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**New Perspectives on 'Black Tom'? The Female Relationships of Sir Thomas Wentworth,
1593-1641**

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Abstract

Thomas Wentworth, the first Earl of Strafford, has been portrayed as either a ruthless tyrant or the first martyr of Parliament, and his political career has been meticulously studied by historians since his execution in 1641. Though Wentworth did have an important political career, it is his home life that this thesis looks to focus on. During his lifetime, Wentworth had three wives and four surviving children. Yet, Wentworth's wives have often been overlooked by historians, so much so that no letter from or to any of his wives made it into William Knowler's publication of Strafford's letters in 1739.

It is the aim of this thesis to highlight the importance of women in their own right during the Early Modern period. By using what remains of Wentworth's letters and first-hand accounts of the Wentworth's close friends and family, this thesis uncovers the lives of each of these women and highlights the influence they may have had over Thomas Wentworth and his career. The research suggests that Wentworth was a kind and loving husband and father, and that his career was at least partially motivated by his family and his drive to give them a better life. This thesis begins by looking at Wentworth's family background in order to understand Wentworth's relationship with his parents and how their marriage affected Wentworth's own relationships with his wives and family. It then looks at each of Wentworth's wives: Margaret Clifford, Arabella Holles and Elizabeth Rhodes respectively; not only does this focus allow us to better understand the lives each of these women experienced, but from this we are able to compare each of the marriages to see how Wentworth's approach to his relationships changed over time.

The outcome of this research highlights the significance of women and their role as wives of important political figures during this period; if Wentworth could be shaped by the women in his life, it is possible to argue that other key political figures may have been too.

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I would also like to thank my family for their constant support and encouragement, my boyfriend for his [feigned] interest and my friends; it has been a long year and a half, but we made it!

Covid Statement

This research has been affected by the 2020 Coronavirus pandemic. As a result of the closure of archives and libraries, I have been unable to access certain sources significant to my research.

The Strafford Papers that hold Wentworth's personal correspondence, including the letters from his wives, are held on microfilm at Sheffield Archives. These are a significant source of evidence for my research and though I have been able to obtain digital copies of the letters written by his wives, I have not had access to the rest of the correspondence and as such, have been unable to put the letters I do have into context. This is especially significant regarding the letters from Arabella, as they are undated.

At the same time, I have been unable to access R. Monckton Milnes's 'Private letters from the earl of Strafford to his third wife', *Philobiblon Society*, 1, (1854), pp 17–18. I have instead relied upon those published in Elizabeth Cooper *The Life of Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford and Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland*, (1874), and the entry on Thomas Wentworth in the *Biographia Britannica: Or The Lives Of The Most Eminent Persons Who Have Flourished in Great Britain And Ireland, From the Earliest Ages, Down to the Present Times: Collected from the Best Authorities, Both Printed and Manuscript, And Digested in the Manner of Mr Bayle's Historical and Critical Dictionary*, VI.I, (1763), 4172-4197.

Another source I have been unable to gain access to is 'A letter of newes from Ireland containing (amongst other things) the new lord deputies entrainment and taking his place there', which can be found in the Trumbull Papers, at the British Library. This could have proven insightful to the fourth chapter, on Wentworth's third wife, Elizabeth Rhodes, as it details Wentworth's 'coronation' in Ireland, and so may have held information about the role of Elizabeth, who had moved to Ireland ahead of her husband.

As a result of the closure of the archives, I have also been unable to gain access to the Prison records from Wentworth's time at Marshalsea prison in order to find out more about his and Arabella's stay.

Introduction

The life of Sir Thomas Wentworth, 1593-1641, has long been studied by historians of the Early Modern period.¹ His career has proven significant to understanding the politics leading up to the Civil War; and yet, Wentworth remains a controversial figure. In life Thomas Wentworth came to inspire contrasting opinions on his character; the Earl of Clarendon may have put it best in his description of Wentworth's ability 'in doing good to his friends...[and] in doing mischief to his enemies'.² As such, he was seen by contemporaries as either 'a treasure, which no earthly thing can countervail' or 'the greatest enemy to the liberties of his country'.³ Even after his death on the scaffold in 1641 he continued to divide opinions. Due to the conflicting contemporary attitudes, subsequent historiography also found it difficult to agree on how to portray Wentworth.⁴ Seen as 'the Satan of the apostasy', as well as a 'great administrator who made Ireland prosperous', he has been vilified and eulogised by historians ever since.⁵ It was not until the revisionist school of history in the 1990s that historians began to understand there was more to

¹ J.F. Merritt, 'Introduction. The Historical Reputation of Thomas Wentworth' in *The Political World of Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, 1621-1641*, ed. J.F. Merritt, (Cambridge: 1996), 1-23. Hugh Kearney, *Strafford In Ireland 1633-1641: Study in Absolutism*, (Cambridge University Press: 1989), pp.xi-xv.

² This was originally thought to have been recorded by Plutarch about Silla, however, Clarendon found it just as apt to describe Wentworth. Earl of Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England Begun in the Year 1641, Vol. I*, ed. W. Dunn Macray, (Oxford 1888), p.342.

³ George Radcliffe, 'Appendix. An Essay towards the Life of my Lord Strafforde, in a Letter to the late Earl' in *The Earl of Strafforde's Letters and Dispatches vol.2*, ed. William Knowler, (1739), 429-439, p.435. Earl of Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion Vol. I*, p.223.

⁴ Early historians followed the popular opinion of the time and saw Wentworth as a ruthless tyrant. However, with time came a more reflective look on Wentworth's character. Royalist historians tended to be more favourable to Wentworth, depicting him as the first martyr of Parliament, his death portrayed as a classical tragedy. Whereas later Tory historians still sought to denounce Wentworth as he stood for all that went wrong with the Personal Rule. J.F Merritt, 'Introduction. The Historical Reputation of Wentworth', 1-23.

⁵ Henry Hallam, 'The Constitutional History of England' in *Critical and Historical Essays*; Thomas Babington Macaulay (Longman: 1874) 51-98, p.62. C.V. Wedgwood, *Thomas Wentworth, First Earl of Strafford, 1569-1641: A Revaluation*, (Phoenix Press: 1961), p.12.

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Wentworth than simply good or bad.⁶ It is the aim of this study to add a new perspective on Wentworth. By focusing on the female relationships he had in his lifetime, we hope to prove there was more to the man that some historians have tried to condemn and others to praise.

Wentworth had three wives and three daughters during his lifetime, along with a small number of female friendships, and yet the relationships he had with them and the kind of husband and father he was has so often been overlooked by historians. This is in part because the lives of women in history have not always gained much attention: often seen only through the male perspective, their significance was judged in how they fitted into a patriarchal society. Yet how can we hope fully to understand Wentworth without understanding his personal life, something that we can only begin to do by looking at his closest relationships. Wentworth has been perceived as a political force; whether as a tyrant or a great administrator his significance has been his political career. However, he avoided taking his politics home with him; he would not discuss his work with his wives and instead at home enjoyed hunting and playing games with friends.⁷ As such, Wentworth was a completely different man at home than he was in the political sphere, yet this juxtaposition of character has barely been noted by those studying Wentworth. Therefore, it is imperative that we look at Wentworth's female relationships, not only to gain an understanding to a side of his character that has been ignored but also to shed some light on the lives they would have led as the wives of such a divisive figure.

⁶ Richard Cust, 'Wentworth's 'change of sides' in the 1620s' in Merritt ed. *The Political World of Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford 1621-1641*, 63-80.

⁷ Elizabeth Cooper, *The Life of Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford and Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, Vol. I*, (1874), p.171.

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In order to understand why a study of Wentworth's female relationships is so valuable, it is worth briefly summarising the historiography that is already available on Wentworth.

During his political career Wentworth relied heavily on correspondence with senior courtiers and councillors to keep informed of the latest political developments. As a result, his surviving correspondence is vast; however, after Wentworth's execution his letters were kept at Wentworth Woodhouse where access to them was limited. Historians, therefore, had to rely on the publication of William Knowler, who in 1739 edited and published two volumes of these letters and dispatches. Although Knowler stated that he would not attempt to comment on Wentworth's character, allowing the letters to speak for themselves, his selection and edition of letters created an unbalanced perspective which filtered through into subsequent publications.⁸ The historiography therefore, came to represent Wentworth as a devoted servant, a great administrator and the brain behind an authoritarian but benevolent government.⁹

As already stated, Wentworth's career has been the focus of many scholars over the years, whether it was Hugh Kearney's study of Wentworth's political rule in Ireland or Wentworth's financial gains throughout his career (as explained by J.P. Cooper) or even his so called apostasy of 1629, which has divided many historians.¹⁰ Much of the early historiography focused on Wentworth's influence, his formal authority and his political relationships, and consequently, very little attention had been paid to Wentworth's

⁸ William Knowler, *The Earl of Strafforde's Letters and Dispatches: Vol. I*, Dedication.

⁹ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, pp.11-15.

¹⁰ Kearney, *Strafford in Ireland 1633-1641*. J.P. Cooper, 'The Fortune of Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford', *The Economic History Review*, 11.2, 1958, 227-248. Cust, 'Wentworth's change of sides' in the 1620s', 63-80.

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personal and intimate relationships. However, more recently, scholars have begun to take an interest in matters of social, cultural and emotional significance. The first scholar to consider the Lord Deputy as a man, rather than a crown servant, was Elizabeth Cooper in 1874 who, in her biography of Wentworth, does not shy away from including Wentworth's relationship with his wives to come to an understanding of the man. Cooper had an interesting take on his character, suggesting that although cold to the world around him, to any person who won his heart Wentworth was filled with an unbreakable sense of devotion, which fits with the description given of Wentworth by the Earl of Clarendon.¹¹ However, her portrayal seems to have been largely overlooked, as it was not until Burghclere's biography of Wentworth in the early 1900s that the personal side of Wentworth again gained some attention. Not only did she write a biography of Wentworth that included fragments on Wentworth's female relationships, but in her study of Wentworth's letters, Burghclere began to explore his relationships, briefly looking at his role as father and husband and how that contrasted with his political alter ego.¹² Burghclere was fortunate enough to have access to Wentworth's letters in order to aid her research, and so was able to provide details of Wentworth's personal life that had previously been inaccessible. In Knowler's edition of the letters, no correspondence between Wentworth and his wives was included.¹³ This meant that the only information regarding his relationship with his family came from references made to other correspondence. Most of these relationships were politically based, and as a result the particulars of his private life would not have been appropriate to

¹¹ Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth, Vol. I*, p.82.

¹² Winifred Burghclere, *Strafford Volumes I and II*, (London: 1931). Winifred Burghclere, 'Strafford as Letter Writer', *The Nineteenth Century and After: A Monthly Review*, 59.347, (1907), 90-106.

¹³ In fact, the only letter of the ones he wrote to his children included was his final letter to his son before his execution. Knowler, *Letters and Dispatches, Vol. II*, p.416.

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include amongst discussions about religion, war or finance and so the softer, familial side of his character would not have been revealed. Therefore, Burghclere's research is significant because she was the first to see this side of Wentworth from his own hand.

Consequently, it was not until the letters were made available to the public, after the Second World War when they were deposited in Sheffield Archives, that a true representation of Wentworth took shape, as shown in C.V. Wedgwood's revision of her earlier interpretation to portray the harsh and unforgiving 'Black Tom Tyrant', as well as the adoring husband, father and friend.¹⁴ And so more recently, there has begun to be a shift in perspective on Wentworth: Fiona Pogson's work sheds light on what insight Wentworth's letters give to his relationships, specifically his political alliances with Archbishop Laud and Lord Cottington. Pogson used Wentworth's letters to argue that whilst he had a strong political alliance with Laud, the 'agents of thorough' being more well-known, it was with Cottington whom he could claim a real friendship.¹⁵ At the same time, Charlotte Brownhill has focused her studies on the contribution of Wentworth's close friends to his career, arguing that though Wentworth was often depicted as acting alone, Sir George Radcliffe and Christopher Wandesford were his key confidants.¹⁶ Though there has begun to be an interest in the more personal side of Thomas Wentworth, there remains more to his female relationships than has yet been stated. As a major figure of the time, Wentworth's relationships are significant, especially when they deviate from what would have been

¹⁴ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*.

¹⁵ Fiona Pogson, 'Making and Maintaining Political Alliances during the Personal Rule of Charles I: Wentworth's Associations with Laud and Cottington', *History*, 84.277, 1999, 52-73.

¹⁶ Charlotte Brownhill, 'The Personal and Professional Relationships between Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford and his Closest Advisors', (PhD. thesis, University of Sheffield: 2004).

expected; as such, it is surprising that the kind and gentle side that Wentworth showed to those he cared about has not come under scrutiny.¹⁷

It is also worth noting the progression of women's studies over the last century, as this suggests why there has been a lack of focus on Wentworth's female relationships up until this point. Contemporary opinions of women were that they were the weaker sex: they were easily tempted and as such could not be trusted. Such a belief took its origins from the creation story, where it was thought Eve was created as an afterthought to Adam, who had been made in God's image. At the same time, it was Eve who was the one to be tempted by the Serpent, disobeying God and creating sin, thereby passing her weaknesses on to all women. As religion was a big part of everyday life during the early modern period, it is unsurprising that the prevailing opinion was that women could not be trusted.¹⁸ The result of this was that women were not allowed to play a part in politics or receive a university education. This left women with little agency and few ways of communicating their individual lives to society, as such they faded into the background of history- their significance ignored or seen only through the male perspective.¹⁹ This is perhaps why Wentworth's wives have, up until this point, been largely ignored. In recent decades however, there has been a flourishing of interest in the women of history resulting in an abundance of scholarship on women in early modern England and Ireland. It has been argued that women found other ways of exercising their own version of control and

¹⁷ From what was written about Wentworth as a political figure it is somewhat surprising to see how devoted and loving he was to his family. Unlike a lot of wealthy aristocratic families, Wentworth took an interest in the raising of his children, writing specifically 'Nan, they tell me danceth prettily, which I wish...were not lost'. Knowler, *Letters and Dispatches*, Vol. II, p.379.

¹⁸ Cissie Fairchilds, *Women in Early Modern Europe 1500-1700*, (2007), pp.9-10.

¹⁹ Jacqueline Eales, *Women in Early Modern England 1500-1700*, (Routledge: 2005), pp.47-59.

authority and so, as Barbara Harris has pointed out, politics was in fact more than just the male-dominated institutions.²⁰ Politics for the landed elite did not just revolve around courtly life, the royal family and government. Instead recent research has highlighted that politics was also a part of domestic and family life, including family status and reputation, control of lands and other assets. If the family is seen as its own political unit then women had a more active role in politics than previously had been thought.²¹ Although they had little room to manoeuvre in official politics, women were able to exert their influence closer to home, with the running of the household, through patronage rights and marriage negotiations.²² Patronage was an important part of early modern society, allowing families to maintain or advance their standing, and one in which women and wives were able to play a significant part, along with marriage negotiations.²³ Whether it was through patronage or marriage negotiations, because women were in charge of running the household, recent scholars have come to argue that women were able to exercise some influence over domestic politics.

Since Wentworth's third wife, Elizabeth Rhodes, accompanied her husband to Ireland it is perhaps also worth noting the experiences of women in Ireland as well. Women in Ireland had a similar experience as those in England; however, they perhaps had fewer

²⁰ Barbara Harris, 'Women and Politics in Early Tudor England', *The Historical Journal*, 33.2, (1990), 259-281.

²¹ James Daybell, 'Introduction: Rethinking Women and Politics in Early Modern England' in *Women and Politics in Early Modern England, 1450-1700*, ed. James Daybell, (Routledge: 2017), 1-20, pp.2-3.

²² Eales, *Women in Early Modern England*, pp.7-15.

²³ One form of patronage was for parents to place their children into the households of relatives, friends or other high-ranking families who would then educate and raise the children. This would create or strengthen relationships between the two families as they would often visit each other. In some circumstances the lady of the house would also introduce the child at court and help to find husbands. Women could also get involved in the marriage negotiations for their children and it was not seen as out of the ordinary or above their rank when they did. Widows would usually arrange marriages for their children, as they had no husband to do it for them. Harris, 'Women and Politics', pp.262-265.

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opportunities to exercise such control. The population of Ireland was divided not only over religion but also over 'Old English' versus 'New English'.²⁴ This meant marriage alliances still played an important part in society as they could be used to maintain boundaries between the different subcultures. Marriage had always been important in Ireland: in Gaelic society it had been used to show political support between families, and marriages would change with the politics; the Old English had used marriage to strengthen their community identity by limiting its membership.²⁵ However, after the Reformation religion became one of the most important factors in choosing a spouse, as such marriages between Catholic 'Old English' and Gaelic families became more common.²⁶ Marriage was also used to cement ties between converted Irish families and the 'New English', as well as across the borders between England and Ireland; for example Richard Boyle, 1st Earl of Cork, used the marriages of his children to create a wide circle of political influence around Ireland, as well as within the English court.²⁷ Gaelic marriages traditionally gave women little political authority as Irish law stopped women from inheriting family land and, in agreements between lords and crown officials, wives and widows were often overlooked.²⁸ However, as in England, the public and the private spheres were not so dissimilar and Gaelic women

²⁴ 'Old English' refers to descendants of those from England, Wales and Normandy who settled in Ireland after the Norman invasion in 1169-71. 'New English' refers to the Protestants who came to Ireland after the Tudor conquest in the 16th and 17th centuries.

²⁵ To protect the identity of their community, in the Pale, marriage partners were traditionally chosen from a small group of families. Nevertheless, as marriage was a way of gaining access to municipal offices, marriages to Gaelic families, as well as to politically ambitious New English, did take place. Mary O'Dowd, *A History of Women in Ireland, 1500-1800*, (Routledge: 2016), pp.14-15.

²⁶ O'Dowd, *A History of Women in Ireland*, p.16.

²⁷ This was not uncommon as many Irish-born peers would gain landed estates and titles through marriages to English wives.

²⁸ Due to the nature of marriage in Gaelic society, where marriages could end as quickly as political alliances changed, women would be used even more as a bargaining tool with even less say, as Lords threatened to remove their daughters from marriages if their husbands' family displeased them.

gained some political control in the running of the household and the raising of the children.²⁹

Where women in England also had opportunities at court, especially in the Queen's Household, in Ireland they did not. Tudor and early Stuart Ireland had seen the decline of the Irish court and Dublin Castle had fallen into a state of disrepair. Wives of Lord Deputies rarely travelled to Ireland with their husbands, which meant there were few women in important official positions to exercise patronage rights. It was not until Thomas Wentworth was Lord Deputy that an interest was shown in developing the Irish court.³⁰ It has often been argued that Wentworth played *rex* whilst Lord Deputy of Ireland, so it is hardly surprising that he would want his home to reflect this position.³¹ In the 1630s he made plans to refurbish Dublin Castle and supported the expansion of social activities in and around it, including the development of theatre. Wentworth's third wife, Elizabeth Rhodes, was one of the few Lord Deputies' wives who accompanied their husbands to Ireland and yet surprisingly little has been written about her experience and what role she played. After Wentworth's execution, subsequent Lord Deputies continued to develop court life in Dublin; however it was not until the mid-eighteenth century that the wives of these officials had any real involvement or place within the court.³² Instead Irish women had more luck finding themselves positions in the English court, especially as this remained important for Irish

²⁹ O'Dowd, *A History of Women in Ireland*, pp.21-28.

³⁰ *Ibid*, pp.28-30.

³¹ Dougal Shaw, 'Thomas Wentworth and Monarchical Ritual in Early Modern Ireland', *The Historical Journal*, 49.2, (2006), 331-355.

³² At social events in the late 1600s the men and women would be segregated, dining separately. Rachel Wilson, *The Vicereines of Ireland and the Transformation of the Dublin Court, 1703-1737*, *The Court Historian*, 19.1, 3-28. O'Dowd, *A History of Women in Ireland*, p.30.

political affairs.³³ This would suggest that women in Ireland had little very political agency and perhaps explain why, until recently, very little has been written about them.

During the early modern period elite men would move themselves and their families over to Ireland, either for a place in Irish office or after gaining lands from the plantation initiatives; this left numerous English girls spending their youth growing up in Ireland. Ireland was seen as a cold and harsh land, the setting of what was known as the 'Irish nightmare'- not the best place for proper English girls to be raised,³⁴ Yet, some of these girls went on, in later life, to write about their experience of growing up in Ireland; to them it was a 'mini-England' where they were able to experience great happiness.³⁵ Although this is the retrospective narrative of women, who possibly would not have been aware of the real world drama that was taking place around them, recent scholarship has taken an interest in what these women had to say.³⁶ Julie Eckerle has studied the experiences of Mary Boyle, daughter of the Earl of Cork, and Alice Wandesford, daughter of Christopher Wandesford. Also briefly mentioned in her research are Thomas Wentworth's daughters, due to their close connection with Alice Wandesford, and their stepmother, Elizabeth Rhodes. Through their own writing Eckerle has looked to understand the typical lives of these young English girls

³³ O'Dowd, *Ibid*, p.31.

³⁴ Thomas Wentworth often blamed Ireland for his poor health. Julie A. Eckerle, 'Elite English Girlhood in Early Modern Ireland', *The Youth of Early Modern Women*, ed. Elizabeth S. Cohen and Margaret Reeves, (2018), 159-177, p.164.

³⁵ Eckerle, 'Elite English Girlhood in Early Modern Ireland', p.161. Raymond A. Anselment, 'Alice Thornton, Elizabeth Freke, and the Remembrance of Ireland', *Women's Life Writing and Early Modern Ireland*, ed. Julie A. Eckerle and Naomi McAreavey, (2019), 23-20.

³⁶ It has been noted the girls had little to no interaction with any native Irish. Raymond A. Anselment, 'Alice Thornton, Elizabeth Freke, and the Remembrance of Ireland', 23-20. Eckerle, 'Elite English Girlhood in Early Modern Ireland', pp.159-177.

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living in a Ireland and how their fathers often played an important role in their happiness.³⁷

These girls seemed to have a closer relationship with their father than they may have done back in England as their fathers were very involved in the girls' education and upbringing; it was, arguably, their father's presence that made the girls feel safe and happy.³⁸

It is clear then that there is not only a gap in the historiography on Thomas Wentworth regarding the females in his life, but that there is also a growing interest in the lives of early modern women. It is, therefore, the hope of our research to begin to fill this gap, to attempt to understand the relationship these women had with such a divisive figure. To do this we will use a mixture of primary and secondary sources, including some of the original letters written by the women themselves. As Pogson and Burghclere have demonstrated with their research, Wentworth's correspondence can be used to unlock significant information about his relationships with the people around him. It is therefore, an important aspect of this study to focus on what Wentworth's correspondence can tell us about his female relationships.

Though Wentworth's correspondence is vast, the letters from his wives are few. There are no letters surviving from his first marriage to Margaret Clifford, though we know from other correspondence that the two did write to each other. At the same time, there is only a handful of letters, written by Wentworth's second and third wives: Arabella Holles and Elizabeth Rhodes. The surviving letters are a combination of letters written to Wentworth and letters written to his steward, Richard Marris. The ones to Marris will be used to try and

³⁷ Eckerle, *Ibid*, p.169.

³⁸ *Ibid*, pp.167-170.

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understand the daily lives of each wife, the responsibilities they had in running the household and their role as wife. Whereas the letters to Wentworth will be used to try and understand the relationship between the couple, Wentworth's attitude to each woman and their experience of the marriage. Unfortunately, the context of the letters is not always clear as, due to the current Covid crisis and the closure of libraries and archives, an exhaustive study of the collection has been unachievable. We will therefore, also rely on supporting documents to aid the discussion, such as Knowler's edition of Wentworth's letters, the entry of Wentworth in the *Biographia Britannica* volumes, as well as the collection of letters from the Earl of Cumberland regarding Wentworth, included in Whitaker's *The History and Antiquities of the Deanery of Craven in the County of York*.³⁹ Though useful sources, it is important to remember that each one has its drawbacks. As already stated, there are limitations to Knowler's edition of letters, the main one being that it is not the full collection and as such each letter has been purposely chosen to be included. Nevertheless, it is still a collection of Wentworth's own letters and is therefore, a useful source of information about the Earl and his political career and can be used to give context to this research. On the other hand, the *Biographia Britannica* is a compendium, written in the eighteenth century, documenting the lives of notable British men and women; as such it is a summary of Wentworth's life condensed down to a couple of pages. Its use to this study consequently, lies in the fact it has included a number of letters, written by Wentworth to his third wife, within its entry on Wentworth as, again due to the current pandemic, it has not been possible to consult either the original letters or R. Monckton Milnes's publications

³⁹ I have been unable to find the original copies of these letters.

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of 'Private Letters from the Earl of Strafford to his Third Wife'. At the same time, Whitaker's *The History and Antiquities of the Deanery of Craven in the County of York*, was written in the eighteenth century for 'The Last Male Line of the Cliffords Earl of Cumberlands'.⁴⁰ The main focus of this volume of work is to tell the history of the Clifford family in a specific area in Yorkshire, Craven. The inclusion of Wentworth was simply due to his relation to the family through his first marriage, and so this cannot tell us about Wentworth's character or his career, but his relation to his first wife's family. Nevertheless, this is useful since we do not have any correspondence between Wentworth and Margaret Clifford surviving and so to have the letters written by Margaret's father, to her brother, about Wentworth allows us some insight into the marriage, that we would not otherwise have. Whitaker does appear to comment on Wentworth's character briefly, suggesting that his affection towards Lady Margaret may have been because he was attempting to court her. Though this shows that there is some bias within Whitaker's work, it highlights the popular view of Wentworth after his death that he was a harsh, single-minded politician.⁴¹

Alongside the letters, we will also use the *Essay towards the Life of my Lord Strafforde*, written by Sir George Radcliffe and published at the end of the second volume of Knowler's edition of letters as well as *Extracts from Sir George Radcliffe's draughts for his life of Strafford*, published in the Wentworth Papers volume of the Camden Fourth Series.⁴²

Radcliffe was not only a close friend of Wentworth but one of his most trusted advisers; as

⁴⁰ Thomas Dunham Whitaker, *The History and Antiquities of the Deanery of Craven, in the County of York*, (London: 1805).

⁴¹ Whitaker, *The History and Antiquities*, p.258.

⁴² Radcliffe, 'Essay towards the Life of', pp. 429-436. Sir George Radcliffe, 'Extracts from Sir George Radcliffe's draughts for his life of Strafford', *Camden Fourth Series*, 12, (1973), 319-326.

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such the essay is filled with information about Wentworth's life that Radcliffe would also have experienced, including the relationships with the women in Wentworth's life.⁴³

Radcliffe speaks of how it was he who brought their son, William, to see Lady Arabella on her deathbed, in 1631, and it was Radcliffe who accompanied Lady Elizabeth to Ireland whilst Wentworth remained for some months in England, in 1633, thus confirming how close he was to the family.⁴⁴ Consequently, it is a highly significant source of information on Wentworth as a man and not just a politician, and one that will be drawn on throughout this study. However, it must be noted that this essay by Radcliffe was written years after the events he was describing and so the accuracy of some of his statements may be called in to question; he admits 'My memory is (of late especially) very bad and decayed'.⁴⁵ Moreover, this is not a neutral documentation of Wentworth's life; Radcliffe was writing this essay for Wentworth's family, addressed to his only surviving son William. It is therefore highly unlikely that Radcliffe would write about Wentworth's more questionable actions and policies. Nevertheless by cross-referencing to other extant sources, we know that at least some of what Radcliffe has written is true; for example, he talks about Wentworth's struggle to find a second wife and how the rumours of his infertility came from the marriage negotiations he had with the Craven family for his younger brother, William.⁴⁶ Radcliffe argues that Wentworth had tried to make a deal that meant his brother would be well

⁴³ Radcliffe was able to make such claims as 'he married the Lady Arabella...a Lady exceedingly comely and beautiful, and yet much more lovely in the Endowments of her Mind. Radcliffe, 'Essay towards the Life of', pp. 429-436. The letters between George Radcliffe and Wentworth have been included in the publication of Radcliffe's own correspondence, *The Life and Original Correspondence of Sir George Radcliffe, the friend of the Earl of Strafford*, ed. Thomas Dunham Whitaker, (London: 1810).

⁴⁴ Radcliffe, 'An Essay Towards the Life of', p.430.

⁴⁵ There is no date credited to this essay, though it was likely written later in Radcliffe's life as he speaks of how he had 'often been about to write something that might preserve the memory of your blessed Father', *Ibid*, p.429.

⁴⁶ Sir George Radcliffe, 'Extracts from Sir George Radcliffe's draughts', pp.323-324.

provided for if Wentworth were to go on to have children, something we will use to argue Wentworth's caring nature towards those he loved.⁴⁷ Since Radcliffe was a close friend of Wentworth's he would not want to see him 'very much wronged' by these ill-rumours, which might suggest his explanation was trying to portray Wentworth in a better light, to shift the focus away from his infertility. However, in the letter Wentworth wrote to Lady Craven in February 1619 regarding the negotiations, he explains 'my second brothere...the next heire of my house, my self as yeat not having any children...the consideration whearof makes me desirouse to see him bestowed in some vertuouse stocke and family that he may not only content himself therin but in some measure advance his fortunes allsoe.'⁴⁸ This proves Radcliffe's explanation as the truth, which gives us more confidence to accept his veracity when cross-checking is not possible. Radcliffe's essay is, therefore, a significant source for our research as his work includes insights into Wentworth's relationships that we may not otherwise have.

As well as the primary sources, we will also draw on the work of previous historians. Though Wentworth's female relationships have never been at the forefront of any academic study, there are still sources that prove valuable to this research. Perhaps the most useful to this study are the three biographies previously noted, written by Elizabeth Cooper, Winifred Burghclere and C.V. Wedgwood. Cooper has included in her volumes the letters from Wentworth to his third wife; however, she has gone no further than to use them to follow Wentworth's whereabouts on his business travels.⁴⁹ Though Cooper understands that there

⁴⁷ See p.62.

⁴⁸ 'V. Sir Thomas Wentworth's Papers', (1973), *Camden Fourth Series*, 12, 79-318, p.120.

⁴⁹ Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth Vol. I*, p.378.

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was another side to Wentworth, the lives of Wentworth's wives have remained overlooked. At the same time, since this was written in the late eighteenth century, the references are scarce and so some statements or references cannot be validated. As already stated, Burghclere's volumes are significant as they were able to draw directly on Wentworth's letters. It was Burghclere's aim to try and shed some new light on Wentworth, who had been condemned by the early historians. As such, she chose to include the personal life of Wentworth, to show him as 'the passionately devoted husband and father, the good comrade cracking jokes and smoking a pipe with his friends...ordering portraits by the vanload from Sir Anthony, quoting Virgil and Chaucer to his correspondents'. In the hope that 'To see Strafford from this angle is to realise that to him the homely joys of family life, the intimacies of friendship were of no less account than the satisfaction of his sense of power'.⁵⁰ As it is this personal side of Wentworth's character that our study is concerned with, Burghclere's volumes will therefore be valuable. Nevertheless, her aim was to get people to reconsider Wentworth's character through his personal relationships; however, her research goes no further into the women's own experiences. Wedgwood's work is a revision of her earlier biography which she published before she had access to the letters. Wedgwood has admitted that she has come to realise there was more to Wentworth than she previously thought and that he could be both loving father and ruthless politician.⁵¹ And yet, the focus of her work was to retell Wentworth's history and so, although she does include elements of his female relationships, as this was one side of Wentworth, nor does she look into their experience of Wentworth.

⁵⁰ Burghclere, *Strafford*, Vol. I, pp. xv-xvi.

⁵¹ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, pp.11-15

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This study will take the form of four chapters. We will begin by looking at Wentworth's family background, where we hope to gain a better understanding of how Wentworth was raised, the relationship he had with both his father and his mother and their relationship with each other. From this we will argue that Wentworth's early years had a significant impact on the man Wentworth would become, and that the relationships he had with his parents did affect the kind of relationships he would go on to have with women in his life. This chapter will be significantly shorter than the ensuing three chapters, the reason for this being that the aim of this chapter is simply to set up Wentworth's familial background, as these will be referred back to throughout the discussions on his marital relationships. Each of the following chapters will look at Wentworth's wives respectively: Margaret Clifford, m.1611-1622; Arabella Holles, m.1625-1631 and Elizabeth Rhodes, m.1632-1641. These again vary in length due to the source material. Since there are limited sources available from the time of Wentworth's marriage to his first wife, Margaret Clifford, her chapter is somewhat shorter than the other two. At the same time, the chapter on Wentworth's third wife, Elizabeth Rhodes, also deals with Wentworth's role as a father and the rumours regarding affairs he may have had with other women. Consequently, this chapter is slightly longer than the one on Wentworth's second wife, Arabella Holles. By looking at the marriages separately, we can better understand the individual relationships Wentworth had with each wife and the development of his character, his approach to each marriage and what effect his career may have had on each of them. Nevertheless, there will also be some comparison between the marriages within the relevant chapters.

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We have seen that though Wentworth has been the focus of much research and scrutiny over the years, his female relationships and the experience of the women in his life are still fairly neglected. Consequently, it is the aim of this study to offer a new perspective on Thomas Wentworth. By looking at his female relationships we will argue that there was more to Wentworth than the ruthless politician that history has usually focused on and that though cold to the outside world, he was in fact a kind and loving husband and father. Furthermore, through the experiences of Wentworth's wives, we hope to prove that these women held their own historical significance.

Family Background

Before we can begin to look at Wentworth's relationships with the women in his life, it is important to first establish his family background to see the influence this had on his character development. Thomas Wentworth was born to Sir William Wentworth and Lady Anne née Atkinson in 1593. Sir William and Lady Anne were happily married; as we will see, Sir William credited his wife with his happiness and success and so Wentworth would have grown up with a positive experience of love and marriage. Wentworth was married three times during his lifetime; he experienced the deaths of two of his wives and mourned for them both deeply.⁵² Nevertheless, Wentworth continued to strive for love and contentment within each of his marriages, which arguably is due to this early experience of his parents' own marriage.

Though the Wentworths were a prominent family in the North even before Wentworth's rise to power, little has been written about Sir William Wentworth and his wife.

Consequently, there are limited sources discussing Wentworth's early experiences.

However, in 1604 Sir William composed an account, addressed to his son, detailing his approach to marriage, family life and his own personal experiences.⁵³ We are fortunate in that this document by Wentworth's father has survived, as from it we can ascertain the expectations and opinions Wentworth may have had surrounding women, as a result of his father's advice to him. The 'Letter of advice to a son' was becoming popular during this period, especially amongst the wealthier classes, as these documents were used to highlight

⁵² Wentworth's experiences of grief over the deaths of his wives will be discussed in the ensuing chapters.

⁵³ Though written in 1604, we do not know the date that Wentworth received the advice: whether it was when it was written or when he had reached maturity. 'Sir William Wentworth's advice to his Son', Sir William Wentworth's Volume, *Camden Fourth Series*, 12, (1973), 9-36, p.29.

the popular opinions towards marriage during this period; however many of the pieces appear to follow a similar structure and in certain cases there are examples of direct copying from previous works.⁵⁴ This brings in to question how much of Sir William's advice was his own and how much was in keeping with the tendencies of the time. However, as we shall see Sir William's advice to his son is filled with examples of his own personal experience, specifically when referring to his relationship with his wife and so although there are likely to be similarities between other works of advice to children, we can presume that much of this document is Sir William's own advice to his son. Despite Sir William's advice having been printed publicly in the 1970s, there has been no further exploration of this document, especially concerning the influence it may have had on its intended audience. Those that have studied Wentworth may have hinted at the relationship he had with his father; however none has speculated at the influence Sir William had over his son.

The purpose of this chapter will be to prove that Wentworth's early years had a significant impact on the man Wentworth would become. To do this we will look at three important aspects of Wentworth's family background: the relationship Thomas Wentworth had with his parents, the relationship they had with each other and the extent of their influence over their son. From this we will establish that the relationships he had with his parents did affect the kind of relationships he would go on to have with women in his life.

We will begin by looking at Sir William's relationship with his wife, something which has not been explored by scholars. This would have been Wentworth's first experience of love and

⁵⁴ The most famous example of such a document was James I's *Basilikon Doron*. Lawrence Stone, *The Crisis of the Aristocracy, 1558-1641*, (1965), pp.612-613. William Sloane, 'Some Plagiarisms in 17th Century Books of Advice to Children', *Modern Language Notes*, 55.6, (1940), 416-418.

marriage and so it is important to understand the level of influence his parents' marriage had on Wentworth. It will be argued that Wentworth's parents had a loving relationship with each other and as such Wentworth went on to value his own familial happiness. It is clear that Wentworth had been raised in a family where his father loved his wife and attributed all his success and happiness to their marriage.⁵⁵ Whilst love within a marriage was not uncommon in this period, women handed over their legal identities when they married, it was therefore, not often a man measured his success by his wife.⁵⁶ William Wentworth was a wealthy Yorkshire landowner whose family could trace their wealth and estate back to the Saxons. His own mother had doubled the Wentworth fortune when marrying into the family, a fortune he also went on to add to, and yet William credited his good fortune to his marriage.⁵⁷ To him, Anne Atkinson was 'a woman endowed with manie virtue'; she came from an affluent family whose money likely came from the wool trade, bringing to the marriage a £2000 portion.⁵⁸ Together they had twelve children, Thomas Wentworth being the third child and oldest surviving son. The two seemed to have enjoyed an amicable marriage, and when Lady Anne died in 1611 Sir William was described as her 'loving and sorrowful husband in his great love and affection to her'.⁵⁹ In his advice to his son, William Wentworth wrote of the five or so years after his marriage to Lady Anne in which he was blessed 'wth all kynde of wordlie comforts thatt my hart could desire: namelie contentment of mynde, youth, helth, strengthe, children even as I would, plentie of all

⁵⁵ Burghclere, *Strafford Vol. I*, pp.3-4.

⁵⁶ Married women could only inherit a small portion of their father's fortune. At the same time they could not enter into contracts or sue without the consent or involvement of their husband. Eales, 'Women in Early Modern England', p.1.

⁵⁷ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*.

⁵⁸ Burghclere, *Strafford Vol. I*, p.4.

⁵⁹ I have been unable to find the origin of this quotation. *Ibid.*

things I could wishe for, frends manie and known enemies, or open adversaries, nott anie'. Sir William is suggesting to his son that a good marriage was the key to his success. Thanks to his wife he was happy, healthy and had no worries for a long period of time. Even when things did then change and he was faced with lawsuits and claims against him, he could still be thankful for the children she had given him.⁶⁰ At the same time, it hints at the character of Sir William; it appears he did not measure his happiness by his fortune but rather by his family. This may well have had an influence on his son who, despite being an ambitious man, was a committed husband to each of his wives and an affectionate father to his children.⁶¹

At the same time, it appears Sir William discussed matters of their estate with his wife, referring to a time where 'I called to me your mother and i or ii discrete persons thatt I durst well trust and sytting privately in councell, we drew to consideration the dangers of my entryng into so waightie a bargaine.'⁶² Lady Anne was therefore not just the mother of his children or the coin in his pocket, she was also his trusted counsel. This was perhaps not so uncommon; although women could not play an active role in politics at this time, they were expected, in their husband's absence, to act on his behalf which would suggest that elite married women would be aware of the political situation and their families' position.⁶³

Women were in charge of the domestic sphere and so it makes sense that Sir William might

⁶⁰ 'Sir William Wentworth's advice to his Son'.

⁶¹ This dissertation will seek to demonstrate that Wentworth to his family was a loving and attentive father; he involved himself in the lives of his children. Upon hearing the news that the King had signed his execution warrant, his concern was that his family were taken care of. In his final letter to his son he wrote 'The King I trust will deal graciously with you, restore you those honours and that fortune', Wedgewood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, pp.384-385.

⁶² 'Sir William Wentworth's advice to his Son', p.33.

⁶³ O'Dowd, *Women in Ireland*, p.26.

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involve Lady Anne in discussions that would affect their estate, especially when he held her in such high regard. Wentworth would have been raised with an awareness of his parents' close partnership, witnessing his father making important political decisions with the help of his mother. Sir William's paternal advice to his son was that he should follow his parents' 'good and refuse what is amisse in them'.⁶⁴

We now turn to Sir William's view of women and marriages in general, which was not as universally optimistic. Instead, Sir William's opinions seem to fall in line with the contemporary view of women, and with the influence he held over his son, we can argue that Wentworth may well have been influenced by the same beliefs about women. Sir William cautioned his son about who to trust, advising him to speak openly only 'to your wyfe, if she can kepe counsell (as fewe wemen can)'.⁶⁵ This statement implies that, although he trusted his wife and would involve her in certain decisions relating to their estate, Sir William seems to have regarded Lady Anne as an exceptional woman. The rest of Sir William's advice to his son follows along the same lines regarding women and any future spouses his son might have. Sir William warns Wentworth against allowing his wife to listen to their tenants' complaints as 'flatteringe tenants will sone seduce a woman, who neither is lyke to haue a true intelligence of the matter, nor so sound a iudgmentt as the wyser sortt of men haue'.⁶⁶ The view of women here is that they are naïve and gullible: they cannot be trusted in business affairs because their ignorance could cause issues; therefore, business should be left to the men. This was not something personal to Sir William but rather it was

⁶⁴ 'Sir William Wentworth's advice to his Son', p.13.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, p.10.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, pp.20-21.

the overall opinion of society at the time: women were believed to be the 'weaker vessel' and it was this frailty that justified their lack of responsibility.⁶⁷ Both Lady Anne and Sir William were pious people and so they would believe in the teachings of the Church which said women were more prone to temptation. Unsurprisingly, Sir William suggests that Lady Anne also refrained from getting involved in such matters. Consequently, this indicates that even though Sir William could trust his wife and did ask for her counsel, it was only on matters where he was involved directly, as business should be left for the men. On her own a woman could not be trusted to deal with important domestic matters. As we hope to establish, Wentworth took the same view as his parents.⁶⁸

Nevertheless, we will now explore the extent to which Wentworth followed his father's advice as this will give some indication as to whether he would accept his father's opinions about women as his own. His father's advice was a thorough twenty four page document which covered most aspects of life- from friends and family and the King to the running of the household and religion.⁶⁹ As previously stated, though this document has been made available to the public there is limited discussions about its impact on Wentworth. For the most part, it appears that Wentworth did listen to the advice of his father. 'Touching FRENDES', his father advised, 'make choice especiallie of 3 or 4 or 5 knights or esqyres that were faithfull to your father, for those are lykest to be faithfull to yow'.⁷⁰ Wentworth did indeed always have two or three close friends who he would consult on most things; in his

⁶⁷ Anthony Fletcher, *Gender, Sex and Subordination in England, 1500-1800*, (Yale University Press: 1999), pp.60-62. Fairchilds, *Women in Early Modern Europe*, pp.9-10.

⁶⁸ As we will see Wentworth refrained from discussing matters of his estate with his wives. See p.83.

⁶⁹ The document even covered if Wentworth was ever to be chosen as a Sheriff, which in 1626 to his surprise he was pricked to be Sheriff of Yorkshire.

⁷⁰ 'Sir William Wentworth's advice to his Son', pp.14-15.

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early life it was his steward, Richard Marris, his family solicitor, Peter Man, and his old tutor, Charles Greenwood; in later life he turned to George Radcliffe and Christopher Wandesford for counsel: each of these men were acquaintances that Wentworth knew he could trust.⁷¹

Despite his high profile career, Wentworth remained throughout his life a somewhat humble man with simple tastes, preferring to spend time discussing agricultural projects with his steward to dining with his wealthy neighbours.⁷² He was a God-fearing man who went to Church regularly and took care of his family, including his numerous siblings, as his father had asked of him 'Your BRETHREN and sisters yow must loue and assist in their honest causes with countenance and good counsell'.⁷³ Arguably the piece of advice Wentworth took most to heart was when Sir William stated 'he that wilbe honoured and feared in his cuntrie must beare countenance and authority: for people are servyle, nott generous and do reverence men for feare, not for loue of their vertues which they apprehend nott.'⁷⁴ As Wentworth's career brought him more into the forefront of politics, his public persona was often seen as a force to be reckoned with, making more enemies than he did friends.⁷⁵ And yet he remained in his personal life a well-loved, loyal and kind gentleman which might suggest that on the whole his harsh nature was a front.⁷⁶ The basis of Wentworth's character appears therefore to have come from the advice his father gave him, which would suggest his view of women also came from that advice.

⁷¹ Radcliffe, 'An Essay towards the Life of my Lord Strafforde', p.433. Brownhill, 'The Personal and Professional Relationships between Thomas Wentworth and his Closest Advisors'.

⁷² Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.29.

⁷³ 'Sir William Wentworth's advice to his Son', pp.9, 13. Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth Vol. I*, p.169. Radcliffe, 'An Essay towards the Life of my Lord Strafforde', p.436.

⁷⁴ 'Sir William Wentworth's advice to his Son' p.12.

⁷⁵ A.H.A Hamilton, 'Strafford', *Fraser's Magazine*, 18.107, (1878), 580-594, pp.583-586.

⁷⁶ Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth Vol. I*, p.86.

However, despite receiving detailed advice from his father, Wentworth did not follow his father's advice without question. With regard to writing letters, his father advised Wentworth 'to frends and strangers wryte as few as yow can and let these be penned with so good discretion as yow nede nott care though they weare proclaymed in anye tyme to come. For itt is a common custome of men to kepe letters safelie and sometymes many yeares after to produce them for evydence against the author of them, either in open courtt or otherwise.'⁷⁷ In his lifetime Wentworth would go on to write volumes of letters, most of which have survived, much to the advantage of historians. Arguably due to his appointment as Lord Deputy of Ireland, Wentworth had to keep a vast correspondence of letters so as to remain up-to-date on events taking place in England; therefore to keep the position he worked so hard for he had to ignore his father's advice. At the same time, in his correspondence with Laud, the two agents of thorough often wrote in a code that only they knew, this meant that if anyone else were to obtain a copy of their communications they would not be able to decipher the subject, therefore he did try to practise discretion as his father cautioned.⁷⁸ Yet, Wentworth was already writing letters and building up his correspondence before he was appointed Lord Deputy.⁷⁹ Most of his correspondence was to do with politics, which could be argued as necessary for his career; however, he also enjoyed some personal contacts, including his relationships with Lord Cottington and Lady Carlisle.⁸⁰ It would then suggest that Wentworth did not always follow the advice of his

⁷⁷ 'Sir William Wentworth's advice to his Son', p.18.

⁷⁸ It is still uncertain to this day who or what Laud and Wentworth were referring to when they spoke of 'Lady Mora'.

⁷⁹ Knowler, *Letters and Dispatches*, pp.3-63.

⁸⁰ For more on Wentworth's relationships with Lady Carlisle, see p.116 Wedgewood, *Thomas Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.212. Wentworth relied on Cottington to update him on the developments at court and to keep

father as it was not always practical to do so; however he was always careful with being caught out, either by using code or by having his brother personally deliver his messages, thereby always taking heed of his father's warning.⁸¹ Consequently, it is possible to argue that Thomas Wentworth was his own man who did not simply follow advice like a sheep but rather he was able to decide for himself the practicality of any advice and whether it was indeed worthy of listening to. This then might suggest he had his own ideas about women which he came to from his own experiences.

We must now look at the kind of relationship Wentworth had with his parents, as this would also have held some influence over his future relationships. Again, this is not something that has been looked at in detail; though biographers of Wentworth have alluded to his parents, particularly his father, they do not appear to discuss the effects of Wentworth's parental relationships on his future character, and yet we will argue that Wentworth was a loving and caring father and husband, which may be due to his father's influence. It would seem therefore, that the two men enjoyed an amicable relationship which was based on mutual respect.⁸² Sir William was proud of his eldest son; valuing his judgement he consulted the young man on his will and the two would have discussions about their business.⁸³ Although historians have come to regard William Wentworth as an ambitious yet weak and naïve man, Thomas Wentworth always spoke highly of his father.⁸⁴ It would come as no surprise

him relevant whilst he was away; however as Fiona Pogson has demonstrated their relationship went further than politics and the two men enjoyed a real friendship. Pogson, 'Making and Maintaining Political Alliances', pp.52-73.

⁸¹ Burghclere, *Strafford Vol. I*, p.259.

⁸² Wentworth named his first, and only surviving son, William after his father.

⁸³ In a series of letters written from Wentworth to his father, Wentworth appears to discuss all his business with his father. 'Sir William Wentworth's Other Papers', *Camden Fourth Series*, 12, (1973), 47-62, pp.55-62.

⁸⁴ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, pp.20, 23.

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then that Wentworth valued the advice Sir William left him and would try to heed it where he could. Nevertheless, it is worth noting in a letter to Wentworth in early 1614, his father-in-law the Earl of Cumberland wrote of 'being as loath as your owne father to advise any thing that might prejudice yow.'⁸⁵ Since this is written by Cumberland and not Sir William the accuracy of it is questionable; however, it would suggest that Sir William was aware of the level of influence he had over his son, and was careful not to advise him of anything that may have proven damaging to his reputation.

If the father-son relationship between William and Thomas Wentworth was generally positive, what do we know about Wentworth's relationship with his mother? Although he named his first daughter Anne, after his mother, there is no mention of the lady in his vast correspondence which might possibly suggest they did not have that good a relationship. Yet Burghclere's study has revealed that Lady Anne was a kind and devout lady who would have easily earned the love and affection of her children and it was simply due to the timing of her death that she was not mentioned in Wentworth's letters.⁸⁶ Lady Anne died in 1611 before Wentworth had reached his maturity, and in that same year he married his first wife and began his travels around Europe. Consequently, whilst his mother was alive Wentworth would have had little need to have the sort of correspondence he did in later life, or even after his father's death. Lady Anne's death did not affect Wentworth in the same way Sir William's did, simply because as a result of his father's death Wentworth inherited the family estate and the guardianship of his siblings. Nevertheless, that does not mean that Wentworth and his mother did not have a good relationship, in fact it appears the two

⁸⁵ 'Thomas Wentworth's Papers', p.79.

⁸⁶ Burghclere, *Strafford Vol. I*, pp.4-5.

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shared several similar characteristics which may rather suggest a closeness between them. Indeed it was noted even at the time that there were similarities between the two; in a letter to Sir William in January 1611[2] Peter Frenchville writes 'Amongst many good Things which I like in my Godson, this is not the least, that in my Eye he much resembleth his late virtuous Mother, and...will in the Sweetness of Nature and Stayedness of Disposition prove more like unto her'.⁸⁷ The sweetness of nature did not stay with Wentworth long, for he turned into a grave yet arrogant man who struggled with a bad temper and little patience; although he did have a soft side which he showed to his family, his aspirations for greatness left him harsh and unforgiving. However the 'stayedness of disposition' was something that remained with Wentworth; not only was he responsible but he took his responsibilities seriously: if asked for advice he would take his time, consulting others before considering answering.⁸⁸ As Wedgwood noted, it was from his mother that Wentworth inherited his 'unexpected vein of contemplation in his otherwise active nature'.⁸⁹ Similarly there are characteristics that have been attributed to Lady Anne which also ring true to Wentworth; she was described as 'Right wise and sober, secret... [she] Despised the world and without fear or grudge Gave up her soul to her Creator's hand' but she held a 'constant heart'.⁹⁰ Wentworth was also known to be righteous and reserved in his speech; he was cold to the world around him, except to those who won his heart to whom he was fiercely loyal, to the extent that he put his life fully in to the hands of Charles I. The fact the two shared similar

⁸⁷ Knowler, in *Letters and Dispatches, Vol. I*, pp.1-2.

⁸⁸ Radcliffe 'An Essay towards the Life of my Lord Strafforde', p.433.

⁸⁹ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.21.

⁹⁰ 'Eulogy of Lady Anne Wentworth, Inscribed in Wentworth Church' in Burghclere, *Strafford Vol. I*, p.4.

characteristics would imply that his mother did in fact have a bond with him during Wentworth's early life.

Overall Wentworth's family background would have significantly impacted the sort of relationships he would go on to have with the women in his life. He had been witness to the successful and happy relationship his mother and father had enjoyed, with his father claiming his happiness and prosperity was the result of his marriage to Lady Anne. Even though in his father's advice he was warned of societies belief that women could not always be trusted, he was also told of how his father consulted his mother on certain matters. Although Sir William's advice to his son may have contradicted what Wentworth saw in his parents, Wentworth did not always follow his father's advice to the letter. He enjoyed a respectful relationship with his father which might suggest a degree of trust in Wentworth's own judgement on what advice was worth following. Moreover, Wentworth inherited several characteristics from his mother which would suggest a close relationship with her. Lady Anne was thought to be the stronger character of his parents and so might have had a bigger influence on her son, showing him how strong-willed, responsible and trustworthy a woman could be.⁹¹ Nevertheless, society was dominated by a religion whose founding belief was that women were inferior to men. The Institution of marriage was used to reinforce the ideals of a patriarchal society, founded on assumptions of male dominance and female submission.⁹² As such it would be difficult for Wentworth to believe anything other than

⁹¹ Wedgewood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.21.

⁹² Alysson M. Poska, 'Upending Patriarchy: Rethinking Marriage and Family in Early Modern Europe' in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Jane Couchman, (2016), 195-212, pp.195-196.

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that women were the weaker sex. Nonetheless, it would still be interesting to see what sort of an effect his parental relationships had on his relationships with the women in his life.

Margaret Clifford

In this chapter, we will be considering Wentworth's relationship with his first wife, Margaret Clifford. Margaret was the eldest daughter of Francis Clifford, 4th Earl of Cumberland. The marriage is thought to have taken place in October 1611, when Wentworth was just eighteen years old and still in the middle of his education. Their marriage was arranged by Sir William Wentworth and the Earl of Cumberland; though arranged marriages were becoming less popular during this period, it was not uncommon, especially amongst the upper classes, for parents to still play a significant role in their child's marriage arrangements.⁹³ The marriage between Margaret and Wentworth was beneficial to both families: through the marriage the Wentworths were able to increase their social standing and the Cliffords gained some financial stability from the alliance. Their marriage lasted for eleven years, though Wentworth spent the first fourteen or fifteen months of their marriage travelling around Europe, whilst Margaret stayed home in England. The pair did grow to love each other; it was only Margaret's premature death that separated them. Margaret was witness to Wentworth's introduction to the world of politics and it was through his marriage to her that he was able to gain important political alliances. Though we know little about the details of their married life, we know it was not without its struggles as the pair were unable to have children.

⁹³ The early modern period saw a change to the foundations of marriage. Medieval marriages had been arranged by the family to further their social status; however, during the early modern period it was becoming more common for people to marry for love. Alliances between elite aristocratic families to advance or strengthen their position were still the main goal for marriage negotiations and the family would arrange suitors for their children; however, now the children would have a choice in who they married and women had the ability to say no. Nevertheless, the family reputation was still important meaning there were cases where women were forced into marriages unwillingly. Eales, *Women in Early Modern England*, pp.63-64.

Since the marriage took place before Wentworth had made a name for himself, there is little evidence available regarding the details of his first marriage. The pair were separated at the start of their marriage whilst Wentworth completed his education in Europe; though we know they did write to each other during this period, no letters survive between the two of them. The only letter regarding their marriage which is available is the one in which Wentworth writes of Margaret's sickness and passing. At the same time, details about Margaret's family and early life are sparse; there appears to be no record of her birth, but it is thought to have been between 1590 and 1594. We do know that she was one of four children born to Clifford and his wife, Grissell.⁹⁴ Her brother, Henry, was privately educated before being sent away, first to Dean John Higgins' School at Well, and then Oxford's Christ Church. This suggests that Margaret herself may have obtained some form of education at home, given that there was a family tutor. While she is unlikely to have had the same level of education as her brother, it is probable that she was at least able to read and write.⁹⁵ Margaret has often been overlooked by historians, with nothing more than brief mentions within biographies on Wentworth.

This chapter will explore the details of Wentworth and Margaret's relationship. Though the evidence is sparse we will focus on eight different aspects of their marriage: the reason behind the arranged marriage, the early years whilst Wentworth was away in Europe,

⁹⁴ In Francis Clifford's entry in the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography it lists the order of his children as George, born in 1590, Henry then Margaret and lastly Frances, who was born in 1594. Richard T. Spence, 'Clifford, Francis, 4th Earl of Cumberland' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, < <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-67095?rskey=AVXlt2>>.

⁹⁵ Richard T. Spence, 'Clifford, Henry, 5th Earl of Cumberland' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2006, < <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-5649#odnb-9780198614128-e-5649>>.

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Wentworth's return from Europe, Margaret's experience as Wentworth's wife, their fertility issues, Wentworth's view of the marriage and the benefits he gained from this match, and finally Margaret's death and the effect this had on Wentworth. From all this we will argue that Wentworth had a happy first marriage to Margaret. Though they had their own personal struggles Wentworth had followed the example of his parents' marriage and showed himself to be a kind and loving husband, even to a wife that had been chosen for him.

We will begin by discussing the reasoning behind the match. It has already been noted that Wentworth and Margaret's marriage was arranged by their parents; however, what has not yet been looked at in detail is how Wentworth and Margaret felt about the match. The union was mutually beneficial to both sets of parents. There appears to have been some financial trouble within the Clifford family and the young Cliffords were not able to 'live with the lustre of [their] ancestors' and so it is unlikely that a better match could have been arranged for Margaret.⁹⁶ At the same time, William Wentworth had recently purchased a baronetcy from James I, increasing his family's status, and he believed a marriage to the Earl of Cumberland's daughter would cement his family's newfound position.⁹⁷ Though Wentworth had not inherited his title, Cumberland was still willing to consider an alliance with the family because of their standing within Yorkshire society. In a letter penned just before his daughter's marriage, Cumberland wrote of how 'Mr Wentworth is ranked in the

⁹⁶ The financial trouble was due to Clifford's courtier brother, George Clifford the 3rd Earl of Cumberland; when Margaret's father inherited the Earldom in 1605 he also inherited his brother's debts, impaired estates and a twelve-year costly lawsuit. Spence, 'Clifford, Francis'. Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion*, 2.286.

⁹⁷ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.24.

first place for Yorkshire'.⁹⁸ The Wentworths had long been established in Yorkshire as a wealthy, upwardly mobile family, and so it is not so surprising that a marriage between the Wentworths and the Cliffords was able to take place, especially as Cumberland needed Wentworth's newfound position to strengthen his own dwindling estate.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, by the early 1600s it was thought that children should not be forced into an unwanted partnership and so, although arrangements were made between families, those involved still had the ability to say no.¹⁰⁰ The fact that the marriage went ahead would suggest that neither Wentworth nor Margaret were completely against the proposal, moreover we know, from a letter written by her father in October 1611, that Margaret was 'well pleased and contented' to have Wentworth as her husband.¹⁰¹ We do not know Wentworth's personal feelings about the match; it is possible that he too was happy with Margaret as his wife; and yet it is also possible Wentworth was acting the dutiful son, marrying his father's choice of bride, especially as we have already established Wentworth respected his father. Wentworth was an ambitious man and so he may have recognised the advantages he would receive through this marriage. Wentworth decided to woo the bride his father had chosen for him; however, the fact he came across as 'an earnest and...very affecc'onate suitor' to Margaret and her father would suggest that he was not just following his father's wishes.¹⁰² Moreover, Wentworth spent at least three weeks with his wife and her family before their

⁹⁸ Whitaker, *The History and Antiquities*, p.253.

⁹⁹ Elizabeth Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth Vol. I*, p.2.

¹⁰⁰ Eales, *Women in Early Modern England*, p.64.

¹⁰¹ Whitaker, *The History and Antiquities*, p.258.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*

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wedding in order to court his wife-to-be and her family, which again would suggest that he wanted a meaningful relationship with his bride.¹⁰³

Since we have established that Margaret and Wentworth were happy with the match that had been arranged for them, we will now look at the first few years of their marriage, as the couple spent this time apart, and the effect this had on their marriage. As we have seen, Wentworth had first-hand experience of his parents' close working partnership, so we can assume he recognised what constituted a successful marriage. And yet his first years of marriage, to a bride he barely knew, were spent in a different country to his wife. It would therefore have been quite difficult for him to follow his parents' example as his wife would likely still have been a stranger to him. However, marrying early was not something that was encouraged in the early modern period, as a way of trying to control the population and maintaining the way of life. As such, in the 1600s the median age at the time of their first marriage for a woman was 26 and for a man it ranged from 27-29.¹⁰⁴ Instead marrying young was something that was done more amongst the elite classes as marriage, without the economic restrictions, was seen as a way of forming political alliances between families and furthering social status; the earlier the marriage the sooner such connections could be realised.¹⁰⁵ We already know that the marriage between Wentworth and Lady Margaret was arranged by their parents as it was mutually beneficial to both families. Their marriage took place before Wentworth had finished his education and so perhaps at the time of his travels the significance of the marriage was less to do with the relationship between the couple and

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Richard Adair, *Courtship, Illegitimacy and Marriage in Early Modern England*, (Manchester University Press: 1996), p.132.

¹⁰⁵ Eales, *Women in Early Modern England*, pp.61-62.

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more to do with what it meant for the two families. Especially since it was thought a young man needed the experience of an institution or an education to teach him control and to curb his inner desires, meaning Wentworth would not have been ready for marriage at the time.¹⁰⁶ If this were the case then Wentworth did not need to worry about replicating his parents' relationship until after he had returned from his studies; even then Wentworth and Margaret would still have been younger than the average married couple. Therefore, the first year of their relationship should not be looked at in terms of Wentworth's expectations of marriage and the sort of relationship he should have with his wife but instead it should be seen as a type of courtship and how Wentworth was able to navigate forming a relationship with his new wife and her family from afar.

Wentworth's time in Europe has already been studied by historians, as what he learned on this trip influenced his later character; however, the fact that he was, at the time of his departure, newly married and his wife remained at home in England has been overlooked.¹⁰⁷ This may be because there has been some uncertainty over the chronology of their marriage and Wentworth's travel. However, according to Wentworth's close friend, George Radcliffe, the marriage took place before Wentworth left for Europe- this aligns with the majority of the historiography, which has the marriage taking place in London on 22nd October 1611, just prior to Wentworth's departure in November or December.¹⁰⁸

Wentworth left the country to finish his education: travelling around France with his tutor,

¹⁰⁶ Anthony Fletcher, 'Manhood, the Male Body, Courtship and the Household in Early Modern England', *History*, 84.275, (1999), 419-436, p.425.

¹⁰⁷ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.25. Cust, 'Wentworth's change of sides', p.68.

¹⁰⁸ Radcliffe, 'An Essay Towards the Life', p.430.

Charles Greenwood, a young clergyman.¹⁰⁹ The chronology of the marriage and Wentworth's departure is significant in trying to uncover more about their relationship. Wentworth did not return to his wife in England until February 1613, over a year after he had left. This meant the first year of their marriage were spent apart and the only contact they would have had with each other was through written letters. Since there is no extant correspondence between the couple, it is difficult to ascertain how either of them experienced the separation or the effect that this may have had on their marriage; nevertheless it was not unusual for aristocratic couples in this period to spend significant periods of time apart and the Wentworths were no exception.¹¹⁰ Wentworth was a dedicated young man, full of ambition; as such he was able to use his time in France to become a man worthy of his new position, as a member of the extended Clifford family. Whilst in Paris, Wentworth encountered his old school acquaintance Henry Clifford, Margaret's brother, and there formed a friendship that would last until Wentworth's execution in 1641. A letter from his father to Henry Clifford dated 13th January 1611[2] refers to the 'begynnyng of love and kyndnes settled between you and yo'r brother in law', thus not only confirming that the Wentworth-Clifford marriage had taken place prior to

¹⁰⁹ The two men, along with a number of servants, travelled to Paris, stayed in Orléans travelled down to Nantes, to La Rochelle and Bordeaux, on to Toulouse and Carcassonne, then to Narbonne, Montpellier, Avignon, Arles and Marseilles before visiting Lyon. By the end of his travels Wentworth was fluent in French, he could also speak some Spanish and Italian; he had perfected his handwriting and learnt about French customs and European politics. He had also acquired a large number of books to help with his studies: books and plays to improve his languages, as well as a number of Protestant and Catholic works of rhetoric and controversy and books on devotion. Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, pp.24-26.

¹¹⁰ Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, pp.652-660.

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Wentworth's travels but also highlighting that Wentworth was actively becoming closer to his wife's family.¹¹¹

We will now explore Wentworth's experiences during his time in Europe and how he took his responsibility as Margaret's husband very seriously. During this time, it was not uncommon for aristocratic young men to complete a tour of Europe in order to finish their education, as Wentworth did.¹¹² However, most young boys saw this time as a form of bachelordom where they could exercise a certain amount of freedom and independence before they entered the real world full of responsibilities, including formal office, marriage and parenthood. At the same time, it was seen as important for a man to gain sexual experience during this Grand Tour, as it was seen as a crucial step on the road to becoming a man.¹¹³ Yet, Wentworth's 'Sweetness of nature' would suggest that he would have felt it was important to keep up a relationship with his new wife whilst he was away.¹¹⁴ From his parents he witnessed the importance of communication and while he may not have known at the time whether or not Lady Margaret was one of the few women who could be trusted, he would still have felt the need to establish a line of communication.¹¹⁵ Although the letters between the young couple have not survived, we know that the two did correspond with each other. For instance, Cumberland informed his son Henry that 'Yo'r sister thinks herself much bownd to you for entertaining her husband soe kyndely, which he haith highly

¹¹¹ Whitaker, *History and Antiquities*, p.256.

¹¹² Burghclere, *Strafford Vol. I*, p.9. Keith Thomas, *In Pursuit of Civility:6 Manners and Civilization in Early Modern England*, (2018), pp.45-45.

¹¹³ Fletcher, *Manhood, the Male Body, Courtship and the Household*, pp.425-426. See also Keith Thomas, 'The Double Standard', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 20.2, (1959), 195-216.

¹¹⁴ Knowler, *Letters and Dispatches, Vol. I*, pp.1-2.

¹¹⁵ In his Advice to his Son, Sir William charges his son to give [his wife] 'good counsell...and guyde hir thirin', 'Sir William Wentworth's advice to his Son', p.20.

co'mended in his letters to hir'.¹¹⁶ Although the content of their correspondence remains unknown, the fact that that the two were in communication suggests, although Wentworth was experiencing what might be described as his 'bachelor's pleasure', he was nevertheless aware of his marital duty.¹¹⁷ Since Wentworth had married so young he had the unusual responsibility of a wife waiting for him at home, and so whilst most would have enjoyed the freedom just over a year in Europe may have afforded them, Wentworth was writing letters to his wife updating her on his situation and his experiences. He became good friends with her brother which would have strengthened the bond he felt with his wife and her family. Moreover, Margaret continued to update her father about her relationship with her new husband, implying Wentworth was not only attentive but respectful to his new wife. This would have further deepened the relationship between Wentworth and the Cliffords. Consequently, even though Wentworth was away for the first year of his marriage, he was still able to spend that time forming a good relationship with his wife, whilst also creating long-lasting bonds with the rest of her family.

So far, we have established that though the Clifford-Wentworth match was advantageous for both families in terms of local power, influence and money; the marriage was becoming more substantial than a purely practical arrangement. However, it has been suggested by Whitaker that perhaps Wentworth's courtship of Margaret was not as innocent as it may have looked.¹¹⁸ Wentworth was an ambitious man, his father had wanted the marriage to

¹¹⁶ Whitaker, *History and Antiquities*, pp.256-257.

¹¹⁷ Lawrence Price, 'The Bachelor's Feast', (1636), *English Broadside Ballad Archive*, <<https://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/30015/xml>> [Accessed May 2020].

¹¹⁸ Whitaker, *History and Antiquities*, p.258.

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Lady Margaret to strengthen their own family's position and so it is possible Wentworth felt the need to create a positive relationship with the Clifford men to help pursue his own political career. Wentworth and Henry Clifford had been acquaintances since school; yet it was only after they met in Paris, after he had married Lady Margaret, that the two formed a closer bond.¹¹⁹ Cumberland admitted to his son that 'we are lykwyse exceedingly well pleased and well satisfied to see by bothe your owne lett'rs soe good a begynnyng of love', the fact he speaks of hearing from 'bothe' Wentworth and Henry Clifford about their friendship implies the same message was also being sent from Henry which would have increased Wentworth's standing in the eyes of his father-in-law.¹²⁰ Even as early as February 1613[4] Cumberland admits to 'have respected [Wentworth] as my owne sonne Harry'.¹²¹ This might imply that Wentworth saw Margaret as a tool for his own ambition; the relationship he was building with Margaret's father and brother could suggest that he was using his marriage to form relationships that might further his political status. His father had attributed his successes to his wife and so perhaps Wentworth's attitude towards women was based on how they could help him with his own successes. Yet, Cumberland also writes of how 'I have not now more to wryte, but to tell yow that I take great comforte in yow and my daughter your wife as in any.'¹²² Had Wentworth's view of Margaret been solely based on the relationships her name and her family were able to provide for him then Cumberland might not have been so comforted by their marriage. Cumberland cared for his daughter, as evident by the 'great content' he felt at her coming to stay with him, consequently he would

¹¹⁹ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, pp.24-25.

¹²⁰ Whitaker, *History and Antiquities*, p.256.

¹²¹ 'Thomas Wentworth's Papers' p.79.

¹²² *Ibid*, p.79.

not have settled for just anybody to be his son-in-law. The three weeks Wentworth spent with the Cliffords prior to their marriage proved to Cumberland that Wentworth was worthy of his daughter.¹²³ At the time Cumberland wrote the letter, Margaret was staying with her father and so would have been able to share her experience of Wentworth as a husband; we know that Margaret did share information with her father as evident from the letter Cumberland wrote to his son when he was in Paris. Therefore, Cumberland would have known his daughter's feelings about her husband and the fact that he was happy to have Wentworth as a son-in-law suggests that Margaret believed Wentworth was an attentive husband. Wentworth never did anything to suggest to his new family that he would be anything other than a good husband to his wife; this would imply he did care about the sort of relationship he had with Margaret and he saw women as more than just their name.

We will now look at how Wentworth's character can be used to provide some insights into his marriage, specifically looking at his behaviour when he returned to England from France in February 1613. Wentworth's political actions have not yet been looked at with regards to what insights they can give to the inner-workings of his marriages; however, we will argue that his approach to politics can also be applied to his marriage. In April 1641, Wentworth participated in the first Parliament of his career, the Addled Parliament, as a member of Yorkshire. As it was his first foray into the world of Parliament and politics, Wentworth remained a silent player, choosing to wait until 'such Time as Experience hath ripened [his] Judgment' before indulging in passionate debates.¹²⁴ What this says of Wentworth's character might allow us a better understanding of his attitude towards marriage. In his

¹²³ Whitaker, *History and Antiquities*, p.258.

¹²⁴ Knowler, *Letters and Dispatches, Vol. I*, p.169.

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political life, he clearly recognised his own weaknesses choosing to bide his time and listen to the advice of his more 'aged...friends'.¹²⁵ If we extend this attitude to his marriage, we can see that, having spent the first year apart from his wife, he had no practical experience of what it meant to be a husband and may, therefore, have relied on advice from others, including his father. As George Radcliffe recalled, Wentworth 'did endeavour to grow in Virtue and Victory over himself'.¹²⁶ This could suggest that he was not afraid to acknowledge any weaknesses he may have had within his marriage and that, on returning to England and the marital home, he may well have spent some time working on his relationship with Margaret. This alleged willingness to grow might indicate that Wentworth, who was later described as 'the wicked earl', was not a controlling or overbearing husband.¹²⁷

As well as juggling his political career, at the age of twenty-one Wentworth also had to deal with the responsibility of becoming head of an eminent house and protector of numerous siblings and nephews.¹²⁸ We will now look at the effect this added responsibility had on his marriage to Margaret. Wentworth was a caring father-figure to his siblings, this was noted at the time by his friends; Radcliffe mentions in his essay on Wentworth's life the effort he put into ensuring his family had good lives, but the effect this had on his marriage has not been discussed. Wentworth's father died in late 1614; as a result Wentworth inherited guardianship of his nine siblings who were not yet of age; the youngest being George, born in 1609, sixteen years younger than Wentworth.¹²⁹ In the same year, the husband of his

¹²⁵ 'Sir William Wentworth's advice to his Son', p.9. This resonates with the advice from his father that we have already looked at, see above pp.27-28.

¹²⁶ Radcliffe, 'An Essay towards the Life' p.435.

¹²⁷ Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion, Vol. I, Part. I, Book III*, (1807), p.338.

¹²⁸ Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth Vol. I*, p.6.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, p.7. Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.27.

eldest sister Anne died, leaving behind two sons whom Wentworth had been appointed guardian. Wentworth took his newfound responsibility seriously; he was kind and considerate to those in his protection, going beyond what was expected of him, which again hints at the type of man he was.¹³⁰ Some his age would have been corrupted by an early accession to such wealth and so it was a statement of Wentworth's character, his deep sense of responsibility and self-control, which differentiated him from the rest.¹³¹ He felt a sense of duty to his family and so strove to give them the best life he could get for them no matter the cost; he spent eight years personally trying to resolve lawsuits that his nephews were caught up in.¹³² He spent hours of his own time searching for the most advantageous positions for his brothers with regard to their individual professions, taking a personal interest in their state of affairs.¹³³ Moreover, his father had promised his sisters portions of £2000, which Wentworth was expected to fulfil.¹³⁴ This was a lot of responsibility for the young Wentworth and it is a testament to his kindness as a guardian and sibling that for the rest of his life, his siblings remained supportive.¹³⁵ As such it would also make sense that Wentworth felt the same sense of responsibility towards the happiness and prosperity of his own wife. As the two were now linked through marriage, any promotions in wealth or status Wentworth earned, his wife would also have reaped the benefits of. Margaret came from a more affluent family than Wentworth which might suggest part of his ambition was based

¹³⁰ Burghclere, *Strafford Vol. I*, p.13. Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth*, p.8.

¹³¹ Burghclere, *Ibid*, pp.12-13.

¹³² Radcliffe, 'An Essay towards the Life' p.436.

¹³³ Cooper, *The Life of Thomas Wentworth Vol. I*, p.8.

¹³⁴ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.28.

¹³⁵ On occasion, he had some issues with his younger siblings Elizabeth and Matthew, which he writes of in a letter dated November 1635. Knowler, *Letters and Dispatches Vol I*, p.484.

on what he felt his wife deserved; in the same way he worked hard to ensure his siblings prospered.

How, then, did Sir William's death affect Wentworth's relationship with his first wife? The focus of Sir William's death has always been how it affected Wentworth: how he inherited a large fortune at a young age, how alongside that he also inherited a vast amount of responsibility and dependents and consequently how he was able to juggle all those responsibilities whilst still pursuing a political career in London. What has yet to be looked at is how this situation affected Margaret and whether this influenced their marriage. As the Lady of the house, Margaret would have been in charge of the running of their household and so she too would have been affected by the sudden added responsibility that came with the guardianship of Wentworth's siblings.¹³⁶ Wives and widows often involved themselves in marriage discussions and patronage for the younger members of their family; however, as the sister-in-law it is unlikely that Margaret would have had much of a say in any marital, domestic or educational arrangements that Wentworth put into place for his siblings.¹³⁷ Yet, through connections made as a result of their marriage, Wentworth would have been in a better position within society to make such arrangements. Marriage in the early modern period was becoming more like a partnership between the couple where the wife was expected to act on behalf of her husband whilst he was away, and so when Wentworth was called to London, Margaret would have been expected to take his place.¹³⁸ This would all suggest that Margaret did have some form of input into the lives of her new family.

¹³⁶ Natasha Korda, *Shakespeare's Domestic Economies: Gender and Property in Early Modern England*, (2012), p.27.

¹³⁷ Eales, *Women in Early Modern England 1500-1700*, p.64

¹³⁸ N.H. Keeble, *The Cultural Identity of Seventeenth-Century Woman A Reader*, (London: 1994) p.143.

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Unfortunately, there does not appear to be any sources available that are able to offer any insight into the extent of Margaret's influence. Nevertheless, Wentworth described her as his 'most obedient and loving wife' which would suggest she did what was expected of her without question or opposition.¹³⁹ Margaret had no children of her own and so perhaps developed a fondness for Wentworth's younger siblings as a substitute for what she was missing, as was sometimes the case amongst upper class women struggling with infertility.¹⁴⁰

Thus far, the focus of this section has been on Thomas rather than on Margaret Wentworth. We need to move now to a discussion of how Margaret experienced her life as Wentworth's first wife. Since there are few sources available from this period, regarding their marriage, Margaret's personal life has never been discussed. However, the sources that are available suggest that Margaret was afforded some freedom in her life. The amount of independence a woman would have experienced depended entirely on her husband or father; as head of the household the man was thought to have gained his authority from God and so a woman had very little rights to dispute her husband's wishes.¹⁴¹ This would suggest that Wentworth allowed Margaret her own freedom. As we know from Cumberland's letter in February 1614 Margaret went to stay with her father without her husband. It is possible to assume Margaret had a good relationship with her father and so although her father had asked for her company, presumably she was willing to visit him.¹⁴² Again, in March 1618 Margaret was

¹³⁹ 'Thomas Wentworth's Papers', p.176.

¹⁴⁰ Helen Barry and Elizabeth Foster, 'Childless Men in Early Modern England', in *The Family in Early Modern England*, (2007), 158-183, p.181. We will return to Margaret and Wentworth's infertility, see below p.50.

¹⁴¹ Mary E. Wiesner-Hanks, 'Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe', (2019), p.314.

¹⁴² 'Thomas Wentworth's Papers', p.79.

planning another trip without her husband. In a letter to the Countess of Shrewsbury, Wentworth wrote 'By reason of your Ladyship's intended journey to London, and my wife's towards the Bathe...I have presumed with your good leave and favour, to send for my sister and nephews, fearinge that otherwaies, my wife haveinge the coach and horses, there might bee more trouble and difficulty'.¹⁴³ Not only does this prove that Margaret was free to travel where she pleased without the company of her husband, but also that Wentworth was accommodating to his wife's freedom. Though his wife's intended journey interfered with his sister's travel; rather than make changes to Margaret's plans, Wentworth brought forward his sister's visit instead.¹⁴⁴ The overall significance of this comment is that it proves Margaret had her own independence within their marriage.¹⁴⁵

We will now return to the issue of the couple's fertility problems to look at the effect they may have had on the marriage; though Wentworth wanted children of his own, we will argue that their infertility was not a defining feature of their marriage and they remained hopeful of having children of their own. Wentworth and Margaret might have had an amicable marriage filled with mutual respect and companionship, but to go by early modern standards they did not have a successful one. The main reason for marriages during this period was for procreation, specifically the creation of heirs so as to carry on the family name and titles; unfortunately, in the eleven years Margaret and Wentworth were together

¹⁴³ *Ibid*, p.113. The Countess of Shrewsbury, Joan, was married to Edward Talbot eighth Earl of Shrewsbury, died in 1627.

¹⁴⁴ We will return to the reason behind Margaret's trip to Bath, see p.52

¹⁴⁵ The significance of Margaret's freedom will appear more evident when compared to Wentworth's second wife, Arabella, see pp.79-80

they had no children.¹⁴⁶ Infertility during this period has been widely documented and studied already; however, Wentworth and Margaret's own personal fertility issues have not been looked at, specifically in terms of Margaret's experience of it. Society at the time, being unable to understand the medical reasoning behind infertility, would have blamed Margaret for the couple's predicament; as it was assumed to be the woman who was barren.¹⁴⁷ Since infertility was seen as a form of divine punishment, anxiety within married couples over the ability to have children was common, especially amongst the upper classes.¹⁴⁸ Religion was a significant aspect of a couple's need to have children.¹⁴⁹ For women, motherhood was thought to be the ideal state, to be a mother was part of a woman's identity whereas for a man, the desire for children was due to a concern over the future of his property and family name, he needed an heir.¹⁵⁰ Consequently, although Wentworth and Margaret already had responsibility of Wentworth's numerous younger siblings, George being about five at the age of his father's death, the couple still hoped to have children of their own.¹⁵¹ Even though it would have been assumed Margaret was the cause of their predicament, Wentworth's reputation would also have felt some backlash as a result of their lack of children, as childless men were seen by their peers as 'lesse then a man'.¹⁵² Moreover, as a direct result of the couple's infertility, Wentworth struggled in his

¹⁴⁶ Daphna Oren-Magidor, *Infertility in Early Modern England*, (Springer: 2017), p.3. Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, p.620.

¹⁴⁷ Barry, Foster, 'Childless Men', p.159.

¹⁴⁸ The fear of infertility was perhaps more prevalent amongst the nobility who liked to keep track of their family lineage; however, it was not a rare occurrence as 19% of first marriages among the elite classes were childless. Barry, Foster, 'Childless Men', pp.161,165. Oren-Magidor, *Infertility in Early Modern England*, p.2.

¹⁴⁹ Oren-Magidor, *Ibid*, p.3.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid*, pp.15-16.

¹⁵¹ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.28.

¹⁵² Anon., *A Discourse of the Married and Single Life, Wherein, by Discovering the Misery of the One, is Plainely Declared the Felicity of the Other*, (London, 1621), pp. 25–6.

search for a second wife amid rumours of his own impotence.¹⁵³ This would have put a strain on the couple's marriage; when a man could not procreate questions were raised about his character, and an ambitious man such as Wentworth would not have wanted anything to taint his reputation.¹⁵⁴ However, it is highly likely that the couple were trying to fix their fertility problem. In the letter to the Countess of Shrewsbury in 1618 Wentworth mentions that his wife was intending a journey 'towards the Bathe', the spas at Bath and Tunbridge Wells were believed to be beneficial to those looking to get pregnant; it was thought the air and water, as well as the positive atmosphere, were the right mix of good environment and mentality that would aid conception.¹⁵⁵ This alleged journey took place seven years into Margaret and Wentworth's marriage, which would imply infertility was the reason behind Margaret's visit. It was not uncommon for the first five years of a marriage to be without children, so much so that 'childlessness' was seen as a life-stage in a couple's married life, however after five years the couple may have felt the need to look for a little help, hence the trip to Bath.¹⁵⁶ This might also explain why Wentworth was willing to inconvenience his sisters and the Countess of Shrewsbury to accommodate his wife's visit. Couples struggling with infertility would still remain hopeful about their situation, even after years of disappointment, suggesting Margaret and Wentworth's inability to have children did not take its toll on their relationship.¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, although infertility was thought to

¹⁵³ J.P Cooper, 'The Fortune of Sir Thomas Wentworth', *The Economic History Review*, 11.2, (1958), 227-248, P.230.

¹⁵⁴ Barry, Foster, 'Childless Men', p.178.

¹⁵⁵ 'Thomas Wentworth's Papers'. Barry, Foster, 'Childless Men', p.176.

¹⁵⁶ Barry, Foster, *Ibid*, p.163.

¹⁵⁷ Oren-Magidor, 'Infertility in Early Modern England', p.19.

be a misfortune, it was not so uncommon that it was thought to be a disaster.¹⁵⁸ Couples could find a way of manoeuvring around their problem by unofficially adopting younger relatives.¹⁵⁹ And so, although Wentworth hoped for children of his own, he was sensible enough to make provisions in case they were unsuccessful by considering his second brother, William as his heir. Moreover, his relationship with his youngest brother George at times took on the form of father and son and they became exceedingly close.¹⁶⁰ This would suggest that although disappointing, their infertility was not a dividing issue within their marriage as not only did they remain positive about their chances but Wentworth had the option to make alternate arrangements to ensure the continuation of his family. Margaret would likely have been the most affected party of the two, as she would have felt responsible for their difficulties, but her trip to Bath would suggest she was still hopeful for their future.

Apart from the brief references to Lady Margaret in a selection of Wentworth's letters, there is little evidence remaining that examines the intimate details of their eleven years of marriage. Instead we will turn to perhaps the most significant source available regarding Lady Margaret: the account Wentworth wrote detailing her death. It is due to this account that we can argue that the two did indeed care for each other. In July 1620, Wentworth himself having been 'dangerously sicke' had moved his family to Stratford hoping the fresh air would aid his recovery. Instead days later, Margaret fell ill of a fever and in August, having suffered for just less than a week, she passed away. The eleven-page document,

¹⁵⁸ Barry, Foster, 'Childless Men', p.164.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid*, p.181.

¹⁶⁰ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.29.

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written by Wentworth, details each stage of the 'blessed departure of the most virtuous and sanctified Lady' as he was there to witness them.¹⁶¹ Since it is a first-hand account by Wentworth, it is able to give some insight into the couple's marriage. For example, Margaret and Wentworth were both faithful Protestants and so as can be expected, religion played a vital role in Margaret's final days as prayer was an important part of their experience of death.¹⁶² Wentworth describes how the couple prayed together, how he continued to pray when Margaret had lost the ability to do so and the comfort Margaret took from her prayers during her suffering.¹⁶³ As this was a personal and private memorial to Margaret it is unsurprising that God and prayer featured so heavily, telling the story of how together the young couple faced death.¹⁶⁴ However, it is interesting to note what the rest of the document is able to highlight regarding Margaret and Wentworth's marriage; for instance, the intimacy they shared in her final days and what this says about their relationship. At one point Wentworth describes how Margaret called Wentworth to her bedside hoping to ask something of him but was reluctant to ask what she wanted 'fearing it might...discomfort me'. Even on her deathbed, Margaret was more concerned about her husband's feelings than her own suffering, which would suggest she cared deeply for Wentworth. Moreover, within the text Wentworth refers to his wife as 'this blessed Lady' which highlights the strength of her character; even though she was in pain, she was not his poor, suffering wife

¹⁶¹ Sheffield City Archives, Sheffield, WWM/Str P, 'Strafford Correspondence and Papers, 1611-1640', 21.16.

¹⁶² The Reformation meant that prayer had become a bigger part of people's daily lives as it allowed them to have a personal relationship with God; they no longer relied on ceremonies or the buying of indulgences in order to get in to Heaven quicker. Diarmaid MacCulloch, *The Later Reformation in England 1547-1603*, (1990), pp.5-6.

¹⁶³ Over the course of her illness, Margaret kept returning to the Book of Common Prayer, Wentworth details how 'at night she tooke the Book again' and how she recited 'her usual prayer'. 'Strafford Papers', 21.16

¹⁶⁴ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.29.

but a martyr.¹⁶⁵ The fact that the couple experienced each stage together is also significant, Wentworth did not leave Margaret to suffer but instead remained by her side to comfort her and prayed for her when she no longer could. This would suggest that although their marriage was an arranged one, Wentworth was a loving and caring husband.

We finally turn to Wentworth's reaction of Margaret's death, from which we will argue that not only does it show that the couple had grown to love each other but it also highlights a more human side to Wentworth, something that we may not have seen before.¹⁶⁶

Wentworth's reaction to Margaret's death highlights a more vulnerable and apprehensive side to Wentworth's character. Though the details of their eleven-year marriage have often been overlooked, scholars such as Wedgwood have reflected upon the grief that Wentworth felt over the passing of his wife.¹⁶⁷ The letters he wrote to his brother-in-law, Henry, in the months after Margaret's death show that his grief consumed him. In a letter dated the 17th September 1622, Wentworth admitted to Henry Clifford that his grief 'soe distracts, that it will not giue mee leaue to thinke upon my owne affaires, albeitt very pressing and urgent'.¹⁶⁸ We know that Wentworth was an ambitious young man and an important part of his marriage to Margaret was the influence that her family name afforded him in his political career; therefore, the fact that for a period of at least a month Wentworth was unable to focus on his work and his business reveals that he was deeply affected by Margaret's death. Moreover, Wentworth began making plans after Margaret's

¹⁶⁵ 'Strafford Papers', 21.16.

¹⁶⁶ Wentworth has been portrayed as a strong political figure, a tyrant or a martyr depending on the point of view, as well as described as a loving and caring husband and father.

¹⁶⁷ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.43.

¹⁶⁸ 'Thomas Wentworth's Papers', p.175.

death to leave the country for a year. The official reason for his trip was that he hoped to better 'himselfe in language and otherwise' which is highly plausible, given that Wentworth now found himself back on the marriage market, in need of a young, beautiful and highly-born bride, suggesting that Wentworth might have felt apprehensive about his position and the bride that he could negotiate for himself.¹⁶⁹ Nevertheless, his confession to Henry Clifford suggests that this plan to leave the country was also about getting away from his responsibilities and the life he'd had with Margaret. Wentworth had been married to Margaret for all of his adult life, meaning he now had to face life without his 'obedient wife', this might then indicate that the trip abroad was instead a chance to escape his responsibilities, even for a short period of time. However, Wentworth was twenty-nine at the time of Margaret's death, he had just begun making a name for himself in the political sphere and though they had no children of their own, he still had his brothers, sisters and nephews depending on him. Wentworth was a responsible man and so whether he felt apprehensive about life without Margaret, he did not go through with the trip to Europe and instead resumed his responsibilities when he felt able.

Wentworth's reaction to Margaret's death proves that he was deeply affected by the loss of his wife; however, it also gives one final insight into their eleven-year marriage. In another letter to his brother-in-law, dated 24th September 1622, Wentworth wrote to Henry of how 'that where rested the fountaine of my comfort, from thence should now springe my greatest anguish and torment'.¹⁷⁰ The fact that Margaret was the source of Wentworth's 'comfort' would suggest that there were no major issues within the marriage, which in some

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, p.179.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, p.176.

ways could be seen to echo how Sir William described his marriage. Sir William wrote 'it pleased God of his most mercyfull goodnes for the space of five years, or thereaboutt, to blesse me wth all kynde of wordlie comforts thatt my hart could desire: namelie contentment of mynde,'.¹⁷¹ Though Wentworth could not fully imitate his parents' marriage, as he and Margaret remained childless, this choice of words does seem to suggest that he had in some ways followed the example of his parents by having a happy and easy marriage.

This chapter has explored how Wentworth experienced his relationship with his first wife. Unfortunately, due to the lack of evidence Margaret is somewhat of a silent player; however we have been able to piece together some of the experiences she had as wife of Thomas Wentworth. Margaret was from a high-ranking family, she married into an on the rise family as her own was suffering from financial problems. Her first year of marriage was spent apart from her new husband with letters as their only form of communication. When her husband finally returned to her his father died and they inherited guardianship of his numerous younger siblings. As the Lady of the house Margaret oversaw their household and so whilst Wentworth travelled to London, involving himself in politics and personal ambition, she would have remained at Wentworth Woodhouse, to look after his family estate. We know that Margaret had the ability to travel elsewhere without her husband accompanying her; however we do not know who she socialised with.¹⁷² Whilst Wentworth was increasing his position, gaining a place on the Council of the North, Margaret was struggling with the

¹⁷¹ 'Sir William Wentworth's advice to his Son', p.29.

¹⁷² From Wentworth's letters we know Lady Shrewsbury stayed with them at Wentworth Woodhouse and in another the wife of Mr Justice Hutton spent part of the summer at Woodhouse to keep Margaret company. 'Thomas Wentworth's Papers', p.108.

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inability to have children and the shame she must have felt in disappointing her husband yet she remained hopeful, with potential trips to the spas at Bath. She was described as an 'obedient wife', suggesting that she behaved as was expected of a woman: she was careful, considerate and modest. Even her death is told through Wentworth's own experience of it, but it is from this we know she put her faith in her God and her husband. As with many arranged marriages during this period, the two appear to have grown to hold a companionate love for the other, and Wentworth was deeply affected by Margaret's death.¹⁷³ In a letter to his brother-in-law in September 1622 he wrote 'my grief still encreasinge, as one depriued of the greatest treasure, this world could afford mee'.¹⁷⁴ This was Wentworth's first relationship with a woman after his mother and it is interesting to see how it developed: from strangers brought together by their parents into a comfortable partnership; and subsequently what sort of effect Margaret would have had on Wentworth's future relationships.

¹⁷³ A.J Macfarlane, 'Love and Capitalism', *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology*, 11.2, (1986), 22-39, p.22.

¹⁷⁴ 'Thomas Wentworth's Papers', p.175

Arabella Holles

In this chapter we turn to the relationship Wentworth had with his second and most-loved wife, Arabella Holles. The marriage took place at the Holles' family home on 24th February 1625, over two years after Margaret's death; that it was no sooner was in part due to problems Wentworth encountered whilst negotiating his next match due to rumours regarding his fertility. Arabella was just sixteen at the time of her marriage to the thirty-one-year-old Wentworth and was described by those who knew her as 'well-educated...graceful, gay, intelligent, with all the easy social gifts and with the generosity and considerate kindness as well'.¹⁷⁵ Wentworth had become smitten with her since their meeting in the summer of 1624, having joined the company of her father and brother amongst the opposition party at Court. Arabella Holles was the second daughter of John Holles, first Earl of Clare, and his wife Anne. The Holles were a wealthy family, owning land in Nottinghamshire; Clare had bought a barony from James I in 1616 and in 1624 an earldom.¹⁷⁶ He had a secure foothold in the circle of power at Court; however he was often left out of favour.¹⁷⁷ The bitterness he felt he passed on to his second son, Denzil, who was to become a prominent player in Charles' opposition, holding down the speaker in the 1629 session of Parliament.¹⁷⁸ However, it seems the same cannot be said for his daughter, who

¹⁷⁵ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.50.

¹⁷⁶ P.R. Seddon, 'Holles, John, First earl of Clare' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biographies*, 2004, <<https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-13554#odnb-9780198614128-e-13554>> .

¹⁷⁷ The Earl of Clare had been a gentleman of the King's privy chamber under Elizabeth I, however, was unable to gain the position he wanted at the court of James I. He was a bitter and disappointed man with a need for personal justice.

¹⁷⁸ John Morrill, 'Holles, Denzil, first Baron Holles' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biographies*, 2004, <<https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-13550#odnb-9780198614128-e-13550>>.

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has been described as 'a Lady exceedingly comely and beautiful, and yet much more lovely in the Endowments of her mind'.¹⁷⁹ Arabella was a kind, young woman who gained the love and affection of those around her. The couple were married for six years and only parted as a result of Arabella's untimely death. During this period, Wentworth went from being a background figure at Court, to one of the former MPs who were imprisoned for refusing the forced loan, to Lord President of the Council of the North. It was his marriage to Arabella that saw Wentworth become a father. The two appear to have had a strong and loving relationship; Wentworth adored Arabella and Arabella was willing to follow Wentworth wherever his business took him, even whilst pregnant, so much so she ended up giving birth to their second child in prison.

This period of Wentworth's life was crucial to his career, consequently, the details of which have been documented extensively, both at the time and by historians ever since: the debate over whether Wentworth switched sides is still up for discussion.¹⁸⁰ However, his relationship with Arabella and the details of her life have remained overlooked, even though, as we shall see, their relationship arguably had a direct influence on Wentworth's actions regarding his career.¹⁸¹ Though it was first with Arabella that Wentworth had children, his experience as a father has only been looked at when studying his marriage with his third wife, Elizabeth. As with many women of the period, the details of Arabella's life have not been explored, which is likely because of a lack of sources. Wentworth and

¹⁷⁹ Radcliffe, 'An Essay Towards the Life of', p.430.

¹⁸⁰ For debates regarding Wentworth's change of sides see Conrad Russell, 'Parliamentary History in Perspective, 1604-1629', *History*, 61.201 (1976), 1-27. P. Zagorin, 'Did Strafford Change Sides', *The English Historical Review*, 101.398, (1986), 149-163. Cust, 'Wentworth's Change of Sides in the 1620s', 63-80.

¹⁸¹ See pp.68-69.

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Arabella did not spend much time apart, meaning they had no need to write to each other, and consequently, it is difficult to ascertain the full details of their marital situation. Unlike his previous marriage, there are four letters surviving in Arabella's own hand, including three letters to their steward, Richard Marris, which will be able to give some indication towards their lifestyle and Wentworth and Arabella's relationship, and one to her husband. Nevertheless, the majority of the information we have on Arabella's character comes from the account by George Radcliffe, which although it was written after Wentworth's execution and years after Arabella's death, is still a fairly reliable account of her personality as Radcliffe had known Arabella intimately.

In this chapter we will look at several different aspects of Wentworth's marriage to Arabella and her life as Wentworth's wife during a period of abrupt change in Wentworth's career. We will discuss twelve topics regarding Wentworth and Arabella's marriage: Wentworth's search for a new wife, the effect his marriage had on his political career, including his reasons for joining the opposition, Arabella's experience of Wentworth's time amongst the opposition, their relationship, Wentworth's reputation and Arabella's influence, Wentworth as a family man, a comparison between Arabella and Margaret, Arabella's letters, the kind of life Arabella had as Wentworth's wife and finally her death and how Wentworth handled his grief over losing her. From Wentworth's marriage to Arabella, we can begin to see a softer side to Wentworth, more so than we were able to with his previous marriage.

We will begin by looking at Wentworth's search for a new wife. Though the problems Wentworth encountered in his marriage negotiations and the infertility rumours that began to surround him at this time have already been noted by historians, few have looked at this

situation with regard to Wentworth's character.¹⁸² We will argue that Wentworth's struggles came about as a result of the loyal and caring nature he had towards his family. In Wentworth's two-and-a-half-year quest for a new wife, before negotiations began with the Holles family, Wentworth had already approached three separate families regarding a potential match. The first was Lady Mary, daughter of Sir William Craven; the second was Lady Diana Cecil, daughter of the Earl of Exeter; and the third was the widowed Countess Dowager of Dorset, Lady Anne Clifford.¹⁸³ The first two matches failed due to a belief that Wentworth was infertile. As already noted, Wentworth's first marriage to Margaret had not resulted in any children being born to them. Though the couple never gave up hope of conceiving and we can presume that Margaret's trips to Bath were fertility-related, their eleven-year marriage remained childless.¹⁸⁴ As was the way at the time, it would have been Margaret who was thought to have been the reason for their fertility problems; however, during Wentworth's search for a new wife, rumours began to emerge that he had 'some imperfection in himselfe which putte him by the hope of havinge any children'.¹⁸⁵ This was arguably due to Wentworth's loving nature towards his friends and family as when negotiating a match for his brother, to the eldest daughter of Sir William Craven, Wentworth had made a large offer towards a yearly allowance for the couple in the hopes that, if he had children, then his brother would still have a fortune of his own. Not only does this demonstrate that Wentworth was not aware of any reason why he could not conceive a child of his own but it also shows once again that Wentworth was willing to go above and

¹⁸² J.P. Cooper, 'The Fortune of Thomas Wentworth', p.230.

¹⁸³ Lady Mary Craven, daughter of Sir William Craven. 1602-1634. Lady Diana Cecil, daughter of William, Earl of Exeter, 1695-1654. Lady Anne Clifford, daughter of Sir George Clifford third Earl of Cumberland, 1590-1676.

¹⁸⁴ For Margaret and Wentworth's fertility issues, see p.50.

¹⁸⁵ Radcliffe, 'Extracts from Sir George Radcliffe's draughts', p.324.

beyond to ensure his family had a good life. However, when Wentworth made an offer for himself to their younger daughter, the family remembered the generosity he had shown towards his brother and assumed it was because he knew he was unable to have children.¹⁸⁶ Not only did this misunderstanding affect his negotiations with the Craven family but the rumours of his supposed impotence spread so that subsequent discussions with the family of Lady Diana Cecil were also hindered by the belief he was infertile. The negotiations for the third match to Lady Anne Clifford, who was a cousin of his first wife Margaret, do not appear to have gained much traction either. There are two likely causes for this; the first, and one that has been adopted by historians since it was mentioned by George Radcliffe, was that Lady Anne was already past the age of having children and since Wentworth was still hopeful to have children of his own, these marriage arrangements came to nothing.¹⁸⁷ However, there is another possible reason; Lady Anne Clifford was the cousin of Wentworth's first wife and there appears to have been some familial dispute in that for her to inherit the fortune she believed she deserved, she had to oppose Margaret's father and brother.¹⁸⁸ As we know, Wentworth remained close to Henry Clifford throughout the rest of his life; we also know that Wentworth was exceedingly loyal to his friends and family. Although it is more likely that the marriage negotiations with Lady Anne went no further because of her inability to have children, it is also plausible that Wentworth's loyalty to his brother-in-law played a small part in his decision as well.

¹⁸⁶ Radcliffe, 'Extracts from Sir George Radcliffe's draughts', pp.323-324.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁸ Richard T. Spence, 'Clifford, Anne [known as Lady Anne Clifford], Countess of Pembroke, Dorset and Montgomery', in Oxford National Dictionary of National Biography, 2004, <<https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-5641?rskey=AYTAYQ&result=2>>.

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As we have seen, Wentworth encountered difficulties in his search for a second wife; however, he was also influenced by several factors when choosing his potential spouse. We will argue that though he was affected by his finances, it was his father's advice that helped him find his perfect match. It is worth noting that each of these three potential matches had been pursued based on the woman's wealth and status. As J.P. Cooper has already argued the main reason for this was that, during this period of his life, the evidence suggests that Wentworth had found himself in some form of debt.¹⁸⁹ After the death of his first wife, Wentworth was looking for a marriage to an heiress that would help him with his money problems.¹⁹⁰ Wentworth's first marriage had been arranged to improve his family's status and yet he had grown to love Margaret, it is therefore possible that Wentworth was willing to arrange his second marriage based on his finances rather than feelings and this is why he entertained the idea of marriages to these women. Yet, he did not rush into a new marriage; even though he was thirty years old, childless and in debt, it still took him two years to find himself a new wife. Though we know this was mainly due to the rumours surrounding his infertility, it was also because he believed himself worthy of a decent match and so he did not rush into a marriage simply to aid his finances. Though his finances were an important factor in his choice of bride, Wentworth was also influenced by his father as Sir William had left his son some advice to remember when looking for a wife. According to Sir William, what a wife needed to be was 'well borne and brought up but not too highlie, of a helthfull

¹⁸⁹ Sir William had left Wentworth a fortune when he died; however the provisions he had promised for his sons' educations and daughters' marriage portions were quite substantial, especially as they all came to fruition in the 1620s, around the same time Wentworth's own political career was taking off. Due to the depression of 1621 which caused falling rents and heavy arrears in the years following, Wentworth found himself in some financial difficulty.

¹⁹⁰ J.P Cooper, 'The Fortune of Thomas Wentworth', pp.228-230.

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bodye, of a good complexion, humble and vertuouse, some few years younger then your self and nott of a simple witt'.¹⁹¹ Wentworth did not have an opportunity to apply this to his first wife, as his father had already chosen Margaret for him, but it seems he was able to listen to his father's advice when it came to his second. Lady Arabella was from a wealthy family, bringing with her a marriage portion of £6000; however her father had also bought his title from the King, meaning Arabella would have been wellborn but she was not from a family who would look down upon the Wentworths for buying their position amongst the upper classes.¹⁹² The description of Lady Arabella written by George Radcliffe shows her to be not only young, beautiful and intelligent but also selfless and generous, 'She was bountifull with great largenesse of heart and discretion, as farre from ostentation as baseness'.¹⁹³ It would therefore appear that Arabella fitted all of Sir William's criteria for what a good wife should be. This might suggest that even as an adult, Wentworth was still heavily influenced by his father. Nevertheless, we must not overlook the fact that Wentworth had also pursued matches that did not follow his father's counsel.¹⁹⁴ The match with the Holles' came about as a result of Wentworth finding himself amongst their company at Court, having fallen out of favour due to his opinions of the Spanish war.¹⁹⁵ Nevertheless, having had a successful marriage of his own, perhaps Sir William was right in his advice about what a wife needed to be as Wentworth 'grew passionately in love with her after his first acquaintance, insomuch that for 3 or 4 months before they were married, he

¹⁹¹ 'Sir William Wentworth's advice to his Son', p.20.

¹⁹² J.P Cooper, 'The Fortune of Thomas Wentworth', p.230.

¹⁹³ Radcliffe, 'Extracts from Sir George Radcliffe's draughts', p.325.

¹⁹⁴ For example, Lady Anne Clifford was three years older than Wentworth.

¹⁹⁵ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Reevaluation*, p.49.

missed not 3 dayes from beinge most part of the afternoones in her company'.¹⁹⁶ The marriage between Wentworth and Arabella may have been financially beneficial to Wentworth; however there is no doubt that this was a marriage for love. It is worth noting how Wentworth's marriages echoed the shifting pattern of society's expectations of marriage at the time. As had been the custom at the start of the early modern period, when alliances between families were crucial for political gains, Wentworth's first marriage, to Margaret Clifford, was an arranged one; they were not in love and Wentworth spent the first part of their marriage absent, travelling around Europe.¹⁹⁷ Although they did grow to love and truly care for each other, this was not a certainty when the arrangement was struck. However, his second marriage, as had become the more popular option by the early seventeenth century when the family became a more private sphere, was one for love.¹⁹⁸ Although it did help that she was of an affluent background, Wentworth courted and became completely infatuated with Arabella before they were even married.

We will now look at Wentworth's marriage to Arabella and how this affected his political career, suggesting a direct link between the two. The correlation between the two is something which has not been proposed before, yet we will argue that Wentworth's timing in his attempts to promote his political career were directly impacted by the news of his impending fatherhood. We know that Margaret's childlessness was a source of disappointment to Wentworth and that the couple had tried to solve their infertility problem, with trips to the Bath spas. Without children, a man's honour and reputation were

¹⁹⁶ Radcliffe, 'Extracts from Sir George Radcliffe's draughts', p.324.

¹⁹⁷ Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800*, (1977), pp.85-93.

¹⁹⁸ Eales, *Women in Early Modern England*, (Routledge:2005), pp.63-65.

called in to question; such rumours had already cost Wentworth two marriage suitors and for a man as ambitious as Wentworth this would have been a source of humiliation.¹⁹⁹ Nevertheless, as already indicated, Wentworth had not given up on his chances of becoming a father and in the autumn of 1625 he was able to disprove the rumours of his infertility.²⁰⁰ Less than a year into their marriage, Lady Arabella had fallen pregnant and it is this pregnancy that forced Wentworth to think about the consequences of his actions and how they would affect his family in the long term. With his second wife expecting, Wentworth would have been able to prove to society that he was a 'proper' man, worthy of honour and titles.²⁰¹ At this time in his life Wentworth had found himself at odds with the King's favourite, the Duke of Buckingham. Though he was trying to improve their relationship he was appointed sheriff of Yorkshire in autumn 1625.²⁰² Wentworth should have been disappointed by the appointment, as it not only stopped him from sitting in Parliament for the year but it also meant his attempts at gaining Buckingham's favour were not going as well as he hoped.²⁰³ However, the news of his wife's pregnancy revived the hopes he had of building a better place for himself in society, that he could one day pass on to his son and heir; as such he remained positive which arguably implies that his family was his primary concern.²⁰⁴ Rather than find a way around being picked, by getting elected as MP for another borough, as his father-in-law suggested, Wentworth followed the King's wishes,

¹⁹⁹ Barry, Foster, *Childless Men*, p.183.

²⁰⁰ Wentworth had considered which of his siblings he would name his heir, yet he still attempted to provide the best match for him in case Wentworth ever had his own children. Wentworth also did not pursue a match where the woman was passed her childbearing years. Radcliffe, 'Extracts from Sir George Radcliffe's draughts', pp.323-324.

²⁰¹ Barry, Foster, *Childless Men*, p.177.

²⁰² Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth Vol. I*, p.23.

²⁰³ In his advice to his son, William Wentworth had warned against being chosen as Sheriff. 'Sir William Wentworth's advice to his Son', p.12.

²⁰⁴ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.54.

believing that he could spend the time in Yorkshire rebuilding his reputation, which would help him regain his position in the long run.²⁰⁵ Wentworth was clever enough to know that to disobey the King would have had consequences and so, even though it left him at a loss for the time being, to bow to the King's wishes would allow for the possibility of being re-accepted into the royal favour at a later date.²⁰⁶

Though Wentworth had accepted defeat over being appointed sheriff, his wife's pregnancy meant he still felt a growing pressure to try and improve his family's position. Wentworth spent his time as sheriff in Yorkshire improving his influence and reputation, whilst also repairing his relationship with the King's favourite. In 1626, Wentworth believed himself to be in a good enough position to put himself forward for the role of Lord President of the Council of the North. The reason behind Wentworth's pursuit of this position has been somewhat uncertain; in a letter to Sir Edward Conway in January 1625[6] he admits 'many of my friends have earnestly moved me to use some means to procure it', and it was believed that these 'friends' may have first been given the idea by Buckingham, to buy Wentworth's loyalty or silence in the next Parliament.²⁰⁷ Nevertheless, it is also possible that Wentworth was simply applying for a position in his home county that suited his capabilities which he believed to be open to all.²⁰⁸ So far in his political career, Wentworth

²⁰⁵ *Ibid*, p.55. Knowler, *Letters and Dispatches*, p.31.

²⁰⁶ Wedgwood, *Ibid*. p.54.

²⁰⁷ Buckingham was facing increasing criticism and so may have felt it necessary to try and buy support from influential members of Parliament. Burghclere, *Strafford Vol. I*, p.68.

²⁰⁸ The council in the North was created to maintain order and keep the peace in the Northern counties, Wentworth had always been interested in law and justice so he would have been well suited to the role. The council had lost some of its status and influence under the reign of Elizabeth and the current president had done nothing to preserve its powers; Wentworth realised that for the administration to be effective the Council needed strengthening. Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth Vol. I*, p.29. Charles Frank Nemos, *Thomas L. Wentworth as Lord President of the Council of the North, 1629-1633*, 1950, pp.7-9.

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had been somewhat of a silent player; he had admitted to taking a back seat during his first Parliament so as to further his political education, and yet over a decade later and the only influence Wentworth had gained had led him to being appointed sheriff.²⁰⁹ As we have seen from the events of his first Parliament, and the advice he gave to his nephew, he would not have put himself forward if he did not think he was well suited to the position.²¹⁰ Yet, the news of a child may have forced Wentworth to look at his career and remind him of the achievements he hoped to one day pass down to his heir. Perhaps then, it is not simply coincidence that Wentworth put his name forward for Lord President of the North just months before his first child was due.

As we have seen, Wentworth's ambition was, at least in part, motivated by his family. However, it did not always lead him to the anticipated outcome; rather, it was his pursuit of power and influence for his family name that found him opposing the King. On the 8th June 1626, Arabella gave birth to their first child: a son named William, after his grandfather. Not only was Wentworth unsuccessful in his attempts to gain the Lord Presidency but less than a month after the birth of his son, Wentworth was also publicly dismissed from his role as Custos Rotulorum, to which he had years earlier successfully defended his right.²¹¹ It appears, after Wentworth's attempts to promote his career on his own terms, Buckingham

²⁰⁹ Although Wentworth was ideologically opposed to the war against Spain he also recognised the fault of the opposition in its attack on Buckingham. Wentworth had unsuccessfully tried to steer a middle ground in which grievances could be heard whilst business could still be attended to. Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.53.

²¹⁰ See p.45

²¹¹ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, pp.56-57. Wentworth received this dismissal with grace during a session of The Commission of the Peace. Previously, Buckingham had asked Wentworth to step down from his position as Master of the Rolls in favour of his predecessor who had been publicly disgraced, yet Wentworth wrote to Buckingham to defend his right to the position. Knowler, *Letters and Dispatches*, p.4.

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had decided he no longer needed Wentworth on his side.²¹² This signalled to him that whilst Buckingham was around, he had little hope of improving his political career. Though this was not the first time Wentworth had gone against Buckingham, it was this public dismissal that left Wentworth feeling his political future was bleak.²¹³ The reason for Wentworth's melancholy was that now he had a family of his own, a son who would inherit his fortune and a fertile, young wife who was relying on him to improve their position as there was no way of gaining the King's favour without the support of Buckingham, after having spent the last few years trying to improve their relationship. It was arguably this failure, as well as his increasing dislike of Buckingham's war policy, that resulted in his active participation with the opposition at court. Wentworth had always been a supporter of the King's prerogative, however he had come to realise that Buckingham was too powerful and something needed to be done to keep peace within the Kingdom.²¹⁴ In the company of the opposition, Wentworth found an opportunity to regain his influence: since the free gift that Charles had asked for to fund the war effort had been somewhat unsuccessful, it was swapped in September 1626 for a forced loan. Wentworth, who had refused to pay the free gift in 1625 as he was against the war with Spain, again refused to pay the loan and instead found himself defending those who refused to pay.²¹⁵ However, by the time of the forced loan Wentworth had a reputation amongst his friends and family for his poor health.²¹⁶ Consequently, those trying to warn him against disobeying the King, which included his

²¹² Burghclere has argued Wentworth's dismissal was a result of his reluctance to support the war effort and the free gift he had refused to pay. *Burghclere, Strafford Vol. I*, pp.71-72.

²¹³ Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth Vol. I*, p.31.

²¹⁴ *Ibid*, pp.31-32.

²¹⁵ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, pp.57-58.

²¹⁶ Radcliffe, 'Extracts from Sir George Radcliffe's draughts', p.324. We will return to Wentworth's many illnesses, see below p.119.

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former brother-in-law, Henry Clifford, attempted to caution him that his health would not allow him to undergo whatever punishment the King would have him suffer and that he should think of his family and his wife, who was now pregnant with their second child.²¹⁷ After the news of his first child, Wentworth became more determined in his pursuit of power so perhaps the news of his second child, rather than deter him from his actions, reminded him that if he submitted then he had no future chance of gaining higher positions and titles. Whatever his reasons may have been, Wentworth was not one to allow an illness to stop him from accomplishing what he set out to do and so he refused to pay the forced loan and was sent to Marshalsea prison on July 4th 1627.

This brings us to Wentworth's time amongst the opposition, which was arguably a significant event within his career. John Pym's speech in the 1641 Parliament recalled the time when Wentworth had been 'a most zealous assertor and champion for the liberties of the people' and Wentworth's supposed apostasy has sparked a debate throughout the centuries.²¹⁸ Although we have argued that the reason behind Wentworth's refusal to pay the loan was, at least in part, because of his family and the ambitions he held for their future, the impact this had on Wentworth's young family has not been studied.

Consequently, we do not yet know what this meant for his wife, who would have had no say in what her husband chose to do. Although Wentworth's father did on occasion listen to the advice of his wife, as we saw with his previous marriage, Wentworth did not discuss politics with Margaret and so it is unlikely he would have discussed his actions with Arabella.

Arabella would have been unable to get involved in her husband's politics and instead, what

²¹⁷ Knowler, *Letters and Dispatches*, pp. 36-38. Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p. 58.

²¹⁸ Earl of Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion Vol. I*, p.223.

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we know of Wentworth was that he saw his wife's political significance in the relationships and alliances he could form through her family.²¹⁹ It seems an unlikely coincidence that amongst the fourteen peers who protested against the forced loan was the Earl of Clare, Wentworth's father-in-law. It would therefore seem more likely that Wentworth continued to form relationships out of his second marriage, including his new family who were also on the side of the opposition. As a dutiful wife and daughter, Arabella would have been expected to support her husband's refusal to pay the forced loan.²²⁰

We will now look at Arabella's experience of Wentworth's time amongst the opposition and what this tells of their relationship. We have already stated, Arabella would have been expected to support her husband, especially as her father and brother also held his belief; however, we will argue that Arabella went beyond her duties as Wentworth's wife, which could suggest that she was as devoted to Wentworth as he was to her. It appears that Lady Arabella went with her husband when he was sentenced to Marshalsea Prison, which would suggest she did support her husband's cause.²²¹ Although it was infamous for its severe punishments, women, wives, daughters and prostitutes were welcome to visit Marshalsea; not only that but wives were free to live with their husbands at the prison if they so chose.²²² Therefore, Arabella attending Wentworth was not uncommon. Yet, it is interesting that Wentworth, who was devoted to his young wife and had concerns about her own health and safety, would have allowed her company at a place such as Marshalsea,

²¹⁹ Eales, *Women in Early Modern England*, p.27.

²²⁰ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.58.

²²¹ Violet Brooke-Hunt, *Prisoners of the Tower of London: being an account of some who at divers times lay captive within its walls*, (1901), p.77.

²²² Geoffrey Howse, *A History of London Prisons*, (2013), Chapter 3.

especially whilst she was pregnant.²²³ The fact that Arabella stayed with Wentworth in prison suggests that she was committed to her husband and going beyond what was expected of her in her wifely duties. Wentworth's friend George Radcliffe was another of the forced loan refusers to be sent to Marshalsea, and yet his wife did not join him in his stay, suggesting that it was not expected for Arabella to attend with Wentworth, especially when they had a young child at home.²²⁴ Even though Radcliffe '[did] very much desire [his wife's] company here', she had been left to run their household in his absence.

Interestingly, the response of the two women to their husbands' imprisonment highlights the different ways in what it meant to be a wife in this period. It appears that Radcliffe's wife did not agree with her husband's refusal, as incarceration gave her concerns about their family status, yet there was nothing she could do that could change their situation, 'I never knew you desire anything so earnestly of me as you doe now that I would use meanes to come out; you presse your owne and Tom's interest both, which I do professe they do and shal move me much'.²²⁵ Lady Anne was left without her husband for several months as he remained firm in his resolution not to pay the loan, despite his wife's pleading.²²⁶

Arabella, on the other hand, appears to have supported her husband, or at least chosen to accompany him in his punishment. Both Radcliffe and Wentworth were loving husbands to their wives; Radcliffe's letters to his wife whilst he was away often refers to how much he

²²³ We will return to why Wentworth chose to have his wife with him in prison, see p.78.

²²⁴ Burghclere, *Strafford Vol. I*, p.77.

²²⁵ Whitaker, *The Life and Original Correspondence of Sir George Radcliffe*, pp.148-151.

²²⁶ On several occasions Radcliffe does ask his wife to visit him in prison, 'You might live with your aunt, and come here by water when you will'. Although we are not certain whether Lady Anne did in fact visit her husband whilst he was in prison, a few weeks after he wrote to her asking her to visit he was writing to her again, which might suggest she did not. Whitaker, *The Life and Original Correspondence of Sir George Radcliffe*, pp.152-153. Fiona Pogson, 'Radcliffe, Sir George' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (2004), <<https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-22980?rskey=NsNyJu>>.

misses her and their son. Yet, Lady Anne appears to have followed her duty as mother, staying home in order to run the household; whereas Lady Arabella followed her duty as a wife, remaining by her husband's side.²²⁷

It is Arabella's actions during this period that tells us more about her relationship with her husband, that she was willing to stick by him whilst he was imprisoned and she was heavily pregnant, even if it meant her spending a long period away from the comfort of the family home, this shows her dedication to Wentworth. In July 1627 a group of prisoners, including Wentworth and Radcliffe, were moved from Marshalsea to Dartford, due to the heat of the summer and fears of the plague.²²⁸ It would appear that Arabella remained with her husband after he was moved to Dartford, as it was here in October 1627, that she gave birth to their second child, a daughter, Anne, named for Wentworth's mother.²²⁹ The fact that Arabella gave birth at Dartford is significant as childbirth had become a social occasion for women during the early modern period, one in which female friends, neighbours and relatives would all be included; in a society that was dictated by men such an occasion would have been an important bonding period for the women.²³⁰ Consequently, for Arabella to give birth in Dartford, away from their family estate would have meant that any female friends and family would have been excluded from the birthing process; this could arguably imply that she viewed her marriage to Wentworth as more important than these female relationships. Yet, Wentworth himself had not been born in his family home, though this

²²⁷ Whitaker, *Ibid.* pp.148-152.

²²⁸ Dartford Bridewell was a house in the High Street granted to the justices of the peace to be used as a House of Correction. It is thought this is where the forced loan refusers were sent after Marshalsea.

²²⁹ Burghclere, *Strafford Vol. I*, p.79.

²³⁰ Adrian Wilson, *Ritual and Conflict: The Social Relations of Childbirth in Early Modern England*, (2016), p.154.

was due to his mother giving birth prematurely on a visit to her father; nevertheless, this still proves that it was not unheard of for a woman to skip the female birthing ritual.²³¹

Moreover, this was not their first child and it would not be their last so perhaps Arabella simply felt it was more important at the time to promote solidarity with her husband.

Whatever the reason, giving birth in Dartford instead of at Woodhouse would still have been significant for the couple. Whilst we do not know if the children were at Marshalsea, it appears as though they were with their parents at Dartford. In a letter Arabella wrote to her husband in December 1627, during the short period the two were separated when Wentworth had obtained leave to go to London for 6 days, she tells her husband that 'the children are all very well god be thanked soe I rest'.²³² This would suggest that their stay at Dartford was not so bad a punishment; the conditions appear to have been much better than those at Marshalsea, which would explain why Wentworth allowed Arabella to stay with him.²³³ Nevertheless, Arabella would have been left to look after the children without the same level of support she would have had had they been at Woodhouse, it is, therefore, no wonder that she writes of how she wished her mother could stay with her at Dartford, until 'my Lord come upp'.²³⁴ This arguably highlights what Arabella was willing to give up to support her husband, as neither she nor the children were expected to stay at Dartford with Wentworth yet they remained there until he was released in December 1627.

²³¹ Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth Vol. I*, pp.1-2.

²³² 'Strafford Papers', 22.22.

²³³ Wentworth complained about the effect the foggy air at Marshalsea had on his brain. Knowler, *Letters and Dispatches Vol. I*, p.40.

²³⁴ 'Strafford Papers', 22.22.

Over the course of Wentworth and Arabella's marriage, Wentworth's reputation transformed from champion of the public to 'the greatest enemy to the liberties of his country'.²³⁵ Though Wentworth's reputation took a turn for the worse during his time in office, his wife's did not.²³⁶ It is worth exploring the idea that Arabella and her benevolent nature had some influence on her husband, something which has not been considered before. Arabella was a charitable and caring young woman; from Radcliffe's personal account we know that she was active in her neighbourhood, 'She had not a servant in the house that she did not some particuler kindnesse too to oblige them, nor a person in all her neighbourhood that was poore or sicke that she did not particularly take care on, dayly sendinge to their supplyes and herselfe at fit oportunities visitinge them'.²³⁷ Though it was during his time as President of the Council of the North that his reputation as a harsh and ruthless man had begun to take form, there was another side to Wentworth's rule. As Lord President, Wentworth continued to champion the country-folk: he attempted to enforce order and give justice to the poor, he was successful in his endeavours to control the plague and he even caused himself disfavour from the King by standing up for the people of Yorkshire in the Vermuyden case.²³⁸ We can argue that this was his wife's influence as we do not see the same level of concern about the poor whilst he is in Ireland. Until recently it was believed by historians, such as Wedgwood, that it was in Wentworth's character to protect the

²³⁵ Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion Vol. I*, p.223. Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.70.

²³⁶ It was noted at the time of her death that 'the whole city' of York was 'wearing a face of mourning'. Though this is an exaggeration, it suggests that Arabella was indeed well-liked. Burghclere, *Strafford Vol. I*, p.51.

²³⁷ Radcliffe, 'Extracts from Sir George Radcliffe's draughts', p.325.

²³⁸ Cornelius Vermuyden was the Dutch engineer who had been granted the Hatfield Chase drainage project. He faced resistance from the locals as the work interfered with their livelihoods and they feared their rights to the common land would be disregarded. There was tension between the locals and the workmen, one day a brawl broke out during which a fenmen was killed. Wentworth supported those who opposed Vermuyden, even before he became Lord President. Wedgwood, *Thomas Wentworth: A Revaluation*, pp.80-81, 112-114.

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poor from the rich whether in Yorkshire or in Ireland, however, Hugh Kearney's study of Wentworth's rule in Ireland has suggested that Wentworth's own financial gain put his profit on par with that of the Earl of Cork and it was the Native Irish who were 'the worst off' under Wentworth. Additionally it has been suggested that Wentworth's challenging of the elite classes was in fact to do with them profiting off the land at the expense of the Church and the Crown.²³⁹ Nevertheless, as a Yorkshire-man it appears Wentworth did care about his home county doing what he could with his newfound position to try and better it, yet the gentler aspects of his time in office were known about almost exclusively in the North and he was still becoming known as a hard, overly ambitious tyrant.²⁴⁰ The reason for this being that at this point, his growing reputation was less to do with his own character and more to do with his success as Lord President; Wentworth believed his reputation was slandered 'meerly...for doing the King's Service', an unfairness which he speaks of in a letter to Lord Cottington. It is interesting that he would discuss such a topic with Lord Cottington as he suggests his adversaries were in reality opposing the King but 'contented themselves to call upon me by the way', accusing them of disloyalty to the King.²⁴¹ Such an accusation could not be suggested to just anyone and so it would suggest a level of trust between Wentworth and Cottington. This may again be his wife's influence as the relationship he formed with Cottington, one of the few relationships that Wentworth had made at court that had grown into a real friendship, had been encouraged by his wife, who found Cottington to be witty and amiable.²⁴²

²³⁹ Kearney, *Strafford in Ireland 1633-1641: A Study in Absolutism*, pp.171-184. Terence Ranger, 'Strafford in Ireland: A Revaluation', *Past & Present*, 19, (1961), 26-45.

²⁴⁰ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.112.

²⁴¹ Knowler, *Letters and Dispatches*, p.145.

²⁴² Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.90. For more on Wentworth's personal relationship with Lord Cottington see Fiona Pogson, 'Making and Maintaining Political Alliances', 52-73

Consequently, we can argue that though Wentworth may not have taken his wife's advice politically, we can assume that he did respect her enough to listen to some of her opinions.

Although this side of Wentworth has largely been overlooked by those studying his life, Wentworth was in fact a caring family man.²⁴³ Throughout their marriage, it was not often that Wentworth would willingly part from his wife. As a result of the sudden death of his first wife, Lady Margaret, Wentworth was now more aware of the fragility of life and was, therefore, unwilling to leave Arabella's side, especially as his young wife was of a somewhat fragile disposition herself.²⁴⁴ This often led to Arabella accompanying Wentworth on his numerous trips to London; this would also explain why she attended her husband during his imprisonment, even if it meant giving birth away from family. Arabella appears to have been willing to follow her husband in his endeavours, no matter the consequences.²⁴⁵ The fact the children also stayed with them at Dartford is significant as it highlights the idea that family was important to Wentworth and Arabella, since they chose to keep their children close rather than leave them with a guardian at this time. However, as the children got older and Wentworth was called to London more, their children were often left at Wentworth Woodhouse under the care of trusted guardians, chiefly Sir William Pennyman.²⁴⁶ Nonetheless, Wentworth still cared deeply for his family, even whilst separated from them. Sir William Pennyman was Wentworth's Vice-President which suggests that Wentworth believed the care of his children was extremely important, since he did not entrust just

²⁴³ Even those supporting Wentworth have chosen to focus on him as the dutiful servant of the Crown, Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, pp.11-12.

²⁴⁴ Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth Vol. I*, p.86.

²⁴⁵ In the summer of 1630, Arabella was once again pregnant and had been advised by the doctor against the long journey North and yet insisted on following her husband. Wedgwood, *Thomas Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.100.

²⁴⁶ Knowler, *Letters and Dispatches Vol. I*, p.55.

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anyone to look after them but appointed but his second-in-command. It was not uncommon for parents to separate themselves from their children, especially amongst the elite who would often send their children to live under the care of acquaintances as a form of patronage and a way of forming alliances with other important families.²⁴⁷ It would, therefore, not have been surprising for Wentworth and his wife to leave the children whilst they attended business in London. However, as already noted Wentworth took an interest in his children and though away from them, would receive regular updates on how they were progressing which would again suggest a level of care that was not always common amongst early modern parents.²⁴⁸ This is again an example of Wentworth's caring nature towards his family. It is also worth noting that despite the fact that Wentworth and Arabella did spend time away from their children, the children still adored their parents, as evidenced in a letter written to Wentworth in June 1631, which the children were more interested in seeing their parents than in any gift they could receive from them.²⁴⁹

It is worth taking a moment at this point to compare Wentworth's two marriages and how differently he approached his relationship with the two women. Wentworth went from spending the first year of his first marriage in a different country, unable to build a relationship with his new wife until he returned, to an inability to leave his second wife's side, having managed to form a bond before they had married. We cannot be certain as to whether Margaret would accompany Wentworth on his frequent trips to the capital, though we know from Radcliffe that Wentworth did indeed frequent London often, we are unable

²⁴⁷ Barbara Harris, 'Women and Politics', pp.262-265

²⁴⁸ Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth Vol. I*, p.87.

²⁴⁹ Knowler, *Letters and Dispatches Vol. I*, p.57.

to track Margaret's movements due to a lack of extant sources.²⁵⁰ Nevertheless, we have already noted that she was able to take leave of her husband for personal trips- something that Arabella does not appear to have done.²⁵¹ Even whilst Wentworth's career progressed and his public duties built up, he continued to watch over his young wife. As evident on one such occasion when a doctor had suggested to Wentworth that his wife may have cancer; in response to this Wentworth sent for two more doctors, plus 'the best surgeon they have in York', making arrangements to take his wife home to Woodhouse immediately.²⁵²

Wentworth's quick reaction, when he often suffered through his own illnesses, is proof of the devotion he held for Arabella. Although the suspicions proved unfounded, it is thought that Wentworth refused to tell his wife about this scare, asking others to avoid telling her as well.²⁵³ This might suggest that although he loved his wife dearly, he still exercised control over their relationship, withholding information that he did not think appropriate to tell his wife. Nevertheless, this was done out of love and devotion, rather than a display of dominance. Wentworth's fear of losing his wife plagued him, hence the need for constant supervision and reassurance and why Margaret, in contrast, had been permitted so much freedom.

Unlike with his first marriage, his second wife has not been left voiceless by history, and yet she remains largely overlooked by historians. A selection of letters written by Lady Arabella are still available to study: one addressed to her husband, the other three written to the

²⁵⁰ Radcliffe, 'An Essay Towards the Life of', p.436.

²⁵¹ The only letter between Arabella and her husband that we have found is the one already discussed where she remained at Dartford whilst Wentworth visited London which may suggest this was one of the few times the couple were separated from each other.

²⁵² 'Letter from Wentworth to Richard Marris Westminster. April 22, 1629' quoted in Burghclere, *Strafford Vol. I*, pp.160-162.

²⁵³ Burghclere, *Ibid.*

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steward of Wentworth Woodhouse, Richard Marris, which allows some insight into the kind of life Lady Arabella had as wife of Wentworth. The rest of her letter whilst at Dartford in 1627 is what would be expected of a wife writing to her husband who was away on business: Arabella writes of her family; she updates her husband of her and her children's health and wishes for his swift return. Somewhat interesting though is the statement she writes of how 'here is also no oates left, neither doe I know where to have any bought'.²⁵⁴ Since they had been imprisoned alongside Wentworth there would be no gossip or other such news for his wife to update him on, it appears the best she could find was the issue over oats to feed the horses.²⁵⁵ As Wentworth's wife, Arabella would have been in charge of the running of the household, although the family was imprisoned at Dartford it is interesting that Arabella is writing to her husband about her inability to source oats for the horses, a problem she would have been expected to resolve, had they been at Woodhouse. Since the death of his father, the running of the Wentworth estate at Woodhouse was left to Wentworth's steward, Richard Marris; whom Wentworth always treated with a level of respect, enjoying a friendship that was uncommon between master and servant.²⁵⁶ Since Wentworth was often called to London and his wife would go with him, Marris was left to deal with the everyday running of Wentworth Woodhouse. However, letters from Arabella to Marris suggest that she too had a say in the dealings of the household. On one such occasion, Arabella wrote to Marris how 'I had indeed a great desire to come this day,

²⁵⁴ 'Strafford Papers', 22.22.

²⁵⁵ Wentworth enjoyed gossiping with his third wife, which might suggest that he too liked to gossip with Arabella, but because they did not spend much time apart there is not enough evidence to fully support this notion. Burghclere, 'Strafford as a Letter Writer', p.97.

²⁵⁶ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.29.

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because of much business which I have to do there'.²⁵⁷ Since married women had no autonomy of their own, the only business Arabella could have been involved in was to do with the household.²⁵⁸ Yet, it appears she relied heavily on Marris, especially during her trips away from Woodhouse, often asking him to send her various items; from her 'Polonia gown lined with plush' to lemons which he had found for her, to 'the black work sheets' which she sent extensive instructions for him to find.²⁵⁹ Not only does this show the authority she felt she had over the household, as she knew exactly where everything was kept, but it also shows the life of luxury that she was able to lead as Wentworth's wife.

We will now look at the kind of life Arabella was able to have as Wentworth's wife. We have already established that Arabella was a charitable and benevolent woman; nevertheless, she was also a member of the upper classes with a husband who adored her, she was therefore, able to lead a comfortable life. Wentworth's accounts are unfortunately sparse for this period and so those trying to study his finances have been forced to rely on his correspondence for much of the information.²⁶⁰ Arabella's lifestyle is not something that has been brought to light, yet Wentworth's political successes would have had an impact on his wife. We know that the 1620s saw Wentworth's finances at their lowest.²⁶¹ The portion he received from his marriage to Arabella, although a significant sum, was not enough to fix his financial difficulties and by the end of 1627, Wentworth was again struggling with money. At this point Wentworth had two young children of his own plus the education of his brothers

²⁵⁷ Strafford Papers, 22.16.

²⁵⁸ Amy Erickson, *Women and Property: In Early Modern England*, (2002), p.99.

²⁵⁹ 'Strafford Papers'. 22.16, 22.18.

²⁶⁰ J.P. Cooper, 'The Fortune of Strafford', p.227.

²⁶¹ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.45.

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and his sisters' dowries to pay for, he had not been recognised for his actions in Parliament in the way he hoped and he had just spent several months imprisoned for going against the King's wishes. Wentworth was a practical man and so in November 1627, he made plans with Richard Marris to sell his manors at 'Thorneton, Sharphill and Stratford att the rate of 350p.a.'²⁶² We do not know much about Arabella during this period; it is therefore, difficult to judge whether she was affected by her husband's financial worries. However, it appears the sale of land discussed did not take place until some years later- this is perhaps because Wentworth's fortunes were beginning to change.²⁶³ After the Petition of Right in the June of 1628, Wentworth had begun to show his loyalty to the King and was rewarded the following month, becoming Baron Wentworth. By the end of the year, Wentworth had been made a Viscount and appointed Lord President. Wentworth's position in high office brought with it opportunities for personal and financial gain, which he used to his advantage, accumulating extra land.²⁶⁴ From Arabella's letters to Marris we can see that she was able to enjoy not only lemons but strawberries and oysters, as well as expensive clothing, which would suggest that finances were no longer an issue for Wentworth.²⁶⁵ Arabella was able to enjoy the luxuries of life highlighted in the portrait of her, painted by Van Dyck. We do not know exactly when the portrait was painted, though it is entitled Lady Arabella Holles, Viscount Wentworth so we may assume it was after December 1628. This might suggest it was important to the couple to show off their newfound position as, in the portrait, Arabella is wearing jewels and an expensive gown, which also appears to be covered in beads or

²⁶² 'Thomas Wentworth's Papers', p.273.

²⁶³ Thorneton was sold four years later, Sharphill was still in Strafford's possession in 1636 and Stratforth was sold in 1629. J.P. Cooper, 'The Fortune of Strafford', p.227.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁵ Unfortunately, we do have dates for these letters written by Arabella. 'Strafford Papers'. 22.16, 22.18.

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jewels, demonstrating her wealth and status.. Portraiture was an important political tool in this period and Wentworth was one of the few statesmen who fully understood the power of political imagery.²⁶⁶ Wentworth had several pieces commissioned by Van Dyck, Charles I's court painter, including the one of his second wife and another of his children.²⁶⁷ There are some similarities between this portrait and the one of Wentworth's first wife.²⁶⁸ Lady Margaret also appears dressed in pearls, used as a way of showing status, however the main difference between the two is the background; the portrait of Margaret is of her upper body, seated in front of a plain backdrop; whereas Arabella is depicted full figure against a pillar in what appears to be a Grecian inspired courtyard. It is this background that demonstrates Wentworth's rise in power at the time as it highlights his ability to commission a master of the art such as Van Dyck; it is an example of the cultural and political significance of the renaissance art movement, with its call-backs to the classical world and use of movement within paintings.²⁶⁹ At the time of Margaret's painting Wentworth did not hold a strong position at court and was struggling financially, this would explain why this portrait was much more simple than Arabella's.²⁷⁰ At the same time, Arabella is depicted facing away from the painter, with only her head turned to look, as though shy or humble. Though she may have cared for her neighbours and servants, and

²⁶⁶ Dougal Shaw, 'Thomas Wentworth and Monastic Ritual in Early Modern Ireland', p.340.

²⁶⁷ Van Dyck, *Lady Arabella Holles, Viscount Wentworth 2nd wife of Viscount Wentworth*, Oil Painting, 1500-1799, Sheffield City Archives. Van Dyck, *William Wentworth, 2nd Earl of Strafford, and his sisters*, Oil Painting, 1500-1977, Sheffield City Archives. Given the age of the three children, their portrait would have been painted after their mother's death when Wentworth was enjoying the benefits that came with being Lord Deputy of Ireland.

²⁶⁸ A reproduction of this portrait can be found in George Howse, *The Fitzwilliam (Wentworth) Estates and The Wentworth Monuments*, (Rotherham: 2002), p.117.

²⁶⁹ David Howarth, *Images of Rule: Art and Politics in the English Renaissance, 1485-1649*, (1997), pp.1-10

²⁷⁰ Wentworth's son would go on to describe the portrait as 'a bad picture but I have noe other of her'. Richard Ollard & Pamela Tudor-Craig, *For Veronica Wedgwood These Studies in Seventeenth-Century History*, (London, 1986), p.122.

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was in return loved by them, she did not forget her place in society. In her letters to Marris she always addressed them 'my good servant Richard Marris' and signed them off 'your mrs and assured friend.'²⁷¹ Although ending with a term of endearment, she chooses to first remind him that he is still her servant.²⁷² Altogether this paints an interesting picture of the life of Wentworth's second wife, who appears to have benefitted from Wentworth's increasing political career.

It is once again at this time worth drawing comparisons between Wentworth's relationships with his two wives to try and understand the ways in which Wentworth viewed women. To Wentworth, Margaret had been useful in the alliances he began to form thanks to her family connections; the Cumberlands were an important family in the North and Wentworth remained close to her brother, who had married into the Cecil family and so was able to offer inner knowledge about that group at Court.²⁷³ Wentworth was a young man when he married Margaret and would have relied on her connections and his family's reputation to help build his own. He did not include Margaret in his political business but understood the benefits that she was able to provide for him simply through her heritage. However, by the time of his second marriage, Wentworth had already begun his political career at Court, and so did not need to rely on his wife's family connections to create political alliances as he had previously done. However, it was partially through this marriage that he found himself drawn over to the opposition and it was within this group that he began to truly make a name for himself, which again might suggest the importance of connections made through

²⁷¹ 'Strafford Papers', 22.16, 22.16, 22.24.

²⁷² See p.98 for a comparison of Arabella's writing style to Wentworth's third wife, Elizabeth.

²⁷³ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Reevaluation*, p.32.

his marriage. Yet, he was not afraid to turn his back on these same men, when the opportunity arose to further his career, permanently burning bridges with the members of the opposition.²⁷⁴ As this included his father and brother in-law, such actions might suggest that he viewed the marriage to his second wife as more than what her family could do for his career. Again, it appears Wentworth did not involve his wife in his political decisions, even when the consequence affected her directly. Consequently, although his first marriage had given him means and connections to court, it was his second marriage that gave him purpose - as Lady Arabella had given him children, which had revived his ambitions and forced him to try and further his career on his own terms.

We will now turn to Arabella's death in October 1631 and the effect this had on Wentworth. The grief he felt over his wife's passing was highlighted by the concern of those who knew him at the time.²⁷⁵ Yet, Arabella's death was made worse by the fact her family turned against Wentworth and fuelled the rumours that he was a ruthless man. Though we have argued that Wentworth was deeply affected by the death of his first wife, whom he had grown to love over the course of their marriage, there is a sense that that grief did not compare to what he felt over the loss of Arabella. We will argue that though after Margaret's death Wentworth entertained the idea of escaping to Europe away from his responsibilities, it was his career and his family that kept him going this time around.²⁷⁶ Arabella had given birth to two more children, a girl named Arabella after her mother in October 1630 and a second son, Thomas, named after his father, who died in July of

²⁷⁴ Earl of Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion, Vol. I*, p.223.

²⁷⁵ Radcliffe, 'An Essay Towards the Life of', p.430.

²⁷⁶ See pp.53-55 for Margaret's death.

1631.²⁷⁷ That same year, Arabella was pregnant once again with their fifth child, however, she was beginning to feel the strain of all her pregnancies. She had been advised by the doctor not to travel to York; however she insisted on following her husband, who had chosen to spend the summer in York so as to reassure the people of York against fears over the plague, who he believed 'would fall into affrights and confusion if we should leave'.²⁷⁸ One day Wentworth came in from the garden to see his wife, she went to brush off an insect that had settled itself on his coat when it flew into her face; she stepped back, tripped and fell. The shock of which caused her to prematurely deliver a stillborn child and not long after, Arabella passed away.²⁷⁹ Wentworth was so deeply afflicted by the death of his beloved Arabella that for days afterwards Radcliffe did not leave his side for longer than a few minutes.²⁸⁰ Wentworth was overcome by grief: shutting himself away in Woodhouse for weeks after her death, torturing himself over her virtues and his unworthiness.²⁸¹ To make matters worse, Arabella's family blamed Wentworth for her death, believing he forced her to travel to York and in a fit of anger struck her so she fell. They used this opportunity to break off any relationship they had with him; these actions endorsed the growing reputation of Wentworth as hard and ruthless.²⁸² Yet, Wentworth's profound grief over his wife's death proves there was another, softer side to the political force that he would be remembered for. The extent of his grief began to concern his friends, who encouraged him to return to court 'where the gracious welcome of your Master, conversation of your

²⁷⁷ Radcliffe, 'An Essay Towards the Life of', p.430. Burghclere, *Strafford Vol. I*, p.161.

²⁷⁸ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.100.

²⁷⁹ A. Leslie Banks, 'Strafford-The Medical Background', *Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine*, (1959), 52.361, 15-20, p.17.

²⁸⁰ Radcliffe, 'An Essay Towards the Life of', p.435.

²⁸¹ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.101.

²⁸² *Ibid*, p.103.

friends, and variety of business may divert your thoughts the sooner from sad objects, the continuance of which will but endanger your health, on which depends the welfare of your children'.²⁸³ Wentworth's children and family had always been his motivation and it seems that by the end of the month Wentworth had returned to work, though this should not be used to deny his grief, which he still felt, but instead it has been suggested that he simply found solace in his work.²⁸⁴ Though Wentworth did move on, he never forgot his second wife, always speaking of her with the deepest affection.²⁸⁵

In this chapter we have begun to see the more intimate details of Wentworth's personal relationships that historians have often missed. By studying his marriage to his second and most loved wife we have begun to understand the hidden side of Wentworth's character. Though we may have seen the beginnings of his descent into 'Black Tom Tyrant', we have learnt that this was not always an accurate representation of his actions; he also had a caring side –perhaps brought out by the benevolent nature of his young wife. The 'Black Tom' that history knows was strong-willed and ruthless, yet here he is unable to leave Arabella's side any longer than he had to, for fears over her health. The same man who would later be called 'Satan' was a caring father, whose ambition was motivated by his family, wanting to give them as good a place in society as he could.²⁸⁶ We have seen how Arabella's death affected him so immensely that his friends feared for his health, which proves just how much he cared about her. Moreover, we have been able to piece together Arabella's life and what it meant for her to be Wentworth's wife. A kind and generous young

²⁸³ Knowler, *Letters and Dispatches*, pp.59-60.

²⁸⁴ Ibid, pp.60-61. Banks, 'Strafford- The Medical Background', p.17.

²⁸⁵ Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth Vol.I*, p.88. Knowler, *Letters and Dispatches Vol. II*, p.122.

²⁸⁶ Hallam, 'The Constitutional History of England', p.62.

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woman, who was adored by her city, Arabella followed her husband wherever he went, even when it meant giving birth in prison; this would suggest that Wentworth was not as cruel as his reputation suggested, having been able to win the love and affection of such a kind young lady.

Elizabeth Rhodes

This chapter will discuss the relationship Wentworth had with his third and final wife, Elizabeth Rhodes. Wentworth's marriage to Elizabeth took place in October 1632, just under a year after the death of Arabella.²⁸⁷ It was done in secret and was not acknowledged until several months later, when Wentworth finally arrived in Ireland, in July 1633. Elizabeth was thought to be twenty-five at the time of her marriage to Wentworth, making her fifteen years younger than her new husband. Neither an heiress nor from a particularly political family, she was the daughter of Sir Godfrey Rhodes, a neighbour of Wentworth's.²⁸⁸ Sir Godfrey did not hold a key position at court, so he could not offer Wentworth any of the opportunities or acquaintances that the families of his previous wives had done. Instead Sir Godfrey was a knight; his father had been Judge Rhodes who had made himself a fortune and established his 'secondary son' at Great Houghton.²⁸⁹ Yet this was not a problem for Wentworth, whose previous matches had been driven by a need for money and power, as he now held the position of both Lord President of the Council of the North and Lord Deputy of Ireland. What Wentworth needed from his third marriage was a mother for his children; as a man in his high position he could not afford to live a life of solitude especially with three children depending on him, the oldest being only six at the time. As Wentworth's third wife, Elizabeth was moved away from her family to live with her husband in Ireland; she experienced his rise to power and was there to see his untimely fall. Elizabeth may have

²⁸⁷ We do not know the exact date or location of their marriage; however, the first letter Wentworth wrote to his wife shortly after their marriage was addressed to London which suggests this was where the marriage took place.

²⁸⁸ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, pp.123-125.

²⁸⁹ Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth, Vol. I*, p.162. Burghclere, *Strafford Vol. I*, p.168.

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outlived her late husband but she appears to have disappeared into obscurity not long after his execution, returning with the children to Yorkshire. We will look at the life she had married to 'Black Tom' and the experiences she may have had as wife of the Lord Deputy of Ireland.

Although Elizabeth was married to Wentworth during the height of his career, she has not received the attention from historians that she deserved. Those who have written about her- Burghclere, Wedgwood and Cooper - have looked at her regarding her marriage to Wentworth and the role she played as mother of his children; none has investigated her own experiences. Elizabeth was the first wife of the Lord Deputy of Ireland to live with her husband in Ireland for a significant period of time and yet her role as the wife of such an important figure in Irish politics has not been explored.²⁹⁰ The marriage between Wentworth and Elizabeth is the most fruitful of the three for sources; this is most likely due to Wentworth's very prominent position in the public eye at this time. During his first marriage Wentworth was young and inexperienced, consequently he played a minor part in the politics of the time, and as a result of this there is little information about him or his marriage. It was during his second marriage that he started to make a name for himself, first in opposition to the King and Buckingham and then in his alleged changing of sides; consequently, there begin to appear sources about his actions and his character: this is where the rumours of 'Black Tom' began to emerge. As Lord Deputy of Ireland, Lord

²⁹⁰ Elizabeth Cary, the wife of the previous Lord Deputy, Viscount Falkland, attended Ireland with her husband when he was appointed Lord Deputy of Ireland in 1622. She remained in Ireland for three years before returning to England due to financial difficulties. Stephanie Hodgson-Wright, 'Cary, [née Tanfield] Elizabeth, Viscountess Falkland' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2014. <<https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-4835?rskey=018Z5L&result=2>>.

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President of the Council of the North and the King's trusted counsellor, Wentworth was an important political figure, which would have invited much attention; there are, therefore, ample sources available regarding Wentworth during this period. Moreover, it meant Wentworth travelled a lot; unlike Arabella, Elizabeth did not always attend him on his business trips, and so the two kept in contact during these trips via letters. Unfortunately, only a couple of Elizabeth's letters to her husband appear to have survived and so even with these sources we are limited in our understanding of Elizabeth's experiences. Nevertheless, we do also have available several letters that Wentworth wrote to his third wife. These letters are spread over the period, starting from a month after their marriage and continuing intermittently up until Wentworth's trial. Even though we are limited in what we know of Elizabeth's life from her own perspective, we are able to gain some insight into her experiences through Wentworth's letters and his reactions to what she had, or had not, said in her letters and from the advice he continued to give her about the rights and wrongs of social etiquette. There are also a small number of letters written by Elizabeth to Wentworth's steward, Richard Marris, which combined with Fiona Pogson's study of Wentworth's financial accounts, are able to give us some insight into Elizabeth's role and what was expected from her as wife of the Lord Deputy.²⁹¹

The analysis will proceed by looking at nine different aspects of Elizabeth's married life: Wentworth's reasoning behind his choice of bride, Elizabeth's position as the third wife, the growth in their relationship, Elizabeth's experiences as wife of the Lord Deputy of Ireland, her role as mother and Wentworth's relationship with his children, her political influence,

²⁹¹ Fiona Pogson, 'Financial Accounts of Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, And Sir George Radcliffe, 1639-1640,' *Analecta Hibernica*, 48, (2017), 89-168.

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other women in Wentworth's life and the rumours of infidelity, the challenges Elizabeth faced as Wentworth's wife and finally her experience of his downfall. The overall argument will be that Wentworth was able to extricate his family life from his political career by keeping his wife out of any political decisions; by doing this he could be both loving husband and devoted father whilst also being the 'Black Tom Tyrant' whom some historians remember.

We will begin by considering the reason behind Wentworth's choice of bride. Though the difference in Wentworth and Elizabeth's social standing has already been noted by historians, the reasoning behind Wentworth's choice of bride has often been overlooked.

For his third marriage, Wentworth had purposely pursued a woman of lower status. He had declined an offer from the Earl of Cork, a powerful player in Irish politics, due to the fact he was not looking for a large fortune from his third wife.²⁹² The reason why Wentworth chose a woman of lower status and declined the offer from the Earl of Cork was due to the fact he did not want to burden his only heir with a large jointure. Though at times in his second marriage, Wentworth had struggled with his finances and debt, by the time of his third he had been able to use his position as Lord President to increase his fortune.²⁹³ He wrote to Laud in September 1633 of how he felt it more appropriate to marry 'a Gentlewoman, without disparagement either in blood or Education, than to match with a larger fortune that would have consequently taken a great piece of my estate from the other's eldest son,

²⁹² Knowler, *Letters and Dispatches*, Vol. I, p.86. Andrew Kippis, *Biographia Britannica: Or The Lives Of The Most Eminent Persons Who Have Flourished in Great Britain And Ireland, From the Earliest Ages, Down to the Present Times: Collected from the Best Authorities, Both Printed and Manuscript, And Digested in the Manner of Mr Bayle's Historical and Critical Dictionary*, VI.I, (1763), 4172-4197, p.4181.

²⁹³ J.P. Cooper, 'The Fortune of Thomas Wentworth', p.231.

the heir of my house'.²⁹⁴ This appears to echo the advice Sir William left for Wentworth in which he had warned his son to be aware of his fortune and what would happen to it with regards to his heir, were he to die before his wife.²⁹⁵ At age forty Wentworth was once again following the advice his father had left for him, which highlights the importance of family relationships to Wentworth. However, though he declared he had 'no cause to repent' his match with Elizabeth, Wentworth had used his previous marriages to advance his position within society, something he was unable to do with this marriage. As President of the Council of the North and now Lord Deputy of Ireland, Wentworth was in a powerful position and so could have had his pick of brides; hence the offer from the Earl of Cork - who through the marriages of his daughters had a wide political influence throughout England and Ireland.²⁹⁶ However, Wentworth only had one surviving son and so, marrying a woman from a prosperous family would have only caused problems for his heir. Since Wentworth's political career had been motivated by his need to leave his family in a better position than he came to it, he therefore chose to marry Elizabeth Rhodes, who brought a marriage portion of £1000, a sixth of what his previous marriage had brought him.²⁹⁷ Wentworth was an ambitious man, yet the marriage to Elizabeth shows that it was important to Wentworth to balance his career with his family.

Wentworth's actions surrounding his third marriage have caused some to suggest that he was ashamed of his marriage to Elizabeth, since he did not acknowledge it until eight

²⁹⁴ Burghclere, *Strafford Vol. I*, pp.169-170.

²⁹⁵ 'Sir William Wentworth's Advice to his son', p.20.

²⁹⁶ Burghclere, *Strafford Vol. I*, pp.169. O'Dowd, *A History of Women in Ireland*, p.16.

²⁹⁷ J.P. Cooper, 'The Fortune of Thomas Wentworth', pp.232-233.

months later; however, we will suggest his motivations were more complicated.²⁹⁸

Wentworth had purposely married a woman with a smaller fortune which would suggest that he was not ashamed of the match. Instead, this concealment may have more to do with the speed at which he remarried, rather than his marriage choice, as he was married again less than a year after Arabella's death. It took him over two years to move on from his first wife, though that was not for lack of trying; however it would have been somewhat surprising to see Wentworth remarry so quickly after the death of his second wife, especially considering he had been so devoted to Arabella. The timing of his remarriage gave rise to ill-rumours that he had struck Arabella, causing her death, so he could marry his 'whore'.²⁹⁹ Given his growing political reputation combined with the hostility of the Holles family and the secrecy surrounding the new marriage, even his close associates began to question the appearance of the young lady who had taken up residence in the Wentworth family home.³⁰⁰ Laud, whose relationship with Wentworth was never really personal, wrote to Wentworth in October 1632 regarding the young girl, 'Mye Lord Cottington was laughinge and asked me wheather you wear not married'.³⁰¹ Yet, Laud was writing to Wentworth because he was unaware of the truth and wished to warn Wentworth that he was becoming the source of gossip at court. This would suggest then that it was the hushed

²⁹⁸ *Biographia Britannica*, p.4181.

²⁹⁹ There is no evidence to suggest that Wentworth and Elizabeth had any kind of relationship before Arabella died. Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.125.

³⁰⁰ The Holles family blamed Wentworth for Arabella's death. It is thought that a disgruntled servant told Arabella's mother that Wentworth had forced Arabella to travel to Yorkshire whilst she was heavily pregnant and then struck her in, in a moment of anger, causing her death.

³⁰¹ Kenneth Fincham, ed. *The Further Correspondence of William Laud*, (Woodbridge: 2018), p.69. Of Wentworth and Laud's relationship see Fiona Pogson, 'Wentworth's Associations with Laud and Cottington', pp.52-73. Since Laud was writing to Wentworth the same month that the wedding took place, it would appear the wedding was not as secret as Wentworth hoped, nevertheless, he did not admit to Laud his marriage until a year later.

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nature of Wentworth's third marriage, rather than the speed of the nuptials, which was the cause of the ill-rumours.³⁰² Moreover, since the mortality rate amongst married women was fairly high, it was common for men of this period to remarry after their wives had died, especially if they had young children that needed taking care of.³⁰³ Having been given the position of Lord Deputy of Ireland in January 1632, Wentworth was in need of a new wife before he left the country; so no one would have blamed him for remarrying so soon. However, keeping his new wife a secret for eight months suggests there was more to the story, hence the rumour of her being Wentworth's 'whore'. However, we will suggest that there was indeed a reason for Wentworth to keep the marriage a secret, though not the one that has already been stated. Rather, Wentworth chose to keep his marriage a secret in order to protect his new bride. Elizabeth was not from a political family; she had never left Yorkshire before she married Wentworth, therefore, she did not know the ways of courtly politics. As Wentworth did not have time to teach her all she needed to know before she left for Ireland, it was easier to keep their marriage a secret to stop her being taken advantage of by potential suitors.³⁰⁴ Years into their marriage, Elizabeth was still learning the proper way to act and the expectations that were had of her as the wife of the Lord Deputy.³⁰⁵ This suggests that Wentworth was being considerate to his new wife by concealing their marriage. Yet, as a result of the secrecy Elizabeth was becoming known as Wentworth's 'whore' which was damaging to both Wentworth and Elizabeth's reputations; had Wentworth cared about his new wife he would not have let such ill-rumours about her

³⁰² Burghclere, *Strafford Vol. I*, p.169.

³⁰³ Lucinda M. Becker, *Death and the Early Modern Englishwoman*, (2017), Chapter 2. Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth Vol. I*, p.132. Stone, *Crisis of the Aristocracy*, p.619.

³⁰⁴ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.125.

³⁰⁵ Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth, Vol. I*, p.379.

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spread. However, it is possible that Wentworth was simply naïve to the attention his actions would draw, that it was Laud's letter that warned him he and his wife had become the source of gossip and it was after this that Wentworth admitted to Laud who Elizabeth really was.³⁰⁶ This would suggest that when it came to it Wentworth did stand up for his wife's honour. At the same time, we shall see that Wentworth's closest friends were aware of the marriage from the day of the wedding, which suggests that the reason for his discretion was politically motivated and not because he was ashamed of the match.³⁰⁷

We now look to Elizabeth's position and sense of self as Wentworth's wife, which arguably differs from her predecessors. Elizabeth was always conscious of her position as the third wife; fully aware of the women in whose footsteps she was following. She was told early on by her husband, 'you succeed in this family two of the rarest ladies of their time; equal them in those excellent dispositions of your minde and you becum every ways equally worthy of any thing'.³⁰⁸ Although said to try and reassure her of her position as Wentworth's wife, it would have been a constant reminder to her of how her actions would always be compared to her predecessors, especially as Wentworth still referred to Arabella as the 'Saint in Heaven'.³⁰⁹ In his final letter to his son in 1641, Wentworth still referred to Arabella as 'your excellent Mother', whereas Elizabeth was referred to simply as his sister's 'Mother', which highlights that even at the end of Wentworth and Elizabeth's eight year marriage, Arabella was still the favourite wife.³¹⁰ Since Elizabeth was from a more humble background she

³⁰⁶ Though it must be noted his response took almost a year. Fincham, ed. *The Further Correspondence of William Laud*, p.69. Burghclere, *Strafford, Vol. I*, p.169.

³⁰⁷ See p.101.

³⁰⁸ *Biographia Britannica*, p.4182.

³⁰⁹ Burghclere, *Strafford Vol. I*, p.164.

³¹⁰ Knowler, *Letters and Dispatches*, p.416.

continued, for the first few years of their marriage, to regard her husband with a sense of awe; in one of the few letters we still have that she wrote to her husband, she signs of 'your most faithful humble servant'.³¹¹ However, Wentworth treated his wife the same tenderness he offered the rest of his friends and family, telling her 'the fellowshipp of marriage ought to carry with itt more of love and equality than any other apprehension'.³¹² It is perhaps credit to Wentworth's kind nature towards those he cared about that, after five years of marriage, Elizabeth was confident enough to question her husband over her lack of invitation to join her husband at Naas, where Wentworth had built himself a country palace.³¹³ Nevertheless, Elizabeth remained throughout their marriage humble and unspoiled.³¹⁴ In the few letters that remain from Elizabeth to her husband, she refers to herself as 'your faithful and affectionate servant', suggesting she did not think herself too highly risen in her position as Wentworth's wife, as she still did not feel like his equal.³¹⁵ In comparison, we know Arabella signed her letters to her husband 'your most faithful and ever loving wyfe', which suggests she was more confident in her position as she came from a more significant family.³¹⁶ It is also important to note Elizabeth's age, as this is likely to have been a contributing factor to her sense of inadequacy. Wentworth was 40 when he married Elizabeth; he had been married twice already and was at the height of his career, whereas Elizabeth was twenty-five and had never left Yorkshire. The fifteen-year age gap would likely have been intimidating to the naïve Elizabeth. In comparison, though

³¹¹ 'Strafford Papers', 17.163.

³¹² *Biographia Britannica*, p.4182. Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth Vol. I*, p.163.

³¹³ Burghclere, 'Strafford as a Letter Writer', p.97. Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth Vol. II*, (1874), p.37.

³¹⁴ Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth Vol. I*, p.165.

³¹⁵ 'Strafford Papers', 17.163, 19.98.

³¹⁶ *Ibid*, 22.22.

Wentworth was seventeen years older than Arabella when he married her, who was just sixteen, he did not have the same level of experience or authority as he did when marrying Elizabeth and so, though the age gap between the two couples was similar, it would not have been as intimidating, which may be another reason why Arabella felt more her husband's equal than Elizabeth did.

To understand Wentworth and Elizabeth's relationship we must turn to their correspondence. Wentworth's vast correspondence has previously been used by historians to explain certain aspects of Wentworth's life and relationships.³¹⁷ However, the letters between the couple have so far largely been ignored by scholars; highlighted by the fact that not one of their letters to each other was included in Knowler's two volumes of Wentworth's letters, which was, for a long time, the only access historians had to Wentworth's correspondence. Wentworth's position as Lord Deputy, Lord President and King Charles' advisor meant that he and Elizabeth were often separated. Unlike Arabella who accompanied her husband even when heavily pregnant, Elizabeth did not always attend Wentworth on his business trips; she was thus awarded more freedom than her predecessor.³¹⁸ As we previously mentioned, Wentworth was a man to remain in communication with his wife when separated from her; and so it is unsurprising that Wentworth and Elizabeth continued to correspond through letters whilst Wentworth was away. Fortunately, roughly a dozen of the letters Wentworth wrote to his third wife have

³¹⁷ See Burghclere, 'Strafford as a Letter Writer', 90-109. Fiona Pogson, 'Wentworth's Associations with Laud and Cottingham', pp.52-73.

³¹⁸ In the previous chapter we have discussed the relationship between Arabella and Wentworth and whether it was Arabella's choice to follow her husband, leaving her children in the care of a guardian. See above pp.80, 87.

survived. Unfortunately, the same cannot be said for the letters Elizabeth wrote to her husband, with only two extant; we are, therefore, unsure of Elizabeth's exact comings and goings whilst her husband was away, consequently, we are forced to piece together what she said by looking at Wentworth's own replies.

It is through Wentworth's letters that we can see the growth in their relationship. The first letter he writes to Elizabeth is addressed 'Madam'; it was written on the 30th October 1632 not long after their nuptials whilst Elizabeth was in London, where it is thought the marriage rites took place.³¹⁹ At this point, the two would still have been unfamiliar with each other, which explains why Wentworth used the formal greeting to write to his own wife. The primary purpose of this first letter was to reassure Wentworth's new bride of her position. Wentworth's 'beloved' Arabella had died less than a year before, that combined with the secret nature of their marriage may have left Elizabeth wondering about her husband's commitment, especially considering his position compared to hers. Wentworth penned a letter to his new wife to try and reassure her of his love for her, promising 'I am your husbände and that husbände of yours, that will ever discharge those dutyes of love and respect towards you, which good women may expect and are justly due from good men'.³²⁰ Evidently, Wentworth believed himself to be a good man, despite his growing political reputation as 'Black Tom'. In this letter he does not mention his previous wives but instead speaks of what would be expected from the both of them if they were to be a good husband and wife, an idealistic portrayal of the expectations of an early modern couple.

Nevertheless, Wentworth was still a practical man, even when trying to court his young

³¹⁹ *Biographia Britannica*, p.4182.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*

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wife; he ends this first letter asking his wife to 'speake to my cousin, Radcliffe for the paste I told you on for your teeth, and desire him to speake to Dr Moore in my name for 2 potts of it, and that doctor will see it be good, for this last indeed was not soe, you may bring one downe and keep the other yourself'.³²¹ Wentworth was already in communication with Radcliffe so it is interesting that he would ask Elizabeth to pass on a message to Radcliffe from himself. It also suggests that Radcliffe may have been one of the few people to know about the wedding. Radcliffe was close to the whole of the Wentworth family; he was the one who carried young William to receive his mother's final blessing and it would be Radcliffe who would accompany Elizabeth on her journey to Ireland three months later. This therefore, may have been a way of showing Elizabeth that although their marriage was a secret, she was still his wife and the people in his inner circle were aware of this; hence why he asked her to speak to Radcliffe. Moreover, as Wentworth's wife Elizabeth would have had to perform similar tasks so this was an introduction into the kind of duties that would have been expected of her, though done through Radcliffe because her status was not common knowledge. It is therefore possible that Wentworth decided to include this extra note in the first letter he wrote to his wife to reassure her of her position, suggesting that he was looking out for his young wife.

His next letter, dated the 19th November 1632, begins 'Dear Besse', a more informal introduction. The two had been married for about a month, suggesting this change in tone was because they had begun to form a relationship. Nevertheless, the marriage was still a secret at this time which may also explain why it is still fairly formal. Though we cannot

³²¹ I have been unable to identify Dr Moore, though he is likely Wentworth's family doctor.

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know what Elizabeth wrote to her husband, Wentworth is responding to a letter from her; 'Your first lines were wellcum unto me, and I will keep them'. However, from Wentworth's response we can assume that at this point Elizabeth was still in awe of her husband; she appears to be tentative in her interactions with him which is why the subject of this letter is a reminder that she need not be so timid in her responses, that 'it is no presumption for you to write unto me'.³²² As already noted Elizabeth still took to signing her letters as 'your most faithful humble servant' and addressed them to 'My Lord', which would again highlight her feelings of inadequacy. Elizabeth's tone within the few letters that have survived, appears respectful; she wrote about hearing 'the most welcomest newes of your good health for the continuance of it unto you I shall ever pray twice as much as for my owne'.³²³ On one such occasion she appears not to have signed the letter at all; something Wentworth noted in his response to her, 'I will do more for you in this than you did for me in one of yours- not only write myself but sign myself'.³²⁴ It appears Wentworth was a patient and caring husband to his wife, and the rest of his letters to Elizabeth were filled with more affection than hers, addressed 'Sweet hearte' and concluded 'your loving husband'. However, their letters give us little further insight into their relationship. The few letters of Elizabeth's do not give much away about her experiences; instead they revolve around the wellbeing of family and friends, 'you shall as briefly as may be know how we do hear'.³²⁵

We now explore the neglected subject of Elizabeth's own experiences. So far Elizabeth's life has been looked at in the ways she interacted with her husband; however, we will start to

³²² *Biographia Britannica*, p.4182.

³²³ 'Strafford Papers', 17.163.

³²⁴ Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth, Vol. I*, p.381.

³²⁵ 'Strafford Papers', 19.98.

look at her role as wife of the Lord Deputy, through which will be shown that Elizabeth spent most of her time looking after the household and the children, as would have been expected of her. We know that Elizabeth was sent to Ireland in January 1633, with Radcliffe, ahead of Wentworth in order to get the household ready.³²⁶ Even though Elizabeth came to Ireland months before Wentworth did, the time she spent in Ireland before her husband arrived has been overlooked. Elizabeth was in Ireland for six months before her husband arrived; though we are unsure exactly what she was doing during this period, she wrote a letter to Richard Marris, dated 1st June 1633, concerning the preparations for the vice-regal household. This would suggest that most of her time was spent trying to organise the household, ready for her husband's arrival. She wrote to Marris of their need for a laundry maid and a nursery maid in Dublin, asking 'pray send women and not girls'.³²⁷ Whilst we can only guess at Elizabeth's reasoning for this decision, it shows her asserting some authority over the choices for the household. In this letter Elizabeth also sent Marris a list of all the linens that had arrived safely in Ireland. This provides some idea of the elaborate nature of the household of the Lord Deputy of Ireland, whilst also confirms that as Wentworth's wife. Elizabeth oversaw organising the household. Numerous sheets, pillowcases, tablecloths, napkins, towels all in various materials had been sent over to Ireland by Marris ready for Wentworth's arrival. As Lord Deputy of Ireland, Wentworth would have had to host his own miniature court to successfully govern the country. This was not the full extent of what was sent, for Elizabeth writes 'one trunk tis certaine the pirates toke with a hat case upon it, we

³²⁶ Wentworth remained in England as he was remaining Lord President of the Council of the North but with a deputy in charge.

³²⁷ 'Strafford Papers', 22.14.

think it is ordinary diaper for none is come yet'.³²⁸ As Wentworth's wife, Elizabeth was in charge of many different aspects of running the household; through Wentworth's financial accounts we can begin to understand the extent of Elizabeth's role. According to the accounts, Elizabeth was given £100 every three months which she put towards the household; the £100 was usually put towards clothing and education. She was not limited to the £100, for it seems this could be topped up as and when she needed, as in August 1639 where she was paid her usual £100 and then she was given another £20 a couple of weeks later.³²⁹ As wife of the Lord Deputy, this would have been expected of Elizabeth; however, it is not something that has really been looked at before.

From the letter to Marris, in June 1633, we can also presume that the Wentworth children did not travel to Ireland with Elizabeth and Radcliffe, but remained at Woodhouse, arriving in Ireland months later with their father. Elizabeth writes to Marris to thank him for letting her know of 'the wellbeing of those swell babes who are as dear to me as to him whose own they are'.³³⁰ As we have discussed, one of the main reasons for Wentworth's marriage to Elizabeth was because he was in need of a mother for his children- especially once he had been named Lord Deputy of Ireland. It is therefore surprising that Elizabeth had been sent to Ireland early leaving the children behind. Wentworth would have been busy trying to juggle his duties as Lord President whilst also getting to grips with what was expected of him in Ireland, so the children would likely have been left under the supervision of a guardian, as they had often been during Wentworth and Arabella's marriage. This is perhaps why Marris

³²⁸ *Ibid*

³²⁹ Fiona Pogson, 'Financial Accounts of Thomas Wentworth', p. 125.

³³⁰ 'Strafford Papers', 22.14.

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was writing to Elizabeth of the health of the children, rather than her hearing about them from Wentworth. If Wentworth was busy, why then would he leave the children in the care of a guardian rather than their new mother, especially when it appears she had already grown fond of them? We know Wentworth was involved in his children's lives, looking out for what was best for them and so it is probable that the reason Elizabeth went to Ireland without the children was because Wentworth felt it best for them to remain in Yorkshire until he knew what to expect. Due to the nature of the political rule within Ireland, it was not deemed the safest of places especially for families and children.³³¹ Moreover, when first appointed Lord Deputy, Wentworth had limited knowledge of the goings-on in Ireland.³³² Wentworth always did what he thought best for his children, as in 1639, when he sent his girls to stay with their maternal grandmother in England.³³³ Although he would rather have kept them in Ireland with him, they were at an age where they were in need of a new educational environment and he believed that 'Dublin was not the best school for elegant graces'.³³⁴ This would suggest that Wentworth did indeed have a reason for not sending his children to Ireland with Elizabeth in 1633 as it is these sorts of actions that have led historians to believe that Wentworth was a kind and loving father.³³⁵

We must now consider Elizabeth as mother, where it will be argued that her kind and gentle nature made her a loving mother to the children who were an important part of

Wentworth's life. Recent historiography has begun to look at the experiences of children

³³¹ O'Dowd, *A History of Women in Ireland*, p.29.

³³² J.F. Merritt, 'Power and Communication: Thomas Wentworth and government at a distance during the Personal Rule, 1629-1635', in *The Political World of Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, 1621-1641*, p.116.

³³³ Knowler, *Letters and Dispatches Vol. II*, pp.379-380

³³⁴ Knowler, *Ibid.*

³³⁵ As another example of Wentworth as a caring father, that he never forgot to send his youngest son, who was still a baby, love and blessings whenever he was away.

growing up in Ireland during this period. It was thought at the time that Ireland was not a safe place for women and families, however, the Wentworth children appear to have had a happy childhood in Ireland with Elizabeth as their mother, growing to love and respect her as if she was their own mother. The Wentworth children were not the only children of important political figures to have spent some of their childhood in Ireland, it was in fact fairly common as during this period Ireland was seen as a place of opportunity and so those looking to prosper would come to Ireland, looking to acquire lands, bringing with them their children. For the most part, it appears that English children growing up in Ireland because of their father's ambitions could look back at their time in Ireland as a positive experience.

Mary Boyle, the daughter of the Earl of Cork, was one such example of a girl who spent her childhood in Ireland and went on to write about her experiences when she grew up. Alice Wandesford, the daughter of Christopher Wandesford who came to Ireland with Wentworth and played an important role in his governing of the country, was another.

Though Ireland was, at this time, a complex landscape full of tension and unrest between its various factions, the girls were well protected and came to see Ireland as a mini-version of England. Both these women's happy experiences in Ireland can be attributed to the fact their fathers played a more involved role in their lives than if they had been in England.³³⁶

Alice Wandesforde's account highlights clearly the importance of her father in making her feel safe, as her father's death coincided with the 1641 uprisings.³³⁷ Like Wandesford and

³³⁶ Being across the sea in Ireland meant the men could not attend court in London as regularly as they may have. Due to the setup of Ireland, the majority of land at this time belonged to the native Irish, which would have meant these English Lords were concentrated in Anglo-Irish lands and so could not have been far away from their children and families for long periods of time. Eckerle, 'Elite English Girlhood in Early Modern Ireland', pp.159-177.

³³⁷ *Ibid*, p.169

Boyle, Wentworth played an active role in his children's lives whilst they were in Ireland; although we have no account of the Wentworth children's childhood, we can use these other accounts to piece together the kind of experience they had.

Since Christopher Wandesford was a close friend and trusted advisor to Wentworth it is through Alice's account that we gain some insight into the lives of the Wentworth girls; 'haveing the fortunate opportunity in that time, and after when I staid there, of the best education that kingdom could afford, haveing the advantage of societie in the sweet and chaste company of the Earle of Strafford's daughter, the most virtuous Lady Anne and the Lady Arabella Wentworth'.³³⁸ This suggests that even in Ireland, the Wentworth children received the proper education that was expected of them, learning 'the French language, to write and speake the same; singing; dancing; plaieing on the lute and theorboe; learning such other accomplishments of working silks, gummework, sweatmeats, and other suitable housewifery...I trained in those pious, holy, and religious instructions, examples, admonitions, teachings, reproofs, and godly education, tending to the welfare and eternal happinesse and salvation of my poore soul'.³³⁹ The humanist movement of the 15th Century had called for a better education of women; since the family had become a more central part of society it was accepted that women, as wives, mothers and household managers, would need an education. However, compared to boys their education was still limited, varying depending on their class. Upper class girls received the best education, as shown by Alice's account; the girls' education would have taught them skills needed to run a

³³⁸ Alice Thornton, *The Autobiography of Mrs. Alice Thornton, of East Newton, Co. York*, ed. Charles Jackson, (1875), p. 8.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*

household, as well as a strong focus on their religious education.³⁴⁰ According to Alice Wandesford, the girls' education appears to have followed these expectations, with the responsibility of their spiritual education falling to the maternal figure.³⁴¹ In the case of Anne and Arabella that would have been their stepmother. Elizabeth also encouraged the girls to enjoy recreational activities, bonding with the other children. Alice writes of an occasion spent 'swing[ing] by the armes for recreation, and being good to exersize the body of children in growing' which was an activity encouraged by Lady Strafford as it united the young girls.³⁴² Through Alice's account we can see that Elizabeth cared about the Wentworth children, encouraging them to play and enjoy their childhood, not just focusing on their education and turning them into 'proper' young ladies.

In Ireland, Elizabeth gave birth to four children, only two of whom survived: a boy and a girl.³⁴³ There does not appear to be an account of their births, other than a note written on the back of one of Wentworth's first letters to Elizabeth, stating 'Tom was born the seventeenth of September, being Wednesday, in the morning betwixt two and three o'clock, and was christened of the seventh of October 1634'.³⁴⁴ The little boy, Tom, did not live past infancy and the girl, Margaret, though she outlived her father, did not marry but instead remained with her mother in Yorkshire.³⁴⁵ We know little about Elizabeth's children with Wentworth, perhaps because Margaret, born in 1639, was still a baby when her father

³⁴⁰ Cissie Fairchilds, *Women in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1700*, pp.29, 45.

³⁴¹ Alice Wandesford's mother took her role as spiritual teacher seriously, Wandesford's wrote in his advice he left for his son, 'In this Time of your Minority [...] your Devotions to God will be directed by your Mother and others about you'. Eckerle, 'Elite English Girlhood in Early Modern Ireland', p. 171.

³⁴² Alice Thornton, *The Autobiography of Mrs Alice Thornton*, p.10. Eckerle, 'Elite English Girlhood in Early Modern Ireland', p.172.

³⁴³ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.167.

³⁴⁴ *Biographia Britannica*, p.4182.

³⁴⁵ Margaret, likely named after his first wife. Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth, Vol. II*, p.414.

was executed, after which the family fell out of the public eye and so she went on to live a quiet life, dying in 1681. Elizabeth's son was the second of Wentworth's boys to be named Tom, after his father, which highlights Wentworth's desire to leave a strong legacy behind him.³⁴⁶ Unfortunately, he died in the summer of 1635, before he reached his first birthday. The letters we have available to us that Wentworth wrote to Elizabeth whilst in the Tower simply refer to 'the children'; however in his last letter to his son he writes 'your care and affection...the like regard you must have for your youngest sister'.³⁴⁷ Though there is little information regarding his youngest child, this may still suggest that he would have been as much a caring father to her as he was to his older children, were he given the chance.

We now address Elizabeth's political influence, something which has not so far been considered by historians. It might be expected that Elizabeth exercised some political influence within Ireland, since her husband was to be the King's mouthpiece; in the same way Henrietta Maria held some influence in her role as Queen; however, we will show that Elizabeth did not get involved in politics and remained focused on her wifely duties. This is perhaps because Elizabeth Rhodes was one of the first wives of a Lord Deputy of Ireland to spend a significant amount of time in Ireland.³⁴⁸ Elizabeth's predecessor, Elizabeth Carey, spent three years in Ireland before returning to England, due to her family's financial troubles; whilst in Ireland she made some attempts to set-up various schemes however none appear to have succeeded.³⁴⁹ The previous Lord Deputies had tended not to bring

³⁴⁶ The first Tom, born to Wentworth's second wife, Arabella, died in July 1631. See p.86.

³⁴⁷ Knowler, *Letters and Dispatches Vol. II*, p.416.

³⁴⁸ The Earl of Surrey brought his wife and family to Ireland in 1520s, however, they were quickly sent home again for fear of the Irish Plague. O'Dowd, *A History of Women in Ireland*, pp.28-29.

³⁴⁹ Hodgson-Wright, 'Cary, [née Tanfield] Elizabeth, Viscountess Falkland'.

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their wives with them meaning there had been few influential women taking a role in Irish politics, on occasion the wife of the chief governor was permitted to offer patronage in the securing of political appointments, however this was usually confined to minor posts.³⁵⁰ This would indicate there was no precedent set for Elizabeth to involve herself in her husband's politics and since she was not the most politically savvy of Wentworth's wives, the sources seem to suggest that her focus remained on running the household and looking after the children. Moreover, women in Ireland had somewhat of a similar experience as their English counterparts: unable to get directly involved in politics, Irish women were instead left to run the household, where they learned to exert their authority in other ways. As already stated, in Ireland they did not have access to the King and Queen, or courtly life, and so would be unable to gain patronage or favour as women in England could do.³⁵¹ Wentworth was politically savvy enough to recognise the importance of reputation and power and so began to work on rebuilding the Irish court, which had long been abandoned by the time Wentworth was appointed to the position.³⁵² Though Wentworth made positive changes to Dublin's court culture, it was not until 1703 that women finally began to exercise some influence within the court.³⁵³ Consequently, this would suggest that Elizabeth had little to no influence within the courtly life in Dublin.

³⁵⁰ O'Dowd, *A History of Women in Ireland*, pp.28-29.

³⁵¹ Women were able to gain important positions in the court of the Queen: Lady Carlisle exercised a great deal of influence simply because of her position as Queen Henrietta Maria's friend. Even important male politicians, such as Wentworth, recognised Lady Carlisle's power and would seek out her friendship in order to help their own position.

³⁵² This took shape in several ways which Dougal Shaw has begun to explore. Shaw, 'Thomas Wentworth and Monarchical Ritual', pp. 345-352.

³⁵³ O'Dowd, *A History of Women in Ireland*, p.30.

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Nevertheless, as in England, women in Ireland still found other ways of exercising their own autonomy during Wentworth's time in Ireland. Recent historiography has begun to look more specifically at Irish women in the early modern period and how they were able to navigate their social constraints. The Boyle women are one such example. Ann-Maria Walsh has studied the ways in which the Boyle women were able to exercise their own political influence, which might suggest that had Elizabeth wanted to exert her own authority she could have found a way. However, an important way in which the Boyle women were able to hold influence was because of their family connections, they relied upon one another.³⁵⁴ Elizabeth was not from a political family, she did not have acquaintances in high places as her predecessors had done, neither did she make any in her position as Wentworth's wife and so she could not rely on friends and family in the same way the Boyle women did in order to gain any political influence. Nevertheless, there are examples of times when Elizabeth utilised her political influence; such as a visit she made, with the Duchess of Buckingham in the late 1630s, to the Poor Clare convent, where they assured the women in the community that those who had persecuted them 'did never after prosper well'.³⁵⁵ It is worth noting that this was later in their marriage and so by this time Elizabeth may have gained more confidence in her role as Lord Deputy's wife; and yet she was accompanied by the Duchess of Buckingham suggesting it was not a solo visit which reinforces the idea that Elizabeth did not hold a lot of political influence. Though she was one of the few Lord Deputy's wives to join her husband in Ireland, Elizabeth remained largely in the shadows when it came to politics. Was this her own choice or Wentworth's we do not know for sure,

³⁵⁴ Ann-Maria Walsh, *Daughters of the First Earl of Cork: Writing family, faith, politics and place*, (Dublin: 2020).

³⁵⁵ Jane Ohlmeyer, *Making Ireland English*, (2012), p.147.

since her letters have been lost we cannot know the insights she may have offered her husband. Perhaps because of her background and unfamiliarity with the ways of the political world she was reluctant to try and involve herself in her husband's affairs; however, as we have seen with Wentworth's previous marriages he did not like to involve any of his wives in his business.³⁵⁶

It is interesting that Wentworth chose not to involve any of his wives in his political business, especially as he was not averse to listening to other women's opinions on politics. As we have seen, throughout his life Wentworth kept returning to the advice his father left for him, implying he felt a high level of respect for his father's opinions.³⁵⁷ His father may have advised caution during discussions with women however, we know Sir William did at times turn to his wife for counsel, it would then be expected that Wentworth too might follow suit and discuss such affairs with his wives.³⁵⁸ However, it appears that even discussions regarding selling part of their estate -something that would directly affect his wife- remained between Wentworth and Marris.³⁵⁹ Yet Wentworth had a respect for women of real talent and feeling; he enjoyed a close relationship with the Countess of Carlisle, Lucy Hay, in which they would discuss politics and business.³⁶⁰ Nevertheless, he was wary of women who overstepped their boundaries: he disliked the way in which Henrietta Maria tried to manage her husband.³⁶¹ Henrietta Maria was an influential counsellor at the Court of King Charles, though at this time she only involved herself in furthering the private

³⁵⁶ As previously discussed, see p.83.

³⁵⁷ The most recent being the reason behind his choice of wife, see p.94.

³⁵⁸ See p.25.

³⁵⁹ J.P Cooper, 'The Fortune of Thomas Wentworth', p231.

³⁶⁰ See p.116 for more details on Wentworth and Lucy Hay's relationship

³⁶¹ Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth, Vol. II*, p.203.

interests of her friends.³⁶² Wentworth was aware of her potential to block his attempts at reforming the government; this manifested in numerous small clashes between the two.³⁶³

It is, therefore, possible that Wentworth chose not to discuss matters with his wives as he did not want to be influenced by them in the way Charles was by Henrietta Maria.

There has been a lot of focus by historians on Wentworth's political career, given Wentworth's political prowess and formidable character; however, there has been little attention paid to the personal character of Thomas Wentworth. Analysis of Wentworth's personal relationships, especially his third marriage, shows him to be a loving, family man who saw his personal life as separate from his political one. By keeping his wives out of his political affairs, Wentworth was consequently able to enjoy his home life as a place where he could get away from the daily politics and issues he faced as Lord Deputy of Ireland, yet this compartmentalisation of work and home has yet to be truly explored. At home Wentworth was able to relax; he enjoyed hunting and playing games, sharing stories amongst friends. So different was his persona at home than his political character that those he had only met in public whom he invited to join him in this free time were often surprised at the man they found in his home.³⁶⁴ Wentworth had the ability to incite love in others: his two closest friends and advisors Radcliffe and Wandesford were loyal to him until the end; the reason for this was that Wentworth was as devoted to his friends and family as they

³⁶² During the later 1620s, Henrietta Maria was a generous patron of the arts and luxury goods. Her position as Queen opened up a number of opportunities of women at court, for more information on Henrietta Maria's influence see Caroline Hibbard, 'Henrietta Maria in the 1630s: Perspectives on the role of consort queens in Ancien Régime courts', in *The 1630s: Interdisciplinary Essays on Culture and Politics in the Caroline Era*, ed. Ian Atherton, Julie Sanders, (2006), 92-110.

³⁶³ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Reevaluation*, p.119.

³⁶⁴ Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth Vol. I*, p.171.

were to him, he remained faithful and caring towards them.³⁶⁵ The same Wentworth who relentlessly pursued the Earl of Cork and Lord Mountnorris, also wrote to his ex-mother-in-law, 'it is not without difficulty before I could persuade myself thus to be deprived the looking upon them [his girls], who with their Brother are the pledges of all the comfort'.³⁶⁶ Wentworth was clearly a devoted father; he took an interest in his children and enjoyed their company. This would explain how he was able to enjoy such close relationships with his friends and gives some insight into the kind of man he was to his family. Wentworth was a man of two halves; although he became known as 'Black Tom Tyrant', with regards to his wife and his family he clearly saw himself as a 'good man'. In his letters to Elizabeth, he did discuss his political affairs however, it is clear he expected no real discussion in response to them. After writing to Elizabeth about the current state of the affairs of the Cardinal in France, Cardinal Richelieu, he finishes 'But what's all this to you wenches- what's all this to you? Show it to the Master of the Rolls...saves me the labour of writing it over twice'.³⁶⁷ Nevertheless, it is interesting that once again we see Wentworth asking Elizabeth to pass on information to people whom he was already in contact with.³⁶⁸ This might suggest that although he did not value her opinion in politics, he felt it important to establish her position to others as his wife. It appears however that Wentworth believed the sort of conversation suitable to discuss with his wife was gossip relating to their acquaintances, writing to Elizabeth whilst on progress, 'My Lady Ormond is not so inclined to be fat as we

³⁶⁵ *Ibid*, pp.126-127

³⁶⁶ Knowler, *Letters and Dispatches Vol. II*, p.379-380.

³⁶⁷ Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth, Vol. I*, p.381.

³⁶⁸ We have already discussed how, in his first letter to Elizabeth, he asked her to speak to Radcliffe for him, p. 100.

thought she was at Dublin'.³⁶⁹ Although as we have previously noted, his political choices were often motivated by his personal life, this is a clear example of Wentworth's need to keep politics and personal life as separate.³⁷⁰

Other than his relationships with his wives, Wentworth had few female friends.³⁷¹

Consequently, historians and contemporaries have questioned the propriety of the few relationships he did have with other women. Interestingly there were no such rumours surrounding Wentworth during his previous marriages; only after the death of his second wife did they begin. This is perhaps because it was not until late 1628, when Wentworth was appointed Lord President of the Council of the North, that he had the sort of influence and power that might induce people to speak against his character. As Lord President, his character was already beginning to be questioned. As we have seen, the actions that he chose to do for the good of the people of Yorkshire were kept quiet and the persona of 'Black Tom' was beginning to be cast.³⁷² It would therefore appear that at this time people were beginning to cast doubt on his character; however, Wentworth was clearly devoted to Arabella who held her own influence over the people of York. After Arabella's death Wentworth was appointed Lord Deputy of Ireland; it was at this point that rumours began to emerge that he had killed his wife to marry his 'whore'. The marriage to Elizabeth was one of convenience rather than love and Wentworth did not gain anything from it with regards to his status or career; Elizabeth was primarily there to look after his children.

³⁶⁹ Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth, Vol. II*, p.40.

³⁷⁰ His marriage to Margaret increased his position within society and his pursuit of the role of Lord President of the Council of the North was prompted by the news of Arabella's pregnancy.

³⁷¹ Burghclere, *Strafford Vol. II*, p.116.

³⁷² Wentworth could be a formidable and ruthless politician, however, he did also do good in his role as Lord President and as Lord Deputy; yet, these actions were often overshadowed in the stories told to the public of Wentworth's career. Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Reevaluation*, pp.112-113.

Wentworth, therefore, may have looked to other women in order to remain prominent in the Caroline court in London; the women whom he is thought to have liaised with were important and influential characters.

The most infamous of his supposed affairs was the relationship he shared with Lucy Hay, the Countess of Carlisle. The rumours are thought to have started in the summer of 1636 when Wentworth returned to London for six weeks; it is perhaps not coincidental that the rumours began to emerge when Wentworth was enjoying a period of triumph in his career, which might suggest that there was nothing more to them than an attack on Wentworth's character.³⁷³ Both Wentworth and Radcliffe felt the need to defend the platonic nature of the relationship, with Wentworth describing their relationship as 'a nobler nor more intelligent friendship did I never meet with in all my life'.³⁷⁴ Though this may not sound like a gentleman describing his lover, it is interesting that he would refer to Carlisle, a woman, as the most intelligent of his friendships. Given the political prowess of both Lucy Hay and Wentworth, it is unsurprising that their relationship has been well researched by historians. Though we are uncertain of the intimate details of their relationship, we do know that the friendship was mutually beneficial. Through Wentworth, Lucy Hay and her husband were able to secure and protect their projects in Ireland, whilst Wentworth borrowed money from Lucy on several occasions.³⁷⁵ In letters to Radcliffe, Wentworth appears concerned about making sure Lucy received repayments of her loan, asking 'Good George, be very

³⁷³ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.211.

³⁷⁴ Whitaker, *The Life and Original Correspondence of Sir George Radcliffe*, p.221.

³⁷⁵ Roy E. Schreiber, 'Hay [nee Percy], Lucy, countess of Carlisle', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, [2008], < <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-12733?rskey=yr9twh&result=2>>.

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carefull to return my Ladie's money', and on another occasion, 'you must not move me to wronge my Lady, or insure the trust Lady reposes in me'.³⁷⁶ In his letters to Radcliffe, Wentworth talks more of Lady Carlisle and the repayment of her money than he does of his wife or of his family. Moreover, the two exchanged portraits, which might suggest there was more to their relationship. The exchanging of portraits had long been a part of renaissance diplomacy, where the portrait was thought to act as a stand-in for the person whom it represented.³⁷⁷ Wentworth was fully aware of the power of portraiture, as noted by his use of the portrait of Charles I whilst in Ireland, it is therefore, significant that he would choose to exchange portraits with Lady Carlisle.³⁷⁸ Especially as it appears there was no portrait of his wife, Elizabeth, commissioned, during Wentworth's lifetime, even though the portrait of his children was painted during their marriage.³⁷⁹ A portrait of Elizabeth as a mature woman survives in a private collection, however this would suggest that the portrait was commissioned after Wentworth was executed and not during their marriage.³⁸⁰ The portraits shared between Carlisle and Wentworth were full-sized paintings which would have been publicly displayed; this might suggest that their relationship was nothing more than Platonic love, as it would go against Wentworth's character to do something so brazen in front of his wife.³⁸¹ Unfortunately, we do not know of Elizabeth's reaction to their relationship or to the paintings, as neither are mentioned in the few surviving letters.

³⁷⁶ Whitaker, *The Life and Original Correspondence of Sir George Radcliffe*, 183, 189.

³⁷⁷ Tracey A. Sowerby, 'A Memorial and a Pledge of Faith': Portraiture and Early Modern Diplomatic Culture', *The English Historical Review*, 129.537, (2014), 296-331, p.300.

³⁷⁸ Shaw, *Wentworth and Monarchical Ritual*, p.341-343.

³⁷⁹ Though we cannot say for certain there does not appear to be any record of a painting of Elizabeth Rhodes by Van Dyck. The portrait of the Wentworth children was painted during the period that Wentworth was in England; Elizabeth remained in Dublin which might suggest why her portrait was not painted. Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.213.

³⁸⁰ C.V Wedgwood, *Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford*, (1965), p.118.

³⁸¹ *Ibid.*

Nevertheless, this does tell us that Wentworth judged and procured his relationship with a woman based on her usefulness to him.

The other woman whom it is thought Wentworth had an intimate relationship was Eleanor, Lady Loftus, who was part of an important political family in Ireland. Eleanor had married the eldest son of Adam Loftus, the Lord Chancellor of Ireland, whom Wentworth had enjoyed a friendship with since his appointment as Lord Deputy, until 1637 when their relationship began to deteriorate.³⁸² Eleanor's sister had married Wentworth's brother George. Eleanor was, therefore, a well-connected lady, albeit one who would have been forgotten by history, if it were not for the rumours surrounding her friendship with the Lord Deputy. According to Clarendon, at Wentworth's trial his correspondence with Eleanor was unearthed to expose a disreputable romance between the pair.³⁸³ Again, the nature of their relationship has been debated by historians.³⁸⁴ Though it would appear these rumours regarding Wentworth and Eleanor's relationship may have been fabricated to further damage Wentworth's reputation, there was some basis for them. In 1639, Wentworth wrote to Lord Viscount Conway on the passing of Eleanor Loftus, 'one of the noblest persons I ever had the happiness to be acquainted with...so with her are gone the greatest part of my affections to the Country'.³⁸⁵ This is not the first time Wentworth has experienced a strong emotional response to a woman; similarities can be drawn between his eulogy of Eleanor Loftus and the tribute he wrote of his first wife, Margaret, 'that where rested the

³⁸² W. N. Osborough, 'Loftus, Adam, First Viscount Loftus of Ely', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 2004, <<https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-16935>>. Adam Loftus' daughter Anne was another of the Wentworth girls' playmates. Alice Thornton, *The AutoBiography of Mrs Alice Thornton*, p.10.

³⁸³ Clarendon, *History of the Rebellion, Vol. I, Part. I, Book III*, (1807), p. 345.

³⁸⁴ For a succinct account of the argument see Burghclere, *Strafford Vol. II*, p.116.

³⁸⁵ Knowler, *Letters and Dispatches Vol. II*, p.381.

fountaine of my comfort, from thence should now springe my greatest anguish and torment'.³⁸⁶ Though on different emotional levels, Margaret being the source of his whole happiness and Eleanor being the basis of his feelings towards Ireland, it is interesting that on at least two occasions Wentworth attributed the source of his happiness or comfort to a woman, be it his wife or his friend. This would suggest that to Wentworth there was a link between women and emotions. On both these occasions Wentworth is giving his posthumous account of these women shortly after their death and so his emotions are likely to be heightened, however from this we are able to gain some insight into how Wentworth viewed women. Though he did not value them politically, he credited them as the key to his happiness.

Thus far we have not looked in detail at the kind of life Elizabeth had as Wentworth's wife; we know she stayed away from her husband's politics, focusing on her duties of running the household and taking care of the children. However, we will now look at the challenges she faced as Wentworth's wife, as it was not an easy experience for her. Unfortunately, it is difficult to ascertain Elizabeth's experiences as we only have Wentworth's side of their conversations. However, we know that along with looking after Wentworth's children, Elizabeth also had to deal with Wentworth's frequent illnesses. Wentworth suffered from numerous afflictions throughout his lifetime, something which has already been explored by historians and medical professionals. However, no one has yet thought to look at the effect Wentworth's numerous illnesses had on his wives. The fever which he had before the death of his first wife appears to have been the first case of a lifetime of illnesses and so Margaret

³⁸⁶ 'Thomas Wentworth's Papers', p.176.

would not have experienced Wentworth's illnesses. However, as his career progressed so too did the record of his illnesses and so his second and third wife would have experienced Wentworth's suffering.³⁸⁷ On the day of his second wedding, Wentworth 'was much afflicted...with a fit of the stone and bloody urine'.³⁸⁸ However, Arabella was herself fragile, hence why Wentworth became unwilling to leave her side for long periods of time, consequently, it is possible that Wentworth did not wish to further worry her by his own maladies. On his wedding, though he was in pain 'he bore [it] out without any notice taken of it by anybody...at night it left him'.³⁸⁹ However, his illnesses only worsened on his arrival in Ireland meaning Elizabeth appears to have experienced the brunt of his suffering. The poor weather conditions and added stress from his role as Lord Deputy took their toll on Wentworth: he suffered from increased fits of depression; his hands, feet and one knee were crippled with gout; he often experienced attacks of the stones; he had periods of sleeplessness and headaches and fainting was not an uncommon occurrence.³⁹⁰ He often wrote to Lord Cottington of his troubles; in August 1634 he wrote 'in good earnest I grow extreamly old, and full of grey Hairs since I came into this Kingdom, and should wax exceedingly melancholy...Remember I tell you I am of no long Life', and again in March the following year he told him of how 'that Monday Night last I swooned twice before they could get off my Cloathes. Indeed I am not well disposed to write now'.³⁹¹ This must not have been easy for Elizabeth, at twenty-seven years old, living in a strange country with no

³⁸⁷ Banks, 'Strafford-The Medical Background', p.16.

³⁸⁸ Radcliffe, 'Extracts from Sir George Radcliffe's draughts', p.324.

³⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁹⁰ It is thought that on at least one occasion, Wentworth was assumed to have passed away. Banks, 'Strafford-The Medical Background', p.17.

³⁹¹ Knowler, *Letters and Dispatches Vol.I*, pp. 294, 393.

family or friends of her own to support her, whilst worrying about her husband's life. However, Elizabeth as we have seen in her care of the children, Elizabeth was a gentle and caring young woman, as such, she was always there to comfort and to soothe Wentworth whenever he was in pain.³⁹² She may not have been the most confident or politically minded of the women in Wentworth's life; however, Elizabeth's devotion to her husband was shown in the care she gave him; it was her kind heart that won the love and affection of those around her.

The final topic to discuss within this chapter is Elizabeth's experience of Wentworth's arrest, which has not been examined by scholars. Elizabeth was in Ireland when Wentworth was impeached by Parliament, which is where she remained throughout his trial and execution. Wentworth's letters to Elizabeth were optimistic; he gave her no reason to fear the worst and so it is possible that she believed her husband would come home. However, parts of Ireland had turned against Strafford; according to his daughter Christopher Wandesford had been able to successfully govern Ireland during this interim but in December 1640, Wandesford died and Elizabeth was left with few friends to help her through the experience.³⁹³ Wentworth wrote to Elizabeth, from the Tower, of how 'I never pityed you so much as I do now, for in the death of that great person the Deputy, you have lost the principal friend that you had there'.³⁹⁴ Elizabeth's experience in Ireland after Wandesford's death is again something that has not been looked at: since we do not have her letters available to us, we cannot know what she was writing to her husband. The last letter

³⁹² Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth, Vol. I*, p.239.

³⁹³ Alice Thornton, *The Autobiography of Mrs. Alice Thornton*, p.19.

³⁹⁴ *Biographia Britannica*, p.4182.

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Wentworth wrote to his wife asking her to remain positive. It was dated the 19th April 1641; he wrote it in the Tower of London, when his trial had finished, stating his 'friends increased rather than lessened' and 'the King continued very gracious'.³⁹⁵ Did Wentworth believe what he told his wife or was he simply trying to protect his family? The case against Wentworth was unprecedented; in order to make a case against him Parliament had to redefine tyranny and even then it looked as though Wentworth was able to talk his way out of the charges. It is highly possible then that Wentworth believed he would be found innocent. Yet, Wentworth was once on the same side as those who had sided against him and would have been aware of the extreme lengths they would go to; after all he was the one to relinquish Charles of his promise. Perhaps we can read more deeply in his words to his wife, written whilst in the Tower awaiting his trial, 'time I trust will salve any other hurt which can be done me. Therefore hold up your heart, look to the children and your house, let me have your prayers'.³⁹⁶

In conclusion, though the balance of evidence suggests that Elizabeth Rhodes may not have been Wentworth's favourite wife, for their marriage was one of convenience, kept a secret for months; however, it appears that Wentworth did grow to care for her. Elizabeth, although timid and submissive in her letters to her husband, also cared for Wentworth and his children. From this chapter we have come to learn more about Wentworth's personal life, something which we have not been able to ascertain from his previous marriages.

Wentworth was a different man to his family than he was to the rest of the world and it was his caring nature that inspired devotion in those around him. Though to the world he was

³⁹⁵ *Ibid*, p.4183.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p.4182.

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'Black Tom Tyrant', to his children he was an active father figure, only sending his daughters away when he believed it was best for them. Elizabeth was a kind and loving mother to her stepchildren and to two children of her own. Their marriage came at an important time in Wentworth's career and although we have not explored in depth the highlights of Wentworth's career as Lord Deputy of Ireland, we have seen the effects it had on Elizabeth. Elizabeth having no experience of life outside of Yorkshire before her marriage was brought into the forefront of Stuart politics. Though she kept away from her husband's business as much as possible, there were still aspects that she could not hide from, relying on her husband to guide her; on one such occasion he advised her 'I conceive you might bring an ill custom upon yourself to give presents to your god daughters'.³⁹⁷ After Wentworth's execution, his widow and children managed to escape the wrath of his enemies, living a quiet life in Yorkshire. During the Civil Wars, General Fairfax regarded 'that poor distressed family at Woodhouse' with 'chivalrous consideration'. Though his girls did not receive the £1000 dowry Wentworth had hoped to leave them, his only living son was granted Wentworth's title, Earl of Strafford, in the winter of 1641.³⁹⁸ Elizabeth outlived her husband by almost fifty years, though after Wentworth's death little more is mentioned of either Elizabeth or her daughter Margaret in any records.

In comparison to Arabella and Margaret, Elizabeth had perhaps the most difficult marriage to Wentworth. During their marriage, Wentworth was becoming increasingly important in the court of Charles I; his time was split between London, Yorkshire and Ireland; he suffered terrible illnesses and so Elizabeth's focus was to care for her husband, the children and

³⁹⁷ Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth, Vol. I*, p.379.

³⁹⁸ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.393.

continue her duties as wife of the Lord Deputy. Although Wentworth was a loving husband, Elizabeth could not compare to his great love 'Arabella'. Consequently, she remained humble in her character, quiet and submissive to her husband. Nevertheless, it is through their marriage that we are able to see the comparison between 'Black Tom' and the loving husband who began each letter 'sweet heart', who gossiped with her about the people they knew and teased her over not signing off her name. It is as a result of the findings of this chapter that we can truly begin to understand the relationships Wentworth had with the women in his life: from the doting father, the gossiping partner and the caring husband to the political and financial beneficiary.

Conclusion

Thomas Wentworth has often been depicted by historians as two-dimensional, seen as either 'Black Tom tyrant' or the first martyr of the Long Parliament; it is only recently that he has come to be regarded as more complex. It has been the hope of this study to suggest a new perspective on 'Black Tom'. By looking at his female relationships, something which has hitherto been largely ignored, we have argued that there was another side to the political force that has been the focus of much historical debate.

Wentworth could be a harsh and single-minded political figure who treated the world with a coldness that left his popularity wanting.³⁹⁹ Christened 'Black Tom Tyrant' he made a long list of enemies at court, in the North and especially in Ireland; the very occasion of his trial and execution suggests the enormity of the hate and fear that Wentworth instilled.⁴⁰⁰

However, Wentworth could also incite love and loyalty in those around him.⁴⁰¹ Even Charles I, who may not have reciprocated the adoration that Wentworth felt towards him, did come to rely on him and felt a strong sense of guilt over his death, recalling in his speech before his own execution 'an unjust sentence that I suffered to take effect, is punished now by an unjust sentence on me'.⁴⁰² It is this side of his character that has been the focus of this research. Through a study of his closest female relationships, we have argued that

³⁹⁹ Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth: Vol I*, p.82.

⁴⁰⁰ As portrayed in *The true maner of the execution of the Earle of Strafford*. The print depicts the crowds that gathered for Wentworth's execution. The execution that is taking place in the centre of the image is almost overlooked due to the sheer volume of the spectators. Wenceslaus Holler, *The true maner of the execution of the Earle of Strafford*, 1641, Etching, The British Museum.

⁴⁰¹ His closest friends, Sir George Radcliffe and Sir Christopher Wandesford, moving to Ireland when Wentworth was appointed Lord Deputy, to become his two most trusted advisors. Cooper, *Thomas Wentworth, Vol. I*, p.126. Whitaker, *The Life and Original Correspondence of Sir George Radcliffe*.

⁴⁰² C.V Wedgwood, *A King Condemned: The Trial and Execution of Charles I*, (Collins: 1964), pp. 163, 190.

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Wentworth was indeed a caring individual, and that, although, undeniably, a man driven by ambition, it was not necessarily for himself. Rather, it was Wentworth's hope to leave a strong legacy for his family to inherit. Moreover, it was his family and the news of his wife's pregnancy that prompted Wentworth to take control of his career.

Through our brief study of Wentworth's family background, we were able to conclude that Wentworth had a strong bond with both his parents, having adopted some of his mother's characteristics. Wentworth was also close to his father and the advice that he left for him, was something he took to heart and followed throughout his career. Though brief, this chapter set up Wentworth's early experiences of women and his father's expectations that he passed on. We were then able to compare Wentworth's own marriages to his parents, which differ in that Sir William Wentworth did, at times, confer with his wife on issues of their estate, whereas we have seen Wentworth's discussions about selling property were with his steward, Richard Marris.

From Wentworth's first marriage, to Margaret Clifford, we began to understand his attitudes towards women. The marriage was arranged by the couple's parents, as it benefitted both their families; consequently, Wentworth came to understand that women held political significance. He utilised his marriage to Margaret the way his father intended: by making political connections. He integrated himself amongst her family; not only did he become lifelong friends with her brother, Henry Clifford, but he also appeared the dotting son-in-law to the Earl of Cumberland. At the same time, Wentworth used this opportunity to begin to build his list of correspondence. Though he remained somewhat on the back

bench in Parliament, he had begun to make a name for himself as 'an honest gentleman'.⁴⁰³

Nevertheless, there was another side to Wentworth which our study of his first marriage has begun to shed some light on: Wentworth was a caring husband. The sources from this period are limited, yet, the ones surrounding Margaret's death suggest that not only was Wentworth deeply affected by her passing but they also suggest that Margaret cared for her husband, worrying about him even on her deathbed.⁴⁰⁴

Wentworth's marriage to Margaret was not without issue and so we have seen how Wentworth responded to personal struggles. The first year of their marriage was spent apart, with Wentworth travelling around Europe, yet Wentworth remained in touch with his wife during his time away. On his return his father died and he inherited the guardianship of his younger siblings. This came with financial issues, as Sir William had promised his daughters decent marriage portions and good educations for his brothers, which Wentworth continued to deal with after Margaret's death.⁴⁰⁵ Nevertheless, Wentworth went out of his way to ensure his family were well provided for, even when it indirectly affected his own prospects.⁴⁰⁶ Additionally, we know that Margaret and Wentworth suffered from fertility problems over their eleven-year marriage. Yet, from Wentworth's letters we have learned that the couple remained hopeful, with Margaret taking trips to Bath, where the spas were thought to aid fertility.⁴⁰⁷

⁴⁰³ Wedgwood, *Wentworth: A Revaluation*, p.54.

⁴⁰⁴ 'Strafford Papers', 21.16.

⁴⁰⁵ J.P. Cooper, 'The Fortune of Thomas Wentworth', pp.228-229.

⁴⁰⁶ As we noted in his attempts to arrange his second marriage and the rumours that began regarding his infertility. The reason for this being that Wentworth had tried to arrange a prosperous match for his brother. See above p.62.

⁴⁰⁷ Barry, Foster, 'Childless Men', p.176.

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Wentworth's search for a second wife was an opportunity to understand how he perceived women. He began his search looking for an heiress as he was struggling financially; however rumours about his impotence meant his attempts were unsuccessful. Though his pursuit of a woman for her family's money suggests that Wentworth was more interested in what he could gain from a marriage than the woman herself, the rumours emerged because Wentworth wanted to ensure his brother was provided for- highlighting Wentworth's caring nature towards his loved ones. The marriage itself also suggests another side to Wentworth. Wentworth had grown to love Margaret, yet, he remained aware of what his connection to her could do for him; however, his marriage to Arabella was one for love. Wentworth had become infatuated with Arabella after just one meeting; though she did bring with her a sizeable marriage portion and Wentworth was able to utilise her family's connections, he was, arguably, not afraid to turn his back on them when the occasion arose.⁴⁰⁸ Throughout their marriage Wentworth remained infatuated with his young wife. From Arabella's letters to Richard Marris and the portrait by Van Dyck, we have concluded that Arabella was able to enjoy a comfortable life. Though Wentworth was struggling financially at the start of their marriage, his rise to Lord President meant there was opportunity to increase his finances, shown through Arabella's luxuries.⁴⁰⁹

Moreover, it was through his relationship with Arabella that we saw the lasting effect Margaret's death had on him. Wentworth was devoted to Arabella, that coupled with his experience of losing Margaret, meant that he did not like to leave his wife for long periods of time. Subsequently, throughout their marriage Arabella would accompany her husband

⁴⁰⁸ See above p.86.

⁴⁰⁹ She enjoyed exotic fruits, luxurious clothing and her portrait painted by Charles I's court painter, Van Dyck.

on his business, even if it meant leaving their children under the guardianship of Wentworth's second-in-command. It must be noted that Wentworth was interested in his children's lives and would remain updated whilst he was away and that his children adored both him and his wife.⁴¹⁰ Arabella even attended her husband when he was imprisoned for refusing the forced loan, though it meant she gave birth to their second child at Dartford. This was significant as it meant Arabella chose to support her husband over following the traditions surrounding childbirth, which was an important time for female bonding.⁴¹¹ It is within their marriage that we have seen a controlling side to Wentworth, though this was done out of fear of losing another wife, rather than a need to control her.⁴¹² Nevertheless, we have concluded that Arabella was just as devoted to Wentworth as he was to her. Through a comparison with Wentworth's friend, George Radcliffe, who was imprisoned alongside him, we have learnt that Arabella was not expected to attend her husband in prison, yet she did. Furthermore, she also chose to attend Wentworth in York during her final pregnancy, though she had been advised not to, Arabella willingly followed her husband, risking her health to remain by his side. The fact that Margaret, Arabella and their children loved Wentworth suggests another softer side to the Earl. We have also noted, through our study of Arabella, the fact that Wentworth was influenced by his family. His marriage to Arabella saw him go from opposing the King's war with Spain, playing an important part in the drafting of the Petition of Right, to becoming Lord President of the Council of the North. This was seen by some contemporaries as a betrayal of the

⁴¹⁰ Knowler, *Letters and Dispatches Vol. I*, p.57.

⁴¹¹ Adrian Wilson, *Ritual and Conflict: The Social Relations of Childbirth*, p.154.

⁴¹² Wentworth refused to tell Arabella when his doctor suggested she may have cancer. See above p.80.

people's liberty and from these actions Wentworth made powerful enemies amongst the opposition.⁴¹³ Yet, there was a personal side to Wentworth's political actions; he was motivated by his need to provide for his family. It was after the news of his wife expecting for the first time that Wentworth put himself forward for the post of Lord President which was, in part, the catalyst for his opposition of Buckingham. Moreover, it was when he was Lord President that the rumours about Wentworth's callous character began to emerge.

However, we have seen that Arabella's kind nature had an impact on Wentworth and that his policies in Yorkshire were often for the improvement of the county. We have also noted that it was Arabella's death that saw Wentworth focus on his career to overcome his grief.

Wentworth's marriage to Elizabeth has proven interesting to our study. It appears, in the beginning, that this was simply a marriage of convenience; the death of Arabella and his promotion to Lord Deputy of Ireland meant he needed a wife to look after his children.

Elizabeth was not of an important, influential family as Margaret and Arabella had been, but at this point in Wentworth's career, she did not need to be. This indicates once again that Wentworth realised that women held their own level of political significance, also seen in the reason why the marriage was not announced until after Wentworth's arrival in Ireland, where Elizabeth had already been for several months. Elizabeth lacked political experience and so this was an attempt to avoid her being hounded for political favours whilst her husband was not there. Moreover, Elizabeth remained, for several years, in awe of her husband and appears more confident in her discussions with Richard Marris than in her

⁴¹³ Pym referred back to this instance in his speech in 1640, yet, at the time of Wentworth's apostasy, he was contacted by the supposed leader of the opposition, the Earl of Bedford, to discuss getting his nephew a barony, implying that Wentworth's betrayal was not felt by all. Russell, 'Parliamentary History in Perspective', p.4.

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letters to her husband, which might suggest a lack of affection between the couple, with Elizabeth feeling inadequate.⁴¹⁴ However, Wentworth did grow fond of Elizabeth, as in his letter to her which he addressed 'sweet heart'. It was his kind nature that allowed Elizabeth's confidence to grow over time, suggesting that Wentworth did not just value a woman for their political significance and that he could be a kinder man than he has been portrayed to be.⁴¹⁵

Nevertheless, our study of Elizabeth has also noted the hardships she experienced as wife of the Lord Deputy. Elizabeth moved to a foreign land, having previously never left Yorkshire; she then had to deal with running a household that Wentworth was attempting to turn into a court. She was fifteen years younger than her new husband and whilst he struggled with numerous illnesses that often left him bedridden, Elizabeth was left to care for him and his children, all whilst also dealing with the deaths of her own children.⁴¹⁶ Yet, our research has shown that Elizabeth was a kind and gentle woman who was always there so comfort her husband.⁴¹⁷ Elizabeth also had to cope with Wentworth's impeachment, trial and execution, throughout which she remained in Ireland, where she also experienced the death of their close friend, Christopher Wandesford.⁴¹⁸ Since she remained in Ireland her only communication with her husband before his death was with letters in which he insisted that he would be found innocent.⁴¹⁹ Though we know little about Elizabeth's life after Wentworth's death, we know that she returned to Yorkshire to live a quiet life with her

⁴¹⁴ 'Strafford Papers', 17.163, 19.98.

⁴¹⁵ 'Strafford Papers', 22.22. Burghclere, 'Strafford as a Letter Writer', 90-109.

⁴¹⁶ She lost three children in Ireland; only her daughter Margaret survived infancy.

⁴¹⁷ Arabella's children grew to love her as she encouraged them to play and develop friendships. Alice Thornton, *The Autobiography of Mrs. Alice Thornton*, p. 10.

⁴¹⁸ *Biographia Britannica*, p.4182.

⁴¹⁹ *Ibid*, p.4183.

daughter. Consequently, Elizabeth appears to have had the hardest time as Wentworth's wife.

Due to the current restrictions, there are areas which this research has been unable to cover, especially regarding the lives of Wentworth's children and his third wife, Elizabeth Rhodes. For example, her life in Ireland has only been looked at briefly; her role as the wife of Lord Deputy and what this involved has not been discussed in depth, neither have her activities in the months she was in Ireland before Wentworth's arrival nor her role in Wentworth's coronation. Similarly, her life after Wentworth's death offers much more than has been disclosed.⁴²⁰ At the same time, we know Wentworth had one surviving son and three daughters, yet, we have not looked at their relationship with their father in detail meaning we do not know the affect their upbringing had on them. Consequently, this research is not an exhaustive study of Wentworth's female relationships. Instead, it is an introduction into the subject to show how valuable such a study can be. This research has not only given a fuller picture of who Wentworth was, but from it we have also begun to uncover the role each of his wives played and the influence they may have had in their position as wife of Thomas Wentworth. Since women have been largely overlooked throughout history, our findings are significant, not only in the study of Wentworth but also with regard to the role of women and wives of political figures in Early Modern England; if Wentworth could be influenced, even unintentionally, by his wives then perhaps other political figures were as well; and to what extent did these women understand the power

⁴²⁰ It has been suggested that after Wentworth's execution Elizabeth and her daughter, Margaret. Nadine Akkerman, *Invisible Agents: Women and Espionage in Seventeenth-Century Britain*, (Oxford University Press: 2018), p.146.

they held. Though there are areas this study has been limited on, the research has already proven plentiful.

Overall, our research has given a new perspective on Sir Thomas Wentworth. Though he may have valued women for their political worth, shown through his relationship with Lady Carlisle, he also came to understand that a woman was more than that. Each of his wives he loved in a different way: his first wife was his companion, his second his true love and his third his caregiver. To each of them he showed a side that his political rivals did not see: a jovial Wentworth who did not let his politics affect his downtime. Each of these women appear to have had positive experiences as wife of Wentworth, suggesting that Wentworth was successful in his separation of his professional and personal life. Nevertheless, Wentworth allowed, in some way, his personal life to affect his political; we have seen how he was driven by a desire to provide for his family. Therefore, we can conclude that a look at his female relationships is invaluable to trying to understand the man that was Sir Thomas Wentworth.

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