MAKING FASHIONABLE FURNITURE IN ENGLAND AND FRANCE DURING THE AGE OF ELEGANCE

Chapter VI

Final Thoughts and Conclusions

On the cover:

- Top Picture: The Harewood Library Table currently at Temple Newsom, picture taken by the author September 2009.

- Lower Picture: The Trellised *secrétaire á abattant* located in The Wallace Collection (F302). Picture taken from: P. Hughes, *The Wallace Collection Catalogue of Furniture Vol II,* p. 997.

A. Introduction

As outlined in the Introduction, this thesis was formed around three inter-related objectives:

- Firstly, it considered cultural, sociological and economic factors influencing the production of fashion and fashionable furniture in late 18th Century England and France
- Secondly, it developed a case study around two pieces of fashionable furniture (one English and one French)
- Finally, this case study was interpreted in such a way as to illuminate the culture and society that produced them and develop the central theme of the thesis – making fashionable furniture in the *age of elegance*.

What have been the outcomes?

Firstly (it is hoped) this thesis has had one very concrete outcome – a set of objective data which scholars interested in furniture by Chippendale and Riesener (the authors of the case study pieces) can employ to better understand (and if necessary identify) their furniture. This data represents a useful contribution to knowledge in the field and could be used to re-examine the catalogue raisonne(s) of these two significant historical figures. As noted above, this author has considerable reservations about several pieces currently attributed to these figures.

Secondly, this project also has implications for future work in this cultural field rather more generally. The detailed study of these two pieces has shone light on many aspects of the culture of C18th England and France, particularly as regards the rich subject of fashion. Hodder suggests that all cultural items are 'meaningful' in three ways; through their use,

through their symbolic meaning and through their historical significance.[1] It could be argued that the process of making the objective also provides an indication of the objects importance. One could argue that the object of this thesis has been to look at two objects in detail and to identify all three of these ways of considering their importance. It is only by using all of the information available that one gets the fullest and most accurate picture and thus achieve the final objective.

Before presenting the conclusions, some thoughts about the approaches that were used should be discussed to point up some of the issues that emerged in the course of the research journey.

B. Reflections on the Research Journey

While the general approach used in this research project was developed out of models proposed by E. Fleming, J. Prown and P. Zimmerman, this thesis places greater emphasis on detailed quantitative measures and makes a more pronounced use of comparison in order to reach its conclusions. This thesis is predicated on the belief that (in this instance) a comparative case study (of English and French examples respectively) worked to provide a much better understanding of the individual pieces of furniture at issue and ultimately allow a much better understanding of the cultural field - as least in so far as it extends to fashionable furniture in C18th England and France. The use of this model made it possible to set up a system of analysis that could easily be extended to other furniture - either by the same makers or by others.

However, even in detailing the construction of the Chippendale and Riesener writing tables, it did not go as far as it might. The following measurements would have done much to complete this analysis[2]:

[1] I. Hodder, The Contextual Analysis of Symbolic Meanings, in Hodder, I., *The Archaeology of Contextual Meanings,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 1987, pp. 1 -10.

[2] Most of these could be conducted using non-invasive techniques such as the UV-VIS Spectrometer to identify dyes, UV florescence to identify the surface coatings, and the recent analytical techniques to identify the source of glues by the Getty Centre. (See: F. Philip, UV Light Photography as an Aid in the Conservation of 18th Century Furniture, *Wag post prints,* 1997 for information on surface coating identification, H. Piening, *UV/VIS-*

- Testing the surface coatings to determine what was originally used to coat and protect these two pieces.
- X ray different joints to get a deeper understanding of the construction of these types of furniture.
- Determining the dyes used to colour the veneers.
- Testing the glues in order to determine the type of glue used.
- Microscopic analysis to identify the type of woods used.
- Dendrochronology to identify the age of the wood used and from where the wood was harvested (if possible)[3].
- Testing the metal to determine the exact make up of the different metals used to make the different components (screws, pins, locks, handles, as well as, decorative pieces).

There were many problems in organising such an all-encompassing and comprehensive analysis – most to do with time, expertise, access and technology – placing them out of the reach of this study. However, much was accomplished. For example, there was extensive research into the dyes, the surface coatings and glues to identify the *possible* ingredients that *could* have been used on the furniture examined for the case study. Research around the gilded metals used to decorate the furniture (on these pieces and in this period) has been included. So, while the research (inevitably) could go further, without a doubt a template has been set out which would allow for the research on these pieces to be more fully completed.

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*Absorbtion Spectrometry: A Non-Destructive Method For Dyestuff Identificatio*n, Presented at conference: Marquetry - Past and Present 2nd Scandinavian Symposium on Furniture Technology and Design Vadstena, Sweden May 10-12, 2007 for an approach to identify dyes, and A. Heginbotham, V. Millay, and M. Quick, The Use of Immunofluorescence Microscopy (IFM) and Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assay (ELISA) as Complementary Techniques for Protein Identification in Artists' Materials, *WAGPostprints*, 2004, Portland Oregan for information on glue identification.

[3] Obviously this is limited to situations where there is a large enough sample of the wood to allow for this type of analysis. It is also more difficult to conduct this analysis on certain species of wood (mahogany for example is thought to be difficult to analyse using these techniques.) As a result, in many cases with furniture this is not possible.

There is one issue in particular that needs to be considered when interpreting the data that presented within this thesis and that is to do with the concept of 'good workshop practice'. Many of the characteristics identified by this research, one could argue, correspond to the kind of good workshop practice that would be followed by any good C18th workshop. For example the use of the wide solid dovetails by Riesener, could be considered basic workshop practice in France and therefore this detail would not (in itself) differentiate Riesener from any of a dozen other good cabinetmakers. There are three arguments that can be set against this. The first is that although there are a number of different and acceptable ways to handle most constructional detail; individual workshops generally adopted specific and uniform practices. Secondly, it is usually a *combination* of characteristics that proves decisive – not an individual characteristic. To use a simplistic example, it is not just the shape of the dovetails in a drawer but the shape of the dovetails, *in conjunction with* the thickness of the sides, the bottom, of the front *and* the way the bottom is attached to the rest of the drawer. Thirdly, we simply do not know what the other cabinetmakers and workshops used to construct their pieces and until we conduct a similarly detailed analysis.

In addition to this there are other limitations that need to be considered despite the extensive measurements that were taken.

- First and foremost there are issues around the number of objects available for research. It has been estimated that of the types of furniture included in this research Chippendale produced a total of 10 library tables[4] and Riesener produced approximately 51 *secrétaire á abattant*s.[5] For a variety of reasons, many of these

[4] In addition to these there are a number of related piece of furniture. In particular there are three known dressing / writing tables, 4 ladies secretaries (two of which are of the form of the *secrétaire á abattant* – very similar to the ones that Riesener produced.) an artists table, a music table and six other writing tables. Of these 4 library tables are included in this research along with 1 of the dressing / writing table, one of the *secrétaire á abattant*.

[5] The number that were included in Chippendale's count are based on C. Gilbert's detailed listings of the invoiced amounts (See C. Gilbert, *The Life and Works of Thomas Chippendale*, Studio Vista/Christies, London, 1978) and the number that were include the Riesener estimates are based on the *Journal du Garde-Meuble* which counts all the furniture that was delivered to members of the Royal family (Various Authors, *Journal du Garde-Meuble,* 1761-1784, These are detailed listings of all furniture that was either delivered, ordered or repaired in service for France's Royal Households. Copies are located in The Wallace Collection Library and are available in France's archives.)

pieces were not available for research.[6] However, all the examples that were available were included in this research; for Chippendale six library tables were studied in detail and likewise there were six Riesener pieces that were examined.[7] There were also a number of pieces that were identified but could not be included because either they could not be located or the owners would not allow close inspection – again placing them beyond the reach of this study.[8]

- The comparisons developed in this thesis included comparison of Chippendale's Harewood table to similar tables made by Chippendale and for Riesener, comparisons were made to other *secrétaire á abattant* that were made by Riesener. There were also cross-comparisons developed between the furniture made by Chippendale and Riesener.

  There are several criticisms that could be levelled against these comparisons. First, as already mentioned, they are limited by number of samples but this could not be helped as many useful pieces made by these two makers were not available for viewing. Second, 'in an ideal' world one would include comparisons to furniture made by other furniture makers in order more clearly isolate those characteristics that identify either Chippendale or Riesener.[9] However this too lay well beyond the reach of this project. In this sense, the value of the thesis lies in the template it has established and the methodology that underpins it.

- Another issue that emerged in the course of the research journey was to do with resources. In particular there were elements of the scientific analysis that could not be undertaken because of lack of equipment and/or financial support which limited

[6] In the known cases, the pieces were privately owned and not available for close inspections. Those cases that were unknown, the pieces are either missing/destroyed or, again, privately owned and have never become available through a major auction house.
[7] There was also two dressing tables and two pieces which Chippendale called 'lady's' secretary' which were studied or had very detailed file notes on them.
[8] There were a total of four other pieces by Chippendale and 18 other Riesener pieces that were identified but not included in the detailed investigation.
[9] For example, if there were several English cabinetmakers included, we could clearly identify what characteristics were 'English' and which were Chippendale.

(for example) research around the dyes and glues used on the case study pieces as well as the constituents of the surface treatment.[10]

- Photographing evidence also proved problematical. In no case was it possible for the furniture at issue to be removed to a light controlled area where the furniture could be taken apart and photographed and documented in an orderly fashion. Research had to be conducted around museum opening times or in situ – and most often without assistance. While museum staff were always helpful as they could be, they (and in turn this author) had to work to the demands of the situation and organisational guidelines. On reflection, no doubt some of these problems could have been overcome by better planning and this author will approach subsequent work in a more consistent way - see below.

C. Findings

What follows here is a discussion of the findings from this research – firstly around the outcomes of the case-study and then more broadly in consideration of wider cultural issues. Following this will be a listing of the different characteristics that can be used to identify these two makers.

In Chapter 1 (p. 25), the development of the case-study was discussed, showing how the Chippendale and Riesener pieces were selected because they represented fashionable icons within their respective cultures.[11] Few would argue that the *secrétaire á abattant* is a more feminine piece than its English counterpart, which (arguably) might in turn suggest that

[10] In all likelihood most of these pieces of furniture would have been restored or conserved at some time in their history. This is evidenced by the fact that all of these pieces appear to be covered in shellac when all of the literature suggests that shellac was one surface coating that was rarely used during this period (in England it was more likely to have been protected with a type of resin varnish and in France it was more likely to have been wax (this was discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5 – starting on p. 295.)

[11] There were very few library tables produced in France and there were very few *secrétaire á abattant*s produced in England during this time.

France was more influenced by the feminine side of society. However, it could just as easily imply that there was a greater desire for more open rooms.[12]

On the Harewood Library Table (as on many other Chippendale Library Tables) there is a large drawer designed to hold architectural drawings. None of the *secrétaire á abattant*s offered such a feature, suggesting (perhaps) a greater interest in architectural matters amongst the English aristocrats than the French Royal household.[13] Another feature that differentiated the furniture lay in their respective locks. In France, there was much greater emphasis on locks although Riesener's F302 actually had much simpler locks than most of his *secrétaire á abattant*. But even this relatively simple lock was far more complicated than the locks on the Chippendale Library Table. While Riesener used a double bolt, double throw lock for the fall front, a separate spring loaded lock in the lower section, and a third single bolt lock for the safe located in the lower section, on the Chippendale piece one key was enough to open all of its simple single bolt, single throw locks. There were no 'safes' or secret compartments in the Harewood Library Table - nor in any of the other Chippendale Library Tables. The locks that Chippendale used were very simple ward locks of a poorer quality of the metal than that used in Riesener's locks, all of which strongly suggests a greater perceived need for security in France than England. [14] C. Sargentson's work would seem to confirm this need for security. [15]

The C18th saw wide-ranging changes across the social and political sphere. As this thesis shows, fashionable furniture provides further insight into (and evidence of) these changes. As discussed earlier, these two makers reflected many cultural changes such as the

[12] This is supported by the suggestion that Marie Antoinette, the original owner of F302 requested this *secrétaire á abattant* for her space in Versailles in order to replace a larger more imposing model – making this argument more relevant (File notes from The Wallace Collection files on F302, accessed in 01/2010).
[13] It is probably safe to assume that this held true for other members of the French elite, as this feature does not appear to be on any of the major types of writing furniture. While it is likely that some do have this feature, five of the six Chippendale pieces that were studied in detail had either a large drawer for drawings or the combination of a large drawer and a pull out drawing table.
[14] This is based on the condition of the metals as the metals and the movements of the locks. The locks on the Riesener piece appear shinier and with less corrosion than the Chippendale piece and the mechanism is smoother in its operation. Of course this could be the result of care received after the pieces were made, or the weather conditions or a number of other possible factors.
[15] Sargentson, C., Looking at Furniture Inside Out: Strategies of Secrecy and Security in Eighteenth-Century French Furniture, found in Goodman, D. & Norberg, K. (eds), *Furnishing the Eighteenth Century: What Furniture Can Tell us about the European and American Past,* Routledge, London, 2007, PP 205-237.

application of the Neo-Classical design approach, the interest in reading and communicating by the fact that these pieces of 'fashionable furniture' were designed for writing and storing of information and the relative level of security on these pieces, etc. Thus, in many ways these two makers did reflect these changes in many ways, the thesis also shows, however, that Chippendale and Riesener were in some ways not representative of their field. For example neither made use of the new trends in making shopping a fashionable activity.

What do we learn about fashionable furniture in C18th England and France from all of the above? We learn that shopping was an activity reshaping the cultural stage. Shops advertised their wares, they set up displays and a new breed of sales staff helped a new breed of customer make their selections and more furniture sellers in both England and France were devising new ways to promote their services and products to potential buyers. Saying this, neither Chippendale nor Riesener seemed to have had an actual storefront and both specialized in high quality work for a limited client base.[16] While both businesses prospered, they operated in entirely different ways. Riesener produced large volumes of innovative cabinet or case furniture (containing new locking devices, mechanical movements to tables, an unusual configuration of drawers or shelves, etc. Chippendale, on the other hand, grew his business by offering a variety of services to his clients in addition to cabinetmaking; such as upholstery and soft furnishings such as curtains and bedding etc.. While Riesener specialized (arguably) Chippendale generalized.

Like other furniture makers who offered their products to others, both Chippendale and Riesener did actively 'market' themselves, although Chippendale's efforts were much more advanced in this respect, particularly in the publication of a *Director* which served to establish Chippendale's reputation for high-end fashionable furniture. Riesener on the other

[16] Please note that 'normal' in this case is referring to other fashionable furniture makers. As with any market, there were apparently different layers to the furniture trade during this period. In France, this refers to the furniture produces and sold by other guild members this of course included the *Merchard Merciers* and in England this includes those high end furniture makers such as William Ince and John Mayhew, John Linnell, William France, Matthias Lock, etc. There were probably in both countries, furniture makers who produced furniture that was affordable to a part of the population that could not afford furniture by these makers, however that is not part of this research.

hand, used his skills to produce the kind of virtuoso work that would secure the patronage of the French crown.[17]

The thesis hypothesized that both Chippendale and Riesener can be seen to adopt many of the strategies that relate to the furniture making business today, although neither (like the rest of the furniture field) were employing the kind of machinery associated with mass production techniques. For example:

- Both cabinetmakers were very consistent in terms of the excellence of construction and the the quality of materials used in making their furniture; high standards and close supervision were clearly the order of the day.

- Regarding the above, there was little consistency in the thickness of the wood or in the exact sizes of the furniture or the sections of furniture across different pieces. This suggests that neither of these two shops would (for example) plane a large selection of timber to be used for drawer sides or bottoms over an extended period of time nor did they set absolute standards for this particular characteristic. And while we know that in the early C19th the French cabinetmakers at least started to put their marquetry work into packets - in order to cut multiple copies of the same patterns at the same time - this does not appear to have been the case in either Chippendale or Riesener's workshop.

- Both cabinetmakers showed a preference for Neo-Classical design. Chippendale set out this vision in his *Director* of course, while Riesener's preference can be read from the furniture that emerged from his workshop.

The fact that there were so many differences in the measurements of the pieces made by these two cabinetmakers supports a conclusion that was suggested by the research elsewhere in this thesis - that much of the work undertaken by these cabinetmakers was bespoke. We know from the literature that both Chippendale and Riesener used to visit

[17] Recall this is the creation of the *Bureau du Roi* for King Louis XVI that was completed in 1769.

their clients to discuss their requirements and to take measurements. The fact that the pieces examined in this thesis vary so much in their overall measurements suggests this.

Regarding the concept of 'good working practice', as mentioned earlier, there was a hypothesis suggested to this author that the French were good at producing wonderful looking pieces but English produced furniture of workmanship. That proved (on close inspection) to be completely false. While in all cases where the provenance of the piece was known, the pieces were equally of the highest quality, both in terms of the craftsmanship and in the materials used; whether by Chippendale or by Riesener. In the few pieces where the quality seemed questionable, the provenance was weak and the attribution was debatable.

The design of the case-study pieces at issue also speaks to the culture in which they were produced. In both cases, there were elements in their design that related to the rooms in which the furniture was to be placed. Both designs reflect the changing fashions – moving from Rococo to the Neo-Classical, following the lead provided by architects in this area. It is also interesting to note that while Chippendale had previously been known for furniture with little marquetry or ormolu, the Harewood Library Table was just the opposite, moving toward the French look. Riesener, on the other hand, was known for his elaborate marquetry designs and ormolu used in *secrétaire á abattant* F302 using a simple repeated design – suggested a move toward simpler designs. This could reflect the mutual cultural exchange between the societies of England and France that was evidenced within this thesis.

As noted above, comparative data was vital to animating the key characteristics of the fashionable furniture of England and France in the *age of elegance.* A summary of the key characteristics of Chippendale's library tables and Riesener's *secrétaire á abattant*s are represented by the table below.

Table 6-1
Summary of Key Characteristics
Chippendale's Library Tables and Riesener's *Secrétaire á Abattant*

	Chippendales Library Tables	Riesener's *Secrétaire á Abattant*
Overall Characteristics		
Overall Measurements	• All of the tables were of different sizes on depth and width, but the height was similar for all (average of 80 cms) and there were consistencies such as the top-drawer section that was always slightly over 15 cms. The height of the feet or plinth and the pedestal were also consistent.	• While there was a number of Riesener *secrétaire á abattant*s that were similar in size, all were slightly different (about 7 were the same height – about 144 cm in height and of these about
Structural Woods Used	• The primary woods used for construction of Chippendale's tables were Oak, 'deal[18]' and occasionally mahogany for things such as the drawer front. • In all cases (except 1) the wood used was of the highest standard; all were quarter sawn, straight grain with very few knots.	• The primary wood used for the construction of *secrétaire á abattant* of Riesener's was Oak, with the occasion use of mahogany for drawer fronts. • In all cases (except 1) the quality of the wood used was of the highest standard; all were quarter sawn, straight grain, and had very few knots.
Decorative woods	• The veneers that were used for Chippendales Library Tables were generally very simple applications of mahogany. The only two exceptions to this were the Harewood pieces, which used holly, rosewood, satinwood and tulipwood as well as a number of dyes.	• The opposite could be said of Riesener, in general, Riesener used a variety of as his pieces, historically, used a wide variety of veneers to decorate his *secrétaire á abattants.* However, his workshop used a much simpler design on F302 and in many of his later pieces, he used solid woods veneers, similar to the approach by Chippendale. (On F302, Riesener was believed to have used Satane, Purplewood, some kind of fruitwood (apple, pear, etc.), Barberry, Holly, Tulipwood, Ebony, Boxwood, Walnut and Sycamore.)
Structural Design	• The basic design of the Harewood Library Table was what was labelled in Chapter 5 as Version A – The Complete Top Drawer design[19]. This was one of two that were used by Chippendale. The top drawer was used primarily when there was a drawing table embedded in one side. • The key characteristics of this design is that the top rests on a structure that stretches across the width and depth of the table and containing the centre drawing drawer and four corner drawers. Below this are two matching pedestals that rest upon plinths. • The basic design for this table was also used by Chippendale for the solid mahogany Library Table at Nostell Priory. The differences were that the Nostell Priory Library Table used feet and not a plinth as a	• The design of the Trellis marquetry *secrétaire á abattant* (F302) was very similar to the standard *secrétaire á abattant* design that Riesener used throughout his career. The general characteristics of this model were the cantered corners, the bracket feet, the two sections (lower storage section and the upper fall front section) and marble top with ormolu gallery. • Inner structure was of three separate sections – a 'box' in the lower section, another box in the top section (behind the fall front) and a rectangular section for the top drawer. All of this was enclosed with an outer shell and sat on a stand with bracket feet.

[18] As mentioned before this was either pine, fir or spruce all of which generally came from northern Europe.
[19] See Chapter V. p. 202 for a detailed explanation.

Table 6-1 Summary of Key Characteristics Chippendale's Library Tables and Riesener's *Secrétaire á Abattant*		
	Chippendales Library Tables	**Riesener's *Secrétaire á Abattant***
	base; the surface was decorated with carved ornaments and mahogany veneer and was not covered in marquetry.	
Detailed Characteristics		
Drawer Construction	• Front dovetails were long and slender. Also, the thickness of the wood in front of the drawer was about 7mm. • The back dovetails were short and squatty. • With the grain running from side to side, the bottom was placed in a rebate then pinned in with a piece of wood to act as a runner for the bottom.	• The dovetails on the drawer front were shorter and wider than Chippendale's. • The back dovetails were similar to that of Chippendales. • Also with the grain running from side to side, the bottom slid along small rebates entering from the back of the drawer. • The drawer bottom usually had a small curved rebate cut into the bottom.
Drawer Cavity Construction	• The drawer cavities had oak runners on either side of the cavity. • The drawers were stopped by small hexagonal pieces of oak.	• The drawer for the large drawers cavities usually had oak runners on either side of the drawers but the smaller drawers did not have runners. • Often small strips of amaranth acted to protect the sides of the drawer cavity.
Locks	• Chippendale in general used very simple ward locks on all of his furniture. The locks had a single rectangular bolt, it is fully extended on one turn, and the same key worked all of the locks on a single piece of furniture. • The one exception to this was the Nostell Priory Library Table that used a very unusual (for Chippendale) S-shaped key and had, on the pedestal doors, locks that were located in the centre of the door.	• Riesener tended to use very complicated locking systems. Nearly all *secrétaire á abattant*s had three different keys. The top drawer was usually locked with the mechanism on the fall front. This lock usually had two bolts and required at least two turns to lock the fall front and the top drawer. Frequently there were bolts extending to each side as well as to the top. On occasion, there was also a bolt that opened a secret compartment amongst the drawers in the top section. There was usually a safe in the lower section and frequently it was disguised as two drawers. The lower cabinet usually had a spring-loaded lock.
Other Constructional Characteristics	• Chippendale usually used a plinth to stand the two pedestals of his library tables onto instead of individual feet (he only used feet on one example – the Nostell Priory Library Table) • Chippendale's Library tables frequently had two sides to them; differing on the internal features of the pedestals. On the front side the pedestals usually contained three drawers. On the backside they contained slots for files.	• The backs of Riesener's *secrétaire á abattant* were constructed of panels that slide into place from the bottom and were screwed in at the bottom. • The Lower cabinet doors were frequently closed with spring loaded locks and used a 'tongue and groove' joint to secure their attachment • The feet on Riesener's *secrétaire á abattant* were virtually always very simple bracket feet that mirrored the canted angle of the rest of the furniture.
Design	• As mentioned before most library tables	• All of the design elements that were

Table 6-1 Summary of Key Characteristics Chippendale's Library Tables and Riesener's *Secrétaire á Abattant*		
	Chippendales Library Tables	**Riesener's *Secrétaire á Abattant***
Elements	were custom designed (even though the general patterns could be identified in the *Director*.) This usually meant that the design elements were also frequently custom designed to match the surrounding area – some however were very simple with only slight embellishments. • The Harewood Table was decorated much differently from other tables. In most cases, the decoration was fairly simple. In the case of the Harewood table there is extensive use of ormolu, marquetry of Classically (Adam) inspired design elements, many of which were also used in the room where the piece was originally located. • The design was similar to that used in the Nostell Priory Library Table and one that appeared in Chippendale's *Director*.	used on F302 could be found on other Riesener pieces. The flowered trellis design was found on several cabinets and commodes, the detailed floral ormolu was found on many of Riesener's later pieces of both *secrétaire á abattant*s, commodes and corner cabinets. • Riesener was known to have executed both simpler and more complicated designs as what was used on this particular piece.
Features	All of these features were common on Chippendale's Library Tables: • A large drawer to hold architectural drawings that locked. • A pull out drawing table that the user could adjust both the height and angle to suit their needs. This was disguised as a drawer emanating from one side of the table. • Locks on all four-pedestal doors. • The ability to use the table from both sides, with two sets of drawers in the pedestals on the front and two sets of file dividers in the pedestals on the back. • Top drawers with locks on each corner (when there was no drawing stand).	These features were common on Riesener's *Secrétaire á abattant*s: • Separate keys for the top, bottom and the safe. • A safe in the lower section. • A top drawer that stretched across the top section, above the fall front. • A marble top.
Design Elements	• Chippendale custom designed his Library tables to fit the room that it was to be placed. Many times this included adding decorative elements that reflected the decorations in the room. Two key examples of this were the Harewood Library Table and the Nostell Priory Library Table. (See Chapter Five, pp. 231-232) • On the Harewood Library Table, Chippendale made use of extensive marquetry, dyed veneers, and ormolu.	• As with Chippendale, Riesener custom sized and decorated the pieces to fit the situation where the *secrétaire á abattant* was to be placed. Furniture had some of the decorative elements used in the room on the furniture itself, plus the size and shapes of the pieces were custom designed for the situation.

D Contributions to Knowledge

As can be seen from the table above, this thesis has attempted to develop a useful template to identify the work of two important C18th cabinetmakers – Chippendale & Riesener. While additional research is needed, this thesis has developed data that should help in the identification of furniture produced by these two figures and so contribute to knowledge within the field. One proof of the usefulness of this data emerged around *attributed* pieces examined in the course of research that failed to convince this author of their authenticity.

As part of this process, one of the outcomes was to produce the beginnings of a database that would be used to catalogue pieces of furniture in subsequent research. If for example this were to set a standard for the field, this work could be combined with that developed by others to set up a useful and authoritative system for cataloguing furniture made by different makers. While the database assembled in this thesis around the work of Chippendale and Riesener represents a start, it is clear that many further revisions and additions will have to be made in order to complete the data base and provide a useful vehicle for collectors, dealers, auction houses and museum personnel as well as scholars interested in material and design history.

One might ask why we should study furniture or analyse the way that furniture is made. The answer to this is complicated. At the practical level, this detailed study of the creation of fashionable furniture will enable museums, auction houses and individual collectors to better understand the products they own. One will see that as the result of the detailed analysis offered by this thesis, the identification of both Chippendale and Riesener furniture is much closer to being a science as opposed to an art, as was often suggested in early interviews.[20] This more systematic and rigorous approach in this thesis provides a clear and

[20] There are two points that should be made here. First of all the use of these two terms 'art' and 'science' should be considered. By the use of these terms I am referring to the earlier discussion of the response to my initial inquiries into this area of study. Like the field of conservation itself, in the past, it has been steeped with secret formulas, and methods that were not discussed in open forums. As a result the act of identifying a particular maker of a piece of furniture was more of a personal judgment based on general impressions and individual beliefs. Conclusions are based solely on the documentation, the style of the piece (relative to pictures of other similar pieces) overlaid with the personal experience of the evaluator – the 'art' of identification. I propose here that the 'artistic' component should be replaced by a more rigorous approach.

objective data which will help any professional identify with a great deal more certainty whether (or not) a particular piece of furniture was made either Chippendale or Riesener. It also offers a model which could (by extension) be developed to identify the work of cabinetmakers from other countries and different time periods. The information tabled here should also aide in the conservation of furniture made by these two makers - in that the conservator will be better informed as to what the original cabinetmaker made use of in the way of materials or intended to express through his furniture. It may also prove useful in guiding certain forms of testing and evaluation (e.g. what types of dye would expect to see employed on a particular piece of furniture) and thus potentially save both time and money.

There is also a much broader and ultimately much more important reasons for studying furniture design. As Fleming notes:

> *"To known man we must*[21] *study the things he has made – the Parthenon, the Panama Canal, Stonehenge, the computer, the Taj Mahal, the space capsule, Michelangelo's Pietà, the highway cloverleaf, the Great Pyramid, Rembrandt's self-portraits. The artifacts made and used by a people are not only a basic expression of that people; they are, like culture itself, a necessary means of man's self-fulfillment."*[22]

While this list contains only grander examples of art, architecture and technical advancements, Fleming goes on to insist that the inclusion of all cultural materials is vital. This thesis contributes to knowledge in demonstrating how the study of furniture can provide just such meaningful insight into how culture develops, highlighting interesting cultural differences between England and France, particularly in terms of fashion and its

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By comparing the constructional elements of a piece to known examples as a replacement for professional judgments in combination with the review of documentation and historical reviews, one can be more assured of the final decision than with personal or professional 'judgment'. This process, of course, depends on both money, the ability to conduct certain tests or observations and the availability of prior studies. Further, it will never be a process that is completely devoid of professional or personal judgment, but what is proposed here is that it will gradually be reduced by the move toward more objective, observational – 'scientific' methods.

[21] Italics are mine for emphasis, the quote came from: Fleming, E., 1974, Artifact Study: A Proposed Model, *The Winterthur Portfolio,* Vol. 9, p. 153.

[22] Fleming, E., 1974, Artifact Study: A Proposed Model, pp.. 153-173.

impact upon furniture. This also represents a distinct contribution to knowledge in the field for those academics interested in material culture and C18th fashion.

One outcome of this research is to set up a model for the collection and synthesis of data from other pieces of furniture and to therefore begin the process of actually setting up a database into which the information could be inputted in some kind of standard way. The following table is such a generalized approach. One pivotal point in the setting up this database is the basic structure of the piece, which is defined in the Structural Design section of this model. This basic structure will define precisely what measurements are to be taken (for example with the Library Table one question that needs to be addressed is how to measure the height of the pedestals). It is in this 'basic structure' one defines, for example, how many drawers are to be measured, and how many cabinet doors need to be measured and the location of both sets of characteristics. One important ambition is to take the finally determined measurements on as many examples of these pieces of furniture as possible as it will aid in the analysis which is outlined immediately following this Data Collection Model.

The following table details the information that will be needed for this model.

Table 6-2
Data Collection Model

Area of Inquiry		
	Specific Questions Asked	**Comments**
General Description		
	• Outstanding Features. • Type and function of furniture. • Reasons for importance. • General description of decorative style. • Key features.	• Include pictures showing overview and each of the decorative features mentioned.
Historical Context (provenance)		
	• Summary of History of the piece. o Who was the original owner? o Reasons for its production. o Whose workshop produced this piece?	• Note any documentation (both primary and secondary sources) supporting its history.
Historical Context (Key events and fashions of the time)		
	• Discuss any key events or tends that may impact the design or the making of the piece of	• Were there any key fashions that impacted how this piece was made?

Table 6-2 Data Collection Model		
Area of Inquiry		
	Specific Questions Asked	**Comments**
	furniture.	• Were there any political/social/military events that affected either the design or with what materials were used to produce the piece?
Design Features		
STYLE	• General design. • List specific design elements (e.g., any Gadrooning, acanthus leaf designs) • Discuss any inspirations for the design elements (e.g. Roman or Greek designs) • Who designed the piece (Was it the architect? A furniture maker? Or other?)	• If known, relate this piece to the room in which it was originally made. (e.g., What design elements were common between the two items?, What colours were used on the piece and the room?) • Describe the room (e.g., its size, where the furniture was located) • List the decorative elements and describe how each of the decorative elements were executed (e.g., carving, marquetry, ormolu)
STRUCTURAL[23]	• Produce a drawing of the overall structure (Note this structural 'map' may require removal of cover panels to define the actual structure and joints connecting different structural elements.) • Draw and discuss key features and functions of the piece (e.g., drawers, shelves, special locks, safes, etc.)[24]	• Use the overall designs to guide the key measurements for comparisons to similar pieces – develop the measurement table based on these drawings. • Identify where possible the joints used to connect different structural components. • Include pictures as well as verbal and quantifiable descriptions of each key feature. • Include any x-rays of joints connecting key structural elements.
Materials used in Making this Piece		
	• Structural Woods – Identify each of the woods used in the structural components of the piece. Include the materials used to make drawers, shelves as well as supporting materials.	• Include testing (e.g. d dendrochronology) and any microscopic evidence used in identifying wood. • Speak to the quality of the wood and it's condition (e.g., type of cut, quality of the grain, how well it has maintained its shape)
	• Decorative woods and related material (Identify each of the woods that visible on the outside of the piece. This includes any trim, any veneers and any marquetry. Of course if any non-wood materials, such as	• Include testing (e.g. d dendrochronology) and any microscopic evidence used in identifying wood. • Speak to the quality of the wood and it's condition (e.g., type of cut, quality of the grain,

[23] This will drive much of the research that will follow.

[24] Laser scanning techniques would be the most accurate approach to making the measurements, however an understanding of the structure is needed before finalizing the measures. For example, one needs to know the type of pedestal that is used on a particular Library Table before knowing how to measure the height of the pedestal. See K. Cain, Drawing Accurate Ground Plans from Laser Scan Data, Institute for the Study and Integration of Graphical Heritage Techniques (INSIGHT), Web site: www.insightdigital.org/PDF%20papers/**Plans**.pdf Accessed 28–December-2010, for an application of this technology to architectural research.

Table 6-2 Data Collection Model		
Area of Inquiry		
	Specific Questions Asked	**Comments**
	shell, turtle shell, or mother of pearl, it should be noted.)	how well it has maintained its shape)
	• Metals in support of the pieces structure (e.g. pins or nails, screws, brackets)	• Describe the location and the use of the item. • Describe the material used and the reason for the conclusion. Of course, include any testing used to reach this determination (e.g., XRF)
	• Metals used in functional features (e.g. locks, knobs or handles, hinges)	• Describe the location and the use of the item. • Describe the material used and the reason for the conclusion. Of course, include any testing used to reach this determination (e.g., XRF)
	• Metals used for more decorative functions.	• Describe the location and the use of the item. • Describe the material used and the reason for the conclusion. Of course, include any testing used to reach this determination (e.g., XRF)
	• Surface Coatings.	• Describe the location and the use of the item. • Describe the material used and the reason for the conclusion. Of course, include any testing used to reach this determination (e.g., UV-VIS Spectrometer).
	• Dyes	• Describe the location and the use of the item. • Describe the material used and the reason for the conclusion. Of course, include any testing used to reach this determination (e.g., Cross sectional analysis with UV light[25])
	• Glues	• Describe the location and the use of the item. • Describe the material used and the reason for the conclusion. Of course, include any testing used to reach this determination (e.g., The Getty Centre's protein analysis to identify the type of animal used to produce the glue[26].)

[25] The recommended approach is the UV/VIS-absorbtion spectrometry which is a a non-destructive method for dyes identification that has been developed by Dr. Heinrich Piening (reference: (H. Piening, UV/VIS-Absorbtion Spectrometry: A Non-Destructive Method For Dyestuff Identification, Presented at conference: Marquetry - Past and Present 2nd Scandinavian Symposium on Furniture Technology and Design Vadstena, Sweden May 10-12, 2007).

[26] One process is one in which the type of animal used is identified by an analysis of the proteins present in the glues. See: A. Heginbotham, V. Millay, M. Quick, The Use of Immunofluorescence Microscopy (IFM) and Enzyme-Linked Immunosorbent Assay (ELISA) as Complementary Techniques for Protein Identification in Artists' Materials, *WAGPostprints*, 2004, Portland Oregan.

The following table outlines the analysis approach that is suggested by this research.

Table 6-3 Data Analysis Model	
Specific Questions Asked	**Comments**
• Discuss as many comparisons as appropriate such as ○ Similar pieces made by the same workshop. ○ Similar pieces produced by other workshops, but within the same period and country/region ○ Similar pieces made by workshops in other countries.	• Attempt to answer the questions: ○ How similar/dissimilar is this piece from other pieces (made by the same workshop, other workshops)? ○ What characteristics make this consistent or inconsistent with other pieces in the comparison? ○ Why do these differences exist between this piece and the others to which it is being compared?
• After reviewing the structure and having made comparisons (where possible and appropriate) relate the design and the making of this piece to its historical context.	• Relate materials used to the practices that were known to have been in use at the time the piece was made (Are the two consistent?, Why not?) • Relate the material selection to the key events of the time (e.g. Were there events occurring that impacted the material selection?) • How do the decorative elements relate to the 'fashions' of the time the piece were made? • How does the function of the piece relate to 'fashions' of the day?

E Further Research

There are several directions that it is hoped that the future research might take. First of all, there is much data needed to complete the objectives set out in this thesis. This would require further testing to determine (and in some cases confirm) the different materials employed in the furniture at issue in the thesis, particularly the two pieces by Chippendale and Riesener that lie at the heart of the thesis. Of particular interest (to this author) would be a testing regime to confirm a) the constitution of the dyes, glues and varnishes employed on the pieces; b) the formulas for the different metals that used on the pieces; together

with c) a microscopic analysis of the timbers. Such work would require time, technology and (not least) access.

There are a number of other directions that this research could take. For example:

- Expanding the research to include different types of furniture made by these two cabinetmakers. Perhaps the first step in this progression would be to include other pieces of writing furniture by Chippendale and Riesener (for Chippendale for example this might include dressing tables and art drawing tables - for Riesener it might include *secrétaires* on stands. Following this might come commodes.
- Expanding the research to include other furniture makers. The idea here would be to begin the process of cataloguing other key C18th cabinetmakers.
- Another project that could be very valuable would to produce a definitive history of writing furniture. While there is one short history that is currently available, this type of furniture is exceptionally important in terms of its cultural implications[27].
- Another important project would be to try to establish (by avocation and dissemination) a common template (and open database) for the collection of data relating to furniture makers, so that different museums, conservators, collectors and auction houses could more easily share and access such data.
- Another project would be to continue the process of translating key texts (that proved useful in this research) into to English. The first text of this kind (since its translation by this author is almost complete) would be the book by P. Verlet on Riesener. Further texts would include both Roubo's *L'Art Du Menuisier Ébéniste* (Paris 1772) and on Watin's *L'art du peintre, doreur, vernisseur 3rd Ed,* (Paris 1776).

One immediate outcome of this research is that it has generated interested in the support of research that is desired by a major collector and research in the field. This is leading to A a request for proposals for two particular research projects one involving the application of the approaches discussed in this thesis to a comparison between an American cabinet maker (Thomas Tufts) and another project on later pieces by Riesener. In both of these

[27] M. Bridge, *An Encyclopaedia of Desks,* The Apple Press, London, 1988.

instances, the goal is to identify some of the key combination of discriminating characteristics that would suggest the maker's identification. The pieces that are to be studied are currently at a number of well known museums (The Met in NY, Versailles, The Wallace Collection, as well as museums in Boston, Philadelphia, and Washington D.C.) In addition to the detailed measurements that were taken within this thesis, the research group has authorized the inclusion of some of the detailed testing that was mentioned earlier. These proposals are currently being developed for submission.