

### Chapter 3: The History of the Butler Collection

Was Theophilus Butler the sole contributor to the Butler library? In order to answer this effectively it was necessary to examine the histories of his family, both his contemporaries and descendants. By doing so, it becomes clear who had the opportunity to add texts to the main collection constructed by Theophilus. An additional benefit to forming a chronology of the Butler family was that a clearer picture of the timing of the donation to Trinity College emerged. Previously, the dating of the gift has been based mainly on a painting by James Malton. While, undoubtedly, this proved helpful, the Butlers themselves are a more reliable source particularly when the collection stayed in their hands right up until the donation of the library to Trinity. Though, hindered by the absence of the wills of key members of the family, nonetheless, a plausible argument for the timing of the transfer of ownership does emerge. Finally, by examining the texts which were contributed by the family trends in interest can be formed and the extent to which the collection can be described as a family collection can be established.

Following Theophilus Butler's death, his collection of books and manuscripts were, according to the wishes stated in his will, given to his brother, James. James Butler, unlike Theophilus and Brinsley, did not establish a career in politics. Instead he entered the army and was by the time of Theophilus's death a colonel.<sup>78</sup> That James was less affluent than his two brothers is a possibility with Theophilus leaving him, as well as his collection, 'one hundred and fifty pounds for ever' and his house in St. Stephen's Green.<sup>79</sup> This house was the most probable location of Butler's library. Although, he held lands in Fermanagh and Monaghan, Theophilus's home in St. Stephen's Green would have offered the most convenience for an Irish political figure. In terms of collecting, too, Dublin's booktrade, as we have seen, held the greatest wares for the Irish book collector. As already established, Theophilus's father, Francis, had also lived in the St. Stephen's Green house and as a collector himself would, undoubtedly, have had some facility for the preservation of his library in the house. When James' will was written, though, in 1734 neither he or his family were

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<sup>78</sup> Registry of Deeds. Memorial 25645. (Theophilus Butler's Will)

<sup>79</sup> Registry of Deeds. Memorial 25645. (Theophilus Butler's Will)

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living in St. Stephen's Green. Though, he leaves the house, 'two plots on either side and all his estate and interest therein' to Anne, his wife, he notes that 'Viscount Lanesborough', was living there at that time.<sup>80</sup>

Viscount Lanesborough, was Brinsley Butler, who in 1728 had been created the earl of Lanesborough of Co. Longford.<sup>81</sup> He had for the years following Theophilus' death sat in the House of Lords as Lord Newtown and in 1726 was sworn into the Privy Council. With his prestigious career in politics, certainly a house in the city centre would have provided more convenience for Brinsley. There is also a possibility that Brinsley had been living with Theophilus even before his death in 1723. One of the books in Butler's collection is *The Starry-Interpreter or a most useful and compleat Almanack for the year of our lord 1722*, Dublin, 1722, by Peter La Boissiere.<sup>82</sup> This is a book of prophecy for that year but is significant here for its interleaved pages. These are filled with entries which document a year of Theophilus's illness. His identity is certain by the references to 'my brother Newtown'. The first entry is dated 2 January and the last December. With the date of the book's imprint and the death of Theophilus in March of 1723, it is likely that the year covered in diary form is that of 1722. Early entries are uniformly vague and describe fits of varying severity:

'March the fourth at five and twenty minutes after four in the morning my Brother Newtown had a slight fitt and another slight one the same morning at half an hour after five in the morning'.

Later, though, towards the end of the year the accounts become more specific and serious:

'October the sixth within five minutes after three my brother Newtown had a pretty severe fit beginning in his arm'.

'October the thirteenth at twenty minutes after one my brother Newtown had a very severe fit beginning in his leg'.

The timing of these accounts, with most fits beginning in the early hours of the morning makes it likely that whoever was writing them was living with Newtown at that time. There does not

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<sup>80</sup> Registry of Deeds. Memorial 75269 (James Butler's Will)

<sup>81</sup> Cokayne, George Edmund, *The Complete Peerage*, (London, 1936). p 424

<sup>82</sup> TCD V.kk.58

appear to be a connection between the St. Stephen's Green house, where Theophilus, eventually died, and his two sisters. James's will also states that neither he or his wife, Anne, maintained a connection to it. In it he describes his land in Co. Roscommon as his personal estate and the one in which his wife lived.<sup>83</sup> If it was Brinsley, then, who had cared for Theophilus he may have stayed on after his death explaining the entry in James's will.

By the time of his death in 1735 Brinsley had fathered twenty three children with his wife Catherine. Of these Humphrey was the eldest followed by Thomas, Robert and John.<sup>84</sup> Humphrey's career in many ways parallels that of both his father and his uncle, Theophilus. He was M.P. for Belturbet, Co. Cavan from 1725 until 1735, he received an L.L.D. from Trinity in 1730, was at times Captain of the Battle-Axe Guards and from 15th of November 1749 was a member of the Privy Council. If anything his political career exceeds his two predecessors. He was a sheriff of Co. Cavan and of Co. Westmeath. He was a governor of Co. Cavan and a Bencher of King's Inn in 1756. An indication of the esteem with which he was held by his peers is his nomination as Speaker of the House of Lords on 14 March 1760 during the Chancellor's illness. It was on 20 July 1756 that Humphrey became the second Earl of Lanesborough, taking his seat in October 1757.<sup>85</sup> It appears that Humphrey was in possession of Theophilus's collection some time after this date. Two books appear in the collection bearing the Lanesborough signature. They both bear the title *Acts and Statutes made in a Parliament begun at Dublin the 28th day of November 1727*, Dublin, and have imprints dating from 1756 and 1760 respectively, therefore, fitting in with the date of Humphrey's peerage.<sup>86</sup> The signature is written in both cases on the title page and their political subject matter would undoubtedly have held some interest for Humphrey. Another book in the collection from this period has connections to the Earl, *The interests of Ireland considered, stated and recommende*, London, 1759, a book on navigation dating from 1759.<sup>87</sup> On the front cover of the book can be seen in gold engraving 'To

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<sup>83</sup> Registry of Deeds. Memorial 75269 (James Butler's Will)

<sup>84</sup> Genealogical Office Document GEO 229 p 10 (National Library of Ireland)

<sup>85</sup> Cokrayne, George Edmund, *The Complete Peerage*, (London, 1936). p 424

<sup>86</sup> TCD W.b.36/W.b.37

<sup>87</sup> TCD W.h.70

the RI HONBLE THE EARL OF LANESBOROUGH' while the back continues 'From the Author'. There can be no doubt from the dating of the imprint that the Earl of Lanesborough in question was Humphrey Butler. The evidence of books belonging to Humphrey in the collection means that they were probably added by him when the library was in his possession. This is supported by a further connection between Humphrey and the house in St. Stephen's Green. The house stayed within the Lanesborough family. It was at this house that he died in 1768 and he stated in his will that it should be passed to his son and heir, Brinsley.<sup>88</sup>

Born on 4 March 1728, the second Brinsley Butler was admitted to Trinity College in 1745, receiving a B.A. in 1748, an M.A. in 1750 and an L.L.D. in 1754. He also was an M.P. for Co. Cavan from 1751 until 1768.<sup>89</sup> In 1761 Brinsley gained a seat on the Board of Revenue and in 1765 joined the Privy Council. Soon after in 1770 Brinsley was removed from the council for voting against the government. He regained his seat, though, on 19 December 1774. On the death of his father in 1768 Brinsley became the third Earl of Lanesborough and took his seat in the House of Lords in May of that year. He died on 24 January 1779 and was survived by his wife Jane, daughter of Robert Rochfort, the first Earl of Belvidere and by his children, Robert, William, Elizabeth, Mary and Catherine. His wife later married John King and lived until the 1820s. Although, there are no books in the Butler collection which can be certainly identified as belonging to Brinsley, he is, as we shall see, significant to its dating.<sup>90</sup>

In discussing the *Whimsical Medley*, James Woolley dates the donation of the collection to the Long Room, Trinity College as sometime before the 1790s.<sup>91</sup> How true, though, is this? The basis of this assumption appears to lie with the work of James Malton. Malton, was a painter towards the end of the eighteenth century who gained fame for his depiction of Irish scenes. In 1799 he published *A Picturesque and Descriptive View of the City of Dublin* containing plates of

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<sup>88</sup> Registry of Deeds. Memorial 177419. (Humphrey Butler's Will)

<sup>89</sup> *Journal of the House of Commons* Vol. 5 and 6., (Dublin, 1796)

<sup>90</sup> Though books are included in Appendix A dating up to the date 1780 there is no mark or signature which identify them with Brinsley.

<sup>91</sup> Woolley, 'John Barrett, "Whimsical Medley," and Swift's Poems', p 33 n 50

scenes in Dublin and was accompanied by a history of the city. The Parliament House, the Law Courts and the Custom House are just some of the scenes depicted. The Long Room in Trinity College is also included accompanied by a short history of its existence.(Illustration A) To the left of the picture can be seen the bay in which Butler's collection is today now kept.<sup>92</sup> In the accompanying text Malton states that 'on the left, as you enter, is one case full, lately given by a Mr. Butler'. What exactly does Malton mean by 'lately'. This is unclear. The plate in the book is dated as 1793 yet Malton may have begun it as early as 1791. He states in the preface that 'though all the views were taken in the year 1791, yet, as the work was in hand till the year 1797, such alterations as occurred in each subject, between the taking and publishing of any view of it, have been attended to; to the end, that it might be as perfect a semblance as possible of the original, at the time of the completion of the work'.<sup>93</sup> Even if the plate was completed in 1791 it does not help to establish the timing of the donation of the library. The only other donations Malton mentions in his account are Usher's and Bishop Gilbert's. Obviously Usher's gift could not be described as having been given lately donated as it was in 1661 and Gilbert's was donated in 1749. Is Butler's donation described in such a way then merely because his was the most recent addition to the library? Or, did Malton simply not know when the donation was made hence his vague terming. Woolley, in his article, mentions another picture by Malton of the Long Room, a water-colour dating from 1794.<sup>94</sup> In this the Butler bay is inscribed with BIBLIOTH BUTLERIANA in gilt lettering. It is unclear, however, whether this was omitted from the 1791/1793 picture or whether it was a recent addition to the Long Room. In any case, no records can be found in Trinity College for the commissioning of the painting of the lettering of that bay.

Malton's work is important to the dating of the collection in one way. It establishes that it was given to the library and not sold to them and that this was done by a member of the Butler family. But who was "Mr. Butler"? The last Butler to appear in the collection is Humphrey who died in 1768. No mention is made of the collection in his will though he does leave the St. Stephen's

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<sup>92</sup> Malton, James, *A Picturesque and Descriptive View of the City of Dublin*, (Dublin, 1798)

<sup>93</sup> Malton, *A Picturesque and Descriptive View of the City of Dublin*, p i

<sup>94</sup> Woolley, James 'John Barrett, "Whimsical Medley," and Swift's Poems', p 33 n 50

Green house to Brinsley. Taking Malton's use of the word "lately", it is unlikely that the collection was donated to the Long Room at this point but rather was passed on to Brinsley with the house. Although Brinsley's own will does not survive the date of his death in 1779 fits more comfortably with the Malton description. Even if Brinsley had passed the collection on to his wife, Jane, it could not have been <sup>she</sup> her who granted it to Trinity <sup>given</sup> with Malton's description of a male donor. Her death in the 1820s also rules out a posthumous donation to the library. What, though, of Brinsley's children? His heir Robert did not die until 1806 and so, again, did not make a posthumous donation to the library. As an heir and executor, though, he may have carried out the instructions of the will of his father and given the library to Trinity. Though, Brinsley died in March 1779 probate was not granted of his will until 1780 when the directions of his will would have been carried out.<sup>95</sup> Might it be, then, that Robert donated the collection to the library in 1780? Following Brinsley's attendance at Trinity itself he may have wished the collection to be passed to the university from which he gained his education. With such information, then, "Mr. Butler" becomes Robert Butler, "lately" becomes over a decade earlier and 1780 becomes the most likely date for the donation of the Butler library.

The library to which the Butler collection was donated had been in existence in Trinity since 1732. Malton describes it as being 'two hundred and eight feet long, forty-one broad, and forty wide'. In the 1780's the upper gallery was not yet used for the storage of books and desks and seats were used between the lower piers for the study of the texts. Of the thirty-eight double cases of books Butler's collection was and is situated in the last case to the north of the library. Comparing Malton's picture of the case to its present appearance there were many more gaps in the shelves in the 1790's than there are today. Though this may be in part due to his artistic licence there was also an addition of many nineteenth century books in the years following Butler's gift and which are unrelated to the collection. The cases have been catalogued including both Butler and non-Butler books from W.a. 1 on the left and from V.aa. 1 on the right case. Because of this inclusive cataloguing system it has been impossible up to now to identify which

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<sup>95</sup> Cokayne, George Edmund, *The Complete Peerage VII*, (London, 1936). p 425

books did or did not form part of the Butler collection. A small double case has also been added between the two cases which are also exclusively filled with nineteenth century books. In order to identify those books which formed part of Butler's collection it was necessary to differentiate between the books donated by Brinsley Butler and those which were added to the shelves later. This process was helped by Theophilus Butler's bookplate which was pasted to many of his books on the inside cover or on the back of the book's imprint. (Illustration B) In other cases, a bookstamp marked simply TB was marked on the book's title page. (Illustration C) In other cases, still, Theophilus's own signature was identifiable on the texts. However, many of the books appear to have been rebound at various times in the nineteenth century meaning that where a bookplate or bookstamp appeared on the inside cover of the books evidence has been lost and these texts can never certainly be identified as belonging to the collection. Those books, then, that fall into the relevant time period, that is, up until 1780 and which fall into the identified collecting interests of the Butler's have been included though they may not have any other identifiable connection to the collection. These books form the majority of the collection coming to a total of almost seven hundred books. Also included in this category are those books which have a bookplate or signature other than Butler's or his family's. Although more doubtful these cannot be excluded merely because to do so would be to ignore the possibility that Butler had bought books from other collectors. These books, though, have been distinctly identified in the appendix and must be treated with caution. Those books which can be definitely attributed to Butler, either through bookplate, bookstamps, a connection with Lanesborough or to the Butler family come to a total of just over four hundred and fifty books and collections of pamphlets. The result is a total of just over one thousand one hundred and fifty texts, close to Woolley's presumption of 'about a thousand volumes'.<sup>96</sup> Of these, there are sixty eight volumes of compiled pamphlets covering such topics as trials, plays, news, operas and poems and which were, judging by the presence of Butler's bookplate on many, compiled by Theophilus himself. Another twenty three volumes are comprised of serials. In some cases, these are published books

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<sup>96</sup> Woolley, 'John Barrett, "Whimsical Medley," and Swift's Poems', p 17

of compilations of serials. In other cases, such as *The Evening Post* Theophilus Butler has collected a series of journals or newsletter into a volume for his own use.

Apart from the additions by the Lanesborough family and the collected books of Theophilus, himself, other texts appear in the collection which are connected to acquaintances of the Butlers. Unsurprisingly a book appears in the collection which can be attributed to Theophilus's father, Francis. The book in question is *An Introduction to the skill of Music*, London, 1674, by John Playford, a subject matter which implies that Theophilus inherited his interest in music from his father.<sup>97</sup> The book is signed 'F.Butler July 7 1699', three years before the death of Francis.

Other books in the collection are also potentially the property of Francis. Many date from before the 1680's the time at which Theophilus is most likely to have begun his collection. Though some must have been bought by him in order to increase the value of his collection others may have been contemporary purchases by Francis.

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Another name which features in the collection is that of Emily Stopford, Theophilus's wife. In all, nine books appear with Emily's Stopford signature, all dating from before her marriage to Butler in 1702. Two religious books appear with Emily's signature, one being a French Bible without an imprint which is signed 'Emilia Stopford my book'.<sup>98</sup> The other is *Practical Christianity or an account of the Holiness which the Gospel enjoins*, London, 1693 by R. Lucas which is signed 'Emily Stopford. Her book given her by the Rev. John Moor.'<sup>99</sup> History books appear to have been an interest for her with three such books appearing in the collection. *Historiae Britannicae Saxonicae Anglo Danicae Scripturae XV*, Oxford, 1691, *The Compleat Ambassador or two Treaties of the intended marriage of Queen Elizabeth*, London, 1655, and *Polydori Vergilii Urbina Tis Anglicae Historiae*, 1570, can all be found with her signature, the latter two dated by her 1693. Two travel books also appear. *A relation of Remarkable passages in two embassies from the East-India Company of the United Provinces*, London, 1671, and *Atlas Japannensis*,

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<sup>97</sup> TCD V.nn.65

<sup>98</sup> TCD W.n.43

<sup>99</sup> TCD W.n.14

London, 1652, are both two large elaborately illustrated texts describing the places of the titles, their customs and geography.<sup>100</sup> Both books are marked 'Stopford 1700'. Emily's signature also appears in a compilation of plays. On the final page of *The Comical Revenge or Love in a Tub*, London, 1689 by George Etherege her signature appears as 'Emely Sopford'. This dates from 1684 and with its inaccurate spelling was probably written by her as a child.<sup>101</sup> Only one book belonging to Emily appears after the date of marriage, *The Rule of Charity*, London, 1696.<sup>102</sup> Though the imprint dates from 1696 the title page is stamped with 'E. Butler'. The book is also dedicated to Theophilus. Presumably, following her marriage to Theophilus any books belonging to her would have been pasted with the Butler plate or stamp. It is, therefore, difficult to identify any texts exclusively to her beyond 1702.

Another Stopford to appear in the collection is James Stopford, Emily's father. In a collection of compiled pamphlets there is one included entitled *His Majesties Declaration to all his loving subjects touching the causes and reasons that moved him to dissolve the two last parliaments*, Dublin, 1681.<sup>103</sup> On the back of the title page is a hand-written note 'To James Stopford Esq.'. Additionally, though *The Complete Peerage* describes James's second wife and Emily's mother as Mary Forth it is possible that a book signed Margaret Forth belonged to her.<sup>104</sup> The book is *Hudibras*, London, 1678, a compilation of poetry and its imprint from 1678 dates from before her marriage to Stopford explaining the use of her maiden name.<sup>105</sup> Though James died in July of 1721 following his daughter's death in March of the same year, possibly both his and his wife's books passed to Butler in the absence of Emily. The other option is that Emily simply brought some of her parent's collection with her following her marriage to Theophilus.

The name Robert Stopford also appears throughout the collection. In all, his signature appears on thirteen pamphlets and books. Robert Stopford was Emily's brother and, like her, was a result of

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<sup>100</sup> TCD W.a.16 and W.a.18

<sup>101</sup> TCD V. ff.7

<sup>102</sup> TCD W.n.41

<sup>103</sup> TCD V.kk.39

<sup>104</sup> Cokayne, *The Complete Peerage IX*, (London, 1936). p 557

<sup>105</sup> TCD V.mm.36

the marriage between James Stopford and his second wife Mary Forth. Robert entered politics and became M.P. for Kilkenny City and Inishfree between 1692 and 1695.<sup>106</sup> Robert's signature in the collection is usually accompanied by a date from 1679 to 1688. His signature is at times included in a collection of pamphlets where Emily's signature also appears.<sup>107</sup> His interests are diverse, covering subjects such as music, math, economics (by Locke), physics and religion.<sup>108</sup> Locke's *Essay concerning Humane Understanding*, London, 1694 is accompanied by his signature as is a collection of Orrery's plays and a pamphlet justifying the Protestant acceptance of William III.<sup>109</sup> One further link to Theophilus can also be found in the collection. Woolley in his article mentions a deed that Theophilus had signed to Matthew French in 1723.<sup>110</sup> French's signature appears once in the collection. His name appears on the imprint on a book of sermons entitled *The Truth and Excellence of the Christian Religion asserted against Jews, Infidels and Hereticks*, London, 1702, underlining a friendship between the two men.<sup>111</sup>

Others, then, besides Lord Newtown contributed to the Butler collection. Though only twenty nine of a total of over a thousand can be definitively identified as belonging to the Stopfords, the Lanesboroughs or French their appearance underlines the possibility that more texts may have been added by them to Theophilus's main library. That they appear at all dismisses the belief that the library was that of a sole collector

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<sup>106</sup> TCD MS Courtown P59/2/1

<sup>107</sup> TCD V.ff.7

<sup>108</sup> TCD V.nn.42, V.oo.25, V.nn.51, W.n.68, W.n.34, W.n.37

<sup>109</sup> TCD W.d.19, V.kk.38, V.ee.6

<sup>110</sup> Woolley, 'John Barrett, "Whimsical Medley," and Swift's Poems', p 26 n 25

<sup>111</sup> TCD V.kk.37