

Neil Jeffares, *Dictionary of pastellists before 1800*

Online edition

COLE, Christian

London 1673–1734

British diplomat; secretary to the Earl (later 1st Duke) of Manchester. Cole was in The Hague and Ryswick with the Earl of Pembroke 1697–99 when Manchester was British ambassador extraordinary (to Venice in 1697 and to Paris in 1699), and appears to have become his secretary around this time. Cole was certainly in Italy by 1704, travelling to Venice, Verona, Padua and Rome. Manchester was appointed ambassador to Venice again in 1707, and Cole was formally accredited as secretary resident that year (at a salary of 40*s.* a day); he was chargé d'affaires 1708–14 and minister resident in Venice in 1715. He was based at Milan and elsewhere in connection with the Kurprinz von Sachsen's visit to Italy .III.–10.V.1712, and left Venice .IX.1714. Before his return to Venice in 1715 Cole married Silvestra Cooke at St Clement Dane's, giving his age in the allegation (27.I.1714 old style) as 40. His bride was 27. He made his will at the time of his marriage.

Some sources suggest that he remained in post until 1719; however, although his credentials for this second mission were issued 11.II.1715 and he was back in Venice 8.V.1715, his mission was short-lived: he never had public audience as resident; he had vacated his rooms when his successor, the historian Alexander Cunningham, arrived, 15.VIII.1715; and he had left Venice by 22.XI.1715.

Cole then travelled extensively in Europe with the soldier and diplomat John Braithwaite (1696–1740), who was to marry Cole's niece Silvia (1714–1799) in 1730; she was the daughter of Cole's brother, William, a merchant based in Amsterdam (another brother, John, was a merchant in London).

Cole was back in London in 1723 (leasing a house, 8 Cork Street); he also became involved around this time with the Thames Water in York Buildings Company (originally a water company, it diversified into property speculation with disastrous results, resulting in protracted litigation). In 1735 Cole published a compilation of *Historical and political memoirs*, which are however completely silent about his artistic activities and interests. He is known to have sought other positions, such as the governorship of North Carolina (which Manchester proposed to Newcastle), but met with no success (apart from being appointed justice of the peace for Middlesex).

He was dead by 2.XI.1734, his residuary legatee being his widow Silvestra, of Bolton Street; a probate lawsuit, *Cole v Braithwaite*, ensued. Silvestra (who was a homonym and no doubt relative of John Braithwaite's mother) was remarried, to a Sturmy Lowther, in 1736 (but not it seems to John, or Giovanni Battista, Grano [Granoë or Granom], the trumpeter, her engagement to whom was announced in the *Historical register* in .X.1734; this may be explained by another lawsuit from 1735, in which Silvestra sued Grano's brother, Lewis Christian Austin Granom).

Tomitano (cited Sani 1985, p. 79) reports a reference to Cole as an amateur pastellist. He

certainly had a keen interest in art, and was probably also involved in Manchester's invitation to Pellegrini, Marco Ricci and other Venetian artists to London c.1708–09. He is best known for his friendship with Rosalba Carriera (*q.v.*), maintaining a correspondence with her from 1704; teaching her English; and even searching for good supplies of pastels for her during his travels. He sat to her, presumably in miniature as we can infer from his letter to the artist written from Rome on 1.XI.1704:

Molti qui hanno con grandissima ammirazione, veduto il mio ritratto, fatto dalla sua arteficiosissima mano. Ho veduto qui alcuni pittori chi fanno in miniatura, ma nissun chipuo comparato con Ella.

In Rome in 1705 he ordered pastels for her of the most beautiful blue, yellow and red; as they were expensive, he insisted on their being made in his presence.

Bibliography

National Archives PROB 11/668; Burns 2007; Eidelberg & Rowlands 1994; *Handel's trumpeter: the diary of John Grano*, ed. John Ginger, 1998; Highfill & al. 1978, *s.v.* Grano; D. B. Horn, *British diplomatic representatives*, XLVI, 1932, p. 83; Ingamells 1997; Filippo Pedrocco, in Turin 2003, p. 80; Sani 1985; Whistler 2009, pp. 183ff