

EARLY MODERN COURT STUDIES

Edited by Susannah Lyon-Whaley

Floral Culture and the Tudor and Stuart Courts

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Floral Culture and the Tudor and Stuart Courts

Early Modern Court Studies

The early modern court in Europe was a political and cultural powerhouse and a hotbed of confessional intrigue, factional rivalry and international diplomacy. With a potent confluence of power, prestige and capital, the court set the tone for cultural innovation and fashions, provided for large numbers of people in food, board, wages and/or perquisites, while also being responsible for safeguarding the nation's security. Yet no court operated in isolation. The maintenance of international relations through kinship ties, treaties and alliances were crucial to dynastic success as the courts vied with one another on the highly politicized stage of European monarchy.

Early Modern Court Studies encourages rigorous, fresh examination on any aspect of court culture: political, military and social history; confessional identity and relationships with the church and monasteries/nunneries; court chapels and religious rituals; diplomacy, ritual and ceremonial; courtly retinues and household staff; visual and material culture; patronage, collecting and display; gender, sexuality, marriage, domesticity; architecture, furniture, interior decoration and garden design; clothing, jewelry and regalia; music; food and banquets; letter writing, diaries and personal and ambassadorial accounts; drama and dance; hygiene, medicine and beauty; the senses and emotions. It invites proposals on individual courts and comparative studies, both monographs and essay collections, and encourages cross-disciplinary work and the publication of transcriptions and translations of primary sources within the context of these studies.

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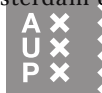


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Susannah Lyon-Whaley

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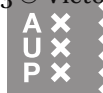
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Introduction: Flowers and the Courts

Susannah Lyon-Whaley

Abstract

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, flowers enthralled men and women, kings and artists, gardeners and scientists. This introduction charts the development of a distinctive floral culture in the English court and its extended circles from the beginning of the Tudor dynasty till the twilight of the Stuarts. While flowers have long registered in various histories, this volume aims to bring different floral disciplines—visual and material culture, literature, gardens, medicine, and foodstuffs—together. Real or representations, flowers mattered in court culture, bound to local ambitions and enmeshed with the most violent aspects of colonisation during these centuries, in which members of the court—and their desire for flowers—played a leading role.

Keywords: Tudor; Stuart; gardens; nature; imperialism

Talking Flowers

In 1629, English herbalist John Parkinson (1567–1650) dedicated *Paradisi in Sole Paradisus Terrestris*, a book of the ‘pleasant flowers’ of the garden, and the ‘herbes, rootes, & fruites’ of the kitchen garden and orchard, to nineteen-year-old Queen Henrietta Maria (1609–1669). Parkinson described his book of flowers as a ‘speaking Garden, that it might informe you in all the particulars of your store, as well as wants, when you cannot see any of them fresh vpon the ground ...’¹ Parkinson’s flowers ‘speak’ through shapes and colours of England as a ‘paradise.’ Yet the language of flowers in the early Stuart court was not meant for the queen’s ears alone. In 1614, male courtiers danced on-stage as flowers for the marriage of James VI/I’s (1566–1625) favourite,

1 Parkinson, *Paradisi*, dedication.

Robert Carr, earl of Somerset (1587–1645), to the recently divorced Frances Howard (1590–1632). Appearing before the king, these ‘happy flowers’ had their ‘leaves’ transformed to ‘fine hair,’ ‘stalks to bodies,’ ‘sprigs to limbs,’ ‘verdure to fresh blood,’ and ‘smell’ to ‘breath.’² Sometime later, the poet Lady Hester Pulter (1605–1678) was to anthropomorphise her own garden of plants. In her poem, the woodbine, tulip, wallflower, lily, rose, and other blooms ‘most fair and fresh’ actually talk, bragging of their place in the ‘bower of love’ alongside their descent from ‘Orient kingdoms’ and the fields of war spilt with ‘princely blood,’ their abilities to cure and ‘comfort.’³

This volume ‘talks’ of all such flowers. Essays examine flowers in gardens and indoors as textiles, jewels, literature, painting, ceramics, woodwork, medicine, and food. They offer an immersive picture of flowers in use and on display in connection with the Tudor and Stuart courts from the beginning of Henry Tudor’s reign in 1485 until the death of Queen Anne in 1714. Though the rose was an emblem of English royalty, the soils and palaces over which a monarch shone as ‘Sunne’ delivered further bounty.⁴ These included cowslips, lilies, columbines, daisies, marigolds, wild strawberries, rosemary, wallflowers, gillyflowers, and increasingly jasmine, orange blossoms, auriculas, tulips, hyacinths, sunflowers, and nasturtiums. Parkinson’s Adam and Eve, pictured on *Paradisi in Sole*’s title page, wander through blooms as big as trees, native and foreign, real and fantasy (figure 0.1). These flowers are depicted in a wood, yet their variety, splendour, value, and colour evoke courtly jewels.

The flowers that adorned arbours and scented the chambers of courtiers have long faded. Reviving these flowers, their once-vibrant petals webbed with ridged veins, through floral impressions stamped in plans, inventories, accounts, books, artworks, and interior decoration offers a transformation. This is the transformation of flowers into the sensory and emotional experiences, thoughts, ideas, interests, and desires of individuals: monarchs, consorts, princes and princesses, nobles, gardeners, writers, and artists, who led what historian Keith Thomas has described as a ‘Gardening Revolution’ manifested through the garden’s blooms.⁵ At their biological roots, flowers are a plant’s ‘reproductive organs and its envelopes.’⁶ Additionally, blossoms

2 *Maske of Flowers*, Cantus II, ll. 352–59, cited in Adams, ‘Francis Bacon,’ 44.

3 Pulter, ‘Garden,’ ll. 3, 32, 165–66, 204. For talking flowers as literary trope, see Dolan, ‘Parliaments of Flowers,’ n.p.

4 The monarch as a sun was a common analogy in Britain as in Europe. See Peacham, *Minerva Britanna*, 105.

5 Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 224, 223–26, 228

6 ‘flower, n.’ 1.a. *OED Online*, March 2023, Oxford University Press.

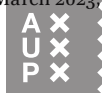




Figure 0.1. Title page to John Parkinson, *Paradisi in Sole Paradisus Terrestris* (London, 1629). Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (2881-302)

connected to the courts of the Tudor and Stuart monarchs drove a distinctive floral culture unlike that of past centuries, in which flowers not only celebrated the court, but the court celebrated flowers.

Flowers in Context: The Rose and Beyond

In a portrait of Elizabeth of York (1466–1603), the first queen consort of the Tudor dynasty clasps a white rose (figure 0.2). A few years after the original portrait was made, her husband Henry VII (1457–1509) was painted with red roses (figure 0.3). The couple's flowers symbolised their dynastic houses and eventually created an emblem that would define their descendants for the next five hundred years: the red and white Tudor rose. The late Elizabethan herbalist John Gerard (1545–1612) enthused that the rose was 'the honor and ornament of our English Scepter.'⁷ But it was not alone; Rebecca Laroche suggests that the frontispiece to Gerard's herbal presents Elizabeth I (1533–1603) as Flora, goddess of flowers, as mother of England.⁸ The Virgin Queen's close relationship with flowers powerfully asserted her flourishing reign, while the pan-European use of royal floral symbols such as the lilies of Florence and *fleur-de-lys* of France underlined flowers' innate assurances of dynastic continuity, potently renewing the family tree and portending new life, fruit, and branches.⁹ In 1603, the coronation of James VI of Scotland as James I invited an emblem book writer to enthuse that the purple Scottish thistle and the royal rose 'Together in pepetuall league doe growe.'¹⁰ In 1689, Britain welcomed another foreign king with his own ancestral botanical heraldry: the Dutch orange that bloomed alongside the rose on the ceiling of his bedchamber at Hampton Court (figure 11.9).

For Tudor and Stuart monarchs, the rose remained an unmistakable shorthand to power, a claim of continuity across branches of the family tree and disputed lineages. By the reign of Henry VIII, manuscript illustrations were depicting red and white roses conjoined.¹¹ Elizabeth I, removed from the succession for a time by her own father and declared illegitimate, was met during her coronation procession by a pageant of roses comprising a family

7 Gerard, *Herball*, 1077.

8 Laroche, *Medical Authority*, 56–57.

9 For royal floral symbolism in Europe, see for example, Sturm-Maddox, *Catherine de Medici*, 25–36.

10 Peacham, *Minerva Britanna*, 12.

11 The red and white rose appears in a book of poems by Thomas More on the coronation of Henry VIII and Katharine of Aragon, 1509, BL, Cotton Titus D. IV f.11v.

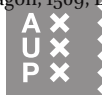




Figure 0.2. Unknown artist, *Elizabeth of York*, late sixteenth century, based on a work of c. 1500, oil on panel, 56.5 × 41.6 cm. NPG 3111 © National Portrait Gallery, London



Figure 0.3. Unknown Netherlandish artist, *Henry VII*, 1505, oil on panel, 42.5 × 30.5 cm. NPG 416 © National Portrait Gallery, London

tree ascending over three stages. The first stage depicted her grandparents Henry VII and Elizabeth of York enclosed in red and white roses, the second held roses representing Henry VIII (1491–1547) and his executed wife, Anne Boleyn (c. 1501/1507–1536), whilst ‘planted’ on the third stage appeared their daughter ‘the Queen’s most excellent Majesty Elizabeth.’ The flowers charted Elizabeth’s genealogy, rehabilitated her long-tarnished mother, and validated her claims to the throne. On learning the pageant’s subject, Elizabeth had her chariot drawn back for a better view.¹² Similarly, Stuart family ‘trees,’ as prints and miniatures, depicted royal likenesses joined by branches blossoming with roses, promoting the Stuarts as a dynasty continuing ‘to grow’ (figure 0.4).¹³ When Mary Beatrice of Modena’s (1658–1718) infant son, the duke of Cambridge, died in 1677, the court poet Edmund Waller (1606–1687) reassured his readers that ‘The failing blossoms which a young plant bears, / Engage our hopes for the succeeding years.’¹⁴ Even as flowers evoked death and decay, flowers that bloomed in garments and freshened royal linens vivified the court, advertising beauty, health, and wealth, corroborating ideals of a golden age and eternal spring.¹⁵

Beyond the rose and other greenery employed in dynastic contexts, the array of flowers in garden manuals, inventories, and poems indicates an early modern court intensely literate in flowers’ types, uses, and meanings. Sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe experienced an unprecedented florescence of botany, its pursuit, and rendition in the materials furnishing the elite, their gardens, and palaces, spurred by growing contact with the Ottoman Empire, Asia, and America. Paula Henderson describes windows increasingly orientated to look over gardens, whilst flowers entered kitchens and chambers in floral waters and sweet bags, and floral motifs featured in furnishings, even in decorations surrounding the monarch’s chair of state (figure 2.3).¹⁶

Engagement with flowers was changing. European art moved from ‘stereotyped foliage chains’ to ‘more naturalistic flowers’ and botanical drawings.¹⁷ Elite women and men spurred a fashion for plant collecting and

12 Warkentin, ed., *Queen’s Majesty’s Passage*, 78–80.

13 See also Murray, *Imaging Stuart Family Politics*, 2, 14, 17, 45, 55, 59, 119, 123 for sustained use of dynastic natural imagery in the Stuart period.

14 ‘Upon Our Late Loss of the Duke of Cambridge,’ ll. 1–2, in Waller, *Poems, &c.*, 249.

15 For floral metaphors and health, see Griffey, “Rose and Lily Queen”, esp. 816–17. Apothecaries supplied the monarch with quilted sweet bags of floral powders and with perfumes: Matthews, *Royal Apothecaries*, 105.

16 See Henderson, *Tudor House*, 213–68.

17 Goody, *Culture*, 171. On new scientific drawings, see Neri, *Insect and the Image*, xvii.

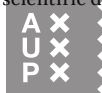




Figure 0.4. Workshop of John Hoskins, possibly Samuel Cooper, *Sheet of Portrait Medallions of Charles I, Henrietta Maria and Their Eldest Five Children*, c. 1641, watercolour on vellum. Paleis Noordeinde, Royal Collections, the Netherlands

gardeners were dispatched abroad to find rare and ornamental blooms.¹⁸ English visitor Peter Mundy marvelled at the gardens of Agra in India, with ‘Poppeas red, carnation and white’ and ‘divers other sortes of faire flowers which wee knowe not in our parts, many groweing on prettie

18 For England’s entry into botanical trade, see Tigner, ‘Flowers of Paradise,’ 137–56. For similar expansion in France: Hyde, *Cultivated Power*, esp. 55–88; in Dresden, see Anna, electress of Saxony’s (1532–1585) efforts procuring rare flowers from her correspondents: Keller, ‘Tulips, Tobacco,’ esp. 175–77.

trees.’¹⁹ The establishment of a botanic garden at Oxford in the 1620s institutionalised the intellectual study of flowers.²⁰ In 1657, Richard Ligon’s *A True & Exact History of the Island of Barbados* described a new ‘white Lilly,’ ‘a red Lilly,’ the beautiful ‘St. *Jago* flower,’ and ‘the flower of the Moon.’²¹ Ligon was a royalist exiled following the English Civil Wars, who also brought flowering English herbs to Barbados including ‘Rosemary, Time, Winter Savory, Sweet Margerom, Pot Marjerom, Parsley, Penniroyall, Camomile, Sage, Tansie, Lavender, Cotton ... Marigolds,’ which ‘prospered well.’²²

Yet Ligon’s floral interests in Barbados’ climate underscored other aims. Jennifer L. Morgan describes Ligon’s text as a ‘promotional’ guide for Englishmen to establish sugar plantations using African slave labour.²³ For all their beauty, flowers (their use and movement) were enmeshed with the politics and violence of Britain’s colonial expansion. Amy Tigner points out that many plants entered England from Tripoli, a hub for the slave trade, whilst cuttings were carried as merchandise on slave ships.²⁴ English explorers, noblemen, gardeners, and merchants who sought natural spoils were also engaged in the trade of men, women, and children long before the crown’s official sanction of the transatlantic slave trade in 1663.²⁵ As Morgan points out, the absence of exact numbers and stories does not alter the irrefutable truth that people were traded.²⁶ Likewise, if it is not possible to distinguish the extent to which the trade of people and flowers were intertwined, Schiebinger and Swan argue that ‘early modern botany both facilitated and profited from colonialism and long-distance trade, and that the development of botany and Europe’s commercial and territorial expansion are closely associated developments.’²⁷

At the forefront of these changes were the court. Henrietta Maria sent plant collectors to France, while the caretaker of the Chelsea Physic Garden, who supplied the garden of the dowager queen Catherine of Braganza in the late 1680s, collected plants from Leiden, China, and North America.²⁸

19 Cited in Henderson, ‘Elysian Fields,’ 40.

20 Tigner, *Renaissance Garden*, 162.

21 Ligon, *True & Exact History*, 106–7.

22 Cited in Schiebinger and Swan, ed., *Colonial Botany*, 9.

23 Morgan, *Reckoning*, 34.

24 Tigner, *Renaissance Garden*, 18; Tigner, ‘Flowers of Paradise,’ 143–44.

25 For this sanction, see Habib, *Black Lives*, 14.

26 Morgan, *Reckoning*, 29.

27 Schiebinger and Swan, ed., *Colonial Botany*, 3.

28 Griffey, *On Display*, 18; Minter, *Apothecaries’ Garden*, 6. For Catherine’s connection with the Physic Garden, see TNA, LR 5/76–93.



Later seventeenth-century portraits of elite women with black sitters (usually presented as children) who offer them nature's bounty, including shells, pearls, and especially flowers, conjure English trade. Kim Hall has seminally aligned the floral exchange in the portraits with 'a culture of consumerism,' writing that the children act as 'symbols for the accumulation of profitable foreign goods.'²⁹ In Willem Wissing's (1656–1687) portrait of the ladies Frances and Katherine Jones and an unidentified youth (figure 9.5) discussed by Diana Dethloff in this volume, he kneels side on, apparently absorbed by the roses, carnations, and other blooms in his basket. As he wears a green sash and a pearl earring, suggestive of the earth and its riches, in Sir Peter Lely's portrait of Elizabeth (Wriosthesley) Noel (c. 1635–1680) and a black child, the latter's orange shirt associates him with the potted orange tree he is picking blossoms from. The ability to cultivate oranges remained a status symbol in England even as the scent and whiteness of the flowers here compliments the sitter's beauty.³⁰ The flowers in both portraits may allude to the women's youth and attractions, but the presence of the children highlights a flourishing culture of luxury connected to natural and global exploits. Fertile foreign lands could be shaped, grown, moulded, and possessed, much like flowers prodded and pruned by court gardeners.³¹ As Tigner argues that Henrietta Maria's appearance as the goddess of spring ruling over domestic and exotic plants in a masque performed at court in 1631 demonstrated the crown's 'power to reproduce an English paradise throughout the world,' so nature's resources are channelled into a targeted celebration of English beauty in the portraits, papering over the violent trade practices integral to their bounty.³²

It is impossible to overlook the horrifying similitude of flowers and people as objects of cargo that such pictures evoke. Even if it is difficult to ascertain whether the young persons depicted are enslaved, indentured servants, or waged attendants, Morgan points out that of 336 voyages between Africa and the Carribean between 1514 and 1700 for which sex ratios of captives were reported, 310 recorded the carriage of children.³³ Morgan notes that the children in these portraits can be seen as the 'embodiment of silver or gold.'³⁴ What is more, dressed in natural colours, the children become emblems of foreign lands. Even if the flowers they offer are not exotic imports, the

29 Hall, *Things of Darkness*, 212, 242.

30 Peter Lely, 1660–1665, Petworth House and Park, West Sussex, NT 486278

31 On the Eden-like, fertile qualities of the Americas, see Bleichmar, 'Books,' 90.

32 Tigner, 'Flowers of Paradise,' 153.

33 See Morgan, *Reckoning*, 45–48, with her insightful discussion on interpreting these statistics.

34 Morgan, *Reckoning*, 77.



portraits' iconography of trade would have been supplemented by sitters and viewers' familiarity with the flourishing of new flowers in gardens. As Chandra Mukerji notes, in the early modern period collecting and displaying 'rare and exotic plants took on strategic significance.'³⁵

Floral culture not only responded to new imports but motivated their search; as Beverly Lemire points out in her chapter in this volume, English desire for items such as floriated calico played a part in driving trade and the encroachment of colonial systems. Flowers bloomed in imported carpets, silks, damasks, and cottons, as well as on porcelain.³⁶ On occasion, this trade was two-way. The Ottoman Sultana Safiye (c. 1550–1619) sought from Elizabeth I 'rare distilled waters of every kind for the face and odiferous oils for the hands,' and it is tempting to imagine that Elizabeth wrote on floral-scented stationery, as the Sultana complimented her letter as 'more fragrant than pure camphor and amber-gris.'³⁷ The rose's impact in conveying Tudor power was heightened by the domestication of the fragrant damask rose (*Rosa damascena*) from Eastern Europe from the 1520s, which Holly Dugan argues supplied the iconography of kingship with 'an olfactory dimension.'³⁸

Ubiquitous, malleable, and powerful, flowers merit their own study. Considering flowers as 'speaking' requires contemplating who they spoke to, or for. Flowers engaged diverse audiences, visibly rooted in court politics and structures as well as daily use. The religious symbolism of flowers on the Catholic continent was joined in England by what Andrew Morrall describes as an 'entirely secular' culture of floral decoration as well as a 'Protestant understanding of Nature as God's creation' manifested in seventeenth-century embroidery.³⁹ Although anthropologist Jack Goody contends that England's floral culture suffered major setbacks at the hands of Puritans who eschewed flowers, the garden of *Paradise Lost* envisioned by John Milton (1608–1674), who also penned Puritan tracts, is rich with roses, jasmine, myrtle, hyacinths, and violets.⁴⁰ The 'Flow'rs of all hue' that 'Pour'd forth profuse' indicate the need for more detailed analysis of British

35 Mukerji, 'Dominion,' 19.

36 For the floral textile trade, see Lemire, 'Domesticating the Exotic,' 68–71. Bowls and saucers from the exiled Jacobite household of Mary Beatrice of Modena bloom with chrysanthemums and lotus blossoms: Sizergh Castle, NT 997917, NT 997919.1–7.

37 Cited in Schoel, 'Cosmetics, Whiteness,' 2, 11. The English ambassador to the court of Mughal emperor Jahāngīr (r. 1605–1627) also recommended sending sweet bags to Queen Nur Jahan (1577–1645): Houghteling, "From Scorching Spain", 16.

38 Dugan, *Ephemeral History*, 45–47.

39 Morrall, 'Regaining Eden,' 79. For Catholic and continental flowers, see D'Ancona, *Garden of the Renaissance* (1977); Fisher, *Flowers of the Renaissance* (2011).

40 Goody, *Culture*, 189–205.



floral culture in religious contexts that a further study may expand.⁴¹ At the same time, the flowers in this volume are repeatedly seen to advertise the renewal of the monarchy. In Henry Peacham's *Minerva Britannia* (1612), the union of England and Scotland depicts roses and thistles watered by God's hand emerging from the clouds—these thriving flowers demonstrate a rule sanctioned by heaven.⁴²

In art, literature, and even medical discourse, blooms were connected strongly with the feminine, evoking the goddess of flowers, Flora, or Venus with her signature blooms of rose, fragrant white myrtle, and jasmine.⁴³ Gerard referred to women's menstruation as 'flowers,' while courtier and gardener John Evelyn (1620–1706) described flowers as the 'for runner of pregnancy'—fruit.⁴⁴ In early modern Europe, collecting and growing flowers was an activity that elite men dominated, while in Britain both men and women nurtured the garden's blooms.⁴⁵ The rose and the *fleur-de-lys*, the latter signifying England's historic claims to France, were grafted onto banners, shields, and armour (figure 4.7 and figure 12.1). An illustration inside a music book presented to Henry VIII in 1516 envisioned England as a walled garden with royal roses growing safely inside, indicating the court as nation as prospering garden paradise, in which flowers were a crucial component.⁴⁶ On this volume's cover, the goddess of love and the god of war both recline with roses, anemones, daffodils, and other blooms in a painting furnishing the last Stuart king's bedchamber. Mars's armour has been removed but its presence in the frame is evocative of the imperial force with which both Britain and the Dutch Republic's peace and bounty has been won.

Goody pinpoints the Tudor period as when growing flowers for beauty and rarity rapidly expanded 'as part of the culture of luxury.'⁴⁷ Henderson records gardens 'previously squeezed into irregular spaces' spreading outwards from the house, while Tigner draws attention to the expanding English obsession with horticulture, with a rapid increase in the number of plants grown in gardens and introduced over the sixteenth and the seventeenth

41 Milton, *Paradise Lost*, IV, ll. 243, 256, cited in Swaim, 'Flower, Fruit,' 155–58.

42 Peacham, *Minerva Britannia*, 12.

43 See Compton, *Venus*, 129–35, 141–47.

44 Gerard, *Herball*, index entries (F); Evelyn, *Elysium Britannicum*, 75–76.

45 See Elizabeth Hyde's chapter in this volume; also Rea, *Flora*, 'To ... The Lady Hamner,' n.p.

46 BL, MS Royal II.E.xi, fol. 2, reproduced in Strong, *Artist*, 99. For the garden as a political image, see Tigner, *Literature*, 1–2. Oversized flowers dominate in seventeenth-century embroidered representations of Eden: see Morrall, 'Regaining Eden,' 79–81, 86.

47 See Goody, *Culture*, 167, 183–84, 187.



centuries.⁴⁸ Dugan remarks on a shift in fragrances from animal musks to natural botanicals, including floral scents.⁴⁹ For the Tudors and Stuarts, flowers became increasingly worthy of depiction, transitioning from single stems grasped in portraits, motifs on carpets underfoot, flowers strewed on floors or scenting dress, to floral garlands and the growing visibility of non-native flowers.

Flowers as Culture: Natural Beauties and Blossoming Jewels

In *Flora, seu, De Florum Cultura, Or, A Complete Florilege Furnished with all the Requisites Belonging to a Florist* (1665) by John Rea (d. 1677), Queen Flora invites the reader to view the flower garden's 'Jewels,' 'set' by an 'Artist,' to 'Come boldly on, and your Collection make.'⁵⁰ According to Thomas, the early modern relationship between humans and nature was one of dominion by divine ordination, accelerated by science.⁵¹ Parkinson and Rea's books of flowers were fit for royalty and nobility, and gardening books sought to create bigger, earlier, longer-lasting, more colourful, and more fragrant blooms.⁵² Similarly, Anne Goldgar argues that the tulip, which European gardeners strove to improve on with new cultivars, was 'art itself.'⁵³ Flowers rarely sprouted at court; they were planted. Strong describes the Tudor garden as a symbol of 'power and prestige,' the 'setting for a deliberate display of heraldry,' and royal gardens as emblems of 'peace,' inherent functions that remained constant.⁵⁴ In transposing flowers, artists sought to outdo nature. Yvonne Hackenbroch draws attention to Elizabeth I's jeweller, William Herrick (1562–1653), whose nephew Robert (1591–1674) wrote verses about flowers 'such as he might not only have seen out-of-doors, but also in his father's workshop, executed in gold and enamel, with dewdrops of diamonds and pearls.'⁵⁵

Although this volume examines floral culture, it endeavours to maintain sight of flowers. Nature was as integral to culture as to art.⁵⁶ Traditional

48 Henderson, *Tudor House*, 31; Tigner, 'Flowers of Paradise,' 154.

49 Dugan, *Ephemeral History*, 18.

50 Rea, *Flora*, n.p.

51 Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 18, 27.

52 Bushnell, *Green Desire*, 143. Bushnell notes that *Paradisi in Sole* was unprecedented as a book of 'beautifull flower plants, fit to store a garden of delight and pleasure': 62.

53 Goldgar, 'Nature as Art,' 334.

54 Strong, *Renaissance Garden*, 11.

55 Hackenbroch, *Jewels*, 236.

56 On nature's centrality to Dutch still lifes, see Pedersen and Poulsen, eds., *Flowers and World Views*, 11.



studies of nature in court culture have often focused on pastoral literature and art, presenting the court's engagement with nature as idealised.⁵⁷ Yet a wider lens demonstrates nature was physically present in court spaces, while Strong argues that technical innovations in perspective were placing portrait sitters more and more within landscapes than in front of them.⁵⁸ Flowers encompassed worlds inside the court and external to it—flowers fed, clothed, cleaned, cured, recorded, evoked. Chambers 'swirled' with scent, some employed for medical purposes, indicating the integration of the 'transcendent with the mundane' that Morrall describes as 'characteristic ... of the age.'⁵⁹ Poets referred to 'Nature's culture' or the sight of flowers adorning fields as 'Landskip tapestry,' indicating early modern understandings of nature as creator.⁶⁰ These perspectives parallel those on shells that were polished and mounted by artists for collectors' cabinets, and that Anna Grasskamp argues were simultaneously understood to express the 'creative agency' of molluscs.⁶¹ Taming flowers—turning them to court use—required nature and responded to its organic fluctuations. The power of flowers as living entities—or to evoke beings that were alive and flourishing—was a key part of their allure.

As Thomas comments, 'it is impossible to disentangle what the people of the past thought about plants and animals from what they thought about themselves.'⁶² Conversely, in the context of seventeenth-century Dutch floral still lifes, Eva de la Fuente Pedersen asks 'Might not meaning, significance, or perhaps an entire world view be found within a flower painting?'⁶³ Tudor and Stuart flowers, growing outdoors, plucked for a nosegay, or embroidered into bed linen, were 'historically contingent.'⁶⁴ Whilst questions about the juxtaposition of nature and culture are not new, the dynamism and immediacy of flowers demonstrates that they have much to say about contexts in which they appeared. Blossoms, represented and real, reveal as much about the court as they do about the court's attitudes towards floral matter. Flowers responded to fashion. By 1665, Rea was dissatisfied with 'Mr. Parkinson's garden of pleasant flowers' and 'easily perceived his

57 See Montrose, "Eliza", 153–82.

58 Strong, *Renaissance Garden*, 203, 206.

59 Griffey, *On Display*, 111; Morrall, 'Regaining Eden,' 92.

60 Barker, *Poetical Recreations*, 21. For a fuller discussion, see Goldgar, 'Nature as Art,' 324–46.

61 Grasskamp, *Art and Ocean*, 11, 67.

62 Thomas, *Man and Natural World*, 16.

63 Pedersen, 'Flora's World,' 19.

64 For nature as inextricable from the human idea of nature, see Cronon, 'In Search of Nature,' 3, 20.



book to want the addition of many noble things of newer choosing.⁶⁵ A marigold might symbolise death, the Virgin Mary, or marriage.⁶⁶ The ‘rose / By any other word would smell as sweet,’ comments the lovelorn Juliet.⁶⁷ Perhaps, yet what is the nature of this sweetness? What associations does its smell evoke?

Refocusing Flowers

This volume seeks to refresh our understanding of flowers’ importance in connection with the Tudor and Stuart courts. Flowers are ephemeral, complicating efforts to study them; however, they were physically discernible to Tudor and Stuart senses, seen and touched, and there is therefore ample record—written, visual, textile—of engagements made with them. They were colourful, as the volume’s illustrations strive to recreate. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the garden of flowers was the garden of ‘delight’; yet Parkinson acknowledges that ‘The study, knowledge, and [travail]’ of flowers and herbs has ‘been entertained of great Kings, Princes and Potentates, without disparagement to their Greatnesse.’⁶⁸ If flowers have never been forgotten by historians, they have been appreciated primarily within a greater view. In the courtly garden, filled with paths, bays and fruit trees, grottos and fountains, statues and automata, this volume asks the wanderer to pause by the gillyflowers and heliotrope, tiger lilies and irises, honeysuckle and fritillaries, to contemplate them for their own sake and their impact on the wider landscape.

The early modern European obsession with flowers spans disciplines, from the garden to the decorative arts, and this volume takes part in lively and timely discussions on courtly interactions with nature in an increasingly global world. Goody’s seminal work on flowers, though its perspective appears limited to modern readers, deals with their culture across an expansive geographical and temporal scope, while the Dutch Republic has received attention for its seventeenth-century ‘Tulipmania’ and resplendent floral still lifes.⁶⁹ Elizabeth Hyde’s study of the social and political roles of flowers

65 Rea, Flora, ‘To the Reader,’ np; Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 231–32.

66 See Fisher, *Flowers of the Renaissance*, 124; D’Ancona, *Garden of the Renaissance*, 226; Goody, *Culture*, 181.

67 Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, 210, Act 2, Sc. 1, ll. 86–87.

68 Parkinson, *Paradisi*, ‘To the Covrtevs Reader,’ n.p.

69 See especially Goldgar, *Tulipmania* (2007); Pedersen and Poulsen, eds., *Flowers and World Views* (2013); Segal, *Flowers and Nature* (1990). Moore and Garibaldi’s (eds.) *Flower Power* (2003)

in Louis XIV's France remains the only in-depth and interdisciplinary court-focused study of its kind. In *Cultivated Power*, Hyde maps flowers that 'communicate historical memory, military might, and the rebirth of civilisation,' drawing attention to the 'new "culture of flowers"' that portended 'changes in the cultivation, uses, and symbolism of flowering plants.' Hyde notes that flowers crossed social boundaries, fascinating 'gardeners to kings' and were celebrated for their physical qualities such as 'beauty, form, colour and fragrance' as well as their changing meanings, rarity, and tastefulness.⁷⁰

This volume similarly forwards the study of flowers as material and cultural objects in distinctive Tudor and Stuart contexts. Dugan has persuasively claimed the Tudor rose was an 'essential component' of Henry VIII and Elizabeth I's 'performances of royal power' through scent; Maria Hayward has pointed to the floral symbolism of Elizabeth's portraits; Erin Griffey and Gordon Higgott consider flowers as emblems of health and fertility in the portraits and interior decoration of Henrietta Maria; and various other studies address blooms in diverse forms.⁷¹ The symbolism and cultural meanings of nature in portraits and masques have appealed as testament to aristocratic status and the monarch's power to tame nature, and studies of English visual, literary, and material culture acknowledge nature's use to express royal power and beneficence.⁷² Literary studies map a culture of nature in interaction with the court in gardening manuals, herbals, and poetry, all featuring flowers amidst their verdure.⁷³ In the last two decades, literary scholars have carried out much innovative work on the early modern green world in England. Flowers' presence is most notable in the digital collaboration directed by Wendy Wall and Leah Knight on the royalist Lady Hester Pulter's poems, while Laroche has considered the

and Fisher's *Flowers of the Renaissance* (2011) evince further attention paid to flowers in a European scope.

⁷⁰ Hyde, *Cultivated Power*, xii, xiii.

⁷¹ Dugan, *Ephemeral History*, 17; Hayward, "Empresse of Flowers", 20–27; Griffey, "Rose and Lily Queen", 811–36; Higgott, "Mutual Fruitfulness", 312–16.

⁷² See Strong, *Artist* (2000); Orgel, *Illusion of Power*, 49–56; Morrall, 'Regaining Eden,' 94–95; Pittock, *Material Culture*, 61–64, 74–75. Mulry persuasively argues that reforming the natural environment was integral to Charles II's persona as a capable ruler following political upheaval, *Empire Transformed* (2021). These studies complement a shifting trend of engaging with nature in European visual and material culture beyond traditional discussions of landscape and still life, see Goodchild, Oettinger, and Prosperetti's (eds.) *Green Worlds in Early Modern Italy* (2019) and Grasskamp's *Art and Ocean* (2021).

⁷³ These include Bushnell, *Green Desire* (2003); Laroche, *Medical Authority* (2009); Tigner, *Literature* (2012).



floral image of Elizabeth I as conveyed through herbals.⁷⁴ Christine Adams draws attention to the spectacular representation of flowers at court in *The Masque of Flowers*, and the famous Ophelia's flowers present, as Laroche points out, the 'extensive knowledge of plants and their medicinal uses' that gentlewomen were expected to possess.⁷⁵ Studies on textiles and jewels similarly acknowledge a strong floral presence 'characteristic' of 'the English love of gardening and nature.'⁷⁶

While such investigations enhance our perspective of flowers' visibility and functions at court, many relate to specific contexts and disciplines, and can be taken further with a focus on blooms across mediums, an approach this volume prioritises. Strong's analysis of gardens and portraits concludes in the mid-seventeenth century as he argues that formal parterres gave way to arcadian landscapes, as does Henderson's.⁷⁷ Aileen Ribeiro contends that in the early 1600s 'the Elizabethan and Jacobean meticulous depiction of flowers in dress' fell out of fashion.⁷⁸ In fact, flowers bloomed in paint and cloth throughout the Tudor and Stuart epochs and a fuller and more nuanced analysis of their place in court culture is needed. Describing the royalist Sir Thomas Hamner (1612–1678) in Flintshire, Wales, who sent his prized tulip bulbs to fellow flower enthusiast and parliamentary general John Lambert (1619–1683), Anna Pavord argues that 'Flowers transcended even the Civil War, perhaps the most cataclysmic event in British history.'⁷⁹ Yet at the Battle of Edgehill in 1642, Charles I wore a sash embroidered with roses, carnations, and tulips, also integrating flowers into the politics of the war.⁸⁰ Flowers therefore spanned humanity and pageantry, and fascination with flowers was constant even as its perimeters and the colours of flower beds were in constant motion. Likewise, the Tudor and Stuart courts as they are discussed in this volume extended beyond the palaces and houses of royalty and prominent courtiers to the broader physical and conceptual spaces where 'court' actions and ideas about flowers permeated.

74 Wall and Knight, eds., 'Pulter Project.'

75 Laroche, 'Ophelia's Plants,' 216.

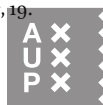
76 Reynolds, *In Fine Style*, 189. See Ribeiro, "Paradise of Flowers"; 110–17; North, 'Instrument of Profit,' 46–51; Houghteling, "From Scorching Spain"; 11–12, 19–22.

77 Strong states that gardens 'vanish from portraiture': *Artist*, 13. See Strong, *Renaissance Garden* (1979); Henderson, *Tudor House* (2005). An exception is Jacques, *Gardens of Court* (2017) spanning 1630–1730.

78 Ribeiro contends that later seventeenth-century flowers were less naturalistic and 'restricted to woven textiles, with heavy, Baroque designs': "Paradise of Flowers"; 116.

79 Pavord, 'Passion for Flowers,' 12.

80 Beck, *Embroiderer's Flowers*, 19.



This volume revives scattered interest in flowers to underscore them as an integral, stable, and developing aspect of court culture. Spanning two dynasties allows it to form a fuller, more focused picture of flowers at court, including the later Stuart reigns. The breadth of its interdisciplinary approach is appropriate given how widely flowers permeated ceremony and daily life. Chapters encapsulate gardens, visual and material culture, and literature, intertwining environmental history, sensory history, the history of medicine and science, food history, trade, and empire into court history. Insistently local and bound by the geographies in which they grew, the flowers of the Tudor and Stuart courts were also transnational and cross-cultural. If cultural historian Raymond Williams defines nature as ‘the material world itself,’ Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello’s contention in the field of material culture that items have social, cultural, and historical lives, takes on added importance in relation to botanical matter.⁸¹ By the time flowers arrived in Britain from Asia, Europe, and America, they carried histories of transit and handling, but also natural and biological histories of soils from which they had come.

Flowers’ history is broad as it is wide, and this volume leaves much to be charted. It focuses on England as the location from which both the Tudor and Stuart courts primarily functioned; more work is welcome, and indeed imperative, on floral culture in conjunction with courts in Scotland, Ireland, with American colonies, and in the London-based Cromwellian court. The colonial connections of flowers in the court’s gardens demand further exploration. Although amongst the Tudor courts, only Elizabeth I’s reign is dealt with as the subject of single chapters and further work can productively focus on other Tudor courts, the essays by Paula Henderson, Eleri Lynn, Susan North, Elizabeth Hyde, and Beverly Lemire engage directly with these courts within their fuller scope and the volume endeavours to present Tudor floral culture as an essential foundation for that of the Stuart era. While the early Stuart court of James VI/I and Anna of Denmark is a vibrant location for further focused study on flowers, recent study has been undertaken on Anna’s garden patronage and the inclusion of the later Stuart courts of Charles II, Mary II, and William III has been prioritised, as these have seen comparatively little work.⁸²

While areas of court culture also remain under-investigated in this volume, such as masques, its budding explorations fertilise the ground for

81 Williams, *Keywords*, 158; Gerritsen and Riello, eds., *Global Lives*, 3–4.

82 See Field, *Anna of Denmark*, 58–69. This patronage is referred to in Henderson’s chapter in this volume.



further studies. Flowers illuminate cultural, social, and physical aspects of court lives, to a greater extent than has been considered. As the Tudor and Stuart courts are one part of a vaster floral, human, natural, and global history, there is no more apt time to consider flowers' imprint on the court than when human imprints on flowers have become shockingly visible. In early 2022, the University of Cambridge reported that plants in the United Kingdom now flower one month earlier owing to climate change.⁸³ In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, flowers were moved, grown in new soils, and inspired new desire for knowledge, learning, and even dominion of nature that preceded modern ecological changes. As the flowers of the Cambridge study remind us how connected our lives and actions are to the world outside our doorsteps today, the Tudor and Stuart courts were not isolated nor insular as a fixed collection of people and palaces, but adaptable, responsive, integrated, operating outdoors as well as inside, growing and moving.

Floral Culture and the Tudor and Stuart Courts

The essays of this volume comprise four sections. 'Flowering Spaces,' 'Flowers and the Body,' 'Performing Flowers,' and 'Global Flowers' traverse the range of cultural functions of flowers in court life. They utilise diverse media: books, prints, portraits, paintings, fabrics, and accounts, and span two centuries, from the dawn of the Tudor dynasty to the twilight of the Stuarts. Given their differing disciplinary (and interdisciplinary) perspectives, the essays take varying approaches to remaking engagement with flowers as ephemeral subjects. A number turn to documentary evidence, including maps, lists, and archival scribbles, while others combine written and visual culture; some map the real presence of flowers, whilst others interpret meanings in floral depictions. Sitting side by side, they inform an understanding of the experience and operation of flowers in court spaces and culture. Essays focus on the court in London and expand beyond it, presenting a fuller representation of its floral topography and offshoots.

'Flowering Spaces' begins in the garden. Paula Henderson plots the changing Tudor and early Stuart flower garden, creatively tracking flowers through plant lists, herbals, and gardening books to fill gaps left in surviving designs. Flowers for aesthetic pleasure increasingly predominated in the Tudor and early Stuart gardens of Henry VIII, Elizabeth I, William Cecil

83 Büntgen et al., 'Plants in the UK,' n.p.



and Robert Cecil, Robert Dudley, John Lumley, and Anna of Denmark, and in winter representations of flowers substituted blossoming plants outside. Eleri Lynn takes up this theme, arguing that the floral tapestries, cloths of estate, and bed hangings adorning Tudor royal palaces reveal an overlooked partiality for flowers and their symbolism at the dynastic heart of the court. Lynn's work is innovative in interpreting flowers in tapestries, revealing symbolic, technical, and social significance by foregrounding what has otherwise been conceived of as decorative space. While verdure or *millefleurs* tapestries emulated European fashions, royal textiles reflected burgeoning botanical interests as well as Asian designs. Maria Hayward's essay branches beyond London to Worcestershire, demonstrating how the aristocratic passion for flowers permeated the lost garden of a Tudor gentleman with court connections. Henry Dingley's 'life with flowers,' painstakingly recovered through annotations on his illustrated herbal, reveals a floral world both wild and cultivated through a refreshingly personal lens. In looking to the margins of their source materials, Hayward, Henderson, and Lynn reveal flowers at the centre of court spaces and uncover a courtly approach to flowers not only in noble gardens and interiors, but along wild riverbanks.

In 'Flowers and the Body,' flowers blossom on garments, as medicinal cures, and even as food. Susan North charts the fashion for flowers in jewels and dress from the Tudor to Stuart courts, and its motivations as decorative, dynastic, and symbolic, laying important groundwork for examining flowers by establishing clear categories that dress historians have often referred to interchangeably. While reasons for the choice of particular flowers are usually unrecorded, North transcends these limitations to establish that men and women, queens and kings, garlanded themselves with flowered fabrics, jewels, and lace to varied ends. As bodies bloomed in the botanical splendour of silks and threads, so flowers and plants nourished individuals as *materia medica*. Erin Griffey takes up plants—their flowers, leaves, and roots—in iconography and physic, to analyse Henrietta Maria's prints, portraits, and even recipes alongside the hitherto unstudied prescriptions of her physician, Theodore de Mayerne. If natural imagery advertised the queen as a mother, plants were essential to maintaining her fertility through conception, birth, and beyond, and Mayerne's notes provide extraordinary insight into a royal stillbirth. While Griffey draws art together with the history of medicine, Susannah Lyon-Whaley argues that flowers in culinary recipes and on display in dining rooms at the court and beyond celebrated the restored Charles II. Flowers' associations with springtime, renewal, and health elevated the

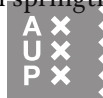
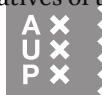


table to a location where royalist ideals of kingship could be embodied. These essays tantalisingly demonstrate the interaction of plants with living bodies, reminding us that flowers were not only seen but worn, consumed, and used.

'Performing Flowers' considers flowers in stage plays, and as part of the performance of court bonds and artistry through gift-giving and portraiture. Bonnie Lander Johnson examines the Elizabethan court alongside that of the fairies in Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*. Amongst its flowers, steeped in the herbal lore of old wives, Johnson singles out the pansy which, replicated in Elizabeth's garments using dye made from the South American cochineal insect, indicates an intertwining of floral nostalgia and expansion in both the play and the real-life court. Building on Johnson's insightful analysis, we can also glean uncomfortable links in the play between flowers and foreign children as court objects. For modern readers, this suggests the court's desires to show off exotic, almost otherworldly, floral beauty underscored by colonial activity and dislocations. In the next essay, Susan M. Cogan also considers flowers performing political power, investigating the rising visibility of flowers, sweet bags, perfumes, floral jewels, and textiles on display at the Elizabethan New Year's gift exchange. These flowers enhanced attachment between monarch and subject, dramatising subtle variations of loyalty, power, and flowers' associations with youth, especially as the queen aged. Cogan's close attention to patterns of giving productively interprets short descriptions in the gift rolls, indicating the queen's fondness for floral items and conjuring the fleeting sensory and symbolic experiences they invoked for giver, receiver, and onlookers. Interpreting the meanings of flowers requires looking to their creators and audience. Diana Dethloff's essay moves forward to the late seventeenth century to flowers in portraits, going beyond traditional symbolic analysis to consider artists skilled in depicting flowers such as Simon Verelst. Dethloff sheds light on little-examined collaborations between painters of flowers and 'painters of faces' such as Sir Peter Lely and Willem Wissing, illuminating the importance that artists and patrons accorded sitters' efflorescence. In considering the technical skill required to paint flowers, Dethloff refocuses from the sitters' performance to the virtuoso performance of the painter, and as in Lynn and North's essays towards flowers as more than fillers of space but as conscious, artistic components of the composition.

The final section, 'Global Flowers' expands flowers' geographical connections. Seeds and bulbs brought unknown natural histories to the court, investing them with narratives of trade and empire. Elizabeth Hyde charts



flowers' roles in national posturing and identity-making in iconography and the garden. Intertwining representations with real plants allows Hyde to identify a uniquely English floriculture that looked abroad to demonstrate domestic prosperity. Foreign flowers expanded the crown's vocabulary of power, materially reflected in plant collecting missions royal gardeners undertook in courts in Leiden, Antwerp, and France. As Hyde demonstrates, the court's flowers go hand-in-hand with its imperial politics, even to the present day. Amy Lim and Renske Eking span two imperial European courts in their essay on Mary II and William III, who returned from the Dutch Republic in the late 1680s with a passion for flowers in horticulture and decoration. The blending of flowers indoors and outside reflects a conjoining of artistic influences. It also underscores the global trade networks of the British and Dutch states to represent the couple's joint dynastic identities and claims to power at Palais Het Loo and Hampton Court. Finally, Beverly Lemire highlights how far flowers could travel across a wide geopolitical landscape as floral symbols from India to Britain. Considering quilts, carpets, and cotton 'bespangled' with flowers, Lemire examines how floral textiles motivated English trade, piracy, and direct contact with Asia, eliciting desire at all social levels and finally charges of cultural pollution. All of these essays demonstrate that flowers were transported to England with histories attached and also contributed to England's conception of its own identity on the world stage.

By 1700, Timothy Nourse's *Campania Fœlix, or, A Discourse of the Benefits and Improvements of Husbandry* stated that 'to see a Flower-Garden without its decorations, is ... as to sit down to Table furnisht with Cloth, Plats and Napkin, and nothing serv'd in.'⁸⁴ The bright blooms of these essays aim to stimulate further forays down garden paths and into the scented, colourful chambers of the Tudor and Stuart courts, as well as into flowers' entanglement with the court's political and economic ambitions. At the close of the Stuart dynasty, flowers had become more visible, with engrained roots putting forth long tendrils linking them to new soils. Blooms were pervasive, and the goal of this volume is to highlight their significance. The flowers that Parkinson offered to Henrietta Maria in his 'speaking garden' in 1629 no longer grow 'fresh upon the ground' for the modern reader to survey. Yet their imprints reveal a court alive with flowers. The reader approaching this volume is encouraged to stop and smell the roses, as they encounter flowers that shake the dust and decay from their petals to be touched, smelt, eaten, and seen.

84 Nourse, *Campania Fœlix*, 317.



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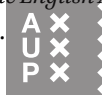
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