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Faction and Fashion : The Politics of Court Dress in Eighteenth-Century England

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Résumés

ceci, la loyauté à la couronne est cartographiée et mesurée à l'instar de la contestation politique, et l'habit de cour interprété autant comme un baromètre de mécontentement que d'affiliation au monarque. Surtout, les tentatives des correspondants pour soutenir, contrôler ou stimuler les comptes rendus sur la vêture de cour attestent que la circulation des informations sur le sujet était politiquement signifiante. Relatée et décrite, la mode à la cour était ainsi traduite comme la manifestation d'une faction politique. L'article explore donc le rôle de l'habit de cour en politique.

Faction and Fashion : The Politics of Court Dress in Eighteenth-Century England - Eighteenth-century British court dress was, in comparison to other forms of contemporary clothing, anachronistic and a relic of a former age. Yet, despite its anomalous fashion status, court dress was nevertheless regarded as surprisingly newsworthy, widely catalogued and reported in both manuscript letters and printed news. Close examination of this widespread practice of court dress reporting reveals that such published and unpublished accounts gave more than the material details of sumptuous, if eccentric, sartorial displays. Instead, strategic political allegiances were read by commentators from the appearance of court clothing. Loyalty to the crown was mapped and measured through material show, but so too was political protest, and court dress was interpreted as much as a barometer of discontent as of affiliation to the monarch. Most significantly, attempts by correspondents to support, control or challenge reports of court clothing reveal that the circulation of information about court dress was itself politically charged. When reported and described, court fashion was thus translated as a display of political faction. It is this system of sartorial politics, and the politicized interpretation of court clothing, that this essay explores.

Texte intégral

1 On 20 January 1795, the London newspaper, *The Morning Chronicle* published a tirade against a particular contemporary tradition, the reporting of court dress. Denouncing sartorial reports as 'unintelligible gibberish', the newspaper's editor sniffed that details of the clothing worn to court could hardly be considered news :

> It eternally consists of a satin or velvet train, and an embroidered petticoat, which glitter with half a dozen ornaments of tassels and fringe, flowers and foil, gold and silver through so many insipid columns. The etiquette of Court demanding the obsolete hoop in the Ladies dress, and the standing collar in the Gentleman's, there is no scope for the exercise of either fancy or taste ; the whole variety of description consists in the colour of the body and train [...] whether the embroidery is in bouquets of roses, or branches of wheat-ear, all of which is extremely useful to the Court milliners, and interesting to no human creature beside[1].

2 Notably, despite the strongly-worded disclaimer, *The Morning Chronicle* proceeded with its own substantial account of the clothing worn to Queen Charlotte's birthday, held at St. James's Palace the day before. The Duchess of Leeds was reported to have chosen a 'richly embroidered petticoat' with gold spangles, gold sprigs and gold tassel fringe. Lady Walsingham's petticoat was described as 'richly appliquéd in zic zac stripes' with 'festoons of white satin, bunches of grapes, wheat ears and fancy flowers', whilst Lady Cathcart's white satin petticoat was declared to be 'beautifully embroidered with gold and spangles'. Amidst this list of titled and ornamented mannequins, two women in particular were singled out for their exceptional elegance. One was Mrs Colonel Egerton, with a petticoat embroidered to 'represent feathers', declared to have been of 'a most elegant appearance'. The other was Mrs Colonel de Bathe, for her velvet gown and satin, silver-trimmed petticoat, 'universally admired for its happy combination of richness and elegance'[2].

3 *The Morning Chronicle* was not the only newspaper to devote column inches to court dresses. Similar accounts can be found in many newspapers and periodicals throughout the 1700s. From its first issue in 1730, *The Gentleman's Magazine* included reports on the sartorial displays at court. At the birthday court of March 1731, it was decided that Lord Portmore had the 'richest dress', whilst her Majesty was also 'magnificently dress'd', particularly on account of a 'flower'd Muslin head and edging'[3]. At the end of the century the magazine retained this practice. On 18 January 1790, for example, it published a similarly lengthy report on court clothing, which detailed the Princess Royal's 'particularly elegant' birthday gown, with its riotously decorated petticoat 'striped with wreaths of laurel embroidered on crape, intermixed with purple foil that appeared like a worm twisted round the wreath, the space between the stripes was covered with small embroidery in gold and coloured foil, that formed a beautiful contrast to the stripes'[4]. *The Times* likewise addressed court clothing amidst its routine reporting from its earliest issues in 1785 through to the early 1800s, as did *The St. James's Chronicle*, *The Morning Herald*, *Telegraph*, *Bath Chronicle* and many other regional and national newspapers[5].

4 Reports of court dress, therefore, occupied a prominent place in the eighteenth-century printed news industry, referenced alongside politics, foreign affairs and social and moral comment[6]. Such reports also extended beyond the commercial press. A comparable and related preoccupation is readily identified within the personal correspondence and epistolary news penned by those present at court and their close acquaintances[7]. Frances Bathurst, for instance, sent notes to the Duchess of Marlborough detailing dresses anticipated at the court of William III and Queen Mary in 1692[8]. In the 1710s, William, Earl of Strafford received court dress reports from both his wife, Anne, Countess of Strafford and his brother, Peter Wentworth[9]. One

anonymous correspondent sent a letter to Lady Anne Campbell detailing the attire of over forty-five people seen at the birthday court of George II[10]. Lady Hertford regularly sent her correspondents details of court attire, noting in 1742, for instance, the fine 'white satin' gown of Lady Caroline Lennox, 'embroidered with gold and colors [*sic*]' and Lady Brooke's 'pretty stuff of silver and colors upon yellow ground'[11]. In the 1770s, Molly Hood included descriptions of court clothing in her letter to her friend Hester Pitt, Lady Chatham, whilst Lady Mary Grey sent her sister, mother and other correspondents lengthy accounts of dresses seen at the court of George III and Queen Charlotte, including, in 1779, the gold silk gown worn by Lady Middleton, the 'showy' white dress selected by the Duchess of Devonshire, Miss Thynne's gold-spangled dress and the 'thickest silk' worn by the Spanish Ambassadress, rumoured to be of 'Paris manufacture'[12].

5 This essay examines this eighteenth-century British practice of reporting and describing court clothing, in both published and unpublished textual accounts. The prevalence of contemporary court dress reports is striking, but why did the sartorial choices of those attending court attract such attention ? Why were those choices monitored and reported ? Why, in essence, did court dress matter ?

Histories of the eighteenth-century court and court dress

6 Within the context of this book, dedicated as it is to the study and discussion of the clothing attributed to the early modern European courts, the questions which frame this essay might need little justification. Our shared starting point is that court clothing is historically significant. However, when contextualised within British historiographical traditions, such questions are a less obvious point of academic enquiry. Firstly, as insinuated by *The Morning Chronicle* in 1795, the clothing worn by those attending court was, over the course of the century, increasingly out of line with current fashion. By 1795, the wide-hooped petticoats of women's court dress had rarely been seen in Britain beyond the palace walls for half a century or more (fig. 1). In stark contrast to the eighteenth-century court cultures of France and other European neighbours, the British court was famously immured in sartorial traditions and immune to new styles rather than a source of fashion leadership and innovation. As one contemporary witness disappointedly declared, in a comparison of England and France in the 1700s,

> The [British] court, instead of being looked up to by the young as a source of gaiety, by the handsome as a scene of triumph, and by the fashionable as necessary to the confirmation of their pretensions, was soon voted by all a duty, which was performed with a sort of contemptuous reluctance. [...] No fashions emanated from a court, itself an enemy to show [...][13].

Fig. 1 - Silk court mantua, c. 1740–45, embroidered with colour silk and silver thread (probably made in England). London, Victoria and Albert Museum, T.260&A-1969. **The style of the dress echoes seventeenth-century elite fashions, rather than those of the eighteenth century.**

7 Within the wider historical context of British fashion and dress, then, eighteenth-century court clothing has been approached as something of an anomaly. Moreover, the position of the court itself in eighteenth-century British history has been much disputed and is historiographically unresolved. Traditionally, the history of the court in this period was widely presumed to be one of political, social and economic regression. It was long held that after the Revolution of 1689, when the Catholic James II was replaced by his Protestant daughter Mary and her husband, William of Orange, the position of the court fundamentally changed and its authority declined. Broadly speaking, with the royal court castigated as an institution in decline, scholarly attention focused instead on the sectors that appeared to be flourishing, such as a burgeoning urban society, vibrant popular entertainments, an expansive press and print culture, and the politics of a public sphere and newly independent parliament rather than the sagas of the court and palace. This is not to suggest all things courtly are entirely written out of the British history ; far from it. Linda Colley's influential study of Britishness singled out George III's reign as a key moment in the history of monarchy, one that vigorously and successfully aligned kingship to national identity[14]. Studies of individual courtiers and court life have long been published and continue to be developed[15]. Most recently, Hannah Smith's important revisionist work of the early Georgian courts (1714–60) has reignited the field, reflecting as it does on the contested historiographical underpinnings of eighteenth-century British court history and opening up new avenues of enquiry[16].

8 Whilst there is not space here to reflect on these historiographical developments in detail, for the purposes of this collection it is necessary to offer a brief reflection on the differences between the social and political context of the British court and its continental neighbours. On the one hand the British royal court was closely intertwined with its European counterparts. Presided over by Dutch *stadtholder,* William of Orange (1688–1702), and subsequently by the Hanoverian George I (1714–27) and George II (1727–60), European interconnections and relationships were pronounced. Yet, many contemporaries regarded the British court system as constitutionally distinct from continental counterpoints. Although historians debate the precise workings of the balance of power between parliament and court, it was widely declared by

contemporaries that Britain enjoyed an ideal mixed constitution, wherein the power of the monarch was held in check by parliament, parliament was held accountable to the people, and the country overseen by a divinely ordained (Protestant) monarch. The 'tyranny' of France's autocratic Catholic monarchs was routinely cited by eighteenth-century British writers as the deplorable state that Britain had avoided, thanks to the 'Glorious' Revolution[17].

9 For historians and contemporaries alike, the loss of Whitehall Palace to fire in 1698 (and the subsequent failure to rebuild or replace it) is taken to symbolise eighteenth-century attitudes to court and monarchy. A sprawling twenty-three acres of residences, offices, public rooms and recreation rooms, home to royals, their courtiers and, crucially, Parliament, Whitehall Palace had been London's Versailles. Developed in a piecemeal fashion over many generations, it was never as coherent as the Sun King's palace, but it still stood as a symbol of majesty[18]. After 1698, the residences and rituals of the eighteenth-century court were split between satellite buildings : Kensington Palace, St. James's Palace and Queen's House (later Buckingham Palace) in London, and Windsor Castle which was one day's ride away. All were small in comparison to Whitehall, and none was large enough to retain full retinues for all members of the royal family and to host the ceremonies of court. As a result, ceremony and residence were often divided, with drawing rooms and receptions held at St. James's whilst accommodation was kept at Kensington, Windsor or the Queen's House[19]. Moreover, the royal family itself was fractured between properties, and the existence of two courts – one presided over by the monarch and the other by his heir – became a key feature of the century, a pattern repeated throughout the reigns of George I to George IV[20]. Significantly, Parliament sat in Westminster, in buildings now separated from the monarch's own court.

10 Such peculiarities and particularities of the British court system are essential to the investigation of court clothing with which the remainder of this essay is concerned. Court dress can be found to have been both integral to and defined by the political system that emerged in eighteenth-century Britain, with the court offering an arena for an extended parliamentary politics. In this setting, factions that we might loosely regard as party political were mediated through dress in ways no longer dictated by the monarch.

11 By focusing on written reports of court clothing, this essay investigates the significance of court dress to eighteenth-century elite culture. Notably, only a few examples of British court dresses from this period survive. On the one hand, then, these textual descriptions offer valuable supplementary details of contemporary cut, colour and style[21]. Such schematic and reconstructive use of court dress reports, however, is not the approach taken by this essay. Instead, the following discussion focuses specifically on the practice of writing about court clothing and the contemporary practice of circulating sartorial information, rather than on reconstructing the material appearance of the garments themselves. Crucially, and despite the contested political role ascribed to the British court by historians, court appearances were interpreted by correspondents as meaningful political performances. Both personal and collective allegiances were read by commentators from the appearance of court clothing. Loyalty was mapped and measured through material show. Yet, significantly, so too were political protests. The sartorial politics of the post-Glorious Revolution British court were multi-dimensional, involving the signaling of discontent as well as monarchical affiliation, and the flaunting of factional political sentiments that were arguably no longer dictated wholly by the monarch. Indicative of the significance of politicized material posturing is the fact that close investigation of contemporary court dress reports reveals that correspondents endeavoured to support, control or challenge parallel accounts of court clothing that were circulating at the same time. The transmission of information about court dress was itself politically charged. Clothing formed part of the performance of politics, a performance which was in turn placed at

the centre of a system of partisan reporting and political spin.

12 Interrogating written representations of court clothing, then, nuances our understanding of the ways in which the British court functioned and its position in the political culture and history of the eighteenth century. It also suggests new interpretations of the uses and meanings of 'court dress' more broadly. The type of court dress that this essay focuses on is the clothing that was worn by members of the elite when they attended court for ceremonies such as weekly drawing rooms and birthday balls. Whilst many of those attending court for drawing rooms and other rituals were courtiers – such as ladies and gentlemen of the bedchamber – the majority were members of Parliament, titled aristocrats and (sometimes) their untitled acquaintances. Within the British court system, those attending court for weekly drawing rooms were not necessarily members of the household nor did they live within royal properties. Therefore, 'court dress' is understood in this essay not simply as the wardrobes of the monarch or courtiers but as the clothing that was worn to court by those attending its rituals and ceremonies. Such clothing was subject to certain regulations and protocols. The specifics certainly varied across each reign, but broadly speaking the court demanded wide-hooped skirts for women and 'full' dress for men, and it was routinely stipulated that the fabrics of court clothing should be manufactured in Britain, to support national trade (although such rules were often ignored as French silks were favoured by the most fashionable courtiers). However, as this essay will explore, the semiotics of court dress for the eighteenth-century British court was arguably less about courtly rituals and court protocol, and more about the performances of power by the political elite. By using court material displays to communicate and mediate political allegiances and sentiments, 'court dress' for the elite wearer had broader connotations. The sartorial displays associated with the court may have operated within the palace, but they had a significance beyond it.

Court ceremonies and elite attendance

13 'Performed with a sort of contemptuous reluctance' is how the disappointed gentlewoman and author Mary Berry described the regulations of court attendance in eighteenth-century Britain when compared to the more sensuous excitement of Versailles. For the British, she declared, going to court was 'a duty which, in certain situations of life, it was necessary to pay, but from which they [the elite] no more thought of deriving amusement than from a visit to their grandmother'[22]. Others concurred, bemoaning their obligations. For Lady Louisa Stuart in 1782 the court drawing room was a 'frightful scene, people crying and fainting and going into screaming fits', with Lady MacCartney lost to 'violent hysterics' on her return home and Lady Mary Montagu, Lady Sydney, Lady Elizabeth Yorke, Mrs Adair and Miss Chaplin 'fainting away'[23]. Nonetheless despite the hyperbolic objections, court attendance provided a framework for elite social behaviour that was of course based on longstanding tradition[24]. For example, following the birth of her child, Mary Robinson acknowledged that attendance at court was a necessary part of her re-entrance into London society. 'I believe I must make my appearance [at court next Thursday]', she wrote to her mother, 'as I shall be known to be out in the World by being at Lady Mary Forbes on Wednesday'[25]. When Lady Mary Grey entered fashionable society in 1774, her first appearance at court marked the beginning of her involvement in the whirl of metropolitan life. 'I do not know whether Mama informed you' she wrote to her sister in 1774, 'we made our appearance at Court last Thursday sevennight, and since then we have seen all that is to be seen'[26].

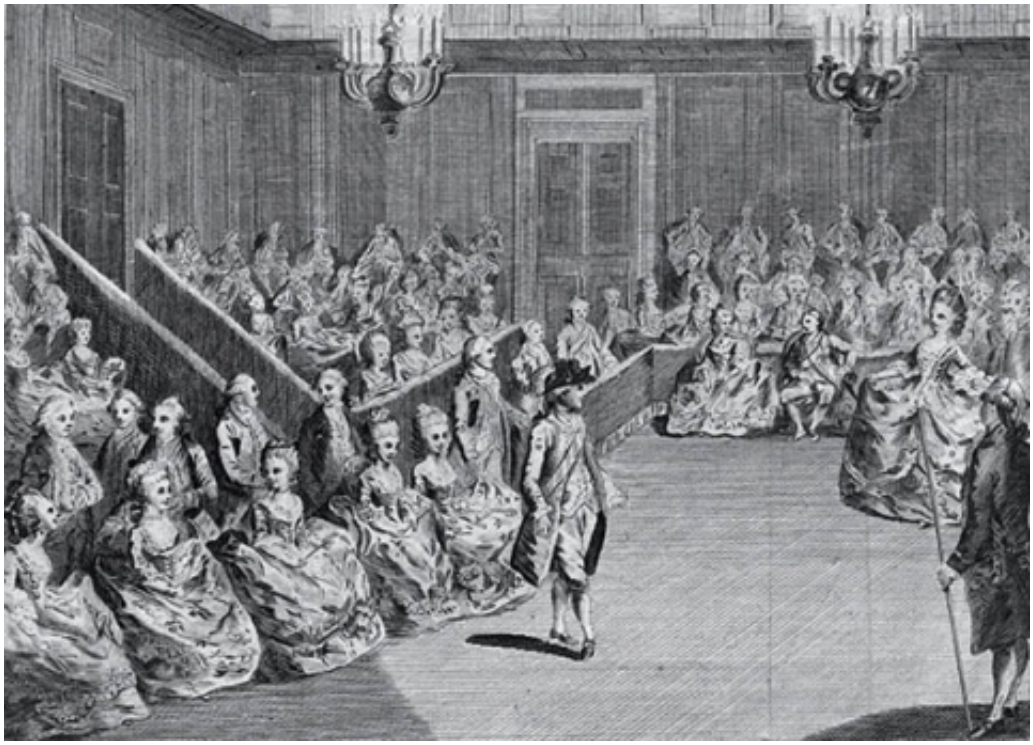
14 The precise timetable of entertainments and ceremonies differed according to the politics and personality of each sovereign but, most often, the standard sequence of events during the winter parliamentary season comprised Sunday church services

(when the family processed with the attendants to the chapel at St. James's), *levées*, drawing rooms, and the celebration of royal birthdays. *Levées* were held for important ministers, allowing them to foregather with the monarch in comparative seclusion. Under George III these meetings were all male and for government alone. Drawing rooms were larger affairs, often held three times a week, at which the nobility and gentry paid their respects to the monarch and showed themselves at court[27] (fig. 2).

Fig. 2 - *The Court at St. James's*, c. 1766, etching with engraving : 17 × 16 cm. Yale University, The Lewis Walpole Library, inv. 766.00.00.12.
Few images of the eighteenth-century English court survive. This engraving of 1766 is a rare illustration of a court drawing room. It pays particular attention to both the finery of clothing on display and the cramped accommodation detailed in contemporary letters. Note the canopied throne for the monarch in the background.

15 But it was the royal birthdays that formed the centrepiece of royal ceremony during the 1700s. A royal birthday celebration usually began with a church service in the morning. The monarch would later hear an ode in their praise, penned by their Poet Laureate and set to music by their Master of Music. In the late morning or early afternoon a drawing room would be held, followed in the evening by a grand ball[28](fig. 3).

Fig. 3 - *A View of the Ball at St. James on his Mjesties* [*sic*] *Birth Night*, c. 1782, etching on laid paper : 18 × 22 cm. Yale University, The Lewis Walpole Library, inv. 782.02.12.02.2.
Another example of a rare depiction of an eighteenth-century court ball (although this particular image was widely reprinted). By the 1780s the wide hooped dresses seen here were stylistically far removed from contemporary female fashions.



16 Access to the royal courts in eighteenth-century England appears to have been policed using outwardly informal, but nevertheless effective, devices. Appropriate dress, appropriate demeanour and insider knowledge stood as the main requirements for entrance. In theory, anyone dressed correctly was free to access the most public rooms of the London palaces (such as courtyards and entry rooms). However, to attend a formal event, such as a birthday drawing room, court-goers had to pass through an enfilade of spaces and rooms which acted as a powerful filter, gradually removing all but the titled, the expected and the invited. At each stage, the credentials of attendees were checked by watchful courtiers, responsible for filtering out those without rank or connection enough to progress[29].

17 Fine court clothing was the main ticket a court attendee had to carry and announced a noble's right to participate in court ceremonies, but entry on such terms was far from cheap. Dressing for court was phenomenally expensive. Anne, Countess of Strafford confessed to a £ 100 price tag for her court dress purchased in 1711. The Duchess of Hamilton's dress, purchased in 1752, cost almost as much as her husband's brand new and luxuriously fitted sedan chair[30]. In 1767 Lady Mary Coke spent £ 70 on silk alone, and, in 1790, the Duke of Bedford's brown striped silk suit embroidered in silver, spangles and brilliant diamonds was reported to have cost in excess of £ 500[31]. The expense incurred is brought into even sharper relief when it is recalled that many dresses were often intended to be worn only once. In many ways such expenditure was unmatched by any other category of elite consumer culture. High-end goods billed in the hundreds of pounds (such as domestic silverware, jewellery or light town carriages) enjoyed much more routine and long-term use by their possessors than was the norm for court dress. Small wonder, then, that Lady Louisa Stuart tartly calculated 'fifteen or sixteen hundred a year would not do very much for two people who must live in London and appear in fine clothes at St James's twice a week'[32].

New clothes and the politics of allegiance

18 The messages communicated by court clothing, however, extended beyond signals of wealth alone. Highly politicised and partisan messages were also worked into courtly

displays. On the one hand, to invest in court clothing was a clear signal of respect for royalty and a material display of honouring the monarch. Indeed, the role played by court clothing in communicating power can often be evaluated in terms of loyalties – to the monarch and also to the government, with the purchase of new clothing a particular indication of affiliation. For example, during Queen Anne's reign Lady Scarborough wrote to the Duchess of Marlborough about court dress. Rumour had reached Scarborough that the Duchess was to appear in new clothes at court. 'I take this opportunity to tell you deare Lady Dutchess [that] I am very glad to heare you talk of being drest on ye birthday', Lady Scarborough explained, 'and wish you may make many for ye same purpose, and if you have use of such cloathes this yeare, I verily believe you may have so for many to come'[33]. Here, then, intelligence that the Duchess of Marlborough was making new clothes for court was taken as a signal of her allegiance to Anne's court and, moreover, of her favour in those circles (although that position was soon to change). In 1712, the newly married Earl and Countess of Strafford (only recently promoted to their titles) were keen to curry favour with Queen Anne. In April of that year the Countess of Strafford recorded the 'new sute of clothes' she had commissioned for a court birthday to 'make a compliment' to the Queen[34]. Similarly, in 1714, she requested permission from her husband to purchase a new court gown after hearing that the Duchess of Portland and her daughter had ordered new clothes for the Queen's birthday celebrations and the Countess of Strafford believed that, following the initial success of her husband's diplomatic negotiations for the Treaty of Utrecht (and hopeful that they might secure another peerage promotion or at least a financially lucrative post on the back of the success), she and his sister had 'more reason to be in new [clothes] than any body'[35].

19 However, sartorial politics were not always this straightforward. Because new clothes were widely seen as testaments of loyalty, they could also be used to disguise political intent. The strategies employed by those who sought to manipulate the messages broadcast by court dress bring into sharp relief the communicative power of such clothing and its role in a politicised system of display. Written reports of court dress suggest that sartorial shows were minutely scrutinized in a bid to measure the relationship between various factions of the political elite and the monarch. For example, by late 1712, the relationship between the Marlboroughs and the Queen had soured, and a group of politicians (who for ease of reference we might loosely call Whig) were beginning to form a cluster of opposition in alignment to the Marlboroughs[36]. Reports of court clothing captured this development, as those involved used court displays to signal their political position. Noticeably writers who supported the opposition cause tried to skew reports of court attendance to make it appear that the court and its supporters were losing ground. The Whigs circulated reports that no new clothes were to be seen at court and that attendance was poor. With newspapers picking up this information from informers and publishing similar accounts, those who supported the crown and government endeavoured to correct the news. One such correspondent was Peter Wentworth. Explaining the situation in a letter to his brother, the Earl of Strafford, Queen's ambassador to The Hague, he detailed the competing reports of sartorial show that were coming from the court :

> The Whigs are pleased to give out that there was but very odd figures at Court of the Birthday [...] They gave out before that there wou'd be very little company, and 'twas said the Queen wou'd not come out ; but there was as much fine cloaths as ever [...][37].

20 The Countess of Strafford also wrote to clarify press reports and detailed the Whigs' attempts to boycott court events, noting that 'none of the Whigg Ladys now ever goes to Court because the Queen shall not have a full Drawing room & they give out that nobody goes near her'. Despite the political wrangling, she reassured her husband that court events remained 'fine'[38].

21 The issue of whether or not new and splendid clothes were worn to court was of paramount importance. In the midst of Whig attempts to boycott the court, the Queen's ambassadors sent expensive and luxurious clothing from their postings abroad for their wives and female acquaintances to wear. No doubt hoping for such a gown herself, the Countess of Strafford archly reported that, 'Lord Bullinbrock has given his Lady for today the finest manto and petecoat that be could had in France & Sir J Hammond has sent the Duchess of Grafton a very fine won'[39].

22 It was not only with splendid new dresses that the Tories attempted to denigrate the opposition Whig attack. Taking their campaign still further the Tories published their own press reports. These claimed that the Marlborough opposition was so extreme and unconstitutional that they were effectively setting up a court of their own. Significantly, Tory reports claimed that those who were to attend the 'Marlborough' court had commissioned new clothes to honour the Marlboroughs and snub the Queen. Once again, Peter Wentworth worked through the complexities of the partisan reports for his absent brother :

> Twas talkt of as if the Duke of M. – intended to make a ball that night at his house, [...] but that morning there was paper cry'd about the Street as representing it a design to sett up for themselves, [and] that there was several people that had made cloath for that day that had not for the birthday [...] they put off their Ball but sent to all the Ladies they had invited there woud be no dancing but that the Dutchess wou'd be at home, and shou'd be glad to see any of them that wou'd come[40].

23 Although they denied the rumours, the Marlboroughs would not have been the first to engineer an opposition 'court' that encouraged the wearing of new clothes to undermine rather than honour the monarch. As Robert Bucholz notes, in 1703, the opposition Whigs attempted to generate an alternative ceremonial calendar that challenged the celebrations of the Tory-dominated court. For example, in November of that year, the Whig Kit Kat Club met to commemorate the birthday of the previous monarch William III (rather than that of Queen Anne). The Whig nobles gathered at the Kit Kat Club to toast the former King, and made it known that they were wearing new clothes to celebrate the event, an honour traditionally bestowed on the current monarch alone[41].

24 In contrast to such efforts to boycott the display of finery at court or replicate the displays for alternative political ends, the Earl of Bristol attempted to make strategic use of court dress some years later to disguise a move towards political opposition. In 1716, the Earl had found his lengthy absences from London were generating rumours about his political sympathies. In an effort to quash the gossip he wrote to his wife, then in London, instructing her to wear a new and especially fine dress to court as a public statement of continued allegiance to the monarch, finessing his commands with verse. 'Since your finery is come from France,' he explained, 'you cannot with good grace stay in Town and not appear on the Birth night, which I desire you woud do to shew them' :

> Our loyalty is still the same,
> Whither it wins or loose the game,
> True as the diall to the sun,
> Altho it be not shind upon[42].

25 Whilst Bristol was keen to make a *show* of loyalty, it transpired that hearsay about his position was far from groundless. One year later, the Earl made public his move to political opposition and never again attended court. Notably though, until he was quite ready to act, he used court dress to cloak his manoeuvring and buy more time.

Old clothes and the politics of

opposition

26 At certain points in the century, the existence of an adult heir apparent allowed for the creation of an alternative royal court around which political opposition could rally. In this context, we find that clothing was again routinely deployed by the elite to display political preference, with the distinction between new and old clothing carefully deployed as politicized sartorial statements. In the 1730s, the relationship between the Prince of Wales and George II was fragile and disintegrating. Those attending the court used court birthdays and appearances at court to register their opposition or affiliation to different factions of the royal household. In 1734, for example, Lord Egmont noted that he had made new clothes for the Prince of Wales's birthday when, previously, he only recorded ordering new clothing for the birthdays of the King and Queen. Whilst he ensured his family appeared at the King's court dressed new, Egmont himself appears to have been irregular in his attendance. As early as April 1731, Egmont noted that the King had looked 'cool' because he 'did not go often enough to Court', and the Queen's vicious rebuke to Egmont's wife, recorded in 1736 – 'tis so long since I have seen you I thought you were dead' – testifies to the uncertain ground on which they stood[43]. Whilst his diary does not state his intentions explicitly, the fact that Egmont commissioned clothes to honour the Princes of Wales's birthday certainly appears loaded. If it was not so much a direct slur against the official court, it may nonetheless have been an attempt to garner favour from the heir apparent when such recognition from the current monarch was less forthcoming.

27 Such an interpretation is supported by the fact that accounts by some of Egmont's contemporaries reveal that others were careful to avoid showing any new clothing at the court of the errant Prince of Wales. Mary Delany, for example, recorded her desire to appear 'humbly drest' at the Prince's court, whilst opposition politicians such as the Duke of Portland were reported to appear dressed 'very fine' in the presence of the Prince[44]. By 1742 tensions had eased, but the Prince of Wales nonetheless retained a separate residence at Leicester House in Leicester Square. Arriving in London in November of that year, Lady Hertford wore the same new clothing to both courts to demonstrate her arrival in the capital and loyalty to the crown. She noted that the court that was held at Leicester House involved a 'great crowd but there were very few new clothes' amongst those in attendance. In contrast, at St. James's, although the royals themselves were not flaunting new clothing the nobles attending the St. James's court were spectacular in their shows. Lady Caroline Lennox was singled out by Lady Hertford as one of 'the finest of the ladies in white satin' (said to have been embroidered in Paris with the work alone costing 130 *louis*)[45]. The physical separation of the courts of the monarch and heir, and the often fractious relationship between the two ensured that the clothing worn to each was loaded with significance and the distribution of new clothes to old being particularly closely monitored.

28 Comparable attention to court clothing can also be identified in the second half of the century. In 1767, Lady Mary Coke was certain that royal court favourites and fellow Scottish nobles the Duchess of Hamilton and Lady Susan Stewart were conspiring against her. Coke was convinced that Hamilton and Stewart were purposefully misinforming their royal patrons and other acquaintances that the new and, in her opinion, 'fine', dress Coke wore to court for Queen Charlotte's birthday was 'old'. Lady Mary Coke was reassured by the King's brother the Duke of York that the King had indeed 'taken great notice of [her] Clothes' despite it 'being said before that [she] had an old Gown'[46]. On this occasion the attempt by the Duchess of Hamilton and Lady Susan Stewart to distort the information about court clothing in circulation appears to have been driven by interpersonal rivalries between the Scottish noble families, but nonetheless the nuanced significance of whether court clothing was deemed new or old, fine or not is clear[47]. Fraught political tensions resurfaced at court and were mediated

through court displays in the closing decades as the political elite responded to the fluctuating relationship between George III and his dissolute Prince of Wales. In the early 1780s, the King and his heir apparent continued to appear together at court events, but contemporaries watched the court closely for signs of discontent. A plethora of conflicting reports on the finery and show seen at court hinted at the tensions that were beginning to build. 'One hears of many different reports,' noted Jemima, Marchioness Grey of Queen's birthday ball in February 1781,

> it is wonder'd why some were invited and why others were not invited. It is said to have been very handsome and it is said the contrary. There were about twenty couples consisting chiefly of the Families of Ministers and of Persons belonging to the Court [...] but then some with such Pretensions being left out and some without any such taken in, [which] always makes a wonderment. The Maids of Honour were not asked and are very many of them angry (some of them you know are thought not to be in great favour)[48].

29 During George III's lengthy period of illness between 1788 and 1789, Whig politicians flaunted their support for the Princes of Wales and his Regency campaign. On the King's recovery, however, overt displays of loyalty were demanded from all to celebrate his health. As *The Times* noted in June 1789, 'even the forlorn, melancholy, disappointed Members of The Party' presented themselves at court to celebrate the King's recovery and 'dressed up their countenance so as to give the appearance, however they might be destitute of the spirit, of loyalty'[49]. 'Loyalty is a most expensive virtue at present', Lady Louisa Stuart wryly declared[50]. Nevertheless, the most extreme Whigs still found ways to accessorize their sartorial displays with messages of opposition, while ostensibly bowing to the authority of the crown. In late April a formal service of thanksgiving had been held at St. Paul's Cathedral to commemorate the King's return to health. Brooke's club, the St. James's haunt of the Whig party, hosted its own gala to 'toast' the King's health. Newspapers, however, reported that the dress required would be court dress in full embroidery but rendered in 'blue and buff' (the colours routinely adopted by the Whig party, echoing the uniform of the American revolutionary army)[51]. Celebrations and political displays continued elsewhere too. On 30 May 1789, the King's supporters attended a gala held by the French ambassador dressed either in the Windsor uniform – a blue hunting suit – or variations thereof. And their wives wore their latest court dress. It was noted in the papers however that 'those Noblemen distinguished in the opposite Party [...] did not wear any uniform'. The women in the opposition camp, high profile Whig hostesses such as the Duchess of Devonshire, were also recorded as shunning court-inspired clothing, and attended the gala in other, more fashionable, gowns.[52] At a ball held by the Duchess of Gordon when the King's health was clearly improving, Lady Carlisle, Lady Caroline Howard and Lady Villiers nevertheless took the opportunity to advertise their support for the Prince of Wales, flaunting his feathers and motto on their caps[53].

30 In 1792, a further attempt by the Whigs to orchestrate a collective display of political opposition at a court birthday was thwarted by the vigilance of customs officers. Contravening late eighteenth-century court protocols which stipulated that English silks should be used for court dress, the Whig party had commissioned their clothing in France. In a snub to the crown they decided to show themselves at court wearing new clothes of foreign manufacture. However, all did not go to plan. The imported suits were seized at Dover by customs and so the clothes (and the challenge they would have suggested) were kept away from court. *The Times* newspaper, in a report weighted in support of the government, smugly noted it to be 'astonishing the Nobility will suffer the anxiety and run the hazard of disappointment when it is an acknowledged fact that the *best dresses* which appeared at court *were entirely of English manufacture*'[54].

31 An awareness of the potential for politics to inform not only the sartorial choices of the elite but also the way in which sartorial displays at court were reported, positions the lengthy criticism and report of court dress published by *The Morning Chronicle*

(quoted at the start of this essay) in a new light. It will be recalled that, in the January 1795 article, despite dismissing the traditions of court dress reporting as 'gibberish', the newspaper nevertheless included its own extensive account of the clothing worn by those attending George III's birthday. Moreover, within that report, the dresses of two women in particular – Mrs Colonel de Bathe and Mrs Colonel Egerton – were singled out for particular praise. It is striking that it was the attire of the untitled, military wives rather than the female courtiers and noble ladies that *The Morning Chronicle* puffed. Only they were congratulated for 'elegance'. As war with revolutionary France raged, it seems likely that the coverage of court dress (denounced in one sentence but detailed in the next) was utilised by *The Morning Chronicle* as more than a straightforward fashion story. At this date, the newspaper was notoriously partisan. Under the proprietorship of Richard Brinsley Sheridan, it served as a mouthpiece for the Foxite Whigs who routinely boycotted court as a statement of their political opposition. By applauding the attire of the colonels' wives, it appears that the newspaper took pains to assert its national allegiance and sympathies at a time of war, whilst simultaneously denigrating the ostentation of court show and courtly (and, at this time, Tory) affiliation, 'especially at a time when every feeling heart is occupied by interest so much more important'[55]. Moreover, though criticising the tradition of reporting attendance at royal birthdays, an advertisement for Charles James Fox's birthday (leader of the Whigs) was carried on the front page of the paper[56]. Consequently, the 'unintelligible gibberish' of spangles, flounces and fancy trims can be read not simply as a record of court pomp but also as a thinly veiled political report, spun to serve the Whig interest and loaded with political intent.

32 Those attending court were clearly required to participate in a spectacular sartorial show. However, this display was far more than empty spectacle. An investigation of contemporary letters and their preoccupation with court dress reveals a system of reporting that extended beyond the recitation of cut, colour and style. Court dress was defined by more than its place within, or distance from, contemporary fashions. Rather, when *reported*, the clothing worn was interpreted as a meaningful signal of political display, read by observers both as a general measure of the political climate and also as an active component in the creation of political identities. It appears to have been precisely because of the uncertain nature of relationships between crown, government, palace and Parliament during the eighteenth century that court dress, and the interpretation of courtly display, became so overtly politicised. When dressing for court, elite figures broadcast their position in a political system, comprising a newly established constitutional monarchy, whose rules and expectations were universally unresolved. For the elite to shun the court entirely was an extreme statement of opposition that few were ready to attempt. However, it was possible for elite figures to display degrees of opposition through their sartorial choices. By selecting foreign-made fabrics, by wearing old instead of new (or new instead of old), or even by loading a dress with trimmings better suited for another garment, the clothing worn to court provided a means to articulate nuanced politicized positions and complex relationships to the presumed authority of the monarch.

33 Of course, the political potential of such choices may not always have been the concern of the wearer. Crucially, though, it was politics that was foregrounded in court dress reports. Far from straightforward catalogues of court fashions, both epistolary and published newspaper reports of court clothing mediated and manipulated the representation of courtly displays. Such reports are best approached as part of an interconnected culture of commentary that encompassed both the unpublished accounts in manuscript letters and the published accounts which appeared in newspapers. In 1800 Lady Jerningham's description of court clothing for her daughter included the perplexed note, 'I thought everybody fine but the newspapers says they were not so'[57]. Although here a brief and nondescript comment, when positioned alongside a wider context of court dress reports, it stands as a reminder of the

interrelationship of published and unpublished accounts within a culture of commentary that was often politically nuanced, with one report endeavouring to countermand another. At moments of political tension, members of the elite relied on close acquaintances to confirm or challenge the veracity of different accounts. The circulation of information about court clothing, and indeed the manipulation of reports about court show, also illuminates that this was not an entirely closed world. Crucially, although court dress was worn only at court, the messages it broadcast extended further. By donning court clothing the elite were not simply cloaking themselves in the traditions of monarchical authority. The messages communicated by court dress helped to forge new and complex politicised identities – identities that were as meaningful and relevant outside the palace walls as they were within them.

Notes

1 Acknowledgements : I am pleased to acknowledge my gratitude to Isabelle Paresys for inviting me to participate in the conference at Versailles in 2009 and to Lesley Miller for providing thorough and informative editorial suggestions. For additional critical readings and advice, I thank Quintin Colville, Joanna Marshner, Giorgio Riello and Amanda Vickery. Bedfordshire and Luton Archives and Record Service have granted permission to quote from the Wrest Park Papers. The material presented here extends some ideas first aired in 'Dressing for Court : Sartorial Politics and Fashion News in the Age of Mary Delany' in *Mrs. Delany & her Circle*, ed. by M. Laird and A. Wesiberg-Roberts, New Haven/London, Yale Center for British Art/Yale University Press/Sir John Soane's Museum, 2009. I have sought to avoid unnecessary overlap but these two essays share a broad (and still developing) investigation of the politics of court clothing. Together they represent the preliminary stages of a wider project on the material culture of the eighteenth-century court. I am grateful to these publications for allowing me to position these findings in two very different contexts. *The Morning Chronicle*, 20 January 1795, p. 4.

2 The puffing of the military women was subtle but distinctive. Mrs Colonel Egerton and Mrs Colonel de Bathe are the only women to be singled out for their 'elegance' in the description.

3 *The Gentleman's Magazine*, March 1731, p. 122.

4 *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 18 January 1790, p. 80.

5 See for example, *The Times*, 19 January 1792 ; *Bath Chronicle*, 22 January 1784 ; *Morning Herald*, 19 January 1788 ; *English Chronicle or Universal Evening Post*, 19 January 1790 ; *The St. James's Chronicle*, 27 February 1796 ; *The General Evening Post*, 16 February 1797 ; *Telegraph*, 16 February 1797 ; *Sun*, 5 June 1795 ; *Whitehall Evening Post*, 23 July 1798 ; *Morning Post and Gazetteer,* 15 July 1798.

6 The history of the English newspaper has been subject to considerable academic scrutiny. In particular, see Hannah Barker's *Newspapers, Politics and English Society 1695–1855*, Harlow, Longman, 2000 and *Newspapers, Politics and Public Opinion in Late Eighteenth-Century England*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1998.

7 The inclusion of these reports in both epistolary and printed news is unsurprising given the close linkages between the development of printed newspapers and the manuscript 'newsletter'. See Terttu Nevalainen, *An Introduction to Early Modern English*, Oxford University Press, 2006, pp. 20–21 and Daniel R. Woolf, *Reading History in Early Modern England*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001, chap. 1, 'The Death of the Chronicle', especially p. 28.

8 For example, British Library (hereafter BL), Add. Mss. 61455, letter from Frances Bathurst to the Duchess of Marlborough, Kensington, London, 20 October [1692].

9 BL, Add. Mss. 22256-7, letters from Anne, Countess of Strafford to Thomas Wentworth, 1st Earl of Strafford (second creation), 1711–1736 ; Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Stafford, *The Wentworth Papers 1705–1739 : Selected from the Private and Family Correspondence of Thomas Wentworth Lord Raby…*, ed. by J. J. Cartwight, London, Whyman & Sons, 1883. See, for example, letter from Peter Wentworth to his brother Earl of Strafford of 12 January 1712, p. 247.

10 BL, Add. Mss. 22256, letters to Lady Anne Campbell (1735–1750), fol. 50, undated letter signed 'CB'.

11 See for example letters from Lady Hertford to Lord Beauchamp, Sunday 12 November 1742, in Helen Sard Hughes, *The Gentle Hertford : Her Life and Letters*, New York, Macmillan

Co., 1940, p. 225.

12 Molly Hood née West (c. 1706–1786), was a granddaughter of Sir Richard Temple and first wife of naval officer Alexander Hood, who was twenty years her junior. Hester Pitt, Lady Chatham (1720–1803) was the wife of Prime Minister William Pitt the elder (1708–1778) and mother of William Pitt the younger, prime minister from 1783. For letters of Molly Hood to Hester Pitt, Lady Chatham, see *So Dearly Loved, So Much Admired : Letters to Hester Pitt, Lady Chatham, from her Relations and Friends*, ed. by V. Birdwood, London, H.M.S.O, 1994, for example the letter dated January 23 1773, p. 110. Lady Mary Jemima Grey Yorke (1757-1830) was the second daughter of Philip Yorke, 2nd earl of Hardwicke. Mary Grey's correspondence is held at Bedfordshire Record Office (BRO), Lucas (Wrest Park) Papers (hereafter WPP). See for example L30/11/133/68, from Mary Grey to her sister Amabel Polwarth, London, 20 January 1779.

13 Mary Berry, *A Comparative View of the Social Life of England and France from the Restoration of Charles the Second, to the French Revolution*, London, Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1828, p. 439-40.

14 Linda Colley, *Britons : Forging the Nation 1707–1837*, New Haven/London, Yale University Press, 2005, see chap. 5, 'Majesty', especially p. 204-17.

15 A nineteenth-century fascination with the excesses of Georgian life led to the publication of many court memoirs, including Mary Cowper, *Diary of Mary Countess Cowper, Lady of the Bedchamber to the Princess of Wales 1714–1720*, London, J. Murray, 1864 and Charlotte Papendiek, *Court and Private life in the Time of Queen Charlotte : Being the Journals of Mrs Papendiek*, London, Richard Dentley & Son, 1887. Throughout the twentieth century biographies of courtiers and monarchs have continued to be produced : for example, Constance Hill, *Fanny Burney at the Court of Queen Charlotte*, London, Lane, 1912 ; Robert Halsband, *Lord Hervey : Eighteenth-Century Courtier*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1973 ; R. O. Bucholz, *The Augustan Court : Queen Anne and the Decline of Court Culture*, Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1993 ; Steven Parissien, *George IV : The Grand Entertainment*, London, J. Murray, 2001 ; Tony Claydon, *William III*, London, Longman, 2002 ; Grayson M. Ditchfield, *George III : An Essay in Monarchy*, Basingstoke, Palgrave, 2002 ; E. A. Smith, *A Queen on Trial : The Affair of Queen Caroline*, Stroud, Sutton, 2005.

16 Hannah Smith, *Georgian Monarchy : Politics and Culture, 1714-1760*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006. See her succinct introduction for an overview of the historiographical debates relating to the position of the court in eighteenth-century English politics and culture.

17 H. Smith, *Georgian Monarchy*, *op. cit.*, especially pp. 30–35, 56–59, 64. The relationship between the British and European courts is further complicated by the continuation of support for the dethroned Stuarts (for James II and his descendants). For studies of the Jacobites, their continental activities and court-in-exile, see Edward T. Corp, *A Court in Exile : The Stuarts in France, 1689-1718*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004, and Daniel Szechi, *The Jacobites, Britain and Europe 1688-1788*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1994.

18 R. Malcolm Smuts, *Court Culture and the Origins of a Royalist Tradition in Early Stuart England*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987, pp. 52–68.

19 Derek Hudson, *Kensington Palace*, London, P. Davis, 1968, p. 6 ; E. J. Burford, *Royal St. James's : Being a Story of Kings, Clubmen and Courtesans*, London, Hale, 1988, p. 17.

20 For the division between George I and the Prince of Wales (later George II) see John M. Beattie, 'The Court of George I and English Politics, 1717-1720', *English Historical Review*, 81, 1966, p. 26-37.

21 A model of how manuscript evidence can be utilized in conjunction with material evidence is given in Clare Browne's detailed and insightful study of the fragments of a 1740s court dress attributed to Mary Delany. See Clare Browne, 'Mary Delany's Embroidered Court Dress', in *Mrs. Delany & her Circle*, ed. by M. Laird and A. Wesiberg-Roberts, New Haven/London, Yale Center for British Art/Yale University Press/Sir John Soane's Museum, 2009.

22 M. Berry, *A Comparative View…*, *op. cit.*, p. 439-40.

23 Lady Louisa Stuart, *The Letters of Lady Louisa Stuart*, ed. by R. Brimley Johnson, London, Lane, 1926, p. 69.

24 Few formal presentation records survive for the eighteenth century, but elite letters reveal that presentation to the monarch, as well as subsequent routine participation in court events, was the norm. More detailed records survive for the nineteenth century and have been examined by Nancy Ellenberger to map the changing social status of those presented at court during Queen Victoria's reign. See Nancy W. Ellenberger, 'The Transformation of London "Society" at the End of Victoria's Reign : Evidence from Court Presentation Records', *Albion*, 22, no. 4, 1990, p. 633–53.

25 BRO, WPP, L30/9/81/34, letter from Mary Robinson to Marchioness Grey, 21 January

1782.

26 BRO, WPP, L30/11/123/31, letter from Mary Grey to Amabel Polwarth, 17 December 1774.

27 Newspapers advertised the dates on which drawing rooms would be held. In November 1717, for example, the *Original Weekly Journal* noted, 'a with-drawing room is order'd to be kept at court every Monday, Wednesday and Friday night during the winter'. In 1722 the Prince of Wales held two drawing rooms each week at Leicester House, and three per week were held by the King at St. James's (see, for example, *Post Boy*, 11 October 1722). In 1790 *The Public Advertiser* reported that the royal family were based primarily at Windsor but stayed a few nights each week at Kensington to enable the Queen to hold a St James's Drawing Room on Thursday and the King to host a levee for ministers each Friday morning. See *Public Advertiser*, 27 December 1790 and also *Woodfall's Register*, 29 December 1790.

28 *Weekly Journal or British Gazetteer*, 2 June 1722 gave a full report of the progression of Birthday celebrations : 'Monday being the Birth-Day of His Most Sacred Majesty King GEORGE, who then enter'd into the 63d year of his age [...] the Morning was usher'd with ringing of Bells, and at one o'clock the Guns on the Tower Wharf were fired to the Number of 62, being the exact Number of His Majesty's Years, after which they fired all round the Lines and Ramparts. There was a Drawing Room at Court crowded with a splendid Appearance of the Nobility and Foreign Ministers to compliment His Majesty, as did also their Royal Highnesses the Prince and princess of Wales, and after the Birth-Day Song as usual, there was an illustrious Ball, at which were also present the Prince and Princess of Wales, so that the greatest Court was made, as has been seen in any Reign past'.

29 Robert Bucholz has investigated the procedures and principles which determined access to the eighteenth-century courts. See Robert O. Bucholz, 'Going to Court circa 1700 : A Visitor's Guide', *The Court Historian*, 5, no. 3, December 2000, p. 191.

30 BL, Add Mss. 22226, fol. 48 from the Countess of Strafford to the Earl of Strafford [1711] ; Accounts of Duke and Duchess of Hamilton, National Register of Archives, Scotland, NRA(S) 2177, bundle 426, number 532.

31 Noted by Lady Mary Coke, 13 January 1767, in *The Letters and Journals of Lady Mary Coke*, ed. by J. A. Home, Edinburgh, D. Douglas, 1889–96, 4 vols. ; here, vol. 2, p. 114. In comparison Lady Louisa Stuart suggested a gown for 'full dress' (worn to a private ball for example) might cost £ 24 whereas a court gown would cost over £ 70. Lady Louisa Stuart to Lady Portalington, 30 March 1789, in Lady Louisa Stuart, *The Letters...*, *op. cit.*, p. 96.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 83, Lady Louisa Stuart to Lady Portalington, 13 March 1787.

33 BL, Add. Mss. 61456, fol. 66, letter from Frances, Countess of Scarborough to Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough [undated, c. 1708–10].

34 BL, Add. Mss. 22226, fol. 145, letter from Anne, Countess of Strafford in London to Thomas Wentworth 1st Earl of Strafford in The Hague, 15 April 1712.

35 BL, Add. Mss. 22226, fol. 393, letter from Anne, Countess of Strafford to Thomas Wentworth, 1st Earl of Strafford, 30 January 1713/14.

36 The attribution of 'party' political labels to eighteenth-century factions is notoriously difficult. Many eighteenth-century politicians referred to themselves as 'independent'. Nevertheless the terms 'whig' and 'tory' were widely deployed throughout the period and politicians often voted as a group. The attribution of the Marlboroughs to 'whig' politics is not without its problems but their opponents often labeled them as such. The Earl and Countess of Strafford, for example, discuss the 'whig' politics of the Marlborough as distinct from their 'tory' allegiance. For further details on the multiplicity of political factions between 1688 and 1800, see John Brewer, *Party Ideology and Popular Politics at the Accession of George III*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1976.

37 Peter Wentworth to the Earl of Strafford, London, 12 January 1712, reprinted in T. Wentworth, Earl of Stafford, *The Wentworth Papers*, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

38 BL, Add. Mss. 22226, fol. 288, letter from the Countess of Strafford to the Earl, London, February 1712/13.

39 *Ibid.* Henry St John, First Viscount Bolingbroke (1678–1751) was Secretary of State between 1710 and 1714. At the date of the Countess of Strafford's letter he was in Paris negotiating terms of peace with France. 'Sir J. Hammond' is likely to be a reference to Anthony Hammond (1668-1738), who was deputy paymaster of British forces serving in Spain at this date. He was elected Knight of the shire for Huntingdonshire in 1695 and was married to Lady Jane Hammond, daughter of Sir Walter Clarges.

40 Peter Wentworth to his brother the Earl of Strafford, London, 12 January 1712, T. Wentworth, Earl of Stafford, *The Wentworth Papers*, *op. cit.*, p. 247.

41 R. Bucholz, *The Augustan Court*, *op. cit.*, p. 226. A description of the Marlborough incidente is also treated by Bucholz, refer to pp. 227–28 for details. Contemporary accounts

reveal the widespread use of specific symbols to signal loyalty or opposition to royal houses. Mary Countess Cowper, for example, noted in her diary that, after 1714, some would wear ‘green boughs’ (oak leaves) in their hats on the anniversary of the Restoration, as a statement of opposition to the House of Hanover and roses in buttonholes on the Pretender’s birthday (the descendant of the exiled James II and the Stuart court). Supporters of the Protestant monarchy and the house of Hanover wore orange ribbons to commemorate William of Orange on key dates associated with the Glorious Revolution. See entries for 29 May to 10 June1716 in Mary Cowper, *Diary of Mary, Countess Cowper, Lady of the Bedchamber, to the Princess of Wales, 1714–1720*, ed. by C. S. Cowper, London, J. Murray, 1864, p. 107.

42 Letter from Lord Bristol to Lady Bristol, Ickworth, 26 October 1716 in *Letter Books of John Hervey, 1st Earl of Bristol,* London, Jackson, 1894, vol. 1, p. 34.

43 See for example, BL, Add. Mss. 47061, journal entry for 3 April 1730/1 ; BL, Add Mss. 47062, 1 November 1732 ; BL, Add Mss. 47064, 21 January 1733/4 and 1 March 1733/4.

44 For a full study of Mary Delany’s use of court clothing to signal her allegiance to the court see *Mrs. Delany & her Circle*, *op. cit.*, chapters by Mark Laird, Clarissa Campbell Orr, Clare Browne and Hannah Greig.

45 Lady Hertford to Lord Beauchamp, Sunday 12 November 1742, in H. S. Hughes, *The Gentle Hertford…*, *op. cit.*, p. 225.

46 Diary entries for 21 and 24 January 1767 in Lady Mary Coke, *The Letters…*, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, pp. 121–22.

47 Lady Mary Coke makes repeated reference to fraught relationships with Elizabeth Campbell (née Gunning), Duchess of Hamilton and Lady Susan Stewart, probably linked to the fractious dispute which embroiled the Scottish peers over the rightful inheritance of the Hamilton dukedom (known as the Douglas cause) and Elizabeth Gunning’s second marriage to John Campbell, heir to the 3rd Duke of Argyll. Lady Mary Coke was the fifth daughter of John Campbell, 2nd Duke of Argyll. For further references to the frosty relationships between these extended kin, see diary entries for September 1766, in Lady Mary Coke, *The Letters…*, *op. cit.*, vol. 1.

48 Wrest Park Papers L30/11/122/287, Letter from Jemima, Marchioness Grey to her daughter Amabel, Lady Polwarth, Monday 19 February 1781.

49 *The Times*, 5 June 1789, issue 1172, p. 2, col. B.

50 Lady Louisa Stuart to Lady Caroline Dawson, Countess of Portarlengton, 30th March 1789, in *Gleanings from an Old Portfolio Containing Some Correspondence between Lady Louisa Stuart and her Sister Caroline, Countess of Portarlengton, and Other Friends and Relations*, ed. by A. G. C. S. Clark, Edinburgh, D. Douglas, 3 vols. ; here, vol. 2, p. 117.

51 *The World*, 18 April 1789, issue 717.

52 *The Times*, 30 May 1789, issue 1168, p. 2, col. C. Report repeated in *Felix Farley’s Bristol Journal*, 6 June 1789.

53 Lady Strafford to George Leveson Gower, 12 February 1789, in *Lord Granville Leveson Gower : First Earl Granville Private Correspondence 1781–1821*, ed. by C. Granville, London, Murray, 1917, p. 12.

54 *The Times*, 19 January 1792. Text italicized in the original.

55 *The Morning Chronicle*, 20 January 1795.

56 The advertisement noted that ‘Mr Fox’s birthday will be celebrated at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, the Strand, on Saturday 24th […] tickets to be had of the stewards and at the Crown and Anchor bar’.

57 Letter from Lady Jerningham to Charlotte Bedingfeld, London 24 May 1800 from ‘Letters and journals for years 1780–1833 : belonging to Charlotte Lady Bedingfeld, daughter of Sir William and Lady Jerningham of Costessey Hall Norfolk’ published as part of microfilm series *Aristocratic Women : The Social, Political and Cultural History of Rich and Powerful Women*, Adam Matthews Microfilm Publication.

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Titre

Fig. 1 - Silk court mantua, c. 1740–45, embroidered with colour silk and silver thread (probably made in England). London, Victoria and Albert Museum, T.260&A-1969. The style of the dress echoes seventeenth-century elite fashions, rather than those of the eighteenth century.

	URL	http://journals.openedition.org/apparences/docannexe/image/1311/img-1.jpg
	Fichier	image/jpeg, 132k
	**Titre**	Fig. 2 - *The Court at St. James's*, c. 1766, etching with engraving : 17 × 16 cm. Yale University, The Lewis Walpole Library, inv. 766.00.00.12. Few images of the eighteenth-century English court survive. This engraving of 1766 is a rare illustration of a court drawing room. It pays particular attention to both the finery of clothing on display and the cramped accommodation detailed in contemporary letters. Note the canopied throne for the monarch in the background.
	URL	http://journals.openedition.org/apparences/docannexe/image/1311/img-2.jpg
	Fichier	image/jpeg, 144k
	**Titre**	Fig. 3 - *A View of the Ball at St. James on his Mjesties* [*sic*] *Birth Night*, c. 1782, etching on laid paper : 18 × 22 cm. Yale University, The Lewis Walpole Library, inv. 782.02.12.02.2. Another example of a rare depiction of an eighteenth-century court ball (although this particular image was widely reprinted). By the 1780s the wide hooped dresses seen here were stylistically far removed from contemporary female fashions.
	URL	http://journals.openedition.org/apparences/docannexe/image/1311/img-3.jpg
	Fichier	image/jpeg, 101k

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Droits d’auteur