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Saltram House: The Evolution of an Eighteenth-Century Country Estate

By

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Abstract: Saltram House: The Evolution of an Eighteenth-Century Country

Estate

This thesis examines the evolution of Saltram House in Devon as a country estate from the years 1743 to 1819, with a focus on the impact of two eighteenth-century generations of the Parker family. These dates have been chosen because Saltram's architecture, interior design and parkland underwent the most drastic changes during this time. It will argue that Saltram conforms to the existing models of country house scholarship on the form, function and meaning of the country estate during the eighteenth century. This thesis will bring new knowledge to this picture however, by placing Saltram firmly within this scholarship. It will examine the transformation of Saltram initiated by the first generation of eighteenth-century Parkers, John Parker the First and his wife Lady Catherine Parker in 1743. It will then move on to the second generation of eighteenth-century Parkers, John Parker, First Lord Boringdon and his wife Lady Theresa Parker who continued to transform the estate from the year 1768. This thesis will focus on the impact the women of the Parker family had over Saltram's design by analysing previously understudied family correspondence which details Lady Catherine Parker, Lady Theresa Parker and Theresa's sister Anne Robinson as the decision makers on Saltram's design.

The thesis will argue that the Parker family were able to become active patrons of the arts, and shape their image, through strategic marriage and accumulated wealth. To do this, the following topics will be studied. Architecture and landscape will be examined with reference to the influence of William Kent and Capability Brown landscape design. Robert Adam, one of the leading neo-classical architects of the eighteenth century and the lesser known Nathaniel Richmond, a student of the leading landscape designer Capability Brown and their

involvement will also be examined. The Chinoiserie style, with a focus on the lesser known Chinese wallpaper collection will also be examined bringing new knowledge to an understudied subject. Some discussion will be made of the well-known Robert Adam interiors of Saltram House. The thesis will then end on the extensive portraiture collection of Saltram House including the Parker family portraits by Plympton born Sir Joshua Reynolds, the leading portrait painter of the eighteenth century. The importance of portraiture display and iconography when shaping and representing the image of a sitter will also be examined.

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Introduction

This dissertation examines the evolution of Saltram House in Devon as a country estate, with a particular focus on the house's interior and exterior design between the years 1743 and 1819. It will show how Saltram House fits the existing models of country house scholarship on the form, function and meaning of the country estate during the eighteenth century. However, this thesis will add new knowledge to this picture, by placing Devon firmly within this scholarship. I will explore how a family without title gradually rose in the ranks of society through the use of strategic marriage and accumulated wealth, whilst using visual culture to maintain a positive image of the family. It is my aim to demonstrate how Saltram House became a vessel for the representation and self-fashioning of status through its architecture, landscape, interiors and its collection of portraiture. To do this, I will be focussing on two generations of eighteenth century Parkers: John Parker, whom I shall refer to as John Parker the first, and his wife Lady Catherine Parker, and John Parker, First Lord Boringdon, who I shall refer as John Parker the second, and his wife Lady Theresa Parker. These are the two families who had the most impact on Saltram's development. Although further changes were made in the nineteenth century under John Parker, First Lord Morley, the son of John Parker the second, and an increase in tours taken by visitors to the estate, this epoch will not be examined in detail. This is due to the eighteenth century seeing the most drastic changes to Saltram's interior and exterior design. This period is also the richest in primary source material which include letters between Lady Theresa Parker and her brother Thomas Robinson, Second Lord Grantham on the subject of Saltram's design.

Literature Review

There is a wealth of country house scholarship which has studied the history, form, functions and meanings of the eighteenth-century country estate depending on the ambitions and values of those who inhabited them. Mark Girouard's *Life in the English Country House*¹ looks at the social and architectural history of the eighteenth-century country house in relation to what the house itself was used for. The family's ambitions and needs determined architectural choices and affected social customs performed in the house as the house itself became a visual means to achieve them. As Girouard states, before his work country house scholarship often studied 'architects, craftsmen or family history' without a focus or understanding of how the house was used or 'operated or what was expected of them when they were first built.'² Girouard's research questions 'what were country houses used for?' He finds that they were not simply households for those of the élite to live in. Instead, they were consciously constructed depending on the changing ambitions or needs of their inhabitants and there was a demonstrated awareness by country house owners that choices in designs projected an image of the family.³ Country house architecture and its interiors are viewed by Girouard as

'.. show case[s] in which to exhibit and entertain supporters and good connections...

[Architecture] was an image maker which projected an aura of glamour, mystery or

¹ Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (London: Yale University Press, 1978).

² Ibid v.

³ Ibid 2.

success around the owner. It was a visible evidence of his wealth. It showed his credentials.⁴

This narrow gender view expressed by Girouard in the 1970s will be redressed in this thesis which will examine the influence of women on country house design and its purpose.

Nonetheless, Girouard's account is a model for the social history of the country estate. A coat of arms over the entrance of a country house could suggest that the family had centuries of wealthy aristocratic ancestry, even if they did not. The inclusion of an extensive library collection could give the impression of an intelligent, widely read family which valued knowledge and the improvement of morals. Sir Robert Walpole's Houghton in Norfolk, was built to consolidate his success from raising himself from minor gentry to a more dominant social position. The building included 'housing [for] the finest picture collection in England'⁵ to show evidence of his new found power and family wealth.

Dana Arnold's *The Georgian Country House: Architecture, Landscape and Society*⁶ looks at the many meanings of the country house by analysing its social and cultural significance in eighteenth-century elite society. This is done by analysing broad and varied aspects of the country house such as its landscape design, to the involvement of women. Arnold provides a broad survey of country house examples looking at well-known estates such as Blenheim Palace, but also focussing on lesser known properties like A la Ronde, Exmouth. There is also an inclusion of five expert's essays on specific aspects of the country house they specialise in

⁴ Ibid 3.

⁵ Ibid 4.

⁶ Dana Arnold, *The Georgian Country House: Architecture, Landscape and Society* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing Limited, 2003).

such as M.H. Port's 'Town House and Country House: their interaction' which looks at how both buildings influenced one another's functions and design.

Marcia Pointon's *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and the Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England*⁷ looks at the use of portraiture in the setting of the eighteenth-century country house. Pointon examines how it was used to create and shape personal identity but also how it was seen as a tool for social ascent into the higher echelons of English élite society. Pointon examines how portraiture was hung and the significance of where it was placed in the country house for visitors to the estate. If a large scale portrait had its own designated wall with no other paintings for example, it would be a dominant feature and focal point for the viewer. Strawberry Hill, owned by Horace Walpole, incorporated copies of seventeenth-century portraits above gothic bookcases with heraldic devices (figure 1.1) in order to 'inscribe Walpole the owner into the past.'⁸ The bookcases and portraits were made to complement one another and give the impression that Walpole was now part of a royal ancestry.

Similar to Pointon and Girouard, Christopher Christie's book *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century*⁹ looks also at how the country house was used for the purpose of displaying élite credentials. In comparison to Pointon's focussed study on one feature of the country house, portraiture, Christie offers a broad survey on various aspects of the estate used to convey ideas of a family dynasty from portraiture, to landscaping, and refers to over thirty country houses rather than focussing on a few case studies. Architecture is treated by

⁷ Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Yale University Press, 1993), 13-15.

⁸ *Ibid*, 14.

⁹ Christopher Christie, *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 232.

Christie as a conscious strategy, an act of public social dominance to declare a family's wealth and power made by those who inhabited the property; such a property often dominated its surroundings due to its size and decoration, therefore its occupants overtly intended it to be viewed. Christie's intention, as stated in the Introduction, was to study broadly the importance of the country house 'architecturally, artistically, socially and economically'¹⁰ to offer an overview of country house history. Christie's work is particularly significant compared to previous studies as it gives attention to how a family's political position and ambitions impacted upon the way they chose to decorate and embellish their estate. Stowe, in Buckinghamshire, according to Christie, was a 'political statement from the start, the East Garden was... a carefully conceived iconographical programme that incorporated political allusions.'¹¹ The layout was created to express 'Viscount Cobham's political independence... the Elysian Fields, with their resonances of antiquity, were filled with monuments and statuary which demonstrated Cobham's libertarianism.'¹² A taste for the antique had resonances of democracy rather than absolute monarchy; Cobham was a noted Whig supporter.

Unlike previous studies, Rosemary Baird's *Mistress of the House: Great Ladies and Grand Houses*¹³ looks at women's history and the country house. Baird looks at the role women played and were expected to undertake in the country estate as wives of members of the landed gentry. This included, according to Baird, having the responsibility for decorating and designing the house, conversing with artists and architects and developing artistic connections in order to gain knowledge of current taste and fashions in house-making.

¹⁰ Ibid 1.

¹¹ Ibid 130.

¹² Ibid 130.

¹³ Rosemary Baird, *Mistress of the House* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003).

Motherhood was also an integral role to the survival of the country estate as women of this social stratum were expected to produce heirs to continue the family dynasty. Women have usually been only briefly studied in National Trust guidebooks, with an occasional referral to their life and role in the estate in question. Baird, however, addresses this gap by providing ten case studies on ten different women and what they brought to their properties. One of these subjects is Lady Theresa Parker, wife of John Parker the second and it looks at the role she played in decorating Saltram House with her knowledge of the arts, and artistic connections as a result of her family's social status. Baird is thus far the only published scholar to address, in detail, the legacy of Theresa Parker and her role as a wife who supported her husband's ambitions. Baird comprehensively acknowledges throughout that a woman's role in the country house was vital. This was perhaps more so than the men of the house because they were usually busy with political duties. The responsibility for adorning the country house therefore went to the women. It was an essential role to play; women of the country house created the stage on which to perform their social status, entertain guests and gain supporters to help their husband's ambitions.¹⁴

Richard Stephen's 'The Parker Family,' in *Sir Joshua Reynolds: The Acquisition of Genius*¹⁵ is one of a few published studies which looks at the owners of Saltram House in any great detail. Stephens focuses on the relationship between the Parker family and Sir Joshua Reynolds, the Plympton born leading portrait painter of the eighteenth century. In particular, it looks at how Reynolds improved the Parker family's artistic life by being the main catalyst for Saltram's successful development into one of the finest country estates in

¹⁴ Ibid 2.

¹⁵ Richard Stephens, "The Parker Family," in *Sir Joshua Reynolds: The Acquisition of Genius*, ed. Sam Smiles (Bristol: Sansom & Company, 2009).

Devon. This was due to Reynolds having the ability to collect and procure art and artefacts for the Parker family for the curation of the house. Reynolds, because of his knowledge, became an advisor to the Parkers on embellishing their property. He also painted the majority of the Parker family portraits promoting their status as a family who were of the moment in terms of the artistic tastes and fashions of an élite social circle.¹⁶

Arguably, the only sustained history on the Parker family and Saltram House which has been published by The National Trust and made available to the public are the various guidebooks on Saltram House. The most informative is by Ceri Johnson, (1998) because it not only contains an inventory of the house collection but also gives brief descriptions of the usage of each room as well as a brief history of the Parkers. Some useful source material drawing on the letters of the Parkers in the eighteenth century is also introduced. However, despite this, there is no comprehensive study on Saltram House and its design history. When it comes to the South West of England in general, there is a lack of country house scholarship to convey the fact that country houses of Devon and Cornwall had just as much meaning for their inhabitants, as better known properties such as Blenheim Palace. However, there is a developing scholarship which argues for the importance of properties in the south west. Jennifer Fraser's thesis 'A Strategy of distinction: cultural identity and the Carews of Antony' has already shown that the Carew family were aware of the power of material culture in their curation of Antony House, in Cornwall.¹⁷ Michael Dahl was commissioned by the Carews to paint several family portraits, one being of Lady Anne Coventry, Lady Carew.

¹⁶ Ibid 52

¹⁷ Jennifer Fraser, 'A Strategy of distinction: cultural identity and the Carews of Antony,' Unpublished PhD dissertation (Plymouth: University of Plymouth, 2017) 7.

Anne was depicted by Dahl as 'the age's concept of beauty... Anne's silk gown alone communicated an amalgam of aristocratic advantages.'¹⁸

My research adds to this scholarship and shows that properties of the South West had their own significance. It also introduces new research by examining important primary source material such as the eighteenth-century letters of the Parker family held in the Plymouth and West Devon record office, the British Library and the Bedfordshire record office. It considers the first art inventories of Saltram House, created in 1819 and 1844, held at the Saltram estate and the Victoria and Albert National Art Library, as well as an unpublished account of the Parker family history created by the third Earl of Morley. The role of collections and the house for the Parker family will be addressed throughout. The thesis will contribute to women's history by focussing on the involvement of Lady Catherine Parker, wife of John Parker the first and Lady Theresa Parker, wife of John Parker the second, in Saltram's design.

This thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapter One, 'The Parkers and Polite Society' gives a detailed introduction to Saltram and its owners. It details the Parker's history and origins from the fifteenth century to the early nineteenth century in order to understand how and why Saltram evolved in a short space of time under female patronage. It will also explain the term 'polite society' with reference to taste-making at Saltram and its relevance to the two eighteenth-century generations of the Parker family. Chapter Two, 'Saltram House: Architecture and Landscape' looks at the influence of Lady Catherine Parker and Lady Theresa Parker on the exterior of the house and gardens. It examines how the architecture and landscape were used to represent and shape social status via the use of symbolism

¹⁸ Ibid 224-225.

attached to both art forms. Chapter Three, 'Saltram House: Interior Design' focuses on two main interiors which reflect the taste of the Parkers in a cosmopolitan context. The first is the Chinese wallpaper collection which is believed to have been brought to Saltram by Lady Catherine Parker in the 1750s. It will detail the importance of the notion of "Chinoiserie" for Lady Catherine Parker, and what it represented in eighteenth-century visual culture regarding rarity and luxury. My work here breaks new ground in the study of this design style in the eighteenth-century country house. The chapter looks also at Robert Adam's interiors for Saltram House, focussing on the Saloon and the designs by Adam for it in the collection of the Sir John Soane Museum. The final chapter, 'Saltram House: Portraiture' examines the functions that portraiture fulfilled at Saltram, with a focus on the years 1769 to 1784, during which the family commissioned portraits by Reynolds and Gilbert Stuart.

Chapter One

The Parkers and Polite Society

‘From country squires to fashionable metropolitan aristocrats’,¹⁹ the Parkers of Saltram House became a prominent family, both socially and politically during the long eighteenth century. Saltram House became and still stands as a symbolic monument to the family’s identity and social ascent, a physical symbol of their social mobility as a result of consciously following the standards of a polite society. During the eighteenth century, John Parker the first and Lady Catherine, John Parker the second (First Lord Boringdon) and Lady Theresa Parker and John Parker the third (First Earl of Morley) transformed Saltram from a Stuart manor to a fashionably Georgian mansion. This took place from the year 1743 onwards, to reflect and shape status through money combined with the taste-making cultures of the period. Art and material culture seen as demonstrating ‘taste’ became a way of fashioning an identity within this society; the country house was used to express such tastes and portrayed an image of the family with the explicit purpose of being viewed.²⁰ The term ‘polite society’ has been used to describe a number of social constructs created during this period which became a lifestyle to be followed by those of the landed gentry and aristocracy.²¹ Various individuals had influence over what it was to be ‘polite’ from writers such as Colen Campbell, whose *Vitruvius Britannicus* (1715-1725) was highly influential on matters of architectural taste, and Alexander Pope whose ‘Of Taste: an Epistle to the Earl of

¹⁹ Richard Stephens, “The Parker Family,” in *Sir Joshua Reynolds: The Acquisition of Genius*, ed. Sam Smiles (Bristol: Sansom & Company, 2009), 52.

²⁰ Alun Withey, *Technology, Self-Fashioning and Politeness in Eighteenth Century Britain* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 67-68.

²¹ Lawrence E. Klein, “Politeness and the Interpretation of the British Eighteenth Century,” *The Historical Journal* 45, no. 4 (2002): 869.

Burlington' (1731) ridiculed those who preferred excessive display over human understanding and appreciation of art. The Crown held influence, particularly over the fashion for collecting art and artefacts. King George III was one of the most influential patrons of the eighteenth century,²² being an avid art and book collector: he founded the Royal Academy of Arts. Such efforts were influenced by ideas on taste and culture, which included a set of desired qualities and knowledge for a polite gentleman and gentlewomanly lady to possess and follow. As Girouard states, 'it was a language of dress, behaviour, movement, art, architecture and decoration.'²³ Classical architecture was an expected art form to be learned about and appreciated in order to discuss during polite conversation and to distinguish between those who knew its value and those who commissioned architecture on the basis of excess decoration. Above all, a polite person needed a country estate in order to demonstrate desired polite qualities such as knowledge of classical art, value over correct etiquette (behaviour and dress code) and a worthy family ancestry, preferably one with a history of wealth or aristocratic ties.

An Englishman of the eighteenth century 'got his public identity in relation to his birth, his property, his occupation, and his rank in the social order'²⁴ as did an English woman, which also included the possibility of artistic occupation, as Angelica Kauffman (many of whose paintings hang at Saltram) had demonstrated through her successful career as a painter. As we will see, Theresa Parker's letters demonstrate her own involvement in the decoration of Saltram and its decision making in terms of projects and artworks commissioned, despite

²² Jane Roberts and Christopher Lloyd, *George III & Queen Charlotte: Patronage, Collecting and Court Taste* (London: The Royal Collection, 2004), 1-15.

²³ Mark Girouard, *The English Town: A History of Urban Life* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 77

²⁴ Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Penguin Books, 1982), 63.

the country house traditionally being viewed as male-dominated. There was, however, in place, a status differentiation throughout the eighteenth century, within which awareness of who was of an aristocratic family and who was of the middle or merchant classes was of paramount importance. The potential for social mobility was considerable and this could offer the opportunity to obscure such status differentiation; the chief reason according to contemporaries such as Samuel Johnson was the 'great increase of money'.²⁵ Money allowed the Parker men, who were without aristocratic lineage, to buy estates rather than to inherit, and then to start their own legacy to pass on to their descendants. Property was needed in order to improve status, and such property, and wealth accumulated from land invited the opportunity to obtain social connections and perhaps an advantageous marriage with the possibility of a peerage.²⁶ Land and property gave power due to the support gained from its ownership. This could range from social connections with those involved in arts and politics, to gaining electoral votes from tenants who farmed the land.²⁷ Through its architecture, interior design and art collected by the family, the country house became a display of power, wealth, learning and even political ideologies intended to be viewed by others, whether in person or from a distance, as the country house was often physically the largest building within its land. Porter states that 'what it took to be reckoned a gentleman was negotiable, for by long tradition gentility in England was but ancient riches and titles.'²⁸ This meant that with the increase in money accumulated from land, usually from tenant farming and tithes, the Parkers gained the opportunity to rise within the social ranks. Wealth allowed the Parkers to marry into families with an aristocratic or landed gentry

²⁵ Ibid 64.

²⁶ Ibid 66-70.

²⁷ Christopher Christie, *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 159.

²⁸ Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Penguin Books, 1982), 64.

ancestry. The earliest example was John Parker's marriage to Frances Mayhew in 1583; Frances came from a family with a history of extensive land ownership and wealth.

The Parker family history in terms of origin and lineage before the eighteenth century is both largely unknown and uncertain.²⁹ It is important to understand what we know of the family's origins, despite there being limited primary sources,³⁰ before examining in more detail the eighteenth-century Parkers. The Parkers went from relatively modest origins to obtaining aristocratic titles. They did not have a history of aristocratic lineage before the eighteenth century; instead, their history involves wool merchant activities which lasted into the 1500s.³¹ It is known that the Parkers were a relatively successful family during the sixteenth century in North Molton, Devon. In 1564, a John Parker was a tenant of Boringdon Manor which was then under the ownership of the Mayhew family, respected for their history of land ownership. Added to this, a John Parker of North Molton had been 'a Justice of the Peace for the Country since 1538'.³² This position was unpaid, meaning that the Parkers must have been reasonably wealthy to afford to undertake such a role. In the year 1550, John Parker's son Edmund who died in the year 1635 had the title of 'Bailiff of the Manor North Molton'³³ which allowed the Parkers to build their own property, Court House

²⁹ Ceri Johnson, *Saltram Guidebook* (Swindon Wilts: Hawthornes, 1998), 41.

³⁰ The primary sources I have looked at include archive material from the Plymouth and West Devon record office, Parker correspondence held within the British Library, Parker correspondence held within the Bedfordshire record office which I had to look at online, the 1819 and 1844 catalogues documenting Saltram's art collection which are currently held within the Saltram estate and the Victoria and Albert National Art Library and the unpublished account of the Parker family created by the third Earl of Morley. Unfortunately, there is no existing correspondence by Catherine Parker on Saltram nor is there a catalogue before 1819 which is why it is difficult to piece together parts of the Parker family's history. At present access to all the Saltram family papers is strictly limited.

³¹ Albert Parker, 3rd Earl of Morley, *3rd Earl's Account of the Parker Family History*, Unpublished held at Saltram House.

³² Judith Teasdale, *National Trust: Saltram Conservation Management Plan, Published privately for Saltram House* (Plymouth: The National Trust, 2017), chapter 2, 4.

³³ Ibid

in North Molton. Eventually, the same Edmund Parker acquired the Manor of Woodford in Plympton. During the year 1583, Edmund's son also named John Parker (1563-1610), married the heiress Frances Mayhew of the Mayhew family and inherited Boringdon Manor in Plympton.³⁴ This chapter will now give details of the key generations of the Parker family affecting the ownership of Saltram.

John Parker and Frances Mayhew (m. 1583)

During the sixteenth century John Parker and his wife Frances Mayhew already began to demonstrate the evolution of the country house which started to change during this century.³⁵ Great houses were once fortified, but gradually throughout the sixteenth century houses were becoming 'prodigy houses' built to attract a visit from the monarch.³⁶ The Parkers transformed Boringdon into what was seen as a 'fashionable E shaped building'³⁷ and created the village of Colebrook to house those who worked on the estate.³⁸ The Parkers, along with this newly acquired and transformed estate, became well known for having notable visitors such as Sir Francis Drake who dined at Boringdon in 1587.³⁹ Drake was a friend of John Parker and his brother William Parker, who sailed alongside Drake and eventually became Lord Mayor of Plymouth.⁴⁰ It is also believed that Queen Elizabeth herself stayed with the Parkers at Boringdon Hall in the year 1588 during her 'West Country

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ Daniel Lysons and Samuel Lysons, *Magna Britannia: A Concise Topographical Account of The Several Counties of Great Britain*, vol. 6 (London: Thomas Cadell, 1822), 411-413.

³⁶ R. Malcom Smuts, *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987), 100-106.

³⁷ *Historic England: Boringdon House*, Historic England, London, 2018, <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1330575>.

³⁸ Daniel Lysons and Samuel Lysons, *Magna Britannia: A Concise Topographical Account of The Several Counties of Great Britain*, vol. 6 (London: Thomas Cadell, 1822), 411-413.

³⁹ *The History and Heritage of Boringdon Hall*, Boringdon Hall, Plymouth, 2018, <https://www.boringdonhall.co.uk/the-hotel/history-and-heritage/>

⁴⁰ Ibid

Progress'.⁴¹ Thus the Parkers may not have had a history of aristocratic lineage, but certainly one of connection, a history of a gradual accumulation of wealth, and one locatable firmly within the landed gentry, due to marriage into the Mayhew family.

George Parker (purchased Saltram 1712)

This wealth, land ownership and social connection continued to grow for the Parkers during the eighteenth century, especially with the addition of the Saltram land and its Stuart manor in 1712, which was leased to George Parker by the Carteret family who had owned Saltram since 1661; the house was leased to a Sir Thomas Wolstenholme.⁴² Sir Thomas Wolstenholme's son, who inherited the lease, died in 1738. As a result, the lease to the house and land reverted solely to George Parker, making him essentially the owner of Saltram and its land.⁴³ George had little interest in the house itself. Instead, he wanted the land surrounding Saltram and its tithes as this created an income. A tithe was a tax system whereby those living in an area were obliged to pay ten percent of their produce to the owner of the tithe attached to the land. Legal writer and judge Sir William Blackstone stated that the tithe tax would only be collected on the efforts of man, explaining that tithes were collected on 'the profits of the land [farming], stock upon the lands [for example wool] and the personal industry of inhabitants [trades, fishing etc.]'⁴⁴ Tithes were lucrative, especially in an area like Saltram with large fields, several tenant farms and an important trading and mercantile hub in Plympton. George would also have been able to collect rent from tenants

⁴¹ Ibid

⁴² Judith Teasdale, *National Trust: Saltram Conservation Management Plan*, (Plymouth: The National Trust, 2017), chapter 2, 8.

⁴³ Ibid

⁴⁴ Sir William Blackstone, *Commentaries on The Laws of England*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1765-1770), 17.

in houses sublet to them. It is crucial to point out that Saltram and its land was leased to George Parker rather than inherited by him. According to Jonathan Dewald in his book *The European Nobility*, the descent of an individual would shape his or her identity within society.⁴⁵ Having distinguished ancestors, preferably wealthy nobility, who held land and property in the form of a family dynasty, was advantageous. George Parker was the first eighteenth-century Parker to start building a notable amount of wealth through land to begin the father-to-son inheritance. The profits from agriculture were regarded as one of the most respected forms of income, especially when they were gained from land inherited from generation to generation.⁴⁶ According to Christopher Christie, it symbolised a family's right to a certain amount of influence within society due to its powerful lineage attached to the land.⁴⁷ Jeremy Black in *Culture in Eighteenth Century England* attributes this sentiment to the threat of new money and the resulting social mobility it gave to the rising middle classes.⁴⁸ To be a member of the landed gentry, a gentleman was expected to remove himself from 'the taint of trade'⁴⁹ and live off his land whilst having influence in public affairs, usually through politics.

John Parker and Catherine Parker (moved into Saltram: 1743)

Saltram House and its land was passed on to George's son John Parker (hitherto identified in the thesis as John Parker the first), who used the law known as Common Recovery to change Saltram from a lease to absolute ownership under the Parkers. John married Lady

⁴⁵ Jonathan Dewald, *The European Nobility: 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 1-15.

⁴⁶ Roy Porter, *English Society in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Penguin Books, 1982), 63-67.

⁴⁷ Christopher Christie, *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 197-204.

⁴⁸ Jeremy Black, *Culture in Eighteenth-Century England: A Subject for Taste* (London: The Tower Building, 2005), 43.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

Catherine, daughter of the First Earl of Poulett which enhanced the family's social status due to the Pouletts having a history of aristocratic lineage. The Parkers had no titles themselves; due to their wealth and position as a prominent family within the county of Devon, however, this was advantageous. Lady Catherine has been described by Rosemary Baird as an individual who had sophisticated taste, with ambition to build a substantial classical house;⁵⁰ she worked to gain for herself and John the required taste and the drive to fashion a home suitable for their position. These Parkers also owned a town house in Conduit Street, London, which would have been seen as the 'centre' in terms of keeping up with the latest fashions and news.

Catherine had artistic connections and was familiar with various artists of London including the Devon-born artist Thomas Hudson who painted the portrait of her now displayed in the entrance hall at Saltram (figure 1.2).⁵¹ This London connection allowed the Parkers to collect works for their estate, which practice continued with the second generation of Parkers. John Parker the second and Lady Theresa Parker in turn relied on their close friend Sir Joshua Reynolds, the first president of the Royal Academy of Arts, who made trips to London and abroad to collect works deemed appropriate for a country house. It was Catherine and John who began the transformation of Saltram's exterior and interior appearance to adapt it to the fashionable symmetrical Palladian architecture, and to install the Rococo interiors, which can be seen within the entrance hall, staircase hall and the morning room. The Parkers commissioned a design plan in the style of William Kent who

⁵⁰ Rosemary Baird, *Mistress of the House* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), 220-221.

⁵¹ Richard Stephens, "The Parker Family," in *Sir Joshua Reynolds: The Acquisition of Genius*, ed. Sam Smiles (Bristol: Sansom & Company, 2009), 54.

was the leading architect of Palladianism during the eighteenth century.⁵² Perhaps for economic reasons, however, the eventual plan for Saltram was more modest in comparison. We know little about the appearance of the parkland during the first half of the eighteenth century. According to Ceri Johnson, it is believed that John Parker the first and Catherine were responsible for the inclusion of the Amphitheatre (figure 1.3), a large temple-like folly used to greet those who visited Saltram by boat, and Jupiter's temple, a small classical temple within the garden walk, to act as focal points. The reasons behind Catherine's choice to redesign Saltram rather than Boringdon are uncertain. According to Rosemary Baird, due to the picturesque views it offered compared to that of Boringdon, Saltram was chosen primarily for its location, having a view of the sea towards the river Plym, which is visible from the first floor, with rolling acres of parkland.⁵³

Girouard states that members of this social class and those who wished to become part of it were faced with the importance of taste daily in various aspects of life, particularly as communicated through books.⁵⁴ The publication of *Vitruvius Britannicus* was key, as it is a classic example of the opinions held by those concerned with arts and architecture. Colen Campbell criticises the Baroque for being excessive and praises elegant Palladianism as the fashionable style due to its ability to convey the classical ideals of purity and simplicity.⁵⁵ The library at Saltram contains three copies of *Vitruvius Britannicus* which have bookplates inscribed 'Earl of Morley' (John Parker the third in the thesis) which are pasted over plates

⁵² Ceri Johnson, *Saltram Guidebook* (Swindon Wilts: Hawthornes, 1998), 42-43.

⁵³ Rosemary Baird, *Mistress of the House* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), 220-221.

⁵⁴ Mark Girouard, *The English Town: A History of Urban Life* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 89-100.

⁵⁵ Eileen Harris, "Vitruvius Britannicus before Colen Campbell," *The Burlington Magazine* 128, no. 998 (1986): 338-346.

that were perhaps inscribed with earlier family names.⁵⁶ This shows that such knowledge was within the Parkers' orbit but whether copies existed in the library collection during Catherine and John's period is uncertain, as no inventory exists for this time. We know that Theresa Parker, Catherine's daughter in law, took an interest in the changing fashions of taste, and read books on such matters such as Sir Joshua Reynolds *Discourses on Art*, copies of which are in the Parker family library.⁵⁷

John Parker, 1st Baron Boringdon and Theresa Parker (m. 1769)

After John Parker's death, Saltram, along with other estates owned by the family such as the Whiteway estate, in Chudleigh, Devon, bought by George Parker in 1724, passed on to his son John (John Parker the second, later First Lord Boringdon). Parker was educated at Christ Church, Oxford and during his studies he gained influential social connections. These included William Petty, the Second Earl of Shelburne, who, along with Lord Bute, secured Parker a seat in parliament: first as MP for Bodmin and eventually for Devon in 1762.⁵⁸ John demonstrated the various qualities and virtues valued by polite society. Sociability, the ability to interact with others of a similar social standing within polite spaces such as salons to discuss topics such as the arts to impress potential connections, was an invaluable quality to have in terms of building an influential social circle. This aided John in obtaining his position as an MP. John embarked on a Grand Tour as part of his artistic and cultural education in the year 1764, although it is not known specifically what was collected. We do

⁵⁶ *Saltram House: The Third Volume of Vitruvius Britannicus*, Saltram House, Plymouth, 2018, <http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/3042435>

⁵⁷ Trevor Lummis and Jan Marsh, *The Woman's Domain: Women and the English Country House* (London: Penguin Group, 1990), 71.

⁵⁸ Sir Lewis Namier, *Parker, John (1735-88), of Boringdon, Devon*, *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1754-1790*, 1964, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1754-1790/member/parker-john-1735-88>.

know Parker travelled to Italy.⁵⁹ Participating in a Grand Tour was another 'polite' standard activity expected to be undertaken by men of the landed gentry, in order to gain the ability to discuss and form ideas on 'beauty,' during a time where taste was 'respected and represented the virtue of the individual'.⁶⁰ Rome was the primary objective of the Grand Tour due to 'the atmosphere of the ancient world that it retained'.⁶¹ This was a world which was the epitome of greatness and beauty, destroyed by a corrupt modern world, but that could be used to remind travellers where civilisation had started. Rome was after all home to many 'great minds' such as Ovid or Raphael, who were admired by 'the great minds of eighteenth-century thinkers'.⁶²

In 1769, John married Theresa Robinson, daughter of the First Lord Grantham in 1769, and it was this strategic marriage which, in a way similar to that of his father, raised John Parker's social rank.⁶³ In 1784, Parker was created First Baron Boringdon, the first member of the Parker family to obtain a peerage, which reflected his wealth and growing status acquired through the marriage to Theresa.⁶⁴ Yet John and Theresa's marriage would have been described by contemporaries as a companionate one; a marriage based on a loving relationship rather than for material gain.⁶⁵ Theresa herself disapproved of such marriages, stating to her brother who wished to marry, that he should 'study nothing but his

⁵⁹ Ceri Johnson, *Saltram Guidebook* (Swindon Wilts: Hawthornes, 1998), 45.

⁶⁰ Robert W. Jones, *Gender and the Formation of Taste in Eighteenth Century Britain: The Analysis of Beauty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 77.

⁶¹ Cesare De Seta, "Grand Tour: The Lure of Italy in the Eighteenth Century," in *Grand Tour: The Lure of Italy in the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Andrew Wilton and Ilaria Bignamini (London: Tate Gallery Publishing Ltd, 1996), 14.

⁶² Lewis White Beck, ed., *Eighteenth Century Philosophy* (New York: The Free Press, 1966), 1.

⁶³ Ceri Johnson, *Saltram Guidebook* (Swindon Wilts: Hawthornes, 1998), 45.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Katherine Sobba Green, *The Courtship Novel, 1740-1820: A Feminized Genre* (Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1991), 165.

happiness'⁶⁶ when choosing a wife. The marriage gave Theresa financial stability along with a lifestyle enabled by John's ownership of land and property, with the inherited wealth started primarily by his grandfather. Although Theresa came from a family with titles, they did not boast the wealth which John Parker the second had passed on. Theresa herself offered John a connection with a family who themselves had connections with prominent figures such as the architect Robert Adam, and her exceptional knowledge on taste and the arts when transforming Saltram into a property to which reflected her family's position.⁶⁷ Theresa showed an active interest in matters of taste, and often discussed her tastes and plans for Saltram's improvements. Writing to her brother about a half portrait of her by Reynolds, which would include her son, there is evidence that it was Theresa rather than her husband who made important artistic decisions:

'I have some thoughts, (that is) Mr Parker talks of having the little boy put into the half-length at Sir Joshua's which remains just as you left it, only in bright yellow, which he is very fond of at present but I do not approve of.'⁶⁸

As a result, Theresa became one of the leading female patrons of the eighteenth century when refurbishing and decorating Saltram. Theresa had become a friend and patron of many artists, including Reynolds and Angelica Kauffmann, and showed through her correspondence conscious decisions when choosing art works and their hanging. According to Rosemary Baird, Theresa actively recognised her role as one which would assist her

⁶⁶ British Library. Add. MS.; 48218 (Morley Papers), ff. 105-171b, Theresa to Lord Grantham, 3rd February 1774.

⁶⁷ Trevor Lummis and Jan Marsh, *The Woman's Domain: Women and the English Country House* (London: Penguin Group, 1990), 67-69

⁶⁸ British Library. Add. MS.; 48218 (Morley Papers), ff. 105-171b, Theresa to Lord Grantham, Sackville Street, 5th February 1773.

‘husband in fulfilling his social and political ambitions’⁶⁹ by creating a home which would reflect ambition, wealth and status.

Despite John Parker the second preferring to spend time on his estate shooting, he still had a reputation to uphold in order to reflect his status and the power he held within the county of Devon. John had a conflicted reputation amongst his peers, however, embodying ‘the lowest stereotype of country squire.’⁷⁰ This was generally because he was known for having a thick Devon accent, as well as an enjoyment of gambling.⁷¹ As Christopher Christie states, many country gentlemen had a ‘reputation for being wholly uncivilised due to his confinement to the countryside’⁷² and the excessive pleasures which his estate had to offer.⁷³ But John had prominent visitors to entertain. The Duchess of Devonshire, Georgiana Cavendish, stayed at Saltram in 1782. When meeting Lord Boringdon, Georgiana commented that he was ‘as dirty, as comical, and talking as bad English as ever’.⁷⁴ Theresa however, brought with her an air of greater sophistication.

Robert Jones states that during the eighteenth century, ‘the question of beauty occupied a prominent position in debates about the nature of taste’⁷⁵ and this was often connected with women and their judgement of aesthetics. An awareness of ‘the concept of beauty

⁶⁹ Rosemary Baird, *Mistress of the House* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), 221-234.

⁷⁰ Max Bryant, *Saltram Park, Devon: Designs for the House and Estate for John Parker 1768-82*, Sir John Soane’s Museum London, 2012, http://collections.soane.org/drawings?ci_search_type=ARCI&mi_search_type=adv&sort=7&tn=Drawings&t=SCHEME1260

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² Christopher Christie, *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 103.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ John Murray, *Georgiana, Excerpts from the Correspondence of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire*, ed. Earl of Bessborough (Michigan: The University of Michigan, 1955), 54.

⁷⁵ Robert W. Jones, *Gender and the Formation of Taste in Eighteenth Century Britain: The Analysis of Beauty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1.

constituted a claim to cultural fluency and intellectual capacity'.⁷⁶ The word 'beauty' was used to describe taste with relation to the arts and although there was no single definition of beauty, it was a form of moral statement knowing 'the right thing to say, to look for, to feel and to own'.⁷⁷ Correct taste was assumed to be held by those of the gentry and aristocracy who were seen to be capable of being able to demonstrate correct judgement rather than purchasing it or fabricating it. Interest in beauty and taste extended into artistic circles, with Reynolds' *Discourses* which described his theories on art, on what typically makes a piece beautiful, and stressed that art works should generally be pleasing to the senses.⁷⁸ They also promoted neo-classical taste rather than the lower arts of the Dutch and Flemish schools. It is through the correspondence of Theresa Parker from 1769 up to her death in 1775, in which she discusses those who passed through Saltram and details a timeline of Saltram's changing image, that we see a quasi-aristocratic woman who presented the epitome of 'beauty' to those within her social circle. Reynolds himself admired her judgements on taste. Reynolds was a close enough friend of the family to write her obituary, which gives a description of her character that conforms perfectly to eighteenth-century 'polite' ideas on taste and the desirable qualities of 'tasteful' women. It is worth quoting the obituary in full:

'Her amiable disposition, her softness and gentleness of manners endeared her to every person that had the happiness of knowing her. Her whole pleasure and ambition

⁷⁶ Ibid VII.

⁷⁷ Ibid 8-9.

⁷⁸ Robert W. Jones, *Gender and the Formation of Taste in Eighteenth Century Britain: The Analysis of Beauty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 117-153.

seemed to be centred in a consciousness of properly discharging all the duties of a wife, a mother and a sister, and she neither sought for nor expected fame out of her own house. Her virtues were habitual, uniform and quiet. They were not occasionally put on; she wore them continually; they seemed to grow to her and be a part of herself; and it seemed to be impossible for her to lay them aside or be other than what she was. Her person was eminently agreeable, but the expression of her countenance was far above all beauty that proceeds from regularity of features only; the gentleness and benevolence of her disposition were so naturally impressed on every look and motion... In so exalted a character it is scarcely worth mentioning, her skill and exact judgement in the polite arts; she seemed to possess by a kind of intuition that propriety of taste and right thinking which others but imperfectly acquire by long labour and application.⁷⁹

The increase in wealth from areas such as mercantile trade, manufacturing, banking, law and shop-keeping meant that 'the middling sort of people',⁸⁰ were also 'anxious to express their refinement as a means to cultural distinction'.⁸¹ In turn, the shop-keeping classes were seen by the aristocracy as consumers who bought art and other material possessions simply for decoration, without a thought to its meaning. For Jones, art and culture represented

⁷⁹ "News, Obituary of Hon. Mrs. Parker," *Public Advertiser*, 29 December 1775, Iss. 14428.

⁸⁰ Margaret R. Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender and the Family in England, 1680-1780* (California: University of California Press, 1996), 20.

⁸¹ Robert W. Jones, *Gender and the Formation of Taste in Eighteenth Century Britain: The Analysis of Beauty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), VII.

social position and the virtues of men and women such as honour and sensibility; 'taste' became a term to represent moral judgement.⁸²

The most common definition of 'beauty' during Theresa's time was a love of 'simplicity, purity and symmetry'.⁸³ The style that emerged as fashionable around the 1760s was Neoclassicism, which Theresa and her brothers Thomas Robinson, Second Baron Grantham, and the youngest brother, Frederick Robinson (referred to as Fritz in correspondence held in the British Library, Bedfordshire Archives and Plymouth and West Devon Records) brought to Saltram. It came to represent the values of a landed aristocracy who, following the aesthetics of the Grand Tour, wished to be associated with those of Ancient Rome and Greece, seen as the pinnacle of civilisation. Theresa followed Lady Catherine Parker's ambitions and began to plan the continued transformation of Saltram with an addition of two rooms in neo-classical style, a saloon and library. As well as this, changes to the landscape of the estate with additions such as the castle used as a summer house and Stag Lodge with stag statues flanking each side, acting as one of the entrances to the estate, were created which complimented Catherine Parker's earlier additions. These additions during Theresa's period were modest in comparison to the initial plans made for the house by Robert Adam; Theresa showed a dislike towards the type of excess akin to Pope's famous poem 'Of Taste: an Epistle to the Earl of Burlington' (1731).⁸⁴ Theresa Parker demonstrated through various letters her opinions on how important matters of taste were; she disliked superficiality⁸⁵ and took such judgements seriously, as was expected as a member of the landed gentry. This is also demonstrated by her values of 'sociability'. Members of polite

⁸² Ibid 52.

⁸³ Silvestra Bietoletti, *Neoclassicism and Romanticism* (New York: Sterling Publishing Co, 2005), 15.

⁸⁴ Rosemary Baird, *Mistress of the House* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), 222-223.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

society were expected to be social and follow a set code of behaviour when socialising with others, and the saloon added by John and Theresa was the perfect room to impress for entertainment, a stage for the performance of 'politeness'. Theresa was aware of her role as a hostess to those who visited Saltram in order to build connections. Despite this, Theresa chose to socialise with a select few as she was aware social circles would better define her character as sophisticated and polite.⁸⁶ Her love for the polite arts made country society seem tedious, with Theresa seeing certain conversations as dull and lacking in meaning unless she found them interesting.⁸⁷ Theresa was 'a discriminating judge of character'⁸⁸ socialising only with those who demonstrated the pursuit of knowledge or a love for the polite arts. Despite showing no admiration for William Pitt, who became Prime Minister in 1783, for example, she wished to welcome 'so remarkable a man'⁸⁹ during the winter period of 1774 because she knew he would engage in interesting conversation. Theresa disliked entertaining much of the Devon county social set, preferring to be at home alone with her husband or surrounded by her circle of close friends and relatives, stating to her brother Second Baron Grantham in 1772 that 'we expect a good deal of company this week, Sir Thomas Ackland, Sir F Chichester and half the county. You may guess how agreeable it will be; how far I shall think so, I might as well keep to myself.'⁹⁰

John Parker, First Earl of Morley in 1815

⁸⁶ Ibid 232.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ British Library. Add. MS.; 48218 (Morley Papers), ff. 105-171b, Theresa to Lord Grantham, November 1774.

⁹⁰ Rosemary Baird, *Mistress of the House* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), 232.

Saltram House passed on to Theresa's son John Parker who like his father, followed the standards of polite society expected of him. He was educated at Oxford like his father and continued to acquire 'distinguished and influential'⁹¹ friends within the Parker social circle such as George Canning (1770-1827) who eventually became Prime Minister and was a frequent visitor to Saltram despite displaying a dislike of the journey.⁹² In a letter of March 1795 for example, Canning explains that John, to whom he refers as Boringdon in his letters, wanted Canning to stay at Saltram for a fortnight with other friends such as Granville Leveson-Gower, because Canning had 'owed' Boringdon a visit but 'it is rather too great a journey to undertake for a fortnight'.⁹³ Like his mother and father before him, John used Saltram as a site for entertaining visitors and continued to keep the estate private, open only to a select few. After university, John completed a Grand Tour alongside his influential friends in 1793 in order to improve his education in arts and culture, obtaining the title of Earl of Morley in 1815, and he showed more interest in politics than his father.⁹⁴ Despite following these standards, Parker was involved with several events which could have been potentially damaging for his reputation. John married Lady Augusta Fane, daughter of the Earl of Westmorland whose earldom had been in his family since the 1600s, in 1804. Unfortunately, the Earl's affair with Lady Elizabeth Monck continued throughout his marriage to Augusta which arguably resulted in Augusta eloping with Sir Arthur Paget in

⁹¹ Ceri Johnson, *Saltram Guidebook* (Swindon Wilts: Hawthornes, 1998), 50.

⁹² Peter Jupp, ed., *The Letter-Journal of George Canning, 1793-1795* (London: Butler and Tanner Ltd, 1991), 230.

⁹³ *Ibid*

⁹⁴ Ceri Johnson, *Saltram Guidebook* (Swindon Wilts: Hawthornes, 1998), 50.

1808.⁹⁵ This caused a public scandal; companionate marriage was highly valued within polite society as it was seen as a way of continuing the rank and sensibility of the elite classes.⁹⁶

In order to protect his reputation, John Parker the third requested a divorce from Augusta which entailed having to detail Augusta's elopement with Paget. He placed all blame for sexual deviation upon Augusta rather than himself in order to appear the victim of a loveless marriage. The divorce was publicised within several papers of the period such as *The Morning Post*, and *The Morning Chronicle*.⁹⁷ The language of each article within these papers constructs an image of Augusta as a corrupted, indulgent and willingly unfaithful wife without a care for her duties.⁹⁸ It depicts the Earl as an innocent 'noble' of the 'highest rank' who suffered one of the 'greatest injuries which a man could suffer in civil society'.⁹⁹ The articles display the Earl of Morley's marriage to Lady Augusta Fane as one of companionate harmony destroyed by Sir Arthur Paget who instigated the 'criminal intercourse,' visiting 'the Lady' frequently whilst the Earl was away 'strictly attending to his parliamentary duties.'¹⁰⁰ The papers continued that Lady Augusta would meet Sir Arthur Paget frequently and leave behind her child to walk with him in private, showing no care for her duty as a mother.¹⁰¹ As a result, the Earl won the case and a divorce was settled resulting in Lady Augusta marrying Sir Arthur Paget but also her banishment from polite society in 1808.¹⁰²

⁹⁵ Christopher Christie, *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 110.

⁹⁶ Rosemary Baird, *Mistress of the House* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), 222.

⁹⁷ "Lord Boringdon V. Sir A. Paget," *The Morning Post*, 20 July 1808, Iss. 11693.

⁹⁸ "Lord Boringdon V. Sir A. Paget," *The Morning Post*, 20 July 1808, Iss. 11693.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² Ceri Johnson, *Saltram Guidebook* (Swindon Wilts: Hawthornes, 1998), 50.

Although it could be argued that publicly it did not have a huge impact on his reputation due to the blame being placed upon Augusta, there were those of his social circle who did hold judgement against his actions. Lady Granville, wife of Lord Granville Leveson-Gower, for example, stated her shock when Frances Talbot, the second wife of John Parker the third, married John Parker, referring to his previous marriage claiming she was glad Augusta had escaped:

‘Were you surprised at Lord Boringdon’s marriage? Miss Talbot is a most delightful person... How they all do surprise me by accepting him. His success, just as to that, is wonderful. I do not envy his wife and happy in my mind was she who ran.’¹⁰³

In 1815, John Parker was made First Earl of Morley by recommendation of the Prime Minister Robert Jenkinson, Second Lord Liverpool (in office 1812-1827). During the year 1814, Lord Liverpool offered George Canning a reward for his support as a fellow Tory, due to Canning having many supporters under him which would gain Lord Liverpool the support he needed to stay in office. In return for this support, a number of Canning’s closest friends and supporters received aristocratic titles, including John Parker the third who became the First Earl of Morley. Despite this colourful personal history, Saltram House, its interiors and exteriors were not drastically changed or added to during the Earl’s tenure, which lasted between 1788 and 1840. According to Michelle Cohen, by the end of the eighteenth century, men were ‘expected to develop their mental faculties and acquire the virtue of sincerity’¹⁰⁴ rather than being concerned solely with public displays through the arts. This

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Robert B. Shoemaker, review of *Fashioning Masculinity: National Identity and Language in The Eighteenth Century*, by Michele Cohen (London: Routledge, 1996) *Reviews in History*, November 1997.

could explain why the Earl transformed and extended his library, but not the house. John Foulston viewed as ‘the architect of Regency Plymouth’¹⁰⁵ was appointed to extend the library and to design an entrance to the house in a neo-classical style. With this, the Earl of Morley developed an extensive ‘gentlemanly library collection’ full of thinkers such as Reynolds and other works, by, for example, Pliny the Elder and John Locke. Few changes were made to the interior design of Saltram, perhaps due also to a shift in interests in the nineteenth century to a focus on industrial enterprise,¹⁰⁶ as wealth was moving from the land to the cities. This was due to the Industrial Revolution which had introduced new machinery and technological advances to increase production. The introduction of steam power meant that there was now a mass production of manufactured goods without having to rely on human power. You could now be rich by owning a small factory to produce finished goods faster and more efficiently rather than farming land.¹⁰⁷

During the period to be studied here, from 1743 to 1819, owning a country house was essential in terms of the identity of a polite owner. It embodied especially for the Parkers, John the Parker first, Catherine Parker, and then John Parker the second and Theresa Parker, a concern for the ‘genteel cultivation.’¹⁰⁸ Modest and restrained material expression of cultural superiority along with money and companionate marriage, a bond made through love, became key components for the Parkers in terms of building connections and

¹⁰⁵ Frank Jenkins, “John Foulston and his Public Buildings in Plymouth, Stonehouse and Devonport,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 27, no. 2 (1968): 124.

¹⁰⁶ Paul Atterbury, *Steam and Speed: Industry, Power & Social Change in 19th Century Britain*, Victoria and Albert Museum London, <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/s/industry-power-and-social-change/>

¹⁰⁷ Stephen King and Geoffrey Timmins, *Making Sense of the Industrial Revolution: English Economy and Society 1700-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2001), 96.

¹⁰⁸ Katharine Glover, *Elite Women and Polite Society in Eighteenth-Century Scotland* (Woodridge: The Boydell Press, 2011), 7.

continuing to shape and reflect a positive reputation of the family. They established their right to be part of the gentry through the use of wealth but also through the self-fashioning of identity using taste and the arts. The following chapters will consider in detail the development of Saltram by two generations of Parkers for the purposes of social elevation and consolidation.

Chapter Two

Saltram House: Architecture and Landscape

As we saw in Chapter One, Saltram House before the time of Lady Catherine and John Parker the first, who inherited Saltram in 1743, was a Stuart manor. The Parkers' home before 1743, Boringdon Hall, was also unmodernised in terms of the fashion of architectural taste of the period. There is no correspondence from Catherine Parker herself to give an insight into her life or involvement in terms of the refurbishing and redesigning of Saltram.¹⁰⁹ There is, however, primary source material available which refers to Catherine's ambitions, including her plan for Saltram's re-design (figure 1.4).¹¹⁰ Through this material, it is known that Catherine had a reputation during the eighteenth century as an educated and ambitious woman who held sophisticated taste in terms of the arts and an excellent aesthetic judgement which she executed in the re-design of Saltram. When King George III visited Saltram in 1789, he asked questions about 'Lady Catherine and her manner of getting the house built'¹¹¹ rather than attributing the initiative to her husband John Parker.

¹⁰⁹ Judith Teasdale, *National Trust: Saltram Conservation Management Plan*, (Plymouth: The National Trust, 2017), chapter 2, 9.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid*, 9-14.

¹¹¹ British Library. Add. MS.; 48242 (Morley Papers), ff. 4, Henry Ley to Lord Boringdon, 16th August 1789.

According to Rosemary Baird, Catherine Parker wanted to build a ‘substantial classical house’¹¹² to reflect her family’s wealth and growing status, being the daughter of a peer. Catherine recognised the importance of having a fashionable country house in order to shape an identity and reputation, as shall be seen later in this chapter through the limited letters available on Catherine’s character. Saltram was chosen to become the new fashionable mansion from the two properties. The reason for this is uncertain. The parkland and picturesque views offered by Saltram’s location on the river surrounded by natural woodlands, compared to Boringdon which was more inland were perhaps a decisive factor. Three generations of the Parker family from the 1740s to the early 1800s brought their own tastes and contributions to Saltram, depending on the changes of style throughout the long eighteenth century. This was done without demolishing the work which their predecessors had planned and commissioned, particularly the architecture of the house and the landscape. Lady Catherine and John Parker the first began the transformation of Saltram House into what effectively became a Palladian mansion.¹¹³ As well as this, research suggests that John the first and Catherine Parker were responsible for significant changes to the landscape of Saltram’s parkland.

From Stuart Manor to Palladian Mansion: Lady Catherine and John Parker

The main transformation commissioned by Catherine and John Parker was in Saltram’s architecture whereby a symmetrical Palladian façade (figure 1.5) was placed around the Stuart and Tudor building rather than demolishing them. The reason behind this again is uncertain, with the usual argument being that it was perhaps due to economic reasons

¹¹² Rosemary Baird, *Mistress of the House* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), 220.

¹¹³ Judith Teasdale, *National Trust: Saltram Conservation Management Plan*, (Plymouth: The National Trust, 2017), chapter 2, 9-14.

choosing to keep the exterior plain whilst heavily embellishing the interiors instead.¹¹⁴

Despite gentrified men of the eighteenth century generally being given credit for country house design, Catherine Parker is credited with initiating the plans to transform Saltram House and its architecture and no architect is documented.¹¹⁵ The only plan of Saltram's architectural re-design available is displayed within the house inscribed 'To the Rt. Hon. Lady Katharine Parker at Saltram' (figure 1.4) and remains as 'evidence of her ambitions for a classical building in the grand manner'.¹¹⁶ Although gentlemen of the country house were viewed as those who influenced the decoration and collecting habits of an estate, a wife was still expected to undertake her role as 'mistress of the house' by making sure the house was up to date with the fashions in taste. This required her to have knowledge of the arts and communicate with those in artistic and fashionable circles. This role was undertaken in order to support her husband's goals and ambitions.¹¹⁷ This is particularly evident in the Parker family where as we have seen the men were generally labelled as 'country squires',¹¹⁸ with little knowledge of the arts compared to that of their wives who came from backgrounds educated in such matters. The design for Saltram, was modest in terms of its scale and the architect remains unknown.

According to Christopher Christie, country houses were vehicles with the intention of expressing dominance in the county by creating an overwhelming architectural form against

¹¹⁴ Ibid, 12

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 11

¹¹⁶ Trevor Lummis and Jan Marsh, *The Woman's Domain: Women and the English Country House* (London: Penguin Group, 1990), 66.

¹¹⁷ Rosemary Baird, *Mistress of the House* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), 1.

¹¹⁸ Richard Stephens, "The Parker Family," in *Sir Joshua Reynolds: The Acquisition of Genius*, ed. Sam Smiles (Bristol: Sansom & Company, 2009), 52.

the backdrop of the countryside 'to express the power of a family in solid forms'.¹¹⁹ As such, the choice of architecture was essential in terms of portraying how the family wished to be seen. Architecture became a valued art in itself with many members of the gentry and aristocracy engaging in architectural patronage. The taste and fashions of architecture emerged through travel, 'word of mouth' and the publication of books on architectural style. These books were circulated and promoted 'in different societies and clubs which took the place of an academy of architecture'¹²⁰ such as the Kit-Kat Club, which included Sir John Vanbrugh, a fellow architect who had a taste for the Baroque, until the Royal Academy was founded in 1768. Architecture was also promoted by noblemen who held political influence such as Richard Boyle, the Third Earl of Burlington, who has been viewed in country estate scholarship as having 'great influence on the architecture of country houses'.¹²¹ According to James Ackerman, his villa at Chiswick was viewed as 'a paradigm of the resurgent Palladianism'¹²² as it was modelled on Palladio's Villa Rotonda, built near Vicenza in Northern Italy around 1560-1571, in terms of its architectural style and the functions intended for the interiors. The Rotonda had various uses including relaxation, study and entertainment. According to Christie, this villa 'stood as an example of the new purity in architecture and made the previous Baroque seem indulgent, incorrect and in need of modification'.¹²³

¹¹⁹ Christopher Christie, *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 26.

¹²⁰ Ibid 26.

¹²¹ Ibid 27.

¹²² James Ackerman, *The Villa: Form and Ideology of Country Houses* (London: Thames and Hudson Ltd, 1990), 136.

¹²³ Christopher Christie, *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 27.

The country house therefore became a physical emblem of the development of taste and aesthetic judgement in the eighteenth century. It was expected of a 'gentleman owner' to have knowledge of architecture and to continue his learning through the Grand Tour. There is no evidence however to suggest that John Parker the first went on a Grand Tour in order to educate himself on such matters: the reasons for this are unknown. A gentleman needed the necessary knowledge and advice in order to design aesthetically pleasing architecture for a country house, and living in the countryside far from London meant often that 'there was little or no assistance for designs.'¹²⁴ However, such knowledge could be obtained through publications such as Colen Campbell's *Vitruvius Britannicus* and William Kent's *Designs of Inigo Jones* published in 1727, which was a catalogue of Jones' drawings, intended to educate and inspire. It is uncertain whether there was ever a copy of these works in the Saltram Library during Lady Catherine's time. Catherine however, due to her lineage as an Earl's daughter, and due to her connections, would have most likely had the education and necessary knowledge to design and make decisions on the architecture of Saltram herself. In addition, Richard Stephens believes that Catherine would have communicated on Saltram's design with General Guise, the 'informal art advisor'¹²⁵ to Frederick Prince of Wales, due to the political connections her family held. Further evidence of this is suggested through Frederick's son Prince Edward's visit to Saltram in 1759 where he stayed for a period of time, proving a likely social connection between the Royal Family and their own advisor to the Parkers.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ Robert Chitham, *The Classical Orders of Architecture* (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2005), 107.

¹²⁵ Richard Stephens, "The Parker Family," in *Sir Joshua Reynolds: The Acquisition of Genius*, ed. Sam Smiles (Bristol: Sansom & Company, 2009), 54.

¹²⁶ "London News," *London Evening Post*, 16 October 1759, Iss. 4985.

The Palladian architecture initiated by Catherine, despite her connections and knowledge of taste, is, however, plain and based more on 'the rules of proportion'.¹²⁷ This may have been due to symmetry and balance without excessive decoration being the favoured architectural design as it reflected values held in ancient Greece and Rome. According to Kenneth Hafertepe, Catherine Parker had 'a well-developed sense of what it took for a family to rise in [eighteenth-century] England'¹²⁸ choosing to develop an architectural fashionable house without damaging the family financially.

The north, east and west fronts as such were given symmetrical windows, and the roof was decorated with classical urns reminiscent of the ancient cultures which inspired Palladianism (figure 1.5). Each side was given a pediment on top of the architecture, with a large pediment above the entrance of the house. Mark Girouard states that 'knowledge of the classics were considered desirable among the upper classes'¹²⁹ which was reflected 'in the classical details and iconographies'¹³⁰ they incorporated into their country house designs. Pediments for example, became a popular architectural device to use to give the impression that the owner's house was in itself a temple to art and culture, a place of sensibility and wisdom, reminiscent of the temples of Greece which had pediments decorated above the entrance.¹³¹ The west side of the house at Saltram was the most heavily decorated part of the architecture in terms of classical details. The four sculptures on the west side are

¹²⁷ Rudolph Wittkower, "Principles of Palladio's Architecture:II," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, no. 8 (1945): 74.

¹²⁸ Kenneth Hafertepe and James F. O'Gorman, eds., *American Architects and their Books* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 2001), 47.

¹²⁹ Mark Girouard, *Life in the English Country House: A Social and Architectural History* (London: Yale University Press, 1978), 86.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*

¹³¹ Christopher Christie, *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 27.

thought to have been commissioned from the English sculptor John Cheere (figure 1.6) by Catherine and John Parker the first, (although the exact date is unknown), each with its own symbolism to reflect well upon the family. They include a vestal virgin, a symbol of purity; Mercury (figure 1.6), a popular classical figure in country houses to offer welcome to travellers and visitors; (this reference is also used in the entrance hall); the goddess Isis; and a copy of the Capitoline Antinous from Rome (figure 1.7). The Capitoline Antinous sculpture was of particular significance in terms of expressing taste in the eighteenth century and Catherine would have recognised this. The original sculpture was found around 1723-24 in Hadrian's Villa during an excavation in Italy and became a popular sculpture in Britain. It was deemed by eighteenth-century contemporaries as one of the most exquisite copies of a Greek statue due to its melancholy expression, and the skill used in portraying the human body.¹³² Saltram undeniably followed the principles of Palladianism, so much so that succeeding generations made relatively little changes to the architecture of the house.

Foundations of an English Landscape garden

In terms of the landscape, it is not known how much Catherine and John were involved with its designs, as there is little evidence that remains of their involvement. However, it is generally believed that Catherine's passion to create the beginnings of a family dynasty must have extended to the parkland. It is believed that the British politician Charles Hamilton of Painshill advised Catherine on the landscape of Saltram, due to a letter of 1749, from Catherine Parker's brother, the second Earl Poulett, to Catherine herself. In it, Poulett requests to see the Parkers whilst in the company of Charles Hamilton. According to Tim

¹³² Frances Haskell and Nicholas Penny, *Taste and the Antique* (London: Yale University Press, 1998), 64-65.

Richardson, Charles Hamilton was influential during the eighteenth century owing to his work on Painshill, becoming seen as one of the 'finest of all Landscape gardens'.¹³³ Catherine's brother supported this view, referring in his letter to 'Mr. Hamilton... who has that pretty place so near London, and who is certainly the top man of taste in England,'¹³⁴ and adding that 'I am very much obliged for the visit as well as the advice and assistance he has been so good as to give me here... I therefore in return have promised to shew him yr ladyships (who may also profit of it)'.¹³⁵ This correspondence confirms that the Pouletts had a connection with Charles Hamilton and gained advice on artistic matters. Painshill was one of the first estates to reflect the changes in landscape fashion 'with a move from the 17th century geometric formal garden'¹³⁶ to a garden design with a more picturesque and natural design to complement nature. The changes from a formal garden to a more natural 'English Landscape' were started by William Kent and Charles Bridgeman, both of whom were influential landscape designers working for patrons who shaped the tastes for a new natural landscape in eighteenth-century England. Again, Richard Boyle, the third Earl of Burlington, had a taste specifically for ancient Roman ruins and Italian landscapes based on his education and travels to Italy. This was reproduced within his estates such as Chiswick House¹³⁷ which showed the beginnings of the inclusion of picturesque aspects of the then developing English landscape garden, such as the inclusion of an Ionic temple.¹³⁸ Catherine

¹³³ Tim Richardson, *The Arcadian Friends: Inventing the English Landscape Garden* (London: Bantam Press, 2008), 434.

¹³⁴ Ceri Johnson, *Saltram Guidebook* (Swindon Wilts: Hawthornes, 1998), 60.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Vanessa Bezemer Sellers, *From Geometric to Informal Gardens in the Eighteenth Century*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2008, https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/gard_3/hd_gard_3.htm.

¹³⁷ Christopher Christie, *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 141.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

Parker and Hamilton himself would have been surrounded by writings and discussion about such changes in tastes. Hamilton conducted a Grand Tour which included a visit to Italy, and other countries during which he was also inspired by 'romantic [Arcadian] landscape paintings' such as those by Nicolas Poussin and Claude Lorrain.¹³⁹ When returning to England, Hamilton purchased Painshill to start his own 'idyllic' landscape.

Painshill, along with other country estates such as Stowe which was known to be a tourist attraction for visitors since 1724, was visited frequently by notable figures such as the artist William Gilpin, one of the first creators of the ideas on the picturesque.¹⁴⁰ Whether Catherine and John Parker went on such 'home tours', as they were known during this time, where tourists, usually fellow country-estate owners, visited properties in Britain for inspiration to design their own estates, is unknown. However, judging by the popularity of such visits and the undertaking of the 'home tour' by members of the gentry, it is not unlikely.

Regardless as to whether Catherine and John went on these tours, they were surrounded by knowledge of garden design, and because of their friendship with Hamilton, they had connections to those who were in the process of building country estates with an idyllic landscape. It is therefore believed that Catherine and John Parker were responsible for the 'Kentian landscape' of Saltram, inspired by William Kent, where they began to create a natural and idealised garden out of Saltram's parkland. This included the Saltram Wood, garden walks and the folly now known as the amphitheatre (figure 1.3), all created around

¹³⁹ Tom Turner, *Garden Design: Philosophy and Design 2000 BC- 2000 AD* (Oxon: Spon Press, 2005), 321.

¹⁴⁰ Deborah Phillips, *Fairground Attractions: A Genealogy of the Pleasure Ground* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2012), 11.

1740 onwards. It is also uncertain as to who commissioned Fanny's Bower (figure 1.8), originally known as Jupiter's Temple. A letter by a group of lady tourists who visited Saltram in 1777 described the temple as being in a 'ruinous state' suggesting it had been there for a long period of time.¹⁴¹ It is believed that Catherine was responsible for its addition to the garden walks designed to support the chosen 'Kentian design'. Such a design included using such follies to 'frame views'¹⁴² of the landscape, especially with the use of classical temples, inspired by Ancient Roman temples such as the Temple of Jupiter, to harmonise with the country house. It is not known what the amphitheatre was used for other than simply being decoration following common changes in landscape design during the eighteenth century. This is due to a lack of correspondence during Catherine's period. However, one letter held at Saltram from a Mrs Parry Price in 1805 details how the amphitheatre was used after the time of Catherine Parker: 'The Amphitheatre where we intended to dine [was] too damp and there was a battery of small cannon round the side of the river'.¹⁴³ We know therefore from this letter that the Amphitheatre, along with the statue of a gladiator placed before the amphitheatre which is shown in William Tomkins landscape of Saltram's amphitheatre (figure 1.3), was obviously used as a landing place for visitors in order to impress as well as being an informal dining room. In a letter from Thomas Robinson, second Baron Grantham to Frederick Robinson (Theresa's brothers) in 1770, Frederick describes a visit by the Bastard

¹⁴¹ Judith Teasdale, *National Trust: Saltram Conservation Management Plan*, (Plymouth: The National Trust, 2017), chapter 3, 4.

¹⁴² Tim Richardson, *The Arcadian Friends: Inventing the English Landscape Garden* (London: Bantam Press, 2008), 474.

¹⁴³ Mrs Parry Price of Chester, *Description of Saltram Visit*, 1805, copy of letter held at Saltram House.

family of Kitley House stating that they 'were saluted at the Amphitheatre to the great terror of Mrs Edmund Bastard'¹⁴⁴ who was alarmed by the canon fire.

John Parker, First Baron Boringdon and Theresa Parker (married. 1769)

After the deaths of Catherine and John Parker, the house and estate went to John Parker the second, son of John and Lady Catherine Parker and his wife Theresa Parker. Like Catherine, Theresa showed great interest in designing and refurbishing Saltram and is generally credited with much of Saltram's transformation, including the landscape. It is around this period, approximately from 1768 to 1788, that the greatest changes to the gardens and landscape were made, transforming it into a true 'picturesque landscape' to reflect the move away from geometric gardening to a more natural landscape.

According to Trevor Lummis in a short account of Theresa Parker's influence on Saltram House, Theresa had remarkable 'tastes and talents'¹⁴⁵ when it came to the decoration of the house and estate. Theresa recognised the connection between country house 'embellishment and the improvement of parks and gardens'¹⁴⁶ alongside 'the development of aristocratic society based on rank, wealth, the refinement of manners and the polite cultivation of the arts'.¹⁴⁷ John's marriage to Theresa, the daughter of the First Baron Grantham, raised his social rank but also gave him a marriage of companionship with an accomplished woman in terms of her knowledge of taste and the arts: we know that John (a country squire) valued her opinion on such things. Saltram House, due to its location close

¹⁴⁴ Bedfordshire Record Office. L30/14/333/61, Frederick Robinson to Thomas Robinson, second Baron Grantham, 11th September 1770.

¹⁴⁵ Trevor Lummis and Jan Marsh, *The Woman's Domain: Women and the English Country House* (London: Penguin Group, 1990), 70.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid 2.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

to both the town and harbour, attracted many 'distinguished figures to Plymouth on naval, military and government affairs.'¹⁴⁸ With this, came the role and responsibility to ensure such an estate reflected the family's rank and the tastes of the century in order to entertain, lodge and impress visitors of the highest ranks of society.¹⁴⁹ Theresa recognised her role within 'the woman's domain' like Catherine before her, and therefore started work on continuing to transform Saltram's landscape.

Theresa 'took responsibility for landscaping the grounds and embellishing them'¹⁵⁰ with features reminiscent of the 'picturesque landscaping' favoured during this time in order to create a garden which looked natural and complemented the style of the house. Theresa's concern for designing features for the gardens is shown throughout her correspondence with her siblings, which also shows evidence of the design of Saltram being primarily initiated by herself rather than her husband. Writing in the summer of 1771 to her brother Grantham, who had promised a design plan for a castle, Theresa stated: 'Pray do not forget the castle. Something must be built upon that spot and I know no other plan will ever please me so much as yours did as far as I saw of it'.¹⁵¹ The castle (figure 1.9) was to be built as a summer house or a place for those who visited and toured the gardens as a retreat to enjoy the pastoral views of the estate whilst being able to relax and socialise. Theresa also focused on the creation of an orangery (figure 2.0):

'I want to have niches and statues for the summer, exposed as it is, to the sea air and the dampness there must be in the walls sets aside all thoughts for paintings. I

¹⁴⁸ Ibid 63.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid 73.

¹⁵¹ British Library. Add. MS.; 48218 (Morley Papers), ff. 108, Theresa Parker to Lord Grantham, 31st December 1784.

have a notion we may get good medallions and bas reliefs in artificial stone, which properly arranged over niches make it clever'.¹⁵²

As well as the 'castle', Theresa according to her sister Anne Robinson, had begun a 'planting fitt'¹⁵³ by planting many trees and 'very thick growing shrubs between the stables and the woods'¹⁵⁴ and began plans to build a new orangery to keep exotic fruits. This 'planting fitt' continued after Theresa's death with Anne describing to her brother Grantham the various flowers they wished to plant within the landscape:

'We mean to plant all sorts of curious shrubs, myrtles, we are sure will grow and geraniums we mean to try. I do assure you will be a very beautiful place... we shall wait for the weather to change to begin building a grape house to join the melon ground... there has been 40,570 trees planted this year'¹⁵⁵

Throughout the correspondence between Theresa and her siblings, concerns for the landscape and the documentation of its changes are shown. In August 1772, Theresa's sister Anne speaks of Saltram and the changing landscape with a focus on its 'beauty' stating: 'this place is in great beauty... the new garden is a very fine one... the woods are full of primroses, the butterflies are flying as if it were summer'.¹⁵⁶

It was during the eighteenth century that changes in garden design became apparent. It became considered an art form in itself. Garden design changed tremendously; influential

¹⁵² Ceri Johnson, *Saltram Guidebook* (Swindon Wilts: Hawthornes, 1998), 60.

¹⁵³ British Library. Add. MS.; 48218 (Morley Papers), ff. 31-32, Anne Robinson to Frederick 'Fritz' Robinson, 25th October 1772.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ British Library. Add. MS.; 48218 (Morley Papers), 105-71b, Anne Robinson to Lord Grantham, 4th January 1782.

¹⁵⁶ British Library. Add. MS.; 48218 (Morley Papers), 73-74, Anne Robinson to Lord Grantham, February 1786.

writers like Alexander Pope influenced garden design, 'new plants introduced from distant lands became available'¹⁵⁷, and artists such as Charles Bridgeman, William Kent, Capability Brown and Humphry Repton had the greatest influence in terms of shaping the fashions in garden design, with each developing their own styles appealing to various land owners. However, each 'landscape park artist' demonstrated a dominant 'trend' running throughout the period, which was towards a more 'irregular, asymmetrical, 'natural' form of gardening'.¹⁵⁸ Alexander Pope's writings supported such design, which is shown in his various works, particularly his moral essays. Stating in his 'Epistle to Several Persons: Epistle IV To Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington,' Pope addresses the vain aspirations of wealthy people who abuse the meaning of taste, and concludes that to achieve happiness in a gentleman's estate, he must follow nature and not force beauty upon it, but allow beauty to result from the naturalism of the landscape.¹⁵⁹

'In all, let Nature never be forgot.

But treat the goddess like a modest fair,

Nor overdress, nor leave her wholly bare;

Let not each beauty ev'rywhere be spied,

Where half the skill is decently to hide'.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁷ Thomas Williamson, *Polite Landscapes: Gardens and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1995), 1.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.

¹⁵⁹ Alexander Pope, 'Epistles to Several Persons: Epistle IV To Richard Boyle, Earl of Burlington' (London: 1731).

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

The landed gentry, according to Pope, should not focus on the scale and dimensions of garden landscaping, but on harmony and proportion, to allow a natural appearance, an imitation of nature, and to harmonise with the country house.

These writings, and landscape designers such as Capability Brown, shaped this change from formal to natural designs, with the support of patrons such as Horace Walpole who, inspired by the writings of Pope, stated in 1760 that 'the garden in its turn was to be set free from its prim regularity, that it might assort with the wilder country without'.¹⁶¹ It must be acknowledged however, that gardens also were used to display political beliefs and ideologies. According to Dana Arnold, gardens became a self-conscious form of identity construction and 'one of the ways in which élite culture represents itself to the wider world'.¹⁶² The landscape garden became symbolic for the landowner: 'In creating an idealized landscape the landowner demonstrates his clarity of view and therefore his fitness to govern'.¹⁶³ Arnold continues that landscapes were also used as 'landscapes of exclusion... physically demonstrating the owner's élite status while preventing the non-landowner from laying claims upon them as a social or aesthetic space'.¹⁶⁴ The lack of embellishments in landscapes created by Capability Brown denied 'the non-landowner any kind of personal engagement or contact with the owner';¹⁶⁵ there is nothing to engage with but 'an empty space of vast amounts of parkland'.¹⁶⁶ As Williamson states, landscapes were also used to 'proclaim the wealth and power, and thus by implication the continuing political success, of

¹⁶¹ Thomas Williamson, *Polite Landscapes: Gardens and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1995), 2.

¹⁶² Dana Arnold, *The Georgian Country House: Architecture, Landscape and Society* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing Limited, 2003), 61.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

great landowners: overawing the local population and attracting the undecided to their interest'.¹⁶⁷

Whether these were the reasons behind Theresa's designs and visions for the landscape of Saltram is uncertain. Dana Arnold, Thomas Williamson and other scholars of the country house have acknowledged that many country house owners designed landscapes simply with their own tastes in mind, with little recognition of the fashions of the period. We know, however, that Theresa was of aristocratic lineage, with a select chosen social circle consisting of families such as the Pelhams from Sussex (who had a history of noble titles), with a husband who was MP for Devon in 1762.¹⁶⁸ We also know Theresa had ambition for the estate and chose to have a landscape which seemed natural as possible, with few embellishments to act as 'eye catchers'¹⁶⁹ for the estate, reminiscent of styles by designers such as Kent and Brown whose styles often overlap. William Kent's style demonstrated the inspiration he gained during his Grand Tour, which focused on Italy. His style was made to complement Palladian architecture such as that used for Saltram's exterior, rather than overwhelm it. He made 'considerable use of framed views- either of distant features in the landscape, or of structures within the garden/park itself, especially classical temples and other kinds of pleasure garden buildings'.¹⁷⁰ It was this 'Kentian' style chosen for Saltram's landscape. It was a style used to represent 'a three dimensional version of Italian landscape paintings'.¹⁷¹ As a result, such a design would be used not only to reflect a positive image of

¹⁶⁷ Thomas Williamson, *Polite Landscapes: Gardens and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1995), 16.

¹⁶⁸ Ceri Johnson, *Saltram Guidebook* (Swindon Wilts: Hawthornes, 1998), 45-50.

¹⁶⁹ Thomas Williamson, *Polite Landscapes: Gardens and Society in Eighteenth-Century England* (Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton Publishing Ltd, 1995), 151.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid* 59.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid*.

the owner, but also to 'inspire contemplation and evoke moods and sentiments'¹⁷² in those who toured the gardens.

Capability Brown is generally seen as the most influential landscape designer of the English landscape garden; he began his career with direction from Charles Bridgeman, and then succeeded William Kent as head Gardener for Stowe.¹⁷³ According to Roger Turner, Brown's style was one which would 'evoke the poet's feeling and please the painter's eye'¹⁷⁴ with a focus on 'elegance and the improvements of its beauty by imitating nature'.¹⁷⁵ Brown had no great interest in 'the classical associations'¹⁷⁶ of the Arcadian landscape which had social and political connotations to serve the owners desired constructed identity. Instead, Brown preferred creating a 'pure' landscape working with the nature he had, without 'borrowing beauty by making reference to the landscapes of antiquity'.¹⁷⁷ Brown had several pupils, including Nathaniel Richmond who was, according to Elizabeth Montagu, 'Brown's best pupil'.¹⁷⁸ Richmond was well known amongst the landed gentleman for his landscape design, becoming responsible for various landscape commissions including Stoke Park, Stanmer Park and Saltram House's pleasure grounds.¹⁷⁹ According to available correspondence, Richmond advised greatly on the landscape designs and a few of its buildings from 1770 onwards. In 1771, Anne Robinson explained that with Richmond's

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Roger Turner, *Capability Brown and the Eighteenth-Century Landscape* (London: Butler & Tanner, 1999), 54-68.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid 68.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ David Brown and Tom Williamson, *Lancelot Brown and the Capability Men: Landscape Revolution in the Eighteenth-Century* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd, 2016), 87.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid.

advice, a new lodge had been built which 'looked very pretty from Saltram wood'.¹⁸⁰ We also know through correspondence and secondary sources that Saltram's landscape had both a Kentian and then Brownian influence (through Nathaniel Richmond). Both of these men were concerned with beauty and naturalism in different ways, following the pattern in changes of landscape style, with the influence of the family's own personal taste. In a letter from Anne in 1772, Anne demonstrates her interest in the estate's decoration, as the Robinson family were close and affectionate towards one another, showing support in all aspects of life towards Theresa and her husband John Parker the second.¹⁸¹ Details of the changes Richmond made, along with Anne's opinion of how the estate looked, are given in this letter, with an emphasis on the beauty of place and a concern for the estate to look and feel natural:

'This place is in great beauty... the last time Mr Richmond was down the place for the lodges was altered to also make the entrance higher up the lane... the present [entrance] does not come naturally enough. The new garden is a very fine one.'¹⁸²

Anne 'Nanny' Robinson, sister of Theresa Parker, was heavily involved with the landscaping of Saltram, often commenting on changes made by Theresa and the continued alterations made after Theresa's death in 1775. In November 1776, Anne commented in a letter to her brother on the changes made to the landscape of the garden in order to improve its appearance:

¹⁸⁰ British Library. Add. MS.; 48218 (Morley Papers), 25, Anne Robinson to Frederick Robinson, 8th December 1771.

¹⁸¹ Rosemary Baird, *Mistress of the House* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), 222-223.

¹⁸² British Library. Add. MS.; 48218 (Morley Papers), 29-30, Anne Robinson to Lord Grantham, 2nd August 1772.

‘We shall go on as much as possible with planting and are going to begin a very large plantation from the Wood to the house in order to hide the offices from the road, it will look much better.’¹⁸³

According to Rosemary Baird, Theresa ‘took great interest in the garden and park, choosing the ornamental buildings herself.’¹⁸⁴ This was so much the case that there is evidence of Theresa taking ‘home tours’ to gain inspiration for such improvements. In Anne Robinson’s letter of October 1772 to her brother, she states that their visit to the Port Eliot estate, home of the Eliot family, who were also patrons of Sir Joshua Reynolds¹⁸⁵, influenced Theresa’s motivation to continue improving the landscape of Saltram: ‘Therese [sic] has returned fully resolved not to let another year slip but sow the whole top of the hill immediately’.¹⁸⁶ In a letter of 1771 to her brother Lord Grantham, Theresa explains they have not long been returned from tours in ‘Bodmin & some Cornish visits & set out tomorrow for visits in the north and Barnstaple.’¹⁸⁷ They also received the Edgecumbes of Mount Edgecumbe at Saltram, also patrons of Reynolds.

However, throughout Theresa’s correspondence there is evidence of the importance of family and friendship when it came to making decisions on matters of art and taste, such as her request for a castle folly design from her brother.¹⁸⁸ As mentioned briefly in Chapter One, it is believed that Grantham, brother of Theresa and John Parker, First Baron

¹⁸³ British Library. Add. MS.; 48218 (Morley Papers), 51-52, Anne Robinson to Lord Grantham, 1st November 1776.

¹⁸⁴ Rosemary Baird, *Mistress of the House* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), 232- 233.

¹⁸⁵ Richard Stephens, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: The Acquisition of Genius*, ed. Sam Smiles (Bristol: Sansom & Company, 2009), 37-45.

¹⁸⁶ British Library. Add. MS.; 48218 (Morley Papers), 31-32, Anne Robinson to Frederick Robinson, 25th October 1772.

¹⁸⁷ British Library. Add. MS.; 48218 (Morley Papers), 107-108, Theresa Parker to Lord Grantham, 23rd August 1771.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

Boringdon's friend the Earl of Shelburne were those responsible for introducing John to Robert Adam. Adam was commissioned by John Parker the second to design various areas of the house and estate decorations up until the year 1782.¹⁸⁹

Robert Adam is mentioned frequently throughout family correspondence, along with a wealth of architectural designs for the landscape of Saltram both executed and unexecuted (now held in the Soane museum) which shows the taste and ambitions of the Parker family, along with the responses gained by those who visited. From surviving correspondence and the Adam designs, we are aware that Adam was commissioned to create additions to the landscape including an entrance to Saltram's park (figure 2.1) in 1773 along with a triumphal arch (figure 2.2) designed in 1782, several years after Theresa's death. The entrance, which was executed with chosen alterations, was designed to be modest in terms of its embellishment but act as a focal point before entering the main part of Saltram's park which Anne comments on as being 'higher up in the lane... as mr adams [*sic*] first proposed for...the new entrance looks very well'.¹⁹⁰ The triumphal arch was built in 1783 to be in line with the dining room of Saltram House to act as a focal point for visitors during their visit of the grounds and to be visible through the dining window to show off the land. In terms of its appearance today compared with the drawings by Adam, it is not certain how it would have appeared during the late eighteenth century.

However, from what survives, we can determine that it was neo-classical in design, decorated with urns on top of the arch, with stucco as a finish in order to reflect the natural

¹⁸⁹ Max Bryant, *Saltram Park: Purpose*, Sir John Soane's Museum, London, 2012, <http://collections.soane.org/SCHEME1260>.

¹⁹⁰ British Library. Add. MS.; 48218 (Morley Papers), 29-30, Anne Robinson to Lord Grantham, 2nd August 1772.

light, to make it a bright focal point of the landscape. It may also have had figures and other decoration sculpted into the front of the arch such as classical figures, animals and natural elements although this is not certain. The entrance had three designs created by Adam on behalf of John Parker the second, each with the same structure but varying in terms of decoration.

Whatever the reasons behind Catherine and Theresa's visions for the landscape of Saltram, it certainly received many visitors, and with them came observations and assessments made in the language reminiscent of the language of taste. On 18 August 1789, the writer and courtier Fanny Burney, along with King George III, and Queen Charlotte, came to visit and stayed at Saltram during their 'West Country progress'. During this time, Burney, who was passionate about gardens and an avid diarist, commented on Saltram's landscape in several of her diary entries:

'I spent the time very serenely in my favourite wood, which abounds in seats of all sorts. The wood here is truly enchanting; the paths on the slant down to the water resemble those of Norbury Park (Surrey). Today was devoted to general quiet; and I spent all I could of it in my sweet wood, reading the 'Art of Contentment', a delightful old treatise, by the author of 'The Whole Duty of Man', which I have found in the Saltram Library. The house is one of the most magnificent in the kingdom... its view is noble...the sea at times fills up a part of the domain almost close to the house... I had a sweet parlour allotted to me, with the far most beautiful view of any.'¹⁹¹

¹⁹¹ Charlotte Barrett, ed., *Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay: Volume 5* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 38-44.

Fanny Burney saw Saltram's landscape as a beautiful, picturesque setting, allowing herself to enjoy the naturalness of the place, using 'highlights' such as the wood as a place of 'meditative' pleasure to enjoy her reading to improve the mind and soul. Anne best summarises the beauty Saltram had to offer in her letter of 1784: 'Saltram is in the greatest beauty, the trees in full blossom, and the house full of roses, violets, carnations, lily of the valley, minionet, and everything that is sweet and delightful'¹⁹² To have a landscape praised for its beauty and acknowledged as one of the finest within the county by the royal family and a member of its entourage clearly demonstrates that Catherine and Theresa's ambitions for the landscape of Saltram were successful.

¹⁹² British Library. Add. MS.; 48218 (Morley Papers), 105-71b, Anne Robinson to Lord Grantham, February 1784.

Chapter Three

Saltram House: Interior Design

As we saw in Chapter Two, Saltram's Palladian architectural design, commissioned by Lady Catherine Parker, was both modest and plain when compared to previous building proposals. The known surviving architectural design which is inscribed to 'the Rt Hon the Lady Katharine Parker at Saltram' (figure 1.4), now displayed in the east corridor of the ground floor, shows the ambition Catherine had for the scale of the house. In comparison, there was no expense spared for the interior design of the property by two generations of the eighteenth-century Parker family. This chapter will examine the less well known Chinese wallpaper collection of Saltram House. Chinese wallpaper in general has arguably not been studied in great depth in scholarship. This chapter will then move on to discuss the famous Robert Adam interiors of Saltram House. As Robert Adam's designs have been discussed in detail in country house scholarship,¹⁹³ this chapter's focus will be mainly on the Chinoiserie style. This chapter will be concerned with John Parker the first and Lady Catherine Parker, and with John Parker the second and Lady Theresa Parker, as these two generations made the greatest changes to Saltram's interiors. This chapter will show the Parkers had an interest in and concern with the furnishing of the property as a matter of status and reputation.

Saltram House did not follow the most current interior style across its entire estate during the eighteenth century. Interior styles not only influenced but also overlapped one another, with many estates choosing to keep previous generation's work and add current fashionable

¹⁹³ For a more comprehensive account on Robert Adam's connection to Saltram and its interiors, see Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam: His interiors* (London: The Paul Mellon Centre, 2001).

styles to it. Other estates chose to reject the 'current' fashion to suit the family's ambitions or completely transform a property into the new fashionable style. It is therefore difficult to state firmly that a certain movement was the most fashionable style for the country house estate at any time during the eighteenth century. There were styles used more predominantly in estates than others throughout the century in question such as Rococo which was popular during the early part of the century. However, there were patrons, writers and estate owners who supported other styles rather than the current favourable design. The personal taste of the owner, and those the owner chose to socialise with, were decisive factors and need to be considered more within country house scholarship.¹⁹⁴ An example of this would be Horace Walpole's home, Strawberry Hill, which was built in 1749 in the Gothic revival style, during a period where Rococo was arguably viewed to be the more 'current' design choice. According to Christopher Christie, the Gothic style offered a way to 'express political achievements and allegories as well as dynastic connections',¹⁹⁵ as opposed to the prevalent style of the time, Rococo, which connoted ideas of 'luxury and sophistication... as well as the diplomatic career of the owner'.¹⁹⁶ The Gothic style was usually applied to long-held ancestral estates, reminiscent of ancient castles, families and riches. Choosing the Gothic style rather than Rococo, Walpole was making a bold statement. This demonstrated his support and passion for Gothic (he stated that he chose the style 'to please my own taste and my own visions')¹⁹⁷ by taking a style associated with those who had an ancestry of aristocratic lineage to use as a reflection on his own family. It was a

¹⁹⁴ Christopher Christie, *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 60-61.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Amanda Vickery, *Horace Walpole and Strawberry Hill*, The Guardian, London, 2010, <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2010/feb/20/horace-walpole-strawberry-hill>

statement of power made through the visual suggestions of dynasty and ancestry combined with Walpole's claims of ancient Royal lineage: Strawberry Hill boasted

'[a] mock-castle of a fake dynasty complete with a reproduction baronial hall, flourishing the arms and images of putative crusader ancestors on the ceiling. Through his mother, Walpole claimed descent from Cadwallader of Wales.'¹⁹⁸

Like Strawberry Hill, Saltram House did not follow the most current interior style across its estate during the eighteenth century, but held value over several movements with reason. Through the correspondence of the Parkers, some family members mention an appreciation of many interior designs due to their intricacy and workmanship. Other members showed a preference towards one specific style. The house shows an evolution of eighteenth-century styles, starting with the Rococo and the fascination with the 'exotic India paper' imported by the East India trading company, to the Neo-classical style introduced by John Parker the second and Theresa, with the help of Robert Adam's design. John Parker the second and Theresa decided not to demolish the work of previous family members in favour of current interior tastes. Instead, they added their own favoured styles and followed what they believed to be the most fashionable choice to succeeding rooms.

John Parker the first and Lady Catherine Parker: The Oriental and Rococo period 1743

As mentioned in previous chapters, not much is known of John the first and Lady Catherine's Parker's influence over the estate's design. It is also not known who the architect of the exterior and interior design of Saltram was during this time. According to Eileen Harris, a possible architect could have been Matthew Brettingham, as Lady Catherine Parker's

¹⁹⁸ Ibid

brother, the second Earl of Poulett, had consulted him around the 1750s for work to be done at his property Hinton St George.¹⁹⁹ The possibility that Brettingham may have been involved with the interior design of Saltram is further supported through Harris's visual analysis of both the drawing room of Kedleston Hall, where Brettingham had previously been in charge of the design before Robert Adam, and the Saloon of Saltram House. Both are similar in terms of style, design, room layout and colour. There is only a brief mention of John Parker the first and Lady Catherine Parker's influence within correspondence of future family members, or by those who associated with them, which offers a glimpse into designs carried out by them. We do know that John Parker the first and Lady Catherine were responsible for the interiors of the Entrance Hall, the Morning Room and the Red Velvet Drawing Room.²⁰⁰ It is believed that John and Catherine were responsible for introducing the Chinese wallpaper collection, which was originally hung in family and guest bedrooms, and possibly in one room on the ground floor.²⁰¹ In a letter by Anne Robinson, sister of Lady Theresa Parker, Anne states that the family were busy 'making chair covers and window curtains out of the old chintzes and old stores of Lady Catherine's hoarding up.'²⁰² This letter could refer to the storage of Chinese wallpaper and silk wall-hanging pieces believed to have been introduced to Saltram by Catherine. 'Chintz' usually describes an exotic, brightly-coloured floral or other boldly designed fabric. This is further supported by a label found in what is referred to as the 'plan chest' of Saltram which states: 'birds & flowers cut out of India paper for filling vacancies in other paper. March 1757.'²⁰³

¹⁹⁹ Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam: His Interiors* (London: Yale University Press, 2001), 233.

²⁰⁰ Ceri Johnson, *Saltram Guidebook* (Swindon Wilts: Hawthornes, 1998), 4.

²⁰¹ Bedfordshire Record Office. L30/14/333/61, Frederick Robinson to Thomas Robinson, second Baron Grantham, 11th September 1770.

²⁰² Judith Teasdale, *National Trust: Saltram Conservation Management Plan*, (Plymouth: The National Trust, 2017), chapter 2, 13.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*

A Chinese mirror painting, also believed to have been introduced by John and Catherine, now hung within what is known as the Chinese mirror room, has a date inscribed in the back as 1757. This corresponds with the above label, and the frames of these mirrors are in the Rococo style favoured by Lady Catherine Parker, placing it within her time period. This is just a few of many clues left behind by the family that the oriental style was introduced to Saltram by the first generation of eighteenth-century Parkers.

The Chinoiserie style, according to the Victoria and Albert museum, was at its height during the years 1750-1765, which is during John Parker the first's and Catherine's period. Along with the Rococo style, Chinoiserie was viewed as one of the most fashionable designs to use in the country house interior. This oriental style offered the English country house owner something otherworldly and fantastical, an appreciation of 'the aesthetics of exoticism'.²⁰⁴

According to Emile de Bruijn,

'the decoration of these wares, showing figures, landscapes, birds and flowers, provided a glimpse of distant lands. In an age when it took many months to travel to Asia by ship, and the risks of shipwreck or other disasters were considerable, its very remoteness made it glamorous.'²⁰⁵

David Porter in his work 'Monstrous Beauty: Eighteenth Century Fashion and the Aesthetics of the Chinese Taste' states that wealthy society in the middle of the eighteenth century was fascinated by Chinese interior design. This was due not only to its quality but also to its 'otherness', with its use of bright bold colours and patterns, which was brought to Britain

²⁰⁴ David L. Porter, "Monstrous Beauty: Eighteenth-Century Fashion and the Aesthetics of the Chinese Taste," *Eighteenth Century Studies* 35, no. 3 (2002): 395.

²⁰⁵ Emile de Bruijn, *Chinese Wallpaper in Britain and Ireland* (London: Phillip Wilson Publishers), 15-16.

due to a 'rapidly expanding overseas trade'.²⁰⁶ This increase in trade overseas offered a 'consolidation of nationalist pride,' and the consumption of Chinese goods symbolised this pride within the country house interior.²⁰⁷ The demand for 'foreign commodities' such as Chinese painted silk wall coverings and tea, began in the seventeenth century and increased into the eighteenth century in response to 'the steady increase in market demand for fashionable novelties'²⁰⁸ which came to represent initially 'luxurious markers of class distinction.'²⁰⁹ The monarchy influenced the tastes and fashions of interior design; it is worth noting, therefore, that throughout the 1690s, Queen Mary II of England was known for her passion for oriental porcelain. An inventory taken in the year 1697 of Kensington Palace 'records 787 pieces of [Chinese] porcelain arranged through the nine rooms of her apartments there'.²¹⁰ According to Porter, by the 1730s:

'a Chinese room, decorated with imported paper and screens... porcelain vases on the mantelpiece and blue and white plate lining the walls was de rigeur in respectable country houses.'²¹¹

It is also known from account books that King George II of England purchased: 'Linnen cloth to cover all the sides of the dressing room & fitting & fixing up Do & pasting Indian pictures all over Do'²¹²

²⁰⁶ David L. Porter, "Monstrous Beauty: Eighteenth-Century Fashion and the Aesthetics of the Chinese Taste," *Eighteenth Century Studies* 35, no. 3 (2002): 395.

²⁰⁷ Ibid 396.

²⁰⁸ Ibid.

²⁰⁹ Ibid.

²¹⁰ *Mary II, Queen of Great Britain*, The Royal Collection Trust, <https://www.rct.uk/collection/people/mary-ii-queen-of-great-britain-1662-94#/type/subject>.

²¹¹ David L. Porter, "Monstrous Beauty: Eighteenth-Century Fashion and the Aesthetics of the Chinese Taste," *Eighteenth Century Studies* 35, no. 3 (2002): 396.

²¹² *Saltram II Devonshire: The Seat of The Earl of Morley*, Country Life, 1926, 163.

Mary, Countess of Cardigan was also known for her taste in Chinoiserie, and decorated a room in this style in 1742, purchasing '88 India pictures at 4/6 each'.²¹³ Her mother Mary, Duchess of Montagu, was a close friend of Lady Catherine Parker, and the study of Saltram House currently is close to a Chinoiserie styled room once used in Montagu house. This shows how 'the taste for this kind of wall decoration could be spread through networks of friends and relations.'²¹⁴

Other commissions by royalty also continued this taste for Chinoiserie. In 1762, Sir William Chambers designed the Chinese pagoda situated in Kew Gardens. It was believed to have been commissioned by Augusta, Princess of Wales, who along with her husband Frederick, Prince of Wales, started the creation of Kew Gardens around Kew Palace.²¹⁵ Matthew Storey, a member of the curatorial team of Historic Royal palaces, believes that the Chinese pagoda was created for Kew not just due to the fashion and taste for Chinoiserie, but also to 'bring the world to Kew, partly through exotic buildings and exotic plants'²¹⁶ to satisfy the curiosity about the exotic world China had to offer.

By the 1750s, the taste for Chinoiserie and fascination for the mysterious world of China had reached its height within the arts. Chinese wallpaper became one of the most expensive components of the English country house. Lady Anna Miller in her *Letters From Italy* during her travels stated that 'India paper is more expensive in England than damask here [in Italy]'.²¹⁷ The expense of Chinese wallpaper meant it was viewed as a rare commodity which

²¹³ Emile de Bruijn, *Chinese Wallpaper in Britain and Ireland* (London: Phillip Wilson Publishers), 36.

²¹⁴ Ibid 37.

²¹⁵ *A History of Kew Gardens*, The Telegraph, 2015, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/gardening/8301243/A-history-of-Kew-Gardens.html>.

²¹⁶ Li Wensha and Wang Mingjie, *After 230 Years, The Dragons are back*, The Telegraph, 2017, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/china-watch/culture/kew-gardens-pagoda-dragons/>.

²¹⁷ Lady Anna Riggs Miller, *Letters From Italy Vol. I* (London: Edward and Charles Dilly, 1848), 189.

only a select few could afford; this rarity, however, made it all the more appealing to the country house owner when choosing an interior design. Lady Mary Coke, known for her letters and journals which offer an insight into the world of the aristocracy, gives detail throughout few of her letters to family and friends on the value she placed upon Chinese wallpaper. In a letter penned in 1772 for example, Lady Mary states:

‘I have taken down the Indian paper, put another upon a blue ground with white birds & flowers: ‘tis very pretty & has the additional recommendation of being quite new. There are but eight sets come to England’.²¹⁸

It is believed that there were at least four rooms in Saltram House decorated with Chinese wallpaper, and there may have possibly been a fifth. This is due to evidence of cutting and pasting over the current wallpaper designs, observed from close inspection of the present surviving collection of Saltram’s Chinese wallpaper. According to Ceri Johnson, the current wallpaper has been added to with ‘birds and other shapes’²¹⁹ being cut from other pieces of wallpaper and then used to paste over any gaps within the design of the present paper. It is believed that the wallpaper decorated in the Chinese dressing room (figure 2.3) dates from the early eighteenth century. Its ‘long Eliza’ figures are similar to those used ‘on porcelain during the reign of K’ang His (1662-1722)’²²⁰ and are therefore the oldest within the house. It is believed that the Chinese bedroom was once known as the ‘Blue Bow Room’, a room which had various uses from dining to being used as a family sitting room.²²¹

²¹⁸ Helen Clifford, “Chinese Wallpaper: An Elusive Element in the British Country House,” *The East India Company at Home: UCL History* (2014): 8.

²¹⁹ Ceri Johnson, *Saltram Guidebook* (Swindon Wilts: Hawthornes, 1998), 29.

²²⁰ *Saltram II Devonshire: The Seat of The Earl of Morley, Country Life, 1926*, 164.

²²¹ Judith Teasdale, *National Trust: Saltram Conservation Management Plan*, (Plymouth: The National Trust, 2017), appendix C, 94.

Scholarly opinion differs as to where the Chinese wallpaper would have hung in the property. Ronald Fletcher's study *The Parkers at Saltram*, for example, states that the Chinese bedroom was decorated as we see it today: 'it was still as John Parker's mother-Lady Catherine- had made it: with rich oriental wall hangings'.²²² The Chinese bedroom would have offered one of the best views of the estate which is why some, including Fletcher, believe it was hung originally on the first floor alongside the other bedrooms.

However, there is a plentiful evidence which suggests the wallpaper in the Chinese bedroom and dressing room would have been elsewhere, and therefore counters Fletcher's statements.

Letters of the late eighteenth century also refer to this room as the 'Blue Bow room'. The first Earl of Morley's letter of 1795 to Anne Robinson, sister of Theresa Parker, where the Earl states that 'Mr Collopy has now only to finish... the blue bow room'²²³ shows that this room may not have been decorated in the Chinoiserie style during this time. As a result, it is not known where the Chinese wallpaper would have been used within Saltram. The only mention I have been able to find of the paper's existence within the house is in a letter by Lady Theresa Parker's brother Frederick Robinson in the year 1770, to their brother Thomas Robinson, second Baron Grantham. In this letter, Frederick Robinson offers an overview of the building work and decoration of Saltram room by room, and says that 'the Indian Paper room remains the same the organ stands in it.'²²⁴ This could be the room once known as the drawing room, next to what was a dining room on the ground floor before both rooms were

²²² Ronald Fletcher, *The Parkers at Saltram 1769-1789* (London: BBC Books, 1970), 106.

²²³ British Library. Add. MS.; 48218 (Morley Papers), ff. 85, John Parker, 1st Earl Morley to Anne Robinson, 21st September 1795.

²²⁴ Bedfordshire Record Office. L30/14/333/61, Frederick Robinson to Thomas Robinson, second Baron Grantham, 11th September 1770.

turned into a library in 1819. The Chinese wallpaper in this room may be what is now used in the current study room (figure 2.4) as both rooms are the same in structure.

There is only a brief mention of this 'Indian paper' in this letter as Frederick wished to focus on the changes Lady Theresa and John Parker the second were making in the Neo-classical style, such as 'the Great room' or Saloon. Frederick Robinson and his brother Thomas Robinson, second Baron Grantham, preferred the Neo-classical designs of Saltram introduced by Robert Adam over the previous Rococo and Chinoiserie styles of the house. The fact that Theresa and John Parker the second chose not to change the Chinese styled rooms suggests the status this trend held throughout the century, despite this generation of Parkers showing more of a taste for the Neo-classical. In a letter of 1769 for example, John Parker the second's brother-in-law stated that 'the two news rooms [Saloon and Library] are very forward... the other parts of the house is not in good taste but still much too good to destroy.'²²⁵

There is evidence which suggests the Chinese wallpaper now in the current Chinese bedroom would have been used in the Collopy rooms (figure 2.5) (named after Timothy Collopy, a painter and picture restorer who worked for the Parkers) on the first floor because the paper fits the room structure perfectly. These rooms, as well as the North Bow rooms above on the second floor, would have been used as a 'high status' guest bedrooms because of the luxurious Chinese silk wall hangings, combined with the views offered which looked out to the triumphal Boringdon arch.²²⁶ Adjacent to Collopy bedroom on the first floor, was the Collopy dressing room which was decorated with the Chinese wallpaper, now

²²⁵ Ceri Johnson, *Saltram Guidebook* (Swindon Wilts: Hawthornes, 1998), 46-47.

²²⁶ Judith Teasdale, *National Trust: Saltram Conservation Management Plan*, (Plymouth: The National Trust, 2017), appendix C, 72.

hung in the mirror room. Although there is no evidence securely showing where the Chinese paper was situated, the Collopy rooms and the study fit the Chinese wallpaper collection perfectly: this is clear purely from a structural analysis. It is difficult to conclude whether or not the wallpaper would have been used in the rooms above the Collopy rooms, as currently they are closed from the public and have been turned into staff apartments and archival storage. It is stated in the current conservation plan on Saltram that this set of rooms was known as the North Bow room, and there is no mention of the Chinese paper being situated here in the same plan.²²⁷ However the rooms are spacious and also offer the same spectacular views as the Collopy rooms, making them the ideal candidate for such wall hangings. As well as this, we do know that the North Bow room was used to house guests as Anne Robinson, sister of Theresa Parker mentions the room in her correspondence:

‘I propose to put you in the North Bow and your maid in the dressing room next to it... Miss Mary will be in the tapestry room so that you will not be alone.’²²⁸

The stair case today leading up to the Collopy rooms currently houses the Poulett portraits (figure 2.6) and could have possibly been used as a family portrait gallery for guests to walk up and view at some point during the eighteenth century. This may be the north staircase referred to in the 1844 catalogue which mentions several of the family portraits being on display in a ‘north staircase.’²²⁹ It would have been a statement piece for guests to walk up the stair case whilst being confronted with large portraits depicting the Parker’s aristocratic family tree, as collated by Catherine Parker, and then to walk into the expensive Chinoiserie-

²²⁷ Ibid, appendix C, 102.

²²⁸ Letter from Anne Robinson to Mrs Robinson (her sister-in-law), 1 Sept 1793. PWDRO ref. 1259/2/188.

²²⁹ *Catalogue of the Pictures, Casts and Busts Belonging to the Earl of Morley at Saltram* (London: W.S. Johnson Printer, Nassau Steam Press, 1844), 69-70.

decorated Collopy rooms. However, in the 1819 catalogue these portraits were housed in a room called the Southern Gallery. There is no earlier inventory so this theory remains uncertain.

John Parker the second and Lady Theresa Parker: Robert Adam and Neo-classical design 1768

In 1768 John Parker the first's son John Parker the second (later known as the first Lord Boringdon) inherited Saltram and began adding to the transformation of Saltram's interior, moving away from the Rococo and Chinoiserie style. Parker commissioned two rooms to be designed by Robert Adam in the Neo-classical style: A Library and the Saloon, referred to as the 'Great drawing room' in correspondence. In 1769 his marriage to Lady Theresa Robinson who came from 'an artistically minded family that advised on the embellishment of the house'²³⁰ continued to strengthen his interest and add to his developing artistic social circle. It is believed that Robert Adam was introduced to John Parker the second through his friend William Petty, the second Earl of Shelburne, and Thomas Robinson, second Lord Grantham, brother of Lady Theresa Parker.²³¹ As mentioned in Chapter One, John built many friendships during his education at Oxford with those who would become influential in art, culture and politics. These connections helped shape John Parker the second's taste in the arts and his decisions on the interior of Saltram. The Earl of Shelburne for example, was a significant figure during John's life time due to securing him a seat in parliament. Therefore, he must have held some influence in shaping John's interior taste. Shelburne was an ardent patron of Robert Adam, who commissioned him to design several grand rooms

²³⁰ Ceri Johnson, *Saltram Guidebook* (Swindon Wilts: Hawthornes, 1998), 4-5.

²³¹ Max Bryant, *Saltram Park: Purpose*, Sir John Soane's Museum, London, 2012, <http://collections.soane.org/SCHEME1260>.

within his property Bowood House. Adam was also commissioned to design Shelburne's London Townhouse Lansdowne which was 'regarded as Adam's finest London house... a palace, a country house in a town'.²³² As well as this, Shelburne influenced other significant moments of John Parker the second's life. These included his marriage to Lady Theresa Robinson who was the sister of Shelburne's 'former foreign secretary, the Hon. Thomas Robinson'.²³³ Like Shelburne, the Hon. Thomas Robinson who later became second Baron Grantham, played an important part in John Parker the second's decisions for the interior design of Saltram. According to Eileen Harris, Grantham and his younger brother Frederick Robinson were given the responsibility of monitoring what was ordered in London for Saltram's interiors as well as watching the Parker's London town house number 29 Sackville Street for which Adam had also made a drawing room ceiling design (figure 2.7).²³⁴ John's wife Lady Theresa Parker shows in her correspondence how crucial Lord Grantham's opinion was in terms of artistic taste for Saltram House and its design:

'Remember if you meet with anything abroad... that is invaluable in itself, beautiful and proper for any part of Saltram we depend so much upon your taste and judgement that you must not lose an opportunity of procuring it for us.'²³⁵

In 1768, John Parker the second commissioned Robert Adam to draw up several designs for a 'Great Drawing room' and a Library. His first priority it seems was to complete the design of the rooms begun by his mother and father, before the rest of the house interiors. This is

²³² William Rieder, *The Lansdowne Dining Room, London*, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2009, https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/lans/hd_lans.htm.

²³³ Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam: His Interiors* (London: Yale University Press, 2001), 234.

²³⁴ Ibid 233.

²³⁵ British Library. Add. MS.; 48218 (Morley Papers), ff. 108, Theresa Parker to Lord Grantham, 23rd August 1771.

probably due to 'The Great Drawing Room' being viewed as a room needed within the country house to impress those who visited the property, due to their size, and with paintings on show along with the intricate interiors. Now held in the Sir John Soane museum, these drawing plans included wall, ceiling and chimney piece designs (figure 2.8) for both rooms. Several designs were drawn up: not all were executed, however, with Robert Adam taking into account the tastes and design agenda of the owners themselves. Two designs had been drawn up for a new chimney piece in the typical 'Adamesque' style for example; these were rejected, however, in favour of the current chimney piece attributed to Thomas Carter the younger which had been commissioned by John Parker the first and Lady Catherine Parker.

Adam had purposely designed the 'Great Room' so as to showcase his work and to make each part of the room correspond with one another. The walls in each design were left relatively bare of any art piece and the chandeliers in the Saloon of Saltram, which were placed later, went against Adam's principles of simplicity and harmony. A common motif Adam chose to use for was what the Soane Museum terms a 'rosette' surrounded by 'anthemia' which is a design resembling leaves or honeysuckle.²³⁶ This is seen in the ceiling of the 'Great Room' and corresponds with other elements of the room, from the Axminster carpet to the gilded door handles which have exactly the same motif. This was typical of Robert Adam's style which was in favour of the classical designs of Ancient Rome and Greece, showing a purity and symmetry in interior design and architecture.²³⁷ Lord

²³⁶ Sir John Soane's Museum, London, <http://collections.soane.org/ARC1899>.

²³⁷ Christopher Christie, *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 27-28.

Grantham, brother to Theresa Parker, revealed his opinions on Robert Adam's work and any work done before him in Saltram through his correspondence:

'The two new rooms [Saloon and Library] are very forward, they are highly finished... the Stucco in the other parts of the house is not in a good taste but still much too good to destroy'²³⁸

Lord Grantham must have viewed the Rococo designs of previous generations as being outdated, especially during a period where Grand Tours to Italy were discovering more of the classical world of Ancient Rome and Greece, which spoke to the emerging Enlightenment values. Excavations in Herculaneum and Pompeii which had begun in 1738 and 1748, added to the taste for everything Neo-Classical. This was especially apparent in country house interiors, with a move away from the Rococo style which was seen to be the opposite of what the neo-classical stood for: excessive and highly ornamental without reason.²³⁹ Lord Grantham admired Robert Adam's work perhaps due to himself being a member of the Society of Dilettanti and an amateur architect. The Society of Dilettanti would have been influential in shaping Lord Grantham's taste who in turn must have influenced the tastes chosen by John the Second. The Society of Dilettanti was a group created in 1734 by British noblemen 'who had shared the transforming experience of having made the Grand Tour of Italy'²⁴⁰ and met to study Ancient Greek and Roman art, and in turn became arbiters of taste by supporting a love for classicism.

²³⁸ Ceri Johnson, *Saltram Guidebook* (Swindon Wilts: Hawthornes, 1998), 46-47.

²³⁹ Christopher Christie, *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 60.

²⁴⁰ Richard Dorment, *The Dilettanti: Exclusive society that celebrates art*, The Telegraph, London, 2008, <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/3559589/The-Dilettanti-exclusive-society-that-celebrates-art.html>

It was during this period that Robert Adam was becoming one of the most important architects of the eighteenth century, 'with Harewood House, Croome Court, Kedleston Hall, Syon House and Osterley Park already among his commissions.'²⁴¹ Adam supported the style Neo-classicism in both the country and town house interiors of society whilst developing his own style. During Adam's Grand Tour between 1754 and 1757, Adam was inspired by 'the Roman antiquities... seeing the antique primarily as architectural source material'²⁴² to create his own style moving away from 'the rules' of Palladianism. And it was this which inspired Adam to bring all he had learned from his tour with the ambition of giving Britain a new architectural form. Adam created a style which focussed on the use of wall and ceiling decoration, limiting the amount of ornaments used to keep simplicity reminiscent of ancient Rome and Greek design, to give the impression that the British country house was the home of ancient civilisations and values.²⁴³ Adam's interiors would have corresponding patterns in each detail from matching carpet symbols to door knobs with the same subtle design to give the impression of a natural order and unity to the room.

According to Judith Teasdale, many 'country gentry' families of Devon before John Parker the second and Theresa's period preferred to hire local architects to build or add to their houses. Commissioning Robert Adam therefore to design two new rooms for the estate, as well as other architectural ornaments, was regarded as something revolutionary for Devon. It shows that John Parker the second and his wife Lady Theresa Parker had an awareness of what hiring a prominent architect conveyed to those who visited and viewed the property.

²⁴¹ Ceri Johnson, *Saltram Guidebook* (Swindon Wilts: Hawthornes, 1998), 46.

²⁴² Judith Teasdale, *National Trust: Saltram Conservation Management Plan: Main Document*, (Plymouth: The National Trust, 2017), chapter 8, 8.

²⁴³ Victoria and Albert Museum, London 2019, <https://www.vam.ac.uk/articles/robert-adam-neoclassical-architect-and-designer>.

Through commissioning Adam to create the Saloon and Library, John Parker the second and Theresa showed their support as patrons of the arts and their appreciation of what Adam's style symbolised.

John Parker the second and Theresa intended that the Saloon should be a place of amusement and pleasure to entertain guests, while at the same time they could demonstrate their knowledge of what was fashionable in the art world through their art collection. There is no doubt that they had succeeded in their intended purpose, as the correspondence available from the Parker family contains various tales of the entertainment, laughter and joy the Saloon had to offer the family and the various guests invited to Saltram:

'The saloon was prepared for the dancing and looked quite brilliant and beautiful- We lighted it by hanging lamps over the windows and putting a quantity of candles over the doors, the places in which they were fixed being concealed by large wreaths and festoons of leaves and flowers beautiful to behold. Out of the great window we had a temporary place erected for the North Devon Band which played the dances all night- round the room we had two rows of seats affording comfortable anchorage for about 200 persons.'²⁴⁴

²⁴⁴ Countess of Morley description of a ball in 1810. Cited in Ceri Johnson, *Saltram Guidebook* (Swindon Wilts: Hawthornes, 1998), 13-14.

Chapter Four

Saltram House: Portraiture

'The portraits... must seem to speak to us of themselves, and, as it were, to say to us- Stop, take notice of me: I am that great minister who knew all the springs of politics... I am that man of letters who is absorbed in the sciences- I am that wife and sedate person, whom the love of philosophy has raised above desires and ambition- I am that protector of the fine arts, and lover of virtue'²⁴⁵

Roger de Piles, *The Principles of Painting*, 1743, pp. 169-170.

'In women, the language [of portraiture] ought to be I am that high spirited lady, whose noble manners command esteem etc. I am that virtuous, courteous, and modest lady, &c.- I am that cheerful lady, who delight in smiles and joy. And so of others'²⁴⁶

Roger de Piles, *The Principles of Painting*, 1743, pp. 169-170.

This chapter will examine the portraiture of Saltram and the functions it performed, with a focus on two eighteenth-century Parker generations: John Parker the first and his wife Lady Catherine Parker, and John Parker the second and his wife Lady Theresa Parker. Drawing on formulations of eighteenth-century portraiture and its functions by scholars such as Marcia

²⁴⁵ Roger de Piles, *The Principles of Painting* (London: J. Osborn, 1743), 169-170.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

Pointon and Christopher Christie, I hope to show how closely the display of portraiture at Saltram followed these principles.

Portraiture of the owner, his family, ancestry (whether real or constructed) or those connected with the family in some form became popular as commissions during this period. As Hallett has recognised, the eighteenth century recognised the ability of the portrait 'to generate, shape and sustain the reputations'²⁴⁷ of those it depicted, both in country houses and when sent to exhibitions in London. Room choice within the house also influenced the way interactions took place with portraiture²⁴⁸ and its intended message by the family. A portrait of an individual in its own dedicated space would be the main point of focus for the viewer and usually a statement of the sitters' character. If however in a public room, such as the 'Great Drawing Room', amongst other portraits such as ancestral portraiture, it could be a statement of the family's powerful ancestry. Portraiture became a visual statement of wealth and status, with artists such as Reynolds leading to establish what has now been termed 'the creation of celebrity',²⁴⁹ acknowledging the power a portrait had achieved through the use of classical iconography and inspiration from old master paintings. As well as this, the exposure a portrait could have in the 'public domain', such as Royal Academy exhibitions held in London, shaped the image of an individual in polite society as it was available for public consumption and critique, as we shall see later when discussing John Parker the second's portrait.

²⁴⁷ Mark Hallett, "Reynolds, Celebrity and the Exhibition Space," in *Joshua Reynolds: The Creation of Celebrity*, ed. Martin Postle (London: Tate Publishing, 2005), 35.

²⁴⁸ Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Yale University Press, 1993), 13.

²⁴⁹ Mark Hallett, "Reynolds, Celebrity and the Exhibition Space," in *Joshua Reynolds: The Creation of Celebrity*, ed. Martin Postle (London: Tate Publishing, 2005), 17.

According to Marcia Pointon in *Hanging the Head* and Gill Perry in *Placing Faces*, there is a relationship between the portrait and its chosen surroundings. The ‘messages conveyed by a portrait, indeed any image, are clearly affected by (and affect) the location in which it is displayed’²⁵⁰: by architecture and adjacent décor: by other pictures and surrounding objects.²⁵¹ Crucially, the majority of portraiture was sent ‘straight from the studio to the country house’²⁵² rather than being on display in London and then eventually to the household of a gentry family. Ancestry and lineage were important features of the country house, to be displayed as soon as possible. Giles Waterfield in his article ‘The Town House as Gallery of Art’ supports this, stating that the majority of visitors to country houses noticed the trend that families would display their ‘old masters’ in London and their portraits in the country.²⁵³ ‘The galleries filled with family portraits which Walpole himself so frequently encountered during his visits to country seats were not found in the capital’.²⁵⁴ The city may have been the place where arts and culture thrived; however, it was also despised with a genuine fear of the corruption it could inflict upon polite society.²⁵⁵ The countryside was viewed in binary opposition to the city, which was seen as corrupt and disengaged from the world, whereas the country envisaged as moral and pure. It was a place untainted by vice

²⁵⁰ Kate Redford, Gill Perry and Jordan Vibert, “Introduction: Placing Faces in the Country House,” in *Placing Faces: The Portrait and the English country house in the long Eighteenth Century*, eds. Gill Perry, Kate Redford and Jordan Vibert (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 1.

²⁵¹ Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Yale University Press, 1993), 13-15.

²⁵² Kate Redford, Gill Perry and Jordan Vibert, “Introduction: Placing Faces in the Country House,” in *Placing Faces: The Portrait and the English country house in the long Eighteenth Century*, eds. Gill Perry, Kate Redford and Jordan Vibert (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 2-3.

²⁵³ Giles Waterfield, “The Townhouse as Gallery of Art,” *The London Journal* 1, no. 20 (2013): 47-66.

²⁵⁴ Kate Redford, Gill Perry and Jordan Vibert, “Introduction: Placing Faces in the Country House,” in *Placing Faces: The Portrait and the English country house in the long Eighteenth Century*, eds. Gill Perry, Kate Redford and Jordan Vibert (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 3.

²⁵⁵ Arthur J. Weitzman, “Eighteenth-Century London: Urban Paradise or Fallen City?,” *Journal of the History of Ideas* 36, no. 3 (1975): 469-480.

and where ‘a secret connection between the world of nature and the consciousness of man’²⁵⁶ was possible; an environment better suited for the display of family portraiture with the intention to be viewed as the epitome of virtue.

This discourse added a sense of gravitas to the country seat and its contents. Indeed, the country house was at ‘the heart of an élite family’s identity’²⁵⁷ and for the expression of its virtues. According to Kate Redford:

‘Country houses were expressive of permanence, status and inheritance. They were associated with the founders of the family’s fortune and status; they were linked to the land and estate which still underpinned economic and political power; and it was there that lineage and succession were most clearly expressed.’²⁵⁸

This lineage was expressed through the estate itself and its contents, to add to the overall constructed identity or image of a family dynasty. The country house may not have been in London, a bustling city where life was fast paced, but it was certainly not a private home.²⁵⁹

As we have seen in Chapter Two, country house visiting was a polite hobby to be undertaken, which consisted usually of country gentry and aristocratic families taking tours of other country house estates.²⁶⁰ Other than this, the ‘presence of extended family

²⁵⁶ Ibid 469.

²⁵⁷ Kate Redford, Gill Perry and Jordan Vibert, “Introduction: Placing Faces in the Country House,” in *Placing Faces: The Portrait and the English country house in the long Eighteenth Century*, eds. Gill Perry, Kate Redford and Jordan Vibert (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 3.

²⁵⁸ Ibid 3.

²⁵⁹ Adrian Tinniswood, *The Polite Tourist: A History of Country House Visiting* (London: National Trust Enterprises Ltd, 1998), 91-113.

²⁶⁰ Ibid.

members, friends, acquaintances, tenants, business and political associates²⁶¹ meant that that there were other common visitors to the country estate. To gain such friends and political associates, a gentleman would have to have a house correctly decorated in order to impress. Having portraiture to display the right to status and influence was essential to show the credentials of a family.

Throughout their correspondence, the Parkers of Saltram demonstrated the value of portraiture to their sense of identity. Catherine Parker's correspondence was possibly destroyed shortly after her death, and this is acknowledged in *The Conservation Management Plan* by Judith Teasdale on Saltram House. This may explain why the National Trust cannot firmly place Catherine's influence on Saltram. However, we can still interpret her recourse to family portraiture based on available primary sources which suggest Catherine had some influence over Saltram's design and the fact that she had a few portraits commissioned of herself. This interpretation is based on eighteenth-century designs of Saltram, and correspondence by later eighteenth-century Parkers and their connections such as King George III, who is quoted in a letter of 1789 by Henry Ley to John the third: the king asked questions about 'Lady Catherine and her manner of getting the house built'.²⁶²

Secondary sources also believe Catherine held influence over Saltram's portraiture collection. According to the National Trusts website, Lady Catherine Parker 'possibly brought

²⁶¹ Kate Redford, Gill Perry and Jordan Vibert, "Introduction: Placing Faces in the Country House," in *Placing Faces: The Portrait and the English country house in the long Eighteenth Century*, eds. Gill Perry, Kate Redford and Jordan Vibert (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 4.

²⁶² British Library. Add. MS.; 48242 (Morley Papers), ff. 4, Henry Ley to Lord Boringdon, 16th August 1789.

the Poulett portraits to the house when she got married'²⁶³ which includes the portrait of her father John Poulett, 1st Earl of Poulett and her mother Bridget Bertie, Countess of Poulett. It is likely Catherine would have brought several family portraits with her to decorate the house given her upbringing which included knowledge of arts and culture.²⁶⁴ Catherine was from an aristocratic family who had a history of titles dating back to 1627, something a country gentry family who had no such titles would surely wish to display and commemorate through portraiture displaying newly acquired status.

Southern Gallery

According to the 1819 *Catalogue of the pictures, casts and busts*, made for John Parker the third, First Earl of Morley, and designed to be used as a guide for each room's contents, a 'Southern Gallery'²⁶⁵ was a dedicated space to demonstrate the lineage and ever growing connections of the Parker family. In 1819 this gallery and most likely before this period, displayed around eight portraits of Parker and Poulett family members. These were portraits of the Poulett siblings and parents of Catherine Parker, as well as portraits of George Parker (first son of John Parker the first and Catherine who died prematurely), John Parker the first and his wife Catherine Parker. In *Hanging the Head* Pointon discusses the issue of personal and even national identity in the commissioning of portraits. In terms of this study in relation to the position of the Parker family portraits, there is a close correlation between Marica Pointon's model and the Parker's portraits. The Southern gallery was a dedicated space purely for the subject of lineage to act as some form of a

²⁶³ Saltram, *Katherine Poulett*, National Trust Collections, Swindon, <http://www.nationaltrustcollections.org.uk/object/872187>

²⁶⁴ Rosemary Baird, *Mistress of the House* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), 220-221.

²⁶⁵ *Catalogue of the Pictures, Casts and Busts Belonging to the Earl of Morley at Saltram* (Plymouth: P. Nettleton, 1819), 49-51.

family tree for visitors to walk through. It was a performative display to symbolise and represent the family dynasty along with their aristocratic bloodline and connections made possible through the marriage of Lady Catherine Poulett. This was a significant gallery to have, given the Parker men were regarded as country squires, wealthy landowners but with no title to their name. The Parker men however did also show some interest in family portraiture: perhaps not in the same style of portraiture as those commissioned by the Parker women, but correspondence shows John Parker the second requesting to commission portraits for display within the house. In a letter of 1784 by Anne Robinson, sister of Theresa Parker, to her brother Grantham, John asked Anne to request her brothers, Grantham and Fritz, to sit for their portraits:

‘I am commissioned by Lord Boringdon to beg a favour of you... which is to desire you will be so good as to sit for your picture for him, to Mr Stewart (Gilbert Stuart)... he intends to desire Fritz to do the same when he comes to town. I dare say you will like his pictures very much as they are very strong and good likeness, Sir Joshua recommends him and has sit to him’,²⁶⁶

In it, we see the values held by Anne and perhaps John Parker who refer to strength and ‘likeness’ as being essential features used to make a portrait appealing and give a positive image of the sitter. According to Marcia Pointon, and although it may seem obvious, capturing a likeness of the sitter in terms of physical appearance was one of the qualities looked for by patrons.²⁶⁷ The term likeness also referred to capturing the sitters’ qualities

²⁶⁶ British Library. Add. MS.; 48218 (Morley Papers), ff. 105-71b, Anne Robinson to Lord Grantham, 3^{1st} December 1784.

²⁶⁷ Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Yale University Press, 1993), 80.

and achievements through the body language of the sitter or through the use of iconography, such as including swords to allude to military achievement. This is evident through Anne Robinson's correspondence as she specifically compliments the artist Gilbert Stuart on his ability to paint a likeness. It also continues to reveal the influence Sir Joshua Reynolds had when it came to the judgement of art and taste, as someone viewed as the leading British portrait artist, especially by the Parker family.

Ancestral Portraiture

Theresa Parker, wife to John Parker the second in 1769, was undoubtedly the patron who influenced the design and collections of Saltram the most, and took particular concern over the portraiture of Saltram with an evident concern to continue a visual family tree. Theresa took great pride along with her husband in nurturing the arts by becoming patrons of artists including Sir Joshua Reynolds and Robert Adam. One of the most significant individuals on display is that of a Sir Thomas Parker²⁶⁸ (figure 2.9), according to the 1819 catalogue, over whom Theresa showed great concern in a few letters of her correspondence between her siblings. In a letter to her brother Frederick on 12th March 1772, Theresa stated that 'Sir Thomas Parker wants a companion so much in the Great Room at Saltram, that it could not be delayed another year'.²⁶⁹ Despite his identity being contested, it is generally agreed by the National Trust that Sir Thomas Parker was Sir Thomas of Ratton born in 1595 from Sussex,²⁷⁰ an MP with a family history of representing 'various Sussex constituencies'²⁷¹

²⁶⁸ *Catalogue of the Pictures, Casts and Busts Belonging to the Earl of Morley at Saltram* (Plymouth: P. Nettleton, 1819), 20.

²⁶⁹ British Library. Add. MS.; 48218 (Morley Papers), ff. 67-68, Theresa Parker to Frederick, 12th March 1772.

²⁷⁰ Ceri Johnson, *Saltram Guidebook* (Swindon Wilts: Hawthornes, 1998), 16.

²⁷¹ Peter Lefevre, *Parker, Sir Thomas (1595-1663), of Ratton, Willingdon*, *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1604-1629*, <http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1604-1629/member/parker-sir-thomas-1595-1663>.

since the late fourteenth century. The only Thomas Parker within the Parker family at North Molton around this period is a Thomas Parker, born 1594.²⁷² However, Parker lived in North Molton not Sussex and ‘was never knighted’²⁷³ therefore no such individual existed in the Parker family. Whether the Parker family knew that Sir Thomas Parker in the portrait was not their ancestor is uncertain. His portrait is significant for two reasons: the first being they may have genuinely believed him to be a relation to the Parker family ancestry, since the Parkers themselves appeared to have little knowledge of their origins. This uncertainty over their ancestry continued long into the lifetime of the first Earl of Morley whose wife Frances, according to the third Earl of Morley, started to create a written family tree during the early nineteenth century and had difficulty herself creating a recorded pedigree.²⁷⁴ Believing that a history of status and influence, especially in terms of being members of parliament, had belonged the family since the fourteenth century would have been advantageous. Alternatively, this portrait of Sir Thomas Parker is significant as the Parker family may have consciously constructed this ancestry and relation to Sir Thomas Parker with full knowledge that no such relation existed. It was common for eighteenth and nineteenth-century families of the gentry such as the Parkers whose origins were either unknown or humble in comparison of others to construct a lineage in order to show their right to their position and growing status.²⁷⁵

²⁷² Ceri Johnson, *Saltram Guidebook* (Swindon Wilts: Hawthornes, 1998), 16.

²⁷³ *Ibid*

²⁷⁴ Albert Parker, 3rd Earl of Morley, 3rd *Earl's Account of the Parker Family History*, Unpublished document held at Saltram House Collections.

²⁷⁵ Raymond Firth, Jane Hubert and Anthony Forge, *Families and their Relatives* (London: Routledge, 2006), 96-98.

The Display of Family Portraiture

Regardless of which was the case, Sir Thomas Parker was displayed in the Saloon, a room made to entertain those who visited whilst demonstrating a large collection of artworks and intricate interior designs. Its size in itself could be viewed as overwhelming the viewer, along with the bright red colours worn by Sir Thomas in his portrait which signified ideas of confidence in terms of station, influence and power. The Great Saloon, as it became known, was a room not just for entertainment, but for admiration and display of Robert Adam's interior design. The ever growing art collection of the Parker family and, crucially, the lineage of the Parker family, were also strategically placed in a very public room. Theresa commissioned Sir Joshua Reynolds to paint a full length portrait of herself (figure 3.0) to match Sir Thomas Parker's²⁷⁶ in terms of height, in profile looking towards Sir Thomas Parker. Anne Robinson stated to her brother:

'I expect Therese [sic] every minute to carry me to Sir Joshua's where she is sitting for her picture... to answer Sir Thomas Parker's in the great room at Saltram. Perhaps you may think her situation may make this an improper time to have her sit'²⁷⁷.

The 'improper time' referred to here was Theresa's pregnancy, which was underway during

²⁷⁶ Rosemary Baird, *Mistress of the House* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), 228.

²⁷⁷ British Library. Add. MS.; 48218 (Morley Papers), ff. 25-26, Anne Robinson to Frederick Robinson, 3rd March 1772.

the painting of the portrait. As we have seen, Theresa was insistent on having a painting to match the one she thought represented her husband's ancestor.

There was a lack of portraits of the Parkers themselves and no portrait to match that of Thomas from the same century. Crucially, on the subject of Marcia Pointon's model which looks at the effects of display or what she terms the 'hang of the portrait'²⁷⁸, Theresa Parker was painted to match Sir Thomas' portrait by being to the left of the saloon door whilst Sir Thomas was to the right of the door. Theresa was proud of the result of her portrait and its ability to complement Sir Thomas Parker's portrait, stating to her brother in a letter of April 1772 that 'Sir Thomas Parker's companion has done setting in and is universally allowed to be very like.'²⁷⁹ Her sister Anne agreed writing in a letter to her brother Grantham that 'we dined last Friday at Sir Joshua's. Therese's picture is very like her.'²⁸⁰ As well as these two portraits, the importance of ancestry to the Parkers is demonstrated by a family portrait of the Bolingbroke family, ancestors on the Poulett side of the family, by Van Dyke. According to the first Earl of Morley's catalogue of 1819, 'Oliver St. John, created by James 1st [sic] in 1624 Earl of Bolingbroke, married Elizabeth Poulett in 1602, sister to John Lord Poulett.'²⁸¹ The Bolingbroke family were ancestors of the Poulett family who, like the Pouletts, had aristocratic status and therefore were an advantageous addition to this constructed display of lineage. The children represented in the portrait are those of Elizabeth, Countess of Bolingbroke, who was the great aunt of Catherine Poulett. As with Sir Thomas Parker

²⁷⁸ Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Yale University Press, 1993), 13.

²⁷⁹ British Library. Add. MS.; 48218 (Morley Papers), ff. 111-112, Theresa Parker to Lord Grantham 2nd April 1772.

²⁸⁰ British Library. Add. MS.; 48218 (Morley Papers), ff. 27-28, Anne Robinson to Lord Grantham, 23rd June 1772.

²⁸¹ *Catalogue of the Pictures, Casts and Busts Belonging to the Earl of Morley at Saltram* (Plymouth: P. Nettleton, 1819), 22.

before, Theresa Parker showed a concern with the Bolingbroke family portrait in terms of its hang, placing it between hers and Thomas Parker's portrait and wished to find a painting to match it with to complement its size and subject matter. In a letter to her brother of 2 April 1772, Theresa asks: 'Are you likely to pick up any very good picture to match our Van Dyke as to size and partly as to subject?'²⁸² Continuing that the size of an art work to match is more important than a subject match, she stated:

'the latter is of great consequence as the Vandyke hangs over the door of the Great Room going into the library and its companion must therefore hang over the door going into the Velvet Room and consequently cannot be seen at the same time'²⁸³

Theresa clearly understood the importance of displaying portraiture and how to complement it with other works of art on display within the Great Room. Theresa showed a value for symmetry and similar subject matter to convey a certain image of the family in one of the most public rooms of the house. Theresa's full length portrait was not the only one commissioned to be painted. John Parker, first Lord Boringdon, and Theresa Parker commissioned several family portraits such as that of Theresa with her son Jack, the first Earl of Morley and one of the Lord Boringdon himself (figure 3.1) in a different style and pose compared to most portraiture of eighteenth-century English gentry.²⁸⁴ In this portrait, Lord Boringdon looks slightly dishevelled, unlike that of his wife who stands in front of a

²⁸² British Library. Add. MS.; 48218 (Morley Papers), ff. 111-112, Theresa Parker to Lord Grantham 2nd April 1772.

²⁸³ Ibid.

²⁸⁴ Kate Redford, Gill Perry and Jordan Vibert, "Introduction: Placing Faces in the Country House," in *Placing Faces: The Portrait and the English country house in the long Eighteenth Century*, eds. Gill Perry, Kate Redford and Jordan Vibert (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 13.

classical landscape with classical style urns, reminiscent of the ancient cultures polite society aspired to in the eighteenth century.²⁸⁵ This portrait, however, was not intended for the Great Saloon due to the pose of the subject. Rather it symbolised the close friendship between John Parker and Sir Joshua Reynolds and showed John Parker to be a true country gentleman.

Complementary Art:

From Theresa's letter to her brother in 1772, an idea as to what images could have been place in the Great Room along with the portraiture is revealed:

'There remains only wanting for the Great Room... two very good landscapes. Mr Parker... offered Sir Joshua 800 for the two Claud Lorraines²⁸⁶ but he would listen to nothing under 2000. We bought a landscape yesterday that I believe is a very good one, at least it is one of the most pleasing I ever saw done by the first landscape painter in France'²⁸⁷

The works that possibly were also purchased to be on display with Theresa's, Sir Thomas' and the Bolingbroke's family portraits possibly would have been the six history paintings by Angelica Kauffman showing classical themes.²⁸⁸ Angela Kauffman was a friend of the Parkers

²⁸⁵ Christopher Christie, *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 232.

²⁸⁶ For the importance on landscape art in the country house, see Christopher Christies *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century*. Christie offers an insight into the value of 'Old Master' landscape paintings, such as those by Claude Lorrain, which inspired landowners to have their own estates depicted in the same style.

²⁸⁷ British Library. Add. MS.; 48218 (Morley Papers), ff. 111-112, Theresa Parker to Lord Grantham 2nd April 1772.

²⁸⁸ Richard Stephens, "The Parker Family," in *Sir Joshua Reynolds: The Acquisition of Genius*, ed. Sam Smiles (Bristol: Sansom & Company, 2009), 61.

(who also commissioned and bought many works by her) introduced through the friendship of Sir Joshua Reynolds. There is no doubt that Reynolds influenced the choice in these history paintings. Reynolds was the president of the Royal Academy in London, and therefore was held in high regard when it came to matters of taste in art. In his *Discourses on Art*, Reynolds exalted 'the supremacy of history painting in the hierarchy of genres.'²⁸⁹ Portraits however, in the Royal Academy exhibits were the most popular to be submitted, and were seen to match perfectly with the 'Grand Manner' of painting designed by Reynolds in his portraits.²⁹⁰ Kauffman's paintings were symmetrical in terms of their size, displaying the classical themes favoured by polite society and the highest art form in terms of the artistic hierarchy. These paintings complimented the classical themes displayed in the full length portrait of Theresa Parker. If they were intended for the Saloon, it would have been a 'public position in the house'²⁹¹ which would have helped to convey the educated, classical credentials of the family and their collection as well as their ideologies in terms of the value of Ancient Greek and Roman culture.

Gender and Portraiture

Christopher Christie in his study on the English country house supports Marcia Pointon's theory by researching why portraiture was so important, and the language of portraiture to be followed according to 'polite society' depending on gender, which is clearly demonstrated by Roger de Piles seen at the head of this chapter. According to Christie, 'the portrait of nobleman often embodied the political and territorial powers of the British

²⁸⁹ Paul Duro, "Challenges to the Hierarchy of Genres," *Art History* 28, no. 5 (2005): 689-711.

²⁹⁰ Robert W. Jones, *Gender and the Formation of Taste in Eighteenth Century Britain: The Analysis of Beauty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 118-121.

²⁹¹ Rosemary Baird, *Mistress of the House* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), 229.

aristocracy in the eighteenth century and created a dominant image in state rooms.²⁹² Sir Joshua Reynolds took the lead in developing a type of male portraiture, along with contemporaries such as his teacher Thomas Hudson, to embody this 'political and social significance of eighteenth-century aristocrats, landowners [and] politicians.'²⁹³ According to Christie, portraits before Reynolds such as that by Sir Godfrey Kneller 'developed a formula for expressing the tastes and aspirations of the well-bred Whig sitter'²⁹⁴; however, this had started to be easily copied by those of the 'middling orders' who 'sought to emulate their social superiors.'²⁹⁵ John Parker the second's portrait by Thomas Hudson, now displayed in the entrance hall, was impressive for its time but could have been easily copied in its manner. He is seen in fashionable dress of the 1750s. What would have set him apart from the 'middling orders' however in this portrait, was Hudson's use of symbolism, something only those of the gentry and aristocracy would have been able to understand. The sword attached to John's side would have been seen to represent ideas of bravery, manliness, skill and most importantly the honour John held as a member of the country gentry.

In response to the social emulation by the upper middle classes, Sir Joshua Reynolds combined 'Italian Old Master history paintings' along with the grandeur of seventeenth-century portraits 'to bestow an imposing presence upon his patrons.'²⁹⁶ The use of robes rich with texture and colour in some shape or form within both male and female portraiture became a favoured choice of clothing for sitters, rather than portraying them in fashionable clothing; this created a connection between portraiture and history painting as such robes

²⁹² Christopher Christie, *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 188

²⁹³ Ibid 189

²⁹⁴ Ibid

²⁹⁵ Ibid

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

appeared in both styles of painting.²⁹⁷ Interestingly, Reynolds did not portray John Parker, First Lord Boringdon in this manner. Parker commissioned him to paint two portraits of himself, one half-length which matched several other oval portraits of both family members and connections, and one full length unique to Reynolds *oeuvre*. In this painting, John Parker is relaxed, reclined against a gate amongst his estate, although as mentioned before, this probably did not lose effect in terms of the meaning it may have signified. Anne Robinson, in a letter of 27 April 1771, to her brother Grantham stated ‘the exhibition is open and amongst Sir Joshua’s performances is Mr Parkers picture. Some people do not like it at all, others say it is a very fine picture.’²⁹⁸ This suggests that it must have deviated from the usual style and pose of male portraiture; however it still generated a positive response from some viewers. Theresa Parker showed more of an interest when it came to portraiture, especially in terms of how she was portrayed and where to hang her portrait to have a desired effect upon the interior of the room. Reynolds’s full length portrait of Theresa, hung in the Saloon, made reference to the Old Master history paintings through the use of a wooded landscape, combined with a large urn upon a pedestal with classical figures engraved upon it; such classical details were used by Reynolds ‘to symbolise noble qualities of the sitter’²⁹⁹. It was popular in eighteenth-century country houses to make references to art and architecture of the past as often as possible, so naturally portraiture followed suit. Classical iconographies made in such portraits as Theresa’s with the classical urn with figures, created imagery that

²⁹⁷ Ibid

²⁹⁸ British Library. Add. MS.; 48218 (Morley Papers), ff. 111-112, Anne Robinson to Lord Grantham 27th April 1773.

²⁹⁹ Christopher Christie, *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 189.

only those who had a classical education could understand. This created a differentiation between those of the gentry/aristocracy and the upper middle classes.

Portraits of women had a different language when it came to style and iconography used compared to male portraiture. John Parker First Lord Boringdon's portrait of himself reclining against a gate on his own land, for example, may have been unusual and even viewed as an intimate and casual scene, but it still displayed Parker within his estate. The relaxed pose suggested the ease in which he matched the life of a true country gentleman whilst still showing his power and land ownership. Women during the eighteenth century had a very different role to that of their male counterparts, and this had to be matched within the portrait to suit the ideas of gender roles assigned to each. Reynolds for example according to Christopher Christie, 'transformed women into allegorical images'³⁰⁰ either as representing classical figures themselves or alluding to symbolism connected with the desired qualities and characteristics of women. Often in Reynolds' portraits of women, 'the country estate was evoked'³⁰¹ particularly the landscape garden, often making reference to the 'Arcadian' aspect of the estate; displaying that amount of land ownership was a symbol of status and wealth. Theresa's portrait contains a classical-styled landscape, although we do not know which landscape it may represent. The landscape garden of Saltram does have various urns decorating the estate, and a few are a similar shape to the one depicted in the portrait. Other than representing women within a classical landscape, which was usually representative of the acres of land owned by their husbands, women were also portrayed in a calm and peaceful manner, often in a constructed image which symbolised 'ideas of

³⁰⁰ Christopher Christie, *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 193.

³⁰¹ Ibid.

childbearing, indicating the continuation of the family line.³⁰² Theresa's full length for example displays Theresa with rich and luxurious robes over her torso which mainly gathers across her stomach alluding to ideas of fertility; Theresa was in fact pregnant around this time so the symbolism was perhaps intended.

Women of polite society were also often painted alongside their children to show ideas of genealogy and the roles to be played by wives of the aristocracy and gentry such as the importance of the role of motherhood. Theresa Parker had a painting of herself painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds with the later addition of 'Jack' the 1st Earl of Morley (figure 3.2). The Parkers appear to have not had a large 'family conversation piece'³⁰³ created, in which all members of the family are within a portrait. This is possibly due to the death of Theresa who passed away at the age of 30 after the birth of her second child. According to Marcia Pointon 'the absence of the father/husband'³⁰⁴ in portraits such as that of Theresa and her son was a 'deliberate narrative device that sharpens our perception of the patriarchal'³⁰⁵ in the society and the country house. Absence of father figures in family portraits also implied the career path of the busy father bettering society through his knowledge and work rather than staying within the domain of the country house like his wife.³⁰⁶

The Parkers also commissioned Reynolds to paint a portrait of the First Earl of Morley and his sister as children which possibly would have been within the same room as the half-length of Theresa and Jack. As well as this, a child portrait of Jack (First Earl of Morley) was

³⁰² Robert W. Jones, *Gender and the Formation of Taste in Eighteenth Century Britain: The Analysis of Beauty* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 154.

³⁰³ Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Yale University Press, 1993), 159.

³⁰⁴ *Ibid* 160.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid*.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid* 172-173.

painted by the artist Gardner for Saltram House (figure 3.3). Anne Robinson to her brother Grantham in March 1779 stated:

‘The little Children have been sent to sit today to Sir Joshua for the first time since their colds... it will not be finished for some time but will be a very fine picture and very like, but they are very near kissing, an attitude that they are very often in... The boy is sitting for Mr Gardiner in his regimentals with a espontoon, gorget and sash like a little officer upon guard and very like.’³⁰⁷

It is believed by Marcia Pointon that such child portraits generated views ‘on power relations’³⁰⁸ between genders designed by ideas held by ‘the adult world to produce a set of explicit and implicit meanings’³⁰⁹ and to paint children as ‘the bearers of the values of society.’³¹⁰ Such portraits demonstrated the gender roles to be assigned during childhood to be carried into adulthood. Theresa Parker, daughter of John Parker the second and Lady Theresa Parker in the portrait *Master Parker and his Sister* (figure 3.4) has been painted with almost marble-like skin to symbolise ideas ‘of virtue and beauty to ensure she will be in due course marriageable.’³¹¹ There are a few binary oppositions within the portrait such as the passivity of her body language compared to her brothers, with her hands and feet closed together, and her posture upright. Her brother John first Earl of Morley however is in an assertive role, with his legs spread apart and holding his sister. This is also confirmed

³⁰⁷ British Library. Add. MS.; 48218 (Morley Papers), ff. 55-56, Anne Robinson to Lord Grantham 26th March 1779.

³⁰⁸ Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Yale University Press, 1993), 184.

³⁰⁹ Ibid 178.

³¹⁰ Ibid 180.

³¹¹ Ibid 190.

through his portrait as a soldier, placing him in an active, masculine role which connoted ideas of heroism and manliness³¹².

Portraiture and political ideology

Family portraiture however was not the only significant portraiture form displayed within Saltram House. According to the 1819 catalogue, there were several portraits of King Charles I and his son King Charles II displayed in various rooms of Saltram House. One portrait of Charles I is significantly displayed in the Southern Gallery which contained mostly family portraits of the Parkers and their ancestors. During the English Civil War, the Parkers remained loyal to King Charles I and were rewarded for this by Charles II, who returned their property and now increased fortune.³¹³ The fact that the Parker family collected and displayed portraits, placing one amongst family portraiture, could have demonstrated a type of political ideology held by the family. Christopher Christie states that 'political sympathies could be expressed through collections of portraits and their arrangement'³¹⁴. The fact that the Parkers used Charles I portraits in their display could suggest their 'allegiance'³¹⁵ to royalty and the current social hierarchy. As well as this, portraits of Queen Elizabeth I were also displayed amongst the collection of Saltram such as one by Cornelius Janssen which was on display in the Billiard room. The Parker men may have been from humble origins compared to their wives, and had a 'family dynasty'³¹⁶ which was relatively new compared to others. The use of portraiture, however, of Charles I, his son and of Queen Elizabeth I,

³¹² Ibid 180.

³¹³ *The History and Heritage of Boringdon Hall*, Boringdon Hall, Plymouth, 2018, <https://www.boringdonhall.co.uk/the-hotel/history-and-heritage/>.

³¹⁴ Christopher Christie, *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 196.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Yale University Press, 1993), 13-15.

showed that the family although new in status, still had a history of 'loyal service to a ruling family'³¹⁷. It also documented the family history in terms of when they began to rise in prominence during Elizabeth's reign and of those who famously visited the family before the eighteenth century; as we have seen, Elizabeth herself stayed at Boringdon Hall around 1588. The first Earl of Morley was a Tory, and Tories were a party developed specifically to support the monarch. As a result of this, Morley may well have been proud of his family's support of King Charles I who stayed within Colebrook, most likely at Boringdon Hall itself.

'Evocative of a remote past'

Gradually, the position of the majority of Reynolds's portraiture and its symbolism began to change by the end of the long eighteenth century, and this is shown through the actions of Frances, Countess of Morley, wife to the first Earl of Morley who initiated 'few but significant changes'³¹⁸ in the display of some of Saltram's portraiture collection. In a letter to her husband, Frances stated:

'I am making a mighty revolution in the Library. I have presumed to bring out all of Sir Joshua's admirable portraits from their hiding place and hung them over the bookshelves... the pictures themselves, which are really invaluable and which were never before seen or heard of, appear to the greatest advantage'³¹⁹

Placing such portraits in the library, along with portraits of the Earl of Morley himself, created a connection between these paintings and the books in the bookcases according to Pointon's theory. Placing the family portraits within a place of learning and self-

³¹⁷ Christopher Christie, *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), 196.

³¹⁸ Ceri Johnson, *Saltram Guidebook* (Swindon Wilts: Hawthornes, 1998), 50-51.

³¹⁹ *Ibid* 51

improvement in a hang above the book cases rather than on the same level symbolised the highly-educated gentleman and his family throughout the several generations.³²⁰ Placing portraits almost close to the ceiling compared to other paintings according to Pointon, ‘established knowledge of the hierarchy of genres’³²¹ symbolising the value and importance these Parker portraits had to the family. The space above the bookshelves became a gallery space primarily dedicated to Reynolds’s work in order to emphasise ‘the painter’s connection and relationship with the family’³²² rather than being arranged in long-established positions in the house.³²³ As a result of being placed within a gallery type space, the first Earl of Morley along with his wife Frances, Countess of Morley continued to add to the display of the family ancestry and social status. Reynolds’s portraits of ‘cherished friends and relatives [became] ancestral paintings evocative of a remote past’³²⁴ at Saltram House.

³²⁰ Marcia Pointon, *Hanging the Head: Portraiture and Social Formation in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Yale University Press, 1993), 15-16.

³²¹ Ibid 16

³²² Richard Stephens, “The Parker Family,” in *Sir Joshua Reynolds: The Acquisition of Genius*, ed. Sam Smiles (Bristol: Sansom & Company, 2009), 71.

³²³ Ibid.

³²⁴ Ibid.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I believe this thesis shows that Saltram House complies with current country house scholarship which looks at the form, function and meaning behind the country estate and the various functions it performed for its inhabitants. Through each chapter which focuses on a different area of visual culture, we have seen a family actively use Saltram house, its interiors, architecture and landscape gardens as a way to project an image of the family. As well as this, this thesis has brought new knowledge to country house scholarship in several ways. Saltram is unique compared to other estates studied as it is situated in the south west, an area which has been previously overlooked until now. It shows that despite properties such as Saltram being far from London, families of the Parkers status in Devon still had the ability and knowledge to create a fashionable estate to reflect the status of the family. The Parkers had both a close family with connections and a selective and influential social circle which aided in their decisions for decorating and designing Saltram. This included friendships with influential artistic figures such as the Plympton-born artist Sir Joshua Reynolds, which is further proof of the value the south west has to offer in terms of the evolution of the country estate. It shows that Devon had influential figures in shaping the tastes of eighteenth-century polite society.

Saltram has also given new importance to the role of women in the country estate as it was the Parker women who were the driving force behind Saltram's design, not their husbands. The Parker men had the wealth needed to create the house, but lacked artistic knowledge and connections. However, this wealth attracted an advantageous marriage to women of status with the necessary knowledge and education to design and decorate an estate. The Parker women brought with them the connections and knowledge needed to commission

architects and artists. These marriages also demonstrate the importance and value of companionship and companionate marriage to eighteenth-century polite society when creating a country seat for a family; Theresa Parker, wife to John Parker the second commented her values on happiness in a marriage to her brother Frederick Robinson as we have seen.

Saltram has one of the best preserved portrait collections painted by the leading portrait painter of Plympton, Sir Joshua Reynolds, and two of the best preserved Robert Adam interiors in the Saloon and Dining room. This study of Saltram in particular demonstrates crucially the importance of Chinoiserie and its symbolism to the Parker family, who preferred the Adam interiors not to dominate. It also has what is regarded as the largest preserved Chinese wallpaper collection which allows scholars to study the purpose and symbolic significance Chinoiserie offered eighteenth-century polite society.

What further makes Saltram important to our understanding of the evolution of an eighteenth-century country estate is its wealth of eighteenth-century family correspondence. As Rosemary Baird has stated, the difficulty in studying the purpose of the country house is its lack of correspondence or diaries left by the owners.³²⁵ This is partly why women's history and the country house have been understudied. Much work commissioned was under the husband's name on the usual only available source, house bills, and therefore it has been assumed that the husband was the patron. Held in the British Library, Bedfordshire Archives and the Plymouth and West Devon record office, Saltram has an extensive collection of family letters by the women of the family who communicated frequently on matters of Saltram. They offer an insight into the daily life of the women of

³²⁵ Rosemary Baird, *Mistress of the House* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), xiv.

Saltram, from the people they interacted with in the house, to the concerns they showed for the presentation and continued design improvement of Saltram House. This thesis shows that the Parker women knew how important a country estate was to a family's status and reputation through the use of visual culture as a way of self-fashioning.

Saltram throughout the eighteenth century evolved into one of Devon's finest country estates. This was due to the artistic connections with important figures such as Sir Joshua Reynolds and Robert Adam, but also due to the women of the family having knowledge of taste in the arts, as well as the ability to use their aristocratic status to build artistic connections in order to help design Saltram. Saltram House clearly became an important vessel for the representation and self-fashioning of the family's reputation and status through the use of visual culture. And it succeeded in its objective. I believe a visit from King George III himself is proof enough of this that Saltram was noticed by those who mattered socially.

There are several studies which could lead on from this thesis. Saltram as part of a larger study of the evolution of the country house estate in the south west would continue to offer new knowledge on this area. It would offer a broad study to our understanding, and it would be interesting to see comparisons and contrasts between Saltram and other south west estates, particularly estates whose families were patrons of the same artists. This would be done by looking at several case studies, such as those of Port Eliot and Mount Edgecumbe: the owners of both estates were patrons of Sir Joshua Reynolds. The Parker correspondence also offers a glimpse into the lives of the Eliot family and the Edgecumbes in terms of how they influenced any choices made by the Parkers on Saltram's contents which would be an excellent starting point from this thesis. Another potential topic would

be to continue to focus solely on Saltram with a similar theme but with a different time period in mind.

Saltram House during the nineteenth-century period would be a potential PhD topic lead on to from this thesis. There is a large collection of nineteenth-century Parker family correspondence held in the British Library and the Plymouth and West Devon record office. This could be done either on its own or as a case study amongst other Devon and Cornwall properties to further our understanding of country estates in these counties as there are many country houses in these areas which have no detailed study on them. Few changes were made to the interior and exterior design of Saltram during the nineteenth-century period as mentioned before in Chapter One. This was primarily due to a shift in interests amongst the gentry in the nineteenth century with a focus on industrial enterprise,³²⁶ as wealth was gradually moving from the land to the cities with the advent of the industrial revolution. However, there was a large increase in the numbers of those who visited Saltram House, with country house tourism appearing to be undertaken more frequently compared to the eighteenth century. The nineteenth century at Saltram House is well documented, primarily by Frances Talbot, Countess of Morley, (second wife to John Parker the third) Anne Robinson, sister of Theresa Parker, and Theresa Parker daughter of Theresa Parker: all of these women speak of the many visitors they received. Again, this would continue to add to women's history in relation to the history of the country house. It would add much to our understanding of these matters to see how the house evolved to suit the needs of the nineteenth-century Parkers compared to the eighteenth century.

³²⁶ Paul Atterbury, *Steam and Speed: Industry, Power & Social Change in 19th Century Britain*, Victoria and Albert Museum London, <http://www.vam.ac.uk/content/articles/s/industry-power-and-social-change/>

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