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# No Angels in the House: The Victorian Myth and the Paget Women

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M. JEANNE PETERSON

THE REVOLUTION IN HISTORIANS' KNOWLEDGE of women and family life in Victorian England has left one social group untouched. While working-class women, prostitutes, nursing reformers, and female philanthropists have all become better known to us in the past fifteen years, the Victorian lady is understood today much as she was three decades ago when J. A. Banks and Olive Banks wrote their classic works on the Victorian upper-middle class.<sup>1</sup> Leisured, superficially accomplished, busy with the management of servants and the family's social life—this is the socioeconomic stereotype of the Victorian lady. Her sociopsychological profile is contained in one phrase—the “angel in the house.”

In both Victorian and modern usage, that term covers widely disparate and even contradictory notions. In the narrowest sense the angel was the one near to God, the pious one who kept the family on the Christian path. In secular terms the angel provided the home environment that promoted her husband's and children's well-being in the world; she also provided a haven from its worst pressures through her sound household management and sweetness of temperament. The latter meaning suggests the angel's domesticity, unworldliness, asexuality, innocence, even helplessness in matters outside the domestic sphere.<sup>2</sup> Although revisionist history has

I want to thank the members of the Paget family for their assistance and for permission to use their family papers: Lord Mayhew, Sir Julian and Lady Paget, Mr. and Mrs. Paul Paget, Dr. Oliver Paget, Mr. David P. Thomson, Mrs. Joan Thomson Charnock, the late Sir George P. Thomson, Col. Humphrey Paget, Mrs. Alice Thompson, and the late Mrs. James M. Thompson. For their reading of the manuscript and other help I want to thank George Alter, Walter Arnstein, Judith Berling, William Burgan, Moureen Coulter, Ann R. Higginbotham, Catherine Hoyser, Anya Peterson Royce, and the anonymous critics and the editors of the *American Historical Review*. Versions of this essay were presented to the Women's Studies Program and the West European Studies Program, Indiana University, Bloomington, the Departments of History and Women's Studies, the University of Hawaii, Manoa, September 14, 1981, and the Anglo-American Conference of Historians, University of London, July 5, 1982. Financial support for my work on the Paget family has come from the Office of Research and Graduate Development, Indiana University, Bloomington, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the National Endowment for the Humanities. I am grateful for their aid.

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Banks, *Prosperity and Parenthood: A Study of Family Planning among the Victorian Middle Classes* (London, 1954). Also see J. A. Banks and Olive Banks, *Feminism and Family Planning in Victorian England* (Liverpool, 1964).

<sup>2</sup> Nina Auerbach, *Woman and the Demon: The Life of a Victorian Myth* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983); Janet H. Murray, *Strong-Minded Women: And Other Lost Voices from Nineteenth-Century England* (New York, 1982), 6, 7, 10, 13; and Deborah Gorham, *The Victorian Girl and the Feminine Ideal* (Bloomington, Ind., 1983), 90. The *Oxford English Dictionary* supports these readings of the word “angel” as a “lovely, bright, innocent, or gracious being” as well as “ministering spirit or divine messenger.”

changed our ideas about a host of family subjects, the notion remains in the writing of many scholars of Victorian history that the accomplished, demure, and pious woman was not just an ideal but a reality—that she populated most genteel Victorian households.<sup>3</sup> For some, the angel in the house is evidence of a “golden age” of family life, an era when men and women had separate roles in the social hierarchy. For others, she is a symbol of oppressed women trapped in the gilded cage of Victorian male domination. One way or another, we write as though the angel metaphor really describes the woman in the Victorian home.<sup>4</sup>

The angel became, some have argued, a model for all ranks of Victorian women. Perhaps so, but I maintain that the model is appropriate only to the middle strata of Victorian society, where women had the leisure, privacy, and prosperity to aspire to the combination of innocence, piety, and dependency that she embodied. Even then, the problem of being an angel in the house was radically different for the lower-middle-class woman keeping house on £200 a year than for the upper-middle-class woman whose husband earned upwards of £700 a year.<sup>5</sup> The primary reference group for Victorian (and modern) discussions of the Victorian angel in the house is, I suggest, the women of the upper-middle class—the wives and daughters of clergymen, country gentlemen, and prosperous and well-born men in the professions and business. If any woman carried out the religious and social mandates of the angel model, it was the gentlewoman.

The angel's stereotypical social role varied, of course, according to her age and status. As a young, single woman she carried on the duties of the daughter of the house and was educated to the accomplishments—needlework, a smattering of French, a bit of painting, and piano. She made morning calls with mama and did occasional charitable work. Her single life provided training for her role as angel-wife. As a wife and mother she obeyed her husband, adored him, and promoted his spiritual and physical well-being. She supervised the servants' activities under the watchful eye of her husband and became the devoted and loving mother of a large Victorian family. She was an acquiescent, passive, unintellectual creature, whose life revolved entirely around social engagements, domestic management, and religion.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>3</sup> R. K. Webb, *Modern England: From the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (2d edn., New York, 1980), 403; David Roberts, “The Paterfamilias of the Victorian Governing Classes,” in A. J. Wohl, ed., *The Victorian Family: Structure and Stresses* (New York, 1978), 63. Roberts found memoirists' praise of women “mechanical,” but he did not pursue the implications of his own doubts. Also see Clayton Roberts and David Roberts, *A History of England*, Volume 2, *1688 to the Present* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1980): 650–51; and Murray, *Strong-Minded Women*, 5, 6. Like many authors, Murray moved back and forth between the angel as ideal and the angel as the reality of upper-middle-class female life.

<sup>4</sup> Ivan Illich, *Gender* (New York, 1983); and Gorham, *Victorian Girl*. Not all have accepted these stereotypes. See, for example, F. B. Smith, “Sexuality in Britain, 1800–1900: Some Suggested Revisions,” in Martha Vicinus, ed., *A Widening Sphere: Changing Roles of Victorian Women* (Bloomington, Ind., 1977), 182–98. In general, American historians have been quicker than English historians to question this stereotype. See Carl Degler, “What Ought To Be and What Was: Women's Sexuality in the Nineteenth Century,” *AHR*, 79 (1974): 1467–90, and *At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present* (New York, 1980); and Erna Olafson Hellerstein et al., eds., *Victorian Women: A Documentary Account of Women's Lives in Nineteenth-Century England, France, and the United States* (Stanford, 1981), 123–33.

<sup>5</sup> Banks, *Prosperity and Parenthood*, 48–51. J. A. Banks identified the subjects of this earlier work as the upper-middle class; Banks, *Victorian Values: Secularism and the Size of Families* (London, 1981), 44–45. Patricia Branca, on the other hand, clearly dealt with the lower-middle class in *Silent Sisterhood: Middle-Class Women in the Victorian Home* (London, 1975), 6, 16, 40, 47, 53.

<sup>6</sup> For further information on the angel stereotype, see Banks and Banks, *Feminism and Family Planning*, 58–70; Branca, *Silent Sisterhood*, 6, 16, 46, 56; Murray, *Strong-Minded Women*, 21, 75–83, 197; and Gorham, *Victorian*

Much in the literature of the Victorian years supports these notions of Victorian ladyhood. In Dickens's *David Copperfield* (1849–50) Agnes was a woman of unswerving piety, while Dora was angelic in her charm and her dependency; Emilia in Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* (1848) was charming, too, and not entirely competent to deal with the tasks life thrust at her.<sup>7</sup> John Ruskin's essays set forth these feminine ideals with eloquence. Prescriptive literature like Sarah Stickney Ellis's *Wives of England* (1843) and *Daughters of England* (1845) further supports this notion of female character. The medical profession testified to the biological roots of her dependency. And, of course, Coventry Patmore's poem, *The Angel in the House* (1854), bolstered the image of female virtue and domesticity.<sup>8</sup> Victorian and Edwardian memoirists and biographers, writing about their own mothers, sisters, and wives, added to our lore about the angels that inhabited nineteenth-century English homes. But perhaps the angel in the house never really existed, and perhaps students of the Victorian period have been substituting fiction for fact, idealizations for realities, prescriptions for descriptions.

A systematic, statistical survey of Victorian women of the upper-middle class is perhaps an impossible task. This essay, instead, takes a microscopic approach, examining the lives of Victorian women in a single family—the Pagets—to test the image of the Victorian angel against their actual lives. Were these women as ill educated and superficial, helpless and incompetent, unphysical and asexual as the angel stereotype suggests? Were they so pious, devoted, passive, and sweet as to deserve this famous image?

THE SUBJECTS OF THIS ESSAY are three generations of women who, by birth or marriage, became members of the Paget family in the nineteenth century. Although their lives span the period from 1778, when the first was born, to 1951, when the last survivor of these three generations died, this essay is limited to the nineteenth century, beginning with the founding couple's marriage in 1799 and ending with the coming of war in 1914, when the image of the "angel," like many other features of Victorian and Edwardian life, began to fracture.

The matriarch of the family was Sarah Elizabeth Tolver (b. 1778), the daughter

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*Girl*. Also see Leonore Davidoff, *The Best Circles: Women and Society in Victorian England* (Totowa, N.J., 1973), esp. 42–46, 93.

<sup>7</sup> This is not to say that Victorian fiction offers no examples of women who were ill tempered, domineering, authoritative, or independent. But most often they turn out not to be ladies or, if ladies, they are comic figures who therefore do not reflect valued social roles for women. Examples include Charles Dickens's Sarah Gamp in *Martin Chuzzlewit* (1843) and Mrs. Nickleby in *Nicholas Nickleby* (1838); and Anthony Trollope's Mrs. Proudie in *Barchester Towers* (1857) and Mrs. Arabella Greenow in *Can You Forgive Her?* (1864–65). Also see Michael Slater, *Dickens and Women* (London, 1983), 259, 273–75, 285, 350.

<sup>8</sup> John Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies: Two Lectures Delivered at Manchester in 1864* (London, 1865); Sarah S. Ellis, *The Wives of England, Their Relative Duties, Domestic Influence, and Social Obligations* (London, [1843]), and *The Daughters of England, Their Society, Character, and Responsibilities* (London, [1845]); Charles West, *Medical Women: A Statement and an Argument* (London and Edinburgh, 1878); and Patmore, *The Angel in the House*, 2 vols. (London, 1854). The most famous medical man is, perhaps, William Acton. See his *The Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs in Childhood, Youth, Adult Age, and Advanced Life* (3d American edn. from the 5th London edn., Philadelphia, 1871). The children of the Victorians played a crucial role, it seems to me, in the evolution of the twentieth-century idea of the angel as a central (and often contemptible) feature of Victorian domestic life. Intense ambivalence about Victorian womanhood characterizes the writings of many of them, including Virginia Woolf, Lytton Strachey, and even Vera Brittain.

of Ann Capps and Tom Tolver, a self-made gentleman. At twenty-one Betsy married Samuel Paget of Great Yarmouth (see Table 1). A young man of modest origins, he made a fortune as a provisioner of ships during the Napoleonic wars. Later he diversified into shipping and brewing. Betsy bore seventeen children in the first twenty-five years of her married life. Nine survived to adulthood.<sup>9</sup> Kate and Patty, the oldest and youngest of her offspring, never married, nor did four sons. Through the three sons who did marry, five women entered the family. Frederick had, consecutively, three wives: Elizabeth Rogers, Hester King, and Sarah Shoubridge, all apparently the daughters of gentlemen. A partner in his father's brewing business, Frederick failed as a businessman. He moved his family to Vienna, where they remained outside the English family circle until Elise, the only surviving daughter of Frederick and Hester, returned to England in the 1860s. Lydia North (b. 1815), the daughter of a London cleric and schoolmaster, established another Paget family household in London in 1844 by her marriage to James Paget, a rising young surgeon at St. Bartholomew's Hospital. And her sister-in-law Clara Fardell (b. ca. 1825), daughter of an Ely clergyman, entered the Paget family in 1851 as the wife of Betsy's son George, a physician and teacher of medicine at Cambridge University.<sup>10</sup>

The women of the third generation of this study include Elise together with the daughters and daughters-in-law of Lydia and Clara. Lydia's eldest daughter Catharine married a clergyman and Oxford don. Helen Church, daughter of the dean of St. Paul's Cathedral, married Lydia's son Francis, also a clergyman and Oxford don (later dean of Christ Church and bishop of Oxford). Elma Katie Hoare came from a Norfolk banking family; her father had been a member of Parliament. She entered the Paget circle through marriage to the Reverend Henry Luke Paget, who became bishop of Chester after the First World War. Lydia's other two daughters-in-law were Julia Norrie Moke, an American-born heiress, who married the Pagets' eldest son, barrister John R. Paget, and Eleanor Mary Burd, daughter of a provincial medical man, who married the youngest son of the family, Stephen. Stephen abandoned a surgical career to take up writing and medical politics. The youngest of James and Lydia's offspring, Mary, remained a spinster.<sup>11</sup>

While Lydia's family had close ties to the Church of England, Clara's had links to the medical and scientific professions. Clara's three daughters, Maud, Violet, and Rose, all married Cambridge scientists. (Violet's second marriage was to a wealthy

<sup>9</sup> Betsy bore sixteen children in the first twenty years of marriage; eight died before the age of six. Demographic historian George Alter pointed out to me that the pattern of births and deaths among Betsy's offspring suggests that she did not breast-feed her infants. Given that there was very little wet-nursing in England, the children might have been artificially fed, which may explain their high mortality.

<sup>10</sup> Sir Julian Paget, Bart., "Paget Family Tree," MS genealogy of the family, November 1963; James Paget, *Memoirs and Letters of Sir James Paget, Bart.*, ed. Stephen Paget (London, 1902), 1–10; Humphrey Paget, "The Pagets of Great Yarmouth, 1800 to 1850," family MS (1930) in the possession of Lord Mayhew; and G. H. Brown, comp., *Lives of the Fellows of the Royal College of Physicians, 1826–1925* (London, 1955), s.v. George E. Paget. A copy of Humphrey Paget's manuscript is also in the Bodleian Library, Oxford, Reserved Collection.

<sup>11</sup> Sir Julian Paget, "Paget Family Tree"; *Burke's Peerage and Baronetage* (105th edn., London, 1978), 2060; Stephen Paget and J. M. C. Crum, *Francis Paget: Bishop of Oxford* (London, 1912), 74–76; Elma K. Paget, *Henry Luke Paget: Portrait and Frame* (London, 1939), 210; "Sir John Paget, K.C.," obituary, *The Times* (London), August 22, 1938, p. 13; "Miss [Mary] Paget," obituary, *ibid.*, June 25, 1945, p. 6; and *Plarr's Lives of the Fellows of the Royal College of Surgeons of England*, ed. Sir D'Arcy Power et al., 2 vols. (Bristol, 1936), s.v. Stephen Paget.



businessman.) Two of Clara's daughters-in-law entered the family through marriages to her sons who were medical men in private practice. A third daughter-in-law, Stella Salomons, married Clara's son Edmund, a stockbroker.<sup>12</sup>

In all, thirty females appear in the three nineteenth-century generations of the family: the founding mother; ten daughters and daughters-in-law in the second generation; and nineteen in the third generation. Of these thirty, six died in infancy. Two lived permanently abroad and fall outside the scope of this study. Of the remaining twenty-two, four never married, and four married but had no offspring. The remaining fourteen had the conventional lives of marriage and children. As far as we can reconstruct the record, the number of children born to any one woman ranged from a low of one to a high of seventeen. The average age of marriage for women in the second generation was twenty-seven; for the third generation, twenty-nine. The average age of their husbands at marriage was thirty-two and thirty-three respectively. And the median between marriage and the birth of the first child was seventeen months in the second generation and twenty-one months in the third. Following the pattern of the Victorian upper-middle class, the Paget families formed after 1870 (the third generation) tended to be smaller than those formed in the first two-thirds of the century. In the second generation the average was eight children; in the third (post-1870) generation the average was three.<sup>13</sup>

The first generation of Pagets belonged to the political and commercial elite of Great Yarmouth. The family remained in business for part of the second generation. The remaining sons of the second and all of the third generation were educated in public schools and Oxbridge and entered the Victorian professions—medicine, the church, law, the university. They did not aspire to join the ranks of county society. They and their families belonged to the upper-middle class, or what might better be called the “new urban gentry”<sup>14</sup>—urban professionals who became the new gentefolk of industrial society. The Paget women came from this group and married into it. They may teach us something about the rest of the women of this social rank.

Because the Paget women did not live exceptional lives, information about them is often patchy. Little information survives, for example, about the three women who married Frederick. Three of Clara's daughters-in-law, Ethel, Christobel, and Hilda, also remain largely unknown. Yet records for other women in the family are surprisingly voluminous; they include letters, diaries, memoirs, newspapers, magazines, legal records and testaments, institutional documents, and the reminiscences of husbands, brothers, and sons.

The Paget women were in every way conventional ladies and, in their very

<sup>12</sup> Sir Julian Paget, “Paget Family Tree”; J. A. Venn, comp., *Alumni Cantabrigienses, A Biographical List of All Known Students . . . at the University of Cambridge from the Earliest Times to 1900*, part 2, *From 1752 to 1900* (Cambridge, 1922–54), s.v. Owen Paget, and George Edmund Paget; and “Mr. J. H. Batty,” obituary, *The Times* (London), January 23, 1946, p. 7.

<sup>13</sup> Sir Julian Paget, “Paget Family Tree.” Also see Banks, *Prosperity and Parenthood*, 2–5.

<sup>14</sup> The only previous use of this phrase that I can find occurs when Philip Jenkins used a similar term, “urban gentry,” to refer to men of town origins who bought country estates; Jenkins, *The Making of a Ruling Class: The Glamorgan Gentry, 1640–1790* (New York, 1983), 42. I intend the “new urban gentry” to refer to those ranks of urban society that sustained the values and social relations of the traditional gentry.

ordinariness, seem typical of the Victorian upper-middle class. Most married and bore children, but, whether married or single, none had a career. Nor is there any evidence to suggest that any wanted an occupation or profession. Their ranks included no feminists. All were Anglican except for the Jewish Stella, and their religious activities ranged from the occasional to the extensive. Their interests and pursuits were normal activities for nineteenth-century ladies of their status—painting, sketching, needlework, morning calls. They engaged in charitable activities, but none was a reformer. Some wrote and published, but the subjects were always those suitable for a lady's pen. They were, in short, the entirely predictable wives and daughters of the new urban gentry. In terms of personality and temperament, too, these women do not reflect anything but the norm. Some were shy and quiet, while others were more dynamic and extroverted, but not one stood out as exceptional by Victorian standards. In their education, views on sensitive issues in Victorian social life, and personalities and characters, they reveal something of the reality behind the image of the Victorian lady as the angel in the house.

GIVEN THE TIMES AND THE FAMILY'S STATUS, the Paget women almost certainly learned the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic at home. Although the evidence is sparse, we have glimpses of young Kate in Great Yarmouth in 1835 having lessons at home and, four decades later, of her ten-year-old niece Mary in the schoolroom upstairs in the big London house in Harewood Place. Education at home, historians have long thought, was intended to protect daughters from the evils of the world outside.<sup>15</sup> But this does not appear to have been entirely true of the Pagets. For the first generation we know only that Betsy was "well-educated" and "very accomplished"; no clues tell us how or where. The evidence is firmer for the second generation. Lydia North, an adolescent in London in the 1820s, had the standard education at home but went to "botannical lectures" from time to time. Her clergyman father, thoroughly opposed to frivolity and idleness and recognizing her talent, enrolled her in the newly founded Royal Academy of Music.<sup>16</sup>

The third-generation girls also ventured out of the house to study. In the 1870s the adolescent Paget daughters in Cambridge attended Professor Sidney Colvin's lectures on art history and joined several other daughters of faculty members in organizing a class to study foreign languages. This education outside the home

<sup>15</sup> Murray, *Strong-Minded Women*, 197; Sara Delamont, "The Contradictions in Ladies' Education," in S. Delamont and Lorna Duffin, eds., *The Nineteenth-Century Woman: Her Cultural and Physical World* (London, 1978), 135–38; and Gorham, *Victorian Girl*, 73–75.

<sup>16</sup> Lydia North to James Paget, July 16, 1839, Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine [hereafter, WIHM], Paget MS. 91; Catharine Paget, diary, February 2, 12, 19, 23, 26, 28, 1870, Bodleian Library, Oxford [hereafter, Bodl. Lib.], Reserved Collection; Stephen Paget, memoir, pt. 1, "Harewood Place," 14, Bodl. Lib., Thompson MSS; Mary Paget, "1 Harewood Place," Bodl. Lib., Thompson MSS; Delamont, "Contradictions in Ladies' Education," 136; and Carol Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up in Victorian and Edwardian England* (Boston and London, 1981), 40–41, 44. But see Gorham, *Victorian Girl*, 22–24. Lydia North to James Paget, December 24, 1836, WIHM, Paget MS. 12; Isaac W. North, *A Brief Memoir of the Rev. Henry North* (London, 1839), 10, 24, 34; and F. Corder, *History of the Royal Academy of Music from 1822 to 1922* (London, 1922), 40. Fanny Dickens, the sister of the novelist, was also a pupil at the Royal Academy in this period as were other girls; Corder, *History of the Royal Academy of Music from 1822 to 1922*, 9. For biographical notes on female musicians at the academy, see W. W. Cazalet, *The History of the Royal Academy of Music* (London, 1854), 279–326.

continued into adulthood. Rose Paget, at the age of twenty-seven, pursued her interests in science by working in the Cavendish Laboratory in the 1880s. During the same period Eleanor Burd studied at the Slade School of Fine Art in London. Ultimately, Rose entered the formal system of education for women; she took the Higher Local Examination and attended classes at Newnham.<sup>17</sup> None of the other women enrolled in the newly opened Oxbridge colleges for women.

Obviously the Paget women received most of their education at home. Their mothers, of course, head the list of teachers. Older sisters helped educate younger girls, and governesses provided some language and art instruction. Lydia North, while visiting in Great Yarmouth, gave piano lessons to young Kate Paget.<sup>18</sup> Although women provided most of the girls' education, men participated on occasion. Sir George Paget wrote regularly to his daughters when they were at the family's country house, Tan-yr-allt, in North Wales and he was at work in Cambridge. He used his letters as teaching devices, as vehicles for communicating information on subjects that arose out of newspaper stories or current family activities. He informed young Rose about warships and the history of shipbuilding; he gave her a four-page dissertation on cannons and a note on the history of the marquises of Anglesea. Following a visit to the South Kensington Museum to see gifts received by the prince of Wales on a visit to India, George described at length the jewels, their quality, and their uses.<sup>19</sup>

Aside from Paget's instructive letters, he also kept a minatory eye on his daughters' study habits and progress. When Rose was in Wales for the summer, he asked her to write "about all you are doing and learning." He exhorted her, "Do your best to save your Mama trouble, and learn all you can. Now is your time for learning, now you are young. If you do not make a good start now, you will run the risk of being behind-hand all your life." He attended even to the details of writing and arithmetic, and he could be severe. "You require some practice in letter-writing," he told Rose. "Your English is not always grammatical, and your spelling & stops not such as Rose Paget's should be. You have spelt pieces thus *peices*." The fourteen-year-old girl's arithmetic also got his attention. "I am glad you are . . . doing sums. I just looked at the last sums you sent. They were not properly set down. . . . The mistake seemed to be in your not being clearly aware that the sign = means *equal to*, and must never be put between two quantities unless they be really *equal to one another*." But he was not all severity; the pedagogue was also

<sup>17</sup> Rose Paget, diary, May 5, October 12, November 2, 1875, February 2, 1876, November 23, 27, 30, 1877. Thomson Papers in the possession of David P. Thomson, London [hereafter, Thomson Papers]; E. V. Lucas, *The Colvins and Their Friends* (New York, 1928), 27–29; and R. J. Strutt, 4th Baron Rayleigh, *Life of J. J. Thomson* (Cambridge, 1942), 34. Also see the account by Rose's son, George P. Thomson, *J. J. Thomson and the Cavendish Laboratory in His Times* (London, 1964), 77, 92. Stephen Paget, memoir, pt. 5, "October 5th, 1925," 17; James Paget to H. W. Acland, June 3, 1885, Bodl. Lib., MS. Acland d. 64, f. 210. Apparently many upper-middle-class women went to the Slade; Germaine Greer, *The Obstacle Race: The Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work* (New York, 1979), 52, 53, 63, 319.

<sup>18</sup> Stephen Paget, memoir, pt. 1, "Harewood Place," 14; Catharine Paget, diary, February 2, 12, 19, 23, 26, 28, 1870; Lydia North to James Paget, July 16, 1839, WJHM, Paget MS. 91; and Rose Paget, diary, entry following July 31, 1874, and April 23, 1876. Rose's diary describes their German governess, Fräulein Anna.

<sup>19</sup> Sir George Paget to Rose Paget, June 30, July 7, 1872, May 17, 1874, July 2, 1876, Thomson Papers. But for David Roberts's idea of the remote father, see "The Paterfamilias of the Victorian Governing Classes," 59–62. Gorham discovered similarly involved fathers but considered them atypical; *Victorian Girl*, 126–28, 130, 170.

affectionate papa. "If you have any difficulty with your Algebra, write to me about it—indeed write every week, whether you have any difficulty or not." As he admitted to his daughter, "I like to hear how you are going on & what you are doing."<sup>20</sup>

Paget advised his daughters, as they grew older, on the subjects they might study. "I hope you are learning to *speak* Welsh. You have a grand opportunity with Miss Ellis [in Wales]." He suggested that Rose follow the lead of one of the family's neighbors. "If Miss West is studying Botany, you might study it also." He thought the library at Tan-yr-allt would serve well enough for "merely learning how to distinguish plants and learn their names." But if, he went on, "you desire to study the *Physiology* of plants, let me know what books you have there, and if you have none that will serve I would send you one." When Paget took his children on a trip to the Low Countries in 1878, he prepared them in advance for the tour. "An acquaintance with their [Belgium's and Holland's] history will greatly add to the interest of seeing them," he told Rose. And he went to the university library to get J. L. Motley's volumes on *The Rise of the Dutch Republic* and sent them to Wales for Rose to read.<sup>21</sup> No evidence exists that other Paget men were so involved in their daughters' education. But such fatherly involvement was possible and perhaps extensive.

Fathers were not the only men involved in the educational lives of these girls. Although the stereotype calls for governesses and schoolmistresses, Paget females of every generation had male teachers. When Betsy Paget, as a young wife and mother thirty years of age, wanted to study painting in Great Yarmouth, an artist came from Norwich to give her instruction. Lydia North's music teachers at the Royal Academy included men as well as women. Lydia's daughter Catharine studied music in London in the 1870s, and she, too, had men as teachers as well as women.<sup>22</sup> Rose, Violet, and Maud took their various art, music, and language lessons in Cambridge from Messrs. Amps, Wiles, Archer Hind, Boquet, and Steinhilper.<sup>23</sup> In short, sex segregation was not a feature of these girls' education.

An important and often ignored avenue of Victorian education was self-education. As the Paget girls grew into womanhood, their reading contributed much to their culture as educated adults. In Great Yarmouth Kate's favorite books included volumes by Scott and Byron, the *Arabian Nights*, and a shelf of Shakespeare's works. Lydia read religious works and, perhaps under her fiancé's influence, also geology. Not all their reading was on the highest intellectual plane. In 1870 Catharine read Bulwer Lytton's *Harold* and Willkie Collins's *Man and Wife*. No empty-headed consumer of romance, she offered critical assessments even of the entertainments. "I read [the] 1st vol. [of Disraeli's] *Lothair*," she recorded in her

<sup>20</sup> Sir George Paget to Rose Paget, July 6, 1873, May 10, 1874, July 2, 1876, Thomson Papers.

<sup>21</sup> Sir George Paget to Rose Paget and Violet Paget, June 30, 1872, and to Rose Paget, July 5, July 3, 1878, Thomson Papers.

<sup>22</sup> Murray, *Strong-Minded Women*, 196; James Paget, *Memoirs and Letters*, 8, 255; Corder, *History of the Royal Academy of Music from 1822 to 1922*, 44–45; and Catharine Paget, diary, February 24, 28, June 2, July 13, 1870. Dyhouse mentioned male tutors for well-to-do families to "polish up" the girl's accomplishments; *Girls Growing Up*, 40. Also see Gorham, *Victorian Girl*, 22; and Delamont, "Contradictions in Ladies' Education," 136.

<sup>23</sup> Rose Paget, diary, October 16, 1875, April 29, October 13, 1876; and Maud Paget to Rose Paget, July 31, [1878], Thomson Papers. Most of these men were apparently Cambridge dons; *Alumni Cantabrigienses*.

diary on May 12, “—such *false* stupid stuff it seems to me.”<sup>24</sup> Catharine’s reading went beyond fiction to include history (J. A. Froude’s *History of England*), biography (G. H. Lewes’s *Life of Goethe*), religious books (the Oxford Lenten sermons for 1869), as well as the latest in folklore (*Vikram and the Vampire; or, Tales of Hindu Devilry*).<sup>25</sup> In Cambridge, Catharine’s cousins followed a similar regimen. In 1880 Maud was reading William Gresley’s *Siege of Lichfield, Some Elements of Religion, and Eternal Hope*. The heart of their learning from childhood, regardless of other interests, was the Christian religion.<sup>26</sup> This they learned in the family, in church, and in private reading.

The Paget women were all literate and numerate women. Letters survive from every generation that testify to their ability to write clearly and effectively. Occasional financial records demonstrate their ability to manage numbers logically.<sup>27</sup> Such skills were, of course, a standard part of a Victorian lady’s household management. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, Betsy Paget, even with servants in the Yarmouth house, “took the close charge and guidance of . . . all [her children]: she managed household affairs and, after the manner of the time and place, did all the marketing and shopping, directed the cookery, and made the choicest sweets.” In the second and third generation such close attention to household chores may have been attenuated by social mobility, the demands of urban life, and changing domestic mores. But occasional cookery, light sewing, and shopping, as well as flower arranging, continued to be part of these women’s lives. The Cambridge girls were specifically taught such household tasks as ironing, and they participated in the entertainment of guests and management of servants.<sup>28</sup> But the interests and skills acquired by Paget women extended far beyond the household, and many of their activities do not conform to the piano-tinkling and watercolor-dabbling stereotype of the Victorian female.

The arts were a conventional arena of Victorian female “accomplishment.” Sketching and painting, piano and voice lessons, presumably taught by a badly trained governess or a black-coated music master—these were standard items in the young ladies’ curriculum.<sup>29</sup> At first sight, the Paget women seem to fit this pattern, but on closer examination it becomes clear that they do not. Seventeen children born in the space of twenty-five years might reasonably be expected to have filled

<sup>24</sup> Humphrey Paget, “Pagets of Great Yarmouth,” 115–16; Lydia North to James Paget, August 10, 1840, WIHM, Paget MS. 113; and Catharine Paget, diary, frontispiece, and May 12, 1870. On self-education, see Gorham, *Victorian Girl*, 103.

<sup>25</sup> Catharine Paget, diary, frontispiece. The British Museum Catalogue identifies the last item as the work adapted from the *Batāl-Pachīsi* by Richard Burton, published by Longmans in 1870.

<sup>26</sup> Maud Paget to Rose Paget, n.d., and n.d. [August 1880], Thomson Papers. The authorship of the religious books is unknown.

<sup>27</sup> Catharine Paget’s diary has an unnumbered separate ledger section devoted to records of income and expenditure. Also see the entry at June 24, 1870. Rose Paget’s diary indicates regular involvement in household financial matters.

<sup>28</sup> James Paget, *Memoirs and Letters*, 7; Catharine Paget, diary, June 30, July 15, October 8, November 23, 1870; and Rose Paget, diary, March 13, 1877, November 22, 1876. Letters to Rose Paget in the Thomson Papers are full of such references.

<sup>29</sup> Gorham, *Victorian Girl*, 104; Lee Holcombe, *Victorian Ladies at Work: Middle-Class Working Women in England and Wales, 1850–1914* (Hamden, Conn., 1973), 24; Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up*, 40; and Greer, *Obstacle Race*, 248–49. But see Greer’s oddly contemptuous remarks about female artists; *Obstacle Race*, 249.



*Figure 1: Still life by Sarah Elizabeth Tolver Paget (n.d.).*  
Reproduced courtesy of Joan Thomson Charnock, Cambridge, England.

Betsy Paget's life, and her responsibilities as the wife of a local community leader also took time. She wanted to paint, however, and paint she did. Her teacher, John Crome (1768–1821), was a leading regional painter of the period, better known as “Old Crome” of Norfolk, and, under his direction, whatever her talents as a painter, she did master the technique of working in oil (see Figure 1). Third-generation Elise Paget also painted in oils. As part of her training she copied paintings in the National Gallery, and she traveled to France to study works in Paris galleries. She earned some recognition for the quality of her work; in 1878 and

again in 1888 her paintings won places in exhibitions at the Royal Academy of Art.<sup>30</sup>

Elise's cousin Maud began her art studies while living at home in Cambridge. In 1878 she went to Dresden, where she lived for most of the academic year and studied sculpture, painting, and drawing from life, and Maud continued to paint after her return. While in Wales in the summer of 1880 she did landscapes and portraits of friends.<sup>31</sup> In 1884 Maud's cousin Stephen married another young artist, Eleanor Burd, the daughter of a provincial general practitioner. She had as a girl taken up sketching and later attended the Slade School of Fine Art, where in 1885 she "won the first prize for drawing from life." Marriage that same year did not stop her from sketching and painting. Indeed, her father-in-law provided the funds to build a studio for her at the back of her house in fashionable Wimpole Street.<sup>32</sup>

Music, too, was part of the Paget women's repertoire of apparently conventional accomplishments. The quality of their teachers offers one index of their achievements. At the Royal Academy of Music in the 1820s and '30s, Lydia North studied not only with Domenico Crivelli, the son of a famous Italian tenor, but also with Lucy (Philpot) Anderson, a renowned concert pianist. Her most important teacher was William Crotch. Crotch had been professor of music at Oxford and was principal of the Royal Academy of Music until 1832. He was "one of the most distinguished English musicians of his day." That upper-middle-class women had teachers of such distinction was apparently common. Even the famous Sir Charles Hallé often took lady pupils.<sup>33</sup>

Famous teachers would have availed little without their students' abilities and dedication. In these respects Lydia North shone, for she was both talented and serious. At twelve or thirteen she won silver and bronze medals in competitions at the Royal Academy of Music for her performance on the piano. While some of the academy's students earned "severe censure" in the 1820s and 1830s for their poor performance, Lydia's teachers judged her among those "most highly satisfactory in all their studies" in 1830. And when Lydia was seventeen years old the school records showed that "Miss North has composed a Quartett for Piano, Violin, Tenor and Violoncello, which reflects the highest Credit upon her." She also learned how to "read a full orchestral score at sight." In her late teens Lydia was apparently invited to begin a concert career. She refused, for she did not like the prospect of

<sup>30</sup> James Paget, *Memoirs and Letters*, 8; R. H. Mottram, *John Crome of Norwich* (London, 1931); Algernon Graves, *The Royal Academy of Arts: A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and Their Work from Its Foundation in 1769 to 1904*, 6 (East Ardsley, 1970): 39; and Stephen Paget, memoir, pt. 2, "Pinner," 20. Some of Elise's work survives in the collection of the late Mrs. J. M. Thompson, now in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. On oils as the male painters' medium versus watercolors as the female painters' medium, see Greer, *Obstacle Race*, 249.

<sup>31</sup> Rose Paget, diary, January 21, 1875; and Maud Paget to Rose Paget, n.d. [1878], July 13, 1880, Thomson Papers. Also see Maud Paget to Rose Paget, August 31, [1880], *ibid.* The following year Maud's sister Violet went to Dresden for a similar course. On the importance of drawing from life for Victorian women's art education, see Greer, *Obstacle Race*, 319.

<sup>32</sup> James Paget to H. W. Acland, June 3, 1885, Bodl. Lib., MS. Acland d. 64, f. 210; and Stephen Paget, memoir, pt. 5, "October 5th, 1925," 17.

<sup>33</sup> Stanley Sadie, ed., *New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians* (London, 1980), s.v. Crotch, Gaetano Crivelli, Anderson, Pinsuti, Leslie, and Sain-ton-Dolby; James Paget, *Memoirs and Letters*, 255; and Sir Charles Hallé, *The Autobiography of Charles Hallé: With Correspondence and Diaries*, ed. Michael Kennedy (New York, 1973), 121–22. Sain-ton's most famous pupil was Fanny Moody. Anderson taught piano to Queen Victoria and her children.

“publicity.”<sup>34</sup> But she did not give up music. As pianist and singer, she entertained family and guests, gave music lessons, and continued composing. She wrote glees (four-part unaccompanied songs) for performance in the family, and she and James played duets for piano and flute. One of her later compositions seems to have been prepared for her friend Cardinal Newman for use at the Birmingham Oratory, and another—“a little French dance”—came into the possession of the princess of Wales.<sup>35</sup>

No other woman in the family achieved Lydia’s level of musical skill, but her daughter Catharine’s musical education reflected a similar seriousness and commitment. Her instructors, too, were notable members of the English music scene: Ciro Pinsuti, an Italian composer and teacher of voice, member since 1856 of the staff of the Royal Academy of Music; Henry Leslie, a choral conductor and composer of note, director of the prize-winning Henry Leslie Choir from 1855 to 1880, and briefly principal of the National College of Music; and Charlotte Sainton-Dolby, a singer, composer, and teacher, former student at the Royal Academy of Music, a favorite of Mendelssohn, and head of her own Vocal Academy after 1872. Catharine’s voice teachers reflected Lydia’s musical sophistication as well as Catharine’s abilities. The Cambridge daughters had musical instruction that, although not by famous teachers, had substance and depth. The predictable voice and piano lessons were only part of a systematic schedule of musical training that included harmony and composition.<sup>36</sup>

Clearly music constituted an important part of these women’s lives. Concerts, operas, and private musical evenings made for a rich musical environment. Their training enabled them to appreciate the performances of Sir Charles Santley, Adelina Patti, Joseph Joachim, Sims Reeves, Zelia Trebelli, and others they heard in the private musical evenings and public concerts of mid-Victorian London. Catharine judged a performance of *Il Puritani* to be “*first rate*” but thought “Mme Reboux sang *dreadfully*” at a musical afternoon.<sup>37</sup> The musical and artistic education that the Paget women received, then, sustains the notion that these Victorian women were not mere dilettantes.

THE EDUCATION OF UPPER-MIDDLE-CLASS WOMEN, historians have assumed, was designed to make them “marriageable,” a matter of “man-trapping proficiency.”<sup>38</sup> The angel’s education prepared her for home life, and she had no need for abstract subjects or deep learning. But again the Paget women’s educational experience

<sup>34</sup> James Paget, *Memoirs and Letters*, 255; Corder, *History of the Royal Academy of Music from 1822 to 1922*, 40, 45; and Lydia North to James Paget, [November 16, 1838], WIHM, Paget MS. 64.

<sup>35</sup> Lydia North to James Paget, December 24, 1836, WIHM, Paget MS. 12; James Paget to Lydia North, January 4, 1837, *ibid.* 14; Lydia North to James Paget, February 3, 1837, *ibid.* 17; Stephen Paget, memoir, pt. 5, “October 5th, 1925,” 35–36, 41; and J. H. Newman to Lady Paget, January 9, 1879, Bodl. Lib., MS. Autogr. b. 13, ff. 378–79.

<sup>36</sup> Catharine Paget, diary, February 24, 28, March 10, 14, 21, April 4, June 2, July 13, 1870; and Rose Paget, diary, January 11, 14, December 15, 18, 1874, February 8, 1875.

<sup>37</sup> Catharine Paget, diary, July 11, June 10, 1870. Also see *ibid.*, February 19, March 24, June 6, 1870. Her diary indicates that she went to concerts two or three times a week.

<sup>38</sup> Gorham, *Victorian Girl*, 165; and Holcombe, *Victorian Ladies at Work*, 24. Also see Phyllis Stock, *Better than Rubies: A History of Women’s Education* (New York, 1978), 127, 176; and Murray, *Strong-Minded Women*, 195, 197.

does not fit the model. In language and science, as well as the arts, their studies illustrate the potential depth of Victorian female education.

Language training for the Paget women included more than a decorative smattering of French. While her fiancé spent a term studying in Paris in the 1830s, Lydia North learned French at home. The Cambridge girls in the 1870s took French lessons three times a week. They also studied German, and Maud and Violet lived in Dresden for a year.<sup>39</sup> Their object and achievement was a firm mastery of these languages. Catharine Paget had a good command of both French and German. Brother Francis (Frank), a Christ Church don, sought her help as a tutor. "I wonder whether you would read some German with me . . . this autumn. If so, would you mind our trying [J. A. W.] Neander's *Church History*? I'm afraid I shall only read it very slowly, but I think it's the best way to begin on a reasonable book." Catharine also studied Italian, translated German *Lieder* into English, and wrote letters in French. T. H. Huxley, a family friend, asked her assistance in translating scientific materials. When they finished the work in early 1870, Catharine was proud that Huxley was "sending our translation not to 'Nature' but to 'Macmillan.'" <sup>40</sup>

Most of the Paget women had some command of classical languages as well. Lydia and Clara knew Latin and taught it to their sons and daughters. W. G. Rutherford recognized the erudition of Lydia's youngest daughter, Mary, by calling her a "Latinist," and Sir Alfred Milner sent her long quotations in Greek.<sup>41</sup> In Cambridge, faculty daughters organized a class in Greek, and, like young men of the time, the Paget women displayed their classical learning by peppering their letters with Greek phrases.<sup>42</sup> When home, Frank tutored Catharine in Greek, and, when away, he advised her by letter. "I am sorry you have begun with the New Testament in your Greek studies: for the English translation is a thousand times more charming than the original. I will bring you the *Phaedo* of Plato when I come home, which, with the aid of a translation, you will read quite as easily as the New Testament, and I think with far more pleasure." "Don't you think it would be well," he asked, "if you always wrote to me in Greek, I to you in French? whereby we should mutually improve."<sup>43</sup>

<sup>39</sup> Lydia North to James Paget, February 6, [1837], WIHM, Paget MS. 19; and Rose Paget, diary, January 21, 1875, February 14, April 29, 1876. Rose's brother Charles was allowed to join the girls' class.

<sup>40</sup> Francis Paget to Catharine Paget, August 2, 1874, as quoted in Paget and Crum, *Francis Paget*, 35; and Catharine Paget, diary, January 11, July 12, November 28, January 31, 1870. I have been unable to locate the work on which Catharine Paget and T. H. Huxley collaborated. I suspect that gentlemen often served as translators for the scientific or professional work of fathers, husbands, or friends. Also see Catharine Paget, diary, October 31, November 14, 1870. Regarding Mrs. T. H. Huxley's role in Huxley's work, see Leonard Huxley, *Life and Letters of Thomas Henry Huxley*, 1 (London, 1900): 301.

<sup>41</sup> Clara Paget to Rose Paget, April 22, [1878?], Thomson Papers; W. G. Rutherford to [Mary] Paget, November 1, 1893, Bodl. Lib., MS. Autogr. b. 13, f. 209; and Sir Alfred Milner to [Mary] Paget, June 30, 1896, Bodl. Lib., MS. Autogr. b. 14, f. 229. Also see Stephen Paget, memoir, pt. 1, "Harewood Place," 14.

<sup>42</sup> Rose Paget, diary, October 16, 1875; Francis Paget to Catharine Paget, n.d., as quoted in Paget and Crum, *Francis Paget*, 18–19; and Maud Paget to Rose Paget, n.d. [1878–79], Thomson Papers. Mr. Lewis of Corpus Christi taught the Greek class, and Elizabeth Cookson joined the group. For other examples of girls studying the classical languages, see Emily Pilkington to Rose Paget, July 5, 1880, Thomson Papers; and Gorham, *Victorian Girl*, 26, 130. Helen Heinemann described women who had a classical education before the Victorian period; Heinemann, *Restless Angels: The Friendship of Six Victorian Women* (Athens, Ohio, 1983), 3, 10.

<sup>43</sup> Catharine Paget, diary, January 18, 1870; Francis Paget to Catharine Paget, n.d. [1870–72], as quoted in Paget and Crum, *Francis Paget*, 26. But see the stereotype of sister-brother relations in Dyhouse, *Girls Growing Up*, 14, 15; and Gorham, *Victorian Girl*, 155, 164.

The girls also studied arithmetic, algebra, and basic science.<sup>44</sup> They followed individual paths and read extensively in whatever interested them. Rose enjoyed geology and botany, which her sister found unpalatable. As Maud told her, “I have finished your odious little book on Botany & never was so confused in my life!” Maud did better with more abstract subjects. “Your book of logic is very good,” she told Rose in June 1880. “I feel my mind much enlarged already by its perusal.” By the end of the month she had read four books on logic.<sup>45</sup>

Rose Paget’s interest in science led her to mathematics and into the laboratory. The physicist Lord Rayleigh described her experience: “feeling the need of intellectual food more satisfying than French and German she gained a fair acquaintance with elementary mathematics.” She began attending lectures and demonstrations at the Cavendish Laboratory in 1887, and in 1888 she moved on to the advanced demonstrations presented by J. J. Thomson, professor of physics. On October 15, 1888, Thomson wrote to tell her, “I think I have found a subject which you could work at with advantage,” and Rose began research in the Cavendish Laboratory, studying “the stationary vibrations of soap films at audible frequencies.” Thomson explained the project to her, provided her with the necessary laboratory apparatus, and lent her reading materials. Rose studied physics for over two years.<sup>46</sup>

No strict line divides the Paget women’s education from the rest of the activities of their youth and adult lives. Their education was useful and relevant in much the same way that a gentleman’s was—incidental rather than systematic, in broad cultural terms more than in merely practical ways. It was liberal, not narrowly functional. They employed it in teaching their children, boys and girls alike, and may have adorned their drawing rooms with their paintings and music. Their intellectual pursuits were as intimate a part of their lives as their needlework and their collections of shells, old china, and autographs of eminent Victorians.<sup>47</sup>

The Paget women’s education, literacy, and learning bore fruit beyond the cultivated life of the family when they put their work and thoughts into print. Historians know of the women novelists, essayists, and polemicists who took up writing to make a living or to campaign for reform. Writing for publication was not, however, the preserve of exceptional women—the Harriet Martineaus and George Eliots of the age. Ordinary women, too, put pen to paper and published what they wrote. The Paget women wrote, not fiction but other sorts of works. Although a clergyman’s daughter, Clara cared less about religion than about Welsh antiquities. She spent many months of the year in north Wales after she and George built a country house there in the early 1870s. During her long stays, and perhaps with the

<sup>44</sup> For school curricula in this period, see Stock, *Better than Rubies*, 174, 176, 182; Holcombe, *Victorian Ladies*, 24–25; and Gorham, *Victorian Girl*, 26, 139.

<sup>45</sup> Maud Paget to Rose Paget, July 13, 1880, Thomson Papers; Rose Paget, diary, March 23, 1877; and Maud Paget to Rose Paget, June 23, June 22, 1880, Thomson Papers.

<sup>46</sup> Rayleigh, *J. J. Thomson*, 34, 275; and J. J. Thomson to Rose Paget, October 15, 1888, as quoted in Thomson, *J. J. Thomson*, 77. Eleanor Balfour expressed a similar interest in mathematics and physics at about this same period; Ethel Sidgwick, *Mrs. Henry Sidgwick: A Memoir* (London, 1938), 9, 21, 71–72, 77, 103; and Rayleigh, *J. J. Thomson*, 34. Rose married Thomson in 1890. He later won the Nobel Prize in physics, as did their son George.

<sup>47</sup> Paget and Crum, *Francis Paget*, 5; James Paget, *Memoirs and Letters*, 7–8; and Catharine Paget, diary, February 25, March 1, 16, 1870.

aid of the university library in Cambridge, she carried out research that led to the private publication of pamphlets on Welsh prehistory, Carnarvonshire forts, and Norse mythology. Elma, as the wife of a clergyman, published works related to her role: a handbook for the conduct of mothers' meetings, a children's biography of Bishop Patteson, and a pamphlet entitled *In Praise of Virginity*, which endorsed holy orders for single women as an avenue to God's service.<sup>48</sup> Given her artistic work and her family's connection with the painter, Elise Paget quite fittingly wrote an article on "Old Crome" for an art magazine. Mary Paget, Lydia and James's spinster daughter, took a great interest in music and in the 1890s published a series of articles in the literary magazine *Temple Bar* on musicians—Henry Purcell, Henry Lawes, John Bull, and John Arne. Meanwhile, in Cambridge, Clara's daughter Rose turned her skills to poetry. She asked sister Maud and brother Edmund to look over her poems, and Edmund encouraged her to seek a publisher. In at least one case she seems to have succeeded, for a poem entitled "Aber Waterfall" appeared in *Temple Bar* in 1880, and it bears both the stylistic and geographical marks of Rose's authorship.<sup>49</sup>

Christianity—as learning, culture, and commitment—also shaped these women's activities. Lydia taught in a Sunday school and regularly visited the poor. A generation later Catharine took time in a very busy social life to visit the poor in her district. Under the auspices of her parish church, she became a volunteer teacher at the Burlington Charity School for Girls, work she particularly enjoyed. She went to the school every week to teach geography and arithmetic.<sup>50</sup> Christian socialism and the settlement-house movement led some of the Paget women, like the men of the family, into mission work in London's east end. In the 1880s, Catharine's aunt Kate, by then in her late fifties, brought "wisdom and devotion" to her work in the Poplar district of east London, where her nephew Luke led Christ Church's mission. Three decades later, Catharine, a widow in her sixties, worked among the poor

<sup>48</sup> Clara Paget, *Extracts from "The Kalevala,"* trans. J. M. Crawford (Cambridge, 1892), *King Bele of the Sogn District, Norway, and Jarl Angantyr of the Orkney Islands* (Cambridge, 1894), *The Northmen in Wales* (Cambridge, 1896), and *Some Ancient Stone Forts in Carnarvonshire* (Cambridge, 1896). Elma K. Paget, *The Story of Bishop Patteson*, Children's Heroes Series, vol. 13 (London, 1907), *The Woman's Part* (London, 1914), *In Praise of Virginity*, Marriage and Morality, no. 4 (London, 1916), *Studies and Discussions for the Women's Fellowship and Reformed Mothers' Meeting* (London, 1918), and *Henry Luke Paget: Portrait and Frame* (London, 1939). Elma K. Paget also edited *New Methods in the Mothers' Meeting* (London, 1915).

<sup>49</sup> Elise Paget, "Old Crome," *The Magazine of Art*, 5 (1882): 221–26. [Mary Maud Paget], "Dr. Arne," *Temple Bar*, 117 (1899): 111–27, "Henry Purcell," *ibid.*, 107 (1896): 593–603, "Henry Lawes," *ibid.*, 109 (1896): 24–33, and "John Bull," *ibid.*, 111 (1897): 398–407. Edmund Paget to Rose Paget, March 19, March 22, March 28, 1879, Thomson Papers; [Rose Paget], "Aber Waterfall," *Temple Bar*, 58 (1880): 388. Aber Waterfall was a common sight on summer walks in Wales. See, for example, Clara Paget to Rose Paget, June 15, [1880], Thomson Papers. For writings probably by Catharine Paget, see C. P., "The Pleasures of Hotel-Bills, By a Traveller," *Macmillan's Magazine*, 23 (1870): 159–60, and C. P., "The Traveller's Calendar," *ibid.*, 28 (1873): 184–92. Also see the memoir by Catharine Thompson and Stephen Paget in H. L. Thompson, *Four Biographical Sermons on John Wesley and Others* (London, 1905).

<sup>50</sup> Lydia North to James Paget, December 24, 1836, WIHM, Paget MS. 12. Catharine Paget, diary, February and June 1870. Also see *ibid.*, October 10, 11, 15, 1870. The archives of the Burlington School give no clue to the existence of volunteer teachers there; Burlington School, London, Minutes of the Trustees, 1870–75, Burlington Danes School MSS. My thanks to Mrs. E. Moore, former head mistress of the school, for access to the Victorian records. On district visiting, see Anne Summers, "A Home from Home—Women's Philanthropic Work in the Nineteenth Century," in Sandra Burman, ed., *Fit Work for Women* (New York, 1970), 33–63. F. K. Prochaska thought "slumming" or "keep[ing] up with the Joneses" motivated such district visiting; see Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1980), 107, 108.

under the auspices of the mission established by Magdalene College in east London, where her son James was also active. Violet Paget Roy served as lady superintendent of St. Saviour's Homes, established by the National Association for Promoting the Welfare of the Feeble Minded, and Mary Paget gave her name, time, and money to the work of the Factory Girls' Country Holiday Fund. In these charities the Paget women had to confront the bitter facts of life for the poor—the "verminous" factory girls, the sexual temptations of working-class life, and the hopeless cruelties of the slum streets.<sup>51</sup>

The Paget women were active, but they neither had careers nor seemed to regret the lack of them. They often involved themselves, however, in the careers of the men in their families, and no strict demarcations of roles kept these women at home and out of family professional activities. Lydia contemplated going to her brother's parish to help him with record keeping while his curate was away. She also engaged in a bit of family politicking, canvassing the governors of St. Bartholomew's Hospital when her brother Isaac sought a post as chaplain there. From the beginning of her engagement to the young surgeon, she discussed his medical cases with him. Rose, keeping house in Cambridge while her mother and physician father were away, found herself medicating the servants and doling out both medicine and advice to his patients on his instructions. As the wife of the bishop of Chester, Elma Paget often represented her husband at committee meetings, and they worked as a team in managing the affairs of the diocese.<sup>52</sup> Some of the Paget women found more gratification in politics than they did in charity and religion. Early Victorian Yarmouth was a thoroughly political town, and Betsy was, her son recalled, "ready to do . . . more than her share in politics, as a thorough Tory with Mr. Pitt for her hero." Clara also became involved in public causes. When the water supply in her Welsh village was threatened by a greedy property owner, she battled her neighbor, Major Molesworth, on behalf of the local poor, took the matter to local authorities, and mobilized a policeman to enforce the law.<sup>53</sup>

The Paget women enjoyed many options in their education and activities. They could study what they wanted, limit their activities if they wished to family and friends, or turn to public affairs, whether in charities, politics, family profession, or the arts. Most important, their lives show that female education could be serious and thorough. In this respect they differed little from the leisured gentlemen who

<sup>51</sup> Stephen Paget, memoir, pt. 2, "Pinner," 14; James M. Thompson, diary, October 7, 1902, and following entries, Bodl. Lib., MS. Eng. Lett. d. 182; Violet Paget Roy to George P. Thomson, May 2, 1898, Thomson Papers; *Herbert Fry's Royal Guide to the London Charities for 1910* (London, 1910), 98–99; "Miss [Mary] Paget" obituary, *The Times* (London), June 25, 1945, p. 6; Catharine Paget, diary, January 14, 1871; Elma K. Paget, *New Methods*, 16; and Henrietta Barnett, *Canon Barnett: His Life, Work, and Friends*, 1 (London, 1918): 123. Also see Melvin Richter, *The Politics of Conscience: T. H. Green and His Age* (London, 1964).

<sup>52</sup> Lydia North to James Paget, February 11, 1837, February 14, 23, 1839, August 10, 1840, WIHM, Paget MSS. 22, 86, 87, 113; Clara Paget to Rose Paget, April 7, [n.y.]; George Edward Paget to Rose Paget, July 1, 1880, Thomson Papers; and Cheshire Record Office, Minutes of the Chester Diocesan Association for the Promotion of Social Purity, October 26, 1923, September 28, October 24, 1924, April 30, 1926, November 14, 1927. Leonore Davidoff saw social connection as the upper-middle-class woman's role; Davidoff, *The Best Circles: Women and Society in Victorian England* (London, 1973), esp. 16–17. The evidence here suggests something more substantive. On the role of the prime minister's wife, see Esther Shkolnik, "Petticoat Power: The Political Influence of Mrs. Gladstone," *The Historian*, 42 (1980): 631–47.

<sup>53</sup> James Paget, *Memoirs and Letters*, 8; and Rose Paget, diary, April 14, 1874.

pursued a liberal education in philosophy or biology with no need to make a profession or career of such interests. Similarly, their lives demonstrate that the education of Victorian gentlewomen was not necessarily oriented toward the marriage market. If typical, the experience of the Paget women suggests that a fine education, whether formally or informally obtained, was part of the cultural equipage of the new urban gentry of both sexes.

ANOTHER COMMON ASSUMPTION about Victorian womanhood is that the “angel in the house” had no contact with money and did not care for sex. To earn money, some believe, was beneath her dignity and even declassified her.<sup>54</sup> Not one of the Paget women had to earn her own living; none had any financial needs not met by the earnings of a father, husband, or brother. The two spinster daughters of Samuel and Betsy Paget were worst off because of their father’s financial collapse, but even they did not have to earn a living. They survived with the support of brothers Alfred, George, and James.<sup>55</sup> The experiences of other Paget women suggest, nevertheless, that the received wisdom needs reassessment.

Although Lydia North belonged to a prosperous family, she gave piano lessons to the children of family friends in the 1830s. What began as an excuse for a day out of town for the sake of her health soon became a source of income and pleasure. She enjoyed the work enormously. “The esteem, the parental affection . . . combined with . . . respect” from her employers brought her “almost uninterrupted enjoyment.” She also enjoyed the money. On her way to a lesson, “she used to buy a twopenny apple of the old woman who kept an apple stall near the house” and “munch it in the streets.” Catharine, Lydia’s daughter, had analogous experiences in the mid-Victorian years. Her father allowed her some £3 a quarter while she was single and living at home in the 1870s, in part perhaps as payment for the lessons she gave to little Mary. In addition, she received a quarterly sum of £10 or £11 from an unspecified source (perhaps stocks in her name). In all she had some £50 or £60 a year to spend as she wished. She did not seem to consider such income as earned. Payment from *Macmillan’s* qualified as true income. In March 1870, she noted, “I came home to the *delight* of finding a cheque for £4 from Macmillan. The first money I have ever *earned!*” Even her accounting sheets reflect her excitement; there, too, she reported the £4 as “*Earned.*” She did not need this money for the necessities of life but spent it on church offerings, ribbons, shoes, and gifts. In the process she learned how to keep financial accounts and enjoyed the recognition that came with work for pay.<sup>56</sup>

The family’s reaction to women’s earnings was somewhat mixed. “Dearest papa,” Lydia said, “ever considered it much for the happiness of young people that they should be actively employed.” The Reverend North’s own lost musical career must

<sup>54</sup> See, for example, M. Jeanne Peterson, “The Victorian Governess: Status Incongruence in Family and Society,” *Victorian Studies*, 13 (1970): 9–10.

<sup>55</sup> Stephen Paget, memoir, pt. 2, “Pinner,” 1–2.

<sup>56</sup> Lydia North to James Paget, [November 16, 1838], WIHM, Paget MS. 64; Stephen Paget, memoir, pt. 3, “My Mother’s People,” 2; Elma K. Paget, *Henry Luke Paget*, 39; Catharine Paget, diary, unnumbered ledger section, and March 28, 1870. For more of Catharine’s earnings, see her diary, unnumbered ledger section, December 1870.

have given him a special interest in his daughter's venture. Neither her mother nor her sisters found fault in her earning. Only her brother-in-law, the tea merchant and banker Richard Twining, was somewhat censorious in the matter. But Twining was "a hard, dry, inexorable, laughterless man," and he always found much to disapprove.<sup>57</sup> Lydia's employers remained her friends throughout life. Most important, of course, was the attitude of Lydia's future husband. When she and James Paget decided to marry, she worried that he might disapprove of her work. When she confessed to having done something "regarded by the world as lowering," James's response left her feeling that her anxiety had been "absurd."<sup>58</sup> If there was any reaction to Catharine's earnings a generation later, it is nowhere recorded. But it is also unlikely, for she worked closely with her father on his writing and correspondence with editors. He could not have disapproved of her own efforts or she would have stopped. The Paget women did not often earn money, but, when they did, they were neither shamed nor declassified.

The Paget women were also involved in decisions concerning the administration of family money throughout their adult lives. Included were both mundane household matters that were standard for middle-class women and major responsibilities related to family finance. In Great Yarmouth, Betsy Paget "took part," her son James said, "even a leading and decisive part, in all grave business-questions."<sup>59</sup> In a family that faced a decade of serious financial strain, the issue was important. The subject of money came up between Lydia and James from the very beginning of their relationship, and their financial affairs were characterized by candor and equality. Financially, the pair was mismatched—the Norths had wealth, while the Pagets had severe financial problems. The discrepancy might have been a source of tension, but it was not. As in all things, James, the impoverished medical student, was punctilious about money, but not hypersensitive. In the winter of 1837 the couple exchanged long letters between London and Paris (where James took a brief course). When little money matters arose, like postage due on his letters to her, James suggested that Lydia "put it [the postage] down to my account with you, in which you have already two or three items against me. . . . It is but fair that we should enjoy our pleasure at equal expense." He went on to note that "there will be a considerable amount of expenditure of this kind before we can have a common purse, and till then let our business be fairly transacted—after that we can make some mutual arrangement."<sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup> Lydia North to James Paget, [November 16, 1838], WIHM, Paget MS. 64; Isaac North, *Henry North*, 34; and Stephen Paget, memoir, pt. 3, "My Mother's People," 8. Much later, Lydia's son Stephen and her daughter-in-law Elma raised doubts about Rev. North's attitude. See Stephen Paget, memoir, pt. 3, "My Mother's People," 1–2; and Elma K. Paget, *Henry Luke Paget*, 39. This case illustrates how the children of the Victorians might have created much of the mythology about their parents.

<sup>58</sup> Lydia North to James Paget, [November 16, 1838], and [November 17, 1838?], WIHM, Paget MSS. 64, 65. The couple discussed the matter face to face, and, as a result, there is no record of what James thought except her second letter to him. Later in their engagement Lydia regretted that she was no longer earning money, when her income could have reduced the burden James had to carry; Lydia North to James Paget, October 9, 1839, *ibid.* 100.

<sup>59</sup> James Paget, *Memoirs and Letters*, 8.

<sup>60</sup> James Paget to Lydia North, February 5, 1837, WIHM, Paget MS. 18. For other examples of their discussion of money, see Lydia North to James Paget, March 17, 1843, *ibid.* 134; and James Paget to Lydia North, July 23, 27, 1840, *ibid.* 104, 105.

After their marriage Lydia North Paget handled ordinary family finances. James made regular disbursements "To Lydia." Their son Stephen recalled, "One morning a week, [my brother] Luke and I used to go with my Mother 'to pay the bills.' The shops were Lidstone's, Holland's, Bradley's, Luckie's—these were the butcher, grocer, greengrocer, and poulterer: and a fishmonger's in Marylebone Lane." Later Lydia relied on her daughter Catharine to handle some of these accounts. In Cambridge, Clara's daughters also played a regular role in domestic financial affairs. While mama was in Wales for the summer, either Maud or Rose stayed in Cambridge and acted as housekeeper and intermediary in money matters between her parents. One particularly vexing June (probably in the late 1870s or early 1880s) Maud wrote from Cambridge to her sister in Wales, asking for information on a bill from a Cambridge tradesman. "Oh, deary me! this horrible housekeeping, here's Papa haranguing on the 'Tea Bill' again & a nice little lump is to be paid at Church's next week." Other bills also needed explaining, and she urged Rose, "Pray enlighten me quick before we are reduced to £ a week."<sup>61</sup>

Wills offer the most systematic information regarding women's roles in family finances. In a few cases the Paget men left women out of the management of their estates. Their reasons were not always obvious. When Sir James Paget wrote his will in the late 1890s, his wife Lydia was dead, and his younger daughter Mary may have been losing her sight. His elder daughter Catharine might have been a suitable choice as executor, but he passed over both daughters to name his son-in-law, the Reverend H. L. Thompson, his eldest son John, the barrister, and his former student and professional associate Sir Thomas Smith to administer his £74,861 estate.<sup>62</sup> In the 1840s Betsy's son, bachelor Charles Paget, named his father, Samuel, as his executor. When making his will Charles also had a choice of several competent brothers, an ailing mother, and two spinster sisters, one over forty, the other not yet eighteen. His choice of his father may reflect no more than their existing business partnership; it need not, certainly, imply a rejection of female competence in money matters. Sometimes passing over the wife as executrix may signal strained relations between husband and wife or between the husband and the wife's family. Tensions with in-laws seem to account for Edmund Paget's choice of his solicitor to administer his estate of £6,137. Sir George Paget's decision in 1892 to leave the management of his £21,939 estate to his sons, but to leave in his wife Clara's hands the power to appoint new trustees, is difficult to assess. Perhaps he wanted to leave the day-to-day details to the younger members of the family, while leaving major power in the hands of his wife. But he did exclude all his daughters from involvement in the administration of his estate. Lydia's eldest son, Sir John Paget, barrister and expert on banking law, was the only Paget to leave his £6,286 in

<sup>61</sup> Sir James Paget, *Visiting Lists, 1856–96*, Royal College of Surgeons Library. (Because the entries are so cramped and unsystematic, more exact details of the Pagets' domestic financial arrangements are impossible to obtain.) Stephen Paget, memoirs, pt. 1, "Harewood Place," 39; Catharine Paget, diary, January 19, February 22, 1870; and Maud Paget to Rose Paget, June 25, [n.y.], Thomson Papers. My special thanks to Mr. Eustace Cornelius, librarian of the Royal College of Surgeons, for his help in this project from its beginnings.

<sup>62</sup> Prerogative Court of Canterbury, *Calendar of the Grants of Probate and Letters of Administration Made in the Probate Registers of the High Court of Justice in England . . . , 1900*, Principal Registry of the Family Division, Somerset House [hereafter, P.C.C., *Calendar*], s.v. Sir James Paget. In this and all references, estate values are rounded off to the nearest pound.

the hands of bankers. His wife had predeceased him, but he left two adult sons and two adult daughters without responsibility in his affairs. Perhaps his will reflects confidence in bankers; perhaps it reveals his relations with all his children.<sup>63</sup>

These five cases aside, the Paget women figure largely in the management of family property. Indeed, when it was possible to do so, Paget family men almost always designated women to administer their estates. Choice of an executrix did not depend on the size of the estate. Henry Luke Paget, bishop of Chester, named his wife Elma and son Paul executors of the small personalty of £497 he left in 1937. At the other extreme was Rose's husband, J. J. Thomson, who in 1940 named daughter Joan as well as son George executors of his £82,601 estate. In 1862 the Reverend Alfred Paget left his £1,500 estate to his spinster sister Katherine (aged thirty-seven), although he might have appointed one of several responsible brothers. Widower Francis Paget, bishop of Oxford, named his sister-in-law Mary Church executrix of his £15,226 estate. Church had taken over the care of his children after Helen Church Paget's death in 1901. Soon after Catharine Paget married the Reverend H. L. Thompson in 1877, he named her executrix of his estate. In 1905 he left an estate valued at £4,164. Catharine's youngest brother Stephen designated his wife Eleanor for this task; on his death in 1926 the estate was valued at £6,588. With a few possible exceptions the Paget wills suggest confidence in the abilities of the family women either to assume or, in some cases, to continue the administration of family financial affairs.<sup>64</sup> Money and its management were not alien to them, and the Pagets, men and women alike, expected women of the family to be involved in family finances throughout their adult lives.

The only subject thought to be more fraught with tension and secrecy than money in the Victorian code of morals and mores was sex. Steven Marcus's influential *The Other Victorians* argues that Victorians were "alienated" from their own physical existence. If this was true of Victorians generally, it was particularly true of the Victorian lady. On this point Marcus, and many others since, quoted Dr. William Acton, who claimed that "the majority of women (happily for society) are not very much troubled with sexual feelings of any kind." Of late, Peter Gay challenged this image of sexless Victorian bourgeois womanhood in Europe and America, but he drew most of his cases from Germany and the United States. A recent study by Edward Shorter concentrated on women's health problems—what women suffered in the lifelong trial of being female.<sup>65</sup> To look only at sexual

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 1844, s.v. Charles Paget; *ibid.*, 1929, s.v. George Edmund Paget; *ibid.*, 1892, s.v. Sir George Edward Paget, Kt.; *ibid.*, 1938, s.v. Sir John R. Paget, Bart.; and Rose Paget, diary, August 11, 14, 20, 29, 1877.

<sup>64</sup> P.C.C., *Calendar*, 1937, s.v. Henry Luke Paget; *ibid.*, 1940, s.v. Sir Joseph J. Thomson, Kt.; *ibid.*, 1862, s.v. Alfred T. Paget; *ibid.*, 1926, s.v. Stephen Paget. Thomson's wife was eighty years old when he died. Francis Paget's will is recorded under his title, Oxford, Bishop of. For other instances of women administrators of men's estates, with dates of probate and estate values, see *ibid.*, 1868, Frederick Paget to Sarah Lucy Paget (under £800); *ibid.*, 1927, Charles Edward Paget to Ethel Paget (£8,687); *ibid.*, 1927, Alfred J. Meyrick Paget to Christobel Paget (£1,383); and *ibid.*, 1928, Hans Gadow to Clara Maud Gadow (£2,703). Oddly enough, the women of the family nearly universally chose male executors, regardless of whether there were women at hand to do the work.

<sup>65</sup> Marcus, *The Other Victorians: A Study of Sexuality and Pornography in Mid-Nineteenth-Century England* (New York, 1964), 18, 21; Acton, *Functions and Disorders of the Reproductive Organs*, 162; Gay, *The Education of the Senses* (Oxford, 1984); and Shorter, *The History of Women's Bodies* (New York, 1983). For more on the American perspective, see Carl Degler, "What Ought To Be and What Was," 1467–90; and Hellerstein *et al.*, *Victorian Women*, 166–67, 174–75.

function or at female disease is not enough; Victorian sexuality needs to be seen as part of a larger discussion on women's physical lives, their attitudes toward their bodies, and their relationships, both physical and emotional, with men.

The Paget women were, in the first place, energetic and active—as children, as adolescents, and as women, both before and after childbirth. Taking a walk—not a slow stroll—was a basic form of exercise in every generation. Lydia went for walks in London, along the quayside in Great Yarmouth, and around St. Mary's on her holiday in the Isles of Scilly. The Cambridge girls, vacationing in Wales, also took long walks. Maud walked the six miles from Penmaenmawr to Conway and back one autumn day in 1879. Hiking and climbing also constituted a regular part of the Paget women's outdoor lives. In the summer of 1870 James and Lydia took a house in Wales, and Catherine spent much of her summer there. She and her companions had more than one “splendid scrambling walk” in the hilly Welsh countryside. A decade later Maud was in North Wales at her parents' house in Penmaenmawr with a guest, Edith Tait, daughter of the archbishop of Canterbury. Both were climbers. Maud judged that Edith was “quite equal to me in energy, &c.” Maud and her party hiked up Mt. Snowdon (3,500 feet) in less than two hours in the rain. Climbing was not reserved for the young. On frequent trips to Wales, Clara (now Lady Paget and forty-five to fifty years of age) took pleasure in hours-long hikes in the mountains; visitors of both sexes joined her on these vigorous expeditions.<sup>66</sup>

Other summer activities included horseback-riding and swimming. In her twenties, Lydia went horseback-riding with sister Sarah during a holiday in the Isles of Scilly. Sarah was not fond of riding, and Lydia paced herself to her sister's lower level of skill. At other times she rode with more vigor, and her brother Isaac called Lydia “Minshi the Son of Jehu.” Lydia reported all this to her fiancé with amusement and a certain glee. “So you see dear, what a very Amazonian young lady I am become.” Lydia also enjoyed driving a pony chaise, but her brother scolded her for driving too fast. In 1870 Catharine, her younger sister Mary, and their friend Carrie Gull enjoyed a “capital bathe in a good rough sea.” Their mother Lydia, aged fifty-five, joined them in the surf. In the winter, skating attracted the young people, and sedate decorum was not the order of the day on the ice, any more than on horseback. At age twenty-four, Catharine learned to ice skate. “I had lots of tumbles but enjoyed it all.”<sup>67</sup> The Paget women were, in short, generally active and often athletic.

<sup>66</sup> Lydia North to James Paget, December 24, 1836, WIHM, Paget MS. 12; Maud Paget to Rose Paget, September 25, 1879, Thomson Papers; Catharine Paget, diary, August 12, 24, 25, 1870; Maud Paget to Rose Paget, June 26, 1880, June 24, [1880], Thomson Papers; Rose Paget, diary, July 29, August 10, 1875, July 11, 27, August 9, 22, 1876. The highest peak in the Snowdon group is Moel-y-Wyddfa, which is 3,560 feet, but on some occasions they may have climbed the peak closest to their residence, Tal-y-fan, which is 2,001 feet. The athletic aristocratic woman has long been known to Victorian scholars, but less is known of the upper-middle-class woman's activities. Gorham found them vigorous; *Victorian Girl*, 94. But Paul Atkinson contrasted the “sickly” Victorian lady of the . . . upper-middle classes” with the new schemes for women's physical education in the 1880s; Atkinson, “Fitness, Feminism and Schooling,” in Delamont and Duffin, *The Nineteenth-Century Woman*, 92, 93.

<sup>67</sup> Catharine Paget, diary, August 15, 1870; Lydia North to James Paget, April 1, March 17, 1843, WIHM, Paget MSS. 138, 134; Catharine Paget, diary, January 29, 1870; and Maud Paget to Rose Paget, September 25, 1879, Thomson Papers. Also see Catharine Paget, diary, August 23, 26, 1870. Caroline Gull was the daughter of another medical eminence in London, Sir William Gull. Jehu was a king of Israel known for the fury of his chariot driving. By “Minshi,” Isaac presumably meant Nimshi, Jehu's grandfather. In Vienna, Ludmilla Paget

From what we can tell, most of the Paget women suffered from common minor ailments but not from the major gynecological disorders that could limit women's lives and pleasures. Catharine suffered from a "face sore and stiff" in July 1870, which was "not very bad." A month later she had an "unlucky toothache," probably the source of the difficulties in July. At other times she was out, about, active, which suggests that she usually enjoyed good health. Catharine's experience seems typical of the Paget women and their circle. Apart from common ailments—a cold, a toothache, an inflamed eye—their health was generally good. In middle life and after, the women suffered from disorders common to both sexes. Betsy, for example, seems to have suffered from a series of minor strokes late in life.<sup>68</sup>

The reproductive histories of the women of the family also suggest generally good health. Before 1870 most had large families, although none as large as Betsy's seventeen. After 1870 family size declined, presumably with the use of contraceptives. Two women in the family died in childbirth.<sup>69</sup> Menstruation seems to have been a problem for at least one woman in the family. Rose Paget suffered some discomfort, and, appropriately enough, consulted her father, a physician, for advice. "During your 'poorly' times," he told her, "rest yourself—lying, if convenient on a couch. At other times, when you are *not* poorly, you can take exercise and will be the better for it." Lydia had intermittent difficulties with ill temper and depression that suggest a cyclical problem related to ovulation and menstruation. Catharine Paget, too, may have suffered a bit from her menstrual cycle. She found herself (at intervals) feeling "dull" or low—perhaps describing what is now known as premenstrual syndrome—but she did not link her blue moods to her physiology.<sup>70</sup>

In the specific matter of sexual relations, the search for evidence becomes more difficult. The Paget family is typical in its relative silence in this matter. But there are hints in the record that the women of the family were sexually responsive, despite what Acton had to say. The Paget girls and women repeatedly expressed their awareness of, and interest in, men. Lydia and James got into a debate over the relative evils of card playing and dancing. Lydia argued for the lesser wickedness of dancing but admitted, "I fear I rather like dancing." She believed her taste for it was "in *some degree* innocent as it would give me equal pleasure to dance *alone* to good music, as to dance with the ordinary run of strangers one meets." She was aware that paired dancing, with its physical contact, might be a source of physical pleasure as well as a place for merely social flirtation. When Maud spotted a Mr. Bower at church she "nearly jumped." "Do you remember," she asked her sister Rose, the man "who used to play divinely on the fiddle at the Wed[nesday] Pops. 'Twas he—

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drove a coach and four horses, also at great speed, and eventually died of injuries sustained in a road accident. The horses bolted, but no one knows why. (Information courtesy of Dr. Oliver Paget, September 12, 1983.)

<sup>68</sup> Catharine Paget, diary, July 14, August 17, November 18, 22, 1870; and James Paget, *Memoirs and Letters*, 145–46.

<sup>69</sup> Banks, *Prosperity and Parenthood*, 5. Considering the timing, I guess that Frederick Paget's first and second wives, Elizabeth Rogers and Hester King, both died as a result of complications in childbirth.

<sup>70</sup> George E. Paget to Rose Paget, May 25, 1880, Thomson Papers; Lydia North to James Paget, [May 14, 1839], August 2, 1839, [February 2, 1841], WHM, Paget MSS. 88, 95, 120; and Catharine Paget, diary, February 3, 23, March 24, April 21, May 3, 1870.

'twas! he & no mistake." They found some men attractive; they teased each other when some particular young man caught their fancy. In London Catharine's social life brought her into contact with many attractive men—and she noticed them. H. P. Liddon, canon of St. Paul's Cathedral, especially fascinated her. "It is *grand* preaching," she exclaimed, "one long argument close & unanswerable, made attractive by his *delivery, voice & beautiful reverence.*"<sup>71</sup> His spiritual virtues, his rhetorical skills, and his person moved her to eloquence.

Flirtation and more serious sexual interaction were also part of the by-play between two engaged people. Lydia North was, at one level, a playfully flirtatious woman. "*How can you,*" she asked James, "*be so cruel as to endeavour to aggravate that miserable feeling of jealousy which you know is already so predominant in my disposition? . . . really I am quite shocked!!!*" Beneath the teasing, Lydia acknowledged herself as affectionate, loving, ardent. Even after a long engagement, this couple's affection for each other continued warm, and their expressions of it reveal only a more comfortable assurance of reciprocity. Lydia teased him, but beneath her play was provocation and challenge. She admitted to "a love so intense for an earthly object that I *dare* not indulge it but with some reference to the mercy of God."<sup>72</sup>

This couple's discussions about matters sexual contain nothing of the bluntness and baldness of late twentieth-century frankness, but they were neither coy nor foolishly circuitous. James, for example, found Paris shockingly irreligious. And he told his fiancée of "the most indecent sights in the open streets in broad day." He admitted that his views of "female delicacy" were considered "rather ultra" but insisted that the sort of "degradation" he saw in Paris only confirmed him in his views. Protesting that decent women should be protected from such sights, he nevertheless told Lydia about the French women whose appearance he found "almost disgusting," particularly because of "the rather loose mode of dress wh. they adopt, and wh. as I believe you know is singularly offensive in my eyes."<sup>73</sup>

During their long engagement in the 1830s the couple's relationship was physical as well as close. When the two were apart, they wrote to each other almost daily. James felt, he told her, "buoyant delight in thinking of you, and in remembering the enjoyment of those sweet privileges of love." He imagined, as he wrote, that they were together. "Kiss me, dearest," he wrote her, "and I will go on [with my letter]." And her answer, "Accept my ready and fervent compliance . . . now." They watched other couples and (not without some self-congratulation) noted that not all observed the same social decorum in matters of affection. James told Lydia what he had seen among friends at a party. "H. D. [Henrietta Dowson] quite astonished me

<sup>71</sup> Lydia North to James Paget, February 2, 1841, WIHM, Paget MS. 120; Maud Paget to Rose Paget, n.d. [1878?], Thomson Papers; Catharine Paget, diary, March 6, 13, 20, 27, April 3, 1870. For another example of Maud's interest, see Maud Paget to Rose Paget, n.d. [1878 or 1879], Thomson Papers. Corder indicated that the girls at the Royal Academy of Music flirted at an early age; *History of the Royal Academy of Music from 1822 to 1922*, 49. I suspect that Victorian girls had "crushes" on clergy the way girls in the 1940s and 1950s idolized movie actors and girls in the 1960s worshipped rock musicians.

<sup>72</sup> Lydia North to James Paget, December 30, 1836, October 9, 1839, WIHM, Paget MSS. 13, 100. Also see Lydia North to James Paget, March 25, April 1, 1843, *ibid.* 136, 138.

<sup>73</sup> James Paget to Lydia North, February 5, 1837, WIHM, Paget MS. 18.

by her daring. Entre nous Lydia do not be induced by any praises you may hear of her to imitate her. . . . That extreme and ardour of affection when openly exhibited is as displeasing to me as, when privately shown, it is delightful.”<sup>74</sup>

As a married couple Lydia and James shared a bedroom and a four-poster bed, even when prosperity allowed them more distance and individual privacy. They chose an upstairs bedroom that did not adjoin the sleeping quarters of any of the children, giving them added privacy as a couple. They knelt at the bedside to say their prayers together before retiring. Within the circle of the family, moreover, Lydia displayed a relaxed sensuality. Her son Stephen remembered a delicious scene from his childhood. In 1860, when Lydia was forty-five years old and pregnant with her sixth child, and Stephen was five years old, “my mother used to lie . . . [on the schoolroom sofa] and I used to ‘tickle her foot.’ . . . I believe my Mother really enjoyed it: and I was a most expert tickler: the forefinger of the left hand . . . lightly tracing away up and down and across foot and ankle, rarely and very lightly touching the sole: mostly the arch and the inner aspect of the stockinged foot. Sometimes I tickled her hand: but usually her foot.” Lydia’s capacity for sensuous self-indulgence may explain part of why James called her, after thirteen years of married life, “My own darling—my own sweet comfort-woman, my one dear companion.”<sup>75</sup> These scant clues about money and female physical experience point to the possibility that the financially fettered, physically inactive, and anaesthetic angel was not at all the norm of Victorian middle-class life. Perhaps, though, money and sex have less to do with the angel in the house than does the role of the Victorian woman as religious wife and loving mother.

THE GREATEST TEST OF THE ANGEL IN THE HOUSE as a model of Victorian upper-middle-class womanhood must be that of personality and character, for the angel was first and foremost the religious woman, the peacemaker, the comforter, and the submissive woman—submissive to father, perhaps to brothers, certainly to husband. Given the differentiation of sex roles in Victorian families, it is easy to assume that the closest social bonds were between mothers and daughters, on the one hand, and between fathers and sons, on the other. The Paget girls did not always, however, ally themselves with their mothers. Fathers played an important role in their daughters’ educational lives. Emotionally, too, mothers were sometimes less significant than fathers. Lydia North’s father was a silent and withdrawn man, and she spent much time in the company of mother and sisters. But the silent and

<sup>74</sup> James Paget to Lydia North, May 23, 1839, March 25, 1843; Lydia North to James Paget, April 1, 1843; James Paget to Lydia North, July 20, 1838, WIHM, Paget MSS. 89, 136, 138, 57. Henrietta Dowson was engaged to Lydia’s clergyman brother Jacob. For an unusually candid account of the intimacies of one couple, see Susan Chitty, *The Monk and The Beast: A Life of Charles Kingsley* (New York, 1975), 79–89, and illustrations. Lydia’s son Stephen began courting practices early; he kissed a girl “behind the schoolroom blind” at a children’s party when he was eleven or twelve years old (that is, in 1866 or 1867). Stephen Paget, memoir, pt. 1, “Harewood Place,” 17.

<sup>75</sup> Stephen Paget, memoir, pt. 1, “Harewood Place,” 30, 28–29; and James Paget to Lydia Paget, July 6, 1857, WIHM, Paget MS. 182. Stephen also tickled his aunt Sarah’s foot. The bedroom James and Lydia shared was not the nicest one upstairs. Stephen could never understand why his parents insisted on that room.

unsociable Rev. North, nevertheless, played an important role in Lydia's life; it was he who made sure that she had music lessons and encouraged her extensive development as a musician.<sup>76</sup>

Among the Cambridge Pagets, some daughters were close to their fathers and alienated from their mothers—a situation that did not always lead to family peace. One summer Rose sent her sister Maud some of her poetry, and Maud wrote back, "I read it to Mama. . . . [She] liked it *evidently very much* & seemed hurt that you never had read her any others." Maud advised Rose, "Whatever your ideas may be, it cannot hurt . . . for you to read [your poems] to Papa & Mama especially as it gives pleasure to both." Maud sympathized with her sister, however, for she, too, felt reticent about sharing her artistic and musical efforts with her mother Clara. "Your feelings in reading poetry to M[ama] cannot be much otherwise to mine in showing drawings & singing songs neither of which may be understood." Whatever they admitted publicly, Rose and Maud had a relationship to Clara that was less than placid. Truthfulness as well as obedience was the core of a daughter's Christian duty, and Lydia fell short of the mark in the matter of her engagement to James. When the young couple informed their families that they planned to marry, James's father raised serious objections on grounds of prudence. They appeared to accept Sam's judgment but made no change in their plans. During much of the eight years of their engagement, Lydia colluded with James in deceiving his family.<sup>77</sup>

The tensions of adolescence and young adulthood, arising at least partly from conflicts with parents, are reflected in the girls' emotional lives. Lydia North's imagination was captured by fierce storms, turbulent seas, and the prospect of violent death. In 1837 her father became dangerously ill, and, during his long recuperation that winter, Lydia, while alone one night, was seized by "a ruminating fit." "I thought & thought, & fancied for about 20 minutes, till I began to think if perchance I *had* let one spark fall on the carpet, & a fire was to be the consequence, & Papa in his state had to make his escape out of doors, what should I think of my carelessness." Her fantasy reveals a sense of guilt and ambivalence about her silent, authoritarian, and—in his illness—demanding father.<sup>78</sup>

In her mid-teens Rose Paget was attracted to newspaper accounts of violence. The "Ashantee war," a Welsh miners' strike, typhus, gunpowder explosions, and cyclones in India particularly caught her attention. She also dwelled on morbid events in the life of the family: the sudden death by stroke of her grandmother Fardell, the incarceration of her former governess in a German madhouse, and the suicide attempt of one of the Pagets' servants. Rose enjoyed seeing the spot called "Devil's Ditch," where her father and his coachmen escaped three men who "no doubt intended robbery & perhaps murder." Rose noted, "It was said that not long

<sup>76</sup> North, *Henry North*, 5–6, 10, 33–34; Lydia North to James Paget, February 6, 1837, [November 16, 1838], WIHM, Paget MSS. 19, 64. North's silence had, of course, its own power.

<sup>77</sup> Maud Paget to Rose Paget, n.d. [1880?], Thomson Papers; James Paget, *Memoirs and Letters*, 88–89, 90; Samuel Paget to Henry North, October 24, 27, 1836, WIHM, Paget MSS. 10, 11. Lydia also helped keep her brother's romance with Henrietta Dowson a secret from Mrs. Dowson; James Paget to Lydia North, January 4, 1837; Lydia North to James Paget, February 11, March 2, 1837, WIHM, Paget MSS. 14, 22, 25.

<sup>78</sup> Lydia North to James Paget, [August 17, 1840], February 6, 1837, WIHM, Paget MSS. 115, 19.

after, an old man was nearly murdered there, but it is probably untrue.” This well-behaved daughter of the Victorian professional classes, for all her poetry and filial piety, was fascinated by violence and death. While revealing deep ambivalences in the psyches of at least two Paget women, these experiences also show that they were not sheltered from the realities of violence, crime, and death. Nor were squeamishness and primness considered proper in a young woman. When Rose seemed sentimental or affected Maud scolded her for being “missish,” an epithet suggesting that swooning, helplessness, and sentimentality deserved ridicule, not admiration.<sup>79</sup>

Historians have suggested that Victorian girls regularly took a subordinate, even submissive, position in relation to brothers. The Paget females do not provide unvarying support for this view. In their middle years the two spinster sisters of James and George were financially dependent on their adored brothers and may also have been submissive to them. Lydia was close to her brothers. When Isaac married and went to live in the Isles of Scilly, she visited him and “was not quite happy” with what she saw. She worried about his health and “induced him to write” to her surgeon-fiancé for medical advice. “You would have smiled,” she told James, “to see me managing him.”<sup>80</sup> Catharine was particularly close to her brother Frank. He left home in 1869 first to study at public school and afterward at Christ Church, Oxford. Religious ritualism was much debated in this period, and Frank brought this and related theological issues home from Oxford to his parents’ breakfast table. “Lengthy family arguments” ensued, brother Stephen recalled. “Home-life at Harewood Place, so far as the sons and daughters were concerned, began to be . . . deeply committed to disputes on these lines.” Catharine’s reading and study enabled her to participate fully in these debates. Catharine and Frank had taught each other Greek, German, and French; they shared books and ideas—about politics, literature, religion, and philosophy. As a boy Frank had “made her his counsellor.” In fact, he called her his “sister-confessor.”<sup>81</sup> Frank looked up to Catharine—contrary to the angel stereotype.

The unmarried daughters of Betsy and Sam lived out their roles as sisters and spinster aunts. The elder, Aunt Patty (Martha), her nephew Stephen judged, was “not clever, not much of a reader, nor a wide thinker: old-fashioned always: rather narrow in her views, and censorious.” She was a bit timid and “London scared her,” but the London suburb of Pinner bored her. She kept a “nervous venomous” little terrier, and she too had her moments of venom. When speaking of someone of whom she disapproved—“Napoleon III, or Mrs. Gladstone, or [her sister-in-law] Aunt Clara”—Patty would say they “ought to be whipped.” Her nephew remembered how “she used to make the aspirate and the final d sting like a lash—‘ought to be WHIPT.’” On the surface Kate seemed different from her older sister Patty. She

<sup>79</sup> Rose Paget, diary, February 12, June 16, September 27, October 3, November 8, 1874, July 20, 31, August 30, 1874, May 17, 1875. Also see *ibid.*, August 17, 1874, April 17, 1875; Charles E. Paget to Rose Paget, May 19, 1878, Thomson Papers; and *Oxford English Dictionary*.

<sup>80</sup> Lydia North to James Paget, March 25, 1843, WIHM, Paget MS. 135. For the subordination of girls to boys, see Gorham, *Victorian Girl*, 155, 163–64, 179.

<sup>81</sup> Paget and Crum, *Francis Paget*, 16, 26, 34–35, 20 n. Their younger siblings, Stephen and Mary, “plough[ed] through Dante together”; Stephen Paget, memoir, pt. 1, “Harewood Place,” 46. Gorham suggested that boys and girls were purposely socialized differently by different reading materials; *Victorian Girl*, 163–64, 179.

could have married a Shrewsbury schoolmaster but chose to remain single. Her “ardent” and “aggressive” Paget allegiance led her to think that brother James was owed the best of everything—and Lydia to be less than he deserved. In the mid-1870s Kate (then aged fifty) traveled to the Continent with nephews Frank and Stephen (aged twenty-four and twenty). Otherwise she stayed home—“impatient, discontented, imprisoned in the dull enclosed suburban monotony of Woodridings.” In contrast to timid Patty she seemed like a “great eagle in a cage intended for a parrot . . . and she beat her wings against the bars of it, and often hurt herself.” She had “flings” (Stephen said) in London, Oxford, and Paris, but these must only have whetted her appetite for “money and wide influence.” Elise, the spinster cousin from Vienna, played the step-sister to her six cousins in Harewood Place. She tried to live quietly, sharing a house with her maiden aunts in Pinner and pursuing her artistic interests. But her cousin Stephen thought that she kept a “steady hold over herself.” Behind the reserve, however, she was “quick tempered, and sometimes showed it, flushing and speaking sharply.” As she grew older, Elise expressed herself more boldly, wore more assertive clothing, and allowed herself greater freedom.<sup>82</sup>

The married woman has to be the apotheosis of the angel in the house. Lydia North offers the model of angelic piety. She was, of all the women, closest to the model of the clinging, dependent, reliant wife. Her son Stephen saw her as “a simple little white soul.”<sup>83</sup> But the children of the Victorians are not always reliable witnesses to the characters and relations of their parents. Lydia sought humility and rejected any credit for virtue; “do not entertain too high an opinion of me,” she told James. Praise, she said, led to pride and pride to sin. She looked to James to be her spiritual guide, even asking him for criticism of her character. “*Dearest*, I pray you tell me *frankly* of *all* my *faults*.”<sup>84</sup> Such sayings seem to prove that the sweet—and submissive—Victorian wife did indeed exist. But Lydia’s strivings for spirituality are the very mirror image of her human foibles. She was often angry, irritable, or bad tempered. And, although she asked James to criticize her, her reaction to his reproofs was scarcely submissive or humble. “I fear at times I give you but little cause to believe it is my *sincere* desire to be corrected by you, by shewing some symptoms of pain or temper when you have ventured to do so.” Naughty Lydia! She invited James’s correction but felt hurt or angry when it came.<sup>85</sup>

In fact, the Paget women and their husbands seem often to have worked out marriages that were remarkable, given our stereotypes, for their mutuality. Partnership seems to have characterized, for example, Betsy’s relations with Sam. Eleanor Burd and Stephen Paget, too, had a partnership they called “our life.”<sup>86</sup> Even Lydia seems to have abandoned her fruitless search for humility and found a more balanced relationship with James. Certainly he depended on her from the

<sup>82</sup> Stephen Paget, memoir, pt. 2, “Pinner,” 7, 8–13, 17. Also see *ibid.*, 11.

<sup>83</sup> Stephen Paget, memoir, pt. 3, “My Mother’s People,” 2.

<sup>84</sup> Lydia North to James Paget, February 6, 1837, WIHM, Paget MS. 19. Also see Catherine Hall, “The Early Formation of Victorian Domestic Ideology,” in S. Burman, ed., *Fit Work for Women*, 15–32. James also asked Lydia to be his spiritual guide.

<sup>85</sup> Lydia North to James Paget, October 9, 1839, WIHM, Paget MS. 100.

<sup>86</sup> Stephen Paget, memoir, pt. 5, “October 5th, 1925,” 19.

earliest days of their courtship. And fifteen years after their marriage he wrote to her, "It would be hard to tell how much and often I have wished for you all today."<sup>87</sup> She may have depended on him, but he needed her no less.

Perhaps the word "detachment" best characterizes the marriage of Lydia's sister-in-law, Clara Fardell Paget, to George Paget. Even when the children were young, Clara often left for Wales in early April and did not return until October. She took the preschool boys with her and left Rose or Maud to manage the house and to play hostess to the busy Cambridge don. Clara kept in touch with Cambridge and George by her letters to Rose, with postscripts enclosing "best love to your Papa & to you."<sup>88</sup> This arrangement begins to look like a partial separation, but Clara's attitude toward George was never one of overt hostility. She consulted him on family matters, watched over his health, and urged him to take a holiday in Wales when he seemed overworked or tired.<sup>89</sup> But it may have been easy for Clara to be benign when she was in her beloved Wales. If, on her account or his, the marriage was less than satisfactory, then the house in Wales was a source of liberation for both of them—a separation, without the legalities or the stigma, an amicable solution to the problem of a tense marriage. If it was not a troubled marriage, it was surely one in which domestic convention took second place to the individual wishes of the partners. The Paget marriages reflect the possibility of various solutions to the question of how married couples lived together in relative peace.

As mothers the Paget women were, sometimes, less angelic than they were as wives. Lydia was a devoted wife, but she admitted to James that pregnancies and babies required her to "assume . . . an interest very foreign to me concerning small children." Others of the Paget women were more maternal. Clara had specially tender feelings for her little boys. And Stella took every precaution with her new son's health.<sup>90</sup> But what began as devotion could verge on interference. Betsy Paget involved herself directly in decisions about her sons' lives, and Clara had no doubt that she should advise her son on his career. Characteristically she wrote to Rose, "Charles is more fitted for a Surgeon than anything else; tell him so with my love."<sup>91</sup>

Clara stands as a model of imperial motherhood. Off in Wales for five or six months of the year, her communications with her daughters took the form of terse orders about household affairs: "Have the attic bed well aired, have a fire in the room for two days—but not in the evenings. Have the Schoolroom well cleaned . . . my dressingroom . . . the Front dressing room. . . . Take Owen's Waistcoat to Miss Green to mend. . . . Ever your affectionate mother Clara Paget." When Rose once hinted at some dissatisfaction with their relations, Clara wrote back, "I am much engaged in Antiquarian as well as domestic work & really cannot write much."<sup>92</sup>

<sup>87</sup> James Paget to Lydia Paget, December 5, 1858, WIHM, Paget MS. 190. Also see James Paget to Lydia Paget, July 19, 1863, *ibid.* 195.

<sup>88</sup> Rose Paget, diary, April 5, October 9, 1874, April 1, October 1, 1875; and Clara Paget to Rose Paget, April 17, [n.y.], Thomson Papers.

<sup>89</sup> Clara Paget to Rose Paget, September 7, [n.y.], Thomson Papers.

<sup>90</sup> Lydia North to James Paget, April 15, 1843, WIHM, Paget MS. 141. Clara Paget to Rose Paget, June 9, 1876; Stella Paget to Rose Paget, December 16, 1878, Thomson Papers.

<sup>91</sup> James Paget, *Memoirs and Letters*, 13, 31, 67, 89; and Clara Paget to Rose Paget and Maud Paget, April 22, [1874?], Thomson Papers.

Clara's relations with her son Edmund were troubled, too. When he married a young Jewish girl, Stella Salomons, mama did not go to the wedding, did not want the couple invited for Christmas, and waited months before she visited their first child—her first grandchild. Her least angelic mother role came in her relations with Violet. Some unknown crisis in the adolescent girl's life led to conflict between mother and daughter—conflict so explosive that for several years the family colluded in domestic arrangements to ensure that mama and Violet should never be in the same town (let alone the same house) at the same time.<sup>93</sup>

In their relations with the world outside the home the Paget women carried with them the same temperaments they expressed within the circle of the family. Religious activity both reflected and helped shape their personalities and characters, but even piety was not without its complications. Lydia, in visiting the poor, confessed, "It often strikes me as one of the greatest proofs of the utter aversion I naturally have to every thing that is good, that I always go with such reluctance to visit the poor people under our care; when I once get amongst them I quite enjoy myself, but on setting out I feel inclined to bend my steps in any other direction rather than the right." This Christian woman's repulsion at going to the shabby, perhaps wretched, dwellings of the poor may reflect her snobbery or her human sensitivity. But such feelings take her Christian service out of the realm of the angelic and place it firmly in the realm of ordinary humanity. Catharine was far less introspective about her Christian action. She cared, but she did not agonize. One Friday, she reported, "I spent the morning seeing poor people, the afternoon calling on rich ones."<sup>94</sup> Clara fought with her Welsh neighbors and got into a "row" with the parish priest in Cambridge because he was twenty minutes late for church service. Lydia avoided fireworks—but not criticism. She subjected every sermon to the severest evaluations.<sup>95</sup> From girlhood to old age, the Paget women raise questions about the modesty, the helplessness, the dependency, and the sweetness of the Victorian angel in the house.

ACCORDING TO THE RECEIVED WISDOM, Victorian ladies cared for nothing but homes and families, their education was "decorative adornment," and they submitted to fathers and husbands. Three generations of Paget women do not conform to this stereotype. Their education was more than decorative, their relationship to money less distant than we thought, their physical lives more vigorous, expansive, and sensual than either scholars today or some Victorians themselves have led us to believe. Most telling, perhaps, is that, behind the image of the loving, peaceful,

<sup>92</sup> Clara Paget to Rose Paget, n.d. [1875–1881?]; Clara Paget to Rose Paget, [July 1880], Thomson Papers.

<sup>93</sup> Rose Paget, diary, August 29, December 25, 1877; Edmund Paget to Rose Paget, December 3, 1878; Stella Paget to Rose Paget, January 4, 1879, Thomson Papers; Rose Paget, diary, August 19, December 23, 1875, January 12, 13, February 14, March 31, May 5, 1876, January 31, 1877; and Louisa Howard to Rose Paget, May 23, 1879; Katherine Paget to Rose Paget, July 12, [1880], Thomson Papers. The origins of the conflict are unknown.

<sup>94</sup> Lydia North to James Paget, December 30, 1836, WIHM, Paget MS. 13; and Catharine Paget, diary, January 20, 1870.

<sup>95</sup> Rose Paget, diary, April 18, 1875; Lydia North to James Paget, February 22, 1837, WIHM, Paget MS. 22; and Rose Paget, diary, April 24, 1874.

docile daughters and wives of England, the realities of these women's characters and personalities ranged from the quiet Lydia to the talkative Rose and the bombastic Clara. Victorian ladies varied from the sweet to the tart, from the tender to the tough. Perhaps this argues the obvious. But since Victorians and historians alike have covered Victorian gentlewomen with sugar syrup, perhaps we need a reminder to pay closer attention to the obvious. Victorian women of all classes lived under legal and social disabilities, but that fact should not obscure the other realities of individual women's lives.

It cannot be said, of course, that the Paget women were typical even of upper-middle-class Victorian womanhood. To determine whether they represented the norm or the exception will require many more case studies showing how the ladies of Victorian England really lived. The example of the Paget women merely suggests some ways to transcend the stereotype and see Victorian women in all their complexity. From their example we may conclude: (1) Rank is as crucial a factor in studying women as it is in studying men. The culture, opportunities, options, and mentalities of these upper-middle-class women differed greatly from, for example, women of the lower-middle class. Any study of women's minds and actions must take life styles and life chances into account. (2) Age seems to be a significant variable in women's experience: the age of a female's siblings; the age at which women married, bore children, and climbed mountains; the ages and the relative ages of their husbands; and their children's ages when the women reached mid-life. (3) It is useful to take social geography into account in studying women's lives. Mores, but more important, opportunities and prospects for girls and women, even on the same economic levels, differed between Yarmouth, London, and Oxford, not to speak of the little suburb of Pinner. (4) For some purposes scholars should abandon a simple bi-polar analysis of social relations based on gender alone. In its place we might begin to look for patterns of relationship that combine gender issues with other variables. We need to search for patterns of interaction and change, for example, at various stages of the family life cycle. A woman's experience as a wife without children must necessarily be different, in her relations with her husband and in her life options, from those of a woman with many small children at home. A husband and wife with children gone from home may become a paired couple again, with new roles after age fifty or fifty-five. Relative age may be significant: a man and woman close to the same age will almost surely deal with each other differently than a couple whose ages are ten to fifteen years apart. And that age disparity will matter more in youth than in late middle age. Older brothers, younger brothers, sisters, aging parents—all of these offer relationships that can reveal the changing patterns of Victorian women's lives from childhood to old age.

What is so striking about most stereotypes is their remarkable fixity. The women of the Paget family illustrate the enormous variability that could exist within even a single family. This is not, in itself, of great interest—that one woman could be silent, another voluble, that one could pursue poetry while another studied physics, that one woman was devoted and passionate while another was cold and distant. This variability is significant only because it reveals how much freedom these women had, even within the boundaries of the most conventional and traditional of upper-

middle-class Victorian families. They experienced few restrictions on their liberty to read, study, travel, and enjoy themselves.

Brian Harrison, in his study of the opponents of women's suffrage, has suggested that a deeper understanding of women's activism, or its absence, might come from a close examination of women's lives at home and their relationships within families.<sup>96</sup> For the Paget women, the issues of suffrage and emancipation in any broader sense were meaningless; to women who had so many choices open to them, who did not need to struggle to open any door that attracted them, the women's movement must simply have been irrelevant. Closed doors, anomalous status, ideological commitment—these made women activists. But the liberties and comforts enjoyed by most women of the upper-middle class left them with no time or need for movements. Contentment rarely makes rebels. I suspect that the model of the angel of the house, had it truly been imposed on upper-middle-class Victorian households, might have made rebels of them all. Instead, the freedom, the adaptability, the choices inherent in genteel family life laid the basis for a profound conservatism, the conservatism of gender- as well as class-based privilege.

Even as an ideal, the angel in the house did not belong to these families. She was the dream of the lower-middle class, the poor housewife struggling to get by on £200 a year. To her the angel was an ideal, a model of the gentlewoman that she aspired to become, little knowing that the angel she admired did not exist—not in Harewood Place, not in St. Peter's Terrace, not in the bishop's residence—any more than she did in a bow-windowed house in Putney. The angel may have represented a dream of unachieved gentility for some women; she may have been a nightmare of potential repression for others. For yet others she was the “missish” and silly figment of “ladies” magazines and entrepreneurial advice books for sale to the newly arrived. Much talked of in some Victorian circles, the angel of the house was nowhere to be found among living women.

<sup>96</sup> Harrison, *Separate Spheres: The Opposition to Women's Suffrage in Britain* (London, 1978), 258.