

## Bath and the Care of a 'Poor' Woman

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# Bath and the Care of a 'Poor' Woman

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Bath re-established its name as a fashionable spa in the eighteenth-century.<sup>1</sup> Its prosperity was part of 'the English urban renaissance', as Peter Borsay put it, and still, Bath's rise was conspicuous.<sup>2</sup> About a hundred years from mid-seventeenth-century saw a remarkable increase in population from 1,500 to 6,000, excluding seasonal visitors.<sup>3</sup> Bath was an alternative to London, where the powerful could steer and find the retinue to exert their influence on. Queen Anne (1665-1714), who always suffered from poor health and went through pregnancies real and false, visited Bath, willingly following her physicians' advice for her own health and her husband's. She left London for Bath when her Catholic step-mother, Mary of Modena, gave controversial birth to a son in London.<sup>4</sup> When the Duke of Marlborough went to Bath seeking for cure after the strokes, his entourage followed him and Sarah, his formidable wife; she governed there. These two influential women were not alone in their partiality to Bath. Samuel Pepys (1633-1703), Alexander Pope (1688-1744), Henry Fielding (1707-54), Samuel Johnson (1709-84), David Garrick (1717-79), Edmund Burke (1729-97), Elizabeth Montagu (1720-1800), T.R. Malthus (1766-1834), Walter Scott (1711-1832) and Jane Austen (1775-1817), among others, all enjoyed society there. Pope, that sickly genius, attests to disappointment in the so-called panacea as well as people's susceptibility

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1 Legend tells that Bath's hot springs were known well before the Romans built baths in the first century.

2 Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town 1660-1770* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

3 Borsay, p. 31.

4 Edward Gregg, *Queen Anne* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2001[1980]), pp. 56-7, 95-7, 161-2.

to belief in the cure by Bath's water: 'The Bath was tried after all other remedies, as a last remedy, and that has proved totally ineffectual.'<sup>5</sup>

This paper examines a case of the care of an aging literary woman in Bath. Though she was a daughter of a lieutenant with wealthy relatives, she was left impoverished and unmarried. She had lost her siblings and close friends before settling in Bath in her mid-forties. This lonesome woman with her limited income moved from London to Bath and sought care there through personal connections. Her name is Sarah Fielding (1710-68), a sister of the novelist Henry Fielding, and she was a writer on her own. She was born at East Stour, Dorset, spent her childhood in Salisbury, lived in London, and settled in Bath. Her life in Bath is better documented than that in London. In her fiction she made use of Bath, and Bristol as well, a nearby health resort where people visiting Bath used to make an optional trip.<sup>6</sup> Her decision to choose Bath as her retreat was not by chance but had reasons. The next section of this paper surveys the town of Bath, followed by Sarah Fielding's later life in Bath.

### **A) The prosperity of Bath**

The making of eighteenth-century prosperity of Bath was illustrated by four figures: Beau Nash, the representative of fashionable society, Ralph Allen, of hospitality and literary interests, John Wood, of architecture, and William Oliver, of medicine.<sup>7</sup> They all contributed to make Bath a desirable and respectable town of comfort and pleasure. Pope testifies Bath's captivating attractions: '... I have Slid, I can't tell how, into all the Amusements of this Place: My whole Day is shar'd by the Pump-Assemblies, the Walks, the Chocolate houses, Raffling Shops, Plays, Medleys, etc.'<sup>8</sup>

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5 Quoted in Maynard Mack, *Alexander Pope: a Life* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), p. 156.

6 Although the actions in *David Simple* are concentrated in London, some of the letters in *Familiar Letters* are dated at Bath. *David Simple: Volume the Last* gives an explanation that Cynthia goes to Bath for her health. Dellwyn includes scenes in Bristol.

7 Introduction by Brigitte Mitchell to *Letters from Bath 1766-1767 by the Rev. John Penrose* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1983), p. 7.

Bath attracted the wealthy, the diseased and the cultured, offering them mineral water, doctors, games, ceremonies, balls, other entertainments and opportunities to get acquainted with various people. Even the healthy wanted to go to Bath for its pleasures as Defoe reported that Bath was 'the resort of the sound rather than the sick'.<sup>9</sup> It was a resort town where pleasure and pain, life and death, men and women, the old and the young, met each other. It was the realm of medicine, 'the arena of display' and the marketplace of the nubile and the fortune-hunters. The Moseleys, elderly and sick, went to Bath in 1745 with their only daughter Elizabeth, who was seeking for a suitable husband with a marriage portion of £5,000. Arthur Collier, who according to Hester Thrale taught Sarah Fielding the classics, went to Bath in 1745, when he was in a great financial trouble. They met each other in the public rooms and walks, and eventually exchanged a promise to marry. However, she withdrew as she realized her parents were against the match. Afterwards Arthur sued Elizabeth for unfulfilled marriage contract, winning his case in the lower court and losing in the Court of Arches.<sup>10</sup>

For those who favoured urban flow of information, Bath did not lack in communication facilities and literary stimuli. Ralph Allen (1694-1764) and John Palmer endeavoured to ensure quick and safe postal service networks, especially between Bath and London. The London papers were delivered there and Bath's own newspapers were launched; bookshops including Leake's (his sister married Samuel Richardson, London printer, bookseller and novelist) were very successful there.<sup>11</sup> Bath adopted the circulating

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8 *The Correspondence of Alexander Pope*, ed. George Sherburn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), vol.1, p. 260.

9 Quoted in Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), p. 245.

10 For his financial trouble, see Martin C. Battestin and Ruthe R. Battestin, *Henry Fielding: A Life* (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 392-5; for his courtship in Bath see Lawrence Stone, *Uncertain Unions: Marriage in England 1660-1753* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp. 68-77.

11 Alfred Barbeau, *Life and Letters at Bath in the XVIIIth Century* (London: William Heinemann, 1904), p. 57; N.S. Neale, *Bath 1680-1850: A Social History or A Valley of Pleasure, yet a Sink of Iniquity* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 23-5.

The bookshelves of Leake's included some scandalous books and they were not thoroughly devoted to serious reading, but sermons were dominant (Neale, pp. 23-25).

library earlier than London.<sup>12</sup>

Bath also inspired literary minds. Its connection with literature abounds, first of all, in satirical comments.<sup>13</sup> Though the master of ceremony and others kept control of moral standards and respectability sufficiently enough to make the town attractive, its frivolity and foibles fell easy butt of writers:

Hundreds of Dames (who never out of breath,  
Wou'd talk an Army, singled out, to death)  
At Sense's Cost, divide their Time and Hearts  
Twixt Fashions, Scandal, Toys, Codrille, and Smarts.<sup>14</sup>

The Gods of Silence fled  
MODESTY retir'd with red'ning Face  
PRUDENCE dismiss  
OECONOMY was hist.<sup>15</sup>

Here Folly's prattling tongues proclaim  
What hate, or darling rage supplies;  
Ambition too invokes foul fame,  
And coward meanness whispers lies!  
Here prostituted friendship dwells-

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12 The first circulating library was in Edinburgh. In Bath a circulating library was begun in 1728 and in London, 1730.

13 Bath provided subjects for verse, mostly satirical; see *A Description of Bath: A Poem* (London: J. Roberts, n.d.); *The Diseases of Bath: A Satire* (London: J. Roberts, 1737); *The Bath Miscellany: for the Year 1740* (Bath: W. Jones et al, 1741); *Bath A Poem* (London: Longman and Shewell, 1748); *A Poetical Address to the Ladies of Bath* (Bath: R. Cruttwell, 1775); *Bath: Its Beauties, and Amusements* (Bath: W. Goldsmith, 1777); *Bath, A Simile* (London: T. Whieldon, 1779); *The Belles of Bath: with a Satire on the Prevailing Passion: and a Model for Emulation* (Bath, 1782). Among a variety of prose fiction satirically dealing with Bath, see Smollett, *Humphry Clinker*. As for fashionable society there, see O. Goldsmith, *The Life of Richard Nash* (London: J. Newbery, 1762); Lewis Melville, *Bath Under Beau Nash* (London: Eveleigh Nash, 1907). As for descriptions with an emphasis on the literary importance of Bath, see Joseph Hunter, *The Connection of Bath, with the Literature and Science of England* (Bath: R.E. Peach, 1853); G. Monkland, *The Literature and Literati of Bath* (Bath: R.E. Peach, 1854).

14 *The Diseases of Bath*, p. 16.

15 *Bath A Poem*, p. 29.

Villainy masked in gay decoy,  
Which deeply fraught with magic spells  
With Smile - and smile - but to destroy.<sup>16</sup>

For writers Bath was a convenient place to observe characters and make sketches: 'We shall find there at all times, Beauties of all ages who come to show off their charms, young Girls and Widows in quest of Husbands, married Women who seek Solace for the unpleasant Ones they possess...'<sup>17</sup> It flourished as a very fashionable health and amusement resort, which was regarded as an epitome of the world, where one could see every kind of character.<sup>18</sup> Writers established a literary stereotype of Bath as a vicious city of pleasure for thoughtless people. Its conspicuous materialism provided a convenient literary theme. Literary people criticized Bath, declaring how loathsome its fashionable vices were. In particular women visiting Bath were easy butts for ridicule on account of their supposedly giddy way of life.

Nevertheless, while criticizing the vices of Bath, writers were attracted to the city and actually numerous writers visited it, enjoying its social life and describing its people. Sarah Fielding was one of those writers who criticized the urban milieu and frivolity and yet never detached herself completely from urban sophistication; she was one of those who chose to live in Bath. She did not prefer living in a remote province or in the middle of wild nature, but placed herself not far away from urban life. Bath provided the society with a central point, where all could meet each other, unlike London which had multiple cultural meeting points. Residence in Bath enabled her to call on and be visited by other literary figures including Elizabeth Montagu, Sarah Scott (1723-95), and Frances Sheridan (1724-66).<sup>19</sup>

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16 *The Belles of Bath: with a Satire on the Prevailing Passions: and a Model for Emulation* (Bath, 1782), p. 13.

17 The Abbé Prévost, 'Pour et Contre' (1734) no. 38, p. 173, quoted in Barbeau, p. 80.

18 Barbeau, Chap. IV; Neale, Chap. II; Borsay, Chaps. 9 and 10. For description of prosperity of Bath, see for example, Tobias Smollett, *The Expedition of Humphrey Clinker* (London: J.M. Dent, 1943), pp. 32, 36, 37; John Wood, *A Description of Bath* (London: W. Bathoe, 1765), p. 446; MO 293, Montagu to the Duchess of Portland, 4 Jan. 1740 (The Montagu Collection, The Huntington Library).

19 Alicia Lefanu records Sheridan frequently visited her (*Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Mrs. Frances Sheridan* [London: F. and W.B. Whittaker, 1824] , p. 95).

## B) Sarah Fielding's life in Bath

Sarah Fielding did not live a comfortable life especially in her later years after she lost her siblings and intimates between 1750 and 1755.<sup>20</sup> Her straitened circumstances are illustrated by her borrowing from Samuel Richardson.<sup>21</sup> When she decided to settle in Bath in 1754, she did not have sufficient resources and had to borrow ten guineas from him.<sup>22</sup> Although she earned some money through her publications, she found it difficult to repay him her debts. She counted on the sale of *Dellwyn* but there was little prospect of earning enough to pay off the debts; she wrote to Richardson: 'Millar's Bill [for printing] is so high that I cannot contrive it unless it comes to a second Edition'.<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, it did not sell well enough to justify a second edition. Indeed, Richardson offered an additional support.<sup>24</sup>

Another benefactor was Ralph Allen. Samuel Derrick, a Master of the Ceremonies at Bath, described the Allens as 'the parents of the industrious poor, the protectors of the really distressed, and the nourishers of depressed genius'.<sup>25</sup> Allen, who was a model for Allworthy in *Tom Jones* and whose virtues are praised in Sarah Fielding's *Familiar Letters*, is said to have invited her to dinner quite often at his residence at Prior Park and Claverton.<sup>26</sup> In *Familiar Letters*, Cynthia describes a virtuous and sociable man and his wife (probably alluding to Allen and his wife) and the magnificence and grandeur of their house at a small distance from where

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20 Her sisters who died around 1750 were: Catherine(1708-1750), Ursula (1709-1750), and Beatrice (1714-1751). Henry Fielding died in 1754 and Jane Collier in 1754 or 1755.

21 Thomas Secker also recorded giving her money (*The Autobiography of Thomas Secker Archbishop of Canterbury*, ed. John S. Macauley and L.W. Greaves [Lawrence: University of Kansas Libraries, 1988], p. 49).

22 See Fielding, Henry and Sarah. *The Correspondence of Henry and Sarah Fielding*, ed. Martin C. Battestin and Clive T. Probyn (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), pp. 127, 128 n1, 128, 149. According to Peach, she settled in Bath as early as 1739 (*Historic Houses*, II, p. 32), but it was in 1750s that she finally settled in Bath and lived there until her death in 1768.

23 Battestin and Probyn, pp. 149, 150.

24 See Battestin and Probyn, p. 150 and p. 151. n1.

25 *Letters Written from Liverpool, Chester, Corke, the Lake of Killarney, Dublin, Tunbridge-Wells, Bath* (London: L. Davis and C. Reymers, 1767), pp. 94-5.

she lodged for her health:

I confess to you I am apt to imagine, wherever a great Superiority of Fortune is very apparent, that I shall be treated with a formal Ceremony, and made to feel a Restraint, which takes away the pleasure of all Conversation. But how was I surprised! when the Lady of this House received me with a good-natured Freedom, that plainly proved she was innocent of even a Thought that might offend another, and never harboured a Suspicion, that any one could have an Intention of dropping a word, that might tend in the most distant view to hurt her... And the Gentleman seemed to enjoy his Fortune, only as it gave him an Opportunity of serving his Acquaintance and being beneficent to Mankind... The Joy and Serenity that reigned in their Countenances was diffused throughout the house....<sup>27</sup>

He was one of the mediators for Sarah Fielding to socially and literally prominent people visiting Bath; his guests included Alexander Pope, Henry Fielding, Samuel Richardson, David Garrick, Lord Chesterfield (1694-1773), and Richard Graves (1715-1804, a cleric and the author of *The Spiritual Quixote*).<sup>28</sup> But he seems to have been no more than an occasional host and benefactor to her. Although he left her £100 when he died in 1764, Elizabeth Montagu expressed something close to resentment about the

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26 'I dined [at Claverton] more than once with Mrs. Fielding, the author of 'David Simple' - 'The Cry', and some other works; ... Mr. Allen very generously allowed her one hundred pounds a year'. See R. Graves, *The Triflers* (London: Lackington, 1806), p. 77. Pope's praise seems to be rather modest: 'Let low-born (in the second edition, 'humble') Allen, with an awkward Shame,/ Do good by stealth and blush to find it Fame.' (*One Thousand Seven Hundred and Thirty-Eight*, 1:135-36).

27 Sarah Fielding, *Familiar Letters*, I, pp. 172-73.

28 Peach tells that Sarah knew Allen earlier than Henry did (*Historic House in Bath*, p. 32; *The Life and Time of Ralph Allen* (London: D. Nutt, 1895), p. 133). Benjamin Boyce follows Peach, though admitting there is no documentary support. He suggests that it is possible that the Goulds, the family from which Henry and Sarah's mother came, knew Allen before, because one of them was engaged in law in Bath (*The Benevolent Man: A Life of Ralph Allen of Bath* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1967), p. 128). Battestin deduces that Henry's friendship with Allen began in 1741 (*Henry Fielding*, p. 315).



sum.<sup>29</sup> She thought Allen left Fielding an undeservedly low amount in his will:

It was a great pity Mr Allen did not leave poor Mrs Fielding a decent maintenance for life, sixty pounds a year added to what she enjoys had made her happy, for she lives retired by choice, But I know not how it is that people seldom use their last opportunity to do good.<sup>30</sup>

Elizabeth Montagu sympathized with Fielding in her difficulties, sending her wine and food, and also trying to make contact on her behalf with her half brother, Sir John Fielding (1721-1820), through Lord Lyttelton (1709-73). She also offered an annuity of ten pounds – although what she thought would make her happy was sixty pounds per year –, which Fielding did not enjoy long.<sup>31</sup>

Her literary activity brought her some reward including annuities and hospitality, besides payments by the publishers, although the income does not seem to have been enough for her to live comfortably. Her earning pattern marks one phase in the transition from aristocratic (personal) patronage to commercial dealing with booksellers: the co-existence of older, intermediary, and new systems. She sought for patronage, collected subscriptions, and sold copyright to the publishers.<sup>32</sup> She dedicated *The*

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29 Ralph Allen's will reads 'I give to the 3 children of Henry Fielding, esqre, deceased, the sum of £100 each, and to their Aunt, Sarah Fielding, I give the sum of £100, which said 4 last named legacies I will be paid in 12 months after my decease.' There was also a memorandum for around 1744 and 1745: 'An account of my money to be apply'd to... Mrs. Fielding, 120'. See Peach, *The Life and Times of Ralph Allen*, pp. 236, 120; and also Austin Dobson, *At Prior Park and other Papers* (London: Humphrey Milford & Oxford University Press, 1925), p. 28; Boyce, *The Benevolent Man*, pp. 128, 159, 172, 243, 247, 270.

30 MO 3155, Montagu to Carter, 1 Oct. [1765]

31 Sir John Fielding helped Sarah Fielding to buy a cottage at Walcot in 1760, but when she was dying, she received no assistance from him. Montagu's care for Sarah Fielding is recorded in the letters between her and Scott: MO 5292, MO 5821, MO 5829, MO 5832, MO 5834, MO 5319, MO 5856, MO 5872. She writes to Sarah Scott about an annuity: 'Mrs Fielding is to receive ten pounds from me always at this Season, if more be necessary you will advance it & I will pay' (probably Dec. 1767) and 'I will assist in making her able to lie at Hitcham by doubling or trebling ye ten pd per ann'(MO 5872, MO 5879).

32 See Turner, *Living by the Pen*, pp. 102-16, 119-21, 122-23.

*Governess* to Mrs Poyntz (-1771), who was closely connected with the court and *Cleopatra and Octavia* to Countess Pomfret (1698-1761).<sup>33</sup> Both of them subscribed to her translation, but neither became her chief patroness. Among her books, *Familiar Letters*, *Cleopatra and Octavia*, and the translation of Xenophon's (c.428-c.354 B.C.) *Memoirs of Socrates* were published by subscription.<sup>34</sup> Sarah Fielding's own relatives, Allen's connections, and James Harris's helped to increase subscribers. Andrew Millar published for her, *David Simple*, *Familiar Letters*, *The Governess*, *David Simple Volume the Last*, *Cleopatra and Octavia*, *Dellwyn*, and *Memoirs of Socrates*. *Remarks on Clarissa* was printed for J. Robinson.<sup>35</sup> *The Cry* was published by R. Dodsley and *Ophelia* by R. Baldwin.<sup>36</sup> Andrew Millar was generous in his payments to authors; for example, he paid £183 for *Joseph Andrews*, for which another bookseller had offered only twenty five pounds, and £600 in advance and probably more for *Tom Jones*.<sup>37</sup> It is not certain which amount is for which work, but between 5 Oct 1750 and 6 Oct 1752 Millar paid Sarah Fielding £256.1.0 in total.<sup>38</sup> Later she sold the copyright of *Dellwyn* to Millar for 60 guineas with a prospect of another 40 guineas if a second edition was issued.<sup>39</sup> A similar amount was paid for *The Cry*, in 1753 Dodsley agreed with Sarah Fielding to buy half of the copyright for

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33 Anna Maria Poyntz (nee Mordaunt) married Stephen Poyntz who was influential at court. See Chapter Four for details. The Countess of Pomfret, Henrietta Louisa Fermor was a daughter of 2nd Baron Jeffreys, married (1720) Thomas Fermor (1698-1753), later 1st Earl of Pomfret. She was Lady of the Bedchamber to Queen Caroline. She was an old friend of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who was a relative to Sarah Fielding.

34 William Strahan's ledgers record an amount of 10s.6d. payable by Andrew Millar for Strahan's printing of 600 subscription receipts for 'Miss F's Octavia' (BL, Add.MSS 48800, fol.77<sup>v</sup>; Battestin & Probyn, p. 137).

35 Publisher, 1737-58, dealt with extensive miscellaneous literature.

36 Bookseller and publisher 1749-1810, nephew and successor to R. Baldwin.

37 Henry Fielding was happily surprised to be offered such an amount. See Battestin, *Henry Fielding*, pp. 325, 440. Boswell reports Johnson's comment on Millar: 'Johnson said of him, 'I respect Millar, Sir; he has raised the price of literature.'" *Boswell's Life of Johnson: Together with Boswell's Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides and Johnson's Diary of a Journey into North Wales* ed. George Birkbeck Hill and L.F. Powell, vol I *The Life* (1709-1765) (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1934), vol.I, pp. 287-88.

38 Millar paid her £20 (5 Oct. 1750), £57 (5 Jan. 1750/51), £50 (7 May 1751), £50 (16 Nov. 1751), £58.1.0. (3 June 1752), and £21 (6 Oct. 1752). See Battestin, *Henry Fielding*, p. 712.

39 Battestin and Probyn, pp. 144-49.

a little more than £52. Dodsley paid for the printing and the profit was to be shared between Sarah Fielding and Dodsley.<sup>40</sup>

Lady Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762), her relative, famously pitied her for having to earn a living by her pen: 'I ... heartily pity her, constrain'd by her Circumstances to seek her bread by a method I do not doubt she despises.'<sup>41</sup> Lady Mary's pity is based on incorrect attributions; she assumes that besides Sarah Fielding's own *David Simple Volume the Last*, three other works published between 1752 and 1753 were all written by her.<sup>42</sup> So she wrongly assumes Sarah Fielding's overproductivity. Nevertheless, she is right in seeing in Sarah Fielding an example of a struggling single woman writer in the eighteenth century.<sup>43</sup>

She also played a role of an agent for an author. As James Harris's busy political career had just begun and he wanted to keep his authorship of the sketch secret, she became an agent in his dealings with the publisher, Andrew Millar, whom she had opportunities to see in Bath. However, as far as we can see from the result of the negotiation, she was not competent in this kind of dealings; she did not know that Millar had already chosen an introductory essay to Henry Fielding's *Works* by Arthur Murphy (1727-1805) rather than Harris's. Although Murphy's version was unsatisfactory to Henry Fielding's friends and sister, owing to the fact that Murphy did not know him personally, Harris withdrew his. He did not need to squeeze in literary career but could gain satisfaction elsewhere, in philosophical pursuits and his newly-begun political career.

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40 Sarah Fielding's signed receipt is dated 19 November 1753 for £52.10.0 (*The Correspondence of Robert Dodsley* ed. James E. Tierney [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988], pp. 31, 514).

41 Fielding's grandfather, John (c.1650-98), the Archdeacon of Dorset, was a brother of William (1640-85), third Earl of Denbigh and second of Desmond, who was the grandfather of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu; *The Complete Letters of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu* ed. Robert Halsband 3 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965-67), III, p. 67. Lady Mary also regrets that Henry Fielding is forced to waste his genius by being pressed by his financial difficulties.

42 *The Complete Letters*, III, p. 67. The other three works she mentions are: Jane Collier's *The Art of Ingeniously Tormenting* (1753), Charlotte Lennox's *Female Quixote* (1752), and the anonymous *Sir Charles Goodville* (1753).

43 For women writers' struggle in the eighteenth century, see for example, Cheryl Turner, *Living by the Pen: Women Writers in the Eighteenth Century* (New York & London: Routledge, 1992); Catherine Gallagher, *Nobody's Story: The Vanishing Acts of Women Writers in the Marketplace 1670-1820* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

She was not rich enough to live at the centre of the town, but instead lived on the outskirts of Bath, perhaps at Widcombe, Walcot and later Bathwick.<sup>44</sup> She lived a secluded life there and at times visited the city centre. Her reports about the city are often second-hand: 'I am told that the Bath is very full this Season, but I only know it by hear-say, for I have no Inclination to go amongst them only when my perticular friends come'.<sup>45</sup> Since she went there for her health, she took opportunities to drink spa water which was provided in the centre. She also visited acquaintances in the centre as Sarah Scott (1723-95) reports: 'One day this week, poor Feilding having an opportunity of being brought to Bath came to spend it with me'.<sup>46</sup> Thus she placed herself at the margins of the convivial city, keeping in touch with her acquaintances. To be not too far away from nor too close to the eminent social gathering provided her with opportunities to socialize with people of fashion without being too involved.

This position is mirrored by her literary standpoint; she prefers the viewpoint of the moderately detached observer. In *Familiar Letters*, for example, Cynthia stays at Bath, where she spends days as many people did in Bath, going to the Pump Room, the coffee-room, and a ball, and paying visits to friends. She lets Camilla know what it is like to be in Bath and what she thinks about people there. Cynthia observes men and women at Bath, jolted by 'their lifeless Shadow, Foppery and Dress, Impertinence and Folly!' She sees ladies wearing capuchins, bonnets, and muffs, in spite of the extreme heat, simply in order to follow the fashion. People's eagerness to join tumultuous and thronged card tables is beyond her understanding. She hears some ladies talking of the merit of putting up with crowded card-tables: 'the Variety there relaxed their Thoughts, and kept them from the *Pain of Thinking*, which was not good with the Waters.'<sup>47</sup> Though she

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44 Neale gives examples of expenses at Bath in the second part of chapter II.

45 To James Harris, Bathwick, 21 Oct [1758] (Battestin and Probyn, p. 144); see also Battestin and Probyn, p. 137.

46 MO 5317, Nov 10 [1765]. Scott tends to spell her name as 'Feilding'. On this particular occasion, Sarah Scott was indisposed and Sarah Fielding could not gratify her expectation; Scott writes: 'unluckily I was so ill I cou'd pass only part of it with her, & then in a way not to give her any gratification'.

47 *Familiar Letters*, I, p. 90.

hates frivolity there, she does not hate the city, and she takes pleasure in being an observer.

Although Fielding seems to have been at ease in her stance as a detached observer such as Cynthia is, it was not that she willingly separated herself from every community. There were some she wanted to join. In her works she cherishes the importance of familiar company formed by mutual understanding and stimulating conversation. Her longing for an understanding and close community increased especially after she successively lost her sisters, Henry Fielding, and her intimate friend, Jane Collier by the mid-1750s. In 1755, shortly after she lost Henry Fielding and probably Jane Collier as well, she wrote a suggestive letter to Richardson. She congratulates Richardson for what he has with him:

To live in a family where there is but one heart, and as many good strong heads as persons, and to have a place in that enlarged single heart, is such a state of happiness as I cannot hear of without feeling the utmost pleasure.<sup>48</sup>

Later, she wished to join the circle of Sarah Scott, Lady Barbara Montagu (-1765) and others.<sup>49</sup> However, just as she lived at a certain distance from the city centre, she remained at some distance from the group; they took care of her while not regarding her as an equal member of their circle. Sarah Fielding intended to join them at Bath Easton in 1757, but Elizabeth Montagu interfered with the plan. She describes Fielding's eagerness and her captious opinion of her:

She is impatient to get to Bath Easton where she intends to reside.  
I said all I could to divert her from ye scheme for tho she is good

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48 Battestin and Probyn, p. 130.

49 Sarah Scott met Lady Barbara in Bath in 1748, and after her marriage came to an end in 1752, she settled in Bath with Lady Barbara. They had one house in the centre and another in Bath Easton. Scott's ideal community of women in *Millenium Hall* (1762) is thought to be a reflection of her own life with Lady Barbara. See Janet Todd, *Women's Friendship in Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), pp. 342-44; Neale, pp. 317-20.

sort of Woman I think you & Lady Bab will not want her in a long summers day nor a long winters evening. How is ones time taxed by civility and humanity & real & artificial devoirs? I grow savage in my disposition tho social & affable in my manners, & I felt for you & Lady Bab the hours of leisure & retirement she wd rob you of.<sup>50</sup>

Evidently Fielding's polite behaviour made a distance and Elizabeth Montagu cannot treat her as a comfortable friend. At that time, she was prejudiced against Fielding's character as well as her work; she subscribed to *Cleopatra and Octavia* (1757) only to find that the content of the work did not interest her much: 'the pages that gave me most pleasure were those that contained the names of the subscribers.'<sup>51</sup> After all, Sarah Fielding failed to be given a secure place within the female community. Generally personal connections formed circles, which were helpful for each member, and this was a great strength of the bluestocking circle, but they could easily become exclusive.<sup>52</sup> Consequently Sarah Fielding was not accepted into the inner circle of Scott and Lady Barbara, although she kept friendly terms especially with Scott.

To Fielding's consolation, Scott remained more sympathetic to her than Elizabeth Montagu, willing to help her and often taking opportunities to see her. Presumably their intimacy grew after Scott's intimate friend, Lady Barbara, died in 1765; Scott mentions 'Mrs Feilding' more frequently in letters to Elizabeth Montagu after that year.<sup>53</sup> Sometime in 1766 Sarah Fielding

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50 MO 5766, Montagu to Scott, 9 June 1757; Elizabeth Carter agrees that Sarah Fielding is not a cheerful vivacious person, but she is more sympathetic to her reserved character: 'I am very sorry for the loss [Mrs. Scott] is likely to have of poor Mrs. Fielding; though she is not a lively companion, she is a friendly and good woman, and such a character will always be tenderly regretted' (Carter to Montagu, Nov. 25, 1767, *Letters from Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, to Mrs. Montagu, between the Years 1755 and 1800* ed. Montagu Pennington (London: F.C. and J. Rivington, 1817), I, p. 369).

51 MO 5766, Montagu to Scott.

52 For details of the bluestocking circle's personal connections, see Sylvia Harcstark Myers, *The Bluestocking Circle: Women, Friendship, and the Life of the Mind in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).

53 Lady Barbara left Sarah Fielding an annuity of ten pounds (Montagu to Carter, quoted in Needham, p. 357).

spent days with Scott and a Mrs Cutts. After coming to stay at Scott's partly for the waters and probably more for her longing for Scott's company, she was reluctant to go back alone to Bathwick: 'I [Sarah Scott] find she [Mrs. Feilding] does not intend returning any more to the house she is now in, finding it I believe too lonely'.<sup>54</sup> The fear of smallpox made Scott change her lodging, which luckily enabled Fielding to join Scott, Mrs Cutts, and a Miss Arnold. Sarah Fielding was getting weaker and weaker at this time, and 'she much wants revival' but she spent her days happily in this small circle of sisterhood as Scott wrote: 'she thinks herself much happier since she came'.<sup>55</sup> This temporary happiness presumably ended when the danger of smallpox subsided resulting in that Scott returned to her former abode and the cosy co-habitation came to an end.

Meanwhile, Elizabeth Montagu planned to live at Hitcham with Mrs Scott, Mrs Cutts, and Mrs Freind in 1767. The original plan did not include Sarah Fielding. Montagu was aloof and not very kind to her: 'I like vastly the thought of inviting Mrs Fielding as a Guest, seeing her happy will be a noble payment for her board & Lodging'.<sup>56</sup> On reconsideration, thinking it would be a pity to leave Sarah Fielding out 'if it were to cost that good Woman all her happiness', Montagu decided to help Sarah Fielding to join them. Yet she remained businesslike; in her thoughts about the possibility of Fielding's joining the community, practical financial considerations came first. As she knew Sarah Fielding could not afford to join in the scheme, she offers in a letter to Scott to pay the difference without letting her know her dependence, pointing out that 'my friend Fielding is too much of a Bel esprit to know a better of ye ordinary affairs of life' 'so we can cheat her as to knowledge of ye expence & let her imagine her present income equal to it I had much rather she did not know she was assisted in it'. Sarah Fielding's attachment to Sarah Scott's company was such that Elizabeth Montagu was worried about her sense of alienation if Scott left Sarah

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54 MO 531, Jan 30 [1766].

55 MO 5321, Feb 9 [1766].

56 Quoted in Arnold Edwin Needham, 'The Life and Works of Sarah Fielding.' University of California, Ph.D., 1942, p. 359.

Fielding to join the Hitcham scheme: 'I am afraid some rumors of this scheme of Hitcham sh<sup>d</sup> reach her ear & kill her'.<sup>57</sup> In the event, at this time Sarah Fielding was too ill to move houses. Montagu let Elizabeth Carter (1717-1806) know about her poor health: 'Poor Mrs Fielding is declining very fast, she is at Bath. My sister sees her every day.'<sup>58</sup> Montagu took pity on her and offered to pay her medical expence if her half-brother was not available: 'Sir J: Fielding has not yet sent any Person to pay the money if Mrs Fielding in the mean time shd want any pray supply her for me, her condition must be expensive tho the generosity of her Physician saves her the great & heavy charge of sickness'.<sup>59</sup> She tried to make contact with Sir John Fielding, but she could not at least until five days before her death.<sup>60</sup> There is a tablet in her memory in the church of Charlcombe, and another by Dr John Hoadly (1711-76) in the Abbey, Bath. Hoadly describes her virtuous character together with her intellectual superiority: 'Her unaffected Manners, candid Mind,/ Her Heart benevolent, and Soul resign'd,/ Were more her Praise than all she knew or thought,/ Though Athens' Wisdom to her Sex she taught.'

In Bath the dazzling assembly of the young and fit in the public rooms and along the walks lay side by side with the melancholy scenes of the despondent ones over their and their family members' ill health and death. Bath inimitably attracted the young and the old, the rich and the not-so-rich, so as to work as a centre that provided pleasure, care, benevolence and all that each generation and each financial situation needed. Literary and personal connections worked as a safety net for the unmarried aging lonesome Sarah Fielding. Bath water was beneficial not only in its healing potential but also in drawing her and her benefactors together. In her youth Bath gave her materials to write about and in her later life she could see there somebody to look after her.

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57 MO 5873, Montagu to Scott, 1 Jan 1768.

58 Quoted in Needham, p. 361.

59 MO 5881, Mar 28 1768, Montagu to Scott.

60 'No news of S<sup>r</sup> John Fielding. L<sup>d</sup> Lyttelton has been out of Town almost a Month I believe he has no connections with S<sup>r</sup> John...' (MO 5882, Montagu to Scott, 4 April 1768).