



- It is 1660, the English Civil War is over and the experiment with the Commonwealth has left the country disorientated. When Charles II was invited back to England as King he brought new French styles and sexual conduct with him. In particular, he introduced the French idea of the publically accepted mistress. Beautiful women who could catch the King's eye and become his mistress found that this brought great wealth, titles and power. Some historians think their power has been exaggerated but everyone agrees they could influence appointments at Court and at least proposition the King for political change.
- The new freedoms introduced by the Reformation Court spread through society. Women could appear on stage for the first time, write books and Margaret Cavendish was the first British scientist. However, it was a totally male dominated society and so these heroic women had to fight against established norms and laws.

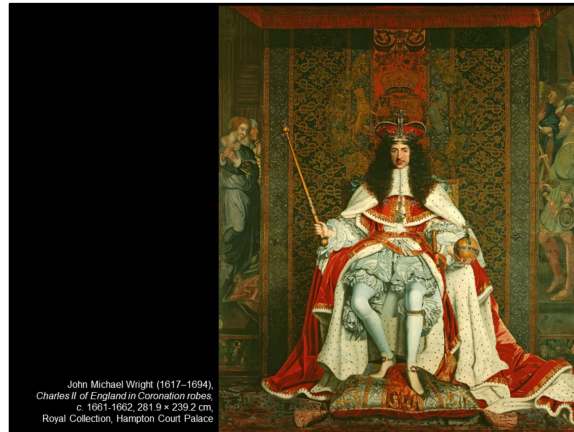
Notes

- The Restoration followed a turbulent twenty years that included three English Civil Wars (1642-46, 1648-9 and 1649-51), the execution of Charles I in 1649, the Commonwealth of England (1649-53) and the Protectorate (1653-59) under Oliver Cromwell's (1599-1658) personal rule.
- Following the Restoration of the Stuarts, a small number of court mistresses and beauties are renowned for their influence over Charles II and his courtiers. They were immortalised by Sir Peter Lely as the '**Windsor Beauties**'. Today, I will talk about Charles II and his mistresses, Peter Lely and those portraits as well as another set of portraits known as the '**Hampton Court Beauties**' which were painted by Godfrey Kneller (1646-1723) during the reign of William III and Mary II.
- Some historians believe the mistresses of Charles II had a significant impact but it is likely that they had more influence on court appointments than on policy. They had little or no influence during the reign of James II and William and Mary although there were significant women at court including, of course, Mary herself and later Queen Anne.
- The present Dukes of Buccleuch (pronounced 'Buck-loo'), Richmond, Grafton and St Albans descend from Charles in unbroken male line. **Diana**, Princess of Wales, was **descended from two** of Charles's illegitimate sons: the Dukes of Grafton and Richmond. Diana's son, Prince William, Duke of Cambridge, second in line to the

British Throne, is likely to be the first British monarch descended from Charles II. Charles's eldest son, the **Duke of Monmouth** (James Crofts or Fitzroy, later he took his wife's name Scott, by Charles's mistress Lucy Walter), **led a rebellion against James II**, but was defeated at the Battle of Sedgemoor on 6 July 1685, **captured and executed**. James was eventually dethroned in 1688, in the course of the Glorious Revolution. He was the last Catholic monarch to rule Britain.

References

- The most importance reference from which many of the facts, phrases and quotations have been taken is Brett Dolman, *Beauty, Sex and Power: A Story of Debauchery and Decadent Art at the Late Stuart Court (1660-1714)*. The book's biggest fault is that it has no index.
- Maureen Waller, *1700: Scenes from London Life*, an easy to read summary of life during the late Stuart period.
- Elizabeth Prettejohn, *Beauty and Art*.
- And, as always, Wikipedia and the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography.



John Michael Wright (1617–1694), *Charles II of England in Coronation robes*, c. 1661–1662, 281.9 × 239.2 cm, Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace

- Let us start with the newly appointed king, **Charles II** (1630-1685).
- He had been defeated by Oliver Cromwell in 1651 when Charles was 21 and he spent the next nine years in the courts of Louis XIV (1643-1715) of France, the Dutch Republic and the Spanish Netherlands. He returned on 29 May, 1660, his thirtieth birthday.
- This is one of the best known portraits of Charles II and it can be seen at **Hampton Court** Palace. Even in his coronation robes he looks rakish. The Restoration has been described as suddenly switching into **Technicolour** following the drab black-and-white of the Puritan Commonwealth period. Charles brought the sexual freedom, fun, licentiousness and depravity of the French court with him. He is wearing his sumptuous ermine-lined Parliament robes over his garter costume and the new St. Edward's Crown as the old one had been sold by Cromwell who regarded it as symbolic of the 'detestable rule of kings'. Charles restored the pomp and ceremony of monarchy and here he has added lavish ribbons in fashionable taste to add splendour to the traditional robes. The tapestry behind adds to the propaganda value by showing the *Judgement of Solomon* and by implication the wisdom of Charles himself.
- Charles's court officially and publically recognised his mistresses, for the first and only time in the history of the monarchy. This was at a time when a large part of the population was Puritan. Puritans embraced sexuality but only within marriage.
- Charles had no legitimate children as his wife Catherine of Braganza (1662-1705, queen 1662-1685) was barren but he acknowledged 11 (some say 13 some 17) illegitimate children by nine mistresses. including five by the notorious Barbara Villiers, Lady Castlemaine, for whom the Dukedom of Cleveland was created. His other mistresses included Moll Davis, Nell Gwyn, Elizabeth Killigrew, Catherine Pegge,

Lucy Walter, and Louise de K rouaille, Duchess of Portsmouth. As a result, in his lifetime he was often nicknamed "**Old Rowley**", the name of one of his horses which was a notable stud.

- The personality of Charles II is important if we are to judge the significance and power of his mistresses. His courtiers described him as impossible to read. He was shrewd and pragmatic although not a great intellect. As far as his adultery was concerned he thought that God would forgive a little fun. He trusted no one and so could not select advisors but, unlike his brother James, he was aware of the dangers of going too far in his policies.
- The artist who produced this portrait is **John Michael Wright** (May 1617 – July 1694), a British portrait painter in the Baroque style, is currently rated as **one of the leading indigenous British painters of his generation** and largely for the distinctive realism in his portraiture. Wright trained in Edinburgh and Rome and was known as an artist and scholar. He moved to England in 1656 and was a court painter before and after the Restoration. He was a Catholic and a favourite of both Charles II and James II but when James fled the country Wright's career was at an end, his health deteriorated and he died in 1694. Some scholars call him a Scotsman and other claim he was born in Shoe Lane, London. The Edinburgh register of apprentices records him as a 'citizen of London'.

Notes

- Charles is viewed by some as a benevolent monarch and by others as a terrible despot. Others see him as a lovable rogue. John Evelyn wrote, "a prince of many virtues and many great imperfections, debonair, easy of access, not bloody or cruel". John Wilmot, 2nd Earl of Rochester, wrote more lewdly of Charles:
Restless he rolls from whore to whore
A merry monarch, scandalous and poor.
- Charles was a patron of the arts and sciences, founded the Royal Observatory and supported the Royal Society, a scientific group whose early members included Robert Hooke, Robert Boyle and Sir Isaac Newton. He was the personal patron of Sir Christopher Wren, the architect who helped rebuild London after the Great Fire and who constructed the Royal Hospital Chelsea, which Charles founded as a home for retired soldiers in 1682.
- St. Edward's Crown was one of the oldest Crown Jewels and was named after Edward the Confessor and allegedly had elements of the crown used by Alfred the Great. During the English Civil War in 1642, Parliament sold the medieval St Edward's Crown, regarded by Oliver Cromwell as symbolic of the 'detestable rule of kings', and in 1661 a new crown was made by Robert Vyner.



Ballad, 'Rocke the Babie Joane', *Pepys's Ballads* 1.396-397, Magdalene College (see <http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/20184/image>).

Man: To thee I make [give] my mone[y]
O rocke the cradle Jone

Woman: So I may have my will,
I'll love thy Baby still

Ballad, 'Rocke the cradle, John', *Pepys Ballads* 1.404-405, Magdalene College

- **What was it really like for women in the seventeenth century?**
- This was a period when women had **new freedoms**, to act on the stage, run a business, publish plays and control household finances but women were **defined by their marital status**. The definition of **what constituted marriage** changed over the seventeenth century. **James I laid down the basis of what constituted marriage in 1604** and it included the exchange of rings and a public ceremony in a church.
- **The Puritans** had a different view driven by their dislike of any church hierarchy and they were in **favour of civil marriage** outside the church where you just needed to **make a vow** in front of a Justice of the Peace. However, the consequences of marriage were strictly enforced. They made **adultery a crime punishable by death**.
- When **Charles II** returned marriage **changed again**. The only person who could then conduct a marriage was an **ordained Anglican priest**. The Church ceremony reminded women that they were 'the weaker vessel' and must obey their husbands. The bride's father had to pay a large amount for the **dowry** and marriage was largely about the **financial transaction**. The husband had to have a good estate (land) or a good trade and **potential husbands advertised for wives with particular dowries**. Getting married was **expensive** because of the **new tax (1694)** on marriage, the dowry and entertaining guests. You could **avoid the tax** and the dowry by getting married on the **black market**. The centre of this was **around the Fleet** and you could then pay extra to get married at any time and on any day and you received a **(fake) certificate**. You could **even backdate** the date of the marriage to **legitimise a child**. Church weddings were public and between 8:00am and 12:00 noon on Sunday and many couples wished to **marry in secret** to avoid those who would **try to get money** from the marriage by, for example, creating a racket below their window until paid.
- Daniel Defoe in *Moll Flanders* wrote, '**Nothing but money commends a women**'.

Women were treated **like livestock** and wives could be **sold at public market** although the **practice was illegal** and **wealthy women could be kidnapped and married** without their consent.

- **Aristocrats married young** but poorer people married in their **early 20s** in 1600 but this changed to their **late 20s** by 1700. In towns there was an **excess of women** and in rural areas an excess of men. One reason was that **women travelled looking for work** and would spend a year weaving, sewing, housekeeping or one of many other female occupations. However, women's freedom was limited as they were still regarded as inferior to men.
- The **illegitimacy rate was very low** in the late 1600s, the **lowest it has ever been**. In many areas it was 1 in 10 and in some areas only **1 in 100 children were illegitimate**. One vicar wrote in his diary that for the last 40 years few young men were drunk and **no illegitimate children** were born in the parish.

Notes

- Ballad, 'Rocke the Babie Joane', Magdalene College, Pepys's Ballads 1.396-397 (see <http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/20184/image>). A young man's **wife refuses to look after a child he brings home** after the mother died. The child is one '**he got it on an other**'. As it is his child **the parish insists** he look after it so he appeals to his wife. His wife says she will never love him as she did. He says he loved the child's mother but will never love another woman. She says it would be to **her discredit** because no other woman had ever done it but he says it will be to **her commendation** if she looks after the child. She says 'I doubt I shall be forced, From thee to bee divorced.' He says he will love her better if she does it. She **finally agrees** his argument has 'chang'd my disposition' and agrees to look after the child 'as well as may be' as long as he agrees to '**goe no more astray**'.
- In **another ballad**, 'Rocke the cradle, John', Magdalene College - Pepys 1.404-405 (see <http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/ballad/20190/image>) the **woman is in control and manipulates a young man from the country**. The young man comes to London and woos a woman but she rejects the man as she says she wishes to die a virgin. She explains to John that many men tried to woo her (Harry, William, Thomas, Richard, Humphrey). He says '**My heart doth fry in Cupid's fire**.' She then knows she has **hooked a 'foole' as 'her belly [was] wonderous round**'. She gives him **many hard tasks** such as cooking her breakfast and cleaning her gowne and shoes. She tells him that when they have a child he must look after it and feed it and 'lay the young one in the Cradle, whilst I sing merrily'. **He agrees and they are married**. The **same month** she is taken to bed and the **midwife brings in a son and a daughter**. **He accepts the children as his own** and is reassured by the midwife that they are his. The reader is warned about coming to London and being fooled like this country lad who 'Within a moneth was made a Dad'.
- The man is **shown as a cuckold**, a word derived from the Italian *cornuto* in the fifteenth century which is ultimately descended from the Latin *cornu*, meaning horn, as in cornet or unicorn. The man in the woodcut wears a hat with two horns to signify he is a cuckold. Another term for cuckold was **skimmington** and the husband and wife would be made to ride through the town backwards on a horse while their neighbours banged kettles and saucepans. It was much worse if the husband knew and did

nothing or who encouraged his wife to take lovers for profit, the man was called a **wittol** and the wife a wittee. An adulterous wife might also be called a **bed-swerver** or **a jilt**. If it was the husband who had committed **adultery** the wife was said to **wear the willow**, a willow tree being traditionally a **symbol of grief**.



Anon, Interior of a London Coffee House, 1695-1700 (falsely inscribed 'A.S. 1668')

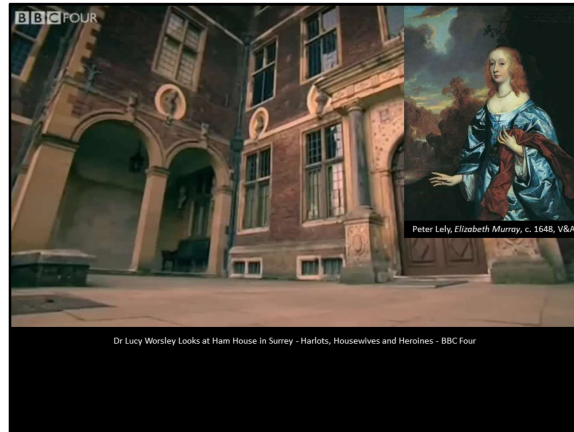
- During the Civil War many **women wrote tracts and broadsheets** and participated in the debate. Those few rights were fought over by women in the courts, for example, a woman's right to inherit her husband's business. We know that about **10% of business insured by Sun Fire were owned by women** and this anonymous painting shows a **coffee house run by a woman**. This fashionable new drink was an indication of the growing economy and women were integral to the food and drink trades but they were **not allowed to enter coffee houses as customers**.
- The situation was **different at Court** which was not typical of society at large. **Female beauty was prized** and this gave certain women an influence over Court affairs.
- **Pamphlets**, like early newspapers circulated information **about the Court** and the mistresses among the new middling class. **Charles II was furious** with the pamphlets but he became an expert at spin and enjoyed the title of '**the Merry Monarch**'. Charles became the longest serving seventeenth-century monarch.
- By the end of the seventeenth century there were towns where over **half the population were single women**. This was because the **Civil War had decimated the men** and there were **more women in the towns** and more men in the countryside because of the types of employment available. The surfeit of women meant that **many did not marry and the term 'spinster' and 'old maid' started to be used** for the first time. The old maid became a stock character in ballads such as 'The Old Maid Mad for a Husband'. In this ballad she manipulates the men to achieve what she wants and in the end she gets a young lover, keeps her money and doesn't marry.
- The marriage of **William Cavendish**, Duke of Newcastle and **Margaret Lucas** (writer and scientist) was an exception and became a type of role model for emancipated women. It was a **marriage of equals carried out for love** and Margaret wrote a book (*A True Relation of my Birth, Breeding, and Life*, 1656) describing it which gave rise to debate and criticism of both Margaret and William for allowing his wife to write such a book. In 1666 she published *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy* and five other books on natural philosophy (science). She published twenty one books including over a dozen original works and her utopian romance, *The Blazing World* (1666) is one of the first examples of

science fiction.

- **The first daily newspaper**, *The Daily Courant*, was published in 1702 by **Elizabeth Mallet**. It was a single page with advertisements on the back that contained foreign news and no editorial comment. The newspaper's offices were at Fleet Bridge, now Ludgate Circus, at the eastern end of Fleet Street.

Notes

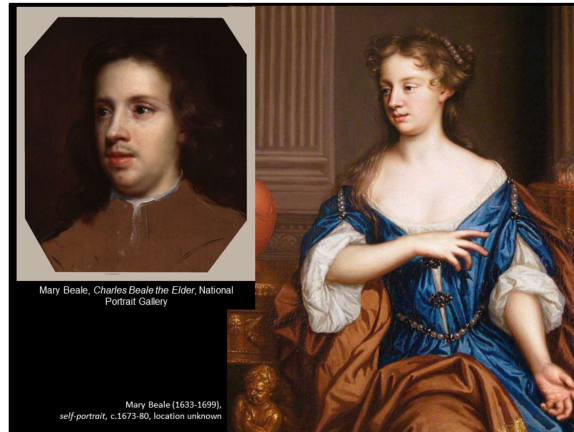
- 'Mounting a few steps, we made our way into a big room which was equipped in an old-fashioned way. There was a rabble going hither and thither, reminding me of a swarm of rats in a ruinous cheese-store. Some came, others went; some were scribbling, others were talking; some were drinking (coffee), some smoking, and some arguing; the whole place stank of tobacco like the cabin of a barge. On the corner of a long table, close by the armchair, was lying a Bible . . . Besides it were earthenware pitchers, long clay pipes, a little fire on the hearth, and over it the large coffee-pot. Beneath a small book-shelf, on which were bottles, cups, and an advertisement for a beautifier to improve the complexion, was hanging a parliamentary ordinance against drinking and the use of bad language. The walls were decorated with gilt frames, much as a smithy is decorated with horseshoes.' (Ned Ward, *London Spy*, quoted in Ellis, *Penny Universities*).
- **Lucy Worsley** in *Harlots, Housewives and Heroines* (BBC Four) asked the question, '**did things get better for women?**' Of course, history doesn't work in straight lines, and the answer is **yes... and no**. The potential rewards for being one of Charles II's 'harlots' were considerable. You could **win enormous political influence**, a **dukedom for your children**, **financial security**. You might even, like Barbara Villiers, end up with Hampton Court Palace as a retirement home. She was powerful enough to depose a government minister like the Earl of Clarendon, and self-confident enough to be unfaithful even to the king'. However, **it was not emancipation** but certain opportunities that opened up for **beautiful women** who were willing to **sleep with the king**. Outside court women were **defined by their marital status**, 'maid' (not yet married), a wife or a widow. **Only widows were allowed to control their own money**. A married woman was head of the household and **managed the servants** and the household finances and affairs. **Women's health improved**, medical textbooks for midwives appeared and **forceps saved many lives**. However, **male doctors kept the trick of using them secret** and started to **medicalize delivery, putting women on their backs to give birth** for the first time. A few women became authors and Aphra Behn (d. 1689) was a playwright, poet, translator and fiction writer and the only woman until the 20th century to write (in her poem, *The Disappointment*) about erectile dysfunction. She kept her life secret and so not much is known about her. Even her name is shrouded in mystery and during her lifetime she was known as Ann Behn, Mrs Bean, agent 160 (her codename when she was a spy) and Astrea.



Dr Lucy Worsley Looks at Ham House in Surrey - *Harlots, Housewives and Heroines* - BBC Four

Peter Lely, *Elizabeth Murray*, c. 1648, V&A, painted when she was 22

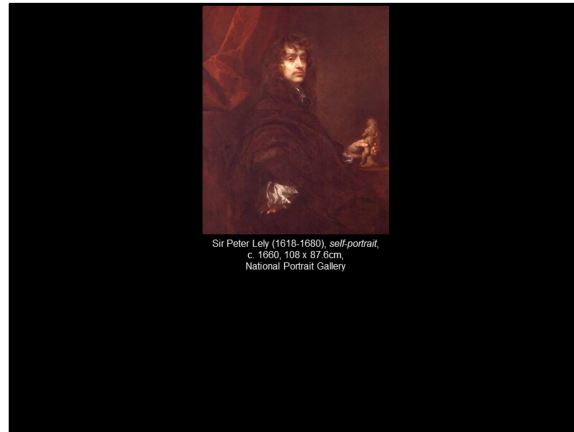
- One famous woman of the period was **Elizabeth Maitland**, Duchess of Lauderdale (née Murray; 1626-1698), an influential Scottish noblewoman. When her father died in 1655 she inherited his titles and became **Countess of Dysart** in her own right and later, through marriage, the Duchess of Lauderdale. **She is famous for the political influence she held**, which was unusual for women of the period, and for her support for Charles II during his exile, as a member of the **secret organisation** known as the **Sealed Knot**. The six founder members made eight attempts to bring about the restoration between 1652 and 1659. In 1660, when Charles II resumed the throne, he **rewarded Elizabeth with an annual pension of £800**. Her enemies **accused her of witchcraft** because of her political influence, a **common accusation** used to attack women who refused to conform.
- She married Lionel Tollemache (pronounced 'toll-mash') in 1648 and she had eleven children, five of whom survived into adulthood.
- Tollemache died in France in 1669 and it is believed she became the mistress of **John Maitland**, 1st Duke of Lauderdale, whom she married in 1672 when his wife died. They became known for their wealth, influence and extravagance.
- **She died aged 72 at Ham House** and is buried in Petersham Parish Church.



Mary Beale (1633-1699), *self-portrait*, c.1673-80, location unknown

Mary Beale, *Charles Beale the Elder*, National Portrait Gallery

- Another successful woman was Mary Beale (née Cradock), the **first professional female English painter** and one of the most important portrait painters of 17th century England.
- She became very popular after 1670 and took **inspiration from Lely**. She ran a successful business in Bury St Edmunds and was **assisted by her husband and son**.
- **Her father was an amateur painter** and she **knew Peter Lely** growing up. She married Charles Beale a cloth merchant from London and an amateur painter. She became semi-professional in the 1650s and 1660s working from home, first in Covent Garden and then Fleet Street.
- The family **moved to Hampshire** for five years for financial reasons as he husband lost his job as patent clerk and also because of the Great Plague. She returned and set up a **studio in Pall Mall**, with her husband mixing her paints and keeping her accounts. **She became successful and renewed her acquaintance with Peter Lely but her work became unfashionable after his death in 1680**. She died in 1699 in Pall Mall and is buried in St James's Piccadilly.

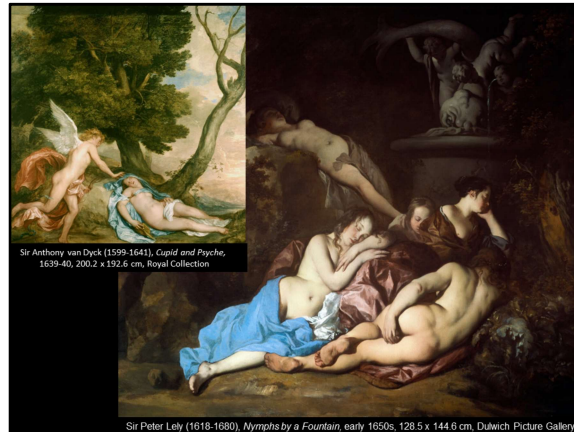


Sir Peter Lely (1618-1680), *self-portrait*, c. 1660, 108 x 87.6cm, National Portrait Gallery

- However, it was a man's world and the leading artist were men.
- This is Peter Lely (pronounced 'leelee'), born **Pieter van der Faes** (pronounce 'Farce') to Dutch parents. He adopted the surname Lely (or Lilly) from a heraldic lily (the Dutch for 'lily' is 'lelie') on the gable of the house where his father was born.
- He **arrived in London in 1641**, aged 23, the year **Anthony van Dyck died** and he replaced him as **court painter to Charles I**.
- He was seen as Van Dyck's successor and was keen to show he was. He was also inspired by Italian Mannerist artists such as Parmigiano regarding the distortion of strict classical rules to achieve a more sensuous and graceful line.
- Always conscious of his position, Lely conducted himself in a lordly manner; Samuel Pepys found him a "**mighty proud man, and full of state.**" He lived well and accumulated an impressive art collection.
- When he arrived in England he did not want to be a portrait artist. His early paintings are religious and mythological, such as this next one at Dulwich Picture Gallery...

Notes

- A court painter was an artist who painted for the members of a royal or noble family, sometimes on a fixed salary and on an exclusive basis where the artist was not supposed to undertake other work. The appointment freed them from the restrictions of local painters' guilds. In England the Serjeant Painter carried out decorative work and temporary works for entertainment and the King's Painter (or Queen's) focused on portraits.



Sir Peter Lely (1618-1680), *Nymphs by a Fountain*, early 1650s, 128.5 x 144.6 cm, Dulwich Picture Gallery
 Sir Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641), *Cupid and Psyche*, 1639-40, 200.2 x 192.6 cm, Royal Collection

- Peter Lely (1618-1680) came to the UK in 1641, aged 23, as a painter of mythological and religious scenes. This is his **most famous non-portrait**, *Nymphs by a Fountain*, which was painted after Lely arrived in **Puritan England** during the Commonwealth period. It is likely it was commissioned for the home of a private patron. Its reference to a famous work by Van Dyck would have made it acceptable as a mythological scene. The naked and semi-naked female figures demonstrate another role for women, as the object of the male gaze. The reason such paintings were acceptable was that they reference a classical scene although in this case it is not a particular story from Greek mythology but a scene that is associated with the Classical through the sculptures in the background and the use of the word 'Nymphs' in the title. The Van Dyck, however, references a particular story from Ovid's *Metamorphoses* in which Cupid and Psyche overcome many obstacles in order to achieve a marriage in the realm of the gods.

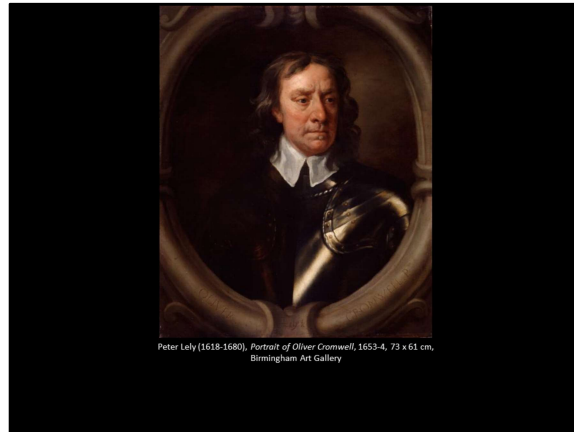
Notes

- **Dulwich Picture Gallery** website: *Nymphs at a Fountain* is a rare example of Lely's early explorations in **narrative painting**, executed in the years following his arrival in England before he began to focus his career almost exclusively on portraiture. The idyllic pastoral setting, the large format and the rich, shimmering colours attest to Lely's recent exposure to the work of 16th-century Venetian artists such as **Titian and Giorgione** in the collection of Charles I, which was sold at public auction in 1649. Although the individually sketched figures remain somewhat awkwardly assembled across the canvas, the young artist's newfound confidence in depicting the female nude, visible here in the softness of the rounded forms against the shining crispness of the satin, was a direct result of Lely drawing from the live model in his studio.

- By alluding to the great narratives of the Bible and Classical mythology, Lely here declares his **intention to emulate** the exceptional career of his recent predecessor in London, Anthony **Van Dyck**. Indeed, the recumbent pose of the nymph in the left foreground is adapted from **Van Dyck's *Cupid & Psyche***, now in the Royal Collection, London, which **Lely himself owned** between c.1654 and 1660. Rather than depicting a particular story, however, *Nymphs by a Fountain* presents a more generalised vision of Arcadian pleasure and female beauty, a scene which **carries erotic overtones** as the viewer is invited to gaze voyeuristically upon the sleeping nymphs. Such a theme serves as a marked contrast to the contemporary turmoil of the **English Civil War (1642–1651)** and its aftermath, a fact which, along with the unusual dimensions, would suggest that this painting was specifically commissioned for the home of a **private patron** rather than for the open market.
- **Peter Lely: 101 Paintings, Fabien Newfield.** “Sir Peter Lely (1618 – 1680) was a painter of **Dutch origin**, whose career was nearly **all spent in England**, where he became the **dominant portrait painter** to the court. His early English paintings, mainly **mythological** or **religious** scenes, or portraits set in a pastoral landscape, show influences from Anthony **van Dyck** and the Dutch baroque. Lely's portraits were well received, and he **succeeded Anthony van Dyck** as the most fashionable portrait artist in England. He became a freeman of the Painter-Stainers' Company in 1647 and was **portrait artist to Charles I**. His talent ensured that his career was **not interrupted by Charles's execution**, and he **served Oliver Cromwell**, and Richard Cromwell. After the English **Restoration** in 1660, Lely was appointed as **Charles II's Principal Painter in Ordinary in 1661**. Demand was high, and Lely and his large workshop were **prolific**. After Lely painted a sitter's **head**, Lely's pupils would often complete the portrait in one of a series of **numbered poses**. As a result Lely is the first English painter who has left “an **enormous mass of work**”, although the quality of studio pieces is variable. Among his most famous paintings are a series of 10 portraits of ladies from the Royal court, known as the “**Windsor Beauties**”; a similar series for Althorp; a series of 12 of the admirals and captains who fought in the Second Anglo-Dutch War, known as the “**Flagmen of Lowestoft**” (National Maritime Museum, Greenwich); and his *Susannah and the Elders* at Burghley House. His most famous non-portrait work is probably *Nymphs by a Fountain*.”
- **Royal Collection website:** This is the only surviving mythological painting from Van Dyck's employment as Charles I's court artist. It may be one of a series of canvases illustrating the story of Cupid and Psyche ordered for the Queen's House at Greenwich. This project, which involved Jacob Jordaens and Sir Peter Paul Rubens, was never completed - which may explain the painting's lack of frame and finish. On the other hand, the painting may have been made as part of the marriage celebrations of Princess Mary and William II of Orange, April-

May 1641. Van Dyck's mistress, Margaret Lemon, may have been the model for Psyche.

- In classical mythology, Venus, jealous of Psyche's beauty, set her a number of tasks, the last of which was to bring her a small portion of Proserpine's beauty from Hades in an unopened casket. Psyche, overcome by curiosity, opened it and released not beauty, but sleep, from which she is roused by Cupid. Psyche represents earthly beauty, while Cupid is Desire aroused by her beauty.



Peter Lely (1618-1680), *Portrait of Oliver Cromwell*, 1653-4, 76.2 x 62.9 cm, Birmingham Art Gallery

- Lely's painting ability meant that he was appointed as official painter by Charles I. He made the transition from the Royalist court to the strict Commonwealth period of Oliver Cromwell. He was also painter for his son Richard Cromwell and made the transition again to become court painter to Charles II (b. 1630, reigned 1660-1685).
- Was the famous instruction to paint Oliver Cromwell 'warts and all' ('Remark all these roughnesses, pimples, warts, and everything as you see me.') given to **Peter Lely** or to **Samuel Cooper**? Cooper was a miniaturist but did paint Oliver Cromwell with large wart. It was recorded by Horace Walpole (1717-1797, art historian, creator of Strawberry Hill and son of the first Prime Minister Robert Walpole) *Anecdotes of Painting in England* (1763) as "**Mr Lely, I desire you would use all your skill to paint my picture truly like me, and not flatter me at all; but remark all these roughnesses, pimples, warts, and everything as you see me; otherwise I will never pay a farthing for it.**" Walpole adds that it was reported by Sheffield, Duke of Buckingham who was told by one of Cromwell's officers, Captain Winde.
- After the **Restoration** **Lely was appointed as Charles II's Principal Painter in Ordinary in 1661**, paid £200 a year, the same as Van Dyck. Lely had a large workshop and his assistants often completed the work. There are therefore thousands of 'Lely' paintings in country houses that may have seen little of Lely's brush. The quality therefore varies enormously.

Notes

- Laura Lunger Knoppers, *Constructing Cromwell: Ceremony, Portrait, and Print 1645-1661*,
 'It was to Sir Peter Lely that the (now) well-known advice of Cromwell regarding his portraiture was allegedly given: "Mr. Lilly I desire you would use all your skill to paint my picture truly like me not Flatter me at all. But (pointing to his own face) remark all these ruffness, pimples warts everything as you see me. Otherwise I never will pay a farthing for it." The

anecdote was first recorded by George Vertue early in the eighteenth century and is **thought by some to refer not to Lely, but to Cooper**, whose watercolor miniature evinces Cromwell's warts even more prominently. Although its authenticity cannot be proved, the account of Cromwell urging that his portrait be "truly like me, " without flattery and even with "ruffness, pimples and warts," coheres with Cromwell's own professed piety and humility. In the event, the portraiture was never wholly "warts and all": while eschewing the gaudy trappings of power, **Lely elongates Cromwell's face, smooths over some of the roughnesses**, and adds the cultural **prestige of the cuirassier armour.**'



Peter Lely (1618-1680), *Susanna and the Elders*, c. 1660-5, 127 x 149.2 cm, Tate
 Marble statue of Aphrodite, also known as 'Crouching Venus'. This statue is a Roman version of a Hellenistic original of 200 BC. It is carved in marble and shown nude, with hair piled on head and crouching with right arm bent across front and left arm resting on left leg. On ovoid base. Acquired by Charles I, purchased by Lely during the Commonwealth Sale and then re-acquired by Charles II.

- Returning to Lely, he continued to paint a few religious paintings during the 1660s but the overwhelming demand was for portraits.
- Lely acquired the Italian Sketchbook of Van Dyck and studied it carefully. This painting is very similar to Van Dyck's *Venus and Cupid* sketch which in turn is based on a painting by Palma Vecchio.
- This painting is interesting as there are five versions. In Lely's *Susanna and the Elders*, in the Burghley House version Susanna's left breast is fully exposed, the Birmingham City Art Gallery version is close in composition to this one in the Tate, although the Tate version has been extended at both the top and the bottom, apparently by Lely himself. A seventeenth-century copy is in Dulwich Picture Gallery and a drawing very close to the Tate composition and attributed to Lely is in the Courtauld Gallery.
- These paintings **explore beauty in the context of a biblical story** where Lely was free to interpret Susanna as he wished. The large bulging eyes and brown ringlets often appear in his Windsor Beauties.
- Lely was knighted in 1680. **He died** soon afterwards at his easel in Covent Garden, **while painting** a portrait of the Duchess of Somerset, and he was buried at St Paul's Church, Covent Garden. On his death, his collection of old masters raised the **immense sum of £26,000**. As those who attended my previous talk on the Commonwealth Sale will know, Lely acquired many works of art such as the *Lely Venus* (a crouching Hellenistic marble Venus) which was re-acquired by the Royal Collection in 1682. It was housed in the Palace of Whitehall at the time of the fire which destroyed that palace on January 4, 1698, and was rescued from the flames. Since 2005 it has been on long-term loan to British Museum, following treatment by

their conservators, and is currently on display in gallery 23.

Notes

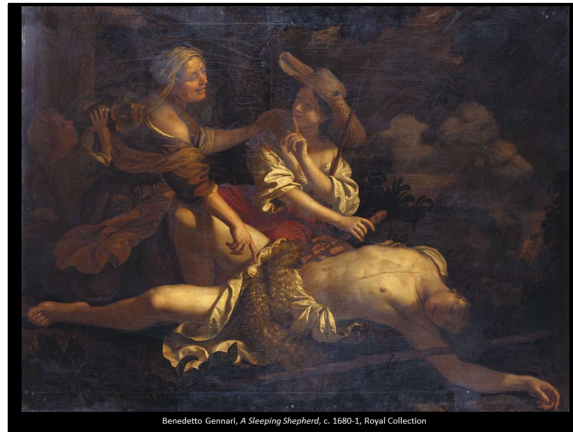
- Lely played a significant role in introducing the mezzotint to Britain, as he realized its possibilities for publicising his portraits. He encouraged Dutch mezzotinters to come to Britain to copy his work, laying the foundations for the English mezzotint tradition. Mezzotint continued in the eighteenth century to be the preferred method for reproducing portraits and became so firmly rooted in Britain that it was referred to as *la manière anglaise*. The eighteenth century saw many masterpieces of mezzotint notably prints after paintings by Fuseli, Reynolds, Stubbs and Wright of Derby.



- Charles II had 14 recognised mistresses but the only mistress that was a Windsor Beauty was Barbara Villiers.

Charles II's Mistresses

1. Lucy Walter (c. 1630-1658), one son who became the Duke of Monmouth. There was a claim that she married Charles II which he denied. This claim arose during the Exclusion Bill debate (1673-1680, to exclude James II as he was a Catholic) as it would have made the Duke of Monmouth the legitimate heir and ruled out James II.
 2. Elizabeth Killigrew (1622-1680), bore one daughter.
 3. Catherine Pegge, bore a son and a daughter,
 4. Barbara née Villiers (1641–1709), wife of Roger Palmer, 1st Earl of Castlemaine; created Duchess of Cleveland in her own right, bore three sons and three daughters.
 5. Nell Gwyn (1650-1687) bore two sons.
 6. Louise Renée de Penancoet de Kérouaille (1649–1734), created Duchess of Portsmouth in her own right (1673), bore one son Charles Lennox made the Duke of Richmond.
 7. Mary 'Moll' Davis an actress of repute, bore a daughter.
 8. Christabella Wyndham
 9. Hortense Mancini, Duchess of Mazarin
 10. Winifred Wells – one of the Queen's Maids of Honour
 11. Jane Roberts – the daughter of a clergyman
 12. Elizabeth Berkeley, née Bagot, Dowager Countess of Falmouth – the widow of Charles Berkeley, 1st Earl of Falmouth
 13. Elizabeth Fitzgerald, Countess of Kildare
 14. Marguerite or Margaret de Carteret claims she bore his son but the letters are dismissed as forgeries.
- The only mistress who was also a Windsor Beauty was Barbara Villiers.



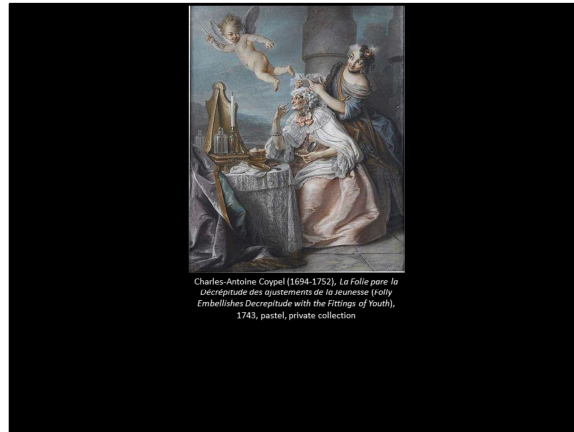
Benedetto Gennari, *A Sleeping Shepherd*, c. 1680-1, Royal Collection

- **The court was full of lechers dressed as courteous gallants** and new **guidebooks**, such as *The New Academy of Compliments* (1669) explained **how to seduce young ladies**. Temptation was everywhere and the diarist John Evelyn (1620-1706) complained, **'To conserve ones self in a Court, is to become an absolute Hero'**.
- **This painting** by the Italian artist Benedetto Gennari was commissioned by Charles II as a **blatant invitation to debauchery**. It **parodies the virtuous innocence of an Arcadian paradise** by showing two women awakening a sleeping shepherd. As the Royal Collection website explains, **'an older woman points to the shepherd's groin while the younger one, with a finger to her lips, has taken the shepherd's flute in her right hand'**. It was commissioned to hang in Charles's private apartments in Whitehall.
- Peter Lely was described as **'pandering to the depravity of his patrons'** and the Beauties were seen as 'pin-ups' rather than portraits. William Hazlitt in 1824 said they **'look just what they were – a set of kept mistresses, painted, tawdry, showing of their theatrical or meretricious airs and graces, without one trace of real elegance or refinement, or one spark of sentiment to touch the heart'**. In 1951 the historian Ronald Beckett described them as a **'set of extremely silly and insipid young creatures with just enough sense to defend their virtue just as long as it suited them to do so.'** These **misogynistic comments** say more about the writers than their subjects.

Notes

- Every year the court descended on Newmarket for the racing. Newmarket was then a small town of 600 inhabitants and the Court arrived in full force with all the King's mistresses, his wife and all their retainers. The gambling was extraordinary, according to Pepys, Barbara Villiers lost £25,000 and on another night won £15,000. It was the **seventeenth century Las Vegas**.
- ***Sodom, or the Quintessence of Debauchery*** was an **obscene Restoration closet drama**, published in 1684. The play was **actually a biting political satire** that compared Charles's Court with the biblical city of Sodom. Both were decadent and both were consumed by fire. The work has been attributed to John Wilmot, 2nd Earl

of Rochester. Wilmot was a poet and courtier and a well known rake who insulted the King and **died of venereal disease at the age of 33.** Andrew Marvell described him as the 'best English satirist'. He was the **lover of Nell Gwynn** before she became the mistress of Charles II and they remained friends so that through her Rochester had influence and status at Court. He was a member of the *Merry Gang* and **'for five years together he was continually Drunk'** and did many 'wild and unaccountable things'. At one time, when he had fallen seriously out of favour with the King, he fled to Tower Hill and set himself up as Doctor and Mrs. Bendo, a charlatan doctor who claimed to **cure barrenness** with considerable success. He would **dress as the serious and matronly Mrs. Bendo** to inspect and **'treat' young wives** without arousing their husband's suspicions.



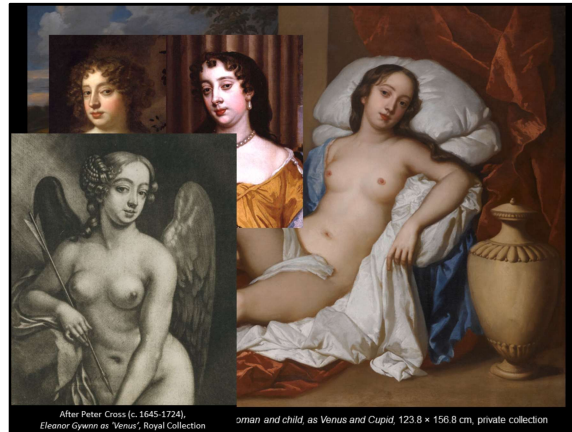
Charles-Antoine Coypel (1694-1752), *La Folie pare la Décrépitude des ajustements de la Jeunesse*, 1743, pastel, private collection
Folly Embellishes Decrepitude with the Fittings of Youth

- **How to maintain one's beauty during a hectic day and night at court particularly as the years pass.**
- The answer for both men and women was a copious amount of **powders, paints and cosmetics**. **Catherine of Braganza**, the wife of Charles II, had a **dark complexion** when she arrived from Portugal and was not considered attractive. John Evelyn (1620-1706) wrote, 'their complexions olivarder and sufficiently unagreeable'. A pure, pale complexion was essential and so English beauties applied **white lead powder** and scarlet leather or paper to dye the cheeks. The use of **rouge** was regarded as particularly **deceitful** as a **natural blush** was prized as a **sign of female virginity and modesty** and its absence signified lost modesty and worldliness.
- White lead was used even though women knew it was **poisonous**. To this they added ground cochineal beetles to colour their cheeks and patches.
- The make-up was so thick 'a man might easily cut off a curd or cheese cake from either of their cheeks'.
- Blemishes were covered by patches of velvet or paper cut into shapes. 'Plumpers' were inserted into the mouth to plump up the cheeks of older women.
- **Washing the body was considered dangerous** and lavish amounts of perfume were used to hide body odour. Mary II used 'Hungary water', a popular perfume made from alcohol, rosemary, cedar and turpentine used as a body rub or on sponges tied to the clothes.
- Women made beauty creams at home from traditional recipes that used olive oil and honey but also pigeon dung, snail ash, opium and urine. Some recipes specified 'puppy dog fat' and women wore gloves at night made from chicken skin or the skin of unborn calves lined with cream.

- During the seventeenth century a market developed for 'unique' powders and creams to improve beauty advertised with endorsements and pseudo-scientific claims, much like cosmetics today.
- A satirical pastel by a French artist. Although from 1743 it shows the time and trouble wealthy men and women took to improve on their natural beauty. Beauty and youth were referred to in the French court and in the court of Charles II.
- Men and women used potions, pastes, perfumes and patches to keep the ravages of time and disease at bay even though many of the ingredients were poisonous and sometimes fatal.
- **Beauty was synonymous with virtue** and beauty of the flesh indicated inner beauty, a virtuous soul. As cosmetics hid the natural beauty of a woman from men they were criticized as immoral although **Margaret Cavendish**, Duchess of Newcastle argued that the use of cosmetics was no different from **men cutting their hair or shaving their beard**.
- Beauty was something to be celebrated and recorded and the most famous recording is a series of portraits by Sir Peter Lely known as the 'Windsor Beauties'. The title of the series was given to a series of portraits that were at Windsor Castle and are now ten portraits usually exhibited at Hampton Court. The patron is generally assumed to be Anne Hyde (1637-1671), Duchess of York and Albany, first wife of James II. She was the daughter of a commoner which caused great scandal. She had eight children but only two survived, Mary, who succeeded her father and Anne who became Queen in 1702.

References

Suzanne W. Hull, *Women According to Men: The World of Tudor-Stuart Women*



Peter Lely (1618–1680), *Portrait of a young woman and child, as Venus and Cupid*, 1668, 123.8 × 156.8 cm, private collection

Studio of Peter Lely (1618–1680), *Portrait of a women, formerly known as Nell Gwynn (1650-1687) (?)*, c. 1675, National Portrait Gallery

Peter Lely (1618–1680), *Barbara Palmer (née Villiers), Duchess of Cleveland*, c. 1666, National Portrait Gallery

After Peter Cross (c. 1645-1724), *Eleanor Gwynn as 'Venus'*, Royal Collection

- Lely developed this **sexy new 'look'** for the 1660s and all the women wanted the look. The look was sexualised but virtuous.
- The portraits represent **ideal beauty** as it was seen in the 1660s with **large, wide, prominent eyes, exposed shoulders, a drowsy sweetness and long flowing hair**, often with ringlets. The portrait was not just a likeness but an expression of the model's **grace, the highest form of beauty**. We might imagine 'grace' to be associated with modesty and purity but at this period it was associated with what we would call **sex appeal**. Lely was expected to improve nature in order to create a better opinion of the sitter by creating a beauty that emphasises her good sense and breeding but without losing the likeness. His paintings were often criticized at the time for being **'good but not like'**.
- As a consequence of this idealisation we do not know if this is a portrait of Nell Gwynn or Barbara Villiers. (Click) These are the two mistresses with Nell Gwynn on the left but the National Portrait Gallery now says that it is a portrait of a woman, formerly known as Nell Gwynn. (Click) This portrait by or after Peter Cross of Nell Gwynn as Venus does look more like the woman in the bed and we know that Samuel Pepys (1633-1703) who knew both women well kept an engraving of this Peter Cross painting above his desk at the Admiralty suggesting it is an accurate portrait. Lucy Worsley also claims that this is a portrait of Nell Gwynn.
- **Nell Gwynn was so popular that she gave rise to a whole series of merchandise** just like a modern personality. One example was a series of costumes painted on a clear material that could be placed over a miniature portrait of Nell.
- **Nell became wealthy** as she was awarded an annuity of £5,000 by the Treasury. Barbara Villiers was awarded £15,000 a year and Louis de K rouaille (pronounced 'louis de kerr-why-ay') £19,000 a year (about £10.5 million).

- The new decadent court of Charles II distanced him not just from Oliver Cromwell but also from his father Charles I.

Mistresses

- This is **not one of the Windsor Beauties** but a well-known portrait of **either Nell Gwyn or Barbara Villiers**, both mistresses of Charles II. The three most famous mistresses of Charles were the disarmingly guileless **Nell Gwyn**, the sexually voracious **Barbara Villiers** and the virginally respectable **Louise de K rouialle**. Unable to pronounce the latter's name the English called her Miss Carwell or Cartwheel.
- Charles II was capable and clever and interested in science, art and music. He was a political survivor and had charisma but at his worst he was lazy, inconsistent and unwilling to trust anyone. The rules of behaviour at the court were rewritten and based partly on those of the French court where he had grown up. This lack of clear rules and the acceptance of mistresses gave certain women a new power which extended into society.
- Women appeared on stage for the first time and even took men's parts. They ran businesses, published plays, and controlled the household and at Court political networks. Nell Gwyn crossed the social divide from her mother's brothel to a luxury house on Pall Mall.
- This was a combination of a lack of men, especially the decimation of heads of household as a consequence of the Civil War and a licentious court where beauty was eulogised and where being beautiful brought power. At Court it was an age of debauchery, adultery, deceit, decadence and promiscuity. Beauty was associated with the pure, spiritual and true and beautiful women could do no wrong, Samuel Pepys wrote of Barbara Villiers, **"For her beauty I am willing to construe all this to the best ... though I know well enough she is a whore."**
- **The death of Charles II brought about the gradual decline** in this embryonic **sexual revolution**. James II was a very different character from Charles II and his reign only last three years. **James had no style and was awkward and hypocritical** and he made the critical mistake of being publicly Catholic.
- Mary and Anne were both women in power but the wider rights of women did not improve and by the Hanoverian dynasty women had become merely mistresses with little power.
- Let us look at some of the other mistresses of Charles II before looking at the Windsor Beauties.

Notes

- The young woman is almost certainly either Barbara Villiers, Countess of Castlemaine, and Duchess of Cleveland (1640-1709), or Nell Gwyn (1650-1687)
- Eleanor "Nell" Gwyn (2 February 1650 – 14 November 1687; also spelled Gwynn, Gwynne) was one of the first English actresses and a long-time mistress of King Charles II of England and Scotland. **Called "pretty, witty Nell" by Samuel Pepys**, she has been regarded as a living embodiment of the spirit of Restoration England and has come to be considered a folk heroine, with a story echoing the rags-to-royalty tale of Cinderella. She was the most famous Restoration actress and possessed a **prodigious**

comic talent. Gwyn had two sons by King Charles: Charles Beauclerk (1670–1726); and James Beauclerk (1671–1680). The surname of her sons is pronounced 'Bo-Clare'. Charles was created Earl of Burford and later Duke of St. Albans.

- Sold by Christies in 2007 for £1,588,000.

References

- Christies website: <http://fw.to/WDUnJ7b>



After Peter Lely (1618–1680), *Barbara Palmer (née Villiers), Duchess of Cleveland with her son, Charles Fitzroy, as Madonna and Child*, c.1664, National Portrait Gallery

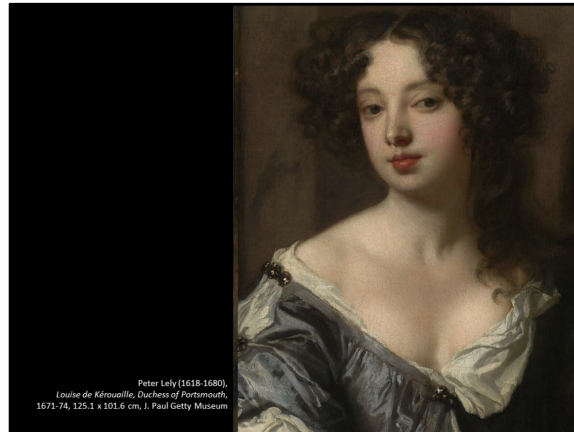
- In 1660, Charles came from France with Barbara Palmer (born Villiers, 1640-1709), 1st Duchess of Cleveland, Countess of Castlemaine, also known as **Lady Castlemaine** (1640-1709) as his official mistress. He married Catherine of Braganza from Portugal in 1661. Catherine brought England Bombay in India as a dowry. Catherine popularized tea drinking and created tea parties, occasions for women, and only women, to meet and chat.
- Barbara was an English courtesan from the Villiers family and perhaps the most notorious of the many mistresses of King Charles II of England, by whom she had five children, all of whom were acknowledged and subsequently ennobled. Her influence was so great that she has been referred to as '**The Uncrowned Queen.**'
- In this portrait she presents herself as the **Virgin Mary** with her illegitimate son Charles Fitzroy as Jesus.
- Barbara was the subject of many portraits, in particular by court painter Sir Peter Lely. **Her extravagance, foul temper and promiscuity** provoked diarist John Evelyn into describing her as the '**curse of the nation**', whereas Samuel Pepys often noted seeing her, admiringly.
- Tall, voluptuous, with masses of brunette hair, slanting, heavy-lidded violet eyes, alabaster skin, and a sensuous, sulky mouth, Barbara Villiers was considered to be one of the most beautiful of the Royalist women, but her lack of fortune left her with reduced marriage prospects.
- She later fell out of favour but retained her titles, her wealth and was made keeper of Hampton Court.

Notes

- For the ten years before the Restoration Britain was controlled by Puritans and plays were banned and women were covered up in black. But in the 1650s women started to run businesses.
- Barbara Villiers was from an impoverished but very respectable branch of the famous Villiers family. When she was 18 she married a close friend of the King Roger Palmer and they lived at Dorney Court. Barbara was chosen to go to France to tell the King it

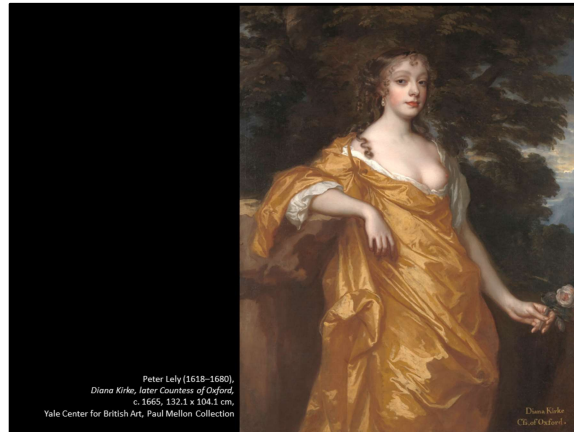
was time for his return. She was chosen as she was beautiful, intelligent and most importantly had survived smallpox which was ravaging the Continent. Charles immediately was smitten by Barbara and they formed a close relationship. Her husband was made Earl of Castlemaine but it was to be inherited by Barbara's illegitimate children.

- Charles II had 7 mistresses in France and 13 in total with at least 13 illegitimate children. Five of those children were Barbara Villiers's children even though she was married.
- Becoming a mistress in the 1660s was almost a career choice. Catherine Sedley (1657-1717), Countess of Dorchester, was independently wealthy but chose to become a mistress. She was not regarded as beautiful but became mistress to James II through her wits and her brains although she did say, 'it cannot be my wit, for he has not enough to know that I have any'. James was often attracted to women that other men regarded as ugly; his brother Charles II once joked that his confessor must impose these mistresses on him as penance.
- The role of the mistress had been debated by women in 1650s France at the court of Henry IV and at Salons. A book was published by a woman explaining to men the path to friendship through sincerity, honesty, generosity and goodness. Henry IV was notoriously sexually insatiable and he earned the nickname *Le Vert Galant* ('the verdant gallant' or more colloquially 'the randy playboy').
- Her cousin Elizabeth Villiers was the only acknowledged mistress of King William III.



Peter Lely (1618-1680), *Louise de Kérouaille, Duchess of Portsmouth*, 1671-74, 125.1 x 101.6 cm, J. Paul Getty Museum

- Charles soon added other mistresses and Whitehall Palace became full of the living quarters of mistresses. Louise de Kérouaille (pronounced 'Kerr-why-ay') was not a 'Windsor Beauty' but she was one of the beauties at court and a mistress of Charles II. She was given a suite of 23 rooms at Whitehall Palace.
- She was born of a French nobleman and was placed in the household of Henrietta Anne Stuart, Duchess of Orléans, sister of Charles II of England, and sister-in-law of Louis XIV of France. In 1670 Anne Stuart visited Charles II at Dover and died and Charles appointed her lady-in-waiting to his own queen Catherine of Braganza.
- Unlike her predecessor, Barbara Palmer, who had openly insulted the Queen, Louise was careful to show her every respect, and relations between the two women were never less than amicable.
- It was said she was placed in Charles II court by the French king to influence him but there is no evidence of this.
- Louise, who **concealed great cleverness** and a **strong will** under an appearance of languor and a rather childlike beauty (John Evelyn, the diarist, speaks of her "**baby face**"), yielded only when she had already established a strong hold on Charles's affections and character. Her son Charles (1672–1723) was created Duke of Richmond in 1675.
- Through her son by Charles II, Charles Lennox, 1st Duke of Richmond, she is ancestress of both wives of Prince Charles: Diana, Princess of Wales, and Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall.



Peter Lely (1618–1680), *Diana Kirke, later Countess of Oxford*, c. 1665, 132.1 x 104.1 cm, Yale Center for British Art, Paul Mellon Collection

- The Windsor Beauties were **not the only beauties at court**. This is Diana Kirke, later Countess of Oxford posing semi-topless. The exposed breast indicates that she represents the **goddess Venus** but it also signals her **sexual availability**. She began her **court career as mistress** of Aubrey de Vere, Earl of Oxford (1627-1703), for whom this was almost certainly painted, and she became his wife in 1673 and they had five children.
- The 19th-century critic and essayist William Hazlitt, said these portraits "look just what they were", "a set of kept mistresses, painted, tawdry, showing off their theatrical or meretricious airs and graces, without one touch of real elegance or refinement".
- **To show we are prudish as the Victorians this painting was banned by London Underground in 2001 when it was used as an exhibition poster for the National Portrait Gallery.** It was replaced by a portrait of Frances Stuart that we will see later. The London Underground denies the ban and added that although pictures of women in swimsuits are frequently covered in graffiti fine art paintings are ignored.

Inscription

Inscribed in ochre paint, lower right: "Diana Kirke | Cts, of Oxford."

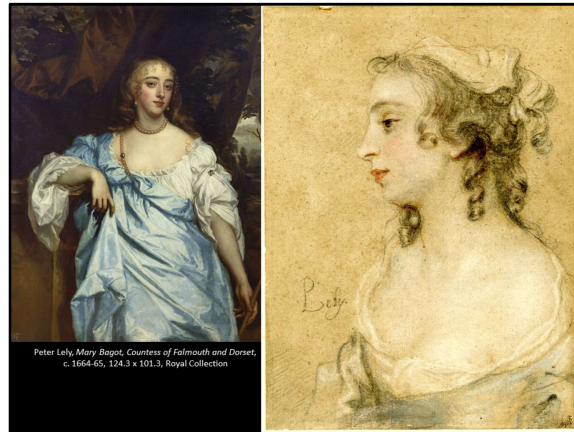


- The Windsor Beauties were the power behind the court of Charles II. The portraits were commissioned acquired in the early to mid-1660s as the **favourite female friends and confidantes of the Duke (later James II) and Duchess of York**.
- For the first time, in the 1660s, cheap printed engravings of the royal mistresses became available for people to leer over.

The Windsor Beauties

- The original set of "Beauties" painted by Lely include (depending on the source):
 1. Elizabeth, Countess of Northumberland (née Wriothesley; 1646-1690)
 2. Henrietta, Countess of Rochester (née Boyle; 1646-1687)
 3. Margaret, Lady Denham (née Brooke; ca. 1647-67) (named Elizabeth in the cited printed sources [and in 18th century prints] but Margaret in the Royal Collection)
 4. Barbara, Duchess of Cleveland (née Villiers; ca 1641-1709)
 5. Elizabeth, Countess de Grammont (née Hamilton; 1641-1708)
 6. Mary, Countess of Falmouth and Dorset (née Bagot; 1645–79) (named Elizabeth in the cited printed sources [and in 18th century prints] but Mary at the Royal Collection)
 7. Anne, Countess of Sunderland (née Digby; ca. 1646-1715)
 8. Jane Myddleton (née Needham; 1646–92)
 9. Frances, Lady Whitmore (née Brooke; d. 1690)
 10. Frances, Duchess of Richmond and Lennox (née Stuart; 1648-1702), not currently on display
 11. Emilia Butler, Countess of Ossory (Melville omits this name, citing Ernest Law that the portrait previously identified by this name is actually Lady Falmouth.)
 12. Madame Henrietta, Duchess of Orléans
- The first nine are listed in the order they appear in the corridor at Hampton Court.
- The portraits for the first 10 names are included at the Royal Collection website as "**probably commissioned by Anne Hyde, Duchess of York.**"

- The Duchess of York does not figure in the above list often; but since she was largely responsible for the collection (and choosing the sitters), she was also painted as part of the series. Possibly a little flattery from Lely was responsible for this.
- A portrait of Anne's sister Lady Frances Hyde is described as a lost eleventh by Historic Royal Palaces.



Peter Lely (1618–1680), *Mary Bagot, Countess of Falmouth and Dorset*, c. 1664–65, 124.3 x 101.3, Royal Collection

Peter Lely (1618–1680), *Frances Brooke, Lady Whitmore*, c. 1665, 124.4 x 101.3 cm, Royal Collection

Peter Lely (1618–1680), *A lady*, nearly half-length, before 1680, black chalk, red chalk and white chalk on gray-brown paper, 24.4 x 18.4 cm, British Museum

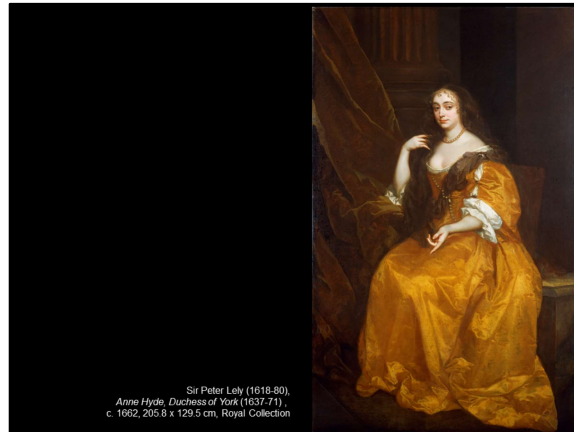
- First, a **comment on style**. Sir Peter **Lely often just painted the faces** and by the late 1660s his studio completed the portrait using a number of **set patterns**. In addition, Lely idealised the portraits to add the attributes of beauty and grace. Lely interpreted **grace to mean what we would call sex appeal**. Beauty took the form of low-cut necklines and exposed neck, shoulders and chest (décolletage), heavily lidded eyes, well-defined eyebrows, a full mouth and flowing hair. They have a **'drowsy sweetness'** and a combination of sensuality and dignity. Most of the portraits are three-quarter length, and generally the sitter is posed somewhat to one side of the composition. The setting is often a turbulent landscape and is frequently enriched by swags of drapery, an architectural element, or a decorative urn. Lely was famous for his facility in handling fabrics, and the play of **light on flowing satin** clothing is one of the primary visual elements of his paintings.
- Unfortunately, Lely's idealisation of his sitter's means that it is sometimes **difficult to distinguish** one sitter from another, as we see here. We shall also see that contemporary description do not always match the faces we see.
- As he became more popular, Lely created a large workshop and set up a production line to produce portraits. He would spend an hour making a quick chalk sketch and then pass it to his assistants.

Notes

- Mary Bagot, Countess of Falmouth and Dorset (1645 – 1679) was a British courtier. She was one of the Windsor Beauties painted by Sir Peter Lely. Her portrait by Lely was erroneously named "Elizabeth, Countess of Falmouth" and also as "Countess of

Ossory" in some portrait prints and books in the 18th and 19th centuries, many of which were later reprinted, compounding the error.

- Frances Brooke, Lady Whitmore was the daughter of Sir William Brooke. By 1665 she had married Sir Thomas Whitmore. Her sister was Margaret Brooke, Lady Denham, mistress to the Duke of York, who was also painted by Lely for the Windsor Beauties series. Some historians believe the portrait on the left is Margaret Brooke.



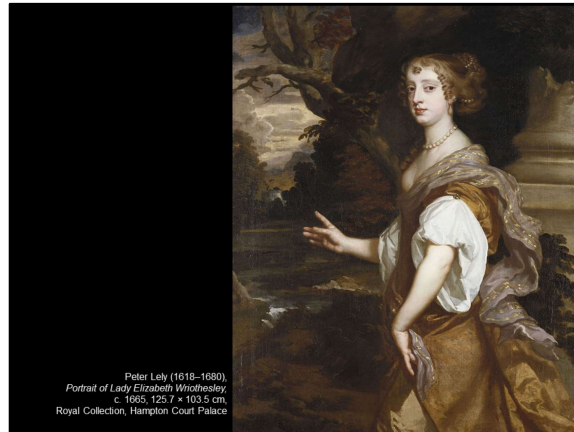
Sir Peter Lely (1618-80), *Anne Hyde, Duchess of York* (1637-71) c. 1662, 205.8 x 129.5 cm, Royal Collection

- This is not one of the **Windsor Beauties** but **Anne Hyde**, who commissioned them in the mid-1660s.
- **Anne Hyde** was James II's first wife and mother of Mary II (b. 1662, reigned 1689-1694) and Anne (b. 1665, reigned 1702-1707). She was born the daughter of a commoner, Edward Hyde (later created Earl of Clarendon), a lawyer. Anne is best known for her marriage to James, which caused much gossip. Two months after the marriage, Anne gave birth to the couple's first child, who had obviously been conceived out of wedlock. Until near the end of Anne's life, some observers disapproved of James' decision to marry Anne; but not King Charles II, James' brother, who wanted the marriage to take place. Another cause of disapproval was the **public affection James showed towards Anne**, such as kissing and leaning against each other, which was considered improper behaviour during the 1600s. Anne had problems at court as few liked her because of her lowly birth and James had affairs with younger women including Arabella Churchill with whom he fathered many illegitimate children. Anne converted to Catholicism almost immediately after the Restoration and James converted nine years later.
- Samuel Pepys wrote that her considered the Duchess of York, 'a plain woman'. Pepys, though thought the Duke should not have married her even though she was pregnant and the daughter of the Lord Chancellor.
- **Anne Hyde's father was Edward Hyde**, a lawyer and Member of Parliament from an established but not aristocratic family. He was later made the 1st Earl of Clarendon. Edward Hyde was accused of arranging his daughters marriage but this is unlikely and it appears he opposed the marriage as he had hoped James would marry a foreign princess and he was aware that the marriage would not be approved and this would damage his reputation. **After the**

marriage Anne was a stickler for protocol and, as commoners, Edward Hyde and his wife Frances were not allowed to sit in their daughters presence or refer to her as their daughter.

Notes

- Anne Hyde, Duchess of York (1637-71) is shown wearing an amber coloured silk gown and holding in her right hand a tress of her hair that hangs loosely around her. This full-length design appears to have been painted later than the three-quarter length version which is also in the Royal Collection. Anne Hyde regularly patronised Lely and there were ten copies of his portraits of her in his studio at the time of his death.
- Anne Hyde (12 March 1637 – 31 March 1671) **became Duchess of York** and of Albany as the **first wife of the future King James II** of England. Her father was a lawyer and Anne **married James in 1660** after she became pregnant by him, but James is said to have promised to marry her in 1659. The two first met in the Netherlands while Anne was living in the household of James' sister Mary. James and Anne had eight children, but six died in early childhood. The **two who survived** to adulthood were **Lady Mary, who succeeded her father** after his deposition during the **Glorious Revolution of 1688** and **Lady Anne**, who succeeded her brother-in-law and became the **first monarch of Great Britain**.
- Two years after Anne's death from breast cancer, **James married** a Catholic princess, **Mary of Modena**, who bore **James Francis Edward (the 'Old Pretender')**, James' only son to survive to adulthood. James became **king of England, Ireland, and Scotland in 1685**, but was **deposed** during the **Glorious Revolution of 1688**. The throne was then offered by Parliament to Anne's eldest daughter Mary and her husband William of Orange. After **Mary died in 1694** and **William in 1702**, Anne Hyde's youngest daughter Anne became Queen of the **three Kingdoms** and, in **1707**, the first sovereign of the **United Kingdom of Great Britain**.



Peter Lely (1618–1680), *Portrait of Lady Elizabeth Wriothesley, Countess of Northumberland*, c. 1665, 125.7 × 103.5 cm, Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace

1. The Hidden Beauty

- The first Windsor Beauty in the corridor at Hampton Court and the next eight portraits are in order down the corridor starting at the door to the Cumberland Suite.
- Lady Elizabeth Wriothesley (pronounced Risley, or Roseley or Riseley), later Countess of Northumberland, later Countess of Montagu (1646-90), mother of Lady Elizabeth Percy, Countess of Ogle. **She was the granddaughter** of the Wriothesley who was **Shakespeare's patron**.
- Despite the intrigue and adultery at court it was possible for a woman to be a Court beauty and to lead a successful, uncontroversial life. Elizabeth Wriothesley married Joceline Percy, the Earl of Northumberland, whilst still a teenager. After his death, the rich widow married again, to Ralph Montagu, later Duke of Montagu, before dying in wealthy middle age in 1690.
- Elizabeth Wriothesley went on to become chatelaine of Syon House but her husband Joceline Percy, 11th Earl of Northumberland (1644-1670) took her to Paris in 1669 **to hide her** as he was **worried** she had **caught Charles II's eye**. He **left her in Paris** while he went on a Grand Tour but his **sudden death** in Turin in 1670 left her free to return to England and marry the Duke of Montagu. The direct male line of the Percy family died out but continued through their daughter Elizabeth and granddaughter Elizabeth, the 1st Duchess of Northumberland.

Notes

Royal Collection website:

- This picture forms one of the 'Windsor Beauties' series, a set of eleven portraits of celebrated women at the Restoration court. The series was apparently commissioned or at least assembled by Anne Hyde, Duchess of York, probably around 1662-5. Pepys recorded on 21 August 1668 that he 'did first see the Duke of York's room of pictures of some Maids of Honour, done by Lilly: good, but not like.' By describing the pictures as 'not like' Pepys is alluding to the often noted opinion that

Lely flattered his subjects, and gave each portrait a similar languorous and 'sleepy eyed' air, said to have been influenced by the features of the noted court beauty Barbara Villiers, Duchess of Cleveland (RCIN 404957) who was painted many times by Lely. Contrary to Pepys's assertion, only one of the sitters, Frances Teresa Stuart (RCIN 404514) actually held the position of Maid of Honour in the Royal Household. Some of the others were noted courtesans, while others were respected members of the nobility.

- In 1674, after the death of Anne Hyde, the pictures were hanging as a group in the White Room at Whitehall which was reported as being 'Hunge wth white sarsanett [sarcenet - a soft fabric, usually of silk], and over it blew Mohair with silk fringe'. Eleven pictures are mentioned in this inventory, although ten today are identified today as belonging to the group. The series was taken from Whitehall to Windsor, presumably by James II and hung in the Princess's Dressing Room. In the reign of Queen Anne they were hung in the Queen's Waiting Room and later in the Queen's State Bedchamber. They were at Hampton Court by June 1835. All appear to be wholly by Lely's own hand except **Anne Digby, Countess of Sunderland which is probably a studio copy.**



Peter Lely (1618–1680), *Henrietta Boyle, Countess of Rochester* (1646-87), c. 1665, 124.4 × 101.4 cm, Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace

Henrietta Hyde (née Boyle), Countess of Rochester, sister-in-law of Anne Hyde, Duchess of York.

2. The Poisoner

- The diarist John Aubrey wrote that Lady Denham (Margaret Brooke) ‘was poisoned by the hands of the Countess of Rochester with chocolate’. Her sister-in-law Anne Hyde was also suspected of poisoning her husband’s mistress (see Pepys, January 8, 1667) but Lady Denham apparently died of natural causes.
- The Boyle family had, over two generations, become almost all-powerful in the south of Ireland and **Henrietta**, like the rest of her family was **strong-minded, ruthless and acquisitive**. During the last two years of her life, when her husband was Chief Minister to his brother-in-law King James II, Henrietta took full advantage of his power to **claim every possible privilege**. She clashed bitterly with her husband's niece, the future Queen Anne over who should have the best apartments in Whitehall Palace. Anne, who could herself be a formidable opponent, complained bitterly of her aunt's ‘peevishness’ to her.
- Henrietta Boyle married Lawrence Hyde in 1665 and had four children. He was the son of the Earl of Clarendon and brother of Anne Hyde, wife of the future James II. The Earl of Clarendon had many enemies that tried to bring him down and they eventually succeeded with the military setbacks of the Second Anglo-Dutch war of 1665-7 (which he had opposed), the Plague of 1665 and the Great Fire of London of 1666. He was forced to flee into exile rather than face impeachment. However, Charles did not oppose his sons and Lawrence became a foreign ambassador. He even remained at court when his brother-in-law, King James, fled despite his open opposition to William and Mary as joint rulers.



Peter Lely (1618–1680), *Margaret Brooke, Lady Denham* (c. 1647-67), c. 1663-5, 124.5 × 101 cm, Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace

3. The Poisoned Beauty

- It was rumoured Margaret Brooke was killed by her husband, by Henrietta Boyle, Countess of Rochester or by Anne Hyde, Duchess of York.
- She became mistress of James, Duke of York, after her marriage to Sir John Denham, a poet. James became obsessed with her and would follow her everywhere and she was dead, poisoned, within a year.

Notes

- Margaret Brooke, Lady Denham was the daughter of Sir William Brooke, and sister of Frances Brooke. In 1665 she married Sir John Denham but soon became known as the Duke of York's mistress.
- Caro Riikonen ('The Brimstone Butterfly' website)
 - Margaret Brook, Lady Denham was married to a man twice her age but determined to make her own way at Court and in Restoration England the way to social advancement for a pretty young woman, whether married or no, was to catch the eye of the king or his brother. Having seen her attempts to set her cap at King Charles II thwarted by the machinations of the king's principal mistress Barbara Palmer, Margaret turned her attention to his brother, the Duke of York. By June 1666 Pepys was writing in his diary: " the Duke of York is wholly given up to his new mistress, my Lady Denham, going at noonday with all his gentlemen to visit her in Scotland Yard; she declaring that she will not be his mistress, as Mrs. Price, to go up and down the Privy-stairs, but will be owned publicly; and so she is." The affair ended in tragedy with the sudden death of Margaret. **She believed she had been poisoned and insisted before she died that an autopsy should be carried out. No trace of poison was found but it did not allay public suspicion that her husband Sir John Denham had murdered her with a poisoned cup**

of cocoa at the behest of the jealous Duchess of York, an early example of death by chocolate. The poet Andrew Marvell wrote couplets on the supposed murder in his poem "Last Instructions to a Painter", written in September 1667:

“What frosts to fruit, what arsenic to the rat,
What to fair Denham, mortal chocolate.”



Sir Peter Lely, *Barbara Villiers* (1640-1709), *Duchess of Cleveland as Minerva, Countess of Castlemaine*, c. 1665, 124.5 × 101.4 cm, Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace

Sir Peter Lely, *Barbara Villiers* (1640-1709), *Duchess of Cleveland as Minerva, Countess of Castlemaine*, c. 1665, mezzotint

4. Barbara Villiers - the Number One Beauty

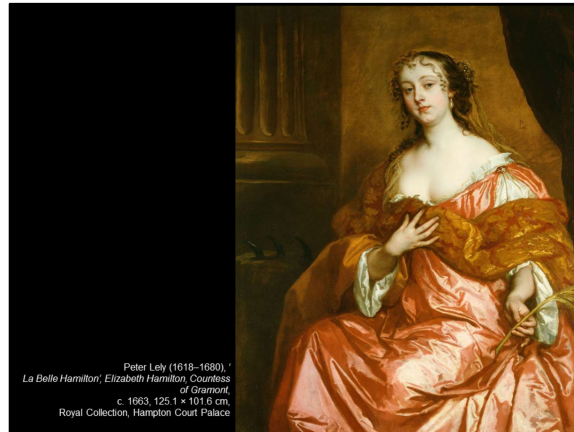
- Barbara Villiers—**the most notorious mistress of Charles II** by whom she had five children all of whom were ennobled.
- Known as **Lady Castlemaine** and nicknamed the '**Uncrowned Queen**'. She had more influence than Catherine of Braganza the queen consort. She was appointed Lady of the bedchamber even though she and the queen were bitter enemies.
- **She was extravagant, had a foul temper and was promiscuous although many found her good company.** There are stories of her **kindness** such as she once rushed to help an injured child when some scaffolding fell down even though no other ladies of the court would help. The diarist **John Evelyn** described her as '**the curse of the nation**'. She converted to Catholicism in 1663 perhaps to get closer to Charles but the view was the Church of England had lost nothing and the Church of Rome had gained nothing.
- I mentioned that **Lely introduced the reproduction of his portraits using mezzotints** and this is one example. Mezzotint was the first technique that could produce half-tones with stippling or cross-hatching. This was done using a metal tool called a rocker. The rocker had hundreds of small teeth that when rocked across the plate produced thousands of tiny pits that held ink after the plate was wiped. The process was invented by the German amateur artist Ludwig von Siegen (1609–c 1680) in 1642.

Notes

- Lely painted many portraits of her.
- She was born into the aristocratic Villiers family. Her father died fighting for the Royalists in the Civil War. He had spent so much on his regiment he left his family in straightened circumstances.
- Tall, voluptuous, with masses of brunette hair, slanting, heavy-lidded violet eyes, alabaster skin, and a sensuous, sulky mouth, Barbara Villiers was considered to be

one of the most beautiful of the Royalist women, but her lack of fortune left her with reduced marriage prospects.

- In 1659 she married Roger Palmer but they separated in 1662 and it is believed he fathered none of her children. They remained married for the rest of his lifetime.
- She became Charles II's mistress in 1660. She was made baroness Nonsuch in 1670 as she was the owner of Nonsuch Palace despite the fact that she demolished the palace and sold the materials.
- While the **King had taken other mistresses**, the most notable being the actress **Nell Gwynne**, **Barbara took other lovers too**, including the acrobat Jacob Hall and her second cousin John Churchill.
- As the result of the **1673 Test Act**, which essentially banned Catholics from holding office, Barbara lost her position as Lady of the Bedchamber, and **the King cast her aside** completely from her position as a mistress, taking **Louise de K rouaille** as his newest "favourite" royal mistress. The King advised Barbara to live quietly and cause no scandal, in which case he "cared not whom she loved".
- She had **many descendants including Lady Diana Spencer**, the Mitford sisters, **Bertrand Russell**, **Sir Anthony Eden** (Prime Minister 1955-57) and Serena Armstrong-Jones.
- *Minerva* was the Roman goddess of wisdom and sponsor of arts, trade, and strategy. She is often shown on Roman coins wearing a helmet and a full length dress and holding a spear in her left hand with a shield at her feet.



Peter Lely (1618–1680), *'La Belle Hamilton', Elizabeth Hamilton, Countess of Gramont*, c. 1663, 125.1 × 101.6 cm, Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace

5 'La Belle Hamilton'

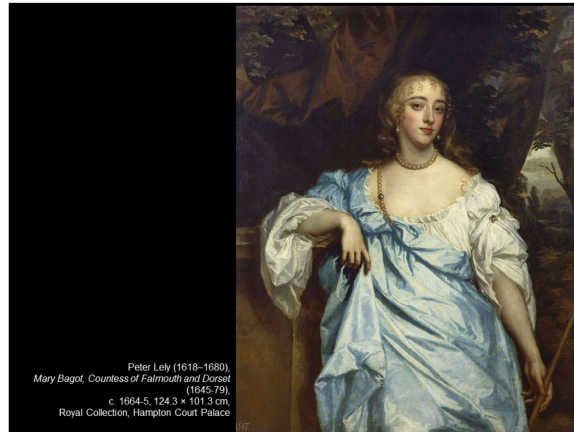
- The original court beauty that all the other ladies copied. Arguably this is the greatest example of Lely's skill at combining beauty and a true likeness.
- Before *'La Belle Stuart'* was "**La belle Hamilton**" was one of the **great beauties** of the English court but did not have a fortune and ended up as the wife of a French knight.
- Elizabeth Hamilton is here shown as St. Catherine with a palm frond and the wheel on which she was tortured. Elizabeth therefore embodies not just external beauty but the internal virtues of St. Catherine of piety and chastity. St. Catherine of Alexandria was only one of two saints who experienced a 'mystical marriage with Christ'. The other was St. Catherine of Siena (1347-1380), a Dominican nun who received the stigmata.

Notes

- Elizabeth Hamilton was lady in waiting to Louis XIV's (1638-1715) queen consort Maria Theresa of Spain (1638-1683).
- Born Elizabeth Hamilton in Ireland, she became a member of the English court in 1661.
- She was described as a great beauty and became known for her judgement, charm and sensibility, and she was seen as witty and careful with her words as she, reportedly, said no more than she thought. She also **loved practical jokes** and mischief. On one occasion, she played a practical joke on two British maids of honour, Lady Muskerry and Miss Blague. Lady Muskerry she convinced to go to a ball dressed absurdly as a Babylonian princess and Miss Blague she convinced to wear a yellow ribbon that was also worn by her rival in love with a French Marquis.
- Elizabeth Hamilton was much courted, by, among others the Duke of York, the Duke of Richmond and the Heir of Norfolk, but she reportedly rejected them all. **She married Philibert**, comte de Gramont and followed him to France in 1669.
- In 1679 **she was associated with 'La Voisin'** ('the neighbour'), a French fortune

teller, **poisoner** and alleged sorceress. Her cult ('affaire des poisons') was suspected of **killing 1000-2,500 people** in Black Masses. It led to the execution of 36 people.

- Her husband became ill and when he recovered he turned to a religious life and she followed him. They are said to have had a **long and happy marriage**. He wrote of her in his memoirs,
 - 'She had the **finest shape, the loveliest neck, and the most beautiful arms in the world** ; she was majestic and graceful in all her movements ; and **she was the original** after which **all the ladies copied** in their taste and air of dress. Her forehead was open, white, and smooth ; her hair was well set, and fell with ease into that natural order which it is so difficult to imitate ; her complexion was possessed of a certain freshness, not to be equalled by borrowed colours ; her eyes were not large, but they were lively, and capable of expressing whatever she pleased ; her mouth was full of graces, and her contour uncommonly perfect : nor was her nose, which was small, delicate, and turned up, the least ornament of so lovely a face.'



Peter Lely (1618–1680), *Mary Bagot, Countess of Falmouth and Dorset* (1645–79), c. 1664–5, 124.3 × 101.3 cm, Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace

6. The Trophy Beauty

- Mary became Lady Berkeley on her marriage, aged about 20, and later Countess of Falmouth. Her husband died the following year during the Dutch Wars when a cannonball blew his head apart. Rumours put her in the arms of **James, Duke of York** who, it was said, **thought of marrying her after his first wife, Anne Hyde, died**. Instead she married Charles Sackville, later Earl of Dorset. She was clearly much sought after and a 'trophy wife' despite her humble origins.
- As we have seen, her portrait looks very similar to that of Frances Brooke and to add to the difficulty this portrait by Lely was erroneously named "Elizabeth, Countess of Falmouth" and also as "Countess of Ossory" in some portrait prints and books.
- Mary Bagot may have been the mistress of James, Duke of York. She was the daughter of an **impoverished but loyal Cavalier officer** and she may have been one of the Duchess's Maids of Honour although there is some confusion with her half-sister Elizabeth Bagot. Hamilton says, 'Miss Bagot was the only one who was really possessed of virtue and beauty ... she had beautiful and regular features and that sort of brown complexion, which, when in perfection, is so particularly fascinating, and more especially in England where it is uncommon. There was an involuntary blush almost continually upon her cheek without having anything to blush for.'



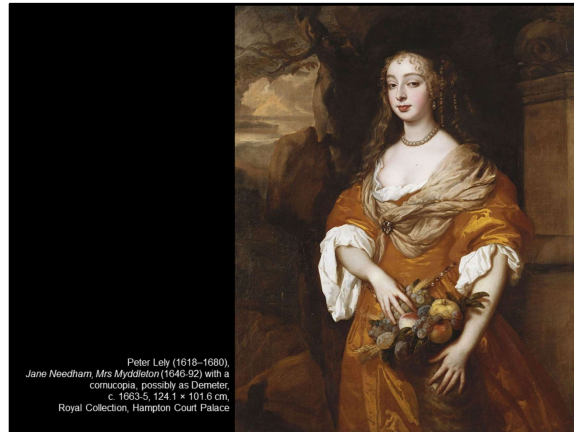
Studio copy of a Peter Lely (1618–1680), *Anne Spencer (née Digby), Countess of Sunderland* (c. 1646-1715), before 1666, 124.9 × 101.8 cm, Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace

7. The Villainous Beauty

- **Anne Digby** takes us from the court of Charles II right through to the court of Queen Anne. Despite being described as a “dissembling, false woman” Anne Digby was lady-in-waiting to the wife of James II and was then able to become Princess Anne and the Queen Anne’s lady-in-waiting.
- Note that the Windsor Beauties were **not the most beautiful women** at court but those that were the **closest friends of the Duchess of York**. All the portraits in the 'Windsor Beauties' series appear to be **wholly by Lely’s own hand, except this portrait of Anne Digby**, Countess of Sunderland which is **probably a studio copy**, after the original portrait at Althorp which is inscribed with the date 1666. This portrait is arguably the least beautiful of the set but it does not compare well with descriptions of Anne and other portraits. Lely was unrivalled for capturing a likeness and so this portraits may have been produced by his studio to complete a set of family portraits.
- In 1687, in a letter to her sister, Princess Mary of Orange, Anne Hyde wrote of Anne Digby, Countess of Sunderland: ‘**She is a flattering, dissembling, false woman ; but she has so fawning and endearing a way**, that she will deceive anybody at first, and it is not possible to find out all her ways in a little time. Then she has had her gallants, though may be not so many as some ladies here, and with all these good qualities she is a constant church woman ; so that to outward appearance, **one would take her for a saint**, and, to hear her talk, you would think she is a very good Protestant, but she is as much the one as the other, for it is certain that her lord does nothing without her.’ Anne later wrote, ‘Sure there never was a couple so well matched as she and her husband ; for as she is throughout in all her actions **the greatest jade that ever was**, so is he the **subtlest workingest villain that is on the face of the earth.**’

Notes

- Anne Digby was the daughter of George Digby, 2nd Earl of Bristol. In 1665 she married Robert Spencer, 2nd Earl of Sunderland. Her husband assembled a fine collection of female portraits by Lely which is still at Althorp.
- She was a **lady-in-waiting to Mary of Modena** during the reign of James II, and was present at the birth of the Prince of Wales, signalling to the king that his new child was a boy.
- Rather fortuitously the Earl of **Sunderland fell out with James II** and been dismissed shortly before the king was dethroned. The Sunderlands went into self-imposed exile in Holland. Sunderland later returned to England and managed to **ingratiate himself into William of Orange's** good books when the latter was proclaimed King of England. By some miracle Lady Sunderland was also able to worm her way into **Princess Anne's good graces** and became her lady-in-waiting despite being 'the greatest jade there ever was' (see below).
- She became a **close friend of Sarah Churchill**, later Duchess of Marlborough, and was **disliked by Queen Anne, who was jealous** of their friendship. She is alleged to have had an affair with Henry Sidney, Earl of Romney, her husband's uncle. However, John Evelyn spoke well of her, and most of her friends shared her own strong religious faith. Her devotion to her husband was never seriously questioned; his biographer considered that it was principally his happy marriage which sustained Sunderland through a long and unhappy life.
- **Robert Spencer, 2nd Earl of Sunderland** (1641–1702) was an English statesman and nobleman from the Spencer family. **His sarcasm and bad temper**, and his reputation as a ruthless advocate of absolute monarchy, made him numerous enemies, and he was forced to flee abroad in 1688, but he later underwent a political rehabilitation. In his last years he appeared in a somewhat different light as a disinterested adviser to the Crown who neither sought nor wished for political office. By the standards of the Restoration Court, his private life was remarkably free from scandal.



Peter Lely (1618–1680), *Jane Needham, Mrs Myddleton* (1646–92) with a cornucopia, possibly as Demeter, c. 1663–5, 124.1 × 101.6 cm, Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace

8. The Smelly Beauty

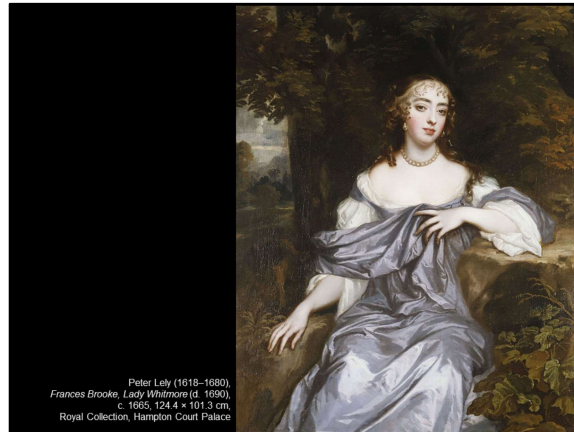
- A great beauty who was well known at court for her enormous pride and **general unwillingness to have a bath.**
- Jane Myddleton was described by the diarist John Evelyn as '**that famous and indeed incomparable beauty**', she was pursued by both King Charles II and the Duke of York, but **resisted becoming a royal mistress**, although she was the mistress of the Duke of Montagu and later the Earl of Rochester. Her beauty inspired the poets Edmund Waller and Saint-Evremond. Pepys also records that she was a skilful amateur painter.
- She was described as a '**silly and sentimental beauty**', whose '**ambition to pass for a wit, only established for her the reputation of being tiresome, which lasted much longer than her beauty**' (Anthony Hamilton). At Court her striking beauty was the only necessary qualification for advancement, where she had numerous admirers. When only eighteen years old she had been chosen by the Duke of York for inclusion in Sir Peter Lely's paintings of the Court beauties that hung in his apartments at Windsor. She never became the king's lover and failed to replace Louise de Kerouaille, the King's unpopular French mistress, with her daughter Jenny (1661 – 1740).
- However, not all the beauties were perfect. **Samuel Pepys** took the well-known beauty and wife of his friend Elizabeth Pearse to dinner and she told him that "the fine Mrs. Middleton is noted for **carrying about her body a continued sour base smell, that is very offensive**, especially if she be a little hot." and others said she "had not learned the meaning of wit or wisdom". Elizabeth Pearse was said to still look only 20 after she had had her nineteenth child and her relationship with Pepys made his wife jealous.

Notes

- **Jane Needham** was the daughter of Sir Robert Needham and in 1660 she **married Charles Myddelton** of Ruabon in Wales.
- She was born into a wealthy and aristocratic family and married Charles Myddelton, who was ten years her senior. Despite her marriage she had a number of lovers at court.
- The Count de Gramont claimed that Mrs Myddelton 'was fair, well made and delicate, in manner somewhat precise and affected, giving herself indolent, languishing airs, and extremely anxious to pass as a wit. She wearied by trying to explain sentiments which she did not understand, and she bored while trying to entertain.' It could be he was peeved as she did not agree to become his mistress.

References

<http://www.historicalportraits.com/Gallery.asp?Page=Item&ItemID=327&Desc=Jane-Needham-%7C-Henri-Gascar>



Peter Lely (1618–1680), *Frances Brooke, Lady Whitmore* (d. 1690), c. 1665, 124.4 × 101.3 cm, Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace

- **9. The Quiet Beauty with the ‘Ugly Nose’**
- Frances Brooke, Lady Whitmore was the daughter of Sir William Brooke. By 1665 she had married Sir Thomas Whitmore. Her sister was Margaret Brooke, Lady Denham, mistress to the Duke of York, who was also painted by Lely for the Windsor Beauties series. The sisters were daughters of a knight who had died fighting on the parliamentary side during the Civil War and their uncle brought them to court as teenagers to increase his influence with Charles.
- Frances Brook, Lady Whitmore **‘possessed heavily marked features, thick eyebrows, a long, rather ugly nose, well-formed but large mouth, and dark hair.’** (Clare Jerrold, ‘The Fair Ladies of Hampton Court’, 1911) and she **did not succumb to court temptation** and married twice before dying in her 40s. Her first husband was Sir Thomas Whitmore and after his death she married Mathew Harvey and led a life of quiet domesticity away from the court.



Peter Lely (1618–1680), *Portrait of Frances Theresa Stuart, Duchess of Richmond and Lennox*, c. 1662-65, 125.8 × 102.7 cm, Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace

John Roettier, *gold medal of Charles II*, 1667, British Museum

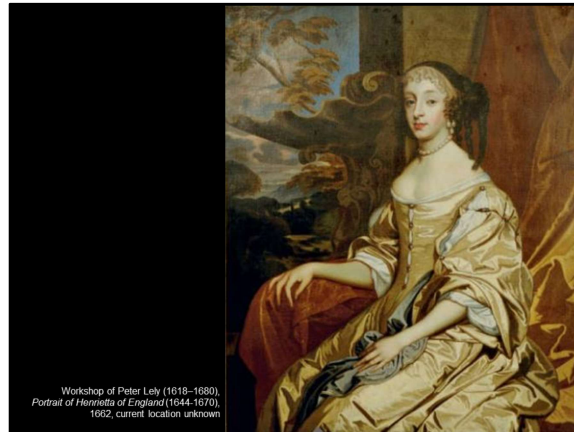
Wax effigy of Frances Stuart, Westminster Abbey Museum

La Belle Stuart - the Prettiest Beauty

- **Not currently on display.**
- A woman could sometimes spurn Charles II and get away with it.
- Frances Stuart is shown as the chaste virgin huntress Diana, and she was certainly chased around the palace by Charles II shortly after her arrival from Paris as a teenager.
- **Frances Stuart, the face of Britannia and famous for holding off the King's advances.** The King fell deeply in love with her. When his wife fell ill he said he intended to marry Frances Stuart and four years later he considered obtaining a divorce. Frances ran off and married the Duke of Richmond and the King forgave her. For her great beauty she was known as **La Belle Stuart**. The image of Britannia was engraved by Jan Roettier in 1667 for medals made to celebrate naval victories that year. Frances' virtue like Britain's protected both from foreign invasion.
- Daughter of a physician, exiled to Paris and returned to London in 1663. **Samuel Pepys described her "The prettiest girl in the world, and the best fitted of any to adorn a Court" with "her sweet eye, little Roman nose and excellent taille** (pronounced 'tie-yuh', OED: waist or 'the shape of the bust from shoulder to waist') , **is now the greatest beauty I ever saw, I think, in my life".**
- She had many suitors including the Duke of Buckingham and Francis Digby, the son of the Earl of Bristol. Her beauty was only equalled by her **childish silliness** although her letters indicate some good sense.
- She married the Duke of Richmond and Lennox in 1667 and may have had to elope when she was discovered with him by Lady Castlemaine, a rival for the king's affections.
- She caught smallpox which spoilt her complexion causing Pepys to write in 1668, 'Here I did see Mrs. Stewart's picture as when a young maid, and now just

done before her having the smallpox: and it would make a man weep to see what she was then, and what she is like to be, by people's discourse, now.'

- Even after smallpox she is rumoured to have had an affair with Charles who is said to have rowed to her house and climbed her garden wall to see her.
- Charles chose Frances Stuart to represent **Britannia on a commemorative medal** celebrating peace with the Dutch and it was later used on coins (a copper farthing) and statues including copper coins until decimalization in 1971 and on the fifty pence coin in 2006.
- Her **5' 8" wax effigy** is in Westminster Abbey Museum and was ordered by her from Mr. Goldsmith to stand alongside the tomb of her husband in Henry VII's chapel. The wax effigy stands alongside her **stuffed pet African grey parrot**, the oldest stuffed bird in existence.
- Not currently on display at Hampton Court Palace.



Workshop of Peter Lely (1618–1680), *Portrait of Henrietta of England* (1644–1670), 1662, current location unknown

- Henrietta of England (1644–1670) was the **youngest daughter of King Charles I** and his wife, Henrietta Maria of France. She fled England with her governess at the age of three and moved to the court of her first cousin Louis XIV of France, where she was known as *Minette*. She married **Philippe of France**, brother of King Louis XIV, known as Monsieur at court and she became known as **Madame**. Very popular with the court, her marriage was marked by frequent tensions. Henrietta was instrumental in negotiating the Secret Treaty of Dover prior to her **unexpected death in June 1670**. Jacobite claims to the throne of Great Britain following the death of Henry Benedict Stuart (brother of Bonnie Prince Charlie) descend from her through her **daughter Anne Marie**, Queen of Sardinia. The present day ancestor in line of Jacobite succession is Franz, Duke of Bavaria.



- The Puritans were horrified by the excesses of the Reformation Court and saw the Great Plague and the Great Fire as God's punishment.
- When William and Mary came to the throne they decided there would be a return to the behaviour and manners of the pre-Reformation period. A Society for the Reformation of Manners was formed for persons of all ranks to promote laws against profanities and debauchery for the effecting of a national reformation. Volunteers patrolled the streets looking for prostitutes to arrest. They published a 'Black Roll' naming women they did not approve of and many innocent women were caught. They were sent to Bridewell Prison, stripped to the waist and flogged.
- Theatres were reinvented when they opened in the 1660s with the innovation of a curtain, wings and footlights. Women actresses were welcomed on equal terms with men and women could attend the theatre, unlike coffee houses from which they were banned. Actresses would often have to extemporize to entertain the heckling audience and women playing 'breeches roles' could use the opportunity of playing men to criticize all men. The most famous actress was Nell Gwynn who was beautiful, intelligent, witty and independent.

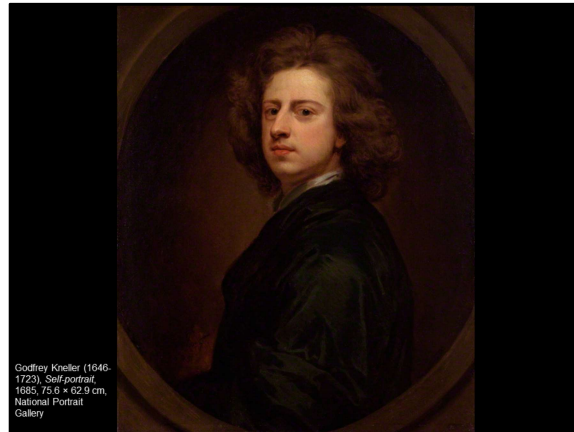
Notes

- The Hampton Court Beauties were commissioned by Mary II from Godfrey Kneller, perhaps in emulation of her mother's collection. They were commissioned to hang in the Water Gallery at Hampton Court.
- Lely interpreted beauty as close to sex appeal but Kneller represented inner beauty using symbols such as a dolphin meaning love, a lizard for death, a rose for beauty and a distant ship for hope.
- Kneller's women stand upright and are refined and aristocratic. They are sensitive rather than sensual.
- The death of Charles II in 1685 brought about the gradual death of this new sexual revolution. His brother James II lasted only three years and was followed by a husband and wife team, William III and Mary II.
- James had less charisma than Charles II and was **decadent without style**. His big mistake though was to be publically Catholic. This was unacceptable following the

brutality of the catholic reign of Mary I even though this had been over hundred years before. The memory of events during her reign was well known to everyone through John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* (originally *Actes and Monuments of these Latter and Perillous Days, Touching Matters of the Church*, 1863).

William III and Mary II

- **Hampton Court Beauties** commissioned from Godfrey Kneller by Mary II
 - Isabella Bennet, Duchess of Grafton (1667–1713),
 - Margaret Cecil, Countess of Ranelagh (1672–1727),
 - Carey Fraser, Countess of Peterborough (c.1658–1709),
 - Frances Whitmore, Lady Middleton (1666–1694),
 - Mary Scrope, later Mrs Pitt (born 1676),
 - Diana De Vere, Duchess of St Albans (1679–1742),
 - Lady Mary Bentinck, Countess of Essex (died 1726),
 - Mary Compton, Countess of Dorset (1669–1691)

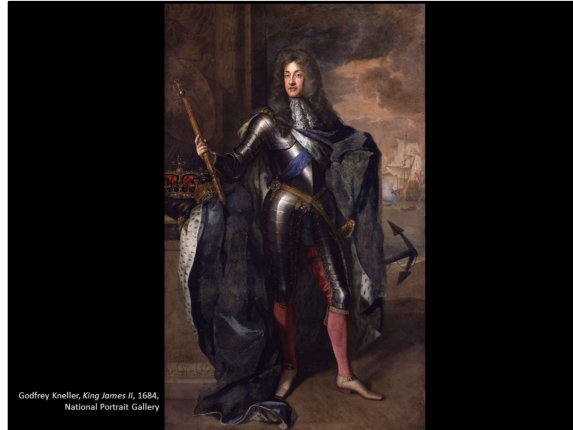


Godfrey Kneller (1646-1723), *Self-portrait*, 1685, 75.6 × 62.9 cm, National Portrait Gallery

- **Sir Peter Lely died in 1680 and was replaced as court painter by Geoffrey Kneller, a very different painter who served seven British monarchs.**
- Kneller was the leading portrait painter in the late 17th and early 18th centuries and was court painter to monarchs from Charles II to George I.
- Kneller was born in Lubeck, **studied with Rembrandt in Amsterdam** and by 1676 was working in England as a fashionable portrait painter. He painted seven British monarchs (**Charles II, James II, William III, Mary II, Anne, George I and George II**), though his portraits of Charles II are no longer in the Royal Collection, and in 1715 was the first artist to be made a Baronet (the next was John Everett Millais in 1885). A set of portraits of naval heroes by Kneller was given by George IV to the Royal Naval Hospital in Greenwich in 1824.
- Godfrey Kneller was reputed to be very vain and there are many anecdotes. One involved Pope who had made a wager that there was no flattery so gross but that Kneller would swallow it but in this case Kneller got the better of him. Pope said, "Sir Godfrey, I believe if God Almighty had had your assistance, the world would have been formed more perfect." "Fore God, sir" replied Kneller "I believe so!" and laid his hand gently upon Pope's deformed shoulder.
- His major works include *The Chinese Convert* (1687; Royal Collection, London); a series of four portraits of Isaac Newton painted at various junctures of the latter's life; a series of ten reigning European monarchs, including King Louis XIV of France; over 40 "Kit-cat portraits" of members of the Kit-Cat Club; and **ten "beauties" of the court of William III**, to match a similar series of ten beauties of the court of Charles II painted by his predecessor as court painter, Sir Peter Lely. Kneller's ten beauties are known as the "Hampton Court Beauties".

Notes

- **Kneller was dashing and worldly**, he rapidly established an extremely successful business as a portrait painter. **His production was immense**, and his large team of assistants formed **virtually a factory**; the standard product was **mechanical and lifeless**, yet Kneller's **individual masterpieces** rank as **high as any** portraits produced in Europe in his time. This self-portrait of 1685 demonstrates his power as an artist before it was diluted by mass production.



Godfrey Kneller (1646-1723), *King James II*, 1684, 238.2 x 147.7 cm, National Portrait Gallery

- The court of Charles II was replaced by the short-lived court of James II.
- **James II and VII** (1633–1701) was King of England and Ireland as James II and King of Scotland as James VII, from 6 February 1685 until he was **deposed in the Glorious Revolution of 1688**. He was the **last Roman Catholic monarch** to reign over the Kingdoms of England, Scotland and Ireland.
- When he produced a Catholic heir the leading nobles called on his **Protestant son-in-law and nephew, William of Orange**, to mount an invasion army. **James fled England** (and thus was held to have abdicated) and was replaced by his Protestant elder daughter, Mary II, and her husband, William III. James made one serious attempt to return when he landed in Ireland in 1689 but, after his defeat at the Battle of the Boyne in July 1690, James returned to France. He lived out the rest of his life as a pretender at a court sponsored by his cousin and ally, King Louis XIV. His son, **James III** (1701-1766), was known as the '**Old Pretender**' and his son **Charles Stuart** (1720-1788) as the '**Young Pretender**' and retrospectively as '**Bonnie Prince Charlie**'.

James II

- After Richard Cromwell's resignation as Lord Protector in 1659 and the subsequent collapse of the Commonwealth in 1660, Charles II was restored to the English throne. Although James was the heir presumptive, it seemed unlikely that he would inherit the Crown, as Charles was still a young man capable of fathering children.
- On 31 December 1660, following his brother's restoration, James was created **Duke of Albany in Scotland**, to go along with his English title, **Duke of York**. Upon his return to England, James prompted an **immediate controversy** by announcing his **engagement to Anne Hyde**, the daughter of Charles' chief minister, Edward Hyde. In 1659, while trying to seduce her, James promised he would marry Anne. Anne became **pregnant in 1660**, but following the Restoration and James's return to power, no one at the royal court **expected a prince to marry a commoner**, no matter what he had pledged beforehand. Although nearly everyone, including Anne's father, urged the two **not to marry**, the couple **married secretly**, then went through an official marriage ceremony on 3 September 1660 in London. Their first child, Charles, was

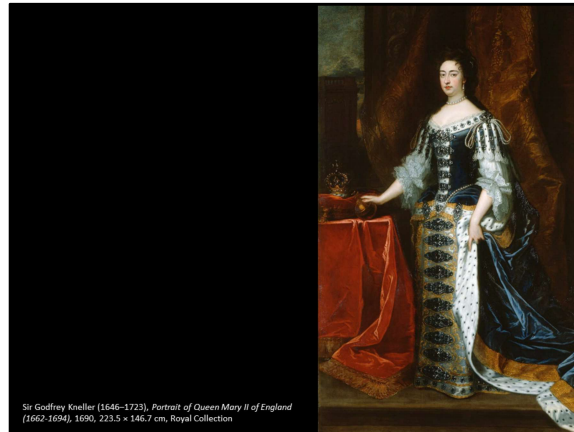
born less than **two months later**, but **died** in infancy, as did five further sons and daughters. Only **two daughters survived**: **Mary** (born 1662) and **Anne** (born 1665). Samuel Pepys wrote that James was **fond of his children** and his role as a father, and played with them "like an ordinary private father of a child", a contrast to the distant parenting common to royals at the time.

- James's wife, **Mary of Modena**, was devoted to him and influenced many of his decisions. Even so, he kept a variety of **mistresses**, including **Arabella Churchill** and **Catherine Sedley**.
- Mary of Modena is primarily remembered for the controversial **birth of James Francis Edward**, her only surviving son. It was widely rumoured that he was a "changeling", brought into the birth-chamber **in a warming-pan**, in order to perpetuate her husband's Catholic Stuart dynasty. Although the accusation was **entirely false**, and the subsequent Privy Council investigation only reaffirmed this, James Francis Edward's birth was a contributing factor to the "Glorious Revolution", the revolution which deposed James II and VII and replaced him with his Protestant eldest daughter from his first marriage to Anne Hyde, (1637–1671), Lady Mary, (later Queen Mary II). She and her husband, William III, Prince of Orange-Nassau, would reign jointly on the English Throne as "William and Mary". She was exiled to France and became the "Queen over the water"—as the "Jacobites", (followers of James II and VII, Stuart dynasty claims, and generally Roman Catholics) called Mary — lived with her husband and children in the Château de Saint-Germain-en-Laye, provided by King Louis XIV of France ("The Sun King"). Mary was popular among Louis XIV's courtiers; however, James was considered a bore.



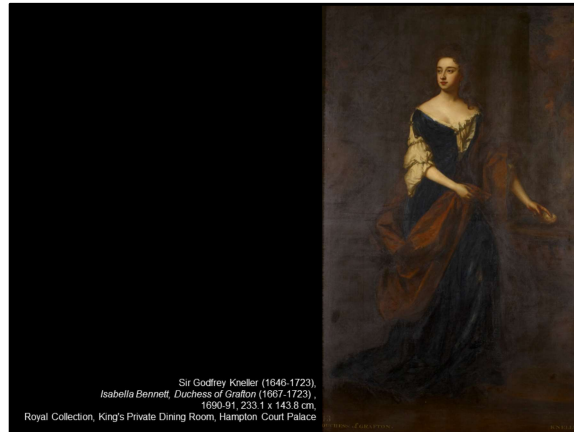
Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646-1723), *Michael Alphonsus Shen Fu-Tsung* (d. 1691), 'The Chinese Convert', 1687, 212.2 x 147.6 cm, Royal Collection, Queen's Drawing Room (State Apartments), Windsor Castle

- The sitter was born of **Chinese Christian parents** and came to Europe at the instigation of Father Philip Couplet, Procurator of the China Jesuits in Rome. After leaving Macao in 1681 they travelled together in Italy, France and England. **Shen Fu-Tsung left England in 1688** for Lisbon where he entered the **Society of Jesus**. He died near Mozambique on his way back to China in 1691.
- Shen Fu-Tsung seems to have been a **well-known figure at the English Court** and this portrait was painted **for James II**. The first reference to this work is by the naval surgeon, James Yonge, who saw Shen Fu-Tsung at Windsor in July 1687, describing him as a 'pale-faced fellow who had travelled from his country and become a papist (his picture being done very well like him in one of the King's lodgings)'.¹
- The painting can be categorised as both a **religious image and as a portrait**. The composition succeeds on the basis of the unaffected sense of design and the directness of the characterisation. The fact that the sitter looks upwards away from the viewer suggests divine inspiration. According to Horace Walpole, 'Of all his works, Sir Godfrey was most proud of the converted Chinese at Windsor'.



Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723), *Portrait of Queen Mary II of England (1662-1694)*, 1690, 223.5 × 146.7 cm, Royal Collection

- This is Mary II. William and Mary's court was still grand and baroque but **depraved conduct was out of fashion**. Many of the rakes and mistresses of the 1660s and 70s such as the Earl of Rochester (John Wilmot) and Nell Gwyn were dead. The most notorious mistress, Barbara Villiers was still scheming and sexually inexhaustible into her 60s. She did not die until 1709 when Anne (1665-1714) was Queen.



Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646-1723), *Isabella Bennett, Duchess of Grafton* (1667-1723) , 1690-91, 233.1 x 143.8 cm, Royal Collection, King's Private Dining Room, Hampton Court Palace

- These are the Hampton Court Beauties, shown in the order they are hung in the Palace starting on the left of the door in from the Orangery.
- In 1690 Mary II commissioned Kneller to paint a series, in Defoe's words, 'of the principal Ladies attending upon her Majesty, or who were frequently in her Retinue'. They originally hung in the 'Water Gallery' at Hampton Court, until it was destroyed in c. 1700, when they moved to their present location in the Eating Room below stairs, also at Hampton Court. According to Horace Walpole **Mary II was advised by Lady Dorchester against the idea** of having the most beautiful of her court painted: '**Madam, if the King were to ask for the portraits of all the wits in his court, would not the rest think he called them fools?**'
- This portrait of the Duchess of Grafton, painted in the same year that her husband died, may have been the **first in the series** of Beauties.
- The Hampton Court Beauties are a series of portraits by **Sir Godfrey Kneller**, **commissioned by Queen Mary II**, depicting the **most glamorous ladies from the court of William III**. They adorn the state rooms of King William III at Hampton Court Palace. Hampton Court also houses the so-called Windsor Beauties from a generation before. The Hampton Court Beauties are of a **plainer, less erotic style** reflecting the change in opinion towards women towards the latter half of the seventeenth century.

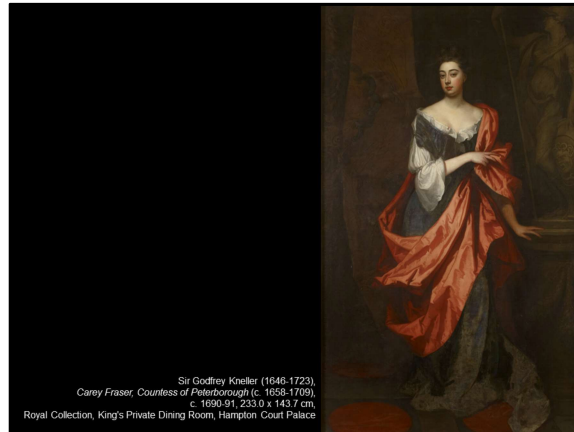


Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646-1723), *Margaret Cecil, Countess of Ranelagh* (1672-1728) , c. 1690-91, 232.9 x 143.6 cm, Royal Collection, King's Private Dining Room, Hampton Court Palace

- Kneller represented inner beauty and virtue by the use of symbols such as a dolphin for love, a rose for beauty, a lizard for death and a distant ship for hope.
- Kneller's women stand **upright, refined and aristocratic rather than lazily draped**. **Kneller's women are sensitive rather than sensual**. The late 17th century artist was expected to deliver more than just likeness; the artists had to represent beauty itself.
- Margaret Cecil, Countess of Ranelagh (1672-1728) was the daughter of the 3rd Earl of Salisbury and evidently so beautiful that Henry Fielding described the heroine of 'Tom Jones', Sophia Western, as resembling this portrait. She is here shown pointing with her right hand to a richly carved vase of flowers and holding the train of her dress with her left; she wears a white silk robe.
- She appears demure but she became the standard for Restoration unpredictability and female daring. She married John, Lord Stawell who died within a year and at the age of 24 she married Richard Jones, Earl of Ranelagh, a man of 64. According to gossip that circulated:
 - *My Lord Ranelagh coming back from the pay office sooner than his lady expected him, he went straight up to her chamber, the door of which, for want of precaution in her or her woman was unlocked, and that his lordship, drawing back the curtains of the bed found my Lord Coningsby in bed with his wife; at which sight he said nothing, but withdrew very civilly and went downstairs about his business.*
- The sequel even stranger. Ranelagh could easily have got a divorce on this evidence alone and sued his rival for heavy damages; but he took his wife back. In April 1698, his daughter Frances married the same Thomas Coningsby against his wishes so he transferred her marriage settlement of £3,250 to his youngest daughter, Catherine. Ranelagh and Coningsby remained closely associated in politics and business but Ranelagh cut him out of his will.

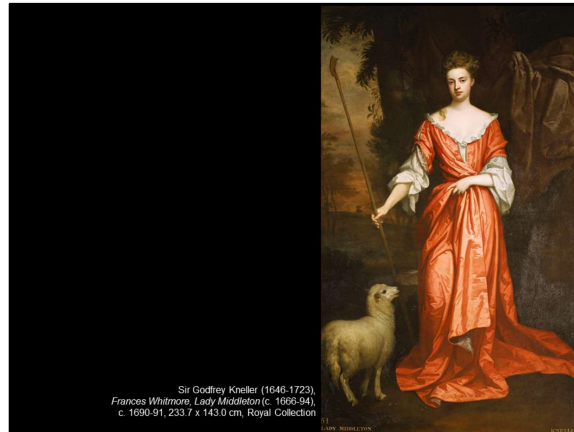
However, he relented with his daughter and in his will he bequeathed Frances a fourth of his estate.

- The Hampton Court Beauties tended to be teenage society women who were preyed upon by seducers at court rather than mature women carefully planning their infidelities.



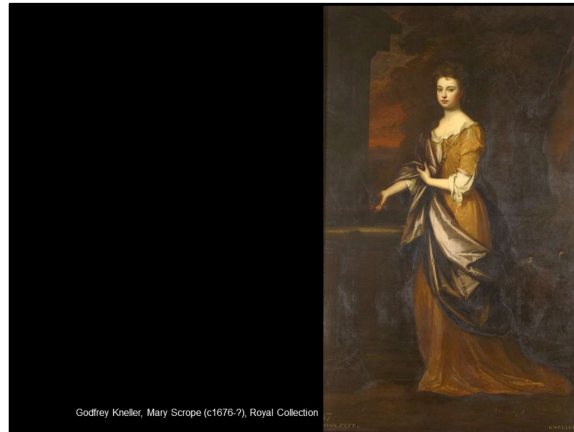
Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646-1723), *Carey Fraser, Countess of Peterborough* (c. 1658-1709), c. 1690-91, 233.0 x 143.7 cm, Royal Collection, King's Private Dining Room, Hampton Court Palace

- The Countess of Peterborough was the daughter of Charles II physician and had been Maid of Honour to Catherine of Braganza; she is here shown leaning against the base of a statue of Minerva, wearing a blue dress over which is draped a scarlet mantle.
- She was thrust forward at court by her mother who was hoping she would become a royal mistress. Thwarted, her family arranged a clandestine marriage with Charles Mordaunt, the future Earl of Peterborough when they were both under age.



Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646-1723), *Frances Whitmore, Lady Middleton* (c. 1666-94), c. 1690-91, 233.7 x 143.0 cm, Royal Collection, King's Private Dining Room, Hampton Court Palace

- Another Hampton Court Beauty that died young was Frances Whitmore, Lady Middleton (c. 1666-94) who was the wife of Sir Richard Middleton, 3rd Baronet of Chirk; she is here shown holding her crimson dress in her left hand, a shepherd's crook in her right, a lamb at her feet; beyond, a landscape with a pool and a wooded glade. She died in childbirth aged about 28.
- Frances Myddelton (Nee Whitmore) was known as Lady Myddelton, coincidentally, her husband's aunt is the Mrs Myddelton of the Windsor Beauties and her own Mother is Lady Whitmore of the Windsor Beauties.



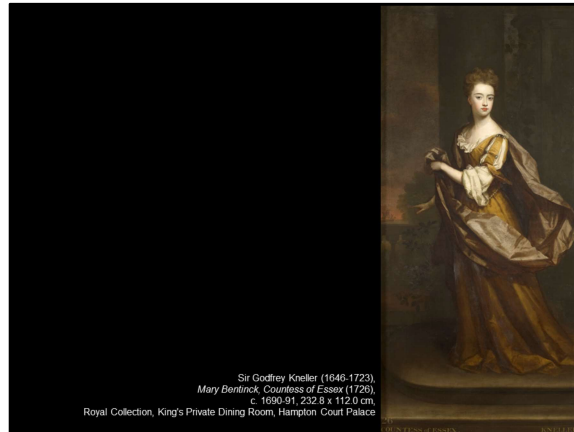
Godfrey Kneller, *Mary Scrope, later Mrs. Pitt* (b. c.1676-?), 1691, Royal Collection

- Mary Scrope is an example of these teenage beauties. She was said to be the most beautiful lady of the court who was about 15 when Kneller painted her. She married John Pitt in about 1695 and disappeared into obscurity.
- She is shown holding her hand under a jet of water from a carved fountain; she wears a yellow robe, over which is a grey mantle; to the left is a lizard which could represent death or rebirth.



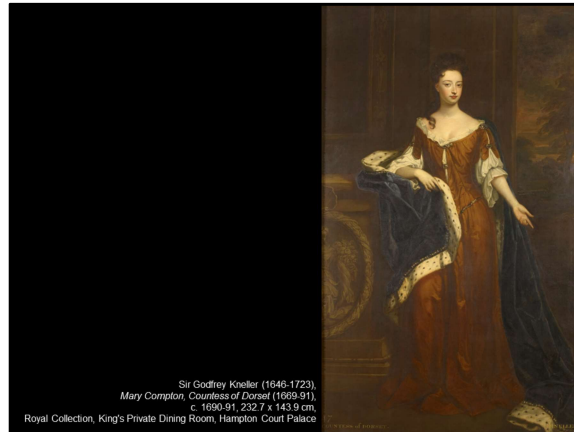
Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646-1723), *Diana De Vere, Duchess of St. Albans* (1679-1742), c. 1691, 233.6 x 115.0 cm, Royal Collection, King's Private Dining Room, Hampton Court Palace

- Diana de Vere was the daughter and sole heiress of the 20th and last Earl of Oxford. In 1694 she married Charles Beauclerk, 1st Duke of St Albans. She was First Lady of the Bedchamber and Groom of the Stole to Caroline of Ansbach when Princess of Wales. She is here shown wearing a red dress with a yellow robe, holding in her left hand an orange which she has plucked from an orange tree in a terracotta vase.
- This painting and one other are narrower than the other six portraits and were presumably painted to fill two narrower spaces in the Water Gallery.



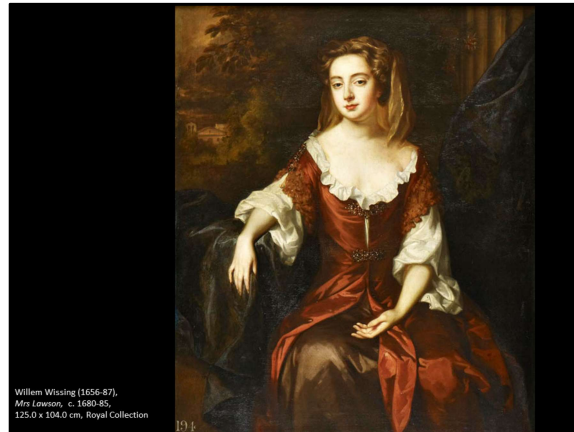
Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646-1723), *Mary Bentinck, Countess of Essex* (1726), c. 1690-91, 232.8 x 112.0 cm Royal Collection, King's Private Dining Room, Hampton Court Palace

- Countess of Essex was the daughter of William III's friend, the Earl of Portland; she is here shown wearing a yellow dress with slashed sleeves and a billowing grey mantle; with her right hand she points to a distant ship at sea.



Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646-1723), *Mary Compton, Countess of Dorset* (1669-91), c. 1690-91, 232.7 x 143.9 cm, Royal Collection, King's Private Dining Room, Hampton Court Palace

- The revealing clothes and loose drapery shown by Lely and Kneller are misleading as they give little indication of the formality of their normal court dress. They were based on pastoral and classical costumes and **fashionable forms of undress**. The informal style was an indication of status, as it suggest the loose gown or shift a woman might wear in the morning before she dressed for the day. **An aristocratic host could receive visitors in 'undress' but only if she was socially superior**. The costumes were also intended to be timeless as fashions at court frequently changed.
- The Countess of Dorchester was Lady of the Bedchamber to Mary II; she is shown here wearing a russet- coloured dress and blue ermine-lined robe; she is resting her right arm on a ledge beneath which is an oval relief of Ceres.
- She married Charles Sackville, Earl of Dorset, who uniquely managed to marry both a Windsor Beauty and a Hampton Court Beauty, as well as being Nell Gwyn's 'Charles the Second'. Mary Compton became Sackville's second wife in 1685 before **dying of smallpox aged just 22**, shortly after this portrait was completed.
- One of the fashion trends of the late 1670s was cross-dressing. Women at court would dress in male figure hugging hunting costumes. This was much admired by James, Duke of York, when adopted by his second and much younger wife, Mary of Modena.



Willem Wissing (1656-87), *Mrs Lawson*, c. 1680-85, 125.0 x 104.0 cm, Royal Collection

- This final portrait is above the fireplace and is by Willem Wissing. Wissing was a Dutch artist who came to London in 1676, studied with Sir Peter Lely and effectively took over the business for the seven years between Lely's death in 1680 and his own in 1687 (aged only thirty one). All the works by Wissing in the Royal Collection date for this period. This is one of three portraits of 'court beauties' (OM 326-8, 402580, 402573 and 402575) which may have been painted in 1680-5 for Mary II, while she was in Holland as Princess of Orange. They first appear in inventories in the reign of Queen Anne. The sitter may be the 'Lawson' mentioned as a mistress of Charles II in 1681. Signed: W. Wissing fec.'



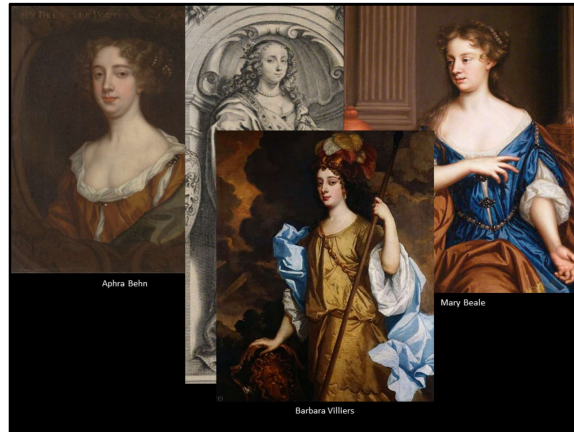
John Closterman (1660-1711), *Portrait of Queen Anne (1665-1714)*, c. 1702, 125.1 × 102.9 cm, National Portrait Gallery

- Queen Anne (1665-1714) became Queen in 1702 and England and Scotland united in 1707. She was the daughter of James and her uncle Charles II, who had no children, insisted she be brought up an Anglican. When James was deposed in the Glorious Revolution of 1688 Anne's elder sister Mary and her husband William became queen and king. Mary died of smallpox in 1694 and Anne became Queen when William III died in 1702 following a riding accident. She was a close friend of Sarah Churchill, Duchess of Marlborough but they later fell out.
- Anne was plagued by ill health and grew increasingly lame and obese. Despite seventeen pregnancies by her husband Prince George of Denmark she dies without any surviving children.
- John Closterman was a portrait painter who was born in Osnabrück and was the son of an artist. He travelled to Paris and then London but argued with his patron, the Duke of Somerset. He went to Spain and Italy before returning to England where he married an Englishwoman who died. He later took a mistress who ruined him by her extravagant habits and drove him to madness.



Antonio Verrio (c. 1636-1707), *Prince George of Denmark and British Fleet*, mural, Hampton Court, Queen's Drawing Room

- Finally, as a footnote. This **mural at Hampton Court** always reminds me of the **power of Queen Anne**. Although her husband **George of Denmark** was appointed **Lord High Admiral** and nominal head of the Royal Navy he is shown here **naked like a water nymph**. George's smooth, naked limbs compete in beauty with those of the water maidens.
- Prince George was fond of Hampton Court and these apartments were set up for his use. This was Verrio's last commission—he was by this time an ageing man with poor eyesight—and the work has, with justification, been much criticised, although it is much restored, George II having covered it up with wallpaper.
- **We have travelled a long way** from the women who used their beauty to achieve power fifty years previously to the beautiful male consort of a powerful Queen.



Peter Lely (1618-1680), *Aphra Behn*, c. 1670, 76.8 cm x 64.1 cm, Yale Center for British Art

Margaret Cavendish

Mary Beale

Barbara Villiers

Millicent Fawcett

- **Did women have real power?** A few wealthy widows and the monarch but in general—no. A few women excelled in their professions despite the odds, such as **Aphra Behn** (poet and playwright), **Margaret Cavendish** (poet and scientist) and **Mary Beale** (artist) and a few beautiful women could sometimes manipulate powerful men such as **Barbara Villiers**. But it would be over 200 years before women had the same voting rights as men. One intrepid campaigner for women's rights was Millicent Fawcett (1847-1929) who attended Parliament in 1867 when she was 20 to hear John Stuart Mill introduce the first women's suffrage amendment to the Reform Bill and she had to wait until she was 81 to attend Parliament to hear the Equal Franchise Act passed in 1928.

Notes

- The Royal Hospital describes **Christian Welsh** as a wounded women who dressed in the habit of a man. When her husband joined the army she put on his clothes and also joined the army. She had small breasts which she did not need to bind and she had a urinary instrument so she could pee standing up. She was captured and was wounded several times and she once won a duel. She was eventually found out when she was wounded in the groin. Rather than condemned she was celebrated and her memoirs were an instant hit.
- One of the best known women of the period is **Aphra Behn** (1640?-1689) she was the first women to make a living from writing plays and she demanded equality with her male peers. She is buried at Westminster Abbey but not in Poets Corner but in the cloisters. She had more plays put on than anybody else.
- **Margaret Cavendish** (1623-1673, née Lucas) was the first women to publish scientific works and she made statements that today we would call feminist. She was viewed by her contemporaries as being rather eccentric. She was extravagant and

flirtatious, accused of using speech full of 'oaths and obscenity', and was noted for her unusual sense of fashion. This reputation for eccentricity survives today, when Margaret is widely referred to as 'Mad Madge'. In 1667 she was asked to talk at the Royal Society, remarkable for a Society of men. She met Robert Hooke (1635-1703) who wrote *Micrographia* and saw his microscope but she thought that such instruments distorted reality. She published one of the first works of science fiction (*The Blazing World*, 1666) which explored science and was also a political satire. She was one of the most original thinkers of the age.

- **The first act of Parliament** that allowed women to **apply for divorce** was the Matrimonial Causes Act, 1857 and that allowed married women to **inherit property in their own name** and keep the money they earned were the Married Women's Property Acts of 1870, 1882, 1884 and 1893. Equal voting rights to men was brought in by the The Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act, 1928.




After 300 years we are still not sure what beauty is or what it is for. It has been praised for its spiritual purity, embraced for its sensuality and dismissed for its cultural relativism. However, it is still praised, coveted, feared and despised.



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