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The Eastern Journey of William Feilding, earl of Denbigh (1631–33)

Jean MacIntyre
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UNLIKE OTHER ENGLISH COURTIERs whom Van Dyck painted—Lords John and Bernard Stuart in English court finery, James marquis of Hamilton in armor, Archbishop William Laud in clerical robes—his portrait of William Feilding, earl of Denbigh, depicts him in an exotic costume. The portrait, since 1938 in the National Gallery, commemorates Denbigh’s 1631–33 voyage to India and Persia in East India Company ships.¹ He may have commissioned it for his daughter, the marchioness of Hamilton, or for his son-in-law the marquess, who owned it in 1641 (two years before Denbigh’s death), and in whose heirs’ Scottish mansion it remained until 1919.² If Denbigh kept any written account of his travel to and in the East, it has disappeared, leaving only the portrait as his personal record; when, where, and how he went can, however, be discovered in occasional records of the East India Company and in a few of the *State Papers Domestic* for the reign of Charles I.

The East India Company minutes for 15 August 1630 give the gist of a letter from King Charles:

The Earl of Denbigh has requested permission to make a journey into Asia into the Great Mogul’s country and also into Persia. Knowing his journey would be too tedious and dangerous over-

¹The unmemorable William Feilding owed his title and other royal favors to having married Susan Villiers, sister of King James’s favorite Buckingham. When, early in the twentieth century, Cecelia countess of Denbigh searched Feilding records at Newnham Paddocks, Warwickshire, for her biography of Denbigh and his son Basil, she found nothing the earl had written about his voyage except a letter to Basil (then Charles I’s ambassador in Venice). Unlike Sir Thomas Roe, who knew he would have to justify his actions in India, Denbigh had no pressing reason to keep a journal; copies of letters addressed to him from his wife have survived, so it seems likely that either he did not write at all, or that any letter he did write miscarried.

²Oliver Millar, *Van Dyck in England* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 1982), 58. Denbigh’s “Roundhead son” and successor Basil Feilding and his heirs may have forgotten or even not known of the portrait. An eighteenth century guide at Hamilton called Denbigh “the governor of Jamaica” though the English only captured the island in 1655, twelve years after Denbigh’s death; Ann Rosalind Jones and Peter Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing and the Materials of Memory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 55. The error suggests that little or nothing about a distaff Hamilton ancestor was remembered.

land his Majesty requires the East India Company to give orders that he and his followers be received into such one of the Company's ships as he shall make choice of, and be allowed for himself and his train of six persons at most the great cabin. And because he does not intend to be anyways chargeable or troublesome to the Company, but rather to further their trade, his Majesty expects the Company shall advise him with respect to his diet, and assist him, when he desires to return, as a person whom his Majesty tenderly affects, and whose furtherance and safety he earnestly desires; and the Company wil find his Majesty mindful and himself [i.e. Denbigh] grateful.³

Denbigh was not quite the first Englishman to go to India for reasons other than trade. In 1615 the East India Company grudgingly allowed the Gentleman Pensioner Humphrey Boughton to sail with the fleet carrying Sir Thomas Roe as King James's (and the Company's) ambassador to the Great Mogul Jehangir; on 19 November, after only two months on the road in India, Boughton sickened at Burhanpur, where Roe buried him "by leaue" on 26 November.⁴ In 1611 the adventurous eccentric Thomas Coryate began a journey afoot through Turkey, Syria, Palestine, Armenia, and Persia to Jehangir's court at Ajmere, which he reached shortly before Roe did. As he had done in Istanbul, Coryate took up residence in the ambassador's household, causing Roe repeated embarrassment.⁵ He followed Jehangir's progress from Ajmere to Mandu in Roe's train, then, already ill, he left on foot for Surat, where he died in 1618. Letters sent home with a returning company chaplain show that Coryate's journey amounted even in his own mind to a heroic stunt that would top the European travels afoot published in his *Crudities*. The East India Company's view of its noble tourist Denbigh resembles Roe's irritated view of

³*Calendar of State Papers, Colonial Series, East Indies and Persia 1630–1634*, ed. Noel Sainsbury (1892; repr. Vaduz: Kraus, 1964), 37–38 (hereafter *CSP Colonial, 1630–34*).

⁴Like Denbigh, Boughton seems to have wanted only to see India, and had some idea of continuing to China. When the English Company denied him passage, he threatened to go with the rival Dutch Company; fearing he would appeal to the king, the Company then allowed him space on the smallest ship, the Peppercorn. Though he joined Roe's entourage in India, Boughton had no financial reason to do so, for as a Gentleman Pensioner (the elite royal guard) he had to have been of some means, and when he died was carrying £250. Roe held the money until he came home in 1619 and "paid [it] unto the Companies account"; Sir Thomas Roe, *The Embassy of Sir Thomas Roe to the Court of the Great Mogul, 1615–1619*, ed. William Foster (1899; repr. Nendeln, Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1967), 32, 529.

⁵When Roe reached Ajmer in December 1614, Coryate was already there and came with the East India Company factors to greet him. As an Englishman far from home, he became a not altogether welcome member of the ambassador's household. Roe disapproved of Coryate's familiarity toward Jehangir, who privileged him as a kind of court fool. Coryate had made himself fluent in Persian, the Mogul court language, yet Roe never employed him despite having trouble finding reliable interpreters; perhaps Coryate's London reputation as a fool made Roe think that to use him in a position of trust would lower his own court standing.

Coryate. From Roe's diplomatic expertise the Company expected and got help with trading concessions, limited though they were, in the Mogul empire, but its managers evidently believed that Denbigh or his servants might jeopardize these concessions.

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries foreign travel by aristocrats was undertaken "normally to study the cities and institutions of foreign States and to gain proficiency in their languages by converse with one's social equals."⁶ Sir Philip Sidney, Roger Ascham, James Cleland, Samuel Purchas, and James Howell all assumed that voluntary foreign travel was to educate youths in their teens and twenties. Some aristocrats' travel filled the years between early marriage and cohabitation; when Sir Henry Savile was arranging his daughter's marriage with Sir William Sedley's only son, they agreed "to send him over to travell...till some few yeares may make them both more ripe for marriage."⁷ Similarly, when "the Lord Fitzwater married Sir Michael Stanhops elder daughter...because they are both young (she not above 12 yeares old,) he goes shortly to travayle."⁸ George Villiers, later duke of Buckingham, for "giving ornament to his hopeful person... was by [his mother] sent into France, where he spent two or three years in attaining the language and in learning the exercises of riding and dancing."⁹ Though "not precisely confined to movements between court and court, [with] needless halts...seldom made except at provincial capitals," most such travel had "an urban character."¹⁰ James Cleland laid out a travel programme that took a long circuit from Paris to Orleans, Poitiers, Bordeaux, Nerac, Toulouse, Aix-en-Provence, Grenoble, and Lyon before crossing to Italy via Geneva. This routing enabled the traveler to see six "Courts of Parliament" instead of one "Court of Parliament at *Dijon*,"¹¹ and to touch at important Protestant centres in southern France.

Travel also prepared the sons of aristocrats for future careers. The eldest son of Sir John Holles spent a year "finishing" in Paris, exhorted by his father to serve God, acquire languages and the social skills of his class, and send court and diplomatic news to his father's political allies.¹² Fynes Moryson, third son of a Lincolnshire gentleman, took M.A.s in civil law from Cambridge and Oxford, and afterwards traveled to learn languages

⁶David Mathew, *Sir Tobie Mathew* (London: M. Parrish, 1950), 13–14.

⁷John Chamberlain, *Letters*, ed. Norman E. McClure, 2 vols. (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1939), 1:436. Both the third earl of Essex and Salisbury's son William traveled for two to three years after weddings in their mid-teens.

⁸*Ibid.*, 1:516.

⁹Edward Hyde, earl of Clarendon, *The Story of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England begun in the Year 1641*, ed. W. Dunn Macray, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1888), 1:11.

¹⁰Mathew, *Sir Tobie Mathew*, 10.

¹¹James Cleland, *The Institution of a Young Nobleman 1607*, ed. Max Molyneux (New York: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1948), 265.

¹²*Letters of John Holles 1587–1637*, ed. P. R. Seddon, 3 vols. (Nottingham: Thoroton Society Record Series, 1975), 1:51–56.

and observe political and economic conditions in places significant to England. He therefore went outside the aristocrats' usual circuit in France and Italy, visiting the Netherlands, north Germany, Poland, Bohemia, Austria (site of the Emperor's court), and Bavaria, before proceeding to Italy and coming home through France.

Mature noblemen could undertake private journeys only with difficulty, "for they were burdened by their own great households, their friends and their attendant gentlemen."¹³ In 1613, after accompanying Princess Elizabeth and her new husband the palgrave to Heidelberg, the earl and countess of Arundel went on to Italy with "a goodly number of gentlemen of their own choosing," and a "great train of servants."¹⁴ They entered Venice in state as official visitors, where they were escorted about the city by King James's ambassador Dudley Carleton and two Venetian noblemen, but after reaching Bologna the earl went on to Florence and Siena with few companions while his countess followed more slowly with the entourage. They left "the most part of theyre great family" in Lucca and Siena in 1614 while they made an unauthorized, "secret and unsettled" expedition to Rome and Naples, but when they turned for home they entered Turin "followed by some thirty horse," men of gentry rank, besides lesser servants.¹⁵ On a diplomatic mission to Spain in 1616, young Lord Roos was attended by "six footmen, eight pages ... twelve gentlemen ... [and] some twenty ordinary servants ... in costly liveries ... sumptuous beyond precedent."¹⁶ These numbers provide a scale by which to estimate the number of Arundel's attendants; besides the thirty documented horsemen, his train is likely to have included no fewer than twenty footmen, twenty-four pages, and sixty "ordinary servants."¹⁷ When Sir Thomas Roe sailed as King James's ambassador to the Mogul court, his entourage was limited to fifteen: a chaplain, a surgeon, a secretary, and twelve servants. But when he landed at Surat harbor the Company augmented Roe's train "for his Lordshipps better grace ... by the generall, captains, and merchants of the fleet (on shoare) ...; alsoe fower score menn in armes with shott and pyke redye ordred upon the sand in rancks against his landing for guard, and 48 peeces great ordnance discharged from our fleete; this daye our shipps were all hansomlye fitted with their waistclotes,

¹³Mathew, *Sir Tobie Mathew*, 14.

¹⁴Mary F. S. Hervey, *The Life, Correspondence, and Collections of Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel* (1920; repr. New York: Kraus Reprint, 1969), 74–75; David Howarth, *Lord Arundel and His Circle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 43.

¹⁵Hervey, *Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel*, 89.

¹⁶Howarth, *Lord Arundel and His Circle*, 62.

¹⁷Arundel did not take anything like this train in 1612, when he went privately to consult the University of Padua's medical faculty and use the neighboring baths. Similarly, when Dudley Carleton, King James's ambassador to The Hague, went to Spa for his health, he and his wife took only a few servants.

ensignes, flagges, pendants, and streamers.”¹⁸ To the city of Surat proper, however, he was followed by only twenty-three men, who were greatly outnumbered and indeed felt threatened by a native escort of “about 50 horse and 200 foote.”¹⁹

In contrast to the numbers who attended a nobleman traveling in Europe and even the smaller number who accompanied an ambassador to distant India, King Charles promised that Denbigh would travel with at most six retainers, though this may have been Denbigh’s idea, not the king’s. The Company showed itself skeptical that so modest an entourage would follow a traveling aristocrat, for it demanded a promise from the earl that his train would not exceed six and, for further assurance, asked him to provide their names. This he appears not to have done, for the list of his servants was still to come by the time his goods were loaded. Only two names appear in the company records, Denbigh’s kinsman Captain Feilding and his secretary Robert Barlowe, perhaps a company appointee.²⁰ Nothing is said of a private chaplain, though one was *de rigueur* for any Christian envoy in unbelievers’ lands.²¹ James Cleland indeed thought a tutor, an elder manservant, and a boy enough English servants for a young noble on his educational tour of Europe,²² but for a courtier of Denbigh’s age and status his train of six was much too small to impress those abroad with his dignity and that of his king. Even though three merchant ships on a voyage lasting six months or more could not have accommodated the numbers that followed Roos to Spain, let alone the numbers that followed Arundel to Italy, they could have handled an entourage the size of Sir Thomas Roe’s. Denbigh’s minimal train probably explains “the base usage and disrespect of this Governor [when Denbigh debarked at Surat], who would not suffer him to have one horse to ride on, but enforced him and his followers to travel in coaches such as this country affords,”²³ presumably the bullock carts used by merchant caravans. The

¹⁸Roe, *Embassy*, 46.

¹⁹Roe, *Embassy*, 49.

²⁰Barlowe was the son of a former Company employee who had gone bankrupt in 1630; at the end of that year the Committees “(understanding he has a son trained up as a merchant) [resolved] to employ him into the Indies, either in this fleet or the next”; *CSP Colonial*, 1630–34, 101). “The next” fleet was the one with which Denbigh sailed.

²¹When Roe’s chaplain John Hall suddenly died on 19 August 1616, Roe at once asked for a replacement, for “Heere I cannot live the life of an Atheist. I will not abyde in this place destitute of the Comfort of Godes woord and heavenly Sacraments.” The Surat chaplain was unwilling to go to Ajmere, but when the fleet from England arrived in late September Edward Terry was quickly despatched (Roe, *Embassy*, 246).

²²If more attendants were thought necessary, Cleland advises engaging them in France, “where you shal have good store of faithful men and bois; who will serve you gladlie, & be profitable unto you, both in their natural languag, and in buying of sundrie necessary things, wherin your *Purse-bearer* maie be coosened, either for lacke of the *French* tongue, or because he is not so wel acquainted with their price and fashion of counting” (Cleland, *Institution*, 246).

²³*CSP Colonial*, 1630–34, 245.

Surat governor could hardly have thought a European so ill attended as Denbigh a person of importance, even if told that he was a “great Lord of the court,” any more than his predecessor had considered Roe (despite his sixteen followers) as one to whom he owed deference.²⁴ Like contemporary Europeans, the Moguls assessed a stranger’s status by the size of his entourage.

The reasons for his journey, which Denbigh gave to his son Basil and to the East India Company, were in every respect unconventional for a man of his rank and age. His desire “only to see those countries” would have appalled Sir Philip Sidney, who wrote to his younger brother Robert in 1578 or 1579 that travel was justifiable only to learn “such thinges, as maie be serviceable to your Countree, and fit for your calling.” The laws and customs of distant Turkey and China might have moral value, but “to knowe their riches, and power is of little purpose for us, since it cann neither advantage us, or hinder us.” As for sightseeing, “howses are howses in everie place, they doe but differ Secundum magus & minus.”²⁵

James Howell advises a young man who has left the university to spend “forty months” seeing Europe, then, having studied “awhile in one of the *Innes of Court*... to understand something of the *Common Lawes of England*,... make one flying journey over againe, and in one Summer review all those Countreys... but being returned the second time, let him thinke no more of Forrain Iourneys, unlesse it be by command, and upon publique service.”²⁶ Denbigh’s defensive letter to his son Basil, Charles I’s ambassador to Venice, shows that he understood how eccentric would seem voluntary travel to such distant places by a man over fifty years old:

I have obtained leave from the King to make a voyage in the East India ship (as a volunteer) to the King of Persia and the Great Mogul; in which voyage I hope to better my understanding and

²⁴Roe blamed the Mughal idea that an ambassador was a mere message-carrier on company representatives who usurped the title: “At this name of an Ambassador [men from Cambaya] laughed one upon another; it beeing become ridiculous, so many having assumed that title, and not performed the offices.... I mention these only to lett the Company understand how meanly an Embassador was esteemed at my landing; how [my predecessors] subjected themselves to all searches and barbarous Customes, and became sutors to the Governors and great men”; Roe, *Embassy*, 45–46.

²⁵Sir Philip Sidney, *The Prose Works*, 4 vols., ed. Albert Feuillerat (1912; repr. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), 3:124–26. Sidney’s attitude resembles Roger Ascham’s, who had been uneasy at “the fancy that many young gentlemen of England have to travel abroad,” especially to Italy. Ascham feared they would learn exotic continental sins that “the simple head of an Englishman is not able to invent”; Roger Ascham, *The Scholemaster*, ed. R. J. Schoeck (Don Mills, Ont.: Dent Canada, 1966), 59, 67. Sidney suggests that he and similar travelers learned nothing more sinister than “disguisements, not onlie of our apparrell, but of our countenaunces, as though the credit of a travyler stood all uppon his outside” (Sidney, *Prose*, 3:125).

²⁶James Howell, *Instructions for Forreine Travel 1642*, ed. Edward Arber (Westminster: Constable, 1903), 76–80.

not impeach my estate. These doings, I have thought better to undertake than to live at home, get nothing, and spend all.²⁷

The East India Company suspected that Denbigh was really going in a secret official capacity, and at his first meeting with its Committees (directors) asked whether he was going “as Ambassador or as a private person.” Denbigh replied that he would “carry letters of recommendation from his Majesty to the Great Mogul and to the King of Persia, whose Courts he intends to visit, but not to go as an Ambassador.”²⁸ A Dutchman in Surat could not imagine a mature nobleman taking such a journey for any other purpose: he wrote to the Dutch East India Company that “on the English Admiral came a great Lord, the brother-in-law of Buckingham, called the Earl of Denbigh, ... it is conceived that he comes Ambassador to the Mogul.”²⁹ Like the London directors of the English East India Company, Europeans in India thought that a man of Denbigh’s rank and age would undertake such a journey only as a legate from his prince.

Charles provided Denbigh with letters splendidly inscribed and decorated, addressed “to the several Eastern potentates whom the King commanded him to visit. These five [undelivered] skins of parchment are well written, and illuminated; much gilt, painted with the arms of England, and bear the King’s signature. They are all dated 1630.” Three are addressed: to “Shah Suffie Emperor of Persia,” to “the Nabob Aseph Khan favoured of the Mighty Emperor Shangh Jehan Great Mogul,” and to “the Nabob Khan Channa,” and two are blank, with space to add “the names of any other potentates the delegate might happen upon.”³⁰ All the letters use similar language:

we have thought fit by these our royal and friendly letters to recommend unto you our trusty and well beloved cousin, servant, and subject, William Earl of Denbigh, who, being a prince of our kingdom whom we have formerly employed as admiral of our victorious armadas at sea, being now transported with the fame and glory of your empire hath desired to see that Prince and Court so renowned in the remotest part of the world. We shall therefore desire you to receive and entertain him according to his quality and our friendship.³¹

²⁷Cecelia Feilding, Countess of Denbigh, *Royalist Father and Roundhead Son: Being the Memoirs of the First and Second Earls of Denbigh 1600–1675* (London: Methuen, 1915), 76.

²⁸*CSP Colonial, 1630–34*, 66.

²⁹*CSP Colonial, 1630–34*, 229.

³⁰Feilding, *Royalist Father*, 74–75.

³¹Feilding, *Royalist Father*, 75–76. Charles’s grandiose “Victorious armadas at sea” whitewashes Buckingham’s failed expeditions to Cadiz and La Rochelle and Denbigh’s role in them. He must have thought it unlikely that the eastern potentates he was addressing would know what really happened.

Denbigh would have presented such a letter to Shah Jahan in 1632, when he reached the Mughal court at Burhanpur.

The East India Company was hardly in a position to refuse what the king wanted. After its immense early success, by the later 1620s its profits were dropping thanks to a Europe-wide glut of pepper. In 1628 the President and Committees turned down a dissident faction's proposal to make King Charles a Company member and give him a one-fifth share, even though the king supported the faction.³² Yet despite the risk of further offending Charles, the Committees delayed their reply to his 15 August letter. On 17 September they decided that "before giving an absolute answer to his Majesty's letter on behalf of the Earl of Denbigh, ... Committees [should] attend the Lord Treasurer and confer how the Company may receive satisfaction and assurance that his going shall not be prejudicial or chargeable to them, both by the way and in the Indies."³³

There were more points of disagreement. Denbigh wanted the great cabin of the Admiral (the principal ship), on this voyage the 800-ton *Mary*;³⁴ the Company offered the great cabin on "the second ship," the older 800-ton *Royal Exchange*. On 24 September the Committees kept Denbigh's emissary Sir John Watts waiting all morning "for answer to his Majesty's letter concerning the passage of the Earl of Denbigh in the Company's ships to Surat and Persia which has been long expected," before promising that a delegation would visit Denbigh that afternoon. They then "resolved to propound to the Earl ... (1) That a list of the names of his servants be given to the Company, and that he lessen the number as much as with conveniency he may; (2) ... that his Lordship would accept of the second ship, where he shall be every way as well accommodated; (3) that according to his Majesty's letter he will give good caution not to prejudice or be chargeable to the Company."³⁵ The conditions suggest the Committees' hope that the earl would give up the voyage if denied precedence and made to bring an even smaller train than the six he proposed. But Denbigh accepted most of their conditions; he "promised to give a list of his servants, and also on his honour to be careful that nothing be done to put the Company to charge or to prejudice their trade in the least kind, assuring them that none of those he intends to carry with him had ever been so far at sea as the Cape; but his Lordship seemed much to distaste their request that he would accept the second ship, in regard he hath formerly been Admiral, Vice-Admiral, and Rear Admiral of his Majesty's

³²K. N. Chaudhuri, *The English East India Company* (London: F. Cass, 1965), 31; Kenneth R. Andrews, *Trade, Plunder, and Settlement: Maritime Enterprise and the Genesis of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 279.

³³*CSP Colonial, 1630–34*, 45.

³⁴Chaudhuri, *English East India Company*, 229–33.

³⁵*CSP Colonial, 1630–34*, 47.

fleet, and is resolved in what ship soever he goes to bear the flag in the maintop.”³⁶

On 15 October, accompanied by Sir Thomas Roe (an honorary Committee since his return from India in 1619), Denbigh attended a Company meeting and “declared that he had nothing more to propound.” He reiterated that he would bring no more than six yet to be named persons, and assured the Company that none of his train had ever been in the East or engaged in “private trade,” a problem the Company had with its own servants, even with some of its chaplains. Denbigh, however, still insisted that “he could not with his honour give way to going in the second ship but did and doth expect that in what ship soever he goes she shall carry the flag in the maintop.” As a concession to business needs, however, he offered to “leave... the great cabin and dispose himself elsewhere” whenever Company people needed the space for private meetings. The Committees “thought fit to give way to this particular and let him know how ready they were to accommodate him.”³⁷ Denbigh thus gained the premier accommodation he thought befitted his dignity. The Committees warned him that the Company meant to “dispeed the ships about the last of December and therefore desired that his provisions be timely put aboard so the ships be not forced to stay for them.”³⁸ One motive for the Company to concede the Mary’s cabin may have been the next item on its agenda, an upcoming meeting with Secretary of State Dorchester about the still-unpaid compensation for the Dutch massacre of Company factors at Amboina in 1623.

On 17 December Denbigh and Sir John Watts again met with the Company Governor and Committees. Thanking them for willingness to further “his passage for Persia and the Indies, Denbigh assured them he would be ever ready to do them all friendly offices in his power,” and he and three Committees signed their agreement:

That said Earl with his kinsman Capt Fielding and five attendants shall take passage upon the Mary for Persia, paying for the ships’ allowance the sum of 70£ for six months, and if his Lordship take passage for Surat, he shall allow for himself and his followers per month of 30 days according to the rate of 1£ 13s. 4d; and whereas his Lordship has paid 70£. to the Treasurer, he shall pay to the Captain or Purser of the ship where he lands, according to said rate, and his Lordship undertakes to provide for himself such extraordinary provisions as he shall conceive needful.³⁹

³⁶*CSP Colonial, 1630–34*, 55.

³⁷*CSP Colonial, 1630–34*, 66.

³⁸*Ibid.*

³⁹*CSP Colonial, 1630–34*, 96.

On 3 January 1631, “Committees [were named] ... to go down to dispeed away the ships [the Mary, the Exchange, and the Speedwell] from Gravesend to the Downs,” and others “to give notice thereof to Lord Denbigh, and desire a list of his retainers that are to wait on him in this voyage,”⁴⁰ still unsupplied despite his promise. The ships left the Thames before January ended, but in February the Mary was still caught in the Channel. In September a ship homebound from Persia was ordered to wait for the outbound fleet at the Comoro Islands and warn it not to call in the Persian Gulf, as there was plague at Gombroon.⁴¹ After an unusually long passage, whether owing to contrary winds or to lengthy halts at such usual stopping places as the Cape, the Comoros, and perhaps Socotra, the three ships reached Surat in late December. They found Surat flooded and suffering from a famine that had already lasted over a year, and the chief factor, William Rastell, lately dead.⁴²

The Company men in Surat show little sign of thinking Denbigh’s reception by Shah Jahan important. A postscript to their January 1632 letter says that “Lord Denbigh took his journey towards the Mogul’s Court 23rd Dec. last, being ill accommodated for such a journey, and the worse by the base usage and disrespect of this Governor, who would not suffer him to have one horse to ride on, but enforced him and his followers to travel in coaches such as this country affords.”⁴³ A brief note the next April mentions “The Earl of Denbigh’s entertainment with the Mogul,” with no further details.⁴⁴ This is the only evidence that Denbigh reached the court at Burhanpur, for two years Shah Jahan’s Deccan War headquarters.⁴⁵ Sir Thomas Roe with a train of carts took a fortnight to get to Burhanpur from Surat, a distance he estimated at 223 English miles, so Denbigh most likely reached the Mogul court in mid to late January.⁴⁶

In December 1631 the funeral cortege of Queen Mumtaz Mahal, who had died in June, had left Burhanpur for Agra. Shah Jahan followed early in April 1632.⁴⁷ Denbigh probably began his return journey to Surat

⁴⁰*CSP Colonial, 1630–34*, 111.

⁴¹*CSP Colonial, 1630–34*, 196.

⁴²At this time a Dutch East India Company man wrote that “no trade may be expected in these parts these three years; no man can go in the street without giving great alms or being in danger of being murdered” (*CSP Colonial, 1630–34*, 229).

⁴³*CSP Colonial, 1630–34*, 245.

⁴⁴*CSP Colonial, 1630–34*, 261.

⁴⁵*CSP Colonial, 1630–34*, 243. The Surat factors minced no words about Shah Jahan’s war: “This base King continues his wars on Deccan, though the famine and their success has made him much the loser; and lately he has sent Aseph Khan upon them, against his will, ... which will be to little purpose” (*CSP Colonial, 1630–34*, 243).

⁴⁶Roe, *Embassy*, 89–95. Late in 1631, when the famine had only recently begun, the Company clerk Peter Mundy took three weeks to reach Burhanpore, but he was attached to a native merchant’s caravan that made several halts on the way.

⁴⁷Waldemar Hansen, *The Peacock Throne: The Drama of Mogul India* (New York: Holt, 1972), 106, 113–14.

about the same time, for on 24 April he was there and ready “to go in the Mary whither she goes.”⁴⁸ On 28 April the Mary and the Exchange left Surat for the Coromandel Coast, reaching Amargon on 24 May and Masulipatam on 30 May. They meant “to stay but 15 days for receipt of goods for Persia, but were obliged to stay till the last of June,” when the ships had loaded “400 to 500 parcels of goods and about 130 passengers, which at 16 per cent freight and 20 Ryals for each passenger amounted to 8,000 Ryals of 8 paid there.” The ships left Masulipatam on 29 June; after a long transit hindered by contrary winds they reached Jask at the mouth of the Persian Gulf on 15 September, and on 3 October had been joined at Gombroon (Bandar Abbas) in the Gulf both by ships from London and by the Great or Royal James “from Bantam.”⁴⁹ On 27 November all these ships were anchored “between the Surat Bar and the outward road of Swally” after a thirty-five-day voyage “much hindered by calms and cross winds.”⁵⁰ Between the Mary’s arrival at Jask and the fleet’s departure from Gombroon on 24 October, Denbigh could hardly have traveled to and from the Persian court at Ispahan; King Charles’s letter to “Shah Suffie” remained undelivered. The Shah was in any case absent on campaign against the Turks, far to the northwest of his capital. On 4 January 1633 Surat wrote to London that “The Earl of Denbigh has been at Masulipatam and Persia in the Mary, and intends to return in the James” which had already sailed on 20 January.⁵¹ Despite his expressed wish “to see those countries,” Denbigh spent little over six months ashore in widely separated parts of India, and no more than five weeks on or near the southernmost coast of Persia.

The James made good time to Mauritius, where she “arrived safely... 4th Feb, since when have carreened the ship, and found good store of fish and goats and some beeves, their sick being well recovered.” On 8 May

⁴⁸*CSP Colonial, 1630–34*, 261. A long letter from four Company men at Gombroon in the Persian Gulf, dated 22 March 1632, shows that they were “not yet troubled with Lord Denbigh and his company, but if he arrive in these parts [they] will, by the Company’s order, afford him their best entertainment; but how to assist him and yet not engage the Company’s means” they do not know. They also expect he will want money from them (*CSP Colonial, 1630–34*, 259). This and other letters from Company agents in India and Persia show that a noble tourist did not count for much in the context of trade difficulties caused by the deaths of princes, famine, and war. Denbigh’s behavior once he reached India shows that he understood their position, for he no longer insisted on his own wishes, as he had in London in 1630, but accommodated himself to Company needs.

⁴⁹*CSP Colonial, 1630–34*, 295–96, 301.

⁵⁰*CSP Colonial, 1630–34*, 315.

⁵¹*CSP Colonial, 1630–34*, 341. Company captains still at Surat reported with concern that the James had sailed with “great want of bread, sail cloth, flesh, wine, cordage, and stuff by reason of many disbursements to other ships, and the number of men they have taken, having hardly provisions for those they had” because of the famine. The captains had supplied Denbigh with “two butts of sack, for which he will make double satisfaction in England” (*Ibid.*).

the Mauritius agents wrote that the James would wait until 10 June “if meantime the Company’s ships arrive not from Persia nor they receive further advice from Surat.”⁵² Probably the provisions needed for the extra men, including Denbigh and those of his suite still with him, replaced much of the James’s cargo of spices. On 13 July 1633, Captain John Pennington met “the Jewel of London, one of our East India ships, much distressed for want of both men and victual” from which he heard “the Earl of Denbigh to be in good health and of purpose shortly to return home.” The interloper Captain Quaile’s crew carried the same message.⁵³ Even if the James left Mauritius well before 10 June, she made a remarkably swift return, for on 28 August James Howell wrote to Secretary Windebank that “The Lo; Denbigh is returned from ye great Mogor full of jewells.”⁵⁴ Denbigh’s view of his experience lives only in the portrait he commissioned from Van Dyck.

Oliver Millar describes this portrait as a “successful...[attempt] to plant a full length figure in a landscape...; the sitter strides—or lurches—forward towards the spectator and through the landscape which is no longer [a] decorative backcloth...[and] carries a flint-lock fowling piece, probably of French or Flemish origin.”⁵⁵ This fowling piece would have been Denbigh’s own, perhaps even the one he took to India. Such guns were in request by Mughal rulers; a last-minute company memo (3 January 1631) directs Mr Colthurst “to look out...Some fowling pieces...to be bought for presents, and dogs.”⁵⁶ His costume is partly Indian and partly European, a silk and gold kurta-pajama worn with English shoes and shirt. The assumption that “the costume [Denbigh] wears is of a type worn at that date by Europeans in India” is, however, questionable.⁵⁷ Edward Terry, Sir Thomas Roe’s chaplain, recorded that in India, “We all kept to our English habits, made as light and coole as possibly we could have them.” For display as King James’s ambassador, “At Surat [Roe] pro-

⁵²*CSP Colonial, 1630–34, 262–63.*

⁵³*Calendar of State Papers Domestic Series of the Reign of Charles I 1633–34*, ed. John Bruce (1863; repr. Nendeln: Kraus, 1967), 141; *CSP Colonial, 1630–34, 430.*

⁵⁴*CSP Colonial, 1630–34, 452.* The company may have suspected Denbigh’s involvement in private trade, for on 20 September it recorded delivery to a “Mr Oxwick, the Spanish merchant” of “60 bales of indigo and other goods secretly conveyed out of the ship... reported to belong to the Earl of Denbigh” (*Ibid.*, 459). Some “interloping” in the East India Company’s territory was suspected, for on 5 October Pennington had heard a rumor that “Captain Mince [Mennes] is going a voyage to the East Indies with a ship of 500 tons and a pinnacle of 200 tons, and that Lord Denbigh has a hand in it” (*Ibid.*, 472). By 10 October, however, there was “not a word of Capt. Mennes’ going any where” (*Ibid.*, 242) whether financed by Denbigh or on his own, and that is the last heard of it.

⁵⁵Millar, *Van Dyck in England*, 56.

⁵⁶*CSP Colonial, 1630–34, 111.* Sir Thomas Roe despised Mughal greed for “presents” of guns, European pictures and jewelry, hunting dogs, and even an English horse demanded by Jehangir himself.

⁵⁷Millar, *Van Dyck in England*, 58; Jones and Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing*, 53.

vided himself with twelve suits at a cost of from £3 to £42 each, and subsequent entries [in an account kept in Roe's journal] show that he spared no expense to maintain the dignity of his post."⁵⁸

Roe mentions wearing an item of native dress only once, in a journal entry made during Jehangir's 1616 progress from Agra to Mandu. Prince Khurram (the future Shah Jahan) sent an eunuch to Roe with a message:

[T]he Prince would giue me a great Present...[making] such a busines as if I should haue receiued his best Chayne of Pearle. By and by came out a Cloth of gould Cloake of his owne, once or twice worne, which he caused to be put on my back, and I made reuerence, very vnwillingly. When his Ancestor Tamerlane was represented at the Theatre the Garment would haue well become the Actor; but it is here reputed the highest of fauour to giue a garment warne [*sic*] by the Prince, or, beeing New, once layd on his shoulder.⁵⁹

Denbigh, of much higher rank than Roe, is likely to have felt a similar constraint about an Englishman's dignity, even if forced to travel to the Mughal court in a merchant's cart without a train great enough to assert his nobility. Almost the only word Denbigh wrote about his travels mentions that he had brought back little but "pieces of Mesopotamia cloth," perhaps acquired at Gombroon, and a garment he calls "an old pagan coat," conceivably a gift like the one Roe got from Prince Khurram.⁶⁰ But the costume in the portrait is not Mughal but Hindu, and would no more have been worn for hunting in India than in England; the strain-folds across the chest and the too-short sleeves also suggest that it had been made for a somewhat smaller man.

In Europe Sir Robert Sherley did indeed wear the dress of Persia, but this was not a souvenir of his years in Asia but a livery to assert his status as the Shah's ambassador.⁶¹ However he acquired it, Denbigh's kurta-pajama outfit, like Sherley's Persian dress, is for European, not Eastern eyes, but his European shoes, shirt, and gun with its accessories assert that though Denbigh wears native garb, he has not "gone native" as did Coryate on his epic walk from Aleppo to Ajmere.⁶² Furthermore, unlike Sir Robert Sherley and unlike the boy beside him, Denbigh does not wear the

⁵⁸Roe, *Embassy*, 106.

⁵⁹Roe, *Embassy*, 334.

⁶⁰Millar, *Van Dyck in England*, 56.

⁶¹Jones and Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing*, 57.

⁶²Merchants working in places of different culture "had to conduct themselves in a manner acceptable to their hosts.... [I]n the Ottoman empire...the English adopted Turkish dress, but only to avoid insult and injury"; this was why William Harborne, his guide Joseph Clements, and his servant changed from European into Turkish dress in Poland before crossing into Turkish territory (Andrews, *Trade, Plunder, and Settlement*, 37, 89). The inventory of one dead East India Company factor's possessions suggests that his owning native as well

turban (“to the average Englishman... a sign of Islam”⁶³), but, like most of Van Dyck’s other English noblemen, he is bareheaded. “In Van Dyck’s underpainting the earl was holding in his left hand a wide-brimmed black hat, the ‘castor’ made of beaver fur.... The elimination of the hat from Van Dyck’s painting emphasizes its allusions to Indian and Persian realms instead.”⁶⁴ Perhaps, but the hat’s deletion would not have been at Van Dyck’s discretion but by Denbigh’s choice.

One early inventory of the Hamilton pictures describes the portrait as “my lords denbighs at length, with a fowlinge peece in his hand, and a Blackamore by him,” and another as “My Lorde Denbeigh & Jacke.”⁶⁵ “Jacke,” his coloring and features clearly Indian, wears a long tunic girded with a wide sash and a turban bound with a scarf, dress authentic for servants in Mughal India;⁶⁶ his gesture points not only toward the South American parrot above his head but toward his own face. He stands to the earl’s left, a step deeper in the picture plane but in the same full lighting. Van Dyck painted one portrait of Charles I attended by his riding master, Antoine, and another of Charles in hunting dress attended by a groom, but unlike “Jacke” these attendants are in shadow, well behind the brightly lit king. In 1776 Benjamin West painted Colonel Guy Johnson wearing a Mohawk robe and moccasins with a British army scarlet coat; a Mohawk chief stands in the shadows to his left and behind him. The Mohawk “remains anonymous as a type, an *ancilla* to Johnson’s persona.... He exemplifies ethnographic stereotyping,... [which depends] on the externals of appearance, especially costume.... [E]xoticism is manifested through careful attention to details of costume, personal appearance, and ‘race.’”⁶⁷ Given the authenticity of “Jacke’s” appearance, he must have been available to sit for Van Dyck, and Denbigh must have wanted “Jacke” emphatically placed in his portrait, but where might “Jacke,” clearly a servant important to his master, have come from?

The name of only one of Denbigh’s servants during his voyage is recorded. In January 1633, Surat wrote that “Mr [Robert] Barlowe, a Gentleman attendant on the Earl of Denbigh [was] left at Gombroon,” but he was back in England by September 1634, when the Company, noting that he had been “Secretary to the Earl of Denbigh... left behind

as English dress was thought unusual, though Peter Mundy, a young man very open to new experience, adopted native dress when returning from Agra to Surat by an uncharted route.

⁶³Nabil Matar, *Islam in Britain 1558–1685* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 116.

⁶⁴Jones and Stallybrass, *Renaissance Clothing*, 53. In scenes of outdoor activity King Charles wears a hat, but male companions of all ranks and ages are bareheaded and seldom even carry hats. Archbishop Laud’s square clerical cap is a professional icon.

⁶⁵Millar, *Van Dyck in England*, 56–58.

⁶⁶Roe, *Embassy*, 114.

⁶⁷Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture* (London: Reaktion Books, 1991), 106–7.

upon some difference between them,” granted “his passage and diet given him freely” because he had “not used private trade.”⁶⁸ There is no record that any of Denbigh’s party died, or that he hired any new servant. Peter Mundy’s diary for 1630–31, however, does suggest one way that “Jacke” might have come into the picture.

Mundy left Surat for Agra on 11 November 1630, at “The begininge of the greate Famine” caused by “the want of rayne this last Season,” when “poore people [were] begininge to die for want of Sustenance.” On 16 November he reached a town where “the men and weomen were driven to that extremitie for want of food that they sold their Children for 12*d.*, 6*d.*, and [blank] pence a peece; yea, and to give them away to any that would take them, with manye thancks, that soe they might preserve them alive, although they were sure never to see them againe.”⁶⁹ Mundy does not say that he or his fellow merchants bought children, but a nobleman like Denbigh would have thought that taking such a child was a gesture of aristocratic liberality, like taking the son of an unfortunate English dependant into his service. “Jacke” might also have been a gift from Shah Jahan or one of his nobles. However Denbigh acquired him, he would have had the boy christened, possibly acting as godfather; the quasi-kinship thus created would help explain the boy’s prominence in the portrait, even as his color and exotic clothing emphasize his alien difference.

Though Denbigh must have chosen the Indian suit and boy, the fowling piece, sword, and shot-bag (not purse) for his sitting to Van Dyck, the only likely target for his gun is the parrot toward which the boy gestures. As Richard Wendorf reads the scene, “Denbigh has stopped dead in his tracks, with his gun lowered, and with his left hand suggestively opening up to the scene that lies before him..., in spatial terms, [placed] between the English trees on the left... and the native Indian tree and mountain scene on the right,” but his gaze is directed outside the picture, not toward the viewer as in other Van Dyck portraits but toward a mysterious something which the viewer cannot see.⁷⁰

Unlike Denbigh’s suit, accessories, and boy, this landscape setting came from Van Dyck’s imagination. The species of the tree on the left of the picture is indeterminate, unlike easily recognizable trees in the background of other Van Dyck paintings, so can hardly be claimed as “English” except as it resembles the generic trees that shade Charles I in some portraits located outdoors. The palm on the right side of the picture

⁶⁸*CSP Colonial, 1630–34*, 360, 570.

⁶⁹*The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia, 1608–1667*, 5 vols., ed. Richard Carmac Temple and Lavinia Mary Anstey (Cambridge: The Hakluyt Society, 1907–36), 2:38, 42.

⁷⁰Richard Wendorf, *The Elements of Life: Biography and Portrait Painting in Stuart and Georgian England* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1990), 102.

could have been taken from an illustrated herbal, from a book of designs like those Inigo Jones used for masque scenery, or from Van Dyck's observations in Italy some fifteen years before.⁷¹ The distant snowcapped mountain looks like a volcano. While in India Denbigh could hardly have seen a snow-capped mountain, volcanic or otherwise, but Van Dyck would have seen snow peaks en route to Italy, and in Sicily could also have viewed Mount Etna.⁷² The painting thus blends the authentic (the human subjects, clothes, and equipment) with the imaginary (the landscape background). In these respects the painting resembles Caroline masques, in which persons well known at court (including the king and queen) appeared in fanciful array before exotic settings.

Denbigh's voyage and perhaps Van Dyck's record of it, may even have contributed to the choice of subject for such a masque. Susan countess of Denbigh was Queen Henrietta Maria's "most important attendant,"⁷³ so her husband's voyage to India and Persia may have suggested the Indian setting for the queen's 1635 Shrove Tuesday masque, *The Temple of Love*. In this masque, noble Persian youths seek the Temple of Chaste Love, and in the Indian kingdom of Narsinga are resisted by "Brachmani" magicians whom they in turn resist. As the masque's climax, Queen Henrietta Maria as Queen Indamora of Narsinga and ladies (among them Denbigh's daughters the marchioness of Hamilton and Elizabeth Feilding) entered on a "maritime chariot... drawn by sea-monsters" from which they descended for their dances.⁷⁴ Jones may have incorporated a detail from

⁷¹The Catholic emblem book *Parthenia Sacra* places a palm and an olive inside the gate of the enclosed garden which traditionally symbolizes the Virgin Mary. "The Essay" on the palm declares it an emblem not only as "with Antiquitie... the Symbol of constancie and victorie" but also of married chastity, then adding that "The *Indians* haue need of manie things, and lo the *Palme* supplies the[m] al;... it affords them oyle, wine, and bread, as they ha[n]dle it; with the leaues they cover their houses, as we with tiles; they write thereon, instead of paper; if they put themselues to sea, the *Palmes* doe furnish them with al things necessarie thereto.... The trunck and branches yeald them masts and boards; the leaues being wouen, make vp their sayles; with the bark, they frame their tacklings and cordage. So as not without some miracle, as it were, may you say, when you see a Man-of-warre of theirs, or a marchant's ship, behold a *Palme*, how it rides vpon the seas." Henry Hawkins, *Parthenia Sacra* (1633; repr. Menston, England: Scolar Press, 1977), 154–55.

⁷²Millar, *Van Dyck in England*, 14.

⁷³"Susan Villiers, Countess of Denbigh, sister of the favorite [Buckingham,... continued to have access to both the king and the queen independently even after [his] assassination... in 1628.... [She] kept alive the Villiers patronage network in both Privy Council and Household. Her work was made easier by the marriage of her son, Basil, Lord Feilding, to Anne Weston, daughter of the Lord Treasurer, and by the marriage of James, marquis of Hamilton, to her daughter. Although her husband... was Master of the Wardrobe for the king, her preferred intermediary was her son-in-law Hamilton, who was closer to Charles." A patronage seeker "planned to approach 'the king by my Lord Marquess and the Countess of Denbigh and by them jointly. My lady has promised me her furtherance.'" She kept her word. Linda Levy Peck, *Court Patronage and Corruption in Early Stuart England* (London: Routledge, 1990), 73.

⁷⁴William Davenant, *The Temple of Love in Dramatic Works, 1872–1874*, 5 vols. (New York: Russell and Russell, 1964), 1:300.

Van Dyck's background to the earl's portrait in the "Indian Shore" set for this masque; though most of the design comes from an Italian stage image of South America, Jones added a tree like the one on Denbigh's right, which stands in the same relation (but in mirror image) to a palm as does the tree in the portrait. Except for the portrait and perhaps the masque, however, Denbigh's eastern tour had no discernible effect on Caroline culture or his own career, unless whatever glimpses he had of Mughal recklessness in war inspired his mortal bravado during Prince Rupert's 1643 assault on Birmingham. Nonetheless, he thought it important for Van Dyck to record not only his middle-aged appearance but, by costume, landscape, and servant, to document the truth of his eastern journey.

The parrot could have been drawn from either a living pet or a stuffed specimen, but that the boy points at the bird for Denbigh to shoot as game is unlikely. Parrots have long symbolized imitation; the boy's gesture, simultaneously toward the bird and toward himself, suggests that he wishes to imitate his master, to become, as much as a "native" can, like an Englishman. But Denbigh's Indian dress shows the imitation as reciprocal; just as the native imperfectly parrots him, so he, on a grander scale, imperfectly parrots the native. Denbigh's awkward pose, his exotic costume, and his puzzled gaze beneath the palm of victory and the mocking parrot create an ironic comment (presumably Van Dyck's own) on his voyage "to see those countries" in the East.