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# Curating a Gentleman's Library: Practices of Acquisition, Display and Disposal in the Cottonian Collection, 1791-1816

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# Curating a Gentleman's Library: Practices of Acquisition, Display and Disposal in the Cottonian Collection, 1791-1816

Susan Leedham

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in partial fulfilment for the degree of

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# Author's Declaration

At no time during the registration for the degree of *Doctor of Philosophy* has the author been registered for any other University award without prior agreement of the Doctoral College Quality Sub-committee.

Work submitted for this research degree at the University of Plymouth has not formed part of any other degree either at the University of Plymouth or at another establishment.

This study was sponsored by the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) and was undertaken in collaboration with Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery (PCMAG).

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## **Publications:**

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# Abstract

## Curating a Gentleman's Library: Practices of Acquisition, Display and Disposal in the Cottonian Collection, 1791-1816

This thesis examines the book and archival holdings of the Cottonian Collection – a national designated eighteenth-century collection of fine art and books – between 1791 and 1816, the period of William Cotton II's custodianship. Prior to this thesis, the Cottonian Collection has not been the subject of a full-length academic study. Whilst the art holdings have received some attention, the book and archival contents have not been examined. This thesis addresses this imbalance by conducting a thorough examination of the archival holdings and the history of the book collection. Taking the actions of the collection's penultimate private owner, William Cotton II, as its primary focus this thesis examines the curatorial practices of acquisition, preservation and disposal through three key lenses: the presentation of the collection as a symbol of gentlemanly status, the evolution of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism thought, and the rise of Anglican Evangelicalism during this period. In doing so, this thesis considers the effects of the broader societal, political and religion changes on a national designated collection during a period defined by ideological threat and revolutionary warfare. In the process, it seeks to embed the history of the Cottonian Collection within the broader context of late-eighteenth-century book collecting practices.

Susan Leedham



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# Introduction: The Cottonian Collection

## Introduction

This thesis examines collecting practices and curatorial behaviours relating to the Cottonian Collection – a national designated eighteenth-century collection of books and fine art held at the Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery.<sup>1</sup> Focusing, in particular, on the curation of the library contents by the collection’s penultimate private owner, William Cotton II (1759-1816), between 1791 and 1816, this thesis explores the ways in which decisions around book acquisition, preservation, and disposal aligned with broader trends in book collecting practices in the eighteenth century. In seeking to provide a more nuanced account of the curatorial practices undertaken by Cotton II – one that cuts against dominant narratives of collection mismanagement and financially driven decision-making – this thesis seeks not only to provide a more considered account of Cotton II’s actions and their implications for the Cottonian Collection but provides an opportunity to scrutinise the broader societal, political and religious conditions that shaped book collecting practices and the trade at the time.

Prior to this thesis, the Cottonian Collection has not been the subject of a full-length academic study. Whilst the fine art holdings have been briefly explored with examination of the print holdings and their formation taking place twenty years ago, the books and archival material held in the collection have never been examined.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, despite the collection being awarded national designated status, no work has sought to explore the curatorial processes associated with the collection itself. This lack of knowledge has led to simplified, often conflicting and, possibly, erroneous narratives surrounding the

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<sup>1</sup>The Cottonian Collection was awarded national designated status by Arts Council England in 1998. The designation scheme ‘identifies and celebrates outstanding collections, which deepen our understanding of the world and what it means to be human. [...] The founding aims were to raise the profile of these vital collections and encourage everyone to safeguard them.’ < <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/supporting-collections-and-archives/designation-scheme> > [accessed 1<sup>st</sup> August 2017].

<sup>2</sup> Antony Griffiths, ‘The Rogers Collection in the Cottonian Collection’, *Print Quarterly*, 10:1 (1993), pp. 19-36; Louise Lippencott, *Selling Art in Georgian London* (London: Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 29-30; 115-125. Margaret Lattimore, *The History of Libraries in Plymouth to 1914: A study of the Library Development in the Three Towns of Plymouth, Devonport and Stonehouse which amalgamated into Plymouth in 1914*. Unpublished PhD thesis. University of London, 1982, p. 165.

history of the collection. These narratives inherently shape how the collection is presented and curated by the Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery. In particular, Cotton II's curatorship of his inherited collection (which saw the collection reduced from twenty-five thousand pieces to ten thousand pieces) is commonly assumed to be driven by financial gain. This assumption has not only influenced how Cotton II's character is presented within the museum setting but also makes it difficult to acknowledge how his actions interact with the broader collecting practices of the period.

Consequently, the purpose of this thesis is threefold. Firstly, in taking the books and archival contents of the collection as its core focus, this thesis seeks to offer a comprehensive overview of both the collection's history and the curation of the library. In examining the contents of the current collection, in relation to knowledge about the changing nature of its contents, I seek to develop a broader understanding of the history of a national designated collection. Secondly, it aims to more thoroughly examine the curatorial practices of William Cotton II, thereby adding depth and detail to the narrative of both the collection and its curator. In building on the first aim, this shifts attention from the contents of the collection to a consideration of why particular books were acquired, retained and sold. Finally, this thesis seeks to explore and embed the curation of the collection between 1791 and 1816 within the broader context of book collecting practices of the period. More specifically, this context is explored through three lenses: the presentation and function of the collection as a symbol of gentlemanly status; the evolution of Enlightenment cosmopolitan thought; and the rise of Anglican Evangelicalism during the period of Cotton II's custodianship.

In what follows, I briefly outline the history of the Cottonian Collection from its mid-seventeenth-century origins through to the current day. This introductory chapter then moves to explore debates key to the understanding of book collection practices in the eighteenth century, focusing in particular on the practices of connoisseurship and the rise of the gentleman collector. Finally, I introduce the research questions that underlie this thesis and provide an overview of the chapters that follow.

## The Cottonian Collection

The national designated Cottonian Collection is today held at Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery. The collection contains over ten thousand objects including approximately one thousand prints, over two hundred drawings, a number of oil paintings including works by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792), some two thousand books housed in custom-made eighteenth-century bookcases, as well as a small selection of sculpture, bronzes and ceramics. Whilst now located in Plymouth (the reasons for which I will discuss in due course), the collection's origins can be traced to late-seventeenth-century London. Over the course of the next two hundred years the collection was transferred through the custodianship of six gentleman collectors. Related through blood, marriage and friendship, each collector contributed to the collection in a different manner, shaping and developing its contents according to their individual tastes and the broader fashions of book collecting that characterised their lifetime.

The origins of the collection can be traced to Robert Townson (1640-1709), a middle-class gentleman living in London. Townson was employed at the London Custom House as the Chief of Certificates Inwards – a position that entailed overseeing the recording of all imports entering the port of London.<sup>3</sup> This was a position that afforded him enough income to accumulate a modest collection of two hundred and seventy books. These purchases were recorded by him in his *Catalogue of My Bookes* (1709).<sup>4</sup> The majority of these works (approximately two-thirds) can be classed as theological material. This includes sermons, tracts, religious treatises as well as Bibles. The remaining third of the collection is made up of writings by natural philosophers, several versions of Aesop's fables and a small miscellaneous selection of tracts.<sup>5</sup> Many of these works survive in the collection to this day. Following his death in 1709, the collection was inherited by his son, William (1682-1740), who would also inherit his father's position at the Custom House. No archival evidence survives to document William's purchases, but the established narrative of the collection, as told by Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery, suggests that William acquired books and artwork for the collection.

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<sup>3</sup> Elizabeth Hoon, *The Organization of the English Custom System: 1696-1786* (New York; London: American Historical Association, 1938), p. 198.

<sup>4</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Robert Townson: *Catalogue of My Bookes*, 368.

<sup>5</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Robert Townson: *Catalogue of My Bookes*, 368.



Figure 1: *Charles Rogers Esq F.R.S F.S.A (1711-1784)* By Sir Joshua Reynolds (1777)  
Permission courtesy of Plymouth City Council Arts and Heritage Service.

Having no heirs of his own, William left the collection to his friend and colleague at the Custom House, Charles Rogers (1711-1784). Rogers (**Figure 1**) would also eventually inherit William's position as Chief Clerk of Certificates. It is Rogers who is largely credited with having shaped the collection's holdings. His meticulous purchase records are held in the Cottonian archive and document the thousands of prints, drawings, books, sculpture, bronzes and pieces of furniture that he acquired during the forty-four years of his custodianship.<sup>6</sup> Rogers' obituary in *The Gentleman's Magazine* (1784) portrays him as an industrious gentleman and connoisseur who dedicated his leisure time to 'the cultivation of his mind in the acquisition of literature and in forming a valuable collection

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<sup>6</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Charles Rogers' Purchase List, 359.

of prints and drawings'.<sup>7</sup> During his lifetime he published two works – *Prints in Imitation of Drawings* (1778) and an illustrated edition of *The Inferno of Dante* (1782). A survey of his correspondence reveals connections with fellow collectors, many of whom were well-known: Daniel Wray, Edward Walpole, Horace Walpole, Mariette the engraver, and Arthur Pond.<sup>8</sup> Many of these connections were instrumental in enabling him to develop his collection. Rogers died in 1784 shortly after having been knocked down in Fleet-Street by the 'carelessness or brutality of a butcher's boy on horseback.'<sup>9</sup>



Figure 2: *William Cotton II Esq F.S.A (1759-1816)* Unknown Artist (c.1790) Permission courtesy of The Bodleian Libraries, The University of Oxford, MS. Eng. D. 3551, fol. 13v.

Rogers also died without direct heirs and the collection passed to his brother-in-law, William Cotton I (1731-1791). There is no evidence to suggest that Cotton I had any impact on the collection in the form of acquisitions or disposals. The collection then passed to his son, and Rogers' nephew, William Cotton II – the focus of this thesis (**Figure 2**). Cotton II's period of custodianship is characterised by two sales in 1799 and 1801

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<sup>7</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Chronicle*, vol. 54 (1784), pp. 158-161 (p. 159).

<sup>8</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Correspondence of Charles Rogers, 345. All quotations taken from the letters held in the Cottonian Archive retain the original spelling and grammar as intended by the letters' authors.

<sup>9</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine, and Historical Chronicle*, p. 160.



which resulted in the disposal of two-thirds of his inherited collection. Over twenty-five thousand items were sold including the majority of Rogers' collection of the Italian Old Master prints and drawings. In light of these sales the collection that Cotton II passed to his son and heir, William Cotton III (1794-1863), was considerably smaller than that which he had inherited himself in 1791. Cotton III (**Figure 3**) similarly left his mark on the collection. He initiated a third sale in 1839 and, although not as large as that conducted by his father, this sale reduced the collection yet again.<sup>10</sup> Although no purchase records documenting Cotton III's acquisitions can be found in the archive, those additions that can be attributed to him reveal a particular interest in the work of Sir Joshua Reynolds, as well as the study of domestic antiquities. Cotton III published a study of the work of Reynolds as well as two further works on the cromlechs of Cornwall and Devon.



Figure 3: *William Cotton III Esq F.S.A (1794-1863)* By Stephen Poyntz Denning (1845) Permission Courtesy of Plymouth City Council Arts and Heritage Service.

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<sup>10</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, 1839 Sale Poster.

William Cotton III was responsible for relocating the collection from the London area to South Devon in 1830s where he died without issue in 1864. Prior to his death he donated the collection to the people of the three towns of Plymouth, Stonehouse and Devonport for their 'amusement and instruction'.<sup>11</sup> In doing so he guaranteed that the collection was preserved for posterity and ensured the legacy of the Cotton family by gifting their name to the collection. The terms of Cotton III's bequest stipulate that the collection must be kept intact and on permanent display and, therefore, accessible to the public at all times.<sup>12</sup> Until 1915 the collection was held at the Plymouth Proprietary Library where it was accessible for subscribers to the library. In 1915 oversight of the collection was transferred to the Plymouth City Corporation (now the City Council) by Parliamentary Act and for the last one hundred years it has been on display at Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery.

## Critical Historiography and the Cottonian Collection

In this section I provide a brief overview of the key concepts that foreground this thesis and recur throughout the course of the following six chapters. This thesis intersects with the body of literary and historical scholarship that examines the book collecting practices of the eighteenth century. The last forty years has witnessed a spate of studies examining print culture and which attempt to trace its rise, trends and evolutions. These divide into two main approaches: those that explore the history of the book and of reading through reception studies, and those that examine the mechanisms of the book trade – more specifically, the production, circulation and accessibility of books. As the first full-length study of the Cottonian Collection, this thesis is situated within the intersection of these two approaches to the study of book history. Its scrutiny of the book collecting practices of a late-eighteenth-century gentleman interrogates both the broader mechanics of the book trade – for example, the choice of bindings in relation to the aesthetics of the domestic library – and the response of Cotton II to individual works. This is done through an examination of empirical data and an understanding of the broader historiography of a period defined by ideological upheaval and revolutionary war. In the section that follows, I first establish the broader field tracing the evolution of studies of book history

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<sup>11</sup> *A Catalogue of the Pictures, Sketches by the Old Masters, Books, Prints, Etc., contained in the Cottonian Library, Plymouth* (Plymouth: Plymouth Public Library, 1854), p. ix.

<sup>12</sup> *A Catalogue of the Pictures, Sketches by the Old Masters, Books, Prints, Etc.*, (1854), p. ix.

in the last forty years, before moving to a discussion of the methodological challenges posed by the study of book collecting practices.

Book collecting in the eighteenth century formed part of a long tradition of collecting practices – encompassing the collection of art, natural history, and antiquities – dating back to the Renaissance period. In the eighteenth century collecting became endemic and embedded in British society.<sup>13</sup> This was a period defined by the formation of large Grand Tour collections, an interest in antiquarian studies, the foundation of the British Museum following Sir Hans Sloane’s gift of his natural history collection to the nation in 1756 and the emergence of public libraries. It was also a period that saw the act of collecting filter down into the lower strata of society. Once reserved for the aristocracy and gentry, collecting became a popular and accessible pastime for the middling classes. Collections were often regarded as vessels of knowledge whilst the collector was engaged in the enterprise of learning, or at least of amassing and displaying knowledge.<sup>14</sup> As the popularity of book collecting increased, so too could many of the same connoisseurial questions and concerns that drove the collecting of art and natural history now be applied to the formation of book collections.

More specifically, and crucially, in the context of my thesis, Barbara Benedict argues that book collecting and the practice of connoisseurship are intricately connected being two eighteenth-century phenomena that embody the political and cultural strain of the period.<sup>15</sup> Both generate similar questions and debates concerning the accessibility of the acquisition of knowledge, and the effect of taste and prevailing fashions on the practices of acquisition, preservation and disposal. Similarly, a study of both resonates with the key issues of the period and discussions of nationality and nationhood, global expansion, anthropologic investigation and imperial conquest, overseas and internal political conflict, and the economic development of an industrialised nation. The broader societal,

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<sup>13</sup> Frank Herrmann, *The English as Collectors: A Documentary Sourcebook* (New York: Ursus Press, 1997), p.8.

<sup>14</sup> Barbara M. Benedict. ‘Reading Collections: The Literary Discourse of Eighteenth-Century Libraries’, *Bookish Histories: Books, Libraries, and Commercial Modernity, 1700-1900* ed. by Ina Ferris and Paul Keen (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 169-197 (p.169).

<sup>15</sup> Barbara M. Benedict. ‘Reading Collections: The Literary Discourse of Eighteenth-Century Libraries’, p.169.

political and religious climate is an under-current throughout the study of book history studies and, whilst not always engaged with directly, its influence is frequently evident.

Benedict's adoption of a historicist approach to the study of print culture is not a new one. Since the 1960s, book historians have sought to understand the history of the book through its relation to the socio-economic and political conditions of the period. Donald McKenzie's study of the *Cambridge University Press, 1696-1712* is an exemplar of this approach. Despite the limitations of the surviving archival material related to the press, by locating the history of the press within an awareness of the broader trends and fashions of printing presses in the seventeenth century, McKenzie is able to navigate and overcome the restraints of the archive. In doing so, he not only offers an in-depth study of the formation and evolution of the press, but places its history within the broader rise of the publishing industry, even extending knowledge of the industry.<sup>16</sup> McKenzie's attempt to return historicism to the study of the book is further developed in his 'Bibliography and Sociology of Texts' in which he argues that there has been a shift from questions of authorial intention and textual authority to questions of dissemination and readership in relation to both economic and political perspectives.<sup>17</sup>

Jerome McGann further promulgates a historical approach to the study of literary works and the book, in opposition to New Criticism and its focused interpretation of literature. McGann's seminal *Beauty of Inflections* convincingly argues the case for the reintegration of socio-historical and philological methods with an aesthetic and ideological criticism of individual works; an approach he terms 'sociological poetics', whereby literary works are reunited with the social and historical contexts in which they were created.<sup>18</sup> His work argues that the production of the book was not simply a linguistic event. Rather, he views it as a cultural event which took place in a socio-historical space. The failure to take into account the broader context of the work and the community of people involved in its production and reception thus obscures a crucial element of book history.

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<sup>16</sup> Donald McKenzie, *Cambridge University Press, 1696-1712* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1966), pp. vii-xv.

<sup>17</sup> Donald McKenzie, *Bibliography and the Sociology of Texts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999; 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1984).

<sup>18</sup> Jerome McGann, *The Beauty of Inflections: Literary Investigations in Historical Method and Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 62.

Robert Darnton's *Business of the Enlightenment* further champions the historicist approach. He not only draws on historical contextualisation to make sense of the book trade itself, but argues that omitting the importance of the book from historical studies ignores the wealth of information that it offers in relation to understanding the society and culture of the Enlightenment.<sup>19</sup> This argument continues in his essay for the *Book History Reader* in which he outlines the model of production and circulation which he terms the 'communication circuit'.<sup>20</sup> This model, which passes from author to producer to consumer, was, he argues, effected by the social, economic, political and intellectual conditions of the time. In accordance with this argument, examination of book history cannot take place in a vacuum but rather 'the history of books must be international in scale and interdisciplinary in method.'<sup>21</sup> This is an approach that champions the study of print culture for the insight it offers into the society in which it was created and produced and, vice versa, the insight contextualisation provides about the production and reception of books.

The work of McKenzie, McGann, and Darnton in the 1970s and 80s paved the way for later studies which adopted this approach to the study of book history. For instance, James Raven's *Judging New Wealth* continues this examination of the relationship between the book trade (both as an economic enterprise and as a literary representation of society) and the emergence of a commercial society defined by new money, often acquired through mercantilism. Raven argues that what emerges are concerns about the deterioration of society through careless reading and collecting.<sup>22</sup> An increase in production and circulation led to the greater accessibility of books for a broader cross-section of society, whilst cheaper production costs resulted in the publication of titles perceived as holding minimal educational or cultural value. Furthermore, book collecting (along with other forms of collecting) was commonly regarded as a signifier of wealth and status. However, concerns about the quality of books being purchased and read, and

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<sup>19</sup> Robert Darnton, *The Business of Enlightenment: A Publishing History of the Encyclopédie, 1775-1800* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1979), pp. 1-4.

<sup>20</sup> Robert Darnton, 'What is the History of Books?', *Daedalus*, vol. 111 (1982), pp. 65-83; Robert Darnton, 'What is the History of Books?', *The Book History Reader* ed. by David Finkelstein; Alistair McCleery (London; New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 11.

<sup>21</sup> Darnton, 'What is the History of Books?', *The Books History Reader*, p. 22.

<sup>22</sup> James Raven, *Judging New Wealth: Popular Publishing and Responses to Commerce in England 1750-1800* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992).

the motives of the collector in doing so (collecting simply for display rather than self-education) resulted in further anxiety about the association between the book trade, new wealth and accusations of decadence and indulgence. Raven argues that these concerns were, in turn, bound up with anxieties about the effect of excessive consumerism on the British population and, ultimately, the strength of British colonial power.<sup>23</sup>

Likewise, William St Clair's study of *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* contributes an inter-disciplinary approach to book history, examining the cultural and commercial exchange between authors, publishers, editors and the reading public. St Clair focuses on the shaping influence of reading on the nation's culture offering a study of the emergence and habits of the reading nation. Although focusing on the Romantic period, St Clair's study has a wide berth taking in the previous centuries so as to trace the emergence of reading. His study also extends into the Victorian age in order to examine the long-term impact of the growth of readership. Drawing on a wealth of empirical data, St Clair presents reading as a symbol of polite society, but similarly one that was expanding in line with, and determined by, the pressures of a rapidly commercialising society.<sup>24</sup>

More recently, David Allan has brought the centrality of reading book history within the broader political, economic and societal conditions to the forefront of cultural studies. In his study *Making British Culture*, Allan argues that the cultural and intellectual life of England can hardly be considered '*terra incognita*' for the study of the book.<sup>25</sup> Rather, he argues that closely-related to any study of print culture are the surrounding factors: The creation and growth of a sizeable middle class, and a series of structural changes in the economy including the acceleration of overseas trade, the further commercialisation of agriculture, and from the 1750s the onset of full-blown industrialisation. Furthermore, it is necessary to look beyond the immediate British society to take into account British overseas growth and the perception at home of imperial conquest and dominance. The effect of this for the country's culture (including literary culture) was far-reaching. Allan

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<sup>23</sup> Raven, *Judging New Wealth*, pp. 157-182.

<sup>24</sup> William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

<sup>25</sup> David Allan, *Making British Culture: English Readers and the Scottish Enlightenment, 1740-1830* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 9.

argues that 'Its very nature was transformed. So too were public perceptions of both its scope and its significance. Indeed, the English increasingly gloried in their rapidly evolving culture, almost as much as in their political, economic and military triumphs.'<sup>26</sup>

Integral to this thesis are those studies which place the study of the book within an awareness of British international activity. Kristian Jensen's study of *Revolution and the Antiquarian Book* and the representation of incunabula within collections and collecting practices is one such study which traces the effects of events overseas, particularly the French Revolution, on the activity of British collectors. Jensen argues that 'Without losing sight of different cultural, economic, and political circumstances, [his work] seeks to explore a shared international marketplace where the aspirations of collectors, dealers, and scholars met, competed, were formed and reformed.'<sup>27</sup> His is an international approach to the study of book collecting, but also one which touches on Britain's relation with the French Revolution and ensuing conflict and the effect on collectors. The relationship between book collections and global events is further exemplified by Philip Connell's examination of the treatment and celebration of domestic authors in the late-eighteenth century. His study explores the principal role of print culture in the fostering of a national cultural heritage and identity in a period of growing nationalism and British dominance overseas.<sup>28</sup>

The importance of placing the history of the book within the socio-political context is further evident in the *The Practice and Representation of Reading in Reading in England* – a collection of essays edited by James Raven, Naomi Tadmor and Helen Small – which demonstrate that the history of reading cannot be viewed in a vacuum. This is an approach that posits print culture in relation to other lines of enquiry: gender, race, political and economic history and class. In doing so, these studies forge connections between the history of reading and the broader socio-political and economic conditions of the eighteenth century and, subsequently, determine the factors that both enabled and resulted from the emergence of print culture. More recently, further work has been

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<sup>26</sup> Allan, *Making British Culture: English Readers and the Scottish Enlightenment, 1740-1830*, p. 9.

<sup>27</sup> Kristian Jensen, *Revolution and the Antiquarian Book: Reshaping the Past, 1780-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> Philip Connell, 'Bibliomania: Book Collecting, Cultural Politics, and the Rise of Literary Heritage in Romantic Britain', *Representations*, 71 (2000), pp. 24-47.

conducted on these various lines of enquiry. For example, Isabel Rivers work on religious thought and language offers an insight into the use of published material in spreading theological viewpoints.<sup>29</sup> Whilst Mark Towsey's study of female readers contributes to a growing awareness of the role of women readers, frequently overlooked, in the rise of circulating libraries.<sup>30</sup> Whilst it is not necessarily within the scope of this study to engage with all of the divisions and lenses through which book history can be studied, an awareness of the possible lines of fruitful enquiry is important for understanding the history of the Cottonian Collection.

Examination of collecting practices through various lines of enquiries generates questions about consumption and display of books. For instance, questions of connoisseurship and decisions regarding titles to acquire, preserve for posterity and dispose of concealed concerns about indifferent and unguided reading and collecting practices. In the earlier part of the eighteenth century, criticism of uncontrolled virtuosos collecting simply for the sake of doing so and driven by a desire to hoard items with little true regard for their aesthetic merit saw collectors mocked in publications.<sup>31</sup> In the final decades of the eighteenth century, similar concerns resurfaced regarding the perils of unmoderated and undiscerning reading and, between 1770 and 1825, the dangers of obsessive bibliomaniacal collecting practices.<sup>32</sup> Readers who consumed literature with little thought or read in unsuitable environments were portrayed as dangerous readers. As Jacqueline Pearson argues, this form of reading, particularly by women or the lower classes, was portrayed as socially dangerous.<sup>33</sup> Likewise, the bibliomaniacal collector who purchased for the sake of fashion was equally as culpable of the crime of indiscriminate collecting.<sup>34</sup> This begs the question as to how connoisseurship responded

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<sup>29</sup> Isabel Rivers, 'Dissenting and Methodist Books of Practical Divinity', *Books and their Readers in Eighteenth-Century England* ed. by Isabel Rivers (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1982), pp. 127-164.

<sup>30</sup> Mark Towsey, 'Women as readers and writers', *The Cambridge Companion to Women's Writing, 1660-1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 24.

<sup>31</sup> Rosemary Sweet, *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past*, (London; New York: Hambledon and London, 2004), p. 9.

<sup>32</sup> Arnold Hunt, 'Private Libraries in the Age of Bibliomania', *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland*, ed. by Giles Mandelbrote and K.A. Manley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 438-458.

<sup>33</sup> Jacqueline Pearson, *Women's Reading in Britain, 1750-1835: A Dangerous Recreation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 170-174.

<sup>34</sup> James Raven, 'Debating Bibliomania and the Collection of Books in the Eighteenth Century', *Library & Information History*, 29 (2013), pp. 196-209.



to these concerns – an answer which this thesis seeks to explore through engagement with broader socio-political lines of enquiry.

Having highlighted the focus of this thesis as an intervention between reception studies and a history of the book trade, it is productive to draw on work that has examined the production, circulation and accessibility of books. As mentioned earlier in this section, Darnton's work in the 1980s put forward 'a communication circuit' which connected the role of the author with that of the reader, and the middle men involved in the process of book production.<sup>35</sup> In the last twenty years, the field has expanded to focus on those middle men who were responsible for the mechanics and nuts and bolts of the book trade including the commercial enterprises of booksellers, auction houses and editors, as well as the accessibility of print in coffee-shops, circulating and subscription libraries and the domestic book collection. John Feather's *The Commerce of Letters* further contributes to this field interrogating the supply chain that enabled the trade of books across Europe and linked the London markets with those on the continent.<sup>36</sup> A later study by Feather of the book trade and libraries explores the relationship between the mechanics of the trade and the accessibility of books.<sup>37</sup> Likewise, *Under the Hammer* offers a different approach to study of the book trade contributing a series of essays on the importance and role of the auction houses in facilitating a trade and fashion for second hand books and incunabula, particularly in the late-eighteenth century.<sup>38</sup> More recently, James Raven's *The Business of Books* – a study of the London book trade – has extensively demonstrated the link between the consumption of books and the physical processes of production, distribution and acquisition.<sup>39</sup>

As books became more affordable, their accessibility increased through private collections and publicly accessible libraries. Further studies have emerged examining how books were used in terms of aesthetic display. This includes studies of bindings,

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<sup>35</sup> Darnton, 'What is the History of Books?', *Daedalus*, p. 62.

<sup>36</sup> John Feather, 'The Commerce of Letters: The Study of the English Book Trade', *Eighteenth-century Studies*, 17 (1984), pp. 405-424.

<sup>37</sup> John Feather, 'The Book Trade and Libraries', *The Cambridge History of Books in Britain and Ireland*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 301-312.

<sup>38</sup> *Under the Hammer: Book Auctions since the Seventeenth Century*, ed. by Robin Myers, Michael Harris and Giles Mandelbrote (Newcastle; London: Oak Knoll Press; The British Library, 2001).

<sup>39</sup> James Raven, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade 1450-1850* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2007).

library design, the changing ways in which libraries were decorated and used, the distinction between private and public library usage and the emergence of domestic, coffee-house, circulating, and subscription libraries and working-class reading rooms. The study of publicly accessible libraries tends to focus on the sociability of libraries. James Raven's 'libraries for sociability' explores the changing notion of shared reading practices and the dichotomy between reading as a private and public act and part of the emergence of a public society.<sup>40</sup> The application of distinctions of class, gender, politics, religion applied to the study of the accessibility of books is evident in David Allan's *A Nation of Readers* and his study of the mechanics behind public borrowing libraries in Georgian England.<sup>41</sup> As Annika Bautz observes, acknowledgement of contemporary definitions of 'public libraries' is key to understanding of the way in which these public libraries operated.<sup>42</sup> Rather than later definitions of public as denoting free at the point of access, circulating and subscription public libraries often maintained distinctions of class and exclusivity charging membership fees or requiring letters of recommendations. This is further examined by Mark Towsey in his study of book use and sociability. Towsey comments on the mechanisms by which this 'lost library' culture facilitated reading practices, whilst simultaneously reinforcing existing social hierarchies by ensuring the exclusivity of membership and access to so-called 'public' libraries.<sup>43</sup>

The history of libraries is further enhanced by those studies that examine the private domestic libraries and its use. Published four decades ago, Mark Girouard's seminal study of the *English Country House* offers an insight into the display and function of the domestic library within the large aristocratic and landed gentry country retreats of some of eighteenth-century England's wealthiest families. His study of the function of the library within the country house has been further enhanced by the contributions of Clive Wainwright, James Raven and, later, M.H. Port who both investigate the growing trend in the latter part of the eighteenth century for the domestic library to become an extension

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<sup>40</sup> James Raven, 'Libraries for Sociability: The Advance of the Subscription Library', *The Cambridge History of Books in Britain and Ireland*, vol. 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 241-263.

<sup>41</sup> David Allan, *A Nation of Readers: The Lending Library in Georgian England* (London: British Library, 2008).

<sup>42</sup> Annika Bautz, 'The Foundation of the Plymouth Public Library: cultural status, philanthropy, and expanding readerships, 1810-1825', *Before the Public Library: Reading, Identity and Community in the Atlantic World, 1650-1850*, ed. by Mark Towsey and Kyle Roberts (Leiden: Brill, 2017), no pagination.

<sup>43</sup> Mark Towsey, 'Book Use and Sociability in Lost Libraries of the Eighteenth Century: Towards a Union Catalogue', *Lost Books: Reconstructing the Print World of Pre-Industrial Europe*, ed. by Flavia Bruni and Andrew Pettegree, (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2016), pp. 414-440.

of the family reception rooms as a location for music, dancing, painting and sewing, rather than scholarly pursuit. This in turn generated a market for library accoutrements as owners sought out soft furnishings and sophisticated mechanical furniture such as folding steps and reading chairs to create a more comfortable room.<sup>44</sup> However, as Giles Mandelbrote's study of the personal owners of books notes, whilst the library was, in some homes, a place of increased sociability, it often retained its scholarly purpose with the quality and presentation of the collection standing as a symbol of the family's status and pedigree.<sup>45</sup>

Most recently, Mark Purcell's much needed study of the evolution of the country house library has shed light on the styles of landed gentry collecting – distinct from that of the practices of the connoisseur – and the creation of hybrid and rambling collections which reflect the changing reading interests of the house's occupants across two hundred years, and those of their guests and visitors.<sup>46</sup> The role of the library is further discussed in Abigail Williams's 2017 study of *The Social Life of Books* which traces the forms of reading that took place in wealthy homes in the eighteenth century, and the role of the book in fostering sociability, drama recitals as well as religious piety and group domestic worship.<sup>47</sup> Likewise, Stephen Hague's recent study of the home of the city gentleman in the eighteenth century discusses the library and its function in the home of the newly wealthy, opposed to the landed gentry, and ideas of status that are bound up with the purchase and display of an impressive book collection. Building on earlier work by Raven, Hague presents an insight into the changing display, design and function of the domestic library of the upper middle classes.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1978); C. Wainwright, 'The Library as living room' in *Property of a Gentleman: The Formation, Organization and Dispersal of the Private Library 1620-1920*, ed. by Robin Myers and M. Harris (Winchester, 1991); M. H. Port, 'Library Architecture and Interiors', *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland*, ed. by Giles Mandelbrote and K.A. Manley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 459-478; James Raven, 'From promotion to proscription: arrangements for reading and eighteenth-century libraries', in *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, ed. by James Raven Helen Small and Naomi Tadmor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996);

<sup>45</sup> Giles Mandelbrote 'Personal Owners of Books', *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland*, ed. by Giles Mandelbrote and K.A. Manley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 173-189.

<sup>46</sup> Mark Purcell, *The Country House Library* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2017).

<sup>47</sup> Abigail Williams, *The Social Life of Books: Reading Together in the Eighteenth-Century Home* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2017).

<sup>48</sup> Stephen Hague, *The Gentleman's House in the British Atlantic World 1680-1780* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

A recurring theme throughout studies of book history and print cultures discussed in this chapter is the lack of reliable archival resources. This is a challenge shared by the majority of those who seek to determine the reception, interpretation, use, and understanding of books by readers in the eighteenth century. The challenges posed by obtaining detailed archival remains which provide a direct access to readers' thoughts complicates these studies. Similar concerns and limitations of the archive were encountered in the process of this study. Firstly, the archival remains documenting the history of the Cottonian Collection are of a limited capacity and do not offer an exhaustive insight into the history of the collection. Secondly, amongst the material that does survive, there is minimal evidence of collectors' direct engagement with the collection. Those correspondence that do survive are predominantly the letters of Charles Rogers, but only rarely make passing reference to the titles in the library. As such, it is difficult to discern the reading habits and thoughts of the collectors who formed the Cottonian from the surviving archival material. In order to overcome this challenge, I looked to those scholars who have successfully mediated this process. My attempt to overcome the limitations of the archive adopted two main strategies. Firstly, the generation of empirical data. Secondly, the contextualisation of the study so as to make educated and well-grounded theories based on strong comparative evidence.

The generation of empirical data as an approach is exemplified by James Raven's *The Business of Books*. His study of the trade itself draws upon data produced from archival research to re-create a history of the mechanics behind the production and circulation of books. Attempts to produce empirical data are reliant upon the analysis of archival material – book and auction catalogues, the correspondence of collectors and readers, and account books. These can often be hard to come by and, as Raven notes, the 'history of the book trade is severely handicapped by the paucity of critical material.'<sup>49</sup> Likewise, Kristian Jensen draws upon empirical data and collectors' expenditure on incunabula and the costs of works sold in his study of the *Revolution and the Antiquarian Book*. In doing so, he traces the rise and decline of incunabula and the prices for which it was sold and purchased. These trends are then mapped onto an awareness of the broader events of the

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<sup>49</sup> Raven, *Business of Books*, p. 347.

period in order to determine a rationale and correlation between the empirical data produced and historical events that affected the popularity of incunabula.

Looking to these studies, this investigation of the Cottonian Collection required the generation of statistical information in order to foster an understanding of the Cottonian Collection and the actions of the collectors. Firstly, in order to trace the changes in the contents of the collection over the last three hundred years, it involved a process of compare and contrast between Robert Townson's catalogue of books, Charles Rogers' purchase records, the 1801 sale catalogue, William Cotton II's account book and the current catalogue held by the museum. This highlighted those works which remained to this day, who they were purchased by, and those which have since disappeared. This process did not, however, account for the entirety of the library due to the paucity of the collectors' records. A second empirical approach was used in an attempt to determine a correlation between the initial data produced and the surviving collection. This involved the division of the current catalogue and the surviving 1801 sale catalogue into core themes of subject matter. This in itself revealed the substantial holdings of religious, travel, antiquarian, historical, and philosophical literature. Having divided the catalogue into this broad sub-divisions, it became possible through an examination of publication dates, a survey of bindings and cross-referencing with the surviving purchase records of the collectors to begin to trace personal preferences and interests of the individual owners of the collectors.

However, the generation of empirical data does not alleviate the entirety of the limitations faced by book historians when dealing with scarce archival resources and the difficulty of interpreting that material that does exist. Mark Towsey in his work on book use and sociability acknowledges the difficulty of extracting reader responses to their reading material from surviving book catalogues. Whilst catalogues provide an overview of titles that were stocked by a library – its presence indicating its popularity, perhaps – catalogues offer little to no evidence of the manner in which the book was used, how its contents were responded to or if the work was read at all.<sup>50</sup> The study of marginalia offers one such means of navigating the difficulty posed by attempts to trace a readers'

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<sup>50</sup> Mark Towsey 'Book Use and Sociability in Lost Libraries of the Eighteenth-Century: Towards a Union Catalogue', *Lost Book: Reconstructing the Print World of Pre-Industrial Europe*, pp. 414-440.

interpretation of a text. William Sherman's recent study of Renaissance readers draws heavily on marginalia as a means of mapping reader engagement with works.<sup>51</sup> Whilst minimal marginalia exist in those works held in the Cottonian, its lack is, of itself, a means of harnessing some indication of the collectors' perception of the library and its contents, and their attitude and response towards the collection and their use of it.

One such means of alleviating the impact of this is to return to the contextualisation of the book. McKenzie's study of the *Cambridge University Press 1696-1712* is limited by the dates of the archival remains which McKenzie had access to. However, in order to mitigate the limitations of this, the narrative glances both before and after this short span of years in order to establish a context for the activities of the Press or to provide grounds for comparison. In doing so, it is possible to draw comparisons with other printing presses in order to place the Cambridge Press in the broader context of the book trade and highlight both conformity and diversion from nationwide pattern.<sup>52</sup> This is a method adopted by others including James Raven, Kristian Jensen and William St Clair who, when faced with gaps in the archive, have convincingly turned to historical contextualisation, as discussed earlier in this section, to draw comparisons and fill these gaps by making well-grounded and historically sound estimations of the reception of works.

Therefore, by generating and conducting an analysis of empirical data, this thesis develops an in-depth understanding of the ways in which gentlemanly collecting practices (examined through the treatment of the Cottonian Collection) intersect with the established field of eighteenth-century print culture. In doing so, three key lines of enquiry are adopted: display of the collection and concepts of gentlemanly status, Enlightenment cosmopolitanism and national character, and changing Anglican thought in the eighteenth century. As a consequence, this thesis places the Cottonian Collection within the broader socio-political and economic landscape of a century defined by the growth of commerce and trade, repeated war with European competitors, ideological upheaval following the loss of the American colonies and French Revolution, and episodes of domestic social unrest. Attention now turns to the research aims and outline of this thesis.

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<sup>51</sup> William Sherman, *Used Books: Marking Readers in Renaissance England* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008)

<sup>52</sup> McKenzie, *Cambridge University Press*, p. 151-152.

## Research Aims and Thesis Outline

This thesis is guided by three research aims that drive the focus of my research and are touched upon in each of the following six chapters.

The primary aim of this thesis is to interrogate the history of the book and archival holdings of the Cottonian Collection and to locate them in the broader history of book collecting practices between 1791 and 1816. Despite the collection's status as a national designated collection, no full-length study of the collection has been conducted, with only a handful of studies exploring the contents of the art holdings. This thesis responds to this imbalance by conducting a thorough examination of the history of the collection and shifting focus away from the art holdings to the book and archival contents of the collection. The archive contains an extensive number of documents related to the formation of the collection. These include the collectors' account books, purchase records, correspondence, and documents related to business transactions. The archive has been catalogued in a rudimentary manner however no formal cataloguing system exists. In mining the archive, my thesis generates empirical data based on the limited surviving purchase lists, sale catalogues and account books of Charles Rogers and William Cotton II.

The second aim of this study is to address the lack of academic examination of the book holdings through an exploration of the curatorial practices of William Cotton II. Today the narrative of the collection adopted by the museum focuses primarily on the actions of Charles Rogers between 1741 and 1784 and William Cotton III's donation of the collection to the city in 1853. William Cotton II's treatment of the collection is frequently overlooked. Any acknowledgement of his period of custodianship focuses on the sales of 1799 and 1801. Whilst the sales have never been the subject of an academic investigation until this thesis, an oral tradition has developed around the sales. Explanations for Cotton II's actions range from merely being the actions of an indifferent owner to the less salubrious suggestion that his actions were finically motivated, perhaps due to a series of gambling debts.

As I demonstrate over the course of this thesis, the tendency to dismiss Cotton II's custodianship and actions as those of a philistine fails to take into account the broader implications of his curatorship. Whilst these actions irreparably reduced the holdings of the collection, reducing his period of custodianship to one of merely disposal prevents a more thorough consideration of his broader collecting practices. Throughout the twenty-five years of his custodianship he continued to purchase books, although never recovering anywhere near the number sold, and invested in the display of the collection. He also chose to retain over two thousand volumes which suggests that the choice of books to sell and which to keep was guided by some form of rationale. Overlooking the significance of Cotton II's custodianship therefore inhibits understanding of a significant moment in the collection's history and prevents the collection being located in the broader patterns of book collecting during this period.

The third research aim of this thesis is to embed the history of the national designated Cottonian Collection within an understanding of the broader book collecting practices of the eighteenth century. As I discuss in the introduction to this thesis, the study of book collecting is enhanced when examined through additional lines of enquiry. Therefore, in order to embed the history of the Cottonian Collection within the broader book collecting practices of the period, I examine the treatment of the holdings through three central lenses: the evolving display of the collection and ideas of gentlemanly status and identity, as demonstrated through the aesthetic presentation of the collection; a study of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism and mercantile imperialism and the extent to which this crafted a sense of a national character, and, subsequently, the effect of this character on Cotton II's curation of the collection; and finally, the evolution of Anglicanism during the eighteenth century and the effect that a shift in the mainstream Church from latitudinarianism to Anglican Evangelicalism had on the collection. In doing so, this thesis argues that the study of the Cottonian Collection aids understanding of the book trade in the period of 1791 to 1816, and demonstrates the extent to which the book trade was shaped by the broader socio-political and religious nature of the period.

Having outlined the history of the collection and the research aims themselves, I now turn to an outline of the thesis itself. Chapters One and Two address the history of the display of the collection and explore the association between its evolving display and concepts of



gentlemanly status and identity. I review the collection's history prior to Cotton II's inheritance in Chapter One considering how the nature of its display evolved as the size of the collection grew and its purpose shifted. Chapter Two builds on the preceding chapter to examine Cotton II's investment in the display of the collection. In light of the broader fashions of library function and decoration of the period, it considers how his choice of interior decoration reflected his engagement with and his attitude towards his inherited collection. Chapters Three and Four examine the collection through an exploration of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism. Focusing on how Enlightenment cosmopolitanism would have been understood and experienced in the eighteenth century, this pair of chapters work in tandem to consider the effect of mercantile imperialism on metropolitan society inhabited by the Cottonian Collectors. In doing so, they seek to determine the effect that the shift from a polite cosmopolitan outlook towards the more nationalistic atmosphere of the 1780s and 1790s affected Cotton II's curation of the collection. The final pair of chapters (Five and Six) consider the evolution of Anglicanism over the course of the eighteenth century. I trace the change in mainstream Anglican thought during the period of the Cottonian's history and the ways in which religion was experienced by the collection's custodians. I then consider the effects of the rise of Anglican Evangelicalism in the 1790s on Cotton II's curation of the collection. In the conclusion I review the findings of this thesis in relation to the research aims, as discussed above.

# Chapter One: Constructing a Gentleman's Library

## Introduction

In the introduction to this thesis I situated the Cottonian Collection's history within the broader study of connoisseurship and book collecting practices of the eighteenth century. The following two chapters work together to trace the changing manner in which the Cottonian Collection was displayed by its custodians between 1690 and 1816. The first chapter of this pair examines the rise of private book collecting and display in the domestic library prior to William Cotton II's inheritance of the collection. Opening with an examination of the book collecting practices of Cotton II's predecessors between 1690 and 1791, this first chapter outlines the collection's foundations on characteristically eighteenth-century gentlemanly purchases of classical philosophy and Italian Renaissance literature. The chapter then moves to address the changing display of the collection in the domestic setting of William and Robert Townson and Charles Rogers' central London home. In doing so, this chapter argues that the early creation of a library by the Townsons and Rogers was, first and foremost, an Enlightenment tool for learning and the acquisition of knowledge thereby reinforcing the gentlemanly status of its middle-class owners. The succeeding chapter builds on this conclusion to examine Cotton II's style of book collecting – particularly in relation to the sales of 1799 and 1801 – and the manner in which he chose to display his inherited collection.

## The Rise of the Private Book Collection, 1690-1784

In the last thirty years' scholars of print culture and book historians have traced the emergence of book collections and libraries to the medieval period when universities and monasteries formed institutional collections.<sup>79</sup> Private book collecting by individuals is

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<sup>79</sup> Teresa Webber, 'Monastic and Cathedral Book Collections in the Late Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries', *The Cambridge History of Libraries to 1640*, vol. 1, ed by Elisabeth Leedham-Green (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 109-125; Roger Lovatt, 'College and University Book Collection Libraries', *The Cambridge History of Libraries to 1640*, vol. 1, ed by Elisabeth Leedham-Green (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 152-177.

not thought to have developed until the Renaissance when the aristocracy began to construct domestic libraries or book rooms to house their collections.<sup>80</sup> However, it was not until the late-seventeenth century that book collecting became a readily available and accessible pastime for the gentry and, increasingly, the growing metropolitan middle classes and urban elite. From the late-seventeenth century onwards prominent figures such as Samuel Pepys, the diarist (1633-1703); Robert Harley, the first Earl of Oxford (1661-1724); and his son, Edward Harley (1689-1741); and Sir Hans Sloane (1660-1753), whose collection was bequeathed to the nation, were purchasing books in large quantities and forming their own private book collections.<sup>81</sup> The actions of these prominent, wealthy men helped to establish the fashion for book collecting and paved the way for men such as Robert and William Townson who began to form their own modest collections.

Increased and cheaper production of books, technological improvement in the printing industry and the emergence of a metropolitan middle class with disposable income all contributed to improving the accessibility of books and the formation of the private library. Whilst the practice of reading amongst women did increase over the course of the eighteenth century, serious book collecting remained predominantly the pastime of the gentleman.<sup>82</sup> As the popularity of book collecting amongst middle-class newly wealthy gentlemen developed, so too did the act of collecting adopt a twofold purpose. On the one hand it was a practical means of acquiring knowledge for the self-made (and largely self-educated) gentleman wishing to imitate an aristocratic society in which gentlemanliness

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<sup>80</sup> Pamela Selwyn; David Selwyn, “‘The Profession of a Gentleman:’ Books for the gentry and the nobility (c. 1560-1640)”, *The Cambridge History of Libraries to 1640*, vol. 1, ed by Elisabeth Leedham-Green (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 489-519.

<sup>81</sup> Mandelbrote, ‘Personal owners of books’, *The Cambridge History of Libraries in Britain and Ireland, 1640-1850*, p. 186.

<sup>82</sup> Whilst it is not within the scope of my study to examine the rise of women’s reading habits, it should be noted that the number of female readers increased over the course of the eighteenth-century. Despite this, there are few examples of women collecting on the scale or with the seriousness with which many gentlemen collectors participated. Those women who did build their own libraries were amongst the wealthiest women in the country. As Mark Towsey concurs, family wealth dictated female reading habits. Wealthy women such as Mary Wortley Montagu (1689-1762), Hester Thrale (1741-1821) and Elizabeth Vesey (1715-91) could afford to build their own library collections, as evidenced by the catalogues they left behind. However, the majority of women from professional, clerical and landed backgrounds (women like the female relatives of the Cottonian men) were forced to rely on the books purchased by their male relatives, thus making it difficult to discern those books that appealed to women within the family library. See: Mark Towsey, ‘Women as Readers and Writers’, *The Cambridge Companion to Women’s Writing, 1660-1789* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 24. William St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 242-245.

was often associated with learning. In a period now regarded as the age of Enlightenment, the growth of the book trade offered opportunities for men of relatively modest means, such as the Townsons, who had been 'gripped by intellectual curiosity or religious enthusiasm' to form their own book collections.<sup>83</sup> Secondly, collecting and the acquisition of books as material evidence of gentlemanliness provided a means for the emerging, and often socially insecure, middle classes to acquire a tangible reinforcement of their social status and wealth. Giles Mandelbrote argues that 'the exercise of personal choice in forming a library was a means of defining individuality and expressing aspirations, as well as offering opportunities for competition and emulation.'<sup>84</sup> For Cotton II's predecessors, the motivation that fuelled their desire to amass a library of books likely stemmed from a culmination of these factors – the desire for knowledge, wealth and status, whilst the influence and weighting of these factors likely varied between the individual collectors.

Robert Townson's formation of the foundations of the Cottonian Collection in the mid-to-late-seventeenth century was likely to have been largely inspired by what Peter Earle terms, the middle stations' thirst for knowledge and self-improvement.<sup>85</sup> The obsessive desire to acquire books based purely on the desirability of their titles or their provenance (a desire associated with bibliomania) was a phenomenon that was not seen until the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. For much of the seventeenth century, however, books were celebrated and amassed for their 'practical usefulness' rather than their aesthetic or monetary value, although this is not to say that collectors were impartial to the appearance of their book collection.<sup>86</sup> There were, of course, those who wanted their books bound in ornate bindings or who set out to amass large libraries. However, for the vast majority of collectors in the seventeenth century, it was the contents of the books themselves and knowledge that they contained which fuelled their passion for collecting.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Mandelbrote, 'Personal Owners of Books', p.178.

<sup>84</sup> Mandelbrote, 'Personal Owners of Books', p. 184.

<sup>85</sup> Peter Earle, *The making of the English middle class: Business, Society and Family life in London, 1660-1730* (London: Methuen, 1989), p. 10.

<sup>86</sup> David Pearson, 'The English Private Library in the Seventeenth century', *The Library: The transactions of the bibliographical society*, 4 (2012), pp. 379-399 (p.387).

<sup>87</sup> Pearson, 'The English Private Library in the Seventeenth Century', p.387.

Today scant archival evidence survives documenting the life of Robert Townson. However, that which does remain, namely his *Catalogue of my Bookes* (1705), creates the impression of a middle-class, professional man who was largely self-educated and keen to keep abreast of the theological, philosophical and scientific discourse of the period. In keeping with other gentleman collectors of the seventeenth century, Townson's book collecting was not driven by purely superficial reasons, but rather stemmed from an ideal that originated during the Renaissance; an ideal that associated 'the many-sided humane thinker with a well-stocked head and a better stocked library'.<sup>88</sup> As his preference for plain, hard-wearing and modest bindings suggests, his was a library that was built to further the education of its owner not impress visitors.

In his *Catalogue of my Bookes*, Townson leaves a lasting record of the scope and size of his library as it stood in 1705. According to David Pearson's survey, the average upper middle-class gentleman's library in the seventeenth century was comprised of at least one half theological works, with the remaining half covering the broad ranging themes of history, literature, travel, Classics, science, natural history, medicine and law.<sup>89</sup> In 1705 Townson's library deviated slightly from Pearson's study of the average library with just over two-thirds of his collection populated by theological tracts. Of these, a significant proportion were penned by latitudinarian clergymen and, whilst the examination of these works will take place in Chapter Five, it suffices to say now that their presence in the collection is not inconsistent with the broader rationalist interests of the collection.

The remaining third of Townson's book purchases broadly conforms to expectation. Townson's collection contained popular works by notable thinkers of the day such as Thomas Hobbes' *Leviathan* (1651) and two editions of *Humane Nature* published in 1651 and 1672. Alongside these could be found the philosopher John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* (1693) in which Locke laid out his treatise on the education of the gentleman, along with various works by Lord Francis Bacon including the *Advancement of Learning* (1651) and *Natural History* (1670). Scientific progress is also represented in

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<sup>88</sup> Gilbert Highet, *The Classical Tradition: Greek and Roman influences on Western Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 82-83.

<sup>89</sup> Pearson, 'The English Private Library in the Seventeenth Century', p. 383.

the form of Robert Boyle's *Experimentall Philosophie* (1664).<sup>90</sup> When considered in their entirety, Robert Townson's purchases are reflective of an Enlightenment gentleman whose library functioned as his means of acquiring knowledge and understanding the world around him.

The Cottonian under Robert Townson was, therefore, first and foremost a working library. Indeed, throughout its history the Cottonian has been used as a scholarly resource for research and the acquisition of knowledge (and remains so to this day).<sup>91</sup> It was only as the collection expanded under the direction of William Townson and then Charles Rogers to incorporate prints, drawings and paintings that the collection began to be highly-regarded for both its appearance and its functionality as a resource for learning and study. By the period of Cotton II and Cotton III's custodianship, both collectors invested heavily in the display of the collection at their homes ensuring that the library was displayed in an opulent and fashionable manner.<sup>92</sup>

The attention paid to the display of the collection (particularly from the mid-eighteenth century onwards) is not surprising. Despite their functionality, books have been regarded as indicators of wealth and status throughout history.<sup>93</sup> The formation of a private library, therefore, whilst historically regarded as primarily used for the education of its owner and their family, was also a means for the gentleman collector to reinforce his wealth, status, respectability and the legitimacy of his social position. This was particularly true for the middling sorts who looked to material goods to reinforce their position within eighteenth-century English society.<sup>94</sup> As Amanda Vickery notes, 'gentility found its richest expression in objects'.<sup>95</sup> Books, along with fine art and other expensive material

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<sup>90</sup> Titles and their spelling of works appear here as they are recorded by Robert Townson in his catalogue of books.

<sup>91</sup> Throughout its history the Rogers-Cotton family record using the collection for scholarly endeavour. For example, Rogers' correspondence records enquiries to consult the prints, drawings and books within the collection, as well as Rogers' own use of the collection to contribute to proceedings at the Society of Antiquaries. Furthermore, Cotton III records in his *Reminiscences* the family gathering in the library at Balham Hill House on red letter days to study the prints within the collection. Plymouth, Cottonian Collection, MS Correspondence of Charles Rogers, 345; Bodleian, Cotton and Hudson papers, MS Eng. D. 3551.

<sup>92</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Reminiscences of William Cotton III; Plymouth Cottonian Collection Archive, Image of William Cotton III at Leatherhead.

<sup>93</sup> Raven, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade 1450-1850*, p. 101.

<sup>94</sup> Stephen Hague, *The Gentleman's House in the Atlantic world 1680-1780*, p. 97.

<sup>95</sup> Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter: Women's Lives in Georgian England* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1998), p. 229.

objects, were important signifiers of wealth. The effectiveness of materialism in reinforcing status and facilitating interaction between social classes (namely the upper and middle classes) is evident in the way in which Rogers', through discussions regarding his collection, is able to engage in correspondence with notable figures such as Horace Walpole and the Whig politician, Daniel Wray.<sup>96</sup> Largely due to the wealth of the art holdings that developed under Rogers, ownership of the Cottonian Collection bestowed on its custodians a sense of pedigree and prestige which men of a similar social position, but lacking enviable collections, would not have experienced. This was a sense of prestige and pedigree that Cotton II, as I will discuss in the subsequent chapter, respects and reinforces in his display of the collection.

Robert Townson's initial rather modest purchases were dwarfed by the sheer number of acquisitions made by Charles Rogers between 1739 and 1783. In contrast with Robert Townson, Rogers engaged in a style of book collecting that encompassed a greater variety of subject matter from philosophy, antiquarian studies, and theology through to plays, periodicals and the theory of art. Over the forty years of his custodianship, Rogers purchased thousands of objects, which he recorded in his meticulous purchase records, inflating the collection to over twenty-five thousand individual objects.<sup>97</sup> Many of these purchases were books and he acquired new works, as well as the artwork that was his true passion and for which the collection is more widely known, on a near weekly basis. Often his accounts record him making multiple purchases on the same day regularly spending large sums of money expanding and crafting the collection to his tastes.<sup>98</sup>

Rogers' collecting tendencies are best exemplified in his acquisition of multiple editions of the same works. For instance, Rogers purchased three copies of Samuel Butler's mock heroic poem, *Hubdras*, including one edition with prints by the artist, William Hogarth.<sup>99</sup> In this instance, Rogers was not motivated primarily by the textual contents of the work as there are minimal editorial differences between the works. Rather, his acquisition of three separate editions was likely based on the illustrations (an edition including

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<sup>96</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Correspondence of Charles Rogers, 345.

<sup>97</sup> This is an estimated figure calculated from Rogers' purchase lists, the sale catalogues and the number of items contained in the collection today. Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Rogers' purchase records, 359; Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Sale catalogues, 1799 and 1801.

<sup>98</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Charles Rogers' purchase records, 359.

<sup>99</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Charles Rogers' purchase records, 359.

illustrations by Hogarth would have been enticing to Rogers as a collector of prints), the quality of the edition or paper, or the name of the editor. Writing to his friend Charles Wollaston in 1748, Rogers observes that ‘contrary to the usual Custom, I buy Books to look at and Prints to study’.<sup>100</sup> This off-hand comment in a congenial letter to a friend should not be misinterpreted and taken as evidence that Rogers had no interest in the contents of the books he purchased. On the contrary, he relied on them heavily in order to make a name for himself within the Society of Antiquaries.<sup>101</sup> However, his passing comment, combined with his purchase of multiple editions of the same works, and his interest in the appearance of his library (including commissioning expensive bookcases to store and display his purchases) indicates that the purpose of the collection for Rogers was twofold – both as an educational resource and for the aesthetic enjoyment obtained from seeing the works displayed.

Rogers’ particular passion for Classical and Italian Renaissance literature and art was part of a broader trend for all things Italian sweeping across eighteenth-century England.<sup>102</sup> The frontispiece of the 1799 Cottonian sale catalogue lists just some of the artists whose works were being auctioned including prominent Italian High Renaissance artists such as Raphael (1483-1520), Michelangelo (1475-1564), Julio Romano (1499-1546) and Antonio da Correggio (1489-1534). Later Italian Mannerist and Baroque artists are also well-represented at the sale including Polidoro da Caravaggio (1499-1543), Guido Renia (1575-1642), and The Carracci brothers – Annibale (1560-1609), Agostino (1557-1602), Ludovico (1555-1619).<sup>103</sup> Rogers was renowned for his knowledge of Italian art and his refined tastes, as the preface to the 1799 sale catalogue states:

Though Mr. Rogers has been dead above fifteenth years, he is still in the recollection of the older connoisseurs, as one of the ablest judges, in his time, of whatever relates to the *Fine Arts*, and particularly of the DESIGNS OF THE

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<sup>100</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Correspondence of Charles Rogers, 345. Letter to Charles Wollaston, 26/2/1748.

<sup>101</sup> Rogers writes a number of papers for the Society of Antiquaries’ journal, *Archaeologia*, on the subject of the antiquity of horse shoes, masks from Mosquito Shore and ancient styles of printing. *The Gentleman’s Magazine, and Historical Chronicle* (1784), p. 160.

<sup>102</sup> J.R. Hale, *England and the Italian Renaissance: The Growth of Interest in its History and Art* (Malden, M.A.: Blackwell, 2005), p. 29.

<sup>103</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS 1799 Sale Catalogue.



GREAT MASTERS: and this indeed he has sufficiently evinced by his capital work of imitation, which has long been before the public.<sup>104</sup>

Collecting prints, drawings and paintings was, above all, Rogers' passion. Despite never travelling abroad himself, he was able, through the auction rooms of London and the courier services of his friends, to amass fine examples of Italian Renaissance art and build a prestigious collection.<sup>105</sup>

However, his interest in Italy stretched beyond fine art. During his period of custodianship, Italy came to be heavily represented in the collection through his purchase of Classical Ancient Roman philosophy, the works of Italian Renaissance writers, and contemporary titles on the antiquities and history of ancient Rome. Under the direction of Rogers, the Cottonian evolved into a 'Classical library', defined by Arnold Hunt as a library that 'concentrated on the canonical works of Greek and Latin literature, often formed part of a larger classical collection encompassing pictures, drawings, prints and sculptures, many of them brought back from Italy by English travellers on Grand Tour.'<sup>106</sup> Whilst Rogers never travelled abroad, under his influence the collection grew to emulate those formed by veterans of the Grand Tour. Rogers' correspondence is littered with requests to friends on the continent to send home items, predominantly prints and drawings, from the studios of Italy.<sup>107</sup>

Rogers' emphasis on Classicism and the Italian Renaissance writers reflects a preference in the mid-eighteenth century for Latin works produced by Roman philosophers in the classical period. Latin (and Greek, although to a lesser extent) classicism was often perceived as the highest form of culture, followed by Italian literature before French, Spanish and the other romance languages descended from Latin.<sup>108</sup> It is not surprising to find such a wealth of Greek and Roman classical authors in Rogers collection. Cicero, Seneca, Plato, Homer, Ovid were all required reading for men of the aristocracy and

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<sup>104</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS 1799 Sale Catalogue, Frontispiece.

<sup>105</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Correspondence of Charles Rogers, 345. Letter from Horatio Paul, 7/11/1753, 5/1/1754, 10/7/1755, 11/2/1756, Letter from W. Adams, 15/10/1757; Charles Towley, 12/1/1773.

<sup>106</sup> Hunt, 'Private Libraries in the Age of Bibliomania', p. 439.

<sup>107</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection, MS Correspondence of Charles Rogers, 345. Letters to Horatio Paul, 13/6/1754, 29/9/1755, 5/4/1776

<sup>108</sup> Hunt, 'Private Libraries in the Age of Bibliomania', p. 439.

gentry, a trend which filtered down to the socially aspiring middling sorts. Knowledge of the work of the classical authors, but also their lives, and their political and philosophical stance all became standard practice for polite gentleman in eighteenth-century England. In his *Observations on the Greek and Roman classics in a series of letters to a young nobleman* (1751), a work purchased by Rogers in 1766, Joseph Baretti recommends young gentlemen study Latin and Greek texts by authors such as Homer, Longius, Hesiod, Pindar, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Socrates and Aristophanes, all of whom can be found within the Cottonian Collection.<sup>109</sup>

Much has been written on the preference for ancient Roman Republican models in the eighteenth century. Philip Ayres in his study of the idea of Rome in the eighteenth century attributes the popularity and interest in Roman heritage, above that of ancient Greek, in the first half of the eighteenth century to political conveniences and class affinities.<sup>110</sup> The Roman Republican state had been celebrated for centuries prior to the eighteenth century for its superiority to the despotic rule of Emperors or tyrants, and for the liberty, honour and responsibility that it fostered in its people. Following the 1688 Glorious Revolution, philosophical and political commentators increasingly drew comparison between the Roman Republic's emphasis on liberty, civic virtue – a form of allegiance to the state and its people that transcended individual interests and fostered social harmony – and its mixed constitution and the British state emerging following the Revolution.<sup>111</sup> The study of classical authors, who celebrated liberty and civic virtue and lamented its loss following the Republic's transition into an Empire, were particularly important reading for eighteenth-century gentlemen inhabiting metropolitan London in a period of growing empire and British imperial conquest – as will be discussed in Chapter Three. Rogers' collection of works by Tacitus, Plutarch, Livy, Cicero, Marcus Aurelius – all authors who commented on the importance of civic virtue and liberty – reflects the required reading of polite gentleman and similarly an interest in contemporary allusions

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<sup>109</sup> Joseph Baretti, *Observations on the Greeks and Roman Classics in a series of Letters to a Young Nobleman. Now published for the use of Gentleman at the University, and those who may have Occasion to speak in Public. To which are added, Remarks on the Italian Language and Writers* (London, 1751).

<sup>110</sup> Philip Ayres, *Classical Culture and the Idea of Rome in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 3.

<sup>111</sup> Edward G. Andrew, *Imperial Republics: Revolution, war and Territorial Expansion from the English Civil War to the French Revolution* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2011), pp.53-56; Ayres, *Classical Culture*, p. 3.

between ancient Rome and the society in which Rogers inhabited. Whilst ancient Greek authors – Plato, Aristotle, Socrates amongst others – continued to be read and collected, it was not until the second half of the eighteenth century that the preference for Greek taste rose above that for Roman.<sup>112</sup>

Writing anonymously in *The Tatler*, Addison declares ‘It is impossible to read a page in Plato, Tully, and a thousand other ancient moralists, without being a greater and better man for it.’<sup>113</sup> Indeed, the improving quality of a knowledge of classical authors was well-established by the mid-century. Rogers, as a self-made man, frequently drops classical references and quotes into his correspondence (the recipients of which would have likely understood and known his references) thus demonstrating his gentlemanly classical learning.<sup>114</sup> For Rogers, to quote from Cicero and Plato would have been merely a matter of course. Rogers’ was not alone in amassing a collection dominated by classical literature and references to Southern Europe. Comparisons can be drawn between the style of collecting engaged in by Rogers and that of other mid-eighteenth century collectors. The catalogue of the collection formed by the English bibliophile, Revd. Thomas Crofts (1722-81), documents numerous similarities with Rogers’ catalogue including a concentration of Classical authors and Italian literature.<sup>115</sup>

Rogers’ library, rich in the works of prominent fourteenth-and-fifteenth-century Italian Renaissance poets and thinkers, complimented his art purchases. In much the same way that Renaissance art was held up as an exemplar of taste in the eighteenth century, the Italian language and literature was celebrated and perceived as a ‘herald of modernity’. It was the first language to have emerged in the early Renaissance out of the ‘wreckage of the dark ages’ that followed the collapse of the Roman Empire. Italy, as the epicentre of the Renaissance in the fourteenth century, was the first place in which Classical culture was revived and Italian was the first European language to have been ‘restored to

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<sup>112</sup> Constanze Güthenke *Placing Modern Greece: The Dynamics of Romantic Hellenism, 1770-1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) p.6.

<sup>113</sup> *The Tatler*, 17<sup>th</sup> December 1709.

<sup>114</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Correspondence of Charles Rogers, 345. Letter to Francis Wollaston, 21/01/1749; Letter to Hugh, Lord Willoughby of Parham, 16/02/1750; Letter from Charles Wollaston to Charles Rogers, April 1750.

<sup>115</sup> Hunt, ‘Private Libraries in the Age of Bibliomania’, p. 440.

something approaching classical purity.<sup>116</sup> The idea of Italian society and language as the most refined and polished is captured in one of Rogers' most enchanting purchases, a pair of wooden candlesticks by Agostini Carlini. Purchased by Rogers, the two candlesticks were likely designed to sit on either side of a fireplace. One depicts a finely dressed gentleman reclining in a chair next to a neoclassical style pillar (which forms the candle holder), holding a sheet of Italian music. The other depicts a dishevelled and poorly dressed man sat on a bar stool clutching a tankard and holding the sheet music for a bawdy ballad – 'O Sue'. These quirky candlesticks perfectly encapsulate the contrast that existed between the perceived sophistication of the Italian language and culture and the impolite and undignified coarseness of English culture. This idea of Italy as the pinnacle of polite, refined society is reflected in Rogers' celebration of everything Italian in his collection.

In his *Observations*, Baretto identified a number of fourteenth-century authors such as Boccaccio who he believed 'carried the Italian to a great height which I imagine, can scarce be surpassed.'<sup>117</sup> Rogers' purchases included early Renaissance authors such as Dante (1265-1321), whose work Baretto singled out calling him 'the greatest' and stating that 'never, surely was a man endued with so great a genius and such a fruitful invention.'<sup>118</sup> Along with Dante, Rogers acquired works by Boccaccio (1313-1375), and Petrarch (1304-1374) who is often considered to be the founder of Renaissance humanism and the first 'modern man'.<sup>119</sup> The collection contained copies of works by these authors with editions dating from the sixteenth century to the eighteenth century. During his time as custodian, Rogers acquired five editions of *Decameron* dating from 1702 to 1757, however the collection also contained an earlier sixteenth-century edition, although the provenance of this edition is not known. These were not necessarily expensive editions. To put Rogers' purchases in context, a first edition of *Decameron* printed in 1471 fetched over two thousand pounds at the famous Roxburghe Sale of 1812,

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<sup>116</sup> Hunt, 'Private Libraries in the Age of Bibliomania', pp. 439-440; Edward Chaney, 'Introduction' in John Hale, *England and the Italian Renaissance: The Growth of Interest in its History and Art* (Malden, M.A: Blackwell, 2005), p. ix.

<sup>117</sup> Baretto, *Observations on the Greek and Roman Classics*, p. 5.

<sup>118</sup> Baretto, *Observations on the Greek and Roman Classics*, p. 5.

<sup>119</sup> Albert Russell Ascoli; Unn Falkeid, 'Introduction', *The Cambridge Companion to Petrarch* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 1.

yet the sixteenth-century edition sold by Cotton II in 1801 fetched only 6 guineas.<sup>120</sup> As I have already established, Rogers appears to have acquired books for a number of reasons, beyond an interest in their contents, and this is further attested to by his acquisition of five slightly different editions of the same title.

Alongside these early, founding figures of the literary Renaissance were works by Later-Renaissance authors. Multiple editions of the satires of Ludovico Ariosto (1474-1533), in French, Italian and English (with editions dating from the sixteenth through to the eighteenth century) and Torquato Tasso's (1544-1595) epic poem *Jerusalem* sat side by side on the shelves with Northern European Renaissance writings. Titles by Francis Bacon (1561-1626), John Donne (1572-1631), William Shakespeare (1564-1616), Edmund Spenser (1552/53-1599) and Ben Jonson (1572-1637) represent the English literary Renaissance and form the foundations of the collection's representation of English literature, an aspect of the collection that continues to grow under William Cotton II and William Cotton III. Rogers' interest in Italy and Classicism extended beyond the fine arts and his purchases also included works on Roman history and antiquities including Laurence Echard's *The Roman History* (1696), William Wotton's *The History of Rome* (1701) and Jean Barbault's *Les plus beaux monuments de Rome ancienne* (1761).

As the end of the eighteenth century approached, there was a move away from the emphasis on Classicism and Italian Renaissance literature that had dominated the book collecting of the mid-eighteenth century. This is not to say that book collectors abandoned their pursuit of these genres altogether, but rather broader trends and fashions emerged and space opened up for an appreciation of incunabula and black letter Gothic works of the Medieval period, formerly shunned as the product of the dark ages that had covered Europe prior to the re-emergence of civilisation during the Renaissance.<sup>121</sup> Collectors continued to retain the classical core to their collections and Classicism remained an integral aspect of gentlemanly education. However, for those who wished to stay abreast of trends, a new fashion emerged for *Editiones Principes* of Latin and Greek Classics – those published in the fourteenth and fifteenth century – in favour

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<sup>120</sup> The sale catalogue for the 1801 sale is annotated by an unknown author with, it is assumed, the sale prices of each title. Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS 1801 Sale Catalogue.

<sup>121</sup> Hugh Trevor-Roper; John Robertson, *History and the Enlightenment* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2010), p. 254.

of the later editions published from the sixteenth century onwards.<sup>122</sup> There also emerged a greater appreciation of the English language and English literature. Although English literature had never been entirely shunned by collectors, the latter-part of the eighteenth century saw a new emphasis and celebration of English authors and the consolidation of a national literary heritage.

These changing trends were driven by the emerging bibliomania of the period. Although bibliomania was largely confined to the very wealthy, the fashions and patterns which it adopted fed down into the broader practices of book collecting which were practiced more widely by gentlemen collectors. Cotton II inherited a library that was predominantly a mid-eighteenth-century style Classical library and, whilst not a bibliomaniac himself, his inherited collection would likely have started to feel outmoded and unfashionable as the fashions of book collecting shifted at the end of the century. A closer examination of bibliomania and its effects on the broader practices of book collecting may, therefore, offer a plausible rationale behind Cotton II's actions.

## A Gentleman's Retreat: the private domestic library

As the book trade flourished in eighteenth-century England, so too did the number of libraries increase. By the end of the century an unprecedented number of libraries, both public and private, had sprung up across the country and increasingly libraries were judged on their appearance as well as the contents of their bookshelves. The Cottonian was not immune to the trend for building private libraries and investing in the display of book collections. The first half of this chapter traced the evolution of book collecting and the evolving fashions of bibliomania up to the point of Cotton II's inheritance of the collection. This second half of this chapter will focus on the evolution of the display of the private domestic library. In doing so, it will be possible in Chapter Two to discern the extent to which Cotton II's practices both conformed to and subverted these trends, and the messages which were conveyed through his display of the Cottonian Collection.

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<sup>122</sup> Whilst debates surrounded the teaching of Classicism in public schools, particularly in the years following the French Revolution. An education grounded in the Classics was generally considered an important aspect of a young gentleman's education. William Van Reyk, 'Educating Christian Men in the Eighteenth and Early-Nineteenth Centuries: Public School and Oxbridge Ideals', *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 32 (2009), pp. 425-437; Hunt, 'Private Libraries in the Age of Bibliomania', p. 441.

The craze for book collecting in both its general and most extreme form of bibliomania manifested itself in what James Raven has termed, the 'library revolution'.<sup>123</sup> As the number of avid readers and collectors grew, so too did the demand for library. From the 1740s onwards there was a rapid increase in the number of commercial libraries, both subscription and circulating, as well as private domestic libraries in the homes of the wealthy. Whilst it is not within the remit of this study to consider at length the evolution of public commercial libraries, nevertheless it is important to acknowledge that the rise of private libraries did not take place within a vacuum and that they were part of a broader emergence of both public and private libraries. Many owners of a private library, including Cotton II, were also members of book libraries or book societies and would therefore have had access to books beyond the contents of their private collections.<sup>124</sup> However, given the domestic, private nature of the Cottonian, this section focuses principally on the rise of the domestic library which began to expand out of the homes of the aristocracy and landed gentry, and into those of the wealthy middle classes. Each of the Cottonian collectors displayed the collection in a different manner; a manner that reflected the fashions of library display in the period of their custodianship.

In the mid-seventeenth century, the grand private libraries were confined to the homes of the aristocracy and gentlemen. A middle-class gentleman such as Robert Townson would likely have been more familiar with the Cottonian installed within a book room or closet, rather than the grand libraries constructed by Cotton II and William Cotton III over a century later. The private closet, Michael McKeon argues, like the earlier cabinets of curiosities, were places for keeping rare commodities such as books. Often a small chamber or study, the book room was furnished with little more than a desk or reading stand and functioned as the private scholarly retreat of its gentleman owner. This was a retreat in which he was free to engage in private study or conduct business away from the bustle of the house.<sup>125</sup> No records survive to document Robert Townson's storage of his book collection, but consideration of the styles of storage used by men of a similar position at the time, and examination of the books themselves indicates that Townson

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<sup>123</sup> Raven, 'From Promotion to Proscription: Arrangements for Reading and Eighteenth-Century Libraries', *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, p. 176.

<sup>124</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS William Cotton II accounts, 271.

<sup>125</sup> Michael McKeon, *The Secret History of Domesticity: Public, Private, and the Division of Knowledge* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2007), p. 225.

likely kept his books in a private closet with open shelves on which the books were displayed in either an upright manner or were stacked horizontally. Looking to the book-closet owned by John Elbridge, a Bristol merchant in the 1720s provides one such means of estimating the style of display utilised by Robert and William Townson in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries. Elbridge's closet was positioned adjacent to his bed chamber and contained one walnut desk and a bookcase. Stephen Hague, logically, concludes that it was here that Elbridge kept the majority of his modest collection of seventy volumes (a small collection in comparison to the two-hundred and seventy owned by Robert Townson). Elbridge's collection, whilst significantly smaller than that of Robert Townson, contained a similar combination of religious and instructional literature, together with some history, poetry and plays and included popular titles such as *The Whole Duty of Man*.<sup>126</sup>

Despite the lack of surviving records depicting the Cottonian at the home of Robert and William Townson, it is possible to determine the prestige and importance of the books from their bindings. From the second half of the seventeenth century onwards, owners became increasingly concerned with the presentation of their collections. Books were removed from their storage chests and began to be housed in a linear fashion on open shelves with the spines displayed outward to reveal their titles.<sup>127</sup> Increasingly owners were paying to have their books bound in custom bindings and the spines decorated with gilding so as to create a uniform decorative effect.<sup>128</sup> Robert Townson's choice of bindings reveals a compromise between functionality and appearance. The cheaper, pocket-sized works which would have easily fitted into a gentleman's coat pocket are bound in rougher, cheaper versatile bindings. However, his awareness of the value of the collection as a luxury object and symbol of wealth and status, as well as being a tool for the acquisition of knowledge, is evidenced by his choice of bindings for the larger books on display. The uniform white vellum binding with gold tooling on the spine attests to the idea that his books were stored in a linear fashion on open shelves conveying a sense of order and 'neatness'.<sup>129</sup> Whilst it is not known if the books were on public or private

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<sup>126</sup> Hague, *The Gentleman's House in the British Atlantic world*, p. 102.

<sup>127</sup> Lucy Gwyn, 'The Design of the English Domestic Library in the Seventeenth century: Readers and their Book Rooms', *Library Trends*, 60 (2011), pp. 45-53 (p. 45).

<sup>128</sup> In 1665 Samuel Pepy's had nearly all of his books rebound to create a uniform effect. Gwyn, 'The Design of the English Domestic Library in the Seventeenth Century', p. 45.

<sup>129</sup> Raven, 'From Promotion to Proscription' *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, p. 176.



display, their value to Robert Townson is reinforced by William Townson's prompt purchase of the collection upon declaration of his father's bankruptcy in 1703.<sup>130</sup>

By the end of the seventeenth century, the private library was beginning to emerge out of the gentleman's book closet and spread into the public family rooms of the house. As Mark Girouard's seminal study of the English country house concludes, by the mid-eighteenth century the library was a defining feature of the large stately homes of the aristocracy and landed gentry.<sup>131</sup> In imitation of their social superiors, domestic libraries began to appear in the homes of the upper middle cases, men such as Charles Rogers and later William Cotton II, albeit on a smaller scale. The second half of the century saw 'dozens of grandiose buildings designed or commissioned by the very wealthy, translating the ideas of the monumental library to the city residence and the country house.'<sup>132</sup> Pearson notes, by the mid-eighteenth century the private library had become a major feature of the rebuilding project, and the trend began to spread downwards to the middle classes becoming 'a visible sign of class and economic as of gender privilege.'<sup>133</sup>

The use of the private library developed during the course of the eighteenth century and evolved from the scholar's retreat into the family living room. Increasingly it was used to serve a purpose not fulfilled by either the dining room or drawing room. The library became a room to which the family could retire after breakfast to engage in recreational pursuits such as reading, writing, drawing, painting and music.<sup>134</sup> Indeed, few libraries were places of exclusive scholarly activity. With the evolution of the library came the emergence of an entire industry dedicated to supplying furniture and library decorations. Comfortable sofas and chairs, along with writing tables, reading desks, musical instruments and games tables came to be found in many domestic libraries.

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<sup>130</sup> Florence Stanbury, *The Story of the Cottonian Collection* (Plymouth: Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery, 1992), p. 6.

<sup>131</sup> Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (London: Penguin Books, 1980; 1<sup>st</sup> ed. Yale University Press, 1978), p. 166.

<sup>132</sup> Raven, 'From Promotion to Proscription', *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, p. 176.

<sup>133</sup> Pearson, *Women's Reading in Britain 1750-1835: A Dangerous Recreation*, p. 152.

<sup>134</sup> Raven, 'From Promotion to Proscription', *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, p. 176.

By the mid-eighteenth century the collection was in the custodianship of Charles Rogers. It was likely that it was under the direction of Rogers that the design of the library evolved beyond the rudimentary fashioning of the seventeenth-century gentleman's book room. Increasingly the grand domestic libraries of the aristocracy were emulated in the homes of English gentlemen who were regular book purchasers. Raven argues that increasingly the English book collector 'bought and arranged books with increasing concern to display their trophies to others.'<sup>135</sup> However domestic libraries were not designed exclusively for books. Paintings, drawings, prints and sculptures, many of which were collected whilst on the Grand Tour or purchased at London auction rooms, were displayed in the library. As Girouard notes, 'space had to be found for the combined accumulation of objects collected by previous generations and the new dilettanti', and 'libraries were enlarged and enriched by new books or portfolios of engravings concerned with travel, classical architecture, statues or pictures.'<sup>136</sup>

Whilst Charles Rogers never undertook a Grand Tour of Europe, his library was furnished with items imported from the continent. No evidence survives to document the layout of his library, however Rogers' accounts record the commission of library furniture which was designed to impress visitors to his home as well as to store his growing collection. Shortly after inheriting the collection in 1741, Rogers commissioned his first piece of furniture, a glazed bookcase.<sup>137</sup> This was followed in 1757 by the order of several Amboina-wood bookcases with glazed interior doors incorporating specimens of exotic imported wood (**Figure 4**).<sup>138</sup> A second Amboina-wood bookcase was commissioned in 1780 to contain Rogers growing collection and to maintain the uniform style of his library.

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<sup>135</sup> Raven, 'The Advance of the Subscription Library', p. 247.

<sup>136</sup> Girouard, *Life in the English Country House*, p. 188.

<sup>137</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Charles Rogers purchase records, 359.

<sup>138</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Charles Rogers purchase records, 359.



Figure 4: *Charles Rogers' Amboina Bookcase (CF3)* Constructed by Robert Tuson (C. 1757).  
Permission courtesy of Plymouth City Arts and Heritage Service.

Rogers' most flamboyant commission was that of a sarcophagus cabinet supported on carved lion's paws (**figure 5**). This highly fashionable and unusual piece of furniture was likely to have been inspired by the neo-classical furniture of Robert Adam, or perhaps by contemporary engravings of Roman marble sarcophagi standing among the fallen columns of ruined temples.<sup>139</sup> Indeed, Rogers was evidently an admirer of the work of Robert Adam as he commissioned him to design a series of chimney pieces and ceilings for one of the properties that he owned on Laurence Pountney Lane, London.<sup>140</sup> Made primarily from mahogany, the sarcophagus cabinet is veneered with South American Amarillo wood. Now dark brown in colour, when the cabinet was first produced the wood would have been canary yellow, creating a striking piece of furniture with a bright yellow front, cut with wavy flutes of rich red mahogany and contrasted against the jet black mahogany mouldings.<sup>141</sup> This was a piece that was clearly designed to impress visitors to Rogers' library as well as providing storage for his growing collection. Tables and matching Amboina-veneered picture frames were also commissioned to complete the library's carefully chosen design, although these are no longer retained within the collection.<sup>142</sup> In the eighteenth century the library was increasingly designed to simultaneously house a collection and impress visitors. The line between the public and private function of the domestic library was increasingly blurred, as is demonstrated by Rogers' surviving correspondence recording requests by friends and acquaintances to view items in his collection.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Adam Bowett, 'Furniture for a Connoisseur: The Cottonian Bookcases and Other Furniture, 1670-1853', *Historic Furniture in The Cottonian Collection: A Concise Catalogue* (Plymouth: Plymouth Museum and Art Gallery, 2014), p. 7.

<sup>140</sup> The John Soane Museum archive holds 23 drawings produced by the workshop of Robert Adam for Charles Rogers. The designs were intended for a house owned by Rogers – No. 4 Laurence Pountney Lane. The majority of the designs are recorded as unexecuted, however of the others it is not specified as to whether or not they were ever executed. London, Sir John Soane Museum, SM Adam Volume 22.

<sup>141</sup> Bowett, 'Furniture for a Connoisseur', p. 7.

<sup>142</sup> The Amboina-veneered picture frames are mentioned in William Cotton III's description of the library at Balham Hill House between 1793 and 1816. However, there is no record of when they were removed from the collection. Bowett, 'Furniture for a Connoisseur', p. 7. Since the publication of Bowett's research, it has come to light that a handful of the original Amboina-veneered frames remain within the collection to this day.

<sup>143</sup> Mr Tyson writes to Charles Rogers on the 26<sup>th</sup> April 1778 enquiring whether his friend, a Mr Herrick, would be allowed to visit and view Rogers' collection. Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Correspondence of Charles Rogers, 345.



Figure 5: *Charles Rogers' Sarcophagus Cabinet (CF6)* Constructed by Robert Tuson (1772).  
Permission courtesy of Plymouth City Arts and Heritage Service.

As the library evolved beyond the realm of the private gentleman scholar and into the centre of the family house, it was increasingly regarded as an extension of the family's public rooms within a domestic setting. Many private libraries, whilst located within the owner's home, were designed for display and to impress friends and neighbours. As Raven argues:

The characterization of many of these libraries as either "private" or "public" is ambiguous. The new domestic libraries, like the visitable commercial and proprietary libraries, created appropriate places for the enjoyment of print and for sociability in the setting of literature.<sup>144</sup>

The library offered a space in which visitors could meet with the family, make use of the collection, or simply marvel at the wealth of the family's collection.

Raven argues that all libraries had in common their promotion in varied ways and with varied deliberateness statements about what a library represented, and they offered particular messages about the purpose and consequences of reading and the characteristics and qualifications expected of readers.<sup>145</sup> These messages about the purpose and consequence of reading were conveyed through the types of books collected and the manner in which they were treated and housed. They also translated into the architectural design and features of the libraries themselves. Library design offered the opportunity 'to give physical expression to notions of the relationship between reading, knowledge and civilisation, as well as to provide practical comforts and aids to study and literary enjoyment.'<sup>146</sup> The design of the library itself provided an indication of the owner's opinions on reading and wider social, political and cultural concerns. As William St Clair observes 'If a visitor made a social call when the family was at home, the book was the natural starting point for conversation, and it had to be selected with that purpose in mind.'<sup>147</sup> Collection such as the Cottonian would, therefore, have been a gravitational point for any visitors to the house and would have offered plenty of

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<sup>144</sup> Raven, 'From Promotion to Proscription', *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, p. 176.

<sup>145</sup> Raven, 'From Promotion to Proscription', *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, p. 176.

<sup>146</sup> Raven, 'From Promotion to Proscription', *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England*, pp. 176-177.

<sup>147</sup> St Clair, *The Reading Nation in the Romantic Period*, p. 1.

opportunity for discussion, whilst showing that the family engaged in educated forms of reading in an appropriate environment.

## Conclusion

This chapter has examined the display of the collection between its origins in 1690 and the death of Charles Rogers in 1784. The collection originated as a repository of knowledge amassed by Robert Townson so as to aid his understanding of the world which he inhabited through the acquisition of Enlightenment philosophy, theology and studies of the natural world. The collection retained its scholarly function throughout this period with Rogers' contribution of Italian Renaissance literature and Classical Roman philosophy. In this sense, the collection that emerged during this period was well-suited for a middle-class gentleman in metropolitan London seeking to remain abreast of the philosophical thought of the day, and acquire the classical education considered to be a necessary attribute of a polite gentleman in the early-eighteenth century.

As a repository of learning for its owners, aiding their social advancement as educated and cultured gentlemen in eighteenth-century society, so the collection became a symbol of their wealth and status. Its holdings and its display at the home of the Townsons and Rogers was likely, as I have sought to demonstrate, increasingly designed to impress the visitor with the wealth, learning and taste of its owners. In its transition from being a small collection, likely to have been contained in a private book closet, to the large collection housed in Rogers' custom-built bookcases crafted from exotic woods, the collection evolved into a manifestation of the polite gentlemanliness that its custodian wished to portray of himself and, as will be discussed in Chapter Three, connected the collection with Britain's imperial and colonial activities. In the subsequent chapter I move to examine Cotton II's treatment of the library through a comparison of the manner in which it was displayed in the 1790s with those styles favoured by his predecessors. The chapter then turns to examine his treatment of the holdings, namely the Italian Renaissance, Classical philosophy and incunabula works, to determine the extent to which the broader trends of book collecting in the late-eighteenth century shaped his treatment of the collection.

# Chapter Two:

## The Cottonian Collection at Clapham, 1791-1816

### Introduction

In the previous chapter I traced the presentation of the Cottonian Collection from its conception in the 1690s through to the death of Charles Rogers in 1784. In the following chapter, I build on this in order to determine the effect of William Cotton II's collecting practices on the curation of the collection. Opening with an examination of Cotton II's physical display of the collection at Balham Hill House, this chapter first locates the display of the collection between 1791 and 1816 within the broader context of late-eighteenth-century library design. The chapter then moves to examine the contents of the bookshelves. Focusing on three core aspects of the collection – Classicism, Italian literature and Incunabula – the second part of this chapter scrutinises Cotton II's treatment of the literary holdings in relation to the broader trends of bibliomania that emerged in this period. This chapter also demonstrates the extent to which Cotton II's treatment of the collection – both its display and the contents of the shelves – can be read as a physical manifestation of the complex coming-together of both his personal values, and the broader socio-political and religious issues of the day.

### The Cottonian Collection on display

Prior to relocating from central London to fashionable Clapham Common in 1796, Cotton II embarked on a series of renovations of the family's new home, Balham Hill House.<sup>148</sup> This included the addition of two symmetrical single story wings extending to the east and west of the main body of the house (**Figure 6**). Within the east wing the collection was displayed in its full glory. The imposing Amboina-wood bookcases lined the walls, and the room was lit from above by a cupola (a feature believed to provide the best

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<sup>148</sup> Bodleian, Cotton and Hudson papers, MS Eng. D. 3551.



lighting by which to study prints).<sup>149</sup> Despite this investment, only three years after completion of these renovations, Cotton II instigated the sales of two-thirds of the collection by auction. A study of his account book reveals him to have been a wealthy man which suggests that the sales were not, as far as I have been able to establish, motivated by any particular financial distress. Despite the sales, Cotton II's investment in the display of the collection suggests a degree of pride and appreciation of the aesthetic, social and, of course, monetary value of his inherited collection. His investment in the display of the collection shortly prior to the sales complicates the traditional narrative of the Cottonian, as told by Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery, as it suggests both an interest in the preservation of the collection, but also the determination of a rationale that would guide his selection of works to dispose of and preserve.

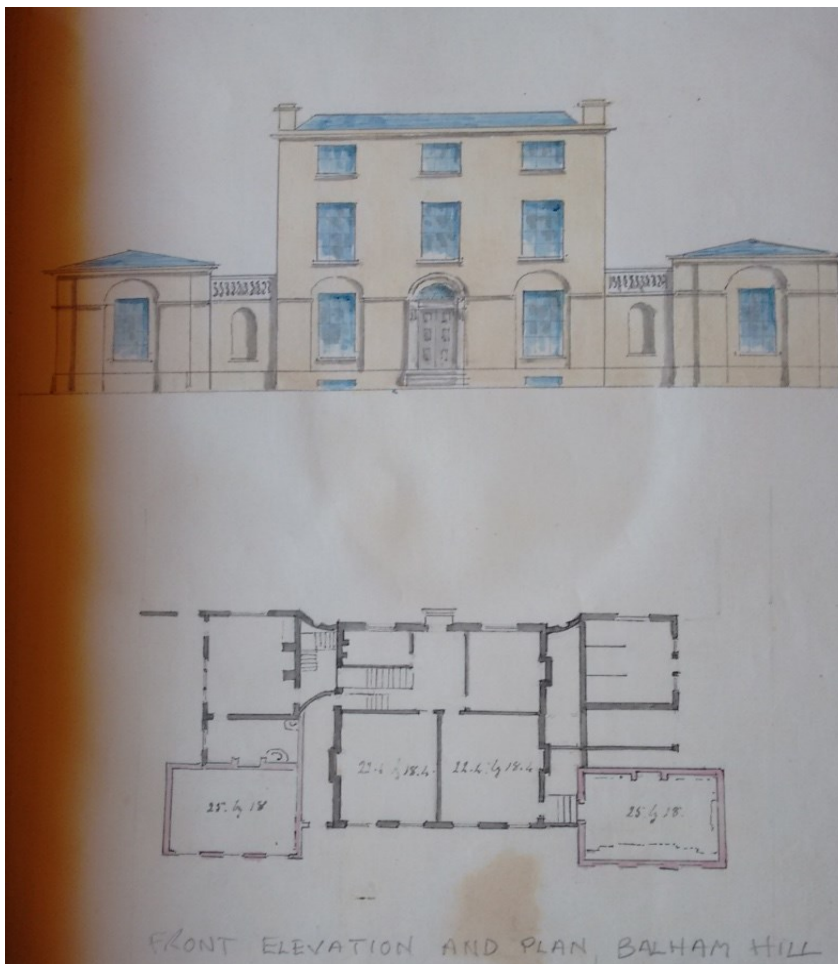


Figure 6: *Balham Hill House, Clapham* (c. 1796) Permission courtesy of The Bodleian Libraries, The University of Oxford, MS. Eng. D. 3551, fol. 13v.

<sup>149</sup> Gerald Hamilton-Edwards, *The Leisured Connoisseur: William Cotton of Ivybridge* (Plymouth, 1954), p. 10.

Whilst by the 1790s nearly all wealthy middle-class homes would have some semblance of a library, these varied in size from modest collections of books that filled only a few shelves, to the grand and extensive libraries such as that owned by the bibliophile William Herbert whose collection occupied an entire wing.<sup>150</sup> Few middle-class collectors would have been able to afford to extend their homes to cater for book collections. Therefore, Cotton II's construction of an entire wing in which to house his inherited collection made a profound statement about his secure financial position. It also signalled to visitors to his home that he respected, acknowledged, and even craved the prestige which came with ownership of an inherited collection. Ownership of a library was a symbol of wealth and status, and a library owner was able to convey a sense of his personality, rank, status, education and political and religious beliefs and values through the presentation of his library. Thus the library was not merely a place to store books, but a physical manifestation of its owner's identity.

When it came to choosing how to display his inheritance, Cotton II looked to the styles favoured by the aristocracy. The sole surviving sketch (**Figure 7**) depicting the Cottonian installed at Balham Hill House shows a neoclassical style of library that would not have looked out of place in any of England's grand country houses; a style that was likely designed to impress Cotton II's immediate social circle in Clapham Common. Lighted from above by a cupola, the bookcases and cabinets commissioned by Charles Rogers 'extended from one end of the room to the other on the south side, and contained a series of large folio volumes in sepia leather full of prints and painter's etchings.' Above the fireplace in Amboina wood frames were hung three 'capital' drawings including views of Windsor Castle by Paul Sandby and a Cleopatra by Cipriani. The majority of the oil paintings were not, however, to be found in the library but were scattered around the other reception rooms of the house including the dining room and hallway. On either side of the fireplaces open cases contained a collection of Delphin and Variorum Classics and miscellaneous literature. At the east end of the room 'stood an antique cabinet of black mahogany, full of books relating to the Fine Arts' whilst in front stood 'a smaller cabinet of inlaid wood, filled with coins and medals, and supporting a case, in plaster of Paris, of

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<sup>150</sup> Jennifer Ciro, 'Country House Libraries in the Nineteenth Century', *Library History*, 18 (2002), pp. 89-98 (p. 90); Robin Myers, 'William Herbert: His Library and his Friends', *Property of a Gentleman: The Formation, Organisation and Dispersal of the Private Library 1620-1920*, ed. by Robin Myers and Michael Harris (Winchester: St. Paul's Bibliographies, 1991), p. 148.

St. Sebastian by Puget, Venus and Mercury'. On top of the bookcases and other cabinets were placed 'casts from the original by G.Pigalle, models after Fiamingo and Birnini of St. Bibiena and St. Susannah' and 'a magnificent set of China jars and beakers of unusual size and beauty'.<sup>151</sup> With its carefully selected books and bookcases adorned with figures from Classical antiquity and Chinese vases, Cotton II's library was designed to impress upon the visitor the status and learning of its owner.



Figure 7: *The Library at Balham Hill House, Clapham* (c. 1796) Permission courtesy of The Bodleian Libraries, The University of Oxford, MS. Eng. D. 3551, fol. 13v.

<sup>151</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Reminiscences of William Cotton III, p. 10.; Bodleian, Cotton and Hudson papers, MS Eng. D. 3551.

Unsurprisingly, given the attention paid to the display of the library, the appearance and decoration of the books themselves was of almost equal importance to many library owners. William Cotton II was no exception. The books purchased by him are bound in leather and decorated with gold tooling on the spines, including the addition of an adapted form of Charles Rogers' earlier collector's mark – a lion and vase. Depending on a collector's choice of bindings, the process of binding could be an expensive business. Over the course of two years, Cotton II spent over twenty pounds having his most recent purchases bound by his bookseller, Mr Wingrave.<sup>152</sup> As I discussed in the previous chapter, in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries plain, durable bindings were favoured by collectors, such as Robert Townson, largely because of the private nature of book closets which did not necessitate ornamentation of books for display. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, collectors were willing to spend considerable sums having their books bound with opulent Moroccan leather, or even velvet bindings which were designed for show, not be hidden away in private closets and closed bookcases.<sup>153</sup>

Despite the emphasis placed on the appearance of books, uniformity of bindings was not a primary concern for collectors. Indeed, the Cottonian Collection with its miscellaneous assortment of bindings dating from the mid-seventeenth century through to the mid-nineteenth century provides a snapshot of the evolving tastes and fashions of book binding. Robert and William Townson, on the one hand, preferred the plain, practical and durable leather or vellum bindings with minimal decorative tooling on the spines. Charles Rogers and Cotton II, in contrast, selected opulent Moroccan leather bindings with marbled paper pasted on the inside covers and gold-tooling on the spines and covers. A lack of uniformity amongst the bindings does not appear to have been a concern for collectors. Rather, Earl of Crawford and Belcarres, an avid book collector, observed that:

Uniformity robs us of what is perhaps the richest and most extended range of colour in the world – a wall space generously furnished with books, each clothes with its appropriate personality of varied style and hue, displaying the price and ingenuity of different craftsmen, the reflections of successive

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<sup>152</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS William Cotton II Account Book, 271.

<sup>153</sup> Esther Potter, 'To St. Paul's Churchyard to meet with a Bookbinder', *Property of a Gentleman: The Formation, Organisation and Dispersal of the Private Library 1620-1920*, ed. by Robin Myers and Michael Harris (Winchester, St. Paul's Bibliographies, 1991), p. 148.

fashions and taste but all combining with irresistible art to radiate light and shadow.<sup>154</sup>

Rather, instead of uniformity, collectors sought 'to make their books present a visually cohesive appearance which spoke of the value which was attached to them.'<sup>155</sup> The Bodleian Library, for example, established a system in the 1790s whereby different styles of bindings were used to differentiate between the levels of value and importance assigned to the books in their collection.<sup>156</sup>

Whilst there is little evidence to suggest that the Cottonian collectors adopted quite such an elaborate categorisation system as the Bodleian, close examination of the Cottonian bookshelves reveals discernible patterns in the collectors' choice of bindings; patterns that reflect the monetary value of the works as well as their contents. For instance, the collection contains a series of volumes containing sets of miscellaneous plays dating from the late-seventeenth through to the mid-eighteenth centuries. These volumes included plays written by John Dryden, John Gay and David Garrick. Published in cheap pamphlet style available for a few shillings, these editions were affordable for even most of the poorest collectors. Featuring adaptations of plays performed in London's theatres, many of them were likely to have been attended by the Cottonian Collectors – Rogers, for instance, was a keen theatre-goer.<sup>157</sup> Bound into small pocket-sized books, presumably by either William Townson or Charles Rogers, these works have functional, hard-wearing, dark leather bindings with little external decoration other than the word 'Plays' stamped on the spine. In contrast, the expensive multi-volume editions of works such as Samuel Johnson's ten-volume edition of *The Plays and Works of William Shakespeare* (1771) are bound in uniform bindings with elaborate gold-tooled decoration on the spine and cover. Likewise, the *Voyages of Captain Cook* (1771-1781), despite having been purchased over the course of a ten-year period and by two different collectors – Rogers and Cotton II – are uniformly bound in the same vibrant yellow bindings with gold-tooled decorative sailing ships and anchors on the spines to denote the theme of the works. As was the fashion, the collectors' marks of Rogers and Cotton II are tooled in gold at the top of the spines clearly marking their ownership of the works.

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<sup>154</sup> Quoted in Potter, 'To St. Paul's Churchyard to meet with a Bookbinder', *Property of a Gentleman*, p. 33.

<sup>155</sup> Potter, 'To St. Paul's Churchyard to meet with a Bookbinder', *Property of a Gentleman*, p. 33.

<sup>156</sup> Potter, 'To St. Paul's Churchyard to meet with a Bookbinder', *Property of a Gentleman*, p. 33.

<sup>157</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Correspondence of Charles Rogers, 347.

When designing his own library, Cotton II would likely have looked to the impressive homes of the aristocracy and gentry; houses such as Stourhead, Chatsworth and Woburn Abbey, which were renowned for their grand interiors and large libraries.<sup>158</sup> However, by the late-eighteenth century, the function of the library in these homes had evolved from the scholar's retreat into cosy living rooms adorned with soft furnishings and used for a multitude of activities, although always retaining the possibility for private reading and study in the placement of furniture. In contrast, Cotton II's library does not seem to have been an extension of the family's reception rooms. Returning to the sole surviving image of Balham Hill House library (**Figure 7**), a single large table stands in the centre of the room piled with books and papers as though its occupants had simply paused in their scholarly endeavours for a moment.<sup>159</sup> Absent are the comfortable sofas and coffee tables placed in small groups by the fire, or armchairs tucked away in the corners of the room offering users of the library to retreat for private reading or conversation.

Rather, despite the opulence with which it is decorated, this was a room reserved for group and individual study; for appreciating the contents of the collection; and, as remembered by Cotton III, as a room in which the family would gather on special occasions to view the prints and drawings contained within the collection.<sup>160</sup> Thus, whilst the collection was displayed to maximise its impact on visitors, it also retained its role as a room for studious work. Cotton II's choice of display with light pouring in through the cupola onto the central table, and the oriental vases and figures from Classical antiquity overseeing the scholarly endeavours of the room's occupants from their places on top of the bookcases, emphasises the importance of the collection as a symbol of Enlightenment learning and knowledge. The collection was not merely an ornament used as a backdrop to impress guests with its visual splendour, but was a significant legacy for the family and treated with the respect it deserved.

The design of the library at Balham Hill with its clean cut lines and simple design suggests that Cotton II likely looked to neoclassicism for inspiration. His choice of a neoclassical

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<sup>158</sup> John Cornforth, *English Interiors, 1790-1848: The Quest for Comfort* (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1978), p.76.

<sup>159</sup> Bodleian, Cotton and Hudson papers, MS Eng. D. 3551.

<sup>160</sup> Hamilton-Edwards, *Leisured Connoisseur*, p. 15.

style came at a time when increasingly fashions for library design were incorporating Gothic Revival style architecture. The 1790s was a transitional period in which architectural styles were shifting away from the Robert Adam style neoclassicism of the 1760s and 1770s towards the Gothic style exemplified by Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill constructed between 1749 and 1776 – an anomaly at the time. It is likely that Rogers too favoured the popular neoclassical style but was unlikely to have been fully visualised by him due to the restrictions of his seventeenth-century merchant style house in central London. Looking forward to the nineteenth century, however, after inheriting the collection in 1816 and relocating to Leatherhead, Surrey, William Cotton III designed a Gothic Revival style library with arched-windows, and an ornate ceiling modelled on the Presence Chamber of Hampton Court Palace (**Figure 8**).



Figure 8: *William Cotton III in the Library, Leatherhead, Surrey* (c.1830)  
Permission courtesy of Plymouth Arts and Heritage Service.

In maintaining a neoclassical style of library Cotton II was doing a number of things. Firstly, as a new resident of Clapham – a growing village which already had many Palladian style homes situated around the leafy common – he was conforming to the style of presentation likely favoured by his neighbours. In maintaining a neoclassical style, he was not only acting in harmony with his style of house, but also likely following his

neighbours' tastes. His was a style of library seen throughout England's aristocratic and gentry country houses with the addition of cupolas – modelled on domes of Rome and Florence – as a means of flooding the room with light and bringing in classical styles. Secondly, in maintaining a style likely to have been favoured by Rogers he was in effect signalling continuity between his uncle's and his own period of custodianship. In retaining many of his uncle's purchases, although of course selling a substantial number too, he continued to preserve part of Rogers' legacy. His choice of display also reinforces the association between Classicism and learning, the enlightenment and status. This emphasis on antiquarian learning is again evident in the display of the collection in the purpose built Cottonian room at the Plymouth Public Library from 1853 to 1915. The room was decorated with a frieze modelled on the Elgin Marbles thereby drawing on the popularity of Hellenism in the late-eighteenth and nineteenth century. In doing so, it again emphasises the connection between Classicism and gentlemanly learning and, in turn, reinforcement of status.

It was likely to have been important for Cotton II to display his collection in a suitable manner as he was part of a community of likeminded, socially and politically active gentlemen with collections of their own. As I will discuss in the succeeding chapters, Clapham Common in the 1790s was renowned for its community of well-educated, socially active residents including the abolitionist William Wilberforce. Many of Cotton II's neighbours in Clapham were also collectors and had equally impressive personal collections. For instance, Clapham was home to Thomas Astle, the antiquarian and fellow of the Royal Society whose collection of manuscripts and State Papers were gifted to the British Museum.<sup>161</sup> Incidentally, Rogers was in communication with Astle shortly prior to his death regarding the study of wooden blocks used in ancient printing. His letter to Thomas Astle was read aloud to the Society of Antiquaries in 1781.<sup>162</sup> Across the common lived another prominent collector, George Hibbert whose collection included a copy of

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<sup>161</sup> Nigel Ramsay, 'Astle, Thomas (1735–1803)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, May 2009 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/816>, accessed 1 July 2016].

<sup>162</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Correspondence of Charles Rogers, 347. Letter from Thomas Astle, 7/1/1781; Letter to Astle, 15/1/1781.



the Gutenberg Bible, along with a copy of the sought after 1459 Psalter on vellum.<sup>163</sup> Whilst there is no direct evidence to suggest that Cotton II was friends with either man, Clapham was a melting point of intellectualism in the late-eighteenth century and geographic proximity alone suggests that Cotton II would have at least been familiar with these collectors. Indeed, given the prestige with which the Cottonian was held amongst collectors during the eighteenth century, it is extremely likely that there would have been frequent visitors to view the collection. Therefore, Cotton II's display of his collection, whilst mirroring many of the fashions of the period, retained its scholarly purpose during a time when libraries were increasingly regarded as recreational rooms. In doing so, the library at Balham Hill retained a public function as a room with which to impress guests or offer the opportunity for research, thereby ensuring an appropriate setting in which to view and utilise the holdings of the Cottonian Collection.

Furthermore, between 1806 and 1814, Cotton II paid an annual subscription to the Clapham Book Society.<sup>164</sup> This is likely the same Clapham Book Society whose notable members of the Society included the Rev. John Sharpe and Rev. John Venn (whose acquaintance with Cotton II is attested to by surviving correspondence between the pair), as well as members of the Clapham Sect such as Charles Grant – the politician, philanthropist and known mover within the Sect.<sup>165</sup> Little research has been undertaken on the Society, however it is known that the Society met regularly at the members' houses.<sup>166</sup> John Venn's diary entry for November 1811 records 'Book club held at my house – general – accounts, &c.'<sup>167</sup> It is not known whether Cotton II ever hosted a meeting of the club, however should he have done so then his purpose-built library housing the collection would have provided an impressive meeting room for the Society. Even if the Society never met there, it is likely that Cotton II would have entertained individual members from time to time and, no doubt, his inherited collection displayed

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<sup>163</sup> David Hancock, 'Hibbert, George (1757–1837)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/13194>, accessed 1 July 2016]; A Catalogue of the library of George Hibbert, esq; of Portland Place (1829)

<sup>164</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS William Cotton II Account Book, 271. Bodleian, Cotton and Hudson papers, MS Eng. D. 3551.

<sup>165</sup> On the death of Mrs Cotton in 1803, John Venn writes to Cotton II expressing his condolences. Bodleian, Cotton and Hudson papers, MS Eng. D. 3551.

<sup>166</sup> David H. Knott, 'An Eighteenth-Century Book Club at Clapham', *The Library*, S5-XXIV (1969), pp. 243-246 (p.245).

<sup>167</sup> Knott, 'An Eighteenth-Century Book Club at Clapham', p.245.

in a tasteful neo-classical library would have provided an interesting talking point conveying a sense of Cotton II's learning and the legacy nature of his collection.

Cotton II display of the collection was, therefore, most likely designed not only to facilitate the use of the collection, but to reinforce his status as an educated and cultured gentleman, and maintain an appropriate setting for his inherited collection. Cotton II was fortunate in that he inherited a complete collection; a collection that had an established reputation as a prestigious example of eighteenth-century connoisseurial collecting. Although the sales were conducted nearly twenty years after the death of Charles Rogers, the auctions were advertised in *The Times* newspaper as those of the collection of 'Charles Rogers Esq. F.R.S and S.A. deceased.'<sup>168</sup> Inheritance, it was argued, was one of the 'soundest ways of acquiring a collection', for when a collection is inherited, 'a collector's attitude towards his possessions stems from an owner's feeling of responsibility toward his property.'<sup>169</sup> To inherit a collection was, therefore, to inherit not only a collection of objects, but the legacy of its previous owner. In light of this, the treatment of the collection by its new owner – be it to sell, preserve or re-shape – can also indicate their sense of responsibility towards ensuring the posterity of the collection and continuing the legacy of its former owner.

Cotton II's inheritance of the Cottonian came at a time when much of Europe was engaged in an ideological war with Revolutionary France. The uprooting of the former way of life – namely the *Ancien Régime* – and the subsequent descent into the Reign of Terror caused some commentators to lament the loss of all that had been inherited and obtained progressively.<sup>170</sup> The publication of Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution* (a copy of which was purchased by Cotton II) helped to promulgate the idea that the French revolutionaries had destroyed all that had been acquired organically and, in doing so, had disrupted the natural order.<sup>171</sup> Within this atmosphere, treatment of a collection which had been formed progressively and inherited from earlier generations emphasised its

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<sup>168</sup> "Sales By Auction." *Times* (London, England) 15 Apr. 1799: 3. *The Times Digital Archive*. Web. 4 July 2016.

<sup>169</sup> Connell, 'Bibliomania: Book collecting, Cultural Politics, and the Rise of Literary Heritage in Romantic Britain', p. 24.

<sup>170</sup> J.G.A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 199.

<sup>171</sup> Jonathan I. Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750-1790* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011) pp. 809-814.

new owners sense of responsibility and respect for ensuring the posterity of the collection and, by extension, the importance of the work of earlier generations. As I discuss in Chapter Four, Cotton II's custodianship coincided with a period during which ideas of a national cultural heritage as a reflection of national character and identity was increasingly topical. The inheritance of a collection – imbued with a sense of posterity and legacy – and treatment of it in a respectful and careful manner that celebrated its origins was, therefore, an act of preserving cultural heritage and a means of reinforcing a sense of national character. In this light, Cotton II's treatment of the collection could be viewed as disrespectful given his sale of two-thirds of his inherited collection, however, as I argue over the ensuing chapters, it can also be viewed as an attempt to amalgamate and accommodate older philosophical, societal and religious ideas within the changing and highly charged climate of the 1790s.

## Stocking the Shelves in the Age of Bibliomania

The first half of this chapter established the nature of William Cotton II's display of the collection between 1791 and 1816 in comparison with his predecessors' styles of display. In the second part, I now turn attention to the contents of the shelves and the influence of bibliomania on Cotton II's curation of his inherited collection through a study of the representation of Classicism, Italian literature and incunabula.

Cotton II's inheritance of the collection coincided with the age of bibliomania which is dated to the period of 1775 to 1825. Writing in his novel, *Bibliomania; or Book-Madness; A Biographical Romance* (1809), Dibdin identified the symptoms of bibliomania, or the 'book disease' as a passion for large paper copies, uncut, or illustrated copies, along with true editions and 'an undistinguished voracious appetite, to swallow everything printed in the black letter'. It was the passion for black letter, or Gothic works, which Dibdin believed to be the most serious symptoms and one which he argued 'can only bring on unconquerable disease, if not death, to the patient!'.<sup>172</sup> The bibliomania of the period was principally characterised by a passion for antiquarian texts, namely incunabula, and works dating from the medieval period. It was the fashion for black letter or gothic type at the end of the century which saw prices rise to dizzying heights and characterised the

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<sup>172</sup> Thomas Frognall Dibdin, 'Preliminary Observations', *Bibliomania; or Book-Madness; A biographical romance* (London, 1842), p. 11.

bibliomania of the period. The bibliomania that dominated book collecting practices of the period 1770 to 1830 was, therefore, reserved for the wealthy aristocracy and members of the gentry as well as upper middle-class men who could afford the expenditure and large amounts of capital required to purchase rare and sought-after books at auction.

From the 1790s onwards, large sums of money were spent on old books, notably incunabula, which had formerly been regarded as worthless. Indeed, the actions of collectors in the century earlier paled in comparison to the prices paid during this period. Bibliomaniacal collectors were more often than not aristocrats, figures such as William Cavendish, 6th Duke of Devonshire (1790-1858) and George Spencer, 2nd Earl of Spencer (1758-1834). However, Philip Connell notes that wealthy 'amateur bibliographers' and the 'nouveaux riche' were able to participate in the mania and were able to 'consolidate their social status through the creation – if not wholesale acquisition – of an impressive library of old books.'<sup>173</sup>

The sale of the Duke of Roxburghe's collection in 1812 is widely perceived to be the central and defining moment of the age of bibliomania. Taking place four years after the Duke's death, the sale of his collection saw prices reach dizzying heights with the centre piece of the sale being Giovanni Boccaccio's *Decamerone* (1471). A bidding war broke out between two aristocratic book collectors, Lord Spencer and the Marquis of Blandford driving the price of the work up to the unprecedented sum of £2,260.<sup>174</sup> Indeed, one of the greatest effects of bibliomania was the way in which it facilitated a structural change in the market for books, and the ways in which books were valued financially. Up to this point, books were priced according to their size and the financial implications involved in their production, such as the cost of paper and workmanship. However, as bibliomania took hold, collectors increasingly sought out particular authors and styles of text, the financial value of which was increasingly determined by questions of connoisseurship based on authorship, title, illustrations, bindings, the edition, and the works' former owner.

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<sup>173</sup> Connell, 'Bibliomania: book collecting, cultural politics, and the rise of literary heritage in Romantic Britain', p. 25.

<sup>174</sup> Connell, 'Bibliomania: book collecting, cultural politics, and the rise of literary heritage in Romantic Britain', p. 25.

Despite investing in the display of the collection at Balham Hill House, Cotton II should not be regarded as a bibliophile. His contributions to the collection were small and sporadic, and were not the actions of a collector in the grips of bibliomania.<sup>175</sup> The reasons for this are speculative, but could likely be attributed to a lack of interest, space and funds, particularly as prices for sought after titles skyrocketed during the age of bibliomania. However, this is not to say that Cotton II and his collecting practices were immune from the broader effects of bibliomania on the book trade and collecting practices. The next part of this chapter will examine three core aspects of the literary holdings – Classical literature, incunabula and Italian literature – and the extent to which Cotton II's treatment of them both conformed to and subverted the broader trends of bibliomania. All three of these genres were affected by the evolving fashions of bibliomania and the book collecting practices of Cotton II, whilst he did not directly engage with the trend, were vicariously influenced by the broader impact of bibliomania on the book trade.

As previously established, Cotton II inherited what was a predominantly mid-eighteenth-century style of library. Its shelves were rich with editions of the works of eminent Latin and Greek authors. As I established in the previous chapter, the presence of these works within an eighteenth-century gentlemanly collection was not in itself surprising. Indeed, their absence from Rogers' bequest to Cotton II would have been more noteworthy. Rather, it is what Cotton II does next with the collection that is worthy of investigation. Under Cotton II's direction, there was a shift away from the collection's foundations in classical Greek and Latin literature and the celebrated canon of Italian Renaissance authors that had been selected for inclusion by the Italophile, Charles Rogers.

The second day of the 1801 sale saw the disposal of some one hundred and seventy lots under the headings of 'Classici' and 'Libri Latini Recennifiores'. The lots sold on this day were made up of predominantly sixteenth and seventeenth-century editions of canonical authors such as Cicero, Hierolces and Virgil, as well as obscure titles and authors. Editions such as a Greek and Latin edition of Homer's *Odyssey* (1664), two copies of Seneca's *Tragedies* dating from the mid-seventeenth century, and various editions of the Delphini

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<sup>175</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS William Cotton II Account book, 271.

Classics including Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (1719), and unspecified works by Horatius (1694) and Juvenal (1691). Around one-quarter of the sale catalogue was made up of either Classical works or Italian literature (the only percentage larger was the sale of early religious writings, as I will touch on in the final two chapters). This was not, however, a complete dispersal. Cotton III recalls how either side of the fireplace were a set of Delphin and Variorum Classics published in the late-seventeenth century. Whilst not regarded as the best edition of the Classics, they were prized for their age and prestige having been prepared during the reign of Louis XIV for the dauphin Louis. These works were well-regarded and a complete set sold at the Roxburghe sale in 1812 for over five hundred pounds.<sup>176</sup> Cotton II disposes of a number of these works at the 1801 sale, however he also retains a handful of these works which are still present in the collection today.

Italian Renaissance literature also featured substantially in the sale with various editions of the Italian Renaissance authors were disposed of. This included over one hundred remaining copies of Charles Rogers' interpretation of Dante's *Inferno* (1782). Copies of Boccaccio's *Decameron* and unidentified works by Petrarch were also sold. Cotton II did not, however, entirely remove these genres from the collection. Editions of these works were retained in the collection whilst duplicates were sold, perhaps to reduce the overall size of the collection. What dictated his choice of copies to preserve and which to sell is not always obvious. A survey of the sale catalogue reveals a tendency to sell sixteenth-century editions published between 1530 and 1580. For example, he sells two editions of *Orlando Furioso* by Ariosto dating from 1565 and 1580. These sell for small amounts - £0.12.0 and £0.4.0, respectively. In comparison, a copy of the 1545 edition sold at the Roxburghe sale for £5.5 only eleven years later. Cotton II's actions, therefore, suggest an attempt to reduce the holdings of two core and expected genres in a gentleman's library. Whilst he retains at least one copy of each of the more popular titles sold thereby ensuring a strong representation of these works in the collection, his selective sale of duplicates suggests an attempt to reduce the rather unwieldy size of his inherited collection.

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<sup>176</sup> 'It may be observed, that a set of the Delphin alone sold at the Roxburghe sale in 1812 for above 500.l, and that a uniform set of the VARIORUM cannot be obtained at any price. To collect the editions now offered would cost *many* hundred pounds.' *Catalogue of Classical Works in Greek, Latin and English, lately printed by A. J. Valpy, M.A.* (London, 1831).

Cotton II's removal of a significant proportion of the sixteenth-and-seventeenth-century editions of both ancient Latin and Greek translations, as well as prominent works of Italian literature, is consistent with the broader contours of bibliomania as it impacted on taste and the market. Increasingly bibliophiles shunned sixteenth-and-seventeenth-century editions of classical authors in favour of earlier fifteenth-century editions which came to be known as *editions principes*, or principle or true editions. In the middle of the eighteenth century, collectors such as Rogers had paid these editions scarce attention, favouring instead the finely printed sixteenth-century editions. Following the destruction of monastic and aristocratic libraries during the French Revolution, thousands of *editions principes* were released onto the market and made their way across the channel to the auction rooms of London.<sup>177</sup>

The popularity of these early editions grew in the first decade of the nineteenth century. For collectors seeking these 'true editions', the older and the rarer the book, the higher the price they were willing to pay. At the historic Roxburghe sale of 1812, a 'principle edition' of Boccaccio's *Decameron* (1471) sold for a staggering two thousand two hundred and sixty pounds.<sup>178</sup> In contrast, a sixteenth-century edition of the same work was sold by Cotton II only eleven years previous for a mere fraction of that price. Fashion for incunabula arose from the late-eighteenth-century Gothic Revival. The late-eighteenth century saw the popularity of incunabula, especially medieval literature printed in gothic type, or black letter increase dramatically. For instance, the Bodleian Library's annual expenditure on incunabula rose dramatically between 1786 and 1791, raising from a mere fifty pounds a year in 1786 to over one thousand pounds in 1791.<sup>179</sup> Prices for sought after titles reached record highs, the Gutenberg Bible being a good example. In 1791 there was half a copy in England, but by 1815 there were at least nine and collectors were willing to pay in the region of £500 for a copy.

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<sup>177</sup> Kristian Jensen, *Revolution and the Antiquarian Book: Reshaping the Past, 1780-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), p. 5.

<sup>178</sup> Connell, 'Bibliomania: Book Collecting, Cultural Politics and the Rise of Literary Heritage in Romantic Britain', p. 25.

<sup>179</sup> Jensen, *Revolution and the Antiquarian Book*, p. 4.

Cotton II did not engage with the fashion for *editions principes*. This was likely for any number of reasons including being priced out of the market or even a lack of interest. What can be seen in his selection of works to be sold is an awareness of the market and sustained desirability of these titles for the gentleman book collector. However, I argue that his selection of works to be sold was not necessarily driven by a desire for a quick monetary gain. Had he been interested solely in generating income, the few pieces of incunabula within the collection would have featured in his selection of works for sale. None of the titles put up for sale sold for particularly large sums. Rather, I argue that the trend amongst bibliomaniacs for *editions principes* influenced the way in which Cotton II viewed his collection as an outsider, rather than as a primary motivator for making money. Suddenly it seemed old-fashioned, even embarrassing, for a gentleman to own obscure titles, unfashionable seventeenth-century editions and duplications of works that contributed little aesthetic or monetary value to the collection.

Although not purchasing any of these works himself, Cotton II chose to retain a number of works likely purchased by Rogers which fell into this category. This included a first edition of Albrecht Durer's *Passio Christi* (1511), two illuminated copies of the Book of Hours, published in the fifteenth century, and Sebastian Brant's *Ship of Fools* (1498). These works were all produced in Northern Europe. Bibliomania saw a revival and celebration of the languages of Northern Europe which had suffered under the early and mid-eighteenth-century taste for the romantic languages of Southern Europe. There emerged a new generation of bibliophiles who were opposed to their predecessors' admiration of the books of early Italian printers. Thus, the fashion for Gothic literature was not merely an enlargement of the existing classical canon but a deliberate departure from it.<sup>180</sup> These works were valuable and had they featured in the 1801 sale would undoubtedly have generated a large income for Cotton II. However, the collection does not hold duplications of individual works and, save for a general dislike of the works or a desire for financial gain, Cotton II would have had little motivation to dispose of them as they are fine examples of incunabula.

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<sup>180</sup> Hunt, 'Private libraries in the age of bibliomania', p. 445.



## Conclusion

This chapter has examined William Cotton II's presentation of the Cottonian Collection within his home in fashionable Clapham Common in the 1790s. Comparing and contrasting his manner of display with those of his predecessors, this chapter has demonstrated the extent to which Cotton II's display of the collection conformed to and dissented from the broader fashions of library design in the late-eighteenth century. In contrast to the shift, amongst some private library owners, towards the library being used as an extension of the family's recreational rooms, Cotton II's display of the collection suggests a conscious attempt to preserve the collection as a tool for scholarship. Absent from his presentation of the library are the soft-furnishings or provisions for the playing of music or cards in the library – as was increasingly the fashion. Rather, his display retains its scholarly purpose with a large table in the centre of the room for occupants to peruse the titles held in the bookcases.

Furthermore, through an examination of his treatment of the core themes of classicism, incunabula and Italian literature, this chapter has demonstrated the extent to which Cotton II reduced the holdings of obscure or duplicates of classical philosophy and Italian Renaissance writings – as were particularly favoured by Rogers. In contrast, however, he preserved the few items of incunabula suggesting an awareness of the broader fashions of bibliomania in the late-eighteenth century. His decision to preserve the Gothic black type texts of Durer and the *Book of Hours* also suggests that the sales were not motivated by the lure of financial gain. Had they have been so, these works would surely have featured in the sale catalogue.

Rather, as this chapter has sought to demonstrate, Cotton II's display and treatment of these three themes within the book holdings suggests a conscious attempt to present his inherited collection in such a way that both celebrated the legacy of an inherited collection – both as a repository of texts and the taste of his predecessors – whilst ensuring that the display of the collection and its contents continued to present a form of gentlemanliness that was suited to the late-eighteenth-century social arena. His display of the collection, therefore, continues to reinforce the association of the collection with the acquisition of knowledge and learning. However, his selective disposal of titles

suggests an attempt to remove from the holdings duplicates, out-dated titles, obscure works or those books that simply did not sit comfortably with the form of gentleman's library which he wished to present in the late-eighteenth century.

# Chapter Three: The Global Cottonian: Cosmopolitanism and Colonialism, 1690-1784

## Introduction

In the previous chapter I examined the association between the domestic library (its presentation and its holdings) and changing ideas of gentlemanly identity. I considered the display of the Cottonian Collection between 1690 and 1816 and the manner in which the design of the library altered as its purpose within the home evolved. I also examined the contents of the shelves arguing that the rise of Bibliomania between 1770 and 1816 affected William Cotton II's treatment of his inherited collection, and directed his own choice of acquisitions. The following pair of chapters work in tandem to examine the relationship between the Cottonian Collection and the emergence of a sense of a British national character in the eighteenth century.

In the first chapter of the pair (Chapter Three) I examine the notion of Britishness in a polite and increasingly commercial metropolitan society between 1690 and 1784. This was, I argue, a sense of Britishness that was characterised by a coming together of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism (driven in part by Francophilia) and imperial economic and territorial ambition and growth. I argue that the collecting practices of Robert and William Townson and Charles Rogers – men who inhabited a polite metropolitan society and whose livelihood at the London Custom House was reliant upon the success of British international dominance – were shaped by a cosmopolitan outlook; an outlook that was facilitated by both the ambition and brutality of British imperialist ambition and a desire to emulate the perceived cultural and intellectual refinement of their continental neighbours. The chapter opens with an examination of polite cosmopolitan masculinity as it would have been experienced and embodied by the Townsons and Rogers. I then turn to a study of British imperialism between 1690 and 1784 examining how colonialism and British dominance overseas was understood by a domestic audience. I also address the extent to which the interplay between cosmopolitanism and colonialism shaped

notions of Britishness in the decades after the Acts of Union in 1706 and 1707.<sup>181</sup> Finally, the chapter moves to scrutinise the effects of this emergent national character on the Townsons and Rogers' collecting practices. In doing so, it explores the representation of travelogues, contemporary periodicals and antiquarian studies in the collection and the extent to which the acquisition of these works reflected the broader notions of a national identity in the eighteenth century.

## Polite Cosmopolitan Gentlemen: The Metropolitan Business Elite, 1690-1784

The period of Robert and William Townson and Charles Rogers lives spanned what has come to be regarded as a significant moment in the formation of notions of a British character. Scholars have varied in their identification of the catalysts behind the emergence of a sense of a British national character in the early-to-mid-eighteenth century. Linda Colley emphasises the importance of Protestantism in creating a sense of Britishness defined in opposition to the 'otherness' of the Catholicism of the French – a sense of 'otherness' that was heightened through recurrent war and imperial competition between the two neighbouring countries.<sup>182</sup> Gerald Newman, similarly identifies Britain's complex relationship with France as a key factor in the formulation of British national character. He argues that growing anti-Gallophobia, as a reaction against the dominance of cosmopolitanism and French culture amongst the British aristocracy, fuelled the formation of a British national identity in the latter part of the eighteenth century.<sup>183</sup> Kadav, whilst concurring with Colley and Newman's identification of Francophobia as an influencing factor, argues that their emphasis on anti-French, anti-Catholic and xenophobia attitudes overlooks the importance of internal anxieties regarding the

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<sup>181</sup> I use the term Britishness to refer to ideas of character and identity in post-1707 Britain, however this is not to suggest that provincial distinctions between England, Scotland and Wales ceased in the eighteenth century. Rather, as Kumar argues, it is a mistake to think that individuals must have only one over-riding nationality rather than the ability to be both English and British. Therefore, I use the term British to suggest notions of broad sweeping characteristics (although predominantly associated with the English) that accompanied the growth of Empire and colonial activity during this period, rather than to suggest the displacement of provincial or regional cultural identities. Krishan Kumar, *The Making of English National Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 148-149.

<sup>182</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1992), pp. 369-370.

<sup>183</sup> Gerald Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History 1740-1830* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1997), p. 50.

perception of Britain's provincial and cultural inferiority in Europe.<sup>184</sup> Similarly, Colin Kidd argues that Colley and Newman place too great an emphasis on crude xenophobia arguing instead that many of 'England's patriotic intelligentsia' did not conform to this pattern. Rather, Kidd argues that there remained an acknowledgement of Northern Europeans common Goth ancestral heritage and historic accident, rather than genetic differences, separated Britain from her continental neighbours.<sup>185</sup> These varying arguments highlight the complexity of accurately identifying the factors behind the emergence of a British sense of character in the eighteenth century and, if indeed one did emerge, how this was experienced by men and women in eighteenth-century Britain.

Whilst scholars have varied in the extent to which they identify growing imperial superiority, or anxieties about the stability of this power – not consolidated until the Seven Years War – there is a general consensus amongst historians that Britain's complex relationship with France played a considerable role in dictating a sense of Britishness (cultural and political) in the eighteenth century. Robin Eagles argues that there is no escaping the fact that national character was dependent on the French with the two countries like unruly siblings. However, Eagles argues that Colley over-emphasises the idea of opposition and 'that the dominant cultural position was held by those who defined themselves in terms of everything that was antithetical to France.' Rather, he argues that attitudes to France were divided during the early-to-mid-eighteenth century between those who regarded France as the enemy for its Catholicism and absolutism (there were also those who admired it for the very same reasons), and 'those who adored it for its enlightenment, its fashion, and its potential as a successor to 1688.'<sup>186</sup> Many members of the urban elite – Macaronis and Whig radicals included – identified themselves by what they liked and wished to incorporate from French culture. William Townson and Charles Rogers, members of the business elite, most likely identified themselves with those sections of society who celebrated the infusion of French culture and its influence on the emergence of a polite metropolitan society. This was a form of polite gentlemanliness

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<sup>184</sup> Alok Yadav, *Before the Empire of English: Literature, Provinciality and Nationalism in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 2-3.

<sup>185</sup> Colin Kidd, *British Identities Before Nationalism: Ethnicity and Nationhood in the Atlantic World 1600-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 212-213.

<sup>186</sup> Robin Eagles, *Francophilia in English Society, 1748-1815* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), p. 176-177.

that would come to characterise aspects of British gentlemanly identity between 1707 and the 1760s.

Eighteenth-century polite society has been well-documented in the last twenty years. Politeness, Lawrence Klein argues, is a term with 'polymorphous usefulness' that has been 'used to interpret, among other things, material and visual cultures, the organization of space, the constitution of social and political identities, the character of intellectual and artistic life, and even institutional structures.'<sup>187</sup> Whilst Philip Carter concurs with Klein's broad application of politeness, he more specifically defines polite society as consisting of:

those who sought a reputation for refinement, whether this reputation be politeness or sensibility, sociability or snobbishness; and of those activities and locations within which individuals, conduct writers or social analysts claimed to detect and pursue refined behaviour.<sup>188</sup>

Politeness, as these definitions demonstrate is an ambiguous term that could denote a multitude of behaviours, locations and activities. These ranged from private acts of reading, the study of classical philosophy and languages, and the collecting of art and antiquities through to public acts of sociability which, although still restricted to the upper echelons of society, involved attendance at the theatre, concerts, the Assembly rooms, and, for the demonstration of a gentlemanliness politeness, the coffee-shops of London.

Whilst scholars have struggled to identify the exact moment in which politeness can be said to have emerged, it is now most commonly associated with the early-to-mid-eighteenth century and the development of a commercial society. J.G.A Pocock maps the rise of politeness onto the growth of a commercial economy and the move towards a 'sociable religiosity' following the demise of the Commonwealth of England.<sup>189</sup> This is a view shared by Klein who concurs with Pocock's identification of the growing commercial

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<sup>187</sup> Lawrence Klein, 'Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century', *The Historical Journal*, 45 (2002), pp. 869-898 (p. 870).

<sup>188</sup> Philip Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society, Britain 1660-1800* (London; New York: Longman, 2001) p. 19.

<sup>189</sup> Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce and History*, p.236.

society as necessitating a new form of sociability.<sup>190</sup> In a commercial society where landed wealth was no longer an indicator of gentlemanliness or class, the demonstration of characteristically polite behaviours became a means of identifying a cultured, socially refined and, therefore, true gentleman. Demonstration of politeness required disposable income (although not inherited or landed money), taste and knowledge of the arts and culture acquired through study. True politeness, rather than simply the display of politeness, could not be simply purchased by those with new money but rather had to be acquired through study and the acquisition of taste.

Sharing similar hallmarks of politeness, cosmopolitanism required the display of many of the same behaviours: a knowledge of the arts, antiquities, languages, the natural world and philosophy; consumption of imported goods, such as silk, wine, coffee and chocolate; and public displays of cosmopolitanism such as the drinking of imported coffee at London's coffee-houses where gentlemanly sociability and the mixing of nationalities was possible. By the mid-eighteenth century, there existed a close affinity between cosmopolitanism and polite gentlemanliness. 'A true "citizen of the world" was' Vaughn Scribner observes, 'in short, the most accomplished gentleman. Such a "Man formed for Society" had the wherewithal to distance himself from the social melee of his locality, utilizing his vast reserve of gentlemanly attributes to observe mankind with "Reason" rather "than Imagination".'<sup>191</sup> In Scribner's description, cosmopolitanism becomes another characteristic of politeness and a requirement for an accomplished gentleman.

Cosmopolitanism as a signifier of polite metropolitan gentlemanliness and cultural refinement in the period of 1690 to 1784 took its origins from the study of classical Roman philosophy. The concept of the cosmopolite, or citizen of the world, originated in Stoic philosophy and was born out of a belief in the universal humanity and commonality of mankind.<sup>192</sup> Interpretations of what it meant to embody these ideals altered between generations. In the lifetime of Rogers, cosmopolitanism was understood, not simply as a belief in the equality of mankind but rather, as a rational and reasoned approach to the

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<sup>190</sup> Lawrence E. Klein, 'Coffee-House Civility, 1660-1714: An Aspect of Post-Courtly Culture in England', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 59 (1997), pp. 31-51

<sup>191</sup> Vaughn Scribner, 'Cosmopolitan Colonists, Gentleman's Pursuit of Cosmopolitanism and Hierarchy in British American Taverns', *Atlantic Studies*, 10 (2013) pp. 467-496 (p. 470-471).

<sup>192</sup> Martha, C. Nussbaum, 'Kant and Stoic Cosmopolitanism', p. 15; Mary Helen McMurrin, 'The New Cosmopolitanism and the Eighteenth Century', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 47 (2013), pp. 19-38 (P. 7).

study of the world and Britain's role within it. It re-emerged, Gerald Newman argues, as 'a secular ideal in Renaissance humanism, the renewed study of Stoic doctrines, the spread of global exploration, and the tendency to man-in-general theorizing that was greatly strengthened by the Scientific Revolution'.<sup>193</sup> It also drove attempts to trace a common European history, as Karen O'Brien's seminal work demonstrates, through philosophical and antiquarian study.<sup>194</sup> Attempts to develop a unified understanding of mankind and the world through science stems from seventeenth-century Enlightenment writings by Francis Bacon which sought to combine a philosophical approach with emerging scientific theory and the study of the natural world. Cosmopolitanism in this period, whilst underpinned by the philosophical ideals of a universal humanity that transcends local divisions and loyalties, was better enacted as a demonstration of polite sociability and interest in the other cultures, people and lands rather than a desire to occupy a harmonious and equal world.<sup>195</sup>

The adoption of polite cosmopolitanism was intertwined with the influence of French culture (perceived to embody cosmopolitanism) on Britain in the early-eighteenth century. In the first half of the eighteenth century, French culture held a strong sway over Britain with frequent travel and established routes for trade and commerce taking place between the two countries. Travel between the nations resulted in an influx of French literature and philosophical thought in the form of Voltaire, Montesquieu and Denis Diderot, and the emulation of French polite mannerisms by the aristocracy and, increasingly, the emergent middle classes. Between approximately 1710 and 1770, England was in the grips of what has frequently been termed as Francophilia.<sup>196</sup> Despite the recurrent conflict between the two nations, Paris was held up as an exemplar of polite cosmopolitan society. To proponents of polite society, their mannerisms and fashions including the art of conversation were perceived as being of the highest quality and refinement. As Michele Cohen notes, for the eighteenth-century British gentleman to

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<sup>193</sup> Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History, 1740-1830*, p. 3.

<sup>194</sup> Karen O'Brien, *Narratives of Enlightenment: Cosmopolitan History from Voltaire to Gibbon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997).

<sup>195</sup> Margaret Jacob, *Strangers Nowhere in the World: The Rise of Cosmopolitanism in Early Modern Europe* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), p. 1.

<sup>196</sup> Jeremy Black, *The British Abroad: The Grand Tour in the Eighteenth Century* (Stroud: Sutton, 1992), p. 3, pp. 21-23; Eagles, *Francophilia in English Society, 1748-1815*, pp. 3-4; Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History, 1740-1830*, pp. 1-44.



fashion himself as a 'man of conversation', he also had to imitate the best model of polite conversation – the French. The French were believed to have best developed the 'art of pleasing' that lay at the heart of politeness.<sup>197</sup> London was only a microcosm of polite society whilst Paris was the pinnacle of this sophisticated society in which the polite metropolitan gentleman could emphasise his social refinement and suitability for the emerging commercial modern society. It was this form of polite cosmopolitan masculinity that, Cohen argues, emerged as the hegemonic form of masculinity in early-to-mid-eighteenth-century metropolitan London.<sup>198</sup>

A biographical study of the Townsons and Rogers, as drawn from archival evidence, reveals them to have been men who could be classed, in line with the above definition, as polite, cosmopolitan gentlemen. Whilst minimal archival evidence survives to document the lives of the Townsons, Robert Townson's catalogue of books reveals him to have had knowledge of classic Stoic philosophers and Enlightenment writers who espoused the ideals of cosmopolitanism.<sup>199</sup> Likewise, the narrative of the Cottonian, as told by Plymouth City Museum, suggests that William Townson, believed to be the first to contribute to the art holdings of the collection, was likely to have attended London's auction houses and coffee shops thereby participating in a polite cosmopolitan society.<sup>200</sup> The collecting practices of Robert and William Townson shortly prior to and in the immediate years after the 1707 Act of Union were likely influenced by the stirrings of polite society and a move towards the reformation of male manners. This was a process (which drew heavily on neighbouring France's culture) that formed part of the refinement of British society.<sup>201</sup> A refinement that was necessary so as to ensure Britain

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<sup>197</sup> Michèle Cohen, 'Manliness, Effeminacy and the French: Gender and the Construction of National Character in Eighteenth-Century England', in *English Masculinities, 1660-1800* ed. by Tim Hitchcock and Michèle Cohen (London, 1999), pp. 50-51.

<sup>198</sup> Michèle Cohen, "'Manners' Make the Man: Politeness, Chivalry and the Construction of Masculinity, 1750-1830", *Journal of British Studies*, 44 (2005), pp. 312-329. (p.312).

<sup>199</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection, MS Robert Townson: *Catalogue My Bookes*.

<sup>200</sup> The oral history of the Cottonian Collection as told by Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery portrays William Townson as involved in London polite society, although there is no archival proof that I have come across to support this theory.

<sup>201</sup> Robert Shoemaker, 'Reforming Male Manners: Public Insult and the Decline of Violence in London, 1660-1740', in *English Masculinities 1600-1800*, ed. by Tim Hitchcock and Michele Cohen (London; New York: Longman, 1999), p. 149; Elizabeth Foyster, 'Boys will be Boys? Manhood and Aggression, 1660-1800', in *English Masculinities 1600-1800*, ed. by Tim Hitchcock and Michele Cohen (London; New York: Longman, 1999), p. 166.

was well-suited for the role it would come to adopt in the eighteenth century as a major contender for global power and as a leading commercial and trading nation.

It is Charles Rogers, however, whose archival remains provide the clearest picture of a polite cosmopolitan gentleman and an active participant in London's cultural society. A study of his surviving correspondence reveals a knowledge of classical philosophy and antiquities – all of which was self-taught as is evidenced by his obituary in *The Gentleman's Magazine*.<sup>202</sup> He was a regular attendee of London's coffee-houses and auction rooms where he met with fellow collectors.<sup>203</sup> Further to this, Rogers was employed at the London Custom House where, as I discuss in due course, his role gave him oversight of all imported goods entering London. There is also evidence of a cosmopolitan interest in the outside world, as demonstrated not only by his letters to friends travelling abroad (although he never travelled himself) and an interest in the cultures they experience, but through the collection's holdings of a large number of travelogues, Indian Moghul prints, exotic woods from Asia, South America and the South Sea Islands and shells (which no longer form part of the collection). His interest is further evidenced by his fellowship of the Royal Society and the Society of Antiquaries where he published papers on the Ancient Roman occupation of Britain.<sup>204</sup> The impression of Rogers drawn from both a biographical study and an examination of his contributions to the collection overwhelmingly suggests a cultured, educated and socially refined gentleman who embodied the epitome of the cosmopolitan polite gentleman.

As the first section of this chapter demonstrates, in the early-to-mid-eighteenth century Britain's relationship with France was not dictated solely by animosity. Far from uniting the nation in opposition to French, there were variations in feelings amongst sections of British society and these feelings could change depending on the current political situation between the two countries. Many of the metropolitan elite inhabiting polite society embraced aspects of French culture. The 1740s and 50s are often regarded as a period in which Gallomania and when a love of all things French (including a cosmopolitan spirit) characterised the upper classes.<sup>205</sup> Eagles observes that 'aristocratic

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<sup>202</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine* (1784)

<sup>203</sup> Lippencott, *Selling Art in Georgian London* pp. 28-29; pp. 122-123.

<sup>204</sup> GB 117/ The Royal Society EC/1757/13.

<sup>205</sup> Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History 1740-1830*, p. 50.

Francophilia, and cosmopolitanism were powerful and dominant in the years leading up to the French Revolution' and whilst they 'may not have been the sole cultural blue prints [...] the position of France, and the Rococo, the influence of Voltaire, and Macaronidom were vibrant and influential; as influential as John Bull and roast Beef, or Protestantism and commercial freedoms.'<sup>206</sup> This is a view shared by Newman who concurs that, 'Prior to the French Revolution, the culture of Europe's upper classes was indeed marred by a cosmopolitan sentiment. A spirit of worldly sophistication and tolerance, a genuine attachment to international ideals of reason, progress and civilized behaviour'.<sup>207</sup>

However, the adoption of French styles of politeness did not signify an entirely harmonious relationship between the two nations. Concerns about the effeminising effect of French culture required a moderation of British and French character values. The figure of the fop – a parody of a man who has followed advice for achieving politeness to the extreme and has become effeminate and frenchified – 'embodies both the dilemma and the danger of politeness: in becoming polite, one risked forfeiting one's identity as *English* and as a *man* and becoming "all outside, no inside"'.<sup>208</sup> Michéle Cohen argues that it was not politeness that was at issue, but the relation of politeness to the French that was cause for concern.<sup>209</sup> Furthermore, politeness and its association with a commercial metropolitan society was implicated in concerns about the degenerative effects of excessive consumerism and luxury. In the mid-eighteenth century with the growth of the domestic commercial society and Britain's need to reaffirm her status as a contender for global imperial power, there was a move to establish a British form of polite masculinity that found an equilibrium between politeness and effeminacy. In light of this, I now turn to an examination of the importance of mercantilism and commercial success, particularly in relation to the Townsons and Rogers' employment at the London Custom House, in defining their sense of Britishness and what it meant to be a member of the British metropolitan elite in the eighteenth century.

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<sup>206</sup> Eagles, *Francophilia in English Society, 1748-1815*, p. 4.

<sup>207</sup> Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History 1740-1830*, p. 50.

<sup>208</sup> Cohen, 'Manliness, Effeminacy and the French: Gender and the Construction of National Character in Eighteenth-Century England', p. 51.

<sup>209</sup> Cohen, 'Manliness, Effeminacy and the French: Gender and the Construction of National Character', p. 52.

## Enlightenment Cosmopolitanism and the British Empire

In the following section I examine the relationship between polite Enlightenment cosmopolitanism – as embodied by Charles Rogers – and growth of the British Imperial ambitions in the period of 1690 to 1784. In order to do so, it is necessary to explore the nature of these ambitions, which were intrinsically linked to ideas of Britishness in the eighteenth century, and the role of London (the home and workplace of the Cottonian men) as the bureaucratic centre of British overseas activity. Britain, in the eighteenth century, underwent a significant transformation as the country transitioned from a rural agricultural society to a commercial and international society. This period was defined by the Industrial Revolution which saw domestic manufacturing and production increase, thereby resulting in a rise of British exports; an agricultural revolution which improved the efficiency of the land and helped to feed a growing population; and overseas territorial expansion and the opening up of trading links and markets with European and non-European partners. At home, society experienced a consumer boom fuelled by the import of luxury goods and a growing market amongst the emergent urban middle class population. Furthermore, the development of a sophisticated system of bureaucratic administration resulted in the consolidation of Government control of commerce and financial growth. The intellectual sphere also experienced growth spurred on by advances in geographical exploration, scientific investigation and technological invention.<sup>210</sup> As an ‘England-centric Great Britain’ came into being, London emerged as the ‘administrative, financial, scientific, and cultural hub’<sup>211</sup>.

London, as Britain’s gatekeeper with the world beyond its shore, could therefore be described as a cosmopolitan centre of cultural exchange and intellectual thought. Writing in 1711, Joseph Addison (under the pseudonym of Mr. Spectator) famously describes the London Royal Exchange as so:

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<sup>210</sup> David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Community, 1735-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 32; Paul Langford, *Eighteenth-Century Britain, 1688-1815* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2002; 1<sup>st</sup> ed 1976); Paul Langford, *A Polite and Commercial People* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005; 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 1989); Jeremy Black, *Eighteenth-Century Britain, 1688-1783* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2008; 1<sup>st</sup> ed. 2001).

<sup>211</sup> Suvir Kaul, *Eighteenth-Century British Literature and Postcolonial Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 4.

rich an Assembly of Countrymen and Foreigners consulting together upon the private Business of Mankind, and making this Metropolis a kind of *Emporium* for the whole Earth.<sup>212</sup>

Here he finds himself 'joustled among a body of Armenians [...] lost in a Crowd of Jews [...] and sometimes make one in a Groupe of Dutchmen.'<sup>213</sup> Within the walls of the exchange, nationalities and religions mingled and conducted business. Merchants from different nations (although predominantly European) met to trade in the heart of the city of London. A melting pot of nationalities, religion, languages and customs, the exchange came to be seen, in the prevalent Whig ideology espoused by *The Spectator*, as a place where sociability between nations and individuals could be fostered. This sociability, a consequence of international trade and mercantilism, had the potential to overcome the obstacles of customs, habits and national and religious prejudices. Within the exchange, Addison writes that a man could fancy himself to be 'like the old Philosopher, who upon being asked what Countryman he was, replied, That he was a Citizen of the World'.<sup>214</sup> Located only a stones-throw from the Laurence Pountney Lane home of Robert and William Townson and, later, Charles Rogers, the Royal Exchange stood as the epitome and heart of Enlightenment cosmopolitanism and the location where it had the most potential to be fully realised.

Whilst the study of the British Empire and Imperialism has received much attention by scholars, the focus has overwhelmingly centred on overseas activity and warfare.<sup>215</sup> The response of the British population and the domestic systems in place at home have received less attention. However, there existed a close affinity between domestic activity and colonial territorial expansion which was reliant upon a strong domestic economy and administrative system. Not least, a sense of Britishness became intertwined with economic success generated by both domestic and overseas commercial activity. There were, therefore, Kathleen Wilson argues, 'strong material reasons for ordinary English

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<sup>212</sup> Joseph Addison; Richard Steele, *The Spectator*. 19<sup>th</sup> May 1711.

<sup>213</sup> Joseph Addison; Richard Steele, *The Spectator*. 19<sup>th</sup> May 1711.

<sup>214</sup> Joseph Addison; Richard Steele, *The Spectator*. 19<sup>th</sup> May 1711.

<sup>215</sup> Kenneth Andrews, *Trade, Plunder and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire, 1480-1630* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Daniel A. Baugh, *The Global Seven Years' War 1754-1763: Britain and France in a great power contest* (Harlow: Longman, 2011); John M. Merriman, *A History of Modern Europe: From the Renaissance to the Present* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010).

people to be vividly interested in imperial affairs'. Trade and consumerism, the funding of war through taxation (and the resulting national debt) were all necessary for overseas colonialization and 'even the most humble citizens were drawn into the imperial effort, however distant or immediate that effort may have seemed.'<sup>216</sup> It is impossible, therefore, to separate British colonial expansion from domestic activities – the consumerism and cultural activities of literature, art, collecting and architecture – taking place in eighteenth-century London.

The importance of a domestic structure that supported British overseas colonial endeavours is evident in a biographical study of the Townsons and Rogers who, despite never travelling abroad, played a crucial role in the system. The three men were all employed in turn at the London Custom House as Chief Clerk of Certificates Inwards. Their role at the Custom House – the bureaucratic engine room of British international trade and commerce – involved the overseeing and appropriate taxation of all imports entering the port of London. This inherited role (the position was occupied by each of the three men shortly after the death of his predecessor) would have provided a detailed knowledge of British commercial practices. This included an awareness of the types of goods being imported for the commercial market and an intimate knowledge of the mechanisms of international trade.<sup>217</sup>

Their knowledge of these systems is reflected in the handful of titles (mainly rule and guide books) regarding the operations of the port which can be found in the collection including Richard Hayes's *Rules for the Port of London* (1765) and John Evelyn's thesis on *Navigation and Commerce* (1674). Furthermore, their responsibility for ensuring the taxation of imported goods implicated them in British Imperial expansion. The taxing of goods entering the port generated revenue which was, in turn, used by the government to finance their colonial activities. This included investment in the Navy so as to protect essential trading routes and ensure victory in the near-continual warfare with European competitors; the exploration of the Southern hemisphere, mainly as an opportunity for scoping out further colonial outposts; and the exploitation of colonised states and their

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<sup>216</sup> Kathleen Wilson 'Empire of Virtue: The Imperial Project and Hanoverian Culture c. 1720-1785', *An Imperial State at War: Britain from 1689 to 1815* ed. by Lawrence Stone (London; New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 128-164 (p. 129).

<sup>217</sup> Hoon, *The Organization of the English Custom System: 1696-1786*, p. 198.

indigenous populations.<sup>218</sup> Their role, therefore, saw them become part of a metropolitan business elite that profited from Britain's oppressive colonial practices and empire building whilst simultaneously affording them the opportunity, paradoxically, to engage in polite cosmopolitan consumer behaviour, namely through the formation of a collection of art and literature.

The cosmopolitanism and sociability celebrated by Addison in his description of the Royal Exchange concealed, however, a darker undercurrent. The trade and commerce which fostered its appearance was only possible through warfare, colonial advancement and the exploitation of other countries' natural resources and indigenous population. Cosmopolitanism demonstrated through polite sociability was, therefore, paradoxically reliant upon oppressive acts of imperialism. Scribner argues that whilst cosmopolites continued to tout humanistic origins of cosmopolitanism, it could also be used as a tool of control, the reinforcement of nationality and exclusivity. An eighteenth-century understanding of cosmopolitanism could quite comfortably incorporate ideas of social exclusion and national superiority as much, if not more so, than their desire for a wider humanism.<sup>219</sup> The ideals of a humanist cosmopolitanism could be applied selectively depending on the nationality of the people encountered. For example, Northern Europeans were, with some exceptions, considered to be of intellectual and cultural equals to the British. The indigenous populations in the southern hemisphere or northern America however were, more often than not, perceived as savages and uncivilised (despite the recurrent popularity of the figure of the noble savage).<sup>220</sup> Even the sophisticated empires of China, Japan, and the Ottoman Empire, whilst acknowledged as being culturally refined, were frequently portrayed as morally corrupt and socially inferior.<sup>221</sup> The ideals of cosmopolitanism could be used, therefore, to emphasise British superiority.

An aggressive foreign policy was intrinsic to the formation of the Cottonian Collection and the lives of Robert and William Townson and Charles Rogers. The colonisation that

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<sup>218</sup> Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, pp. 25-31.

<sup>219</sup> Scribner, 'Cosmopolitan Colonists, Gentleman's Pursuit of Cosmopolitanism and Hierarchy in British American Taverns', p. 468.

<sup>220</sup> Roxann Wheeler, *The Complexion of Race: Categories of Difference in Eighteenth-Century British Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), pp. 35-36.

<sup>221</sup> Kaul, *Eighteenth-Century British Literature and Postcolonial Studies*, p. 7.

supported the rise of the commercial society, their employment at the Custom House and the networks of trade that facilitated their collecting practices was only possible through British oppression of the colonies. This oppression included the exploitation of colonised nations' natural resources and indigenous populations and continued conflict with other European colonial powers so as to maintain British overseas dominance. Whilst there is little explicit engagement with colonialism in the collection, a handful of passing references to the slave trade can be found amongst Rogers' correspondences. For example, a letter from P. Collinson dated 1768 makes reference to a proposed scheme for the use of older slaves and white servants on a South Carolina silk farm:

I find by my Letter so long ago as anno 1728. I proposed to the Govenor & Council of So'th Carolina to encourage the raising of Silke to give a Bounty - & make the produce the Ladies property as She would superintend the Employment of Old & Young Female Negroes, & Boyes, & Ancient White Servants - all these being capable to Manage Silk Worms, who Otherwise are so Load on a Family, in this Employe they would Maintain themselves & put something besides in their Mistresses Pocket - this plan was approved by the assembly & a Bounty was Order'd, - But Wether from Indolence & Lasiness the Epidemic Evil of Hot Countries - or from the great attachment the planters had for increasing their Rice plantations the raising of Silk made little or no progress, until at last was quite neglected.<sup>222</sup>

The only other instance in the archive that hints towards the slave trade are a series of letters between Rogers and two acquaintances - Edward Mann and William Blydon - regarding Mann's claim to inheritance of land in Tortola, British Virgin Islands.<sup>223</sup> Whilst not explicitly stated, it is highly likely that the land in question was farmed using slave labour. Despite the few references to British overseas activity, there is no doubting that the money that funded the formation of the Cottonian Collection stemmed, albeit vicariously, from British involvement in the African slave trade.

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<sup>222</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Correspondence of Charles Rogers, 345. From P. Collinson, 1768.

<sup>223</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Correspondence of Charles Rogers, 345. Letters between Rogers, and Edward Mann, Mary Mann, and William Blydon. 17/4/1775, 8/1/1776, 18/10/1776, 23/10/1776.



British dominance of trade routes and territorial control was reliant upon near-continuous warfare. From 1701 and the beginning of the Wars of Spanish Succession through to 1763, Britain was at war near-continuously with France, Spain and the Netherlands with allegiances changing depending on the conflict. Public support for the wars was maintained through propaganda that portrayed the imperial project as a patriotic one. Wilson argues that British overseas activity was depicted as ‘Simultaneously libertarian and mercantilist, this conceptualization of empire celebrated an aggressive imperial presence and flourishing colonies as bulwarks of trade, power, liberty and virtue for Britons at home and abroad.’<sup>224</sup> War was vital therefore to maintain imperial dominance and this, in turn, was only possible through a thriving economy.<sup>225</sup> Britain emerged by the 1740s and 50s as a military-fiscal state whereby investment in the navy was necessary to protect trading routes, and trade was necessary in order to fuel the economy and fund the navy.<sup>226</sup> The territorial warfare that ensued saw the redistribution of colonies during the mid-eighteenth century as the European powers sought to claim dominance over colonised lands and trading routes.

In much the same way as the brutality of slavery, war forms a backdrop against which the domestic lives of the Cottonian collectors and the formation of the collection took place. Writing from France in February 1756, Horatio Paul informs Rogers that:

I am at this instance extremely hurried by the circumstance in wh. I find myself. The King has just given out an order to oblige all the English to leave France before the 13. next month., this is but a short warning so that I am wholly taken up with different affairs & have not a minute to myself.<sup>227</sup>

In this instance, conflict with France in what would come to be known as the Seven Years’ War resulted in the expulsion of all Britons from France. The effect of this on the Cottonian and Rogers’ life results in a delay in Horatio being able to send Rogers’ prints purchased for him due to having to flee the country. In the following year, W. Adams writes to inform Rogers that:

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<sup>224</sup> Wilson, ‘Empire of Virtue: The Imperial Project and Hanoverian Culture’, p. 144.

<sup>225</sup> John Brewer, *The Sinews of Power: War, Money and the English State 1688-1783* (London: Unwin Hyman Ltd, 1989), p. 179.

<sup>226</sup> Brewer, *The Sinews of Power*, p. 135.

<sup>227</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Correspondence of Charles Rogers, 345. From Horatio Paul, 24/2/1756.

The Ship sailed from hence the 31<sup>st</sup> August in company with 7 or 8 others, under the convoy of a Man of War. Capt Bushell is to be met with at Sams or Wills coffeeshouse near the exchange.<sup>228</sup>

Adams' letter reveals two things: firstly, it provides commentary on the wartime situation whereby trading vessels between France and Britain must sail in convoy and with protection from the navy. Secondly, it reveals the inconvenience of war on Rogers' life as it likely caused delay again to his receiving or prints. Later in the same letter, Adam writes asking about the political situation in London:

I do not know how you Gentlemen in Town relish the Cockle Shell expedition of our Army, but the Politicians in this Place are greatly alarmed at it, and Mr Pitt begins a Letter to a Correspondent of his, with assuring him that his heart is broke; He then proceeds to observe the defenceless condition of the French Coast, affirming that if they had landed directly they must have destroyed their Shipping and Magazines and greatly distressed them; whereas they trifled away their time, and sailed on the 29<sup>th</sup>: Without once attempting to land or to execute their orders. His Letter is exposed at the Book-Sellers Shops to be perused by all who have an inclination. I should be glad to know in what light the City considers this affair.<sup>229</sup>

The signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1763 saw Britain claim victory in the Seven Years' war. Having defeated France and Spain, Britain emerged as the world's largest military and colonial power. Britain's colonial size witnessed a five-fold increase and a redrawing of colonial boundaries as France conceded most of North America east of the Mississippi along with large parts of India and the West Indies.<sup>230</sup> Peace did not last long, however, and the 1775-83 American Revolution signalled the onset of renewed fighting and a shift in momentum. This was the first time that the population of a colony had rebelled against their British control, although supported by other colonial powers of France and Spain, and showed the limits of British power. It resulted in a loss of overseas territory and was

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<sup>228</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Correspondence of Charles Rogers 345. From W. Adam, 15/10/1757.

<sup>229</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Correspondence of Charles Rogers, 345. From W. Adam, 15/10/1757.

<sup>230</sup> Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, p. 25.

also the only war that Britain lost in the eighteenth century. Writing from Tortola, William Blyden makes reference to war with America and the battle for Quebec:

I make no doubt you will have heard of the good news are this come to hand, for Carleton has gained Compleat Victory over the Provincials he has Killed Eight hundred and taken three hundred Prisoners with this Defate, and the arrival of Troops I hope we shall have maters settled by the fall, we are well supply'd heir from Europe so that we can't complain as yet.<sup>231</sup>

The effect of the loss of the thirteen American colonies has been debated by historians. In some respect it has been seen as a massive blow to the British resulting in a loss of confidence in Britain's power. On the other hand, it saw a re-directing of attention towards exploration and control of other areas of the globe – namely the Southern hemisphere and India and Asia. From a financial and military position, whilst resulting in a large national debt, Britain was able to fight another long war with France less than ten years later. However, as Chapter Four will demonstrate, this was an altogether different type of war than that experienced by Britain before.

Despite the near-continual conflict with France and periods of heightened Francophobia, British national character in the early-to-mid-eighteenth century was characterised by a coming-together of polite cosmopolitanism – infused with Francophilia – and a growing sense of British imperial power and success. Therefore, for the Townsons and Rogers inhabiting metropolitan London during this period, it seems likely that they would have understood British national character as one defined by growing commercial power and dominance, but which retained a sense of cultural inferiority in comparison to their European neighbours.

## A Cosmopolitan Collection: The Cottonian Collection and the Empire

Having outlined the inter-connectedness of polite cosmopolitanism and British colonial expansion in the formation of a national character, I now turn to address the effect of the coming-together of these two eighteenth-century phenomena on the contents of the Cottonian Collection. In order to do so, I first examine the manner in which the Cottonian

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<sup>231</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Correspondence of Charles Rogers, 345. From William Blyden, 6/7/1776.

was shaped and formed by trading networks. I then move to scrutinise the literary holdings of the collection as a commentary on eighteenth-century British cosmopolitan and imperial society. Exploration of the holdings focuses around the representation of two central themes in the collection: travelogues and antiquarian studies.

As discussed in the first section of this chapter, polite Enlightenment cosmopolitanism required the display of learning and knowledge of the natural world and its history, classical philosophy and current events. However, as this section demonstrates, travelogues and antiquarian and historical studies went further than this in their attempts to drive a cosmopolitan pursuit of understanding the world (and Britain's place within it) or, as Mary Pratt terms it, a 'planetary consciousness'.<sup>232</sup> They also presented the opportunity to reflect on the complex anxieties that the growth of empire and commercial society generated – the stages of human civilisation, the possible degenerative effects of commerce and luxury and the precarious nature of their own society. For men such as Rogers who never left England's shores but whose life was intricately connected to British imperial ambition, the study of the documentation of newly-discovered lands and people and the rise and fall of ancient Rome offered a point of comparison whereby notions of Britishness could be defined. In doing so, it was possible to reflect on the means by which to navigate an emerging commercial and increasingly global society. Close examination of Townsons and Rogers' treatment of these two themes therefore provides an insight into the global reach of the Cottonian. In doing so it furthers understanding of the inter-connected relationship between book collecting, notions of polite gentlemanliness and the growing empire in the early-to-mid-eighteenth century.

Foreign trade was intrinsic to the formation of the collection in two key ways. Firstly, by generating the income through their employment at the Custom House with which the Cottonian men were able to purchase items. Secondly, it provided a means of facilitating the collecting process and enabling objects to be imported into the country. Many of the prints, drawings, and some books, along with the wood used to construct the bookcases entered the collection through pathways maintained by international trade and

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<sup>232</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York; Abingdon: Routledge, 2008), p.4.

commerce. For instance, the bookcases are constructed from woods imported from Indonesia, South American and North American thereby making them both scientific specimens and physical evidence of colonial trade networks. Furthermore, Adam Bowett argues that it is likely that it was through Rogers' position at the Custom House that he was able to obtain the Indonesian yellow wood and other specimens of imported timber. Rogers' purchase of exotic woods obtained through his employment at the Custom House demonstrates the importance of both colonial trade networks and Rogers' role in the administration of these networks in facilitating his collecting practices.<sup>233</sup>

Equally, the mechanics of the mercantile system enabled the transmission of goods between friends on the continent and Rogers in London. For example, Rogers' friend, Horatio Paul, employs the captain of a ship sailing from France (it is assumed that he would have been paid to do so) to carry and deposit a number of prints sent for Rogers at St. James's Coffee-House where Rogers is then able to send for their collection.<sup>234</sup> A more detailed knowledge of the import system (and the manner in which to subvert the legal processes) is evident in an earlier letter from Horatio. Horatio responds to Rogers' request for leather and marble paper – presumably to be used for book binding:

By the first person that will take charge of them you'll receive the green morocco leather & some French marble paper, but, as these things are contrebande M. Selwin will get some of his acquaintances to carry them over for you.<sup>235</sup>

Not only does Horatio use merchants and sailors to convey goods to England from France but, in August 1754 with the onset of hostilities between Britain and France, these items were deemed contraband and he is forced to find an alternative method of importing them into London. In doing so, however, he is attempting to avoid the very channels of taxation and confiscation that Rogers' role at the Custom House required him to oversee. Trade was, therefore, intrinsic to the formation of the Cottonian Collection. Through their employment at the Custom House it provided the Cottonian men with a salary funded by the profits of trade and brought goods into the country for them to buy using their

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<sup>233</sup> Adam Bowett, 'Furniture for a Connoisseur: The Cottonian Bookcases and Other Furniture, 1670-1853', *Historic Furniture in The Cottonian Collection: A Concise Catalogue* (Plymouth: Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery, 2014), pp. 15-16.

<sup>234</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Correspondence of Charles Rogers, 345. To Horatio Paul, 9/4/1756.

<sup>235</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Correspondence of Charles Rogers, 345. From Horatio Paul, 5/8/1754.

salaries, thus connecting the Cottonian with the outside world. Furthermore, the placement of Rogers, and the Townsons before him, at the Custom House enabled them to navigate the complexities of the system so as to facilitate their collecting practices.

The representation of travelogues in the Cottonian Collection echoes the relevance of overseas trade and commerce for the lives of the metropolitan business elite and mercantile classes. Approximately one-fifth of the collection's current holdings comprise of travel narratives and travelogues documenting European-led exploration of the globe. Dating from the early-seventeenth century, the majority of these works were purchased by Charles Rogers with an increased number entering the collection in the last fifteen years of his life.<sup>236</sup> The influx of these works from the 1760s onwards was partly a reflection of the growing popularity of travel writing. Whilst travel writing was not a new genre – works documenting voyages to the New World were published from the sixteenth century onwards – increased exploration of the Southern hemisphere, coupled with the growth of the print industry, thereby increasing the production and accessibility of books, along with an increase in the reading public saw a growing demand for travelogues.<sup>237</sup> In the period of Rogers' custodianship, travel writing was a popular genre and throughout the eighteenth century gentleman were 'advised that travel literature provided "the chief materials to furnish out a library", according to the third Earl of Shaftsbury', and their popularity soared.'<sup>238</sup> As Paul Smethurst observes, 'Exploration narratives were in high demand in a period of colonial exploration'.<sup>239</sup> Those works within the Cottonian which fall under the genre of travel narratives include the documentation of voyages of discovery which chart the new territories encountered through global exploration. Alongside these are the more mundane guidebooks of European cities (namely those of Italy and France) aimed at the Grand Tour tourist or, in the case of Rogers, those who wished to capture some of the experience of the Grand Tour without leaving Britain's shores.

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<sup>236</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Charles Rogers' Purchase Records, 347.

<sup>237</sup> Evi Mitsi, "Nowhere is a Place": Travel Writing in Sixteenth-Century England', *Literature Compass* (2005), pp. 1-13. (pp. 1-4); St Clair, *The Reading Nation*, p. 233.

<sup>238</sup> Brian Dolan, *Exploring European Frontiers: British Travellers in the Age of Enlightenment* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd, 2000), p. 161.

<sup>239</sup> Paul Smethurst, *Travel Writing and the Natural World, 1768-1840* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p.5.

Amongst Rogers purchases can be found travelogues recording the great sea voyages of exploration such as the first two works documenting the voyages of Captain James Cook (the final edition being added by William Cotton II), and *Voyages towards North Pole* by G.J. Phillipp (1774). Older narratives of exploration were also purchased including George Anson *Voyage Around the World* (1748), Thomas Wright, *The Famous Voyage of Francis Drake with particular account of his Expedition in the West Indies* (1742) and a French travelogue by Nicolas de Nicolay, *Les Navigations, peregrinations et voyages faicts en la Turquie* (1576). Increasingly, particularly towards the latter part of the century, there was a move towards the exploration of the interiors of lands as are documented in *Travels in Asia Minor* by Richard Chandler (1774) and *Chandler's Travels through Interior Parts of North America* (1778).

The motivation for voyages of exploration was twofold. On the one hand they were driven by imperial and colonial ambition to seek out new territories for exploitation. On the other hand, they were part of the Enlightenment and cosmopolitan drive to explore humankind and the wider world. These two aims saw science become yoked to commercial enterprise in the eighteenth century with travellers and merchants, embarking on commercial ventures, returning with raw data and accounts of the lands and people they had encountered.<sup>240</sup> The accumulation of scientific data was part of the broader Enlightenment project to determine a universal natural history of the world and mankind. In doing so, it included the systematising and cataloguing of plants, insects, animals, climates, mapping of the seas and landmasses, and the indigenous populations encountered on these voyages. Increasingly commercial colonialisation became voyages of both trade and commerce and of exploration charting and mapping the world and the people and habitats encountered.

One such work in the collection, Maria Sibylla Merian's *Plante de Surin et de l'Europe* (1701) captures the European Enlightenment drive to categorise and systematise the natural world. In June 1699 Merian – a pioneering German entomologist – set sail for the embattled Dutch colony of Suriname with the aim of studying the stages of metamorphosis in the insects of the rainforests. It has been argued that Merian's voyage

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<sup>240</sup> Anna Neill, *British Discovery Literature and the Rise of Global Commerce* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 6.

was one of the first to be undertaken purely for entomological purposes and was void of political and commercial motivations.<sup>241</sup> Merian's two volume work, written in Dutch, contains vivid and colourful illustrations of the insects. Her work, alongside Carl Linnaeus' system for cataloguing organisms, *Systema Naturae* (1735) and George Louis Leclerc, Comte de Buffon's study of natural history, formed part of an Enlightenment attempt to order and categorise the natural world according to Northern European principles. Rogers' purchase of Merian's work along with other systematic cataloguing works such as Emanuel Mendes da Costa's *Natural History of Fossils* (1757), George Edwards and Carl Linnaeus' *A Catalogue of the Birds in Edwards' Natural History* (1758) and John Woodward's *An Essay towards the Natural History of the Earth and Terrestrial Bodies* (1702) demonstrates the convergence of travel and scientific enquiry in the pursuit of a universal understanding of the natural world.

In some respects, the Northern European venture to map the natural history of the world had the potential to transcend local affinities and rivalries between nations in the pursuit of knowledge. The Royal Society, of which Rogers was a fellow, bestowed honorary fellowships on French explorers and it was possible for natural historians to work with their compatriots in other European cities and to share their knowledge of the natural world without subverting national allegiances. Commercial colonialism thus fostered both a cosmopolitan drive for the creation of universal sciences alongside economic nationalism. The opportunities fostered by the coming-together of science and economic nationalism was, Neill argues, first proposed by Francis Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* – a title purchased by Robert Townson. Bacon argued that it was possible for the two to co-exist but the pursuit of scientific knowledge could never override the competition among nations as the main impetus behind global exploration remained the European project of colonisation and overseas expansion.<sup>242</sup>

However, whilst furthering European understanding and categorisation of the natural world, travelogues offered British metropolitan readers the opportunity to reflect on their place in the world. As exploration extended to the South Seas, the interior of Africa and South America, so too were greater numbers of indigenous populations encountered.

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<sup>241</sup> Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert, 'Maria Sibylla Merian: The Dawn of Field Ecology in the Forests of Suriname, 1699-1701', *Review: Literature and Arts of the Americas*, 45 (2012), pp. 10-20 (pp.10-12).

<sup>242</sup> Neill, *British Discovery Literature*, p. 7.



Detailed reports of the customs, habits, appearance, weapons and tools, and hierarchical systems of the indigenous people were increasingly recorded by European travellers offering a point of comparison for British readers between their own society and those of non-Europeans. Neil argues that reports of these encounters saw 'cultural and political transactions take place on both sides of the colonial equation.'<sup>243</sup> Greater awareness, observation and discussion of the native people of distant lands, such as those which begin to take place in George Anson's *Voyage Around the World* (1748), raised questions about notions of human evolutionary development, stages of civilisation, and ideas of nationhood. As Mary Pratt observes, 'scientific exploration was to become a focus of intense public interest, and a source of some of the most powerful ideational and ideological apparatuses through which European citizenries related themselves to other parts of the world.'<sup>244</sup>

In their attempt to categorise the new cultures and landmasses encountered in pursuit of commercial colonialism, new evolutionary theories of social development began to emerge. Climate theory and stadial (termed conjectural histories in the 1790s) models emerged with the three or four-stage theory, as exemplified by Scottish Enlightenment philosophers including Adam Smith, Adam Ferguson, and John Millar, gaining precedence from the 1750s onwards. The theory sought to explain the societal development of mankind according to a universal history of progress. It was argued by philosophers, most notably Adam Smith in *Wealth of Nations*, that the history of mankind passed through four distinct stages of development: hunter-gatherer, pastoral, agricultural, and the age of commerce.<sup>245</sup> Eighteenth-century Britons having reached the final commercial stage characterised by 'improvement in arts and commerce', the division of labour and the transition from an agricultural to an urban environment had reached the final stage of the civilisation process.<sup>246</sup> Whilst the work of Smith, Ferguson, and Millar are not represented in the Cottonian Collection, it seems unlikely that Rogers would have been unaware of this increasingly popular theory, particularly given his involvement with the

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<sup>243</sup> Neill, *British Discovery Literature*, p. 1.

<sup>244</sup> Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, p. 23.

<sup>245</sup> In the *Wealth of Nations*, Adam Smith describes the four stages of human development. Although he does not explicitly state that one follows the other, he describes each state as more advanced than its predecessor. Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. by R. H. Campbell and A.S. Skinner (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), VI.x.a, p. 116; VI.xb pp. 117-134.

<sup>246</sup> Karen O'Brien, *Narratives of the Enlightenment*, p. 133.

Royal Society. It is entirely plausible, therefore, that works which discussed such theories were removed from the collection by Cotton III in 1839 at a time when theories of evolution had progressed beyond conjectural models.

The four-stage theory offered a means of interpreting and organising the wealth of new scientific data and observations of people and societies that was being reported by returning travellers. Travelogues and the reports from explorers, merchants and travellers seemed to prove for many contemporary observers the accuracy of the Eurocentric viewpoint of mid-eighteenth-century stage theory. Travellers returning home with descriptions of supposedly primitive hunter-gatherer societies seemed to confirm 'that 'better' societies are more settled and more capable of regular commerce.'<sup>247</sup> In turn, this imbued a sense of superiority within some quarters of polite British society who saw these discoveries as confirmation of their own cultural superiority. As Kaul notes, travelogues played a propagandist role confirming for the British their sense of being a great trading nation and a potentially great colonial power. Even when it was clear that Britain was not the commanding military or commercial power in Europe, or possessed the riches of the Ottoman Empire, or of China or Japan, 'literary writing in a variety of forms argued that Britain had a divine or civilizational mandate to assume global authority or dominance.'<sup>248</sup> The British, having reached the fourth and final stage of human development were best equipped to dominate and control those nations perceived as at lower rungs of civilisation and, in doing so, aided them in their societal advancement.

Cook's account of his encounter with the natives of New Zealand during his second voyage is heavy with imperialist undertones that emphasise the perceived primitiveness of those he encounters. He writes:

That the New Zealanders are cannibals, can no longer be doubted. [...] Few consider what a savage man is in his natural state, and even after he is, in some degrees civilized. The New Zealanders are certainly in some state of civilization; their behaviour to us was manly and mild, shewing, on all occasions, a readiness to oblige. They have some arts among them which they execute with great

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<sup>247</sup> Neill, *British Discovery Literature*, p. 2.

<sup>248</sup> Kaul, *Eighteenth-Century British Literature and Postcolonial Studies*, p.7.

judgement, and unwearied patience; they are far less addicted to thieving than the other islanders of the South Seas; and, I believe, those in the same tribe, or such as are at peace one with another, are strictly honest among themselves. This custom of eating their enemies slain in battle (for I firmly believe they eat the flesh of no others) has, undoubtedly, been handed down to them from the earliest times.<sup>249</sup>

Cook's description, whilst noting the existence of some degree of civilisation as demonstrated through the natives' cultural activities, maintains that the native islanders are at a lower rung of the civilisation process than the British, as is evident through their cannibalism.

However, Cook continues promulgating the four-stage theory of human development and the potentially civilising effects of commerce. He argues that:

if that nation has no manner of connexion or commerce with strangers. For it is by this that the greatest part of the human race has been civilized; an advantage which the New Zealanders, from their situation, never had. An intercourse with foreigners would reform their manners, and polish their savage minds. Or, were they more united under a settled form of government, that would have fewer enemies, consequently this custom [cannibalism] would be less in use, and might in time be forgotten.<sup>250</sup>

Cook's observations reinforce notions of British superiority as being a nation having been exposed to commerce. In alignment with this argument, the savage and cannibalistic Maori of New Zealand would only be able to be civilised through interaction with the superior British colonists who, on their exploration of the Southern hemisphere, bring commerce, trade and, consequently, civilisation to Pacific islanders.

Despite the celebration of commerce and trade in reinforcing superiority of the British according to the four-stage model, the rise of the commercial society generated anxiety amongst some sections of the British population. As Britain became an increasingly commercial society driven by consumerism, so too did concerns arise about the effects of luxury (defined on an economic level as the consumption of non-necessities in a

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<sup>249</sup> James Cook, *A Voyage towards the South Pole, and Round the World*, vol. 1 (1777), p. 245.

<sup>250</sup> Cook, *A Voyage towards the South Pole, and Round the World*, p. 245.

consumer society, but on a moral and philosophical level as denoting ideas of desire, inequality and morality) on the health of society.<sup>251</sup> Debates about luxury, John Sekora argues, were also debates about colonial trade as it was this trade that fuelled domestic Britons' consumerism. Therefore, terms that derived from the expansion of 'commodity culture – consumption, circulation, luxury – became important to debates about Britain as a nation and as an empire.'<sup>252</sup> On the one hand commerce was celebrated for its civilising potential, but on the other it could lead to degeneration, ruin and decline. Sekora argues that these concerns came about because of four principle reasons. Firstly, the emergence of a commercial society, whilst fuelling economic growth, had the potential to blur class boundaries when servants and the lower classes consumed goods above their station. Secondly, as Britain overseas Empire expanded, increasingly parallels were drawn with the ancient Roman Empire and the role played by luxury in its corruption. Thirdly, debates about luxury could be recast into theories of social and historical development and decline from the ancient world to modern society. Finally, luxury became central to articulations of class tensions.<sup>253</sup> Discussions and interactions with the overseas world offered opportunity to engage with these debates. Travelogues with descriptions of indigenous populations encountered and their societal systems offered an opportunity to comment on the benefits and negative consequences of commerce.

For critics of a consumer society, non-European indigenous populations, defined by stadial theory as the lowest rung of human development, the hunter-gatherer, could also be contrasted with British society so as to comment on the potentially negative effects of commerce. In doing so, they tended to draw on cultural primitivism theory using it to criticise aspects of European society. The main impetus of the theory is that the ideal mode of life is thought to be lived by contemporary so-called primitive or savage peoples, distanced from the corruption of modern society either by time or by distance.<sup>254</sup> Overseas exploration during the eighteenth century gave these theories a new credibility

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<sup>251</sup> Christopher J. Berry, *The Idea of Luxury: A Conceptual and Historical Investigation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 126-138.

<sup>252</sup> Kaul, *Eighteenth-Century British Literature and Postcolonial Studies*, p. 85.

<sup>253</sup> John Sekora, *Luxury: The Concept in Western Thought, Eden to Smollett* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1977), pp.2-9.

<sup>254</sup> Armin W. Geertz, 'Can we move beyond Primitivism? On recovering the indigenes of indigenous religions in the academic study of religion', *Beyond Primitivism: Indigenous Religious Traditions and Modernity* ed. by Jacob K. Olupona (New York: Routledge, 2004), p. 39.

through the dystopian idea that the people they encountered – free from commerce, luxury and structure of modern Western society – were happier and more virtuous by right of being closer to nature. Primitivism theory connected indigenous populations encountered with a mythical Golden Age regarded as the beginning of history in which humankind was at its happiest, most innocent and uncorrupted by vice.<sup>255</sup> Within this theory, the largely literary rhetorical device of the Noble Savage (defined as ‘any free or wild being who draws directly from nature virtues which raise doubt about the value of civilisation’) was reborn.<sup>256</sup> The re-emergence of primitivism theory and the use of the Noble Savage was not necessarily a wish to return to an earlier form of civilisation, but rather a point of reflection for Europeans to consider the emergence of their own commercial society and its potentially negative effects.<sup>257</sup>

John Hawkesworth’s narrative of Captain James Cook’s first *Voyage of Discovery* drew upon the image of the Noble Savage in its portrayal of the indigenous populations encountered. The sketches of Cook meeting the people of the Friendly Islands by William Hodges (**Figure 9**) depict the inhabitants dressed as classical figures in togas and robes more reminiscent of ancient Greek or Rome than the Pacific islands. Bernard Smith argues that this selective use of the Noble Savage mode of presentation was not applied indiscriminately, but rather was ‘the result of a conscious aesthetic decision to elevate where the artist felt that elevation was appropriate.’<sup>258</sup> Therefore, in accordance with Smith’s argument, the warm and civilised greeting of Cook’s crew by the people of The Friendly Islands sees them portrayed as classical Roman figures emphasising their affinity with the Golden Age, in accordance with cultural primitivism theory.

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<sup>255</sup> Samuel Clark, *Living without Domination: The Possibility of an Anarchist Utopia* (London; New York: Routledge, 2006), p.34.

<sup>256</sup> Hoxie Neale Fairchild, *The Noble Savage: A Study in Romantic Naturalism* (New York: Russell, 1961), p.2.

<sup>257</sup> Terr Ellingson, *The Myth of the Noble Savage* (California: University of California Press, 2001), p. 46.

<sup>258</sup> Bernard Smith, *Imagining the Pacific in the Wake of the Cook Voyages* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 84.

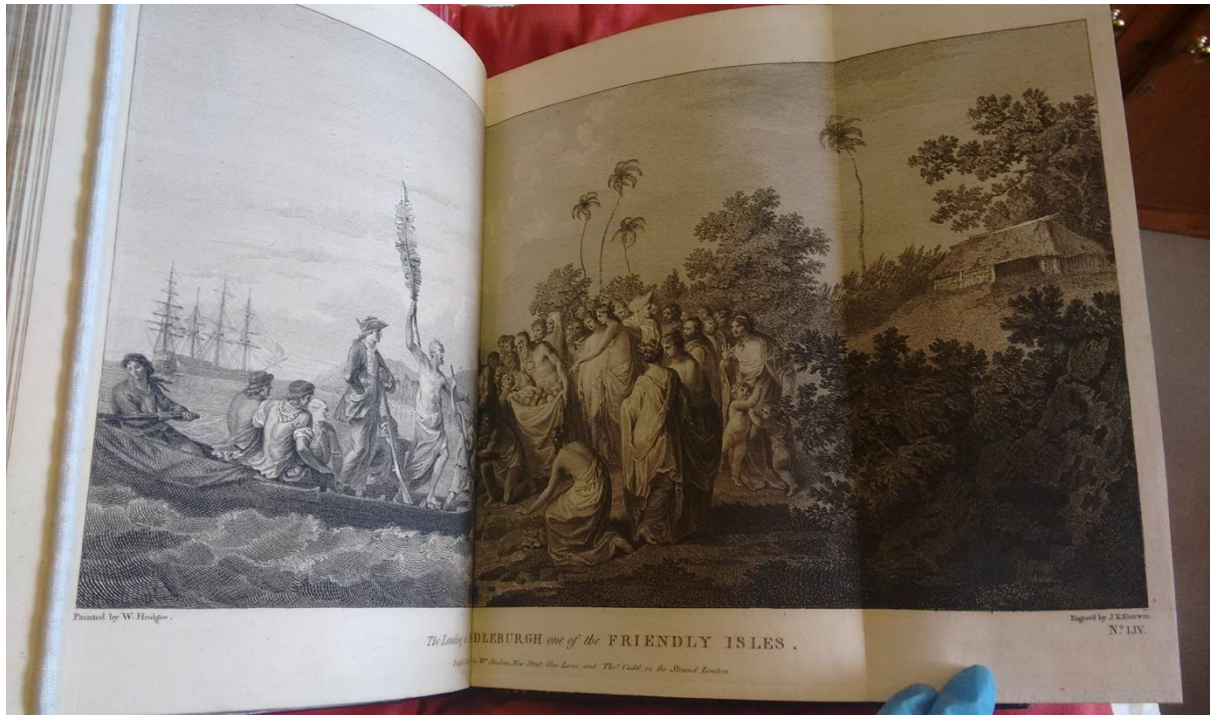


Figure 9: 'Landing at Middleburg, one of the Friendly Islands', William Hodges in *John Hawkesworth, An Account of the Voyages Undertaken [...] for Making Discoveries in the Southern Hemisphere* (London, 1773) Permission courtesy of Plymouth City Arts and Heritage Service.

Likewise, the civility and natural refinement of Omai (or, more correctly Mai) captured the British public's attention when he arrived in England on the return of Cook's second voyage of discovery in 1776. Mai (**Figure 10**) was shown off to polite London society including an audience with King George III and sitting for Sir Joshua Reynolds.<sup>260</sup> Reports emphasised his natural sociability and politeness and Cook describes him as having 'most certainly a very good understanding, quick parts, and honest principles, which rendered him acceptable to the best company, and a proper degree of pride, which taught him to avoid the society of persons of inferior rank.' Whilst 'He has passions of the same kind as other young men, but has judgement enough not to indulge them in improper excess.'<sup>261</sup> The commotion caused by Mai's arrival resulted in crowds forming to see him and, whilst it is not known whether Rogers or Cotton II would have had opportunity to encounter him, they would undoubtedly have been aware of his presence in London and the self-reflection his embodiment of the literary trope of the Noble Savage had for British polite society. The raising of questions around human civilisation, the positive and negative

<sup>260</sup> Kate Fullagar, "Savages that are come among us": Mai, Bennelong, and British Imperial Culture, 1774-1795', *The Eighteenth Century*, 49 (2008), pp. 211-237 (pp. 216-219).

<sup>261</sup> James Cook; John Hawkesworth, *An Account of the Voyages Undertaken...for Making Discoveries in the Southern Hemisphere* (London, 1773)

effects of commerce and luxury, and theories of progression and possible degeneration caused some friction between the celebration of commercial society and Empire growth and its possible effects on British society.<sup>262</sup>

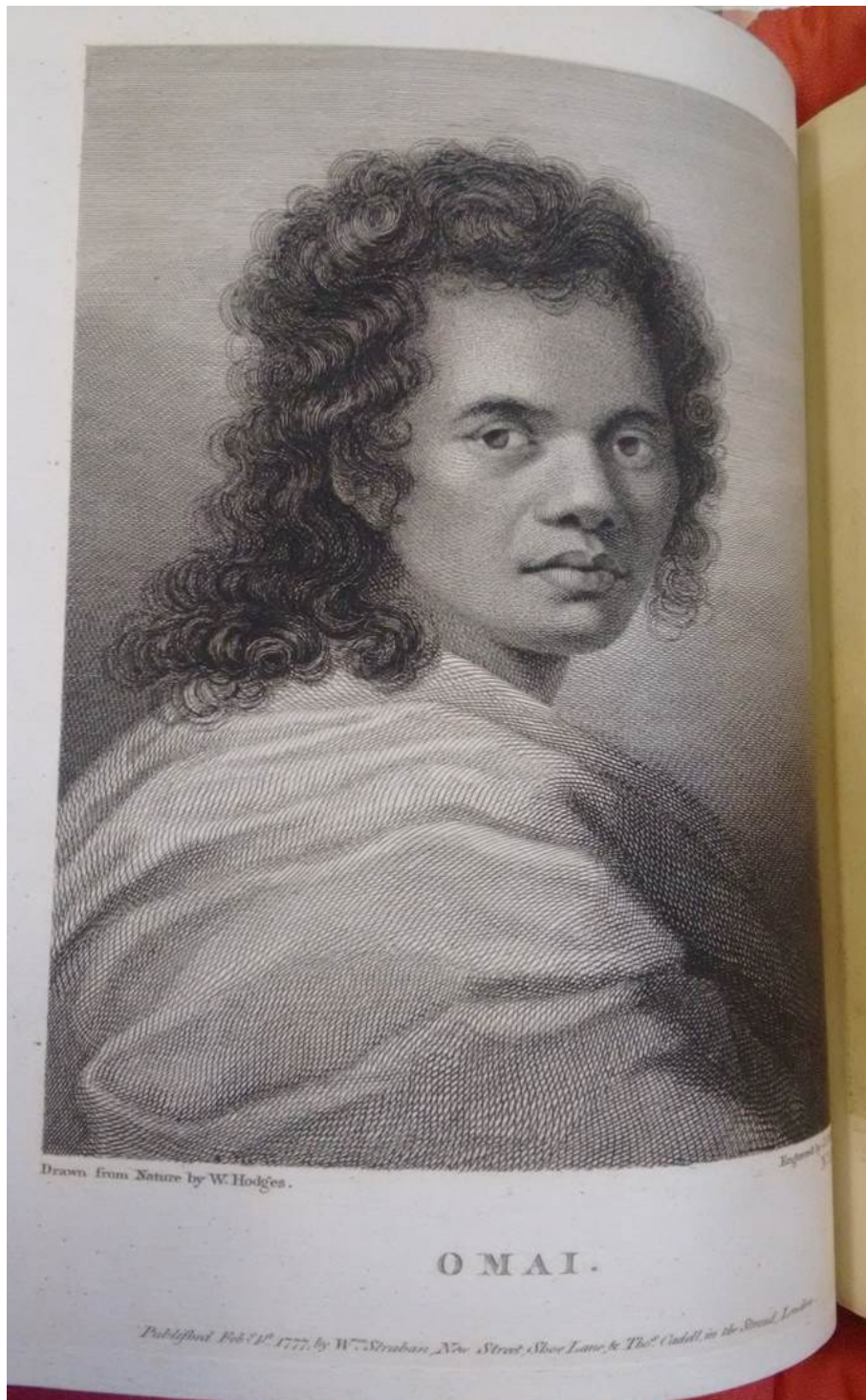


Figure 10: 'Omai', Drawn from nature by William Hodges, in *James Cook, A Voyage Towards the South Pole and Around the World* (London, 1777) Permission courtesy of Plymouth City Arts and Heritage Service.

<sup>262</sup> Michelle Hetherington, 'The Cult of the South Seas', *Cook and Omai: The Cult of the South Seas* (Canberra: National Library of Australia, 2001), p.7.

Charles Rogers' purchase of travel narratives that function both as scientific reports and documentation of Britain's imperial agenda emphasizes his polite cosmopolitan outlook. He was a gentleman who remained abreast of the latest discoveries and was interested in attempts to determine a universal history of the world. These same narratives, however – a confluence of cosmopolitan pursuit of a universal history and imperialist commercial ambitions – offered a vehicle for national self-reflection regarding concerns about the effects of commerce on the health and security of British society. Encounters with indigenous populations and attempts to incorporate them within a universal narrative of mankind raised questions about the progress (and degeneracy) of civilisation and, consequently, the effects of an increasingly commercialised society (and its accompanying luxury and consumerism) on the future of the British state. In an attempt to navigate the anxieties caused by exploration of the world, many eighteenth-century social commentators looked to the past. Thus historical and antiquarian studies of ancient Rome offered a vehicle by which to interrogate their own concerns about the future of the British state. Kathleen Wilson argues that 'By the mid-eighteenth century, History itself had emerged as a primary vehicle of national self-understanding and identity as well as philosophical reflection, promoting a cosmopolitan perspective and a deeply grounded sense of national specificity.'<sup>263</sup> The study of ancient Rome offered an opportunity to draw comparisons between the ancient Republic and the eighteenth-century British state and, in turn, to consider the future of Britain. Therefore, the chapter now turns to consider the antiquarian and historical studies purchased by Charles Rogers and the extent to which his interest in ancient Roman history was part of a continuing attempt to navigate the commercial, metropolitan and imperial society of Britain.

The history of the Roman Republic, its transition into a military Empire and eventual fall at the hands of the barbarians, as well as antiquarian studies of classical architecture and archaeological finds, had long been regarded as required learning for the aspiring polite cosmopolitan gentleman in early-to-mid-eighteenth-century England. Charles Rogers, as previously mentioned, was a fellow of the Society of Antiquaries whose activities sought to craft a universal narrative of Europe (and the wider world) through the study of ancient artefacts, classical philosophy and histories. There was, it should be noted, a

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<sup>263</sup> Kathleen Wilson, *The Island Race: Englishness, Empire and Gender in the Eighteenth Century* (London; New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 9.



distinction between antiquarian and historical studies in the eighteenth century. The former was often more concerned with the minutiae of ancient civilisations, whilst the latter tended to draw on historical events and philosophical ideas in order to understand the present. Despite this, the two disciplines continued to converge and, as Sweet notes, both made similar claims for the utility of their subject.<sup>264</sup> Rogers' contributions to the collection included both antiquarian and historical studies. Niche studies such as Charles Cameron's *Baths of the Romans* (1772) and Johannes Arnay's *Private Lives of the Romans* (1732) can be found amongst his purchases, along with a luxurious edition of William Hamilton's *Collection of Etruscan Vases* (1766).<sup>265</sup> Rogers also engaged in his own antiquarian study contributing papers to the Society's journal *Archeologia* on the subject of the shoeing horses in ancient Rome and the ticketing system in operation at the colosseum.<sup>266</sup> However, longer narrative histories of the Roman Republic and the rise and fall of its Empire can be found in the collection with studies by William Wotton, Edward Gibbon, Conveyers Middleton and Machiavelli. An interest in the Roman occupation of Britain as documented in William Camden's *Britannia* (1695) is also evident in his purchases for the collection.

As the first chapter of this thesis touched on, the study of ancient Rome offered a point of comparison for Britons in the eighteenth century. Its mixed constitution Republican government and growing Empire were used to emphasise the similarities between the two and comparisons between the states offered 'a point of connection with the period of history that was held in higher esteem than any other, and traces of Rome were to be found throughout Britain.'<sup>267</sup> On the one hand, the ancient Roman Empire was celebrated as 'an agent of civilization, taming the savage barbarians with the restraint of law, bringing wisdom, discipline, and the liberal arts to the 'rude unpolish'd world' and introducing a code of virtues and manners.'<sup>268</sup> On the other, however, acknowledgement of its eventual fall to the barbarians generated anxiety regarding Britain's ability to avoid a similar decline.

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<sup>264</sup> Rosemary Sweet, *Antiquaries: The Discovery of the Past in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London; New York: Hambledon and London, 2004), p. 2.

<sup>265</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Charles Rogers Purchase Records, 359.

<sup>266</sup> *The Gentleman's Magazine* (1784), p. 160.

<sup>267</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, p. 155.

<sup>268</sup> Sweet *Antiquaries*, p. 155.

In a letter published in *The Gentleman's Magazine* in November 1760, under the pseudonym of Londinensir, Rogers' touches on the close affinity believed to exist between the two ancient and the modern states. His letter proposes the re-modelling of the streets of London on the ancient city of Rome. In doing so, he argues that the aesthetics of the city should reflect the elevation in wealth and status of London's inhabitants. Rogers' letter suggests that, in his mind at least, the imitation of classical culture, held up as the height of taste and sophistication, was a means of celebrating the polite and cultivated civilisation of London where the wealthy population, having been civilised through commerce, should expect to live in an aesthetically pleasant city. He argues that:

When a People increase in Wealth, to the Necessaries of Life may be reasonably added the justifiable Pleasure; to Usefulness Magnificence: of this the Ancient and modern Romans were sensible, and indeed these Arts of tempting the Rich to live among them are known to every City of the World. It is the Breadth of Streets, the Airiness of Squares, and the Elegance of Buildings that always command inhabitants, and with these Happiness may be enjoyed as well East as West of Temple Bar. As the City of London is perhaps the most considerable for its Wealth of any in the World, the Gentleman who with their large Fortunes and Industry contribute to it by extending its Trade and increasing its Manufacture, have an undoubted Right to desire that the Place of their Habitation may be serviceable and pleasant to them.<sup>269</sup>

In order to do so, he proposes the rebuilding of areas of London modelled on Rome (a city he was only familiar with through the study of the books and prints found in his collection). He suggests that:

the two Houses at that end of Cornhill next to the Poultry are among those prescribed; on the space of which I should be well pleased to see erected lofty Obelisks, which will head the two Ranges of Buildings on each Side of it in a Manner by no means disagreeable to those who are acquainted with that end of the Strada Del'Corso next the Porto del'Popolo at Rome.<sup>270</sup>

His attention then moves to the Monument to the Great Fire of London, suggesting that:

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<sup>269</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Correspondence of Charles Rogers, 345.

<sup>270</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Correspondence of Charles Rogers, 345.

Among other Articles of Magnificence, I could desire that the noble Doric Column, by us called the Monument, be removed from the Hole in which it now stands to the Hill where the Standard in Cornhill was anciently placed. This Spot formerly employed for so serviceable a Purpose as supplying the City with Water from a Conduit, called the Standard, which poured out its Treasures to the four great Streets it faced: was probably the Reason which prevented our great Architect Sir Christopher Wren from erecting it here originally.<sup>271</sup>

Rogers' somewhat flamboyant suggestion draws a comparison between the inhabitants of ancient Rome and mid-eighteenth-century London. London has, in Rogers' eyes, been raised to the same cultural level as Rome through trade and commerce. Consequently, the architecture of the city should be adapted so as to suit the cultural refinement of its inhabitants. Furthermore, having acquired success through trade, there was the possibility that Britain, as the inheritors of the ancient Roman legacy heralding the advancement of civilisation through commerce, scientific endeavour, global exploration and cultural refinement may even surpass the achievements of the Roman Republic <sup>272</sup>

However, any comparison between the eighteenth-century British state and ancient Rome had to concede the transition of the Roman Republic from a mixed constitution government to militarised Empire and, consequently, the eventual decline and fall of Rome. As such, comparisons with the ancient state often concealed anxieties and concerns about Britain's own future as an Empire, particularly in the years between the end of the Seven Years' war and the French Revolution. Iain McDaniel argues that the history of ancient Rome raised three main concerns about the future of Britain. Firstly, the identification of Britain as a quasi-republican and commercialised state which was now prone to political corruption, instability and internal faction opened up the possibility for a descent from liberty into license. Secondly, Britain's growing status as a global commercial power and imperial force generated concern regarding its ability to maintain its security and survival, and the extent to which its new status may prove to be incompatible to its security within Europe. Finally, the relationship between Britain's civil and military powers and the difficulties posed by organising military forces and

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<sup>271</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Correspondence of Charles Rogers, 345.

<sup>272</sup> Rosemary Sweet, *Cities and the Grand Tour: The British in Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 124; Iain McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Roman Past and Europe's Future* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 56.

control in large, economically powerful states raised concern about Britain's ability to control its forces.<sup>273</sup>

These anxieties saw a number of historians and philosophers confront and attempt to analyse the fall of Rome as a model for the future of the British state. Two such popular works were Machiavelli's *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Livy* (1690), which was regarded as the authority on the history of Rome well into the eighteenth century; and Edward Gibbon's *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (1776-88). Both were purchased for the collection by Charles Rogers. Offering varying interpretations of the contributing factors that resulted in the demise of the Roman Empire, these two works offered a means to relate Roman history to that of the modern British state. They can, therefore, be read as a commentary on eighteenth-century British society and the potential future of the British Empire.

Machiavelli's *Discourses on the First Ten Books of Livy* emerged as one of the most prevalent works on the history of the Roman Empire. Through an examination of the first ten books of Titus Livy's *Ab urbe condita* which explore the expansion of Rome prior to the end of the Third Samnite War, Machiavelli presents an analysis of the fall of Rome that examines the challenge of preserving liberty in an expanding empire. His *Discourses* presents a gloomy outlook arguing that liberty and empire are incompatible and result in the downfall of each other. As Pocock observes:

The republic was vulnerable to corruption, to political, moral or economic changes which destroyed the equality on which it rested, and these changes might occur not accidentally, but in consequence of the republic's own virtue. Because it was virtuous it defeated its enemies; because it defeated its enemies it acquired empire; but empire brought to some citizens – chiefly military commanders and economic speculators – the opportunity to acquire power incompatible with equality and uncontrollable by law, and so the republic was destroyed by success and excess.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>273</sup> Iain McDaniel, *Adam Ferguson in the Scottish Enlightenment: The Roman Past and Europe's Future* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 39.

<sup>274</sup> Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce and History*, p. 146.

In Machiavelli's analysis, at the root of this excess was luxury and the corruptive effects of an unmoderated indulgence in the prosperity of empire. Machiavelli argues that as the strength of the Republic and, later, the empire grows so too does the wealth of its population. However, an excess of luxury causes the citizens to become weak, corrupt and selfish resulting in a loss of the civic virtue and loyalty that had fostered liberty. Excessive luxury resulted in an undisciplined and selfish life which weakened loyalty to the state. As such, the transition of the Republic into an empire ultimately resulted in its constitution being 'subverted by luxury, greed and factionalism in the wake of military victories which civic virtue made possible.'<sup>275</sup>

The conclusion that Machiavelli's draws and its association of luxury with the potentially corrupting effects was, as previously discussed, a contentious topic amongst philosophers, political writers, historians and social commentators in the mid-eighteenth century. For readers in mid-eighteenth-century Britain faced with the growth of the Empire in 1763 and an increasingly commercial society, Machiavelli's analysis offered a stark warning on the potentially disastrous consequences of empire growth and unrestrained indulgence in luxury. As Pocock observes:

The "new speculative image of economic man was opposed to the essentially paternal and Roman figure of the citizen patriot." Those who warned Englishmen that effeminacy was the inevitable effect of luxury had the most powerful of all precedents in mind, the history of the degeneracy of Rome, from virtuous republic to luxurious empire.<sup>276</sup>

In his analysis, Machiavelli presents three possible scenarios that can be taken in an attempt to mitigate the same fate as Rome. Either, the state expands following in the footsteps of Rome with a growth of empire and the accompanying negative effects. Although its lifespan will be limited it will, nonetheless, be glorious during the period of its existence. Or, the state could adopt the position of the German republics which balanced defensive stability with curbed ambition. Finally, the least successful option, in Machiavelli's eyes, was to remain static with no expansion so as to maintain internal tranquillity. Whilst ultimately destructive, Machiavelli's preferred option was to follow in the path of Rome. This was advisable not so as to obtain glory, but for security in a world

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<sup>275</sup> Ayres, *Classical Culture and the Idea of Rome*, p. 22.

<sup>276</sup> Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, p. 104.

of change and ambition.<sup>277</sup> Britain after 1763 with its empire at its peak could, therefore, draw parallels between its own seemingly precarious position and that of ancient Rome, despite Machiavelli's conclusion.

In contrast, Edward Gibbon's popular *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* published over two hundred and fifty years after Machiavelli's work presented a different conclusion. Published in three instalments between 1776 and 1787, Gibbon's work spanned the period of the American Revolutionary wars and loss of the American colonies, falling short of the French Revolution by two years. In contrast to Machiavelli, luxury is not the main contributor in Gibbon's analysis to the fall of Rome. Rather:

the decline of Rome was the natural and inevitable effect of immoderate greatness. Prosperity ripened the principle of decay; the causes of destruction multiplied with the extent of conquest; and as soon as time or accident had removed the artificial support, the stupendous fabric yielded to the pressure of its own weight. The story of its ruin is simple and obvious; and instead of inquiring *why* the Roman empire was destroyed, we should rather be surprised that it had subsisted so long.<sup>278</sup>

In Gibbon's conclusion, as the Roman empire grew so it struggled to maintain control and, ultimately, became the victim of its own greatness. Whilst Gibbon does touch on luxury in his discussion of the eastern empire, unlike Machiavelli he does not perceive luxury as seditious but rather blames despotism for the corruption of the ancient empire.<sup>279</sup> In this view, the professionalisation of the armies and the separation of civic and military virtue, with military forces moving to govern the empire independent of the voice of its citizens, resulted in the eventual fall of the empire. Thus Gibbon's analysis presents a seemingly positive portrayal of luxury and consumerism when moderated by profitable exchange.

The study of ancient Roman society therefore presented a means by which it was possible to navigate and reflect upon the anxieties and complexities of emerging consumerism, the growth of Empire and the potentially degenerative and corruptive effect of both. The

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<sup>277</sup> David Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 130.

<sup>278</sup> Edward Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, abridged by D.M. Low (London: Chatto and Windus, 1961), pp. 524-525.

<sup>279</sup> Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History*, p. 148.

study of Rome's history offered not only a possible means by which to reflect on Britain's seemingly precarious position but also could offer comfort. In his 'Observations' at the end of volume three, Gibbon concludes that it would be near-impossible for the British Empire to experience the same fate as ancient Roman society. He argues that Britain's geographical position and her large overseas empire would not only make it difficult for enemies to invade and overrun the country but, in the event that this were to occur, she had a large colonial network where her population could escape and re-build. Furthermore, technology and weaponry had improved since ancient times meaning that Britain was well-equipped to see off invaders.<sup>280</sup> The acquisition of historical and antiquarian studies provided metropolitan men such as Rogers with not only an enjoyable and fashionable pastime, but offered a means of reflecting on the society in which they inhabited and the anxieties that accompanied the growth of the British Empire in the mid-eighteenth century.

## Conclusion

Polite cosmopolitanism as embodied by the Townsons and Rogers was reliant upon British imperial conquest. The two philosophies, seemingly antithetical, shared similar characteristics and the ideals of cosmopolitanism were often moulded to fit imperialist ambitions. Likewise, the very act of demonstrating cosmopolitanism in a commercial society was through participation in acts supported by colonial exploitation. The Cottonian Collection, amassed using money gained through its custodians' employment in the bureaucratic centre of British colonial trade, was implicated in the growth of the British Empire. However, the contents of its holdings – travelogues, natural history studies, and the study of ancient Roman history and antiquities reveals an inherently cosmopolitan, albeit Eurocentric, approach to the world. This was characterised by an interest in overseas lands and cultures, a knowledge of ancient Stoic philosophical understanding of the cosmopolitan ideals, and attempts to understand and be part of a global metropolitan commercial society. Furthermore, whilst many of the travel narratives acquired by Rogers conceal an imperialist agenda, they simultaneously reveal the Enlightenment cosmopolitan drive for knowledge and to be part of a global society,

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<sup>280</sup> Gibbon, *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, pp. 527-529.

albeit one dominated by British superiority. They also reveal an anxiety about the growth of the British Empire and the need to navigate a path through the growth in commercialism that would prevent the negative effects of luxury, commerce and degeneracy.

The building of the Cottonian Collection by Robert and William Townson and Charles Rogers was, therefore, a physical embodiment of both the Enlightenment cosmopolitanism pursuit of knowledge and the material consequences of British colonial ambition. Rogers' death, however, came at a pivotal moment in history. The loss of the American colonies in the year prior to his death and the move towards an increasingly aggressive foreign policy and military conquest saw the earlier concerns and anxieties about luxury and the morality of Empire suppressed. Emerging in its place, as the next chapter discusses, was an altogether bolder and self-confident Britain that saw a shift in the ways in which eighteenth-century metropolitan Britons viewed themselves. Therefore, in the subsequent chapter, I build on discussion of the earlier standard of British national character amongst the metropolitan elite – one that incorporated Enlightenment cosmopolitanism and imperial ambition – to trace its evolution in the 1780s and 90s and, significantly, the period of Cotton II's custodianship between 1791 and 1816. This was a period defined by the loss of the American colonies and the onset of ideological warfare with revolutionary France. As the succeeding chapter demonstrates, the Enlightenment cosmopolitan ideals embodied by the Townsons and Rogers came under pressure as ideological shifts resulted in the consolidation of a new British national identity – an identity that sought to emphasise British superiority over other European nations. As such, it is possible to trace this shift in Cotton II's treatment of the Cottonian Collection.



# Chapter Four:

## A British Gentleman in a Revolutionary Age, 1784-1816

### Introduction

In the previous chapter I discussed the importance of polite cosmopolitanism and imperial success for the creation of a mid-eighteenth-century British national character in an emerging military-fiscal state. I then examined the extent to which this identity was embodied by Robert and William Townson and Charles Rogers. The chapter then established the effect of this coming-together of polite cosmopolitanism and growing imperialism on their book collecting practices, thereby viewing their acts of connoisseurship within the context of both broader book collecting trends and the socio-political landscape.

At the close of the preceding chapter, I touched on the anxiety generated by the loss of the American colonies shortly prior to Rogers' death in 1783. In the chapter that follows, I focus on these anxieties addressing the repercussions of this defeat on the British national psyche. Firstly, I examine how this defeat eventually resulted, in some quarters, in the reinforcement of a British national character in the 1780s – a character that had been in development since at least the 1740s, as discussed in the previous chapter – through the implementation of an aggressive foreign policy that strengthened xenophobic and imperialist ideas of Britishness. I then turn to address the effects of the onset of war with revolutionary and Napoleonic France and, consequently, the extent to which the events of the 1780s and 1790s affected William Cotton II's own sense of Britishness. I argue that between Cotton II's coming of age in 1780 and his death in 1816, the earlier form of Britishness that incorporated a cosmopolitan outlook and Gallomania – as embodied by the Townsons and, in particular, Rogers – came under increasing pressure during a period of reactionary conservatism and fear of a revolutionary threat. What emerges, therefore, is a late-eighteenth-century national identity characterised by a sense of imperial superiority, military prowess, and the downplaying of earlier polite cosmopolitan values. The chapter then moves to address the effect of this modified form

of Britishness on Cotton II's collecting practices. Mirroring the previous chapter, it examines his treatment of antiquarian studies and travelogues as evidence of a renewed interest in and celebration of British history and culture. The chapter then explores the establishment of a national literary heritage through the canonisation of English literature.

## Recovery and Resilience in the 1780s

In recent years the effect of the American Revolutionary Wars on the domestic British population has been the focus of long over-due scholarly attention. Whilst historians and literary scholars have explored the international and imperial dimensions of the conflict, the effect on British domestic history and the lives of the population has been neglected.<sup>281</sup> Stephen Conway addresses this deficit convincingly demonstrating the intrusive nature of the war on British domestic life. Its impact, he argues, could be felt in the arts, literature and theatre of the period through to calls for social and political reform, a decline in overseas trade, and the creation of political legislation for an independent Ireland.<sup>282</sup> For Charles Rogers and William Cotton II living in metropolitan London and employed in its trading administration centre – the Custom House – it would have been impossible to have been ignorant of many of these effects, particularly in relation to overseas trade. Like his predecessors, Cotton II's personal fortune was reliant upon the success of overseas trade. His account book records lucrative stocks in the East India Company along with an investment in the 1800s in his cousin's trading vessel.<sup>283</sup> The maintenance of successful trading partnerships was, therefore, of paramount importance for Cotton II's professional and personal financial success.

The decline in overseas trade during the American Revolutionary Wars is of particular importance for a study of William Cotton II's character because, as previously established, imperial success and commerce were intrinsic in the formation of the British national

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<sup>281</sup> The main focus for historians examining the American Revolutionary wars (or American War of Independence) has been the effects of the victory on the formation of the modern American State. Stephen Conway, *The American War of Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), Jeremy Black, *War for America: The Fight for Independence, 1775-1783* (Stroud: Alan Sutton, 2001); Harry M. Ward, *The war for independence and the transformation of American Society* (London: UCL Press, 1999).

<sup>282</sup> Conway, *The British Isles and the War of American Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) pp. 60-64.

<sup>283</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection, MS William Cotton II's Account Book, 271.

psyche between the 1740s and 1780s. Gerald Newman argues that it was in this forty-year period that a sense of a British identity built on self-confidence in Britain's ability to maintain and support its growing colonial empire emerged.<sup>284</sup> With the onset of war with America in 1775, lucrative Anglo-American trade routes were severely disrupted as America banned trade with Britain. In retaliation, Britain passed the Prohibitory Act outlawing all trade and commerce by British colonial states. The Royal Navy were directed to seize all American vessels, whilst American privateers retaliated in the same way. The result was that many ships (and their cargos) were lost on both sides, although some individuals profited from these captures.<sup>285</sup> Following the entry of France and Spain into the conflict in 1779, trade with neighbouring European states all but ceased. In consequence, between 1772 and 1778 there was a significant drop of 26% in the value of British overseas trade with little recovery recorded until 1782.<sup>286</sup> The decline in British overseas trade (both exports and imports) contributed to a growing concern that Britain was unable to maintain its military-fiscal state and control of a large trading empire. In turn, this threatened the very nature of the assumptions upon which a sense of imperial purpose was founded.

William Cotton II's entry into employment at the London Custom House coincided with the onset of the American Revolutionary Wars and, therefore, a decline in overseas commercial activity. Likely starting his career as a junior clerk, he eventually inherited his uncle's position as Chief Clerk of Certificates, although the exact date of his appointment is not known. It is impossible, therefore, for him not to have been aware of the impact of the war on overseas trade during this period. Whilst the archive contains only a few direct references to the war, Cotton II's correspondence with John Bell in 1778 – a year defined by Wilson as marked by 'a sense of crisis' and a 'pervasive foreboding that the existence of the nation was at stake' – captures what was perceived as Britain's precarious economic and political situation.<sup>287</sup> Bell writes that:

I am just now come from Politician Plestow, who has been pouring over a News-Paper & lamenting the dangerous Situation which poor old England seems to be

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<sup>284</sup> Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism: A Cultural History, 1740-1830*, p. 227.

<sup>285</sup> P. J. Marshall, *Re-making the British Atlantic: The United State and the British Empire after American Independence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 261.

<sup>286</sup> Conway, *The British Isles and the War of American Independence*, p. 70.

<sup>287</sup> Kathleen Wilson, *The Sense of the People: Politics, Culture and Imperialism in England, 1715-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 253.

in for this hour past; in yr. next Letter you may tell me what the Politicians in the Capital think of the present State of Affairs.<sup>288</sup>

The dangerous situation of 'poor old England' can be understood in a number of ways. Firstly, as already discussed, the decline in trade due to disruption of colonial trading networks raised concerns about Britain's ability to maintain control of her Empire. Secondly, the rebellion of the American colonies and their rejection of British mixed monarchical government in favour of Republicanism caused concern in Britain. Whilst historians have maintained that support amongst the British public for the American cause remained minimal, the British radicals, fired up by Richard Price and John Cartwright's proclamations for constitutional reform, generated concern in the 1770.<sup>289</sup> Events in American were regarded as a threat, therefore, not only to the future of the Empire and colonial control of trading networks, but the political doctrine espoused by American Republics was perceived as pernicious and a threat to the historic nature of the British constitution.<sup>290</sup>

The eventual loss of the thirteen colonies following Britain's defeat is often regarded as having delivered a blow to a sense of British national identity built upon assurances of imperial strength and superiority. Britain was left temporarily weakened (psychologically as well as financially). As Newman observes, in 1782:

The national psychology as a whole was now riper than ever for drastic change. The mood was bitter, irrational, and more volatile than at any time since 1763. France was about to impose a treaty [...] the war had been lost, the empire dismembered and Britain disgraced as a great international power; even Ireland seemed close to succession.<sup>291</sup>

The peace settlement with its accompanying loss of territory and face was perceived by many, including George III, as a weakening of the Empire and the decay of British power.<sup>292</sup> Internal political uncertainty, growing social discontent directed at the aristocracy, religious upheaval (as will be discussed in Chapter Five and Six),

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<sup>288</sup> Plymouth. Cottonian Collection Archive, MS William Cotton II Correspondence, John Bell to William Cotton II, 6/6/1778.

<sup>289</sup> Robert E. Toohey, *Liberty and Empire: British Radical Solutions to the American Problem, 1774-1776* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1978), pp.8-9.

<sup>290</sup> Marshall, *Re-Making the British Atlantic*, p. 68.

<sup>291</sup> Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism*, p. 210.

<sup>292</sup> Jeremy Black, *George III, America's Last King* (New haven; London: Yale University Press, 2006), p. 255.

accompanied by a lack of faith in the capability of George III following his support for the war and initial refusal to accept the terms of the Treaty with America, resulted in a precarious domestic and foreign position. In the following ten years, the country witnessed a strengthening of imperial and domestic policy in an attempt to mitigate the damage caused by the humiliating defeat and loss of the American colonies. Linda Colley argues, that in many ways, the loss would prove to be decisive in strengthening British imperial ambition as:

Instead of being sated with conquests, alarmed at their own presumptuous grandeur as they had been after 1763, the British could now unite in feeling hard done by. Their backs were once more well and truly to the wall, filling many of them with grim relish and renewed strength.<sup>293</sup>

From this defensive position, the country no longer felt crushed by the responsibility of Empire, but rather could reflect on the actions and the possible deficit of character that had resulted in their defeat.

The decade after the American Revolutionary Wars has been referred to as the dawning of a new era of Empire or the second Empire. It was an Empire that was partly characterised by a shift to the political right and the emergence of an aggressive foreign policy and more ruthless control of colonial states. Tillman Nechtman argues that this period, marked by the loss of the colonies in North America and the shifting of power and control in the Caribbean, 'served to highlight a sea change in British and British imperial history, a transition from the "first" British empire – an empire of commerce and of the seas – to a "second" British empire – an empire of conquest.'<sup>294</sup> Attention now turned to re-focus on Asia and the Southern hemisphere – regions explored by British-led voyages of discovery in the 1760s and 1770s – as possible areas to further and develop British colonial activity.<sup>295</sup> This next stage of Empire was accompanied by the tightening of rule in colonial settlements. The passing of the India Act of 1784 and the Canada Act of 1791 further enabled British administrative and governmental control and signalled a movement away from self-governed British satellite states towards authoritarian (and frequently despotic) rule of the indigenous populations.

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<sup>293</sup> Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, p. 144.

<sup>294</sup> Tillman W. Nechtman, *Nabobs: Empire and Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 8.

<sup>295</sup> Philippa Levine, *The British Empire: Sunrise to Sunset* (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd, 2007), p. 44.

The decisive shift in the 1780s towards an empire of heightened aggressive and authoritarian foreign policy was frequently justified by contemporaries as the bringing of the light of civilisation to the provinces. Conway argues that, whilst a transition from an empire of liberty to one of control could be regarded as despotic:

it was a humane, civilized, and regulated despotism—a despotism that seemed to an increasing number of contemporaries in the British Isles to be an acceptable means of governing India, not least because it could be portrayed as an altogether gentler and superior form of despotism to the oriental variety<sup>296</sup>.

British actions in India during the eighteenth and nineteenth century illustrate the brutality of this rule, justified by the notion of bringing civilization and control to the population. Whilst it was a harsh system of rule, it was viewed by some as better than that which existed before (and was claimed to be equally as harsh) because it was British.<sup>297</sup> Thus the earlier cosmopolitan ideals which partly motivated European-led conquest of the globe, with the intention of further understanding the natural history of the world and its peoples, were increasingly displaced by a growing aggressive and imperialist agenda that reduced the cosmopolitan drive of British global exploration.

In the years that followed the loss of the American colonies:

there would emerge in Great Britain a far more consciously and officially constructed patriotism which stressed attachment to the monarchy, the importance of empire, the value of military and naval achievement, and the desirability of strong, stable government by a virtuous, able and authentically British elite.<sup>298</sup>

A consequence of which, it has been argued by Colley and Newman, was an increase in Francophobia amongst the upper classes of British society. This became increasingly pronounced in the 1790s with the onset of a new period of conflict with France. However, in contrast to earlier conflicts, this was a war partly driven by ideological difference and a need to protect the very nature of Britishness and the British constitution from the radical French. For Cotton II, therefore, coming-of-age in this period and inheriting the collection only two years after the French Revolution, his understanding of a national

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<sup>296</sup> Conway, *The British Isles and the War of American Independence*, p. 345.

<sup>297</sup> Conway, *The British Isles and the War of American Independence*, p. 345.

<sup>298</sup> Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, p. 145.

character was likely to have had a closer affinity to that defined by anti-Gallic sentiments and a strengthening of imperialism than the earlier polite cosmopolitanism of Charles Rogers.

## Revolution, Anti-Gallicanism and Britishness

In the previous chapter I touched on the complexity of Britain's relationship with France and French culture in the first eighty years of the eighteenth century. As political rivals engaged in military conflict for much of the period, the relationship between the two neighbours was never going to be easy. Despite the years of warfare between the two countries, sections of British polite society in the early-to-mid-eighteenth century drew heavily on French culture as the height of modern European sophistication. However, as the century progressed and Britain's imperial power increased, so too was there a growth, in some quarters, of anti-French feeling. In the aftermath of the loss of the American colonies and defeat at the hands of the French, this feeling increased and was intensified further following the descent into terror of the French Revolution and the onset of an ideological-driven conflict with France. What emerged, Colley and Newman argue, is a sense of Britishness in the 1790s that was partly defined by a deep-rooted distrust and disdain for the French; a distrust that was heightened further by the conflict between the two countries.

Conflict between the two countries was more often than not motivated by competing ambitions to dominate colonised regions and to control lucrative trading networks. Conway argues that hostility towards the French increased:

As the British economy and public finances seemed to become more and more reliant on imperial trade, successive governments from the middle of the eighteenth century recognized the necessity of protecting Britain's imperial possessions as markets for British products and as sources of raw materials and valuable re-exports.<sup>299</sup>

Even the American Revolutionary War was a conflict partly motivated by trade and anxiety that American Independence would result in the loss of profitable trade links, protected by the Navigation Act, to the French. Because of the hostility between the two

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<sup>299</sup> Conway, *The British Isles and the War of American Independence*, p. 330.

countries, the revolution in France was not initially perceived by all as a threat to Britain. In 1789 the French Revolution was seen by some Britons as a weakening of the old enemy, or even leading France to enjoy the same constitutional benefits that were granted to Britain by the Glorious Revolution of 1688-89. Some also recognised it as an opportunity to extend the achievements of Britain's revolution and create the idealised liberal democratic state.<sup>300</sup> By the early 1790s, however, the ensuing Reign of Terror (1793-94) had left many in Britain deeply concerned about the threat the Revolution posed to Britain.

The outbreak of war with Revolutionary France in February 1793 signalled the onset of a new form of ideological conflict. This was, William Pitt announced to the Commons, the confrontation of 'a system, the principles of which, if not opposed, threaten the most fatal consequences to the tranquillity of this country, the security of its allies, the good order of every European Government and the happiness of the whole human race.'<sup>301</sup> As Clive Emsley notes, 'the political and constitutional structure of the country was a source of pride to many [...] Englishmen prided themselves on possessing liberties unique in Europe' and which needed to be defended against foreign threat.<sup>303</sup> Jennifer Mori questions the extent to which the onset of the Revolutionary Wars in 1793 can be attributed solely to the threat 'posed by revolutionary principles to the political and social fabric of the ancient regime in Europe'.<sup>304</sup> Rather, Mori argues that the wars, although ideological, were underpinned by more traditional motivations; motivations such as the First French Republic's invasion of the Austrian Netherlands in 1792 which breached the arrangements of the Rastatt Treaty of 1714, and the protection of British national interests including her non-European colonies.<sup>305</sup> However, despite the mixed motivations for the conflict, this was a war that was driven, in part, by a sense of ideological threat.

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<sup>300</sup> Robert R. Dozier, *For King, Constitution, and Country: The English Loyalists and the French Revolution* (Lexington, University Press of Kentucky, 1983), pp. 4-6; Stephen Prickett, *England and the French Revolution* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Education Ltd, 1989), pp. 31-60.

<sup>301</sup> William Pitt, 'Speech given to Parliament on 12<sup>th</sup> February 1793', *The War Speeches of William Pitt the Younger, selected by R. Coupland* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1915), p. 76.

<sup>303</sup> Clive Emsley, 'The Impact of the French Revolution', *The French Revolution and British Culture*, ed. by Ceri Crossley and Ian Small (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 31-32.

<sup>304</sup> Jennifer Mori, *William Pitt and the French Revolution, 1785-1795* (Edinburgh: Keele University Press, 1997), p. 143.

<sup>305</sup> Glyn Williams; John Ramsden, *Ruling Britannia: A Political History of Britain, 1688-1988* (London; New York: Longman, 1990), p. 154; Mori, *William Pitt and the French Revolution, 1785-1795*, p. 143.



War with France would continue near-continuously until the defeat of Napoleon in 1815. The majority of Cotton II's period of custodianship was, therefore, defined by ideological and territorial warfare with France. It has been suggested that the subversion threat posed by Revolutionary France in the 1790s was exaggerated by Pitt who argued that 'the French government was conspiring to win the hearts and minds of the British public'; however, whether this was the case or not, the next decade experienced a period of reactionary conservatism with increased censorship of print, the regulation of oppositional political groups and the passing of the Alien Act in 1792.<sup>306</sup> Furthermore, the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars were characterised by the threat of invasion which they posed to Britain. Whilst the Seven Years War had also experienced incidences of possible invasion in 1759, the threat posed by French invasion in the 1790s and 1800s was one which would, had it have been successful, have attempted to dismantle the mechanisms of the British constitution and state. The result, it was believed, would be the onset of revolutionary chaos or Napoleon led despotism being erected in its place. Therefore, in part, and 'as William Pitt the Younger openly admitted, war with France represented a desperate struggle to defend rank, and property against the 'example of successful pillage' set by the revolutionaries of 1789.'<sup>307</sup>

The unsettling socio-political climate of the 1790s and 1800s is captured in incidences of violence and fear in the Cottonian archive. William Cotton III opens his *Reminiscences* recording how his parents, dining with a Captain Morgan and Mrs Morgan at a house in Bloomsbury Square, were disturbed by a rioting mob in the street outside (reflecting the pockets of social unrest and growth of radicalism at the time) and a sheep's head was thrown through an open window. Cotton III records that the event 'so alarmed' Catherine Cotton that 'a miscarriage was the consequences' and thus he 'obtained the priority of birth right'.<sup>308</sup> Thirteen years later when the threat of invasion during the Napoleonic Wars reached its height, Cotton II's account book records his purchase of a musket and

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<sup>306</sup> Mori, *William Pitt and the French Revolution 1785-1795*, p. 129; Jennifer Mori, 'Responses to Revolution: The November Crisis of 1792', *Historical Research*, 69 (1996), pp. 284-304 (p. 285).

<sup>307</sup> Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation*, p. 150.

<sup>308</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Reminiscences of William Cotton III, p. 1.

bayonet and subscription to the Clapham Voluntary Corp of which he was a member.<sup>309</sup> Cotton III recalls, rather dryly, how the:

inhabitants of Clapham Common assembled at each other's houses in turns, and learned the manual exercise and to march in rank and file, under the instruction of a Drill Sergeant. My father and his neighbours [...] shouldered a musket, but I doubt whether they were ever required to discharge. Their marching's and manoeuvres being confined to their own grass-plots.<sup>310</sup>

In the same year Catherine Cotton, fatally ill with a postpartum fever, dreams 'that Buonaparte had landed & made a most terrible slaughter, afterwards there appeared a great number of Hearses & Mourning Coaches'.<sup>311</sup> These incidences, whilst infrequent and often referred to merely in passing, provide a glimpse into the intrusive manner in which world events impacted on the domestic life of William Cotton II. They also reveal, particularly in the case of Catherine Cotton's nightmare, the threat of massacre and upheaval of a British way of life that it was believed would accompany Napoleon's invasion of Britain.

The events of the 1780s and 1790s resulted in a growth in Anti-French sentiments amongst some sections of the population. Propaganda of the period routinely portrayed the French as feminine and devious in comparison to the figure of Britannia or the masculine John Bull.<sup>312</sup> One consequence of a shift in attitudes towards the French was a decline in the Francophilia of the earlier part of the century and the polite cosmopolitanism that had characterised Charles Rogers' life. The culture of politeness had been the subject of growing criticism since the 1760s by commentators concerned about the effects of adopting French mannerisms on British masculinity. Others questioned the degenerative and corrupting effects of the indulgence and luxury of polite society – as associated with the French – on Britain's ability to maintain control of their colonial outposts.<sup>313</sup> The association of the French with revolutionary and ideological threat and their portrayal as effeminate, degenerate, licentious and dishonest in propaganda of the period furthered the disdain displayed towards the French. At the

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<sup>309</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS William Cotton II account book, 271.

<sup>310</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Reminiscences of William Cotton III, p. 19.

<sup>311</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Reminiscences of William Cotton III, p. 19.

<sup>312</sup> Tamara L. Hunt, *Defining John Bull: Political Caricature and National Identity in Late Georgian England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), p. 147.

<sup>313</sup> Carter, *Men and the Emergence of Polite Society*, pp. 212-214.

same time, notions of British national character returned to an emphasis on manliness as evidence of national strength, as embodied by the popular caricature of John Bull.

The figure of John Bull had emerged much earlier in 1712 but until the final decades of the eighteenth century he was more often presented as an embarrassing and ignorant English traveller with coarse and unrefined manners.<sup>314</sup> By 1790s, however, he had emerged as the embodiment of a Britishness associated with Beef and Liberty, Protestantism, masculinity, hard work, good nature, frankness and honesty, a dislike of all things foreign (especially French) and a preference for the home comforts of Britain.<sup>315</sup> The portrayal of Bull, Tamara Hunt argues, came to be 'imbued with many of the qualities considered to be particularly 'English' and thus worth defending against French-inspired changes [...] he was both male and ordinary, a common Englishman who suffered in the same way that the public suffered.'<sup>316</sup> Love of home and dislike of the foreign developed into an intense form of patriotism and became one of John Bull's prominent characteristics. As such, the caricature of John Bull was thought to emphasise those superior qualities that were believed to differentiate Englishmen from other nations and which contributed to Britain's greatness. Newman argues that 'by the 1780s the British people were indoctrinated in the *belief* that they and their ancestors uniquely exemplified these values.'<sup>317</sup>

Whilst the figure of John Bull was a caricature exaggerated by cartoonists to reflect on Britain's political situation, his popularity in the 1790s reveals a broader celebration of British character and superiority. A celebration of this character can be seen in Cotton II's account book which records payment for two dinners at the Beefsteaks Club.<sup>318</sup> Whilst it is not known whether these payments were for attendance at the infamous Sublime Beefsteaks Club (perhaps as the guest of a member) or at an offshoot dinner club, it is likely that they retained the same purpose – the celebration of Britishness through the consumption of roast beef.<sup>319</sup> Cotton II's attendance at this form of club suggests an

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<sup>314</sup> Hunt, *Defining John Bull: Political Caricature and National Identity in Late Georgian England*, p. 147.

<sup>315</sup> Ben Rogers, *Beef and Liberty: Roast Beef, John Bull and the English Nation* (London: Vintage, 2004), p. 25.

<sup>316</sup> Hunt, *Defining John Bull: Political Caricature and National Identity in Late Georgian England*, p. 147.

<sup>317</sup> Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism*, p. 148.

<sup>318</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, William Cotton II's Account Book, 271.

<sup>319</sup> Arnold, Bro. Walter, *The Life and Death of the Sublime Society of Beef Steaks* (London: Bradbury, Evans & Co., 1871)

alignment with a later eighteenth-century version of masculinity which, whilst never as exaggerated as that displayed by the caricature of John Bull, emphasised similar virtues and characteristics. John Bull, roast beef, and masculinity became symbols of the unique character of the British people. A character that had contributed to the greatness of the nation and its superiority as a global power.

The consequence then, of the years of conflict and ideological threat was a strengthening of nationalist ideology and British imperial agendas as ‘this community of domestic Britons became even more interested in throwing up barriers between what they imagined as a stable, secure, and unitary British centre and the tumultuous collection of outposts they called the empire.’<sup>320</sup> This also included their European neighbours, the ideological corrupt French. As Newman notes, cosmopolitanism was a victim of the French Revolution.

In its philosophical soul, this Age was not the realization but the repudiation of cosmopolitan ideals; it was the beginning of the new era of democratic nationalism. It was not so much ‘the rights of man’ as the rights of Englishmen, Frenchmen, and other nationalities, that was to bring whole peoples into the streets.<sup>321</sup>

A revolution which at its heart carried cosmopolitan ideas of liberty and fraternity saw ‘the cosmopolitan “citizen of the world” come under suspicion as a French sympathizer, or simply as indifferent or selfish.’<sup>322</sup> This resulted in a movement away from the Enlightened polite cosmopolitan gentleman, embodied by Rogers and which sought to emulate French culture, towards a form of British character associated with Francophobia, xenophobia, and a sense of global superiority. As a result, many of the cosmopolitan ideals that were likely celebrated by Rogers – moderation, tolerance, universalism – came under increasing pressure when it was felt that the very constitution of Britain was under threat from the revolutionary French.

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<sup>320</sup> Nechtman, *Nabobs: Empire and Identity in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, p. 10.

<sup>321</sup> Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism*, p. 224.

<sup>322</sup> Dustin Griffin, *Patriotism and Poetry in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 33.

## National Character, Cultural Heritage and the Cottonian Collection

William Cotton II's custodianship of the collection coincided with a period marked by a decline in a cosmopolitan spirit and the culture of politeness. Consequently, it is likely that he would have more closely aligned himself with a British gentlemanliness that emphasised imperial superiority and downplayed many of the Enlightenment values that his predecessors embraced. His attendance at a Beefsteaks dinner, an event designed to celebrate British character, and his willingness to participate in the volunteer corps and defend the country in the event of a French invasion suggests a form of gentlemanliness removed from that of the polite cosmopolitanism of his predecessors.

In light of this, I now turn to examine the effect that this shift in gentlemanliness had on Cotton II's curatorial practices. Reversing the format of the previous chapter, I first examine his treatment of the antiquarian studies and travelogues in the collection. I then move to examine the national canon and the rise of a literary heritage. As I argue in the following section, Cotton II's curatorial decisions were partly influenced by shifting ideas of national character in the 1790s. In comparison to his predecessors, his collecting practices reveal a preference for domestic antiquities and travelogues and the writings of English authors whose increasing popularity in the period was part of a move towards the celebration of the national past. This was a celebration of native Britons' achievements that attempted to create (and allowed individuals to buy into through the purchase of literary works) a sense of a shared cultural heritage. In what follows, I demonstrate the extent to which a celebration of a British cultural heritage resulted in a reconfiguration of book collecting practices and, consequently, impacted on Cotton II's curatorship of his inherited collection.

In the previous chapter I discussed the importance of studying ancient Rome as an exemplar of the highest form of culture, but also as a means of navigating and attempting to predict the future of Britain's growing Empire. Classicism and the history of ancient Rome (and increasingly that of ancient Greece) continued to draw the attention of the reading public, namely the upper and middle classes, throughout the eighteenth century. However, towards the end of the century there was a growing interest in the domestic history of Britain. This is not to say that domestic history had not been the subject of

interest for antiquarians prior to the 1790s. Indeed, the study of Anglo-Saxons, along with the Celts, Druids and Ancient Britons, did take place during the seventeenth and eighteenth century. However, Rosemary Sweet argues that whilst the Saxon period was significant for England's constitutional, ecclesiastical and legal development, 'it could not command the widespread interest which surrounded Roman antiquities'<sup>323</sup>. The Anglo-Saxons and the Ancient Britons were often depicted as barbaric, rude, and, in the case of the Anglo-Saxons, as destroyers of the civilisation brought to Britain by the Romans.

By the 1790s, however, there was a resurgence of interest in Anglo-Saxon antiquities. The Medieval period was increasingly held in higher esteem as a significant moment in the formation of those institutions still evident in the late-eighteenth-century British state. Aided by the growing momentum of the Gothic Revival, in motion since the 1740s, there was a renewed appreciation for the culture and people of the British Isles who succeeded the Roman occupation of Britain. Kidd argues that the Anglo-Saxons were increasingly admired for their libertarian ways and believed to constitute 'the historic core of the English nation'<sup>324</sup>.

The growing popularity of studies of domestic antiquities and history is evident in an examination of Cotton II's purchases between 1791 and 1816. In contrast to Rogers, Cotton II's account book records a preference for domestic studies including John Carter's *Specimens of Ancient Sculpture and Painting* (1780-95), Francis Grose's *The Antiquities of England and Wales* (1772-73), Daniel Lyson's *Environs of London* (1792-96), and a subscription for Robert Bowyer's illustrated edition of David Hume's *History of England* (1806).<sup>325</sup> This is not to say that Rogers did not buy any works that dealt with the subject of domestic antiquities. Indeed, William Camden's *Britannia*, edited by Edmund Gibson (1722) can be attributed to him along with works by Richard Gough, the President of the Society of Antiquaries, who was an avid scholar of domestic antiquities and a correspondent of Rogers in the 1770s.<sup>326</sup> However, given Rogers' interest in Italian artwork and writings, it is not surprising to find that the majority of his purchases that

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<sup>323</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, p. 191.

<sup>324</sup> Kidd, *British Identities before Nationalism*, p. 112.

<sup>325</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Account Book of William Cotton II, 271.

<sup>326</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Correspondence of Charles Rogers, 347.

fall under the genre of historical and antiquarian studies focused on the civilisation of ancient Rome.

The resurgence of interest in the history of Britain from the fall of the Roman Empire to the end of the Medieval period helped to further understanding and celebration of Britain's historic past and was part of an attempt to foster a sense of national cultural heritage. As such the study of domestic antiquities was, Newman observes, part of a large-scale expansion and exploration of national selfhood.<sup>327</sup> This view is shared by Sweet who argues that 'Antiquarian studies have always had an important role to play in the creation of a nationalist myth of British origins and a British national identity.'<sup>328</sup> For, 'As national identity waxed stronger over the course of the century, the adumbration of a common ancestral past through the description of the nation's history and antiquities assumed a weightier significance.'<sup>329</sup> This included a celebration of the shared Anglo-Saxon origins and the achievements of the nation during the Medieval period. However, despite attempts to foster a unified sense of British cultural history, this was not always the case. Gothic architecture, for instance, was often referred to as English Gothic, thereby continuing a sense of provincial identities and asserting ideas of English superiority and dominance within the British Isles.<sup>330</sup> However, despite the continuation of provincialism, there was increased interest amongst both antiquarians and the reading public for the study of ancient Britain's past. Increasingly notions of late-eighteenth-century Britishness became intertwined with a knowledge of the nation's past and a sense of cultural heritage.

Whilst the term heritage was not used in the eighteenth century to denote a common and shared inheritance of the past, Sweet argues that there was a growing consciousness that 'Antiquities and history belonged to the public at large.'<sup>331</sup> In turn, there was a growth of interest in the Anglo-Saxon and Gothic origins of Britain and the extent to which they shaped eighteenth-century society. Although John Frew argues that antiquarians were slow to respond to the growth of public interest in domestic antiquities, from the 1770s

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<sup>327</sup> Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism*, p. 114.

<sup>328</sup> Rosemary Sweet, 'Antiquaries and Antiquities in Eighteenth-Century England', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 34 (2001), pp.181-206 (p. 192).

<sup>329</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, p. 309.

<sup>330</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, p. 267.

<sup>331</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, p. 309.

onward a greater number of studies were being published at affordable prices so as to appeal to middle-class collectors with an amateur interest in domestic antiquities.<sup>332</sup> There was a move away from the niche studies in favour of more accessible and captivating material which held greater appeal for a broader and less specialised market.

The increased availability of antiquarian studies provided the book buying public with the opportunity to purchase a piece of British history and buy into the concept of a national cultural heritage. One such work was Francis Grose's *Antiquities of England Wales* (1772) which Cotton II purchased in instalments in 1793. Grose's work consists of a series of prints documenting the Anglo-Saxon and Gothic ruins across Britain. Frew argues that Grose's 'rambling, anecdotal volumes were written in the express belief that "every man is naturally an antiquarian" and that the "cheapness and singularity" of his ventures would recommend (them) to public favour'<sup>333</sup>. Whilst Grose's work has been dismissed as a crude study and the work of poor antiquarian, his *Antiquities* provided the middle classes with the opportunity to purchase and buy into a sense of a common cultural heritage at an affordable price. The individual plates were initially sold at sixpence a plate, although Cotton II paid in the region of £7.0.0 for a bound copy of *Antiquities of England and Wales* and £8.12.0 and £6.2.6 for two further works on the antiquities of Scotland and Ireland.<sup>334</sup> If, as Stephen Bending argues:

prints transform the objects of the past into a commodity, buying into those representations of the past – the transformation of the physical into the aesthetic products of consumerism – is also, then, the chance to buy into a shared national heritage, and the beginnings of a national heritage industry.<sup>335</sup>

Grose's works, written in their accessible anecdotal style and marketed at an affordable price, contributed to the creation of a shared cultural heritage which could be purchased and consumed by the book buying public.

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<sup>332</sup> John Frew, 'An Aspect of the Early Gothic Revival: The Transformation of Medievalist Research, 1770-1800', *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, 43 (1980), pp. 174-185 (pp. 179-181).

<sup>333</sup> Frew, 'An Aspect of the Early Gothic Revival: The Transformation of Medievalist Research, 1770-1800', p. 175.

<sup>334</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS William Cotton II Account Book, 271.

<sup>335</sup> Stephen Bending, 'Every Man is Naturally an Antiquarian: Francis Grose and Polite Antiquaries', *Art History*, 25 (2002), pp. 520-530 (p. 529).



The opportunity to purchase a piece of a shared heritage is undertaken again by Cotton II. Cotton II's account book records payments of £1.1.0, at regular intervals, between 1796 and 1805 and recorded as 'Subscription for Bowyer's History of England'.<sup>336</sup> These payments refer to Robert Bowyer's Historic Gallery which was an enterprise centred around his commission of artists to produce depictions of scenes from British history. The works were exhibited to the public for the cost of an entrance fee and patrons were able to purchase an exhibition catalogue. The culmination of the project was a luxurious illustrated edition of David Hume's *History of England*. Hume's work remained immensely popular throughout the late-eighteenth century and, as Towsey argues, was required reading of all socially aspirational gentlemen seeking to familiarise themselves with England's past.<sup>337</sup> Cotton II's subscription to the gallery was likely to have been motivated by a desire to see his name publicly displayed on the list of subscribers, and to purchase illustrations of key moments in British history depicted in a romanticised manner.

Bowyer's illustrated edition presents Hume's work in a manner which was perhaps unintended by its author. Mark Philip argues that 'Bowyer's artists present the English past in decidedly sentimental terms, giving history a new sense of narrative fluency, allied to very little in the way of costume or accuracy.'<sup>338</sup> The paintings (produced to accompany Hume's writing) have been described as 'Gothick-picturesque' with their emphasis on charming simplicity rather than historical accuracy. The 1793 prospectus to the exhibition stated that the paintings were intended 'to rouse the passions, to fire the mind with emulation of heroic deeds, or to inspire it with detestation of criminal actions'<sup>339</sup>. Bowyer's romanticised depiction of historical scenes bear little resemblance to the pathos and irony of Hume's writing. Rather, Philip suggests that 'What the painters offer is easy access to the sentiments, diminished by a seeming blindness to all questions of historical or ideological difference.'<sup>340</sup> Detached from the content of Hume's work, rather than offering a judgement or opinion on historical events, they sentimentalise the subject

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<sup>336</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS William Cotton II's Account Book, 271.

<sup>337</sup> Towsey, "'The Book seemed to sink into Oblivion': Reading Hume's *History* in Eighteenth-Century Scotland', in *David Hume: Historical Thinker, Historical Writer*, ed. by Mark G. Spencer (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 2015), pp. 81-102 (pp. 96-97).

<sup>338</sup> Mark Philip, *On Historical Distance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 171.

<sup>339</sup> Quoted in Rosemary Mitchell, *Picturing the Past: English History in Text and Image, 1830-1870* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), p. 39.

<sup>340</sup> Philip, *On Historical Distance*, p. 178.

and focus on the imagined feelings of the characters they depict so as to elicit an emotive response. In much the same way as Francis Grose's work offered consumers the opportunity to buy into a cultural past, so too did Bowyer's gallery. In doing so, 'a generalised – at times superficial – acquaintance with the nation's antiquities was being subsumed into a historical package for the wider reading public; a process of commodifying the past that would become typical of the 'heritage industry'.<sup>341</sup>

The interest in domestic antiquities was complemented by a growth in domestic travel writing or travelogues. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, the latter part of the eighteenth century witnessed a rapid expansion of writing on foreign and domestic travel and exploration.<sup>342</sup> With the continent closed off to travellers during the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars with France, British tourists increasingly looked to the opportunities for sightseeing provided by their own country. Titles such as Thomas Pennant's *Tours* offered potential itineraries for travellers and, for armchair tourists, opportunities to further their knowledge of the British Isles. As Sweet observes, 'the nation was coming to know itself through topographical literature, and to define itself through the monuments and antiquities as well as the agriculture and manufacturers.'<sup>343</sup>

Cotton II's purchased various titles by Thomas Pennant including his *Tour of England* and *Tour of Wales* in 1792 and *Outline of the Globe* in 1804. Alongside these additions, between 1792 and 1794 he purchased John Carter's *Antiquities and Ancient Sculpture* in instalments. Another purchase was an unidentified book of maps by John Cary in 1795. Whilst the work is no longer retained in the collection, it is likely that the book referred to in Cotton II's accounts may be Cary's *New Maps of England and Wales, with Parts of Scotland* which was published in the preceding year. The domestic focus of the antiquarian and topographical content of the titles purchased by Cotton II suggests an attempt to further his knowledge of the country's historic past and geographical landscape. Whilst Cotton II never travelled abroad, he did make trips to Margate, Brighton and Bath suggesting that he was at least familiar with the landscape surrounding London.<sup>344</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, p. 310.

<sup>342</sup> St Clair, *The Reading Nation*, p. 233.

<sup>343</sup> Sweet, *Antiquaries*, p. 309.

<sup>344</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Reminiscences of William Cotton III; Plymouth, Cottonian Collection, MS Correspondence of William Cotton II, 347.

Titles such as Carter's and Grose's antiquities also offered the traveller an illustrated guide to the antiquarian ruins which could be seen on a tour of the country thereby combining both travel and antiquarian studies. Popularised by their depiction in illustrated antiquarian studies such as Grose's work and, in part, by the efforts of the Romantic poets and ideas of the picturesque by William Gilpin, the ancient and rambling ruins of Abbeys, castles and churches were given a new lease of life by the rise of domestic picturesque tourism.<sup>345</sup> Increasingly, 'Medieval architecture, previously neglected or despised, attracted first new interest and then dawning admiration. Gothic ruins of the monasteries ceased to be merely antiquarian curiosities and became major features on a redrawn tourist map of England.'<sup>346</sup>

Ancient rambling ruins which appeared to have been untouched for centuries were of great interest for travellers seeking picturesque landscapes and awe-inspiring relics of the past. Francis Grose disapproved of efforts in the 1790s to tidy up the overgrown ruins of Tintern Abbey lamenting that 'Here at one cast of the eye, the whole is comprehended, nothing being left for the spectator to guess or explore'. In tidying up the Abbey 'the ground is covered over with a turf as even and trim as that of a Bowling-green which gives the building more the air of an artificial Ruin in a garden, than that of an ancient decayed Abbey'.<sup>347</sup> Picturesque taste recommended a state of decay and rugged disrepair as having the highest aesthetic appeal. An appeal which had the ability to both delight and, in some instances, conjure a sense of the sublime. For Grose, therefore, the tidying up of the ruins resulted in the loss of 'the atmosphere of mystery and even horror proper to a monument of the Catholic past and the spectator has been deprived of the opportunity for a pleasurable frisson.'<sup>348</sup>

For the authors of antiquarian studies and travelogues, historical or visual accuracy was often less of a concern than the depiction of ruined abbeys or castles in such a manner as

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<sup>345</sup> Malcom Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800* (Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1989), pp. 4-5.

<sup>346</sup> Ian Ousby, *The Englishman's England: Taste, Travel and the Rise of Tourism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 99-100.

<sup>347</sup> Francis Grose quoted in Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800*, pp.98-102.

<sup>348</sup> Ousby, *The Englishman's England*, p. 124.

to elicit 'Pleasing melancholy' or 'agreeable horror' in the observer.<sup>349</sup> Commenting on the presence of human figures, decorative borders, and compositional elements such as exaggerated plant life or aspects that couldn't be seen from the assumed perspective, Maria Grazia Loll argues that 'such artful compositions approximated a ritual of preservation. They celebrated the monuments; they were monuments to the monuments, but not the monuments themselves [...] at each step they make clear that they are *not* the objects they represent.'<sup>350</sup> In their portrayal of decaying monuments and ruins, the prints by Carter and Grose sought to inspire in their viewer – both the traveller in person and the reader – an aesthetic feeling that rendered the monuments themselves immaterial.<sup>351</sup> In a period characterised by ideas of beauty, the picturesque and the sublime and a renewed appreciation for Britain's Gothic architecture, the reader of such works could, upon seeing the images of ruins captured and romanticised by Carter and Grose, be both inspired and horrified through a confrontation with the remains of their own primitive past.<sup>352</sup> In doing so, Paul Smethurst argues that 'An increased sense of national and, by extension, imperial belonging was a significant purpose and outcome of the domestic tour in Britain, which helped reinforce these attachments to political as well as natural landscapes.'<sup>353</sup>

Although the late-eighteenth century witnessed a growth in domestic tourism, narratives depicting voyages of exploration and scientific discovery continued to grip readers' attention. Cotton II's purchases included the narrative of Captain Cook's third and final voyage of discovery and Captain Vancouver's exploration of the north western seaboard of American and Canada. As I discussed in the previous chapter, the voyages of exploration in the 1760s and 1770s saw travellers returning with raw data documenting the habitats, people and societies, and topography encountered on their journeys. This information in turn aided theories of universal human development with stadial theories gaining momentum. Ronald Meek argues that, in the last two decades of the eighteenth

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<sup>349</sup> Andrews, *The Search for the Picturesque: Landscape Aesthetics and Tourism in Britain, 1760-1800*, p. 41.

<sup>350</sup> Maria Grazia Lolla, 'Ceci n'est pas un monument: Vetusta Monumenta and antiquarian aesthetics', *Producing the Past: Aspects of Antiquarian Culture and Practice 1700-1850* ed. by Martin Myrone; Lucy Peltz (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), pp. 15-34 (p. 20).

<sup>351</sup> Noah Heringman, *Sciences of Antiquity: Romantic Antiquarianism, Natural History and Knowledge Work* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 233.

<sup>352</sup> Anne Erikson, *From Antiquities to Heritage: Transformations of Cultural Memory* (New York; Oxford: Berghan Books, 2014), p. 71.

<sup>353</sup> Paul Smethurst, *Travel Writing and the Natural World, 1768-1840* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 10.

century, interest in the four stages theory reached its apogee.<sup>354</sup> In the 1780s and 1790s philosophers continued to question, Wilson argues, 'If all people enjoyed a "natural" equality, as some Enlightenment thinkers had suggested, then why were some so much more advanced than others?'.<sup>355</sup> Amid these questions and with a greater knowledge of the indigenous people of the world, the beginnings of racialised theories of human development began to emerge, although it would not be until the mid-nineteenth century that they would displace stadial models.

By early 1780s a shift had occurred in the British public's perception of the indigenous encounters recorded in the Voyages of Captain Cook. Wilson argues that 'the second and third voyages even had the effect of recasting a longer-held and more ferociously enacted anti-primitivism that had shaped English colonial relations for some time.'<sup>356</sup> As Cook's voyages provided 'authenticated facts' and observations thereby contributing to a new comparative ethnography, so too did a 'nascent anthropology' emerge that supported imperial control by arguing that these societies encountered were an earlier, nastier and less-developed version of European society.<sup>357</sup> The construct of the Noble Savage was replaced with that of the ignoble savage who, in contrast to the Noble Savage, was depicted as a primitive heathen uncivilised and held up as evidence of European superiority.<sup>358</sup> The shifting interpretation of the indigenous people depicted in Cook's voyages was characterised by a movement away from the earlier anxieties about the morality of the British Empire towards a confirmation that it was Britain's moral duty to colonise these primitive and undeveloped lands and their people. The Anglican Evangelicals with their emphasis on religious conversion led the reversal of primitivism theories.<sup>359</sup> In Chapter Six I discuss Cotton II's involvement with the Anglican Evangelicals in greater detail. However, it suffices to say now that in the 1790s he aligned himself with the group and likely supported their ideas on overseas missionaries.

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<sup>354</sup> Ronald L. Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), p. 177.

<sup>355</sup> Wilson, *The Island Race*, p. 58.

<sup>356</sup> Wilson, *The Island Race*, p. 71.

<sup>357</sup> Wilson, *The Island Race*, p. 71

<sup>358</sup> Meek, *Social Science and the Ignoble Savage*, p. 2-3.

<sup>359</sup> Jocelyn Linnekin, 'Contending Approaches', *The Cambridge History of the Pacific Islanders* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p.12.

The Evangelicals, as proponents of the abolition movement and bound to practices of conversion, believed it was their duty to bring Christianity to the indigenous people of far-flung lands and to civilise them through conversion to the Christian faith. William Barnhart argues that in the minds of the Anglican Evangelicals:

Britain enjoyed a unique status as God's chosen nation, whose great Protestant religion was an important component of its growing overseas empire [...] the "signs of the times" suggested that it was Britain's divinely ordained mission to rescue indigenous people by extending to them the benefits of civilization and true Christianity.<sup>360</sup>

Thus, the Evangelicals saw it as their duty to protect the moral health of Britain and the world and to civilise the "heathens" across the globe. The tropics and South Sea Islands had long been held to be geographic spaces of luxury, slothfulness and sensuality which, in the minds of the Evangelical missionaries, were in need of Christianity. Furthermore, the South Seas held particular appeal for a nation still fascinated by Cook's voyages of exploration and, as Barnhart notes, the Evangelical press exploited this interest depicting images of the inhabitants of the Pacific islands as barbaric and wretched. Evangelical missionaries were dispatched in greater numbers throughout the early 1800s on a national mission, founded on a belief in Britain's status as God's chosen nation, 'whose providential task was to Christianize and civilize the "heathen" across the globe'<sup>361</sup>. Missionaries were elevated to the status of national heroes by the Evangelical press who portrayed their role as on a par with the great adventures of explorers or the heroic acts of national service by Nelson and Wellington.<sup>362</sup> In their attempts to convert the supposed heathens they encountered, British Anglican Evangelical missionaries believed they were saving the savages from themselves. This view of themselves aided, in some quarters, the development of a sense of Britishness characterised by their role of bringing civilisation and Christianity to the far corners of the globe.

The death of Cook at the hands of the natives of Tahiti helped to cement him as a national hero and reinforce notions of British superiority over the primitive savages of the island. After his death, Cook is venerated as the embodiment of a late-eighteenth-century

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<sup>360</sup> William C. Barnhart, 'Evangelicalism, Masculinity, and the Making of Imperial Missionaries in Late Georgian Britain, 1795-1820', *The Historian; A Journal of History*, 67 (2005), pp. 712-732 (p. 712).

<sup>361</sup> Barnhart, 'Evangelicalism, Masculinity, and the Making of Imperial Missionaries', p. 713.

<sup>362</sup> Barnhart, 'Evangelicalism, Masculinity, and the Making of Imperial Missionaries', pp. 728-729.

characteristically British form of masculinity. He is depicted as a strong and firm leader, yet fair and compassionate to his crew and the people he encounters. Cook came 'to symbolize and embody the combination of intrepidity and humanitarianism that was quickly vaunted as a central feature of Englishness itself.'<sup>363</sup> Furthermore, Harris argues that Cook's portrayal as a hard-working and modest man who earned his status through merit rather than entitlement sees him become a representation of both imperialism and a new form of middle-class masculinity. The image of Cook as the embodiment of the noble explorer who was humane and benevolent, yet courageous and loyal to his men formed an enduring myth that prevails to this day.<sup>364</sup>

The elevation of Cook's status as a national hero is evident in the Cottonian Collection. One of Rogers' final purchases prior to his death was a portrait medallion depicting Captain Cook. Whilst not specified, it is likely that the medallion was one of two produced by Josiah Wedgwood – the first produced in 1779 and the second in 1784.<sup>365</sup> Further evidence of the continuing celebrity status of Cook can be found in the copy of Cook's second voyage of discovery held in the Cottonian. Pasted into the volume is an original page from the log book kept by Cook during his second voyage (**Figure 11**). The double-sided page is dated Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> and Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1773. The coordinates listed on the page place *Resolution* off the coast of New Zealand whilst Cook was conducting his first sweep of the Pacific. It is believed that the page was a gift from Mrs Elizabeth Cook (Cook's widow) who lived in Clapham during the period of the Cotton family's period of residence. It is known that Elizabeth Cook distributed a few logbook pages from Cook's voyages to friends on special occasions in the early-nineteenth century, however it is not known whether this page was gifted to either Cotton II or Cotton III.<sup>366</sup> Despite this, the gift of the logbook pages and its preservation reiterates the continuing legacy of Cook as a British hero long after his death.

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<sup>363</sup> Jocelyn Harris, "Domestic Virtues and National Importance": Lord Nelson, Captain Wentworth and the English Napoleonic War Hero', *Eighteenth Century Fiction*, 19 (2006), pp. 181-205

<sup>364</sup> Gananath Obeyesekere, *The Apotheosis of Captain Cook: European Myth Making in the Pacific*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 4-5.

<sup>365</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection, MS Charles Rogers' Purchase Records, 359.

<sup>366</sup> I am grateful to Cliff Thornton (President of the Captain Cook Society) for verifying the authenticity of the logbook page and for providing further information regarding the context of the page. Only a handful of individual pages taken from Cook's logbooks have survived. Of these, one is recorded as having been a gift from Elizabeth Cook to a Robert Williamson in 1814. Williamson was a wealthy merchant, also resident in Clapham at this time, therefore making it extremely likely that the page in the Cottonian entered the collection in a similar fashion.

Remarks on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> Sept. 1773.

11	2	SW	...	SSW	
12	4				
13	6	SSW	...	SSW	
14	6	SSW	...	SSW	
15	2	SSW	...	SSW	
16					
17					
18	1	SSW	...	SSW	
19	2	SSW	...	SSW	
20	3				
21	3				
22	3				
23	3				
24	3				
25	3				
26	3				
27	3				
28	3				
29	3				
30	3				
31	4	SSW	...	SSW	
32	4				
33	4				
34	4				
35	4				
36	4				
37	4				
38	4				
39	4				
40	4				
41	4				
42	4				

Var<sup>n</sup> - p. N. by the ... 7. 26 E.

Hazy & Drizzle ... 4. 26 S. 26 E.

S. 26 S. 26 E. ... 7. 26 E.

A Great Swell from the South -

Course cor Discreants	Sailed 5 <sup>o</sup>	Long. Whitea	West from Greenwich
173 <sup>o</sup> 30'	18.40	5.38	5-40
74			157-58

Figure 11: Logbook page from Captain Cook's second voyage of exploration. Permission Courtesy of Plymouth City Arts and Heritage Service.



The celebration of Cook as the embodiment of British character was part of the emergence of a late-eighteenth-century cult of celebrity and hero worship that emerged around key figures of British history and culture. A similar veneration was reserved for Admiral Nelson following his death at the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805. Cotton III records in his *Reminiscences* watching the State funeral parade for Nelson from a house on Ludgate Hill which he describes as ‘a Grand imposing spectacle and the processions occupied nearly the whole day’.<sup>367</sup> It is likely, given Cotton III’s young age at the time, that he was accompanied by Cotton II when viewing the spectacle. Adoration of Cook and Nelson as the embodiment of those virtuous characteristics believed to be associated with British masculinity – military prowess, bravery and courage whilst also being firm, fair and wise – formed part of a celebration of British character in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth century. This, in turn, was part of the wider programme of creating a national cultural heritage and the celebration of men who were believed to embody Britain’s imperial conquest.

Intrinsic to a celebration of a national cultural heritage was the renewed importance and elevation of English authors and the nation’s literary past. As was discussed in Chapter One, for much of the eighteenth century English literature was ranked behind works written in Latin, Greek, Italian and French. However, over the course of the eighteenth century the status of works by British authors began to rise with the national canon consolidated by the mid-eighteenth century. Jonathan Brody Kramnick argues that a number of factors including the expansion of polite readership, increases in print production rates, the rise of the novel, and increased literary scholarship all contributed to the canonisation process in the 1740s and 1750s.<sup>368</sup> Britain’s older writers – Shakespeare, Spenser and Milton – came to form a classical Trinity of English playwrights and poets with their work becoming the focus of textual scholarship and compiled into anthologies.<sup>369</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection, MS Reminiscence of William Cotton III, p. 24.

<sup>368</sup> Jonathan Brody Kramnick, *Making the English Canon: Print Capitalism and the Cultural Past, 1700-1770* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 1.

<sup>369</sup> Jonathan Brody Kramnick, ‘The Making of the English Canon’, *PMLA*, 112 (1997), pp. 1087-1101 (p. 1087).

Although the process of canonisation was complete by the mid-eighteenth century, it was not until the 1780s and 1790s that book collectors began to hold the writing of their countrymen in high esteem and prices for early editions began to rise. For example, the price for a copy of Shakespeare's first folio rose from £5 10s in 1775 to £121 16s in 1818.<sup>370</sup> The growth of interest for early editions of native authors can be attributed to a number of reasons including the Gothic Revival and a more general growth of interest in the vernacular literature of northern Europe, the continuing effects of the canonisation process making rare early editions of the works Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton more desirable for collectors, and the broader nationalism of the late-eighteenth century.<sup>371</sup> The elevation of early editions of English canonical authors' work during a period of growing nationalism and celebration of Britain's native culture sought to cement the union between England, Scotland and Wales (and, after 1801, Ireland) through the cultivation and celebration of a common literary heritage.<sup>372</sup>

The Cottonian as it was inherited by Cotton II in 1791 already contained a strong representation of English literature. Amongst Rogers' purchases can be found varying editions of works by Geoffrey Chaucer, Edmund Spenser, William Shakespeare, John Milton and John Dryden, along with later eighteenth-century authors such as Alexander Pope, John Gay, Henry Fielding, Jonathan Swift and Tobias Smollett. All of these authors' works began to appear with greater frequency and were included in anthologies produced from the 1770s onwards.<sup>373</sup> With the end of perpetual copyright in 1774, new editions appeared on the market thereby improving the accessibility of English literary works.<sup>374</sup> At same time, early editions of works by Edmund Spenser, William Shakespeare, and John Milton were increasingly seen as desirable pieces by bibliomaniacs looking to develop their collections. In turn, this habit filtered down to the more modest book collectors who, whilst not being able to afford record high prices, could buy later editions of works to add to their collections.<sup>375</sup> Whilst the Cottonian does

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<sup>370</sup> Hunt, 'Private libraries in the age of bibliomania', pp. 447-448.

<sup>371</sup> Hunt, 'Private libraries in the age of bibliomania', pp. 447-448.

<sup>372</sup> Newman, *The Rise of English Nationalism*, pp. 113-115.

<sup>373</sup> St Clair, *The Reading Nation*, p. 132.

<sup>374</sup> Trevor Ross, *The Making of the English Canon* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1998), p. 297.

<sup>375</sup> Connell, 'Bibliomania: Book Collecting, Cultural Politics and the Rise of the Literary Heritage in Britain', p. 27-28.

not hold any particularly early editions of these authors' works – most date from the seventeenth and early-eighteenth century – the rising popularity and canonisation of English authors is evident in Cotton II's decision to preserve the majority of those English literary works purchased by Rogers.

To conclude this chapter, I briefly discuss Cotton II's treatment of the works of one of these authors, William Shakespeare. The works of Shakespeare were well-represented in the Cottonian throughout its history and under all of its custodians. Editions of Shakespeare's plays and poems held in the collection date from the 1640 edition of *Poems Written by Wil-Shakespeare, Gent* (which was censored by its publishers and in recent times has been universally despised as an act of privacy) through to the highly praised and well-presented series of volumes edited by Samuel Johnson and published in the 1770s.<sup>376</sup> The earlier single pamphlet-style plays, produced between approximately 1700 and the 1740s, are bound in plain, pocket-sized volumes with hard-wearing bindings. Included in these compilations of plays is the 1766 edition of *Romeo and Juliet* reworked by David Garrick for performance at London's theatres. It is possible that William Townson or Charles Rogers may have attended productions of this adaptation of *Romeo and Juliet* and other Shakespearian plays held in the collection. In contrast, the later 1770s edition of the works of Shakespeare edited by Johnson (purchased by Rogers) are published in ten volumes bound with uniformed bindings. Johnson's scholarly edition with notes on the texts and elaborate binding is reflective of the canonisation process which saw English literary works become the focus of textual criticism. Furthermore, the publication of such works with emphasis on scholarly criticism, illustrations, and expensive bindings reflects the increasing celebration of Shakespeare and his work as a native author firmly embedded within the nation's cultural heritage.<sup>377</sup>

Amongst Cotton II's acquisitions can be included John Boydell's illustrated edition of the plays of William Shakespeare. The sister enterprise of Robert Bowyer's history gallery,

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<sup>376</sup> St Clair argues that, whilst the 1640 edition of poems has been dismissed by scholars, any criticism of its censorship of references to homoerotic love and the changing of titles overlooks the authority of the publisher to alter it. Furthermore, under the severe textual control of the period, St Clair argues that the publisher had a civic duty to do so. St Clair, *The Reading Nation*, p. 141.

<sup>377</sup> Jean L. Marsden, *The Re-Imagined Text: Shakespeare, Adaptation, and Eighteenth-Century Literary Theory* (Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 1995), pp. 47-48; Ross, *The Making of the English Canon*, p. 220-223.

Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery opened in 1789 on London's Pall Mall. Showcasing artists' depictions of scenes from Shakespeare's Plays, the gallery operated in a similar fashion to that of Bowyer's – visitors paid an entrance fee, could purchase an exhibition catalogue (a copy of which survives in the Cottonian Collection), and subscribers were able to purchase an illustrated edition of Shakespeare's plays. Cotton II received his copy in 1805, after paying an annual subscription for nearly ten years, although the work itself can no longer be found in the collection having been sold by Cotton III in 1839.<sup>378</sup> The intention of the project was, similar to that of Bowyer's, to revive history painting in contemporary British art – a genre thought to be of public benefit because of the moral message it embodied.<sup>379</sup> Rosie Dias argues that Shakespeare, who had become so integral to ideas of a British identity and cultural heritage, was considered to be an obvious subject for the project.<sup>380</sup> Much like the works displayed in Boydell's gallery, the paintings depicting scenes from Shakespeare's plays drew upon costumes and landscapes with a closer affinity to British domestic history than the period in which they were intended to be set. Despite the less than authentic reproduction of scenes, it is likely that the work held great appeal to Cotton II whose subscription for the work was likely motivated by both the appeal of having his name on the list of subscribers, but also a renewed appreciation, indeed celebration, of Shakespeare as the nation's playwright.

The choice of Shakespeare as the subject matter of Boydell's gallery furthered the association between him as the nation's playwright and consolidation of the nation's cultural heritage. In much the same way that Cook and Nelson were held up as exemplars of British masculinity in the late-eighteenth century, so too were the nation's authors celebrated for their contribution to the nation's literary past. Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Chaucer and, increasingly, eighteenth-century authors such as Samuel Johnson and Oliver Goldsmith achieved new status as cultural icons and their work was regarded as exemplifying the cultural sophistication of Britain. Philip Connell in his study of Poets' Corner in Westminster Abbey in the late-eighteenth century explores the connection between the erecting of monuments to English authors in one of the nation's most

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<sup>378</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection, MS account book, 271; Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS 1839 sale poster.

<sup>379</sup> Juliet Feibel, 'Vortigern, Rowena, and the Ancient Britons: Historical Art and the Anglicization of National Origin', *Eighteenth-Century Life*, 24 (2011), pp. 1-18 (p.14).

<sup>380</sup> Rosie Dias, *Exhibiting Englishness: John Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery and the Formation of a National Aesthetic* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 50.

prominent Churches and the reinforcement of an appreciation of the nation's culture and identity. He argues that:

By the 1790s, as newly militant patriotic conservatism took shape in response to the French revolution, Poets' Corner (as it had now become known) was being celebrated as a site of national literary commemoration surpassing even the "scatter'd monuments of Rome" as a focal point for the loyalists' veneration of literary genius."<sup>381</sup>

In a period of ideological threat during which the idea of British character was consolidated, so too did the celebration of the nation's poets, authors and playwrights become a means of reinforcing a sense of national cultural achievement. Thus Poets' Corner and the raising of authors to hero status, to be celebrated alongside Cook and Nelson as symbols of British imperial masculinity, furthered the consolidation of a sense of national character and heritage and attempts to imagine a native literary past.

## Conclusion

The period of Cotton II's custodianship of the Cottonian Collection was, as this chapter has sought to demonstrate, marked by a series of significant political and social events. The psychological and political repercussions following the loss of the American colonies, the onset of a renewed conflict with France, the ideological threat believed to be posed by revolutionary France, and the recurring threat of a Napoleon-led invasion fostered an increasingly anxious climate. Continued exploration and colonisation of the Southern hemisphere, a growing British Empire and the adoption of an increasingly aggressive imperial agenda further characterised the period in which Cotton II held custodianship of the collection. Consequently, Cotton II's inheritance of the collection in 1791 occurred at a moment when British national character was, in part, increasingly adopting a xenophobic and nationalistic outlook. In contrast to the earlier polite cosmopolitanism that Rogers would likely have associated with his British masculinity, Cotton II's gentlemanliness was likely to have held a closer affinity to the caricature of John Bull – patriotic, masculine, militaristic, honest, and Protestant.

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<sup>381</sup> Philip Connell, 'Death and the author: Westminster Abbey and the meanings of the literary monument', *Eighteenth-century Studies* (2005), pp. 557-585 (pp. 562-563).

Whilst this shift in character was likely to have been subtle, I have sought to demonstrate how its effects manifested themselves in Cotton II's curatorial practices. A study of his choice of titles for preservation and acquisition reveals a preference for those works which contributed, in part, to the rediscovery and consolidation of a national cultural heritage – a project that celebrated domestic antiquities and historical studies, the scenery of the British Isles, the British imperialist agenda and the national canon of English literary authors. In contrast to Rogers' preference for the study of classical civilisations and Enlightenment interest in the natural world as a means of furthering a universal history of mankind, the collection shifts in the 1790s to reflect the changing world around it. This is not to say that Cotton II had no interest in classical antiquities or the study of the natural world, rather, his curatorial decisions can be read as a response to the socio-political climate in which he lived. What emerges, therefore, is a collection that was largely based on mid-eighteenth-century cosmopolitan ideals being re-shaped by the growing nationalism of the late-eighteenth century. The fashions of book collecting were reflective of the changing socio-political environment in which these practices were fostered and, to some extent, were intrinsic in shaping this environment through their significance as evidence of the nation's cultural heritage.

# Chapter Five: The Cottonian Collection and the Church of England, 1690-1791

## Introduction

The final two chapters of this thesis work in tandem to trace the alterations in Anglican thought during the eighteenth century and, consequently, the effect of these changes on the curatorial practices of the Cottonian collectors. In the first chapter I situate the Cottonian Collection within the religious landscape of 1690-1784. Through an exploration of current historical debate on the centrality of religious observance during the period, I determine the religious outlook of Robert and William Townson and Rogers. I then turn attention to an examination of latitudinarianism – a form of religious thought that combined rational religion with natural philosophy – that dominated the Anglican Church of England from approximately 1650 to 1770 and gained a popular following amongst the urban middle classes. The chapter then moves to examine the contents of the Cottonian Collection in relation to mainstream latitudinarian thought and determine the extent to which this school of religious thought, that best describes that adopted by the Townsons and Rogers, influenced their curatorial practices. I argue that the theological holdings of the collection inherited by William Cotton II were those of an inherently latitudinarian collection shaped by the religious ideas of the previous one hundred years. The succeeding and final chapter of this thesis examines Cotton II's response to his inheritance of a collection grounded in the theological thought of an earlier age.

## An Everyday Religion: Anglicanism and the Cottonian Collectors

In recent times, scholarship has reasserted the importance of religion in eighteenth-century England. Until approximately twenty years ago, relatively few scholars working on the Enlightenment noted the significance of the Church in the lives of the laity. Rather, the eighteenth century was commonly perceived as an age of growing secularisation where an emphasis on science and rationalism resulted in a reduction in religious belief

and spirituality.<sup>382</sup> John Gascoigne argues that religion was ‘once consigned to the unfashionable outer suburbs of the historical polity’ where ‘easy generalisations about the growth of secularisation prevailed’.<sup>383</sup> The work of Gascoigne, Jonathan Sheehan and S. J. Barnett has done much to address this imbalance and, as Sheehan proclaims, ‘Religion has returned to the Enlightenment’.<sup>384</sup> Further support comes from W. M Jacob’s study of *Lay People and Religion in the Early Eighteenth Century* (1996) which convincingly demonstrates the intrinsic nature of the Church of England in the lives of much of the eighteenth-century population of England.<sup>385</sup>

The Anglican Church of England held dominance over the majority of the population’s religious practice. Unsurprisingly, however, as a Church attempting to represent an entire nation, there existed a number of internal divisions and variations in religious belief within the established Church. Throughout the eighteenth century, ‘High Church’, ‘Low Church’, ‘Orthodox’, ‘Evangelicals’ and ‘Methodism’ with varying interpretations of the Christian scripture held influence over the established Church. The balance of strength between these different devotional schools of Anglican churchmanship, Peter Nockles argues, shifted between 1688 and 1832. The result of variations in state policy and intellectual trends, these shifts in power are of particular importance for the following two chapters as they provide an opportunity to scrutinise the collection’s changing representation of theological literature.<sup>386</sup>

On the whole, the nature of these shifts were fairly subtle and it is now commonly held that, after the reign of Queen Anne, there existed a long period of comparative religious

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<sup>382</sup> Jonathan Sheehan, ‘Enlightenment, Religion and the Enigma of Secularisation’, *The American Historical Review*, 108 (2003), pp. 1061-1080, John Gascoigne, ‘Anglican latitudinarianism, Rational Dissent and Political Radicalism in the Late Eighteenth Century’, *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, ed. by Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 219-240, (p. 219); Jonathan Clark, *English Society, 1660-1832*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2000), p. 28; S.J. Barnett, *Enlightenment and Religion: The Myths of Modernity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

<sup>383</sup> Gascoigne, ‘Anglican latitudinarianism, Rational Dissent and Political Radicalism’, p. 219.

<sup>384</sup> Jonathan Sheehan, ‘Enlightenment, Religion and the Enigma of Secularisation’, p. 1062.

<sup>385</sup> W. M. Jacob, *Lay People and Religion in the Early Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 6

<sup>386</sup> Peter B. Nockles, ‘The Waning of Protestant Unity and Waxing of Anti-Catholicism? Archdeacon Daubeny and the Reconstruction of “Anglican” Identity in the Later Georgian Church, c. 1780-1830’, *Religious Identities in Britain, 1660-1832*, ed. by William Gibson and Robert G. Ingram (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), p. 182.



peace, consensus and protestant unity.<sup>387</sup> Aside from internal differences, the Church of England maintained its authority during the eighteenth century. Dissenters and non-conformists were in the minority (although their presence was often exaggerated), and only a small number of the population consciously disassociated themselves from the established Church.<sup>388</sup> Given the minority status of dissenters and the Cottonian men's allegiance to the established Church, this chapter focuses on the dominant school within the Church of England during the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries, latitudinarianism. This thesis is less concerned with non-conformists and the anomalies who are so often the focus of academic investigation, but rather it examines the lives of everyday middle-class men who are often overlooked, despite their prevalence and importance in understanding eighteenth-century society.

When Robert Townson made his initial theological purchases of Bibles, sermons, conduct guides, and tracts in the latter half of the seventeenth century, he did so within a society that was recovering from the religious conflict and hostility that had characterised the Civil Wars and Interregnum of the earlier half of the century. This was a period during which an Anglican Church of England sought to recover itself from the turmoil inflicted on it by Oliver Cromwell and his Puritan government.<sup>389</sup> During this time the Church of England continued to play a significant role in the everyday lives of men and women. W.M. Jacob argues that 'Religion permeated every area of people's lives.'<sup>390</sup> Far from being an unwelcome intrusion, 'for the majority of people the Christian religion was real and was

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<sup>387</sup> Nockles, 'The Waning of Protestant Unity', p. 179.

<sup>388</sup> The term dissenters refer to those who disassociated themselves from the established Church following the Restoration of the monarchy in 1660. After the Act of Uniformity in 1662 required ordination for all Anglican clergyman, those within the clergy who refused to submit became known as dissenters, non-conformists and non-jurors. W.M. Jacob argues that of the broader population in the early eighteenth century, only 5.6% could be classed as dissenters. W. M. Jacob, *Lay People and Religion in the Early Eighteenth Century*, p. 6. The over-whelming majority, however, conformed to the established Church. Despite this, dissenters have received considerable more attention from scholars. See: Knud Haakonssen, *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Lucy Underwood, *Childhood, Youth and Religious Dissent in Post-Reformation England* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Daniel E. White, *Early Romanticism and Religious Dissent* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>389</sup> The period of the Interregnum was characterised by conflict between the Puritans and the Anglican Church as Puritans attempted to impose their own religious view. See: Bernard Capp, *England's Culture Wars: Puritan Reformation and its Enemies in the Interregnum, 1649-1660* (Oxford Scholarship Online, 2012); Christopher Durston; Judith Maltby, *Religion in Revolutionary England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).

<sup>390</sup> Jacob, *Lay People and Religion in the Early Eighteenth Century*, p. 16.

a central, perhaps the central, focus of their lives.<sup>391</sup> The Church played a role in defining nearly every aspect of people's lives, from the governance of the local community through to domestic reading habits in the form of prayer books and conduct manuals. Whilst the period was characterised by a movement towards scientific and philosophical enquiry, for the majority the existence of God was never in question.<sup>392</sup>

The Church took on two principle roles. First was its physical importance as the centre of the community where parishioners met to worship, listen to sermons, celebrate festivals and holydays, meet with neighbours, exchange news and gossip, and to conduct the rituals associated with birth, death and marriage. Its second role was to create a sense of community and belonging. Nearly all households were represented in the parish Church at least once a week and this helped to create a fierce sense of loyalty and kinship towards the 'mother' church.<sup>393</sup> The Church was, therefore, 'a unit to which people were conscious of belonging and which distinguished them from their neighbours in adjacent parishes.'<sup>394</sup> In accordance with this argument, a biographical study of Cotton II's predecessors reveals their lives to have been intricately inter-woven with the Church of England. The influence of the Church can be glimpsed in the collectors' purchase records and archival documents, such as Rogers' appointment as a Church Warden, friendships between the collectors and members of the clergy, the religious language used in legal documents and the sheer volume of theological literature amassed by the collectors.<sup>395</sup>

At the time when Rogers assumed his position as a Church warden (probably in the 1740s or 1750s) the role was a significant one, not only in the church but within the parish and

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<sup>391</sup> Jacob, *Lay People and Religion in the Early Eighteenth Century*, p. 11.

<sup>392</sup> Anthony Pagden, *The Enlightenment and Why It Still Matters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 79.

<sup>393</sup> John Walsh; Stephen Taylor, 'Introduction: The Church and Anglicanism in the 'long' eighteenth century', *The Church of England c. 1689-1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 27.

<sup>394</sup> Jacob, *Lay People and Religion*, p. 53.

<sup>395</sup> Rogers was a church warden in the city of London. Plymouth, Cottonian Collection, Church accounts, 272. Rogers correspondence included the Rev. Samuel Bishop (who was also headmaster of the local Merchant Taylors School attended by Cotton II) and the Rev Jeremiah Miller, President of the Society of Antiquaries in 1770, the Rev. James Granger and Francis Wollaston. It should be noted that Rogers' correspondence with this members of the clergy was concerning his collection rather than religious matters. Plymouth, Cottonian Collection, Correspondence of Rogers, 345. Rogers' will begins: 'In the name of God Amen, I Charles Rogers of Laurence Pountney Lane London Esquire'. Religious language was used in legal documents such as these as a common practice. Plymouth, Cottonian Collection, Copy of Charles Rogers Will, 281.

wider community.<sup>396</sup> Governance of the local community was the responsibility of the Church. The parish formed the basic unit of local government with the vestry overseeing the running of parochial business. Formed of ratepayers within the parish the vestry (of which Rogers as a churchwarden was part of) were responsible for the maintenance of the Church and the administration of the parish. This included the provision of care of the poor and the upholding of law and order, and the conduct of the clergy. This was not, Jacob argues, the Church acting as an agent of the state, or the clergy attempting to subvert the political system. It is important to note that, generally speaking, the populous did not distinguish between the Church and State at either a national or local level. Rather, the mixing of the two 'was an expression of a particular form of Christianity, in which citizenship and Christianity were coterminous'.<sup>397</sup> Rogers' role as a church warden, whilst simultaneously employed as a State official involved in the administration of excise duties, reveals just one of the ways in which the mechanisms of the Church and State were deeply intertwined with each other and the lives of the metropolitan population of mid-eighteenth-century London. As an agent of both the established Church and the State's operational matrix, Rogers was involved in maintaining the relatively harmonious relationship between Church and State and their control of the lay population. As Walsh and Taylor note, 'any stereotype of the Church as an agency of social control neglected or despised by its plebeian constituents need to be treated warily and set alongside the powerful loyalties that attracted it.'<sup>398</sup>

Worship at the parish church of St Mary Abchurch would, however, have formed only one aspect of the Townsons and Rogers' religious life. Indeed, many in this period led a rich religious life outside of the Church through participation in private domestic worship. Increasingly the domestic circle was responsible for the fostering of religious habits through family prayers and the reading of sermons and the Bible (both privately and as a family unit).<sup>399</sup> Devotional theological literature played an integral role in enabling

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<sup>396</sup> Whilst the nature of the Church of which Rogers is warden is not stipulated by archival material, it is likely to have been that of St. Mary Abchurch. Following fire of London in 1666, the Church of Laurence Pountney (which neighboured the Townson and Rogers' property) was destroyed. The Church of Laurence Pountney united with St Mary Abchurch of the neighbouring parish, however the graveyard of Laurence Pountney Lane remains and is where bodies of Townsons, Rogers and Cotton II are buried. Rev. H.B. Wilson, *A History of the Parish of St. Laurence Pountney* (1831), p. 3.

<sup>397</sup> Jacob, *Lay People and Religion*, p. 11.

<sup>398</sup> Walsh; Taylor, 'Introduction', *The Church of England c. 1689-1833*, p. 27.

<sup>399</sup> Leonore Davidoff; Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (Abingdon, Routledge, 2002), p. 86.

parishioners to conduct their own private worship at home and it is, therefore, not surprising that a significant proportion of Robert Townson's purchases were comprised of sermons, tracts, theological treatises, prayer books and conduct manuals. Amongst the sermons and editions of the Bible, Townson purchased a copy of Richard Allestree's *The Whole Duty of Man* (1658). A popular religious conduct guide, the *Duty of Man* was modelled on the Church of England's the Book of Common Prayer and sought to offer readers a guide to godly living and was designed for everyday use so as to help foster religious habits in the reader.<sup>400</sup>

The role of the Church (both the symbolic and literal building) fluctuated over the course of the eighteenth century. By the mid-nineteenth century, domestic worship, whilst remaining an important aspect of an individual's religious life, was second to the function of the Church of England. Writing in his *Reminiscences*, William Cotton III chastises his parents for having him 'privately baptised, (according to the prevailing and irreverent custom of the time) in the drawing room of my Father's house'.<sup>401</sup> There was a continued allegiance to the parish Church and its influence in the lives of its parishioners, and the Church remained the centre of the community. It can, therefore, despite the lack of explicit archival evidence, be confidently assumed that the mainstream Church of England was influential in the lives of the Cottonian men: in shaping their religious beliefs, their outlook on State and society, and their day-to-day involvement with their local community. In light of this, I will now move on to an examination of the nature of their Anglican religious outlook; an outlook that is best exemplified by the latitudinarian doctrinal school that held sway over the eighteenth-century Anglican Church.

## The Rise of Latitudinarianism

A preliminary survey of Robert Townson's catalogue, the core of the original collection, reveal that of the two hundred and seventy entries, two-thirds of these were written by prominent Anglican theologians that have become associated with the latitudinarian tradition. These include sermons and treatises by John Tillotson (1630-94), Edward Stillingfleet (1633-99), Edward Fowler (1632-1714), and Isaac Barrow (1630-77)

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<sup>400</sup> Paul Elmen, 'Richard Allestree and *The Whole Duty of Man*', *The Library*, 6 (London, 1951), pp. 19-27; R.C. Tennant, 'Christopher Smart and *The Whole Duty of Man*', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 13 (1979), pp. 63-78.

<sup>401</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection, MS *Reminiscences of William Cotton III*, p.1.

amongst others.<sup>402</sup> Likewise, Charles Rogers, although his purchases were more varied than Robert Townson's, continued to include latitudinarian theological works such as titles by Samuel Clarke (1675-1729) and William Whiston (1667-1752) amongst his acquisitions.<sup>403</sup>

Latitudinarianism was a philosophical and theological position that combined reason, rationalism and natural philosophy with faith and religious belief. From the late-seventeenth century through to the mid-eighteenth century it would come to dominate the established Church's interpretation of the Christian scripture. For example, whilst never doubting that the Resurrection of Christ had taken place, they sought rational arguments grounded in natural philosophy in order to prove its existence. In contrast to Catholic or Puritan doctrine, they did not blindly place their faith in its existence, but attempts to rationalise and provide a scientific underpinning to their beliefs. Given their influence on mainstream Anglicanism by the early-eighteenth century, it is not entirely unusual to find the works of many prominent latitudinarian figures in the Cottonian Collection. At the time that they were making their theological purchases, latitudinarianism was increasing its influence over the Church and its reasoned, rational and moderate approach to religion was one that appealed, in particular, to many of the emergent middle class men and women who lived within the growing metropolis of London. From this point onwards, therefore, all close examination of theological writings will be drawn from those works which were purchased by either Robert or William Townson or Charles Rogers and formed part of the Cottonian Collection prior to the 1801 sale.

Originating from theological debates taking place in mid-seventeenth-century England (the result of turmoil following the Interregnum), latitudinarianism emerged as a form of religious outlook that had the potential to unify the English Protestants. Initially confined to a small group of clergymen and natural philosophers based at Cambridge University, the latitudinarians or 'latitude-men' sought to reduce the Church of England's teachings to 'a few plain essentially moral fundamentals, easily to be apprehended and put into

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<sup>402</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection, Robert Townson: *My Catalogue of Bookes*, 368.

<sup>403</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Charles Rogers purchase Records, 359.

practice by the ordinary rational man'.<sup>404</sup> They brought a reasoned and rational approach to study of the Scripture (one that contrasted with the affective and mysterious approach of the Puritans and Catholics) that aimed to increase the accessibility of the Christian doctrine. Isaac Barrow, the mathematician and latitudinarian (whose work appears to have been of particular interest to Robert Townson who produced his own analysis, written in Latin, of Barrow's sermons) summarises this aim in his sermon on 'Upright Walking Sure Walking', he writes:

the ways of truth, of right, of virtue, are so very simple and uniform, so fixed and permanent, so clear and notorious, that we can hardly miss them, or (except wilfully), swerve from them. For they be divine wisdom were chalked out, not only for ingenious and subtle persons (men of great parts, of refined wits, of long expence) but rather for the vulgar community of men, the great body of God's subjects consisting in persons of meanest capacity, and small improvement.<sup>405</sup>

Theirs was a form of belief that combined rationalism and reason, natural philosophy and faith and aimed to counter religious enthusiasm, atheism and superstition. By religious enthusiasm, they referred to any form of Puritanism that separated reason and religious belief. Atheism was associated with Epicureanism, libertinism, determinism, and especially the works of Thomas Hobbes. Finally, superstition referred to the Roman Catholic Church with its rituals and ceremony.<sup>406</sup> In contrast, latitudinarianism was a religious position known as low church Anglicanism; a position that sought to promote unity within English Protestantism by emphasising the commonality of man and a simple form of belief. In their pursuit of a simplified religion that reduced the need for divine intervention by priests, they preached toleration of other forms of Protestantism, and drew on emerging natural philosophical discoveries for determining the truth of the scripture. In doing so, the latitudinarians offered a religious outlook that was well-suited for English enlightened society and a growing mercantile society in the late-seventeenth century.

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<sup>404</sup> Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace and Sentiment: A Study of the Language and Ethics in England, 1660-1780*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p. 25.

<sup>405</sup> Isaac Barrow, 'Sermon V', *The Works of The Rev. Isaac Barrow, D.D* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1810), p. 313.

<sup>406</sup> Martin Ignatius; Joseph Griffin, *Latitudinarianism in the Seventeenth-Century Church of England* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1992), pp. 49-54.

Approaches to the study of latitudinarianism tend to differentiate between two generations of theologians.<sup>407</sup> The first generation included Benjamin Whichcote (1609-83), Henry More (1614-87), John Smith (1618-52) and Ralph Cudsworth (1617-88). The second group, many of whom had studied under the first, consisted of John Tillotson, Edward Stillingfleet (1633-99), Edward Fowler (1632-1714), Isaac Barrow (1630-77) and Simon Patrick (1626-1707). Alongside these can be included the works of natural philosophers such as Robert Boyle (1627-1691), John Wilkins (1617-72) and Isaac Newton (1643-1727) who, although more concerned with the emerging 'new science' are also associated with the latitudinarianism emerging at Cambridge. For, as Barbara Shapiro notes, whilst not all scientists were latitudinarians (and not all clergy were scientists) the latitudinarian clergy were keen supporters of the new science propagated by Boyle, Wilkins and Newton.<sup>408</sup> The affinity between natural philosophy, or 'new' science, and religion will be discussed in due course, however at this point it is important to note the close affinity between the two. Both figures associated with latitudinarian theological discussion and those with natural philosophy (in the form adopted by the latitudinarians) feature heavily in both Robert Townson's catalogue and Rogers' purchase records. Whilst not an unusual combination given the extent to which they looked to each other's writings, this dominant mix of natural philosophy and latitudinarianism reflects the Cottonian men's clear allegiance to this form of religious outlook.

Initially latitudinarianism was met with hostility. With their emphasis on moderation, reason and rationalism, they were accused of Socinianism, Deism and even Atheism. On the one side, the High Church clergy accused them of undermining the true tenets of religion by over-emphasising the role of rationalism. They argued that the latitudinarian's rationalism was undermining the Church from within and left the established Church open to attacks from Socinaism – a form of belief that denied the deity of Christ, Deism – a reasoned approach, closely associated to naturalism, which discounted the existence of the revelation and miracles, and Atheism. On the other side,

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<sup>407</sup> John Gascoigne and Isabel Rivers offer detailed discussions of the two different generations of 'Latitude-men' and their activities at Cambridge see: John Gascoigne, 'Cambridge and the Latitude Men' in *Cambridge in the Age of Enlightenment*, p. 40-51; Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, pp.28-31.

<sup>408</sup> Barbara Shapiro, 'Latitudinarianism and Science in Seventeenth-century England', *Past and Present*, 40 (1968), pp. 16-41 (p. 31).

the non-conformist including Calvinists and Puritans accused them of placing too much emphasis on the role of philosophical enquiry and accused them of being heathen moralists. On the contrary, however, whilst caring little for what they perceived as minor philosophical differences between Protestant sects, they were united in their opposition to atheism, superstition and religious enthusiasm.<sup>409</sup>

Although staunch opponents of Catholicism, they were keen to promote tolerance of other Protestants and their interpretation of the Scripture. This was partially a response to the religious conflict and hostility that characterised much of the seventeenth century. Their support for the Act of Toleration (1689) gained them the support of the Protestant non-conformists, yet simultaneously increased animosity from High Churchmen who continued to regard them as subversive and dangerous. Amongst Townson's purchases of latitudinarian clergyman are a handful of significant texts by non-conformists and dissenters such as the Puritan Richard Baxter's *Reasons of the Christian Religion* (1667) and his *The Knowledge of God* (1664), and, the controversial philosopher, and accused atheist, Thomas Hobbes' *State of Humane Nature* (1651) and *Leviathan* (1651).<sup>410</sup> For example, Hobbes' mechanical philosophy and controversial theories on divine providence were refuted by latitudinarian theologians including John Wilkins who accused him of atheism. This is not to say, therefore, that Townson necessarily had any leanings towards non-conformism, but rather than his collection reflects a broader interest and awareness of the religious themes of the period, and exhibits the tolerance towards variations of Protestantism so encouraged by many of the latitudinarian clergy.

By the end of the seventeenth century, the latitudinarians had gained dominance within the Church of England. Their dominance was heightened by the removal of the non-jurors (those clergymen who refused to swear allegiance to the newly crowned King William and Queen Mary). The removal of the non-jurors left many prominent positions within the Church opened and, more often than not, these were filled by latitudinarian

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<sup>409</sup> For an overview of the criticisms and attacks levelled at the latitudinarians between the Reformation and the Glorious Revolution see: John Spurr, "Latitudinarianism" and the Restoration Church, *The Historical Journal*, 31 (1998), pp.61-82 (p. 61-68); Rivers, *Reason, Grace and 'Sentiment*, p. 26.

<sup>410</sup> Much has been written on the complex nature of Thomas Hobbes' religious (or irreligious) stance. This thesis does not engage with arguments concerning the nature of Hobbes' religious beliefs, but notes their existence. For just a few of these varying views see: Peter Geach, 'The Religion of Thomas Hobbes', *Religious Studies*, 17 (1981), pp. 549-558; Devin Stauffer, "'Of Religion" in Hobbes' *Leviathan*', 72 (2010), pp. 868-879; Alan Cromartie, 'The God of Thomas Hobbes', *The Historical Journal*, 51 (2008), pp. 857-879.



clergymen sympathetic to the Restoration monarchy.<sup>411</sup> From their prominent positions, the latitudinarian clergy held a significant influence over the state, the Church and held the ear of the laity. As Robert Townsons' *Catalogue of my Bookes* attests, their sermons were very popular amongst those who heard them or could afford to buy their publications, Despite the attacks against them, the popularity of the latitudinarians amongst the laity grew significantly. Part of their appeal can be attributed to the nature of their preaching style. In the latter part of the seventeenth century, many of the second generation of latitudinarians relocated from Cambridge to London where the city became their pulpit and the metropolitan middle-classes their willing listeners.

Preaching from the city's churches, the latitudinarians adopted a plain and accessible manner of preaching that would become their trademark style. John Tillotson is often identified as the leading proponent of this style; a style that was reasoned and well-structured, drew on the emerging new science of the period, adopted considered and accessible language, and attempted to relate to the mercantile and urban interests of those men and women who came to listen to their sermons in the city of London.<sup>412</sup> Edward Fowler was one of those who applauded the new style of his fellow latitude-men observing that:

they affect not Bombaste word, trifling strains of Wit, foolish Quibbling, and making pretty sport with Letters and Syllables in their Preaching, but despite those despise those doings as pedantick and unmanly. But on the contrary they use a style that is very *grave*, and no less *significant*.<sup>413</sup>

Their purpose in using a simplified language and preaching style is 'to make the Doctrines of the Gospel as easie and intelligible as well they may'<sup>414</sup>. Theirs was a style that contrasted with that of the puritans who drew on mysteries and affections in their sermons and who, Fowler warns, 'do no small mischief, but render our Religion, which you have shewn is so highly reasonable, greatly suspected by many of the warier sort of

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<sup>411</sup> Mark Goldie, 'John Locke, Jonas Proast and Religious Toleration 1688-1692', *The Church of England c. 1689-1833*, ed. by John Walsh, Colin Haydon and Stephen Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 151.

<sup>412</sup> Rivers, *Reason, Grace and Sentiment*, pp. 52-56.

<sup>413</sup> Edward Fowler, *The Principles and Practices of certain Moderate Divines of the Church of England (greatly mis-understood) Truly Represented and Defended; Wherein (by the way) Some Controversies, of no mean Importance, are succinctly discussed: In A Free Discourse between two Intimate Friends. In III Parts.* (London, 1670), p. 104.

<sup>414</sup> Fowler, *Principles and Practices*, p. 104.

people.<sup>415</sup> In attempts to avoid this they therefore adopted a language that was rational, clear, and easy for listeners to follow.

It is not surprising that latitudinarianism and this preaching style would have appealed to the Townsons and Rogers. Although no evidence survives to suggest that Robert Townson ever attended any services held by the latitudinarian clergy, there is a chance that he may have had opportunity to do so. In the second half of the seventeenth century, London became the focal point of latitudinarian activities. Stillingfleet, Patrick and Fowler all obtained livings in the City of London. The most important pulpit dominated by the latitudinarians, St Lawrence Jewry, was held by John Wilkins and later Benjamin Whichcote, whilst Isaac Barrow was a guest preacher for a short duration, whilst Tillotson held a Tuesday sermon there from 1661.<sup>416</sup> St Lawrence Jewry Church was less than a mile from Townson's Laurence Poutney Lane home and it is likely, as a young man, that he would have had the opportunity to hear the sermons of Stillingfleet, Tillotson, Wilkins, Whichcote and Barrow first-hand. From the 1660s onwards, the latitudinarians held sway over a number of the city of London's pulpits where they held forth to an audience predominantly formed of middle-class men amongst whom, given the abundance of latitudinarian theology in the collection, could likely be counted Robert Townson.

In their attempt to Christianise the rapidly expanding market place, the latitudinarians drew upon mercantile language and metaphors as they knew would appeal to their audience in London churches. Isaac Barrow in his sermon on 'The Duty and reward of Bounty to the Poor', Barrow draws upon mercantile language in his promotion of charity. He argues that 'contributing part of our goods to the poor will qualify us to enjoy the rest with satisfaction and comfort' for 'having discharged this debt of justice' and 'having paid this tribute of gratitude our hearts being at rest, and our conscience well satisfied we shall like those good people in the Acts, *eat our meat with gladness, and singleness of heart*'.<sup>417</sup> He continues, adding that 'we may be further certified about the weight and worth of these duties, that to the observance of them most ample and excellent rewards are

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<sup>415</sup> Fowler, *Principles and Practices*, pp. 107-108.

<sup>416</sup> Rivers, *Reason, Grace and Sentiment*, p. 31.

<sup>417</sup> Barrow, 'The Duty and Reward of Bounty to the Poor', *Sermons Selected from The Works of the Rev. Isaac Barrow, D.D.*, vol. 2 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1810), p. 584.

assigned.<sup>418</sup> Barrow thus appeals to his middle-class professional and merchant listeners to invest in the short term so as to gain long term benefits of a charitable life, and to ensure that charity and piety remains a characteristic of an increasingly commercial society. In the same sermon he makes the connection between good deeds and financial success:

Liberality is the most beneficial traffick that can be; it is bringing our wares to the best market; it is letting out our money to God, who repays with vast usury; an hundred to one is the rate he allows at present, and above a hundred millions to one he will render hereafter; so that if you will be sure to thrive, you cannot fail to grow rich most easily and speedily. [...] them who freely offer him their goods, in return thereto will prosper their dealings, and bless their estates.<sup>419</sup>

Part of the appeal of the latitudinarians for the Cottonian men was likely to be their ability to talk, as Barrow's language use demonstrates, directly to the world of commerce and trade as it was experienced by the Townsons and Rogers who, although not merchants, benefited from British imperial trade through their role at the Custom House. Drawing upon mercantile language in their religious analogy, Barrow and his fellow clergyman were able to engage with their predominantly metropolitan middle-class audiences in a relatable and accessible manner.

Another appeal of the latitudinarians for the emerging mercantile middle classes was the latitudinarians grounding in Ancient Stoicism and its characteristic traits of rationalism, sociability and an industrious work ethic, as discussed in Chapter Three, that had such appeal for the men of the Cottonian. Isabel Rivers, in her study of the latitudinarians' use of language, has identified the Late-Stoic authors – Seneca, Plutarch and Marcus Aurelius, all of whom preached rationalism and a notion of civic virtue founded on ethics – as amongst those ancient philosophers most frequently cited by latitudinarian theologians. The works of those authors that Rivers discusses in her study can be found, as previously discussed, in Rogers' library. Rivers argues that the latitudinarians invoke the names and writings of the Ancient Stoics as they 'define man as a free, rational, sociable being,

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<sup>418</sup> Barrow, 'The Duty and Reward of Bounty to the Poor', *Sermons Selected from The Works of the Rev. Isaac Barrow* (1810), p. 584.

<sup>419</sup> Barrow, 'The Duty and Reward of Bounty to the Poor', *Sermons Selected from The Works of the Rev. Isaac Barrow*, (1810), p. 583.

capable of imitating God.<sup>420</sup> This view is shared by Christopher Brooke who argues that the latitudinarians regularly drew on aspects of Stoicism in their ethical theory, and particularly in their attack on the ethics of Thomas Hobbes and his perceived adoption of Epicurean philosophy.<sup>421</sup>

As the first half of this chapter demonstrates, the latitudinarian approach to the Christian doctrine, with their emphasis on reason, rationalism, and moderation coupled with their accessible stylistic flair made their writings appealing to middle-class men such as the Townsons and Rogers. It is likely, given their choice of purchases and Rogers' position as Church warden for the local parish, that the Townsons and Rogers conformed to the establishments standard approach to Anglicanism in the early-to-mid-eighteenth century. Furthermore, although there is minimal explicit engagement with politics in the collection, the latitudinarians also suited what was likely to have been the Cottonian men's Whig political stance. As Gascoigne notes, despite claims that latitudinarianism could transcend 'differences of political persuasion', it was unlikely that the Tory party, a traditional defender of the Church's privileges, 'would align themselves with those who wished to widen the doors of the Church to accommodate at least some of the dissenters.'<sup>422</sup> Latitudinarianism was, therefore, well-suited to men of the middle-class metropolitan elite who, like the Townsons and Rogers, inhabited an increasingly commercial society.

## Rational Religion and Natural Theology

Robert Townson's theological purchases fall into two categories. In the first category are works written by natural philosophers such as Robert Boyle, John Wilkins, Francis Bacon, and John Locke, of which Boyle and Wilkins classed themselves as latitudinarians, whose works explore the relationship between science and religion, and offer a methodology for determining the authenticity of the Christian religion. In the second category falls the majority of Townson's theological purchases – those written by clergymen who drew upon scientific methodology in their attempts to legitimise and rationalise their interpretation of the Christian scripture. Amongst the purchases made by the Townsons

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<sup>420</sup> Rivers, *Reason, Grace and Sentiment*, p. 35.

<sup>421</sup> Christopher Brooke, *Philosophic Pride: Stoicism and Political Thought from Lipsius to Rousseau* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 110-111.

<sup>422</sup> Gascoigne, *Cambridge in the Age of Enlightenment*, p. 5.

and Rogers can be found a number of prominent works that did just this such as Edward Stillingfleet's *Origines Sacrae, Or, A Rational Account of Faith* (1662) and his *A Rational Account of the Grounds of Protestant Religion* (1664), Tillotson's *Rule of Faith*, Samuel Clarke's *A Demonstration of Being and Attributes of God* (1705), various sermons by Isaac Barrow, William Derham's *Physico-Theology* (1713), and Thomas Sherlock's *Tryal of Witnesses* (1729).<sup>423</sup> The final section of this chapter turns to examine the interconnectedness of natural philosophy and latitudinarianism in order to further understand the Townsons' and Rogers' amalgamation of theological and scientific purchases.

Whilst the idea of harmony between science and theology in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries may seem antithetical, for the latitudinarians this was not the case. Rather, they shared many of the same principles and approaches to their study: a rational methodology grounded in evidence rather than conjecture, a rejection of superstition and mysteries, and an emphasis on moderation. Indeed, the very basis of latitudinarian religious outlook celebrated the coming-together of science and religion. Succinctly put by Margaret Jacob, the core beliefs of latitudinarianism were that:

Rational argumentation and not faith is the final arbiter of Christian belief and dogma; scientific knowledge and natural philosophy are the most reliable means of explaining creation; and political and ecclesiastical moderation are the only realistic means by which the Reformation will be accomplished.<sup>424</sup>

In natural philosophy, the latitudinarians found a close affinity and the leading scientists of the time - Robert Boyle, John Wilkins and Isaac Newton - all held staunchly latitudinarian religious beliefs. As Gascoigne notes, the latitudinarians, with their emphasis on natural rather than revealed theology and belief that the Christian revelation could be confirmed by the study of nature, were amongst the earliest of Newton's supporters.<sup>425</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Robert Townson: *Catalogue of my Bookes*, 384.

<sup>424</sup> Margaret C. Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution*, pp. 34-35.

<sup>425</sup> Gascoigne, 'Anglicanism and Latitudinarianism', p. 26.

This coming together of rational religion and natural philosophy resulted in formation of a 'holy alliance' that created natural religion, or natural theology.<sup>426</sup> Writing in a *Natural Religion*, purchased by Robert Townson, John Wilkins states:

I call that Natural Religion, which Men might know, and should be obliged unto, by the mere Principles of Reason, improved by Consideration and Experience without the help of Revelation.<sup>427</sup>

Jonathan Topham defines it as a type of theology which 'relies on reason (which is natural), unaided by any evidence derived from God's revelation through scriptures, miracles or prophecies (which is supernatural).'<sup>428</sup> This is a view supported by Francis Bacon who, writing in *The Advancement of Learning* (a work again purchased by Robert Townson and still to be found in the Cottonian Collection to this day) and which has been credited with influencing the writings of Boyle and Wilkins, said:

As concerning DIVINE PHILOSOPHIE, or NATURAL THEOLOGIE, It is that knowledge or Rudiment of knowledge concerning GOD, which may be obtained by the contemplation of his Creatures.<sup>429</sup>

Simply put, natural theology was best exemplified as a coming-together of science and religion, and a system of thought in which religion drew on science in such a way as to explain and support its understanding of scripture. In contrast to revealed theology of the Puritans and Catholics, it provided a transparent understanding of the scripture whilst also enabling a means of validating Christianity which makes natural philosophy and science seem respectable.<sup>430</sup>

Whilst John Wilkins and Isaac Barrow were clergyman who crossed the divide between science and religion, most churchmen were not natural philosophers. Rather, their knowledge of natural philosophy was gained through reading the works of others, through discussion, and through membership of the Royal Society or the reading of its proceedings.<sup>431</sup> In particular, it was the new mechanical philosophy or new science

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<sup>426</sup> Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution*, p. 6; John Gascoigne, 'Politics, Patronage and Newtonianism: The Cambridge Example', *The Historical Journal*, 31 (1984), pp. 1-24 (p. 8).

<sup>427</sup> John Wilkins, *Of the Principles and Duties of Natural Religion* (London, 1678), p. 39.

<sup>428</sup> Jonathan Topham, 'Natural Theology and the Sciences', *The Cambridge Companion to Science and Religion* ed. by Peter Harrison (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) p. 59.

<sup>429</sup> Francis Bacon, *The Advancement of Learning*, ed. by Michael Kiernan (Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press, 2000), p. 78.

<sup>430</sup> Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution*, p. 29.

<sup>431</sup> Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution*, p. 16.

(encompassing Newton's study of natural philosophy) that appealed to the latitudinarians. The new science emerged in a number of different theories, including Wilkins and Boyle's theory of the natural order that stressed the providential ordering of nature and the consequent lawful operation of the universe as proof of divine power and will.<sup>432</sup> As Popkin notes, for clergymen such as Stillingfleet, it was the English scientists, but especially Boyle and Newton, who 'had theories that led to God, or at least to the possibility of divine control of Nature. And by their insistence that they were not trying to explain the hidden causes of the universe, they left room for Providence.'<sup>433</sup> In particular, what Stillingfleet liked most about Newton's theory was its compatibility with religion. Newton explained everything by the principle of gravitation which was a force given and directed by a divine power and wisdom. In doing so, therefore, Newton was not denying that there may be secret powers behind his theory, but still offered a rational explanation for gravity.<sup>434</sup> The latitudinarian churchmen used this new mechanical philosophy in order to support their Christianity, and incorporated it into their theological writings. In doing so, they helped to spread the ideas of the new science and its relationship with natural philosophy.<sup>435</sup>

With its emphasis on tolerance and attempts to seek a reasoned and rational approach to religion, it was hoped that latitudinarianism had the potential to resolve conflict and tensions between different Protestant schools that had persisted into the late-seventeenth century following the Restoration of the English monarchy in 1660. Latitudinarian was born out of religious tension and it was hoped that it had within it the power to abate the very same tensions. As Shapiro argues, John Wilkins (as one who bridged the divide between science and religion) spent the latter part of his religious career 'entirely devoted to creating and fostering a latitudinarian movement and a theology of natural religion that would eliminate the issues which had divided Anglicans and Puritans.'<sup>436</sup> Wilkins disapproval of the religious tensions that existed between the Puritans, Baptists, Calvinists and Orthodox Anglicans was shared by Robert Boyle. On his

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<sup>432</sup> Scott Mandelbrote, 'The Use of Natural Theology in Seventeenth-Century England', *Science in Context*, 20 (2007), pp. 451-480 (p. 452).

<sup>433</sup> Richard H. Popkin, 'The Philosophy of Bishop Stillingfleet', *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 9 (1971), pp. 303-319 (p. 310).

<sup>434</sup> Popkin, 'The Philosophy of Bishop Stillingfleet', p. 310.

<sup>435</sup> Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>436</sup> Shapiro, 'Latitudinarianism and Science in Seventeenth-century England', p. 22.

death in 1691, Boyle left a bequest to fund an annual series of sermons in London whose primary function was 'for proving the Christian religion, against notorious Infidels, viz. Atheists, Theists, Pagans, Jews, and Mohometans.'<sup>437</sup> In doing so, Boyle hoped to unite Protestants in defending their religion from external forces, however he stipulated in his bequest that no speaker should lecture on the topic of internal divisions within Protestantism. Rather, Topham notes, the lectures encouraged the coming-together of science and theology and favoured a specifically Newtonian natural theology to shore up latitudinarian commitment to a rational and anti-sectarian form of Christianity, as well as a providential reading of history that would justify the Whig defence of the Glorious Revolution of 1688.<sup>438</sup>

It was believed that scientists were best placed to determine the truth behind the Christian Scripture because they were able to apply objectivity and strict methodology to the study of religion. As Robert Boyle states the natural philosopher:

will examine with more strictness and skill, than ordinary men are able, miracles, prophecies, or other proofs, said to be supernatural, that are alleged to evince a real religion; yet if the certain and genuine characters of truth appear in it, he will be more thoroughly convinced of it than a less skilful man.<sup>439</sup>

Boyle, as a natural philosopher, and thus possessing the ability to determine the truth of the scripture, identified three degrees of evidence (or demonstrations as he terms them) by which 'may reasonably thought sufficient to make the Christian Religion thought fit to be embrac'd.'<sup>440</sup> These include Metaphysical demonstration, physical demonstration and moral demonstrations. In the religious writings of those who looked to Boyle for evidence of their beliefs, moral demonstration – that which is 'built either upon some one such proof cogent in its kind; or some concurrence of Probabilities that it cannot be but allowed' – provided the best evidence for the existence of God.<sup>442</sup>

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<sup>437</sup> As quoted in M.C. Jacob, 'The Church and the Formulation of the Newtonian World-View', *Journal of European Studies*, 1 (1971), pp. 128-148 (p. 128).

<sup>438</sup> Topham, 'Natural theology and the sciences', p. 64.

<sup>439</sup> Robert Boyle, *The Christian Virtuoso: Shewing, That by being addicted to Experimental Philosophy, a man is rather Assisted than Indisposed to be a Good Christian* (London, 1690), p. 131.

<sup>440</sup> Robert Boyle, *Some Considerations About The Reconcilableness of Reason and Religion T.E.A Lay-man* (London, 1675), p. 92.

<sup>442</sup> Boyle, *The Reconcilableness of Reason and Religion*, p. 94-95.



In *Origines Sacrae* (1662), Stillingfleet applies Boyle's method arguing that evidence of God's existence can be proven by the universal occurrence of belief in God and the resilience of this belief throughout history. He writes that he 'shall prove this Character to be universal, because the whole World hath consented in it. It is strange to think that Mankind in so many Ages of the World shou'd not grow wise enough to rid itself of so troublesome an Opinion at that was of the Being of God, had it not been true.'<sup>443</sup> Stillingfleet's argument is further supported by Tillotson who, in his sermon on 'The Wisdom of Being Religious', preached:

If it be not natural to the mind of Man, but proceeds from some accidental distemper of our understandings, how comes it to be so Universal, that no differences of age, temper, or education, can wear it out, and set any considerable number of men free from it?'<sup>444</sup>

For Tillotson and Stillingfleet, a reasonable argument for God's existence is that, firstly, knowledge of him is universal and, secondly, that this knowledge has withstood the test of time. For them, this is proof enough of his existence, however the method in which they reach this conclusion draws upon a systematic and reasoned process of investigation.

This idea of the universal belief of God that has withstood history was one of a number of key beliefs termed common notions that the latitudinarians believed were innate to mankind. The common notions included the belief that man is a reasonable and rational being who, as well as having an innate belief in the existence of God, is born with a knowledge of good and evil, and an awareness of his moral duties. In his sermon entitled 'Upright Walking Sure Walking', Isaac Barrow describes these innate characteristics as having been 'graven by the finger of God upon our Hearts and consciences, so that by any considerate reflection inwards we may easily read them.'<sup>445</sup> Fowler concurs writing 'that nothing revealed by God can possibly contradict those principles that are impressed in (as I think) indelible characters upon the Souls of men'.<sup>446</sup> These common notions such as 'the practice of pious love and reverence toward God, of entire justice and charity

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<sup>443</sup> Edward Stillingfleet, *Origines Sacrae, or, A Rational Account of the grounds of Christian Faith, as to the Truth and Divine Authority of the Scriptures, and the matters therein contained*. (London, 1662), p. 384.

<sup>444</sup> John Tillotson, 'The Wisdom of being Religious', *The Works of the Most Reverend Dr John Tillotson, Late Lord Archbishop of Canterbury: Containing Fifty Four Sermons and Discourses, On Several Occasions. Together with the Rule of Faith Being ALL that were Published by his Grace Himself, And now Collected into One Volume*. (London, 1714), p. 16.

<sup>445</sup> Barrow, Sermon V, *The Works of The Rev. Isaac Barrow, D.D*, p. 313.

<sup>446</sup> Fowler, *Principles and Practices*, p. 247.

toward our neighbour, of sober temperance and purity toward ourselves', Barrow writes, 'is approved by reason' and 'prescribed by God to us'.<sup>447</sup> In order to prove these common notions, it was, however, necessary to once again turn to the power of reason. For 'Reason', as Fowler writes in *Practices and Principles*, is 'that power, whereby men are enabled to draw clear inferences from evident Principles.'<sup>448</sup> It is through reason that man has the power to interpret God's divine law and recognise the common notions that are universal to all mankind and evidence of God's existence.

An emphasis on reason underpinning evidence of God did not, however, undermine the role of faith. Rather, it was argued, faith could too be an act of reason. As Rivers notes, this is not to say that 'nothing is to be believed except that which can be evidenced by faith' but rather, when a believer is guided by their faith, 'they must be certain (following the principles of reason) that their faith is beyond reason.'<sup>449</sup> In his *Rational Account* Stillingfleet argues that 'Faith is a rational and discursive act of the mind for faith being an assent upon evidence, or reason inducing the mind to assent, it must be a rational and discursive act'<sup>450</sup>. As this quote from Stillingfleet demonstrates, reason and faith could co-exist, despite their seemingly paradoxical definitions. Likewise, Tillotson in his sermon on 'The Excellency of Abraham's Faith and Obedience' states:

it is reason enough for any article of our faith, that our GOD hath revealed it; because this is one of the strongest and most cogent reasons for the belief of anything. But when we say GOD hath revealed anything, we must be ready to prove it [...] If we turn off reason here, we level the best religion in the world with the wildest and most absurd enthusiasms.<sup>451</sup>

It was reason that stopped faith from descending into the wild and ungrounded enthusiasms and superstitions of Catholicism and Puritanism, and to fulfil the latitudinarian's aim of connecting faith and reason and religion and philosophy.

Like the role of faith, miraculous events in the Christian scripture were not dismissed outright. In contrast to their Puritan counterparts who emphasised the role of miracles

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<sup>447</sup> Isaac Barrow, 'Sermon V', *The Works of The Rev. Isaac Barrow, D.D.*, p. 314.

<sup>448</sup> Edward Fowler, *Principles and Practices*, p. 70.

<sup>449</sup> Rivers, *Reason, Grace and Sentiment*, p. 65-66.

<sup>450</sup> Edward Stillingfleet, *A Rational Account of the Grounds of Protestant Religion* (London, 1665), p. 202.

<sup>451</sup> Tillotson, 'The Excellency of Abraham's Faith and Obedience', *The Works of the most Reverend John Tillotson* (London, 1717), p. 19.

as evidence of God's existence, the latitudinarians sought to determine a scientific grounding and evidence of their existence. Miracles, it was argued, were important even for a religion founded on reason and rationalism. Robert Boyle in *The Christian Virtuoso* argues that miracles are:

Absolutely Necessary, to Evince, that any Religion that Men believe to be Supernaturally Reveal'd, and consequently that the Christian, does really proceed from God. For, tho' the Excellency of the Christian Doctrine, and other concurrent Motives, may justly persuade me, that 'tis worthy and likely to be given by God; yet tho' *de facto* this Doctrine comes from Him by way of Supernatural Revelation.<sup>452</sup>

Likewise, Samuel Clarke sees 'The Christian revelation' as being 'positively and directly proved, to be actually and immediately sent to us from God, by the many infallible *Signs and Miracles*, which the Author of it worked publicly as evidence of his Divine Commission.'<sup>453</sup> Miracles, therefore, to many latitudinarians were a necessary part of the Christian religion however their legitimacy and reliability as a direct message from God needed to be verified.

The latitudinarians continued to accept that miracles had played a foundational role in establishing the truth of the Christian religion, but adopted a forensic approach to determining their reliability. As Harrison notes, the individual believer couldn't be left to determine the legitimacy of miracles, rather they discussions of miracles needed to be relocated to the sphere of influence where the natural philosopher (who was for the purpose of the exercise neutral) could determine the reliability of the miraculous event.<sup>454</sup> However, in order to determine the authenticity of miracles, a new method of assessing the evidence of the Christian religion was needed. This resulted in publications that offered surveys of the Christian Religion. For example, Stillingfleet's *Rational Account*, as have been touched on already, attempted to determine the legitimacy of Christianity, whilst Richard Jenkin produced the *Reasonableness of Christian Religion*, and Gilbert Burnet's *An Impartial study of the Protestant Religion*. Thomas Sherlock's *Tryal of*

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<sup>452</sup> Boyle, *The Christian Virtuoso*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>453</sup> Samuel Clarke, *A Discourse concerning the Being and Attributes of God, The Obligations of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation* (London, 1733), p. 371.

<sup>454</sup> Peter Harrison, 'Miracles, Early Modern Science, and Rational Religion', *Church History*, 75 (2006), 493-510 (p. 504).

*the Witnesses of the Resurrection* (1729) used an altogether different method by assessing the reliability of historical testimony in a fictional moot court. All of these works, along with many others, that discuss the rational approach to the study of miracles were purchased by either the Townsons or Rogers, and many would go on to be sold by Cotton II in 1801.

In order to determine the authenticity of miracles, Tillotson in 'Of the Trial of Spirits', came up with a six-point method of discerning true and false revelations. In his six-point method, he asserts that 'all revelations from God supposeth us to be men, and to be endured with reason [...] and by this faculty we are to examine all doctrines which pretend to be from God, and, upon examination, to judge whether there be reason to receive them as divine, or to reject them as impostures.' He then continues to number a further five points by which to determine the authenticity of miracles including that 'True and Divine Miracles may be known and distinguished from false and diabolical from the circumstances, or the manner of their operation', by this he means that 'there are signatures which can be found on the miracles of Christ which cannot be found in any wrought by heathens'. Unlike true miracle-makers, 'False ones did it with a lot of pomp whilst Christ can perform miracles without speaking or with merely the touch of his garment.'<sup>455</sup>

Likewise, Stillingfleet in his *Origines Sacrae*, in a chapter entitled 'the difference of true miracles from false', similarly argues that 'there are certain rules of distinguishing true Miracles from false, and Divine from Diabolical, prov'd from God's intention in giving a power or Miracles, and the Providence of God in the world.' By identifying 'certain evidences' it is possible to determine the difference between the Divine and the Diaboloical, and between the real and the false miracles.<sup>456</sup> Like Tillotson, he too adopts a series of rules by which to judge the authenticity of miracles arguing that 'all Miracles are performed for divine revelation' and 'When Miracles are true and divine, there the effects which follow them upon the Minds of those who believe, them are true and divine'. Furthermore, 'True and Divine Miracles may be known and distinguished from false and

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<sup>455</sup> John Tillotson, 'Of the Trial of the Spirits', *The Works of the Most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson* (Edinburgh, 1777). p. 354-357.

<sup>456</sup> Stillingfleet, *Origines Sacrae*, p. 33.

diabolical, from the circumstances, or the manner of their operation' as 'there are signatures which can be found on the miracles of Christ which cannot be found in any wrought by heathens.'<sup>457</sup> Finally, Stillingfleet argues that 'Where Miracles are truly Divine, God makes it evident to all impartial Judgements that the things done exceed all created power.'<sup>458</sup> For latitudinarians such as Tillotson and Stillingfleet, therefore, faith and miracles were not simply means of deceptive trickery put forth by Catholics, but rather than being merely accepted at face-value, they needed to be supported by reason and evidence. Only then could they be used, as they should be, as evidence of God's existence and will.

The Townsons and Rogers', as the previous section demonstrates, balanced their theological purchases with philosophical and scientific explorations of the world and foundations of religion. In doing so they crafted a collection that was grounded in a natural theology that combined rationalism, reason, ideas of civic virtue, a strong work ethic and emerging scientific understandings of the world in which they inhabited. It was likely, for example, that the scientific writings of Robert Boyle and John Wilkins were read by Rogers alongside the sermons of Tillotson or Stillingfleet's *Rational Religion*. Science and religion, as many of the works discussed demonstrate, did not need to be antithetical but rather spoke to each other offering an Enlightenment age approach to theological thought. Theirs was an approach that countered the superstitions and mysteries of Puritan thought, and was a form of religious approach that had dominated the Commonwealth prior to the Restoration of Charles II in 1660 and, consequently, the reinstating of the Church of England as the national Church supported by the 1662 Act of Uniformity. The new science of the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries could be used to support and authenticate aspects of religious belief that, previously, believers had simply had to accept with little examination of why, or how they came to be. In a study of the ways in which these works spoke to each other, it is possible to determine the manner in which the Cottonian harnessed the Enlightenment spirit of theological, scientific and philosophical discovery; a spirit that sought to offer a plausible explanations of the world, its people and their religious beliefs through a rational and balanced investigation.

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<sup>457</sup> Stillingfleet, *Origines Sacrae*, p. 357.

<sup>458</sup> Stillingfleet, *Origines Sacrae*, p. 357.

## Conclusion

Religion, as this chapter demonstrates, forms the backbone of the Cottonian Collection. Its importance is evident not only in the theological sermons and tracts that form a substantial proportion of the holdings (and made up an even larger percentage of them prior to 1801), but in the lives of the Cottonian men and the ways in which they engaged with the established Church. The presence of the Church is almost unspoken, yet its influence can be felt in small details such as Rogers' position as a Churchwarden, and Robert Townson's pious selection of books to collect. By aligning themselves with the latitudinarians who, by the late-seventeenth century, held sway over the established Church, the Townsons and Rogers conformed to the religious status quo. In their purchase of a combination of latitudinarianism and natural philosophy sympathetic to the latitudinarian's religious stance, the Cottonian men amassed an array of literature that appealed to their religious beliefs and the doctrine that they had come to accept through the Church of England. Whilst some non-conformist material was purchased by the collectors, such as works by Richard Baxter and Thomas Hobbes' controversial texts, these were likely to have been purchases that reflect an interest in the wider topical ideas of the day – ideas that were often engaged with in the writings of latitudinarians and other philosophers – rather than an alignment with non-conformism.

These holdings, therefore, suggest that the Cottonian men, whilst inherently latitudinarian in their interpretation of religion, were interested in broadening their understanding of eighteenth-century Britain's theological landscape. The theological holdings of the Cottonian Collection, prior to 1801, were grounded in the middle-class metropolitan religious beliefs of a series of gentlemen who inhabited a period of the eighteenth century when scientific endeavour combined with theology in order to determine a new way of viewing religion: one that was grounded on a reasoned, rational and moderate approach to the doctrine and one that was well-suited to a cosmopolitan and metropolitan society. In 1801, however, the religious landscape had changed and Cotton II would find himself to be custodian of a collection whose theological holdings no longer seemed relevant or reassuring in a time when reason and rationalism, so favourably adopted by the latitudinarians, had the potential to destroy the Church and Society.

# Chapter Six:

## A Meeting of Doctrines: William Cotton II and Anglican Evangelicalism

### Introduction

As the previous chapter demonstrates, the theological holdings of the Cottonian Collection inherited by William Cotton II in 1791 were largely dominated by latitudinarian interpretations of the Christian doctrine. In the chapter that follows, attention shifts to Cotton II's treatment of a collection grounded in the mainstream theological thought of the preceding one hundred years. Opening with an examination of the rise of Anglican Evangelicalism in the 1790s and its increasing hold over the Church of England, the first part of this chapter explores the religious landscape of the period of Cotton II's inheritance. The chapter then moves to determine Cotton II's own religious beliefs and the extent to which he conformed to the Evangelicalism of the period and dissented from the latitudinarianism of his predecessors. Finally, the chapter examines the effects of a shift in religious outlook, from one grounded in rationalism and reason to emotive Evangelicalism, on Cotton II's treatment of the theological holdings of the Cottonian Collection between 1791 and 1816.

### The Decline of Latitudinarianism

By the late-eighteenth century the latitudinarians were losing their dominance over the established Church. A culmination of factors: the failure of the Feathers Tavern Petition in 1777 (calling for the abolition of subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles), the subsequent breaking away of the Unitarian church, the renewed association of latitudinarianism with radicalism, the Evangelical revival and extended periods of social unrest all contributed to the decline of the latitudinarians' rational, reasoned and balanced approach to Anglicanism. As Fitzpatrick notes, 'Latitudinarianism was always going to have a difficult time in the late eighteenth century with the growth of High Churchism and Evangelicalism within the Church and political radicalism and a self-

conscious conservatism in the state.<sup>459</sup> The result, as this chapter demonstrates, was the superseding of latitudinarianism's hold on the Church of England by Anglican Evangelicalism.

Of the factors that led to the decline in latitudinarianism's influence, the failure of the Feathers Tavern Petition and accusations of dissent have been identified as among the most damaging. It was a pivotal moment in the history of the latitudinarians and a moment that has come to symbolise their loss of control over the Church of England. Calling for clerical emancipation from the Thirty-Nine Articles and its replacement with a simple declaration of doctrinal faith, the Feathers Tavern Petition marked the culmination of years of hostility and resentment towards the dogma of the Thirty-Nine Articles. Spearheaded by a group of radical latitudinarians, the Feathers Tavern Petition and its calls for the abolition of compulsory subscription was a radical standpoint and was perceived by many as a threat to the very order of Society.<sup>460</sup> The failure in Parliament of the bill for emancipation from the articles resulted in a significant number of its proponents dissenting from the Church of England to establish the Unitarian Church, thus signalling a clear break from the dominant Anglican ecclesiastical system.<sup>461</sup> Although support for the petition was not widespread amongst the latitudinarian clergy with the majority preferring to avoid conflict, its effects were far-reaching resulting in a crisis of conscience for many latitudinarians and a weakening of the dominant latitudinarian spirit.

Whilst this incident alone was not enough to break latitudinarianism, it was part of a growing subversion of latitudinarianism and concerns about its association with rational dissent. The impact of a crisis within the Church and latitudinarians' growing calls for reform is evident in the history of the collection. Charles Rogers' correspondence with the Reverend Francis Stone (who was chairman of the Feathers' Tavern Petitioning committee) hints that Rogers may have supported the calls for ecclesiastical reform.<sup>462</sup>

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<sup>459</sup> Martin Fitzpatrick, 'Latitudinarianism at the parting of the ways: a suggestion', *The Church of England c. 1689-c.1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism* ed. by John Walsh; Colin Haydon; Stephen Taylor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 209-227 (p. 226).

<sup>460</sup> Martin Fitzpatrick, 'Latitudinarianism and the parting of the ways', p. 220.

<sup>461</sup> Gascoigne, 'Anglican latitudinarianism, Rational Dissent and political radicalism', p. 28.

<sup>462</sup> Colin Haydon, 'The Extirpation of Athanasianism: The Considerable doubts of Francis Stone', *Studies in Church History*, 52 (2016), 347-363 (p. 351).



Gifting Rogers a copy of his book, *Religious Grievances* (1776), Stone asks Rogers for his opinion on the work which outlines his scheme for discharging the national debt and reforming the ecclesiastical system. He also asks Rogers to present the work to the Society for Antiquaries. Rogers, however, despite aligning himself with the latitudinarian stance which frequently called for such reforms, warns Stone that his ideas will 'in this age be accounted sick-men's Dreams, and as such be neglected'.<sup>463</sup> Diplomatically, he advises Stone against presenting the work to the Society for, as he wisely notes:

When the latter is proposed to be effected by pulling down Bishops & c from their exalted Stalls, I cannot prevail with myself to think it prudent to present your Treatise to a Society whose worthy President is a Dignitary of the Church, and the Prolocutor of the Lower House of Convocation: and I cannot question your being of the same Opinion, as no Gentleman would, unprovoked, affront another.<sup>464</sup>

Despite advising against promotion of the work, Rogers acknowledges that 'you and I may view your Plan in different lights; at least the Stile of it: but, in either case, I heartily wish you clear of it.'<sup>465</sup> For Rogers, as for many others who shared latitudinarian sympathies, the call for ecclesiastical reform was too controversial and liable to be associated with rational dissent to be publicly supported in the 1770s.

Rogers' advice was not met favourably by Francis Stone. In response to Rogers' diplomatic and carefully considered response, he militantly stands by his beliefs asserting that:

there are strong Expressions interspersed in Mr Stone's Plan, which indicate an attempt, at least, to collect Fortitude sufficient to ensure the worst worldly Consequences, which may happen – Ecclesiastical Concerns, in these Days, require not so much the Gentleness of a Melancthon, as the determined Spirit of a Luther, to reform them.<sup>466</sup>

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<sup>463</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Correspondence of Charles Rogers, 347 To Stone, 26/1/1777.

<sup>464</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Correspondence of Charles Rogers, 347, To Stone, 26/1/1777.

<sup>465</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Correspondence of Charles Rogers, 347, To Stone, 26/1/1777.

<sup>466</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Correspondence of Charles Rogers, 347. From Stone, 29/1/1777

After months of silence, a more measured response from Stone follows requesting that, in light of the controversial nature of his writings, Rogers either hide or destroy the two copies of his book sent to Rogers.<sup>467</sup> Rogers, however, does neither, and one of these copies remains in the collection today. The survival of this work from the 1801 sale, however, was likely either due to their limited re-sale value or, perhaps, to avoid the controversy and stigma that may have followed had the public seen these works, with their controversial message, held in the collection of the eminent Charles Rogers – thus their preservation was perhaps a way of preserving his posthumous reputation.<sup>468</sup> Stone's notoriety continued into the early-nineteenth century and in 1808 he was stripped of his living by the Church of England for preaching a radical sermon in which he declared the Virgin Birth a myth and that Christ, though the messenger of God, was merely human.<sup>469</sup> In doing so, he claimed to teach only that which could be proved by the scripture. Colin Haydon argues that the stripping of Stone's living was an important test case and sent a powerful warning to Anglican clerics who wanted to engage in 'free' and 'candid' theological debates in the conservative 1800s.<sup>470</sup> In light of this, it is possible to understand Cotton II's hesitation in selling Stone's work, but it is unlikely (in contrast to Rogers who may have supported some of Stone's ideas) that he was in favour of Stone's proposed reforms.

Just over ten years later, the reforms of the clergy and State suggested by Stone would have been even less well-received. The Feather's Tavern petition and the subsequent internal divisions and association with rational dissent, whilst creating a difficult environment for latitudinarianism, simultaneously presented the Anglican Evangelicals with opportunities to flourish. As Walsh and Taylor note, from the 1770s onwards, a series of 'dramatic political events' that, even as they 'refashioned the geo-political landscape', created for the evangelicals 'new situations, new challenges, new openings and new alliances.'<sup>471</sup> The American Revolutionary Wars shrank Britain's colonies, and opened up expansion of British colonial conquest in other areas of the globe. Over the

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<sup>467</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Correspondence of Charles Rogers, From Stone, 7/4/1777.

<sup>468</sup> Stone publicly supported the French Revolution and was seen by some as a religious Tom Paine. He was also a Whig and a latitudinarian – polar opposite to what the State and Church was in the late-eighteenth century and at the time of the sales. Haydon, *The Extirpation of Athanasianism*, p. 358.

<sup>469</sup> Haydon, *The Extirpation of Athanasianism*, p. 356.

<sup>470</sup> Haydon, *The Extirpation of Athanasianism*, p. 361.

<sup>471</sup> Walsh; Taylor, 'Introduction: The Church and Anglicanism', p. 41.

course of the following decades, these colonies would become the focus of Evangelical missionary activities. The Gordon Riots caused disquiet at home. As Demetria Cotton's account of the riots reveals, it was not necessarily persecution of London's Catholics that unnerved the family but the mob mentality on the streets of London and social unrest. The anxiety and concern generated in Britain by disquiet both at home and abroad created the conditions for the Anglican Evangelicals to rise. Having been weakened by internal divisions as a result of the failed petition, the latitudinarians were not well-positioned to defend themselves against renewed attacks or provide answers to the current concerns of parishioners.<sup>472</sup> The end of the eighteenth century therefore signalled the decline of latitudinarianism's dominance over the established church and the lives of men and women such as William Cotton II and his family.

## The Evangelical Revival

Having discussed the loosening of latitudinarianisms' hold over the established Church from the 1770s onwards, the chapter now turns to examine the rise of Anglican Evangelicalism. As previously established, Evangelicalism was partly a reaction against eighteenth-century latitudinarianism and the prioritisation of rational, moderate and ethical interpretations of the Christian doctrine. In contrast the Evangelical Revival, Peter Nockles argues, sought 'to recover the claims of revelation from the apparent inroad of rationalism.'<sup>473</sup> This is a view shared by Isabel Rivers who identifies the Evangelical Revival of the late-eighteenth century as the most significant challenge to the dominant Anglican tradition of moral and rational religion.<sup>474</sup>

Born out of an Orthodox Anglicanism, Jonathan Clark argues that both Evangelicalism and Methodism 'drew on the parent stem for aspects of their devotional practice and theology, and distinguished themselves from their parent by different emphases on, or selection from, elements in the common tradition.'<sup>475</sup> Within the Evangelical Revival, there emerged three main strands; the Arminian Methodists, who were followers of John Wesley; the Calvinistic Methodists, who looked to George Whitefield and the Countess of

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<sup>472</sup> Fitzpatrick, 'Latitudinarianism and the parting of ways', p. 226.

<sup>473</sup> Nockles, 'The Waning of Protestant Unity', p. 183.

<sup>474</sup> Rivers, *Reason, Grace and Sentiment*, p. 206.

<sup>475</sup> J.C.D. Clark, *English Society 1688-1832: Ideology, Social Structure and Political Practice during the Ancien Regime* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 235.

Huntingdon for guidance; and finally, the Anglican Evangelicals who, although initially co-operating with the Methodists, kept clear of any commitments that were beyond the framework of the Church of England. In doing so, they separated themselves from the more extreme practices of the Methodists who, by the late 1770s, were becoming their own established denomination and, consequently, were taking up the pattern of Dissent.<sup>476</sup> It is this final group of moderates who made up the Clapham Sect that best describe the late-eighteenth-century mainstream Anglican Evangelicalism adopted by Cotton II.

These divisions, whilst holding varying views of the scripture were all characterised by two main features. Firstly, they all employed irregular practices and structures, choosing to meet in the open-air or in private chapels or meeting houses. However, despite this, they consciously chose to function 'alongside and ostensibly not in opposition to the existing parochial system, though inevitably they caused much friction within the Established Church.'<sup>477</sup> Secondly, they all distanced themselves from the largely ethical teachings of the Anglican clergy, although the extent to which this occurred varied between Evangelical groups. Instead, they preferred to return to the Reformation doctrine of 'justification' and 'regeneration' as outlined in the Thirty-Nine articles – a more traditional approach than the loose interpretation favoured by the latitudinarians. Despite these doctrinal differences, however, the Evangelicals were a warm, vibrant, accessible, and emotive faith. They presented an altogether more emotional and inspiring form of faith than the rationalism and reason of the latitudinarian Anglicanism that had dominated the Church of England during the eighteenth century.

The main three strands also held many of the same doctrinal principles. D.W. Bebbington has identified the four elements which he terms 'the special marks of Evangelical religion' and which together 'form a quadrilateral of priorities'. These are:

conversion, the belief that lives need to be changed; activism, the expression of the gospel in effort; biblicalism, a particular regard for the Bible, and what

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<sup>476</sup> Misty C. Anderson, *Imagining Methodism in Eighteenth-Century Britain: Enthusiasm, Belief & the Borders of the Self* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2012), p. 234.

<sup>477</sup> Rivers, *Reason, Grace and Sentiment*, p. 206.

may be called crucicentrism, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.<sup>478</sup>

The first two beliefs (conversion and activism), G.M. Ditchfield argues, encapsulate the way in which the second two beliefs (biblicalism and crucicentrism) were experienced and communicated.<sup>479</sup> Whilst different generations of Evangelicals interpreted these core beliefs in varying ways, they remained integral to the Evangelical faith. There were, however, a number of doctrinal differences between the Methodists and Anglican Evangelicals.

Anglican Evangelicalism was largely distinct from the two schools of Methodism. Whilst the Anglican Evangelicals owed much to the initially more powerful and prominent Methodists, by the late-eighteenth century the Anglican Evangelicals were keen to minimise their similarities. This was especially true following the Methodists break from the established Church in 1795.<sup>480</sup> Anglican Evangelicals remained fiercely loyal to the Church of England and respected the authority of the clergy (unlike Methodists who refused to accept lay preachers). As strict churchmen they refused to co-operate with dissenters. Furthermore, they differed on issues of doctrine, such as teaching on Christian perfection and the Methodists' over-reliance on emotive religion. Their stress on the religious feeling and enthusiasm – particularly through the conversion experience – saw them lampooned in the 1760s by commentators including Horace Walpole, Samuel Richardson and Henry Fielding.<sup>481</sup> In contrast, the Anglican Evangelicals placed a greater emphasis on the legacy of the Protestant Reformation and held the Puritan tradition in high esteem. They remained, and were increasingly perceived to be in the 1790s, a respected and moderate strand that sought to combine feeling with rationalism.

The Anglican Evangelicals, whilst attempting to enact social and ecclesiastical reform, attempted to do so from within. In contrast, they perceived the Methodists more innovative methods of reform and unregulated lay preachers as dangerous and subversive. The Methodists, therefore, were increasingly delineated from the established

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<sup>478</sup> D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History of the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989), p. 3.

<sup>479</sup> G.M. Ditchfield, *The Evangelical Revival* (London: UCL Press, 1998), p. 26.

<sup>480</sup> Hylson-Smith, *Evangelicals in the Church of England*, p. 10-11.

<sup>481</sup> Anderson, *Imagining Methodism in Eighteenth-Century Britain*, pp. 4-5

Church whilst the Anglican Evangelicals were characterised by an allegiance to the Church. As Hilton points out, the moderate Anglican Evangelicals were middle-class men who held key positions in the running of the State. Evangelicalism was, Hilton argues, 'an important element in the mentality of the *haute bourgeoisie* that dominated British politics from 1784 to the 1840s'.<sup>482</sup> By 1800 the Anglican Evangelicals were, therefore, part of the very fabric of society and were not radicals attempting to overthrow the Church.

The Anglican Evangelicals, therefore, provided a new form of dominance over the Church of England. In contrast to the latitudinarians who held sway over the established Church for much of the eighteenth century, the Anglican Evangelicals emphasised revealed rather than natural religion, a belief in the Atonement of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross, and an altogether warmer, more emotive and enthusiastic approach to religious belief. In contrast to other forms of Evangelicalism, they remained loyal to the Church of England and provided a moderate, respectable form of religion to the seemingly excessive rationalism of the latitudinarians. By the 1790s, this form of religious belief replaced latitudinarianism as the dominant belief system of the mainstream Church of England and offered a distinctively middle-class piety associated with public probity, national honour and professionalism. It was, therefore, well-suited to the uncertain political and social climate of the late-eighteenth century.

## William Cotton II and the Clapham Sect

William Cotton II, born in 1759, was likely to have been raised in an Anglican household that leaned towards the rational and reasoned approach to Christianity, as exemplified by the latitudinarian theologians that featured so prominently in his Uncle's collection. Despite this, by the end of the eighteenth century, Cotton II had relocated with his young family from the City of London to the Anglican Evangelical heartland of Clapham Common which offered a retreat from the growing pollution of the city of London. Whilst not in itself necessarily evidence of changing theological views, a study of the broader biographical details of his life suggest that a realignment of his religious beliefs took place

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<sup>482</sup> Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785-1865* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 7.

in the 1780s and 90s. By this point, Evangelicalism had come to dominate the mainstream Church of England and the shift in Cotton II's religious outlook was part of a broader reconfiguration of Anglicanism taking place in the period. In what follows, I examine the extent to which Cotton II can be identified as having leanings towards Anglican Evangelicalism through a biographical study of his activities in Clapham.

In 1796 William Cotton II relocated to Clapham, then a growing village some six miles from the city of London.<sup>483</sup> Clapham was experiencing a period of rapid growth in the late-eighteenth century. As members of the wealthy and growing middle classes sought refuge from the pollution of London, Clapham emerged as a fashionable suburb and home to prominent politicians and figures.<sup>484</sup> Clapham, in the 1790s, was home to a group of prominent Anglican Evangelicals who came to be known as the 'Clapham Saints' or the 'Clapham Sect'.<sup>485</sup> The group consisted of a number of prominent figures in the religious, political and commercial spheres. Amongst their number could be counted the Reverend Henry Venn (1725-97) and his son the Reverend John Venn (1759-1813), William Wilberforce, an MP and prominent campaigner for the Abolition movement (1759-1833); Henry Thornton, a banker, philanthropist and MP (1760-1815); Glanville Sharpe, a scholar and founder of the Sierra Leone Company (1735-1813); Zachery Macauley, a colonial Governor and member of the Sierra Leone Company (1768-1838), and Charles Grant, Chairman of Directors of the East India Trading Company (1746-1823).<sup>486</sup> These men, positioned within the business and social elite of London, had influence across a broad spectrum of society. Parliamentary power was obtained through the influence of MPs, particularly so in Wilberforce's role in driving momentum for the abolition of slavery. Furthermore, they had the ability to shape the commercial markets as is evidenced through Sharpe and Macauley's success with the Sierra Leone Company – which sought to demonstrate that effective trade was possible without the mechanisms

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<sup>483</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS William Cotton II Account Book, 271.

<sup>484</sup> Elizabeth McKellar, *Landscapes of London: The City, The Country and The Suburbs, 1660-1840* (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 171.

<sup>485</sup> The term 'Clapham Sect' was not used during the lifetime of Wilberforce and his fellow Evangelicals. A contemporary name given to the group, or, more correctly, those tended to align themselves in Parliament with Wilberforce and voted with him on most issues, was the 'Clapham Saints'. Their influence, however, spread far beyond Clapham. Today the term is used to denote those Anglican Evangelical associates of Wilberforce who tended to reside in the Clapham area. Hylson-Smith, *Evangelicals in the Church of England 1734-1984*, p. 80.

<sup>486</sup> Ernest Marshall Howse, *Saints in Politics: The "Clapham Sect" and the Growth of Freedom* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1973), p. 14.

of slavery – and impacts such as the sugar boycott which affected the import market and placed pressure on the government to abolish slavery. The effects of these men’s actions filtered down through society both helping to raise the profile of motions such as the abolition movement and influencing the commercial choices of consumers.

Initially the Sect, keen to retreat from the perceived vice and immorality of the city of London, chose Clapham as their base due to its close proximity to London, yet association with a quiet and peaceful village life.<sup>487</sup> The Sect were keen to establish a division between home and work life; a separation that was increasingly difficult in the crowded and polluted city of London.<sup>488</sup> At Clapham, therefore, they sought to create an Evangelical utopia with green open spaces, houses arranged spaciouly around the common (including the home of Cotton II) and a community free from the contamination of the vices found in the city.<sup>489</sup> Ironically it was the adoption of Clapham by the Evangelicals for this reason that partly resulted in its growth as a fashionable suburb in the late-eighteenth century.<sup>490</sup> Furthermore, as Anglican Evangelicalism became increasingly mainstream amongst the broader middle-class population, so their emphasis on the distinction between home and work and ideas related to separate spheres gained increasing momentum. Residence at Clapham was not necessarily about exclusion but rather promoted the idea that, for middle-class business and mercantile families who could afford to, industry and recreation should be kept separate. In this sense, the Evangelicals helped to carve out the distinction between masculine and feminine roles in the public and private sphere.<sup>491</sup>

Whilst Anglican Evangelicalism was not, of course, a prerequisite for living in Clapham biographical evidence reveals that Cotton II was unlikely to have been completely indifferent to the activities and beliefs of the Anglican Evangelicals. On the contrary, their paths would likely have crossed on numerous occasions each week. Like many wealthy families, the Cotton’s rented a pew at the Evangelical-led Church of England Holy Trinity

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<sup>487</sup> Improvement of the turnpike roads made it possible to commute the six miles to London, as Cotton II did on a daily basis, thus making Clapham one of the first commuter villages.

<sup>488</sup> Davidoff; Hall, *Family Fortunes*, pp. 358-362.

<sup>489</sup> Howse, *Saints in Politics*, p. 31.

<sup>490</sup> Robert Fishman, *Bourgeois Utopias: The Rise and Fall of Suburbia* (New York: Basic Books Inc, 1987), p. 53.

<sup>491</sup> Davidoff; Hall, *Family Fortunes* pp. 114-118; 149.



Church on Clapham Common where they would have sat, alongside members of the Clapham Sect, to listen to the sermons of John Venn, the village's Evangelical preacher.<sup>492</sup> Later in 1808 when the Sect raised funds for the rebuilding of the village church, Cotton II purchased shares and invested in the construction of the new building.<sup>493</sup> Cotton II also paid a regular subscription to the Clapham Book Society which included members of the Sect amongst its members and would have stocked texts that appealed to them – thus Cotton II likely had the opportunity to read Evangelical tracts and pamphlets at the Society, a fact that should be borne in mind when thinking about the evidence of the Cottonian Collection holdings themselves.<sup>494</sup> His involvement with the Sect was not confined to purely social events. He also engaged in business transactions with the Sect through the renting of Number Four Laurence Pountney Lane (the adjoining home to the family's London home) to the Sierra Leone Company.<sup>495</sup> Set up to prove that slavery was not necessary for free trade, the Sierra Leone Company founded by the Sect members Henry Thornton and Glanville Sharp, and supported by Zachery Macauley, was an important and vocal force in the abolition movement.<sup>496</sup> Finally, his correspondence reveals connections such as a letter from John Venn on the death of Catherine Cotton, and correspondence with an overseas Evangelical missionary whose writings reveal an emotive and characteristically Evangelical style of referring to God.<sup>497</sup>

However, despite this, the extent to which Cotton II aligned with the beliefs of the Anglican Evangelicals should be approached with caution. In contrast to members of the Sect, he continued to attend the theatre in London and was a regular attendee of the Clapham Assembly Rooms and a keen dancer, as is attested to in a letter from John Bell who refers to Cotton II's enjoyment of dancing.<sup>498</sup> All these activities were frowned upon by the more austere members of the Sect.<sup>499</sup> Furthermore, the Clapham Church which he

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<sup>492</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Cotton II Account Book, 271.

<sup>493</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Cotton II Account Book, 271.

<sup>494</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Cotton II Account Book, 271.

<sup>495</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Cotton II Account Book, Cotton II sold this property in 1798 to a Joseph Wilson Esq. Rev. H.B. Wilson, *A History of the Parish of St. Laurence Pountney*, p. 216.

<sup>496</sup> A.P.Kup, 'John Clarkson and the Sierra Leone Company', *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 5 (1972), pp. 203-220 (pp. 203-204).

<sup>497</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS William Cotton II Correspondence; Bodleian, Cotton and Hudson Papers, MS. Eng. d 3551.

<sup>498</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS William Cotton II Account Book, 271; Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Correspondence of William Cotton II, 271. From John Bell, 23/11/1780.

<sup>499</sup> Nigel A.D. Scotland, *Evangelical Anglicans in a Revolutionary Age, 1789-1901* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2004), p. 38.

attended was the main Church of England place of worship in the village and, unless he wished to actively separate himself from the now mainstream activities of the Evangelicals, attendance at the local Church would have been a matter of course. However, it is likely given the influence of Evangelicalism over the Church of England and his attendance at John Venn's sermons – even if limited by choice of alternative Churches to attend – as well as his interaction with prominent Evangelicals that he would, in part at least, have felt more kinship with the Anglican Evangelicalism of the 1790s than the moderate latitudinarianism that had dominated the religious lives of his predecessors.

## William Cotton II's Curation of a Theological Collection

I now turn to examine the effect of the change in dominant Anglican thought on William Cotton II's curation of the theological contents of the Cottonian Collection. During the 1801 sale William Cotton II disposed of approximately one hundred and seventy volumes under the broad head of 'Divinity, Sermons &c'. Close examination of the sale of religious works reveals certain patterns. Firstly, the over-whelming majority of titles put up for auction were written by latitudinarians. Tillotson, Stillingfleet, Whichcote, Whiston, Clarke, Sherlock, Stanhope feature amongst the catalogue. Secondly, works by dissenters such as the Puritan Richard Baxter, the Quaker Robert Barclay and the rational Deist John Toland could be found in the sale collection. Alongside these are the writings of natural philosophers such as Robert Boyle, Thomas Hobbes and John Wilkins. Cotton II's criteria for theological works for disposal appears to have been motivated by a consideration of the works' use of reason and rationalism. It should be noted, however, that in the early-nineteenth century there remained a market for earlier latitudinarian works and natural philosophical writings that supported their rational interpretation of the scripture and all of the titles listed for sale sold.

Cotton II did not, however, dispose of all the titles that fall under these categories. On the contrary, he retained a reduced core of early theological titles including sermons by the latitudinarian clerics, Samuel Clarke and Benjamin Whichcote, and the late-seventeenth-century non-juror Charles Leslie's *Growth of Deism* (1696). His actions, therefore, suggest a far more nuanced rationale behind his selection criteria than simply an outright rejection of the latitudinarian rationalism of his religious upbringing. Rather, his choice

of theological titles for disposal was likely influenced by a culmination of factors including the broader move of society away from the cold and hard rationalism of the seventeenth and early-eighteenth-century latitudinarian divines. In the remainder of the chapter, I examine the variations in doctrinal approach between latitudinarianism and Anglican Evangelicalism and the extent to which these variations could be said to dictate Cotton II's selection of works to purchase, preserve and dispose.

One of the major effects of Cotton II's sale was the removal of the entire catalogue of John Tillotson's sermons. Tillotson's sermons were immensely popular throughout the eighteenth century (even during the time of the 1801 sale), yet Cotton II disposes of all of them bar a copy of Tillotson's sermons transcribed, likely by either Robert or William Townson, into a small vellum bound book. Examination of the doctrinal content of Tillotson's sermons and their approach to questions of justification of faith in contrast to the Anglican Evangelicalism's approach may make it possible to further understand Cotton II's actions. Although widely accepted that Christ's death on the cross had made salvation possible, latitudinarians believed that 'the Christian must still fulfil certain conditions in order to make it an actuality.'<sup>500</sup> Obedience, virtue, repentance, holiness, good works, morality, duty and sincere endeavour were all required in order for salvation to be achieved. Indeed, this conditional salvation conflicted with article XI of the Thirty-Nine Articles which stated that 'We are all accounted righteous before God, only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ by faith, and not for our own works or deservings.'<sup>501</sup> Like his fellow-clergymen, Tillotson, a renowned opponent of the Thirty-Nine Articles, attacked the belief of guaranteed salvation preaching instead that 'For men to think that the mere belief of the gospel, without the fruits and effects of a good life, will save them, is a very fond and vain imagination.'<sup>502</sup> Rather, Tillotson's concern is complacency. He warns that:

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<sup>500</sup> Gregory F. Schlotz, 'Anglicanism in the Age of Johnson: The Doctrine of Conditional Salvation', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 22 (1988/89), 182-207 (p. 186).

<sup>501</sup> The Church of England, *The Thirty-Nine Articles, and the constitutions and canons, of the Church of England* (London, 1724), p.9.

<sup>502</sup> John Tillotson, 'Sermon XX: Preached at the first general meeting of the gentleman and others, in and near London, born within the county of York', *The Works of the Most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson*, vol. 2 (Dublin, 1739), p. 15.

They which have believed in God might be “careful to maintain good works;” that is, that they who are thus justified by the faith of the gospel should be so far from thinking themselves hereby excused from good works.<sup>503</sup>

Thus for Tillotson, mere belief and faith in the existence of God was not enough to warrant the salvation of mankind.

In contrast, the Anglican Evangelicals emphasised justification by faith as the sole means of achieving salvation. Good deeds, whilst commendable and encouraged, were always tainted by sin – as were all human actions. Thus, there was no possibility that they would achieve merit in the eyes of God for good deeds. For the Evangelicals, salvation had to be received rather than achieved. John Venn, whose sermons were purchased by Cotton II, preaches against the latitudinarian’s doctrine of conditional salvation in his sermon, ‘On the Preaching of the Gospel’. In this sermon, he argues that:

If we represent man as in no need of a Saviour, or if we ascribe to him the ability to deliver himself; if we leave Christ out of our view, or substitute anything in the place of his meritorious death, perfect righteousness, and prevailing intercession, or if we do not insist on the necessity of sanctifying influence of the Spirit; we evidently do not preach the Gospel: we do not glorify Christ, or exalt his Spirit as we ought: we give false views of the state of man, and therefore fail in rightly preparing him for eternity.<sup>504</sup>

In his sermon on justification by faith, Venn returns to the Thirty-Nine Articles and argues that good works ‘cannot put away our sins, and ensure the severity of God’s judgement.’<sup>505</sup>

The question of justification by faith is evident again in Cotton II’s correspondence with Anne Dyer, his wife’s aunt. Writing to Cotton II following the death of Catherine Cotton in 1803, Dyer seeks to placate Cotton II’s concerns which, presumably (Cotton II’s letter to Dyer does not survive), vocalised his wife’s deathbed laments that she had not lived a Christian life. In her letter Dyer emphasises the Evangelical belief that faith alone is the only prerequisite for salvation, whilst drawing upon the emotive style of language characteristic of the Evangelical clergy. Dyer writes:

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<sup>503</sup> Tillotson, ‘Of the necessity of good works’, p. 465.

<sup>504</sup> John Venn, ‘On Preaching the Gospel’, *Sermons by the Rev. John Venn, M.A.* (Boston, 1822), p. 14.

<sup>505</sup> The Church of England, *The Thirty-Nine Articles*, p. 9.

I cannot suppose she can have anything upon her mind, that her ramblings are all the effects of Fever and perhaps a tender Conscience from goodness of Heart which I am sure she possessed, and her being reduced so low makes her fancy she has not always acted up to her Duty of God. Alas! Who of us frail mortals have, and where are we to fly for relief but to the Thrones of Mercy through the intercession of Our Blessed Saviour therefore let us be Humble and Thankfull.<sup>506</sup>

For the Anglican Evangelicals, although good works, sanctification and holiness are important, they cannot precede faith in securing salvation for mankind. Rather, Boyd Hilton argues, 'The organ of redemption is the individual conscience, and the means are provided by Christ's Atonement on the Cross, which purchased ransom for the sins of all mankind.'<sup>507</sup> In Dyer's letter to Cotton II, whilst mention is made of Catherine Cotton having fulfilled 'her Duty to God' through the living a Christian life, it is her faith alone in the Atonement of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and 'the intercession of Our Blessed Saviour' that will grant her salvation at 'the Thrones of Mercy'. This is not a conditional salvation but one grounded on faith.

Despite the Evangelicals emphasis on justification by faith, this was not to say that they did not believe in the importance of leading a charitable, good and Christian life. On the contrary, the Anglican Evangelicals saw life as 'an ethical obstacle course on which men are temped, tested, and ultimately sorted into saints and sinners in readiness for the Day of Judgement.'<sup>508</sup> Preaching on the subject of good deeds, John Venn observed that:

if we do not insist that the great end of Christ's coming in the flesh was to purchase to himself a holy people who should be zealous of good works, to enable them to escape the corruptions of the world, and make them partakers of a divine nature, we do not "preach the Gospel" for we overlook the very design of Christ in coming upon earth.<sup>509</sup>

Although secondary in achieving salvation, good deeds were still important. This argument is reiterated by William Wilberforce in his *Practical View*. Although there is no

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<sup>506</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS William Cotton II Correspondence, 347. From Anne Dyer, 5/12/1803.

<sup>507</sup> Hilton, *The Age of Atonement*, p. 8.

<sup>508</sup> Hilton, *The Age of Atonement*, p. 8.

<sup>509</sup> John Venn, 'On Preaching the Gospel', *Sermons by the Reverend John Venn, M.A.* (Boston, 1822), p. 14.

evidence that Cotton II purchased Wilberforce's *Practical View*, it seems almost impossible that he would not have been familiar with the work. Not least because he lived in the same neighbourhood and attended the same Church as Wilberforce, but he was also a member of the Clapham Book Society which, having been founded by members of the Clapham Sect, must surely have stocked the title. Wilberforce reinforces Venn's emphasis on the importance of good deeds stating that:

Bountiful as is the hand of Providence, its gifts are not so bestowed as to seduce us into indolence, but to rouse us to exertion; and no one expects to attain the height of learning, or arts, or power, or wealth, or military glory, without vigorous resolution, and strenuous diligence and steady perseverance.<sup>510</sup>

Therefore, whilst justification by faith and belief in Christ's sacrifice on the cross as Atonement for the sins of mankind was the first, and paramount, means of salvation, the importance of good deeds during man's time on earth was not to be underestimated.

This coming-together of life as a trial to be endured and to be spent pursuing a Holy Life is further evident in a letter written by the Reverend John Venn to Cotton II on hearing of the death of Catherine Cotton. Venn offers Cotton II 'a little Book, which I & many others have found useful in soothing their Sermons'. Although the exact nature of this little book is not known, it can be presumed that it was some form of Evangelical tract. Venn continues expressing sympathy for Cotton II's situation (which parallels his own) when 'every Hope of Happiness which we have indulged in on this side the grave has been removed from us, what remains amidst the Black which the Shroud presents, except the hope that there is another & a better life where sorrows never come'. He counsels Cotton II that following the death of Catherine, 'In the humble endeavour to obtain an entrance into this life peace may be found.'<sup>511</sup> Venn's letter to Cotton II thus suggests that, whilst the death of Catherine may signal the end of Cotton II's earthly happiness, through conducting good deeds and pursuing a Holy Life, he may find some comfort and ensure his own salvation.

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<sup>510</sup> William Wilberforce, *A Practical View of the prevailing religious system of professed Christians, in the higher and middle classes in this country, contrasted with real Christianity* (London, 1798), p. 10.

<sup>511</sup> Bodleian, Cotton and Hudson Papers, MS. Eng. d 3551.

Indeed, many Evangelicals saw it as their duty to live a charitable life and emulate the works of Christ, as detailed in the Bible. John Bell, an Evangelical missionary and friend of Cotton II, offers his condolences on the death of Rogers, whilst ruminating on the debt owed to God and the importance of leading a charitable life so as to reduce the fear of death.

I was very much concerned to see by your Letter that you had lost so good & valuable a Friend as your Uncle; but Death is a Debt we are all doomed to pay for our First Entrance into Life: happy are they who so conduct themselves in their Passage thro' this Vale of Misery, as, when that King of Terrors approaches, to look upon Him without Dread & Confusion. But I am running into a sermonising Strain.<sup>512</sup>

Bell's tone adopts the emotive and rather pessimistic tone of the Evangelicals whose sermons were notorious for dwelling on the horrors of Hell and the trials and tribulations of an earthly life. In it, however, he reiterates this image of life being an ordeal to be endured in order to achieve salvation in the next.

Activism and the conversion of others was one of the principle means by which the Anglican Evangelicals believed it was possible to live a charitable and Christian life. The conversion of others could take place at home and overseas. For example, a study of Cotton II's account reveals his attempts to live a charitable life through donations to the poor and the upkeep of the Church at Clapham.<sup>513</sup> It was the responsibility of an individual to convert as many souls as possible. Whilst there is no evidence in the Cottonian archive to suggest that Cotton II was militant in his attempts to convert others, his account book shows that he purchased prayer books for Denice and Robert (believed to have been the family's servants) at a cost of £1.7.0.<sup>514</sup> A minor expense for Cotton II, the purchase of prayer books for his servants suggests he felt some degree of responsibility for the spiritual well-being of his household. In doing so, his actions are part of a broader encompassing of Evangelical values of activism and conversion and growing concern in the late-eighteenth century for the spiritual welfare of the lower classes. The spiritual welfare of the lower classes, as Davidoff and Hall note, became of

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<sup>512</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS William Cotton II Correspondence, 347. From John Bell, 27/4/1783.

<sup>513</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS William Cotton II Account Book, 271.

<sup>514</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS William Cotton II Account Book, 271.

particular concern in the years following the French Revolution.<sup>515</sup> Spirituality, it was argued, was one means of repressing the revolutionary spirit of the lower classes. The Evangelicals were ardent in their drive to convert the souls of others. Bell, takes the duty of spreading the gospel very seriously. In a letter dated 17<sup>th</sup> July 1780, Bell writes to Cotton II of the exhausting nature of his work:

I have lately commenced Curate, having undertaken to serve a Church for three Months about Six Miles from Oxford, in the London Road: there are Prayers twice on Sundays, & one sermon: so that what with reading Prayers in Chapel before I go there (which I have hitherto done) & my Duty there, I am generally a little fatigued by the Time Night comes on.<sup>516</sup>

Despite his Sunday duties leaving him 'a little fatigued', Bell dedicates himself to saving the souls of his parishioners, which he appears to regard as a worthwhile occupation. His letter continues observing that 'if I never have any more Labours in the way of my Profession than I have hitherto had, I shall have very little reason to complain'.

The drive to convert the souls of others caused the Evangelicals to cast their eyes beyond their immediate domestic setting. It also resulted in the formation of the Church Missionary Service (CMS) and the despatching of Evangelical missionaries overseas. As Whitefield's description of Wesley captures, this was part of a process of bringing 'the light of life' to these 'savages' who 'sat in darkness'. Bebbington notes that the 'quest for souls' drove the 'Evangelicals out from the centres of learning to the parishes and foreign missionary field.'<sup>517</sup> Later in 1783, John Bell, is despatched as a missionary to Portugal in order to bring Evangelical Anglicanism to the Catholics that he blithely describes in his letters to Cotton II. Missionaries were despatched across the globe to spread Anglicanism as part of Britain's imperial drive to impose a British understanding of civilisation across the globe – thereby asserting their imperial dominance – under the genuine (but misguided) guise of conversion and offers of salvation.<sup>518</sup> Their attempts to do so were underpinned by a fear of Catholicism and competition with France. As discussed in Chapters Three and Four, the conversion of the indigenous population of overseas lands

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<sup>515</sup> Davidoff; Hall, *Family Fortunes*. pp. 392-395.

<sup>516</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS William Cotton II Correspondence, 347. From John Bell, 17/7/1780.

<sup>517</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p. 12.

<sup>518</sup> Barnhart, 'Evangelicalism, Masculinity, and the Making of Imperial Missionaries in Late Georgian Britain', pp. 712-713.



was just one aspect of a darker imperialist control of that sought to Anglicise the globe and minimise competition from Britain's European competitors – the Catholic French and Spanish.

For all that which separated them, the latitudinarians and Anglican Evangelicals were united in their anti-Catholicism. Despite their writings often emphasising tolerance of other Protestant schools, the latitudinarians were committed to their anti-Catholic sentiments. Tillotson's *Rule of Faith* (1666) and Stillingfleet's *A Rational Account of the Grounds of Natural and Revealed Religion* (1665) were just two such works that lambasted the Catholic's reliance on what was perceived as superstition and corrupt popery. Sentiments such as these were embedded into the very fabric of eighteenth-century British society, as Linda Colley's study of British nationalism has shown.<sup>519</sup> The Catholics were the threatening 'other' who posed a danger to British society, whilst its religious tenets are perceived as blasphemous and irrational, and the papists were portrayed as dangerous and cruel.<sup>520</sup> Bell writing to Cotton II from Portugal where he has travelled to convert the Catholics laments the perceived inferiority of the Portuguese Catholics. He writes that:

The general Character of the Portugeeze is a very bad one: they are looked upon as a fiery, revengeful Set of People, & extremely bigoted to the absurd & monstrous Superstitions of the Roman Catholick Church.<sup>521</sup>

The latitudinarians' dislike of the Catholics was largely grounded on their association of Catholicism with superstition, ungrounded mysteries and dogma. These were approaches to the Christian doctrine that they themselves perceived as lacking the moderating effects of rationalism and reason.

As Bell's comment notes, the Anglican Evangelicals, although less concerned about mysteries of the doctrine, which they were inclined to themselves, likewise expressed disdain at the Catholics use of superstition and melodrama. Whilst on the passage from England to Portugal, Bell recounts the Portuguese sailors' response to a fearsome storm.

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<sup>519</sup> Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation*, pp.22-23.

<sup>520</sup> Colin Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism in Eighteenth-Century England: A Political and Social Study* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993), p. 23.

<sup>521</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS William Cotton II Correspondence, 347. From John Bell, 29/7/1784.

He describes how ‘The Portugeeze Sailors began to call rather clamorously upon their tutelary Saint’. Bell, however, whilst similarly afraid recounts how he calmly ‘went upon my Knees & recommended myself to the great Author of my Being, beseeching him that if it were his good Will & Pleasure that I should perish in that miserable Manner, he would give me Strength to bear up against the fatal Shock.’ After a moment of quiet prayer Bell finds ‘my Mind greatly relieved, & flattered myself that I was not totally unprepared to meet the deadly Stroke.’<sup>522</sup> In contrast to the Catholics upon the ship, Bell speaks directly to God in his prayers, thus avoiding what he terms their ‘tutelary Saint’, and rather than begging for his life merely submits himself to God’s will drawing comfort from his faith and his part in God’s greater plan. In his request for strength to endure rather than mercy, Bell’s relationship with his God is one characterised by the altogether more reasoned and rational approach of a man whose religious beliefs, despite being Anglican Evangelical, were grounded in the eighteenth-century English Enlightenment.

Anti-Catholic sentiments can be again glimpsed in the British society in a letter from Demetria Cotton (sister of William) to her sister Charlotte on the evening of the 1780 Gordon Riots:

In the evening my brother and we said we would go and take a walk down Cheapside and we wondered to see the shops shut up but presently a mob appeared with Lord George Gordon in a chariot drawn by the metropolis and violent huzza and blue Cockades in evening hat. There was Newgate set on fire and [unintelligible] house burnt to the ground and all the prisoners set free. My brother saw through a curtain The mob sawing off one of the prisoners irons that was to be hung on Thursday. Disturbances continued the following day with the rioters inflicting chaos and damage on the city: There is a great many Rome’s Catholicks living in Abchurch Lane and there were a great many soldiers on horseback with naked swords walking up and down the Lane; We came home they said there was a monstrous fire, we went up on the Leads there was a sight which we prayed never to see again, there were three fires burning at once, The new gaol at the Stones End, Fleet Ditch,

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<sup>522</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS William Cotton II Correspondence, 347. From John Bell, 27/4/1783.

and several other Fires which we have not heard where they were.<sup>523</sup> Demetria's description of the mob's progress across the city expresses more concern for the damage done and the civil unrest than for the fate of the Catholics living in Abchurch Lane.

Indeed, she recalls how one of her friend's upon hearing that the mob was coming 'sent upstairs for her blue ribbon cap and put some half crowns in her picket because they said the mob went a begging'<sup>524</sup>. There is far more of a sense of placating the mob than opposing them in order to promote tolerance of the Catholics. Later in the day she records how her and her sisters went out in the street and 'wrote upon every body's door 'No Popery'. From the tone of her letter it seems that this was done as a joke, rather than as an explicit attack on the Catholics. When they were asked by a neighbour if they knew who had done it, they replied that it was their uncle, Charles Rogers. Given that Rogers was elderly and frail by this point, plus a well-respected figure who was extremely unlikely to have vandalising the street with religious graffiti, it was likely to have been done by Demetria and her sisters more in jest than as an attack on the Catholics. However, despite this, their actions suggest greater concern about disturbance to the city than the fate of the Catholics. The latitudinarians and Anglican Evangelicals shared dislike of Catholicism had much to do with their perceived over-reliance on superstition and dogma that was believed to undermine their rational and reasoned approach to the study of the Christian doctrine.

As has been discussed in the previous chapter, the latitudinarians looked to reason, moderation, rationalism and natural philosophy in their attempts to legitimise the Christian religion. Whilst the Anglican Evangelicals are associated with a more emotive and warmer response to religion, they too did not entirely divest themselves of reason and rationalism in their approach to the Christian doctrine. As a study of Cotton II's

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<sup>523</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Correspondence of the Cotton family, 347. Demetria Cotton to her sister Charlotte, 8/6/1780.

<sup>524</sup> Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS Correspondence of Cotton family, 347.

The reference to a blue cap is likely a reference to the mob's adoption of the colour blue; a colour historically associated in England with the Tory party, conservatism and old views and the proclamation that 'True Blue will never stain'. By wearing the colour blue, the crowd sent the message that they were 'denouncing, not demanding innovations, and that it wanted to ensure, by the Relief Act's Repeal, that 'the Protestant religion would be preserved; the British constitution secured.' Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism in Eighteenth-Century England*, p. 235.

religious life shows, many of the Anglican Evangelicals approaches to the doctrine were similarly grounded in the Enlightenment principles (rationalism, rejection of mysteries and dogma) associated with the latitudinarians. A straight-forward rejection of a rational approach to religion cannot, therefore, be used to explain Cotton II's disposal of many latitudinarian works. The answer, however, may be found in their differing approaches to the delivery of sermons and their emphasis on the emotions rather than the mind. In contrast to the latitudinarians' adoption of a plain and straight-forward sermonising style, the Evangelicals, favoured a warmer and emotive style that appealed to the emotions.

Yet, for all this, neither side entirely discredited the role of emotions or reason in Christian belief. Rivers notes that it would be incorrect to argue that the latitudinarians were entirely divested of emotion and, likewise, that the Evangelicals overlooked the role of reason in religious belief. Rather, there was a different emphasis on the importance of emotions versus reason. For example, the latitudinarians were not entirely against the role of emotions. Henry More in his attempts to solve the mystery of the Resurrection acknowledges the importance of emotions (termed affections or motions):

Of what infinite importance therefore must it be to have such a body as is not only perpetually thus compliable with the Best motions of the Soul, but by virtue of its Heavenly purity does naturally encline the Mind to such Thoughts, Motions and Affections, as are most acceptable to God and most enravishing to her self?<sup>525</sup>

However, More argues that these affections are the result of reason for their existence and acceptance by God 'evidently demonstrate that high Reason that is in our Religion, in the Promise of a glorified Body, as the greatest Reward of our earnest colluctations and obedient endeavours in this life. For nothing but Divine Inspiration or some infallible Method of Philosophy could discover to the Mind of man so concerning a Point.'<sup>526</sup>

Likewise Tillotson in his sermon 'On the Nature and Necessity of Holy Resolution' preaches that:

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<sup>525</sup> Henry More, *An Explanation of the Grand Mysteries of Godliness; Or, A True and Faithfull Representation of the Everlasting Gospel Of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ* (London, 1660), p. 228.

<sup>526</sup> More, *An Explanation of the Grand Mysteries of Godliness*, p. 228.

If the matter be of some considerable moment and consequence, resolution supposeth some motion of the affections, which is a kind of bias upon the will, a certain propension and inclination that a man feels in himself, either urging him to do a thing, or withdrawing from it. Deliberation and judgement, they direct a man what to do, or leave undone; the affections excite and quicken a man to take some resolution in the matter, that is, to do suitably to the judgement his mind hath pass'd upon the thing.<sup>527</sup>

However, like More, the existence and role of these emotions in relation to the Christian doctrine are still controlled by reason:

a great sinner reflects upon his life, and considers what he has done [...] debating the matter calmly and soberly with himself, he is satisfied and convinced of the evil and danger a wicked life, and consequently that it is best for him to resolve upon a better course, that is, to repent.<sup>528</sup>

For many latitudinarians, the emotions played an important role in religion, but their presence was controlled by reason and rationalism.

Despite his removal of near-enough the entire representation of latitudinarian works from the Cottonian Collection, Cotton II purchased the works of the Reverend Hugh Blair – a minister of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland. His writings were immensely popular running into fifteen editions by 1790 and, so Brown argues, rivalling those of Tillotson in their popularity.<sup>529</sup> Cotton II invested in editions of his sermons in 1795 and 1796.<sup>530</sup> This is likely for two reasons. Firstly, Blair's accessible sermons were popular with readers within the varying divisions of the Anglican Church. Secondly, Blair's focus was on the emotions and human passions in relation to religion – an interest which characterised much of Anglican Evangelical belief.<sup>531</sup> Furthermore, avoiding doctrinal issues through Biblical analysis or discussion of hell, or the doctrine of salvation, he was able to navigate a neutral pathway through religious controversy. Drawing upon mid-eighteenth century interest in sentiments, emotions and the passions and the emerging culture of sensibility,

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<sup>527</sup> Tillotson, 'On the nature and necessity of holy resolution', in *The Works of the Most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson*, vol. II (London, 1712), p. 64.

<sup>528</sup> Tillotson, 'On the nature and necessity of holy resolution', p. 64.

<sup>529</sup> Stewart J. Brown, 'Hugh Blair, the sentiments and preaching the enlightenment in Scotland', *Intellectual History Review*, 26 (2016), 411-427 (p. 411).

<sup>530</sup> Cotton II's account book for the years 1795 and 1796 record the purchase of volumes three and four of Blair's sermons. Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS William Cotton II Account Book, 271.

<sup>531</sup> St Clair, *The Reading Nation*, p. 274.

Blair's sermons looked to the theme of human passions and the role of religion in directing and controlling the passions to imbue social virtue.<sup>532</sup>

In his sermon 'On Sensibility' (found in volume three of his sermons and purchased by Cotton II in 1794), Blair preaches on the importance of true sensibility. True sensibility, he argues, is one of 'the social duties of life' that comes 'from the Father of mercies' and 'will undoubtedly breathe benevolence and humanity.'<sup>533</sup> Quoting from the Bible, Blair says 'to rejoice with them that rejoice, and to weep with them that weep'. This feeling of shared happiness and sympathy, he argues, is known as sensibility. True sensibility (that which is genuine and selfless) differs from unmoderated and excessive displays of emotion that incapacitate the believer. It is only:

From true sensibility flow a thousand good offices apparently small in themselves, but of high importance to the felicity of others [...] How happy then would it be for mankind, if this affectionate disposition prevailed more generally in the world! How much would the sum of public virtue and public felicity be increased, if men were always inclined to rejoice with them that rejoice, and to weep with them that weep!<sup>534</sup>

With his emphasis on fellow-feeling and the benefit of this for society, the content of Blair's sermons, whilst not necessarily Evangelical, would have appealed to many similar qualities of good deeds, conversion and the leading of a charitable life. Indeed, St Clair argues that his sermons had the ability to transcend differences in doctrinal belief by emphasising traditional values of honesty, kindness, truthfulness, modesty, patriotism, thrift, enterprise and self-reliance. His sermons contained little, St Clair adds, that was inherently Christian, but rather tapped into many shared and common traits between Protestant schools of belief thereby ensuring their near-universal appeal.<sup>535</sup>

Blair's writings combined the Anglican Evangelicals emphasis on an emotional response to religion with the latitudinarians' moderation and reasoned interpretation of the doctrine. For Cotton II caught, as he was, between his latitudinarian upbringing and his later alignment with the Anglican Evangelicals, Blair's ability to seemingly balance the

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<sup>532</sup> Stewart J. Brown, 'Hugh Blair, the sentiments and preaching the enlightenment in Scotland', p. 420.

<sup>533</sup> Hugh Blair, 'On Sensibility' in *Sermons by Hugh Blair*, Volume III (London 1790), p. 30.

<sup>534</sup> Blair, 'On Sensibility', p. 31.

<sup>535</sup> St Clair, *The Reading Nation*, p. 273.

stylistic nature of the two schools of doctrinal thought would have made his sermons appealing. As Brown notes, 'Blair's published sermons also contributed to a late eighteenth-century religious ethos that placed increasing emphasis on the sentiments and passions, on a practical morality based on the teachings and character of Jesus and on a personal, introspective religion of the heart.'<sup>536</sup> Blair was a moderate and thus opposed to the styles of preaching adopted by the Evangelicals that included depictions of hell and emphasis on personal conversion through acceptance of Christ's sacrifice on the cross. Yet, whilst Blair was certainly not an Evangelical. In his focus on individual sentiment and emotions, on a religion of feeling and the heart, and on personal introspection, Blair did contribute to the renewal of vital Christianity – a renewal that included the Evangelical Revival.'<sup>537</sup>

Cotton II's purchases of two volumes of Blair's sermons was not, therefore, necessarily unusual, despite the shift of his religious outlook. As previously noted, Cotton II's religious shift was fairly subtle and not to be associated with any form of extremism. Blair's sermons were popular, appealed to late-eighteenth-century Evangelicals (despite Blair's different doctrinal emphasis) and his acquisition of these works shortly prior to disposing of others is not necessarily problematic, but rather shows that Cotton II's religious character was not essentially straight-forward. As evidence of his decision to preserve some latitudinarian writings in the collection demonstrates, Cotton II did not entirely divest himself of his religious upbringing during adulthood choosing to maintain a handful of latitudinarian sermons, including those by Stillingfleet and Whichcote (although removing the entirety of Tillotson's works). As previously mentioned, Cotton II's alignment with the Anglican Evangelicals is best described as a shift in religious outlook rather than a complete rejection of his religious upbringing. Part of this shift, I argue, was the way in which Anglicanism was practiced. Cotton II thus disposes of many of the latitudinarians works that were increasingly perceived as cold and indifferent, in favour of an altogether warmer approach to religious belief. It is this distinction, I argue, that is likely to have resulted in Cotton II's removal of many latitudinarian works that, despite not being that far removed from his own beliefs, placed a different emphasis on the emotions.

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<sup>536</sup> Brown, 'Hugh Blair, the sentiment and preaching the Enlightenment in Scotland', p. 423.

<sup>537</sup> Brown, 'Hugh Blair, the sentiment and preaching the Enlightenment in Scotland', p. 423.

The final point that I consider in relation to Cotton II's treatment of the theological holdings of the collection centres around the debate between natural and revealed religion. As discussed in the preceding chapter, natural theology was an important characteristic of latitudinarianism. However, by the late-eighteenth century the natural philosophy that had underpinned the latitudinarians' interpretation of the Bible was facing increasing criticism from Evangelicalism. As Gascoigne notes, "The Evangelicals, with their rejection of the natural theology which lay at the root of the "holy alliance" between Newtonian natural philosophy and latitudinarians theology, posed a long-term threat to this accord between science and religion."<sup>538</sup> Their opposition to the extremes of natural theology was further heightened by the political events in France from 1789 onwards. Following the French Revolution and France's move towards an atheist society, so a rational religion grounded on natural theology began to be associated with assault on the British Church and State. Walsh and Taylor argue that "The atheism of the French Revolution seemed to provide a sombre object lesson on what happened to a society when the solvent forces of rationalism were allowed to go unchecked."<sup>539</sup> Under the National Assembly, various sects – the atheist Cult of Reason, deist Cult of Supreme Being and Theophilanthropism – emerged in France as the Religion of Reason and replaced Catholicism.<sup>540</sup> The Religion of Reason claimed to be founded on an extension of the Enlightenment principles that had driven the Revolution. In Britain, however, (especially following the descent of the Revolution into the Regime of Terror and onset of war with France) reason was increasingly perceived as having undermined revealed religion and had led the French into the perils of atheism.

As discussed in Chapters Three and Four, the ideological threat perceived to be posed by the French resulted in a reactionary conservative backlash amongst the British State. At the same time, the established Church, as the voice of the State, began to distance itself from natural theology's emphasis on rationalism in favour of a return to those 'aspects of revealed religion which they regarded as transcending human reason.'<sup>541</sup> In light of this political climate, it is not surprising to discover in the 1801 sale catalogue, especially

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<sup>538</sup> Gascoigne, *Cambridge in the Enlightenment*, p. 262.

<sup>539</sup> Walsh; Taylor, 'Introduction', *The Church of England c. 1689-1833*, p. 41.

<sup>540</sup> Noah Schusterman, *The French Revolution: Faith, Desire and Politics* (London; New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 207, 223, 247.

<sup>541</sup> Gascoigne, *Cambridge in the Age of Enlightenment*, p. 238.



given Cotton II's own religious outlook, works which present a rational and scientific approach to the study of the Christian scripture rejecting aspects of revealed religion. Included in the 1801 sale catalogue was John Toland's controversial *Christianity Not Mysterious* (1696), Mathew Tindal's *Rights of the Christian Church* (1706), Henry More's *Mysterious of Godliness* (1660), Edward Stillingfleet *On Christian Religion* (1662), William Derham's *Physico-theology* (1713) along with a fifteen volume edition of the complete works of Robert Boyle. Derham's work, in particular, was thought to have inspired William Paley's 1802 work on the relationship between natural theology and the existence of a divine force. There is no evidence to suggest Paley's title was purchased by Cotton II but it became a ground-breaking study of natural theology in the early-nineteenth century comparable only to the enduring influence of Isaac Newton.<sup>542</sup> It was also, however, strongly opposed by prominent Evangelicals including Wilberforce who argued that Paley was complacent about nature.<sup>543</sup> A common theme amongst those works disposed of by Cotton II was the way in which they posited science and religion alongside each other.

*Christianity not Mysterious* was a controversial work when published in 1696 by the deist, John Toland. Toland, Popkin notes, was a friend of John Locke and in his work he utilised portions of Locke's theory of knowledge in order to undertake a negative critique of Christian religious beliefs. In his work, Toland insists that 'there is no Doctrine of the Gospel contrary to Reason'.<sup>544</sup> Rather,

we hold that Reason is the only Foundation of all Certitude; and that nothing reveal'd, whether as to its Manner or Existence, is more exempted from its Disquisitions than the ordinary Phenomena of Nature, Wherefore, we likewise maintain, according to the Title of this Discourse, that there is nothing in the Gospel contrary to Reason, nor above it; and that no Christian Doctrine can be properly call'd a Mystery.<sup>545</sup>

Toland's emphasis on a form of reason seemingly devoid of faith 'alarm'd all sober well-meaning Christians, and set the whole clergy against him'.<sup>546</sup> As Popkin notes, 'Despite the

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<sup>542</sup> St Clair, *The Reading Nation*, p. 627.

<sup>543</sup> Hilton, *The Age of Atonement*, p.4.

<sup>544</sup> Toland, *Christianity not Mysterious*, p. 7.

<sup>545</sup> Toland, *Christianity not Mysterious*, p. 6.

<sup>546</sup> Justin Champion, *Republic of learning: John Toland and the crisis of Christian culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 200), p. 69.

work masquerading as the penmanship of a sincere Christian (a passage from Archbishop Tillotson had been included prominently on the title-page), the outcry of rage was immediate and intense.<sup>547</sup> By early June the book was being attacked from pulpits across London for its 'most arrogant and impudent treatment of God and the Holy Scriptures'<sup>548</sup>. It is not surprising, therefore, that this work featured amongst Cotton II's choice of works for sale as, in a period which saw a renewed emphasis on Christian mysteries and revealed religion, it was unlikely to appeal to his religious sentiments.

Another such work sold was Mathew Tindel's *Rights of the Christian Church* (1706). In *The Rights* Tindel argues that 'the right to worship God according to conscience was not consistent with the claim by the clergy to exercise a spiritual authority, it provoked the wrath of both religious and civil authorities.'<sup>549</sup> As a Deist, Tindel's works can be read as an attempt to distinguish between superstition and religion, to rid the latter of the former, and to exalt the external validity of the core Christian values, and to promote an exalted view of the Deity. Despite the controversy that this work generated in the early eighteenth century, it should be noted that the book sold in the 1801 sale so its content likely still held appeal for some collectors.

However, whilst Evangelicalism was a religion of the heart, natural theology still held an important place in their religious outlook. Rather, they placed a different emphasis on its importance in understanding Christianity. Hilton argues whilst 'the fervent aspects of this 'religion of the heart', its stress on conversion and grace as against the dry rationalism of the eighteenth century, are most frequently stressed, but, for all that, most evangelicals stood inside and partly depended on the rationalistic and mechanistic tradition of eighteenth-century natural theology.'<sup>550</sup> Moderates clung to an enlightenment view of nature as both constant and perfectly constructed. Bebbington argues that, contrary to perceived understanding, there existed a tight bond between evangelicalism and science. Whilst the Anglican Evangelicals could never be considered as being at the heart of British

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<sup>547</sup> Champion, *Republic of Learning*, p. 70.

<sup>548</sup> Champion, *Republic of Learning*, p. 70.

<sup>549</sup> Stephen Lalor, *Mathew Tindel, Freethinker: An Eighteenth-Century Assault on Religion* (London; New York: Continuum, 2006), p. 12.

<sup>550</sup> Hilton, *The Age of Atonement*, p. 8.

science, 'moderate evangelicals were in their own way extremely rational, and believed just as much in the potential as in the depravity of humankind'.<sup>551</sup>

In their attempts to understand the changing world they inhabited, many Evangelicals continued to look to the natural theology of the earlier half of the century. Retained in the collection is a small core of works, purchased by the Townsons and Rogers in the earlier part of the eighteenth century, that deal with the relationship between natural philosophy and religion. These include William Wollaston's *The Religion of Nature Delineated* (1750), Hugo Grotius *The Truth of Christian Religion* (1674) – including two copies in Dutch and a further English translation by Simon Patrick – and Robert Jenkin's *The Reasonableness and Certainty of the Christian Religion* (1721). On the whole, the Anglican Evangelicals were not overly hostile to science. Whilst they had some reservations about natural philosophy, 'the movement adherents were not generally the foes of learning, research and intellect'. Rather, Bebbington argues, 'even if they ranked these matters below conversion, revelation, and the spirit, they normally regarded scientific investigation in particular as bound up with the knowledge of God through natural theology.'<sup>552</sup>

## Conclusion

As this final chapter has sought to demonstrate, the decade preceding William Cotton II's inheritance of the Cottonian Collection was characterised by a declining influence of latitudinarianism's hold over the established Church in contrast to the growing strength of Anglican Evangelicalism. It was this latter interpretation of the Christian doctrine that would come to dominate the Church of England in the 1790s and early-nineteenth century and, consequently, Cotton II's own religious outlook. The Revival, in response to the socio-political climate of social unrest, fear of revolutionary infection and their association with the forces of extreme rationalism and atheism, offered a secure footing for the middle classes looking for reassurance and stability in the Church. An examination of Cotton II's collecting practices in light of his own alignment with the Anglican Evangelicals' religious outlook in the 1790s indicates a rationale behind his treatment of

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<sup>551</sup> Hilton, *The Age of Atonement*, p. 21.

<sup>552</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p. 124.

the theological holdings. As this chapter has demonstrated, the theological writings disposed of by Cotton II predominantly consisted of the sermons and tracts of latitudinarian clergyman published in the late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century. This was not, however, a complete removal of latitudinarianism from the collection and Cotton II continued to preserve the work of some authors – Stillingfleet and Whichcote included – suggesting that he had not completely disavowed himself of his latitudinarian upbringing.

Rather, as I have argued, the selection of theological titles for sale suggests a shift in Cotton II's religious outlook rather than a rejection of an earlier system of beliefs favoured by the Townsons and Charles Rogers. As a result, those works that, in the eyes of a late-eighteenth-century Anglican Evangelical, perhaps seemed too out-moded, placed too great an emphasis on reason or disputed the importance of mystery were disposed of. When considered in relation to the broader socio-political events of the period, it is possible to see that the earlier religious ideas of the Enlightenment – emphasis on rationalism, reason and moderation – were coming under increasing pressure during a period of concern about the threat posed by revolutionary France, social unrest at home, and the split within the latitudinarians. Therefore, Cotton II's sale of much of the earlier theological holdings of his predecessors suggests an attempt to remove the most out-dated or controversial titles from the collection; titles that, in the eyes of Cotton II, did not convey the sense of late-eighteenth-century British gentlemanliness that he wished to portray through his display of the library at his home in Clapham.

# Conclusion

This thesis has examined the previously untouched book and archival holdings of the national designated Cottonian Collection. Through an examination of the collecting practices of William Cotton II, hitherto an overlooked collector, this thesis has sought to place the history of the book holdings within the broader study of book collecting and the print trade during the eighteenth century. In conducting in-depth archival research, it has been possible to generate an impression of Cotton II's gentlemanly identity and, in turn, to glean an insight into the factors that shaped his curatorship of the literary holdings. Prior to this thesis, Cotton II's orchestration of the 1799 and 1801 sales have overshadowed his custodianship and there has been no attempt to investigate either the sales or his broader collecting practices during this time. As I have argued, dismissing his actions as those of a careless philistine presents a simplistic view of Cotton II's actions, and subsequently curtails the opportunity to scrutinise the broader book collecting practices of the period.

Examination of the literary holdings of the collection has been explored through three themes: the importance of the formation of a domestic library for the reinforcement of gentlemanly status, evolving concepts of British national character, and changing theological thought during the eighteenth century. Chapters One and Two examined the evolving styles of displaying the collection by its gentleman owner in relation to the broader fashions for library design. These two chapters demonstrated the importance of an appropriately displayed library and of ensuring that the shelves were stocked with suitable titles so as to reinforce Cotton II's status as middle-class gentleman in the fashionable suburb of Clapham in the 1790s. Chapters Three and Four examined the relationship between changing ideals of British national character – including its relationship with the socio-economic and political events of the period – and the extent to which this impacted on the shape of the collection. Commerce, trade, and British imperial ambition, as these chapters argued, were intrinsic to the lives of all of the Cottonian collectors, given their employment at the London Custom House, and the formation of the collection. As these chapters established, Cotton II's period of custodianship saw a consolidation of a British national character and, consequentially,

the construction of a national cultural and literary heritage. The final two chapters traced the evolution of Anglican theological thought between 1690 and 1816 and the effect of this on the collectors' religious outlook. Cotton II's movement away from the rational and natural theology of the latitudinarianism of his predecessors towards the emotive Anglican Evangelicalism of the 1790s resulted in his disposing of a significant proportion of the collection's late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth-century theological holdings.

Additionally, it became evident that the earlier ideas about religion, philosophy, and of Britain's place in the world came under increasing pressure in the final decade of the eighteenth century which influenced both the book trade and Cotton II's curatorial practices. Cotton II's period of custodianship between 1791 and 1816 marked a watershed moment in the collection's history. Not only did he dramatically reduce the holdings by twenty-five thousand pieces of artwork and books, but his custodianship coincided with a period during which many of the earlier ideas that had shaped his predecessors' collecting practices came under increasing pressure. The socio-political and economic events which took place between 1690 and 1791 gradually precipitated a shift away from the polite cosmopolitan, latitudinarian and Enlightenment gentlemanliness as embodied by Robert and William Townson and Charles Rogers. By the time of Cotton II's inheritance of the collection in 1791, the loss of the American Colonies and the onset of a new war with Revolutionary France, as well as periods of domestic social unrest, was threatening the political and social stability of Britain. As a result, the earlier polite cosmopolitanism characteristic of the Enlightened metropolitan gentlemen in the early-eighteenth century was increasingly downplayed in favour of a consolidated sense of British national character. This form of British gentlemanliness that emerged in the 1780s and 90s was associated with an emphasis on traditional masculine characteristics, xenophobia, commercial dominance and the display of military strength.

The events of the last two decades of the eighteenth century also impacted on the broader book collecting practices of the period. The rise of bibliomania, the influx of incunabula onto the market, a movement away from the dominance of Roman antiquarian study in favour of domestic antiquities, and an increase in the popularity of travel literature and the national canon saw book collecting intricately intertwined with notions of a national cultural heritage. By the time of Cotton II's custodianship, ownership of a collection was

to be part of a collective act to create a sense of a national heritage. It was essential therefore, that it appropriately displayed and included titles that reinforced Cotton II's status as a late-eighteenth-century British, middle-class gentleman in a period when revolutionary warfare threatened the very ideology and fabric of the British constitution.

Therefore, as the earlier ideas of gentlemanliness that shaped Cotton II's predecessors collecting practices came under increasing pressure in the 1780s and 1790s, so a collection, founded on the philosophical, theological, and imperialistic principles of an earlier age, came to be seen as old-fashioned or out-moded in the eyes of its late-eighteenth-century custodian, William Cotton II. His curatorship of the collection can, therefore, be viewed as an attempt by him to partly modernise the literary holdings of collection so as to ensure it was more suited for the form of late-eighteenth-century British gentlemanly identity which he wished to embody. In turn, this directed the rationale behind his choice of titles for acquisition, preservation, disposal and the means by which they were displayed in his domestic library. The result was a reduction in earlier latitudinarian holdings, obscure Greek and Roman classical literature and Italian literature in favour of native authors, studies of domestic antiquities and travel narratives, and travelogues that celebrate Britain's imperial status as a global colonial power. Contextualising Cotton II's period of custodianship, this thesis not only presents a more nuanced examination of his actions, but offers a commentary on the intricately connected nature of the socio-political landscape and practices of book collecting in the eighteenth century.

As the first major study of the Cottonian Collection, this work has laid the foundations for further research by outlining the history of the collection and its collectors. In the process of examining the book collecting practices of William Cotton II, this thesis has touched on the actions and character of his predecessors. However, in order to further develop understanding of the collection and its custodians' curatorial practices, particularly in relation to their importance for the study of art history, print collecting, connoisseurship and book history, further academic investigation is necessary. As this thesis has demonstrated, commerce and trade, global exploration, notions of gentlemanly identity and theology were intrinsic for the shaping of the eighteenth-century book trade and, consequently, the formation of the Cottonian Collection and connoisseurial practices of

its custodians. Whilst this study has focused on the Cottonian Collection, the insight it offers into the relationship between socio-political and economic considerations and the book trade sheds light on the manner in which external factors affected the evolution of the trade during the eighteenth century. Academic study of the collection, therefore, offers the potential to extend the relevance of the collection beyond its holdings or the lives of individual collectors and to place it within the broader history of the rise and consolidation of a commercial and global society in the eighteenth century.



# Bibliography

## Archival Sources

The Cottonian Collection archive is catalogued in only a rudimentary manner. It has not been thoroughly catalogued using a digitised system or detailed inventory. Therefore, not all papers consulted have catalogue numbers assigned to them. In this instance, I have provided a title that best fits the contents of the material.

Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, Sale Catalogue of Prints and Books of Prints, 1799

Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, Sale Catalogue of Books, 1801

Plymouth, Cottonian Collection Archive, MS William Cotton's account book, 1791-1814, 271

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