INTRODUCTION

Writing to Gilbert Burnet, bishop of Salisbury (1643–1715), eight months before the death of Katherine Jones, Lady Ranelagh (1615–1691), Laurence Hyde, 1st earl of Rochester (1642–1711), lamented Ranelagh's ongoing illness and celebrated the good deeds she had done for him:

> I know your L*ordshi*p will be troubled to loose a uery good freind, & humble servant of your owne as well as a most wonderfull good persone to all that know her, for my owne part I know no body now aliue to whom I haue so many obligations, wherein I am sorry to see how little I can returne now, when there is most need of serving her; Amongst all her favours one that I shall never forgett, was her desire & endeavour not onely to renew ^for me^ the acquaintance I had formerly with your L*ordshi*p, but to knitt it closer into a freindship.[1]

Rochester's letter commemorates one of Ranelagh's most endearing qualities: her ability to network and petition, not only on her own behalf, but also, on the behalf of others, building rapport and gaining admiration from those that she connected. This praise would have made a fine eulogy were it not for Burnet's own tribute, which was delivered at the funeral of Ranelagh's brother, Robert Boyle (1627–1691): 'she lived the longest on the publickest Scene, she made the greatest Figure in all the Revolutions of these Kingdoms for above fifty Years, of any Woman of our Age'.[2] Considering both of these commendations, one can see why scholars have suggested that Ranelagh 'was one of the most politically influential and intellectually respected women in seventeenth-century England'.[3]

This edition, which includes Ranelagh's extant incoming and outgoing correspondence that has not been published in any other

[1] Bod. MSS Add. A. 191, fol. 117, letter, Laurence Hyde to Gilbert Burnet, 2 April 1691.

[2] Gilbert Burnet, *A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of the Honorable Robert Boyle* (London, 1692), 32.

[3] Michelle DiMeo, 'Katherine Jones, Lady Ranelagh (1615–91): Science and medicine in a seventeenth-century Englishwoman's writing' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Warwick, 2009), 1.

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modern edition to date, bridges many themes, topics, and disparate networks. It emphasizes her participation in advocating for religious toleration and debating religious doctrine; her role as a medical provider for her family, close friends, and even members of the royal family; her questioning and debating political developments from the War of the Three Kingdoms to the Williamite War in Ireland; and her petitioning and advocating for various members of the Boyle family, including looking after their health, their education, their marriage alliances, and the finances of the family. This correspondence includes prophetical discussions with members of the intellectual correspondence network known as the Hartlib circle;[4] theological discussions on the Nicene creed with John Beale (*c.*1603–1683); a transmutation history sent to Samuel Hartlib (1600–1662); letters to Edward Hyde, 1st earl of Clarendon (1609–1674), petitioning on behalf of William Kiffin (1616–1701) and nonconformists; and discussions with Anthony Dopping, Anglican bishop of Meath (1643–1697), on the production of the first version of the Old Testament in Irish. Ranelagh's correspondence also includes familial correspondence that discusses political events (the Restoration, Battle of the Medway, Siege of Derry, Siege of Limerick), and illuminates Ranelagh's role in offering medical advice to family members and their wider network. In short, it is an edition that gives insights into the life and extant writings of one of the most influential women of the seventeenth century, who managed to maintain a positive reputation under every regime during a tumultuous era, and who was connected in some way to all the leading intellectual groups of her time.

The vibrant depth and breadth of Ranelagh's correspondence, and the networks they expose, can be difficult to cohesively frame. Carol Pal has importantly argued that we cannot fully explain Ranelagh's activities if we focus on them as 'as a corollary of her family connections and patronage'; nor can we frame them in one network alone – be that the Hartlib circle, the Royal Society, the Boyle family network, or medical networks – as to do so privileges one group of connections

[4] The Hartlib circle was an intellectual correspondence network that was formed in London in 1641, centred around Samuel Hartlib, John Dury, and Jan Amos Kaminski (Comenius). This group was mainly active between 1641 and 1661 and included well-known figures such as Robert Boyle, Henry Oldenburg, Benjamin Worsley, and the Boate brothers. Its overarching aim was universal knowledge; thus members corresponded on various topics including politics, religious conversion, educational reform, science, and medicine. For more on the Hartlib circle see Mark Greengrass, 'Introduction', in *Samuel Hartlib and Universal Reformation: Studies in intellectual communication*, ed. M. Greengrass, M. Leslie, and T. Raylor (Cambridge, 2002), 1–26.

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at the expense of the others.[5] Instead she suggests that we consider Ranelagh as an early modern intelligencer, akin to Hartlib, in her own right. She is not just a family informant, Robert Boyle's sister, or a member of Hartlib's network: she is all of this and more. Thus, by bringing together her diverse correspondence, this edition not only acts to reconstruct the life and intellectual activity of an important seventeenth-century woman intelligencer, but, due to the depth and breadth of her interests, influences, and connections, Ranelagh's correspondence simultaneously constitutes an important window, and woman's perspective, onto the story of the mid to late seventeenth century – an era of important religious, political, scientific, medical, and social change.

1. The life of Lady Ranelagh

Katherine Jones (née Boyle), Viscountess Ranelagh was born in Youghal on 22 March 1615.[6] She was the fifth daughter and seventh child of Richard Boyle, 1st earl of Cork (1566–1643) and his second wife Catherine Fenton (*c.*1588–*c.*1630). Among her siblings, she was particularly close to Roger Boyle, Lord Broghill (later earl of Orrery) (1621–1679); Richard Boyle, earl of Burlington and later 2nd earl of Cork; Robert Boyle; and Mary Rich, countess of Warwick (1625–1678). Ranelagh's educational background is uncertain, as her father provided 'no formal education for the daughters beyond that which they obtained from their chaplains who doubled as tutors'.[7] Unlike some of her other sisters, it is not known whether Katherine had a foster family when she was young, thus, it is a possibility that she stayed at home and gained access to education through her brother's tutors.[8]

In September 1624, when she was nine and a half years old, Katherine left her family when she was contracted to marry Sapcott Beaumont (1614–1658). Katherine lived with the Beaumonts from 1624 until 1628. The marriage alliance broke down after Thomas Beaumont's death (1625) when the family asked for an extra £2,000

[5] Carol Pal, 'Accidental archive: Samuel Hartlib and the afterlife of female scholars', in *Archival Afterlives: Life, death, and knowledge-making in early modern British scientific and medical archives*, ed. Vera Keller, Anna Marie Roos, and Elizabeth Yale (London, 2018), 141–142.

[6] This biography is a summary drawn from DiMeo's book and Hutton's ODNB entry. For DiMeo's extensive biography see, Michelle DiMeo, *Lady Ranelagh: The incomparable life of Robert Boyle's sister* (Chicago, 2021).

[7] Nicholas Canny, *The Upstart Earl: A study of the social and mental world of Richard Boyle, first earl of Cork, 1566–1643* (Cambridge, 1982), 86–87.

[8] DiMeo, 'Katherine Jones, Lady Ranelagh', 29. See also Appendix 2 for Ranelagh's family tree.

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on top of the £4,000 dowry already agreed. Katherine returned home for two years, until age fifteen, when she married Arthur Jones (d. 1669), heir to the 1st Viscount Ranelagh (bf. 1589–1643), with a dowry of £4000.

Over the first ten years of their marriage, Katherine and Arthur had four children, Catherine (b. December 1633), Elizabeth (b. 1635), Frances (b. 17 August 1639), and their only son Richard (b. 8 February 1641). Despite an unhappy marriage, they tried to make it work, and over this decade they travelled between England and Ireland, although not always together. Little is known about Katherine's movements throughout this decade, but what we do know is that she was in London in 1631, and back in Ireland by 1633, when she gave birth to Catherine. In 1638, the pair moved to England. Once there, they spent time moving between various London locations and the family home in Dorset.

This move only lasted just over two years as Katherine was back in Ireland in 1641, where she and her four children were besieged in Athlone Castle for many months after the outbreak of the Irish uprising. In a letter to her father, Katherine recounts her experiences of this time, and states that the rebel leader James Dillon (*c.*1600–*c.*1667), not only offered, but also ensured her safe passage from Athlone to Dublin.[9] After escaping the siege, Katherine moved to London and lived apart from her husband, forging a space for herself to become involved in many intellectual, religious, and political activities.

When she arrived in England, Katherine resided on Queen Street, near St Paul's Cathedral, with her home serving as a place of refuge for displaced family members. Katherine made the most of her location and connections in London and very quickly became integrated into parliamentarian politics. In 1644, she urged Sir Edward Hyde to try to reconcile the king and Parliament. In 1647, she was paid an allowance of 6s by the House of Lords and was later granted a pension of £4 by the House of Commons. However, by this time she was disappointed in Charles I's actions, and expressed this disappointment in a letter to his sister (queen of Bohemia) dated 7 August 1646.[10] By 1648, she had no faith left in the king, believed that he should be stripped of most of his powers, and that the governance should lie with Parliament.

From 1643, Katherine was closely acquainted with the Hartlib circle. It is believed that it was Dorothy Moore (1613–1664), Ranelagh's aunt through marriage, who persuaded Katherine to

[9] See **letter 2**.
[10] See **letter 23**.

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support Hartlib.[11] Between the 1640s and 1650s, she was involved Hartlib's projects for educational reform, chemistry, medicine, optics, and reform in Ireland.[12] In September 1656, Katherine left England to spend two and a half years in Ireland in order to help in the reclaiming of Boyle family estates there, while also trying to pursue a settlement from her husband. Throughout this time Katherine continued to discourse with Hartlib and his associates. Katherine returned to England on 15 February 1659 with two of her daughters, although the trip across the Irish Sea was not without difficulty, as the ship got stuck in a bad storm.[13] Upon her arrival in London, she continued to pursue her complaints against her husband, and was almost successful until Parliament was brought to a premature end.[14] She also continued to correspond with Hartlib and his associates, sending Hartlib a transmutation history in which she tells the story of an Irishman named Butler and how he had the philosopher's stone, and receiving correspondence from Benjamin Worsley concerning millenarianism, and John Beale on liturgical debates around the Nicene Creed.[15]

Despite the regime change upon the Restoration, Katherine still had family and friends in pivotal political positions. Her brother Richard, who was created earl of Burlington in 1664 held the position of Lord High Treasurer of Ireland from 1660 until 1695. Similarly, Roger was created earl of Orrery in 1660 and held the position of Lord President of Munster from 1660 until 1662. In 1664, Katherine moved to Pall Mall where she was assigned two houses on the south side by her brother-in-law Charles Rich, 4th earl of Warwick (1623–1673).[16] Ranelagh was in London when the great plague hit a year later, and she believed it was the wrath of God. At its height, she moved to Essex where she stayed with her sister Mary Rich, and corresponded with her brother Robert Boyle to ensure he was in good health, and it was around this time that she composed her discourse on the plague that engages with questions of religious toleration.[17] Once the plague abated, Ranelagh went back to London, and from here she played a role in negotiating the marriage match between

[11] Carol Pal, *Republic of Women: Rethinking the Republic of Letters in the seventeenth century* (Cambridge, 2012), 147.

[12] For evidence of Ranelagh's activities see Hartlib Papers archive.

[13] See **letter 51**.

[14] See **letters 53–54, 58–61, 65–71**.

[15] See **letters 52, 55, 64, 73–74**.

[16] 'Nos. 83–84 Pall Mall', *Survey of London*, ed. F.H.W. Sheppard, vols 29 and 30 (London, 1960).

[17] See **letters 88–89, 91–92**.

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her niece Anne Boyle (d. 1671) and Edward Montagu, 2nd earl of Sandwich, while also attending to the health of close friends and members of the royal family, including the Frances Hyde, countess of Clarendon (1617–1667) and the duke of Kendal (1666–1667).[18] In 1668, Robert moved into Katherine's Pall Mall home, where the pair would live together for the last twenty-three years of their lives.[19] Throughout this time she kept her interest in natural philosophy alive by having members of the Royal Society over for dinner. For example, Lisa Jardine has highlighted that Robert Hooke (1635–1703) dined at Lady Ranelagh's more than thirty times in 1677, and Ranelagh commissioned Hooke to make additions to her house, including a laboratory for Boyle's use, while also encouraging his literary and scientific pursuits and sharing with him her religious and ethical ideals.[20] She was also involved in many of her brother's projects over the next two decades. She was actively involved with his attempts to produce an Irish vernacular Bible. Between 1678 and 1682, Boyle had worked with Andrew Sall, printing in 1682 Irish translations of the New Testament. Sall died shortly after, and Boyle began to collaborate with Narcissus Marsh on an Old Testament translation.[21] At this stage, Ranelagh's involvement became apparent as she corresponded with Bishop Dopping, encouraging him to become involved in the project, due to its potential to further proselytization efforts in Ireland.[22]

Over the next two decades, Ranelagh's involvement in medicine, politics, and religious affairs continued. Throughout the 1680s, she frequently corresponded with Margaret Boyle, countess of Orrery (1623–1689), the widow of her brother Roger Boyle, earl of Orrery, who died in 1679. The majority of these letters occur between 1682 and 1689, after the death of the countess's son, Roger Boyle, 2nd earl of Orrery, up until the countess's own death. They corresponded about a wide range of topics that related to the Boyle family. They discussed family finances and legal affairs including Margaret Boyle's dispute with daughter-in-law, Mary Boyle (née Sackville), 2nd countess of Orrery (1648–1710), regarding Mary's Irish jointure lands and financial provision; they shared medical advice and discussed their health, with Ranelagh writing her about her emerging frailty including trembles and falls; and they discussed the educational needs of

[18] See **letters 104–108, 110–126**.

[19] DiMeo, 'Katherine Jones, Lady Ranelagh', 69.

[20] Lisa Jardine, *The Curious Life of Robert Hooke: The man who measured London* (London, 2003), 91.

[21] DiMeo, *Lady Ranelagh*, 177.

[22] See **letters 158–162**.

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the countess's grandchildren including James O'Brien (d. 1693) and Lionel Boyle, 3rd earl of Orrery (1670–1703).[23] During this time Ranelagh also corresponded with William Penn (1644–1718), sending him a 'prescription' for his sick child, and asking Penn to give his support to two Irish people who travelled to the American colonies, including the interesting case of Anne O'Dempsey, 3rd Viscountess Clanmalier, who was a Catholic woman.[24]

Fitting a woman who lived her life with her pen, Lady Ranelagh continued to write letters right up until she was no longer physically able. Between 1687 and 1691 she corresponded with Anne Hamilton, duchess of Hamilton and Margaret Hamilton, countess of Penmure, sending medical advice, writing about the Williamite War in Ireland, and her own declining health.[25] Sadly, in her last letter to Margaret Hamilton, penned six months before her death, Ranelagh laments the loss of her ability to write for herself, considering herself a 'worthless & useless creature' due to the declining sight and strength preventing her from writing in her own hand.[26] On 23 December 1691, Ranelagh died, and eight days later, Robert Boyle, the brother with whom she spent so much of her life followed, and both are buried in St Martin–in-the-Fields.

Overall, Ranelagh's life, and the correspondence that acts as our window into this life, is significant as it showcases how a woman, born and largely raised in Ireland, managed to partake in and influence political, religious, scientific, and medical discussions. This is despite the fact (as DiMeo has previously highlighted) that Ranelagh's gender prohibited her from holding an official political post, prevented her from obtaining a university education, and meant that she could not formally join the Royal Society.[27] Even with these obstacles, several of Ranelagh's letters stand out as being hugely influential and important. This includes her letter to Elizabeth of Bohemia (1596–1662), written at a time in which peace negotiations between Charles I and Parliament were at a crucial determining point. This letter presents in detail the political situation, the earl of Clarendon's latest peace proposal, and an update on the royal family. However, the most significant element of this letter is Ranelagh's openness in criticizing the king's unwillingness to compromise in a letter delivered to a member of the king's own family, a letter that Ranelagh clearly intended as a

[23] See **letters 163–173, 175, 183, 185–186**.
[24] See **letters 180–182**. See also: DiMeo, *Lady Ranelagh*, 177–181.
[25] See **letters 188–191, 193–195**.
[26] See **letter 195**.
[27] DiMeo, *Lady Ranelagh*, 203.

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subtle whisper in the ear of the king's sister in the hope that Elizabeth of Bohemia could influence her brother's decision-making.[28] Another letter of note includes her biggest contribution to scientific discussions – namely, her manuscript treatise on the philosopher's stone, presented in the form of a transmutation history. This letter not only participated in international speculation surrounding the philosopher's stone by directly responding to Jan Baptist van Helmont's (1580–1644) *Ortus Medicinae* (1648) and his reference to an 'Irish-man named Buttler' and his 'certain little stone', but it also circulated as far as the American colonies and influenced Robert Boyle's *Usefulness of Natural Philosophy* (1662).[29] In this letter, Ranelagh anticipated this wider audience and consciously wrote with this audience in mind. She did this by implicitly rooting her position as author through her late father's authority as the earl of Cork to assert that Butler was from Bandon – one of her father's landholdings. She also presented the transmutation history and an appended note for Hartlib as separate sections of her letter. This meant that Butler's story could be read independently of the note, meaning that Hartlib could circulate it with or without Ranelagh's postscript, and thus is an explicit example of Ranelagh working with and applying Hartlib's modus operandi to influence her own materials circulation.

Throughout her life, Ranelagh was also deeply committed to liberty of conscience for all Protestants, and this is captured in two letters in particular. The first is the letter from John Beale dated 5 September 1660, in which he presents his thesis on the Apostles' Creed. This letter presents a deeply complex argument and moves freely between English and Latin and is significant in that it highlights how Ranelagh was perceived as an expert on religious matters who could engage with, and give feedback on, Beale's liturgical arguments, including the Latin elements.[30] The second is a letter to Edward Hyde, written just after the Conventicle Act (1664), which prevented religious congregation of more than five people unless they were reading from the Anglican prayer book, came into effect. At this time, the Baptist minister William Kiffin relayed to Lady Ranelagh the news of twelve general Baptists who were imprisoned on the suspicion of having met at a Conventicle. As the Conventicle Act was a part of the Clarendon Code, Kiffin requested that Ranelagh pass on his petition against the arrest to Edward Hyde, which Ranelagh did in an undated letter. While we do not know if Clarendon acted on this information, we

[28] **Letter 20** and DiMeo, *Lady Ranelagh*, 42–43.
[29] **Letter 52** and DiMeo, *Lady Ranelagh*, 116–119.
[30] **Letter 74** and DiMeo, *Lady Ranelagh*, 123.

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do know that Kiffin did petition Charles II and successfully obtained a pardon for the twelve prisoners.[31]

In terms of Ranelagh's engagement with medicine, many of the letters throughout this edition showcase how she was called upon to treat family members and friends, but several of the letters are significant as they give evidence of Ranelagh's treatment of the wives and children of eminent figures, including William Penn, the earl of Clarendon, and most notably the royal family. It is the latter that truly stand out as noteworthy, as not only do they give evidence of a woman's involvement in the medical treatment of a member of the royal family at a time when women could not formally train as physicians, but they also act as an account of the duke of Kendal's death and, more intriguingly, his autopsy.[32]

While these letters showcase Ranelagh's diverse interests and knowledge, what unites them is their public nature, giving us a sense of what Burnet meant when he said that Ranelagh lived on 'the publickest Scene'.[33] However, to just focus on the letters that are written to or engage with leading public figures overlooks how the vast majority of the letters in this edition are between members of the extended Boyle family. It is in these letters that Ranelagh's key role within the family unit comes to the fore, including evidence of her looking after the health, education, marriage alliances, and finances of several different members of the Boyle family. Such is the extent of her position within her family that, in 1681, the duke of Ormond noted that Ranelagh's influence 'is great, even with her brother [Richard Boyle, earl of] Corke; as for the other branches she governs them very absolutely'.[34] Thus, Ranelagh's letters to her family are also significant as they present insight into the workings of one of the most important and politically influential families of seventeenth-century England and Ireland.

2. A note on the text

The letters included in this edition are those authored by and written to Katherine Jones (née Boyle) Viscountess Ranelagh during six decades of her adult life that have not been included in any modern edition to date. While I have not been able to include all the extant

[31] **Letter 82** and DiMeo, *Lady Ranelagh*, 128.
[32] **Letter 107** and DiMeo, *Lady Ranelagh*, 155–157.
[33] Burnet, *A Sermon*, 32.
[34] James Butler, 1st duke of Ormonde to Lord Arlington, August 24 1681, in Anon., *Calendar of Ormonde Papers*, vol. 6 (London, 1911), 138.

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letters, I have listed them all and provide references to other modern editions that contain the letters I have been unable to include. The letters in this edition are housed in a wide range of archives throughout the United Kingdom, Ireland, and the United States. The Hartlib Papers archive at Sheffield University holds eight letters written by Ranelagh to Hartlib and his associates.[35] The British Library in London holds thirty-four letters including letters sent to her brother Richard and to William Petty.[36] The Boyle family papers held at Chatsworth House consists of twenty-one letters she sent to the 1st and 2nd earls of Cork.[37] The West Sussex Record Office in Chichester has a collection of twenty-one letters written to Roger Boyle, earl of Orrery, and his wife, Margaret.[38] The Royal Society Library holds twelve letters (mostly written to her brother Robert) and a manuscript treatise entitled 'Discourse concerning the Plague', written during 1665.[39] The rest of the letters based in England are scattered over four locations: the Bodleian Library, which holds seven letters; the National Archives, which also holds seven letters; Cambridge University Library, which holds two letters; and the Library of the Society of Friends, which holds three letters.[40]

[35] HP 39/2/56–59 and HP 39/2/50 consists of extracts from four letters in German; HP 39/2/60 is a fifth letter written in German; 66/8/1 and 60/4/20 are recipe extracts from two of her letters written to Hartlib; 46/9/12 is a copy letter of a reply Ranelagh sent to John Sadler in 1648; HP 26/13/1A–2B is a list of questions which Ranelagh sent to Hartlib for him to forward to Sir Cheney Culpeper.

[36] BL Add MS 75354, fols 50–119 contains thirty letters addressed to Richard Boyle, earl of Burlington and Cork; BL MS 72884, fols 5–6 is an undated letter written to William Petty; BL Add. MS 4292, fols 278–279 is a letter to Robert Boyle which discusses the deaths of Henry Oldenburg and Benjamin Worsley; BL Add. MS 17017 is a letter to Laurence Hyde dated 23 November 1676; BL Add. MS 46932 is a copy letter to Lord Broghill.

[37] The letter to her father, the 1st earl of Cork can be seen at Chatsworth House, Cork MSS, vol. 21, letter 61. The twenty other letters are to her brother, Richard and can be seen at Cork MSS, vol. 30, letter 95; Cork MSS, vol. 31, letters 2, 4, 11, 12, 15, 15a, 17, 18, 36, 46, 47, 50, 52, 53, 58; and Cork MSS, vol. 33, letters 12, 13, 59, 63.

[38] Twenty of the letters are in WSRO, Petworth House, Orrery MS 13219 (a microfilm copy of these letters can also be consulted in the NLI), while one letter is in Orrery MS 13222 (4).

[39] In total, nine of the twelve letters are to Robert, and are shelved at RS, RB/3/5/6–8 and RB/3/5/10–15. The other three letters are letters to John Eliot, an unnamed recipient, and extracts to Henry Oldenburg, which can be seen at RB/3/5/9; RB/3/6/3; and MS MM 1, fol. 190 respectively. The manuscript treatise can be seen at RB/1/14/4, fols 27–42. The extracts to Oldenburg are only potentially from Ranelagh and are omitted from this edition.

[40] Four letters are housed in the CSP and are addressed to Edward Hyde, earl of Clarendon. See CSP, vol. 23, fols 113–115; CSP, vol. 78, fols 230–231; CSP, vol. 79, fols 73–74, 269–272. One letter is addressed to Gilbert Burnett, Bod. MSS Add. A. 191, fol. 113. The final two letters are addressed to the countess of Ormond, Carte 217, fols

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While the letters housed in archives in England comprise of the majority of the extant letters, there are nineteen extant letters elsewhere in the world. The majority of these are in Ireland with both the National Library of Ireland and the Armagh Public Library, holding four letters each.[41] In Scotland, the National Records of Scotland houses eight letters from Ranelagh to Margaret Hamilton, countess of Panmure and Anne Hamilton, duchess of Hamilton.[42] Finally, the Beinecke Library at Yale University has one bundle of Hartlib papers, which houses two letters from Ranelagh, while the Cushing/Whitney Medical Library holds one letter that Ranelagh wrote to the earl of Clarendon.[43] Overall, when one excludes duplicate copies and integrates letters that are only extant in print, the total number of known letters is 138, which is an impressive collection that spans over fifty years of Ranelagh's life.

However, correspondence is not a one-way dialogue, and there are also fifty-seven extant letters sent to Ranelagh. Twenty of these letters are in the Hartlib Papers archive, with Ranelagh being the recipient of nine letters by Moore, three letters each by John Dury and John Beale, and one letter each by Samuel Hartlib, John Sadler, Cresy Dymock, Benjamin Worsley, and Mr Fountain. In the Royal Society Library, there are nine letters addressed to Ranelagh, five from her brother Robert, two from Henry Oldenburg, one from John Beale, and one from an unidentified sender.[44] The Orrery Collection in the National Library of Ireland has five letters written to Ranelagh, while

452, 454–456. TNA holds three letters to Joseph Williamson (SP 29/197; SP 29/230; SP 29/251B), two letters to Robert Thornhill (E 192/14/5; E 192/14/11), one letter to Daniel Finch, earl of Nottingham (SP 3/30), and a copy of a letter to Elizabeth, queen of Bohemia (TS 23/1/43 fols 62–63). The V&A museum holds the original copy of this letter to the queen of Bohemia and is shelved at Forster MS 454, letter 74, 40/1, fols 74–75. Cambridge University Library holds two letters: a letter to Samuel Hartlib shelved at Baker's MSS, Mm 1.40, fols 193–238 and a letter to Robert Thornhill shelved at Add. MS 8524/2. The three letters in the Library of the Society of Friends are all copy letters to William Penn, and are shelved at MS Box 7.1, letters 14–16.

[41] The four letters in the NLI are shelved at MS 43266/20, MS 43266/21, Ormonde MS 2383 F307 (4953), and Orrery Papers MS 32, fol. 304, while the four letters in the Armagh Public Library are in the collection of state papers concerning Meath, MS 26544, letters 10, 17, 20, 21.

[42] NRS, GD 45/14/237/1–5, GD 406/1/3797, GD 406/1/10719 and GD 406/1/10720.

[43] Beinecke Library, Yale University, James Marshall and Marie–Louise Osborn Collection (OSB), MSS File 12473; OSB, MSS 16789. Harvey Cushing/John Hay Whitney Medical Library, Yale University, letter, Lady Ranelagh to the earl of Clarendon, uncatalogued letter.

[44] RS, RB/3/1/23; RB/3/1/46; RB/3/1/54; RB/3/1/56; RB/3/1/58; RB/3/1/73; MS MM 1, fol. 15; MS MM 1, fol. 25; and RB/3/7/32.

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the British Library houses seven.[45] The rest of the letters are scattered over seven archives including Armagh Robinson Library, Chatsworth House, the National Archives, Petworth House, Longleat House, Cambridge University Library, and Harvard University Library.[46]

The diversity of the extant letters suggests that a large and ever-changing epistolary network was maintained by Lady Ranelagh throughout her life. However, in many of the letters, written by or to her, there is indication of enclosures, previous correspondence, or promised future correspondence that have been lost to the historical record. Thus, it is likely that we only have a very small fraction of what was written by Lady Ranelagh during what was a long and productive letter-writing career. DiMeo attributes this to the fact that 'Lady Ranelagh did not publish her works and made no provision to preserve her manuscripts after death.'[47] This differs from male members of her family, including Richard Boyle, earl of Burlington. For example, in British Library Add MS 75356, which is a collection of correspondence to Richard Boyle and his wife Elizabeth Boyle, there is an active attempt to catalogue the letters, including lists of who the letters were from, whether they should be 'Kept' or 'Burnt', and even a sense of what is in this archive through descriptions such as 'only complimentary letters'.[48] In no instance do we find this with Lady Ranelagh, and this could be a key reason why the letters from Ranelagh outweigh those to her, with other people collecting the letters she sent to them, rather than Ranelagh preserving those letters sent to her. Thus, what has survived in this scattered form has been accurately described by Carol Pal as an 'accidental' or 'unintentional' archive.[49] In Pal's description an 'unintentional archive' is a place where material related to a particular woman would be both

[45] The letters in the NLI are all in the Orrery Collection, Orrery MS 32, letters 117, 121; Orrery MS 33 letter 141; and Orrery MS 34 letters 308, 316. The letters in the BL are from William Petty, Dorothy Moore, Benjamin Worsley, and Lord Inchiquin, MS 72858, fols 92–3, 96, 103; MS 72884, fol. 3–4; Sloane MS 649; MS add 4106 fol. 224–5; MS46931 fol. 102.

[46] These letters are Chatsworth House, Cork MSS, vol. 31, letter 16; Longleat House, Whitelocke Papers, vol. 19, fol. 129r; The National Archives, SP 29/202 f.63, SP 63/330/1 f.187, SP 29/403/175, SP/32/3 fol. 86; WSRO, Petworth House, Orrery MS 13218 (5); Orrery MS 13222 (6); Cambridge University Library, Add. MS 8524/2; Armagh Public Library, Collection of state papers concerning Meath, 3 vols. MS 26544, letters 19–20; and Harvard Library, MS ENG 602, fol. 17.

[47] DiMeo, *Lady Ranelagh*, 2.

[48] BL Add MS 75356, General correspondence concerning private and public affairs; 1632–1689, n.d.

[49] Pal, 'Accidental archive', 121.

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unexpected and unlooked for.[50] While Pal's analysis is focused primarily on the Hartlib Papers, it could be argued that this applies to Lady Ranelagh's entire 'archive'. While one may expect to find material relating to her in her male relatives' archives, the material in the Hartlib Papers in the National Records of Scotland, in Armagh Public library, and in the Library of the Society of Friends is less expected and their survival could be seen to be more 'accidental'. With this in mind, it is important to note that this edition should not be seen as Lady Ranelagh's 'archive'. Instead, it is the collective result of bringing together various 'accidental archives' and should be seen as a state of play. It is my hope that wider attention to Lady Ranelagh and her diverse activities and networks may bring new material to the fore.

Unsurprisingly, due to the 'accidental' nature of Ranelagh's 'archive', there are significant gaps throughout this edition, one such example being the small number of letters written to members of the Hartlib circle. As previously mentioned, between 1643 and 1660 Lady Ranelagh received twenty letters from various members of the Hartlib circle, yet only ten of her letters survive. Despite receiving ten letters from Dorothy Moore and three letters from John Dury, not a single one of Ranelagh's letters to either person survives; even though we know from Hartlib and Dury's correspondence that Ranelagh was writing to both Moore and Dury on a regular basis. The reason for the loss of these letters is likely practical; Moore and Dury were travelling around mainland Europe between 1642 and 1645, and it is likely that they were not able to properly archive letters they received during this time. Even if Hartlib had made copies of these letters before sending them to Moore and Dury (as was his modus operandi), some of the letters that he collected were lost in a fire in Hartlib's home in 1662. Thus, the letters housed in Sheffield are only those that survived the 271 years, during which time more of them may have been lost.[51] While the non-existence of these letters has the potential to skew our understanding of Ranelagh's literary output, what does survive, combined with what was written to her, gives us a deep understanding of her oeuvre.

Lady Ranelagh normally writes with medium to dark-brown ink in a distinctive italic hand. It is unknown how Lady Ranelagh learnt to write, but it is possible that she was taught by her brother's tutors while she still lived in Ireland. The vast majority of her letters are holograph, in that the letter is written and signed in Ranelagh's hand.

[50] Ibid.

[51] For a detailed history of the Hartlib Papers see Leigh Penman, 'Omnium exposita rapinae: The afterlives of the papers of Samuel Hartlib', *Book History*, 19 (2016), 1–65.

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Some of her letters only survive in scribal form (mainly her letters written to members of the Hartlib circle) and these letters also tend to have evidence of further dissemination and circulation. Notably, only one of her letters is autograph and this is her final letter, written months before her death. The letters written to Ranelagh also tend to be in an italic hand, and the form varies between scribal and holograph depending on the sender. It is noted in the transcriptions whether letters are in a holograph, scribal, or autograph form.

Throughout the correspondence, the paper is generally of good quality. The only exception being letters sent to the earl of Burlington during the height of the plague in 1666/7, and in these instances Ranelagh complained about the difficulty of securing paper. Most of the letters are on a folded half-sheet quarto, where a full sheet of paper was cut in half and folded to form four writing sides, although Ranelagh sometimes writes on a folded folio sheet depending on the circumstances and her recipient. Similarly, the correspondents writing to Ranelagh used various paper formats depending on the situation. Again, each letter in this edition includes a description of the paper format so as to highlight the different usages. The letters are generally folded through the standard 'tuck and seal' method, which James Daybell highlights involves folding the bifolium letter twice horizontally, then twice vertically, before tucking the left portion inside the right.[52] Ranelagh's letters are usually sealed and there is evidence of her using three different seals throughout her life. Two of the seal types are badly damaged and hard to clearly discern, while the third is a heraldic crest, which bears similarities to the Jones family crest. In most of her letters, she uses red wax to seal the letter, but on occasion she used a black wax. Black wax was a declaration of mourning, and Ranelagh used black wax during the political upheaval of 1659, and when mourning the death of Oliver Cromwell.[53] The text is occasionally obscured by worn or torn paper, bindings, and mending tape (especially those letters preserved in Chatsworth House). In these instances, I have tried to discern what was written, but in cases where I have been unable to do so, I have noted this through the use of [MS torn].

Some of the letters in this edition are originally in languages other than English. Due to issues of space, the translation is given and references to the original document are provided. When only segments

[52] James Daybell, *The Material Letter* (Basingstoke, 2012), 49.
[53] Ibid., 105–106.

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of a letter are in languages other than English, the translation is supplied in the footnotes. Unless otherwise stated, German texts have been translated by Ruth Connolly and Latin texts have been translated by the author. In all cases, the objective has been to give a fluent text retaining something of the structure and flavour of the original.

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