Title: *The Agency of Portrayal*

This workshop explores how portrayals of women in both literary and visual media function as active agents in the shaping of the identity and reputations of the portrayed - or how such representations reflect the identities of those around them. Though discussions of the agency of the patron/sitter is also essential to understanding how portraiture may have functioned in the early modern period, this workshop seeks to focus the discourse of portrayal on the portrayal itself. In so doing, we seek to examine the how of identity formation, triangulating between portrayal, portrayer, portrayed, and the reader/viewer.

Organizers:
- Saskia Beranek, Colby College, Art and Architectural History
- Sheila ffolliott, Professor Emerita, Department of History and Art History, George Mason University, sffolli@gmu.edu
- Sandra Friesen, English Instructor, Langara College, Vancouver, BC
- Kyungran Park, PhD Candidate, Department of English, University at Buffalo, kyungran@buffalo.edu

This workshop begins from a position of asking how portraits established or challenged identities, activated spaces, circulated in familial and economic networks, and functioned in forging alliances. Under the rubric of collectivity, we will pose questions about how representations of and by women engage in creating and maintaining certain types of spaces, how they circulated to both create and recreate individual and collective identities, and how their presence and absence anchored or dissolved social networks. Spanning literary studies, art history, and architectural history, our point of departure is the contention that representations of women in text and image are themselves active agents in all of the social practices noted above. Discussions of painted portraits have often centered on issues of iconography and likeness, exploring how symbolic and mimetic conventions have been used in the representation of women. Broader studies of patronage have stretched the study of women’s portraits to include hypotheses about the agendas of the female patron/sitter. Though this is an essential component of the study of early modern representations of women, it does not go far enough: it does not consider that the agendas of the patron may differ radically from the messages received by viewers. The act of viewing, of constructing images of an individual based in the assemblage of art, architecture, correspondence, sculpture, rumor, and gossip, complicates how early modern viewers may have received images of women. To fully unravel how images of women worked, whether in the form of residential spaces, painted portraits of verbal encomia, we consider turning to strategies of display. This has been a fruitful avenue of discussion in recent early modern scholarship in the works of scholars like Gail Feigenbaum, Daniela Bleichmar, and an entire volume of the *Nederlandse Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*. This discourse, however, is seldom explicitly gendered.

Rather than passive reflections of faces, values, and social status, representations of women are images, spaces, and texts that possess cultural agency. That may take the form of Orange court portraiture working to generate the social space of the court in the
mind of the viewer, allegorical descriptions of women in Spenser’s *Faerie Queene* that serve as mirrors to reflect character traits back to the protagonists, or images of English women that shape and reshape the perceptions of courtly ladies characters as disorderly, just to name some of the interests of the organizers of this panel. Representations of women are deeply engaged not in the passive reflection of what and who women are but in the active creation of what they might become. We encourage participating scholars to contribute flash contributions of their own case studies researching the affective agency of portraits in an attempt to establish methodologies and theories for studying the cultural work that representations do and for finding creative solutions to undocumented - or undocumentable - responses to representation.

We invite scholars from all disciplines to join us for an examination of how representations of women gain agency after they leave the hands of their creators and patrons through posing a series of questions: In what ways can representations themselves be said to have agency and in what ways is this agency demonstrable? Since this is dependent on viewer response, how can scholars accurately gauge this type agency, since response is likely to be highly variable and subjective? How does such a response impact viewer and subject? Do cases where the representations may be a direct result of the agency of the subject function differently than those where no such influence can be registered? These could be said to be questions that universally apply to images and texts, but in what ways are these practices specifically gendered, and how were the stakes different when women are represented? How do literary and art historical theories of allegory and narrative inform the ways in which the presentation (and representation) of women in the early modern period functioned? How do we effectively and responsibly triangulate between patron, producer, and consumer of representations of women?

Readings:

Lady Cobham, *Letter from the French Court* (selections), 1580. 1 ½ pages.

Selection from Alastair Fowler's “Perspective and Realism in the Renaissance” in *A Companion to Tudor Literature*, 2010. 3 pages.

Edmund Spenser, *Faerie Queene* Book 2, 1590. 2 pages (9 stanzas)


Suggested readings:


John Harold Wilson, *Court Satires of the Restoration*, 1976; available online in .pdf

189. LADY COBHAM (wife of the English Ambassador) at the French Court, Feb ? 1580
(Calendar of State Papers, Foreign, Elizabeth, 174-176)

Being invited on Shrove Monday by Queen Mother to her own house, where sumptuous feast was to be kept, I was met at the stairhead by a great ‘scoort’ of ladies, among whom were duchesses and countesses, and was led by them into a chamber where the Princess of Lorraine and the Princess of Condé were awaiting the coming of the young queen. Queen Mother being sick, appointed the king and the queen his wife, in her absence, to solemnize the feast.

Afterwards I was brought down into the hall where the feast was kept. There the king met me. He saluted me with a kiss and bade me welcome, offering to do me all the service he could. He said he was very desirous to see the Queen my mistress; to which I answered that she desired as much to see him. He said, moreover, it would be great job to him if he could see her Majesty and his brother together, professing that as long as she enjoyed the presence of his brother she had as it were a part of himself. I answered that I referred that to the will of God and his brother’s good affection.

Then he desired of me her Majesty’s picture, of which he had heard from M. Gourdan. My answer was that I had made a vow the first that should see it should be his mother, who as I heard was then sick, which my mistress would be very sorry to hear. He told me that it was but ‘lickell’ cold which she had taken, and no doubt she would soon recover. He said further, he ‘thought beholding’ to her Highness that she was so careful of his mother’s good health. Then he desired again to see the picture, which I told him was very excellent; wherefore I trusted he would the rather hold me excus’d ‘for that I made it so dainty.’ Then with a smiling countenance he left me, saying that the ambassador’s wife was much changed; and in my sight he charged the Princess of Lorraine and the Princess of Condé to accompany me, commanding that I should sit at his own table.

By this time the meat was ready on the table furnished. We stayed therewith a great while for the coming of the young queen. Meantime questions arose among the ladies what could be the cause of her staying so long; to which some answer’d it was that she was to be gorgeously appareled that day. At last she came in such sumptuous and costly attire, indeed so decked and ‘besceatt [beset]’ with precious stones and pearls, and so gallantly set out, that it was a most goodly sight to behold.

At her entrance I was shown to her. She saluted me with a kiss, and bade me welcome. I humbly thanked her, and said for my excuse that I would have done my duty to her long before, if I had not been hindered by sickness since my coming over. She answered she had heard of it, and was sorry for it; being then as glad of my recovery, and to see be walking. She asked how the Queen did; I answered, I trusted she was very well, and would rejoice to hear the like of her.

Then the king took his queen by the hand and led her to the table, where was a towel ready prepared. One part of it was wet and the other dry. This the queen took, and kissing it, gave it to the king. When they had wiped their hands, the queen made low courtesy to the king, and they sat down together.
The king and queen and the rest took their places in order. A little distance from the queen sat the Princess of Lorraine, over against whom I was placed. The feast was very plentiful, with rare dainties. I was ‘carved unto’ on all sides, and much looked upon.

After dinner the queen called me to her in the presence of the king and desired to see the picture; saying I should not break my vow in showing it to her, because she was the queen. Thereupon I showed it to her, and she was looking at it, the king suddenly took it from her, so that it was well viewed by both.

The king said it was an excellent picture; the queen asked me if she were like it. I answered that she was. Then said the queen is a very fair lady. I told them her Majesty had commanded that whenever I came in the presence of them both, I should wish her there. They said again that if wishing would have prevailed, they would have been together many times long ago.

Then I said to the queen: if it should happily fall out that the Queen my mistress and your Majesty might meet, it might then be truly said that two of the goodliest creatures and greatest queens in the world were together.

She answered that as appeared by the picture it might be very true of my mistress, but not in respect of herself. I answered that in my opinion she much resembled my mistress; and indeed she does, not only in my opinion, but in that of others. So the queen thanked me for the good opinion I had of her, and asked me if I could find in my heart to part with the picture. I answered that the greatest comfort which I have, being absent from my mistress, is to behold it. Hearing that, she said she would not do me so much injury as to request it from me; but commended me greatly for loving my mistress so well.

She asked me also if I had been continually at the Court. I said, not so much of late as in times past, for I have had the charge of a household and children to look to. She asked me how many of them were here. I said but one. And she desired greatly to see him; for which I thanked her, and promised that when he was a little able to prattle he should wait upon her. But she said she would not forbear the sight of him so long. Then I told her he was at her commandment.

Then the king departed and commanded us to follow. He led us up into a goodly gallery, himself keeping the door till all those were entered whom he liked to have present.

Then showing the pictures to the ladies, he called me to him and brought me to those of the King and Queen of Scots, asking if I had seen them. I said I had seen the King, but the queen never.

So he passed through the gallery into a very gallant chamber richly hung round, wherein there stood a sumptuous bed. The king showed me there the picture of his father, which he said was very like him when he lived. I said it seemed by his picture he was a wise and valiant gentleman, which the king said was true.

Then he went into a very large chamber, where there was the greatest company of men and women that ever I saw in such a place at one time. The women were so gallantly and richly decked ‘as it was a world to see.’
Here the king and queen sat down in their state, and the king caused my husband to sit next him, and beneath my husband sat all the rest of the ambassadors. Next to the Queen sat the Princesses of Lorraine and Condé, the Queen’s sister, and myself; and so the duchesses and countesses with ladies and gentlewomen, all in their degrees. After a while the king rose up and took his queen by the hand and danced the ‘measures’ with her. Then bringing her to her place again, he took Madame “Dawtree” [d’Atri] and danced with her the ‘currants.’ Next he danced a galliard with Madame “Pownce” (qy. Pons) very excellent well. Afterward he danced the ‘levoltes’ very lustily; which ended, he left dancing and sat down again in his state.

Presently there came in a very gallant masque with excellent music and sweet voice. The men were attired like Portugals, and the women like Spaniards. Both had each a dart in their hands; the men had a thing in one hand that made a great jingling, the women had another device, to snap their fingers after the Spanish ‘order.’ Having done their duty to the king and queen they danced ‘on towards,’ seeming as they would wound each other with their darts. In the end the women overcame the men, and received each a garland. Then they danced again, and in a while the women gave their garlands to the men, and continued dancing. When they had made an end, the king went up into another goodly chamber, where stood a long board furnished with banqueting dishes, very curiously and cunningly wrought; also a cupboard furnished with crystal glasses set in gold, so strange and so many fashions I have not seen the like. Every table had divers ‘covred paynes’ very finely wrought, which being taken off, they fell to the banquet. Some ate and some put more into their pockets than into their bellies, so that at last all was gone. Then the king saluted the ambassador departed. The throng was so great that he himself could not pass out for a great while.

Endd.: The French courtesy to the Lady Ambassador [France IV .24 ter.]
Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene* (1590), book 2, canto 9, stanzas 36-44

Soone as the gracious *Alma* came in place,
   They all attonce out of their seates arose,
   And to her homage made, with humble grace:
   Whom when the knights beheld, they gan dispose
   Themselves to court, and each a Damsell chose:
   The Prince by chaunce did on a Lady light,
   That was right faire and fresh as morning rose,
   But somewhat sad, and solemne eke in sight,
As if some pensiue thought constraind her gentle spright.

In a long purple pall, whose skirt with gold,
   Was fretted all about, she was arayd;
   And in her hand a Poplar braunch did hold:
   To whom the Prince in courteous manner said;
   Gentle Madame, why beene ye thus dismaid,
   And your faire beautie do with sadnesse spill?
   Liues any, that you hath thus ill apaid?
   Or doen you loue, or doen you lacke your will?
What euer be the cause, it sure beseemes you ill.

Faire Sir, (said she halfe in disdainefull wise,)
   How is it, that this word in me ye blame,
   And in your selfe do not the same aduise?
   Him ill beseemes, anothers fault to name,
   That may vnwares be blotted with the same:
   Pensiue I yield I am, and sad in mind,
   Through great desire of glory and of fame;
   Ne ought I weene are ye therein behind,
That haue twelue moneths sought one, yet no where can her find.

The Prince was inly moued at her speech,
   Well weeting trew, what she had rashly told;
   Yet with faire samblaunt sought to hide the breach,
   Which change of colour did perforce vnfold,
   Now seeming flaming whot, now stony cold.
   Tho turning soft aside, he did inquire,
   What wight she was, that Poplar braunch did hold:
   It answered was, her name was *Prays-desire*,
That by well doing sought to honour to aspire.

The whiles, the *Faerie* knight did entertaine
   Another Damsell of that gentle crew,
   That was right faire, and modest of demaine,
   But that too oft she chaung’d her natuie hew:
Strange was her tyre, and all her garment blew,
Close round about her tuckt with many a plight:
Vpon her fist the bird, which shonneth vew,
And keeps in couerts close from liuing wight,
Did sit, as yet ashamd, how rude Pan did her dight.

So long as Guyon with her commoned,
Vnto the ground she cast her modest eye,
And euer and anone with rosie red
The bashfull bloud her snowy cheeks did dye,
That her became, as polish yuory,
Which cunning Craftesman hand hath ouerlayd
With faire vermilion or pure Castory.
Great wonder had the knight, to see the mayd
So strangely passioned, and to her gently sayd,

Faire Damzell, seemeth, by your troubled cheare,
That either me too bold ye weene, this wise
You to molest, or other ill to feare
That in the secret of your hart close lyes,
From whence it doth, as cloud from sea arise.
If it be I, of pardon I you pray;
But if ought else that I mote not deuise,
I will, if please you it discure, assay,
To ease you of that ill, so wisely as I may.

She answered nought, but more abasht for shame,
Held downe her head, the whiles her louely face
The flasching bloud with blushing did inflame,
And the strong passion mard her modest grace,
That Guyon meruayld at her vncouth cace:
Till Alma him bespake, Why wonder yee
Faire Sir at that, which ye so much embrace?
She is the fountaine of your modestee;
You shamefast are, but Shamefastnesse it selfe is shee.

Thereat the Elfe did blush in priuettee,
And turnd his face away; but she the same
Dissembled faire, and faynd to ouersee.
Thus they awhile with court and goodly game,
Themselues did solace each one with his Dame,
Till that great Ladie thence away them sought,
To vew her castles other wondrous frame.
Vp to a stately Turret she them brought,
Ascending by ten steps of Alablaster wrought.
Lady Cobham was Anne, daughter of Sir Henry Sutton. Walter Haddon (1516-1572) was her first husband. She survived both Haddon and Cobham. Haddon very well educated, did Latin translations, eventually ended up in Elizabeth’s court as master of requests (early on in her court). Haddon died in London, 1571/2 buried in Christ Church, Newgate Street, where, previously to the Great Fire, there was a monument to his memory. DNB for Haddon.

Catherine de’ Medici.

Called the Hotel de la Reine, located near the church of St. Eustache where the Forum des Halles is today.

Christine, Catherine de’ Medici’s granddaughter who came to live with her grandmother at her own mother’s death (Catherine’s daughter Claude married the Duke of Lorraine). Catherine arranged Christine’s marriage to Ferdinando I, Grandduke of Tuscany, and made her a principal heir.

Françoise-Marie d’Orléans-Longueville, daughter of the comte de Neuchâtel and Jacqueline de Rohan (whose mother was Italian, Giovanna Sanseverino). She married Louis Ier de Bourbon-Condé, prince de Condé (who died in 1569) and they had three sons, two of whom lived to adulthood. She died in 1601 at the Hôtel de Soissons (as it was then called—the same Hôtel de la Reine in Paris that had belonged to Catherine de’ Medici). She figures in the inventory published by Bonaffé. She was Catherine de’ Medici’s 4th-cousin-once-removed.

Louise of Lorraine.

Henri III, previously the Duc d’Anjou

Elizabeth I.

Catherine’s youngest son, the Duke d’Alencon who became d’Anjou at his elder brother’s succession.

Marguerite was her half-sister, strictly speaking (her mother was Jeanne de Savoie, while Louise de Lorraine’s mother was Marguerite d’Egmont); Marguerite de Lorraine would marry Henri III’s favorite, Anne, the Duc de Joyeuse, in September 1581.

Anne d’Aquaviella, dame d’honneur married later to the Comte de Chateauvillain

Could be two people: the wife of Antoine de Pons, Comte de Marenne or the wife of Pons de Lauzière-La Chapelle de Thémines, Sénéchal de Quercy.
Those wishing to follow the movements of sensibility accompanying the shift from the Ptolemaic to the modern world (through the medieval, Copernican, and eventually Newtonian universes) naturally have recourse to comparing contemporary literary representations of the world. But in this they meet a great difficulty: namely that methods of mimesis, or representation of life, did not meanwhile stand still. These too suffered, from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries, a series of radical metamorphoses. In particular, ideas of realism changed almost beyond recognition.

Spectator Realism

Many will think the development of realism a familiar story - so familiar that it can almost be taken for granted. But this seems to me a misconception. Of the true story of realism, less than half has ever been told. For there are at least two, distinct realisms, of which only one has been much discussed. The familiar realism is the one that became “classic realism,” the realism of Samuel Richardson or Anthony Trollope or Graham Greene – and of William Congreve, Arthur Pinero, and Terence Rattigan. In this realism action is shown as it appears to an observer. I shall lump together the variants of classic realism, calling them all “spectator realism.”

Spectators of the action were indeed often enough portrayed in pre-novelistic fiction and in drama before the dramatists named in the last paragraph. Think of the stage audiences of Jacobean drama: Andrea’s ghost in The Spanish Tragedy, for example, sitting down with Revenge to watch the play that follows: “Here sit we down to see the mystery, / And serve for Chorus in this tragedy” (1.1.90–1). Or Christopher Sly and a lord’s hunting party watching a company of travelling players acting The Taming of the Shrew. Or, a more striking example still, Claudius and his court watching The Murder of Gonzago, themselves watched by young Hamlet and Horatio, who in turn are watched by the “real” audience in the Globe. In drama dominated by the Renaissance “idea of the play” (Righter 1967), watching and deliberating spectator-gods were common enough. Shakespeare’s characters often refer to such gods: “Look down,
you gods” (The Tempest 5.1.201); “you gods, look down” (The Winter's Tale 5.3.121); “sit, gods, upon your thrones, and smile at Troy” (Troilus and Cressida 5.10.13); “The gods look down, and this unnatural scene / They laugh at” (Coriolanus 5.3.184–5); “eyes of heaven” (Hamlet 2.2.518); “You see me here, you gods” (King Lear 2.4.274). Such deities, like Bishop Berkeley’s observing God, were omnipresent, keeping things under their moral judgment – keeping them, almost, in existence.

In a somewhat earlier period (but lingering on in Shakespeare’s) the medieval dream-vision genre typically depended on a spectator who was a dreamer – sometimes a naïve one like the Chaucer of The House of Fame – who (conveniently for the reader) needed to have everything explained to him by a guide or presenter. Great differences, however, separate these medieval or early Renaissance observers from those our own spectator realism implies. One obvious difference is that in Renaissance plays and narratives the spectators (Chaucer; Christopher Sly in The Taming of the Shrew) may themselves be represented as actually engaged in spectating. They exist visibly, if only at the edge of the reader’s attention. Secondly, and less obviously, the early spectators are not always entirely passive. They participate. At the very least they may ask questions – sometimes very frequent questions – and receive answers from a guide or presenter. Occasionally they even involve themselves in the action, perhaps joining in conversation with other characters, as in The Assemblie of Ladies (anon., c. 1470–80) or Thomas Clavnove’s The Cuckoo and the Nightingale (late fourteenth century) (Spear-1 976: 179). This is hardly surprising, since it is the spectator’s experience, and the spectator’s emotions, that the dream-vision usually portrays. Its narrative is after all the dreamer’s own vision.

In the accepted model, medieval dream-vision figures as the anticipation or foreshadowing of later, more sophisticated, forms of fiction. This model is thoroughly teleological, with classic realism as its telos: The naïve dreamers of dream-vision are determined by the primitive character of the form itself. When literature becomes less uncouth, when the realistic illusion is achieved, dreamers and their allegories can be eliminated – dismantled like scaffolding no longer needed. With the advent of Ian Watt’s “formal realism” (Watt 1957), in other words, the spectator-god becomes an invisible deus absconditus. This model has appeared to work reasonably well for much fiction and drama of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries – for much of William Thackeray and Henry James, as for Pinero and Rattigan. But it has serious defects, among them the patronizing assumption that medieval and Renaissance mimesis was no more than fumbling experimentation. Besides, it gives no account of the dreamer’s or spectator’s participation in the action of medieval and Renaissance works. What about the substance of those sophisticated allegories? What of all their emotional content?

**Participative Realism**

In short, one may think of realism as composed of two distinct strands. The first, as we saw, developed from medieval allegory into spectator realism and has been much
discussed. But another strand (let us call it participatory or empathic realism) is largely ignored and little understood. It is nevertheless a vital component in Victorian literature, and still more so in modernist and more recent fiction and drama. The novels of Henry Fielding, Trollope, and George Meredith, the dramas of Henrik Ibsen, James Barrie, and Luigi Pirandello – to say nothing of absurdist drama – are obviously not cast in the mould of spectator realism.

A Spenserian passage on the border between the two narrative modes may exemplify how they interacted during the Renaissance. In The Faerie Queene 2.4.3–15 the knight Sir Guyon "saw from far, or seemed for to see" an affray which he hoped to "agree" (settle). A madman was dragging a youth by the hair and cruelly mistreating him. At first Guyon and his guide, the Palmer, are simply spectators viewing a scene of violence described in emblematic detail: the youth in the grip of a madman encouraged by a lame hag. But Guyon is no passive, apathetic spectator: "moved with great remorse" (Stanza 6) he intervenes, grappling with the madman, only to be himself overcome. Now enraged – "emboyling in his haughtie hart" (Stanza 9) – he draws his sword. But the Palmer, offering an explicatio of the complex emblems of Furor and Occasion, tells him the madman cannot be subdued by main force (so to say, will-power). Guyon must first restrain Furor's mother, the hag "Occasion, the root of all wrath and despight" (Stanza 10). As in the traditional emblem of Occasio, she must be seized by the forelock: Once things have gone too far, there is no holding the smooth back of her head, since "all behind was bald, and wore away, / That none thereof could ever taken hold" (Stanza 4). The passage is generalizing, allegorical and emblematic, but Guyon and the Palmer are real spectators, not mere fictiones. All the same, the mode is not that of our spectator realism: It is more participatory. For Guyon, too, is in the grip of passion: He is involved in the struggle, which becomes in some sense his own. And the Palmer interprets Guyon's own experience, rather than expounding universal generalities the youth's suffering exemplifies.

The narrative now turns to the youth Phedon, who has taken no part in Guyon's encounter with Furor. And for Phedon's story, Spenser shifts into a different narrative mode. As if illustrating the preceding discourse, or unfolding its emblems, Phedon's tale is not allegorical, but a simple exemplum. It is even in a tragic genre: the most realistic form then available.

In Phedon's tale (Stanzas 17–33), his false friend Philemon deceives him by getting the maid Pryene to impersonate her mistress Claribell, Phedon's love. As Phedon puts it, he himself is made "the sad spectatour of my Tragedie" (Stanza 27). He sees what he takes to be Claribell betraying him with a "groom of base degree." Although a spectator, Phedon is passionately involved: so passionately that he kills the supposedly unfaithful Claribell. The tale continues in this tragic mode, quite as realistically as Ariosto's or François de Belleforest's treatments of the story. That is, up to the point when Phedon, having poisoned Philemon, pursues Pryene to kill her too. But now Phedon finds himself totally possessed by rage. In a characteristically Spenserian peripeteia (or sudden reversal), the figure who meets and overcomes him is "this madman" (Stanza 32): the personification of his own furor. And here the narrative returns
to internalized experience and to Guyon’s adventure, the tempering of passion. Having heard Phedon’s terrible story, the temperate Guyon didactically comments, “Squire, sore have ye beeene diseasd; / But all your hurts may soone through temperance be easd” (Stanza 33). Readers and critics understandably take against this advice as priggish. It implies superiority to Phedon’s suffering or at least a disagreeable overconfidence. Temperance will not bring back Philemon or Claribell. Taking the passage as reversion to allegory hardly improves matters: The overconfidence is then authorial, and Guyon’s later downfall at the Cave of Mammon becomes problematic.

Just as Phedon, although at first a spectator of Claribell’s supposed unfaithfulness, is aroused to jealous rage and becomes intensely involved, so with Guyon. He too is at first a compassionate spectator of Phedon’s suffering at the hands of the madman. And when Guyon himself participates — struggling with the same madman — he too fails to subdue Furor until he follows the Palmer’s advice. Occasion of fury must be dealt with first: “first her restrain” (2.4.11); “the sparke soone quench” (2.4.35). Phedon’s tale illustrates this by negative example: Instead of quenching jealousy’s sparks he embraces the occasion of wrath by arranging with Philemon to witness what he takes to be Claribell’s disloyalty. Similarly Guyon accepts Mammon’s invitation to see over the Cave, and in doing so embraces its occasion of worldliness and avarice. Thus, Guyon’s glib advice to Phedon, far from showing the triteness of Spenser’s morality, is actually a shrewd touch of realism. Guyon, not Spenser, is overconfidently didactic. The reader is surely meant to receive Guyon’s advice much as Phedon may be supposed to do; feeling that Guyon makes temperance sound much too easy. As often, Spenser is blamed for his success.

One has to accept that Renaissance readers felt no incompatibility between naturalistic representation of shaded characters and allegorical representation of black-and-white ones. And in visual art similarly, from Jan van Eyck to Jan Steen, it was not thought incongruous that genre scenes or realistic portraits like The Great Picture of Lady Anne Clifford should have emblematic details or attributes (Fowler 2003: 32–6). This became more difficult with the advent of formal realism and the gradual development of consistent perspective construction. From the eighteenth century, objects in pictures tended to be plausibly naturalistic — or else the whole picture had to be visionary or symbolic. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, however, it was different, partly because the real world was then itself allegorical and emblematic (even house- and shop-signs were emblems). In literary realism, characters like the human Phedon, the heroic Guyon, and the personification Furor all belong to the same fictive world, part naturalistic and part allegorical.

Realistic effects of such a sort are by no means peculiar to Spenser: Sidney’s Arcadia and Shakespeare’s tragedies are full of them, and so is Milton’s Paradise Lost. All continue to explore and develop representational devices common in medieval fiction: for example, the dispersal of character among objects, places, and animals (Ginsberg 1983). After all, each allegorical fictio in a dream-vision is dreamt by the protagonist-dreamer, and so generated as an identification of subjective experience. The medieval allegorist does not narrate events in the external world as if viewed by a notional
skeptic, but rather presents aspects of subjective experience, encountered when the “character” (as we say) of an emotion is recognized. In dream-visions of the Middle Ages the dreamer’s participation was not often explored in much detail: For the readers or audience to be edified it was only necessary that they should identify broadly with the dreamer’s encounters. In general, they were to apply the vision to themselves, appropriating all the fictiones.

**Viewpoints**

Unlike Renaissance fiction, where perspectives perpetually change, medieval allegory shifted viewpoint less often. Exceptions include a few devotional works like the Arca Noe of Hugh of St Victor (Carruthers 1990) and – far greater exceptions – certain bold narratives of genius. In Piers Plowman (c. 1360–87), William Langland constructs multiple perspectives on a grand scale, switching the eye-point (and I-point) of his mimesis again and again. When the action is imagined from a supernal viewpoint, in the debate of the Four Daughters of God (B, passus 18), no creature can truly have a spectatorial role, since the arguments are between fictiones of God. Then, abruptly, Langland turns to Piers’s joust: to action performed, at least on one level, by human agencies. In such passages of Piers Plowman, in Dante’s exchanges with his guides Virgil and Beatrice in the Commedia Divina (21307–20), in the kaleidoscopic narrative of Francesco Colonna’s Hypnerotomachia (1499), and in late medieval allegorical fiction and drama generally, we may find models for the shifting viewpoints of Renaissance realism.

That this stage of realism had a basis in perception, or in the configuration of the imagination, is strongly suggested by the fact that visual art presents analogous forms. There, too, in manuscript illuminations, biblical dreamers like Jacob and Joseph are often pictured together with the contents of their vision. This motif, termed Assistenzporträt, continued into the seventeenth century, and can be seen again in the Rückenfigur (or “back figure”) of the nineteenth. Today, spectators in fiction are discussed in terms of the “male gaze” or the “female gaze”; but in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Dutch art theory, an altogether different range of types of beholders were distinguished. There was the beschouwer, for example, who by mime or action interpreted the action; the sprecher, who explained the work, much like the presenter of a masque; and the gesturing maidservant eavesdropping through the open door of a doorkijkje. The beschouwer was often physically involved in the action, as in countless realizations of the myth of Actaeon’s discovery of Diana (Fowler 2003: 66–76).

Literary historians have been accustomed to think of Renaissance realism as anticipating later forms. Looking forward rather than back, they have eagerly shown how, after Spenser, the conventions of spectator realism displaced those of allegory and participatory realism in a decisive, almost inexorable way. This did not happen, however, so rapidly as has been assumed. So far as Elizabethan and Jacobean drama
DISPLAY of ART in the ROMAN PALACE 1550–1750
Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION: ART AND DISPLAY IN PRINCIPLE AND IN PRACTICE

GAIL FEIGENBAUM

The purpose of this book is to explore principles, patterns, and gestures of display of art in Roman palaces as they formed and changed over the arc of the long seventeenth century. Display, as a way of organizing attention, brings a new critical dimension to our understanding of art. It has been relatively little investigated in this period or, for that matter, in any other period. Yet our book suggests that art history and theory, including the emergence of the modern category of fine art, were worked out as much in practice on the walls of palaces as in the printed pages of Giorgio Vasari, Giovanni Pietro Bellori, and other early writers on art. It follows that display constitutes a form of art-historical narrative to be considered on an equal footing with the kind of written texts that have been so attentively unpacked by scholars. Display trains our vision on the parts insofar as they function within an environment that itself is worthy of attention. In turn, individual objects and features acquire new import from their aggregation in the larger spatial surroundings. Taken in the context of display, objects that we are accustomed to think about as solo actors—including the majority of the framed paintings from this period that fill today's museums—are revealed to have functioned quite differently as ensemble players in an articulated and complex setting. Accessory decorative features, such as stucco or frames, that had barely captured our notice, leap into action as indispensable contributors to display.1

Rome is the focus of this volume because, as an international capital, it was exceptional in setting the artistic trends others would follow in Europe and beyond. In this period, the later sixteenth century through the early eighteenth century, the city was a magnet for foreign diplomats and tourists, as well as for artists and artisans, all of whom carried the models of Roman display back with them when they returned home. A new ornamental acanthus pattern created in Rome soon would be translated into engravings that were consumed in London, Paris, Augsburg, Stockholm, and Amsterdam. There was plenty of innovation to be learned, copied, sent forth, and taken away, as this period saw a rapid expansion of the city's population and a building boom in palaces, with a marked transformation of their interiors. Of the objects studied by art historians, collected, and exhibited in museums today, countless numbers once graced the interiors of a Roman Baroque palace or came from a setting inspired by one. In fact, the very convention of a paintings gallery, which became the mainstay of museums, traces its ancestry to prototypes in early modern palaces in Italy—in Florence, of course, but especially in Rome.

Fig. 1. Andrea Francesco Nicoletti (Italian, act. first half of the 18th century). Section of a Palace with Carriage, 1709(?), pen and black ink with watercolor, 40.8 × 32.7 cm (16³⁄₈ × 12⁷⁄₈ in.). Rome, Museo di Roma, G.S. 2796, fol. 5.
ones, such frescoes might be covered wholly or in part by tapestries, but not all the time, and so the frescoes were on view only when they were not covered by tapestries; likewise, a frieze just below the cornice or a band of generic decoration at floor level might be left visible. Textiles were so inextricably associated with the wall that the conceit of feigned tapestries, swags, and the like was ubiquitous in the frescoes that covered them, most prominently in the sixteenth century. In many rooms, the walls were dressed in suites of either panneaux, panels of decorative fabrics, or corni, panels of decorated leather. If there were no frescoes, bare plaster might peek out from above or below a textile that was too short or too narrow to cover a wall, something that caused real concern. Documents reveal, for example, how Cardinal de’ Medici’s staff rushed to complete the renovations in his residence in Rome; they scrambled to piece together existing tapestries, or procure new ones, and to rig the proper patchwork to cover the exposed bits above the doors and windows in the freshly plastered rooms.

The mobile and impermanent soft decorations—the dressing of the palace as one dresses the body—are only one indication that continual change was a fact of everyday display. Objects were on the move well beyond what was requisite to decorate for a special occasion like a banquet. As the discussions in this book about textiles, rental properties, and the circulation of objects among properties and families attest, Baroque display was as provisional and ephemeral as it was
impressive and elaborate. Gian Lorenzo Bernini’s baldacchino is the paradigmatic demonstration of this, a monument to and about ephemeral display, a mobile ciborium, fixed in place, with its textile canopy and trim bronzed in full flutter.

Inside the palace, things moved and changed with the seasons; with financial gains and losses; with the need to show off a new gift from someone important; with a promotion in rank, a death, an inheritance, or a marriage; with the acquisition, rental, or renovation of a new property; in anticipation of an eminent visitor. We find, in general, a surprisingly restless shifting around of things, even heavy marble sculptures, a custom that presumed an abundance of workers at the ready. To safeguard the valuable goods and supervise their movement, the important position of guardaroba was created within the great households; the term can refer either to the master who administered this circulation of objects or to the storage rooms where things were locked up when not in use. To explain the nature of evidence on which our research is based, we have included introductions to the types of documents on which we have relied heavily: the registers of the guardaroba, inventories, bank ledgers, and guidebooks.

Paintings were easy to move, and they migrated within the palace and among residences. Consequently, it has been argued that efforts to document placement and juxtaposition of both paintings and sculpture may be misguided. In some cases, a patron expressed a preference for a subject that was open to multiple readings, its message wandering depending on who was looking at it and on the neighboring pictures — conditions that were subject to change. When Cardinal Bernardino Spada commissioned a picture from Guercino in 1624, as Genevieve Warwick points out, they decided on a “historia” that was susceptible to different interpretations according to the person viewing it. The import would depend on its staging among other works to which it might be compared, setting up conditions conducive to the kind of clever performance of conversation favored by cognoscenti. In the rare cases that we can recuperate a hanging successfully, a feat Cristina Strunck achieves in this book, the arrangement may be strikingly contingent, unique, and unanticipated and may have been intended to spark the visitors’ associative thinking and conversations. An actor in one painting might peer across the frame, as it were, at a beauty in an adjacent composition, or a subject might find in its neighbor an apt moral exemplum. Move pictures around, as was the custom, and the topics of conversation among them, and among their spectators, also change. This kind of conceptual and contingent reverberation is quite unlike the quasi-didactic art-historical orderings — according to the school of Peter Paul Rubens or the Bolognese school, for example — that appeared in the eighteenth century.

Inventories are rich sources of information, occasionally offering at least a notional snapshot of a room at a particular moment, such as the brief interlude between a death and the dispersal of belongings. They may only cursorily list objects and typically remain silent about fixed decoration (fresco or stucco), but they often carefully note the number, condition, type, color, and value of the parati (the very important coordinated suites of textiles, in sets typically of twelve to forty panels plus columns, friezes, and trimmings) that covered the walls of palaces. As often as not, inventories furnish more details about frames than about the paintings they enclose, give attributions only sporadically, and describe pictures by size or subject: small or large, portrait or Madonna. Inventories are legal documents drawn up to establish material patrimony and the value of objects. They speak the language of the law rather than of connoisseurship. Inventories suggest that most paintings belong to the categories of portrait, devotional picture, or “no subject” — that is, a generic fruit piece or landscape. If inventories rarely answer all of what we ask of them, they tell us other kinds of things instead: that in the Giustiniani’s huge and famous collection, the paintings were, for the most part, hung unframed, and apparently edge to edge; or that the Odescalchi kept hundreds of unframed copies on the floor, propped against the wall.
The palace was the sign of a family's public presence in Rome. Inside the palace, display was calibrated to an increasingly accentuated dynamism of social and official life, activated by the moving bodies and the attention of residents and visitors. The experience it offered a visitor must have been closer to the state of distraction that Walter Benjamin associated with the modern conditions of reception than to any idealized state of contemplation of an isolated work of art that he imputed to earlier times. What would have been distinctive in the palace was that the parts operated in concert to convey multiple artistic, social, and political messages that were in no sense random or casual, so that a beholder, while on the move through the palace, and with his own agenda to pursue, was also required to figure out what was intended by the display. The beholder's active share in the interpretation of works of art arrayed in the specific matrix of display in the Roman palace, very much as Alois Riegl conceived it, is presumed: the viewer is a collaborator without whom the display of art is incomplete. Spatially, a Roman Baroque palace manipulated the trajectory of the moving body, much as the Florentine Renaissance palace formed a box in which to inscribe a static Vitruvian man. The visual richness and abundance of the Roman palace interior results from a calculated ordering of things according to clear imperatives and assertive conventions. Display unfolds in space in a purposeful narrative of rank, honor, privilege, intimacy. Such considered governing principles mark a fundamental distinction from modern atmospheric museum installations that aim to simulate or evoke a palace setting, as, for example, in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, where objects are assimilated into a historicizing aesthetic.

Reconstruction Elusive and Ephemeral

No interior of an early modern Roman palace survives intact, a circumstance that presents a formidable challenge for this book. What evidence does remain, in the form of partial physical traces, documents, contemporary treatises, guidebooks, descriptions, and the like, is only rarely conducive to literally "reconstructing" display. Lists of artists represented in a collection, as can be found in a guidebook like Ottavio Pancirol's, give little indication of how the artists' works were installed. Occasionally, important relationships among objects in space can be recuperated, offering the semblance of an arrangement of pictures in a gallery, for example, though never approaching the detail offered in the self-conscious, graphic documentation of later periods.

Paper galleries — whether the collection of poetic ekphrasis in La galleria (1620) by Giambattista Marino or the Galleria Giustiniani (1631), an album supervised by Joachim von Sandrart with engravings of the Giustiniani family's collections of ancient statues, or the Museo Cartaceo (Paper Museum) of Cassiano dal Pozzo — offer a fascinating counterpoint to real ones, but they do not factually document display. They seem as much to feed into the conceptualization of galleries as to reflect them. Andrea Francesco Nicoletti's watercolor drawings thus provide a unique and precious visual testimony of display (figs. 1, 2). Indeed, it is curious that so few images from the early modern period — prints, paintings, drawings — depict rooms of the sort constantly attested as sources for Renaissance interiors, the charming pictures with a plethora of detail of furnishings and walls, epitomized by Vittore Carpaccio's Birth of the Virgin. Even though recent scholarship cautions that the tantalizing Renaissance pictures cannot be regarded as accurately documenting real interiors, they nevertheless provide useful clues.

Later in the eighteenth century, when movable paintings became the protagonists of art history, arranged in galleries in order of chronology and according to regional schools, pains were taken to record their manner of installation.

In the elite Roman palace, it was no more appropriate to show a naked wall to visitors than to expose the naked body of the patron. Horizontal bands of fresco decoration were a common economical, and efficient, means of covering the bare plaster, or intonaco, and they were able carriers of messages about the residents. In some rooms, often the most prestigious
answer, and suggest, different questions from the ones art historians have been accustomed to ask, revealing how people valued all of their things, and not only in monetary terms.  

Because a detailed reconstruction of an interior is rarely attainable, the greater gain in understanding display comes in analyzing it as a critical driving force, one that is generated by cultural motives and that generates imperatives, which create a circuit, turning back to inform and inspire the very art that fulfills its special requirements. In this circuit, the conditions of display are anticipated in the very creation of objects and decoration; thus, display is as much the raison d’être of art as art is the raison d’être of its display. Crucial themes follow, such as the slow filtration of new categories that eventually posit the modern distinction between fine art and applied or decorative art; the integration of ancient marble fragments into statues that are iconographically coherent, whole, and displayable; and the new trend of collecting paintings and hanging them in specially designated rooms.

Gallery pictures that galvanize an interrelationship of different sorts of people with art, ornament, and space constitute an important representative case. Beyond that, however, other broad themes emerge as the narrative of display develops in the book. Palaces often had large households numbering in the hundreds of people; but, as contemporary sources indicate, in the rhythm of life, apartments sometimes teemed with people and at other times were deserted and even markedly lonely. To augment real life, the display of art offered the constant presence and company of a proxy figurative population: hundreds of ancient statues; painted, woven, and sculpted bodies, in whole and in part, movable and fixed; family members past and present, friends and patrons; pagan gods and Christian saints; and virtuous heroes, beguiling beauties, Roman emperors, and denizens of the tavern down the street. The interior of the palace was thickly historiated, packed with objects and covered with images that represented or called up multitudes of narratives.

We will look in the next pages at some of the factors that made Rome the capital of display and will also consider methodological issues and problems of definition, scope, and taxonomy. A broad-gauged study of the display of art in Roman palaces has not been undertaken before. With the notable exception of the exhibition Life and the Arts in the Baroque Palaces of Rome, curated by Stefanie Walker, forays into this terrain have been few. An important body of specialized research that has been published in the past few decades supports the endeavor, but it tends to be atomized in a plethora of microhistories of individual families and palaces, the fruits of studies on patronage and collecting. These fine-grained studies parallel the vast traditional literature on individual artists and media categories, on architecture, frescoes, easel paintings, tapestries, furniture, and metalwork. Display charts a different course as it mobilizes this research to approach the processes by which objects of art and decorative media were integrated into ensembles and environments in which people conducted their lives. To focus on the specific Roman social and cultural context for display, our authors tap into other methodologies, such as economic history on the mechanics of production, circulation, and the art market, for example, and the processes by which desire is negotiated into concrete, yet contingent and changing, aesthetic environments.

**Rome: A Host of Special Requirements**

A wealthy elite population with deep and specific needs created a culture of demand in Rome. Into the city poured the people, from all of Italy and the rest of Europe, with the skills to design, build, and furnish their palaces; entertain them with music, plays, and poetry; carve and decorate their musical instruments; tutor their children; manage and service their large households; advise on and restore their collections of antiquities; paint frescoes that glorified their families or implied that they descended from Caesar himself; and procure or produce elegant tableware and centerpieces for their feasts and the tapestries to ennable and mitigate the chilly dampness of their high-ceilinged rooms.

Modern Rome was, of course, also unique for being the site
The Imperative of Display

Finally, display can be understood as an imperative force that affected the physical state of art objects. Early collections of antiquities, for example, had been located in gardens and cortile—they were fragmentary, piled up in picturesque arrangements, heavy on epigraphic pieces (see fig. 3). Essentially, such objects were treated as remains, even fossils, as relics, sources of knowledge of ancient Rome, and material to investigate or connect to a past, but hardly as aesthetic objects. This attitude changed over the course of the Renaissance, with the turning point marked by the stunning gesture of the Cortile delle Statue of the Vatican Belvedere. By the end of the cinquecento, collectors wanted to display their antique marbles inside their palaces: white, spotless, and complete. That is not how the marbles came out of the ground, but now they would be restored as composites of fragments, with the missing parts often scavenged from other incomplete statues. Antique marbles, valued for their aesthetic qualities, shifted into a category that we have come to consider art. Vasari discusses such restoration, and the greatest sculptors of the period, including Bernini, Du Quesnoy, and Algardi, not to mention specialist restorers, would have a hand in the process of “composing” ancient marbles, of transforming the stained and broken remains of ancient Rome into clean, white, iconographically enhanced wholes, into art for display.

The quintessential case is the Farnese gallery. At the beginning of the early modern period, the Farnese dukes and cardinals had claimed that the family’s collections of antiquities—inscriptions, coins, fragments, and statues—were made accessible and served as a schola publica for the benefit of Rome, an act of magnificenza. Some of the iconic statues of ancient Rome, including the Farnese Hercules, had been installed in the cortile of the great Palazzo Farnese in the kind of charmingly unsystematic arrangement that had become widespread in Roman palaces, where they were easily accessible but where admittance was easily controlled. Indoors in the Farnese gallery, on the piano nobile, a project conceived in the late 1590s, antiquities became objects of full-bore aesthetic display. The best marble statues were acquired or were culled from the family’s impressive collections, restored to completeness, polished to gleaming perfection, and furnished with attributes and new pedestals. They were installed in niches excavated in the walls in an elaborate new setting of stucco in the antique spirit. The stucco design is brilliant, unifying the ensemble of statues and entirely obliterating the plane of the wall.

The display of restored ancient statues was coordinated with a spectacular new frescoed ceiling by Annibale Carracci, wherein the painter animated the lives and loves of the very same pagan gods embodied in marble in the ensemble below. The Galleria Farnese was a complete work of display: nothing could be added or taken away. Annibale Carracci had upended the new marvel of display of his own time—the novel phenomenon of the paintings gallery—and transported it onto the ceiling, where it simulated an ensemble of living sculptures and framed pictures that brought vividly to life the dead stone remnants of ancient mythology. It was the imperative of display that inspired Annibale to create one of the most powerful statements of the famous paragone—the great and serious game of artistic comparison and competition—in which the prowess of painting trumps sculpture, and the moderns surpass the ancients. A coda is provided in a palace inventory of 1642, which lists a mobile mirror covered with red drapery in the gallery. The mirror probably was put there to facilitate artists’ study of the acclaimed tour de force of Annibale’s ceiling. But unfurl the red drapery to reveal the mirror, and in the mirror, which can be moved to catch the reflection, is registered the instant of display of art completed by the visitor in the act of viewing it.
Placing faces

The portrait and the English country house in the long eighteenth century

EDITED BY GILL PERRY, KATE RETFORD AND JORDAN VIBERT, WITH HANNAH LYONS

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Robert Gwillym of Atherton and his Family (c.1745–47), on the front cover of this book, shows an owner embedded at the heart of his country estate. Gwillym’s directive gesture may be restrained and polite, but it proprietorially takes in his wife and children, his household family as represented by his steward, approaching across the lawn, and, crucially, Atherton Hall in the background.

The country house was not quite a rural equivalent to the exhibitions of the Society of Artists or the Royal Academy, but it is important that, as many of the essays show, these were scarcely ‘private’ homes. In addition to the presence of extended family members, friends, acquaintances, tenants, business and political associates and the like, there was a fair amount of tourism. Samuel Curwen’s perambulation in Wiltshire, trooping around the houses of the great and good, was a pretty characteristic activity for a member of the middling or upper classes at this date.\(^9\) John Britton in 1801 was overdoing it when he claimed that ‘People of all ranks visited Stourhead’, but such trips were certainly a staple of ‘polite’ leisure time.\(^9\) Furthermore, whilst the eighteenth century by no means saw the scale of country house visiting to be seen in the Victorian era, there was clearly already an imperative felt by all parties concerned that owners should make their properties and their possessions accessible.\(^9\) The ways and degree to which they did that varied greatly. Letters of introduction were sometimes required, sometimes not (Curwen considers it worth noting that, on reaching the house at Stourhead, his party ‘gained an easy admittance’\(^9\)). The largest properties and most important collections had accompanying published catalogues, other houses had a certain amount of information available on site. Many (like Stourhead at the time of Curwen’s visit) relied on the knowledge of the housekeeper or other servant who could escort the curious tourist around. Some owners were even considerate enough to ensure that accommodation was available in the vicinity. A nearby inn facilitated visitors to Kedleston Hall in Derbyshire, whilst the Golden Eagle at the entrance to Stourhead’s gardens was, as Mrs Lybbe Powys observed; ‘built by Mr. Hoare for the company that comes to see his place’.\(^9\)

This, then, is the environment to be explored by the essays in *Placing faces*, concerned with how our understanding of a portrait such as that of Henry Hoare II deepens and changes when we study it within the country house for which it was intended, and in which it was displayed.\(^9\) This volume examines how such an image could contribute to a carefully choreographed display of wealth, power, lineage and/
or political affiliation; how it could function as part of a positioned performance on the part of the owners. We have to take into account the location in which such a portrait was displayed. The function of a room within the overall plan of the house, its relative importance, the degree to which it was accessible to visitors, its décor – all affects the portrait’s signification. It might be hung in a grand gallery, one component of a traditional sequence of household heads – or a commemorative eulogy to military heroes, as explored in Desmond Shawe-Taylor’s essay ‘The Waterloo Chamber before the Battle of Waterloo’. It might take its place in a row above a series of bookcases, as in the library at Narford, the subject of Susie West’s chapter, ‘Life in the Library’, absorbing and feeding into that room’s associations with history, scholarship and shared learning. It is highly significant that Hoare’s portrait was hung in the entrance hall of his country property, at the very threshold, rather than encountered later on in the house. It was shown in a room intended for the purpose of reception, and was immediately visible to every person who entered. There, it made a bold statement of the family’s recently acquired wealth, status and power. The Hoares, significantly, were ‘nouveau riche’.13 Henry’s grandfather, Richard, had been the son of a horse-dealer and a goldsmith’s apprentice, but he secured the Hoares’ subsequent name and fortune when he founded the family business in 1672. Henry’s father, Henry I, had used some of their newly acquired wealth to purchase the manor of Stourton, pulling down the extant house and constructing one of the first country villas in the new Palladian style, designed by Colen Campbell. This was just finished by the time of his death, but Henry himself didn’t move in until after the death of his mother in 1741. By the time Walpole and Curwen came to peruse the family home, he had added to what was previously a fairly paltry collection to create an impressive display of works of art and, most significantly, had created the famous landscape gardens which still draw thousands of visitors today.

Shearer West has proposed that the country house acts as a frame for the portraits within it, and we also have to consider a portrait alongside the other portraits which accompany it.16 As is shown so clearly in Susie West’s chapter and Alison Yarrington’s essay, ‘Marble, Memory and Theatre’, likenesses were engaged in ‘conversations’, their various meanings and their significance amplified by and even dependent upon their mutual relationships. Today, Hoare’s picture can be seen embedded in a vast display of family portraits which fills the entrance hall at Stourhead, so that one is rather overwhelmed by faces
on arriving at the house. Dahl and Wootton’s huge canvas dominates the south wall of the room, but it is part of a display hung, in many places, three pictures deep. On the west wall, a portrait by Jonathan Richardson of Richard Hoare as Lord Mayor (1712) begins the visual family tree. The ‘founder’ is effectively seated back to back with his heir, Henry I, who grasps a paper showing the elevation of the house (Michael Dahl; c.1722). The two wives of Henry II are also present: Susanna Colt, painted by Hans Hysing, at one end of the south wall (1733); Ann Masham by Dahl at the other (c.1726). Henry Hoare II needs to be seen in the context of the sitter’s linear and nuclear families. In many cases, that is also true of the sitter’s extended family. The web of connections visually evident in such a display often extends outwards, as the constant process of intermarriage and complex arrangements of inheritance continually bound families together. A visitor to Blenheim Palace, for example, can see the same Reynolds portrait of George, 4th Duke of Marlborough (1764) as can be viewed in the colonnade room at Wilton, the doubling of the painted likeness expressive of the link between the two families and houses formed by the crucial marriage of the Duke’s sister to the 10th Earl of Pembroke. Portrait, house, estate and family work together as a potent entity, and in the case of great houses such as Blenheim and Wilton, as will be discussed in more detail below, their cumulative meaning further extends outside the history of the families concerned to that of the nation. A visitor faced with the likeness of a great military or naval figure would be encouraged to reflect on battles won and lost, whilst the family portraits in the house of a major political dynasty prompted reflection on the sitter’s various actions and allegiances.

However, seeing the portrait collection as a complex entity, emphasising the place of Hoare’s portrait in that entrance hall display at Stourhead, immediately raises practical issues which have challenged the contributors to this volume. Henry’s equestrian portrait may have already functioned as an elaborate nameplate to the house by the time Walpole and Curwen entered the front door, but it was not surrounded by all the family portraits we see today. Inevitably, country house tourists such as these rarely give us complete accounts of what they saw, but the first published catalogue to the house of 1800 tells us that it was, at that date, mostly surrounded by classical landscapes. The only portrait to have joined it was another large canvas depicting Henry’s successor and grandson, Sir Richard Colt Hoare, with his own prospective heir. It was Colt Hoare who soon afterwards made the decision to cluster
the Hoares’ portraits around these two large paintings, which effectively structure the display. He had certainly undertaken his remarkably systematic reorganisation of the pictures in the house by the date of the next edition of the catalogue, 1818, and he explained his rationale in his History of Modern Wiltshire of 1822:

family portraits [are] a very appropriate decoration for the first entrance into a house, as well as for the pannels of a dining-room. They remind us of the genealogy of our families, and recall to our minds the hospitality, & c. of its former inhabits, and on the first entrance of the friend, or stranger, seem to greet them with a SALVE, or welcome.¹⁸

Colt Hoare makes, here, a number of crucial points. The family portrait collection is a visual family tree, and, indeed, in some houses the visitor would actually be presented with a diagrammatic version in order that each individual likeness might be mentally positioned in his or her correct place in the line. In his account, he regrets that the various sizes of the pictures mean they ‘cannot be conveniently placed in chronological order’, but rectifies that in his text by structuring the discussion around a clear progression through the generations. He begins with the portrait of Richard Hoare as the ‘personage … to whom the present family owes its chief opulence’, and then moves on to Henry I and Henry II, noting the presence of the portraits of the latter’s wives.¹⁹ Colt Hoare also clearly builds on the external orientation of Henry’s grand equestrian portrait, but tempers its rather strident and bombastic message. Multiplying the likenesses, adding quantities of smaller portraits, he creates a sense of sociability and offers a rather friendlier gesture of greeting to the newly arrived visitor.

But Colt Hoare changes the original display. Henry Hoare II has to be seen in the context of the portrait collection, of the house and the estate, but, as is shown in many of these essays, those are constantly evolving and developing phenomena. In ‘Dirty Dancing at Knole’, Gill Perry notes how the new wife of the 3rd Duke of Dorset (understandably) moved the nude statue of his former mistress, the dancer Giovanna Baccelli, by Locatelli out of its prime position at the foot of the Great Staircase at Knole House. Yarrington unpicks the 6th Duke of Devonshire’s many rearrangements of his sculpture gallery at Chatsworth, whilst Shawe-Taylor explores the ramifications of various and changing displays of military portraits in the Royal Collection in the early nineteenth century. A visitor to Stourhead today ascends one
of two staircases to a freestanding portico constructed in 1838, and not the single large flight to the engaged frontispiece which Curwen would have encountered in the 1770s. The visitor today experiences the portrait in the context of a hang organised by the sitter's grandson, and not that conceived by the sitter himself. Portraits are always being acquired, reorganised within the house - and even reorganised between different houses belonging to a family. Sometimes, they are sold or given away - as in the case of Wanstead, the subject of Kate Retford's essay, 'The Topography of the Conversation Piece', along with the entire collection prior to the house's destruction in 1823. It is only on occasion that a particular hang of interest survives intact, and something of its attendant spatial dynamics and visual effect are fully appreciable. Portraits set in overmantels, or shown in fixed schemes within plaster frames, have often been more resistant to the whims of subsequent owners. This is true of the family portraits by John Verelst at Beningbrough Hall, set into overdoors; the plasterwork frames installed in the parlour at Rousham in the 1760s, to house new and reworked portraits; and the extraordinary series of historical portraits manufactured by Biagio Rebecca for Audley End, incorporated into arched frames within a new decorative scheme the following decade. In such cases, the portraits become part of the very fabric of the house, literally united with the building in conveying the family's history and identity.\(^2\) In such cases, the desire for permanence was fulfilled. In so many other examples, however, extant hangs have to be put next to visitor accounts, catalogues, inventories, sketched records of displays and any other available scraps of material in order to recover any single scheme.

Fixed displays may have been intended as a bulwark against the vagaries of history, and scholars may engage in re-creative research in order to negotiate sales, rehangs, fires and so on, but those processes can sit in tension with the country house's crucial nature as a palimpsest. Both the story of a family and the story of a country house inexorably evolve with the passage of time. That important sense of progress would be evident even in one lifetime, as the portrait of a young boy at the knee of his mother was joined by a Grand Tour portrait of that same sitter, now in his early twenties. Another likeness might be produced, linked to a further key life stage such as inheritance, the building of a new family seat, or the substantial redecoration of an extant property. After all, a portrait has to have somewhere to hang, and the substantial building and rebuilding of houses in the English countryside in this
period provides an important backdrop to the essays presented here.21 A marriage portrait and/or a family group showing the next generation might be further additions.22 Jonathan Richardson claimed in 1715 that ‘In Picture[s] we never ... grow older’, but the picture collection always emphasised the successive life events and stages which rendered that process more than apparent.23 Interestingly, Colt Hoare’s reorganisation of his family portraits at Stourhead was not a solely backward-looking enterprise. He notes in his 1822 account that ‘space [in the hall] is left for the nati natorum, and for the future possessors of this mansion’, and, in the process of excusing the length of his narrative, he evokes his descendants who, he hopes, will benefit from the recorded information: ‘We ought to consider ourselves as existing not solely for ourselves, and to bear in mind the non sibi sed posteris.’24

Any descendant’s new addition to a portrait collection would have to take into account that setting and its current occupants.25 An artist might actually represent that environment within the picture, as in the case of Joseph Nollekens’s portrait of the Tynney family at Wanstead (1740). As Retford explores, this shows the sitters within the saloon at Richard Child’s palace, and is relatively unusual within the genre of the conversation piece for a detailed accuracy of setting which enables a strong, significant relationship with the fabric and flow of the house and estate. Or, a portrait might have to be painted on a particular scale, as in the case of Reynolds’s portrait of Theresa Parker at Saltram House, Devon (1770–72), intended to hang as a pendant to a full length of one of her husband’s ancestors. A compositional reference might be made to an earlier work, a motif might be adopted from an important extant portrait in the collection, or an heirloom might be included which had passed through and been pictured by various generations. The same artist might be used: Dahl significantly not only painted Henry Hoare II, but also his father and one of his wives. The sitter might be garbed in Van Dyckian dress, as in the case of the 11th and 12th Dukes of Norfolk painted by Thomas Gainsborough (1783 and c.1788 respectively). The vogue for early seventeenth-century costume in portraiture at this date was to do with a fashionable nostalgia for the Caroline court and its modishness at masquerades, but it also suggested lineage – and here the passage of time between these Dukes of Norfolk and their predecessors at Arundel Castle, painted by the likes of Van Dyck and Mytens, is ellipsed in a vision of continuity.26 The classical drapery in which so many of Reynolds’s female sitters are swathed was about lifting portraiture closer to the hallowed status of history
painting, and bestowing an air of dignity and grandeur. But it was also about circumnavigating fashion and custom, again allowing some sense of permanence. Combining this with other techniques, such as use of bitumen to give a warm old masterly glow, Reynolds hoped his portraits would have an effect praised by Fanny Burney at Knole; 'they are so bewitching, and finished in a style of taste, colouring, and expression, so like their companions, that it is not, at first view, easy to distinguish the new from the old.' 27

**Houses, homes and ‘mistresses’**

Through the combination of imposing architectural context and strategically positioned portraits, country houses could 'bewitch', inform and enthral the visitor, whether an eminent invited guest or an eighteenth-century 'tourist'. These decorated spaces offered up narratives of dynasty, family history and political endeavour that this collection seeks critically to examine. However, the extent to which such houses or so-called 'stately homes' were in fact 'homes' in the modern sense is a question that has informed this study, especially in relation to gender. Evolving definitions of the 'home' – the idea of 'dwelling' and its relationship with the structure of the house – have enriched recent debates within the spheres of cultural geography, architectural and design history, history, literature, anthropology, sociology and philosophy, among others. 28 As a fertile research area that straddles disciplines, the historical idea of the 'home' is of special interest to this collection, contributing to our understanding of the social significance of these imposing country houses and their contents. Influential cultural historians Philippe Ariès and Witold Rybczynski have both charted the evolving concept of the 'home' in Europe from the medieval period to the twentieth century, suggesting that the term was increasingly separated from the word 'house'. 29 While Ariès viewed the home as the setting for an emerging concept of 'privacy' in his ground-breaking (yet controversial) exploration of family life in the eighteenth century, Rybczynski charted the evolution of the idea of ‘home’ that is (as he argues) enmeshed with developing, and culturally specific, notions of ‘comfort’, ‘domesticity’, ‘intimacy’ and family privacy. 30 He argues for the evolution of an idea of ‘comfort’ in the ‘European consciousness’, which in eighteenth-century France revealed the ‘extent of the influence of bourgeois values on court life’. 31 But he also suggests that the preference for country houses within upper-class and bourgeois English society resulted in a style of living