

Art and Aristocracy in late Stuart England

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Contents

Short abstract	3
Long abstract	5
List of figures	14
Abbreviations	20
Acknowledgements	21
 Introduction	 23
 Chapter One: Court Influence	 49
 Chapter Two: Imports and Immigrants	 110
 Chapter Three: Travel, or, More than the Grand Tour	 157
 Chapter Four: Collaboration and Connection	 211
 Chapter Five: The Dynamics of Conjugal Patronage	 274
 Chapter Six: Magnificence, Dynasty, Posterity	 327
 Epilogue	 386
 Bibliography	 396

Short abstract

Art was integral to the lives of the late Stuart aristocracy. Through case studies of the art patronage of three aristocratic couples, this interdisciplinary thesis examines their stylistic influences, the strategies and networks that underlay their patronage, and why they invested so much time, effort, and money on buildings, interiors, gardens, and moveable works of art. In doing so, it illuminates the dynamics of late Stuart aristocratic society, while simultaneously deepening our understanding of the art itself. It explores the relationship between monarchy and aristocracy in the pivotal decades around the Glorious Revolution, finding that despite the profound political consequences of the Revolution, the court continued to attract the aristocracy as the leader of artistic fashion. It emphasises that aristocrats were integrated into wider European court culture, and shows how they adopted a range of strategies to obtain fashionable and exclusive foreign artworks in order to demonstrate their proximity to the centres of fashion and differentiate themselves from their peers. They employed immigrant artists and craftsmen, adopted European designs, and some travelled to the continent, modelling their patronage on the European potentates they encountered. This thesis dethrones the lone male patron by identifying the household staff and agents, and kinship, county, associational and political networks that were integral to art patronage. It also considers the dynamics of conjugal patronage, uncovering the important contribution of married women, while recognising that it was circumscribed within legal, economic, and social strictures. Finally, it questions previous assumptions that aristocratic art, particularly in country houses, was politically motivated and directed towards instrumental purposes. Differentiating between politics and power, it demonstrates that these aristocrats principally used art to demonstrate and maintain their

status through displays of magnificence; to invest in their estates on behalf of the dynasty;
and to commemorate their own achievements for posterity.

Long abstract

Art was integral to the lives of the late Stuart aristocracy. It formed their material environment, maintained their position in the social and political hierarchy, was a topic of mutual interest with peers, cemented the bonds of kinship and friendship, and absorbed large amounts of their time, attention, and money. Patronage of the arts was not simply a pastime, but a serious business that underpinned the exercise of power by monarchies and aristocracies throughout Europe. It was used to communicate different messages to different audiences. To the masses, displays of art on a magnificent scale were intended to maintain the cultural, and by extension, social and political, hegemony of the elite. To the much smaller, but highly informed audience of their peers and superiors, aristocratic art implied their knowledge, connections, and proximity to the centres of power and taste. It was a means of self-fashioning, not only in the present, but to create a personal and dynastic legacy. This thesis explores the role that art played in the lives of the late Stuart aristocracy, and consequently what it reveals about their lives. Through an examination of the art they commissioned, collected and displayed, how they acquired it, and why they did so, it demonstrates that although art was often separate from politics, it was fundamentally connected with power, and the ways in which it was exercised and maintained, between monarchy, aristocracy and wider society, within the ranks of the nobility and gentry, and within the family and household.

Late Stuart aristocratic art patronage has left a significant material legacy in the shape of country houses, their gardens, interior furnishings, and art collections, which are among the most-visited heritage sites in England. Yet despite its importance to public history, it has

received relatively little scholarly attention, particularly as a discrete subject, rather than studies of individual patrons, properties, artists, or media. One notable exception is Helen Jacobsen's *Luxury and Power*, which demonstrated how diplomats (some, but not all of whom, were members of the nobility) used art to engage in conspicuous display during their overseas missions, and leveraged their privileged access to foreign markets and fashions to improve their cultural and political standing in England. Georgian aristocratic art patronage has attracted considerably more scholarship, with a current focus on the material legacy – often in the form of country houses – of the transatlantic slave trade, global slave-based economy, and colonialism. Marc Girouard and Dana Arnold have argued that the country house was a 'power house', functioning literally and metaphorically as the seat and symbol of the social, economic, political and cultural hegemony of the ruling classes. Power, however, is often conflated with politics, and aristocratic art has frequently been interpreted as having an instrumental function, most recently by Laurel Peterson, whose PhD thesis argued that Whig country houses were 'political centers' that communicated specific political messages in order to advance their owners' power and status.

However, although some ambitious aristocrats, including those in Jacobsen's study, did use art for instrumental purposes to gain social and political advancement, the patrons surveyed here were motivated by different considerations. In particular, the scarcity of elite visitors to those country houses that were distant from London suggests that we must seek alternative motivations. This thesis argues that although some aristocratic art, especially that displayed in London, was intended to communicate patrons' connoisseurship and connections to an audience of their peers, country houses, their contents and gardens were

principally intended to express and maintain aristocrats' position in society through displays of magnificence. They also invested in the fabric of their estates on behalf of future generations of the dynasty. The art they sought to acquire, and the means by which they did so, also has much to reveal about the dynamics of late Stuart aristocratic society: the relationship between monarchy and aristocracy, their orientation towards Europe, and their networks and relationships.

This interdisciplinary thesis straddles the boundaries of history and art history, and is the product of a Collaborative Doctoral Partnership between the University of Oxford and Tate, in support of the exhibition, *British Baroque: Power and Illusion*, held at Tate Britain in February/March 2020. It defines 'art' broadly, to include architecture, interiors, furnishings, gardens, silverware, jewellery, ironwork, woodcarving, painting, and sculpture, granting each medium equal status, reflecting the values of late Stuart England rather than the fine-arts bias of much art-historical scholarship. It takes an object-led approach, and through a close reading of surviving and reconstructed artworks, and the circumstances of their creation, acquisition and display, it illuminates the world of the late Stuart aristocrat, while simultaneously deepening our understanding of the art itself.

'Art and Aristocracy in late Stuart England' is constructed from case studies of the art patronage of three aristocratic couples: William and Mary Cavendish, first duke and duchess of Devonshire; Charles and Elizabeth Seymour, sixth duke and duchess of Somerset; and John and Anne Cecil, fifth earl and countess of Exeter. Each undertook a major rebuilding or refurbishment of their country houses, as well as maintaining other town and country

properties, and were consequently among the most important patrons of the period for architecture, interiors, gardens, and moveable works of art. The first duke of Devonshire is chiefly renowned for two achievements: his leading role in the Glorious Revolution of 1688/9, and the transformation of his country house, Chatsworth, into a masterpiece of architecture, interiors and gardens. These two aspects have been explicitly linked in a historiography that infers a causal link between Devonshire's Whig politics and the building of Chatsworth. However, it is demonstrated here that although the scale and grandeur of Chatsworth was in part enabled by Devonshire's increased income and status consequent to the Revolution, the rebuilding was inspired by dynastic rather than political considerations. While Chatsworth may have memorialised Devonshire's political successes, it was principally intended to demonstrate his newly-advanced status as a duke and commemorate his actions in the eyes of future generations.

Charles and Elizabeth Seymour, sixth duke and duchess of Somerset, enjoyed the second-highest ranking title in the peerage and one of the greatest estates and private incomes in England, and during the reign of Queen Anne, held between them two of the four principal court offices. The duchess' inheritance and independent income gave her an agency denied to most married women, and she was a significant art patron in her own right, as well as in partnership with her husband. The influence of the court on the Somersets' art patronage, even when they were associated with the opposition, testifies to the continued artistic leadership of the court after the Revolution. The fifth earl and countess of Exeter act as a counterpoint to the other two case studies, since the earl withdrew from court and national politics, and refused to swear the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy after the Revolution.

Despite this, he rebuilt and furnished his country house, Burghley, in very similar manner to his Whig peers and relatives (Devonshire was the countess of Exeter's brother). He even built a suite of state apartments and then deliberately absented himself when the King was in the locality, indicating that they were not intended to advance his status. In any case, style was not necessarily aligned with politics, and English aristocratic tastes were strongly influenced by a European, Francophile court culture that transcended national, political, and religious boundaries.

This study covers a varied range of subjects across its six chapters, enabling aristocratic art patronage to be considered from a wider perspective than has been adopted by many scholars. The first three chapters are broadly concerned with influence and orientation, and the strategies employed by aristocrats to obtain the most desirable works of art. Chapter One: Court Influence, considers the impact of the Glorious Revolution on the relationship between the monarchy and aristocracy. By tracing the influence of the court on aristocratic art patronage in the pivotal decades around the Revolution, it questions whether the shift in the balance of power from the monarchy to the aristocracy was reflected in a corresponding decline in the court's artistic leadership. It finds that in the two decades following the Revolution, the court maintained its position as the centre of artistic fashion. There are, however, indications in some of the art commissioned by the aristocracy that they did not feel the same deference towards William III as they had towards his predecessors.

Chapter Two: Imports and Immigrants, demonstrates that English aristocratic culture was embedded in a wide European court culture that took its stylistic lead from the court of Versailles. Aristocrats sought to display foreign artworks, designs, furnishings, and other

luxury goods in order to achieve a competitive edge among their peers, and differentiate themselves from those who were less wealthy, less influential, and less well connected. Whereas scholars of the eighteenth century have emphasised mercantilism, deepening market penetration for foreign luxury goods, and the growth of import substitutes, in the late-seventeenth century, even the elite had very limited access to imported art. This chapter therefore outlines the range of alternative strategies employed by aristocrats to obtain foreign or foreign-designed artworks and luxury goods. They employed immigrant artists and craftsmen, especially those who had trained at the French court, and commissioned native artists and craftsmen to use foreign designs brought to England through prints or word-of-mouth. It was not enough to simply obtain foreign designs: speed was of the essence, and aristocrats aimed to be the first in England to display the latest foreign fashions. Some imported goods were available, either by exploiting contacts overseas, or on the open market, and when certain goods, such as porcelain, became more widely available, the aristocratic elite differentiated themselves from the masses by the quality and quantity they purchased and displayed.

Chapter Three: Travel, builds on Jacobsen's study of diplomats and recent diversifications of traditional 'Grand Tour' narratives to consider how aristocrats acquired art, and cultural capital, by travelling to Europe in person. During the three months Devonshire spent in the Netherlands for the International Congress of 1691, he took the opportunity to acquire Brussels tapestries and the finest private collection of delftware in England, to improve his knowledge of Dutch art, architecture, and gardens, and to show off his status by entertaining the European elite. While most scholarship on the material culture of diplomacy has concentrated on the principal players, Devonshire's example shows that such

events were also important forums of cultural exchange among the lesser delegates. Through an in-depth examination of the fifth earl and countess of Exeter's continental travels, Chapter Three also suggests that previous scholarship on the Exeters as Grand Tourists has misleadingly focused on painting and sculpture, at the expense of their interest in the decorative arts, as well as underestimating the extent of their collecting. It demonstrates that foreign travel was not simply an opportunity for acquisition, but that European courts exerted an important influence as models of patronage, and that the Exeters' unrivalled collection of contemporary Italian paintings and sculptures was inspired by the patrons they met in Europe, above all the Medici family.

The second part of this thesis considers the people who participated in the shared endeavour of art patronage, and the audiences for which it was intended. In doing so, it demonstrates how art was embedded into, visualised, and upheld the social, political and domestic structures of late Stuart aristocratic society. Chapters Four and Five dethrone the lone male patron by emphasising the collaborative nature of aristocratic art patronage. Chapter Four: Collaboration and Connection examines the domestic, social and professional networks that were involved in the creation and consumption of art. It foregrounds the contribution of household staff, agents and artists, and shows how art was integrated into social, political and associational culture. Together, the nominal patron and his network discussed designs, recommended artworks, artists and craftsmen to one another, exchanged artworks as gifts, commissioned portraits of each other, and reinforced their social bonds through a mutual engagement with art. It shows how artists and designs

moved between families and within county society, and how art was used to visualise and consolidate political and social associations.

Contrary to the majority of scholarship on the late-seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century aristocracy, the present study gives equal billing throughout to both partners in the married couples it examines. However, by comparing the respective activities of husband and wife, Chapter Five: The Dynamics of Conjugal Patronage not only highlights the contribution of married women (who are under-represented in patronage studies), but also engages with wider debates around gender and categorisation. Drawing on the work of scholars such as James Daybell and Lydia Hamlett, it brings an open-minded approach to archival sources and the mechanics of patronage to uncover the important contributions of Elizabeth, duchess of Somerset and Anne, countess of Exeter as independent patrons and in collaboration with their husbands. It identifies female networks and familial traditions of patronage, and questions the traditional gendering of artistic categories, finding that it does not always stand up to scrutiny. However, it also demonstrates that since married women's patronage was circumscribed by the common law of coverture and social convention, they relied on the co-operation and consent of their male relatives if they were to exercise independent or collaborative patronage.

By considering the audiences and purposes of aristocratic art, Chapter Six: Magnificence, Dynasty, Posterity asks why aristocrats placed so much importance on art, and what they hoped to achieve with it. Aristocrats received most of their elite visitors at their London townhouses, which they used to demonstrate their connoisseurship and political

connections through the display of old master paintings and contemporary portraits. The visitors a country house received depended on its proximity to London and major routes, and those houses that were relatively remote received most of their visitors from within a thirty-five mile radius. This undermines previous assumptions about the instrumental and political function of country houses, including mural paintings and state apartments.

Instead, as Kate Retford has observed for the Georgian period, while the town house was tied to the life of the individual, country houses were associated with dynasty.

Differentiating between politics and power, this chapter argues that the ultra-elite built and furnished their country houses principally to demonstrate and maintain their status through displays of magnificence. Besides displaying art to living audiences, aristocrats (especially patriarchs) were strongly future-orientated, and invested in the buildings and collections of their estates on behalf of succeeding generations, since their own identity was indivisible from that of the dynasty. Finally, building on Peter Burke's analysis of the patronage of Louis XIV, and the psychology of Ernest Becker, this thesis also argues that another important motivation for aristocratic art patronage was to create a personal legacy for posterity. The art commissioned, collected and displayed by these couples illuminates the influences, strategies, networks and relationships of the late Stuart aristocracy. It demonstrates that aristocratic art patronage shaped, and was shaped by, the structures of power and society, and was central to their self-fashioning, in the present and for the future.

List of Figures

Chapter One: Court Influence

Fig. 1.1 Louis Laguerre, *Christ Healing the Sick* (c. 1689-92), oil on plaster, north wall of the chapel, Chatsworth House. Image: Daderot, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.

Fig. 1.2 Antonio Verrio, *Christ Healing the Sick* (c.1678-82), modello for the King's chapel, Windsor Castle, oil on canvas, Royal Collection Trust © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2022.

Fig. 1.3 Caius Gabriel Cibber (figurative stone carving), Samuel Watson (decorative stone carving), Louis Laguerre (mural painting), Antonio Verrio (altarpiece painting), east end of the chapel (c.1688-94), Chatsworth House. Image: Amy Lim.

Fig. 1.4 Samuel Watson, Sketch of Grinling Gibbons' reredos at St. James' church, Piccadilly (c. 1684-1692), pencil on paper, The Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth. Image: Amy Lim.

Fig. 1.5 Samuel Watson, designs for carved wood panels for the chapel (c. 1688-94), pencil on paper, The Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth. Image: Amy Lim.

Fig. 1.6 Daniel Marot, 'Cabinet', possibly a design for Het Loo, *Nouveau livre de parterments* (The Hague, 1683-1703), etching on paper. Image: Amy Lim.

Fig. 1.7 Porcelain jar on wooden pedestal (c. 1690s), Petworth House
Jar: Egremont Collection, pedestal: NT. Image: Amy Lim.

Fig. 1.8 Carved oak stand for a porcelain jar (c. 1690s), Royal Collection Trust © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2022.

Fig. 1.9 John Closterman, *William Cavendish, 1st Duke of Devonshire and an unnamed Black attendant* (1697), oil on canvas, Hardwick House (NT). Image: National Trust.

Fig. 1.10 Grinling Gibbons, The Carved Room, Petworth (detail showing central drop between portraits of the 6th duke and duchess of Somerset) (c. 1691-2), limewood.
Image: Amy Lim.

Fig. 1.11 Grinling Gibbons, Limewood carving with Garter, coronet and cipher of Charles Seymour, sixth duke of Somerset (c. 1692), Trinity College, Cambridge. Image: Amy Lim.

Fig. 1.12 Godfrey Kneller, *Elizabeth Seymour, Duchess of Somerset* (1713), oil on canvas, Petworth House, Egremont Collection. Image © National Trust.

Fig. 1.13 Louis Laguerre, *The Death of Caesar* (1692-4), oil on plaster, Chatsworth House.
Image: Amy Lim.

Fig. 1.14 Daniel Mytens, *William Cavendish, second earl of Devonshire; Thomas Bruce, first earl of Elgin; Philip Herbert, fourth earl of Pembroke; William Herbert, third earl of*

Pembroke, (c. 1620-40), oil on canvas, Hardwick Hall (NT) Images: © National Trust / Robert Thrift.

Fig. 1.15 Grinling Gibbons, *Charles, sixth duke of Somerset* (1691), marble, Trinity College, Cambridge. Image: English Heritage, via British History Online.

Fig. 1.16 Peter Vandrebanc (engraver) after Grinling Gibbons (sculptor), *A statue of Charles II in Roman dress* (1684-1697), engraving, Royal Collection Trust© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2022.

Fig. 1.17 Wren library, Trinity College, Cambridge (1675-1699). Image: Amy Lim.

Fig. 1.18 Sutton Nichols (printmaker), *View of three sides of the courtyard of the Royal Exchange as reconstructed after the Great Fire* (1712), engraving and etching on paper, British Museum, London © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Fig. 1.19 Neville's Court and the Wren Library, Trinity College, Cambridge. Image: Amy Lim.

Chapter Two: Imports and Immigrants

Fig. 2.1 Antonio Verrio, 'Heaven Room', Burghley House (c. 1693-6). Image: Amy Lim.

Fig. 2.2 Attributed to Gerrit Jensen, Carved and gilded table and stands with pewter inlay (c. 1690-1700), Petworth House, Egremont Collection. Image: Amy Lim.

Fig. 2.3 Jean Tijou, Balustrade panel (1688-92), now on the west front at Chatsworth House. Image: Press Association © The Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth. Reproduced by permission of Chatsworth Settlement Trustees.

Fig. 2.4 Jean Le Blond, Royal Railings, Palace of Versailles (1679-82, demolished 1794, reconstructed 2005-8). Image : Amy Lim.

Fig. 2.5 Beauvais manufactory (Philippe Béhagle, maker; Jean-Baptiste Monnoyer, designer) 'The Elephant' from a set of five *Grotesques* (designed 1688, made c. 1690-1711) Wool and silk, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Fig. 2.6 Soho manufactory (John Vanderbank, maker; John-Baptiste Monnoyer, designer) Detail of *Grotesques* tapestry from a set of two (c. 1691-1707), Burghley House. Image: Amy Lim.

Fig. 2.7 Pierre Harache (maker), Blaise Gentot (engraver), ewer and dish (1697), silver-gilt, British Museum, London © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Fig. 2.8 Multi-branched chandelier, unknown maker, probably Huguenot (c. 1694), silver, The Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth. Image: Amy Lim.

Fig. 2.9 William Talman, south front of Chatsworth House (1685-90). Image: Amy Lim.

Fig. 2.10 Gian Lorenzo Bernini (architect), Jean Marot (engraver), 'Fassade du Louvre du Costé de l'eau, du desseing du Cavalier Bernini', from J. Marot, *L'Architecture française* (Paris, c. 1670). Image: Wikimedia Commons.

Fig. 2.11 Dutch school, *Interior of a Chinese shop* (c. 1680-1700), Fan leaf, gouache on paper, mounted onto a wooden panel. Image © Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

Chapter Three: Travel

Fig. 3.1 Adriaen Kocks, Urn (1689-94), tin glazed earthenware, The Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth. Image: Amy Lim.

Fig. 3.2 Adriaen Kocks, Hexagonal- and square-based pyramid flower vases (1686-1701), tin-glazed earthenware, The Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth. Image: Amy Lim.

Fig. 3.3 Adriaen Kocks, Hexagonal pyramid flower vase (c.1694), tin-glazed earthenware, Royal Collection Trust © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2022.

Fig. 3.4 Jan Jans II (weaver, unknown designer after François Chauveau), 'The Horse and the Wolf' from *Fables de la Fontaine* (1680-1), Burghley House.

Fig. 3.5 François Chauveau, 'The Horse and the Wolf', from Charles de la Fontaine, *Fables* vol. 5 (Paris, 1668). Image : gallica.bnf.fr / BnF.

Fig. 3.6 Albert Eckhout (designer), de la Croix (weaver), 'Le Cheval Rayé' from *Ancien Indes* (1689), *basse-lisse* tapestry © Mobilier National, Paris.

Fig 3.7 Domenico Guidi, *Andromeda and the Sea Monster* (c. 1694), marble, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Purchase, Josephine Bay Paul and C. Michael Paul Foundation Inc. Gift and Charles Ulrick and Josephine Bay Foundation Inc. Gift, 1967.

Fig. 3.8 Pierre-Etienne Monnot, *John, Earl of Exeter and Anne, Countess of Exeter* (1701), marble, Burghley House.

Fig. 3.9 Pietro Liberi, *Lord Burghley pulling Fortune by the hair* (1681), oil on canvas, Burghley House.

Fig. 3.10 Carlo Maratti, *Jupiter and Semele* (c. 1684), oil on canvas, Burghley House.

Fig. 3.11 Grinling Gibbons, *The Cosimo panel* (1682), limewood, Palazzo Pitti, Florence. Image: Scala, Florence - courtesy of the Ministero Beni e Att. Culturali e del Turismo.

Fig. 3.12 Grinling Gibbons, *Music and the Sciences* trophy panel (1683-5), limewood, Burghley House. Image: Amy Lim.

Chapter Four: Collaboration and Connection

Fig. 4.1 Jean Tijou, gates in west front (c. 1686-90), iron and gilding, Burghley House. Image: Amy Lim.

Fig. 4.2 Thomas Young, Samuel Watson, and Joel Lobb, carved overdoor in the great chamber (1692-3), limewood, Chatsworth House. Image: Amy Lim.

Fig. 4.3 Boughton House, Northamptonshire. Image: Euan Myles (2013), Wikipedia Creative Commons.

Fig. 4.4 *Petworth House*, artist unknown (c.1700), Belvoir Castle, coll. Duke of Rutland Image: Wikimedia Commons. [Creative Commons 2.0](#).

Fig. 4.5 Elevation of Montagu House, later the British Museum, Bloomsbury. Engraving published in Colen Campbell, *Vitruvius Britannicus* (1715) © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Fig. 4.6 Caius Gabriel Cibber, Sphinx on pedestal (c. 1687-90), freestone, Chatsworth House. Image: Amy Lim.

Fig. 4.7 Jan Siberechts, *Chatsworth House and Park* (1699, altered c.1703), oil on canvas. © The Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth / Omnia Art Ltd. Reproduced by permission of Chatsworth Settlement Trustees.

Fig. 4.8 Jan Siberechts, *Wollaton Hall* (1695), oil on canvas, Middleton Collection, Birdsall. Image: Cara Willoughby.

Fig. 4.9 Chatsworth House, west front (1700-1705) Image: Duncan Harris, Wikimedia Commons.

Fig. 4.10 Castle Howard, garden front. Image: chris, Wikimedia Commons. Own work, CC BY 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=10539450>.

Fig. 4.11 Samuel Watson after Henri Nadauld, Frieze on the west front, Chatsworth House (c. 1703-20), pencil on paper, The Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth.

Fig. 4.12 Godfrey Kneller, *Self-portrait* (left) and *Antonio Verrio* (right) as members of the Order of Bedlam (c. 1688-90), oil on canvas, Burghley Collection.

Fig. 4.13 Godfrey Kneller, *Charles Seymour, sixth duke of Somerset* (c. 1702-3), oil on canvas, National Portrait Gallery, London.

Fig. 4.14 Godfrey Kneller, *Charles Sackville, sixth earl of Dorset* (c. 1697), oil on canvas, National Portrait Gallery, London.

Fig. 4.15 Godfrey Kneller, *Charles Dartiquenave* (1702), oil on canvas, National Portrait Gallery, London.

Fig. 4.16 Godfrey Kneller, *Thomas Pelham-Holles, 1st Duke of Newcastle-under-Lyme and Henry Clinton, 7th Earl of Lincoln* (c. 1721), oil on canvas, National Portrait Gallery, London.

Chapter Five: The Dynamics of Conjugal Patronage

Fig. 5.1 Louis Laguerre, *The Triumph of Elizabeth Percy* (c.1719-20), oil on plaster, Petworth House © National Trust Images/Derrick E. Witty.

Fig. 5.2 John Closterman, *Charles Seymour, sixth duke of Somerset and an unnamed attendant* (1692), oil on canvas, and John Riley and John Closterman, *Elizabeth, duchess of Somerset and Algernon Seymour, earl of Hertford* (c.1689), oil on canvas, Petworth House (NT) ©National Trust Images/Matthew Hollow.

Fig. 5.3 Detail of NatWest CH194/7 fol. 73r. © NatWest.

Fig. 5.4 Attributed to Gerrit Jensen, walnut and marquetry floor, later made into a table (1679, altered eighteenth century), Burghley House.

Fig. 5.5 Attributed to Gerrit Jensen, walnut and marquetry writing table (c. 1679-88), Burghley House.

Fig. 5.6 John Smith after Willem Wissing, *Self-portrait of Willem Wissing* (1687), mezzotint on paper, National Portrait Gallery, London.

Fig. 5.7 Willem Wissing, *Called Aemelia Nassau, Countess of Ossory* (c. 1685), oil on canvas, Royal Collection Trust. Identified here as Mary Somerset, countess of Ossory.

Fig. 5.8 Willem Wissing, *John, Lord Burghley* (c. 1685), oil on canvas, Burghley Collection.

Fig. 5.9 Gerrit Jensen, folding writing table (1688), oak with walnut and holly marquetry, Egremont Collection, Petworth. Image: Adam Bowett.

Fig. 5.10 Ewer, Miseroni workshop, Italy (c. 1600, mounts, handle and possibly the foot, England c. 1660), rock crystal, gold, precious stones and enamel. Burghley Collection.

Chapter Six: Magnificence, Dynasty, Posterity

Fig. 6.1 Jan Siberechts, *Chatsworth House and Park* (detail) (1699, altered c.1703), oil on canvas. © The Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth / Omnia Art Ltd. Reproduced by permission of Chatsworth Settlement Trustees.

Fig. 6.2 J. Kip after L. Kynff, 'Chatsworth House' (detail), from *Britannia Illustrata* (London, 1707). Image: Amy Lim.

Fig. 6.3 Antonio Verrio, detail of mural painting with Cavendish stags and the first duke's of Devonshire's cipher and garter (1691), Great Chamber, Chatsworth House. Photo: Amy Lim.

Fig. 6.4 Marlborough College, formerly Castle House, Wiltshire. Image: Rob Purvis, Wikimedia Commons [Creative Commons 2.0](#).

Fig. 6.5 Het Loo Palace, Apeldoorn, The Netherlands. Image: Zairon, Wikimedia Commons [Creative Commons 4.0](#).

Fig. 6.6 John Selden, Wooden painted festoon curtain over the family pew in the chapel gallery, Petworth (c. 1692) © National Trust Images/John Hammond

Fig. 6.7 Remigio van Leemput after Hans Holbein, *Henry VII, Queen Elizabeth of York, Henry VIII, Queen Jane Seymour and Edward VI as Prince of Wales* (1669), oil on canvas. Petworth House, Egremont Collection. Image: © National Trust.

Fig. 6.8 Sir Godfrey Kneller, *John, fifth earl of Exeter* (1696), oil on canvas, Burghley Collection.

Fig. 6.9 Pierre-Etienne Monnot, Funerary monument of John and Anne Cecil, fifth earl and countess of Exeter (1700-4), marble, St. Martin's church, Stamford. Image: Amy Lim.

Fig. 6.10 Details of fig. 6.10: attributes of the personification of 'Arts'.

Fig. 6.11 Alessandro Algardi, *Tomb of Leo XI* (1634-44), marble, St Peter's, Rome. Image: Jordiferrer, Wikimedia Commons [Creative Commons 4.0](#).

Fig. 6.12 Maximilian Colt, Funerary monument of Robert Cecil, first earl of Salisbury (c. 1609-12), marble, St. Etheldreda's parish church, Hatfield. Image: Amy Lim.

Epilogue

Fig. 7.1 Attributed here to Jan Jans II (weaver), 'The Reconciliation of Romulus and Titus Tatius' (c. 1699-1700), tapestry, wool and silk, Hardwick Hall (NT). Image: © National Trust/Robert Thrift

Fig. 7.2 Detail of fig. 7.1 with Cavendish serpent and leopard. Image: © National Trust/Robert Thrift

Abbreviations

BA Burghley Archives, Stamford, Lincolnshire

Celia Fiennes C. Morris (ed.), *The Illustrated Journeys of Celia Fiennes* (Stroud, 1995)

DCC The Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth, Derbyshire

HMC Historical Manuscripts Commission

NPG National Portrait Gallery, London

NT The National Trust

ODNB *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*

PHA Petworth House Archives, West Sussex Record Office

TNA The National Archives, London

Walpole W. Lewis (ed.), *The Yale Edition of Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, 48 vols.
(New Haven, 1938-83)

WSHC Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre, Chippenham, Wiltshire

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Introduction

Art was integral to the lives of the late Stuart aristocracy. It formed their material environment, maintained their place in the social and political hierarchy, was a topic of mutual interest with peers, cemented the bonds of kinship and friendship, and absorbed large amounts of their time, attention, and money. Patronage of the arts was not a pastime or an act of benevolence, but a serious business that underpinned the exercise of power by monarchies and aristocracies throughout Europe. It was used to communicate different messages to different audiences. To the masses, displays of art on a magnificent scale were intended to maintain the cultural, and by extension, social and political, hegemony of the elite. To the narrow, informed audience of their peers and superiors, aristocratic art communicated subtle messages of knowledge, connections and proximity to the centres of power and fashion. It was a means of self-fashioning, not only in the present, but to create a personal and dynastic legacy. This thesis explores the role that art played in the lives of the late Stuart aristocracy, and consequently what it reveals about their lives. Through an examination of what, how and why they commissioned, collected and displayed art, it demonstrates while art was often separate from politics, it was fundamentally connected with power and the ways in which it was exercised and maintained, between monarchy, aristocracy and wider society, within the ranks of the aristocracy, and within the family and household.

Why study the art patronage of an ultra-elite minority, in the face of a resolute turn in academia and the heritage sector towards subaltern studies, and the legacies of slavery and

empire?¹ In short, because aristocrats were disproportionately influential in the political, economic, social and cultural spheres of late Stuart England, and art was immensely important to them, yet its role in their lives has not been given dedicated consideration. The aristocracy dominated both Houses of Parliament, government and court offices, held the ear of the monarch, and owned estates that stretched across the country, yielding immense revenues. Aristocratic men – and their wives – expended a great deal of time, money and effort on building their town and country houses, laying out gardens, and embellishing the interiors with furnishings and works of art. Though almost all their London houses have since been demolished, country houses such as Blenheim, Boughton, Burghley, Chatsworth and Petworth (which now contain many of the furnishings and artworks originally in London), are among the greatest artistic legacies of this period. Yet remarkably few studies have considered the aristocracy as a body, together with the art they commissioned, collected and displayed, despite the fact that neither can be fully understood without reference to the other. By analysing the art patronage of three leading late Stuart aristocratic couples, this thesis brings a new understanding of their influences, aspirations, networks and motivations, while also expanding our knowledge of the art and artists they patronised.

The scholarly study of aristocratic art patronage also makes a vital contribution to public history. Chatsworth House in Derbyshire, rebuilt by William Cavendish, first duke of Devonshire between 1686 and 1705, is one of Britain's premier tourist destinations. In

¹ At the time of writing, eleven of the thirty-six CDP studentships advertised to start in October 2021 addressed aspects and legacies of empire and slavery. <https://www.ahrc-cdp.org/phd-studentships-list-of-ahrc-collaborative-doctoral-partnership-phd-oct-2021-start/> [accessed: 11 May 2021].

2019, the last pre-pandemic full year, there were 606,534 visitors to the house, garden, and farmyard, while Chatsworth's media coverage reached an estimated 489 million people.² Country houses have become totemic symbols of English culture, and the media attention generated by the publication in 2020 of the National Trust's *Interim Report on the Connections between Colonialism and Properties now in the Care of the National Trust, Including Links with Historic Slavery* has placed the study of country houses, their contents, and the actions of their owners at the centre of the so-called 'Culture Wars'.³ The interpretation of these properties to the visiting public is fuelled by academic research. Uncovering legacies of slavery and colonialism is essential to our understanding of British art and architecture, along with an appreciation of the contribution to houses and estates made by a wide range of people, but there are many other significant gaps in our knowledge. We need to know how and why these houses came into being, and understand the lives of the men and women who commissioned and lived in them, not simply as knowledge for its own sake, but because it is imperative that we communicate that history clearly and accurately to the millions of people who encounter it every year.

Despite the prominence of late Stuart aristocratic art within the heritage sector and public history, it has received relatively little scholarly attention, particularly as a subject considered in its entirety, rather than studies of individual patrons, properties, artists or

² Chatsworth House Trust Annual Review 2019, pp. 4-5. <https://www.chatsworth.org/media/13445/2019-annual-report.pdf> [accessed: 10 May 2021].

³ The report can be found at <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/addressing-the-histories-of-slavery-and-colonialism-at-the-national-trust> [accessed: 6 December 2021]. For an overview of the media attention, see S. Knight, 'Britain's Idyllic Country Houses Reveal a Darker History', *New Yorker* 16 August 2021 <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2021/08/23/britains-idyllic-country-houses-reveal-a-darker-history> [accessed: 6 December 2021].

media. Since a large proportion of late Stuart art survives in country houses (including the fabric and fixtures of the houses themselves), they have been the point of departure for most research in this field. Properties, rather than patrons, have been the principal focus, reflecting the structures of private and institutional ownership, and the curatorial need to understand and interpret surviving artworks, rather than those that have been lost or dispersed. For example, although William Cavendish, first duke of Devonshire was one of the most important art patrons of his generation, his patronage at his country houses of Chatsworth and Hardwick has been discussed separately in general histories of the properties, and at Devonshire House in London, since demolished, not at all.⁴ Even the principal country houses considered in the present study, Burghley, Chatsworth and Petworth, have received little in-depth scholarly attention. Despite being among the finest examples of English country houses, interiors and collections, scholarship has been principally limited to guidebooks, a relatively small number of articles and exhibition catalogues, and the discussion of their place in the work of individual artists.⁵

Aside from these limited studies of individual patrons and properties, there has been little scholarship that seeks to understand late Stuart aristocratic art patrons as a discrete group, and their patronage in its social and political context. The late-seventeenth century is a

⁴ For example, N. Barker, *The Devonshire Inheritance: Five Centuries of Collecting at Chatsworth* (Alexandria, 2003) and D. Adshead and D.A.H.B. Taylor (eds.), *Hardwick Hall: A great old castle of romance* (New Haven and London, 2016).

⁵ For example, O. Impey, *Four Centuries of Decorative Arts from Burghley House* (Alexandria, VA, 1998), H. Brigstocke and J. Somerville, *Italian Paintings from Burghley House* (Alexandria, VA, 1995), F. Thompson, *A History of Chatsworth* (London, 1949), R. Johns, 'James Thornhill and Decorative History Painting in England after 1688', PhD thesis, University of York (2004), G. Jackson-Stops, 'The Building of Petworth', *Apollo* 105:183 (May 1977), pp. 324-33 and C. Rowell, *Petworth: The People and the Place* (London, 2012). Chatsworth is a case study in L. Peterson, 'Making Spaces: Art and Politics in the Whig Country House Interior, 1688-1745', PhD thesis, University of Yale (2018), discussed at greater length below.

relatively neglected period in English art history, sandwiched between the splendour of the Tudor and early Stuart courts, and the social, economic and cultural developments of the eighteenth century.⁶ Although David Solkin's *Art in Britain 1660-1815* situated late-seventeenth century art in its social, political, economic and cultural contexts, it focused largely on canonical easel paintings and discussed patronage only in a few specific instances.⁷ The publication associated with the Tate/University of York research project, *Court, Country, City*, did not attempt to provide a comprehensive survey but addressed a variety of topics, loci and artistic genres, allowing links to be traced between subjects that have often in the past been treated separately.⁸

The profile of scholarship has also been shaped by the material legacy, or otherwise, of late Stuart aristocratic art. Thanks to the destruction of the majority of aristocratic London townhouses in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the migration of their contents to the country, country houses have become a synecdoche for aristocratic art patronage. While Susannah Avery-Quash and Kate Retford have emphasised the importance of the London town house to the Georgian aristocracy, no equivalent study has been undertaken for Stuart England.⁹ Late Stuart country houses are also considerably outnumbered by the many surviving Georgian country houses and collections. England's growing global mercantile, economic and political power directly benefitted the landed aristocracy, in

⁶ For example, P. Rumberg and D. Shawe-Taylor (eds.), *Charles I: King and Collector* (London, 2018) and D. Solkin, *Painting for money: the visual arts and the rise of the public sphere in eighteenth-century England* (New Haven and London, 1993).

⁷ D. Solkin, *Art in Britain 1660-1815* (New Haven and London, 2015).

⁸ M. Hallett, N. Llewellyn and M. Myrone (eds.), *Court, Country, City: British art and architecture, 1660-1735* (New Haven and London, 2016).

⁹ S. Avery-Quash and K. Retford (eds.), *The Georgian London Town House* (New York and London, 2019).

whose hands power was still largely concentrated, and they invested the proceeds in art and architecture, particularly country houses, besides taking advantage of the increased opportunities to obtain goods from overseas, through increased travel and trade. The material legacy – often in the form of country houses – of the transatlantic slave trade, global slave-based economy, and colonialism, is an area of current scholarly focus.¹⁰ This has led to a large body of scholarship on eighteenth-century country houses and collectors, either as dedicated publications, or reflected in the balance of content in edited collections and monographs that cover a longer period.¹¹

Two notable exceptions treat late-seventeenth-century aristocratic art patronage as a discrete subject. Helen Jacobsen's *Luxury and Power* demonstrated how diplomats (some, but not all of whom, were members of the nobility), used art to engage in conspicuous display during their overseas missions, and leveraged their privileged access to foreign markets and fashions to improve their cultural and political standing in England.¹² Laurel Peterson's 2018 PhD dissertation explored the creative space of the country house interior as a locus of stylistic exchange around which artists, craftsmen, and patrons coalesced to create a unified, harmonious style.¹³ The stylistic interchanges identified by Peterson are

¹⁰ For example, A. Hann and M. Dresser (eds.), *Slavery and the British country house* (Swindon, 2013), M. Finn and K. Smith (eds.), *The East India Company at Home, 1757-1857* (London, 2018) and E. Grass, 'The West Indian landed gentleman: estates, identity and empire 1700-1830', DPhil thesis, University of Oxford (forthcoming). The IHR Partnership seminar series 'The World in a (Historic) House: global connections and collections' explores these issues further. <https://www.history.ac.uk/partnership-seminars/world-a-historic-house-global-connections-and-collections> [accessed: 10 January 2022].

¹¹ For example, J. Stobart (ed.), *Travel and the British Country House* (Manchester, 2017); J. Stobart and A. Hann (eds.), *The Country House: Material Culture and Consumption* (Swindon, 2016); D. Arnold, *The Georgian Country House* (Stroud, 1998); J. Black, *Italy and the Grand Tour* (New Haven and London, 2003) and J. Stourton and S. Sebag-Montefiore, *The British as Art Collectors: from the Tudors to the present* (London, 2012).

¹² H. Jacobsen, *Luxury and Power: the material world of the Stuart diplomat* (Oxford, 2012).

¹³ Peterson, 'Making Spaces'.

supported by the findings of this thesis, particularly in Chapters Two and Four, which explore the continental influences and collaborative processes through which country house interiors were created. However, as elaborated fully in Chapter Six, this thesis does not find evidence to support Peterson's view, based principally on iconographical interpretation, that such interiors were inherently political (specifically Whig) and intended to communicate particular political messages with the intention of advancing their owners' power and status. The profile of visitors to country houses, or rather the lack of them, requires a different interpretation, in which the maintenance of power is separate from the exercise of politics.

The distinction between power and politics is crucial to understanding the relationship between aristocratic art and power. Aristocratic power was structural, long-term, and interconnected with social and economic hegemony. Politics, relating to local and national government or party, principally operated within a shorter time frame and was concerned with directing behaviour and opinion relating to specific matters. This distinction was recognised by John Adamson, who cautioned against a 'functionalist interpretation of art that regards it only in terms of iconography and its use in maintaining and disseminating structures and cultures of power', arguing that art can, in a general sense, 'convey meanings relating to the exercise of rule' without being specifically intended to shape opinion.¹⁴ Peter Burke's account of the cultural programme of Louis XIV went a step further, warning that not all art was intended to have a persuasive function, some works being created simply to

¹⁴ J. Adamson, *The Princely Courts of Europe 1500-1750* (London, 1999), pp. 10 & 34.

exist.¹⁵ The art patronage of the elite discussed in the following chapters was a manifestation of power in its more general sense, but was rarely expressly political. And on occasions, as with the patronage of Louis XIV, aristocratic patrons collected art not for a purpose but simply as an end in itself.

In England, the relationship between art, power and politics has been of particular interest to historians of country houses, particularly those of the eighteenth century. Marc Girouard's *Life in the English Country House* marked a radical departure from architectural historians' earlier preoccupations with style to foreground the function of the country house, coining the widely-repeated term the 'power house' to describe its role in local and national political life.¹⁶ Dana Arnold suggested that to Girouard's physical function should be added the country house's metaphorical function, as a symbol of the social, economic, political and cultural hegemony of the ruling classes.¹⁷ This has laid the foundations for a reappraisal of country houses and their contents in light of their contribution to, and integration within, structures of power.¹⁸ Power, however, is often conflated with politics. Although few historians now argue for a direct correlation between politics and style (although there are instances in which this does occur), political events and affiliations nevertheless underpin the interpretation of many works of art, particularly mural paintings, and the 'political country house' continues to attract scholarly attention.¹⁹

¹⁵ P. Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (New Haven and London, 1992), p. 5.

¹⁶ M. Girouard, *Life in the English Country House* (New Haven and London, 1978), p. 2.

¹⁷ D. Arnold, 'The Country House: Form, Function and Meaning', in Arnold, *Georgian Country House*, p. 16.

¹⁸ For example, Finn and Smith (eds.), *East India Company at Home*.

¹⁹ Peterson, 'Making Spaces'; L. Hamlett, *Mural Painting in Britain 1630-1730* (Abingdon, 2020); J. Coutu, P. Lindfield and J. Stobart (eds.), *Politics and the English Country House, 1688-1850* (forthcoming, 2022).

Other scholars have found different motives for country house building. Charles Saumarez Smith argued that in building Castle Howard, Charles Howard, third earl of Carlisle, was driven at least in part by the 'idea of artistic patronage as a hereditary responsibility, appropriate to a particular rank in the social hierarchy', a motive that he also ascribed to the dukes of Devonshire and Somerset.²⁰ The in-depth analysis of Devonshire's and Somerset's patronage in this thesis supports and develops Saumarez Smith's assessment, and Chapter Six argues that displays of aristocratic magnificence were expected of those in the highest ranks of the peerage, in order to uphold their position. Aristocrats also commissioned and collected art in the long-term interests of their dynasty. In *An Open Elite?* Laurence Stone and Jennifer Stone argued that the country house and its heirloom contents were part of the organising principles of the landed elite's patrilinear society, acting as a visible symbol of family continuity.²¹ Understood within this context, the buildings, furnishings, gardens and artworks acquired by the aristocracy can be seen as part of a strategy to manifest and uphold their status through successive generations. Chapter Six develops Stone and Stone's brief mention of 'heirloom contents' to probe their significance to their aristocratic owners. Finally, building on Peter Burke's argument that posterity was one of the intended audiences for the works of Louis XIV, it finds that posterity was also important to the English aristocracy, in particular the fifth earl and countess of Exeter.²² Overall, this thesis finds that the art patronage of the elite couples surveyed here was principally directed towards the

²⁰ C. Saumarez Smith, *The Building of Castle Howard* (London, 1990), p. 24.

²¹ L. Stone and J. Stone, *An Open Elite? England 1540-1880* (Oxford, 1995), especially pp. 45-7.

²² Burke, *Fabrication of Louis XIV*, p. 153.

maintenance of their position in society and its consolidation on behalf of future generations, rather than an attempt to gain social and political advancement.

The present study of aristocratic art patronage does not sit within the traditional discipline of art history, defined by Ivan Gaskell as ‘largely concerned with art alone and the perception of qualitative hierarchies within it’, and ‘largely and legitimately ahistorical’, though in recent years art historians have substantially widened the range of subjects defined as ‘art’, and paid increasing attention to the contexts of its creation and reception.²³ Instead, this study takes an interdisciplinary approach, straddling the boundaries of art history and history. It addresses traditional art-historical topics such as stylistic influence and interchange and the relationship between artist and patron, through a close reading of the objects themselves and the circumstances of their creation, acquisition and display. It concurrently uses art as a historical source to shed new light on the world of the late Stuart aristocracy at a time of intense political upheaval: their influences and aspirations, their self-perception and self-fashioning, and their relationships and networks.²⁴ Understanding what art they wanted, how they obtained it, and why, helps to illuminate the dynamics of late Stuart aristocratic society, while simultaneously deepening our understanding of the art itself.

²³ I. Gaskell, ‘Visual History’, in P. Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 169.

²⁴ Though focused on elite culture, this psychological approach nevertheless draws on the work of the Annales school. See P. Hutton, ‘The History of Mentalities: The New Map of Cultural History’, *History and Theory* 20: 3 (October 1981), pp. 237-259.

Interdisciplinarity, although a much-vaunted concept, is more difficult to practise than preach, in no small part due to the underlying structures of teaching, assessment, and academic publishing.²⁵ The reader will judge whether the interdisciplinary approach of this thesis has been successful. The examination of material culture —of which art is a subset— as the principal primary source material is still relatively limited within mainstream historical studies, despite the fact that material culture studies are well established.²⁶ Material culture, as Serena Dyer pointed out in her survey of the field, ‘encompasses a body of source material made up of the objects and spaces through which people have constructed and defined their cultural practices and identities’, but there is no single methodology that can be uniformly applied.²⁷ The methodology adopted here is object-led, using textual sources to contextualise the surviving objects and reconstruct those that have been lost or destroyed, in order to build as comprehensive as possible a picture of the art patronage of the aristocrats under consideration. The ‘meaning’ or significance of these artworks, objects, and buildings was not inherent, but accrued in the circumstances of their creation, circulation and reception. It is from the perspective of the aristocratic patrons and their audiences, rather than the artists, that these artworks are considered.

Susan Whyman’s reconstruction of the ‘cultural world’ of the Verney family has also been a methodological precedent for understanding the ways in which material culture was used to

²⁵ J. Moran, *Interdisciplinarity* (Abingdon, 2010).

²⁶ Besides Jacobsen, *Luxury and Power*, notables exceptions for late Stuart England are K. Sharpe, *Rebranding Rule* (New Haven and Yale, 2013) and J. Farguson, *Visualising Protestant Monarchy* (Woodbridge, 2021), both of which concern the monarchy.

²⁷ S. Dyer, ‘State of the Field: Material Culture’, *History* 106:370 (2021), p. 283. For an introduction to using material culture, see L. Jordanova, *The Look of the Past: Visual and Material Culture in Historical Practice* (Cambridge, 2012).

facilitate social networks and connote status.²⁸ Although the Verneys were a gentry rather than aristocratic family, many of Whyman's findings regarding networks, exchange and the connotations of material culture are echoed in the present study. One other monograph has been influential and inspirational. Since its publication in 1976, Judith Hook's *The Baroque Age in Britain* remains unsurpassed in its analysis of the structures and mechanics of patronage and influence in seventeenth-century England.²⁹ This thesis builds on Hook's emphasis on the importance of local and kinship networks of patronage, and her conclusion that aristocrats looked to the court and the continent as their main stylistic influences. However, by considering these subjects in considerably more depth than Hook was able to in her wide-ranging study, it significantly deepens our knowledge of the ways in which these networks and influences operated, besides adding gender as a framework of analysis.

As well as illuminating the dynamics of art and power in aristocratic society, this thesis also presents many new discoveries relating to the art and artists of late Stuart England. It introduces the significant but previously unknown female Huguenot jeweller and banker Jeanne Rigal, and sheds new light on the work of well-known figures such as cabinet-maker Gerrit Jensen, demonstrating that he moved within networks of female patrons. It suggests that the precedent for the Kit-cat portraits, one of the most iconic series of the eighteenth century and an emblem of associational culture, may lie in the fifth earl of Exeter's drinking club, the Order of Bedlam. It identifies William Cavendish, first duke of Devonshire, as the earliest known patron of French ironsmith Jean Tijou (who would go on to revolutionise

²⁸ S. Whyman, *Sociability and Power in late-Stuart England: the cultural world of the Verneys 1660-1720* (Oxford, 1999).

²⁹ J. Hook, *The Baroque Age in England* (London, 1976).

English ironwork); reconstructs the lost garden sculpture at Chatsworth; draws new links between the architecture of Chatsworth and Castle Howard; newly attributes a set of tapestries at Hardwick Hall to Gobelins weaver Jan Jans II; and identifies the design of the tapestries that originally hung in the Tapestry Room at Petworth, one of the most prestigious interiors of late-seventeenth-century England. These are just some of the many new discoveries that considerably enhance our knowledge and understanding of the arts in late Stuart England, some of which are already being incorporated into strategic plans and visitor interpretation.³⁰ It is also the first time that the patronage of these aristocrats across their different properties has been considered in its entirety.

This thesis is the product of a Collaborative Doctoral Partnership between the University of Oxford and Tate, and was conceived to support the exhibition, *British Baroque: Power and Illusion* held at Tate Britain in February/March 2020.³¹ Its interdisciplinarity reflects its multi-institutional origins. Besides utilising surviving works of art, the present study draws on inventories, correspondence, bills and other textual material to reconstruct lost works, and locates the art in its social, artistic, political and biographical contexts. It defines ‘art’ in a broad sense, including architecture, interiors, furnishings, gardens, silverware, jewellery, ironwork, woodcarving, painting and sculpture, granting each medium equal status, to reflect the values of late Stuart England rather than the fine-arts bias of much art-historical scholarship. Although it may open this study to accusations of thinness, this breadth is necessary to break down artificial the barriers between media and facilitate a

³⁰ For example, the findings regarding the *History of the Sabines* tapestries have been incorporated into Hardwick Hall’s Content Management Plan, determining the 25-year strategy for the property.

³¹ T. Barber (ed.), *British Baroque: Power and Illusion* (London, 2020).

comprehensive understanding of both the patrons and their art. Baroque art, as the prevailing style of this period is generally termed, was particularly characterised by its intermediality. This study is ambitious in scope, covering a wide range of topics across the six chapters, any of which might have formed the basis of a doctoral thesis in their own right. Examining these different facets of aristocratic art patronage has enabled a holistic understanding of a subject where the parts are often not considered in relation to the whole.

Introducing the band

‘Art and Aristocracy in late Stuart England’ is constructed from case studies of the art patronage of three aristocratic couples: John and Anne Cecil, fifth earl and countess of Exeter, William and Mary Cavendish, first duke and duchess of Devonshire, and Charles and Elizabeth Seymour, sixth duke and duchess of Somerset. This allows for considerable depth, but also enables comparisons and connections to be made, which has been particularly fruitful in the case of the Devonshires and Exeters, who were closely related by marriage. The choice of these couples was determined in part by their surviving properties and collections, which rank among the finest country houses and interiors of late Stuart England, and yet have been relatively little studied. However, the decision to consider them as couples, rather than focusing on the male patron, is unusual, although public interpretation at Burghley has historically highlighted the countess of Exeter’s participation.³² All three couples placed a great importance on the acquisition and display of art. They each

³² *Burghley: England’s Greatest Elizabethan House* (Peterborough, 2011), p. 16; E. Till, *The Travelling Earl* (exhibition catalogue, Burghley House, 1988), p. 2.

undertook a major rebuilding or refurbishment of their country houses, as well as maintaining other town and country properties, and were consequently among the most important patrons of the period for interiors and furnishings, gardens and moveable works of art.

John Cecil, fifth earl of Exeter (1648-1700) was the direct descendant of Elizabeth's I's Lord Treasurer William Cecil, first Baron Burghley, who had founded the family's fortunes and built a mansion, Burghley House, on the outskirts of Stamford, Lincolnshire. The family estates included subsidiary and little-used properties at Wothorpe (a stone's throw from Burghley) and Snape Castle in Yorkshire, and yielded an income of around £7,000 per annum, a substantial income for a nobleman but not among the highest.³³ In 1670 he married Anne (1649-1703), daughter of William Cavendish, third earl of Devonshire.³⁴ The relationship between the Cavendish and Cecil families was close and important. The Cavendishes were a major source of income: the Exeters received legacies of £25,000 and £7,000 after the deaths of the countess' father and mother in 1684 and 1690 respectively, besides Anne's marriage settlement.³⁵ But personal ties were equally significant. Besides corresponding regularly, the two families frequently stayed with each other when travelling to and from or visiting London, and lent each other household staff. This relationship was reflected in their art patronage: they recommended artists and craftsmen to each other, and the Exeters procured foreign artworks on the Cavendishes' behalf.

³³ E. Till, 'Notes to the 1688 inventory', unpublished manuscript, BA.

³⁴ Exeter was Anne's second husband. In 1662 she married Charles, Lord Rich, but was widowed, childless, within two years.

³⁵ E. Till, *A Family Affair: Stamford and the Cecils 1650-1900* (Rugby, 1990), p. 2.

Although the Exeter fortune was founded in royal service, Exeter had little interest in holding office himself, though he was not entirely disengaged from public life. He served as MP for Northamptonshire from 1675 to 1678, sitting on several committees, and held a number of county roles including JP and Commissioner for Assessment. He was a supporter of the country party and actively interested in local politics, acting as Recorder for Stamford in 1682-5 and 1688-97.³⁶ But on the national stage he spoke only once in the lower house, and never in the upper, and his lengthy absences in Europe meant that he was absent during significant votes.³⁷ It has been suggested that Exeter's travels were motivated by the desire 'to escape the dangerous fall-out of the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis'.³⁸ However, his lack of interest in politics was manifest long before the upheavals of the 1670s and 1680s, since in 1671 he petitioned successfully for a licence to demolish his London houses in order to commercially redevelop the land, distancing himself – literally – from court and parliament.³⁹

On inheriting his title and estates in 1678, the fifth earl and his countess embarked on a major refurbishment of Burghley, reconfiguring the interiors and filling them with outstanding woodcarving, plasterwork and mural paintings, tapestries and furniture, paintings and sculpture. However, they are chiefly renowned for their extended continental

³⁶ Ibid., p. 32.

J. Ferris, 'Cecil, John, Lord Burghley (c.1648-1700) of Burghley House, Northants.', in B. Henning (ed.), *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1660-1690* (London, 1983) <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1660-1690/member/cecil-john-1648-1700> [accessed: 17 March 2020].

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ E. Chaney (ed.), *The Evolution of English Collecting: Receptions of Italian Art in the Tudor and Stuart Periods* (New Haven & London, 2003), p. 69.

³⁹ 'Southampton Street and Tavistock Street Area: The Cecil Estate', in F. Sheppard (ed.), *Survey of London: Volume 36, Covent Garden* (London, 1970), p. 223. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol36/p.223> [accessed: 17 March 2020].

tours, and Exeter has been described as ‘the Travelling Earl’.⁴⁰ During their travels they acquired an exceptionally large and fine collection of contemporary Italian paintings, many of which are still at Burghley, and the narrative of the Exeters as pioneer ‘Grand Tourists’ has subsequently dominated their historiography.⁴¹ Although their collecting of Italian paintings was certainly the most distinctive aspect of their patronage, Chapter Three also highlights their parallel collecting of French and Italian decorative arts and sculpture, and how their model of patronage was based on the continental courts and patrons with which they became acquainted.

After the Glorious Revolution of 1688/9, Exeter was among the small group of peers who refused to swear the Oaths of Supremacy and Allegiance to the new monarchs. Before the Revolution he had taken part in major court ceremonies, acting as hereditary Lord Almoner at the coronation of James II, but as a non-juror he was no longer able to attend court, hold public office, or even wear his peer’s robes.⁴² Exeter’s lack of participation in national politics, his non-juror status and his love of Italian religious art have been linked by historians who have suspected him of being a Jacobite and crypto-Catholic.⁴³ These accusations are unfounded. When travelling in France, the Exeters lodged in Huguenot households, and their attendance at Catholic ceremonies and centres of pilgrimage in Italy were undertaken in a spirit of tourism.⁴⁴ Exeter’s decision not to swear the Oath was probably motivated by traditional high Anglican sentiment, and his withdrawal from

⁴⁰ Till, *Travelling Earl*.

⁴¹ Brigstocke and Somerville, *Italian Paintings*.

⁴² TNA PRO LC9/43 fol. 8.

⁴³ C. Hussey, ‘The Splendours of Burghley’, *Country Life* 137 (1 Jan 1965), p.35; Chaney, *Evolution of English Collecting*, p.69.

⁴⁴ BA EX51/8/3.

national politics motivated by lack of interest more than disaffection. Nor was his relationship with his brother-in-law Devonshire adversely affected by their opposing politics at the Revolution. The two families continued to be as close as ever, nor was there any discernible impact on the Exeters' art patronage, and they continued to build and furnish Burghley in a manner remarkably similar to their Williamite peers.

William Cavendish, fourth earl, later first duke, of Devonshire (1641-1707) was, like his father and grandfather before him, a politician and courtier, and the owner of one of the largest estates in England, yielding around £20,000 a year, principally from agricultural rents and mining rights.⁴⁵ The building and furnishing of Devonshire's principal seat of Chatsworth, Derbyshire has been the subject of the vast majority of scholarship on his art patronage.⁴⁶ Although undoubtedly important, this presents an incomplete picture. Devonshire spent most of the year in London, renting Montagu and Arlington Houses and then purchasing Berkeley House (renamed Devonshire House) in 1696, as well as, from 1689 to 1698, occupying lodgings at Whitehall Palace. He passed only a few weeks each year in Derbyshire, a three-day journey from London, where besides Chatsworth he owned Hardwick Hall, an Elizabethan prodigy house built by his great-grandmother 'Bess of Hardwick', countess of Shrewsbury. In 1662, Devonshire married Mary (1646-1710), daughter of James Butler, first duke of Ormonde, but he was persistently and flagrantly unfaithful; their marriage was not happy, nor was it a partnership in any meaningful sense.

⁴⁵ O. Davies, 'The Dukes of Devonshire, Newcastle and Rutland, 1688-1714: a Study in Wealth and Political Influence', DPhil thesis, University of Oxford (1972), pp. 145-6.

⁴⁶ See note 5.

Duchess Mary played very little part in the design and furnishing of the couple's homes, due to her husband's total financial and managerial control. For this reason, she makes few appearances in the present study.

Devonshire is chiefly renowned for two achievements: his leading role in the Glorious Revolution, and the transformation of Chatsworth into a masterpiece of English country house architecture, interiors and gardens. These two aspects have been explicitly linked in a historiography that has interpreted the magnificence of Chatsworth as the physical manifestation of a buoyant aristocratic confidence in the post-Revolutionary polity.⁴⁷ There is no doubt that the Revolution was the springboard for Devonshire's leap into the top echelons of society. He played a vital part in the Revolution as one of the seven signatories to the letter inviting William to intervene in British affairs, and raising a militia in Derbyshire in support, and his loyalty was duly rewarded. Devonshire was installed as Knight of the Garter in April 1689 and appointed to the lucrative court office of Lord Steward of the Household, a position in which he was reconfirmed by Queen Anne in 1702. He also served as Lord Lieutenant of Derbyshire (and briefly Nottinghamshire), and as a member of the privy council, the regency council convened to advise Queen Mary during the king's absences, and the Lords Justices.⁴⁸ His elevation to a dukedom in May 1694 sealed his position, even if after 1689 his principal political contribution, as a moderate Whig, was to provide 'ballast' for the government.⁴⁹ While his Protestant convictions must have played a

⁴⁷ J. Lees-Milne, 'Chatsworth Derbyshire. III. A seat of the Duke of Devonshire.', *Country Life* 143:3712 (25 April 1968), p. 1040.

⁴⁸ D. Hosford, 'Cavendish, William, first duke of Devonshire (1641–1707), politician', *ODNB* (2008) <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:4148/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-4948> [accessed: 29 July 2019].

⁴⁹ J. Kenyon, cited in Hosford, 'Cavendish, William, first duke of Devonshire'.

significant part in his disaffection with James II, the nuances of Devonshire's personal faith and preferred style of worship are unknown.

Devonshire's court office also provided an important supplement to his income. As Lord Steward he received an annual remuneration of £1,460 and, from 1690 to 1702, a further annual discretionary sum of £2,000, presumably in recognition of his pivotal support for William III during the Revolution.⁵⁰ This additional income facilitated the rebuilding of Chatsworth, which was completed piecemeal as the funds became available. However, salary payments were not always timely, and cashflow difficulties were exacerbated by Devonshire's heavy gambling losses. While this was not untypical for a wealthy aristocrat, at times it had the effect of curtailing his spending.⁵¹ Consequently, Devonshire was often a poor patron, paying bills late and constantly trying to squeeze costs from the artists and craftsmen he employed. The impact of economic forces and Devonshire's own behaviour on his art patronage should not be overlooked.

Devonshire spent several formative years on the continent during his youth, and his extended European tour from 1647 to 1651 has been credited with shaping his sophisticated appreciation of European art and architecture, which was acknowledged by his contemporaries.⁵² These tastes took shape in the French-influenced new building at

⁵⁰ R. Bucholz, 'Database of Court Officers' (website) <http://courtofficers.ctsdh.luc.edu/HOUSEBS1.list.pdf> [accessed: 29 July 2019].

⁵¹ Conversely, Devonshire's friend Charles Howard, third earl of Carlisle, actually part-funded the building of Castle Howard from his gambling wins. Saumarez Smith, *Castle Howard*, pp. 74-6.

⁵² Hosford, 'Cavendish, William, first duke of Devonshire'. Devonshire was the dedicatee of William Aglionby's *Painting Illustrated in three dialogues* (London, 1686), a paean to European art.

Chatsworth, described by John Summerson as ‘an artistic revolution which is the counterpart of the political revolution in which the Earl was so prominent a leader’.⁵³

James-Lees Milne extended the metaphor to infer a causal link between these ‘revolutions’, arguing that Chatsworth represented ‘the yardstick of territorial ownership, of political patronage, and so of power’, and that its building was ‘*consequent upon* the political revolution of 1688’ [emphasis added].⁵⁴ This political interpretation of Chatsworth still holds currency in tourist guides and recent scholarly analyses that interrogate the iconography of the mural paintings and elaborate interiors.⁵⁵ However, the Chapter Six will posit that while Chatsworth may have memorialised Devonshire’s political successes, it was principally intended to demonstrate his newly-advanced status and commemorate his actions in the eyes of future generations and posterity, rather than to intervene in present-day politics.

Charles (1662-1748) and Elizabeth (1667-1722) Seymour, sixth duke and duchess of Somerset were the ultimate power couple of late Stuart England. They held the second-highest ranking title in the peerage but since the more senior duke of Norfolk was Catholic and consequently unable to take part in court ceremony, Somerset was in practice the leading peer. His insistence on the strict observance of precedence and his overbearing sense of self-importance earned him the soubriquet ‘the Proud Duke’ among his contemporaries. His title, however, came with only a poor estate, so to remedy this, in 1682 he married the 15-year-old Elizabeth, sole heir of Josceline Percy, eleventh earl of

⁵³ J. Summerson, ‘The Classical Country House in 18th-Century England’, *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 107 (July 1959), p. 542.

⁵⁴ Lees-Milne, ‘Chatsworth Derbyshire. III’, p. 1040.

⁵⁵ *Your Guide to Chatsworth* (Chatsworth House Trust, 2010), p. 4; Johns, ‘James Thornhill’, pp. 117-154; A. Ricketts, *The English Country House Chapel* (Reading, 2007), pp. 192-5; Peterson, ‘Making Spaces’, pp. 27-71.

Northumberland, already twice widowed, and the greatest heiress in England. She brought to the marriage the vast Percy estates, including Northumberland House in London, Syon House in Middlesex, Petworth in Sussex, and Alnwick Castle in Northumberland, as well as the art collection amassed by her grandfather Algernon, tenth earl of Northumberland. With careful management and investment, the estates yielded £20-30,000 per annum by the early 1700s, one of the very greatest private incomes in England.⁵⁶ It was this inheritance that bankrolled the Somersets' art patronage. It also significantly transformed the balance of financial power between the couple. The duchess received a personal allowance of £5,000 a year, equivalent to the income of a wealthy nobleman, and in addition from 1702 she received wages of £1,000 per annum from her court offices, rising to £3,600 in 1711, besides an allowance for plate.⁵⁷ This independent income gave the duchess an agency denied to most women. Although she does not appear to have contributed (directly) to rebuilding the fabric of Petworth, she took an active role in its furnishing, as well as that of their other homes.

As befitting their status, the Somersets took an active part in court life and ceremony, playing leading roles at almost every royal funeral and coronation from 1685 to 1727, and the duke was installed as a Knight of the Garter in April 1684. Both served at court in the highest positions. The duke was appointed a Gentleman of the Bedchamber by James II in 1685 until he forfeit his post in 1687 after refusing to introduce the papal nuncio at court.⁵⁸ He held office as a Privy Councillor from June 1701 and was appointed President of the

⁵⁶ R. Bucholz, 'Seymour, Charles, sixth duke of Somerset (1662–1748), politician and courtier', *ODNB* (2004) [accessed: 1 December 2018].

⁵⁷ PHA 243; Bucholz (ed.), 'Database of Court Officers'.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

Council the following year. He was Master of the Horse, one of the four principal court offices, to Queen Anne from 1703 to 1712, and again briefly in 1715 to George I until he resigned in protest over the arrest of his son-in-law Sir William Wyndham for suspected Jacobitism. Elizabeth was appointed a Lady of the Bedchamber on Anne's accession in 1702 and in January 1711 was promoted to Groom of the Stole and Mistress of the Robes, the former being another of the four principal positions. She and her predecessor Sarah, duchess of Marlborough, were the only two women ever to hold this prestigious post. The Somersets' politics were moderate, broadly aligned with the Tory opposition during the 1690s, and with the Whigs during Anne's reign, although Robert Bucholz's comprehensive *ODNB* entries illustrate the nuances of the shifting alliances and political stances that characterised the duke's and duchess' political careers.⁵⁹

Besides his pride, Somerset is chiefly remembered for rebuilding Petworth into one of the finest country seats of late Stuart England, a French-style palace 'furnished exactly like Hampton Court'.⁶⁰ The similarities between the interiors at Petworth and the court of William and Mary have been ascribed to the duchess' supposed friendship with the queen, but, as Chapter One demonstrates, stylistic influence did not depend on personal relationships. However, the Somersets' relationship with the duchess' stepfather, arch-Francophile Ralph Montagu, was extremely important, both in shaping their tastes and by providing introductions to artists and designers. Apart from the duke's youthful tour of Europe in 1679-81, and a short stay in The Hague by the (future) duchess in 1681, the

⁵⁹ Ibid; R. Bucholz, 'Seymour [née Percy], Elizabeth, duchess of Somerset (1667–1722), courtier and politician', *ODNB* (2015) [accessed: 29 September 2020].

⁶⁰ *Walpole*, vol. 9, pp. 97-8.

Somersets did not travel abroad, but their tastes were just as orientated towards Europe as their more travelled contemporaries.

The structure of this thesis divides into two parts. The first three chapters are broadly concerned with influence and orientation, and the strategies employed by aristocrats to obtain the most desirable works of art. Chapter One uses artistic influence to explore the relationship between monarchy and aristocracy in the pivotal decades around the Glorious Revolution, finding that despite the profound political consequences of the Revolution, the court continued to attract the aristocracy as the leader of artistic fashion. There are, however, indications that the emboldened aristocracy did not feel the same deference towards William III as they had towards his predecessors. The English court was itself part of a wider European court culture, and Chapter Two considers the paradoxes and practicalities of acquiring coveted European goods and designs during a time of near-constant warfare. Whereas scholars of the eighteenth century have emphasised mercantilism, deepening market penetration for foreign luxury goods, and the growth of import substitutes, the present study demonstrates that in the late-seventeenth century, even the elite had very limited access to imported art, and that the migration of craftsmen and designs accounted for the majority of 'foreign' luxury goods.⁶¹ Poignantly, given that this thesis was researched and written during the UK's departure from the European Union, it finds the English aristocracy to have been strongly orientated towards Europe, especially France, and highlights the vital contribution of religious and economic migrants to the visual

⁶¹ J. Brewer and R. Porter (eds.), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London, 1993) and M. Berg and E. Eger (eds.), *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods* (Basingstoke, 2003).

arts in England. Chapter Three builds on Jacobsen's study of diplomats and recent diversifications of traditional 'Grand Tour' narratives to consider how aristocrats acquired art, and cultural capital, by travelling to Europe in person.⁶² It suggests that previous scholarship on the Exeters as Grand Tourists has misleadingly focused on painting and sculpture, at the expense of their interest in the decorative arts, as well as underestimating the extent of their collecting. It demonstrates that foreign travel was not simply an opportunity for acquisition, but that European courts exerted an important influence as models of patronage, and that the Exeters' unrivalled collection of contemporary Italian paintings and sculptures was inspired by the patrons they met in Europe, above all the Medici family.

The second part turns to the people who were involved the creation and reception of aristocratic art. Chapters Four and Five seek to dethrone the lone male patron, often lionised in histories of art and patronage.⁶³ They explore the domestic, social, and professional relationships that were involved in the creation and consumption of art, and in doing so, illuminates the structures and mechanics of aristocratic society. Chapter Four foregrounds the contribution of employees and agents, not only as facilitators but as advisors. It demonstrates how artists and craftsmen, artworks and designs, travelled through family, kinship, friendship and county networks, and how a shared interest in and patronage of art was integral to political and associational culture. Chapter Five looks within

⁶² Jacobsen, *Luxury and Power*; R. Sweet, *Cities and the Grand Tour: the British in Italy, c. 1680-1820* (Cambridge, 2012).

⁶³ For example, J. Lees-Milne, *Earls of Creation* (London, 1986, first pub. 1962).

the institution of marriage to consider the dynamics of conjugal patronage. Drawing on the work of scholars such as James Daybell and Lydia Hamlett, it adopts an open-minded approach to archival sources and the mechanics of patronage to uncover the important contributions of Elizabeth, duchess of Somerset and Anne, countess of Exeter.⁶⁴ It identifies female networks and familial traditions of patronage, and questions the traditional gendering of artistic categories, finding that it does not always stand up to scrutiny. Married women's patronage, however, was always circumscribed within a legal framework that relied on the co-operation and consent of their male relatives. Finally, Chapter Six asks why aristocrats placed so much importance on art, and what they hoped to achieve with it. Differentiating between politics and power, it demonstrates that these aristocrats principally used art to demonstrate and maintain their status through displays of magnificence; to invest in their estates on behalf of the dynasty; and to commemorate their own achievements for posterity.

⁶⁴ J. Daybell, 'Gender, politics and archives' in J. Daybell and S. Norrhem (eds.), *Gender and Political Culture in Early Modern Europe, 1400-1800* (London, 2016), pp. 25-46; L. Hamlett, 'Pandora at Petworth House: new light on the career and patronage of Louis Laguerre', *The Burlington Magazine* 158 (December 2016), pp. 950-955.

Chapter One

Court Influence

We were charmed with the magnificence of the park at Petworth, which is Percy to the backbone; but the house and garden did not please our antiquarian spirit. The house is entirely new-fronted in the style of the Tuileries, and furnished exactly like Hampton Court.

Horace Walpole to George Montagu, 26 Aug 1749.⁶⁵

The early modern court was considered by contemporary observers to be the natural centre of gravity for the nobility. Michel de Montaigne, ruminating in his Périgord tower, advised that, ‘in a monarchy every nobleman ought to model himself on the fashion of the Court’, and as the apex of the social pyramid, for centuries royal courts across Europe acted as centres of patronage, power, manners, and display.⁶⁶ Over subsequent centuries, most European courts have ceased to be a centre of either political or artistic leadership. Did this diminution invariably take place in tandem, or are political and cultural power separate to one another? The most significant political event of late Stuart England was the Glorious Revolution of 1688/9, in which the Catholic James II was forced from the throne and replaced by his Protestant daughter Mary and her husband William of Orange, after which the power of the crown was circumscribed, politically and economically. The aristocracy were the principal instigators and beneficiaries of this Revolution. By tracing the influence of the court on aristocratic art patronage in these pivotal decades, this chapter questions whether these political events had a corresponding impact on the court’s artistic leadership over the aristocracy. It finds that in the decades following the Revolution, the court

⁶⁵ *Walpole*, vol. 9, pp. 97-8.

⁶⁶ M. de Montaigne, trans. J. Cohen, ‘On the education of children’, *Essays* (Harmondsworth, 1958, first pub. 1580), p. 80.

maintained its position as the leader of fashion, but nevertheless the shifting balance of political power from the monarchy to the aristocracy was reflected in some of the artworks the latter commissioned and displayed.

Court studies as a historical sub-discipline originates in Norbert Elias' anthropological dissection of the court of Versailles and its grip on the aristocracy of the *ancien regime*.⁶⁷ In England, however, court historians of the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have argued that the court was *not* a thriving centre of cultural and social power, but an institution in terminal decline, a view expounded in Robert Bucholz's still-influential monograph, *The Augustan Court: Queen Anne and the Decline of Court Culture*.⁶⁸ Bucholz dated the beginning of this decline from the middle years of Charles II's reign, and although he placed considerable importance on the personalities of the individual monarchs, he saw the Glorious Revolution of 1688/9 as the key event that sealed the court's decline. It was the Revolution and the subsequent political and economic developments of the 1690s (the Triennial Act and the foundation of the Bank of England) that led, directly or indirectly, to the three principal causes that Bucholz identifies for the decline of the court: the establishment of parliamentary monarchy, the rise of party politics, and the emergence of alternative loci of social, economic and cultural opportunities. Predating the resurgence in court studies, and writing from the perspective of the aristocracy, John Summerson also saw the Glorious Revolution as a pivotal moment, arguing that in the period 1689-1718, 'one could demonstrate in detail the transfer of authority in architecture from the Court to the

⁶⁷ N. Elias, trans. E. Jephcott, *The Court Society* (Oxford, 1983; first pub. 1969 as *Die Höfische Gesellschaft*).

⁶⁸ R. Bucholz, *The Augustan Court: Queen Anne and the Decline of Court Culture* (Stanford, 1993).

landed oligarchs'.⁶⁹ Bucholz and Summerson thus explicitly link the political and cultural consequences of the Revolution.

Bucholz's argument remains influential as the point of departure for court studies, and many of his arguments are yet to be convincingly refuted. While *The Augustan Court* addresses the court as an institutional body, those historians of the later Stuart courts whose focus is the arts have also found much to agree with. In *Rebranding Rule*, Kevin Sharpe broadly concurred with Bucholz's trajectory of the declining cultural power of the monarchy. Concerned principally with the creation of the royal image, he saw issues of patronage as indivisible from those of representation, and characterised Anne as particularly neglectful of this aspect of monarchy. Blenheim Palace (or Blenheim House, as it was known to contemporaries), a monument to a private subject rather than the monarch, was the nail in the coffin: a sign that, 'power – and the power of image – as well as patronage were transferring from the crown to the aristocracy.'⁷⁰ John Brewer's *Pleasures of the Imagination*, which presents the transfer of power from court to city as a prelude to a study of eighteenth-century culture, also remains influential.⁷¹

However, Norbert Elias' 'old' court history, in which power radiates from the monarch, through the nobility and gentry and out to the people (tacitly accepted by Bucholz and Brewer), ignores the complex web of vertical and horizontal relationships that underpinned the structures of power. John Adamson, however, stressed the multivalent nature of

⁶⁹ Summerson, 'The Classical Country House', p. 542.

⁷⁰ Sharpe, *Rebranding Rule*, p. 606.

⁷¹ J. Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination* (London, 1997), especially chapter 1, pp. 15-54.

power, as a constellation of monarch and nobles rather than an absolutist sun.⁷² Chapter Four will explore these relationships in depth through the local, familial and kinship networks that were integral to the lives of late Stuart aristocrats; chapters Three and Five will discuss international friendships and conjugal relationships. The association between monarchy and aristocracy explored within this chapter was only one, albeit important, influence on the life of a nobleman.

It was the fact that the nobility was not exclusively dedicated to the monarch that allowed the Glorious Revolution to take place. In the interlocking web of rank, kinship, principle and personal favour, the loyalty of the nobility always had limits. Adamson's argument that loyalty to the French Valois and early Bourbon kings 'never wholly supplanted [the] value-system of aristocratic honour that sanctioned, *in extremis*, the nobles' right of revolt' could be equally applied to the Glorious Revolution.⁷³ Recent historiography of the Revolution has overturned the view, prevalent for some decades, that it was in essence a palace coup, to return to a more revolutionary assessment of the Revolution.⁷⁴ In either case there is no denying that the aristocracy took a leading role. Acting in a context of domestic political turmoil and widespread discontent among the clergy, senior nobles instigated and led the military rebellion, and were the principal authors of the post-Revolutionary settlement. They were acting in line with what Adamson described as the 'aristocratic honour cult, with its insistence on the great nobleman's "ancient tradition" of independent judgement when

⁷² Adamson (ed.), *Princely Courts of Europe*, p. 17.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

⁷⁴ For a historiographical summary, see T. Harris, *Revolution: The Great Crisis of the British Monarchy, 1685-1720* (London, 2006), p. 309.

it came to determining the good of the realm.’⁷⁵ The nobility were defending their rights but also exercising their responsibilities by challenging James II when he overstepped the boundaries of royal prerogative and threatened the established church.

Viewing the court from the perspective of the aristocracy, this chapter argues that although the political, economic and social changes wrought by the Revolution were ultimately long-reaching and profound, its immediate impact on the court as a centre of social, cultural and artistic leadership was limited. Nor was style straightforwardly aligned with politics or religion, and both before and after the Revolution, courtiers emulated the buildings, interiors, gardens and art collections they saw at court, sometimes in contradiction to their political and religious affiliations. Mary II’s taste in interior furnishings was widely imitated by the elite, not only those in her immediate circles. For William and Mary’s closest supporters, the Glorious Revolution actually increased the orientation of noble art patronage towards the court, in its subject matter, and through the financial rewards bestowed by the grateful monarchs. The post-Revolutionary monarchy remained at the head of the system of rank and honours, and as the centre for the award of offices, salaries and political favour, the court continued to attract the nobility as a place to see and be seen.

Nevertheless, the subtle but profound changes in the balance of power between the monarchy and aristocracy consequent upon the Revolution can be discerned in some of the art they commissioned and displayed, demonstrating their own power and status to a degree that would have previously been unacceptable. For example, Grinling Gibbons’

⁷⁵Adamson, *Princely Courts of Europe*, p. 40.

statue of the duke of Somerset at Trinity College, Cambridge is closely based on his earlier statues of Charles II and James II, conferring associations of royalty onto a prominent Whig nobleman. This chapter also examines the emergence of a collaborative model of architectural patronage under Queen Anne in which the nobility took the lead and the monarch acted principally as a sponsor. Finally, it distinguishes generic court style from the individual court, arguing that court style was not simply a domestic matter but a pan-European phenomenon that extended beyond politics, religion and national boundaries.

Imitating court style

The choices made by patrons, of artist, maker, style and object, betray their sources of influence and towards whom and where they were orientated. Most art patrons in late Stuart England did not aspire to originality. There was no stigma attached to imitation, and copying the latest styles conferred prestige. Stylistic choice was not, however, necessarily aligned with political or religious affiliation. Sometimes this was the case, as when Queen Catherine of Braganza used portrait painter Jacob Huysmans to project a distinct visual identity.⁷⁶ Her patronage of Huysmans was imitated by Catholic and non-Catholic courtiers who wished to dissociate themselves from the lax morals of the Restoration court.

However, as many of the examples in this chapter demonstrate, style was not always allied with ideology. Aristocrats followed the court's artistic lead as a means of signalling their proximity to the centre of power, but that did not automatically represent an endorsement of the monarch's politics or religion. Consequently, the political and religious upheavals of

⁷⁶ D.A.H.B. Taylor, 'The Restoration Court', in Barber (ed.), *British Baroque*, p. 37.

the late Stuart monarchy did not inevitably disturb the court's position at the centre of artistic fashion.

High-ranking nobles and holders of court office had right of access to the private royal apartments, and profited from that access to reproduce the interiors and furnishings of the royal palaces in their own homes. Where possible, they employed the same artists and craftsmen as the crown. Speed was also important, since it implied privileged access to information. Charles Seymour, sixth duke of Somerset, used his position as a Gentleman of the Bedchamber to James II to copy the king's new interiors at Whitehall in his own house at Petworth, while the royal works were still underway.⁷⁷ In the articles of agreement drawn up with London joiner Thomas Larkin in December 1686, Somerset directed the craftsman to reproduce the wainscotting, cornices and window shutters 'according to the worke in his matie. Great & new Gallery at Whitehall'.⁷⁸

James II's Roman Catholic chapel at Whitehall heavily influenced Devonshire's new chapel at Chatsworth, despite the fact that even as he approved the designs, he was plotting to replace the king with a Protestant monarch. The Chatsworth chapel, executed between 1689 and 1694, is stylistically derived from the two major royal chapel commissions of the early 1680s: James II's Catholic chapel at Whitehall, and Charles II's chapel at Windsor. Both the Windsor and Chatsworth chapels feature a large mural of *Christ Healing the Sick* framed within a *trompe l'oeil* architectural device of columns and architrave, situated high on the north walls opposite the windows (figs. 1.1 and 1.2). As Wolf Burchard has noted, the

⁷⁷ For the works at Whitehall, see S. Thurley, *Whitehall Palace: An Architectural History of the Royal Apartments, 1240-1698* (New Haven and London, 1999), p. 135.

⁷⁸ PHA 6290 fol. 5.

Windsor painting, executed by Antonio Verrio between 1678 and 1682, served as a backdrop for the ceremony of touching for the 'king's evil', or scrofula, a ritual that underscored the divine nature of royal succession.⁷⁹ By the time the chapel at Chatsworth was ready for painting, a new king on sat the throne, thanks as much to Devonshire's intervention as divine intervention, and who (unsurprisingly) did not touch for scrofula. Nevertheless, Devonshire commissioned Louis Laguerre to paint a very similar painting of *Christ Healing the Sick* on the north wall of his chapel.

Other elements of the Chatsworth chapel were derived from James II's sumptuous Roman Catholic chapel at Whitehall. Laguerre's *Christ in Glory* on the ceiling at Chatsworth was based on Verrio's *Assumption of the Virgin* on the ceiling at Whitehall. The two-story marble reredos with life-size freestanding figures by Caius Gabriel Cibber, highly embellished with Watson's swags, garlands and cherubs, is also modelled on the Whitehall Catholic chapel; there were no other precedents in England for this combination of scale and ornamentation, executed in such rich materials (fig. 1.3). In her history of country house chapels, Annabel Ricketts emphasised just how unprecedentedly extravagant the chapel at Chatsworth was, and how many similarities there were with the two royal chapels.⁸⁰ Famously, the Whitehall chapel caused a sensation when it was opened on Christmas Day 1686, and visiting three days later, John Evelyn was appalled by the

⁷⁹ W. Burchard, 'Illusion and Involvement: the Lost Baroque Architecture of St. George's Hall at Windsor Castle', *Immediations* 2:4 (2011), p. 116; see also H. Smith, "Last of all the Heavenly Birth': Queen Anne and Sacral Queenship", *Parliamentary History* 28:1 (2009), pp. 137-149, for a discussion of the implications of this ceremony.

⁸⁰ Ricketts, *English Country House Chapel*, p. 193.

‘mysterious Ceremony’ he saw enacted.⁸¹ But he was also awed by the ‘magnificent marble work [...] exquisite art and great cost’, and it was this aspect that appealed to Devonshire.



Fig. 1.1 Louis Laguerre, *Christ Healing the Sick* (c. 1689-92), oil on plaster, north wall of the chapel, Chatsworth House. Image: Daderot, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons



Fig. 1.2 Antonio Verrio, *Christ Healing the Sick* (c.1678-82), modello for the King's chapel, Windsor Castle, oil on canvas, Royal Collection Trust. © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2022

⁸¹ 29 December 1686, E. de Beer (ed.) *Diary of John Evelyn, Volume IV: Kalendarium, 1673-1689* (Oxford, 1955), p. 535.



Fig. 1.3 Caius Gabriel Cibber (figurative stone carving), Samuel Watson (decorative stone carving), Louis Laguerre (mural painting), Antonio Verrio (altarpiece painting), east end of the chapel (c.1688-94), Chatsworth House. Image: Amy Lim

The Whitehall chapel was a Roman Catholic chapel, however, and Devonshire was certainly solidly Protestant, whatever the subtleties of his personal faith. Ricketts thought that Devonshire directed Laguerre and Cibber to adapt the royal designs to emphasise Protestant values of humility and faith through divine grace, as ‘a direct and very splendid rebuttal of the Roman Catholic scheme at Whitehall’.⁸² A rebuttal, however, would surely have been better expressed in an unmistakeably Protestant idiom, one which restricted itself to plainer materials and privileged the Word over images. The answer may lie in Ricketts’ own observation that the plainness of English chapels until the 1680s was in part due to the

⁸² Ricketts, *English Country House Chapel*, p. 194.

shortage of skilled artists and materials.⁸³ The opportunity to employ artists trained in Italy and France, and a local supply of marble and alabaster, enabled Devonshire to emulate the new royal chapels, which were at the forefront of style and craftsmanship. The iconographic implications of the models – the divine power of the monarch, and the Counter-Reformation origins of exuberant baroque church decoration – do not appear to have been of concern, and perhaps he simply chose the schemes because they had been recently and successfully executed in a prestigious setting by the artists he employed. The royal chapels were not the only source used for the Chatsworth chapel, since its woodcarvings were derived from Grinling Gibbons' reredos at St James', Piccadilly, close to Devonshire's London house. This is confirmed by sketches made by local Derbyshire carver Samuel Watson, who was sent to London to reconnoitre the best new designs and bring them back to Chatsworth (figs. 1.4 and 1.5). Devonshire drew on the best precedent wherever he found it, court or city, Catholic or Protestant. The extraordinarily flamboyant chapel at Chatsworth was not so much a declaration of Protestant victory, as a display of the best in materials and craftsmanship and an imitation of royal taste.

⁸³ Ibid., p. 187.



Fig. 1.4 Samuel Watson, Sketch of Grinling Gibbons' reredos at St. James' church, Piccadilly (c. 1684-1692), pencil on paper, The Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth. Image: Amy Lim



Fig. 1.5 Samuel Watson, designs for carved wood panels for the chapel (c. 1688-94), pencil on paper, The Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth. Image: Amy Lim

William and Mary style

Although William III and Mary II have received little recognition in general surveys of royal art patronage, among scholars of the decorative arts they are acknowledged as highly sophisticated patrons who took a close interest in the interior furnishings and gardens of their palaces.⁸⁴ The goods and styles that Mary adopted during her eleven years in the Dutch Republic and introduced to England from 1689 became widely influential, not only among their inner circle of courtiers, but also among those with whom they had no personal connection. Displays of massed porcelain, lacquer-panelled closets and enormous delftware flower pyramids and urns have been associated by scholars with the monarchs' closest supporters, including the first duke of Devonshire and William III's Secretary at War, William Blathwayt.⁸⁵ However, just as the influence of the Whitehall chapel on Chatsworth's chapel did not mean that Devonshire was a Catholic, nor was the adoption of Mary's taste in interior décor confined to her adherents. Although the sixth duke and duchess of Somerset were not close to the new monarchs, the interiors at Petworth were strongly influenced by William and Mary's court style.

Mary II's interiors made heavy use of the Asian imports brought to the Netherlands by the Dutch East India Company (VOC): textiles, porcelain and lacquerware. Such interiors were closely associated with the women of the House of Orange. In 1654, Mary's grandmother-

⁸⁴ R. Baarsen, G. Jackson-Stops, P. Johnston and E. Evans Dee, *Courts and Colonies: The William and Mary Style in Holland, England, and America* (Seattle and London, 1988) and R. Maccubbin and M. Hamilton-Phillips (eds.), *The Age of William III & Mary II: Power, Politics and Patronage 1688-1702* (Williamsburg, 1989), which also describes William's close interest in the royal art collection, p. 50.

⁸⁵ For example, P. Ferguson, 'Ambassadeur voor Nederland – Delfts aardewerk in Engeland', in S. Lambooy (ed.), *Koninklijk Blauw* (Zwolle, 2020), pp. 133-164. I am grateful to Patricia Ferguson for sharing her English language version with me.

in-law, Amalia van Solms-Braunfel, Princess of Orange, panelled a small room at the Huis ten Bosch with lacquer taken from cabinets, screens and chests imported by the VOC.⁸⁶ The young Mary adopted this fashion, installing a lacquer-panelled room, designed by Daniel Marot, at Huis Honselaarsdijk near The Hague in 1687. Marot, a Huguenot refugee who had trained at the French court, acted as designer-in-chief to William and Mary, catering to the royal couple's Francophile tastes in interiors and gardens (fig. 1.6). Mary also displayed large quantities of imported porcelain in her apartments, and was a major patron of the Delft manufacturers of tin-glazed earthenware. She particularly used delftware at their hunting lodge-turned-palace, Het Loo, for which she commissioned large urns and vases for flowers and garden plants, and tiles to line her ornamental dairy.⁸⁷

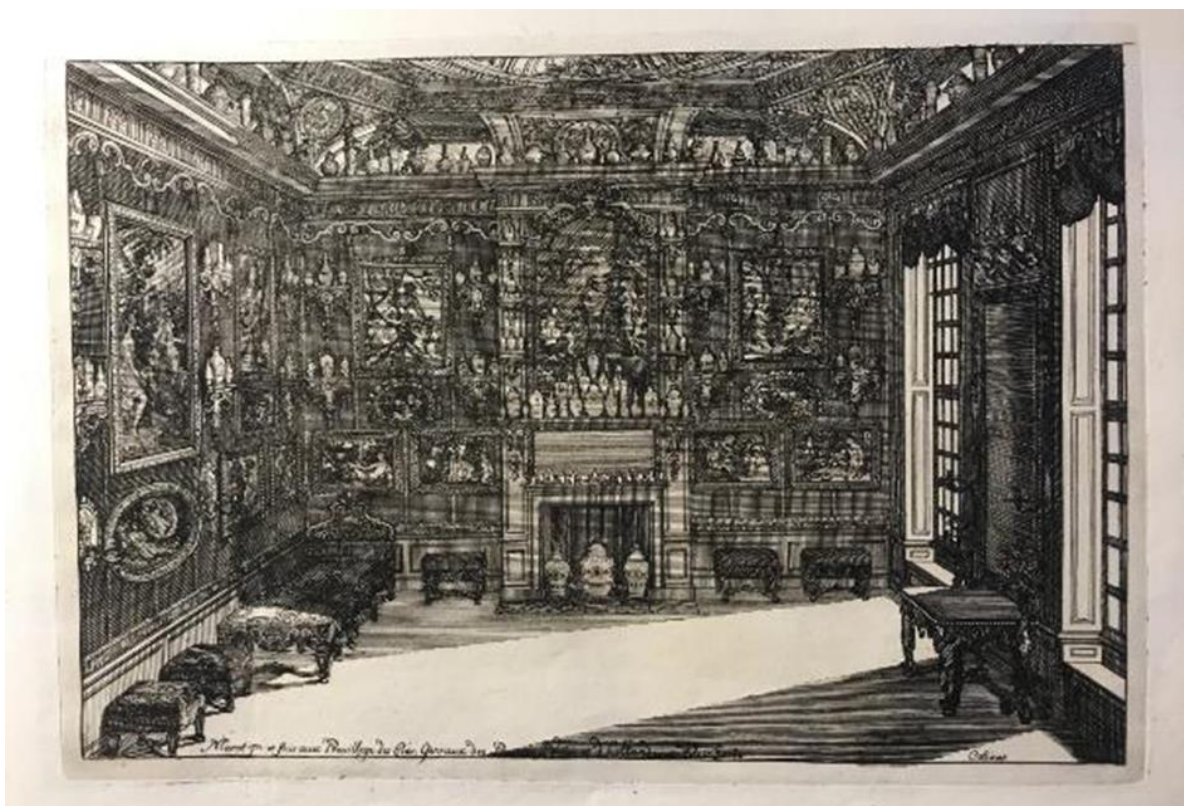


Fig. 1.6 Daniel Marot, 'Cabinet', possibly a design for Het Loo, *Nouveau livre de parterments* (The Hague, 1683-1703), etching on paper. Image: Amy Lim

⁸⁶ E. de Bruijn, 'East Asian Luxury goods', in R. Goulding and D.A.H.B. Taylor (eds.), *Prized Possessions: Dutch Paintings from National Trust Houses* (London, 2018), pp. 86-7.

⁸⁷ Lambooy (ed.), *Koninklijk Blauw*, passim.

On her return to England in 1689, Mary carried her acquired tastes with her. She brought over her large collection of porcelain, continued to order delftware from Holland, and furnished her apartments at Whitehall, Hampton Court and Kensington with Asian textiles, French-style furniture, porcelain and lacquer. This taste was epitomised by her short-lived but influential Water Gallery at Hampton Court. Built in 1691-2 as a private retreat during building works on the palace, it was decorated with blue and white porcelain-themed furnishings and upholstery, and filled with flower paintings and a set of full-length portraits of 'Beauties' by Sir Godfrey Kneller. Leading off the principal floor of the gallery were four small closets, one lined with mirrors, one with lacquer panels, one with needlework panels to French designs, and one with delftware.⁸⁸ At Kensington House, porcelain took centre stage, and the 1693 inventory listed 918 pieces of porcelain in the queen's apartments, displayed symmetrically on cabinets, mantelpieces, door frames and specially-made pedestals and pyramid shelving.⁸⁹

In his role as Lord Steward of the royal household, Devonshire was frequently at court, and he also held a warm personal regard for the queen.⁹⁰ Consequently, some of the interiors of the principal state apartments in the south front of Chatsworth, finished and furnished in the early 1690s, are closely associated with Mary II. He even acquired some of the

⁸⁸ S. Thurley, *Hampton Court: A Social and Architectural History* (New Haven & London, 2003), pp. 172-4; Celia Fiennes, p. 106.

⁸⁹ M. Hinton and O. Impey (eds.), *Kensington Palace and the Porcelain of Queen Mary II* (London, 1998), pp. 85-99.

⁹⁰ Devonshire expressed his regard in a poem written after her death, 'On the Death of the late Queen Mary', Appendix XII in W. Kennett, *A Sermon Preached at the Funeral of the...Duke of Devonshire* (London, 1707). His grief was described by one of his household staff, William Poole, in a letter of 29 December 1694: 'his Grace [is] ... in an extraordinary concerne, and affliction for the death of the Queene, having I dare say never (since he was a man) ... shed so many Teares', DCC W/E/110/23A. Devonshire was much less emotional after William III's death, and was soon back on the turf at Newmarket, DCC W/C/349.

furnishings that she had personally used. In December 1696, he purchased two beds and their en suite chairs, one of crimson velvet, one of blue damask, both of which had been formerly owned by the queen. They were a bargain at 250 guineas (the velvet bed alone had cost £1,500 when new), but their personal associations were also important, and Devonshire instructed his steward to find the money immediately ‘(what ever happens)’ in order to secure them.⁹¹

Devonshire paid direct tribute to Mary II’s Water Gallery with his lacquer closet, which formed the climax of the state apartments at Chatsworth. The Japan Closet, as it was known, was the first lacquer-panelled room in England outside a royal palace, and was installed in 1692 by cabinet maker Gerrit Jensen who had worked at the Water Galley earlier that year. Jensen may not have supplied the lacquer there, but he had certainly installed a closet with mirrors and glass *fleurs-de-lys* to cover the joints in the panes (an interesting choice, at a time of war with France).⁹² The Chatsworth closet was faced with panels of incised Chinese lacquer, with mirror-glass pilasters in the corners and a carved cornish around the top. Jensen laid a cedar and walnut inlaid floor, and above the mantelpiece was oval mirror with incised carving in the spandrels.⁹³ Jensen’s bill mentions ‘japanning’ the closet (applying artificial lacquer was known as japanning), and materials supplied to Chatsworth at the same time include ‘Wt [white] Japan varnish 6 bottles’, suggesting that some of the surrounding joinery was painted with this. Besides two large chests and two stools, it was probably furnished with oriental porcelain and delftware.⁹⁴ It was evidently

⁹¹ Full details will be published by Olivia Fryman and Lucy Wood in due course; I am grateful to them for sharing their research with me. DCC W/C/113.

⁹² TNA PRO/LC9/280 fol. 44r.

⁹³ DCC CH37/2 p. 97E.

⁹⁴ DCC CH37/2 p. 103.

inspired by the Water Gallery and echoed the tastes of the House of Orange, brought to England by Mary.

Few people could afford the quantity of lacquer required to panel a small room, and from the few known examples, it has been suggested that ‘the taste for lacquer seems to have had connotations of personal and political allegiance’ to William and Mary.⁹⁵ Besides the Chatsworth closet, another was known to be at Dyrham Park, home of William Blathwayt, William III’s Secretary at War. However, the recent discovery of a lacquer closet in the home of an aristocrat outside court circles, described here for the first time, throws doubt on the association of lacquer with supporters of William and Mary, and serves further to sever the associations between court style and politics.

This closet has been identified in the London house of Elizabeth Percy (née Howard), dowager countess of Northumberland and grandmother of Elizabeth Seymour, duchess of Somerset. Her husband Algernon, tenth earl of Northumberland, had been a significant art patron and collector, but the dowager countess’ will, which singled out several important paintings and pieces of silverware, suggests that she was a notable patron in her own right.⁹⁶ The countess had been a close acquaintance of Queen Catherine of Braganza, but by the 1690s, now probably in her seventies (her birthdate is uncertain), she was no longer involved in court or political life.⁹⁷ In 1694 she purchased a large house at 37-8 St James’

⁹⁵ de Bruijn, ‘East Asian Luxury goods’, p. 87. Celia Fiennes described a lacquer closet at Burghley but since this is contradicted the inventories it appears to have been a mistake on her part. *Celia Fiennes*, p. 83.

⁹⁶ TNA PROB 11/481/149. An article by James Rothwell on the countess’ silver is in preparation. I am grateful to James for our discussions in which he first suggested the inventory might relate to the countess.

⁹⁷ E. Gregory, ‘Catherine of Braganza’s relationship with her Catholic Household’ in V. Schutte and E. Paraque (eds.), *Forgotten Queens in Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (London, 2018), p. 136.

Street, London, where she lived until her death in March 1704.⁹⁸ She bequeathed the house to her great-grandson and godson Lord Percy Seymour, and a previously unidentified inventory of 'Lord Percy's House in St James' almost certainly refers to this house, taken shortly after her death and before it was leased to a series of tenants.⁹⁹

The inventory describes a 'New Japan Room' (evidently installed by the countess) which was 'Hung with Indian Screens and border'd about with Japan work' with 'Carv'd work over the Chimney to sett China'. 'India' was a catch-all term for Asian goods, 'Japan work' in this instance referring to the japanning of the surrounding woodwork, just as in the closet at Chatsworth. Jensen was a regular supplier to the dowager countess, and although no known bill survives, he is the most likely candidate to have installed the New Japan Room at St James' Street.¹⁰⁰ The discovery of this closet in the home of a woman linked neither politically nor socially to Mary II is new evidence that lacquer closets in England were not necessarily associated with supporters of the House of Orange. Mary II's distinctive interiors inspired emulation simply through their style and quality. It is possible that the dowager countess did not even take her lead directly from the queen, but that lacquer closets had become generally popular among the London elite. Whether leading through direct contact or at a remove, the court remained firmly at the forefront of fashion in the decade following the Revolution.

⁹⁸ 'White's: Nos. 37-38 St James's Street' in *Survey of London* <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vols29-30/pt1/pp433-458#h3-0013> [accessed: 14 September 2021].

⁹⁹ WSHC 1332/2/2/2.

¹⁰⁰ Payments to Jensen can be found in countess' papers at Alnwick Castle, Duke of Northumberland Papers, Sy.U.I.20 fols. 50 & 67. I am grateful to Adam Bowett for this information.

William and Mary's court style also inspired the interiors, furnishings and artworks of the countess' granddaughter, the duchess of Somerset, and her husband the sixth duke, although they were neither courtiers nor close allies of the king and queen. On his visit to Petworth in 1749, Horace Walpole remarked disapprovingly that it was 'furnished exactly like Hampton Court', referring to the new royal apartments in Fountain Court, begun by William and Mary and completed by Queen Anne.¹⁰¹ With the interiors at Petworth completed mainly between 1690 and 1702, the royal households at Hampton Court and Kensington were the single largest source of influence for the Somersets' own furnishings.

The similarities between Petworth and the royal palaces, in particular the duchess of Somerset's collecting and display of porcelain, have been ascribed to the supposed friendship between the duchess and the queen.¹⁰² However, there is no evidence that the duchess was in the queen's inner circle, and their relationship was at times even antagonistic. In the disagreements between the queen and her sister Princess Anne in 1692, the Somersets sided with the latter, loaning her their house at Syon after she was ejected from court.¹⁰³ This may account for their patronage of Michael Dahl, a portrait painter favoured by Anne and her husband, Prince George of Denmark. Neither the duchess nor duke held court office under William and Mary, and although the duke had supported the Revolution, he had not played a major part, and remained politically distant from court, classed as a Tory for most of William's reign.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰¹ *Walpole*, vol. 9, pp. 97-8.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 43.

¹⁰³ T. Martyn et al (eds.), *Syon* (Peterborough, 2017), p. 19.

¹⁰⁴ Bucholz, 'Seymour, Charles, sixth duke of Somerset'.

Despite this, the Somersets closely imitated the royal interiors when furnishing Petworth and Northumberland House, suggesting that they still thought it important to follow royal fashion. They would have been greatly assisted in this by Ralph Montagu, the duchess' stepfather, who as Master of the Great Wardrobe from 1671-85 and 1689-1709 (succeeded in office by his son), oversaw the royal furnishings and could pass on information about the latest developments in palace interiors. Mary II had been on the throne for only a few months before the duchess of Somerset began to copy her new furniture. During 1689, the queen ordered four squab couches (daybeds) for her closets at Hampton Court, Holland House, Kensington House and Whitehall. In August the same year, the duchess ordered a similar squab for herself, then another in December and two more the following March, one of which was made by the royal upholsterer Richard Bealing.¹⁰⁵ These were the first of many examples of court furnishings imitated at Petworth.

The Somersets employed many craftsmen who also worked for the crown, including woodcarver Grinling Gibbons, upholsterer Jean Poictevin and cabinet-maker Gerrit Jensen, and Daniel Marot may have supplied some designs.¹⁰⁶ Besides the duchess' squabs, they acquired other furnishings that copied those in the royal household. In February 1701, the duke purchased a second-hand set of 'Diogenes' tapestries, probably for the principal guest bedchamber (later renamed the King of Spain's bedchamber) which was then being furnished.¹⁰⁷ The story of Diogenes, a philosopher who rejected wealth and pomp in favour of the simple life, seems an incongruous choice for a state bedchamber, but the

¹⁰⁵ TNA PRO LC9/279 fols. 57, 72, 89, 90 & 99; PHA 267 fols. 62 & 69. They are described at further length in A. Lim, 'The furniture patronage of Elizabeth Seymour (née Percy), duchess of Somerset, 1667-1722', *Furniture History* 57 (2021), pp. 1-23.

¹⁰⁶ Rowell, *Petworth*, pp. 42-3.

¹⁰⁷ PHA 251.

iconography was probably irrelevant, and the purchase inspired instead by William III's Diogenes tapestries displayed at Kensington House.¹⁰⁸ Grinling Gibbons' woodcarvings at Petworth were stylistically linked to his work for the royal household, but they also included overt references to the monarchs. Among the musical trophies in the Carved Room is a sheet of music showing part of *The Fairy Queen*, a semi-opera recently composed by Henry Purcell to celebrate the 15th wedding anniversary of William and Mary.¹⁰⁹

The most distinctive element of court style reproduced at Petworth (and to a lesser extent at Northumberland House) was the massed display of oriental porcelain. It was stacked on tiered mantelpieces, on top of cabinets and doorways, and on specially carved stands virtually identical to those in Mary's apartments at Kensington House. It was only after Mary II arrived in London with her porcelain collection that the duchess of Somerset began to collect and display porcelain on a large scale. During the 1680s, she had bought only small quantities of porcelain for serving tea and chocolate.¹¹⁰ The Petworth inventory of 1686 lists Indian textiles and lacquer and japanned furniture, but no porcelain on display.¹¹¹ However, from 1692, the duchess began to pay frequent visits to London India merchants including Solomon de Medina and John van Collema (both patronised by Mary), where she purchased large quantities of porcelain for decorative use. A single visit to Collema on 15 December 1692 yielded 34 pieces of 'old China' (antique was especially prized) for £53; she returned two days later to purchase 'Two blew Jarrs with flatt Covers' and 'a pair of fine

¹⁰⁸ 'The Meeting between Alexander the Great and Diogenes' <https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/27903/the-meeting-between-alexander-the-great-and-diogenes> [accessed 28 September 2018]; TNA PRO LC9/280 fols. 89 & 380.

¹⁰⁹ 'Carving a legacy: Grinling Gibbons at Petworth House' <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/petworth-house-and-park/features/carving-a-legacy-grinling-gibbons-at-petworth-house> [accessed: 14 September 2021].

¹¹⁰ For example, see PHA 259 fols. 29 & 58, PHA 260 fol. 8 and PHA 262 fol. 6.

¹¹¹ PHA 6268.

large bottles', the latter at the high price of £26 17 6d.¹¹² A second peak in porcelain purchasing occurred around 1700-1 when the King of Spain's apartments were being furnished. The 'large jar with a flat cover blew & white' purchased from Collema on 16 November 1700 was probably intended for these rooms, and may be one of several large jars still at Petworth.¹¹³

The Petworth inventory of 1750 shows that this porcelain was arranged in massed displays very similar to the queen's at Kensington.¹¹⁴ At least six of the lacquer cabinets at Petworth were dressed with garnitures (decorative ensembles) of between ten and seventeen pieces of porcelain, which would most likely have been arranged in three symmetrical rows of ascending height, as described in the Kensington inventories.¹¹⁵ Further pieces were displayed on the mantelpieces in eight of the rooms. The corner fireplaces in the King of Spain's Drawing Room and the Red Leather Chair Room each had 'One Large Blue & white China Jarr over the Chimney with 11 pieces of different sorts of China upon the same Place', indicating a symmetrical arrangement on tiered shelving, as it was displayed at Kensington.¹¹⁶ Porcelain was further arranged over the doors in the South Gallery, the duke's and duchess' dressing rooms, and in the duchess' closet. In the latter, the displays were backed by 'One Glass Pannel over the door & another ditto over the chimney both ornamented with carved work', a feature found in Queen Mary's porcelain rooms at her

¹¹² PHA 268 fol. 30.

¹¹³ PHA 268 fol. 28.

¹¹⁴ PHA 6263.

¹¹⁵ PHA 6263; Th. Lunsingh Scheurleer, 'Documents on the Furnishing of Kensington House', *Walpole Society* 38 (Oxford, 1962), pp. 15-58.

¹¹⁶ PHA 6263.

Dutch palaces of Honselaardijk and Het Loo, as well as the Water Gallery.¹¹⁷ The 1748 Northumberland House inventory shows a similar concentration of porcelain on top of the cabinets in the duchess' drawing room, dressing room and bedchamber and the shared closet, although fewer pieces overall.¹¹⁸

The largest jars were displayed on carved wooden pedestals, very similar to a set in the Royal Collection, formerly at Kensington and now at Hampton Court (figs. 1.7 and 1.8).¹¹⁹ These are the only known examples of such pedestals, so their presence at Petworth cannot be a coincidence. They were located in the principal guest rooms: the King of Spain's and the Cloth Bedchambers and their en suite drawing rooms. These furnishings and the manner of their display strongly evoked Hampton Court and Kensington House, as was immediately recognised by Walpole. Yet it was not until the reign of Queen Anne that the Somersets took office at court and became personally close to the monarch. The distinctive court style of William and Mary, influenced by the Dutch House of Orange, was highly aspirational for the nobility, irrespective of personal or political affiliation. In the decade following the Glorious Revolution, William and Mary's personal interest and investment in the arts ensured that the court maintained its position as the leader of fashion.

¹¹⁷ J. Ayers, O. Impey and J. Mallet (eds.), *Porcelain for Palaces: The Fashion for Japan in Europe 1650-1750* (London, 1990), p. 58.

¹¹⁸ Alnwick Castle, Duke of Northumberland Papers, SY:H.IV.1c, fols. 9-13.

¹¹⁹ NT 485427; 485405; 483455.1-2 & NT 485407.1-2.



(left) Fig. 1.7 Porcelain jar on wooden pedestal (c. 1690s), Petworth House
Jar: Egremont Collection, pedestal: NT. Image: Amy Lim



(right) Fig. 1.8 Carved oak stand for a porcelain jar (c. 1690s), Royal Collection Trust
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The crown at the apex of the social hierarchy

Nor did events of the Revolution affect the position of the crown at the apex of the social hierarchy, and the art commissioned by the nobility continued to reflect this. Portraiture dominated easel painting in England throughout the seventeenth century and well into the eighteenth century, and contemporary viewers were adept at decoding the iconography of portraits, including the identities of the sitters, their clothes and accoutrements of rank and office. Before and after the Revolution, the portraits commissioned by the aristocracy displayed their immense pride in rank and honours, especially the Order of the Garter. They exhibited royal portraits prominently in their homes, partly as a demonstration of loyalty, but also to underline their own proximity to power. Such displays were unchanged after the Revolution.

Devonshire used the display of portraits at his London house to present himself as a leading aristocrat and courtier alongside the monarchs whom he served and who had rewarded him with honours and offices. Devonshire House was his principal residence and the one that received by far the most visitors. Here he hung an imposing full-length portrait of himself in Garter robes, painted by John Closterman in 1697, holding his staff of office as Lord Steward and accompanied by a Black attendant (fig. 1.9). He was accompanied by full-length portraits of William III, Mary II, and Queen Anne, from the studio of Sir Godfrey Kneller, Principal Painter to the Crown, after his official state portraits.¹²⁰ Although it was standard practice to display an assemblage of royal portraits in aristocratic houses, this does not

¹²⁰ Now at Hardwick Hall (NT), NT1129215, NT1129214 & NT1129216. Their location at Devonshire House can be deduced from successive inventories. DCC CH36/7/1A fol. 105. Where they hung is unrecorded but full-length portraits of family and royalty commonly hung together in the public spaces of the staircase or principal drawing room.

lessen its importance as a demonstration of Devonshire's pride in his court office, ducal rank, Garter knighthood, and proximity to the crown.



Fig. 1.9 John Closterman, *William Cavendish, 1st Duke of Devonshire and an unnamed Black attendant* (1697), oil on canvas, Hardwick House (NT). Image: National Trust.

The Most Noble Order of the Garter, the highest award in the honours system, continued to be highly sought after. Since its award was in the hands of the monarch alone, the Order served to secure the loyalty of its members to the crown, as well as proving a powerful incentive to those who hoped for this ultimate accolade. Members took every opportunity to publicise their status, and the importance of the Garter to its recipients can be seen in

the frequency with which Garter motifs are incorporated into the art they commissioned. Devonshire was awarded the Garter in 1689 as a reward for his support for William III, and besides the portrait by Closterman, he included his arms encircled within the Garter on Delftware urns, a crested mirror, a silver chandelier, a silver table, urns and dishes, tapestries, and the wood and stone carvings that embellished Chatsworth.

Somerset, who was admitted the Order in 1684, also publicised his status widely through art. The woodcarvings at Petworth usually attract attention as the most spectacular example of Grinling Gibbons' work, but besides the virtuosity of their execution, they were also intended to draw attention to the heraldic and Garter devices incorporated into the designs. The carvings surrounded a set of Seymour family portraits, and the central space between a portrait of the duke in Garter robes with a Black attendant (one of at least five portraits of the duke in Garter robes), and a pendant portrait of his wife and son, was filled with a flower basket, a cluster of Grecian vases, cherubs, and the outstretched wings of the Seymour crest from which a Greater George hangs prominently on its ribbon (fig. 1.10).¹²¹ At eye level, the intricate bas-reliefs on the vases invite close inspection, from which the eye cannot help but drift upwards to the Garter star placed prominently above.¹²² Around the same time, Gibbons also carved the embellishments for the new library at Trinity College, Cambridge (Somerset was the principal donor), where Somerset's Garter-encircled cipher was placed on alternate bookcases along the north wall (fig. 1.11).

¹²¹ Petworth NT 486185. Others were commissioned from John Riley between 1684 and 1690 (British Museum BM 1874, 0808.1271), Michael Dahl c. 1710 (Muncaster Castle) and two from Godfrey Kneller c. 1705-1713 (Egremont Collection, Petworth; Duke of Northumberland Collection, Alnwick Castle).

¹²² *Walpole*, vol. 9, pp. 97-8.



Fig. 1.10 Grinling Gibbons, *The Carved Room*, Petworth (detail showing central drop between portraits of the 6th duke and duchess of Somerset) (c. 1691-2), limewood.
Image: Amy Lim



Fig. 1.11 Grinling Gibbons, Limewood carving with Garter, coronet and cipher of Charles Seymour, sixth duke of Somerset (c. 1692), Trinity College, Cambridge. Image: Amy Lim

Courtier life and the art of politics

After the Revolution, as before, court office holding continued to exert a significant influence on the lives of the aristocracy, which can be discerned in their art patronage. The court was a workplace, a part-time residence, and a source of income and perks. Some offices were sinecures, but others required constant attendance at court and actual work, even for those the highest ranks of the nobility. Devonshire, the duke of Somerset and the duchess of Somerset between them held three of the four principal court offices: Lord Steward, Master of the Horse, and Groom of the Stole respectively. These offices were a source of pride, which they commemorated in portraits of themselves with the symbols of office. The offices also came with lodgings that had to be furnished in a manner befitting their location in a palace frequented by high-status visitors.

The contribution of Devonshire's court salary and pension to the rebuilding of Chatsworth will be discussed at further length below. Not everything was siphoned off to Derbyshire, however, and his court lodgings were also an important site of display. Courtier lodgings have been neglected in histories of collecting, probably because the rapid turnover of tenants meant that few interiors survived unchanged for long, and few records were kept. Simon Thurley's architectural histories of the royal palaces describe the layout of courtier lodgings, and the Royal Wardrobe accounts detail some of the furnishings purchased or rented on behalf of courtiers (especially the newly-arrived Dutch courtiers in 1689), but there has been little built on these foundations.¹²³

Devonshire was allocated a set of lodgings at Whitehall and for a time at Hampton Court, but since his London accounts were destroyed in a fire there is no detailed record of their fittings and furnishings. Scattered references in his servants' correspondence, however, indicate that he kept many of his best artworks and furnishings at court. The king himself dined with Devonshire in his Whitehall lodgings, and courtiers and nobles came to view his furnishings and art collection, even in his absence.¹²⁴ In August 1694, Thomas Osborne, first duke of Leeds, came specifically 'to see his Graces pictures', and borrowed his much-admired *Phillip II of Spain* by Titian in order to have a copy taken.¹²⁵ Although some of Devonshire's old masters hung at Devonshire House, many were in his Whitehall lodgings. On the night of the great Whitehall fire of 4 January 1698, it was 'my Lords best pictures' that were top of the list to be saved from the flames.¹²⁶ Also rescued were a 'strong box Chinaa and Choise

¹²³ Thurley, *Whitehall Palace*, pp. 114-25; TNA PRO LC9/279 fols. 46-53.

¹²⁴ DCC W/C/38.

¹²⁵ DCC W/E/94/4. Devonshire's painting was, unknown to him, also a copy.

¹²⁶ DCC W/C/178.

things', but some of the valuable hangings could not be removed in time and were consumed by the fire.¹²⁷ Displaying his best pictures within the cultured surroundings of Whitehall Palace meant that they would be seen and appreciated by a high traffic of nobility, ambassadors and royalty. Although Chatsworth was lavishly built and furnished, it was not in distant Derbyshire but in London, and specifically at court, that Devonshire chose to demonstrate his connoisseurship.

The impact of office holding can also be seen in the activities of the duchess of Somerset. Her appointment in January 1711 as Groom of the Stole and Mistress of the Robes to Queen Anne transformed her daily life. It also caused her to commission a great many furnishings and paintings. Somerset was given four sets of lodgings, one in each of the principal royal palaces. Because the Groom of the Stole attended the monarch's person, it was necessary under a Queen Regnant for the position under to be filled by a woman. As head of the Queen's Bedchamber, the duchess supervised the bedchamber staff and controlled informal 'backstairs' access to the queen. She was required to be on hand day and night, and so was allocated lodgings at Kensington, Windsor, Hampton Court and St James. Financial retrenchments due the spiralling costs of war meant that the queen supplied only the most essential items of furniture for her household servants, leaving the duchess to furnish her lodgings herself.¹²⁸ The duchess' bills for 1711–2 record a sudden flurry of activity as she purchased furnishings to set up four new households.¹²⁹

¹²⁷ DCC W/C/275.

¹²⁸ The Royal Wardrobe accounts record lavish furnishings for courtier lodgings under William III and Mary II in the 1690s (TNA PRO LC9/279 and /280) in comparison with those supplied under Queen Anne (TNA PRO LC9/284), despite the costs of the Nine Years' War (1688-97).

¹²⁹ Principally found in PHA 286 & PHA 287.

Some of these were high-end items, designed for display, such as the two beds with en suite chairs for St James' Palace, one of rich red damask, the other of yellow mohair.¹³⁰ The duchess bought a walnut-framed looking glass in the new arched style from Jacob Arbunot, three marble-topped tables, and a walnut bookcase with glass doors for Hampton Court from fashionable cabinet-maker Philip Arbuthnot.¹³¹ She purchased over two hundred chairs, mostly of carved walnut with cane seats, some made to order, some ready made.¹³² Somerset also needed furniture for everyday use by herself and her household staff. She bought nursery chairs (presumably for visiting grandchildren), commissioned basic wainscot tables, beds and chests of drawers, and fitted out rooms for her steward and unmarried daughter with mirrors and family portraits.¹³³ Besides furniture, she purchased lanterns, locks, and a full set of kitchenalia.¹³⁴ There is no apparent gender dimension to her purchases; rather, they reflect the full range of goods required to furnish a set of lodgings. Such intimate and practical purchases also illuminate the lived experience of holding court office.

The duchess' court office was also a source of pride, and she commemorated her position by commissioning several portraits of herself as Groom of the Stole from Sir Godfrey Kneller, Principal Painter to the Crown, a choice that referenced Kneller's official portraits of the queen. In August 1713, Somerset paid Kneller fifteen guineas on receipt of a half-length portrait of herself, having already paid fifteen on placing the commission.¹³⁵ On 26 April

¹³⁰ See the bill from mercer Thomas Hinchliffe, PHA 287 fol. 10.

¹³¹ PHA 287 fols. 147 & 148, PHA 300.

¹³² PHA 300; PHA 287 fol. 89, PHA 287 fol. 94.

¹³³ PHA 286 fol. 53; 287 fols. 76, 112 & 158, 289 fol. 26; PHA 290 fol. 76.

¹³⁴ PHA 287 fols. 41, 64 & 97.

¹³⁵ PHA 290 fol. 18.

1714 the duchess paid Kneller 60 guineas for a full-length seated portrait of herself, now at Syon House.¹³⁶ In the portraits, the duchess wears her key of office at her waist (fig. 1.12). It was the instantly-recognisable symbol of the Groom of the Stole, equivalent to the white staff of the Lord Chamberlain. It was probably at this time that the key was added to an earlier portrait of the duchess by Kneller (Petworth House, Egremont Collection, c. 1707); it floats slightly awkwardly on top of the original drapery.



Fig. 1.12 Godfrey Kneller, *Elizabeth Seymour, Duchess of Somerset* (1713), oil on canvas Petworth House, Egremont Collection. Image © National Trust

¹³⁶ PHA 291 fol. 53.

Despite the rage of party in which her husband was embroiled, the duchess of Somerset preferred to remain largely aloof from political affairs, unlike her predecessor the duchess of Marlborough.¹³⁷ Nevertheless, the portraits of the duchess as Groom of the Stole would have reminded contemporaries of the power she could potentially wield. As Bucholz noted, Queen Anne's frequent ill health, her innate shyness, and 'contemporary expectations of her sex and marital status' kept her largely isolated from all but a narrow circle consisting of her physicians, her chief ministers, and above all, her Ladies of the Bedchamber.¹³⁸ As Groom of the Stole, Somerset controlled access to the queen besides having the benefit of frequent confidential conversation. In January 1712, Peter Wentworth recounted to the earl of Strafford a rumour that, 'A Gentleman desired to speak to the Queen [...] but, that the Dutchess of Sommerset was just gone and had left orders that nobody shou'd be permitted to speak to the Queen till she came again.'¹³⁹ In the royal bedchamber, where public and private spheres were elided, the impression of influence was a proxy for power itself. Swift certainly believed that Somerset held an unwelcome influence over the queen, and his vitriolic slanders against her in *The Windsor Prophecy* (dredging up decades-old rumours about her second husband's death) were an attempt to drive her from office.¹⁴⁰ In such an environment, the portraits of Somerset as Groom of the Stole not only commemorated her position, but hinted at her hypothetical influence, even if she did not choose to exercise it.

¹³⁷ Bucholz, *Augustan Court*, p. 168.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 153.

¹³⁹ Peter Wentworth to the Earl of Strafford, London, 12 Jan 1712, p.250, cited in Bucholz, *Augustan Court*, p. 156.

¹⁴⁰ P. Roberts, 'Swift, Queen Anne and "The Windsor Prophecy"', *Philological Quarterly* 49:2 (April 1970), pp. 254-8.

Painting and sculpture in the wake of the Revolution

So far, this chapter has demonstrated that the court maintained its place at the centre of artistic fashion in the years following the Glorious Revolution. The court continued to introduce new styles in interior furnishings and dispense honours and offices, which were reflected in the art commissioned and displayed by the aristocracy. However, the subtle but profound shift in relations consequent upon the Revolution led to an aristocratic self-confidence, or even insubordination, that was rarely found prior to 1688. This can be discerned in several works of art that were commissioned and displayed by the dukes of Somerset and Devonshire. Louis Laguerre's mural paintings, and the display of portraits in the state apartments at Chatsworth, and Somerset's statue at Trinity College, Cambridge, all implied a balance of power between monarch and aristocracy that would have been improbable, if not impossible, before the Revolution. This display of insubordination may not have been intentional, but examples such as these demonstrate that the analysis of art adds significant value to written sources, penetrating to a subconscious level to reveal attitudes and beliefs that patrons could not express overtly.

However much they may have supported him politically, William III was not personally popular with many members of the aristocracy. The taciturn Dutchman's coterie of Dutch favourites and his dislike of court ceremony alienated him to many nobles, and personal antipathy towards the king probably amplified their feelings of discomfort at the questionable legitimacy of his kingship.¹⁴¹ Mary II's personal popularity and Stuart blood meant that she was an important figurehead around which support for the new regime

¹⁴¹ This can be seen in the less-than-enthusiastic response given by some nobles to the king during the royal progress of 1695. See A. Lim, 'For Politics, Progresses, or Posterity? Some Alternative Reasons for Building State Apartments', in Coutu, Lindfield and Stobart (eds.), *Politics and the English Country House*.

coalesced, not only for those who were lukewarm supporters, but also for those, like Devonshire, who had played a pivotal role in its creation. William's position on the throne, however, was thanks to the invitation and military support of the English nobility, and they expressed their new-found confidence as kingmakers in the art they commissioned and displayed.

The Revolution brought great benefits for some aristocrats. It was the fulcrum around which Devonshire's fortunes turned, and his gains were invested and commemorated in the rebuilding and furnishing of his country house, Chatsworth. The most immediate reward for his efforts was his appointment on 21 February 1689 to the court office of Lord Steward, recently made vacant by the death of the previous incumbent, his father-in-law James Butler, first duke of Ormonde.¹⁴² As head of the Household Below Stairs, the Lord Steward was responsible for the provisioning, feeding, and servicing of the royal household. The office carried an annual salary of £1,460 besides a plate allowance of £400, fees, perquisites, and a travel allowance worth £700, as well as the opportunity to generate further income through the sale of offices. Devonshire was granted an additional annual pension of £2,000, no doubt for his services to William III, since it ceased on the death of the king in 1702. In total, this amounted to around £72,000 over eighteen years.¹⁴³ O. Davies, whose DPhil thesis assessed Devonshire's wealth and political influence, surmised that although additional expenses and taxes may have absorbed up to half of this income, it still represented a very substantial contribution towards the £62,410 expended on the house, furnishings and gardens at Chatsworth between 1687 and 1706.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴² Bucholz (ed.), 'Database of Court Officers'.

¹⁴³ TNA PRO LS 1/34.

¹⁴⁴ Davies, 'Dukes of Devonshire, Newcastle and Rutland', pp. 197 & 207.

This cash injection enabled Devonshire to rebuild Chatsworth on a much grander scale than he would otherwise have been able to afford. James Lees-Milne, in his survey of Baroque country houses, drew a direct causal link between the Revolution, marking ‘the passing of authority from an absolute monarchy to a Whig oligarchy’, and ‘the immediate spate of country houses on a monumental scale’.¹⁴⁵ In fact, the rebuilding of Chatsworth was begun well before the Revolution, with the first payment for ‘alteracions’ made to architect William Talman in January 1687, and plans drawn up as early as 1684.¹⁴⁶ Its ‘monumental scale’, however, was certainly thanks to the Revolution, not only for the confidence it engendered in its builder, but for the money which paid for it. The rebuilding of Chatsworth was a piecemeal process, with each of the four fronts tackled in turn as funds became available. Despite an estate income of around £20,000 a year, Devonshire was perpetually short of cash, as the correspondence of his London and Derbyshire receivers Aaron Kinton and James Whildon makes clear.¹⁴⁷ Devonshire’s court salary and its associated benefits were therefore an important supplement to his finances.

The decoration of Chatsworth contained many references to the events of the Glorious Revolution, particularly in the mural paintings. Mural paintings frequently depicted allegorical schemes that referred to contemporary political events, and those in the Hall and Great Chamber at Chatsworth allude to the events and consequences of the Revolution. It has been argued that these murals therefore represented a ‘political statement’, and were ‘carefully designed to further [Devonshire’s] political and social aims [...] in dialogue with

¹⁴⁵ J. Lees-Milne, *English Country Houses: Baroque 1685-1715* (London, 1970), p. 9.

¹⁴⁶ DCC CH37/1 p. 4.

¹⁴⁷ DCC W/C/18A, W/C/52, W/C/126.

contemporary politics rather than simply a glorification of the owner'.¹⁴⁸ However, it is not clear exactly what they were expected to achieve, or how, in practice, they might achieve it. Devonshire rarely used Chatsworth to entertain political colleagues, partly due to its distance from London and partly to save money. On one occasion Devonshire considered sending his family to Hardwick rather than Chatsworth to avoid the expense of reciprocally entertaining the duke of Rutland, who was staying at nearby Haddon Hall.¹⁴⁹ As will be elaborated on below, he did not even encourage William III to visit Chatsworth, on the only occasion he might have done so. The mural paintings at Chatsworth undoubtedly referred to the Revolution but they were not intended as a political intervention. Instead, along with a display of portraits in the state apartments, they celebrated the actions of Devonshire and his peers, embedding them into the fabric of Chatsworth as an enduring reminder of his achievements, for future generations of Cavendishes, and for posterity. They were concerned with power, but not with politics.

Louis Laguerre's *Murder of Caesar* (c. 1692-4), on the north wall the Hall, provided a dramatic opening to the ceremonial route at Chatsworth. This violent and graphic depiction of the consequences of the abuse of power has been interpreted by Richard Johns as an allegory of the Revolution.¹⁵⁰ Paintings of the twelve Caesars on the ground level gave way to a shocking *dénouement* as the viewer ascended the stairs, turning back to see 'the pathetic, filthy, bloody end of a hated tyrant' in the outstretched figure of Julius Caesar stabbed by the senators (fig. 1.13).¹⁵¹ The dying Caesar is watched over by an image of his

¹⁴⁸ L. Peterson, 'A New Golden Age: Politics and Mural Painting at Chatsworth', *Journal 18* 9 (Spring 2020), <http://www.journal18.org/category/issue9/> [accessed: 16 December 2021].

¹⁴⁹ DCC W/B/5/15.

¹⁵⁰ Johns, 'James Thornhill', p. 117.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 125-6.

own statue, which is notably reminiscent of Grinling Gibbons' statue of James II *all'antica* that stood in the Privy Garden at Whitehall.¹⁵² By implication, Devonshire's own hands were bloody, but in a just cause, that of Liberty over Tyranny.



Fig. 1.13 Louis Laguerre, *The Death of Caesar* (1692-4), oil on plaster, Chatsworth House. Image: Amy Lim

The ceremonial route progressed from the Hall, up the Great Staircase and into the state apartments, commencing with the Great Chamber, a large assembly and dining space, where the mural painting was once again an allegory of the Revolution. Antonio Verrio's ceiling, painted in 1691-2, has been interpreted by Laurel Peterson as an allegory of the peace and plenty ushered in by the Revolution.¹⁵³ It depicts 'The Return of the Golden Age',

¹⁵² See pp. 93-5.

¹⁵³ Peterson, 'A New Golden Age'.

an era of peace and justice described in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, already familiar as an allegory of an auspicious new reign from its use by John Michael Wright on the ceiling of Charles II's bedchamber at Whitehall Palace.¹⁵⁴ After the dynastic hiccup of the Glorious Revolution, the Golden Age was used once again to refer to a fruitful restoration, in this case of Protestant monarchy. Peterson identified Mary as the central figure of Cybele, and ascribed the queen's central role to her 'widespread and significant' political influence.¹⁵⁵ Her central position might also be attributed to the personal regard Devonshire felt for the queen. William III, however, plays little part in the mural paintings at Chatsworth, appearing only as a fictive grisaille statue of Hercules at the bottom of the stairs (commonly associated with the king). The allegorical mural paintings at Chatsworth certainly referred to the Revolution and its happy consequences, but by implication they lauded Devonshire's achievements in bringing about these events, and his role as kingmaker.

The display of portraits in the state apartments told a similar tale of noble, rather than royal, power. The third room in the state enfilade, the Antechamber, was hung with eight full-length gilt-framed portraits of seventeenth-century nobles, several of whom were connected with the opposition to James II —the present day counterparts of Brutus and Cassius.¹⁵⁶ Since, as Horace Walpole observed, there were few portraits at Chatsworth, this portrait set assumes particular significance, especially given its prominent location.¹⁵⁷

Although the portraits were identified by Walpole in 1760 and listed in the 1792 inventory,

¹⁵⁴ T. Barber, 'Restoration', in Barber, *British Baroque*, p. 20.

¹⁵⁵ Peterson, 'A New Golden Age'.

¹⁵⁶ DCC CH36/7/0. The inventory describes these as 'HL', but all other descriptions identify them as full-length. All are now at Hardwick Hall (NT): NT1129111, NT1129118, NT1129163, NT1129213, NT1129219, NT1129264, NT1129132 & NT1129220 www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk [accessed: 25 July 2019].

¹⁵⁷ *Walpole*, vol. 9, p. 295.

until now they have never been discussed in relation to Chatsworth's state apartments, despite being a prominent element of the furnishing. The portraits were a mixture of heirlooms and gifts, and were probably chosen for both aesthetic and personal reasons. Five were by or after Daniel Mytens: William Herbert, third earl of Pembroke (1580-1630) and Philip Herbert, fourth earl of Pembroke (1584-1650), both with their Lord Chamberlain's staff of office; Thomas Bruce, third earl of Elgin (1599-1652), brother of Christian Bruce who was Devonshire's grandmother; his grandfather William Cavendish, second earl of Devonshire (1590-1628); and Colonel Charles Cavendish (1620-1643), the duke's uncle and a civil war hero (fig. 1.14). Grand and formal, with swathes of crimson velvet, they were probably chosen partly for dashing effect, as well as the identity of the sitters.



Fig. 1.14 Daniel Mytens, (clockwise from top left), *William Cavendish, second earl of Devonshire*; *Thomas Bruce, first earl of Elgin*; *Philip Herbert, fourth earl of Pembroke*; *William Herbert, third earl of Pembroke*, (c. 1620-40), oil on canvas, Hardwick Hall (NT)
Images: © National Trust / Robert Thrift



Making up the set were three more recent portraits of Devonshire's close associates. James Butler, first duke of Ormonde (1610-1688), was Devonshire's father-in-law, and had crossed the lines to support William of Orange early in the Revolution; Colonel John Russell (1620-1687) had been a Royalist campaigner in the civil wars and was uncle to Devonshire's friends, Lord William Russell, 'The Patriot', whose execution for treason following the Rye House Plot of 1683 had catapulted him to martyr status after 1689, and his brother Edward Russell (1613-1700), one of Devonshire's 'immortal' co-signatories; and John Manners, first duke of Rutland (1638-1711), whose seat at Haddon Hall was a stone's throw from Chatsworth, and who had been a co-activist in the Revolution, raising the Nottinghamshire militia in support of William. Since they were by different artists (after Wright, Kerseboom and Baptist Closterman respectively), they were probably gifts rather than commissions. As the portraits had been selected from those already at hand, it is unlikely that Devonshire had a deliberately polemical agenda, and he naturally associated with other men who shared a similar political outlook. Nevertheless, when hung together they made a formidable assembly of noble power. The ceiling of the Great Chamber may have celebrated the glories of the post-revolutionary Golden Age, but these portraits made it clear who were the agents and guardians of that regime.

If Devonshire stuck the knife into Caesar (in the guise of Brutus), Somerset went even further by assuming the mantle of Caesar himself. Somerset's statue in the library of Trinity College, Cambridge used an audacious design that would have been unthinkable prior to the Revolution. It portrays him in Roman dress in a manner closely associated with Charles II and James II, placing him by implication on the same level. Somerset had been appointed Chancellor of the University of Cambridge in March 1689, and the following year made a

benefaction of £500 towards the completion of Wren's magnificent library at Trinity.¹⁵⁸ It was the single largest donation the college received, but it was something of a backhanded gift since £200 of it was spent on a statue of the duke and the carving of his arms, crest and ciphers on the bookcases along the west wall. They were all executed by Grinling Gibbons, who at the time that he received the commission was working for Somerset at Petworth, where he supplied statues as well as woodcarving.¹⁵⁹ The statue was made in his London workshop and transported to Cambridge, and given the contiguous nature of the commissions it is likely that it was Somerset, rather than the Fellows of Trinity, who agreed the design of the statue with Gibbons.

Somerset's statue has received little attention from scholars, perhaps because of its inconspicuous location, but also because aesthetically it is considered to be one of Gibbons' less-successful works (fig. 1.15).¹⁶⁰ The iconography of the statue, however, is highly significant. In the first instance, it was very unusual to commission a statue of a living subject, no matter how elevated their rank. Nearly all full-length sculpture was either royal, or funerary, the sole contemporary exception being Arnold Quellin's c. 1683 statue of Sir John Cutler at the Royal College of Physicians, to which he had given a large 'benefaction' that posthumously turned out to be a loan.¹⁶¹ The design of the Somerset's statue was also closely associated with royalty. It was modelled on three recent statues by Gibbons: a gilded brass statue of Charles II at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea (c.1682), a lead statue of

¹⁵⁸ Wren library, Trinity College, Cambridge 0/4/46a.

¹⁵⁹ Somerset paid Gibbons £173 for statues in March 1691. PHA 245.

¹⁶⁰ K. Gibson, 'The emergence of Grinling Gibbons as a "statuary"', *Apollo* 60:451 (September 1999), pp. 21-29; *Sculpture Journal* 29:3 (2020). Margaret Whinney thought it 'silly and supercilious', M. Whinney, *Sculpture in Britain 1530-1830* (Harmondsworth, 1964), p. 124.

¹⁶¹ D. Hayton, 'Cutler, Sir John', *ODNB* (2004) <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/ref:odnb/6980> [accessed: 15 December 2021].

James II at Whitehall Palace (1687/8), and a stone statue of Charles II, commissioned in 1684 by the Merchant Adventurers of Hamburg, which stood in the centre of the courtyard of the Royal Exchange (fig. 1.16).¹⁶² A poem by an anonymous author praised the sculpture's 'God-like Features and majestick Meen', commending its power to represent divine authority and command loyalty.¹⁶³ All three depicted the king *all'antica*, a style that was very unusual at the time, even for kings. The cropped hair was even more rare, these being the only three contemporary examples in England. Somerset's statue is virtually identical to the royal statues. Only the laurel wreath is absent; not even the Proud Duke could claim imperial status.

To be portrayed *all'antica*, by Gibbons, in an almost identical pose to Charles II and James II, would have transferred their connotations of royalty and quasi-divinity to Somerset, implying that he was of equal status with recent Stuart kings. There are indications that the statue's associations were recognised and not welcomed by the Master and Fellows of Trinity College. The library's building accounts record a flurry of activity concerning the arrival and installation of the statue.¹⁶⁴ Two niches were created in an unobtrusive location, high up in the south wall, one for the duke's statue, and the other which remains empty to this day (fig. 1.17). Clearly it had not been part of the original plan, nor had Somerset intended the statue to be housed in a niche, since it is sculpted in the round, and its baton has been broken and reattached at an angle in order to fit. He may have envisaged it being placed in the centre of the court before the library, where the arcaded architecture was

¹⁶² G. Beard, *The work of Grinling Gibbons* (London, 1989), p.61. The statue of James II now stands outside the National Gallery in London.

¹⁶³ *A Poem upon The New Marble Statue of His Present Majesty, Erected in the Royal Exchange* (London, 1684).

¹⁶⁴ Wren library, Trinity College, Cambridge O/4/46a.

remarkably similar to the Royal Exchange (figs. 1.18 and 1.19). The University of Cambridge had, as a whole, greeted the outcome of the Revolution with 'unenthusiastic propriety', but its Fellows did not need to be Jacobites to have qualms about the duke's statue.¹⁶⁵

The use of imperial iconography before the Revolution would have been an act of monstrous arrogance bordering on treason. After 1689 it was still egregious, but it was also a reflection of the new political order. Somerset had only played a minor role in the Revolution, but he too felt the balance of power tip from the monarch towards the aristocracy. It was probably not a conscious challenge to the power of the crown, and Gibbons may simply have suggested the design as an example of what he had recently undertaken. Nevertheless, it is hard to believe that Somerset was oblivious to the implications, and to adopt such a posture to glorify one's own self, rather than the monarch, was a subtle but profound shift in the use of imperial iconography that would have been unthinkable prior to the events of 1688/9.

¹⁶⁵ J. Gascoigne, *Cambridge in the age of the Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1989), p. 71.



Fig. 1.15 Grinling Gibbons, *Charles, sixth duke of Somerset* (1691), marble, Trinity College, Cambridge. Image: English Heritage, via British History Online



Fig. 1.16 Peter Vandrebanc (engraver) after Grinling Gibbons (sculptor), *A statue of Charles II in Roman dress* (1684-1697), engraving, Royal Collection Trust
© Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2022



Fig. 1.17 Wren library, Trinity College, Cambridge (1675-1699). Image: Amy Lim
Somerset's statue can be seen on the back wall at the right.

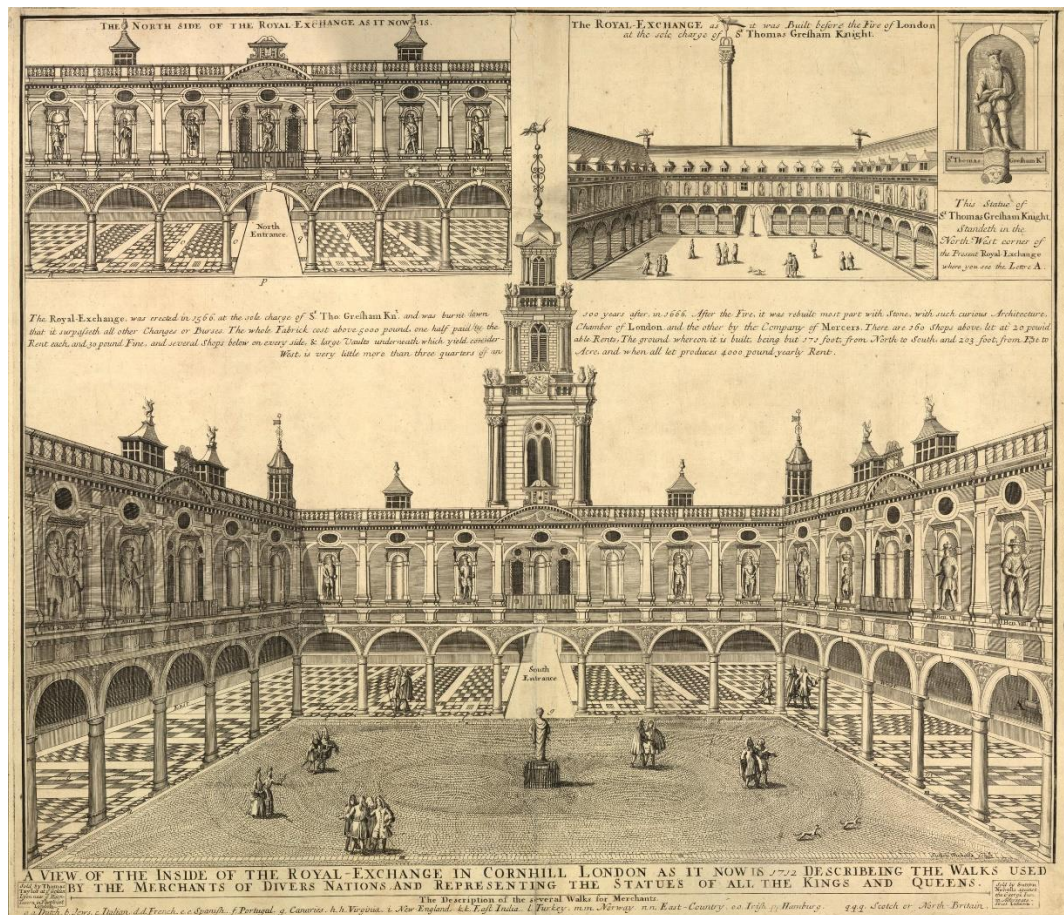


Fig. 1.18 Sutton Nichols (printmaker), *View of three sides of the courtyard of the Royal Exchange as reconstructed after the Great Fire (1712)*, engraving and etching on paper, British Museum, London Image: © The Trustees of the British Museum



Fig. 1.19 Nevile's Court and the Wren Library, Trinity College, Cambridge. Image: Amy Lim

Somerset's pride was notorious, and there are abundant anecdotes about his obsession with rank and protocol, but he was also strongly motivated by the aristocratic code of honour. As the second-highest ranking peer, he felt an exceptionally strong sense of dynastic pride and a corresponding responsibility to act on matters of principle, even to his own detriment. The integrity of the Seymour name was more important than short-term personal gain. In the summer of 1687, his refusal to take part in the ceremony of public audience held at Windsor for the Papal Nuncio, Ferdinando d'Adda, led to the forfeiture of his posts, including that of Gentleman of the Bedchamber. Somerset, who had sought legal advice, told James II that 'whatever the king might be, he himself was not above the law'.¹⁶⁶

A second time, in October 1715, Somerset chose to forfeit his office rather than compromise his honour, this time in defence of his favourite son-in-law, Sir William Wyndham. Somerset had been reappointed by George I to his former office of Master of the Horse, but when he heard that Wyndham had been arrested on suspicion of Jacobite plotting, despite his offering surety, he became so 'very much enraged at such unexpected Treatment to a Person of his Rank and Station' that not only did he resign his offices, but physically threw his regalia into the palace courtyard.¹⁶⁷ Such actions help to explain how it was that the nobility were prepared to challenge the legitimacy of James II's rule. In works of art like Laguerre's murals, the portraits of assembled nobles at Chatsworth, and Somerset's statue at Trinity College, aristocratic pride and honour hinted at what might come to pass (or already had), if royal power overstepped its limits.

¹⁶⁶ G. Burnet, *Bishop Burnet's History of his own time*, vol. 1 (London, 1724), pp. 716-7.

¹⁶⁷ *Memoirs of the life, family, and character of Charles Seymour, Duke of Somerset, lately deceased* (London, ?1749), pp. 61-2.

From privy purse to public works

The decades following the Glorious Revolution were a high-water mark of the nobility's power: they dominated government office and both Houses of Parliament (through local electoral influence and the presence of their sons in the Commons); they headed the social hierarchy; landed estates were still one of the principal sources of wealth; and they were eagerly sought as patrons of the arts. They played a leading role in the alternative sites of politics, sociability and display that were growing up to rival the court. Brewer's narrative of the gradual transfer of cultural power between the separate spheres of court and city has recently been challenged by a more pluralistic approach to art history that presents a more interconnected cultural world.¹⁶⁸ The editors of the 2016 volume *Court, Country, City* admitted that while they set out to survey 'three distinctive and at least partially independent cultural spheres [...] we became increasingly struck by [...] the ways in which the artistic activities associated with such environments continually leaked into, or trespassed across, one another.'¹⁶⁹ The aristocracy embodied this 'leaking' between spheres. Even as they continued to hold court and government office, they were active in the clubs and committees that have been linked to city culture. The Proud Duke of Somerset moved between the inner circles of court and government and the more egalitarian spheres of city clubs and horseracing, commissioning paintings that reflected his multifarious interests. Associational culture will be discussed at greater length in Chapter Four; this chapter will now consider the rise of architectural patronage by committee as an alternative to the direct patronage of the crown.

¹⁶⁸ Most influentially, chapter 1, 'Changing Places: The Court and the City' in Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, pp. 3-43.

¹⁶⁹ Hallett, Llewellyn and Myrone (eds.), *Court, Country, City*, p. 22.

One such project was the building of the Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich, overseen by a committee that included several members of the nobility. Like Somerset, Devonshire had fingers in many pies, and the role he played in commissioning the mural paintings in the Hall at Greenwich Hospital adds weight to Hallett et al's picture of overlapping spheres rather than Brewer's linear trajectory. The original impetus for the Hospital came from Mary II in response to the heavy casualties sustained by British seamen at the battle of La Hogue in 1690. The building of the Hall, now known as the Painted Hall, was funded by subscription, with forty-seven donors totalling just over £100,000, headed by Queen Anne with a donation of £6,472.¹⁷⁰ It was designed by Sir Christopher Wren, with the building works overseen by a Fabric Committee. One of the directors was the first duke of Devonshire, whose patronage of mural painter James Thornhill at Chatsworth significantly influenced his appointment to paint the Hall at Greenwich. It was to become the greatest commission of his career.

Until Devonshire engaged Thornhill in 1706 to paint the Saloon, west staircase and other rooms at Chatsworth, he was a relatively minor artist, with only one previous independent commission under his belt. Worn out by arguments over money and confident in his own judgement, Devonshire had turned his back on the big-name artists and craftsmen in favour of new faces who were cheaper and more biddable. He must have been pleased with Thornhill's work, since by July 1707, while in Derbyshire, Thornhill had begun working on the designs for Greenwich. There had been no public competition, and in Anya Lucas' assessment, 'it seems highly likely that Thornhill was awarded the Painted Hall commission

¹⁷⁰ Admittedly the queen's 'donation' had been confiscated from the executed pirate Captain William Kidd. A. Lucas, 'The Architecture, Construction and Preparation of the Painted Hall' in A. Lucas, R. Johns, S. Stewart and S. Paine, *The Painted Hall* (London, 2019), pp. 30-3.

at least in part on the basis of his work at Chatsworth'.¹⁷¹ Although the building of the hall was ostensibly run and managed by a committee, it was the duke who was calling the shots, at least for the appointment of the artist. Here was a new model of patronage, with permeable boundaries between public and private; court, country and city. The aristocracy slipped between spheres with ease, taking a prominent role in all.

Although as a commissioner, Devonshire exerted an influence that had previously been the privilege of the crown, this collaborative model of patronage also offers a kinder interpretation of Queen Anne as a patron of the visual arts, suggesting that rather than failing as a patron, she prioritised public benefit over the royal image. Although Brewer argued that the decline in royal patronage of the arts began under Charles II, his chief culprits were William and Mary and Queen Anne, especially their failure to build grand new palaces, instead only carrying out renovations (nicely done, but rather middle-class in ambition).¹⁷² Bucholz agreed that 'perhaps Anne's greatest aesthetic failure as Queen was as a builder'.¹⁷³ It is true that Anne did not build grand palaces in her own name, but to dismiss her as an architectural patron presupposes a model of patronage that places the ego of the patron at the centre. Several of the architectural projects begun or championed by the post-Revolution Stuart monarchs are among the finest and best-loved baroque buildings in Britain: St Paul's Cathedral, the Royal Hospital for Seamen at Greenwich, and fifty new churches in London. They were designed for public benefit rather than the glorification of

¹⁷¹ A. Lucas, 'Sir James Thornhill and the Painted Hall Commission', in Lucas et al, *Painted Hall*, p. 59.

¹⁷² Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, pp. 8-11.

¹⁷³ R. Bucholz, 'Queen Anne: victim of her virtues' in C. Campbell Orr (ed.), *Queenship in Britain 1660-1837* (Manchester, 2002), p. 117.

the monarch, and the latter two in particular exemplified the cross-sphere collaboration between monarchy, aristocracy and city highlighted by Hallett, Llewellyn and Myrone.

Whose court style?

Having argued for a more fluid interpretation of the court as a centre of artistic leadership, I will now complicate that picture further by arguing that in any case, 'court style' did not refer to a particular court, but rather to a generic courtly style that prevailed throughout Europe. The *Courts and Colonies* exhibition of decorative arts under William and Mary emphasised the pan-European nature of court style.¹⁷⁴ Gervase Jackson-Stops identified the royal couple's taste as an Anglo-Franco-Dutch court style that was spread by migrant craftsmen and the mutual gaze of European courts. Artists and designs, and in some cases the physical artworks themselves, moved between the French, English and Dutch courts, but it was principally the court of Versailles that set the standard for the rest of Europe. Although Dutch influence was more pronounced during the reign of William and Mary, the international court style dominated the whole of the late Stuart period. Although this exhibition is well known to historians of the decorative arts it has made considerably less impact outside these circles, perhaps because the importance of 'decorative' arts has been persistently underestimated. But the decorative arts, even more than easel painting and sculpture, demonstrate the interconnectedness of European court culture, as designs, craftsmen and goods flowed across borders.

¹⁷⁴ Baarsen et al, *Courts and Colonies*.

Until now, the fifth earl and countess of Exeter have not featured in this chapter since they were not courtiers. The earl served as hereditary Almoner at the coronation of James II, but spent little time at court or in parliament, attending the House of Lords only infrequently. As a young man, he signalled his lack of interest in holding office when he demolished his London town house, a requisite for a court or national political career. In 1671 Exeter (then Lord Burghley) had petitioned for a licence to redevelop the land on which stood his two houses near Covent Garden, Exeter House and Little Exeter House, into rental housing and commercial properties.¹⁷⁵ Thereafter the Exeters stayed with the earl and countess of Devonshire when in town. Exeter preferred to concentrate his energies on his country house at Burghley, and spent several years travelling in Europe to buy furnishings, paintings, and sculpture.

The Revolution marked a major divergence between the Cecil and Cavendish families, since the two brothers-in-law were on opposite sides of the political divide. While Devonshire was a primary instigator of the Revolution, Exeter, although he had not actively fought for James II, was one of only a handful of peers who refused to swear the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy. He was stripped of his local and county offices and banished from court. Exeter was not an active Jacobite, nor, probably, was he a crypto-Catholic as has been suggested, but he remained aloof from court until his death in 1700.¹⁷⁶ Despite their disagreement over the legitimacy of William III, the personal friendship between the families continued to be as close as ever.

¹⁷⁵ 'Southampton Street and Tavistock Street Area: The Cecil Estate' in *Survey of London* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol36/p223> [accessed: 17 March 2020].

¹⁷⁶ For example, Chaney (ed.), *Evolution of English Collecting*, p. 69.

The political differences between the Devonshires and Exeters were not reflected in the art they commissioned and displayed, and both Burghley and Chatsworth were fitted out in the same European court style. Many of the same artists and craftsmen worked on both properties, and often for the crown as well: architect William Talman, woodcarvers Thomas Young and Samuel Watson; cabinet-maker Gerrit Jensen; upholsterer Francis Lapiere; ironsmith Jean Tijou, mural painters Antonio Verrio and Louis Laguerre; and gardeners George London and Henry Wise. If the aristocracy took their artistic lead only from the English court, we would expect the paths of the Devonshires and Exeters to diverge dramatically after the Revolution. One earl led the Revolution, one denied its legitimacy. One was prominent at court, the other banished from it. One took a leading role in affairs of state, the other retired to the country. Yet Burghley and Chatsworth were built (internally at least) and furnished in the same style, by the same hands. As Gervase Jackson-Stops observed, the European baroque style transcended national and political boundaries. He continued, 'above all it was court style, clearly identified in a secular context with the ceremonials and rituals of kingship, whether employed in a palace or in a lesser country house, whose owner 'kept state' as the king's representative.'¹⁷⁷ Yet Exeter continued to furnish his house in this court style even after 1689 when he no longer considered himself the monarch's representative. The *concept* of the court – as manifested in various forms throughout Europe – as the centre of artistic fashion was stronger than its political and personal reality.

¹⁷⁷ G. Jackson-Stops, 'The Court Style in Britain' in Baarsen et al, *Courts and Colonies*, p. 36.

The disconnect between ideal and reality was vividly expressed in the building of the state apartments at Burghley. There is a common supposition among architectural historians and guidebook authors alike that state apartments were built in country houses in the hope of hosting a visit from the monarch.¹⁷⁸ Specifically at Burghley, Hugh Brigstocke believed that the state rooms were created to be 'suitable for the entertainment of royalty'.¹⁷⁹ More recent scholars have highlighted the metaphorical function of state apartments, with Sebastian Edwards arguing that they were 'a potent symbol of royal power' and a demonstration of loyalty to the crown.¹⁸⁰ But the state apartments at Burghley, principally fitted out in the decade after the Revolution, do not fit comfortably within either of these propositions. Given Exeter's political stance, they were certainly not intended as a demonstration of loyalty. If the state apartments at Burghley had been intended either to host or pay homage to the monarch, we might expect to see the unfinished rooms to be abandoned or diverted to a different use following Exeter's break with the crown in 1689. Quite the opposite: following a four year hiatus, work was resumed in 1690. It is possible that the Exeters had the reversionary interest in mind, holding out for a legitimate Stuart succession (Princess Anne's son, William, Duke of Gloucester had been born in 1689), but they could not have expected him to accede to the throne for many years. The building of the state apartments at Burghley appears to have had no connection to political events. Instead, the timing was probably determined by the financial windfall of the dowager countess of Devonshire's legacy, received in late 1689.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Lees-Milne, *English Country Houses: Baroque*, p. 24, repeated in guidebooks such as *Your Guide to Chatsworth* (Bakewell, 2016), p. 40.

¹⁷⁹ H. Brigstocke, 'The 5th Earl of Exeter as Grand Tourist and Collector', *Papers of the British School at Rome*, 72 (2004), p. 333.

¹⁸⁰ S. Edwards, 'Fashioning and Furnishing for Performance: The Rise and Fall of the State Bedchamber in the English Royal Palace', in Hallett, Llewellyn and Myrone (eds.), *Court, Country, City*, p. 119.

¹⁸¹ E. Till, 'Notes to the 1688 inventory', unpublished manuscript, BA.

The theory that the nobility invested in building and furnishing their country seats in order to demonstrate loyalty was put to the test in the autumn of 1695, when Burghley received one of the most unusual visits ever by a reigning monarch. Rather than welcoming William III, the Exeters virtually turned him away from their doorstep. The king ultimately gained access to the house as a tourist rather than as an honoured guest. In October and November 1695, William undertook his first and only royal progress, a three-week journey around England, which he used as an opportunity to visit many of the newest and greatest country seats, among which Burghley was purposefully included.¹⁸² On 28 October, the king arrived in Stamford on the edge of the Burghley estate, only to find the Exeters away from home. The disjoint between the king's eagerness to see Burghley and the Exeters' deliberate absence is startling. William was obliged to stay in lodgings in Stamford, and although it was already evening,

went (tho' out of his way) to see Burghly House, the seat and constant Residence of the Earl of Exeter, who was come away to London, which His Majesty being inform'd of, was pleas'd to ask, if he had carried his House with him? answer was made no; *Then, says the King, I'll go and see it*, which his Majesty did twice, that night and the next morning, being extreemly satisfied with it.¹⁸³

It was inconceivable that the Exeters did not know about the king's intended visit. His itinerary was published in the *Gazette* a few days in advance, and in any case, Devonshire's steward, Henry Lowman, was organising the progress and would have been sure to inform them.¹⁸⁴ The decision to 'come away to London' can only have been deliberate.

¹⁸² See S. van Raaij and P. Spies, *The Royal Progress of William and Mary* (Amsterdam, 1988) for a full account.

¹⁸³ *The Royal Progress, or, a Diary of the King's Journey* (London, 1695), pp. 6-7.

¹⁸⁴ *London Gazette* 3126 (24-28 October 1695).

Lydia Hamlett has suggested that an allegorical reference to the Revolution in the Heaven room murals signalled the earl's acceptance of the new regime, arguing that his absence was 'less of a snub and more of a vote of confidence in the eloquence of his mural programme to express itself in his absence'.¹⁸⁵ This supposed change of heart is contradicted by a comment by Matthew Prior, formerly tutor to the Exeter children, now turned diplomat. When the Exeters' second son, William Cecil, passed through Paris in 1697, Prior advised against him being presented at the court of Versailles, 'considering my Lord Exeter's character in relation to His Majesty's Government', indicating that Exeter had not changed his stance.¹⁸⁶ Besides politics, another likely reason for turning away the king was that of expense. By the autumn of 1695, the costs of rebuilding Burghley had outstripped their income to such an extent that the Exeters were forced to pawn their silver plate to their tradesmen creditors.¹⁸⁷ Hosting the king, even for one night, was an expensive undertaking that the Exeters could ill afford.

The principal legacy of William's visit to Burghley was not a reconciliation with Exeter, nor a conferral of honour and status, but the reappointment of mural painter Antonio Verrio to royal service. After seeing his work at Burghley, William decided to waive the requirement for him to swear the Oaths, and Verrio was appointed first to repair the flaking murals at Windsor, and then complete the painting in the new state apartments at Hampton Court.¹⁸⁸ The Burghley visit was a striking reversal of the usual order. The king visited his subject's house as a private tourist, hoping to glean ideas for art, interior, and garden design that he

¹⁸⁵ Hamlett, *Mural Painting in Britain*, p. 73.

¹⁸⁶ HMC, *Calendar of the Manuscripts of the Marquis of Bath*, vol. 3 (hereafter: *Prior Papers*) (London, 1908), p. 252.

¹⁸⁷ BA EX 51/16/4.

¹⁸⁸ C. Brett, 'Antonio Verrio: his Career and Surviving Work', *British Art Journal* 10:1 (2010), pp. 24-5.

could apply to his own palaces, and subsequently commissioned an artist whose work he had admired. It is difficult to imagine Louis XIV doing such a thing, or even Charles II. It was not that William did not appreciate art and its power, but rather that he did not stand on ceremony. It marked the emergence of a different kind of monarchy, moving away from the personal magnificence of Charles II to a more down-to-earth and ultimately frugal regime that would win plaudits for its restraint.¹⁸⁹

The Glorious Revolution was the pivotal event of late Stuart England, a constitutional and successional crisis that would eventually lead to substantial and lasting political, economic and cultural changes. These changes did not manifest themselves immediately, however. The court continued to function as a social and cultural leader, a place to see and be seen. William and Mary, whose personal interest in and promotion of the arts has been underestimated, continued to set the standard of taste; indeed they were far more engaged and literate in visual culture than either Charles II or James II. The interiors and gardens of their royal palaces were imitated by courtiers, sometimes as a demonstration of loyalty or personal proximity, but also because the court was at the forefront of artistic fashion. Queen Anne's court offered less inspiration, but as the court remained at the centre of social and political power, it continued to exert a strong influence over the art patronage of courtiers like the duke and duchess of Somerset.

If political and cultural leadership were not entirely severed, there was at least a time-lag, and the while the court may have maintained its artistic leadership, structural cracks in its

¹⁸⁹ H. Smith, *Georgian Monarchy* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 62.

political leadership can be detected in aristocratic art as early as 1691. Somerset's statue at Trinity and the mural paintings and portraits at Chatsworth all reflected a shift in the relationship between monarchy and aristocracy. Having successfully fomented Revolution, the aristocracy were emboldened. The art they commissioned paid tribute to their own actions and alluded to their power. But in matters of artistic taste, the English court was, in any case, only one source of artistic inspiration. Nor was there an 'English' court style. The courts of Europe were linked by a shared culture and style, and the English elite looked across the channel as much as they looked towards Whitehall or Hampton Court. It is to Europe that we too now turn.

Chapter Two

Imports and Immigrants

My goods are now coming from France, and I hope in a little time to open my bundle and give every man his due; pray signify as much to His Grace of Somerset.

Matthew Prior to J. Talbot, 4 October 1700¹⁹⁰

Continental art, demand and supply

In the closing decades of the seventeenth century, the artworks, luxury goods and designs that were most in demand among the English elite were European, especially French, and above all those connected with the court of Versailles. The English monarchy's taste for European fashions was nurtured between 1651 and 1660, when the future Charles II spent his exile in Paris, Cologne and the Netherlands, experiencing European courts at first hand. Many of his courtiers and aristocratic supporters likewise spent the years of the Interregnum on the continent, where they absorbed the manners and fashions of their European hosts. After the Restoration, Charles II introduced these fashions to his court, creating new state bedchambers in the royal apartments based on models he had seen on the continent, and from 1675 employing Italian mural painter Antonio Verrio to transform the walls and ceilings of Windsor Castle.¹⁹¹ His Portuguese queen, Catherine of Braganza, and French mistress, Louise de Keroualle, filled their apartments with foreign furnishings that were deeply admired by the English courtiers.¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ Prior *Papers*, p. 422.

¹⁹¹ Edwards, 'Fashioning and Furnishing for Performance', in Hallett, Llewellyn and Myrone (eds.), *Court, Country, City*, p. 107.

¹⁹² Beer (ed.), *Diary of John Evelyn, Volume IV*, p. 343.

The English desire for the French arts was further increased by their greater visibility and quality under the patronage of Louis XIV. The cultural and economic policies of Jean-Baptiste Colbert, his First Minister of State from 1661 to 1683, brought the decorative arts to new heights of sophistication and stimulated the demand for French art among the courts and aristocracies of Western Europe. By founding and reorganising the various Academies of the Arts and Sciences, founding the royal Gobelins tapestry works, and bringing renowned artists such as Gianlorenzo Bernini to France, Colbert created a magnificent backdrop for the royal court, and stimulated a Europe-wide demand for French goods and fashions.¹⁹³ Under the artistic direction of Charles Le Brun, the French royal residences were transformed with mural paintings; inlaid, carved and gilded furniture; enormous mirrors; carvings in wood and stone; upholstery; and tapestries, to create the rich and unified effect that characterised the 'baroque' interior. Although the accession of the Dutch stadholder William III to the English and Scottish thrones triggered over two decades of near-continuous war with France, the Francophile tastes of the English court and elite paradoxically increased after 1688. Even as they confronted Louis XIV on the battlefields of Flanders, William and Mary enthusiastically adopted French court fashions in interiors and gardens, and their principal court designer, Daniel Marot, was a Huguenot refugee who had worked at the French court. As we have seen in Chapter One, the court continued to set the fashion for the aristocracy, and the English elite continued to seek out French goods and designs.

¹⁹³ R. Wellington, 'A Reflection of the Sun: The Duke of Marlborough in the Image of Louis XIV', *The Court Historian* 21:2 (2016), p. 127.

France did not hold a monopoly on the arts, however. Specialist centres of production across Europe created goods that were eagerly sought after: tapestries from Brussels, *pietre dure* (inlaid hardstones) from Florence, velvets from Genoa, silks from Venice, paintings and sculptures from Rome, Florence, Venice and Naples. From beyond Europe, the ships of the East and West India Companies brought porcelain, lacquer and textiles from South and East Asia, and exotic animals and plants from the Americas. The display of foreign artworks and luxury goods has long been a marker of elite status, and the global history of art is one of travel and trade, the constant movement and interchange of people, ideas, raw materials and finished works.

Despite England's growing global trade networks, foreign art was still difficult to obtain. Some goods were available on the London market through picture auctions or retail outlets, but substantial commissions or purchases from the continent required agents on the ground, and few possessed the necessary connections. Prices were inflated by protectionist trade policies, and outside court circles, campaigners increasingly pressed for a reduction in imports for political and economic reasons.¹⁹⁴ The logistical difficulties of overseas procurement were also compounded by repeated outbreaks of war that hindered the movement of goods and people.¹⁹⁵ War with Louis XIV may not have affected the demand for French art, but it all but dried up the supply. Trade with France was prohibited in 1689

¹⁹⁴ For example, 'William and Mary, 1689: An Act for the discouraging the Importation of Throwne Silke. [Chapter IX. Rot. Parl. pt. 1. nu. 11.],' in *Statutes of the Realm: Volume 6, 1685-94*, ed. J. Raithby (s.l, 1819), p. 173. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/statutes-realm/vol6/p173> [accessed: 21 December 2021] and D. Defoe, *The Advantages of Peace of Commerce; with some remarks on the East-India trade* (London, 1729).

¹⁹⁵ D. Ormrod, 'Cultural production and import substitution: the fine and decorative arts in London, 1660-1730', in P. O'Brien, D. Keene, M. Hart and H. van der Wee (eds.), *Urban Achievement in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 228.

and again in 1704; only between 1697 and 1702 was there a brief relaxation of restrictions, but imports from France were still subject to punitive taxation.¹⁹⁶ Leisure travel, a major undertaking at the best of times, was prohibited during times of war.

These factors restricted the availability of foreign goods and pushed up prices to levels that only the elite could afford. Most histories of luxury goods in late-seventeenth and eighteenth-century England have taken a macro-economic perspective, investigating the market forces of supply and demand, and exploring the links between London's growing global mercantile power, the market penetration of imported goods and import substitutes, and their transformative effect on the social, economic and cultural landscape.¹⁹⁷ However, in late Stuart England, these developments were still in their infancy. The scarcity and expense of foreign art and luxury goods meant that they were unattainable for the vast majority of the population.

Consequently, the display of foreign artworks, designs, furnishings and other luxury goods provided an opportunity for the elite to differentiate themselves from those who were less wealthy, less influential, and less well connected. Ownership of a *pietre dure* cabinet from the Galleria dei Lavori in Florence, an aviary of American parrots, or a Gobelins tapestry, were markers not only of taste, but of wealth and superior access. Thanks to their economic and cultural power, the families under consideration in this thesis were much less

¹⁹⁶ William and Mary, 1688. An Act for Prohibiting all Trade and Commerce with France. <https://www.british-history.ac.uk/statutes-realm/vol6/pp98-103> [accessed: 20 December 2021]. A. Bowett, *English Furniture 1660-1714* (Woodbridge, 2002), p. 194.

¹⁹⁷ J. Brewer and R. Porter (eds.), *Consumption and the World of Goods* (London, 1993) and M. Berg and E. Eger (eds.), *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century: Debates, Desires and Delectable Goods* (Basingstoke, 2003); Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*.

constrained by the forces that affected the rest of society. They exhibited their wealth through the quantity and quality of the foreign artworks and luxury goods they purchased, and their connections by sourcing goods that were not commercially available. By displaying the latest foreign designs in architecture and furnishings, and patronising immigrant artists and craftsmen who had trained at foreign courts, they showed that they had the economic and cultural muscle necessary to secure them.

Despite the difficulties of travel, some aristocrats did manage to journey overseas where they procured foreign works of art, either as the primary purpose of their journey or incidentally. Diplomatic postings provided the opportunity to absorb foreign fashions and buy artwork and furnishings, and in *Luxury and Power*, Helen Jacobsen noted how diplomats used their privileged access not only on their own behalf, but to win favour with influential patrons back in England.¹⁹⁸ This superior access meant that those in the lower ranks of the nobility and gentry could punch above their weight in cultural terms, and Matthew Prior's ascent of the social ladder, leveraging his knowledge of and access to foreign art, is a particularly striking example.¹⁹⁹ Some aristocrats, in particular the fifth earl of Exeter (known as 'the Travelling Earl') and his countess, travelled with the express purpose of viewing and acquiring art, and this acquisition strategy will be explored at length in Chapter Three. However, such journeys typically lasted several years and were largely incompatible with the demands of family life or office holding. This option was only available to, or taken up by, a tiny minority.

¹⁹⁸ Jacobsen, *Luxury and Power*.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid, pp. 185-208.

Instead, home-based aristocrats (i.e. the majority) employed a range of strategies to acquire scarce and desirable foreign artworks and luxury goods while remaining on English soil. The main body of this chapter will discuss those strategies, and how the English aristocracy aligned themselves with European court culture. One strategy was to substitute imported art with works produced in England by immigrant artists and craftsmen. Those who had trained at the French court were in especially high demand, since they brought not only their skills but an in-depth knowledge of the latest French court fashions. The influx of Huguenot refugees from the 1680s provided an opportunity to profit from their familiarity with modish French design and highly-developed technical skills, particularly in the medium of gold and silversmithing. Aristocrats also employed immigrants as household staff in order to benefit from their contacts and familiarity with foreign fashions. Sometimes they employed foreigners in front-of-house positions simply because they were fashionable in and of themselves, including enslaved and/or trafficked Black pages.

Another alternative to imported goods was to commission native artists and craftsmen to use foreign designs brought to England through prints, sketches or word-of-mouth. It was not enough to simply obtain foreign designs: speed was of the essence, and aristocrats aimed to be the first in England to display the latest foreign fashions. Some imported goods were available, either by exploiting contacts overseas, or on the open market. When certain goods, such as porcelain, became more widely available, the elite differentiated themselves from the masses by the quality and quantity they purchased. Through the acquisition and

display of European and global luxury goods and designs, the aristocracy accrued and displayed their social, economic and cultural capital.²⁰⁰

Migrant artists from the French court

For aristocrats based in England, migrant European artists and craftsmen could supply artworks and furnishings as a credible alternative to imports. The influx of Huguenot refugees, particularly following the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, supplemented the many economic migrants who came to take advantage of a thriving market of customers hungry for their technical skills and knowledge of European design. These immigrants included many of the best-known artists and craftsmen working in late Stuart England: easel painters Peter Lely (Dutch), Willem Wissing (Dutch), Benedetto Gennari (Italian), Jean-Baptiste Monnoyer (French), Godfrey Kneller (German) and Michael Dahl (Swedish); upholsterer Francis Lapiere (French) and fringe-maker Pierre Dufresnoy (French); woodcarver Grinling Gibbons (Anglo-Dutch); ironsmith Jean Tijou (French); cabinet-maker Gerrit Jensen (Dutch); mural painters Louis Laguerre (French) and Antonio Verrio (Italian); and Huguenot goldsmiths Pierre Harache, Claude Platel and David Willaume. Many of these artists and craftsmen introduced new artistic genres, or entirely new ways of decorating interiors. Dutch painters like Pieter Gerritsz. van Roestraten and Jan Siberechts popularised still-life and estate landscape paintings respectively, while Monnoyer's exuberant flower paintings, intended to be displayed as overdoors, echoed the woodcarvings of Grinling Gibbons and helped to create a unified interior aesthetic.

²⁰⁰ For the formulation of these types of capital, see P. Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital' in J. Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education* (Westport, 1986), pp. 241-58.

Mural painting, in its late-seventeenth-century or 'baroque' form, was a radically new genre introduced to England by migrant artists in the 1670s and was closely associated with continental courts. From its origins in the frescoed churches and palazzos of Renaissance Italy, it had been enthusiastically adopted by rulers across Europe, above all Louis XIV whose iconographical programme of murals, masterminded by Charles Le Brun, spread over the walls and ceilings of his palaces. Recent scholarship has challenged perceptions of baroque mural painting as 'decorative', emphasising its iconographic and affective power.²⁰¹ The animative function of murals that unfolded as the viewer moved through the painted spaces differentiated them from earlier, more static incarnations of mural painting.²⁰² One of the earliest adopters of the new immersive style of painting was Charles II, who from 1675 to 1684 commissioned Antonio Verrio, an Italian who had worked in France, to paint an extensive programme of murals at Windsor Castle. For the next three decades, until James Thornhill won his first solo commission in 1705, the mural painters working in England were exclusively Europe-born and Europe-trained, many of them at the court of Versailles.

The sheer scale of mural paintings meant that only the highest-ranking members of society possessed the requisite wealth and wall space to commission them, and the very presence of a mural painting in a house was redolent of European courtly magnificence. The subjects were commonly drawn from classical sources (Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was a popular choice), many of which communicated allegorical meanings to the educated viewer as the narrative unfolded. Thus the iconography of the Hall at Chatsworth, discussed in the

²⁰¹ Hamlett, *Mural Painting in Britain*.

²⁰² Ibid., p. 17.

previous chapter, referred to the events of the Glorious Revolution and the part played by Devonshire. However, these messages were beyond the comprehension of most viewers, who had neither the education nor time to decode them. Nevertheless, regardless of whether or not viewers understood the encoded references, they were still impressed by the murals' visual impact. Celia Fiennes, who was fairly well educated and the granddaughter of a viscount, was oblivious to the meanings of the many murals she saw on her travels, but she still admired them greatly. She rarely noted the subject matter beyond vague generalisations ('with armoury and Battles'), but appreciated how they were 'delicately painted' and especially commended their *trompe l'oeil* effects.²⁰³

Devonshire complemented the continental exterior architecture at Chatsworth with mural paintings in the interiors (and sometimes exteriors) commissioned from the best artists in England, whose credentials included work at the French, Dutch and English courts. His principal painters were Louis Laguerre and his assistant Ricard. Laguerre had actually been born at Versailles and was a godson of Louis XIV. He had trained at the *Académie Royale de Peinture et Sculpture*, then in the studio of Charles Le Brun, and on his arrival in England in 1684 gained employment as an assistant to Antonio Verrio, under whom he probably worked at Whitehall.²⁰⁴ Devonshire, who was probably introduced to Laguerre while he was working at nearby Thoresby Hall, took full advantage of having secured the services of a mural painter with such connections and experience, and employed Laguerre for a near-continuous eight years on various schemes. Laguerre and Ricard worked at Chatsworth

²⁰³ Celia Fiennes, pp. 68 & 106.

²⁰⁴ N. Smith, 'Laguerre, Louis', *Grove Art Online* (2003) <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T048771> [accessed: 21 December 2021]; E. Croft-Murray, *Decorative Painting in England 1537-1837* vol. 1 (London, 1962), pp. 55 & 61.

from January 1689 until 1694, where they painted the chapel, the ceilings of the State Drawing Room, Anti-chamber, Bedroom and Closet, and finally the Hall.²⁰⁵ Once the Hall was completed in May 1694, Ricard stayed on at Chatsworth to paint the ceiling of the Bathing Room and a 'perspective' in the garden, while Laguerre, back in London, repaired damaged ceilings at Devonshire's townhouse in St James Square.²⁰⁶ When Devonshire undertook major renovations to his new London property Devonshire House in 1696, he again called on Laguerre to paint *An Assembly of the Gods* and *The Rape of Proserpine* on the staircase ceiling and walls, as well as two lobbies off the Great Hall and some decorative work on the external façade.²⁰⁷

Although Laguerre was Devonshire's principal mural painter, he brought in Antonio Verrio to execute the highest-profile work at Chatsworth. It was Verrio who had first introduced the genre to England, amazing viewers with the totality of the experience. With the major Windsor commission under his belt, his reputation as the leading mural painter was unchallenged. Although Laguerre's star was rising, he had been one of Verrio's assistants and had only recently begun to undertake solo commissions, of which Chatsworth was one of his earliest, and certainly his largest to date. In 1689 Verrio painted the Great Stairs and Great Chamber, and a canvas altarpiece for the chapel, and five years later he was invited back to paint the closet in the Queen of Scots apartments and a series of roundels for the ceiling of the Gallery, which was being fitted out as the most luxurious room at

²⁰⁵ DCC CH37/1 fols. 30-100.

²⁰⁶ DCC CH37/1 fol. 97, W/E/110/8 & 10 & W/E/94/3-7.

²⁰⁷ DCC W/C/106; 'The Notebooks of George Vertue', vol. 3, *Walpole Society* 22 (Oxford, 1934, rep. London, 1968), p.67. A modello for Proserpine is in the collection of the Yale Center for British Art, B1976.7.50.

Chatsworth.²⁰⁸ Verrio's credentials enabled him to charge much higher rates than Laguerre. An exact comparison of their rates is not possible as the bills have not survived and payments are inconsistent across the account books. However Laguerre and Ricard received total payments of around £500 for their work at Chatsworth, while Verrio was paid £550 for his work (excluding the Gallery), which had a surface area of around a quarter to a third of that painted by Laguerre.²⁰⁹ Verrio also benefited from a degree of preferential treatment and social acceptance that was not extended to Laguerre, and along with portrait painter Sir Godfrey Kneller was invited to join the earl of Exeter's drinking club, the Honourable Order of Bedlam, of which Devonshire was also a member.²¹⁰

Besides his work at Chatsworth, Verrio was also employed by the earl and countess of Exeter to paint the ceilings of the state apartments at Burghley, known as the George Rooms. Although he was first engaged in 1686, the majority of the work was carried out between 1689 and 1698, when Verrio was excluded from royal service as a Catholic. Some aristocrats may have scrupled to employ him for this reason, but not Exeter, who had himself refused to swear the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy. Verrio created a series of murals worthy of a great continental palace, and in the Saloon, or Heaven Room, the painting encompassed virtually every inch of surface except the floor (fig. 2.1). It rivalled St George's Hall at Windsor for its immersive impact, and is the finest surviving example of Verrio's work. The Exeters had travelled widely on the continent, where they had

²⁰⁸ DCC CH37/1 fols. 142 & 144.

²⁰⁹ Payments to Laguerre and Ricard for their work at Chatsworth are recorded in DCC CH37/1 and CH37/2, duplicated in CH37/8 but with some differences. For Verrio's payments, see DCC CH37/1 fols. 61-75.

²¹⁰ Verrio's *prima donna*-like behaviour caused endless problems. Wine was specially ordered for his stay, and when he argued with the housekeeper Mrs Hackett, Devonshire took Verrio's side and would have dismissed her had his chaplain not intervened. This kind of behaviour was entirely characteristic of Verrio, whose excesses at Burghley drove Exeter to despair. DCC W/C 171, 178 & 180; BA EX 54/05(a)110, and see p. 211.

experienced this kind of mural painting first hand, and it is no coincidence that the finest suite of murals in an English private home was commissioned by such a cosmopolitan couple.



Fig. 2.1 Antonio Verrio, 'Heaven Room', Burghley House (c. 1693-6). Image: Amy Lim.

Alongside Laguerre and Verrio, Devonshire also gave smaller commissions to a number of less well-known mural painters, all of whom were French and had (except one) worked on high-profile royal and aristocratic commissions in France, the Dutch Republic, and England. In May 1690 Nicolas Heude was paid £20 to 'take the Prospect of Chatsworth' and paint 'ye

side of ye turret and the Landskip in the garden'.²¹¹ Pierre Berchet was paid £35 in 1698 for another perspective (*trompe l'oeil* vista) for the garden, painted in London rather than on site, causing much consternation about how such an enormous panel – 21 feet long – was to be transported by carrier.²¹² Heude and Berchet were both Huguenots. Another French painter, Le Maire, also travelled to Chatsworth in July 1698 and was paid £7 for unspecified work there.²¹³ Two more French painters were employed in 1699-1700 to work on the Gallery: Jacob Rambour undertook architectural painting, while Louis Chéron, another Huguenot, was paid £40 for six panels with scenes from Guarini's *Pastor Fido*, as well as £40 and £30 respectively for painting the ceilings of the Little Dining Room and Bowling Green House.²¹⁴

With the exception of Le Maire, all of these painters had arrived in England with courtly credentials: Rambour had worked at Versailles as well as the Chateau de Marly, Louis XIV's nearby private retreat. Berchet had worked at Marly and Het Loo, and together with Heude, they had found work as assistants to Verrio at Windsor.²¹⁵ Louis Chéron had trained at the *Academie Royale de Peinture et Sculpture* in Paris where he had twice won the Prix de Rome; he had also travelled in Italy where he studied the works of Raphael and Giulio Romano.²¹⁶ These artists brought to England the technical skills and knowledge of design that they had learned while working on some of the highest-profile mural schemes in

²¹¹ DCC CH37/1 fols. 47-8.

²¹² DCC CH37/1 fols. 148 & 160; W/C 208.

²¹³ Croft-Murray, *Decorative Painting*, p. 65; DCC CH37/1 fol. 148; CH37/4 fols. 25 & 27.

²¹⁴ DCC CH37/5 fol. 1; CH37/6 fol. 1.

²¹⁵ Croft-Murray, *Decorative Painting*, pp. 243, 248 & 257.

²¹⁶ D. Cast, 'Chéron, Louis (1655–1725), painter and illustrator', *ODNB* (2020) <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2648/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-5221> [accessed: 31 March 2021].

Europe. Thornhill, whom Devonshire employed in 1707 to paint the stairs and Saloon in the West Front, was an Englishman, but he was heavily influenced by Laguerre, Verrio and Chéron, whose work he had seen at Chatsworth, and he continued to work in the idiom of European mural painting. These artists enabled Devonshire to present his country and London houses as satellite European palaces, reproducing the exuberant baroque style associated with the continent.

French furnishings were also highly sought after, and the duke and duchess of Somerset employed several furniture-makers of European origin who retained close links with the continent, and were thus able to supply furniture that was characteristically French in design. The duchess purchased a carved and gilded stand from Jean Pelletier, a Huguenot who had arrived from Paris before 1682 and continued to make French-style furniture, drawing on engravings by Pierre le Pautre and others.²¹⁷ Pelletier was extensively patronised by Francophiles Ralph Montagu (the duchess' stepfather) and William III. The Somersets patronised other furniture-makers of French origin, including upholsterer Jean Poictevin and cabinet-maker Pierre Pavie, both of whom were also employed by the royal household.²¹⁸ In addition, they were major patrons of Gerrit Jensen, the leading cabinet-maker working in England, who although Dutch by birth, maintained professional links with France, including Pierre Gole, who from the 1650s was principal *ébéniste* to Louis XIV.²¹⁹ Many of Jensen's pieces used French styles and techniques, and in the 1690s he was the

²¹⁷ PHA 275 fol. 67. I am grateful to James Rothwell for bringing this to my attention. 'Pelletier, Jean/John (1682–1704)', *British and Irish Furniture Makers Online* <https://bifmo.history.ac.uk/entry/pelletier-john-1690-1710> [accessed: 25 March 2021].

²¹⁸ PHA 268. Rowell, *Petworth*, p. 42.

²¹⁹ 'Jensen, Gerrit (1667–1715)', *British and Irish Furniture Makers Online* <https://bifmo.history.ac.uk/entry/jensen-gerrit-1680-1715> [accessed: 27 September 2021].

only cabinet-maker in England to supply pewter-inlaid marquetry, a technique associated with France and the work of André-Charles Boulle. A carved and gilded table and stands with pewter inlay, still at Petworth, was probably supplied by Jensen, and typifies the French courtly aesthetic that the aristocracy strove to reproduce (fig. 2.2).²²⁰



Fig. 2.2 Attributed to Gerrit Jensen, Carved and gilded table and stands with pewter inlay (c. 1690-1700), Petworth House, Egremont Collection. Image: Amy Lim.

For the most ambitious nobles, however, it was not enough to simply place a commission, since these artists and craftsmen were nominally available to anyone who could afford them. The elite sought to differentiate themselves by being just ahead of the curve of fashion. The ultimate aim was to get as close to the source – Europe – as possible, either temporally, by being the first to employ a newly-arrived immigrant, or through association,

²²⁰ Research into the table is ongoing and will be published by Adam Bowett in due course.

by employing artists who had worked at foreign courts, or preferably both. Many of the commissions discussed below are previously unknown to scholars, including the Petworth *Grotesques* tapestries; the Huguenot jeweller Jeanne Rigal; and the identification of Devonshire as the earliest known English patron of ironsmith Jean Tijou and the countess of Exeter as the earliest known English patron of upholsterer Francis Lapiere. Besides their art-historical interest, these examples demonstrate how aristocrats sought to obtain a competitive edge over their peers.

To be the very first person or household in England to display a new style from the continent was an effective means of achieving standout. There was a delicate balance to be achieved: how to be ahead of the game, while making sure that one did not depart too far from what was deemed to be fashionable and desirable? Most aristocratic art patrons were not mould-breakers. Their interest in design served a material purpose, to present themselves as knowledgeable, wealthy, connected, and at the forefront of taste – but they were not risk-takers, and most were not interested in pushing the boundaries of art and design for its own sake. The answer was to adopt styles from Europe that had already been endorsed by the leaders of European fashion, but to be the first to display them by securing the services of newly-arrived artists and craftsmen, who had knowledge of the very latest fashions. In the following examples of Devonshire's patronage of ironsmith Jean Tijou and Somerset's commission of tapestry designs from Jean-Baptiste Monnoyer, both aristocrats used recent arrivals from France to strike a major fashion coup.

One of Devonshire's greatest artistic triumphs was when he was one of the first, if not the very first, patron in England to employ French ironsmith Jean Tijou. Tijou, who may have trained at the French court, went on to transform decorative ironwork in England through his revolutionary designs and immense skill in repoussé technique, creating elaborate and beautiful gates, grilles, and balustrades. Devonshire is identified here for the first time as Tijou's earliest recorded patron in England, a discovery of considerable art-historical significance, since it uncovers a crucial episode in the biography of one of the most influential craftsmen of late-seventeenth-century England. For this reason, full details of Tijou's work for Devonshire are elaborated below. Their working relationship also sheds light on Devonshire's use of art to fashion his image as a major player on a European stage. By being the first to patronise new arrivals like Tijou, Devonshire displayed the power of his cultural patronage, and through the French courtly aesthetic that Tijou helped to create at Chatsworth, Devonshire positioned himself among the international courtly elite.

Despite his renown, Tijou's life and works have received relatively little scholarly attention, probably because ironwork remains a niche area within art history.²²¹ Yet his work was highly influential in the palaces, churches, houses and gardens of late-seventeenth-century England, and his stature as an ironsmith is comparable to that of Grinling Gibbons as a woodcarver. A leaf through the country houses of *Britannia Illustrata*, engraved between c. 1698 and 1707, shows just how quickly and widely this new style of ironwork spread.²²² In one of the few articles dedicated to Tijou, Gervase Jackson-Stops suggested that he was

²²¹ Samantha Twomey's thesis sheds little light on Tijou's biography. S. Twomey, 'Decorative Wrought Iron in England, Wales and Scotland from 1660 to 1720: The Continental Influences', PhD thesis, University of Sussex (2017).

²²² L. Knyff & J. Kip, *Britannia Illustrata* (London, 1707).

probably a Catholic who came to England for economic reasons. He speculated that he may have been invited by Ralph Montagu, since drawings of the now-destroyed Montagu House (built 1686-90) show elaborate and characteristically-French ironwork, arguing that ‘nothing like them can have been seen in England before this date’.²²³ But the building work at Montagu House did not begin until late 1686 and the ironwork would have been commissioned at least a year or two later, when, as described below, Tijou was already working at Chatsworth. It is proposed here that Tijou arrived in England of his own accord and found work under London ironsmith William Marshall, who first brought him to Chatsworth and Devonshire’s attention.

A close examination of the Chatsworth building accounts shows Tijou to have been employed there fourteen months earlier than has previously been thought, before any work he might have undertaken at Montagu House. Until now, Tijou’s first work at Chatsworth was thought to be his balustrade for the hall and great stairs, for which he received his first payment in March 1688.²²⁴ However, he first appears in the accounts in November 1686 as an anonymous French smith employed in conjunction with Marshall to make a palisade and gates for the west entrance court.²²⁵ The identity of ‘ye French smith’ to whom three payments were recorded in April 1687 (of which two were backdated), is confirmed by further payments in which Tijou is named.²²⁶ The dates of the backdated payments can be deduced from parallel payments to Marshall on 6 November 1686 and 6 January 1687.²²⁷

²²³ G. Jackson-Stops, ‘English Baroque Ironwork – I: The Sources of Tijou’s Designs’, *Country Life* 149: 3842 (28 January 1971), p. 183.

²²⁴ Duchess of Devonshire, *Chatsworth: The House* (London, 2002), p. 58.

²²⁵ DCC CH37/1 fol. 7.

²²⁶ DCC CH37/1 fols. 8 & 9.

²²⁷ DCC CH37/1 fol. 7.

Tijou and Marshall each signed separate articles for their work, with Marshall as the principal receiving a total of £200 for the gates and palisade, while Tijou received £80, and £70 was paid to other unnamed workmen.²²⁸ This suggests that Tijou was not Marshall's apprentice but his junior partner, perhaps reflecting his status as a recent immigrant.

Tijou's work must have impressed Devonshire because in March 1688 he commissioned him to make two very large pieces that formed part of the chief visitor route at Chatsworth, a balustrade for the great cantilevered staircase leading to the state apartments, and a steep horseshoe-shaped twin flight balustrade from the Hall to the landing. Tijou was paid at least £260 for this work (excluding materials), and while the payments were made 'by Marshall's order', Marshall received nothing himself, indicating that the work was all Tijou's.²²⁹ Further commissions included a grille in the garden, and possibly the balustrade for the exterior balcony on the south front, visible in the large painting by Jan Siberechts (fig. 4.7, p. 252).²³⁰

Most of this work has since been altered or destroyed, but two surviving panels show that the original ironwork was French in design and dazzling in effect (fig. 2.3). These panels probably formed part of the balustrade for the Great Stairs or possibly the south front balcony, but were later moved to the west front. Samantha Twomey, whose PhD thesis traced continental influences on late-seventeenth-century English ironwork, drew direct stylistic links between the Chatsworth balconies and those in the *cour d'honneur* at Versailles that were based on designs by Jean Le Blond.²³¹ Tijou was evidently already

²²⁸ DCC CH37/1 fols. 7-9, 16, 20 & 30.

²²⁹ Dev Coll CH37/1 passim.

²³⁰ Dev Coll CH37/1 fol. 83.

²³¹ Twomey, 'Decorative Wrought Iron', pp. 130-1 & 207.

highly-skilled when he arrived in England, but his prior activities in France are unknown, and it is not unlikely, as Twomey speculated, that Tijou worked with Le Blond at Versailles. As Gervase Jackson-Stops demonstrated, Tijou's designs were highly derivative, closely based on the published designs of Hugues Brisville.²³² The tasselled caparison motif, however, is absent in Brisville's designs, but recurs throughout Le Blond's balconies and palisade at Versailles, suggesting that Tijou drew inspiration from both (fig. 2.4). Although by the 1680s, Tijou's designs would have been considered outmoded in France, nothing like this had been seen before in England, and it gave rise to an entirely new style of decorative ironwork.



Fig. 2.3 Jean Tijou, Balustrade panel (1688-92), now on the west front at Chatsworth House. Image: Press Association © The Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth. Reproduced by permission of Chatsworth Settlement Trustees

²³² Jackson-Stops, 'English Baroque Ironwork – I', pp. 182-3.



Fig. 2.4 Jean Le Blond, Royal Railings, Palace of Versailles (1679-82, demolished 1794, reconstructed 2005-8). Image : Amy Lim

Devonshire's discovery of Tijou appears to have been down to luck, since he was apparently brought to Chatsworth by Marshall as part of his team. His principal contribution as a patron was to recognise Tijou's skills and knowledge of French design and entrust him with major commissions. Devonshire may have leveraged his discovery of Tijou by introducing him to the king, since the ironsmith was still working at Chatsworth when he was commissioned to produce a set of great gates for the privy garden at Hampton Court.²³³ Tijou went on to execute major commissions for St Paul's cathedral as well as Burghley and other aristocratic houses. Devonshire must have been delighted that an ironsmith of such talent and style all but fell into his lap. It was a serendipitous meeting that enabled the earl

²³³ J. Gardner, *English Ironwork of the XVIIth & XVIIIth Centuries* (London, 1911), p. 38.

to be at the vanguard of decorative ironwork in England, while Tijou found a path to a highly successful career.

Like Devonshire, the duke of Somerset also ensured that he was the first in England to display a French fashion by patronising a newly-arrived artist. In this instance, he secured an introduction from his stepfather-in-law Ralph Montagu to French court artist Jean-Baptiste Monnoyer, from whom he commissioned a set of designs for tapestries. As with Devonshire's patronage of Tijou, the Petworth *Grotesques* tapestries are described here for the first time, and as well as filling an important lacuna in the history of Petworth's interiors, they illuminate the methods employed by aristocrats to secure new French designs ahead of their peers.

The *Grotesques* tapestries, woven to Monnoyer's designs in 1691 by John Vanderbank, Arrasworker to the Crown, were one of the most important furnishings in the state rooms at Petworth, but as the interiors were later reconfigured, they have been omitted from histories of Petworth. The Tapestry Room was third in the enfilade of *chambres de parade* in the duke and duchess of Somerset's new west front, rooms whose primary purpose was to display the best of the artworks and furnishings. Given that at least seventeen other rooms at Petworth contained tapestries, the name indicates the importance of the particular set that hung there.²³⁴ After the Tapestry Room was knocked through into the adjacent Carved Room in the late-eighteenth century, the tapestries which originally hung there were moved, and have subsequently been lost and forgotten.

²³⁴ PHA 6263.

However, a contract between Somerset and Vanderbank, described here for the first time, refers to a set of tapestries of the right dimensions and date to have been commissioned for the Tapestry Room. They were to be a set of ‘three peices of Silk Tapestry Hangings well and suffitiently wrought according to the best skill and workmanshapp in Tapestry.’²³⁵ The contract went on to specify that, ‘the same to be made according to the Designs of Monsieur Baptist of Crotessqu worke’, in other words, *Grotesques* designs by Jean-Baptiste Monnoyer. The three hangings were to measure 14’ 2” in depth, and 18’, 14’ 2” and 12’ 5” in width, dimensions that snugly fit the south, east and north walls respectively of the Tapestry Room.²³⁶ At an agreed price of fifty shillings per Flanders Ell, the total price amounted to around £325, a substantial outlay compared to the £170 which the duke paid to Grinling Gibbons for his work in the Carved Room in December of the following year.²³⁷ The contract is dated 28 January 1691 and stipulated that the tapestries were to be delivered before 29 September of that year, coinciding with the fitting of the interiors in the west front.²³⁸

Monnoyer had worked under Charles Le Brun at the French royal residences of Vincennes, Marly, and the Grand Trianon at Versailles. In early 1690 he came to England for a few months at the invitation of Ralph Montagu, where he was employed alongside fellow French artists Jacques Rousseau and Charles de La Fosse to paint the staircase, anti-chamber and

²³⁵ PHA 9018.

²³⁶ See the reconstructed plan of the house in the 6th duke and duchess’ time in C. Rowell, ‘Grinling Gibbons’s Carved Room at Petworth’, *Apollo* 151:450 (April 2000), p.26 fig. 9. I am very grateful to the National Trust house staff at Petworth for their help in measuring the room. The dimensions allow for a small corner fireplace which no longer exists.

²³⁷ PHA 245.

²³⁸ Jackson-Stops, ‘Building of Petworth’, pp. 328-9.

salon of Montagu House in London.²³⁹ Although war had put a stop to most trade and leisure travel, some movement between France and England was evidently still possible. Montagu must have introduced the Somersets to Monnoyer during the short time that he was in London, during which Somerset commissioned Monnoyer to draw up the designs. Vanderbank's contract refers to 'the colours of the paint in the Designs', making it clear that he was working from original painted designs rather than copying existing cartoons or tapestries.²⁴⁰

The *Grotesques* were named after the Roman wall paintings discovered in the grotto-like excavations of the Domus Aurea in Rome in the 1480s and adopted by artists such as Pinturicchio and Raphael, and they had subsequently entered the lexicon of European ornamental design. In the 1680s they were taken up by Jean Bérain, designer of masques and entertainments at Louis XIV's court, who disseminated them widely through prints. In 1688, while working at the French court, Monnoyer had drawn on Bérain's work to produce a set of *Grotesques* designs for the Beauvais tapestry works, a parallel operation to the royal works at Gobelins that served prosperous private clients. To ensure that he would be the first in England to possess a set of *Grotesques* tapestries, Somerset included a clause in Vanderbank's contract stipulating that the weaver 'shall not make or worke any hangings upon the same Designs for any person or persons whatsoever untill he hath finished and delivered the said hangings.'²⁴¹

²³⁹ L. Stevenson, 'Monnoyer, Jean-Baptiste' *Grove Art Online* (2003) <<http://www.oxfordartonline.com/groveart/view/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.001.0001/oao-9781884446054-e-7000059167>> [accessed: 22 December 2021].

²⁴⁰ PHA 9018.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

By commissioning new designs, Somerset was able to ensure that he was identified as the patron within the design of the tapestries themselves. Ordinarily, patrons commissioned tapestries to be woven with their arms in the borders, signalling that they were a commission rather than purchased ready made or second hand. Somerset went one better than this, tailoring the entire tapestry to his requirements. Comparisons between the Beauvais *Grotesques* and a later surviving set of Vanderbank *Grotesques* at Burghley, almost certainly to the same designs as those commissioned by Somerset, show that Monnoyer adapted the French designs to harmonise with the interiors at Petworth, replicating motifs from its fittings and furnishings (figs. 2.5 and 2.6).²⁴² The elephants and tumblers of the Beauvais tapestries are replaced by putti that echo those in Grinling Gibbons' carvings in the adjacent room, while the Beauvais bronze vases that hold abundant flowers are transformed into blue and white porcelain vases like those in the duchess of Somerset's growing collection. In the 1750 inventory, three 'Japan China Jarrs' were recorded on the mantelpiece in the Tapestry Room, tangible manifestations of their woven counterparts.²⁴³ Two garlanded herms supporting a ledge in the centre of the tapestry are also very close to the legs of the gilded table in fig. 2.2, and Monnoyer may even have copied them. The tapestries thus combined the prestige of being the first to display the latest French fashion, with the individuality and inventiveness of a bespoke commission. Visitors to Petworth would have been in no doubt of the connections and influence required to obtain such exclusive works of art.

²⁴² Burghley Collection TAP03010 & TAP03011.

²⁴³ PHA 6263.



Fig. 2.5 Beauvais manufactory (Philippe Béhagle, maker; Jean-Baptiste Monnoyer, designer)
 'The Elephant' from a set of five *Grotesques* (designed 1688, made c. 1690-1711)
 Wool and silk, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Fig. 2.6 Soho manufactory (John Vanderbank, maker; John-Baptiste Monnoyer, designer)
 Detail of *Grotesques* tapestry from a set of two (c. 1691-1707), Burghley House.
 Image: Amy Lim.

Aristocratic patronage of Huguenot goldsmiths and jewellers

From 1681, increasing religious persecution in France drove many Huguenots to seek refuge in Protestant countries. Silversmithing was a common occupation among these migrant craftsmen and women, and English aristocrats swiftly took advantage of their sophisticated design and technical skills.²⁴⁴ They used techniques of moulding and casting in high relief to produce highly-finished pieces in a classical style influenced by French court designers Jean Bérain, Jean Lepautre and Paul Ducerceau. This was a significant departure from the Dutch-influenced Caroline English silver that tended to be heavily embossed or flat-chased with chinoiserie designs.²⁴⁵ Although William and Mary patronised Huguenot smiths (Pierre Platel came to England with William III after the Revolution), the majority of royal commissions continued to go to English goldsmiths such as George Garthorne and Benjamin Pyne, probably thanks to lobbying by the Goldsmiths' Company, who sought to protect the interests of English goldsmiths.²⁴⁶ The aristocracy were under no such obligation, and enthusiastically patronised the Huguenot smiths in a symbiotic relationship that helped the craftsmen to establish themselves in a new country, while the patrons enjoyed their high quality and fashionable products. The duchess of Somerset and duke of Devonshire were among them, but as two of the wealthiest individuals in England, they also distinguished themselves from their peers in quantity as well as quality, through the sheer magnitude of the commissions they placed.

The duchess of Somerset was a major patron in her own right of goldsmiths and jewellers, and from the spring of 1689 she switched all her silver patronage to Huguenot smiths. She

²⁴⁴ J. Hayward, *Huguenot Silver in England 1688-1727* (London, 1959), pp. 6 & 10.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p.10.

patronised the most renowned goldsmiths of the period, Pierre Harache, Pierre Platel, and David Willaume, as well as lesser known makers Tartully Lehault and Mme Garnier; her commissions included tea, chocolate and coffee ware, chimney and lighting furniture, and small personal items.²⁴⁷ She also patronised a Huguenot jewellery maker, Jeanne Rigal (fl. 1689-1707), whose activities are described here for the first time.²⁴⁸ Born Jeanne Collett, she had probably arrived in London in the 1680s with her first husband, Samuel Berny.²⁴⁹ After, or perhaps during, her second marriage to Jean/John Rigal, she began working independently as a jeweller, capitalising on the skills that she had either learned in France or from her French husbands. The wording of her bills makes it clear that it was Rigal herself who fashioned the jewellery and sold the stones ('fet par moy Jeanne rigal'); she was not merely preparing the paperwork on behalf of a male relative.²⁵⁰

Rigal must have been highly skilled since the duchess placed the lion's share of her jewellery commissions in volume and value with her; one bill alone totalled £1290, for which Rigal also supplied credit at 2.1%.²⁵¹ Items included rings, clasps, buttons and diamond-set buckles; the large clasp billed for £250 on 22 April 1689 may have been one of those worn by Somerset on her manteau when she took a prominent role at William and Mary's coronation eleven days earlier (just visible in fig. 1.10). It is difficult to assess whether Rigal's reputation was already established when Somerset began to patronise her in February 1688, since her activities have been previously unknown to scholars. The silence in

²⁴⁷ Bills from Huguenot smiths can be found in PHA 266, 267, 268, 274 & 282.

²⁴⁸ She does not appear in the records of the Goldsmiths' Company. Since most Huguenots operated outside the guild system there is little documentation of their activities. A. Heal, *The London Goldsmiths 1200-1800* (Cambridge, 1935), p. 232.

²⁴⁹ TNA PROB 11/505/111. In her will, her name is spelt Rigall, but she herself spelt it Rigal.

²⁵⁰ PHA 266 fol. 36.

²⁵¹ PHA 266 fol. 5. Rigal's other bills are PHA 266 fols. 25 & 49, 267 fol. 47 & 282 fol. 12.

the historical record suggests that she was not an established maker, yet the scale of her making and banking operations imply that she ran a successful business. In either case, the immense amount of money Somerset spent with Rigal, wearing her jewels on important ceremonial occasions, indicate the value that she placed on the Huguenot's talents.

The first duke of Devonshire placed great importance on Huguenot plate as a show of magnificence. Several surviving pieces he commissioned in the 1690s and 1700s are of exceptional weight and quality, marking him out as a patron of vast wealth as well as taste. There are no archival records relating to their acquisition, but the makers can be identified from the hallmarks. Philip Rollos, who also supplied the crown, was probably the 'PR' marked on a magnificent perfume burner still at Chatsworth, the largest and heaviest ever recorded.²⁵² Pierre Harache made Devonshire a silver-gilt rosewater dish and ewer in 1697 (fig. 2.7), and the following year David Willaume supplied a pair of silver-gilt wine coolers; all were engraved with the Devonshire's arms.²⁵³ An enormous silver chandelier by an unknown maker, bearing Devonshire's arms, is decorated with cast cherubs and acanthus scrolls characteristic of Huguenot work (fig. 2.8). Most fabulous of all was the solid gold ewer and basin engraved with the duke's arms, made by Pierre Platel in 1701 and described as his 'masterpiece'.²⁵⁴ Devonshire's plate was not exclusively Huguenot-made, but his patronage of Huguenot goldsmiths for his most costly and impressive pieces indicates that, like Somerset, he placed high value on their knowledge and abilities. Jewellery and plate functioned as both work of art and repository of wealth. By commissioning work of such

²⁵² Barker, *Devonshire Inheritance*, p. 102.

²⁵³ Rosewater dish and ewer, museum number 1969,0705.28a-b, www.britishmuseum.org [accessed: 23 June 2019]; Barker, *Devonshire Inheritance*, p. 103.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 104.

visibly high value from fashionable and skilled Huguenot smiths, Devonshire and Somerset ensured that their plate and jewellery spoke equally of their economic and cultural power.



Fig. 2.7 Pierre Harache (maker), Blaise Gentot (engraver), ewer and dish (1697), silver-gilt, British Museum, London. © The Trustees of the British Museum



Fig. 2.8 Multi-branched chandelier, unknown maker, probably Huguenot (c. 1694), silver, The Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth. Image: Amy Lim

Immigrants as employees

The possession of foreign luxuries as a marker of status also extended to household staff.

Whilst human beings are certainly not goods, they were nevertheless sometimes employed for the fashionability of their person, as well as their knowledge and skills. The duke of Devonshire retained a French Huguenot clergyman, Monsieur Huet, and a German steward, Henry Lowman, to advise on and oversee his interiors and gardens, and their contribution will be explored in detail in Chapter Four. He also hired Frenchmen in conspicuous positions. To the dismay of his other staff, he engaged a French steward seemingly for his nationality alone, since the 'young french gentleman [...] never was a Steward before'.²⁵⁵ Devonshire's French valet-de-chambre would have ensured that he was turned out *à la mode*, and his French cook laid on a lavish *repas* for the French ambassador when he dined at Devonshire House in 1698.²⁵⁶ A French flower gardener, Pierre Audias, was sent to Chatsworth from February 1696 to July 1697, where he received the second-highest wages of any employee (£16 a year plus £12 12s board wages).²⁵⁷ Somerset, who also had a French cook, employed an Italian steward, Brunetti, and a Dutch gardener.²⁵⁸ European staff could offer useful advice and contacts, but simply employing them was a fashionable act in and of itself.

It was not only European household staff who were employed as a display of fashion. All three of the male aristocrats surveyed here employed Black page boys for their 'exotic' appeal. Devonshire and Somerset's Black attendants appear, in a subservient role, in their

²⁵⁵ DCC W/C/50.

²⁵⁶ Davies, 'Dukes of Devonshire, Newcastle and Rutland', p. 159; *Prior Papers*, p. 227.

²⁵⁷ DCC CH37/1 fols. 128 & 131.

²⁵⁸ PHA 245 & 249.

full-length Garter portraits by John Closterman (fig. 1.9). The attendants in the portraits are almost certainly the actual boys who worked in the Devonshire and Somerset households, and not artist's models. Not only are they different people (in two portraits that are otherwise remarkably similar), but their presence in the households is confirmed by archival references, including a payment for 'boardwages to ye black boy [and] 2 pair of shooes & a pair of stockings for ye black boy'.²⁵⁹ The Black page at Chatsworth received wages, but the Black page who worked at Burghley may not have, since he was purchased as a slave. On 28 March 1679, Exeter paid Edward Heward Esq £54 3s 4d 'for the Blackmore'.²⁶⁰ We do not know this enslaved person's name, or even gender, though he was probably a boy. In Francis Peck's list of 73 members of the Burghley household in 1694, only five are not identified by name, one of whom is no. 25 'The Page'.²⁶¹ The enslavement and trafficking of children, so abhorrent today, was of little concern in the quest to secure a fashionable Black page.

Architecture, prints and personal connections

Architecture was the most visible of all art forms, but also one that was, for obvious reasons, impossible to import. It was also very difficult to employ an immigrant architect, since there were very few professional architects at all, let alone foreign-born. Most private houses were built by master masons, working under the direction of their patron. Aristocrats employed a variety of means to acquire the necessary knowledge to build their country houses in the latest continental styles. These included drawing on their own experiences of foreign travel, the study of published engravings, and word-of-mouth. They

²⁵⁹ DCC CH37/1 fol. 136.

²⁶⁰ NatWest CH 194/6 fol. 93r.

²⁶¹ F. Peck, *Desiderata Curiosa* vol. 1 (London, 1732), p. 27.

used their networks of friends and acquaintances who had travelled abroad, and foreign artists in their employ to advise on continental styles. Armed with this knowledge, and backed up by the wealth that enabled them to build on a lavish scale, aristocrats recreated French *chateaux* on their English estates.

Chatsworth's continental architecture was lauded by Summerson as an 'artistic revolution' and has been described as 'the first truly baroque façade in England', but there was very little involvement by Europeans in its construction. It was masterminded by Devonshire himself, who drew on published engravings, personal connections, and the knowledge gleaned from his earlier foreign travels, to direct his architects and masons.²⁶² The east and south fronts were designed by the English architect William Talman, who had never built anything like this before. Although nothing is known about Talman's early life or training, his earliest houses, built around the mid-1680s were relatively plain, and it is likely that Devonshire was closely involved in the plans that Talman drew up for Chatsworth.²⁶³ They were developed through an iterative process between architect and client, and after three months of discussions and 'severall designs and Modells', Devonshire and Talman settled on a design that borrowed heavily from continental architecture, in particular the 1665 designs by Italian architect Gianlorenzo Bernini for the east front of the Louvre.²⁶⁴

Devonshire may have been inspired by his visits to France some years earlier, a prolonged Grand Tour in 1657-61, and two more spells in Paris in 1669 and 1680 to escape his

²⁶² Summerson, 'The Classical Country House', p. 542.

²⁶³ P. Smith, 'Talman, William (bap. 1650, d. 1719), architect and collector', *ODNB* (2008), <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2468/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-26956> [accessed: 18 July 2019].

²⁶⁴ DCC CS1/70/23.

creditors.²⁶⁵ He would have seen the building work underway on the Louvre (albeit to different designs), but he was more likely to be familiar with Bernini's unexecuted designs from the engravings of them that were widely circulated throughout Europe. It was James Lees-Milne who suggested that the façade of the south front at Chatsworth (fig. 2.9), with its horizontal emphasis, rusticated basement, heavy cornice, and giant pilasters, may have been influenced by Bernini's third design for the Louvre, engraved by Jean Marot (fig. 2.10).²⁶⁶ Although Talman's design differs in several respects – he replaced Bernini's Corinthian pilasters with Ionic, and the triangular window pediments with heavy keystones – the effect is nevertheless far closer to the architectural style favoured by Louis XIV, than the projecting wings, steeply-pitched roofs and central triangular pediments used by architects such as Roger Pratt and William Winde, that had characterised English country house architecture since the Restoration.

²⁶⁵ Hosford, 'Cavendish, William, first duke of Devonshire'; Davies, 'Dukes of Devonshire, Newcastle and Rutland', p. 25.

²⁶⁶ J. Lees-Milne, 'Chatsworth Derbyshire. I. A seat of the Duke of Devonshire', *Country Life*, 143:3710 (11 April 1968), p. 892.



Fig. 2.9 William Talman, south front of Chatsworth House (1685-90). Image: Amy Lim.



Fig. 2.10 Gian Lorenzo Bernini (architect), Jean Marot (engraver), 'Fassade du Louvre du Costé de l'eau, du desseing du Cavalier Bernini', from J. Marot, *L'Architecture française* (Paris, c. 1670). Image: Wikimedia Commons.

Perhaps emboldened by the success of the south front, Devonshire appears to have acted as his own architect for the west front at Chatsworth, once again drawing inspiration from the architectural works of Louis XIV (see Chapter Four, fig. 4.9). Talman had continued to work for Devonshire until 1696, designing the east front at Chatsworth, minor alterations at Hardwick, and major alterations to Devonshire House in London.²⁶⁷ But by 1700, when Devonshire decided to rebuild the west front, the relationship between architect and patron

²⁶⁷ For Talman's work at Devonshire House, see DCC W/C/102-4.

had undergone a serious rift, caused by financial disagreements with the workmen employed by Talman under the contract system. In the absence of any other evidence, it seems that Devonshire did not employ an architect for his grand new entrance front but advised the builder John Fitch directly. Lees-Milne described the west front as ‘an obvious but extremely clever adaptation’ of Mansart’s 1683 two-storied pavilion at Marly.²⁶⁸ The work at Marly was not begun until after Devonshire’s last visit to France, so once again, Devonshire seems to have based the design on published engravings. Matthew Hirst suggested that he may have seen Perelle’s engraving of Marly in Langlois’ 1690 *Vues des plus Beaux Lieux de France et d’Italie*.²⁶⁹ He may also have drawn on the knowledge of Louis Chéron, a Huguenot mural painter then working at Chatsworth who had come to England from France in the early 1690s. A painting by Chéron and a drawing by local carver Samuel Watson show what are probably early or intermediate designs for the west front. Since published engravings were widely available and affordable, in theory anyone could copy them and build their house in the manner of Louis XIV. In practice, it needed enormous ambition and very deep pockets to carry out such a venture, of which Devonshire possessed both.

For the north front, the last to be built (1705–6), Devonshire did not consult published engravings but drew on the knowledge of Thomas Archer, a gentleman-architect who had studied in Rome.²⁷⁰ He had already designed the cascade house at Chatsworth in 1702, and

²⁶⁸ Lees-Milne, ‘Chatsworth Derbyshire. IV’, p. 1111.

²⁶⁹ M. Hirst, ‘The Influence of the French Court on the 1st Duke of Devonshire’s Chatsworth’, *Bulletin du Centre du recherche du château de Versailles* (2012) doi: 10.4000/crcv.11943 [accessed: 19 July 2019].

²⁷⁰ A. Gomme, ‘Archer, Thomas (1668/9–1743), architect and courtier’, *ODNB* (2008) <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:4148/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-628> [accessed: 5 August 2019].

Devonshire employed him in an informal capacity as architect on the north front, though not to act as overseer as Talman had. Archer designed a façade with a projecting bow in an Italianate style, supplying drawings for the decorative stonework as well as the overall structure.²⁷¹ His contribution was recognised in Devonshire's will with a gift of £200, 'in acknowledgement of his favours and his care and trouble touching the Building of my House'.²⁷² Devonshire's shift towards Italian taste in the first decade of the eighteenth century illuminates the development of elite taste at this time. Helen Jacobsen has argued that Charles Montagu, fifth earl of Manchester's patronage of Italian art and furnishings, and his taste for classical architecture, pre-dated the wider turn towards Italy from the 1710s that was spearheaded by Lord Burlington.²⁷³ The Italianate north front of Chatsworth suggests that Manchester's taste was not unique; nor, like Manchester, is there any suggestion of an ideological or political basis for Devonshire's turn. It may simply have been the availability of an architect who had studied in Rome that gave Devonshire the opportunity to move on from French taste, now that it was becoming more popular, and showcase something new.

The fifth earl and countess of Exeter made few changes to the Elizabethan exterior of Burghley House, probably as a tribute to its builder William Cecil, Lord Burghley, Lord Treasurer to Elizabeth I and founder of the dynasty.²⁷⁴ However, they completely reconfigured the interior architecture in line with contemporary French arrangements. The

²⁷¹ DCC CH37/9 fol. 68.

²⁷² DCC CS1/18/14.

²⁷³ Chapter 7, 'Venetian Influences: The Earl of Manchester, 1662–1722' in Jacobsen, *Luxury and Power*, pp. 160–184. See also Chapter 3, 'Richard Boyle, 3rd Earl of Burlington (1694–1753)' in J. Lees-Milne, *The Earls of Creation* (London, 1962), pp. 103–172.

²⁷⁴ *Burghley*, p. 9.

great hall was abandoned to lumber, while the first and second floor galleries on the west front were divided into individual chambers.²⁷⁵ Doorways were aligned to create mirrored suites of apartments for the earl and countess on the ground floor of the west front.²⁷⁶ On the ground floor of the south front, a suite of richly-furnished apartments was created for family use, and above them an enfilade of state apartments, in the centre of which was a saloon. Now known as the 'second George room', its intended function as a dining room (i.e. saloon) is indicated by the mural paintings of Ceres, Bacchus, and a fictive buffet of dining plate. This was a specifically French layout. Mark Girouard pinpointed the key difference between French and English enfilades as being the prominence given in France to the central *grand salon* (anglicised to 'saloon'), a descendent of the earlier great chamber.²⁷⁷

It is not known if an architect was employed at Burghley, although a London-based surveyor was certainly involved, possibly William Talman, who was among the earl's creditors at his death.²⁷⁸ Like the Somersets, the Exeters probably relied on word-of-mouth, since they did not travel to France until after the building work at Burghley was underway. Burghley's internal architecture may have been influenced by the château of Vaux-le-Vicomte, built for Nicolas Fouquet in the late 1650s and subsequently acquired by Louis XIV and which had set a precedent for French palace architecture. Devonshire had spent some months in Paris in 1669, where it is likely that he visited Vaux-le-Vicomte, and certainly would have familiarised himself with the latest architectural developments. It is probable that he drew

²⁷⁵ BA EX 51/18; Impey, *Four Centuries of Decorative Arts*, p. 32.

²⁷⁶ See floor plans of 1623 and 1688 in Impey, *Four Centuries of Decorative Arts*, pp. 68-71.

²⁷⁷ Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, p. 128.

²⁷⁸ BA EX 51/8/13; NatWest CH 194/10 fol. 451r.

on his experiences to help his sister and brother-in-law to replicate French court architecture in England.

Imported goods

So far, this chapter has demonstrated how English aristocrats displayed their cultural and economic power by using immigrant artists and craftsmen, published engravings, and information from their contacts to commission artworks, furnishings and buildings in England to continental designs. These import substitutes made up the majority of the artworks commissioned and collected by English aristocrats, but in some instances they were able to access foreign-made goods. This chapter will now consider where and how they obtained and displayed imported artworks. Aristocrats differentiated themselves from their peers and the lesser ranks by using their contacts to obtain goods that were not usually available in the London marketplace, by exploiting their contacts overseas or in England. Where imports were commercially available to a wider market, they distinguished themselves through the quantity and quality of goods that they collected and displayed, or by being among the first to acquire new products that had only recently become available.

Despite the geographic proximity of continental Europe, obtaining imported artworks and luxury goods was difficult and expensive, even in times of peace. Until 1695, it was not permitted to import paintings for sale, although imports for personal use were allowed and some slipped through the net in this way. Some commodities such as wine and other comestibles were available through retailers, as were textiles and lower-value works of art such as the engravings described above. However, higher-value finished items such as

tapestries and fine furniture were typically made to commission. Without contacts on the ground to place commissions (such as the diplomats profiled in *Luxury and Power*, or the earl of Exeter's agents described in Chapter Four), such goods were largely beyond the reach of those unable to travel overseas.²⁷⁹ On occasion, wealthy and connected aristocrats could exploit their contacts to obtain imported continental artworks and furnishings. In 1683 the duke of Somerset took delivery of a shipment of French furniture, probably thanks to his stepfather-in-law Montagu's connections, and in 1686, Devonshire received a cargo of paintings, almost certainly sent from Italy by the agents working for his brother-in-law Exeter.²⁸⁰

Some contemporary (especially Dutch) and old master paintings were available at auction, and Devonshire and Somerset were both regular attendees at these events. Such auctions were a new feature in London, and one of the earliest picture sales was organised by Parry Walton and Grinling Gibbons in May 1686, possibly in conjunction with Sir Robert Gayer, acting as their agent in Italy.²⁸¹ Somerset was already using Walton's services as a restorer, and the role of artists and dealers as advisers will be considered at greater length in Chapter Four. At this sale, Somerset purchased Claude Lorrain's *A River Landscape with Jacob and Laban and his Daughters* for £200. Along with at least two other paintings by Claude at the same sale, this was the first painting by the artist to be imported into England since the two paintings commissioned by an unknown English patron over four decades earlier.²⁸² The

²⁷⁹ Jacobsen, *Luxury and Power*.

²⁸⁰ PHA 341; 'Entry Book: February 1686, 11-20', in, *Calendar of Treasury Books, Volume 8, 1685-1689* ed. W. Shaw (London, 1923), pp. 586-604. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-treasury-books/vol8/pp586-604> [accessed: 20 September 2021].

²⁸¹ A. Laing, 'A River Landscape with Jacob and Laban and his Daughters', NT 486253, <https://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/486253> [accessed: 20 December 2021].

²⁸² Ibid.

high price reflected the scarcity and desirability of owning a painting by the renowned French/Italian master.

Despite the distance, increasing quantities of luxury goods and materials began to reach England from other continents, opening up new arenas for consumption and competition.

In the sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries, porcelain was imported in very small quantities, available only to the wealthiest and often displayed in a *kunstkammer* setting.

However, in the second half of the seventeenth century, expanding trade with Asia extended the reach of 'exotic' oriental goods down the social scale, while the colonisation of the Americas introduced new materials, both raw (sometimes live) and processed. Tea; Chinese and Japanese porcelain; fan sticks; paper screens; bamboo furniture; lacquer cabinets, chests and tea tables; pictures; silks, muslins and calicoes, were all stocked by 'India merchants' such as Solomon de Medina, John van Collema and Pierre Motteux (fig 2.11). Prices began at just a few shillings, bringing Asian imports within the reach of London's growing mercantile classes.²⁸³ As the Dutch and English East India Companies brought more frequent cargoes, greater quantities reached the London market,²⁸⁴ raising the question: how did the elite respond to the deepening market penetration of luxury imports, the exclusivity of which they had hitherto used as a means of conveying wealth and status?

²⁸³ Sample India merchants' bills can be found in PHA 268, PHA 274, PHA 275 & PHA 282.

²⁸⁴ M. Berg, 'Asian Luxuries and the Making of the European Consumer Revolution' in Berg and Eger (eds.), *Luxury in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 228-9. Some Asian imports reached London via Amsterdam.



Fig. 2.11 Dutch school, *Interior of a Chinese shop* (c. 1680-1700), Fan leaf, gouache on paper, mounted onto a wooden panel. Image © Victoria & Albert Museum, London.

Aristocrats responded by collecting and displaying goods that were distinguished by their quantity, quality and scarcity. As the middling sort made their first small purchases of porcelain, aristocrats bought larger and finer pieces in ever greater quantities. They did not buy just a few teacups or a vase: they bought hundreds, and created massed displays on top of cabinets, mantelpieces, and door frames. The duchess of Somerset visited Solomon de Medina and John van Collema repeatedly, sometimes several times a week, where she purchased large numbers of vases, jars, beakers, cups and bottles.²⁸⁵ The duke prioritised quality and size over quantity.²⁸⁶ He paid a phenomenal £110 in May 1693 for 'a large old China jar and a fine china serpent bought of the Lady St Johns', and in 1695 purchased 'two very fine large pursaline Rowle wagons' from Mrs Bull for £30.

²⁸⁵ PHA 268 fol. 30.

²⁸⁶ It is possible that the duke also bought smaller items, disbursed from petty accounts of which there is no record.

As described in Chapter One, the Somersets displayed porcelain in abundance in the most prestigious rooms at Petworth and Northumberland House. The duchess' dressing room and closet had the highest concentration, with thirty-one and forty-five pieces respectively, but the duke also had seventeen pieces over the doors of his dressing room.²⁸⁷ Besides the porcelain, each of the principal guest bedrooms and drawing rooms had a Japanese lacquer cabinet, expensive items that could retail for over £50.²⁸⁸ Lacquer cabinets also made impressive gifts, and in May 1704 the duchess sent 'a large Indon cabonite to ye Dutchess of Marlboroughs'.²⁸⁹ The copious display of Asian imports was in part due to the stylistic lead of Mary II, as described above, but the sheer quantity of goods displayed, and by implication their value, also sent a clear message to visitors about the Somersets' wealth.

Just as the Somersets displayed their wealth and taste through the quantity of porcelain and lacquer they displayed, so did the Exeters with Asian textiles. Although they acquired velvets and silks in Italy, they also spent lavishly on Indian silks and quilts with the same London retailers patronised by the Somersets: Solomon de Medina, who in May 1685 was paid £45 for two quilts (possibly the 'Rich Embroidred Indian Quilt in Birds etc.' on the earl's bed), and Jane Harrison, who supplied '2 Indian Quilts...with red fflowers and red ffringe' for the countess' bed.²⁹⁰ The imported upholstery fabrics identified in the 1688 inventory were probably purchased from mercer Henry Coape, with whom they spent the staggering sum of

²⁸⁷ PHA 6263. The duke's dressing room had been renamed 'The Green Cloth Table room' by 1750 but from the layout was evidently part of the duke's original private apartments.

²⁸⁸ PHA 6263; PHA 248.

²⁸⁹ PHA 279 fol. 3.

²⁹⁰ NatWest CH 194/7 fol. 180r & BA EX 51/18.

£1,076 between 1679 and 1687.²⁹¹ As at Petworth, they were used in the earl and countess' private apartments and the principal reception rooms. Lord Exeter's closet was hung with 'Indian crimson and gold stuff' and Lady Exeter's dressing room walls and chairs were upholstered with crimson damask and Indian flowered silk.²⁹² The sheer quantity of expensive silks and satins on display implied wealth as well as taste, but this level of expenditure was unsustainable and, as discussed in Chapter Six, would ultimately result in damage to the estate.

The Exeters' approach to collecting and display combined quantity with connoisseurship. These might be seen as mutually exclusive, but their porcelain collection, recorded in detail in an inventory, is renowned as one the great collections of the seventeenth century, as much for the rarity of the items that comprised it, as the quantity.²⁹³ This collection of Chinese and Japanese porcelain contained many uncommon specimens, and was also noteworthy for the preponderance of figurative pieces. Whereas most late-seventeenth-century porcelain collections were predominantly of vessels of varying sizes and shapes, the Exeters owned many figures of gods, people, animals, and birds.²⁹⁴ The earl appears to have particularly valued these pieces, and the porcelain in his ante-room, bedchamber and closet was almost all figurative, either Japanese, decorated in the Kakiemon palette, or Chinese blanc-de-chine.²⁹⁵ The countess preferred to mix her figurines with porcelain vessels and small statues of European origin, fashioned from alabaster, ivory or box. At the time of the

²⁹¹ PHA 266 fol. 52; NatWest CH 194/6 fol. 155r; 194/7 fols. 101r, 178-9, 213r; 194/10 fol. 36r.

²⁹² BA EX 51/18.

²⁹³ O. Impey, 'Japanese Porcelain at Burghley House: The Inventory of 1688 and the Sale of 1888', *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 37 (2002), pp. 117-31 doi:10.2307/1513079 [accessed: 4 September 2020].

²⁹⁴ BA EX 41/82; EX 51/18.

²⁹⁵ [Burghley House], *The Wrestling Boys* (Stamford, 1983).

Exeters' collecting there was a distinct hierarchy of porcelain, with the rarer Japanese wares considered superior to Chinese, and their collection was particularly distinguished in this regard.²⁹⁶ Oliver Impey found several examples of Japanese porcelain in the 1688 inventory to be the earliest recorded pieces in Europe, where they can still be matched against surviving pieces.²⁹⁷

How did the Exeters acquire such a distinctive collection? They amassed it in the decade before Mary II arrived from the Dutch Republic with her porcelain collection and precipitated a boom in porcelain sales. Such pieces were not commonly for sale in England, and Impey believed Exeter may have had contact with a dealer who sourced his wares directly from private cargoes. English access to Japanese porcelain in the seventeenth century came principally through Dutch private traders who passed on their wares to English retailers, and occasionally other sources such as the capture of a VOC [Dutch East India Company] ship in 1674, and a shipment from Siam in 1684.²⁹⁸ Impey identified a group of small Japanese dishes not intended for the export market, and found only at Burghley, Drayton House and Welbeck Abbey, suggesting the existence of a so-called 'A1 dealer' (these three houses all being in relative proximity along that road).²⁹⁹ Alternatively, Lord Exeter's banker, Francis Child, was a major investor in the East India Company, and may have been a conduit to private sales. Private consignments on East India Company ships, known as 'supercargoes', may possibly have included Japanese porcelain, purchased

²⁹⁶ P. Ferguson, "'Japan China' taste and elite ceramic consumption in 18th-century England: revising the narrative', in Stobart and Hann (eds.), *The Country House*, p. 114.

²⁹⁷ Impey, 'Japanese Porcelain at Burghley House', p. 129.

²⁹⁸ Ferguson, "'Japan China' taste', p. 116.

²⁹⁹ Impey, 'Japanese Porcelain at Burghley House', p. 129.

in various Asian ports as part of the complex intra-Asian trade web. As with the Somersets' *Grotesques* tapestries, personal contacts could be the key to accessing exclusive goods. However the Exeters managed to acquire their porcelain, what was important was that it *was* difficult to acquire, and could not be easily replicated by other collectors.

The colonisation of the Americas and its associated transatlantic trade also brought new goods that could be used to connote status. William Blathwayt, an ambitious government official, exploited his connections in colonial America to build his house with imported hardwoods and fill his garden with exotic plants and trees.³⁰⁰ The implication of English country houses within networks of colonialism, enslavement, and exploitation, and the financial and geographical origins of their structures and contents, is an area of current scholarly focus.³⁰¹ The aristocrats profiled in this thesis were not directly involved in colonisation or the transatlantic trade, but they nevertheless benefited from these newly-available goods. The Devonshires and Somersets kept aviaries of tropical birds from South America and the Caribbean. The Somersets kept their parrots in cages, and at Chatsworth, Devonshire built a group of dedicated 'volaries', besides several cages built onto the lower windows of the east front.³⁰² The 'outlandish fowle' that were housed in them included canaries, shakers and three 'West India Ducks'.³⁰³ The gardens at Chatsworth were planted with Virginia and Bermuda cedars, and the two 'Jamaica wood Tables' recorded in the 1688 Burghley inventory may have been an early example of mahogany furniture.³⁰⁴ As further

³⁰⁰ R. Goulding, *Dyrham Park and William Blathwayt* (Swindon, 2017).

³⁰¹ In particular, see Finn and Smith (eds.), *East India Company at Home*, A. Hann and M. Dresser (eds.), *Slavery and the British country house* (Swindon, 2013), and Grass, 'The West Indian landed gentleman'.

³⁰² PHA 341; DCC CH37/1/165. The window cages were seen by Celia Fiennes. *Celia Fiennes*, p. 106.

³⁰³ DCC CH37/1/148.

³⁰⁴ DCC W/C/34. In the 'Tile room' and the '4th room'. BA EX 51/18.

global markets opened up, the aristocracy exploited the opportunity to furnish their homes and gardens with newly-available imported goods.

This chapter has demonstrated the strong demand among the English aristocracy for foreign artists, artworks, designs and luxury goods, and how they used them to convey status and differentiate themselves from their peers and the lower ranks. In a period when travel and trade were severely disrupted by warfare, aristocrats in England used their cultural and economic power in a variety of ways to obtain these goods. They patronised immigrant artists and craftsmen who had acquired their knowledge and skills in Europe and introduced new styles or even genres to England. They exploited their networks to gain access to goods and designs, and aimed to be the first to display new styles. Aristocrats were swift to patronise the influx of refugee Huguenot goldsmiths as well as economic migrants, and gained a competitive edge by being the first in England to patronise a newly arrived artist or display a new design. Finally, as imported goods became more widely available on the London market, they sought to differentiate themselves either by seeking out newly-available goods from the Americas, or by the sheer weight of their wealth, out-displaying their rivals in quality and quantity. None of these strategies, however, rivalled the advantages of foreign travel, which allowed aristocrats to obtain the most desirable works of art at source. Travel was the most effective means of acquiring prestigious foreign art and luxury goods, and forms the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Three

Travel, or, More than the Grand Tour

Those Spoils indeed, which now thy Burghley store
Were once the Ornament of Tybur's Shores.

Francis Peck, *Desiderata Curiosa*³⁰⁵

Introduction

This thesis has already addressed how foreign artworks, designs, and luxury goods could convey status, and outlined the strategies utilised by aristocrats to procure them in England. It now turns to the ways in which they acquired artworks, and cultural capital, by travelling to Europe in person. Travel in Europe was not something to be undertaken lightly. Even in peacetime, it was difficult, time-consuming, expensive and risky, but it could also yield rich rewards, and was the most direct and effective means of procuring foreign art and luxury goods. It also enabled aristocratic travellers to see new developments in art and architecture, to build a network of overseas contacts, and to interact with other members of the European elite.

There were various reasons why an English aristocrat might travel to Europe in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. Some were good opportunities to buy art, others were decidedly not. Diplomatic posts at the most senior levels were often filled by nobles; Viscount Fauconberg was appointed ambassador to Venice in 1670, and twenty-seven years later Charles Montagu, fourth earl of Manchester, took up the same position.

³⁰⁵ Peck, *Desiderata Curiosa*, vol. 1, p. 47.

Both acquired artworks and luxury goods during their postings, and the ways in which diplomats exploited their privileged access has been magnificently described by Helen Jacobsen.³⁰⁶ Others travelled for infelicitous reasons. Some were on the run, fleeing their creditors or abusive husbands. Some journeyed to Europe as political exiles, either in disgrace or disgust. Ralph Montagu spent 1683-5 in Paris to avoid the recriminatory atmosphere at court following the Rye House plot, and after 1714, exiled Jacobites eddied around the cities of Europe.³⁰⁷ The uncertainty of when, or if, they would return, and the associated financial precarity, meant that political exiles were not likely to be large-scale purchasers of art.

Another catalyst for travel was war, and its associated diplomacy. Conflict and art have long been intertwined, and we need only consider the looting of the Benin Bronzes in 1897, or the splendour of the Field of the Cloth of Gold in 1520, to understand the significance of military conflict as an agent of acquisition and display. William III returned annually to the United Provinces for the duration of the campaign season throughout the Nine Years War (1688-1697). He was accompanied by a retinue of nobles and functionaries who took advantage of the opportunity to make purchases while they were abroad. Military victories also brought spoils. Blenheim Palace, built for John Churchill, first duke of Marlborough, between 1705 and 1722 was metaphorically a giant war trophy, adorned with literal booty.³⁰⁸

³⁰⁶ Jacobsen, *Luxury and Power*, pp. 12 & 163.

³⁰⁷ E. Metzger, 'Montagu, Ralph, first duke of Montagu (bap. 1638, d. 1709), politician and diplomat', *ODNB* (2004) <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2648/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-19030> [accessed: 2 April 2021].

³⁰⁸ J. Legard, 'Vanbrugh, Blenheim Palace, and the Meanings of Baroque Architecture', PhD thesis, University of York (2013).

Although war dominated international relations in late Stuart England, there were interludes of peace when leisure travel flourished. In the last quarter of the seventeenth century, after the lifting of the century-long ban on travel to Rome, increasing numbers of travellers visited Italy (usually via France), many of whom were young men on a Grand Tour.³⁰⁹ This tour was principally didactic, in which the young male heir finished his education by visiting the great sites of classical antiquity and contemporary culture, while polishing his European languages and manners. Many commissioned their portrait, often while in Rome, and picked up a few other works, but in the seventeenth century at least, buying art was not the primary purpose.

Travel played a significant role in the art patronage and self-fashioning of two out of the three aristocratic couples surveyed in this thesis. Devonshire's youthful Grand Tour was especially prolonged, lasting from 1657 to 1661, during which he is said to have visited most of Europe.³¹⁰ He visited Paris twice more in 1669 and 1680 to escape his creditors. Apart from a large equestrian portrait by Adam Frans van der Meulen, probably commissioned in Paris in 1669, he does not appear to have made many purchases on these occasions, though given his financial circumstances it is hardly surprising.³¹¹ What Devonshire did acquire on his travels, however, was a taste for continental art and architecture that shaped his later actions. On the one occasion that Devonshire travelled overseas after he had come into his

³⁰⁹ E. Chaney, 'The Italianate Evolution of English Collecting' in Chaney (ed.), *The Evolution of English Collecting*, p. 120. The Grand Tour has been subject to extensive scholarly scrutiny, although much of its focus is on the eighteenth century. Recent literature includes Black, *Italy and the Grand Tour* and Sweet, *Cities and the Grand Tour*.

³¹⁰ Hosford, 'Cavendish, William, first duke of Devonshire'.

³¹¹ D.A.H.B. Taylor, 'The Re-presentation of later pictures at Hardwick', in Adshead and Taylor (eds.), *Hardwick Hall*, p. 246.

inheritance, visiting The Hague for the International Congress of 1691, he made time to view and buy art. Touring Europe was the *sine qua non* of the 'travelling earl' and countess of Exeter.³¹² Over three extended journeys, they built a celebrated collection of Italian paintings, systematically acquired decorative arts, furnishings and sculptures, and built relationships with some of Europe's leading patrons of the arts. The model adopted by the Exeters, favouring contemporary artists over old masters, was one they learned on their continental travels, and set them apart from other late-seventeenth-century English travellers and collectors. In contrast, the Somersets did not use travel to acquire art. The young duke undertook a Grand Tour to Europe with his tutor in 1679-81, but there are no records of any purchases, nor any suggestion from inventories or the surviving collection that he made significant acquisitions during his travels. The duchess spent four months in The Hague in 1681-2 after fleeing from her second marriage, but again, there are no records of any purchases. Both, however, must have taken in the art, architecture, and design during their time overseas. After their marriage, neither travelled overseas again, perhaps held back by the rebuilding of Petworth, their growing family, and their court offices.

The art of war and diplomacy

The English country house most obviously associated with war is Blenheim, named after the military victory of 1704 after which Queen Anne and Parliament expressed their gratitude to the duke of Marlborough with the gift of a former royal manor and the money to build a magnificent palace. Many elements of Blenheim's fabric and furnishings were also acquired by Marlborough while overseas, including the French military trophies incorporated into the skyline; two Flemish tapestry series commemorating his achievements, *The Art of War* and

³¹² E. Till, *The Travelling Earl* (exhibition catalogue, Burghley House, 1988).

Victories; several large delftware pyramids; and Peter Paul Rubens' *Self-portrait with his wife, Helena Fourment and their son*.³¹³ However, shorter periods of military travel could also be turned to good use. William III's Secretary at War, William Blathwayt, accompanied the king on his annual campaigns and even had his own apartment at Het Loo. He used the opportunity to buy Dutch paintings and delftware for his newly-built home, Dyrham Park.³¹⁴

Devonshire spent much less time overseas than Marlborough and Blathwayt, but in early 1691 he accompanied William III to the International Congress in the Hague, in his capacity as Lord Steward. While there, he commissioned delftware and bought tapestries, visited art collections and gardens, and cut a magnificent figure among the assembled grandees. Building on Helen Jacobsen's studies of diplomats and recent scholarship exploring the influence of war on the creation of art and architecture, this chapter now considers how Devonshire made use of diplomatic travel to further his own artistic interests.³¹⁵

The 1691 Congress was a gathering of the League of Augsburg, a coalition of powers led by William III, king of England and Scotland and stadholder of the Dutch Republic and Leopold I, Holy Roman Emperor. Hosted by William in The Hague, its purpose was to consolidate the ties between a diverse group of allied states, and to discuss strategy for the forthcoming campaign season. The all-star delegate list included the electors of Bavaria and Brandenburg, the king of Denmark, the dukes of Zell, Luxembourg and Wurttemberg, the landgrave of Hesse-Kassel, envoys from the electors of Mainz, Trier, and Cologne, the duke

³¹³ Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1981.238.

³¹⁴ Goulding, *Dyrham Park*, p. 39.

³¹⁵ Jacobsen, *Luxury and Power*; Legard, 'Vanbrugh, Blenheim Palace', T. Barber and T. Batchelor, 'Triumph and Glory' in Barber (ed.), *British Baroque*, pp. 130-143; D. Ingram, 'Senior Military Officers, Politics, and the Country Estate in Britain, c. 1700-1750', DPhil thesis, University of Oxford (2018).

of Savoy, and the Emperor's special envoy, the count de Windisch-Graetz.³¹⁶ Despite the formalities, important business was transacted, and many of the delegates returned from the Congress directly to their troops in the field.

William III's diplomatic and military strategizing was bolstered by a soft-power programme of ceremonies and dinners that showed off the finest Dutch palaces and gardens. He entertained the principal delegates at his palaces of Huis ten Bosch and Honselaarsdijk, and took them to Zorghvliet, the country retreat of Hans Willem Bentinck, earl of Portland, famed for its gardens. Later in the conference, the whole party decamped to William's hunting lodge at Het Loo for ten days of hunting, talks, and strolling in the newly-laid out gardens.³¹⁷ Some Catholic states had been reluctant to acknowledge his right to the English and Scottish thrones, and the Congress' elaborate courtesies were carefully calibrated to consolidate William's position.³¹⁸ In the absence of the Emperor, William exercised his seniority with a formal levee at which, 'there were [...] in the King's Bed-chamber 30 Princes, besides the Electors of Brandenburg and Bavaria, the Governor of Flanders, and a great number of Foreign Ministers'.³¹⁹

A gathering of representatives of so many European states was also an important opportunity for displays of magnificence among the delegates. As Linda and Marsha Frey described in relation to the 1713 Congress at Utrecht, elite sociability at diplomatic events

³¹⁶ *London Gazette* 2631-2654 (January-April 1691).

³¹⁷ E. de Jong, trans. A. Langenakens, *Nature and Art: Dutch Garden and Landscape Architecture, 1650-1740* (Philadelphia, 2000), pp. 46-7.

³¹⁸ Ferguson, *Visualising Protestant Monarchy*, pp. 118-22.

³¹⁹ *London Gazette* 2637 (16-19 Feb 1691).

renewed ties, facilitated negotiation, and ‘undergirded the international order’.³²⁰ Although he was attending as one of William III’s courtiers, Devonshire took the opportunity to project his personal image among the European elite. He hosted a dinner at which he secured almost a full house of the principal delegates. As the *London Gazette* reported,

On Monday last my Lord Steward treated the Elector of Brandenburg, the Landtgrave of Hesse, the Prince de Commercy &c. with great Magnificence, and the King was pleased, unexpected, to do his Lordship the Honour to be one of the Company. The Elector of Bavaria was not there but has invited himself some other day.³²¹

Devonshire must have enjoyed the honour conferred by entertaining such an illustrious company, no doubt aware that it would be reported in the English press, as indeed it was.

Alongside the official events, Devonshire also indulged in a fringe programme of viewing and buying art.³²² He visited Constantijn Huygens’ renowned collection of paintings and attempted to buy his ‘Saturn’ by Van Dyck (probably *Time Clipping Cupid’s Wings*) but was rebuffed; the painting was later purchased by the first duke of Marlborough.³²³ It was probably at this time that Devonshire acquired a set of eight Flemish mythological tapestries still at Chatsworth, where they were seen by a visitor in 1705, and noted by another in 1746 as being in the state rooms in the south front.³²⁴ The tapestries were made around 1690 by

³²⁰ L. Frey and M. Frey, ‘The Olive and the Horse: the Eighteenth-Century Culture of Diplomacy’ in R. de Bruin, C. van der Haven, L. Jensen and D. Onnekink (eds.), *Performances of Peace: Utrecht 1713* (Leiden, 2015), p. 36.

³²¹ *London Gazette* 2642 (5-9 March 1691).

³²² For example, T. Sowerby and J. Hennings (eds.), *Practices of diplomacy in the early modern world c.1410-1800* (London, 2017).

³²³ ‘Journaal van Constantijn Huygens’ vol. 2, *Handschrift van de Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam* 23 (Utrecht, 1876), pp. 400-1. The painting is now in the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow.

³²⁴ Four depict scenes from Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*: ‘Jupiter and Juno’, ‘Leda and the Swan’, ‘The Muses’, and ‘Callisto’. The others are ‘Hercules as Eagle-Slayer’, ‘Cupid and Pegasus’, ‘Vulcan giving arms to Venus’, and ‘Venus Asleep’. J. Taylor, *A Journey to Edenborough in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1903), pp. 34-5; William Pritchard, 25 May 1746, cited in unpublished catalogue notes by Jo Black. I am grateful to Charles Noble for allowing me to consult the Devonshire Collections catalogue.

Brussels weavers Jacques Coenot, Jan Cobus and Jacques Castro (also known as van der Borcht). The city was still famous for tapestry production despite being usurped as the European leader by the Parisian Gobelins workshops. William and his entourage visited Brussels in early April on their way to review the troops encamped nearby; it was very close to the front line, and was briefly retaken by the French not long afterwards.³²⁵ Given the precarious military situation, a commission would have been risky, and Devonshire probably purchased the tapestries ready made. The tapestries were also linked to William and Mary through their iconography and makers. Around this time, Coenot, Cobus, and Castro collaborated on a set of sixteen armorial tapestries for the royal couple, some of which show William as Hercules and Apollo with captured French military trophies.³²⁶ William himself also owned a set of *Metamorphoses* tapestries, which Devonshire may have seen at Het Loo.³²⁷

Devonshire's most significant purchase in the Low Countries was also closely associated with William and Mary, particularly the queen. It was almost certainly during this visit that he commissioned what was to become the most outstanding English private collection of delftware. Delftware's popularity with English collectors peaked during the reign of William and Mary, in no small part due to the example of the queen, as described in Chapter One.³²⁸ Besides seeing the queen's delftware at Hampton Court and Kensington House, Devonshire would have seen her much more extensive (at the time) collections at Honselaarsdijk and Het Loo, where at the latter her bedroom, dressing room and closet were decorated with

³²⁵ *London Gazette* 2650 (2-6 April 1691).

³²⁶ E. Hartkamp-Jonxis and H. Smit (eds.), *European Tapestries in the Rijksmuseum* (Amsterdam, 2004), pp.147-8.

³²⁷ Recorded in the 1713 inventory. A. Vliegthart, *Het Loo Palace* (Apeldoorn, 2002), p. 169.

³²⁸ Ferguson, 'Ambassadeur voor Nederland', pp. 133-64.

porcelain and delftware, placed on and in front of the fireplaces.³²⁹ William and Mary also commissioned deep urns for the gardens at Het Loo, which were probably also used to overwinter exotic plants in the orangery.³³⁰

The surviving delftware at Chatsworth and its occurrence in inventories indicate the scale of Devonshire's collection, which is likely to have been the largest in England, comprising at least a dozen flower pyramids and nine urns. There are no records of how much he paid for it, but a 2019 interpretation panel at the Royal Delft Museum gave an arresting comparison of contemporary values: 'The price of a full set of Delft Blue tableware in the Golden Age is the same as the price of a Porsche Carrera with golden wheel covers now.' Although it is possible that some of the flower pyramids may have been a gift from William III following the queen's death in 1695, several of the urns are painted with the Cavendish arms surmounted by an earl's coronet within the Garter, pinpointing the commission to between 1689 and 1694 (fig. 3.1). Delft was just six miles from The Hague, where Devonshire spent two months during the Congress of 1691, and it is highly likely that he took the opportunity to commission the urns and pyramids during this time.³³¹

³²⁹ A. Erkelens, *'Delfts Porcelijn' van koningin Mary II/Queen Mary's 'Delft porcelain'* (Zwolle, 1996), pp. 14 & 18. Excavated sherds at Het Loo show that these were mostly supplied by De Greysche A factory between 1678 and 1686.

³³⁰ S. Kluver, 'Scherven uit Schiedam: De sleutel tot een koninklijke tuinvaas', in Lambooy, *Koninklijk Blauw*, pp. 192-203.

³³¹ DCC CH36/7/0; CH36/7/1A. See also Ferguson, 'Ambassadeur voor Nederland', p. 151.



Fig. 3.1 Adriaen Kocks, Urn (1689-94), tin glazed earthenware, The Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth. Image: Amy Lim

It is suggested here that the iconography of one of the pairs of pyramids may relate to the International Congress, reflecting Devonshire's views regarding the mission of the League of Augsburg. They are decorated with allegorical figures of the four elements and the cardinal and religious virtues, including 'Prudentia', 'Religio', 'Justitia', and 'Libertas'. The inclusion of 'Libertas' is significant. It is not usually listed among the virtues, nor does it appear on the Delft flower pyramid commissioned by John Churchill, first earl of Marlborough, between 1689 and 1702, decorated with allegorical figures of Justice, Faith, Charity, and Prudence.³³² Hannah Obee noted that Religion, Justice and Liberty 'would have had particular resonance for the Protestant Devonshire'.³³³ However, if we consider that

³³² V&A Museum, London C.615-1925. <https://collections.vam.ac.uk/item/O77966/flower-pyramid-greek-a-factory/> [accessed: 11 April 2021].

³³³ H. Obee, 'Baroque Exuberance: Delft flower vases at Chatsworth', *Apollo* 167:555 (June 2008), p. 92.

Devonshire's delftware was almost certainly commissioned during the 1691 Congress, these virtues take on the additional meaning of wartime rhetoric. Devonshire would have considered the Nine Years War to be an extension of the values for which he had acted in the Glorious Revolution. Liberty was at the heart of the Whig endeavour: the struggle for Protestant Liberty against Roman Catholic arbitrary power. It was James II who had embodied the latter in England, and now Louis XIV posed the same threat in Europe. Not all of the delegates would have seen the League of Augsburg in this light, since several of the allied states were Catholic, but all would have agreed that they were fighting to preserve justice and liberty in Europe against the threat of absolutist French hegemony. Devonshire's Delft pyramids encapsulated the values for which he, through his service to William III, was fighting at home and abroad.

Having seen Mary's delftware in her Dutch palaces, Devonshire was able to copy its form and display. Mary favoured tall pyramid flower vases, and the hexagonal pyramid vase on ball-and-claw feet at Chatsworth (fig. 3.2, centre), made by Adriaen Kocks at the De Greiksche A works, is similar to one he supplied to the queen, now at Hampton Court (fig. 3.3), and the lion-and-globe feet (a reference to William III) were also used on a ewer for Queen Mary.³³⁴ Devonshire placed his delftware in the hearths at Chatsworth, as it was at Kensington, Hampton Court and Het Loo.³³⁵ At the latter, Devonshire would have seen the urns used for garden planting, which he replicated at Chatsworth, filling them with flowers and mounting them on the wall of the greenhouse, as visible in a painting by Jan Siberechts (fig. 4.7).

³³⁴ Ibid., p. 91; Royal Collection Trust RCIN 1083.

³³⁵ DCC CH36/7/0; CH36/7/1A.



Fig. 3.2 Adriaen Kocks, Hexagonal- and square-based pyramid flower vases (1686-1701), tin-glazed earthenware, The Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth. Image: Amy Lim.



Fig. 3.3 Adriaen Kocks, Hexagonal pyramid flower vase (c.1694), tin-glazed earthenware, Royal Collection Trust © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II 2022

After his return to England, Devonshire continued to mull over the art, architecture and gardens he had seen in the Netherlands. Four years later, the gardens at Het Loo influenced his reconfiguration of a fountain at Chatsworth. At Het Loo, the Venus fountain occupied a prominent site in the centre of the principal parterre, directly in front of the house. It had been constructed in 1687-90 and would have been seen by Devonshire in 1691.³³⁶ At Chatsworth, the Neptune fountain sat in the centre of the west parterre, laid out by garden contractor George London in 1688-90 and known as 'Neptune's garden'.³³⁷ Neptune was a popular choice for fountains, although the god was also associated with William III.³³⁸ Devonshire was constantly rearranging the fountains at Chatsworth, and in 1695 he altered Neptune's fountain to a rectangular basin with apsidal ends, flanked by two mermaids and a cluster of bulrushes that spouted arcs of water, the same as Venus at Het Loo.³³⁹ It seems that the memory of what he had seen on his visit to the Netherlands stayed with him, and influenced the garden design that he implemented in England. International stylistic links are evident in the similarities between works produced in different locations, and the example of the Chatsworth Neptune and Het Loo Venus fountains shows one of the ways in which such links were created and effected.

His three months in the Netherlands in 1691 was the only time Devonshire spent abroad after he had acceded to his title and inheritance. He exploited the opportunity to acquire Brussels tapestries and the finest private collection of delftware in England, to improve his knowledge of Dutch art, architecture, and gardens, and to show off his status by

³³⁶ de Jong, *Nature and Art*, p. 46.

³³⁷ DCC CS1/70/0.

³³⁸ DCC CH 37/8 fols. 6-8.

³³⁹ DCC CH37/3 pp. 19 & 49. Also visible in Siberechts' painting.

entertaining the European elite. While most scholarship on the material culture of diplomacy has concentrated on the principal players, Devonshire's example shows that such events were also important forums of cultural exchange among the lesser delegates. Foreign travel enabled aristocrats to purchase goods at source and view art, fashion, and design at first hand, but equally important was the chance to cultivate relationships with their European peers. The earl and countess of Exeter did all of these, while also distinguishing themselves from their peers by adopting a continental, rather than English, model of collecting, and this will be the focus of the remainder of this chapter.

The Travelling Earl and Countess

English collectors who bought art while travelling in Europe in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are often classified as Grand Tourists, but although the earl and countess of Exeter have been described as such, their profile and purpose was very different.³⁴⁰ They certainly did not meet Bruce Redford's definition of the Grand Tourist as 'a young British male patrician' with 'a tutor who accompanies his charge throughout the journey'.³⁴¹ The Exeters travelled as a family with an extensive retinue of companions, servants, and baggage. On their first tour from 1679 to 1681, the earl, countess, and five-year-old Lord Burghley travelled with twenty-two servants and thirty horses.³⁴² The earl travelled without his family on his second journey, but in 1699-1700 was accompanied by the countess and three of their children. Like their younger counterparts they took in the

³⁴⁰ For example, chapter 7, 'The Grand Tour', in Stourton and Sebag-Montefiore, *British as Art Collectors*; H. Brigstocke, 'The 5th Earl of Exeter as Grand Tourist and Collector', *Papers of the British School at Rome* 72 (2004), pp. 331-56.

³⁴¹ B. Redford, *Venice and the Grand Tour* (New Haven and London, 2006), p. 14.

³⁴² *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Charles II, 1679-80* ed. F. Blackburne Daniell (London, 1915) <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/domestic/chas2/1679-80> [accessed 15 July 2020].

sights and made time for socialising, but theirs was a more focused, mature programme, eschewing the gambling dens of Paris and bordellos of Bologna for the civilised company of Grand Dukes and cardinals. Among the over-excited teenagers, Exeter played the father figure, on one occasion taking young Thomas Morgan under his wing after he had fallen victim to the shysters of Fontainebleau.³⁴³

Recent Grand Tour scholarship has challenged Redford's narrow definition, with Rosemary Sweet highlighting how 'in practice, the range of travellers undertaking these continental tours was more diverse than the traditional image implies'.³⁴⁴ Exeter's cousin Frances, dowager countess of Salisbury, travelled independently as a widow in Europe from 1699 to 1703, sightseeing, socialising and learning French and Italian.³⁴⁵ However, it was not only the Exeters' biographical profile that differed from Grand Tourists, but their interests and purposes. Hugh Brigstocke observed that Exeter 'appears to have shown little interest in either the literary associations or the archaeology of the ancient world; nor does he appear to have focused his travel around the study and connoisseurship of old master paintings', the usual Tourist preoccupations.³⁴⁶ Exeter certainly did have some scholarly interest in ancient Rome, for a visitor to the library at Burghley in 1732 noted 'an infinite number of Latin, French & Italian authors, all relating to the History and Antiquities of Ancient Rome [...] mostly purchased by my Lord's Grandfather [the fifth earl] in his Travels.'³⁴⁷ Yet during their months in Rome in the winter of 1699/1700, the Exeters did not visit a single site of

³⁴³ NLW Penrice and Margam Estate Letters, GB 0210 Series L165. I am grateful to Bryher Mason for bringing this to my attention, and to Elisabeth Grass for photographing the documents.

³⁴⁴ Sweet, *Cities and the Grand Tour*, pp. 2-3.

³⁴⁵ L. Levy Peck, *Women of Fortune* (Cambridge, 2018), pp. 179-207.

³⁴⁶ Brigstocke, 'The 5th Earl of Exeter as Grand Tourist and Collector', pp. 331-56.

³⁴⁷ Peck, *Desiderata Curiosa*, vol. 6, p. 47.

classical antiquity and although the earl and countess had visited Rome before, their adolescent children had not. As will be elaborated below, the Exeters' interests were almost entirely focused on contemporary art and architecture.

An important difference between the Exeters and so-called Grand Tourists was property and money. Most Grand Tourists were adolescents who did not control their own fortunes, either because their father was still alive and in possession of the family estate, or because they had not come into their majority. Exeter was thirty-two when he began his first journey in 1679, the year after he had inherited his father's title and estates. He was in possession of a large house to furnish and the income to do so. All three of the male aristocrats surveyed in this thesis ramped up their art patronage immediately after acceding to their estates. Rebuilding and furnishing their country and town houses was the catalyst for large-scale commissions and purchases across the entire range of artistic media. Like most Grand Tourists, neither Devonshire nor Somerset made substantial purchases on their youthful travels because they did not yet have the means or the motivation. Exeter travelled as an adult in full possession of his fortune, with a house that was being refurbished and in need of new furnishings to complete it.

We can only speculate on why Exeter chose to travel after he came into his inheritance while most other aristocrats did not, but the answer may lie in his detachment from court and public life. Devonshire and Somerset were busy with court, county, and political offices, and perhaps felt that they could not leave their responsibilities. Exeter was active in local

politics but unburdened by national office and as discussed above, had chosen to withdraw from court, Parliament and London, to focus his energies on Burghley. He had the freedom, as well as the means and incentive, to leave England for extended periods.

Because the purpose of the Exeters' travels differed from that of Grand Tourists, so did the scale and focus of their collecting. While Grand Tourists usually had their portrait painted and picked up a few paintings, sculptures and souvenirs, the Exeters travelled with the express purpose of buying furnishings and works of art for Burghley, and were systematic and thorough in this pursuit. Their purchases were far more varied, both by type and place of origin, since they acquired furnishings from France and Italy as well as the paintings and sculpture that were most closely associated with the latter. They were distinguished by their patronage of contemporary artists, following continental precedent, in contrast to the Grand Tourists who stuck with the established English taste for old masters. They also collected on a scale that dwarfed the teenagers. While Sir Thomas Isham, with whom they are often bracketed as collectors, purchased around twenty paintings in Rome during his adolescent Grand Tour of 1676-8, the Exeters purchased several hundred paintings from over sixty different artists across Italy.³⁴⁸

Two principles guided the Exeters' collecting. Firstly, they targeted specialist centres of production, where they could buy goods with international reputations for quality and

³⁴⁸ Stourton, and Sebag-Montefiore, *The British as Art Collectors*, p. 87. For a full discussion of Isham's collecting, see G. Burdon, 'Sir Thomas Isham an English Collector in Rome in 1677-8', *Italian Studies* 15:1 (1960), pp. 1-25.

artistry. Not only did this overcome the difficulties of accessing such goods back in England, as outlined in Chapter Two, but it gave a much wider choice at (presumably) much better prices. They sought out tapestries in Paris, *pietre dure* in Florence, textiles in northern Italy, sculpture in Rome, and paintings in all the major Italian cities. Secondly, they principally patronised contemporary or recent artists who had been endorsed by the major political and cultural figures of Europe. In France, they took their lead from Louis XIV. In Italy, their chief influence was Cosimo III de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany, but they also looked to other dukes, cardinals, and even popes.

Besides collecting, another significant purpose of their travels was to gather knowledge about the latest developments in European art, architecture and design, and when possible, meet the patrons responsible for them. They toured palaces and churches, viewed collections and exhibitions, and visited the workshops of artists and sculptors. They employed local agents who advised which artists to patronise, besides offering their services as dealers, brokers, and shippers.³⁴⁹ They made the acquaintance of two of the leading art patrons in Italy: Cosimo III de' Medici in Florence and Cardinal Ottoboni in Rome, and from them and the other great European patrons they learned not only which artists to patronise, and which styles to favour, but also their mode of patronage itself.

The Exeters travelled to continental Europe on four occasions. The first, from 1679 to 1681, was undertaken *en famille* (as described above), and timed to escape the dust and noise of the building work at Burghley. They set out with the intention of purchasing furnishings and

³⁴⁹ The role of agents will be discussed at length in Chapter Four.

paintings for the new rooms, and measurements were forwarded from Burghley as the work progressed.³⁵⁰ The family spent several months in the winter and spring of 1679/80 in Paris, where they would have visited the royal palaces of the Louvre, Saint-Germain-en-Laye and Versailles, which was not yet the seat of the court but was undergoing major building works. In the autumn of 1680 the Exeters crossed the Alps through Savoy into Italy, where they spent the next eighteen months visiting all the major cities. Stopping in Turin, Milan, Venice, Genoa, and Padua, they spent several weeks in April and May 1681 in Florence, where they were introduced at the court of the Grand Duke of Tuscany, Cosimo III de'Medici, beginning a relationship that was to have a profound influence. After moving down the peninsula to Rome and Naples, they retraced their steps back to England.

The earl travelled to Europe again in 1683-4, this time without the countess, probably because she was expecting their third child. Learning from experience, he travelled fast and light with a much smaller retinue (only four gentlemen companions and five servants).³⁵¹ They moved swiftly through France, spending most of their time revisiting the Italian cities of the first journey. Exeter's steward Culpepper Tanner kept careful accounts which give a window onto their day-to-day activities.³⁵² There was still time for enjoyment – iced drinks and music in Bologna, a gondola in Venice – but there is no doubt that, unlike the varied agenda of 1679-81, the main purpose of the second tour was the systematic acquisition of paintings by contemporary artists. The party moved rapidly from city to city, buying finished paintings and commissioning new ones in a whirlwind of patronage on an unprecedented

³⁵⁰ BA EX 51/8/1 & /2.

³⁵¹ 'Charles II: Passes of the following Persons in 1683', in *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Charles II, 1683-4*, p. 254.

³⁵² BA EX 51/9 & EX 51/10.

scale. There was then a pause of almost two decades. After a hiatus, building work on the state apartments at Burghley resumed in 1690, but the Nine Years War prevented the Exeters from travelling to buy furnishings. The earl and his two eldest sons did journey to Holland in 1693, but probably no further.³⁵³

It was not until the autumn of 1699 that the Exeters were able to visit France and Italy again, on what was to be their final journey. The signing of the Treaty of Ryswick in late 1697 opened up the continent to leisure travellers once more. On 19 September 1699 a pass was issued, 'to John, earl of Exeter, his wife, and children, William, Charles and Elizabeth, to go to France, Germany etc., for his health and the better education of his children.'³⁵⁴ They left behind their eldest son, John, Lord Burghley, who had recently married Elizabeth Brownlow, and their youngest son Edward. The wording of the pass was somewhat disingenuous, since the principal destination was Italy, and the reasons for travel were to witness the Holy Year festivities in Rome, and to see and buy more art. During this tour, the Exeters commissioned tapestries and paintings from established favourites, and approached new artists based on reputation, seeking out those who had been involved in recent high-profile commissions. What was different was the emphasis on sculpture, including the commission of a large funerary monument. Richard Creed, a half-pay army officer who accompanied the family for the first seven months of their journey, kept a journal during his travels that yields valuable insights into their itinerary, activities, and

³⁵³ BA EX 51/12. One payment was made to Genoa in April 1693 but this could have been in payment for goods shipped: NatWest CH 194/10 fol. 92r.

³⁵⁴ 'William III: September 1699', in *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: William III, 1699-1700* ed. E. Bateson, (London, 1937), pp. 254-262. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/domestic/will-mary/1699-1700/pp254-262> [accessed: 15 July 2020].

social circle.³⁵⁵ It shows that besides buying art, they used their travels to acquaint themselves with new domestic and ecclesiastical art, architecture and gardens, and to renew old and forge new relationships with the European cultural elite.

Decorative arts and the French court

For the remainder of this chapter, we will follow in the footsteps of the Exeters as they journey across Europe, pausing with them at each of the major centres of production to examine their purchases of artworks and furnishings. The first important stop was Paris, now the European leader in tapestry and furniture production, thanks to Colbert's programme of investment in the royal Gobelins workshops. More than any other art form, tapestries symbolised princely magnificence. French royal historiographer Félibien lauded the Gobelins tapestries as 'priceless objects. I don't just mean that they are laden with silk and gold; I mean that the greatness of the design and beauty of the workmanship infinitely surpass the richness of the material'.³⁵⁶ The most beautiful workmanship of all came from the looms of Jan Jans II, who had succeeded his father in 1668 as head of the principal Gobelins *haute-lisse* (high warp) workshop. His work was considered superior to that of the second *haute-lisse* workshop under Jean Lefebvre, reflected in their payments of 380 and 330 livres per square ell respectively.³⁵⁷ The *basse-lisse* (low warp) workshops used a different technique that produced tapestry of inferior quality. Jans was therefore arguably the leading tapestry weaver in Europe.

³⁵⁵ R. Creed, *Journal of the Grand Tour* (Oundle, 2002).

³⁵⁶ Cited in P-F. Bertrand, 'Tapestry Production at the Gobelins during the reign of Louis XIV, 1661-1715' in T. Campbell (ed.), *Tapestry in the Baroque: Threads of Splendour* (New Haven and London, 2007), p. 341.

³⁵⁷ C. Bremer-David, *Woven Gold: Tapestries of Louis XIV* (Los Angeles, 2015), p. 19.

Although the official output of the Gobelins manufactory was reserved for royal use, Jans also undertook private commissions. Over two visits, in 1680 and 1699, the Exeters commissioned three sets of tapestries of exceptional quality and exclusivity. On their first visit, the Exeters commissioned two new sets of tapestries from Jans, the *Metamorphoses* and *Fables*, and a smaller picture to be hung as an overmantel.³⁵⁸ These designs were closely associated with Louis XIV. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was Gobelins' newest series, and the first weaving was delivered by Jans to the king that same year, 1680.³⁵⁹ The Exeters' set was only the second weaving and Jans must have begun it almost as soon as the king's set was off the loom. The *Metamorphoses* went on to become a popular series with many editions, but when the Exeters' tapestries were completed in 1681 they were the only people in the world, other than the French king, to possess them. They were given pride of place in the Best Bedchamber at Burghley.³⁶⁰

Very little is known about the *Fables* series (it does not even feature in Fenaille's catalogue raisonné), and it is possible that the Exeters' was the only set ever woven.³⁶¹ Described in a letter from Jans as 'Des fables de la fontaine', their source is identified here as François Chauveau's illustrations for Charles de la Fontaine's *Fables*, published in 1668.³⁶² A comparison between the Burghley 'Horse and the Wolf' and the engraving of the same subject, indicates that the designs were elaborated from Chauveau's illustrations into scenes suitable for tapestry (figs. 3.4 & 3.5).

³⁵⁸ BA EX 51/8/14 & 51/8/36.

³⁵⁹ Bremer-David, *Woven Gold*, p. 26; see also E. Standen, 'Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: a Gobelins Tapestry Series', *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 23 (1988), pp. 149-91.

³⁶⁰ BA EX 51/18.

³⁶¹ M. Fenaille, *Etat Générale de Tapisseries de la Manufacture des Gobelins*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1903-23). From the mid-eighteenth century the *Fables*, to different designs, became a popular subject for upholstered furniture.

³⁶² BA EX 51/8/14.



Fig. 3.4 Jan Jans II (weaver, unknown designer after François Chauveau), 'The Horse and the Wolf' from *Fables de la Fontaine* (1680-1), Burghley House.



Fig. 3.5 François Chauveau, 'The Horse and the Wolf', from Charles de la Fontaine, *Fables* vol. 5 (Paris, 1668). Image : gallica.bnf.fr / BnF

It is unlikely that the Exeters commissioned a completely new tapestry design, as they favoured designs associated with the court. Instead, the cartoons for the *Fables* may have originally been commissioned by the Dauphin Louis. He was the dedicatee of de la Fontaine's first edition, and Raymond LePage has argued that Fontaine's stories and Chauveau's illustrations work together to present a particular vision of how power must be maintained and exercised, a suitable topic for the heir to the throne.³⁶³ While further research is required to investigate this supposition, it is not unlikely that Jans had in his possession a set of cartoons, based on Chauveau's illustrations, that were intended for the Dauphin. As with the *Metamorphoses*, they were exclusive, and closely associated with the French court, and therefore highly desirable. Back at Burghley, the *Fables* were hung in the countess' bedchamber and noted in the inventory as 'made in France by Monsr Jans'.³⁶⁴

The overmantel picture has received no previous scholarly attention yet was perhaps the most distinctive of the pieces made by Jans for the Exeters. It was a small but intricate tapestry of Louis XIV and Queen Maria Theresa dancing at a ball, surrounded by members of the royal court, and was displayed over the mantelpiece in the drawing room at Burghley, where it attracted much attention.³⁶⁵ Celia Fiennes, who toured the house in 1697, mistakenly attributed it to 'nuns work', but thought it 'the finest Embroidery that looks just like point or the finest linen you can see', adding approvingly, 'this cost a great Summe'.³⁶⁶ Francis Peck thought it 'surpasses all the Tapestry I ever yet saw either here or anywhere

³⁶³ R. LePage, 'The 1668 Edition of the Fables: An Iconographic Interpretation', *L'Esprit Créateur* 21:4 (1981), p. 69.

³⁶⁴ BA EX 51/18.

³⁶⁵ BA EX 51/8/14.

³⁶⁶ *Celia Fiennes*, p. 84.

else', and was especially impressed by the inclusion of so many accurate portraits 'in so small a piece'.³⁶⁷

Had the Exeters' final Gobelins tapestry commission not gone astray, it would have been the finest of all the sets they ordered, combining superlative workmanship, impeccable provenance, and exotic associations. Racing across Europe in the autumn of 1699, in a hurry to reach Rome for the Jubilee festivities, the Exeters did not even spend a single night in Paris. Nevertheless, they still made time to meet Jans. From him they commissioned two sets of tapestries, the *Indes* for themselves, and *The History of the Sabines* for their brother Devonshire.³⁶⁸ As recounted in the Epilogue, the *Sabines* now hang at Hardwick Hall, but due to the renewal of hostilities between England and France in 1702, the *Indes* never reached Burghley, and the tapestries have disappeared without a trace.

A memorandum, written by Jans in 1716 as he attempted to reconcile the still-outstanding account, describes their fate.³⁶⁹ On his return to Paris from Italy in 1700, Lord Exeter visited Jans' workshop to inspect the work in progress. He asked the weaver to visit him to complete the contract, but Exeter died before it could be signed.³⁷⁰ The countess instructed Jans to continue with the commission, and he duly delivered the first piece to her Parisian banker, Daniel Arthur, in November 1701, receiving payment of 1655 livres (£100), though for unknown reasons, it does not appear to have reached Burghley.³⁷¹ The wartime trade

³⁶⁷ Peck, *Desiderata Curiosa*, vol. 6, p. 45.

³⁶⁸ For the Sabines, see Epilogue.

³⁶⁹ BA EX 51/17. The tapestries are briefly discussed in O. Impey, 'The Furnishing of Burghley', in Impey (ed.), *Four Centuries of Decorative Arts*, p. 45.

³⁷⁰ Presumably there had not been time to draw up a contract on the previous visit.

³⁷¹ NatWest CH 194/10 fol. 422r. Its fate is unknown; there is no indication of it ever having reached Burghley.

embargo then prevented the delivery of the remaining three pieces. For ten years Jans tried in vain to contact the dowager countess and her son the sixth earl but, 'dont il n'a pû jamais avoir aucune reponce', he was eventually forced to sell the remaining tapestries, now much deteriorated, at a discount.

As with the *Metamorphoses*, the *Indes* tapestries were a private copy of Louis XIV's latest series, which was also the only new design to be woven at the Gobelins since Exeter's last visit to Paris in 1684. The *Ancien Indes* (so named to distinguish them from the later *Nouvelles Indes*) had an illustrious origin as a courtly gift between European potentates. They were based on a series of paintings by Albert Eckhout commissioned around 1640 by Prince Johan-Maurits of Nassau during his time as governor of Brazil, intended to show off Dutch discoveries of the flora, fauna, and people of the New World.³⁷² On his return to the Dutch Republic, Johan-Maurits commissioned two sets of tapestries after the paintings, one for himself and the other for his cousin the Elector of Brandenburg. He then presented the paintings to Louis XIV, expressly recommending that they be woven at the Gobelins. The paintings were displayed to public acclaim in 1679 (the Exeters may have seen them while in Paris that winter) but were not woven until 1687-90 when two *basse-lisse* sets were produced (fig. 3.6). Financial retrenchments during the Nine Years War forced the temporary closure of the Gobelins workshops between 1694 and 1699, so it was not until 1699 that Jans produced the first *haute-lisse* weaving.

³⁷² Bertrand, 'Tapestry Production at the Gobelins', pp. 352-391.



Fig. 3.6 Albert Eckhout (designer), de la Croix (weaver), 'Le Cheval Rayé' from *Ancien Indes* (1689), *basse-lisse* tapestry, Mobilier National, Paris. © Mobilier national, droits réservés

Louis XIV's *Indes* tapestries had only just been completed when the Exeters met Jans on 21 October 1699, perhaps at the royal wardrobe. He showed them 'les huit pieces que Lees Jans a faittes pour le Roy', from which they chose four designs. Jans' detailed description of each piece enables them to be identified as 'L'Elephant', 'Le Cheval Rayé', 'Le Roi porté par deux Maures', and 'Le Combat d'Animaux'. At 200 livres/ell (a little over half of what Jans charged the king) the total cost was 7,950 livres, equivalent to £480, nearly half as much again as Somerset had paid Vanderbank for the *Grotesques* tapestries.³⁷³ It is not

³⁷³ See p. 132. The rate of exchange is based on the payment for the first piece in November 1701. NatWest CH 195/10 fol. 422r.

certain which room at Burghley they were intended for, but the two large and two small tapestries would have comfortably fitted the state drawing room, which was approaching completion in 1699.³⁷⁴ The *Indes* had everything that could be desired: they were exclusive, associated with Louis XIV and princely gift-exchange, made by the best weaver in Europe, and depicted exotic subjects that would chime with the porcelain, lacquer and oriental silks at Burghley. Had they arrived safely, they would have been a *coup d'éclat*; instead, they exemplify the risks and difficulties associated with buying works of art abroad.

The tapestries commissioned in Paris by the Exeters were vastly superior in quality and fashionability to anything they could buy in England. Somerset's *Grotesques* tapestries were a good approximation, but Vanderbank was simply not as skilled as his Gobelins counterparts, as a comparison between his pirated *Elements* tapestries and the French originals makes clear.³⁷⁵ There was a substantial gap between aspiration and achievement for patrons who remained in England. Being on the spot also meant that the Exeters could acquire goods with genuine royal provenance, something that was almost impossible to achieve in England. While in Paris, they also made an important purchase of a set of floral marquetry furniture that had once stood in Louis XIV's bedchamber at Versailles.

This furniture, which is still at Burghley, comprised cabinet, table and guéridons (candlestands), and was made by another Gobelins master, Pierre Gole, one of the greatest *ébénistes* (cabinet-makers) in the service of the king.³⁷⁶ Gole's superlative skills were shown

³⁷⁴ The dimensions of the tapestries ordered were 518 x 338 cm ('Cheval' and 'Elephant') and 330 x 338 cm ('Roi' and 'Combat'). One French ell = 200cm.

³⁷⁵ Vanderbank's *Elements* in the Burghley Collection (TAP03020-2) lack the finesse of those in the Mobilier National de France (GMTT-12277-000).

³⁷⁶ Burghley House FUR0448.

off by the rich materials, which included ivory, turtle-shell, coloured woods, and gilt-bronze mounts. Theo Lunsingh Scheurleer identified the cabinet and its accompanying guéridons as a set supplied to the king around 1663 for his bedchamber at Versailles.³⁷⁷ As they did not feature in a subsequent royal inventory, his supposition is that they were later returned to Gole as surplus to requirement, and subsequently purchased by the Exeters. The *fleur de lys* on the cabinet's stretcher confirms its royal provenance. As Lunsingh Scheurleer pointed out, the fact that the cabinet was nearly twenty years old was unimportant beside its royal origins. The table, with a second set of guéridons, was probably one of several made by Gole in 1679 to similar designs, one of which was also supplied to Louis XIV that year. In England, where genuine French furniture was difficult to obtain, simply to display any at all was a marker of status and exclusivity. To own items not only made in the French royal workshops, but that had actually stood in Louis XIV's bedchamber, forming a backdrop to the rituals of *lever* and *coucher*, was immeasurably superior.

Crossing the Mont Cenis pass and descending into Italy, the Exeters turned their attention to textiles, and the northern city states that were the renowned centres of their production. In Venice, they purchased silks and placed a commission with the English consul, Thomas Hobson, for gold 'brocadello' or brocatelle, and in Lucca they ordered damask, and the countess sent home 'Stuffs of gold & Silver flowers'.³⁷⁸ Genoa was famous for its velvet, a highly expensive textile due to the large quantities of silk and time used in its manufacture. Both plain and 'figured' or 'wrought' velvet, in which a floral pattern was incorporated into the weave, sold in England for around 25-30s/yard, and mercers customarily noted in their

³⁷⁷ Th. Lunsingh Scheurleer, *Pierre Gole, ébéniste du Louis XIV* (Dijon, 2005), pp. 122-30.

³⁷⁸ EX 51/3/5 & EX 51/8/28.

bills when the fabric was from Genoa.³⁷⁹ The costliest textile on the London market was polychrome figured velvet, a Genoese speciality, which sold for as much as 38s/yard.³⁸⁰

Although there are no records of the Exeters' purchases, there is an abundance of velvet in the 1688 Burghley inventory, including many of the rooms for which their upholsterer, Thomas Stretch had forwarded measurements for wall hangings and chairs.³⁸¹ This suggests that they bought large quantities of Italian velvet in 1680-1.

The state bed in the Best Bedchamber at Burghley was upholstered with an exceptionally rich polychrome figured velvet, most likely purchased during this journey.³⁸² A 1985 restoration project revealed the fabric to be, 'a gold-coloured ground including silver-gilt thread and flowers and leaves in blue/green, pinks and pale blue', with a second 'gold-coloured silk fabric, ribbed over a silver-gilt thread in the weft and decorated with embroidery in coloured silks and cording' on the cornice and base boards.³⁸³ The bed was originally known as the 'Turin' bed, implying the fabric's place of purchase; the Exeters visited Turin in October 1680.³⁸⁴ It may have been manufactured there, but is more likely to have come from nearby Genoa. Purchasing at source meant that the Exeters could afford to display premium Italian textiles far more extravagantly than their English peers, comparable to those in the royal household.³⁸⁵ Visitors to Burghley could certainly appraise the value

³⁷⁹ TNA PRO LC9/276 fols. 55r, 146v.

³⁸⁰ TNA PRO LC 9/296 fol. 123r. Similar prices can be found in Thomas Alchorne's bill to the duchess of Somerset, PHA 267 fol. 69.

³⁸¹ BA EX 51/8/16.

³⁸² Now in Queen Elizabeth's Bedchamber, Burghley House, FUR0427.

³⁸³ S. Landi, *The Textile Conservator's Manual* (Oxford, 1992), p. 237.

³⁸⁴ BA EX 51/8/8 & 10.

³⁸⁵ Contemporary royal upholstery bills can be found in TNA PRO LC 9/279 & 280.

and quality of these gorgeous fabrics. Celia Fiennes noted that ‘there was at least 4 velvet beds 2 plaine and 2 figures crimson green several coullours together in one’.³⁸⁶

The culmination of the educational Grand Tour was a prolonged stay in Rome, and this was no different for the Exeters. They spent three or four months there on each of their journeys, and it was their primary destination in 1699-1700.³⁸⁷ As the epicentre of the Roman Empire and Roman Catholic Church, Rome was the pre-eminent location for the study of classical antiquity and its reinterpretation in the contemporary arts, especially sculpture. The papal tax on the export of antiquities had all but dried up that trade, but there was a thriving market in reproduction and new sculpture. Nearly all of the Exeters’ sculptures were acquired in Rome in 1699-1700, and it appears that one of the principal reasons for this journey was to commission their funerary monument, as well as purchase a number of smaller pieces.³⁸⁸ Three chests of statues were shipped back from Leghorn in August 1700, which may have included some of the statues recorded as standing in the niches of the staircase in 1738.³⁸⁹ Besides these, two important acquisitions were made from contemporary sculptors Domenico Guidi and Pierre-Etienne Monnot.

Since the death of Gianlorenzo Bernini in 1680, Guidi had been widely acknowledged as the leading sculptor working in Rome.³⁹⁰ He had trained in the workshop of the famed

³⁸⁶ Celia Fiennes, p. 83.

³⁸⁷ Their itinerary has been deduced from Tanner’s correspondence and notebooks (BA EX 51/8-10) and Creed, *Journal of the Grand Tour*.

³⁸⁸ The monument is discussed at length in Chapter Six.

³⁸⁹ NatWest CH 194/10 fol. 417r.; BA EX 630.

³⁹⁰ R. Wittkower, *Art and Architecture in Italy 1600-1750* (Harmondsworth, 1985, first pub. 1958), p. 434.

Alessandro Algardi, before setting up his own prolifically-successful studio, and his many high-profile commissions included the tomb of Pope Clement IX in St. Peter's and a marble bust of Pope Alexander VII.³⁹¹ Guidi also had close links with the French court, and had supplied statuary for the gardens at Versailles, among which *Fame Writing the History of Louis XIV* received particular praise. When visiting S. Maria della Vittoria in February 1700, the Exeters admired the altarpiece of *The Dream of St Joseph*, 'done wonderfully well by Guede, another very famous sculptor'.³⁹² Guidi was by now an old man and probably no longer accepting commissions, but the Exeters visited his workshop, where they saw and purchased his exceptional *Andromeda and the Sea Monster* (fig. 3.7).



Fig 3.7 Domenico Guidi, *Andromeda and the Sea Monster* (c. 1694), marble, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Purchase, Josephine Bay Paul and C. Michael Paul Foundation Inc. Gift and Charles Ulrick and Josephine Bay Foundation Inc. Gift, 1967.

³⁹¹ D. Bershad, 'Guidi, Domenico', *Grove Art Online* (2003)

<https://doi.org/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T035528> [accessed: 27 July 2020].

³⁹² Creed, *Journal of the Grand Tour*, p. 32.

Andromeda was the casualty of an order that had gone awry. It had originally been commissioned in 1686 by Francesco II d'Este, Duke of Modena, a provenance that gave the sculpture an extra cachet. D'Este (whose sister Mary was queen to the deposed James II) had died in 1694 before taking delivery of *Andromeda*, and his successor Rinaldo had refused to receive it on the grounds that he knew nothing of it. Rinaldo sent his ambassador, Francesco Fossi, to Rome in 1696 to placate the disgruntled Guidi, where he saw the sculpture in his workshop and admired it as 'Bellissima et e una delle piu nobili e vaghe opera che habbia fatta'.³⁹³ Not only was the sculpture beautiful, but it was also enormous (over 5' high) and exceedingly expensive. After George Vertue's visit to Burghley in 1727 he noted that the statue had cost '4000 crown. at 5s 6d.'³⁹⁴ This information, no doubt divulged by the housekeeper, was probably a corruption of 4000 pistoles at 55d/pistole, since the Child's bank ledgers record several large payments at this exchange rate between December 1699 and February 1700.³⁹⁵ This equated to £916, a vast sum that accounted for nearly half of their total expenditure in Italy. This prestigious sculpture was placed in the Marble Saloon at Burghley, a room used to showcase portraits and sculpture, but unfortunately its credentials were soon forgotten. From the mid-eighteenth century it was mistakenly thought to be by Monnot, until in 1994 Andrea Bacchi, in a brilliant piece of art-historical detective work, identified it as the *Andromeda* commissioned from Guidi by d'Este.³⁹⁶ It seems that Exeters' connoisseurship was lost even on his immediate descendants.

³⁹³ Modena, Archivio di Stato, Ambasciatori, Italia, Roma b. 312 Da 289. Cited in A. Bacchi, 'L'Andromeda di Lord Exeter', *Antologia di Belle Arti* 48-51 (1994), p. 70.

³⁹⁴ 'The Notebooks of George Vertue vol. 2', *Walpole Society* 20 (Oxford, 1932, rep. London, 1968), p. 34.

³⁹⁵ NatWest CH 194/10 f.383r.

³⁹⁶ A. Bacchi, 'L'Andromeda di Lord Exeter', *Antologia di Belle Arti* 48-51 (1994), pp. 64-70.

In Rome, the Exeters were also able to commission up-and-coming talents like Pierre-Etienne Monnot who, although he did not make *Andromeda*, did make several other important sculptures for the earl and countess. Though much younger and less distinguished than Guidi, Monnot too had excellent credentials, including that most prestigious of commissions, a papal tomb. He was originally from Besançon, and since moving to Rome in 1687 had been riding the wave of success enjoyed by French sculptors in the last years of the century. The altar of St Ignatius in the Gesù, one of the highest-profile sculptural commissions of the decade, was almost entirely furnished by Frenchmen, and Monnot had contributed a bronze relief and two marble angels.³⁹⁷ The Exeters admired the altar while enjoying the music in the church on Christmas Day 1700, and while attending the ‘Quarant’ore’ ceremony the following February.³⁹⁸ Creed noted that it was ‘the finest and richest altar in the world [...] wonderful fine, far beyond anything at St Peter’s Church.’³⁹⁹ They would also have seen Monnot’s marble reliefs flanking Guidi’s *St Joseph* in S. Maria della Vittoria.

Being on the spot gave rise to serendipitous meetings, and Exeter’s introduction to the artist came through a chance encounter in Santa Maria del Popolo. Leone Pascoli, friend and biographer of Monnot, recounted how Exeter happened to visit the church while the sculptor was installing his bust of Cardinal Mellini.⁴⁰⁰ Exeter told Monnot ‘ch’e’ pur gli avrebbe fatto fare qualcosa’, and a few days later visited his studio in the Arco della Ciambella. The exact details of the commission are uncertain. Pascoli mentions a funerary

³⁹⁷ R. Enggass, *Early Eighteenth-Century sculpture in Rome* (University Park, PA and London, 1976), pp. ix & 77.

³⁹⁸ Creed, *Journal of the Grand Tour*, pp. 27 & 32.

³⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 38.

⁴⁰⁰ L. Pascoli, *Vite de’ pittori, scultori, ed architetti moderni*, vol. 2 (Rome, 1736), p. 491.

monument 'con cinque alter statue grandi, ed una piccola', but besides the monument, discussed in detail in Chapter Six, the only works than can be definitely ascribed to this commission are two portrait busts of the earl and countess of Exeter (fig. 3.8), and a marble relief, *The Adoration of the Child*, that recalled Monnot's work in S. Maria della Vittoria.⁴⁰¹ Commissioning works in person, rather than through a proxy, brought many advantages. They could sit for their portraits (though busts were occasionally made from painted models, most famously Bernini's of Charles I), they could shape the commission to their requirements by looking over working drawings, and their aristocratic status and presence may have given them more traction when negotiating prices.



Fig. 3.8 Pierre-Etienne Monnot, *John, Earl of Exeter and Anne, Countess of Exeter* (1701), marble, Burghley House.

⁴⁰¹ Impey, *Four Centuries of Decorative Arts*, p. 148.

Patrons of contemporary painters

Although they made major acquisitions of decorative arts and sculpture, one of the most important reasons for the Exeters' travels was to collect Italian paintings. This chapter has already argued that the Exeters differed from Grand Tourists in their single-minded pursuit of art. This was not the only matter that set them apart. They also diverged from other seventeenth-century English collectors of Italian art in the scale and breadth of their collecting, and their preference for contemporary artists over old masters. Of the twenty paintings acquired in Italy by Sir Thomas Isham, excluding two portraits, less than half were original contemporary works, the others being copies, principally of seventeenth-century masters held in the collections of the families he visited.⁴⁰² The quantity was also small fry in comparison to the Exeters' massive haul of several hundred paintings from over sixty different artists. No English contemporaries collected Italian art on a comparable scale, and it is small wonder that one of Exeter's shipments of forty-six pictures in nine cases was impounded by English customs in October 1684, on suspicion of breaking the law against the commercial import of paintings. Exeter hastened to reassure the Customs Commissioners that 'the said several pictures were imported for his own particular use for furniture of his house at Burghley and not for sale', judiciously omitting to mention the other hundred or so paintings that he had also purchased.⁴⁰³ They could scarcely have believed him.

⁴⁰² Burdon, 'Sir Thomas Isham an English Collector', p. 7.

⁴⁰³ 'Entry Book: December 1684, 1-5', in *Calendar of Treasury Books, vol. 7, 1681-1685*, ed. W. Shaw (London, 1916), pp. 1420-35. <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-treasury-books/vol7/pp1420-1435>> British History Online [accessed: 6 January 2020].

Inevitably there was some overlap between the Exeters' collecting, and that of other late-seventeenth-century aristocratic travellers to Italy. Like many a Grand Tourist, Exeter commissioned portraits of himself and his companions. The Venetian artist Sebastiano Bombelli painted the earl and his fellow-traveller Major Willoughby in 1681, and in 1683 Exeter returned to him for portraits of his gentlemen companions, Captains Hyde and Fitzwilliams and Mr Palmer.⁴⁰⁴ When in Rome, Exeter and Isham both used the same agent, Buno Talbot and copyist, Giovanni Remigio.⁴⁰⁵ Nor was Exeter's patronage of Carlo Maratti anything new. Maratti was a long-established favourite with the English: Isham and John Evelyn both commissioned their portraits from him, and Sir John Finch, English Resident in Florence from 1665 to 1670, sent Charles II and Catherine of Braganza each a religious scene by Maratti.⁴⁰⁶ Exeter commissioned his portrait from Maratti and bought at least seven other paintings from him.⁴⁰⁷ However, this was the extent of the similarity. The necessarily condensed account that follows demonstrates that the Exeters collected contemporary Italian paintings on a scale unmatched by their English peers.

It is possible that the Exeters left England in 1679 with the intention of purchasing a large number of paintings, but their collecting accelerated significantly after they visited the Medici court. Before they arrived in Florence, they had only bought a handful of paintings. They had attempted to buy a pair of portraits of the Dauphin and Daphine while in Paris, but had been discouraged by the high asking price.⁴⁰⁸ Most of their picture buying on this first

⁴⁰⁴ The Bombelli portraits are now lost but can be identified in the 1688 inventory and 1690 addendum. BA EX 51/18.

⁴⁰⁵ BA EX 51/10. See p. 224 for a full account of Remigio's services to Exeter.

⁴⁰⁶ Chaney, 'The Italianate Evolution of English Collecting', pp. 61-9.

⁴⁰⁷ Exeter's portrait by Maratti was recorded by Bellori and seen at Burghley by Rev. William Cole in 1763, but since disappeared. Brigstocke and Somerville, *Italian Paintings*, p. 109; *Walpole*, vol. 10, p. 346.

⁴⁰⁸ BA EX 51/8/7.

journey appears to have taken place in the spring of 1681, when they were resident in Florence, although there may have been a time-lag between placing commissions and making payments. This was the beginning of the Exeters' career as major collectors of contemporary European paintings. Lack of archival evidence for 1679-81 in comparison to the journey of 1683-4 has led scholars to suppose that they did not buy many paintings on their first visit to Italy, but a cross-referencing of surviving correspondence, bank ledgers, and the 1688 Burghley inventory, shows that they acquired many more paintings than previously thought, more than twenty in total, from at least a dozen different artists representing every major city.⁴⁰⁹ During this first visit, the seed was sown that would come to full flowering on the earl's second journey. Their collecting in the spring of 1681 may have been precipitated in part by the ease with which they were able to acquire paintings, with courtier Andrea Laurenzini acting as their agent. However, it may also be that the Exeters' collecting was inspired by the illustrious history of Medici art patronage that they experienced first hand at the Tuscan court.

The Exeters favoured artists patronised by the Medici, adding weight to the supposition that their collecting was at least in part modelled on the family's example. Chief among these was Carlo Dolci, an artist much favoured at the Tuscan court. On their first visit they acquired at least three of his paintings, two of which were probably from the artist's stock, and a painting that Dolci was currently working on, *The Adoration of the Magi*, a variant of a painting of the same subject commissioned by Cardinal Leopoldo de Medici.⁴¹⁰ They also purchased paintings by Simone Pignone and Livio Mehus, two more Florentine artists

⁴⁰⁹ Brigstocke, 'The 5th Earl of Exeter as Grand Tourist and Collector', pp. 334-5; BA EX 51/8 & 3; NatWest CH 194/6-10 & BA EX 51/18.

⁴¹⁰ BA EX 51/8/26 & EX 51/3/4; Brigstocke, 'The 5th Earl of Exeter as Grand Tourist and Collector', p. 335.

represented in the Medici collection.⁴¹¹ In Venice, they placed commissions with more contemporary artists, where besides the two Bombelli portraits mentioned above, the Exeters purchased paintings by Giacomo da Castello and Johan Carlo Loth, and commissioned a set of four paintings from Pietro Liberi, including the charming *Lord Burghley pulling Fortune by the hair* (fig. 3.9).⁴¹² Hugh Brigstocke suggested that these were commissioned in 1684, but young Lord Burghley only visited Venice in 1681 and did not accompany his father in 1683-4.⁴¹³ Furthermore, they were hung over the doors and mantelpiece in Lady Exeter's dressing room at Burghley, for which the dimensions had been forwarded by Stretch in March 1681.⁴¹⁴



⁴¹¹ BA EX 51/3/4.

⁴¹² BA EX 51/8/29. 'Fortune' may also be a portrait of Lady Exeter.

⁴¹³ Brigstocke and Somerville, *Italian Paintings*, p. 100.

⁴¹⁴ BA EX 51/18; BA EX 51/8/16.

Fig. 3.9 Pietro Liberi, *Lord Burghley pulling Fortune by the hair* (1681), oil on canvas, Burghley House.

This new-found taste for contemporary paintings gathered pace as the Exeters journeyed south. Brigstocke believed that they did not visit Naples on the first journey but correspondence confirms that Lord Exeter and a small party headed there from Rome in a hired calash in April 1681, a trip he repeated three years later.⁴¹⁵ A payment of £110 10s 0d to consul George Davies in April 1683 was probably for the delivery of paintings commissioned two years earlier, most likely by Francesco di Maria, twelve of whose works were recorded in the 1688 inventory.⁴¹⁶ Although there are no recorded payments to artists in Rome, several chests of pictures were sent back from Leghorn shortly after their visit to Rome in April 1681, along with several other goods that had certainly been purchased there. Commissions from other Roman artists followed on later.⁴¹⁷

If contemporary paintings were an important aspect of the first journey, they were the *raison d'être* of the second. A comprehensive survey of the paintings purchased by Exeter in 1683-4 could fill a thesis in its own right, and only the salient features are outlined here.⁴¹⁸ Francis Haskell's description of Exeter's collecting as 'indiscriminate enthusiasm' is not an unfair assessment, but there were nevertheless some patterns to his patronage.⁴¹⁹ Exeter returned to almost all the artists whom he had commissioned two years previously, acquiring more (sometimes many more) works from them. In Florence, he revisited Carlo

⁴¹⁵ BA EX 51/8/26.

⁴¹⁶ NatWest CH 194/7 fol.72r; BA EX 51/18. This payment was twelve months before the second visit to Naples.

⁴¹⁷ BA EX 51/3/2 and EX 51/8/26.

⁴¹⁸ The most in-depth surveys, now supplemented by this thesis, are Brigstocke and Somerville, *Italian Paintings* and Brigstocke, 'The 5th Earl of Exeter as Grand Tourist and Collector'.

⁴¹⁹ F. Haskell, *Patrons and Painters* (New Haven and London, 1980, first pub. 1963), p. 197.

Dolci, purchasing several finished paintings and commissioning two new ones, *Elijah Feeding the Ravens* and *Christ Consecrating the Elements*.⁴²⁰ With the help of consul Thomas Hobson, he commissioned '3 pieces of beasts and birds' from Castello, seven or eight more from Loth, and purchased a 'Magdalen etc' from Pietro Liberi, probably *Christ Appearing to Mary Magdalen*, *Adoration of the Shepherds*, and *Descent from the Cross*.⁴²¹ There were plenty of new names, however. In Venice, Tanner noted payments to Federico Cervelli and 'Carpiari' (Carlo Carpioni), who may have been selling off the stock of his recently deceased father Giulio, while painters named in the 1688 Burghley inventory indicate that Exeter also patronised Antonio Zanchi (a close friend of Loth), Cesare Ferrari, Pietro Dandini, and Andrea Celesti again.⁴²²

In Rome, no stone was left unturned, and Tanner's 'account of ye charge of pictures at Rome' reads like a directory of artists working in the Eternal City.⁴²³ Giacinto Brandi, Giacinto Calandrucci, Giovanni Battista Gaulli, David de Koninck, Fillipo Lauri, Agostino Scilla, and Daniel Seiter all received payments directly from Tanner. Some were highly esteemed artists, like Gaulli, who had recently finished his acclaimed *Triumph in the name of Jesus* on the ceiling of the Church of the Gesù. Others were up-and-coming, like Calandrucci and Giuseppe Maria Chiari, both promising pupils of Maratti.⁴²⁴ It was Carlo Maratti himself, the grand master of Roman painters, with whom Exeter laid out the greatest amount of money: Tanner's payment to him of 600 crowns was four times as much as the next highest

⁴²⁰ These, and the Bombelli portraits, arrived between August 1688 and August 1690. BA EX 51/18. Burghley House PIC265.

⁴²¹ BA EX 51/9; EX 51/18. Burghley House PIC074 & PIC070.

⁴²² BA EX 51/9; EX 51/18.

⁴²³ BA EX 51/10.

⁴²⁴ There are no direct payments to Chiari but two of his works are in the 1688 inventory. BA EX 51/18.

payment of 125 crowns to David de Koninck.⁴²⁵ Although now in his declining years, Maratti's reputation remained high, and he was consistently patronised by popes, cardinals and monarchs. He had recently completed *Apollo and Daphne* for Louis XIV, a much-lauded work that earned him the title 'Royal Painter to the French Court'.⁴²⁶ Exeter's pride in his Marattis is evident from the prestige locations in which they were hung at Burghley. Maratti's religious subjects, *Penitent Magdalene with an Angel* and *Christ and the Woman of Samaria at the Well* were hung in the Best Bedchamber, while a set of four small mythological scenes in his closet were among those 'without Garments or very little' that offended Celia Fiennes (fig. 3.10).⁴²⁷



Fig. 3.10 Carlo Maratti, *Jupiter and Semele* (c. 1684), oil on canvas, Burghley House.

⁴²⁵ BA EX 51/10.

⁴²⁶ M. Mena Marqués, 'Maratti [Maratta], Carlo', *Grove Art Online* (2003) <https://doi.org/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T054166> [accessed: 20 July 2020].

⁴²⁷ BA EX 51/18; *Celia Fiennes*, p. 83.

Besides patronising living artists, Exeter also purchased paintings by artists who were recently deceased but would still be defined as contemporary rather than old masters. In Rome he purchased two paintings by Giacinto Gimignani (d. 1681) from Buno Talbot, a Roman Catholic priest of English descent (though one painting turned out to be by Gimignani's brother-in-law Domenico Turchi), and in Genoa purchased a set of landscapes by Antonio Trevi da Sestri, who had died in 1665.⁴²⁸ Besides these, Exeter also bought paintings by Valerio Castello, Giovanni Benedetto Castiglione (Il Grechetto), and Antonio Maria Vassallo, all of whom, like Sestri, were recently deceased. They all featured in Raffaello Soprani's *Vite de' pittori, scultori e architetti genovesi* (1674), a guide which Exeter had just purchased in Rome and was using to supplement the advice of Balle, his agent in Genoa.⁴²⁹ But overall there were remarkably few purchases of works by non-living artists. Nor did Exeter acquire paintings by or after old masters, with the exception of 'a Coppie of Tissians Venus ... done upon woolen cloath', presumably for its curiosity value.⁴³⁰ The 1688 inventory shows just one painting by a 'master', and a seventeenth-century one at that: Guercino's *Simeon and the Christ Child*, paired as an overdoor in the Best Bedchamber with one by his nephew Benedetto Gennari, who had been patronised by the family during his time in England.⁴³¹ Through the scale of their patronage of contemporary painters, the Exeters, uniquely in late-seventeenth-century England, built a collection akin to those of the great patrons of the Italian renaissance and baroque.

⁴²⁸ BA EX 51/10; 'Entry Book: October 1684, 14-20', in *Calendar of Treasury Books*, vol. 7.

⁴²⁹ BA EX 51/10.

⁴³⁰ BA EX 51/3/4.

⁴³¹ BA EX 51/18.

Seeing places, meeting people

Important though it was, acquisition was not the only purpose of the Exeters' journey. Travel was also an opportunity to see the latest fashions in art and architecture, and to develop relationships with some of Europe's leading patrons. Their precise itinerary in 1699-1700 is known from Creed's journal, and there is every reason to suppose that the previous journeys followed a similar programme. As the Exeters journeyed from city to city, they visited sites of historic, artistic, religious and cultural interest. Secular highlights included the Duke of Savoy's town and country palaces around Turin, the Governor's palace in Milan, the Duke of Parma's palace and theatre in Piacenza and Parma, and Cardinal d'Adda's palace in Bologna.⁴³² Creed's account reflects his own interests (he especially liked cabinets of curiosities) but also shows that the party paid close attention to all aspects of the interiors and gardens. At the ducal palace in Piacenza he took detailed notes of the upholstery ('painted printed satin, with birds and figures'), carving ('eagles and other birds, as big as the life, flying about the cornices') and murals ('painted atop prospective like a cupola'), as well as the paintings commemorating Farnese military victories.⁴³³ They were particularly impressed by the murals and carvings of Sant'Alessandro, Milan, and the shrine of St Catherine of Bologna, as well as the richness of the Marian shrine and treasury at Loreto.⁴³⁴ There was an element of sightseeing to these visits, but they were also a form of visual education, yielding valuable information about artistic developments.

The party arrived in Rome on 23 December 1699, just in time to witness the opening of the holy door at St Peter's the following day. During their four-month stay, the Exeters divided

⁴³² Creed, *Journal of the Grand Tour*, pp. 14-20.

⁴³³ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁴³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 17 & 20-2.

their time between taking part in the Jubilee festivities and ceremonies, and visiting the modern cultural highlights. They took in the Farnese and Borghese palaces, the Farnese and Barberini villas, several nunneries and chapels, and a great many churches. Through the lens of Creed's firm Anglican faith it is difficult to determine how much of the church-visiting was driven by religious conviction, and how much by touristic and artistic curiosity. Creed was fascinated by the unfamiliar Catholic rituals, paying equal attention to the funerary rites of Cardinal Pallavicini and the puppet show at San Pietro in Montorio.⁴³⁵ He also remarked on recent and in-progress works of art: after visiting Santa Maria della Vittoria ('now a-painting'), he noted not only Bernini's 1652 masterpiece *The Ecstasy of St Teresa*, 'counted the finest statue in Rome', but Domenico Guidi's 1694 altarpiece, *The Dream of St Joseph*. As discussed above, this led to the acquisition of Guidi's *Andromeda*. Viewing the works of contemporary sculptors *in situ* was important for scoping out potential commissions.

While in Rome in 1700, the Exeters also cultivated the acquaintance of two prelates of the Roman Catholic church who were also figures of considerable cultural importance. The first was Louis XIV's ambassador to Rome, Cardinal de Bouillon, Duc d'Albret. He was prominent in the church, frequently standing in for the ailing Pope Innocent XII, and he formed a cordial relationship with the Exeters, waiting on the countess 'in great state and pomp, with a great deal of ceremony'.⁴³⁶ Even during this peacetime hiatus, a friendship with a French cardinal would have raised eyebrows in England, but Exeter's alienation from public life gave him the freedom to associate with whom he chose. Their other new acquaintance was the Venetian Cardinal Pietro Ottoboni, grandnephew of Pope Alexander VIII and a patron of

⁴³⁵ Ibid, pp. 27-8 & 31.

⁴³⁶ Ibid, p. 31.

composer Arcangelo Corelli and painter Francesco Trevisani, among others. Ottoboni was probably responsible for introducing the Exeters to Trevisani, from whom they bought around six paintings.⁴³⁷ Trevisani's career was flourishing, and two of the paintings purchased by the Exeters, *The Mocking of Christ* and *The Flagellation*, related to his recently-completed work in the church of San Silvestro, Rome, a commission he may have won through Ottoboni's influence.⁴³⁸

The most important and enduring friendship that the Exeters forged in Italy, however, was with Cosimo III de' Medici. The famed art patronage of the Medici dynasty stretched back to the fifteenth century, and although now in its autumn years, the family was still among the leading patrons of Europe. Pending the completion of the works at Versailles, the Palazzo Pitti in Florence was the grandest palace in Europe, particularly famed for its frescoes by Pietro da Cortona. Besides his outstanding collection of antique statues, Cosimo was an enthusiastic patron of contemporary Florentine artists, founding the Accademia Fiorentina for their training in Rome.⁴³⁹ He also maintained Florence's pre-eminence in the decorative arts through his support of the Galleria dei Lavori. Although his estranged wife Marguerite-Louise d'Orléans had returned to a convent in France, his son Prince Ferdinando was an equally enthusiastic patron of the arts, and his brother Cardinal Leopoldo had been a celebrated collector of art and antiquities, many of which remained in the Palazzo Pitti. Cosimo was also known for his hospitality to visiting noblemen, and besides his love of art he had travelled widely in Europe. It is not unlikely that countess Anne had met Cosimo

⁴³⁷ Listed in the 1738 inventory, BA EX 630.

⁴³⁸ Brigstocke and Somerville, *Italian Paintings*, p. 142.

⁴³⁹ E. Goldberg, *Patterns in Late Medici Art Patronage* (Princeton, 1983).

during his 1669 sojourn in London, when was entertained at dinner by her father, and on another occasion paid a social visit to her mother.⁴⁴⁰

The Exeters' friendship with the Medicis was developed over two (possibly three) visits to the Tuscan court and was cemented through the exchange of gifts. Gift-giving was fundamental to the praxis of early-modern friendship, and while some gifts were ephemeral (game was popular), works of art could be displayed as a visible manifestation of interpersonal connections. When Exeter overwintered at the Tuscan court in 1683/4, Cosimo presented him with a magnificent *pietre dure* cabinet. Scrambling to find a suitable gift in return, Exeter commissioned a charriot from his English coachmaker to be sent out to Florence.⁴⁴¹ The Medicis frequently sent *pietre dure* cabinets as gifts to other rulers, and they could be found in princely collections throughout Europe.⁴⁴² Exeter's cabinet was a large and fine example from the leading court cabinet-maker, Leonardo van der Vinne, who led the Galleria dei Lavori as 'first ebonist and inlay artist'.⁴⁴³ The Grand Duke's gift honoured Lord Exeter by placing him among the potentates who had received similar gifts.

Once back at Burghley, the Exeters publicised their friendship with the Medici through the display of artworks associated with the Tuscan court. Livio Mehus' *Polyphemus and Acis* was hung over the mantelpiece in the Best Bedchamber.⁴⁴⁴ Mehus was closely associated

⁴⁴⁰ L. Magalotti, *Travels of Cosmo the Third, Grand Duke of Tuscany, through England, during the reign of King Charles the Second* (London, 1821), pp. 185 & 324.

⁴⁴¹ NatWest CH 194/7 fol. 75r.

⁴⁴² A. Giusti, *Pietre Dure and the Art of Florentine Italy* (London, 2006), p. 83.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 94.

⁴⁴⁴ Entered as 'Livio Magius' in the 1688 inventory, BA EX 51/18.

with the Grand Duke since he had accompanied the teenage Cosimo III to Rome in 1656.⁴⁴⁵

The *pietre dure* cabinet, placed prominently in the drawing room, was later joined by an ingenious scagliola table, known only from its description in the 1738 inventory. Its unusual form and provenance warranted a far lengthier description than those accorded to other furnishings:

a curious Table, made of a paste, the ground black, inlaid with different Colours, in the form of Flutes, Music books, some open, with an Italian Air wrote in them; cards thrown carelessly about, some tore, and one directed to the Countess of Exeter, to whom this Table was sent by the late Great Duke of Tuscany.⁴⁴⁶

The Grand Duke and Duchess and Prince Ferdinando were all represented by portraits, with the latter among the family portraits in the Marble Saloon, suggesting that it was Ferdinando with whom the Exeters had the warmest relationship.⁴⁴⁷ Extraordinarily, there were more portraits of the Medici than English royals at Burghley. Aside from a bust of Charles II by French/Genoese sculptor Honoré Pelle, only Elizabeth I, benefactress of the first Lord Burghley, was honoured with a portrait.⁴⁴⁸

The Exeters also commemorated their friendship with the Medici in a set of overdoor trophy panels by Grinling Gibbons that imitated one he had recently carved as a gift from Charles II to Cosimo III de' Medici. The so-called 'Cosimo panel' was conceived as a gesture of peace and friendship between princes, and a celebration of the arts (a reference to Medici patronage), with crowns, musical scores, an artist's palette, and a medallion of Pietro da

⁴⁴⁵ J. Southorn, 'Cosimo III de' Medici, Grand Duke of Tuscany', *Grove Art Online* (2003), <https://doi.org/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T056375> [accessed: 16 July 2020].

⁴⁴⁶ BA EX 603.

⁴⁴⁷ BA EX 51/18.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid.

Cortona, topped with a pair of billing doves (fig. 3.11). The Burghley trophy panels were commissioned within a year of the Cosimo panel, with Gibbons receiving his first payment of £60 from Exeter in July 1683, and final payment in December 1685, probably marking the completion and commencement of the work.⁴⁴⁹ Since this fell between the Exeters' two visits to the Tuscan court, they cannot have seen the Cosimo panel in Florence but must have known of it by repute, or from Gibbons himself. For Burghley, Gibbons carved three overdoor trophy panels which, although smaller, follow the same compositional principles as the Cosimo panel (fig. 3.12). They may represent 'The Triumph of Love over War', 'Music and the Sciences', and 'The Attributes of War', and reprise many of the elements of the Cosimo panel, such as the quiver of arrows, lion-hilted sword, billing doves, quill and musical score. In place of Pietro da Cortona, a medallion of Charles II hangs on a chain. They were installed in what would become the state dressing room. Aside from the Cosimo and Burghley panels, Gibbons made only one other trophy panel, in c. 1685 as a gift for Alfonso d'Este, Duke of Modena.⁴⁵⁰ The similarity of the Cosimo and Exeter panels is likely to be a deliberate reference to their relationship with the Medici, embedded into the fabric of Burghley.

⁴⁴⁹ NatWest CH 194/7, 6 July 1683 [folio no. illegible]. The entry has been defaced and may read £50. The payments to Gibbons do not specify what they were for, but have been matched to the panels by their date and stylistic attribution. NatWest CH 194/7 fol. 213r.

⁴⁵⁰ D. Esterly, *Grinling Gibbons and the Art of Carving* (London, 1998), p. 150.



Photo Scala, Florence - courtesy of the Ministero Beni e Att. Culturali

Fig. 3.11 Grinling Gibbons, *The Cosimo panel* (1682), limewood, Palazzo Pitti, Florence.
Image: Scala, Florence - courtesy of the Ministero Beni e Att. Culturali e del Turismo



Fig. 3.12 Grinling Gibbons, *Music and the Sciences trophy panel* (1683-5), limewood, Burghley House. Image: Amy Lim.

The most important aspect of the Exeters' friendship with the Medici, however, was not in the particular works of art they exchanged, commissioned, or collected, but their influence on the Exeters' own self-fashioning as patrons of the arts. This chapter has already argued that the Exeters stood apart from their peers in their focus on contemporary artists. There were very few precedents for this among seventeenth-century English collectors. Perhaps the closest comparison was Charles I, who in 1625 dispatched Nicolas Lanier to buy paintings in Rome on his behalf, where he spent £2,000 on over thirty works by contemporary artists.⁴⁵¹ But the celebrated Gonzaga collection, the purchase of which Lanier helped negotiate for Charles two years later, was skewed towards old masters such as Raphael, Titian, Tintoretto and Giulio Romano, as was royal taste in general.

Likewise, most aristocratic collectors (including Devonshire and Somerset) preferred the old masters of the Italian Renaissance, along with the big names of the early- to mid-seventeenth century (Rubens, Van Dyck, Claude Lorrain, Guido Reni), which they snapped up at London auctions. Old masters, and copies of old masters, dominated the market for serious collectors. There were contemporary artists working in England: plenty of 'face-painters', besides specialists in genres such as still-life and *trompe l'oeil*, flower and bird paintings, and landscapes. But 'history' paintings were almost exclusively found in murals, not on canvas, and since there was still a strong Anglican distrust of religious imagery, very few religious subjects were painted by artists living in England.⁴⁵² Benedetto Gennari, an Italian artist based in London from 1674 to 1689, was one of the few to do so, and it is noteworthy that Exeter was among his patrons.⁴⁵³

⁴⁵¹ J. Brotton, *The Sale of the Late King's Goods* (London, 2006), p. 116-28.

⁴⁵² T. Barber, 'The Religious Interior', in Barber (ed.), *British Baroque*, p. 60.

⁴⁵³ P. Bagni, *Benedetto Gennari e la Bottega del Guercino* ([Bologna], 1986), pp. 94-9, 108-9 & 154-8.

The precedent for the Exeters' collecting was to be found not in England but in Italy. The great Italian collections like those of the Medicis and Gonzagas had been formed by patronising contemporary artists, nurturing talent while building a collection with an eye to the future. Late-seventeenth-century painters like Maratti and Gaulli made their names painting frescoes and altarpieces for popes, cardinals and grand dukes, just as Raphael and Mantegna had two centuries before. Louis XIV's foundation of the *Académies* and the Gobelins workshops aimed at a similar end, in other words, the sponsorship of the contemporary arts. In England, aside from the royal court, very few nobles offered contemporary painters a place in their household and the constant promotion of their work. Significantly, Lord Exeter offered bed, board, and several years of work to mural painter Antonio Verrio (who was Italian). This is not to say that the Exeters thought of themselves on equal terms with the Bourbons or Barberini, Medici or Gonzaga. They could, however, see that today's contemporary artist is tomorrow's old master. With the exception of a few stars of the northern Renaissance, the majority of old masters were Italian, or at least had worked or trained in Italy. Given the shortage of such talent in England, and the scarcity, difficulty, and cost of importing, travel was the only effective means of acquiring a modern collection. Patronising contemporary Italian painters on a large scale projected an image of grandeur, and was also a shrewd investment on behalf of future generations.

How exceptional was the Exeters' patronage of contemporary artists, and how much does their exceptionality qualify our image of seventeenth-century English collectors and travellers in Europe? Robert Spencer, second earl of Sunderland, is also known to have collected Italian paintings. Having succeeded to his title at the age of two, like Exeter he was in full possession of his fortune when he travelled to Italy in 1664. He commissioned his

portrait from Maratti, besides acquiring some other paintings and possibly sculptures, but his collection is poorly documented.⁴⁵⁴ Until further research is carried out into other collectors, and perhaps more archival material uncovered, the scale and focus of the Exeters' collecting of contemporary Italian art appears to be unmatched by any other English collector of the period. It is difficult to assess whether the Exeters' intention to collect contemporary paintings on a grand scale was formed before or during their first visit to Italy, but in the absence of any significant precedent in England, the latter seems likely. English collectors played it safe with old masters, while the great continental patrons sought out and supported emerging artists. It was a higher-risk strategy, but one that yielded much richer rewards: paintings acquired at relatively low prices would mature into a great collection, and create their reputations as great patrons of the arts. The Exeters saw the opportunity, and seized it with both hands.

By adopting this strategy, the Exeters, who were neither as elevated nor as wealthy as the Somersets or Devonshires, were able to build, furnish, and fill their country house with a magnificence that ranked it (and still does) among the very greatest houses of late Stuart England. Like Ralph Montagu and Matthew Prior, the opportunities opened up by European travel enabled them to punch above their weight in terms of material display and cultural capital. The Exeters' travels were about much more than Italian paintings. They acquired valuable and prestigious tapestries, furniture, textiles and sculpture, of a quality and range that would have been exceptionally difficult to obtain in England. Being there in person meant that they could commission or purchase unique works with important provenance or

⁴⁵⁴ E. Waterhouse, 'A note on British collecting of Italian pictures in the later seventeenth century', *Burlington Magazine* 102:683 (Feb 1960), p. 57.

associations, as with the Gobelins tapestries, Louis XIV's bedchamber furniture, and the Duke of Modena's *Andromeda*. But above all, their collection of contemporary Italian paintings set them apart from their English peers, marking them out as patrons of unique foresight, with the ambition to be ranked among the great art patrons of Europe.

Chapter Four

Collaboration and connection

'I stay'd at Chattlesworth four or five days the Duke being there. I shew'd him all my Ld Carlisle's designs ... He absolutely approv'd the whole designe ... There has been a great many Criticks consulted up on it since.'

John Vanbrugh to the Earl of Manchester,
25 December 1699⁴⁵⁵

In 1693, Culpepper Tanner, steward to the fifth earl of Exeter, was given the unenviable task of drawing up the terms of agreement with mural painter Antonio Verrio for the Saloon at Burghley, today known as the Heaven Room. Although it is now widely regarded as his finest surviving work, Verrio at first claimed to be 'too busy for my Lord', in a fit of pique because 'he said my Lord had called him an Impudent Dogg'.⁴⁵⁶ If Exeter had indeed called him an impudent dog, it was not without provocation. Not only had Verrio gone £60 over the agreed price for painting the previous room in the enfilade, the dining room ('his bond not being of any validity'), but he left a trail of unpaid bills and disgruntled housekeepers wherever he went.⁴⁵⁷ And where he went, most often, was to Exeter's brother-in-law Devonshire at Chatsworth. Between 1689 and 1698 Verrio shuttled back and forth between the two houses, leaving his assistants to continue in his absence. As well as painting the dining room at Burghley, he had recently completed the staircase and Great Chamber at Chatsworth, and Tanner sensibly leveraged this shared patronage in his negotiations with Verrio. Armed with the comparative dimensions of Burghley's Saloon and Chatsworth's Great Chamber, and a detailed run-down of exactly what extras Verrio had received at

⁴⁵⁵ G. Webb (ed.), *The Complete Works of Sir John Vanbrugh*, vol. 4 (London, 1927), pp. 4-5.

⁴⁵⁶ BA F54/05(a)110.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid.; many bills throughout F54/05(a); DCC W/C/178 & 180.

Chatsworth for board and lodging, he proposed that 'My Lord will give proportionally att soe much agreed as Lord Devon', and made a note, 'to write to Noble Lord [Devonshire] on what Sigr Verrio had in monye and what was reckon'd for Dyett'.⁴⁵⁸ The contract eventually agreed with Verrio was the product of a collaboration between the patron, his steward, and his brother-in-law.

The production and consumption of art in late Stuart England was more often than not a collaborative endeavour, and the lone male patron, lionised throughout much of art history, was a rare beast.⁴⁵⁹ The dukes of Devonshire and Somerset and the earl of Exeter may have been the nominal patrons of the art they commissioned and displayed, but they did not and could not act alone. Chapter Five will look within their marriages at the dynamics of conjugal patronage, but first this chapter examines the other groups who facilitated, collaborated, and participated in the shared endeavour of art patronage. Beginning close to home, with household staff, it moves outwards in concentric circles to examine the respective contributions of agents, family, friends, county neighbours, and associates. Together, the nominal patron and his network discussed designs, recommended artworks, artists and craftsmen to one another, exchanged artworks as gifts, commissioned portraits of each other, and reinforced their social bonds through a mutual engagement with art. This chapter explores the domestic, social, and professional networks that were involved in the creation and consumption of art, and in doing so, illuminates the dynamics of late Stuart aristocratic society.

⁴⁵⁸ BA F54/05(a)110.

⁴⁵⁹ A classic example of lionisation is Lees-Milne, *Earls of Creation*.

Patrons employed many people on a formal and informal basis to help them acquire art; the fact that they were remunerated for their services should not discount their essential contribution. They included household staff, agents, and the artists and craftsmen themselves, who often acted in a dual capacity as artist and dealer. Their role was not confined to practicalities for they also provided their advice and expertise. Choosing, sourcing, and managing purchases and commissions was a collaborative process within and outside the household. Agents are already acknowledged to have played an important role in amassing the major art collections of early Stuart England, especially that of Charles I. Jeremy Wood has elaborated on the different ways in which members of the King's court circle influenced his taste, offered him works for sale, negotiated bulk acquisitions, and even undertook buying expeditions on his behalf.⁴⁶⁰ After the Restoration, royal and aristocratic collectors were no less dependent on outside help. The role of agents on foreign soil has been examined in histories of English collecting, and the Exeters' employment of such agents, discussed below, confirms their importance and expands on the variety of services they offered.⁴⁶¹ The contribution of equivalent figures on home turf has received less scholarly attention, but they were no less crucial. Agents and employees not only advised aristocrats on the purchase of old master paintings and sculpture, but helped them to create their buildings, interiors and gardens. Their project management and creative flair are brought here to the fore, not only to give them their due, but to emphasise the collaborative and pluralistic nature of large-scale art patronage.

⁴⁶⁰ J. Wood, 'Connoisseurship at the Caroline Court', in Rumberg and Shawe-Taylor (eds.), *Charles I*, pp. 30-5.

⁴⁶¹ Stourton and Sebag-Montefiore, *British as Art Collectors*, pp. 86-7.

The recent ‘global turn’ in country house scholarship and interpretation acknowledges the interconnected nature of country houses and their contents, highlighting the international economic and social networks that sustained them. Elisabeth Grass’ forthcoming doctoral thesis connects the building and furnishing of absentee West Indian plantation owners’ houses in England with the slave-produced origins of their wealth, while the AHRC-funded Jewish Country Houses project led by Abigail Green reaches across national boundaries to connect the praxes of the Jewish diaspora.⁴⁶² Alongside these international networks, aristocrats and their country houses were also enmeshed within national networks of family, friends, neighbours and associates. Susan Whyman’s micro-history of the Verneys located two generations of a gentry family within their country and city networks, and emphasised the importance of gift-exchange as a means of consolidating hierarchy and ties of mutual obligation.⁴⁶³ Although the case studies in this thesis are of considerably higher social status than the Verneys, their ‘cultural worlds’ also relied on networks and exchange. Judith Hook noted the incidence of ‘baroque groupings’, in which nobles linked by kinship patronised the same people, most notably architect William Talman and his regular team of artists and craftsmen.⁴⁶⁴ This chapter reinforces Hook’s observation and expands those kinship groupings to encompass county society, and informal and formal associations.

Some of these connections were peer-to-peer, but others cut across social hierarchies and political affiliations. These networks help to explain stylistic development and the movement of artworks and artists, and consequently can make a valuable contribution to

⁴⁶² Grass, ‘The West Indian landed gentleman’; A. Green and J. Carey, ‘Beyond the pale: the country houses of the Jewish élite’, *Journal of Modern Jewish Studies*, 18:4 (2019), pp. 393-398, doi: 10.1080/14725886.2019.1667115 [accessed: 14 April 2021].

⁴⁶³ Whyman, *Sociability and Power in late-Stuart England*.

⁴⁶⁴ Hook, *Baroque Age in England*, pp. 77-8.

art history. But by turning the analysis through 180 degrees, a close reading of the artworks can also help to uncover the networks that interlaced late Stuart aristocratic society. At a micro level, art patronage can uncover important but overlooked relationships, such as the friendship between the Cecil and Noel families described below. At a macro level, the study of aristocratic networks through the medium of art complements textual sources, and helps to fill the archival silences left by face-to-face communication, in order to deepen our understanding of the mechanics of social and professional intercourse.

Household staff

Within their own households, aristocratic patrons relied heavily on their staff to advise on and execute art commissions. The role that the Exeters' steward Culpepper Tanner played in negotiating Antonio Verrio's contract was outlined at the beginning of this chapter, and it is evident from Tanner's correspondence that he was a key player at Burghley. He acted as the central point of contact for artists and craftsmen, managing budgets and facilitating the smooth running of the household. He also accompanied the Exeters on their travels around Europe, where he carried out the same tasks, adapting quickly to the new environment and working hard at his Italian language skills. Less is known about Somerset's stewards, who included Nathaniel Bridgewater and an Italian, Brunetti, although they certainly handled payments to artists.⁴⁶⁵ Devonshire relied heavily on the assistance of two men, Henry Lowman and Monsieur Huet, who made a significant contribution to Chatsworth and Devonshire House, bringing to bear not only their organisational skills but their contacts and creative flair. Francis Thompson's history of the building of Chatsworth acknowledged the

⁴⁶⁵ PHA 321.

input of Huet, a Huguenot refugee employed sporadically as an advisor and overseer, but Lowman's importance in London has previously been entirely overlooked.⁴⁶⁶ The first duke of Devonshire is often lauded as one of the greatest town and country house builders of the age, but any account of his patronage needs to acknowledge his debt to these two instrumental figures.

Henry Lowman was employed in Devonshire's London households, moving between his Whitehall lodgings and his West End townhouse, where he oversaw the interior fixtures and furnishings, first at St James' Square and from 1696 at Devonshire House. Little is known about Lowman's background other than that he was a German protestant, born to Theodor and Mary Lowman in 1650/1 at Dortmund in the Electorate of Brandenburg.⁴⁶⁷ He was in Devonshire's employ by February 1686 and remained in his service throughout the busiest years of rebuilding, decorating, and furnishing Chatsworth and Devonshire House. Lowman had particular responsibility for overseeing the decoration and furnishing of the London properties. He arranged with mural painter Louis Laguerre for repairs to the ceiling and closet at St James' Square and managed the commission of a set of tapestries from John Vanderbank.⁴⁶⁸ He organised carvings from Valentin Lancroon (father of the mural painter Gerard), and beds from Lapiere, unpacked and aired the tapestries bequeathed by the duke's grandmother at Roehampton, and acted as general overseer of the craftsmen working on the interiors at Devonshire House.⁴⁶⁹ He received new furniture from the

⁴⁶⁶ F. Thompson, *A History of Chatsworth* (London, 1949), p. 36.

⁴⁶⁷ Parliamentary Archives HL/PO/JO/10/6/2/1498 Naturalisation (Vandertyd. &c) Act & HL/PO/PB/1/1698/11&12W3n61 Private Act, 11 William III, c. 37. See also his memorial tablet at St Nicholas, Ash, Kent; I am grateful to Olivia Fryman for bringing it to my attention.

⁴⁶⁸ DCC W/E/94/6, W/E/94/7

⁴⁶⁹ DCC W/E/94/3, W/C/94/7, W/C/18/A, W/E/94/4 & W/E/94/6.

upholsterers and sent it up to Chatsworth, took charge of the silver inventory, and went in person to Holland to buy a set of hangings.⁴⁷⁰

Lowman's management skills and flair for interiors led to a successful career at court. In 1689, Devonshire appointed him to one of the positions at his disposal, Joint Clerk of the Acatry (with Tom Fox, another of his London staff), and in September 1691 secured him a better position as Third Clerk of the Kitchen, but Lowman did not rely on Devonshire's patronage alone.⁴⁷¹ By January 1695 Lowman was 'a great favourite at Court' and in October 1695 he was given the task of overseeing arrangements for William III's royal progress.⁴⁷² Lowman's proximity to the crown and his frequent attendance at court meant that he was ideally placed to advise Devonshire on the latest developments in court fashion, but he must have also brought his own tastes to bear on Devonshire's interiors. His talent for arranging and commissioning interiors and furnishings was recognised by the King in January 1700 when Lowman and his wife Mary were jointly appointed to the prestigious position of Housekeepers and Keepers of the Standing Wardrobe at Kensington, with responsibility for maintaining the house and its contents.⁴⁷³ The appointment probably precipitated his naturalisation in February 1700.⁴⁷⁴ The couple held the position until their retirement in 1727, and Henry Lowman developed a reputation for expertise in running a

⁴⁷⁰ DCC CH37/6 fol. 24.

⁴⁷¹ 'Department of the Lord Steward', Database of Court Officers <http://courtofficers.ctsdh.luc.edu/HOUSEBS1.list.pdf> [accessed: 6 May 2021].

⁴⁷² DCC W/B/55 & W/C/83.

⁴⁷³ 'Chamber List 3', Database of Court Officers <http://courtofficers.ctsdh.luc.edu/CHAMBER3.list.pdf> [accessed: 6 May 2021].

⁴⁷⁴ Parliamentary Archives HL/PO/JO/10/6/2/1498 & HL/PO/PB/1/1698/11&12W3n61.

well-regulated but economical household.⁴⁷⁵ Devonshire owed a debt of gratitude to Lowman for his contribution to the building and furnishing of his London properties.

The other key facilitator of Devonshire's art patronage was Monsieur Huet, acknowledged by Thompson as 'a person of great importance'.⁴⁷⁶ Little is known about Huet except that he was a French Huguenot minister, and his self-confessed 'want of the Anglish tongue' suggests that he had not been living in England long before his first appearance in the Chatsworth accounts in March 1686.⁴⁷⁷ He was employed by Devonshire until September 1687 and returned to Chatsworth in 1694, where he was continually employed until the duke's death, 'looking to the Gardens and new building'.⁴⁷⁸ Huet assumed the role of overseer and head of procurement for the gardens and interiors. He directed the artists and craftsmen at Chatsworth and travelled to London to make purchases, negotiating the acquisition of four statues from a City gentleman, commissioning a perspective from Huguenot artist Pierre Berchet, and buying exotic birds and trees for the gardens.⁴⁷⁹ Gardens were something of a speciality for Huet, for as well as recommending a French gardener, Pierre Audias, and overseeing tree planting and work on the fountains, he also designed a wilderness in 1704 for Thomas Coke at nearby Melbourne Hall.⁴⁸⁰

⁴⁷⁵ O. Fryman, 'For his Majesties service: The Household Below Stairs 1689-1760', in O. Fryman (ed.), *Kensington Palace* (London, 2018), p. 182.

⁴⁷⁶ Thompson, *History of Chatsworth*, p. 36.

⁴⁷⁷ DCC W/E/83/1 & CH37/1 fol. 2.

⁴⁷⁸ DCC CH37/1 fols. 11, 99, 126, 141, 146, 156, 163, 173 & CH37/6 fol. 47.

⁴⁷⁹ DCC CH37/9 fol. 4, W/C/157, W/C/203, W/C/123 & W/C/345.

⁴⁸⁰ DCC W/B/5/12 & W/C/83/4; D. Jacques, *Gardens of Court and Country* (New Haven and London, 2017), p. 191.

Huet's first-hand knowledge of French design and his connection to the Huguenot diaspora were important attributes, and his influence at Chatsworth is underlined by a vitriolic letter written by Devonshire's chief comptroller William Grosvenor, shortly after the duke's death in 1707. Grosvenor, whose hatred of Huet was both personal and enmeshed in anti-French prejudice, unleashed a bitter tirade against 'the Monsieur at Chatsworth, that Linsey Wolsey saint', continuing, 'is he not and has he not bin the very Hector of Chatsworth [...], whoe can deny it, how many hundreds nay thousands has he buried in pursuit of his French fancies'.⁴⁸¹ In a subsequent letter to Whildon he griped, 'I am of opinion that if we were all of one language we might serve his Grace as well'; Devonshire's household staff also included a French steward, clerk of the kitchen, and butler.⁴⁸² It is noteworthy that both Lowman and Huet were immigrants from the continent, for not only did they bring their organisational skills, but they were in themselves European cultural ambassadors to the ducal household.

Artists, advisors, and dealers

Besides formally-employed staff, aristocratic patrons also relied on dealers and advisors, many of whom were also practising artists. The dukes of Somerset and Devonshire both purchased sculptures and old master paintings on the art market in London, either at auction or in private sales, through dealers and brokers. In the mid 1690s, Devonshire was a regular attendee at the sales of Edward Davies. In 1696, he paid Davies £130 for '2 Basso Relievos, 3 Bustos of Women' and a copy of Guido Reni's *Judith and Holofernes*, and he also bought statues of Mark Anthony and a Faunus from him, destined for the gardens at

⁴⁸¹ DCC W/D/62. He appears to have jumbled his schoolboy Homer.

⁴⁸² DCC W/D/63 & W/B/5/11.

Chatsworth.⁴⁸³ Some dealers also worked for their patrons as artists. Parry Walton was a painter and restorer (as well as James II's keeper of the royal collection) who also held regular sales of paintings at his house in Lincolns Inn Fields.⁴⁸⁴ Somerset patronised him in both capacities, paying him £28 in February 1683 for cleaning, mending, and reframing pictures, and buying 'an old head at Mr Waltons' for £6 three months later.⁴⁸⁵ He continued to attend Walton's sales regularly, spending £131 on 'severall pictures bowght of Mr Walton' in December 1693, and it was Walton, along with Grinling Gibbons, who organised the sale at which Somerset purchased his treasured Claude Lorrain.⁴⁸⁶

Many artists were also collectors themselves; it was their expertise in the field that made their advice so valuable to their aristocratic patrons. Some of the most successful artists, among them Sir Peter Lely and John Riley, amassed substantial collections of paintings that demonstrated their connoisseurship as well as informing their artistic practice. The duke of Somerset purchased three paintings, including one by Dobson, from Riley in December 1682, then commissioned several portraits from him over the next few years, before attending the sale of Riley's collection (held at Walton's) after his death.⁴⁸⁷ He then turned to Riley's successor John Closterman for both portrait painting and art advisory services. George Vertue recounted how Somerset took Closterman with him to one of Davies' sales 'to have his judgment on the pictures', where on Closterman's advice he successfully bid for

⁴⁸³ DCC CH37/4 fol. 5; DCC CH37/3 fols. 8 & 57.

⁴⁸⁴ For Walton and other dealers see *The art world in Britain 1660 to 1735* <https://artworld.york.ac.uk> [accessed: 6 May 2021].

⁴⁸⁵ PHA 321 & 241.

⁴⁸⁶ PHA 243.

⁴⁸⁷ PHA 321; 'Sale of paintings, drawings and prints belonging to John Riley at Parry Walton's premises in Lincoln's Inn Fields, 25 February 1692' in *The art world in Britain*.

Guercino's *Lot and his Daughters*.⁴⁸⁸ Unfortunately Somerset failed to settle the bill and Closterman subsequently acquired the painting for his own collection, an ill-advised move since it cost him the duke's goodwill and patronage. But artists did not need to be in a long-term relationship with their patron to also act as advisors and brokers. When Exeter was visiting Paris in October 1680, Gobelins weaver Jan Jans II acted as a go-between in the potential purchase of a pair of portraits of the Dauphin and Dauphine, honestly advising his client that he felt the asking price of twelve Louis d'or was 'beaucoup d'argent'.⁴⁸⁹ Patrons turned to artists for their connoisseurial eye and knowledge of the art market as well as for their own works. Their contribution to the great aristocratic collections should not be underestimated.

Foreign agents

Overseas travel brought an additional set of challenges, and during their extended journeys in Europe, besides the invaluable Culpepper Tanner, the earl and countess of Exeter relied on a network of local agents to manage the practicalities of life on the road. These agents were also instrumental in procuring artworks, and overseeing the process from start to finish. They recommended artists, purchased paintings and luxury goods, placed commissions, negotiated contracts, and handled payment, packing and dispatch. Some of the biggest commissions took years to execute, leaving the agents to chase up the artists and arrange shipping long after the Exeters had returned to England.⁴⁹⁰ In each of the major

⁴⁸⁸ 'Vertue' vol. 4, *Walpole Society* 24 (1935-6), p. 21.

⁴⁸⁹ BA EX 51/8/7.

⁴⁹⁰ For example, a payment was made to Andrea Laurenzini in Florence in October 1685 and a customs bill for pictures was paid in March 1686. BA CH194/7 fols. 213r. & 215r.

cities they visited, the Exeters sought the assistance of merchants, courtiers, artists, and diplomats, seeking out fellow Englishmen whenever possible.

In Venice, the Exeters relied heavily on the services of the English consul, John Hobson, who acted as their personal shopper. On their first visit in 1681, Hobson arranged the commission of six paintings from Giacomo da Castello, Andrea Celesti, and Johan Carlo Loth.⁴⁹¹ After their departure for Bologna, he continued to render his services in a multitude of ways. Besides taking care of left luggage and a sick horse, he forwarded a sample swatch of brocadello for approval, and received, paid for, packed and shipped the commissioned pictures, along with a case of Venice treacle, some guns, and various other effects.⁴⁹² George Davies, the English consul in Naples, also oversaw commissions on the Exeters' behalf. Lord Exeter briefly visited the city in April 1681, and a payment of £110 10s 0d to Davies in April 1683 (when Exeter was in England) was probably for the delivery of paintings commissioned during his visit, most likely by Francesco di Maria, twelve of whose works were recorded in the 1688 Burghley inventory.⁴⁹³ Back in Naples in the spring of 1684, Exeter returned to Davies for assistance in purchasing two large flower paintings from still-life artist Giuseppe Recco.⁴⁹⁴ Once an agent was in place, he could be trusted with further commissions directed from England, and in October 1685 Exeter, back at Burghley, used Davies as an intermediary to purchase a further six paintings by Recco, this time of game and fish.⁴⁹⁵

⁴⁹¹ BA EX 51/8/29.

⁴⁹² BA EX 51/8/19.

⁴⁹³ BA EX 51/8/26. NatWest CH194/7 fol.72r.; BA EX 51/18. This payment is twelve months before the second visit to Naples.

⁴⁹⁴ See the agreement cited in Brigstocke and Somerville, *Italian Paintings from Burghley House*, p. 120.

⁴⁹⁵ Ibid.

Hobson and Davies offered mainly practical assistance to the Exeters, presumably in return for remuneration, though no record of this survives. The earl and countess also made the acquaintance of several individuals who took on a much more advisory role. Soon after arriving in Florence, the Exeters formed a relationship with Andrea Laurenzini, a courtier who acted as an agent during their first two journeys. Although Laurenzini's own position at the Tuscan court is unknown, his brothers were both in the service of Prince Ferdinando de' Medici.⁴⁹⁶ Laurenzini was the only native Italian to act as agent for the Exeters, and it may have been his English language skills as well as his courtly and art-world connections that recommended him to them. He arranged for the purchase of a *pietre dure* cabinet and later suggested they might like to acquire a panel they had seen in progress in the maker's workshop.⁴⁹⁷ Laurenzini acted as broker with, and possibly introduced, Carlo Dolci, bringing his *Adoration of the Magi* to the earl's attention, perhaps having seen it in the artist's studio. Laurenzini was also responsible for commissioning paintings from Simone Pignone and Livio Mehus, two more Florentine artists whose works were represented in the Medici collection.⁴⁹⁸ Although there are no details of what services Laurenzini rendered during Exeter's second visit, he evidently acted as broker for a great many commissions, since he was remitted a steady stream of payments, the last not until September 1687, four years after Exeter's return to England.⁴⁹⁹

⁴⁹⁶ BA EX 51/8/23.

⁴⁹⁷ BA EX 51/3/6.

⁴⁹⁸ BA EX 51/3/4.

⁴⁹⁹ NatWest CH 194/6 fols. 178r., 180r. & 213r. CH 194/7 fols. 32r. & 35r.

In Rome, like his London counterparts, painter Giovanni Remigio combined the services of agent with artist and copyist. Remigio (alias Jan van Leemput) was the son of London-based Remi van Leemput, a Flemish copyist of Van Dyck and Holbein who was also a collector and dealer.⁵⁰⁰ Giovanni's sister Mary, also a painter, was married to Thomas Streeter, son of mural painter Robert Streeter. Thomas worked as a painter at Burghley from at least June 1680, so he may have been responsible for recommending the services of his brother-in-law to the Exeters. Remigio (often anglicised to 'Mr Remy') soon made himself indispensable to the family, supplementing his practical assistance with the latest gossip from the Vatican.⁵⁰¹ On Exeter's second visit to Rome, Remigio welcomed him back with open arms, offering his various services once again. He took care of storage and shipping, purchased books on his behalf, and sold the earl several pictures.⁵⁰² Tanner's notebooks do not specify whether Remigio was acting as a broker on behalf of other artists, or selling his own works, but since the 1688 inventory identifies six paintings by 'Signior Remigio' it seems likely that they were by him, albeit copies rather than his own original compositions.⁵⁰³

The unsung heroes of the Exeters' art collecting were the Balle brothers, an English family of merchant-bankers who had relocated to Leghorn in the 1660s.⁵⁰⁴ Robert Balle was a partner in the merchant firm Balle, Gosfright and Arthur who provided banking and shipping services to Lord Exeter in Italy and France (Daniel Arthur was their banker in Paris).⁵⁰⁵

⁵⁰⁰ R. Jeffree, 'Remi van Leemput', *Grove Art Online* (2003) <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T050025> [accessed: 31 December 2021].

⁵⁰¹ BA EX 51/8/32 & 34.

⁵⁰² BA EX 51/10.

⁵⁰³ BA EX 51/18.

⁵⁰⁴ N. Fisher, 'Robert Balle, Merchant of Leghorn and Fellow of the Royal Society (Ca. 1640-Ca. 1734)', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 55:3 (2001) www.jstor.org/stable/531946 [accessed: 5 May 2021], p. 352.

⁵⁰⁵ Arthur handled the payment and receipt of the *Ancien Indes* tapestries. NatWest CH 194/10 fol. 422r.

Bankers have previously been given little credit for their role as international art handlers, but they were an essential cog in the machinery of collecting. The Exeters stayed with Huguenot merchant-bankers as they travelled through France (David Ollivier in Lyons, M. Guilles in Tours), but none were quite so indispensable as the Balle brothers. From the first shipment of paintings in 1681, to the dispatch of the Exeters' funerary monument in 1706, they handled the receipt, payment, packing and shipping of well over a thousand pounds worth of paintings and sculpture.⁵⁰⁶ It was an immense logistical exercise: one shipment alone consisted of forty-six paintings in nine cases, carefully protected against the elements, and the high cost of £208 for shipping the monument reflected the difficulties of transporting such an enormous and fragile sculpture.⁵⁰⁷

While Robert and Thomas Balle handled the finance and logistics, brother Giles, based in Genoa, offered his services as an art broker. Not even Laurenzini in Florence had fingers in quite as many pies as Giles Balle. A letter from Balle in Genoa to Exeter in Venice dated 4 December 1683 is worth citing at length because it illustrates the various ways in which he was assisting the earl:

My Lord, As soone as you departed I made it my business to purchase those two peeces of Lucca Giordano of Senica & Europa, which by bribinge a younge man I found out all ye intreagues about them, & soo sente an authentick broker to buy them, which hee did effectually for d[ucats] 190 [...] Piola is now finishing ye designes promised, & I hope in a poste or two shall have them. Carlone hath bin with mee, and desires may doe somewhatt for yr Honor, & I belieeve would doe it well, & moderate, being seemes verry ambitious you should have some of his worke soe you may please lett me knowe your pleasure, & I shall act accordingly. I have wrote Mr Legatt about ye peece Palma Vecchio, and hope may have effect in your Lordshipp's service, of which more when when [sic] have his answer. Inclosed I send yr Lordshipp three bills exchange [...] of ye said two pictures which you may please to firme being I was faine to pay ye money immedately, thos others yr Lordshippe

⁵⁰⁶ BA EX 51/3/4; NatWest CH 194/7.

⁵⁰⁷ 'Entry Book: October 1684, 14-20' in *Calendar of Treasury Books*, vol. 7, 1681-1685; NatWest CH 194/10 fol. 451r.

made choice of in my house you may take your owne time in receiving them and paying for them [...].⁵⁰⁸

Since Exeter's departure from Genoa, Balle had been busy. He had purchased two major paintings that the earl had admired by Luca Giordano, a Neapolitan artist who had recently been working in Florence, using an anonymous intermediary to achieve a better price. He was overseeing a commission from Genoese painter Domenico Piola, and received a speculative visit from an ambitious artist, Carlone, who had sniffed out the rich English milord. He was investigating a potential purchase of a piece by the sixteenth-century master Palma Vecchio, and it is noteworthy that this did not come to fruition, since Exeter showed little interest in old masters. Finally, Balle shows us that he was operating his own home as a gallery from which Exeter had 'made choice of' several pictures.

Balle's letter reveals just how much Exeter relied on the advice and assistance of others. The earl and countess were pioneers among English collectors of contemporary Italian art, but they could not have achieved this without the knowledge, contacts and logistical support of a network of agents on the ground and eager to win their custom. When Exeter returned to Italy in 1683/4, part of the reason he was able to move so swiftly and efficiently through the peninsula in a whirlwind of art-buying was because his network was already in place. Ollivier in Lyons, Laurenzini in Florence, Hobson in Venice, Davies in Naples and many others were all primed and ready to leap back into service. Abroad, as at home, agents and employees were vital collaborators in the business of commissioning and collecting art.

⁵⁰⁸ BA EX 51/3/7.

Family

Stepping over the threshold, we can see that collaboration and connections beyond the household were equally important to the acquisition and display of art. Family was enormously important to the late Stuart aristocracy and the relationship between art patronage and family as manifested in dynasty will be explored in Chapter Six. In more immediate terms, natal and marital family members made an important contribution to the day-to-day mechanics of art patronage, as a source of information, contacts, money, or simply a friend with whom to discuss artistic matters. As the Exeters and Devonshires simultaneously rebuilt and furnished their country houses, their kinship acted as a conduit for the flow of money, goods, designs and artists. The duke and duchess of Somerset made use of her step-father Ralph Montagu's links with France, and the importance of their extended family was also made visible through the exchange and display of portraits.

The marriage in 1670 of Anne, née Cavendish, brother of William Cavendish, future first duke of Devonshire, to John Cecil, then Lord Burghley and future fifth earl of Exeter, began a relationship that was to forge strong affective and artistic bonds between the two families. The Cavendishes were the longer-established family, with more extensive estates and a greater income, and they provided several large cash injections to the Cecils: the Exeters received legacies of £25,000 in 1684 and £7,000 in 1690 at the respective deaths of the countess' father and mother, besides her marriage settlement in 1670.⁵⁰⁹ This enabled the Exeters to build and furnish Burghley much more lavishly than their estate income alone would have allowed. Their personal ties were even more important. The relationship

⁵⁰⁹ Till, *A Family Affair*, p. 2.

between the families was warm, and did not appear to cool at all after 1689 despite the brothers-in-law's opposing politics. They corresponded regularly, and the Devonshires stayed at Burghley when travelling between Derbyshire and London, while the Exeters lodged at Devonshire House when visiting the capital. Members of household staff moved between the two families: Tom Fox, one of Devonshire's London staff, ran errands for the Exeters, and John Whildon, son of Devonshire's Derbyshire Receiver James Whildon, was seconded to Burghley as Steward for a few months in 1685-6.⁵¹⁰

The rebuilding and furnishing of Chatsworth, Burghley, and Devonshire Houses must have provided much material for conversation, and there was a great deal of overlap in the two families' patronage of architects, masons, gardeners, artists and craftsmen. Many are associated with architect William Talman, who designed the south and east fronts at Chatsworth as well as the alterations to Devonshire House, and who also worked at Burghley, although his precise role is unknown.⁵¹¹ Although some were the 'big names' of the time, and might reasonably have been expected to be involved in any major aristocratic commission, others were definitely employed on each other's recommendation, in some cases moving directly between the households. The chronology of shared artists and craftsmen between the families is difficult to disentangle, but the timing of the work at Burghley, which was begun some seven years before that at Chatsworth, meant that in most instances, artists and craftsmen worked first for the Exeters before moving on to the Devonshires. Gerrit Jensen supplied window glass to Burghley from 1675, as well as furniture from at least 1683, and was very likely responsible for the walnut inlaid floor in the

⁵¹⁰ NatWest CH 194/6 fol. 359r, CH 194/7 fol. 213r.

⁵¹¹ Talman received a payment of £200 from Exeter's executors. NatWest CH 194/10 fol. 451r.

countess' closet laid in 1679.⁵¹² He then repeated much of this work for Devonshire, supplying window glass for the south front at Chatsworth in 1688-9, furniture in 1691, and installing a walnut and cedar parquet floor in the closet of the state apartments in 1692.⁵¹³ Upholsterer Francis Lapiere was first brought to Burghley in 1683 by the countess.⁵¹⁴ She went on to patronise him for the next twenty years, and introduced him to her brother Devonshire, to whom he supplied a bed costing a hefty £470.⁵¹⁵

The Exeters were also the first to patronise two painters who subsequently moved back and forth between the two families. The notebooks of Benedetto Gennari, a Catholic artist favoured by Charles II and Mary of Modena, record commissions alternating between the Devonshires and Exeters. 'Milord Exeter' purchased three mythological paintings in 1681, and may have then recommended him to his mother-in-law, Elizabeth, countess of Devonshire (mother of the first duke), who commissioned the artist to copy two of his own works in the Royal Collection.⁵¹⁶ In 1685, Gennari then received a further commission from Exeter for a *Virgin and Child with Saint Anne and the infant John the Baptist*. Finally, in 1688 Gennari sold two works to the fourth earl of Devonshire, a *Noli me tangere* and *The Flight into Egypt*, in his studio clearance before his flight to Saint-Germain-en-Laye in the retinue of the deposed James II. Mural painter Antonio Verrio certainly owed his employment at Chatsworth to the Exeters. He was first employed at Burghley in 1685, and had begun work

⁵¹² NatWest CH 194/3 fol. 320r & CH 194/6 fol. 361r. Payments to Jensen in April 1679 probably relate to the inlaid floor. CH 194/6 fol. 119r. and BA EX 15B/29.

⁵¹³ DCC CH 37/2 fol. 42, CH37/1 fols. 66 & 80.

⁵¹⁴ NatWest CH 194/7 fol. 73r. See p. 305 for an account of the countess' patronage of Lapiere.

⁵¹⁵ DCC CH37/1 fols. 100 & 135.

⁵¹⁶ Bagni, *Benedetto Gennari*, pp. 94-9, 108-9 & 154-8.

on the ceilings of the state apartments there in 1690 when he was seconded to Chatsworth to paint the ceiling of the stairs and Great Chamber.⁵¹⁷

On occasion, the flow went in the other direction. Mural painter Louis Laguerre worked regularly at Chatsworth from January 1689 but did not work at Burghley until several years later, when he was employed to paint the Bow Room.⁵¹⁸ The Exeters also benefitted from Devonshire's discovery of French ironsmith Jean Tijou. As described in Chapter Two, Tijou's earliest recorded commission was at Chatsworth, where he was employed as an assistant by November 1686, and in a solo capacity from March 1688.⁵¹⁹ Within a short time, he was also working at Burghley for Lord Exeter, for whom he made a spectacular pair of ornate, gilded gates that are among his finest surviving works (fig. 4.1). At the time, they formed the principal visitor entrance, and Celia Fiennes noted their dramatic impact, commenting, 'the door you enter is of iron carv'd the finest I ever saw, all sorts of leaves flowers figures birds beast wheate in the Carving'.⁵²⁰ The date of their construction is unrecorded, but it was certainly before 1693 when they appeared in Tijou's volume of engraved designs, the *Nouveau livre de desseins*, along with the balustrade he had manufactured for Devonshire at Chatsworth.⁵²¹ Their execution was probably some years earlier than this, however, since they were refurbished by gilder René Cousin in 1694.⁵²² This places the Burghley gates among Tijou's first commissions in England and consequently one of the earliest examples of the French ironwork that he introduced to England. Thus the two families were able to

⁵¹⁷ NatWest CH 194/7 fol. 214r; BA EX F54/05(a)010; DCC CH37/1 fol. 55.

⁵¹⁸ DCC CH37/1 fol. 30.

⁵¹⁹ See pp. 126-9.

⁵²⁰ *Celia Fiennes*, p. 83.

⁵²¹ Tijou was eventually paid by the earl's executors in 1704. NatWest CH 194/10 fol. 422r.

⁵²² BA EX 51/15.

assist each other by recommending skilful artists and craftsmen, sharing new discoveries, and, as we saw at the opening of this chapter, combining forces when negotiating terms.



Fig. 4.1 Jean Tijou, gates in west front (c. 1686-90), iron and gilding, Burghley House.
Image: Amy Lim

Besides employing artists on Exeter's recommendation, Devonshire also took design ideas from his brother-in-law. In 1686, he commissioned a new grass parterre and enclosing gated palisade for the east court at Hardwick, elements of which were copied from

Burghley: a draft design is annotated 'here must be a palisade like as at Burghley'.⁵²³ The Hardwick design may have been drawn up by garden contractor George London, who in 1683 with his partner Moses Cook had created the west court with gates and palisade at Burghley. London was certainly employed by Devonshire to remodel the west and south parterres at Chatsworth in 1688 and 1694 respectively; he also continued to work for Exeter and was listed among his creditors at his death.⁵²⁴ The team of woodcarvers who worked between the two families also transferred designs from Burghley to Chatsworth. Thomas Young, his partner Jonathan Mayne, and Derbyshire-born apprentice Samuel Watson worked extensively at Burghley between 1683 and 1687 before moving to Chatsworth in January 1689.⁵²⁵ It was during their time at Burghley that Grinling Gibbons carved the trophy panels described above, which sat atop architraves probably carved by Mayne. As David Esterly noted, Young and Watson took the genre of the wooden trophy panel from Burghley to Chatsworth, where they carved several overdoor panels and overmantels for the state apartments that incorporated trophy elements (fig. 4.2).⁵²⁶ Even though Gibbons himself never worked at Chatsworth, his stylistic influence travelled there through the kinship connection.

⁵²³ P. Henderson and R. Wheeler, 'The Gardens and Park' in Adshead and Taylor (eds.), *Hardwick Hall*, pp. 229-30.

⁵²⁴ DCC CS1/70/0 & CS1/70/12; NatWest CH 194/10 fol. 423r.

⁵²⁵ NatWest CH 194/7 fol. 71r.; CH 194/10 fol. 35r. For the woodcarving at Chatsworth see p. 59.

⁵²⁶ Esterly, *Grinling Gibbons*, p. 150.



Fig. 4.2 Thomas Young, Samuel Watson, and Joel Lobb, carved overdoor in the great chamber (1692-3), limewood, Chatsworth House. Image: Amy Lim.

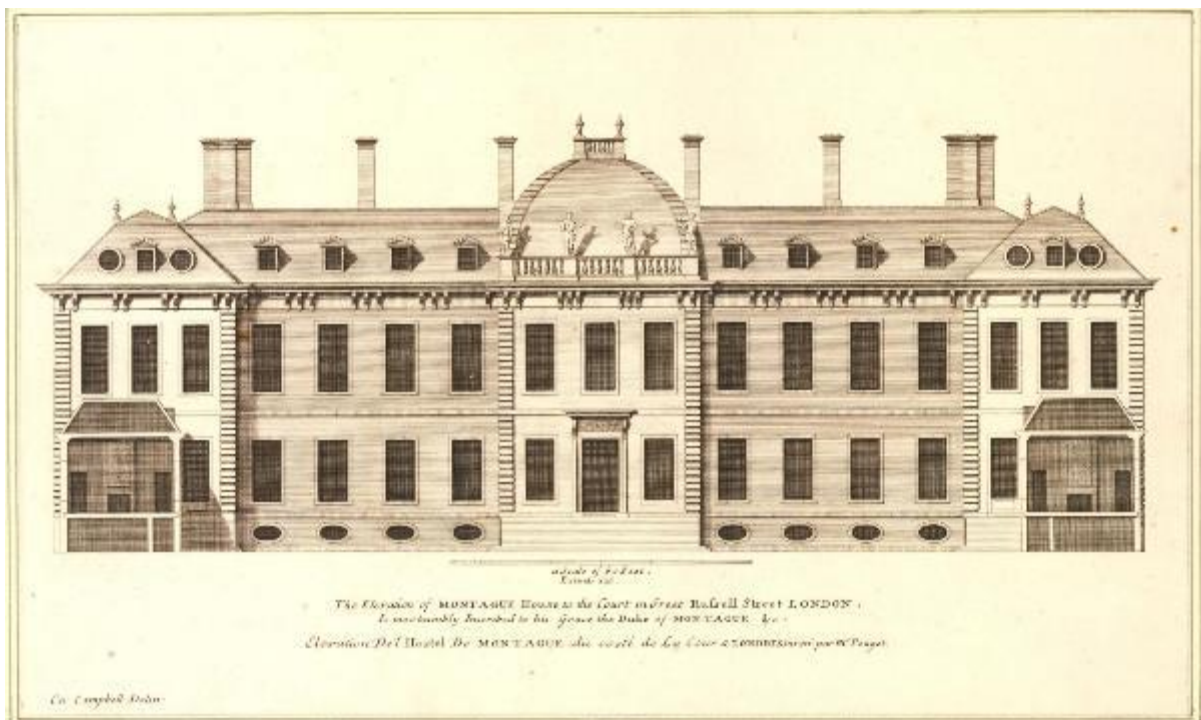
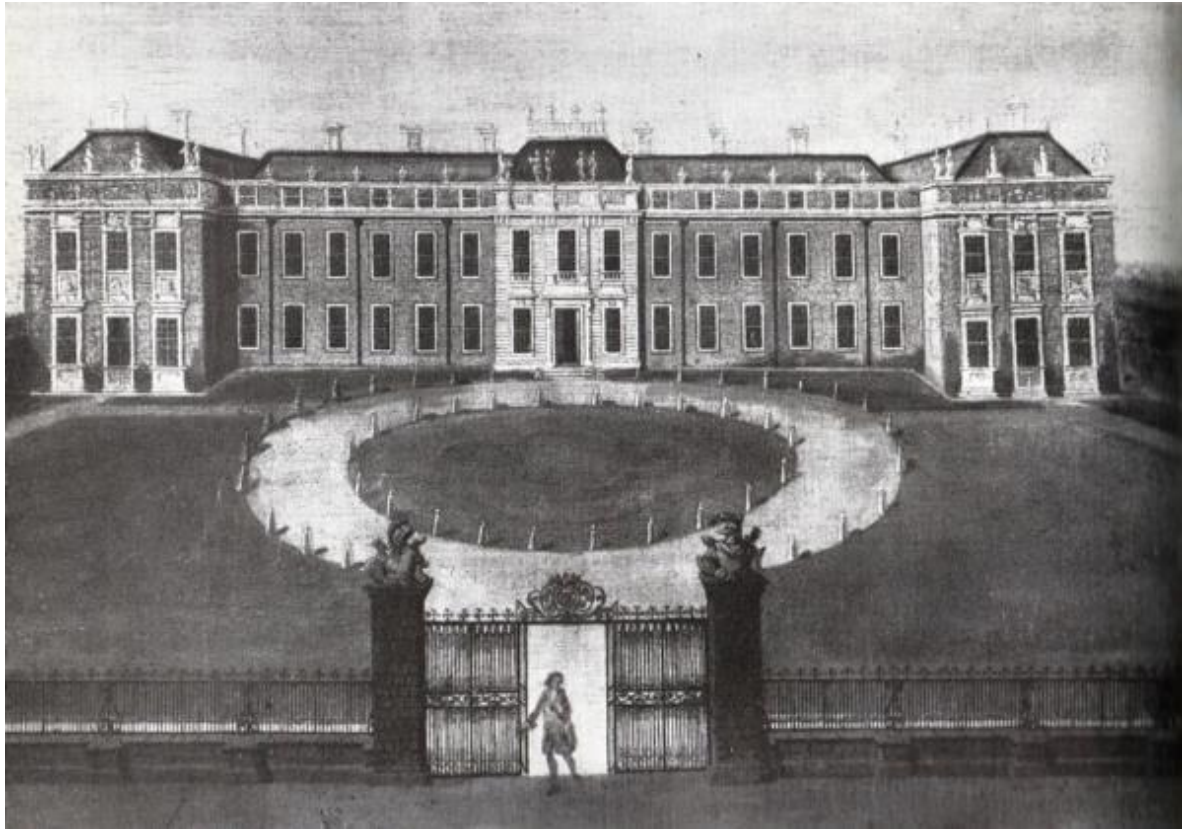
The most important family relationship for the sixth duke and duchess of Somerset, as far as art was concerned, was with the duchess' stepfather, Ralph Montagu. He had married her widowed mother Elizabeth in 1673, and after the young Elizabeth Percy married Charles Seymour in 1681, the two families maintained friendly relations, which continued after Elizabeth Montagu's death. The extent to which Montagu influenced the taste for French architecture and decorative arts in England has been discussed in Chapter Two, and he certainly shared these tastes with his stepdaughter and her husband. There are clear links between the architecture of Petworth and Montagu's properties of Boughton, Northamptonshire and Montagu House, London. All three were built simultaneously, with the rebuilding begun at Petworth in 1685, and Montagu House and Boughton in c. 1686-7. The architects of the three houses are uncertain, but all share a common, characteristically French, architecture. Though the roofline of the principal west front at Petworth was altered in 1777-8, its original appearance as first rebuilt by the Somersets was much more French in style. Its late-seventeenth-century form can be seen in a painting of c. 1700 (fig. 4.4), and as a small image in Louis Laguerre's c. 1720-2 staircase mural at Petworth.

Originally, the terminating pavilions were defined by separate mansard roofs, and over the central three bays sat a squared dome topped with an ironwork balcony. Instead of today's unbroken horizontal profile, this gave a much more varied effect that was typical of contemporary French architecture. It was also remarkably similar to Montagu House, with its projecting central three bays and balcony-topped dome embellished with statuary, as well as the projecting end pavilions with mansard roofs (fig. 4.5). Although Boughton's north front, with its unbroken open arcade, presented a different appearance, it too featured projecting end pavilions of three bays with separate mansard roofs (fig. 4.3), while a dome similar to those at Petworth and Montagu House can be found on the stable block.⁵²⁷ These domes and mansard roofs were not found on any other English houses, underlining the significance of the Montagu-Somerset connection.



Fig. 4.3 Boughton House, Northamptonshire. Image: Euan Myles (2013), Wikipedia Creative Commons.

⁵²⁷ Jackson-Stops, 'The Building of Petworth', p. 327.



Gervase Jackson-Stops discussed the architectural similarities of Petworth, Boughton and Montagu House, drawing on circumstantial evidence to detect the hand of Daniel Marot in all three.⁵²⁸ It is possible, however, that the synergies were simply the result of mutual interest and discussion between the Somersets and Montagu, rather than a common architect. Given the regular communication between the families at a time when both were engaged in major building works, it is hard to imagine that they did not take a close interest in each other's projects.⁵²⁹ We have already seen that word-of-mouth and the circulation of engravings played a part in the development of the architecture at Chatsworth and Burghley. It is highly likely that this process of discussion accounts at least in part for the architectural similarities between the three properties.

As Master of the Great Wardrobe, Montagu was responsible for cultivating a particularly French aesthetic at court, in accordance with his own tastes and those of his royal patrons. He engaged many of the artists and craftsmen employed in the royal household to work for him in a personal capacity, and it is likely that he also passed these connections on to the Somersets (besides the introduction to Monnoyer described in Chapter One), as well as briefing them on the latest fashions during the years when they did not hold office and may have been less frequently at court. There were several furniture-makers of French origin who worked for the crown, Montagu and the Somersets. Jean Poictevin worked for all three, as did Pierre Pavie and Cornelius Gole, while Jean Pelletier worked for the court and the Somersets.⁵³⁰ Daniel Marot, *dessinateur-en-chef* to William and Mary was also

⁵²⁸ G. Jackson-Stops, 'French and Dutch influence on architecture and interiors', in T. Murdoch, *Boughton: The English Versailles* (London, 1992), pp. 58-60.

⁵²⁹ For example, 'Givin to Jack the porter for going Twice to Montague House', April 1686, PHA 652.

⁵³⁰ Rowell, *Petworth*, p. 42; Jackson-Stops, 'French and Dutch influences on architecture and interiors', p. 61; PHA 275 fol. 67; TNA PRO LC9/280.

employed by Montagu, and although his involvement at Petworth is uncertain, it appears he visited on at least one occasion.⁵³¹ Montagu is likely to have influenced the Somersets' taste for the French courtly aesthetic, as well as assisting them with connections.

Kinship and friendship networks

Aristocratic life was underpinned by networks of kinship and friendship through which power, patronage and mutual support were effected, besides the affective ties that bound them together. Nowhere were these networks more manifest than in the exchange and display of portraits, where the faces of the protagonists were literally on show. As Kate Retford observed, 'portraits in great houses formed a visual map of aristocratic connections across the country'.⁵³² Any visitor to a town or country house would see the owner's family and friends ranged across the walls, situating them at the centre of a web that stretched vertically through time and horizontally through society. Collections were accrued over generations and comprised a mixture of inherited portraits, commissions and gifts. The core portraits of ancestors and immediate family were supplemented with those of wider family, friends, and associates, exchanged and displayed as part of the praxis of early modern friendship. As well as providing a visual testimony of a relationship, gift-giving also implied reciprocity and obligation, this 'instrumental friendship' being an essential element of the structure of patronage and authority.⁵³³ The exchange and display of portraits in aristocratic town and country houses is a visual counterpoint to epistolary networks and can illuminate relationships whose significance has previously been overlooked.

⁵³¹ Rowell, *Petworth*, p. 40.

⁵³² K. Retford, *The Art of Domestic Life: Family Portraiture in Eighteenth-century England* (New Haven and London, 2006), p. 152.

⁵³³ C. Brown, *Friendship and its Discourses in the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 2-3.

The duke and duchess of Somerset placed much importance on the exchange and display of portraits, which accounted for by far the greatest part of their expenditure on easel paintings. Throughout their married lives they commissioned numerous portraits to display across their various properties, and give to friends and relatives. Since many of these were copies by lesser artists, rather than from the studio of the original portrait painter, it is clear that the gift of a portrait was valued more as a representation of the sitter than as a work from the hand of a particular artist. During the duchess' first marriage, the young earl and countess of Ogle were painted by Sir Peter Lely, and in July 1680 Elizabeth commissioned copies of her portrait from Thomas Hawker to give to Viscountess Ranelagh and Lady Ann Walsingham, both of whom were friends of her grandmother, the dowager countess of Northumberland.⁵³⁴ Dr Mapletoft, her grandmother's physician and companion, was perhaps considered a more important recipient, since when she gave him a copy of her portrait in 1687, it was by the original artist John Riley, rather than a copy.⁵³⁵ In 1700, after Michael Dahl had painted her portrait, she commissioned copies of it from Sarah Curtis, probably to give as gifts to her cousin Anne Capel, countess of Carlisle and cousin-in-law Juliana Alington, viscountess Howe.⁵³⁶

Ladies Carlisle and Howe were both among the 'Petworth Beauties', a series of seven portraits commissioned by the Somersets from Dahl in c. 1696-1700 that paid tribute to their circle of family, friends, and political connections. Although 'beauty' series were part of an established courtly tradition, most recently those painted by Godfrey Kneller in 1690-1 for Queen Mary's Water Gallery at Hampton Court, the Petworth sitters were chosen not

⁵³⁴ PHA 259 fol. 20.

⁵³⁵ PHA 264 fol. 5.

⁵³⁶ PHA 274 fol. 39.

simply for their physiological or moral beauty but for their relationship to the Somersets. Tabitha Barber has shown how the traditional assumption that the sitters represented ‘Ladies of the Court of Queen Anne, who were remarkable for their beauty’ is incorrect; rather, they were chosen for their family, social and professional connections to the duke and duchess of Somerset.⁵³⁷ Of the seven sitters, three were the duchess’ cousins and one the duke’s cousin, and another, Jane Temple (Lady Berkeley) a close friend. Not coincidentally, the sitters were also the wives, sisters and daughters of ‘some of the most powerful individuals and grandest noble families of the time’.⁵³⁸ Hung together with a later portrait of Sarah, duchess of Marlborough, they were a visualisation of the Somersets’ powerful political and kinship network. As Barber argued, the portrayal of ‘beauty’ and its associated moral virtue was a form of flattery that ‘would have cemented kinship and friendship networks and hung together the portraits would have been a rich visual advertisement of the personal “court” of the Duke and Duchess of Somerset.’⁵³⁹

The Somersets’ choice of portrait painter Michael Dahl for this series was in itself influenced by kinship and friendship. Although they patronised almost all the leading portrait painters of the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries, their engagement of Dahl appears to have been particularly linked to their networks; he was patronised by a distinct cluster of patrons in their close circles. Dahl began working for the Somersets around 1696, principally painting informal portraits of their family and friends. His appointment followed the breach with John Closterman, who had been their preferred portrait painter since the

⁵³⁷ T. Barber, ‘The Petworth Beauties’, in M. Postle (ed.), *Art and the Country House* (London, 2020), <https://doi.org/10.17658/ACH/PTE530> [accessed: 20 April 2021].

⁵³⁸ Ibid.

⁵³⁹ Ibid.

death of John Riley in 1691.⁵⁴⁰ Their choice of Dahl, rather than Sir Godfrey Kneller, principal painter to the crown, may have been due to their alignment with the prince and princess of Denmark, since the prince was a regular patron of Dahl. The earl and countess of Marlborough, close friends of the Denmarks, also patronised Dahl, as did James Butler, second duke of Ormonde, and his duchess Mary Somerset, whose portrait was painted by Dahl around 1695. The families were close: she was the duchess of Somerset's cousin, and would be one of the 'Petworth Beauties'.⁵⁴¹ When the third earl of Carlisle commissioned Dahl to paint his wife's portrait in May 1700 it was probably not, as Charles Saumarez Smith suggested, because he 'lacked much interest in [...] art' and so employed a 'conventional and unremarkable Swedish artist'.⁵⁴² Coming only one month after Somerset had given Lady Carlisle her own portrait by (or after) Dahl, it was surely part of a reciprocal exchange, reflecting the common patronage of the artist within their circle.

County society

As the Petworth Beauties demonstrate, many relationships defied precise classification, and 'friend', 'relative' and 'political associate' were not mutually exclusive categories. Local and county neighbours were also incorporated into these networks. As high-ranking nobles, the families under consideration here naturally gravitated towards their peers in the locality, but their circles also encompassed members of the lesser nobility and gentry. County networks were not merely social, but underpinned the structures of local and regional power. The election of county and borough MPs, appointments to local office, and on

⁵⁴⁰ Barber, 'The Petworth Beauties'.

⁵⁴¹ R. Jeffree, 'Dahl, Michael', Grove Art Online (2003) <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2102/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.article.T021151> [accessed: 26 November 2018]; W. Nisser, *Michael Dahl and the Contemporary Swedish School of Painting* (London, 1927), p. 91.

⁵⁴² Saumarez Smith, *Castle Howard*, p. 95.

occasion (such as in 1688) the raising of local militia, all relied on mutual alliances forged through patronage, friendship and intermarriage. Before the construction of dedicated spaces of sociability such as assembly rooms, late-seventeenth-century county social encounters principally took place at home, providing ample opportunity to admire the host's architecture, interiors and artworks. Besides politics and local chit-chat, art was also a topic of conversation, and there is evidence of stylistic transfer within county networks as well as shared patronage of the same architects, artists and craftsmen.

Since the fifth earl and countess of Exeter had largely withdrawn from court and London society, county networks were particularly important to them. Art occupied a significant amount of their attention, and so it naturally played a part in their relationships with their county neighbours and associates. From the portraits of the earl's local drinking club to the common patronage of artists with neighbouring families, art was integrated into these relationships as a topic of common interest, and as a means of commemorating their connections.

The Noel family of Exton Hall, nine miles from Burghley, were the nearest aristocratic neighbours to the Exeters, and their relationship extended beyond neighbourly cordiality into a warm friendship.⁵⁴³ The Noel siblings were the children of Baptist Noel, third Viscount Campden of Exton and his fourth wife, Elizabeth Bertie of nearby Grimsthorpe, the other neighbouring aristocratic family. The siblings were close in age and around ten years younger than Exeter, but the two families knew each other well. Brothers Baptist and John

⁵⁴³ Eric Till discusses the importance of the Noels to local politics, but not their friendship. Till, *A Family Affair*, p. 32.

were members of the Order of Bedlam, Exeter's drinking club, until Baptist's untimely death in 1690, and John, the younger of the two, was living at Burghley at the time of the 1688 inventory, although his position in the household is unclear.⁵⁴⁴ The importance of the relationship between the two families has subsequently been disregarded, but it is evidenced by the portraits of the Noel siblings at Burghley, identified in a 1690 addendum to the 1688 Burghley inventory, but subsequently dispersed.⁵⁴⁵ Among the portraits were four (possibly five) portraits of the Noel siblings, including three by Antonio Verrio of Baptist, John and their younger sister Bridget. There were also two pastel portraits by Grinling Gibbons. One was of their half-sister Catherine, now married to John Manners, first earl (later duke) of Rutland, neighbours of Devonshire through their property at Haddon Hall near Chatsworth, while the second, of an unidentified lady, was probably another member of the Noel family.⁵⁴⁶ A portrait of 'Mr Noell' in pastels, bequeathed by the dowager countess of Devonshire to her daughter in 1690, may have been another from this suite of portraits of the Noel siblings, indicating that the friendship also extended to the Cavendish family.⁵⁴⁷ The display of portraits was a signifier of the Exeters' valued friendship with the Noels. More than three hundred years after they were commissioned, the Petworth Beauties help us to understand the connections that were most important to the Somersets; similarly, the portraits of the Noel siblings at Burghley, now lost and forgotten, bring back into focus a neighbourly friendship that was of great significance to the Exeters.

⁵⁴⁴ BA EX 51/18.

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁴⁷ BA EX 41/82.

The manner of a portrait's display also denoted the relative importance of the sitter to the family. The location of Bridget Noel's portrait in the Marble Saloon at Burghley indicates that of all the Noel siblings, it was Bridget with whom the Exeters had the most valued relationship. The Saloon was one of the principal 'showcase' rooms, its status delineated by an especially ornate plasterwork ceiling. It was hung with portraits, fixed into the wainscot, and all were of close family members, with two notable exceptions: Prince Ferdinando of Tuscany and Bridget Noel. For her portrait to be hung in such a prestigious location, Bridget must have been very important to the family indeed. The 1738 inventory describes a portrait of 'Mrs Bridget Noel sitting upon a Marble seat, one hand upon it, the other holding flowers upon her knee, A Statue of the Goddess Minerva near her in the Garden': not the portrait of her by Willem Wissing that survives at Burghley but another one, now lost.⁵⁴⁸ The reference to Minerva in her portrait is also intriguing, since Minerva also appears in a portrait of Exeter painted by Sir Godfrey Kneller in 1696.⁵⁴⁹ Minerva was the goddess of the arts, adopted by Exeter as his emblem; perhaps Bridget and Exeter were bound by a mutual interest in art. Kneller painted several members of the Exeter family around this time, to commemorate Lord Burghley's wedding to Arabella Bennet.⁵⁵⁰ Might Bridget have been among the close 'family' painted by Kneller? Exeter's affection for her is evident in his will, singling her out to give 'my Gold Meddall of Alexander and three hundred Guineas to my Noble friend Mrs Bridgett Noell to buy her a Ring to weare in remembrance of me'.⁵⁵¹ Bridget died unmarried in 1719/20, appointing her niece Susanna Noel as her heir and executrix.⁵⁵² These personal relationships, so important to the protagonists, have been

⁵⁴⁸ BA 603. Burghley Collection PIC092.

⁵⁴⁹ See fig 6.8, p. 343, where the significance of Exeter's painting is discussed.

⁵⁵⁰ Burghley Collection PIC076, PIC077, PIC081, PIC091.

⁵⁵¹ TNA PROB/11/460/116.

⁵⁵² TNA PROB 11/567/273.

buried over time but, as demonstrated here, can be uncovered by a close reading of the art they engendered.

Besides the display of their portraits at Burghley, the Exeters' relationship with the Noels is also evident in their shared patronage of Grinling Gibbons. John Noel commissioned a large funerary monument from Gibbons for the church of St Peter and St Paul, Exton, in honour of his parents who had died in 1682 and 1683. The monument was erected in 1686, so its construction coincides with the years when Gibbons carved the overdoor trophy panels at Burghley described on page 205. Noel was living at Burghley by 1688 and may have been there several years earlier, and it is not unlikely that he met the woodcarver during a visit by the latter to Burghley.⁵⁵³ It may also have been at this time that Gibbons executed the pastel portraits of the Noel sisters described above. Gibbons, the Noels and the Exeters were brought together in a network of neighbourly society, friendship, and patronage.

Local networks seem to have played a much smaller part in the lives of the sixth duke and duchess of Somerset, as far as artistic matters were concerned. Devonshire, however, was deeply embedded in Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire society and there are many artistic connections between him and his county neighbours. One important relationship was with William Pierrepont, fourth earl of Kingston-upon-Hull, whose seat at Thoresby Hall was twenty-eight miles from Chatsworth, and only seventeen from Hardwick. It was probably Kingston who introduced architect William Talman and his team of artists and craftsmen to Devonshire. Although records are sketchy, Margaret Whinney has argued that Talman

⁵⁵³ BA EX 51/18.

probably began work at Thoresby around 1683, twelve to eighteen months before Talman and Devonshire began to discuss the 'revolutionary' designs for Chatsworth's south and east fronts.⁵⁵⁴ As chief overseer and surveyor, Talman brought with him many of the team who had worked under him at Thoresby, including master mason Benjamin Jackson, mural painter Louis Laguerre and sculptor Caius Gabriel Cibber.⁵⁵⁵ The direct link between their work at Thoresby and Chatsworth is demonstrated by a handwritten list drawn up by Cibber for Devonshire of 'the rates I had at Lord Kingstons', and tucked into the Chatsworth building accounts.⁵⁵⁶ In it, Cibber listed his prices for statues in high-relief and in the round, concluding, 'at this rate I will doe my endeavour to serve any Nobleman'. Devonshire duly commissioned Cibber to sculpt many statues for his house and garden, some of which, like the pair of sphinxes on the gateposts, were exact replicas of those he had carved at Thoresby (fig. 4.6).

⁵⁵⁴ M. Whinney, 'William Talman', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 18:1/2 (Jan-June 1955), p. 126. See pp. 360-1 for the dating of the first designs for Chatsworth.

⁵⁵⁵ DCC CS1/70/23; Whinney, 'William Talman', p. 126.

⁵⁵⁶ DCC CH 37/8 fol. 5a.



Fig. 4.6 Caius Gabriel Cibber, Sphinx on pedestal (c. 1687-90), freestone, Chatsworth House. Image: Amy Lim.

Many of the same architects, masons, artists, and craftsmen worked together in regular teams and moved from client to client through a network of personal connections, and just as Kingston had recommended his team to Devonshire, so Devonshire in turn probably recommended them to another member of the Midlands aristocracy, his revolutionary co-conspirator Thomas Osborne, first duke of Leeds. Leeds' seat at Kiveton was in Yorkshire but only twenty-one miles from Chatsworth and eighteen from Hardwick. Although they were of the same rank, and Leeds the elder by nine years, Leeds appears to have deferred to Devonshire's artistic judgement: his visit to Devonshire's court lodgings to inspect his paintings has already been noted, and he employed many of the artists and craftsmen already patronised by Devonshire. Kiveton was rebuilt between 1694 and 1704 by a cast of

characters familiar from their work at Chatsworth. William Talman drew up an elevation for the building but his design was not adopted (perhaps because Devonshire and Talman fell out badly in 1696), but many of the craftsmen who had worked on the interiors at Chatsworth moved on to Kiveton. They included mural painter Louis Laguerre, ironsmith Jean Tijou, woodcarver Jonathan Mayne, plasterer Henry Margetts and London joiner John Chaplin.⁵⁵⁷ Chaplin was probably working for both dukes simultaneously, since he was contracted to make window frames, wainscots and a parquet floor for the west front at Chatsworth in 1700, when work at Kiveton was well underway.⁵⁵⁸ Talman was appointed Comptroller of the Kings Works in 1689 and many of his team were also employed in the royal works, though the genealogy of patronage was not straightforward, as Laguerre had probably already worked with Verrio at Windsor before he began working with Talman. The circles of artists and craftsmen were as interconnected as those of their patrons, and it is likely that personal contacts were as influential among the former as the latter.

County and kinship networks often overlapped. After the death of Lord Burghley's wife Arabella Bennet, after just one year of marriage, he married Elizabeth, daughter of the Exeters' Lincolnshire neighbour Sir John Brownlow. In Derbyshire, the Devonshires were connected by marriage to Philip Stanhope, second earl of Chesterfield, whose seat was at Bretby in the south of the county. In 1661 Elizabeth, eldest daughter of James Butler, first duke of Ormonde, had married Chesterfield (as his second wife) and the following year her sister Mary married William Cavendish, future fourth earl of Devonshire.⁵⁵⁹ Although

⁵⁵⁷ G. Beard, *Craftsmen and Interior Decoration in England* (London, 1986), p. 142. DCC CH37/2 p. 42.

⁵⁵⁸ DCC CS1/70/16.

⁵⁵⁹ S. Handley, 'Stanhope, Philip, second earl of Chesterfield (1633–1714), courtier and politician', *ODNB* (2004) <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2648/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-26253> [accessed: 17 April 2021].

Elizabeth Stanhope died in 1665, and Chesterfield remarried, the two families maintained contact, perhaps bound by affective ties to their motherless niece, but also by a mutual interest in French garden design. Although there is no direct evidence that Devonshire and Chesterfield conferred on garden design, the unusually French characteristics of the gardens at Bretby and Chatsworth, in the context of their familial and geographic connection, are unlikely to be coincidental.

The parterres — formal, level gardens often with ornamental planting in geometric designs — at Bretby and Chatsworth were much more French in design and materials than those at other English country houses. English parterres were generally made of grass, often in plain squares or *plats*, or sometimes with patterns cut out and filled with gravel, known as cut-work, or *parterres à l'Angloise*. By contrast, French *broderie* parterres were made with elaborate designs in box, other low evergreens, or flowers, against a background of gravel. Daniel Marot used a combination of both in his designs for William and Mary at Het Loo and the great parterre at Hampton Court, but true *broderie* parterres were only found in a handful of English gardens, among which were Chatsworth and Bretby. The design of the main parterre to the side of the house at Bretby was a *broderie* parterre with a design of eagles' heads copied from a recently republished book of engravings by Mollet.⁵⁶⁰ At Chatsworth, the gravel patterns in the parterres were embellished with a central band of flowers and low evergreens in the French manner, and further flower borders ran around the edges of all of the quarters (just visible in fig. 4.7). The elaborate scrolling designs gave a French air, and even the plain cut-work included a *fleur-de-lys* design.

⁵⁶⁰ Jacques, *Gardens of Court and Country*, p. 134.

While Versailles, Marly and Het Loo were renowned throughout Europe for their fountains and cascades, Bretby and Chatsworth vied for the title of best garden waterworks in England. At Chatsworth, there was a long, stepped cascade, Cibber's Neptune and Triton fountains in the west and south parterres, and many more dispersed around the gardens. A pair of bronzed lead mermaids and a dolphin-riding putti spouted jets from the centres of the three grass statue *plats*, and a tall *jet d'eau* sprang from an island in the middle of the greenhouse pond, backed by a small cascade with a figure, probably *Amphitrite*. Bretby's gardens, however, were a strong challenger for the title. Celia Fiennes had heard great things of Bretby ('that which is most admired – and justly so to be – by all persons and excite their curiosity to come and see is the Gardens and Waterworks'), and she was not disappointed.⁵⁶¹ Besides the planting, she admired how 'the pipes in the fountains play very finely, some of a great height, some flushes the water about', and was particularly taken by a water-clock that played Lillibullero on its chimes.

The waterworks at Bretby and Chatsworth had been created by the same Frenchman, Grillet, who had been Le Notre's hydraulics engineer at Versailles.⁵⁶² Grillet spent at least four months in the summer of 1695 at Chatsworth, working on the fountains and cascade.⁵⁶³ Here he created the *Mercury* fountain described by Celia Fiennes, in which a copy of Giambologna's statue stood atop a pyramid of spouting pipes, 'which looks like rocks and hollow stones'.⁵⁶⁴ This kind of rockwork was particularly French in character and besides Chatsworth, the only other place it was found in England was at Bretby, where

⁵⁶¹ Celia Fiennes, p. 153.

⁵⁶² Jacques, *Gardens of Court and Country*, pp. 134-5.

⁵⁶³ DCC CH37/3 pp. 4 & 12.

⁵⁶⁴ Celia Fiennes, p. 105.

Grillet also worked.⁵⁶⁵ Nor can it have been a coincidence that London and Wise, who had laid out the parterre at Chatsworth, sent plans for a parterre 'to suit with Versailles' to Melbourne Hall, Derbyshire, marital home of Chesterfield's daughter (and Devonshire's niece) Mary Coke.⁵⁶⁶ As mentioned above, Melbourne's garden wilderness was also designed by Devonshire's clergyman-surveyor, M. Huet. This Derbyshire cluster of French-style gardens was a result of the county, kinship and friendship networks that were expressed by shared tastes and patronage.

County political associates also participated in these artistic networks. The enormous landscape painting of Chatsworth house and gardens by Jan Siberechts (fig. 4.7) copied a format the artist had recently developed for his painting of Wollaton Hall, Nottingham (fig. 4.8). Wollaton was the seat of Sir Thomas Willoughby, who had served as deputy to Devonshire's Lord Lieutenancy of Nottinghamshire in 1692-4. Siberechts had painted a large prospect of Wollaton in 1695 and a smaller version in 1697, as well as a number of local scenes and the zebras from Sir Thomas' menagerie. Devonshire commissioned a painting of Chatsworth from Siberechts in 1699, and the contiguous dates and strong compositional similarities between the Wollaton and Chatsworth paintings suggest that it was Willoughby's painting that triggered Devonshire's commission. Nicholas Grindle noted how Siberechts' adoption of the bird's-eye viewpoint for Wollaton marked a departure from his previous style, and how the diagonal line of perspective has the effect of shifting the focus of the painting.⁵⁶⁷ Instead of earlier views that focused squarely on the house, the

⁵⁶⁵ D. Jacques and A. van der Horst, *The Gardens of William and Mary* (London, 1988), p. 143.

⁵⁶⁶ Jacques, *Gardens of Court and Country*, p. 191.

⁵⁶⁷ N. Grindle, "'The wise surveyor': Surveying and representation in British house and estate portraiture, c.1650-1715', PhD thesis, University College, London (2001), pp. 75 & 83.

gardens and parkland are given equal focus. This wider perspective was ideally suited to Chatsworth, where Devonshire had lavished as much attention on the gardens as the house. In his prospect of Chatsworth, Siberechts used a composition almost identical to that of Wollaton. The house is viewed in the same south-east to north-west diagonal perspective, although in the case of Chatsworth, the Bakewell road, as it descended the escarpment, provided a genuine viewpoint rather than the fictitious one adopted at Wollaton.⁵⁶⁸ The Chatsworth painting, like that of Wollaton, was on a vast scale. It has subsequently been cut down at each side, and even in its present reduced size it is an enormous 320 x 305 cm; its original dimensions may have been as large as 320 x 450 cm, and with the lost sections reimagined, the similarity would have been even more marked.⁵⁶⁹ Devonshire must have seen Siberechts' painting on a visit to Wollaton and wanted one of his own house; the disparity in their social rank was evidently no barrier to admiring and imitating his neighbour's art.

⁵⁶⁸ Chris Garibaldi suggested that Siberechts may have used a church tower as a viewpoint. In conversation, 30 November 2021.

⁵⁶⁹ Thompson, *History of Chatsworth*, p. 66.

⁵⁶⁹ Estimate based on the height/width ratio of Siberechts' canvas of Wollaton.



Fig. 4.7 Jan Siberechts, *Chatsworth House and Park* (1699, altered c.1703), oil on canvas.
 © The Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth / Omnia Art Ltd. Reproduced by permission of
 Chatsworth Settlement Trustees.



Fig. 4.8 Jan Siberechts, *Wollaton Hall* (1695), oil on canvas, Middleton Collection, Birdsall.
 Image: Cara Willoughby.

The Criticks

The dukes of Devonshire and Leeds were linked by the geography of their country seats, but they were also part of a group of like-minded peers whose relationship was forged principally through court, politics and London society. Moving outwards once again, we can see how informal communities of interest were highly influential in shaping the critical discourse of the contemporary arts. The senior Whig peers of the late 1690s and early 1700s shared an interest in architecture and interiors, and exercised their connoisseurial skills as an informal panel of 'Criticks', a term coined by William Talman to describe their activities.⁵⁷⁰ Devonshire appears to have been particularly influential among this group. He had a reputation as a connoisseur, and was the dedicatee of William Aglionby's 1686 *Painting Illustrated in three diallogues* in which he lauded Devonshire's 'Knowledge, of which you show as much skill as the Artists themselves do in the Execution.'⁵⁷¹

There was some overlap between this group and the Kit-cat club, whose activities will be discussed at greater length in the final section of this chapter. It was through the Kit-cats that Charles Howard, third earl of Carlisle forged a relationship with the architect John Vanbrugh, who was to design Castle Howard for him (a project scrutinised by the Criticks), nor was it a coincidence that the first stone was laid by the duke of Somerset, the club's highest-ranking member.⁵⁷² However, most of the peers in this network were not members. Devonshire's son, Lord Hartington was a Kit-cat, as was the fourth earl of Kingston, but he

⁵⁷⁰ See p. 254.

⁵⁷¹ Aglionby, *Painting Illustrated in three dialogues*, [unpaginated].

⁵⁷² Saumarez Smith, *Castle Howard*, p. 95.

himself was not a member, nor was the duke of Leeds, nor the earls of Nottingham or Marlborough.

The Criticks were particularly excited by large architectural projects, and Carlisle's plans for a new country seat at Henderskelfe, Yorkshire – Castle Howard – provoked much interest and discussion. Charles Saumarez Smith described building in the late-seventeenth century as 'essentially a collaborative activity [...], when there was not a fully developed conception of the professional function of the architect', and the Whig peers were certainly keen to get involved in this grand design.⁵⁷³ An initial plan was drawn up by William Talman in early 1699, but it did not pass muster. It may have been one of the projects to which he was referring, when on 12 September Talman wrote to William Blathwayt, 'We have an abundance of projects (if his Matie will like them) by severall noble Lords that we here calle the Critiques.'⁵⁷⁴ John Vanbrugh then tried his hand, with better luck. His plans were ultimately adopted, cementing his career as an architect, but he too had to submit his designs to wide scrutiny. On Christmas Day 1699, sending news to his patron and friend the earl of Manchester who was on a diplomatic posting to Venice, he wrote,

I have been this Summer at my Ld Carlisle's, and Seen most of the great houses in the North, as Ld Nottings: Duke of Leeds Chatterworth &c. I stay'd at Chatterworth four or five days the Duke being there. I shew'd him all my Ld Carlisle's designs, which he said was quite another thing, than what he imagin'd from the Character yr Ldship gave him on't; He absolutely approv'd the whole design [...] There has been a great many Criticks consulted up on it since.⁵⁷⁵

⁵⁷³ Ibid., pp. 52 & 45.

⁵⁷⁴ Cited in *ibid.*, p. 34.

⁵⁷⁵ Webb, *Complete Works of Sir John Vanbrugh*, vol. 4, pp. 4-5.

Judging by Vanbrugh's comments, Devonshire's opinion carried particular weight. Vanbrugh continued, 'The Modell is preparing in Wood, wch when done is to travel to Kensington, where the King's thoughts upon't are to be had.' The king's opinion was also valued, but he seems to have been only one among several great men whose input was sought. Vanbrugh's plans and wooden model for Blenheim would undergo a similar scrutiny a few years later.⁵⁷⁶

Devonshire's involvement in the design of Castle Howard went considerably further than simply commenting on the initial plans, and it is proposed here that the designs for the garden front at Castle Howard and the west front at Chatsworth were developed in dialogue with each other. In 1699, when Devonshire reviewed Vanbrugh's plans for Castle Howard, he had completed the rebuilding of the south and east fronts at Chatsworth, but had not yet decided to rebuild the west front. Perhaps the excitement of the Castle Howard build contributed to his decision to do so the following year. In his definitive account of the building of Castle Howard, Charles Saumarez Smith acknowledged the general influence of Chatsworth, but did not comment on the many similarities between Chatsworth's west front (fig. 4.9), and the central block of Castle Howard's garden front (fig. 4.10).⁵⁷⁷ Both comprise three blocks of three bays, with the slightly projecting central block surmounted by a pediment. There are some differences: the bays are divided by fluted Corinthian pilasters at Castle Howard, where Chatsworth has Ionic attached columns, the rusticated basement is partially submerged at Castle Howard, and its arched windows contrast with Chatsworth's flat-topped sashes, but overall, the effect is remarkably similar. As discussed

⁵⁷⁶ Legard, 'Vanbrugh, Blenheim Palace', p. 95.

⁵⁷⁷ Saumarez Smith, *Castle Howard*, pp. 40-1 .

in Chapter Two, it has been generally accepted that Devonshire was his own architect for the west front at Chatsworth, drawing on engraved views of Marly and the advice of painter Louis Chéron, but to this list must be added John Vanbrugh. The similarities between Castle Howard and Chatsworth, the contemporaneity of their design, and the known involvement of Devonshire in the designs for Castle Howard point to Vanbrugh's influence at Chatsworth, if not in a formal capacity, then at least through discussion and shared tastes.



Fig. 4.9 Chatsworth House, west front (1700-1705) Image: Duncan Harris, Wikimedia Commons.



Fig. 4.10 John Vanbrugh (architect), South (garden) front of Castle Howard (c. 1705-20) Image: chris, Wikimedia Commons.

There are even greater parallels in the decorative details of the garden front at Castle Howard and west front at Chatsworth. The west is the most heavily embellished of Chatsworth's four fronts and anticipated the baroque exuberance that reached its apogee at Castle Howard. Both are finished with an urn-topped balustrade, and on the apex of each pediment (with a carved relief of arms in the tympanum), stands a statue of Pallas Athene. An identical frieze of 'sea boys and sea horses' runs below the tympanum and balustrade of both houses (fig. 4.11). Both statues and friezes were executed by the same sculptor, Henri Nadauld, who in 1703 was paid £50 'for Carving the Ornaments in the Great Frise in the West front' at Chatsworth, where he also carved several of the urns and the statue of Pallas Athene, besides numerous other statues and decorative details for the house and gardens.⁵⁷⁸ After completing his work at Chatsworth, Nadauld moved on to Castle Howard. His list of work 'Done for the Rait honorable the Earle of Carlile at Henderskelfe' between 1705 and 1709 included 'a figure Called pallas upon the pediment', 'Foure Little figures called the foure Sezons made at Chattsworth', and 'a freeses in the South front with Sey boy ent Sey horses'.⁵⁷⁹ Both Nadauld's presence at Castle Howard, and the specific detail of his decorative work, were almost certainly due to the connection between Carlisle and Devonshire and their collaborative discussion of these great architectural projects. Carlisle may have listened to Devonshire's opinions and recommendations in other artistic matters too, since many of the team of craftsmen who worked on the interiors at Chatsworth and Devonshire House in the 1690s also worked at Carlisle House in Soho Square, London,

⁵⁷⁸ DCC CH37/3 fols. 57-86 & CH37/6 fol. 91.

⁵⁷⁹ Cited in Saumarez Smith, *Castle Howard*, pp. 64-5.

including mural painter Louis Chéron, cabinetmaker Gerrit Jensen, sculptor Richard Osgood and joiner Joel Lobb.⁵⁸⁰



Fig. 4.11 Samuel Watson after Henri Nadauld, Frieze on the west front, Chatsworth House (c. 1703-20), pencil on paper, The Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth.

The west front at Chatsworth met with Critickal approval. Devonshire's London receiver Aaron Kinton passed on the feedback to his Derbyshire counterpart James Whildon, informing him, 'by the Reports of all that have seen this new front, it is much more noble and finer then Jacksons [Talman's mason who had built the south and east fronts]'.⁵⁸¹ The taste for exuberant baroque ornamentation seems to have peaked around 1699-1705 during which time Castle Howard was planned and begun, and the west front at Chatsworth conceived and built in its entirety. By the time Devonshire came to rebuild the north front at Chatsworth in 1705-7, his tastes had moved to a simpler, more Italianate style.⁵⁸² Vanbrugh's subsequent country houses, such as Kimbolton (1707-10) and Blenheim (1705-33) were also much plainer, achieving their effect through massive solidity instead of decorative detail. Rather than attempting to disentangle a chronology of influence between Devonshire and Carlisle, Chatsworth and Castle Howard, it is more helpful to think of the two houses and their patrons as being in conversation, developed in tandem, each influencing the other. While reviewing Vanbrugh's designs for Castle Howard, Devonshire

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 7.

⁵⁸¹ DCC W/C/396.

⁵⁸² Thompson, *History of Chatsworth*, pp. 77-8.

absorbed ideas for his own house. Charles Saumarez Smith emphasised the collaborative nature of architecture, in which the final building reflects the input not only of the architect and patron but also masons and craftsmen.⁵⁸³ To that list can be added friends and associates. Art and architecture were topics of intense preoccupation among the nobility and their shared critical discourse reflected and shaped the networks that bound them.

Associational culture: Bedlam and the Kit-cats

As with the networks of kinship, friendship, neighbourhood and mutual interest described above, some late-seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century clubs and societies shared a interest in art, and used portraiture to enact and visualise their association. Clubs functioned as spaces of sociability and cultural exchange in which drinking and dining were combined with scholarly debate, the sharing of court and city news, the dispensing of patronage, and conversation on matters of artistic and topical interest; they were sometimes, but not always, linked to political affiliation. The Kit-cat club was an association of Whig peers and commoners, formed in the mid 1690s and functioning until around 1720. The nature of the club changed over its lifespan, with Ophelia Field arguing that in its early years the Kit-cat's primary purpose was to act as a forum for patronage, particularly of writers, and that around 1705, the club became less cultural and more political.⁵⁸⁴

Thanks to the series of portraits of its members by Sir Godfrey Kneller, the Kit-cat club occupies a prominent position in the historiography of early-eighteenth-century urban

⁵⁸³ Saumarez Smith, *Castle Howard*, pp. 52-3

⁵⁸⁴ O. Field, *The Kit-Cat Club: friends who imagined a nation* (London, 2008), pp. 36 & 146.

culture. It is frequently cited as an example of the decline of the court as a centre of fashion and patronage in favour of private and commercial urban spaces. For John Brewer, the Kit-cats exemplified the shift 'from court to city, from raffish courtier to polite man-about-town'.⁵⁸⁵ As a series, Kneller's paintings were 'a collective portrait of a society of equals, engaged in civilization.'⁵⁸⁶ As Brewer went on to point out, this was an idealization, nor was the court/city dichotomy quite so clear cut. The patronage dispensed by wealthy aristocrats to creative talents such as Congreve, Vanbrugh and Addison, was often dispensed in the form of court or government offices. For David Solkin, the Kit-cat portraits represent the developing urban culture of politeness, but the earliest portraits, painted in 1703 and setting the tone for the remainder of the series, predate Addison's influential writings in *The Spectator*, and at this time Addison himself was not yet a member.⁵⁸⁷ Instead, the club's egalitarian principles were more likely a reflection of the members' shared Whiggish ideals of liberty.⁵⁸⁸

However, a close investigation of the origins of the portrait series situates the Kit-cats in a wider geographical and temporal context and links it to an earlier, regional and rural manifestation of associational culture. Topographically, the Kit-cats are closely associated with London, initially through their gatherings in the taverns of the City and West End, and later their dedicated meeting-room at the home of Jacob Tonson in Barn Elms. However, the portraits may have been inspired by an earlier series of club portraits, not in London but in Lincolnshire: The Honourable Order of Bedlam, a club headed by the fifth earl of Exeter at

⁵⁸⁵ Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination*, pp. 42-3.

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid*, p. 42.

⁵⁸⁷ Solkin, *Art in Britain*, p. 76.

⁵⁸⁸ T. Barber, 'The Age of Politics', in *British Baroque*, p. 155.

Burghley. Sir Godfrey Kneller forms the missing link between the two clubs, and the artist may have been instrumental in instigating the Kit-cat series. The club's egalitarian culture has also been presented as static, but when the portraits are considered chronologically, it appears that there was a later partial retreat from the club's original ethos. Viewing the Kit-cat club as part of an established tradition of clubs in which portraiture played an important part qualifies and contextualises it within the changing landscape of national and local networks.

The Honourable Order of Bedlam was a drinking and dining club founded by the earl of Exeter soon after his return from Italy in 1684. The club, which met at Burghley, drew its members from the Lincolnshire, Nottinghamshire and Rutland nobility and gentry, though Devonshire, who stayed at Burghley frequently, was also a member. It was predominantly social rather than political in nature since its members were drawn from across the political spectrum.⁵⁸⁹ Each member was represented by an animal avatar – Exeter was a lion, Devonshire a leopard, and so on – and members of the club were obliged to address each other at meetings by their animal names on pain of a five shilling fine.⁵⁹⁰ Portraits were integral to the club's proceedings. On admission, each member was required to present the club with his own portrait, animal at his side. The portraits hung in the room where the club met, but on the death of a member his portrait's gilded oval frame was replaced with a black one and moved downstairs to a room known as 'Dead Bedlam'. On the re-founding of the club in 1705 (there had been a brief hiatus after Exeter's death), former members were

⁵⁸⁹ A list of members at the earl's death in 1700 who were served notice of the club's intention to reform in 1705 can be found in HMC, *Fifth Report of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts* (London, 1876), p. 399.

⁵⁹⁰ Peck, *Desiderata Curiosa*, vol. 6, p. 42.

warned that if they did not state their intention to continue their membership, 'your picture will be taken downe, and the master will proceed to a new election to fill up your place.'⁵⁹¹

The portraits thus played a central role in the club's ritual and self-representation.

Two artists, Antonio Verrio (porcupine) and Godfrey Kneller (unicorn), were also members of the Order of Bedlam. Their presence was anomalous, since all the other members were linked through geography, county politics, kinship and marriage. Verrio's membership is not so surprising since he lived at Burghley for the best part of a decade. He was accorded the title 'Signior', and judging by his bills from the Stamford hostelries he was gregarious and bibulous, on one occasion notching up '12 Botls of Claret 6 of whit & 6 Botls of Canarey' (presumably with the help of some companions), and regularly losing the drinking game 'last to pay'.⁵⁹² Kneller's membership is harder to explain. After painting the young Lord Burghley around 1681-2, he was not patronised by the family again until 1696, when he was commissioned to paint portraits of the family to commemorate Lord Burghley's marriage.⁵⁹³ However, Kneller was certainly a member of the Order before August 1690 when his club portraits of himself and Verrio, with their respective avatars of a unicorn and porcupine, were recorded as having recently arrived at Burghley (fig. 4.12).⁵⁹⁴ He was not, however, 'official portrait artist' to the club, since members supplied their own portraits, and a range of artists was therefore represented among the collection.

⁵⁹¹ HMC, *Fifth Report*, p. 399.

⁵⁹² BA EX 54/05(a)046.

⁵⁹³ All Burghley Collection. The earl's portrait, signed and dated 1696, is incorrectly identified as Edward Cecil, PIC081.

⁵⁹⁴ BA EX 51/18.



Fig. 4.12 Godfrey Kneller, *Self-portrait* (left) and *Antonio Verrio* (right) as members of the Order of Bedlam (c. 1688-90), oil on canvas, Burghley Collection.

At some point in the mid-to-late 1680s, Exeter must have renewed Kneller's acquaintance. By now Kneller was the country's leading portrait painter, but more importantly he and Exeter had a shared experience of the Italian art scene.⁵⁹⁵ Between 1672 and 1675, Kneller had studied in Italy, first in Rome with Bernini and Carlo Maratti, and then in Venice, where he had met Bombelli and painted his portrait; Exeter knew Bombelli from his own visits to Venice in 1681 and 1683.⁵⁹⁶ Kneller was also familiar with the French court, having been sent there by Charles II in 1684 to paint Louis XIV. The earl and the artist would have had much to talk about, discussing their common experiences and acquaintances. Kneller's membership of the Order of Bedlam must have been due to Exeter's desire to extend

⁵⁹⁵ J.D. Stewart, 'Kneller, Sir Godfrey [formerly Gottfried Kniller], baronet (1646–1723), history and portrait painter', *ODNB* (2010) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/15710> [accessed: 29 September 2020].

⁵⁹⁶ See p. 193.

friendship, and a rather nebulous form of patronage, to the artist. Art and artists were important to Exeter for their own sake, and he broke with convention to incorporate them into his social and associational life.

Around fifteen years after Kneller painted his own and Verrio's portraits for the Order of Bedlam, he began his series of members' portraits for the Kit-cat Club, and it is possible that the idea to paint such a series was inspired by the Bedlam portraits. Kneller was never a member of the Kit-cats (although he is often mistakenly described as one), but he shared their Whiggish sympathies, and was friendly with several of the members.⁵⁹⁷ In 1702 or early 1703 he began to paint the portraits of several of the club's members (fig. 4.13). The precise circumstances of the commission are unclear. The portraits are first mentioned in a letter of 15 June 1703 from club member John Vanbrugh to Jacob Tonson. Tonson was one of the principal organisers of the club and at the time was in Amsterdam on printing business. Looking forward to Tonson's return, Vanbrugh wrote:

my hopes are, you'll be spueing at sea before this gets halfway to the Brill. In short, the Kit-cat wants you, much more than you can ever do them. Those who remain in towne, are in great desire of waiting on you at Barne-Elmes; not that they have finished their pictures neither; tho' to excuse them (as well as myself), Sr Godfrey has been most in fault. The fool has got a country house near Hampton Court, and is so busy about fitting it up (to receive nobody), that there is no getting him to work.⁵⁹⁸

Evidently Kneller was working on the portraits of several Kit-cat members, including Vanbrugh himself, and Vanbrugh's complaint implies that the portraits were conceived together, and were expressly intended for Tonson. It was also in 1703 that the club moved

⁵⁹⁷ Barber, 'The Age of Politics', p. 155.

⁵⁹⁸ Webb, *Complete works of Sir John Vanbrugh*, vol. 4, p.7.

its meetings from Christopher Cat's tavern near Temple Bar to Tonson's house at Barn Elms, although the meeting room, where the portraits would be hung, was a much later addition.⁵⁹⁹ Perhaps it was Kneller who, recalling the Bedlam portraits, suggested to some of his Kit-cat friends that they commission a similar series – although in this case, all to be painted by him, rather than individual commissions from disparate artists. If so, it was a canny suggestion, since it ultimately resulted in commissions for almost forty portraits, which remain among Kneller's best-known works.

For the portraits, Kneller used a 36" x 28" format, with the sitter shown to the waist, which has subsequently become known as the Kit-cat (fig. 4.13). This gave the series uniformity and a distinct identity, and created what Solkin described as a 'performed informality'.⁶⁰⁰ Designed to be hung at eye level, the sitter is near life-size and close to the picture plane, and in many of the portraits, rests one arm on a plinth. In devising this composition, Kneller appears to have drawn on his early training in Rembrandt's workshop, as well as his years in Italy. The composition recalls Rembrandt's *Self portrait at the age of 34*, which was in turn derived from Titian's *Portrait of Gerolamo (?) Barbarigo*.⁶⁰¹ The Kit-cat portraits also echoed the informality of Kneller's Bedlam self-portrait, in which he meets the viewer's gaze with an equanimity quite unlike the baroque swagger he usually gave his noble sitters.

⁵⁹⁹ For their later display at Barn Elms, see J. Simon, 'Displaying the Kit-cats: The fate of the Kit-cat club portraits', *Georgian Group Journal* 29 (2021), pp. 83-98.

⁶⁰⁰ Solkin, *Art in Britain*, p. 77.

⁶⁰¹ J.D. Stewart, 'Kneller, Sir Godfrey'. 'Self portrait at the age of 34', <https://www.nationalgallery.org.uk/paintings/rembrandt-self-portrait-at-the-age-of-34> [accessed: 4 August 2020]; National Gallery, London NG624 & NG1944.



Fig. 4.13 Godfrey Kneller, *Charles Seymour, sixth duke of Somerset* (c. 1702-3), oil on canvas, National Portrait Gallery, London.

Eleven portraits, all dated between 1703 and 1705 by the National Portrait Gallery, are the most likely candidates for this first clutch of portraits. They are Charles Seymour; sixth duke of Somerset; Charles Fitzroy, second duke of Grafton; Charles Lennox, first duke of Richmond and Lennox; Charles Cornwallis, fourth Baron Cornwallis; John Dormer; Edmund

Dunch; Algernon Capel, second earl of Essex; Sir Samuel Garth; Charles Montagu, first earl of Halifax; John Tidcomb; and John Vanbrugh. All have a pared-down simplicity. Occasionally insignia of status and office are included, in the shape of Vanbrugh's badge as Clarenceux King of Arms and Lennox's Garter star, but their clothes are unadorned and the backdrops mostly plain. The portraits reflect the club's ethos of liberty and friendship, 'unencumbered by the constraints of hierarchy and differences of social rank'.⁶⁰² In practice, hierarchy did play a part in the relationships between club members, both in terms of patronage and the clubs rituals, but it was concealed beneath a veneer of equality.⁶⁰³

Two portraits painted by Kneller at an early date are usually considered part of the series, but there are noticeable differences from the other portraits. The earliest portrait in the series is of Charles Sackville, first earl of Dorset (fig. 4.14). He carries the white staff of the Lord Chamberlain, a role he relinquished in April 1697, providing a *terminus ante quem* for the portrait. Although the dimensions are the standard 36" x 28" size, Sackville looms larger than his fellow club members, crowding into the edges of the frame, and the tip of his staff has been cut off. Kneller may have copied an earlier portrait of Sackville, trimming the composition to fit onto a Kit-cat canvas, or a pre-1697 portrait may have been cut down to the Kit-cat size in or after 1703. Nor do Dorset's clothes and markers of status accord with the other early portraits. The rich gold buttons and embroidery of his coat, as well as his staff of office, contrast with the plain velvet coats and absence of insignia in the portraits of the early 1700s.

⁶⁰² Barber, 'The Age of Politics', p. 155.

⁶⁰³ Grace was said by the highest-ranking member and nobles were served first at table. Field, *The Kit-Cat Club*, p. 44.



Fig. 4.14 Godfrey Kneller, *Charles Sackville, sixth earl of Dorset* (c. 1697), oil on canvas, National Portrait Gallery, London.

The other portrait with an early date of execution appears to have been a later addition to the series. The portrait of Charles Dartiquenave, signed by Kneller and dated 1702, is a larger size, at 42 ½" x 31 ½" (fig. 4.15). A copy was later made, probably in the early nineteenth century, in the smaller Kit-cat size to conform with the rest of the series.⁶⁰⁴

Dartiquenave's portrait is of particular interest since his pose, clothing and backdrop are all closely aligned with the early Kit-cat portraits, and it may have been an early experiment

⁶⁰⁴ NPG 3201.

with the format by Kneller. However, Dartiquenave's portrait does not appear to have been part of the original series since not only is it larger, but it was not originally planned to be included in the print reproduction of the portrait series, engraved by John Faber and published in 1735 by Jacob Tonson II (nephew of Jacob Tonson to whom the portraits were presented).⁶⁰⁵ The engraving of Dartiquenave's portrait is signed 'I. Faber fecit 1734', but it is not included in the numbered sequence of plates, but is marked 'Between 40 & 41'.⁶⁰⁶ Several other portraits were added in this way, including Kneller and John Churchill, first duke of Marlborough, though neither were members.⁶⁰⁷ Did Tonson make a late decision to include Dartiquenave's portrait among the Kit-cats on the grounds of its compositional similarity? Was Dartiquenave actually a member, or has he simply been ascribed membership of the Kit-cats on the grounds of his portrait's inclusion in the series? By the time the prints were published, the club had long since ceased to meet. In 1725, Vanbrugh wrote nostalgically to the elder Tonson,

You may believe, when I tell you, you were often talked of, both during the journey and at home; and our former Kit-cat days were remembered with pleasure. We were one night reckoning who were left, and both Lord Carlisle and Cobham expressed a great desire of having one meeting next Winter if you came to town; not as a club, but as old friends that have been of a club, and the best club that ever met.⁶⁰⁸

The prints can not be read as a faithful record, but must be understood as a memory captured at a generation removed, by two men – Faber and Jacob Tonson II – who were not directly involved in the club.

⁶⁰⁵ *The Kit-cat club: done from the original paintings of Sir Godfrey Kneller by Mr. Faber* (London, 1735).

⁶⁰⁶ NPG, [D33133](#).

⁶⁰⁷ NPG, [D19727](#).

⁶⁰⁸ Webb, *Complete Works of Sir John Vanbrugh*, vol. 4, p. 167.



Fig. 4.15 Godfrey Kneller, Charles Dartiquenave (1702), oil on canvas, National Portrait Gallery, London.

Faber's dedication to the 1735 volume of prints identified the duke of Somerset as the instigator of the portrait series. Beneath Somerset's arms, he wrote: 'This Collection of Prints owes it's very Being to Your Graces Liberality in setting the Example to the other Members of the Kit-cat Club of honouring Mr Tonson with their Pictures'.⁶⁰⁹ This may have been flattery, since Somerset is an unlikely instigator of the series. Neither he nor the

⁶⁰⁹ *The Kit-cat club.*

duchess of Somerset had patronised Kneller since 1684, and the informality of his Kit-cat portrait is highly uncharacteristic of the Proud Duke, who was not usually one to dispense with the trappings of status. In it, Somerset gazes equitably at the viewer, exuding humanity in place of his usual imperiousness. His open-necked shirt and loose robe, with just a glimpse of the blue Garter sash, are a striking contrast to the full Garter or peer's robes he wears in almost all of his other portraits. It is more likely that the club members agreed together to commission and present their portraits to Tonson. Yet even if the composition of Somerset's portrait was simply conforming to a format agreed by the members, the duke still valued his portrait and club membership enough to commission at least one copy for himself, implying that even the rank-obsessed duke enjoyed the informality of urban associational culture.⁶¹⁰

Over subsequent years, more portraits were added to the series as new members joined or other existing members commissioned their portraits to present to Tonson, and these later portraits differed from the earlier ones in subtle but significant ways, suggesting at least a partial retreat from the egalitarian principles of the club's early years. Beginning with the 1707 portrait of Charles, fourth Baron Mohun, the trappings of status began to creep back in.⁶¹¹ The fabrics became richer, with velvet coats, gold embroidery and lace cuffs, and plain backdrops gave way to landscapes. The 1721 double portrait of Thomas Pelham-Holles, first duke of Newcastle-under-Lyme and Henry Clinton, seventh earl of Lincoln, is a far cry from the simplicity of the earlier portraits (fig. 4.16). It is laden with markers of wealth and

⁶¹⁰ NPG, Heinz archive, sitter box 'Charles Seymour, 6th Duke of Somerset'. It was later used as the template for a roundel in the Gallery at Syon House. A photograph of another version can be found in the 'Kneller' artist box at the Courtauld Institute's Witt library.

⁶¹¹ The series can be viewed at <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/set/347/The+Kit-cat+Club+portraits%3A+by+Sir+Godfrey+Kneller> [accessed: 30 December 2021].

status, from Newcastle's fabulous silver brocade and Lesser George to Lincoln's Garter star and the depiction of Vanbrugh's Belvedere Tower at Claremont, Newcastle's country house, in the background. In their final display at Barn Elms (c.1733), six dukes were hung together on one wall, with a further row of peers opposite.⁶¹² This later arrangement similarly reflects a concern with rank that was probably absent in the original display.



Fig. 4.16 Godfrey Kneller, *Thomas Pelham-Holles, 1st Duke of Newcastle-under-Lyme and Henry Clinton, 7th Earl of Lincoln* (c. 1721), oil on canvas, National Portrait Gallery, London.

⁶¹² Simon, 'Displaying the Kit-cats', pp. 89-91.

The networks that underpinned late Stuart society – and consequently late Stuart art patronage – should be seen as a three-dimensional web that linked many different groups together. Aristocratic art patrons collaborated closely with those in their immediate circles: their household, family, friends, county, political and social associates. Those circles, however, did not stand apart, but overlapped, and personal connections were often reinforced through multiple and simultaneous ties, such as kinship and friendship, or politics and neighbourhood. Since life itself could not be neatly separated into categories, it followed that art patronage would also transcend boundaries. Art was a subject of interest throughout aristocratic society, not only through the exchange and display of portraits to cement and visualise relationships, but as a topic of mutual concern. Employees, agents, family, friends, neighbours, colleagues and associates took an interest in each other's patronage, discussing designs, recommending artists and craftsmen to each other, giving art as gifts and sharing their connections and expertise. These networks were integral to the production and consumption of art, just as art was integral to the networks. The aristocratic art patron was not a lion, but an ant, a single individual in a complex ecosystem built on collaboration and connection.

Chapter Five

The Dynamics of Conjugal Patronage

1682 Sep 16 Paid Mr Johnson for a cabinet per ladyes order £8 15s 0d

Child's Bank ledger: the Earl of Exeter⁶¹³

Introduction

The previous chapter situated aristocrats at the centre of the regional and national networks that influenced and facilitated their art patronage. This chapter continues the theme of collaboration, but rather than looking outward, it looks within the institution of marriage, to explore the dynamics of conjugal patronage. Contrary to the majority of scholarship on the late-seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century aristocracy, this thesis has given equal billing to both partners in the married couples it examines. The activities of these three women – Anne, countess of Exeter, Mary, duchess of Devonshire, and Elizabeth, duchess of Somerset – are discussed throughout its six chapters. However, by analysing the comparative activities of husband and wife, this dedicated chapter not only highlights women's contributions, but also engages with wider debates around gender and categorisation. The countess of Exeter and duchess of Somerset were both significant art patrons, in their own right and in collaboration with their husbands. The duchess of Devonshire, however, was hampered by her husband's domineering character, a reminder that for a woman to overcome the constraints of the law of *couverture*, she relied on the co-operation of her husband.

⁶¹³ NatWest CH 194/6 fol. 361r.

Studies of women's patronage (sometimes known as 'matronage') are well established, moving beyond 'compensatory' or 'celebratory' case studies to explore the distinctive characteristics of women's patronage and critically integrate it into mainstream art-historical discourse.⁶¹⁴ Early modern Italy has proved particularly fertile ground for this sub-discipline, but there is comparatively much less scholarship on the women of late Stuart England, and those studies have tended to centre on queens, consorts and courtesans.⁶¹⁵ In Italy and England, scholars have emphasised the importance of art patronage in self-fashioning, religious practice, and the building of dynastic identity. Widows are also disproportionately accounted for in patronage studies, and relatively few consider how married women exercised patronage alongside their husbands, or how the mechanics and purposes of their respective patronage might complement or contrast with one another. Yet married women in the late-seventeenth century exercised considerably more agency than they have traditionally been credited with. Linda Levy Peck's *Women of Fortune* elaborated the strategies employed by the women of two wealthy families as they sought to maintain control over their personal and family finances and the education of their children, even within the constraints of arranged marriages, social and legal conventions.⁶¹⁶

With the exception of Christopher Rowell's profile of Elizabeth Dysart, duchess of Lauderdale, most studies of early modern aristocratic women's patronage have

⁶¹⁴ See 'Introduction' in C. Lawrence (ed.), *Women and Art in Early Modern Europe* (University Park, Pennsylvania, 1997), pp. 1-20.

⁶¹⁵ Half of the case studies in C. Lawrence (ed.), *Women and Art in Early Modern Europe* (University Park, Pennsylvania, 1997) were of Italian or Italian-born women; see also A. Modesti, *Women's patronage and gendered cultural networks in early modern Europe: Vittoria della Rovere, Grand Duchess of Tuscany* (New York, 2020). For late Stuart England, see J. Marciari Alexander and C. MacLeod (eds.), *Politics, Transgression and Representation at the Court of Charles II* (New Haven & London, 2007); J. Winn, *Queen Anne: patroness of arts* (Oxford, 2014).

⁶¹⁶ Levy Peck, *Women of Fortune*.

concentrated on architecture, perhaps confronting head-on this most stereotypically male artistic category.⁶¹⁷ The notion of gendered spheres, championed by second-wave feminists to explain the lack of women's participation in public life, has largely been overturned by historians who have shown that women's lived experiences were often at odds with the ideals promoted by conduct literature.⁶¹⁸ However, the idea of gendered categories of art collecting still persists, closely aligned with a value system that places the intellectualised 'fine' arts of painting and sculpture above the merely 'decorative' arts. Deeper into the eighteenth century, this dichotomy is further complicated by the widespread practice by elite and middling women of domestic crafts such as shell-work, japanning, and collage that are only now being validated as subjects of artistic and scholarly merit.⁶¹⁹ While men have traditionally been associated with the patronage of painting, sculpture, and architecture (categories privileged in art historical scholarship and modern art-market value), women have been apportioned small-scale items and those relating to people and the home: jewellery, portraits, soft furnishings and porcelain.⁶²⁰

The case studies in this thesis complicate this categorisation. These women were not very active as collectors of subject paintings and sculpture; there is, however, ample evidence in

⁶¹⁷ C. Rowell, 'Elizabeth Murray, Countess of Dysart and Duchess of Lauderdale (1626-98) as a Collector and Patron' in S. Bracken, A. Galdy and A. Turpin (eds.), *Women patrons and collectors* (Newcastle, 2012), pp. 67-82. For an overview of English women's patronage through five centuries, see A. Boyington, 'Women's Collecting and Display Strategies in the British Country House', in Postle (ed.) *Art & the Country House*, <https://doi.org/10.17658/ACH/TE579> [accessed: 27 April 2021]. For women's architectural patronage, see R. Baird, *Mistress of the House: Great Ladies and Grand Houses, 1670-1830* (London, 2003); A. Boyington, 'Maids, Wives, Widows: Female Architectural Patronage in Eighteenth-Century Britain', PhD thesis, University of Cambridge (2017); J. Learmouth, 'Elite Women and the West End Town House: Creating, Maintaining and Inhabiting a Residence in London, c.1710-c.1750', PhD thesis, University of London (2021).

⁶¹⁸ A. Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres?', *Historical Journal* 36:2 (1993), pp. 383-414.

⁶¹⁹ M. Pelling, 'Collecting the World: Female Friendship and Domestic Craft At Bulstrode Park', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 41:1 (March 2018), pp. 101-120; F. Gowrley, *Domestic Space in Britain, 1750-1840: Materiality, Sociability and Emotion* (forthcoming, 2022).

⁶²⁰ S. ffolliott, 'Introduction', in Bracken, Galdy and Turpin (eds.), *Women patrons and collectors*, pp. xxxiii-iv.

their participation in a wide range of categories including conventionally masculine items such as furniture and clocks. Additionally, their husbands enthusiastically patronised categories traditionally perceived as feminine, including jewellery, upholstery and porcelain. The association in the later eighteenth century of 'chinoiserie' with women's domestic spaces is not borne out by the findings of this thesis. In the late-seventeenth century when artistic hierarchies were not yet entrenched, the categories in which women and men participated were much less gendered, and both were closely involved across a wide range of artistic media.

Married women's ability to exercise independent patronage was limited by the common law of *couverture*. As *femmes couvertes*, married women were absorbed into their husband's legal and financial identity. They could not own property in their own name, and any money they earned legally belonged to their husbands. Nor could they enter into contracts in their own right, although under the doctrine of necessities, women could contract to buy certain goods to uphold their husbands' status.⁶²¹ However, in practice, women were often able to maintain a degree of financial independence through the terms of their marriage settlement, a legal device that could apportion property to a woman through the creation of a separate estate, or through 'pin money', an annual sum granted for personal expenses.⁶²² Women's earnings or property could also be managed on their behalf by trustees, and most married women did have at least some independent spending power. This was, nevertheless, contingent on the co-operation of their male relatives. The varied conjugal

⁶²¹ Levy Peck, *Women of Fortune*, p. 77.

⁶²² A. Erickson, *Women and Property in Early Modern England* (London, 1993), pp. 102-4.

dynamics of the three couples surveyed here reflect their different financial and personal circumstances.

The duchess of Somerset and countess of Exeter both exercised considerable control over the commissioning of art for their homes, from their own private purse and jointly with their husband. The nature of this patronage was dictated by their varying personal finances, though its full extent is still unknown, thanks to patriarchal archival practices that have obscured women's activities. Both of these women, however, benefited from a family tradition of female patronage, and associated networks of female patronage through which artists and craftsmen passed, in much the same way as the predominantly male networks discussed in Chapter Four. They also relied on the goodwill and co-operation of their husbands to overcome the restrictions of *couverture*. This was unfortunately lacking in the marriage of the duke and duchess of Devonshire, with the result that her patronage, independent and collaborative, was severely curtailed.

Independent and collaborative patronage

Elizabeth, duchess of Somerset, enjoyed a considerable degree of financial autonomy. As the wealthiest heiress in England, her grandmother and guardian, Elizabeth, countess dowager of Northumberland, held a great deal of leverage in negotiating her marriage settlements. The settlement with Charles, sixth duke of Somerset, has not survived, but the settlement for her first marriage to Henry, earl of Ogle was weighted heavily in favour of the young Lady Percy, and is indicative of what her settlement with Somerset was likely to have

been.⁶²³ She brought to the marriage a portion of £30,000 besides estates that yielded £20-30,000 a year; in return, Ogle was obliged to change his surname to Percy. Among other provisions she received pin-money of £3,000 a year, plus a further £1,500 from her Northumberland and Cumberland estates 'for her own separate use'. This was equivalent to the annual income of a lesser nobleman. From 1702 Somerset also received annual wages of £1,000 for her court offices, rising to £3,600 in 1711, besides an allowance for plate; her earnings were held in trust on her behalf.⁶²⁴

This independent income gave the duchess an agency beyond the reach of most married women and enabled her to patronise artists and craftsmen on a large scale in her own right. A cache of receipted bills—unusually extensive and detailed for any patron, let alone female—survives in the Petworth House Archives, thanks to the assiduous book-keeping of her stewards, Mrs Stanhope and Mrs Felton. Catalogued by year, they itemise her expenses throughout almost her entire married life, from her purchase of a still-life painting by Pieter Gerritsz. van Roestraeten as a child bride in December 1678, to a subscription to Greycoats School in February 1719, three years before her death.⁶²⁵ Although not comprehensive, they nonetheless include a vast range of items including jewellery, clothing, paintings, furniture, silver, porcelain, books, and charming incidental expenses such as a puppet show and jelly for her grandchildren.⁶²⁶ Many are from the foremost artists and craftsmen based

⁶²³ University of Nottingham Archives PI F3/1/6.

⁶²⁴ Database of Court Officers (website) <http://courtofficers.ctsdh.luc.edu/CHAMBER1.list.pdf> [accessed: 28 April 2021].

⁶²⁵ PHA 258-300 & 652.

⁶²⁶ For the last item, see PHA 298 fol. 13.

in late Stuart London, besides introducing several previously-unknown names.⁶²⁷ Although some scholars have recently begun to draw on these archives, their riches remain mostly untapped.⁶²⁸ The rare survival of such a detailed archive is not only of great value to scholars of art and London manufacturing and retail, but offers an almost unique insight into the patronage of one of England's wealthiest women.

Elizabeth was only twelve years old and newly married to Henry, earl of Ogle, when she began to patronise artists and craftsmen. Given her youth, she probably acted under the supervision of her grandmother and guardian Elizabeth, countess dowager of Northumberland, and their relationship will be discussed at greater length below. Besides portraits, she placed substantial commissions for upholstered furniture. Upholstery, especially beds, was among the most expensive of all artistic categories and the young countess appears to have commissioned the furniture on behalf of herself and her young husband. In May 1679, she ordered a sky-blue damask bed with eight en suite carved walnut chairs from upholsterer Richard Coke, made 'after the newest fashion' with a rising tester and curved headboard, scalloped valances, French cup finials, and a silk-embroidered tester, headcloth and counterpane.⁶²⁹ The rich silk fringing, in twists and tufts of deep buff, sky, and black and white, supplied by Jos.[eph?] Bell for £100 9s 7d, was even more expensive than the upholstery.⁶³⁰ After the untimely death of her young husband, the widowed countess probably retained the furnishings she had paid for from her own purse,

⁶²⁷ For a more detailed account of the bills, see A. Lim, 'The furniture patronage of Elizabeth Seymour (née Percy), duchess of Somerset (1667-1722)', *Furniture History* 57 (2021), pp. 1-23.

⁶²⁸ For example, J. Rothwell, 'Taste Contained and Liberated', *National Trust Historic Houses and Collections Annual 2018*, p. 27 and A. Westman, *Fringe, Frog and Tassel* (London, 2019).

⁶²⁹ PHA 258 fol. 13.

⁶³⁰ PHA 258 fol. 14. Excluding the cost of the damask: the mercer's bill is lost.

and this bed may be the blue silk damask bed and en suite elbow chairs recorded in one of the principal bedchambers at Petworth in 1750.⁶³¹ Over the next three decades, her bills record many more payments to mercers and fringe-makers, as she continued to commission these expensive and prestigious furnishings.

Besides contributing to the shared areas of her properties, the duchess' bills also indicate that she was responsible for commissioning and paying for the furnishings in her private apartments. Besides those at Petworth, she was responsible for 'The Duchess of Somerset's Great Apartment' at Northumberland House, one of the greatest London town houses. The apartment comprised a waiting room, drawing room, dressing room, and bedchamber, and the inventory drawn up in 1748 after the duke's death indicates the luxuriousness of its furnishings.⁶³² They included 'a rich inlaid table', a large number of mirrors (mirror glass was extremely expensive), several lacquer cabinets and chests, and a bed and en suite chairs upholstered with crimson silk damask, one of the most expensive furnishing fabrics. The drawing room boasted a nine-branch silver hanging chandelier, a massive and showy piece of lighting furniture that was beyond the reach of all but the wealthiest few.⁶³³ Her apartments at Petworth were also luxuriously furnished, with more lacquer-work, mirrors, and damask upholstery, and a pair of silver sconces in the closet.⁶³⁴ Although the inventory lacks sufficient detail to match the furnishings against the duchess' surviving bills, given the

⁶³¹ PHA 6263.

⁶³² Alnwick Castle, Duke of Northumberland Papers, SY:H.IV.1c No. 1.

⁶³³ WSHC 1332/1/2/2/3.

⁶³⁴ PHA 6263.

extensive nature of her furniture and silver purchases recorded among her bills, it is almost certain that she commissioned and paid for these items herself.

The duke and duchess of Somerset both contributed to the furnishing of the common areas of their houses. The duchess commissioned two large garden seats, one for Petworth and one for Syon, carved with flowers, leaves, and her coronet and cipher.⁶³⁵ At Castle House, the Somersets' home in Marlborough, Wiltshire, the duke and duchess shared a bedroom, an unusual arrangement probably due to the compact layout, although each retained their own dressing room. Their bed was hung with fine chintz lined with red holland which was also used for the wall hangings, window curtains, and carried through into the hangings, curtains, and seat furniture of the duchess' dressing room.⁶³⁶ Although there are no records relating to the commission, the Somersets' daughter-in-law later referred to the bed in correspondence as 'bought by the Duchess of Somerset new for that house.'⁶³⁷ It is likely that the duchess made many other undocumented commissions for the common areas of the couple's houses. The duke also contributed in this way. His account books (far less detailed than the duchess' bills) contain payments to upholsterers, drapers and fringe-makers.⁶³⁸ The green and white silk Indian damask he purchased for £241 in September 1700 was intended for the state bed in the later-named King of Spain's bedchamber.⁶³⁹

⁶³⁵ PHA 267 fol. 25.

⁶³⁶ 'An inventory of his goods at his Grace the duke of Somerset's house in Marlborough taken at 6 of October 1715', *Report of the Marlborough College Natural History Society* (1958-9), pp. 56-61.

⁶³⁷ Frances, dowager duchess of Somerset to Mr Rogers, 25 June 1751, reproduced in *ibid.*, pp.66-7.

⁶³⁸ G. Jackson-Stops, 'The Furniture at Petworth', *Apollo* 105:183 (May 1977), p. 360.

⁶³⁹ PHA 251.

Comparing the duke's and duchess' accounts is like comparing apples with pears, so conclusions about the division of spending must remain tentative. The duke certainly paid for the building works at Petworth (although the source of the money was, of course, the duchess' inheritance), and it is likely that he also footed the bill for most of the furnishing of the common areas. This did not, however, disqualify the duchess' involvement, either as lead or co-patron. Lydia Hamlett has convincingly argued that the iconography of the staircase mural at Petworth, painted by Louis Laguerre in 1719-20, points to the involvement of the duchess in the commission, even if the bill was ultimately paid by the duke.⁶⁴⁰ Not only does the interpretation of the Pandora myth on the ceiling indicate a female patron, but the south wall also depicts the duchess riding triumphant in a chariot, flanked by her children (fig. 5.1). The contract for the commission has not survived, although a letter addressed from Laguerre to the duke has, but such a substantial commission may have been considered too large to be contracted by the duchess under the doctrine of necessities.⁶⁴¹ Hamlett's case study has demonstrated that it cannot be assumed that payment by the duke precluded the duchess' involvement in, or even management of, a commission. In light of this, we might reasonably ask whether other commissions in the duke's name, such as that with weaver John Vanderbank for the *Grotesques* tapestries, also occlude the duchess' involvement.⁶⁴²

⁶⁴⁰ Hamlett, 'Pandora at Petworth House', pp. 950-5.

⁶⁴¹ PHA 6292 and PHA 382.

⁶⁴² PHA 9018.



Fig. 5.1 Louis Laguerre, *The Triumph of Elizabeth Percy* (c.1719-20), oil on plaster, Petworth House © National Trust Images/Derrick E. Witty

The duchess was also a regular patron of portrait painters, independently and in collaboration with her husband. Throughout her adult life, she commissioned a great many portraits of herself, her friends and family, favouring the leading artists of the day but also employing lesser artists to make copies. Her court portraits by Sir Godfrey Kneller, and the portraits she commissioned from Michael Dahl have already been discussed in Chapters One and Four respectively, but besides these she also patronised each of the Principal Painters to the Crown before Kneller: Sir Peter Lely, and John Riley, as well as John Closterman and fashionable painter Willem Wissing. She also patronised miniaturists Richard Gibson and Charles Boit. Gibson, who had been appointed as Picture Maker to the Crown in May 1672,

supplied pictures, frames and crystal glasses on several occasions between 1680 and 1686, and in 1708, she paid Boit, a Swedish painter closely associated with Michael Dahl, for two miniatures, probably after recent portraits of her and her daughter Catherine by Dahl.⁶⁴³ She also commissioned painters who (at the time) were less well known to make copies of existing portraits: Jonathan Richardson, Sarah Curtis, Charles Jervas, Charles D'Agar and Isaac Seeman.⁶⁴⁴ Jervas would himself later become Principal Painter to the Crown.

Although the bills show that the duchess commissioned and paid for these portraits independently, her patronage was closely linked to that of her husband. Her earliest commission, as countess of Ogle, was for four portraits from Sir Peter Lely, which were probably the two portraits of herself at Syon House, and possibly the pair of portraits of her and her husband now in the Royal Collection.⁶⁴⁵ The duchess paid for them all: £90 for two half-lengths and a £10 down-payment on two more in March 1680, and the balance of £70 in September of the same year.⁶⁴⁶ Unsurprisingly, there were no portraits from her second marriage. Her third marriage was a more equitable partnership. The duke paid for his own portraits, but with the exception of Wissing who, as will be discussed further below, was particularly associated with the women of the duchess' circles, he simultaneously patronised each of the principal painters employed by his wife. Between 1684 and 1691, the duke and duchess both patronised John Riley, who had been appointed Painter and Picture Drawer to the crown after Lely's death. The duchess commissioned 'a Cotype of a

⁶⁴³ PHA 259 fol. 23; PHA 260 fol. 24; PHA 263 fol. 63; PHA 284 fols. 10, 35 & 37.

⁶⁴⁴ Richardson: PHA 277 fol. 20; Curtis: PHA 274 fol. 39; D'Agar: PHA 278 fol. 32, PHA 280 fol. 27, PHA 292 fol. 48 and PHA 293/16; Jervas: PHA 292 fol. 4; Seeman: PHA 297 fol. 70. Richardson also painted her younger sons around this time, Egremont Collection, Petworth. I am grateful to Andrew Loukes for this information.

⁶⁴⁵ Duke of Northumberland Collection, Syon House; Royal Collection RCIN 402856 and RCIN 402857.

⁶⁴⁶ PHA 259 fols. 19 & 39.

half length picture and frame' from Riley in April 1686 and 'an Originall of her Grace's picture' for twenty guineas in November of the same year.⁶⁴⁷ Riley also painted at least three portraits of the duke: an oval bust still at Petworth, and two larger portraits in Garter robes, one of which was engraved by John Smith for the frontispiece of Loggan's *Cantabridgia Illustrata*.⁶⁴⁸

The full-length portraits of the duke and duchess in the Carved Room at Petworth are usually considered to be pendants, but a closer examination indicates the duchess' portrait was painted first, with the duke commissioning his around three years later (fig. 5.2).⁶⁴⁹ The duchess' coronation robes, the apparent age of young Lord Hertford (born November 1684), and the enclosed, self-referential composition of mother and son suggest that it was commissioned around 1689 as a stand-alone portrait, probably painted jointly by Riley and John Closterman.⁶⁵⁰ Closterman worked in partnership with Riley as his drapery painter, and after Riley's death in 1691 he inherited his studio and many of his clients.⁶⁵¹ The duke's portrait was certainly commissioned in 1692 from Closterman, since his account book records 'Fourscore pounds to pay Mr Glausterman for Drawing my Lord Dukes and his sisters Pictures being whole lengths...80'.⁶⁵² No corresponding bill survives among the duchess' papers, but a separate, earlier commission, most likely from the duchess, would account for it not being included in the duke's 1692 payment. Closterman cleverly created a

⁶⁴⁷ PHA 264 fol. 5; PHA 652.

⁶⁴⁸ Egremont Collection, Petworth; British Museum, London, 1864,0813.208; CPS, British School 268178.

⁶⁴⁹ Petworth House, NT 486184 & NT 486185.

⁶⁵⁰ An earlier date for the duchess' portrait was first suggested by Christopher Rowell in 'Grinling Gibbons's Carved Room at Petworth', *Apollo*, 151:450 (April 2000), p. 24.

⁶⁵¹ J.D. Stewart, 'Closterman, John (1660–1711), history and portrait painter', *ODNB* (2007) <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2648/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-5708> [accessed: 28 April 2021].

⁶⁵² PHA 245.

composition that incorporated the duchess' portrait to give the impression that they had been intended as a pair. Every inch the 'Proud Duke', he gestures across, not to his unnamed servant, but to his son and heir in the adjacent portrait.⁶⁵³ The duke's and duchess' portraits can thus be seen as independent, but related.

This pattern of separate but related patronage continued over the next two decades.

Husband and wife continued to patronise Closterman for the next few years; he was paid £20 by the duchess to paint 'her Grace's Pecctar' in January 1694, while acting as the duke's advisor and agent at picture sales.⁶⁵⁴ It was around this time that the Somersets – probably jointly – commissioned a large group portrait of their children from Closterman, a format that he would repeat for several other families.⁶⁵⁵ After the duke's relationship with Closterman soured, as described in Chapter Four, both the Somersets transferred their patronage to Michael Dahl. Likewise, from c. 1702-1715, they both commissioned portraits from Sir Godfrey Kneller: the duke's Kit-cat portrait and the duchess' Groom of the Stole portraits, and numerous other family members, that may have been commissioned by either, or both together.⁶⁵⁶

⁶⁵³ After the Carved Room was reconfigured in the late-eighteenth century, the portraits were rehung the wrong way round, negating the effect.

⁶⁵⁴ PHA 267 fol. 7. This is probably the portrait of the duchess in a brown dress holding a sprig of *nicotiana*, formerly attrib. Kerseboom, Egremont collection, Petworth. 'Notebooks of George Vertue' vol. 4, p. 21.

⁶⁵⁵ Duke of Northumberland Collection, Syon House.

⁶⁵⁶ Most are still in the Egremont and Duke of Northumberland Collections.



Fig. 5.2 (l) John Closterman, *Charles Seymour, sixth duke of Somerset and an unnamed attendant* (1692), oil on canvas, (r) John Riley and John Closterman, *Elizabeth, duchess of Somerset and Algernon Seymour, earl of Hertford* (c.1689), oil on canvas, Petworth House (NT) ©National Trust Images/Matthew Hollow.

With the duchess' bills only telling one side of the story, and the duke's account books lacking in detail, a degree of conjecture is necessary, but it appears that the duke and duchess each paid for their own portraits while those of other family members might be paid for by either of them, according to circumstance. For example, in 1712-14 the duchess paid Kneller for half-length and full-length portraits of herself, a half-length of her son Percy, and a three-quarter-length copy of her grandson Charles Wyndham.⁶⁵⁷ There is no recorded payment for Kneller's signed and dated 1713 portrait of the duke in Garter robes, nor his

⁶⁵⁷ PHA 288 fol. 52, PHA 290 fol. 18 & 115, PHA 291 fol. 53 .

contemporaneous family group of their daughter Catherine, her husband Sir William Wyndham and their two children, after which the duchess' copy of Charles Wyndham was made.⁶⁵⁸ The family group may have been commissioned by the Wyndhams, but was more likely paid for by the duke: Sir William was his favourite son-in-law, sharing his love of horseracing, and he preferred his company to that of his own son Lord Hertford. The duke would have almost certainly paid for his own portrait.

This parallel patronage of Riley, Closterman, Dahl, and Kneller shows that although the duchess was undoubtedly a significant patron in her own right, commissioning and paying for portraits from leading artists, her patronage was related to that of her husband. At different times, each followed the lead of the other, in patronising a particular artist, leaving another, or commissioning portraits as pendants to each other's. As with furnishings, the duchess usually took responsibility for her own purchases, and also contributed to joint or household commissions. Since he controlled the estate finances, the duke was naturally responsible for paying major bills relating to their properties, and of necessity took legal responsibility for contracts, but nevertheless the duchess also participated in these commissions. The duchess and duke were separate players, but on the same team.

⁶⁵⁸ Petworth House, Egremont Collection; Syon House, Duke of Northumberland Collection.

Gendered categories

This pattern of collaborative and parallel patronage also challenges stereotypes of gendered categories of art. We will now consider whether the Somersets' art patronage was associated with particular categories, and if so, which categories could be considered to be more masculine or feminine, or gender neutral, in late Stuart England. These did not necessarily accord with twenty-first century associations between gender and art, or indeed those associations formed later in the eighteenth century. It has been demonstrated above that the duke and duchess both commissioned upholstered furnishings, a category which in the present day carries more feminine associations, but in late Stuart England did not. Upholstery was one of the most expensive and eye-catching art forms, and royal and private state apartments usually culminated in a great state bed, often the most expensive item of furniture in the palace or house. Since the duchess took responsibility for furnishing and maintaining her personal apartments, her expenses reached from the greatest items, such as beds, to the smallest, encompassing mundane and 'unfeminine' matters such as locks and keys, and wainscot-painting, as well as more ornamental items, such as the pendulum clock bought from leading maker Thomas Tompion.⁶⁵⁹

Turning to jewellery, the Somersets' purchasing patterns partly confirm and partly confound traditional gender expectations. The duchess certainly took the lead, spending over £3,000 on jewellery between 1679 and 1715, although as this is only the total for those bills that survive, the actual expenditure may be considerably higher.⁶⁶⁰ This figure represents the

⁶⁵⁹ PHA 268 fol. 35; PHA 286 fol. 52; PHA 287 fol. 97; PHA 267 fol. 20.

⁶⁶⁰ Jewellers' bills can be found in PHA 258, 260, 261, 263, 264, 266, 267, 268, 274, 280, 282, 287 & 294.

highest expenditure by the couple on any artistic medium except architecture, though it should be noted that jewellery, along with silver, was a highly liquid asset, and functioned simultaneously as art and capital. The duchess patronised several jewellers concurrently, placing orders repeatedly with Christopher Rosse, Philip Mussard, Richard de Beauvoir, David Mesgret, and Jeanne Rigal, although Rigal, as discussed in Chapter Two, took the lion's share in volume and value. The duchess commissioned a wide range of items, including locketts, finger rings, earrings, seals, clasps, buckles, bracelets and mourning jewellery, most of which were made of gold and set with diamonds, rubies, emeralds and other brilliants. Some of these were completely new, while others were refashioned from existing jewellery. Inevitably, the highest prices were where the stones and other raw materials were newly purchased, but some of the most spectacular pieces were probably those refashioned from existing jewels, such as the manto clasp with 29 diamonds and three yellow brilliants set in gold and silver, made in January 1690 by David Mesgret, to whom she paid only £4 for the 'faschion' and metal.⁶⁶¹

As with portraiture, the duchess principally took responsibility for her personal items, but at times extended her patronage on behalf of other family members. She commissioned buckles and buttons for her eldest son and daughter, and sometimes purchased items for her husband, including fasteners, seals, locketts and, on one occasion, a gold George.⁶⁶² Convention dictated that the duke should wear less personal adornment than the duchess, but he clearly had a taste for jewellery. His admission to the Order of the Garter in 1684 necessitated the acquisition of its regalia, which he embraced with enthusiasm. The

⁶⁶¹ PHA 266 fol. 53.

⁶⁶² PHA 261 fol. 50, PHA 266 fols. 25 & 49, PHA 267 fols. 47 & 50.

contents of an iron chest at Northumberland House, inventoried after his death, included his collar of the Order of the Garter with 'an enamelled George hanging to it richly ornamented with diamonds' (visible in fig. 5.2), a diamond lesser George on a blue ribbon, and a small enamelled George, and no fewer than four garters with gold buckles, one of which was 'very richly ornamented with diamond & rubies'.⁶⁶³ Although the jewellery commissioned by the duchess could be interpreted as reinforcing conventional gender categorisation, the immense wealth embodied in her expenditure, her purchases for her husband, and his own fondness for jewellery, all subvert these category 'norms'.

One of the most contentiously gendered categories of late-seventeenth and eighteenth-century art is 'chinoiserie', interior furnishings built around the display of imported Asian porcelain and lacquer and their European imitations, as well as textiles and, later in the eighteenth century, wallpaper. Eighteenth-century chinoiserie's associations with feminine taste were deeply embedded in critical debates around luxury goods, imports and mercantilism. As Stacey Sloboda summarised, 'both the methods of acquiring Chinese objects and the objects themselves were figured as barbarous, dangerously mobile, and responsible for the decline of English economy and taste. Women, as a category, were positioned as agents of this demise.'⁶⁶⁴ Sloboda acknowledged that late-seventeenth-century chinoiserie was principally an elite taste, not yet associated with mercantile families, and that men as well as women could be avid collectors of porcelain. Nevertheless, contemporary popular culture tarred porcelain-collecting with a feminine brush, and

⁶⁶³ WSHC 1332/2/2/3/1.

⁶⁶⁴ S. Sloboda, *Chinoiserie: Commerce and Critical Ornament in Eighteenth-century Britain* (Manchester, 2014), pp. 108-9.

portrayed women as being in the grip of a ruinous acquisitive frenzy. Daniel Defoe's critique is regularly cited, in which he berated collectors for 'piling their China upon the Tops of Cabinets, Scrutores and every Chimney-Piece, to the tops of the Ceilings, and even setting up Shelves for their China Ware [...] till it became a Grievance in the Expence of it, and even injurious to their Families and Estates.'⁶⁶⁵ This colourful but highly partisan description is invariably reproduced without its polemical context. Defoe was an active campaigner against Asian imports which he believed were draining England of bullion, and were consequently 'Grievous to our Trade and Ruining to our Manufacturies and the Poor'.⁶⁶⁶

As the association between women and porcelain persists in many guidebooks and some scholarly publications, it should be emphasised that 'china mania' was not a gendered phenomenon among the three couples surveyed in this thesis. The duchess of Somerset may have had the edge over the duke in the quantity of porcelain she purchased, but he too collected and displayed porcelain and lacquer in his private apartments as well as the most prestigious public rooms at Petworth. As recounted in Chapter Two, it was the earl, rather than the countess of Exeter who was the more enthusiastic purchaser of porcelain, using it to display his connoisseurship and connections. And while Devonshire restricted himself to a few large, choice pieces of porcelain, besides his superlative collection of delftware, there is no evidence to indicate that his duchess had any involvement in its acquisition. Although it is the case that in these three households, oriental furnishings were concentrated in the more private areas — bedchambers, dressing rooms and closets — these intimate spaces did not represent the most feminine areas, but the most prestigious, where only the highly

⁶⁶⁵ D. Defoe, *Curious and diverting journies* (London, 1734), p. 101.

⁶⁶⁶ Defoe, *Advantages of Peace of Commerce*, p.18. See also G. Starr, 'Defoe and China', *Eighteenth-Century Studies* 43:4 (2010), pp. 435-54.

privileged were granted access. Chinoiserie was associated with wealth and status, not gender.

There is considerably less evidence, however, that these aristocratic women were significant patrons of subject paintings and sculpture, categories that were later revered as ‘fine art’ and laden with heavy moral and intellectual baggage. The hierarchies of ornamental vs subject paintings, introduced through translations of French and Italian art theories, had yet to become fully established, since there was still very little production and consumption of the latter in late-seventeenth-century England.⁶⁶⁷ James Stourton and Simon Sebag-Montefiore’s concession that the countess of Exeter shared her husband’s passion for paintings is a rare mention of a woman in their survey of nearly five centuries of collecting, though this may speak more of the authors’ assumptions than actuality.⁶⁶⁸ It is difficult to appraise the role that countess Anne played in amassing the couple’s immense and important collection of contemporary Italian paintings. The lion’s share was acquired in 1683-4 when the earl travelled to Italy without his wife. However, as demonstrated in Chapter Two, considerably more paintings were acquired on the Exeters’ first tour, when the countess was present, than has previously been thought. At the least, she was probably responsible for commissioning the charming portrait of her young son, *Lord Burghley pulling Fortune by the hair* (fig. 3.9) from Pietro Liberi, along with two other overdoors and an overmantel painting, all destined for her dressing room.⁶⁶⁹ The figure of Fortune may be modelled on the countess herself. It has been suggested that these were commissioned in

⁶⁶⁷ For example, Aglionby, *Painting Illustrated in three dialogues*.

⁶⁶⁸ Stourton and Sebag-Montefiore, *British as Art Collectors*, p. 87.

⁶⁶⁹ BA EX 51/18. Burghley Collection PIC248. The others are *Fortune embracing Prudence* PIC586, *Jupiter and Juno* PIC502 and *Logic between Vice and Virtue* PIC139 (the overmantel). Exeter purchased more paintings from Liberi in 1684 but only one, ‘magdalen etc.’, is identified by name in Tanner’s accounts, BA EX 51/19.

1684, but Lord Burghley did not accompany his father on the second tour, and these were among the overdoor and overmantel spaces for which steward/upholsterer Thomas Stretch had forwarded the dimensions to the countess in March 1681.⁶⁷⁰ This also indicates that the paintings were considered to be part of the overall decorative scheme, rather than weighty subjects to be revered in a gallery setting.

Countess Anne did, however, inherit a great many paintings from her mother, Elizabeth, countess dowager of Devonshire, that certainly would not have been classified as ornamental. Included in her bequest, discussed at greater length on pages 318-20, were 68 oil paintings, 32 watercolours, four pastel drawings and four enamel miniatures. Of the oils, half were portraits, mostly of family, while the other half were subject pictures, predominantly of religious subjects with a few mythological scenes and landscapes, a still life, and the interior of a Dutch church.⁶⁷¹ Many were after old masters: four after Correggio, and others after Raphael, Palma Vecchio, Andrea del Sarto, Titian, Tintoretto, Parmigiano, and Jacopo Bassano. Some were listed as by, rather than after, the artists in question, and the survival of Bassano's *Agony in the Garden* in the collection at Burghley, confirms that in this instance at least the attribution was correct.⁶⁷² Other oils included *Animals in a Rocky Landscape*, painted in 1618 by the Flemish Rolandt Savery, two paintings on copper by Cornelis van Poelenburgh, and two copies after Rottenhammer (probably Hans), one of *Diana and her Nymphs*, the other an allegory of Charity. Although most of the watercolours were miniature family portraits, there were also copies of Titian's *Venus and*

⁶⁷⁰ Brigstocke and Somerville, *Italian Paintings*, p. 100; BA EX 51/8/15 & 16.

⁶⁷¹ BA EX 41/82.

⁶⁷² Burghley Collection PIC173.

Adonis by Peter Oliver and Correggio's *Education of Cupid* by John Hoskins, both of which had previously been in the collection of Charles I.⁶⁷³ This was substantial collection of subject pictures that would have distinguished any seventeenth-century aristocrat and was highly unusual for a woman.⁶⁷⁴ Prior to the bequest, her collection is undocumented, and some items may have come from her natal family, the Cecils of Hatfield House, but others were certainly acquired by the countess herself (the miniatures were sold from the royal collection in 1651), and she is undoubtedly a subject worthy of further research.⁶⁷⁵

The duchess of Somerset did not purchase sculpture, and apart from portraits, the only easel painting she is known to have acquired was a still life by Peter Gerritsz. van Roestraten.⁶⁷⁶ She also purchased pictures from India merchants (presumably Chinese or Japanese prints or watercolours), some of which may have been the '17 India pictures in black frames' hanging in the South Gallery at Petworth.⁶⁷⁷ The duke, however, bought many subject paintings and sculptures. He purchased originals and copies after old masters, including Holbein, Palma Vecchio and Titian, as well as more recent artists such as Dobson.⁶⁷⁸ His greatest triumph was the acquisition of Claude Lorrain's *A River Landscape with Jacob and Laban and his Daughters*, bought at auction for £200 in May 1686.⁶⁷⁹ Auctions were the duke's chief hunting ground; another was the informal marketplace that sprang up at Newmarket during the race season but there is no indication that the duchess

⁶⁷³ Burghley Collection MIN0001 & MIN0002.

⁶⁷⁴ Future research may of course unearth other significant female collectors in this field.

⁶⁷⁵ A. Somers-Cocks, 'Introduction' in [Burghley House], *The Countess's Gems*, (Rugby, 1985), pp. 7-11.

⁶⁷⁶ PHA 258 fol. 20.

⁶⁷⁷ PHA 274 fol. 6; PHA 282 fols. 38 & 63; PHA 6263.

⁶⁷⁸ PHA 321.

⁶⁷⁹ *A catalogue of divers Excellent Italian pictures of the Most Eminent Masters* (London, 1686), lot. 158.

participated in either of these activities.⁶⁸⁰ The duke also acquired paintings through artists who doubled their services as agents or dealers. The duchess patronised some of the most active figures in this field, including Frederick Sonnius, Richard Gibson and John Closterman, but did not use them as dealers.⁶⁸¹ And while the duke purchased several large pieces of antique and Renaissance sculpture, including '8 Roman heads' in 1694-5, a large marble statue for £43 in 1724 (possibly one of the two Roman statues that still stand in their niches in the Marble Hall at Petworth) and Lord Arundel's copy of Michelangelo's *pieta* for a hefty £108, there is no suggestion that the duchess was involved.⁶⁸² Nor are there any bills among her papers relating to independent purchases of sculpture.

The question of gendered categories remains a vexed one. On one hand, the duchess of Somerset (and quite possibly the countess of Exeter) took responsibility for the entire contents and maintenance of her personal apartments, and all clothing, jewels, and portraits relating to her own person. She also commissioned items for other family members, and both Somerset and Exeter were involved in commissions that related to the public areas of the house, from garden furniture to mural painting. Equally, their husbands were keenly involved in commissioning and collecting decorative arts such as upholstery and porcelain. There is no evidence to assign a gender bias to any of these categories.

However, when it came to subject paintings and sculpture, these categories did indeed appear to be largely a masculine preserve, with the significant exception of Elizabeth, countess dowager of Devonshire. It suggests that a link between gender and the privileging of certain categories of the arts may have already existed in the late-seventeenth century. It

⁶⁸⁰ PHA 321 & 243.

⁶⁸¹ PHA 265 fol. 53; PHA 287 fol. 63.

⁶⁸² Rowell, *Petworth*, p. 159 n. 58.

is not clear, however, whether the intellectual credentials of subject paintings and sculpture contributed to their masculinisation, or the other way round – a subject that would be worthy of much more detailed study than there is scope for here.

Gender and archives

This chapter has already touched on the role that archives can play in revealing and eliding women's patronage. The duchess of Somerset's papers in the Petworth House archives are a rich resource, yet have hardly been consulted, seemingly because most historians have assumed that the duke was the principal patron. Yet the survival of such a comprehensive archive of a woman's papers is highly unusual, and no such archive exists for Anne, countess of Exeter, Mary, duchess of Devonshire, or Charlotte, duchess of Somerset (second wife of the sixth duke). It is much more difficult to know the extent of their activities, simply because their papers have not survived. The link between archives and power, the control of people through the control of knowledge, has been forcefully described by Jacques Derrida, and the subordinate position of women has been perpetuated through patriarchal archival practices that have created barriers to the preservation of, and access to, women's papers.⁶⁸³

Many of the historic and contemporary archival practices identified by James Daybell as affecting early modern women can be recognised in the archives (or lack thereof) of the

⁶⁸³ J. Derrida, trans. E. Prenowitz, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (Chicago and London, 1996).

women in this thesis.⁶⁸⁴ Firstly, the lack of a single identifier: since women changed their name at marriage, they may have been known by several different names across their lifetime, and for the nobility this is compounded by changing titles.⁶⁸⁵ This is particularly the case for the duchess of Somerset, who bore four surnames and titles during her lifetime. Even in the Petworth archives, the first two years of her papers are filed under 'Countess of Ogle', and are not discoverable through an online search for 'Somerset'; only their numbering, consecutive with the 'Duchess of Somerset's' papers, brings them to light.⁶⁸⁶ A second issue is that women's papers have simply not been preserved, deemed less important than those relating to (men's) political matters or estate management. None of Charlotte Finch's papers have survived at Petworth, despite the fact that she was its chatelaine for twenty-two years, and dowager duchess of Somerset for a further twenty-five. Nor have the countess of Exeter's papers survived at Burghley, and only a fraction of the correspondence of Mary, duchess of Devonshire, in the Devonshire Collections at Chatsworth.⁶⁸⁷ Thirdly, while men's papers are more usually kept with their family's archive, and therefore more easily located, women's may be scattered across the different families to which they 'belonged'. Papers relating to Elizabeth, duchess of Somerset are split across the Somerset and Northumberland archives, as well as among the papers of the Cavendish family, of which she was a member for less than two years.⁶⁸⁸

⁶⁸⁴ Daybell, 'Gender, politics and archives', pp. 25-46 and K. McLean-Flander and J. Daybell 'New directions in early modern women's letters: WEMLO's challenges and possibilities' in J. Daybell and A. Gordon, *Women and Epistolary Agency in Early Modern Culture, 1450-1690* (London, 2016), pp. 223-38.

⁶⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 230.

⁶⁸⁶ PHA 258 & 259.

⁶⁸⁷ DCC CS1/29 & 117. However, extensive correspondence survives of Rachel Russell, second duchess of Devonshire, and her mother, also Rachel Russell.

⁶⁸⁸ Nottingham University Library PW1.

Moving from documentary to material sources, the obstacles are even greater. Most of the artworks that these women commissioned or collected have subsequently been dispersed from their family collections. Those items they purchased with their own money were not entailed to the estate, and were easier to dispose of as fashions changed or economic necessity dictated. As women moved into and out of families, so did their possessions. The contents of duchess Charlotte's private apartments (mostly acquired by duchess Elizabeth) left with her after she was widowed.⁶⁸⁹ The countess of Exeter's goods were put up for public auction to pay her debts after her death. It was a large sale, lasting two days with a printed catalogue, of which there is unfortunately no surviving copy, but a payment to the porters shows that a bed was among the goods sold.⁶⁹⁰ Men's chattels, however, were usually paid for from estate income, and were consequently entailed, so are much more likely to remain in the family property to the present day. When the fifth earl of Exeter died, heavily in debt, his collections were bequeathed with the house, and instead some of the estate lands had to be sold by special act of Parliament to pay his creditors.⁶⁹¹ Some of the furniture and paintings commissioned by women did slip through the net, particularly portraits, which had a low resale value, and some of the furniture that was too good to be allowed to leave.⁶⁹² Compared to men, however, whose purchases were far more likely to be handed down through the generations, women's purchases were often dispersed and forgotten.

⁶⁸⁹ WSHC 1332/1/3/2.

⁶⁹⁰ TNA PROB 5/2860.

⁶⁹¹ TNA PROB/11/460/116; Parliamentary Archives HL/PO/JO/10/6/32/1788 & HL/PO/PB/1/1708/7An43.

⁶⁹² The magnificent marquetry writing table in the countess of Exeter's closet, which matched the inlaid floor, can be placed in this category. Burghley Collection FUR0324f.

All of this means that historians of women's patronage must, as Natalie Zemon Davies recommended, read against the grain in order to fill the silences in the archives.⁶⁹³ Lydia Hamlett's reading of the Laguerre murals at Petworth, in which she supplements the scant archival material with iconographical interpretation, is one fruitful approach. Another is to look closer, and push harder, at those written sources that do survive. Besides inventories, the principal sources for the art patronage of the fifth earl and countess of Exeter are the account ledgers kept by the earl's banker, Sir Francis Child, and the correspondence and notebooks of the Exeters' steward, Culpepper Tanner.⁶⁹⁴ The account is in the earl's name, and Tanner makes only passing references to the countess. But closer looking yields new information that can be pieced together to build a picture of the countess' contribution. Unlike many historic houses, the interpretation at Burghley and associated exhibitions already emphasise the co-patronage of the earl and countess.⁶⁹⁵ The new findings elaborated on below add more depth and detail to our knowledge of Lady Exeter's patronage. Incidentally, they also bring to light new information about the career of Francis Lapiere, one of the leading upholsterers of late Stuart England which, quite separately from gender history, demonstrates the value of reconsidering women's contributions.

A close reading of Tanner's correspondence shows that the countess was in charge of the upholstery at Burghley, at least in the early years. During the Exeters' continental tour of 1679-81, the countess bought textiles in Italy while remotely overseeing the furnishing of the new rooms at Burghley. A letter from upholsterer Thomas Stretch informed Tanner in

⁶⁹³ N.Z. Davis, 'Silences and gaps: what can the historian do with them?' *Fortid* 2:11 (2011), pp. 54-5.

⁶⁹⁴ BA EX 51/18 & 603/18; NatWest CH 194/3-10; BA EX 51/8-10,

⁶⁹⁵ *Burghley* (Peterborough, 2011), p. 16; Impey, *Four Centuries of Decorative Arts*, pp. 32-47.

Milan, '*as my Lady hath commanded me*, accordingly I have taken the measheres of the roomes you sent to me' [emphasis added], and went on to describe the dimensions for the hangings and the number of chairs required to furnish the drawing room, dressing room and ante room at Burghley.⁶⁹⁶ As described in Chapter Three, the Exeters intended to acquire the fabric in Italy where they could source the highest quality textiles at better prices than in London. Stretch also corresponded with the countess (through Tanner) about the upholstery she was directing from overseas, asking for guidance on the amount of stuffing he should use in the dining room Turkey work chairs, and consulting her about alterations to a bed.⁶⁹⁷

Once back in England, the countess continued to take an active role in furnishing her own apartments and the public rooms at Burghley. Although she maintained her own personal accounts, she was also responsible for directing commissions that were paid for from the earl's bank account, and which were therefore likely to be for the common areas of the house, rather than her personal apartments. Scrutinising the Child's ledgers, it is possible to see annotations in a second hand of 'lady' and 'per ladys order' against certain entries, indicating that the payments were made by direction or authorisation of the countess (fig. 5.3). These annotated payments included £8 15s 'Paid Mr Johnson for a Cabinet per Ladyes order' in September 1682, and a further payment of £20 10s to Mr Johnson in December 1683.⁶⁹⁸ This was Gerrit Jensen, to whom several surviving pieces of furniture at Burghley can be attributed on stylistic grounds.⁶⁹⁹ Jensen was probably responsible for the walnut

⁶⁹⁶ BA EX 51/8/4.

⁶⁹⁷ BA EX 51/8/4 & 13.

⁶⁹⁸ NatWest CH 194/6 fol. 361r. & CH 194/7 [fol. no. illegible].

⁶⁹⁹ Burghley Collection FUR0324f & FUR0324b.

marquetry floor and matching writing table in the countess' closet that are described in the 1688 inventory as '1 Inlaid walnut Tree writing Table with Silver Sand box & Standish in itt, Inlayd as the floore is'.⁷⁰⁰ The spectacular appearance of the original but impractical floor, remade into a table in the eighteenth century, can be reconstructed by comparing its faded colours with the still-bright hues of the matching table (figs. 5.4 and 5.5). The bill for the floor has not survived, although the measurer who assessed the work referred to the 'London joiner' who laid it.⁷⁰¹ Reading between the lines, it is highly likely that it was the countess who directed the commission, given that it was for her most personal room and she was known to patronise Jensen for other furniture at Burghley.

9	Laide that Hooves for a Clock	1	5
20	Laide in La Pirzi	1	18
22	Laide of Laide	1	140
29	Laide m. Clare	1	50
1 st	Laide of m. Parren	1	12
12	Laide of Laides order	1	40
14	Laide of Tho: Martinfield	1	81 8
14	Laide m. Daniell Eckman	1	14
15	Laide m. Fetter on acct	1	123
15	Laide m. Vanderbank	1	100
	Laide m. Montre of Laides order	1	10

Fig. 5.3 Detail of NatWest CH194/7 fol. 73r. © NatWest

⁷⁰⁰ BA EX 51/18.

⁷⁰¹ BA EX 15B/29. I am grateful to Jon Culverhouse and Adam Bowett for discussing this furniture with me.



Fig. 5.4 Attributed to Gerrit Jensen, walnut and marquetry floor, later made into a table (1679, altered eighteenth century), Burghley House.



Fig. 5.5 Attributed to Gerrit Jensen, walnut and marquetry writing table (c. 1679-88), Burghley House.

The countess continued to direct the upholsterers' work at Burghley while the earl was absent in Italy 1683-4 on a picture-buying spree. Since the first phase of the rebuilding was now complete, there was much work to be done to complete the interiors, and the Child's ledgers record a host of payments to upholsterers, mercers and fringe-makers. It was at this time that the countess first brought upholsterer Francis Lapiere to Burghley. Lapiere would later become one of the leading upholsterers of late Stuart England, working regularly for the crown and other aristocratic clients (including Devonshire), but the payment to him on 20 August 1683, annotated 'lady', is the earliest known payment to Lapiere by any patron.⁷⁰² He appears first as 'La Pierzi', then 'Mr Rupier upholsterer', and then finally 'Mr Lapiere Upholsterer', as though the clerk were having trouble getting to grips with his name.⁷⁰³ Thereafter, Lapiere became the Exeters' principal upholsterer. He received payments on nine occasions totalling the huge sum of £909, as well as bonds for £361 from the countess, dated April 1703, of which £300 was still unpaid at his death in 1715.⁷⁰⁴

Lapiere was French, and brought to Burghley his knowledge of the latest French upholstery design. It is not known how he first came to the countess' attention, perhaps through the female patronage networks discussed below. Adelina Modesti found that elite female patrons of seventeenth-century Italy were 'more avant-garde and fashionable in their tastes' than men, and that their gender 'may have enabled them to take greater licence and

⁷⁰² NatWest CH 194/7 fol.73r; See G. Beard and A. Westman, 'A French Upholsterer in England: Francis Lapiere, 1653-1714', *Burlington Magazine* 135:1085 (August 1993), pp. 515-524, for a detailed account of Lapiere's career. However, they attribute the first payment to the earl, rather than the countess.

⁷⁰³ NatWest CH 194/7 76r., 178r. & 179r.

⁷⁰⁴ NatWest CH 194/7 & 10. Lapiere was paid £61 by the countess' executors in 1707, TNA PROB 5/2860. Beard and Westman, 'A French Upholsterer in England', p. 523.

push boundaries'.⁷⁰⁵ The furniture that Lapiere made for Burghley was certainly at the cutting edge of fashion. Although the payments do not identify which pieces he made, the 1688 inventory gives some indication. Three of the beds, Lord Exeter's, Lady Exeter's, and the 'Best Bedd', featured cornices, the earl's being Japanned with velvet cups, and the other two embroidered.⁷⁰⁶ Such cornices were a new arrival, replacing the flat valances of the rectilinear French box beds that had dominated fashion for two decades. Annabel Westman suggested that the Exeters would have seen this new fashion during their travels, introducing it to Burghley on their return.⁷⁰⁷ Lapiere himself must have played an important part in creating the cornices, since the Exeters were unlikely to have been able to recall sufficient detail of what they had seen for it to be replicated.

Indirect evidence also suggests that the countess was involved in commissioning some of the most important items of furniture in the public rooms at Burghley. This included the 'Turin' bed made with the valuable polychrome velvet bought in Italy, possibly by the countess, as described in Chapter Three. Geoffrey Beard attributed the bed to Lapiere on grounds of style, while its sumptuous fringing has been attributed by Annabel Westman to Peter Dufresnoy. A lone Frenchman in a trade dominated by the English, Dufresnoy worked regularly with Lapiere, who probably introduced him to the Exeters. Dufresnoy received his first payment from the Exeters in January 1686, and in total they spent the enormous sum of £1,016 with him.⁷⁰⁸ He supplied fringing for the countess' own furnishings besides the public rooms, and was probably responsible for the rich silk fringe of friar's knots on her

⁷⁰⁵ Modesti, *Women's Patronage and Gendered Cultural Networks*, p. xix.

⁷⁰⁶ BA EX 51/18.

⁷⁰⁷ Westman, *Fringe Frog & Tassel*, p. 55.

⁷⁰⁸ NatWest CH 194/7 fols. 214r. & 10.

blue damask bed, a similar fringe in blue, white and red on the Mazarin velvet hangings and chairs in the drawing room, and the hair-colour, crimson and black tufted fringe edging the dining room hangings.⁷⁰⁹ These fringes were at the cutting edge of fashion and luxuriousness.

The countess was therefore directly responsible for bringing Lapiere to Burghley, and indirectly Dufresnoy, who together created some of the most up-to-date upholstered furniture in 1680s England. She had directed the upholsterer's work at Burghley even from abroad, taken the lead in procuring textiles, and directed payments during her husband's absence and after his return. There is every likelihood that she continued to take an active part in commissioning the furnishings in the public rooms at Burghley throughout the 1680s, either taking the lead, or in collaboration with the earl. As we have seen with the role of agents, household staff and wider connections in Chapter Four, patronage is about more than just paying the bills; it also involves the practical management of the commission, and the exercise of creative vision. Accounts often reveal the first, correspondence may demonstrate the second, but the third leaves fewer documentary traces, since it is often enacted verbally. In the same way that family, friends and 'criticks' discussed each other's projects, husbands and wives surely discussed their own domestic commissions. Rather than starting from the point of attributing particular items to an individual, it may be more helpful to assume that conjugal patronage was fundamentally collaborative, unless proven otherwise.

⁷⁰⁹ BA EX 51/8. The fringe from the countess' bed is still at Burghley and has been attributed to Dufresnoy by Westman on the grounds of its quality. Westman, *Fringe Frog & Tassel*, p. 60.

Women's patronage networks

Chapter Four demonstrated how groups of artists and craftsmen, such as architect William Talman and his team, passed from patron to patron through networks of kinship, neighbourhood and friendship. These networks included men and women, but there are also instances in which artists and craftsmen appear to have passed through specifically female networks. It is suggested here that portrait painter Willem Wissing and cabinet-maker Gerrit Jensen passed from patron to patron through female connections of kinship and friendship; there may be other instances yet to be uncovered. Willem Wissing is a relatively unstudied painter, but an examination of his brief but flourishing career as a leading society portrait painter suggests that he was particularly favoured by women.⁷¹⁰ Besides his flattering and much-copied portraits of Princesses Mary and Anne, he was in demand as a painter of children, as well as aristocratic ladies, who were charmed by his 'good manners and complaisance' as well as his knack of capturing a 'beautiful likeness'.⁷¹¹ Bainbrigg Buckeridge, writing some years after Wissing's death, recounted his practice of taking his sitters by the hand and dancing them around the room in order to impart a rosy glow to their complexion which, combined with his own smouldering good looks, no doubt endeared him to his female sitters (fig. 5.6).⁷¹² These ladies were not merely his sitters; they were often also his patrons, and the flow of Wissing's patronage can be traced from family to family through the female line.

⁷¹⁰ The most comprehensive account of Wissing's career is T. Barber, 'Wissing, Willem [William] (1656–1687), portrait painter', *ODNB* (2004) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29798> [Accessed 29 Sep 2020]. I am grateful to Tabitha Barber for sharing her extensive files on Wissing with me.

⁷¹¹ [B. Buckeridge], 'An essay towards an English school of painters', in R. de Piles, *The Art of Painting and the Lives of the Painters* (London, 1706), p. 477.

⁷¹² *Ibid.*



Fig. 5.6 John Smith after Willem Wissing, *Self-portrait of Willem Wissing* (1687), mezzotint on paper, National Portrait Gallery, London.

The lynchpin of the circle of Wissing's patrons was the Butler family, earls of Ossory and dukes of Ormonde, who recur repeatedly among his sitters. They may have been responsible for introducing Wissing to the duchess of Somerset, by whom he was paid £52 in December 1686 for three half-length pictures.⁷¹³ One was priced at £20, the others at £16 each, the variation suggesting an original and two copies. There are several half-lengths by Wissing in the Egremont and Duke of Northumberland collections but the most likely candidates are *A Lady in Red and Grey*, signed and probably an original portrait of the duchess of Somerset; *Anne Montagu, Countess of Suffolk*; and the so-called *Emilie Nassau, Countess of Ossory*, a copy after an original now in the Royal Collection (fig. 5.7).⁷¹⁴ The subject of the last is unlikely to be countess Aemelia, who would have been aged around fifty when the portrait was painted, whereas the portrait shows a much younger sitter. It is more likely to be Mary Somerset, daughter of the first duke of Beaufort, who in August 1685 married James Butler, earl of Ossory and future second duke of Ormonde, as his second wife. She was the duchess of Somerset's cousin on her mother's side, and one of the Petworth Beauties; the confusion of one countess of Ossory for another would not only account for the implausible identification of the portrait as a fifty-year-old woman, but would also account for its presence at Petworth. The duchess of Somerset was also friendly with other Butler women. In correspondence with Mary Butler, duchess of Devonshire, she protested that, 'I can with great truth say you have not [...] one that values your friendship more than I doe', and in 1702 Somerset sent a portrait of Elizabeth Butler, countess of Derby, to Mrs Richardson (probably the wife of painter Jonathan Richardson), to have a copy taken.⁷¹⁵

⁷¹³ PHA 652.

⁷¹⁴ All Egremont Collection, Petworth.

⁷¹⁵ DCC CS1/117/0; PHA 277 fol. 20.



Fig. 5.7 Willem Wissing, Called *Aemelia Nassau, Countess of Ossory* (c. 1685), oil on canvas, Royal Collection Trust. Identified here as Mary Somerset, countess of Ossory.

The Butlers and several other families who patronised Wissing were connected through women's kinship and friendship networks. Mary Butler, daughter of James, first duke of Ormonde married into the Cavendish family, and several portraits of Mary at Chatsworth and Hardwick may have been painted around 1684, when her husband succeeded to his

title as fourth earl of Devonshire.⁷¹⁶ Her mother-in-law, Elizabeth, countess dowager of Devonshire owned a large group portrait by Wissing of all seven of her Cavendish and Cecil grandsons. It has long since been lost, but when it passed to the countess of Exeter in 1690 as part of her mother's legacy (listed in the Devonshire Schedule as 'A picture of the Children of both ffamilies by Wissing'), it prompted Matthew Prior, then resident at Burghley, to write a eulogistic poem praising the beauty of the mother and grandmother, 'renew'd and stamp'd in all your race'.⁷¹⁷ He painted the two heirs, William Cavendish and John Cecil, in classical dress accompanied by hunting dogs (fig. 5.8), and the younger Cecil boys, William and Charles, with a spaniel, parrot and sheep.⁷¹⁸ A payment of £20 from Exeter to 'Mr Wisting' in February 1686 may relate to these portraits, which were engraved the same year by John Smith.⁷¹⁹ Wissing may also have been recommended to the Exeters by the neighbouring Brownlow family of Belton House, of whom Wissing painted many of the women and children, including a half-length portrait of young Elizabeth Brownlow and a full-length of her mother Lady Alice, both in 1685, as well as Alice's sister-in-law Dorothy Brownlow (née Mason), and her own sisters.⁷²⁰ Aside from the £20 from Lord Exeter, there are no records of who commissioned or paid for these paintings, and sitters did not necessarily pay for their own portraits. However, as we have seen, the duchess of Somerset principally commissioned portraits of herself and her children, and it is not unlikely that this was common practice in other marriages. The sitters in the portraits by Wissing in the

⁷¹⁶ Hardwick Hall, NT 1129209 and NT 1129228; DCC PA361.

⁷¹⁷ BA EX 41/82. 'To The Right Honourable The Countess Dowager Of Devonshire, On A Piece Of Wiessen's; whereon were all her grandsons painted', in M. Prior, *A new collection of poems on several occasions* (London, 1725), pp. 78-81.

⁷¹⁸ DCC PA358; Burghley Collection PIC514 & PIC838.

⁷¹⁹ NPG D30939.

⁷²⁰ NatWest CH 194/7 fol. 214r. Belton House, NT 436035, 436046, 436031 & 436027 and Grimsthorpe Castle, private collection.

Cavendish, Cecil and Brownlow families were all women and children, and the connections between the families were principally through the female line, suggesting that female networks may have been at play in his patronage by these interconnected families.



Fig. 5.8 Willem Wissing, *John, Lord Burghley* (c. 1685), oil on canvas, Burghley Collection.

In a similar manner, cabinet-maker Gerrit Jensen appears to have been recommended from woman to woman. Jensen was the leading cabinet-maker working in late-seventeenth-century England, and the duchess of Somerset was a major patron. Jensen's bills to the duchess, previously unstudied, show that she purchased many items of furniture from Jensen between 1681 and 1690, some of which were highly sophisticated and expensive.⁷²¹ They included a table, stands and glass in marquetry, and another set in 'right Japan' (probably made from dismantled Japanese lacquer screens), at £30 per set, as well as a beautiful and ingenious portable writing table with her cipher and coronet incorporated into the marquetry (fig. 5.9).⁷²² It is likely that the duchess was responsible for introducing Jensen to her husband, the duke, who in December 1683 paid Jensen £100 in part of a substantial bill of £321 3s 10d 'for Cabinetts & glasses sold into the Dutchesses Lodging'.⁷²³



Fig. 5.9 Gerrit Jensen, folding writing table (1688), oak with walnut and holly marquetry, Egremont Collection, Petworth. Image: Adam Bowett.

⁷²¹ Jensen's bills to the duchess are at PHA 259 fol. 53, PHA 266 fols. 32, 51 & 60, and PHA 652. I am grateful to Adam Bowett for our discussions concerning these bills.

⁷²² PHA 265 fols. 51 & 60. For further details of the duchess' patronage of Jensen, see Lim, 'The furniture patronage of Elizabeth Seymour', pp. 5-9.

⁷²³ PHA 341.

The lineage of female patronage of Jensen can be traced to the duchess of Somerset from Queen Catherine of Braganza via her grandmother, Elizabeth, countess of Northumberland. It was Queen Catherine who was Jensen's first royal patron, employing him as her cabinet-maker by 1674, as part of the circle of Catholic artisans around her (Jensen was Catholic, of Dutch origin).⁷²⁴ Lady Northumberland was on cordial terms with the queen, from whom she received regular visits between 1675 and 1678. She too patronised Jensen as early as 1673/4, and continued to commission furniture from him regularly until her death three decades later.⁷²⁵ The countess almost certainly directed her granddaughter to patronise Jensen. The young Elizabeth was just fourteen, recently widowed and living under her grandmother's guardianship, when she made her first purchase from the cabinet-maker in March 1681, of a strongbox, bookcase and other goods.⁷²⁶ Once the connection had been made, she continued to patronise him into her adulthood and marriage to the duke of Somerset. Art patronage was evidently a topic of common interest among women's kinship and friendship networks, just as it was with all-male and mixed company.

A family tradition of female patronage

Elizabeth Percy, née Howard, countess dowager of Northumberland, provided more than simply introductions to her granddaughter; she also acted as a model of patronage for her to emulate. Studies of Italian renaissance women patrons show that many were continuing

⁷²⁴ E. Gregory, 'Catherine of Braganza's relationship with her Catholic household' in V. Schutte and E. Paraque (eds.), *Forgotten queens in medieval and early modern Europe* (London: Routledge, 2018), p. 136; A. Lim, 'New Information About the Life and Work of Gerrit Jensen (1667-1715)', *Furniture History Society Newsletter* 221 (February 2021), pp. 23-5.

⁷²⁵ Alnwick Castle, Sy.U.I.20.

⁷²⁶ PHA 259 fol. 53.

a tradition of female patronage set by the preceding generations of their family.⁷²⁷ This was also the case for the duchess of Somerset and countess of Exeter. The countess dowager of Northumberland's will indicates that she owned many family portraits, jewels, silver plate, furnishings and porcelain, some of which were by leading artists, or of high intrinsic value.⁷²⁸ Items singled out for bequest included oil portraits by Anthony Van Dyck (which in part inspired the Petworth Beauties), a miniature by John Hoskins and Jean Petitot, 'a great Diamond Ring sett round with small diamonds', and a bed with black mohair hangings. Some of these items dated back to her youth at the pre-Restoration court, but the Japan room in her house on St James' Street, described in Chapter One, shows that she kept abreast of fashion and continued to commission new furnishings well into old age. The countess was close to her granddaughter, exchanging regular visits, acting as godmother to her son Percy (to whom she bequeathed her house), and leaving her a large part of her estate. She was a formidable figure, about whom relatively little is known, and would undoubtedly reward further research.⁷²⁹

Inventories and surviving pieces also indicate that the women of the Percy family maintained a tradition of commissioning their own personal silver plate, marked with their arms and cipher. James Rothwell has described the silver patronage of three generations of Percy women.⁷³⁰ He noted that Dorothy Percy, née Devereux, wife of the ninth earl of Northumberland, possessed her own collection of silver that was unusually inventoried separately from that of her husband. Of the plate mentioned in countess Elizabeth's will,

⁷²⁷ D. Wilkins, 'Introduction: Recognizing new patrons, posing new questions,' in S. Reiss and D. Wilkins, *Beyond Isabella: Secular Women Patrons of Art in Renaissance Italy* (Kirkville, MO, 2001), pp. 2-3.

⁷²⁸ TNA PROB 11/481/149.

⁷²⁹ James Rothwell is preparing an article on the tenth earl and countess of Northumberland's silver patronage.

⁷³⁰ Rothwell, 'Taste Contained and Liberated', pp. 26-7.

two pieces survive at Petworth, both marked with her arms in a widow's lozenge. Her granddaughter Elizabeth Somerset engraved the Percy arms and her cipher and coronet on the silver she commissioned, sometimes breaking with convention to do so. In 1681, shortly after the death of her first husband, Lord Ogle, she commissioned several items of silverware marked with a coronet and arms within a knot. A surviving pair of casters and footed salvers show that the arms engraved were not the Ogle arms, as they should have been, but the Percy arms, and nor were they contained within a widow's lozenge, as custom dictated. Thirty years later, the duchess of Somerset again defied convention by engraving the plate she received as a perquisite as Groom of the Stole not with the Queen's arms, as was required, but with her own arms. The inventory of plate at Northumberland House, drawn up after the sixth duke's death, lists many items engraved with the duchess' cipher and coronet.⁷³¹ This tradition of commissioning and engraving silver on her own account followed in the footsteps of her grandmother and great-grandmother. The duchess of Somerset's granddaughter, yet another Elizabeth Percy, first duchess of Northumberland, would also become an important art patron and collector.⁷³² Successive generations of Percy women continued the tradition of patronage.

The countess of Exeter grew up steeped in an environment of female art patronage. Her grandmother Christian, née Bruce, second countess of Devonshire, was another formidable and cultured woman, who was widowed young and managed the Cavendish estates during her eldest son's minority. Later in life, Christian's household at Roehampton was described by an Italian visitor as 'a magnificent house in the style of something more than a great

⁷³¹ WSHC 1332/1/2/2/3.

⁷³² E. Rogers, 'Women's Curiosity and Collecting, 1680-1820', PhD thesis, University of Hull (2020).

princess', and after her death her bequests to her grandson the fourth earl included rich hangings and tapestries.⁷³³ Christian's daughter-in-law Elizabeth, née Cecil (1620-1689), third countess of Devonshire and mother of Anne Exeter, was an important collector about whom there is, as yet remarkably little scholarship. Besides her collection of paintings, described above, she amassed an important collection of jewels, furnishings and objects of vertu. These two women set the pattern that would be continued by the countess of Exeter.

Besides setting a precedent for her daughter's art collecting, countess Elizabeth also made a significant material contribution to it when, after her death on 19 November 1689, she bequeathed her the contents of her private chamber and closet. This was no ordinary clutter of personal effects, but an extremely large and valuable collection of paintings, silver and gold plate, jewels, hardstone vessels, porcelain and furnishings. A deed of conveyance known as 'The Devonshire Schedule' listed 540 separate items.⁷³⁴ It included 68 oil paintings, 151 pieces of porcelain and a 'Purple Velvett Bed wrought with Starrs in Sattin stitch' with three other sets of hangings. Besides the paintings described above, the rare old porcelain, renaissance jewels, 'Gold things', rock crystal and hardstone vessels were exceptional in their quality and quantity.⁷³⁵ Among them were treasures such as 'A Large Emrald in the Shape of a Bunch of Grapes sett in Gold with three Diamonds', 'A Gold Indian Bird Garnisht with pearle and Rubies', and 'A Christall Ewer Garnisht with Diamonds and Rubies one of the Rubies being Queen Elizabeths head' (fig. 5.10). Countess Anne, whose

⁷³³ V. Stater, 'Cavendish [née Bruce], Christian [Christiana], countess of Devonshire (1595–1675), royalist noblewoman', *ODNB* (2004) <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2648/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-4929> [accessed: 2 May 2021]; DCC W/E/94/3.

⁷³⁴ BA EX 41/82.

⁷³⁵ Some were exhibited in 1985. *The Countess' Gems*.

apartments were already richly furnished, brought many of these items into her closet, where she displayed them in glass-fronted cases lined with green velvet.⁷³⁶



Fig. 5.10 Ewer, Miseroni workshop, Italy (c. 1600, mounts, handle and possibly the foot, England c. 1660), rock crystal, gold, precious stones and enamel. Burghley Collection.

Countess Elizabeth amassed a large, valuable and culturally-important collection, but the common law of *couverture* meant that it was vulnerable, particularly when a family death necessitated a transfer of ownership. Each legal transfer relied on the co-operation of male relatives and male lawyers. Fortunately, her husband, William, third earl of Devonshire, included the necessary clause in his will to ensure that her own possessions were bequeathed to her, rather than being absorbed into his estate. It specifically mentioned ‘all Jewells Plate Cabinetts pictures and other things *which she hath bought* for the furniture of her Chamber and Closett’ [emphasis added], indicating that it was indeed the countess who

⁷³⁶ Celia Fiennes, pp. 83-4. In 1738 the cases housed a collection of shells, BA EX 603.

had purchased the items in her collection.⁷³⁷ After her own death, countess Elizabeth not only bequeathed her collection to her daughter Anne, but took steps to ensure that it would be protected from sale or dispersal by her son-in-law (or his creditors) under the law of *couverture*. The Schedule specified that the items 'should be for the peculiar Use and Benefit and at the onely disposall' of her daughter, who was to retain the right to dispose of them 'as if She was a ffem sole'.⁷³⁸ She felt it necessary to add a clause explicitly stating that 'the said Earle of Exeter should not Intermedle nor should the same be in any sort lyable to his Debts'. It was a wise proviso, since Exeter's snowballing debts were beginning to threaten the very fabric of the estate, and amicable conjugal relations were not enough to protect a wife's possessions. The lineage of female collecting was always at risk of rupture; cultural knowledge, connections and a tradition of patronage could be passed down from woman to woman, but the material objects themselves were vulnerable. There are very few surviving collections amassed by seventeenth-century aristocratic women, and none passed through the female line, not because they did not collect or bequeath works of art, but because the odds of a collection's survival were extremely slim.

Respect, consent, and the law

Couverture also left married women dependent on the consent of their husband if they were to exercise patronage for anything more than small personal items, either independently or in collaboration. Conjugal patronage relied on a partnership between husband and wife, if not of equals, then at least of mutual respect. The Exeters' marriage appears to have been amicable and it is noteworthy that the countess travelled to Europe

⁷³⁷ TNA PROB 11/379/486.

⁷³⁸ BA EX 41/82.

with her husband. Although the Somersets' marriage, according to Bucholz, was 'well known to be unhappy', this is not borne out by the sole known surviving letter between the couple.⁷³⁹ Written around 1697, the duchess addressed the duke in affectionate terms, reporting family news and wishing she was 'there with my Dearest'.⁷⁴⁰ Significantly, she also recounted a meeting with Hans Willem Bentinck, first earl of Portland, who had come to solicit her assistance in persuading the duke to return to public office. Not only was the duchess deemed to be influential in the duke's public affairs, but she presented an admirably united front in her response to Portland:

I could say nothing to this but what I was sure he knew already which was that you had once made a rare resolution which you sayd you could not dispense with but that I was sure you had as great dutty for the King and would doe as much for his service as for any body; and that I did not doubt his being convinced of.

This was the correspondence of a couple who were not only bound by affection, but who formed a united public partnership that would come to fruition during the reign of Queen Anne. This marriage of affection and mutual respect allowed the duchess to exercise considerable agency as a patron in collaboration with her husband, besides her significant independent patronage.

The duke of Somerset's second duchess Charlotte did not enjoy the same level of respect and independence as her predecessor, and consequently exercised relatively little art patronage. Four years after Elizabeth's death in 1722, the duke of Somerset remarried to Charlotte Finch, youngest daughter of Daniel, second earl of Nottingham and seventh earl of

⁷³⁹ Bucholz, 'Seymour [née Percy], Elizabeth, duchess of Somerset'.

⁷⁴⁰ PHA 16 fol.1.

Winchilsea. It was certainly not a marriage of equals. For a start, she was fifteen to his sixty-three. Even by contemporary standards, this age gap was deemed inappropriate. Nor did she bring a large dowry, estates, or the prestige of the Percy name. Somerset deliberated between Charlotte and her elder sister Henrietta, discussing their relative merits with his friend Richard 'Beau' Nash.⁷⁴¹ Even though Nash felt that 'a cheerfull companion is the chiefest pleasure of Life', Somerset was more convinced by his assessment of Charlotte, who 'has many good qualitys and would make a good mistress of a familye and perhaps would take more domestick care than H.' This did not bode well for a marriage of equals, and although Charlotte did manage to carve out a role for herself in society (notably, she was the first signatory of Captain Thomas Coram's petition for a Hospital for Foundlings), her predecessor must always have remained something of a Rebecca figure for the young duchess.

Given the nature of their marriage, it is unsurprising that there is little evidence of duchess Charlotte as an art patron, either independently or in collaboration. Her personal papers have not survived, but some evidence is provided by inventories and the duke's will.⁷⁴² The duchess and her daughters Charlotte and Frances were granted the portraits of the duchess' family in the Red Leather Chair room at Petworth, and their personal possessions, which included the contents of their private apartments at Petworth, Syon and Northumberland House. But the description of these rooms in the inventory taken after the duke's death in 1748 reflect the tastes of the 1690s and early 1700s, suggesting that duchess Charlotte had

⁷⁴¹ PHA 16 fols. 6 & 7.

⁷⁴² WSHC 1332/1/3/2.

acquired few items of her own.⁷⁴³ Most of the furnishings of the duchess of Somerset's Great Apartment at Northumberland House were entailed with the estate. Somerset provided for his second wife and their daughters after his demise by leaving them their jewels and plate, along with his house at Chevely near Newmarket (not entailed to the estate), and several large pieces of silverware and cabinets that could be easily liquidated. To his credit, he did his best to provide for them and protect them from harassment by his heir, Algernon, Lord Hertford, with whom he was on bad terms.⁷⁴⁴ None of this, however, points to any significant art patronage by duchess Charlotte, at least within a domestic setting, and perhaps explains why she turned instead to public philanthropy.

The personal relationship between husband and wife was therefore crucial to circumventing the restrictions of *couverture* if a woman was to act as a patron, independently or in collaboration. Even pin money was discretionary under the law. If a man was controlling or wilfully obstructive, his wife had very little recourse. It is for this reason that Mary, née Butler, duchess of Devonshire, features so little throughout this thesis. Her relationship with her husband was poor, and the duke was a notorious adulterer. Marital infidelity (on the part of men) was common among the elite, where marriages were contracted for social and economic reasons, but the blatancy with which Devonshire paraded his mistresses was considered shocking even by the standards of the day. He fathered several children with the actress Mrs Heneage, and at the time of his death the infant daughter of his recently deceased teenaged mistress Mary Anne Campion was at nurse in Devonshire House. After

⁷⁴³ PHA 6263.

⁷⁴⁴ The fault was probably the duke's as Algernon was widely liked.

Devonshire's funeral, White Kennet's eulogy was answered with a swift riposte in print, *The danger of living in a known sin*, which admonished that, 'if any Great Man makes use of his Power and Riches to be more Vicious than Others, and give a bad instead of a good Example, he is as much more guilty than others, as he is higher than they'.⁷⁴⁵

Alas, Devonshire's viciousness was also manifested in a mean and petty spirit. Despite blowing literally thousands of pounds on the horses, he was tight-fisted and penny-pinching. On one occasion, he negotiated hard to secure the services of a highly-regarded cook, then refused to pay her travel expenses to Derbyshire. The letters between his staff leave no doubt that this was considered harsh and unreasonable treatment.⁷⁴⁶ This tight-fistedness extended to a close control over all aspects of art and architecture, leaving very little room for input by other family members. When Berkeley House (soon to be renamed Devonshire House) was being rebuilt in 1696, the marquess and marchioness of Hartington, Devonshire's eldest son and his wife, asked for some minor alterations to be made to the apartments they were to occupy. It is telling that Lady Hartington offered to pay the cost of her new dressing and close-stool rooms (no more than £20) out of her own pocket, 'rather than what she desires to be done, s[hould] not be done'.⁷⁴⁷ It could not be taken for granted that Devonshire would allow such a minor alteration. The duchess of Devonshire did play a small role in the creation of the couple's interiors, and it is clear from the stewards' correspondence that she was in charge of the arrangement of the beds at

⁷⁴⁵ [J. Dunton], *The danger of living in a known sin, and the hazard of a Death-Bed Repentance* ([London], 1738, 1st ed. 1708).

⁷⁴⁶ DCC W/E/119/9.

⁷⁴⁷ DCC W/C/103.

Devonshire House.⁷⁴⁸ However, even minor expenses had to be signed off by the duke. When she found some matching blue damask to make new curtains for the bed that had formerly been Queen Mary's, she had to write for her husband's approval before proceeding with the purchase.⁷⁴⁹ There is no evidence of any independent patronage on her part.

One further point of note is that the patronage of these married women was exercised throughout their reproductive years. Contrary to Lawrence et al's case studies of early modern women, most of whose art patronage was exercised once they were no longer accountable for child-bearing, Somerset's and Exeter's busiest years were simultaneous with the most intense phase of motherhood.⁷⁵⁰ Between 1683 and 1698 Somerset bore seven children who lived, besides a further five who died in infancy.⁷⁵¹ Exeter raised five children to adulthood; her losses are unknown. Even with the undoubted assistance of nursemaids, this would have exacted a heavy physical and emotional toll. Married women's patronage was enacted in a context where the odds were stacked against them: legally, economically, and biologically. Perhaps there is still a place for the compensatory and celebratory in studies of women's patronage.

Under the system of *couverture*, the dynamics of conjugal patronage thus played out in many different ways. Married women acted as independent patrons, spending their

⁷⁴⁸ DCC W/C/104.

⁷⁴⁹ DCC W/C/164.

⁷⁵⁰ Lawrence (ed.), *Women and Art in Early Modern Europe*.

⁷⁵¹ Most are in the baptism records of St Mary's, Petworth. Sussex Online Parish Clerk [website] <http://www.sussex-opc.org/index.php?no=1> [accessed: 2 January 2022].

ringfenced pin money on artworks and furnishings that related to their own apartments and person, as well as sometimes that of other family members. Regardless of who paid the bills, women contributed their creativity, management and resourcefulness to commissioning and overseeing art for the public areas of their houses, probably in collaboration with their husbands. Married men also participated enthusiastically in categories that have subsequently been denigrated as 'decorative' and associated with women, especially upholstery and chinoiserie. Just as with male networks, connections and information were shared between women, and family traditions of patronage were passed down through generations. All of these, however, depended on the personalities and cooperation of men to circumvent the restrictions of *couverture*. Many of the themes identified here, especially the elision of women's patronage with that of their male relatives, and the denigration of 'female' categories of art, recur in Tom Stammers' review of women's collecting in the late-nineteenth century.⁷⁵² Only the Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882, overturning the status of *femme couverte*, would guarantee the ability of a married woman to exercise art patronage, either independently or in collaboration with her husband.

⁷⁵² T. Stammers, 'Women Collectors and Cultural Philanthropy, c. 1850–1920', *19: Interdisciplinary Studies in the Long Nineteenth Century* 31 (2020) doi: <https://doi.org/10.16995/ntn.3347> [accessed: 3 May 2021].

Chapter 6

Magnificence, Dynasty, Posterity

Being ever mindful of mortality, when he was in Italy, whilst he thoroughly examined and as curiously collected the works of choicest art, there he caused this monument to be made, where it could be most exquisitely done.

Monument inscription to John and Anne Cecil, fifth earl and countess of Exeter,
St. Martin's Church, Stamford

Introduction: politics and power, town and country

The previous five chapters have addressed the what, how, and who, of aristocratic art patronage. This final chapter turns to the most difficult, unanswered question: why? Why did aristocrats in late Stuart England devote so much time, money and effort to art? What was the purpose of such an endeavour? We can, of course, never fully understand another person's motivations, of which they may not even be conscious themselves. However, it is necessary to at least attempt to answer this question in order to deepen our understanding of this important facet of aristocratic life. Some idea can be gleaned by examining the quantity, quality and iconography of their art, their actions and writings, contextualised by contemporary culture and modern social science. Together, they suggest that aristocratic art patrons' principal ambitions were threefold: to uphold their status through displays of fashionable magnificence, to strengthen their dynasty, and to create a legacy for posterity.

There is a broad consensus among historians that the building and furnishing of grand properties and the associated display of art was aligned with the exercise of power, particularly by sovereign rulers. Many monographs have been devoted to the deployment

of the visual arts by rulers as a form of soft power, to bolster their political authority and military might. Some, such as Kevin Sharpe's trilogy, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy*, *Image Wars*, and *Rebranding Rule*, see this as an essentially propagandist exercise in which art is used as a tool for shaping popular opinion.⁷⁵³ Others, such as John Adamson and Peter Burke, offer a more subtle interpretation, relating art less to quotidian politics than to the symbolic representation of power, besides more ethereal objectives.⁷⁵⁴ In *The Fabrication of Louis XIV*, Burke identified three principal audiences for the Sun King's visual communications: the French elites, foreigners (especially ambassadors and foreign courts), and posterity.⁷⁵⁵

The English aristocracy's art patronage has often been aligned with politics and power. Since country houses are the most visible and enduring legacy of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century aristocratic art patronage, they have formed the principal area of study in this field. The publication in 1978 of Mark Girouard's seminal *Life in the English Country House: a Social and Architectural History* connected for the first time architecture with its (political) purpose, and the country house with the estates that provided the owner's political, social and economic power. For Girouard, the country house 'was the headquarters from which land was administered and power organised. It was a show-case, in which to exhibit and entertain supporters and good connections [...] It was an image-maker [...] It was visible evidence of his wealth.'⁷⁵⁶ Girouard's analysis precipitated a new

⁷⁵³ K. Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor monarchy: authority and image in sixteenth-century England* (New Haven, 2009); *Image Wars: Promoting Kings and Commonwealths in England, 1603-1660* (New Haven, 2010); and *Rebranding Rule*.

⁷⁵⁴ Adamson, *Princely Courts of Europe*, pp. 34-8.

⁷⁵⁵ Burke, *Fabrication of Louis XIV*, p. 153.

⁷⁵⁶ Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, p. 3.

branch of scholarship that has subsequently explored the myriad ways in which these ‘power houses’, their furnishings and contents were vital tools in the construction and exercise of power, locally, nationally and internationally.⁷⁵⁷

As outlined in the Introduction, however, long-term structural power and short-term issue-driven politics should not be conflated. For Girouard, the material presence of the country house was important as a backdrop for the rituals of power, but he stopped short of ascribing it a role in the play of party politics. Few historians now would argue for a straightforward alignment between style and political affiliation, although in the second quarter of the eighteenth century there are some instances of art being co-opted in the service of party politics, such as Lord Cobham’s explicitly political garden monuments at Stowe.⁷⁵⁸ Other historians have drawn explicit links between politics and country house building, not only James Lees-Milne in 1968, but Laurel Peterson, who fifty years later argued that Whig country houses were the ‘paradigmatic form of political art at the turn of the eighteenth century’.⁷⁵⁹ She argued that Laguerre’s mural-painted hall at Chatsworth ‘establishes the house as a political center’, and the interiors were intended to bolster Devonshire’s power, specifically in his ‘persistent pursuit of a dukedom’.⁷⁶⁰ However, Peterson offers no suggestion as to how, in practice, the political iconography of the Chatsworth murals might achieve the desired effect. Chatsworth was 150 miles from London, where most political business was transacted, and received few visitors from

⁷⁵⁷ For a comprehensive summary, see O. Cox, ‘From Power to Enslavement: Recent Perspectives on the Politics of Art Patronage and Display in the Country House’, in Postle (ed.), *Art & the Country House*.

⁷⁵⁸ J.M. Robinson, *Temples of delight: Stowe landscape gardens* (Andover, 1994).

⁷⁵⁹ Peterson, ‘Making Spaces’, p. 5.

⁷⁶⁰ Ibid., pp. 33 & 55.

beyond the Midlands. On the one occasion that Devonshire might have hosted the monarch at Chatsworth, he did not pursue the opportunity.⁷⁶¹ The connection between art, power and politics was not straightforward.

Some nobles and aspiring gentry did use art in an attempt to achieve social advancement, and build and furnish country houses to further their status by presenting themselves at the rank to which they aspired. Ralph Montagu, step-father to the duchess of the Somerset and the subject of one of Jacobsen's case studies, continued to exploit his continental connections on his return to London, using art as part of a concerted programme to advance his social status. He built and furnished his London and country houses in magnificent style, and while much scholarly ink has been spilled in debating exactly which artists and designs he was responsible for introducing to England, his position at the cutting edge of French style is unchallenged.⁷⁶² From his origins as the second son of a baron to the eventual award of a dukedom, Montagu's rise was facilitated by his court and diplomatic offices and two financially advantageous marriages, but he also used art to project an image of himself that was grander than his status in reality. Shortly after William III had rejected his initial request for a dukedom, Montagu showed the king around his country house at Boughton, still in progress but on the way to being one of the most lavish and fashionable houses in England. The king, who shared Montagu's Francophile tastes, admired the architecture (reminiscent of Versailles), the imported French furniture, and the murals by painters trained at the French court. It was a form of lobbying, projecting an image of the status

⁷⁶¹ See pp. 336-7.

⁷⁶² They included Jean-Baptiste Monnoyer, Charles de la Fosse and Jacques Rousseau. He has traditionally been credited with introducing Verrio to England, but this has been challenged by Helen Jacobsen who suggests that Henry Bennet, Earl of Arlington, was responsible. Jacobsen, *Luxury and Power*, pp. 135 & 153.

Montagu aspired to, and the king tacitly acknowledged this, commenting that, 'nothing made a Gentleman look like a Gentleman, but living like one'.⁷⁶³ Living like a duke eventually paid dividends for Montagu, even if he had to wait until 1705 to finally reach the highest rung of the peerage.

Other aristocrats, however, built and furnished their houses in an equally lavish and fashionable manner, without any evident political ambition. Exeter had no aspirations to political office, yet spent an enormous (and ultimately damaging) proportion of his income on rebuilding and furnishing Burghley. The style this Tory non-juror favoured for the interiors of his state and family apartments were remarkably similar to those in so-called Whig country houses.⁷⁶⁴ And if the interrupted bedroom scene depicted in the Heaven Room murals at Burghley was a satirical representation of the Glorious Revolution, as Lydia Hamlett has claimed, its purpose was almost certainly for amusement, rather than political intent.⁷⁶⁵ Similarly, if Devonshire built Chatsworth in order to curry favour with William and Mary and secure a dukedom, this does not explain why after he was created duke, he continued to lavish money on Chatsworth on the same lavish scale as before. Between 1694 and his death in 1707, he rebuilt the west and north fronts, purchased and commissioned a great many new furnishings, and remodelled the gardens extensively. Chatsworth was principally an investment of the proceeds of his advancement, rather than a means to that end. Similarly, there were no obvious political ends that the duke of Somerset might have been aiming for when he rebuilt and furnished Petworth. He was

⁷⁶³ *Royal progress*, p. 6.

⁷⁶⁴ Peterson, 'Making Spaces'.

⁷⁶⁵ Hamlett, *Mural Painting in Britain*, p. 71.

already the second-most senior member of the peerage, and although he enjoyed power, he valued his aristocratic honour still more highly.

It is more helpful to think of the power of art as symbolic rather than instrumental. This does not lessen the significance of its impact, but removes the burden of cause and effect that is so difficult to prove. Dana Arnold suggested that to Girouard's physical function of the country house should be added its metaphorical function, in which it was 'a symbol of the power and wealth of the landowner and more broadly the social, cultural and political hegemony of the ruling classes'.⁷⁶⁶ For Arnold, this symbolic power was principally exercised by the ruling elite over the masses. However, this ignores the peer-to-peer display that was an important aspect (if not the most important aspect) of aristocratic art. The complex iconographies of mural paintings could not be deciphered by the uneducated, casual visitor. The estate tenants, gentry families and freeholders who made up the local electorate did not possess the requisite cultural capital to recognise a set of Gobelins tapestries or a Claude Lorrain, or appreciate their scarcity and expense. This art was aimed, instead, at the narrow audience of the wealthy, culturally-sophisticated elite. By displaying the latest fashions, the most exclusive goods, and the most in-demand artists, aristocrats augmented and maintained their positions relative to their peers in the jostling hierarchy of rank and status. If, as E.P. Thompson argued, 'ruling-class control in the eighteenth century was located primarily within a cultural hegemony', then the distinctions within the ruling class were also upheld culturally, through the art they displayed.⁷⁶⁷

⁷⁶⁶ D. Arnold, 'The Country House: Form, Function and Meaning', in Arnold, *Georgian Country House*, p. 16.

⁷⁶⁷ E.P. Thompson, 'Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture', *Journal of Social History* 7:4 (Summer, 1974), p. 387.

The purpose and power of art was therefore linked to its reception: who was it intended to be seen by, where, and when? The art commissioned, collected, and displayed by aristocrats had overlapping audiences, and its purpose varied with each of these audiences, geographically and socially. At a time when travel was made difficult by poor roads, especially in winter, the profile of visitors to an aristocratic property was closely linked to its location. Aristocrats received most of their elite visitors at their London townhouses, whereas visitors to country houses were predominantly drawn from the nobility and gentry of the surrounding counties. Both London and country houses would have received a steady stream of visitors on business, principally drawn from the lower social ranks: tenant farmers, servants, people seeking patronage, clerks, craftsmen and tradespeople. The reach of aristocratic art was also extended by occasional tourists, word-of-mouth, and manuscript and printed accounts. To these contemporary audiences can be added anticipated future generations, and the all-seeing eye of posterity. These last two will be discussed at greater lengths in subsequent sub-sections of this chapter, 'Dynasty' and 'Posterity', but first, let us consider the living.

The demands of the court, parliamentary and social calendars meant that most nobles spent the majority of the year in their London townhouses, and it was here that they entertained most of their visitors.⁷⁶⁸ Devonshire typically spent a few weeks each summer at Chatsworth, and the rest of the year principally in London. Besides his Whitehall lodgings, described in Chapter One, he used Devonshire House for political and social entertaining, hosting dinners for William III in 1697, the French ambassador in 1698 and 1700, and the

⁷⁶⁸ H. Greig, *The Beau Monde* (Oxford, 2013).

duke of Ormonde and Lord Essex; there are likely to have been many more such instances.⁷⁶⁹ Since Petworth was relatively close to London, the Somersets divided their time more evenly between their properties, often also spending the summer months at Syon House, west of London on the banks of the Thames. Somerset hosted regular political meetings at Northumberland House and Petworth, as well as using them both for entertaining.⁷⁷⁰ Visitors called at Northumberland House on political business, such as when the earl of Portland called to lobby the duchess on the duke's behalf.⁷⁷¹ The duchesses of Somerset and Devonshire exchanged visits with other aristocratic ladies — and each other — while they were resident in town.⁷⁷² As discussed in the Introduction, the Exeters did not possess a London townhouse after 1671, but lived almost exclusively at Burghley.⁷⁷³

The high traffic of elite visitors meant that townhouses were important spaces for display, the exchange of ideas, and the formation of taste.⁷⁷⁴ Devonshire used his London house and Whitehall lodgings to demonstrate his connoisseurship and political connections. He was well known among his contemporaries as a collector of old master paintings, but very few appear in inventories of Chatsworth and Hardwick, indicating that most were in London.⁷⁷⁵ At Devonshire House, he also hung his own full-length portrait in Garter Robes with his Lord Steward's staff of office, alongside those of William III, Mary II and Queen Anne, the

⁷⁶⁹ DCC W/C/123, W/C/312 & W/C/145; *Prior Papers*, p. 227.

⁷⁷⁰ 'Seymour, Charles (1662-1748)' in R. Paley (ed.), *The History of Parliament: The House of Lords (1660-1715)* (Cambridge, 2016), *passim*.

⁷⁷¹ See p. 321.

⁷⁷² DCC CS1/20/0 & CS1/117/0.

⁷⁷³ See p. 38.

⁷⁷⁴ K. Retford, 'Introduction', in Avery-Quash and Retford (eds.), *Georgian London Town House*, p. 18.

⁷⁷⁵ M. Jaffé, *The Devonshire Collection of Italian Drawings* (2 vols., London, 1994), vol. 1, p. 16. DCC CH36/7/ & CH37/1/1A. There is no surviving inventory or description of Devonshire House from the first duke's time.

monarchs whom he served, and who had rewarded him with honours and offices.⁷⁷⁶ The Somersets' collection of paintings was more evenly distributed between London and Petworth, echoing the more equal share of visitors. While the duke's prized Claude Lorrain hung in the picture room at Petworth, their finest painting, Titian's Cornaro family (now known as the *Vendramin Family*) hung at Northumberland House, where it was admired by a steady stream of visitors.⁷⁷⁷ However, a comparison of the Northumberland House and Petworth inventories taken after the duke's death suggests that while both were richly furnished, the finest furnishings were concentrated at Petworth.⁷⁷⁸

The Somersets' country houses were all located in the south of England and close to major roads, and consequently received plenty of visitors. Friends such as the Temple family regularly came to stay at Petworth, where the duke's political gatherings combined business with pleasure.⁷⁷⁹ The Somersets also received many royal visits. Petworth was visited by William III in 1693 and 1694-5, as well as the Habsburg Archduke Charles in 1703.⁷⁸⁰ The duke's ancestral home, Castle House in Marlborough, Wiltshire, was a convenient stopping place for monarchs travelling on the London to Bath and Bristol road. James II stayed during his west country progress in August 1686, Queen Mary of Modena on her way to Bath for fertility treatment in 1687, and William III after landing at Bristol on his return from Ireland in September 1690, while Queen Anne stayed on her way to and from Bath in

⁷⁷⁶ NT1129215, NT1129214 & NT1129216, Hardwick Hall (NT). Anne was recorded as having moved from London to Hardwick in 1786, but William and Mary were absent in the 1792 Hardwick inventory, probably because they were still in London; DCC CH36/7/1A fol. 105.

⁷⁷⁷ Alnwick Castle, Sy: H/IV/1/g; 'Notebooks of George Vertue vol. 4', p. 152; NRS GD18/2107 21v. The painting is now at the National Gallery, London, NG4452.

⁷⁷⁸ Alnwick Castle, SY:H.IV.1c; PHA 6263.

⁷⁷⁹ Barber, 'Petworth Beauties'.

⁷⁸⁰ Rowell, *Petworth*, p. 47.

October 1702 and August 1703.⁷⁸¹ However, these visits were not a significant opportunity to display art or architecture. Castle House, an unpretentious property built in the 1610s, was not particularly well-equipped to host the monarch, containing nothing more ceremonious than ordinary bedchambers, and even after it had been rebuilt in the 1690s, it was still relatively modest and compact. Similarly Syon House, where Anne (then Princess) and her husband Prince George spent two months in 1692 after her ejection from court, had not been modernised for several decades.

Conversely, although Chatsworth boasted a magnificent suite of state apartments, no monarch ever saw them during Devonshire's lifetime. This was in part due to the remoteness of Derbyshire (a three-day journey from London), but nor did Devonshire seem particularly keen to encourage a royal visit. It has often been said that the state apartments at Chatsworth (and other houses) were built in anticipation of, or readiness for, a royal visit, but when presented with this possibility during William III's progress in the autumn of 1695, Devonshire was remarkably indifferent to the prospect.⁷⁸² His own servant Henry Lowman, for whom he had secured a position in the royal household as Third Clerk of the Kitchen, had been given the task of arranging the king's journey.⁷⁸³ The route was not fixed, and Devonshire was well positioned to influence the itinerary in favour of a visit to Chatsworth or Hardwick, which indeed is what some of his servants expected.⁷⁸⁴ Instead, Devonshire accompanied the king only as far as Newmarket, from where he chose to 'goe noe further

⁷⁸¹ *Report of Marlborough College*, pp. 3-8.

⁷⁸² H. Obee, 'The Golden Age Returns', *Apollo* 167:555 (June 2008), p. 62.

⁷⁸³ DCC W/B/5/5 & W/C/83.

⁷⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

with the King,' returning to London having 'lost a deale of money' on the horse races.⁷⁸⁵ If the *raison d'être* of the state apartments at Chatsworth was to receive the monarch, surely Devonshire would at least have attempted to secure a royal visit, but he did no such thing.⁷⁸⁶ And as recounted in Chapter One, when William III visited Burghley during the same progress, he was hardly welcomed with open arms. This suggests that the building of state apartments in country houses, and by extension, much of their art and architecture, was *not* intended as a means of political or social advancement, but that we must seek alternative motivations.

Most of the visitors to Chatsworth and Burghley came from within a thirty-five-mile radius. The duke of Leeds visited from his seat at Kiveton, twenty-one miles away, and when the Devonshires were staying at Chatsworth, they exchanged visits with the duke of Rutland whose subsidiary property Haddon Hall was six miles away, although on at least one occasion Devonshire deliberately avoided this, to save the expense.⁷⁸⁷ In the absence of documentary evidence, the artistic connections between Chatsworth and Bretby, Wollaton, Melbourne and Thoresby described in Chapter Four all indicate that Devonshire exchanged visits with his county neighbours and that they closely inspected each other's architecture, interiors and gardens. At Burghley, the Exeters entertained members of the Noel, Brownlow and Bertie families, and hosted the meetings of the Order of Bedlam, whose members were principally drawn from the nobility and gentry of the surrounding counties. The duke and duchess of Somerset exchanged visits with their neighbours at Goodwood, Charles and Anne Lennox, first duke and duchess of Richmond. Country house visiting as a

⁷⁸⁵ DCC W/C/79 & W/C/81.

⁷⁸⁶ This subject will be explored at greater length in Lim, 'For Politics, Progresses, or Posterity?'.

⁷⁸⁷ DCC W/C/110/11DCC W/B/5/15.

genteel pastime was in its infancy, but some intrepid travellers did arrive and were usually granted access to the gardens, and if the owner was away, were shown around the mansion by the housekeeper. Celia Fiennes is the most well-known of these early tourists, but there were others, such as lawyer Joseph Taylor who in 1703 journeyed to Edinburgh with two friends, taking in the sights along the way.⁷⁸⁸

Besides these visitors who saw aristocratic art first hand, others learned of it through word-of-mouth, manuscript and printed accounts. As mentioned in Chapter Four, John Vanbrugh was an important stylistic conduit as he journeyed between the principal aristocratic seats of northern England in the summer of 1699. Artists and craftsmen also acted as stylistic conduits as they moved from property to property. Fiennes and Taylor kept a journal of their travels and although they were not published until much later, it is not unlikely that their manuscripts circulated among friends. Other visitors described what they had seen in correspondence, such as when George Copley wrote to his friend Thomas Kirk about the alterations that Devonshire had made to the gardens since their previous visit.⁷⁸⁹ It is reasonable to suppose that friends also shared such knowledge in face-to-face conversation. Printed accounts reached an even wider audience. John Macky published an account of his travels through England in 1707, as did Swiss traveller B  at Louis de Muralt, although not until many years after his journey.⁷⁹⁰ Important events such as William III's royal progress in 1695 and the visit of Archduke Charles in 1703 were also recounted in the press and in

⁷⁸⁸ Celia Fiennes; Taylor, *Journey to Edenborough*.

⁷⁸⁹ DCC CS1/70/19.

⁷⁹⁰ J. Macky, *A journey through England* (London, 1714); B. de Muralt, *Letters describing the characteristics of the English and French Nations* (London, 1726).

separately published accounts.⁷⁹¹ However, since the published descriptions were usually confined to generalised plaudits and contained little or no concrete details about the houses and gardens, they served only a mass, rather than an informed audience.

Just as the art commissioned, collected and displayed by aristocrats was seen by a variety of different audiences, so it served a variety of different purposes. Within the small, informed audience composed predominantly of their peers, and occasionally those of higher rank, art was used to express and maintain their position in the social and political hierarchy.

Displays of the most fashionable and exclusive art demonstrated the patrons' proximity to the centres of fashion and power, superior connections, and cultural and economic capital. Towards their social and economic inferiors, displays of artistic magnificence were essential to upholding their cultural hegemony. It was expected of a great nobleman that he would patronise the arts as befitting his status, and 'magnificence', expressed through the building and furnishing of grand houses and gardens, as well as ceremony and lavish hospitality, were the foundations on which noble supremacy rested. For those surveyed in this thesis, art was not principally a means of advancement or achieving specific political objectives, but instead was used to demonstrate, consolidate and perpetuate the position they already enjoyed.

These audiences and purposes partly aligned with geography, and the town/country dichotomy. London was the obvious place to display one's connoisseurship to an audience of informed peers. However, the Devonshires, Somersets and Exeters actually spent

⁷⁹¹*London Gazette* 3123-30; *Royal Progress*; A. Boyer, *The history of the reign of Queen Anne* (London, 1704), vol. 2, appendix 3.

considerably more money and effort in building and furnishing their country houses than their town houses, irrespective of where the former were located. In her survey of Georgian London townhouses, Kate Retford argued that while the townhouse was tied to the life of the individual, the country house embodied ancestry and lineage.⁷⁹² There has been no comparable survey for late Stuart England, but studies of individual patrons, including the aristocrats surveyed here, indicate a similar pattern. The analyses by Juliet Learmouth and James Legard of the architectural patronage of John and Sarah Churchill, first duke and duchess of Marlborough, found the same division of purpose. The duchess used the architecture and interiors of Marlborough House in London to communicate political messages to a contemporary audience, while the duke masterminded the building of Blenheim House in the country as ‘a marker of dynastic identity’.⁷⁹³ The Devonshires and Somersets employed similar strategies of differentiation, focusing their attention on Chatsworth and Petworth respectively as the principal seat of their dynasty.

Besides the living audiences discussed above, aristocrats were strongly future-orientated, and invested in art and architecture to secure the cultural hegemony of their descendants as well as their own. The interests and identities of noble patriarchs were indivisible from those of their dynasty, both the preceding generations whose legacy they honoured, and those of generations yet to come. Later in the eighteenth century, property was summarised by Edmund Burke as ‘a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead, and those who are to be born’, a

⁷⁹² Retford, ‘Introduction’, p. 5.

⁷⁹³ Legard, ‘Vanbrugh, Blenheim Palace’, p. 239; J. Learmouth, ‘Holding court at Marlborough House: the London residence of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough’ in Coutu, Lindfield and Stobart (eds.), *Politics and the English Country House*.

sentiment reflected in the actions of late Stuart aristocrats.⁷⁹⁴ They were focused on the *longue durée*, investing in their houses and chattels on behalf of future Seymours, Cavendishes and Cecils, while highlighting their individual importance within the chain of dynastic succession. Looking beyond the horizon of time itself, they also cultivated their personal legacies for the benefit of posterity. These factors were not mutually exclusive but operated simultaneously, and in varying proportions underlay the art patronage of the aristocrats surveyed here.

Despite the contribution of married women to art patronage discussed in Chapter Five, they are largely absent from this chapter. This is because under the system of primogeniture and law of coverture, their legal, public and dynastic identities were largely subsumed within those of their husbands. Under these circumstances, the principal motivations for aristocratic art patronage identified here – magnificence, dynasty, and posterity – were meaningless to women, other than as a contribution to their husbands' endeavours. The nobility was a masculine preserve: titles were held by men, and passed through the male line, other than in a very few exceptions. Dynasty was also masculine: women gave up their birth name for that of their husband, and were identified with the family into which they had married. The duchess of Somerset did sometimes proclaim her own lineage, engraving her silver plate with the Percy arms during her widowhood, and depicting herself and her children (without her husband) triumphant on the staircase wall at Petworth, but these examples are limited. Even posterity was colonised by men. If a woman formed an art collection, there was no guarantee that she would be able to bequeath it, since her

⁷⁹⁴ E. Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* ed. C. O'Brien (Harmondsworth, 1968), pp. 194-5.

possessions legally belonged to her husband.⁷⁹⁵ A married woman was customarily allowed to own some personal goods, but did not usually make a will, so after her death they were usually dispersed or absorbed into those of her husband. The pervasive influence of legal structures should not be underestimated.

Magnificence

In order to maintain their position in the social hierarchy, those in its highest ranks, particularly dukes, were expected to display art on a magnificent scale. The concept of magnificence was established long before the seventeenth century. Originating in classical Greek and Roman philosophy, most notably in the writings of Aristotle, it later formed a conceptual framework for the patronage of the wealthy citizens of Renaissance Italy.⁷⁹⁶ In both the Roman and Renaissance interpretations, magnificence was a civic virtue, manifested through public works and displays of liberality that benefited the masses, rather than being undertaken for personal benefit. By the seventeenth century, however, magnificence was frequently referred to as having a political function and an integral part of power.⁷⁹⁷ It was seen as an essential quality of royalty, but was also expected of nobility. Although magnificence took many forms, including dress, ceremony and hospitality, art was an important element, and magnificence was expressed through scale, quantity, and the intrinsic value of the materials.

⁷⁹⁵ See the discussion of the dowager countess of Devonshire's collection on pp. 318-20.

⁷⁹⁶ A.F. Jenkins, 'Cosimo de' Medici's Patronage of Architecture and the Theory of Magnificence', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 33 (1970), pp. 162-170.

⁷⁹⁷ Burke, *Fabrication of Louis XIV*, p. 5.

Magnificence was also a way of living. Devonshire and Somerset maintained large retinues of liveried servants, and when B  at Louis de Muralt called on the duke at Petworth, he marvelled to find ‘above a hundred Servants, a finer Palace than the King’s, and as good a Table’.⁷⁹⁸ Ceremony and hospitality were traditional forms of aristocratic magnificence, and Somerset placed great emphasis on them, combining them with material display. In 1694, he entertained the three newly-created dukes (Devonshire, Newcastle, and Bedford) at dinner, after which it was reported that ‘besides the splendour and magnificence of the feast itself [...] all the plates, forks and spoons at the desert, were not double guilt [sic] but beaten gold’.⁷⁹⁹ This may have been a mark of respect towards his guests, but also served to remind them that although they had now joined him on the highest rung of the ladder, Somerset still outranked them in seniority and wealth. He was also preoccupied with the etiquette of precedence to the point of obsession.⁸⁰⁰ Somerset was mocked by contemporaries for his overbearing pride and excessive formality, but the ‘Proud Duke’ saw these values as essential to upholding the traditions of the nobility, and his own place near the summit of its ranks.

Nobility and magnificence went hand in hand. The adjective ‘noble’ was appended to great buildings almost as frequently as ‘magnificent’. Thus Burghley was described in 1695 as ‘a noble Pile of Stone Building, mightily adorn'd and beautified by the present Earl of Exeter, who lives very Great and Nobly’.⁸⁰¹ It was deemed fitting, or even obligatory, that great

⁷⁹⁸ Davies, ‘Dukes of Devonshire, Newcastle and Rutland’, pp. 160-1; Muralt, *Letters*, p. 88.

⁷⁹⁹ ‘Seymour, Charles (1662-1748)’ in Paley (ed.), *History of Parliament*, pp. 394-5.

⁸⁰⁰ See M. Noble after J. Granger, *A biographical history of England, from the Revolution to the end of George I’s reign* (London, 1806), vol. 2, pp. 29-30 for a marvellous anecdote in which Sir James Delaval wins a wager by tricking Somerset into ceding precedence.

⁸⁰¹ *Royal progress*, p. 7.

noblemen should live in magnificent style. John Macky felt that Somerset's material surroundings were entirely appropriate for a man of his rank. He wrote of Petworth, 'This Palace is every way answerable to the Grandeur of its Great Master, whose Family hath always made one of the brightest Figures in the English Court', and similarly of Northumberland House, 'the Apartments answer his Grandeur, as in his other Palaces'.⁸⁰² England's entire social and political system was predicated on the idea of noble birth, and displays of magnificence were deemed appropriate simply to uphold the distinction of the nobility. Political power, or the right to rule, was implicit in magnificence, and noblemen's houses were often described as palaces, synonymous with the houses of royalty. Macky thought the street front of Northumberland House to be 'Princely' (though Somerset's granddaughter thought it looked like a prison) and described the state apartment at Petworth as 'truly Royal, equal to that of any Prince in Europe'.⁸⁰³ There may have been an element of patriotic pride in Macky's statement, but underneath it lay a tacit acceptance of the superiority of noble blood, and by implication the right of the hereditary nobility to hold the great offices of state. Nobles used displays of magnificence to maintain the belief system that underlay the social, political and economic hegemony they enjoyed.

Magnificence was also expressed through the lavish use of costly materials. The value of art in the late-seventeenth century lay in a synthesis of the intrinsic value of its materials, the labour and skill involved in its production, the associations of its design or style, and the

⁸⁰² Macky, *A journey through England*, pp. 66 & 117.

⁸⁰³ Ibid.; 'Northumberland House', in *Survey of London: Volume 18*, ed. G.H. Gater and E.P. Wheeler (London, 1937), pp. 10-20. *British History Online* <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vol18/pt2/pp10-20> [accessed: 6 January 2022].

original contribution of the artist. For example, the cost of a set of tapestries was determined by the value of the raw materials (such as dyed silks, gold and silver thread), the skill of the weaver, the time taken to weave them (as much as six months or more on the loom for a single piece), and the designs from which the tapestries were woven. These last were sometimes produced by highly renowned artists, the most well-known being Raphael's cartoons for the *Acts of the Apostles* tapestries, commissioned by Pope Leo X for the Sistine chapel. Not all art used costly materials (materials formed a relatively low proportion of the cost of easel paintings), but many did. Tapestries, upholstery, chimney and lighting furniture, mirrors, jewellery and interior fittings were often partly or wholly composed of costly materials. Late Stuart aristocrats used these artworks to display their wealth and create an impression of magnificence.

Not all visitors could appreciate the subtleties of taste but they had no difficulty understanding material value. The 'Blue and Gold' tapestries in the earl of Exeter's bedchamber at Burghley were defined by the richness of their materials. They were woven from silk, gold and silver wire thread, and were referred to in inventories by the gold they contained.⁸⁰⁴ Celia Fiennes, who took an intense interest in the materiality and value of objects, singled them out for special praise: 'his bed chamber was furnish'd very rich the tapestry was all blew Silke and rich gold thread, so that the gold appeared for the light part of all the worke.'⁸⁰⁵ Visiting Nottingham Castle, home of the first duke of Newcastle, she principally admired the tapestries for their costliness, commenting, 'the Chamber of State is hung with very rich tapestry so much silver and gold in it that the 3 pieces that hung in the

⁸⁰⁴ NatWest CH 194/6 fols. 361r. & 363r.; BA EX51/18.

⁸⁰⁵ *Celia Fiennes*, p. 83.

roome cost £1500.⁸⁰⁶ The materials used in upholstered furniture also had a high intrinsic worth, one of the reasons why state beds were such a prominent feature of baroque interiors. Fiennes approvingly noted at least four velvet beds at Burghley, two plain and two figured (the most expensive fabric).⁸⁰⁷ Decorative fringing could be even more expensive than upholstery fabric, and if made with gold and silver thread it could cost well over £250 to trim a bed.⁸⁰⁸ The state bed at Petworth was trimmed with broad and narrow silver lace and silver tassels with such a high metal thread content that when the bed was surplus to requirements, the trimmings were melted down for re-use, yielding bullion to the value of £74 6s.⁸⁰⁹

Silver was not only decorative, but a highly visible form of capital. It was an asset that could be quickly liquidated – easily resaleable or recyclable – and by displaying large pieces of silverware, wealthy aristocrats (and royalty) demonstrated that they had the necessary wealth to uphold their position in society. It was for this reason that diplomats received an allowance of at least 4000 ounces of plate.⁸¹⁰ The most prestigious rooms at Petworth were lit with silver sconces, and the fire irons were embellished with silver knobs.⁸¹¹ The duke and duchess also possessed three multi-branched silver hanging chandeliers, one in each of the King of Spain's Drawing Room and Tapestry Room at Petworth, and one in the duchess' Drawing Room at Northumberland House.⁸¹² Such massive and showy pieces of lighting furniture were restricted to just a handful of the very wealthiest, and very few were ever

⁸⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 72.

⁸⁰⁷ Ibid., p. 69.

⁸⁰⁸ Westman, *Fringe, Frog & Tassel*, p. 69.

⁸⁰⁹ PHA 6263; A. Westman, 'William Elliot "The Laceman", 164?-1728', *Furniture History* 50 (2014), p. 96.

⁸¹⁰ Hayward, *Huguenot Silver*, p. xx.

⁸¹¹ PHA 6263.

⁸¹² WSHC 1332/1/3/2.

made, making the Somersets' three chandeliers particularly extravagant.⁸¹³ Somerset singled out his chandeliers to be left to his second duchess Charlotte and their two daughters, since their capital could be easily realised. Other substantial pieces of silver on display at Petworth included a large brazier in the Tapestry Room, and a massive silver cistern weighing 1005 oz, inherited from the duchess' grandfather, which was customarily placed in front of the sideboard during meals.⁸¹⁴ Such displays of *orfèvrerie* were a centuries-old custom in aristocratic households.

At Chatsworth, costly materials were embedded into the very fabric of the house. From decorative urns to window bars, Chatsworth was literally painted with gold, and gilder Giuseppe Viti was one of the busiest craftsmen, bringing his Midas touch inside and out.⁸¹⁵ The interiors and exteriors also made generous use of costly stone. In the chapel, the enormous, red-veined marble reredos contrasted with the black and white marble floor and massive black marble pillars, described with awe by Celia Fiennes as 'so bigg that I could not compass one with my arms', while she remarked that the large stone steps of the Great Stairs 'cost £20 apiece'.⁸¹⁶ The bathing room (a novel concept in itself) boasted a large marble bath, while its walls and floor were clad with different coloured marbles. Some of these materials were imported—in 1691 Devonshire spent the vast sum of £682 15s 7d importing a shipment of white and blue-veined marble and a block of dove-coloured marble from Holland—but much came from his own land.⁸¹⁷ The deep windowsills of the state apartments were made from polished fossil limestone from nearby Bakewell, and the

⁸¹³ Hayward, *Huguenot Silver*, p. 64.

⁸¹⁴ PHA 6263; WSHC 1332/1/3/2 & 1332/2/2/3.

⁸¹⁵ DCC CH37/1 fol. 50.

⁸¹⁶ *Celia Fiennes*, p. 99.

⁸¹⁷ CH 37/1 fol. 65 & CH 37/2 fol. 90.

freestone and alabaster for the interior and exterior carvings came from Devonshire's quarries at Roach Abbey and Castle Hayes.⁸¹⁸ This did not escape the appraising eye of Celia Fiennes, who noted that the altar steps in the chapel 'was made out of one stone cut out of the hill just by, so is all the marble about the house'.⁸¹⁹ The fabric of Chatsworth, beautiful as it was, also functioned as an advertisement for the mineral resources in its owner's possession.

Aristocrats also expressed their power and magnificence through the human resources at their command. Besides employing large retinues of liveried servants, they undertook building and gardening works that drew on manpower on an immense scale. Devonshire's most ambitious gardening project was to literally move a mountain to extend the sightline from the south front at Chatsworth into a long vista. Following a visit in September 1703, George Copley wrote to a friend, 'his [Devonshire's] chief work hath been levelling a hill which faced ye old front by which he hath open'd a distant prospect to ye blue hills, & made on ye same level with his house & Garden a Canall something broader then my new River but not quite so long.'⁸²⁰ Daniel Defoe was unusually impressed, praising Devonshire for 'what others thought impossible, was not only made practicable, but easy, removed, and perfectly carried away a great Mountain that stood in the way, and which interrupted the Prospect.'⁸²¹ The sheer scale of the endeavour impressed visitors because they could see how large a workforce was required to carry out groundworks of this magnitude. If

⁸¹⁸ DCC CH 37/2 fol. 50.

⁸¹⁹ *Celia Fiennes*, p. 99.

⁸²⁰ DCC CS1/70/19.

⁸²¹ Defoe, *Curious and diverting journies*, p.367.

Devonshire could mobilise such an army of labourers for his garden, who could doubt the resources at his command?⁸²²

Although no king ever strolled through the parterres at Chatsworth, they were among the most magnificent gardens of late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth-century Europe, and were modelled on those of William III at Het Loo and Louis XIV at Versailles and Marly. Blessed with the perfect topography to create the necessary hydraulic pressure, Devonshire created waterworks that rivalled those of royalty. He ordered a large reservoir to be dug on the escarpment above the gardens, providing enough pressure to power a series of jets, basins, trick fountains, and a spectacular stepped cascade so noteworthy and unique in England (at least until Dyrham's was installed in the 1700s) that it caused Chatsworth to be compared to Marly.⁸²³ In fact the first incarnation of Chatsworth's cascade, built in 1694-5, predated Marly's, which was not begun until 1697, though once Marly's had been built, Devonshire greatly extended his own to rival it.⁸²⁴ It is possible that Louis XIV himself received favourable reports of the gardens at Chatsworth. His marshal, Camille d'Hostun de la Baume, duc de Tallard, spent 1704-11 as a military hostage in Nottingham, during which time he spent several days as Devonshire's guest at Chatsworth. He reportedly told the duke that of all the sights he had seen in England, Chatsworth was the one he dared not tell Louis XIV about.⁸²⁵ It was a compliment no doubt, but one that recognised that

⁸²² Some of the craftsmen employed at Chatsworth even joined Devonshire's militia during the Glorious Revolution. Hosford, 'Cavendish, William, first duke of Devonshire'.

⁸²³ DCC CS1/70/19.

⁸²⁴ G. Mabile, *Views of the Gardens at Marly* (Paris, 1998), opposite plate 28. Thompson, *History of Chatsworth*, p. 87.

⁸²⁵ Cited in Davies, 'Dukes of Devonshire, Newcastle and Rutland', p. 203.

Devonshire's gardens were not only modelled on those of Louis XIV, but approached them in magnificence. This was impact.

The Somersets also had the opportunity to demonstrate their magnificence to a visiting European dignitary when Archduke Charles, Habsburg claimant to the Spanish throne (the so-called King of Spain), stayed at Petworth en route from Portsmouth to London in December 1703. This was an event of great ceremony in which the newly-finished state apartments were put to the use for which they were designed. The Archduke was met by Prince George of Denmark on Queen Anne's behalf, and each of the principal participants: Archduke Charles, Prince George, the duke of Marlborough (also in attendance), and the duke and duchess of Somerset, paid a series of visits to each others' apartments, carefully calibrating the precise points at which they met and escorted each other in a display of respect and etiquette.⁸²⁶ In the evening, the archduke was entertained at supper, 'which was serv'd up with so much Splendour and Profusion, and yet with so much Decency and Order, that I must needs say I never saw the like', as gushed the anonymous author of the account published soon afterwards.⁸²⁷ This visit was of great significance to the Somersets, who renamed their state apartment in his honour, and hung his full-length portrait by Godfrey Kneller in the bedchamber in which he had slept.⁸²⁸ As with Tallard's visit to Chatsworth, there was an element of national pride at play, besides the opportunity to demonstrate their cultural prowess on a European stage.

⁸²⁶ Boyer, *History of the reign of Queen Anne*, vol. 2, appendix 3.

⁸²⁷ Ibid.

⁸²⁸ Alnwick Castle, Sy: H/IV/1/g.

Magnificence could also be expressed through connoisseurship, particularly in the acquisition and display of paintings and sculptures that were not readily available. The gardens at Chatsworth functioned as an outdoor sculpture gallery, with copies of some of the most famous antique and renaissance statues. These were almost as prestigious as the originals, since antique sculptures were extremely difficult to acquire outside Italy, nor were casts and copies widely available. Many of Devonshire's statues, described here for the first time, can be identified in Siberechts' large painting, and although it is possible that some may have been the artist's invention, at least some of the identifiable statues are mentioned by name in the building accounts, which supports the reliability of the painting as a source (fig. 6.1). The *Apollo Belvedere*, the *Farnese Hercules*, the *Dancing Faun*, and one of the sons of Niobe from the group in the collection of the Medici, are all visible in the sculpture garden before the east front. Elsewhere in the gardens were copies of the *Borghese Gladiator*, and *Mercury and Samson Slaying a Philistine* by the renowned sixteenth-century sculptor Giambologna, supplied by sculptors Richard Osgood and Jan Nost.⁸²⁹ The marble original of the latter was one of the most well-known statues in London. Made in Italy in 1560-2, it had been a gift from Philip IV of Spain in 1623 to Charles I (then Prince of Wales), who passed it on to his favourite, the duke of Buckingham, and the statue stood in the garden of York House until the early-eighteenth century.⁸³⁰ By displaying these sculpture, Devonshire demonstrated that he had the cultural knowledge to select the right models, and the economic and social muscle necessary to acquire them.

⁸²⁹ Then wrongly known as 'Cain and Abel', DCC CH37/2 fol. 90. Osgood supplied a lead cast of 'Cain and Abel' to Sutton Court, Chiswick in 1695, and further examples at Anglesey Abbey and Wimpole are both attributed to Nost. Mercury: DCC CH37/4 fol. 8. 'Mercury' <http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/454563> [accessed: 22 May 2019]. Gladiator: DCC CH37/3 fol. 50. 'Borghese Gladiator' <http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/130066> [accessed: 12 February 2020].

⁸³⁰ Giambologna, 'Samson Slaying a Philistine', (1560-2), <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/s/giambolognas-samson-and-a-philistine/> [accessed: 22 May 2019].



Fig. 6.1 Jan Siberechts, *Chatsworth House and Park* (detail of fig. 4.7) (1699, altered c.1703), oil on canvas. © The Devonshire Collections, Chatsworth / Omnia Art Ltd. Reproduced by permission of Chatsworth Settlement Trustees.

Siberechts' painting is also key to understanding how the audience for Chatsworth could extend beyond those few visitors who made the journey to Derbyshire. The sculptures are recognisable in Siberechts' painting precisely because Devonshire intended them to be so. Chatsworth's remoteness meant that Devonshire could not expect his gardens to be widely visited, but on display in London the painting could stand in for the real Chatsworth.⁸³¹ The forensic accuracy with which the house and garden are painted enabled informed viewers to appreciate the French-style planting in the parterres, Tijou's ironwork balustrades, and every individual fountain and sculpture. Devonshire commissioned the painting from Siberechts in 1699, with payment completed in July the following year.⁸³² However, he did not paint the north and west fronts of the house that were standing when the artist visited,

⁸³¹ There is no evidence that it ever hung at Chatsworth or Hardwick. The painting passed into the Russell family, from whom it was reacquired by the Devonshire Collections in 2017.

⁸³² DMC CH37/5 p. 6 & CH37/6 p. 8.

but as they would later appear after they had been rebuilt. It seems that Devonshire took the decision to rebuild these two fronts while Siberechts was working on the canvas, and instructed him to depict the house as though it had been completed. The painting has also been altered to include the later, longer iteration of the cascade, suggesting that Devonshire wanted it to show the latest developments in the house and gardens.

By contrast, when Leonard Knyff visited Chatsworth in September 1700 to ‘take ye prospect’, Devonshire gave him no such instruction to ‘future proof’ his drawing. In the subsequent engraving by Jan Kip, the Tudor west front that was still standing in 1700 is clearly visible (fig. 6.2). Knyff’s drawing was intended for a proposed volume of country seats, *Britannia Illustrata*, for which Devonshire paid him only £2, presumably towards a subscription.⁸³³ Devonshire probably did not realise that *Britannia Illustrata* would eventually reach a far wider audience than Siberechts’ painting, being widely reprinted, circulated, and pored over. Together with Colen Campbell’s *Vitruvius Britannicus* (1715), which also featured Chatsworth, it became one of the most influential disseminators of information about country house architecture and a source-book for aspirational builders and gardeners.⁸³⁴

⁸³³ DCC 37/6 p. 8. L. Knyff, and J. Kip, *Britannia Illustrata* (London, 1707). Subscriptions were collected at £10 per copy.

⁸³⁴ C. Campbell, *Vitruvius Britannicus: The Classic of Eighteenth-Century British Architecture* (London, 2007, first. pub. 1715)

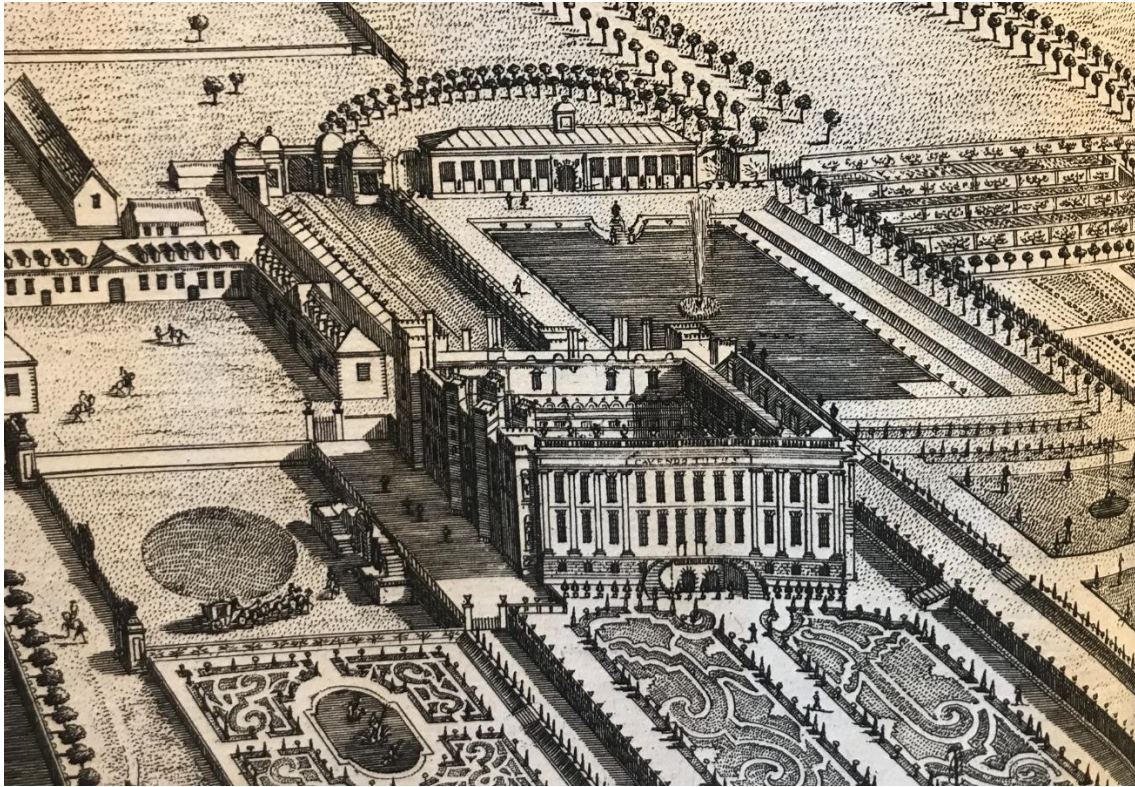


Fig. 6.2 Jan Kip after Leonard Kynff, 'Chatsworth House' (detail), from *Britannia Illustrata* (London, 1707). Image: Amy Lim.

Magnificence was clearly understood and appreciated by late-seventeenth- and early-eighteenth-century audiences. The term appears like a refrain throughout contemporary descriptions of the great aristocratic houses of late Stuart England, though less frequently after the first quarter of the eighteenth century, when tastes turned to a more pared-down classicism. No private house in England exemplified magnificence more than Chatsworth. This had always been Devonshire's intention, and according to architect William Talman, he first sent for him 'upon his intentions in a magnificent manner to rebuild Chatsworth house'.⁸³⁵ Although other houses attracted this adjective, including Petworth ('the magnificence of the Duke of Somerset's House') and Boughton ('a stately and magnificent

⁸³⁵ DCC CS1/70/23.

Pile of Building'), nowhere was lauded in such glowing terms as Chatsworth.⁸³⁶ For Daniel Defoe, it was 'indeed a most glorious and magnificent House [...] a Palace for a Prince, a most magnificent Building'.⁸³⁷ Bishop Kennet began his eulogy of Devonshire by declaring that 'He has in this County left a Monument of Beauty and Magnificence that perhaps is not exceeded by any Palace in Europe'.⁸³⁸ The highest praise of all came from Colen Campbell in *Vitruvius Britannicus*. He believed that Chatsworth, the 'magnificent Palace [...] for the Quality of its Materials, Neatness of Execution, rich Furniture, and all proper Decorations, is second to none in the Kingdom, and perhaps in Europe.'⁸³⁹ Devonshire's increase in wealth and status after the Revolution turbo-charged his ambitions for Chatsworth. He did not build his country house in magnificent style in order to achieve a dukedom, but because he had already achieved one, and magnificence, more than anything else, expressed what it meant to be a duke.

Dynasty

Another motive for art patronage was to invest in the estate on behalf of the dynasty. Under the systems of primogeniture and entail, most noble titles and their associated estates were passed down through a succession of first-born male heirs. Each title-holder held a life interest in the property, and although the estate income was his to enjoy during his lifetime, he could not sell or otherwise dispose of the entailed estates except by private

⁸³⁶ Boyer, *History of the reign of Queen Anne*, vol. 2, appendix 3, p. 12; *Royal progress*, p. 5.

⁸³⁷ Defoe, *Curious and diverting journies*, pp. 366-7.

⁸³⁸ W. Kennet, *A sermon preach'd at the funeral of the Right Noble William Duke of Devonshire* (London, 1708), p. 53.

⁸³⁹ Campbell, *Vitruvius Britannicus*, pp. 72-6.

Act of Parliament. These laws ensured that the lands, buildings, and their contents (termed 'chattels') were passed intact from generation to generation, and that the title and the wealth that supported it would be preserved in perpetuity.⁸⁴⁰

The system incentivised nobles to invest in the great houses on their estates, knowing that their achievements would be preserved. A magnificent house was both a personal legacy and of benefit to their descendants. In any case, personal identity was indivisible from dynastic identity. A nobleman's wealth and status was principally inherited from his forebears, and he was simply a link in the chain, though some (including Devonshire, Somerset and Exeter) saw themselves as particularly large and important links. As is still the case today with country houses that remain in the ownership of the ancestral family, noblemen saw their role as one of stewardship. At the least, they hoped to consolidate and pass on the estate in the condition in which they had received it. If possible, they hoped to augment the estate and title through political or military success, advantageous marriage, or shrewd investment. Expenditure on art and architecture — on houses, their contents, and gardens — was the reinvestment of their income into the estate, for the benefit of the dynasty. The improved house glorified its creator, who reflected that glory onto generations to come.

The psychology of George Becker offers a useful model for interrogating the subconscious motivations for aristocratic art patronage. Becker, writing in the 1970s, drew heavily on the traditions of Freud and Jung, and while some aspects of his work are now outdated or even

⁸⁴⁰ This idea is discussed at length in Stone and Stone, *An Open Elite?*.

offensive, his theories on the search for meaning in life still resonate. In *The Denial of Death*, Becker described man's urge to transcend the temporal limitations of his physical body by finding a symbolic *causa-sui*, or personal life project.⁸⁴¹ This project gives significance to man's actions during his lifetime, merging his individual existence into a 'larger expansiveness of meaning', either through personal achievements, or by dedicating his life to collective projects such as family or citizenship.⁸⁴² The *causa-sui* also functions as an 'immortality ideology', allowing the individual to live on after his physical death through his symbolic life. Becker considered the impulse for personal distinction to be in conflict with the cause of the greater unit, but in the case of patriarchs of noble dynasties, their achievements were simultaneously individual and part of a greater cause. As will be discussed at greater length in the final section of this chapter, Lord Exeter's *causa-sui* was more personal rather than dynastic, directed towards the accumulation of a great art collection and his own reputation as a patron. However, the dukes of Devonshire and Somerset integrated their personal legacies into their dynastic interests, rebuilding and furnishing their country houses as a commemoration of their individual achievements, but with an eye to the interest of future generations.

Dynasty was not the same as family, and some aristocrats were deeply preoccupied with the interests of future generations while being indifferent to the welfare of their flesh-and-blood children. Somerset was on bad terms with his eldest son and heir, Algernon, Lord Hertford and barely spoke to him for the last twenty years of his life. Devonshire

⁸⁴¹ E. Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York, 1973). Becker wrote entirely from a male perspective, apparently untouched by second-wave feminism.

⁸⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 152-5.

demonstrated no affection for his family. Besides the poor treatment of his wife described in the previous chapter, he was keen to be rid of his adult children, and was pleased when his new London house was not large enough to accommodate them all.⁸⁴³ His behaviour after the death of his son Henry in May 1700, when he angrily queried the funeral expenses and refused to give the customary benefaction to the poor, seems frankly callous.⁸⁴⁴ Affection had little to do with dynastic succession, though when the system of primogeniture broke down, it could be called into play in the appointment of a new heir.

As Kate Retford argued, this preoccupation with dynasty was particularly associated with the country house.⁸⁴⁵ Country houses were the jewel in the crown of the family estate. They were the symbolic home of the dynasty, where generations of the family had lived, built, entertained, schemed, and to which many nobles made the final journey home for burial in the parish church or closest cathedral. Devonshire's country houses played complementary role within his dynastic strategy. He presented Hardwick as the historic home of the Cavendish dynasty, in a deliberately antiquarian staging that emphasised the family's illustrious past and Hardwick's heyday under its builder, 'Bess of Hardwick', Countess of Shrewsbury and her famous detainee, Mary Queen of Scots.⁸⁴⁶ Devonshire had inherited many historic portraits that he displayed at Hardwick to link past generations of Cavendishes with the present. On his visit in 1760, Horace Walpole noted a large number of royal and family portraits with a particular concentration on the sixteenth century; he thought they were 'wretched pictures [...] not worth sixpence apiece'; they had more than

⁸⁴³ DCC W/B/5/16.

⁸⁴⁴ DCC W/C/331 & W/C/332.

⁸⁴⁵ Retford, 'Introduction', p. 5.

⁸⁴⁶ I am grateful to Jane Gallagher, Bryher Mason and Nigel Wright, formerly of the National Trust, for their insights into the role of Hardwick among the first duke's properties.

likely been there for many decades.⁸⁴⁷ There were several portraits of the countess of Shrewsbury and her husband Sir William Cavendish, the founders of the dynasty, and various Tudor and early Stuart monarchs from Bess' time including, naturally, Mary Queen of Scots. For Devonshire, the point of displaying these portraits was not their artistic merit but the identity of the sitters, demonstrating the origins of the Cavendish dynasty and its long-standing royal connections. It was also Bess and Sir William Cavendish who had bought the Chatsworth estate and built on it the substantial, richly-furnished, but now outmoded house that Devonshire was in the process of rebuilding. Their activities thus provided a precedent for his own actions. In renovating Chatsworth but preserving Hardwick, Devonshire both honoured and built on their achievements.

Chatsworth was to be the magnificent new seat of the dynasty, commemorating Devonshire's achievements and memory just as Hardwick enshrined those of Bess and Sir William Cavendish. It has previously been argued that the rebuilding of Chatsworth was precipitated by political events, but the chronology, laid out here for the first time, suggests that Devonshire's purpose was almost certainly dynastic. James Lees-Milne believed that 'In its palatial scale and novel style, Chatsworth was among the first great architectural creations consequent upon the political revolution of 1688', and was an assertion of aristocratic power in the face of a weakened crown.⁸⁴⁸ It has also been thought that Devonshire made the decision to rebuild Chatsworth while he was in political exile, lying low

⁸⁴⁷ P. Toynbee (ed.), 'Horace Walpole's Journals of Visits to Country Seats, &c.', *Walpole Society* 16 (1928), pp. 29-30; *Walpole*, vol. 9, pp. 297-8. Listed in full in the 1792 inventory, there is no indication that they were ever at Chatsworth or in London, DCC CH36/7/1A.

⁸⁴⁸ Lees-Milne, 'Chatsworth Derbyshire. III', p. 1040.

in Derbyshire after a clash with Colonel Colepepper at court that was bound up in wider disagreements between Devonshire and James II, a misconception that originated in Bishop Kennet's funeral sermon.⁸⁴⁹ This political interpretation of Chatsworth still holds currency today, both in tourist guides and recent scholarly analyses.⁸⁵⁰ However a close analysis of the phases of construction shows that while the building of Chatsworth was partly enabled by the financial benefits accruing to Devonshire after the Revolution, he took the initial decision to rebuild immediately after coming into his inheritance, rather than consequent upon any political event. This suggests that his motive for rebuilding was not driven by specific political considerations.

The Colepepper incident took place in late 1685, and although Francis Thompson, author of the definitive history of the building of Chatsworth acknowledged that on Devonshire's inheritance he found the Elizabethan building to be 'decaying and weake', he thought that the catalyst for the rebuilding was Devonshire's Derbyshire exile.⁸⁵¹ However, a statement made by architect William Talman after Devonshire's death indicates that designs for the new building were drawn up a year earlier. Petitioning the second duke for outstanding costs, Talman described how he 'waited and attended on your Graces Father in St James's Square and Gerrard street all most dayly for three months together, preparing and making several designs and Modells.'⁸⁵² Talman's reference to 'Modells' also raises the intriguing possibility that the new Chatsworth was originally planned as a whole (rather than

⁸⁴⁹ Kennet, *Sermon preach'd at the funeral of the Right Noble William Duke of Devonshire*, p. 139. Repeated in, for example, Davies, 'Dukes of Devonshire, Newcastle and Rutland', p. 29.

⁸⁵⁰ *Your Guide to Chatsworth* (Chatsworth House Trust, 2010), p. 4; Johns, 'James Thornhill', pp. 117-152; Ricketts, *English Country House Chapel*, pp. 192-5.

⁸⁵¹ Thompson, *History of Chatsworth*, p. 33.

⁸⁵² DCC CS1/70/23.

rebuilding each front in turn as happened in practice), as it is unlikely that replacing a single front would necessitate a three-dimensional prototype. From 1679 to 1684, Devonshire (then Lord Cavendish) occupied 3 St James' Square in London, but from 1685 (when he moved to Gerrard Street) it was let to a series of tenants.⁸⁵³ This places the initial planning in the winter of 1684/5, and indicates that the rebuilding of Chatsworth was neither an exile pastime, nor a move to consolidate a regional powerbase in opposition to the court, as has been suggested. Instead, Devonshire almost certainly initiated the rebuilding as a result of coming into his inheritance in November 1684, when he would have started thinking about how he would define his own tenure as patriarch of the dynasty.

Chatsworth was heavily branded inside and out with emblems of the Cavendish dynasty and the first duke's personal contribution to it. The family motto, 'CAVENDO TUTUS', was emblazoned in huge, gilded capitals beneath the cornice of the south front, flanked by stone carvings of the entwined Cavendish serpent, while the keystones of the windows below were mounted with the stags heads of the Cavendish arms. The west front (the principal entrance) was even more heavily embellished with Cavendish emblems. Some of the window keystones carried more serpents and stags heads, while others bore the first duke's cipher and ducal coronet. The central tympanum was filled with a carved stone relief of the first duke's arms, against a backdrop of military trophies, with his Garter, motto, and ducal coronet picked out in gold (fig. 4.9). His arms, Garter, cipher and coronet recurred throughout the interiors, appearing in wood and stone carvings, murals, ceramics, silver,

⁸⁵³ 'St. James's Square: No 3', in *Survey of London: Volumes 29 and 30, St James Westminster, Part 1*, ed. F. Sheppard (London, 1960), pp. 83-88. British History Online <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vols29-30/pt1/> pp. 83-88 [accessed: 18 July 2019].

tapestries and mirrors. They combined elements of the dynastic (the Cavendish stags, serpent and motto) with the personal (cipher and Garter) (fig. 6.3). The ducal coronet synthesised the personal and the dynastic, since it was Devonshire to whom the title had been granted, but it would pass to his descendants. Only in one place, the crest of a pair of mirrors bought from John Gumley in 1703, did the duke's arms appear impaled with those of his wife (in contrast to the fifth earl and countess of Exeter, whose impaled arms recur throughout Burghley), otherwise the emphasis was firmly on himself.⁸⁵⁴



Fig. 6.3 Antonio Verrio, detail of mural painting with Cavendish stags and the first duke's of Devonshire's cipher and garter (1691), Great Chamber, Chatsworth House. Photo: Amy Lim.

The mural paintings at Chatsworth that allegorize the events and consequences of the Glorious Revolution have been interpreted as a declaration of Whig principles, but they can also be read as commemorating Devonshire's pivotal role in the greatest political event of his generation.⁸⁵⁵ In the mural paintings and stone carvings of the hall, palm leaves and trumpet-wielding putti (an allegory of Fame) laud the duke's achievements. Chatsworth

⁸⁵⁴ DCC CH 37/6 fol. 89.

⁸⁵⁵ Peterson, 'New Golden Age'.

owed its magnificent form to the Revolution, and Devonshire ensured that his individual contribution to it would be remembered. After his death in 1707, he was buried in All Saints church, Derby (now Derby Cathedral) without a funerary monument, and there is no indication that he had planned one. Chatsworth was the real monument to his achievements, in which he created a new mythology of himself as a salient figure among the Cavendishes: the one who restored the throne to a Protestant monarch, achieved great honours, won a dukedom for the dynasty, and built a magnificent palace for the glory of himself and the future dukes of Devonshire.

If dynasty was important to the first duke of Devonshire, it was everything to the sixth duke of Somerset. The pride that inspired his soubriquet, 'The Proud Duke', was vested principally in the achievements and rank of the Seymour dynasty and his position as its representative. The dynasty's fortunes were secured by Edward Seymour, first duke of Somerset, who exercised immense power as Lord Protector and governor of the king's person during the reign of his young nephew, King Edward VI. The dukedom of Somerset was the second-highest ranking title in the peerage, after the duke of Norfolk, who as a Catholic was barred from taking part in court ceremony. Somerset never lost an opportunity to assert his precedence, or to remind all and sundry of the seniority of his title and achievements of his forebears. Despite the fact that most of his properties, and almost all of his income, came from his wife's Percy inheritance, he invested in the fabric and furnishings of his houses in order to aggrandise the Seymour name, with his efforts centred on Petworth.

Wolf Hall, the original Seymour family home, had long been derelict by the time Somerset inherited his title and small estate, and the principal Seymour house was Castle House in Marlborough, Wiltshire, excellent hunting country where he also had electoral interests. One of Somerset's first priorities after his marriage was to replace the small and outdated house. In February 1684, he commissioned a surveyor to draw up plans in preparation for building a new house, and construction began the following year, although the house, which was built in stages, was not completed until 1723.⁸⁵⁶ The new Castle House was modestly sized but architecturally fashionable, and its final form was closely modelled on William III's hunting lodge-cum-palace at Het Loo in the Netherlands (figs. 6.4 and 6.5). The balance between the centre and wings has been reversed, but the red brick construction, plain triangular pediment with its central oculus, flat-topped hipped roofs with tall square chimneys at each corner, cornices with widely-spaced dentils, and sashes of equal size on ground and first floors are all drawn directly from Het Loo. Somerset used Castle House as a hunting lodge, until he gave it to his eldest son Algernon in 1715 on the occasion of his marriage.⁸⁵⁷

⁸⁵⁶ *Records of Marlborough College*, pp. 47-75.

⁸⁵⁷ PHA 248.



Fig. 6.4 Marlborough College, formerly Castle House, Wiltshire. Image: Rob Purvis, Wikimedia Commons.



Fig. 6.5 Het Loo Palace, Apeldoorn, The Netherlands. Image: Zairon, Wikimedia Commons.

Somerset did not carry out any renovations to Northumberland House or Alnwick Castle, the great ancestral Percy property, though he scarcely used the latter due to its remoteness.

Nor did he refurbish Syon House, one of the great historic Seymour properties, which had passed into the Percy family through marriage in 1595. Instead, Petworth became the focus of Somerset's investment in buildings and chattels on behalf of the Seymour dynasty. It was an ancient Percy property, but unlike Alnwick Castle it was not indelibly associated with the

family's rise. Its convenient location, described above, meant that Petworth was the ideal property in which to create a magnificent new Seymour palace. Work began in 1685, almost immediately after the duchess attained her majority, releasing her immense wealth into Somerset's hands.⁸⁵⁸ She also released him from the obligation to take the name Percy, and he reverted to his Seymour name.⁸⁵⁹

Like Chatsworth, the rebuilt Petworth was badged 'Seymour' throughout, with Somerset's arms and emblems embedded into the fabric. The wings of the Seymour arms were placed over each stone window lintel on the principal west front, and Somerset's crest of a phoenix rising from a ducal coronet was carved on the central bay of each flanking pavilion. In the entrance hall, Somerset's arms, coronet, and supporters were prominently carved over the mantelpieces at each end. In the chapel, the theatrically-swagged wooden *trompe l'oeil* curtain above the gallery was practically an ante-mortem apotheosis of the duke of Somerset. Angels held aloft an enormous Garter badge encircling the Seymour arms, surmounted with a ducal coronet, raised over the head of the duke as he surveyed his family at prayer (fig. 6.6). The display of paintings at Petworth also emphasised the history and importance of the Seymour dynasty and Somerset's own prominent place within it. Remigio van Leemput's copy of Holbein's Whitehall mural hung in the Picture Room. Painted for the Seymour family in 1669, it introduced the figure of Edward VI (son of Queen Jane Seymour) where he did not exist in the original, and substituted the original mural's inscription with the royal arms impaled with the augmentation of arms granted to Edward Seymour, first duke of Somerset, a reminder of the family's royal connections. (fig. 6.7).

⁸⁵⁸ For an account of the rebuilding, see Jackson-Stops, 'The Building of Petworth', pp. 324-33.

⁸⁵⁹ Bucholz, 'Seymour, Charles'.



Fig. 6.6 John Selden, Wooden painted festoon curtain over the family pew in the chapel gallery, Petworth (c. 1692) © National Trust Images/John Hammond



Fig. 6.7 Remigio van Leemput after Hans Holbein, *Henry VII, Queen Elizabeth of York, Henry VIII, Queen Jane Seymour and Edward VI as Prince of Wales* (1669), oil on canvas. Petworth House, Egremont Collection. Image: © National Trust.

The grandest celebration of the Seymour dynasty at Petworth was the Carved Room. Grinling Gibbons' exceptional wood-carving has distracted scholars from the room's purpose, which was to glorify the sixth duke of Somerset and locate him within the Seymour lineage.⁸⁶⁰ Christopher Rowell reconstructed the original layout of the room, identifying which portraits hung where, and which carvings surrounded them.⁸⁶¹ Apart from a copy of Van Dyck's *Charles I on horseback*, most of the portraits were of members of the Seymour family. They included the duke's mother, his sister Honora, her daughter and granddaughter, and the duchess' mother. In prime position on the north wall facing the entrance were the imposing full-length portraits of the sixth duke and duchess of Somerset and their heir, Lord Hertford, by Riley and Closterman, and opposite them were full-length portraits of the duke's grandparents Francis Seymour, first baron of Trowbridge and Lady Frances Seymour. Grinling Gibbons' carvings, described in Chapter One, emphasised the symbols of Somerset's lineage and his Garter knighthood. Above the frames, the vast, spreading wings of the Seymour arms embrace the duke, his wife and his heir, heralded by the trumpets of fame (fig. 1.10). The ensemble of portraits and carvings was a celebration of the duke of Somerset's lineage and his position as one of the leading lights of the Seymour dynasty.

On 11 September 1744, after Somerset had spent half a century building Petworth into a magnificent palace to bequeath to his heirs, disaster struck. George Seymour, Viscount Beauchamp, only son of Algernon, Lord Hertford, and the ultimate heir to Somerset's title

⁸⁶⁰ For example, Beard, *Work of Grinling Gibbons*, pp. 38-41.

⁸⁶¹ Rowell, 'Grinling Gibbons's Carved Room', pp. 19-26.

and estates, died of smallpox on his nineteenth birthday while in Bologna on his Grand Tour. Algernon was Somerset's sole surviving son; Lady Hertford was forty-five and unlikely to have another child. Unexpectedly, Somerset faced the prospect of the title passing to a distant cousin, Sir Edward Seymour, and his own lineage coming to a full stop. The Percy estates were still his to bequeath, but were all but meaningless without a title. He was distraught and furious, unjustly blaming Lord Hertford, and bemoaning 'this most unfortunate loss of the only remaining hopes of continuance [of] the present issue in its originall Branche'.⁸⁶² Somerset was seemingly oblivious to the irony that he himself had been a distant cousin who had only inherited through the untimely deaths of several male relatives. Without a male heir, the dynasty, and with it Petworth, which he had hoped would become the new family seat, would come to nothing.

Somerset began to lobby George Grenville, Lord of the Admiralty (who would later marry his granddaughter Elizabeth Wyndham), to intercede with the king to create new titles in the peerage for his own branch of the family. He hoped that the earldom of Northumberland and barony of Cockermouth, two Percy titles, could be revived and after Algernon's death passed to his grandson Charles Wyndham, eldest son of William, third baronet Wyndham, and Somerset's daughter Catherine, along with the Percy estates, with the remainder to Charles' brother and sister. Not coincidentally, Wyndham was Somerset's favourite son-in-law, their bond forged through a mutual love of the turf. Unsurprisingly, Somerset's granddaughter Elizabeth, sister of the unfortunate Lord Beauchamp, was outraged at being

⁸⁶² PHA 16, Somerset to Lord George Grenville, [nd] November 1744.

thus disinherited.⁸⁶³ Eventually an agreement was reached whereby the estates were split between Somerset's grandchildren. The greater part of the Percy estates, including Alnwick Castle and Northumberland and Syon Houses, passed to Elizabeth and her husband Sir Hugh Smithson, who changed his name to Percy; they were later created first duke and duchess of Northumberland.⁸⁶⁴ But Petworth, Somerset's pride and joy, passed as he had hoped to his grandson Charles Wyndham, and the earldom of Egremont was created for that branch of the family. The dukedom of Somerset went to Sir Edward Seymour, but a new dynasty, with its seat at Petworth, was created, albeit in the name of the Wyndhams of Egremont, not the Seymours of Somerset.

Somerset intended the rebuilding and furnishing of Petworth to be his principal legacy to the Seymour dynasty. He did not erect a funerary monument to himself, but wished to be buried, along with his wife and sons, in the tomb of his ancestor Edward, first earl of Hertford, in Salisbury Cathedral.⁸⁶⁵ He hoped the magnificent mansion would be his own monument, for the benefit of future generations, and that his personal achievements would stand out like those of his forefather, Lord Protector Somerset. Somerset's life, personality and actions, and much of his art patronage, were moulded by pride in his rank and dynasty. But the system of primogeniture to which he owed his rank was also vulnerable to the vagaries of biology, and this was to be the undoing of everything for which he had striven.

⁸⁶³ Alnwick Castle, Duke of Northumberland Papers, Lady Betty Smithson to the sixth duke of Somerset, 29 April 1745.

⁸⁶⁴ J. McDonald, *Alnwick Castle* (London, 2012), pp. 19-20.

⁸⁶⁵ WSHC 1332/1/3/2.

Posterity

The notion that posterity is the ultimate audience for man's actions on earth is implicit in Becker's theory, but it was already a widely-cited concept in early modern Europe.

Furthermore, it was advanced as an important justification for building palaces, as Jean-Baptiste Colbert, First Minister of State to Louis XIV, advised the king:

Your Majesty knows that in the absence of brilliant feats of war, nothing does more to signal the grandeur and intelligence of princes than buildings, and all posterity measures them by the yardstick of these superb palaces which they construct during their lifetime.⁸⁶⁶

Posterity was not the same as heaven, and although Christian theology offers a strong immortality ideology through the submergence of the individual into God and the promise of eternal life, the two concepts were held in tandem. In *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*, Daniel Defoe asked, 'How can we answer it to God, to the Church, and to our posterity', implying that God and posterity were separate, parallel notions.⁸⁶⁷ A belief in eternal life in heaven did not preclude the urge to leave a mark on Earth that would extend beyond one's own lifetime.

To think of one's dynasty was to think of future generations, potentially enduring for centuries, but posterity extended that temporal horizon to infinity. For the fifth earl of Exeter, the balance of his motives was tipped away from the dynastic towards the personal, and the eye of posterity. Since he had voluntarily left the national public arena, the building and furnishing of Burghley, and the creation of a personal legacy as a great patron of the

⁸⁶⁶ Cited in T. Blanning, *The Culture of Power and the Power of Culture* (Oxford, 2002), p. 35.

⁸⁶⁷ D. Defoe, *The True-Born Englishman and Other Writings* (Harmondsworth, 1997), p. 144.

arts, became his *causa-sui*. The refurbished Burghley, with its sumptuous furnishings and unrivalled collection of contemporary Italian art, was one of the greatest artistic achievements of seventeenth-century England. His motives are evident not only in his emulation of the great European art patrons, but in the way in which he chose to be depicted in portraits and on his funerary monument. Exeter may have begun refurbishing Burghley and collecting art for the benefit of future generations, but it was ultimately at their expense, since Exeter's expenditure on art far outstripped his income, leading to damaging sales of estate lands. The principal legacy of John Cecil, fifth earl of Exeter, was therefore not to the Cecil dynasty, but to posterity.

In 1696, Exeter commissioned his portrait from Sir Godfrey Kneller in which he identified himself as a patron of the arts. It was part of a series of portraits that included the countess, their eldest son, and his fiancée Arabella Bennet, commissioned on the occasion of the latter's betrothal.⁸⁶⁸ They were probably intended as part of the suite of family portraits set into wainscot frames in the Brown Dining Room, where they were recorded in 1738, and still hang today.⁸⁶⁹ The portrait of the countess gives little personal insight. She is simply shown as an elegant aristocratic lady; Kneller and his studio turned out such paintings by the dozen. The earl's portrait, however, is much more revealing (fig. 6.8).⁸⁷⁰ His confident pose and direct gaze suggest a man who is self-assured and secure in his achievements, satisfied with the use he has made of his forty-eight years. At approximately

⁸⁶⁸ Only Exeter's portrait is dated but they appear to be a set. Annabella died in 1698. Burghley Collection PIC081, PIC076, PIC077 & PIC519.

⁸⁶⁹ BA EX 603. Now called the Billiard Room.

⁸⁷⁰ This portrait is incorrectly identified in the Burghley catalogue (PIC081) as Edward Cecil, fourth son of the fifth earl. However, Edward would have been around ten years old when the portrait – signed and dated 1696 – was painted. Facially, it also resembles Monnot's bust of the earl (fig. 3.8).

50" square, his portrait is almost a foot wider than the standard 50" x 40" half-length format, to match the width of the door over which it hangs. The additional width gives him an imposing air as head of the family and also allows for the incorporation of a statue of Minerva in a garden behind the earl's shoulder. Minerva was the Roman goddess of wisdom, medicine, commerce, handicrafts, weaving and tapestry, poetry, and the arts in general. Portraits commonly included iconographic devices to signal the sitter's achievements, and by choosing Minerva, Exeter drew particular attention to his patronage of the arts.



Fig. 6.8 Sir Godfrey Kneller, *John, fifth earl of Exeter* (1696), oil on canvas, Burghley Collection.

The earl and countess of Exeter's funerary monument refers to their patronage of the arts even more explicitly. They commissioned it while in Rome in 1700 on their final tour, but it was something they had been thinking about before leaving home.⁸⁷¹ In July 1699, two months before departing for the continent, Exeter took the prescient precaution of making his will, in which he directed that a monument be erected to him in the chancel of St Martin's church, Stamford, 'in such manner and of such form and fashion as I shall direct or my son William shall judge fit if I performe not the same myself before I dye.'⁸⁷² He considered it important for the monument to be as he directed. Monuments were used to record the deceased's achievements, and shape the way in which they would be remembered. Peter Sherlock has shown how funerary monuments were not intended to recall memory, but to create it. They were 'designed to be deliberate messages from the past to posterity [...] the self-proclaimed voice of the past'.⁸⁷³ Design, iconography, and text worked together to present a profile of the deceased that, it was hoped, would become the version of record.⁸⁷⁴ Some monuments were erected after death by the deceased's descendants, but by commissioning their own monument before they died, the Exeters took charge of the way in which they would be (or hoped to be) remembered. Their monument demonstrates that first and foremost they wanted to be remembered as patrons of the arts (fig. 6.9).

⁸⁷¹ All written sources relating to the monument refer only to the earl, but given the collaborative nature of their art patronage it is extremely unlikely that the countess was not involved in the decision making, especially as the monument is to both of them.

⁸⁷² TNA PROB 11/460/116.

⁸⁷³ P. Sherlock, *Monuments and Memory in Early Modern England* (London, 2008), pp. 1 & 5.

⁸⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 201.



Fig. 6.9 Pierre-Etienne Monnot, Funerary monument of John and Anne Cecil, fifth earl and countess of Exeter (1700-4), marble, St. Martin's church, Stamford. Photo: Amy Lim.

The monument centres on the life-size figures of the earl and countess in Roman dress. They are reclining on top of a large sarcophagus with massive lion's feet (a nod to the Exeter supporters) and a lengthy Latin inscription. The couple are depicted as private Roman citizens, leafing through the books that symbolise their civility and erudition.⁸⁷⁵ In any case, Exeter could not be portrayed in armour, or with the trappings of office or honours since he held none, and he had forfeit his right to wear peers' robes since his withdrawal from court. They are flanked by another pair of life-sized figures: on the left, Minerva, goddess of the arts, and on the right, the personification of 'Arts', identified (for the first time here) by her painter's palette and brushes, architect's square and compasses, and sculptor's chisels (fig. 6.10). She stands dejected, mourning the deaths of her great patrons. Behind the figures are a pair of funerary urns and a tall pyramid, symbolising eternity, on which is appended a cartouche with the impaled Cecil and Cavendish arms, topped with an earl's coronet. The figures are sculpted in pure white Carrara marble with touches of gilding, while the architectural elements are in white marble veined with grey. The figures are Italianate in style, and executed with a skill far beyond any sculptor working in England at the time. Hugh Honour grudgingly admitted that its 'precocious neo-classical leanings' were some twenty years ahead of the rest of England, which found at odds with the Exeters' patronage of 'such baroque decorators as Verrio and Laguerre'.⁸⁷⁶ In fact, the monument was the culmination of twenty years of patronage of contemporary Italian art, and was entirely in keeping with the Exeters' tastes and values.

⁸⁷⁵ Exeter had a large and prestigious book collection that awaits its historian.

⁸⁷⁶ H. Honour, 'English Patrons and Italian Sculptors in the first half of the eighteenth century', *Connoisseur* 141 (1958), p. 221.



Fig. 6.10 Details of fig. 6.9: attributes of the personification of 'Arts'.

The origin, sculptor, and design of the monument reinforced the message of the iconography. Besides commemorating their art patronage, the monument was also a major art commission in itself, through which the Exeters demonstrated their superior taste and access to the best in foreign art. Rome was the acknowledged European centre of classical and modern sculpture, and by sourcing it from a sculptor working in the city, they ensured they would be able to commission a monument of the highest quality. The papal funerary monuments in St Peter's church in the Vatican also provided a model for the Exeters' tomb. Popes were among the most prolific and influential art patrons of renaissance and counter-reformation Italy. In addition to the ongoing beautification of Rome's churches with architecture, frescoes, and altarpieces, papal funerary monuments were some of the most important art commissions placed by popes and their cardinal-nephews. Although they were not Roman Catholics, the Exeters commissioned a design that was derived from papal monuments, by association linking themselves with these great art patrons.

The earl and countess commissioned their monument from Pierre-Etienne Monnot, a Rome-based French sculptor who was at the time also working on the tomb of Innocent XI, commissioned by the pope's nephew Livio Odescalchi and installed in St Peter's in 1701.⁸⁷⁷ In his design for the Exeters, Monnot drew on the papal monuments of the first half of the seventeenth century. Gianlorenzo Bernini had established a new format for papal monuments with his monument to Urban VIII (1628-47). Born Maffeo Barberini, Urban VIII was a major patron of the arts, and the Exeters visited Palazzo Barberini during their time in Rome. Bernini's pyramidal arrangement, with an effigy of the pope seated above a sarcophagus and flanked by a pair of allegorical figures, quickly became the standard format for papal monuments.⁸⁷⁸ Alessandro Algardi reprised Bernini's arrangement in his tomb of Leo XI (1634-44) —notably, Leo XI was a member of the Medici family— and it is this monument that the Exeters' follows most closely (fig. 6.11). The shape of the sarcophagus, flanking figures, and cartouche with arms at the apex of the monument echo those of Leo XI's monument. The white marble medium also recalls Algardi's use of the same material, in contrast to the combination of marble and bronze used by Bernini, and by Monnot himself in his tomb of Innocent XI. Obviously, a secular married couple could not be depicted seated on a throne in the same manner as a pontiff. Margaret Whinney identified the source for the reclining figures of Lord and Lady Exeter as the Roman sarcophagus of Severus Alexander and Giulia Mammea; it was located in the city and had been engraved by Santi Bartoli in 1697.⁸⁷⁹

⁸⁷⁷ Enggass, *Early Eighteenth-Century sculpture in Rome*, p. 77.

⁸⁷⁸ Wittkower, *Art and Architecture in Italy*, pp. 150 & 269.

⁸⁷⁹ Whinney, *Sculpture in Britain*, p. 447, n. 15.



Fig. 6.11 Alessandro Algardi, *Tomb of Leo XI* (1634-44), marble, St Peter's, Rome. Image: Jordiferrer, Wikimedia Commons.

The importance of the monument to the Exeters is attested by the care and money they lavished on it. According to Pascoli, Monnot's biographer, Exeter took a close interest in its planning and execution, discussing drawings and choosing a design, then urging Monnot to begin work as soon as possible.⁸⁸⁰ While still in Rome he visited the sculptor's studio frequently to watch him at work, and did not leave the capital until the monument was satisfactorily underway, taking a copy of the design with him and writing regularly to check up on its progress. Perhaps the most telling detail is that Exeter left Monnot 'ben fornito di danaro' [well supplied with money]. By 1700, the earl and countess' debts were

⁸⁸⁰ Pascoli, *Vite de' pittori* vol. 2, p. 491.

overwhelming, with a long list of unpaid bills.⁸⁸¹ They could ill afford such an expensive monument, but pressed ahead regardless. The total cost is likely to have been well over £1,000. Although the amount of the deposit is unknown, the outstanding balance of 2,600 pistoles (£617 10s 0d at an exchange rate of 57d/pistol) was paid on the monument's completion in April 1704 via the Balle brothers in Leghorn, who also arranged for it to be shipped to England for a further £208.⁸⁸² This far outstripped any other purchases made on their travels. Exeter died in Paris in August 1700 on his way back from Italy, and by the time the monument arrived, the dowager countess had followed her husband to the grave. She died in June 1703 and was interred beside her husband in St Martin's church, where the monument was finally installed in 1707.

The monument's inscription was added after its erection, presumably by William Cecil as directed in his father's will.⁸⁸³ It dwells at length on the couple's learning, travels, and art patronage, and how the earl 'went abroad more than once; and from the most refined parts of Europe, brought home much knowledge of antiquities, languages and civil affairs.'⁸⁸⁴ It describes his choice to withdraw from court and public life in favour of living 'in ease and retirement [...] at his own country seat, elegantly, sumptuously, splendidly.' The countess is praised as 'the companion of his virtues and travels, and in a manner, of his studies'.

William, who was with his parents in Rome in 1700, also described how the earl, 'being ever mindful of mortality, when he was in Italy, whilst he thoroughly examined and as curiously

⁸⁸¹ A long list of creditors was settled from the earl's estate in 1704. NatWest CH 194/fol. 422r.

⁸⁸² NatWest CH 194/10 fol. 451r.

⁸⁸³ TNA PROB 11/460/116.

⁸⁸⁴ Translation by St Martin's church, Stamford. The original Latin inscription is reproduced in full in J. Bridges, *The History and Antiquities of Northamptonshire*, vol. 2 (Oxford, 1762), p. 581.

collected the works of choicest art, there he caused this monument to be made, where it could be most exquisitely done'. The monument's iconography, sculptor, design, and inscription work together to present a clear picture of the earl and countess as sophisticated patrons of the arts.

Although the Exeters' monument principally referred to their individual achievements, the Cecil dynasty was not entirely forgotten. It was intended to harmonise with the funerary monuments of two important figures in the Cecil dynasty. The first was that of Exeter's ancestor, Lord Burghley, in the chancel of St Martin's church. Exeter's will specified that his monument was to be of the same size as Lord Burghley's, and placed next to it, implying that he was of equal significance within the Cecil dynasty (or perhaps he was simply driven by considerations of symmetry and balance).⁸⁸⁵ The monument's cutting-edge continental style recalled that of Lord Burghley's son Robert Cecil, first earl of Salisbury, in the church of St Etheldreda, Hatfield, between Stamford and London on the Great North Road. He was an ancestor of both the earl and countess, since she was herself descended from the Hatfield Cecils. Robert Cecil was a renowned intellectual and art patron who commissioned his monument in 1609, three years before his death, from the immigrant Netherlandish sculptor Maximilian Colt. The black and white Carrara marble tomb with figures of the four cardinal virtues in classical Greek dress supporting a *transi* (double effigy) was derived from French engravings and introduced a Renaissance aesthetic that was virtually unknown in English funerary sculpture (fig. 6.12).⁸⁸⁶ Like the Exeters', Cecil's monument was a

⁸⁸⁵ TNA PROB 11/460/116.

⁸⁸⁶ P. Sherlock, 'Funeral Monuments: Piety, honour and memory in Early Modern England', DPhil thesis, University of Oxford (2000), p. 246.

commemoration of individual achievement rather than dynasty. It is likely that the Exeters saw Cecil as something of a kindred spirit, and had his monument in mind when commissioning their own.



Fig. 6.12 Maximilian Colt, Funerary monument of Robert Cecil, first earl of Salisbury (c. 1609-12), marble, St. Etheldreda's parish church, Hatfield. Image: Amy Lim.

As a member of the nobility, Exeter's art patronage was in part a demonstration of his status through appropriate levels of magnificent display. He may also have begun refurbishing Burghley and collecting art with the intention of benefitting his descendants, but over time it became a personal project, and an end in itself. Ultimately, his investment in art did not augment the family estate but actually undermined it through the burden of debt he created, since his expenditure on art was far beyond his means. The legacies totalling £32,000 from the third earl and countess of Devonshire were a substantial bonus but still nowhere near enough to sustain his outgoings on art, architecture and interiors. Eric Till

calculated that on average the earl overspent his income by fifty percent throughout the twenty-two years that he held his earldom.⁸⁸⁷ On his death, Exeter's debts amounted to £38,000. Although it was not unusual for the nobility to outspend their income, this level of debt was excessive and damaging.

Exeter ensured that his collection would remain intact by entailing it with the estate. In his will he repeatedly and emphatically insisted that his son and heir should not 'sell or Imbezle any of my Pictures & hangings plate & household stuffe Medalls Statues China Ware or Rarities or my Bookes', which were to be designated as heirlooms so that 'afterwards they may remaine and come [...] with my said House at Burghley.'⁸⁸⁸ Instead, their sons and executors were obliged to apply for two private Acts of Parliament to enable them to sell lands from the estate to settle the debts.⁸⁸⁹ Two home manors and 3,500 acres – most of the North Lincolnshire estate – had to be surrendered, besides further lands from William Cecil's Snape estate in Yorkshire.⁸⁹⁰ It was common practice to entail artworks as chattels, but not at the expense of estate lands, and this was far from the careful stewardship on behalf of future generations that was the expected duty of a titled landowner. It is interesting that the sixth earl and his brothers chose to apply for special dispensation to sell the estates, rather than sacrifice their father's collection. The countess also accrued her own debts, and her executors were obliged to sell many of her goods to settle them.⁸⁹¹

⁸⁸⁷ Till, *A Family Affair*, p. 2.

⁸⁸⁸ TNA PROB 11/460/116.

⁸⁸⁹ Parliamentary Archives HL/PO/JO/10/6/32/1788 & HL/PO/PB/1/1708/7An43.

⁸⁹⁰ Till, *A Family Affair*, p. 2.

⁸⁹¹ TNA PROB 5/2860.

Unlike her husband, her personal possessions were not entailed and could be disposed of, one of the many reasons why women's patronage has been obscured.

The refurbishing and furnishing of Burghley, and the amassing of a great art collection, was Exeter's *causa-sui*. It gave shape and meaning to his actions during his life, and defined the way in which his memory would be perpetuated for posterity. In this, he achieved his objective. The Exeters' enduring reputation as art patrons is not, in the end, thanks to their funerary monument, which attracts little attention today, and certainly not the earl's portrait, which has been wrongly identified as his son Edward.⁸⁹² It is the fabric of Burghley House itself and the Exeter's art collection, still largely intact and in the custodianship of his descendants, that sustains their reputation into the twenty-first century. Although the upholstery is long since worn out, the tapestries faded and fallen out of fashion, and some of the choicest pieces sold to pay death duties (*Andromeda* was sacrificed in 1958), the murals, wood carvings, cabinets, porcelain, and above all the unrivalled collection of seventeenth-century Italian paintings continue to attract scholarly attention and over 120,000 visitors a year.⁸⁹³ Thanks to modern price inflation for works by the artists patronised by Exeter, the collection did, ultimately, prove to be a savvy financial investment. However, since the artworks are now under the care of the Burghley Preservation Trust, they are effectively still entailed to the estate and Exeter's legacy to posterity is preserved.

⁸⁹² Burghley Collection PIC081.

⁸⁹³ *Burghley House Preservation Trust Limited Annual Report and Accounts 2018*, p. 6. <https://www.burghley.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Annual-Report-2018-FINAL-3.pdf> [accessed: 29 July 2020]. This figure excludes visitors to the park and events.

This chapter has challenged assumptions that aristocratic patrons principally used art for instrumental purposes: to climb the social ladder, gain political advantage, or demonstrate allegiance. This was certainly true for some, but not all. For the patrons studied here, the purpose of art patronage was much less specific. Building and furnishing great houses, laying out gardens, and building art collections was expected of the nobility. They reinforced their position at the apex of the political, social and economic hierarchy by displaying magnificence through the quantity and quality of their art patronage. Their patronage also looked to the future as much as the present. For Devonshire and Somerset, dynasty was pre-eminent. They were conscious of their place in the succession of patriarchs, and sought to build on the achievements of their predecessors for the benefit of their descendants. Besides commemorating their own achievements, their art patronage was an investment on behalf of future generations. Exeter's impetus was as much personal as dynastic. Although Burghley's interiors, furnishings and artworks could be considered to be a legacy to future generations of Cecils, it was amassed at the expense of the estates which supported the title. Exeter's choice to be depicted on his funerary monument as a private patron of the arts lays bare his priorities. Magnificence, dynasty and posterity were not mutually exclusive, and they motivated Devonshire, Somerset and Exeter in varying proportions. Nor did they necessarily preclude art sometimes being used for political purposes. However, for nobles who were less actively seeking social or political advancement, these purposes offer an alternative understanding of why art absorbed so much of the time, money, and effort of the late Stuart aristocracy.

Epilogue

On the drawing-room landing at Hardwick Hall hangs a large tapestry of 'The Reconciliation of Romulus and Titus Tatius' (c. 1699-1700), a scene drawn from the wars between the Romans and neighbouring Sabine tribe as recounted by Plutarch and Livy, with themes of betrayal, self-sacrifice and reconciliation (fig. 7.1).⁸⁹⁴ It is easy to pass it by in the gloomy lighting conditions necessary for its conservation, and there is, as yet, no visitor interpretation, since it does not fit easily into the property's Elizabethan narrative.⁸⁹⁵ Its fellow tapestries that make up the set have fared even worse: they hang in storerooms away from the visitor route, and two of them have been sewn together into a single panel, rendering them stylistically and iconographically incoherent. Their fate is not unusual for tapestries, which over the course of the eighteenth century yielded their status as the most prestigious art form to history painting, and remain an unfashionable and often-overlooked medium. Yet when the first duke of Devonshire acquired the *History of the Sabines* tapestries at the turn of the eighteenth century, they were the epitome of taste and exclusivity. The Sabines tapestries can also be seen as a synecdoche for aristocratic art patronage as a whole, since their design and the manner of their commission embody the themes explored in the previous chapters. The story of their commission, recounted here for the first time, weaves together courtly and continental influences, foreign travel, networks of family, friends, and associational culture, the collaborative nature of patronage, and the aristocratic preoccupation with magnificence, dynasty and posterity.

⁸⁹⁴ NT 1129463.1-3.

⁸⁹⁵ I am grateful to Jane Gallagher, formerly of the National Trust, for our discussions relating to the tapestries. The findings presented here have been incorporated into the Conservation Management Plan for Hardwick Hall and will inform future interpretation.



Fig. 7.1 Attributed here to Jan Jans II (weaver), 'The Reconciliation of Romulus and Titus Tatius' (c. 1699-1700), tapestry, wool and silk, Hardwick Hall (NT). Image: © National Trust/Robert Thrift

The Hardwick Sabines tapestries comprise four scenes: 'The Reconciliation of Romulus and Titus Tatius', 'Titus Tatius's Attack on the Citadel', 'The Retreat to the Palatine Gate', and 'The Abduction of the Sabines', the latter two now joined together. Helen Wyld and Terry Kilburn identified the source of the designs as a set of late-seventeenth-century painted silk hangings by Claude Bosquet that were in the French royal collection between at least 1672 and the 1720s, implying that the tapestries were woven in France.⁸⁹⁶ Although the scenes are different, the French silks also depict the Sabine histories, and the borders are the same

⁸⁹⁶ H. Wyld and T. Kilburn, 'The Reconciliation of Romulus and Titus Tatius' (2013) NT1129463.1 <http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/1129463.1> [accessed: 21 June 2019].

as the Hardwick tapestries, the only two known instances of these border designs. The borders contain arabesques, sphinxes and floral garlands, and in the upper corners, angels carry roundels with the first duke of Devonshire's cipher and coronet. In the two larger panels (those left whole), the top border contains Devonshire's coat of arms, encircled with the Garter and topped with a ducal coronet, while in the bottom border is a roundel with the Cavendish serpent and another coronet, replacing the arms of Louis XIV and the entwined double 'L' that occur in the French painted silks. Additionally, in the two larger tapestries, the French royal lion embraced by two putti has been substituted with a leopard, Devonshire's animal avatar in the Order of Bedlam (fig. 7.2). Apart from the link with the painted silks, and a date of manufacture pinpointed between 1694 and 1707 by the first duke's insignia, nothing has been known until now of when, where, or how the *History of the Sabines* tapestries were acquired by Devonshire. They originally hung in the Queen of Scots or Leicester apartments in the newly-rebuilt east front at Chatsworth, where they were noted by a visitor in 1705, until in the nineteenth century they were relegated by the sixth duke of Devonshire to 'antiquarian' Hardwick, where they have remained ever since.⁸⁹⁷

⁸⁹⁷ Taylor, *Journey to Edenborough*, pp. 34-5; W. Cavendish, sixth duke of Devonshire, *Handbook of Chatsworth and Hardwick* (1844) p. 187, cited in Wyld and Kilburn, 'The Reconciliation of Romulus and Titus Tatius'.



Fig. 7.2 Detail of fig. 7.1 with Cavendish serpent and leopard. Image: © National Trust/Robert Thrift

The *History of the Sabines* tapestries exemplify the benefits of looking beyond the activities of an individual patron or property to draw connections within wider aristocratic society. Bringing together the archival evidence of the Devonshire and Exeter families, it becomes apparent that the tapestries were commissioned on Devonshire's behalf by his brother-in-law and sister the fifth earl and countess of Exeter, as they passed through Paris in October 1699 on their way to Italy. Earlier that year, the interior fittings of the Leicester and adjacent Queen of Scots' apartments at Chatsworth had been completed, and Devonshire's thoughts turned to their furnishings. On 18 May, his receiver Aaron Kinton wrote to his Derbyshire counterpart James Whildon, 'my Lord is laying out money apace for Chatsworth [...] his Grace talks of a Journey to Fr[ance] where he designs to doe much, but takes noe

care of money.⁸⁹⁸ Since the signing of the Treaty of Ryswick in October 1697, the continent had once again opened up to travel and trade. Devonshire's perpetual cashflow problems (exacerbated by his persistent gambling habit) were temporarily resolved in September that year when he received a six-month salary payment of £730 for his court offices, though Kinton feared he would see little of it, 'because his Grace had a Designe to appropriate it to a perticuler use'.⁸⁹⁹ The 'perticuler use' must have been intended for a set of tapestries, although Devonshire's proposed trip to France did not come off; instead it was the Exeters who, two weeks later, embarked for the continent.

No bills or correspondence relating to the *History of the Sabines* tapestries survive, but circumstantial evidence strongly suggests that the Exeters commissioned them from Gobelins weaver Jan Jans II. They could only have been made by a highly-skilled weaver with access to the painted silks in the royal collection, and Jans was one of only a few possible candidates. The Exeters, who had patronised Jans in 1680, visited him again in the autumn of 1699. As described in Chapter Three, they passed through Paris on 21 October, stopping briefly to visit the weaver, with whom they placed a commission for a set of *Indes* tapestries for themselves.⁹⁰⁰ This meeting probably took place at the Garde-Meuble de la Couronne, where Jans showed them the *Indes* tapestries he had recently completed for the king. Since the painted silks identified by Kilburn and Wyld were also likely to be stored in the Garde-Meuble, the Exeters would have seen them there, and very likely placed an additional commission on Devonshire's behalf for a set of tapestries based on the painted silks. They may have taken delivery of the tapestries on their return to Paris the next year

⁸⁹⁸ DCC W/C/268.

⁸⁹⁹ DCC W/C/295. 18 months tax, £210, was deducted.

⁹⁰⁰ pp. 181-4.

and brought them back in their baggage, which would account for their being no record of their arrival in England, or their later delivery may have been recorded in the papers lost in a subsequent fire at Devonshire House.⁹⁰¹

As described in Chapters One and Two, the English aristocracy looked principally to the court for stylistic leadership, although the English court was itself embedded in wider European court culture, and despite their opposing politics and religion, the court of William and Mary was strongly Francophile in artistic taste. Devonshire sought to position himself at the forefront of European fashion by acquiring tapestries that were closely associated with the court of Versailles (though they were paid for from his English court salary). The *Sabines* tapestries were made by the premier weaver of the royal Gobelins workshops, to a set of designs in the French royal collection, and were possibly the only set ever woven to these designs, so they were luxurious, exclusive, and at the forefront of European artistic taste. It is not likely that the designs held any iconographical significance for Devonshire.

‘The Abduction of the Sabine Women’ was later the subject of James Thornhill’s 1707 mural painting in the west front saloon at Chatsworth, which Richard Johns interpreted as representing Devonshire’s support for the Glorious Revolution, and the peace-making intervention of Queens Mary II and Anne.⁹⁰² But when the *Sabines* tapestries were commissioned, the Exeters had no time to discuss such subtleties, and the subject matter was almost certainly dictated by the models available to copy in the Garde-Meuble. The

⁹⁰¹ Helen Wyld suggested that a reference in the Chatsworth accounts to a ‘Licence from the Treasury to bring the Hangings from Dover to ye Custom house’ in May 1700 may refer to the *Sabines*, but as this is mentioned in conjunction with ‘hangings bought in Holland’ by Lowman, it is unlikely. H. Wyld, ‘Seventeenth-century tapestries at Hardwick Hall: Sources and Iconography’, in Adshead and Taylor (eds.), *Hardwick Hall*, p. 219; DCC CH37/6 p. 24.

⁹⁰² Johns, ‘James Thornhill’, pp. 152-4.

tapestries' chief attractions lay in their costly materials, skilled workmanship, exclusivity and their association with Louis XIV. Their commission is a caution against reading too much political symbolism into artistic choices.

If Devonshire had commissioned a set of tapestries a few years earlier, during the Nine Years War, he would have had to settle for what he could get hold of in England, using one of the strategies outlined in Chapter Two. Perhaps he would have commissioned John Vanderbank to weave tapestries to French designs, like the Somersets' *Grotesques*, or he may have been able to secure a scarce import or second-hand set through a dealer or contact. But the former would have been less prestigious and exclusive, and the latter would not have been bespoke and woven with his arms. As Chapter Three has shown, travel remained the most effective means of sourcing the most desirable European artworks and luxury goods. Before 1688 and in the brief window between hostilities from 1697 to 1700, intrepid aristocrats like the Exeters travelled to the continent to purchase artworks and furnishings, enabling Devonshire to commission his *Sabines* tapestries by proxy. Travel gave collectors advantages of choice, range and price over the limited and costly imports available in England, and the opportunity to secure select works closely associated with foreign courts, while viewing the latest continental artistic developments.

Devonshire may have been the nominal patron of the *Sabines* tapestries, but a great many people had a hand in their acquisition, chief among them being Lord Exeter. For two decades the brothers-in-law discussed art and design, and shared artists and craftsmen as they rebuilt and furnished their country houses. Far from style being aligned with politics,

their opposing stances after the Revolution of 1688/9 had no discernible effect on either their personal friendship or artistic choices. The relationship between the Devonshires and Exeters was just one example of the many kinship, social, political, regional and gender networks that underpinned the commissioning and collecting of art, as discussed in Chapter Four. The leopard in the Sabines tapestries that replaced the lion on the French silks, surely Exeter's doing, also reminds us of art's place in associational culture. It was a stroke of inspiration to include this teasing reference to their convivial evenings with the Order of Bedlam.⁹⁰³ Sadly, the two men did not get a chance to laugh over it together. Exeter never returned to England; he took ill of a flux and died in Paris on 29 August 1700, on his way back from Italy. When Devonshire unpacked the *Sabines* tapestries on their arrival in England, and thereafter whenever he looked on them, they must have been a poignant reminder of his dead brother-in-law and friend.

Nor did Exeter and Devonshire act alone. In showing them the designs to choose from, Jans acted in an advisory role as he had previously, and the choice of the Sabine histories as a subject was in all likelihood arrived at through a discussion between weaver and patron. Devonshire's household staff would also have been instrumental in managing the practicalities, and when the tapestries arrived at Chatsworth it was probably Huet who unpacked and aired them, and oversaw their hanging. We have seen in Chapter Five that married women's patronage has often been obscured, and although she has left only the lightest archival footprint, Anne, countess of Exeter also contributed to the commissioning

⁹⁰³ Wyld and Kilburn suggested that the leopard may have referred to Devonshire's Bedlam avatar, Wyld and Kilburn, 'The Reconciliation of Romulus and Titus Tatius'. The fact that Exeter commissioned the tapestries on Devonshire's behalf confirms it. The leopard must have been at Exeter's instigation since Devonshire would not have seen the designs before the commission was placed.

of the *Sabines* tapestries. Besides being the link between the Cavendish and Cecil families, she was with her husband when they visited the Garde-Meuble in 1699, and was very likely involved in choosing the designs for the tapestries, even if she could not, as *femme couverte*, place the commission. When Exeter died before the *Indes* tapestries were completed, it was the widowed countess who met with Jans and instructed him to continue with the commission.⁹⁰⁴

Finally, what were the tapestries for, beyond covering a bare space on the walls? Despite the skill and artistry that had gone into their production, Devonshire did not only purchase them as art objects to be enjoyed for their own sakes. All three of the motivations outlined in Chapter Six, magnificence, dynasty and posterity, can be discerned in Devonshire's commission of the *Sabines* tapestries. The original silks glorified Louis XIV by proclaiming his magnificence as a great patron of the arts, and by copying the silks and replacing Louis XIV's arms and cipher with his own, Devonshire reflected some of that magnificence onto himself. He demonstrated his ability, as a wealthy, powerful and high-ranking noble, to access exclusive works of art closely associated with the court of Versailles. The tapestries, prominently branded with the ducal coronet and Cavendish serpent, became part of the entailed chattels of the Chatsworth estate, aggrandising it for the benefit of the Cavendish dynasty. But they also carried the first duke's cipher and the symbols of his personal achievements, the Garter and the dukedom, memorialising them for posterity as well as for future generations. As the patriarch, Devonshire's achievements would become part of the Cavendish family mythology, through which he would be immortalised.

⁹⁰⁴ BA EX 51/17. She was accompanied by one of her younger sons (not, as Jans mistakenly thought, her eldest son, who had remained in England), who would not have had the authority to instruct Jans.

The threads of influence and acquisition, family and friendship, collaboration and commemoration that run through aristocratic art patronage in late Stuart England were thus woven into the fabric of the *Sabines* tapestries. There are almost 300,000 visitors to Hardwick Hall in a typical year, and this set of tapestries has the potential to tell those visitors many stories.⁹⁰⁵ They speak of England's place in a Europe that was characterised by migration and interconnectedness, even through years of warfare. They show that country houses and their owners were not isolated, but deeply embedded in county, kinship and national networks. The aristocratic men who created these houses and their collections were not individual geniuses, but achieved what they did through collaboration with artists, household staff, agents, friends, and especially their wives. And the tapestries can also tell visitors that art patronage and collecting, then as now, was a source of pleasure and shared interest, but was also deeply connected with the structures of power, and with the desire to leave a legacy for posterity. The *Sabines* tapestries are not unique; there are many more such artworks in museums, galleries, and country houses throughout England that have the potential to tell similar stories. By bringing together the art patronage of just three couples, this study has opened a window onto the world of the late Stuart aristocracy. There are unquestionably many more such windows yet to be unlocked.

⁹⁰⁵ There were 288,799 visitors to Hardwick in 2019/20. *National Trust Annual Report 2020/21* <https://nt.global.ssl.fastly.net/documents/annual-report-202021.pdf> [accessed: 14 December 2021].

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PHA 260 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1682/3

PHA 261 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1683/4

PHA 262 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1684/5

PHA 263 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1685/6

PHA 264 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1686/7

PHA 265 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1688

PHA 266 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1688/9

PHA 267 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1689/90

PHA 268 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1692

PHA 270 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1695

PHA 272 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1698

PHA 273 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1699

PHA 274 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1700/1

PHA 275 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1701/2, 1702/3

PHA 276 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1702/3

PHA 277 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1703/4

PHA 278 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1703/5

PHA 279 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1704

PHA 280 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1705

PHA 281 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1706/7

PHA 282 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1707

PHA 284 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1708

PHA 285 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1709, 1710/1

PHA 286 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1711

PHA 287 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1712

PHA 288 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1712/3, 1713/4

PHA 289 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1713/4

PHA 290 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1713/4, 1714/5

PHA 291 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1714

PHA 292 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1715

PHA 293 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1715/6

PHA 294 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1716

PHA 295 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1717

PHA 296 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1717

PHA 297 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1718

PHA 298 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset 1718

PHA 300 Money received and paid for Her Grace the Duchess of Somerset from the 5th of February 1711 to the 25th of March 1714

PHA 321 Personal accounts of the Duke of Somerset 1682-1686

PHA 341 A book of Dixons disbursements and payment of servants wages for his Grace the Duke of Somerset for the year 1683

PHA 652 Receipted bills of the Duchess of Somerset miscellaneous

PHA 6263 Inventory of Goods at Petworth 1749

PHA 6268 Inventory of Goods in the House and domestic quarters [Petworth c. 1686]

PHA 6290 Agreements and accounts for wainscoting, brickmaking, building works, ceiling work, plastering and painting at Petworth House for the Duke of Somerset 1686-1697

PHA 9018 Contract between Charles Duke of Somerset and John Vanderbank of St. Giles in the Fields, Middx., tapestry maker, for 3 pieces of silk tapestry hangings.

Chippenham, Wiltshire and Swindon History Centre (WSHC)

WSHC 1332/1/3/2 Original will and codicils of Charles, 6th Duke of Somerset 1741

WSHC 1332/2/2/1 Plans of Cheveley House, Cambs.; An Inventory of the goods &c at Cheveley House Belonging to his Grace the Duke of Somerset taken March 12th 1736/37 by Edward Wood, Housekeeper

WSHC 1332/2/2/2 An Inventory of Goods left in the Lord Percy Seymour's House in St. James's Street [n.d., c. 1704]

WSHC 1332/2/2/3 Five inventories of plate: at Petworth and taken to London, at Newmarket and Northumberland House, Middlesex 1749

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CH 194/3 Child's Bank customer ledger

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CH 195/2/7 Loose document inside customer ledger

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PRO LC9/275 Lord Chamberlain's accounts: Great wardrobe. Bills 1675-8

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PRO LC 9/279 Lord Chamberlain's accounts: Great wardrobe. Bills 1689-90

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Sitter boxes: Lord Percy Seymour; Charles Seymour, sixth duke of Somerset; Elizabeth Percy, duchess of Somerset; John Cecil, fifth earl of Exeter; Cecil family.

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PI F3/1/6 Articles of agreement for the marriage settlement of the Earl of Ogle and Lady Elizabeth Percy; 10 March 1678/79

PW1 Papers of the Cavendish Family, 1563-1707, in the Portland (Welbeck) Collection

Stamford, Burghley House, Exeter MS (BA)

EX 15/B/29 The London Carpenters bill Measur'd by Mr Cheare, May 6, 1679

EX 41/82 Conveyance and Schedule of Gift of 1690 at Burghley House ('The Devonshire Schedule')

EX 51/3 Miscellaneous

EX 51/8 Correspondence, principally to and from Culpepper Tanner c. 1679-1683

EX 51/12 Pass for travel for Lord Burghleigh and William Cecill 1692

EX 51/13 Earl of Exeter &c. Passe 1693

EX 51/14 Receipts from Alexandre Souville for work for Lord Exeter

EX 51/15 René Cousin's memorandum of gilding done for Lord Exeter, 1694

EX51/16 Notes of plate at Burghley House, 1695-6

EX 51/17 Memorandum from Jan Jans regarding a set of four Indian tapestries ordered by Lord Exeter in 1700

EX 51/18 Inventory of goods at Burghley House in 1688. See also: E. Till, 'Notes to the 1688 inventory', unpublished manuscript

EX 54/05 333 Receipts and receipted bills of Antonio Verrio

EX 603 Inventory of goods at Burghley House in 1738

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