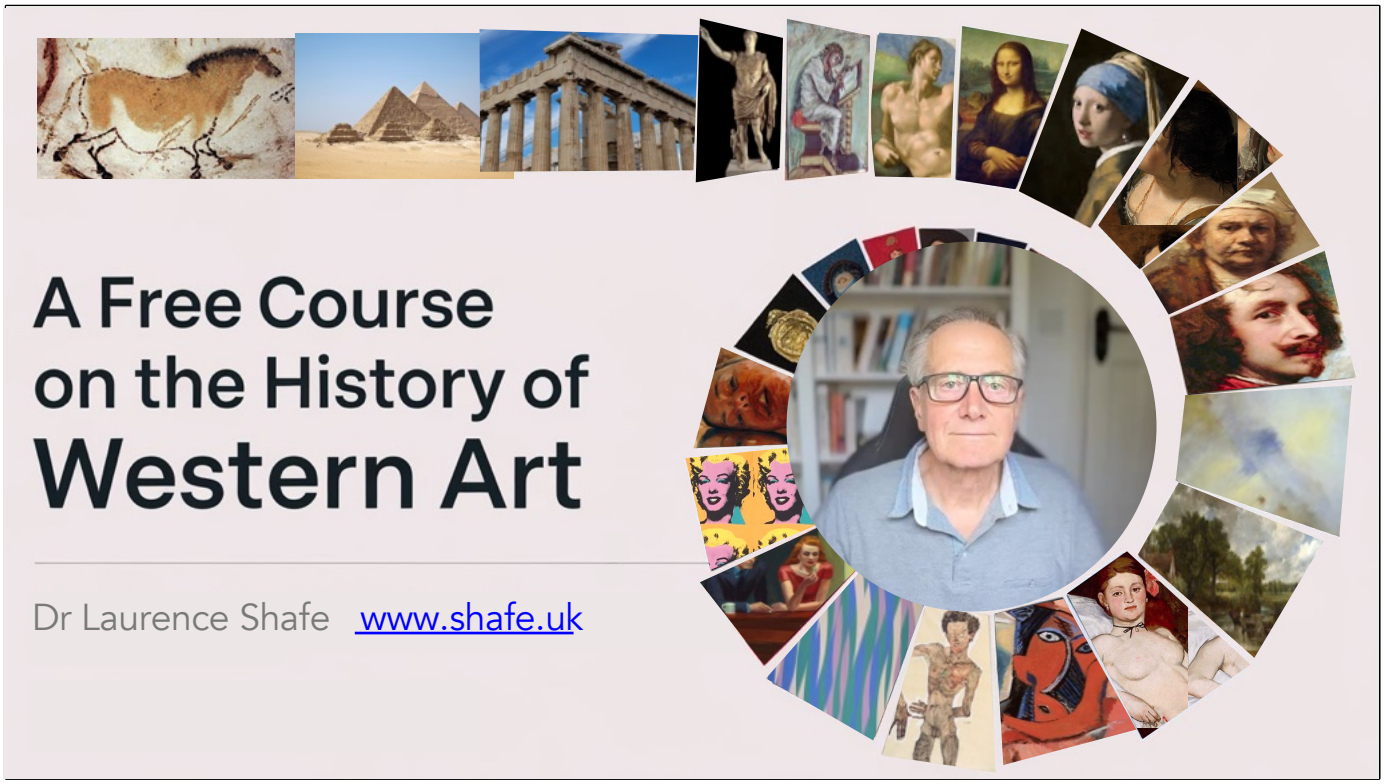

- Welcome. I have finished the History of Western Art but I had some old lectures that I gave ten years ago. Rather than delete them I decided to use Claude, Heygen and ElevenLabs to convert them to my new design, improve the text and use a clone of my voice and face to give them.

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16-04 Charles II Art & Power

DR. LAURENCE SHAFE WWW.SHAFE.UK

Peter Lely
Portrait of an Unknown Woman
c. 1670-75
Tate

Charles II returned from exile in 1660 to a court eager for spectacle after eleven years of Puritan austerity. This talk traces how portraiture, court mistresses, and royal patronage rebuilt the monarchy's image — through Peter Lely's brush, the Windsor Beauties, and a culture that turned beauty into political theatre.

Unknown Dutch artist
The Execution of Charles I
c. 1649
—
163.2 x 296.8 cm
Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh

Unknown Dutch artist, The Execution of Charles I, c. 1649, 163.2 x 296.8 cm, Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh

This painting documents the moment **Charles I** met his end on **30 January 1649** outside the Banqueting House, Whitehall — a scene recorded by an unknown Dutch artist now housed in the Scottish National Portrait Gallery. The woman fainting in the crowd signals not squeamishness at bloodshed but theological horror: kings ruled by divine right, and many witnesses regarded regicide as the gravest possible blasphemy. In the lower right corner, onlookers press handkerchiefs to the scaffold's blood, collecting it as a relic — Charles was widely mourned as a **Christian martyr**. The dual date 1648/49 reflects a genuine calendrical fault line. England used **Lady Day**, 25 March, as the legal new year from **1155 until 1752**, when the **Gregorian calendar** finally aligned Britain with Catholic Europe. Parliament recorded the execution as 30 January 1648 (Old Style); modern texts render it 1649 (New Style). Roman Catholic countries, having adopted the Gregorian calendar in **1582**, logged it as 9 February 1649 altogether. The execution came at the midpoint of a catastrophic period: three **English Civil Wars** between 1642 and 1651, followed by the Commonwealth and then the Protectorate under **Oliver Cromwell**. The monarchy's restoration was still eleven years away.

Notes

Unknown Dutch artist, Charles I, 1600-1649, reigned 1625-1649 (‘The Execution

of Charles I'), c. 1649, 163.2 x 296.8 cm, Scottish National Portrait Gallery Charles II came to power in 1660 and his father had been beheaded eleven years ago. The English Civil War is over and the experiment with the Commonwealth has left the country disorientated. This is a record of the execution made by a Dutch artist. It took place in Whitehall outside the Banqueting Hall. The woman in the audience is fainting not because of the bloody dead but because kings were considered to be appointed by God and so this was seen by many as the ultimate blasphemy. In the bottom right we see people mopping up the blood with handkerchiefs as many thought Charles was a Christian martyr and his blood would bring good fortune. The execution took place on 30 January 1648/49. Why two dates? Start of year. In England, Lady Day (the date of the Annunciation and the conception of Christ) was New Year's Day from 1155 until 1752, when the Gregorian calendar was adopted and the first of January became the official start of the year. Lady Day was the start of the new year for legal and tax purposes and the UK tax year still begins on 6 April, or 'New Lady Day', i.e., Lady Day adjusted for the 11 lost days of the calendar change. Lady Day was the official start of the new year but from the late 14th century, New Year's Day was celebrated on 1 January as part of Yule. One reason for March 25th is that it is close the the equinox when the length of day and night is equal and many ancient cultures still use this time as the start of the new year. Dual dates. For years before 1752 academic texts write dual years for dates between 1 January and 25 March. For example, the execution of Charles I was recorded at the time in parliament as happening on 30 January 1648 (Old Style). In newer English language texts this date is usually shown as 30 January 1649 (New Style). To add to the confusion because Roman Catholic countries adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1582 contemporaries in those countries recorded the date of his execution as 9 February 1649. 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 (pronounced 'lay-lee') as the 'Windsor Beauties'. Another set of portraits known as the 'Hampton Court Beauties' were painted by Godfrey Kneller (1646-1723) during the reign of William III and Mary II are also on display at Hampton Court. 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. The Levellers was a political movement during the English Civil War that discussed extended suffrage but in the end in their manifesto ‘An Agreement of the People’ it was limited to adult male property holders. Although the new Model Army did not adopt their manifesto it is said to have greatly influenced the development of the U.S. Constitution.

Anonymous
Old Christmas (Sir, I bring good cheer)
1652/1653
Woodcut
—
—

Anonymous, Old Christmas (Sir, I bring good cheer), 1652/1653

This 1652/3 woodcut distils the cultural tensions of the Interregnum into a single image: Christmas, personified, is turned away by a soldier whilst a working man offers a welcome. Parliament's 1644 Act had effectively banned the feast — reinforced by the Long Parliament's 1647 ordinance — on the grounds that Christmas holds no biblical authority. Yet the ban was widely defied; carols continued in secret, and popular resistance to Puritan governance ran deep. When the monarchy was restored, all legislation from 1642 to 1660 was declared null and void, Christmas among the casualties rehabilitated overnight. The Commonwealth years were intellectually charged despite their cultural austerity. The Putney Debates of 1647, held at St Mary the Virgin, Putney, saw the Levellers press for a written constitution grounded in manhood suffrage, biennial Parliaments, and redistributed constituencies. Authority, they argued, belonged to the Commons alone — not the King or Lords. Certain native rights were declared inviolable: freedom of conscience, exemption from forced military service, and equality before the law. Debates on the equality of the sexes circulated in the same ferment. These were radical propositions that would echo far beyond the seventeenth century.

Notes

This is a woodcut from 1652/3 (the new year came on Lady Day, the 25th March). Christmas is saying 'Sir, I bring good cheer' and the soldier is saying 'Keep out,

you come not here'. However a worker is saying, 'Old Christmas welcome. Do not fear.' In 1644, an Act of Parliament effectively banned Christmas as it is not mentioned in the Bible and in June 1647, the Long Parliament passed an ordinance confirming the abolition of the feast of Christmas. Although banned Christmas was celebrated and carols were sung in secret. In 1660 all legislation from 1642 to 1660 was declared null and void. Although the Commonwealth period was a bleak time in terms of entertainment it was an exciting time intellectually as many new ideas, such as the equality of the sexes, were discussed. The Church of St. Mary the Virgin, east of what is now Putney bridge, was the home of the Putney Debates in 1647. The radicals wanted a constitution based upon manhood suffrage ("one man, one vote"), biennial Parliaments and a reorganisation of parliamentary constituencies. Authority was to be vested in the House of Commons rather than the King and Lords. Certain "native rights" were declared sacrosanct for all Englishmen: freedom of conscience, freedom from impressment into the armed forces and equality before the law.

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 / Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace

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 / Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace

John Michael Wright's portrait of **Charles II** in coronation robes, painted around **1661–62**, announces the Restoration's transformation of English public life with unmistakable swagger. After a decade of Puritan austerity, Charles's return on **29 May 1660** — his thirtieth birthday — threw the country into vivid, unapologetic colour. Wright, trained in Edinburgh and Rome, brings a distinctive realism to this enormous canvas. Charles wears ermine-lined Parliament robes over his Garter costume, lavished with fashionable ribbons, and bears the newly commissioned **St Edward's Crown**, recreated after **Oliver Cromwell** had sold the original as a symbol of tyranny. The **orb**, costing £1,150, represents Christ's dominion over the world; the sceptre signals temporal authority and good governance. Behind the King, a tapestry depicting the Judgement of Solomon pointedly equates Charles with royal wisdom. The total cost of recreating the crown jewels reached **£12,184** — equivalent to three warships. This was deliberate, monumental propaganda. Charles had spent nine years in the courts of **Louis XIV** absorbing French ideas about magnificence, and this portrait translates that ambition into pigment and gold: a monarchy restored, recrowned, and refusing any apology for its splendour.

Notes

John Michael Wright (1617–1694), Charles II of England in Coronation robes, c. 1661-1662, 281.9 × 239.2 cm, Royal Collection, usually at Hampton Court Palace but on display at the Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace in Charles II: Art & Power, 8 December 2017 to 13 May 2018) Suddenly, in 1660, everything at the top of society changed. Compared to the dull, dreary and serious Commonwealth period it was suddenly, fun with plays, music and dancing. A bright Technicolour Court of beauty, power and passion had begun. The new freedoms introduced by the Restoration Court spread through society. Women could appear on stage for the first time, write books and one women, Margaret Cavendish, became the first British women scientist. However, it was a totally male-dominated society and so these heroic women had to fight against established norms and laws. Inequalities between men and women were taken for granted and embodied in law, religious teaching and the fabric of society. However, as well as this gender hierarchy there was also a hierarchy of status and rank that was recognised by law and religion and by social customs. So, although male superiority was taken for granted this did not mean that all men were superior to all women and women could occupy positions of power and authority. How did this radical change come about? The old king's eldest son Charles II (1630-1685) was invited back to England as King and he arrived on 29 May, his 30th birthday. He brought new French styles and sexual conduct with him. For the first time the King openly had mistresses and beauty became the route to power for women at court. The leading court beauties were immortalised by Sir Peter Lely as the 'Windsor Beauties', as we shall see later. 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 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. 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 total cost of the recreated crown jewels was £12,184, the cost of three warships. In addition, £18,000 was spent on two tons of altar and banqueting plate. The tapestry behind adds to the propaganda value by showing the Judgement of Solomon and by implication the wisdom of Charles himself. He is holding the orb and sceptre. Oliver Cromwell melted down the crown jewels during the Interregnum and the orb was made for Charles's coronation at a cost of £1,150. It is a hollow gold sphere mounted with nine emeralds, 18 rubies, nine sapphires and 365 diamonds and 375 pearls. It represents Christ's dominion over the world and the Monarch as God's representative. The sceptre is one of two and it was also commissioned by Charles for the coronation. It represents the King's temporal power and is associated with good governance. Notes John Michael Wright (May 1617 – July 1694) was 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'. Charles (1630-1685) was been defeated by Oliver Cromwell and his New Model Army at the battle of Worcester in 1651 when Charles was 21. He managed to escape using safe houses and hiding in an oak tree and he spent the next nine years in the courts of the Sun King, Louis XIV (b. 1638, reigned 1643-1715) of France, the Dutch Republic and the Spanish Netherlands. He was unmarried when he took the throne and married Catherine of Braganza in 1662, two years later. The House of Braganza was the royal house of Portugal. She was a Roman Catholic and unpopular and was falsely accused by Titus Oates of planning to poison the King. She had three miscarriages and produced no heirs. She and Charles are credited with introducing the custom of drinking tea to the British court, which was common among the Portuguese

nobility. Charles publicly 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 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. 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’. The old crown was one of the oldest of the Crown Jewels and was named after Edward the Confessor and allegedly had elements of the crown used by Alfred the Great. In 1661 a new crown was made by Robert Vyner.

Antonio Verrio (1636-1707)
The Sea Triumph of Charles II
c. 1674
—
224.5 × 231 cm
Royal Collection

Antonio Verrio (1636-1707), The Sea Triumph of Charles II, c. 1674, 224.5 × 231 cm, Royal Collection

Antonio Verrio's *The Sea Triumph of Charles II*, painted around 1674, announced the Italian-born artist's arrival at the English court with extraordinary confidence. Charles II, clad in classical armour, rides a shell-backed chariot driven by Neptune, flanked by three female figures embodying his three kingdoms. Above him, Fame holds a scroll bearing the Virgilian inscription IMPERIVM OCEANO FAMAM QVI TERMINET ASTRIS — "who shall extend his empire to the ocean, his glory to the stars" — drawn from the *Aeneid* and transplanted here onto a living monarch. Time crowns him with a wreath; in the sky, Envy is struck by lightning and routed by putti bearing the attributes of Peace and Love. Minerva and Venus look down upon the British fleet beyond. The programme is unambiguously political: Charles presented as a Caesarian, ocean-commanding sovereign. The painting worked. Verrio was granted rights of residence the following year, swiftly commissioned to decorate the Windsor Castle state apartments, and by 1684 appointed Chief First Painter at a salary of £200 per year. By 1688 the canvas hung at Whitehall alongside works by Tintoretto and Rubens.

Notes

Antonio Verrio, The Sea Triumph of Charles II, c. 1674, 224.5 × 231 cm, Royal Collection This was probably the first work painted by Verrio for Charles II. The

King, wearing classical armour, is driven through the water by Neptune in a high, shell-backed chariot. He is accompanied by three female figures carrying crowns and embodying his three kingdoms. Above his head Fame holds a scroll inscribed IMPERIVM OCEANO FAMAM QVI TERMINET ASTRIS. Time and a female figure hold a wreath and a helmet above his head. In the sky Envy is struck by lightening and chased by putti with the attributes of Peace and Love, and two more putti carry the royal arms on a shield. Beyond are Minerva and Venus (?) looking down on the British fleet. The inscription on the scroll is from Virgil's Aeneid and refers to Caesar 'who shall extend his empire to the ocean, his glory to the stars'. Verrio's painting was evidently a success – the artist was granted rights of residence the following year and soon commissioned to decorate the new state apartments at Windsor Castle. In 1684 Verrio was appointed to the position of 'Chief First Painter' to the king, with a salary of £200 per year. By 1688 this painting was at Whitehall hanging in the Second Privy Lodging Room alongside portraits by Tintoretto (1519–94) and Rubens.

Anonymous
Rocke the Babie Joane
—
Ballad (broadside)
—
Magdalene College, Cambridge
(Pepys Ballads 1.396-397)

Anonymous, Rocke the Babie Joane, Magdalene College, Cambridge (Pepys Ballads 1.396-397)

Samuel Pepys (1633–1703) collected over 1,800 ballads that offer a rare window into the lives of ordinary people in Restoration England — a world shaped, for women, by the legal doctrine of feme covert, under which a wife had no independent property rights, could not enter contracts, and existed in law as one person with her husband. That doctrine held until the Married Women's Property Act of 1870. The two Pepys ballads here work as social commentary. In 'Rocke the Babie Joane' (Pepys Ballads 1.396–397), a husband persuades his wife to raise his illegitimate child; she relents only when he vows to stray no more. In 'Rocke the Cradle, John' (Pepys Ballads 1.404–405), the power shifts sharply — a pregnant London woman manipulates a naïve country suitor into marriage and domestic servitude, leaving him a cuckold within the month. The cuckold figure carried real cultural weight: before the 1640s, a man's masculinity was bound to his wife's sexual reputation, and her infidelity reflected his weakness. Ballads exaggerate for comic effect, but as historian Adam Fox argues, they had to remain believable to find an audience — making them reliable evidence of lived social anxieties.

Notes

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 Balled, 'Rocke the cradle, John', Pepys Ballads 1.404-405, Magdalene College 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 laws regarding married women were known as feme covert (later coverture or couverture) and covered by common law. The man and woman were regarded as one person and the wife acted under the protection and influence of her husband or lord. A wife could not own property or enter into a contract and in some cases could not commit a crime as she was assumed to be acting under her husband's orders. Feme covert was not modified until the Married Woman's Property Act of 1870. What was it really like for women in the seventeenth century? It is very hard when studying history to find out what the majority of ordinary people thought as letters and diaries are written by the educated and wealthy. One little used source of information is ballads and I have selected two from the 1,800 that Samuel Pepys collected. The first tells us how a man brings home his child from an adulterous affair in which the mother died. After a long argument the man persuades his wife to look after the child as long as he agrees to change his ways. The second warns of the dangers a young man from the country faces in the big city. This man falls in love with a woman who initially rejects him. When she realises he is still in love and has not noticed she is heavily pregnant she gets him to promise to make her breakfast, clean her shoes and feed and look after any children they have. He agrees and they get married and a month later the midwife brings in two babies. He accepts them as his own and looks after them and the ballad warns young men to be careful. Although ballads are not factual and exaggerate for amusement they have to be believable to be acceptable so it tells us a lot about society and gender roles. But what about women in business? Marriage 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 brides 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. I 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. The Ballads Samuel Pepys (1633-1703) collected over 1,800 ballads which provide a valuable insight into Restoration England. 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, whilest 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. Before the 1640s a man's masclinity was linked to his wife's sexual reputation ans if she cheated n him he only had himself to blame. He was called a wittol, a weak man. 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. The first lines of the ballad are: There was a country gallant, that wasted had his tallent,Not dreading what would fall out, would needs a wooing ride;Unto a lasse of the citty, that courteous was and pritty,This damsell neat and witty; hee would goe make his Bride:This lasse she had of wealth good store, her stacke was threscore pound and more,Though some supposed her to be poore, the same hath late been tried.Rocke the Cradle, rocke the Cradle, rocke the cradle John,Ther's many a man rockes the cradle, when the childs none of his owne.

Anonymous
Interior of a London Coffee House
1695–1700
—
—
—

Anonymous, Interior of a London Coffee House, 1695–1700

This anonymous painting of a London coffee house, dating to 1695–1700, illustrates a world of sharp contradictions for women. The coffee house was a crucible of the new commercial culture — by 1675, over 3,000 operated across England — yet women were barred from entering as customers, even as they ran establishments like this one. Joanne Bailey's research into coverture shows that married women held no independent property rights, yet Sun Fire insurance records from 1735 show women owned roughly ten per cent of insured businesses, typically inherited through the dower system. Elizabeth Mallet cut through this landscape decisively, founding Britain's first daily newspaper, The Daily Courant, in 1702 at Fleet Bridge. Where rival pamphlets traded in gossip and editorial opinion, Mallet's single-sheet publication carried foreign news without comment — a deliberate act of journalistic restraint that shaped the form. Meanwhile Margaret Cavendish, who published *Observations upon Experimental Philosophy* in 1666, demonstrated that intellectual authority was available to women willing to fight for it. These were not isolated exceptions: they were women operating strategically within a system that simultaneously depended on their labour and refused them formal recognition.

Notes

Anon, Interior of a London Coffee House, 1695-1700 (falsely inscribed ‘A.S. 1668’)
A married woman could not own property but could in some circumstances

inherit part of her husband's property and business (called 'the dower'). We know that about 10% of business insured by Sun Fire were owned by women (in 1735) and this anonymous painting shows a coffee house possibly 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. 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. 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. The first daily newspaper, The Daily Courant ('courant' is Scottish dialect for newspaper), 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. At the time other pamphlets were all editorial, like blogs today, they expressed the personal opinion of the author concerning gossip and rumours of the day, mostly concerning affairs at court. 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). The first coffee house in London was established in 1654 and by 1675 there were more than 3,000 in England. Religious and political discussion became so subversive that Charles II tried to ban coffee houses. Women were not allowed inside although they

could serve and a Women's Petition Against Coffee (1674) bemoaned the 'newfangled, abominable, heathenish liquor'. Coffee cost a penny and came with unlimited refills. 'Old maid'. 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. First woman scientist - Margaret Cavendish. 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. 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. Delivery forceps were kept secret for 150 years by the Chamberlen family and there is evidence for its use by the family as far back as 1634. References Joanne Bailey, “Favoured or oppressed? Married women, property and ‘coverture’ in England”, 1660–1800, Continuity and Change, 2002 Nicola Jane Phillips, Women in Business, 1700-1850 http://www.telegraph.co.uk/travel/destinations/europe/united-kingdom/england/london/articles/London-cafes-the-surprising-history-of-Londons-lost-coffeehouses/

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

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

Aphra Behn (1640?–1689), painted by Peter Lely around 1670, was the first woman to earn her living writing plays — nineteen staged productions, surpassed only by Poet Laureate John Dryden. She demanded equality with male peers, wrote frankly about sexuality, and deliberately kept her biography obscure: in her lifetime she was known variously as Ann Behn, Mrs Bean, and Agent 160, her codename during service as a spy. She is buried in the cloisters of Westminster Abbey, outside Poets' Corner, a distinction that speaks volumes about how her contemporaries valued her work. Margaret Cavendish (1623–1673), Duchess of Newcastle, shown here in a frontispiece engraving designed by Abraham van Diepenbeeck, occupied equally contested ground. She published scientific papers, philosophy, poetry, drama, and *The Blazing World* (1666), one of the earliest works of science fiction — all under her own name, at a time when a married woman's legal identity was absorbed into her husband's as feme covert. In 1667 she addressed the Royal Society, where she met Robert Hooke but rejected microscopy as distorting reality. She insisted fiercely on sole credit for her ideas, fully aware that history might otherwise remember her only as a duke's wife.

Notes

Peter Lely (1618-1680), Aphra Behn (1640?-1689), c. 1670, 76.8 cm x 64.1 cm,

Yale Center for British Art, British playwright, poet, translator and fiction writer who earned her living writing After: Abraham van Diepenbeeck (1596-1675, painter and designer), print made by: Pierre van Schuppen (1627-1702, printmaker, engraver), Portrait of Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle (1623-1673), detail, in the original she is standing in a niche, turned to the right, flanked by figures of Minerva and Apollo, engraving, 28.4 x 17 cm, a private plate used as a frontispiece to presentation copies of her publications, she was a philosopher, poet, scientist, fiction writer, science fiction writer and playwright. One of the best known women of the period is Aphra Behn (1640?-1689) here painted by Peter Lely (pronounced 'lay-lee') who we will hear a lot more about later. She was the first women to make a living from writing plays and she demanded equality with her male peers. She was also a 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. She is buried at Westminster Abbey but not in Poets Corner but in the cloisters. She wrote and staged 19 plays, more than any other playwright apart from Poet Laureate John Dryden. She was known for her bawdy works and 'masculine' style and was widely praised. She said she had led a life 'dedicated to pleasure and poetry'. She was contemptuous of democracy and was not interested in women's rights or anyone else's rights. Margaret Cavendish (1623-1673, née Lucas), Duchess of Newcastle, 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 though that such instruments distorted reality. She published one of the first works of science fiction (The Blazing World, 1666), she published scientific papers, such as Observations upon Experimental Philosophy (1666) and was a philosopher, poet, fiction-writer and playwright was published under her own name. She was one of the most original thinkers of the age. She was aware that upon marriage a woman's legal rights and obligations were subsumed by those of her husband, her

legal status became feme covert. An unmarried woman, or feme sole, had the right to own property and make contracts in her own name. Male writers would often write in the plural or assume the plural as their acknowledgement that they were one part of a complex web of sources and influences but Margaret Cavendish insisted that she was alone in making her discoveries and in her philosophical findings. She was worried that in the future she would be subsumed in the history of her husband and she went to great length's to present herself as an independent person. 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. 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.

Peter Lely (1618-1680)
Portrait of an Unknown Woman
c. 1670-75
—
125.1 x 100.3 cm
Tate, London

Peter Lely (1618-1680), Portrait of an Unknown Woman, c. 1670-75, 125.1 x 100.3 cm, Tate, London

Peter Lely's *Portrait of an Unknown Woman* (c. 1670–75, Tate) sits at a fascinating intersection of identity, power, and display. The inscription "Duchess of Cleveland" on the ledge was added roughly a century after the work was painted and carries no authority. The sitter's bared breast, a golden jar echoing Mary Magdalene iconography, and a quieted spaniel — a breed associated with the Stuart royal family — all signal a woman within court orbit rather than conventional virtue. The strongest candidate for the sitter is Margaret Hughes (c. 1630–1719), celebrated as the first professional actress on the English stage, playing Desdemona in 1660, and long-term mistress of Prince Rupert of the Rhine. Rupert painted her four times through Lely's studio, and a 1677–85 mezzotint engraving confirms her likeness circulated widely. William Hazlitt in 1824 and Ronald Beckett in 1951 both condemned Lely's court women in terms that reveal their own misogyny far more than anything about the sitters. These were women who negotiated real social power — Hughes reportedly secured substantial settlements before reciprocating Rupert's affections — and Lely recorded that negotiation with unflinching directness.

Notes

Peter Lely (1618-1680), Portrait of an Unknown Woman, c. 1670-75, 125.1 x 100.3 cm, Tate After Sir Peter Lely, Margaret Hughes, mezzotint, 1677-1685, 33.9 x 25.2

cm plate size Margaret Hughes (c. 1630-1719) Unknown woman or Margaret Hughes, the first actress? This portrait was bequeathed to the Tate in 1965 and it is an unknown woman. The inscription on the ledge, 'Duchess of Cleveland', was probably added a century later. Tate: ‘Lely's debt to van Dyck's work is evident in the seated three-quarter-length composition, the rich billowing curtain and the stone window opening to the left. While the identity of the sitter is uncertain, her bared breast suggests that she is some powerful man's mistress rather than a lady of impeccable virtue. Her left hand rests on a golden object, perhaps the jar that symbolises the reformed biblical sinner Mary Magdalene. Her other hand quietens an attentive spaniel, a breed often identified with the Stuart royal family.’ It is possible this is Margaret Hughes (c. 1630 – 1 October 1719), also Peg Hughes or Margaret Hewes, is often credited as the first professional actress on the English stage. Hughes was also famous as the mistress of the English Civil War general and later Restoration admiral, Prince Rupert of the Rhine. This is an engraving we have of Margaret Hughes. 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 Lely made the transition to Charles II’s court with ease and was made Principal Painter to the Restoration Court on a pension of £200 a year. Late-seventeenth-century ballads referred to fashionable women with revealed breasts. There was a ban on English drama from 1642 until Charles II became king in 1660. Men played women’s roles and there were embarrassing incidents and concerns over encouraging the ‘unnatural vice’, namely homosexuality. As a result Charles decreed in 1662 that female roles should only be played by women. Margaret Hughes was the first women to perform in 1660 when she played Desdemona in Shakespeare’s Othello. Hughes was famous for her charms as an actress; diarist Samuel Pepys considered her 'a mighty pretty woman, and seems, but is not, modest', and she was said to be 'a great beauty, with dark ringleted hair, a fine figure, and particularly good legs'. Pepys writes, ‘Here I did kiss the pretty woman newly come, called Pegg’. Pepys suggested that she was a lover of Sir Charles

Sedley, a noted dramatist and ‘famous fop’, in the 1660s; she was reportedly also involved with Charles II himself, if only briefly. It is believed that Hughes had an illegitimate son named Arthur, but there is no conclusive evidence that states otherwise. Most famously, however, Hughes became associated with Prince Rupert, Duke of Cumberland (sometimes known as "Rupert of the Rhine" and first cousin of Charles II and his sister was mother of George I), as his lover. Rupert fell in love with her in the late 1660s, although Hughes appears to have held out reciprocating his attentions with the aim of negotiating a suitable settlement. Prince Rupert was one of the most senior members of the royal family at court, and Hughes rapidly received advancement through his patronage; she became a member of the King's Company by 1669, giving her status and immunity from arrest for debt, and was painted four times by Sir Peter Lely, the foremost court artist of the day. Despite being encouraged to do so, Rupert did not formally marry Hughes, but acknowledged their daughter, Ruperta (later Howe), born in 1673. Hughes lived an expensive lifestyle during the 1670s, enjoying gambling and jewels; Rupert gave her at least £20,000 worth of jewellery during their relationship, including several items from the Palatinate royal collection. When he died he left her half of his estate.

Mary Beale (1633-1699)
Self-portrait
c.1666
—
109.2 x 87.6 cm
National Portrait Gallery, London

Mary Beale (1633-1699), Self-portrait, c.1666, 109.2 x 87.6 cm, National Portrait Gallery, London

This self-portrait of **c.1666** shows **Mary Beale (1633–1699)** holding a canvas bearing sketch portraits of her two sons, **Bartholomew** and **Charles** — an image that quietly asserts both her maternal identity and her professional authority. **Roy Strong**, former director of the National Portrait Gallery, identified Beale as uniquely significant in correcting the historical imbalance between women and men artists. Beale was one of the most successful Baroque portrait painters of late seventeenth-century Britain, and the principal financial provider for her household. Her husband **Charles Beale the Elder** became her studio manager, mixing pigments and working alongside her as an equal. **Peter Lely** supported her career, sharing his techniques; she built a profitable trade copying his portraits, though she deliberately moderated their sensuous qualities. Her income rose from £118 in **1671** to £429 by **1677**, and she gave ten per cent annually to charity. Her intellectual ambitions matched her commercial ones. In **1663** she wrote *Observations*, the first instructional text on painting produced by a woman in England, and later authored an *Essay on Friendship* advocating equality between men and women. She is buried at **St James's Church, Piccadilly**.

Notes

Mary Beale (1633-1699), self-portrait, c.1666, 109.2 x 87.6 cm, National Portrait Gallery. Beale is shown holding an unframed canvas on which are sketch portraits

of her two sons, Bartholomew (1656-1709) and Charles (1660-1714?) Mary Beale, Charles Beale the Elder, National Portrait Gallery Mary Beale is an important professional woman artist. Roy Strong, the historian and former director of the National Portrait Gallery wrote, 'Among women artists, she is very important. There is nobody else like her. It's right to try to get the balance in history correct between women and men artists.' Mary Beale (née Cradock; 1633–1699) was one of the most successful professional female Baroque portrait painters of the late 17th century and she became the principal financial provider for her family. She married Charles Beale when she was 18 and her father died a few days later. At some time later the couple moved to Walton-on-Thames. Charles was employed as Deputy Clerk of the Patents Office. At some time later he became her studio manager and mixed pigments and throughout their marriage they worked as equals. In 1654 their first son Bartholomew died and their second son, also called Bartholomew was born in 1655/6. Their third son Charles was born in 1660. In 1663 she wrote Observations, the first instruction book ever made available by a woman. She established a good reputation thanks to her contacts and charged £5 for a half-length portrait and £10 for a three-quarter length. In 1664 Charles's job became uncertain and the family moved to Allbrook Farmhouse near Eastleigh, Hampshire where Mary wrote Essay on Friendship in which she proposes equality between men and women in friendship and marriage. On their return to London in 1670, following the plague and the Great Fire, they set up a studio in Pall Mall and quickly attracted the gentry and the aristocracy and built a thriving business. Her income rose from £118 in 1671 to £429 by 1677. She was sympathetic, hard-working and puritan, giving 10% of her income to charity every year. Peter Lely supported her, showed her his techniques and with his help she built a lucrative trade in copying his portraits although she toned down the overtly sensuous and erotic elements of his work. By 1681 commissions were beginning to diminish and she died in 1699 and is buried in St James's Church, Piccadilly. Bartholomew trained in her study as a boy but went on to Clare College, Cambridge and became a physician in Coventry. Her younger son Charles became an artist and produced some of the finest drawings of the period. Notes Earlier female artists include: Joan Carlile (c. 1606-79, née Palmer) was one of the first women to practise painting professionally. Levina Teerlinc (1510/20-1576), daughter off Simon Bening, a renowned illuminator, was a Flemish Renaissance miniaturist who served as a painter to the English court of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I and Elizabeth I. In Henry VIII's court she was

paid £40 a year, more than Hans Holbein had been paid. It is likely that she helped introduce the portrait miniature to England. Susan Penelope Rosse (1652-1700), n English miniaturist who painted for the court of Charles II. Anne Killigrew (1660-1685), a poet and portrait painter at the court of James II. References http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/beale-sketch-of-the-artists-son-bartholomew-beale-in-profile-t13245
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Sir Peter Lely (1618-1680)
Self-portrait
c. 1660
—
108 x 87.6 cm
National Portrait Gallery, London

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

Sir Peter Lely (1618–1680) dominated English portraiture at a moment when most serious rivals had died or departed London. Born Pieter van der Faes in the Netherlands, he adopted the surname Lely from a heraldic lily on his father's birthplace. Arriving in London in 1641 — the very year Anthony van Dyck died — he stepped into the role of court painter with remarkable timing. Van Dyck shaped Lely's approach directly: the three-quarter-length format, sumptuous dress, suggestive background landscapes, and those signature long, tapering fingers signalling aristocratic refinement. Wealthy patrons including the earls of Leicester, Salisbury, Pembroke, and Northumberland sustained him when Charles I's court withdrew to Oxford in 1642, and Lely remained in his Covent Garden studio, visiting their grand houses and studying their collections firsthand. Samuel Pepys famously recorded him as "a mighty proud man, and full of state," and Lely cultivated that reputation deliberately. In this self-portrait he holds a small classical statuette — at once a collector's emblem of taste and a painter's reference for ideal form. Through a single object, Lely announces his dual identity: artist and connoisseur, a man who had made himself indispensable to England's ruling class.

Notes

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 all men. This is Peter Lely (pronounced 'lay-lee'), 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. Although he had few serious rivals many of his fellow artists had died or left London, such as Marc Gheeraerts (1561-1635/6), Paul von Somer, Daniel Mytens, Cornelius Johnson and William Dodson. Dodson the court portraitist favoured by members of Charles I's court died in 1648 and Lely was able to take his place with extremely wealthy patrons including the earls of Leicester, Salisbury, Pembroke and Northumberland. When Charles's court left London for Oxford in 1642 these four earls remained and Lely stayed in his house in Covent Garden. He visited their grand houses and was able to see their extensive collections including works by Anthony van Dyck. Van Dyck was a major influence on Lely's portrait work in terms of scale, composition, and the use of dress and accessories. The three-quarter length brings us close to the subject but sufficiently far to by overwhelmed by the sumptuous dress. The background hints at land, property and wealth and their poses, although they look stiff and formal to us, where seen as relaxed and graceful. Delicate wrists and long, tapering fingers were considered desirable and are always clearly visible in his paintings. 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. He was one of England's first great collectors outside the nobility and in this portrait he shows himself holding a small classical statuette. The statuette is of a kind that proliferated both in the collections of connoisseurs,

as symbols of their taste, and in the studios of painters, as examples of perfection to copy within their own work. In this portrait, therefore, Lely expresses his two identities, as painter and as collector, through a single attribute. References http://courtauld.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/PeterLelyTeachersResoucelo-res.pdf

Sir Peter Lely (1618-1680)
Nymphs by a Fountain
early 1650s
—
128.5 x 144.6 cm
Dulwich Picture Gallery

Sir Peter Lely (1618-1680), Nymphs by a Fountain, early 1650s, 128.5 x 144.6 cm, Dulwich Picture Gallery

Peter Lely arrived in England in 1641, aged twenty-three, intending to build a career on mythological and religious painting. Instead, he found a country lurching into civil war and, soon after, a Puritan Commonwealth hostile to such imagery. Nymphs by a Fountain (early 1650s, Dulwich Picture Gallery) was his response: a generalised Arcadian scene, rooted in no specific myth, yet signalled as classical through background sculptures and its title. As the Dulwich notes observe, the composition's rich, shimmering surfaces reflect Lely's exposure to Titian and Giorgione in the dispersed Charles I collection. The recumbent foreground nymph is adapted directly from Van Dyck's Cupid and Psyche (1639–40, Royal Collection) — a painting Lely himself owned between roughly 1654 and 1660. Van Dyck's canvas, by contrast, illustrates a precise episode from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: Cupid rousing Psyche after she opens the casket from Hades. Both works present female bodies as objects of a voyeuristic male gaze, yet Lely strips away narrative obligation. The result, almost certainly commissioned for a private patron, sidesteps Puritan objection by keeping mythology vague whilst delivering the erotic charge that a paying household desired.

Notes

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, pronounced ‘lay-lee’) 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 an object for 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 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, Birmingham

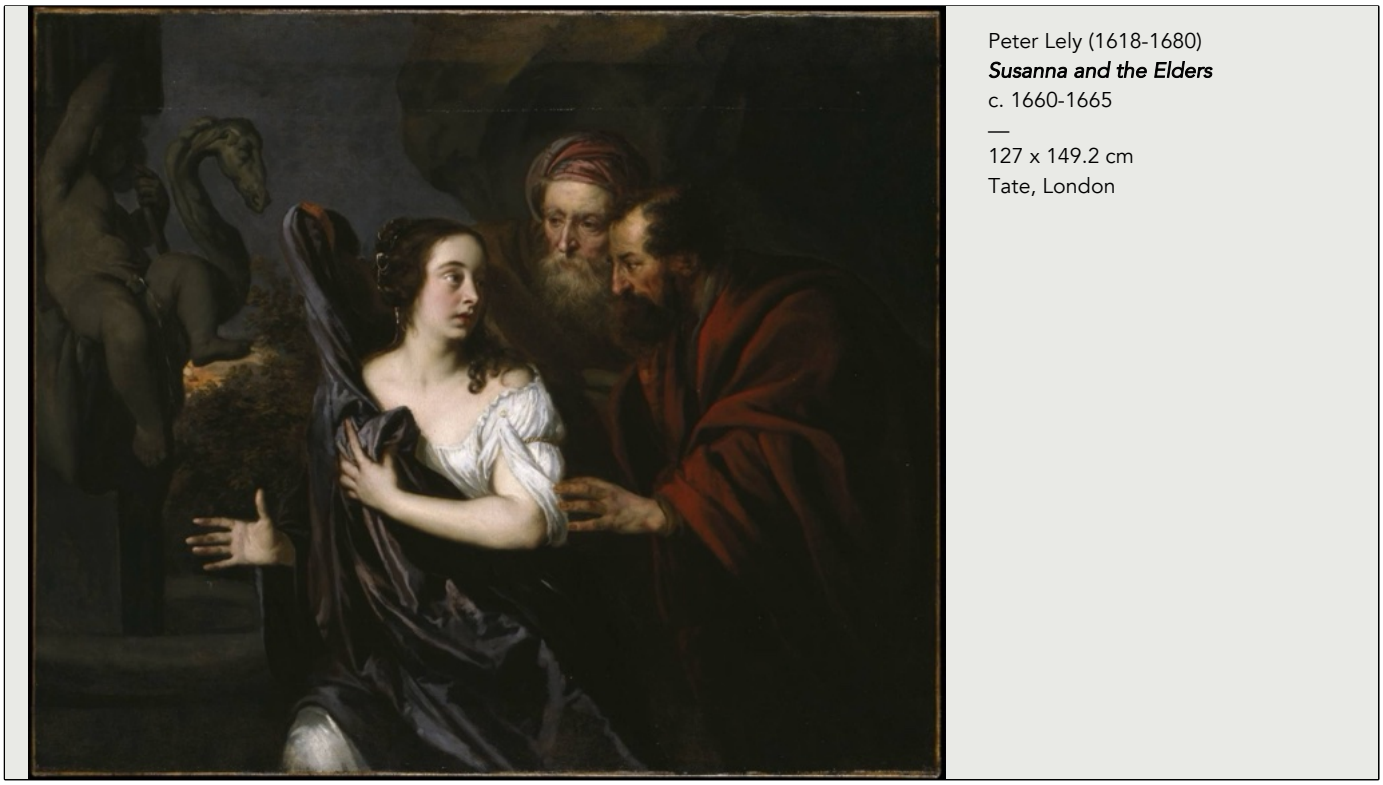
Peter Lely (1618-1680), Portrait of Oliver Cromwell, 1653-4, 76.2 x 62.9 cm, Birmingham Art Gallery, Birmingham

Peter Lely (1618–1680) navigated the most turbulent political transitions of the seventeenth century with remarkable professional dexterity, serving as painter to **Charles I**, then to **Oliver Cromwell**, then to **Richard Cromwell**, and finally as Principal Painter in Ordinary to **Charles II** from 1661 — paid £200 a year, the same salary Van Dyck had received. The famous instruction to paint Cromwell "warts and all" — "remark all these roughnesses, pimples, warts, and everything as you see me" — is attributed to Lely by **Horace Walpole** in *Anecdotes of Painting in England* (1763), though the anecdote was first recorded by **George Vertue** and may refer instead to the miniaturist **Samuel Cooper** (1609–1672), whose **1656** watercolour on vellum gives Cromwell's warts conspicuous prominence. Laura Lunger Knoppers notes that even Lely's version was never truly unvarnished: he elongates Cromwell's face, smooths the skin, and dignifies the sitter with **cuirassier armour**. The rhetoric of plain truth, it turns out, still passed through a painter's flattering hand. Lely's large workshop means that thousands of portraits in British country houses attributed to him involved little of his own brushwork, making quality vary considerably.

Notes

Peter Lely (1618-1680), Portrait of Oliver Cromwell, 1653-4, 76.2 x 62.9 cm, Birmingham Art Gallery Samuel Cooper (1609-1672), Oliver Cromwell,

watercolour on vellum, 1656, 7 x 5.7 cm, National Portrait 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 (1609-1672)? 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 desirer 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 watercolour 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.' (pronounced 'kweer-uh-seer', a cavalry soldier).



Peter Lely (1618-1680), Susanna and the Elders, c. 1660-1665, 127 x 149.2 cm, Tate, London

Peter Lely's *Susanna and the Elders* (c. 1660–5) sits at the intersection of biblical narrative and the Restoration appetite for idealised feminine beauty. The large bulging eyes and brown ringlets Lely gives Susanna are the same features that define his celebrated Windsor Beauties, confirming that the religious subject functioned chiefly as a licence to paint the female nude on his own terms. That nude is grounded in a specific classical source. Lely purchased the Crouching Venus, a 2nd-century AD Roman copy of a Hellenistic original, at the Commonwealth Sale after Charles I's collection was dispersed, and the statue's compact, twisted pose feeds directly into his painted figure. The work also carries a lineage from Rubens, for whom the same statue was a formative influence, and from Van Dyck, whose Italian sketchbook Lely studied closely. Lely died in 1680, still at his easel in Covent Garden, and his collection realised £26,000 at sale — a figure that confirms his standing as one of the period's foremost collectors. The Venus was re-acquired by Charles II and survives today on long-term loan to the British Museum.

Notes

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', 2nd century AD 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 from the Gonzaga collection, purchased by Lely during the Commonwealth Sale and then re-acquired by Charles II. Lely continued to paint a few religious paintings during the 1660s but the overwhelming demand was for portraits. Restoration beauty. 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. Classical beauty. Lely was one of the first and greatest collectors. He 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. The statue was an importance influence on Rubens and his voluptuous style of painting the female nude. 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 1963 it has been on long-term loan to British Museum, following treatment by their conservators, and is currently on display in gallery 23. Lely was knighted in 1680. He died soon afterwards of apoplexy (a stroke) while at his easel in Covent Garden 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. Notes 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. The story of Susanna and the Elders is a common subject for artists. Two Jewish elders plot to seduce Susanna, a young Jewish wife. When she visits her private garden to bathe they come out of hiding and threaten that, unless she has sex with them they will publicly accuse her of adultery for which the penalty is death. She rejects them, they accuse her and she is sentenced to death but the young Daniel cross-examines the elders and shows Susanna is innocent. The animal on the left is a camel with a weeping boy on its back. Lely painted this story a number of times. As a subject it allows the artist to paint a nude or semi-nude figure and in his version that is now in Burghley House (Marquess of Exeter) Susanna's left breast is exposed. A drawing very close to the Tate composition and attributed to Lely is in the Courtauld Gallery. Birmingham City Art Gallery has a version that is close in composition to the Tate work, although the latter has been extended at both the top and the bottom, apparently by Lely himself. Some say the Birmingham version is earlier. 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. 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.

Studio of John Riley (1646-1691)
King Charles II
—
—
72.4 x 57.8 cm
National Portrait Gallery

Studio of John Riley (1646-1691), King Charles II, 72.4 x 57.8 cm, National Portrait Gallery

Weaving together the worlds of celebrity beauty and royal power, the portrait before us shows the very king who set that court in motion. John Riley (1646–1691) painted Charles II (b. 1630, r. 1660–1685) at the height of his own success, when a full-length commission from his studio cost £40 — a substantial fee that reflects both Riley's standing and his sitter's enduring demand as a subject. In 1689 Riley was appointed joint Principal Painter to William III alongside Godfrey Kneller, confirming his place at the summit of English portraiture. The king himself is harder to pin down than his legend suggests. His court attracted charges of corruption and debauchery from contemporaries, yet his biographer Hilaire Belloc argued he was genuinely beloved, particularly by London's poorer populace who encountered him most directly. That reputation for warm accessibility was earned: Charles founded the Royal Hospital Chelsea, patronised Christopher Wren, and supported the Royal Society throughout his reign. He died in 1685, aged 54, of sudden kidney failure. His reported deathbed words — asking his brother to care for his mistresses and apologising to his courtiers for "being such a time a-dying" — crystallise the self-aware charm that has made him a sympathetic figure ever since.

Notes

Studio of John Riley, King Charles II, 72.4 x 57.8 cm, National Portrait Gallery

Charles II (b. 1630, reigned 1660-1685, died aged 54) was loved by Londoners and was known as the Merry Monarch or Old Rowley, the name of his stallion. As Charles II got older his sexual appetite declined and he spent more time sailing and fishing and his mistresses had a quieter time at court and picked up other lovers. By the end of his reign many commentators at the time looked back on his court as superficial, corrupt, degenerate and debauched and the kings relationships were regarded as scandalous. However, over the next 300 years his reputation has mellowed and his is now regarded as a loveable rogue, naughty but nice, a tolerant and good humoured monarch who had a bit of fun. He was a patron of the arts and sciences and founded the Royal Observatory and supported the Royal Society. He was the personal patron of Sir Christopher Wren and he founded the Royal Hospital Chelsea for retired soldiers. Notes Charles II was king for twenty five years and died when he was 54 of a sudden apoplectic fit. Many thought he had been poisoned as the death was so sudden but the symptoms fit kidney failure. On his deathbed Charles asked his brother, James, to look after his mistresses: 'be well to Portsmouth, and let not poor Nelly starve'. He told his courtiers, 'I am sorry, gentlemen, for being such a time a-dying', and expressed regret at his treatment of his wife Catherine of Braganza (1638-1705). His biographer Hilaire Belloc wrote: Charles was universally beloved, beloved not only by the crowd of individuals with whom he came in contact, not only adored by his dependents, but thoroughly popular with the mass of his subjects and particularly with the poorer populace of London who knew him best. Charles had no legitimate children, but acknowledged a dozen by seven mistresses, including five by Barbara Villiers. John Riley (1646-1691) began practising painting at a young age, which probably meant he was independently wealthy. He became a fashionable society portrait painter. At the height of his success, in the 1680s, Riley charged £40 for a full-length portrait, a considerable amount of money at this time. In 1689, together with Godfrey Kneller, he was appointed Principal Painter to King William III and Queen Mary, though there are no known portraits by him of either as sovereign.

Benedetto Gennari (1633-1715)
A Sleeping Shepherd
c. 1680-1
—
—
Royal Collection

Benedetto Gennari (1633-1715), A Sleeping Shepherd, c. 1680-1, Royal Collection

The Italian painter **Benedetto Gennari** worked at the court of **Charles II**, one of the most licentious in European history. Gennari's *A Sleeping Shepherd* (**c. 1680–1**), now in the **Royal Collection**, was commissioned by Charles as a direct invitation to debauchery, hung deliberately in his private apartments at **Whitehall**. The composition parodies the virtuous innocence of an Arcadian pastoral: two women awaken a sleeping shepherd as an older figure points to his groin, whilst the younger holds his flute to her lips. The pastoral genre, traditionally associated with innocent retreat, is here inverted into something knowingly obscene. This was a court where, as the diarist **John Evelyn** observed, maintaining one's virtue required the resolve of an absolute hero. New conduct manuals such as *The New Academy of Compliments* (**1669**) circulated instructions on seduction openly. The poet and rake **John Wilmot, 2nd Earl of Rochester**, embodied the court's appetite for transgression — insulting the King, taking **Nell Gwynn** as a lover before she became Charles's mistress, and dying of venereal disease at thirty-three. Gennari's painting belongs precisely to that world: desire dressed in pastoral clothing.

Notes

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. 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 Bendo, a charlatan doctor who claimed to cure barrenness with considerable success, implying he acted as a surreptitious sperm donor. He would also dress as the serious and matronly Mrs. Bendo to inspect and 'treat' young wives without arousing their husband's suspicions.

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

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

Peter Lely's portrait of Diana Kirke (c. 1665) presents her as Venus rather than her namesake Diana — the chaste huntress — an irony Samuel Pepys noted with amusement. The single exposed breast signals her divine role whilst simultaneously advertising her sexual availability to her patron, Aubrey de Vere, 20th Earl of Oxford, for whom this was almost certainly painted. She became his wife in 1673, and when no male heirs survived, the de Vere earldom — one of the oldest in the peerage, granted by Empress Matilda in 1141 — died with him. The semi-nudity here operated within understood conventions. Bare breasts were inadmissible in public but entirely legible in painting when a sitter appeared as a classical figure. Lely's loose studio drapery and the red rose in Kirke's hand anchor her firmly within that iconographic framework. Beauty in this culture carried moral freight: a fine body signalled an innocent, virtuous mind, provided the breast remained, as contemporary writers insisted, youthful and unmarked by maternity. Transgress that boundary, and the image risked reading not as classical idealism but as ungodly pride — a distinction Stuart court culture policed with considerable care.

Notes

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 Diana Kirke, as the

goddess Venus, sexually available, mistress Earl of Oxford 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, 20th Earl of Oxford (1627-1703), for whom this was almost certainly painted, and she became his wife in 1673 and they had five children. There were no surviving sons and so one of the longest lived titles of the peerage, granted by Empress Matilda in 1141, the de Vere Earl of Oxford, died out. Beauty was synonymous with virtue and purity and a beautiful body was equated with a beautiful, innocent mind. So, as well as being sexy these images showed purity and innocence. Breasts were not normally uncovered in public but dresses were very low cut and if a nipple was 'accidentally' exposed at court it was regarded as a tease and put back later. In eighteenth-century France one of both nipples might be exposed by a fashionable lady. It also depended on context. It was acceptable in a painting where the lady represented a classical figure, as her, and in 1631 Inigo Jones designed a masque gown for the queen, Henrietta Maria, with both breasts fully exposed. This was acceptable as she was acting the part of Chloris in a masque. Breasts were also associated with feeding and in this context bare breasts were acceptable but a virtuous breast must be 'unused' and 'apple-like'. In ballad woodcuts Mary II is sometimes shown with bare breasts and this was an expression of her youth, beauty and, hopefully, fecundity. If taken too far it would have been regarded as ungodly self-confidence and pride rather than lewdness or vulgarity. The other issue was religious as fashion was always regarded as coming from France but styles from Catholic countries were potentially tainted with corruption and sin. There were many pamphlets written decrying the fashion for bare breasts but they may have been published as woodcuts of bare breasts seemed to sell pamphlets. Notes Diana Kirke's dress is saffron coloured drapery, known as 'studio drapery' wrapped loosely around her body. Samuel Pepys commented on the irony of the Countess being named after the chaste goddess Diana. In this portrait she appears as Venus, with a red rose in her left hand, which was an attribute of the goddess of love. She would not have appeared like this outside her own home and this painting would probably have hung in a private location to be seen only by close friends. 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. 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. Her father was Groom of the Bedchamber and she married the Earl of Oxford, Aubrey de Vere, who had been one of Charles I's most loyal supporters. The flesh tones are made from a mixture of fresh pinks and bright whites, with the lips painted a deeper pink. Her eyes are large and elongated, with slightly hooded and shadowy eyelids. Her finely arched eyebrows frame her high forehead and long straight nose. Her hair is styled into a loose, but careful arrangement of shining curls. Inscription Inscribed in ochre paint, lower right: "Diana Kirke | Cts, of Oxford." References http://ebba.english.ucsb.edu/content/McShane_Revealing_Mary_History_Today.pdf

Charles-Antoine Coypel (1694-1752)
La Folie pare la Décrépitude des ajustements de la Jeunesse
1743
pastel
—
Private collection

Charles-Antoine Coypel (1694-1752), La Folie pare la Décrépitude des ajustements de la Jeunesse, 1743, Private collection

Charles-Antoine Coypel's 1743 pastel *La Folie pare la Décrépitude des ajustements de la Jeunesse* satirises a pursuit of beauty that was, for many, genuinely lethal. At the court of Charles II, a pale complexion was so prized that women applied white lead powder knowing it was poisonous — it dried the skin, causing premature wrinkling, and left users, as contemporaries recorded, prematurely withered and grey-headed. Rouge was considered morally suspect because a natural blush signalled female virginity; its artificial substitute implied worldliness and deceit. The courtier Henry Savile recorded in 1686 that Lady Henrietta Wentworth had effectively poisoned herself through excessive use of mercury-based cosmetics. Mercury blackened teeth, shrank the gums, and destroyed the nerves. Yet women continued, because beauty was understood as synonymous with virtue — a radiant complexion indicated an equally radiant soul. Margaret Cavendish, Duchess of Newcastle, challenged critics by arguing that cosmetics differed no more from nature than a man shaving his beard. Coypel's image of Folly adorning an aged figure with the trappings of youth distils this contradiction precisely: the frantic concealment of age was simultaneously a social obligation and a slow act of self-destruction.

Notes

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 Beauty highly valued and so was artificially enhanced Both men and women used 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. There were many poisonous compounds in beauty products including white lead, belladonna (deadly nightshade) for the eyes and mercury for just about everything else. It was known to be poisonous. In 1686, the courtier Henry Savile wrote that Lady Henrietta Wentworth 'sacrificed her life to beauty, by painting so beyond measure that the mercury got into her nerves and killed her.' White lead dried the skin and so women who used it became 'prematurely withered and grey headed'. Mercury also turned the teeth black, shrank the gums and made the breath offensive. Syphilis was rife among the aristocracy and the mercury cure caused so much pain that those treated would 'make a damned soul fall a-laughing at his lesser pains'. 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 show the time and trouble wealthy men and women took to improve on their natural beauty.

Beauty and youth were referred 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 women 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

Mary Astell (1666-1731)
Frontispiece 'The Compleat Beau', An Essay In Defence of the Female Sex
1696

Mary Astell (1666-1731), Frontispiece 'The Compleat Beau', An Essay In Defence of the Female Sex, 1696

Mary Astell (1666–1731) stands as the first English feminist in any meaningful sense — not as a rhetorical flourish, but because she grounded women's equality in logic and reason rather than historical precedent, a genuinely radical move for the period. This frontispiece comes from An Essay in Defence of the Female Sex (1696), and it sets up a sharp satirical target: the beau, a man so consumed by appearance that his identity dissolves into his mirror. Astell's own prose is merciless. The beau, she writes, has "more Learning in his Heels than his head," his tailor and barber forming his true "Cabinet Council." His glass becomes his oracle; a pimple distresses him more than a cancer would. The joke cuts both ways — vanity is not a female failing but a human one, and men who mocked women's supposed shallowness were frequently its worst practitioners. Four years later, in Some Reflections upon Marriage (1700), Astell pressed the argument further: "If all Men are born free, how is it that all Women are born Slaves?" The wit and the philosophy are inseparable in her work.

Notes

Mary Astell (1666-1731), frontispiece ‘The Compleat Beau’, An Essay In Defence of the Female Sex, 1696 Men and women were both ridiculed for slaves to their own vanity. This illustration is from a book written by Mary Astell (1666-1731) an early feminist writer. Her advocacy of equal educational opportunities for women

has earned her the title ‘the first English feminist’. In Some Reflections upon Marriage (1700) she wrote, ‘If all Men are born free, how is it that all Women are born Slaves?’ She was one of the first to argue from the basis of logic and reason rather than historical precedence. She talks about the vanity of the beau who ‘has more Learning in his Heels than his head, which is better cover’d than fill’d. His Taylor and his Barber are his Cabinet Council, to whom he is more beholding for what he is, than to his Maker … His looks and gestures are his constant Lesson, and his Glass is the Oracle that resolves all his mighty doubts and scruples. He examines and refreshes his Complexion by it, and is more dejected at a Pimple, than if it were a Cancer.’

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

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

Born into a Coal Yard Alley slum, **Eleanor "Nell" Gwyn** (1650–1687) rose from selling oranges outside Drury Lane to become **Charles II**'s most celebrated mistress — a trajectory that made her a genuine folk heroine rather than merely a royal appendage. **Samuel Pepys**, who knew Nell personally, kept an engraving of **Peter Cross**'s portrait of her as Venus above his Admiralty desk, which is why historians including Lucy Worsley identify the Cross work as a reliable likeness — important because **Peter Lely**'s idealising style makes firm identification elsewhere almost impossible. Lely constructed a look for the **1660s** court: heavy-lidded eyes, loose ringlets, exposed shoulders, and an air of drowsy sensuality that contemporaries read not as immodesty but as grace — meaning, in this period, sexual magnetism combined with breeding. Catherine MacLeod, in *Painted Ladies*, establishes that bare-breasted portraits by Lely correspond closely to depictions of mistresses rather than wives. Nell's expenses — a silver bed costing **£1,135**, three barrels of oysters weekly, even a sixpenny charitable gift — were all receipted. Her lasting public legacy is the **Royal Hospital Chelsea**, which she persuaded the king to build for veteran soldiers. Her own self-description cut through court pretension entirely: "I am the Protestant whore."

Notes

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 Gwyn (1650-1687) (?), c. 1675, National Portrait Gallery Peter Lely (1618–1680), Barbara Palmer (née Villiers), Duchess of Cleveland, c. 1666, National Portrait Gallery Peter Cross (c. 1645-1724), Richard Thomson (engraver), Eleanor Gywnn as 'Cupid', c. 1672, Royal Collection I will show three of Charles II's fifteen mistresses. #1 Nell Gywnn (also spelt Gywn and Gywnne), popular, down-to-earth No one demonstrated the power of beauty more than Eleanor (Nell) Gywnn. She rose from selling oranges to England's most famous mistress. She became the king's mistress in 1669 after he had seen her perform on stage. She was given a grand house on Pall Mall. She had an unconventional approach to court life and was known for being mischievous. Unlike his other mistresses she was liked by the public. She was self-deprecating and honest. She told a coachman who was about to fight for her honour: 'I am a whore. Try to find something else to fight about.' She claimed everything on expenses, a silver bed costing £1,135 (about £150,000 today), three barrels of oysters a week, rum, brandy, cheese and even sixpence she gave a beggar but she always provided receipts. 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 and 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 Gywnn on the left but the National Portrait Gallery now says that it is a portrait of a women, 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 Gywnn was so popular that she gave rise to a whole series of merchandise just like a modern personality. One

example was a series 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 Kérouaille (pronounced 'louis de kerr-why-ay') £19,000 a year (about £10.5 million). Nell Gwynn was one day passing through the streets of Oxford, in her coach, when the mob mistaking her for her rival, the Duchess of Portsmouth, commenced hooting and loading her with every opprobrious epithet. Putting her head out of the coach window, "Good people", she said, smiling, "you are mistaken; I am the Protestant whore." Catherine MacLeod notes in Painted Ladies, Women at the Court of King Charles II, that portraits by Lely showing bare breasts 'seem exclusively to depict mistresses.' Though it is an inexact science, the level of décolletage in Stuart portraits tends to increase in proportion to the sitter's sexual availability. Perhaps surprisingly, in many European societies between the Renaissance and the 19th century, exposed breasts were more acceptable than they are today, with a woman's bared legs, ankles or shoulders being considered to be more risqué than her exposed breasts. Similar fashions became popular in England during the 17th century when they were worn by Queen Mary II and by Henrietta Maria, wife of Charles I of England, for whom architect Inigo Jones designed a masque costume that fully revealed both of her breasts. The new decadent court of Charles II distanced him not just from Oliver Cromwell but also from his father Charles I. Nell's great legacy still stands; the Royal Hospital in Chelsea which this ex-serviceman's daughter persuaded Charles II to build to house poor veterans. Today it is the home of the red-coated Chelsea Pensioners. 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 Kérouaille. Unable to pronounce the latter's name the English called her Miss Carwell or Cartwheel. Other mistresses include Margaret de Carteret (who claimed she bore Charles a son), Lucy Walter (had a son by Charles), Elizabeth Killigrew (married Francis Boyle, had a daughter), Catherine Pegge (had a son and a daughter), Mary 'Moll' Davis (had a daughter), Christabella Wyndham, Hortense Mancini, Duchess of Mazarin, Winifred Wells – one of Queen Catherine's Maids of Honour, Jane Roberts – the daughter of a clergyman, Mrs Knight – a famous singer, Elizabeth Berkeley, née Bagot, Dowager Countess of Falmouth and Elizabeth Fitzgerald, Countess of Kildare. 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. 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. Nell Gywnn was born in Coal Yard Alley, a slum near Drury Lane, where here ex-soldier father sold fruit and he mother ran a brothel until she fell into the Thames drunk and drowned. She sold apples and oranges for her father and

probably worked as a child prostitute although she always denied it. The actor Charles Hart, a lover, gave her a part on the stage when she was 15. Having been the mistress of Charles Hart and the wealthy Lord Buckhurst, also known as Charles Sackville, she nicknamed her new lover 'Charles the third'. In May 1670, Nell had a baby by the King: his seventh son by five mistresses. Peter Cross (c. 1645-1724, formerly thought to be Lawrence Cross) was an English miniature painter born in London the son of a freeman of the Drapers' Company. His first wife was the daughter of a sculptor and they had three children. I is thought he was a friend of the miniaturist Samuel Cooper. References Christies website: http://fw.to/WDUnJ7b
http://www.standard.co.uk/news/royal-mistress-nell-gwyns-expenses-would-shame-our-mps-but-she-was-worth-every-penny-6849398.html
http://blogs.shu.edu/ecww/project/kayle-pichalski/

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

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

Barbara Villiers (1640–1709), 1st Duchess of Cleveland, arrived in England with Charles II in 1660 as his foremost mistress — a role that, in Restoration court culture, carried genuine political currency. She bore the king five acknowledged children, all ennobled, among them Henry Fitzroy, Duke of Grafton, a direct ancestor of Diana, Princess of Wales, and George Fitzroy, 1st Duke of Northumberland. In this portrait, attributed to court painter Sir Peter Lely, Barbara stages herself as the Virgin Mary, her illegitimate son Charles Fitzroy — later Duke of Southampton — positioned as the Christ child. The devotional format is entirely deliberate: it launders scandal into sanctity and asserts dynastic legitimacy through the language of sacred painting. Diarist John Evelyn condemned her as the "curse of the nation"; Samuel Pepys recorded sighting her with undisguised admiration. The tension between those two responses defines her public image perfectly. Her influence over the king was so pronounced that contemporaries called her the Uncrowned Queen — a title that points less to affection than to the structured, if unofficial, power a royal mistress could accumulate at the Restoration court.

Notes

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 #2 Barbara Villiers 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, including the Duke of Grafton (Henry, Fitzroy, 7-greats-grandfather of Diana, Princess of Wales) and the 1st Duke of Northumberland (George Fitzroy). 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 who later became the Duke of Southampton and later the 2nd Duke of Cleveland. 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 startling blue 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 wad been debated by women in 1650s France at the court of Henry IV and at Salons. A book was published by a women 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

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

Peter Lely's portrait of Louise de Kérouaille (painted 1671–74, now at the J. Paul Getty Museum) shows the woman who became Charles II's most politically significant mistress, and one of the most powerful figures at the English court. Born in 1649 into French nobility, Louise had served in the household of Henrietta Anne Stuart before Charles appointed her lady-in-waiting to Queen Catherine of Braganza in 1670. Unlike Barbara Palmer, who openly humiliated the Queen, Louise maintained a studied respect towards her, keeping relations between the two women consistently cordial. Lely renders her signature features — almond-shaped eyes, arched brows, full lips — according to the beauty ideals of the late seventeenth century, yet the diarist John Evelyn shrewdly noted her "baby face" concealed considerable intelligence and will. She occupied 23 rooms at Whitehall Palace and wielded influence that made her enemies suspicious; the accusation that Louis XIV planted her at court to steer Charles's foreign policy has never been substantiated. Her son, Charles Lennox, was created 1st Duke of Richmond in 1675, and through that line Louise became an ancestor of both Diana, Princess of Wales, and Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall.

Notes

Peter Lely (1618-1680), Louise de Kérouaille, Duchess of Portsmouth, 1671-74, 125.1 x 101.6 cm, J. Paul Getty Museum #3 Louise de Kérouaille (1649-1734,

pronounced ‘Kerr-why-ay’ or Miss Carwell or Cartwheel) 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. Her features—almond-shaped eyes, gently arched eyebrows, a straight nose, and full red lips—epitomized ideal beauty of the late 1600s. 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 Lennox (1672–1723) was created 1st Duke of Richmond in 1675. Through him she is ancestress of both wives of Prince Charles: Diana, Princess of Wales (1961-1997, née Spencer), and Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall (b. 1947). The King's haughty and well-born French mistress, Louise de Kérouaille, the Duchess of Portsmouth, was as different from Nell as it was possible to be. Coming from the sophisticated court of Versailles, Louise despised the jokes and high spirits of the former orange seller, while Nell nicknamed her rival 'Squintabella' for her (very slight) squint and 'the Weeping Willow' for her way of using tears to get her way with Charles. Nell's coach was once mistaken for Kérouaille’s by the Oxford mob and it was rocked and pelted with mud. Showing her wit and courage, Nell put her head through the window and cried out: 'Pray good people, be civil. You are mistaken. I am the Protestant whore.'

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

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

Anne Hyde's commission sits at the heart of Restoration court culture, and these two portraits show both its brilliance and its complications. **Mary Bagot, Countess of Falmouth and Dorset** (c. 1664–65) and **Frances Brooke, Lady Whitmore** (c. 1665) have been confused and mislabelled since the eighteenth century, with Mary's portrait misattributed variously to "Elizabeth, Countess of Falmouth" and the "Countess of Ossory" — errors reprinted so frequently they became entrenched. The confusion is understandable, because **Lely** deliberately homogenised his sitters. Working from a quick chalk sketch, he handed compositions to his large studio, which completed them using standardised patterns. The resulting visual language is consistent across the series: three-quarter length poses offset to one side, **décolletage**, heavy-lidded eyes, full mouths, and satin fabrics whose light-catching surfaces remain among Lely's most technically accomplished passages. **Horace Walpole** coined the phrase "drowsy sweetness" for this sensuality, and it holds. Grace, for Lely, meant something close to erotic charge. The cost of that formula is individuality. Frances's sister, **Margaret Brooke, Lady Denham**, mistress to the Duke of York, may even appear here — the identifications remain contested, which tells us everything about Lely's method.

Notes

Peter Lely (1618–1680), Mary Bagot, Countess of Falmouth and Dorset, c. 1664-65, 124.3 x 101.3, Royal Collection (January 2018, on display at the Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace) Peter Lely (1618–1680), Frances Brooke, Lady Whitmore, c. 1665, 124.4 × 101.3 cm, Royal Collection First, a comment on style. These are two of the Windsor Beauties I will be showing you in a minute. They have been confused over the years and mis-titled but that is hardly surprising. Mary Bagot, Countess of Falmouth and Dorset (1645 – 1679) was a British courtier. She was one of the Windsor Beauties (#6) 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 Windsor Beauties series (#9) 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. Some historians believe the portrait on the left is Margaret Brooke, Mary's sister Windsor Beauties series (#3), 'the poisoned'. Peter Lely had a large studio and so he 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.

Sir Peter Lely (1618-1680)
Anne Hyde, Duchess of York
c. 1662
—
205.8 x 129.5 cm
Royal Collection

Sir Peter Lely (1618-1680), Anne Hyde, Duchess of York, c. 1662, 205.8 x 129.5 cm, Royal Collection

This portrait belongs to **Lely**'s sustained working relationship with **Anne Hyde, Duchess of York** — ten copies of his portraits of her remained in his studio at his death in **1680**. She wears an amber silk gown, a tress of her own hair held loosely in her right hand: Lely presents her with quiet dignity rather than flattery. **Samuel Pepys** called her "a plain woman," and Anne herself was celebrated for intelligence and wit, not conventional beauty — yet she commissioned the famous **Windsor Beauties** series in the mid-**1660s** precisely to honour female beauty in others. Her story is inseparable from dynastic consequence. Daughter of lawyer-turned-chancellor **Edward Hyde**, 1st Earl of Clarendon, she married the future **James II** in **1660** after becoming pregnant by him, a union that provoked lasting court disapproval given her commoner origins. Of their eight children, only two daughters survived childhood: **Mary II**, who reigned from **1689**, and **Anne**, who became the first sovereign of the Kingdom of Great Britain in **1707**. Anne Hyde died of breast cancer in **1671**, aged thirty-four, never knowing the extraordinary crowns her daughters would wear.

Notes

Sir Peter Lely (1618-80), Anne Hyde, Duchess of York (1637-71) c. 1662, 205.8 x 129.5 cm, Royal Collection. Died aged 34. This is not one of the Windsor Beauties but Anne Hyde, who commissioned them in the mid-1660s. She was

known for her intelligence and wit rather than her beauty but in her commissions she wanted to celebrate female beauty. Only one of the Windsor Beauties was a mistress of Charles II, Barbara Villiers. 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 who became Chancellor of the Exchequer under Charles I. 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 (Charles, who only lived 6 months), 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. Notes Anne Hyde, Duchess of York (12 March 1637 – 31 March 1671) 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'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. Anne Hyde 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

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

The first portrait in the Windsor Beauties corridor at Hampton Court opens our survey of **Peter Lely**'s celebrated series, and it belongs to a woman whose life defied the court's reputation for scandal. **Lady Elizabeth Wriothesley (1646–1690)** was the daughter of Thomas Wriothesley, 4th Earl of Southampton, and granddaughter of Shakespeare's patron. Lely painted her around **1665**, aged eighteen or nineteen, in a canvas measuring 125.7 × 103.5 cm now in the **Royal Collection**. The series was assembled by **Anne Hyde, Duchess of York**, probably between 1662 and 1665, and by 1674 the portraits hung together at Whitehall draped in blue mohair. Samuel Pepys, visiting in 1668, noted that Lely's portraits were 'not like' — meaning too flattering — a criticism historians link to Lely's habit of echoing the languid features of **Barbara Villiers, Duchess of Cleveland**, across all his female sitters. Elizabeth's life was one of careful manoeuvre rather than scandal. Her husband, **Joceline Percy, 11th Earl of Northumberland**, took her to Paris in 1669, reportedly fearing Charles II's interest. His sudden death in Turin the following year left her a wealthy widow, free to return to England and eventually marry Ralph Montagu.

Notes

Peter Lely (1618–1680), Portrait of Lady Elizabeth Wriothesley, Countess of

Northumberland, c. 1665, 125.7 × 103.5 cm, Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace. Painted when she was 18/19. #1. The Hidden Beauty, Lady Elizabeth Wriothesley (1646-1690), Countess of Northumberland, hidden from Charles in Paris but her husband, Joceline Percy, died leaving her a rich widow and she later married the Duke of Montagu. The first Windsor Beauty in the corridor at Hampton Court and the following 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 and daughter of Thomas Wriothesley, 4th Earl of Southampton. He became Lord High Treasurer and was noted for 'his freedom from any taint of corruption'. 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, 11th Earl of Northumberland (1644-1670) in 1662, while still a teenager. He 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 a rich widow and chatelaine of Syon House. She married Ralph Montagu, later Duke of Montagu, before dying in wealthy middle age in 1690. 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 who was painted many times by Lely. Contrary to Pepys's assertion, only one of the sitters, Frances Teresa Stuart 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
c. 1665
—
124.4 × 101.4 cm
Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace

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

Peter Lely's portrait of **Henrietta Boyle, Countess of Rochester** (c. **1665**) presents a woman whose composed elegance belies a reputation for ferocious ambition. Born into the Boyle dynasty, which had spent two generations consolidating near-total dominance over the south of Ireland, Henrietta brought that ruthless acquisitiveness directly into the English court. She married **Laurence Hyde** — son of the Earl of Clarendon and brother of **Anne Hyde**, first wife of the future James II — in 1665, the same year Lely painted her. When Laurence served as Chief Minister to James, Henrietta seized every privilege court life could yield, including bitter disputes with the future **Queen Anne** over the finest apartments in Whitehall Palace. Anne, no pushover herself, complained pointedly of her aunt's 'peevishness'. The diarist **John Aubrey** accused Henrietta of poisoning **Lady Denham** with chocolate — a claim he offered without a shred of evidence. Lady Denham almost certainly died of natural causes, though the accusation stuck, partly because the court was already whispering similar suspicions about Anne Hyde herself, as **Samuel Pepys** recorded on **8 January 1667**. Mud, in Stuart court circles, rarely needed truth to travel.

Notes

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, her husband was the brother of Anne Hyde, Duchess of York and died aged 40/41. #2. The Poisoner? Henrietta Boyle, Countess of Rochester, strong-minded, ruthless and acquisitive. The diarist John Aubrey (1626-1697) tells us without any evidence that Lady Denham (#3, Margaret Brooke) 'was poisoned by the hands of the Countess of Rochester with chocolate'. She was married to Laurence Hyde the brother of Anne Hyde (1637-1671), the first wife of James II and Duchess of York who died before he became King. Boyle's 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. She was known for her bitter clashes 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. Notes Henrietta Boyle married Laurence 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. 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. 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 Laurence 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. 1663–5
—
124.5 × 101 cm
Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace

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

Painted by **Peter Lely** around **1663–5**, this portrait shows **Margaret Brooke, Lady Denham** at the height of her brief, turbulent ascent through Restoration court society. Having failed to attract **Charles II** — blocked, according to contemporaries, by the formidable **Barbara Palmer** — Margaret turned instead to his brother **James, Duke of York**, becoming his conspicuously public mistress after her **1665** marriage to the poet and gambler **Sir John Denham**, a man twice her age. Pepys recorded in his diary that James followed her everywhere openly, attending her at Scotland Yard in plain sight of the court. The affair ended with Margaret's sudden death in **1667**, aged around twenty. She herself suspected poison and demanded an autopsy; none was found, yet rumour persisted that Sir John had administered poisoned chocolate at the instigation of the jealous **Duchess of York**. **Andrew Marvell** memorialised the scandal in *Last Instructions to a Painter*: "What to fair Denham, mortal chocolate." Lely's composition gives no hint of scandal — she appears composed, well-dressed, entirely in command — which makes the painting's distance from her actual fate all the more striking.

Notes

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, Margaret Brooke, Lady Denham – ‘Death by Chocolate’, rumoured to have been

killed by Henrietta Boyle (#2), her husband or Anne Hyde but the autopsy showed nothing 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. In 1665 she married Sir John Denham, a tall, thin, stork-like poet and gambler, and immediately became the Duke of York's very public mistress. It is said, this cuckoldry sent Sir John mad for a while. Notes Margaret Brooke, Lady Denham was the daughter of Sir William Brooke, and sister of Frances Brooke. 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 (née Villiers, Countess of Castlemaine), 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 (1618-1680)
Barbara Villiers, Duchess of Cleveland as Minerva
c. 1665
—
124.5 x 101.4 cm
Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace

Sir Peter Lely (1618-1680), Barbara Villiers, Duchess of Cleveland as Minerva, c. 1665, 124.5 x 101.4 cm, Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace

Barbara Villiers embodied the contradictions of Restoration court life with an intensity that made her impossible to ignore. Born into the Royalist **Villiers** family, her father died fighting for the Crown, leaving the family financially reduced — a precarious position for a woman whose beauty was her chief political currency. Tall, voluptuous, with heavy-lidded violet eyes and a sensuous mouth, she became **Charles II**'s mistress in **1660** and bore him five ennobled children. The diarist **John Evelyn** called her "the curse of the nation," yet she held genuine power: appointed Lady of the Bedchamber despite her bitter enmity with **Catherine of Braganza**, she wielded more influence than the queen consort herself. Her conversion to Catholicism in **1663** was widely judged cynical — the Church of England, contemporaries quipped, had lost nothing. **Sir Peter Lely** painted her repeatedly, here casting her as **Minerva**, Roman goddess of wisdom and strategy — a flattering fiction given her reputation for temper and promiscuity. The armour and spear reframe scandal as authority. The **Test Act of 1673** stripped her of her court position, and Charles, diplomatically, advised her to live quietly and cause no scandal, "in which case he cared not whom she loved."

Notes

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 (January 2018, on display at the Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace) #4. The Curse of the Nation, Barbara Villiers, the Number One Beauty, the 'Uncrowned Queen' 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. 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 actor Charles Hart (Nell Gwyn's first lover), the acrobat Jacob Hall and her second cousin John Churchill. She rewarded her lovers generously, with Charles's money, but when one, John Ellis, later under-secretary of state, started boasting excessively then, it is implied in a poem by Alexander Pope that she had him castrated. 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 Kérouaille 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. Minerva 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

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

Before introducing the sitter, Lely had already established himself as the pre-eminent portraitist at the Restoration court, and **Elizabeth Hamilton** shows exactly why. Born in Ireland and arriving at the English court in **1661**, Hamilton became celebrated less for wealth — she had none — than for charm, wit, and a mischievous intelligence that included elaborate practical jokes on fellow courtiers. Her husband, **Philibert, comte de Gramont**, whom she followed to France in **1669**, recorded in his memoirs that she was "the original after which all the ladies copied in their taste and air of dress" — a remark that makes Lely's task here both a record and a declaration. **Lely** portrays her as **St. Catherine of Alexandria**, identifiable by the palm frond of martyrdom and the spiked wheel of her torture. The choice is pointed: St. Catherine was one of only two saints to experience a mystical marriage with Christ, the other being the **Dominican** mystic **St. Catherine of Siena (1347–1380)**. External beauty and internal virtue — piety, chastity, intellectual courage — are fused in a single image. Hamilton is not merely beautiful; she is cast as the court's moral and aesthetic exemplar, a standard the other women aspired to but, by implication, could not reach.

Notes

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

(January 2018, on display at the Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace) #5 The Joker, 'La Belle Hamilton', Elizabeth Hamilton, Countess of Gramont, practical jokes, the original, the one that all the other ladies at court copied 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. She did not have a fortune but was much courted and married 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
c. 1664–1665
—
124.3 × 101.3 cm
Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace

Peter Lely (1618–1680), Mary Bagot, Countess of Falmouth and Dorset, c. 1664–1665, 124.3 × 101.3 cm, Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace

Peter Lely's portrait of Mary Bagot (c. 1664–5) presents one of the most socially ascendant women of the Restoration court. Born to an impoverished Cavalier officer, Mary rose through proximity to royal power with remarkable speed. Her first marriage made her Countess of Falmouth, though her husband died within a year, his head taken off by a cannonball during the Dutch Wars. Rumour then placed her in the arms of James, Duke of York, who reputedly considered marrying her after Anne Hyde died. She ultimately wed Charles Sackville, later Earl of Dorset. Anthony Hamilton, in his *Mémoires de Grammont*, offers the most vivid account of her person: "Miss Bagot was the only one who was really possessed of virtue and beauty… there was an involuntary blush almost continually upon her cheek without having anything to blush for." That brown complexion Hamilton singles out as rare and particularly fascinating in England reads directly in Lely's handling of her warm skin tones. Identification of this portrait has been complicated by its misattribution in prints to Elizabeth, Countess of Falmouth, and by confusion between Mary and her half-sister Elizabeth Bagot, both associated with the Duchess's household.

Notes

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 (January

2018, on display at the Queen's Gallery, Buckingham Palace) #6. The Blusher, Mary Bagot, Countess of Falmouth and Dorset, James II wanted to marry her after Anne Hyde died, continually blushed 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 difficult 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 Peter Lely (1618–1680)
Anne Spencer (née Digby), Countess of Sunderland
before 1666
—
124.9 × 101.8 cm
Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace

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

Anne Digby's career at court stretched from **Charles II** to **Queen Anne**, making her one of the most durable political survivors of the late seventeenth century. That longevity owed much to the quality **Anne Hyde** identified so precisely in her 1687 letter: a "fawning and endearing" manner that concealed, in Hyde's view, a thoroughly dissembling character. This portrait, a studio copy after the **1666** original at **Althorp**, is the sole work in the **Windsor Beauties** series not attributed directly to **Peter Lely's** own hand. The original remains at Althorp, the Northamptonshire seat of the Spencer family, where the **2nd Earl of Sunderland** assembled his collection of Lely portraits. The copy falls short of Lely's characteristic authority in likeness — precisely the quality that made his reputation — and was produced to complete a set rather than as a primary commission. Anne's survival across three reigns rested on managing relationships as strategically as her husband **Robert Spencer** managed political ones. She served **Mary of Modena** as lady-in-waiting, witnessed the birth of the Prince of Wales, navigated exile in Holland after **1688**, and still secured a place in Princess Anne's household — a record that more than vindicates Hyde's assessment.

Notes

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 Flatterer, Anne Spencer (née 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.' (Anne Hyde) 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. 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 (near Northampton and the home of Lady Diana Spencer) 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'. 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 with a cornucopia, possibly as Demeter
c. 1663–1665
—
124.1 × 101.6 cm
Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace

Peter Lely (1618–1680), Jane Needham, Mrs Myddleton with a cornucopia, possibly as Demeter, c. 1663–1665, 124.1 × 101.6 cm, Royal Collection, Hampton Court Palace

Jane Needham married Charles Myddelton of Ruabon in 1660, and by the mid-1660s **Peter Lely** had painted her as a goddess of abundance — an elevation that her reputation at court both invited and complicated. **John Evelyn** called her "that incomparable beauty," and the Duke of York selected her for Lely's celebrated series of court beauties hung at **Windsor**. Poets **Edmund Waller** and **Saint-Evremond** wrote in her honour, yet **Samuel Pepys** recorded a rather different impression: that Mrs Myddleton was "noted for carrying about her body a continued sour base smell, that is very offensive." **Anthony Hamilton** was equally deflating, noting her ambition to pass for a wit had only established her reputation for being tiresome. **The Count de Gramont** suggested personal grievance may have sharpened his own verdict — she had declined to become his mistress. She resisted becoming a royal mistress altogether, despite the attentions of both **Charles II** and the Duke of York, though she did take the Duke of Montagu and the Earl of Rochester as lovers. Lely's painting, serene and idealised, keeps all of that social friction decorously out of frame.

Notes

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 One, Jane Needham, Mrs Myddleton, ‘silly and sentimental’ who thought herself a great wit but was considered boring and tiresome, ‘…noted for carrying about her body a continued sour base smell, that is very offensive’ (Samuel Pepys) 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&Des

c=Jane-Needham-%7C-Henri-Gascar

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

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

Lely's Frances Brooke stands apart from the louche atmosphere that defined the Windsor Beauties series — she was, by every account, genuinely virtuous. Frances and her sister **Margaret Brooke, Lady Denham** — James, Duke of York's notorious mistress — were daughters of a parliamentary knight killed in the **Civil War**. Their uncle brought both girls to court as teenagers, deploying them as instruments of political advancement. Margaret embraced that world entirely; Frances did not. She married **Sir Thomas Whitmore**, and after his death wed **Mathew Harvey**, living in quiet domesticity well away from Whitehall. **Clare Jerrold**, writing in *The Fair Ladies of Hampton Court* in **1911**, described her as possessing "heavily marked features, thick eyebrows, a long, rather ugly nose, well-formed but large mouth, and dark hair." Lely, ever the diplomatic portraitist, translates those features into something composed and self-possessed. The large dark eyes carry genuine gravity rather than the calculated allure he gave so many sitters. Where **Lely's** Windsor Beauties typically perform availability for a court built on spectacle and appetite, Lady Whitmore performs nothing at all — and that restraint, in this context, reads as its own quiet statement of character.

Notes

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 One Frances

Brooke, Lady Whitmore, with the ‘Ugly Nose’, no affairs, married twice
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

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

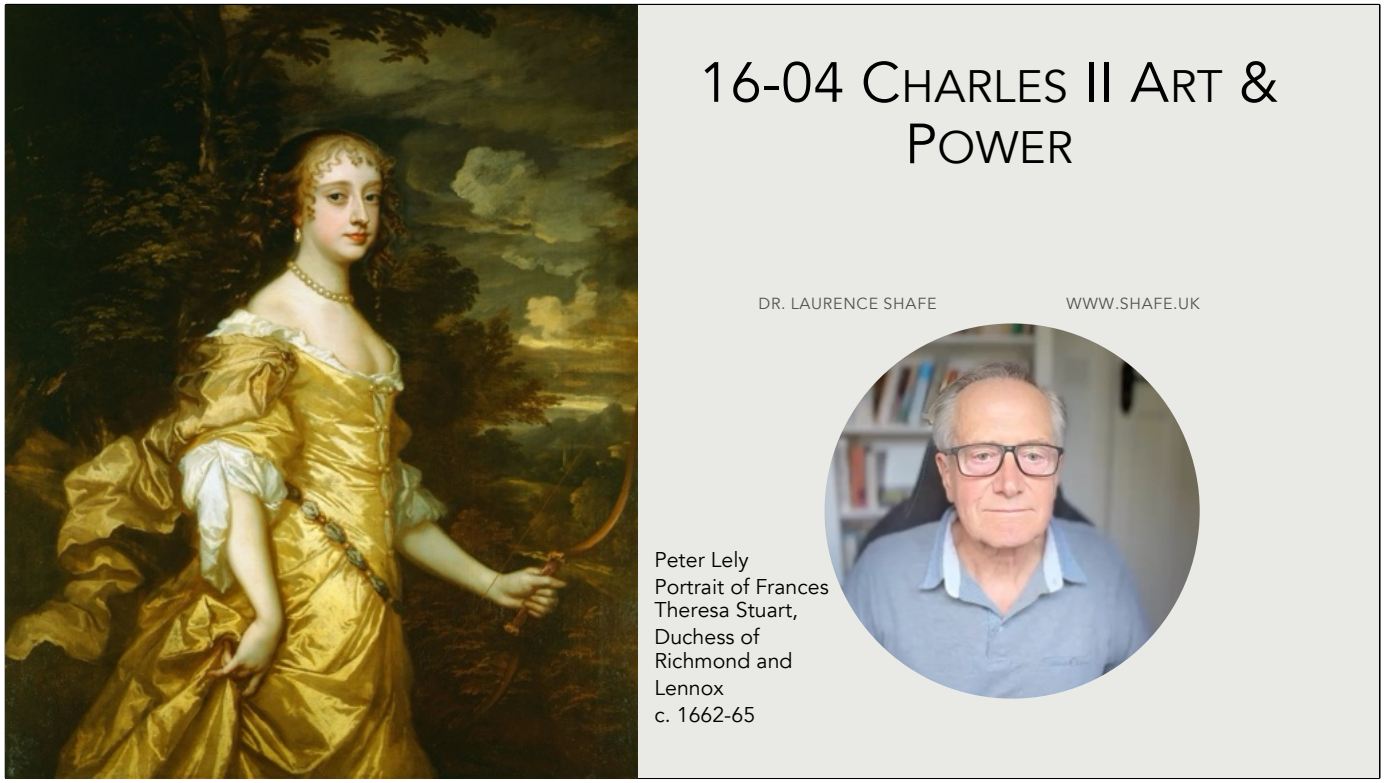
Frances Theresa Stuart (1647–1702) arrived at the Stuart court from Paris in 1663 and became the most celebrated beauty of the Restoration. **Peter Lely** painted her as the chaste huntress Diana — an irony, given Charles II's relentless pursuit of her. She refused the King's advances for years; he reportedly considered divorce from Catherine of Braganza to marry her. When Frances eloped with the **Duke of Richmond and Lennox** in 1667, Charles eventually forgave her. Her face, as **La Belle Stuart**, became constitutional currency. **John Roettier** engraved her profile as Britannia on a gold medal of **1667**, commissioned to celebrate naval victories over the Dutch, and that image persisted on British coinage through decimalisation and onto the **fifty-pence piece until 2008**. **Samuel Pepys** recorded her "sweet eye, little Roman nose and excellent taille" as the greatest beauty he had ever seen. Smallpox in 1668 damaged her complexion, moving Pepys to genuine grief in his diary. Her **wax effigy at Westminster Abbey Museum**, which she commissioned herself, stands beside her stuffed African grey parrot — reputedly the oldest stuffed bird in existence.

Notes

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 #10. The Pretty One, 'La Belle Stuart', Frances Theresa Stuart, Duchess of Richmond and Lennox - the Prettiest Beauty 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. Her image was with us until recently as Charles (allegedly) chose her to represent Britannia and she was on our coins up to the 50p piece in 2008. Frances Stuart, the face of Britannia and famous for holding off the King's advances. The King feel 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. Charles allegedly chose Frances Stuart to represent Britannia on a commemorative medal celebrating peace with the Dutch and it was later used on statues and coins including copper coins until decimalization in 1971 and on the fifty pence coin until 2008. 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 kings' affectations. 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. 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.



That brings me to the end of this long talk. It was originally two hours. I have taken you from From Lely's brush to Mary Astell's pen, this is the story of beauty made political: portraits as propaganda, mistresses as power brokers, and women's bodies turned into the visual currency of a court rebuilding its authority. The Restoration's obsession with appearance reveals as much about insecurity as about magnificence.

Thank you for watching. Future talks in this run-off series I plan to be completely automated so goodbye for now.

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