Chapter 4

THE CAVENDISH INVENTION OF BOLSOVER CASTLE

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IN MARK GIROUARD'S foundational study of the architectural work of Robert Smythson, the keep or Little Castle at Bolsover is bewitchingly described as "a dream-world … an almost untouched expression in stone of the lost world of Elizabethan chivalry and romances." Yet Girouard finds the building difficult to fathom. "Bolsover is like nothing else in England."[1] He salutes the imaginations of Robert and John Smythson, father and son, and their talent for adapting a variety of sources, but he argues that this building's individuality springs largely from the characters of Sir Charles Cavendish, who commissioned the work in 1612, and his son William, 1st Duke of Newcastle, who completed it after his father's death in 1617.

Girouard observes that Charles's "castle mania" fitted with the bravery and martial pride of a man who had fought in the Dutch wars and who was exceptionally skilled in horsemanship and fencing.[2] However, he suggests that it may also have stemmed from a mixture of romanticism and snobbery, born of the union of new (Cavendish) money with ancient Northumberland lineage in the marriage of Charles to Katherine Ogle. He detects a change of direction, a more relaxed approach to the design, when William inherited his father's unfinished project. John Smythson was sent to London to study the new buildings associated with Inigo Jones, returning with examples that he only partly understood. However, for Girouard, William, "the sprawling Duke," may in truth have "preferred something a little more bizarre." In characterizing his architectural taste, Girouard observes that William "suffered from a certain flabbiness": a lack of drive or organizing capacity and an extravagant love of music and "soft pleasures."[3] He notes comments by contemporaries which reveal that these weaknesses underlay his failure as a Royalist commander and his compromised reputation at court. For Girouard, William's poetic and dramatic writings had no shape, and his scientific dabblings were superficial. He was perhaps a little absurd. Thus the castle appears among the witnesses for the prosecution not only in observations about the uneven reception of the continental Renaissance in Tudor and Jacobean Britain but also in Girouard's assessment of Charles and William Cavendish themselves. Architecture is enlisted to colour their biographies, and biography informs the interpretation of the architecture.

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1 Mark Girouard, *Robert Smythson and the Elizabethan Country House* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), 209.

2 Girouard, *Robert Smythson*, 232.

3 Girouard, *Robert Smythson*, 247, 251.

Girouard's approach has proved influential. This chapter begins by examining the ways in which interpretations of Cavendish personalities and Cavendish architecture have remained central, and mutually dependent, even as discussions of the Welbeck branch of the family have broadened to encompass the iconography of the murals at Bolsover, the royal visits of 1633 and 1634, the literature associated with William, his broad cultural interests, and his politics. It then offers a new perspective on these discussions by taking a fresh look at the Little Castle and by examining the life of Charles, reviewing the context for commissioning the building work, and his experience and interests. Finally, recent research on the applied paintings challenges interpretations of William's reception of his father's initial design and sheds further light on his creative output.

While Girouard wrote little about the paintings that decorate the Little Castle, Timothy Mowl has focused on their erotic charge. Echoing Girouard, he presents continuity between the morals in the pictures and the morals of their consumer: the wall paintings in the closets give both "the artistic range and measure of the man." For him it is an "amazing revelation of the times" to realize that this Jacobean creation allowed William to feast his eyes on unclothed flesh in either room, for "Heaven is almost as naughty as Elysium."[4]

Timothy Raylor, too, finds that the decorative scheme at Bolsover expresses the character of William. Indeed, in his ground-breaking study of the applied paintings, he goes further by suggesting that the building should be read as "a witty apologia" for its second owner.[5] He describes the dynamic, theatrical character of the paintings and statues, and he indicates connections in the iconography to both the topos of the banquet of sense and Jonson's masque of 1618, *Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue*. For him, the decoration juxtaposes Neoplatonism with Ovidianism and refers directly to William, who emerges as a complex, potentially contradictory figure. By this interpretation, the schemes portray William as a man of sanguine temperament, who can embrace sensuality because he is endowed with Herculean moral strength. The paintings reveal the central message: William's family and noble guests might come to Bolsover and legitimately partake of pleasure because they too have inherent virtue and self-knowledge.

In Lucy Worsley's biography of William, he is a man "perhaps more deeply addicted to pleasure than most." Worsley presents the visit to Bolsover by King Charles and Queen Henrietta Maria in 1634 as a high-risk strategy on William's part. They "will either be charmed … or else … slightly disgusted."[6] For her, the castle is a private retreat for illicit indulgence but also a shrine to William's lust. She proposes that William used the paintings as a window onto his character (lascivious but not depraved) in a daring campaign of self-promotion to a prudish Caroline court.

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4 Timothy Mowl, *Elizabethan and Jacobean Style* (London: Phaidon, 1993), 123.

5 Timothy Raylor, "'Pleasure Reconciled to Virtue': William Cavendish, Ben Jonson, and the Decorative Scheme of Bolsover Castle," *Renaissance Quarterly* 52 (1999): 402–39 at 402.

6 Lucy Worsley, *Cavalier: The Story of a Seventeenth-Century Playboy* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007), 106.

James Knowles's biographical essay on William also explores his ambivalent reputation. Knowles chooses, however, to foreground William's engagement with continental culture, his energy as a practitioner in a wide range of cultural activities, and his intellectual curiosity. He notes that William was a significant patron of the arts, although he argues that William's primary contribution was as a wealthy "*animateur*." His gift was to bring together exceptionally talented individuals (most famously hosting a dinner for Hobbes, Gassendi, and Descartes), allowing them to enjoy "sweet conversation."[7]

Knowles also makes a link between hospitality and politics. He observes that William was "a keen but critical monarchist" who sometimes rejected court culture and developed instead a distinctly northern style that "absorbed and remade the Caroline aesthetic." Again, Bolsover Castle is called to the stand.

> [William] supported architecture that was Gothic, often with a distinctly Protestant cast (the Bolsover Little Castle is said to borrow from the style of Prince Henry who would, had he lived, have been the militantly Protestant Henry IX of England); he collected and patronised northern European artists; and he practised his local governance and hospitality in a manner closer to the chivalric figures of the English Middle Ages, or the great nobles of the Elizabethan era, rather than the regulated and limited aristocratic style preferred at the Caroline court.[8]

Here Knowles sees an association between William and Gothic architecture, although he does not suggest that William built in the Gothic style. He is a "supporter," it seems, because he did not erase his father's work and because he increased the resemblance of the west façade of the Little Castle to the set by Inigo Jones of Oberon's Palace for Jonson's *Oberon the Fairy Prince* of 1610, first noticed by Roy Strong.[9] By connecting William to his father's Gothic architecture, Knowles elides the two men. With William positioned as a nostalgic proponent of Elizabethan chivalry, Knowles can make a link to his artistic taste, implying that his patronage of northern European artists (Daniel Mytens, Anthony van Dyck, Hendrick van Steenwijck, Alexander Keirincx) reveals him to be out of step with an upcoming appreciation of Italian art.[10]

Knowles also makes a link to William's style of hospitality, for him characterized by extravagance, nostalgia, and a regional inflection. This is further explored in Knowles's analysis of Jonson's text for the site-specific masque performed at Welbeck Abbey in

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7 James Knowles, "From Gentleman to Prince: William Cavendish in Context," in *Royalist Refugees: William and Margaret Cavendish in the Rubens House 1648–1660*, ed. Ben Van Beneden and Nora De Poorter (Antwerp: Rubenshuis and Rubenianum, 2006), 13–20, 20.

8 Knowles, "Gentleman to Prince," 18, 19.

9 Roy Strong, *Henry, Prince of Wales and England's Lost Renaissance* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1986), 96–97.

10 This is in contrast with Karen Hearn, who states in her essay for the same collection that for portraiture William "appears to have employed the most fashionable and skilled painters available, when they were at the height of their vogue." Karen Hearn, "William Cavendish and the Fine Arts: Patronage before the Exile," in Van Beneden and De Poorter, ed., *Royalist Refugees*, 90–94, 94.

1633.[11] He observes that the hybrid buildings at Welbeck conveyed William's combination of localism and internationalism, his attraction to the figure of the Earl of Leicester (see Richard Wood's chapter), and the image he cultivated of himself as "critically distant from the court and its styles." Welbeck was an assemblage. It featured the vaulted remains of the medieval abbey, and the remodelling by Charles, with Robert and John Smythson, included a neo-chivalric porch. These were, however, set beside a canal and pavilions, also by Charles, with a series of ponds that were reminiscent of the Medici villa at Pratolino.[12]

Much has been invested, then, in a picture of Charles as a muscular, though cultured and romantic, proponent of Gothic-inspired architecture with a regional flavour. Likewise, much hinges on the depiction of the mature William as a man of contradictions—trying to square the commitment to traditional aristocratic honour, manliness, chivalry, and Elizabethan magnificence that he inherited from his father with a refined sensibility and a hopelessly louche temperament.[13] This root internal conflict has been found not only in the architecture William sponsored but also in writing by him (and associated with him) that references the masque at Kenilworth of 1575 and the Earl of Leicester, the topos of the banquet of sense, and the opposition in Neoplatonic philosophy between earthly and heavenly love. The literary locations for these William-associated themes include Ben Jonson's *The New Inn*, *The Magnetic Lady*, *The Tale of a Tub*, and *The Sad Shepherd*, in addition to the Welbeck and Bolsover masques. They also include several of William's own plays and fragments of plays (many of which borrow from Jonson: see the chapters by Matthew Steggle and Tom Rutter) and his poetry: *The Variety*, *A Debauched Gallant*, the Antwerp pastoral, and the poem beginning "I'le Muster Up my senses with delight," as well as *The Concealed Fancies* by Lady Jane Cavendish and Lady Elizabeth Brackley.[14] Scholars have connected specific dramatic characters with William and/or Charles: Lovel, Goodstock, Beaufort, Ironside, Compass, Robin Hood, Newman, Manly, and Monsieur Calsindow.[15] Dick and Tom in *A Debauched Gallant* are another

11 Ben Jonson, *The King's Entertainment at Welbeck*, ed. James Knowles, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, ed. David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 6:661–80, 661–63.

12 Lucy Worsley, "The Architectural Patronage of William Cavendish, First Duke of Newcastle, 1593–1676," 2 vols. (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sussex, 2001), 2:130, 137–38.

13 Raylor, " 'Pleasure Reconciled,' " 410–11.

14 For the banquet of sense in the Antwerp pastoral see James Knowles, " 'We've Lost, Should We Lose Too Our Harmless Mirth?': Cavendish's Antwerp Entertainments," in Van Beneden and De Poorter, ed., *Royalist Refugees*, 70–77.

15 Anne Barton, "Harking Back to Elizabeth: Ben Jonson and Caroline Nostalgia," *English Literary History* 48 (1981): 706–31; Jane Cavendish, *The Collected Works of Jane Cavendish*, ed. Alexandra G. Bennett (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 16–21; Alison Findlay, *Playing Spaces in Early Women's Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 44–53; Lisa Hopkins, "Play Houses: Drama at Welbeck and Bolsover," *Early Theatre* 2 (1999): 25–44, 28; Lisa Hopkins and Barbara MacMahon, " 'Come, what, a seige?': Metarepresentation in Lady Jane Cavendish and Lady Elizabeth Brackley's

variation.[16] Shadows of both father and son are detected behind the figures that are old-fashioned, principled, and valiant, although only William is the model for the contrasting good-timers and reprobates.

I would like to come at the connection between Cavendish buildings and Cavendish biography from the starting point of the function of the Little Castle in order to question the established view that it was an exercise in snobbish nostalgia and northern pride for Charles and a secluded nest of pleasure for William. It has generally been agreed that Bolsover was conceived in the tradition of Jacobean lodges, although, as we will see, this can be partly challenged. Colin Platt's survey of remodelled houses discusses Robert Smythson's Wootten Lodge of ca. 1610 and identifies "companion lodges" in "Walter Raleigh's Sherborne, Thomas Howard's Lulworth, Francis Bacon's Verulam, Thomas Tresham's Lyveden, Robert Cecil's Cranborne, and Charles Cavendish's Bolsover." According to Platt's account, the Little Castle was in line with the others: intended for both private contemplation and intimate, cultivated sociability. It was a retreat from the main household and centre of estate business, a "fully—even luxuriously—equipped" second home. It was an "expensive one-off toy," deliberately small and private, though fully formed, with little emphasis on public rooms.[17]

However, Paul Drury's conservation management plan for English Heritage shows that the Little Castle was never a complete house. His analysis of the phases of building underscores an attachment to Charles's main residence at Welbeck Abbey, seven miles to the east. Bolsover lacked a brewery, a laundry, and a wardrobe, and it had limited accommodation for servants, even as the Terrace Range and stable block expanded through the 1620s and 1630s.[18] Thus, while the castle was certainly residential, and its location in a small town was convenient for supplementary services, it was nonetheless dependent on communication with, and transport from, Welbeck Abbey. It was designed for semi-independent living, suitable for day trips and short stays.

Drury's analysis also leads us to challenge the view that Bolsover was built for privacy. Although the Little Castle had a complete range of kitchens from the outset,

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'The Concealed Fancies,'" *Early Modern Literary Studies* 16 (2013): online: https://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/journal/index.php/emls/article/view/83/82. Ben Jonson, *The Magnetic Lady*, ed. Helen Ostovich, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, 6:393–540, 406–10; Raylor, "'Pleasure Reconciled,'" 433–36. David Riggs, *Ben Jonson: A Life* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 302; Nick Rowe, "'My Best Patron': William Cavendish and Jonson's Caroline Dramas," *The Seventeenth Century*, *Special Issue: The Cavendish Circle*, 9 (1994): 197–212 at 201–10; Ben Jonson, *The New Inn*, ed. Julie Sanders, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, 6:167–313, 170–74; Elizabeth Brackley and Jane Cavendish, *The Concealed Fansyes: A Play by Lady Jane Cavendish and Lady Elizabeth Brackley*, ed. Nathan Comfort Starr, *Proceedings of the Modern Language Association* 46 (1931): 802–38 at 838.

16 Lynn Hulse, ed., *Dramatic Works by William Cavendish* (Oxford: Malone Society, 1996), 92–131.

17 Colin Platt, *The Great Rebuildings of Tudor and Stuart England* (London: University College London Press, 1994), 93–98.

18 Paul Drury, "Bolsover Castle, Derbyshire: A Conservation Plan," 2 vols. (unpublished report, English Heritage, 2012), 1:42–84.

including specialist pastry ovens, this generous provision was increased when the Terrace Range was developed, with further areas for storing and preparing food and drink. David Durant argues that the accommodation and kitchens of the north block of the Terrace were probably begun by Charles, while for Drury it is more likely that they were begun soon after William took over the work.[19] Either way, from the early 1620s there was capacity to prepare elaborate dishes for large numbers of guests, and this was amplified as the Terrace Range grew through the 1630s. It seems that Bolsover was more flexible than a lodge, or perhaps it was a particular type of lodge. It was not only a retreat; it was also a banqueting house and, very soon, a venue for feasts.

This weighting towards hospitality makes sense of the essentially linear plan of the site. The approach to the castle through Bolsover town, then along the terrace, followed by the single prescribed route through the ground floor of the Little Castle to the presence chamber or Star Chamber on the first floor was ideal for performative entries and departures. It was also ideal for the choreographed movement associated with masquing and banquets.

No direct evidence has been discovered for Charles's intentions or the use of the castle by William in the early 1620s. However, we can piece together a context of consumption, conviviality, and festivity among their immediate family that corresponds with the architecture. This undermines the view that Charles's design was nostalgic and localist and that William changed direction in style and use. A study of social practice in the family can help us to reinterpret the architecture, and the architecture then sits differently beside the biographies.

Relatively few records survive relating to the personal life of Charles, but his elder brother William (created 1st Earl of Devonshire in 1618) left detailed financial accounts, beginning in 1597, that offer a glimpse of experiences that overlapped with those of Charles. Devonshire met with his brothers, sisters, and other family members, including Lady Arbella Stuart and relatives of his wife Elizabeth and her son Francis Wortley, both in the Midlands and in London.[20] It is clear that Cavendish siblings and cousins led an active social life within a group of local elite families, many of whom attended court and travelled regularly between London, the Midlands, and the north. There were multiple intersections between them in both geographic locations through friendship, land management, politics, and cultural interests.

Devonshire's expenses show that he spent several months a year in London, often making the journey multiple times, and he frequently took his wife and children with him. He kept sixteen liveried servants in the house he rented at Holborn from 1602. We can begin to see how many of the contacts, skills, and interests shared by the Cavendish family were developed. We find Devonshire, for example, travelling by water

19 David N. Durant, *The Smythson Circle: The Story of Six Great English Houses* (London: Owen, 2011), 178–79.

20 Philip Riden, ed., *The Household Accounts of William Cavendish, Lord Cavendish of Hardwick, 1597–1607*, 3 vols. (Chesterfield: Derbyshire Record Society, 2016), 2:126, 161, 169, 199, 239; 3:115, 140, 269, and passim.

to the palatial Talbot house at Coldharbour and to Arundel House and Baynard's Castle, belonging to his stepnieces and their husbands the Earls of Arundel and Pembroke; stopping at Apethorpe Hall on his journey south from Derbyshire; giving a tip to "a woman that kept the Venetian Ambassador's house";[21] visiting the theatre at Blackfriars; spending four weeks in lodgings at Greenwich to attend court; paying £10 to his son for translating Castiglione into Latin and English;[22] spending 4d. on setting up the coach for his wife to dine with Sir Leonard Holliday—who was Lord Mayor and Master of the Merchant Taylors' Company, as well as a founding member of the East India Company—and buying books, lace, perfumes, swords, Venetian glass, paintings, viols in different sizes, cloth from the court supplier Sir Baptist Hicks, prints depicting the Labours of Hercules, and "the Order of My Lord Mayor's Pageant."[23]

The continuity between London and the country is striking. Devonshire took pains to live in the same style in both locations. There was a flow of luxury goods from London and an exchange of servants. We can trace expertise in interior decoration, food, and music within a mobile household. For example, James Painter was sent to London in 1600 and 1602, while his father John Ballechouse was still adding decorative schemes to Hardwick Hall and Owlcotes.[24] Two cooks and a baker were sent up from London to Derbyshire. A French lutenist named Lambert was dressed in Cavendish livery.[25] And in 1604 Baines the singing teacher travelled with the Cavendish children from Derbyshire to Holborn, where Devonshire bought dozens of English and Italian singing books.[26]

In the spring of 1605, Devonshire paid £60 to Sir Walter Cope to buy the "years" of the musician Nicholas Ham (presumably transferring his contracted service).[27] Ham was undoubtedly a catch. Cope was an experienced courtier and a client of Robert Cecil, 1st Earl of Salisbury, and he had impressive theatrical connections. Only the year before, he had helped Cecil to entertain Queen Anne by liaising with Cuthbert Burbage to present a revived version of Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* at Salisbury House.[28] He was also, like Devonshire, engaged in building, with an eye on court hospitality. Work on Cope Castle in Kensington was in full swing when he stayed at Hardwick in 1606.[29]

The Cavendish family was involved with entertaining and sociable performance at the highest level in London. Arbella and Gilbert's daughters, the Countesses of Arundel and Kent, danced in court masques. Devonshire regularly rewarded musicians, and in

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21 Chatsworth House, Derbyshire, Calendar of Devonshire Manuscripts, HM/29*, April 1608, and HM/29, April 1608.

22 Riden, *Household Accounts*, 2:264, 316; 3:247, 250.

23 Riden, *Household Accounts*, 2:141, 150, 158, 165, 213, 334, 335; 3:317, 263, 402.

24 Riden, *Household Accounts*, 2:259, 345, 386.

25 Riden, *Household Accounts*, 2:199, 201.

26 Riden, *Household Accounts*, 2:194, 386, 390; 3:123–25.

27 Riden, *Household Accounts*, 3:207.

28 Edmund Kerchever Chambers, *The Elizabethan Stage*, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1923), 4:139. Richard Dutton, *Shakespeare, Court Dramatist* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 268–69.

29 Riden, *Household Accounts*, 3:359.

payments for the last four months of 1604, connected to his campaign for elevation to the peerage, he bought perfumes, spices, and the aphrodisiac eringo, as well as 31¼ lb. of Barbary sugar and ½ lb. of white sugar candy, probably all for banquets. In June 1605 he bought a colossal 57 lb. of Barbary sugar, 14lb. of Canary sugar, and 3lb. of sugar candy. In the same month, he paid £80 "To Mr Walter Wentworth by My Lord's appointment, servant to Lady Bedford" and "To Mr Drayton at the same by my Lord 25s." This may record the assistance of Lucy, Countess of Bedford and Michael Drayton in the celebrations for Devonshire's elevation as Baron Cavendish of Hardwick. Two years later, a "confectioner's bill for banqueting stuff" in London cost 42s. 9d.[30]

Devonshire also spent large sums on entertaining in Derbyshire, and practice there appears parallel to that in London. When, in 1604, he and his mother hosted the meeting of a law commission at Chatsworth, Freake the Footman was paid 6d. for "running when my master went with 3rd Earl of Cumberland," probably marking a formal entry or departure.[31] Freake also ran for Devonshire in London, and he performed the same service for Arbella.[32] Cumberland was a Knight of the Garter (alongside Charles's stepbrother Gilbert) and he was on the King's Privy Council. He was Elizabeth's second champion after the retirement of Sir Henry Lee of Ditchley. It would have been de rigueur to entertain him with ceremony and magnificence—James Painter was paid 12d. for gilding marchpanes, probably for an associated banquet.[33]

The Cavendish family may also have hosted masked entertainments in Derbyshire. In January 1598 Devonshire paid "for eight kid skins at 6d the skin to line masks for my mistress," suggesting Anne, his first wife, organized a masque for the Christmas season. In 1601 Devonshire bought his 6-year-old daughter Frances a satin mask. He bought two more masks in 1603 and six in 1604. In September 1606, the same month that Cope stayed at Hardwick Hall, Devonshire paid for three silk and taffeta masks. A month later the Derbyshire accounts record that Mr. Piercy was paid £10 to teach dancing.[34]

The development of Bolsover as a venue for festivity can be seen in the context of this sociable and political activity. Both branches of the Cavendish family received royal and aristocratic guests, and it is likely that they were to some extent in competition. For example, Prince Charles visited both Welbeck Abbey and Hardwick Hall in August 1619. Although Devonshire successfully feted the prince with a banquet and a musical entertainment, the royal party would have been able to see his nephew's fantasy castle across the valley at just the moment William was beginning his alterations there.[35] A novel and highly visible venue for hospitality suggested that William was advertising his abilities and ambitions as a host and might soon upstage his uncle. If we think that William hoped to impress the prince and his court in 1619 and entice them to return, then the addition

30 Riden, *Household Accounts*, 3:173–75, 208–9, 403.

31 Riden, *Household Accounts*, 3:155.

32 Devonshire MSS, HM/29, January 1608.

33 Riden, *Household Accounts*, 3:156, 290. London, Lambeth Palace Library, MS Talbot, fol. 38.

34 Riden, *Household Accounts*, 2:64, 339; 3:23, 148, 152, 360, 365.

35 Mark Girouard, *Hardwick Hall* (London: National Trust, 1989, revised 2006), 64.

of the balcony on the west façade, increasing the resemblance to the set design of *Oberon's Palace* by Inigo Jones, noted above, appears astonishingly inspired. The design might have recalled William's attachment to Prince Henry while also trumpeting his loyalty to Prince Charles. William had taken part in the celebrations of 1610 to mark the investiture of Henry as Prince of Wales. He performed in *Barriers*, received the Order of the Bath, and supported Henry in the investiture ceremony. He had also, more recently, run at the ring in the celebrations for the investiture of Charles in 1616. A fantasy castle could have referenced both those moments of success at court and promised a continuation of the festivities that surrounded similar occasions.

In creating the new building, Charles and William refashioned a real royal castle, which had once belonged to King John, in a real country setting to construct a miniature palace that not only demonstrated their familiarity with royal spectacle and iconography but also positioned them as actors in that setting. They were quasi-royal hosts shadowing the king and the prince, who might take symbolic possession of the castle on a future visit. I will suggest in this chapter that the later decoration by William picked up on this essential metatheatrical conceit. Indeed, it went further and set up implied tableaux where the Cavendish family and their royal guests could find themselves caught up in a form of immersive and multisensory theatre, adding an extra dimension to hoped-for entertainments.

The architecture of the Little Castle in the first phase, designed by Charles with John Smythson, combined Gothic, Elizabethan, and Italianate styles in remarkably inventive ways. If we view the castle as an arena or a theatre, it can be understood as a building not just to live in or to look at but to think about and experience. The exterior resembled a Norman keep, and details such as arrow loops in the outer courtyard, twisting staircases, and an archaic version of the Talbot arms in the Star Chamber had Spenserian resonance. However, these contrasted with classical and modern elements: versions of Tuscan, Ionic, and Corinthian pillars, mullioned windows, and a balcony on the south façade, overlooking the garden—an early example of a pergola in Britain that echoed the latest Italianate innovations in London.[36] While borrowing classical and Italianate elements was not new (there were important examples at both Hardwick Hall and Owlcotes), here the contrast in styles was affective and intellectually challenging. Charles organized the interior to create a chronological, perhaps also moral and spiritual, ascent.[37] Gothic on the ground floor gave way to a largely contemporary first floor and more advanced Renaissance simplicity below a lantern at the top (Figure 4.1). The architecture was both a blend and a progression. It was in a sense Vitruvian, and it might express the reborn best of Roman and ancient British, the flowering of a new Golden Age—a theme that was familiar from Jacobean spectacle and poetry.

This view of the form of the castle and its intended use should give us pause. It points towards a revised picture of Charles's project and so of Charles himself. It seems he was planning, as he neared old age, to host entertainments in strikingly sophisticated,

36 Drury, "Bolsover Castle," 1:51–52.

37 Raylor, " 'Pleasure Reconciled,' " 418.

even courtly, surroundings. His ambition, his adoption of continental styles, his take on London fashion, and his commitment to the Smythsons raise a number of questions. It is worth examining Charles's life to uncover more of his particular social and cultural experience, his interests, and his reputation before focusing on the period of transition at Bolsover when he was succeeded by his son.

Charles lived in the shadow of national politics from birth, and his family life revolved around the dual enterprise of developing estates in the Midlands and advancement at court. He was 15 when his mother married George Talbot, 6th Earl of Shrewsbury, in 1568. Large sums were settled on him and his brother Devonshire, as Bess's younger sons, to be paid when they came of age, and Bess gave Charles parcels of property in Derbyshire at intervals over the next thirty years. He also acquired a patchwork of Talbot land, forest, and houses in Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire.

Charles was sent to Eton and Cambridge, and he became closely attached to his stepbrother Gilbert. In 1582 Gilbert became heir to Shrewsbury's titles and estates, and Charles found himself the right-hand man to the future 7th Earl, attending court and travelling to numerous royal palaces and country houses.[38] When he stayed at Coldharbour in London in the autumn of 1604, Charles was paid for his diet as part of Gilbert's retinue.[39]

Charles and Gilbert shared an interest in Italian culture. In 1570, when they were still teenagers, they accompanied Charles's eldest brother Henry on an expedition to Europe. They visited Speyer, Milan, Pavia, and Genoa and continued east to Parma, Verona, Mantua, and Venice.[40] They spent several months in Padua and stayed in Italy more than a year.[41] Charles acquired excellent Italian. Thus the brothers had first-hand experience of mid-sixteenth-century French, German, and Italian culture at an impressionable age. Gilbert and Charles returned to Italy at least once more when, in 1574, they visited Rome.[42] Lynn Hulse has noted that Gilbert also fostered contacts with Italians in London. The Tuscan poet Antimo Galli, who served Lady Elizabeth Grey, may have served in his household, and Sir Horatio Pallavacino, an agent for the purchase of Italian artefacts (who also loaned £3,000 to Gilbert), stipulated in his will that his son should be educated in the household of his godfather, the 7th Earl of Shrewsbury.[43]

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38 Talbot MS 3203, fol. 378, Charles Cavendish to his mother from Oatlands, n.d. [1592].

39 London, Lambeth Palace Library, Shrewsbury MS 702, fol. 47, Expenses of Thomas Coke for his journey to London, October 27–December 21, 1604.

40 Jonathan Woolfson, *Padua and the Tudors: English Students in Italy 1485–1603* (Cambridge: Clarke, 1998), 218.

41 Shrewsbury MS 697, fol. 71, Edward Osborne to the Earl of Shrewsbury, November 1, 1571.

42 Shrewsbury MS 709, fol. 9, Accounts for February 26, 1574.

43 Lynn Hulse, "Apollo's Whirligig: William Cavendish, Duke of Newcastle and His Music Collection," *The Seventeenth Century, Special Issue: The Cavendish Circle* 9 (1994): 213–46 at 216. Talbot MS 3199, fol. 659, William Hammond to the Earl of Shrewsbury, January 26, 1594.

Figure 4.1. The lantern space on the second floor of the Little Castle at Bolsover.

Charles was knighted in 1582, and he married the heiress Margaret Kitson. Margaret's mother was the daughter of Sir Thomas Cornwallis of Brome in Suffolk, a high-ranking client of the 4th Duke of Norfolk, and the Kitsons were related to the Bacon and Drury families, with strong Catholic ties. According to Margaret's settlement, on the death of her father, Charles would acquire property in London and become master of Hengrave Hall in Suffolk. Hengrave was built by Margaret's paternal grandfather Sir Thomas Kitson, who made a fortune in trade with Antwerp. The mansion was sumptuously furnished and had a Dutch garden. When Queen Elizabeth stayed there during the progress of 1578, the Kitsons provided the court with a feast and a banquet, as well as an entertainment that featured fairies.[44] Charles's expectations changed, however, when Margaret died in childbirth in 1583 and he was forced to relinquish his claim to the Kitson estates. He appears nonetheless to have remained in contact with her family, despite the bereavement, particularly through a shared interest in music. John Wilbye the madrigalist, who came into the Kitsons' service, probably in the 1590s, dedicated his first book of madrigals (1598) to Charles, and Charles may have translated Nicholas Yonge's *Musica Transalpina* (1588), the first printed anthology of Italian madrigals in England, with a dedication to Gilbert.[45]

Charles had a longstanding interest in architecture. His connection to Robert Smythson came through both his mother and his stepfather Shrewsbury. Bess had allowed her master mason to be seconded to Wollaton, where her friend Sir Francis Willoughby had commissioned Smythson to begin building an ambitious mansion in about 1580. Charles may have discovered the publications of Hans Vredeman de Vries, Sebastiano Serlio, and Jacques Androuet du Cerceau (with plans of French châteaux) through the Wollaton project, although by this time he already had direct experience of continental styles.[46] In about 1584 Shrewsbury commissioned Smythson to expand the lodge at Worksop, and it is likely that Charles and Gilbert, who would inherit the vast new house, were consulted.

Charles may have brought ideas from East Anglia into the Smythson canon around this time. Girouard noticed an unusual corridor system at Smythson's Barlborough Hall (five miles west of Welbeck Abbey), dating from the mid-1580s, that appears to have been copied from Hengrave Hall, and a similar system of corridors was adopted in Smythson's plan for a house for Charles at Slingsby in the 1590s.[47] It is probable that when Charles married Katherine Ogle, ca. 1591, he took an interest in her ancestral homes too, although there is little to suggest that he copied particular features of the Ogle castles. Charles may already have been aware of these buildings: Katherine's sister

44 Zillah Dovey, *An Elizabethan Progress: The Queen's Journey into East Anglia, 1578* (Stroud: Sutton, 1996), 104–9.

45 Hulse, "Apollo's Whirligig," 216–18.

46 Anthony Wells-Cole, "Hardwick Hall: Sources and Iconography," in *Hardwick Hall: A Great Old Castle of Romance*, ed. David Adshead and David A. H. B. Taylor (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 39–52.

47 Girouard, *Robert Smythson*, 123, 178–79.

Jane married Gilbert's brother Edward (the future 8th Earl of Shrewsbury) in December 1583, and six weeks after their wedding Jane's father wrote to Shrewsbury asking that he send the lead promised for the building of his great chamber.[48]

In May 1607 Charles presented an architectural plan of his own devising to Gilbert and his wife Mary (Charles's sister), who were probably considering the redevelopment of Welbeck Abbey shortly before the property passed to Charles. Although there is no indication that this design was stylistically innovative, Charles was consulted around the same time by John Lumley, 1st Baron Lumley, Keeper of Nonsuch Palace, on a plan for an advanced Italianate building, possibly with Inigo Jones present as the architect.[49] Charles was at pains to show his familiarity with Italian buildings and their use, but he was nonetheless scornful of the proposals, arguing from practical experience of catering for an English aristocratic household in a cold climate.

> [The central position of the Hall would] fill all the house with noyes and smell so many dores flankinge one an other, wherby in winter it wilbe unhabitable, the other place to eat in, which in Italian the [sic] call tenelli is fitt for an Italian gentleman that kepith un pair di servitori and not for an Eng[lish]: Erle ther diett beinge but salletts and frogges that yeald litle vapor, his kytchen is fitt for such a diet [...] all his chimneys shall smok being under the loover that lyghts his hall.[50]

Charles appears to have cultivated a connoisseurship that Lumley could admire. When Jonson stayed at Welbeck in the summer of 1618, he was shown Charles's library, "which beside the neatness and curiosity of the place, the books were many and of especial choice." Jonson was also taken to the Evidence Room to view an array of weapons. Most of these had been captured in 1599 when Sir John Stanhope and thirteen men ambushed Charles and three companions at Kirkby-in-Ashfield. Although two of the assailants were professional fencers, Charles had killed them both.[51] The conjunction of the library and the weapons in the account is telling. The fight was a badge of honour to be set alongside the record of Charles's learning and discernment: the architecture of the library (part of Charles's Gothic-inspired building work), his connoisseurship, his outstanding martial skills, and his bravery were connected parts of his reputation. Although Charles and Gilbert were frequently involved in litigation, sometimes spilling into violence, and they have often been presented as temperamentally quarrelsome, Jonson was to choose the theme of rational control and the

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48 Talbot MS 3198, fol. 237, Lord Ogle to the Earl of Shrewsbury from Bothal, February 7, 1584.

49 Lumley and Gilbert Talbot were friends and land-owning neighbours. See Talbot MS 3200, fol. 224, Lumley at Tower Hill to Gilbert Talbot thanking him for the present of a red deer, 1594.

50 Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, *Calendar of the manuscripts of the most Hon. The Marquis of Salisbury: preserved at Hatfield House, Hertfordshire*, 19 (London, 1965), Salisbury MSS 19, 120–21az, cited in Girouard, *Robert Smythson*, 183–84.

51 James Loxley, Anna Groundwater, and Julie Sanders, ed., *Ben Jonson's Walk to Scotland: An Annotated Edition of the "Foot Voyage"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 51–52.

measured use of violence when he praised both father and son in *Underwood* 59, "An Epigram: To William, Earl of Newcastle" of ca. 1629.[52] The compliment was repeated on the public stage when he referenced them in the portrayal of Lovel in *The New Inn* (4.4.36–220).[53]

Charles had distinguished, if brief, military experience to support this gentlemanly martial standing. In 1586 he served in the army of the Earl of Leicester, fighting at the Battle of Zutphen where Sir Philip Sidney was killed. A year later, in a letter from Theobalds, when he sent his mother news of the Dutch wars, he expressed fears for the safety of his "good friends" among the officers who remained, including Sir Roger Williams. It is striking that his comments about the army are inserted among passages giving an account of Arbella's reception at court; gossip about Leicester, Essex, and Raleigh; a description of the wondrous ceiling and artificial trees in the gallery that captivated Elizabeth; and the purchase of a piece of land in the Peak District, brokered by the Earl of Cumberland. Charles comes across above all as an accomplished courtier and an advocate for his family's interests: his informed stance on the war seems little more than a useful part of his portfolio as an aristocratic insider.[54]

Charles's military experience may have served primarily to fit him for ceremonial chivalry, and at least one high-profile opportunity came through his association with Gilbert, who, as a senior nobleman, assumed a prominent role in ritual at court. Charles participated in the extravagant embassy to France of 1596 when Gilbert presented Henry IV with the Order of the Garter. William Segar, who was Garter King of Arms and the author of a manual of honourable combat, was in the entourage, and the party was joined by the soldier Sir Henry Danvers, later Earl of Danby (whom Charles is likely to have known from Zutphen). Together they witnessed the celebrated entry of the French king into Rouen.[55] The Latin poem by John Westwood of 1634 may have imagined a comparable scene for Welbeck or Bolsover: their Gothic colouring was suitable for similarly flamboyant aristocratic and regal display.[56]

Gilbert was also present at the reception of Frederick, Count Palatine of the Rhine at Whitehall in October 1612 (two weeks before building at Bolsover began), and it is probable that Charles was informed about the preparations for the wedding of Princess

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52 Roy Hattersley, *The Devonshires: The Story of a Family and a Nation* (London: Chatto & Windus, 2013), 86–89.

53 Ben Jonson, *The Underwood*, ed. Colin Burrow, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, ed. David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson, 7:71–295, 207–8.

54 *Bess of Hardwick's Letters: The Complete Correspondence c. 1550–1608*, Letter 209, www.bessofhardwick.org/letter.jsp?letter=209.

55 Margaret M. McGowan, "Henry IV as Architect and Restorer of the State: His Entry into Rouen, 16 October 1596," in *Ceremonial Entries in Early Modern Europe: The Iconography of Power*, ed. J. R. Mulryne and Maria Ines Aliverti (Abingdon: Routledge, 2015), 53–75.

56 Timothy Raylor and Jackson Bryce, "A Manuscript Poem on the Royal Progress of 1634: An Edition and Translation of John Westwood's 'Carmen Basileuporion,'" *The Seventeenth Century, Special Issue: The Cavendish Circle* 9 (1994): 173–95.

Elizabeth.[57] The extended celebrations included curiously mixed allusions to celestial fire, Virginian princes, knights of Mount Olympus, and St. George.[58] A year later (with Bolsover taking shape), William's kinsmen the Earls of Rutland and Pembroke performed in the *Challenge at Tilt* for the lavish wedding of the Earl and Countess of Somerset. His future wife, Elizabeth Bassett, married the bride's brother Henry Howard at about the same time, and Henry, too, was among the tilters.[59]

Viewed this way, the medieval style which Charles favoured for his houses appears in step with a familial and national culture of magnificence inflected with chivalry that was centred at court and that was still vibrant and evolving at the time of Charles's death in 1617. The move to blend medievalism with Italianate classicism at Bolsover appears informed, adroit, and aspirational rather than nostalgic and northern. How, then, should we view the changes made by William?

The cycle of paintings that William added to the Little Castle ca. 1621 was a coherent program across seven rooms. Several key features in the iconography harmonize with Charles's architecture and suggest a fundamental continuity in the concept and use of the building. I have offered a more detailed account of the pictures elsewhere, but here I wish to argue that William, like his father, intended Bolsover for festive entertainment as well as for more private sociability, and he embraced the notion of the castle as a broadly theatrical space for shared performances in receptions, feasting, banqueting, and masques.[60]

The first painting that visitors still encounter on entering is of an empty platform flanked by classical pillars, with a tempietto in the distance (Figure 4.2). The picture is a continuation of the narrowing ascent from the Doe Lea Valley into the castle. The viewer is invited to imagine entering the picture space and so the metaphysical world of the heavens. The scene might even depict a stage, lit for a performance.

The other paintings in the room show three of the four temperaments or humours. Raylor has shown how William and his wife could have stood in for the missing image of sanguinity—a witty welcome to pleasure-seeking guests.[61] There are clues in the other paintings to Cavendish identities, and in deciphering the puzzles, the viewer discovers that these pictures, too, play with the conceit that the hosts move in and out of the picture space. The game depends on a knowledge of masquing culture and London theatre,

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57 John Nichols, *The Progresses, Pageants, and Magnificent Festivities of King James the First*, 4 vols. (London, 1838), 2:464.

58 Graham Parry, "The Wedding of Princess Elizabeth," in *The Golden Age Restor'd: The Culture of the Stuart Court, 1603–42* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981), 95–107.

59 Nichols, *Progresses*, 2:609, 714–15, 729.

60 Crosby Stevens, " 'Oh, to Make Boards Speak! There Is a Task': Understanding the Iconography of the Applied Paintings at Bolsover Castle," *Early Modern Literary Studies* 19 (2017), https://extra.shu.ac.uk/emls/journal/index.php/emls/article/view/339. For Google Street View, see Crosby Stevens, "The Little Castle: Introducing the Little Castle at Bolsover" (Google Arts and Culture, 2017), https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/vgKy7cIY172WIQ.

61 Raylor, " 'Pleasure Reconciled,' " 405–10.

Figure 4.2. A tempietto in the Anteroom of the Little Castle at Bolsover. Oil on plaster. Lunette 157.5 × 305 cm. English Heritage Trust / Kevin Moran.

friendship with the hosts, and familiarity with the source prints by Martin de Vos. The contrived compositions are cryptic but also flattering, amusing, and multisensory: calculated to engage William's cultivated circle, his "fresh golden guests, guests o' the game" (Jonson, *The New Inn*, 1.5.2). They have a mildly bawdy tone, which corresponds with the boisterous private show commissioned from Jonson in 1620, around the same time the pictures were commissioned, for a Cavendish christening at Blackfriars. This was evidently considered suitable for Prince Charles and the Earl (later Duke) of Buckingham, who were among the invited company and who are referenced in the text.[62]

The decoration in the following rooms develops the themes of love and transformation, and Raylor has noted allusions to the story of Hercules and the topos of the banquet of sense. Figures in the paintings appear to reference members of the family, and it is possible they include real as well as allegorical portraits—an area that deserves further research. The conceit of the temple painting is sustained. The Cavendishes and their guests are situated in Derbyshire in present time, but they can shape-shift and move into the various locations and periods imagined by the artist: the Banqueting House at

62 Ben Jonson, *A Cavendish Christening Entertainment*, ed. James Knowles, in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson*, ed. David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson, 5:401–15.

Whitehall, the seaside, the forest, a church, the Augean stables, medieval Britain, the biblical world, Mount Olympus, heaven, or fairyland.

There are several other locations in the building where living people can again complete the iconography. Raylor points to the window space in the Marble Closet, where William and Elizabeth (perhaps alternatively King Charles and Queen Henrietta Maria) might represent the allied virtues of peace and concord, missing from the series of prints by Hendrik Goltzius.[63] I suggest there is another, similar, location in the Heaven Closet where a figure standing by the window appears to receive a garland of red and white roses from an angel descending from the ceiling, and this implied tableau reveals more about the meaning and purpose of the iconography (Figure 4.3). If William stood by the window, backlit, it would seem that the garland hovered over him while Christ looked on. If the pose of Jesus was associated with depictions of the Day of Judgement, for example, in celebrated paintings by Rubens and Michelangelo, then Christ would be inviting William to rise up into heaven. The real and painted characters would be enacting an animated, multisensory Apotheosis, referencing a Neoplatonic circle of love.

In Jonson's entertainment of 1634, Eros appeared, as if from the clouds, wearing a garland of red and white roses.[64] If the character was derived from the paintings, as has often been argued, then the scene was not a presentation of William's deplorable personality, it was part of the architectural and artistic invention of the building: characters were conjured up from the painted world of the Vitruvian building to greet the royal guests in a celebration of love. Delightfully, the angel in the Heaven Closet had magically continued his descent from the painted ceiling and entered the mortal sphere. He was translated into Eros, who was depicted in the Elysium Closet, and he might represent William as both heavenly and erotic, Christian and classical, love. It was "Love's Welcome at Bolsover," the title of the piece in the 1640–1641 Folio of Jonson's works.

Classical gods and goddesses are painted on the cornices of the Elysium Closet, positioned below further versions of themselves on the ceiling above. Linked figures, including dual Venuses, allude to the opposition between earthly and heavenly love and their reconciliation through the production of children (Figure 4.4). Some of the images are sexually explicit, unlike those in the Heaven Closet, but I suggest that they would not have appeared degenerate to William's coterie, nor in opposition to Christian heaven, as Mowl, Raylor, and Worsley have argued. The paintings were the visual equivalent of an epithalamion, ending in the bedchamber suite, and they were intended to be both encouraging and teasing. The partial nudity of characters who are allegorical representations of the Cavendish family resonate with portraits by Anthony van Dyke from the early 1620s, while, at the same time, the scheme appears on the cutting edge of a fashion for the

63 Raylor, " 'Pleasure Reconciled,' " 421–22.

64 For a discussion of the scene, see James Fitzmaurice, "William Cavendish and Two Entertainments by Ben Jonson," *The Ben Jonson Journal* 5 (1998): 63–80 at 73–74.

Figure 4.3. Christ with joyful and sorrowing angels in the Heaven Closet of the Little Castle at Bolsover. Oil on plaster. Ceiling 370 × 300 cm. English Heritage Trust / Kevin Moran.

Figure 4.4. The theme of love in the Elysium Closet of the Little Castle at Bolsover. Oil on plaster. Cornice 105 × 370 cm. English Heritage Trust / Kevin Moran.

irreverent use of stories from Ovid.[65] As in the Heaven Closet, the scheme is flattering, pleasantly shocking, and amusing, and there is a parallel Neoplatonic ascent.

The identity of the lead artist is unknown, but the invention may owe a debt to Jonson, who was brought to the castle by William when he visited Welbeck in the summer of 1618. There are correspondences between the portrait of Jonson by Abraham van Blyenberch of 1617 and three figures in the decoration: Aaron, Democritus, and Heraclitus, which call for attention (Figure 4.5).[66] It is possible that the commission to write the Bolsover entertainment in 1634 and the decision to make the game of the paintings its central conceit reflect a close and ongoing connection between the poet and the building. It seems probable that the 1634 entertainment was one in a series of dramatic pieces, beginning with *The New Inn*, that picked up on the idea that versions of the characters in the Bolsover decoration, representing the Cavendishes, could appear in shows.

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65 Susan J. Barnes, Nora De Poorter, Oliver Millar, and Horst Vey, ed., *Van Dyck: A Complete Catalogue of the Paintings* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 135, 137; Oliver J. Noble Wood, "Mythological Burlesques: Pimps, Prostitutes, and *Pacientes*," in *A Tale Blazed Through Heaven: Imitation and Invention in the Golden Age of Spain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 126–60.

66 Karen Hearn, "Images of Ben Jonson," in *The Cambridge Edition of the Works of Ben Jonson Online*, ed. David Bevington, Martin Butler, and Ian Donaldson, http://universitypublishingonline.org/cambridge/benjonson/k/essays/jonsons_images_essay/1/.

Figure 4.5. Aaron in the Star Chamber of the Little Castle at Bolsover. Oil on panel. 200 × 45.5 cm. © Historic England Archive.

If we place the various Cavendish-associated texts in the context of the castle and its decoration, we can discover new readings. The references to Neoplatonism and earthly and heavenly love, to manly virtue and debauchery, and to hospitality, mimicking Kenilworth, may no longer expose two sides of a conflicted character or devotion to an outmoded Elizabethan style. Instead they may ring the changes on an iconography that complimented William and his family, expressed their dynastic and court ambitions, and set up an accumulating tangle of metatheatrical in-jokes.

With a revised view of the early design of Bolsover as a venue for entertainments and a focus on the particular mix of Gothic and Italianate elements, we can point to Charles's familiarity with London and the royal court and his sophistication as an architect. Likewise, through a study of William's alterations to the building and the associated decoration, we can modify the view that he was sexually depraved while underscoring his importance as a patron and *animateur*. The mutual dependence of architecture and biography is supported, but dramatic literature inspired by the paintings emerges as a missing link in the interpretation. By studying the four areas together (the buildings, the biographies, the literature, and the art) we can open up fruitful avenues of enquiry into the Cavendish texts, the building as a performance space, the authorship of the murals, and Jonson's engagement with the iconography.

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