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**A Tale of Two Sales: Sir Rowland Winn and No.11 St James's Square, London,
1766-1787**

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Abstract: This paper considers no.11 St James's Square, London, during the years that the house was owned by Sir Rowland Winn, fifth baronet, and his Swiss wife Sabine. Drawing on sale catalogues of 1766 and 1785, correspondence with the Adam brothers, and bills from Thomas Chippendale, it is suggested that what should have been a key site for the display of fashionable luxury goods was in fact a house largely furnished with second-hand items that may have functioned as generic markers of membership of polite society rather than specific identifiers of the Winns' tastes. The presence of a number of royal portraits in the house is suggestive of the role that the house may have played in Sir Rowland's political ambitions, while furniture and fittings identified by an earl's coronet may have been retained in the hope that he would be elevated to the peerage.

Key words: London townhouse; Winn family; Thomas Chippendale; Robert Adam

The aristocratic London townhouse is often seen as a site of innovation – as the testing ground for fashionable new styles, the display of important works of art and the consumption of exotic goods from far-flung corners of the British Empire – all but destroyed by the late nineteenth/early twentieth-century decline of the aristocracy as a ruling class.¹ Indeed, the roll call of houses demolished in the capital in the last century is so extensive that architectural historians can surely be forgiven for devoting their energy to country houses, which survive in greater number. However, recent publications have challenged our understanding of the aristocratic townhouse and its relationship with the wider built environment, encouraging deeper consideration of how these houses might have looked and functioned for families who, at best, were part-time residents in the capital.² One such house is no.11 St James’s Square [Fig. 1].

History has not been kind to no.11. Its eighteenth-century furnishings and collections are long gone and its historic interiors were altered in the nineteenth century or obliterated during twentieth-century conversion into offices. In an academic discipline in which the architectural integrity of certain townhouses (Spencer House, Lancaster House) or the fullness of an archive (Devonshire House, Thomas Hope’s Duchess Street townhouse) has led to in-depth investigation and

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¹ Christopher Simon Sykes, *Private Palaces. Life in the Great London Houses* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1989), passim; Francis Haskell, ‘The British as Collectors’, in *The Treasure Houses of Britain*, ed. Gervase Jackson-Stops (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art and New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1985), 51.

² Elizabeth McKellar, *The Birth of Modern London: the development and design of the city, 1660-1720* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Rachel Stewart, *The Town House in Georgian London* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2009).

created or endorsed a canonical status,³ the fragmentary nature of the erstwhile London home of Sir Rowland Winn and his wife Sabine has rendered it a mere footnote in studies on the Adam brothers and Thomas Chippendale. By way of contrast, their extensive work for the Winns at Nostell, the family's West Yorkshire seat, survives relatively intact and continues to be both a much-loved heritage attraction and the subject of research by academics working in a number of disciplines.⁴ So, why bother with no.11 St James's Square now?

My interest has been stimulated by the discovery that Hugh Douglas Hamilton's celebrated double portrait of Sir Rowland and Lady Winn in the library at Nostell hung at their London house between c.1769, when Hamilton submitted his bill, and 1785, shortly before no.11 was sold in the wake of the fifth baronet's untimely death [Fig. 2].⁵

Much ink has been spilled explaining why Nostell's library appears twice its actual size in the portrait,⁶ but, as Kate Retford has demonstrated, the painted interior of most conversation pieces is not so much 'an actual environment, but rather functions to signify values, to convey information about its inhabitants'.⁷ The semi-fictitious depiction of the Nostell library suggests two motives, the first being that the

³ Joseph Friedman, *Spencer House. Chronicle of a great London mansion* (London: Zwemmer, 1993); James Yorke, *Lancaster House: London's greatest town house* (London: Merrell, 2001); William Kent: *designing Georgian Britain*, ed. Susan Weber (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 160-181; Thomas Hope: *Regency Designer*, ed. David Watkin and Philip Hewat-Jaboor (New Haven, London and New York: Yale University Press for the Bard Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts, Design and Culture, 2008), 22-43.

⁴ The most recent published account of Nostell Priory is Eileen Harris *The Genius of Robert Adam. His Interiors*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2001), 196-211.

⁵ Bill from Hugh Douglas Hamilton, Nostell Papers, WYW1352/1/4/56/32, West Yorkshire Archive Service (Wakefield) (hereafter cited as NP).

⁶ Vicky Coltman, 'Classicism in the English Library. Reading classical culture in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries', *Journal of the History of Collections* 11, no.1 (1999): 35; Alastair Laing, 'Sir Rowland and Lady Winn: A conversation piece in the Library at Nostell Priory', *Apollo* 151, no. 458 (April 2000): 15; Kate Retford, 'From the Interior to Interiority: The Conversation Piece in Georgian England', *Journal of Design History* 20, no.4 (2007): 293.

⁷ Retford, 'From the Interior to Interiority', 298.

fifth baronet was eager to be portrayed as more erudite than he actually was to a London audience unlikely to discover the real proportions of the room. The second motive responds more directly to the formation of ‘correct taste’ as Sir Rowland and his wife sought to forge their place among Britain’s aristocratic elite; the man responsible for the design of Nostell’s library was Robert Adam, the most fashionable architect of his generation and then at the height of his powers.

What then may no.11 St James’s Square have been like? Via a close reading of the sale catalogues, Chippendale’s accounts and Winn family correspondence, this paper will attempt to recover something of the costs and appearance of a little-known townhouse and explore the role that luxury goods may have played within it.

The Patron

Rowland Winn came from a gentry family who had been resident in Yorkshire for over a century. Although his father had been on the Grand Tour to Italy, in 1756 the future fifth baronet was only sent as far as Switzerland. There he fell in love with Sabine May, only daughter of Jacques-Philippe d’Herwart, governor of Vevey, and eventually married her in 1761. Early in her marriage Sabine spoke no English, which did not ease her transition into life at the marital home at Badsworth nor foster harmonious relations with her husband’s large family that included two spinster aunts, a brother and five sisters (two of whom never married and thus became financially dependent upon their brother, with unenviable consequences for both women). In the 1760s, the future Lady Winn preferred to stay in London where the couple enjoyed the social round. So much so, in fact, that Ann Elizabeth Winn put pen to paper in 1763 to assert that she had previously told her nephew that he should not travel south again unless ‘he had a Thousand pounds in his Pock when he came to By suh House

hold Stuf as Lodging did not Furnish, as Plat Lining & Glasses & to Suport him & his Wife & to pay suh Depts as he left behind which as near as I can Calculat three hundred pounds [sic].⁸ Discovering that the couple had already set out and that Rowland intended they stay above a shop on Bond Street until he found suitable lodgings, Ann Elizabeth proposed that the couple be given the plate, china and linen that had belonged to her recently-deceased, bachelor brother Edmund. That offer, once accepted, caused long-running divisions between Rowland and his siblings.⁹ Her letter then offers up the information that Sabine thought she was pregnant, in spite of medical advice to the contrary, hence one reason for the London visit was the opportunity it provided to seek another opinion.¹⁰ As it turned out, Sabine's first child was not born until 1768, three years after her husband had inherited the baronetcy and Winn estates and two years after they had purchased a townhouse in St James's Square.

The fifth baronet was the first Winn in many generations to eschew rental accommodation in London. No doubt he bought no.11 because he thought he could afford it and his wife enjoyed shopping for a wide range of luxury goods in the capital – her tone stiff with reproach, his aunt noted that ‘She loves variety, & may truly be Cald Lady Restles [sic]’¹¹ – but there may also have been political overtones to the purchase. Sir Rowland was soon to embark on a political career by offering himself as candidate for Pontefract. He won, but there were allegations that the mob had prevented 180 anti-Winn voters from exercising their electoral right and the results

⁸ Ann Elizabeth Winn to Sir Rowland Winn, fourth baronet, 11 February 1763, NP, WYW1352/1/4/11/15.

⁹ Ann Elizabeth Winn to Sir Rowland Winn, fourth baronet, 17 February 1764, NP, WYW1352/1/4/11/13.

¹⁰ NP, WYW1352/1/4/11/15.

¹¹ Ann Elizabeth Winn to Sir Rowland Winn, fourth baronet, 9 December 1763, NP, WYW1352/1/4/11/8. Sabine's shopping practices are the subject of Kerry Bristol, ‘Between the Exotic and the Everyday: Sabine Winn at Home, 1765-1798’, forthcoming, and are not discussed here because the evidence overlaps both houses and cannot always be teased apart coherently.

were nullified.¹² A second election was held later in 1768, when 349 pro-Winn votes were disallowed, ‘and the decision was yet again confirmed in February 1770’.¹³ He tried again in 1774 and 1784, but never succeeded;¹⁴ nor did he receive the much-desired elevation to the peerage that preoccupied him in 1777.¹⁵ In 1766 Sir Rowland could not have predicted such failure, of course, and a future eye on his political career may have prompted him to buy rather than take lodgings as before. Where better to entertain his would-be political connections than in expensively decorated and tastefully furnished rooms in a large house in the most fashionable square in London?

The House and First Sale

No.11 St James’s Square was one of three houses built as a speculative development in 1735/36.¹⁶ The top floor was reserved for the servants. On the main floors a wall divided the house in two; the eastern part originally consisting of two large rooms and the western part containing the hall, stairhall and service stair, behind which stretched a wing accommodating one large room.¹⁷ More service rooms were to be found in the basement. Thus, in plan, it closely resembled its neighbour at no.10, understandably so given that they were built as a pair for Sir William Heathcote and his son-in-law, George Parker, second earl of Macclesfield. The widowed Lady Macclesfield sold up

¹² Christopher Todd, ‘A Swiss Milady in Yorkshire: Sabine Winn of Nostell Priory’, *Yorkshire Archaeological Journal* 77 (2005): 213-214.

¹³ Todd, ‘A Swiss Milady in Yorkshire’, 213-214.

¹⁴ Todd, ‘A Swiss Milady in Yorkshire’, 214.

¹⁵ Sir Rowland Winn to Sabine Winn, 17 April 1777, NP, WYW1352/1/1/6/3.

¹⁶ Frances Sands, ‘Adam’s London: Then and Now – 11 St James’s Square’, <http://www.soane.org/news/article/adams-london-then-and-now-11-st-jamess-square>. Accessed 29 June 2015; *The Parish of St. James Westminster. Part 1, South of Piccadilly*, Survey of London, 29, ed. F.H.W. Sheppard (London: The Athlone Press, University of London for the London County Council, 1960): 118-120.

¹⁷ *The Parish of St. James Westminster. Part 1*, 133.

in March 1766 to Alexander Nesbitt and Hugh Hammersley.¹⁸ They sold the house on to Joseph Allen on 19/20 June ‘evidently in trust for Sir Rowland Winn’,¹⁹ who had already spent £604.15.6. at the contents sale held 17-20 May 1766.²⁰

Frustratingly, there is no way of knowing if Lady Winn attended the contents sale with her husband, nor if any of the purchases made at this time reflected her tastes rather than his; nonetheless, a close reading of the annotated catalogue from this sale, and a comparison of it with the annotated catalogue that survives from 1785, has yielded unexpected results. These, in turn, undermine our assumption that London townhouses were always the aristocratic site of choice for the display of new luxury goods while older items were sent to the country house where their old-fashioned appearance might suggest frugality, financial steadiness or perhaps longevity in a neighbourhood.

Some of the items purchased in 1766 survive at Nostell, including William Hogarth’s *A Scene from the Tempest* and *Cleopatra and the Asp* after Guido Reni [Figs 3-4]. When added to the other paintings acquired in May 1766, one could also be misled into thinking that Sir Rowland had attended the sale intent on enhancing his art collection. Instead, he was a man in a hurry to occupy his new townhouse and the contents of certain rooms were bought almost in their entirety.

By the end of the first day of the 1766 sale, Sir Rowland had spent £59.13.0., mostly on ‘downstairs’ items such as spit-racks, clothes baskets, washbowls, and a porter’s chair,²¹ presumably because it was easier to buy these items in situ than source them externally and wait for delivery. However, the main room of interest that

¹⁸ Sands, ‘Adam’s London’; *The Parish of St. James Westminster*. Part 1, 123.

¹⁹ *The Parish of St. James Westminster*. Part 1, 123. *Macclesfield Sale Catalogue*, 7-10 May 1766, NP, WYW1352/1/1/5/20.

²⁰ NP, WYW1352/1/1/5/20.

²¹ NP, WYW1352/1/1/5/20, 9.

day was the Middle Parlour, from which he bought three crimson mohair Venetian curtains, tables with gold and black marble tops, white-painted girandoles, a history painting attributed to Peter Paul Rubens and four royal portraits.²² Beyond the gold and black marble-topped tables (purchased for £11.0.6. and sold in 1785 for only £2.19.0.), most of the furniture cannot be identified with any certainty in the 1785 sale catalogue, nor can the ‘Rubens’, but the royal portraits can. They had experienced an alarming drop in value in the intervening years. George I and Queen Anne had cost thirteen guineas in 1766 but had lost their attributions to Sir Godfrey Kneller and raised only nineteen shillings in 1785, while William and Mary had also lost their Kneller attributions and made only thirteen shillings compared with the eleven guineas paid nineteen years earlier.²³ That these royal portraits hung in London – where a display of political allegiance would receive maximum exposure to the Winns’ fellow Whigs – is noteworthy, as is the fact that attributions which presumably added value in 1766 did not hold water or were not considered important enough to mention in 1785. The Winns had bought high and sold low.

At the Second Day’s Sale, Sir Rowland bought almost everything in the laundry and made copious purchases from the butler’s pantry, steward’s room (including leather fire buckets adorned with an earl’s coronet²⁴), steward’s office, and footman’s bedchamber.²⁵ He also bought luxury items such as three crimson silk and worsted damask festoon curtains, a mahogany sofa and ten French elbow chairs with matching crimson upholstery, a Wilton carpet, two large looking glasses ‘with glass borders, in... white carved and painted frames’, white-painted girandoles, and a

²² NP, WYW1352/1/1/5/20, 8-9.

²³ Christie’s Sale Catalogue, 9-11 April 1785, NP, WYW1352/3/4/1/26, 11.

²⁴ The buckets cost £8.17.6. in 1766 but sold in 1785 for only £1.16.0. NP, WYW1352/1/1/5/20; NP, WYW1352/3/4/1/26, 7.

²⁵ NP, WYW1352/1/1/5/20, 11-13.

mahogany display case for porcelain from the enticingly named China Room.²⁶ This was the room in which the Macclesfields had displayed their porcelain collection, although Sir Rowland was only attracted by ‘Two Mandarin figures with glass covers’ at a cost of £2.17.0.²⁷ and nothing labelled a ‘China Room’ appears in the 1785 sale catalogue.

On the third day of the sale, Sir Rowland bought more kitchen items and outfitted the housekeeper’s room and a bedroom and closets on the second floor,²⁸ but the big-ticket items came from the first floor’s Grand Drawing Room and Dressing Room, where he bought almost everything, presumably so that the couple had lavishly decorated rooms for entertaining from the moment they moved in.

It is worth devoting a little attention to the contents of the main reception rooms in no.11 St James’s Square as these would normally be considered the rooms in which an aristocratic family displayed the most fashionable and expensive goods with which London abounded. Surprisingly, the reality was the opposite. Instead of reflecting the Winns’ tastes, these rooms remained redolent of the Macclesfields. The pattern of buying high and selling low also continued.

From the Grand Drawing Room came a companion set (£4.7.0., sold in 1785 for £1.10.0.), three crimson silk damask festoon curtains (£25.10.0., replaced by blue silk and mohair curtains before 1785), pier glasses with carved and gilded frames (£13.10.0.), carved and gilded three-branch girandoles with mirrored backs (£8.12.6.), two marble-topped pier tables with carved and gilded frames (£34.10.0., probably the jasper-topped tables sold for twelve guineas), a sofa upholstered with crimson mohair (£12.10.0., most likely that sold for £3.9.0.), twelve French elbow chairs covered in

²⁶ NP, WYW1352/1/1/5/20, 14.

²⁷ NP, WYW1352/1/1/5/20, 14.

²⁸ NP, WYW1352/1/1/5/20, 16-19.

crimson silk damask (£31.15.0., probably the twelve blue-upholstered cabriole armchairs sold for £39.12.0. and, if so, a rare instance of goods appreciating in value), a Wilton carpet (£12.5.0., sold for £7.10.0), a bust that sat over the chimney (nine shillings), and ‘Two India figures, seated on rocks’ (£1.7.0.).²⁹ Only four girandoles, porcelain, a history painting and two mahogany card tables in this room were either bought in or went to another buyer.

A similar situation occurred in the Dressing Room, where Sir Rowland declined to purchase only two tables, porcelain and a carpet, but splurged on another companion set (four pounds), two crimson silk and worsted curtains (eight pounds), a pier glass in a gilt frame (£4.12.0.), two French stools upholstered in crimson mohair (£3.18.0.), ‘Two neat mahogany china shelves, with coronets’ (£13.15.0.), a ‘large japanned dressing glass’ (£2.4.0.), a ‘neat mahogany china writing table, with shelves and drawers’ (£6.12.6.), six ‘mahogany backstool chairs, covered with crimson silk, and worsted damask’ (£9.7.6.), a mahogany French elbow chair with ‘crimson mixt damask (£2.6.0.)’, a fire screen, a small table, a ‘picture of a miser, by Meiris; in a gilt frame’ (seven guineas) and, for £18.15.0., ‘Cleopatra, by Guido; as fixt over the chimney’.³⁰ The latter was soon relocated to hang above the chimneypiece in the Winns’ bedchamber before it was sent to Nostell in 1767.³¹

On the final day of the sale, Sir Rowland fitted out more of the servants’ rooms; bought a pier glass, chimney glass and companion set from the Best Bedchamber; and some contents of the Great Dining Parlour, including ‘mahogany window blinds’; pier glasses; marble-topped tables; a Turkey carpet; ‘A large view in Venice, by Luca Carheveres [Carlevarijs]’ for £18.18.0. and ‘A ditto’ for £19.8.6.,

²⁹ NP, WYW1352/1/1/5/20, 19-20.

³⁰ NP, WYW1352/1/1/5/20, 20-21.

³¹ Thomas Chippendale to Sir Rowland Winn, 1 October 1767, NP, WYW1352/3/3/1/5/3/9 and Account of Thomas Chippendale, 21 June 1766-13 June 1772, NP, WYW1352/3/3/1/5/3/47.

(which sold as a pair in 1785 for only twenty-one pounds³²); Hogarth's *A Scene from the Tempest* for £23.2.0.; and 'Four small histories in black frames, by Zuchero' for £3.5.0.³³ The latter may have been the 'Four historical sketches' sold for one guinea in 1785.³⁴

The catalogue was then receipted by the same H. Pelling from whom the Winns also purchased a 'Wainscot dressing table on Castors', a deal dressing table, and a feather bed and bolster.³⁵

What is immediately apparent here is that the Winns' acquisition of the traditional markers of aristocratic status – mahogany furniture, Oriental porcelain, paintings by esteemed artists – reveals that they were content to purchase someone else's taste, rather as if displaying generic markers of membership of polite society was enough to convey their gentility. Instead of setting a pace that might attract the historians of the future, the Winns were simultaneously looking backwards and forwards, buying old-fashioned furniture that may have suggested a (fictive) longevity in St James's Square shortly before they commissioned new pieces from Chippendale and the Adam brothers' refurbishment of the main reception room.

The Winns Make Their Mark

Given that much of the Winns' London home was furnished with second-hand goods, and that the barely outmoded rococo interiors at Nostell were soon to be superseded by Robert Adam's cutting-edge Neo-Classical designs, it is surprising how little this ostensibly fashionable couple sought to make their own mark on the interiors of no.11

³² NP, WYW1352/3/4/1/26, 10.

³³ NP, WYW1352/1/1/5/20, 22-28.

³⁴ NP, WYW1352/3/4/1/26, 10.

³⁵ NP, WYW1352/1/1/5/20, 28; Receipt from H. Pelling, 12 May 1766, NP, WYW1352/1/1/5/20.

St James's Square. With the exception of Thomas Chippendale's account, most of the surviving bills and trade cards from their years in London are for items relating to personal hygiene and the vogue for hot drinks rather than for paint, wallpaper, or furnishing fabrics.

One source of new and used goods was the silversmiths Cripps & Co., from whom a surviving bill details items supplied for both no.11 St James's Square and Nostell. Most likely for London was the hire in 1766 of candlesticks; a cruet frame; sauceboats and ladles; trays, salts and shovels; two cases containing cutlery; and an unnamed number of teaspoons.³⁶ Between 1766 and 1769, the firm also repaired many items and sold the Winns everything from pannikins; spoons for olives, for tea, and for a child; a cheese toaster, a collar and chain for a pet squirrel and an inkstand (the latter now in the library at Nostell).³⁷ £343.6.1. was owed by 1770, although this was offset by the acceptance of £74.2.10. worth of old plate,³⁸ perhaps some of that inherited from Edmund Winn. The archive does not supply evidence that the remaining debt was ever cleared.

Thomas Chippendale's work for the Winns began in 1766, shortly after the couple acquired no.11 St James's Square and about the same time that the death of Chippendale's partner James Rannie threatened the future of his business.³⁹

Today Nostell is renowned for its Chippendale furniture, which is even better documented than that at Chippendale's other great Yorkshire commission, Harewood House. Yet there is a difference between the two houses that reveals something of the

³⁶ Account of Sir Rowland Winn with Cripps & Co., 11 July 1766-19 April 1770, NP, WYW1352/1/4/59/8.

³⁷ NP, WYW1352/1/4/59/8.

³⁸ NP, WYW1352/1/4/59/8.

³⁹ Christopher Gilbert, *The Life and Work of Thomas Chippendale* (Bristol: Artlines (UK) Ltd., 1978): 12; Christopher Gilbert, 'New Light on the Furnishing of Nostell Priory', *Furniture History* 26 (1990): 55.

Winns' priorities. At Harewood, the accounts 'refer almost exclusively to state furniture'⁴⁰ that was integrated with Adam's Neo-Classical interiors, but at no.11 St James's Square and Nostell the items run the gamut from a large mahogany bookcase with a pediment top and folding glass doors to an elm chopping block for the kitchen and some of these items were almost certainly supplied rather than made by Chippendale's firm.⁴¹

In 1952, R.W. Symonds asserted that most of the furniture Chippendale supplied between June 1766 and June 1767 was intended for London.⁴² In 1969, Lindsay Boynton and Nicholas Goodison suggested that Sabine's writing table [Fig. 5], secretaire and bookcase [Fig. 6], a pedimented bookcase with 'brass wire doors with carved astragals in the gothic style' and some parlour chairs were all that remained of the London furniture.⁴³ Christopher Gilbert entered the fray in 1978 by adding armchairs and a dining table now at Nostell to Boynton and Goodison's list.⁴⁴

Chippendale was certainly working on both the Winns' houses simultaneously by the late 1760s, but there is a large bill for work in London and a slightly later account that includes work at both Nostell and in London that, between them, support Symonds's statement that work began in London first.⁴⁵ The London account was enclosed in Chippendale's letter of 3 March 1769 that begins: 'I have as you desired sent your bill for Town. The other I have not yet been able to settle...'⁴⁶ That 'other',

⁴⁰ Lindsay Boynton and Nicholas Goodison, 'The Furniture of Thomas Chippendale at Nostell Priory-I', *The Burlington Magazine* 111, No.794 (May 1969): 282.

⁴¹ NP, WYW1352/3/3/1/5/3/63. Sir Rowland Winn's account to Thomas Chippendale for work at the London townhouse, 1766-1769.

⁴² R.W. Symonds, 'Chippendale Furniture at Nostell Priory', *Country Life*, 3 October 1952, 1028-1030.

⁴³ Lindsay Boynton and Nicholas Goodison, 'The Furniture of Thomas Chippendale at Nostell Priory-II', *The Burlington Magazine* 111, No.795 (June 1969): 351, 359.

⁴⁴ Gilbert, *The Life and Work of Thomas Chippendale*, 41, figure 65; 58, figure 90; 84, figures 133 and 134; 224, figure 409 and 238, figure 436.

⁴⁵ NP, WYW1352/3/3/1/5/3/63 and Account of Thomas Chippendale, 21 June 1766-13 June 1772, NP, WYW1352/3/3/1/5/3/47.

⁴⁶ Thomas Chippendale to Sir Rowland Winn, 3 March 1769, NP, WYW1352/3/3/1/5/3/15.

the later second account, reveals that approximately one quarter of Chippendale's work for the Winns was for no.11 St James's Square: almost all of the items billed between June 1766 and June 1767 were for London, as were most of what was billed for June 1767 to February 1768. Almost all of March 1769 to 1772 relates to Nostell, although in April 1769 the Winns were charged just over three shillings for removing a bed that Chippendale had loaned them for six months, which must surely relate to the London house.⁴⁷ In total, Chippendale's bill for no.11 St James's Square amounted to £351.4.7½., a little over half of what the Winns had spent at the 1766 Macclesfield sale.

Beyond this, it is not my intention to enter the debates about Chippendale's personal relationship with the Winns as these have been well rehearsed elsewhere.⁴⁸ What Chippendale itemised in his London account and its relationship with what the Winns had acquired at the Macclesfield sale is of more interest here because Chippendale's work in St James's Square was entirely predetermined by what the Winns had purchased in 1766. There is a surprising amount of copying of pre-existing items such as girandoles and pier glasses and a great deal of mending, repairing, and cleaning. Only in their bedchamber (the first item in Chippendale's account is a mahogany four-post bedstead), library (the second piece of furniture listed is a 'very large Mahogany Library Table') and Great Dining Parlour (two mahogany dining tables 'made to Join Occasionally') did the Winns impose their own tastes more fully⁴⁹ and, if the furniture historians are correct about what survives at Nostell, that taste was conservative and in several different styles ranging from rococo to chinoiserie to a library table that is 'as near to comparable furniture of the 1740s as to

⁴⁷ WYW1352/3/3/1/5/3/47. See also Gilbert, *The Life and Work of Thomas Chippendale*, 52.

⁴⁸ In addition to the citations above, see Lindsay Boynton and Nicholas Goodison, 'Thomas Chippendale at Nostell Priory', *Furniture History* IV (1968): 10-61.

⁴⁹ NP, WYW1352/3/3/1/5/3/63.

anything else'.⁵⁰ Curiously, there is precious little in the pioneering Neo-Classical style that James 'Athenian' Stuart had recently provided for Thomas Anson at no.13 (now no.15) St James's Square or that Robert Adam was soon to design for Sir Watkin Williams Wynn at no.20.

Although there is nothing progressive in the styles of the furniture supplied by Chippendale, the Winns were buying at a time when cabinetmakers were widening their market by creating an expanded range of items for both ladies and gentlemen.⁵¹ Several items from Chippendale's London account can be associated with Lady Winn: the above-mentioned writing table (£5.14.0.) and secretaire (twenty pounds) of 1766, the side cupboards added to the latter in 1767 (five guineas), a petticoat for a toilet table (two shillings), and a tambour embroidery frame – in this case an expensive one at four guineas described as 'very curiously Inlaid with various colour'd woods representing Landscapes & a Brass rim'.⁵² Unfortunately, with only two items we can be absolutely sure came from the London house, it is not possible to determine how Sabine's tastes might have differed from her husband's as both pieces have stylistic counterparts at Nostell and neither looks out of place in its current surroundings.

The 'mahogany folding crib bedstead with ticking sides, throw over cotton furniture' must have been ordered in anticipation of the birth of the Winns' first child, Esther, in November 1768.⁵³ Other items were intended for the servants to use and are identified as such, for example, a bed for the cook or a table for the laundry.⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Boynton and Goodison, 'Nostell Priory-I', 282.

⁵¹ Amanda Vickery, 'The rise of his and hers', *Country Life*, 13 April 2011, 68.

⁵² NP, WYW1352/3/3/1/5/3/63.

⁵³ NP, WYW1352/3/3/1/5/3/63.

⁵⁴ NP, WYW1352/3/3/1/5/3/63.

What is particularly striking in Chippendale's London account is that he provided the objects that turned a house into a home. Most of the new items were small to mid-sized movables like card tables and card racks, music desks and matching candleholders, indicative of the ton's favourite pastimes of gambling and music-making. The 'mahogany house for a monkey' also reveals that Sir Rowland's equally fashionable interest in exotic animals was not confined to the menagerie at Nostell. The 'monkey' was actually a marmoset, a primate native to Central and South America. So entranced was he by his pet that Hugh Douglas Hamilton was paid two guineas to paint its portrait.⁵⁵ Alas, the painting does not appear to have survived, nor is it clear where it originally hung.

Architectural Alterations in the 1770s

Although the Winns' financial situation was already precarious, in 1774 the fifth baronet finally determined that his London house needed to be updated and he turned to the Adam brothers for designs for a new façade.⁵⁶ In July, John Adam sent two designs, each of which could be executed using John Liardet's newly-patented cement; the plain façade would cost £180 while the more ornate pilastered version would cost 'something above £500' and 'make as pretty a Front as any in the Square'.⁵⁷ Given that the majority of houses in St James's Square (including his own) were faced in unassuming brick, and no doubt aware of the statement made at no.13, where Stuart had designed the square's first stone-fronted building – a Palladian-

⁵⁵ NP, WYW1352/1/4/56/32.

⁵⁶ John Adam to Sir Rowland Winn, 6 July 1774, NP, WYW1352/3/3/1/5/2/9, partially reprinted in *The Parish of St. James Westminster. Part 1*, 124. See also David King, *The Complete Works of Robert and James Adam*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Architectural Press, 2001), 290-292; Simon Bradley and Nikolaus Pevsner, *The Buildings of England: London 6: Westminster* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), 628 and Sands, 'Adam's London'.

⁵⁷ NP, WYW1352/3/3/1/5/2/9. See also *The Parish of St. James Westminster. Part 1, South of Piccadilly*, 124.

inspired façade adorned with Greek Ionic pilasters erected 1763-1768⁵⁸ – and Robert Adam’s own response to Stuart in the façade of no.20 erected 1771-1774, the ever-aspirational Sir Rowland chose the more expensive option. Two drawings survive at Sir John Soane’s Museum.⁵⁹ The new façade was erected between 1774 and 1776 using Liardet’s patent cement, making it the first known use of this particular material, in which the firm of William Adam & Co. was a major financial beneficiary.⁶⁰ By February 1778, Robert Adam was able to inform him that ‘every creature admires your front & Sir Watkins told me the Square was much obliged to you, as it was a great ornament to the whole inhabitants’.⁶¹

Ironically, the new façade was a ‘façade’ in more ways than one. Adam may have drawn directly from his archaeological publication *Ruins of the Palace of the Emperor Diocletian at Spalatro* of 1764 (much as Stuart had done from his own Athenian drawings for no.13), but the Winns’ budget only stretched as far as rendered cement, not stone. Behind this ‘mask’, there was a curious mix of new and old, fashionable and passé as the Adams undertook some redecoration of what they referred to as the ‘front room’,⁶² replete with a staggering £1288.19.0. worth of paintings by Antonio Zucchi and plasterwork by Joseph Rose priced at £37.7.3.⁶³ Because what remains in the house today is most likely Adam Revival work of 1877

⁵⁸ Anson House had naturally garnered much attention among architectural connoisseurs. See, for example, James Stuart to Thomas Anson, c.September 1764, Lichfield MS D615/P(S)/1/6/13, Staffordshire Record Office, Stafford.

⁵⁹ Sands, ‘Adam’s London’. See also *The Parish of St. James Westminster. Part 1*, 133 and King, *The Complete Works of Robert and James Adam*, 290-292.

⁶⁰ Bradley and Pevsner, *London 6: Westminster*, 628. See also *The Parish of St. James Westminster. Part 1*, 118. For a detailed account of Liardet’s patent cement, see Frank Kelsall, ‘Liardet versus Adam’, *Architectural History*, 27 (1984): 118-126.

⁶¹ Robert Adam to Sir Rowland Winn, 15 February 1776, NP, WYW1352/3/3/1/5/2/11, partially quoted in *The Parish of St. James Westminster. Part 1*, 124, endnote 253.

⁶² NP, WYW1352/3/3/1/5/2/11. King, *The Complete Works of Robert and James Adam*, 295, footnote 45, has suggested that Sir John Soane’s Museum, Adam volume 5(70) is a preliminary drawing for the ceiling in this room.

⁶³ Abstract of artificers bills of work done for Sir Rowland Winn at his House in St James’s Square, London, 1776, NP, WYW1352/1/4/81/4.

by Trollope & Sons than the real thing,⁶⁴ there is no way of determining if Zucchi's paintings were inset in Rose's plasterwork, whether they hung on the walls or, more likely, were a combination of both. The Adams may also have designed the stairhall ceiling but this is no longer extant.⁶⁵

The Second Sale

Unfortunately no descriptions of the hospitality provided by the Winns at their new house have survived, perhaps because the couple only enjoyed its use for a short time before the birth of the future sixth baronet in 1775. Although the child had been born in London, Sabine soon cocooned herself at Nostell and thereafter refused to travel. The London townhouse became of little importance to her and, if a letter from the housemaid Mary Cane is indicative of wider dissatisfaction, she even neglected the skeleton staff kept on in town.⁶⁶ Her husband continued to rent a pew in the nearby church of St James's Piccadilly⁶⁷ but he stayed alone at the house whenever he had business in the capital, where he can definitely be placed from January to May 1770, February to March 1773, April to May 1774, March 1775, April to June 1777, April to May 1781, May to June 1783, and June to August 1784 (the latter with an interim visit to Bath for his health).⁶⁸ Much of his time was occupied by visits to solicitors and bankers, attending hearings at the House of Commons, and dining with relatives,⁶⁹ but he seldom entertained and there is nothing to suggest that he made further alterations to the house nor added to its collections.

⁶⁴ The Parish of St. James Westminster. Part 1, 134; Bradley and Pevsner, London 6: Westminster, 628.

⁶⁵ King, *The Complete Works of Robert and James Adam*, 290-292.

⁶⁶ Mary Cane to Sir Rowland Winn, 17 February 1782, NP, WYW1352/1/1/5/18.

⁶⁷ NP, WYW1352/1/1/5/20.

⁶⁸ NP, WYW1352/1/1/5/18, WYW1352/1/1/6/3, WYW1352/3/3/1/5/5/1, WYW1352/1/4/2/16, WYW1352/1/4/87/61, WYW1352/1/1/5/9.

⁶⁹ Todd, 'A Swiss Milady in Yorkshire', 212-213.

In spite, or perhaps because, of the large sums of money that the Winns had lavished on no.11 St James's Square and Nostell, by 1784 Sir Rowland was considering selling up and buying elsewhere.⁷⁰ Instead, he was killed in a coach accident at Retford on 20 February 1785.⁷¹

Although the townhouse was mentioned in the fifth baronet's Will as part of the estate left to his wife 'as over and above the Provision' of 'jointure in lieu of her Dower',⁷² so unfamiliar was Lady Winn with her husband's affairs that she thought the house had been sold in November 1784 for £6930 and that the money had been paid to Messrs Hoare and Co. in part payment of a mortgage of £7000.⁷³ Indeed she was adamant that no.11 had been sold but not conveyed to its new owners and she wished to have her personal possessions removed before this happened.⁷⁴

In an uncharacteristically selfless act towards the only sister-in-law with whom she was still on speaking terms, Sabine offered Charlotte Winn whatever she might want from the London house before the rapidly-approaching contents sale took place.⁷⁵ After Charlotte had taken the items she desired, commissioned the copy of Hamilton's double portrait that is now in the possession of Lord St Oswald,⁷⁶ and arranged for Sabine's personal goods to be packed for shipping, Christie's sale of the furnishings took place 9-11 April 1785. The sale catalogue reveals that the Winns had made few changes to the original colour schemes of the house beyond the addition or

⁷⁰ Charlotte Winn to Sir Rowland Winn, 1 July [1784], NP, WYW1352/1/1/5/6. Leasing a London house is also implied in Lady Dering to Sabine Winn, 13 March 1785, NP, WYW1352/1/1/6/10.

⁷¹ Todd, 'A Swiss Milady in Yorkshire', 220.

⁷² Winn Bart v Winn, 3 September 1789, C12/1087/26, The National Archives, London.

⁷³ Winn Bart v Winn, 18 May 1791, C12/1093/21, The National Archives, London.

⁷⁴ Thomas Leech to Mr Leadbetter, 29 March 1785, NP, WYW1352/1/1/6/10. This letter was quoted in part in *The Parish of St. James Westminster*. Part 1, 124. See also Thomas Leech to Mr Leadbetter, 28 March 1785, NP, WYW1352/1/4/59/16 and E. Nicholson to Sabine Winn, 1 April 1785, NP, WYW1352/1/1/6/5.

⁷⁵ Charlotte Winn to Sabine Winn, 21 May 1785, NP, WYW1352/1/1/6/10. See also Sabine Winn to Charlotte Winn, 25 May 1785, NP, WYW1352/1/1/6/10.

⁷⁶ Charlotte Winn to Sabine Winn, 21 May 1785, NP, WYW1352/1/1/6/10.

reupholstering of some furniture covered in blue silk or mohair and the replacement of crimson with blue curtains.⁷⁷ Nothing for work of this sort is itemised in Chippendale's accounts, although his firm may have been responsible as it is known that his attempts to dye Sir Rowland's crimson silk bed hangings 'garter blue' had failed miserably.⁷⁸

Unfortunately there is no direct correlation between items from the Macclesfield sale, those in Chippendale's account and those in Christie's sale catalogue, but enough can be identified to suggest that Sabine retained only what was personal to her, for example, her writing desk, or personal to her children, such as the crib. Evidence for the dining tables, chairs and armchairs identified as having been sent from London to Nostell appears lacking as these items have prices next to them in Christie's catalogue – the dining tables achieved £7.17.6. (Chippendale had charged eleven pounds), two French arm chairs with horsehair seats and brass nails made £2.4.0. (the original cost had been £7) and the ten mahogany chairs made eleven pounds (representing a loss of £1.10.).⁷⁹ The situation with the bookcase is more complicated as the relevant bookcase at Nostell was one of four such pieces. A 'mahogany library BOOK CASE with glass doors, 12 feet 3 wide by 9 feet high' was sold by Christie for £24.3.0. from the back parlour of No.11 St James's Square in 1785,⁸⁰ but nothing comparable had been acquired at the Macclesfield sale, Chippendale's London account does not include measurements for the 'very large Mahogany Bookcase with folding Glass doors & a pediment Top &c' he supplied for thirty-eight pounds in 1766,⁸¹ nor does his combined account include entries for any

⁷⁷ NP, WYW1352/3/4/1/26.

⁷⁸ Thomas Chippendale to Sir Rowland Winn, 26 August and 1 October 1767, NP, WYW1352/3/3/1/5/3/5 and WYW1352/3/3/1/5/3/9.

⁷⁹ NP, WYW1352/3/3/1/5/3/63.

⁸⁰ NP, WYW1352/3/4/1/26, 6.

⁸¹ NP, WYW1352/3/3/1/5/3/63.

other bookcases that would fit the bill. For now, the origins of the Nostell bookcase must remain a mystery.

Fearnley sent Christie's account to Sabine on 28 June 1785, along with his hope that the house would soon be sold.⁸² It eventually changed hands in 1787,⁸³ thus ending the Winns' relationship with no.11 St James's Square.

Conclusions

The first conclusion that can be drawn from the Winns' short occupancy of their London townhouse is the salutary lesson that not all aristocratic townhouses were treated as the primary place for a family to display new trends or adopt new tastes. In the case of the Winns, it was most definitely at Nostell that the Adams were given a free hand to experiment with exciting new room shapes and their own brand of antique-inspired ornament. This suggests that a wider study of London townhouses owned by the gentry rather than the upper echelons of polite society may reveal academic attention has become skewed by our own pursuit of architectural innovation and rarified 'taste'.

A second conclusion is that using furniture made for an older generation to whom the new owners were unrelated might have been more desirable than problematic. In fact, for a couple with aspirations well beyond their purse and otherwise used to hiring luxury items such as silver plate, the purchase of older goods in situ may have presented a ready-made solution to a lack of comparable goods from their own families. Relying solely on hand-me-downs such as an uncle's linens, china or plate would hardly have allowed the Winns to render their house liveable so quickly. That they were displaying the finery of a previous owner of higher social

⁸² Fairfax Fearnley to Sabine Winn, 28 June 1785, NP, WYW1352/1/4/18/16.
⁸³ The Parish of St. James Westminster. Part 1, 124.

status alongside their own goods would surely have been an added bonus had the longed-for peerage come to fruition.