
Ashlee Whitaker
Brigham Young University - Provo

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/etd

Part of the Art Practice Commons

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
DAIRY CULTURE:
INDUSTRY, NATURE AND LIMINALITY IN THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH ORNAMENTAL DAIRY

by

Ashlee Whitaker

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
Brigham Young University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Visual Arts
Brigham Young University
April 2008
ABSTRACT

DAIRY CULTURE:
INDUSTRY, NATURE AND LIMINALITY IN THE EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLISH ORNAMENTAL DAIRY

Ashlee Whitaker
Department of Visual Arts
Master of Arts

The vogue for installing dairies, often termed “fancy” or “polite” dairies, within the gardens of wealthy English estates arose during the latter half of the eighteenth century. These polite dairies were functional spaces in which aristocratic women engaged, to varying degrees, in bucolic tasks of skimming milk, churning and molding butter, and preparing crèmes. As dairy work became a mode of genteel activity, dairies were constructed and renovated in the stylish architectural modes of the day and expanded to serve as spaces of leisure and recreation. Dairies were often lavishly outfitted to create a delicate and clean atmosphere, a fancy yet functional space pleasing to elite tastes. Ornamental dairies were distinctive structures incorporated into the ideologically-laden landscape gardens of the elite.
While pleasure dairies have received some scholarly insights, this study is the first to exclusively treat the fashion for pleasure dairies in terms of English culture and attitudes of the era. It explores the cultural iconology of the ornamental pleasure dairy in England and its appropriation into the landscape parks of the elite. Ornamental dairies held significant ideological associations that were heightened and nuanced by their placement within the larger symbolic space of the country estate and its garden park. Their ornate and decorative quality referenced their intentionality of being displayed and viewed. As objects within the English landscape, they were sites to be seen and from which to see—not only the landscape beyond, but also ideologies about identity, class, gender and morality, key dialogues of eighteenth-century English culture. The dairy emerges as an intriguingly ambiguous space in which morality, innocence and sensuality can be celebrated simultaneously.

This thesis explicates three different readings of the English dairy in the eighteenth-century cultural imagination. Dairies were structures whose contradictory fancy/functional nature referenced contemporary attitudes about the acceptable balance between industry and idleness among the gentility. The ornamental dairy was a space whose signification was employed by women to create an acceptable realm for productive yet pleasurable activity to counter stereotypes of idleness and decadence. As structures related to the dialogue of agricultural improvement and productivity when included on estates, these dairies held signification of industry and social beneficence for gentlemen as well. Placed within a class landscape, the virtue of the dairy space came to represent the identity of the aristocracy, as well as England itself.
Its class allusions notwithstanding, the dairy remained a highly feminine space. Accepted attitudes about dairy labor created a gendered site whose activities and aesthetics referenced contemporary dialogues about the nature of women—biologically, emotionally and physically. As such, these dairies and their decorative accoutrements were metaphors for the elite women who worked within. They were social constructions of femininity and the expectations and ideologies regarding women’s “natural” roles and reproductive responsibilities as mothers in society. Within a male-produced and governed landscape garden, dairies were venues in which cultural notions of propriety were enforced during a time when the roles of women were demanding reconsideration.

However, even the gendered nature of the dairy had its dual significations. The ornamental dairy was a liminal space, a ritual realm that asserted female power and sexuality, as well as ideas of sanctity and chastity. The native femininity and its legacy as an intuitively feminine task also created an exclusive female space that resisted the male gaze, thus creating a dangerous space, an ambiguous space that operated outside the social norms of the time. This mystique of the dairy and its cultish practices was amplified when dairies were placed as independent structures in romantic and idyllic landscape parks. This liminal dairy realm was part of a landscape garden that was equally conflated as a site of liminality and ritual. The idealization and ornamentation of dairies within the garden space enhanced their imaginative distinction and allowed them to become spaces that were both sacred and sexual, pious and pagan. The dairy became an acceptable realm in which to enact varied notions of femininity and sexuality.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the faculty of the BYU Art History department for their support throughout the duration of this project and their excellence in teaching and mentoring. I am especially grateful for the valuable contributions and insights of my graduate committee, Professors Heather Jensen, Martha Peacock, and Mark Johnson. I am indebted to Heather Jensen for the time and energy she devoted in helping this thesis come to fruition. Additionally, I wish to express my particular gratitude to Mark Magleby, whose enthusiasm for and knowledge of eighteenth-century gardens inspired my own studies and whose insights and encouragement have been invaluable.

This thesis was supported by the generous funding of the university and the Graduate Research Award, which allowed me to travel to the United Kingdom and track down priceless archival sources and visit dairy sites. Countless librarians, archivists and tour guides throughout the UK deserve my sincere thanks for their generosity and assistance.

In addition, my heartfelt thanks goes to my loving parents, James and Sharon Whitaker, who have consistently supported me throughout my scholarly endeavors, and to Mariesa Whitaker for excellent proofreading and outstanding feedback. Lastly, I must thank devoted friends, most especially Cameron Engh, for hours of help in researching, writing, traveling and acquiring much-needed books and materials. To all, my thanks for believing in the scholarly potential of the pleasure dairy as much as I did.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Acknowledgments......................................................viii

II. List of Images............................................................x

III. Introduction.............................................................1

IV. Chapter One..............................................................20

V. Chapter Two..............................................................64

VI. Chapter Three...........................................................95

VII. Conclusion.............................................................142

VIII. Bibliography..........................................................148

IX. Figures.................................................................158


5. Interior of dairy at Berrington Hall, Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Henry Holland, c. 1780.


7. Marble fountain with relief carvings, Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire. Photo by author.

8. Dairy at Ham House with cast-iron cow legs and tile patterns. Photo by author.


22. View of Cobham Hall dairy, Kent, pencil sketch by Lord Darnley, c. 1820.

23. View of Cobham Hall dairy. Photo by author.


26. Interior view of bay windows and door leading out to garden entrance at the Kenwood dairy. Photo by author.


41. Dairy at Fawley Court, Oxfordshire. Photo by author.


45. Robert Adam, Sketch for urn, Croome Court dairy, 1763. Photo by author.


52. Print of dairy maids working in the dairy with a “rake” outside the door.
53. Thomas Rowlandson, Dr. Syntax in the Dairy, illustration from *The Tour of Dr. Syntax in Search of the Picturesque*, 1794.


55. Pieter de Jode after Martin de Vos, image of Venus and Cupid, 17th century.


57. Sketches by James Wyatt, Elevation of the west end of the dairy at Cobham Hall, Kent and section of the dairy, c. 1795. Yale Center for British Art.

58. Gothic-style dairy at Corsham Court, Wiltshire, 1800. Photo by author.

59. Serpentine marble fountain at Corsham Court dairy. Photo by author.

60. John Soane, Sketch of frontal view of dairy at Hamels Park, c. 1783.

61. John Soane, Interior sketch of Lees Court dairy showing decorative roundels with cows and churns. Soane Museum, London.

62. John Soane, Lady Elizabeth Yorke’s dairy at Hamel’s Park, watercolor, c. 1783.


64. Interior room of Temple of Diana, showing paintings depicting various stories about Diana.

65. William Kent, sketch of Shell Temple at Twickenham.


INTRODUCTION

Icons of industry. Sanctuaries of femininity. Dangerous liminal spaces.

Ornamental pleasure dairies of the eighteenth century were all of these. This assertion may seem surprising, as dairies were mundane elements of English estates for centuries. Traditionally, dairies were part of the manor house proper. They were usually situated with the other kitchen and service rooms either in the outbuildings, as in medieval country estates, the basement of the house, beginning in the late sixteenth century, or in the wings of the house.¹ However, during the eighteenth century, something changed. As the century progressed, the dairies on many estates became the focus of fashionable attention.

As dairy work was elevated into cultural vogue, the traditional simplicity of the dairy was adapted to reflect aristocratic preferences for decoration and display. Dairies became the focus of architectural and stylistic innovation, employing some of the most notable architects of the era to create distinctive spaces of production and pleasure where the various processes of converting the fresh milk into its delectable by-products were performed.²


² Famed architects like Robert Adams, Henry Holland, Samuel Wyatt, James Paine, John Soane and John Nash were employed to design pleasure dairies for wealthy clients. Dairies and other farm buildings of the late eighteenth century provided an ideal forum for architects to experiment with stylistic and decorative innovations, uninhibited by the spatial demands and aesthetic particulars of homes and civic...
Dairies were constructed or redecorated in a wide variety of styles: Neoclassical formality, as seen at Hagley Hall, Worcestershire (1752-3) (Figure 1), and Castle Ashby, Northamptonshire (1766); Gothic charm at Sherborne Castle, Dorsetshire (1755) (Figure 2); chinoiserie at Woburn Abbey, Bedfordshire (1794) (Figure 3); and Swiss chalet-inspired “rustick” charm at Kenwood House, London (c. 1793) (Figure 4). A formal comparison between nearly fifty pleasure dairies of the time period indicates no real method or shared significance in the use of a particular style. Style depended mostly upon the personal preference of the owner and the architect in incorporating the dairy as a stylish space to compliment the intended aesthetic of the overall estate; however, considerations of utility and economy within the estate also affected the design and location of these structures.

These ornamental dairies were expanded to serve as spaces of pleasure and leisure and were often reconstructed or relocated away from the manor home, thus acquiring a more distinctive function and prominent identity within the landscape of the estate. By the end of the eighteenth century, dairy pavilions—often referred to as “ornamental,” “pleasure,” or “fancy” dairies—had become elegant and unique features of English gardens, fashionable spaces where labor, luxury and leisure could be enacted and displayed, as aristocratic women engaged in the rustic activities of churning butter and making cream. So charming and well-received were these dairy structures that a German

prince visiting England described them as “one of the principal decorations of an English park.”

The dairy’s elevation to greater fashionable and situational prominence within the estate or the landscape park reflected changes in cultural and economic ideologies. The impetus behind the rise of the aristocratic pleasure dairy is typically ascribed to two distinct social and economic trends. First, the dairy was popularized through the landed gentry’s engagement in agrarian production and “improvements” to the land during the late eighteenth century. Thus, dairies and other farm-related structures were constructed and fashionably veneered on English estates. Second, dairy pavilions were a manifestation of the vogue for the “Natural” that swept through urban and rural England. Dairies exemplified the romantic sentiment of an idyllic return to nature and the practices of a more virtuous and simple rural existence.

Despite the evident fashion for ornamental dairies on English estates, these structures have received little in-depth scholarly attention. The existence and charm of such dairies has been acknowledged as embodying a unique aesthetic and a distinctive function among eighteenth-century garden buildings. The popularity of the dairy, its variations of decorative display and ornate veneer, and its feminine appropriation and supervision have been touched upon by a handful of scholars. However, the dairy’s multivalent signification—one encompassing ideals of class, gender, culture, nature and ritual—within the landscape of the English estate and English culture has not yet been

---


4 Peter Brears’ article discusses the trend in eighteenth-century estates for separate kitchen and domestic offices. Dairies, brewhouses and other outbuildings were separated from the kitchen rooms. This design was influenced by the architecture of Palladio and was adopted by popular English architects like James Paine, John Carr, and James Gibbs. See Brears, “Behind the Green Baize Door,” 54.
fully explored. In fact, the recently-published *Oxford Companion to the Garden* (2006) authoritatively states, “Outside France ornamental dairies are rare and tend to be primarily functional, and even when decorative are rarely in a position of prominence.”

This study will modify this claim by elucidating the rich tradition of dairies in English gardens and will explore these structures as cultural objects that stemmed from and signified key cultural issues and debates of the era.

A few scholars’ encounters with the ornamental dairy in their respective studies of art, landscape and culture have laid the groundwork for a more critical investigation into the dairy’s cultural significance and reception. John Martin Robinson’s research into the “model” farms on Georgian-era estates was an important publication that brought the dairy to light. *Georgian Model Farms*, published in 1983, was the first thorough study of the trend for functional, yet stylish farm buildings (called “model farm” buildings) that became part of the landed gentry’s estates during the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Robinson acknowledges that among farm buildings and agricultural-related structures placed in gardens during this era of agricultural zeal, the dairy was “the most elaborate and highly ornamented.” He asserts that the aesthetic was adopted because dairies were traditionally run by women, and thus demanded a more ornate and comfortable aesthetic. As a feminine realm within the estate’s economy, the author cites notable examples of gentlewomen who became engaged in the design and decoration of these “farm” structures and summarizes the varied social and pleasurable roles it assumed.

---


for female practitioners of the dairy. While providing invaluable groundwork for the formal understanding of these structures, there is no real critical analysis of the signification and key iconography of the pleasure space in terms of gender or class. Robinson’s other publications that mention the dairy, such as The English Country Estate, repeat similar information and themes.

Peter Brears’s research into the historic operations of English dairies, particularly those of the National Trust, provides insights into pleasure dairies of the time in context of the economy of the country estate. His collaborative work, The Country House Kitchen (1988), discusses the evolution of the dairy structure and offers an overview of the functional operations of the dairy space, its uses and role within the estate and the processes carried out by traditional dairy women. His discussion of the eighteenth-century pleasure dairy echoes Robinson’s fundamental assertions about the nature of the dairy and its feminine tradition; however, Brears’s research adds a few examples of aristocratic women involved in the dairy trend. His publication Recipes from the Dairy (1999) details traditional production and practices of the dairy, while repeating generalized information about the ornamental dairies of the mid to late eighteenth century. Both Robinson and Brears assert the English origin of the pleasure dairy.

Robinson’s work sparked scholarly interest in aristocratic women’s patronage of pleasure dairies. A few articles appeared that highlighted outstanding examples of English women and their dairies, mostly based around the research of Pierre de la Ruffiènière du Prey, a French scholar whose interest in the dairy seems connected to his scholarship about John Soane’s primitive style of architecture and the dairies designed by Soane for Lady Elizabeth Craven and Lady Elizabeth Yorke. His research is detailed in
his work *John Soane: The Making of an Architect* (1988) and in two articles found in *Country Life* magazine (1987), which highlight some examples of female interest and involvement in the dairy by royal and aristocratic dairy maids. Du Prey emphasizes the styles adopted by aristocratic women and progresses the idea of women’s participation in designing and planning their own pleasure spaces by discussing various patronesses of dairies and a potential network of dairy maids among aristocratic women.

At the outset of this project, scholarship regarding English dairies had received little additional insight. However, pleasure dairies have increasingly been acknowledged as significant decorative and cultural structures by garden scholars. As mentioned previously, an entry on dairies was recently included in the *Oxford Companion to the Garden*, an encyclopedia of garden subjects. The focus of its discussion was on the notable and more well-known tradition of French pleasure dairies, brought to prominence through the aristocratic dairies of such historically fascinating personalities as Madame de Pompadour and Marie Antoinette. This is understandable. The significance and theoretical implications of eighteenth-century French dairies have received more notable attention. Much research was inspired by the intriguing personalities of French culture connected with the dairy tradition, particularly the titillating discourse behind Marie Antoinette’s dairy in her *Hameau* at Versailles, her rustic self-fashioning and its potent role in the ill-fated queen’s private and public image.

Only recently has the allure of the French dairy in art-historical research led to insights into the theory and cultural significance of English dairies. Meredith Martin’s recent dissertation from Harvard University entitled, “Dairy Queens: Sexuality, Space and Subjectivity in Pleasure Dairies from Catherine de’ Medici to Marie-Antoinette”
(2006) is an insightful and methodical history of the French pleasure dairy, or *laiterie d’agrèment*, and its uses by women, beginning with Catherine de’ Medici in the sixteenth century. Martin’s analysis asserts that “[Marie Antoinette’s] dairy was not the singular product of one woman’s (aberrant) imagination; instead it was part of an established tradition of constructing such buildings in royal and other garden complexes.” Martin investigates the long tradition of pleasure dairies in France and particularly emphasizes the popularity of pleasure dairies during the eighteenth century and their varied and intricate cultural, social and gendered implications.

According to Martin, the French pleasure dairy had a reputation as a luxurious and idle pleasure of the royalty, many of whom included lavish dairies in royal gardens and retreats. However, during the eighteenth century the pleasure dairy became a pleasure of not only the decadent royals, but was adopted by a larger sphere of aristocratic society. French dairies were constructed on the suburban “country” estates of the aristocracy, which were “clustered” in and around Paris, enabling the aristocracy to fashionably be in rural nature yet remain intermingled with society. French dairies were highly decorative and intended as a space of display—to advertise one’s tastes in porcelain and china—and was a space appropriated for the purpose of entertainments and enjoyment, a healthful image of fashion.

In exploring the French tradition, Martin examines the dairies of *bon ton* women across the Channel. Though acknowledging distinct differences between the cultures of

---


8 Ibid., 4. Catherine de Medici, Louis XIV, the Grand Condé, the Grand Mademoiselle and Madame de Pompadour are among those notable royal personalities who were known to have constructed lavish dairies and used them for social, theatrical and pleasure purposes.

9 Ibid., 11.
England and France, Martin asserts parallels between the two traditions because of a shared aristocratic culture—an affiliation between aristocrats that shared similar refinements, literature, fashion and languages. She maintains the strong lineage of French pleasure dairies, but also acknowledges an English tradition, concluding that the spread of the dairy’s popularity throughout aristocratic society in many nations made them “cultural hybrids.”

Martin’s dissertation enhances the evidence of the dairy tradition’s popularity among fashionable English women. She highlights the prevalent dialogues regarding the virtue of the dairy and its contrast with other sites of female participation, such as theatres, the tea table, and the salon. Martin investigates the complexity of the dairy space and its ambiguous and dual meanings in relation to the complex ideologies regarding femininity and propriety in contemporary publications.

Martin interprets the dairy as an arena in which fashionable mondaine women responded to the widespread cultural dialogues about femininity, domesticity and cultural standards of the time. Dairies, with their several significations, became “vital sites for the fabrication and representation of subjectivity,” and were used by elite women to create identities or reinforce certain cultural ideals onto their own image as they mimicked the wholesome activities of traditional dairy maids. Ornamental dairies offered aristocratic women the appearance of adhering to culturally conceived gender boundaries about female propriety and virtue while simultaneously challenging traditional notions and expectations in other ways.

---

10 Ibid., 194.
11 Ibid., 190.
12 Ibid., 4.
Martin’s analysis of English dairy spaces focuses on three *mondaine* women who were patrons of their own dairies: Lady Henrietta Luxborough, Lady Lavinia Spencer and Lady Elizabeth Craven. She examines how each one represented a varying response to cultural attitudes regarding femininity and their own attempt at fashioning a distinct persona through their activity and interest in the dairy. She concludes that these women used the romantic ideal of the dairy and dairy maid to assert certain acceptable female virtues, while questioning or belying those very virtues in other areas of their social, emotional and intellectual activities. In these examples, Martin defines pleasure dairies as examples of Foucault’s *heterotopias*, spaces where pastoral ideals and cultural modes of the natural seem to be celebrated, but are actually subverted through aristocratic appropriation of the dairy.\(^\text{13}\) While the prominence of these women as patrons of dairies and their own varied forms of engagement in creating, reinforcing or contesting perceptions of femininity is noteworthy, some of the formal parallels between painted image or architectural sketches and feminine personalities and personas deviate into the realm of individual personality studies of patron and architect.

Previous scholarship promises many possibilities in the study of the English dairy. Martin asserts potential signification of the pleasure dairy as a venue for female activity, expression and identification. However, these structures have not been adequately considered in context of the garden space into which they were incorporated, a space in eighteenth-century England that was highly significant and laden with moral and social ideologies. Ornamental dairies were already structures imbued with inherent ideological nuances and associations. Thus, what remains to be explored is a theoretical and cultural

---

\(^{13}\) Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” trans. Jay Miskowiec, reprinted in *Diacritics* 16, no.1 (Spring 1986), 22-27. This idea is cited and discussed in Martin, 5.
investigation of the pleasure dairy as a structure that was absorbed into landscapes and parks of the wealthy and as such became an object of visual culture to be viewed, understood and interpreted through the cultural imagination of eighteenth-century England.

Considering their ripe multivalency, the void of critical analysis regarding English dairies is surprising. While often categorized as part of the productive service buildings of an estate and, hence, overlooked, the dairy cannot be so simplify defined. It is a productive space turned decorative, a space that was virtuous yet pleasurable. They were agrarian-related spaces where aristocrats themselves participated. When placed in the landscape park, these structures acquired a wide range of cultural, ideological, even allegorical connotations. Thus, contemporary writings as well as the aesthetic formalities of dairies suggest that the dairy connoted paradoxes and contradictions which present a challenge in truly reading the dairy within its cultural framework; however, this very inconsistency was a cultural signifier laden with meanings.

This thesis is concerned with the English tradition of ornamental pleasure dairies and the cultural ideas and dialogues associated with these structures. Scholars may challenge this notion of an English dairy tradition. Pleasure dairies were constructed in other countries—most notably France but also in the Germanic countries and Russia. In emphasizing the English tradition, I do not wish to oversimplify the argument to a nationalistic study that denies the symbiotic relationship between English and particularly French aristocratic culture. It is widely known that both France and England in turn influenced each other’s fashions and modes and, in many respects, shared an inherited culture. Continental cultures, such as the Netherlands, also had a long history of cultural
exchange with England. However, each culture had to be transposed into their respective
cultural climates and traditions. By restricting this study to the implications of the
eighteenth-century dairy and the English treatment of the ornamental dairy, this work will
provide an analysis of these intriguing structures, focusing on English attitudes, culture
and the historical moment in which they arose.

In exploring the various interpretations of these spaces in the fashionable
imagination of the eighteenth-century elite, this study illuminates the vibrant tradition of
ornamental dairies in England and their prevalence within wealthy estates and gardens.
The intention is not to delineate the origins of the English dairy or to trace its evolution
historically or formally; rather, it will scrutinize the signification of the dairy within the
English estate and the landscape garden into which it was appropriated, which was a
distinctly English space. While further probing the gendered issues of the dairy within the
landscape and larger society, by dealing with the dairy in context of the landscape, this
study also places the ornamental dairy as a symbolic structure that asserted ideologies
and virtues not only for women but for the landed class, extending its signification to a
class sense of industry and the privileged romantic sensibility of the era.

I assert that the ideological meanings of these structures are heightened when
considered in context of space and site. As structures incorporated into a distinct
landscape, pleasure dairies absorbed new meanings and import because of their
placement within the social, cultural and natural landscape. This reading of the dairy is
preoccupied with exploring ornamental dairies as spaces that were incorporated into the
larger ideological space of English country estates and their celebrated landscape parks,
which were themselves cultural icons that embodied layers of meaning and continue to attract scholarly investigation.

This “natural” landscape, romanticized within garden parks, was the center of key cultural dialogues of the century such as the definition of aesthetics and art, the cult of nature and sensibility, the Picturesque, and even Englishness itself—all ideologies that redefined what it meant to see, view, think, behave and experience.\textsuperscript{14} The enduring legacy of the landscape as embodying aspects of English culture is evidenced in Jane Austen’s \textit{Emma} (1815), where Emma Woodhouse looks over the countryside and describes the scene as “sweet view, sweet to the eye and the mind. English verdure, English culture, English comfort, seen under a bright sun without being oppressive.”\textsuperscript{15} The “natural” landscape, re-created in garden parks, was a visual and ideological entity that embodied notions of gentility, economics, wealth, freedom, fashion, and politics. As landscape parks and country estates were the settings for pleasure dairies, the varied and complex significations of the landscape garden affected the reception of the dairy space.

Central to this study is the notion of the dairy as an object of viewing. The eighteenth century was an era where visibility governed culture and society. It has been read by scholars as the era of the birth of visual culture.\textsuperscript{16} Looking became a way of

\textsuperscript{14} Brewer, 616. Indeed, during the eighteenth century, the landscape garden became a cultural product imbued with layers of social, economic, cultural and artistic import. As John Brewer has written, “The English had long been in the business of making nature into culture.” Many other scholars have discussed the potent and varied signification of the landscape garden. In particular, I reference Tom Williamson, \textit{The Polite Landscape} (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 1-16 and Ann Bermingham, \textit{Landscape and Ideology} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 1-14.


\textsuperscript{16} Peter de Bolla, \textit{The Education of the Eye} (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 4. New venues for looking—theatres, operas, pleasure gardens—were created as an expanding commercial culture demanded new entertainments to delight and entertain a greater urban population. Fine art venues opened
asserting status, intellect and cultural savvy. Not only was looking a fixation, but being looked upon was also a matter of prime importance. Country estates and landscape gardens, the settings for pleasure dairies, were venues where looking was equally fundamental. Gardens existed to be viewed and experienced. Viewing and imaginative response legitimized and created meaning within the garden. In order to “feel” the garden, one had to see and experience the multiple associations and significations found within nature.

As dairies were incorporated into the landscape parks of the aristocracy in varying styles, fashions and uses, they were objects whose overt decorativeness and placement within estates and gardens referenced the intention of being seen. Thus, this interdisciplinary examination of these charming and ornate structures understands dairies as objects of visual culture, signifiers within the larger aesthetic and cultural world of eighteenth-century England during a time when visuality and looking were cultural

for public consumption of the visual. Also, the increase in print media and printed books expanded the images and ideas that circulated among popular society. This idea is discussed by multiple scholars of eighteenth century culture. See also Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People: England 1727-1783* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989) and John Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997).

Through display and gesture, one asserted breeding, manners and status. Publications emerged that instructed people of all classes about how to look at everything from paintings, to the natural landscape and other people, and also how to present oneself as a viewed object.

Dairies were often specifically designed as ornaments within the estate park, intended to be a focal point of viewing and fodder for the cultured imagination. At Cobham, the Gothic-style dairy was situated close to the hall itself, forming an “eye-catcher” that marked the south end of the gardens on the estate. Roger Bowdler, *Historical Account Cobham Hall Estate, Part 2: The Gardens and Inner Grounds*, Historical Analysis and Research Team Reports and Papers, no. 73 (Swindon : English Heritage, 2002), 80. At Kenwood, the dairy buildings were placed atop a small rise, across a vista through the formal house gardens, culminating the view seen from the Music Room of the house, as described in Julius Bryant, *Kenwood: Paintings in the Iveagh Bequest* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 254. Lord Lyttelton also expected his dairy at Hagley Park to be a focal point within his garden, as he wrote to Miller that the dairy “will be a fine object, both from the house, and several parts of the park.” Michael Cousins, “Hagley Park, Worcestershire.” *Garden History: Journal of the Garden History Society*, Vol. 35: Supplement 1 (2007): 91. Dairies became spaces for display of fashionable interior styles, moldings and tile work. This was an aspect of the dairy’s aesthetic frequently mentioned in written accounts of garden visitors.
fascinations of paramount importance, and where the aristocracy, the patrons of pleasure
dairies, was the focus of much of the public eye.

This investigation presents a multiplicity of views of the dairy as an object that
was viewed and defined by the cultural imagination of the era. Information regarding
ornamental dairies, culled from various extant sources, published and archival, prove that
dairies were definitely viewed and experienced by visitors and tourists within the landed
estates of the countryside. The various “views” and the experience of the dairy realm
were most widely portrayed through their presentation in popular print media such as
guide books, travelogues and contemporary poetry.

As such, it must be acknowledged that the interpretation of the pleasure dairy is
privileged. The space itself was one that could only be enjoyed by those with the time
and means to operate pleasure dairies. The viewing eye through which the dairy was
explored and documented during the eighteenth century was typically that of a privileged
class, those of the aristocracy or the bourgeoisie who could afford to travel and record
their experiences, or else the contemporary writers and historians whose works
historically identified with landowners and the wealthy. 19 These accounts and references
to the dairy are balanced somewhat by the view of dairies, dairy maids, and related
subjects in popular poems and other publications intended to interest a more general
audience. 20

Pugh relates this to Foucault’s discussion of the ‘author’ function as a class function.

20 Dairy maids and dairies were the subjects of poems as well as popular songs, found in printed
literature of the time. Publications like The Lady’s Diary and Women’s Almanack increasingly published
poems and rhymes about dairy maids, shepherds and rural living. As the Aberdeen Chronicle wrote, “The
pleasure with which the poems of the shoemaker, the milk-maid, and the Ayreshire ploughman, have been
read by all classes of people, proves that an acquaintance with the Greek or Roman poets, is not necessary
to inspire just ideas, or to produce harmony in poetry.” The Aberdeen Magazine, vol. 2 [book online]
This study will illuminate the ways in which the dairy reflected prevalent social ideologies of the day and how those were heightened by its appropriation into an aristocratic landscape and culture of visuality and imagination. The discussion will focus on three views of the dairy, each of which will be explored in the three chapters that follow. Each chapter will consider the dairy realm itself and its various interpretations and associations. However, the import of the dairy is not fully understood until considered as part of another space, the larger ideological and geographic space of the landscape in which it was inserted. When considered thus, ornamental dairies referenced contemporary ideologies about gender and class and also cultural modes of imagination, ritual and sexuality.

The first chapter will discuss the dairy as a class object and a signifier of industry and improvement within polite society. The ornamental dairy itself was a space with a dual nature, embodying industry as well as idleness. As such, it referenced the prominent social debate regarding industry and idleness. While the dairy space itself contained this duality, this also extended to the inclusion of the pleasure dairy in elite country landscapes. The dairy was a redemptive symbol of industry for women, who traditionally engaged in the space. However, it also held signification for the gentlemen who encouraged the construction and use of these dairies and into whose demesne these dairies were incorporated. While focusing on the traditional association of fashionable women with the dairy space and the virtuous ideal of the dairy in removing its aristocratic patrons from critiques of idleness and excess, this discussion will also examine the

redeeming qualities such an object brought to the gentlemen who owned the country
estate, itself a symbol of class privileges and prerogatives.

As mentioned earlier, the ornamental dairy is usually categorized as a product
of the century’s cultural obsession with all things Natural. The second chapter
investigates the view of the ornamental dairy as part of the fashion for the Natural. This
discussion explores the cultural and moral associations of nature with dairies and dairy
work and examines what aspects of the Natural the pleasure dairy represented. In doing
so, we will move beyond the idea of natural rusticity and the peasant ideal of dairy work
to dialogues about the dairy as a natural province for women. The ornamental dairy was
not natural to the class or to the landscape garden, but was natural in terms of being a
traditional space for women that referenced definitions of Natural womanhood and
prevalent cultural debates about the proper roles of women. The dairy’s status as a site
where milk was produced and processed in a wholesome natural environment echoes
contemporary ideals about the proper and expected roles of women as mothers—
perpetuators of lineage and those who nurtured and cared for their own offspring.

This discussion of the dairy as a site where ideals of the Natural and “proper”
womanhood were reinforced will also be discussed in terms of contemporary views of
gender and the landscape garden, an interesting parallel that reflects the patriarchal
governance of lineage and reproduction. This avenue of inquiry represents one view, a
highly gendered perspective, of the dairy in terms of its gendered space and implications.
This reading will be cross-examined in the final chapter, showing how the gendered and
ritual aspects of the dairy acted to reverse ideas of patriarchal preeminence.
The third chapter will assert the pleasure dairy as a liminal space within the landscape. This final discussion will emphasize the dairy as a space of female power and governance in which women performed labors that were laden with traditional and cultural significations of ritual and sexuality. Dairies were sites believed to be imbued with a native feminine nature, one whose labor was fundamentally female and became a place of symbolic and didactic ritual process. Defined by contemporaries as a ritualistic act, the various connotations of this term will be explored in terms of traditional dairy labor and the implications of female performance and ritual in facilitating a dual liminality in the ornamental dairy space, creating a realm that was both chaste and seductive, sacred and sexual, pagan and pious. To those viewers literate in the traditions of the dairy, these realms could be conflated within the cultural imagination to represent sacro-idyllic spaces of cleanliness and morality, as well as eroticism and enticement.

This liminality of the pleasure dairy made it an appealing and dangerous space that was romanticized and accepted within a landscape that was equally liminal, a venue also deemed as sacred and seductive, and mystified as an imaginative realm removed from contemporary society. The pleasure dairy was a realm where women could enact both aspects of female nature, where sexuality and power could exist within an acceptable space. However, the ambiguous and liminal nature of the dairy space was regulated and controlled within this same garden space. As settings of rite and ritual, ornamental dairies became sites in which women of the privileged class were brought into a sense of being with nature, in nature and of nature in activity and performance that was truly feminine.

---

21 Pugh, 18. Pugh speaks of the garden as possessing the “mystique of the natural.”
To the privileged eye, the intended audience of the ornamental dairy space, fancy dairies held many connotations as definitive signifiers of class virtues and social ideals, gender and proper womanhood, and romantic and imaginative concepts of nature, power and ritual. However, like the landscape itself and the landscape garden, the dairy’s embodiment of these debates was sometimes contradictory. Brewer explains, “During the eighteenth century the countryside and nature came to represent several different ways of life and to express a variety of values; different versions of England…many in tension or conflict, though people often held them simultaneously.”²² The dairy exemplifies this same tension and complexity in its multivalency.

The appeal of the dairy went beyond rustic charm and agricultural necessity. These ornamental dairies were complex symbols that also became a space for a very distinctive kind of aristocratic leisure and display that complicated its traditional visage of virtue and industry. Within landscape gardens, these structures were romanticized and became symbols that countered the stereotypes of idleness and dissipation characteristic of the landed class. While often considered as ideal and idyllic spaces of morality and virtue, ornamental dairies were also liminal spaces, venues of pleasure. They were ambiguous spaces, whose feminine activity and practice were perceived as Other, as well as spaces laden with references to sexuality and, sometimes, lasciviousness. The associative meanings of these ornamental dairies are as complex as the ideologies which they connote, introducing many inconsistencies and incongruencies which heighten the implications of ornamental dairies in genteel estates. Indeed, the dairy asserted larger virtues clamored after in late eighteenth-century English society—industry, morality,

---
²² Brewer, 618-19.
propriety and social responsibility—but also became an intriguing allegorical and pleasurable realm embodying notions of nature, gender and power.
Pleasure dairies were a curious breed. They were ornamented spaces of leisure, yet they were also designed for functional purposes. They were sites of time-honored skill imbued with traditional virtues and morality, as well as significant statements of aristocratic fashion and privilege. Traditionally, they symbolized productivity and simplicity, but in their ornamental context, they connoted aspects of the pleasure, wealth and privilege associated with the landed class. Thus, dairies exemplified industry but also embodied overt manifestations of the aesthetics and activities often associated with critiques of the idleness, privilege and luxury of the wealthy.

The dual nature of the dairy is one of the most intriguing points in reading the charming pleasure dairy in its cultural context. This chapter will explore this contradictory nature of the dairy and elucidate its accepted virtue within eighteenth-century society by discussing the pleasure dairy as a site that paralleled contemporary dialogues of industry and idleness. Dairy practices were considered a proper form of industry that refuted the threat of aristocratic idleness and the innumerable list of vices found in the aristocracy. Despite its contradictory nature, the fancy dairy came to signify proper and acceptable industry. The virtue of the dairy created a suitable space for
ostentation and leisure that was legitimized by the moral repute of the dairy and its practices.

In existing scholarship, the morality of ornamental dairies and their productive activities is usually applied to aristocratic women. Many women participated and demonstrated interest in dairy practices and other forms of agriculture, and scores of men appropriated money for their wives to redo or commission a dairy outfit for their estate. This chapter will focus on the industrious virtues connected with the ornamental dairy and their influence on perceptions and social discourse regarding upper-class women. However, as ornamental dairies were situated within the larger realm of the landed estate, which was a distinctive realm of class, they also engaged with the ideologies and cultural perceptions of the larger garden space.

There is evidence that as dairies emerged as more popular garden structures and spaces of entertainment and display, ladies and gentlemen often both took a keen interest in dairies and their production methods and promoted their inclusion in landed estates. During the latter part of the century, landed gentlemen were encouraged to engage in beneficial forms of agricultural improvement, including the promotion of dairy work. Thus, this study will call attention to the class-related motivations of industry and virtue which encouraged the construction of many dairies. While multiple scholars have attributed the ornamental dairy’s popularity to the agrarian revolution and the trend of agricultural improvement, the implications of a male and female shared interest in the dairy, a class interest, and the possible readings of the dairy structure as icons of improvement and class values in the context of the country estate have not been explored.
Ornamental dairies became class signifiers of virtue that functioned on multiple levels. Dairies symbolized productivity, morality and competency of female roles among aristocratic women, although their decoration and pleasurable uses still testified to the elite and privileged status of the women. The positive associations of the dairy also extended to the gentlemen who promoted ornamental dairies as part of the agricultural improvements within their estate. Furthermore, the distinctive productivity and social responsibility implied by the dairy were displayed within landscape parks that represented the privileges and the social, political and economic ideologies of the elite class. Thus, as ideological structures in a viewed landscape, one that was “always-already” defining the elite, they asserted the virtues of industry and improvement for the aristocracy as a class and, to some extent, the nation itself.¹

The Duality of the Dairy

Ornamental dairies were definitely structures of fashionable design that catered to aristocratic privilege and leisure. The early examples of English pleasure dairies support this.² As dairying was elevated into fashionable practice, dairies maintained their

---

¹ This is acknowledged as a privileged reading of the dairy space. Issues such as enclosure and aristocratic involvement and the results of agricultural changes also may be discussed in terms of the continuing debate about the plight of the rural poor, often relocated or suffering from the widespread industrialization of agriculture. Issues like these are relevant readings and modes of investigation into landed estates and pleasure dairies. However, this particular reading will focus on the motivations and cultural beliefs that caused the privileged aristocracy to incorporate these multivalent pleasure dairies into their elite environment.

² Early pleasure dairies were connected with gentility of the royal court, which may have perpetuated their popularity among aristocratic women. Queen Mary’s dairy at Hampton Court Palace (1693) is often cited as the forerunner of the century’s craze for ornamental dairies. However, the first substantial evidence of a true pleasure dairy within a garden park is that of Queen Caroline’s dairy at Richmond Park. The queen’s dairy was designed by William Kent in the classical style and was placed near an entrance to the park. See Count Frederick Kielmansegge, *Diary of a Journey to England in the Years 1761-1762* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1902), 73. Constructed during the late 1720s, the building was a square structure with a projecting, central bay crowned by a triangular pediment. The dairy’s interior
traditional need for cleanliness and practicality, but fused those demands with the fashion and luxuries appropriate to the refined tastes of the elite. This is exemplified in the light blue and green tiled walls of the Neoclassical dairy at Berrington Hall, Herefordshire (1778-81) (Figure 5) and the lovely vine pattern of the Wedgwood tiles used at the Althorp dairy in Northamptonshire (Figure 6). Elegant fountains with running water, such as the marble fountain in the former dairy (now gift shop) at Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire (1780) (Figure 7), adorned with relief carvings of cows or the serpentine-embellished fountain in the Gothic dairy at Corsham Court, Wiltshire (1800), were placed in the center of the dairy to cool the dairy and aid in cleaning. Stained glass windows were commonly used to enhance the decorative ambience. The dairy at Woburn, Bedfordshire (1787-94) had stained glass windows featuring Japonisme-inspired birds and foliage. At Cobham Hall’s dairy (c. 1790) in Kent, the stained glass windows featured the family coat of arms set into the glass work, an appropriate compliment to its Gothic veneer. Thatched roofs were also used to regulate the cool temperatures required while also romanticizing the dairy’s exterior.

The arrangement of the interior space further testified of its fancy and functional nature. Marble or tiled counters (called “dressers”) lined the sides of the room, often simple or elegantly streamlined, but sometimes more elaborately decorative, as in the marble countertops and legs at Ham House dairy (early 19th c.) (Figure 8). These surfaces boasted stucco walls and was “furnished suitable to a royal dairy, the utensils for the milk being of the most beautiful china.” The dairy was later destroyed by Caroline’s grandson, to make room for a new building that would sit on the same spot. The dairy is discussed in Ray Desmond, *Kew: The History of the Royal Botanic Garden* (Kew: Harvill Press with Royal Botanic Gardens, 1995), 10.
were available for placing the glistening porcelain dairy dishes in which women placed the dairy goods and displayed the dairy processes and products for those visiting the park. In some designs, a table was placed at the center of the dairy to create more workspace.

Dairies became spaces for displaying fashionable interior styles, moldings and tile work. Shelves and niches were installed to show collections of imported porcelain and English ceramics, popular collectible items among eighteenth-century aristocrats. This is true of Sambrook Freeman’s dairy at Fawley Court, Oxfordshire, described by Mrs. Philip Lybbe Powys as a “most elegant dairy in the garden, ornamented with a profusion of fine old china.” This was also the case with Queen Caroline’s dairy at Richmond and Princess Amelia’s dairy at Gunnersbury Park. The appropriateness of the Duke of Bedford’s obtuse, red Chinese-style dairy (Figure 9) and chinoiserie interior (Figure 10) was legitimized by its function as a showcase for the Duke of Bedford’s collection of porcelain from the Far East. The ornamental richness of the dairy at Woburn is described by the same nineteenth-century visitor:

[The dairy] is decorated with a profusion of white marble and coloured glasses; in the centre is a fountain, and round the walls hundred of large dishes and bowls of Chinese and Japan porcelain of every form and colour, filled with new milk and cream.

---

3 This was an aspect of the dairy’s aesthetic frequently mentioned in written accounts of garden visitors. Many descriptions of dairies speak of the fine china displayed within. A foreign visitor to England during the early 19th century defined the English dairy as “an elegant pavilion, adorned with fountains, marble walls, and rare and beautiful porcelain; and its vessels, large and small filled with most exquisite milk and its products in all their varieties.” See Puckler-Muskau, Tours, 143-44.


Like the dairies themselves, the outfitting within, whether imported *chiniserie* or locally-produced Wedgwood porcelain, was a definitive marker of wealth and status. Many aligned with the ornamental program within these dairies, all of which reinforced them as sites of display and entertainment, attractive garden pieces for those who worked, recreated and toured the estate.

The dual nature of the dairy heightened as the functional aspects of dairies were merged with social and leisured aspects. As dairies were appropriated into elite landscapes, they also became sites of sociality and entertainment, sites intended to be consumed and absorbed by a fashionable viewing audience. The architectural designs of dairies reflect their intention as spaces for casual entertainment and its multivalent uses among the English elite. Many plans incorporated small parlors in which visitors could visit and refresh themselves by sampling creams and milk. One fine example is the dairy built for the Countess of Derby at Knowsley, Lancashire, by Robert Adam (1776-77) (Figure 11). The central, circular portion of the structure housed the dairy itself, while one of the two side wings which flanked the dairy rotunda was a tea room, lavishly furnished, where the family and their guests could relax and enjoy tea, perhaps with a dollop of real cream, or samples of milk and syllabub, healthful and popular drinks.\(^7\) The dairy at Hamels Park had a tea room delightfully called the Strawberry Room.\(^8\) James Wyatt’s pavilion at Dodington Park (1797-99) fused the dairy space with other recreational and practical ideals: a bakehouse and a cold bath. The dairy at Hagley was in


the basement of the Grecian-inspired Doric dairy house, but a light and airy greenhouse sitting room was upstairs, an ideal site for taking tea and sampling dairy confections, as evidenced in a letter in which Lady Lyttelton declares that “The French horns call me to drink tea and sillabub at the dairy.”

The most compelling example of this may be the dairy at Weston Park, built in 1770, located in the basement of the garden pavilion known as the Temple of Diana (Figure 12). Located at the southern edge of the idyllic “Temple Wood,” the temple was a multi-purpose pavilion that housed not only a dairy, but a tea room, a music room and the dairy maid’s room. The south side of the temple served as a greenhouse (Figure 13). The pavilion was transformed into a space that featured virtuous female activities and pastimes, such as dairy activity, music and gardening.

Hence, the dairy was a site laden with contradictions, a space that promoted labor and luxury, pleasure and productivity. The ornamental dairy’s duality paralleled the complex cultural dialogue regarding industry and idleness that prevailed during the eighteenth century. It was a dialogue found at every level of English society, but focused particularly on the up-and-coming gentility and aristocratic class. It became a common theme in literature, the fine arts and in garden structures like pleasure dairies on wealthy estates. Ornamental dairies were redemptive symbols of industry and improvement in the face of increasing idleness.

---

9 Maud Wyndham, *Chronicles of the Eighteenth Century: Founded on the Correspondence of Sir Thomas Lyttelton and his Family*, vol. 2 (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1924), 268. Letter from Lady Lyttelton to her brother-in-law, August 1753.

10 Peter Leach, *James Paine* (London: Philip Wilson, 1988), 122. Thus, the dairy was combined with other rooms that particularly referenced feminine interests and entertainment—a tea room as well as a music room—an entire complex devoted to women’s accomplishments. Paintings of Diana, the goddess of the wood and goddess often associated with the moon and female cycles adorn the temple itself.
Industry and Idleness

In 1747, William Hogarth produced his print series, *Industry and Idleness* (Figure 14), a work that references the ideals of morality and honest labor. Hogarth’s series presented the contrast between the hard-working, virtuous Francis Goodchild and the notorious, wasteful figure of Tom Idle. Goodchild began his life as a weaver’s apprentice, but through honest industry become the honorable Lord Mayor of London. In contrast with Goodchild’s industrious nature, Tom Idle, who also worked as an apprentice alongside Goodchild, squandered away his future through indolence, immorality and dishonesty and was eventually convicted as a criminal and hung on the gallows at Tyburn (Figure 15).

Throughout the series of twelve pictures, Hogarth contrasted the differences between the integrity and dignity of an industrious life and the immorality and dissolution of indolence with characteristic blunt, artistic clarity. Hogarth’s didactic portrayal was not an isolated trope in the artistic production of his time. As Paul Langford writes, “these complex narrative compositions represent not only Hogarth’s own artistic vision but some of the central preoccupations of the early part of George II’s reign.”

Idleness was the great plague of the eighteenth century, or so one might think when reading through popular publications of the era. Though not a new phenomenon,

---

11 Hogarth’s new series was greeted with great excitement and widespread interest by the public, as described by one on-looker, “Walking some Weeks ago from Temple-Bar to ‘Change in a pensive Humour, I found myself interrupted at every Print-Shop by a Croud of People of all Ranks gazing at Mr. Hogarth’s Prints of Industry and Idleness…” see Ronald Paulson, *Hogarth: His Life, Art, and Times*, vol. 2 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1971), 61.

the contagion of idleness and its sickening social effects seemed to reach a more publicly-acknowledged level of paranoia during a century where fashion, recreation and entertainment became more widespread and accessible in the growing commercial economy.\textsuperscript{13} No class was exempt from the potential sin of idleness. The poor of the lower classes were besieged as many, such as the writer John Clayton, believed that “the Poor’s Misery is owing to themselves; and may with great justice be imputed to that Idleness, Extravagance, and Mismanagement, which are as notorious, as the Poverty that proceeds from them.”\textsuperscript{14} Even the middle class, considered the most industrious class in society, were susceptible to the plague of idleness as they expanded in wealth, esteem and privilege.\textsuperscript{15}

The most obvious source of idleness was the aristocracy, the chief patrons of pleasure dairies, whose immense wealth and privileges enabled a leisured lifestyle, free from the necessity of labor, a lifestyle coveted and sought after by many of the lower classes. The clergyman John Brown, speaking out against wealth, declared that it “produces luxury, effeminacy, and indolence among most classes, especially the

\textsuperscript{13} Even in politics, the attack against indolence was a central focus of the Country Party platform against the Walpole administration. Too much commercial prosperity and political corruption had brought about excessive luxury among politicians and the ruling classes. See Ronald Paulson, \textit{Emblem and Expression: Meaning in English Art of the Eighteenth Century} (London: Thames and Hudson, 1975), 74.


\textsuperscript{15} Because of their aspirations for wealth, the middle classes were vulnerable to infection by the contagion of wealth. John Brown, an Angelican clergyman, targeted this perceived threat in his popular 1757 “jeremiad” \textit{Estimate of the Manners and Morals of the Time}, where he argues that industry must be harnessed at the second level of its development, because at its third and final level it leads to indolence, see Brewer, 80. Paulson also cites Brown, “primitive man is slothful; industry arouses him; but beyond a certain point it results in universal luxury, and so further indolence…” in \textit{Emblem and Expression}, 74.
noblility…” The poet James Thomson, among others, addressed the idea of the dullness, inertia and sluggishness associated with the “refined hedonism” of luxury and aristocratic living in his poem, *Castle of Indolence* of 1748. The leisure of wealth was known to produce mental vacuity, boredom, and ennui—a state of physical and moral desensitization because of the lack of stimulating activity.

The luxurious consumption and extravagant entertainments available to the wealthy were also condemned by moralists as idle and vain diversions that produced decadence and carnality. Masquerades, theatres, operas, ridottos, public exhibitions, shopping and pleasure gardens were “pleasures of the flesh” that began raising questions of morality, decency and politeness. Even the cultural refinements of aristocratic society, the interest in fine arts and music, were believed to breed indolence and immorality. The tastes, luxuries and entertainments of the wealthy were becoming increasingly popular and were disseminating throughout all classes of society as social imitation, as a means to social mobility, became more prevalent during the century.

---

16 Paulson, *Emblem and Expression*, 74. The Earl of Shaftsbury, Akenside, Joseph Mitchell and Thomas Morell were all writers of this era that addressed this theme in some of their works. Langford writes that the anti-aristocratic messages prevalent during the century were social critiques bent on reform and equanimity within society as opposed to drastic revolution. Compared to other nations’ traditions of elite privilege in government, law and social mores, English peers shared many privileges with the common worker. It was wealth, more than status that determined social standing and deference in society. See Langford, 599.

17 Brewer, 70. Furthermore, aristocratic pleasures such as sporting and gaming became increasingly popular and depended largely upon betting by those who could (or thought they could) afford it. Amanda Vickery discusses the increased popularity of card games like whist, commerce and quadrille among men and especially women of the aristocracy and upper-classes in Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman’s Daughter: Women’s Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 209.

18 Ibid., 72. Thomas Cole wrote, “The virtuoso arts are giving their instruction how to gratify the lust of the eyes, and to display the pride of life…There is always something in the delights they afford, which renders them rather dangerous with respect to their moral influence.”

19 The increased blurring of class boundaries as a result of the rise of “modern” commercialism and industry was noted with alarm in a variety of published literature. The *London Magazine* of 1780
The imitation of more luxurious lifestyles led to a ubiquitous adoption of the “dangerous” luxuries and entertainments that traditionally were only available to the non-working genteel class, resulting in an alarming increase in indolence and immorality.

The widespread dialogue regarding industry and idleness also had gendered implications, which must be understood in order to grasp the ideological potency of the dairy space. During the eighteenth century, women, particularly women of the upper class, were blamed for much of the moral decline of society. Though this dialogue was not entirely unique to this era, women’s morality again became the focus of moralist agendas. The immense economic, class and social shifts taking place during the Enlightenment era expanded opportunities and advantages for women, especially in various “public” spheres, and made them the focus of significant criticism and anxiety, amplified by the growing voice of the press in moralizing treatises and social commentaries.

wrote: “Vanity has possessed itself of all ranks of people; their scheme of life are not to be really happy, free from want, poverty and oppression; but how to mingle every man with the class that is superior to him, and how to support a gay and splendid appearance, utterly inconsistent with their station and circumstances,” Langford, 600. A 1744 pamphlet exclaimed: “We never saw, in the history of another nation, any account of such degeneracy in manners, as is visible amongst ourselves, where all ranks, all degrees of people, seem involved under this character; so that all other distinctions are lost, except in the degrees of their vices.” An Epistle to the Fair-Sex on the Subject of Drinking... [book online] (London: T.Gardner, 1744, accessed April 2007), 3; based on English Short Title Catalogue. Eighteenth Century Collections Online. http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO.

As women’s status and privileges in society gradually evolved, women had often been subject to social commentary and criticism. Such progress was believed to destabilize the foundations of social order. Lawrence Stone identified this same pervasive opinion of women’s increasing idleness in seventeenth-century views of women. He described seventeenth-century perceptions on women thus: “Women...increasingly became idle drones. They turned household management over to stewards, reduced their reproductive responsibilities by contraceptive measures, and passed their time in such occupations and novel reading, theatre going, card playing and formal visits...The custom of turning wives into ladies ‘languishing in listlessness’ as ornamental status objects spread downwards through the social scale.” Amanda Vickery, The Gentleman’s Daughter: Women’s Lives in Georgian England (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 2.

Brewer, 77. Women’s cultural and social power was increasingly noted by Englishmen and outsiders. They were the focus of many periodicals and the likely audience of the most popular literature of...
Women were traditionally targeted as more idle creatures than men. They were historically exempt from involvement in public or civil life, and were generally believed to be less capable in such roles. Aristocratic women especially, exempt from labor, had become regarded as tokens of family prosperity in their ability to lead a leisured lifestyle. However, according to contemporary literature, women’s various appetites reached unprecedented heights of abandon during the eighteenth century. In 1779, *The Female Congress* concluded that “the frequent violations of the marriage bed, and the rising licentiousness of female manners” were the cause of declining moral standards and widespread immorality.22 Another publication blamed women’s “pernicious custom of drinking.”23 Judging from moralizing treatises of the age, it seemed as though nothing fashionable was entirely exempt from moral critique. Women’s interest in fashion was frequently discussed as being morally problematic, as it represented an alarming degree of ostentation and desire for public display.24 Women’s materialism and their consumption of fanciful imports, fashions and domestic products were also criticized and cited as evidence of women’s increasing indolence, wasting household income on fanciful goods.25

the day. They formed a large audience at theatres and cultural venues and were important consumers in the economy.

22 Langford, 583.

23 Epistle to the Fair Sex, 4.

24 Brewer, 584, 601.

In the eyes of some moralists, this negative shift in women's morals threatened all classes and traditional roles of women. As one horrified writer expounded in *The Gentleman’s Magazine*:

…Is it not a melancholy reflection that our Females are Women at 12 or 13, Men at 18, and very Girls at 50 or 60? That Virtue, Religion, and Economy are now turn’ed to Ridicule! And this not only in the Town but amongst our Country Ladies! Where the double entendre, a thorough Disregard for their Husbands and Children is so much the Mode, that I fear if it gets among the lower Class of Females, the Farmers will have Care of the Dairy as well as Husbandry thrown on their Hands. ²⁶

Acknowledging the exaggeration inherent in this and similar diatribes, it is yet evident that there was a widespread social discourse concerning the morality of women’s lifestyles and the threat of increased idleness and dissipation. Society offered dangerous distractions, so appealing that many saw females gradually abandoning traditional responsibilities such as dairy work, cited in that passage as a token example of women’s traditional responsibilities, and all of society suffering from the moral atrophy of idle living. ²⁷ How could such stereotypes be countered?

The key to avoiding the stigma of idleness and its repercussions, the great savior of society, was engagement in beneficial and honest industry. Industry was celebrated and encouraged, not only for the political and economic well-being of the nation, but for its moral health as well. As the *Gentlewoman’s Companion*...of 1745 teaches, “By Industry we are redeem’d from the Molestations of Idleness, which is the most tedious

---


and irksome Thing in the World; wrecking our soul…” 28 This doctrine of industry was preached throughout society in various forms, as evidenced in Hogarth’s moralizing print series, as an antidote to the contagion of idleness. 29 

The victory of industry over idleness became a matter of cultural concern in English society. It was a prominent theme in artistic production and literature of the era. It was notably manifested in the popular theme of the Choice of Hercules. Hercules’ celebrated choice between pleasure and ease or diligence and virtuous toil that would earn him his immortality was celebrated as a choice of industry over idleness. 30 This trope appeared in Sir Joshua Reynolds’s spirited portrayal of the actor David Garrick, 

_Garrick Between Tragedy and Comedy_ (1760-61) (Figure 16). Garrick chose to be portrayed as Hercules, draped in a lion skin, caught in the moment of decision between the stoic form of Tragedy and the playful, seductive figure of Comedy, embodying the timeless choice between virtue and vice, the easy path of frivolity and decadence or the

---


29 Paulson, 72. Hogarth’s trademark artistic metaphors and allusions were replaced by a more straight-forward method of story telling, even including scriptural references at the bottom of each frame, demonstrating his concern that this didactic message be universally understood as a matter of moral right and wrong. Hogarth asserted the prints were intended for “Instruction,” thus “every thing necessary to be known was to be made as intelligible as possible.” See Paulson, _Hogarth_, 251.

30 In the _Tatler_ 97 of 1709, Joseph Addison retells the story of Hercules’ choice with the aim “To repair the mischief [idleness] has done, and to stock the world with a better race of mortals.” Addison identifies Hercules as being approached by the forms of Virtue and Pleasure, who both court Hercules’ favor. Pleasure first approaches Hercules, inviting him to a “region of delights” wherein his “whole employment shall be, to make your life easy, and to entertain every sense with its proper gratification.” He is promised “sumptuous tables, beds of roses, clouds of perfumes, concerts of music, crowds of beauties” and a removal from business, labor and cares. Virtue promises Hercules immortality, but explains to him the duty of virtue: “There is nothing truly valuable, which can be purchased without pains and labour...If you would be eminent in war or peace, you must become Master of all the qualifications that can make you so...My followers are favoured by the Gods, beloved by their acquaintance, esteemed by their country, and after the close of their labours, honoured by their posterity.” Joseph Addison, _The Papers of Joseph Addison, Esq. in the Tatler, Spectator, Guardian, and Freeholder..._ vol. 1. (Edinburgh: William Creach, 1790), 40-43; based on _English Short Title Catalogue. Eighteenth Century Collections Online_. http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO.
higher, more demanding path of toil and virtue. It was also incorporated into the
decorative schemes of fashionable interiors, as seen in Antonio Zucchi’s work Hercules
between Glory and the Passions commissioned for the Library and ‘Great Room,’ at
Kenwood House, London (Figure 17) in 1769.  

The “Industrious” Dairy

This dialogue was also embodied in the form and function of the pleasure dairy. The ideal of industry through honest toil was a motivation for constructing pleasure dairies and was signified within its uses. The dairy represented both aspects of this debate, as evidence of aristocratic leisure and wealth and its privileges—potential vices—and as a combatant signifier of the industry and virtue gained through voluntary and wholesome labor. Viewing the dairy in terms of this cultural debate illuminates one aspect of the ideological potency of the dairy, especially for the landed class, and explains the dairy’s accepted, even exemplary associations with propriety and industry, crowning virtues in English society.

Women refuted accusations of indolence by not abandoning the dairy space but by embracing it as a form of polite industry and beneficence that transformed their interests and tastes into socially-beneficial forms. Dairy work was traditionally a female realm of labor; but, during the eighteenth century it was widely adopted into the acceptable repertoire of virtuous activities performed by upper class women. Aristocratic

---

31 This image of Hercules was the central image in a series of nineteen paintings that decorated the library. This decorative panel was not part of Robert Adams’ original scheme for Kenwood, and was believed to be added by the Earl himself, a statement of virtue and character that alluded to the virtue and dedicated toil of the Earl of Mansfield himself (who acted as a legislator and chief justice) and one not likely overlooked by visitors. Julius Bryant, Kenwood: Paintings in the Iveagh Bequest (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 164.
women’s “delicate hands” were considered ideal for working with soft dairy foods, whose wholesome goodness implied a morally-elevating effect. Hence, dairy work was an appropriate activity for refined, elite women and the dairy came to be regarded as a feminine and uniquely genteel realm.\textsuperscript{32}

Therefore, dairy work was included with other highly-valued genteel tasks in the education of polite young girls. John Green in his account of Irish schools of the Incorporated Society, described the courses taught as the following: “…[I]n all the schools belonging to the Incorporated Society, besides the Duties of Religion, and Reading and Writing, the Boys are employed in Works of Husbandry, Gardening, &c. and the Girls in the Business of the House and Dairy, Spinning, Knitting, Sewing, &c…”\textsuperscript{33} Such training would enable these girls to contribute to the economy of their future households.

Skills like needlework, spinning, writing and those associated with decoration and household management asserted industry and demonstrated a woman’s competency in regulating the domestic domain. As one lady wrote in 1761, “The proper discharge of your domestic duties…[requires] a perfect knowledge of every branch of Household economy, without which you can neither correct what is wrong, approve what is right, or

\textsuperscript{32} The gentility of the dairy had a long history. In 1595, Henry Percy, 9\textsuperscript{th} Earl of Northumberland, wrote to his son that dairies were tolerable places for great men’s wives to occupy themselves, while a kitchen or pantry was unacceptable. Brears, “The Dairy,” 164. Hannah Woolley’s \textit{Gentlewoman’s Companion}… of the late-seventeenth century offered gentlewomen advice on how to be “delighted” by their activities in a dairy, but cautioned noble women to keep attendants and servants about them “as you cannot do all things your selves.” Hannah Woolley, \textit{The Gentlewoman’s Companion; or, A Guide to the Female Sex}…[book online] (London: William Faithorne, 1670, accessed July 2006), 204; based on \textit{Early English Books Online - Text Creation Partnership} (EEBO-TCP) http://ets.umdl.umich.edu/e/eebo.

give Direction with Propriety.” In order for the mistress of the house to maintain the necessary quality of a polite household she must have mastered them herself.

There was a strong morality associated with productive occupations such as sewing, needlework, writing and dairying. Virtuous industry was reflexive of a woman’s character. This is exemplified in George Romney’s portrait Emma Hart as ‘The Spinstress’ (1784-5) (Figure 18), a portrait of a northern woman born outside the aristocracy who was mistress to Lord Greville and later became Lady Hamilton. Emma was portrayed sitting elegantly alongside her spinning wheel, her soft and appealing gaze directed towards the viewer. Romney painted her as a muse of virtuous employ—dressed in a cream-colored gown, her hair covered, connoting ideals of simplicity, chastity and virtue as she serenely sits at the spinning wheel. The mother hen on the ground at her side emphasizes the virtue and domesticity of Hart’s employment at the wheel, taking the beauty and voluptuousness of the London socialite and creating a hushed and tranquil image of modest productivity.

This portrait is an interesting contrast to other portraits of Emma Hart in which the famed beauty, of somewhat questionable repute, was depicted in more sensual guises. For example, during the 1780s, Emma Hart was portrayed as a Bacchante—defined in a 1746 publication as “a she-priest of Bacchus, or quite simply, a courtesan”—and similar roles by the artists Joshua Reynolds, George Romney and Elizabeth Vigee-Lebrun

34 Vickery, 147. This ideal was also echoed by Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s sentimental heroine, Sophie, “One can never command well except when one knows how to do the job oneself.”

35 Bryant, 378-79. This trope was revived in 18th century portraits. The caged bird overhead is a traditional Dutch symbol for virtue. This idea is cited by Brears, but is based on studies of Netherlandish art by art historian Eddy de Jongh. Though Romney painted several paintings of Emma Hart in various mythological and historical guises, this painting was the only one in which she was portrayed engaged in everyday labor. This work was recorded in Romney’s own ledger as The Spinning Woman and was acclaimed by some to be one of Romney’s best.
Such modest images as Romney’s spinning portrait acted to stabilize the “very public and problematic identity” of the serving girl turned mistress, turned celebrity.\footnote{36 Marcia Pointon, Strategies for Showing: Women, Possession, and Representation in English Visual Culture 1665-1800 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 209. Emma Hart was portrayed as a Bacchante in multiple paintings, but is also depicted as Ariadne, the woman with whom Bacchus, the god of wine and revelry, fell madly in love. These depictions range from playful to seductive. The image shown in Figure 19 is that of Emma Hart as Ariadne, showing the lascivious potential of the portrait subject.}

Dedicated industry and meticulous care were fundamental for dairy work. William Marshall in his popular 1789 treatise on agriculture declared “Skill, Industry, Cleanliness” to be the principal requisites in managing a dairy. According to Marshall, “Cleanliness may indeed be considered as the first qualification of a dairywoman...Cleanliness implies Industry. A…dairywoman is at hard work, from four o’clock in the morning, until bed time.”\footnote{Ibid., 178.} The industry, exactness, gentle care and cleanliness required of dairy practice were attributed to those dairy maids—real or imitated—who were employed within. In the productivity of the dairy, women could engage in honest, wholesome labor and develop moral and refined characters. Part of its redeeming virtue was its association with country living, its idealized distance from the corrupting pastimes of urban society. Thus, the dairy became a cultural signifier that exemplified this preoccupation with creating socially-beneficial women removed from temptations of idleness.

The privileged adoption of the dairy was also a matter of industry and idleness. Many women of social renown found great satisfaction in the industrious production of...
dairy goods. Lady Mary Wortley Montague had an avid interest in dairy work. During her stay in Brescia, Italy, she was celebrated by the local people for her knowledge and skill in the art of making custards, cheesecakes and butter. 39 Louisa Connolly corresponded with her sister about the impressive production of her new dairy at Castletown, “I am very proud of having made fifty cheeses this summer, which next year will nearly keep the family in that article…my dairy is grown quite an object with me.” 40 Lady Elizabeth Yorke oversaw the workings of her dairy and in 1773 began keeping weekly records of the volume of cheeses produced. She ensured that the butter produced from her eight milk cows increased to meet the needs of the estate. 41

Though involved in the production of the dairy, their involvement was a matter of leisure, a labor unnecessary for their situation, one which could be undertaken at will, when living in the country and free from other engagements. 42 It was an industry borne, paradoxically, of the idle time of the aristocracy. Some women’s interest in the dairy may

39 Brears, “Dairies,” 166, 169. The people of Brescia considered erecting a statue in honor of Lady Mary Wortley Montague for the dairy knowledge that she imparted while residing there. Robinson and Brears both cite other examples of elite dairy women such as the Duchesses of Rutland and Norfolk, Queen Charlotte, Lady Spencer, Lady Gower, and the Countess of Derby.

40 Stella Tillyard, Aristocrats (New York: Ferrer, Straus and Giroux, 1994), 201. The yield from the Castletown dairy was impressive indeed. Tillyard writes, “From the dairy came 19 hundred weight of cheese, 7,934 gallons of milk, 1,496 gallons of cream, and 1,454 pounds of butter.” This amount still was inadequate to provide for the entire estate during the year.

41 Brears, “Dairies,” 174. Brears goes into great depth about dairy processes and what aspects of the dairy work aristocratic women would have likely been involved in.

42 Regardless of her Ladyship’s involvement in the dairy, most estates employed dairy maids to govern the milking processes year-round and to oversee the more laborious aspects of the estate’s production, such as the milking. Many dairies, such as the dairy at Kenwood House also incorporated living space for the dairy maid into the dairy complex, see Oxford Archaeological Unit, “Dairy at Kenwood House: Draft Interim Report,” (London: English Heritage, 1998), 3. In the Gothic dairy at Cobham Hall, the dairy maid’s quarters were located in the cloister area, and the dairy maid, Elizabeth Cadwell, was paid nine pounds per year to make cheeses, Sylvia Hammond, Cobham Hall, e-mail correspondence with author, May 8, 2007.
have been less a matter of their proficient knowledge of the dairy, but rather as a
diversion to occupy their time while in the countryside.

Lady Lavinia Spencer lived most of the year at the family estate at Althorp in
Northamptonshire, where she sought hobbies and activities to counter her sense of
idleness. Though among the most prominent social circles, Lavinia’s correspondences
speak of her distaste for the social life of London and her preference for country living. 43
At the same time, her correspondences are peppered with complaints about her idleness
and “the very great want of occurrences in so retired a life as mine.” 44

In 1787, records indicate that Lady Spencer began fashioning a new dairy space
as another way to occupy her time and to create a space for herself in the estate park
(Figure 20). Her exacting correspondences to Henry Holland regarding the dairy’s
construction reflect her thorough interest in the project and a desire to achieve an ideal
aesthetic in her dairy. Though progress was too slow for her tastes, the dairy cottage was
completed the following year. 45

In 1788, with the dairy completed, Lady Spencer turned her attention to a new
project, that of constructing a charitable school for local girls on the estate, to consume
her time and energies in a virtuous manner. On October 2, 1788, Lady Spencer wrote
“…This new hobby horse of mine has made me write every thing but what I ought…” 46

43 Lady Lavinia Spencer, Althorp, to Countess Spencer, December 13, 1788, British Library, Add.
75598, “Really, London is now the most odious place I ever was in – Party rage is so high & people are so
outrageous & absurd that there is even less comfort in society now than there ever was I have always
thought that in the best of time there was nothing that deserved the name of Society in London…”

44 Ibid., May 8, 1787.

45 Lady Lavinia Spencer, Althorp, to Earl Spencer, October 20, 1787, British Library, Add. 75927.

46 Lady Lavinia Spencer, Althorp, to Countess Spencer, October 2, 1788, British Library, Add.
75598.
Again, on November 30, 1788, she wrote to her mother-in-law, “I have many many questions to ask you about my school but I have no time at present to do it in a proper way…It is one of the most entertaining hobby horses I ever had & will I am certain continue to give me the greatest satisfaction.”

Industrious and charitable endeavors, such as constructing a dairy and building a school for young girls were “hobby horses” utilized by the mistress of the estate to spare herself from the idleness of wealthy country living. It reflects Lady Lavinia Spencer’s response to current dialogues about industry and idleness and the need for aristocratic women to devote their energies and means to beneficial endeavors.

Many women truly did see the need for activity and industry within their daily routines. Women were aware of the discourse and many were also concerned about the threat of the dreaded onset of aristocratic idleness. There was a real threat of ennui or illness due to want of activity and occupations. Louisa, Lady Mansfield, who was mistress over a large dairy at Kenwood House, wrote to her sister of the “variety of indoor occupations w’ch prevents Ennui when I can’t go out,” such as practicing music

---

47 Ibid., September 5, 1789. One year after her school was completed, Lady Spencer writes of yet another new project occupying her thoughts and energies: the redesigning and refurbishing of Althorp house. She wrote, “It is even now the source of the greatest pleasure to me for I am all day long forming schemes & laying plans about it.”

48 It is interesting to note that her school for young girls seemed to preach the same morals of industry, as she described it in her correspondences: “I am now fitting up a room…with a very pretty Cottage-like bowwindow looking Southward…for my Schoolroom… I shall cover the Wall above this with prints from the Bible & the subject printed under them & perhaps the story of the industrious servant Girl who from always doing her business early, & being tidy, and neat the rest of the day, was married by her Master, & became Mistress of the Farm she had served in; - and other agreeable wise histories of the same kind, well within the Childrens comprehension, & of a moral tendency.” See Add. 75598, October 2, 1788, Lavinia Spencer, Althorp, to her mother-in-law, Countess Spencer. She later wrote that she wished to have “Emblazoned one or two sentences from the bible in favor of industry” over the chimney piece of the school room. See Add. 75598, December 13, 1788, Lavinia Spencer, Althorp, to Countess Spencer.
and spinning. However, some women simply adopted the dairy and its decorative appeal out of popular taste and fashion and seemed to have little real engagement with its functions. This may have been the case with Lady Lyttelton’s dairy at Hagley Park. Lady Luxborough, who herself kept an active dairy on her estate at Barrels, remarked in a letter to William Shenstone that she could “scarcely form an idea of Lady Lyttelton presiding over a Dairy,” implying a character that lacked aptitude or temperament for managing the complexities and details of a dairy.

Thus, dairies were privileged spaces used by the aristocracy to pass their leisured moments and also to prohibit the exacerbation of idleness and its effects. Regardless, the connotations of industry and morality still held in dairies used for the pleasant occupation and amusement of the wealthy. The positive connotations of the dairy were inscribed upon the aristocratic dairy maids who embraced the dairy practice. This is true of Queen Mary’s dairy at Hampton Court Palace, one of the earliest examples of a pleasure dairy in England. In 1693, Queen Mary II and her husband William III, England’s new monarchs, began redecorating Hampton Court Palace and gardens to suit their Dutch tastes. In her private galleries within the gardens of the palace, Mary constructed a dairy room. The young queen furnished it with dazzling white and blue Delft tiles, ordered from her native Holland and used the space to display her impressive collection of Delft and China

49 Lady Mansfield seems to have been engaged in range of industrious occupations throughout her life. Her daughter wrote: “[M]y dear Mother …delighted in [spinning] & made many experiments with different sorts of wool from her own sheep, & also encouraged spinning to the utmost…I have a recollection of two dresses made of her own spinning, a very fine woolen stuff…There is also a very fine tablecloth & napkins, believed to have been made entirely or in part from her spinning.” Caroline Murray, note attached to letter from Lady Louisa Mansfield to Mary, Mrs. Thomas Graham, October/November 1791, NAS Acc. 12686/59, National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh.

wares.\textsuperscript{51} Daniel Defoe described the dairy as “the pleasantest little place within Doors, that could possibly be made.”\textsuperscript{52}

Mary’s charming dairy was a space in which she modeled virtuous, exemplary female behaviors. She fashioned a realm within her new home where she engaged in the dairy works, as well as the knitting and gardening that she enjoyed, and which were noted by the always-observing public. Though the construction of her dairy did not long precede her death in 1694, Mary’s tastes and activities as newly appointed sovereign were recognized by her adopted people. In a eulogy of 1695, it was said of Queen Mary: “In all those hours that were not given to better employment, she wrought with her own hands...It was a new thing, and looked like a sight, to see a Queen work so many hours a day...So far from being fond of great Dainties, that I heard Her once say, that she could live in a Dairy. What an enemy she was to idleness...”\textsuperscript{53} During her short reign as queen, Mary acquired a distinctive virtue in the eyes of her countrymen because of her engagement in industrious pastimes.

This industry was a valuable form of self-fashioning for these women. Their industrious endeavors could be put on display not only in the dairy but by their charitable distribution of the butter, cheese and creams made in the dairy, which connoted a wholesome brand of domesticity, productivity and rural innocence. Lady Henrietta Luxborough constructed a dairy and \textit{ferme ornée} at her estate, Barrels, after being essentially banished from society following the scandal of an alleged affair. According to

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{51}] Elizabeth Hamilton, \textit{William’s Mary} (New York: Taplinger, 1972), 260.
\item[\textsuperscript{52}] Daniel Defoe’s \textit{Tour Through Great Britain}, quoted in Ernest Law, \textit{History of Hampton Court Palace in Orange and Guelph Times}, vol. 3 (London: George Bell and Sons, 1891), 28.
\item[\textsuperscript{53}] \textit{The Royal Diary}, 1705, quoted in Law, 29.
\end{itemize}
Meredith Martin, Lady Luxborough’s employment in her dairy figures prominently in her correspondences. She sent large amounts of her dairy products to friends and family from whom she was now isolated, charitable tokens that evidenced her dairy practice. She realized the potent signification of her dairy activities and used them, paradoxically, to assert a public, redemptive, image of industry and virtue from the confines of her country estate. Lady Mansfield also was known to send cream cheeses to family and friends and serve her homemade Stilton cheese to guests in her home, for which she received much praise.

The dairy’s goodness and industrious nature dissociated women from the label of idleness. It did the same for the decoration and expense manifested in the space itself. A good example is the amount of porcelain goods purchased for and displayed in dairies. During the eighteenth century, women’s insatiable desire for expensive commodities like tea sets, china, and porcelain were the targets of significant criticism. Moralists viewed porcelain and decorative wares as symbols of extravagant consumption, a waste of money that would be better directed towards familial interests and time that should be dedicated towards family and domestic duties. Women’s desire for commodities was

---

54 Martin, 231-32. Lady Luxborough’s generous giving of the milk products that she herself made could be seen as her giving of the milk of charity, an allegorical trope with particular resonance to feminine icons of charity seen breastfeeding—giving of their own milk.

55 Lady Louisa Mansfield, London, to the Honorable Mrs. Thomas Graham, March 26, 1789, NAS Acc. 3591, National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh. See also General Lord Lynedoch, Lynedoch, to Lady Mansfield, October 10, 1833, NRAS 776/Box 95/2/37, National Register of Archives Scotland, Edinburgh. Lord Lynedoch writes: “I wanted to acknowledge your kind attention till I cd vouch for the excellence of the Cream Cheese wch you were so good as to send me yesterday.”

56 Beth Kowaleski-Wallace, “Women, China, and Consumer Culture in Eighteenth-century England,” Eighteenth-Century Studies 29, no. 2 (1995): 154. Because of women’s weakness for spending, they were considered by many contemporary writers as principle promoters of the eighteenth-century revolution in society’s consumption of those goods, although actual research shows no significant difference between male and female consumption during that time period.
even seen as overriding their interest in and attraction to the male sex. The poet John Gay
alluded to this in a verse:

What ecstacies her bosom fire!
How her eye languish with desire!
How blest, how happy I should be,
Were that fond glance bestow’d on me!...
New doubts and fears within me war;
What rival’s near? a China jar.
China’s the passion of her soul;
A cup, a plate, a dish, a bowl,
Can kindle wishes in her breast,
Inflame with joy, or break her rest.57

Though dairies often displayed china and were elaborately furnished with
delicate, fashionable porcelain ware, they escaped the label of aristocratic excess as well
as criticism about consumer spending.58

The acceptance of oriental porcelain in the dairy was also significant. Throughout
the century, the damaging economic effect of importing foreign commodities was a
subject of intense debate. Women very often “bore the brunt” of anti-importation tirades,
as they were believed to be the chief consumers of such goods.59 However, even these
expensive imported luxury items were neutralized in the dairy. Whether used in dairy
process or simply displayed within the chaste dairy, such imports were considered as
being put to morally and economically beneficial purposes.60

John Gay’s poem, “To a Lady on her Passion for Old China,” London, 1725, likely written for the Duchess
of Queensbury.

58 Sources that speak of specific dairy sites or dairy practices in general offer no critiques of the
porcelain goods or extensive decorations within. Granted, these sources were written by individuals of a
class status such that they too aspired to these dairies or found great pleasure in them and lauded their
display.


60 The incorporation of chinonerie into dairies also leads into a discussion of the nationalistic
aspect of English industry. During the age of innovation and imperialist expansion, England saw its
The dairy space was a proper, acceptable site in which to channel women’s interest in porcelain and china into productivity that would not only benefit the estate, but also the economy and morality of the nation. As Martin writes, “Among their many other attractive qualities, pleasure dairies proposed that their patrons’ interest in consumption and display was being channeled into socially useful ends.” Pleasure dairies offered women the guise of removing themselves from cultural, class practices which could be deemed as decadent and idle, while still retaining the distinguishing features of their class and rank.

Even the adulteration of the dairy space with tea rooms and music rooms was acceptable in light of contemporary dialogues regarding female industry and idleness. The sociality that took place in the dairy, because of its situation, was considered moral and preferable to that of other social venues, which were increasingly criticized for their questionable moral influence on women. Female realms like the tea table began to be censured for not only their potential ill effects on the health of women, but for the immoral influence of the gossip and idle chatter that took place among the women there. In contrast with many public spaces, like tea rooms, salons, assemblies and the progress and its economic growth as evidence of the industriousness of the English people. Oceanic and Asian cultures were also believed to be indolent and altogether degenerate. The use of exotic china wares, real or imitated, within dairies can be seen as putting exotic luxury items to proper use in the dairies of the English, the exotic in service of the domestic—an interesting analogy, considering England’s belief in its own industry and in the indolence of other cultures and its growing imperial power.

61 Martin, 213. Martin discusses the use of pleasure dairies by mondaine women in England and France to retain the privileges and practices of aristocratic living, while also conforming to social ideals for moderate living.

theatre, in which women could associate but often received criticism for it, the dairy was one venue that seemed removed from the stereotypes of corruption and immorality.

Thus, in relation to the dialogue between industry and idleness, the dairy embodied aspects of both. The complex and contradictory nature of the dairy as both a site of ostentation and leisure as well as productivity and order was an embodiment of realistic social attitudes about the acceptable balance between idleness and industry in society. Though moralizing texts spoke out rather puritanically against pleasure, popular dialogue was not so black and white. Leisure and pleasure, such as that enacted and displayed in the dairy, were *expected* among men and women of polite society and were deemed acceptable; however, they must be balanced by a display of private economy, industry and domestic propriety, qualities demonstrated through one’s engagement in certain activities, like dairy work.

Even the conservative moralist Eliza Haywood agreed, “Public diversions…may be enjoyed without prejudice, provided they are frequented in reasonable manner…It is the immoderate Use, or rather the Abuse of anything, which renders the partaking of it a Fault.”63 It was generally believed that diversions were acceptable, even necessary at certain periods of life, and were not condemned as long as the individual evidenced that they managed their stewardships well and “earned [their] pleasures by [their] early rising.”64 Thus, the dairy correlated with prevailing views of acceptable industry, the actuality of the debate, which permitted the dual nature of pleasure dairies’ ostentation. The proper display of activity and industry in the dairy countered any pretence of

---

63 Quoted in Vickery, 279.

64 Ibid., 280.
indolence and excess within the dairy, or its occupants, and legitimized the fanciful nature of the space.

This notion is exemplified in a contemporary visitor’s description of the “Dressed Dairy” at Penrhyn estate. He describes Lady Penrhyn’s dairy as:

…[A] peasant in holiday clothes, where Nature is not farther sacrificed to Art than to improve her beauties and conceal or remedy her defects, Art only ministering as handmaid at her toilet; where, in short, the true characteristick of a dairy and all its appendages, neatness and cleanliness are united with elegance, proving that in every process which relates to milk nicety cannot be carried to excess; and, as in this instance, an exception to the general rule, that extremes are neither unbecoming nor useless, and need not be avoided. 65

The lavish ornamentation and practicality of the dairy were praised as necessary and acceptable elements. The decorative veneer of the dairy was considered highly appropriate for a site dedicated to good morals: productivity, neatness and cleanliness.

Thus, the virtue of the dairy legitimized the dairy’s new visage and usage within the fashionable vocabulary of the landed aristocracy. It allowed women to adopt the virtues of the dairy itself, and thus acted to counter negative criticisms of aristocratic leisure. Pleasure dairies offered a venue in which aristocratic women could assert their distinction as the fashionable women and leading consumers in society but also their industry, as women who did not have to work but chose to because of moral decency and personal virtue. 66 The dairy represented the victory of female industry over idleness.

---


66 Martin, 213.
The Industrious Aristocracy

Interest in ornamental dairies was not entirely exclusive to women. It is interesting to note that gentlemen were also influential in the prominence of ornamental dairies, as well. At this time, dairy work and other forms of “improvements” in agriculture and husbandry were included in the focus on innovation in agriculture and became departments of relevance among aristocratic gentlemen. Thus, the dairy’s industrious signification held meaning for not just women, but the aristocratic class as a whole. Located in an estate where improvements were taking place, dairies referenced the industry of men who governed the estate and who were traditionally responsible for improvements, as well as female industry. Ornamental dairies and other productive agricultural buildings were showpieces within landscape parks that symbolized the aristocratic class and defined them as industrious and moral, the patrons of improvements. In a landscape that also represented English nationhood, ornamental dairies signified improvement, industry and prosperity among the wealthy elite and the entire English nation.

Ornamental dairies are associated with the rise of agricultural innovation which occurred during the eighteenth century. At this time, England became an increasing agricultural power in Western Europe. There was a significant impulse to increase the agricultural productivity of the land to meet the demands of the market both locally and internationally. As agrarian interest grew and “improvement” became an important

---

67 The push for “improvements” in agriculture was one catalyst for the aristocracy’s interest in the dairy. As the century progressed, England began applying technological innovations and large-scale industry to their greatest national resource: the land. Langford writes that “Perhaps more than at any other time in its history the England of George II was the granary of western Europe,” Langford, 165. There was increased interest in inventions and technologies to systematize planting, harvesting and production, agricultural publications and farming and agricultural societies. Parliamentary enclosure of land also increased to enhance agricultural production.
doctrine, landed gentlemen were encouraged to participate in beneficial forms of
agriculture, including the construction and promotion of dairy work.⁶⁸ As patriarchs of
their estates, men of property were urged to direct their vast economic resources towards
industry and agriculture, as a means to test out agricultural practices and innovations that
could benefit the entire country. Rural farmers and those of the laboring class could not
afford to do so; hence, it was the duty of the aristocracy morally, economically and
patriotically to focus their energies into improving their lands.

Scores of men appropriated money for or commissioned dairy outfits on their
estates. In 1783, Nathaniel Ryder, Lord Harrowby, went on a tour of estates with newly-
constructed dairies. Lord Harrowby visited several dairy sites, taking detailed notes about
the furnishings, decorative embellishments, tiles and stone work, as well as the size and
practicality of the space.⁶⁹ He interviewed the dairy maids to ascertain details of
production. All this was to benefit his own dairy, which he was enthusiastically
constructing as part of his model home farm at his Staffordshire estate, Sandon Hall
(Figure 21). Harrowby commissioned Samuel Wyatt to design his dairy, a large structure
that contained a dairy, kitchen, scullery and a cheese room.

The dairy was located at the bottom of a low valley and sat at the northern end of
his home farm buildings, forming an elegant front which could be seen from the estate
and gardens. Lord Harrowby chose a location that provided close access to the nearby

⁶⁸ The changes and progress of agriculture in the late eighteenth century was one example of the
dialogue of improvement that became a prominent focus of social, political and economic institutions
during this “age of improvement.” While the term was applied to the correction and refinement of any
deficient areas of character or society, the term was originally used to describe the profitable and
technologically-progressive management of the land. See Langford, 432.

⁶⁹ Nathaniel Ryder, 1st Lord Harrowby, “Late Diaries,” Harrowby MSS Trust, vol. 437, document
72, Sandon Hall, Staffordshire.
turnpike and running water, a site with excellent views. Though included with the model farm buildings, it was a site for entertainment and recreation. The dairy was fitted with a tea parlor, as well as a cold bath used by Lord Harrowby. Surviving letters indicate that the dairy became a favorite site for walks and for entertaining visitors.

Philip Yorke, the 3rd Lord Hardwicke, commissioned John Soane to design a dairy as part of his plan for an innovative model farm on his estate at Wimpole, Cambridgeshire. The primitive-style dairy was located at a spot removed from the rest of the farm buildings. Though Soane’s plan was not constructed, it is known that Lord Hardwicke encouraged innovation in his dairy, as well as on his entire farm. During one year, a woman was brought to tutor the dairy maid on the making of Cambridgeshire soft cheese. The Gothic-style dairy at Cobham Hall (Figures 22-23) was constructed as a result of Lord Cobham’s resolve to improve the agricultural production on his estate. As part of this remodeling effort, the dairy was not only rebuilt, but was moved from its location among farm buildings to a more prominent part of the estate, to serve pleasurable functions and to serve as an eye-catcher from the house.

Knowledge of dairy production became a matter of interest to many male “improvers.” The Duke of Wellington, the hero of England’s Napoleonic wars, demonstrated an interest in dairy production. He divulged his “particularly advantageous”

---

70 Ibid. A few of Lord Harrowby’s friends encouraged him to locate the dairy closer to the main house for convenience, but Harrowby elected for the current site.


73 Ibid., 90.

74 Bowdler, 80.
recipe for butter to Louisa, Lady Mansfield, in an attempt to prove his understanding of dairy processes. He wrote, “My dear Lady Mansfield you will recollect that you made very Light of my Dairy knowledge when I ventured to make a suggestion of you in your beautiful Dairy at Kenwood. I now send you the receipt in question for making Butter...”\textsuperscript{75} Thus, a prominent group of gentlemen were becoming engaged in dairy pursuits; however, as Wellington’s remarks to Lady Mansfield suggest, women were still perceived as the experts in the dairy practice.

Some of the elite dairy mistresses discussed earlier were involved in the general spirit of agricultural innovation as well. At Croome Court, Worcestershire, both the home farm and the dairy were a result of Lady Coventry’s particular interest in agriculture.\textsuperscript{76} Elizabeth Lamb, Lady Melbourne, who had a dairy at Brocket Hall, was also a notable agricultural improver. She was praised by Arthur Young for the agricultural innovations she sponsored in Hertfordshire and was noted for possessing a Woburn chaff-cutter, a new device for bruising oats and beans.\textsuperscript{77} Lady Mansfield, the dairy mistress at Kenwood, took great interest in the breeding of long-horn cattle. She attended cattle fairs in order to “[make] acquaintance with the various breeds of cattle” and learn the latest innovations for their care.\textsuperscript{78} Her correspondences evidence her knowledge of the stock on the estate.

\textsuperscript{75} Duke of Wellington to Countess of Mansfield, September 11, 1833, NRAS 777/Box 95/2/16, National Register of Archives Scotland, Edinburgh.

\textsuperscript{76} Catherine Gordon, \textit{The Coventrys of Croome Court} (Chicester: Phillimore, 2000), 98.


\textsuperscript{78} Lady Louisa Mansfield, London, to Mary, Mrs. Thomas Graham, September 9, 1790, NAS Acc. 12686/59, National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh. Lady Mansfield wrote that she went to a cattle fair. “I
Whether part of a larger model farm program or placed as independent structures within the estate, many of these dairies referenced an on-going interest in agricultural improvements within the estate. In the eyes of contemporaries, this engagement in agrarian improvement was an occupation that reflected very positively on the aristocratic gentlemen and women who engaged in it.

As with dairy work itself, there was a distinctive morality associated with agrarian pursuits and improvements during the eighteenth century. The profession of farming acquired a romanticized veneer in the 1700s. Inspired by the Arcadian spirit and Biblical heritage, farming and husbandry were praised as virtuous and morally-renewing activities. Lord Bacon wrote: “God Almighty first planted a garden, and indeed it is the purest of human pleasures. It is the greatest refreshment to the spirits of man; without which, buildings and palaces are but gross handyworks.”79 As the first employment given to man, gardening and farming had wholesome and pleasurable effects on the mind, soul and body. The earl-Bishop of Derry wrote in 1785, “I love agriculture because it makes good citizens, good husbands, good fathers, good children; because it does not leave a man time to plunder a neighbour, and because its plenty bereaves him of temptation.”80 Genteel farming even acquired something of the “innocence and simplicity” of the “noble savage” celebrated at the time.81

80 Ibid., 6.
The moral influence of farming and agriculture were emphasized in the propagandistic writings encouraging aristocratic men to engage in improvements. In his treatise, *Improvements on Estates* (1806) J.C. Loudon wrote, “agriculture and planting have been pursued by some of the greatest men in every age; many of whom have left ample testimonies of the satisfaction which they derived from practicing those arts.” Improvement was of both utilitarian and moral benefit to those visionary men who engaged in agriculture, but also benefited the entire society. Nathaniel Kent discusses this in his *Hints to Gentlemen of Landed Property* in 1776:

Agriculture is the most useful science a gentleman can attain; it is the noblest amusement the mind can employ itself in, and tends, at the same time, to the increase of private property, and public benefit…Indeed to them it becomes a duty, which they owe not only to themselves, but to the community; as it behoves every man to make the most of his property…knowing that their own private fortunes are flourishing, at the same time that the mechanic, and labourer, receive advantage from their exertions.

Genteel engagement in farming, agriculture and husbandry demonstrated the economic savvy of the improver as well as his awareness of its widespread social benefits. Agricultural improvements, according to Kent, “are diffusive of general good to mankind” and should be promoted by all ranks of men “whether by liberal aid, industry or talents.”

---

society or peasant types, who were removed from society and cultural modes and as a result were perceived as possessing a kind of nobility and superior innocence.

82 Loudon, 4.

Improvements enacted on these estates were considered a superior form of activity, a noble and honest means by which the wealthy could increase their prosperity and that of their neighbors and their country. Wealth was not corrupting and evil if it resulted in activities that benefitted the nation. As Kent implied, the virtue of improvements did much to remove gentlemen from accusations of idleness, because their own exertions were beneficial to all. A tribute written about the Duke of Bridgewater affirms this: “[He was] the benefactor of his country. By his active spirit and his unshaken perseverance, he amassed immense wealth. But the public grew rich with him; and his labours were not more profitable to himself, than they were to his country.”85

Because of its national benefits, improvements also had patriotic connotations. Contemporaries regarded agricultural production as the foundation for a powerful nation. Any contribution to this national effort was perceived as strengthening the English nation and heightening its advantage over competing nations, especially France.86 This attitude of the patriotic effort and nationalistic benefits of agriculture engagement is expressed well in Alexander Pope’s Epistle to Lord Burlington (1730-31):

…His father’s acres who enjoys in peace,  
Or makes his neighbours glad if he increase:  
Whose cheerful tenants bless their yearly toil,  
Yet to their lord owe more than to the soil:  
Whose ample lawns are not ashamed to feed  
The milky heifer and deserving steed;  
Whose rising forests, not for pride or show,  
But future buildings, future navies grow:  
Let his plantations stretch from down to down,  
First shade a country, and then raise a town.”87

85 Langford, 599.

86 Robinson, Georgian Model Farms, 6.

Pope praises the landowner who through his broadminded efforts at cultivating his “ample lawns” have benefited his “cheerful tenants” that share in the profits. In this idealized passage, the gentleman farmer’s efforts are not intended for “pride or show,” but to benefit his tenants and ensure a prosperous national future.

The nationalistic virtue of agricultural activity found its apex in the nation’s sovereign. King George III was an eager agriculturalist, jokingly named “Farmer George.” After 1777, the royal family spent most of their time at Windsor Castle, experimenting with farming, dairying and other aspects of agricultural production. The king and queen’s agricultural interests and their aversion to the decadence of court life resonated with “countless middle-class households who saw in the royal couple the living embodiment of respectable family life.”

There was an air of virtue and domesticity implied when the wealthy and powerful diverted their resources and energies to beneficial and wholesome industry.

Aristocratic Virtue on View

In an era of imitation, there was social benefit in the aristocracy’s adoption of working ideals and lifestyles that refuted accusations of idleness. Much like women’s involvement in the dairy, the elite class’s associations with improvement evidenced a sense of industry and propriety and a desire to live a life of active civic virtue removed from stereotypes of aristocratic idleness, which benefited their public persona. The class adoption and promotion of ornamental dairies was heightened by their inclusion within

88 Langford, 581.
landscape parks where their industrious activities would be viewed by the public and be read as part of the aristocracy’s identity.

Pleasure dairies were displayed on estates that were becoming public spaces of viewing, sites where aristocratic modes and lifestyles were observed, imagined and assessed in the minds of spectators. Though privately-owned and privileged, country estates were increasingly available to the public gaze, albeit a somewhat privileged gaze. At this time, national tourism became a favorite recreation and pastime among many of the middle and upper classes. Country estates and landscape parks were popular tourist destinations. Brewer writes, “By late in the century England’s country houses had become items on the itinerary of genteel tourists, one of the attractions…visited by ladies and gentlemen in pursuit of leisure and knowledge.”

Modern English travelers were armed with educational writings, booklets, and guidebooks that instructed about ways of viewing architecture, landscape, agriculture and gardens. Vickery affirms, “‘How-to’ manuals for patriotic travelers were published throughout the eighteenth century, encouraging the observation and investigation of everything from field systems to local birth rates.” Pamphlets and literature were published detailing the interesting features contained in estate houses and landscape parks. Thus, any of the literate public, whether tourists or “armchair tourists,” could “view” various estates throughout England and their features, including pleasure dairies with their connotations of agriculture, industry and privilege.

89 Brewer, 630.

90 Vickery, 252.
Visitors to Lord Hardwicke’s estate at Wimpole were instructed on the prudent and judicious workings of his home farm. As an early guidebook wrote, “His lordships’ farming establishment is on a very extensive scale; and, from every improved method in agriculture being judiciously introduced, the produce of this ground is yearly increasing...”

Hardwicke’s agricultural engagement and his charitable demonstrations towards the workers on his estate and farm were valuable propaganda and efforts that greatly raised the esteem of himself and his estate. By 1814, Lord Hardwicke was acting as President of the Board of Agriculture.

Dairies were distinctive features within these landscapes of class and improvement that were toured by visitors to the estate. At Kenwood dairy, the buildings were intended to be viewed as a circuit through the structures. The dairy was a multi-room complex, where various stages of the dairying process were the focus of display. The complex itself, a Swiss chateau-inspired grouping of buildings, likely thatched, consisted of a dairy, rooms for the dairy maid, a churning room and tea room (Figure 24). The visitors would first enter the dairy by mounting the grassy steps into the north door, where they would see the dairy room, lined with cream tiles and black and red Greek key pattern enhancements (Figures 25 and 26). From there, a path led across the small courtyard from the dairy to the south block. Visitors would first be shown to the churning room, which was also lined with shelves displaying the ornamental china wares. Next, guests would be led to the tea room, an elegantly decorated room with an octagonal dome and floral medallions. The tea room French doors opened to the south and onto a path

---

91 Souden, 89.
92 Bowdler, 34.
that led the visitors to the rustic bridge, which led into the pleasure garden of the estate.\textsuperscript{93}

Each aspect of the dairy process was displayed for visitors on the estate.

Dairies were showpieces that highlighted the agricultural savvy and economy of these estates, as well as their taste. This is evidenced in the account written by Earl Cooksey regarding the King’s visit to Croome Court, Worcester, in 1788:

The King, Queen, three Princesses…arrived there at 10 o’clock – breakfasted – saw the Dairy and walked the round of the plantations. The Queen then ordered her carriage into which she took the two oldest Princesses & Lady Coventry – the youngest & attendants Lady Weymouth (I believe) were in the second coach. The King with Lord Coventry on horseback attended by his Suite preceding the Coaches, rode over the whole of the Park & Lady Coventry’s Farm followed by at least 500 horsemen, women on horseback & the most motley group conceivable.\textsuperscript{94}

Cooksey’s brief account is notable because it emphasizes the dairy site and related agricultural buildings as the focus of the estate tour given to the royal guests and over 500 other spectators upon visiting the estate. Though the party eventually toured all of the park and farm, the dairy’s proximity to the house made it the initial showpiece of this aspect of Coventry’s estate.

These “fancy” dairies asserted the industry of the estate but also reflected the character of the estate's proprietors. Sir Richard Joseph Sulivan, visiting the Broadlands estate in 1778, described the dairy “placed at the end of a shady walk on the banks of a little rivulet, whose sides were covered with the drooping willow, and whose appearance altogether modestly proclaimed the attention of its owner; the apartments rurally fitted

\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 5. This possible scheme is proposed by the archaeological survey team at Kenwood.

up, and the whole ornamented with little bustos and statues of exquisite workmanship."95

Interestingly, both the modest order of the dairy and its quaint décor testified to the attention and care lavished upon the site by its owner and implies that such care and taste reigned throughout all matters of estate and business attended to by the owners. This is stated in Sulivan’s account of the drawing room furnishings, “…there is an elegant simplicity in the furniture, which affords not a less degree of satisfaction…All was neatness and unpresuming beauty; nor were little matters less attended to, than those which might be supposed to fall more immediately under observation.”96 Sulivan describes the dairy as one such “little matter” of which great care and order was disposed.

The industry and morality of improvement implied by the presence of a working dairy structure, regardless of its ornamentation, asserted these characteristics as part of aristocratic identity. Dairies were located within a landscape that was continually being used to define and represent the values and ideals of that very class. Landed estates and their garden parks were a tableau of landed identity. This assertion has become somewhat cliché among scholars of this era of landscape gardens; however, during the eighteenth century English country estates became microcosms of landed power, of the world of the elite. The vast homes were objects of history, taste, and leisure, many containing valuable collections of art and artifacts from around the world. Gardens themselves demonstrated economic prosperity through the sheer acreage of their property, as well as cultural and social dominance through their decoration with classical temples, statuary and


96 Ibid.
fashionable Gothic or exotic-style porticoes. Together, the country estate became a tableau vivant of the landowner—and his family’s—power, wealth, cultural depth, taste and economy. These verdant landscapes were visual representations of the values and ideologies of the landed class, “one of the ways in which elite culture represents itself to the wider world.”

Though the landscape parks and estates signified elite status and ideologies, they were not static entities with set meanings. The associative meanings ascribed to these parks and to the English landscape itself were continually shifting throughout the century. Thus, the landscape was a space in which the definition of the aristocracy was “always-already” being formed. As the doctrines of agricultural improvement and innovation began to be adopted by the aristocracy, model farms and related structures like ornamental dairies were inserted into the landscape. Consequently, they proclaimed industry and social beneficence as part of aristocratic identity. The aristocracy fashioned themselves as the moral patrons of improvement in English society, a class of active gentlemen and women who were industrious, patriotic and morally sound.

---

98 The nature of these estates and their art, architecture and garden elements infused with cultural meaning and connotations of wealth, erudition, and classical learning can be considered as parallels of the princely galleries of art which became popular during this time period. Princely galleries also asserted the wealth, cultural understanding and taste of its owner. They were sites of display that housed collections of various items, artistic, historic, all of which had cultural meaning or import.

99 Stephen Bending, “One Among the Many: Popular Aesthetics, Polite Culture, and the Country House Landscape” in The Georgian Country House, Dana Arnold, ed. (London: Sutton Publishing, 1998), 61. Ann Bermingham discusses the preservation of pristine, natural landscapes as an attempt to reclaim the ideal past of a pre-industrial England, see Bermingham, 9-10, 15. These gardens also represent the aristocracy’s attempt to assert a status quo of their dominance or the nouveau riches’ attempt to naturalize themselves into it. Williamson further discusses the political ramifications of the landscape garden, see Williamson, 16.

The industrious activity and improvement of the dairy and its patrons justified the ostentation and evident display of the landscape parks into which they were incorporated. In reality, the implementation of increased agricultural activity and productivity on large estates was one way in which the aristocracy justified their vast land holdings. That is not to say that the increased remodeling of home farms on estates and the construction of farm buildings, like dairies, were universally intended to counter criticism of class extravagance; however, as with the dairy itself, the estate could potentially escape the criticism of luxury because of the perceived virtue of the activities within.101

Finally, privileged dairies represented the industry of the English nation. The English landscape was associated with England’s national identity. The improvement of the land was believed to represent the larger ideal of England’s industriousness and power. As showpieces of improvement and prosperity belonging to the dominant class of the nation, dairies implied the industry which was the backbone of English society and, consequently, national prosperity. During the eighteenth century, with Britain’s economic and industrial growth and their firm and progressive government, the English began to espouse a very celebratory attitude towards their nation. England saw its progress and economic growth as evidence of the industriousness of the English people, as industry was assumed to produce wealth and innovation, of which England at the time was at the forefront of its European and American neighbors. Its virtues were often compared with

101 Estate parks were statements of exclusive ownership and a privileged use of the land, one that could display its non-productivity and assert its social and cultural distinction. These large estate park were made possible by land enclosures. At a time when land was quickly being carved into productive plots to meet the needs of a rising industrial nation, these large landed estates with their vast parks of uncultivated land were antithetical to the newly-enclosed national landscape. However, when this land was put to use by experiments in husbandry, farming and dairying, this nullified somewhat the wealth and exclusion of the estate and its other elements of display, pleasure and recreation. Multiple scholars discuss the relationship between landscape parks of the elite and the enclosure movement. I have consulted Williamson, 9-11; Bermingham, 10; Langford, 438.
those of their more idle continental neighbors, most often France. A print of 1792 contrasting Britain and France labels Britain as “Industry” and France as “Idleness” (Figure 27) and asserts the “moral and national importance attached to the idea of industriousness in eighteenth-century Britain.” Industry was viewed as the necessary virtue that created and maintained the wealth and power of England. Indeed, virtue and industry were discussed as distinguishing British from other European, and certainly non-European cultures. Elizabeth Montagu, one of the leading women of the English Bluestockings, England’s female intellectual circle, commented on the difference between herself and the elite Frenchwomen after her visit to Paris in the 1770s:

I have the same love for my pigs, pride in my potatoes, solicitude for my Poultry, care of my wheat, attention to my barley, and application to the regulation of my dairy as formerly…I believe my friends at Paris would be amazed and scandalized at the joy I feel in this way of life. The business of the toilette, the amusement of les spectacles, and the pleasure of conversation engross their whole attention.

Industry was considered a nationalistic difference between English and French societies. Even English aristocrats were believed to be more socially-motivated and industrious than their continental counterparts. This ideal of the engagement and mutual responsibility of aristocracy, as the powerful elites of society, in furthering the prosperity of their nation could also be seen in aristocratic dairies and improvements.

Previous discussions of ornamental pleasure dairies have noted that the distinctive productivity and social responsibility implied by the dairy was applied to the women who

---

102 Langford, 582. The virtue of British society often acquired a nationalistic tone, stated in contrast with the excesses and increasing secularism perceived among French counterparts. For instance, Queen Charlotte adamantly avoided patronizing French frippery and the immodesty of French fashions in favor of native goods and a less extravagant toilette.

103 Jordan, 17.

inhabited the space. Dairies were feminine spaces whose morality countered the luxury and perceived idleness of aristocratic recreation. However, as ideological structures in a viewed landscape, these dairies not only signified feminine industry but also various associations of the industry and beneficence of the aristocracy as a whole. As a result of the eighteenth century’s focus on agricultural innovations and improvements, many gentlemen also took interest in dairy work, its outfitting and its production, creating a shared interest in the space. Additionally, these structures were located within the landscapes of elite country estates, sites that increasingly represented the values and ideologies of the aristocracy and that were displayed to the public eye through tourism and descriptions and writings in popular publications. The display of these decorative pavilions of industry asserted virtues of social engagement, industry and philanthropy for the landed elite, as well as the nation of England itself.
CHAPTER TWO

THE “NATURAL” DAIRY IN A GENDERED LANDSCAPE

Ornamental dairies are often associated with the eighteenth-century “taste” for the “Natural.” This taste was a philosophical sentiment propagated by Jean-Jacques Rousseau and others that encouraged a return to a simpler, primitive existence and celebrated those modes of life and activity removed from society’s corrupting influences. The charm and appeal of the dairy was popularized by this philosophical ideal and its romanticized celebration of simple, country living as a purer and more virtuous existence; however, the Natural connotations and association of the dairy went beyond the imitation of rural, peasant lifestyles.

The Natural and “nature” were ubiquitous terms, multivalent tag-words in eighteenth-century culture. As Ann Bermingham writes, “Nature, with its various representations….became a supreme social value…One now did something in a certain way because it was more ‘natural’; one said something in a certain way because it sounded more ‘natural’; something worked as it did because it was its ‘nature’ to do so…”¹ Nature became a doctrinal truth, a force invoked to define social action and behaviors. It described how things ought to be, but not necessarily how they were; thus it

was invoked to elicit and justify social change. All areas of society began to be defined and fashioned in terms of what was Natural.

This chapter probes the dairy’s embodiment of the Natural ideology. It is traditionally classified as a signifier of that movement; however, what is striking about the dairy itself is its un-naturalness. The aristocracy’s engagement with the dairy space was certainly not natural to their class; indeed, it was a phenomenon of the era that made its associations with that class so distinct. Nor was the structure of the pleasure dairy, with its ornamentation and leisured functions, truly Natural in its absolute removal from fashion, society and taste.

The most natural aspect of the ornamental dairy was the gendered attribution of the site. The native femininity of the space, its traditional practices, the decorative vessels and the physicality of dairy work all signified prevalent perceptions of interior and exterior ideals of scientifically-diagnosed womanhood, what contemporaries began to term the “natural” characters and traits of women. Dairies, dairy maids, dairy wares and the virtues of dairy labor reflected the societal ideal of women embodied within these sites of feminine iconography.

This chapter explicates the inherent femininity of the dairy and offers one reading of the signification of the female dairy for an eighteenth-century audience. Ornamental dairies embodied the complex dialogue about the fundamental nature of femininity in the

---


3 As discussed in the previous chapter, the dairy’s rise in popularity complicated the traditional femininity of the site. As a site related to agricultural improvements and a structure inserted into the class-oriented landscape, ornamental dairies held signification for both men and women of the upper class.

4 The eighteenth century saw the isolation of male and female as separate genders, and the exploration of male and female differences was a matter of scientific inquiry.
eighteenth century, “natural” womanhood. They referenced socially-prescribed ideals of motherhood and the inherent roles of women, which included domesticity, reproduction and proper nurturing. They became ideological constructions that paralleled social definitions and expectations about the women who claimed the dairy as their realm. Placed within a landscape that represented modes of patriarchy and power, pleasure dairies can be seen as ideological constructions that reflect the same ideal notions of women’s “natural,” socially-expected duties within their family, class and nation.

The “Feminine” Dairy

The dairy was traditionally a feminine site. Dairy labor was historically delegated to women, perhaps out of convenience as part of a woman’s domestic responsibilities. In pre-industrial times, dairying was viewed as a fundamentally female process in which “the resonances of the mothering bond imparted a crucially feminine nature” to the making of dairy products.\textsuperscript{5} The associations of female biological experience and mothering characteristics with the dairy practice inscribed femininity upon the dairy space and allowed for an imaginative conception of the dairy space as metaphorically female in poetry, plays and other popular literature. The space, its activities and the items within were all discussed and imaginatively conceived as symbolic of women’s naturally-developed character, intellect and biological characteristics.

Contemporary discussions of the dairy craft correlated with beliefs and stereotypes about the emotional and physical characteristics of women. The distinctive biological and emotional traits of the female sex were the focus of innumerable

\textsuperscript{5} Alan Davidson, \textit{The Oxford Companion to Food} (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 692-93.
discussions and speculation in published writings. Many of the traits that were stereotyped as feminine were necessary for successful dairy production. Dairy labor required meticulous care, gentleness, sensitivity, nurturing and patience in handling and preparing the delicate products, all characteristics that aligned with perceptions of women’s natures. As a result, dairy practices were described as activities governed by intuition that required a certain “knack” unique to women. The “unscientific,” empirical practices of making creams and cheeses which were passed down through generations of dairy maids, were also perceived by masculine observers as being appropriate to a woman’s intellect and experience.

The nature of the dairy craft drew obvious associations with women’s reproductive capabilities and responsibilities in society, prevalent social dialogues indexed by aristocratic dairy structures. There was a very real connection between the iconography and activities of the dairy and ideals regarding the natural reproductive capabilities of women; hence, dairy pavilions became sites that referenced ideologies regarding the roles, responsibilities and duties of women. The ornamentation and milk-transforming activities of the dairy itself have been read as “disembodied form of milk giving” in which the pains of both mothers and animals were inconsequential. Many ornamental dairies were decorated with symbols of the milking process, especially referencing the milk production of cows. This milk iconography alluded to the milking

---


8 The dairy at Broadlands had small statues of cows and is described in Gervase Jackson-Stops, “Broadlands, Hampshire—III” *Country Life* (Dec 1980), 2335. The dairy at Hamels Park was designed
experience of cows, but had natural associations with female milk, especially considering contemporary scientific exploration into the biology and lactation of women.

During the Enlightenment era of scientific categorization, evaluation and analysis, there is some indication that the shared experience of milk production was a correlation between women and animals. In some treatises the discussion of women’s milk was discussed in series with the milk yielded by cows, asses and goats. Indeed, animals’ milk and its production within the dairy by women drew ideological parallels between women’s experience in milk production and nursing. This parallel between the production of cow’s milk and the similar processes in women are visually expressed in contemporary genre scenes depicting peasant nursing women and cows in such a way that the “the spiritual and animal polarities of the concept of motherhood are effortlessly conjoined.” They were processes instinctive and fundamental to the biology of all involved in dairy labor.

Women’s physical nature was closely associated with the dairy not only because of biological associations but also because of the highly experiential nature of the physical labor performed there. Women’s bodies were an integral part of the dairy

with a cow overhead. Sir John Soane’s drawings for the Lee’s Court dairy show small decorative roundels on the walls containing images of dairy cows (see Soane Museum 1/65). Fountains were decorated with carved reliefs of cows, which seem to be the icon established to represent the presence of milk production, a process shared by female occupants of the pleasure dairy.

---


10 Carroll, 172.

process, as a dairy maid’s physical interaction with the milky substance was essential to its successful transformation into cream, butter or cheese. A dairy maid determined when the curd was ready by the manual pressure of her hand. Before the development of thermometers at the end of the eighteenth century, adequate temperature—hot or coolness—of the products was judged by the “sensitivity of the dairy maid’s elbows and fingers.” Even the cleanliness and neatness of the dairy maid was believed to lend “perfect sweetness to the produce.” Hence, the physical nature of the dairy maid was traditionally believed to ensure successful products.

As dairying became more fashionable and a prominent focus of observation and analysis, poetry and stories emerged that detailed somewhat sentimentally, even sensually, the dairy maid’s “gentler Strokes and artful” hands in various aspects of dairy work, most referencing the physicality of the process. Women hands, metonymic devices of ideal beauty, were described in contemporary literature as “soft and delicate.” They were ideal tools with which to carefully work the equally “soft, salubrious” and “snow-white” dairy products. This parallel of two things equally soft and delicate was published in literature and easily read into an already feminine dairy space.

The porcelain and ceramic vessels housed within the dairy further referenced womanhood in the context of eighteenth-century society. Such associations between

---


13 Ibid., 25.

14 Ibid., 142.


16 Ibid. The twin association of women’s bodies as both “soft and delicate,” especially their hands, was common in writings of the eighteenth century.
decorative vessels and the human body were common in the period. Contemporaries discussed the notion that underneath the surface, both ceramic vessels and human bodies consisted of similar substance. For example, in writing about the importance of personal hygiene in his treatise *Dialogue Concerning Decency*, Samuel Rolleston parallels ceramic vessels and the human body. He writes, “It would be a good effect upon men to reflect that the very vessels which they make use of...are made of as good, nay the same material as their own bodies—the finest and most beautiful bodies are but earthen vessels...they are but statues made of clay.”17 There was a strong metaphoric quality between the substance of porcelain as “made of the dust and clay of earth” and women’s physical bodies.18 The metaphor of the human body as clay heightened the reading of porcelain vessels as signifying real bodies.

Porcelain and ceramic wares signified social definitions about the natural physical attributes and characteristics of the fair sex, associations that were intensified within the space itself. As discussed in the previous chapter, imported porcelain and ceramics were valuable commodities absorbed into and legitimized by the dairy space. Despite the male interest in collecting these fragile commodities, women were considered the true consumers of porcelain and ceramics. This is largely because porcelain became part of a woman’s watch-care in the domestic sphere and a necessary part of any tasteful tea service through which they demonstrated taste, gentility and polite practice. Thus, these

---

17 Sarah Richards, *Eighteenth-Century Ceramics: Products for a Civilized Society* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), 149. Discussions of the physical body as being clay, just as fragile, transient porcelains carried vanitas meanings also. Life was delicate and fragile as porcelain vessels and, like delicate china, was liable to shatter all too quickly.

fashionable vessels were increasingly associated with women’s personalities and even their physical natures.

Porcelain and ceramic commodities were stereotyped as objects of female use, interest and attention and were increasingly discussed as feminine. As the fashionable use of porcelain in the domestic realm increased, “the gendered association implicit between the feminine, domestic space and the objects inhabiting that space [moved] into softer focus.” Due to the gendered attributions of porcelain, the fragile quality and softer lines of these wares began to be discussed in the same terms as contemporary women, believed to be equally delicate, white, refined in their natures. Beth Kowaleski-Wallace, in her research about female consumers and china, concludes, “a woman’s close proximity to china thus enabled a semiotic process which allowed her to be ‘read’ as a particular kind of surface: like the china [or porcelain vessel] she holds in her lovely hands, the woman…is flawless and delicate…Her perfect surface makes her appear superior, yet, after all, she is ultimately made of clay…” In this view, women’s own supposed sense of grace, delicacy and beauty was a trait shared with the items with which they surrounded themselves. As a result, women began to be read in terms of the porcelain commodities within their domestic realm and vice versa.

This correlation between the elegant ivory of dairy wares and the women who used them becomes pronounced in an eighteenth-century poem in which a milkmaid, the fair Patty, is described:

19 Richards, 133.
20 Ibid.
21 Kowaleski-Wallace, 159.
Here Patty is described as having the same features as the elegant cream-colored ceramic vessels of the dairy. Her teeth are the same ivory hue. Her “polish’d neck” rises like the smooth, gleaming neck of a milk spout, “rounding” out as if from the curvature of a porcelain pot. Patty, like women in other contemporary parallels of porcelains and femininity, is a shape that has been “molded” by the hand of Ease—implying a delicate, natural state of femininity and one that could afford leisure—and formed in “exact proportion.”

The rounded and open forms of the porcelain vessels in the dairy would also have drawn associations with female bodies and reproduction. Vessels carrying so many associations with feminine traits and characteristics also draw evident associations with the female womb and reproductive processes, especially in context of the dairy itself and its function of milk processing. Indeed, the womb holding milk, the vehicles of biology and reproduction would have been an obvious connotation within a space already saturated with notions of femininity. The women within the dairy became the vessels.

---

22 Dodsley, lines 137-169.
Dairy wares also indexed negative stereotypes of women’s natural dispositions. The decorative loveliness and sensual appeal of delicate porcelain was often asserted as a parallel of negative stereotypes about women’s inherent susceptibility to their appetites and materialism. As explained earlier, porcelain was typically discussed as an object of feminine desire and acquisition, evidence of “female depravity.” China and ceramics were regarded as a source of weakness for women, who were easily tempted to waste family wealth on the fleeting pleasures and decorative accoutrements of fashionable life.

Porcelain wares were already symbolically associated with women; however, the decorative nature of ceramics created a stronger signification between fancy ceramics and female natures. Ceramic vessels, tea sets and miniatures were dainty and decorative, vessels concerned with surface appearance and décor. When china was written or spoken of during the time, it was usually described as a surface or else discussed as an empty or hollow vessel. This discussion of porcelain aligns with discussions of females during the time period. Because of their weakness for pretty things and their supposed materialism, women were labeled as “decorative” creatures that were preoccupied and diverted by that which was ornamental and surface-oriented, those amusements and preoccupations of little substance. Women—especially women of the upper class—were described as “women of surface,” as they were believed to be those women who fashioned themselves as objects of the gaze, who were more concerned with fashion and exterior appearances than with the cultivation of inner virtues. Such women were

23 Kowaleski-Wallace, 154.
24 Ibid.
shallow creatures, decorative vessels, susceptible to appetites and needing to be filled with virtuous and productive things. These items became a trope for feminine nature, especially aristocratic feminine nature—women of surface, preoccupied with superficial decoration and display, open and waiting (and needing) to be filled.26

Thus the vessels placed amidst the dairy space, described as “expanded,” “deep and wide,” yet lovely signified popular, often male-generated, stereotypes of women as hollow, decorative, even surface-oriented. However, this stigma was tempered by the virtuous associations of their use. The hollow and open vessels were filled with milk and milk products, which was a natural, wholesome, virtuous substance, domestically produced—not imported from exotic locales—in the most natural way. The vessels were placed in the dairy and filled with nourishing milk, creating a display that spoke of neatness, innocence and goodness. This can be evidenced in Sophie v. la Roche’s account of her visit to the dairy at Osterley Park House, near London, in 1786:

The dairy and milk-room, however, surpassed all my expectations. There was an entrance in which milk and milking-pails and butter-tubs stood in splendid array, all white and with brass rings gleaming like gold; then down a step into the dairy where the milk was standing in large, flat china pans, especially made with broad spouts for pouring off the milk, around the four walls on grey marble tables. The fresh butter lay in large Chinese dishes full of water; charming milk vessels, china tumblers and butter saucers were strewn all around on marble slabs; it is impossible to imagine anything nicer and more attractive. Greater sweetness or neatness are impossible, and, to make the picture perfect in its way, the sweetest, prettiest girl in the world entered, wearing a grey frock, white apron and collar, with a small straw hat upon her lovely brown tresses, and brought us each a glass of cream and butter with it, having as charming a presence and personality as though she were a daughter of very good family in disguise…27

26 Kowaleski-Wallace, 154.

27 Sophie v. La Roche, Sophie in London 1786: The Diary of Sophie v. la Roche. trans. Clare Williams (London: Jonathan Cape, 1933), 227. Interestingly, Sophie comments that the very appearance of the milkmaid at the Osterley Park dairy reminded her of the milkmaid Patty, described in Dodsley’s poem, cited in this chapter.
As Sophie’s description demonstrates, the stigma and negative parallels of surface-oriented bowls and saucers were disarmed in the dairy as they were put to use housing milk and butter. The milk wares, regardless of style, exuded an attractive neatness and a sweetness that were echoed by the sweetness and beauty of the milkmaid herself. Both the girl within the space and the porcelain accoutrements were declared to be charming, attractive, orderly—so wholly pleasing and appropriate that one might believe them to be noble, distinct from the common or mundane. As the ceramics were put to productive uses and filled with virtuous milk, they were removed from labels of superficiality and decoration, and instead became useful for domestic and productive ends. The vessels, the bodies of women, filled with milk, connoted maternal duty and experience. Thus, this filling of the vessels symbolized women being transformed through their domestic labors and maternity, as were the porcelain wares and the entire environment, from women of surface into women of depth.28

28 This naturalization of women to their traditional domestic roles is symbolized by the shift in porcelain and ceramic styles used in the dairy. The porcelains used in the dairy were typically highly ornamented with chinoiserie motifs or Rococo styles, decorated with peasants scenes, lovers or other popular subjects. Their designs were ornamental and delicate, often fragile-looking. However, even dairy wares began to reflect the sense of depth, the simplicity and virtuous associations of milk itself. This is exemplified in the trend for the less-conspicuous cream ware vessels that became the fashionable requirement for outfitting aristocratic dairies during the late eighteenth century. Developed in the 1760s, Josiah Wedgwood’s cream ware (or “Queen’s Ware”) was simple, smooth, streamlined earthenware that was colored in light hues—ivory, straw-colored or tan shades—matching the creamy purity of the milk itself. The cream ware vessels were wonderfully elegant, yet very simple and represented a more appropriate type of porcelain for a dairy. Their pure color and unadorned, simple design reflected the chaste and moral aura of the dairy and paralleled the simple beauty and elegance of chaste, simple, yet appealing dairy maids. Cream ware vessels were the new embodiment of the natural woman, women of virtue and depth. Josiah Wedgwood’s cream ware was awarded royal patronage by Queen Charlotte, earning the title of “Queen’s Ware.” Wedgwood’s design for milk bowls, cream pans, cream tiles and other accoutrements were in high demand for use in the fashionable dairies of the aristocracy, Alison Kelly, Decorative Wedgwood in Architecture and Furniture (London: Country Life, 1965), 119. The color and simplicity of Queen’s Ware is also discussed in David Buten, Eighteenth-Century Wedgwood: A Guide for Collectors and Connoisseurs (New York: Methuen, 1980), 17.
“Natural” Women

The symbolic and ideological effect of the dairy was the conversion of women of surface into women of depth, women focused on domestic duties and maternal responsibilities. This idea of the domestically-engrossed woman was part of the socially-outlined definition of natural womanhood in the eighteenth century. Women of surface were preoccupied with idle amusements, visual display and adornments, whereas women of depth were described in contemporary conduct books as those women who cultivated inner qualities and virtues—primarily those traits of domesticity that were considered valuable as a wife and mother.  

This notion of the “woman of depth” as related to ideal feminine nature and nurturing virtue is paralleled in contemporary writings of the novelist Fanny Burney. In Burney’s *Camilla* (1796), the heroine of the title is a character that has been analyzed by literary historians as a “woman of depth.” Camilla is a character so focused on her charitable drives to raise and care for the young baby put under her care that she is not given a physical description in the novel. Rather, she is set in contrast to other characters whose superficiality and preoccupation with material items, fashion and status—“women of surface”—are in strong contrast with Camilla’s self-actualization as a nurturer and her sense of altruism. Interestingly, one of the primary notions discussed in terms of Camilla’s sense of depth was her charitable commitment to “nursing” the infant entrusted to her care. Indeed, the notion of a woman of depth drew connotations with women’s

---

29 Armstrong, 78.

30 Kowaleski-Wallace, 162. Kowaleski-Wallace discussed the ideal of the “woman of depth” on 159-60.

31 Ibid., 160.
natures as nurturers and mothers, an ideal perpetuated in the eighteenth century and
signified within the ornamental dairy space.

Ornamental dairy pavilions referenced contemporary views about “natural”
womanhood and social expectations of women as mothers and nurturers. As
Enlightenment Europe sought to define and redefine male and female in terms of
newfound science and ideas of nature, the biological, intuitive and idealized qualities
unique to women as mothers and nurturers were again celebrated. Consequently, the
sentimentality for the natural that perpetuated the dairy fashion overlapped with an
increased sentimentality towards motherhood. Motherhood was always culturally
constructed and defined as the ideal role for women, but the highly romanticized view of
maternity in the eighteenth century enhanced the natural aura of this role.\textsuperscript{32} As Kate
Retford notes, “Nature became the ultimate authority for the maternal instinct,” even
replacing God and the Bible, which had been the source of similar ideology of traditional
motherhood in earlier eras.\textsuperscript{33}

Motherhood was romantically celebrated as women’s natural, even primordial,
duty, role and function. This essential connection between maternity and nature is a trope
found in Gainsborough’s ‘Cottage Door’ paintings: \textit{Wooded Landscape with Family (The
Woodcutter’s Return)...} (1773) (Figure 28), \textit{The Cottage Door} (1780) (Figure 29), and
\textit{Wooded Landscape with Cattle by a Pool and Figures by a Cottage at Evening} (1782)
(Figure 30). In these paintings, women are portrayed in maternal roles either holding their
children or standing watch over them. The mother and child groupings are highlighted by

\textsuperscript{32} Amanda Vickery, \textit{The Gentleman’s Daughter: Women’s Lives in Georgian England} (New

\textsuperscript{33} Kate Retford, \textit{The Art of Domestic Life} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 87.
dramatic lighting in contrast with the wild foliage of the woodland surrounding them. The
naturalness, the direct association between women and nature, are lit with the same
dramatic chiaroscuro as employed in art to imply holy or divine forces. The women in
nature, maternal women, are elevated as part of nature and highlighted as the focus of the
landscape depicted.

The idea was prevalent in contemporary literature and treatises. Writings
regarding the duties and expectations of women and mothers abounded, especially
beginning around mid-century. As one literary historian assessed:

Augustan writings on motherhood—including conduct literature, sermons,
fiction, visual images, and all sorts of popular writing—participated in recasting
the multiple, contingent experience of motherhood as a more easily controlled
social institution, an institution defined according to a limited set of supposedly
timeless behaviors and sentiments: all-engrossing tenderness, long-term maternal
breastfeeding, personal supervision and education of young children, complete
physical restriction to domestic space...  

The romanticized elevation of maternity was clearly evident in the most
influential sentimental novels of the era. Some of the most popular novels of the
century by Samuel Richardson and Jean-Jacques Rousseau featured heroines who
exemplified maternal devotion and familial duty, chastity and honor. Discourse such as
this created a social ideal of womanhood that was closely linked with maternal instincts

34 Toni Bowers, The Politics of Motherhood: British Writing and Culture, 1680-1760 (New York:

35 In her study of eighteenth-century literature and the cult of womanhood, Marlene LeGates
explains, “Particularly in the sentimental novels, the ideals of familial affection, marital fidelity, and female
chastity were celebrated, and the satire of woman was replaced by praise of Womanhood.” See Marlene
LeGates, “The Cult of Womanhood in Eighteenth-Century Thought” Eighteenth-Century Studies 10, no. 1

36 It is interesting to note that three of the most popular novels of the eighteenth century—
Richardson’s Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded (1740) and Clarissa, or the History of a Young Lady (1747-48)
and Rousseau’s Julie, ou La Nouvelle Héloïse (1761)—all featured dairies within their plots. The characters
of Clarissa and Julie both are known for their dairy labors. Meredith Martin discusses the dairy as a feature
in these three novels in Meredith Martin, “Dairy Queens: Sexuality, Space, and Subjectivity in Pleasure
Dairies from Catherine de’ Medici to Marie-Antoinette” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2006), 195-201.
and duties. These dialogues espoused an assertion of time-honored definitions of patriarchal family unity and were an attempt to redefine and empower traditional notions of family and stabilize the fluctuating social boundaries of class and gender roles during the time period.\textsuperscript{37} Maternal ideologies were defined by society and served to create women that nurtured their families, class and the entire nation.

The vast array of writings carefully constructed the boundaries of good motherhood and raised the expectation of mothers to unprecedented heights.\textsuperscript{38} According to contemporary discourse, a woman’s primary and naturally inspired duty was dictated and celebrated: the production of children.\textsuperscript{39} As one historian wrote, “…Augustan women did not merely supervise servants, order households and regulate the consumption of goods; their main task, and the activity that most clearly established their gendered identities and social value, was reproduction.”\textsuperscript{40} Ideally, all women, regardless of class, were responsible not only for bearing children but were expected to devote themselves to their upbringing and education, raising them to become socially productive and industrious individuals that would benefit the family lineage and the nation as well.

This maternal ideal was echoed in portraiture of the time and had important implications for the popularity and significance of dairies within landscape parks. Johann Zoffany’s portrait of the Colmore Family (Figure 31), done in 1775, shows the family

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid. LeGates, Vickery and other social historians indicate that such notions were not entirely revolutionary, but their dramatization and romanticism of these ideals was distinct.

\textsuperscript{38} Bowers, 156.

\textsuperscript{39} Ibid, 157. Women’s reproductive capacity not only benefited the family, its titles and perpetuation of lineage, but provided manpower for a nation whose birth rate was threatened by the use of new contraceptives, changing family dynamics and the rise of smaller families as a result of industrialized conditions. This emphasis on elite women being directly involved in raising their children is notable in the history of the European aristocracy.

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 22.
seated among the woods of their estate, interacting in a “natural,” supposedly unaffected manner and setting. However, as Ann Bermingham’s research shows, there is a visual separation between the husband and the rest of his family. The husband sits in front of an unimpeded view of the landscape—his land—representing his wealth and social position. Behind his wife is a view of the estate farm, connoting the idea of production, referencing her role in the family. Bermingham argues, “The metaphor is a central, recurring one in the agrarian bourgeoisie’s imagination of itself: masculinity is associated with the natural right to inherit and possess the land and femininity with the natural responsibility to reproduce and maintain a family.”

In this portrait, motherhood is connected to her biological role of producing socially responsible, moral offspring.

However, eighteenth-century historians continue to investigate the dialogue between idealized prescriptions of femininity and the actuality of the debate, questioning whether these dialogues reflected popular ideologies or attempted to change them. Were women truly indoctrinated and converted to their own biological and socially dictated roles as full-time, child-rearing mothers? Research shows that many publications also spoke in favor of an expanded view of womanhood beyond that of a domestically caged woman, demonstrating a strong dialogue that promoted women’s growing interests and roles in society. While most women did not naively accept the romanticized ideal of motherhood, abandoning social life and removing themselves entirely from privileged culture, it was a dialogue and an ideal that could not be ignored. Indeed, the

41 Bermingham, 17.

42 Vickery, 6. This line of questioning was inspired by Vickery’s own line of questioning.

43 Meredith Martin writes, “For reasons including social ostracism and the appeal of the ‘domestic goddess’ model over alternative representations, there were very few women who ignored it outright. But there may have also been few who incorporated it wholeheartedly, sincerely, and without reservation…”
romanticized and ennobling view of mothers among fashionable women is evidenced in aristocratic portraiture of the time and also, as we shall see, in the dairies of country estates.

Images of “maternal tenderness,” depicting mothers and children, became popular themes adopted by many women in depicting their personae. Martin points out that Lady Lavinia Spencer of Althorp drew pictures of mothers and children that referenced this same theme, entitled The Tender Mother (Figure 32) and The Happy Mother (Figure 33). Lady Spencer appeared to fit the mode. She bore her husband multiple children and her correspondences evidence her delight in watching them grow and observing their childhood antics.

Some women of the aristocracy attempted to adopt this same ideal persona, realizing its strong ideological associations, but somewhat less successfully. Elizabeth, Lady Melbourne, chose to have herself depicted in this same vein in a 1770 portrait by Sir Joshua Reynolds entitled Maternal Affection (Figure 34). Lady Melbourne is shown with her oldest son and heir, Peniston Lamb, son of Viscount Peniston Lamb. The painting’s title and subjects anticipate Lady Melbourne as an affectionate, doting mother, but the composition contradicts the ideal. Lady Melbourne’s focus is clearly not on the child, but gazing out to the viewer, her interaction with the plump, loving baby is awkward and tenuous. In reality, the guise of maternal affection and self-sacrifice was not entirely natural to Lady Melbourne, as she left the raising of her children, five

---

See Martin, 212. Vickery adds that it was an ideal that gave renewed esteem to women who chose to be mothers and social sanction to women of the bourgeoisie and upper-class who wanted to nurse their own children either for sentimental, emotional or physical reasons. See Vickery, 107.

44 Martin, 248. Lady Spencer drew The Happy Mother and The Tender Mother, both of which were published in 1787 in stipple print by James Gillray.
children fathered by a selection of prestigious men, to “an old and petulant woman from Jersey whom they detested and whom Lady Melbourne inexplicably admired.”\(^{45}\)

However, Lady Melbourne was very involved in assuring the social prominence and achievement of her children during later years. As with the ideal of women spinning or working in the dairy, the ideal of a woman with her children was one which had socially acknowledged connotations of virtue and natural propriety. Women recognized it as a desirable and potent type in fashioning a persona.

**Milk and Maternity**

The issue of breastfeeding was at the heart of women’s natural role as mother, a subject which has direct implications on the discussion of the dairy. In the romanticized climate of sentiment, the vogue for breastfeeding became an important signifier of maternal tenderness and female virtues.\(^{46}\) Breastfeeding was considered a woman’s natural instinct. Breastfeeding was implied in the iconography and associations of the dairy space, as women’s biological experience as nursing mothers seemed to be an inherent qualification for feminine dairy work.

Breastfeeding was the “touchstone” of ideal, sentimentalized motherhood in the Georgian era.\(^{47}\) To not suckle one’s own children and instead continue the traditional aristocratic practice of sending babies to wet nurses, even if the mother was healthy and


\(^{46}\) Retford, 88.

\(^{47}\) Bowers, 159.
able to nurse, was seen as unnatural and indicated a lack of maternal feeling.\footnote{Ibid., 160. Mothers of the middle class often viewed aristocratic women as maternally deficient for such behaviors.}

Contemporary medical discourse discussed breast-feeding as being critical to the health of both mother and child. William Cadogan’s dissertation, \textit{An Essay on Nursing}, published in 1771 expounds on this idea:

> When a Child sucks its own Mother, which, with a very few exceptions, would be best for every Child and every Mother, Nature has provided it with such wholesome and suitable nourishment…it can hardly do amiss. The Mother would likewise, in most hysterical nervous cases, establish her own health by it…For these reasons I could wish, that every woman that is able, whose fountains are not greatly disturbed or tainted, would give such to her Child. I am very sure, that forcing back the milk…may be of fatal consequence…The call of Nature should be waited for to feed it with any thing more substantial…”\footnote{William Cadogan, \textit{A Dissertation on the Gout, and all Chronic Diseases}…4\textsuperscript{th} ed, [book online] (London, 1771, accessed November 2006), 20-22; based on \textit{English Short Title Catalogue. Eighteenth Century Collections Online}, http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO.}

According to discourse of the time, breastfeeding was morally and physically beneficial to the child and also the mother. Nursing was also believed to create an important bond between the mother and child, an increasingly important matter in contemporary familial discourse, and augmented her natural tenderness and affection for her infant.\footnote{Toni Bowers, “A Point of Conscience,” in \textit{Inventing Maternity}, ed. Susan C. Greenfield and Carol Barash (Lexington, University of Kentucky Press), 145.} One contemporary wrote, “Mothers by suckling their Children, cherish that Tenderness which Nature has implanted in them towards their Offspring. For Experience shews, that the Office of suckling considerably augments in them the Affection from whence that Tenderness flows.”\footnote{Bowers, “Point of Conscience,” 160.} Furthermore, the physical act of feeding an infant was believed to
produce virtues and characteristics that would elevate the mother above popular vanity and frivolity.  

Mothers of aristocratic families traditionally could afford to have their children suckled by a wet nurse. However, at this time, to willingly nurse one’s own children not out of duty, but out of affection and devotion to one’s offspring, was the highest expression of maternal affection. Many women of the aristocracy willingly adopted this practice. Louisa, Lady Mansfield, wrote to her sister about her intent to nurse her newborn child. “I am to nurse this little child myself, which will be a vast pleasure to me, & I hope I shall find no inconvenience from it as I am so much stronger than I was but if I find it weakens me I shall not continue it.” She later reported to her sister that “Nursing agrees perfectly with me & she [Mrs. Hill] says I am a very good nurse, the child never has had any complaint, & is much fatter than when he was born.”

This practice further affirmed a woman’s commitment to her offspring and the success of her lineage and asserted a strong morality. This is suggested in a letter written by the Countess Spencer to her daughter Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, in 1782 warning her about the negative talk that had arisen because of the Duchess’ frequent appearances in public with the Prince of Wales. The Countess implored her daughter, “When, dear Georgiana, shall I see you out of scrapes that injure your character? If you and your sister would but give up the Opera or any public place this one winter, on the

---

52 Ibid., 142. As one very early treatise on breastfeeding confirmed, breastfeeding distanced women from “the vices and vanity, theater, and gambling.”

53 Letter from Lady Louisa Mansfield to Mary, Mrs. Thomas Graham, 1781, NAS Acc. 3591, National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh.

54 Lady Louisa Mansfield, W. Hill, to Mary, Mrs. Thomas Graham, September 10, 1781, NAS Acc. 3591, National Archives of Scotland, Edinburgh.
just pretence of nursing your children, how easily might all this [adverse publicity] be avoided?" The Countess’ writing implies first, the acceptability of removal from fashionable society in order to properly nurture one’s children and, second, the virtue of nursing in fending off suggestions of indecency. That the Duchess of Devonshire was aware of the positive connotations of emphasizing her maternity and familial devotion is evident in the portrait commissioned by the Duchess, showing her and her daughter in a loving and playful moment of maternal delight (Figure 35).

Mothers who chose to breastfeed were celebrated for their sacrifice and were aligned with allegorical notions of charity. This charitable ideal was conveyed in portraits such as Sir Joshua Reynolds’ *Lady Cockburn and her Three Eldest Sons* (1773) (Figure 36). Lady Cockburn holds her youngest son at her covered breast, while her two older sons cling to her cream-colored dress and dark robe, a pose that transformed Lady Cockburn into an allegorical figure of charity. Breastfeeding became not only an attribute of feminine virtue, but was also regarded as a form of selfless sacrifice. A mother’s sacrificial love in nursing her children was associated with divinely instilled maternal instincts. Even in Protestant English society, mothers were paralleled in literature and art with the Virgin Mary. This trend is apparent in Nathanial Hone’s portrait of Ann Gardiner with her eldest son, Kirkman (1776) (Figure 37), which shows the young son standing on his mother’s lap in a pose that mimics Renaissance images of the Madonna and Child (Figure 38). The toddler holds grapes in his outstretched hand to confirm the association of contemporary mother and child with the holy mother and divine Son. This attitude is further expressed in sentimental writings of the time, where admiring men

55 Vickery, 230.
threw themselves at the feet of nursing wives, described as radiant and glorious in their saintly role of mother.\textsuperscript{56} Virtue, motherhood and holiness became aligned, seemingly elevating women by raising the charitable suckling of their children to new heights of veneration. For genteel women who had the choice of nursing or hiring a wet nurse, choosing such a sacrifice was considered the highest form of selflessness.

In this context, the dairy’s evident connection to issues of milk, milk production and breastfeeding created a strong message about women’s natural, “ideal,” role within her family, her class and her nation. Fundamentally, it was the shared experience of women’s maternal milk production which qualified them for intuitively working the dairy process. Milk was women’s business. The “ornamental Lactarium,” as one contemporary male described the dairy, associated the aristocratic women who acted as mistresses of the dairy with the virtue of milk-giving, the most elevated of sacrifices and, by extension, implied their participation as virtuous mothers.\textsuperscript{57} The dairy was a site “crowned in maternalist iconography” as the iconography of the dairy itself referenced women’s biological experience and maternal associations of milk production.\textsuperscript{58}

Altogether, these dairies functioned as signifiers of femininity, of proper or “natural” womanhood and, by extension, responsible and correct maternity. The dairy was embraced by women of fashionable society as a more virtuous pastime, one which asserted their interest in traditional domestic pursuits and the enactment of proper feminine roles, thus enhancing their own reputation as characters of depth, capability and

\textsuperscript{56} Retford, 88. Such an instance is found in Hugh Downman’s \textit{Infancy} and also Samuel Richardson’s novel \textit{History of Sir Charles Grandison}.

\textsuperscript{57} Robinson, 94. Quoting R. Fenton’s \textit{Tours in Wales 1804-1813}.

\textsuperscript{58} Carroll, 168.
virtue. It simultaneously implied their biological and socially-beneficial roles as proper women and mothers, especially mothers in the aristocratic sphere.

**Women in a Man’s World**

However, the ideology embodied in the dairy also appealed to the male component of society and the aristocracy. The dialogue of natural womanhood was a prime example of the use of the Natural as a catalyst to counter the shifting roles and new ideologies concerning womanhood and maternity. Scholars of eighteenth-century literature argue that the contemporary view of strong, moral women who were wholeheartedly, almost religiously, devoted to their families was “an ideological prop to the family” encouraged by the patriarchal cell of society.⁵⁹ The contemporary discourse about women’s roles and maternity kept women firmly entrenched in the traditional social order at a time when women’s acceptable realms were expanding and many were progressing outside traditional boundaries of domesticity.⁶⁰

Many of these new opportunities and ideologies for women were seen as threatening proper domesticity and maternal devotion. The entertainments and diversions of leisured, aristocratic living were believed to be leading women away from their traditional roles and responsibilities. The author of *An Epistle to the Fair Sex on Drinking* (1744) surmised: “If you reflect on the difference there is between the present condition of the English people, and that in which they were about fifty years ago. In those days it is certain, that our women were sober, religious, and good housewives…We had then no

---


⁶⁰ Vickery, 6.
balls, masquerades, or evening assemblies to corrupt our women…” These social diversions made domestic life appear irksome and undesirable. One tract published in 1746, addressed to women of fashion, voiced this very concern:

Can you say you ever come away from the tumultuous scenes of Pleasure, which ingross the bulk of you time, without having your Minds disturbed and thrown into a ferment of irregular and exorbitant desires, which, if you lived a life of sobriety, peace and retirement, would never have stirred in your breasts? Can you pretend that the sight of gorgeous dresses, of gawdy paintings, and all the various magnificence…have any other effect upon you than to fill your fancies with a thousand romantic wishes and desires altogether inconsistent with your station and above your rank in life, and to make your homes dull and tiresome to you?62

The author expressed a growing fear that the new social diversions available to women in the “modern” age would lead women away from their traditional domestic role and inevitably result in negligence of the proper rearing of their offspring. The dialogue of natural womanhood countered these dangerous social trends. Natural women were virtuous and industrious and devoted to their family and lineage. Dairies, symbolic of that discourse, confined in landscape gardens, reflect the construction and definition of ideal womanhood by the ruling voices within English society.

It may be that the dairy represented male-generated ideologies regarding the nature of women and exemplified the high value placed upon women as maternal icons. What did this reading of the dairy signify in context of the landscape garden? In the

61 Epistle, 7.

62 John Brewer, The Pleasures of the Imagination (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 75-76. This idea was also discussed in Thomas Marriot’s 1759 publication Female Conduct…The author outlined the tragic consequences of mothers who neglected their maternal responsibilities: “From School, [Daughters] are immediately initiated in public Assemblies, where the Mothers, fixed in deep Attention to Cards, turn their Daughters adrift, and leave them to their own Discretion; by that means being deprived of the Protection of that Convoy, which should direct, and steer them safe, thro’ the perilous Seas of Life; many of them are seised, as lawful Prizes, and carried off by advent’rous Pirates; some are split on hidden Rocks of Vice…From this irrational method of Education, the female Sex imbibe such an early Passion for public Assemblies, and Cards; and are so enamoured with them, that they conceive a strong Aversion to domestic Life.” See Thomas Marriot, quoted in Ingrid H. Tague, Women of Quality: Accepting and Contesting Ideals of Femininity in England, 1690-1760 (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2002), 59.
garden space, the dairy can be seen as a symbol of the dialogue of maternity within patriarchal society. As part of the garden, dairies were limited female spheres within landscapes authorized by men. Its overriding message was that of affirming women within their proper and divinely-intended sphere of production: reproduction and nurturing. The dairy’s ideological significance ultimately reinforced this “natural” role of women and the control of patriarchy when considered in context of the garden and overall genteel society.

Eighteenth-century landscape gardens, especially those of the later eighteenth-century style set forth by Capability Brown and Humphry Repton, were largely male-dominated spaces. These gardens were discussed by contemporaries as sites where male power was asserted over the female-gendered Nature.63 In relation to Mother Nature, gentleman gardeners acted out the powerful role of Creator and master over a passive, yielding female Nature.64 Gentlemen landscape gardeners often described nature as a “coy or seductive maiden, as a promiscuous or chaste consort, as a naked or overadorned damsel.”65 Alexander Pope described nature as “some coy Nymph her Lover’s warm Address/Nor quite indulges, not can quite repress.”66 Nature was considered a subservient and agreeable mistress to her gardening master and was expected to administer to and fulfill the pleasures of her owner, to entertain and delight. The garden became his own Kingdom and everything within his jurisdiction was subject to his

63 This can also relate to the scholarly assertions in contemporary fields that discuss the same relationship of the landscape as a product of male power and desire. See Rose, 10.


65 Ibid., 110.

66 Ibid.
viewing power and control. As Joseph Addison wrote in The Spectator in 1712, a “Man of Polite Imagination…feels a greater Satisfaction in the Prospect of Fields and Meadows…It gives him, indeed, a kind of Property in every thing he sees, and makes the most rude uncultivated Parts of Nature administer to his Pleasures.”67 All within the sight of the male master of the garden existed and were maintained according to his will.

The very act of viewing the landscape and all within it, as implied in contemporary literature, was defined as a male eye. Though not necessarily present, gardens and parks were often described by visitors as exuding the unseen presence of its owner and creator. The author of the garden was ever-present, ever-visualized internally as a panoptic presence regulating the activities of the estate and garden park.

Hence, the dairy’s prettification and prominence within the garden park can be read as the regulation of maternity, and by extension female powers of reproduction, female sexuality, within the garden. It also parallels contemporary assertions that fathers, as patriarchs of the family, should be involved in the decisions of nursing and raising their offspring. William Cadogen encouraged that “every Father ... have his Child nursed under his own Eye.”68 Later treatises, notably William Buchan’s of 1769, state that fathers must assume awareness and responsibility in all matters pertaining to the “improvement” of their children. Hence, the dairy’s placement within the regulated landscape could easily reference the increased ideal of patriarchal oversight of the maternal role, connoting both progressive and restrictive aspects of the nursing dialogue.

67 Ibid., 117. Quoting Joseph Addison, Spectator 414.

68 Bowers, “Point of Conscience,” 145. Some historians of female history believe that men often exercised a dictatorial role over women, refusing some to breastfeed their babies.
This idea of the male-controlled landscape and the rigid assimilation of female expectations within is portrayed in Thomas Gainsborough’s famous painting of *Mr. and Mrs. Andrews* (c. 1749) (Figure 39). The painting shows the wealthy couple together, their sprawling and productive estate visible behind them. The couple exudes all the arrogance and satisfaction of landed power in their veiled, haughty gazes and their easy postures and fashions, like Mrs. Andrews’ brimmed milk-maid hat.

The painting displays social requirements of masculine and feminine roles of the eighteenth century. Mr. Andrews stands leisurely leaning on the side of the bench; however, he is active, ready at any moment to rouse himself and proceed off to shoot. He is the landowner and governs the estate. The presence of the dog emphasizes Mr. Andrews’ role as a good master and encourages the master to leave and roam his property. Mrs. Andrews, however, remains welded to the bench on which she is placed. Both Mrs. Andrews and the bench itself, with its vine and foliate decoration, mimic the tree behind them. As Gillian Rose argues, Mrs. Andrews’ rigid connection with the tree behind her symbolizes her place as not one of the owners of the estate, but as part of the landscape owned by her husband. She is part of the nature enclosed within the estate and the family into which she has married. The tree against which Mrs. Andrews is set further symbolizes the idea of the lineage which it is her duty to bring forth.

All the production and pleasure of the dairy was regulated within the landscape park. Thus, considering the dairy as signifying female expectations and capacity for maternity and the production of offspring, this power was governed by the gaze of the patriarchal estate. The placement of the dairy at Castle Ashby, Northamptonshire (1760)

---

69 Rose, 14.

70 Ibid., 15.
(Figure 40), reflects this contrast between the regulated space of the domestic dairy and other spaces in the park. The Neoclassical elegance of the dairy is set close to the house of the estate, the domestic sphere of the mansion, but faces outward onto the pleasure garden of the estate. In fact, the dairy is set on a direct axis with the menagerie in the distance, designed to house a host of exotic birds and animals at the Northamptonshire estate. In axial relationship with the menagerie, a cage for exotic birds, the dairy can be seen as a gilded enclosure of domesticity, enclosing the women of the estate. In this reading, the dairy becomes that gilded carcerel. Additionally, the image of the bird in the cage, as evoked in seventeenth-century Dutch paintings, typically embodies the idea of virtue and sheltering from immorality and vices. Thus, the dairy here could contrast the exotic openness of the menagerie by the domestic enclosure and virtue of the actual dairy space, tucked snugly into the domestic demesne.

Within the landscape garden, the dairy may be read as yet another object of the patriarchal domain. The dairy space echoed expectations of aristocratic women within their social order: decorative, yet useful, but recreational enough so as to not be too useful, exemplifying cleanliness, decency, morality and maternity. The paternalistic attitude towards the dairy is conveyed in the following passage from the popular eighteenth-century novel, Clarissa (1748). Lady Howe writes the following advice concerning women whom she calls “man-women,” women who attempt to transgress gender boundaries and “manage affairs that do not belong to [their] sex”:

Indeed…I do not think a man-woman a pretty character at all…Were…[she] to know how to confine herself within her own respectable rounds of the needle, the

---

71 Julius Bryant, Kenwood: Paintings in the Iveagh Bequest (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 378-79. This trope was revived in 18th century portraits. The caged bird overhead is a traditional Dutch symbol for virtue. This idea is cited by Brears, but is based on studies of Netherlandish art by art historian Eddy de Jongh.
pen, the housekeeper’s bills, the dairy for her amusement…and exert herself in all the really useful branches of domestick management; then would she move in her proper sphere; then would she render herself amiably useful and respectably necessary…

Lady Howe’s words clearly are representative of the patriarchal, the proper or natural, view of women’s occupations within the domestic sphere. The dairy was seen as a wholly useful and proper form of diversion for elite women, and an activity that alluded to, and reinforced, their own feminine responsibilities and duties as mothers.

Women’s roles and acceptable activities in the garden, as in society, were regulated by social discourse of the time, which was not governed by a female voice. Ornamental dairies were pleasure pavilions in which women could participate in feminine labor that not only embodied the fashion for all things natural and pastoral but also paralleled society’s expectations of their reproductive and nurturing maternal duties. The dairy exemplifies one art historian’s assessment of mother-and-child portraits of the era, as representing “the embodiment of an ideal…a prompt to virtue and…a means by which the viewer could evidence and enjoy his or her sensitivity to and appreciation of domestic virtue.”

These charming and picturesque dairies in aristocratic garden parks distinguished and encouraged idealistic feminine practices; however, it was within a male-governed realm of ideology—created in conduct books, treatises, publications and landscape gardens—that reminded women of their natural and suitable place in eighteenth-century England. As symbolic embodiments of maternal duty in society, they signified the

---

72 Samuel Richardson, *Clarissa, or the History of a Young Lady…*, vol. 3 (Dublin: P. Byrne, J. Moore, and A. Grueber, 1792), 197.

73 Retford, 15.
regulation and formal dialogues about the process of reproduction, in some cases more of a nosing in on feminine roles than an absolute usurpation or dictation of real maternal and paternal interactions in contemporary England. As with the dairy itself, those women that wanted to embrace either dairying or nursing were given popular encouragement and support to engage in such virtuous and morally renewing activities.

Like the landscape garden itself, continually imbued with the unseen patriarchal presence, the dairy realm was imbued with the unseen presence of the mistress of the dairy, the aristocratic mistress of the estate. This pronounced femininity reverberated in the practices of the dairy, the ornament displayed within and the very implements of dairy production: the bodies of women, real and metaphoric. Within the garden park, these spaces of femininity and maternal connotations became sites where women were used to meet the needs of the estate, the family and the nation.
CHAPTER THREE
LIMINALITY, RITUAL AND SEXUALITY IN THE DAIRY

The previous chapter discussed ornamental dairies as social constructions of femininity regulated and defined in the landscape garden. The native femininity of the ornamental dairy created a space that represented essentialized views of ideal and “natural” womanhood. This feminine body and space existed within the patriarchal landscape. However, this reading of the ornamental dairy constitutes only a partial examination of the implications of the dairy as a gendered space. The multivalency of ornamental dairies enables them to be read as spaces that were governed by patriarchal society but that also resisted it. As such, ornamental dairies acted as one example of Foucault’s heterotopias, spaces that simultaneously conform to and contest the ideologies and relationships they were intended to signify.†

The conformity and ideological constructs embodied in the dairy were necessitated by the liminal nature of the space, as a realm that was distinct from social convention and normative experience, because of the female authority of the space, as well as the notion of the ornamental dairy as a space of performance, embodying female

†This classification of pleasure dairies as heterotopias is presented and analyzed in Meredith Martin’s work on French pleasure dairies. As discussed by Martin, pleasure dairies contradicted and undermined their accepted social, gendered and cultural signification. They “invert the set of relationships’ that they were intended to designate.” See Meredith Martin, “Dairy Queens: Sexuality, Space, and Subjectivity in Pleasure Dairies from Catherine de’ Medici to Marie-Antoinette” (Ph.D. diss., Harvard University, 2006), 5.
ritual and expression. The liminal quality of the pleasure dairy not only demanded such regulation and control, but it also counteracted and resisted such oversight.

This chapter delves into the “Other” dimension of the eighteenth-century pleasure dairy and investigates its significations as a liminal realm—a site of power, ritual and performance—within the landscape garden, which was itself a site encompassing these elements. The ornamental pleasure dairy was a liminal space. Liminality, a term often used in anthropological discussions of ritual and culture, is a term that describes spaces and practices that invoke a frame of mind removed from everyday modes, a realm distinct from the common and everyday, where one is brought to see themselves and their environment in new ways.\(^2\) This concept of liminality has been examined by scholars such as Arnold van Gennep, Victor Turner and Carol Duncan and applied to aesthetic experiences of viewing art and performances in galleries and theaters.\(^3\) The pleasure dairy, as a site of viewing, activity and performance, possessed a distinct liminality and became a space that was as much ideological as real. It was an arena where female power was enacted on many levels; thus, the ornamental dairy represented a more complex view of femininity—one of power and sexuality, of both virtue and vice.

---

\(^2\) Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals* (London: Routledge, 1995), 11. Duncan defines liminality in her discussion of the art museum as a ritual space, or a liminal space. Duncan’s own discussion is drawn from Victor Turner’s work on ritual, in which Turner acknowledges the similarities between liminal experience as pertaining to ritual and the aesthetic experience of viewing art and performance. Duncan summarizes: “Like folk rituals that temporarily suspend the constraining rules of normal social behavior…so these cultural situations, Turner argued, could open a space in which individuals can step back from the practical concerns and social relations of every day life and look at themselves and their world—or at some aspect of it—with different thoughts and feelings.”

\(^3\) Duncan offers a concise summation of Victor Turner’s work on ritual. His discussion of liminality as it pertains to the visual and entertainment can be found in Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982). Many of Turner’s writings were inspired by the work of Arnold van Gennep, whom he cites in his text.
The dairy’s liminality was manifest in various ways, aesthetic and conceptual, which will be discussed in this chapter. The dual aspect of the dairy as both productive and pleasurable anticipated its liminal dimension. However, the pleasure dairy’s distinctive status as a threshold space was heightened by the feminine tradition and control of the dairy, creating a liminal realm that operated under a matriarchal order distinct from social modes of the time. Thus, the ideal female realm of industry was converted into a more threatening sphere of female power and inherent sexuality. Furthermore, the practices and ideological associations of the pleasure dairy combined with traditional beliefs regarding dairy work to create spaces of ritual—according to contemporary accounts, as well as current theorizations of ritual. The ritual nature of the dairy enhanced its quality as a realm separate from the mundane—a liminal realm—a dimension where real and imaginary, performance and allegory conjoined. It was also a venue where sacred piety and pagan rite came together and sensuality and the sacred intermingled.

The liminality of the pleasure dairy as a female realm and the ritual nature of traditional dairy practice, as well as the eighteenth-century romanticization of the dairy and its performed activities, created a site that could be read as both sacred and highly sexual, one that was chaste and moral but also alluring and sensual—the duality of prescribed feminine nature. Thus, the dairy encompassed both the chaste and virtuous element of feminine nature and the untamed, erotic perceptions of women. It was a site that could be both highly celebrated and sanctified but one that was equally threatening and dangerous.
These two aspects of the dairy were conjoined in the ornamental dairies of the aristocracy and were permitted to co-exist within these ambiguous spaces in the landscape, because of the sacro-idyllic interpretation of the dairy space and of the landscape into which it was absorbed. The ambiguous female enclaves were situated in natural gardens that were themselves threshold spaces, increasingly romanticized and laden with implications of imagination and ritual, pastoral innocence and pagan pleasure, which deepened the signification and function of the symbolic dairy space within the landscape. Erotic and moral associations were shared between the dairy and the landscape garden. These co-existing natures were permissible within the imaginative dimension of the landscape garden, where they could be expressed and enjoyed, but also contained.

The liminality of the ornamental dairy allowed women an acceptable site in which to express female identity and respond to the duality of female natures, through activity that inherently embraced both the elevated and the elemental, the sacred and sexual aspects of femininity. This duality, its dignified and dangerous potential, explains the perceived male need to regulate the dairy space and the performed ideologies of the women within the space. It was a space that was encroached upon by men, who saw a

---

4 The term “sacro-idyllic” is a term used in discussions of the classical pastoral heritage of literature and art. One scholar described the sacro-idyllic images of Roman art as depictions of landscapes possessing a “dream-like” and tranquil quality; bucolic images of temples, statues of gods and sacred objects which combined with depictions of farmers, shepherds and peaceful rustics enacting a serene, harmonious rural existence. See Annette Lucia Giesecke, “Beyond the Garden of Epicurus: The Utopics of the Ideal Roman Villa,” in Utopian Studies (March 2001); http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1G1-83582923.html. Giesecke cites Eleanor Winsor Leach’s scholarship about the Roman pastoral tradition and sacro-idyllic images. Leach affirms that sacro-idyllic is a term applied to scenes of Arcadian nature. “Each of these scenes creates a different impression of the pastoral life; some rigorous and austere, others tranquil and leisurely...In all the paintings, the presence of architectural monuments (shrines, houses, temples) establishes a link between bucolic leisure and the civilized world.” Quoting Eleanor Winsor Leach, Vergil’s Eclogues: Landscapes of Experience (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1974), 91. Such pastoral images evoked a sense of tranquility and leisure, but also implied a sense of amorous love.
need for regulation of female power, but also one that resisted it and asserted female authority. Thus, in the romantic imagination, ornamental dairies became sacro-idyllic spaces of ritualistic performance where women came into being with nature in a form of primitive rite, creating a “cult” where sacred and profane convoluted in an imaginative realm.

Dairy as a Liminal Space

The ornamental pleasure dairy, as fashioned, idealized and romanticized in its eighteenth-century context, represented a liminal space. As mentioned above, liminality, as applied to ritual settings and aesthetic experiences, implies entering a situation that invokes a distinct dimension of thought or imagination in which the understanding of identity or reality is heightened by removal from the secular everyday setting.\(^5\) It describes a state of mind “betwixt-and-between the normal, day-to-day cultural and social states.”\(^6\) In the ornamental pleasure dairy, the activities of aristocratic women, the traditional behaviors and expectations of social elites, were suspended. The reversal of class and even gender expectations allowed for an experience within the dairy that brought about a changed mode of understanding and thinking about society, culture and identity. The rural imitation and performance of dairy activities and other natural pursuits opened a “space in which [women could] step back from the practical concerns and social relations of everyday life and look at themselves and their world—or at some aspect of

\(^5\) Ibid.

\(^6\) Duncan, 11.
it—with different thoughts and feelings.”7 The dairy’s liminality was presaged and reflected in its aesthetics and design, its uses, and the cultural and ideological significations assigned to it. The liminal suspension of reality was possible because of the romantic imagination of the era, which we will return to momentarily. This threshold nature of the dairy furthered the complex and dual signification of the dairy as presented throughout this study.

The pleasure dairy’s designation as a realm distinct from the everyday task-space of the traditional dairy, its duality as a transitional space that was both labor and leisure, privileged and productive, was set forth in the first chapter. This transitional-liminal sense was anticipated and manifest in the aesthetic, design and situation of pleasure dairies within the park. Ornamental dairies were often placed in the threshold space between the productive area of the estate and the pleasurable landscape park, between the real task space of the world and the romanticized version. For example, the Neoclassical dairy built at Castle Ashby is close to the functional buildings of the house; however, its formal entrance looks out over the landscape park and creates a vista that forms a direct axis with the menagerie in the distance. The dairy’s location creates an interesting axial contrast between the productive space and the pleasure of the garden park, as well as the domestic space and exotic space between the dairy and the menagerie.

This liminality of location was also true at Sherborne Castle, where the dairy (c. 1755) is also located close to the estate, connected with the kitchen and scullery buildings. However, its Gothic veneer looks out towards the lake, also designed by

---

7 Ibid. Liminal realms, as discussed by Duncan, create this sense of a distinctive and unique realm, differentiated from common time and place. Dairy rituals may be seen as creating a refreshed world view for women.
Capability Brown. Thus, the dairy was in a location convenient with the kitchen and other buildings, but also was placed in a site connected with the garden, offering pleasurable views and leisured space. The later addition of an orangery directly across the quaint grassy pleasure area from the dairy obscured the view somewhat, but strengthened its connection with the pleasurable and recreational realm of the estate’s garden. Sambrook Freeman’s dairy at Fawley Court (pre-1771) (Figure 41), while also connected with the service buildings of the estate, had a decorative front entrance accessible from the gardens, a Norman-style portal accented with flint and stained glass.8 The decorative facade disguised its relationship to the larger, more utilitarian buildings of the estate. Despite their location, ornamental dairy facades were decorated to distinguish the realm of the dairy, signifying a transition into a distinctive space. Whether approaching the ornamental dairy within the pleasure grounds or from the functional area of the estate, the dairy’s aesthetic designated a removal from the common and everyday setting into a unique realm.

The ornamented exteriors opened into attractive interiors that also reflected the distinction of the pleasure dairy as a space differentiated from the mundane. As indicated previously, fancy dairies were expensively decorated. For example, plans for the interior of the dairy at Dodington Park reflect the intricate and elegant conception of the dairy as a distinct realm. Samuel Wyatt’s design for the oval-shaped dairy contrasted with the stark geometry of the estate’s functional buildings (Figure 42). The interior walls were decorated with columned panels of glass, a “dado” lined with porphyry and acanthus leaf

---

decorative moldings along the cornice (Figure 43). This display of Grecian taste was capped by an elegant circular dome with a full rose pattern (Figure 44). The dairy also contained a decorative fount with running water. The Croome Court dairy, designed by Robert Adam in the 1760s, boasted an elegant, ornate Neoclassical interior. The dairy was lined with the “best white dutch tyles.” Adam’s bills indicate plasterwork and moldings throughout the building (enumerated by Adam as “rich foliage ornaments”), geometric paneling surrounded by decorative moldings, as well as ornamental friezes, and cornices. The dressers lining the walls had scroll feet and “moulded bace[s].” Two large niches occupied the east wall of the dairy and originally planned to hold two large decorative urns over 75 inches tall, ornamented with carved garland swags (Figure 45). The decoration of these dairies reflected and anticipated their distinction as a realm removed from its traditional conception.

**The Mystique of the Dairy**

The liminality of the dairy transcended its formal features. It was fundamentally rooted in the nature of the dairy practice as a feminine practice. Within the landscape garden and contemporary society, the ornamental dairy represented a departure from the prescribed social order of male-governed space and distinguished itself as a realm of the “Other,” a matriarchal realm. Thus, as a female province, it created a distinctive,
threshold space that asserted female expertise and power and, thus, was potentially dangerous.

As discussed previously, the dairy sphere was traditionally regulated by women. This was largely due to the perception of essentialized femininity within the dairy practice itself, which was imbued into the physical space of the dairy. In his popular agricultural thesis, *The Rural Economy of Gloucestershire* (1789), William Marshall explained that it required a “degree of NATURAL CLEVERNESS, to which we [male implied] have no pretention.” Scholar Alicia Carroll affirms, “To call the practices and rituals of women’s dairy work in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a 'cult' linked to essentialist ideals of women’s nature is no exaggeration.” Women were typically characterized as being less logically-oriented creatures and more bound to the instincts and rhythms of their bodies than men. As an activity that required constant physical interaction with dairy products, dairy labor was biologically, naturally and socially tied to feminine experience.

Much of the exclusive femininity of the dairy was derived from the mysterious, unknown nature of its practices, which were passed between generations of women.

---

12 The essential female quality of dairy work and dairies themselves is explained in chapter two. Women’s work in the dairy was a work of nature, one that was instinctively learned and practiced and consequently was viewed as being in contrast with culture’s fixation with scientific understanding and improvements.

13 Marshall, 186.


Dairy work was steeped in tradition, superstition and empirical legacies. The creation of butter, cream, cheese and other dairy items were demanding processes involving minutiae of details, which must be conscientiously executed to produce quality goods.\textsuperscript{16} However, the complexities of dairy methods were unrecorded prior to the eighteenth century. Dairy knowledge was an oral tradition, passed down through generations of dairy maids, including aristocratic dairy maids. Emily, Countess of Kildare, boasted to her husband in a letter of 1759, “…I must tell you that I have made myself quite the mistress of the dairy knowledge at Brockley Park, where there is the finest cream your eyes ever beheld …”\textsuperscript{17} The art of the dairy craft could only be learned by observation and participation within the dairy space and, thus, as the contemporary Marshall conceded, was “seldom familiar” to an outside audience.\textsuperscript{18}

Hence, dairy work was often discussed in rather mysterious terms by eighteenth-century scientists and writers, who sought to record and analyze the dairy realm. Indeed, many male agriculturalists of the Enlightenment era that attempted to systematize and scientifically improve dairy processes were baffled by the secrecy and complexities of the practice. The agricultural writer William Marshall described cheese-making and other dairy processes as “a craft—a mystery—secluded from the public eye.”\textsuperscript{19} The association of dairy work with the natural rhythms and intuition of female nature further heightened


\textsuperscript{18} William Marshall, \textit{The Rural Economy of Gloucestershire.} vol. 2. [book online] (Gloucester: R. Raikes for G. Nichol, 1789, accessed November 2007), 185; based on \textit{English Short Title Catalogue. Eighteenth Century Collections Online}, http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO. Marshall writes that dairy practices are seldom familiar to the gentlemen on whose estates the dairies are operating.

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid.
its mysterious and impenetrable aura. Hence, the highly intuitive processes of the female dairy and its closed tradition lent a strong exclusivity to dairy work. It is hardly surprising, then, that the dairy realm resisted the male gaze.

The female control of the art of dairying was conveyed in the writings of agricultural “improvers” like William Marshall, Jonas Twamley and others who set out to lay bare the secrets of the dairy in order to systematize dairy processes for large-scale production. Contemporaries note the rigidity and suspicion of dairy women to the incursion of male agricultural zealots who desired to alter the practices known to generations of dairywomen. One gentleman wrote, “How unthankful an office it is to attempt to instruct or inform Dairywomen, how to improve their method or point out rules, which are different from their own, or what hath always been practiced by their Mothers, to whom they are often very partial.” Another author lamented that the dairy craft continued in its traditional methods “being taught from Mother to Daughter,” as such methods remained old-fashioned and ignorant. Treatises began to be published in the eighteenth century and continued into the nineteenth century, where men attempted to oust the matriarchal order of the dairy, criticizing their traditional methods, a power struggle between masculine science and feminine nature.

---

20 The late eighteenth-century craze for improvements extended to the dairy realm and heightened the interest in the dairy and its processes. While it is true that many men during the eighteenth century became interested in the dairy and its production, these men were primarily the sponsors of the dairy. Ornamental dairies were included in their landscapes as one facet of improvements. However, relatively few men were actually inducted into the realm of practice. Agricultural writers like Marshall, Twamley, William Ellis and John Lawrence made careers traveling the countryside, analyzing and recording dairy methods. Valenze discusses contemporary writings of these authors in her article, 148, 151.

21 Valenze, 154.

22 Cheke, 133.

23 As science, gendered as male, began to assert its presence into the traditional, indigenous methods of dairy women, their intuitive and natural modes obviously gendered as feminine, the masculine-
The secrets of the dairy practice were safeguarded by the watchful eye of the dairy maid. These traditional methods were not easily assessed, altered or abandoned, which explains the resistance of dairy production to industrialization and technological innovations. As one historian explains, “cheese-making continued its arbitrary course...By the end of the eighteenth century a few persons were considering the application of scientific principles, but as these were barely formulated, they made little headway against the traditional. The dairywomen continued to cling pertinaciously to her empirical tenets...”

Dairy women resisted the male incursion that sought to bring industrialization and change into the dairy space. One agricultural writer in the nineteenth century described dairying as a very “tardy a branch of our rural economy.” Well into the nineteenth century, the duration of time cream was kept before churning into butter was still governed by the personal discernment of the dairy maid.

Late eighteenth-century improvements enabled more milk production, but the actual processes of transforming milk into its by-products saw little innovation before the “sudden burst of scientific knowledge” of the 1850s. Thus, the dairy remained a bastion

gendered mode threatened the female power of the dairy. This necessity of bringing order and science to the dairy was manifest in the writings of many of these agriculturalists. William Marshall in his 1789 treatise, issued a rallying cry to “every man of science, who has opportunity and leisure, to lend” his resources and assistance to reforming dairy practices, cited in Valenze, 152. Cheke cites one contemporary writer as stating that he desired to adapt the “at present mysterious but important subject, to some certain and fixed principles,” Cheke, 30.

24 Cheke, 40-41.

25 Ibid., 156.


27 Cheke, 128. Both Fussell and Cheke’s works discuss the integration of industrial methods into dairy practices. While several individuals worked to advance the technology of the dairy, significant adoption of new dairy technologies and industrial methods were not widely used until mid-century, even beyond. Cheke emphasizes that “until 1850 and onwards the changes were more rapid in dairy-building and construction and apparatus than in the actual processes of manufacture,” 139. Fussell writes that by 1850
of feminine craft and tradition decades into the nineteenth century. As a site that was
governed by and seemed to operate under inherent characteristics of female nature, the
ornamental dairy was a space that was distinguished from the prescribed mode of society,
a distinction that was enhanced by the closed nature and exclusivity of the dairy methods.

The female governance of the ornamental dairy complicated its signification. It
made the dairy not simply a space of ideal femininity, where women represented
propriety, industry and socially-sanctioned womanhood, but also a dangerous space, a
space of female power and control. It was a liminal space, existing outside traditional
social frameworks and expectations. Furthermore, because it was a space controlled by
women, there existed therein an inherent notion of the dairy as a space of desire and
sexuality. The mystery of the dairy, its feminine activities, its references to female
biology and sexuality and its rhetoric of chastity created an allurement of sexuality to the
space, an undeniable aspect of its legacy and perception.

Though the dairy could be regarded as moral and pure, as could the women that
worked therein, as a female realm and a space associated with pastoral modes it was also
a site that transgressed these ideals. Women laborers were often discussed as possessing
questionable morality. This and the notion of the female workspace as a dangerous space,
a space of implied sexuality, is not unique to eighteenth-century pleasure dairies. This
was also the case with female spinners. Spinning was a traditional female mode of
productivity, so much so that the term “distaff” came to be used to describe something

---

“invention had come to the aid of the dairy farmer as it had to most other trades, but only to a limited extent,” 170. Also see Cheke, 156-164.
that was feminine. Female spinners were regarded as representing domesticity and proper industry. At the same time, however, the art of spinning and other forms of female handiwork were often represented in art and literature as having erotic connotations.

Depictions of female spinners, as seen in a wide range of Netherlandish prints and emblem books, took both sides of the debate. The comparison of a Netherlandish interpretation of a female space to the English tradition of similar spaces is apt, as England and the Netherlands enjoyed significant cultural exchange throughout the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, including the realm of visual arts, in the forms of prints, emblem books and painted genres. Much emblematic and iconographical signification was passed between the two traditions. In many such renderings of spinners, women are shown dutifully absorbed in their labors. However, many images exist that correlate spinning with amorous or erotic metaphors. The tools of spinning became symbols of male and female sexuality and lovemaking.

Hence, both dairies and dairy maids were discussed as morally questionable and ambiguous characters that embodied virtue as well as vice. As mentioned throughout this study, dairy maids connoted ideals of modesty, chastity and goodness. This is seen in a portrait of Catherine, Duchess of Queensbury, where the fashionable duchess is portrayed

---


29 Ibid, 88, 100. Stone-Ferrier discusses examples of both perceptions of spinning women in poetry, prints and painting. It is an ideal that is, perhaps, best represented in print tradition of seventeenth century, especially Dutch prints.

30 As one scholar wrote regarding Anglo-Dutch relations, “The time when emblem books flourished, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, embraces the period when relations between the two countries developed from traditional trade contacts, mostly coast to coast, to an exchange that, after the mid-sixteenth century, became much more intense, extending to virtually all reaches of life: trade, religion, politics, warfare, art.” See Bart Westerweel, ed. *Anglo-Dutch Relations in the Field of the Emblem* (New York: Brill, 1997), ix.

31 See Stone-Ferrier, 95-100.
in the simple and sweet guise of a milk maid (Figure 46). William Hogarth’s inclusion of a milk maid at the center of his print, *The Enraged Musician* (1741) (Figure 47), is highly symbolic of the virtue and elevated ideology of the dairy maid. In the chaos of the city scene, the central focus of the print is the tall, upright milkmaid, who seems to glide through the chaos and noise of the various characters playing and arguing. The maid looks directly out to the viewer, as if in a realm or state above the others depicted. Notably, Hogarth bathes the simple milk maid with significant white light, implying her singular innocence and goodness. The hilt of a young child’s sword extends across the plain white dress of the milkmaid, forming the silhouette of a cross, heightening the impression of the milk maid as a virtuous individual, elevated above the rabble of the crowd.

This same sense of goodness exudes from the scene of the dairy maid depicted in the popular series *The Cries of London* (Figure 48), produced by Francis Wheatley in the 1790s, and subsequently produced as a celebrated series of stipple engravings. Wheatley’s rendering of the dairy maid converted the daily labor of London city life into a pastoral genre, where the maid exemplifies “an idealized rural sensibility characterized by love of children, animals, the meek and the deserving poor.” The lovely dairy maid gracefully passes milk to the little children surrounding her, almost an allegorical embodiment of charity clad in the robes of a country maid.

Dairy maids could be perceived as Arcadian nymphs of cleanliness, chastity and innocence, but these very attributes also made them the Venuses of the pastoral world.

---

The pastoral mode to which the rustic dairy and the dairy maids belonged connoted innocence, simplicity and morality; yet, the pastoral also implied rustic love, sexuality and erotic appeal. As Meredith Martin writes, “latent qualities of ‘non-useful’ sexuality and erotic desire” were “vital aspects of the pastoral genre.” Representations of pastoral ideals such as those embodied in the dairy and the dairy maid, continually implied that “virtue will always encourage lecherous fantasies of its opposite.” This was true of the dairy and its practitioners.

Hence, dairy maids were frequently discussed and depicted as subjects of male desire—robust, healthy, pure, soft and white. Poetic descriptions speak of their heightened morality and also their bewitching, sexual allure. John Dunton, writing in 1691, described a bewitching encounter with a country milkmaid, whom he heard serenely singing in a meadow, thus:

…[M]y Eyes quickly ceased to envy my ears, for they discover’d kneeling by a Cow, and singing to her (whilst she Milk’d her,) a Person who in the habit of a Milkmaid, seem’d to disguise, and yet make good the Character of one of those Nymphs the Poets are wont to describe: I need not tell you this fair Creature had the Blushes of the Morning in her Cheeke, the Splendor of the Sun in her Eyes, the grateful freshness of the Fields in her Looks, the whiteness of the Milk (she had before her) in her Skin; least you should think I spent too much time in gazing on her: But I may perhaps without much Hyperbole, give you this Account of her, that though her Cloaths were suited to her Condition, yet they were very ill suited to her Beauty, which as if Nature intended a Triumph over Fortune, did without any assistance of Ornament, more distress my Liberty than others have been able to do with all their most curious Dresses. In a word, she looked at once so

---

33 Martin, 278.

34 Ibid., 279.

35 There are an endless supply of poems that speak of the fresh beauty and rosy allure of the dairy maid and reference her desirability and allure. I mention only a few: John Anketell, Poems on several subjects… (Dublin: William Porter, 1793), and Samuel Butler, Hudibras, in three parts; ... corrected and amended. vol. 1 (London, C. Hitch, G. Hawkins, et. al, 1764). Addison includes the subject in his Spectator as well.
Innocent and Pretty, that she seem'd like to do Mischief, without at all intending it.  

Dunton, smitten, followed this description with verses of poetry celebrating both the purity and Venus-like beauty of the maid’s body and visage, confessing that her alluring, sweet appearance caused him to “forget himself.”

The sexual allure of the dairy maid is conveyed in various contemporary renderings of dairy and milk maids. Some images, such as the print entitled Rustic Courtship (Figure 49), drawn by William Hamilton in the late eighteenth century, depict a blushing, yet beautiful and appealing dairy maid, being courted by a shepherd, her beauty and charm creating a more innocent and sweet version of desire on the part of the shepherd suitor. However, many other images are more overt in their depiction of the dairy maid as an object of desire.

A print entitled The London Beau in the Country, or the Dairy-House Gallant (1773) (Figure 50) shows a fashionable city gentleman, obviously overcome by the allure of the modest dairy maid, pouncing upon the young woman as she works in her dairy. His violent advances upset the presumed order of the dairy. Spring and Winter, a print produced in 1786 (Figure 51), goes even further, depicting the milk maid as not only a coveted object of male lust but as one willing to sell herself, like her appealing dairy products, to obliging customers. In the print, a buxom milk maid coyly acknowledges the


37 Dunton writes, “And indeed this Fair Milkmads Eyes, Mouth, Teeth, and Hands, seem'd to have been made only to furnish the God of Love...When she open'd her Mouth, methoughts I saw the three Graces sporting in her Countenance, when she Smiles there needs no day! And her Body was so exactly proportion'd in all its parts, that had she lived in the Time of Phideas, he had certainly taken her for the Model of his Venus, which was the Admiration of all the World: And my Respect to her was (for a while) equal to her Charms,” Ibid., 377.
advances of the lecherous gentleman behind her, who approaches her with inviting eyes and extends a handful of money. Thus, to varying degrees the dairy maid represented both notions of chastity and its opposite and was a coveted object of desire.

Depictions of the dairy space itself also evidence the sexualized aspect of the work of the pleasure dairy and demonstrate similar iconography that connotes lust and desire. This sexuality of dairy work is implied in various contemporary prints depicting maids working in the dairy. Gentlemen lurk in the background around the space, the male presence, the male on-looker. One such print, likely a late eighteenth-century image, depicts women working in the dairy space (Figure 52). The women work pouring and churning, the wide vessels emphasizing female sexuality and the shape and motion of the churn also connoting the idea of copulation. While the women work in their space, the dairy scene opens into the outside where a gentleman, a “rake” literally carrying a rake, watches the women from outside the door. The privacy of the dairy is disrupted by the interested gaze of the male onlooker. The rake he is carrying is representative of male lust or sexuality. The churn used by the woman on the right acts as a sexual symbol of womb and phallus.

The lascivious potential of the dairy space is further represented in a print of 1794, an illustration by Thomas Rowlandson for a popular publication, *The Tour of Dr. Syntax in Search of the Picturesque* (Figure 53). The gentlemen, Dr. Syntax, is shown leaning in closely, his eager body position and the dropping of his hat to the floor evidence of his intense interest in the fair dairy maid. The older man looks as though his chief desire is to seduce the seemingly demure lady. The dairy maid’s ample bosom hangs over a bowl of milk, representing her fecundity and sexuality.
In the English print tradition, one which was largely influenced by Netherlandish prints, depictions of the buxom milk maids holding or working with open vessels also reference female sexuality and the emblematic tradition of open pots and vessels as symbolizing morally loose or available women. On such print, entitled *A Bacchante*, by Francis Wheatley in 1787 (Figure 54) shows this trope of the loose courtesan, one of the servants of Bacchus, the god of wine and reveling. She reclines in a landscape setting, her body suggestively exposed to view. Her foot is placed upon an open vessel, connoting her available sexuality and lustful intentions. The same composition and pose was implemented in earlier Dutch prints of the seventeenth century depicting Venus and Cupid (Figure 55).

In the depiction of Dr. Syntax and the dairy maid, the juxtaposition of traditional and mechanical, screw-like, wide churns and circular vessels are encompassing reminders of male and female sexuality. A cat drinks out of a pan of milk atop the dairy counter. This iconography of the cat has a long tradition in print culture, especially in Dutch emblematic prints, of lust and carnality. The cat, symbol of lust, is engrossed in drinking of the milk and its tail sticks out rigidly in the air, yet another connotation of the male phallus and desire. The cat’s action also implies the dairy maid’s lack of attention to her duties. Thus, the female nature of the dairy, as well as the ritual aspect of dairy

38 Eddy de Jongh, *Questions of Meaning: Theme and Motif in Dutch Seventeenth-Century Painting*, trans. by Michael Hoyle (Leiden: Primavera Press, 2003), 40-42. The Dutch tradition for prints had a strong influence on the English prints, especially during the seventeenth century. Dutch prints often depict women cleaning pots or jugs, or the presence of such items in depictions of women. These open vessels signified the female womb being open or exposed.

39 Ibid., 43. The theme of a milk maid accompanied by a man abounded in Netherlandish prints, poems and songs that explicitly emphasized the heightened lasciviousness of dairy work and milk maids themselves. This is discussed in Eddy de Jongh and Ger Luijten’s *Mirror of Everyday Life: Genreprints in the Netherlands 1550-1700*, trans. by Michael Hoyle (Ghent: Snoeck-Ducaju & Zoon, 1997), 260-62. As the Dutch print culture was absorbed by British culture, such emblematic carry-overs were common.
worked to create a space that could be asserted as moral and chaste, but one that held definite undertones of sexuality and lasciviousness.

Considering the dairy as a dangerous space of female power, it is interesting to note that some “powerful” women, some of questionable repute, adopted the dairy and its practices. Lady Mary Wortley Montague, a famous personality in eighteenth-century English culture, known for her bold activities and her exotic exploits, was famed for her knowledge of dairy practices. After moving to the continent, apart from her husband, she spent considerable time in her dairy at Louvere, having fitted it up with rustic-style furnishings and earthenware.40 She took great pleasure in the seclusion of her dairy and its surrounding garden environs.

Elizabeth Lamb, Lady Melbourne, one of the most powerful social elites of the late eighteenth century, was also known for her interest in dairy work and agricultural pursuits. Lady Melbourne was an intimate of the famous Duchess of Devonshire, considered at one time to be the leading lady of Whig society. Lady Melbourne rose in social prominence in her own right and began to “inspire the envy of the royal family.”41 Moving in the most noticed circles of fashion, Lady Melbourne’s activities, fashion and

40 Lady Montagu described her dairy house: “I have fitted up in this farm-house a room for myself—that is to say, strewed the floor with rushes, covered the chimney with moss and branches, and adorned the room with basins of earthen-ware (which is made here to great perfection) filled with flowers, and put in some straw chairs, and a couch bed, which is my whole furniture. This spot of ground is so beautiful, I am afraid you will scarce credit the description, which, however, I can assure you, shall be very literal, without any embellishment from imagination.” She continued, “I enjoy every amusement that solitude can afford,” she said. “I confess I sometimes wish for a little conversation, but I reflect that the commerce of the world gives more uneasiness than pleasure...” Lady Mary Pierrepont Wortley Montagu, “Letter from Lady Mary Pierrepont Wortley Montagu to Mary Wortley Montagu Stuart, Countess of Bute, July 1748” in The Letters and Works of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, vol. 3. Lord Wharncliffe, ed. (London: Richard Bentley, 1837), 447.

behavior was scrutinized, caricatured and devoured by the public press.\textsuperscript{42} She was known for her fashionable exploits and could boast of having a string of powerful lovers, including the Prince of Wales and Lord Egremont, both who fathered her children.

That Lady Melbourne enjoyed her social notoriety and was eager to assert her powerful femininity is evident in a portrait depicting Lady Melbourne, the Duchess of Devonshire and Anne Damer, as the three witches of Shakespeare’s \textit{Macbeth} (Figure 56). The three women move lithely about the cauldron, throwing flowers and carnations into the steaming pot. The women, coy yet assertive, enact their brand of magic with pleasure and pride. As her biographer noted, this portrait evidenced a desire on the part of the women portrayed to assert their perception of femininity, knowing that “female virtue was not the only value for women to uphold…nor motherhood their sole purpose.”\textsuperscript{43} A contemporary gentleman, Sir Thomas Coke, wrote about the portrait in a letter, “…I daresay they think their charms more irresistible than all the magick of the Witches.”\textsuperscript{44} In this portrait, these three women—the most famed socialites of the time—boldly assert their feminine mystique, their charm and sexuality as their bewitching power.

This same assertion of the female license for power and sexual allure could be inscribed into the pleasure dairy. The dairy’s ambiguity as a site of female power and sexuality could have often reflected the same brand of ambiguity in its practitioners, as well. Not all women who adopted the pleasure dairy as their personal province were icons of purity and virtue. The dairy’s ambiguity was heightened by its status as a female

\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 21-26.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 21.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 20.
space, a venue of womanly authority that was deemed questionable, perhaps somewhat unstable, and dangerous, a realm full of notions of sexuality and desire.

**Ritual Performance in the Dairy**

The complexity of the female liminal space within the ornamental dairy was augmented by the ritual nature of the dairy and its practices, which furthered the liminality of the ornamental dairy. As a result of its intuitive operations and lack of recorded procedure, dairy work was viewed as a feminine art form, a ritualistic female practice. Deborah Valenze, one of the few historians to investigate the female dairy in agricultural history, assessed the male perception of the dairy thus: “[A]s a consequence of its reliance on apparently incalculable procedures, as well as its irregular results, dairying belonged to an occult branch of husbandry.”

As a subject that was seemingly impenetrable, gentlemen who wrote about the dairy equated dairy work as something mystic and ritualistic. William Marshall, the famed agriculturalist, continues, “The dairy-room is consecrated to the [female] sex…and is generally understood to require some interest…to gain full admission to its rites.” The dairy space and its activities were described by contemporaries as a secluded space of mystery and ritual, sanctified to the work of women. As a ritual activity and performance, the ornamental dairy itself, the theater of the activity, necessarily became a liminal space.

The dairy craft was classified as “ritual” by contemporary writers (almost universally male) because of its elaborate and precise ceremony as well as its ambiguous

---

45 Valenze, 153.

46 Ibid.
and unknown nature. It is difficult to conceive of the enactment of true ritual in western culture. Indeed, the term ‘ritual’ itself has become diluted within modern culture. However, contemporary explorations of anthropology have expanded the idea of socio-cultural rituals extensively and the understanding of ritual practices and their social import. Through the lens of modern scholarship on ritual, the dairy’s classification as a ritual space is increasingly apt. Much of the nature of the dairy and its practices align with modern understanding of ritual. The intuitive activities enacted within the dairy, the superstition and lore connected to those practices, its removal from the everyday realm of experience and the contemporary ideal of the transformative moral and spiritually-renewing effects of dairy work all assert that ornamental dairies were spaces of ritual governed by the aristocratic dairy maids.

The term “ritual” was one frequently used in contemporary writings. The term was defined by Dr. Johnson’s *Dictionary* as “solemnly ceremonious; done according to some religious institution.” However, the term was applied to other aspects of eighteenth-century culture, such as the “Art of Love,” and was often preceded by words such as “heathen” that implied attitudes of difference or Other. It was a term also applied to activities and practices where men had little experience and could not systematize or explain their importance or what the minutiae of its practice.

---

47 Nick Crossley, “Ritual, Body Technique, and (Inter)subjectivity,” in *Thinking Through Rituals: Philosophical Perspectives*, Keven Schilbrack, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2004), 32. Crossley discusses the varied use of the term ritual in contemporary society. The term is invoked to describe everything from magic to religion to everyday habit.


49 Joseph Addison, *The Spectator*, vol. 1 (London: J. and R. Tonson, 1765): 295. Ritual and heathen are connected in Roderick Mackenzie, *The extreme cruelty and danger of introducing natural plans of supposed happiness…* (London, 1788); Thomas Broderick, *Letters from Several Parts of Europe…vol. 1* (Dublin, 1754) and others. In certain cases, it seems as though the term “ritual” was applied to activities and practices where men had little experience and could not systematize or explain their importance or what the minutiae of its practice.
applied to certain women’s activities. Dairy practices fell into this category. Polite female practices like the serving and drinking of tea at the tea table and social visiting were also described in terms of ritual. Tea drinking was described as an “ancient custom” of women, though it had only become widely used during the seventeenth century. As with the dairy, an understanding of the manners, movements and utensils of the tea table was considered instinctively female and began to be an important art passed on between women in families. Contemporary texts abound that enumerated the expectations and importance, the subtle art of serving tea and managing a proper tea table with its ornamental equipage. The intricacies and subtleties of this art baffled masculine outsiders and subjected it to much criticism.

The ceremony surrounding the serving and consumption of tea, similar to the activity of the dairy, was concerned with issues of social order, domesticity and performance. The tea table, like the ornamental dairy, became a site of standardized performance utilizing prescribed accoutrements (porcelain and ceramic wares) and actions that symbolized the domestic realm and feminine identity. The “ritual” created by women in relation to the tea table and the “mysteries of its equipage” made the tea table a site where women appropriated power for themselves at the exclusion of the masculine presence. Thus, the complex social ideologies and meanings encoded within these female rites caused them to be spoken of in terms of ritual practice.

50 Kowaleski-Wallace, “Tea, Gender and Domesticity,” 132.

51 Vickery, 208-9. The indoctrination of tea-table rituals began at a young age, as young girls would “play” tea. These “treasured performance[s] of female adulthood” began as play but evolved into “make-believe ceremonies to the real thing.”

52 Richards, 101-2. Richards quotes Eliza Haywood’s Female Spectator, 97. The ritual nature of aristocratic dairy practice shared aspects of the ritual ascribed to feminine tea practice. Tea tables are discussed as sites that displayed a type of social ritual. Tea table practice and dairy works were both
The precise practices of the dairy process also denoted ritual. The exacting nature of dairy work was a prescribed routine that had to be carefully followed to ensure successful dairy products. These processes were enacted by women in a corporeal performance typical of ritual. As outlined in the previous chapter, the bodies of women were essential to the successful transformation of milk into its savory by-products. Women’s elbows, fingers and hands were tools in the creative act. In an almost shamanistic method, dairy maids relied on their physical sense and their interactions with the natural products themselves, forces of nature, and experiential training to ensure successful results.

The ritual nature of the dairy space was heightened by the strong tradition of superstition underlying the correct execution of dairy procedures and traditional beliefs about good and evil, pure and impure, and supernatural forces in pre-industrial dairy labor. Dairy rites, as with much of ritual practice, were often associated with magic, belief in the supernatural and the interactions between humankind and natural or divine assertions of femininity, albeit ornamental femininity, which implied certain virtues and echoed beliefs about social order and the status of women. They were women of manners and fashion who governed their domestic and social duties with propriety. In her article, “Tea, Gender and Domesticity,” Kowaleski-Wallace asserts that much of the eighteenth-century discourse regarding tea and its usage dealt with the nature of female power over the space, over domesticity and their power as consumers within the economy, 141-42. It is interesting to note that the tea table was also considered an ambiguous space, as Kowaleski-Wallace writes, “In a range of texts, the tea table is the place where civilization is simultaneously promoted and undermined.” See “Tea, Gender and Domesticity,” 132. Furthermore, “the upper-class tea table occasions male fantasies about properly domesticated women,” 135.

53 Duncan, 12. “Ritual also involves an element of performance. A ritual site of any kind is a place programmed for the enactment of something. It is a place designed for some kind of performance.” Such performances do not have to be formal occurrences, they can be daily repetitions that hold some kind of value to the individual performing them— “structured experience that relates to the history or meaning of the site…”

54 Crossley, 33-36. Crossley discusses the importance of social and habitual body “techniques” in ritual practice. Body position, movement and gesture, both deliberate and precise as well as repeated by the participate unaware, are a fundamental part of the ritual experience.
Before principles of hygiene and food care were understood, impurities in butter or cheese were attributed to the “Good or Evil Eye” or some kind of witchcraft or primordial force. G.E. Fussell writes that “difficulty in making [butter] come was ascribed to a witch or fairy of whom the dairymaid stood in wholesome fear.”

Dairy maids traditionally wore circular stones called “hag stones” on their person as talismans against the evil forces.

Impurity in dairy products was also believed to reflect impurity within the practitioners. In some regions of England, pre-pubescent girls were used to handle the curd, due to superstitious beliefs linked with menstruation, impurity and cheese. These young dairy maids performed the same function as virgin priestesses in ancient religions, deemed worthy to participate in ritual because of their designation as pure, clean beings. Thus, the precise practice of dairy maids implied not only successful butter or cheese, but also interaction with the good and evil forces of nature; hence, the need for cleanliness and sterility in a maid’s workspace, her person and her character.

While the awareness of supernatural forces imbued time-honored dairy practices, it is not to assume that women in aristocratic dairies, the mistresses of the estate, subscribed to a similar sense of superstition that governed the minutiae of the dairy or that the same indigenous belief emanated within the prettified enclosures of ornamented dairies. However, as mistress of the dairy working over or in tandem with the dairy

55 Duncan, 8.

56 Fussell, 218. Impurities found in the dairy products were linked to impurities of body and health of the dairy maids and also to interactions of supernatural forces.

57 Author’s interview with dairy maid at Wimpole Hall, Cambridgeshire, 28 August 2007.

58 Fussell, 223.
maids, elite women would likely have not been ignorant of traditional views of dairy women. For the most part, elite women learned their skills from dairy maids and also followed inherited notions of cleanliness and practice in the dairy; thus being inducted as priestesses within the cult space of the dairy. As eighteenth-century elite, well-versed in the quasi-religious philosophies regarding Nature and with a nascent understanding of dairy “hygiene,” such indigenous views may not have been altogether discounted. Regardless, this recognized legacy of beliefs associated with pre-industrial dairy methods heightened the ritual connotations of the ornamental dairy space.

The ornamental dairy as a ritual site became a space of the sacred and the secular. This sense of the ornamental dairy as a space of both pious and pagan ritual was further reflected in much of its iconography and visual signification. Many ornamental dairies asserted themselves as a space of tranquility, almost a quasi-religious space, through their use of gothic style and stained glass. The Cobham Hall dairy was constructed as a Gothic church structure, complete with a bell tower (Figure 57). Its inside was heavily decorated with groined vaulting and decorative rosettes, its side elevation resembling the layout of a basilica nave and side aisles. The church-like atmosphere was augmented by the stained glass windows inserted throughout the building, which would have filled the space with dim yet ethereal colored light. The dairy at Corsham Court was a small ornamental dairy also designed in Gothic style, but was also an octagonal space, a shape which was often implemented in the design and decoration of early Christian structures as it represented
regeneration and resurrection. Bright, stained glass windows filled each wall, creating within the dairy a very cool, sheltered, tranquil and reverential atmosphere (Figure 58).

The sacred aura of space was augmented by the inclusion of marble tables and fountains with running water at the center of many dairies, which acted as a central altar within the space. Many dairies, as at Corsham Court, had fountains with running water at the center of the dairy. These fountains, like the large fountain at Blenheim Palace decorated with bucolic sculpture, were very ornate features within the space. The water basin and fountain at Corsham Court with its marble base and its spout, decorated with a sculpted serpent winding around the spout, exude a strong sense of sacrosanct ritual (Figure 59). This distinctive water basin surrounded by an octagonal marble table echoed the symbolic numerology of the entire structure and strongly references the idea of cleansing and purification. Many Early Christian churches constructed baptismal fonts in octagonal shape, or within eight-sided buildings. Such fonts were believed to symbolize the rebirth of baptism and the fountain of life. The fountains of water evoked associations of ritual cleansing, as well as acting as altar-like inclusions within the ritual realm, the water itself exuding a wide range of ritualistic and religious notions of cleansing, purity, birth and rebirth.

Ritualistic connotations persisted in imagery that carried more pagan associations. For example, it was mentioned in the previous chapter that multiple dairies were decorated with images of cows, relating the dairy work performed within and drawing

---

59 In Christian numerology, the octagon correlated with ideas of regeneration and resurrection. Thus, the octagon shape was often used in the design of early Christian martyr chapels and baptismal fonts. See Roger Stalley, Early Medieval Architecture (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 61.

60 Ibid.
associations with lactation and maternity. The dairy at Hamels Park and Princess Amelia’s dairy at Gunnersbury Park were both believed to have the image of a cow within the pediment of their temple-like facades (Figure 60). At Lees Court, the interior of the dairy was decorated with sculpted roundels of cows (Figure 61). The Blenheim fountain and the dairy at Broadlands also contained sculpted images of cows.61 Cow imagery itself connotes ideas of pagan religious practices, idolatry as in the biblical worship of the golden calf and other eastern religions. In addition, the use of ceramic and earthenware vessels in the dairy could also evoke a sense of ritualistic practice. Vessels were used in ritual ceremonies in presenting libations or offerings and Christian scripture alludes to holy disciples as being the vessels of the Lord.62

This sense of pagan ritual and primitivism is further evident in a sketch of the dairy at Hamels Park in Hertfordshire, built for Lady Elizabeth Yorke as a gift from her husband on their first anniversary (Figure 62).63 Designed by Sir John Soane, the primitive style of the Hamels Park dairy implied a sense of primeval mysticism. The dairy was a thatched structure with exposed rafters, rough elm tree columns laced with honeysuckle and woodbine.64 In this sketch, a dairy maid in timeless costume enters the dairy, a rustic bucket perched a top her head. Soane’s designs were based on ideas arising in architectural theory of the time about recovering origins of architecture and the


62 There are numerous references to vessels used in ritual offerings and sacrifices in the Old Testament. One particular reference to disciples as vessels can be found in Acts 9:15, King James Bible.

63 Ibid.

64 Pierre de la Ruffinière Du Prey, John Soane: The Making of an Architect (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 248. This same primitive-style plan was used for a dairy for Lady Elizabeth Craven and was also sent to Lady Penelope Pitt-Rivers for their dairies. Du Prey discusses the influences behind the resurgence of primitive styles in architecture.
primeval beginnings of culture and structure. Thus, the primitive-style structure was viewed as a kind of temple to rusticity and rural engagement, its function shown by the placement of a cow in the medallion of the pediment. The loggia of the dairy was labeled by Soane as a “pronaos” on the plan (Figure 63). Other dairies, like the dairy at Weston Park, were actually placed within temple structures, this one called the Temple of Diana, a site whose interior décor reflects itself as a shrine to the pagan goddess of the moon, who was also the virtuous goddess of chastity (Figure 64). The dairy at Shugborough, built in 1805, was also placed within a temple structure. The dairies at Castle Ashby and Hagley Hall were also reminiscent of classical temples. These temple designs, fused with the sanctity of the site within, implied ideas of power, faith, cult of nature, and worship.

The perception of the ornamental dairy as a space that was ritualistic and carried somewhat pagan associations is apparent in John Papworth’s description of the ideal design for an ornamental dairy. Papworth describes a rich interior, decorated with marbles and porcelain in antique style. He further instructs:

The compartments so formed would be filled with glazed tiles harmonizing with the marble, and niches, designed to contain tripods, or urns, dedicated to the pastoral deities, would each sport a jet d’eau, ‘as their lively, sparkling motion, joined with the coolness they impart to the air in warm seasons, make them fit ornaments for this species of buildings; and the variety of gently splashing sound...
which they produce, adds considerably to the interested created in their favour.”

Papworth’s description calls forth an idea of an antique temple space, with niches constructed to hold urns and tripods, the vessels of antique ceremony and libations, and recommends that such vessels be dedicated to the pastoral deities. The pagan imagery here invoked, combined with the use of water strongly connotes a sense of ritual practice and abundance within the dairy space.

Furthermore, many of these dairies had a porch, portico or a threshold space that designated the passage from the realm of ordinary into the ritual realm of the dairy. As a ritual space, this distinctive “framing” of the liminal-ritual realm is to be expected. As the noted anthropologist Mary Douglas wrote, “A ritual provides a frame. The marked off time or place alerts a special kind of expectancy, just as the oft-repeated ‘Once upon a time’ creates a mood receptive to fantastic tales.” The ritual activities and imaginative adoption of roles by the elite women within was enabled by the distinctive realm into which the participants entered. Unlike most garden buildings, these emblematic temples in the landscape were not simply conceived as temple-like in design but also in their ritual use and associations.

This liminal and ritual reading of the pleasure dairy was possible in context of the landscape garden that was itself a liminal space, possessing a pervasive imaginative and ideological dimension. These gardens represented worlds removed from society, whether it be Eden or Arcadia. Landscape gardens were consecrated as sites separate from

---


68 Mary Douglas, Purity and Danger, 63. Quoted in Duncan, 11.
everyday experience, yet the illusory experience became real. As Joseph Heely wrote in his account of Hagley Park, Worcestershire, in 1777, “[O]ne cannot leave this sweet habitation of the sylvan deities, without extreme regret: the mind imbibes such a pleasing serenity in the contemplation it affords, that one is ready to wish to remain fixed within its happy bounds, never to mingle again in the follies of a busy and licentious world.”

The garden realm was intended to inspire elevated thoughts and understanding through the activities and performances within.

As such, special behaviors and expectations were possible within the idyllic garden space, including genteel dairy work and aristocratic milk maids, highly romanticized within the garden realm. Through interacting with the landscape park, a kind of spiritual transformation or restoration was intended and affected, a communion with nature or the divine that brought the individual into a sense of being.

The ritual aspects of the garden are articulated by garden historian John Dixon Hunt. According to Hunt, the garden is a liminal experience in which one must appreciate the garden as a distinct realm. Indeed, some writers of the eighteenth century called for illusionary means to transcend the world of the garden. Hunt discusses the crafted views and arenas within the garden as “absorbing zones” in which the contrivance of the scene is powerful enough to evoke strong associations of the potential real experience of such.

---


70 Stephen Switzer wrote: “Paradise properly signifies Gardens of Pleasure, the Residence of Angelick and Happy Souls, unsullied with Guilt ...And ’tis from the Admiration of these...the the Soul is elevated to unlimited Heights above, and modell’d and prepar’d for the sweet Reception and happy Enjoyment of Felicities, the durabler as well as happiest that Omniscience has created” see Maynard Mack, *The Garden and the City* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), 24-5.

Within the park, visitors to the garden enacted a performance, a “rural pilgrimage” in which the viewer was inducted into the realm of Apollo, Aeneas, the haven of nymphs, fairies and Nature. This fantasy and imagined aspect of the landscape is implied in William Kent’s sketches of landscape gardens of the time. Kent depicts the realm of the garden as one of imaginative possibilities, inhabited by timeless rustics, fairies and nymphs. In his rendering of the Shell Temple in Alexander Pope’s garden at Twickenham (Figure 65), Kent depicts a crowd of deities, seated on a cloudwork, visiting the garden space, while two garden visitors, accompanied by their dog, look on. Kent inserted a sacrificial altar and antique tripod into the ethereal scene of the Shell Temple, connoting the idea of ritual, both pagan and pious notions. This same liminal distinction of the landscape existed in the notion of the landscape as an Arcadian realm, an almost timeless space characterized by otium, retirement and relaxation, separated from the morals and mores of urban society.

At the same time, these gardens, as exemplary of Nature herself, were also arenas containing an implied sexuality. As referenced in the previous chapter’s discussion of the

---


74 Among the aristocracy who viewed the dairy and the estate, these estates and their Arcadian farming accoutrements represented an ideal prevalent within the mentality of the wealthy that hearkened back to the classical era. The wealthy estates that were enshrouded in pristine, idyllic landscape, yet also becoming sites of productive husbandry and agriculture attempted to imitate the estates of the ancient Romans and their concept of otium. Otium was the retreat to the countryside in which one would enjoy retirement, leisure and partake of the renewing air and environment native to the countryside. This ideal was discovered by gentlemen of the eighteenth century within the writings of Pliny, Ovid and Virgil’s *Georgics*, in which the pleasures and rewards of rural retirement were outlined and, in reading them, parallel writings and mentalities surrounding the development of English estates at the time. As Pliny writes to Gallus in Book Two of the *Villa of the Ancients*: “You wonder I am so much delighted with…my Country-Seat: But you will cease to do so, when you are acquainted with the Beauty of the Villa…The Country on both Sides affords a great Variety of Views; in some Places the Prospect is confin’d by Woods, in other is extended over large and spacious Meadows; where many Flocks of Sheep and Herds of Cattle…were driven,” see Pliny, *Villa of the Ancients*, Book II, 1-4.
male-controlled landscape garden, nature was regarded as female; thus, it also possessed the virtue and vice of feminine character. Nature was beautiful, charming, enchanting, yet at the same time unpredictable, tempestuous, enticing and intoxicating. It was “the great mother goddess earth…the repositories of female mysteries, both maternal and erotic.”

As not only sites of nature, but also arenas of pastoral idealism and evocation, natural landscape gardens emanated complex significations of both the sacred and the sexual, presenting a potential threat. As Eleanor Leach confirms, “The garden Eden and the golden age—the legendary ideals of the pastoral—are primitivistic, fertile, indeed maternal, intrinsically threatening to the security and identity of civilized man.”

The dual character of nature and the pastoral also made liminal garden realms into potentially transgressive spaces, spaces that in some ways challenged the order of patriarchal, “civilized,” or accepted, society.

The imaginative force and understanding of the garden space was dependant upon visibility and the staging of views throughout the park which would cause the viewer to feel the scene and to understand the ideologies and mythologies perpetuated within. As De Bolla writes, the landscape garden is a “fantasy in which the man of taste removes himself” from cares and demands of the world “in order to feel the subject’s entry into the spacing of the socioscopics of landscape.” The garden allows one to “experience oneself as ‘authentic.’”

The symbolic performance of the garden was perpetuated within the ornamental pleasure dairy. Thus, landscape gardens were equally a site of


76 Leach, 35.

77 De Bolla, 147.
ritual and thought that facilitated the romanticized activity and conceptualization of the
dairy and also furthered its dual nature as a liminal site of sacred and sensuality.

Sacred and Sensual: Nymphs in the Dairy

The pleasure dairy’s liminal status, as a realm that operated on many levels
between the reality and the imagination and as a venue of ritual, changed the nature of the
space. It was elevated in the romantic imagination as being more than mundane. The
liminal-ritual understanding of the space allowed dairies to be idealized as sanctified
spaces, temples of cleanliness and morality, goodness and innocence. The sanctity of the
dairy and its rites is conveyed in a narrative passage from George Eliot’s The Sad
Fortunes of the Reverend Amos Barton (1857), in which the narrator describes the milk
being brought to the dairy. The narrator queries if the reader understands the origins of
genuine cream:

…[H]ow it was this morning in the udders of the large sleek beasts as they stood
lowing a patient entreaty under the milking-shed; how it fell with a pleasant
rhythm into Betty’s pail, sending a delicious incense into the cool air; how it was
carried into that temple of moist cleanliness, the dairy, where it quietly separated
itself from the meaner elements of milk, and lay in mellowed whiteness, ready for
the skimming-dish… 78

In this passage, the dairy is described as a temple to cleanliness, wherein the milk, which
itself is possessed of libational and renewing incense, is set out and separates—through
natural forces—the “meaner” elements of the milk from the purity of the cream. The
dairy processes are described in terms not unlike ritual: rhythm, incense, procession and
separation of pure from impure. The dairy becomes a hushed environment in which this

highly-symbolic purification and separation process occurs. Eliot’s description conveys this sense of the sanctified view of these sterile and “chaste” dairies.

Dairies were often discussed in terms that implied sanctity. The dairy at Penrhyn was described as “abundantly and curiously supplied with fine water to prevent the possibility of anything impure existing to vitiate the atmosphere such a room requires.” The dairy environment was believed to be dedicated to the same virtues on a moral level—chastity, purity and wholesome virtue. The purity and hygiene of the dairy space was a metaphor for the women who worked within. Their corporeal, ritualistic labor endowed them with a sense of moral purity, connoting a virginal sense of chastity that was both admired and desirable. In an age where immorality and infidelity was increasing and much criticism was directed towards lustful, uncontrollable and idle aristocratic women, the morals of the dairy were seen as fundamental to maintaining moral and social order. Thus, the dairy processes were purification rituals for those participating.

The liminal nature of the dairy relied upon the belief and acceptance of the imaginative conceptualization of dairy work as symbolic acts and the ornamented dairy as a space differentiated from normal experience, removed from modernity. The imaginative effect, the willingness to enter into the state between real and pretend outside of ordinary experience, was essential in carrying the activities and performances into didactic and morally-renewing results. Dairy maids’ ritualistic labor was both sanctifying, yet also discussed in highly erotic terms. Though often referred to as spaces of cleanliness and chastity in eighteenth-


80 Crossley, 40.
century English culture, dairies were also arenas of intensive, corporeal female performances that were elemental and dirty, involving fluids—body fluids—like rennet and milk. When performed and handled by women, these activities had the potential to become highly eroticized in the cultural imagination. One example of this is found in a poem describing the work of Patty, a milkmaid:

....The rosy maid,  
Crouching beneath their side, in copious streams  
Exhausts the swelling udder…  
…Continu’d agitation separates soon  
The unctuous particles; with gentler strokes  
And artful, soon they coalesce; at length,  
Cool water pouring from the limpid spring  
Into a smooth-glaz’d vessel, deep and wide,  
She gathers the loose fragments to an heap;  
Which in the cleansing wave well-wrought, and press’d  
To one consistent golden mass, receives  
The sprinkled seasoning, and of patts, or pounds,  
The fair impression, the neat shape assumes.

Is cheese her care? Warm from the teat she pours  
The milky flood. An acid juice infus’d,  
From the dry’d stomach drawn of suckling calf,  
Coagulates the whole. Immediate now  
Her spreading hands bear down the gathering curd,  
Which harder and harder grows; till, clean and thin,  
The green whey rises separate…To a vat,  
The size and fashion which her taste approves,  
She bears the snow-white heaps, her future cheese;  
And the strong press establishes its form.  

In this highly descriptive and sensual verse, the dairy maid agitates, strokes, gathers, presses, pats, pounds and gathers. Her intimate physical interaction with milk and her evident skill in the process of the transformation implies a creative act and references the milk maid’s mastery of her “milky treasure.” Her labors are described in highly sensual

---

language that changed the process of milking and creating cheese into an erotic physical act, implying not only her skillfulness but her power of sexuality, a primordial, earthy sensuality often associated with primitive rite.

The Sacro-idyllic Dairy

How did this sense of ritual and liminality, this space that was potentially dignified but also dangerous, affect the ornamental pleasure dairy and its appropriation by the elite class into their landscape parks? Ornamental dairy spaces—spaces mystified and sanctified by their practice and also distinguished through their décor and ambiance—were as temples within a garden landscape that already carried sacro-idyllic connotations. The architectural design and setting of the dairy in the garden fused with the mysterious nature of dairy work to create a mystical female realm with transcendent implications. In a letter written in 1795, Anna Seward described the dairy at Llangolen Vale as a curious and elegant space in a “magic domain.”82 The idyllic landscape setting, combined with the Classical, primitive and Gothic dairy forms, implied a ritualistic—almost sacred—site within the garden, described in some garden accounts as temples.83

In visiting the dairy at Osterley Park House in 1774, John Green wrote: “We were shown the way through a beautiful winding avenue overshadowed by Jasmine and other flowing vines…we were received at the door by a neat nymph-like lass and tho you may laugh at the idea, I cou’d not but almost conceive myself introduced into a Grecian


83 The Doric dairy at Hagley, the dairy at Osterley Park, as well as the Chinese dairy at Woburn were all described as “temples.”
Temple by one of the ministering Priestesses…” Here, Green describes the effect of the pleasure dairy’s placement within the landscape garden. The dairy walk, a bower of vines and foliage created a transitional entrance into the dairy realm. The imaginative effect of scene and environment as described by Green were matched by the charm and appeal of the “nymph-like” dairy maid who allowed the visitors entrance into, what Green implies, was a distinctive realm that transported him beyond his contemporary surroundings and time.

Situated within the landscape garden, the ornamental dairy was, for the aristocratic women who indulged in its practices, a realm of imagination and activity removed from the everyday realm of privileged experience. It was one of recreation, enjoyment, imagination and performance, where aristocratic women could redefine themselves through assumed acts. As such, the ornamental dairy was a theatrical venue, another liminal site, in which elements of real space and social conventions are suspended through an imagined suspension of reality, and may be compared to modern theorizations of such. As Hanna Scolnicov writes in her study of female theatrical space, “Liberated from the universal co-ordinates, the theatrical space stands apart from the everyday space that surrounds it…The theatrical space is qualitatively different from everyday space.”

As described here, the liminality of the ornamental dairy space as a threshold between real and imagined and play enhances it as a realm of performance and vice versa. The pleasurable entertainment that was the exclusive privilege of aristocratic

---


dairy maids enabled a liminal space.\textsuperscript{86} The performance was not only in the dairy space but in the garden itself, which was also a liminal site of allegory and imagination. The ritual enclave of the ornamental dairy was a female space in which aristocratic women personified pastoral or primitive types—the pastoral maid, the priestess in nature, the priestess of Nature. Thus, the ornamental dairy allowed women to enact popular or desirable modes of femininity and was a way for women to come into being in nature.

Within these spaces of Arcadian fancy and imagination, women became dairy nymphs, priestesses, the envoys of ritual and the idyllic forces of nature and imagination. This imaginative leap was not uncommon in the cultural imagination of the era. Such paganism was a cultural mode of the era among the elite class.\textsuperscript{87} At this same time, aristocratic women began officiating as priestesses and offering libations to pagan deities in fashionable portraits. Allegorical portraits, as they were called, were made popular by Sir Joshua Reynolds. These portraits portrayed fashionable women in various guises of classical or mythological origin, what was—at the time—the popular vocabulary and style of the learned elites. Those of the elite classes surrounded themselves with allusions to classical antiquity and mythology in their libraries, in the décor, art and statuary of their estates and in their landscape gardens.\textsuperscript{88} It would seem likely, then, that they would

\textsuperscript{86} Victor Turner’s work on ritual and play in theater emphasizes the idea of entertainment as created a stage for performance and display. Turner points out that word “entertain” derives from the old French verb \textit{entretenir}, which means “‘to hold apart,’ that is, to create a liminal or liminoid space in which performances may take place.” See \textit{From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play}, 41.


\textsuperscript{88} Marcia Pointon writes, “Classical mythology—the narrative content of much that is allegorical—had long been a familiar part of the interior of the English country house and educated audiences expected to be surrounded not only by allegorical portraits but also by tapestries, plasterwork, ceramics, and metalwork with allegorical themes.” See Marcia Pointon, \textit{Strategies for Showing: Women, Possession, and Representation in English Visual Culture 1665-1800} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 66.
eventually begin to fashion their own persona as such. Thus, in the age of sentiment and devotion for the ancients, such allegorical portraits became a popular means of creating images that not only referenced identity but also drew imaginative (yet familiar) associations of virtues, ideals or narrative. Reynolds' portrait of Lady Talbot (Figure 66), painted in 1781, depicts the beautiful society woman in a Grecian robe looking shrewdly outward. Smoke rises in wisps from the sacrificial altar on which she has just made her offering to the goddess Athena, whose silhouetted marble form mimics the curvature of the rising smoke. Reynolds’ *Lady Sarah Bunbury Sacrificing to the Graces* (1765) (Figure 67) also portrays Lady Bunbury presenting an offering over a ritual urn. As in the portrait of Lady Talbot, both of these priestesses are situated within an open portico, outside of which lies a natural landscape setting.

One final portrait, *Three Ladies Adorning a Term of Hymen* (Figure 68), painted by Reynolds in 1773, embodies the imaginative fusing of real and imaginary in these portraits. This portrait of three sisters, the Montgomery sisters, shows the women in flowing, diaphanous robes decorating a statue of Hymen with a garland of flowers. A large vase and a sacrificial altar with ram’s head, the accoutrements of ritual, are placed to the right of the women. Though frozen in the space, the women’s poses convey a sense of lyrical energy. Within an idyllic landscape setting, an Arcadian realm, these three women enact ancient ritual activities of marriage and fertility, identified by scholars as a Priapean rite. As Ernst Gombrich has argued, the fusing of contemporary individuals

---

89 Ibid., 65.

90 Ibid., 69. Reynolds response to the commissioner’s request for an emblematic or poetic invention was a depiction of the three sisters engaged in what Ernst Gombrich has interpreted as a mythological portrait alluding to an ancient fertility rite of Priapos. Priapus is described by garden historian Wendy Frith as “the extremely well-endowed and lascivious offspring of Venus and Bacchus, whose presence would have signified rampant fertility and animalistic excess.” Frith discusses the inclusion of
with allusions to ancient ritual practice created a mythological portrait in which “realism and imagination are held in perfect, if precarious balance.”\textsuperscript{91} The realm of “real” depiction of identity fused with imaginary realm of allegory. These portraits embody what one scholar has identified as the “continuum between classical mythology and present-day humanity” that characterized eighteenth-century culture and thought.\textsuperscript{92} This same continuum of thought, the easy mental transition from imaginary personification to reality, existed between the idyllic pastoral realm found within the landscape garden and the pleasure dairy and mundane experience.

Within the landscape, the space of the dairy created the site in which women interacted with nature, sites where women could be in and of nature, experiencing a coming-into-being with nature, a state of “dwelling” or existing in nature.\textsuperscript{93} In communing with nature, women were communing with Nature herself, Mother Nature. They were communing and dwelling in a feminine realm that signified that which was maternal and that which was seductive and, according to contemporary discourse, that which embodied feminine nature.\textsuperscript{94} Nature’s duality characterized the women within.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{91} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid., 173.
\textsuperscript{93} This idea of the site as a coming-into-being draws off of Heidegger’s writings about the idea of “spaces” allowing the merging of the fourfold into which human beings can dwell, or be. “To preserve the fourfold, to save the earth, to receive the sky, to await the divinities, to escort mortals-this fourfold preserving is the simple nature, the presencing, of dwelling. In this way, then, do genuine buildings give form to dwelling in its presencing and house this presence.” Martin Heidegger, “Building, Dwelling, Thinking,” in \textit{Poetry, Language, Thought}, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1971) http://pratt.edu/~arch543p/readings/Heidegger.html
\textsuperscript{94} Rose, 15. Rose points out that according to medical discourse of the era, “women’s fecundity and her lust placed her close to nature than man. Woman as both mother and whore was constructed as natural.”
\end{flushleft}
Thus, within the landscape garden, what did these liminal, ritual spaces symbolize? Were pleasure dairies temples to the Madonna or to Venus? The ritualistic dairy space implied both.

Both these sacred and sexual aspects, the timeless duality of feminine nature, were embodied within the ornamental dairy space and its activities and performance. The ritual aspect of the dairy, as in traditional ritual, encompassed both aspects—the pure and elevated as well as the elemental and alluring, the sanctified and sexual aspects of the space. While contemporary social discourse tried to classify women as the one or the other, a binary classification, both were fundamentally imbued into the dairy space. Likewise, aristocratic dairy women could be seen as representing aspects of the Madonna, the maternal force of woman, as well as Venus, the embodiment of sexuality and enticement.

This perception was applied to the female nature as it was to the Nature in which they were enacting their ritual practice. Nature as female and the dairy space as female were both pastoral mistresses signifying the timeless duality of womanhood. Thus, the pleasure dairy placed the sexuality of women within a controlled and appropriate sphere, a sphere that implied motherhood and domesticity and chastity. Additionally, it was a space where the sexuality and alleged appetites of women were tempered by activities that were productive and intended to benefit and be distributed for others. It was an ambiguous space, as liminal spaces are, where the femininity and sexuality of the space was appropriately displayed and enacted.

The purpose of ritual is to affect some kind of understanding or awareness on a particular social group. By extension, rituals are invoked to assert (and maintain) social
order.\textsuperscript{95} This is true of the activities of aristocratic dairy women. This liminality, this
dangerous possession of the maternal and the erotic of women, was controlled within the
garden space. Indeed, the ritual performance of the dairy, in eyes of many
contemporaries, worked to regulate the duality of woman. As has been discussed
throughout this study, elite women’s interactions with the dairy implied more than simply
recreational labor. The dairy process was also a morally didactic process in which those
who practiced in the dairy were taught lessons about the necessity for industry,
cleanliness, hygiene, meticulous patience, gentleness and care. The dairy practices
constructed women to fit more readily into prescribed definitions of proper femininity—
women who were chaste, moral and industrious. As the romantic life of the dairy maid
Patty affirms: “Domestic cares, Her children and her dairy, well divide Th’ Appropriated
hours, and duty makes Employment pleasure.”\textsuperscript{96} It further reminded women of their
gendered identity and social duty as mothers, while affirming their natural powers of
procreation and nursing.

As discussed earlier, it also implied the creation of chaste and morally purified
women, for only such women could thrive within the dairy space. Within the dairy, the
ritual was not simply in the production of the cheese. The ideological product of the dairy
was a transformation or change implicit in its morally didactic practice.\textsuperscript{97} The ritual
effect extended to the sanctifying and moral transformation believed capable of such
actions upon its practitioners. The legendary purity and wholesome goodness of the dairy

\textsuperscript{95} Crossley, 32.

\textsuperscript{96} Dodsley, 149, lines 428-31.

\textsuperscript{97} Duncan, 13.
space implied the same purity would be instilled into those who imaginatively participated in the experience. One contemporary source advised, “…One of the main points that belongs to [the dairy] is the Housewife’s Cleanliness in the sweet and neat keeping of the dairy-house, where not the last Mote of filth may by any means appear; but all Things either of the Eye or Nose, void of Sowreness or Sluttishness, that a Prince’s Chamber must not exceed it; to which must be added the sweet and delicate keeping of the Milk Vessels.”98 The excessive cleanliness of the dairy was determined by the “Housewife’s Cleanliness,” here described in language that implies a sense of not just surface cleanliness, but goodness and chastity as well.

Women used the ideologies surrounding the dairy, their dictated roles within the social order, to appropriate a space of entertainment, performance and fulfillment for themselves. Ultimately, the performance and ritual of the eighteenth-century pleasure dairy could only be fully known, understood and practiced by the women within the space. Though a space governed by women, it was one that—even within the garden—was always subject to patriarchal governance and a male interpretation.99 It was this interpretation that read the dairy as being either chaste or unchaste, sacred or sexual to the male viewership who was so often excluded from the rich tradition of dairy labor. However, within the dairy enclave, aristocratic women, through their performance, were

98 Noel Chomel, *Dictionaire Oeconomique: or, The Family Dictionary...* vol. 2 [book online] (Dublin: R. Bradley, 1727, accessed February 2007), 126; based on *English Short Title Catalogue. Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO. This ideal of cleanliness and moral purity can also be connected to seventeenth-century images of Dutch women within their domestic spaces. A near-obsession with cleanliness existed in Calvinist Dutch society. The maintenance of spotlessly clean spaces connoted the morality of those within the space.

99 This notion of woman and sexuality defining itself against the parameters of male-constructed society was drawn from a discussion about some aspects of Luce Irigaray’s theory as presented in *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. Catherine Porter and Carolyn Burke (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1985).
brought to an understanding and into being with the dual pleasure of dairy labor. It was a female act of expression and identification that was neither overtly chaste, nor overtly sexual, but was feminine and could only be truly experienced as such. They were able to define and express themselves through pleasurable and leisure activity, but one which evoked within them both a sense of the rustic sacred and the feminine allure. Thus, the liminality of the pleasure dairy acted in a way that inverted expectations of the social order and cultural experience, but with the intention not to subvert status, order or identity, but to truly reflect it.\textsuperscript{100} The aristocratic dairy maids owned the performance.

The ornamental dairy was a realm in which femininity and fecundity, sanctity and sensuality combined, where women recreated and were re-created. The traditions of the dairy and its highly ritualized practice offered elite women an opportunity to enter into a distinct realm, a liminal sphere of ritual and imagination, where they participated in time-honored rites that asserted identity and femininity. This mystical and romanticized reading of the pleasure dairy was heightened as it was enshrouded in landscape parks that fostered “illusions of Imagination.”\textsuperscript{101} The ornamental dairy space joined the sacred and sensual aspects of humanity, nature and ritual. Its ambiguity allowed for an acceptable realm of female expression and performance. Within the idyllic landscape gardens of the era, pleasure dairies were sites where tradition and imagination came together and created a site of pleasure that further reinforced the signification of the landscape itself. The dairy space represented an imaginative dimension, a sacro-idyllic space in which women

\textsuperscript{100} This idea inspired by Victor Turner’s discussion of satire and ritual, see Turner, 41.

personified pastoral and allegorical types that referenced the enduring power of the feminine mystique.
CONCLUSION

No other European nation has the rich legacy of landscape gardens as do the English. The emblematic and natural gardens of eighteenth-century England were one of the great products of the complex and shifting cultural world of Enlightenment England. It was a realm of class, gender, imaginative ideals and philosophy that were presented to the public eye, yet represented the tastes, interests and ideologies of an exclusive class. As the century progressed, ornamental pleasure dairies were adopted into the functional, symbolic and imaginative realm of the elite landscape. Among garden structures and pavilions, it is difficult to assert that any had the range of interpretation—the multivalency and social import—of the pleasure dairy. Ornamental dairies represented the finest architectural and interior styles of the age. They were completely distinct spaces intended to house leisure, labor and time-honored ritual practice; they were gendered enclosures that, as the century progressed, were increasingly the focus of the public eye, which it both invited and resisted.

As evidenced in this study, the multivalency of the dairy opposes easy categorization or interpretation. In the cultural imagination of eighteenth-century England, the ornamental dairy was perceived on many levels, manifesting not only its charm and its singular embodiment of eighteenth-century fashions, values and cultural concerns; but also manifesting the imaginative pleasure, eroticism and attitudes of
feminine power. They were ambiguous realms and could best be described as spaces of duality, dual natures, even contradiction. They were sites of amusement, femininity, productivity, skill, sexuality and performance. Placed within the realm of the garden, a tableau of class fashions and modes, a theater that displayed the varieties of husbandry, taste and fashion and a romantic realm of imagination and “fancy,” this already-charming and already-unique space acquired new and varied significations, which were not entirely restricted to women. Indeed, it is difficult to comprehend the signification of the ornamental dairy unless considered as an entity within the ideological space of the English country estate and landscape parks.

The ornamental dairy was a signifier of industry and improvement that referenced the aristocratic class and countered stereotypes of idleness and immorality. Despite the class implications of the space, the pleasure dairy’s embodiment of femininity and gendered associations are undeniable. It remained a highly gendered site. The dairy’s physical and moral characteristics and its performances metaphorically represented physical and moral attributes ascribed to aristocratic women. Dairies were feminine spaces that reflected and generated contemporary dialogues surrounding womanhood and gentility—feminine activities, traits, biology and sexuality.

This feminization of the dairy enabled it to be read as representing social constructions of femininity and the prescribed duties and roles of women/mothers/nurturers within society and their class. Yet, the dairy space was also a dangerous and alluring realm possessing a strong female legacy, an oral tradition of practice, where women governed. It was an ambiguous and mysterious enclave of ritual creation that transformed the dairy into a sanctified pastoral realm that referenced the performance of
feminine identity within its walls, and also carried strong connotations of the sensual, pagan rite and a range of possible pleasures. The dairy practice’s inherent female sexuality merged with Nature’s feminine wiles to create a space of female authority, a task and performance space belonging to women.

Ultimately, the enduring charm of the pleasure dairy allowed it to adapt to the changing philosophies and cultural vogues of the era. As landscape gardens became “natural” gardens, the ornamental dairy, with its peasant and pastoral associations and its elemental rusticity, connoted that same philosophy. As the Natural fell out of vogue and the Picturesque became the mode of taste, the dairy’s rustic and rural qualities evoked picturesque quality of embowered cottages and domesticity.

This study leaves the discussion of the ornamental pleasure dairy at a critical juncture. As aristocratic women found fulfillment and expression in the ornamental dairy and domestic production of dairy goods became more fashionable, so the rich legacy of traditional dairy practice began to be threatened by society’s push for industry and improvement. In a world of impending industrialization, ornamental dairies of the eighteenth century and into the early nineteenth century were magical realms, charming realms of fancy and imagination. Their ambiguity and folk legacy vaulted them into the annals of romantic pleasure and recreation. However, as the struggle between female “nature” of the dairy and masculine science continued, science would eventually become the victor, converting domestic dairy operations into historical relics of a romantic age.

Ornamental dairies on many estates felt this falling-out keenly. Many dairy spaces were relegated to fire engine sheds, dowager’s residences, gift shops and coffee parlors. A majority were demolished during the successive century. Few eighteenth-century
ornamental dairies survive in their original condition. However, those left surviving and
maintained at estates such as Woburn, Althorp, Berrington Hall, Sherborne Castle,
Shugborough and Uppark are delightful testaments to the fashion for pleasure dairies.
Other ornamental dairies, such as those at Kenwood House and Cobham Hall, remain
standing but are wanting for critical funds to restore what remains of their delightful
facades and once-pristine and glistening interiors.

This study is the beginning of an iconology of the ornamental dairy, the English
pleasure dairy, situated within the country estates and parks of the nation’s aristocracy,
and its documentation and uses by the eighteenth-century elite. Its popularity provides a
fresh and compelling framework in which to consider English gardens and the dairy
tradition in terms of class and gender space and cultural notions regarding the confluence
of genteel industry, “natural” ideologies and the eighteenth-century sacro-idyllic and
sensual imagination. However, the presence of pleasure dairies within the garden
warrants further investigation. As spaces laden with such associations, there are archival
materials yet untapped which may heighten understanding of the use and discussion of
these dairies. Furthermore, significant work remains to be done to ascertain the placement
of these dairies within overall garden plans to understand more specific and varied
associations intended within these estates.

In recent decades, the study of landscape gardens and their artistic and cultural
significance has become a burgeoning interdisciplinary field of study. Yet, the
consideration of the landscape garden as a space influenced by women still demands
investigation. Pleasure dairies are a singular instance of female authority and
participation in designing and participating in these landscape spaces. This is one area in
which I will continue to probe the dairy’s use and meaning. This study is also an impetus for examining female involvement within the garden. The dairy may be seen as a site where the tradition of women’s labor was isolated within the polite garden setting and where women took a key role in the aesthetic and visual absorption of the space into the garden realm. Thus, the study of the pleasure dairy opens new opportunities for examining the activities and participation of elite women within the cultural and aesthetic realm of the English landscape.

Additionally, I plan to investigate more avenues of cultural signification within these pleasure dairies, particularly expanding on the ideas of ritual and performance in the third chapter. I intended to delve further into the performance aspect of these spaces and gardens themselves, contrasting and comparing masculine and feminine approaches and discourse of the dairy. The idea of the male/female competition over the dairy space, considering the ideas of science and industrialization, is also highly intriguing, as this time is a key moment where the space becomes contested. More can also be done with the class issues and perceptions of the dairy and the representations of dairies and dairy maids. The aristocratic perception of the dairy seems to have differed somewhat from the popular view of the dairy, although more archival sources and research would be necessary to establish such. Dialogues of public and private within the dairy space are other avenues down which I will pursue my scholarly efforts.

Ornamental pleasure dairies were fodder for the contemporary eye and for the English cultural imagination. They were prettified enclosures of morality and industry, havens of femininity and maternity, as well as ritual enclaves and sacro-idyllic bastions of feminine rites. The ornamental dairy signified prevalent values and ideologies of
English society and was a reference point for key cultural dialogues in an era negotiating modernity, tradition and imaginative ideals.


______. The Spectator, no. 415 (June 16, 1712).


British Library, Add. 75927. Lavinia Spencer to Earl Spencer, October 20, 1787.

ECCO.


Giesecke, Annette Lucia. “Beyond the Garden of Epicurus: The Utopics of the Ideal


Luxborough, Henrietta Knight Baroness. *Letters Written by the late Right Honourable*


______. Lady Louisa Mansfield, W. Hill, to Mary, Mrs. Thomas Graham, September 10, 1781.


NRAS 776/Box 95/2/37. National Register of Archives Scotland, General Lord Lynedoch, Lynedoch, to Lady Mansfield, October 10, 1833.


_____ Tours in England, Ireland, and France, in a series of letters... Translated by Sarah Austin. London, 1832.


Richardson, Samuel. Clarissa, or the History of a Young Lady.... 4 vols. Dublin: P. Byrne, J. Moore, and A. Grueber, 1792.


v. La Roche, Sophie. Sophie in London 1786: The Diary of Sophie v. la Roche. Translated by Clare Williams. London: Jonathan Cape, 1933.


Figure 1. Dairy at Hagley Hall, Worcestershire. Sanderson Miller, 1752-3.
Figure 2. Gothic-style dairy at Sherborne Castle, Dorsetshire. Capability Brown, 1756.
Figure 3. Dairy at Woburn, Henry Holland, 1794.
Figure 4. Dairy at Kenwood House, London, 1793.
Figure 5. Interior of dairy at Berrington Hall, Herefordshire and Worcestershire. Henry Holland, c. 1780.
Figure 6. Wedgwood tile and dairy wares, Althorp dairy, Northamptonshire.
Figure 7. Marble fountain with relief carvings, Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire.
Figure 8. Dairy at Ham House with cast-iron cow legs and tile patterns.
Figure 9. Chinese-style dairy at Woburn Abbey, Bedfordshire. Henry Holland, 1794.
Figure 10. Interior of Chinese dairy at Woburn Abbey. Henry Holland, 1794.
Figure 11. Plan for dairy at Knowsley, Lancashire. Robert Adam, 1776-77.
Figure 12. Temple of Diana at Weston Park. James Paine, 1770.
Figure 13. Interior of greenhouse space in the Temple of Diana, Weston Park.

Figure 15. William Hogarth, *Industry and Idleness*, “Tom Idle at the Gallows at Tyburn,” Plate 2, 1747.
Figure 16. Joshua Reynolds, *Garrick Between Comedy and Tragedy*, 1760-61. Private collection.
Figure 17. Antonio Zucchi, *Hercules Between Glory and the Passions*, 1769. 
Iveagh Bequest, Kenwood House, London.
Figure 18. George Romney, *Emma Hart as Spinstress*, 1784-85. Iveagh Bequest, Kenwood House, London.
Figure 19. Elizabeth Vigee-LeBrun, *Emma Hart as Ariadne*, 1790.
Figure 20. Exterior of Lady Spencer’s dairy at Althorp, Northamptonshire. Henry Holland, 1786.
Figure 21. Dairy at Sandon Hall, Staffordshire. Samuel Wyatt, 1783.
Figure 22. View of Cobham Hall dairy, Kent, pencil sketch by Lord Darnley, c. 1820.

Figure 23. View of Cobham Hall dairy.
Figure 24. View of Kenwood dairy in Julius Caesar Ibbetson’s, *Three Long-Horned Cattle at Kenwood*, 1797. Iveagh Bequest, Kenwood House, London.
Figure 25. Interior of the dairy with tile, wood work and marble dressers and basin, Kenwood House, London.

Figure 26. Interior view of bay windows and door leading out to garden entrance at the Kenwood dairy.
Figure 27. Thomas Rowlandson, “The Contrast, 1792—Which is Best?” 1792. Fine Arts Museum of San Francisco.
Figure 28. Thomas Gainsborough, *Wooded Landscape with Family*, 1773. Duke of Rutland, Belvoir Castle.
Figure 29. Thomas Gainsborough, *The Cottage Door*, 1780. Henry E. Huntington Gallery, San Marino, California.
Figure 30. Thomas Gainsborough, *Wooded Landscape with Cattle by a Pool and Figures by a Cottage at Evening*, 1782. Gainsborough House, Suffolk.
Figure 31. Johann Zoffany, *The Colmore Family*, 1775.

Figure 35. Joshua Reynolds, *Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, and Her Daughter, Lady Georgiana Cavendish*, 1784. Chatsworth House, Derbyshire.
Figure 36. Joshua Reynolds, *Lady Cockburn and Her Three Eldest Sons*, 1773.
Figure 37. Nathaniel Hone, *Ann Gardiner with her Eldest Son, Kirkman*, 1776.

Figure 38. Giovanni Bellini, *Madonna with Child*, c. 1470.
Galleria dell’ Accademia, Venice.
Figure 40. Dairy at Castle Ashby, Northamptonshire. Capability Brown, c. 1760.
Figure 41. Dairy at Fawley Court, Oxfordshire.
Figure 42. Samuel Wyatt, Floorplan of dairy, Dodington Park, 1797. Gloucestershire Records Office.
Figure 43. Samuel Wyatt, Plan for dairy wall with embellishments, Dodington Park, 1797. Gloucestershire Records Office.
Figure 44. Samuel Wyatt, Rose Design for Dome, Dodington Park, 1797. Gloucestershire Records Office.
Figure 45. Robert Adam, Sketch for urn, Croome Court dairy, 1763.
Figure 47. William Hogarth, *The Enraged Musician*, 1741. Library of Congress, Washington D.C.
Figure 48. Francis Wheatley, Image of milk maid from *The Cries of London* series, 1790s.
Figure 50. *The London Beau in the Country, or the Dairyhouse Gallant*, 1773. British Museum, London.
Figure 51. *Spring and Winter*, print after Robert Dighton, 1786. British Museum, London.
Figure 52. Print of dairy maids working in the dairy with a “rake” outside the door. Date uncertain, likely 18th century image, found in Val Cheke, *The Story of Cheese-making in Britain*, 1959.
Figure 53. Thomas Rowlandson, Dr. Syntax in the Dairy, illustration from *The Tour of Dr. Syntax in Search of the Picturesque*, 1794.
Figure 55. Pieter de Jode after Martin de Vos, image of Venus and Cupid, 17th century.
Figure 56. Daniel Carter, *Witches Round the Cauldron*, 1775.
Figure 57. Sketches by James Wyatt, Elevation of the west end of the dairy at Cobham Hall, Kent and section of the dairy, c. 1795. Yale Center for British Art. Note the steeple and cross on the top sketch and the basilica-type nave and side aisle scheme on the section plan.
Figure 58. Gothic-style dairy at Corsham Court, Wiltshire, 1800.
Figure 59. Serpentine marble fountain at Corsham Court dairy.
Figure 60. John Soane, Sketch of frontal view of dairy at Hamels Park, c. 1783.
Figure 61. John Soane, Interior sketch of Lees Court dairy showing decorative roundels with cows and churns. Soane Museum, London.
Figure 62. John Soane, Lady Elizabeth Yorke’s dairy at Hamel’s Park, watercolor, c. 1783.
Figure 63. John Soane, Hamels Park dairy sketch of elevations. Soane Museum, London.
Figure 64. Interior room of Temple of Diana, showing paintings depicting various stories about Diana.
Figure 65. William Kent, sketch of Shell Temple at Twickenham.
Figure 66. Joshua Reynolds, *Lady Talbot*, 1781. Tate Gallery, London.
Figure 67. Joshua Reynolds, *Lady Sarah Bunbury Sacrificing to the Graces*, 1765. Art Institute of Chicago.
Figure 68. Joshua Reynolds. *Three Women Adorning a Term of Hymen*, 1774. Tate Gallery, London.