

Charlotte de La Trémoille,
the Notorious
Countess of Derby

Charlotte de La Trémoille, the Notorious Countess of Derby

By

Sandy Riley

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INTRODUCTION

A well built almost fleshy woman having large eyes, heavy eyebrows and a prominent nose, was at once haughty and humble, was pious and would out of pride, stubbornly hold to a cause which she regarded as duty, of considerable intelligence, she had a shrewd grasp of the principles of negotiation.¹

During the siege of Lathom House, Charlotte de La Trémoille expressed several different facets of her identity. Lathom House, the ancestral home of the earls of Derby, was besieged by the Parliamentary forces twice during the English Civil War. In the first siege in 1643, the defence was led by Charlotte de La Trémoille. This siege lasted for eighteen weeks, and was the longest female-led siege defence by either side. For nearly a year prior to the actual siege, Charlotte de La Trémoille was confined to the house and garden by the Parliamentary forces. During the eighteen weeks of the siege her only communication with the outside world was from the besieging force. In answering Sir Thomas Fairfax and his demands that she surrenders to Parliament demands, she used the “good wife” topos, suggesting that her husband had left her in charge of the house and she would remain there until he told her to leave. However, at the same time, she was undertaking the seemingly masculine activity of increasing the defending force, stocking ammunition, and stockpiling supplies while organising both the defence of the house and attacks on the besiegers. During the siege, she was both a devoted Christian attending church several times a day and a busy mother involved in caring for her children. While historians who have analysed her actions to date have emphasised her activities, they have not explored the questions of why she acted as she did, and how she expressed those roles and responsibilities as aspects of her identity.

Charlotte de La Trémoille, in her defence of Lathom House, has come down through history as a well-known woman of the English Civil War. This book aims to look at her life and conduct before, during, and after the war. No one has so far looked at the role identity played in her activities. Charlotte de La Trémoille is often cited by scholars as an example of unusual feminine activity at this time.² But there has been no in-depth analysis of her deeds and a rationale for them. How do we learn about this

woman and the actions she undertook? Did she undertake the action voluntarily or were her deeds forced on her by events? Does her writing show her personality and the resources she relied on in the religious and political atmosphere of the time? How did she represent herself at key moments in her life experiences?

Historiography

Surprisingly then, there has been very limited scholarly research on Charlotte de La Trémoille in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, a period in which the English Civil War has been the subject of much analysis. This has been a period in which feminist scholarship has come to the fore, highlighting the various activities women conducted during this period of instability, and might have been expected to have paid attention to such a significant contemporary personality. Charlotte de La Trémoille was seen as important at the time, as shown by the quote published in *The Parliamentary Scout* 1643/5: “three women ruined the kingdom: Eve, the Queen and the Countess of Derby,” and the book published in 1644 *A Brief Journal of the Siege* by Edward Halsall.³ One of the major questions that this study aims to answer is why she acted as she did. Why also was Charlotte de La Trémoille seen as a suitable subject for a nineteenth-century biography? This was a period that saw her actions and words analysed in four new publications. Why is she often cited in English history today as an example of a female-led siege defence,⁴ but there is no well-referenced book about her life and actions?

The rise of feminist analyses has encouraged scholars to study history in an attempt to understand women’s experiences in the past. They have sought to explain women’s reasons for behaving as they did, and the supports that they relied on and barriers they faced. Traditional scholarship assumed that women’s activities and perspectives were the same as those of men. Where scholars have examined women’s activities in the English Civil War specifically, they have tended to focus on the artisan and the middling classes. When historians look at women, the opportunities that the world turned upside down gave to middling and poorer women particularly have captured their attention.⁵ The first half of the seventeenth-century was a time of turmoil with a breakdown of “normal society” that allowed people to do things that were not acceptable in the centuries before or after. Henry Deane, the Puritan Divine, in *Grace, Mercy and Peace* (1645) appears to have been the first person to apply the phrase, “the world turned upside down” from Acts 17 to try to describe the events of 1625–60, and modern-day historians have continued to use the

phrase to describe the period.⁶ This time of instability gave women opportunities to participate in activities from which they were usually excluded.

The nineteenth-century was an important period for women writers in Great Britain, in which they developed interests that have continued to the present day. Female biography was an area of special interest mainly of “women worthies,” including Charlotte, Countess of Derby, and “royal lives.” The stories of women writers are the subject of the *Companion to Women’s Historical Writing*, published in 2005.⁷ In the introduction, it explains that the minority of women wrote “women’s history,” but show that “the prescription of gender functions” fashioned the female appreciation of history. Female education did not allow women to gain formal qualifications, but they frequently educated themselves in libraries, often belonging to their fathers. Charlotte is included in the Chawton House Library Edition of *Female Biography* published in 2013/4.⁸ This is an updated version of Mary Hays’ *Female Biography: or Memoirs of Illustrious and Celebrated Women of All Ages and Countries*.⁹ Madam de Witt, the writer of several history books, learned from and worked with her father François Guizot, the famous French historian.¹⁰ At the same time, some women novelists such as Jane Austen were writing about history—not the activities of men, but those of women, for example the individuals left at home when the young men went off to war.

In the nineteenth century, two English and two French language biographies were written about Charlotte, but none about other women involved in English Civil War sieges. Several books also had a chapter about Charlotte, and she was included in most of the books about her husband James or the Stanley Family. Since the end of the Second World War, Charlotte has been included in chapters or articles about the English Civil War, while Sonja Kmec devotes one quarter of *Across the Channel, Noblewomen in Seventeenth-Century France and England* (2010) to Charlotte. In the twentieth century, especially in the first half, the majority of historians were male, and “the serious studies of women written by amateur women scholars were ignored by the male-dominated history profession until the 1960s, when the first breakthroughs came.”¹¹ In the 1960s a number of more serious historiographies by professional female historians on female history emerged. Many original documents and out of copyright books are now available on the internet, increasing research opportunities.

The earliest book about Charlotte’s activities during the siege of Lathom House is recorded in *A Journal of the Siege of Lathom House*, written by Captain Edward Halsall, first published in 1644, who was a

member of the defending force. It has been republished many times, once as a serial in *The Kaleidoscope*, a weekly magazine, in November 1820.¹² The language of the original version has been updated to nineteenth-century English. This is a very short book and covers only the first siege that Charlotte directed, and ends when Edward Halsall wrote that he was wounded. All of Charlotte's summons and answers are included. This book has been used by all the people who have since written about Charlotte and or the siege of Lathom House. In 1823, an edition of the book of the siege attributed to Captain Edward Chisenhall was published in response to Sir Walter Scott's, and was reprinted in 2010 by Partizan Press who specialise in English Civil War Facsimiles and reprints.¹³

John Seacome's *House of Stanley, from the Conquest to the death of Edward, late Earl of Derby in the year 1776. Containing a genealogical and historical account of that Illustrious House. To which is added, A complete history of The Isle of Man of The past and present State of Society and Manners containing also Anecdotes of eminent persons connected with that island*¹⁴ was reprinted many times, first in 1821, and has been used by many later historians when writing about Charlotte. The second chapter is called, "A true and genuine account of the famous and memorial siege of Latham House, begun the 28th February, and carried on by the Parliament army till the 27th of May 1644," and describes Charlotte as "this martial and heroic lady." This account appears to be based on a manuscript by Samuel Rutter but there are no references or footnotes.¹⁵ It is possible that Seacome was some form of employee or related to an employee of the Earl of Derby. Most of the illustrations in the book are various Coats of Arms used by members of the family. In his chapter about James, he tells the story of the siege and includes copies of a number of documents relating to the sequestration of the Stanley estates in the Civil War. The appendix comprises important financial documents, including a copy of James and Charlotte's marriage contract in English. This book is very positively in favour of the Stanley family. In his description of the siege of Lathom House, Seacome admiringly portrays Charlotte thus: "During all this sharp and bloody fight, the heroic and most undaunted lady governess was without the gates, and sometimes near the trenches, encouraging her brave soldiers with her presence; and as she constantly began all her undertakings with prayers in her chapel, so she closed them with thanksgivings, and truly it was hard to say whether she was more eminent for courage, prudence, and steady resolution; or justice piety and religion."¹⁶

Throughout the nineteenth century and into the twentieth before the end of the First World War, there was written interest in Charlotte. It

started with articles in nineteenth-century antiquarian magazines. These commentaries were often illustrated with etched copies of seventeenth-century paintings. The 1644 book by Edward Halsall on the siege of Lathom House was serialised in one of these antiquarian journals and reprinted in the early 1820s.¹⁷ Sir Walter Scott's novel *Peveiril of the Peak*, published in 1822, featured Charlotte, but he took artistic licence to change her to suit his story.¹⁸ He received much criticism for this but he defended his right to creative changes. Two French authors published biographies about Charlotte in the latter half of the nineteenth century, one in English.¹⁹ A second biography in English was published in 1905.²⁰ Several other authors who published books at this time included Charlotte, and most took a romantic view of her Civil War military activities.²¹

Sir Walter Scott's Waverly novel *Peveiril of the Peak* was published in 1823 in four volumes. The background to the novel is the so-called Popish Plot of 1678, when Jesuits were alleged to be planning the assassination of King Charles II in order to bring his Roman Catholic brother, the Duke of York (later King James II), to the throne. The story centres on two Derbyshire landowners, Sir Geoffrey Peveiril, an old Cavalier, and Major Ralph Bridgenorth, a Puritan. Bridgenorth is suspicious of Sir Geoffrey's friendship with the Countess of Derby who, although guiltless, is implicated in the plot.

The other fictional account of Charlotte is *The Leaguer of Lathom* by W. Harrison Ainsworth (1805–82), illustrated by Frederick Christian and published by Tauchnitz in two parts, the first in 1877 and the second in 1880. William Harrison Ainsworth was a prolific author who published 42 books between 1826 and 1881; eight of these books are available from Project Gutenberg, but not *The Leaguer of Lathom*. This book has been republished several times since, the first in 1949 in hardback by George Routledge & Sons Ltd., followed by a paperback edition by the 1873 Press in 1999. The version I am using is the 1873 Press edition, in which the type has been reset and is not a copy of the scanned pages of the original, and is therefore easy to read. It praises the activities of Charlotte in the siege of Lathom House.

Because this is a work of fiction, the historical errors can be due to artistic license, but there is more historical accuracy in the description of Charlotte's activities than in Scott's *Peveiril of the Peak*. People who learned their history from reading novels and who read both books would be very confused about Charlotte and the roles she played in the English Civil War and restoration. Both Sir Walter Scott and William Harrison Ainsworth were prolific authors, and while Scott wrote his story of Charlotte fairly early in his career, Ainsworth wrote his at the end of his.

Both authors wrote stories based on history or set in earlier centuries, and neither acknowledged that their story was based on a real person, in the original edition.

Mrs. Thomson, in her book *Recollections of Literary Characters and Celebrated Places*, in two chapters of Volume II opens on a very emotional note with, “Never, perhaps, in England, were three domestic tragedies recorded in history, more painful to witness, more culpably and remorselessly enacted than those of Raglan, Basing and Lathom.” This sets the emotional tone for the chapter. She then disposes of Raglan and Basing in one paragraph. After comparing Lancashire unfavourably with Surrey and Warwickshire, the rest of the chapter is about Charlotte, James, and Lathom House. She starts by describing how Charlotte was, “rebellious against the cultural *mores* and values of her time.” Charlotte is described as, “having all the heroism of a French woman—the gentle virtues of an English wife and mother.” She then writes, “I sorrowed for her as though it all had happened yesterday.”²² She examines family portraits to describe the personality of the person. Charlotte is said to be fat and clumsy and showing none of the aristocratic bearing one would expect to see in a descendant of the Bourbons, looking more Dutch. On the other hand, James is described as descending from those of high birth. She quotes an unnamed modern writer who described the marriage of James and Charlotte as, “This marvellous picture of almost super-human felicity was doomed to be torn to pieces and scattered to the winds, by the accursed demon of faction and rebellion.”²³ She condemns the actions of both King Charles I and his son Charles II against Charlotte and her family. The last few pages describe Charlotte’s widowhood on the Isle of Man and her attempts to regain family lands after the end of the war. There are many inaccuracies in this book that affect the story. It is difficult to know why she wrote it. Mrs. Thomson wants only to view those she sees as aristocrats, and is disappointed that she does not see this in Charlotte’s portrait. She becomes very melodramatic when she quotes a Stanley historian, “then her great heart overwhelmed with grief and endless sorrow, burst in pieces.”²⁴ She ends the chapter, “one word to the theme with which I set out; one brief, affectionate farewell to Lathom.” But it is not the Lathom House “of the never-to-be-forgotten Charlotte de La Tremouille.”²⁵ The romance of the story of Charlotte appears to be her most important criteria.

Peter Draper, who worked for the Ormskirk Advertiser, a local newspaper, wrote *The House of Stanley*, which was published in Ormskirk in 1864. After three chapters on James, he includes two pages about Charlotte, especially her disappointment at the court of King Charles II

and return to Knowsley Hall. Draper is writing very much from the point of view that history was mainly big political events and therefore about men, as women did not have a place in politics.

The Revd. Joseph George Cumming (1812–63), vice-principal of King William's College, Castletown, and the Isle of Man, became very interested in Manx history and geology, but from an antiquarian rather than historical viewpoint. He wrote seven books about the history and geology of the island. His last book was *The Great Stanley or, James, VIIth Earl of Derby, and his Noble Countess Charlotte de La Trémoille, in their Isle of Man*, published in 1867 shortly before his death. He starts the preface with, "That James, the seventh Earl of Derby, deserved to be called great was the verdict of his contemporaries, and posterity has never attempted to change it." He wrote that the book appears in the form of fiction to make it more readable, and introduces two female characters who interact with Charlotte throughout. There are no footnotes or a bibliography, but there are 45 pages of endnotes, some of which are four or five pages long. He describes Charlotte, presumably taking his ideas from a painting, as, "Her majestic figure, her strongly-marked features, her capacious brow, her large intelligent eyes, her fine mouth, all indicate a person formed to govern."²⁶ Charlotte de La Trémoille had the following document inserted in the record of the Rolls' Office.

Be it recorded that James, Earl of Derby, Lord of Man, being in his Lordship's fort in St Michael's Isle, the 26th of April, 1645, the day twelve months that the House of Lathom having been besieged close near three months, and gallantly defended by the great wisdom and valour of the illustrious Lady, Charlotte, Countess of Derby, by her ladyship's direction, the stout soldiers of Lathom did make a sallie and beat the enemies round out of all their works, saving one; and miraculously did bring the enemies' great mortar piece into the house, for which the thank and glorie is given unto God; and my Lord doth name this fort Derby Fort. Charlotte de La Trémoille.²⁷

The surrender of the island and the results of its parliamentary takeover are covered in two pages. The book ends with two quotes about Charlotte, one from Seacome: "That her great heart burst in pieces, overfilled with grief and endless sorrow at the ingratitude of Charles the Second."²⁸ There are some factual errors in this book, but not many. Cumming is very sympathetic to both James and Charlotte and very much a supporter of the royalist cause in the English Civil War.

In the limited modern work on her military activities, Charlotte de La Trémoille has only been treated as part of either a larger discussion of

female activities of the period or “women warriors” throughout history.²⁹ Indeed, the only recent analytical study of Charlotte de La Trémoille is Sonja Kmec’s 2004 doctoral book and the subsequent book published in 2010. These focus specifically on Marie de La Tour d’Auvergne and her retention of family fortunes and increasing social prestige, with a much smaller section on Charlotte de La Trémoille. An analysis of identity construction and representations of the self are not explored in her work.³⁰

Biography as a Historical Method

The analysis of the life and activities of Charlotte de La Trémoille are presented in this book in the form of an analytical biography. Biography can be a legitimate approach to understanding a historical character. Literary biographer Leon Edel, in his book *Writing Lives Principia Biographica*, contends that:

Biography attempts to preserve what it can of human greatness or humbleness; to describe a pilgrimage from childhood to maturity and finally to the grave and in this process the labours, errors, passions and actions that lead to accomplishments. The personage exists; the documents exist; they are the “given” to a writer of lives. They may not be altered. To alter is to disfigure. A biographer may mediate on the habits and conditions of the personage, he may study their psychology; but he mediates on a pre-existing person, some are well known before they reach the printed page. Also, the mind and inner worlds of the subject is unique and cannot be fashioned by anyone else.³¹

The structure of a biography following a person from birth to death, examining the actions and identities that were presented in the course of a life, constitutes one method of exploring the character of that person and why also particularly powerful memories remain of some individuals, such as Charlotte de La Trémoille, in folklore. Those who have authored books about the writing of biography have emphasised how complex it is to understand a subject. It is more difficult to understand a person who lived in an unrelated cultural situation to the author. It is by exploring a subject’s expressions of identity in a different environment that some understanding of the subject may be obtained. Charlotte de La Trémoille is mentioned frequently by scholars who have written about the events that occurred in the middle of the seventeenth century, but this is the first work that attempts to explain those activities through understanding her presentations of identity in those moments.

Madam Guizot de Witt, the daughter of French historian François Pierre Guillaume Guizot, was a French Huguenot married to a Dutch

Calvinist, and wrote a biography about Charlotte from her father's notes that was translated into English and published in 1869, and in the original French in 1870.³² This book was reprinted in 2009 credited to Henrietta Elizabeth Witt, and titled *The Lady of Latham: Being the Original Letters of Charlotte De La Trémoille, Countess of Derby (1869)*. Inside the front cover is an engraved copy of the widow's portrait by C. H. Jones after Peter Lely. In her preface, de Witt questions why "Sir Walter Scott, that great painter of life and character, so completely failed in his portraiture of the Countess of Derby?"³³ She then questions why having taken liberties with historical fact he made her "a mere queen of melodrama?" There are very few footnotes in this book and no bibliography, although there is a listing of the three books used in the preface. De Witt describes how she is now able to examine her heart because M. le Duc de la Trémoille has allowed her to use the newly discovered letters from Charlotte to her sister-in-law Marie found in the cellars of Thouars.³⁴ There was no date by Charlotte on the letters but Marie has put the date on the back. That de Witt admired Charlotte is demonstrated by the last paragraph in her book:

Living in a foreign country and in the midst of foreign manners which she frankly adopted, called upon to endure the most unexpected trials, she nevertheless retained something of the prejudices, habits, and tastes of her own country, and of the rank in which she was born. She was pre-eminently a "grande dame" and a noble lady; frank and resolute, loyal and faithful; a woman of whom the great houses from which she sprung and to which she was allied might well be proud, —one who was worthy to bear upon her arms the two mottoes which had govern her life: — "Je maintiendrai," and "Sans changer."³⁵

'T was when they raised, 'mid sap and siege,
The banners of the rightful liege,
At their she-captains call,
Who, miracle of womankind!
Lent mettle to the meanest hind
That Mann'd her castle wall.³⁶

A Study of Identity

This book focuses on articulations of Charlotte's identity as they are expressed in her words and actions, and those of others who have written about her in her own time and since. What identities are evident through her different activities and expressions that she used in order to defend herself against political and military actions? The religious and political history of England in the middle of the seventeenth century, and especially

the conduct of the parliamentary groups towards this woman, will help to put her response in context. Stephanie Tarbin and Susan Broomhall give a useful list of some of the factors that affected early modern women's identities as, "social, marital and sexual status; religious and political affiliations; age and occupation ..."³⁷ As the woman at the centre of attention of this book was a member of the nobility, the term "elite," which Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford define as, "shorthand for the wealthiest and most educated members of society, from nobility to minor gentry," will be used.³⁸

Many factors contribute to the formation of identity: some are adopted consciously, others unconsciously. The description of subjectivity and identity used by The Chelsea Research Group's (a group of feminist writers and artists at Chelsea University), in which identity is described as "being formed out of a whole range of intersecting determinations, (social, political, linguistic, psychological, ideological)," has been a useful guide when looking at the various aspects of identity displayed by Charlotte.³⁹ This definition works well with the approach taken by Natalie Zemon Davis in her work on seventeenth-century European women, where she contrasts three contemporary women in order to highlight similarities and differences in their understandings of self.⁴⁰ Her work also emphasised the complexities of identity presentation among women even at the same social level.

Identity is understood as both the presentation by the person of themselves to others and the personal view one has of oneself, although it is much easier to find the outward presentation of identity than the internalised sense of self. Identity is formed from a combination of multiple factors that include, but are not limited to, in-born traits, education, and circumstances. As will be argued here, Charlotte demonstrated different aspects her identity in her speech, actions, writing, and in the artworks, she commissioned, as well as across time and circumstances. The artworks are also distinct in that they were specifically designed as presentations of her identity to present and future audiences. In particular, the two widow portraits that she commissioned were designed to present political viewpoints that Charlotte was unable to verbalise.

Genre is an important factor to be considered in presentations of self. Jane Couchman and Ann Crabb examine the presentation in early modern letters of the sense of identity of both writer and recipients, and found that these letters, "offer, however briefly and partially, a window on their world."⁴¹ Their understanding of the epistolary genre will aid in this examination of Charlotte's own letters. Contemporary descriptions of her activities also have to be understood in the context of a gendered society,

“a society that understood and demarcated clear roles and expectations for men and women of her class.” The work of Laurel Thatcher Ulrich will be useful when reading this material.⁴² Ulrich demonstrates how societies, when writing about women, asserted their own perspectives on the activities performed by women. She gives as an example how Joan of Arc—who at different times has been described as a saint, a witch, a virgin, a whore, a transvestite, and a simple peasant—was used by others to achieve their own view of her.⁴³ Likewise, it becomes clear that Charlotte de La Trémoille’s activities were described by the parliamentary forces in ways that were intended to denigrate her, while the Royalists praised those same activities.

Sources

Given such divergent views expressed in the contemporary sources surrounding Charlotte, this book will study the wide range of written materials that have survived from the period. These include a rich archive of letters written by Charlotte that remain in the Thouars archives, those to James and her children that have not survived, some to parliamentary officials published in parliamentary calendars as well as the artwork Charlotte de La Trémoille commissioned. Other sources will include contemporary eyewitness accounts and journal publications, nineteenth-century novels, histories, and modern travel and tourism materials.

Letters are an especially crucial foundation for this book, and have been a particularly important source for finding women’s own voices and activities for feminist scholars of this period. In the introduction to *Women’s Letters Across Europe, 1400–1700*, Jane Couchman and Ann Crabb argue that, “To hold in one’s hand a women’s letter, knowing that it was her hand that wrote the words, is as close as we are likely to come to conversing with her.”⁴⁴ Modern historians such as Couchman, Crabb, and James Daybell, who have worked on reading women’s letters, now emphasise the significance of reading the format and rhetoric as well as the events and news that the letters describe, as I will do here.⁴⁵ This project will be based on archival research of primary source material composed mainly of the letters written by Charlotte to her mother Charlotte-Brabantine, sister-in-law Marie de La Tour d’Auvergne, and brother Henri de La Trémoille et Thouars. The Thouars archive is composed of letters that were found in the cellars of the Château of Thouars in the nineteenth century. The letters have been moved to the Archives Nationales in Paris. Of the letters found in the Thouars vaults, nearly two-hundred were written by Charlotte mainly to her sister-in-law

Marie La Tour d'Auvergne, mother Charlotte-Brabantine de Nassau, and brother Henri de La Trémoille. There are also a few letters written by Charlotte's husband James and children Charles, Katherine, and Henrietta Marie. Copies of all these letters are available on microfilm at the archives national. Charlotte's letters are very difficult to read due to her poor handwriting, orthography, and the amount of words on each page. When discussing handwriting, James Daybell suggests that it was tolerable for noblewomen to write in an almost illegible manner.⁴⁶ When discussing the paper used for autograph letters, Daybell discusses both its high cost and shortage.⁴⁷ Charlotte's letters were sent by courier, so the high cost of postage limited the number of sheets of paper used.⁴⁸ After a month spent in the Archives Nationales reading the microfilmed letters and comparing them with the transcription by French independent scholar Jean-Luc Tulot, I decided to use the transcriptions. Tulot chose not to change the orthography of the letters. Some copies of letters to Charlotte or about her activities in both the Bishops Wars and the Civil Wars are copied in The Farington Papers.⁴⁹

Other primary sources include the paintings commissioned by the Stanleys. Two portraits, one of Charlotte the other of James, were painted in 1626, possibly as wedding portraits, and attributed to Michiel Jansz. van Miereveldt (Delft 1567–Delft 1641). They are now held by the National Trust and on display at Blickling Hall, Norfolk, England. Details of who commissioned all the portraits are not available. Anthony Van Dyck (1599–1641) painted *James, Seventh Earl of Derby, His Lady and Child* (1632–41). This very large painting is now in the Frick Gallery in New York. The title of this painting has been changed as James did not become Earl until 1642. The two widow portraits were probably commissioned by Charlotte herself as she was living alone at Knowsley or in London when they were painted. The first widow portrait of Charlotte, Countess of Derby, after Sir Peter Lely (1618–80) is now the property of The National Portrait Gallery and is on display at Gawthorpe Hall, Burnley, Lancashire, about 60 km from Knowsley. The later widow portrait by an anonymous artist remains at Knowsley. Additional resources can be found in records of dramas and masques that the Stanleys appeared in as well as in Compounding Committee documents both local and central. The calendars of these proceedings of the committees document some parts of these letters. There are also significant parliamentary and royalist pamphlets that refer to Charlotte and the activities of the family generally during this period. These pamphlets of the time include *Mercurius rusticus*, a royalist pamphlet published on an irregular basis,⁵⁰ and *The Parliament Scout*, a weekly pamphlet published in London giving details of factors affecting

the Parliament supporters in the English Civil War.⁵¹ They will be employed to understand sectarian differences. Others written by both sides will provide contemporary but opposing views of the behaviour of Charlotte de La Trémoille and other women during the English Civil War. These accounts will be slanted as each used her activities to support their point of view. Each account will thus need to be read in the context of its political point of view. Other events in Charlotte's life do not offer the same range of extant perspectives. A book about the 1644 siege of Lathom House written by Cavalier officer Edward Halsall, who was part of the defending force, was published in 1644 and is also an important resource. This account cannot be balanced by any writing from the besieging force as it did not leave one. When it eventually succeeded in taking Lathom House the building was almost totally destroyed, leaving little above ground, which perhaps gives some sense of their feelings.

Memories of Charlotte continued to be created after her death. For example, two of her sons-in-law erected memorials to their wives that specifically mention Charlotte. In the eighteenth century, between 1708 and 1735 when restoring the hall, Charlotte's youngest grandson James erected a plaque over the front door that highlights her fight to save Lathom House. Writers of history in the nineteenth century saw Charlotte de La Trémoille as a significant figure of her time, producing fiction, non-fiction, and even a travel guide to celebrated places that reinforced memories of her activities in folklore. Joan Thirsk wrote in the foreword to Mary Prior's book *Women in English Society 1500–1800*, "nineteenth-century historians laid foundations on which we build ... they were veritable pioneers in their indefatigable search for original documents as evidence."⁵² These statements will be helpful in trying to understand the approaches of nineteenth-century writers as she goes on to describe how these scholars, mainly women, worked. This will help us to understand the memorialising of Charlotte in the centuries after her death through analysis of which of her activities were discussed and how her character came to be understood. Mary Spongberg, Barbara Caine, and Ann Curthoys published an essential reference book for those interested in women's writing and history.⁵³ As mentioned earlier, I will be analysing a range of nineteenth-century fictional and non-fiction historical presentations of Charlotte de La Trémoille that must be understood in the context of nineteenth-century writers and their understanding of women's roles past and present.

Many antiquarian books about James (that also include Charlotte) and about Charlotte or the siege of Lathom House were published in the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries.⁵⁴ A final set of sources are those that will help me to analyse the interpretation of Charlotte de La

Trémoille's character in modern cultural and heritage tourism and popular memory. My analysis here includes museum signage, interpretive panels, plaques, brochures, and booklets designed for general public consumption. These also play a role in shaping modern perceptions of Charlotte de La Trémoille's identity for visitors, especially at Ormskirk Parish Church and on the Isle of Man. I will interpret these texts as sources for modern understandings of seventeenth-century female identity, which both draw from academic sources and popular local tradition. Folk memories were reinforced in 2004 when a popular [folk] song was written about her by the electric folk band Steeleye Span, a group based in Liverpool. There can be few seventeenth-century women who have been the subject of similar musical interpretation in the twenty-first century.

The names of people and places can be difficult to use consistently in this time period. Throughout this book, whether as Charlotte de La Trémoille, Mademoiselle de La Trémoille, Lady Strange, or Countess of Derby, our subject will be referred to as Charlotte. James Stanley, Lord Strange, or the 7th Earl of Derby will, from the time of his marriage, be referred to as James. The English versions of names are mainly used in this book as we do not know what version of names Charlotte used. For the French individuals, the French version of their names will be used. The present-day spelling of place names will be used to prevent confusion due to the variable seventeenth-century spelling. This applies to English, French, and Dutch names. Man, as in the Isle of Man, can be spelt as either Man or Mann; I have chosen to use Man. Where Charlotte has used Holland for either The Hague or The Netherlands, I have done the same. All dates given in this book use January 1 as the start of the new year, instead of March 1.

This book covers the life story of Charlotte and is divided into three sections that reflect her life and after. In 1642, her life, like that of many others, turned upside down at the start of the Civil War, and for Charlotte never returned to any form of settled existence. This is the largest part of the book, as it is the period for which there are the most extant primary sources. The third section examines those interpretations of her identity and character since her death.

The first part, titled "A Huguenot Child becomes Lady Strange," first examines her childhood and life in France then her early married life after her move to England, a period of 42 years. Chapter one focuses on her upbringing as a member of the Huguenot minority in France, including the influence of longstanding religious/political upheaval. I will examine why none of the historians who have looked at the early life of Charlotte have examined the relationship between her early life in France during its

religious/political wars and the effects these may have had on her activities during the English Civil War for which she is mostly known. Chapter two documents her marriage with its move to England and coping with living in England as a foreigner and all the distrust that this involved. In the early years of their marriage, the Stanleys lived in both London at the Royal Court and Knowsley Hall and Lathom House in rural Lancashire. This period includes the birth of her children and travels to France and The Hague. I explore whether the aristocratic persona she had developed before her marriage was reinforced by events during the marriage.

Part 2, "Her World Turns Upside Down," investigates how her world changed in a relatively short period, never to return to its pre-war state. In chapter three I will analyse the rapid change in the early 1640s when James and Charlotte were living quietly in Lancashire moving between Lathom House and Knowsley to a world turned upside down. For reasons unknown, there remain no letters written to family in this period, a time when Charlotte was making important political and military choices. Chapter four examines how Charlotte took on the role of a military leader while at the same time using the role of the "good wife" as justification for her temporary masculine position without suspending her femininity. Charlotte used a combination of identities as a defence in the early stages of the siege of Lathom House, that of a woman, a member of the elite, or the "good wife," or a combination of all three. Charlotte welcomed James and Prince Rupert to Lathom House after Colonel Rigby and the parliamentary forces raised the siege.

Chapter five covers the time that Charlotte and her children accompanied James to the Isle of Man. Although Charlotte left the island twice in this period, it appears to have been a settled time for this family. This was a time of frequent letters to Marie, especially when Charlotte was not on the island.

In Part 3, I turn my attention to "Interregnum, Restoration and Beyond." Chapter six focuses on Charlotte's demonstrations, both public and private, of her grief that followed the death of James. She was forced to plan for the marriages of her daughters and the education of her younger sons on her own. How were the problems with her attempts to regain the family finances reflected through (and a consequence of) her identity as a widow and royalist? One of her sons-in-law and the family of another daughter erected memorial plaques to the daughter and her natal family. Seventy years after her death, a grandson erected a plaque over the doorway at Knowsley remembering James and Charlotte. All of these memorials take notice of Charlotte's lineage, especially her French ancestry.

Notes

¹ Unnamed source cited in Colin Pilkington, *To Play the Man* (Preston: Carnegie Publishing, 1991), 33.

² Anne Laurence, "Women's Work and the English Civil War," *History Today* (June 1992): 6–14, and Alison Plowden, *Women all on Fire: The Women of the English Civil War* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1998).

³ Antonia Fraser, *The Weaker Vessel* (London: Phoenix Press, 1984), 199, and Mary Coate, *Social Life in Stuart England* (London: Methuen Publishing Ltd., 1924), 30

⁴ Plowden, *Women all on Fire*, and David Jones, *Women Warriors: A History* (Washington: Brassey's, 1997).

⁵ Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England 1550–1720* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998) and Laurence, "Women's Work and the English Civil War," 6–14.

⁶ Henry Deane, *Grace, Mercy and Peace* (1645), quoted in Christopher Hill, *World Turned Upside Down* (London: Temple Smith, 1972), 12, and used by Hill as the title for his 1972 book.

⁷ Mary Spongberg, Barbara Caine, and Ann Curthoys (eds.), *Companion to Women's Historical Writing* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 221.

⁸ Mary Hays, *Female Biography; or, Memoirs of Illustrious and Celebrated Women, of All Ages and Countries* (6 Volumes) (London: R. Phillips, 1803); *Chawton House Library Series: Women's Memoirs*, edited by Gina Luria Walker, *Memoirs of Women Writers Part III* (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013), vol. 8, 40, editorial notes, 521–2.

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¹⁰ Spongberg, Caine, and Curthoys, *Companion to Women's Historical Writing*.

¹¹ Bonnie G. Smith, "Women's History: A Retrospective from the United States," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture & Society* 35 (3) (2010): 723–47.

¹² Captain Edward Halsall, "A Brief Journal of the Siege Against Lathom House," *The Kaleidoscope or Literary and scientific Mirror* (Liverpool: Egerton Smith, 1818–31).

¹³ Captain Edward Halsall, *A Journal of the Siege of Lathom House* (London, Harding, Mavor and Lepard, 1823).

¹⁴ John Seacome, *House of Stanley, from the Conquest to the death of Edward, late Earl of Derby in the year 1776. Containing a genealogical and historical account of that Illustrious House. To which is added, A complete history of The Isle of Man of The past and present State of Society and Manners containing also Anecdotes of eminent persons connected with that island* (Manchester: Printed and Published by J. Greave, 1821)

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 130.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Halsall, "A Brief Journal of the Siege Against Lathom House," and Halsall, *A Journal of the Siege of Lathom House*.

¹⁸ Sir Walter Scott, *Peveiril of the Peak* (Edinburgh, Archibald Constable & Co., 1823).

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- ¹⁹ Henrietta de Witt, *The Lady of Latham: Being the Original Letters of Charlotte De La Tremoille, Countess of Derby* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1869), and Léon Marlet, *Charlotte de La Trémoille Comtess de Derby (1599–1664)* (Paris: Pairault & Co., 1895).
- ²⁰ Mary C. Rowsall, *The Life-Story of Charlotte de La Trémoille, Countess of Derby* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co. Ltd., 1905).
- ²¹ Charles Duke Yonge, *The Seven Heroines of Christendom* (London: W. Swan Sonnenschien & Co., 1884); Katherine Thomson, *Recollections of Literary Characters and Celebrated Places* (London: Richard Bentley & Winifred Stephens, 1854); *The La Trémoille Family* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1914).
- ²² Mrs. Thomson, *Recollections of Literary Characters and Celebrated Places* (London: Richard Bentley, Publisher, 1854), 1–30.
- ²³ *Ibid.*, 39
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*, 53.
- ²⁵ *Ibid.*, 56.
- ²⁶ Revd. Joseph George Cumming, *The Great Stanley or, James, VIIth Earl of Derby, and his Noble Countess Charlotte de La Trémoille, In their Isle of Man* (London: William MacIntosh, 1967), 105.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 139.
- ²⁸ *Ibid.*, 233.
- ²⁹ Plowden, *Women all on Fire*; Jones, *Women Warriors*.
- ³⁰ Sonja Kmec, *Across the Channel, Noblewomen in Seventeenth-Century France and England* (Trier: Kliomedica, 2010); R. C. Richardson, *The English Civil Wars, Local Aspects* (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1997).
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- ³² Madame Guizot de Witt, *The Lady of Lathom* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1869).
- ³³ *Ibid.*, v.
- ³⁴ *Ibid.*
- ³⁵ *Ibid.*, 298–9.
- ³⁶ Poem or song from W. Harrison Ainsworth, *The Leaguer of Lathom*, in two parts, the first in 1877 and the second in 1880, published by Tauchnitz.
- ³⁷ Stephanie Tarbin and Susan Broomhall, *Women, Identities and Communities in Early Modern England* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 1.
- ³⁸ Mendelson and Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England*, 5.
- ³⁹ Chelsea Research Group on Subjectivity and Feminism, <http://www.arts.ac.uk/research/researching-at-ual/research-infrastructure/research-groups-networks-and-collaborations/subjectivity-and-feminisms>.
- ⁴⁰ Natalie Zemon Davis, *Women in the Margins* (Cambridge Ma.: Harvard University Press, 1997).
- ⁴¹ Jane Couchman and Ann Crabb (eds.), *Women's Letters Across Europe, 1400–1700* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 3.

⁴² Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Well-Behaved Women Seldom Make History* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007).

⁴³ *Ibid.*, xxii.

⁴⁴ Couchman and Crabb, *Women's Letters Across Europe*, 3.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

⁴⁶ Daybell, "'I wold wyshe my doings myght be ... secret': Privacy and the Social Practices of Reading Women's Letters in Sixteenth-Century England," in *Form and Persuasion in Women's Letters, 1400-1700*, eds Ann Crabbe and Jane Couchman (Aldershot: Ashgate, November 2005)

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 98.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 100.

⁴⁹ Susan Maria Farington (ed.), *The Farington Paper* (Manchester: Chetham Society, 1861).

⁵⁰ Ryves, *Mercurius rusticus*, published May 20, 1643–December 16, 1653.

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⁵⁴ de Witt, *The Lady of Lathom*, 1869; Barry Coward, *The Stanleys, Lord Stanley and the Earls of Derby, 1385–1672* (Manchester: Chetham Society, 1983); Kmec, *Across the Channel*.