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TIM BLANNING

AUGUSTUS *the* STRONG

A STUDY *in* ARTISTIC GREATNESS *and* POLITICAL FIASCO

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Augustus the Strong

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Until age-dictated retirement in 2009, Tim Blanning was Professor of Modern History at the University of Cambridge. He remains a Fellow of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, and has been a Fellow of the British Academy since 1990. His major works include *The French Revolution in Germany*, *The French Revolutionary Wars*, *The Power of Culture and the Culture of Power*, *The Pursuit of Glory: Europe 1648–1815* and *The Triumph of Music*. He has written biographies of Joseph II, Frederick the Great and George I.

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Augustus the Strong

A Study in Artistic Greatness and Political Fiasco

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Dedicated to the memory of three of the best of historians and the best of friends: Derek Beales, Peter Dickson, Hamish Scott

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Introduction[1]

Augustus of Saxony could have been a happy man. The accident of conception made him a member of the oldest and richest of all the princely families of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, placing in his mouth a spoon of unalloyed silver.[2] Not even the apparent handicap of younger-son status delayed him for long, cholera removing his father in 1691, and smallpox despatching his elder brother three years later. At the age of twenty-four Augustus was the monarch of all he surveyed, looking forward with relish to a life of power and pleasure. Alas, when he died in Warsaw thirty-eight years later, on 1 February 1733, there was little of either remaining. As his gangrenous body sank towards oblivion, he lamented that the Polish throne that had cost him so much effort and money had been 'a crown of thorns'. Although never conspicuously pious, he summoned enough energy to croak out as his last words the confession: 'God forgive me, my entire life was one sin.'[3]

Few European rulers could record a longer list of military failures; even fewer have been forced to abdicate; hardly any have regained their throne courtesy of another power. It was somehow fitting that the only victory won under his aegis (Kalisz in 1706) was more an embarrassment than a triumph.[4] Yet there had been good times as well as bad times, with the occasional spark of achievement to lift his spirits and keep hope alive. Moreover, against political and military failure has to be set a cultural legacy which included making his Saxon capital, Dresden, one of the most beautiful cities in Europe and qualifying him to be classed as a great artist. His times had certainly been exciting. Augustus had played a significant role in one of those periods of European history when the pace of change accelerates and events occur with profound and long-lasting consequences. It was his bad luck to have to contend

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with two contemporaries of exceptional ability and demonic energy – Tsar Peter of Russia (b. 1672) and King Charles XII of Sweden (b. 1682). Trapped in the world-historical clash between these last two titans in the Great Northern War (1700–1721), hapless Augustus was ground into insignificance.

What started as a quadrilateral struggle, pitting Sweden against Denmark, Russia and Saxony,[5] quickly reduced to trilateral, as Denmark was knocked out in the first year. That was how it stayed until 1706, when Augustus's involuntary departure from the conflict shortened it to a duel between Russia and Sweden. Even when he returned to the fray in 1709, his subordinate status as a satellite of Russia became increasingly apparent. Revealingly, neither Saxony nor Poland were parties to the Peace of Nystad which brought the war to a close in 1721. Such a simple summary is more than a little misleading, as several other players were active at times, including Prussians, Hanoverians, Turks, Cossacks and Tatars, not to mention the numerous combatants engaged in the overlapping War of the Spanish Succession (1701–14), notably the Habsburg Monarchy, the Holy Roman Empire, Britain, the Dutch Republic, Savoy, Portugal and Spain. In this turbulent maelstrom embracing almost all of Europe, Augustus bobbed about helplessly like a plastic duck, often submerged but never quite sunk. It will be argued in what follows that an examination of his (mis)fortunes is justified not only by the importance of his own role, active or passive, but also by its contribution to an understanding of what made for success and failure in the Europe of this, or indeed any other, period.

It will also support one of Karl Marx's most penetrating observations, conveyed in the second paragraph of *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon* (1852):

> Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living.[6]

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In the case of Augustus, the nightmare was concealed behind the glittering façade of the representational court culture that reached its apogee at Louis XIV's Versailles during his lifetime. It was 'representational' because its *raison d'être* was the re-presentation (in the sense of 'making present') of the power, glory, wealth and legitimacy of the patron, and it was 'court' because the ruler's court was at its centre.[7] Thanks to his education, travels and family tradition, not to mention personal inclination, this inheritance was for Augustus not a nightmare but a beautiful if evanescent dream, one which he never ceased trying to turn into reality. As the 'Sun King' of France was to be the model for Augustus (and for many other European sovereigns great and small), an introduction to the main features of his project is necessary.

The sharp end of the princely glory this culture advertised was martial prowess. For every male ruler not disqualified by physical incapacity, leading an army into battle was the ultimate justification of majesty. Among the many features that make Louis XIV's Palace of Versailles the *non plus ultra* of representational culture is its triumphalist proclamation of its creator's military feats. Every visitor was expected to be impressed by the plethora of images of Louis XIV as the hands-on hero – 'Louis XIV at the siege of Lille', 'Louis XIV at the siege of Cambrai', 'Louis XIV at the siege of Douai', 'Louis XIV crossing the Rhine', 'Louis XIV arriving at the camp at Maastricht' and so on, in what ultimately becomes an enervating sequence of boasting. The climax is reached in the Salon of War, dominated by Antoine Coysevox's mighty bas-relief depicting 'Louis XIV trampling on his enemies'. Particularly offensive to German visitors was the painting above, depicting 'Germania' and the imperial eagle cowering in terror before the might of Louis' France. In the Hall of Mirrors which then follows, seventeen of the twenty-seven paintings showed the smiting of foreign foes, nine of them celebrating victories in the war against the Dutch, concluded in 1678. At one end of the Hall, the Dutch folly of conspiring with France's enemies is depicted, at the other their humiliating submission, in a visual progress from provocation to

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retribution.[8] So awe-inspiring and intimidating could this triumphalist sequence of images prove that a Turkish envoy is said to have lost control of his bodily functions as he made his way past them, necessitating a change of clothes before he could complete his journey to the audience chamber. If that anecdote is authentic, it is perhaps the ultimate tribute to the success of Versailles and its representational culture.[9]

Louis XIV was not the first sovereign to take personal command of his army, of course. When he commissioned four huge tapestries depicting the victories of Alexander the Great, for example, or had Coysevox present him in the costume of a Roman emperor, he was following a well-trodden path linking antique to contemporary heroism. Modern armour was also acceptable, and arguably more relevant. Palaces were crowded with portraits and sculptures suggesting that their owners are on the battlefield. Whether it was Titian portraying Emperor Charles V on horseback, in full armour, spear at the ready, smiting the Protestant heretics hip and thigh at the Battle of Mühlberg, or Jan Wyck showing William III scattering the Catholics at the Battle of the Boyne, the fearless royal warrior was a trope of early modern iconography. They were not photographs – flattering liberties were certainly taken – but there were enough actual examples of rulers risking life and limb to sustain the desired image. In the lifetime of Augustus, apart from Louis XIV and his nemesis, William III, other rulers to go to war in person included Georges I and II of England, Charles XI and XII of Sweden, Frederick William the Great Elector and Frederick William I of Brandenburg–Prussia, Margrave Ludwig Wilhelm of Baden-Baden, John III Sobieski of Poland and Victor Amadeus of Sardinia, not to mention Augustus's father, the Elector Johann Georg III, whose martial enthusiasm was legendary.

Not even Louis XIV could always be on campaign. During the 1690s his personal involvement tailed off, the last siege he supervised in person being at Namur in 1692.[10] By then he was fifty-three, elderly by the standards of the day. Moreover, military success was proving increasingly elusive. If the War of Devolution (1667–8)

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against Spain was an unequivocal triumph, and the war against the Dutch (1672–8) could be talked up as a victory, the Nine Years War (1688–97) was a failure, and the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–14) a defeat. Fortunately, *la gloire militaire* was only part of the representation project, necessary but not sufficient. More durable was the soft power deployed by cultural instruments. Building on the firm foundations laid during the previous reign by Cardinal Richelieu, Louis and his ministers, with Jean-Baptiste Colbert to the fore, raised France to be the undisputed cultural arbiter of Europe. All the arts were enlisted, financed and controlled, to propagate the image of Louis as the Sun King and his nation just as supreme in the service of Apollo as of Mars.

To these indoor pursuits must be added hunting, not just a form of recreation but *the* central royal and aristocratic peacetime activity. Anyone who has looked back from the inner courtyard of Versailles and marvelled at the size and splendour of the royal stables and kennels on either side of the Avenue de Paris, which can easily be mistaken for additional palaces, will know that this is no exaggeration. As the most scholarly study of French hunting put it, 'ever since Merovingian times, hunting had been inseparable from royal life. Pursuit of the stag is the royal activity *par excellence*'.[11] Even towards the end of his reign, Louis XIV was hunting 110 to 140 days a year.[12] Enormous areas were required to accommodate the very large amount of game of various kinds waiting to be slaughtered. The hunting reserve at Versailles was increased to 30,000 acres, 57,000 more were added with the purchase of the Rambouillet estate, tens of thousands more were available at Fontainebleau, to which the court moved every autumn, and in the forest of Compiègne, through which Louis had fifty-four new hunting roads cut and fifty-one bridges built.[13]

The clearest indication of the success of all these cultural initiatives was linguistic hegemony. When Louis came to the throne in 1643, French was only one of several competing languages. Either Spanish or Italian could have made as good a claim for ubiquity, while Latin still dominated academic discourse. But halfway

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through the reign it could be asserted by the Jesuit Dominique Bouhours that the French had outstripped even the Roman Empire, for whereas Latin arrived only in the wake of military occupation, the French language preceded conquest. Indeed, he suggested that even the common people of Europe were now adopting French, as if they sensed it was their manifest destiny to be annexed by their greater neighbour.[14] As Louis XIV's power began to wane, his admirers responded by turning up the volume. In 1694 the *Mercure Galant* gloried in the continuing linguistic conquests, which had spilled out over the frontiers to make French the lingua franca of all Europe, if not the world.[15] This nationalist hyperbole had a core of truth: in 1714, the year before Louis' death, the Holy Roman Emperor Charles VI deigned to sign an international treaty (Rastatt) drafted in the French language rather than Latin.[16]

As we shall see, as a young man Augustus drank deep at the cultural well of Louis XIV and his Versailles project. He also had a lot of fun. This might seem self-evident, but it needs to be emphasized, if only because so many serious-minded treatments of court culture give the impression that it was essentially functional, aimed at the maximization of power through the imposition of social distancing and social control.[17] But people also went to court because it was enjoyable, offering the best balls, banquets, gambling, music, theatre, opera, drinking, hunting and, last but not least, sex. It was also a gigantic patronage pump (not least for ecclesiastical preferment) and marriage market (the Duc de Saint-Simon recorded by name more than 1,000 persons whose marriages had been arranged at Versailles).[18] On the other hand, court life had its dreary side. Only the pious can have welcomed the innumerable religious services (Mass every day at Versailles) and not everyone can have relished the straitjacket imposed by the rigid hierarchy and strict etiquette. When Louis XIV turned bigot in his later years, the mood darkened. Directed by his deeply pious morganatic wife, Madame de Maintenon, whom he married secretly in 1683, he put a brake on lavish court festivities.[19] Versailles became *boring*. Although the grandees still attended on high days and holidays, increasingly they

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preferred their *hôtels* in Paris where the lights were brighter and the parties more fun.[20]

For pure unrestrained pleasure the place to be was Venice, the playground of the European elites. Adapting to the westward shift of Europe's economic axis, the Venetians found compensation for their loss of markets by turning to tourism. By the late seventeenth century, although their 'argosies with portly sail'[21] were still bringing home the spices of the East for re-export, the cloth and silk manufacturers were still sending their luxury items north of the Alps, and the furnaces of the Murano glass-makers were still blazing, they had fallen behind their Portuguese, Dutch, English and Bohemian competitors. But they still had a priceless asset passed down by their ancestors, in the shape of the most beautiful city in Europe, set in a cerulean sea and enjoying a climate especially attractive to anyone living north of the Alps. Giving nature a helping hand, they made the carnival season, from St Stephen's Day (26 December) to midnight on Shrove Tuesday, *the* great event in any socialite's calendar. Although it had been celebrated by the locals for centuries, it was only in the later seventeenth century that it really got into its stride as an international festival. Not the least of its attractions was the use of masks, which allowed all kinds of impropriety to be indulged with impunity.

If Venice was the headquarters of hedonism, there were plenty of other alluring destinations in Italy for northern visitors – Rome and Bologna for clerical enthusiasts; Florence for art lovers; Naples for operagoers; Sicily for vulcanologists; just to mention a few. By the time Augustus travelled south, it was axiomatic among European elites that a 'Grand Tour' (the term first appeared in print in 1676)[22] concentrating on travel around Italy was a *sine qua non* of a gentleman's education. As Dr Johnson put it: 'Sir, a man who has not been in Italy is always conscious of an inferiority, from his not having seen what it is expected a man should see. The grand object of travelling is to see the shores of the Mediterranean. On those shores were the four great empires of the world; the Assyrian, the Persian, the Grecian, and the Roman. – All our religion, almost all

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our law, almost all our arts, almost all that sets us above savages, has come to us from the shores of the Mediterranean.'[23] If the English were the most ubiquitous grand tourists, thanks to their greater wealth, there were plenty of other nations represented.[24] Among the German princes to stand out for enthusiastic patronage of the Venetian carnival was Augustus's father, the hard-living Elector Johann Georg III, who rented a large palace on the Grand Canal for a season of intensive self-indulgence. As we shall see, in this and many other respects his son was a chip off the old block.

To outline the culture into which Augustus was born, and in which he was brought up, is essential but potentially misleading, if allowed to stand without qualification. In the event, Augustus did prove to be an enthusiastic military monarch, the epitome of representational culture and one of the most self-indulgent hedonists ever to sit on a European throne, but this florid combination was not pre-programmed. He was indeed profoundly influenced by Karl Marx's 'tradition of all the dead generations' but there remained for him, as for every human being, an irreducible core of individuality. To employ one of Goethe's favourite classical aphorisms, '*individuum est ineffabile*' (the individual is inexpressible), to which he added his own version: 'every human being is wonderfully caught in his or her individuality'.[25] Trying to unravel the secrets of Augustus's psyche is difficult, because he was not given to introspection and his surviving correspondence is depressingly mundane, but an attempt has to be made. Not until his topsy-turvy career has been charted and analysed will that be done, although the reader may well be forming an opinion as the story unfolds. A premature rush to judgement should be resisted, for a final section will argue that, once the appropriate methodology is employed and a full range of evidence deployed, Augustus can be hailed as one of the most important creative artists of his era.

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1.
The Gilded Cage

Brotherly enmity

At some point in April 1694, Augustus received news that his brother, the Elector Johann Georg IV, had contracted smallpox and was dying. His reaction is not known. It can be conjectured, however, with some confidence, that grief was not his dominant emotion. Not only had he never liked his brother, he had gone out of his way to record the fact in a draft for a novel he had written four years earlier, when recovering from his own mild attack of the illness (which had given him immunity).[1] 'These two brothers', he wrote, 'were constantly at war with each other', the older being jealous because nature had been so much more generous in bestowing gifts on the younger, and the younger being resentful because the accident of birth had made his unworthy sibling the heir to the Electorate. Augustus characterized himself as 'a lively fellow, carefree, showing from a young age that he was blessed with a strong body, a robust constitution, an amiable, generous disposition, equipped with everything that makes up an honourable man, more devoted to physical exercise than book-learning and a born soldier'. Johann Georg, on the other hand, was depicted as a depressive, irascible, feeble bookworm.[2]

What Augustus did not reveal was what the two of them had in common, namely a powerful libido. In 1688 the twenty-year old Johann Georg had fallen head over heels in love with the thirteen-year-old Magdalena Sibylla von Neitschütz, the daughter of a colonel in the Saxon army. Although she was undoubtedly of noble birth – her mother was a von Haugwitz – she was equally

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clearly not a fit marriage partner for a member of the Wettin dynasty, the oldest and therefore the grandest in the Holy Roman Empire. His appalled parents (his mother was a Danish princess) sent Johann Georg off on a grand tour and then on campaign, in the hope that his passion would cool. As the equally libidinous but less monogamous father was conducting affairs simultaneously with the Italian singer Margarita Salicola and the Austrian Countess Margarethe Susanne von Zinzendorff (whom he called 'Suschen'), it is not difficult to imagine the vehemence of the three-way family rows that erupted.[3]

Absence only made the heart grow fonder. Once he succeeded his father as elector in 1691, Johann Georg at once recognized the beautiful Magdalena as his *maîtresse en titre*. He also promoted her father from colonel to lieutenant-general.[4] Rather strangely, he also got married to the unappealing Eleonore Erdmuthe, widow of the Markgraf of Brandenburg-Bayreuth, probably at the behest of his chief minister, Hans Adam von Schöning, who was seeking a rapprochement with Brandenburg. It was not a happy marriage. In the course of a heated argument about a gift to Magdalena, Johann Georg drew his sword, prevented from striking his wife only by the timely intervention of Augustus, who sustained a deep cut to his hand for his pains.[5]

The presence of a wife did not prevent the mistress from taking the lioness's share of the spoils. Showered with gifts, including a town palace in Dresden and a huge country estate at Pillnitz, just outside the city, Magdalena was also raised to the status of Countess of the Holy Roman Empire (*Reichsgräfin*) as 'Countess von Rochlitz' by Leopold I. The price was paid by the 12,000 Saxon soldiers sent off to the Rhine to fight and die for their emperor against the French.[6] They were led by the elector himself, accompanied of course by his mistress, who gave birth to a daughter in Frankfurt am Main. This idyll did not last long. On 4 April 1694 Magdalena died of smallpox. For her funeral procession, Johann Georg ordered the entire population of Dresden to turn out, on pain of punishment, to line the streets along which the cortege passed on its way to St

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Sophia's Church (Sophienkirche), where her body was buried with all possible ceremony behind the altar.[7] He himself was prostrate with grief. The English envoy George Stepney reported: 'He is really to be pitied, for never prince had so violent passions, and any man who sees the agonies he suffers, cannot but be touched and suffer with him.'[8] As a lover, he had saved his best for last, selflessly nursing his beloved throughout her final illness, with the predictable result that he himself succumbed to the same disease twenty days later.[9]

Given their mutual dislike, Augustus would probably have disapproved of any woman his brother chose. In the event, he had showed his distaste by absenting himself from the court at Dresden and spending most of his time in Vienna and Berlin.[10] Unknown to him, it had been even worse than it looked, for Magdalena and her mother had rapaciously turned their control of the elector into hard cash. Among other things, they had extorted protection money from a group of Leipzig merchants by threatening to have their commercial privileges revoked.[11] The foreign diplomats were also paying large bribes to get Johann Georg's foreign policy influenced.[12] On her death Magdalena left 'six tons of gold',[13] estates at Pillnitz, Gorbitz and Pennrich, vineyards at Kostbaude, a pleasure garden at Plauen and a town house in Dresden later known as the 'Fürstenberg Palace', linked to the Electoral Palace by a secret passage.[14]

Once both mistress and elector were dead, Augustus could take revenge on the mother. She was promptly arrested, her possessions confiscated, along with those of her late daughter, and put on trial. The two Neitschütz ladies had been extremely unpopular with the plain people of Dresden, so this initiative got the new reign off to a good start. It is not clear whether it was Augustus himself or the judicial authorities who decided to charge her, not with corruption, of which she was undoubtedly guilty, but with witchcraft, of which she was (probably) innocent.[15] The assumption that the intensity of Johann Georg's passion could only be explained by supernatural forces is an interesting indication of the mores of late-seventeenth-century Dresden. Also striking was the application of torture during

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Frau von Neitschütz's interrogation. What her prosecutors hoped to gain is not obvious; perhaps the location of her ill-gotten gains. If only 'the first degree' of pain was inflicted in the shape of thumbscrews, it was enough to prompt her to wear gloves thereafter, to avoid displaying the damage to her hands. More might have followed if Augustus had not intervened to put a stop to any further barbarity. He also ordered her release from prison sixteen months later, allowing her to return to her estate at Gausig, where she died in 1713.[16] He took responsibility for Johann Georg and Magdalena's daughter, paying for her upbringing and later arranging an advantageous match with a rich Polish noble, Count Piotr Dunin, the castellan of Radom, with whom she had five children.[17] Augustus also took swift action against the Saxon officials complicit in the Neitschütz depredations, the main target being the President of the Treasury, Ludwig Gebhard Freiherr von Hoym. He was packed off to prison and only released, in 1696, because Augustus urgently needed the huge sum (200,000 talers) the prisoner was prepared to spend on the purchase of a pardon.[18]

Chips off the old block

Augustus may have thought that he was very different from his brother, but they shared more than carnal enthusiasm. Also to the fore was their common conviction that the first duty of a true German prince was to lead his army into battle against the enemies of the Empire. Here, too, they were following a trail blazed by their father. Not for nothing was Johann Georg III known as 'the Saxon Mars'.[19] When he inherited the Electorate in 1680 he cut back sharply on court expenditure, redirecting resources to building up the army. While still crown prince he had signalled his martial interest by leading a small Saxon auxiliary force to campaign on the Rhine against the French in the 1670s. Once on the throne he proved to be one of the most effective allies of the Habsburg Emperor Leopold I, against both the French in the west and the Turks in the

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east. His finest hour came in 1683, when he led a substantial force of over 10,000[20] to assist the relief of Vienna from the greatest (and last) Turkish siege. During the battle on 12 September he was in command of the left wing, leading from the front until an anxious bodyguard extricated him from the hand-to-hand fighting.[21] By then he was so covered in blood as to be barely recognizable.[22] His army has been acclaimed for having 'performed some of the most gallant of all the action before Vienna' and credited with a significant contribution to the victory.[23] Saxon dragoons were the first allied troops to plant their standard in the Turkish camp.[24]

Conspicuously absent from the battle was Leopold I. When the Turks had broken into Austria in July he had fled to Passau, over 200 kilometres to the west, together with his family and court, a move which may have been prudent but also looked very much like cowardice. That was certainly how it seemed to his subjects, who tried to stop him leaving the Imperial Palace (*Hofburg*) and demonstrated their anger with curses and abuse as he made his way along the Danube.[25] When he reached Passau, however, he did make his own and possibly invaluable contribution to victory by praying every day before a famous image of 'Mary help us!' (*Maria hilf!*) in the eponymous pilgrimage church on the steep hill above the River Inn.[26] It is not recorded whether he followed the example of the most devout pilgrims by mounting the 321 steps on his knees each time he went. He did however fervently believe that it was the intervention of the Virgin which had scattered the infidel hosts, for it was with the cry '*Maria hilf!*' that the Christian army began the assault on the Turkish besiegers. At his request, Pope Innocent XI declared the day of the battle a holy day in Mary's name throughout Catholic Europe.[27] The triumph confirmed Leopold's earlier avowal that 'in time of war I want the Blessed Virgin Mary as my general and in the peace-negotiations I want her as my ambassador'.[28]

Although he was undoubtedly an Empire loyalist, Johann Georg III was also a Lutheran and was unimpressed by Leopold's Marian devotion. Having rushed back to his battered but liberated capital, the emperor then succeeded in alienating his allies by treating them

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with indifference if not disdain, a poor return for their sacrifices of men and money, not to mention risking their own lives and limbs in his service. For the Protestants among them, a further source of friction was the persecution of their co-religionists being vigorously enforced by Leopold's officials in Hungary. Outraged by a dismissive reply to his remonstrance on the subject, Johann Georg III ordered his contingent to march straight home.[29] Leopold's neglect of basic courtesy also extended to his Catholic supporters. Annoyed that the commander of the allied army, the King of Poland, John III Sobieski, had not waited to allow him to be the first sovereign to enter Vienna, Leopold let his displeasure be known by frigid body language, including snubbing his son.[30] Quite apart from his irritation at being upstaged by Sobieski's premature victory parade, he was also alarmed by the possibility that the Hungarian rebels would offer their crown to Sobieski's son.

The summer of 1683 marked the high-water mark of Ottoman expansion in Europe and the beginning of a secular decline. Although this decaying process was drawn out over the next two centuries, the immediate world-historical importance of the Christian victory did not escape contemporaries. Sobieski sent an envoy to the Pope with the message 'We came, we saw, and God conquered' (*Venimus, vidimus et Deus vicit*), together with a banner mistakenly thought to be the holy banner of the Prophet. Across the continent, the feats that were done that day were celebrated in every conceivable medium. Overnight Sobieski became the most famous and venerated Pole of all time.[31] Alas, this was also the high-water mark of Polish success in Europe and the beginning of a downward path to mirror that of the Ottomans. The subsequent campaign petered out in the autumn, the Austrians went into winter quarters and the Poles went home.[32] They did not go empty-handed. With some relish, German observers recorded that during the night after the battle of 12 September, while the German contingents held their positions in case the Ottomans counter-attacked, their undisciplined Polish allies were busily looting the Ottoman camp and baggage trains. There was so much on offer, however, that the

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Saxons did find a few things to take back to Dresden as trophies – five Ottoman tents, eleven cannon, several copies of the Koran, an elephant (which did not survive the journey) and a number of camels (although the attempt to establish a stud with them failed).[33] The most interesting booty was human, in the attractive shape of a young Turkish girl called Fatima, who found her way into the hands of the Polish Crown Treasurer Count Jan Jerzy Przebendowski and was eventually passed to Augustus, for whom she bore two children.[34]

Johann Georg III's two sons were too young to accompany their father to Vienna, being fourteen and thirteen respectively, but they certainly heard a great deal about it and were present at the victory celebrations when the conquering heroes returned to Dresden. They would also have been aware that several other princes of the Holy Roman Empire had been on the battlefield – indeed the attendance list reads like a supplement to the *Almanach de Gotha*: the Electors of Bavaria and Saxony; the Dukes of Lorraine, Saxony-Eisenach, Lauenburg, Holstein, Württemberg, Brunswick-Lüneburg and Palatinate-Neuburg; the Margraves of Baden and Brandenburg-Bayreuth; the Landgrave of Hessen-Kassel; the Princes of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, Anhalt-Dessau and Salm; and the Count of Waldeck.[35] In other words, Catholics, Calvinists and Lutherans had all combined in a joint imperial action against the Crescent.

The brilliant – and well-publicized – success at Vienna in 1683 confirmed the primacy of the warrior-king as a *beau idéal*. Every prince, great or small, now wanted to be depicted in armour, usually clasping a field marshal's baton and staring imperiously and imperturbably at the viewer as a battle rages behind him. Hyacinthe Rigaud's portrait of Louis XIV wearing French cavalry armour, now in the Prado, is just the most outstanding of innumerable examples.[36] Even the unfortunate Charles II of Spain (1661–1700), who throughout his childhood had to be carried as if he were a babe in arms, and even as an adult was usually incapable of walking or speaking, had to be painted in full armour (by Juan

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Carreño de Miranda). As old as monarchy itself, the axiom that a ruler must fight as well as govern had been reinforced by the examples set by three successive French kings – Henry IV, Louis XIII and Louis XIV.[37] In short, a prince of Saxony, whether reigning elector or younger son, was marked out from birth to be a soldier. As soon as Johann Georg III's boys were old enough he took them off with him on campaign, to the Rhineland in the spring of 1689 to besiege Mainz, captured by the French the previous autumn.[38] That was something else the two boys had in common – enthusiasm for the military life. Gainsaying his brother's depiction of him as a weakling, when the elder succeeded as Johann Georg IV, he too went off to war on the Rhine at the head of his troops in 1693, and was preparing another campaign there for the following year when he died.[39]

Fun and games

Part and parcel of a masculinist attitude to conflict resolution was extramarital sexual activity. Breaking the seventh commandment ('Thou shalt not commit adultery' – Exodus 20:14) was almost de rigueur for early modern European sovereigns, most of the exceptions being those to whom heterosexual intercourse did not appeal (Charles XII of Sweden and Frederick the Great of Prussia, for example). The Wettins of Saxony were very much the norm. The most entertaining episode was provided by Johann Georg III in 1685, or rather by the 'Count von Hoyerswerda', the alias he used when visiting the fleshpots of Venice during the carnival season. Visiting the Teatro San Giovanni Grisostomo one evening to hear a *dramma per musica* with the singularly inappropriate title *Penelope the Chaste*, Johann Georg was overwhelmed with enthusiasm for the aforementioned prima donna, Margarita Salicola. There has been some debate as to whether he was attracted more by her voice or her beauty – both of which, by all accounts, were exceptional. There was the added spice of novelty, as this was the first female singer he

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had seen on stage, for back home all the female roles were sung by male *castrati*.[40]

La Salicola was attracted both by the elector's attention and by the very generous terms he offered for a move to Dresden. Unfortunately, there were a number of obstacles to be overcome, the easiest being release from her existing engagement (an entrepreneurial palm was greased) and the most intractable being the relationship she already enjoyed with the possessive Ferdinando Carlo Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua. To cover the back of the theatre's impresario against ducal retribution, it was pretended that she had been abducted by Johann Georg, although in reality they had just fled north. Pursued by a Mantuan posse, they reached the safety of Habsburg dominions in the Tyrol with only a couple of hours to spare. The story did not end there. The duke now resorted to angry correspondence supported by threats, including an order to his envoy to challenge Johann Georg to a duel if Margarita was not given up. Rumours of planned assassinations and poisonings abounded. With France supporting the duke and the emperor supporting the elector, even international conflict began to seem a possibility. To cut a long story short, eventually mediation by the Elector of Bavaria brought a peaceful resolution – Margarita Salicola stayed in Dresden and the Duke of Mantua's face was saved by a conciliatory letter from Johann Georg. Any amusement derived from this farce might be tempered by the thought that the cost of Johann Georg's Venetian adventure was met by the soldiers he had hired out to the Republic of Venice to fight against the Turks in the Peloponnese in return for 120,000 talers. Of the 3,000 who went, only 761 ever saw their homes again.[41]

Margarita remained in Dresden after the death of her patron, moving to Vienna in 1693. Two years later she was back in Italy, now known as 'Margarita di Sassonia'.[42] What is still not clear is whether or not she was the mother of an illegitimate child sired by Johann Georg in 1686 and legitimized with the name Johann Georg Maximilian von Fürstenhoff.[43] Supported after his father's death by his half-brother Augustus, he trained as an architect, entered Saxon

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service and enjoyed a successful career until his death in 1753.[44] In the meantime, his two half-brothers had been keeping up the family tradition of extramarital liaisons. Johann Georg IV's passion for Magdalena Sibyll von Neitschütz has already been noted. As for Augustus himself, his stable of mistresses became legendary, both in the sense of being prolific (354 is the number often bandied around, even by historians who ought to know better) and also in the sense of being grotesquely exaggerated, for the actual score was just eight.[45]

With the fashion for promiscuity set from the top by Louis XIV, the European trend-setter par excellence, staying on the straight and narrow path of monogamy was a special challenge during this period for those with the means and the power to indulge their carnal appetites. For young princes past puberty, temptation abounded. If adult supervision could sometimes be exercised within the confines of the court, once the young bloods set out on the essential rite of passage that was the grand tour, the traces could be kicked over as soon as the parental home faded into the distance. What should have been the restraining hand of the escorting tutor or chaplain was rarely applied firmly or consistently. Both of Johann Georg III's sons went on extensive grand tours and doubtless enjoyed themselves. Augustus did not need to wait, having started rather early, aged only sixteen, with a lady of the court, Countess Marie Elisabeth von Brockdorff.[46] When the affair was discovered, the lady was sent away from court and Augustus was sent off to Denmark to visit his grandparents, although when he came back his indulgent father allowed the countess to return also.[47]

Aware of the dangers which lay ahead for his two sons on their grand tours, although his own father had preferred to keep him at home and put him to work in the administration,[48] Johann Georg III made sure that the instructions for those in charge of their moral welfare made daily religious observance (and a sermon on Sundays) the top priority. He himself may have been a libertine, but he was a *pious* libertine, a combination which is an oxymoron, not a contradiction in terms.[49] On the other hand, when travelling through

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Catholic areas, especially those recently annexed to France, there was to be absolutely no public discussion of religious issues. As his elder son set out in November 1685, at a time when Louis XIV was busily expelling tens of thousands of French Protestants after revoking the Edict of Nantes a month earlier, this was a prudent precaution.[50] In the event, Johann Georg junior's tour was rather short, lasting only just over a year. The itinerary was confined to northern Europe, the main destination being Paris and Versailles, of course, where he was presented to the Sun King; Windsor, where he was received by James II, still apparently secure on the throne from which he would be chased two years later; the Low Countries, including Brussels and Amsterdam; and various German courts. The detailed journal kept by the tutor reveals that this was a major undertaking, the party also comprising a chaplain, physician, tour director (*Stallmeister*) and numerous servants, making a total of twenty-one.[51] The omission of the south, which every German is supposed to yearn for, was made good in 1690 when he went to Venice, Bologna, Florence and Rome.

The original intention was to send the younger brother away for three years, perhaps because he was thought to need an extra layer of polish. His father stressed that the tour's purpose was to 'raise to a higher level of perfection all the virtues appertaining to a prince'.[52] The itinerary was to include all of Europe north, south and west of Saxony, including England and Scandinavia. In the event, the Glorious Revolution in England conspired with Louis XIV's simultaneous resumption of war with the emperor to force curtailment. Even so, by the time Augustus returned to Dresden in April 1689 he had been away for just one month short of two years.[53] Unfortunately, the dull daily journal kept by his tutor, Christian August Haxthausen, is singularly unhelpful in revealing his pupil's development. Only occasionally does a glimmer of light penetrate the pall of pedantic tedium. Taken at face value, it suggests that Augustus's main concern was religious, with every day said to have begun with a service of prayers and/or a sermon. This was obviously for the father's benefit, although he probably knew

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his son well enough to know that he was not spending so much time on his knees.

The highlight in every sense was the long sojourn in Paris/Versailles (June–September 1687 and May–November 1688), which Augustus reached shortly after his seventeenth birthday. Even those (or perhaps *especially* those) familiar with the overcrowded queue-ridden theme park that is Versailles today need to make an imaginative effort to recreate the palace as it was in all the glory of its first flush of youth, for it had only been the principal royal residence since 1682.[54] Like his brother before him, Augustus was travelling incognito, in his case using the pseudonym 'Count of Leisnig'. This was a common device to bypass the complications arising from disputes over precedence and etiquette. It did not prevent Augustus being presented to the king or consorting with princes of the blood royal and the high aristocracy, notably the Duke and Duchess of Orléans, whom he visited several times at Saint-Cloud.[55] The duchess had been born Elisabeth Charlotte of the Palatinate, although she was better known to posterity by her nickname 'Liselotte'. An indefatigable letter-writer (she wrote about 60,000, two-thirds in German, the rest in French), she sent the following assessment of Augustus to her aunt Sophie, wife of Elector Ernst August of Hanover and thus mother of George I of England: 'I cannot yet express a proper opinion of the prince: his features are not handsome, but he is well-built and has a pleasant expression, and he also seems to be more lively than his brother [Johann Georg] and is not so gloomy; but he doesn't say much and so one can't know what lies behind the exterior.'[56]

Normally loquacious at home, Augustus was probably more reticent at Versailles because his command of the French language was far from perfect. Nor was it improving much. Throughout his tour, he was supposed to be studying, especially languages, dancing and horsemanship. As the long-suffering Haxthausen complained, he was enthusiastic about the last of those, but negligent about the other two. It can be inferred that eventually the tutor was driven to despair, because he abandoned his usual discretion and reported

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candidly to the elector that, while he believed Augustus could derive some benefit from his tour, he would have to improve his attitude and wake up to what was needed.[57] Writing much later, the Duchess of Orléans recalled Haxthausen telling her at the time that the Paris experience had damaged Augustus terribly (*abscheulich geschadt*) and that his behaviour had been so dissolute that he could do nothing with him. Her own comment was that once young people succumbed to debauchery, there was no vice to which they would not resort, and that they thus became 'bestial'.[58] Alas, Augustus proved to be incorrigible. What he did take back to Saxony with him from France was an enthusiasm for grand court spectacles which bordered on addiction. Its most intellectual form was a taste for French opera and French drama. He was there at the right time, for this was the golden age about which Voltaire was to rhapsodize in *The Age of Louis XIV* (1751), lauding it as one of the four great creative periods of world history, the others being ancient Greece, classical Rome and the Italian Renaissance. Augustus demonstrated his own enthusiasm by being an avid visitor of the Académie Royale de Musique, as the Paris opera was officially known, brought to a peak of perfection by the recently deceased Jean-Baptiste Lully. Both at Versailles and Paris he was also a keen theatregoer, seeing thirteen plays by Corneille, eighteen by Molière and nine by Racine.[59]

In the autumn of 1687 the Saxon party moved south, with the less lively court at Madrid as their destination. At Bayonne, however, a prolonged halt had to be called, for Augustus fell seriously ill. Both the symptoms – a high temperature, hallucinations, extreme lethargy, loss of appetite – and the treatment – quinine – suggest that this may have been a case of malaria.[60] It was not until mid-December that he was well enough to leave, although then the journey proceeded smoothly enough and the party reached Madrid on the penultimate day of the year. There is little of value to be extracted from Haxthausen's journal entries about this episode. At a stretch, it might be worth mentioning the problem raised by the notoriously demanding Spanish etiquette over whether Augustus

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might keep his hat on when being received by King Charles II (in the end, both men held their hats under their arms).

Marginally more important was the bullfight that never was. Augustus informed his father on his arrival in Madrid that an *'ocsen-fest'* (bullfight) had been arranged in his honour. Although it did not happen, that did not stop the notorious gossip Baron Pöllnitz from promoting one of the many myths about Augustus which were to earn him the sobriquet 'The Strong'. By this account, Augustus started the fight as a spectator but soon leaped into the arena to become an active participant: 'he was soon as skilful at it as any that were in the Career . . . and there shewed his surprising Dexterity and Strength. He struck the hinder-path of the Neck of one of those furious Animals with his Hanger [sword] that he had almost deprived it of its Head, and caused its final Fall. The Spaniards could not sufficiently admire him, nor could they be persuaded that a Man, not a Spaniard born, was master of such Strength and Dexterity.'[61] This account is completely fictitious, but worth mentioning if only to discredit the source of many of the spurious anecdotes relating to Augustus, especially about his fabled strength and priapism.

The most recent Polish biographer of Augustus, the late Jacek Staszewski, ingeniously suggested that the odd nugget of accuracy in Pöllnitz's scurrilous exposé might have derived from two pages written by Augustus in 1690, shortly after his recovery from a mild attack of smallpox, in which he sketched out what reads like an outline of an autobiography. It was known that Prussian agents had infiltrated the Saxon archives and so Staszewski, imaginatively if unconvincingly, speculated that one of them might have provided Pöllnitz with a copy.[62] What that document certainly did show was, firstly, that Augustus's mastery of written German was defective to the point of incomprehensibility and, secondly, that he was proud of his sexual conquests – which he called 'intrigues' or 'adventures' – with high-ranking aristocratic ladies, his most prestigious partner being a 'Conty' (Conti).[63]

After a month-long excursion to Portugal, which prompted

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Augustus to boast that he had won the heart of a Portuguese princess,[64] the party moved back to Paris, arriving in May 1688. What was intended to be a prolonged sojourn, followed by a visit to England and the Low Countries, was cut short by ever-strengthening rumours of war. Haxthausen may have failed to educate Augustus, or to keep him on the straight and narrow, but he was certainly alert to international developments, sending back to Dresden reports on French troop movements and military preparations. Very sensibly, as it turned out, in October it was decided that the time had come to leave France. With the Low Countries and Rhineland likely to be combat zones, the safest way out of the country lay to the south-east. By mid-November the party had reached Lyon and soon afterwards crossed the frontier into the Duchy of Savoy. They were only just in time, for they had been pursued by an order from Louis XIV that Augustus be apprehended and interned. They had only been allowed to leave Paris because it was still hoped that the Elector of Saxony could be induced to stay neutral.[65] The Duke of Savoy refused a French demand that the refugees be extradited, earning Augustus's gratitude, friendship and – much later – a large consignment of Meissen porcelain (he received several valuable tapestries in return).[66]

Now the fun could begin again, in warmer climes and a less censorious society. From the Savoyard capital Turin Augustus moved to Milan, accompanied by two Hanoverian princes, one of them being Georg Ludwig, the future King of England.[67] The destination they were all looking forward to, however, was Venice, especially as the carnival season was already under way. Relations between Venice and Saxony were excellent, the latter being a source of mercenaries for the former, and the former being a source of funds for the latter. So the new arrival was sent two Venetian noblemen – Micheli and Molini – to show him all those delights that made the city an El Dorado for a man of Augustus's worldly tastes. Despite the rigours of the journey, transported on the last stretch from Padua by a gondola, on the first night Augustus went straight off to an opera at the Teatro San Angelo.[68] After

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the long journey from Paris, the teenaged Augustus was ready to party. Balls, banquets, brothels, gambling dens, theatres, opera houses were all available, and his two Venetian escorts made sure Augustus went to the best. He even got to see a bullfight, in St Mark's Square, albeit as a spectator not an actor.[69] More edifying, perhaps, was a separate visit to the basilica to witness the precious relics it housed, including several thorns from the Crown of Thorns and one of the nails used to impale Jesus on the Cross.[70]

Augustus no doubt enjoyed the Venetian fleshpots, but what he wanted even more was to go to war. Louis XIV's invasion of the Rhineland at the end of September 1688 presaged a major conflict, although no one knew at the time that it would last until 1697. With the war between the Austrian Habsburgs and the Ottoman Turks still rumbling along and with William III's invasion of England in November 1688 and campaigns in Ireland in 1688–91, Europe was aflame from the Atlantic to the Danube, an inviting prospect for a young would-be warrior keen to make a name for himself. Augustus had asked his father for permission to join the Saxon army when he was still in Paris and he now repeated the request from Venice.[71] It was granted in January 1689, when Johann Georg III told Haxthausen to take Augustus to Bologna and Florence, but to skip Rome and be back home by Easter, taking in Vienna en route.[72]

Court culture

With Augustus about to go off to war for the first time, a brief reflection on what he had experienced during his grand tour is in order. At every court he visited he found familiar objects, familiar rituals, familiar values – in short, a familiar culture. Although courts were as old as monarchies, they had been evolving at an accelerating pace in the early modern period.[73] In particular, there had been a tendency to settle in a permanent location rather than progress from one part of the country to another, although there might still be seasonal migrations, usually for hunting.[74] Peripatetic at the start

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of his reign, Louis XIV increasingly settled at Versailles before formally making it his main residence in 1682. One result of this trend was an increase in personnel and a concomitant increase in cost.[75] It also encouraged greater regularity of ritual and routine, or what John Adamson has termed 'a standardisation of expectations', including magnificent architecture, opulent interior decoration, big gardens, elaborate ritual, a clear hierarchy of rank, strict etiquette and, last but not least, demonstrative piety.[76]

There was also an international standardization of court pursuits. A crisp summary of what daily life at Versailles involved was supplied by the Duchess of Orléans in a letter to her aunt, the Electress of Hanover, in December 1676: 'I do beg your pardon for not writing for such an eternity. First of all I have been at Versailles, where I was kept busy the whole day long. We hunted all morning, got back at 3 o'clock in the afternoon, changed, went up to gamble until 7 o'clock, then to the play, which never ended before 10.30, then on to supper, and afterwards to the ball until 3 o'clock in the morning, and then we went to bed.'[77] The major omission from this schedule was a visit to the royal chapel, about which she was not particularly enthusiastic: 'it may be a great honour to sit next to the King in church, but I would gladly relinquish it because His Majesty won't let me sleep. As soon as I doze off, he nudges me with his elbow and wakes me up again, so that I am neither wholly asleep nor wholly awake. It gives me a headache.'[78]

This quotidian fare was punctuated by grand set pieces for grand occasions, such as the birth of an heir, the marriage of a daughter or the visit of a foreign sovereign. Then the boat could be pushed out far into an ocean of excess and expense. A clutch of celebrations across Europe in the 1660s announced the coming of age of the genre. If the first, chronologically speaking, was an equestrian ballet to mark the marriage of Duke Cosimo III Medici in Florence, the most spectacular was a week-long, multi-media extravaganza at Versailles with the sultry title *The Pleasures of the Enchanted Island*.[79] Officially, it was staged in honour of the king's mother, the dowager Queen Anne (of Austria), and his wife, Queen

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Marie-Thérèse (of Spain), but the person he was really trying to impress was his young mistress Louise de la Vallière.[80] A good idea of what was on offer was provided by the title of the commemorative brochure published subsequently: *The pleasures of the enchanted island, with tilting at the ring; dramas combined with dance and music; the ballet of Alcina's palace; fireworks; and other refined and magnificent festivals, arranged by the King at Versailles on 7 May 1664 and continued for several days thereafter*.[81] Over eight days the 600 guests were treated to the very best that the richest and most powerful king in Europe could offer, including banquets, pageants, equestrian displays, tournaments, ballets (music by Lully), plays (by Molière, among them the premiere of *Tartuffe*), *comèdies-ballets* (music by Lully, text by Molière), illuminations, fireworks, and so on. The central theme was taken from Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, with Louis himself cast as the hero Roger, who overcomes the wicked sorceress Alcina and liberates the knights she is holding captive on her enchanted island. It might be thought that Mlle de la Vallière was not encouraged by the storyline.

Louis XIV may not have invented this form of court festival, but his enthusiastic adoption and assiduous propagation by well-publicized word and image certainly made it a *sine qua non* for his fellow sovereigns.[82] One dynasty that needed no prompting was the House of Wettin, for court festivals had been introduced to Saxony by the Elector Augustus I (r. 1553–86) in the late sixteenth century. One feature, which became popular from the middle of the next and was shared with other German princes, was a taste for celebrations in what was thought to be a plebeian style. Known as a 'Kingdom' (*Königreich*), 'Tavern' (*Wirtschaft*) or a 'Peasant Wedding' (*Bauernhochzeit*), this involved courtiers stepping out of their class for a day to dress up as a servant, artisan or farmhand. It need hardly be added that this play-acting did not stretch to wearing authentically plebeian clothes or consuming authentically plebeian food and drink.[83] The Saxon festivals also differed from the Versailles spectaculars because of their urban setting. One advantage of building Versailles on what was virtually a greenfield site was that Louis'

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creation faced no competition from aristocratic or ecclesiastical palaces in downtown Paris. The visual impact of the stand-alone palace as the visitor emerged from the forest was designed to be overwhelming. Back in Dresden, a familiar feature of festivals under Johann Georg II were the processions of richly costumed courtiers and gorgeously decorated floats, accompanied by bands of musicians, through the streets.[84] Some idea of the scale of the festivities organized by Johann Georg II is provided by Gabriel Tzschimmer's account, comprising 316 folio pages and thirty huge fold-out plates which recorded all the tournaments, hunts, processions, ballets, operas and plays of his reign.[85]

In other words, as Augustus travelled through Europe on his grand tour in 1687–9 he found himself in a familiar environment. There were some exceptions: while the baiting of animals was as popular in Dresden as anywhere else, the Saxons did not rise to the kind of ritual slaughter offered by a Spanish or Italian bullfight. Yet there was a difference. It was not so much that familiarity bred contempt, rather the reverse – it was the awareness that foreigners did those familiar things, but did them on so much grander a scale that left Augustus with something of an inferiority complex. The Electoral Palace in Dresden had something to be said for it: it was big; it contained a few impressive rooms (the 'Hall of Giants', for example); it had a picturesque location close to the River Elbe; but it paled by comparison with some of the palaces Augustus visited. The decorative scheme of the main state rooms, when completed (belatedly) in 1650, was 'rather provincial'.[86] By the reign of Johann Georg II it was even outpaced by the smaller but more modern palaces erected at Weissenfels and Zeitz by the two junior branches of the Albertine Wettins.[87] The response of the elector was not a major rebuild in the new baroque style, rather a refurbishment in a deliberately conservationist 'old German' (*altdeutsch*) style, which left the palace exterior still with steep roofs, irregular ground plan, asymmetric skyline and *sgraffito* façades.[88] It was charming, picturesque, but also old-fashioned, although there had been significant modernization inside.[89] A crucial shortcoming in the eyes of contemporary taste

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was the lack of a proper approach. When he first saw Versailles, Augustus would have seen a logical progression, from a broad *avant-cour*, more like an open square, narrowing to a square court, followed by a second and smaller court and finally a three-sided marble court focused on the holy of holies – the royal bedroom.[90] There was nothing comparable in Dresden, where the palace could be entered by several gates.

It is not clear what impressed Augustus most on his tour. The buildings? The paintings? The drama? The operas? The hunting? The banquets? The balls? The masquerades? The ladies of the court? The ladies of the brothels? Perhaps surprisingly, a good case could be made for the jewels. As we shall see later, Augustus devoted a great deal of time to and lavished enormous sums of money on jewellery of various kinds.[91] This was a family tradition: his grandfather, Johann Georg II, had been a fashion-setter in Germany in the 1670s with his French-style *justaucorps*, a knee-length coat lavishly decorated with precious stones.[92] Augustus's own taste can only have been intensified by his acquaintance with Louis XIV, about whom his most recent biographer has written:

> He loved jewels. In 1674 he wrote to Colbert of his need to have a case of jewels for himself and Madame de Montespan [his current mistress], so that they always had enough to suit the colour of their clothes . . . On great occasions, he was covered with jewels like the images of the Madonna carried in procession through the streets of Paris. He would wear them on his coat, hat, sword hilt and cross of the Order of the Holy Spirit. Once his coat of gold brocade was so covered in diamonds that he seemed to the Chevalier d'Arvieux to be surrounded by light.[93]

Jewels had obvious advantages: the admiration they excited was specific to the wearer; they announced wealth; they were easily portable; they could be turned into ready money in an emergency; and, because their settings could be modified to suit the current taste, they never went out of fashion. Although often overlooked by

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