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Social Negotiations in Correspondence between Mothers and Daughters in Tudor and Early Stuart England

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James Daybell, 'Social Negotiations in Correspondence between Mothers and Daughters in Tudor and Early Stuart England'¹

This article examines correspondence between mothers and daughters in sixteenth- and early-seventeenth-century England, as a way of investigating the distinct nature of mother-daughter relationships during this period, and studying the ways in which such relationships were negotiated through the epistolary medium. While historians of the family have elucidated the complexities of early modern familial bonds, scholars of early modern letters have recovered and studied women's letters broadly defined, and work by women's historians has done much to excavate the importance of female social interactions, looking at female networks and friendships, and women's relations within the family. The subject of the relationships between mothers and daughters, however, has received much less scholarly attention.² By contrast, a substantial body of work has been produced looking at relations between mothers and sons, focussing in particular on the nature of familial bonds, the shifting dynamics of power over the life-cycle and on maternal advice.³ The relative neglect of mother-daughter correspondence (which refers to both mother to daughter, and daughter to mother letters) is at least in part explained by the fact that they survive in far fewer number than correspondence with sons, or other influential male family members, such as father, brother and kinsmen, a function of what might be termed the 'politics of archival survival'. Nonetheless, approximately 100 letters are extant for the period 1530 to 1620, and form the basis of this study, which aims partially to redress this historiographical lacuna. As a corpus, these surviving letters are a highly selective sample of those actually written; they are mostly from elite female letter-writers, and exchanges reflect adult rather than childhood relationships – few letters survive to or from young girls – and they represent relationships at a distance, when a daughter married, was at court or resided in another household. These conditions necessarily shaped epistolary relations, and directly influence the ways in which we read, situate and understand mother-daughter correspondence.

The early modern letter itself is a highly complex socio-textual form, inflected by materials, practices and rhetorics that generate significant meaning. Recent studies of letters and letter-writing have challenged simplistic fictions of intimacy in correspondence, and developed a range of interpretive methodologies – influenced by linguistic and material turns

¹ I am grateful to Andrew Gordon, Barbara Harris, Ralph Houlbrooke, Alan Stewart and Julia Daybell for reading and commenting on this article. All mistakes are alas my own.

² On the early modern family see, for example, Ralph A. Houlbrooke (1984) *The English Family 1450-1700* (London: Longman); J.A. Sharpe (1997) *Early Modern England: A Social History 1560-1760* (London: Bloomsbury Academic); Keith Wrightson (1982) *English Society 1580-1680* (London: Hutchinson); Will Coster (2001) *Family and Kinship in England 1450-1800* (London: Longman). On early modern women's letters see, James Daybell (2006) *Women Letter-Writers in Tudor England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press); Daybell (Ed.) (2001) *Early Modern Women's Letter-Writing, 1450-1700* (Basingstoke: Palgrave); Jane Couchman and Anne Crabb (Eds) (2005) *Women's Letters Across Europe, 1400-1700: Form and Persuasion* (Aldershot: Ashgate). On female networks: Barbara J. Harris (2004) 'Sisterhood, Friendship and the Power of English Aristocratic Women, 1450-1550', in James Daybell (Ed.) *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450-1700* (Aldershot: Ashgate), pp. 21-50; Susan Frye and Robertson, Karen (Eds.) (1999) *Maids and Mistress, Cousins and Queens: Women's Alliances in Early Modern England* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press); Laura Gowing (2005) 'The Politics of Women's Friendships in Early Modern England', in Laura Gowing, Michael Hunter and Miri Rubin (Eds) *Love, Friendship and Faith in Europe, 1300-1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), pp.131-49.

³ Barbara J. Harris (1990) 'Property, Power and Personal Relations: Elite Mothers and Sons in Yorkist and Early Tudor England', *Signs*, 15(3), pp. 606-32; Raymond A. Anselment (2004) 'Katherine Paston and Brilliana Harley: Maternal Letters and the Genre of Mother's Advice', *Studies in Philology*, 101(4), pp. 431-53; Lynne Magnusson (2001) 'Widowhood and Linguistic Capital: The Rhetoric and Reception of Anne Bacon's Epistolary Advice', *English Literary Renaissance*, 31(1), pp. 3-33.

– to explore the cultural phenomenon of the letter.⁴ Such approaches tend to have been embraced more fully by literary critics, but equally are an invaluable addition to the ‘historians’ toolbox’. Rhetorical and material reading strategies (paying attention to genre and the physical features of manuscripts) shed important new light on letters as evidence of mother-daughter relationships, and are useful in decoding broader social relationships inscribed within correspondence. Rather than providing a case study of a particular mother-daughter relationship as represented in epistolary form, this article offers a more synoptic analysis of the range of letters that survive from the sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries, thereby sketching the contours of early modern mother-daughter correspondences and offering a contextual and methodological framework for the analysis of specific relationships or exchanges between individuals. It studies the impact of the archival survival of correspondence; analyses the protocols embedded within such epistolary exchanges, considering the degree to which they were scripted by epistolographies or other social codes, and how far these impact upon the recovery of emotional bonds between mothers and daughters; and investigates the purpose of corresponding, teasing out the reasons and occasions of letter-writing, the role of maternal advice, and the extent to which advice to daughters was gendered, differing from that to sons.

Methodologically then the article applies recent innovations in the field of Renaissance letter-writing to the social-cultural history of early modern women and the family. As such it outlines four main arguments. First, it will be argued that analysis of correspondence and the traces of historically situated relationships embedded within epistolary texts demands a historicised understanding of early modern epistolarity (in other words, the ways in which letters worked and communicated in the broadest sense) and therefore begs attention to the rhetorical, linguistic and material, as well as to the historical aspects of letters in order to unpack their full meaning. Secondly, it asserts that letters were influenced at least indirectly by rhetorical or cultural models of the dutiful daughter and loving mother, which scripted epistolary transactions and influenced expressions of affect as well as invective. Importantly here, letters represent textual performances, rather than enacted behaviours. The epistolary formulae of opening and closing modes, and protocols of commendation often lent letters a rather formal and stiff quality, nonetheless beyond these structural constraints they could equally display more personal and original forms of expression. Thirdly, it argues that there is no such thing that could be categorised as a typical form of mother-daughter correspondence. While they do display characteristic epistolary traits, letters between mothers and daughters are marked by their generic range, and diversity of form and function. Intrinsically, letter-writing was structured by socio-cultural conditions, letters shaped by what might be termed the ‘social materiality of texts’, in other words, the manner and contexts of their production, transmission and reception. Alongside this stylistic variety the article argues for a distinct tradition of the maternal advice letter. Finally, by way of an extended analysis of Anne Clifford’s correspondence with her mother, the article argues for the complexity and distinctiveness of the mother-daughter relationship, which was structured by socio-economic and political factors; and suggest that the balance of power fluctuated and developed over time and over the course of the female lifecycle. It shows that the letter was a key technology for sustaining, developing and negotiating these relationships

⁴ James Daybell (2012) *The Material Letter in Early Modern England: Manuscript Letters and the Culture and Practices of Letter-Writing, 1512-1635* (Basingstoke: Palgrave); Alan Stewart (2008) *Shakespeare’s Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press); Lynne Magnusson (1999) *Shakespeare and Social Dialogue: Dramatic Language and Elizabethan Letters* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press); Gary Schneider (2005) *The Culture of Epistolarity: Vernacular Letters and Letter Writing in Early Modern England, 1500-1700* (Newark, DE: University of Delaware Press).

at a distance; it facilitated the conveying of emotion, whether positive or negative, performed vital communicative functions for mothers and daughters.

The nature of mother-daughter bonds within the modern world has been the subject of intense inquiry by sociologists, psychologists, literary critics, theologians and philosophers among others since Adrienne Rich's seminal 1974 feminist study lamenting the creative and conceptual silence that surrounded this central, complex and ultimately ambivalent relationship within women's lives.⁵ Motherhood – and mothers' relationships with daughters – is viewed as intrinsically bound up with patterns of socialisation, female self-identity, generational perpetuation of familial roles, and deep-seated psychological continuities between mother and daughter. In psychological terms, post Freud the ego boundaries between mother and daughter have been seen as fluid and undefined; maternal omnipotence and dominance during infancy generates simultaneously an emotional sense of deep connection and seeds of resentment, conflict and suffocation in later life.⁶ Such theories based on particular family structures, breastfeeding and maternal bonding during infancy are not applicable to early modern aristocratic families which used wet-nurses and governesses. From a feminist perspective, however, the significance of early psychoanalytical theories of the mother-daughter relationship (while open to critique) was, as Marianne Hirsch has argued, that it established 'a theory that links the most private family structures to social, economic and political structures'.⁷ Sociological studies of modern England produced during the 1960s viewed the bond between mothers and daughters, as Ralph Houlbrooke has argued, as the 'strongest and most enduring of those between members of the nuclear family', since within the domestic sphere mothers provided advice and assistance in childcare and household management.⁸ More recent sociological studies have challenged perceptions of mother-daughter relationships as universally and uniquely close, compared with relationships with sisters, and have emphasised cultural relativity and the complexity of relationships which are redefined and renegotiated at different stages over the lifecycle and were culturally relative.⁹

⁵ Adrienne Rich (1976) *Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Experience and Institution* (New York: Norton), esp the chapter 'Motherhood and Daughterhood'. On literary approaches see Myra Glazer Schotz (1980) *The Great Unwritten Story: Mothers and Daughters in Shakespeare*, in Cathy Davidson and Esther Broner (Eds) *The Lost Tradition: Mothers and Daughters in Literature* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing), pp.44-54; Marianne Hirsch (1989) *The Mother/Daughter Plot: Narrative, Psychoanalysis, Feminism* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press).

⁶ On psychoanalytical approaches see, for example, Marianne Hirsch (1981) *Mothers and Daughters, Signs*, 7(1), pp. 200-222; Jane Flax (1978) *The Conflict Between Nurturance and Autonomy in Mother-Daughter Relationships and within Feminism, Feminist Studies*, 4(1), pp. 171-89; Nancy Chodorow (1978) *Mothering, Object Relations and the Female Oedipal Configuration, Feminist Studies*, 4(1), pp. 137-58; Luce Irigaray and Hélène Vivienne Wenzel (1981) *And the One Doesn't Stir without the Other, Signs*, 7(1), pp. 60-7. See also Eva S. Lefkowitz and Karen L. Fingerman (2003) *Positive and Negative Emotional Feelings and Behaviours in Mother-Daughter Ties in Late Life, Journal of Family Psychology*, 17(4), pp. 607-617; Lillian E. Troll (1987) *Mother-Daughter Relationships Through the Life Span, Applied Social Psychology Annual*, 7, pp. 284-305; Diane Sholomskas and Rosalind Axelrod (1986) *The Influence of Mother-Daughter Relationships on Women's Sense of Self and Current Role Choices, Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 10, pp. 171-82. For more general recent approaches on motherhood see Samira Kawash (2011) *New Directions in Motherhood Studies, Signs*, 36(4), pp. 969-1003.

⁷ Hirsch, *Mothers and Daughters*, p.208.

⁸ Houlbrooke, *English Family*, p.187.

⁹ For sociological approaches see Pat O'Connor (1990) *The Adult Mother/Daughter Relationship: A Uniquely and Universally Close Relationship?, The Sociological Review*, 38(2), pp. 293-322; Greer Litton Fox (1980) *The Mother-Adolescent Daughter Relationship as a Sexual Socialization Structure: A Research Review, Family Relations*, 29(1), pp. 21-8; Lucy Rose Fischer (1981) *Transitions in the Mother-Daughter Relationship, Journal of Marriage and Family*, 43(3), pp. 613-22; Mudita Rastogi and Karen S. Wampler (1999) *Adult Daughters' Perceptions of the Mother-Daughter Relationship: A Cross-Cultural Comparison, Family Relations*, 48(3), pp. 327-36; Rosemary Blieszner, Paula M. Usita and Jay A. Mancini (1996) *Diversity and Dynamics in Late-Life Mother-Daughter Relationships, Journal of Women and Aging*, 8(3-4), pp. 5-24.

Cumulatively then such theoretical approaches emphasise the contradictory and sophisticated nature of mother-daughter relationships, which were historically and culturally specific, and must be viewed as dynamic, evolving, and structurally conditioned.

Early modern conditions too necessarily structured relationships between mothers and daughters. Social codes promulgated by the pulpit and press counselled filial obedience, and daughterly duty, and reciprocally exhorted women to be ‘natural’ and ‘loving’ mothers. Barbara Harris has argued that ‘the structures and goals of aristocratic families created a class-specific, historically distinctive form of motherhood’; low priority was given to the physical care of babies and young children, and concerns of lineage and family advancement meant that ‘wives’ relationships with their husbands, social and managerial functions, and duties at court took precedence over their obligations as mothers’.¹⁰ Relations, even from a young age, might also be geographically conducted at a distance, with daughters also often absent from the home, placed in other households as an important form of socialisation.¹¹ Nonetheless, early modern mothers of the nobility and gentry played a central and important role in the lives of their daughters into adulthood. They oversaw education and socialisation during childhood and adolescence, imparted housewifery skills, and advanced daughters’ careers by placing them in other households or at court; they were actively involved in the arrangement of marriages, and defended inheritances, dowries and jointures. In later life, mothers continued to offer emotional and practical support, through visits and hospitality, gift-giving and letter-writing. Mothers frequently visited daughters during their lyings-in. As a result ‘strong, loving ties’ developed between aristocratic mothers and their daughters, as Barbara Harris has notably shown.¹² While the centrality of mothers’ roles might indeed foster closeness and intimacy, it could also breed conflict and personal differences, especially during adolescence, and relationships could become complicated by widowhood and remarriages, with conflict arising over dowries and inheritance.¹³ The process of upbringing itself, as Linda Pollock has argued, bore seeds of conflict and tension, as mothers were intimately involved in the training up of young girls to be modest, which may have conflicted with wilful personalities.¹⁴ The dynamics of interpersonal relationships changed over time, as Elizabeth Foyster importantly reminds us, with shifts in the balance of power across the lifecycle as children married, had grandchildren and parents entered old age.¹⁵ It might be objected that there is an intrinsic artificiality to studying mothers and daughters in isolation from other social bonds, since individual relationships do not exist within a vacuum but were embedded within the context of the wider family relationships with fathers, siblings and kin.

¹⁰ Barbara J. Harris (2002) *English Aristocratic Women, 1450-1550: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp.100, 107.

¹¹ Grant McCracken (1983) The Exchange of Children in Tudor England: An Anthropological Phenomenon in Historical Context, *Journal of Family History*, 8(4), pp. 303-313.

¹² Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp. 108-111. See also, Linda A. Pollock (1983) *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 268-9; Rosemary O’Day (1994) *The Family and Family Relationships, 1500-190: England, France and the United States of America* (Basingstoke: Macmillan), pp. 169-70; Sara Mendelson (2011) Anne Dormer and Her Children, in Naomi J. Miller and Naomi Yavneh (Eds.) *Gender and Early Modern Constructions of Childhood* (Farnham: Ashgate), pp.117-26.

¹³ Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, pp.27-42, 99-101, 103, 117, 185-7; Houlbrooke, *English Family*, pp.187-8

¹⁴ Linda A. Pollock (1989) “Teach Her to Live Under Obedience”: The Making of Women in the Upper Ranks of Early Modern England, *Continuity and Change*, 4(2), pp. 231-58 (pp.245-7). Kenneth Charlton (1988) “Not public only but also private and domestical”: Mothers and Familial Education in Pre-Industrial England, *History of Education*, 17(1), pp. 1-20; Sara H. Mendelson (2010) Child Rearing in Theory and Practice: The Letters of John Locke and Mary Clarke, *Women’s History Review*, 18(2), pp. 231-43 (p.235).

¹⁵ Elizabeth Foyster (2001) Parenting was for Life, Not Just for Childhood: The Role of Parents in the Married Lives of their Children in Early Modern England, *History*, 86(283), pp. 313-27 (p.317).

However, a clear rationale exists for focussing on the relatively neglected subject of mother-daughter relationships, since mothers assumed a special responsibility for the upbringing of daughters, in a way they did not for sons. Power relationships within a primogenitural society were gendered, and those between mothers and daughters reveal distinct differences from those that characterised bonds with male relatives. While elite mothers might offer advice and help to adult daughters, they often related differently to adult sons, especially the heir, to whom they deferred and from whom they sought support.¹⁶ In some circumstances, deference towards sons-in-law might mediate relations with daughters; and mothers might well feel a continuing duty to advise and reprove adult, especially younger, sons who acted unwisely or irresponsibly. These structures of family life – patterns of upbringing and socialisation, inheritance and marriage – shaped the mother-daughter relationship and emotional exchange, with power hierarchies inflected by gender and age.

Advice-giving played a central role in mother's correspondence to girls, and was an important part of the duty of a natural, loving mother, a rhetorical justification that could support the dispensing of advice, and conversely be deployed by mothers seeking to intercede on behalf of their children.¹⁷ Indeed, the epistle has been long regarded as a medium for parental advice, and fathers' advice letters to sons were a well-established tradition, with notable letters from Lord Burghley, Walter Raleigh and James I circulating in manuscript form.¹⁸ The tradition of maternal advice too is a strong one, with a series of advice books by mothers printed in the early seventeenth century, including Elizabeth Grymeston's *Miscelanea. Meditations, Memoratiues* (1604), Dorothy Leigh's *The Mothers Blessing* (1616) and Elizabeth Jocelin's *The Mothers Legacie to her Unborne Childe* (1624). The subject of maternal advice is a burgeoning field, and much scholarship has explored the tradition of mother's letters of advice to sons, such as those of Brilliana Harley, Katherine Paston, and Anne Bacon – the imparting of spiritual and moral guidance, and maternal concerns for social behaviour and education – but little work has focussed on mothers' advice to daughters and how this was gendered.¹⁹ On the whole, the letters from mothers to daughters that survive from the sixteenth and early-seventeenth century were not conventional epistles effectively masquerading as conduct books or deploying classical *sententiae* as moral advice. Instead advice was tailored to particular situations, and it is here that distinct gendered differences exist between mothers' letters to sons and daughters, in that advice-giving was situational, and reflects different social environments and experiences as well as different life stages. Letters to sons were normally written while young boys were away at school or university, and discussed subjects such as academic studies, moral behaviour, religion, finances, followers and diet. Mothers' advice to daughters, however, tended to be written when their female offspring were married, and was likewise geared towards the social realities of their lives, and dealt with topics such as childbirth, marriage, inheritance, religion and moral

¹⁶ Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford (1998) *Women in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp.160-61.

¹⁷ Emily Ross (2010) "Kicking at the prick": Assertions of a Mother's Rights in the Letters of Lady Elizabeth Hatton, in Paul Salzman (Ed.) *Expanding the Canon of Early Modern Women's Writing* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars), pp. 84-95.

¹⁸ R.C. Richardson (2002) The Generation Gap: Parental Advice in Early Modern England, *Clio*, 32(1), pp. 1-26; W. Lee Ustick (1932) Advice to a Son: A Type of Seventeenth-Century Conduct Book, *Studies in Philology*, 29, pp. 409-41; Louis B. Wright (1962) *Advice to a Son: Precepts of Lord Burghley, Sir Walter Raleigh, and Francis Osborne* (Ithaca: Cornell UP for the Folger Shakespeare Library).

¹⁹ Anselment, Maternal Letters; Kristen Poole (1995) "The Fittest Closet for All Goodness": Authorial Strategies of Jacobean Mothers Manuals, *Studies in English Literature, 1500-1900*, 35(1), pp. 69-88; Betty Travitsky (1980) 'The New Mother of the English Renaissance: Her Writings on Motherhood' in Cathy N. Davidson and E.M. Broner (Eds.) *The Lost Tradition: Mother and Daughters in Literature* (New York: Frederick Ungar), pp.33-43. Cf. Jennifer Heller (2011) *The Mother's Legacy in Early Modern England* (Burlington VT: Ashgate), ch.3.

behaviour broadly defined. This reflects the higher changes of survival of later letters, especially where they address tricky matrimonial situations, rather than the actual chronological pattern of the original correspondence.

Analysis of the emotional dimension of mother-daughter relationships is fundamental to examining the nature of their correspondence, and personal letters have long been viewed as an important site for assessing the emotional quality of family life.²⁰ Recent important work on the history of emotions has shown the complexity of theorizing and recovering this aspect of early modern relationships.²¹ When conceptualising emotion, as Susan Broomhall informs us, it is important to remember the different types of ‘emotional phenomena, such as feelings, moods, attitudes, affect and emotion’.²² Historians have argued that positive emotional feelings and affect could sit alongside more calculated forms of reciprocity and personal gain. Indeed, Linda Pollock has importantly demonstrated that kindness operated as a cluster concept that ‘linked together a diverse array of related ideas’, and argues for a way of incorporating affect into our understanding of early modern relationships, alongside approaches that view them as self-interested.²³ Letters are a unique source for studying the emotions in that by their very nature they elucidate social interactions. Pollock has persuasively argued that emotions must be studied as a situated or ‘lived’ experience, and that correspondence reveals the ‘articulation of emotions, the dynamics of emotional engagement, and the role of emotions in interpersonal relations’.²⁴ This is not to say that letters are transparent conveyors of social meaning, and scholars are quick to recognize that correspondence does not offer direct unmediated access to inner emotions.²⁵ Indeed, Fay Bound argues that letters tell us less about ‘interiorised experience than about the socially available paradigms used to convey feeling’.²⁶ While historians have been alert to the fact that letters are not unproblematic – distance provided a safe buffer and time for reflection; letters might be carefully crafted; writers could select and manipulate cultural scripts and the phrasing of sentiment – less scholarly attention has focussed on what might be termed the rhetorical and material politics of letter-writing. This article will correct this scholarly lacuna arguing that such approaches are central to the ways in which letters should be interpreted.

I

²⁰ Lawrence Stone (1977) *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson); Michael Anderson (1980) *Approaches to the History of the Western Family, 1500-1914* (Basingstoke, Macmillan); Edward Shorter (1976) *The Making of the Modern Family* (London: Collins).

²¹ For broader work on the history of emotions see for example, Joanna Bourke (2003) *Fear and Anxiety: Writing about Emotion in Modern History*, *History Workshop Journal*, 55, pp. 111-133; Barbara H. Rosenwein (2002) *Worrying about Emotions in History*, *The American Historical Review*, 107(3), pp. 821-845.

²² Susan Broomhall (2008) *Emotions in the Household*, in Susan Broomhall (Ed.) *Emotions in the Household, 1200-1900* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan), pp. 1-37 (p. 7).

²³ Linda A. Pollock (2011) *The Practice of Kindness in Early Modern Elite Society, Past and Present*, 211, pp. 121-58 (p. 124, 154). Cf. Ilana Krausman Ben-Amos (2000) *Reciprocal Bonding: Parents and Their Offspring in Early Modern England*, *Journal of Family History*, 25(3), pp. 291-312.

²⁴ Linda A. Pollock (2004) *Anger and the Negotiation of Relationships in Early Modern England*, *Historical Journal*, 47, pp. 567-590 (p. 573). See also, Catherine Mann (2008) ‘Whether your Ladship will or ne’: Displeasure, Duty and Devotion in *The Lisle Letters*, in Broomhall (Ed.) *Emotions in the Household*, pp. 119-134; Gary Schneider (2000) *Affecting Correspondences: Body, Behavior, and the Textualization of Emotion in Early Modern English Letters*, *Prose Studies*, 23(3), pp. 31-62.

²⁵ Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers*, pp. 23-6.

²⁶ Fay Bound (2002) *Writing the Self? Love and the Letter in England, c. 1660-c.1760*, *Literature and History*, 11(1), pp. 1-19 (pp. 5-6, 13). Linda Pollock, *Anger and the Negotiation*, p. 573.

Analysis of mother-daughter correspondence is ultimately shaped by the nature of extant letters and the material conditions of their production, reception and survival. The gendered politics of early modern archives restricts the kinds of perspectives of mother-daughter relationships possible, influences the kinds of questions asked and the ways in which we decode these texts. The corpus of letters that survive is highly selective, and socially restricted, largely from elite women; few survive from or to young girls, which privileges adult rather than childhood relationships, and may reflect practical archival concerns and that during this period children's letters were not preserved as objects of sentimentality.²⁷ More letters exist from daughters than mothers, perhaps indicative of daughterly duty to keep in touch or that the social position of mothers meant that they were more likely to be approached by daughters for help and assistance. On the whole, single or small clusters of letters survive; correspondence is often one-sided, and rarely do we get runs of epistolary exchanges, although Anne Clifford's lengthy correspondence with her mother, Margaret, countess of Cumberland is a notable exception. Surviving examples of letters thus capture a mere snapshot in time, generating a view of women's lives as static rather than evolving, and the relationships they document as constant, rather than fluctuating. Naturally letters were written at a distance, which fundamentally structured the social interaction, reflecting relationships when apart rather than living under the same roof. They thus reveal rhetorical acts performed during separation. Correspondence was conducted by daughters residing in other households, at court, or when married, and necessarily reflects these states. The eleven-year-old Lady Bridget Manners corresponded with her mother during the period she spent in the household of her grandmother, Bridget, countess of Bedford at Woburn Abbey from June 1588 until her arrival at court as Maid of Honour. Her letters were products of her situation. They requested furnishings for her chamber, delivered assurances that Lady Bedford 'hath great care of me', and reported news of family well-being and her departure to London.²⁸ Thus an understanding of the intricacies of early modern letter-writing is central to analysis of the peculiarities of mother-daughter relationships.

Attention to the mechanics of composition – who wrote letters, how and under what conditions – further exposes the generic complexity of mother-daughter correspondence, eroding, but not completely erasing notions of early modern letter-writing as private, personal and singular. While many women wrote themselves, a significant proportion of letters were penned by amanuenses (distancing female signatories from personal writing technologies) or exhibit signs of collaboration. Letters were dictated to scribes; written from notes by secretaries; constructed from templates or models by clerks; passed to family members and friends for comment.²⁹ Lady Lisle's daughters routinely used scribes to indite letters for them; Lady Lisle knew no French and therefore had her own secretaries read her daughter's French letters aloud for her.³⁰ Letter-writing was thus not unmediated, and letter texts survive in different formats, as drafts, copies, sent letters, and as documents intentionally preserved in family archives. There is also a degree of fluidity between husbands' and wives' correspondence, meaning that it is sometimes hard to isolate a daughter's relationship with her mother separate from her father. Daughters wrote to both parents, and spouses supplied

²⁷ This does however allow a corrective to studies of motherhood that have tended to concentrate on childbirth and maternal relationships with young children, rather than relationships with older and adult children. Valerie Fildes (Ed.) (1990) *Women as Mothers in Pre-Industrial England* (London: Routledge); Patricia Crawford, (2004) *Blood, Bodies and Families in Early Modern England* (Harlow: Pearson Education).

²⁸ HMC (1888) *Report on the Manuscripts of his Grace the Duke of Rutland, Preserved at Belvoir Castle*, 4 vols (London: HMSO), 1, p. 264.

²⁹ James Daybell (1999) Women's Letters and Letter-Writing in England, 1540-1603: An Introduction to the Issues of Authorship and Construction, *Shakespeare Studies*, 27, pp. 161-86.

³⁰ Muriel St. Clare Byrne (1981) *The Lisle Letters*, 6 vols. (Chicago: Chicago University Press), 3, 571, 584, p. 142.

postscripts to joint letters, blurring the categorisation of mother-daughter correspondence. Indeed, Anne Bacon's (née Gresham) complaints to her mother Mistress Dutton about her living conditions, which criticised her husband who 'hetherto' having 'provided nothinge towards our going to house' are only fully understood when it is noted that the letter was in fact written by her husband, Nathaniel Bacon, suggesting his involvement in trying to persuade her natural father the merchant and financier Sir Thomas Gresham to assist in providing for their living.³¹ The scribal and textual peculiarities of letters influence textual readings, and refigures them as potentially communal and collective, rather than merely individual and exclusive, providing a more complex understanding of issues of authorship and early modern subjectivities.

Customs of delivery and reading further inform our interpretation of early modern correspondence. A letter's deliverer (bearer) might act as a supplement to the letter's text, becoming a corporeal extension of the letter; meaning was therefore generated orally as well as textually; the sudden departure of a chance bearer could encourage an urgent immediacy among letter-writers (distanced from the careful crafting described by some historians) and become a rhetorical trope framing the occasion of a letter; letters were frequently sent unsealed, passed among family members and read aloud to assembled company. Alice Fitton sent a letter to her daughter Anne Newdigate open to be passed to her sister and added a postscript to a letter by her husband.³² A letter from Catherine countess of Westmorland to her daughter Margaret countess of Rutland was passed to the earl of Rutland with the request that she desired to know his pleasure concerning her mother's letter.³³ Such practices further undercut notions of correspondence as personal and individual; privacy here is defined by a shared set of reading practices within the family, rather than structured around a one-to-one relationship.

A central part of the argument of this article is that early modern letters can only be fully understood by also paying attention to the 'materiality' of texts, here defined as the physical characteristics of manuscript letters and the meanings generated by them: for example, the significance of handwriting, the size and quality of paper used, the layout of the manuscript page and the significance attached to seals. Such forms were imbued with social signs and codes that affected meaning. Features like writing a letter oneself, the use of black wax for sealing, signing at the bottom of the page, the way in which a letter was folded or the use of Italian paper, all carried significant meanings that were readily understood during the early modern period as markers of affect, respect, condolence or status. As female literacy rates rose among letter-writing groups over the course of the sixteenth century, it was increasingly expected that letters be personally written as a marker of intimacy and respect. Daughters were encouraged to learn to write, trained in the epistolary arts, and enjoined to correspond with their own hands. Not to do so was a social affront that demanded explanation. In this manner, the material rhetorics of the manuscript page were central to the ways in which letters communicated.

Furthermore, the strategic use of 'significant space' is relatively widespread in letters from daughters wanting to show due deference to mothers, marshalled alongside a vocabulary of petitioning.³⁴ Convention deemed it appropriate, for example, to leave an

³¹ Folger, L.d.21: [c.1572]. Anne was the illegitimate daughter of Sir Thomas Gresham and Anne Dutton: A. Hassell Smith, *et al.* (Eds) (1978-2000) *The Papers of Nathaniel Bacon of Stiffkey, 1556-1602*, 4 vols., Norfolk Record Society, 46, 49, 53, 64, 1, p. 291.

³² W[arwickshire] C[ounty] R[ecord] O[ffice], Newdegate Family of Arbury Papers CR 136/B122, B131.

³³ HMC, *Rutland*, 1, p. 56 (10/04/1550).

³⁴ On significant space see, Jonathan Gibson (1997) Significant Space in Manuscript Letters, *The Seventeenth Century*, 12(1), pp. 1-9; Daybell (2009) Material Meanings and the Social Signs of Manuscript Letters in Early Modern England, *Literature Compass*, 6, pp. 1-21.

honorific blank space after the closing salutation in letters to social superiors with signatures placed in the lower right hand corner of the page as a mark of filial obedience.³⁵ Such deference is clearly registered materially in many of the letters Bess of Hardwick received from her adult daughters. A letter enclosing new year's gifts of cloth and 'a drinckinge glasse' written by Frances Pierrepont (née Cavendish) to her mother Bess of Hardwick in her mid-twenties, once married, included significant space between the main body of the letter, the closing mode of address ('your Ladyships humble and dutiful dautter') and the signature, which was placed in the bottom right hand corner of the page, a mark of filial respect.³⁶ She continued to deploy the material rhetoric of deferential spacing almost thirty years later in her mid-fifties when corresponding in 1603 to send her news of King James's progress south.³⁷ In the early Tudor period too, such rules regarding the politics of deferential space were employed to social superiors, including mothers, as demonstrated by many of the letters from the Basset girls to their mother Honor, Lady Lisle.³⁸ A letter from the 13-year-old Anne Basset penned by a French scribe left significant space before the closing mode of address 'Votre tres humble et tres obeissant fille', producing a spatial template that forced Anne to sign in the bottom right-hand corner of the page. These were clearly traditions followed in France, as well as in England during the early modern period.³⁹ Size of paper also mattered. The utilisation of a full rather than cropped sheet for half a page exhibited due deference to a recipient of superior social standing. The deployment of blank space was thus central to the material meanings of manuscript letters and the ways in which they communicated visually as well as textually. In contrast to daughters' correspondence, deferential spacing was not a feature of mothers' letters; signatures were placed close to the main body of the letter, as can be seen from Elizabeth Leake's letter to her daughter Bess of Hardwick.⁴⁰ Layout, spacing and the placement of signature functioned as physical representations of social and gender hierarchies.

II

Letter-writing manuals of the period provided social templates for varied correspondents, including between daughter and mothers.⁴¹ In general they upheld social and gender hierarchies, demanding a certain level of formality and deference in letters dispatched

³⁵ William Fulwood (1568) *Enimie of Idlenesse*, sig.B2^v.

³⁶ Folger, X.d.428 (67): [c.1575]. For an new online edition of Bess of Hardwick's letters see, *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence, c.1550-1608*, Ed. by Alison Wiggins, Alan Bryson, Daniel Starza Smith, Anke Timmermann and Graham Williams, University of Glasgow, web development by Katherine Rogers, University of Sheffield Humanities Research Institute (April 2013), <http://www.bessofhardwick.org> [accessed 31 October 2013].

³⁷ Folger, X.d.428 (68): [1603].

³⁸ Mary Basset to Lady Lisle. Holograph letters: T[he] N[ational] A[rchives], S[tate] P[apers] 3/1, fol. 88 (08/11/1534), SP 3/1, fol. 92 (13/03/1536), SP 3/1, fol. 87 (05/09/1537), SP 3/1, fol. 90 (28/01/1538), SP 3/1, fol. 97 (15/02/1538). Scribal letters: SP 1/103, fol. 7 (24/03/1536), SP 3/1, fol. 93 (23/12/1536), SP 3/1, fol. 94 (17/03/1537), SP 3/1, fol. 89 (05/04/1537), SP 3/1, fol. 91 (25/04/1537), SP 3/1, fol. 96 (14/05/1537). See also, SP3/1, fol. 86: Katherine Basset to Lady Lisle, 24/07/1539 (holograph); SP 3/1, fol. 85 (before 19/10/1539) *Lisle Letters*, 5, 1495, p. 596, 1574, pp. 681-2.

³⁹ SP 3/1, fol. 49, *Lisle Letters*, 3: 571, pp. 142-3 (Anne Basset to Lady Lisle, 11/05/1534). See also, SP 1/93, fol. 49 (10/06/1534); SP 3/1, fol. 51 (12/03/1536); SP 3/1, fol. 48 (24/03/1536); SP 3/1, fol. 52 (25/03/1536); SP 3/1, fol. 53 (05/10/1539); SP 3/1, fol. 56 (22/12/1539). Cf. SP 3/1, fol. 50 (17/08/1535); SP 3/1, fol. 55 (08/08/1539); SP 3/1, fol. 54 (19/02/1540). Giora Sternberg (2009) *Epistolary Ceremonial: Corresponding Status at the Time of Louis XIV, Past & Present*, 204(1), pp. 33-88.

⁴⁰ Folger, X.d.428 (48): [c.1565].

⁴¹ Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers*, p. 23.

to those of superior status. Daughters in particular were enjoined to display filial obedience in writing to parents, undergirded by the precepts that governed children's demeanour towards parents that poured from the pulpit and press.⁴² Model letters for epistolary exchanges between daughters and mothers were provided by William Fulwood's *The Enemie of Idlenesse* (1568), reflecting social distinctions, and employing tropes of daughterly deference in the opening 'Dere and welbeloued Mother, after most humble and reuerent commendations with the desyre of your long life', and closing 'Your obedient and louing Daughter'.⁴³ Similar models are founded in late seventeenth-century guides for women's letter-writing, including Henry Care's *The Female Secretary* (1671) and Hannah Wolley's *The Gentlewoman's Companion* (1672).⁴⁴ Maternal replies were likewise supplied by Renaissance epistolographies, such as Fulwood, which enforced filial reverence and authorised a voice of maternal advice that verged on censure. Fulwood's example presents a 'charitable' mother reproving her daughter for her 'yll renoune'.⁴⁵ In practice, such model letters and authoritarian precepts to some extent indirectly scripted social relations between mothers and daughters; letters are often marked by a formality, and daughters often wrote with due deference, deploying a vocabulary of supplication and entreaty that extended beyond routine standardised modes of greeting and valediction. In a letter to her mother the Countess of Bath, Jane Long 'humbly' remembered her duty, 'beseeched' her mother for her 'daily blessing', 'advertised' her of her sister's health and that of all the family, apologised that she sent no token ('the wante thereof is poverty'), and signed herself 'your moste obedient dowghter'.⁴⁶ Attempts by daughters to recover maternal favour also accentuated social differences, as a means of fostering reconciliation. Thus, Margaret Kitson wrote in a respectful manner to her mother Lady Elizabeth Kitson asking for forgiveness. Margaret's missive presented herself in a manner that conformed to conventional precepts of filial obedience. Humbly submitting to her mother's will, and asking for her forgiveness on bended knee, Margaret argued that in future she would play the model daughter, in accordance with her Lady Kitson's commandments, 'specially' she claimed

...haveinge nowe of late redde the very same (your commandmentes) a mongeste the preceptes and rules of the wyse Cato expressed in these words *deo supplica, ama parentes, Magistrum metue*,⁴⁷ the which in efecte are the very three preceptes wherof you did chefly admonish me at Hengrave. I trust they are nowe so settled in my breaste that I hope never hereafter to be forgetfull of them.⁴⁸

In another letter she wrote 'I therefore with trickelinge tears and most sorrowful mind (acknowledginge my faulte) do most humbly crave pardon and forgiveness at your hands, a standard trope in formal letters of petition seeking clemency or pardon'.⁴⁹ These letters illustrate what Alison Wall has noted for the Thynne family, that women were fully aware of the behavioural codes that sought to regulate their conduct and that they gave them

⁴² Houlbrooke, *English Family*, pp. 143-45.

⁴³ *Enemie of Idlenesse*, pp. 114^r-114^v.

⁴⁴ *The Female Secretary* (1671), pp. 54-57; *The Gentlewoman's Companion* (1672), pp. 243-245.

⁴⁵ *Enemie of Idlenesse*, pp. 113^r-114^r.

⁴⁶ C[ambridge] U[niversity] L[ibrary], Hengrave MS, 88/2, fol. 129: 29/10/n.y.

⁴⁷ This is a version of the opening lines of Cato, the standard schoolboy text for teaching Latin phrases:

Itaque deo supplica. So, pray to God.

Parentes ama. Love your parents.

Cognatos cole. Respect your kindred.

Magistrum metue. Fear (respect) your teacher.

⁴⁸ CUL, Hengrave MS, 88/2, fol. 60, n.d. Joy Rowe (2004) Kitson family (*per. c.1520–c.1660*), *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

⁴⁹ CUL, Hengrave MS, 88/2, fol. 59: 01/04/n.y.

expression in their correspondence.⁵⁰ While a ‘voice’ of filial obedience was a useful cultural script for certain social situations or interactions, itself suggestive of the prevalence of authoritarian social attitudes in Tudor England, the extent to which these codes were internalised (‘settled in’ women’s ‘breasts’) is, however, harder to discern. In Margaret Kitson’s case, her letters represent strategic textual performances of rhetorical acts – obeisance on bended knee and sorrowful weeping – that she did not perform in person. Her mother might not have expected a display of contrition whose artificiality could have been more apparent in personal performance than in description of paper, though kneeling to parents was certainly not unknown during this period. Penned at a distance, correspondence thus allowed for the deployment of discursive tropes, as opposed to enacted gestures, lending greater significance to the epistolary transaction.

Behind the conventions of daughterly reverence, women’s letters to their mothers could in fact be open and intimate, much more so than letters to fathers, though this category of women’s letter is the least likely to survive. Daughters discussed with their mothers personal matters of some delicacy. While at court Elizabeth Talbot, the future wife of Henry Grey, Earl of Kent, wrote a small note home, in which she confidentially described to her mother, Mary, Countess of Shrewsbury, the health-related problems that she was suffering: ‘I had yesterday a lettel payne in my lefte brest there was a letel harde knot that was red’.⁵¹ Conventional mentions of one’s good or ill health are commonplace in women’s letters, yet the detail with which Elizabeth mentioned her condition is unusual in its intimacy, suggestive perhaps of her closeness with her mother. Elizabeth Wetherton sent to her mother Elizabeth Wynnnton a letter written on a fragment of a printed breviary with plainsong notation; use of this improvised writing material conceivably indicates limited access to paper or the secretive nature of the epistle. Unhappy in the household in which she was currently placed, Elizabeth Wetherton discussed with her mother the prospect of her entering Lady Corbet’s service, a matter that she had already mentioned to William Cecil. Her writing exhibits a fine balance of deference and forcefulness, dependence and self-reliance, as in her closing remarks: ‘for god sake neuer will me to tare here no longer for you know not thynges so well as I do mother I desayre you not to fayle but sende me worde by this berer what youre will is’.⁵² The unusual writing surface here is informative, and equally material features might be used to convey affect. Elizabeth Stuart (née Cavendish), countess of Lennox (1554-1582), Bess of Hardwick’s third daughter from her second marriage to Sir William Cavendish (1508-1557) used coloured floss within the seal in a letter to her mother, as a sign of affect. Use of silk or floss added a personal or emotive touch to the sealing of correspondence, and was much used in love letters of the period.⁵³

Mothers’ letters to daughters could also be relaxed and affectionate: Alice Fitton wrote to her daughter Anne Newdigate (‘My owne dere nan’), sending the bearer to hear news of ‘howe you and your cheekynes [chickens, i.e. her grandchildren] doo’; and in a postscript to a letter from her husband, Edward, she informed her daughter ‘this letter must do from us both’, writing that she hoped to hear from her soon, promising herself to send any good news.⁵⁴ Amidst discussions of provisioning and household servants, a letter from Isabella Foxe to her married daughter Margaret Herbert, informed her that her sister Martha was delivered of a daughter, and discussed details of who was to stand godparents at the

⁵⁰ Alison Wall (1990) *Elizabethan Precept and Feminine Practice: The Thynne Family of Longleat*, *History*, 75, pp. 23-38.

⁵¹ L[ambeth] P[alace] L[ibrary], Shrewsbury, 708, fol. 169: 14/03/n.y.

⁵² TNA, SP46/24/91: 02/11/[temp. Mary/Eliz].

⁵³ Folger, Cavendish-Talbot MSS, X.d.428 (50): [1574?]. Daybell, *Material Letter*, pp. 106-7. See also, Folger, X.d.428 (51).

⁵⁴ W[arwickshire] C[ounty] R[ecord] O[ffice], CR136/B120a: n.d.

Christening.⁵⁵ More informal modes are also evident in a letter from Bess of Hardwick to her daughter Mary: she wrote ‘my good sweete daughter; I am very desirous to heare how you doe./ I truste your Lord ys well or now of the goute; and I desire to heare how all ours doe at London and the Lettell sweete Lorde mautrauars; I pray god euer to blesse you deare harte; and them all with all [his] good blessinges; and soe in haste I cease at hardwecke this Laste of novembar’, signing herself your Loueing mother’.⁵⁶ Expressions that a mother might miss or long for her daughter are also common in correspondences between mothers and daughters, displaying the affective or positive emotional bonds present in these relationships, often obscured by social custom and familial obligation. Indeed, epistolary exchanges developed from desires to maintain contact with family. Elizabeth Talbot wrote to her daughter Lady Mary Talbot asking to hear of her situation: ‘I pray you let me heare this nighte how you and your good lorde dothe else shall I not slepe quiatly’.⁵⁷ These letters further indicate that conducting domestic correspondence not only fulfilled women’s emotional needs to receive news of the health, life and progress of relatives and other social contacts, but also was vital to maintaining networks of support, information and influence.

Alongside the formal, sometimes affectionate nature of mother-daughter relationships, anger could play a role, and as Linda Pollock has argued, such strong emotional feelings were an important, socially acceptable and everyday part of the negotiation of early modern relationships.⁵⁸ Epistolary templates for such rebarbative exchanges were supplied in letter-writing manuals of the period, under the category of letter of affront. Letters written during periods of dispute illustrate well the ways in which daughters balanced outward displays of filial respect and obedience with feelings of anger and frustration. Passionate correspondence was often strategic, echoing models of vituperation, written to correct perceived wrongs, and especially to defend female honour.⁵⁹ During her separation from her husband, Anthony Bourne, it appears that Elizabeth Bourne’s mother wished her to live with him. In a highly charged missive to her mother, Alice Mervin, Elizabeth Bourne balanced deference and defiance. The letter opens presenting her ‘dewtyfull love’, saying that her lack of writing was not because she ‘honored her lesse’ than she ought, but because she ‘chowsed wyth silence to kepe’ her ‘grefes’ to herself for fear of ‘offending’ her mother, a rhetorical tactic for drawing attention to them. She wrote on this occasion, Elizabeth informed her mother, because she understood that Lady Mervin ‘condemned’ her for an ‘undutiful child’. In response to her mother’s request that she live with her husband, she wrote that her ‘martyrdom’ could be no greater, that ‘my yll fortune hath wroute you agaynst me to wych I do ympute all’.⁶⁰ In like manner Mary Lady Darcy wrote to her mother Lady Elizabeth Kitson at the time of the split from her husband Thomas Lord Darcy. Lady Darcy’s character had been poisoned by her enemies who had informed her husband that she had been speaking ill of him in his absence; Lord Darcy suspected his wife of flirtatious behaviour and potential adultery. Although not directed at her mother, the angry complaints discharged in the letter appear to have acted as some kind of catharsis for her, bemoaning to her mother of the false slanders against her, bemoaning the lying tongues of her enemies, who treated her odiously and vilely: ‘I neuer

⁵⁵ W.J. Smith (Ed.) (1963) *Herbert Correspondence: The Sixteenth and Seventeenth Century Letters of the Herberts of Chirbury, Powis Castle and Dolguog, Formerly at Powis Castle in Montgomeryshire* (Cardiff), pp.65-66, [c.1600-1610].

⁵⁶ LPL, Talbot Papers, MS 3205, fols. 59^r-60^v: 30/11/1607.

⁵⁷ Talbot Papers, 3205, fol. 64: n.d.

⁵⁸ Pollock, ‘Anger and the Negotiation’.

⁵⁹ Michelle O’Callaghan (forthcoming) ‘An uncivill scurrilous letter’: “womanish brabb[ll]es” and the Letter of Affront, in James Daybell and Andrew Gordon (Eds.) *Cultures of Correspondence in Early Modern Britain*.

⁶⁰ B[ritish] L[ibrary], London, Additional MS, 23212, fol.182: n.d.

lowke' she informed her mother 'to live so longe as to be free from mallisius tonges'.⁶¹ Mother-daughter bonds could clearly command respect and affection, but equally conflict aroused more negative passions. At times of family dispute, the textual demonstration of hurt or upset feelings, moral outrage and indignation could be strategic, with the letter of affront supplying women with an epistolary template for the defence of female honour and reputation.

III

While the correspondence between mothers and daughters displays clear traits, it is very difficult simply to characterise such letters as a sub-genre of women's letters, since they vary enormously in form and function. Letters from young girls (the few that survive) are formal, simplistic and brief, and often penned as a form of pedagogical exercise. Several examples of practice letters by girls survive from the period including three beautifully written and highly ornate letters that Katherine Oxinden sent home to her mother in the early-seventeenth century, which reveal her use of faint pencil lines to guide carefully the formation of lower- and upper-case letters, and ascenders and descenders.⁶² Anne Basset's letters to her mother (written aged 13 or 14) also betray pedagogical designs to inculcate codes of obedience and patterns of deferential behavior. This is clearly displayed in extracts from an early letter to her mother written from Pont de Remy on 17 August 1535: 'Madame, I commend me to your good favour....Madame, I was very glad to receive good news of you....Madame, I would most earnestly entreat you that if I am to pass the winter in France I may have some gown to pass it in'.⁶³ While the scribal process may well have accentuated social hierarchies, the repetition of the formal mode of address for her mother, 'Madame', combined with the staccato stiffness of the short formal and formulaic sentences, imbued with a vocabulary of deference, serve to reinforce the strict boundaries of the mother-daughter relationship. The letter is also indicative perhaps of an unpracticed writer, and shows the ways in which early efforts at letter-writing were central to strict practices of upbringing. Mary Basset's early letters written perhaps as early as nine likewise read as formulaic lists, with each sentence following 'Madame'.⁶⁴ Thus, the writing of letters to family members could be part of the educative process, as part of childhood socialization to enforce deferential codes of filial respect. It is hard in these young girls' brief, simplistic letters, which are little more than pedagogical exercises written to convey commendations or duty to discern much of a personality. The obedient tone of these early letters might be contrasted with a letter that Anne Basset sent her mother a couple of years later, during her appointment as a Maid-of-Honour, in which she wrote with much greater assurance and confidence:

I perceive that you think that I am at the Court, and that your pleasure is that I shall sue to the King's Highness for the pardon of John Harris. It is not possible that I should speak for his pardon, for Mistress Mewtas and I are now at Guildford, going to London; and I think we shall not see the King again till his Grace come to Grafton...⁶⁵

⁶¹ CUL, Hengrave MS, 88/2, fol.77, (30/01/1595); Joy Rowe, Gawdy family (*per. c.1500–1723*), *ODNB*; John Gage (1822) *The History and Antiquities of Hengrave in Suffolk* (London: Carpenter), pp.214-18.

⁶² BL, Add. MS, 28004, fols.9^r-10^v, 11^r-12^v, 13^{r-v}: n.d.

⁶³ *Lisle Letters*, 3, 578 (17/08/1535). See also, *Lisle Letters*, 3, 584, 592.

⁶⁴ *Lisle Letters*, 3, 575 (08/11/1534), 590 (24/03/1536).

⁶⁵ *Lisle Letters*, 5, 1513: 08/08/1539. See also, *Lisle Letters*, 5, 1126: 15/03/1538.

Here something of the assertive personality of the young letter-writer emerges, jostling alongside the protocols of childish obedience. Such letters may highlight the conventions, formality and distance of the parent-child relationship at this early developmental stage, which was further mediated by scribes. Nonetheless, they also illustrate the ways in which young girls were taught to write letters, and how they experimented with the form to develop epistolary selves.

On the whole, letters between mothers and daughters were rather protean in form, not conforming to strict epistolary genres or templates. They were rarely written for a single purpose, but instead they resemble what Erasmus described as ‘mixed’ letters, incorporating (often simultaneously) elements of various formal types of letters, such as the letter of condolence, petition or advice letter.⁶⁶ In a letter to her daughter Elizabeth, ‘My Besse’, Susannah Darnell interwove commendations to various family members with discussions of food, money, tokens, servants, her purchases of clothing and gifts, and Christmas preparations. Furthermore, the main body of the letter is followed by a series of random crammed postscripts continuing on the side of the paper and filling the entire page. These afterthoughts, which imbue the letter with a kind of chaotic spontaneity, include details of further gifts and food items sent, snippets of news and prescriptions for her daughter Margaret’s education.⁶⁷ The defiance of conventions of manuscript spacing here – for example, not maintaining a right-hand margin – indicates either a letter-writer unaware of spatial protocols or a more informal mode of writing, signalling an intimacy that does not necessitate formal conventions. In terms of format, letters were ordinarily contained on one manuscript page, with standard folio sheets of paper often cropped to smaller sizes for reasons of household economy. Some writers occasionally ran to more than one page, which may indicate less social rigidity, and perhaps more emotional or sentimental reasons for writing. Anne countess of Sussex’s lengthy self-justificatory letter to her mother, exonerating herself from charges of adultery, ran to six sides of manuscript and is quite extraordinary, reading more like an ‘open letter’ intended for wider public distribution than an intimate exchange.⁶⁸ Generically then, surviving letters between mothers and daughters represent a broad spectrum from the stiff simplicity of the half-dozen lines of an early educational letter to the more prolix, rambling style of a woman defending her sexual honour and reputation.

Letters were thus shaped by their ‘social materiality’, in other words the material conditions and contexts in which they were produced, disseminated and consumed. The act of writing letters to mothers (as well as other familial and social acquaintances) was customarily regarded as a filial duty or obligation during the early modern period. Letters functioned as gifts, conveying commendations, remembrances and family news, which obligated reciprocal and timely exchange, an exchange imbued with social protocols that made demands on both receiver and recipient.⁶⁹ Agnes Wilford wrote to her ‘most louing mother’, ‘hauing so conuenient a messinger I could not forbere to writ these few lines unto you to show the part of a dutifull childe to so kinde a mother’.⁷⁰ Elizabeth, countess of Kent wrote to her mother Mary, countess of Shrewsbury that ‘I nowe have no other ocation to drawe me to trobell your la[dys]hip with my ill hande, butt only to perform my duty, in humbly presentinge my service by every messenger’.⁷¹ Correspondents also conventionally apologised for not having written sooner or more often, conscious not to cause offence by a ‘lack of duty’; the apologetics

⁶⁶ Desiderius Erasmus (1522) *De conscribendis epistolis* (1522) in *Collected Works of Erasmus*, 25, (Ed.) J.K. Sowards (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), pp.67-71.

⁶⁷ TNA, SP46/24/224: [temp. James I].

⁶⁸ BL, Cotton MS, Vespasian, F.IX, fols. 115^r-117^v: 03/09/1549.

⁶⁹ On letters as gifts, see Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers*, pp. 159-65.

⁷⁰ WCRO, Throckmorton Papers, CR 1998/Box 60/Folder 1/4: 19/09/n.y.

⁷¹ Talbot MS, 3205, fol. 104^{r-v}: n.d.

associated with the despatch of letters, as with excuses for poor handwriting (whether real or feigned), were part of the humility topoi employed by letter-writers corresponding with social superiors. The transmission of news formed a key gift in exchanges; daughters well-placed at court were a useful conduit for news.⁷² Letters were also the conveyers of material gifts. Lady Anne Clifford's letter to her mother of December 1615 was accompanied by a New Year's gift: 'Maddam' she wrote,

I intended to haue wrought a peece of worke with my on handes for a nuers gifte for your La.; but his hathe bine so trubellsom a yere with mee as I had nether lesuer to worke or doe aney thing ellce but weepe and greefe therfore I beeciche your La: bee plesed to receue thes pillabers [pillow cases] as a nuers gifte and poore remembrance of my duty and affection.⁷³

In many cases, the letters to mothers were perfunctory and practical, the textual transmitters of routine conventions, social protocols, and smatterings of news.

In spite of the claims of duty and obligation evident in correspondence, epistolary communications between mothers and daughters were in practice (as far as evidence shows) not conducted on a regular basis by modern-day standards, for example, written every Sunday without fail, in a way that marital correspondence might be.⁷⁴ Instead letter-writing was episodic, occasioned by practical concerns, crises and events; letters thus privilege certain emotional states or conditions, such as grief, love and need, all of which demanded someone to set pen to paper. The reasons for corresponding thus implicitly shaped the nature of the correspondence. Letters were written at particular occasions and points, to transact business, at times of pregnancy and childbirth, as occasions of duty, and in times of trouble or want (usually relating to disputes or marital crises), when mothers could dispense timely advice. Produced in connection with specific moments, such letters shed important light on the roles of mothers with adult children. Periods during pregnancy and childbirth also occasioned correspondence, revealing the emotional and practical support that married daughters could derive from their mothers.⁷⁵ This was a distinctly female gendered feature of mother-daughter correspondence. The pregnant Anne Bacon (née Gresham) wrote to her natural mother – a letter drafted in the hand of her husband Nathaniel Bacon – not long 'I wish with all my hart my fortune were so good as to have yow ther', adding 'I hope you will prairie for your dawghter, though yow be not with her'.⁷⁶ The teenaged Mary Basset was concerned for her own mother, Lady Lisle's safe delivery during childbirth, writing on several occasions to send her well wishes and express anxiety at her welfare, and in one missive asking 'If I might have my wish I would be with you when you shall be brought to bed, to warm his swaddling clouts for the babe'.⁷⁷

Among the most discernibly personal elements of mother-daughter correspondences was the discussion of illness, which scholars have shown was intimately connected to expressions of the self.⁷⁸ Some of the most striking discussions of ill-health are in letters between Bess of Hardwick and her daughters, which impart the correspondence a particular intimacy. Mary, countess of Shrewsbury wrote to her mother the countess dowager, 'I am

⁷² *Lisle Letters*, 5, 1513 (08/08/1539).

⁷³ Kendal Record Office, Hothfield Papers, WD/Hoth/Box 44, unfoliated: 1615.

⁷⁴ Daybell, *Women Letter-Writers*, p. 60.

⁷⁵ Patricia Crawford (2004) Katharine and Philip Henry and Their Children: A Case Study in Family Ideology, in *Blood, Bodies and Families in Early Modern England* (Harlow: Pearson Education), pp. 175-208 (p. 188).

⁷⁶ Folger, L.d.21, L.d.20: [early June 1573], [mid June 1573]. *The Papers of Nathaniel Bacon*, 1, pp. 25, 75, 78, 291.

⁷⁷ *Lisle Letters*, 3, 615 (17/03/1537), 617 (5/04/1537), 619 (25/04/1537), 620 (14/05/1537).

⁷⁸ Roy Porter (1991) "Expressing Yourself Ill": The Language of Sickness in Georgian England, in Peter Burke and Roy Porter (Eds.) *Language, Self, and Society: A Social History* (Cambridge: Polity), pp. 276-99.

very glad to here your la: helth is beter and that the pane in your hepe declineth', but complained of 'sume payne' in her own 'hed'.⁷⁹ In an earlier letter to her daughter, the countess asked for news that she and her husband were well 'else I shall not sleep quietly', another letter written in 1580 addressed her as 'Swete harte', and complained 'I haue ben contnewally greatly paynd in my heade, necke, shouldars, and armes, and thenke yt much worse in the moyste wether'.⁸⁰ She wrote to Gilbert and Mary together in the late 1590s writing that she was 'trobuled to vnderstande of my daughter of shrouesburys sycknes', addressing her daughter who had been troubled by 'a coulde' directly within the text, 'yf your fytes be paste I truste you wyll sovne recouer strenthe wth that good order you wyll vse', adding that she herself had been troubled with a cold, but 'I thanke god I am now metly well and take the eayre often abrode, w^{ch} I fynde doth me moste good'.⁸¹ Utterances of this nature reveal a more intimate side to mother-daughter correspondence. Furthermore, the collaboration evident in the last example indicates the degree to which a mother's contact with her daughter was mediated by her relationship with her son-in-law.

Letters between mothers and daughters during this period were not merely sentimental, but often concerned the transaction of business, and within a patronage society family connections were extremely useful to forward suits. Lady Elizabeth Framlingham wrote to her married daughter Anne, the wife of the Norfolk gentleman Bassingbourne Gawdy, to intercede with her uncle about a disputed lease of land that belonged to her friend.⁸² Lady Bridget Manners petitioned her mother the countess of Rutland on behalf of an old servant William Rouse for a parsonage.⁸³ Elizabeth Finch wrote to her mother Lady Anne Heneage at court soliciting news of progress of her intercession with the queen concerning their lands, writing, 'I can not forgyt my parke'.⁸⁴ Katherine Basset wanted her mother to be 'so good lady and mother unto me as to speak that I may be one of the Queen's maids; for I have no trust in none other but your ladyship to speak for me in that cause'.⁸⁵ Mothers were often mediators within families. Bess of Hardwick's mother Elizabeth Leake wrote to her daughter then Lady St Loe thanking her for her great kindness to her half-sister Margaret, and asking her to lend her son, Bess's brother James Hardwick, money to buy land.⁸⁶ Often the letters took the form of requests, which Mary Basset was very mindful of, writing 'All letters I write you are ever to make requests'.⁸⁷ At its heart, the transaction of business in letters necessitated the making of requests, which imbued correspondence with a rhetoric of supplication and deference, what Lynne Magnusson (echoing Angel Day) refers to as letters of humility and entreaty, or 'trouble-taking' missives. Such letters were marked by tropes of deference and self-deprecation, which reflects the specifics of the social transaction, the delicacy of the act of making a request.⁸⁸ Above all, this use of petitionary language demonstrates the translation of deferential rhetoric from formal letters of petition to the familiar letter between family members.

⁷⁹ Folger, X.d.428 (118): 08/07[1607].

⁸⁰ Talbot Papers, MS 3205, fols.64^r-65^v, 72: [1580s], [1580].

⁸¹ Talbot Papers, MS 3205, fols.75^r-76^v: 28/02/[1597/8?].

⁸² HMC (1885) *Report on the Manuscripts of the Family of Gawdy Formerly of Norfolk* (London: HMSO), p. 32 (17/03/1589); P.W. Hasler (Ed.) (2006) *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons, 1558-1603*, 3 vols. (Woodbridge: Boydell & Brewer), 2, pp. 176-77.

⁸³ HMC, *Rutland*, 4, p.208 ([c.1590]).

⁸⁴ HMC (1913-65) *Report on the Manuscripts of Allan George Finch, Esq. Of Burley-On-The-Hill, Rutland*, 4 vols. (London: HMSO), 1, pp. 28-9 (27/04/[1589], 17/05/1589).

⁸⁵ *Lisle Letters*, 5, 1574 (before 19/10/1539).

⁸⁶ Folger, X.d.428 (48): [c.1565].

⁸⁷ *Lisle Letters*, 3, 622a (05/09/1537).

⁸⁸ Lynne Magnusson (2004) A Rhetoric of Requests: Genre and Linguistic Scripts in Elizabethan Women's Suitors, in James Daybell (Ed.) *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450-1700* (Aldershot: Ashgate), pp. 51-66.

The letter also functioned as a key vehicle for the dispensation of maternal advice, and many daughters seem to have sought mothers' epistolary counsel. Indeed, Alatheia, countess of Arundel thanked her mother the countess of Shrewsbury for her advice.⁸⁹ Anne Basset thanked her mother for her 'good and motherly counsel' concerning her 'continuance in the King's favour'.⁹⁰ Some letters dispensed precepts that enforced honourable conduct and duty. Lady Lisle wrote to her daughter Mary, who resided with Madame de Bours' household at Abbeville willing her to 'serve God and please my lord and lady'.⁹¹ Lady Mary Peyton advised her recently married daughter 'be careful that, whatever you doe, to love honer and obey your housband in all things that is fitting for a resonable creature', in other words that obedience should not be unbounded.⁹² Other Tudor mothers wrote to their daughters offering emotional and material support during times of particular need, adversity and uncertainty. Alice Marvin wrote to encourage her daughter Elizabeth Bourne during a period of marital difficulty with her violent and wayward husband Anthony Bourne, promising to 'wryte to make suche frends as I can for the favo[u]r of yo[u]r cause' and assuring her that between her and her step-father's soliciting 'we shall be able to do you some good'. Despite Anthony Bourne's attempts to win Lady Marvin to his side in the dispute, she assured her daughter of her backing: 'his despytes cannot more move me, then the vomyting of a dronken man, or the raving of a madde man'.⁹³ Other letters dispensed political advice. Lady Alice Fitton wrote to her eldest daughter advising her husband to go in person to see Lord Keeper Egerton and explain objections made by the Fittons and Newdigates to the marriage of Mary Fitton with William Polewhele, whose candidacy for marriage the Egerton family endorsed.⁹⁴

Maternal advice could also verge on the vitriolic and invective, especially when linked to disputes over matters of marriage and religion, which were such an integral part of early modern female identity. Lady Elizabeth Willoughby a woman described by Cassandra, duchess of Chandos as 'a woman of great wit and virtue but of turbulent spirit', and possessed of a veritable poisoned pen, contested the match that her estranged husband Sir Francis was planning for her second daughter, Margaret to the Catholic Griffin Markham.⁹⁵ Writing to persuade her daughter not to enter into the match, Lady Willoughby employed a rhetoric of maternal affection to justify her intervention: 'My daughter, the motherly love I bear you (than which no love can be greater) constrains me to write hoping that you bear a dutifull care of my blessing and counsel'. Added to this plea for filial duty, the letter continued asking Margaret to 'remember your calling', invoking God's help and counselling her to remember her true faith:

I desire to the Almighty to bless you and continue you in that faith which your father and I carefully desired you should learn from your cradle, and as a mother I charge and exhort you not to enter into any union which may draw you from the same. Marriage is honourable, but if religion fail on the one party, it is in my opinion a wicked joyning of the faithfull with the ungodly. I write this because I hear of a marriage motion'd to you which, for the religion suspected or professed, is not to be received. I also hear that to procure your good will tokens have been given you which are markes and signs of

⁸⁹ Talbot Papers, 2105, fol.135: n.d.

⁹⁰ *Lisle Letters*, 5, 1620: (22/12/1539).

⁹¹ *Lisle Letters*, 3, 590a (after 16/04/1536).

⁹² BL, Additional MS, 27999, fol. 171: 19/02/1633.

⁹³ BL, Additional MS, 23212, fol.195: n.d.

⁹⁴ WCRO, CR 136/B121. Lady Newdigate-Newdegate (1897) *Gossip From a Muniment Room Being: Passages Lives of Anne and Mary Fytton, 1574 to 1618* (London: David Nutt), pp. 78-9; Vivienne Larminie (1995) *Wealth, Kinship and Culture: the Seventeenth-Century Newdigates of Arbury and Their World* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press), p.90

⁹⁵ R.S. Smith (1988) *Sir Francis Willoughby of Wollaton Hall* (Nottingham: City of Nottingham Art Department), p. 14; R. S. Smith, Willoughby, Sir Francis (1546/7–1596), *ODNB*.

popery: I mean crucifixes and such like. Either you must in time go back, or God hath lost a servant and my self a daughter.

The rhetorical point that if the marriage took place she would have lost a daughter is reiterated in the closing mode of address, where Lady Willoughby signed herself ‘your loving mother, if you be an obedient child’.⁹⁶ The letter illustrates the more authoritarian side of mother-daughter relationships, and Lady Willoughby had acted with physical violence to another daughter, Winifred, over her choice of match to her kinsman Edward Willoughby, reacting by locking her daughter up and beating her so severely that Winifred feared she would end up lame.⁹⁷ Despite the extremity of this example, it nonetheless illustrates that advice-giving was seen as an inalienable right of the natural, loving mother, which authorised a voice of authority and counsel. This was all the more emotionally charged in Lady Willoughby’s case since the right and authority to decide upon a match for her daughter – or at least be part of it – was central to her social authority and influence as a mother.

IV

The most extensive English mother-daughter correspondence that survives for the period is that between Anne Clifford and her mother Margaret, Countess of Cumberland. An analysis of these letters highlights the social complexities of epistolary exchange between mothers and daughters, affording the opportunity to examine the variety of techniques deployed, and countering the methodological weaknesses imposed by limited archival survival, which forces a concentration on individual examples. Although sometimes formal and respectful, Anne’s letters reveal an attachment to and reliance upon her mother.⁹⁸ Her earliest surviving letter, written in late August 1605 at the age of fifteen, exhibits a mixture of filial reverence and conspiratorial address. Addressing her mother as ‘Madone’ and signing herself ‘your La[dys]hip’s] moost obedient and dutyfull daughter’, Anne Clifford informed her that she would not be residing with Arbella Stuart in her chamber at Court in Oxford as her mother had desired, relating to her that ‘I haue had a gret dell, of talke, with my lord about that matter you knoe of, for that mache, and my lord hath promesed mee, that ther sholld nothing pase, for any marage, what so euer, but that your consent sholld bee asked’.⁹⁹ Most of her correspondence with her mother, however, survives from 1614 to 1616. Although not part of a weekly routine, the relative frequency with which the two women wrote to each other and the very length of their letters documents a strong mutually supportive relationship. Anne’s letters to her mother are packed with news of daily life: an account of her daughter’s illness in one letter is followed by news of the scandal involving ‘my Lord of Somerset and his Lady’, which she claims is the wonder of the world.¹⁰⁰ Another letter described recent

⁹⁶ HMC (1911) *Report on the Manuscripts of Lord Middleton, Preserved at Wollaton Hall, Nottinghamshire* (London: HMSO), pp. 592-96; Mark Nicholls, Markham, Sir Griffin (b. c.1565, d. in or after 1644), *ODNB*.

⁹⁷ Alice T. Friedman (1989) *House and Household in Elizabethan England: Wollaton Hall and the Willoughby Family* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), p. 67; HMC, *Middleton*, pp. 599-603.

⁹⁸ WD/Hoth/Box 44. K. Hodgkin (1985) The Diary of Lady Anne Clifford: A Study of Class and Gender in the Seventeenth-Century, *History Workshop Journal*, 19, pp. 148-61.

⁹⁹ WD/Hoth/Box 44: 08/1605. George C. Williamson (1922) *Lady Anne Clifford, Countess of Dorset, Pembroke and Montgomery 1590-1676: Her Life, Letters and Work* (Kendal: T. Wilson), plate 8. The ‘match’ here probably refers to her first husband Richard Sackville, lord Buckhurst whom she later married in 1610.

¹⁰⁰ WD/Hoth/Box 44: 10/11/1615.

Christmas festivities at Bollbroke House, dealings between her husband and uncle, and ended announcing the birth of ‘two fine pups’.¹⁰¹ It is in her later letters, written during the protracted disputes with her uncle Francis, fourth Earl of Cumberland over her lands of inheritance, that the procedure of writing to her mother appears to have facilitated for Anne Clifford the sorting out, ordering and articulating of her thoughts and problems on paper. The relationship with her mother glimpsed in these letters is a close one; they were penned at a time when she was under enormous pressure from her husband, the Earl of Dorset, to come to what for her would have been an unfavourable arrangement with her uncle. In a letter of 6 December 1615, she reported her husband’s continued efforts to take money and force a settlement with her ‘uncle of Cumberland’; she ‘beseeched’ her mother not to trouble herself, for ‘so long as you live and are there, there is still hope for me’.¹⁰² Anne seems to have utilised her letters to her mother as a way of exploring her relationship with her husband and the possibility of marital separation. In one letter she explained to her mother that her husband had threatened to leave her to live in France if she did not drop her claims for the Clifford lands and accept a financial settlement. Forced to decide between her husband and her rightful inheritance, Anne wrote to her mother seeking counsel and laying out her options:

I am noue in a naroe strate and knoe not which way to turne mysellfe. my Coussen Russell wolld haue mee doe it, and uses all the parswasions hee can to that ende hee hathe sente you a leter to that purpos...I beecich you sende mee an aunser with as much speede as you can for I shall bee earnestley prest to doe it, or ellse absolutley to denie it, which will make cich [such] a breche beetwene my Lorde and mee as will not eseley bee mended. I will doe nothing with out your La[dyship’s] knolledge therfor I beecich you let mee knoe your resolucion as son as possable you may.¹⁰³

In some senses then, letters provided women with a sounding board for ideas and arguments; read carefully, with attention to rhetoric and purpose, such documents can offer insights into women’s thinking and mental processes.

Margaret Clifford’s own side of the correspondence reveals her role in supporting her daughter throughout the difficulties with her husband over the disputed inheritance. In a letter that ran to six sides, the Countess of Cumberland attempted to strengthen her daughter’s resolve in the matter. She pressed Anne not to pass away her inheritance, stating in confessional terms that once it is done ‘your soro can not recalle you and yours shall ever repent’. Later in the letter the countess addresses head-on her daughter’s concern and misery that as a wife she is being unfaithful in crossing her husband in this manner: ‘for in wat estate so evry yo bein’ she wrote ‘ther ar and will be som discontiments with land and without land, with a howsbant, and without, on tille we injoy that most bliset howsbant Jesus christ’.¹⁰⁴ In the years after her husband’s death, the Countess of Cumberland devoted much of her energy to working towards the restitution of her daughter’s estates.¹⁰⁵ She wrote on 30 July 1615, ‘I most lok forder, bouth for you and my selfe and as on writes ther is som resolucion in the femallys’.¹⁰⁶ Close to death, Margaret Clifford wrote to her ‘der dauter’ telling her of her illness, and even to the end strove to galvanise Anne’s resolution, committing her to God who would give her the strength to endure and overcome; the letter is touchingly endorsed in Anne Clifford’s own handwriting, ‘the last leter which I reseved from my dear mother of her own hand writinge, it beeing towards the later end of Aprell 1616’, a conscious textual

¹⁰¹ Ibid: 01/1615.

¹⁰² Ibid: 06/12/1615.

¹⁰³ Ibid: 20/01/1616.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid: 14/01/1616.

¹⁰⁵ George Clifford, d. 1605: Arthur Clifford (Ed.) (1817) *Collectanea Cliffordiana* (Paris; rpt. 1980), p. 28.

¹⁰⁶ WD/Hoth/Box 44: 30/07/1615.

monument to their affectionate relationship.¹⁰⁷ The survival of these letters was no mere chance. Indeed, Anne Clifford commissioned a manuscript volume of her mother's correspondence to be drawn up as part of her efforts to memorialise the countess of Cumberland and the Clifford family.¹⁰⁸ The material conditions of the archival afterlife of these letters, which were preserved and ordered almost as a form of biography, influence the ways in which they must be read.

In conclusion, early modern English mother-daughter correspondence is hard to categorise in any simplistic way. Generically it does not conform to any given epistolary type or model, but rather is more protean, resembling 'mixed letters' incorporating different elements of letters of condolence, request, supplication and advice, depending on form and function. Letters thus assume a variety of formats from brief and simplistic missives written as pedagogical exercises to encourage filial socialisation (the letter functioning as a gift) to more expansive letters that are a cross between newsletters and shopping lists. Letters often share a close association with formal modes of supplication and petition as well as advice letters. While women's letters did not always conform to epistolary templates, the social situations that structured the act of letter-writing might encourage a degree of formality. Supplications and requests demanded a petitionary language of deference, which was matched by a spatial rhetoric of respect; while the act of advice-giving lent mothers a voice of maternal authority and counsel. As textual conveyors of emotion letters were innately complex, mediated texts, which conveyed meaning through material as well as textual forms, and were inflected by archival conditions. Extant letters tend to privilege elite women, corresponding during adulthood, and more survive from daughters than mothers. Surviving letters are also often singular and correspondence one-sided, rather than a two-way exchange, which imposes certain constraints on the material, and can encourage a view of relationships as snapshots in time, at a distance, and as static and unchanging, rather than dynamic and fluctuating over the varied course of the female lifecycle. Relations between mothers and daughters were governed by a range of 'cultural scripts' – the obedient, dutiful daughter and the loving natural mother – which were chosen and adopted according to circumstance, and it is the nuances and negotiations of such scripts that is telling. Exchanges were situational, related to particular emotional states or conditions – that of need, gratitude, distress or conflict – which further shapes the nature of mother-daughter relationships. Thus, arguably more personal and individual elements are discernible alongside epistolary formalities and protocols. Mothers and daughters expressed gratitude in receiving correspondence and longing to see one another; letters imparted warm sentiments and confidences, and conveyed intimate advice and gifts; they also register conflict and dispute, were vehicles for invective and moral censure. In short, they reflect the complex tensions and contradictions that lay at the heart of early modern mother-daughter relationships, as reciprocal codes of obedience, duty and sentiment shaped by socio-economic and political structures contested with personality and circumstance which changed over the female lifecycle.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 16/04/1616. Margaret Clifford d. 24 May 1616, and was buried in Appleby Church on 11 July: Williamson (1920) *George Third Earl of Cumberland (1558-1605): His Life and His Voyages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 303-04.

¹⁰⁸ Richard T. Spence (1997) *Lady Anne Clifford: Countess of Pembroke, Dorset and Montgomery (1590-1676)* (Stroud: Sutton), pp. 177-79.