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“The Tranquility of a Society of Females”: Mary Morgan’s A Tour to Milford Haven, Elizabeth Montagu, and the Transformative Politics of Female Governance

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“The Tranquility of a Society of Females”: Mary Morgan’s A Tour to Milford Haven, Elizabeth Montagu, and the Transformative Politics of Female Governance

Abstract

This paper explores the political function of Elizabeth Montagu’s Berkshire estate in travel writer Mary Morgan’s 1795 publication *A Tour to Milford Haven, in the Year 1791*. The travelogue is politically invested both in problematizing radical ideologies and the British government’s wartime policies and in providing an alternative model of governance based on the relational leadership found within Montagu’s Sandleford community. Of central importance to Morgan’s political argument is the contrast she creates between the socioeconomic philosophies manifest in Montagu’s perfectly ordered estate in Berkshire and in the Duke of Marlborough’s imposing palace in Oxfordshire. Whereas Montagu’s relational approach to leadership results in a profoundly peaceful and productive community bound by loyalty rather than by fear, the Duke of Marlborough’s authoritarian approach to power ultimately creates detachment and engenders disillusionment. Her juxtaposition of the two estates subtly suggests both the need and a plan for the reform of Britain’s leadership and political practices that incorporates the communitarian principles modeled in Montagu’s community.

Keywords

Travel writing, Elizabeth Montagu, Mary Morgan, women and politics, long eighteenth century, British women writers, Anti-Jacobin literature.

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There is nothing more mortifying to an affectionate heart than to be restrained, through fear of the world, or of giving offence to the delicacy of a friend, from expressing the dictates of its regard. Yet, according to the present system of things, every mark of attention to a superior rank is so liable to be construed into adulation, that real affection is often obliged to be silent.

—Mary Morgan, *A Tour to Milford Haven*

The dedication to the Countess of Winterton that opens Mary Morgan's 1795 travelogue, *A Tour to Milford Haven, in the Year 1791*, introduces the text's foundational and linked concerns with sensibility, class relations, and national and gender politics. Published during a period of political instability marked by the volatile and violent Revolution in France, the French Revolutionary Wars on the Continent, and William Pitt's controversial politics in Britain, Morgan's travelogue is predictably preoccupied with questions of political authority, administration, and organization. Similar to Edmund Burke's conservative defense of Britain's political system in *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), Morgan perceives and portrays the nation as a collection of interconnected relationships extending from the primordial to the political. Accordingly, she believes that national instability is the direct result of social, economic, or political ideologies and practices that interrupt or destroy the affective ties that facilitate Britain's social hierarchy. It is the restraint of "real affection" (iv) that Morgan identifies as the real threat to Britain's national cohesion.

Her suggestion that the bond between women (in this case, between Morgan and the Countess) can overcome the constraints of the "present system of things" (iv) gestures towards her belief in women's particular facility in maintaining Britain's socio-political relationships in the face of the anti-social forces challenging the unity of the nation. In a period when powerful women and their extra-domestic activities were rendered suspect due to their active role in the French Revolution and the subsequent fears of subversive female influence, Morgan rigorously defends the importance of women within the public sphere by suggesting that female influence—or 'feminine' values—can save the nation.¹ While her understanding of women appears to be broadly informed by their Enlightenment designation as the custodians of polite culture, Morgan's specifically Anglican religious context invested her with a deep sense of women's moral obligation to virtuous action, a religious practice that necessarily consecrated the involvement of women in public life.² Morgan makes her case for the political value of public women by contrasting the estate design and management styles of two prominent

landlords: Elizabeth Montagu—philanthropist, public intellectual, and businesswoman—and George Spencer, 4th Duke of Marlborough—nobleman, former captain in the British Army, and politician. The well-established tradition of interpreting the private estate as a “metonymy and metaphor for the larger state of the nation” (Gary Kelly 28) immediately suggests the political nature of Morgan’s comparison of Montagu’s and the Duke of Marlborough’s estates; her reflections clearly conflate the material and ideological dimensions of the country house in order to engage in a dialogue about effective governance. Morgan’s observations regarding Sandleford Priory provide a model of exemplary governance premised upon an ethics of care that is expressed through the practices of hospitality, social responsibility, and benevolence. Her visit to Blenheim subtly criticizes aristocratic governance by identifying the fault lines within Britain’s court government and culture: namely, a marked tendency towards self-indulgence, social detachment, and a defensive posture that was readily apparent in the British government’s politics of terror. Her subtle juxtaposition of the two different estates provides a salient critique of Britain’s current leadership that participates in the largely conservative campaign to reform the manners of the elite in order to ensure their preservation.³

Morgan’s commitment both to Britain’s traditional social order and to the active participation of women within this order was undoubtedly shaped by the intersecting cultures of conservative politics, Anglicanism, and Bluestocking intellectualism that constituted her world. Although the details of her life are scant, a few telling particulars can be gleaned from her obituary and from the two texts that she published during her lifetime. The politically conservative character of the largely Anglican circles in which Morgan circulated is evident from the details of her social milieu sketched out in the subscription list that fronts *A Tour to Milford Haven*: the list is replete with members of the gentry, aristocracy, and Anglican clergy, many of whom had a vested interest in preserving Britain’s hierarchical structure. Her husband, Rev. Caesar Morgan, was a high-ranking member of the Anglican clergy whose published sermons advertise his commitment to preserving the social hierarchy that protected his privilege. His publications generally coincide with major political events and preach active patriotism and due regard for authority in the face of political unrest.⁴ However, like Mary Morgan’s travelogue, Rev. Morgan’s publications betray his concern with what he perceives as a toxic tendency towards profligacy and dissipation in Britain’s upper ranks; his sermons frequently serve to remind Britain’s ruling class of their duty to model responsible citizenship and to pursue social amelioration through philanthropy. Rev. Morgan’s politically conservative ideology may be indicative of his wife’s political leanings, but Mary Morgan’s support of conservative politics is best ascertained through her personal friendship with and keen support of Matthew Montagu (née Robinson), a Tory Member of Parliament who was also Elizabeth Montagu’s nephew and heir.

Matthew Montagu was resolutely pro-establishment and anti-revolution in his political views,⁵ and Morgan makes her affinity with his politics known through her written praise of his political work. To one of her many correspondents in *A Tour*, she says that he was “deserving of more than I venture to say of him” (16) and proceeds to thank her correspondent for transcribing and sending copies of Matthew Montagu’s most recent parliamentary speech.

Mary Morgan’s avid interest in parliamentary politics demonstrates her sense of women’s significance as agents of moral transformation (or reformation); as she declares in her travelogue: “I would not . . . have them stand by unconcerned spectators of what is passing in the world” (286). Her belief in the socio-political efficacy of women can be traced to her integration within the synergetic Anglican and Bluestocking circles. The constitutive role of Anglican theology and praxis in Bluestocking thought has been skillfully explored by Emma Major and Karen O’Brien, who posit that the tradition of female exemplarity and the demands of religious service within the Church of England provided eighteenth-century Anglican women with a potent sense of their public value and authorized their involvement in public life.⁶ “The religious public, and especially that of the established Church,” Major explains, “was often an important forum in which women understood themselves as active participants in a national community” (7). The interweaving of Morgan’s religious and intellectual activity in her obituary speaks to the ways in which religious duty could be used to validate female intellectual activity. Her obituary positions her intellectual pursuits as a form of faithful labor, musing that her life “shewed what a grace . . . the duties of religion and humanity, diffuse over a vigorous understanding, a brilliant genius, an elegant taste, and a lively wit” (751).

While Morgan’s religious context validated her intellectual activity, her foray into the public as an author and as an editor was facilitated by her female friendships within the Bluestocking community. Morgan published only two texts during her lifetime: *A Tour to Milford Haven* was her first publication, and four years later she edited a putatively ancient poem, *The Knyghte of the Golden Locks* (1799). Both texts appear to have directly benefitted from her friendships within the Bluestocking community. The subscription list for *A Tour* reveals that Elizabeth Montagu and Frances Boscawen both ordered editions of the travelogue, with Montagu ordering a rather extravagant 10 copies. Her editorial work on *The Knyghte of the Golden Locks* was aided by her friendship with Ellis Cornelia Knight’s family, in whose library she purports to have first discovered her love for ancient poetry through her perusal of Thomas Percy’s *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765).⁷ Morgan’s travelogue is, in turn, an expression of her investment in the practice, promotion, and defense of female intellectual and creative development, or what Elizabeth Eger and Lucy Peltz characterize as the

“Enlightenment belief in freedom of enquiry irrespective of nature or gender” (16). “As a female,” she argues in her preface, “I have certainly no occasion to excuse my temerity, so many of my sex have shewn they are capable of the most admirable compositions on the most important subjects” (ix). She supports this assertion throughout her travelogue, commending Sarah Scott’s and Ellis Cornelia Knight’s novels (15, 38, 112), Elizabeth Montagu’s scholarship (42, 48), and Anna Laetitia Barbauld’s and Sarah Trimmer’s children’s literature (321). Morgan’s endorsement of female authors and their works as well as the intellectual and economic support she personally receives from Bluestocking women indicates the productive power of female community: an experience and practice that ultimately informs her political vision.

Reading her defense of female agency against the backdrop of political revolution abroad and political repression at home reveals the complex ideological work done by politically conservative women who sought to maintain Britain’s traditional hierarchy while simultaneously enlarging the sphere of female influence. Although her travelogue has received increasing scholarly attention in recent years, Morgan’s text is often mined for anecdotes rather than considered on its own terms, and very little attention has been paid to the text’s political context and content.⁸ One notable exception is Zoë Kinsley’s excellent body of scholarly work on Morgan’s travelogue; of particular significance to this essay is her detailed study of Morgan’s representation of Elizabeth Montagu’s philanthropy in her article, “*A Tour to Milford Haven and Millenium Hall: Female Charity and the Example of Elizabeth Montagu*” (2003).⁹ Kinsley argues that Morgan’s conflation of the real-life Sandleford with the fictional Millenium Hall portrays Elizabeth Montagu’s philanthropic initiatives as a form of disinterested “religious work” (201); as such, she argues that Morgan’s championing of Montagu should be read as a defense of her charitable work against contemporaneous accusations that Montagu’s very public philanthropy was motivated by self-interest. This essay seeks to further illuminate the political work accomplished by Morgan’s travelogue by situating her commentary on Elizabeth Montagu and her country estate within its larger political context of revolution, rebellion, and repression. Read as a response to Britain’s polarized, hostile politics in the 1790s, her promotion of Montagu’s benevolent estate management over the 4th Duke of Marlborough’s extravagant estate embellishment reads more broadly as a plan for the political reform of the aristocracy within solidly conservative parameters. Morgan’s positioning of Montagu as a role model for the nation aligns with Emma Major’s acute analysis of Montagu’s national importance as a public figure of female exemplarity—a role through which she influenced national morality through her religious convictions (Major 78-80) and active patriotism (17-18). “Montagu,” Major states, “increasingly saw her own life as intimately connected with that of the nation” (17). This blending of nation, religion, and femininity in the powerful figure of Elizabeth

Montagu functions as a source of inspiration for Morgan, who deploys this symbol of feminine power to critique, influence, and even feminize the bastions of male power that determined the fate of her nation.

Political context: "The fate of princes and of kingdoms"

In order to understand Morgan's political intervention, it is necessary to first sketch out her specific political context. The travelogue was written and edited from 1791 to 1795; Morgan's original letters were composed during her journey through England and Wales in 1791, and her publication of the collected and revised letters occurred four years later. The timing of *A Tour to Milford Haven* is suggestive: Morgan's delayed publication corresponds with a period when national stability appeared alarmingly tenuous both at home and abroad. She acknowledges her volatile political context in the travelogue's dedication, admitting that "this Book could not come out at a less favourable time than the present, when the fate of princes and of kingdoms is hourly at stake. At such an awful period I cannot expect it should attract attention for a moment" (vi). Morgan's characterization of the publication's timing as "less favourable" can be taken to suggest both her and her nation's preoccupation with politics over the course of the book's transcription and publication. Her foreboding representation of traditional authority as threatened by the hour captures the sense of anxiety that permeated British society at the time of the text's appearance. British troops were floundering against France's advancing army on the Continent; riots over military impressments and bread shortages erupted across the nation in the spring of 1795 and lasted well into the summer; and reform societies continued to flourish despite opposition, presenting the possibility of a violent French-style revolution on British soil. M. O. Grenby describes the combined effects of threatened and real violence as producing a kind of "communal psychosis" (7) that haunted British society throughout the 1790s.

Morgan's dedication to the Countess of Winterton immediately positions political radicalism as the primary threat to Britain's national stability and can be read as a pointed criticism of what Edmund Burke refers to as the "mechanic philosophy" (77) of radical politics. Her reference to the suspect nature of "adulation" (iv) is an allusion to the politically radical proposal offered in Richard Price's infamous sermon, *A Discourse on the Love of Our Country* (1789). In his provocative address—given on the anniversary of the Glorious Revolution and on the eve of the French Revolution—Price condemns what he refers to as the "idolatry" (24) of authority figures, arguing that the veneration of superiors participates in creating relationships of exploitation. "Adulation," he contends, "is always odious, and

when offered to men in power it corrupts *them* . . . and it debases those who offer it, by manifesting an abjectness founded on improper ideas of *themselves*” (22, original italics). Price criticizes political relationships based upon and defined by hierarchy, and argues that “adulation” upsets the appropriate balance of power between subjects and their monarch by enabling those with authority to “consider themselves as possessed of an inherent superiority, which gives them a right to govern” (23). He lauds the French Revolution for restoring right relations between the people and their monarch by instituting a contractual relationship based on rights and responsibilities rather than on traditional hierarchies and their related affects.

It is this threat to entrenched socio-political relationships that Morgan finds so menacing. Her fear suggests her ideological affinity with Edmund Burke’s criticism of Price’s philosophy, vigorously detailed in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*.¹⁰ Burke interprets the admiration inspired by and due to society’s leaders as an organic feeling reminiscent of the familial love between children and their parents, and accuses Price of replacing instinctive affections with an artificial construct that suppresses human nature. “As things now stand,” Burke observes, “with everything respectable destroyed without us, and an attempt to destroy within us every principle of respect, one is almost forced to apologize for harbouring the common feelings of men” (80). Morgan’s comment to the Countess of Winterton that “real affection is often obliged to be silent” (iv) directly echoes Burke’s statement on the newly suspect status of sympathy with the privileged; in the same vein as Burke, she suggests that the egalitarian demands of political radicals such as Price effectively stifle the operation and expression of “real affection” (iv). That the Countess is revealed to be Morgan’s cousin at the conclusion of her dedication serves to emphasize the perversion of Price’s mechanistic system: despite the familial relation between Morgan and the Countess, her cousin’s social position nevertheless renders the feelings of an “affectionate heart” (iv) questionable according to the exigencies of egalitarianism. The conflation of private and public affections in the figure of the Countess speaks to Burke’s concern that radical politics ultimately threatens the cohesion of society by attacking all domestic, social, and political relationships. Analyzing the potential political impact of Price’s “barbarous philosophy,” Burke cautions:

On this scheme of things, a king is but a man; a queen is but a woman; a woman is but an animal; and an animal not of the highest order . . . Regicide, and parricide, and sacrilege are but fictions of superstition (77).

By demanding equality, political radicals effectively reduce humans to mere objects and expunge their humanity by denying the “common feelings” of humankind. That violence was feared to be the consequence of this political

philosophy is suggested by Burke's immediate shift to national, domestic, and religious chaos.

The threat of violence was not, however, exclusively posed by external and internal revolutionary forces. The British government responded to the possibility of revolution by becoming progressively authoritarian and threatening violence against subversives. In addition to engaging France in the Revolutionary Wars, William Pitt's government instituted surveillance operations to monitor its citizens and introduced repressive measures to stifle both real and imaginary threats to Britain's political stability. The aggressive repression of radical activity reached its peak in the mid-1790s with the much-publicized Treason Trials of 1794, the concurrent suspension of habeas corpus, and the introduction of the Treasonable Practices Act and the Seditious Meetings Act in 1795.¹¹ These external and internal pressures created what John Barrell describes as an "atmosphere of suspicion" (4) that effectively policed the British public through the pervasive threat of violence. Surveying the British nation in 1793, the radical polemicist John Thelwall represented the public as conspicuously terrified; buffeted by a "torrent of popular delirium" he observes, "the tranquility of every district in the kingdom has been so artfully disturbed" (vii).

Morgan's criticism of radical political philosophy and her horror at the increasingly tenuous condition of "princes and of kingdoms" (vi) clearly advertises her commitment to the preservation of rank for which Pitt's government stood. Yet Morgan's travelogue is profoundly skeptical of the use of violence as a governing tool, and her repeated suggestion of the inherently anti-social nature of violence ultimately registers as a quiet critique both of radical and of reactionary politics. Her provocative alignment between the actions of Britain's military leaders and that of unscrupulous pillagers who raided shipwrecked vessels along the Welsh coast suggests that Britain's institutionalized violence is equally immoral and similarly destructive as mob violence. "Ye naval and military officers," she pronounces, "who rejoice at the rumour of war, in which thousands and ten thousands must perish . . . be not too severe in your strictures upon the inhospitable temper of these untutored rustics" (208). Her accusation of the zealous attitude with which military leaders accept the annihilation of "thousands and ten thousands" suggests that institutionalized violence instigates a process of dehumanization and disassociation not dissimilar from Price's egalitarianism.

Morgan's subtle alignment of what she sees as the equally damaging agendas of Price and the British Parliament suggests her fundamental dissatisfaction with either political position. Indeed, her recurrent association of men with destruction implicitly questions the ability of Britain's patriarchy—whether inclined to radicalism or conservatism—to preserve the stability of the British nation. Her approbation of the absence of men in the utopian community of females depicted

in Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall* (1762) provides a representative example of the different qualities that Morgan ascribes to men and women. "In that," Morgan archly asserts, referring to Scott's exclusion of men from her feminocentric community, "Mrs S— shewed perfectly her knowledge of human nature, for men are terrible disturbers of the tranquility of a society of females" (112). In Scott's novel, it is women's relational nature that produces and ensures the effective and exemplary functioning of the Millenium Hall community. It is this benevolent form of leadership that Morgan perceives as the antidote to the disruptive agendas of Price and Pitt; that women *maintain* rather than *disturb* "tranquility" indicates their facility for establishing collectivity and stability, both of which were particularly expedient qualities during a time when national disintegration appeared disturbingly imminent.¹²

Morgan extrapolates the political possibilities inherent in the opposing political collectives of a "society of females" (112) and "naval and military officers" (208) in the figures and the estates of Elizabeth Montagu and the Duke of Marlborough.¹³ In Sandleford she finds an example of a benevolent leader who maintains authority by nurturing what Burke defines as the natural social affections of "love, veneration, admiration, or attachment" (77); this relational mode of governance produces the same tranquility she purports to feel when in a "society of females" (112). In Blenheim's architecture and design, she finds evidence of an opulent, egoistic aristocrat who maintains authority through fear; this repressive mode of governance produces the same sense of discomfort or 'disturbance' she describes when masculine individualism intrudes upon female collectivity. By using Montagu's estate to articulate her political vision of the right use of power, Morgan promotes an approach to governance that cultivates rather than 'silences' affection. Her comparison of the two estates effectively advocates for the transformation of the British nation along more feminocentric lines, ultimately expanding the "tranquility" found within small circles or communities of women into the wider circle of the nation.

Sandleford: "The idea of a Roman villa"

In 1755, Elizabeth Montagu wrote the following observation to Gilbert West:

If every Gentleman and lady that live in the Country would allow their poor neighbours to apply to them for relief in necessity, for advice in difficulties, for consolation in affliction, what an effect would it have on the common people! The desire of being in favour with such persons would keep them regular, make them industrious, and prevent the crimes, the follies and misfortunes that attend a dejected or a fearless state of mind. How glorious to be the visible

providence of a Country! (qtd. in Eve Tavor Bannet, "The Bluestocking Sisters," 35-36)

Montagu's fantasy of socially responsible governance and her desire to be "the visible providence of a Country" was fulfilled in the management and design of the Berkshire estate over which she had full control after her husband's death in 1775. Through her actions and words, she cultivated an image of herself as a benevolent landlord and of Sandford as a sentimental community sustained by the kind of reciprocity she imagines in her letter to West. Montagu established her benevolence through her many charitable acts, which ranged from employing the infirm and jobless to subsidizing food and livestock for her tenants.¹⁴ Throughout her extensive redesign of both the house and its grounds in the 1780s, Montagu carefully maintained the appearance of social responsibility by stressing the financial sustainability of her project. In contrast to her spectacular city dwelling in London, she stipulated that Sandford's improvements must conform to her comparatively modest budget. "We shall not erect temples to the gods," she declared, "build bridges over humble rivulets, or do any of the marvelous things suggested by the caprice, and indulged by the wantonness of wealth" ("4 December 1781" 306). Despite hiring Lancelot 'Capability' Brown—whose landscape parks were synonymous with the practices of enclosure and emparkment—Montagu confidently asserted that the comprehensive redesign of the estate effectively fostered rather than ruptured her connection with the local community as it created economic opportunities for laborers.¹⁵ Her country house allowed her to exercise publically the philanthropic ideals championed within the Bluestocking circle and to bring to life the moral economy described in Scott's *Millenium Hall*.

The tense political atmosphere of the 1790s only served to amplify Montagu's desire to obviate the increasingly threatening repercussions of a "dejected and fearless" populace (Montagu, qtd. in Bannet, 36). Emma Major argues that Montagu's philanthropic activity during the 1790s can be understood as a distinctly political "anti-revolutionary practice" (248). Her philanthropic initiatives, Major claims, "become defined by a Protestant patriotism that sees the best refuge from the French, and the best rebuttal to their revolutionary principles, in piety and charity, and an Anglican respect for law, order, and the preservation of rank" (233). Peter Denney agrees with Major that Montagu's philanthropic initiatives "must be regarded as an attempt . . . to diffuse unrest" (509), but further problematizes her exercise of charity by specifically focusing on the class politics that it enshrines. Denney imputes Montagu's charity to the purely classist desire to "promote deference and industry in the poor, not their upward mobility or material comfort" (508). His assessment of Montagu's philanthropy participates in a critical discussion of Montagu's charity—extending from contemporary opinions to modern scholarship—that interprets her very public acts of charity as motivated by

self-aggrandizement rather than benevolence. These suggestions of egotism are perhaps nowhere as blatantly stated as in James Woodhouse's damaging portrayal of Montagu in his autobiographical poem, "The Life and Lucubrations of Crispinus Scriblerus" (written in the 1790s, published in 1896), in which he directly addresses her philanthropic works and estate management. Woodhouse—who worked as Montagu's land bailiff and house steward—excoriates Montagu by attributing her altruism to vanity (68) and criticizing Brown's fashionable 'improvements' of Sandleford as an act of profligacy (165-168) and as a gesture towards exclusion (170-178). "[T]o administer more food for Pride," he mocks, "With ornaments [she] bedeck'd the fair outside, / Where she might show her Wealth" (166). Woodhouse's revolutionary energies are precisely what Montagu feared and attempted to placate by actively courting the goodwill—or, more equivocally, the "gratitude" (Denney 509)—of her rural community.

As Zoë Kinsley observes in her reading of *A Tour's* Sandleford episode, Morgan's glowing appraisal of Montagu's philanthropic initiatives clearly acts as a defense of Montagu by suggesting that her charity is motivated by selfless virtue rather than selfish vanity. However, Morgan's positive assessment does much more than act as a personal defense of Montagu: it also promotes her "piety and charity" (Major 233) as an effective antidote to revolutionary fervour. Morgan shares rather than resents the classist motivations of Montagu's philanthropy, and she interprets her implementation of philanthropic ideals as an advisable approach to assuaging discontent and to safeguarding Britain's hierarchy. She elides some of the problematic elements of Montagu's landscape redesign (particularly her participation in enclosure and emparkment) by moralizing Montagu's aesthetic decisions as an example of responsive and responsible landlordism. "[Montagu's] whole behaviour," she enthuses, "gives you a perfect conception of what is meant by possessing 'the milk of human kindness' . . . [she] is always thinking of some great or good work, which tends to the encouragement of genius, or the promotion of plans for the benefit of her species" (42-43). Her characterization of her host carefully emphasizes the importance that Montagu places upon the maintenance of social relationships, which Morgan indicates is achieved through the operating principles of functionality and inclusivity. She suggests that Montagu's nature and actions are fundamentally oriented towards community and stand in direct contrast to the twin menaces of British stability in the 1790s: the equally solipsistic figures of the mercenary Jacobin and the self-serving aristocrat.

As the liminal space connecting public and private, the entrance to Sandleford's manor house functions as an important symbolic space that defines the relationship between those inside and outside the manor. Morgan's description of the landscape preceding the physical entrance signals Montagu's emphasis on simplicity and practicality. "The approach to the house is a fine lawn," she approvingly notes,

“with sheep feeding upon it. This gives you an idea of beauty blended with utility, which always produces agreeable sensations in the mind” (33). Her description of the main building’s entrance serves to establish the host’s hospitality and further suggests the values of functionality and inclusivity governing the estate:

The carriage draws close up to the front door, by which comfortable circumstance we avoided running the gauntlet up a high flight of steps in view of the windows, to which people are often subject, when they visit at great houses. No such distress awaits you at Sandleford, when you alight you enter a small hall, for Mrs. M— has not spoiled her house in order to make a grand vestibule. (33)

The entrance to the manor house rebuffs architectural features designed to display the power and status of the proprietor; the emphasis on comfort clearly invites fellowship, not discomfiting those who enter with alienating displays of power and wealth. In a letter to Hannah More, Montagu states that she intended the estate’s gothic entrance to convey precisely what Morgan senses, that “ancient simplicity and hospitality resided there, and a homely and sincere reception awaited them, if they would do the mistress of the mansion the favour to walk in” (“From Mrs. Montagu to Miss H. More. Sandleford, 1784” 372). The “ancient simplicity and hospitality” of the entrance advertises Montagu’s (symbolic if not always actual) commitment to preserving the traditional socio-economic function of the estate; the simplicity of the design suggests an emphasis on functionality, and its gesture towards hospitality symbolizes Montagu’s emphasis on inclusion.

Morgan’s further survey of the Sandleford’s outdoor spaces provides additional evidence of Montagu’s benevolent governance; her initial impression of the estate’s functionality and inclusivity is confirmed in the design of the landscape and in the treatment of the estate’s employees. Although she clearly admires Capability Brown’s aesthetic improvements to the landscape, Morgan is careful to focus on the estate’s functional qualities and to gloss over the more controversial aesthetic aspects of Brown’s design. Her description of the estate’s practical features participates in the larger socio-economic discussion that debated the wisdom of dispossessing Britain’s yeomanry and rupturing the traditional relationships between landowners and their tenants for aesthetic and/or economic reasons. The ruin of local economies due to landlords enclosing their property for profit or pleasure and divesting the land of its social function had been subject to criticism for decades, and the disturbing progress of the French Revolution lent renewed urgency to the discussion. As Woodhouse’s trenchant condemnation of Sandleford’s redesign indicates, Brown’s extensive landscape parks—with their large swaths of sterile turf and careful segregation of gentlemen’s seats from rural labor—were subject to particular criticism. As Denney explains, “[i]solating the country house from the working countryside, parks accordingly became signs of how landlords were abandoning

public duty for private pleasure” (493). Indeed, Uvedale Price—a landowner and the author of the influential *Essay on the Picturesque* (1794)—criticized the “solitary grandeur” of the Brownian landscape, arguing that “he who destroys dwellings, gardens, and inclosures, for the sake of mere extent and parade of property, only extends the bounds of . . . dreary selfish pride; but contracts those of variety, amusement, and humanity” (*Essay on the Picturesque* 340). Price’s land agent, Nathaniel Kent, detailed the economic devastation caused by the trend towards divorcing the land from its agricultural uses. Discussing the removal of working dairies from estates, he observes:

From the great farmers dropping their dairies the markets of Yarmouth and Norwich are so ill supplied with butter, that it is become a matter of favour to be able to obtain enough for common consumption, notwithstanding the price, within a very few years, is increased from 8d. to 16 d. a pint (132).

Both Price and Kent feared the political repercussions of the various forms of economic dispossession caused by emparkment and urged landowners to maintain the social function of their land. In *Thoughts on the Defence of Property* (1797), which was published as a response to a possible French invasion, Price associates inclusive land use practices with national stability, arguing that the welfare of the laboring classes serves as an antidote to revolution. “Vast possessions may give ambitious views” he observes, “and ambition destroys local attachments; but even the cottager, with a few acres which he has tilled and manured . . . has at least as much attachment to his little spot, as the greatest lord to his immense domain” (19-20). Price identifies the breakdown of sentimental attachments—between landlord and tenant, tenant and land—as the real danger posed by land enclosures and the development of fashionable parks. In the absence of a social attachment to the landowner and a material attachment to the land, the laboring classes are unlikely to form attachments to their nation at large. As the riots in Britain and the mobs in France had recently demonstrated, the failure of landowners to recognize and mitigate the real, concrete effects of deprivation could indeed have significant repercussions.

The emphasis Morgan places on the functional and inclusive aspects of Montagu’s estate suggests that she would agree with Price’s endorsement of land use practices invested in social reality. Indeed, she voices her disapproval of the practice of land enclosures at a later point in her travelogue, observing that “[t]he gentlemen in Wales have not adopted the custom of throwing several little farms into one great one, by which the small farmer . . . is deprived of the means of subsistence, and must perhaps become the menial servant of one who has hired his cottage over his head, or starve” (270). Although Brown’s redesign of Montagu’s estate predictably relocated the more utilitarian buildings and spaces to the margins in order to provide an unimpeded

view of the park, Morgan's portrayal of the landscape reintegrates these marginalized outbuildings into the prospect.¹⁶ She effectively performs a revision of the Brownian landscape that places the realities of agrarian life back into the visual frame in a way that aligns with her overall portrayal and understanding of Montagu's relational, community-oriented approach to governance. She notes the use of land for pasturage (33), observes that "the farm and the dairy are not omitted" (40), and includes the appearance of cultivated fields in her description of the prospect (36). Morgan deftly manages the thorny issue of Montagu's support of and participation in enclosure and emparkment by claiming that the grounds have been developed both to delight the owner and to serve the community, carefully balancing the dictates of beauty and utility, desire and duty. "The whole of the place," she commends, "suggested to me the idea of a Roman villa. There is everything for use as well as beauty" (40). According to Morgan's impression of the landscape, Montagu's estate stands in contrast to the aestheticized barrenness of fashionable pleasure grounds; by integrating both practical and aesthetic considerations, the landscape signals her rejection of the solipsistic trend of divorcing the country retreat from rural labour.

While the physical structuring of Montagu's grounds suggests an ethics of care, the impact of her benevolent governance is most effectively displayed in her management of the estate. Morgan represents Montagu as a conscientious landlord, carefully detailing her maternal, sympathetic, and perhaps unorthodox treatment of her employees:

When walking in the grounds, I observed an extraordinary degree of cleanliness and decency in the men, who were at work upon them. Upon enquiry I found they were all fed and cloathed by her hand. I perceived too that many of them had some great defect, occasioned by age, natural infirmity, or misfortune, being either blind, deaf, dumb, or lame, yet she had so paired them, and fitted their employments to their several faculties, that the remaining senses of the one served to supply the deficiency of the other. (39)¹⁷

As a result of Montagu's sympathetic initiatives, she remakes marginalized individuals into "useful and happy members of society" (39). Her redemptive role is further supported through Morgan's rather over-the-top comparison of Montagu to Christ: "I hope it is not prophane to say [that] she has made the blind to see, the deaf to hear, the dumb to speak, and the lame to walk" (39-40). By attributing healing capacities to Montagu, Morgan establishes the power of an other-centered, socially responsible approach to governance; Sandleford's architecture, landscape, and people effectively demonstrate the restorative power of a relational approach to governance that prioritizes the needs of the community over that of the individual. She carefully avoids framing Montagu's charitable acts as self-interested by pointing out that her philanthropy is not materially remunerated. "Though she does get so

much work done,” she explains, “as she would by stronger and abler men, she has the heartfelt satisfaction of making those happy and useful members of society . . . who, but for her, must be dependent upon a parish for an idle and scanty subsistence” (39). The economic benefit is to the laborers and to the larger community; the benefit that Montagu accrues through her social initiatives lies equally in her own “heartfelt satisfaction” and in the reciprocal happiness of her employees. Her sympathetic governance is ultimately shown to cultivate the mutual affection that Burke theorized is so essential to the cohesion of political society.

Describing Montagu to her correspondent, Morgan states that “she has the true art of pleasing, for she makes you satisfied with yourself” (42). It is significant that Montagu’s leadership fosters personal contentment rather than dissatisfaction, as it was Britons’ keen sense of dissatisfaction with their limited political and economic positions that generated the rebellions and revolutionary feeling erupting across Britain in the 1790s. Montagu’s authority is safeguarded by the relationships that she actively cultivates within her environment, and the apparent contentment that Morgan observes among the estates’ employees posits this relational approach to leadership as an effective mode of governance. Her representation of Montagu’s estate bears out Uvedale Price’s contention that it is the practice of benevolence rather than the operation of force that obviates revolution. “Attentive kindnesses,” he states, “are amply repaid by affectionate regard and reverence; and were they general through the kingdom, they would do much more towards guarding us against democratical opinions ‘Than twenty thousand soldiers arm’d in proof’” (*Thoughts on the Defence of Property*, 340). Montagu’s cultivation and maintenance of relationships produces a community that demonstrates in reality what Price proposes in theory: that benevolence is a far more effective antidote to disorder than fear.

Blenheim: “Too gay and too gaudy to be real”

Morgan’s visit to the magnificent palace of George Spencer, 4th Duke of Marlborough, almost immediately follows her stay at Sandleford, creating a narrative structure that not only invites comparisons between the two estates, but one which also parallels the contrast created in Scott’s *Millenium Hall* between the fictional feminocentric community and its neighboring, distinctively masculine estate. Scott directly contrasts the ladies’ flourishing estate with a contiguous manor facing disintegration due to neglect by a series of deeply selfish and materialistic male proprietors. The contrast between the two estates explicitly advertises the communitarian values governing the women’s comparatively thriving community. “How directly were we led,” the male narrator states, “to admire the superior sense, as well as transcendent virtue of these ladies” (222). The structural affinity between Scott’s comparison of Millenium Hall and its neighboring estate and Morgan’s comparison of Sandleford and Blenheim forms a suggestive allusion that implicitly

frames the Duke of Marlborough's magnificent palace as the aesthetic and ideological foil to Montagu's comparatively modest country seat.

Blenheim by its very nature invoked the issue of aristocratic profligacy and raised questions regarding the right use of power and wealth. Built largely from public funds awarded to John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough, in recognition of his military achievements, the ostentatious palace quickly became enmeshed in controversy. The Duke of Marlborough's decision to appoint John Vanbrugh as the architect signalled his grand aspirations for the estate; Vanbrugh had a reputation for flamboyant baroque designs, and together he and the Duke planned a structure characterized by extravagance. Although the initial cost of Blenheim was estimated to amount to £100,000 (David Green 43) the final figure came to approximately £300,000 pounds: a princely sum that remained unsurpassed in the eighteenth century (James Legard 185). Further money was expended on the estate's features under the ownership of George Spencer, Churchill's great-grandson. Spencer evidently shared his great-grandfather's grandiose vision and invested large sums of money in modernizing and further embellishing the estate; his alterations and additions included Capability Brown's extensive redesign of the grounds and the construction of William Chamber's Temple of Diana (Green 183).

Blenheim's theatrical architecture and its associated cost came to represent the socially enervating effects of luxury; the 1st Duke of Marlborough's detractors, Virginia Kenny observes, denigrated the building as "a useless show-place" (210). In Alexander Pope's 1714 poem, "Upon the Duke of Marlborough's House at Woodstock," he underscores the uselessness of the palace through his wry observation that it was unsuited for domestic use:

Thanks, Sir, cried I, 't is very fine,
But where d'ye sleep, or where d'ye dine?
I find by all you have been telling
That 't is a house, but not a dwelling. (101-102)

John Loveday, an English antiquarian and travel writer, decried what he described as Blenheim's "plain" (80) or impractical gardens in his travel memoir, *The Diary of a Tour in 1732* (1732), lamenting the erasure of traditional responsibilities and relationships represented by the estate's artistic rather than agrarian landscape. Three decades later, Brown's modern restructuring of the estate's grounds simply exacerbated the issue of the landscape's "showy" rather than functional quality by replacing the traditional gardens with unending turf and by flooding over a hundred acres of land to create a magnificent lake. Indeed, Montagu's declaration she will not "erect temples to the gods, or build bridges over humble rivulets, or do any of the marvelous things suggested by the caprice, and indulged by the wantonness of wealth" ("4 December 1781" 306) could be taken as a thinly-veiled criticism of

Blenheim's ostentatious grounds, particularly as it developed under the guidance of the 4th Duke of Marlborough.¹⁸ Her instructions that Brown's plan for Sandleford heed both the "character of the place" and her "purse" (306) creates a clear distinction between Sandleford and Blenheim, and communicates to Brown that his design must be both socially and fiscally responsible.

Morgan's elaboration of the significant aesthetic differences between the two estates functions on a symbolic level as a representation of two different approaches to governance, which is immediately apparent in her description of the approach to the palace. After passing through a "prodigious grand triumphal arch" (67), she is overcome by the estate's sumptuousness: "Such a magnificent scene presented itself all at once to my ravished sight. The palace, the park, the canal, the bridge, and a hundred other objects, struck upon my senses in a moment" (69). The approach to Blenheim is extravagant and overwhelming, which forms a sharp contrast to the simplicity and utility that characterizes the approach to Montagu's manor. Morgan's initial impression of the estate's extravagance is augmented by her further survey of the palace and its grounds; her account is littered with statements regarding her inability to adequately summarize the estate that cumulatively suggests Blenheim's material excess. The house "would take a week to survey" (69), the ornaments are "too numerous to mention" (70) and "too numerous . . . to describe" (83), the furnishings are "impossible to remember" (73), and to detail the paintings "would take more time than I had for seeing them, or have now for writing" (73). The entire experience leaves her with "eyes tired of seeing" (86). Although she is appropriately awed by the display, Morgan ultimately finds the *dulce* and *utile* of Sandleford superior to the purely ornamental splendor of Blenheim; whereas in Montagu's estate "nothing is gaudy or superfluous" (42), the Duke of Marlborough's palace is "too gay and too gaudy to be real" (76).

Her disapproval of Blenheim's 'gaudiness' reprises the long-standing criticism of the estate's apparent uselessness; that the Dukes of Marlborough have eschewed utility for spectacle visibly indicates their repudiation of the traditional, socio-economic function of the land. Morgan's specific representation of Blenheim as unreal further suggests that the Marlborough dynasty has created a world deliberately divorced from immediate reality, which—as Uvedale Price's connection between inclusive land use practices and national stability indicates—was a dangerous quality at a time when socio-political realities threatened the very foundations of aristocratic privilege and power. Vicesimus Knox, an apologist for British political reform, directly blamed Britain's mounting political instability on the aristocracy's segregation from material reality in his 1795 publication, *The Spirit of Despotism*. According to Knox, the aristocracy's pursuit of "sordid and vain-glorious purposes" demonstrates their disregard for the "real, substantial happiness of the governed" (357). In serving themselves rather than the national

community, the aristocracy's political utility is compromised and their reformation (or, more radically, their removal) is ultimately justified. "[D]egenerate aristocrats," M. O. Grenby contends, "threatened revolution every bit as much as levellers . . . since in not fulfilling the duties incumbent upon them by virtue of their station they deprived the hierarchies of nation of their very *raison d'être* and therefore of their sustainability" (168). Morgan's disapproval of Blenheim's superficiality is more than just an aesthetic judgment; her negative assessment gestures towards the socio-political threat inherent in the combined effects of aristocratic profligacy and indifference, just as her approval of Elizabeth Montagu's virtuous communitarianism indicates her awareness of the socio-political benefits that accrues to a landed class alive to their social obligations. Without cultivating real, lived relationships with their local communities, the aristocracy risked alienating the British public through their displays of 'gaudiness.'

The Dukes of Marlboroughs' investment in show rather than in substance does not merely segregate the estate from the surrounding community, but it also forms a statement on their method of governance. Morgan's immediate response to the estate's architecture draws attention to the power dynamics suggested by its design. Blenheim imposes itself upon Morgan's consciousness in a particularly aggressive manner ("my ravished sight," "struck upon my senses" [69]); her sense of being overwhelmed upon entering the estate suggests that it is designed to advertise the power of its owner and to create awareness (or, to use Morgan's phrase, "anxious fear" [33]) within the spectator of their inferior status. William F. Mavor, who wrote the definitive guide to the palace in 1789, remarks that its appearance reflects the militaristic legacy of its first owner: "Its massy grandeur, its spacious portals, and its lofty towers, recal the ideas of defence and security" (26). Although Mavor approves of this nod to the building's genesis, his observation that Blenheim's façade conjures up images of ancient fortified castles is indicative of the building's intimidating and insular aspect—forming a significant contrast to Sandleford's appeal to "ancient simplicity and hospitality" ("From Mrs. Montagu to Miss H. More. Sandleford, 1784" 372). Consequently, whereas the design of Sandleford's entrance both invites community and invokes the idea of community by drawing in visitors through a succession of welcoming gestures, the very architecture of Blenheim's entrance manufactures distance between those inside and those outside by conjuring the spectre of violence. Morgan's sensation of being immobilized, or "tranfixt" (69), by the image presented by the estate suggests that the architecture answered its intention. Her description of the two different entrances effectively suggests two approaches to power: while Montagu maintains her authority through the cultivation of community, the Marlborough family appears to favor a form of power premised upon intimidation.

In a later and more explicit comparison between Blenheim and Sandleford, it becomes clear that the estates embody two different modes of governance. “Having before described Sandleford to you,” Morgan confides to her correspondent,

I cannot help observing, that it is a striking contrast to Blenheim. But it is such a one, as when the eye, dazzled with gazing at the sun, falls on the soft green of a beautiful lawn, upon which it may rest for ever without satiety or weariness. At S— the mind is gratified with every thing, that can render life rational and happy. At B— it is fatigued with contemplating objects, that seem like a golden dream. (76)

Morgan carefully traipses through the minefield of political critique in the fearful atmosphere of the 1790s by submerging her political commentary in the language of aesthetics. Her comparison directly paraphrases a passage from Burke’s *A Philosophical Enquiry Into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (1757) in which he discusses the tranquil appeal of the beautiful as opposed to the terror of the sublime. To use his precise words, “[i]t is rather the soft green of the soul on which we rest our eyes, that are fatigued with beholding more glaring objects” (206). Morgan’s use of Burke’s analogy loosely allies Sandleford with his definition of the beautiful and Blenheim with his description of the sublime, investing the two divergent estates both with the aesthetic qualities and with the political dimensions manifest in Burke’s categories. According to his theory, the innocuous nature of beauty elicits love, whereas the threatening nature of the sublime induces terror. As a result, beauty is productive of society as it is naturally attractive. “I call beauty a social quality,” Burke explains, “for where women and men . . . give us a sense of joy and pleasure beholding them . . . they inspire us with sentiments of tenderness and affection towards their persons; we like to have them near us, and we enter willingly into a kind of relation with them” (66-67). Although the sublime provokes respect, it is an admiration grounded in fear and therefore fundamentally anti-social; Burke argues that we intuitively distance ourselves from that which elicits terror out of a sense of self-preservation (206-207). The political applications of Burke’s aesthetic theories become evident in his rough alignment of the sublime with “despotic governments” (99) and the beautiful with a form of British libertarianism. The former acquires power through fear, obviating “mischiefs” (206) through the threat of “dangers, punishments, and troubles” (205); the latter secures obedience through affection, garnering loyalty through the dispensation of “reliefs, gratifications, and indulgences” (206).

Montagu’s relational approach to governance operates according to the dictates of the beautiful, procuring love (or at least loyalty) through acts of social amelioration. The association that Morgan draws between Blenheim and the sublime suggests that the Duke of Marlborough represents a more authoritarian approach to

governance that achieves submission through the spectacle of power—a suggestion that is reinforced both in her characterization of Blenheim as a “monument of . . . martial achievements” (74) and in her sensation of being overcome to the point of incapacitation in the estate’s presence.¹⁹ Her elaboration of Burke’s “glaring object” (206) into the scorching sun and the nightmarish experience of inhabiting a world gone slightly mad underscores the terrifying experience of the sublime as described by Burke, effectively indicating the negative impact of Blenheim’s aesthetics and the politics enshrined therein. Morgan attempts to convey that Montagu’s relational approach to power and attention to social realities produces a society that is both contented (“the mind is gratified”) and sustainable (“upon which [the eye] may rest for ever without satiety or weariness”), while the Duke of Marlborough’s spectacle of wealth and naked display of power fosters disillusionment (“too gay and too gaudy”) and is ultimately unsustainable (“dazzled with gazing at the sun”). Invested as she is in the preservation of Britain’s hierarchical structure, Morgan is clearly drawn to the idea of a sustainable mode of governance—one that can withstand revolutionary ideology through the mutual benefits that it confers.

Conclusion: “The power of attraction”

While still at Sandleford, Morgan stops to contemplate the difference between Montagu’s estate and other country houses, providing a frame of reference for her eventual comparison of Sandleford and Blenheim. “Upon viewing some fine houses,” she observes, “we are sometimes tempted to cry out with the wise man, ‘All is vanity!’ Many superb edifices eclipse the owners so much, that they seem the most insignificant things in them. But in every part of [Sandleford] you see the soul that animates the whole” (40). Sandleford’s aesthetic beauty is rendered meaningful through its intention; Montagu’s commitment to the welfare of others is manifest in every aspect of the estate, which ultimately validates its existence. Alternately, Blenheim’s spectacle feels dangerously meaningless due to the fundamental lack of connection between the estate and its community. Morgan is effectively arguing that Montagu’s ‘feminine,’ virtuous, and relational approach to leadership is ultimately superior to the Duke of Marlborough’s ‘masculine,’ egotistic, and authoritarian approach. Given the critical juncture at which Britain found itself in 1795, Morgan asks and enables her audience to examine the principles ensuring the social harmony of Montagu’s estate and to seriously consider their implementation on a national scale. To Montagu’s nephew, she writes: “I cannot help comparing [your aunt] to a loadstone, which has not only the power of attraction, but communicates some of its virtue to everything that approaches it” (209). Morgan’s choice of metaphor identifies the mistress of Sandleford as a compass both for Matthew Montagu as a Tory politician negotiating Britain’s tense political climate and, more broadly, for a nation struggling to find its way amidst the push and pull of revolutionary and reactionary

forces.²⁰ Similar to a loadstone, it is Montagu's use of organic attraction rather than unnatural force that designates her (and, by extension, those like her) as a guide particularly capable of helping Britain navigate through the turbulent socio-political context of the eighteenth century's embattled final decade.

¹ For more on the anxieties surrounding female influence in the 1790s, see Jane Kromm, "Representations of Revolutionary Women in Political Caricature"; Lucy Peltz, "'A Revolution in Female Manners': Women, Politics and Reputation in the Late Eighteenth Century"; Emma Major, *Madam Britannia: Women, Church, and Nation, 1712-1812*; and Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1701-1837* (chapter 5).

² For a more detailed discussion of the role and definition of women within the British Enlightenment, see Eve Tavor Bannet, *The Domestic Revolution: Enlightenment Feminisms and the Novel*. For scholarship on women and the Anglican Church see Karen O'Brien, *Women and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chapter 1); Emma Major, *Madam Britannia*; Harriet Guest, *Small Change: Women, Learning, Patriotism, 1750-1810* (Chapter 6); Norma Clark, "Bluestocking Fictions: Devotional Writings, Didactic Literature and the Imperative of Female Improvement"; and Susan Staves, "Church of England Clergy and Women Writers."

³ The 1780s saw the flourishing of what Joanna Innes calls a "comprehensive programme of moral reform" (179) that culminated in King George III's *Proclamation Against Vice and Immorality* in 1787 and the subsequent formation of the Proclamation Society, whose purpose was to translate the King's proclamation into action. Although the campaign was largely focused on the moral reformation of the poor, there was also a significant push for the reformation of the manners of the elite, as their behaviour set the precedent for the rest of society. The French Revolution politicized the campaign in new ways; in particular, the intense scrutiny under which the British aristocracy found themselves in the face of France's egalitarianism underscored the importance of polishing their image. For discussions regarding the reformation of the elite in the 1790s, see M. O. Grenby, *The Anti-Jacobin Novel: British Conservatism and the French Revolution* (Chapter 5) and Linda Colley, *Britons* (Chapter 4). For more general discussions of the reformation of manners campaign in late-eighteenth century, see Joanna Innes, *Inferior Politics: Social Problems and Social Politics in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Chapter 5) and M. J. D. Roberts, *Making English Morals: Voluntary Association and the Moral Reform Movement in England, 1688-1886* (Chapters 1-2).

⁴ Rev. Morgan's most overtly political sermons include: *The Duty of Patriotism Vindicated and Enforced: A Sermon Preached in the Cathedral Church of Ely* (1798), *A Sermon on Public Spirit: Preached at Wisbech, the Isle of Ely, on Sunday, April 29, 1798* (1798), *A Sermon Preached in the Cathedral Church of Ely, on Thursday, April 23, 1789: Being the Day Appointed for a General Thanksgiving to Almighty God for His Majesty's Happy Recovery* (1789), *A Sermon Preached in the Cathedral Church of Ely, on Wednesday, February the 21st, 1781: Being the Day Appointed for a General Fast* (1781).

⁵ For more on Matthew Montagu's Tory politics, see R. G. Thorne, *The House of Commons 1790-1802*.

⁶ See endnote 3 for scholarship on the role of Anglicanism in Bluestocking culture.

⁷ "Dr. Percy's ancient ballads," Morgan relates, "fell into my hands, and I was so captivated with many of them, that they made an indelible impression on my memory. At a future period I perused them with equal avidity and delight, and from that time, made it my business to enquire of every literary friend for fragments of ancient poetry" ("The Editor to the Reader" 3).

⁸ Contemporary scholarship on Mary Morgan's travelogue tends to focus on her observations on Wales, her antiquarian interests, her impressions of Sandleford and relationship with Elizabeth Montagu, and her engagement with picturesque theory. For an analysis of Morgan's representation

of Wales, see Sarah Prescott, "Women Travellers in Wales: Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi, Mary Morgan and Elizabeth Isabella Spence." For a short discussion of Morgan's antiquarian pursuits, see Katie Garner, *Romantic Women Writers and Arthurian Legend: The Quest for Knowledge* (Chapter 4). For references to Morgan's observations on Sandleford, see Stephen Bending, *Green Retreats: Women, Gardens and Eighteenth-Century Culture* (Chapter 3) and Peter Denney, "'Unpleasant, tho' Arcadian Spots': Plebeian Poetry, Polite Culture, and the Sentimental Economy of the Landscape Park." For a brief mention of Morgan's use of the picturesque, see Malcolm Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque, Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800* (pp. 129).

⁹ In addition to this article, Kinsley has also addressed Morgan's travelogue in the following works: "Beside the Seaside: Mary Morgan's *A Tour to Milford Haven, in the Year 1791*," and *Women Writing the Home Tour, 1682-1812*.

¹⁰ That Morgan was familiar with Burke's *Reflections* is also evident from her direct (mis)quotation of his line: "the age of chivalry is gone" (387). For studies that deal specifically with Edmund Burke's and/or Richard Price's early contributions to the French Revolution debate, see Gregory Claeys, *The French Revolution Debate in Britain: The Origins of Modern Politics* (chapter 1); Wil Verhoeven, *Americomania and the French Revolution Debate in Britain, 1789-1802* (Chapter 1); Marilyn Butler, *Burke, Paine, Godwin, and the Revolution Controversy* (Chapters 2-3); John Faulkner, "Burke's Perception of Richard Price"; and Morgan Rooney, *The French Revolution Debate and the British Novel, 1790-1814: The Struggle for History's Authority* (Chapter 1).

¹¹ For more on the nature and effect of Pitt's policies over the course of the 1790s, see John Barrell, *The Spirit of Despotism: Invasions of Privacy in the 1790s*; Clive Emsley, "An Aspect of Pitt's Terror: Prosecutions for Sedition in the 1790s"; and Steve Poole, "Pitt's Terror Reconsidered: Jacobinism and the Law in Two South-Western Counties, 1791-1803."

¹² Scott's and Morgan's assumption of women's 'natural' benevolence and sociability draws on a common stereotype that was well-established by the end of the eighteenth century, and one that was influential within the Bluestocking set. Ideas regarding women's sympathetic and relational nature circulated early in the eighteenth century and developed into orthodoxy by the end of the century, promulgated through Enlightenment moral philosophy, conduct literature, and novels, to list a few sources. Tracing the emergence of this gendered stereotype is beyond the scope of this essay, but the following works provide excellent commentaries on the construction and circulation of this feminine ideal in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries: Emma Major, *Madam Britannia*; Anne K. Mellor, *Mothers of the Nation: Women's Political Writing in England, 1780-1830* (see especially ch. 2); Dorice Williams Elliot, *The Angel Out of the House: Philanthropy and Gender in Nineteenth-Century England*; and G. J. Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility: Sex and Society in Eighteenth-Century Britain*.

¹³ Elizabeth Montagu was the sole owner and operator of Sandleford after her husband's death in 1775; the 4th Duke of Marlborough served within the British army for five years (1755-1760), achieving the rank of captain.

¹⁴ For more descriptions of Montagu's philanthropic initiatives, see Steve Hindle, "Representing Rural Society: Labor, Leisure, and the Landscape in an Eighteenth-Century Conversation Piece"; Eve Tavor Bannet, "The Bluestocking Sisters: Women's Patronage, *Millenium Hall*, and 'The Visible Providence of a Country'"; Peter Denney, "'Unpleasant, tho' Arcadian Spots': Plebeian Poetry, Polite Culture, and the Sentimental Economy of the Landscape Park"; Zoë Kinsley, "*A Tour to Milford Haven and Millenium Hall*: Female Charity and the Example of Elizabeth Montagu"; and Elizabeth Child, "Elizabeth Montagu, Bluestocking Businesswoman."

¹⁵ Both Peter Denney and Steven Hindle analyze Montagu's justification of her practice of enclosure and emparkment. See Denney, "'Unpleasant, tho' Arcadian Spots': Plebeian Poetry, Polite Culture, and the Sentimental Economy of the Landscape Park" (508) and Hindle, "Representing Rural Society: Labor, Leisure, and the Landscape in an Eighteenth-Century Conversation Piece" (648).

¹⁶ Denney details the shuffling of “objects of utility” under Brown’s leadership, noting that the “offices and barns were moved where they obstructed the prospect” and that the “outbuildings and kitchen garden were also relocated” (506). It is important to clarify that although these buildings and spaces were moved, they were not removed.

¹⁷ Morgan’s description of Montagu’s unique hiring practices bears a striking resemblance to the employment of the disabled in Scott’s *Millenium Hall*: “the cook cannot walk without crutches, the kitchen maid has but one eye, the dairy maid is almost stone-deaf, and the house maid has but one hand” (169). Kinsley also notes the parallels between the fictional Millenium Hall and the real-life Sandlesford, and observes that this similarity demonstrates the principle of inclusion operating both in Scott’s fictional estate and in Montagu’s real-life estate: “Millenium Hall, like the Sandlesford of Morgan’s description, constitutes a society where disability or infirmity actually provides access into the community: the atmosphere is one of positive cooperation rather than exclusion or isolation” (“Female Charity and the Example of Elizabeth Montagu” 209).

¹⁸ Montagu’s reference to “temples” and “bridges” suggests two of Blenheim’s prominent embellishments. The estate features the Temple of Diana, which was built in 1773 by William Chambers. It also boasts a famously extravagant bridge that, prior to Brown’s lake, vaulted over a series of modest canals. Jane Brown also notes the striking similarities between Montagu’s descriptive statement and Blenheim’s famous features, and concludes that Montagu and Brown must have discussed his design of the Duke of Marlborough’s estate. “Surely,” she argues, “the proud bridges over humble rivulets’ meant they had talked of Blenheim and other of Lancelot’s achievements; did he confess to her that some of his clients spent too much money and that places were spoilt by this [?]” (297).

¹⁹ Morgan’s sense of being overwhelmed by Blenheim mirrors Burke’s description of the astonishment evoked by the sublime: “The passion caused by the great and sublime in *nature*, when those causes operate most powerfully, is astonishment; and astonishment is that state of the soul, in which all its motions are suspended, with some degree of horror” (95, original italics).

²⁰ Lodestones were used in compasses for navigational purposes due to their magnetic quality.

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