

‘Dearly Beloved Relations’? A Study of Elite Family Emotions in Late
Eighteenth and Early Nineteenth-Century Northamptonshire.

By Ruth Barton MA

Abstract

Despite its reputation as an age of sensibility, the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were periods in which prescribed codes of conduct and the constraints of polite societal expectations influenced elite behaviour. Consequently, emotions have often been considered in terms of what shaped their expression rather than on how or why they were expressed. This article, however, will look beyond these controls and examine the agentive nature of emotions and the impact that their expression had on three elite Northamptonshire families. With a focus on gentry families, and a review of their correspondence, it will demonstrate the ways in which emotional rhetoric was used in letters to negotiate relationships and influence the behaviour of other family members. Moreover, it will analyse the function of anger and argue that its expression within the family, was on occasion, deemed necessary. Finally, the study will explore from what these families sought emotional comfort, and will suggest that the closeness and the bonds of family were the principal sources, but that letters, which were more than a formulaic product of a polite society, provided emotional comfort in the absence of physical and geographical proximity.

'Unfeeling', 'inauthentic' and 'calculating' are all words that have been used to describe the landed classes and their emotions.¹ Constrained by the 'paradigms of politeness' whilst encouraged to demonstrate a capacity for 'emotional sensibility', the criticisms levelled at the elite were often both pejorative and contradictory.² One purpose of this study is to establish to what extent, if at all, these descriptions were justified, were gentry families unfeeling, were their emotional expressions insincere? Another is to examine how much their elite status defined their emotions, did it have a bearing on how and when they were expressed? Finally, it explores the significance of the family itself in the shaping of emotion, what role did it have in determining how they were expressed? Through the examination of family correspondence, this article will argue that these elite families were emotional beings and that their emotions and the ways in which they were expressed were linked to their status but primarily to their closeness as a family unit.

The three elite families used in this article all owned land and property in Northamptonshire in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The Dryden family had been present in the south of the county since the sixteenth century, and by the 1760s were well established on their estate at Canons Ashby.³ Those examined here include Sir John Dryden, who inherited the estate and title of Seventh Baronet in 1718 and Sir Henry E. L. Dryden, the grandson of Sir John's adopted daughter, who inherited Canons Ashby in 1837. The Young family's county presence began in 1706 when Richard Young, a successful weaver from Worcestershire, purchased Orlingbury Manor.⁴ By the mid-1770s, his son Allen was living in the rebuilt Orlingbury Hall with three of his four adult children, whilst his eldest son was living in India. And the Rye family who had resided in Northamptonshire since the mid seventeenth-

¹ Ute Frevert, 'Defining Emotions: Concepts and Debates over Three Centuries', in *Emotional Lexicons: Continuity and Change in the Vocabulary of Feeling 1700 – 2000*, ed. by U. Frevert, C. Bailey, P. Eitler, B. Gammerl, B. Hitzer, M. Pernou, M. Sheer, A. Schmidt and N. Verheyen (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 1 – 31, (p. 6).

² Clare Brant, *Eighteenth-Century Letters and British Culture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), p. 23. Sarah Goldsmith, 'Nostalgia, homesickness and emotional formation on the eighteenth-century Grand Tour', *Cultural and Social History*, 3 (2018), 333 – 360, (p. 338).

³ Mark Rothery and Jon Stobart, 'Merger and Crisis: Sir John Turner Dryden and Canons Ashby, Northamptonshire, in the Late Eighteenth Century', *Northamptonshire Past and Present*, 65 (2012), 19 – 30, (p. 20 – 21).

⁴ Northamptonshire Record Office, Summary Index Notes, Young Box File.

century, are represented in this study by the Reverend Robert Rye and his younger brother Peter.⁵

This article will aim to shed light on three areas of emotions, with the first focusing on emotional economy. This is the means by which emotional words were used to negotiate power and influence behaviour in familial relationships. The second part of the article will focus specifically on anger and the ways in which it was expressed in family correspondence, the reasons for it and why some expressions of anger were acceptable whilst others were not. It will also reveal aspects of elite masculinity, and suggest that the Rye brothers, and the differing ways in which they expressed their anger, represented the diverse and contradictory nature of elite masculine identity. The final part of this article will examine the role of emotional comfort in the lives of elite families. Comfort, in terms of emotional support and contentment has received little attention from the history of emotions, and this study will address from what or whom these elite families principally derived comfort? It will argue that emotional comfort was sought and found in family and its closeness and will also examine the role that correspondence had in providing it.

Emotional Economy

I shall therefore only add that I hope that you will be a very good little boy and then I shall love you as long as I live.⁶

This section will focus on how emotions and emotional words were used by the elite in their correspondence to influence and control the behaviour of family members and to negotiate power within their respective families. It will also explore the motives behind this 'emotional management' which saw family members 'deploying emotional challenges and expecting commensurate emotional reactions'.⁷ All three families employed an emotional economy within their correspondence to elicit a response from a family member. The Drydens and the Ryes used it to teach their young men how to

⁵ Henry Isham Longden, *Northamptonshire and Rutland Clergy from 1500 Volume XII* (Northampton: Archer and Goodman, 1938), p. 25.

⁶ Mrs Hutchinson to Henry E. L. Dryden, Date Not Known (D.N.K), D(CA) 440, N.R.O.

⁷ Linda A. Pollock, 'Anger and the Negotiation of Relationships in Early Modern England', *The Historical Journal*, 3 (2004), 567 – 590, (p. 588). Henry French and Mark Rothery, 'Male Anxiety Among Younger Sons of the English Landed Gentry, 1700 – 1900', *The Historical Journal*, (2018), 1 – 29, (p. 17).

behave and to instil in them their own and preferred mode of masculine behaviour and there is evidence from the Young family letters of it also being used as a means of influencing a loved one's life choices.

In their article on anxiety within gentry families, Henry French and Mark Rothery describe the ways in which families 'generated' an emotional economy, and the use of this term is key because it emphasises the active, 'agentive force of emotions'.⁸ At the core of this activity lies Reddy's 'emotives', with his emphasis on language and on the articulation of emotion.⁹ The vocalisation of an emotion, however, is insufficient to create an emotional economy on its own, in order for it to stimulate an appropriate behavioural or emotional response another person needs to understand what the emotion is that has been expressed and then what is required of them.¹⁰ Barbara H. Rosenwein would argue that this understanding came from the shared value systems of an emotional community, with Susan Broomhall similarly suggesting that a familial space for feeling would produce an emotional 'affiliation'.¹¹ Linda Pollock points to the need for a 'cultural script' to ensure that all parties fully understood the necessary reactions expected of them. And the formation of this script and the education in the ways and means of an emotional economy were inculcated from an early age.¹²

The extract quoted at the start of this section comes from a letter sent to a young Henry Dryden, who later became Sir Henry E. L. Dryden, 4th Baronet of Canons Ashby, from his grandmother. Her letter begins with 'you cannot remember me, but I remember you and I love you very much', and at this point Henry, who is too young to recall his grandmother, is not aware of the role that he is expected to assume within the emotional economy that she is creating. As the letter continues however, that becomes increasingly clear,

Good children love their Papa and Mama and do as they bid them, which I hope to hear my dear little Henry does and that you grow more and more good every

⁸ French and Rothery, 'Male Anxiety Among Younger Sons of the English Landed Gentry, 1700 – 1900', p. 14. and Susan Broomhall and Jacqueline Van Gent, 'Corresponding Affections: Emotional Exchange Among Siblings in the Nassau Family', *Journal of Family History*, 2 (2009), pp. 143 – 165, (p. 143).

⁹ Barbara H. Rosenwein and Ricardo Christani, *What is the History of Emotions?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017), p. 7.

¹⁰ Pollock, 'Anger and the Negotiation of Relationships in Early Modern England', p. 573.

¹¹ Susan Broomhall, 'Introduction', in *Spaces for Feeling: Emotions and Sociabilities in Britain, 1650 – 1850*, ed. by S. Broomhall (Oxford: Routledge, 2015), pp. 1 – 11, (p. 1).

¹² Pollock, 'Anger and the Negotiation of Relationships in Early Modern England', p. 573.

day, then I shall love you more and more and will try to make you happy as I can.¹³

At the start of the letter young Henry had little knowledge of either his grandmother or the cultural script that would enable him to comprehend her emotional expressions. However, by the end his grandmother seemingly had the power to make him happy or otherwise, simply by how much, or how little, she would love him. This example demonstrates the ways in which emotional language subjected family members, even young children to 'power relations' within an emotional economy.¹⁴ Elite families, therefore, used emotional expressions in correspondence to instruct younger family members about the machinations of an emotional economy, allowing them to subsume the cultural script which would enable a legitimate and appropriate emotional or behavioural response within it.

Emotion as an 'educational tool' however went further than purely defining the intricacies of an emotional economy.¹⁵ Aunts and uncles, as well as grandparents and parents, were involved in forming emotional economies with younger relatives, in order to influence their conduct and shape their future selves. This is illustrated in letters sent to Henry Dryden from his aunt, Cassandra Handley whilst he was away at school and university. As a boy Henry was prone to a 'waywardness of temper' towards his younger sister, the force of which troubled members of his family particularly his aunt Cassandra who wrote him several letters about the impact his behaviour was having on the rest of his family.¹⁶ In 1832 when Henry was fourteen she wrote,

It seems to me so contrary to good nature, to good sense and every manly and laudable sentiment that you should be unkindly disposed towards her, that feeling as I do anxious for your happiness here and hereafter I have been quite grieved for your sake to hear of any tendency in your mind to so unamiable and unnatural a bent.¹⁷

¹³ Mrs Hutchinson to Henry E. L. Dryden, Date Not Known (D.N.K), D(CA) 440, N.R.O.

¹⁴ Joanna Bourke, 'Fear and Anxiety: Writing about Emotion in Modern History', *History Workshop Journal*, 1 (2003), 111 – 133, (p. 125).

¹⁵ Goldsmith, 'Nostalgia, homesickness and emotional formation on the eighteenth-century Grand Tour', p. 361.

¹⁶ Mrs Cassandra Handley to Henry E.L Dryden, 27 November 1832, D(CA) 440, N.R.O.

¹⁷ Ibid.

His aunt is appealing to Henry on two emotional fronts. Firstly, she describes her own emotional response to his behaviour, which was 'anxious' and 'grieved'.¹⁸ She then goes on to speak of his current and future happiness which, she argues, is dependent upon him altering his conduct and no longer indulging his 'unamiable fancies, antipathies or fastidiousness'.¹⁹ Interestingly, Cassandra does not mention the impact, emotional or otherwise, of Henry's behaviour on his sister. Cassandra therefore used an emotional economy to appeal to Henry and to educate him in what she considers to be 'manly' and 'laudable' qualities.²⁰ By 1835, when Henry is seventeen, his aunt was 'rejoiced to hear' that he had conquered his temper, but continued to warn him against 'continually doing that which is impervious to all', as 'much happiness is destroyed in private families sometimes even by the ill temper of one individual only'.²¹ Correspondence, therefore, was an 'educational tool', used by Henry's kin to educate him in the ways of elite behaviour and masculine expectation.²²

Emotion as an educational tool is also an integral theme in relation to elite masculinity. The qualities expected of an elite male included 'self-control and self-management, industry and hard work, independence and autonomy and truth and honesty' and family members would use correspondence within an emotional economy to teach and promote their version of acceptable masculinity.²³ This education in masculine identity was not limited to merely children and adolescents, it could continue long into adulthood. Letters from the Reverend Robert Rye to his brother Peter, who had joined the Royal Navy in 1778, illustrate the elder's frustration at his younger sibling's apparent inability to behave in a way that befitted his status as an elite male. Detailing Peter's profligate manner following receipt of a small inheritance and his involvement in a fight over a female companion, Robert writes,

The deed is done, and every dispassionate man must view it in the light that I do as an infringement of every law, a needless, unprovoked infringement and

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Mrs Cassandra Handley to Henry E.L Dryden, 10 March 1835, D(CA) 440, N.R.O.

²² Brant, *Eighteenth-Century Letters and British Culture*, p. 68.

²³ Mark Rothery and Henry French, *Making Men: The Formation of Elite Male Identities in England, 1660 – 1900: A Sourcebook* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012) pp. 6 – 7.

he who has been guilty of it will by the rational part of men be ever shunned as a weak, extravagant and dangerous character.²⁴

These were not, in Robert's opinion, the actions of an elite male and Peter's behaviour, which could have ramifications for his future career prospects would also reflect badly on Robert's reputation. 'Elite masculinity was always public' and therefore, Robert would be guilty by association, little wonder that he wrote 'your friends, as if the shame on them redounded, are vexed, are tortured by it'.²⁵ Robert's disappointment, frustration, anger and shame at his brother's behaviour is evident in this letter, and he uses them all in an attempt to curb Peter's spendthrift and impetuous nature.

Individual family members could, therefore, be subject to 'power relations'.²⁶ These were not static, however, they were negotiated and competed for, and enabled family members to manoeuvre or consolidate their position within the family hierarchy.²⁷ This is the subject of Broomhall and Van Gent's article on 'emotional exchange' in the Nassau family which details the ways in which siblings used emotional discourse in correspondence to vie for power within the family structure.²⁸ Once established, it becomes an important element of an emotional economy because it can be used to control the behaviour or influence the life choices of family members. This is illustrated in an exchange of letters between Frances Young and her elder, married sister Mary Barton in February 1793. Frances had received an unexpected marriage proposal from a local clergyman which, she told her sister, caused her 'distress' and left her feeling 'wretched'.²⁹ She sought Mary's opinion on the matter and requested that 'for God's sake write me your sentiments freely'.³⁰ In response to her letter, Mary describes the thought of Frances marrying Doctor Bridges as 'repugnant' and the shock of the news as 'very affecting' but concedes that Frances 'alone ought to determine and decide, and may God bless the decision whatever it may prove to be'.³¹

²⁴ Reverend Robert Rye to Mr. Peter Rye, 28 December 1790, X7244 (5), N.R.O.

²⁵ Henry French and Mark Rothery, *Man's Estate: Landed Gentry Masculinities 1660-1900* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012) p.239 and Reverend Robert Rye to Mr. Peter Rye, 28 December 1790, X7244 (5), N.R.O.

²⁶ Bourke, 'Fear and Anxiety: Writing about Emotion in Modern History', p. 113.

²⁷ Broomhall and Van Gent, 'Corresponding Affections: Emotional Exchange Among Siblings in the Nassau Family', p 146.

²⁸ Broomhall and Van Gent, 'Corresponding Affections: Emotional Exchange Among Siblings in the Nassau Family'.

²⁹ Miss Frances Young to Mrs Mary Barton, 5 February 1793, YO 1596, N.R.O.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Mrs Mary Barton to Miss Frances Young, February 1793, YO 1656, N.R.O.

The letter does not end there however, Mary continues for a further six pages detailing the reasons why she considers him ‘the last man whom I wish to consider in the near connection he proposes with our family’.³² In the course of her letter, Mary projects her own emotions about the proposal on to Frances, telling her that ‘most feelingly have I entr’d [*sic*] into all your agitations and anxiety’.³³ Not only does she highlight Frances’ anxieties, she is also emphasising the similarity in their feelings, in the hope perhaps that once Frances has made up her mind, that her ‘determination whatever it may be’ would reflect Mary’s own.³⁴

The letters hitherto discussed have demonstrated how emotions were expressed, and despite letter-writing conventions and expectations, there is little evidence to suggest that the feelings expressed were not genuine.³⁵ In her letter to Frances, detailed above, Mary tells her,

strange as it may seem I am more glad than ever that I am not now at Orlingbury – especially as I would not have spoken more freely than I have written and if my sentiments should differ from your and my dear brothers this is the best method in which they could be convey’d [*sic*]³⁶

which suggests that Frances may have received a different, or less direct, response from Mary if they had been talking to one another face to face. This also suggests that despite employing an emotional economy to influence Frances’ decision-making, there is little evidence of it being a planned or calculated act by Mary and her feelings were no less sincere because she had used them to manage those of her sister.

Families therefore, ‘invoked their feeling hearts’ and used the dynamics of an epistolary exchange coupled with emotional expression, as a ‘way to call upon another family member to behave differently’.³⁷ The motivations for this are varied, but those identified in this study include the education and shaping of younger children and siblings, the inculcation of elite masculine identities and the manipulation of emotional responses and control of life choices. The different emotions drawn on to undertake

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Goldsmith, ‘Nostalgia, homesickness and emotional formation on the eighteenth-century Grand Tour’, p. 341.

³⁶ Mrs Mary Barton to Miss Frances Young, February 1793, YO1656, N.R.O.

³⁷ Pearsall, *Atlantic Families: Lives and Letters in the Later Eighteenth Century*, p. 99.

these processes included the love of a grandmother, the disappointment of an aunt, the shame of an older brother and the anxiety of a sister.

One emotion that warrants closer analysis, however, is anger. Henry Dryden's temper was a cause of concern to his family and Peter Rye's propensity for violent outbursts provoked numerous angry letters from his elder brother, and therefore the next section will examine the instances whereby episodes of anger were deemed appropriate. It will also allow a study of the different masculine identities that the Rye brothers represented, with Robert representing the hegemonic form advocated by R. W. Connell, and Peter epitomising the alternate view that suggests elite masculinity was 'highly complex' and riven with 'contradictions'.³⁸

Anger

Was it madness, intoxication or childish idiotism?³⁹

Anger, according to the Roman philosopher Seneca in his first century C.E. treatise *De Ira*, was 'a voluntary vice of the mind'.⁴⁰ Describing it as the most 'hideous and frenzied' of all the emotions, he advocated restraint and rational reflection at its 'first jolt'.⁴¹ To entertain its impulsive and explosive nature would, he argued, be injurious to one's own interests or advancement.⁴² Whilst there is no evidence to suggest that Robert Rye was schooled in Senecan Stoicism, these sentiments parallel those expressed by Robert in 1790 when he takes his brother Peter to task about his 'wild, absurd gusts of passion'.⁴³ Peter's proclivity for violent, angry outbursts Robert feared, would risk his younger sibling's hopes for advancement in the Navy and he warned him that should they continue 'you may raise insuperable impediments to your

³⁸ R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005) and Karen Harvey and Alexandra Shepard, 'What Have Historians Done with Masculinity? Reflections on Five Centuries of British History, circa 1500 – 1950', *Journal of British Studies*, 1, (2005), 274 – 280, (p. 274).

³⁹ Reverend Robert Rye to Mr. Peter Rye, 28 December 1790, X7244 (5), N.R.O.

⁴⁰ David Konstan, 'Senecan Emotions', in *The Cambridge Companion to Seneca*, ed. by S. Bartsch and A. Schiesaro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 174 – 184, (p. 177) and Tiffany Watt Smith, *The Book of Human Emotions: An Encyclopaedia of Feeling from Anger to Wanderlust* (London: Profile Books Limited, 2015), p. 20.

⁴¹ Watt Smith, *The Book of Human Emotions: An Encyclopaedia of Feeling from Anger to Wanderlust*, p. 20.

⁴² Konstan, 'Senecan Emotions', p. 178.

⁴³ Reverend Robert Rye to Mr. Peter Rye, 28 December 1790, X7244 (5), N.R.O.

promotion'.⁴⁴ Robert's stoic view of Peter's anger is displayed further when he questions the causes of his brother's temper, was 'it madness' he asks Peter, can it be attributed to the 'derangement of your intellects'?⁴⁵ Seneca had also considered anger to be a form of madness because of its apparent resistance to appeals to reason and the ways in which it was 'provoked by groundless motives', and these two themes appear frequently in Robert's letter to Peter condemning his fits of rage.⁴⁶ He told his brother that he 'vainly thought, reason, matured by time, at length might influence you' and hoped that his precautionary censure would call him 'back to reason'.⁴⁷ He criticised his brother's 'pretend cause of this last fracas' and describes the provocation of his anger as 'needless' and 'trifling', thus illustrating the way in which he considered the triviality of Peter's motives.⁴⁸

It was not solely Peter's lack of career advancement that caused his elder brother to condemn his instances of anger, as an elite male he was expected to exhibit 'manly and (gentlemanly) virtues' associated with them, qualities that included self-control and moral integrity.⁴⁹ To demonstrate a tendency for angry outbursts intimated a failure on both fronts and the implications of such could affect both men. Robert's reputation as a gentleman and head of the family would be sullied and Peter would be considered unsuitable for naval progression. 'Self-government' was a fundamental feature of elite masculine identity, and a precondition for any man wishing to govern others.⁵⁰ Should Peter be unable to exercise self-control he would be deemed ill-equipped to control others, an unfortunate moniker for a man hoping to captain a ship in the Royal Navy.

Peter Rye aged twenty-five in 1790 exhibited the same petulant behaviour that Henry Dryden had at aged fourteen; and the implications for them both and the fears of their respective families were the same. A propensity for displaying anger would have a deleterious effect on their and their family's reputation and would call into question

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Konstan, 'Senecan Emotions', p. 178.

⁴⁷ Reverend Robert Rye to Mr. Peter Rye, 28 December 1790, X7244 (5), N.R.O.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Henry French and Mark Rothery, "'Upon your entry in the world": masculine values and the threshold of adulthood among landed elites in England 1680 – 1800', *Social History*, 4 (2008), 402 – 422, (p. 405).

⁵⁰ Elizabeth Foyster, 'Boys will be Boys? Manhood and Aggression, 1660 – 1800', in *English Masculinities 1600 – 1800*, ed. by T. Hitchcock and M. Cohen (Harlow: Longman, 1999), pp.151 – 166, (p. 161) and Ibid., p. 403.

their status as an elite male. This was one reason why Henry's aunt reiterated the importance of 'commanding the temper' in her letters to him and to 'avoid even the appearance of it'.⁵¹ For Henry's father however, the implications of his son's anger went far deeper. Henry had, on occasion, been violent towards his sister, and therefore his father insisted,

that you shall on no occasion show open hostility to her – still less give way to any acts of violence, which if carried to such an outrageous extent, as you have been sometimes capable of – might endanger her personal safety and even your own.⁵²

In the same letter he reminds Henry that should his 'ill temper' continue then he would have little choice but to make alternative arrangements for the school holidays which would see Henry barred from returning home, which 'wd [sic] be a most serious discredit to you, both now and in all your after life' thus emphasising the long term effects that his anger could have.⁵³

The letters of both the elders reveal their own anger at how their respective younger family members have behaved. Sir Henry's 'displeasure' and 'mortification' are evident whilst condemning his son's angry outbursts and Robert Rye refers to his brother as an 'unworthy subject' and 'a gross voluptuary', both using language that exhibited their own feelings of anger.⁵⁴ This prompts the question, why was their anger deemed appropriate when they so vehemently condemned the anger displayed by Henry and Peter?

Pollock's 2004 article looks, in part, at the occasions when anger was considered a 'legitimate response', and suggests that elite families 'distinguished between acceptable and non-acceptable displays of it', that they judged the context in which it was expressed before deciding to condemn or commend it.⁵⁵ Consequently, argues Pollock, those at the head of the family 'fumed' when faced with the poor behaviour of younger members, but this was an appropriate emotional response because it was

⁵¹ Mrs Cassandra Handley to Henry E.L Dryden, 27 November 1832, D(CA) 440, N.R.O and 10 March 1835, D(CA) 440, N.R.O

⁵² Sir Henry Dryden to Henry E.L Dryden, 27 March 1833, D(CA) 440, N.R.O.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Sir Henry Dryden to H.E.L Dryden, 27 March 1833, D(CA) 440, N.R.O and Reverend Robert Rye to Mr. Peter Rye, 28 December 1790, X7244 (5), N.R.O.

⁵⁵ Pollock, 'Anger and the Negotiation of Relationships in Early Modern England', p. 567 and p. 582.

used to both discipline the offender and protect the reputation of the family.⁵⁶ Martha C. Nussbaum's theory that anger vocalised within 'intimate' relationships differed to that expressed in others may also explain why Sir Henry's and Robert's anger was considered appropriate.⁵⁷ The closeness between the protagonists would dictate the legitimacy of the anger, so that it was deemed acceptable for a father or father figure to express anger within a familial relationship, but for someone to demonstrate their ire outside the constraints of a close relationship, it was not. This would explain why Peter's anger and subsequent fight with a stranger was considered 'distressing' and 'needless' but Robert's own 'vexation' towards Peter was deemed legitimate.⁵⁸

Sarah Pearsall continues a similar theme when she discusses the concept of familiarity.⁵⁹ Described as a 'mode of interaction' she suggests that the family network created a 'tone and space' in which members used their increased knowledge of each other to enjoy an ease and affability within it.⁶⁰ This ease of communication would, therefore, allow greater freedom within familial correspondence to exhibit anger as there would be an assumption that the recipient of the letter would understand both the tone of disapproval and the need for corrective behaviour. Familiarity could therefore explain why Sir Henry and Robert were able to air their anger in their letters, that there was an understanding within their epistolary exchanges that meant that their messages conveyed to Henry and Peter were both implicit and accepted. The family, therefore, is at the heart of why the anger of Sir Henry and Robert was appropriate, they were disciplining its younger members and protecting its reputation and the closeness and familiarity that it engendered permitted a freedom and an openness when it was necessary to express their own anger.

Pollock also suggests that the 'necessity of protecting rights' meant that there were occasions when failing to express anger was considered inappropriate.⁶¹ If land or property was at risk, a 'fiery reaction' aimed at the perpetrator would indicate the intention to defend one's rights whilst a failure to do so could threaten the family's

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 582.

⁵⁷ Martha C. Nussbaum, *Anger and Forgiveness, Resentment, Generosity, Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 7.

⁵⁸ Reverend Robert Rye to Mr. Peter Rye, 28 December 1790, X7244 (5), N.R.O.

⁵⁹ Pearsall, *Atlantic Families: Lives and Letters in the Later Eighteenth Century*, p. 56.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 59.

⁶¹ Pollock, 'Anger and the Negotiation of Relationships in Early Modern England', p. 582.

status amongst its peers and neighbouring families.⁶² Robert Rye had occasion to defend both his land and his reputation when a local clergyman falsely accused him of assault whilst attempting to illegally obtain part of his Culworth land. Robert, who was later acquitted of the charge levied against him, did not hide his anger nor his antipathy towards the clergyman in his letters, describing the 'malevolent attacks' and 'violent outrages' that the 'obnoxious Priest' had inflicted upon him.⁶³ Robert's anger in this instance was appropriate because he was protecting his own property and reputation, but it was also appropriate because it was deemed 'moderate'.⁶⁴ Robert's increasing frustration with Peter's behaviour was, in part, due to the 'trifling' and 'needless' causes of his anger and Pollock suggests that having a valid reason for expressing anger was far more socially acceptable within elite circles than not, and that 'immoderate rage', such as that displayed by Peter was less so.⁶⁵ In addition, Robert, despite his anger, used legal means to address the problems that his neighbour created as opposed to taking the law into his own hands and becoming a self-appointed 'righter of wrongs' like his brother, which further legitimised his expressions of anger.⁶⁶

Anger and the ways in which it was expressed was therefore an important facet of elite male identity, but it was also integral to the masculine ideal that the senior members of the Dryden and Rye families advocated and inculcated in their younger family members. To publicly exhibit a violent temper for little or no good reason represented both a want of gentlemanly behaviour and a lack of self-control, qualities that were fundamental to gentry masculinity. Ideals such as restraint, application and judgement lie at the heart of Connell's concept of 'hegemonic masculinity' and are the same attributes that shaped and influenced the Dryden and Rye elders.⁶⁷ However, Connell's school of thought has been challenged by historians such as Karen Harvey and Alexandra Shepard who argue that 'hegemonic codes' were diverse and contradictory.⁶⁸ Sarah Goldsmith agrees, arguing that the methods men used were

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Reverend Robert Rye to Mr. Peter Rye, 11 August 1794, X7244 (29), N.R.O, 23 August 1794, X7244 (30), N.R.O and 11 August 1794, X7244 (29), N.R.O.

⁶⁴ Pollock, 'Anger and the Negotiation of Relationships in Early Modern England', p. 586.

⁶⁵ Reverend Robert Rye to Mr. Peter Rye, 28 December 1790, X7244 (5), N.R.O.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ R.W. Connell, *Masculinities*.

⁶⁸ Harvey and Shepard, 'What Have Historians Done with Masculinity? Reflections on Five Centuries of British History, circa 1500 – 1950', p. 278.

not always 'polite, cosmopolitan and virtuoso', rather, masculine identities were formed through cultures and behaviour that were often considered 'impolite, libertine and violent'.⁶⁹ Such behaviours included drunkenness, violence and sex with prostitutes and were a deliberate challenge to the norms commonly associated with elite manliness.⁷⁰

The two Rye brothers, their own masculine identities and their attitude to anger and its expression are the embodiment of these two different schools of thought. Robert, the elder of the two brothers by fourteen years, represents Connell's hegemonic model. He is the epitome of the elite gentleman, exhibiting qualities associated with them such as hard work, application and self-control. In his letters to his brother he emphasises the importance of 'moderate' and 'moral conduct', the necessity for 'prudence and good sense' and the need for Peter to 'restrain' his 'impetuosity'.⁷¹ Hence, Robert's attitude to anger and his reasons for, and his methods of, expressing it are very much influenced and guided by these values. And whilst not having the benefit of Peter's replies, it remains possible through Robert's letters, to gain an insight into the influences on the younger sibling's masculine identity. Robert describes Peter's 'youthful fancies', his 'childish intemperance' and 'extravagance in expense or in action'.⁷² He condemns his pre-occupation with 'romance' and 'ludicrous infatuation' of which 'the wants, diseases and dissatisfactions you have experienced were occasionally the result'.⁷³ Peter therefore represents the alternate view of masculinity posited by Harvey, Shepard and Goldsmith, which suggests that there was not one dominant model of masculinity, rather there were several, coexisting codes between which men could 'move with a greater degree of fluidity'.⁷⁴ Shepard suggests that this 'plurality of masculinities' meant that men could adopt modes of behaviour that had previously been considered 'unmanly,' in order to construct their own masculine

⁶⁹ Goldsmith, 'Nostalgia, homesickness and emotional formation on the eighteenth-century Grand Tour', p. 334.

⁷⁰ Alexandra Shepard, 'From Anxious Patriarchs to Refined Gentlemen? Manhood in Britain, circa 1500 – 1700', *Journal of British Studies*, 1, (2005), p. 281 – 295, (p. 293) and Karen Harvey, 'The History of Masculinity, circa 1650 – 1800', *Journal of British Studies*, 1, (2005), p. 296 – 311, (p. 305).

⁷¹ Reverend Robert Rye to Mr. Peter Rye, 9 November 1790, X7244 (4), N.R.O and 19 October 1792, X7244 (9), N.R.O.

⁷² Reverend Robert Rye to Mr. Peter Rye, 9 November 1790, X7244 (4), N.R.O and 28 December 1790, X7244 (5), N.R.O.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ Goldsmith, 'Nostalgia, homesickness and emotional formation on the eighteenth-century Grand Tour', p. 334.

identities.⁷⁵ She points to a 'culture of excess' that purposely challenged the qualities and expectations normally associated with 'patriarchal manhood' which included drinking, smoking, the destruction of property and profligacy.⁷⁶ From Robert's letters it is possible to infer that it was these types of behaviours that influenced Peter's sense of masculinity and which subsequently shaped the ways in which he expressed his anger. If his behaviour was extravagant and indiscreet it was likely that the ways in which he expressed his anger would be too.⁷⁷ Shepard suggests that these excessive behaviours were primarily displayed by younger men, which may explain why Peter behaved so differently to Robert, who was fourteen years his senior.⁷⁸

Robert's letters also reveal details about the two men's lives that may explain it further. There was a clear disparity between the two men in terms of their physical health. Robert suffered from epilepsy and often referred to the increasing fragility of his health in his letters, describing it as 'always fluctuating with every change of weather' and how his mind was 'gradually weakening' and 'perceptibly enfeebled', this compared to Peter who is described as 'young and vigorous' with a 'constitution naturally strong'.⁷⁹ Both brothers pursued professions, Robert in the Church and Peter in the Royal Navy, and this is another important factor in the differences between them. Peter's implies strength, courage and camaraderie whereas Robert's suggests a more sedentary and solitudinous mode of employment. Joanne Begiato argues that 'a cult of elite heroism' meant that military men were 'idealised' from the late eighteenth-century and that they were often perceived as the epitome of manliness.⁸⁰ This, therefore, may have reinforced Peter's own concept of masculinity and consequently shaped the way in which he exhibited it. In addition, it also demonstrates that he was able, as Goldsmith purports, to shift between the diverse masculine codes, from the heroic of the military man to the debauched of the drunken youth.⁸¹ All these factors would have influenced the ways in which the two brothers constructed their masculine and emotional

⁷⁵ Shepard, 'From Anxious Patriarchs to Refined Gentlemen? Manhood in Britain, circa 1500 – 1700', p. 292 and p. 293.

⁷⁶ Shepard, 'From Anxious Patriarchs to Refined Gentlemen? Manhood in Britain, circa 1500 – 1700', p. 293.

⁷⁷ Reverend Robert Rye to Mr. Peter Rye, 28 December 1790, X7244 (5), N.R.O.

⁷⁸ Shepard, 'From Anxious Patriarchs to Refined Gentlemen? Manhood in Britain, circa 1500 – 1700', p. 293.

⁷⁹ Reverend Robert Rye to Mr. Peter Rye, D.N.K, X7244 (16), N.R.O, 9 November 1790, X7244 (4), N.R.O, 9 February 1791, X7244 (8), N.R.O, 28 December 1790, X7244 (5), N.R.O and 19 October 1792, X7244 (9), N.R.O.

⁸⁰ Joanne Begiato (Bailey), 'Tears and the manly sailor in England, c. 1760 – 1860', *Journal of Maritime Research*, 2 (2015), 117 – 133, (p. 125).

⁸¹ Goldsmith, 'Nostalgia, homesickness and emotional formation on the eighteenth-century Grand Tour', p. 334.

identities, and which, subsequently, impacted on how they expressed their anger. Robert, concerned with both the family's reputation and property, expressed his anger when both were threatened and did so in a way that befitted his status as a country gentleman, in a private, measured and legal manner. In contrast, Peter's temper was expressed publicly, sometimes violently and, according to his brother, with little or no justification.

The anger exhibited by the elder Dryden and Rye males was considered appropriate because it was expressed within the family environs and a similar theme has been identified in the exchange of letters between Frances Young and her sister Mary. Following Frances' shock marriage proposal she asked for her sister's views and in her response Mary stated that she would not 'withhold' her true sentiments but asked Frances to write 'by the first post as well to assure me you are not angry with me'.⁸² In her reply, Frances wrote, 'you see how candid I am and do not be angry with me for it'.⁸³ Neither sister wanted to incur the wrath of the other, but the importance of honesty and candour far exceeded the risk. It seems that the intimacy of the two sisters' relationship enabled this direct and open exchange, which was also facilitated by the fact that it was conducted through correspondence. Using her letter as a 'buffer', Mary told Frances that she felt able to speak 'more freely', suggesting that she may not have been prepared to risk Frances' anger if they had been speaking in person.⁸⁴

Anger is an 'unruly class of emotion' which encompasses a whole gamut of feelings from mild irritation to violent aggression and despite 'didactic literature' advocating its repression, evidence of its expression was discovered in the correspondence of all three families in this study.⁸⁵ An ill-tempered boy away at school and a belligerent young man both constructing their versions of masculinity were reminded of the need to conceal outward expressions of anger, being taught that it should remain within the private confines of familiarity for it to be considered as an appropriate emotional

⁸² Mrs Mary Barton to Miss Frances Young, February 1793, YO (1656), N.R.O.

⁸³ Miss Frances Young to Mrs Mary Barton, 13 February 1793, YO (1597), N.R.O.

⁸⁴ Pollock, 'Anger and the Negotiation of Relationships in Early Modern England', p. 572. Gary Schneider, 'Affecting correspondences: Body, Behaviour, and the Textualisation of emotion in early modern English letters', *Prose Studies*, 3 (2008), 31 – 62, (p. 51) and Mrs Mary Barton to Miss Frances Young, February 1793, YO (1656), N.R.O.

⁸⁵ Watt Smith, *The Book of Human Emotions: An Encyclopaedia of Feeling from Anger to Wanderlust*, p. 20 and Elizabeth A. Foyster, *Manhood in Early Modern England: Honour, Sex and Marriage* (Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman Limited, 1999), p. 2.

response. The ways in which the Rye brothers chose to express their anger was very much dictated by the tenet of masculine identity to which they subscribed, with Robert's influenced by his status as an elite man and his desire to defend the reputation of his family, and Peter's by a seeming disregard for both. And the close familial relationship that was crucial in ensuring that the two sisters from Orlingbury, who were confident in their intimacy and their regard for each other, felt able to risk each other's anger in the pursuit of frank and open conversation.

The influence of the family is therefore critical in determining the ways in which anger was or was not expressed, but what was the impact of anger's expression on the family unit itself? The anger displayed by Henry Dryden and Peter Rye risked the close bonds and the stability of their respective families. A continuation of an ill-temper would have led to Henry's banishment from Canons Ashby and subsequent split from the Dryden family. And the Ryes, already under attack from false accusations from their neighbour, were further threatened by Peter's impetuosity, which risked his and his family's reputation. Conversely, the anger displayed by their elders had the opposite intention. Sir Henry's anger towards Henry was intended to reconcile his son with his family, to ensure that he controlled his temper and ceased his violence towards his sister and prevent its break-up. Similarly, Robert Rye expressed his anger in order to stop Peter's actions but also protect his family from the slurs of the local clergyman. Anger, therefore, was not always a destructive force, for the Drydens and the Ryes it was used to facilitate a cohesive and stable family unit, and for the Youngs it was proof of one.

Emotional Comfort

I still retain the most earnest desire to return home and shall never consider myself completely happy until that period arrives when I shall make one of the party at the Orlingbury fireside.⁸⁶

⁸⁶ Mr. Allen Young to Miss Frances Young, 7 December 1781, YO709 (xxi), N.R.O.

In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, physical comfort within the home was becoming increasingly important to elite families.⁸⁷ 'New technologies' enabled country houses to be warmer and better ventilated and upholstered furniture and 'new types of textiles' meant rooms were more comfortable for their inhabitants.⁸⁸ At the same time there was an increasing sense of 'informality and ease' within the elite house which enabled it to become a place of 'family, intimacy and personal attachment'; the country house was becoming a home.⁸⁹ Juxtaposed with these developments was also the concept of emotional comfort, of providing 'assistance, support and solace' or of 'feeling comfortable in a particular situation'.⁹⁰ Comfort, therefore, was not only to be found in the warm and newly decorated, furnished interiors of the country house, it was sought and found in the people within it.

Children were an important source of comfort to elite families.⁹¹ Sir John Dryden adopted his niece Elizabeth following the early death of her father in 1761 which had left his widow Mary in severe financial straits. Sir John expressed the affection that he and his wife had for the young child in several letters written to his sister-in-law. He speaks how 'it is impossible not to be fond of her' and that she was a 'child after our own heart'.⁹² The emotional comfort that Sir John and his wife received from Elizabeth's adoption are clear from his letters but what is also interesting, is the way in which he attempts to comfort the child's birth mother in his updates to her. He tells Mary that 'no care shall be waiting on her side' and he presumes that 'nothing will be more agreeable to you than an account of your daughter's health'.⁹³ Mary could, therefore, continue to derive emotional comfort from a daughter that was no longer living with her, through the assurances made by her brother-in-law. In a letter written to Sir John Dryden, the comfort that Mary gained from knowing that her daughter's

⁸⁷ Jon Stobart and Cristina Prytz, 'Comfort in English and Swedish country houses, c. 1760 – 1820', *Social History*, 2 (2018), 234 – 258, (p. 235).

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 235 and p. 244.

⁸⁹ Stobart and Prytz, 'Comfort in English and Swedish country houses, c. 1760 – 1820', p. 235 and p.237.

⁹⁰ Marie Odile-Bernez, 'Comfort, the Acceptable Face of Luxury: An Eighteenth-Century Cultural Etymology', *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies*, 2 (2014), 3 – 21, (p. 3), *Ibid.*, p. 237 and Jon Stobart, 'Words of Comfort – Elizabeth Dryden's Correspondence', *The Social History Blog* (March 2018) <<http://socialhistoryblog.com/words-of-comfort-elizabeth-drydens-correspondence-by-jon-stobart>> [last accessed 17 August 2019].

⁹¹ Jon Stobart and Mark Rothery, *Consumption and the Country House*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 99.

⁹² Sir John Dryden to Mrs Mary Dryden, 6 April 1761, D(CA) 1032, N.R.O and 6 October 1761, D(CA) 1030-1070 Book VII, N.R.O.

⁹³ *Ibid.*

future prospects were secured are seen when she describes the 'love and value I have for my daughter made my mind joyous to read her name under yours'.⁹⁴

Children were an important part of both the growing informality that was starting to surround the elite home and the resulting 'familial comfort' that it helped to engender and provide.⁹⁵ The presence of children at home was enjoyed and their absence keenly felt. This demonstrates, therefore, the extreme measures that Henry Dryden's father was prepared to take in order to curb his son's anger, which was described earlier. To exclude his eldest child from his family would 'cause us, from our real affection for you, the greatest affliction and mortification, I cd not and wd not resort to it, if it cd be possibly dispensed with [*sic*].'⁹⁶ However, 'such an arrangement, if we cd not go on better than in times past, wd be unavoidable [*sic*].'⁹⁷ To view its withdrawal as a punishment, indicates just how important the family and home was as 'a place of emotional well-being and belonging'.⁹⁸

The presence of adult children was also a source of emotional comfort to parents. Mary Dryden, looking forward to a visit from her daughter Philippa in May 1790, was clearly anxious when she failed to arrive, "I expected you the begining may, your not coming gives me great trouble, I hope you are not ill [*sic*]."⁹⁹ A much-anticipated visit from her daughter would have provided Mary Dryden with a level of emotional comfort that she did not ordinarily enjoy due to her limited circumstances. Having an adult child reside nearby was also a great source of comfort to parents. With his eldest daughter married and living away, Mr Allen Young Senior expressed his happiness at his recently married son John settling in a nearby village with his wife, 'how delightful to have them within six miles', yet he still wished that his daughter Mary was closer, 'could Lasham come to such a distance, perhaps it might be too a complete set'.¹⁰⁰

When Mr Young's eldest son, Allen, returned to Orlingbury in 1790 after spending several years in India it was, according to his father, 'to all our heart's content and comfort'.¹⁰¹ A separation of this nature, which occurred over a number of years and at

⁹⁴ Mrs Mary Dryden to Sir John Dryden, DNK, D(CA) 0943 – 0981 (9), N.R.O.

⁹⁵ Stobart and Prytz, 'Comfort in English and Swedish country houses, c. 1760 – 1820', p. 251.

⁹⁶ Sir Henry Dryden to Henry E.L Dryden, 27 March 1833, D(CA) 440, N.R.O.

⁹⁷ Sir Henry Dryden to Henry E.L Dryden, 27 March 1833, D(CA) 440, N.R.O.

⁹⁸ Stobart and Prytz, 'Comfort in English and Swedish country houses, c. 1760 – 1820', p. 237.

⁹⁹ Mrs Mary Dryden to Mrs Philippa Steele, 29 May 1790, D(CA) 1050, N.R.O.

¹⁰⁰ Mr. Allen Young Snr. to Mrs Mary Barton, 6 February 1791, YO550 (xvi), N.R.O.

¹⁰¹ Mr. Allen Young Snr. to Mrs Mary Barton, 1790, YO1550, N.R.O.

a great distance would, according to Goldsmith, have ‘emotional ramifications’ for all affected family members.¹⁰² The ‘strong sense of separation’ that his father felt is clear from the delight that he felt at his son’s return.¹⁰³ But what of Allen’s own feelings at this prolonged separation, how had he sought comfort from his family during his time away? His ‘pangs of absence’ were ‘great’ and ‘only supportable by the hopes of future success’ but his letters to his sister Frances reveal how he sought comfort in the familiarity of home and family.¹⁰⁴ He had ‘few friends’ in India who were known to Frances and the rest of his family, and preferred to talk about their shared acquaintances, asking her to ‘call to recollection former happy times’ and to ‘tell me all these things and as many more of the like’.¹⁰⁵ And in pursuit of the familiar he ‘made it my business to search for my countrymen but neither in the civil or military departments have I discovered one Northamptonshire man’.¹⁰⁶

Allen was able to continue to draw emotional comfort from his family whilst he was abroad, despite the distance that separated them, by relying on these methods. However, none of these would have been possible without his or his family’s letters, which were pivotal in facilitating the provision of familial comfort. As well as ‘communicating comfort’, the letter itself becomes both the provider of emotional comfort and a ‘material substitute’ for its writer.¹⁰⁷

Tiffany Watt Smith suggests that comfort was sought from ‘transitional objects’ particularly during periods of crisis and this is demonstrated in the instances when letters did not arrive at their expected destination or time.¹⁰⁸ Robert Rye’s epistolary exchange with his brother was ad hoc and unreliable owing primarily to the transient nature of Peter’s naval career, and was the cause of great ‘vexation’ to the elder sibling.¹⁰⁹ The previous section outlined the concerns that Robert had regarding both Peter’s prospects and his conduct, he feared that without his influence his brother would fail to secure a promotion or behave in a manner that befitted a gentleman,

¹⁰² Goldsmith, ‘Nostalgia, homesickness and emotional formation on the eighteenth-century Grand Tour’, p 339.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Mr. Allen Young to Miss Frances Young, 15 October 1778, YO709 (xviii), N.R.O.

¹⁰⁵ Mr. Allen Young to Miss Frances Young, December 1777, YO709 (xvi), N.R.O.

¹⁰⁶ Mr. Allen Young to Miss Frances Young, 15 October 1778, YO709 (xviii), N.R.O.

¹⁰⁷ Stobart and Prytz, ‘Comfort in English and Swedish country houses, c. 1760 – 1820’, p. 255 and Broomhall and Van Gent, ‘Corresponding Affections: Emotional Exchange Among Siblings in the Nassau Family’, p. 152.

¹⁰⁸ Watt Smith, *The Book of Human Emotions: An Encyclopaedia of Feeling from Anger to Wanderlust*, p. 50.

¹⁰⁹ Reverend Robert Rye to Mr. Peter Rye, 10 December 1795, X7244 (53), N.R.O.

therefore it is unsurprising that Robert was anxious if his letters did not reach Peter. However, Robert's letters also illustrate the strength of feeling that he had for his brother and his anxiety that this would not be conveyed to Peter should his letters go astray,

I have ever fondly loved you and have wished to cherish in you reciprocal affection. Do not then mistake the negligence of letter-carriers for a diminution of my esteem, be assured it has not hitherto lessen'd [*sic*].¹¹⁰

It was important to Robert that his brother was assured of his affection for him, often speaking of his love for him as that of a parent and thinking of Peter 'as a child I nurtured'.¹¹¹ It was also important, however, for Robert to receive Peter's letters to him, illustrated when he describes how 'every letter I receive from you, yields me inexpressible pleasure by informing me of your health and that you bear me so constantly in your memory'.¹¹² Letters from a loved one confirming their health and well-being 'eased anxiety' and were a source of comfort to the recipient, but to Robert, their significance appears to go deeper.¹¹³ He begs Peter to 'write then speedily to me' and 'write to me as you say you regard me much, and as you should think of me, often', which suggests that Robert hoped that the love that he felt for his brother was reciprocated.¹¹⁴ That Robert derived comfort from his brother's letters and hoped that he held him in as high a regard as he did Peter is thus demonstrated,

Love me always in every clime, my dear Pierre, as I shall endeavour to make retribution of affection.¹¹⁵

Peter's own letters in this instance are not available, but Robert refers to one in which 'you complain of my total silence'.¹¹⁶ Peter's frustration demonstrates that he shared

¹¹⁰ Reverend Robert Rye to Mr. Peter Rye, 24 October 1795, X7244 (49), N.R.O.

¹¹¹ Reverend Robert Rye to Mr. Peter Rye, 4 November, Year Not Known, X7244 (16), N.R.O, 9 November 1790, X7244(4), N.R.O.

¹¹² Reverend Robert Rye to Mr. Peter Rye, 10 December 1795, X7244 (53), N.R.O.

¹¹³ Susan E. Whyman, 'Paper Visits: the post-restoration letter as seen through the Verney family archive', in *Epistolary Selves: letters and letter-writers, 1600 – 1945*, ed. by R. Earle (Aldershot: Aldgate, 1999), pp. 15 – 36, p. 21.

¹¹⁴ Reverend Robert Rye to Mr. Peter Rye, 3 January 1796, X7244 (54), N.R.O, 9 February 1791, X7244 (8), N.R.O.

¹¹⁵ Reverend Robert Rye to Mr. Peter Rye, 9 November 1790, X7244 (4), N.R.O.

¹¹⁶ Reverend Robert Rye to Mr. Peter Rye, 3 January 1796, X7244 (54), N.R.O.

his brother's annoyance and anxiety at the unreliability of the post and that he too gained emotional comfort from receiving his brother's letters.

The Young sisters participated in a regular exchange of letters, but this became especially important to Mary when their elderly father's health began to rapidly decline in the 1790s. She relied on Frances' 'kind and comfortable' letters to update her on Mr Young's progress but also to assuage her own 'dear and tender' anxiety.¹¹⁷ Frances writes to her sister truthfully about their father, wanting to provide comfort to her but also recognising the importance of giving an honest account,

as to the visiting my dear father again by way of comfort to him or you; it is out of the question as I am well convinced he could not receive the smallest satisfaction from seeing you which I know would be a grievous thing to you to behold.¹¹⁸

Frances is suggesting that Mary would derive little comfort from returning to her childhood home in Orlingbury to see their father, advising and encouraging her to remain at home. 'Physical proximity' in this instance would fail to provide the emotional comfort that Mary was seeking, perhaps Frances' letter would in its stead.¹¹⁹

The quote that prefaces this chapter comes from a letter written by Allen Young to his sister Frances in which he yearns to be part of the 'party at the Orlingbury fireside'.¹²⁰ Living in India and separated from his family and his home, the comfort that he craved would not be found in the warmth of the fireside, it would, instead, be found in the group of people sitting around it.¹²¹ The families examined here have demonstrated that emotional comfort was sought and found in family. From the love for a child to the caring of an elderly parent, it was those familial ties and the love and affection that they engendered that assured family members of emotional 'support'.¹²² And whilst physical and geographical closeness was an important element of comfort, when this proved impossible, the concept of family yet remained crucial. Familial letters were

¹¹⁷ Mrs Mary Barton to Miss Frances Young, 10 July 1796, YO555 (i), N.R.O and Miss Frances Young to Mrs Mary Barton, c. June/July 1796, YO543 (iv), N.R.O.

¹¹⁸ Miss Frances Young to Mrs Mary Barton, c. June/July 1796, YO543 (iv), N.R.O.

¹¹⁹ Broomhall and Van Gent, 'Corresponding Affections: Emotional Exchange Among Siblings in the Nassau Family', p. 152.

¹²⁰ Mr. Allen Young to Miss Frances Young, 7 December 1781, YO709 (xxi), N.R.O.

¹²¹ Stobart and Prytz, 'Comfort in English and Swedish country houses, c. 1760 – 1820', p. 257.

¹²² Odile-Bernez, 'Comfort, the Acceptable Face of Luxury: An Eighteenth-Century Cultural Etymology', p. 3.

pivotal in providing emotional support, not only were they a means of conveying words of comfort but the letter itself was a 'material substitute' for its writer and became something from which the recipient could derive relief and solace.¹²³

The significance of family and the role it played in the shaping of emotions and emotional expression is this study's overriding theme. It has explored the ways in which families formulated the scripts required to conduct a meaningful and effective emotional economy and how they employed them to influence and control the emotions and behaviour of other family members. This is not to suggest that the methods that they used were pre-meditated or that the emotions that were expressed and used were insincere, indeed, Sir Henry Dryden's anger and threats to withdraw the comforts of home and family would have meant little if his son had suspected them of being disingenuous.

The family allowed for emotional candour and increased freedom of expression whilst simultaneously ensuring containment within its confines. The closeness of Mary Barton and Frances Young, and the ease that it engendered, enabled the sisters to express themselves with openness and honesty even at the risk of provoking the other's anger and their close bond encouraged freer expression of emotion. A closer focus on anger within the Rye family also served to highlight the multifarious character of elite masculinity in the late eighteenth-century. The two brothers, and how and why they expressed their anger in the manner they did, represented differing schools of thought regarding masculine identity, with Robert embodying the hegemonic model and Peter epitomising the alternative view which highlights its contradictory and diverse character.

The bonds and closeness of family were also fundamental to emotional comfort, with family members looking to each other for both support in difficult times and for personal contentment. This was seen in Sir John Dryden's happiness at the adoption of young Elizabeth and Mr Young's delight at his eldest son's return from India. When it did come to needing or providing comfort in times of distress, the closeness of family very much governed an individual's behaviour. This can be seen in the close and honest relationship that existed between Frances Young and her sister Mary. Frances was

¹²³ Broomhall and Van Gent, 'Corresponding Affections: Emotional Exchange Among Siblings in the Nassau Family', p. 152.

not constrained by the dictates of dutiful politeness or formulaic expressions of comfort, rather her honest assertions that neither Mary nor their father would gain anything from a visit to Orlingbury seemed blunt and harsh. They came, however, from a place of truth and love from where she hoped to protect her sister from witnessing their aging father's decline. There is a commonality therefore between the seemingly dichotomous emotions of anger and comfort, in which the expression of both was shaped and influenced by the bonds and the bounds of family.

Whether providing or seeking emotional comfort, it brought the family together. Sir John Dryden, in comforting his adopted daughter's mother, included her in news about the child and as a consequence integrated her into the familial network whilst Frances Young's almost daily updates to Mary ensured the continuation of their close sisterly relationship. And by using the memory of home and his exchange of letters with Frances to comfort him whilst living in India, Allen Young ensured that he remained part of his close-knit family.

This study has demonstrated that the family and emotional expression are not mutually exclusive, they influence and impact each other. The family encourages open and honest emotional expression whilst, in turn, being affected by those emotions that are being expressed within it. It has also demonstrated that the three elite families were neither unfeeling nor were those feelings inauthentic. They may have, at times, used emotions for their own ends, but the emotions that they employed were genuine and sincere.