Cavendish had also, in 1652, leased out several of his manors in order to pay each of his nieces £2000 within three years. (Presumably it was this that enabled Jane and Frances to marry). Jane was, however, still promised a large dowry, certainly larger than the £2000 from her uncle. Large enough indeed for her husband to purchase between 1657 and 1660 (as her dowry came through in instalments) the former royal palace and manor of Chelsea²⁸.

The civil wars had accustomed Jane to a degree of autonomy and responsibility she would not otherwise have experienced. She appears to have assumed that the trusted estate managers and family servants would work on her behalf to reconcile her family to her choice of husband. However, William writes bullishly that she was deceived in this since the 'Captain' will back the patriarch and his son against the recalcitrant female.

The ladies policeye is as shee thought to worke by sr. Hu: & the Captin & I thank God servants coulde never yett doe anye thinge with mee butt whatt I pleasde my selfe therfor shee was much deseved [deceived] in thatt & for truth sake I muste tell you the Captin knewe mee to well to saye anye thinge & itt is as greate a truth thatt the Captin is still for you in my contience harteleye besides hee hath so much brayne as to see wher his masters affection goes, tis trewe Sr. Hu: was [qu]iblinge butt verye modestlye & had soone don for I bid him holde his peace, - Butt you are the poletick, for you plowe with my Heuer [Heifer].²⁹

William's dismissal of Jane's 'little policies' makes a sharp contrast to the playful notes exchanged by father and daughter pre-war, and to the adoring poems written by Jane to her

²⁷ Adam Littleton, A sermon at the funeral of the Right Honourable the Lady Jane eldest daughter to His Grace, William, Duke of Newcastle, and wife to the Honourable Charles Cheyne, Esq. at Chelsey, Novemb. I. being All-Saints day (London: John Macock, 1669), sig. Fv, 42.

²⁸ John Broad, 'Cheyne, Charles', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography (Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Jan 2008), [http://www.oxforddnb.com.catalogue.ulrls.lon.ac.uk/view/article/5257, accessed 13 July 2007].

²⁹ Pw.1. 79. Oxford English Dictionary (OED Online, Second Edition, 1989, Oxford University Press, 2009) 'P1. to plough with a person's heifer (also ox, calf, etc.) ... (with allusion to Judges 14:18.): to concern oneself in, use, or interfere with a person's affairs, family, property, etc. ... 1655 SIR E. NICHOLAS in Nicholas Papers (1886) II. 172 If he doe not, wee will plough with his heifer as well as with others'.

father at the start of his military campaigns. Jane evidently won out, in spite of her father and brother's displeasure.

Holding out for a suitable royalist is frequently given as the reason for Jane's late marriage, although it is just as likely that she was forced to wait for financial reasons, as brother and uncle attempted to secure her dowry. Perhaps she was also determined to wait until she met a man she could love and who would allow her the independence she had become accustomed to. As Luceny, one of the heroines in 'The Concealed Fansyes', explains:

why shée will contract hir family, Noblenes and Birth, to the servitude of hir husband, as if hee had bought hir his slave, and I'm sure hir Father bought him for hir, for he gave a good Portion, and now in sense who should obey?

Luceny's sister, Tattiney continues: 'this you may see is an equall marryage, and I hate those people that will not understand, matrymony is to ioyne Lovers'.³⁰

Jane's ability to chose her own husband and yet remain within the family as a close and beloved member is perhaps an example of the type of feminine power described by Margaret in her forerunner to the epistolary novel, CCXI Sociable Letters:

And not only Wives and Mistresses have prevalent power with Men, but Mothers, Daughters, Sisters, Aunts, Cousins, nay, Maid-Servants have many times a perswasive power with their Masters, ... yet men will not believe this, and 'tis the better for us, for by that we govern as it were by an insensible power so as men perceive not how they are Led, Guided, and Rul'd by the Feminine Sex.³¹

To what extent Jane ruled over Charles Cheyne cannot be known for certain, but she was evidently a woman who knew her own mind. While it may have been her husband who purchased the manor of Chelsea it was no doubt bought with Jane's approval and possibly under her direction. In May 1656 she wrote politely, but firmly, to Charles explaining why she would not be following his 'kind advice', preferring to rent than to buy.

Croone the hous you mention of Alderman Allens it is as you say a very noble hous & I heare was never built for les then the sume you mention, but the seat is not good, which is a great impedement to the sayle of it, wee have for one yeare more taken this Hous, which is so cheape a rent, that I know not where wee can bee beater, til wee can seat our selves to our likeing both for hous & seat, that being our desires, & paying no more then 50li a yeare for this, I would not wish Mr Cheyne to bye inles it ware such a place wherein both the hous, & seat, might please, as well the opinions of others as our one.

³⁰ 'The Concealed Fansyes', 835.

³¹ Margaret Cavendish, CCXI Sociable Letters (London: William Wilson, 1664), sig. D2v, 28.

This is especially interesting given that Jane must have relied on Charles, acting *in loco parentis*, for her dowry. Her letter continues:

as long as wee can have so much roome & convenience at the cheape rate of 50li a yeare, wee shall not think of purchasing; your kind inquirey after us hath caused you the trouble of this long relation conserning our intentions, which I dout not but your goodnes will forgive & belive mee to bee senser[b]ly and affectionatly thankfull for your well wishes & reall intentions conserning my having my portion & I am extremely well satisfied you have dun what you can in it, which I doe not onely say to you but profes it every where when any ocation is given how much I am obliged to you, for your kindness to us both³²

Jane obviously felt obliged to explain and justify the decision made by herself and her husband regarding their choice of accommodation. In addition to this she makes sure to acknowledge, both personally and publicly, what Charles is doing on their behalf regarding her portion. Her 'long relation' may be in part a strategy of appeasement, the same strategy adopted in the 'chattering letter' referred to by her father in letter Pw1.79. It is clear that, with his father in exile, Charles had become the head of the family. William could rant and rave all he liked, he had no control over his estates or apparently, his children. They did not have to visit him and he could not set foot in England.

The close sibling bonds revealed in the Cavendish correspondence would certainly endorse the view that 'in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the brother-sister relationship was often the closest in the family'³³. On the 29th April 1656 Jane thanks Charles again for his affectionate letters, continuing:

I present my humble & affectionat service the like would my deare Husband if hee ware come home, but as yet hee is not, I expect him the latter end of this weeke in the meane time I have his letters & did I not know my self married I should think by what hee writs that hee was still a woer which puts mee in mind of your woords, for you tould mee it would bee allwayes so, beeing the nature of the person.³⁴

This letter suggests that, contrary to William's assumptions, Charles approved of Cheyne and that, rather than making love to Jane's portion, Cheyne's 'sonetts & Romansicall discourses' were genuine; something Charles had recognized. Again this would suggest that Charles held more influence in the family than his father did at this time and that Jane had

³² Nottingham, Pw1.89.

³³ Lawrence Stone, *The Family Sex and Marriage In England 1500-1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), 115. Although, conversely, Ralph Houlbrooke finds that the bonds between siblings weakened over time, especially after marriage, when the new family took precedence over the original. Indeed, younger siblings often resented the eldest inheriting son (Houlbrooke, 41). This, however, does not appear to have been the case between Charles and Jane.

³⁴ Nottingham, Pw1.88.

married with his consent and could therefore afford to ignore William's displeasure. Certainly in their letters to Charles both she and Cheyne are eager to please, he at times ingratiatingly so. Jane is perhaps painfully aware of the initial opposition to her marriage when she writes to Charles:

the satisfaction I receive when you are pleased to like any Expression in Mr Cheynes letter wherin your likeing & kind acceptance of them wee both acknowldge is more then can bee deserved. I could wish you neere nighbours beeing confident you would both take much contentment in one an others companies.³⁵

That, under primogeniture, Charles as the inheriting son, held all the power and authority should not be overlooked in reading these letters. Charles's siblings must have been conscious of the fact that it would severely disadvantage them to incur their brother's displeasure. Younger siblings must, in this period, behave towards the eldest brother rather like clients towards patrons.

In families where income is derived from rents, ... the responsibility for maintaining and if possible increasing this income went to the male heir as inheritor of the family estates ... As inheritor of the family patrimony Sir Ralph Verney received not only the greatest part of the family wealth but also the most esteemed, prestigious, and powerful place in the family hierarchy.³⁶

Like Charles, Ralph Verney stood in as the head of the family while his father Edmund was away campaigning in the Civil War. This role, while supplying much influence was also arduous. Adrian Tinniswood does not see Ralph Verney's position in as favourable a light as does Slater. According to Tinniswood, Ralph's 'father's readiness to leave the running of the family home to him left him with the worst of both worlds. He had responsibility without power; everyone made demands of him, but no one showed him much respect.'³⁷ While Charles's sisters show him a great deal of love and respect, his role was similarly thankless. Documents in the Nottingham archives show Charles working constantly to raise money to send to his father and to pay off his sisters' portions. All this and he would not live long enough to enjoy the fruits of his labour, nor leave a son, or indeed any heir, to carry his name and line, despite his sisters' best wishes.

Charles' close bonds with his sisters are attested to by the concern he evidently felt for them as they embarked on that most dangerous of early modern female occupations, motherhood. Husbands and sisters keep him up-to-date with detailed accounts of their labours and

³⁵ Nottingham, Pw1.89

³⁶ Miriam Slater, Family Life in the Seventeenth Century: The Verney's of Claydon House (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1984), 30.

³⁷ Adrian Tinniswood, The Verneys, A True Story of Love, War and Madness in Seventeenth-century England (London: Jonathan Cape, 2007), 103.

recoveries. Informing the head of the family of all new additions, especially since he was still without an heir, may in part have been an act of duty, but there was evidently a great deal of warmth involved in this family network of correspondence. There is an underlying assumption of the importance this shared information holds for each of the siblings. The charting of the sisters' experience of childbirth holds particular resonance as women all too often succumbed to puerperal fever even after a successful delivery. What is also striking is the close involvement of Cheyne and Egerton in their wives' labours.

Despite confidently predicting that she would give birth before Jane, who was pregnant at the same time and 'breeds the best that ever I knewe ffor she makes noething of a great Belly', Elizabeth was to be overtaken by her sister, whose anticipated delivery date was over estimated. On the 20 May Cheyne wrote to Charles regarding Jane:

on Sunday last the 18. of May shee was well & safely brought to Bed of a Daughter, some signes of neare Labour began upon her about 2. of the clocke in the morning but no hard paines till betweene 11 & 12. those continued but with some chearfull intermissions, I praise God, till halfe an houre past 3. & were endured with a very great patience & courage; wee were all surprised with the unexpected coming, but I am confident shee went her full time, though it was short of the first reckoning about Ten dayes; The child is, I thanke God, though little & weake born, now well & thriving.³⁸

Elizabeth was not so fortunate, on the 3 June, John Egerton writes to Charles about Elizabeth's labour.

My Wife's present unfitnessse to write is the occasion of my troubling your Lordshipp: at this time to give you account, that I thanke God for it she is now in a hopefull way of returning to her strength againe, which hath lately beene very much weakened, by a very hard, tedious, & exceeding dangerous labour, which she underwent from Saterdag last at 5 in the afternoone till yesterday at noone, at which time, God be thanked, she was delivered, but not without the assistance of Dr: Hinton, of a very large boy, which is since Christned Henry & is, by the grace of God, very likely to live, & I hope in God my Wife will speedily recover her health, being hitherto in as good a condition as in her former lyings in; I know I shall not want of asistance of your Lordshipp:s prayers for her, since she is, deservedly, deare to your Lordshipp:

Charles evidently replies to Egerton asking for news of his sister, although we only have the response which tells him:

³⁸ Nottingham, Pw1.84.

all our hopes were intirely converted into feares, but I thanke God, since yesterday at Noone, when my trouble & sad apprehension was greatest, she hath begun to amend, & hath had yesternight a very good night's rest, & her loosenesse is quite stop't.³⁹

Their youngest sister Frances joins in the correspondence writing from London on the 7 June 1656:

I give you a thousand thanks for your letter by Mr Prise who I am confident has long before now given you a perfect relation of my Deare Sister Bridgewaters ill labour & as yet she is far from well for I heare that she had a very ill night yesternight her child is the lustiest boy that ever I saw & is now very well; I am sorry to heare your deare Lady had indisposistions sumtimes I pray take great Care of her & have good advise about her I pray present my most deare affectionate service to her & excuse my not writing to her at this time next weeke wee intend to bee at melshburne for I hope by that time to see my sister well my sister Cheny thanks bee to God is so well that I saw her walk in her Chamber friddy Strongly so that now thare is I hope noe danger at all of her perfect recovery⁴⁰

Elizabeth would die giving birth to her tenth child at the age of thirty-seven. Jane would die at the age of forty-eight and be buried with her daughter Catherine in Chelsea Old Church, of which she was a great benefactor. Charles Cheyne, the man William accused of marrying her for her portion, would commission a magnificent memorial to her which still stands in the same church. The inscription reads: '...the most loving and beloved wife of Charles Cheyne, Knight. She never caused him any grief except by her own death.'

Charles Cavendish's death in 1659 created new conflicts within the family. On becoming a widow his wife Elizabeth, that 'Incomperable Lady' from whom William had so wanted a visit, was no longer viewed by him as 'sweet & moste Excelente', but rather as a financial burden. Nonetheless, Charles' sisters appear to have maintained their loyalty towards their sister-in-law. On the 18 September 1659 Elizabeth Cavendish Egerton wrote to Jane expressing her outrage that Henry had already taken Charles' title, earl of Mansfield. Not only this, but she suspected that Henry had opened and resealed a letter from Charles' widow intended for herself. This letter conveys the news that the widow's midwife thinks it is unlikely she is pregnant, hence Henry's assumption that the title will go to him.

Truly though I know [from] my dear sister Bolingbrooke [Frances] by her letter that he [Henry] did writ his name Mansfield, yet it put me into a passion of weeping to see another hand with that name Mansfield and not his [Charles's] child and he not have a child. A girl would have been some comfort. I do not perceive he [Henry] hath written

³⁹ Nottingham, Pw1.21-22.

⁴⁰ Nottingham, Pw1.69.

so to any of you but to me. For he thinks he angers me by reason I gave counsel to her [the widow of Charles] to come up. Truly if he was not so hasty it would have been much better for it would not have been stolen from him, and if a boy should yet come it will be much to his dishonor.⁴¹

What is clear from this communication is the manner in which letters were read and passed on, or copied to different family members. Elizabeth's letter to her sister concludes with a 'word for word' account of Henry's letter, 'When I see you, I will show it you' she tells her. There also appears to be a divide here between the male and female members of the family, with William and Henry on one side, Jane, Frances and Elizabeth on the other in allegiance with Charles' widow.

A month later, in October 1659, William wrote to Henry regarding his sister-in-law: 'for your Sisters nott beinge with childe makes us nowe that wee can pretende butt litle intereste in her what her joynture is that I knowe nott'.⁴² This perhaps confirms Elizabeth Egerton's suspicions; Henry had read her letter and passed the information on to their father. William continues: 'for what is in our power praye live att your owne houses Welbeck & Bolsover which will much conduce to your health'. Presumably Charles' widow was expected to vacate the premises. This attitude to his now disposable daughter-in-law may seem somewhat callous, but it is not uncharacteristic of attitudes during this period. In fact it is reasonable to expect William to be concerned with keeping ancestral estates intact and within the family, especially considering the depredations made upon them by parliament. It is indicative of his dislocation, however, that William is not aware of his daughter-in law's jointure. The jointure (lands, property or an annuity bestowed jointly on the husband and wife, to be retained, in the event of the husband predeceasing her, by the wife for the duration of her lifetime) would have been negotiated in relation to the bride's portion as part of the marriage settlement. Where these negotiations were normally conducted by the respective fathers, in Charles' case they had been agreed by his uncle.

By November, William appears to be feeling more generous towards Elizabeth, although he has heard that her servants 'made greate spoyle & lesseninge of the goods' at Bolsover, he writes to Henry 'we must parte fayre with your Sister & repayre itt as well as wee can'.⁴³ Perhaps this magnanimity is inspired by the fact that he has worked out a winning solution to the problem of paying his daughter-in law's jointure. He tells Henry that he wishes him to act as 'farmer' to her lands, taking a long lease from her 'to gett in to posesion off itt you can nott loose by itt for you maye Rayse the Rentes and still bee makinge somethinge off woods

⁴¹ Huntington Library, MS EL 8048, reproduced in James Fitzmaurice (ed.), Sociable Letters (Ontario: Broadview Editions, 2004), 308.

⁴² BL, Add. Ms. 70499, fol. 351r.

⁴³ Elizabeth Egerton believed that if Henry had not acted so hastily in taking his brother's place the servants would not have stolen from him.

everye yeare without distroyenge them & this would bee an Excelente Bargayne both for you & her'.⁴⁴

Just as William attempted to direct and cajole Charles from his exile, his letters to Henry are constantly at pains to reassure Henry that his own and Margaret's motives are purely altruistic. William is very troubled by the 'goods' 'that so longe gatheringe by your ansesters shoulde bee distroyde in a momente.' He wishes Henry to buy them back from Charles' widow, having made sure he has them appraised first. Goods are never appraised at a third of their worth he tells Henry, presumably intending him to get them at a cut price. He suggests that Henry's father-in-law lays out the money and keeps the goods for security. Pierrepoint should also be relied on to hire or deal with the appraisers so that Henry will get 'a verye good bargin – this I desier you will doe & bee verye carefull in itt for itt will bee the greatest contentmente to mee that can bee that I maye knowe you shall enioye them'.⁴⁵ William doesn't trust Henry to deal with this matter alone and his letters pull in several directions at once as he wrestles with the need to both reassure and direct Henry in carrying out those functions that William should have been performing himself had he not been banished.

William's letters from 1659 to Henry reveal the extent of his financial dependency upon his son. 'I thanke you for settling my subsistance' he writes from Antwerp 'butt wher you sayed the nexte 1500li ther want on 200: you knowe which I conceive its your Sisters praye doe sier keep that itt maye coume a longe with the reste att the same time.' Three days later he writes to Henry again 'I must informe you, that wantinge the moneye which was 500:li I am dayleye & insentlye torturde with my creditors a bouthe itt therefore I praye make haste with itt & putt your Sister in mynde to paye thatt 100'. Ten days later he is again writing to thank Henry for the money he is due to receive. He instructs Henry not to send over his man, Charles Eagle, but to keep him in London where he can buy 'manye parsells off little comodeties which wee dayleye wante & can-nott have them heer'. While this suggests William is merely hankering after luxury English goods, his letter reveals a greater level of need as it continues:

This inclosed I desier you will please to doe which is ackordinge to what you sett downe your selfe & withoute itt trewlye I can nott subsiste heer therefore I praye lett itt bee done eyther when I sende you the bills or iff you please to sende mee your acceptance so that theye bee three monthes still before the daye for my Ease & comedieusness - & sende these back as soone as possiblye you can.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ BL, Add. Ms. 70499, fols 355r -56r.

⁴⁵ BL, Add. Ms. 70499, fols 351r-52r.

⁴⁶ BL, Add. Ms. 70499, fol. 355v.

William is certainly shown here to be in the power of his children, despite his attempts to prove to Henry that love is descending, rather than ascending and that he 'hold[s] stroake sufficient in [his] hand' to secure Henry's love and duty.⁴⁷ In these letters William is constantly at pains to point out that everything is being done for the long term advantage of his son and that neither he nor Margaret are out to line their own pockets, something that would increasingly become an issue after Restoration. William writes on 22 October, protesting perhaps too much:

I intende them [the goods] all for your selfe - & iff ever I see you I will give you the moneye & the goods to boote so that all my intention is butt to save them for you – for I proteste that is all the designe my wife & I have in that busines for beleve ^{^mee^} shee is as kinde to you as shee was to your Brother & so good a wife as shee is all for my fameleye, which shee expresses is onlye you, - as you Love mee & yourselfe, save the beste off the goods for your selfe I will make you a note off the beste which I beleve you know as well as I.

His letter of the 25 October, before reminding Henry about 'the moneye', assures his son:

that I leave itt wholye to you, - & I & my wife give all our intereste upp unto you wholye & totaleye lookinge for nothings off them att all onlye the use iff I chance to coume to ^{^you^} duringe life so theye are all yours. – which is my greate desier shoulde remayne to you & yours.⁴⁸

In November, as royalist hopes of restoration were raised, William informs Henry that he will make Welbeck a very fine place for his son and that if he is able to return home it 'will be manye thousande poundes a yeare the better for you then iff I should dye before'.⁴⁹ Regardless of all these assurances, after the Restoration William would reclaim the family estates and the income derived from them. Despite having written to Henry from Antwerp, 'Praye leave your Dove Cote wher you are & live att Wellbeck which will conduce much to your health & to your ladyes & to the little ladies', Henry and his family became infrequent visitors at their former home.⁵⁰ In 1665 Henry wrote from Wellingore to his friend George Savile, Marquis of Halifax:

I would wayt of you now at Rufford but I have not been at Wellbeck since I returned from the Duke, I hope my Father loves me and make noe doubt but to wayt of you at Rufford before Michallmass and after that I will not stir out of Lincolnshire all winter.⁵¹

⁴⁷ See p.2, note 3.

⁴⁸ BL, Add. Ms. 70499, fols 351r-52r; 353r – 53v.

⁴⁹ BL, Add. Ms. 70499, fol. 365r.

⁵⁰ BL, Add. Ms. 70499, fol. 353v.

⁵¹ BL, Add. Ms. 75359, unfoliated.

Relations continued to deteriorate; in 1671 Henry wrote to Thomas Osborne, earl of Danby:

I am very mallencholly, finding my Father more perswaded by his Wife then I could thinke it possible. ... I thank God my little fammily are in health the joy I take in it can not be taken away from me by the unkindness to us at Wellbeck.⁵²

Having been the lord of the manor to whom his father wrote begging letters, Henry would be reduced to writing William a grovelling account of 'how I came to bee eight thousand pounds in Debt'. Included in his debts are his own apothecary bills from his illness between the ages of seventeen and nineteen. He also includes £2000 spent on clearing his brother's debts. The letter ends rather pathetically:

Your Lordshipp. Being pleased to command me to goe from Thorpe, & to live at Wellbeck, & my wife was with child then, & had a Physitian from London. I humbly beg your Lordships: pardon, I have been no better a manager; & humbly subscribe myselfe

Your Lordships: obedient Son

H: Mansfield.⁵³

William's constant reassurances to his son, his concern for Henry's health and later suggestions of mental instability might lead to the conclusion that Henry was suffering from paranoia. However, documentary evidence leaves compelling testimony to Margaret's ever increasing jointure, often extended secretly, but clearly eating away into Henry's inheritance. Henry now occupied the unenviable position of his elder brother, head of the household-in-waiting, saddled with all the responsibilities but few of the rewards.

In February 1665 Henry received a letter of reassurance from John Hutton about his father's estate, Margaret's jointure, and what he might inherit. Henry had obviously asked Hutton to make enquiries with his father on his behalf, but Hutton is still left unsure as to William's intentions.

when that Joynture was made his Grace gave me order to cutt of this entaile of the northern landes and so likewise of the other which were made in Joynture but had not given me enstructions how to settle the reversion ...there upon his Grace asked me if as it was, it would not decend upon your honour, & your Children, I told him I thought it would if his [G]race did doe noe act to hinder it which he sware he would not, and that it was as sure to you as all the settlements in the worlde could make it, & only sayd this more that he wonderd his son should trouble himselfe with nothinge for that it

⁵² Nottingham, Pw1.538.

⁵³ BL, Add. Ms. 70500, fol.14r.

was not imaginable that he should dispose of it from him & his; but whether or noe his Grace will take notice of it or noe to your honour I know not but believe he may.⁵⁴

The following month William wrote individual letters to both Henry and his wife in an attempt to convince them of his good intentions. ‘Sweet Daughter’ he addressed Frances, ‘I thanke you for your letter & I ashure you, that honestye is my mistris – which I will ever serve faythfullye, iff itt weare nott for goodness sake itt is the wiseste thinge in the worlde’. While his warm subscription reads, ‘Your most affectionate lovinge Father, ... W. Newcastle’. He writes more robustly to his son:

I ashure you ther is nothinge pleases mee more then to please you – you see wee are all honeste folkes heer & have no uniuste subtle designs – for jeloseyes doubts, feares, & whispers are to womanishe for mee to trouble my selfe with them though I thinke our Honesties have clerde them sufitientlye & I ame Confidente you never had an Ill opinion – eyther off my love to you & yours – or thatt I was a foole.⁵⁵

Henry’s relationship with his father-in-law Pierrepont also appears to have cooled, possibly because of the latter’s waning influence after the Restoration. Pierrepont retired from politics in 1661 after failing to be elected to the Cavalier Parliament. Despite his numerous letters to Henry during 1657, there are only two letters extant post 1660, both are terse and to the point, lacking the affectionate tone of his earlier correspondence.⁵⁶ Perhaps, once his own father had returned, Henry’s father-in-law proved expendable; although it may equally have been Pierrepont who, disappointed by the return of the monarchy, withdrew from his royalist relations.

The division and dispersal of the Cavendish family papers is perhaps a fitting reflection of the dislocation of the family itself. The Cavendishes found themselves on opposite sides of a geographical and political gulf. The father became the dependent while his children struggled to fulfil their filial duties by making friends with the new regime. The old order had indeed been inverted, but it had not disappeared. England had a new head of state and the Cavendish children had a stand in paterfamilias, yet the usurped authorities were still making claims from across the channel.

While letters between the Cavendish siblings reveal close and affectionate relationships, chatty letters relate news of pregnancies, births and social gossip, references to their father and his wife are conspicuously absent from their correspondence. Although Jane’s brother-in-law, earl Bolingbrooke, is recorded as standing in for William as god father to her first child, there are no expressions of regret that William could not be there in person, nor indeed

⁵⁴ BL, Add. Ms. 70500, fols 33r-v.

⁵⁵ BL, Add. Ms. 70500, fols 35-37.

⁵⁶ Nottingham, Pw1.383 and Pw1.384.

any letters of congratulations from the grandfather on the births of any of his grandchildren. By choosing to enter a new domestic arrangement abroad, William's children must have felt that William was indicating his indifference to their difficulties at home. His marriage to a woman who brought neither wealth nor title to the family perhaps encouraged his daughters, not only to unite behind their eldest brother and then his widow, but in the case of Jane, to select her own husband against her father's wishes. A high level of insecurity is also evident in the relationship between William and Henry; from William with his continual reassurances, and from Henry hoping that his father loves him, yet feeling unwelcome in his home.

By reuniting the Cavendish Family Papers through transcription and analysis the pattern of the family correspondence can be better understood. Important insights can be gained into the changing dynamics of a seventeenth-century family. Often the attachments and anxieties expressed reveal the essential immutability of parent and sibling relationships. Conversely the glimpses into the power structures of patriarchy and primogeniture, not to mention the high mortality rate attendant on childbirth, demonstrate what a long way English society has travelled.

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