



JOHN CHURCHILL, 1st DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH, c.1685-90 BY JOHN RILEY

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SCIPIO OR CRASSUS? THE CONTESTED HEROIC IMAGE OF JOHN CHURCHILL, 1ST DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH (1650-1722)

TOBIAS ROEDER

On 18 September 1714, George I, Elector of Hanover, arrived in Great Britain to be crowned king. When he and his son, later George II, disembarked at Greenwich, they first addressed one of their new subjects, whom they both had known for a long time: 'My lord Duke, [...] I hope your troubles are now all over.'¹ The man addressed by the Sovereign was John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough, Great Britain's first commander-in-chief after the Act of Union with Scotland of 1707 and one of the most successful generals of his time. By 1714, Marlborough had returned from exile in Germany and had already become a figurehead of the Protestant Hanoverian Succession. This article will explore how military successes had led to Churchill's representation as a military hero amongst his contemporaries and will examine the style of heroic image generated. Central to the question of his status as a military hero was his contemporaries' perception of the man and the myth. The article will also show how and why certain individuals rejected the hero-image and how a print and material-cultural modelling of this image served to create a national figure in the early eighteenth century and thereafter.

Glorious campaigns and partisan politics

Born the son of a staunch cavalier, John Churchill had a quite remarkable career as a courtier, soldier and diplomat, first in the Restoration England of Charles II and James II, and afterwards under William III and his successor Anne. It was Queen Anne who made her trusted advisor Captain-General of all Forces at the beginning of her reign, which coincided with the outbreak of the War of the Spanish Succession. Churchill's wife had been the Queen's best friend for many years and a special bond had evolved between the Queen and her husband, the Churchills and the latter's best friend and political ally, Sidney Godolphin, who became Lord Treasurer at the beginning of Anne's reign.² After a first successful campaign in Flanders in 1702, the Queen created Churchill first Duke of Marlborough.³ While this appeared as a classic courtier career of the seventeenth century, the extensive press coverage of Marlborough's campaigns and the attention he received in print made him a popular hero of a style not before seen in Britain.

¹ Winston Churchill, *Marlborough. His Life and Times*, Vol. 2 (Chicago, 2002), p. 1019.

² F. Harris, *A Passion for Government. The Life of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough* (Oxford / New York, 1991), pp. 87-89.

³ J.B. Hattendorf, 'Courtier, Army Officer, Politician, and Diplomat. A Biographical Sketch of John Churchill, first Duke of Marlborough,' in *Marlborough. Soldier and Diplomat*, ed. J.B. Hattendorf / A.J. Veenendaal, Jr. / Rolof van Hövell tot Westerflier (Rotterdam, 2012), pp. 38-63.

From the start of Marlborough's campaigns in 1702, the English press covered his and the Allied campaigns extensively. The newspapers reported every step Marlborough took on the continent, his dealings as a diplomat and his career as a general once the campaign had started.⁴

While the official government newspaper, the *London Gazette*, dealt primarily with England's affairs abroad and covered Marlborough's campaigns from an official viewpoint, the popular market for news of this type was provided by the large number of newly-established newspapers that came into existence after the Licensing Act of 1662 lapsed in 1695. This led to almost unlimited freedom for the press and greatly increased the number of reports of Marlborough's campaigns and the number of people who were able to read them. The War of the Spanish Succession generated a huge interest for news from the different theatres of the war. It is hardly a coincidence that the launch of the *Daily Courant*, England's first daily newspaper, commenced at the same time as the beginning of Marlborough's campaign in the Netherlands. Newspapers mostly relied on different sources from the cities proximate to the action such as English diplomats and merchants based in the Netherlands or the Rhineland. Furthermore, they received their information from foreign papers or from officers participating in the campaigns.⁵ The latter sometimes simply wrote home and their letters were passed on to the press because their recipients thought they were worthy of publication.⁶ Often, however, they were members of the general's personal or military staff. The Captain-General was anxious that his campaigns be perceived as prudent and successful by the British public. In order to achieve this, it was Adam de Cardonnel, his trusted secretary, who sent many accounts of his deeds to London.⁷

Marlborough's most famous victory, the Battle of Blenheim in 1704, triggered a massive reaction in the London print media. Reports of the battle and of victory celebrations, poems, and addresses to the Queen full of praises for the victorious Duke flooded the newspapers.⁸ Contemporaries of different backgrounds were amazed by the triumph at Blenheim.⁹ Together with the Imperial forces of Prince

⁴ *Post Boy* (1695) No. 1068 (London, 19-21 March 1702); *Post Boy* (1695) No. 1126 (London, 30 July-1 August 1702).

⁵ H. Barker, *Newspapers, Politics and English Society, 1695-1855* (Harlow, 2000), p. 105; James Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 20, 28-29.

⁶ *Daily Courant* No. 147 (London, 6 October 1702).

⁷ Jens Metzendorf, *Politik – Propaganda – Patronage. Francis Hare und die Englische Publizistik im Spanischen Erbfolgekrieg* (Mainz, 2000), pp. 65, 130-131; Tony Claydon, 'Daily News and the Construction of Time in Late Stuart England, 1695-1714,' *Journal of British Studies* Vol. 52, No. 1 (January 2013), pp. 61-63.

⁸ *London Gazette* No. 4044 (London, 10-14 August 1704); *Flying Post or The Post Master* (London, 12-15 August 1704); *Post Man and the Historical Account* No. 1309 (London, 19-22 August 1704); *London Gazette* No. 4051 (London, 4-7 September 1704).

⁹ *The Diary of John Evelyn* Vol. 5, *Kalendarium, 1690-1706*, ed. E. S. de Beer (Oxford, 1955), pp. 86, 90, 524-526, 574; W. Coxe (ed.), *Memoirs of John Duke of Marlborough with his original Correspondence*, Vol. 1 (London, 1818), p. 338.

Eugene, Marlborough had decisively defeated a combined Franco-Bavarian army, which comprised the elite troops of the Sun King, constituting the first decisive victory in a field battle over the forces of Louis XIV. In England, it was also perceived as the first victory in a major land battle by English forces in the European theatre since the later Middle Ages. While the battle was won by the combined actions of English, Scottish, Irish, Dutch, Danish and German troops, the commander was an Englishman. Therefore, it could be represented as an English victory.¹⁰ The military impact was as important as the symbolic one: the French were driven from southern Germany, Louis' XIV ally, the Elector of Bavaria, was turned out of his lands, and the Emperor was kept in the Grand Alliance.

The view of Blenheim as an exceptional victory was also, in part, the result of the paucity and difficulty of news coverage at this time. Marlborough's care in dispatching his aide-de-camp to London, immediately after the battle, meant that news of the battle arrived in the city before that of the Capture of Gibraltar on 23 July by Admiral Rooke. The latter was reported on 14 August, while news of Blenheim, fought on 2 August, had been reported on 11 August. It played into the hands of the Whigs, who were promoting a strong commitment to a land war and could now point to the success of their strategy; this was counter to the Tories' position, which advocated concentrated naval warfare and who tried, unsuccessfully, to establish Rooke as their champion.¹¹

Marlborough was also able to back up his triumph with more successes. The Battle of Ramillies (1706) delivered the whole of Brabant to the Allies and the Battle of Oudenarde (1708) was followed by the siege and capture of Lille, the masterpiece of Vauban's fortifications. The inability to bring the war to a successful end and the bloody tactical victory of Malplaquet (1709), however, further reduced Marlborough's already waning influence in the internal politics of Britain. Although Marlborough and his closest allies tried to retain their influence, the factional struggle during the reign of Queen Anne and the emergence of party politics, made their position unsustainable. As he sided more and more with the Whigs to promote a strong commitment to the continental war, he became the Whig champion and figurehead of their call for 'No Peace without Spain'.¹²

Marlborough's position as chief advisor and leading minister of Queen Anne was also very much dependent on the monarch's favour. By 1708, the deterioration of the relationship between Anne and Churchill's wife, Sarah, had undermined this position.¹³ He could not prevent the Queen from dismissing both her Whig-ministers, whom she had never trusted, and Marlborough's closest ally

¹⁰ Daniel Defoe, *A Hymn to Victory*, 2nd ed. (London, 1704), pp. 6-13; see also Tony Claydon, *Europe and the Making of England, 1660-1760* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 125-128.

¹¹ Claydon, 'Daily News,' pp. 66-67; all dates in this paragraph are in Old Style.

¹² G. Holmes, *British Politics in the Age of Anne*, 2nd ed. (London, 1987), pp. 64-74; R. Holmes, *Marlborough. Britain's Greatest General* (London, 2009), pp. 442-444; Metzdorf, *Politik*, pp. 188-189; J.R. Jones, *Marlborough* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 194.

¹³ Harris, *A Passion for Government*, chapters 7-10.

and best friend, Lord Treasurer Sidney Godolphin in 1710. Following a general election the same year, the Tories were able to assume control in the Commons and the ministry.¹⁴ Anxious to reach a settlement with France, the Tories and especially Marlborough's former protégé Henry St John tried to weaken Marlborough's position as Captain-General.¹⁵ Undeterred, Marlborough carried on. From the correspondence with his wife and Godolphin, it is clear that while he wished for an end to the war, he believed that only a decisive victory over the Bourbons would gain a long-lasting peace. Until that was achieved, his self-perception as a faithful Protestant commander fulfilling his 'duty to [his] Queen and country' kept him in office.¹⁶

With Marlborough a symbol of the war effort and the Whig-cause, Tory leader Robert Harley directed his propaganda-machine against the Captain-General. One famous writer in Harley's pay was Jonathan Swift. In his most influential piece, *The Conduct of the Allies*, he not only attacked the Whig leadership and condemned the war as a waste of money, of no use to England, and only helping the despised Dutch; but he especially attacked Marlborough. Swift declared that the war was started and continued only for the personal aggrandizement and enrichment of the Churchills. Marlborough now prolonged the war for 'the Monied Men at home' to profit financially and for the Whigs, who would profit politically. At the end, Swift stated that Marlborough wanted to be king. This notion, which the Tories had begun to spread in 1710, played on the fear of an army general seizing power and setting up a system of arbitrary rule as had happened under Oliver Cromwell. Furthermore, Swift asserted that the majority of people in the Kingdom were against the continuation of the war, but that the politicised population of London was too influenced by the bellicose creditors of the war debt, who filled the 'City Coffee-houses', and by soldiers, so that their opinion had come to be viewed as the will of the nation.¹⁷

Marlborough's chief defender was Dr Francis Hare. He had been Marlborough's son's tutor at Cambridge and had later joined Marlborough's campaign staff as Chaplain-General. Marlborough had also commissioned Hare to compile accounts of his campaigns and he became his first notable biographer. Furthermore, Hare joined Cardonnell in directing the public relations for Marlborough's campaigns.¹⁸ Hare answered Marlborough's enemies in a number of tracts and treatises, rejecting accusations that Marlborough was prolonging the war and that he had shied away from opportunities for peace. He also defended

¹⁴ Churchill, *Marlborough* Vol. 2, pp. 758-764.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 768-773.

¹⁶ *The Marlborough-Godolphin Correspondence*, Vol. 3, ed. Henry L. Snyder (Oxford, 1975), pp. 1513-1514; *Private correspondence of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough. Illustrative of the Court and Times of Queen Anne, with her Sketches and Opinions of her Contemporaries, and the Select Correspondence of her Husband, John, Duke of Marlborough*, Vol. 1 (London, 1838), pp. 25, 146, 184, 351.

¹⁷ Jonathan Swift, *The Conduct of the Allies, and of the Late Ministry, in Beginning and Carrying on the Present War*, 2nd ed., (London, 1711), pp. 10-21, 60-66, 78; Holmes, *Marlborough*, pp. 413-414.

¹⁸ R.D. Horn, 'Marlborough's First Biographer: Dr Francis Hare', *Huntingdon Library Quarterly* Vol. 20, No. 2 (February 1957), pp. 147-153.

Marlborough's strategy and his reputation as a general.¹⁹ The tracts were quite successful, as the high number of copies sold testifies, much more than the anti-Marlborough propaganda answering them. For the Tories, who were negotiating a secret settlement with the French, keeping Marlborough in command became increasingly uncomfortable.²⁰ The breaking point came when, in late 1711 he voted with the still existing Whig-majority in the Lords for an amendment to the Queen's speech at the opening of the session, clearly opposing a peace without Spain. This led to the creation by the Queen of sufficient Tory lords in order to defeat the motion and produce a Tory majority in both houses. The personal consequence for Marlborough was that, in order to blacken his name and destroy his political credibility, he was charged with misappropriation and receiving unlawful perquisites from army suppliers. As Marlborough pointed out, these perquisites had been customary for a commander-in-chief on the continent (which proven when the Tories granted them to his successor right away) and at least part of them were used for the acquisition of military intelligence. Whether the charges were justified or not, they gave ammunition to his enemies and enabled the government finally to push for his dismissal.²¹ The Queen complied and on 31 December 1711 Anne dropped her trusted counsellor and military champion, a decision of political necessity rather than a sign of personal mistrust. Now ardent for a settlement after a whole reign of war, Anne came to see Marlborough as an obstacle to that peace.²²

The reaction to the Duke's dismissal was applause from his enemies and lamentation by his supporters.²³ It led to great frustration among his soldiers, whom he had led to many victories and for whom he had shown unusual care, so that they had even named him 'the Old Corporal.'²⁴ His assailants, however, launched further attacks on the Duke's avarice.²⁵ This was clearly a vulnerable point, easy for his enemies to criticize, and it seemed to have been common knowledge that he was keen on accumulating wealth.²⁶

Just after Marlborough's dismissal, Hare published a grand military biography of his patron: *The Conduct of the Duke of Marlborough During the Present War*. Defending him against those who argued 'that the Duke of Marlborough's Predominant Passion, the Love of acquiring Wealth, kept him in his Command',

¹⁹ Metzendorf, *Politik*, pp. 232-237, 250-251.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 264, 316-321.

²¹ Holmes, *Marlborough*, pp. 460-461.

²² E. Gregg, *Queen Anne* (New Haven / London, 2001), p. 349.

²³ *Remarks and Collections of Thomas Hearne*, Vol. 3, ed. C.E. Doble (Oxford, 1889), p. 289; Richard Steele, 'The Englishman's Thanks to the Duke of Marlborough. Printed in 1711,' in *The Political Writings of Sir Richard Steele*, ed. Richard Steele (London, 1715), pp. 1-6.

²⁴ D. Chandler (ed.), *Robert Parker and Comte de Mérode-Westerloo. The Marlborough Wars* (London, 1968), p. 120.

²⁵ *The D—e and D——s of M———h's Loss; being An Estimate of their former Yearly Income*, (London 1712), British Library 1850.c.10.(23.).

²⁶ *The Wentworth Papers 1705-1739. Selected from the Private and Family Correspondence of Thomas Wentworth, Lord Raby, created in 1711 Earl of Strafford, of Stainborough, co. York*, ed. James J. Cartwright (London, 1883), p. 245.

Hare implies that the duty to his country was what kept Marlborough there.²⁷ Overall this was a piece written in Marlborough's favour, while Hare's closeness to the actions and his use of the official documents available to him lent it the air of a neutral account of facts. This and the avoidance of overtly propagandistic language made it largely immune to attacks by the Tories.²⁸

While Marlborough had suffered the indignity of a vote in the House of Commons that implied his guilt in respect of the peculation charges that had been brought against him, the government did not proceed further, but rather kept the charges against him as a sword of Damocles, with which to threaten him and ensure his future compliant behaviour. In order to get him out of the way, it accepted his petition to go into voluntary exile on mainland Europe. Travelling through the Netherlands and Germany, he was greeted triumphantly throughout. And he did not vanish from British public life. Newspapers covered his journey just as when he had an army following him.²⁹ Marlborough used his voluntary exile in Germany to establish closer contact with the Hanoverians, with whom he had for some time maintained good relations.³⁰ Prince George Augustus of Hanover, later King George II of Great Britain, had served under Marlborough and distinguished himself at Oudenarde: the future of the Protestant British monarchy had thereby already established links with Marlborough and his victories.³¹

With the war ended and the Tory government breaking up over the Succession question, Marlborough decided to return to Britain in the summer of 1714, where he arrived just after Queen Anne's death.³² En route to the capital and in London itself, he was greeted joyfully by the populace.³³ The accession to the throne of George I was more than favourable to Marlborough, as the encounter in Greenwich has shown. With the first warrant George signed, Marlborough was reinstated in all his military offices. For George, favour shown to Marlborough served a purpose; he wished to have this resurrected hero at his side.³⁴ Indicative of the general goodwill with which this was received is the address to the new King by the Mayor and Burgesses of Nottingham, in which they praised the monarch for doing justice to Marlborough.³⁵

²⁷ Francis Hare, *The Conduct of the Duke of Marlborough During the Present War. With Original Papers* (London, 1712), p. 283.

²⁸ Metzendorf, *Politik*, pp. 431-434.

²⁹ *Evening Post* (1709) No. 520 (London, 6-9 December 1712); *The Scots Courant* No. 1176 (Edinburgh, 6-8 April 1713); *Evening Post* (1709) No. 575 (London, 14-16 April 1713).

³⁰ *Daily Courant* No. 1138 (London, 6 December 1705); Holmes, *Marlborough*, p. 467.

³¹ Michael Stanhope, *God the Author of Victory. A Sermon Preach'd in the Royal-Chappel at White-Hall, on Thursday the 19th of August, 1708 [...]* (London, 1708), p. 12.

³² Edward Gregg, 'Marlborough in Exile,' *Historical Journal* Vol. 15, No. 4 (December 1972), pp. 615-616; Hattendorf, 'Courtier, Army Officer, Politician, and Diplomat', p. 98.

³³ *Daily Courant* No. 3987 (London, 4 August 1714); *Flying Post or The Post Master* No. 3524 (London, 3-5 August 1714); *Flying Post or The Post Master* No. 3525 (London, 5-7 August 1714).

³⁴ Churchill, *Marlborough 2*, pp. 1019-1020.

³⁵ *Flying Post or The Post Master* No. 3551 (London, 5-7 October 1714).

The Christian Hero

In order to understand Marlborough's heroic image, it is important to consider certain trends of the period, one of which is the idea of Christian Heroism. In 1701, Richard Steele had published *The Christian Hero*, in which he argued that the correct way to lead a public life and achieve success was to live in union with Christian virtues and put one's 'confidence in God', especially in times of peril. As an exemplar for virtuous lives, Steele proposed the Acts of the Apostles. A former army officer, Steele's tract was directed especially towards his 'Fellow-Soldiours'.³⁶ The publication was highly successful and saw 20 editions throughout the eighteenth century. It provided a summary of the idea of a Christian Hero distinct from classical antique heroism and promoted the picture of a reformed army officer, devoted to his country and adhering to Christian moral values. This was part of a strong pro-army movement that aimed to rid the army, its soldiers, and officers of their bad reputation as mercenaries and as an inherent threat to the state.³⁷

These ideas were connected to Marlborough, as demonstrated by the very similar accounts by Robert Parker and Richard Kane, both officers in the Royal Regiment of Ireland at this time, of how Marlborough had started the day of the Battle of Blenheim: 'The Duke received the Holy Sacrament this morning at the hands of his Chaplain, Doctor Hare, and upon mounting his horse, he said, 'This day I conquer or die.' A noble instance of the Christian hero!'³⁸ Even if constructed, this narrative lends evidence to the claim that soldiers, especially educated officers like Parker and Kane, familiar with Steele's work, thought of Marlborough as such a Christian Hero who first takes communion, then puts his life and success in God's hands. Steele himself seems to have agreed. Following a clearly Protestant ideology (without explicitly excluding the Catholic allies), he had expressed the need for someone to fight the Sun King, whom he saw as an enemy of Christian virtue, and asked 'Is there no Power, no Leader, no Genius that can conduct and animate us to our Death or our Defence?' For him this was William III, who died the year after the tract was published.³⁹ With William dead, he transferred his support to Marlborough as someone who carried forth the late King's God-given agenda.⁴⁰

Poems and especially sermons styled Marlborough a Christian Hero and, as we shall see, his reputation as a committed Protestant provided a sound basis for

³⁶ Richard Steele, *The Christian Hero. An Argument Proving that No Principles but those of Religion are Sufficient to Make a Great Man* (London, 1701), preface, pp. 75-76.

³⁷ Werner Busch, *Das sentimentalische Bild. Die Krise der Kunst im 18. Jahrhundert und die Geburt der Moderne* (München, 1993), p. 20; H. Smith, 'Politics, Patriotism and Gender. The Standing Army Debate on the English Stage, circa 1689-1720,' *Journal of British Studies* Vol. 50, No. 1 (January 2011), pp. 49-50, 64.

³⁸ Chandler, *Robert Parker*, p. 37; Richard Kane, *Campaigns of King William and Queen Anne; From 1689, to 1712. [...] (London, 1745)*, p. 48.

³⁹ Steele, *The Christian Hero*, pp. 92-93.

⁴⁰ C. Winton, 'Steele, Sir Richard (bap. 1672-1729),' in ODNB (Oxford, 2004, Online 2005), URL: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26347> [09/02/ 2013].

this image. Marlborough had become increasingly more religious after the death of his son in 1703 and the observance of thanksgivings after victories earned him the respect of even the painfully-pious Lieutenant-Colonel Blackader.⁴¹ His battlefield valour and his escape from danger unharmed, led one author to the rhetorical question ‘did not Providence particularly watch over it [his Life], and take more care to preserve it than the Hero does himself.’⁴² It was only a small further step to depict him as both protected by, and also embodying a ‘glorious Instrument of Providence’, and being ‘God’s right hand, whom he has made strong for himself.’⁴³

Marlborough was also compared to Biblical heroes like Joshua.⁴⁴ While expressing hopes for a long life of the hero, one poem – a kind of pre-mortem apotheosis – states that after his death he will not only have eternal fame on earth, but will become a divine warrior angel, likening him to the Archangel Michael.⁴⁵ The Joshua-comparison was also employed in a sermon by Hare in 1711, in which Marlborough leads the Israelites (the British and their Allies), into the Holy Land to freedom and liberty after the aggressively Catholic France has been defeated and the return of arbitrary power and popery are parried. He is again shown to complete the work of Moses, i.e. William III.⁴⁶ The oft-employed comparison with the late King could also be problematic, however, as it tied him to the European and less English allegiances of William. Additionally, it elevated Marlborough to the level of a former sovereign and, thereby, put him on a level with the reigning one.⁴⁷ The clergyman Robert Fleming avoided the latter problem when using another biblical warrior hero in his highly advertised essay *Seculum Davidicum Redivivum* of 1706. It was dedicated to the Duchess of Marlborough and is a theological essay that justifies the Glorious Revolution, the right to resist arbitrary government, and the Act of Settlement as opposed to a High Tory understanding of divine kingship, solely using the Bible as source of argument.⁴⁸ When he discusses the deeds of the Israelite King David and his justification as a king, obviously relating him to William III, Fleming talks extensively about David’s great warrior hero Adino/Jashobeam, whom he shows as the most perfect

⁴¹ Metzdorf, *Politik*, p. 96; Blackader, *The Life and Diary of Lieut. Col. J. Blackader, of the Cameronian Regiment, and Deputy Governor of Stirling Castle [...]*, ed. Andrew Crichton, (Edinburgh, 1824), p. 335.

⁴² *An Essay Upon the Character of His Grace the Duke of Marlborough [...]* (London, 1707), p. 11.

⁴³ Gilbert Burnet, *A Sermon Preach’d at the Cathedral Church of Salisbury, On the xxviii Day of June, MDCCVI [...]*, 2nd ed. (London, 1706), pp. 9-10.

⁴⁴ *Joshua. A Poem In Imitation of Milton. Humbly Inscrib’d to the Duke of Marlborough. [...]* (London, 1706), p. 9-10.

⁴⁵ *The Battel of Audenard. A poem, Occasion’d By the Glorious Victory obtain’d over the French near that Place, the 11th of July, 1708. N. S. [...]* (London, 1708), p. 7.

⁴⁶ Metzdorf, *Politik*, pp. 326-328; Francis Hare, *The Charge of God to Joshua, in a Sermon Preach’d before his Grace the Duke of Marlborough [...]*, 2nd ed. (London, 1711).

⁴⁷ Tony Claydon, ‘A European General in the English Press,’ in *Marlborough. Soldier and Diplomat*, p. 308.

⁴⁸ Robert Fleming, *Seculum Davidicum Redivivum; or, the Divine Right of the Revolution Evinc’d and Apply’d: in a Discourse, Occasion’d by the late Glorious Victory at Ramilly [...]*, (London, 1706).

individual: a general, a statesman and a bold warrior.⁴⁹ He draws the obvious connection likening Jashobeam to Marlborough. And he continues, linking Marlborough to the Glorious Revolution, not only exonerating him from any charges of treason against James II, but arguing that his concern for the 'publick Good' led him to support the Revolution. The same applies to his fellow officers and soldiers.⁵⁰ Marlborough's heroism was thereby closely connected to his soldiers. And it corresponded to the idea of Christian heroism, as a sentence from Bishop Burnet's sermon shows, where he points out that '[o]ur Men go to Action as assured of Victory, being resolved to Conquer, or to Die.'⁵¹

English Scipio

While Steele's idea of Christian heroism renounced the example of other classical heroes, the latter were still employed by other contemporary authors to style Marlborough as a hero and show his impact on history. Most important and common was the comparison with Scipio Africanus, who led Rome in its struggle against Carthage in the Second Punic War and in the end, defeated Hannibal in battle. Like Marlborough, Scipio had never been defeated in the field, but having been drawn into a political fight he was humiliatingly forced from power, leading him to undergo voluntary exile from Rome.⁵² The extent of his disgrace and his involvement in political conflict are now disputed by historians but were accepted at the time.⁵³ The similarities seem obvious, especially when Marlborough's fate in the period 1711-1714 is considered. Initially, however, his comparison with Scipio served mainly as an indicator of military glory. Henry Denne calls Marlborough '*English Scipio*', while Thomas Gibson dedicated a whole poem to this topic, entitled *Scipio Britannicus*.⁵⁴ When the campaign of criticism got under way, the ungratefulness of the Romans became a more important theme. Captain Parker tells of a poem by Joseph Addison, which compared Marlborough to Scipio in this regard.⁵⁵ The Whiggish *Observer* made a similar comparison to the Roman ingratitude, when the journal defended Marlborough against the attacks of the *Examiner*.⁵⁶

Another example of ingratitude compared to the one Marlborough met with was that of General Belisarius, a famous and successful commander under the

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 49-58.

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 70-73.

⁵¹ Burnet, *A Sermon*, p. 10.

⁵² H.H. Scullard, *Scipio Africanus. Soldier and Politician*, (London, 1970).

⁵³ For new interpretations, see A.E. Astin, *Cato the Censor* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 59-73 and E.S. Gruen, 'The 'Fall' of the Scipios,' in *Leaders and Masses in the Roman World. Studies in Honor of Zvi Yavetz*, ed. I. Malkin & Z.W. Rubensohn (Leiden / New York, 1995), pp. 59-90. For the contemporary perspective see John Smith, *The Life of Scipio Africanus The Elder* (London, 1738).

⁵⁴ Henry Denne, *Marlborough. An Heroic Poem* (London, 1704), p. 9; Thomas Gibson, *Scipio Britannicus. The Scourge of France, an Heroic Poem [...]* (London, 1709).

⁵⁵ Chandler, *Robert Parker*, p. 115; the poem seems to have disappeared as it is not mentioned in Robert D. Horn, *Marlborough. A Survey. Panegyrics, Satires, and Biographical Writings, 1688-1788* (Folkestone, 1975).

⁵⁶ *Observer* (1702) No. 92 (London, 29 November-2 December 1710).

Emperor Justinian. He fell out of favour with the Emperor from time to time and there was the dominant notion in the early historiography on Justinian of Belisarius being mistreated by malicious contemporaries in spite of his achievements.⁵⁷ A history of Belisarius written in 1713 could assume that people understood whom the author had in mind when stating ‘The Life of Belisarius is such a continued Series of Success and Glory, that every body will immediately perceive there is but one Man in the History of the World whose Story can match it.’ The author actually asserts that Marlborough did not only surpass Belisarius in his achievements, but also in how badly he was treated by the people who should have been grateful to him.⁵⁸ The surpassing of the heroes of antiquity is another central theme, when poets described Marlborough as greater than Caesar, Alexander, and even Scipio.⁵⁹

Yet, ancient figures could also be employed by Marlborough’s enemies to compare him with characters like the treacherous Catilina.⁶⁰ Swift had used the comparison with the greedy Marcus Crassus in attacking Marlborough’s avarice while seemingly acknowledging his merits as an orator and general.⁶¹ He even suggested that he was bribed by the Dutch and the Emperor.⁶² This also serves as a reminder of the problem that Marlborough might appear more as a European than a British general due to his title as a prince of the Empire given to him after Blenheim, his good relations with the Allied powers, and the notion that he was prolonging the war against British interests.⁶³ Opposed to that was his aforementioned fame as the one who revived British glory and he was accordingly compared to the great English warrior kings of the Hundred Years War.⁶⁴ Panegyrics called him ‘*England’s Heroe*’ or were entitled *The English Hero*.⁶⁵ The usage of ‘British’ instead of ‘English’ does not seem to have carried a specific message in itself. Harris, for instance, uses ‘*British*’ and ‘*English*’ intermittently in his poetry, even before the Union.⁶⁶ Still, there was at least one poem from 1708 that particularly links Marlborough’s victories to the Union, praising Queen Anne

⁵⁷ F. Tinnefeld, ‘Belisarios’, in *Der Neue Pauly*, ed. Hubert Cancik, Helmuth Schneider, and Manfred Landfester, 2013, URL: <http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/entries/der-neue-pauly/belisarios-e215020>, [31/05/2013].

⁵⁸ *Life and History of Belisarius, Who conquer’d Africa and Italy, With An Account of his Disgrace, The Ingratitude of the Romans, And a Parallel between Him and a Modern Heroe* (London, 1713), pp. I-II, 1.

⁵⁹ *The Battel of Audenard*, pp. 4-6; Jacob Giles, *Britain’s Hero. A Poem on the Death of His Grace John, Duke of Marlborough* (London, 1722), pp. 8-9.

⁶⁰ *Medley* 45 (London 30 July-6 August 1711); being a Whig creation, the *Medley* reported and rebutted such accusations.

⁶¹ *Examiner or Remarks upon Papers and Occurrences* 28 (London, 1-8 February 1711).

⁶² Swift, *The Conduct of the Allies*, p. 63.

⁶³ Tony Claydon, ‘A European General,’ pp. 308, 311-312.

⁶⁴ *Alcander. A Poem, Occasion’d by the Victories of His Grace the Duke of Marlborough* (London, 1709), pp. 3-4; *An Essay*, p. 16.

⁶⁵ Joseph Addison, *The Campaign, a Poem, to His Grace the Duke of Marlborough* (London, 1705), p. 6; R. Clare, *The English Hero, or, the Duke of Marlborough. A Poem, Upon the late Glorious Victory over the French and Bavarians, at Hochstetten [...]* (London, 1704).

⁶⁶ Joseph Harris, *Anglia Triumphans. A Pindarique Ode, on His Grace, the Duke of Marlborough, and his Glorious Campaign in the Spanish low-countries* (London, 1703), pp. 18-19.

for bringing it about and stating that with a unified Britain and a heroic general like Marlborough 'No more shall Subjects Tyrant's Power fear.' This constructs Britain as the liberator of Europe.⁶⁷ As a result, Marlborough is represented as carrying Britain's legacy of Protestantism and freedom to the continent.⁶⁸

Depicting the Hero – Art and merchandise

The Duke of Marlborough's image as a hero was not only created and developed in writing. He and his triumphs were immortalized by the great artists of Britain. For the soldier Marlborough, it is hardly surprising that a large number of his pictures show him in military apparel; many portraits depicted him in full plate armour. While the use of armour on European battlefields had declined since the middle of the seventeenth century, it was still highly popular in portraits of military leaders and was to remain so even into the 1760s. Michael Dahl shows him in 1702 newly-appointed as Captain-General of her Majesty's forces and Master-General of the Ordnance in full armour with the lace cravat extensively displayed and a red ermine cape wrapped around him, symbolizing his status as an English earl (before being elevated to the dukedom in 1703). His profession and position as a military commander is emphasized by the general's baton in his right hand and the fighting cavalry in the background. Together with the appointment to his military offices, the Queen had finally made Marlborough a Knight of the Garter in 1701. Therefore, his revealed right side is turned to the viewer and ostentatiously shows the insignia of the Order of the Garter, the blue riband and gold badge resting on his hip.⁶⁹ In portraits hereafter, Marlborough was always depicted with the insignia of this most prestigious order. It was even added to older pictures from the seventeenth century, as in the case of the painting by John Riley that provides the frontispiece of this Journal, which shows Marlborough in his late thirties.⁷⁰

The most important and successful portraitist of Marlborough's time was arguably Sir Godfrey Kneller. A German-born artist, he became a naturalized Englishman and had grown to be an 'arbiter of taste' at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Appreciated by English kings since Charles II, Kneller was not on good terms with Queen Anne at the beginning of her reign. Therefore, he was not shy to criticize Marlborough's dismissal in 1712 by painting a full-length portrait of the Duke with a weeping Britannia in the background, which also shows Kneller's appreciation for Marlborough.⁷¹

⁶⁷ J. Gaynam, *Marlborough Still Conquers. Or, Union hath got the Day. A Poem Upon the late Victory Obtained By The Prince and Duke of Marlborough; And Union of the Two Kingdoms* (London, 1708), pp. 10-12.

⁶⁸ Claydon, 'A European General,' pp. 313-314.

⁶⁹ John Churchill (1650-1722), 1st Duke of Marlborough, Captain-General of the English Forces and Master-General of the Ordnance, by Michael Dahl I, c. 1702, National Army Museum (NAM) 91996.

⁷⁰ John Duke of Marlborough, by John Riley, 1685-1690, Althorp House, Northhampton, UK.

⁷¹ John Douglas Stewart, *Sir Godfrey Kneller and the English Baroque Portrait* (Oxford, 1983), pp. 60-61.

Kneller also appreciated the opportunity to spread his artistic impact and enhance his income by working with printers who produced engravings of his works.⁷² One picture was a particular success in this respect. The head-and-shoulders portrait showed Marlborough in full armour with a big lace cravat, a long full-bottomed periwig and the Great George chain of the Garter. This combination of aristocratic dignity and military prowess was reproduced as an engraving by the printer John Smith just after Marlborough's victory at Blenheim. It was sold in such a large number that it became the default hero portrait of Marlborough. Demand was so high that the printing plates were quickly worn out and had to be redone. In addition smaller versions of the picture were produced and it became the best-known portrait of Marlborough.⁷³ It was, however, not the only widely distributed print image of him.⁷⁴

The glorification of Marlborough generated a wide range of merchandise, sold to the admirers of the victorious Duke. In the higher price range, one could acquire painted or ivory-relief medallions of Marlborough.⁷⁵ Handkerchiefs were manufactured to commemorate the Duke's victories.⁷⁶ Table-cloths and napkins with Marlborough's coat-of-arms or his image as a victorious general were imported from Flanders.⁷⁷ Marlborough's battle trophies were a colourful sign of his victories and a point of public interest. The colours and standards of the defeated French regiments were carried in processions through the streets of London. But they also provided the subject matter for commemorative prints; engravings were produced showing the captured trophies and they were advertised in different qualities.⁷⁸

Generally, most of the essays, poems, printed sermons and even pamphlets that have so far been discussed were commercially available. Many were advertised in newspapers and all show how Marlborough was part of popular culture. While it is not possible to measure the percentage of the British population that purchased these products, they were produced and sold in great number. Marlborough had become a figure of widespread public admiration and

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁷³ Richard Johns, 'The British Caesar,' in *Marlborough. Soldier and Diplomat*, p. 327; His Grace John, Duke of Marlborough, by John Smith, after Sir Godfrey Kneller, mezzotint, 1705, 347 x 245 mm, British Museum 1886,0609.21.

⁷⁴ The National Portrait Gallery (NPG) has a number of different print portraits of Marlborough, most of them after portraits by Kneller, but also after others like Michael Dahl. For examples, see John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough, after Sir Godfrey Kneller, line engraving, early to mid-18th century 149 x 86 mm paper size, NPG D31533, and John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough, by John Simon, after Michael Dahl, mezzotint, circa 1700-1725, 452 x 368 mm paper size, NPG D38232.

⁷⁵ Miniature, Victoria and Albert Museum (VAM) LOAN:GILBERT.288-2008; Miniature, VAM LOAN:GILBERT.302-2008; Medallion – John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough, by Christian Frederick Zincke, ca. 1710, VAM A.5-1950.

⁷⁶ Handkerchief, VAM T.47-1967.

⁷⁷ Table cloth, VAM T.2-1927; Napkin, VAM 1834-1888.

⁷⁸ Churchill, *Marlborough* 1, p. 914-915; Trophies from the Battle of Blenheim, 13 August 1704, by an unknown artist, coloured line engraving, published 1704, NAM 10268 ; *London Gazette* No. 4224 (London, 2-6 May 1706).

commercial consumption; even conspicuous consumption.

The Duke's name was also used to enhance the attractiveness of certain locations, like the 'Marlborough Coffee-house' on 'the Corner of Great Marlborough-street.'⁷⁹ Great Marlborough Street was named in 1704 shortly after the Battle of Blenheim.⁸⁰ There was also an idea to create a 'Marlborough Square' with a city house and statues of Marlborough and the Queen; but this seems to have been too much elevation of a subject in close proximity to the royal court.⁸¹

Blenheim Palace

The main reward for Marlborough's great victory at Blenheim was to be Blenheim Palace; but it was more than just an estate and a great house paid for by the English Parliament. From the outset this building was intended to eternalize the memory of Marlborough and the battle that had returned Britain to the European great powers. The project itself was very dear to Marlborough. For John Vanbrugh, whom the Duke chose as the architect of the building, creating a monument was clearly to have precedence over constructing a homely country seat. From the beginning of the construction work in 1705, there was notable public interest and people came to visit the building site. The construction, however, went slowly due to the sheer size of the building and various complications. Finally, when the government changed and Marlborough was dismissed, the whole project was stopped. The construction was recommenced only after Marlborough was restored, but he himself had to pay for the completion.⁸²

When the façade was completed, the display of martial prowess and national triumph was worthy of a military monument. Britannia, the personification of Great Britain, stands over the front portico sporting her trident and shield and a proud, martial bearing. The roof parapets were decorated with trophies, captives, war horses and British lions by master sculptor Grinling Gibbons. Marlborough's victory over France was further symbolized by the pinnacles of the four great corner towers of the main central building. Marlborough's ducal coronet sits atop the inverted French lilies, giving the impression that the French royal symbols had been overturned by the actions of the victorious English Duke.⁸³

Inside the palace the programme continued. The ceiling of the Great Hall was painted by Sir James Thornhill and delineates a metaphorical scene of a hero (Marlborough / allegory of military merit) dressed in a type of Greco-Roman body armour bowing before Britannia and presenting a map of the Battle of Blenheim.

⁷⁹ *Daily Courant* No. 3163 (London, 1 December 1711); *Post Boy* (1695) No. 2157 (London, 10-12 March 1709).

⁸⁰ F.H.W. Sheppard, 'Great Marlborough Street Area,' in *Survey of London 31/32, St James Westminster*, Part 2 (1963), 250-267, URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=41476> [21/04/2013].

⁸¹ L. Whistler, 'Blenheim. An English Palace with some Early Designs by Sir John Vanbrugh,' in *History Today* 2 no. 2 (February 1952), p. 113.

⁸² David Green, *Blenheim Palace, Oxfordshire* (Woodstock, 1950), pp. 12, 23, 73, 138.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 110; Marian Fowler, *Blenheim. Biography of a Palace* (London et al., 1989), pp. 24-25.

He is surrounded by an abundance of metaphorical figures in order to symbolize his virtues – Constancy and the four cardinal virtues: Prudence, Temperance, Fortitude, Justice – and his impact – Peace and Plenty. Clio tells of his historical importance, while Hercules and Mars look on with admiration. Britannia awards him laurels and the usual war trophies are present.⁸⁴ This painting captures the essence of how Marlborough liked to be seen: virtuous, valiant, and dutiful to Britain. That it is the Battle of Blenheim which is shown reiterates the importance of this particular battle, especially as a namesake to the building.

For the interior decoration of the state rooms, Marlborough followed in the footsteps of monarchs like Louis XIV and King Charles XI of Sweden as well as Charles II and James II in having tapestries of his own battles created. In 1708 or 1709, Marlborough ordered the first part of a set of tapestries that were to be called the *Victories* series.⁸⁵ As the name says, it depicted the Duke's battles and his most important sieges of the war. Most of the tapestries followed the style of battle paintings of the period that showed the commanding generals in the foreground, from which they seemingly directed the battle and pointed, addressing the viewer, to the action happening in the low-ground behind them. The Flemish artist Adam-Frans van der Meulen (1634-90) had created this style for the Sun King in the War of Devolution (1667-68). It underlines the control of the commander and legitimizes his authority by showing the battle as an artfully conducted manoeuvre. Louis XIV was usually depicted surrounded by his most important generals. In the *Victories* series Marlborough is accompanied by his staff and sometimes by Prince Eugene.⁸⁶ Other successful engagements of Marlborough's army woven into tapestries were the battles of Schellenberg, Ramillies (not extant, but proven by a delivery sheet), Lille, Oudenarde, Wynendael, Malplaquet, Bouchain, the Lines of Brabant, and the Lines of *Ne Plus Ultra*.⁸⁷ The *Victories* tapestries depict Marlborough's warfare as a series of successes and him as the strategic mastermind behind them.⁸⁸

Death of a retired hero

In 1716 Marlborough suffered two strokes which impeded his speech for the rest of his life. Newspapers reported frequently on the state of Marlborough's health in the years following his strokes.⁸⁹ As he did not want to appear weak in public,

⁸⁴ Johns, 'The British Caesar,' pp. 350-351.

⁸⁵ A. Wace, *The Marlborough Tapestries at Blenheim Palace and their Relation to other Military Tapestries of the War of the Spanish Succession* (London / New York, 1968), pp. 19-26, 29; Jeri Bapasola, *Threads of History. The Tapestries at Blenheim Palace* (Lydney, 2005), pp. 33-34, 40-41, 51-57.

⁸⁶ Wace, *The Marlborough Tapestries*, pp. 69-72; Battle of Blenheim, by Judocus de Vos, after Lambert and Philippe de Hondt, tapestry, early 18th century, Blenheim Palace; J.A. Plax, 'Seventeenth-Century French Images of Warfare,' in *Artful Armies, Beautiful Battles. Art and Warfare in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Pia F. Cuneo (Leiden, 2002), pp. 140-155.

⁸⁷ Bapasola, *Threads*, pp. 74-75.

⁸⁸ Johns, 'The British Caesar,' p. 339.

⁸⁹ E.g. *Daily Courant* 4604 (London, 23 July 1716); *Weekly Packet* No. 306 (London, 10-17 May 1718); *Original Weekly Journal* (London, 25 October 1718).

⁹⁰ Churchill, *Marlborough* 2, p. 1029.

he retreated more and more into privacy.⁹⁰ An account of the severity of his condition by Dudley Ryder, who later became Lord Chief Justice, shows how great his reputation was at this time and how shocking it seemed that he was now destroyed by illness:

*To see a man that was but just now the glory and pride of a nation, the hero of the world, of such vast abilities and knowledge and consequence sink almost below a rational creature, all his fine qualities disappear and fall away!*⁹¹

John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough and Prince of the Holy Roman Empire, died on 16 June 1722 in Windsor Lodge. His death was widely mourned and a large state funeral was held for him in London. The *London Journal* reported, 'We hear, that the Gentry in several Parts of England are putting themselves into Mourning, for the Death of the late Duke of Marlborough.'⁹² Several poems on his death appeared, like the one by Jacob Giles, who writes about his 'Immortal Fame' and the grief expressed all over the world.⁹³ Newspapers printed smaller obituary poems and retold the story of his life and his many military achievements.⁹⁴ They also reported on the preparations for his funeral, for example that 'there are thousand Yards of black Velvet bespoke' for this purpose.⁹⁵ There were even folk-songs sung in taverns telling of his martial successes and mourning his demise.⁹⁶ As the chapel at Blenheim Palace was not yet completed, Marlborough's body was interred in Henry VII's Chapel in Westminster Abbey. When Sarah died in 1744, he was moved and placed by her side in the chapel of Blenheim Palace. In 1722, however, the procession to Westminster Abbey must have been a great, solemn spectacle.⁹⁷

A small curiosity on this occasion is the poem by Leonard Welsted, *The Genius, an Ode*. In the preface he explains that 'Every one remembers the Alarm the Nation was in, on the first News of my Lord MARLBOROUGH'S being seiz'd with an Apoplexy, and the Fears that prevail'd of his not long surviving that Distemper.' Because of this Welsted had written the poem, but when the Duke recuperated, he thought it unfit to publish and had waited until his death to do so. It mentions Blenheim, general themes of battle scenes and martial glory. At the end Marlborough is called to Heaven by his old friend and companion: 'See! Thy Friend, Godolphin, stand! / See! He beckons Thee away!' This is followed by a semi-apotheosis: 'Yonder Seats, and Fields of Light / Let thy ravish'd Thought

⁹¹ *The Diary of Dudley Ryder 1715-1716*, ed. William Matthews (London, 1939), p. 363.

⁹² *London Journal* (1720) CLVIII (London, 4 August 1722).

⁹³ Giles, *Britain's Hero*, p. 5-6.

⁹⁴ *Daily Journal* CCCCL (London, 3 July 1722); *Freeholder's Journal* XXVI (London, 22 June 1722).

⁹⁵ *Daily Journal* CCCCLXI (London, 16 July 1722).

⁹⁶ Churchill, *Marlborough* 2, p. 1038.

⁹⁷ *Daily Journal* CCCCLXXXIII (London, 10 August 1722).

⁹⁸ Leonard Welsted, *The Genius, an Ode, Written on Occasion of the Duke of Marlborough's First Apoplexy, And Reserv'd not to be Publish'd till after his Death* (London, 1722).

explore, / Wishing, panting for thy Flight; / Half an Angel; Man no more.⁹⁸ One writer, however, was not satisfied with allowing the Duke to rest in peace. Jonathan Swift's *Satirical Elegy* tried to besmirch his name with irony as well as with pure insults.⁹⁹

Blenheim Palace was still not completely finished at the time of Marlborough's death. Sarah, out of love for her husband and concern for his memory, put all her efforts into completion of his monument, while she herself had originally been opposed to its grand scale and still did not favour it as a dwelling. She even made additions to the original plans. One was the Column of Victory, a Doric pillar of more than 30 metres in height crowned by the statue of the triumphant Marlborough, depicted in the armour of a Roman general. It was a very strident statement of commemoration at a time when there were virtually no lone-standing statues in Britain. The Column of Victory was placed at the beginning of a colonnade of elm trees on the other side of the river which divides the estate. The trees were planted so that they would appear as two opposing armies in battle formation. At the base of the pillar, there were inscriptions on all four sides. On the back, the left and the right, the Acts of Parliament granting Woodstock and the Palace to Marlborough as a reward for and in memory of his victory were inscribed.¹⁰⁰ It shows how the Duchess cultivated the institutional recognition of her husband's merits.

The story of the front inscription seems rather odd. It was supposed to present a summary account of the Duke's victories. The author of the inscription, whom the Duchess chose, was none other than Henry St John, Viscount Bolingbroke, one of the authors of the Treaty of Utrecht. After the accession of George I and Robert Walpole's design to bring charges against those involved in the perceived shameful treaty, he fled Britain in 1715. After having briefly worked for the Jacobite court, he had forsworn the Pretender's cause in 1716. Six years later, he was finally pardoned and allowed to return to Britain. His undisputed rhetorical and writing skills won him the commission to pen the story of Marlborough's victories. He composed an account that was praised for its simplicity and conciseness. In an attempt to redeem himself in public, he also printed the text in the *The Craftsman*, the Tory journal he published.¹⁰¹ This was rebuffed by the *Gentleman's Magazine* in 1731 saying that 'as no monumental Marble or Inscriptions could add to Marlborough's Glory; so no Recitals of those Inscriptions in *The Craftsman* could take away from B-l-ke's Ingratitude.'¹⁰² This episode shows the heroic reputation the Duke still enjoyed nearly ten years after his death, both through Bolingbroke's attempt to use it to redeem his own reputation and through the *Gentleman's Magazine's* rebuttal of someone who had betrayed him.

The last part of the palace to be completed was the chapel with the tomb and

⁹⁹ Horn, *Marlborough*, pp. 506-507.

¹⁰⁰ Harris, *A Passion for Government*, pp. 119-120; Green, *Blenheim Palace*, pp. 168, 173-174.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., 174; *Country Journal or The Craftsman* No. 252 (London, 1 May 1731).

¹⁰² *Gentleman's Magazine* 1, (London, May 1731), p. 194.

its monument. The marble sculpture by Michael Rysbrack shows the Duke once again as a triumphant Roman general or even emperor. All the other figures are similarly presented in antique costume. His wife sits by his side and gazes at her husband. Grouped with her is their youngest son Charles, who died when younger than two years old and is depicted accordingly. Their oldest son John is at his father's right and Marlborough rests his hand on his son's shoulder. Their daughters are not portrayed. Sarah's relationship with them was very cold in the end and when she had commissioned the sculpture in 1733, Henrietta, 2nd Duchess of Marlborough in her own right, had already died after her sons. The son of Anne and Charles Spencer 3rd Earl of Sunderland, succeeded as Charles Spencer, 3rd Duke of Marlborough. The family group shows the tragedy of the missing male heir, but could also serve as a reminder that Marlborough had fathered two sons.

As a whole, the monument documents the Duke's achievements. He is represented as a good father, husband of an adoring wife, a Prince of the Holy Roman Empire, and Knight of the Order of the Garter, the latter both shown in the coat of arms above the monument. The allegorical figures of History and Fame represent the Duke's immortality as his great deeds are remembered. Under a sarcophagus in the lower half of the sculpture lies a dragon which is crushed by the symbolic weight of the hero's impact and legacy, symbolizing the final victory of Marlborough over his enemies.¹⁰³ The whole sculpture combines family tragedy with heroic achievements.

Afterlife

Blenheim grew to become a site of interest to the British people.¹⁰⁴ While some thought its martial pomp too coarse and its dimensions too grandiose, Marlborough's supporters saw it as the best monument to the Duke's achievements.¹⁰⁵ Matthew Bishop tells us that the memory of these achievements:

*ever will endure so long as Blenheim House stands in Woodstock Park Oxfordshire. The last time I rode through it, it revived my Soul to see the Statue of that brave English Man, whom none can outdo, and I believe in Justice none will gainsay but corroborate my Opinion.*¹⁰⁶

Not only soldiers devoted to Marlborough (like Bishop) visited this monumental building but also academics like the antiquarian William Stukeley, who sketched

¹⁰³ Johns, 'The British Caesar,' pp. 353-355.

¹⁰⁴ While the term 'Palace' only came into use at the end of the century, it is still the only building in Britain with this denomination that is neither a royal nor an episcopal residence.

¹⁰⁵ Fowler, *Blenheim*, p. 74.

¹⁰⁶ Matthew Bishop, *The Life and Adventures of Matthew Bishop of Deddington in Oxfordshire [...]* (London, 1744), p. 218.

¹⁰⁷ *The Family Memoirs of the Rev. William Stukeley, M.D. and the Antiquarian and other Correspondence of William Stukeley, Roger & Samuel Gale, etc.*, Vol. 3, ed. W. C. Lukis (Durham, 1887), p. 499.

the palace in 1724.¹⁰⁷

Unceasing publications about the heroic Duke provide further evidence of the unrelenting interest in his person and his feats. Eleven years after his death, Francis Manning stated that it was necessary to write poetry about such a great *British Hero* as the great ancient poets had done for Alexander and Caesar. He first condemns the Harley-government and praises Blenheim Palace.¹⁰⁸ Then he goes on to retell and laud Marlborough's victories. The deployed motives encompass the comparison to the ancient heroes, especially Scipio and his fall, the late medieval kings, and William III. In addition to a similar apotheosis as that of Welsted, Manning even makes Marlborough a 'Protector-Saint' who watches over the Hanoverians and who should serve as a model for George II in times of crisis or war; quite extraordinary, especially in a Protestant context.¹⁰⁹

Marlborough's name also remained part of the drinking of loyal toasts, not only at the coronation anniversary celebrations in 1722 just after his death, when people drank to 'the immortal Memory of King William and Queen Mary, the immortal Memory of John Duke of Marlborough',¹¹⁰ but also when George II was proclaimed King in 1727. In Kent several notables:

*did in the most loyal Manner celebrate the same, by drinking to the Healths of their Majesties and the Royal Family; the glorious and immortal Memories of King William and King George; and to the Remembrance of the ever-conquering John Duke of Marlborough.*¹¹¹

The publication of the memoirs of his soldiers shows the prolonged public interest in the Duke well after his death. Sergeant John Millner's memoirs were printed in 1733 and the *Campaigns of King William and the Duke of Marlborough* by Richard Kane, who had become colonel of the Royal Regiment of Ireland and Governor of Gibraltar, was published in three editions in 1735, 1747, and 1757.¹¹² Bishop's *Life and Adventures* appeared in 1744. The accounts of Blackader and Parker were published posthumously in 1747, the latter one by Parker's son 'as a stimulus, according to the preface, for our [the British] army then fighting the French in the War of Austrian Succession.'¹¹³

This was not the only reference to Marlborough's victories during this war. John Wootton, who had painted *George II at the Battle of Dettingen* in 1743, had also produced that same year a painting showing the Battle of Blenheim with Marlborough on a prancing horse.¹¹⁴ This is hardly a coincidence. Marlborough's

¹⁰⁸ Francis Manning, *The British Hero, or the Vision. A Poem. Sacred to the Immortal Memory of John late Duke of Marlborough, Prince of the Roman Empire &c.* (London, 1733), pp. 1-4.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11, 24, 35, 43-44.

¹¹⁰ *British Journal* (1722) No. 6 (London, 27 October 1722).

¹¹¹ *London Journal* (1720) No. 412 (London, 24 June 1727).

¹¹² Horn, *Marlborough*, pp. 532-536.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 552-558; Churchill, *Marlborough* 1, p. 490

¹¹⁴ The Battle of Blenheim, 13 August 1704, by John Wootton, oil on canvas, 1743, NAM 33387.

triumphs were used as inspiration and example for British military prowess, still in close connection to the Hanoverian dynasty. Printed pictures of Marlborough continued to be sold throughout the eighteenth century, especially during times of war.¹¹⁵

Remarkable in terms of publication is the story of Swift's *History of the last Years of the Queen*, which he had originally written to defend the Queen, the ministry of 1710-1714, and the peace treaty. It includes accusations against Marlborough and slurs against Prince Eugene.¹¹⁶ When Swift was finally about to publish the text in 1738, many of his friends and patrons advised him not to, as it defamed Marlborough and questioned his personal courage.¹¹⁷

Meanwhile, Hare's *Conduct of the Duke of Marlborough* had become formative for nearly all later works concerning Marlborough in the eighteenth century because their authors adopted Hare's view. In 1737, Thomas Lediard even copied whole passages for his laudatory three-volume biography without acknowledging Hare's text.¹¹⁸ As the Whigs and their champion had won the political battle, they could, for a time, dictate their verdict on history, and in Marlborough's case this was the picture of a great British soldier hero fighting for the good of the Kingdom, its people, and Protestantism.¹¹⁹

Even former writers of anti-Marlborough propaganda, like Abel Boyer, sang his praises. While Boyer argues in *The History of Queen Anne*, that Marlborough 'was still but a SUBJECT, and as such, can make but a *Second Figure* in the History of that Reign',¹²⁰ he dedicated two pages to the description of his 'Pedigree, Rise and Character', where he completely exonerates him from the desertion of James II, when he had seen that the King was 'fully bent upon the Design of introducing *Popery*.' He concludes Marlborough's characterization with some familiar notions:

*To sum it up, King William said of this Great Man, that he had the COOLEST HEAD, and the WARMEST HEART he ever knew; which from so good a Judge, might seem the greatest Eulogy: Were it not, that, in another Respect, what was most true of the Earl of Marlborough, could not be said of any other General, either Ancient nor Modern, That he never sat before a Town, which he did not take; nor ever fought a Battel which he did not win.*¹²¹

¹¹⁵ See the collection of the NPG, e.g. John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough, by William Wynne Ryland, after Sir Godfrey Kneller, line engraving, published 1757, 119 x 95 mm plate size, 155 x 118 mm paper size, NPG D16635 and John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough, by Philipp Audinet, published by Harrison & Co, after Sir Godfrey Kneller, line engraving, published 1795, 73 x 61 mm plate size, 247 x 153 mm paper size, NPG D16639.

¹¹⁶ Jonathan Swift, *The History of the four last Years of the Queen*, ed. Herbert Davis, intr. by Harold Williams, (Oxford, 1964), pp. 65-67.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., pp. xiii-xv, 7 for the actual accusations of cowardice.

¹¹⁸ Thomas Lediard, *The Life of John, Duke of Marlborough, Prince of the Roman Empire*, 3 Vols. (London, 1736); Horn, 'Marlborough's First Biographer,' pp. 155-157.

¹¹⁹ Metzdorf, *Politik*, pp. 445-451.

¹²⁰ Abel Boyer, *The History of Queen Anne. Wherein All the Civil and Military Transactions of that Memorable Reign Are Faithfully Compiled from the Best Authorities and Impartially Related* (London, 1735), p. vij.

¹²¹ Ibid., pp. 15-17.

Conclusion

Marlborough first acquired his heroic fame through remarkable military prowess and an industrious coverage of his actions by the British press. The extensive market for publications and merchandise complemented the picture of the popular hero. But while Marlborough was successful in fashioning his own image as a faithful servant of crown and country, staunch Protestant, and genial commander, the British public could also be turned against him. The changing strategic situation and ongoing political conflicts enabled his opponents to criticize his failure to end the war and his well-known inclination for self-enrichment. Involved in these debates were the foremost writers of the day – some of them changing sides in the process. His most notable and longest-standing opponent was Jonathan Swift.¹²²

Others, like Joseph Addison and Richard Steele, were industrious promulgators of Marlborough's successes. These men were also to the forefront of the promotion of a new code of civility and politeness while at the same time condemning the false graces of courtiers, the rascals of Restoration society, and the foppiness of the period.¹²³ Yet, Marlborough, who had risen at the Restoration court, eventually became the hero of the Whigs and their promoters of moral reform.¹²⁴ His oft-lauded modesty and courage in the field supported this position, as did his stance as the leading figure of a war against an aggressively Catholic, French tyrant.¹²⁵

The other socio-cultural and socio-political philosophy promoted by Steele, Christian Heroism, was even more perfectly applicable to Marlborough as a convinced Protestant, a brave soldier, and the ideological successor of William III. While this idea actively distanced the modern Christian from classical heroic figures of antiquity, the latter were still employed by a great number of writers, both to style Marlborough as a great heroic leader like Scipio or Belisarius and to shun him by comparing him to greedy figures like Crassus or traitors like Catilina. This attack on his greed was combined with a notion that Marlborough served European powers and not England. Such arguments were, however, countered by praise for him as the restorer of England's military fame. Thanks to his successes, he was also largely immune to the English anti-army-ideology and his soldiers participated in an improvement of reputation, at least for the duration of the war. It is, therefore, hardly surprising that they showed wide-scale appreciation for their leader.

Marlborough then became an integrating figure for the accession of the Hanoverian monarchs, providing a link between them and the Protestant tradition of the Glorious Revolution. The lasting effect of Marlborough's positive image was part of the ideological and political supremacy of the Whigs throughout the period, whose military champion he had become and would long remain.

¹²² Mathew Prior and Daniel Defoe were those writing first in favour of Marlborough, but later worked for Harley; Abel Boyer's change of allegiance has been noted above.

¹²³ P. Carter, 'Polite 'Persons'. Character, Biography and the Gentleman,' *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society (Sixth Series)* Vol. 12 (December 2002), pp. 337-338.

¹²⁴ L.E. Klein, 'Coffeehouse Civility, 1660-1714. An Aspect of Post-Courtly Culture in England,' *Huntington Library Quarterly* 59, No. 4 (December 1996), pp. 45-47.

¹²⁵ Richard Steele, 'The Englishman's Thanks,' pp. 1-6.