



Left, Amanda Foreman in New York City's Gramercy Park in 2008 with her husband Jonathan Barton and their children, from left, Hero, now two; Halcyon, four; Theodore, six; Helena, eight; Xanthe, two. Right, Amanda with Keira Knightley at the world premiere of *The Duchess*, 2008

Pretty busy

With a new book coming out and a life split between London and Manhattan, not to mention five children, award-winning historian Amanda Foreman explains how to live on borrowed beauty time

Is it possible to have five children under the age of seven, work an eight-hour day, and still look like Carla Bruni? No. Of course not. But that does not mean one must go through life looking like Mrs Merton.

I don't quite remember when I had this realisation. It was some time between the interview with the prospective nanny who stared hard at me, and then complimented my husband on his youthful looks – over and over again; and the film premiere of *The Duchess*, when I was running so late that the make-up artist had to ride in the car with me, dabbing and crimping in between the lights. The message was clear: I was turning not into my mother, who is the epitome of elegance, but into my gym teacher from prep school. I think we called her Mrs Lizard. Poor thing. I don't know whether she had five children as well, but she definitely had the look of someone who went to the hairdresser about as frequently as she went to the dentist.

Something had to change in my life. Since the husband, the children, the 'bicoastal' life between New York and London and the writing were here to stay, the something had to be something that either did not exist or

was invisible to the naked eye. Inside, I am still the same person I was when I got married 10 years ago – the trouble is reconciling that with the face and body I see in the mirror after four C-sections, a cracked pelvis, a hernia and a thousand sleepless nights. There is no escaping the fact that any beauty routine, any attempt to smarten up, is first and foremost a repair job. I feel quite matter-of-fact about the task; just because I

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am not looking to attract a mate doesn't mean that I should not look attractive.

When I analysed my day, I realised that if I were a chicken, I would be crossing the road every 30 minutes. Actually, I don't have 30 minutes that haven't already been allocated somewhere else. As a multitasking working mother, my life revolves around squeezing 45 minutes into half-hour slots. That does not include tasks which are of no benefit to anyone but myself. There are no time slots for that category. Inside that non-existent time category, known as the Split Infinity, are

two separate activities: a) maintenance, such as facials, eyebrows and manicures; and b) presentation, which means being ready before you get into the car. Both are the equivalent of those black holes in space that scientists love so much. They exist in theory. But it is impossible to enter them straight on without being crushed by divergent forces.

Fortunately, just as NASA has discovered a way to explore black holes using the Laws of Time to compute interesting facts about the Laws of Space, the Multitasking Mother can now bend the Laws of Space to do weird and interesting things to the Laws of Time. The invention is new at-home beautifying service Blossom & Jasmine. Like Unlisted London and Return to Glory, it can be booked online, and a representative will come to your home at the hour and day of your choosing.

Multitasking as ever, I can supervise homework on a Tuesday evening while Ginny is giving me a manicure. I can have a pedicure on a Saturday morning while patiently sitting through three lots of piano scales and a screechy violin.

In New York, home delivery of pizza is easy to get; finding someone who will do home treatments is much harder. On the other hand, there is a mini-spa on every other block (which takes care of the Laws of Space), and my husband will occasionally babysit while I nip out for a 9pm massage and pedicure. The Laws of Time work a ▷

< little differently in Manhattan – it's not so much about multitasking as it is about turning one day into the equivalent of two, which is easily accomplished in the 'city that never sleeps'. Failing that, there is the Susan Ciminelli Day Spa at Bergdorf Goodman.

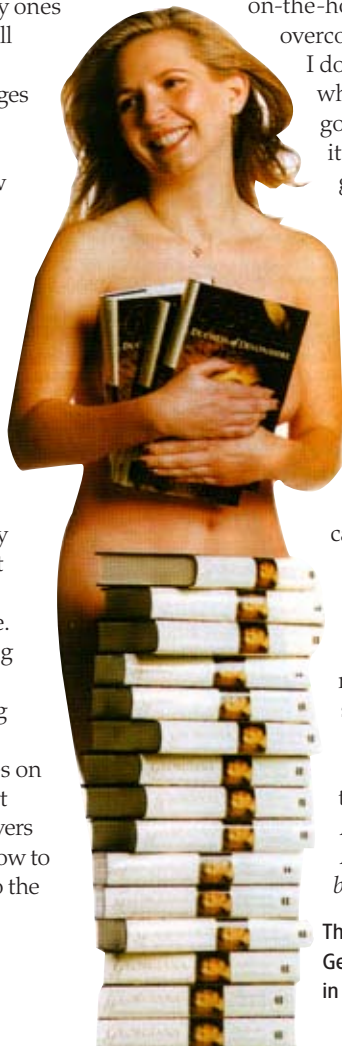
In London, the Laws of Space also include next-door treatments. A trip to Harley Street no longer needs to be viewed with despair as an appalling waste of time. The dentist, the optician, the GP, the psychiatrist: they are all effective conduits to Selfridges, where Sisley awaits with its 30-minute Me Time Instant Glow Facial. Under the Law of Quantum Multitasking, a scheduled visit to Sisley can be slotted in before going to Harley Street as long as the doctor's appointment is for 2pm. The lunch hour can be used for travel, eating a sandwich on the run and 30 minutes of sheer bliss.

Sisley Express Facials are designed to make half an hour seem like an hour. The treatment room is discreetly tucked behind a glass wall next to the make-up counter. The noise from outside barely penetrates. Hot towels steeped in aromatic oils (lavender, jasmine and orange blossom) are gently applied at various intervals. Gillian says kind, soothing words throughout the treatment, probably the only ones the Multitasking Mother will hear all week.

Sisley launched its Selfridges Express spa earlier this year to wild success. How I wish it would do the same in New York. Where's the special relationship when you need it? And how about JFK Airport taking a leaf out of Terminal 5 and giving space to Blink rather than the endless knick-knack and 'I Love NY' T-shirt stalls?

A trip to Blink at Selfridges operates under the same Time-Space Harley Street Continuum. It doesn't count so long as you are on your way to somewhere else. The company's latest offering is eyelash extensions, in addition to its regular tinting and eyebrow threading. The technicians pride themselves on their speed. The UK Passport Service ought to send observers to study their methods on how to ink and glue. If I am going to the

On Harley Street, the dentist, optician, GP and psychiatrist are all effective conduits to Selfridges



City or anywhere near Westminster, I will drive to Stephen Casali's salon on Ebury Street. He is the remaining half of Hugh and Stephen, after Hugh retired to look after the Duchess of Cornwall full-time. Stephen can do miracles with hair, with a make-up artist working at the same time, in 20 minutes. That leaves me with 15 minutes' travel time.

If the event is in north London, I will drive to Selfridges, park in the garage, and race up to Cobella Salon, on the third floor. They have been known to squeeze in a complete hair treatment, plus neck massage, blowdry and style in under an hour. But it is just the 20-minute pit stop for me. The added benefit at Cobella is the army of expert make-up artists who will come up from the ground floor. They can give you any look you want, with your favourite make-up. What's more, if my tights ladder,

I can send someone to buy replacements without leaving the comfy pink leather chair. Daniel Sandler of Urban Retreat at Harrods performs the same service for events in the Knightsbridge, Kensington and Bayswater areas.

The problem in New York is that people seem wedded to the idea that dinner should always be eaten at 7.30. None of my clever strategies for just-in-time makeovers and on-the-hoof transformations can overcome the roadblock called love.

I don't want to miss bedtime – who cares about putting on as good a front as a childless CEO if it means feeling miserable and guilty, and real tears at home?

I have accepted the fact that life in London and life in New York mean two different things. In one city I have a system going; in the other it is still a work in progress. I like to think that one day I will again have the time to exercise, whether in a gym or jogging around Central Park. I won't always be catching up with last week's job which had to be done by yesterday. That chicken will have learned to delegate and sent someone else to cross the road. My half-hour slots will stretch to one hour! But, in the meantime, I think I can star down any nanny who walks through my door. □

Amanda Foreman's new book, A World on Fire, will be published by Allen Lane later this year.

That photo: Foreman with her blockbuster, Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, taken in 1999. The picture became notorious

Task force

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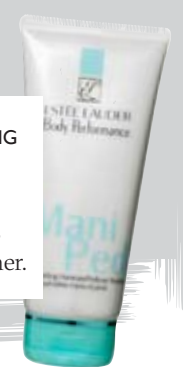


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