

Introduction

i. Research Questions and Rationale

‘Propriety might have been a tight-fitting suit, but it could be worn in a far wider range of situations than we have been previously apt to think’, concluded Amanda Vickery’s *The Gentleman’s Daughter*, a study of the lives of genteel women in eighteenth-century northern England.¹ When worn at fashionable spa resorts, the suit of propriety allowed women to access a wide range of roles and opportunities. Focusing on case studies of Bath and Tunbridge Wells, this thesis explores the leisured woman’s experience of visiting and residing at the English spa town throughout the long eighteenth century. It investigates the social, cultural and leisure opportunities presented to women of elite and middling status at the resorts and a range of spa-specific roles, including those of patient, companion, pleasure-seeker, hostess and patron of the coffee house and library.

Since the publication of E. P. Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working Class* in 1963, which sought to rescue ‘the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the ‘obsolete’ hand-loom weaver’ and the ‘‘utopian’ artisan’ from ‘the enormous condescension of posterity’, there has existed a degree of scepticism regarding research focused on elite or middling society.² However, over the past twenty years interest in the upper and middling orders has been renewed. In the field of women’s history, historians including Elaine Chalus, Katherine Glover, Amanda Herbert, Betty Rizzo, Gillian Russell, Susan Skedd, Ingrid Tague and Amanda Vickery have explored the social, cultural and political lives of polite eighteenth-century women.³

¹ Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman’s Daughter: Women’s Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 294.

² Edward Palmer Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1968), p. 13.

³ Katharine Glover, *Elite Women and Polite-Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2011); Gillian Russell, *Women, Sociability and the Theatre in Georgian London* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Elaine Chalus, *Elite Women in English Political Life c.1754-1790* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2005); Ingrid Tague, *Women of Quality* (Woodbridge:

The experiences of such women have not yet been sufficiently explored in relation to the English spa town. The spa played a significant role in the social calendar of England's upper and middling sorts; whether they went in search of health, pleasure or courtship, most men and women of elite or middling status visited a spa at least once in their life time, whilst many made a point of attending every year.⁴ This study seeks to establish a more complete picture of the leisured eighteenth-century woman, uncovering how she operated in the unique and important context of the English resort.

It has been argued by numerous historians, that between the late seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, women of the upper and middling sorts found themselves increasingly relegated to a private sphere of idle domesticity. Alice Clark suggests that the late seventeenth century saw 'the hardiness of Elizabethan ladies' give way to 'the idleness of pleasure', with genteel women becoming increasingly dependent on their husbands and fathers.⁵ Nancy Cott proposes that from 1780 onwards, a new middle class ideology developed, binding the middling woman within a strictly domestic sphere.⁶ Roy Porter suggests that the 'lady's role as quartermistress of the house... developed upon the shoulders of the fierce, key jangling housekeeper' whilst the genteel woman occupied her time with her 'toilet, the arts of tea, shopping, spending pin-money, paying and receiving calls, philanthropy, the vapours, scents and sensibility.'⁷ Leanore Davidoff and Catherine Hall take a similar line of argument to Cott, arguing that the separation of private and public spheres was a middle class movement. They suggest that this movement emerged between 1780 and 1850, as notions of masculinity and femininity became more defined and sphere-specific, noting that by the 1830s and 1840s, belief in natural difference

Rochester: Boydell Press, 2002); Elaine Chalus, 'That Epidemical Madness: Women and Electoral Politics in the Late Eighteenth Century', Amanda Foreman, 'A Politician's Politician: Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire and the Whig Party' and Susan Skedd, 'Women Teacher's and Girls' Schooling in England c.1760-1820' in Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus (eds.), *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England: Roles Representations and Responsibilities* (London: Routledge, 1997); Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter*; Betty Rizzo, *Companions Without Vows: Relationships Between Eighteenth-Century British Women* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1994).

⁴ Peter J. N. Havins, *Spas of England* (London: Hale, 1976).

⁵ Alice Clark, *The Working Life of Women in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 9, 14-41.

⁶ Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood 'Woman's Sphere' in New England: 1780-1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997 reprint), pp. 63-100.

⁷ Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Pelican Books, 1982), p. 43.

between men and women and their appropriate spheres of activity was commonplace.⁸

Whilst not directly engaging with sphere terminology, Peter Earle agrees with Clark, suggesting that many middle class women were encouraged to give up intensive forms of labour by husbands who wished to illustrate their affluence through keeping 'idle wives'.⁹ Earle also argues that there is 'much circumstantial evidence which suggests ... a growth in the number of idle and frivolous women', citing as proof the expansion of the clothing industry, the production and consumption of soft furnishings and the rise of masquerades and tea visits.¹⁰ Moyra Haslett echoes this argument, noting that polite women were becoming increasingly defined by their leisure pursuits.¹¹ Lawrence Stone emphasises the notion of feminine 'idleness', arguing that throughout the eighteenth century, upper and middling women became 'idle drones' who preferred to spend their time in domestic visiting and card playing, than in useful activity.¹²

Over the past two decades, research into eighteenth-century elite and middling women has evolved, demonstrating that genteel women's lives were not as restricted to ornamental roles as Clark, Cott, Davidoff, Earle, Hall and Stone suggest. Vivien Jones's *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity* (1990) marked the start of its rise. This compilation of extracts from eighteenth-century didactic literature, novels, pamphlets and periodicals, illustrated a variety of contemporary attitudes towards femininity, including the ideals condoned by the upper echelons of society.¹³ Betty Rizzo's *Companions Without Vows* (1994) continued the newly developing field, exploring female friendship amongst polite society in eighteenth-century England. Elite and middling woman received further attention in Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus's edited volume, *Roles,*

⁸ Leanore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class: 1780-1850* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 149-228.

⁹ Peter Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class Business, Society and Family Life in London 1660-1730* (London: Methuen, 1989), pp. 163-166.

¹⁰ Earle, *The Making of the English Middle Class*, p. 165.

¹¹ Moyra Haslett, *Pope to Burney 1714-1779: Scriblerians to Bluestockings* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

¹² Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1977), pp. 349-353, 396-397.

¹³ Vivien Jones, *Women in the Eighteenth Century: Constructions of Femininity* (London: Routledge, 1990).

Representations and Responsibilities (1997). Within this work, Chalus addressed female political involvement in ‘That Epidemical Madness: Women and Electoral Politics in the Late Eighteenth Century’, as did Amanda Foreman in her case study of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire and her work with the Foxite-Whigs, while Susan Skedd’s ‘Women Teachers and the Expansion of Girl’s Schooling’, addressed the growth of polite female education and of respectable female employment in teaching posts.¹⁴

In 1998 Vickery’s seminal work *The Gentleman’s Daughter* was published. Through utilising the letters, diaries and account books of genteel women, Vickery questioned how far women of polite society in northern England were restricted to a private, domestic sphere, whilst re-infusing this sphere with its contemporary significance. Her research illustrated that despite legal, financial and employment restrictions, privileged women exerted influence in a variety of other ways, for example, through aspects of household management such as the employment and organisation of servants, the keeping of household accounts and their roles as hostesses. Furthering Peter Borsay’s work on the eighteenth-century Urban Renaissance, Vickery also demonstrates that genteel women benefitted from an expansion of urban entertainments, including fashionable balls, concerts and plays held in many provincial towns in the later eighteenth century.¹⁵

Interest in elite and middling women’s history women has continued to grow since the 1990s. In *Women of Quality* (2002) Ingrid Tague explored late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century didactic literature aimed at female readership; highlighting how an expansion of female leisure pursuits provoked concern amongst conduct authors.¹⁶ Cindy McCreery addressed the representation of eighteenth-century women in visual prints in her monograph, *The Satirical Gaze* (2004), and amongst other subjects, considered the satirical representations of elite women who defied contemporary feminine ideals through excessive consumption of fashionable goods or neglect of familial or domestic responsibilities.¹⁷ In *Elite Women in English Political Life* (2005) Chalus expanded upon the issue of elite female involvement in

¹⁴ Barker and Chalus (eds.), *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England*.

¹⁵ Vickery, *The Gentleman’s Daughter*, pp. 225-284.

¹⁶ Tague, *Women of Quality*, pp. 49-71.

¹⁷ Cindy McCreery, *The Satirical Gaze: Prints of Women in Late Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), pp. 148-211.

politics; arguing for a wider definition of political life inclusive of the social sphere in which women were active through hosting, canvassing and personal influence.¹⁸ Evidencing a particularly social and cultural trend, more recent publications in the field have focused on female relationships and leisure pursuits. In *Women, Sociability and Theatre in Georgian London*, Gillian Russell explores the way in which women impacted cultural life in later eighteenth-century London, specifically through fashion and theatre attendance;¹⁹ whilst Amanda Herbert's *Female Alliances* investigates the issue of female friendship. Katherine Glover's *Elite Women in Eighteenth Century Scotland* (2011) expands the field geographically, considering similar themes to those addressed by Vickery within a Scottish context.²⁰

Inspired by the above works, this thesis explores female public activity, considering it within the context of the English spa town. Taking the life-writings of female spa visitors and residents as its focal point, the study investigates five central components in the lives of leisured women, investigating how health, courtship, commercial leisure, intellectual and even domestic life, offered women opportunity for public engagement. Influenced by the work of Borsay, Glover, Russell, Tague and Vickery, who have all highlighted the ways in which the Urban Renaissance opened up new forms of leisure and public engagement to the genteel woman, the study considers the ways in which privileged women experienced a widening of leisure opportunities at the spa. Making the essential distinction between leisure and idleness, the thesis asks: with what forms of public life did women engage at the spa? What specific activities did they pursue? Were these actually 'idle' pursuits or, were women in fact involved in a range of physically, verbally and intellectually demanding activities?

Numerous studies have explored Bath through the eyes of individual women such as Jane Austen, Fanny Burney and Lady Luxborough. However as yet, there has been no attempt to create a prosopographical history of the leisured woman's spa

¹⁸ Chalus, *Elite Women in English Political Life*.

¹⁹ Russell, *Women, Sociability and the Theatre*.

²⁰ Glover, *Elite Women and Polite-Society*.

experience through utilising an extensive collection of letters and journals.²¹ Jonathan Williams's M.Sc thesis, 'The Geographies of Genteel Women and the Production of Space in Bath, 1702-1761' (2004) explores the spaces women inhabited at the eighteenth-century spa, as well as the regulation of behaviour within these spaces. However Williams's primary material is largely confined to printed sources and the archive of Bath Central Library is the only manuscript collection consulted.²² Prosopography, which simply defined means 'collective biography', provides a tool by which historians can collect and analyse data from a large number of individuals, representative of a specific population.²³ Originally 'invented as a tool of political history', it is increasingly being adopted by social historians. Though rarely defined as such, the works of women's historians including Glover and Vickery are prosopographical, as they weave collective histories. Drawing from the journals, correspondence and other life-writings of over sixty men and women, this thesis offers the first thorough prosopographical study of the female spa-frequenter. Through using a wide source base, it considers the types of leisured women who attended the resorts, looking at their ages, family situation, marriage status and personal disposition. The thesis also asks why women went to the resorts. Addressing the health facilities, courtship opportunities, and leisure activities which Bath and Tunbridge Wells offered elite and middling women, the thesis assesses how strong various attractions were in drawing them to the spas.

Another aim, central to this study, is to investigate the extent of hetero-sociability at the eighteenth-century resort. Alison Hurley and Amanda Herbert, two of the few historians who have explored female spa visiting, portray the English spa as a distinctly feminised space in which women sought female companionship.²⁴ However, both Herbert and Hurley offer micro studies of only small groups of women. This thesis takes up same issue, but on a wider scale; exploring a variety of

²¹ Maggie Lane, *A City of Palaces: Bath Through the Eyes of Fanny Burney* (Bath: Millstream Books, 1999); Maggie Lane, *A Charming Place: Bath in the Life and Times of Jane Austen* (Bath: Millstream Books, 1988); Marjorie Williams, *Lady Luxborough goes to Bath* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1946).

²² Jonathan Williams, 'The Geographies of Genteel Women and the Production of Space in Bath, 1702-1761' (Unpublished M.Sc Thesis, University of Oxford, 2003).

²³ Lawrence Stone, 'Prosopography', *Daedalus*, 100: 1 (1971).

²⁴ Amanda Herbert, 'Gender and the Spa: Space, Sociability and Self at British Health Spas 1640-1714', *Journal of Social History*, 43: 2 (2009); Alison Hurley, 'A Conversation of Their Own-Watering-Place Correspondence Amongst the Bluestockings', *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 40: 1 (2006).

printed and manuscript sources to discover how frequently men and women socialised together at the resorts and whether they participated in the same activities and conversations. The prosopographical approach enables these questions to be investigated on a more extensive level, in order to determine if Bath and Tunbridge Wells were truly hetero-social societies, or if women preferred to create exclusively female communities during their visits and residences.

The confines of the separate spheres terminology have traditionally encouraged historians to measure public life through political activity. Jürgen Habermas's seminal work *The Transformation of the Public Sphere*, first published in German in 1962, and translated into English in 1989, has played an important role in this. Habermas argues that the public sphere offered a space in which private individuals could come together and form public opinion, which in turn, acted as a form of regulation over the powers of government.²⁵ However, this was only one form of public life, and to argue that female exclusion from parliament, the vote and institutions such as the coffee-house, in which politics were discussed, meant that women's lives were 'private' is a misconception. To illustrate that women, too, formed part of a significant public sphere, this thesis utilises a broader definition. It is argued that the public arenas of the resorts provided leisured women with access to a social as well as an intellectual public sphere. The activities on offer at the resorts, such as taking the waters, promenading on the public walks or dancing in the assembly rooms, provided women with a chance for public display and sociability; they were no less 'public' for their lack of political emphasis, they simply offered a different form of public engagement. Women at the resorts also had access to the more widely recognised literary and discursive public sphere at the resorts, through their coffee-drinking establishments and circulating libraries, and through their authorship of letters and journals.

²⁵ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*; translated by Thomas Burger with the assistance of Frederick Lawrence (Cambridge: Polity, 1989).

ii. Leisured women?

The women who form the focus of this thesis are grouped together under the collective term ‘leisured’. This denotes the fact that they were able to experience the resorts as clients and consumers of spa culture, rather than as providers, and that they were able to partake in the many forms of consumption on offer. The women studied belonged to a social group who were diversified, but unified by their exclusion from ‘non-industrial’ labour.²⁶ To varying degrees, they could all pay for health treatments, doctors’ bills, and subscription to the public rooms: they could dress respectably, some extravagantly, and afford non-essential commodities such as tea, coffee and sugar. They belonged to the social group known to contemporaries as the ‘company’.²⁷ The choice to focus on women of high to middling social status who did not work in paid employment, may leave the thesis open to criticism. However, this decision has been made for a number of reasons. The degree of autonomy privileged women had over their time and money means that their actions reveal much about their personal ideals, values and interests. The letters and journals of this literate class of women illustrate the patterns of sociability, consumption and leisure they valued most highly. In contrast, the leisure and consumption behaviours of working class women, whose time and finances were far more restricted, would be illustrative of necessity; a different study altogether.

A critical response to this justification might be formed by arguing that it rationalises the *inclusion* of upper and middling women, but not the *exclusion* of those of the working class. However, all historians must form boundaries around their research, and this study is specifically concerned with the leisured female clientele as a distinct social group, who were integral to the emergence and continuance of spa-visiting as an eighteenth-century phenomenon. Therefore, whilst a study of working, homeless, unemployed or even criminal women at the spas would be a worthwhile focus of historical research, it does not fit into the framework of this thesis which is concerned with women on the demand, rather than supply side of the spa industry. The spa visitors and residents most frequently referenced throughout this study are

²⁶ This is the definition of a ‘leisure class’ used by Thorstein Veblen in his seminal work: Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007 reprint), p. 1.

²⁷ Celia Fiennes, *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes* (London: Cresset Press, 1947), pp. 132-133.

listed in an alphabetic biographical table at the end of the volume which provides first, married and maiden names. The table also lists birth and death dates and the dates of visits and residences at the resorts. If available, spa addresses are also included. The table has been designed so that the reader might consult it at their own choosing for purposes of clarity.

The most socially privileged of the women whose lives are woven throughout this thesis are those of the aristocracy. The aristocracy have been defined in numerous ways. John Cannon predominantly identifies them as those who held peerages; of whom he notes there were only 1003 throughout the entire eighteenth century.²⁸ For the purposes of this study, the aristocracy are identified as those who owned land and held a peerage. The women of this echelon of society were the wives and daughters of Dukes, Earls, Marquesses, Viscounts and Barons.

The spa visits of many aristocratic women are considered throughout this thesis. Lady Jane Coke, née Wharton (1706-1761), visited Tunbridge Wells in 1750, 1752 and 1761, from where she wrote a number of letters to her friend, Mrs Eyre. Her letters comment on life at the spa and the restriction of her movements due to poor health. Sarah Lennox, née Cadogan (1705-1751), the Duchess of Richmond, visited Tunbridge Wells during the early eighteenth century, also for health reasons. The precise time of her visit/s is unknown, due to her undated correspondence; however, her affectionate letters the Duke of Richmond are a valuable source, detailing her activities at the spa. Mary Hervey, née Felton (1676-1741), The Countess of Bristol, visited Bath in 1703, 1721 and 1723, and like the Duchess of Richmond, she sent affectionate letters home to her husband, detailing her active social life. Amabel Hume-Campbell, née Yorke, (1751-1833), Lady Polwarth, paid visits to Bath and Tunbridge Wells on numerous occasions throughout her life. This study utilises letters from her 1784 visit to Bath and her 1775 and 1776 visits to Tunbridge Wells, in which she comments with satirical bite on the social life of the resorts.²⁹ These

²⁸ John Cannon, *Aristocratic Century: The Peerage of Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 9-10.

²⁹ WSRO Goodwood/102/1-34 Duchess of Richmond, to the Duke of Richmond (c.1719-1740); *Letter-Books of John Hervey, First Earl of Bristol 1651-1750 in Three Volumes* (3 vols, Wells: Earnest Jackson, 1894); BLA L30/13/12/30, 31, 39, 95, 96, 97, 98 Letters from Lady Polwarth at Bath, London and Tunbridge Wells, to her sister Mary Robinson (1775, 1784). Lady Polwarth also wrote a journal, of which there are 37 volumes, now located at Leeds Record Office. As the remits of this study do not extend beyond nineteen archives, the material at Leeds has not been consulted.

correspondences throw light on how elite women perceived and managed health complaints, how they responded to the temptation of public leisure and how they felt about integrating with less high-profile society whilst at the spas.

The gentry differed from the aristocracy as they held land, but not peerages. M.L. Bush states that the gentry originated in the twelfth century, when ‘the professional knight was ‘aristocratised’ becoming a ‘landowner who was expected, by virtue of his landownership, to perform a variety of public functions.’³⁰ They were a vast and varied group, ranging from the baronetcy at the very top, to small landowners at the bottom. Many of the women considered in this thesis were of the English and Welsh landed gentry, including: Priscilla Digby (1711-1760), of Mansfield Woodhouse in Nottinghamshire, who resided at Bath with her mother for the period of 1742 to 1745; Anna Cradock, née Stratford (d.1816), wife of Joseph Cradock of Gumley House in Leicestershire, who visited Bath at least eleven times between 1786 and 1813; Dorothy Filmer, née Deedes (c.1735-1818), wife of Sir John Filmer, a Baronet of Kent who visited Bath in June 1759 and Tunbridge Wells between June and July 1765; Elizabeth Giffard, née Hyde (b.c.1740), of Nerquis Hall in Wales, who visited Bath between November 1766 and February 1767, one year after her marriage to John Giffard and Elizabeth Isham, née Wood (1700-1748), and Mary Isham, née Hacket, the wives of the Baronets of Lamport Hall in Northamptonshire who visited Bath on numerous occasions throughout the 1730s and 1740s. The three unmarried Mitford sisters; Frances (b.1779), Emma (d.1844) and Caroline Mitford (1793-1849) are also of this social group. The sisters, originally of Pitsill House in West Sussex, moved to a village outside of Bath in 1828. Soon after, they moved again, this time to Somerset Place, in the northern part of the expanding spa, finding the outskirts too rural and isolated.³¹

Rachel Johnson offers a study of the journals in her recent PhD thesis: ‘Spas and Seaside Resorts in Kent, 1660-1820’ (The University of Leeds, 2013), unpublished PhD thesis, pp. 200-206.

³⁰ M. L. Bush, *The English Aristocracy: A Comparative Synthesis* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984), p. 38.

³¹ Mrs Ambrose Rathbone (ed.), *Letters from Lady Jane Coke to Her Friend Mrs Eyre 1747-1758* (London: S. Sonnenschein, 1899); NUSC Mol /78, 79, 80, 81, 82 Letters from Priscilla Digby to her sister in law Anne Molyneux (1742-1745); DUSC Add.MS. 1433 Typescript of ‘Journal of a Tour in England, 1786-1791’ by Anna Cradock (1786-1791); CKS U120 C55/1, 8, 9, 10 Letters from Dorothy Filmer at Bath and Tunbridge Wells to her husband John Filmer (1759, 1765); FRO D/NH/1074 Elizabeth Giffard ‘A Bath Journal’ (1766-1767); NRO IC19/94, 95, 97, IC20/16, 17, 19, 20, 21, 23, 33 Letters from Mary Isham at Bath to her husband Justinian Isham 5th Baronet of

Also amongst the visiting and resident gentry were Elizabeth Montagu, née Robinson (1718-1800), ‘Queen of the Bluestockings’, who visited both Bath and Tunbridge Wells numerous times between 1740 and 1760; Hester Lynch Piozzi (previously Thrale), née Salusbury (1741-1821), who resided at Bath with her three adult daughters in 1783, and again after the death of her second husband between 1814 and 1821; Caroline Powys, née Girle (1756-1808), wife of Philip Powys of Hardwicke House in Oxfordshire, who made at least eighteen visits to Bath between 1764 and 1808; Magdalen Price (c.1770-1801), of Cilgwyn in Wales who visited Bath in 1800, Melesina Trench, née Chenevix, (1768-1827), an Irish-born gentry-woman who visited Bath on four recorded occasions between 1797 and 1814 and finally, Isabella Battie Wrightson (1727-1784), of Cusworth Hall in south Yorkshire, who visited Bath in October 1768, two years after the death of her husband John Battie.³²

The middling sections of society were a substantial and diverse group, defined by Margaret Hunt as those that formed the ‘world of commerce’.³³ The wives, daughters and sisters of professional and mercantile men form one section of the middling sort considered throughout this thesis. This includes the wife and daughters of Lewis Weston Dilwyn (1778-1855), an English porcelain manufacturer, published naturalist and Whig MP who recorded twelve visits to Bath between 1821 and 1830, sometimes accompanied by his wife Mary, née Adams, and their two daughters. Also amongst this category is Katherine Plymley (1758-1829), the daughter of a

Lampport Hall (1731, 1733); NRO IC25/34, 65, 66, 70, 71, 78 Letters from Elizabeth Isham at Bath to her husband Edmund Isham 6th Baronet of Lampport Hall (1738, 1746); CRO J/3/2/690, 683 Letters from Frances Mitford, at a village near to Bath (the specific name is illegible) and at Bath (1828).

³² Elizabeth Montagu, *The Letters of Elizabeth Montagu: With Some of the Letters of her Correspondents in Four Volumes* (4 vols, London: 1809-1813); Catherine C. Balderson (ed.), *The Diary of Mrs. Hester Lynch Thrale (Later Mrs. Piozzi) 1776-1809* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1942); BL 42160 Powys Journals vol. i, 42161 Powys Journals vol. ii, 42162 Powys Journals vol. iii, 42169 Powys Journals vol. x, 42171, Powys Journals vol. xii, 42173 Powys Journals vol. xiv ‘Recipe and Medicine Book’; Stephen Powys Marks, ‘The Journals of Mrs Philip Lybbe Powys (1738-1813): A Half Century of Visits to Bath’, *Bath History*, 9 (2002): 28-63; HRO 23M93/42/33/9, 10, 11, 19, 20, 24, 24, 25, 138; 23M93/30/1/21, 22, 37 Letters from Melesina Trench at Bath (1797, 1798, 1812, c.1814); DA DD/BW/A6-A7 Isabella Wrightson Account Book (1768-1769).

³³ Margaret R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender and the Family in England 1680-1780* (London: The University of California Press, 1996), p. 20; Frank O’Gorman defines the middling orders of late seventeenth-century England in these terms, drawing on Gregory King’s ‘Scheme of the Income and Expense of the Several Families of England... for 1688’ in Frank O’Gorman, *The Long Eighteenth Century: British Political and Social History 1688-1832* (London: Arnold, 2002), pp. 14-17.

Shropshire apothecary who visited Bath six times between 1794 and 1807 and Tunbridge Wells once in 1814. Plymley's detailed journals are frequently consulted throughout this thesis. As the daughter of actor and stage manager Thomas Sheridan and playwright Frances Sheridan, Betsy Sheridan also belongs within this social group. Sheridan visited both resorts in 1785, and Bath again in 1786, 1789 and 1790. She wrote regular letters to her sister Alicia LeFanu in Ireland in a journal style which detail the time she spent at the resorts. Isabella Carr, née Byne (d.1797), and Anabella Carr (1763-1822), the wife and daughter of northern merchant and banker Ralph Carr (1711-1806) are also of this branch of middling society. Both women made trips to Bath, Isabella between 1761 and 1762, and Anabella in 1799. The letters which the Carrs wrote from the spa illuminate the importance they placed on socialising with other respectable women, whilst simultaneously demonstrating how health concerns formed the principal issue with which they were concerned.³⁴

The female kin of naval and military men form another subsection of the spa-frequenting middling sorts. These include the wife and daughter of naval officer Dennis Lyddell (d.1717), who visited Bath with him in 1706.³⁵ Lyddell kept a pocket-style journal during his time in Bath, in which he recorded the activities of the entire family, shedding light on family behaviour at the early eighteenth-century spa. Margret Graves, née Spinckes (1727-1808), originally of Aldwinkle in Northamptonshire, later of Hembry Fort in Devon, and eventually of Bath, is one of the most prolific spa correspondents considered.³⁶ Margaret married widower, Admiral Samuel Graves, in 1769. After her husband's death she moved to Bath where she was the first resident of 15 Lansdowne Crescent, between 1792 and her

³⁴ NLW Lewis Weston Dilwyn (1) Journal of Lewis Weston Dilwyn (1778-1755); SRO 567/5/5/1/4 Katherine Plymley 'Journey to Bath 1794 1st', 567/5/5/1/5 'Journey to Bath 1794 2nd', 567/5/5/1/7 'Journey to London and Bath 1795 2nd', 567/5/5/15 'Journey to Bath 1796 1st', 567/5/5/1/16 'Journey to Bath 1796 2nd', 567/5/5/1/17 'Journey to Bath 1799', 567/5/5/1/26b 'Journey from Longor to Penzance 1803', 567/5/5/1/27 'Journey to Bath 1807', 567/5/5/1/31 'Journey to London, Kent, Cambridge 1814'; William LeFanu (ed), *Betsy Sheridan's Journal: Letters from Sheridan's Sister* (Oxford; Oxford Paperbacks, 1986); NA ZCE/F/1/1/3/5, ZCE/F/1/1/5/3, 6, 9 Letters from Isabella Carr at Bath to her husband Ralph Carr (1761-1762); NA ZCE/F/1/1/3/12, 13 Letters from Anabella Carr at Bath to her father, Ralph Carr (1799).

³⁵ BL 74642 Autograph Journal of Dennis Lyddell (1706).

³⁶ DRO 1038M/F1/126; 1038M/F1/121; 1038M/F1/122; 1038M/F1/125; 1038M/F1/123; 1038M/F1/129; 1038M/F1/139; 1038M/F1/140; 1038M/F1/145; 1038M/F1/120;1038M/F1/151; 1038M/F1/138; 1038M/F1/117; 1038M/F1/158; 1038M/F1/161; 1038M/F1/162; 1038M/F1/164; 1038M/F1/130; 1038M/F1/165; 1038M/F1/166; 1038M /F1/172; 1038M/F1/173 Letters from Margaret Graves, 15 Lansdowne Crescent Bath, to her niece Eliza Simcoe (1793-1806).

death in 1808. Graves wrote regularly to her niece Elizabeth (Eliza) Posthume Simcoe, née Gwillim, (1762-1850), wife of the Governor of Northern Canada. Her letters reveal the richness of her life, as an affluent spa widow.³⁷

A number of the women whose writings are explored throughout this thesis belonged to clergy families. The correspondence of Adam Ottley, Registrar of St David's in Wales, and his daughter Bridget Ottley (c.1721-1743), illuminates a close parent-child relationship. Bridget visited Bath between May and July 1741, January and March 1742 and possibly also in 1743. Adam's letters to his daughter are written in a cheerful and intimate tone, with little or no words of religious guidance or moral warning. Instead, he shows concern for his daughter's health and encourages her to make the most of the facilities of the resort. The revealing correspondence, of which both sides are persevered, demonstrates that religiously devout individuals did not necessarily perceive the leisured nature of spa life as dangerous or corrupting to female visitors.³⁸

The same can be said of the letters of John Penrose, a Cornish Reverend whose correspondence offers a detailed, often comical representation of women at Bath. Visiting Bath in 1766 and again in 1767 with his wife and daughter, Penrose sent letters home to his other children, in which he often commented on the extravagances of female dress, behaviour and pursuit of pleasure.³⁹ The Austens were another clergy family who spent time at Bath, moving there in 1801 after George Austen retired from his position as Vicar of Steventon in Hampshire. They resided in the city until 1806, Mrs Cassandra Austen (1739-1827) and her two daughters Jane (1775-1817) and Cassandra (1773-1845), remaining there after George Austen's death in 1805. Jane's opinion of Bath has long intrigued biographers, many concluding that the author cared little for it. However, as her first biographer James Edward Leigh notes, we have few letters from this time in her life. He also highlights that the letters we do have 'show that she went a good deal into

³⁷ Hilary Arnold, 'Genteel Widows of Bath', *Bath History*, 7 (1998).

³⁸ NLW Ottley Pitchford Hall Correspondence (2): 3677; Ottley Pitchford Hall Correspondence (3): 3656, 3650, 3649, 3653, 3651, 3670, 3657, 3658, 3649b, 3663, 3648b, 3666, 3646, 3654, 3662, 3647, 3648 Letters between Bridget Ottley at Bath and her father Adam Ottley (1741, 1742, 1743). The reference numbers appear in an unusual order as they were not catalogued by date. They appear in date order within this sequence and in the bibliography.

³⁹ Brigitte Mitchell and Hubert Penrose (eds.), *Reverend John Penrose: Letters from Bath 1766-1767* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1983), pp. 26, 29-31, 36, 38-39, 111, 138, 140, 144, 147.

society, in a quiet way, chiefly with ladies.’⁴⁰ Much of the unhappiness she experienced there was due to personal and family tragedy, rather than a response to the resort itself, and as Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis illustrate, the spa had much to offer a woman of literary interests.

A small number of women mentioned throughout belonged to the leisured class in social status, yet were also engaged in paid labour. The singer Elizabeth Sheridan, née Linley (1754-1792), is a prime example of this. Linley was employed by her father, Thomas Linley, to sing in musical concerts held in Bath’s assembly rooms.⁴¹ Although she worked for the financial benefit of her family, her talent and beauty led the leisured company at the spa to welcome her enthusiastically. Similarly, Ann Thicknesse, née Ford (1737-1824), was of a genteel family who resided in Bath, and was a talented singer as well as musician, specialising in stringed instruments such as the guitar and viola de gamba. During her teenage years, Thicknesse gave Sunday performances at her home whilst she lived with her parents, but was forbidden to play in public. However she eventually escaped her parents’ household and established a musical career for herself. Linley and Thicknesse’s cases are unusual ones, yet they demonstrate that there were middling women, employed in paid work, who were both consumers and suppliers of spa culture, who can also be termed ‘leisured.’ Celebrity, Felicity Nussbaum argues, ‘created real as well as feigned social mobility for women and allowed them to defy the restrictions of rank’.⁴² Genteel women engaged in performance are not the only anomalies: many of the female authors who resided at the resorts could be described as leisured, as in the instances of Austen, Fanny d’Arblay, née Burney (1752-1740), Sarah Fielding (1710-1768) Catherine Graham, previously Macaulay, née Sawbridge (1731-1791) and Hester Thrale Piozzi.

Manuscripts produced by male visitors and residents are also utilised; in particular, as a point of comparison, for details of hetero-sociability and for commentary on the appearance, behaviour and activities of female visitors. The above section has

⁴⁰ J. E. Austen-Leigh, *A Memoir of Jane Austen: And Other Family Recollections* (Oxford: Oxford World’s Classics, 2008), p. 59.

⁴¹ Elizabeth Sheridan (nee Linley) is referred to as Linley so as not to confuse her with ‘Betsy’ Sheridan, Richard Sheridan’s sister.

⁴² Felicity Nussbaum, *Rival Queens: Actresses, Performance and the Eighteenth-Century British Theatre* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), p. 47.

already highlighted a number of the male authored sources which are considered, including the journals of Lewis Weston Dilwyn and Dennis Lyddell and the letters of the Reverend John Penrose. The diaries of Alfred Daniels (1809-1875), written during an early adolescence on the outskirts of Bath, are also incorporated. Daniels's journals offer insight into the life of a young man on the edge of adulthood, as his relationship with his mother changed from that of child to companion and chaperone. They also demonstrate the similarities between male and female sociability, detailing repeated dancing lessons, tea visits and horse rides with female friends.⁴³ The letters of George Lucy of Charlcote House in Warwickshire (d.1786) are also examined. Lucy visited Bath at least nine times between 1751 and 1768, sending letters to his housekeeper informing her of his pursuits and asking for domestic advice. A permanent bachelor, Lucy spent much time in female company at the spa, often playing at cards.⁴⁴

The manuscript material consulted divides into six categories:

- 1) Letters written by women to women (predominantly to mothers, sisters, daughters and friends).
- 2) Letters written by women to men (predominantly to fathers, husbands and brothers).
- 3) Letters written by men to men (these are the rarest form).
- 4) Letters written by men to women (predominantly to wives and daughters, though in Lucy's unusual case, he wrote to his housekeeper).
- 5) Female authored journals (regular pocket diaries, detailed journals kept in plain notebooks and travel journals).
- 6) Male authored journals (those considered are mostly brief pocket journals).

Another question explored throughout this thesis is how far the female experience of the spa was one specific to women. This question is investigated partly though considering the gendered differences of writing styles. The responses of letter recipients are also taken into consideration, such as the letters of the Earl of Bristol

⁴³ BCL Box 25056 Pocket Journals of Alfred Daniels (1821-1832).

⁴⁴ WRO L6/1426, 27, 30, 31, 32, 51, 52, 53, 55, 58, 59, 60, 64, 71, 72, 74 Letters from George Lucy at Bath to his housekeeper Mrs Philippa Hayes (1751, 1753-1754, 1758-1759, 1760-1764, 1768).

written to his wife at Bath, and those of Adam Ottley to his invalid daughter taking the waters at the spa.

iii. Case-study resorts

Throughout the long eighteenth century spas emerged all over the British Isles; wherever a mineral spring could be found, and a patron or patrons to provide the necessary funds for accommodation and communal buildings, a spa was established. Seeking a medical cure at a watering place was not a new custom, as John Walton highlights, this practice dated back to antiquity.⁴⁵ However, the new scientific emphasis placed on the water cure, coupled with the busy social scene emerging at the English resort from the late decades of the seventeenth century, was new. The term spa, often spelled ‘spaw’, derived from the eponymous resort in modern-day Belgium. It became commonly used to refer to mineral springs frequented by health seekers who ‘took the waters’, either internally, or externally, through bathing or having water pumped onto an affected limb, whilst simultaneously enjoying the leisure and social opportunities on offer. Spas were a mecca for both the sick and the sound, who, it has long been argued, visited in search of health, pleasure and courtship.⁴⁶

Coupled together by contemporary authors and modern-day historians alike, Bath and Tunbridge Wells were and are seen as two of the most significant English spas of the long eighteenth century.⁴⁷ Located in Somerset, Bath owed much of its popularity to its ancient history and to its thermal springs. Local legend suggests that the mineral content of the Bath’s waters was first discovered in ancient times by

⁴⁵ John K. Walton, ‘Health, Sociability, Politics and Culture. Spas in History: An Overview’, *Journal of Tourism*, 4: 1 (2012), p. 3.

⁴⁶ Daniel Defoe, *A Tour Through the Whole Island of Great Britain* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd, 1974, reprinted as one volume with original volume references), p. 34.

⁴⁷ Phyllis Hembry, *The English Spa 1560-1815: A Social History* (London: Athlone Press, 1990), pp. 85, 114; Margaret Barton, *Tunbridge Wells* (London: Faber&Faber, 1937), pp. 173, 199, 202-204; John Macky, *A Journey Through Scotland. In Familiar Letters From a Gentleman Here to His Friend Being the Third Volume Which Completes Great Britain* (3 vols, London: 1714, 1724, 1729), iii, p. 13. The series is actually entitled *A Journey Through England*, however, the third volume includes Scotland and is therefore titled slightly differently. It is part of the three volume series.

Bladud; a Prince banished to prevent contagion when he contracted leprosy. Georgian guidebooks tell how Bladud became a travelling swineherd, who realised the qualities of the local waters when he and his ailing herd bathed in a swamp on the site where Bath now stands, and found themselves cured.⁴⁸ In addition to the reputation of its springs, Bath's increase in popularity in the early eighteenth century was partly due to an architectural expansion which started to take place in 1700 and continued well into the nineteenth-century, much of which was planned by John Wood the elder, and his son and namesake, John Wood the younger. This expansion improved the quality of housing, public buildings, and the aesthetic appeal of Bath's streets, much of which was built in a Palladian style, tying in with a contemporary interest in antiquity.

On the other hand, Tunbridge Wells, located in Kent, was frequented for the reputed quality of its air and for its rural character which enticed the elite and middling sorts from the city during the summer months.⁴⁹ The spa's waters were discovered somewhat later than those of Bath, in 1603, by Dudley Lord North who noticed 'the shining mineral scum' which abounded around the site which would soon develop into the resort. North initiated research into the local waters and started to drink them himself to improve his ailing health.⁵⁰ Whilst Bath was a significantly larger resort, with an international reputation, between 1660 and 1720, Tunbridge Wells stood as its rival.⁵¹ In the early eighteenth century, both resorts went through a transformation as their leisure routines were organised to run like clockwork and the visiting company were encouraged to behave with politeness and gentility. Oliver Goldsmith dates this improvement from the arrival of Richard 'Beau' Nash who was appointed as Master of Ceremonies in 1705 and at Tunbridge Wells in 1735.⁵² Rules for the

⁴⁸ *The New Bath Guide, or, Useful Pocket Companion Necessary For All Persons Residing at, or Resorting to, This Antient and Opulent City. Giving an Account of its Antiquity, and First Discovery of its Waters; A Description of the City Down to the Present Time; and a Much More Correct Account Than Any Yet Publish'd of the Going Out and Coming in of the Post, Machines, Wagons, Carriers, &c.* (Bath, 1762), pp. 1-10.

⁴⁹ Thomas Benge Burr, *A History of Tunbridge Wells* (London, 1766), pp. 67-69; Jasper Sprange, *The Tunbridge Wells Guide, or an Account of the Ancient and Present State of the Place to Which is Added a Particular Description of the Towns and Villages, Remains of Antiquity, Gentlemen's Seats, Foundries, &c, &c, Within the Circumference of Sixteen Miles* (Tunbridge Wells, 1780), p. 47.

⁵⁰ Burr, *A History of Tunbridge Wells*, pp. 4-11.

⁵¹ Hembry, *The English Spa 1560-1815*, p. 85.

⁵² Oliver Goldsmith, *The Life of Richard Nash, of Bath, Esq; Extracted Principally from his Original Papers* (Dublin: Dillon Chamberlaine, 1762), p. vii.

company were then introduced at both resorts, dictating issues such as appropriate dress for the assembly rooms and curtailing evening hours 11.00 pm.⁵³

The two resorts were bound by similarities in fashionable status, leisure routine and their governance by a master of ceremonies (a role sometimes performed by the same man at both spas), yet they also had crucial differences.⁵⁴ Bath was an urban spa, whilst Tunbridge Wells was a small and relatively rural resort. The water-drinking season for most spas was during in the summer; however each resort had its designated season lasting some point between April and November. Bath originally followed this pattern, having a summer visiting season in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century.⁵⁵ However, as Tunbridge Wells rose in popularity and started to draw the elite and genteel classes from London between June and the end of September, Bath responded by developing a dual spring and autumn season, maintaining this pattern into the Regency era, when Nathaniel Sheldon noted ‘the time for the Fashionables to make their appearance here is late autumn, when folly, and vice and dissipation reign with undisputed sway.’⁵⁶ Therefore, the two spas had different, but complementary visiting seasons for most of the long eighteenth century, emphasising the evolution of a ‘twinning’ between the two resorts.⁵⁷

Comparing female visitation and residence at Bath and Tunbridge Wells, this thesis highlights the opportunities which privileged women enjoyed at both resorts, whilst

⁵³ John Wood, *A Description of Bath 1765* (Bath: Kingsmead Reprints, 1969), pp. 412-413.

⁵⁴ Masters of Ceremonies at Bath: Captain Webster c.1703-1705, Richard ‘Beau’ Nash 1705-1761, James Collett (Jaques Caulet) 1761-1763, Samuel Derrick 1763-1769, William Brereton 1769 and William Wade 1769-1777. Upper Rooms: William Dawson 1777-1785 and Richard Tyson 1785-1805. Lower Rooms: William Brereton 1777-1780, Richard Tyson 1780-1785 and James King 1785-1805. See Trevor Fawcett, *Bath Entertain’d: Amusements, Recreation and Gambling at the Eighteenth-Century Spa* (Bath: Ruton, 1998). Masters of Ceremonies at Tunbridge Wells: Bell Causey ‘absolute governess (until 1733), Richard ‘Beau’ Nash, accompanied by Sarah Porter 1733-1761, Samuel Derrick, Major Brereton, Blake 1769-1779, Richard Tyson 1780-1801, Fotheringham 1801-1805, Paul Amsinck 1805-1817, Richard Tyson, G. T. Roberts, Captain Merryweather, H. Madden of the Royal Marines (post resigned and terminated in 1831).

⁵⁵ Fiennes, *The Journeys of Celia Fiennes*, p. 236; Goldsmith, *The Life of Richard Nash*, p. 40; Penelope Corfield, ‘Georgian Bath - The Magical Meeting Place’, *History Today*, 40: 11 (1990), p. 27.

⁵⁶ Nathaniel Sheldon Wheaton, *A Journal of a Residence in London; Including Excursions Through Various Parts of England; and a Short Tour in France and Scotland: In the Years 1823 and 1824* (Hartford: 1830), p. 291.

⁵⁷ Hembry, *The English Spa 1560-1815*, p. 137; Richard Steele, ‘The Spectator’ (27 August 1711) in Daniel Bond (ed.), *The Spectator* (6 vols, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), ii, p. 104.

also shedding light on the different spa experience each resort offered. Another approach might have been to explore a larger number of spas, including other popular eighteenth-century watering places such as Buxton, Epsom, Leamington and Matlock, or perhaps extend the subject area to include the practice of sea-bathing, which became fashionable in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries; however, this would have resulted in a different approach towards archival research, one which would have produced a less detailed exploration of female-spa-manuscript culture and would have risked over-generalisation.

iv. Historiographies

Women's history, gender history, urban history, local history and leisure history form the five principle historiographical fields with which this thesis engages. Many others are also utilised, each chapter introducing one, if not multiple categories. For instance, Chapter 1 engages with the social history of medicine, Chapter 2 with that of marriage and sex, Chapter 3 with the historiography of sport and consumption, Chapter 4 with that of literary and discursive public spheres, and Chapter 5 considers studies of domesticity and private life. However, the five principal historiographies are the linking chain which runs throughout all central chapters.

Prior to the 1960s, the majority of works published on women's history were biographies of royalty and other 'remarkable' individuals. However, during the 1960s and 1970s, women's history emerged as a serious discipline, influenced and encouraged by the rise of second wave feminism. Many of the earliest works had a clear Feminist, sometimes Marxist-Feminist agenda. The objective of women's history, during the first two decades of its existence, was to uncover the 'hidden' histories of the down trodden female worker, and the silenced Victorian 'angel of the house.' Throughout the 1980s, it rapidly expanded, as universities across America and Europe continued to teach and research the developing field which became increasingly rich, as Joan Scott commented: 'bookshelves are being filled with biographies of forgotten women, chronicles of feminist movements and the collected

letters of female authors.’⁵⁸ As the historiography of genteel women addressed at the start of this chapter reveals, the field has continued to grow in many directions.

One particularly significant development to occur as a result of women’s history was the creation of gender history in the 1980s, as historians started to address the social construction of masculine and feminine identities. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, masculinity emerged as a recognised field. Historians working in this area originally faced some hostility from those who treated such research as a ‘take-over bid’.⁵⁹ However opposition did not halt its development. Originally focusing on themes of patriarchy and manliness, by the mid-1990s, historians of masculinity such as John Tosh were highlighting the existence of multiple masculine identities, not all of which matched patriarchal or manly ideals. The field is now much wider, with researchers exploring multiple masculine identities throughout medieval, early modern and modern history.⁶⁰ Matthew McCormack’s *Public Men* (2007) illustrates that even the most political and main stream of historical subjects, can be approached from a gendered angle, as he explores the relationship between the public, politics and masculine identities in the eighteenth century.⁶¹

This thesis adopts a gender-conscious approach to explore how the female spa experience was coloured by women’s health, social position and contemporary cultural expectations of acceptable femininity. It looks at women’s domestic roles as wives, mothers and daughters also as carers, companions, house-hunters, hostesses and visitors, but does not interpret these roles as necessarily private. Instead, the study explores the interlocking private and public nature of many women’s roles and activities, and looks at the influence and significance of such roles in the context of the spa. It considers how the spa was experienced by a range of women in different social positions, in terms of age, marital status, character and interests.

⁵⁸ Joan Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), p. 15.

⁵⁹ John Tosh, *Manliness and Masculinity in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Harlow: Pearson Longman, 2005), p. 29.

⁶⁰ David M. Hadley, *Masculinity in Medieval Europe* (London: Longman, 1999); Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society: Britain 1660-1800* (Harlow: Longman, 2001); Alexandra Shepard, *Meanings of Manhood in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

⁶¹ Matthew McCormack, *Public Men: Masculinity and Politics in Modern Britain* (Houndsmill: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

Influenced by the work of Judith Butler, who suggests that a person's gender is often called into question when their sexual preferences differ from what is considered the norm, Chapter 2 pays particular attention to single women. Whilst Butler speaks specifically in terms of homosexuality and transsexuality, in the eighteenth century, being a single woman was regarded as differing from the norm, and single women were believed to have repressed sexual urges which caused erratic behaviour.⁶² Widows and spinsters were often mocked in contemporary satire for their inability to find spouses, yet there were many reasons that a woman may have opted to remain single including retaining their legal and financial independence, homosexuality, and the fear of pregnancy and child birth.⁶³

The decision to focus on the female rather than the gendered spa experience has been made for three reasons. Firstly, the study primarily responds to the growing literature on women and public life in the eighteenth century. To argue that all gender based work should consider the masculine and feminine experience in equal parts is to undermine the importance of women's history as an independent field. Secondly, the prosopographical aim would have been significantly altered and the focus diluted had the thesis sought to explore both gendered experiences. Thirdly, to have attempted to squeeze the male spa experience and masculinity into the same study would have been to do a disservice to both areas of research. Yet the thesis does not disregard the male experience, or only explore the letters and journals of women. On the contrary, male-authored life writings are also considered, and in many places, the male position or masculine identities form a natural and essential point of comparison.

The 1960s also saw the emergence of Urban History, and in particular, the rise of 'new urban history', predominantly concerned with the social histories of those traditionally excluded from historical research. In 1968 a conference of urban historians at the University of Leicester 'marked an important step in the

⁶² Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subdivision of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1999 reprint), pp. viii-xi

⁶³ Cindy McReery, 'Lustful Widows and Old Maids in Late Eighteenth-Century English Literature' in Katherine Kittredge (ed.), *Lewd & Notorious: Female Transgression in the Eighteenth Century* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), pp. 128-9.

development of a rapidly expanding field.⁶⁴ *The Study of Urban History* (1968) emerged as a result of the conference, a volume of papers demonstrating the wide range of subjects encompassed by the field. H. J. Dyos noted that half the scholars working on urban history at this point in time researched the nineteenth century, while one fifth focused on early-modern towns. Interest in the nineteenth-century town continued to dominate English urban historiography through the late 1960s and early 1970s, while the early modern-town started to attract the attention of a smaller group of historians such as Peter Clark and Paul Slack, whose seminal work *Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500-1700* was published in 1972.⁶⁵ By the 1980s, the field had expanded significantly, in a similar manner to the expansion of women's history. However while many women's histories focused on similar subjects, a key characteristic of urban history was, and remains, its wide ranging subject matter. In 1983 another urban history conference led to the publication of *The Pursuit of Urban History*, a volume of papers illustrating the development of urban history into a 'busy, bustling and productive branch of the historical profession.'⁶⁶ Throughout the 1980s the gap between early-modern and nineteenth-century urban historiography began to close, as more attention started to be paid to the eighteenth century.

Influenced by the cultural turn of the 1980s, urban histories adopted an increasingly social and cultural emphasis. Penelope Corfield's *The Impact of English Towns* (1982) focuses on the transformation of the eighteenth-century English town in terms of 'their numbers, size, physical form, economic role', a traditional approach adopted by urban historians, however Corfield takes into account their 'political, social and cultural significance.'⁶⁷ Peter Borsay's *The English Urban Renaissance* (1989) has a more distinctly cultural agenda, focusing on the development of the eighteenth-century town as a centre 'of fashionable society...where the more affluent

⁶⁴ H. J. Dyos (ed.), *The Study of Urban History: The Proceedings of an International Round-Table Conference of the Urban History Group at Gilbert Hall, University of Leicester* (London: Arnold, 1968), p. xiii.

⁶⁵ Peter Clark and Paul Slack (eds.), *Crisis and Order in English Towns, 1500-1700* (London: Routledge, 1972).

⁶⁶ Derek Fraser, 'Introduction' in Derek Fraser and Anthony Sutcliffe (eds.), *The Pursuit of Urban History* (London: Arnold, 1983), p. xi.

⁶⁷ Penelope J Corfield, *The Impact of English Towns 1700-1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 5.

could engage in conspicuous consumption, and recuperate, recreate and reside.⁶⁸ This work marked a distinct moment in English Urban History, between the medieval and modern town, illustrating the rise of urban sociability and a proliferation of newly emerging public buildings designed to house polite, seasonal entertainments. Rosemary Sweet's *The English Town 1680-1840: Government, Society and Culture* (2003), also has a social, cultural and political emphasis. Its chapters explore themes such as 'Social Structure and Social Experience', and 'Urban Culture and the Urban Renaissance', illustrating the prominence of social and cultural issues in the urban history field by 1990. Throughout the 2000s, and 2010s, social and cultural issues have continued to hold a significant place in studies of the English town, for instance, Joyce Ellis's *The Georgian Town: 1680-1840* (2001) includes chapters on 'Urban Society' and 'Identity and Community'; themes which would not have been highly regarded within academia prior to the cultural turn of the 1980s.⁶⁹

Few texts have focused exclusively on the female urban experience in this period; however Corfield, Ellis and Sweet demonstrate sensitivity to the female urban experience. One notable exception which places women at the centre of urban historical research is *Women and Urban Life in Eighteenth Century England: On the Town* (2003), a volume of papers co-edited by Sweet and Penelope Lane which emerged from a conference held at the University of Leicester. The preface to this volume states that its authors wished to open a discussion on 'the contribution of women to urban economy, society and culture' and that they intended to explore the 'economic, social and cultural changes taking place upon women' rather than 'generalising from the experience of men.'⁷⁰ Contributing to the discussion Sweet and Lane initiated, this thesis examines the social and cultural roles women played in eighteenth-century spa life through a close analysis of their own personal papers, rather than making assumptions based on the male spa experience.

⁶⁸ Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in the Provincial Town: 1660-1770* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 28.

⁶⁹ Joyce Ellis, *The Georgian Town: 1680-1840* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001).

⁷⁰ Rosemary Sweet and Penelope Lane (eds.), *Women and Urban Life in Eighteenth Century England: On the Town* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2003), p. 9.

One of the distinguishing features of urban history is that no single methodology dominates the field. S. G. Checkland argues that an unstructured approach to urban history runs the risk of ‘self indulgence, and lack of perspective and direction.’⁷¹ He suggests that all urban histories fit into one of five structured categories as they examine urban spaces through exploring:

- 1) Political, administrative or military features.
- 2) Adopting a thematic approach.
- 3) As part of a grand circular or linear process
- 4) Adopting an ‘urban biography’ approach.
- 5) A ‘family of cities’ approach, looking at groups of towns or cities, based on their shared status, function, general similarities or common experience.⁷²

This thesis explores a series of interlinking themes, rather than following a chronological list of events. The ‘grand process’ of the urbanization of Bath and Tunbridge Wells is investigated in Chapter 3, which addresses the development of commercial leisure pursuits and the areas which housed them at the resorts, whilst the biographic, and ‘family of cities’ approaches are utilised to look at the ‘biographies’ of Bath and Tunbridge Wells. These approaches are not adopted individualistically or alternately, instead they lace in and out of each other in the broader tapestry of the female spa experience.

Local history has gone through periods of development and stagnation ‘back to the beginning of Antiquitarianism.’ Each period, Philip Riden argues, has had a distinctive approach, for example sixteenth-century historians focused on manors and manorial tenures, in the eighteenth century the emergence of travel literature led to a ‘proliferation of guidebooks’ of particular cities, and guides to country houses, mid nineteenth-century local histories were dominated by archaeological interests, while in the later nineteenth century many parish histories emerged.⁷³ A turning point in local historiography came with the establishment of the Department of

⁷¹ S. G. Checkland, ‘An Urban History Horoscope’ in Fraser and Sutcliffe, *The Pursuit of Urban History*, p. 449.

⁷² Checkland, ‘An Urban History Horoscope’, pp. 449-451.

⁷³ Philip Riden, *Local History: A Handbook for Beginners* (Cardiff: Merton Priory Press, 1998, second edition), pp. 9- 14.

English Local History, under the leadership of W. G. Hoskins, at the University of Leicester in 1948. The work of those in the Department encouraged local history to be regarded as a respectable academic discipline.

Spa historiography has tended to take the form of individual studies of specific resorts, with only a small number of works looking collectively at the institution of spa visiting. Frederick Alderson's *The Inland Spas and Resorts of Great Britain* (1973) offers a concise overview of the development of the British watering place.⁷⁴ *The Spas of England* (1976) by Peter Neville Havins examines the development of the English spa town from the sixteenth century, to the present day, focusing on the English interest in the curative properties of mineral water and Muriel Searle's *Spas and Watering Places* also takes a synoptic approach to the eighteenth-century spa.⁷⁵ The most complete account of the development of the English spa to date, Phyllis Hembry's *The English Spa: 1560-1815* (1990), explores the development of resorts in sixteenth and seventeenth-century England, and the proliferation of spa resorts throughout the eighteenth century. Trevor Fawcett noted in his review of Hembry's work that although many topics are covered using a density of source material, other topics including the important issue of health, are lacking in attention and evidence.⁷⁶

Sylvia McIntyre reviewing R. S. Neale's *Bath: A Social History: 1680-1850 or A Valley of Pleasure yet a Sink of Iniquity* (1982) stated that 'most publications dealing with the Social History of Georgian Bath tend to be both superficial and anecdotal.'⁷⁷ Alfred Barbeau's *Life and Letters at Eighteenth-Century Bath* (1909) is highly descriptive, looking in turn at late seventeenth-century Bath, the influence of Beau Nash, the social life of the spa, the visits of famous authors and scientists, and finally the nineteenth-century spa. However, Barbeau's work is carefully footnoted and demonstrates extensive primary research, providing a highly valuable tool for a modern historian of the spa. David Gadd's *A Georgian Summer* (1971) for instance

⁷⁴ Frederick Alderson, *The Inland Resorts and Spa of Great Britain* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1973).

⁷⁵ Havins, *Spas of England*; Murielle Searle, *Spas and Watering Places* (Tunbridge Wells: Midras Books, 1977).

⁷⁶ Trevor Fawcett, *Urban History*, 1: 19 (1992), p. 160.

⁷⁷ Sylvia McIntyre, *Urban History Yearbook*, 9 (1982), p. 170.

is so close to *Life and Letters* in structure and content that it reads almost as a modernisation of Barbeau's text, with an additional chapter on the modern day city.⁷⁸

The 1980s saw a distinct change in the historiography of Bath. Firstly, Sylvia McIntyre produced one of the first essays on Bath which seriously analysed, rather than simply described the seventeenth and eighteenth-century spa. 'Bath: the rise of a resort town 1660-1800' appeared in Clark's *Country Towns in Pre-Industrial England* (1981), revising research which McIntyre had produced for her PhD thesis 'Towns as Health and Pleasure Resorts; Bath, Scarborough and Weymouth', a study which explored the factors contributing to the fashion of spa visitation.⁷⁹ Neale's *Bath: A Social History* (1981) was published shortly after, and signalled another serious attempt to analyse life at the eighteenth-century resort. Neale's work differed dramatically from other texts produced on Bath by looking at themes of production and labour. He depicts a capitalist society conjured up by profit-seeking entrepreneurs, and turned into reality by the hard labour of a 'largely immigrant and geographically labouring population', which offered its wealthy visitors 'brief moments of social communion wrapped in a cocoon of pleasure.'⁸⁰ Instead of celebrating Bath's heritage, its architectural magnificence, and sophisticated Georgian cultural life, Neale exposed a different Bath, one driven by capitalist concerns.

Four years later, the journal *Bath History* first appeared, 'a periodical featuring articles on aspects of the history of Bath' including 'recent research on the city and articles of a wider historical interest relating to Bath.'⁸¹ The journal encouraged historians to approach the city differently, rather than over-viewing large time spans and topic areas, the article-based format resulted in short, in-depth and detailed histories of specific parts of Bath's history. The articles of the journal largely illustrate that Neale is correct in stating that 'Bath appears differently to historians

⁷⁸ Alfred Barbeau, *Life and Letters at Bath in the Eighteenth Century* (Stroud: The History Press, 2009, second edition).

⁷⁹ Sylvia McIntyre, 'Bath: The Rise of a Resort Town, 1660-1800' in Peter Clark (ed), *Country Towns in Pre Industrial England* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1981), pp. 198-199.

⁸⁰ R. S. Neale, *Bath: A Social History: 1680-1850 A Valley of Pleasure Yet a Sink of Iniquity* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 79, 38.

⁸¹ *Bath History*, 3 (1990).

according to their choice of perspective and evidence.’⁸² Trevor Fawcett’s articles ‘Eighteenth-Century Shops and the Luxury Trade’ and ‘Dance and Teachers of Dance in Eighteenth-Century Bath’, for instance, depict a civilised, polite and sophisticated society, while Graham Davis’s ‘Entertainments in Georgian Bath: Gambling and Vice’ looks at the darker and more sinister aspects of the social life of Bath’s elites.⁸³

Since the 1980s, historians of Bath have explored the spa through a variety of primary sources. James Lees Milne’s *Images of Bath* (1982) tells the history of the Georgian city through architectural prints, sketches and social and political caricatures and Mary Hill’s *Bath and the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (1989) explores the relationship between the Georgian spa, and its representation in contemporary novels, taking the line that ‘the novelists who wrote about Bath referred to the city’s actual appearance, amusements, residents and visitors.’⁸⁴ These works draw attention to the variety of primary sources available which depict the Georgian spa, rather than engaging with art history debates, or literary theory. In *The Image of Georgian Bath 1700-2000* (2000) Peter Borsay offers a more thoroughly interdisciplinary study of the city, examining the image of Georgian Bath, generated through various forms of media in the eighteenth-century, following the developments in the spa’s image from the eighteenth century to the present day. Borsay examines ‘as wide a variety of records as possible, from minute-books to museum displays, so as to explore the full range of fronts on which representation operated.’⁸⁵

While Bath has interested many historians over the past century, resulting in an extensive historiography, fewer historians have focused on Tunbridge Wells and much of the literature which has been produced has been influenced by Bath historiography. Lewis Melville’s *Society at Tunbridge Wells* (1912) for instance, was published eight years after *Life and Letters*, and it is easy to spot the latter’s

⁸² Neale, *Bath: A Social History*, p. 36.

⁸³ Trevor Fawcett, ‘Eighteenth-Century Shops and the Luxury Trade’, *Bath History*, 2 (1990); Trevor Fawcett, ‘Dance and Teachers of Dance in Eighteenth-Century Bath’, *Bath History*, 2 (1988); Graham Davis, ‘Entertainments in Georgian Bath: Gambling and Vice’, *Bath History*, 1 (1986).

⁸⁴ James Lees Milne, *Images of Bath* (St Helena Press, 1982); Mary Hill, *Bath and the Eighteenth-Century Novel* (Bath: Bath University Press, 1989), p. 32.

⁸⁵ Peter Borsay, *The Image of Georgian Bath 1700-2000: Towns, Heritage and History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 9.

influence in Melville's work.⁸⁶ Both contain chapters on the seventeenth-century spa, society at the resort, Beau Nash and famous visitors. Margaret Barton's *Tunbridge Wells* (1937) appears to have been influenced by Sitwell's *Bath* (1932) in its elegant style, and celebration of civilized spa society.⁸⁷ The Bath-Tunbridge Wells link is also visible in Alan Savage's *Royal Tunbridge Wells* (1975) which was published four years after David Gadd's *Georgian Summer* (1971) and shows distinct similarities; both offer an accessible history of each spa and both commenting on the present day spa towns.⁸⁸ This link between the literature on Bath and Tunbridge Wells means that the historiography of Tunbridge lacks its own distinctive style, as the subject matter and style of the works borrow directly from the literature on Bath.

There has been no equivalent turn in the historiography of Tunbridge Wells, to that which occurred in the historiography of Bath in the 1980s. The majority of literature on the spa remains descriptive, rather than analytical. The most recent work, C. W Chalklin's *Royal Tunbridge Wells: A History* (2008) however, sits apart from the majority of literature on the spa. Chalklin's emphasis is on local community, and he examines 'the visitors and leisured residents, their daily habits, their intercourse and their entertainment' as well as 'the planning and building of the town, the owners of the houses and amenities, the professional, trades and craftsmen.'⁸⁹ This thesis is similarly concerned with community at the spa; it focuses, however, on the female communities of the resorts and in doing so, furthers the local history of Tunbridge Wells, which is usually approached by historians addressing large time frames or large social groups.

Before turning our attention to the historiography of leisure, it is necessary to address the question, 'what is leisure?' and, more specifically, 'what constituted leisure for eighteenth-century privileged women?' The majority of leisured women considered here were not engaged in paid employment, and therefore we cannot form a simple division between work and leisure.⁹⁰ However, elite and middling women were

⁸⁶ Lewis Melville, *Society at Tunbridge Wells* (London: Eveleigh Nash, 1912).

⁸⁷ Edith Sitwell, *Bath* (London: Faber&Faber, 1932); Barton, *Tunbridge Wells*.

⁸⁸ Alan Savidge, *Royal Tunbridge Wells* (Tunbridge Wells: Midas Books, 1975).

⁸⁹ C. W. Chalklin, *Royal Tunbridge Wells: A History* (Chichester: Phillimore & Co. Ltd, 2008), p. xi.

⁹⁰ Rosemary Baird, *Mistress of the House: Great Ladies and Grand Houses* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003).

engaged in a range of demanding roles, the fact that they were not paid for them does not disqualify them as a form of labour. For example, they organised servants, planned meals, decorated and maintained the house and performed the role of hostess. These were household duties, but it does not mean they were not pleasurable as well. The difficulty of separating work and leisure can be seen in many spa-related situations. For example, attending a ball, paying a social call and shopping are all, on the surface, activities which seem indisputably within the sphere of leisure. However, if the ball is attended by a single woman in the hope of meeting an eligible man, then her attendance constitutes business as much as leisure. If the social visit is made in order to foster a useful friendship, then the visit bears the hallmarks of networking and finally, if a dress, fan and shoes are purchased in order for the wearer to be accepted into polite society, then the clothes constitute a type of uniform perceived necessary or desirable for particular social purposes, as much as they represent a frivolous diversion.

Rather than attempting a strict definition of leisure, this thesis explores the activities which appear to have offered a pleasurable experience for leisured women during their spa visits, including a wide variety of pursuits such as: social activities, sport and exercise, theatre and concert attendance, shopping, intellectual endeavours including reading, writing and discussion and even domestic such as hosting. Through focusing on life writings, this thesis engages with emotional history. Such sources indicate where their authors found pleasure and therefore are highly valuable in research on leisure.

Leisure history emerged as an academic discipline during the 1970s when it developed as a distinct field in sociological studies. The historiography of British leisure largely focuses on the post-industrial period and the working classes. Hugh Cunningham's *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution* (1980) is a good example of this.⁹¹ Cunningham's work discusses the demise of old forms of working class leisure activities and the increased separation between the work place and home, as industry moved from within the household, to the factory, making the gap between work and leisure time more distinct. Here lies the problem for historians of women's

⁹¹ Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution* (London: Croom Helm, 1980).

leisure; the industrial revolution may have led to segregation between home and work place for men and for those women who took up factory work, however, when female workers returned home at the end of each day, they still had to take up their roles as wives, mothers and home keepers. The ‘separation theory’ is inadequate for historians of women’s leisure, as it fails to take into account the fact that throughout history women of all classes, even eighteenth-century elite and middling women, had domestic and familial roles to play within the home, meaning that the home has often been a place of both work and leisure for them. Additionally, it offers little help for exploration of the leisure experienced by the leisured classes. Therefore, although women’s history emerged at the same time as leisure history, the two fields have tended to evolve separately, meaning that ‘the existing conceptual frameworks of leisure history are not appropriate to women’.⁹²

Historians of elite and middling women, such as Elaine Chalus, Katherine Glover, Amanda Herbert, Betty Rizzo, Gillian Russell, Susan Skedd, Ingrid Tague and Amanda Vickery all address aspects of female leisure in the eighteenth century, as Chapter 3 of this thesis discusses. However, because their work explores highbrow forms of leisure, it is more readily recognised as cultural rather than leisure history. This has resulted in a disjointedness in women’s leisure history. Through engaging in a discussion of the physical aspects of women’s leisure, this thesis seeks to explore the sensory side of elite and middling women’s leisure; an issue often addressed in studies of working class women, but less frequently in those of the upper echelons of society.

E. Green, S. Hebron and D. Woodward have addressed the importance of the social aspect of leisure for women in twentieth-century Britain. Commenting on a survey they organised amongst women in Sheffield between 1984 and 1987, Green, Hebron and Woodward note that sociability is a dimension of leisure which ‘many women feel is important... The general feeling was that being in all-women company offered opportunities for ‘letting your hair down.’⁹³ This thesis borrows from Green,

⁹² Claire Langhamer, *Women’s Leisure in England 1920-60* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), p. 2.

⁹³ E. Green, S. Hebron and D. Woodward, *Women’s Leisure, What Leisure?* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education: 1990), p. 7.

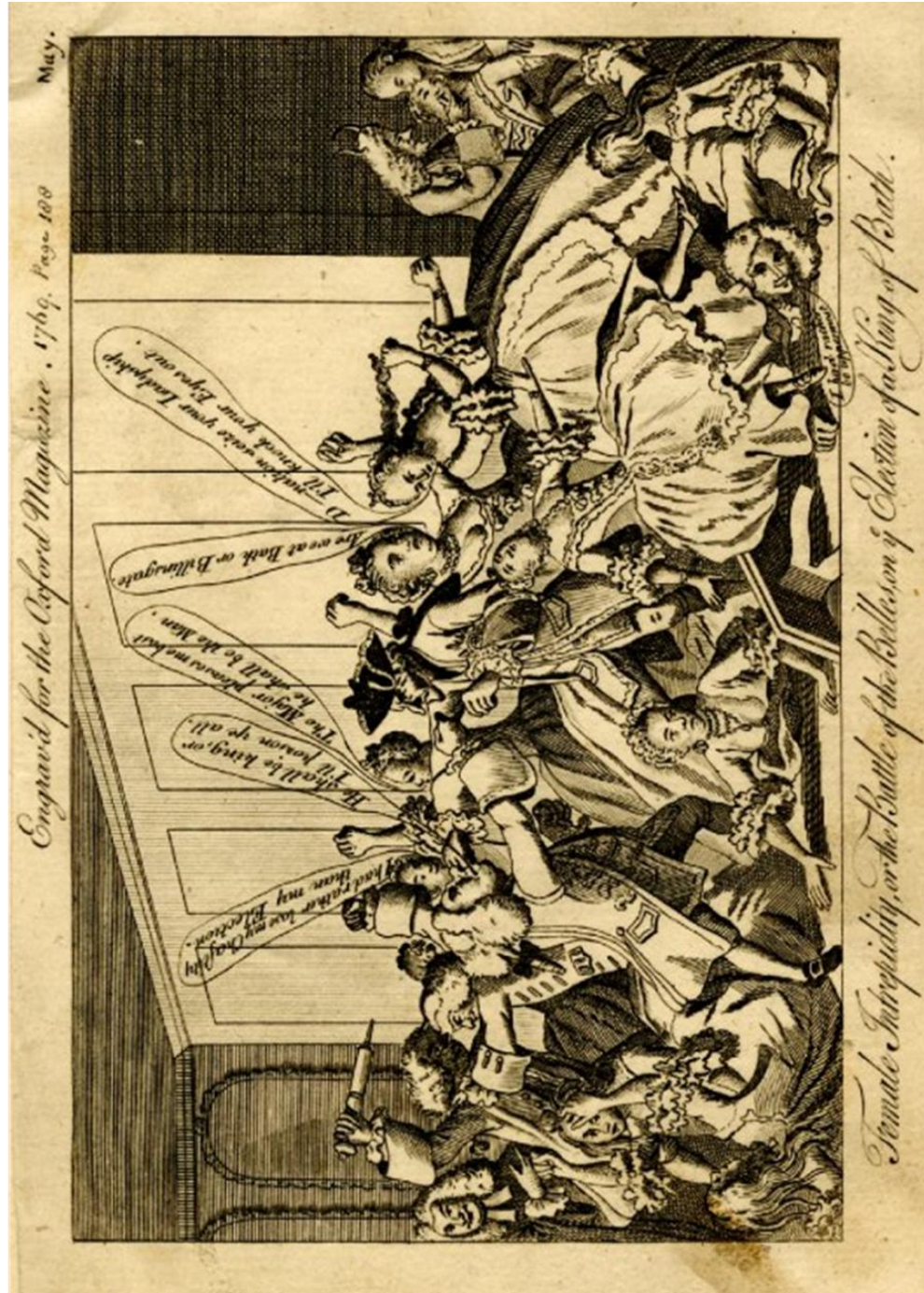
Hebron and Woodward's research; investigating whether privileged female spa visitors felt a similar sense of freedom and relaxation during their rituals of visiting, tea drinking and talking with other privileged women at the spa. Influenced by Cunningham's argument that historians of leisure must address a broad time span, in order to look efficiently at changes and patterns in recreational pursuits, it looks at the period 1680 to 1830, in an attempt to evaluate the different forms of leisure available to elite and middling women at the English spa throughout the long eighteenth century.⁹⁴

Although concerned with public life in its social and intellectual forms, politics, in the most direct sense of the term, do not form a central component of this thesis for one main reason: they are not a prominent feature of the letters and journals of the typical leisured female spa visitor. Female consumption of political news is considered in Chapter 4, and female involvement in other forms of public life such as the public spheres of leisure and literature are crucial to the study, are explored in Chapter 3. Social politics are also considered, for example, female visiting as a way to build friendship networks and attending public events in the hope of making new acquaintances and connections. The 1769 election of the Master of Ceremonies at Bath is perhaps the most prominent example which illustrates how social life at the spa had a political turn. Men and women alike were allowed to vote for their choice of candidate, subscription to the rooms being regarded as the only necessary qualification. A meeting held over the issue of election turned into a scandalously impolite physical fight, as the *Bath and Bristol Chronicle* recorded:

NEVER was such a Scene of Anarchy and Confusion remembered in this City, as happened on Tuesday Night last at one of the public Rooms; when the Friends of Mr. Brereton and Mr. Plomer met mutually to support their Choice of each of the above Gentlemen as Master of the

⁹⁴ Hugh Cunningham, *Leisure in the Industrial Revolution*.

Fig 1: *Female Intrepidity or; the Battle of ye Belles on election of a King of Bath (The Oxford Magazine, May 1769).*



Ceremonies. (65) A written Paper was produced by a Gentleman in the Interest of Mr. Plomer, which he requested to be permitted to read... but a Hiss of Disapprobation from the other Party ensuing, a general Confusion of course followed.- Scandalous Epithets, and Blows, were the Consequence.⁹⁵

When the riot broke out at Bath and women and men alike joined the fight, commentators were quick to highlight what they regarded as inappropriate female engagement in public affairs. *The Oxford Magazine* produced a caricature of the incident, in which a female figure declares: ‘I had rather lose my chastity than my election’, making the common link between female public involvement and sexual impropriety [Fig.1]. In an environment where there was such an emphasis on public sociability, all interactions were charged with some degree of political meaning, in the sense that ideas, influence and connections could be fostered and spread. However, high-politics, and party-politics do not appear as a central theme in the printed or manuscript letters and journals central to this study. It is possible that specific research of political correspondence may reveal that for some women, the spa did provide an environment conducive to political hosting and political influence, as Elaine Chalus suggests. Chalus highlights an occasion when Lady Rockingham courted the favour of William Pitt at Bath through buying a pair of his coach horses as a ‘carefully choreographed political action.’⁹⁶ However, the material consulted throughout this thesis suggests that for the majority of leisured female visitors and residents at the spa, party politics were not a central concern.

v. Sources

The historiography of Bath and Tunbridge Wells tends to be based on a limited pool of primary material. Historians of Bath frequently turn to John Wood’s *An Essay Towards a Description of Bath* (1742), Oliver Goldsmith’s *The Life of Richard Nash* (1762) and Christopher Anstey’s *The New Bath Guide* (1766), whilst those of

⁹⁵ *The Bath and Bristol Chronicle* (16 April 1769).

⁹⁶ Elaine Chalus, ‘Elite Women, Social Politics, and the Political World of Late Eighteenth-Century England’, *The Historical Journal*, 43: 3 (2000), p. 670.

Tunbridge Wells utilise Lowdowick Rowzee's *The Queene's Welles*, and Thomas Benge Burr's *History of Tunbridge Wells* (1766).⁹⁷ Daniel Defoe and Celia Fiennes' accounts of their visits to both spas are also frequently utilised, and where gaps in historical knowledge emerge, the novels of Jane Austen and Tobias Smollett are often used. While these sources provide rich material, they have been consulted time and time again. They are of course also utilised throughout this study, however they are supplementary to the larger bulk of manuscript material, with a clear line being drawn between factual and fictional sources. Neither category of source is read as providing an 'authentic' truth, yet they are carefully read for the specific benefits each written form can provide. The comparative difference in size between the two resorts, as well as Bath's longer visiting season, has resulted in an inevitable difference between the amount of manuscript and printed literature on the resorts, with that relating to Bath being significantly larger. However, a considerable body of material on Tunbridge Wells has been consulted; where a difference in source material is significant, the issue is highlighted and the reasons for this explored.

The original research presented in this thesis extends across nineteen repositories and includes the letters, diaries, pocket books and account books of privileged female spa visitors, many of whom have been identified above. In some cases long correspondences between friends or relations can be traced, covering an extensive time span. This is so with the correspondence of Bridget Ottley and Margaret Graves. Similarly, some female diarists kept regular journals of their repeated spa trips such as Caroline Powys and Katherine Plymley. However, the thesis also examines single letters found as miscellaneous items in archive collections. These letters might provide little information about the author or the recipient, but contain relevant material regarding female spa visitation. Lack of contextual knowledge regarding these items should not render them useless. By extending research to nineteen repositories across England and Wales, this study places an emphasis on the spa visitor whose life-writings have been stored in repositories located near their homes, rather than at the resorts, which they may only have visited occasionally. In addition to these archival letters, printed volumes of letters written by well-known

⁹⁷ Christopher Anstey, *The New Bath Guide: or, Memoirs of the B-r-d Family. In a Series of Poetical Epistles* (London: C. Wittingham, 1800 reprint); Lodowick Rowzee, *The Queenes Welles That Is, A Treatise of the Nature and Vertues of Tunbridge Water* (London: John Dawson, 1632).

residents are also utilised, such as those of Jane Austen, Fanny Burney, Lady Elizabeth Hervey, Elizabeth Montagu, Betsy Sheridan and Hester Lynch Piozzi. All letters and diaries, whether composed by famous or lesser known individual, are utilised in the same way. Their authors are treated as examples of leisured spa women, and the life-writings are searched for their qualitative information, description and details relating to eighteenth-century spa life and how it was lived by elite and middling women.

A variety of printed primary sources are also utilised including newspapers, local guide books and biographies. Several newspapers were printed at Bath throughout the period in consideration; however as this thesis predominantly focuses on uncovering manuscript material it is not within the remit of the study to also conduct a full scale newspaper survey. Therefore, a sample year of the weekly paper, *The Bath Chronicle*, has been examined for each decade that it was in print, throughout the long eighteenth century. The paper has been searched for adverts targeted at women, advertising establishments, fashionable wares, cosmetics, health and medically related practices and goods. Additionally, selected adverts and articles from *The Bath Journal* and *The Bath Herald* are also occasionally highlighted. Tunbridge Wells had no equivalent local paper until the later 1830s, therefore, The British Library's Collection of eighteenth-century London-based papers have been searched for similar adverts and articles targeted at female readers. Guide books to Bath and Tunbridge Wells produced between 1689 and 1832 are examined, as are biographies of local individuals connected with the spas and miscellaneous printed items, such as pamphlets, posters, tickets and invitations.

Fictional works are also explored throughout the thesis, including novels, plays and poetry. Novels in particular are closely examined such as the usual 'Bath' novels: *Northanger Abbey* (1817), *Persuasion* (1817) and *The Expeditions of Humphry Clinker* (1771) as well as Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752) and Maria Edgeworth's *Belinda* (1801) and the much neglected *A Winter in Bath* (1807).⁹⁸ A

⁹⁸ *A Winter in Bath: A Novel* (4 vols, 1807) was published anonymously, with no other indications of its author than 'the author of two popular romances'. It is this novel which is considered throughout this thesis and should not be confused with Mrs Bayfield's *A Winter at Bath: or, Love as it Maybe*,

variety of plays are also consulted, including Thomas Rawlins's *Tunbridge-Wells: or a Dayes Courtship* (1678), Thomas Baker's *Tunbridge Walks: or, the Yeoman of Kent* (1703), Frances Sheridan's *A Journey to the Bath* and Richard Sheridan's *The Rivals* (1775). Rather than supplying details which cannot be found in manuscript or factual printed works, these fictional works are explored throughout the thesis, in order to understand how the leisured female visitor was portrayed by contemporaries.

'Water poetry', is another form of spa fiction which has been consulted. This often neglected genre of poetry falls into two categories. Firstly, those poems inspired by the resorts and their visitors, either of a comic or a praise-worthy nature, that were published and became widely available, and secondly those manuscript poems composed at the resorts by visitors writing on the same themes, who exchanged their verses in the public spaces of the spa. At Tunbridge Wells, such manuscript verses were collected at the booksellers, where they became accessible to all. Samuel Derrick, Master of the Ceremonies, noted that: 'Lampoons are one of the principle amusements of the place.'⁹⁹ Of the former category there are two particularly notable examples, Mary Chandler's *A Description of Bath: A Poem. In a Letter to a Friend* (1733), and Christopher Anstey's *The New Bath Guide*, whilst examples of the latter group have been found in archival collections, such as *A Bath Lamoon* of 1693/4 located in Nottingham University Special Collections and *Advice on a Daughter Going to Bath*, located at the National Library of Wales.

There was a fashion for verses 'complimentary to the ladies in general, or to some particular fair one' at both spas.¹⁰⁰ In the 1722 *Tunbriggialia* for instance, an anonymous poet compiles a series of short verses on the beauty of female visitors such as: *On a very pretty Lady*:

and *Friendship as it Ought to Be* (4 vols, 1807) published in the same year. See *Monthly Literary Recreations: or, Magazine of General Information and Amusement* (London: 1807), ii, p. 392.

⁹⁹ Samuel Derrick, Tunbridge Wells (1 September 1762) in Samuel Derrick, *Letters from Liverpoole, Chester, Corke, the lake of Killarney, Dublin, Tunbridge Wells* (Dublin, 1767), p. 60.

¹⁰⁰ Jasper Sprange, *The Tunbridge Wells Directory; Comprehending a Particular and Full Account of the Medicinal Springs, its Virtues, and in What Cases Most Salutary, with Rules for Drinking Them, Laid Down by Several Eminent Physicians* (Tunbridge Wells, 1792), p. 14.

By Love, I swear, and by the sacred Nine,
Miss T' ___'s a beauty exquisitely fine.¹⁰¹

However, there was also a taste for poetry which mocked female company at spa resorts such as, *A Poetical Address to the Ladies of Bath*, which satirised the behaviour of female visitors, wryly commenting:

A Female Wit is at the Very best,
A silken vehicle for flimsy jest:-
A Widow's troublesome; when married, pert;
A Wife's an insolent, a Maid's a flirt.¹⁰²

The representation of female characters in both flattering and satirical verses is closely examined.

Visual primary sources, predominantly social and cultural caricatures, are also utilised such as Thomas Rowlandson's *Comforts of Bath* series, Gillray's *A Modern Belle Going to the Rooms at Bath*, and a multitude of less well known prints sourced largely from the collection held by the British Museum. As Diana Donald argues, satirical prints must be treated with care not 'cherry picked' as an unproblematic source.¹⁰³ Within this thesis they are read for their representation of elite and middling women at the resorts. Additionally, a number of architectural images of the spas, and depictions of their social scenes are also utilised, in particular, the illustrations of Thomas Loggon, 'court dwarf to Fredrick, Prince of Wales' who ran a shop at the end of the Tunbridge Walks, as well as a circulating library at Bath and the 'long room' at Bristol Hotwells.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ *Tunbriglia; or, the Tunbridge Miscellany, for the Year 1722* (London: A. Moore, 1722), p. 21.

¹⁰² *A Poetical Address to the Ladies of Bath* (Bath: R. Cruttwell, 1774), p. 3.

¹⁰³ Diana Donald, *The Age of Caricature: Satirical Prints in the Reign of George II* (New Haven: London, 1996), p. vii.

¹⁰⁴ Savidge, *Royal Tunbridge Wells*, pp. 80-81.

vi. Structure

This thesis is divided into five central chapters, each of which explores a different component of leisured women's lives at Bath and Tunbridge Wells. Chapter 1 addresses the theme of health; arguing that despite the popular representation of female spa visitors as healthy pleasure-seekers, many women resorted to the spas seeking medical aid. Exploring how the waters of the resorts were advertised as a tonic for female-specific ailments, and highlighting instances in which women sought gynaecological advice and cures at Bath and Tunbridge Wells, the chapter illustrates the emotional and physical discomfort experienced by many women during their time at the resorts. Chapter 1 also demonstrates the multifaceted nature of resort life, considering the social and leisure opportunities presented to women through health treatments. It concludes with an investigation of female companionship of invalids, a distressing and emotionally taxing activity which simultaneously offered healthy women the chance to partake in social life at the resorts.

Furthering the line of argument established in Chapter 1, which highlights the multiplicity of opportunities presented to elite and middling women at the resorts, Chapter 2 argues that the spa presented leisured women with a variety of romantic, courtship and sexual choices, of which, marriage was only one option. The fictional representation of women as romantic and sexual beings is considered first, in a study which highlights how Bath and Tunbridge Wells were often depicted as arenas of danger and opportunity. The chapter moves on to investigate how far the resorts genuinely functioned as marriage markets, exploring examples of women who met their husbands during resort visits and residences and comparing these to fictional accounts. Section three examines the spa girls' schools, paying particular attention to the ways in which spa-based female education prepared young women for the marriage market, both through instilling skills deemed desirable in genteel wives, and providing opportunities for young women to observe how courtships were conducted in the public arenas of the resorts.

It is argued in section four of Chapter 2 that female flirtation was an accepted and expected part of spa culture; one made easier by the emphasis placed on hetero-sociability. Whilst it is unlikely that elite and middling women engaged in illicit sexual relationships as freely as contemporary fiction suggests, section five proposes that even polite women were aware of a public sphere of sex which surrounded them at the spa, such as the prostitutes who inhabited the pleasure gardens and walks, the pornographic literature available in circulating libraries and even the sexual adventures of their male acquaintances. At this point, the question of high class prostitution is also addressed, and it is proposed that a select number of women may have formed part of a public sphere of sex, partially integrated into the class of leisured female visitors and residents. The chapter concludes with an investigation of the spa widow and spinster. It is argued that single women had much to gain through creating lives of comfortable celibacy at the resort, in which they could foster a female-centric support network and have access to a wide range of public areas and leisure activities.

Chapter 3 explores the urban leisure pursuits enjoyed by privileged women at Bath and Tunbridge Wells. Part one considers female attitudes towards public leisure, whilst part two argues that women could adopt highly physical lives at the resorts, investigating female sporting and leisure pursuits. Women's participation in public gambling is addressed next; an activity widely available to polite women in the public arenas at Bath and Tunbridge Wells, while part four addresses female patronage of theatrical and musical events, with particular attention to female participation in the fostering a celebrity culture at the resorts. Religion and charity forms the focus of part five; both of which took on a commercial persona at the eighteenth-century spa. Church and chapel-going bore similarities to other forms of tourism, as visitors desired to hear certain speakers or view particular chapels, and many establishments required payment for entrance. The sixth and final part of Chapter 3 focuses on shopping for wearable fashions as a female leisure pursuit, with particular attention being given to the ways in which spa stores enabled women to create and alter their public image through the abundance of fashionable goods and cosmetics which were made available.

Whilst Chapters 1, 2 and 3 illustrate female engagement in the public sphere of sociability, Chapter 4 argues that the more widely recognised literary and discursive public sphere was also female inclusive at Bath and Tunbridge Wells. The chapter explores a specifically Habermasian notion of a public sphere, based on the institution of the coffee-house. Section one addresses female access to the Ladies' Coffee-House at Bath (the only known example of a coffee-house specifically designed for a female-clientele in eighteenth-century Britain) and to female-inclusive coffee-rooms at both resorts. Female patronage of the circulating library is considered next; an institution which offered women access to newspapers, literature, and public discussion. The third and final section of the chapter explores female involvement in the literary public sphere of the resorts, through consideration of female authors who resided at the resorts.

The fifth and final chapter moves on to consider the domestic sphere of the eighteenth-century spa, a space which until now has received little attention. Section one addresses family relationships, investigating how women maintained their roles as daughters, wives and mothers, during their spa visits and residences. It argues that the hetero-sociability of resorts also resulted in public family sociability. Section two considers women's roles as house-hunters, identifying the important task they frequently assumed in selecting residences for themselves, their families and their friends during visits to Bath and Tunbridge Wells. Section three addresses domestic sociability; in particular highlighting the regularity of tea visits as part of women's daily routine through which they created female friendship networks whilst at the spa. This section also evidences female hosting of domestic entertainments, which transformed their resort homes into semi-public arenas. The chapter concludes with an investigation of women's domestic pursuits, including letter and journal writing, as well as needlework. It is argued that such activities provided a creative outlet, and rather than being viewed as the activities of idle women, can be seen as artistic pursuits which many women enjoyed, even whilst at the spa and surrounded by an array of urban entertainments. In the conclusion, the central themes and patterns which emerge throughout the five central chapters are brought together.