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Luxury and country house sales in England, c.1760–1830

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The country house is often seen as a key site for the consumption of luxury goods: a place where no expense was spared to make a very public statement of the wealth, taste and connoisseurship of the owner.¹ Today the resulting material culture of the country house often seems permanent – a priceless collection uniquely associated with a particular place; yet the reality was very different, with the nature and arrangement of furniture, paintings, books, tableware and so on being in constant flux. New goods came into the house as fashion or fortune dictated, whilst others were removed to less public rooms; put into storage or disposed of altogether. One key mechanism by which luxury goods, amongst others, left the country house was via public auction, which normally took place at the house itself.² This draws the country house firmly into wider processes and debates concerning the recycling of goods and the second-hand trade. These are often seen as being associated with poverty and supply-side inadequacies: goods were recycled amongst needy citizens or down-cycled from wealthier to poorer sections of society.³ However, there is plenty of evidence that recycling formed an important activity within prosperous and even elite households: clothes were mended, curtains adjusted for hanging elsewhere and garments taken apart to make bags or line drawers. Indeed, such practices were seen as central to thrifty huswifery and ‘good Christian stewardship’ which had long been central to notions of good housekeeping. Other items were bequeathed or gifted to friends or family members and were thus recycled between generations and households. Many wealthier households also engaged in commercial recycling, actively seeking out second-hand goods, especially at the house sales of their departed neighbours and peers. At these events, they bought a wide range of useful and durable goods with which to furnish their own homes and, in the process, enjoyed the occasion and drama of the auction itself.⁴

The country house sale brought together buyer, seller and a wide variety of goods. For the seller, the contents of their house were an important asset which could be realised to meet debts or finance redevelopment or refurbishment of the property.⁵ For the buyer, they represented an opportunity to acquire a range of luxury goods. The motivations underpinning such processes of acquisition were complex.⁶ The widening attraction and accessibility of luxury consumption was already a social phenomenon in the sixteenth century when Harrison noted that it had spread ‘even unto the inferior artificers and many farmers’ who had ‘learned also to garnish their cupboards with plate, their joint beds with tapestry and silk hangings, and their tables with carpets and fine napery’.⁷ Acquiring such goods second-hand opened up the world of luxury consumption to a section of the population unable to afford them new; but it also gave other, wealthier consumers the chance to ‘capture value’ by buying luxury goods at a discounted price; to ‘capture difference’ through the ownership of unusual items, or more arguably to ‘share in another’s “genuine” world’ by buying personal or unusual items.⁸

In this paper, I explore the recycling of luxury goods through sales at a range of country houses in the English county of Northamptonshire. These include the residences of fourteen gentlemen or esquires, three titled aristocrats (including a notable local magnate: the Earl of Halifax), two women, and five for whom we have only their name. The sales were therefore predominantly of goods from substantial country houses, rather than aristocratic palaces. They were not national events of the kind that took in 1801 and 1822 when the fabulously wealthy William Beckford sold off a huge variety of luxury goods to fund the construction of Fonthill Abbey and subsequently to help clear some of his debts.⁹ Beyond advertisements, there was little interest in the local or national press and they were usually organised by local auctioneers, rather than notable London figures such as Christie or Phillips. As a consequence, the material at our disposal is primarily comprised of the sale catalogues, produced and distributed by the auctioneers in advance of the sale. These include long lists and sometimes detailed descriptions of the items being offered for sale, but of course tell us nothing about those who purchased goods or the uses to which they were subsequently put. My analysis therefore centres on the nature of the luxury goods being offered for sale and the ways in which these fitted into broader frameworks of (second-hand) consumption. In particular, I want to explore the underpinning attraction of buying luxury goods second hand and ultimately to assess the extent to which we can see luxury as a category which transcends distinctions between new and used.

Luxury goods: capturing value

Even a cursory glance through the catalogues shows that these sales offered a wide variety of luxury goods. These ranged from the turret clock listed in the 1772 sale at Kirby Hall, through the harpsichords by Tabal and Goodfellow being sold at Rolleston Hall in 1801, to the high quality furniture and wines which could be bid for at Wollaston Hall in 1805.¹⁰ Alongside such luxuries were myriad mundane items, including deal furniture, cooking pots and sauce pans, carpenters' benches and chicken coops. In between were objects that might be termed decencies: tea urns and coffee pots, wainscot furniture, feather beds, and carpets. Drawing a line between luxury, decency and necessity is highly problematic, not least since the quality as well as the type of goods was important. However, to make some sense of the huge variety of goods appearing in the catalogues, some kind of classification is needed. An indication of the types of things that might be thought of as luxury can be drawn from contemporary commentaries whose accounts suggest both continuity and change. In 1587, Harrison emphasised tapestries, silverware, fine linen and turkey work; 140 years later, Lady Strafford, aspiring to join London's *beau monde* centred her attention on sconces, pier glasses and silver tableware, whilst many of her male contemporaries focused on coaches, horses and wine cellars.¹¹ More generally, there was a transition from pewter to porcelain, turkey work to mahogany, and (to an extent) tapestry to damask wall hangings.¹² Something of this is captured in an incident in Burney's *Cecilia*. When Miss Larolles plans to go to the sale at Lord Belgrade's house, she is asked by

Cecilia what will be sold there. Her reply tells us much about the nature of desirable luxuries: 'O every thing you can conceive; house, stables, china, laces, horses, caps, every thing in the world'.¹³

Taking these as starting points, it is possible to identify a wide variety of luxury goods in the catalogues, although the range and type available at particular auctions varied considerably. The sales at Brixworth Hall, Wollaston Hall and Welton Place offered consumers the opportunity to acquire fourteen kinds of luxury goods, whilst those visiting the auctions at Pychley Hall, Kirby Hall and Rushton Hall would have found only two or three types of luxuries were available. This kind of variation is not very surprising since country houses differed considerably in their size and character, and sales varied from complete house clearances (as appears to have been the case at Stanford Hall), to selective sales of high quality goods (Barton Hall) or those through which goods from bed chambers and service wings were recycled (Kirby Hall). Especially prominent were goods which could be everyday household items, but were defined as luxuries by their price or the complexity of their acquisition.¹⁴ They included furniture, glass and chinaware, mirrors, curtains and clocks, and were distinguished in one of three ways. First were goods differentiated by the richness of their raw materials. For example, the drawing room curtains sold on the second day of the Barton Hall sale were made of 'rich crimson silk damask ... lined, with tassels and fringe', whilst the 3x5 foot pier glass from the dining room in Rolleston Hall was set in 'strong frame, richly carved with elegant top ornaments gilt in burnished gold'.¹⁵ Here it was the cost of the materials that came to the fore: the silk, gold leaf and silver burnishing. A second set of luxury goods stood out because of their exotic or cosmopolitan nature – the cultural capital represented in such goods being heightened by a layering of their costliness, the contacts required to obtain them, and their cultural associations.¹⁶ The Sevres porcelain desert service and 'tea and coffee equipage' offered on day two of the Stanford Hall sale would only have been available through a handful of London tradesmen or, more likely via contacts in France. Equally, the Indian china vases, scent jars and glass cases sold at Sudborough House in 1836 were clearly seen as rare pieces, to be valued for their provenance – a quality which distinguished them from locally produced and more readily available pieces.¹⁷ A third set of goods were luxurious because of the intricate nature of their manufacture. Design and craftsmanship was becoming increasingly important through the eighteenth century, particularly in items such as furniture, silverware and porcelain.¹⁸ The intricacy of design and manufacture was communicated through detailed descriptions of the goods. At the Rolleston Hall sale, for example, Lot 252 in the Best Chamber was a 'mahogany case of four large, and two small compress drawers; the upper part, with folding doors, encloses a valuable ebony cabinet, *the fronts of the drawers of which are MOST DELICATELY PENCILLED with the history of the journeying the Israelites in the Wilderness, and a great number of exquisite miniature figures*'.¹⁹ Whilst extreme, this level of detail was by no means unusual, especially for elaborate furniture or when a complex design was coupled with exotic materials – effectively rolling into one all three of these dimensions of luxury. Several marble tables – luxury goods by any standard – were offered for sale in 1772 following the death of the Earl of Halifax. The

stone itself was invariably described rather nonchalantly as a 'marble slab', but its dimensions were precisely noted and the 'frame' carefully described, one typical example in the drawing room being set on a 'rich carv'd frame, gilt and burnished'.²⁰

Such luxuries were not, of course, being bought second-hand from financial necessity, but it is apparent that cost and practicality were important considerations. It is difficult to compare prices exactly, but what appear to be reserve prices marked in the catalogue of the 1761 Cottingham sale suggest that curtains and upholstered items were perhaps one-fifth the price they would be new. Two pairs of damask window curtains and rods had a reserve of just £1 and ten walnut chairs, upholstered in 'rich brocade', were £2 15s. Around the same time, Lord Leigh of Stoneleigh Abbey in Warwickshire spent £5 2s 6d on '23 yards of red check with binding, laths &c.' for making curtains, and £8 8s on twelve 'fine walnut chairs'.²¹ Elsewhere, the emphasis on the size of curtains suggests perhaps a concern with their physical fit into another house, but also the volume of cloth contained in them and thus the 'bargain' they comprised. There were, however, other motivations at play. With luxuries defined by the complexity of their acquisition,²² the virtue of buying second hand was that the consumer could short-circuit the complex systems of manufacture and supply – they could take advantage of the cultural and logistical 'reach' of the primary consumer. Rather than having to source Italian marble, organise its shipping to England, and commission the carving and gilding of an appropriate frame, a consumer visiting the Earl of Halifax's sale could simply buy the piece complete. Country house sales thus formed a convenient way of furnishing a house with high quality goods or adding choice pieces to an existing scheme.²³ Indeed, second-hand was the only way in which some items could be acquired. This is clearly true of paintings and unique pieces of furniture such as the mahogany cabinet sold at Rolleston Hall, but also books and prints. There is not space here to discuss the second-hand book trade in detail, but a few examples serve to illustrate the point. The 1836 sale of the effects of W. Lucas, esq. of Hollowell included at least five volumes published in the seventeenth century, and at Wollaston Hall in 1805 there were fourteen seventeenth-century and three sixteenth-century volumes, including Baker's *Bible* of 1599 and Stephano's *Thesaurus Graecae* in 4 volumes, published in 1577.²⁴ Such volumes were impossible to buy new and bibliophiles were dependent upon good contacts in London and elsewhere to secure sought-after books.²⁵ Country house sales thus afforded an invaluable opportunity to raid the libraries of other gentlemen for choice volumes without recourse to the labyrinthine book trade.²⁶ Their significance is made tangible by the hand-written notes added to some of the catalogues. For the Hollowell sale, eighteen volumes are marked, presumably to denote an interest in buying these; but it is the catalogue for the Earl of Halifax's sale that is most revealing. Here, there are names written against some books (Afflick, Lacy, Dash, Burnham), indicating the identity of the successful bidder. There are also notes on the binding ('bad', 'gilt', 'elegant morocco', 'neat') suggesting that the appearance of the books was important; but there are others marked 'wants 1 vol' which indicates an equal interest in the integrity and content of the edition.²⁷ Most significantly, perhaps, the purchase price has been noted for every book.

Cost was clearly important to those buying at country house sales; not because of financial impecunty, but because these sales offered the chance to acquire luxury goods at much reduced prices. This was a major attraction at the Fonthill sales, where the prices paid were clearly some way below what was anticipated as the sale failed to produce the returns that had been hoped for.²⁸ The Earl of Halifax's books included many commonplace volumes, which fetched only a few shillings; but also some that were clearly much sought after. At one extreme, we have Lot 61, 'Locke on Education and Arlington's letters', which sold for 1s 6d, and Lot 20, 'Votes of the House of Commons', which failed to sell and had to be rolled into the next lot. In contrast, 'Campbell's Vitruvius Britannicus' fetched £3 18s and 'Montsaucon's antiquities' made £5 15s 6d.²⁹ Yet even these more costly items represented something of a bargain: the Earl's *Vitruvius Britannicus* comprised all three volumes and a total of around 100 copperplate engravings. The notion that buying at country house sales often focused on 'capturing value' becomes still more apparent from the catalogue for the 1761 sale at Thomas Medleycot's house in Cottingham. Unique amongst this sample, this contained reserve prices for many of lots (though not, significantly, for some of the more obviously luxury items, including silver plate and paintings). These prices suggest that bargains were to be had. For about £35 a parlour could be fitted out in reasonable luxury with, amongst other things: three large pier glasses, a walnut writing table, an elm sideboard, a mahogany card table, curtains, walnut sofas upholstered in brocade; six velvet seated chairs, a mahogany fire screen, and an eight-day clock.³⁰ Buying more selectively, anyone visiting this sale could have secured high quality or rare pieces for very modest sums: an India japanned cabinet for £6 or a set of nine large engravings of classical scenes by Rubens for £2 10s. Careful bidders could thus hope to 'capture value'.³¹

Luxury and individuality: capturing difference?

Luxury was more than simply a reflection of cost; buying goods recycled through country house sales involved other motivations. Some goods were attractive because they provided the opportunity to mark the distinctive taste of the individual. Antiques were important in this regard because of their 'long association with times, events, and names that have an historical interest and that move our feelings deeply by means of such powerful associations'.³² However, this sentiment only grew to prominence at the very end of the period covered here: the catalogues contain just twenty-one references to antiques, mostly describing china. Whilst country house sales were an obvious and important source of such items, this potential had not yet been realised: auctioneers were keen to stress many qualities, but not often or any sustained manner the 'antique' nature of the goods being sold.³³

Collections were more firmly established in eighteenth-century elite culture: coins, scientific instruments and paintings by old masters or fashionable modern artists were luxury goods of the highest order, differentiated in terms of their economic as well as their cultural value. Acquiring such goods required and reinforced specialist knowledge and thus helped to mark out the cognoscenti

from mere consumers.³⁴ Purchasing these things second-hand was little different from acquiring them new: a set of coins or medals, for example, could be absorbed into one's own collection – indeed, filling the different categories to ensure a full set is one of the key attractions of collecting. Again, though, whilst paintings were fairly widespread, featuring in over half the sales sampled, other forms of collection were comparatively rare – especially if we look for something more serious than the six glass cases of stuffed birds (including a curlew, goshawk and ptarmigan) at Welton Place or the model of a church, assortment of china eggs and shells, and stuffed pheasant sold at Hollowell.³⁵ In many ways, these fall into the category of decorative items, of which there was no shortage: the sale at Sudborough House included 'four very handsome Dresden china ornaments', 'a pair of Ormolu chimney candlesticks', and a 'pair of Indian glasscases and flowers'; that at Barton Hall included decorative china such as: 'a slipper ... Harlequin and Columbine, old man and harvest girl, pair eggs, pair dogs, pair rabbits, and a nurse'.³⁶ These might best be viewed as semi-luxury items, produced in quantity by manufacturers in England and Europe, and carrying little cultural capital. Serious collections usually required deeper pockets and greater knowledge of the scientific or artistic world – both of which are often associated with the Grand Tour.³⁷ This makes the '11 antique casts in lead' sold at the Kirby Hall in 1772 and the coin collection belonging to J.P. Clarke, esquire, of Welton Place important because of their rarity.³⁸ That the sales only occasionally included such collections suggests that they afforded few opportunities for marking distinction in this way.

Social and cultural difference could, of course, be communicated in ways other than displays of taste and learning. Cynthia Wall has argued that recycled goods offered an entrée into other people's lives and worlds.³⁹ 'Capturing difference' in this way could feed into what Stewart sees as a wider eighteenth-century desire for objects which conferred human interest.⁴⁰ Items which allowed this kind of transfer of personal association might include family portraits, engraved silverware or jewellery. Paintings were regularly sold from country houses, but most were landscapes, classical scenes, allegorical pieces or still-lives rather than portraits. When they did appear, most portraits showed public figures. At Kirby Hall in 1772, we find: 'Lord Longer-ville, 3 qrs', 'Queen of Hungary, half-length', 'the Countess of Pembroke, whole length', and Lord Strafford, 3 qrs'; and at Rolleston Hall, there were paintings of 'K. Charles II, 3 quarters', 'Oliver Cromwell, Protector' and 'Lancelot Andrews, Bishop of Chichester'.⁴¹ Whilst these figures carried cultural and political associations, they lacked the intimacy of connection that might be accorded by less easily recognisable figures. In this light, the two paintings of 'a lady' sold at Rolleston may have held certain attractions, as might the 'Four family pictures' listed in The Chapel Room at Kirby Hall. It is notable, however, that the Finch-Hattons chose to retain most of their family portraits. This makes the long list of family portraits sold after the death of the Earl of Halifax all the more striking. There were 27 pictures in all, including paintings of his parents and grandparents, as well as himself and his wife.⁴² Clearly, bidding for such pictures did not make the buyer part of the Earl's family, but it did provide a rare chance to acquire a very personal part of his property and thus in some sense facilitated association with this branch of the aristocracy.

Much the same might be said about silverware. This could be highly personal and was often personalised, the Leigh family in Warwickshire, for example, invariably paid for newly-acquired silverware to be engraved with the family crest.⁴³ Again, however, there is little sign of personal items in the sales catalogues. Silverware and plate mostly comprised cutlery and other tableware, with more personal items appearing only rarely: the 'larger two-handled cup and cover' at the Wollaston Hall of 1805 being exceptional.⁴⁴ Perhaps most telling, however, is the fact that those items most linked to the person and the body – clothing and jewellery – were totally absent from these sales; they were generally dispersed through personal or post-mortem gifts. If Wall is right, and buyers at auctions really did want to buy into another's world, they clearly needed to do it through far more mundane items, such as curtains, tables and beds. More likely, such concerns were not at the forefront of the minds of those visiting the auctions. Indeed, the importance of the country house sale as a venue for acquiring the kind of luxury goods that might distinguish the consumer as a person of refined taste or particular cultural qualities seems to have diminished over the period covered here. Between the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, there were few profound changes in the nature of luxury goods offered for sale: furniture, glass and chinaware and mirrors remained the most common items, and the overall range of luxuries declined only slightly, from around nine to about eight types per sale. However, certain categories of goods appeared far less frequently after about 1815 than they had done before. The most marked decline was seen in firearms, perhaps a reflection of the changing military situation, but more likely an indication of the changing cultural character of the elite.⁴⁵ More telling, perhaps, was the drop, by over one-half, in the number of sales that included paintings or prints – a trend broadly followed by scientific instruments and clocks. The implication of this is that the country house was declining in importance as a means of recycling those luxuries which might be defined in terms of their cultural associations (their meanings, links to specialist knowledge systems or personality) rather than simply their price or the complexity of acquisition.

There are two possible explanations for this. The first is that it was linked to the growth of more specialised dealers or auctions. This might be seen in the growing reach of London auction houses such as Christie's and Phillip's, although both of these sold quite a wide range of goods. Probably more significant were the growing number of art dealers in the streets around the Royal Society of Arts and, to a lesser extent, the emergence of specialist antique dealers, initially in Soho and later around Bond Street and Jermyn Street.⁴⁶ Given the lack of specialist knowledge amongst provincial auctioneers in particular, it would make sense for sellers to look to specialist and knowledgeable dealers, who had good contacts amongst potential buyers, in order to get the best possible price for the goods being sold.⁴⁷ The second is that there was a more general decline in demand for recycled luxury goods. This might be seen as part of a general shift in consumer preferences from second-hand to new goods which is often seen as taking place through the nineteenth century. Linked to this was the growing provision of luxury and semi-luxury goods by manufacturers such as Wedgwood and Boulton, who aimed their production, if not their rhetoric, firmly at middle-class consumers who

might previously have sought luxury goods at country house sales.⁴⁸ However, recent work challenges this secular trend, arguing that second-hand goods retained an important role in meeting consumer demand throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth century.⁴⁹ Any decline in the availability of certain luxury goods appears to have been more closely linked to the changing character of the country house sales sampled. Clearances were less common and more selective sales appear to have grown in number, especially those involving the remnants from earlier sales, for example as a second home was gradually wound down. This was the case at Kirby Hall and Geddington House, amongst others. Sales at the former became progressively less wide-ranging in the goods on offer, with luxury items in particular diminishing in both quantity and quality. The house itself followed a parallel decline, gradually slipping from eighteenth-century splendour to a decaying ruin by the turn of the twentieth century.⁵⁰ Whatever the cause, the early nineteenth century may have formed something of a hiatus in the ability of the country house sale to offer buyers real opportunities to mark difference.

Conclusions

Country house sales were an important mechanism for the recycling of luxury goods. This was true of grand and well-known events such as the Fonthill sales of the early nineteenth century, but also of the more modest events that have been the subject of this paper. Significantly, these sales continued well into the nineteenth century and beyond, further questioning the supposed decline in the demand for second-hand goods over this period. The underlying reasons for holding sales did not go away; indeed, as the agricultural economy declined in the later decades of the nineteenth century and the costs of maintaining large country houses escalated in the early twentieth century, the need to sell up or sell off significant amounts of high value goods became more acute. The supply of used luxury goods was therefore at least maintained. Whilst the emergence and growth of specialist art auctions and antique dealers might have taken the cream of the luxury goods, a sizeable amount of high quality items remained to be sold from the property itself. Indeed, the country house sale remains, to this day, an important a key mechanism whereby luxury goods re-enter circulation. For example, the 2005 sale of art and furniture held on the premises at Easton Neston in Northamptonshire included old masters, chairs by Thomas Chippendale, seventeenth-century plaster busts of Sir William and Lady Fermor (ancestors of the current owners), and a 1690 scale model of the house itself. The quality of the items being sold generated national interest in the press and around 7000 people attended over the three days of the sale – some to bid, but many simply to witness the proceedings and be part of the occasion.⁵¹ The parallels between past and present are clear and close: the Easton Neston sale, like that of many of the eighteenth and nineteenth-century auctions studied here, offered a rare chance to buy luxury goods and to glimpse something of the life of the elite. There is a risk in pressing the evidence too far, especially when the catalogues tell us little about those who bought at the sales. However, country house sales seem to have appealed to those seeking to buy quality goods

at reduced prices or secure items that could not easily be obtained through other means. Only in exceptional cases did they afford clear opportunities to buy into another's authentic world. Personal goods were rarely sold at these sales and, whilst it is possible that something of that world might rub off through owning a grand bed or handsome dinner service, relatively little of the previous owner accompanied curtains, chairs or mirrors. These were luxury goods because of their material qualities and, as such, were situated in the same value systems as new goods. In this sense, at least, new and used goods were part of the same consumer world.

Notes

¹ See, for example, Christopher Christie, *The British Country House in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), pp. 179-273.

² Anne Nellis Richter, 'Spectacle, exoticism, and display in the gentleman's house: the Fonthill auction of 1822,' *Eighteenth Century Studies*, 41 (2008), pp. 643-64; Rosie MacArthur and Jon Stobart, 'Going for a song? Country house sales in Georgian England', in Jon Stobart and Ilja Van Damme (eds) *Modernity and the Second-Hand Trade. European Consumption Cultures and Practices, 1700-1900* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), pp. 175-95.

³ See the discussions in Ilja Van Damme, 'Second-hand dealing in Bruges and the rise of an antiquarian culture, c.1750-1870', in Jon Stobart and Ilja Van Damme (eds) *Modernity and the Second-Hand Trade. European Consumption Cultures and Practices, 1700-1900* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010), pp. 74-7; Donald Woodward, "'Swords into ploughshares": recycling in pre-industrial England', *Economic History Review*, 38 (1985), pp. 175-91; Laurence Fontaine, 'The exchange of second-hand goods between survival strategies and 'business' in eighteenth-century Paris', in Laurence Fontaine (ed.) *Alternative Exchanges. Second-Hand Circulations from the Sixteenth Century to the Present* (New York and Oxford, Berghahn, 2008), pp. 97-114.

⁴ Amanda Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter. Women's Lives in Georgian England* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), pp. 150-8; Amanda Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors. At Home in Georgian England* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), p.164; V Pietri, 'Uses and the used. The conventions of renewing and exchanging goods in French provincial aristocracy', in Fontaine (ed.), *Alternative Exchanges*, pp. 115-26; Margaret Ponsonby, *Stories from Home. English Domestic Interiors, 1750-1850* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 79-102; Stana Nenadic, 'Middle-rank consumers and domestic culture in Edinburgh and Glasgow 1720-1840', *Past and Present*, 145 (1994), pp. 122-56.

⁵ The far larger asset of the land itself was sometimes covered by strict settlement which limited the ability to sell estates in whole or part. Even where this was not in place, there was a strong presumption against selling land. The literature on this is vast, but see Eileen Spring, 'The strict settlement: its role in history', *The Economic History Review*, 41 (1988), pp. 454-60.

⁶ For a summary of the various motivations behind second-hand consumption, see: Jon Stobart, 'Clothes, cabinets and carriages: second-hand dealing in eighteenth-century England', in Bruno Blonde, et al (eds) *Buyers and Sellers. Retail Circuits and Practices in Medieval and Early-Modern Europe* (Tournhout: Brepols, 2006), pp. 225-44.

⁷ William Harrison, *The Description of England* (London, 1587), p. 197.

⁸ Nicky Gregson and Louise Crewe, *Second Hand Cultures* (London: Berg, 2003), pp. 11-12; Cynthia Wall, 'The English auction: narratives of dismantlings', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 31 (1997), p. 20.

⁹ See Richter, 'Spectacle, exoticism, and display'; R. J. Gemmett, "'The tinsel of fashion and the gewgaws of luxury": the Fonthill sale of 1801', *The Burlington Magazine*, CL (2008), pp. 381-8.

¹⁰ Northampton Central Library (NCL), M0005646NL/3, Kirby Hall, 1772, p. 18; M0005647NL/2, Rolleston Hall, 1801, p. 21; M0005644NL/5, Wollaston Hall, 1805, passim.

¹¹ Harrison, *Description of England*, p. 197; Hannah Grieg, 'Leading the fashion: the material culture of London's *beau monde*', in John Styles and Amanda Vickery (eds), *Gender, Taste and Material Culture in Britain and North America 1700-1830* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 293-313; Vickery, *Behind Closed Doors*, pp. 124-5.

¹² Jan De Vries, *The Industrious Revolution. Consumer Behaviour and the Household Economy, 1650 to the Present* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp.122-85.

¹³ Fanny Burney, *Cecilia. Memoirs of an Heiress* (London, 1782) (London: Virago, 1986), p. 28.

¹⁴ Price is the first criterion for luxury noted by Arjai Appadurai, 'Introduction: commodities and the politics of value', in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), pp. 3-63.

¹⁵ NCL, M0005646NL/5, Barton Hall, 1784, p. 13; M0005647NL/2, Rolleston Hall, 1801, p. 20.

¹⁶ Linda Levy Peck, *Consuming Splendor. Society and Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp.113-151; Maxine Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp.46-84.

¹⁷ NCL, M0005646NL/11 Stanford Hall, 1792, p. 12; M0005645NL/22, Sudborough House, 1836, pp. 7-8.

¹⁸ See, for example: Geoffrey Beard, *Upholsterers and Interior Furnishing in England, 1530-1840* (London and new haven: Yale University Press, 1997); Helen Clifford, 'A commerce in things: the value of precious metalwork in early modern England', in Maxine Berg and Helen Clifford (eds), *Consumers and Luxury. Consumer Culture in Europe, 1650-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999), pp. 147-68.

¹⁹ NCL, M0005647NL/2, Rolleston Hall, 1801, p. 10.

²⁰ NCL, M0005647NL/6, Earl of Halifax, 1772, p. 19.

²¹ NCL, M0005644NL/2, Cottingham, 1761, p. 9; Shakespeare Central Library and Archives, DR18/5/4408.

²² See Appadurai, 'Introduction'.

²³ This appears to have been important to some of the buyers at the Fonthill sales and at the public auctions held in some Swedish towns. See Gemmett, 'The tinsel of fashion'; Sofia Murhem, et al, 'Tables and chairs under the hammer: second-hand consumption of furniture in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Sweden', in Stobart and Van Damme (eds) *Modernity and the Second-Hand Trade*, pp. 211-12.

²⁴ NCL, M0005644NL/20, Hollowell, 1836, pp. 10-14; M0005644NL/5, Wollaston Hall, 1805, pp. 30-45.

²⁵ John Raven, *The Business of Books. Booksellers and the English Book Trade, 1450-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

²⁶ Such was the importance of sales of the libraries of gentlemen of clergymen that they were sometimes sold at auctions separately from the household goods. The collection of catalogues in NCL contains several catalogues for such sales.

²⁷ NCL, M0005647NL/6, Earl of Halifax, 1772, pp. 29-32.

²⁸ Gemmett, 'The tinsel of fashion', p. 388.

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- ²⁹ NCL, M0005647NL/6, Earl of Halifax, 1772, pp. 29-31.
- ³⁰ NCL, M0005644NL/2, Cottingham, 1761, p. 8.
- ³¹ See Gregson and Crewe, *Second-Hand Cultures*, pp. 11-12.
- ³² Andrew Jackson Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses* (London: D. Appleton, 1850), p.450.
- ³³ For a fuller discussion of the language deployed in the catalogues, see Jon Stobart, 'The language of luxury goods: consumption and the English country house, c.1760-1830' *Virtus* 18 (forthcoming, 2011).
- ³⁴ See John Brewer, *Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1997), pp. 201-87, 427-92; John Elsner and Roger Cardinal (eds) *The Cultures of Collecting* (London: Reaktion Books, 1997)
- ³⁵ NCL, M0005644NL/13, Welton Place, 1830, p. 24; M0005644NL/20, Hollowell, 1836, pp. 18, 24.
- ³⁶ NCL, M0005645NL/22, Sudborough House, 1836, p. 8; M0005646NL/5, Barton Hall, 1784, p. 15.
- ³⁷ See Christie, *British Country Houses*, pp. 179-88.
- ³⁸ NCL, M0005646NL/3, Kirby Hall, 1772, p. 11; M0005644NL/13, Welton Place, 1830, 17-18.
- ³⁹ Wall, 'English auction', pp. 14-15, 20.
- ⁴⁰ Gregson and Crewe, *Second-Hand Cultures*; p. 12; Susan Stewart, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1984), p.133.
- ⁴¹ NCL, M0005646NL/3, Kirby Hall, 1772, pp. 10, 12; M0005647NL/2, Rolleston Hall, 1801, p. 4.
- ⁴² NCL, M0005647NL/6, Earl of Halifax, 1772, p. 38.
- ⁴³ Jon Stobart, 'Gentlemen and shopkeepers: supplying the country house in eighteenth-century England', *Economic History Review*, 64 (2011), pp. 885-904.
- ⁴⁴ NCL, M0005644NL/13, Welton Place, 1830, pp. 29-31. See also M0005646NL/9, Stanwick Hall, 1788, p. 11; M0005644NL/2, Cottingham, 1761, p. 13; NCL, M0005644NL/5, Wollaston Hall, 1805, p. 7.
- ⁴⁵ See Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process, Volume I. The History of Manners* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1969).
- ⁴⁶ Clive Wainwright, *The Romantic Interior* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), p. 35.
- ⁴⁷ This echoes changes taking place in eighteenth-century Antwerp: see Dries Lyna, 'Power to the broker: shifting authorities over public sakes in eighteenth-century Antwerp', in Stobart and Van Damme (eds), *Modernity and the Second-Hand Trade*, pp. 158-74.
- ⁴⁸ See Nenadic, 'Middle-rank consumers'; Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure*, pp. 117-92.
- ⁴⁹ For example: Deborah Cohen, *Household Gods. The British and their Possessions* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Ponsonby, *Stories from Home*, pp. 79-102. See also the various contributions to: Fontaine (ed.) *Alternative Exchanges*, and Stobart and Van Damme (eds), *Modernity and the Second-Hand Trade*.
- ⁵⁰ MacArthur and Stobart, 'Going for a song'.
- ⁵¹ *Country Life*, 25 February 2005; *The Daily Telegraph*, 21 May 2005.