

# Sex Education, Songs, and Spiritual Guidance: An Eighteenth-Century Servants' Library

by

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OVER THE PAST FORTY YEARS, HISTORIANS OF THE BOOK and of reading have sought to expand our knowledge of book use among different social classes. Peter Clark's work on early-modern inventories and wills uncovered book ownership across a much wider demographic than previously documented, revealing the material importance of books in early-modern lives.<sup>1</sup> Jan Fergus's research on the eighteenth-century client profiles of two provincial booksellers historicized both the local 'reading publics' and the economics of book ownership. Importantly, her findings included the purchases by fifty provincial servants.<sup>2</sup> Paul Kaufman worked his way through the early library registers of commercial and subscription libraries, revealing the types of published works members had access to; and Isabel Rivers' and David Wykes' *Dissenting Academies Online* project does the same for those attending eighteenth- and nineteenth-century dissenting academies.<sup>3</sup> More recently, Mark Purcell's excellent survey of *The Country House Library* begins by reminding us of their somewhat neglected status in book history, and of the unexpected spaces and readers that can be found within them. In particular, he draws attention to early nineteenth-century servant libraries.<sup>4</sup> In

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Clark, 'The Ownership of Books in England, 1560–1640: The Example of Some Kentish Townsfolk', in *Schooling and Society: Studies in the History of Education*, ed. by Lawrence Stone (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1976), pp. 95–111.

<sup>2</sup> Jan Fergus, *Provincial Readers in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 1, and 'Provincial Servants' Reading in the Late Eighteenth Century' in *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, ed. by James Raven, Helen Small & Naomi Tadmor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 202–25.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Kaufman, *Borrowings from the Bristol Library, 1773–1784: A Unique Record of Reading Volumes* (Charlottesville, VA: Bibliographical Society of the University of Virginia, 1960). *Dissenting Academies Online*: <https://vls.english.qmul.ac.uk/>.

<sup>4</sup> Mark Purcell, *The Country House Library* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017), p. 231. He cites National Trust, Felbrigg 1398606; NRO, MC 3/535, 516x4, a Register of Books Borrowed from the Servants' Library at Blickling, 1869; and personal information from Peter Hoare about a servants' library at Hatfield in 1855, see p. 318, nn. 63–64.

addition, resources such as the *Reading Experience Database* (RED) and the work of historians of reading such as Abigail Williams, among many others, chronicle the extent of sociable reading across classes in the eighteenth century.<sup>5</sup> Through their meticulous research, it is increasingly apparent that book use, book ownership, and even modest private libraries were much more widespread among servants, trades people, and the middling classes throughout the seventeenth, eighteenth, and early nineteenth centuries.

The present article adds to this field of enquiry by offering a unique and important case study: a mid-eighteenth-century servants' library. The evidence for the library comes from a manuscript list in the hand of Elizabeth (née Seymour) Smithson Percy, duchess of Northumberland (1716–1776). Though the manuscript is identified in the Alnwick Castle archives as a 'List of books, said to be a catalogue of the library of Elizabeth, Countess of Northumberland, n.d. (18<sup>th</sup> cent.)', my research establishes that it could not be anything other than a servants' library.<sup>6</sup> Covering everything from popular chapbooks to evangelical tracts, and jest books to midwifery manuals, this servants' library provides the most expansive record yet of the types of books servants might have read or at least had access to.<sup>7</sup> Of course, the evidence of the library does not confer ownership or, indeed, consumer agency on the Northumberland servants (though there is some evidence to the contrary discussed below). Likewise, the usual caveats obtain regarding the disjunction between the existence of a library and a reading community (just because they had access to a book does not mean they read it). Nevertheless, the list is more suggestive of use than other servant libraries that have been documented. Moreover, it establishes what was made available to staff in a wealthy, aristocratic household, and therefore tells us what eighteenth-century contemporaries thought were the appropriate and/or popular books for servants.

The evidence of this servants' library also reinforces contemporary servants' accounts about their active reading habits, as well as the significance that access to libraries had on their future careers. Indeed, according to Fergus, of all the lower classes, servants were most likely to have leisure time and to be more literate.<sup>8</sup> This is borne out in Giles Jacob's account of the actor, servant, and writer Jane Holt, née Wiseman (*fl.* c. 1682–1717), a maid of the Recorder of Oxford; he notes that she used her spare time to read novels and plays, culminating in the writing of her own play, *Antiochus*

<sup>5</sup> The Reading Experience Database (RED), 1450–1945 available at: <http://www.open.ac.uk/Arts/RED/index.html>. Abigail Williams, *The Social Life of Books: Reading Together in the Eighteenth-Century Home* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> Archives of the Duke of Northumberland at Alnwick Castle [hereafter ADNAC], Duke of Northumberland Miscellaneous [hereafter DNM], D/2/7.

<sup>7</sup> Class terminology is contested and doubly problematic in relation to servants. In an aristocratic household, servants could come from the gentry as well as from local tenant farmers' and trades' families, among others.

<sup>8</sup> Fergus, 'Provincial Servants' Reading', p. 204.

*the Great* (perf. 1701, pub. 1702), and later a book of verse.<sup>9</sup> A similar account is given of Elizabeth Hands (1746–1815), a Warwickshire servant who published a collection of poems by subscription in 1789.<sup>10</sup> While the Northamptonshire poet Mary Leapor (1722–1746) reportedly owned ‘sixteen or seventeen single Volumes’ of her own, she also had access to the libraries and literary manuscripts of two female patrons, Susanna Jennens and Bridget Freemantle.<sup>11</sup> The scope of her wider reading and poetic influences is evident in her posthumously published poetry. Francis Barber, the former slave and latterly the servant and heir of Samuel Johnson, benefited in a more practical way from Johnson’s library. The sale proceeds of Johnson’s 4,000-plus books went to Barber. Possibly the most well-known and bookish former footman was Robert Dodsley (1704–1764); he not only published two poems about servant life, *Servitude* (1729) and *A Muse in Livery* (1732), but later went on to produce the most prestigious editions of his era, many of which were ubiquitous in the libraries of his contemporaries. In almost all of these instances, the access to books and the ability to make use of them was critical to maximizing the ‘social value’ of reading.<sup>12</sup>

The duchess, therefore, is not unusual in giving her servants access to books. What is unique, however, is the existence of a dedicated library, the extraordinary range of titles and genres in it, and the duchess’s documentation of it. Given her engagement with the library at this level, as well as her potential role in shaping the contents, she is key to unlocking what it can tell us. A keen collector, the duchess created and had access to numerous libraries throughout her life. Her collecting and her list also overlap with an important period in the development of both the English country house library and private libraries more generally; as such, she helps furnish new insights, as well as helpful new evidence.

### *The duchess’s collecting in the context of eighteenth-century libraries*

In the world of book collecting and the development of private libraries, the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries mark a significant turning point. As David Pearson’s, Marie-Louise Coolahan’s and Mark Empey’s research reveals, book ownership in seventeenth-century England was extensive, cut across social classes and genders, and varied considerably in size: from a

<sup>9</sup> Giles Jacob, *The Poetical Register* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1719), p. 301, and William J. Christmas, ‘Holt [née Wiseman], Jane (fl. c. 1682–1717), Playwright and Poet’, in *ODNB*.

<sup>10</sup> Cynthia Dereli, ‘Hands [née Herbert], Elizabeth (bap. 1746, d. 1815), poet’, in *ODNB*.

<sup>11</sup> Bridget Freemantle, 21 February 1749, quoted in *The Works of Mary Leapor*, ed. by Richard Greene & Ann Messenger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. xx and xl.

<sup>12</sup> Clark, ‘Ownership of Books in England’, p. 104.

'shelf's worth of books' to thousands.<sup>13</sup> There were bibliophiles who amassed libraries of stupendous proportions: John Moore, bishop of Ely (1646–1714) and Arthur Annesley, earl of Anglesey (1614–1686) had libraries 'estimated at thirty thousand volumes'.<sup>14</sup> Collectors of the eighteenth century brought together equally prodigious libraries: the Harleys, Robert (1661–1724) and Edward (1689–1741), 1st and 2nd earls of Oxford, collected approximately 50,000 printed books, as well as many more pamphlets and manuscripts; Charles Spencer (1674–1722), 3rd earl of Sunderland, gathered 20,000; Thomas Rawlinson (1681–1725)—dubbed a 'leviathan of book-collectors'—may have had as many as 200,000; and Sir Hans Sloane (1660–1753) had another 50,000.<sup>15</sup> As Margaret Spufford notes, 'where money has been expended, and where collecting has been notable, there are likely to be records', and we have many such documents and studies for these wealthy male collectors.<sup>16</sup> However, that sort of collecting is very different from most country house and private libraries of the period. Purcell observes that

for most country house owners, the family library was not a place for incunables and medieval manuscripts, but a repository of everyday reading matter. Its size might vary, according to the tastes of successive owners, the grandeur of the house and the depths of their pockets. . . . In most houses the Library was a place where books accumulated rather than were collected.<sup>17</sup>

In other words, such libraries are both incredibly variable as well as terribly typical. Heraldry, husbandry, and architectural tomes may abound, but equally familiar are the types of private libraries commemorated in the many donations to Oxford and Cambridge colleges from learned gentry and clergy: libraries of divinity, law, classics, and folio antiquities.<sup>18</sup> Purcell's point about the slow accumulation of books is particularly pertinent because the contents of the servants' library suggest specific as well as gradual contributions over the years.

<sup>13</sup> David Pearson, 'Patterns of Book Ownership in Late Seventeenth-Century England', *The Library*, VII, 11 (2010), 139–64 (p. 139). See also Pearson's list, 'English Book Owners in the Seventeenth Century: A Work in Progress Listing' (The Bibliographical Society, Electronic Publications, 2007; last updated: March 2018), <<http://www.bibsoc.org.uk/content/english-book-owners-seventeenth-century>>. Marie-Louise Coolahan & Mark Empey, 'Women's Book Ownership and the Reception of Early Modern Women's Texts, 1545–1700', in *Women's Bookscapes in Early Modern Britain: Reading, Ownership, Circulation*, ed. by Leah Knight, Micheline White & Elizabeth Sauer (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2018), pp. 231–52.

<sup>14</sup> Pearson, 'The English Private Library in the Seventeenth Century', *The Library*, VII, 13 (2012), 379–99.

<sup>15</sup> Seymour De Ricci, *English Collectors of Books & Manuscripts* (New York, NY: Burt Franklin, 1930), pp. 34–35, 38, 45, and 47. Thomas Dibdin is the source of the leviathan description, quoted in De Ricci, p. 45.

<sup>16</sup> Margaret Spufford, 'Libraries of the "common sort"', in *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland*, I: *To 1640*, ed. by Elisabeth Leedham-Green & Tessa Webber (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 520–26 (p. 520).

<sup>17</sup> Purcell, *The Country House Library*, p. 112.

<sup>18</sup> Pearson, 'Patterns of Book Ownership', p. 139.

Though no one has done the kind of statistical work on the contents of eighteenth-century libraries that Pearson, Coolahan and Empey have achieved for the seventeenth, my own research on women's libraries and book ownership suggests that, while the numbers of books owned is less than that of many male libraries in the period, the libraries and book collections themselves become much more numerous.<sup>19</sup> For the truly wealthy, there were also libraries with different emphases at various houses, and, as this article shows, there could also be multiple libraries within larger households: the estate's/husband's, the wife's, the children's, and the servants'. Indeed, whilst records for women's libraries have often been obscured by English property law and the fluidity of collective ownership, they are still discoverable. Importantly, they have also revealed other classes of book owners. Upper-class women's wills, for example, provide extensive evidence of valuable devotional texts and bibles bequeathed to valued companions and loyal servants. More integrated research into country-house estate records (including library catalogues, wills, and inventories) will undoubtedly help broaden our understanding of book ownership and access across classes and genders in the period.

The Duchess of Northumberland does not belong in the bibliophilic ranks of those 'leviathans' of book collecting mentioned above; however, she is important for a number of social and cultural reasons. First, she is one of the most significant female collectors of her era.<sup>20</sup> After unexpectedly inheriting the Percy title through her father (the earl of Hertford, later duke of Somerset), her enterprising husband managed to elevate them still further to earl and countess (1749) and then Duke and Duchess of Northumberland (1766). Through these means they became two of the wealthiest aristocrats in the country. They both served at court and were known for their extravagance in relation to parties, outfits, and retinue. Patrons of artists and architects, they transformed their inherited homes and filled them with beautiful and collectible things.<sup>21</sup> For example, in Northumberland House, her London home, the duchess had her own personal museum. This museum

<sup>19</sup> Robin Alston was working on a reference list of known libraries up to 1850 prior to his death. Andrew Prescott recovered his documents through the Wayback Machine. For details and links see: <https://digitalriffs.blogspot.com/2011/08/robin-alstons-library-history-database.html> [accessed 20 September 2019]. As part of a Leverhulme Fellowship, I am currently compiling a database of women's libraries from 1660–1820. Preliminary records suggest that, outside of royalty and nobility, the number of books rarely rises above a few hundred.

<sup>20</sup> On the duchess's libraries see M. Bigold, 'Women's Book Collecting in the Eighteenth Century: The Libraries of the Countess of Hertford and the Duchess of Northumberland', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 84 (2021), pp. 139–150. Books, however, comprised only one element of the duchess's collecting. On her wider interests, see Adriano Aymonino, 'The *Musaeum* of the 1<sup>st</sup> Duchess of Northumberland (1716–1776) at Northumberland House in London: An Introduction', in *Women, Patrons and Collectors*, ed. by Susan Bracken, Andrea Gáldy & Adriana Turpin (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2011), pp. 101–19; and *Enlightened Eclecticism: The Grand Design of the 1st Duke and Duchess of Northumberland* (London: Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2021).

<sup>21</sup> Rosemary Baird, *Mistress of the House: Great Ladies and Grand Houses, 1670–1830* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), pp. 164–170.

encompassed a wide assortment of artefacts and 'historical curiosities', such as Queen Elizabeth's gloves, and 'a piece of the sheet in which Oliver Cromwell dyed'.<sup>22</sup> It also held her considerable collection of medals, coins, bronzes, prints, and paintings, in addition to a range of manuscripts (including a book of French verses illuminated by Esther Inglis).<sup>23</sup> The catalogue for it runs to eight volumes, only one of which is for the library of over 1,700 books.<sup>24</sup> Those eight volumes hint at a second reason to pay more attention to the duchess. She embodies the antiquary's, bibliographer's, and administrator's propensity for classifying, documenting, and accounting in relation to her collections. Such records are useful when trying to understand the methodologies and epistemologies of collecting, but also the practicalities and materiality associated with book buying and ownership; that is, how contemporaries identified, found, bought, bound, housed, and used books.

The duchess also liked to tour other houses and often has something to say about the nature of the library: whether it displayed the books to advantage—the Radcliffe Camera did not, it was too dark; whether it was of antiquarian interest—she was unimpressed that Blenheim no longer had the full Sunderland collection; or, whether the choice of books was of particular significance—of Lord Scarsdale's new library at Kedleston she noted that the books were 'well chosen entertaining & instructive rather than Curious Books'.<sup>25</sup> By 'curious' she means collector's items and, therefore, seems to acknowledge the usefulness of this country house library, but, at the same time, disparages his knowledge or ability to purchase what is rare or more valuable.

Most helpfully, she came from a family of collectors and readers who liked to document their holdings. Through catalogues, letter books, lists, and surviving textual exemplars at Alnwick Castle and Syon House it is possible to trace her mother's library (the Countess of Hertford—patron and friend of James Thomson, Isaac Watts, and Elizabeth Rowe); books from her own youth (a catalogue of 261 titles from 1737); books inherited and integrated into the estate collections at Alnwick Castle and Syon House; her museum collection; and, now, her servants' books.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>22</sup> ADNAC, Duke of Northumberland Papers [hereafter DNP]: MS 125, fols. 27v–28r. See also Aymonino, 'The *Musaeum*' and *Enlightened Eclecticism*.

<sup>23</sup> ADNAC, DNP, MS 125, fol. 85v for Inglis.

<sup>24</sup> The museum volumes are: ADNAC, DNP, MS 122, 122A, 122B, and 123–27. The library catalogue is MS 127.

<sup>25</sup> Elizabeth Percy, *The Diaries of a Duchess. Extracts from the Diaries of the First Duchess of Northumberland (1716–1776)*, ed. by James Greig. With a Foreword by the Duke of Northumberland (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1926), pp. 3, 5 (quoting from DNP, MS 121/1), and Purcell, *The Country House Library*, p. 112 (quoting from DNP, MS 121/16).

<sup>26</sup> Bigold, 'Women's Book Collecting in the Eighteenth Century'.

Third, and finally, Elizabeth oversaw and fully engaged with a diverse and worldly household which included the extended ‘family’ of servants, tenants, tutors, chaplains, and artists whose lives revolved around the Northumberland. <sup>27</sup> As Rosemary Baird’s work makes clear, a significant number of highly talented women were responsible for the effective and long-term viability of their inherited estates. <sup>28</sup> Elizabeth had a staff of anywhere between forty and seventy people, with six senior male staff—including her chaplain and tutor Thomas Percy, the author of *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry*. Beneath the senior staff, her family included a butler, housekeeper, clerk of the kitchen and head chef, followed by her many footmen (there were so many that she created a rota for them), more cooks (both male and female), chambermaids, not to mention all of the estate workers. <sup>29</sup> She kept meticulous track of everything they did, including domestic arrangements such as where they slept and when they ate, and even produced a book of ‘Household Regulations’ that was still in use after her death. <sup>30</sup> There is also evidence in her accounts that she educated both her own staff and local children. One young man, John Bell—who appears as an usher in early account books—received drawing lessons in the 1760s; in the 1770s he accompanied the duchess on her travels, and, along with her artist-in-residence, J. Vilet, produced paintings for her. <sup>31</sup> There is also a notebook entitled ‘Book of Children 1773 & 1774’ in which she details her payments and gifts of books to a charity school; in it, she appears to keep track of the attendance and progress of both boys and girls. <sup>32</sup> The duchess took her responsibilities towards her ‘family’ seriously, and education, mentorship, and upward mobility were clearly possible in her household and on her estates. The servants’ library contributed to this provision and likewise foregrounds her attention to estate administration and her skills in relation to human resources. Nevertheless, as we shall see, the range of book titles also suggest reading interests and agendas that existed outside her corporate or didactic framework.

<sup>27</sup> In addition to her immediate relations (husband and children), all servants are consistently referred to as ‘Family’ throughout the duchess’s notebooks.

<sup>28</sup> Rosemary Baird, *Mistress of the House: Great Ladies and Grand Houses, 1670–1830* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003).

<sup>29</sup> There are explicit references to staff as the ‘family’ throughout the duchess’s notebooks. See DNP, MS 121/63 and 121/92.

<sup>30</sup> A 1795 copy of the ‘Household Regulations’, with 1805 additions, exists as DNP, MS 164A. The duchess’s drafts of the regulations are in a number of notebooks, including DNP, MS 121/92 (c.1768) and DNP, MS 121/93 (c.1769). It is possible that Thomas Percy’s editorial work on the sixteenth-century manuscripts of the Northumberland household inspired the duchess to devise her own. Percy’s work, *The Regulations and Establishment of the Household of Henry Algernon Percy* (1768, ESTC T121812), was privately printed and distributed in 1773, and again in 1773, but he began work in the late 1760s. See Bertram H. Davis, *Thomas Percy: A Scholar-Cleric in the Age of Johnson* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989).

<sup>31</sup> See ADNAC, DNP, MS 121/28, for payments for lessons. Bell’s and Vilet’s paintings have been digitized at <https://www.watercolourworld.org/>.

<sup>32</sup> ADNAC, DNP, MS 121/180.

Until now, book historians have more often paused over the collections of the duchess's distant ancestor, the 'Wizard Earl', Henry Percy, 9th earl of Northumberland (1564–1632), or admire the impressive and still extant library room created by the fourth duke in the nineteenth century.<sup>33</sup> In contrast, I would argue that it is the first duchess of the second creation who is the most fascinating and overlooked Percy in the history of libraries and collecting. Her servants' library is only one of many revealing resources towards such histories.

### *The servants' library*

The duchess's servants' list comprises 131 titles and appears to be the earliest and most extensive descriptive evidence of its kind. A few examples of nineteenth-century servants' libraries exist, but nothing as early, as copious, or, as we shall see, as diverse as the Alnwick list. At the National Trust's Felbrigg Hall, an early nineteenth-century servants' library is still extant and contains twenty-five titles.<sup>34</sup> The Bodleian Library has two sammelbands each containing eight chapbooks inscribed 'Moreville House Servants Library' (with publication dates ranging from 1800–1820).<sup>35</sup> Owen McKnight has identified fifty titles in an 1849 library catalogue for the servants at Worcester College, Oxford.<sup>36</sup> And, according to Purcell, an 1855 servants' library at Hatfield House must have been 'substantial' given that 'the running number of 123' has been found on one of the extant books.<sup>37</sup> In light of such evidence, the duchess's servants' library, likely assembled one hundred years prior, is a significant early example.

Unfortunately, there are no records regarding who paid for the servants' books, when and where they were purchased, or, indeed, where they were housed. It is likely the books were kept in the servants' hall; however, there may have been a loan system in place, in which case they may have been shelved in the house steward's or housekeeper's rooms. The duchess's tally of contents, and the singular nature of the piece of paper—most of her accounts are in large notebooks—suggests that the list may have lived with

<sup>33</sup> See G. R. Batho, 'The Library of the "Wizard" Earl: Henry Percy, 9th Earl of Northumberland (1564–1632)', *The Library*, v, 15 (1960), 246–61. Purcell discusses both the earl and the fourth duke in *The Country House Library*, and Ralph Percy, duke of Northumberland, provides a useful account of the fourth duke's modernizing and collecting in *Lions of the North: The Percys & Alnwick Castle, A Thousand Years of History* (London: Scala Arts and Heritage Publishers, 2019).

<sup>34</sup> Felbrigg Hall, National Trust. I am indebted to John Gandy and Charlotte Slade of the National Trust for information about this library and its contents.

<sup>35</sup> The 'Moreville' volumes are mentioned in Williams, *The Social Life of Books*, p. 105, but she only mentions eight titles. I would like to thank Dunja Sharif at the Bodleian Library for confirming that there are two sammelbands with a total of sixteen titles. See Vet. A6 e.2755 and Vet. A5 e.6858.

<sup>36</sup> Owen McKnight, 'Reading for Servants', *Worcester College Record* (2013), 96–100. <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~bodlo842/publications/reading-for-servants.pdf> (Accessed 6 January 2021).

<sup>37</sup> Purcell, *The Country House Library*, p. 317, n. 64. The text at Hatfield is Mottley's *History of Peter the Great* (1739).

the books, or, that it was part of a one-off accounting process.<sup>38</sup> Unlike the Worcester College catalogue, which had a list of lending rules in the hand of the college bursar, as well as a register of borrowers, there are no such records for the duchess's servants' library.

The closest comparative examples in terms of date are the early nineteenth-century libraries from Felbrigg Hall in Norfolk and Moreville (Morville) House in Warwickshire. Felbrigg's library is in its own bespoke and locked miniature book press and contains twenty-five duodecimo books. Produced by the Religious Tract Society from 1799, this tiny and portable case reminds us that storage may have been temporary, and that small books are easier to transport than large.<sup>39</sup> The two volumes of Moreville chapbooks are a similar small format, and were produced by William and Ann Watson, printers to the 'Cheap Repository for Religious and Moral Tracts'.<sup>40</sup> Portability may have been an important consideration as the Northumberland household was a peripatetic establishment, moving from Alnwick Castle, Northumberland, to Northumberland House in London, Syon House in Middlesex, and even Ireland and Dublin Castle for a time in 1763. The duchess was also a frequent tourist around England and to the continent. There are records of the family's main library books travelling from one house to another, so it is not inconceivable that the servants' library did too.

While the location or storage of the books remains unknown, it appears fairly certain that the dominant format was duodecimo. Of the titles identified because only one edition exists, this is the standard size: as such the books were not only more portable but pocketable.<sup>41</sup> Indeed, many of the titles are staple chapbooks of the period, which were almost always duodecimo (as the Felbrigg and Moreville examples show). On the same evidence, it is likely that the library (if not the books themselves) dates from between 1750 and 1760. It is unlikely the newly wed Northumberlands would have had a large retinue of servants until they inherited the grand houses in 1750, and the latest publication date identified is 1760.

But who bought the books? Despite very detailed household accounts in all other respects, there are very few records for book purchases—either for the duchess or anyone else in the house. In her notebooks, the duchess writes

<sup>38</sup> The list is on a single, folio sheet with the books listed roughly alphabetically in two columns on the recto and verso.

<sup>39</sup> The case is on view in the library at Felbrigg Hall (National Trust). Despite featuring two shelves of books, it is still smaller in height than the folio tomes shelved behind it. For a discussion of the titles, see below.

<sup>40</sup> Bodleian Library, Vet. A6 e.2755 and Vet. A5 e.6858.

<sup>41</sup> There is a possible exception in the sizes: of two unidentified titles, 'Reformers' and 'Life of English Reformers', one may refer to Richard Rolt's *The Lives of the Principal Reformers, Both Englishmen and Foreigners* (1759). This was a substantial folio with portraits. Issued in three parts, Part III contains only English figures.

down what she wants, where she might buy it from, but she only keeps track of the prices for paintings and antiquities acquired in her travel diaries, and the household accounts only record stationery purchases. There is some evidence that suggests bulk buying, which might require deeper pockets than servants would have. For example, someone invested in nine books, all published in 1758 from the same writer and publisher: W. H. Dilworth and G. Wright, respectively. However, Jan Fergus's work reveals that even servants could take away a number of books based on credit in the eighteenth-century.<sup>42</sup> There is also evidence which suggests the servants may have chosen some of the books; however, as we shall see, the overwhelming impression is that the duchess's interests and oversight may have influenced a number of the choices.

At the same time, it is also possible that the library predates the duchess and that her contributions are simply the 1750 and later texts. For instance, over half of the titles were first published before the eighteenth century: two per cent in the fifteenth century, six per cent in the sixteenth, and forty-seven per cent in the seventeenth. Only thirteen per cent of titles were first published after 1750, once the duchess was in control of the estate.

#### *Dates of first publication*

Fifteenth century:	2% (2 titles)
Sixteenth century:	6% (8)
Seventeenth century:	47% (62)
1700–1749:	25% (33)
1750–1760:	13% (17)
Unknown:	7% (9)

At present, there is no way of knowing whether the books in the list were new, bought second-hand, or hand-me-downs from the Percy family estate. As Purcell observes, this library may have been assembled over many years, and, therefore, could be the work of generations of Percys and their servants. Unfortunately, a search of the current Percy holdings by their librarian, Lisa Little, has not revealed any surviving texts with similar titles.<sup>43</sup> What is striking, though, is the longevity of certain seventeenth-, and even sixteenth- and fifteenth-century titles. For example, the list features *Bellianis of Greece*, a popular chapbook about a chivalric prince which dates back to 1598. Samuel Johnson read it, and it was still being printed in the 1750s.<sup>44</sup> Or, the even earlier *Seven Wise Masters* (c. 1515), a

<sup>42</sup> Fergus, *Provincial Readers*, p. 28.

<sup>43</sup> However, Little did note that there are numerous duodecimo sammelbands in the library that have only been catalogued based upon the first item title.

<sup>44</sup> Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p. 75.

pre-medieval cycle of stories that existed in many lengths and formats. Pepys, for example, owned the chapbook.<sup>45</sup> ‘Reynard the Fox’ and ‘Robin Hood’ are listed, stories that could have been printed at almost any time, in any format, but which had a popular appeal to readers young and old, whether literary, learned, or simply in search of something to pass the time.

As the titles above begin to suggest, this library features genres that were reputedly popular and accessible. This might be expected, but the breakdown of genres across the list is nevertheless surprising in other respects. For example, in the Felbrigg servants’ library, all twenty-five titles in the case are religious, and, in line with the Religious Tract Society’s aims, were meant to convince the reader of the truth of the new testament and the need for salvation. This included the religious allegory of Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, as well as the *Life of Sarah Martin*, an early nineteenth-century missionary who worked with prisoners and workhouse children. The Moreville chapbooks and Worcester College catalogue are similar in their focus on Christian lives, conduct, and religious instruction: the former consists almost entirely of Hannah More titles from the ‘Cheap Repository for Religious and Moral Tracts’, and the latter of titles published by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge (SPCK).<sup>46</sup> Encompassing religion, pedagogy, literature, and life writing, such titles remind us of the permeable nature of genre categories both then and now. Such elisions make categorization difficult and, therefore, the generic breakdown of the servants’ library provided below is necessarily broad and open for interpretation. A full list of the titles is available on the Bibliographical Society’s e-publications page.<sup>47</sup>

#### *Northumberland Servants’ Library by Genre*

Literature:	22% (29 titles)
History/Lives:	20% (26)
Religion:	16% (21)
Pedagogy:	14% (18)
Entertainment:	10% (13)
Household reference:	4% (5)
Husbandry:	2% (3)
General Knowledge:	2% (3)
Music/Songs:	2% (3)
Anti-female:	2% (3)
Medicine:	2% (2)
Single books:	Geography, Petition, Travel, Sport, Anti-quaker (4%)

<sup>45</sup> *ibid.* pp. 224–25.

<sup>46</sup> McKnight, ‘Reading for Servants’, pp. 96, 97–100.

<sup>47</sup> <http://www.bibsoc.org.uk/content/eighteenth-century-servants-library-appendix>  
DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.6606525

Literature is the largest category at twenty-two per cent, followed closely by History/Lives at twenty per cent. Religion is, surprisingly, in third place with sixteen per cent, followed by a large number of pedagogical or self-help titles at fourteen per cent. Rounding out the larger percentages are entertainment, a catch-all category comprising jest, magic, and dream books, but which could have been expanded to include music/songs (another two per cent), as well as the general knowledge texts (also two per cent). There are, as one would expect, a number of practical books, such as household reference and medicine, what Joseph L. Black terms 'books for use' and which remind us of the 'conjunction of physical with spiritual health' in many domestic (that is, female) booklists.<sup>48</sup> Additionally, there are those identified more readily with male readers of the period: husbandry, sport, and anti-female satires. In sum, the contents appeal to, as well as support, a diverse range of interests and skills in the Northumberland household.

According to John Feather's statistics on eighteenth-century publishing trends—which, as he points out, have a number of problems, not least that they are based on titles alone, not size of print runs, and, that the genre designations are not eighteenth-century ones but Dewey Decimal classes—religion was twenty-seven per cent of the market between 1700–1800.<sup>49</sup> Social science (for which Feather suggests politics, although the Dewey numbers also include law, economics, military, education, and folklore) is about twenty-three per cent. This is followed by literature at nineteen per cent, history and geography at fourteen per cent, with technology (medicine, agriculture, household), arts (drama, music, gardening), science, general works, philosophy, and languages rounding out the numbers.<sup>50</sup>

Turning back to the servants' library genres it is immediately apparent how misleading such broad statistics are when trying to assess contemporary book buying, access, and use. For these servants, literature is the dominant option and ninety-three per cent of the literature titles are prose fiction. Feather has the national average of fiction publications at just eleven per cent, with poetry still the dominant form at forty-nine per cent. In contrast to Feather's findings, therefore, the Northumberland statistics for prose fiction are extraordinary for the mid-century. Indeed, based on the majority of eighteenth-century women's library catalogues I have collated and Jan Fergus's research on provincial book purchasing, such high numbers for prose fiction are atypical. Why was literature so popular, or, rather, so well provided for in this library? Why is religion, traditionally the dominant

<sup>48</sup> Joseph L. Black, 'Women's Libraries in the *Private Libraries of Renaissance England* Project', in *Women's Bookscapes in Early Modern Britain*, ed. by Knight, White & Sauer, pp. 214–30 (p. 227).

<sup>49</sup> John Feather, 'British Publishing in the Eighteenth Century: A Preliminary Subject Analysis', *The Library*, vi, 8 (1986), 32–46, (pp. 33–35).

<sup>50</sup> *ibid.* p. 36.

genre, relegated to third place? John Brewer's observations on Feather's statistics are revealing: he characterizes them as painting a picture of a 'highly conservative and traditional' market where 'religion and theology dominate, poetry over novels, and classics over modern languages'.<sup>51</sup> The servants' library suggests otherwise and hints at a household that was more focused on popular forms than the market statistics imply. Indeed, in contrast to the religious collections at other houses, the Northumberland list is uniquely secular and heterogeneous.

One of the reasons for the anomalous nature of the collection may be the duchess's influence. A number of titles in the servants' collection overlap with the duchess's own catalogues. Twelve titles are mirrored in both her youthful catalogue of 1737 and her later museum library from the 1770s (six from each). Titles like the old prose work *Seven Champions of Christendom* (1596–97) and *Argalus & Parthenia* (1629), a courtship story taken from Sidney's *Arcadia*, appear in duodecimo formats across the catalogues. Similarly, Madame de la Fayette's *The Princess of Monpensier* (first English edition 1666) appears with an English title in all lists. Less likely to be in the same form, but nevertheless mirrored across the catalogues, are classics like Aesop's Fables and *Don Quixote*, or the later *Robinson Crusoe*. With the exception of *Crusoe*, it is notable that all these works originate in earlier centuries, suggesting a popular canon with considerable longevity.

There are more similarities across the broader genre statistics. The duchess's mother, the Countess of Hertford (later Duchess of Somerset), is known for her literary patronage and her poetry, and yet her personal library at Percy Lodge had predominantly history and divinity, and only sixteen per cent literature.<sup>52</sup> The daughter, who is not remembered as a literary patron or indeed as literary-inclined, nevertheless enjoyed literature above all else. In her youthful catalogue of 1737, forty-eight per cent are literary works, and, in her 1770 museum, it is forty-five per cent with an even split between her designations of 'Novels and Romances' and 'Poetry and Plays'. Like the servants' list, these statistics are unusual for the period and for her class.

Nevertheless, there is very little drama or poetry in the servants' list, genres the duchess did enjoy and which make up significant proportions of her early and late catalogues. Only one dramatic work and one poetry collection appear on the servant list: John Brown's successful tragedy, *Barbarossa* (perf. 1754, pub. 1755), and the two-volume edition of *The Poetical Works of the Earls of Rochester, Roscomon, and Dorset; the Dukes of Devonshire, Buckinghamshire, &c. with memoirs of their lives* (1707).

<sup>51</sup> John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1997), p. 172.

<sup>52</sup> ADNAC, DP, D1 I/157, 'A Catalogue of the Library at Percy Lodge' (1751).

These works represent very different ends of the literary spectrum in terms of tone and content. Brown was an Anglican clergyman who had only one stage success, with *Barbarossa*, but was better known for works like an *Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Time* (1757–58), a state-of-the-nation text roundly criticizing the ruling classes for their lack of moral leadership. On the subject of reading, for example, he noted that

*Reading* is now sunk at best into a Morning's *Amusement*; till the important Hour of Dress comes on. Books are no longer regarded as the Repositories of Taste and Knowledge; but are rather laid hold of, as a gentle Relaxation from the Tedious Round of Pleasure.... Thus it comes to pass, that Weekly Essays, amatory Plays and Novels, political Pamphlets, and books that revile Religion; together with a general *Hash* of these, served up in some *Monthly Mess* of *Dulness*, are the Meagre *literary Diet* of Town and Country.<sup>53</sup>

While there are examples of less elevated topics (for example, the jest books) in the servants' list, it is remarkable how little Brown's account of reading aligns overall with the servants' library contents. 'Weekly essays, amatory Plays and Novels, political Pamphlets' are, however, present in the duchess's collections in abundance, suggesting that Brown was on point in relation to the upper classes. The Rochester volumes, on the other hand, are undoubtedly the kind of reading Brown was referring to, if not even more risqué. The 1739 edition features a series of entertaining as well as suggestive illustrations but expurgates the bawdy words. As the heavily annotated Bodleian copy illustrates, though, the dashes and heroic rhyming couplets make it very easy to reinsert the crude language.<sup>54</sup>

Another point of synergy between the duchess's catalogues and the servant list is a predilection for entertaining works. Her catalogues are full of song collections, jest books, and true miscellanies covering all manner of contemporary information. The servant list mirrors such interests, and features three song books, five jest books, a book of magic tricks, and two tomes on interpreting dreams. Such books reinforce Williams' account of the broad reach of shared, sociable reading material in the period, and likewise suggest some of the activities that the books enabled, such as singing and magic performances.

Miscellaneous works of general knowledge are also mirrored across the duchess's catalogues and her servants' library. For instance, Robert Burton's *Admirable Curiosities, Rarities and Wonders in England, Scotland, and*

<sup>53</sup> John Brown, *An Estimate of the Manners and Principles of the Time*, 5th edn (London: L. Davis and C. Reymers, 1757), p. 42.

<sup>54</sup> Bodleian Library, Oxford, Vet. A4 f.165. Harold Love points out that expurgation and additions are common in surviving copies of Rochester's poetry, and help to illuminate the 'polite' and 'classicizing' versus 'semi-pornographic' and 'popular' dichotomy in his print history. See 'Refining Rochester: Private Texts and Public Readers', *Harvard Library Bulletin*, n.s., 7 (1996), 40–49 (pp. 42, 47).

*Ireland. Being an account of many remarkable persons and places* (1682) is present in the young duchess's booklist (1737) and again in the servant list. Burton (the pseudonym for Nathaniel Crouch) was a popular chapbook writer, known for his mini-histories, and the servant library has five more of his works covering everything from English history to earthquakes. Burton's appeal crossed class and educational lines: the lower-class tailor and autodidact antiquarian George Ballard (1705/6–1755) attested to his early love of Crouch's histories, as did Thomas Percy (1729–1811), a grocer's son who was tutor to the Northumberlands' youngest son and later became Bishop of Dromore. Percy recorded a number of Crouch works among his youthful books.<sup>55</sup> The presence of these general knowledge books, as well as the many histories and lives, suggest that the servants' library was a resource to educate and entertain a young, literate, and upwardly mobile work force.<sup>56</sup>

The percentages representing the duchess's religious holdings and the servants' list are also very similar. The servants' list contains sixteen per cent religion, while the duchess's 1737 catalogue featured sixteen per cent, and a drop to eleven per cent in her 1770s museum catalogue (a bookcase of nine shelves is devoted to 'Divinity' (210 titles)). All three of these figures are well below Feather's statistics of twenty-seven per cent for the eighteenth-century. Nevertheless, more detailed consideration of the religious texts in the servants' and duchess's libraries reveal different emphases, as well as some surprising omissions. For instance, the largest proportion of religious texts in the servants' list are evangelical: of the eighteen identifiable religious works, eleven are by nonconformist writers. The duchess, by virtue of her position, was high church Anglican; her catalogues, however, feature a relatively inclusive mix of authors and works. Indeed, there was a family tradition of toleration and support for religious dissent. The duchess's maternal grandparents, the Thynnes of Longleat, were the patrons of the dissenter Elizabeth Singer Rowe, and her mother, the Countess of Hertford, maintained the connection. Hertford also patronized Rowe's friends, like Isaac Watts, and even contributed pious poetry and letters to their works. While the duchess had both Rowe's and Watts's works in all her libraries, she does not appear to have cultivated similarly pious or dissenting

<sup>55</sup> On Ballard see Ruth Perry's introduction to Ballard's *Memoirs of Several Ladies* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 1985), p. 15. On Percy, see Bertram H. Davis, *Thomas Percy: A Scholar-Cleric in the Age of Johnson* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), p. 3, and, for the list of Percy's boyhood library, Oxford, Bodleian Library, MS Percy c.9, fols. 33–42.

<sup>56</sup> The question of literacy rates is a vexed one in the period. Traditionally, the measure of literacy has been the ability to sign one's name; however, historians have rightly questioned whether writing and reading were achieved at the same time. Jonathan Brewer, for example, argues that 'most people learned to read before they could write and signatures therefore probably underestimate readership' (*Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. 168). The foundational work in this area is David Cressy's *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

connections. She did, of course, encourage devotion in her family and herself: her 'Household Regulations' advised that 'All servants are to attend regularly at Prayer, & to go to Church as often as possible'.<sup>57</sup> Her 'Rules for my own Conduct' reinforce the admonitions to her servants; her first entry reminds her 'Never to omit going to Church on a Sunday if it is not [ink blot] have prayers at home if [*sic, ?for with*] Chaplain but if neither then to read a Sermon Psalms &c at home'. She likewise aims at 'a more prudent & devout Conduct every Hour of my Life', and to 'Never to omit saying my prayers morning & Evening and always to pray for my Husband & Children'.<sup>58</sup> In contrast to her mother, who set aside many hours of the day for devotional reading, the duchess's need for reminders and her sliding scale of devotional application hint at a less rigorous approach. Perhaps it is not surprising, therefore, that religion is not the dominant genre.

On the other hand, whilst the duchess had a plentiful collection of bibles, prayer books, and catechisms in multiple languages in her catalogues, the servant collection contains none. There are copious records of eighteenth-century masters giving their servants bibles, but often this is at the end of their service and in the form of bequests. For example, the duchess's mother left her most faithful manservant her quarto Field's Bible.<sup>59</sup> Apart from the duchess's charity school, there is no evidence for such specific gifting in her records. Indeed, there is only one instance of book-giving to an employee: in 1771 Percy, the tutor and chaplain, received Algarotti's works as his 1771 New Year's Lottery gift.<sup>60</sup> Given the evidence for an educated, disciplined, and religious community, the lack of bibles, catechisms, and prayer books is a perplexing omission. Clark observes that, though there are very few records for servants in early-modern wills, the ones that exist and where an inventory of books is also present usually mention a bible, a catechism, and/or a devotional text.<sup>61</sup> Is it possible that the absence of such works is negative evidence for servants owning their own copies? The other possibility, of course, is that they were available in the chapel at Alnwick Castle (although it is worth noting that there was no chapel at Syon or Northumberland Houses).

Religion, particularly protestantism, is generally identified as one of the major factors in the growth of literacy and education in early-modern England.<sup>62</sup> Despite the absence of church-sanctioned resources, as well as

<sup>57</sup> ADNAC, DNP, MS 121/60, p. 116.

<sup>58</sup> ADNAC, DNP, MS 121/60, p. 128.

<sup>59</sup> TNA, PRO, PROB 11/810, fol. 81r.

<sup>60</sup> ADNAC, DNP, MS 121/60, fol. 48.

<sup>61</sup> Clark, 'Ownership of Books in England', p. 102–3 and Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order*, p. 4.

<sup>62</sup> See Clark, 'Ownership of Books in England', p. 108 and Cressy, p. 4. Cressy also notes the role of employers in the spread of piety. He cites Richard Baxter's *Christian Directory* exhorting masters to teach their servant to read (p. 4). There is only one Baxter text among the Alnwick catalogues: the duchess's museum list contains 'Baxters Family Book'—likely *The Poor Man's Family Book* (1674).

the third-place status of religion in the list, the servants' library supports claims regarding a revived religious literacy at mid-century.<sup>63</sup> The many nonconformist titles on the list aim to spread devotional reading in the home. Nevertheless, most of the titles also originate in the previous century: from Joseph Alleine's, 'evangelical classic', *An Alarme to Unconverted Sinners* (1672), to Thomas Doolittle's *A Call to Delaying Sinners* (1683).<sup>64</sup> Both Alleine and Doolittle were ejected ministers who taught, preached, and wrote throughout the latter half of the seventeenth century. Other popular non-conformist authors and works from the seventeenth century include John Bunyan's allegorical sermon, *Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ* (1678), Samuel Bury's hymns, and John Flavel's *The Fountain of Life Opened* (1672?). There is also a work by a Puritan woman: Dorothy Leigh's *The Mother's Blessing* (1616), a devotional and conduct book aimed at children. Leigh's work had wide and long-lasting appeal: it was still being printed in the eighteenth century (1707, 1712, 1718, 1729), and had its own chapbook version in 1683. An eighteenth-century work, *The Cries of the Son of God* (1754), from the revivalist John Cennick, is one of the few eighteenth-century works present. There is no record of any of John Wesley's popular compilations, but it is possible that 'The Prodigal Son' is George Whitefield's work of 1741; however, it could also refer to John Goodman's *The Penitent Pardoned: or A discourse of the nature of sin, and the efficacy of repentance, under the parable of the prodigal son* (1679) which is listed as 'Goodman's Prodigal Son' in the duchess's museum list.

In addition to the lack of Bibles and prayer books, other standard religious titles not present are John Foxe's famous martyrology, *Acts and Monuments*, Richard Allestree's *The Whole Duty of Man* (nor any of the sequels), William Law's *A Serious Call*, and Edmund Gibson's *Family Devotion*. In addition, the servant list does not feature Thynne/Percy family favourites like Watts or Rowe. There were/are plenty of Watts's and Rowe's books in the family collections, but none appear to have been passed along to the servants. It is an interesting omission given both their nonconformity and popularity. As with the missing bibles, catechisms, and prayer books, it is possible servants may have owned personal copies of various well-known devotional texts. Significantly, the existence of so many nonconformist writings appears to offer a tantalizing glimpse of the servants' own consumer agency in relation to the library because they point to someone other than the duchess or family inheritances dictating the choice of works. At the

<sup>63</sup> Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727–1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989; 1992), pp. 243–48.

<sup>64</sup> Brian W. Kirk, 'Alleine, Joseph (Bap. 1634, d. 1668), Ejected Minister and Devotional Writer', in ODNB. Kirk states that the first edition was in 1671 but the ESTC only has items from 1672.

same time, the absence of certain standard devotional texts presents the possibility of personal book ownership within the servant ranks.

Another significant omission is that there are no overtly political works. Feather's article on publishing statistics ends with the assertion that 'it is ... clear that the nation's political life had a crucial effect on its reading matter'.<sup>65</sup> It does not appear so for these servants. Nevertheless, in the Dewey system, education and pedagogy come under social science and there are a good number of titles in these categories: fourteen per cent or eighteen texts. It is possible that the presence of so many pedagogical works reflect the hand of the employer; however, Fergus's work on provincial purchases reveals that the genre servants were most 'prepared to spend their own money on [was] useful works, designed to improve their positions in the world'.<sup>66</sup> These useful works are evident in the Northumberland list. There are numerous titles associated with getting on in trade: *The Compleat Tradesman*, *The Exact Dealer* (which taught book-keeping); or learning the ropes in the stables with *The Gentleman's Compleat Jockey*; or in the household with *The Compleat Servant Maid* (likely a version of Hannah Woolley's work which outlined the skills necessary for various posts in a country house, including waiting woman and housekeepers). As noted above, there were clearly opportunities for advancement in the Northumberland household and the library choices support and facilitate such mobility.

There is also a strong element of popular pedagogy—self-help with an element of entertainment—throughout the titles. For example, there are letter-writing manuals such as *The Amorous Gallants Tongue Tipp'd with Golden Expressions: or, The art of courtship refin'd* which was first published in 1698 and achieved a twelfth edition by 1741. Though the short title promises courtship help, the long title of the first edition indicates that letters for both 'love and business' are covered. There are four other letter-writing manuals, including two versions of *The English Secretary*. There are likewise books teaching mathematics, and at least five texts specifically directed at children, including a children's guide to learning geography: *The Geography of Children: or, A Short and Easy Method of Teaching or Learning Geography* (1737).

Possibly the most unexpected genre on this list are those on sexual and reproductive health. *Aristotle's Masterpiece* (1684), which John Brewer characterizes as 'a standard work of sexual instruction', appears alongside its associated *pseudo*-Aristotelian texts, *Aristotle's Last Legacy* and *Aristotle's Problems*.<sup>67</sup> Manifestly not by Aristotle, the *Masterpiece* is

<sup>65</sup> Feather, 'British Publishing in the Eighteenth Century', p. 46.

<sup>66</sup> Fergus, 'Provincial Servants' Reading', p. 214.

<sup>67</sup> Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, p. 186.

actually a compilation of earlier texts and provided instruction and images on the subjects of natural knowledge and midwifery. According to Mary Fissell, *Masterpiece* was the period's 'best-selling guide to pregnancy and childbirth, going into more editions than all other popular works on the topic combined'.<sup>68</sup> The *Last Legacy* and *Problems* offered similar reformulations of older works on sexual knowledge and gender relations. As Fissell's work demonstrates, these texts are particularly interesting in the history of 'vernacular epistemology'. They were also seen and used as pornography. Karen Harvey points out that the 1725 edition of the *Masterpiece* 'interspersed the anatomical depictions with poetry not dissimilar from that of erotic collections'.<sup>69</sup> On the one hand, the appearance of the Aristotle texts in the servants' library reinforces the pragmatic scope of the collection; in particular, they provide practical information about sexual health. On the other hand, such texts, like the Rochester volumes, suggest alternative receptions and use outside any improving framework the duchess may have had in mind.

In a similar vein, there are also a number of texts that purport to warn unsuspecting innocents about the vices of the other sex, and particularly of London's underworld. The latter is an old genre, like the Elizabethan 'coney-catching' tracts, meant to enlighten and expose cheats and swindlers of the town, but they really go into titillating detail about it—for example, *The Honest London Spy* (1706) and the *Town Spy* (1704). This collection of titles include two anti-female texts: *Female Policy Detected* (1695) and *The London-Bawd* (1705).<sup>70</sup> The tone of these is captured in the latter, which opens by describing a bawd as, 'the Refuse of an Old Whore, who having been burnt herself, does like Charcoal help to set greener Wood on Fire; She is one of Natures Errata's, and a true Daughter of *Eve*, who having first undone herself, tempts others to the same Destruction', and a later section details 'How a Young Woman, by the help of an Old Bawd, Enjoy'd her Lover and Deceiv'd her Husband'.<sup>71</sup> These are books for male readers and the duchess's household staff was predominantly male. In her tally of occupants at Alnwick in 1771, only a quarter of the staff were women and the ubiquitous footmen vastly outnumbered maids. Again, these demotic and

<sup>68</sup> Mary E. Fissell, 'Hairy Women and Naked Truths: Gender and the Politics of Knowledge in "Aristotle's Masterpiece"', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 60 (2003), 43–74 (p. 43).

<sup>69</sup> Karen Harvey, *Reading Sex in the Eighteenth Century: Bodies and Gender in English Erotic Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), p. 18.

<sup>70</sup> The list also includes the title 'Look before you leap' which could be *Look E're You Leap: or, A history of the lives and intrigues of lewd women* (1704?). Less likely, given its single-sheet format, is the title, *Look Before You Leap, or; England have a care of your candle* (1711), which dealt with the proposed peace with France.

<sup>71</sup> *The London-Bawd* (1705), ESTC T126672. ESTC states this is the third edition, but no earlier is recorded.

male-centric texts seem to provide evidence of a measure of autonomy with regards to the choice of books.

There are also works specifically for women as well as by women. Five books from four female authors are present, including two by Hannah Woolley: *The Compleat Servant Maid* (1677) and *The Ladies Delight* (1672); Dorothy Leigh's devotional text, mentioned above; the Countess of Kent's book of medical remedies, *A Choice Manual or, Rare and Select Secrets in Physick and Chirurgery* (1653), and Madame de la Fayette's historical novel, *The Princess of Monpensier* (1662; first English, 1666). It is a telling selection in terms of the genres associated with women—household use, devotion, and novels—but not particularly current nor representative of the mid-eighteenth-century with regards to those genres.

As with many libraries, there are also anomalous texts. For example, the slightly peculiar title: *The Children's Petition: or, A Modest Remonstrance of that intolerable grievance our youth lie under, in the accustomed severities of the school-discipline of this nation* (1669), which addresses the topic of corporal punishment in schools, particularly the practice of flogging. Though unsuccessful in its day, the 1669 petition as artefact was clearly of interest to a number of antiquaries (the Bodleian has copies with provenances from Elias Ashmole, Francis Douce, and Anthony Wood). Perhaps the duchess's father collected it—he was president of the Society of Antiquaries for twenty-five years—but it may have been a later acquisition. Was it a cautionary reminder of the rights of children in the Northumberland household? Or, was it already in one of the estate libraries and, through gift or accident, migrated to the servants' library? Such examples suggest the possibility of broader and more fluid collective ownership in country houses. They also complicate our understanding of the use and value of certain works—was this bought for its socio-political message or as an antiquarian artefact?

An equally interesting outlier is the anti-Quaker satire, *The Quakers Art of Courtship: or, the yea-and-nay academy of compliments. Containing several curious discourses, by way of dialogues, letters, and songs, between brethren and green-apron'd sisters. As also, many Rare and Comical Humours, Tricks, Adventures and Cheats of a Canting Bully. With several other Matters very Pleasant and Delightful. Calculated for the Meridian of the Bull-And-Mouth, and may indifferently serve the Brethren of the Windmill-Order, for Noddification in any Part of Will-a-Wisp-Land* (1689). As the full title suggests, this work denigrates Quaker language and is billed as entertainment courtesy of the author responsible for the 'Teagueland jests', a work of Irish humour and witticism. A late seventeenth-century text, it was speedily reprinted in 1690, but also revived in 1710, 1737, and 1770. Such longevity, in terms of both anti-Quaker sentiment and

seventeenth-century humour, clearly evidences the importance of tracing the life-cycles of books in the context of socio-cultural trends.

There is not space or time to discuss every book in the servants' list. However, this picture of the statistics, connections, and disjunctions between the servants' and duchess's books has sought to contextualize, as far as possible, an important new piece of comparative evidence. The list cannot shed light on certain questions—for example, it fails to reveal the prices or sources of the books; the space(s) these books occupied; the scope of individual reading, reception, and use among the servants; and the overall level of literacy in the household. As Margaret Spufford notes, in many cases we are 'reduced to ... intelligent surmise' in that respect.<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, literary scholars have repeatedly sought out evidence of 'libraries for pleasure' amongst the lower classes and this list provides copious evidence for such reading material. The volume of prose fiction is significant and unusual; it is also supplemented by an entertaining and informative selection of history and lives, not to mention the song and jest books. Most importantly, this list provides the titles that are so often missing from inventories and wills, giving us insight into a popular canon of books with considerable longevity.<sup>73</sup> At the same time, a good proportion of the library was clearly for practical use, both in terms of the servants' immediate jobs but also for personal advancement. Some aspects of this use are suggested by the genres and titles: domestic use in the form of recipes, medical remedies, floristry advice, and midwifery guidance; secretarial and estate support through the accounting and letter-writing volumes, in addition to the husbandry texts. But there are possibilities for other types of use in the form of entertainment through singing and magic displays. These books facilitated social exchange, mobility, and education.

Historians of the book often lament the range of scholarship on lower-class readers. Jonathan Rose begins his new introduction to the second edition of *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, with the statement that

Historians of reading have never been solely concerned with the lower classes, but they have proven beyond a reasonable doubt that the great books had plebeian readers, that reading has long been a necessity of everyday life for ordinary people, and that books were an important part of the material culture of most working-class homes.<sup>74</sup>

While the Duchess of Northumberland's servants' list does not give us many 'great books', or indeed readers *per se*, it does reveal its concern with the lower classes, or rather with her 'family'. A hybrid document, the list

<sup>72</sup> Spufford, 'Libraries of the "common sort"', p. 521.

<sup>73</sup> *ibid.* p. 522.

<sup>74</sup> Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes*, 2nd edn (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), p. xi.

appears to represent the oversight and reading preferences of the employer, but it also makes space for the interests, advancement, as well as enjoyment of the employees. It also assumes a literate employee base, or the desire for one. More helpfully—in book-history terms—it evidences the truly mixed economy of the contemporary book trade. It reveals anew for us what was traditional, available, and accessible, as well as what was useful, entertaining, and sustaining.

*Cardiff*