

## Status, gender and life cycle

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## **Status, gender and life cycle in the consumption practices of the English elite. The case of Mary Leigh, 1736-1806\***

**ABSTRACT:** The consumption practices of the elite have received a great deal of attention from historians over the years. The role of women (and gender) is mostly considered in the context of married couples, and therefore at a particular stage in the life cycle, with emphasis placed on the complementary role of husband and wife in the household economy. We know less about the consumption behaviour of single women, especially the ways in which this developed over their life course, singleness being seen as a passing stage rather than a long-term condition for many elite women. This article takes a case study approach to explore in detail how consumption and shopping behaviour was shaped by gender, status and family, and how the relative importance of these changed over the life course of the individual. It focuses in particular on what was bought from whom and the factors shaping the choice of supplier, and argues that single status gave women freedom to act, but that this was framed by the obligations of status and the constraints of family. Landownership, of course, brought responsibilities as well as opportunities that shaped spending; but family as lineage was especially important in shaping patterns and geographies of spending.

**Key words:** consumption, gender, life cycle, elite, status.

The consumption practices of the elite have received a great deal of attention from historians. Luxury, splendour, taste and connoisseurship have all been seen as critical in marking elite status and distinguishing them from other social groups.<sup>1</sup> For a long time, this kind of dynastic consumption was seen as an essentially male concern – it was men, after all, that inherited estates, built country houses and collected artistic treasures. Women consumed, of course, but were denied conscious agency: Sombart saw them as unthinking addicts of luxury and for McKendrick they were hapless yet complicit victims of a fashion-led consumer revolution.<sup>2</sup> Such perspectives have been rightly critiqued by a growing number of historians who have demonstrated the myriad ways in which women as active consumers who played an important role in shaping the domestic material culture of the elite and middling sort. Vickery's analysis of genteel women has emphasised their concern with elegance, civility and virtue, and their importance in shaping domestic material culture and transferring taste across spatial and social distance; Greig portrays Lady Strafford as an active consumer for the family home, even though she operated with and through her husband, and Lewis shows how a range of elite women made important adjustments to their marital homes.<sup>3</sup> These were women with often very clear strategies for how to create domestic space that reflected their rank and dignity; their personal tastes, or their desire for a home of their own. In this, they operated within the imperatives of title and family as lineage – considerations which could lead to either the dynastic-style spending engaged in by Lady Strafford or the attempts to humanise a grand palace undertaken at Blenheim by the Duchess of Marlborough.<sup>4</sup> There is also a growing body of research on the consumption practices of elite women which emphasises their key role in exercising restraint and care, rather than succumbing to the decadent pleasures of luxury and seducing their men to do the same. Vickery, Whittle and Griffiths, and Harvey have all highlighted the importance of

prudence, thrift and oeconomy in women's consumption, and Duncan demonstrates how female consumption could communicate virtue when this was sometimes absent in their male relatives.<sup>5</sup> They are also shown to be knowledgeable and skilled shoppers, drawing on their personal mobility and social networks to acquire a wide range of goods and services, often from the metropolis.<sup>6</sup>

The focus of these studies is generally on married women and thus highlights experiences at a particular stage in the life cycle.<sup>7</sup> We thus have a growing body of work on the linked role of husband and wife in acquiring goods for the household and shaping their personal and domestic material culture. For the early seventeenth century, Whittle and Griffiths show how Alice Le Strange's careful household management enabled her husband's dynastic spending on improving the estate and on building projects. Vickery, writing about the eighteenth century, argues that husbands were often indulging their tastes and passions (buying coaches and saddlery, wine and fine clothes) whilst their wives were responsible for managing the household budget and supplying the everyday needs of their husband and children – a pattern confirmed in Harvey's analysis of the middling sort.<sup>8</sup> Here, female agency was constrained by husbands and by the needs of the household-family; freedom to act was, to a greater or lesser extent, curtailed by networks and obligations of kinship.

Yet marriage and being married was a particular, albeit a common and often sought-after, stage in the life course of an individual. Single women (and men) who had yet to pass into or who never entered this stage, might be thought to have had more scope to act independently, but we know relatively little about their consumption practices and how these differed from their married peers. This reflects the relative neglect of unmarried men and women in studies of life cycles and family. Single people

all too often lie outside constructs of family, whether viewed in synchronic or diachronic terms.<sup>9</sup> Singleness is generally seen as a stage passed through in youth or returned to in old age – the first a period of preparation for marriage and the second one of economic and social marginalisation. It is rarely seen as a long-term state of being, despite the experience of a large proportion of the elite population in eighteenth-century England.<sup>10</sup> Vickery estimates that as many as 30 percent of aristocratic women never married (a problem which Larsen attributes in part to the problems in assembling suitable dowries), and Duncan shows that many single women had large number of similarly unmarried friends.<sup>11</sup>

Despite a growing number of studies of single women, we still know remarkably little about their consumption practices.<sup>12</sup> Vickery has written about the domestic environments, tastes and priorities of wealthy spinsters and bachelors, yet many of her women were in crisis or exceptionally unhappy – surely not the typical experience of single women. Indeed, Duncan demonstrates that, despite the contemporary caricature of the pathetic or resentful old maid, many single women viewed their lives as purposeful, respectable and fulfilling.<sup>13</sup> Understanding what singleness meant to contemporaries, as well as clarifying what it means as an analytical category today, is no easy matter. It varied greatly from one person to another and over the life course: a single person might be not-yet married or widowed, or they might remain unmarried throughout their life; they might live alone (and thus be single in a household as well as marital sense) or with various groupings of relatives and friends (both married and single). All these arrangements could easily change over the life course of an individual, for example as parents died and siblings married. Duncan paints a vivid picture of the shifting circumstances of Jane Innes and the profound impact these had on her life style

and status; yet here, as elsewhere, the focus is more firmly on her material and social life, with relatively little attention given to her consumption practices and these developed over time.<sup>14</sup>

#### CASE STUDY: THE HONOURABLE MARY LEIGH

In this article, I seek to explore the ways in which consumption and shopping behaviour were shaped by gender, status and family, and how the relative importance of these different influences varied over the life cycle of the individual. I approach these questions through the shopping habits of the Honourable Mary Leigh (1736-1806), as revealed through an extensive set of receipted bills.<sup>15</sup> These do not form a complete record of Mary's spending as they omit servants' wages, purchases of land and stocks, advances cash and payments made through the house steward – expenditure that amounted to perhaps £3000 per annum.<sup>16</sup> However, they provide a rich picture of a wide range of spending, from silverware and carriages to groceries and coal, and offer real insights into the patterns and processes of her discretionary consumption. Sadly, her correspondence has not survived on anything like this scale, the largest number of letters that remain being those written in the 1790s to her lawyer and friend, Joseph Hill.

Mary was the sister of Edward, fifth Lord Leigh, of Stoneleigh Abbey in Warwickshire, an estate worth about £10,000 per annum in the mid eighteenth century, placing the family in the highest bracket of Massie's 1756 typology and thus putting Mary in a very different bracket from gentlewomen such as Elizabeth Shackleton, Judith Baker and Elizabeth Purefoy.<sup>17</sup> Her parents died whilst she was in her minority and

Mary was placed in the care of a relative, Elizabeth Verney.<sup>18</sup> Being lodged with relatives in town was not unusual for young gentlewomen, as Glover notes in her study of Scottish elites; but the circumstances and longevity of Mary's metropolitan life was rather less typical.<sup>19</sup> We know little about her early years, but she appears in the Stoneleigh Abbey bills in the 1750s, apparently living in the vicinity of Hanover Square, London. Here she remained through much of the 1760s and probably the 1770s, although she also had a room at Stoneleigh Abbey. When her brother was declared insane in 1774, her life moved into a different phase as she took on joint responsibility for the estate, acting as a commissioner along with her cousin William Craven. It shifted to a third phase in 1786 with the death of Edward and with him the title Lord Leigh. Mary inherited the Leigh estates as life tenant, but held no formal title; she was of aristocratic blood, but was addressed simply as the Honourable Mary Leigh. The inheritance arrangements were provided for in her brother's will and reflected the absence of an obvious male heir: a problem that was to bedevil the estate after Mary's death when claims and counterclaims were lodged by the various life tenants named in Edward's will and confirmed, albeit in a rather confused manner, in Mary's.<sup>20</sup> By the time she inherited, Mary was 50 years old and unlikely to marry, despite being a wealthy heiress. Her reasons for not having married earlier in life are unclear. Family tradition suggests that she was very short and embarrassed to be seen in public, but this is contradicted by her active social life in London; another suggestion is that she had a *tendre* for William Craven, but again there is little evidence, beyond a concern for his declining health. Whatever the reason, Mary remained unmarried for the whole of her long life.

Of course, Mary was exceptional, both in her wealth and her experiences. However, her life provides a means of engaging with much broader debates about the interrelationship between consumption, gender, status and life cycle, not least by allowing a critical examination of Duncan's typology of narratives through which, she argues, single women constructed their lives: family duty, fidelity to a lost suitor, and social usefulness. In drawing principally on bills, it offers a useful counterpoint to studies based largely on correspondence which highlight discursive constructions rather than economic manifestations of material lives. Starting with a thorough examination of changing nature of Mary's consumption through these different periods of her life, thinking in particular how it reflected shifts in her identity as a woman and landowner, and in her conception of family. Next, I turn to the geography of her spending, especially in terms of metropolitan shopping, and explore how this related to changing spending priorities and the imperatives of status and convenience. Lastly, I consider her relationship with suppliers, especially in terms of the mobilisation and (re)construction of family as lineage. Drawing together these different strands, I explore what singleness meant for Mary and what her life can tell us about singleness as a way of understanding consumption patterns.

#### PATTERNS OF SPENDING

As a young woman, Mary's spending was fairly modest, averaging £112 per annum in the 1750s, rising to £149 per annum in the 1760s, to which should be added payments made to Elizabeth Verney for her care and later the cost of leasing a house on Upper Grosvenor Street. Even at this stage, her spending was three times to sum that Judith Baker allowed herself on her annual trips to London – and she was buying for her

daughter as well as herself.<sup>21</sup> Much of Mary's discretionary expenditure was on clothing (Table 1), bills from milliners, mercers, lacemen and the like reaching a peak in 1753 when a total of about £200 was laid out, perhaps in connection with her being brought out into London society. Her other major costs came in buying and servicing her coach and horses and in other travel costs, suggesting a high level of personal mobility both within London and between the capital and Stoneleigh. Other bills covered a predictable mix of music and language lessons and trips to Ranelagh and the opera (Art, Books and Education in Table 1), and the equipage for polite sociability, including tea cups and tables (Household Goods and Furniture). She also made the requisite contributions to metropolitan charities and, by the 1760s, was making modest additions to her London rooms.<sup>22</sup> Such spending was typical for a wealthy woman without family responsibilities: dress embodied gender identities, especially when augmented by purchases of jewellery (Silverware). Indeed, we can see something here of what Kowalski-Wallace characterises as a female hunger for 'all the commodities that indulged the body and enhanced physical life'. But there was moderation and restraint, most obviously in terms of the overall sums being laid out, and little sign of the reckless pursuit of fashion imagined by McKendrick.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, Mary's spending on clothes, jewellery, coaches and the like underlined her status as the sister of a peer of the realm – something which she consciously proclaimed by marking her silverware and carriage with the family crest. In this way, she made these things 'signifiers of family and memory', and rendered them symbols of heritage and power.<sup>24</sup> Gender, status and diachronic family were already intertwined in her identity and her spending, which had a distinctive aristocratic dimension both in the broad priorities (coaches) and the particular focus (engraving crests) of her consumption. These differentiated her from



Shackleton's concern for clothing and tableware, and Purefoy's focus on groceries, clothing and furniture.

[INSERT TABLE 1 HERE]

Mary largely disappears from the bills during the period in which she acted as a commissioner of the estate, re-emerging in the 1780s in a totally different life stage: as the owner of Stoneleigh Abbey. Her spending patterns were transformed with her behaviour driven more by the demands of landownership and dynastic responsibility – usually seen as the domain of men.<sup>25</sup> This is seen in the jump in overall spending, which averaged over £650 per annum between 1786 and 1806 (Table 1), and especially in the increased outlay on the estate (enclosure, ditching and fencing, and so on) and her country house (Building, Furniture, Household goods, and Food and Drink). These levels of spending were some way below those of neighbouring landowners (Sir Roger Newdigate's outgoings amounted to nearly £6000 per annum), but we must recall that the bills excluded major areas of spending on the estate. Significantly, the overall pattern of spending resembled that of other wealthy landowners, except perhaps in the reduced importance of Art, Books and Education – the decline from earlier decades reflecting the absence of music and language lessons received as a young lady but no longer needed in middle and older age. As the greater responsibilities of a landowner weighed on Mary, new possibilities opened up: most notably her ability to reshape the décor and furnishing of her newly inherited house. Like Lady Irwin at Temple Newsam and Lady Boringden at Saltram, Mary Leigh impressed her own character in the house, acquiring new furniture, reorganising rooms and purchasing new sets of silverware that were more to her taste – a point discussed in more detail below.<sup>26</sup>

Rather than having to negotiate roles with a marital partner in the manner described by Vickery, Hussey and others, she had total control over this domestic realm.<sup>27</sup> Here, we see how singleness, coupled with wealth, could shape patterns of consumption in a significant manner; it thus becomes an important constituent of identity through materiality as well as social relations. Although the resulting burst of spending was modest in dynastic terms, it was wholly typical of new home-owners and reflected a change in life-cycle stage to householder. Yet, for Mary, this came with inheritance, rather than marriage. This experience was more typical of men than women (it was men, after all, that usually inherited the estate<sup>28</sup>), but its importance is often overlooked in analyses that emphasise marriage as *the* key transition in lifecourse. To be sure, marriage brought about major changes, but the economic independence, social status and dynastic responsibilities that came with inheritance also had a profound impact on identities and consumption.

The responsibilities and possibilities of estate ownership were added to in 1786 when Mary acquired Grove House in Kensington Gore, at the western edge of London – a property which occupied much of her attention in the early 1790s, as attested by a series of bills paid to builders, carpenters, plumbers, painters, glaziers, plasterers and upholsterers.<sup>29</sup> A London house, even one in a suburban location, gave the owner huge economic, social and cultural advantages over those without this prized asset. Such a facility was almost *de rigeur* amongst the aristocracy, but for a single woman it gave particular flexibility and freedom in terms of consumption choices. There were costs, of course, including rental payments and the additional outlay on maintaining not one, but two houses in a manner that befitted one's status. For Mary, these costs were most obvious in the first decade of ownership, when spending on furniture reached a peak

(Table 1), after which outgoings reflected the cost of feeding substantial numbers of servants and entertaining guests at Grove House and Stoneleigh Abbey. Vickery suggests that the careful choice of food and drink formed a significant investment in economic and cultural capital for many genteel male consumers.<sup>30</sup> Mary's spending shows that this was far from an exclusively male domain: fine groceries, wine and game were also central to social practices and social standing of wealthy female householders.

Mary clearly enjoyed a wide social circle and wrote of being 'wonderfully engaged in receiving and paying visits' in Warwickshire.<sup>31</sup> She mostly entertained couples or single gentlewomen, rather than hosting larger house parties; but many of her guests stayed for a number of weeks or even months, adding considerably to her housekeeping costs. Most important amongst her Stoneleigh Abbey guests were Mrs Hale and Mrs Herbert, who also accompanied Mary on trips to Cheltenham in the 1790s. Her London circle was rather grander and included leading society figures such as the Ladies Sefton, Ormond and Howard – married women who carried the formal title of their status. Her closest companions, however, were Joseph Hill and his wife who made regular visits both to Stoneleigh and Grove House. This social mix reflects Mary's ability and willingness to move between aristocratic and genteel circles, both in the capital and the provinces. Moreover, the long list of guests and friends shows that, although single, she was by no means socially isolated, even in the absence of siblings and close cousins who Duncan suggests formed the usual focal point for the lives of independent and wealthy spinsters.<sup>32</sup>

Even in the absence of guests, Mary was never truly alone since there were always servants in the house. It is unlikely that they provided companionship, but they did offer security and physical comfort in the duties they performed, and they were

crucial in marking status, most notably through their public appearance in livery. Mary supplied new clothing on an annual basis to a wide range of her Stoneleigh servants, including the park keepers, gamekeepers, underkeeper, usher of the servants' hall, and coachman. The average outlay of about £7 5s per servant was considerable, but was significantly outweighed by the £25 per annum that it cost to kit out each of Mary's London servants with four sets of clothes.<sup>33</sup> This on-going expenditure accounted for the lion's share of Mary's spending on clothing during this period; indeed, the bills record remarkable few purchases of clothing for her own use making it difficult to judge how her tastes might have changed in this regard. Liveried servants, however, show the importance of public displays of wealth and status to Mary's self-image: they marked her own rank and dignity, and that of her family.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, they were an important medium for communicating family as lineage, especially when paired with coaches emblazoned with 'coats of arms and cyphers'.<sup>35</sup> Such symbolism marked out Mary as distinct from her genteel counterparts, including the eventually very rich Jane Innes who refused to employ footmen. Despite her absence of formal title, it reminded the world of her family status and bracketed her with her (mostly married) aristocratic friends.

Overall, the pattern of Mary's expenditure shifted considerably over the course of her lifetime. The personal spending of a young woman, much of it centred on the body and gendered in nature, was overlain with other priorities after she inherited the estate. Maintaining and improving her domestic environment; feeding and watering her household and guests, and presenting an appropriate public face were priorities driven by her status and rank more than her gender. These changes were not unusual in the landowning class, although their impact was felt more often by men than women.

Indeed, it is possible to argue that much of the aristocratic man's younger life was a preparation for the responsibilities of landownership.<sup>36</sup> It is striking, therefore, that Mary adopted very similar modes of behaviour and spending even without the male training of school, university and grand tour – such values could clearly be absorbed from a less formal upbringing from parents or, as in Mary's case, guardians. Her spending demonstrated wealth and status in public and domestic settings, yet showed restraint and moderation; her outgoings never approached her considerable income.

Mary's consumption also tells us much about her developing taste. The small items of furniture bought when she was young were either mahogany or lacquerware, tastes which endured into the larger outlays made in the 1780s and 1790s which included a 'neat mahogany dressing table with 4 drawers, locks and handles' supplied by Thomas Thackthwaite and a 'set of dressing boxes with elegant painted landscapes' bought from Henry Clay.<sup>37</sup> Neatness and elegance speak of gentility rather than luxury, as Vickery has noted, and a similar absence of ostentation marked her choice of furnishing textiles, which were characterised by chintz, calico and tabbies, although sets of chairs for Grove House and Stoneleigh Abbey were upholstered in silk.<sup>38</sup> Alongside this conservative taste should be set Mary's purchases of tableware and silverware which suggest that she was aware of changing fashions. In 1786, for example, she bought a large quantity of 'Green Greek Border' china, then at the height of its popularity, and her choice in silverware (bought in large quantities, especially in the early 1790s – see table 1) matched the changing taste for finer, more intricate pieces.<sup>39</sup> Mary did not, however, seek out the finest imported porcelain; nor did she order crested chinaware – a practice common amongst the eighteenth-century aristocracy. We can thus see the conventional and bourgeois being combined with the aristocratic; and

conservative with fashionable taste. A clearer idea of Mary's *personal* preferences can be derived from her purchases of engraved prints, including numerous images of David Garrick in a variety of roles, which were arranged in a Print Room created at Stoneleigh Abbey.<sup>40</sup> It also appears in her collection of books. Her brother had bequeathed his hugely impressive library to his alma mater: Oriel College, Oxford. It is therefore Mary's taste that we see reflected in the numerous accounts of travels in Britain and overseas; books on history, science and cookery; and poems, plays and novels found in Grove House at the time of her death.<sup>41</sup> Travel, then, was something that interested Mary. In her spending, it was dominated by the hire of coaches and the upkeep of her own equipage; yet an awareness of and interest in her immediate surroundings (in London and Cheltenham) and the wider world is also apparent.

#### GEOGRAPHIES OF SHOPPING

Changes in life stage opened up different opportunities and obligations in terms of the amount of money available and the ways in which it was spent. They also impacted upon decisions about where to purchase goods, which could be just as important as the goods themselves in signalling identity and status.<sup>42</sup> Over the course of her life, Mary patronised over 500 suppliers, of which 241 can be definitively located in space, either through internal evidence contained in the bills or by reference to trade directories for London and the Midlands. London dominated in the 1750s and 1760s (Table 2), a pattern which is striking but understandable since Mary was resident in London and effectively shopping locally.<sup>43</sup> Patterns become more complex after she inherited and split her time between London and Warwickshire: most spending still took places in the capital, but groceries, haberdashery, upholstery, stationery, medicines and livery, plus

farriers, masons and braziers came from Coventry, Warwick, Kenilworth and the village of Stoneleigh itself. This Warwickshire shopping found its counterpart in the coal, bread, meat, fish and candles drawn from Kensington retailers to supply Grove House. Despite the complexities created by its suburban location, Mary's Kensington residence was undoubtedly important in easing access to London retailers and its social and leisure infrastructure, adding practical benefits to the kudos of a London address. The metropolis was central to the supply networks of many elite families and especially women: Elizabeth Shackleton had goods sent up to rural Lancashire, Elizabeth Purefoy transacted with London tradesmen, often via agents, from her home in Buckinghamshire, and Judith Baker made annual shopping trips to London from north-east England.<sup>44</sup> However, Mary's personal mobility, and especially her seasonal residence in London's suburbs, enhanced her ability to shop in the capital, making it central to the supply of everyday as well as luxury goods.

[INSERT TABLE 2 HERE]

London, then, was consistent in its importance to Mary's consumption, but her relationship with the space economy of metropolitan retailing shifted markedly through different stages of her life in response to her changing concerns about convenience, quality, reputation and prestige. In 1803, a guidebook entitled *The Picture of London* informed its readers that the capital's key shopping streets were arranged in two lengthy east-west axes.<sup>45</sup> One ran from Leadenhall Street through Cheapside in the City, along Fleet Street and the Strand to Charing Cross. The other went from Shoreditch through Newgate Street and along Holborn and Oxford Street. Intersecting these ran a number of important cross streets including Gracechurch Street, Covent Garden, Piccadilly and New Bond Street. What is notable here is the continued importance of

older shopping streets within the City of London alongside the growth of newer centres further west. There have been very few attempts to match this geography with the spending habits of individual consumers, making the following analysis methodologically as well as empirically important. Understanding precisely where people shopped, how often and for what, has the potential to offer deeper understanding of the processes and practices of consumption, linking supplier and consumer in space and through spatial practices.

The closest comparison we have at present is Berry's analysis of Judith Baker. The shops that she patronised in her trips to London in the third quarter of the eighteenth century reflect only part of this broader distribution.<sup>46</sup> Lodging with family near Grosvenor Square, she shopped in nearby New Bond Street, Hanover Square and Berkeley Square; slightly further afield in Jermyn Street and Coventry Street, and about two miles distant on the Strand and Holborn. Although Berry does not present a comprehensive geographical analysis of Baker's shopping, it seems that she eschewed shops in the City, perhaps because she was unwilling to hire coaches to take her to these more distant retail streets. Mary's shopping in the 1750s and 1760s appears to show a similar preference for the west-end (Figure 1). This distribution suggests that she shopped most often in the immediate vicinity of her home or went to the fashionable streets around Covent Garden – just what we might expect of a young and well-to-do London resident. However, this simple distribution tells only part of the story.

[INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE]

If we examine the number of bills presented and their value, a much more complex and interesting set of behaviours begin to emerge, one that shows both the wide spread of suppliers and the geographical focus onto certain key areas (Table 3).



Suppliers in the West-End were the most numerous and had the greatest number of transactions with Mary, but the size of the bills and total amount spent was generally very modest. For example, the New Bond Street china dealer, Edward Fogg and Samuel Brunt, whose Water Warehouse was on Saville Street, presented nine bills between them with a total value of just £3 17s 4d.<sup>47</sup> The impression that these West End retailers were not Mary's main suppliers is reinforced by the type of goods being bought: gloves, lace and millinery; small quantities of cloth; perfumed soap, tea cups, mineral water and toys. Indeed, it is likely that some of the transactions recorded in these bills were made casually or as part of Mary's social round – the kind of leisure shopping described by Walsh.<sup>48</sup> The regular purchases of mineral water from Samuel Brunt in the winter of 1765 and the knife cases, earrings, buckles, snuff boxes, garter buckles and patch boxes bought over the course of seven visits to Peter Russell at Charing Cross in the early 1750s might both fall into this category.<sup>49</sup>

[INSERT TABLE 3 HERE]

This 'local' shopping was important in reflecting and shaping Mary's identity as a wealthy and titled young woman, not least in terms of the amount of her time that it occupied. However, it is clear that the bright lights of West-End shops that dazzled visitors, and continue to preoccupy retail historians today, did not dominate the shopping practices of London's wealthy residents. For Mary, the Strand and the streets around Covent Garden were much more important. They housed some of her key suppliers, including the mercers, Croft and Hinchcliff of Henrietta Street, and the Long-Acre coach makers, Thomas and James Cope who between them sold Mary over £365 of goods.<sup>50</sup> Both the magnitude of spending and the nature of the goods being purchased mark the importance of these suppliers in Mary's construction and presentation of

herself as a person of rank. In this, they were joined by a second set of retailers located further towards the City of London. Most important in this respect were the partnership of Carr, Ibbetson, Bigge, Packard & Gibson, at the Queen's Head in Ludgate Hill. They billed Mary on ten occasions, to a total value of £195 7s and supplied the highest quality dress materials.<sup>51</sup> In these purchases, Mary was not pursuing the latest trends; rather, she was using fashion as a mark of her rank and dignity. Costly brocades and silks created an impressive public appearance which was, as noted earlier, further augmented by jewellery, much of it bought from Thomas Gilpin of Serle Street, near Lincoln's Inn Fields – another of Mary's major suppliers.<sup>52</sup>

As with her spending patterns, a different life-cycle stage brought marked changes to the geography of Mary's metropolitan shopping (Figure 2). Despite the often-remarked drift westwards of fashionable shops,<sup>53</sup> her suppliers from the 1780s onwards were more dispersed and included a greater number of shops in more traditional retail areas in and around the City. How we best understand this distribution is again nuanced by the frequency and size of transactions (Table 3). West-End retailers still tended to supply relatively small quantities of goods and were rarely central to Mary's shopping habits. Notwithstanding one or two exceptions, including the grocer Thomas Ballard, who billed Mary on twenty-three occasions between 1789 and 1800 when he was probably her main supplier of tea, coffee and chocolate,<sup>54</sup> the West-End had become less important to Mary. This was, in part, because she visited fewer shops in person. Some shopping was done by proxy, but most transactions were carried out via correspondence, including some with West-End retailers. On one occasion, John Taylor, a stay maker on Charles Street near Berkeley Square, wrote that he had been unable to source a particular type of satin needed to line her stays, despite having

'searcht all silk mercers, that I can think on, for it'.<sup>55</sup> This kind of correspondence shopping was especially important when dealing with her major suppliers of groceries, most of whom were located in the City or on Holborn. This now formed by far the most important area in terms of volume and value of transactions, despite housing just nine of Mary's suppliers. They included grocers, drapers and silversmiths who sold the goods which were becoming increasingly central to Mary's consumption practices, allowing her to dine and entertain in an appropriate manner. Fine culinary groceries came from Frances Field of Holborn, and North, Hoare & Hanson on New Bridge Street, just west of St Paul's, who together billed Mary on twenty-seven occasions and for a total of £736 11s 8d.<sup>56</sup> Silverware to ornament her table was supplied by Robert and Thomas Makepeace, who billed Mary for £1518 11s 11d of engraved tableware including waiters, tureens, beef dishes, toast trays, tea vases, coffee pots and candle sticks.<sup>57</sup> The importance of such goods in the creation of Mary's self-image as a wealthy land owner, clearly led her to one of the foremost silversmiths in London, located in an area traditionally associated with such trades, and Wedgwood was in many ways the obvious supplier of fine, if not ultra-exclusive chinaware.<sup>58</sup>

[INSERT FIGURE 2 HERE]

Much more important in terms of financial outlay and public image was the livery acquired from the Fells of St Martin's Lane. Their nine bills amounted to over £1110, making them second only to Makepeace in their importance to Mary's material culture. In part, this growth helps to explain the decline in importance of Covent Garden retailers as London's retailing moved inexorably westwards. Also important, though, was the marked shift in Mary's spending away from clothing for herself. In the 1760s, Covent Garden stood out in terms of bills for drapery and haberdashery; by the 1790s

and 1800s, there was only one retailer in the area serving this need: the laceman, R Bentley & Sons of Bedford Street.<sup>59</sup>

Mary's London shopping thus changed in geography as its character shifted from the preoccupations of a young and wealthy woman to the responsibilities of a major and extremely rich landowner. In part, she followed the tide of shopping as it shifted westwards, but she also sought out reputable suppliers in more traditional retail streets further east, as well as drawing on local suppliers around her Kensington home. Whilst we cannot be certain, it is possible that another important factor was the relative mobility of Mary and the goods she was acquiring. In the earlier period, it is clear that she was visiting at least some of the shops in person, a practice which had key advantages in terms of discovering unexpected novelties (perhaps amongst the toys in Peter Russell's shop) and developing broader consumer knowledge, through inspecting goods or questioning shopkeepers. By the 1790s, however, many of Mary's purchases appear to have been made remotely. Her skills as a shopper and experience of shopping would have changed accordingly, as would the expectations she placed on the shopkeeper.<sup>60</sup> This has important implications for our understanding of shopping practices and their development over time. We are familiar with the rise and growing critique of leisure shopping, and with the parallel world of the carriage trade.<sup>61</sup> What Mary's behaviour suggests is that the two were linked and distinguished according to life course – an idea that demands closer analysis through other case studies.

## LOYALTY AND CHOICE: THE RELATIONSHIP WITH SUPPLIERS

Berry argues that that Judith Baker used a small set of suppliers, her choice being 'predicated upon a system of patronage, personal acquaintance and credit'.<sup>62</sup> Such loyalty made a great deal of sense for wealthy eighteenth-century consumers; it encouraged good service, reduced the transaction costs of shopping and facilitated mutual trust. Such close relations worked well in the short term, but life course changes for both buyer and seller made them difficult to sustain over longer periods. On the supply side, running a retail business in eighteenth-century England was a notoriously risky undertaking. Bankruptcy was an ever-present threat for many shopkeepers and even the most assiduous tradesman was vulnerable to suppliers or customers defaulting on their debts. The upshot of this was that relatively few retail businesses lasted for more than a single generation.<sup>63</sup> Elizabeth Purefoy, despite her frequent complaints about the quality of goods supplied, attempted to circumvent this retail churn by continuing her patronage of Mr Cossins' shop in St Pauls Churchyard when the business was taken on by Wilson and Thornhill in the 1740s. Mary was similarly loyal: she started buying groceries from Frances Field in 1789, and continued doing so as Field went into partnership with R Lewis in 1793 and then from Lewis as the shop passed to them in 1797.<sup>64</sup> On the demand side, life cycle changes could result in dramatic shifts in spending.

In the case of Mary Leigh, shifts from youthful self-centred spending to the later cares of landownership were compounded by the sharp discontinuity caused by the period of her brother's madness. The result was that no supplier bridged this great divide in Mary's life. Through the 1750s and 1760s, she patronised eight retailers for a period of ten years or more: two glove makers, two drapers, a dress maker, a coach maker, a stationer and a silversmith. Some, including the drapers Carr, Ibbetson, Bigge,

Packard & Gibson, were regular suppliers and presented substantial cumulative bills; but loyalty was not necessarily built on frequent purchases, Thomas Gilpin of Serle Street, for example, presenting just three bills in fifteen years. Much the same was true in the later period when the number of long-term retailers rose to fifteen. These comprised four grocers, four drapers (three of which supplied livery), a silversmith, an upholsterer, a brazier, a laceman, a stationer, a china dealer and a coal merchant apothecary. Of these, the grocer, Thomas Ballard; the coal merchant Samuel Kingston, and the livery draper, William Butler, presented more than ten bills. Mary, like Judith Baker, was loyal to a core set of suppliers, but the locus of this loyalty had been transformed in accordance with her changing consumption priorities. The earlier emphasis was on those supplying her with personal clothing and adornments; later on it was centred more on providing for her bodily needs, her table and her public displays of status. Her trusted suppliers were thus central to her shifting status and identity. What gives these relationships additional significance is that the choices were Mary's own; being single as a consumer removed any need to negotiate over which shop to patronise. Once again, then, singleness coupled with wealth provided the individual with additional power as a consumer.

Loyalty did not mean monopoly, either in the short or long term. Mary drew on a range of suppliers for all the goods that she purchased, her status and power as a consumer allowing her to choose between different retailers. The absence of her correspondence or diaries make it all but impossible to know with certainty the reasons behind her preferences, but factors such as convenience, quality, reliability and reputation all played a part. Moreover, it is possible to see a shift in her priorities as she

moved into later stages of her life, with the range and quality of stock and established reputation of the business becoming more important.

The physical appearance of the shop was undoubtedly important for those goods bought in person. In the metropolitan context, Walsh has made much of the growing emphasis on display in London shops, arguing that it not only promoted sales, but also enhanced the reputation and status of the shopkeeper. Certainly, the importance of display struck contemporary commentators from Daniel Defoe to Sophie von le Roche, the latter, like many visitors to London, being particularly taken by the bright lights of the West End.<sup>65</sup> However, it is clear that display and ornamentation was an important part of the retail strategy of shopkeepers across the city. The German visitor, Georg Lichtenberg, noted in the 1770s that the shops from Cheapside to Fleet Street, 'seem to be made entirely of glass; many thousand candles light up silverware, engraving, books, clocks, glass, pewter, paintings, women's finery, modish and otherwise, gold, precious stones, steel-work, and endless coffee-rooms and lottery offices. The street looks as though it were illuminated for some festivity'.<sup>66</sup> Whilst striking additions to the urban landscape, these displays had a less direct impact on elite consumers who, like Mary, increasingly shopped by correspondence. The messages of quality, reliability and reputation that they carried remained important, but the goods and service provided were more influential on consumer choices.

Quality could be judged in person, most readily by visiting the shop, but also by having samples sent to one's home. This was standard practice amongst drapers and mercers dealing with the aristocracy.<sup>67</sup> Other goods were less amenable to this kind of treatment; although samples of tea and coffee could certainly be tasted ahead of purchase, this generally had to be done in the shop. Instead, the quality of products was

often emphasised in advertisements or post-purchase through their description on bills.<sup>68</sup> Amongst the bills sent to Mary, we thus see tea and coffee labelled as 'finest' and bombazine as 'superfine'; furniture and silverware were described in a manner that underlined their quality and the craftsmanship involved in their manufacture, including the 'large cruet frame with sundry mountings and cut glass vases and cruets' supplied by Thomas Makepeace, and the elegantly painted dressing boxes mentioned earlier.<sup>69</sup> Consumers tested these florid descriptions against the reality of the goods they received and made their assessment of the retailer accordingly.<sup>70</sup> This fed into judgments of their reliability, failure to meet expected standards prompting stinging rebukes. Elizabeth Purefoy, for example, wrote to her grocers complaining, amongst other things, about the quality of tea ('pray don't let your Bohea tea be so full of dust as your last was') or the price of sugar ('let me have a better pennyworth than the last, for my neighbour had a better sugar at that price').<sup>71</sup> Despite this, Elizabeth remained loyal to her suppliers, aware that she would be 'better used' that way, especially if payments were promptly made.<sup>72</sup> We lack this kind of detailed information for Mary Leigh, but quality and reliability were undoubtedly central to her use of many City retailers, especially in the later stages of her life. The scale of their business meant that they were better able to meet the demands of wealthy consumers and were often engaged in supplying higher class provincial retailers.<sup>73</sup>

Quality and reliability encouraged loyalty, but reputation was more important in drawing in customers in the first place. This was particularly so in London where the number of shops and consumers made personal and trusting relationships difficult to establish and maintain. Reputation was therefore essential in keeping down the transaction costs involved in locating a good quality and reliable supply.<sup>74</sup> As Davis has



noted, a City shopkeeper ‘with a good reputation in London and a sound connection among country gentry ... still did a bigger trade than his more showy colleague in Oxford Street who depended much more on what was contemptuously called a “dropping trade”’.<sup>75</sup> Indeed, it is notable that many of the most important suppliers to Mary Leigh fell into this category. Blakiston and Myles also supplied groceries to Judith Baker in county Durham and Mary’s distant cousin, James Leigh of Adlestrop in Gloucestershire; James Leigh’s wife Caroline bought cloth and haberdashery from Carr, Ibbetson & Bigge, Jane Gretton and Kempe & Brydges, and Sir Roger Newdigate, Mary’s neighbour in Warwickshire, patronised the grocers Thornhill & Co. and the drapers North, Hoare & Co..<sup>76</sup> Mary’s behaviour, especially in later life, therefore reflected Judith Baker’s practice of dealing with known retailers, but she relied less on personal acquaintance and more on the wider reputation and patronage amongst elite consumers. Some of the retailers that she used made their aristocratic connections explicit. Wedgwood famously styled himself ‘Potter to Her Majesty’, and we can see similar claims being made by Davies and Lee (‘Hatters to her Majesty’), Samuel Crowther (‘Whip Maker to their Royal Highnesses the Prince of Wales and the Duke of York’) and many others.<sup>77</sup> This kind of association operated in the public sphere, drawing on well-known figures to add lustre to the retailer or craftsman and the goods they had for sale, effectively stamping them with a mark of quality. And yet, even when they became widespread in the later decades of the eighteenth century, these advertised associations were less important in Mary’s supply network than those generated through family connections.<sup>78</sup>

Mary’s scope for inheriting suppliers was limited by the early death of her parents, but she still drew on several retailers and craftsmen who had previously been patronised by her father and even her grandfather. For example, Thomas Gilpin had

supplied Edward, third Lord Leigh, with engraved casters and spoons in 1737; Thomas, fourth Lord Leigh, with a range of silverware and jewellery in the 1740s, and Edward, fifth Lord Leigh with over £750 of jewellery and silverware in a consolidated bill running from September 1763 to May 1764.<sup>79</sup> Similar continuity came through her use of the mason, Michael Clarke; the tailor, William Butler, and several other tradesmen.<sup>80</sup> A more tangible connection came through her guardian, Elizabeth Verney who appears to have introduced Mary to key suppliers. For example, a 1756 bill from the drapers James Croft & Co. addressed to 'The Hon Mrs Verney for the Hon Miss Leigh' was followed by several others in the 1750s and 1760s sent directly to Mary herself. The joint shopping trip implied by the first bill meshes closely with Walsh's view of shopping as a social activity, but also a serious matter of acquiring the right goods.<sup>81</sup> Mary also took up tradesmen initially patronised by her brother Edward, fifth Lord Leigh, including the coach makers James and Thomas Cope and John Hatchett, the upholsterer Thomas Burnett, the draper William Fell, the livery draper Joseph Kenn, and the bookseller James Robson. Such introductions are unsurprising, given the ostensibly masculine or dynastic nature of many of these goods; they guided Mary to suppliers who were already known to be reliable and trustworthy, again reducing the transaction costs of finding suitable suppliers. At the same time, Mary appears to have introduced her brother to a range of London retailers, her presence in the metropolis providing her with important knowledge of and access to new goods, much as Vickery argues in the context of Lancashire gentlewomen.<sup>82</sup>

That singleness did not mean isolation from family is evident from Duncan's analysis of Scottish women. What Mary's life makes clear is that this was true even in the absence of synchronic family. The ways in which Mary drew on family connections

reflected her pragmatic need to identify and establish a trusting relationship with reliable suppliers. Yet it is possible to see these practices as a mechanism through which family was constructed. Harvey has recently argued that ‘the writings produced by middling sort men’ were important in creating ‘a corporate identity that would transcend time and reinforce the “lineage-family” as distinguished by credit, probity and order’.<sup>83</sup> Family histories and other forms of writing forged links between generations and created a sense of continuity. These ends could also be met through material culture and especially the display of family portraits – a practice in which Mary herself was engaged.<sup>84</sup> Whilst less tangible, continued patronage of retailers had a similar effect: it underlined lineage and helped to create a connection with the diachronic family, something which perhaps held particular significance for a single woman.

## CONCLUSIONS

This article has offered important new insights into the ways in which spending and shopping practices changed over the life cycle of the individual. For Mary Leigh, there was a sharp contrast between the seemingly carefree and essentially self-centred consumption of her youth, and the more considered patronage of her mature years as a wealthy landowner. Her attachment to London retailers is a feature noted for many members of the elite, not least because they spent some of their time in the capital. For many, these were local suppliers, but it would be a mistake to see elite shopping purely as a product of residential location; nor was it a straightforward reflection of the overarching logic of London’s retail geography. Rather than fading, traditional retail areas became more important as they were better able to meet the larger and more complex demands of a consumer moving into a new stage in her life cycle: that of

landowner and householder. This reflects the complex combination of factors influencing consumer preferences: fashion was a consideration, but just as important were the reputation of retailers, and their ability to meet the needs of a peripatetic consumer. The implications of this for provincial as well as metropolitan retailers have yet to be fully explored. Absentee landlords were seen as a problem, but even their presence might not bring the benefits often assumed to flow from the great house. This problem was especially severe when the owner was single and mobile, as was the case with Mary Leigh. Her relationship with town and country was complex and changed as her life cycle unfolded and her links to other places ebbed and flowed.

More broadly, analysis of Mary's changing consumption practices reveals the way in which these were shaped by life cycle, and particularly for singleness as a way of understanding patterns of consumption. That the balance between gender and status, individual and household, choice and constraint all varied over the lifecourse is unsurprising. What is more striking is that they did so for a woman who remained single and spent her entire adult life living, if not alone, then certainly outside the confines of synchronic family. For a wealthy woman, single status thus brought with it considerable freedom to act, but there were also important and growing constraints. Mary's experiences do not fall neatly into one of the alternative narratives to 'old maidism' suggested by Duncan: there is no evidence of a long queue of suitors, rejected because of the memory of a lost love; charitable obligations were dispensed in London and Warwickshire, but hardly defined Mary's life; and duty to family, in terms of caring for parents or siblings was not even an option. And yet family was important. Although she was not limited by the presence of a husband or even parents, important parameters were laid down by her family role as a wealthy heiress and later a

substantial landowner with obligations to those who bequeathed her the estate; those who lived and worked there, and those who would inherit it in the future. Although free from the restrictions imposed by synchronic family, the actions of wealthy spinsters such as Mary Leigh were thus framed and moulded by the idea of family as lineage. Here, aristocratic and landowning status came to the fore: the importance of lineage and inheritance was layered onto notions of rank and dignity, highlighted by Greig as central to elite identity.<sup>85</sup> They produced a specifically aristocratic mode of consumption, built around signifiers of family, lineage and pedigree – ideas that were perhaps felt even more keenly by Mary, given her lack of formal aristocratic title. But the importance of the diachronic family went beyond specific forms of material culture to encompass the practices of acquiring goods and choosing suppliers. This releases the construction of lineage-family from the deliberate and self-aware practices of collecting, writing and hierlooming, and into the realm everyday processes.

This shows the impact of family on the consumer, but the reverse was also important. The material culture of Stoneleigh Abbey was moulded by Mary and thus impacted upon future generations. Lewis's analysis shows women concerned with the past and the present (especially in terms of family and personal history). Mary was constrained: she could not choose a successor and the estate was not hers to bequeath; plus there is limited evidence that she was buying with half an eye on posterity, but her management of the estate was careful and her care and enhancement of the house likewise. She passed on the family home produced by her grandfather and brother, but augmented and improved it as a lived and living space in accordance with her own tastes and preferences. As a single woman, these legacies were her own. Historical counterfactuals are, by their very nature, highly problematic; but it is difficult to

imagine that any husband of Mary's would have been quite so conservative or restrained in their spending, especially given the resources available. Indeed, James Henry Leigh, who eventually inherited the estate after the life tenancy of his uncle, spent lavishly in refurnishing many of the principal rooms at Stoneleigh Abbey. It thus appears that in the case of Mary Leigh, singleness, status and gender thus combined to produce a specific form of consumption.

Status, gender and life cycle

Table 1. The spending patterns of Mary Leigh, 1750-1806

	1750-59		1760-69		1770-74		1786-95		1796-1806	
	£	%	£	%	£	%	£	%	£	%
Estate & Finance	23	2	36	2	2	1	433	7	589	9
Building	3	0	4	0	3	1	585	10	478	7
Furniture	9	1	13	1	0	0	462	8	26	0
Household goods	23	2	59	4	9	3	590	10	643	9
Food & Drink	7	1	103	7	24	7	1167	19	2298	33
Clothing	543	49	468	31	95	30	964	16	1027	15
Medicine	13	1	20	1	3	1	237	4	67	1
Silver	66	6	11	1	0	0	1023	17	523	8
Art, Books & Education	146	13	152	10	1	0	93	2	126	2
Coach & horses	131	12	329	22	26	8	266	4	542	8
Other travel costs	131	12	132	9	154	49	100	2	316	5
Miscellaneous	20	2	160	11	1	0	216	4	280	4
Total	1115		1488		317		6135		6914	

Source: SCLA, Stoneleigh Abbey bills, series DR18/5

Table 2. The distribution of retailers supplying Mary Leigh, 1750-1806

	1750-1769				1786-1806			
	Suppliers		Total value		Suppliers		Total value	
	No.	%	(£ s d)	%	No.	%	(£ s d)	%
Birmingham	0	0	0	0	1	0	25-17-0	0.0
Coventry	7	7.1	35-11-0	1.9	28	19.6	824-11-5	7.9
Kenilworth	0	0	0	0	2	1.4	419-1-2	4.0
Kensington	0	0	0	0	18	12.6	1217-14-5	11.7
London	88	89.8	1819-9-2	95.9	69	48.3	6880-15-1	66.1
Oxford	1	1.0	14-6-11	0.8	0	0	0	0
Stoneleigh	0	0	0	0	13	9.1	229-18-4	2.2
Warwick	2	2.0	27-4-4	1.4	12	8.4	812-14-4	7.8

Source: SCLA, Stoneleigh Abbey bills, series DR18/5

Table 3. The distribution of London retailers supplying Mary Leigh, 1750-1806

	1750-1769			1786-1806		
	No. of bills	Total (£ s d)	Mean (£ s d)	No. of bills	Total (£ s d)	Mean (£ s)
Holborn / City	18	267-12-11	14-17-0	60	2502-10-11	41-14-0
Strand / Covent Garden	47	466-18-5	9-18-0	18	506-3-0	28-2-0
Piccadilly	33	53-0-11	1-12-0	20	206-2-5	10-6-0
Grosvenor / Hanover Square	34	94-17-10	2-16-0	42	590-16-4	14-1-0
Charing Cross / Soho	88	17-15-8	1-8-0	36	1460-2-8	40-11-0

Source: SCLA, Stoneleigh Abbey bills, series DR18/5

[CAPTIONS FOR FIGURES]

Figure 1. The London suppliers of Mary Leigh, 1750-69.

Sources: Shopping locations from SCLA, DR18/5/- receipted bills; Basemap from Laurie and Whittle, *New Map of London and its Environs, 1809-10* © The British Library Board, Maps Crace Port.6.199

Figure 2. The London suppliers of Mary Leigh, 1786-1806.

Sources: Shopping locations from SCLA, DR18/5/- receipted bills; Basemap from Laurie and Whittle, *New Map of London and its Environs, 1809-10* © The British Library Board, Maps Crace Port.6.199



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<sup>1</sup> See, for example: T. Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class: an Economic Study of Institutions* (1899; London, 1994); M. Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 2005); L. Peck, *Consuming Splendor. Society and Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 2005); J. Cornforth, *Early Georgian Interiors* (New Haven, 2004).

<sup>2</sup> W. Sombart, *Luxury and Capitalism* (1922; Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1967); N. McKendrick, 'The consumer revolution of eighteenth-century England', in N. McKendrick, J. Brewer and J.H. Plumb (eds) *The Birth of a Consumer Society* (London, 1982), 9-33.

<sup>3</sup> A. Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter. Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven, 1998); A. Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors. At Home in Georgian England* (New Haven, 2008), 106-28, 184-207; H. Greig, *The Beau Monde. Fashionable Society in Georgian London* (Oxford, 2013), 36-47; K. Lewis, 'When a house is not a home: elite English women and the eighteenth-century country house', *Journal of British Studies*, XLVIII (2009), 336-63.

<sup>4</sup> For discussion of lineage-family, see N. Tadmor, *Family and Friends in Eighteenth-Century England. Household, Kinship and Patronage* (Cambridge, 2007), 73-102.

<sup>5</sup> Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter*, *op.cit*, esp. 183-94; Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, 106-28, 184-207; Berg, *op.cit*, 234-43; J. Whittle and E. Griffiths, *Consumption and Gender in the Seventeenth-Century Household. The World of Alice Le Strange* (Oxford, 2013), especially 26-42, 203-8; Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, *op.cit*, 106-28; H. Berry, 'Prudent luxury: the Metropolitan tastes of Judith Baker, Durham gentlewoman', in P. Lane and R. Sweet (eds), *Out of Town: Women and Urban Life in Eighteenth-Century Britain*

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(Aldershot, 2005), 149-52; K. Harvey, *The Little Republic. Masculinity and Domestic Authority in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2012), 33-5, 65-76; A. Duncan, 'Old Maids': Family and social relationships of never-married Scottish gentlewomen, c.1740–c.1840' (PhD, Edinburgh 2013), 199-205.

<sup>6</sup> Berry, *op.cit*; C. Walsh, 'Shops, shopping and the art of decision making in eighteenth-century England', in J. Styles and A. Vickery (eds) *Gender, Taste and Material Culture in Britain and North America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 151-77; Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter*, *op.cit*, 168-9.

<sup>7</sup> The seminal study of life cycle remains M. Abbott, *Life Cycles in England, 1560-1720* (London, 1996), but see also Tadmor, *op.cit*, 63-72 and various contributions to E. Foyster and H. Berry (eds) *The Family in Early-Modern England* (Cambridge, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> Whittle and Griffiths, *op.cit*, especially 26-42, 203-8; Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, *op.cit*, 106-28; Harvey, *op.cit*, 82-6.

<sup>9</sup> There are, for example, no index references to spinsters or bachelors in either Abbott, *op.cit*, or Tadmor, *op.cit*.

<sup>10</sup> For the preparation of young men for marriage and their married lives, see H. French and M. Rothery, *Man's Estate. Landed Gentry and Masculinities, 1660-1900* (Oxford, 2012), 185-233.

<sup>11</sup> Vickery, *op.cit*, p.208; R. Larsen, 'For Want of a Good Fortune: elite single women's experiences in Yorkshire, 1730–1860', *Women's History Review*, XVI, 3 (2007), 387-401; Duncan, *op.cit*, 12-14. On rates of singleness amongst the peerage see T. H. Hollingsworth, 'The demography of the peerage', *Supplement to Population Studies*, XVIII (1964), 1-108.

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<sup>12</sup> See, for example, O. Hufton, 'Women without men: widows and spinsters in Britain and France in the eighteenth century', *Journal of Family History*, IX (1984), 355-76; P. Sharpe, 'Dealing with love: the ambiguous independence of single women in early modern England', *Gender and History*, XI (1999), 209-232; A. Froide, *Never Married. Single Women in Early-Modern England* (Oxford, 2005); D. Hussey and M. Ponsonby, *The Single Homemaker and Material Culture in the Long Eighteenth Century* (Farnham, 2012).

<sup>13</sup> Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors. op.cit*, 49-82, 188-93; Duncan, *op.cit*, esp. 57-87.

<sup>14</sup> Duncan, *op.cit*, 179-211.

<sup>15</sup> Little of Mary Leigh's correspondence survives, except for a small number of letters to her solicitor and friend, Joseph Hill: Shakespeare Central Library and Archive (SCLA), DR671.

<sup>16</sup> M. Rothery and J. Stobart, 'Inheritance events and spending patterns in the English country house: the Leigh family of Stoneleigh Abbey, 1738-1806' *Continuity and Change*, XXVII, 4 (2012), 387-9.

<sup>17</sup> P. Mathias, 'The social structure in the eighteenth century: a calculation by Joseph Massie', in idem., *The transformation of England: essays in the economic and social history of England in the Eighteenth century*. (London 1979), 171-89. By the early nineteenth century, the estate's value had risen to c.£19,000 per annum; SCLA DR18/31/16-37, Rentals of Real and Devised Estates 1762-1806.

<sup>18</sup> M. MacDonald, "'Not unmarked by some eccentricities": the Leigh family of Stoneleigh Abbey', in R. Bearman (ed.) *Stoneleigh Abbey. The House, Its Owners, Its Lands* (Stratford-upon-Avon, 2004), 148, 153-5.

<sup>19</sup> K. Glover, *Elite Women and Polite Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Woodbridge, 2011), 33-7.

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<sup>20</sup> MacDonald, *op.cit*, 153-4. Such contestation is seen by Froide, *op.cit*, 44 and 81, as characteristic of single women with large estates.

<sup>21</sup> Berry, *op.cit*, 144.

<sup>22</sup> Abbott, *op.cit*, 86-7; Glover, *op.cit*, 27-33; SCLA, DR18/5/3593, DR18/5/4308, DR18/5/4350, DR18/5/4620.

<sup>23</sup> E. Kowalski-Wallace, *Consuming Subjects: Women, Shopping and Business in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1997), 5; McKendrick, *op.cit*.

<sup>24</sup> For example: SCLA, DR18/5/5809; Berg, *op.cit*, p.242.

<sup>25</sup> This was true of the middling sort as well as the aristocracy. See Harvey, *op.cit*, 82-6, 110-11.

<sup>26</sup> Lewis, 'When a house is not a home'. In buying £1031 of silver from William Makepeace, for instance, Mary received £534 for unspecified but clearly unwanted items that she sold back to the silversmith: SCLA, DR18/5/5809.

<sup>27</sup> Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, *op.cit*, 106-29; D. Hussey, 'Guns, horses and stylish waistcoats? Male consumer activity and domestic shopping in late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century England', in D. Hussey and M. Ponsonby (eds), *Buying for the Home. Shopping for the Domestic from the Seventeenth Century to the Present* (Aldershot, 2008), 51-55.

<sup>28</sup> Abbot, *op.cit*, 111-32; Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, *op.cit*, 8-10, 193-202; Rothery and Stobart, *op.cit*.

<sup>29</sup> See, for example, SCLA, DR18/5/6122-6130, DR18/5/5980, 6023.

<sup>30</sup> Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, *op.cit*, esp. 114.

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<sup>31</sup> SCLA, DR671, letter to Joseph Hill, 12 September 1791. In London, she enjoyed good connections and left post-mortem gifts to the ladies Sefton, Ormond and Howard, though whether they visited her at Grove House is unknown. See Macdonald, *op.cit*, 154.

<sup>32</sup> Duncan, *op.cit*, 121-33.

<sup>33</sup> SCLA, DR18/5/6051, DR18/5/6098, DR18/5/6099.

<sup>34</sup> J. Styles, *The Dress of the People. Everyday Fashion in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, 2007), 295-301.

<sup>35</sup> SCLA, DR18/5/3738.

<sup>36</sup> French and Rothery, *op.cit*.

<sup>37</sup> SCLA, DR18/5/5703, DR48/5/5890.

<sup>38</sup> Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter*, *op.cit*, 161. For example: SCLA, DR18/5/5905, DR48/5/5980.

<sup>39</sup> SCLA, DR18/5/5684, DR18/5/5724; Berg, *op.cit*, 145-53.

<sup>40</sup> SCLA, DR18/5/6049; DR18/4/59 – inventory of Stoneleigh Abbey, 1806.

<sup>41</sup> SCLA, DR18/23/14 – list of books at Grove House, 1806.

<sup>42</sup> See Walsh, *op.cit*; Hussey, *op.cit*, 55-63; Kowalaski-Wallace, *op.cit*, *passim*; Berg, *op.cit*, 247-78.

<sup>43</sup> J. Stobart, 'Gentlemen and shopkeepers: supplying the country house in eighteenth-century England', *Economic History Review* LXIV, 3 (2011), 885-904

<sup>44</sup> Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter*, *op.cit*, 168-72 G. Eland (ed.) *Purefoy Letters, 1735-53* (London, 1931), *passim*; Berry, 'Prudent luxury'. On the general importance of London as a shopping centre, see: N. Cox and K. Dannehl, *Perceptions of Retailing in Early-Modern England* (Aldershot, 2007), 127-44. The lesser gentry were more important as

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patrons of village shops – L. Bailey, ‘Maintaining status: consumption in the nineteenth-century household. The Gibbard family of Sharnbrook, Bedfordshire’ (MA thesis, Northampton, 2010).

<sup>45</sup> *The Picture of London*, 1803; quoted in A. Adburgham, *Shops and Shopping, 800-1914* (London, 1964), 5.

<sup>46</sup> Berry, *op.cit.*, 143-52.

<sup>47</sup> See, for example, SCLA, DR18/5/3986, DR18/5/4252.

<sup>48</sup> Walsh, *op.cit.* See also N. Cox, *The Complete Tradesman. A Study of Retailing, 1550-1820* (Aldershot, 2000).

<sup>49</sup> Respectively, SCLA, DR18/5/4252, DR18/5/4263, DR18/5/4264; and SCLA, DR18/5/3180, DR18/5/3334, DR18/5/3402, DR18/5/3565, DR18/5/3620.

<sup>50</sup> See, for example, SCLA, DR18/5/3738, DR18/5/3062.

<sup>51</sup> SCLA, DR18/5/4303, DR18/5/4441. Importantly, these textiles were bought in 21 and 23 yard lengths; those from Croft and Hinchcliff were in 12 and 16 yard lengths, suggesting more complex and elaborate dresses. See A. Buck, *Dress in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1979).

<sup>52</sup> Greig, *op.cit.*; SCLA, DR/15/5/3136a. For a fuller discussion of the importance of jewellery, see M. Pointon, ‘Jewellery in eighteenth-century England’, in M. Berg and H. Clifford (eds), *Consumers and Luxury. Consumer Culture in Europe, 1650-1850* (Manchester, 1999).

<sup>53</sup> Adburgham, *op.cit.*, 12-18.

<sup>54</sup> See, for example, SCLA, DR18/5/5851, DR18/5/5998.

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<sup>55</sup> Walsh, *op.cit*; SCLA, DR18/17/27/31/15c letter from John Taylor to Mary Leigh, 31 December 1803.

<sup>56</sup> See, for example, the large consolidated bills from Francis Field: SCLA, DR18/5/5865. For fuller discussion of the kind of groceries supplied by Field, see J. Stobart, *Sugar and Spice. Grocers and Groceries in Provincial England, 1650-1830* (Oxford, 2013), 50-55.

<sup>57</sup> SCLA, DR18/5/5809.

<sup>58</sup> H. Clifford, *Silver in London: The Parker and Wakelin Partnership 1760-1776* (New Haven, 2004).

<sup>59</sup> See, for example: SCLA, DR18/5/6040, DR18/5/6181. Lace was an old luxury, again marking Mary's conservative taste.

<sup>60</sup> Walsh, *op.cit*.

<sup>61</sup> Cox, *op.cit*; Walsh, *op.cit*; Adburgham, *op.cit*.

<sup>62</sup> Berry, *op.cit*, 146.

<sup>63</sup> Cox, *op.cit*, 159, 222; D. Alexander, *Retailing in England during the Industrial Revolution* (London, 1970), 204-30; Stobart, *op.cit*, 154-7.

<sup>64</sup> *Purefoy Letters*, no. 65. For example: SCLA, DR18/5/5865a, DR18/5/6048, DR18/5/6444.

<sup>65</sup> C. Walsh, 'Shop design and the display of goods in eighteenth-century London', *Journal of Design History*, VIII (1995), 157-76. For further discussion of the attitudes of Defoe, von le Roche and others, see Cox, *op.cit*, 12, 90-3; D. Davis, *A History of Shopping* (London, 1966), 181-98.

<sup>66</sup> Quoted in Davis, *op.cit*,

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<sup>67</sup> See, for example, S. Dyer, University of York, UK, 'Dressing the elite: fashion, intimacy and business in eighteenth-century London and Yorkshire', paper given at the *CHORD Conference*, Wolverhampton, September 2012.

<sup>68</sup> On advertisements for groceries and china, see: Stobart, *op.cit*, 142, 165-89; J. Hanser, 'Teatime in the North Country: consumption of Chinese imports in North-East England', *Northern History*, XLIX, 1 (2012), 51-74.

<sup>69</sup> SCLA, DR18/5/5809, DR18/5/5890. For fuller discussion of this practice, see J. Stobart, 'The language of luxury goods. Consumption and the English country house, c.1760-1830', *Virtus*, XVIII (2011), 89-104.

<sup>70</sup> See J. Stobart, A. Hann and V. Morgan, *Spaces of Consumption. Leisure and Shopping in the English Town, c.1660-1830* (London, 2007), 156-7.

<sup>71</sup> *Purefoy Letters*, nos 103, 105.

<sup>72</sup> *Purefoy Letters*, no. 104.

<sup>73</sup> On the scale and operation of City retailers, see: H-C. Mui and L. Mui, *Shops and Shopkeeping in Eighteenth-Century England* (London, 1989), *passim*; Walsh, *op.cit*; A. Erikson, 'Eleanor Mosley and other milliners in the City of London companies 1700-1750', *History Workshop Journal*, 71 (2011), 147-72. For London retailers supplying provincial shops, see: H. Wilcock, *Browns and Chester. Portrait of a Shop, 1780-1946* (London, 1947), 23-5.

<sup>74</sup> J. Stobart, 'Selling (through) politeness: advertising provincial shops in eighteenth-century England', *Cultural and Social History*, V, 2 (2008), 309-328.

<sup>75</sup> Davis, *op.cit*, 196-7.



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<sup>76</sup> Berry, *op.cit*; SCLA, DR18/5/3702, DR18/5/3393, DR18/5/3466, DR18/5/3498; J. Stobart and M. Rothery, 'Geographies of supply: Stoneleigh Abbey and Arbury Hall in the eighteenth century', in J. Stobart and A. Hann, *The Country House: Material Culture and Consumption* (London, forthcoming, 2015). It is notable that many of these shared suppliers were found on traditional retailing streets in the City.

<sup>77</sup> SCLA, DR18/5/6097, DR18/5/5886. See also Stobart, 'Selling (through) politeness.

<sup>78</sup> On such communication, see: Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter*, *op.cit*, 168-72; Walsh, *op.cit*; Berry, *op.cit*.

<sup>79</sup> SCLA, DR18/5/1989, DR18/5/2100, DR48/5/2395, DR18/5/4251.

<sup>80</sup> See, respectively: SCLA, DR18/5/3964, DR18/5/6427; DR18/5/4657, DR18/5/6051; and DR18/5/4575, DR18/5/5894.

<sup>81</sup> SCLA, DR18/5/3062, DR18/5/3519; Walsh, 'Shops, shopping'.

<sup>82</sup> SCLA, DR18/17/27/101b letter from Samuel Butler to Mary Leigh; Stobart and Rothery, *op.cit*; Vickery, *Gentleman's Daughter*, *op.cit*, esp. 168-9.

<sup>83</sup> Harvey, *op.cit*, 172.

<sup>84</sup> This practice is discussed in detail in K. Retford, 'Patrilineal portraiture? Gender and genealogy in the eighteenth-century English country house,' in J. Styles and A. Vickery (eds), *Gender, Taste and Material Culture in Britain and North America 1700-1830*, ed. (New Haven, 2006).

<sup>85</sup> Greig, *op.cit*, esp. 36-47.