

‘CULTIVATED LEISURE’

The Subjects of Beckenham Place’s Adam-style Images

When an ambassador dropped dead in mid-negotiation the French statesman Talleyrand (1754-1838) is supposed to have asked wryly “*I wonder what he meant by that?*”. The thirteen fine neo-classical plaster images decorating the three reception rooms of Beckenham Place, a mid-Georgian country villa now within south-east London, are arguably its most distinctive and important surviving feature. But their meaning and purpose has received little attention, perhaps because their ‘classicising’ visual language is no longer widely understood.ⁱ

Their subjects suggest that they were chosen deliberately, from a variety of sources, for a family-sized house intended as more than a pleasant retreat from the hubbub of London. Like the surrounding park, which distantly echoed the visionary, pseudo-classical landscape paintings of Claude Lorrain (1600-82), they would have reminded visitors that their host understood classical ideals, including ‘cultivated leisure’ with literary friends in the countryside, as conceived by the elite of ancient Rome. Re-imagined by their would-be successors, the intellectuals of the Renaissance, and mass-produced in various images bought for display by the well-off across eighteenth-century Europe “*in the form and style of those of the ancients*”,ⁱⁱ this vision is now accessible to all thanks to the LCC’s far-sighted purchase of house and park “*for public recreation*”.ⁱⁱⁱ

This paper argues that such Adam-style designs were not always purely decorative nor literal. They were sometimes orchestrated, as here, to convey ideas about their location and patron, through classicising metaphor.^{iv} The Beckenham images are a distinctively eighteenth-century British view of antiquity applied to contemporary purposes and seen through multiple lenses - the ancient remains themselves, well-known Renaissance designs inspired by them, and later Italian and French interpretations of both, reworked in a continuing dialogue between the present and a revitalised past, “*properly adapting them to our own customs in an artful and masterly manner*”.^v

A ROOM GUIDE TO THE IMAGES

The **South Room** is usually flooded with sunlight and is therefore, perhaps, the most lightly decorated,^{vi} with only two small ceiling roundels, both based on ancient coin-designs.^{vii} One (at the east (E) end) represents **victory**, the other (W) **justice** (*ills 1-4*).^{viii} Here they could indicate typical divisions (*history* and *law*) of the library probably housed in the room’s four main alcoves. The owner, John Cator (1728-1806), a businessman and MP of Quaker ancestry, denigrated by political opponents as “*this adventurer*” and “*this d—d carpenter*”, may also have been seeking to display the life and values “*proper for a man of rank and education*”, the images implying that he thought deeply about public affairs and understood society’s past achievements and enduring values.^{ix} Thus he had himself portrayed in 1777 by Sir Joshua Reynolds (1723-92)^x in a way that hinted at the grand tradition of European portraiture (possibly for the now empty roundel above the fireplace?) with, unusually for Reynolds, several books at his elbow (*ill. 32*).^{xi}

The **East Room** ceiling (*ills 6, 7*) is the most elaborate, its combination of Greco-Roman divinities^{xii} suggesting convivial, artistic pleasures enjoyed with propriety, a typically eighteenth-century ideal of balance and domestic ‘good taste’. **Juno** (SW roundel, *ill. 8*), the queen of the gods, enthroned with her sceptre, peacock, and winged messenger, Iris, represents ‘*family values*’.^{xiii} **Venus** (NE, *ill. 9*), with her dove, confiscates Cupid’s bow ie. ‘*licence is restrained by virtue*’.^{xiv} The long-haired lyre-player (NW, *ill. 10*), the sun-god **Apollo** with his arrow-quiver, box-lyre, and griffin (a mythical eagle-lion hybrid, guardian of ‘solar’ gold), represents celestial harmony and the divine inspiration of

oracles,^{xv} poets and musicians ie. ‘*music as the language of heaven*’.^{xvi} Lastly, a subdued **Bacchus** (SE, *ill. 12*), the unruly god of wine, festivity, and the darker, irrational side of the psyche, sits quietly on the ground holding a jug, his almost domesticated leopard or tigress^{xvii} looking up amiably, his fir-cone tipped staff (‘*thyrsus*’) signifying divine inspiration. He and Apollo were taken from engravings of ancient oil-lamps first published in 1691 (*ills 11, 13*), when this image was described as “*free from any care, wine liberating the mind from troubling thoughts*”.^{xviii}

An oblong tablet (S, *ill. 14*) symbolises the creative arts, represented by a frieze of five **Muses**, their goddesses. One, seated on a goat-skin (here possibly a reminder of the satyr Marsyas, flayed for challenging Apollo’s musical supremacy), listens to a second declaiming. A third, playing the light bowl-lyre used for domestic music-making, possibly Erātō (*lyric poetry*), accompanies the singing of Euterpē (*flute-playing*), recorded by Calliopē (*epic poetry*), all inspired by Apollo enthroned.

Another tablet (N, *ill. 15*) copies an ancient sculpture once in the Albani collection in Rome,^{xix} as published in 1693 (*ills 16, 17*),^{xx} representing the divine powers and, probably, regeneration/rebirth. The sky-god **Jupiter**, seated on a magnificent throne with footstool, grasps a thunderbolt and points to himself, presumably asserting primacy over his brothers, **Neptune** (*the sea*, holding a trident), foot planted firmly on a rock as ‘*Stabilitor*’ (saviour from earthquakes),^{xxi} watching a nymph dropping her cloak, possibly his lover **Amphitrītē**, and **Pluto** (*the underworld and death*, hence the empty cornucopia), his consort, **Proserpina**, the goddess of Spring, probably removing her heavy cloak after the half-year spent with him in Stygian cold and gloom.^{xxii}

The ceiling of the **North Room** (*ill. 19*) has four oval images, a shape recalling ancient gem designs and wall-decorations. Ecstatic, bare-breasted nymphs, similar in spirit to paintings of Bacchantes (female acolytes of Bacchus) excavated from Herculaneum and published in 1757, seem, at one level, to represent **dance** (NW, *ill. 21*) and **music** (SW, *ill. 22*).^{xxiii} A third spreads sanctifying **incense** (NE, *ill. 23*), and another carries a fruit-basket representing **fruitful abundance**, an image much used in the Renaissance, possibly recalling the Roman goddess Pomōna (SE, *ills 24, 25*).^{xxiv}

The large panel above the fireplace (*ill. 26*) shows four figures (the man with covered head acting as priest) burning floral incense at an altar to **Aesculapius**, Apollo’s son, god of *health and healing*, his snake curling round the incense-bowl (*ill. 27*).^{xxv} The ceiling figures could also be read as participants in this ceremony. Aesculapius was honoured as a giver of oracles and healing dreams, and protector of the family, “*making the human race immortal through marriage and healthy children*”^{xxvi} (Cato’s only child, a daughter, died aged three in April 1766, followed in July by his sister, aged seventeen). The design comes from a pseudo-classical engraved gem published in 1709, the snake added later (*ill. 28*).^{xxvii}

The thought behind both rooms is probably that in this ideal of a well-cultivated country retreat (Milton’s “*where the clear fountains of the Muses spring*”)^{xxviii} the highest arts inspire physical and spiritual well-being: “*where he can be at leisure with the muses and the spirit of the place, where at last he may commune with the gods themselves*”.^{xxix}

THEIR CONTEXT

“*The past is a foreign country: they do things differently there*”.^{xxx} The images take for granted two ideas central to the history of Western culture that may now seem odd. First, that contemporary ideas are most properly and effectively communicated in language (here visual language) derived from classical antiquity, “*without which all teaching is blind*”.^{xxxi} Even in ancient Rome and ideas

with the aura of antiquity were re-imagined for new purposes. Cator's contemporary, the French thinker Diderot, was mistaken when he joked that the ancients were not burdened with Antiquity.

Second, that to be considered successful, and even fully civilised, it was necessary not only to play a leading role in public affairs (Cator spent much money to be an MP, on one occasion outside the law) but also to cultivate oneself. This included withdrawal from business (Latin "*negōtium*") for cultured recreation ("*ōtium*") in some country-style retreat where a few like-minded friends could be entertained informally but elegantly. Practised by well-off ancient Romans, this was reborn around many towns across Renaissance Italy, Germany and beyond, wherever there was a concentration of employment for the educated, as idealised by the Dutch scholar Erasmus in "*The Spiritual Banquet*".^{xxxii} In the eighteenth century it morphed into a broader philosophy of life akin to Voltaire's adage "*We must cultivate our garden*".^{xxxiii} Neither idea is exclusively Western: Cator's contemporaries in the rich cities of China and Japan thought exactly the same, and there were many more of them.^{xxxiv}

The money for this was made through the extraordinary growth of eighteenth-century London into a 'world city' hosting a booming consumer society. This grew from the creation of what was probably the largest Single Market of its time, built on the Anglo-Scottish union of 1707; from a constant influx of the talented and ambitious; and from trade, finance, and investment with increasingly globalised and networked economies across Europe, around the Atlantic, and in South and East Asia. Beckenham Place is one of a handful of survivors of the mosaic of fashionable villas and parks for this 'new money' that once encircled London.

Cator was reportedly a bluff businessman, a timber merchant and property developer with family employed in the East India Company. But he had friends of friends at the heart of literary London, including Samuel Johnson and Fanny Burney, who admired his new house and enjoyed his hospitality. The subjects of the images suggest that they were carefully selected for the house by a sophisticated adviser with an informed audience in mind. Their taste and sources overlap with the wide range of reworked classical images marketed as cultural cachet for "*Persons of Curiosity and Taste in the Works of Art*"^{xxxv} by, for example, the Wedgwood and Bentley ceramics factory from around 1768-69, in their case not always with scholarly exactness: "*I am glad you have changed the name of our large Bacchante to Cassandra, I like it much better & hope that it will sell, now that it is regenerated*".^{xxxvi}

The domesticity implied by two images reflects the ideal of informal, affectionate family life that was seen as characteristic of so-called 'middle-class England', part of a trend in how fashionable society across western Europe saw and presented itself. Today the house is often called 'the mansion', but in room size, number and function it was typical of the better-off middle class,^{xxxvii} its layout was thought fitting for Beckenham rectory in an Adam design dated 1788,^{xxxviii} and externally it was originally an unpretentious, almost plain, square block (*ills 30, 31*).^{xxxix} Compare its elaborate extension and, for example, the strikingly monumental design of Foots Cray Place, a small but ambitious villa in nearby Sidcup (built 1754, demolished 1950, *ill. 29*). Like Chiswick House, this re-created a Venetian country retreat near Vicenza, the Villa Capra (or 'Villa Rotonda'), celebrated as a masterpiece of Andrea Palladio (1508-80). Similarly, while the designers of the Beckenham park seem to have had in mind Claude Lorrain's paintings, admired as 'sublime' visions of nature and the classical spirit,^{xl} in Blackheath the marine insurance magnate John Julius Angerstein owned five Claudes now in the National Gallery.

Cator's cultural ambitions were expressed more modestly and economically, not through assertive neo-Palladian architecture nor, as far as we know, great art,^{xli} but through the less showy kind of Adam-style interior decoration, built around classical allusions and executed in moulded plaster.^{xlii} It may be tempting to see a trace of his and his wife's Quaker background in the original house's understated exterior and sophisticated interior decoration, and in their plain and modestly inscribed monument in the churchyard of Saint George's, Beckenham, both heavily modified by their successors. But their personal taste will remain unclear without more evidence about the furnishing of the house.

'ADAM-STYLE' OR 'ADAM'?

No link between the house and **Robert Adam (1728-92)** is documented. The circumstantial evidence is weak: its Palladian layout of rooms and windows and shallow garden-front bay was much used by Adam and others for villas; Cator's and Robert Adam's working lives may have overlapped through their Bankside timber-yards and briefly in Parliament in 1772-73; Cator's town house was among many in the flawed Adam development, the Adelphi, off the Strand; and Adam's office prepared several designs for Beckenham's rector, the last all but copying Beckenham Place on a reduced scale. Above all, if he had designed the house (built 1760-62)^{xliii} early in his career, he would surely have depicted it and not the rectory in the villa designs prepared for publication later.

Various architects working locally for London clients have been proposed, including Robert Taylor (1714-88) and Richard Jupp (1728-99). But the unusually plain exterior of the original house is hard to identify with any individual hand. It presumably embodies Cator's own taste, implemented by an unpretentious architect like Jupp.^{xliiv} Its interior decoration is a good example of the fashionable "*variety of light mouldings, gracefully formed, delicately enriched*"^{xliv} that the Adams claimed to have originated from studying the interiors of ancient Roman 'private' houses (particularly the grandest examples, like the remnants of Nero's '*Domus Aurea*' (Golden Palace) in Rome). But theirs was a hyper-competitive world in which aggressive rivals developed variations on a shared, eclectic idiom unprotected by copyright, and Adam was much imitated.

The best that can probably be said from the visual evidence is that the Beckenham plasterwork came from people with a firm grasp of classical iconography and a thorough understanding of the syntax and vocabulary of Adam's work. It is typical of the leading plastering firm, **Joseph Rose & Co.**, whose close association with Adam is documented from 1760, though they also worked with other architects. Cator knew the Roses intimately, since the advowson (the right to appoint the rector of Beckenham, a key figure in local life), which had been withheld from the sale of Beckenham manor to him in 1773, was sold to the elder Joseph Rose who appointed his son, the Rev. William Rose (1751-1829), in 1778.^{xlvi} The delicate, linear, and lively low-relief is so close to Adam as to suggest that his office probably supplied Rose & Co. with the usual drawings (though they also originated their own designs, these were mostly for decorative detail)^{xlvii} - either during construction, shortly before Adam was flooded with major commissions, or perhaps more likely as a later improvement, given its developed style. Until more specific information emerges, a cautious '*Circle of Robert Adam, attributed to Joseph Rose and Co.*'?

MONEY AND TASTE

Adam, and Rose, had a wide range of clients but their best-known projects were for the seriously rich who typically used inset paintings or murals where Beckenham Place has plaster bas-reliefs. They were sometimes combined, as in the palatial Kedleston Hall (1760-68),^{xlviii} and profusely in an

opulent London mansion, Home House, 20 Portman Square (c. 1775-77).^{xlix} This is richly decorated with thematic images full of classical and other poetic allusions. Amongst its integrated floor-to-ceiling decorations are 27 pictorial roundels from Rose celebrating a wedding,¹ many derived from the same 1693 publication as Beckenham's north tablet.^{li} The lavish, massed effects of such large-scale projects were carefully orchestrated for maximum impact on grand occasions. Beckenham is simpler, lighter, and more comfortable to live with. Without the costly distractions of paintings, gilding and complex decoration, its allusive content is more prominent, "*arranged with propriety and skill*", as Adam claimed for all his work.^{lii}

In Home House these images add variety and structure to a dense arrangement, and perhaps speeded completion, as the client was elderly and is said to have dismissed the previous architect for delay. In Beckenham they may be more a matter of modesty, calculated taste, and value for money. John Cator had a reputation for business sense, securing his position by investing in land, the safest and most prestigious option.^{liii} Vastly greater fortunes were lost through excessive consumption, often due to building and collecting or, like Adam, through "the *Gambling* method of Commerce called *Speculation*".^{liv} The erudition behind the choice of such appropriate images was almost certainly someone else's: it would have been well within the capacity of Adam, Rose, or their associates. But the decision to execute them in Adam-style plasterwork, realising fine aesthetics and classical allusions economically and soberly, was presumably the client's. As Wedgwood promised, "*the most beautiful Enrichment, at a moderate Expence*".^{lv}

This has been very much to the public benefit since they only survive because they are integral with the building's fabric. Their fate depends on always keeping the house, at the very least, sound, weather-proof, and secure.^{lvi} They deserve investigation to confirm, and if necessary restore, their original colouring, its harmony a key feature of Adam-style design. They are important as living heritage of high quality for an area where little survives. They give us direct insight into the thoughts, feelings, and aspirations of those who chose them and lived their lives with and through them.

David Love

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

ⁱ I wish to thank the Friends of Beckenham Place Park (hereafter FBPP) for their invitation to write this, and for their insights into the history of the house and estate; all errors are mine. I am grateful to the following for access to their collections: Cambridge University Library, the National Art Library, the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), Sir John Soane's Museum, and above all the Warburg Institute, a "*locus studiosus*" without equal for these things. The translations are mine.

ⁱⁱ Robert and James Adam, *The Works in Architecture of Robert and James Adam*, 3 vols London 1773-79, 1822., vol. I, part 1 (1773), p.9.

ⁱⁱⁱ Both neglected since the London Borough of Lewisham took ownership of the house and park in 1971 in succession to the GLC and LCC. They now fall just within its borough boundary, unlike Beckenham itself, administratively part of Bromley.

^{iv} Compare “Adam’s ceilings...required no knowledge, understanding or effort on the part of the spectator. Their pleasing impact was immediate”, Eileen Harris, *The Genius of Robert Adam*, New Haven and London 2001, p. 8.

^v Adam’s friend and associate Giovanni Battista Piranesi, *Diverse maniere d’adornare i cammini ed ogni altra parte degli Edifici*, Rome 1769: *Apologetical Essay...*, p. 2.

^{vi} As in the two other rooms, there is much linear, low-relief decoration, here including acanthus and other thin wall-strips, ribbons and light garlands on walls, ceiling, and the lock-plates of the fine mahogany doors, miniature chainwork around windows and on the shutters, elegant lyres on the ceiling, and four small ceiling tablets with pairs of guardians in the form of Greek sphinxes facing tripod lamps/incense burners (*ill. 5*).

^{vii} These are common images on Roman Imperial coins. Variants (‘equity’ and ‘victory’) appear on coins of the emperor Vespasian (r. 69-79) inscribed AEQUITAS AUGUSTI and VICTORIA AUGUSTI published in Joseph Addison, *Dialogues upon the Influence of Ancient Medals especially in relation to the Greek and Latin Poets*, London 1726, ills: Series I.12, Series III.14 (*ills 2, 4*). Addison explained Vespasian’s ‘Victory’ with the quotation “*The captive shield with this inscription grac’d: / “Sacred to Mars, these votive spoils proclaim / The fate of [..], and [..]’s fame*”. The coin probably celebrated the conquest of Judaea, indicated by a palm tree and bound captive. Beckenham’s image is less specific and dilutes the martial element by omitting the coin’s inscription and captive. Such images were also often engraved on gems, three variants of ‘Victory’ being recorded in a standard study published a little later (Ignazio Maria Raponi, *Recueil de pierres antiques gravées...*, Rome 1786, plates 44/1, 54/6 and, almost identically, 79/5). The French connoisseur Caylus (1692-1765) explained such figures writing on shields as ‘Victory’ (winged) and ‘History’ (wingless): Anne-Claude-Philippe de Caylus, *Recueil de Trois Cent Têtes et sujets de composition gravés par M. le Comte de Caylus d’après les pierres gravées antiques du Cabinet du Roi*, ?Paris n.d., plates 282-3.

^{viii} They were much used in grand Renaissance decorative schemes inspired by ancient palaces. ‘Victory’ is in plasterwork on internal pilaster I, ‘justice’ on internal pilaster XIV, of Raphael’s Second Loggia of the Vatican Palace (1518-19), readily accessible until the last century and engraved by Giovanni Volpato and Giovanni Ottaviani, *Loggie di Raffaele*, Rome 1772-77: part I (1772); this was almost certainly lot 58 in Christie’s sale of the Adam library, 20 May 1818. Giulio Romano, Raphael’s pupil and joint heir to his business, had a simpler variant, without the palm tree, in the magnificent villa he designed just outside Mantua, the Palazzo del Te (1526-32), used to entertain the Emperor Charles V, as ceiling plasterwork in the Chamber of the Sun and Moon (among 128 such images there) and in the Chamber of the Eagles.

^{ix} “*A man of rank...*” is from Piranesi, *op. cit.*, p. 6. For the political opprobrium, during an attempt to get elected to Parliament in 1768, see Cator’s biography in *historyofparliamentonline.org*.

^x David Mannings, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: A Complete Catalogue of his Paintings*, New Haven and London 2000, 2 vols: vol. I, p. 123, no. 325; *ill. vol. II*, p.473, no.1214; and Prince Frederick Duleep Singh, *Portraits in Norfolk Houses*, 2 vols, ed. E. Farrer, Norwich n.d. (1928?), vol. II, p. 397, no. 6.

^{xi} The plain half-length or bust portrait, most often without attributes, tightly focussed on the individual likeness and personality in a direct and informal way, was a standard Reynolds format for noblemen and gentlemen alike. The circular shape of Cator’s portrait (described by Singh as wearing a “*grey (Quaker) coat*”) seems to be unique in Reynolds’s work, presumably specified by Cator. It is more formal and highly finished, and perhaps more guarded, than most of this size. As the books at his elbow are rare in Reynolds (and where present are usually connected with the subject’s profession, like the celebrated anatomist James Hunter or actor David Garrick), these too were presumably requested by Cator. The gathered red curtain with tassel behind lightly echoes the tradition of grand portraiture (again little used by Reynolds, mainly for large, formal portraits), as does Cator’s studiously negligent pose. Its recorded diameter, 89 cm., might, if framed using a very narrow moulding, just fit within the 91cm. (ie. almost one yard) internal diameter of the decorative plaster roundel. To judge from Singh’s descriptions the family seem to have preferred traditional, ‘Sunday best’ portraits, Cator’s wife with “*white hair very high à la Pompadour, and at the neck tulle, and also black and white feathers in the hair...bodice cut low*” and his brother Joseph in a “*blue coat edged with gold, gold buttons, also gold round cuffs*” (*op. cit.*, vol. II pp. 397-8, nos 8, 10). Compare the immediacy and simplicity of Reynolds’s portrait of Cator’s friend, the brewer Henry Thrale of Streatham Park, painted in the same year and hung in the library of his villa at Streatham: Mannings, *op.cit.*, vol. I, p. 443, no. 1749, *ill. vol. II*, p. 480, no.1234.

^{xii} Their Latin names are used here instead of Greek where both exist.

^{xiii} Music-loving visitors like the novelist Fanny Burney and her father Charles, organist at the Royal Hospital, Chelsea, might have identified them as the victors in Handel’s comic oratorio *Semele* about the troubles of Bacchus’s parents (Jupiter and one of his mortal lovers, Sémélē), premiered in 1744 at Covent Garden.

^{xiv} A common subject, slight variants are on numerous ancient engraved gems eg. Pierre-Jean Mariette, *Recueil des Pierres Gravées du Cabinet du Roy*, 2 vols, Paris 1750, vol. 2, plate 22; Caylus *op. cit.*, plate 296; Raponi *op. cit.*, plates

22/10, 60/3. See too external pilaster 12 of Raphael's Loggia (Volpato, op. cit., part III, 1777). Much used by Adam, for example in painted ovals above chimney looking-glasses - Adam, op. cit., vol. II part 1, plate III (composition dated 1773 in plate), vol. III, plate XI (undated), and in two design drawings for Home House, 20 Portman Square, inscribed "Adelphi May 1777" (Sir John Soane's Museum, London, Adam Sketchbooks vol. 20, nos 165-6) - as well as in a round, painted medallion on a wall-sconce (vol. II part 1, plate VIII (dated 1774 in the plate), with altar.

^{xv} A best-selling Renaissance iconography shows a griffin being used to cast an oracle (Vincenzo Cartari, *Le Vere e Nove Imagini de gli Dei delli Antichi*, Padua 1615, p.551, ill.).

^{xvi} There is a 'lyre and quiver' frieze on the chimneypiece in the music room at Kedleston Hall (Adam, 1760-68): Harris, op. cit., p. 27. There is no reason to suppose that the originator and most contemporary viewers of the Beckenham images would have seen the two Apollos as representing anything more than 'Apollo, Leader of the Muses' ("*Apollo Musagetes*"). But the roundel's long, unbound hair and near-nudity represent him as a youth ("*epebe*") approaching maturity, for whose education and socialisation Apollo had responsibilities as a patron of civic order. Its ambiguous hair and costume, here half-discarded, might also have reminded well-travelled viewers that the music-making Apollo was sometimes cross-dressed: see, for example, the colossal statue in imperial porphyry, one of the star items of the Farnese collection, which is now in the National Archaeological Museum, Naples (inv. no. 6281). A lyre-playing Muse, possibly Erātō, was depicted in the same pose by Pietro Santi Bartoli, *Admiranda Romanarum Antiquitatum*, Rome 1693, plate 81, figure 3/1, from a Hellenistic sculpture now in the British Museum (acc. no. 1819.0812.1).

^{xvii} Identifications of Bacchus's female 'big cats' vary between classical sources: these are the most common (Patricia Meilán Jácome *Bacchus and Felines in Roman Iconography: Issues of Gender and Species*, in Alberto Bernabé et al. (ed.), *Redefining Dionysos*, Berlin and Boston 2013). Compare "*Tigre di Bacco*", a tigress carrying a thyrsus, engraved on an ancient carnelian gem, in Leonardo Agostini, *Le Gemme antiche figurate di Leonardo Agostini Senese*, Rome 1657, plate 180, and in other pre-Cator publications.

^{xviii} Giovanni Pietro Bellori and Pietro Santi Bartoli, *Le Antiche Lucerne sepolcrali figurate, Raccolte delle Cave sotteranee, e Grotte di Roma*, Rome 1691, Part II, plates 14 ("*L'Armonia d'Apolline, che al suono della sua Lira temprale Stagioni, & la Natura, s'intende in questa immagine*", p. 7), and 20 ("*...dimostra questo Dio, quieto & sicuro da ogni cura, come il vino libera la mente da ogni sensiero & molestia*", p. 9), *ills 11, 13*. Both were excavated in Rome, collected by Bellori (1613-96), and sold before 1702 to the Prussian royal collection in Berlin which had the catalogue republished in Latin for a wider international audience that year and subsequently.

^{xix} "*Cardinal Albani and I are turned very thick ... He has given me allowance to mould several things from his originals, shakes me by the hand ... and claps my shoulder*" (Robert Adam, 1755): quoted by John Fleming, *Robert Adam and his Circle in Edinburgh and Rome*, London 1962, p. 165.

^{xx} Bartoli 1693, op.cit., plate 28 (*ill. 16*), Pluto misidentified as "*Genio*", then in the Massimi collection in Rome. The Beckenham tablet follows Bartoli closely, misinterpreting the trident's prongs. Both are rendered correctly in Tommaso Picoli and Giorgio Zoega, *Li Bassirilievi antichi di Roma*, 2 vols Rome 1808 ("*Piranesi's Antichi*"), vol. 1, plate 1, pp. 1-5, by then in the Albani collection, shown reversed, with restored areas marked (*ill. 17*). Zoega tentatively agrees that the women are Amphitritē and Proserpina. The original theme of what was presumably the front of a sarcophagus was most likely cosmic power – the supreme authority represented by the senior Olympian gods (the male figures), exercised through thunderbolts, earthquakes, and death, and, probably, the power of regeneration and rebirth in nature, represented by the female figures. Another cosmic theme is on the central dome of the great garden loggia of Raphael's Villa Madama in Rome (1518-25), the surviving fragment of a grand suburban villa for the Medici popes (and now the Italian state) to entertain official visitors, a masterpiece of classicising plasterwork by Giovanni da Udine (1487-1564).

^{xxi} A typical pose for Neptune/Poseidon. See, for example, the celebrated sardonyx/onyx cameo of *Poseidon and Athēna disputing the lordship of Athens*, once owned by the Medici (National Archaeological Museum, Naples, inv. no. 25837), and Raponi, op. cit., plate 82/5.

^{xxii} Mythical animals, like the sea-horses within small tablets here (*ill. 18*), and the pairs of guardian griffins facing hanging oil-lamps at the corners of the ceiling (*ill. 7*), were generally used simply as repetitive decoration in 'antique' style. Sea-horses occasionally refer to maritime interests, and griffins (according to the Adams' assistant George Richardson, *A Book of Ceilings composed in the style of the Antique Grotesque*, London 1776, note to plate V) to immortality.

^{xxv} The NW dancer brandishes cymbals associated with Bacchus: compare one of a group of Bacchante murals from Herculaneum first officially published, with associated archaeological remains, in *Le Pitture antiche d'Ercolano*, 5 vols, Naples 1757-79, vol. I (1757), plate 21, p. 115 (*ill. 20*). Inspired dancers were a well-known ancient type, from engraved gems as well as from sculpture: see two similar figures in ovals within an undated frieze design (possibly 1760s?) in the Soane/Adam Sketchbooks, vol.53, no 41, 4th row; another, with tambourine, on an ancient gem was published in 1762

(Caylus, *Recueil d'antiquités*...., 7 vols, Paris 1752-67, vol. 5, p. 218); this book, lot 80 in the 1818 Adam library sale, acknowledged by Wedgwood as a major source.

^{xxiv} An archetypal image, Aby Warburg's "*Fräulein Schnellbring*". See, for example, the right-hand figure in Domenico Ghirlandaio's *Birth of the Virgin*, Tornabuoni chapel, Santa Maria Novella, Florence (1485-90) (*ill. 25*), the Raphael Loggia's internal pilaster VI (Volpato, op. cit., part I), and a characteristically jocular, grimacing variant in Giulio's Chamber of the Sun and Moon, Mantua.

^{xxv} Other Aesculapian images appear frequently in sales catalogues issued by Josiah Wedgwood from 1773; the recurrent family illnesses mentioned in his letters may suggest why they were marketable.

^{xxvi} Aristides, *Oratio XLII*, 5: Emma J. Edelstein and Ludwig Edelstein, *Asclepius: A Collection and Interpretation of Testimonies*, 2 vols, Baltimore 1945, vol I p. 156 (text), vol. II pp. 104-5, 199-208 (commentary).

^{xxvii} Domenico de'Rossi, *Gemme antiche figurate, date in luce da Domenico de'Rossi*...., 4 vols, Rome 1707-9, vol.4, p. 150, plate 97, without snake and altar-base (*ill. 28*); reproduced by Raponi, op. cit., plate 68/10. The altar and some clothing are modified in the Beckenham image, presumably in response to de'Rossi's criticism that those on the gem were unclassical.

^{xxviii} John Milton, *Ad Ioannum Rousicum Oxoniensis Academiae Bibliothecarium* (To John Rouse, Librarian of Oxford University) 23 January 1646/7, from lines 20-21: "*Fontes ubi limpidi / Aonidum*...".

^{xxix} The Italian humanist Bartolomeo Sacchi ('Platina', 1421-81): Platina, *De honesta voluptate et valetudine* (On Proper Pleasure and Good Health), Rome c. 1470, book I, chapter 1, 'Choosing a place to live': "...*ubi musis et genio vacet, ubi postremo [...] cum diis ipsis loquatur*".

^{xxx} L. P. Hartley, *The Go-Between*, London 1953, prologue.

^{xxxi} Desiderius Erasmus, *Antibarbarorum liber primus* (The Anti-Barbarians), Basel 1520: "...*sine quibus caeca est omnis doctrina*".

^{xxxii} Id., *Convivium Religiosum* (The Spiritual Banquet), Basel 1522.

^{xxxiii} 'M. Ralph' [Voltaire], *Candide ou l'Optimisme*, Paris 1759, conclusion: "*Il faut cultiver notre jardin*".

^{xxxiv} In societies then as rich as, and in some respects more effectively organised than, any in Europe: see for example the summary of recent research on China in Mike Davis, *Victorian Holocausts*, London and New York 2001, pp. 281-84, 440-41.

^{xxxv} *A Catalogue of Cameos [etc] after the antique, made by Wedgwood and Bentley* [...], London 1773, p. 1. Their 'Pomōna' has the same roots as Beckenham's, 'Erātō' does not.

^{xxxvi} Katherine, Lady Farrar, *Letters of Josiah Wedgwood*, 3 vols, privately printed 1903-6, reprinted Manchester 1973, vol. 2 p. 59, Wedgwood to Bentley, March 1772. Many thanks to Mike Goodwin, formerly of Pembroke College, Cambridge, for sharing his expertise in Wedgwood and its bibliography.

^{xxxvii} The usual family villa '3 *recepts*, study, 5 beds' on the two principal floors, the servants' attic floor here hidden from view, lit from the central light-well. Extended to the west, presumably after Cator's death in 1806, adding the entrance block with its large Serlio windows, heavily stone-framed square windows above, oversized portico, and dominant coat of arms. L. Bayly's crude engraving of the original house does not have the present dormer windows giving extra light in the attic (*ill. 30*), nor does J. E. Neale's engraving of the extension dated 1 January 1821.

^{xxxviii} With a smaller footprint, the central hall and the equivalent of the East Room much reduced, and an externally lit top floor (*ill. 31*).. See the Soane/Adam Sketchbooks vol. 4 no. 40, vol. 35 no. 101, and vol. 35 nos 102-110, for the three successive and increasingly plain designs for the entrance front. The final design and principal floor plans from vol. 35 were published in Alistair Rowan, *Designs for Castles and Country Villas by Robert and James Adam*, Oxford 1985, pp. 66-67, ills.

^{xxxix} Bayly (who misrepresents the site as almost flat) depicts the exterior varied subtly not only by the shallow bay but by framing the semi-basement lightly with a footing below, horizontal stone-course above, and minimally rusticated corners, much as now (*ill. 30*). The final rectory design has the horizontal courses higher up, framing the entrance floor (presumably to balance the windows added to the second floor), without rustication.

^{xi} Particularly the present view, framed by trees, west from Summerhouse Hill across the valley, site of Cator's lake, to the garden front of the house (depicted in typically late eighteenth-century 'picturesque' manner in a contemporary watercolour on-line with heritage-print.com). In old photographs the opposite view, towards the entrance front from the western boundary, looks through a shady glade with a pool (still present), natural territory for Claude's nymphs and Muses, the house like a distant temple. Building such views required much negotiation and patient consolidation of landholdings; permission was only granted in February 1785 (according to FBPP research) to close a public road through the valley and move another westward from near the entrance front of the house to just beyond the far side of the pool.

^{xli} There are picture-rails of uncertain date in the East and North Rooms.

^{xlii} A technique criticised by some plasterers for eliminating on-site creativity in favour of exact reproduction of the original design (William Millar, *Plastering Plain and Decorative*, 4th ed., London 1927, p. 28).

^{xliii} Lewis Weston Dilwyn, *Hortus Collinsonianus*, Swansea 1843, p. iv, footnote, from the papers of Peter Collinson FRS (1694-1768), Cator's father-in-law (FBPP research).

^{xliiv} Apart from its Palladian layout of rooms and windows, the reticent original house had little in common with Taylor's forceful and ingeniously varied villa designs with canted bays and grandly pedimented entrance-fronts. The fine wall-decorations and pictorial medallions of Pond House, Dulwich (attributed, 1759) are discrete units in Taylor's manner, unlike Beckenham's integrated ceiling-designs, its lunette figures not bas-reliefs but following an earlier tradition of almost independent plaster sculpture. Jupp's Manor House, Lee (1772) is closer, using the elements of Beckenham's design more decoratively and assertively. Largely brick, it has a small, simply pedimented portico around the door, like the built design for the rectory. But its semi-basement is differentiated by stone facing with prominently decorative stone courses higher up, and a shallow bay, unusually broad and high, dominates the garden front. Perhaps designed by the same architect or close associates, for clients with different tastes?

^{xliv} Adam, op. cit., vol. I, preface (1773).

^{xlvi} Daniel Lysons, *An Historical Account of the Towns, Villages and Hamlets [of Kent] within twelve miles of London*, London 1796, p. 299. Possibly bought at Cator's instigation, conceivably because the seller had some scruple about Cator's Quaker connection? William Rose also held the living of Carshalton, in Surrey, from 1776, and Cator bought its advowson in 1796. When Christie's sold a dozen pictures from Rose's estate in a mixed sale on 30 May, 1829, lot 98 was by the fashionable animal painter Sawrey Gilpin RA (1733-1807), "*A Group of Horses – painted with great spirit from horses of the late Mr Rose, at Beckenham in Kent*".

^{xlvii} According to Professor Stillman, Rose and Co. followed the surviving Adam drawings closely (Damie Stillman, *The Decorative Work of Robert Adam*, London 1966, p. 47). For their own designs, generally of decorative detail, see the younger Joseph Rose's carefully indexed sketchbook of friezes, dated 1782, drawn 'from original models in his possession', presumably for reference in the workshop or with clients, in the RIBA Library (ms. VOS 162), with examples by both uncle (9%) and nephew (7%), cf. Adam 60%, James Wyatt 23%; and the 'Batsford sketchbook' of designs for projects datable to 1766-73, including "*Mr Rose's desine*", presumably his uncle's (M. Jourdain, *English Decorative Plasterwork of the Renaissance*, London 1926, pp. 251-53: Appendix).

^{xlviii} A group effort, the elder Joseph Rose responsible for executing ceilings from Adam designs (Eileen Harris, op. cit. pp. 26, 31); dining room wall medallions designed by the sculptor William Collins, Marble Hall wall medallions and tablets by the draughtsman George Richardson for Adam, in rather higher, more sculptural relief than later (Leslie Harris, *Robert Adam and Kedleston*, exh. cat., London 1987, nos 19, 20, 46).

^{xlix} And in other grand projects throughout his career, like 20 St James's Square, Harewood House, and Nostell Priory, in England, or Culzean Castle and Mellerstain House in Scotland.

^l Probably honouring the controversial marriage of the client's step-niece, Mrs Anne Horton, to George III's brother, the Duke of Cumberland, in October 1771 (see Margaret Whinney, *Home House*, Feltham 1969, p. 14).

^{li} Whinney, op. cit., pp. 69-70: Appendix II, *The Stucco Medallions*. Speed may have been paramount as four designs are repeated, two twice in the same room.

^{lii} Adam, op. cit.

^{liii} "*Rough in his manners, acute in his judgment, skilful in trade, and solid in property*" (Hester Thrale, wife of his friend and Bankside neighbour Henry Thrale of Streatham Park, quoted by *historyofparliamentonline.org*). Appropriately, there is still a large walk-in strongroom for valuables, secured with a massive safe door, off the ground-floor room that was almost certainly his study.

^{liv} Mrs Thrale on another businessman, quoted by Marcus Binney, *Sir Robert Taylor: From Rococo to Neoclassicism*, London 1984, p. 32.

^{lv} Wedgwood and Bentley, *op. cit.* p. 3.

^{lvi} “Plasterwork does not take kindly to having an inadequate roof over its head and is liable to crumble into subjection almost without a struggle or adequate warning”: Geoffrey Beard, *Decorative Plasterwork in Great Britain*, London 1975/2011, p. v. The present relatively plain ceiling below the domed skylight of the central hall is said to be a replacement. There has been extensive rainwater penetration and damage to the upper floors in recent decades, and cracking of some of the plasterwork and images in the reception rooms.

ILLUSTRATIONS

SOUTH ROOM

1. Victoria/Victory roundel (east (E) end).



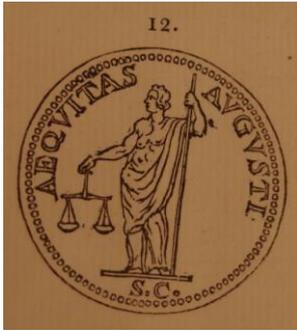
2. Addison 1726, ill. Series I.12, *Victoria* from the reverse of a sestertius of Vespasian .



3. Iustitia/Justice (female) roundel (W).



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4. Addison 1726, ill. Series III.14, *Aequitas* (male) from the reverse of a sestertius of Vespasian.



5. One of four small decorative tablets with paired Greek Sphinx guardians.



EAST ROOM

6. Ceiling, general view looking north.



7. One of four corners decorated with paired Griffin guardians.



8. Juno roundel (SW)



9. Venus roundel (NE)



10. Apollo roundel (NW).



11. Bellori and Bartoli 1691, Part II plate 14, Apollo oil lamp



12. Bacchus roundel (SE)



13. Bellori and Bartoli 1691, Part II plate 20, Bacchus oil lamp.



14. Muses frieze tablet (S).



15. Gods frieze tablet (N)



16. Bartoli 1693, plate 28, Gods frieze, while in the Massimi collection in Rome.



17. Picoli and Zoega 1808, vol. I plate I, Gods frieze, then in the Albani collection in Rome.



18. Decorative friezes near the Gods tablet (N).



NORTH ROOM

19. Ceiling, general view looking west.



20. Naples 1757, vol. I plate 21, engraving of Bacchante mural and Bacchus's leopards and cymbals.



21. Dancing Bacchante, with cymbals (NW).



22. Musical Bacchante (SW).



23. Incense-bearing Bacchante (NE)



24. Fruit-bearing, Pomona-like Bacchante (SE).



25. Aby Warburg's "Fräulein Schnellbring", detail from Domenico Ghirlandaio's *Birth of the Virgin*, Tornabuoni Chapel, Santa Maria Novella, Florence.

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26. Panel on chimney breast, south wall, Sacrifice to Aesculapius, with surrounding plaster garland.



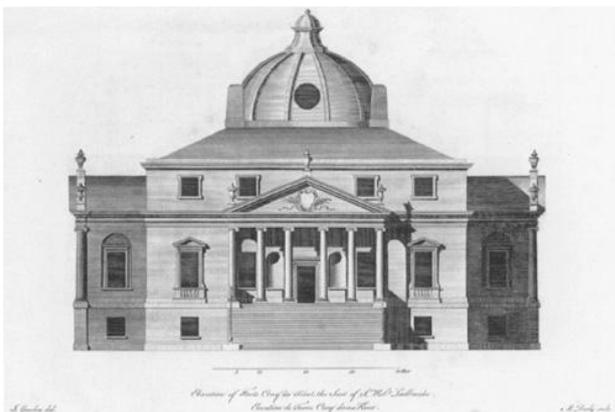
27. Ditto, detail, central scene.



28. de' Rossi 1707-9, vol. 4 plate 97, pseudo-classical gem engraved with a scene of sacrifice.



29. Foots Cray Place, Sidcup (built c. 1754), based on Palladio's Villa Capra/Rotonda near Vicenza.



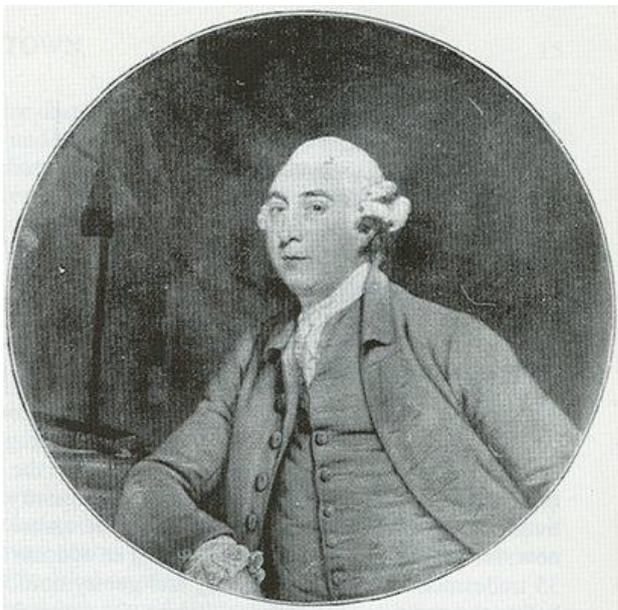
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30. Beckenham Place, Beckenham: south and east fronts of John Cator's house (built 1760-62), by L. Bayly, before the elaborate extension of the entrance (west) front.



31. Beckenham Rectory c. 1880, south front, apparently a scaled-down version of Cator's house with similar internal layout.



32. John Cator by Sir Joshua Reynolds, 1777 (private collection).



- 33.