

Gossip and Sexual Transgression in 'English Society' in 1790s' Naples

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Abstract: This essay analyses Lady Elizabeth Webster's journal, in which she chronicled her travels across Europe in the 1790s. Her journal suggests that there was an English community in Naples, whose codes of conduct were modelled on those that regulated elite society in England. Elite women who transgressed the rules could face consequences: Naples was not a place where women could hide from gossip and scrutiny. The journals also provide a fascinating insight into an elite woman's approach to sexual mores and demonstrate that, while attitudes towards sexual behaviour were highly internalised, how individuals put codes into practice was far more complex and open to discrepancies.

Keywords: elite women, sexual mores, Lady Webster/Holland, expatriate society, Naples, 1790s

In her journal entries for the first half of 1794, Lady Elizabeth Webster wrote about the flirtatious interactions between a group of Grand Tourists and several women, many of whom, like herself, were married and living in Italy on extended tours with their families. Most of her discussions were light on moral reflection. However, one woman, the recently widowed Lady Anne Hatton, repeatedly received harsh criticisms from Lady Webster:

Ld. Morpeth improves the more he is known, I always liked him. He has taken the flippant gallant Ly. Anne Hatton under his protection. She is too volatile to be his exclusively. I never saw her before, & to my surprise found her in company with Ly. Plymouth, who is the great retailer of the anecdotes against this slippery Hibernian, & whom she declared against receiving. Her face is not regularly handsome, her figure enchanting, an airy nymphlike form as youthful as a Hebe. She is however past thirty considerably.¹

In fact, Lady Hatton was about thirty-one in 1794. Lady Webster's ruminations about her romantic intrigues, alongside those of other British visitors, suggest that the British elite in Naples were expected to regulate their conduct according to certain codes. In her journal Lady Webster recorded how other members of her social group reacted to those who had broken these rules, and revealed that they faced consequences for their conduct that were similar to those that transgressors faced in elite society in England. That said, how individuals in Naples chose to put these codes into practice was complex, and it appears that several variables were at play. For example, while Lady Webster tolerated and even assisted the affairs of Sarah Windsor, countess of Plymouth, a woman whom she considered to be her friend, her disdainful judgements of Lady Hatton's liaisons were littered with comments that suggested personal animosity. Significantly, Lady Hatton was linked to the young and charismatic George Howard, Viscount Morpeth, who was ten years her junior, and whom Lady Webster had noted her own attraction to when she met him at a dinner party in Lausanne in 1793. When she discovered that Morpeth already had a love

interest, Lady Webster had marked her disappointment in her journal and mused that, 'If I were addicted to coquetry I believe I could easily become her rival [...] a pretty young woman is always sure of as many lovers as she chooses, but to me there would be more humiliation than glory in such a train.'²

While she recorded and judged the liaisons of her peers, Lady Webster's own conduct in Italy was not above reproach. Better known to history as Lady Holland after her second marriage, she was born Lady Elizabeth Vassall in 1771, the sole heir to an immense fortune from the West Indies. She was married at the age of fifteen to Sir Godfrey Webster, who was over twenty years her senior. They had several children, but the marriage was not a happy one. In the early 1790s Lady Webster persuaded her husband that they should take an extended trip to Europe. While abroad she conducted at least two affairs discreetly, with Thomas Pelham and Lord Henry Spencer. In 1794 she met Henry Fox, Lord Holland, and they embarked on an affair when Sir Godfrey returned to England. In 1796, after she had become pregnant, the pair scandalised elite society by eloping together and returning to London. Sir Godfrey swiftly divorced Lady Webster, allowing her to marry Holland in July 1797. As Lady Holland she became a formidable and influential political hostess for the Whig party for several decades. As a divorcee she was excluded from certain formal aspects of elite society, such as events at court, but Lady Holland retained many of her friendships and continued to socialise with several other prominent Whig ladies, including Countess Bessborough, whom she met during her time in Italy.

This article will address a gap in the historiography of late eighteenth-century travel: how English elite society functioned abroad. To date, scholarship has focused largely on the Grand Tour and has neglected other aristocratic travellers and the societies they formed in European cities. Contemporary representations of the behaviour of Britons living in Italy frequently reflected anxieties that it was a place where individuals could go to evade the restrictive sexual mores of elite society at home.³ However, an examination of the judgements and experiences of those who lived there for longer periods of time demonstrates that the image of Italy as a 'refuge from gossip and ostracism' was not uncomplicated for the vast majority of its elite British visitors.⁴ This was because they congregated in certain towns and cities, forming societies where rules about conduct applied and gossip about those who did not adhere to those rules abounded. In the first section of this article I argue that a distinctly English elite society (modelled on fashionable society in London) existed in Naples in the 1790s. This society was filled with tensions; although Italy was perceived as a place that offered travellers sexual freedoms, those who joined the social circuits there found that their behaviour would be scrutinised. Moreover, women could face consequences for their transgressions that were similar to those imposed by the informal disciplinary systems in elite society in Britain, which ranged from being gossiped about to social ostracism. As Hannah Greig has demonstrated, analysis of who was excluded from elite society, and on what basis, reveals the 'fundamental codes of behaviour to which the fashionable elite were expected to adhere'.⁵ This article focuses predominantly on women, as they were the most affected by these codes; however, it also reflects on what those women thought about the conduct of men. In the second section I examine Lady Webster's attitudes and reactions to specific women's transgressions. I argue that how the individuals in Naples assessed sexual misconduct was influenced by the mores of British society; however, how they put these codes into practice was far more complex and open to discrepancies. An examination of how one young woman reacted to the illicit liaisons of her peers demonstrates that there were

several factors that influenced how individuals treated those whose behaviour they deemed to be transgressive.

Most of my evidence is drawn from Lady Webster's manuscript journal. It is impossible to be certain but, given their candour, it seems likely that Webster's journals (there are fifteen volumes, dating between 1791 and 1815) were reserved for an extremely select audience – if for any audience at all – during her lifetime. There is no evidence to suggest that she intended them to be published after her death.⁶ In her journals Lady Webster constructed a persona of herself as an intelligent and witty young woman, although she portrayed herself as a victim in need of sympathy whenever she discussed her first marriage. She wrote unreservedly about her opinions of her acquaintances with a comical flair that would probably have amused an audience who were already in the know. This article focuses on the first of her journals, which dates from June 1791 to July 1797, opening with her arrival in Revolutionary Paris and recording her travels across France, Switzerland, the German states and Italy. She did not write daily, but the journal was regularly updated. It also covers the decline of her first marriage and her elopement with Lord Holland – although she is not particularly loquacious about their affair. The journal features Lady Webster's commentary on political events alongside her observations on the architecture, archaeological sites and natural phenomena of the countries that she visited. The threat and upheaval caused by the French Revolutionary Wars simmer under the surface of this journal but only come to the fore sporadically: Lady Webster was seemingly enthralled and excited by the conflict.⁷

Gossip, especially regarding sexual transgressions, features frequently in the journal but does not dominate. The gossip that Lady Webster deemed worthy of recording predominantly concerned her British friends and acquaintances, members of the same expatriate social networks that she identified herself as being associated with. In her journal she reflected on the morality of their behaviour, and of her own intrigues, often highlighting the complexities and contradictions that were inherent in elite codes of conduct over this period. The second part of the article centres on Lady Webster's commentary on the conduct of Lady Hatton and the countess of Plymouth. These two examples were partly chosen because Webster passed judgement on the conduct of both women multiple times throughout the journal. Significantly, the contrast between how she assessed and represented the two women's similar behaviour required further investigation: fashionable society's codes and conventions are often discussed as though they were frameworks that were applied consistently, but Lady Webster's expressions in her journal suggest otherwise. Letters written by elite women who were either in Naples at the same time or who were corresponding with individuals who were, are also examined to offer a more balanced view. The reports that women made in their diaries and letters about the behaviour of their peers in Naples reveal that what they said in private, or in public, and the actions that they took were at times quite contradictory. Their expressions were shaped in part by what they anticipated their respective audiences would expect.

I. 'English Society' in Naples

Contemporaries perceived Italy as a place where the rich could avoid the constraints and mores of British society. The Italians were believed to have far looser morals than the English, an image that was abetted by their elite's custom of *cicisbeism*. A *cicisbeo*, usually a young gentleman, was engaged by a married couple to publicly escort the wife and keep her company while her husband was engaged in his political duties. These relationships

were emotionally complex, as Robert Bizzocchi has shown, but to the British they were perceived as condoned adulterous arrangements: the term 'cicisbeo' often appears in British satires of aristocratic adultery by the end of the eighteenth century.⁸ The continent in general was believed to offer a refuge to members of London's fashionable society who were caught up in sex scandals, and many 'ruined' women fled there.⁹ Some, such as Lady Elizabeth Foster, went to give birth to their lover's children secretly, while others, like Lady Seymour Worsley, went on a more permanent basis to escape the humiliating publicity and social rejection that followed in the wake of a criminal conversation trial or divorce.

In her book on Italian cities and the Grand Tour, Rosemary Sweet argues that certain 'narratives [...] were constructed around specific cities'.¹⁰ Over the course of the eighteenth century Naples developed a reputation for hedonism and 'came to represent the antithesis of what many travellers believed to be the defining attributes of their own society'.¹¹ It did not have the same level of 'gambling and organised prostitution' as Venice; however, in the eyes of the English, Naples was a city that endangered its visitors' virtue and sexual morality. This image was the result of a combination of factors, including the beauty and abundant fertility of the bay presided over by Mount Vesuvius – whose own unpredictability embodied Naples's reputation for risk – and the early eighteenth-century rediscoveries of Pompeii and Herculaneum, which put Naples on the map as the ancient depraved playground of the wealthy Romans; and by the end of the period British society in Naples revolved around the disreputable household of the British ambassador, Sir William Hamilton. Hamilton was a respectable figure when he arrived in Naples with his wife in 1764, but by the 1780s his writings on the cult of Priapus and his liaison with Emma Hart, former mistress of his nephew Charles Greville (leading to the pair's subsequent marriage in 1791), made him a figure of ridicule in the London press.¹² The city was also a popular destination for Grand Tourists, offering them a base to see the antiquities displayed in the archaeological museum and nearby excavation sites without the relentless sightseeing schedules that were expected of visitors to Rome.¹³ British expatriate networks in Italy also included aristocratic families who settled there, who Sweet argues were motivated by the cheaper cost of living and the mild climate, which was thought to have health benefits.¹⁴

A recent issue of *Litteraria Pragensia* has started to address the question of how British societies operated abroad by examining the theme of exiles, émigrés and expatriates in Paris and London over the Romantic era.¹⁵ It analyses the displacement of people following the French Revolution and explores the experiences of those who tried to make a home for themselves outside their native country. The meaning of the word 'expatriate' has changed significantly over the last two centuries: first recorded in 1787, the verb meant to 'withdraw from one's native country' and for a long time both verb and noun had strong connotations with banishment in contrast to the voluntariness that the term assumes today.¹⁶ Both the British elite and Italy are largely absent from the articles that make up the issue, but Rachel Roger's piece on the radical émigré society in Paris is interesting in how it explores the formation of a distinct expatriate society around White's hotel, whose radical members were bound by their aspirations and shared ideologies, despite the tensions and divisions caused by their differences and the political oppression.¹⁷ While it may be somewhat anachronistic to call them so, evidence from elite women's letters and Lady Webster's journal suggests that there were elite 'expatriate' societies in Italy during the early 1790s. The group examined in this article were not necessarily escaping persecution in England, but they settled and congregated for varying periods of time in certain

areas. Many brought their attitudes and values with them and appear to have attempted to replicate the activities, codes and conventions of London's fashionable society in Italy.

On several occasions in her journal Lady Webster described the company that she mixed with in Italy as 'the English society' or 'a numerous Society of English'.¹⁸ This was done in a formulaic manner, as upon her arrival in each new city she listed the individuals that composed this society, who were other British travellers, but predominantly English, from varying grades of the upper classes.¹⁹ Linda Colley argues that the British landed elite became more cohesive in the late eighteenth century, with 'cross-border marriages' between English, Irish, Scottish and Welsh dynasties increasing, establishing a 'unified and genuinely British ruling class'.²⁰ Yet it is clear that 'national differences' were not eradicated, and David Duff and Marc Porée suggest that living in an expatriate society often led Britons to perform their distinctions more.²¹ There are hints of this in Lady Webster's journals: for example, she referred to Lady Hatton's Irish nationality on a couple of occasions, thereby identifying Hatton as an outsider.

In February 1792, Lady Webster wrote that 'The English Society was too numerous to be pleasant' in Nice; however, on her arrival in Naples in October she was much more at ease, and wrote that 'The English society was composed of many of my friends'.²² By February 1794 this society was further improved by the arrival of 'a numerous band of young Englishmen from college – gambling & gallantry filled up the evenings & mornings', and Lady Webster recorded that the young men often visited her in her seafront villa in Chiaia.²³ Lady Webster's former lover, Lord Henry Spencer, wrote to her from Florence lamenting the idea that she was in Naples enjoying the attentions of 'the belle jeunesse of our little Island', namely Lords Holland and Boringdon, and Granville Leveson Gower.²⁴ The members of this community socialised frequently and in a similar manner to that which they would have enjoyed in London, attending operas, balls, card parties and more intimate suppers. The social network and relationships that were formed in Naples over the early months of 1794 left a strong imprint in the minds of the individuals who were involved: upon her arrival in Rome in May 1794, Lady Webster was delighted to find 'almost the whole of our Neapolitan set', and this phrase can similarly be found in correspondence of other members, referring back to the same people, in the months that followed.²⁵ However abstract, there was definitely a sense among aristocratic travellers of a distinct community in Naples (and similar examples could probably be found in other European cities), identifiable by its members' elite status and Anglo nationality.

Parallels can be drawn between English society in Naples and London's *beau monde*, who have been thoroughly analysed by Greig. Both groups were deeply hierarchical, and, despite being deemed by outsiders to encourage depravity and licentious behaviour, they were anxious about how they appeared.²⁶ Perhaps surprisingly, female sexual behaviour was scrutinised, and those who transgressed could face social exclusion. Over this period the social and sexual mores that underpinned the British aristocracy's identity were complex and evolving. This was in part a consequence of challenges to their authority: radicals and conservatives alike increasingly condemned elite practices such as gambling, duelling, adultery and divorce, arguing that their wealth and position enabled them to get away with licentious behaviour in a way that those below them could not.²⁷ This discourse fed into wider political concerns that those whose private lives were filled with 'vice' should not be trusted with public office. These ideas were gaining ground by the 1780s but accelerated in the decade that followed the French Revolution. The threat posed by a war with the French (on ideological grounds as much as the possibility of invasion) generated an array of moral anxieties about gender and sexual conduct that rather accentuated the dissipated nature of aristocratic culture.²⁸ The situation was

further aggravated by the rapid expansion of print culture in the second half of the century, catering for an audience whose thirst for gossip about the private lives of wealthy families was unprecedented. Historians including Linda Colley, Hannah Greig, Judith S. Lewis and Marilyn Morris have argued that these challenges influenced how the elite conducted themselves: elite culture was 'reformed' in an attempt to continue to legitimise their political, social and cultural leadership of Britain.²⁹

Their new identity strategy was influenced by two prominent cultural discourses: politeness and domesticity. The two trends both emphasised the qualities of virtue, morality and self-control, but prescribed different ideals for male and female conduct.³⁰ Notions of politeness guided aristocratic sociability norms: 'sophisticated flirtation' between men and women was encouraged, but, in public at least, these relations had to maintain the appearance of respectability.³¹ Over the course of the long eighteenth century aristocratic culture also adopted many of the principles advocated by the cult of domesticity, further restraining heterosexual interactions.³² The discourse surrounding domesticity was strongly influenced by Evangelicalism, stressing the importance of marriage and the family by linking them to images of national strength. It emphasised the differences between the sexes and restricted women's acceptable roles to those of wife and mother. Moreover, sexual restraint was paramount, and tolerance of sexual incontinence (even among elite men) gradually declined. By adapting their conduct according to the principles of these discourses, aristocratic men and women were able to continue to have a very distinctive (often still ostentatious) public presence, which they established through their 'virtuous' charitable or militaristic performances.³³ They also increasingly disdained the looser mores of the European royal courts, which their class had formerly been encouraged to emulate for their politeness (particularly those of the French nobility), as they were perceived to be inferior to British restraint and self-control.³⁴

As Morris has noted, this new set of mores was led by the court of George III and his consort, Queen Charlotte, which was very conservative and broke with the libertine culture of their ancestors; the king had no royal mistress, and the queen refused to permit ladies to court whose public reputations had been compromised by adultery or divorce.³⁵ Yet not all felt the need to conform to these changes. For example, in the 1780s the libertine behaviour of the prince of Wales and the Whig statesman Charles James Fox was infamous, but both were ridiculed in print and by the press for their debauchery. Aristocratic sexual mores, although clearly very complex and in a state of transition, were a fundamental part of a distinctly British elite identity. They influenced the image that individuals tried to project of themselves and how they assessed the behaviour of their peers, neither of which was dramatically transformed simply because of a change in geographical location.

Even within the privacy of her journal, Lady Webster expressed her shock and dismay when the behaviour of her associates failed to conform to her expectations. In Florence in February 1794 she recorded being 'compelled' to get out of a carriage and walk home one evening to avoid being sexually assaulted by Sir Gilbert Elliot: 'Surprise & embarrassment have completely overset me [...] I have heard from the lips of one who affects morality & domestick virtues maxims that would revolt all but the most depraved.'³⁶ Elliot's philandering was renowned in elite society, but he also tried to uphold an image of himself as an honourable and affectionate husband in line with the expectations of male 'domestic devotion' that Morris suggests were (to a degree) idealised in this status group.³⁷ Webster refutes this construction, and, like many contemporary social commentators, she suggested that elite performances of 'domestick virtues' were insincere. The language she documented Elliot using to justify his actions and, in effect, try to placate her afterwards

demonstrate that he was concerned about maintaining his identity as a loving and moral husband, which he had created in England: 'His justification [...] his long absence from home, perfect seclusion [...] delight at meeting a countrywoman [...] created a violent [...] transitory alienation from sense and propriety.' Essentially, Elliot adopted the discourse surrounding Italy and lax behaviour to excuse himself: he had momentarily felt free to behave as he wanted owing to his new surroundings and the absence of the prying eyes that normally scrutinised and constrained his behaviour in fashionable society in London. After his unsuccessful attempts on her, Elliot was insistent that Lady Webster 'be kind & discreet' as he did not want word to get back to his wife. While Lady Webster appears to have kept quiet, she criticised his hypocrisy, noting that he affects 'great conjugal felicity'.³⁸ This event suggests that expatriate societies were spaces governed by ambiguous codes of conduct: individuals were expected to maintain a respectable reputation by following the conventions that guided their conduct back home; however, in their new surroundings, they sensed an opportunity for freedom from sexual constraints because of the absence of conventional societal systems of control.

Largely, the sorts of behaviours and relationships that were deemed deviant by the elite expatriates in Italy were the same as those that were prohibited in the same circles in England. Adultery was tolerated in many cases if it conformed to certain rules.³⁹ Adulterous couples were expected to be discreet and to maintain the appearance of propriety in public. In Turin, in the summer of 1792, Lady Webster wrote that 'we were surprized by the arrival Ly. Malmesbury & G. Ellis, without being a prude, one might criticise the openness of their connexion'.⁴⁰ Indiscretion and public displays or proclamations of illicit love were thought to be offensive and imprudent. In Naples, Lady Webster was outraged on behalf of her friend Lady Plymouth when her lover Lord 'Berwick behaved shockingly' by 'speaking to her and of her with the most disrespectful familiarity'. She similarly disapproved of Mr Beauclerk, Countess Bessborough's admirer, when his overzealous attempts to get her attention caused 'a fit of jealousy' in Lord Bessborough, ruining the group's trip to Tivoli.⁴¹ Often illicit couples socialised within larger groups to keep suspicions at bay, enabling them to spend more time together, although this was not without its sacrifices, as Countess Bessborough would lament a few years later to her lover Leveson Gower: 'seeing you without being able ever to speak to you for a moment free from constraint [... is] almost worse than not seeing you at all'.⁴²

Similarly to London's *beau monde*, 'English society' in Naples did not allow entry to women known to be carrying illegitimate children. As Greig has argued, illegitimate pregnancy made adulterous relationships undeniably evident and more public than they might otherwise have been.⁴³ In May 1793, Lady Webster expressed her concern about Lady Plymouth, whose liaison with Lord Berwick was not very 'prudent' because she planned to pass 'the whole summer' with him while 'Ld. Ply[mouth] is absent'.⁴⁴ Lady Webster's disapproval of Lady Plymouth's conduct is clear: it was not the liaison with Berwick that was the problem but her recklessness. Her husband's long absence meant that he (and their associates) would know that any child conceived over the summer was not his. Aristocratic women's adultery had to fit within more constraining norms than their male counterparts. One of Lady Webster's key criticisms of Lady Hatton was the plurality of her lovers. She accused her of being 'volatile', unwilling to commit to Lord Morpeth 'exclusively', and over the two years that Lady Webster spent in and around Naples, where Lady Hatton lived (at times with her sister and brother-in-law, and at others with Countess Bessborough), she noted rumours of her involvement with four different men in their social network. In 1800, when Lady Hatton was being considered as a potential marriage partner by the earl of Abercorn, Lady Holland (as she was by then) admonished that she

'had lived openly with four gallants, but though that number is sufficient to establish her character, yet I know she has had more'; to the list of 'Lord Hervey, Duke of Manchester, Duke of Rutland, Lord Morpeth', Lady Holland also added 'D'Armfeldt, the Sardinian minister at Naples, Nardini her Italian Master etc besides fifty passades'.⁴⁵ Whatever the truth of it, the promiscuity that Lady Hatton was perceived as engaging in was one that could not be reconciled with contemporary ideals of womanhood – and made her doubly transgressive in the eyes of her female peers.

As the above examples have demonstrated, Brian Dolan's suggestion that Italy offered British women 'a refuge from gossip' is misleading.⁴⁶ Lady Webster made similar judgements of her fellow expatriates to those she expressed in England when confronted with seemingly licentious behaviour by members of her circle.⁴⁷ The assumption that women who had been publicly exiled and shunned at home could freely enter into English social circles abroad (at least, those involving individuals of the same social status) is also problematic: the few accounts available of women carrying illegitimate children suggest that they disappeared to rural locations to give birth attended by native servants, where they ran little risk of encountering anyone they knew.⁴⁸ Many would rejoin society after the birth, leaving their offspring to be raised by adoptive families. Fragmentary evidence suggests that notorious women, such as Ladies Craven and Worsley, moved in social networks that were composed of individuals of a lower social status than those they mixed with in Britain before their scandals – or that they joined foreign court circles.⁴⁹ Furthermore, despite her relationship with Sir William Hamilton being legitimised by marriage in 1791, numerous accounts intimate that Emma Hamilton was never accepted or befriended by the aristocratic women whom she entertained, who felt insulted that a former mistress outranked them in the Neapolitan court.⁵⁰

Elite women, then, remained particular about those with whom they socialised even when they were abroad; their male counterparts were perhaps less so. As Henry French and Mark Rothery have argued, the Grand Tour's role in the development of elite male identities was fraught with paradoxes: while young men were supposed to gain independence and 'test' the values instilled in them by their families and education, they also tested their new-found freedom.⁵¹ Parental concerns that their sons would be corrupted by the people they met abroad were often well founded. Social exiles were not welcome in English society in Naples; however, the abundant gossip recorded by Lady Webster reveals that a significant amount of behaviour that was judged to be transgressive took place there. English society in Naples was a sort of hybrid space where people emboldened by the city's reputation as a place of sexual freedom – the relaxed Italian south – and by the absence of such strict systems of censure that they were used to in England acted in ways they might not have done at home. Disciplinary measures might not have been as consistent as they were in fashionable society in London; however, the attitudes and values of the expatriates in Naples led them to judge between tolerable and transgressive behaviour according to the same frameworks that they followed in England. The next section examines gossip and ostracism in expatriate society in more detail. It explores Lady Webster's reactions to sexual transgression, using two specific cases to demonstrate the influence that women's homosocial relationships had on how they put behavioural codes into practice.

II. *Women's Reactions to Sexual Transgression*

Although it was often trivialised and mocked, gossip was a very popular activity in elite society – at home and abroad. It appears to have been a heterosocial practice among this

group and provided them with entertainment and amusement. Anthropologists have argued that gossip also performs an important role in maintaining collective identities: deliberating (often ambiguous) unwritten moral values and codes of conduct confirms one as belonging to the group in question. It also enables individuals to decide how to respond to transgressive behaviour, and whether or not to enact any disciplinary measures. Gossip can unite members against a supposed 'other' figure and can also be wielded as an informal method of control. By humiliating and singling out transgressors the group deters other members from acting in similar ways.⁵² This analysis largely works for 'English society' in Naples, where individuals were eager to demonstrate that they knew the correct way to behave. By regularly gossiping about those whose behaviour fell short of expectations, they continued to raise awareness of those who did not belong – which was perhaps more important in this context, where possibilities for social mobility were often less monitored and more open than they were in London.

Lady Anne Hatton's casual and indiscreet relationships with married, or young, aristocratic men in Naples incited many to gossip, and some to ostracise her. Over the eight years that Hatton appears in her journals – up to and the year after her marriage to Lord Abercorn in April 1800 – Lady Webster documents gossiping about her on numerous occasions with both male and female friends, including Lady Plymouth and Beauclerk.⁵³ Webster also criticised her conduct to Countess Bessborough, who appears to have been a close friend of Hatton's, both in Naples and when they returned to England. Webster disapproved of this friendship and expressed concern that Bessborough's connection with Hatton could bring her 'difficulties'; indeed, Hatton is first mentioned in Webster's journal in June 1793, because Lord Hervey had abruptly ended his liaison with her, causing Hatton to turn to Bessborough for comfort and assistance.⁵⁴ A couple of weeks later, in July, Lady Webster wrote that 'Lady Ann Hatton is still invisible at least to me, she is a frolicsome Irish widow bewitched, very pretty, very foolish, & very debauched'.⁵⁵ Far from invisible, Hatton's reputation was notorious in English society in Naples, and several women, including Lady Plymouth and Lady Essex, reportedly 'declared against receiving' her.⁵⁶

Women faced similar consequences for their illicit relationships in Naples to those they would have done at home: they were gossiped about, like Lady Plymouth and Lady Malmesbury, or, like Lady Hatton, they could be publicly treated with disdain.⁵⁷ The consequences they faced were somewhat determined by their social standing, but the way they carried out their liaisons was not insignificant. Lady Hatton was treated very differently, at least according to Lady Webster, from her sister Lady Elizabeth Monck, who was married with two daughters. Both sisters, daughters of the second earl of Arran, had married men from the lesser gentry, and so were of a similar status. Lady Monck also conducted several affairs, the most long-lasting of which was with John Parker, Lord Boringdon, whom she met in Naples in 1794. Their affair spanned more than a decade, and Lady Monck gave birth to three illegitimate sons, who were eventually brought up by Boringdon and his second wife at his estate in Plymouth.⁵⁸ Even though she was aware of Lady Monck's behaviour, Lady Webster compared her favourably to her sister:

Ly. E. Monck is divinely beautiful, her head is angelic, she is maintained by the Queen of Naples, to whom she was left by Leopold, had he lived she would have been declared his mistress, & her husband would have had a high station in the Imperial army. Ld Boringdon attached himself to her, & to preserve this liaison she is to go to England [...] She is quite lovely – mischievous & meddling, as bad in point of chastity almost as her sister, but discreet & full of retinue, by which she has preserved herself in reputation, & has not been rejected like Ly Anne.⁵⁹

Lady Webster's assertion that Lady Monck had managed to 'preserve' her reputation to a degree affirms contemporary stereotypes about fashionable society: what mattered most remained public appearance, not private morality. Lady Monck kept her transgressions discreet: she knew how to manipulate the ambiguous codes of conduct that I have outlined in the previous section of this essay, and was thus allowed to continue socialising in elite circles.⁶⁰ In contrast, Lady Hatton's indiscretion saw her 'rejected'. Social ostracism, or 'cutting', was the punishment reserved for the most transgressive women over this period. However, as can be seen in Lady Hatton's case, social rejection was not necessarily practiced universally by all members of a group: although she was rejected by many women, she remained close to Countess Bessborough and lived with her and socialised in her circles regularly.⁶¹ Both sisters were also associates of the duchess of Devonshire, the leader of fashionable society in England, although her biographer Amanda Foreman suggests that her position changed after her exile (to have Lord Grey's baby) and she began to withdraw from society upon her return in 1794.⁶² In August 1793 the duchess wrote to her mother, the Dowager Countess Spencer, who was in Naples with Countess Bessborough, imploring her to 'mention Ly Eliz Monck; & poor dr madcap Ly Anne – I am sure you will be good to her'.⁶³ For the duchess and, more frequently, Countess Bessborough, Lady Hatton appears to have been a pitiable figure, whose conduct was often considered to be questionable but who, they said, deserved their compassion.

Despite Lady Hatton's powerful friends, the way she conducted herself abroad and the way other members of 'English Society' responded to this behaviour had a legacy that would taint her reputation and influence her reception in polite circles for many decades after her return to Britain.⁶⁴ As Katrina O'Loughlin has suggested, the fact that elite epistolary networks transcended continents left 'prominent' women with 'nowhere to hide'.⁶⁵ Far from having found a refuge from gossip, travellers and migrants gossiped frequently, and their reports also made their way back to their friends and relatives in Britain. Lady Hatton caused ripples in elite society when she finally married the earl of Abercorn, because other women were unsure how to receive her. Lady Theresa Villiers, Lord Boringdon's sister, remarked to her aunt in a letter that 'Lady Essex is in a quandary', because she was unsure 'about inviting this said Marchioness having like many other people refus'd to do so at Naples on account of the notoriety of her character'.⁶⁶ Even after she had attained the title of marchioness of Abercorn, the reputation that she had gained in Naples continued to influence how she was treated.

Although the expatriates had a shared framework by which they determined what sorts of relationships were to be criticised or censured, it is clear that how they put them into practice was not straightforward. Lady Webster's reflections on the behaviour of various women that she knew in Naples suggest that there were more factors motivating her reactions than those she candidly addressed. Broad distinctions can be made between her judgements based on whether the relationship between her and the woman in question was founded on friendship or enmity and whether she could identify and empathise with their situation or not. Her descriptions of Lady Hatton's behaviour are littered with hints of envy and personal dislike. She reflected on Hatton's beautiful appearance while making derogatory comments about her age, Irishness or lack of intellect. It is possible that she was experiencing some inner conflict about the fact that she perceived Lady Hatton as both her inferior and a rival – as several men whom she marked her interest in appear to have found Lady Hatton desirable. Lady Webster's attraction to Morpeth is clear from her first description of him as 'clever, very handsome, and very captivating'.⁶⁷ She was

taken aback when he took Lady Hatton 'under his protection', and she frequently implied that he conducted himself 'admirably' towards Lady Hatton even though she 'teazes' him and refused to be exclusive – which did not really reflect the reality (at least, to Lady Hatton) of the relationship.⁶⁸

In 1794 Lady Webster discovered that Lady Hatton had also been linked to another man who intrigued her, the Baron D'Armfeldt: 'scandal says he has frequently found security, as well as pleasure within the sheets of Ly. Anne Hatton, but there are mysteries not to be dived into.'⁶⁹ The Swedish diplomat went into hiding in Naples, having been involved in a plot to murder a Swedish duke, and Lady Webster recorded that she risked her life to go and visit him as the 'Swedish emissaries' who were hunting him had already 'fired' shots at him.⁷⁰ Although in this case it is not clear whether her interest in the baron was romantic, it is fair to say that she admired him, as she did Lord Morpeth, and so the fact that both men appeared to have been by enchanted by Lady Hatton, whom she judged to be inferior to them all, probably perturbed her. One final factor that provoked Lady Webster's envy and resentment of Lady Hatton was her perception that Lady Hatton, as a widow, was not bound by the same constraints as she herself was, and was thus free to pursue whatever romantic intrigues she wished. In June 1794, Webster suggestively recorded that 'Ly. Anne might have married Ld. Grandison, but she preferred a handsome young lover, to the worse prostitution of marrying a disgusting old man'.⁷¹ She implied that Lady Hatton's refusal to marry a stable peer in favour of being a kept woman was beneath contempt, yet at the same time one cannot escape the fact that being 'prostituted' by marriage was often how Lady Webster described her own unhappy first marriage.⁷²

In quite a stark contrast, Lady Webster's reflections about the conduct of her friend Lady Plymouth were far more compassionate. Whether their friendship pre-dated their travels is unclear: Lady Webster listed Lady Plymouth among her 'friends' who 'composed' English society in Naples at the end of 1792, but added 'with whom I became intimate', suggesting that this intimacy developed while the pair were abroad.⁷³ She often expressed her concerns about Lady Plymouth's imprudence; however, although she articulated well-trodden attitudes to imprudence and illegitimacy, Lady Webster framed them differently, and portrayed Lady Plymouth as a victim rather than a debauchee. When discussing her fear that her friend would get pregnant while her husband was absent, Lady Webster expressed her regret that she was leaving her to go away for the summer, 'because tho' I am not very prudent myself yet I think she is less so, & I might have kept her out of the scrape she is on the brink of falling into'.⁷⁴ Rather than attack Lady Plymouth's character, as she frequently did with Lady Hatton, Lady Webster was sympathetic and wished that she could be there to guide and advise her friend to ensure her behaviour met with the expectations of their wider social network.

Between 1793 and 1795 she linked Lady Plymouth to three different men yet made no suggestion that her numerous intrigues were immoral or vulgar. After her liaison with Lord Berwick ended, possibly owing to the shocking 'familiarity' with which he spoke to her in public, Lady Plymouth appears to have had a relationship with a 'Hanoverian Baron', who was 'dismissed' by April 1795, when she took 'complete possession of Amherst' – another young man on his Grand Tour.⁷⁵ Lady Webster indicated Lady Plymouth's dominant position in this new liaison by referring to Lord Amherst as Plymouth's 'amant en titre', satirically inverting the stereotype of a role for which tolerance was rapidly disappearing in royal courts in western Europe after the French Revolution.⁷⁶ Sarcasm aside, Lady Webster was very supportive of this new relationship, and seems to have willingly provided cover for the couple by accompanying them on

overnight trips to Frascati and Tivoli, in April and October 1795.⁷⁷ Providing cover for illicit intrigues was a common practice among friends in this status group – Countess Bessborough would take on this role as Lady Webster’s relationship with Lord Holland progressed. Lady Webster’s compassion for Lady Plymouth was grounded on the intimacy of their friendship and a shared sense of dissatisfaction and misery in their respective marriages. The two women remained close friends throughout the 1790s and supported each other throughout their marital problems with a strong degree of empathy for each other’s affairs. In June 1799, Lady Holland (as she was by then) recorded her joy for her friend that ‘Ld. Plymouth died: a great release to his wife, who will be rewarded by marrying Amherst within the year’.⁷⁸

III. Conclusion

This article has shed light on an under-researched area of eighteenth-century travel: how English elite society functioned abroad. It has demonstrated that there was a vibrant expatriate community in Naples during the 1790s, where a significant number of the British elite assembled to live and socialise in a similar manner to the way they lived and socialised in London. By examining Lady Webster’s travel journal alongside letters written by women who were either in Naples, or in contact with others who were, this article has challenged a common misconception that Italy, or the continent more generally, was a place where aristocratic women (and to some extent men) could unproblematically seek ‘refuge’ from gossip and scandal. Those who moved in elite expatriate networks continued to pry into one another’s private lives and gossiped excitedly about any transgressive behaviour they uncovered.

Lady Webster’s journals depict a migrant society that was governed by ambiguous codes of conduct. The complex sexual mores that its members were expected to adhere to shared many parallels with fashionable society in England: indiscretion, illegitimate pregnancy and excessive promiscuity (predominantly in women) were scandal-worthy, suggesting that members of ‘English Society’ in Naples retained their attitudes from home about which behaviours were permissible and which were offensive. Lady Webster’s judgements about the romantic and sexual intrigues of figures such as Lady Hatton, Lady Plymouth, Lady Monck, Lord Morpeth and Sir Gilbert Elliot reflect the tensions and contradictions that elite sexual conventions were experiencing as they evolved in response to widespread criticism. Often Lady Webster humorously described conduct that was traditionally tolerated in elite society, but at other times she made judgements that were influenced by notions of domesticity – which stressed the importance of private morality and sincerity. That said, it is clear that for Lady Webster it was the more traditional concern about public transgressions that she found distasteful; morality was always a bit of an afterthought.

The scrutiny and gossip that certain women were subjected to was amplified by the anxiety created from simply being in Italy and, more specifically, Naples itself. English visitors knew of the city’s reputation for debauching its visitors, and there was a tacit awareness that the romantic imagery of southern Italy did on occasion cause ‘a transitory alienation from sense and propriety’ among some of their compatriots. Although individuals were expected to maintain a respectable reputation by following the rules that guided their conduct back home, many sensed an opportunity for freedom from sexual constraints owing to the absence of conventional societal systems of control. Social mobility in migrant society was less evidently regulated without the British royal court formally

– and publicly – to divide the respectable from the disreputable. Disciplinary measures were also inconsistently applied: if a woman transgressed the boundaries of acceptable conduct, as Lady Hatton did, she could face the same consequences that she would face in England and be cut from social networks. Yet, while Lady Villiers suggested that Lady Hatton was ostracised by ‘many’ women in Naples because of her ‘notoriety’, the sense we get from Lady Webster’s journals is that this exclusion was not universally enacted, as Lady Hatton makes various appearances alongside other members of elite society. Moreover, from other sources we know she was also on intimate terms with the very Evangelical Dowager Countess Spencer. The ins and outs of ‘cutting’ as a practice are still quite elusive and would benefit from further research, but it appears that in England, as well as among English expatriate networks, even women who had been cut by certain prominent members of the group were not necessarily excluded from all social scenarios. Certain circles would still admit them. While in Britain these women seem to have been confined to more private spaces, in Naples women like Lady Hatton enjoyed a greater social latitude – which perhaps angered those who saw them as a threat and particularly wanted to avoid them.

Although disciplinary action was less regulated than in London, clearly the way they conducted themselves in expatriate society in Naples, and the people they were known to associate with there, could have social ramifications for women when they returned to England. And the majority did return: the aggressive military campaign of Revolutionary France caused turmoil across Europe, leading both the elite families and the Grand Tourists to leave Naples and steadily make their way back to the safety of home. Many English women, including Lady Webster, Lady Plymouth and (so we are told) Lady Essex, were aware that they needed to exercise caution because any questionable social choices they made in Naples had the power to reflect badly on their reputations. Romantic intrigues conducted abroad were not swiftly forgotten but were documented into the group’s collective memory: a bank of gossip that could be drawn on to assess an individual’s character many years after an affair had taken place.

Lady Webster’s judgements suggest that marking one’s disapproval of illicit behaviour was customary, regardless of the specific situation. This she duly did both in the privacy of her journal and in discussions with her friends and peers. The fact that she recorded these discussions in the journal is significant: even if it was for posterity, Lady Webster performed her self-identity in the journal cautiously, anxious to confirm her status as belonging to the English set by recording and strongly showing her disdain for a ‘transgressive’ other. She was not so contemptuous when it came to the imprudent indiscretions of her friends, but she still reflected on their rule-breaking and its potential consequences. This suggests that the attitudes and values that underlined elite codes of conduct produced a sort of subconscious reflex that guided how individuals in this group routinely assessed the liaisons of their associates. Admittedly, these constraints of the mind were not always effective at making individuals keep their own behaviour in line with the codes. These moral and social codes, however, were not rigid; the way in which individuals put them into practice was subject to many variables, including their own social standing and stage in the life-cycle. Lady Webster’s reactions to illicit liaisons, and whether her judgements were combined with abhorrence and contempt, or compassion and concern, often depended on the pre-existing relationship between her and the person she was judging. Whether women empathised with or condemned those who were deemed to have transgressed was heavily guided by whether they counted them as a friend or an enemy. A friend’s character was not irredeemably compromised by an indiscretion, and they were

mostly treated empathetically, but romantic rivals or social foes were viciously gossiped about and treated without compassion.

NOTES

1. London, British Library (hereafter BL), Holland House Papers, Lady Holland's Journals, Add. MS 51927: June 1791-6 July 1797, fol. 132.
2. BL, Add. MS 51927, fol. 83.
3. Brian Dolan, *Ladies of the Grand Tour* (London: Flamingo, 2002), p.93; Judith S. Lewis *Sacred to Female Patriotism: Gender, Class, and Politics in Late Georgian Britain* (New York: Routledge, 2003), p.173; Rosemary Sweet, *Cities and the Grand Tour: The British in Italy, c.1690-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p.164.
4. Dolan, *Ladies of the Grand Tour*, p.123.
5. Hannah Greig, *The Beau Monde: Fashionable Society in Georgian London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p.194.
6. Elizabeth Vassall-Fox, *Lady Holland, The Journal of Elizabeth, Lady Holland (1791-1811)*, ed. Giles Fox-Strangways, earl of Ilchester, 2 vols (London: Longmans, 1908). Fifteen volumes of manuscripts were consolidated into just two volumes by Giles Fox-Strangways, sixth earl of Ilchester, a distant relative of the Hollands, whose father inherited Holland House in the 1870s from a distant cousin who was the direct descendant of Lord and Lady Holland. All the passages discussed in this essay were censored or entirely omitted from the published journals.
7. For example, see Lady Webster's description of attending the debates in the National Assembly, BL, Add. MS 51927, fol. 1.
8. Robert Bizzocchi, *A Lady's Man: The Cicisbei, Private Morals and National Identity in Italy* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); For example, see 'A dictionary for the Bon ton, or the savoir vivre vocabulary', *The Bon Ton Magazine, or Microscope of Fashion and Folly* (London, 1791), vol. 1.97.
9. Lewis, *Sacred to Female Patriotism*, p.173.
10. Sweet, *Cities and the Grand Tour*, p.4.
11. Sweet, *Cities and the Grand Tour*, p.4, 164, 177.
12. For example, see: 'The Diplomatique Lover and the Queen of Attitudes', *The Bon Ton Magazine, or Microscope of Fashion and Folly* (London, 1791), vol. 1.242-5.
13. Sweet, *Cities and the Grand Tour*, p.168, 170-75.
14. Sweet, *Cities and the Grand Tour*, p.177.
15. *Litteraria Pragensia* 29:57 (July 2019).
16. David Duff and Marc Porée, 'Introduction', *Litteraria Pragensia* 29:57 (July 2019), p.2.
17. Rachel Rogers, "'Relinquish(ing) all former connections": British Radical Emigration to Early Republican Paris', *Litteraria Pragensia* 29:57 (July 2019), p.11-29.
18. For examples, see BL, Add. MS 51927, fols 1, 5, 13, 19, 83, 131.
19. Lady Webster's use of 'English' did not necessarily exclude the Irish, Scottish or Welsh. Linda Colley suggests that increasingly the term became 'a synonym for Great Britain as a whole'. Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, 2nd edn (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), p.162.
20. Colley, *Britons*, p.156.
21. Duff and Porée, 'Introduction', p.6.
22. BL, Add. MS 51927, fols 5, 19.
23. BL, Add. MS 51927, fol. 131. It is interesting that Lady Webster uses the phrase 'gambling and gallantry' to describe the socialising of the women and the Grand Tourists. Scholars and

contemporaries have both made connections between how the elite conceptualised the dynamics of sexual transgression and their practice of taking chances and the risks involved in gaming. For discussion, see Donna T. Andrew, *Aristocratic Vice: The Attack on Duelling, Suicide, Adultery, and Gambling in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2013), p.202-3; Phyllis Deutsch, 'Moral Trespass in Georgian London: Gaming, Gender, and Electoral Politics in the Age of George III', *Historical Journal* 39:3 (1996), p.637-56. Gillian Russell, "'Faro's Daughters": Female Gamesters, Politics, and the Discourse of Finance in 1790s Britain', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 33:4 (2000), p.481-504.

24. Lord Henry Spencer to Lady Webster, 25 April 1794: BL, Holland House Papers, General Correspondence of Elizabeth Vassall Webster, Add. MS 51845, fol. 58.

25. BL, Add. MS 51927, fol. 134; For example, see Granville Leveson Gower to John Parker, Lord Boringdon, 3 June 1794, and Granville Leveson Gower to Lord Boringdon, 2 August 1794: BL, Morley Papers, vol. V, Add. MS 48222, fols 59, 63.

26. Greig, *Beau Monde*, p.194.

27. Andrew, *Aristocratic Vice*; Anna Clark, *Scandal: The Sexual Politics of the British Constitution* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004). Lewis, *Sacred to Female Patriotism*, p.170.

28. Clark, *Scandal*, p.3-6; Katherine Binhammer, 'The Sex Panic of the 1790s', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 6:3 (2004), p.410, 413-14; Kathleen Wilson, 'Nelson's Women: Female Masculinity and Body Politics in the French and Napoleonic Wars', *European History Quarterly* 37:4 (2007), p.562-81.

29. Colley, *Britons*, p.155; Greig, *Beau Monde*, p.26; Lewis, *Sacred to Female Patriotism*, p.179-80, 188-9.

30. Stella Tillyard, *Aristocrats: Caroline, Emily, Louisa and Sarah Lennox, 1740-1832* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1994), p.159; Lewis, *Sacred to Female Patriotism*, p.168.

31. Lawrence Klein, 'Kissing for Virtuosi: William Stukeley's Philosophy of Pleasure (1757)', *English Historical Review* 131:549 (2016), p.327.

32. Scholarship on the cult of domesticity is extensive: although Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall's pioneering study on the concept, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1987), remains significant, many scholars have since demonstrated that their claims for domestic ideology's nineteenth-century middle-class origins are problematic. The glorification of domesticity can be found in numerous guises across different social groups throughout the long eighteenth century, and the elite seemingly had their own form. For further discussion about class variations, see: Irene Q. Brown, 'Domesticity, Feminism, and Friendship: Female Aristocratic Culture and Marriage in England, 1660-1760', *Journal of Family History* 7:4 (1982), p.406-424; Karen Harvey, 'Men Making Home: Masculinity and Domesticity in Eighteenth-Century Britain', *Gender & History* 21:3 (2009), p.527; Lewis, *Sacred to Female Patriotism*, Chapter 6; Marilyn Morris, *Sex, Money & Personal Character in Eighteenth-Century British Politics* (London: Yale University Press, 2014), p.99-100; Amanda Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History', *Historical Journal* 36:2 (1993), p.395; Dror Wahrman, "'Middle-Class" Domesticity goes Public: Gender, Class, and Politics from Queen Caroline to Queen Victoria', *Journal of British Studies* 32:4 (1993), p.396-432.

33. Lewis, *Sacred to Female Patriotism*, p.188.

34. Lewis, *Sacred to Female Patriotism*, p.160, 171.

35. Morris, *Sex, Money & Personal Character*, p.59, see Chapters 3 and 4.

36. BL, Add. MS 51927, fol. 126.

37. Morris, *Sex, Money and Personal Character*, p.86, 97.

38. BL, Add. MS 51927, fol. 126.

39. Greig, *Beau Monde*, p.202, 206; Lewis, *Sacred to Female Patriotism*, p.170.

40. BL, Add. MS 51927, fol. 7.
41. BL, Add. MS 51927, fols 133, 135.
42. Countess Bessborough to Granville Leveson Gower, 22 August 1798: BL, Granville Papers, Add. MS 89382/2/9, fols 37-8.
43. Greig, *Beau Monde*, p.202.
44. BL, Add. MS 51927, fols 31-2.
45. BL, Holland House Papers, Lady Holland's Journals, Add. MS 51929: 26 July 1799-28 April 1801, fols 75-6.
46. Dolan, *Ladies of the Grand Tour*, p.123.
47. For examples see Add. MS 51929, *passim*.
48. For example, see the duchess of Devonshire's and Lady Elizabeth Foster's experiences in Amanda Foreman, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire* (London: HarperCollins, 1998), p.170-172, 200, 266-7, 271.
49. Lady Craven found no privacy in France or Italy, as in both countries she was hounded by the English. She eventually settled in the margrave of Anspach's estate in Triesdorf, as discussed in Katrina O'Loughlin, 'Strolling Roxanas': Sexual Transgressions and Social Satire in the Eighteenth Century', in Susan Broomhall (ed.), *Spaces for Feeling: Emotions and Sociabilities in Britain, 1650-1850* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), p.128-9. In the 1780s Lady Worsley fled to France after the infamous criminal conversation trial and lived among the French '*Haut Ton*', according to Hallie Rubenhold, *Lady Worsley's Whim: An Eighteenth-Century Tale of Sex, Scandal and Divorce* (London: Vintage, 2009), Chapter 20. This also concurs with Joanne Begiato's observation that 'women whose marriages ended due to their infidelity might face a lower standard of living and in many cases their social circles narrowed and changed': see Joanne Bailey [Begiato], *Unquiet Lives: Marriage and Marriage Breakdown in England, 1660-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p.150.
50. For Lady Webster's opinion of Lady Hamilton see BL, Add. MS 51927, fol. 133.
51. Henry French and Mark Rothery, *Man's Estate: Landed Gentry Masculinities, c.1660-c.1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p.141.
52. Sally Engle Merry, 'Rethinking Gossip and Scandal', in Donald Black (ed.), *Toward a General Theory of Social Control*, vol. I, *Fundamentals* (London: Academic Press, 1984), p.271, 278.
53. BL, Add. MS 51927, fols 69, 132; BL, Add. MS 51929, fols 75-6, 84.
54. BL, Add. MS 51927, fol. 69.
55. BL, Add. MS 51927, fol. 69.
56. BL, Add. MS 51927, fol. 132.
57. For example, see BL, Add. MS 51927, fols 31-2, where Lady Webster records gossiping with Lady Palmerston about Lady Plymouth's affair with Berwick.
58. For an account of this relationship written by the couple's descendants see, *Henry Stapleton, Heirs without Title: A History of the 1st Earl of Morley & His Natural Children* (York: Skelton Rectory, 1974).
59. BL, Add. MS 51927, fols 132-3.
60. Greig, *Beau Monde*, p.202.
61. There are numerous references to Lady Anne Hatton in Countess Bessborough's correspondence recently purchased by the British Library. For numerous examples see BL, Granville Papers, Add. MS 89382/2/5. In addition to this, certain letters imply that Lady Hatton was on intimate terms with Bessborough's mother, Dowager Countess Spencer, in Naples. For example, see: Dowager Countess Spencer to Georgiana Cavendish, duchess of Devonshire, 15 August 1793: Bakewell, Chatsworth House Archives, 5th Duke's Group, cat. 1166: Lady Spencer records sending Lady Hatton 'a note from me to beg if there was any thing I might go to her'.
62. Foreman, *Georgiana*, p.286-7.

63. Duchess of Devonshire to Dowager Countess Spencer, 17 August 1793: Chatsworth House Archives, 5th Duke's Group, cat. 1167.
64. In later life she dwelled on her social isolation in letters to Lady Georgiana Morpeth (the daughter of the Duchess of Devonshire and wife of Hatton's former lover). For example, see marchioness of Abercorn to Lady Georgiana Morpeth, 16 April [1816]: Yorkshire, Castle Howard Archives, sixth countess of Carlisle's papers, J18/60/16.
65. O'Loughlin, 'Strolling Roxanas', p.114.
66. Lady Theresa Villiers to Lady Anne Robinson, 8 April 1800: Plymouth, Plymouth Record Office, Parker family of Saltram and Robinson Letters, 1259/2/502.
67. BL, Add. MS 51927, fol. 83.
68. BL, Add. MS 51927, fol.132; BL, Add. MS 51928: November 1797-July 1799, fols 77-8; BL, Add. MS 5129, fol. 75; For example of how Lady Anne perceived the relationship see Lady Anne Hatton to Granville Leveson Gower, [1796]: London, The National Archives, Granville Leveson Gower Papers, PRO 30.29.6.2.26.
69. BL, Add. MS 51927, fol. 134.
70. BL, Add. MS 51927, fol. 134.
71. BL, Add. MS 51927, fol. 133.
72. BL, Add. MS 51927, *passim*.
73. BL, Add. MS 51927, fol. 19.
74. BL, Add. MS 51927, fols 31-2.
75. BL, Add. MS 51927, fol. 141.
76. BL, Add. MS 51927, fol. 141.
77. BL, Add. MS 51927, fols 141, 158.
78. BL, Add. MS 51928, fol. 103.

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