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Consuming Faces: portraiture, collections, and display in Mid-Georgian Britain 1760-90

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in

Art History, Theory, and Criticism

by

Vincent Minh-Duc Pham

Committee in charge:

Professor William Tronzo, Chair
Professor Jordan Rose, Co-chair
Professor Stephen Cox
Professor Jack Greenstein
Professor Daniel Vitkus

2021

The dissertation of Vincent Minh-Duc Pham is approved, and it is acceptable in quality and form for publication on microfilm and electronically.

University of California San Diego

2021

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Consuming Faces: portraiture, collections, and display in Mid-Georgian Britain 1760-90

by

Vincent Minh-Duc Pham

Doctor of Philosophy in Art History, Theory, and Criticism

University of California San Diego, 2021

Professor William Tronzo, Chair

Professor Jordan Rose, Co-chair

This dissertation explores British portrait ensembles, collecting practices and framing in the period of 1760-1790. It contains three case study chapters, each of which centers on an individual, their portrait ensemble, and display practices: Lord Chesterfield's library portraits and their subsequent resurrection (1741), Horace Walpole's extensive historical, literary, and aesthetic project Strawberry Hill (1760-

1776), and finally, Hester Thrale's short-lived collection of celebrity portraits in her salon. (1772-1781). Together, the chapters illustrate a deeper intersection of atypical portrait collections, collecting practices, literary biography, and criticism. The ways in which these portrait collectors frame their historical views, social contributions, and conversations is a point of contention against the emerging public sphere. Their acts of interiorizing the self as a rejection of increasingly modern life coexists in an uneasy way, as the eighteenth century becomes socially democratized.

The Mid Georgian period of 1760-90 shows not just a continuation of the seventeenth-century Augustan cultural practices, but a questioning and reevaluation of those adopted values. The pervasiveness of the painted portrait since the Renaissance continues to this period. Portrait studies within art history often do not attempt to address the collective, nor the inherent signals or messages that the patron espoused in relation to the larger systems and aesthetic histories that preceded them. This departure point acts as an opportunity to reconfigure and redress the connections between art, cultural standing, and commodity in the Mid Georgian period. These factors would eventually go on to influence nineteenth century artistic production. This dissertation aims not only to give a more comprehensive (or individuated) account of portrait collections, their reception, but also their varied functions, ephemerality, and in some cases, their resuscitations as a way to examine paintings' collection, framing and display in the eighteenth century.

Chapter 1 Introduction: *Collecting faces in early modern Britain*

By the end of the seventeenth century, numerous examples in English, Dutch, French and German books' frontispieces became a familiar element which confronted readers as they opened to the title page. The combination of an author's likeness with updated editions of books allowed for them to be newly staged, and for links to emerge between a particular author with their antique models, or earlier national authors. Visual representation of literati during this period engaged with a wider context of visual representation, cultural practice, and eventually, canon formation. How did collecting author portraits in the eighteenth-century Britain contribute to interiorization as a response to the rise of the public sphere? The desire to frame literary figures and their portraits within and without their contexts of display is rooted in the externally facing nature of eighteenth-century British portraiture. The existence of these portraits and their rotation and display are not about comparing verisimilitude, but an attempt at creating a code. This codification of literary and historic figures acted as a buffer to the class mobility afforded to mercantile businessmen, who found themselves attempting to assimilate into aristocratic life. These portrait collections were a way for Britain's aristocratic class to create an idealized world as a retreat from an increasingly ambivalent public sphere.

The chapters of the dissertation revolve around three distinct collections of portraits, and their multifarious displays in the Georgian period of England (1760-90). These collections were selected to create a study in which the lives and reputations of literary figures were canonized, critiqued, and collected. Eighteenth century British art studies is only recently undergoing its own period of self-examination. The academic

field began with publications from early museum professionals and subsequent scholars like Roy Strong, Francis Haskell, John Pope-Hennessey, and Malcolm Baker. The renewed interest through a museological lens was brought into contact with academia only in the mid twentieth century- the lion's share of interest and research in the early modern period fell squarely upon France and the revolution, examinations of empire, or moves to consider a global early modern art history.

One of the key scholars who differentiated between the public and audience is Tom Crow. His *Painters and Public Life* sets the tension of the problems of aesthetic response when opened up to the public. No longer only invested in art for art's sake, the attendees of Paris' *Salon des Paris* was the first repeated, large scale display of art for a large number of people. Crow raises the issue of trying to coherently address the attendees of the Salon as a cohesive unit. The public, for Crow, was simultaneously everywhere and nowhere at once. This would lead to a struggle in representation in France's history painting genre. England on the other hand, was slower to adopt the free-form capacity of viewing art that France was experiencing. Entrance to the Royal Academy was still ticketed. The elites in the eighteenth-century England maintained a hold of aesthetic trends and traditions- but was being undermined, all the same. The dissertation takes its cue from a cast of aristocratic and monied individuals who do their best to shape the society's perception of them by mobilizing differing forms of portraiture: that is, by using multitudes of faces to frame views of canonical literature, history, and friendship.

Despite the other developments in early modern art history, I would like to make an argument for the unique place held by portrait ensembles in England (1760-90). Their particular use to guard against an exterior world allows for a critique of Jurgen Habermas' ideas of the emerging public sphere. If the public sphere was a social development and expression of views through mass media, collectors did not do away with their own systems of anthology. Instead, their practices of collection became more codified and intensified as time progressed. The individuals' emphasis on controlling collections is a buffer against the changing, tempestuous winds of public life.

The first chapter in the dissertation is about the early eighteenth-century politician and literary figure from an aristocratic family. Chapter one, "Subject to Change: The Chesterfield House library portraits and their afterlives", focuses on the authorial portrait ensemble of diplomat and author Philip Dormer Stanhope. The Earl of Chesterfield was not the first to fill his library space with portraits of authors. He set a precedent of more affordable portrait copies and associating with modern writers, rather than their Classical forebears. His practice of buying up the archives and collections of fellow aristocrats to repurpose them, dovetailing Bernard Mandeville's ideas of commerce and virtue. The enthusiasm with which he collected author portraits reveals not just his desire for acceptance amongst the great writers of Britain, but also his own efforts at hiding his comparative mediocrity.

The Gothic Revival is the subject of chapter two, "A Certain Kind of Gloomth: Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill". Within the chapter, the focus is on the self-proclaimed aesthete Horace Walpole, and his repurposing of the Gothic design

language from roughly 1180 to 1520. Walpole's self-serving, celebrity-based interest in resuscitating the style is in a whimsical, pastiche manner which sought to bring historical criticality to public attention. Walpole's tailored displays reminded visitors to not forget their recent history under Henry VIII. His villa was the beginning of popularizing the house-museum and contributed greatly to driving broader interest in his own celebrity and Gothic novel, *The Castle of Otranto*. Investigating the uneasy push and pull between Palladianism and the Gothic Revival informs my inquiry into the theatrical presentation of a set of Hans Holbein copied portraits and a larger examination of the house's aesthetic effects on the viewer.

Finally, chapter three, "Performance for Posterity: The Streatham Park Worthies" centers on the salonniere Hester Lynch Thrale and her gatherings of celebrity figures across a variety of fields, as well as her changing place as representative of larger gender shifts and literary club culture. The chapter engages with the Streatham Worthies, a set of twelve bust-length portraits of authors, artists, and actors placed around Hester's double portrait with her daughter. They were also cultural celebrities who socialized at the Thrale house. Hester Thrale's relegation in art history expresses the limits of portraiture. Despite what gossip the public had ingested about the attendees of her Streatham Park dinners, they came together under the banner of Sir Joshua Reynolds' friendship portraits.

Early modern British art studies owes a debt to the work done by Strong, Jackson-Stops, Pope-Hennessy, and others. Basing themselves in systems of collection and archive inquiry, they were able to demonstrate from the 1960s onward, a

level of depth to an area in art history that was derogatively known as the Belgium of art history.[1] Portrait studies' issues of class and social history are rooted in studies on continental exchange among travelling artists, or patronage and workshop models. This is only one tranche of understanding portrait collectorship's use as an ordering system. In a larger sense, early portrait collections served as a self-aggrandizing way of wrapping up social values to aesthetic objects, like paintings or prints. This is the methodology I will apply to portrait ensembles of the period.

The mid-Georgian period was also an age of increasing numbers of literate readers. Popular publications like *The Spectator* could be found in coffee houses, which had become popular gathering sites for men of varying classes. For women, sites of sociability were few and far in-between until the end of the century. Only a few were able to break out of the limited role that Georgian society had constructed for them- literacy, anonymous authorship, and the act of reading were ways to circumvent some of these restrictions. Portraiture and image recognition started to become widespread as the century progressed. Readers in Britain, from London to the Hebrides, would have been confronted with images of faces at every turn. Taking the form of the weak-chinned profile of the coins of George III, to authorial frontispieces in novels, and increasing accessibility to aesthetic objects, the British bourgeois class had to simultaneously look internally and externally to define itself. The resulting social

[1] Michael Yonan, "The History of Studying Eighteenth-Century Art, the Belgium of Art History" Paper presented at HECAA at 25 Art and Architecture in the Long Eighteenth Century, Dallas, TX. November 1-4, 2018.

oscillations in codes lended to the rise of collecting visual media and retreat from the public world.

The issues of class mobility, gender difference, and literacy were centered around topics of self-reflection, improvement of social standings, and success in business endeavors. Class politics and reactions can also be observed through interactions with Dr. Samuel Johnson- the protagonists of the dissertation all retreat inward from the public sphere in response to the upending of social orders. The mercantile background of culture during this period manifested itself in the purchase and display of portraits of people so that the aesthetic, didactic and political value of painting is intertwined with that of luxury goods. British portrait painting existed simultaneously as markers of likeness, value, and demeanor at this moment in time. As there was increased social mobility in the early eighteenth century, the lines between landed aristocracy and bourgeois merchants began to erode. Historian E.P. Thompson compared the classes to Roman precedents: the patrician ruling class and their disdain for the plebeians.[2]

For Thompson, the patrician ruling class resorted to using the symbols and objects of their station to signify or encode their differences from the classes that they interacted with. The goal for these symbolic gestures was to set them apart from the restrictions of lower classes. This took the form of exposure of some of their public functions, and the scarcity of others: Thompson's example of the elaboration and expansion of fashion and religious privileges show that from very early on, the theatrical

[2] Thompson, "Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture." p. 389.

and self-referential nature of British visual culture was tied to its creation of an aesthetics of difference.[3]

On the other hand, the nature of discussing and presenting art requires a conversational element which is understudied in eighteenth century art history: The opening of larger-scale public exhibitions of art, combined with the replication of existing aesthetic trends from the aristocracy meant that the new bourgeois middling sort in England had many opportunities to experience and acquire vocabulary with which to assess art on their own terms, much like how *The Spectator* democratized literary trends. The rest of society was slowed by the shifting codes and traditions, which shapes nineteenth-century aesthetic concerns. Access to such venues as Vauxhall Gardens (1720-1840), the British Royal Academy exhibitions (1769) and various gallery shows around the Pall Mall area in London were crucial to this period's incomplete expansion of artistic literacy and interest among landed gentry.

The key difference that this dissertation will attempt to illustrate is the aspect of the domestic interior. Eighteenth century studies is indebted to the work of Jurgen Habermas on the public sphere and its contributions to our understanding of how the early modern period. Habermas' ideas explained Britain's early modern shift in a single representational culture to one grappling with an increasing public engagement.[4] Rather than Habermas' convention that a representational culture is characterized by one active party and passive observers, the public sphere moves to have multiple entities and classes in dialogue with each other. Ideas, fashions, and discussions passed

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[3] Ibid

[4] Blanning, *The French Revolution*. pp. 26-7.

through conversations held at coffee houses, dinner parties, or were exchanged through print media outlets. The collections which will be examined in the chapters of the dissertation demonstrate individual retreat, and ultimately rejections of the overwhelming nature of the mid-Georgian public sphere. The retreat inwards created a demand for literary and cultural forms as ways of self-fashioning on an accelerating scale. This was after all, a society which read voraciously, and one that used its appetite for reading to address itself.[5]

Moyra Haslett's definition of a reading public sees literature at the center of British culture and explores itself through reading. The self-image of a reader in the eighteenth century is that a community of readers. The emergent genres of newspaper, periodical, novel, and literary criticism made literature an increasingly public affair. This opened a public demand for literature, a space in which was appreciated, evaluated, and even lived out. By 1720, London had three daily papers, seven papers published three times a week, and six weekly journals. The novel's central place in early modern Britain must be considered to understand other contemporary forms of media, like portraiture.

By the time of the collections of Chesterfield, Walpole and Thrale come to exist, this voracious appetite for literature would only serve to accelerate the popular appreciation of existing genres of writing and critical literary appreciation. One genre that sits at an intersection of these structures is the English novel. Terry Eagleton's explication of the literary form of the novel is defined as fiction writing which "present[s]

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[5] Haslett, *Pope to Burney, 1714-1779* p. 18.

us with what looks like objective images of the world, yet we know for a fact that these images are subjectively shaped. In this sense, the novel is an ironic, self-undoing genre."[6] It is a form of fiction writing which has its basis in the middle class, the reason for which Eagleton gives is "the ideology of that class centers on a dream of total freedom from restraint" and was associated with subjectivism and sentimentalism. The English novel, much like the portrait collections which revolve around their creators, straddles the public and private in such a way that both reinforces yet undermines the social systems within the mid Georgian period by simultaneously being concerned externally for approval, and internally for reinforcement.[7] The eighteenth century novel's subjectivism prefigures the changes in psychological depth which arrived in the nineteenth century, with classical modernity and industrial capitalism. Taken with narrative-based writing, these atypical houses are all attempts at generating fantasy worlds based in the Georgian interior.

Comprising often of morally grey depictions of life, novels were heavily popularized. This broadening of literary consumption, and expansion upon works of writing from previous periods in England, contribute to one crucial aspect of literature: that at the same time, it would engage a much sought-after interiority where freedoms could be played out in private fantasy, while also being subject to discussion in the nascent public sphere.

Raymond Williams' ideas on the different epochs of cultural practice are especially helpful in describing what he defines as the residual traditions of these

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[6] Eagleton, *The English Novel.* p. 14.
[7] Ibid, pp. 58-60.

portrait collectors. The lineage of portrait display is not something that is new by the time of the eighteenth century but has been continually in use despite its age.[8] He elaborates further, giving the example of what literary tradition should be in relation to what it exists as, currently. This evaluation rings true when considering residual culture's actions against the pressures of incorporation- the emerging public sphere. This takes place for Williams in class writing- in this case, the eighteenth-century bourgeois novel.

Paintings, rather than novels, were still in the realm of those wealthy enough to collect them in the late eighteenth century. Portraits in the eighteenth century were usually displayed in halls, studies, and libraries. These places were carried over from Antique precedents of ancestor portrait busts displayed in the entrance of the home, to likenesses of prominent authors in the library. The transition from sculpted busts to paintings becomes increasingly popular during the Renaissance- Paolo Giovio's *Museo* and its accompanying text, the *Elogia,* makes the portrait collection a commonplace practice for cultural and political elites.[9] The eighteenth English collectors of the dissertation are participating in this elite culture: by residually mimicking the portrait traditions of Lowland countries, Venice, and Rome.

This lengthy historical precedent for didactic portrait sequences now finds itself working through the dissertation: a Whig politician in his twilight years who clung to the fashions of the Kit Cat portrait, the aesthete son who sought to rebel against his family foundations, and finally, a salonniere whose engagement with literary figures marked a

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[8] Williams, "Dominant, Residual, Emergent," p. 122.
[9] Zimmerman, *Paolo Giovio*. p.34.

fever pitch for the nascent cult of celebrity in England. The complexity of mid eighteenth-century life is apparent, but the increased interest of collecting during the period is something that early modern art historians have not linked satisfactorily to the development of memory and selfhood. In creating an outward facing collection, the early moderns would have to simultaneously look inward. The interface between material collection and the construction of a cognitive ecology that took place in spaces which "was involved in habits of thought but which turned up as well in its caretaker's models for mental work."[10] The larger frameworks of identity formation and its new participants grapple with cultural memory. This served to authorize public-facing individuals and the complex ideas of mind being developed through one's own methods of collection: a way to see and interact with the world. The dissertation's point of departure also hinges upon the lack of focus outside of large, institutional natural history/art museums and their collecting practices. Individuals' collections demonstrate an encasement of mental habits and the owners' materially contingent way of ordering the world. As British fascination with class standing intensifies, neither the aristocracy nor the middle class were immune to critique from within and without.

The new critique that would arise from the emergent upper middle class in Britain needed to redefine the basis for their authority, and by extension, the norms for canonicity. Reading and literacy were increasingly valuable in almost all stations of British society: Saint-Evremond stated that there were "no Sciences that particularly belonged to Gentlemen, but Morality, Politics, and the Knowledge of good Literature."[11]

[10] Silver, "The Curatorial Imagination in England, 1660-1752." p. 5.
[11] Ibid

The establishment of the notion of literary canonicity in the eighteenth century came at a time where there was a vacuum in terms of its fine arts as well. This would allow for a larger cultural need for an ordered body of work from English letters:

> What the public demanded, and what it eventually received, was a history of English poetry, or a survey of English poets, that would provide a basis for criticism by reviewing the entire range of the art. Warton and Johnson responded to a national desire for an evaluation of what English poets had achieved...English literary history was shaped by the need for a definition of the superiority of the national character.[12]

Both traditions of portrait displays, and literature (by way of poetry) are vehicles for the rhetorical implementation of David Solkin's assessment of politeness. Similar to the breakdown of Kneller's style by Sir Joshua Reynolds and other painters, the rhetorical idea of politeness and sociable behavior changes, depending on who is invested in it. Its heterogeneity mirrors the public with which it now engages, and the reactions generated reflect this unevenness. For Lord Chesterfield and the previously dominant aristocratic class, it meant an attempt to tie the merits of being unbound to work or servitude which warrants their position in "steering" the cultural horizons of the nation. For Walpole, politeness was an antiquated system of rules and aesthetic categories which were based in unpleasant and unfounded shifts in regime. His pastiche manifestations in writing and painting displays were a critical response to his father's generation. For Hester Thrale, politeness was rooted in circles of friendship. As the standing of authorship rises in the late eighteenth century, notions of privacy, loyalty, and literary afterlives become much more pressing in the face of a prying public.

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[12] Solkin, *Art on the Line*. p. 247.

The public's favor toward her would prove to be fickle and temporary, even in her own lifetime.

The period of the 1750s onwards also marked a crisis of visual representation. The rapidity of class appropriation and emulation is put under pressure when "genteel mania" starts to take place: the ever-shifting fashions meant that it was becoming a category of social difference that was put under increasing strain. This was contained to monied mercantile and aristocratic participants, unlike the forthcoming crisis among the Three Estates in France. Being in fashion, whether literally, or in terms of the codes of social difference, was becoming increasingly unstable. Portraiture was becoming more affordable in the 1750s and cost much less than buying a trip on the Grand Tour; John Barrell's argument finds England becoming an increasingly privatized society where civic virtues passed on from didactic sources becoming less and less important in a commercially private society.[13] The act of touring and visiting homes moves from a practical concern of a mobile aristocratic court, to sightseeing country and townhouses built for tourism.

William Melmoth's observations show a shift in awareness of the nigh-impossible task of grasping the ideologies of public virtue and mating it to an imagery of private life. It is this incompatibility within the framework of early modern British sensibilities that is at odds with the clear demarcation provided by Habermas in *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. For Habermas, the emergence of a new social order under mercantilism and early capitalism allows for the beginnings of a public sphere for the

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[13] Melmoth, *The Letters of Sir Thomas Fitzosborne, on Several Subjects*. p.9.

middle class. The trafficking of ideas as commodities through print circulation brings private individuals together to form a heterogeneous public. Habermas' epochal examination of how culture becomes claimed as a public discussion topic allows him to argue for a public which used discourse as a way to erode the previously dominant culture of aristocracy, forcing them to turn inwards.

The crisis of interiority came from increasing demands of literacy: whether it was novels, current events, or history, the external public world was always in motion. As the public virtues of a previously aristocratic society were changed to address not just the importance of labor and commerce by way of the middle class, but to the redefinition of politeness to be tied not just to casual conversation, but to transactional interactions as well.

When examining the visual production of this concept of polite converse, the satirical handling of public virtue as seen in Hogarth's *The South Sea Scheme (1721)* cuts against the Kneller-ian closed loop of aristocratic men in painter James Thornhill's *Andrew Quicke in Conversation with the 1st Earl of Godolphin, Joseph Addison, Richard Steele, and the Artist*. The pictures are showing two available realms of the social world: Hogarth depicts the public, commercial, and heterogenous, while Thornhill displays an environment which is exclusive, convivial, and patriarchal. The painting by Thornhill draws its effect from being in opposition to what Hogarth deals in: it tries to resist the caricature and ambivalence of the emerging public sphere.

Figure 1.1: William Hogarth, *South Sea Scheme,* 1721-4, Engraving. 25.7 x 32.1cm. National Portrait Gallery, London

The emblematic worlds of commerce are readily available in Hogarth's allegorical rendering of the world of financial speculation, which has ensnared everyone in the crowd, from whores to clergymen. Hogarth's print found wider reception in 1724, but the effect of early free market commerce was clearly influencing nearly all levels of society. Hogarth has depicted figures like a Catholic priest, a Jew, and a Protestant, all gambling on financial futures to the lower left of the print. The nude, allegorical figure of Honesty is portrayed bound to the wheel of fortune, while various figures are taking a ride on a

carousel of horses. Hogarth's biting satire entirely rejects the notion of polite commerce: virtue has been untethered from transactions. Satire on a larger scale in Britain arguably begins with Hogarth's prints, but also becomes indelibly entwined with the larger reading public.

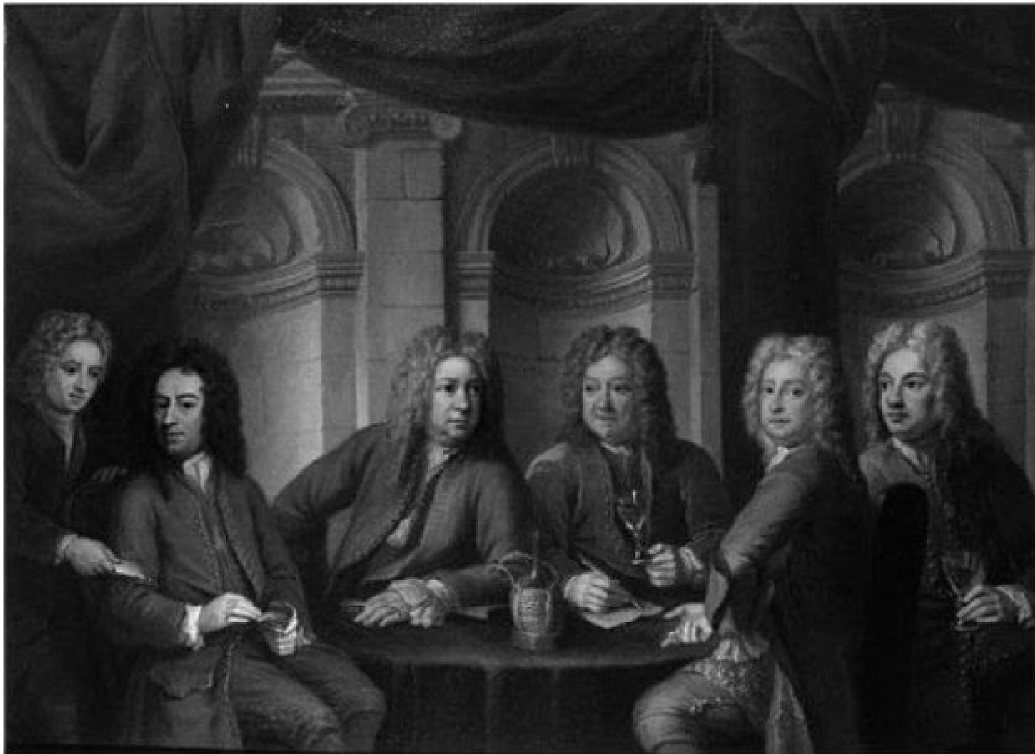

Figure 1.2: James Thornhill, *Andrew Quicke in Conversation with the 1st Earl of Godolphin, Joseph Addison, Sir Richard Steele, and the Artist.* 1711-2, oil on canvas. Private collection, courtesy of the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, London.

In Thornhill's group portrait, various aristocrats and writers sit around a table. Addison and Steele, the boisterous noise of drunk sociability personified instead is sublimated into a scene of quietude. Conversation pieces found their origins in the Low Countries' genre scenes, and many were re-adapted to the new market in England. The patron for the painting, as well as the sponsor for the group of aristocratic and literary men is the Earl of Godolphin, seated in the center. He holds a wine glass, and as

Ronald Paulson points out, is the only figure in the act of speaking. David Solkin and Jon Mee argue that this is the kind of private conversation which would attempt to create the Habermasian public sphere, where participants "practise conversation as a form of polite exchange between equals that put to one side hierarchy and inequality."[14] Despite Thornhill's portrait being about conversation, it does not, like its exclusivity, give enough room to speak. All of the sitters turn to listen to its central figures, suspending their dialogue in order to listen to Quicke and Godolphin. This conversational and cultural bubble is prematurely invested in the homosocial, closed nexus of readership and viewership until the continued expanse of the upper middle class ruptures it. This representational instability signalled the end of the Kneller style of painting and its political ties to a Whiggish aristocracy. From here, there is the creation of the Continental style of British painting through Joshua Reynolds' painting to fashion and a pushback from provincial realist painters like John Singleton Copley.

The notion from Hume's conversable worlds was that polite conversation became wrapped up as a test of gentility: rather than being free and informal, it started to become codified and ossified by rules. These rules were temporarily attached to wealth: portraits became the very fabric symbolizing wealth, position, and their subjects. Owning certain likenesses would become another form of commodity. The rituals, symbols, and aesthetic concerns of the flagging aristocracy were about to burst. Such releases as in the *Spectator* no. 557, the *Rambler* no. 173, and found their new systems in practical manuals: *The Conversation of Gentlemen, The Rules of Civility, The Art of*

[14] Mee, *Conversable Worlds*. p. 38.

Conversation, etc.[15] Even the rules of plain speaking were integrated into Thompson's struggle between plebeians and patricians. The reason for this comparison of unlike images and genres is to illustrate the bursting of another bubble: one which was founded in the construction of private virtue wrestling against public vice. Though the future would not entirely be the dark vision, which was laid out by Hogarth, the bursting of the bubble certainly was an appropriate observation on the transformation of self-representation and class critique moving forward in the eighteenth century. The pushback and emulation of newer groups would eventually force the codifying the acts of conversation to reflect the instability found in British society at large- what follows in the dissertation are three differing responses to fashionable arts, literary criticism, and the change in comportment as they become hallmarks of gentility.

Examining Robert Dighton's *Real Scene in St. Paul's churchyard* gives us an indication as to how the divergent representations of class and social behavior were received by the public: the gusty wind of fashionable trends and social mobility knock over the passersby. On the inside of the print shop window, there are engravings of the divines, sat on top of lower rows of bawdy scenes. Despite the orderly way the British attempted to compose their worlds, the turbulent exterior reality proved to be very different than the images or image of themselves they wished to convey. Caricaturists like Hogarth, Dighton, Rowlandson and Gillray captured these gusty winds of public opinion in a very self-aware manner.

[15] P. Denney, Buchan, and Crawley, *Sound, Space and Civility in the British World, 1700-1850*. pp. 1-12. Rules included not interrupting others, letting others speak in turn, conversational topics on expertise are preferred, not to change topics until they are exhausted, no whispering, not to speak ill of a man's virtues to his face or his faults behind his back.

Figure 1.3: Robert Dighton, *A Windy Day – scene outside the shop of Bowles, the printseller, in St. Paul's Churchyard*, 1785, Watercolor, courtesy of the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

One of the last threads which the dissertation touches upon is the creation of, and popularization of literary celebrity. The availability of cheaper engraved portraits from booksellers, to the multiplication of print media, and to the social spaces like taverns, salons, and cafes where celebrities were discussed beyond their social circles can be examined by a passage from Samuel Johnson, as he and other authors were confronted with popular status which were being authorized at the same time. Johnson had this to say of his newfound celebrity and his inability to deal with it:

> These considerations at first put me on my guard and I have indeed found sufficient reason for my caution for I have discovered many people examining my countenance with a curiosity that shewed their intention to

> draw it. I immediately left the house but find the same behaviour in another. Others may be persecuted, but I am hunted. I have good reason to believe that eleven painters are now dogging me, for they know that he who can get my face first will make his fortune. I often change my wig, and wear my hat over my eyes, by which I hope somewhat to counfound [sic] them: for you know it is not fair to sell my face, without admitting me to share the profit.[16]

Johnson's paranoia showed the overnight change in public perception, and invasive pursuit of artists trying to capitalize on his face and reputation. Johnson bemoans the difficulty of escaping recognition, and the public's increasing presence in his life. The encroaching of the public sphere into the realm of the private showed why there was such focus on the retreat of interior life: its appeal was a way to construct an identity around objects, free of external judgments.

From pirated portrait copies to appropriating authorial work, the previously enclosed systems of patronage were now entirely up for grabs by the public. Lilti's observations on the attachment of various aspects of celebrity to commercial concerns reveals that authorial likeness and cognomens of fame drove the mutations of the public sphere. Johnson rightly intuits that there was a new kind of notoriety that was emerging: one which was paradoxical in how it was wielded. Working in the realms of cultural production, writers and artists relied upon celebrity's marker of success to sustain their professional careers. This is the departure of the aristocratic aesthete: giving way to the professional mercenary instead. This scission contributes to the instability of identity in this period. Fame and celebrity were wrapped up in the "judgement of a vast anonymous public, whose criteria were changeable, inexplicit, or uncertain."[17]

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[16] Johnson, *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*. pp. 13-17.
[17] Lilti and Jeffress, *The Invention of Celebrity*. p. 108.

Johnson's continued observations on how fame would impact authors reflects the uncertainty of popular approval: "If we consider the distribution of literary fame in our own time, we shall find it a possession of very uncertain tenure; sometimes bestowed by a sudden caprice of the public, and again transferred to a new favourite, for no other reason than that he is new."[18] In the mid-Georgian period, not only was there the emerging concept of celebrity, but also its rabid consumption by the public sphere.

Biographical interest and its ties to morality as were laid out by the various ensembles of canonical images which were repurposed in the early modern period to show how private life was much more interesting to consumers. The individual was now revealed through minute details of daily life, so that readers and observers would find private life to be more authentic and interesting than the public accounts of an individual. While Habermas' distinction is key to understanding the larger national concerns with character, class, and politics, the development of celebrity must be considered as an inversion of the hierarchy between public and private. The success of biographies like Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, Boswell's *Life of Johnson*, and Hester Thrale's *Thraliana* respond more to the newfound desires of the public to get as close as possible to the private lives of celebrities. Perhaps Dr. Johnson really was reacting within the scope of reason: he and numerous others in the eighteenth century would become hunted and pursued from afar to satiate the public's desires for celebrity interior life. This surrender of the possibility of privacy marked the public figure's transition to becoming a "common concern", the object of the public's critical attention.[19] Like the

[18] Ibid.
[19] Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. p. 38.

fictional novels whose frontispieces they adorned, portraits acted for consumers as portals to another world: the interior self.

Chapter 2

Subject to change: The Chesterfield House Portraits and their afterlives

This chapter of the dissertation is based on the library portrait collections of Philip Dormer Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield (1694-1773). The collection attempts to reconstruct the nature of the hanging of the library portraits in eighteenth century Britain, but also brokers an examination into the continuation of and evolution of pantheons displayed in the library space. This is a difficult task to set for the dissertation; that is, the differentiation of portrait pictures and furnishing, both practically, and theoretically within the context of the Mid-Georgian British townhouse. The Chesterfield House portraits and their afterlife are critical due to the fungibility and their role in building Chesterfield's literary canon. Chesterfield's library functions as the first case study in a project that seeks to reassess portrait ensembles in relation to their collectors, and the sites in which they are displayed. Chesterfield House was demolished in 1934, and its collections scattered in auction sales. I take my own departure from traditional inquiries into likenesses and the relationship between patron, artist, and sitter, shifting to an examination of the social milieu in which they are displayed, and the enclosure provided by the site-specific, fixed frames. The methods that will be employed in this chapter's analysis of the Chesterfield house set and its placement will run the gamut from topics of its architecture, its historic engagement with library displays, changing ownership over time, and theoretical considerations to deepen scholarship on the topic.

Figure 2.1: By or after William Hoare, *Philip Dormer Stanhope, 4th Earl of Chesterfield*, 1742. Oil on canvas. National Portrait Gallery, London.

It will be helpful to mobilize some of Chesterfield's thoughts on portraits in general, to examine what he was contemplating within those being depicted upon the canvas:

> By portraits, you will easily judge that I do not mean the outlines and the coloring of the human figure; but the inside of the heart and mind of man. This science requires more attention, observation, and penetration, than the other; as indeed it is infinitely more useful. Search, therefore, with the greatest care, into the characters of those whom you converse with; endeavor to discover their predominant passions, their prevailing weaknesses, their vanities, their follies, and their humors, with all the right and wrong, wise and silly springs of human actions, which make such inconsistent and whimsical beings of us rational creatures.[20]

It should be noted that this is revelatory of Chesterfield's practice of acquiring portraits not for their painterly quality or similitude, but rather their symbolic value. The

[20] Stanhope, *Letters to His Son*. 2 October 1747.

portraits he commissioned were either bought cheaply at auctions or were cheaper copies. For Chesterfield, the internal machinations of human life and their contribution to a literary discourse is greatly humanized by attaching a face to a name.

Chesterfield House, previously located in Mayfair, London, was constructed by Philip Dormer Stanhope, the fourth Earl of Chesterfield. Chesterfield was a statesman and writer, who was best known for being the model of a polite nobleman and man of letters. Stanhope was taken in and educated by his grandparents, the Marchioness and Marquess Halifax from a young age. Chesterfield's reputation and popularity would initially stem from his political career and was sustained by a series of posthumous publications. His most influential source of writing, arguably, are the *Letters to His Son on the Art of Becoming a Man of the World and a Gentleman*, published posthumously in 1773. Chesterfield's life after public office was driven by a need for relevancy, and his codifying attempts at creating a national canon of authors.

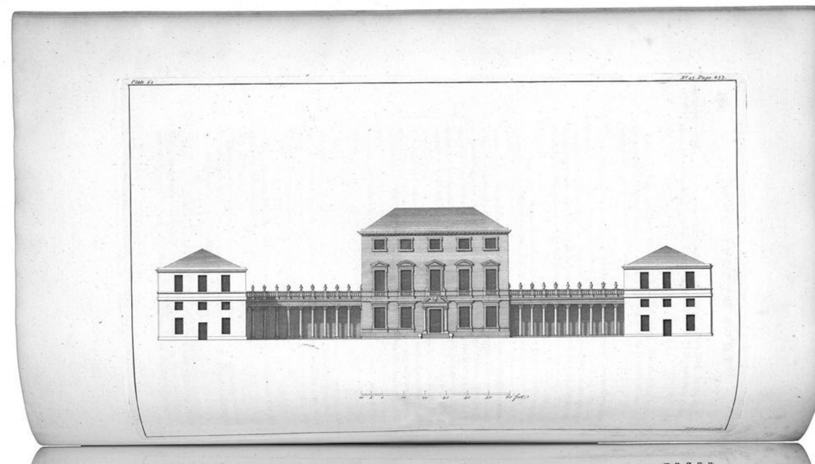

Figure 2.2: Isaac Ware, *Elevation of Chesterfield House, Mayfair, London,* in *A Complete Body of Architecture. Adorned With Plans and Elevations…* 1755-7, Osborne and Shipton, p. 60-88 courtesy of Getty Research Institute.

Figure 2.3: Thomas Ripley, John Vardey, John James & Isaac Ware. *Lecture Drawings of buildings: Perspective of Chesterfield House, Mayfair*. Date unknown, Courtesy of the Sir John Soane's Museum Collection.

The *Letters* went through eight editions in its first year of publication, and by the end of the century, were found in Edinburgh, Boston, Paris, Philadelphia, and Vienna.[21] Chesterfield's overall objective was to create a London *palazzo* that would serve as his home base, rather staying at the traditional northern county seat at Bretby, Derbyshire.[22] It was designed by a second-wave Palladian architect Isaac Ware (1704-1766), with the library being described in Chesterfield's own words as "one of the best in England."[23] Ware's designs on the house are preserved in both photographic form and engraving. The engravings from Ware's *Complete Body of Architecture* detail the elevation view of the house, as well as its ground floor plan.

[21] Dean, "Authorship, Print, and Public in Chesterfield's Letters to His Son." pp. 691–706.
[22] Russell, "Canaletto and Joli at Chesterfield House." pp. 627–30.
[23] Stanhope, *Letters to His Son*. 31 March 1749.

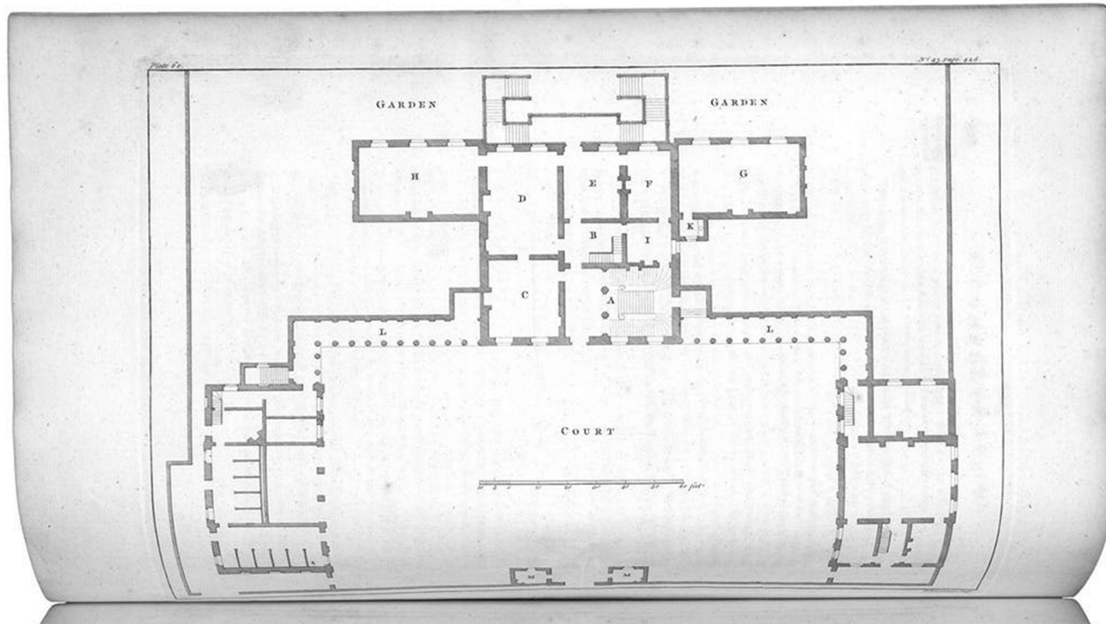

Figure 2.4: Isaac Ware, *Ground floor plan of Chesterfield House*, in *A Complete Body of Architecture. Adorned With Plans and Elevations…*1755-7, Osborne and Shipton, p. 60-88 courtesy of Getty Research Institute

The frontal view of the property as it was completed in 1752 shows Ware's use of a colonnade to connect the central manor house with the flanking buildings. These columns would be lost over time as the manor changed hands. The house was composed of a total of thirteen rooms, and the library is in the top right of the plan. Chesterfield House was externally designed in the Palladian tradition, while its interior was Baroque in its decoration. The Baroque pattern continues to the frames that enveloped the portraits- these were mounted directly into the walls, and when the pictures were removed, the external frames stayed in place. This allowed for a blank canvas when new tenants took ownership of the home. Freestanding frames built into library walls are an anomaly when compared to the usual emphasis on the pictorial content, with the frame acting as a secondary aspect. Rather than an afterthought, the frames were built into the house from its very inception. Either a result of Ware's style or

originating from Chesterfield's input, it is interesting to think that the permanence that was normally suggested by a painting is in this case, was left as a secondary concern to the frame.

There was a shift in the rhetorical use of framing during the sixteenth century onwards in England. Historically, the idea of picture frames were based on Thomas Wilson's *Rule of Reason* (1551), and Ralph Lever's *Arte of Reason, rightly termed Witcraft.* The books showed the joint development of English vernacular writing and the ideas behind practical framing of artwork.[24] The etymology of *frame* begins to move from meaning "an advantage, a building constructed by multiple parts, and a literary composition", to the word most familiar as the casement for an artwork. The physical frame's implementation as a "way to enclose and focus the viewer's gaze onto the scene which unfolds within its boundaries," is used by Chesterfield here to denote that there should always be a syntax of authors which, by being framed in his library, urges the viewer to read the contents as a way to brace against the public sphere's shifts in literary tastes.[25]

If we also consider Shearer West's description and inquiries into frame purposes in the eighteenth century, the in-set frames of Chesterfield House pushed for the idea of continuity. The picture frame within the context of townhomes shows that, by framing and creating a focusing effect on the certain likenesses over others, the continuity of

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[24] Kalas, "The Frame before the Work of Art." p. 28.
[25] Carter, *Framing Art*.

aristocratic families is reinforced in the eighteenth-century period.[26] It is from this patriarchal assertion that Chesterfield constructs his library pantheon of portraits.

In the case of Chesterfield's library portraits, they are conveying a literary genealogy. The importance of the blank space over its subservient content makes for a radical departure of painted portraiture. Usually, the portraits specifically commissioned for a display space take precedence over the work of the frame. As it is the frames that are more permanent, the pictures' copied, altered, or overall fungible qualities reflect this departure. Designed by Isaac Ware and probably carved by either James Richard, or Jean Antoine Cuenot; the boiserie designs of the frames are in line with Rococo designs of the period.[27] Fixed frame portraiture in the vein of Ware's contemporaries, like Robert Adam and William Kent, had frames constructed from plaster, which were fitted into the walls. The frames not only allow for a change in display when new tenants move into or out of the home, but also gives the possibility of revision during their time in ownership. This newfound internal mobility of the pictures from and within the frames is contrary to the *longue durée* of portrait collections in the eighteenth-century country house. In the type of display that Chesterfield participated in, the shift in the portrait display's priorities allows the act of framing to construct a dichotomy of stability vs. instability, of framing or mobility. It is by examination of these tensions that provides new insight into the Chesterfield House library display.

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[26] West, "Framing Hegemony: Economics, Luxury, and Family Continuity in the Country-House Portrait." pp. 63–78.

[27] James Richard was Ware's father-in-law, while Cuenot was known to be in London during the period of Chesterfield House's construction. No record survives of who Ware commissioned to sculpt the frames in the library, however.

The library housed twenty-two sequential painted portraits on its walls. These pictures were documented several times before the house's demolition in 1934. Several of these initially were purchased or commissioned as copies by Lord Chesterfield, even before the library at Chesterfield House was completed. The portraits run the range from the primogenitor of English literature, Geoffrey Chaucer, to Edmund Spenser, Jonathan Swift, and finally to contemporaries of Lord Chesterfield in the forms of Alexander Pope and Joseph Addison. Chesterfield's ensemble was one that reflected his own hope for a national canon. George Vertue states: "[Chesterfield] bought the portraits of many most memorable Poets heads of this nation…he bought at several times from Ld. Oxford, and Lord Hallifaxes [sic] collection…many others are coppyed to the size he wants."[28] Edward Harley, 2nd Earl of Oxford's collections went up for auction, allowing Chesterfield to merely purchase and absorb pieces of his collection. The survival of aristocratic collections by way of estate sales began a trend of auctions acting as a viable (and quick) way of accumulating status and cultural standing in the eighteenth century. The portraits were purchased in 1741-2, five years before construction on the house was finished. Chesterfield would have had time to sit with his collection of pictures before working with Ware and other designers to create a space where they would be displayed. These custom-built frames and pictures were slightly smaller than the Kit Cat portrait sizing which Godfrey Kneller used. The portraits that were altered to fit the library's purpose-built frames, and when they were replaced, reminds us of the fungibility of the pictures they enclosed.

[28] Vertue, *Notebook*. p. 70.

The purely British, modern authorial focus of the ensemble is substantial because Chesterfield was especially considered a Francophile- he had many friends in France and wrote to them regularly. But to exclude writers like Moliere, Voltaire, and others in place of creating a purely British literary canon represents an interest on his part for connecting himself by association to these authors. The construction of Chesterfield's set is based around a series of raffle-leaf frames with tragic and comic masks on the bottom edge, and clustered musical instruments on top. A likely descendant of the popular Sunderland style of frames from the seventeenth century, the Rococo style frames help Chesterfield to process the lived experience of readership: creating a canon for himself which anticipated, recollected, and constructed literary history.

Why was there the obsession of portraits of literary figures? Westminster Abbey had its Poet's Corner, which was developed on a sculptural level, and some of the cast that Chesterfield canonized are buried there. The literati figures portrayed within the space of the library makes sense, but I argue that Chesterfield and other homeowners in similar positions wanted to create a presence of authority by way of using this serialized display. The set of portraits themselves also touches upon the emergent practice of memorialization, as well as acting as a pantheonic display of literary canonical figures. As the British aristocracy started to question their identity, place, and connection in an increasingly modern world, they attempted to build out a historical affiliation to anchor themselves. The difference between inherited portrait pictures and Chesterfield's portrait displays were crucial. The frames were finished first, and portrait copies were purchased at auction and cut down to size to fit. The pictures and their

frames were installed above bookshelves, which wrapped around the entire library. According to Vertue's notebooks, of the original series of the twenty-one portraits installed, six were commissioned for their new site. The new pictures painted by Charles Jervas were of a misattributed-Ben Jonson (now lost), Joseph Addison, Alexander Pope, William Cartwright, Matthew Prior, and Jonathan Swift.[29] The inclusion of this set of authors represented the heights of Augustan literature- their works being contemporary with Chesterfield's own formative period of 1700-1740.

Figure 2.5: Arthur Gill, *Chesterfield House Library,* 1931, Unpublished photograph, Courtesy of Country Life Magazine's Picture Library.

These newly commissioned portrait copies were significant for multiple reasons. Chesterfield's early career was heavily influenced by these authors, and as time went on, he became friends with Pope and Addison. Chesterfield's father was a patron of

[29] Vertue, *Notebook*. p. 38.

Matthew Prior, while Chesterfield’s connection to Swift was through court painter Charles Jervas. Pope, Addison, and Prior were members of the Kit Cats, while Jervas and Swift were part of a literary circle called the Scriblerus Club. Each was distilled down to only their symbolic likeness: acting as frontispieces to the literary content held in the bookshelves below them. In this distillation, Jervas’ plain renderings of the sitters would result in portraits which were comfortable in their absence of particularity. After all, they were affordable portrait copies made to quickly codify authors as symbols to be identified.

Figure 2.6: Charles Jervas et al, *Chesterfield House Library Portraits*, Oil on canvas, dates vary. Courtesy of the Sterling Paleography Senate Reading Room, University of London.

Alexander Pope’s commissioned portrait is an example in how Jervas changes the arm of the sitter to condense the recognition required on part of the viewer. The result is a removal of the original’s pose of holding his translation of the *Iliad*. Jervas’

removal of Pope's recognizable literary contribution makes attribution much more difficult without the book with he is associated with. Gone is the Kneller original's illusory backdrop, and the copy created for Chesterfield has undergone changes which denature the face. Pope's copied image exists as Chesterfield's remarks about portraiture's use: he is less interested in the aesthetic or accurate rendering of the subject and is more invested in portraiture's use as a symbolic language. The decision to cut corners and in this case, the detailed painting work required to render the same likeness in Pope's cheeks, or the Greek script peeking out from the pages distilled Pope's visual attributes down even further. The traditions of moving towards an interiority or coded way of reading portraiture is continued from Dutch portrait conventions.[30] This set of images is less about the public contributions or virtues of authors and more about the private collection: a personally curated and framed view of the British literary tradition. The Pope portrait is one of several examples where Chesterfield had the portraits altered to suit their new display environment.

[30] Riegl, *The Group Portraiture of Holland*. p. 343.

Figure 2.7: L: Attributed to Charles Jervas, *Alexander Pope*, n.d., Chesterfield/Sterling Library version. R: Sir Godfrey Kneller, *Alexander Pope*, 1719, Courtesy of the British Library/Private Collection.

Chesterfield arranged the library portraits to be emblematic of tacit interactions and relationships between literary friends and patrons. Someone who had read any of the Kit Cat club's literary works would have understood the complicated web of connections he was trying to make by recognizing the printed author's portraits in their works. If they did not, the portraits would have been an opportunity for a topic of conversation. These connections act as the bookends to the history of the house and its use as a portrait gallery: the last owner of the home, Henry Lascelles, 6th Lord Harewood, attempts to restore the original portraits to their location. The shift in hands of portraits and owners, forms an integral part to the inquiry into portrait ensembles, their reception, and their afterlives. Lascelles was aware of Chesterfield's history and sought to resurrect the same portrait content in the library, two hundred years later. This creation of a literary-based canon, coupled with the emergent preoccupation of the achievements and fame of those figures, moves to place the importance of literary

memory rather than ancestral lineage. By materially linking coded portraits and authority, the Chesterfield set was the first time that a library held British-only authors to bring an explicit showing of authorial presence that was part of a long textual (and now visual) dialogue of writers, poets, and playwrights.[31]

Since most of Chesterfield's portraits held in the library were copies, The practice of using copied portraits is reinforced by Samuel Richardson in his *The Art of Criticism*, where he defends it: "A copy of a very Good Picture is preferable to an Indifferent Original; for there the Invention is seen almost Intire [sic] and a great deal of the Expression, and Disposition, and many times good Hints of the Colouring, Drawing, and other Qualities."[32] Richardson's views on copying goes against art historical precedent for copies- rather than discounting them, copies are elevated to becoming as useful as originals. This moved the significance of the copy from a lower hierarchy (often in servitude of a missing original), to a symbolic marker of authorial presence. Comprehensive knowledge started to become impossible, and Chesterfield's objective was to show visitors (and with his writings, his son) how and what to read. As the eighteenth century progressed, there were more publications, pictures to see, and their critical commentaries which put increasing pressure on the refined person. By preceding anthologizing practices, and despite Samuel Richardson's views on copied paintings, the surviving Chesterfield portraits' rather plain executions and their rotation

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[31] Baker, "Authorial connections and continuities: frontispieces, library portraits, and the visualization of literary canons." p. 238.
[32] Richardson, *Two Discourses. I.* p. 179.

and replaceability frame his ideas of the construction of a literary canon which were subject to revision in a digestible, visual format.

Chesterfield was also very particular about the arrangement of the portrait sequence. This was to be a collection of not family, nor topographical images, but reflective of someone who desperately wished to be known as a well-read man.[33] Russell briefly discusses both Chesterfield House and what is of greater use is his historiographical inquiry into the history of collectors and their portrait hanging programs, as well as examining how prevalent it was as an emergent cultural practice in eighteenth century Britain. The pictures built for the library space were not only for addressing the authors visually, but in essence, created the consideration of the library *as a book*. The primacy for Chesterfield's cast of literati is not, as we know from the frames, emphasizing the visual. It is instead, acting as indicators of rhetorical framing to show viewers Chesterfield's view of literary history. These frontispieces attempted to enclose a notion of British literary history into an anthology. Chesterfield's portrait ensemble's organizational structure sought engagement not on the visual front, but a metonymic reading. If people were meant to read English literature, this library would be all that they needed to understand the merits and strengths of modern British writing. With the permanence of the frames, the pictures are there to act as guideposts, or indicators of written works held within the shelves. With the frame's allowance of subsequent changes, the library-book has the possibility (or inevitability) of being revised or altered as time went on.

[33] Russell, "The Hanging and Display of Pictures, 1700-1850." pp. 133–53.

The photographs and information that survive about Chesterfield House before its demolition are contained in a lecture by David Piper, former director of the National Portrait Gallery. There are five portraits that were divorced from the seventeen. The portraits that were initially separated from the collection are pictures of Sir Philip Sidney, William Shakespeare, a three quarters-length portrait *called* Ben Jonson, Charles Sackville, 6th Earl of Dorset, and John Wilmot, 2nd Earl of Rochester. The five missing pictures also deviate from the new Chesterfield sizing: Sidney, Shakespeare and Jonson's picture dimensions were less compliant than the rest of the set. The locations of these pictures would have been over the doors and hearth, rather than over the bookcases, where the more uniform portraits resided in their frames.

For example, the portrait of Shakespeare is a full-length portrait, and the called-Ben Jonson was three-quarters. The Chandos-based *Shakespeare* has on it in gold paint, "*Shakespeare, Obiit 1616*". With the inclusion of the obituary note in Latin, we can assume that this was a posthumous portrait of the Bard. Chesterfield probably had a copy made after seeing the original at the Duke of Chandos' estate sale, where he purchased Chesterfield House's wrought-iron gates and other items.[34][35][36] The gesture of the hand is a standout feature of the portrait, which hung in the place of importance overmantel. Shakespeare's left hand is shown to be a *logos* gesture, with which he presumably is using to beckon the viewer's attention to the words on the page, but also that he is about to speak.[37] Viewers should read the newly collected works, but also

[34] Jackson-Stops, "English Baroque Ironwork-II The Influence of Tijou.", pp. 182-7.
[35] Pearce, *London's Mansions*. p. 72, pl. 43.
[36] Sykes, *Private Palaces*. p. 119.
[37] Ibid

should listen to his authority. It also occupies the overmantel position, reserved for the heart of portrait displays. These five were all sold separately, in a sale in 1918 before Sir Louis Sterling could resurrect the intact set. As a director for record company EMI, Sterling would eventually donate his library and portraits from Chesterfield House to the University of London's paleography room. After this sale of the five outlying pictures and despite the portraits finding a home, the original set which was displayed by Chesterfield would never be intact again.

Figure 2.8: Attributed to Pieter Borsselaer, *William Shakespeare*, 1679. Oil on canvas, 127.5 x 120cm. Courtesy of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Stratford-upon-Avon.

With the Chesterfield set acting as a continuation of Sir Godfrey Kneller's *Kit-Kat* type, the historical precedent descends from a set of engravings known as the *Heroologia Anglica* (1620). Mentioned in George Scharf's scrawled annotations in his sketchbooks of the Chesterfield House visit, the *Heroologia* is proving key to understanding the use of literary bust portraits to something more standard and practical: the two-dimensional pantheonic display of literary figures in the same library that contained their work. This broader change marks a move away from sculpted portrait busts' durability and toward the transmissible mediums of portrait painting and engraving.[38] For Chesterfield's inter-generational canon of authors, the pictures created for the space do not invoke the traditions of classicism. The author portraits instead take on a didactic function when arranged to showcase an intellectual tradition.

Portraits acted as a conduit of memory- a key acknowledgement in examining these pictures as being a part of a tradition that descends from the medieval period. Similar to how Mary Carruthers addresses conceptions of memory in relation to the *making* of memory: in particular, it is the division of memory into two parts that I seek to use in this context. The first part is the composition of the work, or the 'authoring' itself that is held within the books (and in certain cases, the frontispieces) as representations of that authoring. This is part of an individual's contribution to the making of memory. That making of the text/authority is what allows for the second part of authority, which is as Carruthers argues, the 'matter of authorizing'.[39] The matter of authorization is something that is more communal and social in nature. In conjunction with the

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[38] Griffiths and Gerard, *The Print in Stuart Britain, 1603-1689.* cat.10.
[39] Carruthers, *The Book of Memory*. p. 238.

authoring, the matter of authorization is in this case, accomplished by Lord Chesterfield. His pantheon here shows what they can do not just as authors and authorities, but also how they compose forms of writing when engaging with other authors and authorities. Connecting back to Chaucer, this painted suite of writers has become a showcase of authors attempting to engage with the long history of authorship and Chesterfield's attempts at drawing those connections back unto his reputation.

By attaching himself through the frames of authority and authorship, I argue that Lord Chesterfield's calculated purchases, engagement with traditions of pantheonic display, within a cultural memory of writing served to strengthen his flagging position during a period of cultural resignification. By using frames in a way to create a boundary from emerging literature, Chesterfield's portrait set were being stabilized and entrenched from shifts in literary tastes.

Authorial presence and portraiture were mobilized in such a way that visitors to the space would be able to identify not just Chesterfield's personal connections to, but also his connoisseurship of British authors, poets, and playwrights. The figure of the collector became more authoritarian in a time of shifting cultural fashions. The presence of the authors portraits function as a paratext- a visual text that would work to affect the perception of Chesterfield's guests. Paratext is best explained as the elements which lie on the threshold of a text that seeks to help direct and, in some cases, control its readers. The paratexts that we are familiar with include prefaces, acknowledgements, interviews, publicity announcements, etc.- they exist as text outside of the text in

question.[40] If a pantheon of labelled authors were framed above the numerous bookshelves, guests would most likely gravitate towards their work. By fulfilling Foucault's concept of an "author-function"; Chesterfield's sequence creates a set figure that exists exterior to the text, while also acting as an antecedent.[41][42] The book-library, if we are to think about it in such terms, is penetrated by the notion of the paratext: Chesterfield's in-built frames lead the occupants of the space to consider the portraits as frontispieces. Here are reminders of the literary canon in which Chesterfield thought visitors might read- dictating which works one should read when considering British literature. Viewers needed only to glance at the *dramatis personae* which Chesterfield assembled.

Chesterfield House became paratextual to the reading not just of Stanhope's desired character, but also of the new literary canon he is making. The book-library of Chesterfield house enters a tradition of canon-making and continuity. By showing collective portraits in a manner that resembles creating an omnibus, the book-library joins the tradition of Plutarch's *Lives,* Vasari's version, as well as those created in France, Italy, Germany, the Netherlands, and eventually England from the sixteenth century onwards.[43]

The celebrity status of Chesterfield's writings, life, and spat with Dr. Samuel Johnson are fed by the conflict in class politics between the two. Johnson's fight with his

[40] Allen, *Intertextuality*. p. 100.
[41] Foucault and Simon, "What Is an Author?" pp. 124-7.
[42] Howe, "The Authority of Presence: The Development of the English Author Portrait, 1500–1640." pp. 465-9.
[43] Baker, "Authorial connections and continuities: frontispieces, library portraits, and the visualization of literary canons." pp. 235–50.

patron over working conditions for the *Dictionary of the English Language* forms the basis as the start of a competition of creating a unified language between the two men. Chesterfield and Johnson are now stand-ins for their respective classes. This competition over the codification of the English language is based in the ways in which both men believed to be the best course of steering the course of literary culture in the eighteenth century. Chesterfield, given his own interest in the realms of the literary, wanted to bring broader attention to the merits of the aristocracy through literacy. Johnson on the other hand, represented the Grub Street writer, the mercenary, and professional author. Johnson's emphasis on plain speaking and speaking to "win" reflects attempts at large to cut through the fashionable trends and rituals put on by the aristocratic class. Taken through the lens of literary theory and history, Chesterfield's attempts to unify the English language takes place through the weeding out of lesser figures in literature. Both men ultimately wanted the same goal: to sweep aside extraneous figures and forms of literature so that an enviable model of British literature existed for dissemination and posterity. For Chesterfield, only the aristocracy has the detachment necessary to create this canon. Meanwhile, Johnson and the professional writers of London are fighting for their own spaces to critique and contribute to self-fashioning as literary consumption becomes more democratized.

Dr. Johnson was overwhelmed by his first visit to Chesterfield House and the man of manners. This was the desired effect of the House and its library on visitors of lower classes. The creation of fashions, in any form, whether as Macaroni outfits inspired by Grand Tourists, or the case of the portrait collection as an affirmation of social position and connection, manifests this axiom of cultural control. As different

classes interacted with the “elegant world”, they absorbed and learned how cultural practices were exercised. By being able to participate in these cultural forms meant that the participants were on the ‘in’, of the status quo.

Chesterfield’s attempt at creating his own contemporary canon of authors is one way to read this. His personal friendship with multiple poet laureates, like Colly Cibber and Nicholas Rowe, gave him the position by which to bring to attention the potential for a more elevated use of English.[44] What Davie is proposing is that through the re-use of dead metaphors or stylistic hallmarks of late Augustan poetry, authors are purifying the English language. On the other hand, is Davie’s condition that the purity of diction also included conversation. Chesterfield’s contribution is to point observers to the works of those displayed upon the walls- by purifying the English language, sweeping away the extraneous that is the result of an emergent public sphere, Chesterfield lays claim to steering the cultural vessel of the mid-Georgian period.[45] His emphasis is the first of two conditions that Davie outlines for purity of diction. For Johnson, however, it is the purview of discourse that will unify English culture and language. What Johnson wanted was plain speak, the usages of polite conversation, which he will manifest later through the Streatham circle. Ironically, to fulfill both conditions of what Davie outlines as a purity of diction, both men only did respectively half of the work required for this elevated state. It is no wonder then, that the split between them over Johnson’s *Dictionary* continued to push them along these disparate (but sympathetic) paths.

[44] Davie, *Purity of Diction in English Verse*.
[45] Ibid.

These portrait sequences act as the material indicators of the experience of reading. For Chesterfield, the inclusion of these likenesses crystallized the immaterial act of reading into one that is tied to memory, tradition, and value. A monument to contributions in literature, the interrogation of value's connection to worth (and in this case, the idea of the Worthy), is critical in starting to understand the significance of pantheonic portrait displays in the eighteenth century. The beginning of various attempts at codifying or ordering portraits act to create clear delineations and divisions in class. This must be a response to the increasing mobility, commerce, and urbanization present in the eighteenth century, which generates the anxieties that spur attempts to anchor itself in history and cultural memory so that these changes might be lessened.

One of the best surviving sources of documentation with regards to Chesterfield House and its library set are the sketchbooks of George Scharf, the first director of the British National Portrait Gallery. Scharf, active from 1857 to 1890, was critical in the documentation of several country houses and their portrait collections. Scharf drew many collections on their last legs and his work predates photographic documentation. These sketchbooks are critical to being sources of inventory, hanging order, and as confirmation for the first two ensemble portrait collections of the dissertation. Late Victorian families could no longer maintain the financial costs and were downsizing their possessions and collections, and Scharf was crucial in preserving their memory.

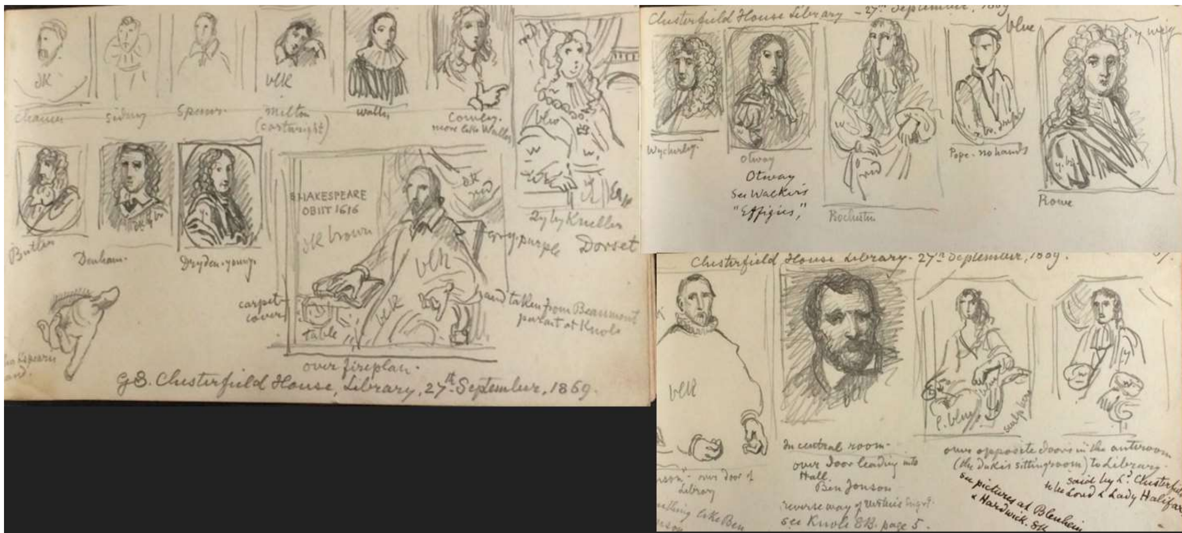

Figure 2.9: George Scharf, *Folios from Sketches at Chesterfield House*. 1869, Graphite on paper, Sketchbook #83. Courtesy of the Heinz Archive at the National Portrait Gallery, London.

These drawings were made presumably just before the family removed all the portraits from their spandrelled frames and relocated to the family seat in Bretby Hall, Derbyshire. The house's occupation was taken up by its purchaser, Charles Magniac, a financier, and politician during 1870s to 1891. Magniac's father, Hollingsworth Magniac, was an early collector of Medieval art. His collection would be inherited by his son Charles. When Charles Magniac dies in 1892, portions of the Magniac/Colworth collection are then passed to the National Gallery. Scharf's drawings give us not only the hanging order of the "Poet's Room", but also details the interstitial portraits and sculptures that accompanied them.[46] These are unnamed but occupy the spaces in between the windows facing North and South. The other portraits of note were placed in an anteroom just outside the library entrance. These contained two portraits of Chesterfield's grandparents, *the Marquess and Marchioness Halifax*, and a version of Sir Peter Lely's double portrait of *Charles I and the Duke of York*. The difficulty of the

[46] Scharf, "The Sketchbooks of George Scharf." Verso 52.

hanging order and composition of the portraits is complicated by the fact that there were modifications during and after the Earl's life.[47]

A painting of interest that is produced after the lifetime of Lord Chesterfield would be the work of E.M. Ward and his nineteenth-century narrative painting entitled *Doctor Johnson waiting in the anteroom of Lord Chesterfield Waiting for an Audience, 1748.*

Figure 2.10: E.M. Ward, *Doctor Johnson in the Anteroom of the Lord Chesterfield Waiting for an Audience 1748.* 1845, Oil on canvas, 106cm x 139.4 cm. Tate Britain, London.

This is a fictional painting that is created about a century after the purported events in the painting occurred. Ward has created a sense of what Doctor Johnson would have felt as he waited for a meeting with Chesterfield to discuss terms of

[47] Piper, "Chesterfield House Portraits."

patronage for his *Dictionary*. We may even look back to the anecdote of Lord Chesterfield (pictured in the center of the hallway, greeting the next of his audience members), and how he kept Doctor Johnson waiting for an extended period. When the door finally opens and the Earl sets forth to meet with Johnson, Colly Cibber, a friend of Lord Chesterfield, walks out. Though the face of the man opening the door to visit with obscured, with his back turned towards the viewer, it would not be a stretch to assume that this might be Cibber, judging by the look of frustration that is portrayed by Johnson, surrounded by figures who ostensibly Ward wants to portray as sycophantic and snide. A figure group of four on the right of the picture walk out, with some sort of decree or deed that has been approved by Chesterfield in the man's hand. They whisper to each other, gossipy and self-satisfied. Chesterfield is portrayed here as the gatekeeper of the literary pantheon which he created. If Johnson's eyeline is followed, it is similar to Peter Burke's remarks on the topic of conversation, Johnson has found himself rather uncomfortably, on the side of exclusion and hierarchy where he was expecting to be on the opposite sides of both. After the fallout between the two men, Johnson would be against traditional models of patronage for the rest of his literary career.

It may also be helpful to think about the term "cast" as a way to speak about the ensemble of literati likenesses: cast not just in the Johnsonian context of a taste or preview but cast used also in its connotation with "from the original". The cast, if we keep to the Johnsonian definition, very much contributes to the paratextual nature that the portrait collection lends to the library as a quality of the space- visitors can be guided to asking who should be read, how it should be read, and which authors are present within the collection. It marks the zone of transition between text and non-text;

something that is on the threshold of the text much like the frontispieces of the seventeenth century books or those in the library.[48]

In this way, Chesterfield House's library contributed beyond its initial purview: as the books move in and out along with the owners and their portraits, the new tenants are not the people who write or publish (in this case, build,) the text of the library, but they must assemble a bricolage of objects to showcase their knowledge of persons of history, and to signal, the contributions of the individuals who are represented.[49]

Samuel Johnson's place in this chapter of the dissertation acts as a bookend of sorts: we find that he becomes close to the elevated social circle of Lord Chesterfield, he enters social networks and membership into literary celebrity which comes into fruition later in his life. The misaligned author-patron relationship, including the participants' attempts at purity of diction, had a captivating afterlife: people enjoyed reading about it. To close, we may look at the words of Chesterfield, writing to his son:

> The next thing to the choice of your friends, is the choice of your company. Endeavor, as much as you can, to keep company with people above you: there you rise, as much as you sink with people below you; for (as I have mentioned before) you are whatever the company you keep is. Do not mistake, when I say company above you, and think that I mean with regard to their birth: that is the least consideration; but I mean with regard to their merit, and the light in which the world considers them. There are two sorts of good company; one, which is called the beau monde, and consists of the people who have the lead in courts, and in the gay parts of life; the other consists of those who are distinguished by some peculiar merit, or who excel in some particular and valuable art or science. For my own part, I used to think myself in company as, much above me, when I

[48] Allen, *Intertextuality*. pp. 40-8.
[49] Peltz, *Facing the Text*. pp. 1-47.

> was with Mr. Addison and Mr. Pope, as if I had been with all the princes in Europe.[50]

The changes in the hermetic circles of aristocracy and their place in dictating cultural practices around portraiture, literature, and history become more democratized as time goes on in the eighteenth century. The access that is made available to professional writers and lower classes inevitably generates friction, but from Chesterfield's creation of a canon for himself, informs us of how aristocratic views of history and authorship could reveal rotational and replaceable practices of portrait displays. Chesterfield's death in 1773 would also signal changes in the next generation of aesthetes: sons of Chesterfield's political contemporaries, such as Horace Walpole would offer their own critical views of history and authority, using complex pictorial displays to attract viewership and consideration in the mid Georgian period.

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[50] Stanhope, *Letters to His Son*. 7 October 1747.

Appendix A:

List of Burlington's portraits while at Chesterfield House:

1. Miss Pitt, by George Romney
2. Mrs Hamar, nee Miss Arden, after Sir Joshua Reynolds
3. Miss Taylor, by Johann Zoffany
4. Philip Dormer Stanhope, by William Hoare
5. Anna Maria Bruderall, Duchess of Shrewsbury, by Sir Godfrey Kneller
6. Commodore Byron, "Rough Weather Jack", by Sir Joshua Reynolds
7. Madame de Bovuille, by Jean Marc Nattier
8. Alexander Pope, by Jonathan Richardson
9. Mrs J.M. Raikes, by Sir William Beechey
10. Sir David Wilkie RA, by Sir Henry Raeburn, RA
11. Mrs Hannah More, by Johann Zoffany
12. John Gay, by William Hogarth
13. The Marquess of Stafford, K.G., by Sir Joshua Reynolds
14. Lady Rodney, by Francis Cotes
15. Edward Gibbon, the Historian, by Sir Joshua Reynolds
16. Mademoiselle Bacelli, by John Opie
17. John, 3rd Duke of Dorset, K.G., by Sir Joshua Reynolds
18. La Contessa della Rena, by Sir Joshua Reynolds
19. Admiral Joseph Hamar, by Sir Joshua Reynolds
20. Miss Rush, by Sir Joshua Reynolds
21. James Northcote by Sir Joshua Reynolds
22. Lady Ann Lennox, by Sir Joshua Reynolds
23. Samuel Johnson, by Sir Joshua Reynolds

B: List of Lascelles portraits held in Chesterfield House in the 1930's:

Chesterfield House's collection at the time of Lord Harewood's occupation is the last time that the portraits are held together. The complete list of portraits as it existed in its final form before the house's demolition in 1934 is:

1. Geoffrey Chaucer, Artist unknown.
2. Edmund Spenser, after a contemporary portrait.
3. Ben Jonson, Artist unknown, after a portrait of van Blijenberch
4. Edmund Waller, inscribed as 'John Milton', after Cornelius Johnson, 1629.
5. William Cartwright, Artist unknown.
6. Samuel Butler, After a painting by Gerard Soest, 1670. (?)
7. Sir John Denham, Artist unknown, c. 1661.
8. Abraham Cowley (?), Artist unknown.
9. John Dryden, After a painting by John Riley, c. 1685.
10. William Wycherley, by Thomas Murray, c. 1700.
11. Thomas Otway, by John Riley, c. 1680-5.
12. Matthew Prior, By or after Jonathan Richardson.
13. Jonathan Swift, by Charles Jervas, c. 1718 (?).
14. William Congreve, After a painting of 1709 by Sir Godfrey Kneller
15. Joseph Addison, After a painting by Kneller, c. 1710.
16. Nicholas Rowe, by Richardson after a painting by Kneller, 1715.
17. Alexander Pope, After a painting by Kneller, 1716.
18. Sir Philip Sidney, By or after John de Critz, c. 1585.
19. William Shakespeare, attributed to Pieter Borseller, 1660-70.
20. Ben Jonson (?), artist unknown.
21. Charles Sackville, 6th Earl of Dorset, artist unknown.
22. John Wilmot, 2nd Earl of Rochester, By or after Sir Peter Lely.

Chapter 3

A Certain Kind of Gloomth: Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill, Twickenham

Horace Walpole's single-handed attempts at changing the dominant trends and preferences of the eighteenth-century house-museum make the assignation of the Prime Minister of taste only fitting. Born Horatio Walpole in 1717 as the youngest son of Britain's first *de-facto* prime minister, Sir Robert Walpole (1676-1745) and his wife Catherine Shorter (1682-1737), Horace was rapidly integrated into the societal framework of polite sociability and aristocratic life. He was educated at Eton College, then King's College, as well as learning about the emergent ideals of neoclassicism through the Grand Tour in Italy in 1739. His contributions include popularizing the Gothic revival style in the eighteenth century via his estate Strawberry Hill through his novel *The Castle of Otranto*. He was also a man of letters, antiquarian, and self-founded publisher.

Figure 3.1: Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Horace Walpole*, Oil on canvas, 1756-7, 127cm x 101.8cm. National Portrait Gallery, London

Walpole derived differing, disparate collecting practices from his time visiting ancestral family seats in England. By doing so, Walpole learned how to consciously control what he collected, to an even greater level than the preceding examples of Lord Chesterfield or Lord Edward Harley. Walpole's carefully planned purchases at auctions allowed him to build the collection to fill Strawberry Hill over his entire life. Walpole decided to stay outside of the confines and restrictions allotted by classically influenced aesthetics and architecture of the Georgian period. Strawberry Hill was a building project whereby Walpole opted to use a non-dominant design philosophy as opposed to the Palladian style. This meant that Walpole gradually enfolded the growing collection into a single Gothic entity which worked to present distinctly historical aspects of British art and present objects from the Medieval part of history into an early museum environment. Walpole's Gothic Revival then, may be thought of not just as a push back against the prevailing tastes of his father's generation, but also against the homogenizing route which neo-Palladian architecture was taking.

Walpole, like Lord Chesterfield, was very much intentional and deliberate with his design directions to his commissioned architects. Architects as established as Robert Adam were given firm directions on where to draw from historical sources, while Walpole took much of the public design credit for himself.[51] Strawberry Hill can be considered as a museum in which viewers are also asked to contribute to its meaning-making when confronted with art objects from a period of contention, beginning with the separation of Henry VIII, to the Glorious Revolution of the recent seventeenth century. The state of museums was beginning to be widely understood in eighteenth-century

[51] Snodin et al., *Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill*. p. 15.

England, with Walpole's remarks from 1746 about his ideas of uniquity reinforcing what we will observe with Strawberry Hill and its collections:

> the notion I have of a Museum is a hospital for everything that is singular. Whether that thing has acquired singularity from having escaped the rage of time: from any natural oddness in itself; or from being so insignificant that nobody ever thought it worth their while to produce any more of the same sort. Intrinsic value has little or no property in the merit of Curiosities.[52]

Walpole's role as rescuer of unique items from history's trash heap was part of his collecting praxis. This soft counter-Enlightenment museum project takes its precedent from the aesthetization of material history and its battles between replication and singularity. Walpole's literary production also travels down these same thematic lines: his approach is rooted in a nascent criticality, rather than conservative history writing. For example, David Hume's revisionist *History of Britain*, with its overt Tory political views, suppressed any mention of events from dissenting perspectives. Walpole, through the multitude of objects and rooms, is creating a place for the historical and political example of heterodoxy. This was accomplished through the Strawberry Hill committee's stylistic, aesthetic, and sexual choices. This dissent was brought about by Walpole's awareness of a popular framework of homogenized culture which focuses on the connection between commerce, virtue, and politeness, rather than a fuller range of emotions, perspectives, and concerns.

Walpole's literary career was launched by his novel, *The Castle of Otranto*. It was published in 1764 and was created as a blend of medieval romance with the fiction novel. Walpole's views on the former were that it remained too fanciful to be taken

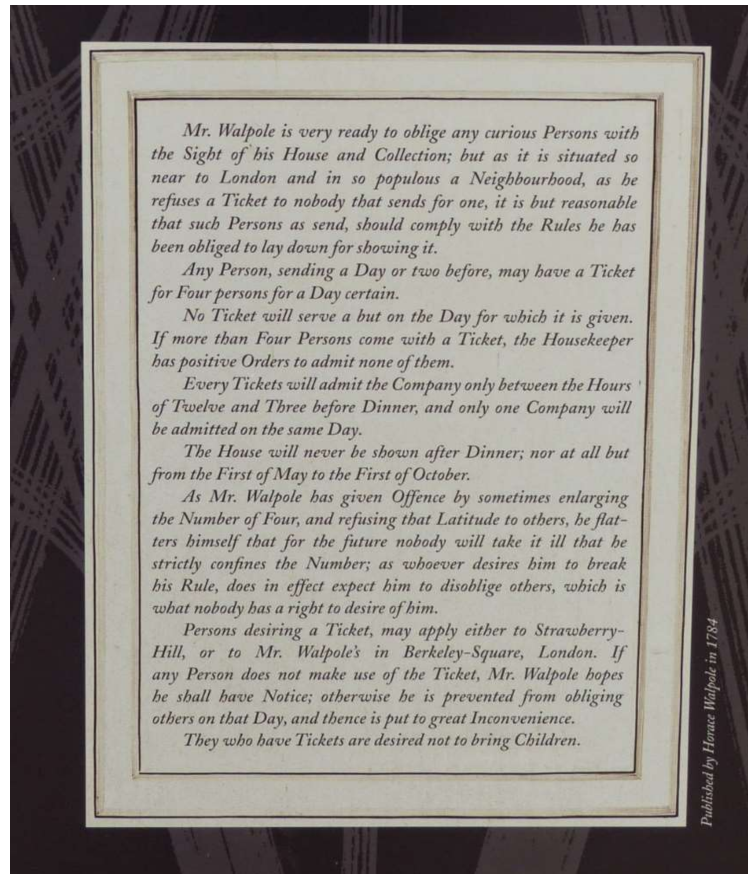
[52] Lilley, "Studies in Uniquity" p. 97.

seriously, while the contemporary novel of his time was too strictly adherent to realism. In blending the two, he also attached a false provenance to the novel's "translation" by a fictitious scion of Onuphrio Muralto. This was enough to garner good reviews from critics who thought it to belong to medieval fiction, "between 1095, the era of the First Crusade, and 1243, the date of the last".[53] Word finally circulated, and in the second edition, Walpole acknowledged authorship of his novel. The same critics who were fooled by the false sense of provenance subsequently dismissed his work as absurd, romantic fiction, and immoral. The excitement generated around the novel's descriptive imagery and its contested authenticity were enough to bring visitors to Walpole's doorstep. The decoration and aesthetic effects of the house informed the novel's most recognizable scenes: the armor of Francis, 1st King of France at the half-landing on the stairs is easily transferred to the opening scene where Conrad is crushed by a massive helmet. The imaginative, animated portrait from the novel was inspired by the likeness of *Henry, 1st Viscount Falkland* and is influenced by Shakespeare's phantasm from *Hamlet*. The opportunity for readers and fans of the novel to be in the place of inspiration and beside the very same objects proved to be an irresistible draw of literary celebrity.

As many as 10,000 guests by the end of the century would flock to see the Gothic villa. This was even more impressive, granted that Walpole would only admit parties of four visitors per day. The house's infamous bricolage collections drew visitors and fans Walpole's fiction novel, *The Castle of Otranto*. Printed tickets and rules were made available and posted anywhere where sociable crowds would gather, like

[53] Lake, "Bloody Records." p. 492.

Slaughter's Coffee House in London. (Figure 3.2) Walpole's reaction to its newfound popularity found him moving to the cottage in the flower garden, saying that he was "overrun with all languages of Babel who come to see my house from morning to night."[54] This was Walpole's version of the *noblesse oblige*, where he complains about the number of visitors he had.



Mr. Walpole is very ready to oblige any curious Persons with the Sight of his House and Collection; but as it is situated so near to London and in so populous a Neighbourhood, as he refuses a Ticket to nobody that sends for one, it is but reasonable that such Persons as send, should comply with the Rules he has been obliged to lay down for showing it.

Any Person, sending a Day or two before, may have a Ticket for Four persons for a Day certain.

No Ticket will serve a but on the Day for which it is given. If more than Four Persons come with a Ticket, the Housekeeper has positive Orders to admit none of them.

Every Tickets will admit the Company only between the Hours of Twelve and Three before Dinner, and only one Company will be admitted on the same Day.

The House will never be shown after Dinner; nor at all but from the First of May to the First of October.

As Mr. Walpole has given Offence by sometimes enlarging the Number of Four, and refusing that Latitude to others, he flatters himself that for the future nobody will take it ill that he strictly confines the Number; as whoever desires him to break his Rule, does in effect expect him to disoblige others, which is what nobody has a right to desire of him.

Persons desiring a Ticket, may apply either to Strawberry-Hill, or to Mr. Walpole's in Berkeley-Square, London. If any Person does not make use of the Ticket, Mr. Walpole hopes he shall have Notice; otherwise he is prevented from obliging others on that Day, and thence is put to great Inconvenience.

They who have Tickets are desired not to bring Children.

Published by Horace Walpole in 1784

Figure 3.2: Horace Walpole, *Rules for obtaining a ticket to see Strawberry Hill*, 1784. 23 x 18.5 cm, The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

The collections and displays from Strawberry Hill "enable us to glimpse the social process[es] through which objects, gestures, rituals and phrases are fashioned and

[54] Snodin et al., *Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill*. pp. 21-22.

moved from one zone of display to another", as these larger frameworks have not been explored in relation to Walpole's project, nor has a deeper investigation into the rooms along the visitor's tour. My approach to Walpole and Strawberry Hill is a syncretic assembly of Walpoliana such that it reconfigures the crux of the site to several rooms based on their questioning of Tudor historicity, as well as a reconfiguration of their pictorial relationship to the viewers. The components of these rooms and their contents created a spectatorship that refuses to be passive in its function- rather, it worked to hijack and repurpose: not just the imagination of its beholders, but also their preconceived notion of the eighteenth century's historic and cultural foundations. The ultimate reward lay in visitors and intimates who had already read *The Castle of Otranto*: the tour sets off flights of association which were already in play and embedded within the reading of his Gothic Revival text. Walpole expected these flights, makes them inevitable, and enforces it through his tour and displays. Walpole's Strawberry Hill sought to communicate with its viewers and visitors by way of a theater of the imagination.

Strawberry Hill's layout and tour progression have been laid out by numerous scholars, the rooms that are of interest regarding the themes of the chapter are found along the same tour route.[55] The self-contained period room of the Holbein Chamber, the Library, and finally, the Tribune are emphasized. Strawberry Hill was replete in portraits, pictures, and curiosities, but the ensemble displays present in these rooms have not been studied or theorized to the same extent as the rest of the house. These selections of focus have to do with their extensive portraiture emphasis, as well as their

[55] Chalcraft and Viscardi, *Strawberry Hill*. pp. 14-94.

importance and function as both social and anti-social spaces which contribute to a form of jointly constructed meaning between visiting viewer, owner, and the historical associations built from the gestalt objects on display. That is not to say that the rooms of the house function in isolation- consideration will also be paid to how these specific rooms also feed into the larger meaning of Strawberry Hill's displays.

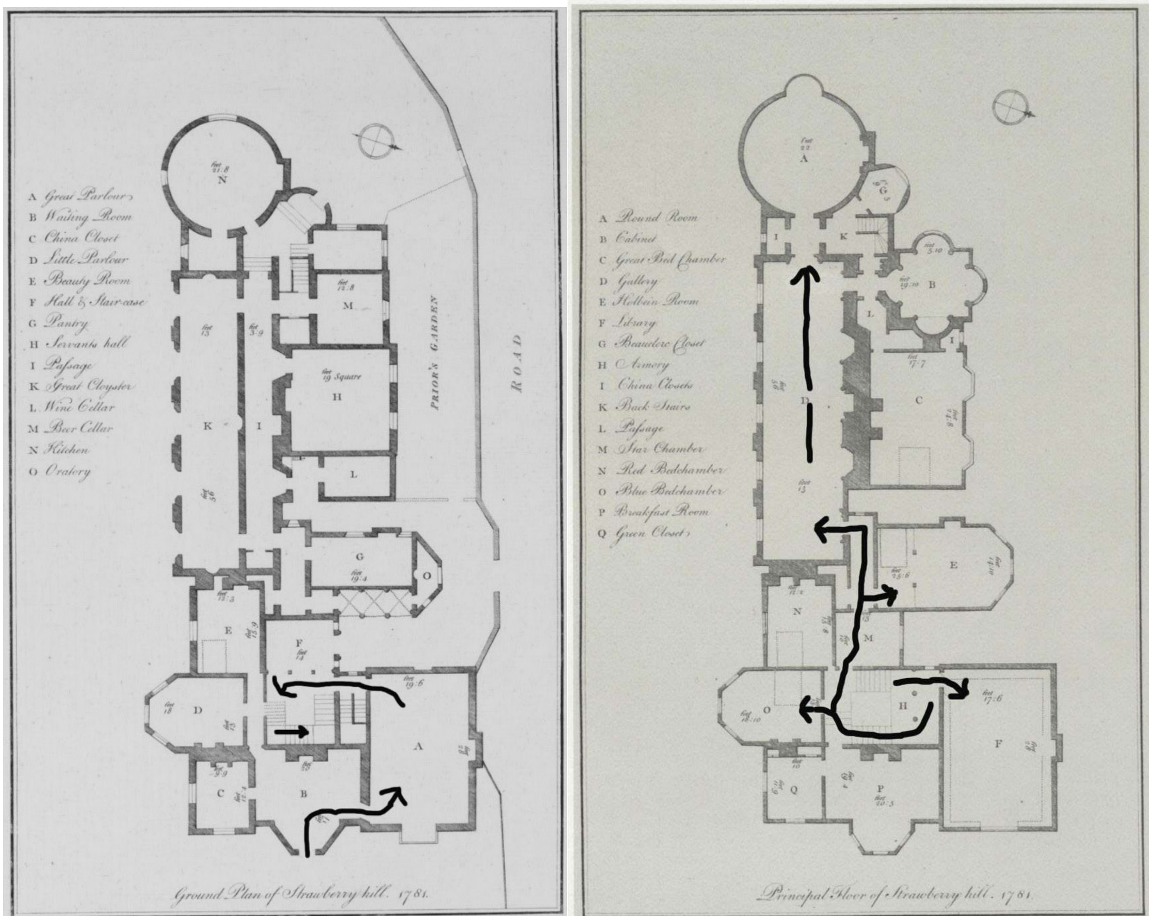


Figure 3.3: Thomas Kirgate, *Plan of Strawberry Hill, 1784.* L: Procession of the tour route from the ground floor. R: Tour continues on the first floor, before doubling back on itself.

To begin a chapter on the best surviving example of a Gothic-revival country house, we must understand in a larger theoretical and thematic sense, the meaning of

Gothic in the eighteenth century. It is also crucial to point out that Walpole's new estate is unlike the other two houses that will be discussed in the dissertation: it breaks in tradition in the use of its space, the objective of its rooms, and even the furniture that adorns the house. This key distinction should be pointed out as a site of resistance, or at least a satirical response toward the classicist architectural trends of the period.[56] Efforts to connect the newly reshaped governments after King James II's ousting to the Roman Republic's civic responsibility resulted in historians dubbing the transitionary period as the Augustan age in Britain. As a result, the appeal of a classical frame of mind, reinforces the class differences between the new patricians and plebeians entering the eighteenth century.[57]

This is not to say, however, that the Gothic Revival arose from a vacuum. Peter Lindfield points out several critical working antecedents for us to consider. Works done by architects in the late seventeenth century, such as Nicholas Hawksmoor (1661-1736), Sir John Vanbrugh (1664-1726), and Sir Christopher Wren (1632-1723) all demonstrate a continuation of the Gothic architectural form.[58] Wren, while interested in implementing Classical architectural style in a rigid form, had this to say about how the early Gothic Revival style was a step backward from where he believed the architectural practice in England needed to go:

> This we now call the *Gothick* Manner of Architecture (so the *Italians* called what was not after the *Roman* Style) tho' the *Goths* were rather Destroyers than Builders; I think it should with more Reason be called the *Saracen* Style; for those People wanted neither Arts nor Learning; and after we in the West had lost both, we borrowed again from them, out of their *Arabick* Books, what they with great Diligence had translated from

[56] Mowl, *Horace Walpole*. p. 128.
[57] Thompson, "Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture." pp. 382-405.
[58] Lindfield, *Georgian Gothic*. pp. 44-48.

> the *Greek*. They were Zealots in their Religion, and where-ever they conquered, (which was with amazing Rapidity) erected Mosques and Caravansara's in Haste[...] and their Arches were pointed without Key-stones, which they thought too heavy.[59]

While Wren and most architects and designers moved on and fully embraced the associative qualities which the Palladian style granted them, Walpole was more interested in the Gothic's discarded nature.

The associational world of the early eighteenth century is made visible through Wren's attitude towards borrowing from a design language which was introduced by a non-Western culture. The Gothic's place within this Othered past necessarily generates an opposite to the neat, tidy styles and plans of Classical buildings.[60] Ironically, Wren's own occupation as the Surveyor of the King's Works brought him into maintaining prolific, period Gothic buildings, such as Westminster Abbey. Rather than pushing his own style into the repairs of these, Wren sought to match repairs to their Gothic origin. The continual changing nature of Strawberry Hill is the closest modelling of the numerous ages or phases which Gothic architecture underwent during construction. The periodization of the changes Walpole made were together with the historical construction of Gothic buildings over time, unlike the Palladian structures which once completed, remained relatively static.[61]

This interaction created a cycle of reinterpretation that brings about a design language that is no longer a logical or ordered system of building, but rather a

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[59] Wren, *Parentalia.* p. 297.
[60] ibid.
[61] Soo, "Fashion and the Idea of National Style in Restoration England." pp. 64–71.

reconstitution and conglomeration of the many versions of Gothic. The Gothic Revival style building might pull from both the past and from itself, a dialogic bond that made its architectural non-compliance the very definition of the style. The bricolage nature of Horace Walpole's iteration would inevitably factor into the attraction of the masses to visit Twickenham and Strawberry Hill. Walpole's designs move into becoming something entirely different from the Gothic which he wrote about: both the neo-Palladian and the Gothic Revival were competing forms, as reactions to both Baroque and Rococo styles.

The conditions of Gothic Revival style within the eighteenth century were foremost a divorce from the political and aesthetic past. This split is predicated upon trends emerging in Britain: a culturally mediated society shifts from a historical paradigm to an economically fueled one. This stems from the events of the Glorious Revolution of 1688, as well as an increased emphasis on the market economies emerging into the eighteenth century. The pushback that supporters of the Gothic style, like Walpole, have towards Classicism comes as the country becomes much more moderate, lacking the freedom and intensity of feeling or expression while also acting as a cultural, non-material resistance to the monetary-based idea of cultural value.[62] In a way, this is an ironic shift: the old guard are using the emerging trend towards an economically powered culture, whilst newer scions of families, such as Walpole, are attempting to latch back onto cultural methods that are based on meaning and experience, rather than using what were newly popularized forms of display.

[62] Kalter, "DIY Gothic." pp. 990-1.

Kenneth Clark finds that at the point which the Gothic style is in danger of doom, "the antiquarians take it up, and soon the leaders of the literary world begin to appreciate and exploit it for purposes of their own."[63] With the popularity of Palladianism, the Gothic style reaches a low point early in the eighteenth century. Clark puts his findings into three discrete categories as to how the Gothic style was kept alive: first, architects like Wren who were working in the Renaissance style. Secondly, local builders and craftsmen who kept the practice of the style going on inertia, and finally, the style's survival is based on a residual cultural interest in Gothic architecture and design. But what of Walpole's view of his immediate architectural predecessors? Walpole's stance on Inigo Jones, Sir Christopher Wren, and others was less than laudatory. They often "blundered into the heaviest and clumsiest compositions whenever they aimed at imitating Gothic."[64] This particular remark downplays the aptitude of the new wave of classically influenced architects and designers, reflects the view that those craftsmen who continued the same building practices are a much firmer link in the resuscitating chain than the architects from the preceding period.

The interest of the Gothic period ties back to some of the subjects covered in the preceding chapter: the early eighteenth-century writers Joseph Addison and Richard Steele. Addison, Steele, with other authors and poets started to integrate the idea of what Clark terms as the "Gothic mood" into their work. This intellectual development went along hand in hand with the popularization (or re-popularization) of Milton and Spenser by younger generations. By creating a revived interest in a melancholic quality

[63] Clark, *The Gothic Revival*. p. 11.
[64] Walpole and Vertue, *Anecdotes of Painting in England*. p. 70.

of writing that was started by Milton and Spenser, continued by Addison and Steele, meant that broader public interest for the Gothic Revival was no longer in question- it simply needed a tie to the social world of Mid-Georgian England. This tie was needed to legitimate its place in the cultural sphere because of its anti-establishment and anti-Protestant significance.

The Gothic Revival was also associated with a term used by Clark: the parvenu, or newly monied. The older breed of aristocrat were being slowly replaced or challenged on all fronts: wealth, politics, and finally, through Walpole and others, culture.[65] The social standing that Walpole was able to impart upon the Gothic, as Clark argues, legitimizes its social standing, as well as his own: particularly after his father's numerous accusations of corruption in the early days of the Hanoverian government. Walpole's own anxieties and motivations behind the conception and creation of Strawberry Hill can be quickly tied to his relationship with his father. Accusations of corruption levied by opposition Whigs, Tories and Jacobites throughout his career led to resignation after a vote of no confidence from Parliament. Horace's realization of politics' volatility and the damage it had done to the Walpole family name pushes him to create a *new* country seat for himself- somewhere that would allow for an intertwining of both national history as well as that of the Walpole family. The deterioration of Houghton Hall, the Walpole family estate, as well as negative consensus towards his father's tenure in Parliament were all ostensibly wrapped up in Palladian Revival environments, which for Walpole were reminders of uncouth behavior, boredom, and fatigue from his upbringing.[66] The

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[65] Clark, *The Gothic Revival*. p. 62.
[66] Harney, *Place-Making for the Imagination: Horace Walpole and Strawberry Hill*. p.15. Walpole writes: "I indeed find this fatigue worse in the country than in the town, because one can avoid it there and has

Gothic Revival was Walpole's way of creating a fresh start for himself, free of his family's loaded Whiggish origins.

Enter one Horatio Walpole. It comes as no surprise that through Clark's expansive study of the Gothic revival, that the diffusion of popularity was not solely Walpole's contribution- this had already been happening before the construction of Strawberry Hill. Walpole, rather than popularizing the historic Gothic, popularizes the Revival style.[67] We may also look to Henry Home, Lord Kames, a writer from the Scottish Enlightenment, for his disdain for the increasing popularization of the Gothic style- "Judged by numbers, the Gothic taste for architecture must be preferred to that of Greece, and the Chinese, taste probably before either."[68] William Hogarth, meanwhile, condemned it as a "thirst after variety and novelty."[69] Walpole's contribution was a lowering (or elevating) the Gothic to pulp status and granted visitors a sense of re-enacting parts of the *Castle of Otranto*. Walpole's familiarity with the Gothic increased as he consolidated George Vertue's collections and would continue to inform his decisions as time went on.

Walpole's writing about the Gothic style in his "*State of Architecture to the End of the Reign of Henry VIII"* in *Anecdotes on Painting* (1762) gives the largest account of both his historical and theoretical understanding of the style, despite being a large survey on the history of painting. Walpole also entertained the idea of writing a separate

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more resources, but it is here too- I fear 'tis growing old- but I literally seem to have murdered a man whose name was ennui, for his ghost is ever before me."

[67] Clark, *The Gothic Revival*. p. 61.

[68] Home, Jones, and Kames, *Elements of Criticism*. p. 471.

[69] Kalter, "DIY Gothic." pp. 995-6.

history on Gothic architecture, but the project never came to fruition. Essential to Walpole's own construction of the Gothic was that it was a style of aesthetic liberty from the dominant Palladian trends- he celebrated its anarchic nature, unburdened by political or social cues and controls.[70] Walpole's chapter drew evidence from outside antiquarian publications and literature from his friends, to provide the first integrated "political-aesthetic history of the Gothic in English."[71] Walpole understood that the Gothic style rooted within Saxon architecture, which itself was descended from antique Roman architecture. For Walpole, Gray and the others, the Gothic style had its origins under Henry III (1216-72) and found its apex during the time of Henry IV (1367-1413).

Walpole's broader understanding of the Gothic hinged on its "liberty". He traced its lineage back to the Saxons, who fought against Roman rule and populated England as the free people of the North. It was this original association which the Gothic style was rooted in. The Gothic acted historically as an alternative to the idea of Rome and its architecture. For Walpole, the Gothic represented a period of "freedom, elegance, artistic refinement, and ornamental extravagance between two periods of repressive regimes: the Romanesque, and the neoclassical."[72] The rise of the Tudors and Henrician classicism corresponded with the symbolic death of the Gothic style and its Catholic cousin. With the Dissolution of the Monasteries, a set of administrative and legal reforms in 1536-41, Henry VIII essentially dissolved nearly 900 religious houses by way of income redirection. The destruction of monastery architecture and their libraries was an offense too high for someone who considered himself London's *arbiter*

[70] Reeve, "The New Medievalism: Constructing the Gothic in the Circle of Horace Walpole". p. 29.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid, p. 31

elegantiarum of the Gothic style. His commitments to bringing back the lost "visionary enjoyments" to a broader audience meant a return its visual cues and performative modes, and an increased awareness of them by society. Walpole would also see the Gothic period as a period of freedom which would eventually extend to morals, manners, and sexuality- something that would also steer his tuning of the Gothic Revival design and its practice among his social and artistic circles.

Walpole's sexuality informed the discourse around him within the Georgian period: it has a very real bearing on his development of his own aesthetic values and interpretations. Matthew Reeve argues for the category of a "third sex" of homoerotically inclined men, and the new "modern styles" of design which they promoted. The Gothic in this sense, allows for an alternative aesthetic and gendered order: an ostensibly queer reversal of the Palladian model. Homes and structures built by Walpole and his friends were understood by contemporary commentators to be a part of this new subculture. The best example is Strawberry Hill's Chapel, which contained various homoerotic subjects hiding in the popery of a consecrated space. Statuettes of Antinous, Salmacis, and Hermaphroditus, as well as Walpole's extensive collection of almost exclusively male portrait miniatures completed the heart of the most protected area in Strawberry Hill.

As an admirer of Joseph Addison's *Spectator*, Walpole assimilated not just his writing style, but also his theory of the imagination. Primarily drawing from visual representation, the theory was split between a primary source of pleasures, which "entirely proceed from such Objects as are before our Eyes', while the secondary

aspects “flow from the Ideas of visible Objects, when the Objects are not actually before the Eye, but are called up into our Memories, or formed into agreeable Visions of Things, that are either absent or Fictitious.” [73] These secondary pleasures then, are recalled through memory and association. It is this association that brings the early modern viewer back not just to the original object, but also elaborated “on the occasion of something without us, as Statues or Descriptions.”[74]

What was started by Addison’s ideas on the secondary aspect of memory and the imagination would find legs not just Walpole’s conception of art, but also in the critical writings of Lord Kames and other Enlightenment philosophes. In his 1762 publication, *Elements of Criticism,* Kames tries to differentiate between the senses and the feelings that they give. Much like Addison’s ideas, the initial experience or impression of sense information is a distinct part, while the latter process happens in the mind, as association.[75] This reached full tilt in 1790 with Archibald Alison’s remarks that continue to build on Kames and Addison:

> Every man must have felt, that the character of a scene is no sooner impressed upon his mind, than various trains of correspondent imagery rise before his imagination...I believe that every man of sensibility will be conscious of a variety of great and pleasing images passing with rapidity in his imagination, beyond what the scene or description before him can of themselves excite. They seem often, indeed, to have but a distant relation to the object that first excited them, and the object itself appears only to serve as a hint to awaken the imagination, and to lead it through every analogous thought that has place in the memory.[76]

[73] Addison et al., *The Spectator*. 21 June 1712.
[74] Ibid.
[75] Home, Jones, and Kames, *Elements of Criticism*. pp. 1-2.
[76] Alison, *Essays on the Nature and Principles of Taste*. pp. 11-41.

Alison's description of the somatic experience of imagination is rooted in the viewing of an object, and its contribution to memories of the viewers would prove to be crucial in Strawberry Hill's effect on its visitors.

The Gothic Revival's implementation as the guiding light for Strawberry Hill shows us an alternative view of the prevailing trends of neo-Palladian architecture. Walpole's villa acts as though the Tudor dynasty had not done away with Gothic's design language. Strawberry Hill was the conduit for Walpole's exploration of other architectural forms which was being sublimated, by the immediate predominance of a stifling Palladian and Neoclassical building style and their rules of moderating behavior.

As Strawberry Hill and its layout started to develop, Walpole needed the house and its collections to stand apart from other familiar country homes and their furnishings. Walpole was no stranger to antiquarianism and its dogma by the time he moved into Strawberry Hill. Walpole joined the Society of Antiquaries by election in 1754, but due to disagreements with its members, resigned by 1772. By this point in his life, he had already catalogued and published an illustrated account of the collections amassed by his father, Sir Robert Walpole (1676-1745) at the family estate of Houghton Hall.[77]

Walpole and his friends Richard Bentley (1708-1772), and John Chute (1701-1776) formed the *Committee of Good Taste,* later known as the *Strawberry Committee.* The organization, design, and collaboration on the house, kept them all engaged, even from a distance.[78] This collaboration would continue through the different phases of

[77] Walpole. *Ædes Walpolianæ*.
[78] Harney, *Place-Making for the Imagination Horace Walpole and Strawberry Hill*. p.156.

construction and decoration at Strawberry Hill house.[79] His various friendships, quaintly named the *Triumvirate* (with Charles Lyttleton and George Montagu at Eton), the *Quadruple Alliance*, (with Thomas Gray, Richard West, and Thomas Ashton), the *Strawberry Committee* (Richard Bentley and John Chute) and finally, the *Out of Town Party*, (with Richard Edgcumbe, George Selwyn, and Gilly Williams), are all indicators to Walpole's interest in sociality- all of these groups would use Strawberry Hill as a place of meeting. This cut against the unassailable solitude which Lord Chesterfield wanted to impose and uphold in his house. Mark Girouard's conception of just how the planning of space would lead to maintenance in the social hierarchies already in place reach a head when extrapolating what he deems as the *'axis of honour*'.[80] This is how far the host or owner of the home is willing to go out and meet the guest in question. The room in which guests would meet would be indicative of the social currency they wielded. If the host met guests in the saloon, it would be an effort being made to leave the zones of comfort (the private rooms, or boudoirs) to socialize. How much one could further penetrate the world of the private space is a marker of social standing. Walpole's most private area, the Chapel, is the only zone out of reach for visitors. At Strawberry Hill, Walpole has done away with the *axis of honour* modality from Palladian homes. Strawberry Hill's processional, single route actively refuted older visitation models.

[79] Vukovich. *An Analysis of Wallpaper Fragments in the Red Bedchamber and Cloisters of Strawberry Hill, Twickenham, England.* The Center for Architectural Conservation outlines six distinct phases of construction under Walpole for Strawberry Hill: the first phase (1748) added the Breakfast Room and Kitchen, the second phase (1753-55) adds the two-story block which includes the Great Parlour and Library. Third, (1758-9) the addition of the Holbein Chamber, Little Cloister and Pantry, the fourth phase (1760-3) is responsible for the Tribune, Great Cloister, Gallery and Round Tower. Phase five (1771-2) adds the Great North Bedchamber. Finally, phase six (1776) sees the Beauclerk Tower being raised. pp. 21-22.
[80] Ibid

Walpole's Strawberry Hill house was opened to public visitors by the early years of the 1760's and had its own tour guide and accompanying *Description*. Strawberry Hill was metonymic for what George Haggerty describes as taste- it acted as the laboratory where the Committee could test out their aesthetic values, homoerotic subjectivities, and artistic judgment within similar terms.[81] It was with as much pastiche as seriousness which Walpole and his friends would design the house. The committee's rotating membership was couched in homoerotic inclination- they were aware of the gendered associations of architecture from Vitruvius and Palladio. These architects would assign the category of male to Classical architecture, while the connotations of the Gothic's effeminate characteristics stood in opposition.[82] The aesthetic judgments on the Gothic from Walpole and the Committee, have been either erased from their writings or obfuscated by euphemisms. If Palladian and Neoclassical aesthetics in England bred an aesthetic disinterestedness, Walpole's ideas of the Gothic elicited a deeply emotional response as its opposite.

Despite the amount of visitation and caricature of design, Walpole and his group still created their self-interested vision of the Gothic Revival. Crucially, their interest in the Gothic Revival style and long-gone ritualism of Catholicism leads Reeve to dub the Committee as crypto-Catholics.[83] While never truly converting to Catholicism, its ritualistic performance and impersonations were found in Walpole's circle. Walpole would often reuse the languages or titles from Catholicism within the context of dressing up events or making epistolary references to Strawberry Hill. The tropes that Walpole

[81] Haggerty, *Horace Walpole's Letters*. p. 80.
[82] Mount, "The Monkey with the Magnifying Glass." pp. 167, 169–84.
[83] Reeve, "The New Medievalism: Constructing the Gothic in the circle of Horace Walpole," p. 13.

and his friends used to “code the emotional and sexual bonds of these men within a hallowed (if illicit) monosexual structure.”[84] Under the cowl of an alternate guiding set of subjectivities to the Palladian norm, Walpole’s sexuality is then extended to his construction of the Gothic Revival style and its continued popular performance in the eighteenth century.

Hiding in plain sight of visitors, the tongue-in-cheek references and the elaborate, dense displays would draw large numbers of curious people. These visitors would eventually become nuisances- Walpole did not plan for such a large and sudden swing in popularity. He decries this, when addressing why he did not give most visitors access to the Tribune in a letter from 1787-

> In the list for which Lord Ossory asks, is the *‘Description’* of this place; now though printed, I have entirely kept it up, and mean to do so while I live for very sound reasons, Madam, as you will allow. I am so tormented by visitors to my house, that two or three rooms are not shown to abridge their stay. In the *‘Description’*, are specified all the enamels and miniatures etc., which I keep under lock and key. If the visitors got the book into their hands, I should never get them out of the house, and they would want to see fifty articles which I do not choose they should handle and paw.[85]

The letter sheds light on an interesting issue that runs its course through Walpole’s lifetime: the demarcation and mediation of a consistent string of visitors against the privacy of certain rooms and objects within Strawberry Hill. Visitors would be treated to the Georgian Gothic version of *noli mi tangere*. The collections were within sight but kept out of reach of pedestrian visitors. The villa’s protean collection, its gardens, and the architecture itself push for a winding, twisting estate that defied visitors’ Palladian-influenced expectations. Walpole’s Gothic intentions through the

[84] Ibid, p. 43
[85] Chalcraft and Viscardi, *Strawberry Hill*. p. 95.

design of the grounds, architecture and displays meant that visitors were confronted with an immersive country estate which, along with Walpole's associational hanging program, became a site of Gothic fantasy which reflected viewers back onto themselves- reminding them of their contentious history by using Walpole's vision of the Gothic as a mirror for examination.

The house, and the attitudes of Walpole sat at discursive odds with one another- on one hand, the creation of an authoritative legacy to rival his father, while on the other hand, an attempt at finding material authenticity in a tumultuous period leading back to the formation of the British state- the accession of the house of Tudor over the Plantagenets.[86] Strawberry Hill's historicizing role is as but a mirror darkly: a way for Walpole and others who are made to see what he saw: a material framework for counter-history and for contemplating the patriarchal events which were glossed over in England's history. Similar to the Sir John Soane museum, when the viewer is made to discover anamorphic subject displays by which viewers may stand in the same place, Strawberry Hill would frame history as Walpole saw it through his own eyes.[87] Both Silver and my own understanding of Strawberry Hill have been predicated on reading Donald Preziosi's work on the museum: the narrative tour is the main method of understanding the apparent disorder of the displays of Strawberry Hill and the Soane Museum. The production of subjects out of the arrangement of objects has the goal of placing visitors into situations where the objects on display seem to arrange themselves. Just as Preziosi posits that if we were able to see what Soane saw, the

[86] Clark, *The Gothic Revival*. p. 176.
[87] Silver, "The Curatorial Imagination in England, 1660-1752." p. 373.

objective of the display was then fulfilled. If we see what Walpole intended through the anamorphic, thematic displays at Strawberry Hill, we as viewers, gain sense from *non-sense*.

Contrary to the newly established British Museum holdings which celebrate British history, and which depend upon didactic captioning, the objects assembled by Walpole produce their revisionist platform by the absence of those captions. Walpole's collections and displays did this through his amateur theory of imagination. The displays of polyphonic objects spoke for themselves through their proximity to events, proximity to other items of uniquity, and their association as such. It is my observation that the house refrains from deciphering the material remnants of the Gothic past for us- rather, it teaches the viewer to read those objects for their associational connections between and amongst themselves, instead.[88] Strawberry Hill's productive role as a counter-historical museum of material history acted as a site of concomitance between its creator, his collection, its viewers, and visitors.[89]

Strawberry Hill's floor plan is enormously different than any other country houses dating from the same period. Yet its asymmetry, its extensive display of Walpole's collection, the prescriptive navigation of its non-centralized plan, and its guise as an ancestral abbey are crucial for its success.[90] This success, I argue, is one that is predicated upon the construction of a viewership that is both made to question the

[88] Silver, "Visiting Strawberry Hill." p. 371.
[89] Preziosi, *Rethinking Art History*. p. 178.
[90] Snodin et al., *Horace Walpole's Strawberry Hill*. p. 15.

historic shifts and doubts that Walpole had identified with historians of both the birth of the Anglican Church, as well as the popularity of his novel.

This tying of associational qualities, to not just interpersonal relationships in the eighteenth century, but to objects and their contested histories, cuts against the prevailing experience of visitations to museums and country homes: the house museum of Strawberry Hill acts to combine its visual elements of display, along with its textual output of the *Description* and *The Castle of Otranto,* enforced house rules, and guided tours in order to facilitate a challenge towards the canonicity and historicity that was being constructed in a period of political transition.[91]

The reliance of a jointly constructed viewership goes beyond comparable sites of visitation in early modern Britain. The model that Strawberry Hill exhibits at behest of Walpole and his Committee relied upon a cooperation between history, material culture, and the imagination. For Strawberry Hill, the notions of surface and text bring to bear a set of objects that were part of several narratives concurrently and brought to bear new perspectives that were possible only through as Michael Snodin puts it, a "house full of stories." If the idea of an architectural space and its use gave way to such associational readings, it holds that this was Walpole's intention: to tie Strawberry Hill to his novelistic writing in a collapse of barriers between works. The Gothic Revival up until this point, did not have an anchor into the world of popular support, unlike the numerous country houses which took on a rapid integration of neo-Palladian design language.

[91] Harney, "The Visualisation of Strawberry Hill: A Collusion of History and Imagination." pp. 32-34.

The Gothic Revival for Walpole acts with interest in offering a critique of Classicism. Rather aptly, Reeves deems it "not so much an opposite, but rather an evil twin in theory and practice."[92] The alterity that is implied and laid out by Walpole and Reeves' remarks offers very much a view or lens with which to examine the more phenomenologically leaning Gothic projections, while other country homes were interested in a logical or processional plan, or a layout that emphasized the centrality of the saloon or parlour. Rather than numerous paths of circulation or ambulation through the home, Strawberry Hill was restricted to a single narrative and physical pilgrimage route: the same path that the visitor's tour is predicated on. The collections, displays, and portrait ensembles at Strawberry were encoded and indexed based on associative and tacit connections which were unexpected to the lay eighteenth-century viewer. Here, the objects defied periodization, genre, and subject. Walpole even claimed that irregularity is the guiding light behind the aesthetic effects behind Strawberry Hill.[93] This was to be a collecting practice of showing items which were meant to defy the neat and orderly precedent set by Palladian tropes.

Strawberry Hill was influenced by Gothic period buildings: the rambling, irregular, asymmetrical nature of the layout contributes to the nearly rhizomatic expression of the house. Its stylistic tropes, however, are architectural quotations from pulled from cathedrals and tombs from all over England, across numerous time periods. Strawberry Hill moves away from the central zone of privileged access, and towards a jointly mediated space where expected social morays were broken down in favor of a dialogic

[92] Reeve. "A Gothic Vatican of Greece and Rome: Horace Walpole, Strawberry Hill, and the Narratives of Gothic." p. 186.
[93] Walpole, "Account of the Aesthetic Effects at Strawberry Hill."

imagination. This experiential emphasis at Strawberry Hill is the second part of Joseph Addison's conception of the pleasures of the imagination. This alternate framework, a space for alterity as a form of 'non-classicism', stands outside of the performative culture of aristocracy that exists in the early to mid-Georgian period. It is refreshingly, the unfixed terms of Walpole's conception of the Gothic that gives more flexibility when put into comparison with its Palladian contemporaries. What follows are the rooms of emphasis within the walking tour, but also their contribution to the larger aesthetic program at Strawberry Hill.

Walpole established a close working relationship with the engraver and printmaker George Vertue (1684-1756). As Silvia Davoli argues, the dispersal of his collection upon his death is an early turning point in the history of collecting Strawberry Hill.[94] Vertue's death was an opportunity for Walpole to expand his own collections and architecture at Strawberry Hill, adding the Holbein Chamber, Little Cloister, and pantry by 1759. Walpole had always relied upon Vertue for the latter's tracings (sometimes literally,) of historical portraiture in England, and with the auction of Vertue's estate, acquired his copies of drawings by Hans Holbein (1497-1543). Walpole then created their own dedicated display space three years after Vertue's death within Strawberry Hill, probably taking inspiration from the display of the originals held in Kensington Palace.[95] An oddity in a house where historical constraints are not enforced in any manner, the Holbein room's self-imposed restrictions of a thematic Tudor "period room" stood in stark contrast to the rest of Walpole's collection.

[94] Davoli and Snodin, *Lost Treasures of Strawberry Hill*. pp. 68-72.
[95] Ibid

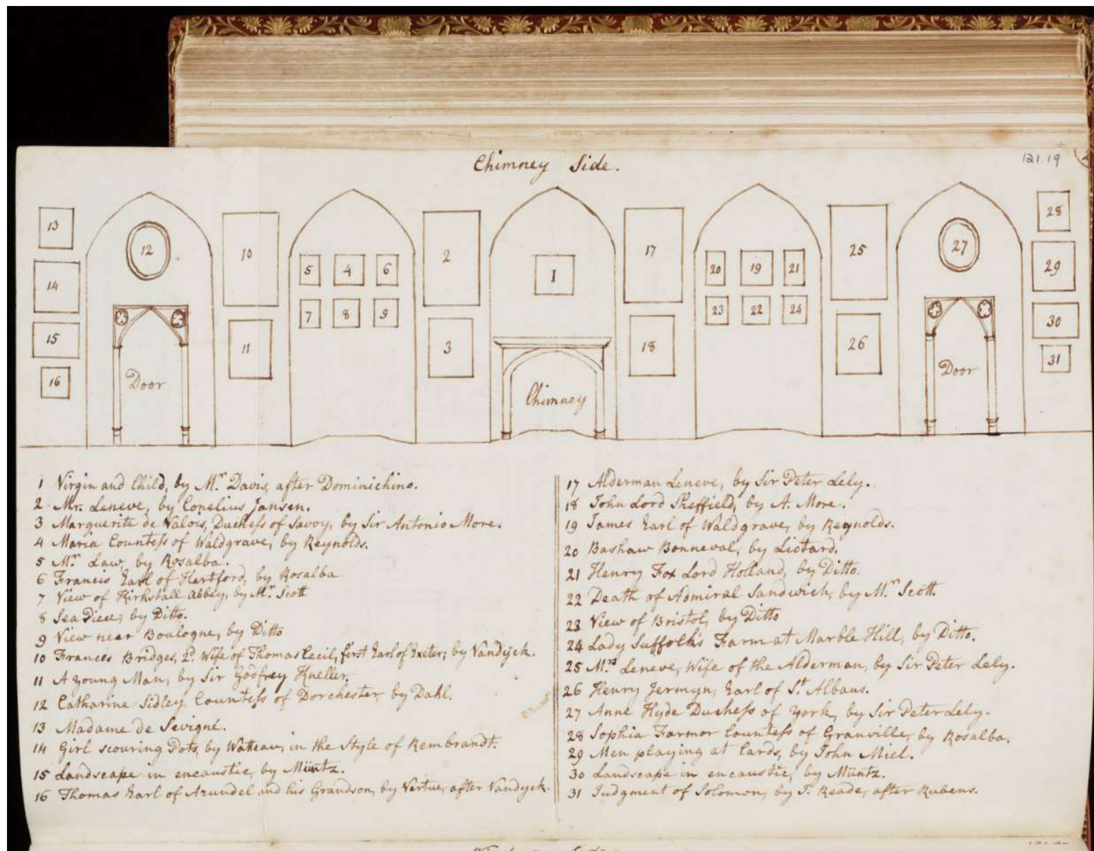
This Tudor time frame is located at the zenith of Gothic architecture's implementation in the twelfth century, until Henry VIII's Act of Supremacy of 1534- when the monarch was simultaneously declared to be the head of the Church of England. This marks the transition of the British Gothic style period into the Anglican Reformation. Containing the newly acquired drawings by Vertue, the Holbein Chamber also held a Richard Bentley-designed chimneypiece, and a conspicuously theatrical pierced screen. Walpole's description of the Chamber in 1772 is helpful in describing a general sense of the space:

> The Star Chamber and the dusky passage again prepare you for solemnity: the Holbein-chamber softens that idea yet maintains a grave tone; for the whole colouring is a kind of Chiaro Scuro [sic]. It is hung with purple and has a purple bed. Almost all the pictures are drawings faintly coloured & the ebony chairs give the darkest shade, while the white fretted ceiling & a sprinkling of gold on the frames afford the lights; as the painted glass darkens part of the windows & heightens the landscapes to which they look.[96][97]

Established hanging plans for the Holbein Chamber as it existed in the 1760s reside in copies of the 1774 *Description,* and contains detailed information about which pieces resided where, along with full numbering and titling, written by Walpole's hand. (Fig 3.7) Several items stand out for closer examination from the Holbein Chamber's display: the Gothic pierced screen by Bentley, the thirty-four portrait drawings of notable members of the Tudor court, a small sculpture of Henry VIII, as well as the purported cap of Cardinal Thomas Wolsey. (Figs 3.9-10) The core of the room revolves around the set of thirty-three Holbein drawing copies made by Vertue, originally the basis of Walpole's decision to build the additional rooms after 1759. Representing several of

[96] Reeve. "A Gothic Vatican of Greece and Rome: Horace Walpole, Strawberry Hill, and the Narratives of Gothic." pp. 185–209.
[97] Walpole, "Account of the Aesthetic Effects at Strawberry Hill."

Henry VIII's wives, as well as other figures involved at the Tudor court, these portrait drawings act as another ensemble: the set's subjects were all affected in some notable way by the advent of the Tudor period. Roughly categorized, they fall into groups of victims of beheading due to Henry VIII's deteriorating mental state, his supporters, courtiers, and finally, close attendants of Henry and his wives.


Chimney Side.

Door

Chimney

Door

1 Virgin and Child, by Mr. Davis, after Dominichino.
2 Mr. Leneve, by Cornelius Jansen.
3 Marguerite de Valois, Duchess of Savoy, by Sir Antonio More.
4 Maria Countess of Waldgrave, by Reynolds.
5 Mr. Law, by Rosalba.
6 Francis Earl of Hertford, by Rosalba
7 View of Kirkstall abbey, by Mr. Scott
8 Sea View, by Ditto.
9 View near Boulogne, by Ditto
10 Frances Bridges, 2d. Wife of Thomas Cecil, first Earl of Exeter; by Vandyck.
11 A young Man, by Sir Godfrey Kneller.
12 Catharine Sidley, Countess of Dorchester, by Dahl.
13 Madame de Sevigné.
14 Girl scouring Pots, by Watteau, in the Style of Rembrandt.
15 Landscape in encaustic, by Müntz.
16 Thomas Earl of Arundel and his Grandson, by Vertue, after Vandyck.
17 Alderman Leneve, by Sir Peter Lely.
18 John Lord Sheffield, by A. More.
19 James Earl of Waldgrave, by Reynolds.
20 Bashaw Bonneval, by Liotard.
21 Henry Fox Lord Holland, by Ditto.
22 Death of Admiral Sandwich, by Mr. Scott.
23 View of Bristol, by Ditto
24 Lady Suffolk's Farm at Marble Hill, by Ditto.
25 Mrs. Leneve, Wife of the Alderman, by Sir Peter Lely.
26 Henry Jermyn, Earl of St. Albans.
27 Anne Hyde Duchess of York, by Sir Peter Lely.
28 Sophia Farmor Countess of Granville, by Rosalba.
29 Men playing at Cards, by John Miel.
30 Landscape in encaustic, by Müntz.
31 Judgment of Solomon, by J. Reade, after Rubens.

Figure 3.4: Horace Walpole, *Catalogue of pictures and drawings in the Holbein-Chamber, at Strawberry Hill,* 1760, Twickenham, London. Courtesy of the British Library.

Figure 3.5: John Carter, *Passage to the Gallery, and Interior of the Holbein Room at Strawberry Hill*. 1790. Pen and ink and watercolor on paper, 35.4 x 25.8cm. Folio 49, 3678.1 Lewis Walpole Library, New Haven.

Figure 3.6: John Carter, *Holbein Chamber*. From *A Description of the Villa…at Strawberry Hill*. Watercolor with wash-line mount. 1788, 33 x 29cm. Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University. Folio 33/30

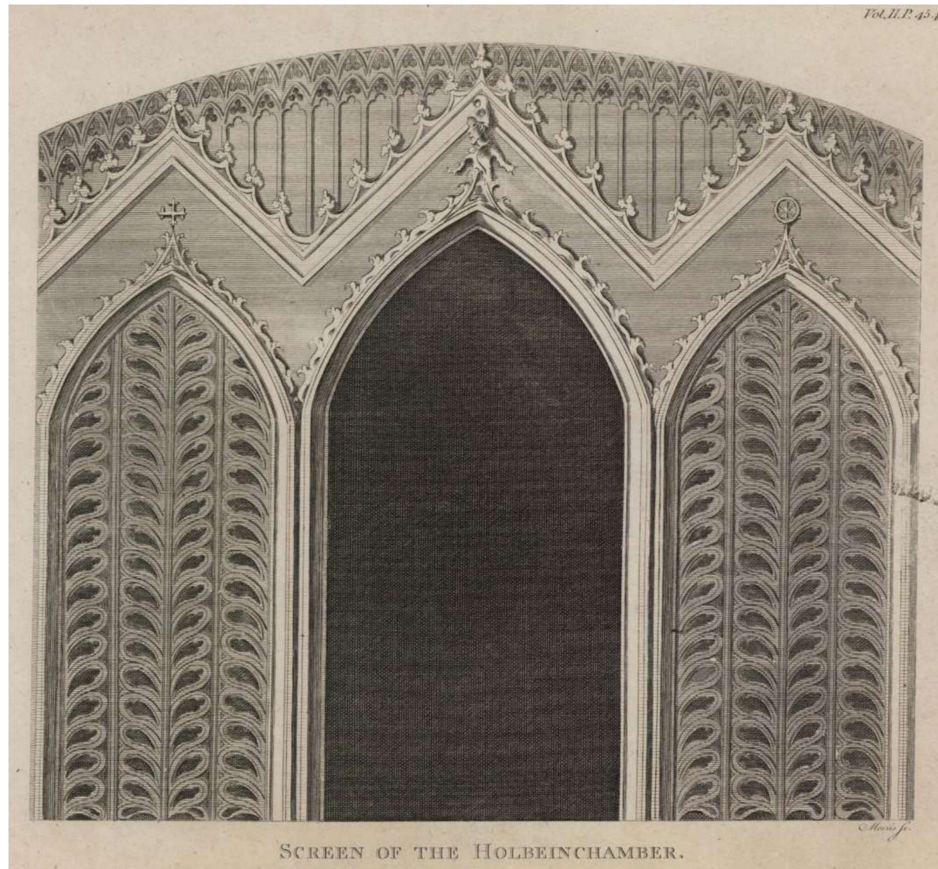


Figure 3.7: Thomas Morris, *Screen of the Holbein Chamber*. No date, By permission of the Richmond Borough Art Collection at Orleans House Gallery, Twickenham United Kingdom

Figure 3.8: L: Hans Holbein, *Catherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk*, 1532-42. Chalk, pen, and ink on prepared paper. 28.9 x 20.9cm. Royal Collection Trust. C: George Vertue after Holbein. *Catherine Willoughby*. Black and colored chalk on paper. Sudeley Castle, Gloucestershire. R: Factum Foundation Art Conservation, *Facsimile of Catherine Willoughby, Duchess of Suffolk*. 2017.

Each Holbein drawing was placed in a black frame with golden ribboning around their edges: the faint lines and Holbein's eidetic portrayal of likeness would be put into sharp relief with the purple wallpaper. Beyond the screen lay not only the ensconced Holbein portrait copies, but additional works by contemporary artists: Sir Antonis Mor, Cornelius Johnson, Sir Peter Lely, Rosalba Carriera and Joshua Reynolds. These works, when taken holistically, represent the fallout from the events of the Tudor court. Thomas Gray's account of the Holbein Chamber to his friend, Doctor Wharton is additionally useful when added to Walpole's earlier description:

> Dear Doctor, Mr. Walpole has lately made a new bed-chamber. Which as it is in the best taste of anything he has yet done, and in your own Gothic way, I must describe [it] a little. You enter by a peaked door at one corner of the room (out of a narrow winding passage, you may be sure), into an alcove, in which the bed is to stand, formed by a screen of pierced work opening by one large arch in the middle of the rest of the chamber, which is lighted at the other end by a bow-window of three bays, whose tops are of rich painted glass in a mosaic. The ceiling is covered and fretted in star and quatre-foil compartments, with roses at the intersections, all is papier mache. The chimney on your left is the high altar in the cathedral of Rouen (from whence the screen is also taken), consisting of a low surbased arch between two octagon towers, whose pinnacles almost

> reach the ceiling, all of the nich-work: the chairs and dressing-table are real carved ebony, picked up at auctions. The hangings uniform, purple paper, hung all over with the court of Henry the VIII copied after the Holbeins in the queen's closet at Kensington, in black and gold frames.[98]

What Gray is referring to is the processional route for visitors to arrive at the Holbein Chamber on the second story of the house. The lilac wallpaper was meant to stand out in contrast to much of the dully colored passages in between rooms of emphasis. The Trunk-Cieled Passage [sic], which butts up against the entryway of the Holbein Chamber, leads from the stairs and into the bright purple wallpaper of the Holbein Chamber. The Chamber is split and demarcated by the Gothic-inspired screen that sits at its center: designed by Bentley, the pierced screen physically distances the viewer from Vertue's Holbein copies seen through a liturgical choir screen. Visitors were brought to the Chamber but were restrained by the housekeeper to remaining on the side of the screen with the estate bed, rather than wandering into the other half of the room. The screen is one of several types that emerge from the Gothic period- despite being derived from Rouen, the screen is much more akin to a *schrankenlettner,* or partition type screen. Jung's exploration of the English choir screen is perfectly apt for our viewing of the Holbein pierced screen: "Despite their structural solidity, however, partition screens were typically designed so as to minimize the effect of closure, through a highly sculptural or decorative treatment of the facade. In England, the wall surface dissolves into lacy configurations of niches and baldachins containing sculptured figures; such is the case with the screen at York."[99]

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[98] Chalcraft and Viscardi, *Strawberry Hill*. p. 76.
[99] Jung, "Beyond the Barrier." p. 625.

Bentley's screen was constructed from carved wood and is placed in such a way within the chamber as to remind visitors and viewers of its Gothic origins, and the Medieval practice of "ocular communion", or liturgical participation from afar.[100] In this case, viewers are brought to communion with their past. Bentley has placed a head in profile of Sir Terry Robsart at the top of the central arch, continuing Walpole's dissemination of ancestral ties throughout the visual language of Strawberry Hill's decorations. Accompanying the head is a multitude of cross-crosslets, as well as being bordered by Catherine wheels, a type of spoked-wheel design. The screen has three apertures, such as the screens found within countless Gothic cathedrals- but the center opening is the only one fully unencumbered by the fern-like screens. Through the screen, there was the limits of the visitor tour- the visiting public were not allowed to walk through the screen before being led away to visit the Gallery- but the suggestive view of the portraits of the members of the Tudor court, the ecclesiastical purple wallpaper, and Bentley's monumental Gothic chimneypiece just out of the spectator's reach warrants more examination. Furnari's explanation is quite helpful in this regard:

> The liturgical screen is an apparatus used, with increasing frequency in the Middle Ages, to divide the space of the church into several zones of ascending holiness. Its continued architectural and sculptural development lead to the vast structures of the choir screen, which separated the sacred space and ritual of the Eucharist from the lay people of the church. Scholars have characterized these screens as restrictive and solid, in so far as they appear to exclude and mediate the common churchgoer's access to the sacred mysteries. This assumption is being contested by the work of Jacqueline E. Jung who has insisted on the unifying function of the choir screen through an analysis of it as a permeable barrier, marked by portals and niches into which the subject may project herself. Her work has reinforced the liminality of the screen as a point of passage and transition. This alternative reading of the choir screen underscores its dual function because the putative exclusion of the subject from the inner

[100] Jung, "Seeing through Screens: The Gothic Choir Enclosure as Frame." p. 189.

sanctum is, paradoxically, that which constitutes its relationship to the church.[101]

This line in the proverbial sand was as far as tourists could venture into the Holbein Chamber. This was their lot- to be able to see beyond the screen of history, but not physically cross the threshold into the past. Walpole's rules of restraint here echo the same burden he encountered when re-examining Tudor history- to see, but not to affect. The central pointed arch acted as a set piece that many would have been familiar with in theater- the design of the Holbein Chamber and its screen are unmistakable when considered through the idea of a theater of the imagination.[102] The Addisonian reaction for viewers of immediacy after passing through the dimly lit trunk ceiled passage is met with the secondary, associational imaginings when entering the Chamber. As choir screens were sites of spectacle from the 13th century on into the early modern period, they also functioned as sites of framing and staging. It is this trope that Walpole would have used in this instance, creating a theatrical apparatus to mirror his historically critical viewing of the Tudor past.[103] The Holbein copies beyond the screen, like Chesterfield's replaceable portraits, symbolize past violence. The screen of history wrenches them from their original context, to be contemplated by viewers.

While liturgical screens often would only show glimpses of the religious event while lay people stayed out of the screen's demarcations to experience it, the pierced screen does not prevent viewers from projecting themselves to the other side. Screens' use in churches were to separate the sacred from the secular, the consecrated from the

[101] Furnari, "Screen (2)."
[102] Harney, "The Visualisation of Strawberry Hill: A Collusion of History and Imagination."
[103] Jung, "Seeing through Screens: The Gothic Choir Enclosure as Frame." p. 190.

profane. Walpole's placement in the site of a bedroom, has been made into a shrine, an irreverent nod to the importance of the marital bed in Henry's schemes and eventual creation of the Church of England. The desire of viewers to move beyond the screen is amplified by the strategic framing and placement of the screen within the Holbein Chamber- one cannot get a complete view without moving beyond the screen; but unlike the promise of an elevation to a higher plane through religious devotion, Walpole's placement has the viewer destabilized from their present in order to be confronted with the sight (and site) of the iconoclastic past after Henry VIII's decision to break with the Roman Catholic church. History here is framed in a similar way to how vision was made hegemonic by the preceding Chesterfield: protecting the selected view from perceptual shifts and Anglican amnesia.

Fred Botting is particularly effective at describing spectatorship in the Holbein Chamber:

> [The] Gothic remains ambivalent and heterotopic, reflecting the doubleness of the relationship between present and past. Indeed, Gothic continues to stand as a trope of the history of the present itself, a screen for the consumption and projection of the present onto a past at once distant, and close by. The play of distance and proximity, rejection and return, telescopes history, both condensing the past into an object of idealized or negative speculation and unraveling and disarming the gaze of the present with its ambivalent return.[104][105]

Botting's use of Foucault's notion of a heterotopia provides a constructive way to consider the same mechanisms found in the pierced screen of the Holbein Chamber. The common understanding of recent British history by visitors to Strawberry Hill would have been magnified in its associational qualities by the ocular communion that

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[104] Foucault, "Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias." p. 4.
[105] Botting, "In Gothic Darkly: Heterotopia, History, Culture." p. 22.

happens for viewers through Bentley's screen, and the strategic placement of Worsley's hat and a courtly bed suggests the patriarchal anxieties plaguing Henry VIII's actions. The demarcation represents to the viewer a boundary between Tudor past and Georgian present which, when folded, creates the same play of distance and proximity. The screen acts also as a framing device- not only does the room remain a reference about the Tudor period but frames the Tudor court and its occupants as one of the key historical sites of contention locked away behind the screen of the past.

Visitors and viewers could not get a whole sense of the room in its entirety (and the historicity of the events that Walpole was trying to associate it with), but the glimpses through the arches would be enough to trigger those same associations. The Chamber visitors would be treated to several levels within this theatrical apparatus: the artwork in this room emphasizes a break within British religion, while presenting the site of contestation ultimately, to the bedchamber. The anxieties of producing a male heir-apparent are a recurring theme in both British histories, as well as Walpole's Gothic fictions. Marie Mulvey Roberts connects the theme of patriarchal usurpation within Walpole's novel, *The Castle of Otranto*, and the events that came directly from the Tudor reign of Henry VIII, culminating with the Hanoverian succession.[106]

To Mulvey-Roberts, these events form an unquestioned and unbroken chain that Walpole wished to explore through his critique of the handling of historicity of the Tudor period onwards. The violence with which the figures presented in the Holbein Chamber were faced with is glossed over by historical writers up until this point. Vision's role in

[106] Mulvey-Roberts, "Catholicism, the Gothic and the Bleeding Body." p. 33.

assisting viewers with the criticality towards the history of successions in the British past was contingent on the viewer's status as a collaborator. The Gothic Revival as begun by Walpole was increasingly reliant upon pictorial recognition.[107] It would require a level of familiarity with Holbein's Tudor court portrait copies and their veristic style. The conceit of the screen and its subjects beyond were predicated upon visitors being familiar with *what, rather than who* the drawings were depicting is key to their communion with the past. Without this association and recognition, the Chamber's conceit falls flat. Unless visitors moved around the room to see the other side of the Chamber through the screen in its entirety, they would not have a complete view of what they were denied.

This challenge to historicity, or the ocular communion with the historic past can also be read through the narrative of *Otranto* itself- in the novel, the character of Manfred is the patriarch of a family destabilized by the death of their scion. To secure his line, Manfred wants to marry his son's fiancée, separate from his wife, and father a son. The anxieties that drive Manfred to this course of action are based in both in Shakespeare (who Walpole admits drawing from), and the unbroken line of patriarchal succession in the British monarchy. Like Hamlet's Claudius, Manfred's family has usurped the throne by poisoning the previous ruler of Otranto. In his lust and paranoia for securing a familial legacy beyond the death of his son Conrad, Manfred revisits the same cycle of cruelties upon his family and court, eventually stabbing his own daughter in an accident. The danger from Hamlet is also present for the visitors standing and peering from behind the screen. The Gothic patriarchal violence that was visited in an arbitrary and sudden manner in the Tudor court under Henry, at any point, could be

[107] Elliott, *Portraiture and British Gothic Fiction*. p. 207.

acted upon viewer: after all, Hamlet's Polonius was very suddenly stabbed through the screen while eavesdropping. This threat of patriarchal violence for Walpole is not locked in the Tudor past, but through the screen of history, becomes replicated and perpetuated from the house of Tudor to Stuart, to Hanover- it has continued and has never stopped.

This simultaneously recombinant and abstracted Gothic design was inspired by the French *genre pittoresque*, its asymmetric forms integrated with S and C-scrolls and shell-work in ornamentation. An early proponent was Walpole's friend George Vertue, who sang the praises of Hubert Gravelot's drawings to the artists at the St. Martin's Lane Academy.[108] Its popularity among printed pattern books would eventually inspire furniture designers such as Thomas Chippendale and Robert Manwaring. Walpole's novel and these architectural projects overlap in the execution of Strawberry Hill: Reeves describes it as Walpole's inside joke with his group of friends.[109] Wilmarth S. Lewis, one of the earliest scholars and collectors of *Walpoliana*, draws several conclusions as to how the design of the house reflexively inspired the novel's description of architectural space. For example, Lewis cited the similarity between the gallery, the Tribune, Holbein Chamber, and the various portraits mentioned in the novel are precisely located in order to achieve "intertextual glosses" between both the real and fictive houses simultaneously.[110] The contemporary understanding of associationist aesthetics were intended to create mnemonic cues in order to unpack a connective

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[108] Lindfield, "High Fashion and Fragments of the Past: The Omnipresence of Rococo Gothic" pp. 81-92.
[109] Reeves, "A Gothic Vatican of Greece and Rome: Horace Walpole, Strawberry Hill, and the Narratives of Gothic". p. 191.
[110] Ibid, p. 190.

realization in the viewer (and reader), allowing the visitor to exist simultaneously within and beside their fantasy based on the novel. The novel concludes with Theodore's restored place as ruler, jointly ruling Otranto with Isabella, Conrad's fiancée before his prophesied death.

Further unpacking of the recent interest of scholars and Walpole's own understanding of these associationist aesthetics finds that pictorial recognition acts as a bridge that links the visual and verbal divide. The examination of the Gothic novel form and its generative links to portraiture is essential in considering its contributions toward driving picture identification's mass rise.[111] Gothic fiction writing intensifies the period's political, social, and professional identity crises for a public audience- *Otranto*'s lost heir is found again by comparing him to his aristocratic grandfather's portrait. The Gothic novel repurposes pictorial recognition in order to rework social legitimacy and entitlement. Walpole's objective presented the viewing public with images from their own past so that they might be confronted with a past too easily forgotten.

One of the main sources of critique of the conservative history writing of the English Gothic period and its continuation into the Georgian was Walpole's *Historic Doubts on the Life and Reign of King Richard III*, published in 1768. Walpole's account was published a great deal after the construction of the Holbein Chamber, but shows an iteration upon the idea behind it. *Historic Doubts* is a response to David Hume's three volumes, *A History of England* that deal with Tudor history as well as the recent events that saw a new dynastic installation for the British monarchy and the creation of the

[111] Elliott, *Portraiture and British Gothic Fiction*. p. 7

Church of England. Much like the home and objects that he had espoused, annotated (or associational) meanings and evidence for Walpole held greater authenticity than Hume's perpetuation of historical revisionism. The lack of citations in Hume's multi-volume work irritated Walpole- in a letter to Reverend Zouch in 1759, the same year that the Chamber was finished in its construction, he derides Hume's attempts at a rose-colored account of the Tudor period: "Mr. Hume has published his *History of the House of Tudor:* I have not advanced far in it, but it appears to be an inaccurate and careless, as it has certainly been a very hasty performance."[112]

Hume's writing, as well as other accounts of British history, tended to gloss over the violence that was prevalent in both the period, but of history in general: the patriarchal motivations behind shifts in ruling families, the suppression and martyrdom of non-Protestants in the period immediately following the Tudors is skimmed over. Walpole's response is thus the intense focus on a multitude of object-based provenance working together in response. The provenance (constructed, or authentic) of Strawberry Hill's polyphonic objects lends credence to the viewing of the repressed Gothic events that were not too distant to recent political events. For Walpole, it is the surviving object that speaks more authentically than the political agendas of those writing textual histories.

Walpole's criticism is also based upon the lack of citations found in historical texts from the contemporary period of the mid eighteenth century, as well as earlier recordings of the Tudor period. He attempts to remedy this in his own writing,

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[112] Walpole. *The Yale Editions of Horace Walpole's Correspondence, Volume 16.* pp. 25-27.

particularly with his *Historic Doubts on the life and reign of Richard III* in 1768, as well as the *Description of the Villa at Strawberry Hill* in 1774. Walpole's solution gives a provenance of the historically significant object that serves to thicken its claim to authenticity. When consulting the *Description* for Cardinal Wolsey's hat, the provenance reveals the afterlife of the hat, of how it was sequestered away *because* of its proximity, and association to historical events of its time, rather than being something to be glossed over in Hume's histories.[113] This interest in the material remnants of the Tudor period is less about the detailed historical accuracy that Hume was missing, but rather focuses on the narrative qualities and structures that the past can take onboard.[114] The space becomes a "theatre of the imagination" that operates via what Harney, referring to its associative powers, calls "a reciprocal arrangement between performer and audience" in order to bring attention to the elision of Gothic design.[115]

Indeed, Abbey Coykendall has an expanded notion for which to examine the various rooms and thoughts behind Walpole's villa. Walpole's close attention to the materiality of the text, his unusually versatile concern with social histories (gardening, decorating, portraiture, even fashion), his inclusion of marginalized constituencies in surveys of artists and writers (women, working classes, the Celtic periphery), as well as his critique of how power and ideology commandeer the historical record all harken to

[113] Walpole. *A Description Of The Villa Of Horace Walpole.* p.104. The hat is described in its provenance as: "Cardinal Wolsey's Hat, found in the great Wardrobe by Bishop Burnet when he was Clerk of the Closet. It was left by his son Judge Burnet to his housekeeper, who gave it to the Countess of Albermarle's Butler."
[114] Dent, "Contested Pasts." pp. 21–33.
[115] Harney, *Place-Making for the Imagination Horace Walpole and Strawberry Hill*. p. 280.

the recovery of what Michel Foucault calls “subjugated knowledges” and the lately mainstreamed ethos of new historicism.”[116]

This is perhaps the most useful way of addressing how the Holbein Room comes to represent not just an attempt at seeing through the distortion of textual history, but into the omission of Gothic style after the Tudors. The Holbein Room offers viewers neither a pro- nor anti-Catholic viewpoint, but instead instils a doubt towards the notion of legitimacy in what invariably is a sequence of illegitimacy: with the Tudors ousting the Plantagenets, Henry VIII’s divorces from the church as well as his wives, the usurpation of the Stuarts by the House of Hanover- the latest battle of which had only just concluded in 1746 (the Battle of Culloden). The cultural battle held in the arena of heterodoxy would continue well into 1778, when a final change in attitude towards Catholics was put forth in Papists Act. The contemporaneous anti-Catholic sentiment and imposition of Anglican doctrine would continue to hold the people of England’s attention would result in the formation of numerous dissenting groups and religious groups.

The library was newly constructed when Walpole took lease of the estate from Mrs. Chevenix and was completed by the joint design with the Committee of Taste, by 1753. Rectangular in its plan, much like the Parlor underneath, the library still has its original bookshelves: ten carved bookshelves with their pierced arches. Above each bookshelf’s pointed arch were familial portraits of the Shorter family. Eleven portraits, mounted in roundels over the shelves, range from ancestral to current relatives, worked

[116] Foucault, “Two Lectures.” p. 55.

to connect Walpole's family to his medieval ancestry. The painted ceiling too, is covered in heraldic imagery that is set within a deep field of starburst mosaic patterning. At the four corners of the ceiling are heraldic symbols painted to resemble shields. Two have the first letters of Horace Walpole's name, while the other two are modified familial crests. These crests have been synthesized to include elements originally found in the heraldry of Sir Lewis Robsart, Knight of the Garter (d. 1431) as well as those of the Walpole family. Robsart's role in English history was to be the squire to Henry V, as well as Privy Councillor and Chamberlain for Henry VI, after being nominated for the Order of the Garter.[117]

These heraldic elements include the shift of the usual Walpolean motif of a Saracen (believed by Walpole to represent Sir Terry Robsart, another ancestor), wearing a cap above the familial shields. Instead of having the Catherine wheel displayed on the hat, it appears above it, and the whole of the Robsart motif becomes the focus.[118] (Fig 3.12-13) This synthesis of the family crest with that of a renowned figure of the medieval past entwined in the politics of the early period so close to the Plantagenet transition to the Tudor dynasty has a particularly curious interaction when considering another side of the Walpole family tree- Saint Henry Walpole, who was martyred under Elizabeth I's regime for refusing to take the Oath of Supremacy, as well as for his Jesuit doctrines.[119]

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[117] "Sir Lewis Robessart, Lord Bourgchier."
[118] Walpole. *A Description Of The Villa Of Horace Walpole*. p. 44.
[119] Tucker, ""Strawberry Hill Spotlights: St.Henry Walpole, 'The Saintly Ancestor'."

Figure 3.9: John Carter, *View of the Library at Strawberry Hill*. 1788, Watercolor, 24.7 x 31cm. The Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University New Haven. Folio 49/3582.

Figure 3.10: Ceiling photograph of Edward Edwards' 1781 *Library* design, 2010. From V&A Museum exhibition, *Horace Walpole & Strawberry Hill* July 2010.

Robsart's Phrygian cap appears again after visitors and viewers have passed through the Holbein Chamber. An attribute of freedom or liberty, it has been co-opted as an archetypal image for its significance from its Roman roots to be mobilized in eighteenth century when used by both American revolutionaries Paul Revere and by satirist William Hogarth's engraving of *John Wilkes Esq.* Having been a supporter of the American colonists, Walpole would have known of its larger iconographic significance, especially with its eventual connotations with the working class in the French Revolution.

When considered together with Walpole's new motto which is painted in large Latin letters across the ceiling of the Library, Walpole's desire of freedom in expression and historical criticality is made clear. The Latin reads: *Fari Qui Sentiat*, or "Say what one feels". There are additional heraldic elements which continue to advocate this message in the library's decorative scheme. At the far ends of the ceiling are roundels of mounted knights, once again replicating in full the heraldry of the Robsarts, while the other roundel features a knight with the symbols from the Fitz Osbert family, which traced back to the time of the Crusades.

It was here that Walpole, working alongside the Committee, crafted much of the aesthetic effects built into Strawberry Hill's displays. The folios from his personal copy of the *Description*, and other volumes, are covered in the scrawling annotations that he made. An early group portrait by Joshua Reynolds captures an example of the meetings that took place in the library: *The Out-of-Town Party*. Completed in 1759, it stages the very same party: three of the four members of Walpole's group of friends are reading and drawing. The portrait depicts three men, identified left to right as George Selwyn,

George “Gilly” Williams, and finally Richard Edgcumbe. Wits and aristocrats themselves, the scene itself captures the use of the library as the site not just of shared learning, but also as “[a library is] …not only a [place] of study, but also one of masculine conversation and fellowship”.[120] This was one of Walpole’s many sounding boards- collaborating, gossiping, and writing about art. Only one, Edcumbe, looks up at the viewer. With Walpole as simultaneously a member of the group, but also as an observer, who interrupts their activities, the picture and its double viewership allows for a staged reading of the figure group. Only one looks up at the viewer *as* Walpole, and the curtains are pulled back to reveal books being consulted for the works being drafted on the table that holds the attention of Selwyn and Williams.

Figure 3.11: Sir Joshua Reynolds, *A Conversation, or the Out-of-Town Party*. 1759-61. Oil on canvas, 52.5 x 81.2cm. Bristol’s City Museum and Art Gallery, Bristol.

[120] Hallett, *Reynolds*. pp. 300-1.

Walpole’s Tribune was planned in 1758 and built in 1761. It had a small connecting doorway into the larger Gallery. Visitors could view part of the room through the grated door leading from the Gallery, but only Walpole’s social favorites would be able to gain access to the treasure trove that lay beyond. The various names that Walpole gave it over its evolution betrays its slippage in terms of the room’s evolving function over time. Walpole began mentioning a cabinet within his correspondence, then changes to calling it a chapel, shifts to using both names interchangeably, and by 1781, calls it the Tribune, after the Tribuna at the Uffizi in Florence.

Figure 3.12: Edward Edwards, *The Cabinet at Strawberry Hill*, 1781. Watercolor, 23 x 18.5cm. Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University, Folio 49/3582.

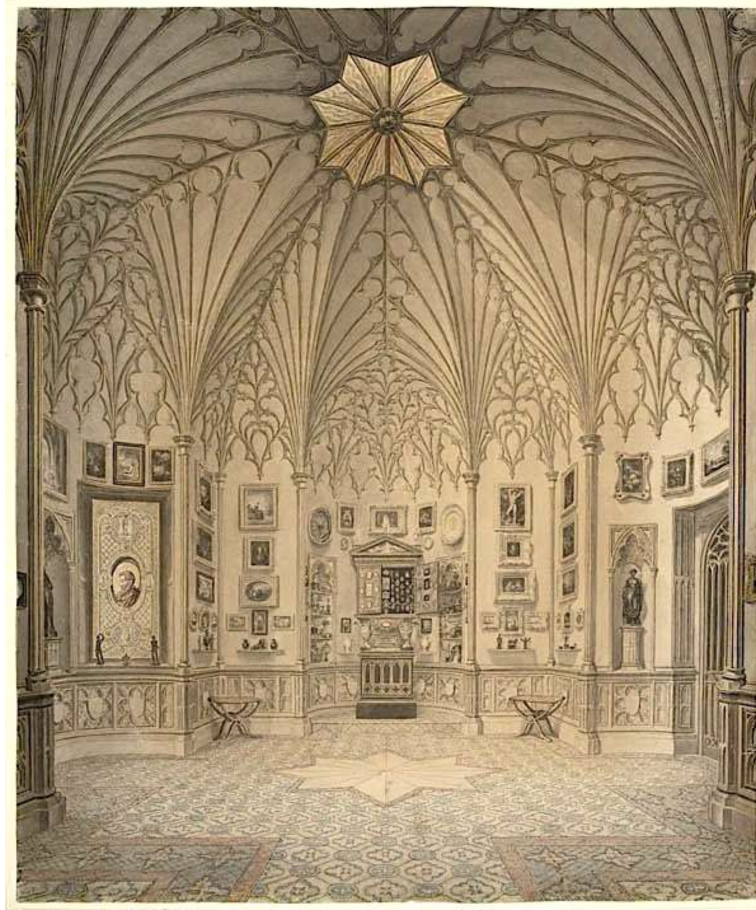

Figure 3.13: John Carter and Edward Edwards, *The Tribune at Strawberry Hill.* 1789. Watercolor on paper, 59.2 x 49.5cm. Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University.

The naming of the space is key: this version of the Gothic mobilizes scale extremes in its collection that simply are not found in larger Georgian frameworks of viewing art and object collections. When scholars compare Strawberry's Tribune to the one located in the Uffizi, a consistent polemicist tone of emerges- particularly the Grand Tour's teaching of the Continental canon of artists. Walpole's Tribune in its counter-hegemonic difference, is actively pushing back against the Palladian taste that is so prevalent of the time. The Tribune's more Classical-leaning floor plan was chosen over Bentley's designs for a traditional Gothic cruciform plan. Comprised of a quatrefoil

ground plan, there are three recesses built into the walls. The room's bays were taken from those found at the church at Saint Alban's, with the roof's principal inspiration coming from a chapterhouse located in York.[121] The roof's design culminates in the golden glass star that is installed to throw a "golden gloom...with all the air of a Catholic chapel, bar consecration- with all the glory of Popery."[122] Walpole continued to elaborate on the Tribune in a letter to Montagu, particularly proud of the rosewood cabinet: "the cabinet, and the glory of yellow glass at top [sic], which had a charming sun for a foil, did surmount their indifference, especially as they were animated by the Duchess of Grafton, who had never happened to be here before, and who perfectly entered into the air of enchantment and fairyism, which is the tone of the place."[123]

This kingwood and ivory-laden cabinet measures around 152 x 91.5 x 21.6cm. Created before Strawberry Hill was renovated and designed by Walpole, it has a trio of figures crowning the cabinet as arbiters of taste: sculptor Francois Duquesnoy, and architects Inigo Jones and his source of inspiration and synthesis: Andrea Palladio. These figures were based on originals by John Michael Rysbrack and crafted from ivory by James Francis Verskovis. The cabinet itself contained a multitude of miniature portraits, or cameos that Walpole collected and continued to edit throughout his life. The contents included notable portrait miniatures of remarkable people with distinguished provenances, which had been painted by English limners and continental enamellers who worked in the time frame of the Tudor and Stuart courts, as well as that of Louis XIV. Metonymy as a term reflects Walpole's taste, and again seems apropos. Walpole's

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[121] Walpole. *A Description Of The Villa Of Horace Walpole.* p. 76.
[122] McEvoy, "Strawberry Hill: Performed Architecture, Houses of Fiction and the Gothic Aesthetic."
[123] Walpole. *Correspondence, Volume 10*. 17 May 1763.

desire to collect these cameos was so voracious, the auction-house prices would become artificially inflated so that even he would come to lament the refined costs of portrait miniatures by the end of the eighteenth century.[124]

The history of the portrait miniature and its place as a lesser form of portraiture in the eighteenth century is crucial for context before launching into an analysis of the cabinet's contents. The first four decades of the eighteenth century are a vacuum in terms of the history of English miniature painting. In the age of Augustan formalism, the integration of 'manners' dress, and appearance being much more crucial to identity than the actual character studies that would develop later with Reynolds and other painters. This marks the beginning of what is termed as the "Modest Period", where the scale of portrait miniatures on enamel gradually diminish from 3.5 inches in height to a much reduced 1.5 to 2-inch scale in comparison. Historiographically, many of the early to mid-twentieth century studies on portrait miniature artists and their critical reception focus solely on men.

The exclusion of lay visitors beyond the Tribune's metal grate reveals not just its separation, but for those who were able to be present inside with Walpole were given intimate access with the miniatures: those close to Walpole would be able to hold these small works and create conversations around the portrait miniature which signals an intimacy of conversation not possible while on the tour.

While the illusion of a Gothic castle fell away to most visiting Strawberry Hill, it was still enough to convince some. In 1763, Walpole entertained a French aristocrat,

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Coombs, "Horace Walpole and the Collecting of Miniatures." pp. 182–99.

the Duc de Nivernais, (Louis Jules Mancini Mazarini) on a visit. When he enters the Tribune, due to Walpole's affectation of the Gothic principles of design, takes his hat off, fully believing that it is a Catholic chapel. Upon realizing his faux pas (and seeing numerous statues of *Venus*, a *Sleeping Hermaphrodite, Antinous* and other homoerotic works), he was quoted as saying: "Ce n'est pas une chapelle, pourtant," and Walpole remarked that he "seemed a little displeased". Nivernais' misunderstanding of the Tribune was not an isolated incident. Particularly amongst French aristocratic visitors, the quantity of such misunderstandings gives insight into the expected sensibilities that were required to appreciate and engage with Strawberry Hill's bespangled Gothicism. The meanings behind the inclusion of *Antinous*, the *Sleeping Hermaphrodite*, and Walpole's miniatures of almost exclusively men gave credence to Reeve's ideas that this was the homoerotic heart of Strawberry Hill's collection: only through a personal connection to Walpole would reveal the Tribune's purpose: after all, an alternative definition of a cloister was a closet.[125] Only through the safety away from prying eyes could Walpole show those he considered intimates his true interests.

[125] Reeve, "Introduction" *Gothic Architecture and Sexuality in the Circle of Horace Walpole*, p. 6.

Figure 3.14: John Carter, *Disposition of the Miniatures in the Rosewood Cabinet in the Tribune*, no date. Watercolor, 32.6 x 27.5cm. Lewis Walpole Library, Yale University. Folio 33/30.

The continued misreading of his collections and displays would continue as more and more visitors came to Strawberry Hill. When writing to his friend George Montagu, Walpole attempts to address this:

> The French do not come hither to see. A *l'Anglaise* happened to be the word in fashion; and half a dozen of the most fashionable people have been the dupes of it. I take for granted that their next mode will be à l'iroquoise, that they may be under no obligation of realizing their pretensions. Madame de Boufflers I think will die a martyr to a taste which she fancied she had, and finds she has not.[126]

[126] Walpole. *The Yale Editions of Horace Walpole's Correspondence, Volume 10.* 17 May 1763.

French visitors to Strawberry Hill came only to confirm their preconceived notions of artistic trends, rather than participating in the Gothic Revival's critical examination of Palladian arts and architecture. Walpole returns to his criticisms of Boufflers a year later, describing her to Horace Mann:

> past forty, and does not appear ever to have been handsome, but is one of the most agreeable and sensible women I ever saw; yet I must tell you a trait of her that will not prove my assertion. Lady Holland asked her how she liked Strawberry Hill? She owned she did not approve of it, and that it was not *digne de la solidité* anglaise. It made me laugh for a quarter of an hour. [127]

Boufflers' remarks about how flimsy Strawberry Hill is relative to the perceived characteristics of English cultural solidity. Bouffler's mistake in judgement, to Walpole was tied to not only Strawberry Hill's its architectural appearances but also absent in her misunderstanding of the house's attempts to overturn prevailing fashions.

The house did not appeal to Boufflers and the Duc de Nivernais because of its generalist principles- nothing was as clear-cut, due to Walpole's bric-a-brac aesthetic. The homosocial component was effaced to the point of pastiche and erases many of the breadcrumbs which pointed to the earnestness critics sought. Strawberry Hill's overwhelming displays, particularly in the rooms, act as what Emma McAvoy terms as *sense* passing as *non-sense*, which creates confusion amongst its visitors. If the Tribune is the only space that motivates a physical reaction from his French guests, Walpole's observations of the differences between British viewers, shared sensibilities, and their suspension of disbelief creates an elision in his desires for the viewer. It was

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[127] Walpole. *Correspondence, Volume 22.* 20 Dec 1764.

only when these sensibilities were satisfied on the part of the observer, that Walpole's version of the Gothic, would slowly begin to reveal itself.

Walpole was not beyond holding grudges or making enemies with other figures in the literary world of London's eighteenth century. A recurring figure in the dissertation is that of Dr. Samuel Johnson, and it is surprising at first to find that Walpole and Johnson never knew one another personally. They were often part of similar circles, but as Joseph Farington's diary entry for 25 July 1796, "Lord Orford never was acquainted with Johnson; Reynolds offered to bring them together, but Lord Orford had so strong a prejudice against Johnson's reputed manners, that he would not agree to it." This distaste and distance is probably due to Johnson's initial poor reviews of Thomas Gray's work- friends of the Strawberry Committee could count on Walpole's loyalty, at least. The slight against Gray might have also been based on Johnson's participation in a largely homophobic culture in the eighteenth century. Brownell's section on Samuel Johnson and Walpole's acerbic remarks to his friends in gossipy letters proves that his fears of Johnson's criticism (and his popularity) were unfounded. James Boswell, a friend, and biographer of Johnson, confirms this: "Talking to me of Horry Walpole...Johnson allowed that he got together a great many curious little things, and told them in an elegant manner."[128]

Thinking back to the archetype of a courtesy-book gentleman, it is this distinction that ruffled Walpole's feathers so- Johnson was a professional writer- in his mind, a sort of mercenary, who had to write for a living, rather than not taking his endeavors

[128] Walpole. *Correspondence, Volume 29.* p. 179.

seriously.[129] The concept of a genteel amateur author with access to his own private press who either out of fear, or perhaps anticipation, creates a distinct barrier between himself and Johnson. It is from the aristocratic and authoritarian distance that Chesterfield and Walpole both made their commentaries. It is this perceived dispassionate, or amateur interest which they believed them to be taken more seriously than the emerging bourgeois chaos. Johnson's full investment which stems from his station (or lack thereof) and moving from project to project as a contractor sets both his employer and the aesthete Walpole on the opposing side of the conflict in visual culture.

One way to determine the contrast between the two authors would be to look at Johan Zoffany's dense painting of the *Tribuna of the Uffizi*. (Fig 3.18) Zoffany's painting is committed to the fictional display of so many works of art being considered by a group of Grand Tour *cognoscenti*, which commits to the ideological representation of the gentleman connoisseur. Walpole is not interested in all with this direction of visual culture and literacy. Instead, his emphasis is placed upon the requirement of a circle of close friends and a passion for a subject. Zoffany's painting is a representation of the perceived necessities and niceties of the class writ large- rather than the intimacies found in Strawberry Hill. The Gothic's differentiation of aesthetic scale is something that is used here by Walpole's flippant pedantry in contrast to the macroscopic.

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[129] Ibid

Figure 3.15: Johan Zoffany, *The Tribuna of the Uffizi*, 1772-7. Oil on canvas, 123.5 x 155cm, Royal Collection Trust, London.

Despite such memorable anecdotes and bon mots produced by both personalities and interpretation of social stations, Johnson and Walpole would never get the chance to meet directly. These frictions though, the inherent differences between Gothic and *taste*, works to prevent discourse between classes and stations within British society, are precisely what is at stake within the dissertation. Walpole's status as a disrupter is best expressed through a culmination of his experiences growing up the son of a prominent member of Parliament, living through his father's downfall, as well as an attempt to pivot the Walpole family name in a way that bit back at the pomp and ceremony of mid-Georgian England and its immediate past. Strawberry Hill was a site of

soft critique against the codes and rituals built up after the ascendancy of the Tudors and the foundational nature of such encoding. Like the foundations and crenellated battlements of Walpole's little Gothic villa, were when prodded, revealed only *papier mâché* underneath.

Chapter 4

Performance for Posterity: Streatham Park's celebrities, portraiture, and literary coteries, 1770-84

During the flurry of tours at Walpole's Gothic revival house, another household was being constructed with a different, contemporary focus on collecting portraits. Whereas Lord Chesterfield and Horace Walpole were looking backwards in time to cement their places in authority, the Thrale family were firmly looking towards their perception in the present as a way of securing future legacies. Streatham Park was a villa and display space where the Thrales were heavily invested in the hosting their closest friends in London, a meeting place of literary criticism, and friendship.

The changes in the traditions of ensemble portraiture and their display culminated in Hester and Henry Thrale's private villa of Streatham Park and its library. Originally built in the south of London, the Thrale library was filled with thirteen bust-length painted portraits, all of which were done by Sir Joshua Reynolds in a decade from 1772-82. Hester Thrale (neé Salusbury, later Piozzi 1741-1821), was an author and diarist, born to the aristocratic Salusbury family in Wales. Her eventual marriage to Henry, son of the brewer Ralph Thrale, (1698-1758) and their joint relationship with both Sir Joshua Reynolds, and Dr. Samuel Johnson were catalysts in sustained literary patronage and portraiture at their residence.

Arthur Murphy, a playwright, and author introduced the Thrales to Dr. Samuel Johnson in 1765. Hester's *Thraliana* recounts the meeting in detail:

> It was on the second Thursday of the month of January 1765, that I first saw Mr. Johnson in a Room: Murphy, whose Intimacy with Mr. Thrale had been of many years standing, was one day dining with us at our house in Southwark; and was zealous that we should be acquainted with Johnson, of whose moral and Literary Character he spoke in the most exalted Terms; and so whetted our desire of seeing him soon, that we were only disputing *how* he should be invited, *when* he should be invited, and what should be the pretence. At last it was resolved that one Woodhouse, a

> shoemaker, who had written some verses, and been asked to do some tables should likewise be asked to ours, and made a Temptation to Mr. Johnson to meet him: accordingly he came, and Mr. Murphy at four o'clock brought Mr. Johnson to dinner.[130]

Henry's unanchored social status as an emergent bourgeois brewer was assisted greatly by his marriage into the Thrale aristocratic family. The Thrales' union was a marriage of convenience, rather than romance. It illustrated the ways in which the merchant class were intermingling with a flagging aristocratic family and previous examples of representation, political power, and prestige were now being extended to the mercantile class. The Thrales commissioned from leading artist Joshua Reynolds a series of thirteen portraits to display and document their social circle in the place of their meeting: the library at Streatham Park.

The Thrale library portrait sequence represents a very curious case of members of a literary coterie starting to self-select in their attempts to canonize themselves.[131] Just as David Hume and other thinkers' writings about the outward presentation of identity in a larger frame, I argue that Streatham Park's portraits are a unique instance of a self-aware and culturally self-selecting social group which dealt with fame in its myriad forms. Reynolds' Streatham Worthies painting set reveals not just the likenesses of the group, but also provides a window into the inner lives, patronage, and conflicts of a group of friends as they lived, read, and talked to each other.[132] Reynolds' lackluster allegorical representation of Hester Thrale as a mother first and foremost, erases her

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[130] Clifford, *Hester Lynch Piozzi (Mrs. Thrale)*. p. 55.

[131] Schellenberg, *Literary Coteries and the Making of Modern Print Culture*. p. 8.

[132] D'Arblay, *Memoirs of Doctor Charles Burney,* p. 81.

contributions to conversation, her aspirations as a writer, and her role as mediator. These non-visual components to her identity cannot be documented and fail to survive her death. She is, for lack of a better term, the life of the party.

Habermas posited that within early modern England, the most critical form and location of public discourse was the coffeehouse, but in doing so, disregarded women's places as members of literary coteries, clubs, and associational groups outside of the male-only coffeehouse of the eighteenth century. Dr. Samuel Johnson perhaps summed up the overall view of coffeehouse contributions to cultural discourse best. When coupled with Elizabeth Montagu's writings about a purely male or female sociable world, both writers' remarks broaden the overlapping nature of the eighteenth century.

> To study manners however only in coffee houses is more than equally imperfect: the minds of men who acquire no solid learning, and only exist on the daily forage they pick up by running about, and snatching what drops from their neighbours as ignorant as themselves, will never ferment into any knowledge valuable or durable"[133] To speak sincerely, I think no society completely agreable [sic] if entirely male or female. The masculinisms of men, and the feminalistics of the women, if the first prevail make conversation too rough, and austere, if the latter, too soft and weak.[134]

Johnson is replicating his former patron Chesterfield's view with regards to the dissemination of culture and knowledge being the purview of those who have been educated and have the appropriate aesthetic distance by which to apply it- frowning upon gossip. But it was this same gossip that would eventually infiltrate, affect, and in some cases, destroy the clubs and groups that Johnson would find himself a part of in the 1770's. The Thrales could only mimic prior forms of veneration that they had only

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[133] Mee, *Conversable Worlds*. p. 83.

[134] Eger, *Bluestockings*. p. 76.

just received access to under consultation by Johnson and Reynolds, they update the idea of the literary canon so that it revolved around Hester Thrale. Hume's conception of women's place in tempering conversation took its inspirations from French salons but became an important step forward in creating opportunities for women to have conditional access to discourse. Hester Thrale and other Bluestocking salonnieres were met with hostility from those who were longing for the masculine values of the Enlightenment.[135] The anxieties of shifting conventions of public and private realms here, falls short of the modernizing and egalitarian pushes in ideas of politeness in eighteenth century Britain: instead, forcing a definition against the exclusivity of club culture while being inseparable from its guidelines.

The Thrale family home was originally located six miles south of London in the borough of Streatham. The pathway led from the lodge gates into a smaller, three-story brick house. It was surrounded by a parcel of land equaling to about a hundred or so acres. The additions of a parlour for hosting and library were added only as the Thrales' family and income increased. The region of Streatham was not, in contrast to Chesterfield House and Strawberry Hill, in any sort of fashionable location or district. Southwark was south of the Thames River, near the site of the old Globe theatre, but beyond that, Streatham was a hub of business and manufacture, not of habitation. This desolation perhaps, played into how much Hester and Henry wanted to create a welcoming meeting place- a later recollection by Hester shows how much that first Winter reoriented her expectations for polite societal living near London: "Our society at the Borough House was exceedingly circumscribed. Few People would come to so

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[135] Mee, *Conversable Worlds,* p. 84.

strange a Place- few indeed *could* come; but as we kept Two Equipages, I had it always in my power to go out. My mother however, thought the closer I kept home the better."[136]

There are even numerous accounts of their neighbors' carriages and even Henry himself being held up by highwaymen from the surrounding area. Streatham Park house was built in 1730, on a plot of land acquired by Ralph Thrale, Henry's father and the founder of Anchor Brewhouse. The Streatham library addition was finished in 1773, and the sales catalogue point towards its purpose during the sale in 1816 lists twenty-two chairs, a couch, three tables, and a "Brussels carpet planned to the room".[137] As stated by Mark Girouard, the eighteenth-century library began to be used as a living room. These rather dry characteristics of the room bely the function of the room's heterotopic characteristics with the eventuality of hosting a great number of occupants that point towards the Thrales' predilection for hosting their literary circle.

[136] Clifford, *Hester Lynch Piozzi (Mrs. Thrale)*. p. 52.

[137] Munby, *Sale Catalogues of Libraries of Eminent Persons.* vol 5.

Figure 4.1: After Thomas Higham, *Streatham Park The Seat of Harrison Esq.,* 1819. Engraving, 8.9 x 12.1cm. Yale Center for British Art

The naming of the literary coterie was from Fanny Burney's visitation to Streatham with her father, Charles Burney. The practice of canonization had become so well-known at this point that the Stowe Temple of British Worthies collection of portrait busts became a point of self-reference for Henry and Hester and their circle- the creation of canon was no longer a posthumous or backwards looking practice. Canonization had in the 1770s, become open to curation for those who were still living, and had accrued enough celebrity clout in their respective fields. Capital was measured not just in terms of wealth, but in terms of reputation and association. The members of the Thrales' inner circle who were painted by Sir Joshua Reynolds included:

1. Lord Edwin Sandys
2. Baron William Lyttelton
3. Hester and Queeney Thrale
4. Arthur Murphy
5. Oliver Goldsmith
6. Sir Joshua Reynolds
7. Sir Robert Chambers
8. David Garrick
9. Henry Thrale
10. Giuseppe Baretti
11. Charles Burney
12. Edmund Burke
13. Samuel Johnson[138]

[138] These were the thirteen Worthies who received portraits. Other notable frequenters of the Thrale circle included Elizabeth Montagu, Fanny Burney, Bennet Langton, and Johnson's friend Topham Beauclerk.

Figure. 4.2: Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Streatham Worthies: a.) Lord Sandys, Baron Lyttelton, Hester Thrale and Queeny, and Arthur Murphy*, wall 1, *b.) Oliver Goldsmith, Self-Portrait, Robert Chambers, David Garrick and Henry Thrale*, wall 2, c.) *Giuseppe Baretti, Charles Burney, Edmund Burke, and Dr. Samuel Johnson,* wall 3, from 1761-1782. Oil on canvas.

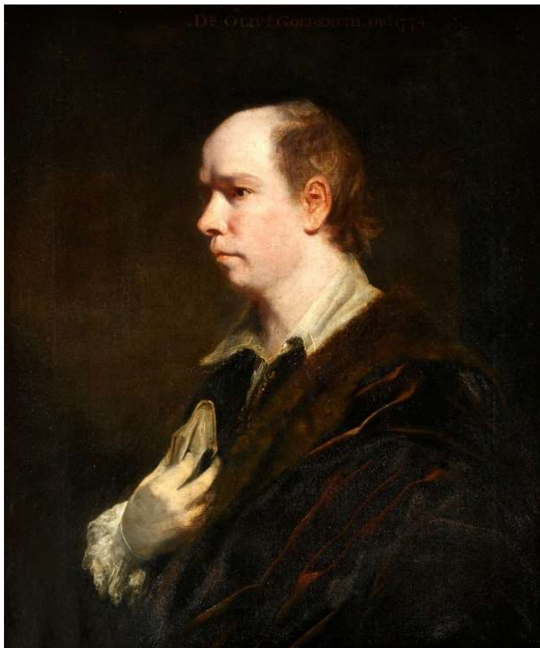

Figure 4.2: Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Streatham Worthies,* continued.

Figure 4.2: Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Streatham Worthies,* continued.

Figure 4.2: Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Streatham Worthies,* continued.

When taking a closer look Streatham Park's portrait ensemble, it is helpful to consider Hughson's account of the library series of portraits his account of 1817: "Thrale resolved to surmount these treasures for the mind by a similar regale for the eyes, in selecting the persons most loved to contemplate, from amongst friends and favourites, to preside over the literature that stood highest in estimation."[139] This continuation of the codes tied author portraits as frontispieces to their textual works was less a reflection on prior authorial achievements, but instead focused the Thrales' myriad contemporaries.

It is through the serialized portraits hung in the library at Streatham Park, and the conversations around them, that have shaped my viewing of Reynolds' more relaxed mode of portraiture. His more public practice was incumbent on portraiture and a fusion with history painting conventions. Here, Joshua Reynolds' rendering of different pairs of sitters reveals how he was sensitive to the desires of his close friends as to what, and how they were represented in their portraits. For example, if we look at the pairing of Robert Chambers and Charles Burney, both subjects are rendered with symbols pertaining to their trade and prestige: both men are shown in their professional garb and holding significant pieces of writing associated with their trades. Chambers, a lawyer and legal scholar, is clad in a black academic robe, possibly dating back to the *cappa clausa*, which were gowns worn by lecturers at universities.

Charles Burney, an honorary recipient of a Doctor of Music from Oxford University, is also dressed in the red and gold silk gowns associated with that institution. In his right hand, he holds a few rolled pages of sheet music. These symbols of

[139] Mme D'Arblay [Fanny Burney], *Memoirs of Dr. Burney,* vol II, London 1832, p. 80

costume and writing are what Mark Hallett deems as “surrogate symbols of authority and achievement, further proclaiming Chambers’ and Burney’s mastery within their chosen fields.”[140] But, even with relatively formal attire, there are some tell-tale pictorial signs of conversation about to emerge.

From Chambers’ portrait, Reynolds has rendered a light source that works to push Chambers out towards the picture plane, as if he were moving forwards. His mouth is curved upward in what will be a smile- soon engaging any listeners in conversation. We see the same forward momentum in the portrait of Charles Burney- his laced bell sleeves nearly pushing outwards. Reynolds has also painted Burney’s mouth as to create an illusion of the moment, forever frozen, of a man about to speak. Despite the formality of their garb, their demeanors are showing relaxation and the potential for engagement or discourse. The animation or potential in these two portraits is one of several portrait types which Reynolds develops for the differing personalities within the Thrale set. Some other examples of Reynolds’ informal depiction are the trio of Giuseppe Baretti, Samuel Johnson, and Joshua Reynolds.

When examining the ensemble, the key difference between the Streatham set and others is that the placement of a double portrait of Hester and her daughter are situated overmantel- a place which from other aristocratic portrait display sequences is reserved for the central figure. The surrounding portraits of Sandys, Lyttelton, Murphy and Goldsmith all shared the same wall, and all four men looked to the leader of the coterie- Hester Thrale. In this case, it is key to note the shift in gender when considering

[140] Hallett, *Reynolds.* p. 302.

other clubs or groups. Bruce Redford finds a parallel between this set of portraits and another group executed at the same time by Reynolds: The Society of Dilettanti's two group portraits. Both \were designed to decorate a "capacious private space that would form the center, both social and symbolic of an inner circle."[141] What was before portraits of Shakespeare or Henry VI, the proverbial glue of the Streatham friend group was undoubtedly Hester Thrale. Reynolds' portrayal of Hester and her daughter were highly idealized, in contrast to the prevailing trends in British portraiture which sought not to soften the flaws of the sitters. It is here that we find the limits of portraiture. Hester's poem in the *Thraliana* is central to understanding how Reynolds' portrait failed to embody her role at Streatham:

> In Features so placid, so smooth, so serene,
> What Trace of the Wit—or the Welch-woman's seen?
> Of the Temper sarcastic, the flattering Tongue,
> The Sentiment right—with th' Occasion still wrong.
> What Trace of the tender, the rough, the refin'd,
> The Soul in which all Contrarieties join'd?
> Where tho' Merriment loves over Method to rule,
> Religion resides, and the Virtues keep School;
> Till when tired we condemn her dogmatical Air,
> Like a Rocket She rises, and leaves us to Stare.
> To such Contradictions d'ye wish for a Clue,
> Keep Vanity still—that vile Passion in view;
> For 'tis thus the slow Miner his Fortune to make,
> Of Arsenic thin scatter'd pursues the pale Track;
> Secure where that Poyson pollutes the rich Ground,
> That it points to the Soil where Some Silver is found.[142]

Hester's rebellion against Reynolds' softening, idealizing style is an interior protest of the double portrait. The poem's content, especially when considered against the events in her life are telling. There is no soul that Reynolds attempts to depict, nor

[141] Redford, *Dilettanti*. p. 107.
[142] Piozzi and Balderston, *Thraliana*. p. 470.

the contradictory elements of human existence. The painting is not capable of containing the multitude of her wit, temper, or conversational aptitude and instead focuses on placating the viewer with the appearance of serenity. Later, Hester writes of the public sphere becoming tired and agape at her rising star in society. The rising rocket is tempered by the poison found by the miner: possibly the jealousy of Boswell and other authors after Johnson dies. The last line in the poem finds some small amount of solace: it is likely about finding her second husband, Gabriel Piozzi. Reynolds' painting is clearly allegorical instead of actual- the placid, un-lifelike portrait of the hostess is locked in a thousand-yard stare, while leaning on a tombstone. Hester is painted in *costume turc*, which was becoming fashionable dress at the time. The portrait by Reynolds combined the classical manner of depicting drapery, the gold-trimmed scarlet girdle that is around her waist, which is reminiscent of a Turkish kusak. She is meant to represent the staid domestic woman, instead of the fiery, witty, and loyal writer who was full of life. If we take art historian Richard Wendorf's qualification that a portrait should at least "as an enterprise, as text, as context, is inextricably enmeshed in the art of pleasing [and] in the perils of acquiescence, self-satisfaction, and self-preservation", then we can see why Hester Thrale would miss the depiction of her wit and intelligence over apparent preference for her physical beauty.[143] But this is not the only time a representation of a woman on the cultural rise was happening in the mid-Georgian period. For a place that was all about conversational character, this painted version of Hester Thrale was simply *out* of character. For further examples of painted women, see

[143] Wendorf, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: The Painter in Society*. p. 11.

Richard Samuel's forgettable allegorical group portrait, *Portraits in the Characters of the Muses in the Temple of Apollo*.[144]

Figure 4.3: Richard Samuel, *Portraits in the Characters of the Muses in the Temple of Apollo,* 1778. Oil on canvas, 131.2 x 154.9cm. National Portrait Gallery, London.

Near Baretti, the self-portrait of Reynolds holds the sixth position on an adjacent wall. Reynolds has chosen to display his own physical disability here, seen cupping his left hand up to his ear. He suffered from deafness in his left ear for several decades before painting this self-portrait- due to an illness suffered while on the Grand Tour. Normally using a silver trumpet to amplify sounds, Reynolds instead eschews the ornamental device in favor of his hand, inviting words or observations from the viewer.

[144] When viewing the group portrait for the first time, one of the Muses, Mrs. Carter, confided to another, Mrs. Montagu, that 'by the mere testimony of my own eyes, I cannot very exactly tell which is you, and which is I, and which is anybody else'.

When considered with other, more formal self-portraits done by Reynolds, the Streatham Library *Self-Portrait as a Deaf Man* is less reserved and more of a witty pendant to the portraits of Robert Chambers and Charles Burney. If those sitters are leaning forward, on the cusp of speaking, then Reynolds' painted form is forced to lean out from the canvas to listen. The casual depictions of Reynolds and Baretti would suggest that those portrayed might have been comfortable letting down their more public personas and feeling at ease with their own shortcomings while in conversation at the Streatham gallery. In Reynolds' case, his deafness in one ear is shown not just as a shortcoming, but as an invitation to interaction, for newcomers and regulars to the Streatham Library. He is beckoning discourse, with one ear cupped and turning not with a look of frustration, but one of curiosity.

Giuseppe Baretti, a friend of the Thrales and Johnson, is shown holding a book incredibly close to his own face- he was known to be short sighted.[145] In this portrait, compared with other depictions of Baretti, his monocle is hanging unused on his stomach. The Thrales' constructed environment pushed for an informal air, which is seen in this unassisted form of reading. Unlike the examples of Chambers and Burney, who were on the cusp of speaking, Baretti's depiction is one based on interiority, and is probably the most on-topic for the library space in which it was displayed. Just as conversation was to be had in Streatham Park, the Worthies represented an idealized variety of the appropriate activities. The majority activity of reading is so little represented due to the Thrale library doubling up as a dining room on evenings when

[145] Wendorf, *Sir Joshua Reynolds: The Painter in Society.* p. 305.

they had guests. The depictions of several authors on the walls (Hester Thrale, Arthur Murphy, Oliver Goldsmith, Giuseppe Barretti, Edmund Burke, and Samuel Johnson) can point to the intent of having a site of conversation between them, even if none were present in person. While there is no confirmation that all members of the Worthies were present at the same time, the Worthies were a reminder for the Thrale family that their closest friends' presence might be invoked with a mere glance above the bookshelves.

The affinity that some of the portraits share is quite curious: *Self-portrait as a deaf man* possesses a phatic, inquisitive nature to its composition, acts as an open contrast while we consider Giuseppe Baretti's portrait, with its silent contemplation, the sitter with his myopic gaze, is held in opposition to the sensorial demand of the other portrait. It not only shows Reynolds in a way that highlights a deficiency that occurred later in his career, but also invites, and incites the viewer to speak, as if Reynolds would do if he misheard something. It would be also appropriate to point out, that despite being a library space, the portrait of the artist shows him holding up a hand to his own ear: an invitation, or incitement, to speak in what is traditionally thought of (via Baretti's portrait) as a quiet, erudite space.

With his own inclusion as a self-portrait in the Streatham Park Worthies, Reynolds shows his (as well as Giuseppe Baretti's) depictions with their physical limitations, while perhaps giving a subtext as to the different capacities that Streatham Park served: on the one hand, with Reynolds' phatic invitation to conversation signaling to the library's use as a place of convivial gossip or conversation, while a quick glance over at Giuseppe Baretti's portrait would remind viewers that this was also a space of

learning and silent contemplation.

The final portrait in the Streatham sequence is that of Dr. Johnson. Reynolds had painted Johnson in the past, and would continue to do so, but this particular portrait displays an unidealized and hefty Johnson taking up much of the picture plane. Johnson's squinted eyes, furrowed brow, and hovering left hand give some indication of the various tics and gesticulations which were manifested throughout his life. In spite of the rather unsparing depiction of Johnson, the bon mots recorded by many of the figures at the Streatham Park set works together to give a complicated portrait to (at first glance, anyways), the famous bull in the china shop.[146] Johnson's position as last of the twelve portraits hanging over the bookshelves forms an interesting end to Hester Thrale's chain of friends, if read sequentially: at the start of the portrait ensemble is Edwin, 2nd Baron Sandys, an aristocrat who was described by Hester Thrale as "a frustrated intellectual".[147] Sandys represents the beginning of the tradition of literary critique and consumption: the aristocrat of the days of Shaftesbury, where one needed aesthetic distance in order to be considered an appropriately 'polite' aesthete. Johnson's place as the anchor signifies the shift in that requirement in his same lifetime- after all, he broke away from the patronage of his previous employer, Lord Chesterfield.

These portrait clusters form a sort of triptych of informality whereby the sitters are depicted with their guards lowered. Still others, such as the portraits of Arthur Murphy, Henry Thrale, and Edmund Burke offer an oblique reference to the prior medium which was popular for library display: that of the marble portrait bust. These portraits show

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[146] Brownell, *Samuel Johnson's Attitude towards the arts*. pp. 28-9.
[147] Piozzi and Balderston, *Thraliana*. p. 471.

their sitters in the typical bust length fashion but are varied in their view. What is common, is the high raking light which Reynolds creates to illuminate his sitters.[148]

The variations of several portrait modes and their subsequent changes to better suit the personalities of his friends is nothing new for the eighteenth century. What is groundbreaking about Reynolds' work, however, and their subsequent organization by Hester Thrale is that its seemingly haphazard and varied nature is an inseparable part of the Streatham set and its multifaceted attendance. These interactions clearly show a web of ties and associations available to be read from the portrait ensemble as a whole and within groupings thanks to Hester's library hanging program.

Reynolds' portrait sequence would have been inspired by recent installations of a similar nature, such as the *Temple of British Worthies* at Stowe. While Reynolds may not have had a plan as to how many portraits or how the portrait sequence might interact amongst itself, over time, he began to paint an increasing amount of variety and contrast between the subjects and their painted attributes. Thinking back to the example of Lord Chesterfield and Horace Walpoles' libraries, it reveals a popular adaptation of the library-canon construction. Surely, with Johnson now close to Hester Thrale, there must also have been some cross-pollination from Johnson's time was working on the Dictionary and meeting with Chesterfield and his version of the library portrait ensemble. Distinctly, the Streatham set was trying to ratify and codify celebrity in an age where notoriety and fame was still finite due to limits within mass media. The Streatham Worthies represented a new paradigm in literature and cultural production. Taking the

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[148] Hallett, *Reynolds*. p. 290.

patronage model of Lord Chesterfield and Dr. Johnson as an example, renown and repute were often tied to aristocratic authority rather than public approval. From the 1760s onwards, the older model of patron/creative started to become one instead predicated upon self-production. In the increasingly democratized eighteenth century, public opinion (and purses) started to support emerging literary figures. This is what Walpole and other aristocrats start to look down upon: the early laissez-faire capitalism allows for the bourgeois and mercantile class a more viable way into participating with literary culture. By purchasing books and driving demand for their favorite authors, they were able to insert themselves into literary considerations alongside critical reception. Budding authors did not need the patronage of lords and ladies; they just needed to know the right people to champion their works to a larger audience.

With Dr. Johnson spending time with Lord Chesterfield in his library, he must have spoken about the layout of the portrait set there to his new host and hostess. They had Reynolds, one of the period's most famous painters doing a very different kind of work. Reynolds portraits were creating for the Thrales a public image: re-writing themselves for public consumption Celebrity as an idea becomes commodified and is remarkably different than the canon of national writers proposed only three decades earlier by Lord Chesterfield. No longer were the portraits of long-dead poets, writers, and playwrights, but displayed contemporaries and colleagues. The push against the past is clear to see here: the cultural canon's construction shifts from past to present, and then to the future: the Worthies also started to think about their own legacies, as some of the members died during Reynolds' sustained painting of the group. The public-facing Streatham Worthies turn toward the present, engaging with early popular

culture. And while it was a rare occurrence to have all of the Worthies in one place at the same time, the self-referential quality would not have been lost on those whose likenesses were portrayed on the walls while discussions were happening.

Dr. Johnson's view on the benefits of portraiture in this regard are especially helpful in thinking about the deaths of Arthur Murphy, Henry Thrale, and eventually, Dr. Johnson:

> Genius is chiefly exerted in historical pictures, and the art of the painter of portraits is often lost in the obscurity of the subject. But it is in painting as in life; what is greatest is not always best. I should grieve to see Reynolds transfer to heroes and goddesses, to empty splendour and to airy fiction, that art which is now employed in diffusing friendship, in renewing tenderness, in quickening the affections of the absent, and continuing the presence of the dead.[149]

Streatham Park and its library portraits also bring up critical questions about gender and social dynamics of the mid-Georgian period of Britain. The central, overmantel positioning of Hester and her daughter Queeny's double portrait over the fireplace's place of honor is very much intentional, and but reads externally as more of an honorific image than that of an active member. Like the poem which she writes about Reynolds' portrait of her, Hester's key role in holding together the group of friends is negated by her placement *above* the mantel and the discussions of culture, rather than amongst it. That is not to say that Hester's role was completely erased- proximity of the two male sitters to the double portrait's original location is also made pictorially clear, by their gazes. Lyttleton and Murphy's eyes are looking towards the glue that held the coterie together: Mrs. Thrale. While the likeness of Reynolds' double portrait was

[149] Brownell, *Samuel Johnson's Attitude towards the arts*. p. 45.

decried by Hester in her *Thraliana*, scholars have argued for its quality as a quasi-allegorical double portrait of the woman who, with more activity and consistency than her husband, spurred on discussions and created a salon of her own. In a world dominated by men, Hester's wit and pen helped her to carve out a lasting place for herself.

The only two members of the Worthies which were not particular paragons of cultural or artistic fields were the first two portraits placed in the sequence. Lord Edwin Sandys, and Lord William Lyttelton. Their place within the sequence and salon were due to their friendships with Henry Thrale, as both were participants of the Grand Tour. I speculate that their contribution toward the Streatham circle was both from a class contribution, as both were aristocratic, and monetary. The aristocratic class was flagging, and opportunities to be seen as relevant would be relished by both men.

As previously mentioned, the *Thraliana* allowed for Hester's judgment of her friends by ways of lines of verse. In 1776, Henry Thrale gifted Hester six blank diary books which were inscribed with the title *Thraliana* on their covers. Hester soon started to transcribe some of the anecdotes and observations of character for those who would come and visit Streatham Park. Not strictly a diary-keeping miscellany genre, the -*ana* suffix is often found attached to surnames to denote belonging to a larger umbrella term of the referent. For example, Thraliana refers to the Thrales' self-conscious literary construction to denote a collection of stories or items. The genre of writing that it engages in, *table talk*, has been in use since the sixteenth century, and is a recording of

impromptu comments or observational anecdotes of a famous person with an eye towards the document's impending value in the future.

Figure 4.4: L: Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Edwin, 2nd Baron Sandys*, 1773. Courtesy of Ombersley Court Worcestershire. R: Sir Joshua Reynolds, *William Henry Lyttelton*, *later 1st Baron Lyttelton.* 1772. Both 74.6 x 60.9cm.

Until the *Thraliana* was published in 1942, scholars sought to lump in Hester Thrale with the much larger and well-known cosmopolitan salon led by Elizabeth Montagu, the Bluestockings. The publication and further excavation of Hester's literary production complicated the prior notion of a 'light bluestocking'. There was some enmity between the two hostesses, as Hester writes of her group and how she did not want her salon as being affiliated with Montagu's: "the wits and the blues (as it is the fashion to call them) will be happy enough, no doubt to have me safe at the Brewery- out of their

way...Charming Blues! Blue with venom, I think."[150][151] This private entry for the *Thraliana* as opposed to Hester's outwardly facing persona (Elizabeth Montagu and Hannah More were both frequent visitors at Streatham) outline the purpose of gossip and table-talk: sociability becomes performative under the purview of maintaining conversation, rather than absolute candor. What the *Thraliana* gives us is a snapshot of Georgian life: anecdotes, verbal jousting, snubs, arguments, along with all of the trials and tribulations of Thrale family life as it moved in unexpected ways. Its supplementary text contributes to an even deeper understanding of the friendships and social life of the coterie.

Lord Edwin Sandys, 2nd Baron, was awarded a Doctor of Civil Law degree from Oxford University (New College), but that degree was only created in 1756. The DCL is usually an honorary degree bestowed to significant contributions to law or politics. It is perhaps his maneuvering in the latter (as MP in the House of Commons for three distinct districts at different times) as well as holding the position of Lord of the Admiralty. Hester Thrale has this to say about Lord Sandys from her inner critique and rankings from the *Thraliana*:

> Lord Sandys is a quiet man with a low-toned Voice, but when I want a Fact, or good Information as to Ecclesiastical History--I go to Lord Sandys for it--He is more a reading Man than a Thinking Man but he really is a full Man as Bacon expresses it. This is really a fair Description of poor Lord Sandys's Situation & Abilities: tho' a dull Converser, he is versed in many Branches of Learning: and an admirable Scholar.--his Friendship with Mr Thrale is of long standing, we must turn the Page for Lord Westcote.[152]

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[150] Prendergast, *Literary Salons Across Britain and Ireland in the Long Eighteenth Century.* p. 70.

[151] Francus, "'Down with Her, Burney!': Johnson, Burney, and the Politics of Literary Celebrity". p. 109.

[152] Piozzi and Balderston, *Thraliana*. p. 11.

Sandys' portrait is at first glance, quite unremarkable. Painted in 1773, the portrait of Lord Sandys lacks any of the hallmarks which gave any phatic qualities of the other library portraits. Taken on its own, it shows Sandys with a rich and matching brocade jacket and vest. Short of Hester Thrale and Charles Burneys' outfits, Sandys' outfit is given the most dedication to detail. He is rendered with a direct gaze towards the viewer, and a countenance that reads as matter of fact. His body is in three-quarters perspective and is turning to the right to the viewer. The cravat around his neck is made of the same lace as his sleeves, and Reynolds did not introduce a dramatic lighting source nor any notable attributes for his sitter. Sandys instead has his left hand inside his vest, using the same longstanding tradition with which men of letters or aristocrats could refer to their education.

Lyttelton's portrait, second in the sequence of thirteen, differs slightly from Sandys'. Reynolds painted this portrait in 1772, and the composition is very much more akin to the lighting and pose of Edmund Burke, from our same sequence. Lyttelton is depicted by Reynolds as facing to his left, using again the high and raking light source which originates off-canvas. Similar to Burke, Lyttelton's clothing beneath the chest mirrors the convention of library bust portraiture, with the shadows in the paintings mimicking where the sculptures would end. Reynolds puts this image of Lyttelton on an aesthetic register: an aloofness, which avoids the direct gaze of his neighbor. It is clear that in relation to his pictorial neighbor, Lord Sandys, Lyttelton's portrait was given more time for depicting a more unique likeness, than on details in clothing and lace. Whether or not this is due to Reynolds being less familiar with Sandys is unknown. Hester Thrale

wrote the following judgment of Lyttelton's character and place in the Worthies in her *Thraliana*:

> Next him on the right hand, see Lyttelton hang;
> Polite in Behaviour, prolix in harangue:
> With power well-natur'd, with Science well bred,
> He had studied, had travell'd, had reason'd, had read;
> Yet the Mind as the body was wanting in Strength,
> For in Lyttelton every thing ran into Length:
> Of his long wheaten Straw thus the Farmer complains
> When the Chaff is still found to outnumber the Grains.[153]

Thrale rates Lord Lyttelton as being well read, well mannered, but too loquacious. The significance of including the analyses of two aristocratic portraits in a sequence that celebrated authors, musicians, actors, painters, and wits is from their placement. They represent the start of a departure of traditional modes of patronage from the beginning of the century. Beginning with two lords and ending with an ex-Grub street writer, the progression of portraits and people show the power of authorial self-fashioning as the eighteenth century progressed. As culture around celebrity emerged, it raised issues and politics of its own making, while leaving the world of dependency on an aristocratic system of representation.

The Streatham Worthies were the most openly mediated group compared to the previous case studies. They reflected an emerging fascination of cliquish gatherings based around homophily, or like-minded interests. Betty Schellenberg elucidates the current state of academic interest in coterie literary production, redefining a coterie as:

> More precisely as a physically realized entity, a relatively cohesive social group whose membership may undergo shifts over time, but which is held together as a continuous identifiable whole by some combination of kinship, friendship, clientage, and at least occasional geographical proximity. Most importantly, a literary coterie's cohesiveness is based on,

[153] Piozzi and Balderston, *Thraliana*.

> and is maintained to a significant degree by, strong shared literary interests, expressed in the scribal exchange of original compositions, reading materials, and critical views.[154]

What this allows for within the examination of the Streatham Worthies is to define the coterie's place in a broader examination of art history. Reynolds' portrait series was a record, or leftover of something significant enough to warrant documenting: a group tied by friendship, clientage, and literary criticism at the intellectual level, and celebrity, reputation, and romance at its more embodied and baser levels. It also was an act of friendship, a re-coding of each member of the Worthies and a gesture of friendship to the Thrale family for hosting various meetings between the community over the decade of the 1770's.

Considering the tradition of entwining writing and painted portraiture, the writings of Leon Battista Alberti reveals much about how painting has power in generating memory and presence. He states:

> Painting possesses a truly divine power in that, not only does it make the absent present (as they say of friendship), but it also represents the dead to the living many centuries later, so that they are recognized by spectators with poleasure and deep admiration for the artist…Through painting, the faces of the dead go on living for a very long time.[155]

The humanist dialogues and letter writing traditions from Renaissance humanists and authors, like Petrarch, acted as a way to continue communication across time and space, but importantly, the painted portrait was a way to trace memories from the mind into a physical conduit to behold absent friends.[156] Jodi Cranston states that the literary form of the dialogue continues into friendship portraits: that the written form removes

[154] Schellenberg, *Literary Coteries and the Making of Modern Print Culture*. p. 14.
[155] Alberti, *On Painting,* p. 61.
[156] Cranston, "Familiare Colloquium: The Recollection and Presence of Portraits.", pp. 62-97.

indicators of tense, with the subsequent events unfold in the present and in the presence of the reader. The portrait version of this implicates the viewer in observing intellectual and interpretive exchange, but also to engage with absent conversation between the Thrales, Reynolds, and their interlocutors. The combination of the friendship portrait with the observations made by Hester Thrale act together to preserve the faces of the dead Worthies for later recognition, and for a more complicated form of what Alberti describes. The engagement on the observer with text and image perpetuates the memory of the coterie, something that is attributable to Hester Thrale's writings- only her role as mediator allowed for such framed view into the interior life of the group. Biographers like Boswell could not have accomplished this- as he was and remains an outsider. Subordinate to Dr. Johnson and kept at arm's length by Hester Thrale, Boswell's observations are only one step removed from the consumers of celebrity life.

Schellenberg's study is also key in revealing examinations of the same subject through numerous academic lenses. The coterie, or ensemble, has been examined through the academic areas of book history, sociology, cultural studies, scribal history, media theory, and as recently as Moyra Haslett's 2003 study on the Bluestockings, the place of the coterie in print studies.[157] Broadly speaking, I seek to expand the complexity of portrait ensembles due to their connections to larger systems of networks, but crucially, that they are sitting at the cusp of art, print culture, literary celebrity and

[157] *Ibid*.

class difference. Opening conversation to more classes, occupations, and genders marks the point of transition: a ceding of, and to the public sphere.

For Dr. Johnson, "Talking of conversation, he said, "There must, in the first place, be knowledge, there must be materials; in the second place, there must be a command of words, in the third place, there must be imagination, to place things in such views as they are not commonly seen in; and in the fourth place, there must be presence of mind, and a resolution that is not to be overcome by failures."[158] He gives his hostess, Hester Thrale, a further description of what sociable conversation he expected to be:

> Have a subject by which you can gratify general curiosity and amuse your company without bewildering them. You can keep the vocal machine in motion, without those seeming paradoxes that are sure to disgust; without that temerity of censure which is sure to provoke enemies; and that exuberance of flattery which experience has found to make no friends. It is the good of public life that it supplies agreeable topics and general conversation. Therefore wherever you are, and whatever you see, talk not of the Punic war; nor of the depravity of human nature; nor of the slender motives of human actions; nor of the difficulty of finding employment or pleasure.[159]

What Johnson looked for within conversation's bounds and expectations, he passed on to Thrale. The source of these expectations and traditions, was in the world of letters. Letter writing in the eighteenth century allowed for a continuation of conversation from beyond *situ*: it was an extension news, gossip, and presence across time and distance.

When trying to reconstruct just what happened for new guests at Streatham, we might look towards Frances (Fanny) Burney's account of her first day there, at the

[158] Boswell, *Life of Samuel Johnson*. p. 166.
[159] Johnson, *Letters of Samuel Johnson (1773-6)* pp. 238-9.

request of Hester and Henry Thrale. In Fanny's letters, she writes of the reception that started with Mrs. Thrale's considerate welcome, working to make her guest feel comfortable without immediately broaching the subject of her visit, the new manuscript she had written, called *Evelina*. Once Hester had shown Fanny around the villa, they returned to the library. It was only there, that the topic was raised, in a situation that was contextually appropriate. Hester asks her guest:

> Yesterday at supper, we talked it all over, and discussed all your characters- but Dr. Johnson's favourite is Mr. Smith. He declares the fine gentleman manque was never better drawn; and he acted him all the evening saying he was 'all for the ladies!' He repeated whole scenes by heart. I declare, I was astonished at him. O, you can't imagine how much he is pleased with the book; he 'could not get rid of the rogue', he told me. But it was not droll, that I should recommend it to Dr. Burney? And tease him so innocently, to read it?[160]

Fanny and the Streatham Circle would then dine, and it was only then that Dr. Johnson made his entrance. From the Burney account, we may glean this tête-à-tête which was expected, and performed within the later eighteenth century. Burney's recollections range from Johnson's inquiry about mutton pies, how proud he was to sit next to the budding author, as well as her novel's initial volume and its expected completion.

The Thrales' circle also engages with the creation of celebrity culture within the long eighteenth century: Stella Tillyard argues that "like so much else that defines us in Europe and America now, celebrity appears to have been made in the eighteenth century and in particular, London, with its dozens of newspapers and print shops, its crowds and coffee-houses, theatres, exhibitions, spectacles, pleasure gardens and

[160] Burney, "A First Visit to Mrs. Thrale and an Introduction to Dr. Johnson", in *Diary and Letters of Madame D'Arblay (Frances Burney)*, I, August 1780.

teeming pavements." Using the frame of celebrity culture, I believe that the Streatham Worthies constitutes just one representational strand of the rise in literary recognition.

Burney's correspondence recalls this visit, as well as the reactions of the other members of the Streatham circle to Elizabeth Montagu's visit. The intervention of the Thrales' dog, Presto undid any air of formality in the library, when Montagu broached the subject of *Evelina's* success leading to booksellers and shops being out of stock. Fanny recounts hiding behind an act of blowing her nose as to not make eye contact. At this point, Burney had not been publicly announced as the true author behind the novel: up until George Huddesford broke the anonymity in late 1778. At dinner, the awkwardness was in full effect. Burney recalls the conversation as 'not brilliant, nor do I remember much of it', with the bon mot culminating with the invitation of the present company to visit Mrs. Montagu's new house in London. Everyone accepted, while Burney remained shy. Dr. Johnson, in his usual gregarious and direct manner, clapped his hand on Fanny's shoulder, and tried to integrate the young author at the housewarming. It is at this point during the dinner that Fanny recounts how Montagu reveals that she knows it was her that wrote Evelina but was "proud of it: I am proud that a work so commended should be a woman's".[161] The takeaway from the accounts given by Fanny Burney, Hester Thrale and others reveals an inner, private life of people who dealt with insecurities, gossip, and the anxiety of meeting one's heroes.

To understand English salons or coterie gatherings such as the ones held at Streatham Park, their indebtedness to the French model is crucial. Amy Prendergast

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[161] Ibid

works to connect the seemingly disparate models by looking at Tinker's *The Salon and English Letters* (1915) and an essay in Heller's *Bluestockings Now*. The gap between the two publications is indicative of the gaps in scholarship for making that connective case. Prendergast's gambit is based on the circulated correspondence of Marie de Raboutin-Chantal, the Madame de Sévigné. Her letters would feature portrayals of seventeenth-century French salons and were widely read and commented on by various members of the eighteenth-century versions.[162] Travelers like Horace Walpole, David Hume, David Garrick, and Elizabeth Montagu both visited the Parisian salon circuit while abroad, and both wrote about their admiration. Their letters and experiences reflected that same enthusiasm back to Britain and held enough description so that the British could in turn, emulate some of the same conventions from those gatherings. These travelers were also active participants within British salons-which allows us to believe that the French salon model was widely experienced by and known to the various members of the British salons.[163]

The Streatham Park villa also represents a shift in the location or focus of the literary salon. While the Bluestockings and other groups would regularly meet in the hustle and bustle of London, Streatham's location just outside would come to foreshadow the suburban extension to London's literary and artistic communities.[164] David Hume's recognition of the cultural scene in the eighteenth century were defined within what he called the public confines of *sociability*. The society that Hume defines, observes, and describes appeared in his writings is a sort of utopia. Involving elegant

[162] Prendergast, *Literary Salons Across Britain and Ireland in the Long Eighteenth Century*.
[163] Ibid
[164] Hallett, Reynolds, p. 299.

conversationalists, both genders, open to differing opinions that were made public, the conversable world would work to enlarge the discourse to wider groups.

The advent of women's role within a literary discursive context may be traced to Samuel Richardson's 'female senate' which he had gathered in the early years of the 1750s at his suburban home called North End, in Fulham. His role was not just to workshop his novel *Sir Charles Grandison*, but also to monitor conversation, and integrate the feedback he had received into the final draft of the novel. This is reflected in his book: *Clarissa, or, the History of a Young Lady*. Terry Eagleton claims that it was Richardson's profession as a printer which contributed to his familiarity with the collaborative nature of writing. So too, can we apply the same principles of its creation to later meetings of authors and the interested readers they might circulate their drafts to, only at this time in the 1770's, those interested readers themselves are other celebrity writers.

An examination of what the well-circulated writers Addison and Steele had to say about conversation and its format was:

> Equality is the life of conversation, and he is much out who assumes to himself any part above another, as he who considers himself below the rest of the Society. Familiarity in Inferiors is sauciness; in superiors, condescension; neither of which are to have Being among Companions, the very Word implying that they are to be equal. When therefore we have abstracted the Company from all Considerations of their Quality, or Fortune, it will immediately appear, that to make it happy and polite, there must nothing be started which shall discover that our Thoughts run upon any such Distinctions. Hence it will arise, that Benevolence must first become the Rule of Society, and he that is most obliging must be most diverting.[165]

[165] Addison et al., *The Spectator*. p. 174.

With the creation of publications like *The Spectator* and *The Tatler*, there was an increase in a broader development by which the public came to be aware of itself and its own construction because of the interactions of private men, (and to a much lesser extent), according to Habermas. The quote by Addison and Steele seems to be grounded in egalitarian logics, but its emphasis on regulation and consolidation on an equal ground starts to suppress difference, while bringing particularities across people into homogeneity.[166]

Despite the country home of families remaining as the seat of power, the traditional rituals of country life were being replaced by London, the center of public visibility.[167] If we go by Habermas' definition of the *public sphere*, then these newly minted coteries also act as a critical space where ideas of individuals publicly circulate and meet, but we should exclude institutionally private spaces, like the home. However, in London, the new theaters and pleasure gardens, fashionable and privileged people also met just as regularly for discourse in the salons (or in this case, libraries,) of their private homes. Their pushback against the emergent public world saw them as the ones to dictate taste, and lead conversations. The public sphere was being reproduced in a much more private manner, with the investment of these houses and families into spaces that were multifaceted and that would facilitate such sociable interactions within the comfort of one's own domicile, in opposition to the public's heterogeneity.

Recent scholarship begins to complicate Jurgen Habermas' initial demarcation of

[166] Mee, *Conversable Worlds.* p. 42.
[167] Perry, *Placing Faces*. p. 78.

public vs. private spheres of social life- fashionable people met just as regularly in public gatherings and more exclusive clubs. The other complication which arises is that Habermas' prime example of the eighteenth-century coffee house was exclusive to men. Women were entirely excluded but could reproduce numerous conventions of city clubs within their own homes, with the key difference being that *they* could lead conversations and dictate models of taste: the public sphere was being replicated within ostensibly private space. Studies by McDowell, Vickery, Kerber and Guest have started to shed light on an image of this overlap, or the domestic public. The presence and rise of women in cultural fields during this time undergirds the requirement for meetings where both sexes could meet and interact.[168]

The component which Habermas leaves out within the construction of his British framework of the bourgeois sphere is the place of women- who were barred from coffeehouses. His work, while offering credit to how French society was molded by women, does not offer the same credit to women in eighteenth century England. Habermas' analysis forfeits women in relation to the coffee house institution but fails to examine the literary societies and mixed-gender clubs that started to emerge around the same time. It is this curious lack of female-led retreats which this chapter takes issue with: the Bluestockings and Streatham gatherings had just as much to discuss within criticism of literature, art, economic and political issues as much as those being presided over within the public coffee house. The Bluestockings, meeting under Elizabeth Montagu's house at Hill Street London, to discuss art and literature. The Bluestockings discussions of literature were fostered by authors like Elizabeth Carter,

[168] D'Ezio, *Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi*. p. 12.

Hannah More and Hester Chapone.[169] The Bluestockings also banned alcohol and gambling at their meetings, removing any deviations from discourse on   For Habermas' lack of examining women's literary groups, his analysis of how cultural (literary and artistic works) shifted remains spot on. He posits that:

> as commodities they became in principle generally accessible...The private people for whom the cultural product became available as a commodity profaned it inasmuch as they had to determine its meaning on their own (by way of rational communication with one another), verbalize it, and thus state explicitly what precisely in its implicitness for so long could assert its authority.[170]

This crucially, is how Habermas argues that the newly bourgeois sphere starts to both read and understand itself. The embodied scrying of literary consumption moves from the individual, literary club, to the larger public: the clubs by which these works were critiqued and absorbed starts to elevate themselves as communities up the status quo of taste in the latter eighteenth century.

While Johnson's ideal form of conversation advances its participants to a culturally leveled playing field, his discounting of gossip is stodgy at best. Geoff Eley extends this, by arguing that the exclusion of unfounded gossip was essential to the construction of liberal public spheres not only in France, but in England as well. These links and exclusions were rooted in processes of class formation. In all of these countries, the soil which nourishes the sapling liberal public sphere was civil society, while the emerging new clubs (congeries) of voluntary associations that sprang up in what came to be known as the "age of societies".[171] These were anything but accessible

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[169] Miegon, "Biographical Sketches of Principal Bluestocking Women". pp. 26-7.
[170] Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. pp. 36-37, my emphasis.
[171] Clark, *British Clubs and Societies 1580-1800*. pp. 170-2.

to everyone. These areas or public spheres were the arenas of and power base from which bourgeois men were coming to see themselves as a universal class and preparing to assert their fitness to govern. Eley implicates the culture of bourgeois clubs and associations in the formation of class: they were markers of distinction, which in Bourdieu's ideas are ways of defining an emerging elite, setting it off from the older aristocratic elites it was intent on displacing (like Chesterfield), on the one hand, and from the popular and plebeian strata that it had aspired to separate from and rule.

The Thrales' exaltation of their closest friends' portraits is, to me, an attempt at reinforcing their fame and friendship. Their corresponding display in a forum created a sense of community not unlike other clubs. The Worthies were able to submit early manuscripts, spread unfounded gossip about contemporary writers, as well as generally create a supportive discursive community.

Within the eighteenth century, a long-standing tradition of writing created a circumstance by which the literary consuming public was well aware of the tropes, traditions and forms of the past. Donald Stauffer gives the example as including verse satire, verse epistle, elegy, fable, tragedy, comedy, polemical pamphlets among many others were keenly read. The introduction of early celebrity culture, status, and fascination would soon also contribute to the renewed interest of the biography. What is made different from the past forms of this would be the rapidity and self-awareness of who was the subject(s) of these biographies. The increased urban development from the Augustan to Georgian periods meant that as the middle class finally achieved means to accumulate culture and capital, they could realize their ways of living and thinking, but also their awareness of legacy and its power.

Samuel Johnson pushed against the Shaftesburian school which pretended to mediate “tastes and perceptions which are not common to all men”. Instead, he pushes for an idealized common reader, whereas the prevailing mode was to use reading and criticism were used mostly for fashion and prestige, and the means for distinguishing oneself from others.[172]

The task of evaluation and construction of the canon in literature could fall to a select group, though not necessarily blessed with deeper understanding than a common reader:

> whoever has remarekd the fate of books, must have found it goverened by other causes, than general consent arising from general conviction. If a new performance happens not to fall into the hands of some, who have courage to tell, and authority to propagate their opinion, it often remains long in obscurity, and perhaps perishes unknown and unexamined. A few, a very few, commonly constitute the taste of the time.[173]

Johnson places himself in those few, he also may have grasped the historical irony that as a champion of a common reader, he wrote his prefaces to *Lives of the Poets* to an edition that was diverting attention from the one readily available, already reprinted series by Bell, which was afforded by commoners.

The meetings at Streatham Park were not centrally predicated on publishing and literary exchange as the Bluestockings, but still circulated texts from within. An example of this is when Charles Burney’s daughter, Fanny, gave advanced versions of her novel *Evelina* for consideration- having literature become just as much a vehicle for sociability as Johnson’s *Club* was in the heart of London.[174] What Hester and other members of

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[172] Ross, *The Making of the English Literary Canon*. p. 283.
[173] Johnson, *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*. III, #138. 1753.
[174] D’Ezio, *Hester Lynch Thrale Piozzi*. p. 15.

the Streatham circle were attempting was a ranking of ideal personality traits by assigning marks to various characteristics which were derived from close observation from meetings at Streatham Park.

Beginning in 1774, members of the Worthies started to die. Oliver Goldsmith died in 1774, David Garrick in 1779, Henry Thrale in 1781, and Dr. Johnson in 1784. The loss of so many who were critical to the discursive production of the Worthies led to the collapse of the literary group. Just before her death, Hester writes again to Fanny d'Arblay (nee Burney) in 1821 about the sale of the house's inventory:

> You would not know poor Streatham Park, I have been forced to dismantle and forsake it; the expenses of the present time treble those of the moments you remember; and since giving up my Welsh estate my income is greatly diminished. I fancy this will be my last residence in the world, meaning Clifton, not Sion Row, where I only live until my house in the Crescent is ready for me … The village of Streatham is full of rich inhabitants, the common much the worse for being spotted about with houses.[175]176

With Johnson's death in 1784, Hester Piozzi and James Boswell began to vie for the authority of writing Johnson's biography. The rivalry between the former salonniere and the hero-worshipper begins in their time together at Streatham Park, before escalating into animosity in 1784. The same year of Johnson's death, Hester Thrale remarries Gabriel Piozzi, a Catholic music teacher who had taught Queeney while the Thrales still occupied the villa. Boswell uses this opportunity to attack Hester Piozzi's authority as a biographer, as both writers scrambled to publish their own versions of the late Johnson's life. Hester Piozzi's *Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson* (1786) and

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[175] Ibid, p. 79

Boswell's *Life of Samuel Johnson* (1791) This multiplicity of Johnson's legacy was publicized and satirized in a print by James Sayers, entitled *The Biographers*.

Figure 4.5: James Sayers, published by Thomas Cornell. *The Biographers* [unfinished proof]. 1786. Engraving, 27.4 x 19.5cm. British Museum

Unfortunately, between Hester Thrale, James Boswell, and others, the *Johnsoniana's* authoritative editions could not be decided nor mediated between them. *The Biographers*, by James Sayers, depicts a sculpted bust of Johnson looking down at three of his well-known acquaintances as they struggle to finish their works first, and with his posthumous approval.

The engraving of *The Biographers* print reads:

> Three Authors in three Sister Kingdoms born,
> The Shrine of Johnson with their Works adorn
> The first a female Friend with letter'd Pride,
> Bares those Defects which Friendship ought to hide,
> B[oswe]ll to Genius gives a Monsters Air
> And shews his Johnson as Men shew a Bear,
> C[ourtena]y to Merit as to Grammar true,
> Blurrs [sic] with bad Verse the Worth he never knew
> O could the Sage whose Fame employs their Pen
> Visit his great Biographers again
> His two good Friends would find him d . . . d uncivil
> And he would drive the Poet to the Devil.

Like any good series of parties or salon gatherings, all good things must come to an end. In a way, the Streatham Worthies could only lead to a very mortal outcome. With Henry Thrale's death in 1781, things at Streatham Park just would not be the same. After a series of years where gossip presupposed Hester Thrale remarrying Dr. Johnson, she would go on to shock the social scene and her close friends by marrying Gabriele Piozzi, a Catholic music teacher who was based in Bath. They married in 1784, and it was this decision that perhaps unfairly changed her relationship to Dr. Johnson, Fanny Burney, and their immediate satellites. Several of the regular members took a more antagonistic slant towards the new Mrs. Piozzi: namely, Baretti and Johnson's biographer, James Boswell. Johnson's later letter to Hester was a shadow of his former friendship and mentorship.

> Madam: If I interpret your letter right, You are ignominiously married, if it is yet undone, let us once talk together. If You have abandoned your children and your religion, God forgive your wickedness; if you have forfeited your Fame, and your country, may your folly do no further mischief. If the last act is yet to do, I, who have loved you, esteemed you, reverenced you, and served you, I who long thought you the first of humankind, entreat that before your fate is irrevocable, I may once more see You. I was, I once was, Madam, most truly yours, Sam Johnson[177]

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[177] Redford, *Dilettant.:* p. 338.

This last plea between Johnson and his former keeper is the concluding arc of the heart of the Streatham Worthies: there would be no reconciliation between the two after 1784.

When Johnson died in 1784, the legacy of biography for one of the most active authors, critics, and lexicographers was at stake. Hester Piozzi's attempt at publishing her correspondence with Johnson would be met with a series of savage attacks in magazine articles by her former house guest, and fellow Worthy Giuseppe Baretti. The most scurrilous of these attacks positioned (falsely) that her new husband was an illegitimate son of her father, John Salusbury, and an Italian mother.[178] Other Bluestocking acquaintances, like Fanny Burney and Elizabeth Montagu would make comments in their correspondence, as well as publicly at gatherings. Grub Street, home of hack and wit writers, did not stay silent, either.[179] The reactions of the literary world to one of their famous salonnieres' re-marrying were not only restricted to epistolary forms.

The satirical print is one of the other forms by which people were reacting to the newly created category of literary fame. James Gillray and Thomas Rowlandson are noted for fanning the flames of caricature so that it became a widespread consumer object which would spread from cosmopolis to province, as the printing trajectory in the eighteenth century continued. The interest of readers in their venerated celebrities had been firmly established and would continue well into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: all the while fueled by conversation, gossip, and most crucially- the push and pull between reader and author.

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[178] McIntyre, *Hester*. p. 181.
[179] Ibid, p. 185.

The authoritative claim of biographers lies in three assessments: its art, morality, and knowledge.[180] Spacks argues that the first of these is the fictional narrative that pushes for a persuasive story which make it plausible. The moral assumption is tied to a responsibility in telling facts, rather than the looser constraints of fiction. Gossip's contribution is focusing these three avenues of biography and demonstrates relationships among them.

Biography's art is creating a desire for the reader in every detail about the subject- gossip serves to heighten this in the case of Johnson's life and legacy. The readers dwell on every detail. The intimate nature of biography and gossip modify the myth or veneer of these celebrity figures. Biography seeks to elevate a person, while gossip focuses on the common elements; it reflects how the author, whether it is Boswell or Thrale, feels in relation to the subject of Dr. Johnson. Their social interactions are based in veneration towards the man, while the imagined and posthumous association elevates the biographer to a superior position of delivering an external view of the subject which they cannot have. Gossip becomes a means for the elements of society which are afforded no power the possibility of voice- a chance to talk about the people who run things. The generic questions related to why people write and read biography are touched upon in Johnson's essay in the *Rambler:* biography conveys intimate knowledge of other lives allows us to know ourselves. From the late seventeenth to eighteenth centuries, gossip and biography shifts from moralizing sanction from the public to becoming a way to achieve recognition and image control.

[180] Spacks, *Gossip*. p. 95.

The Streatham Park portraits and their respective subjects were Hester Thrale's effort to collect the multiple facets of celebrity: their likenesses, works, and friendship. The Streatham portraits acted as microcosms of their sitters. Reynolds distilled each down to an essential character, or type, and the activities of the Worthies created their value. This collecting was an attempt to have select participants in conversation with one another. The tumultuous public sphere would drown out the important voices, as Johnson agreed with keeping a select amount of company. In a way, the Streatham group merely adopts the guise of open conversation to create a community which can come into conflict without encountering criticism of the many. As Hester Thrale took on the role of mediator of conversation, she fulfills the gendered duties which Hume insists is the key to conversation: the domestication and softening of discourse is given to women in the eighteenth century. This movement of the previously boisterous and bullish Johnson into a privatized world does not preclude her public character, something that she used to great effect as one of the numerous arbiters of celebrity legacy. The visibility of conversation is, "on the one hand a shining spectacle for the civilized progress of the nation, and on the other, a figure of vanity whose learning is tainted by the doubtful glitter of fashionable display."[181] For many of the new participants, public discourse became an avenue of contention: Thrale, Bosworth, and other biographers try to seize perception of public figures to mythologize them for their subject's, and their own legacy. This marks the difference between Chesterfield's attempts at associating with past authors; Walpole and Thrale mark the shift to mythologizing for the future. As eighteenth-century readers became more voracious, the

[181] Guest, *Small Change.* p. 131.

pleasures of reading biography and letters generated by public figures facilitates an entrance into lives other than their own.[182] Addison and Steele's pleasures of the imagination are now given material form: biographies, which allow for one focused way to penetrate the dynamic inner lives of the eighteenth-century celebrity.

[182] Spacks, *Gossip,* p. 93.

Chapter 5 Conclusion: *All talk, and no substance?*

In the 1826, William Hazlitt interviewed aging painter James Northcote, who was formerly apprenticed to Joshua Reynolds. Northcote had published articles and memoirs himself before Hazlitt's recollections of their interview began to appear in various journals from 1826 to 1829. Hazlitt and Northcote made for a curious pair. The former was middle aged, an emerging image of the modern man, while the latter was eighty years old and living in slovenly conditions. They were described as friends and collaborators who often had strong ideas but did not see eye to eye on every subject. They shared interests in erstwhile occupations: Hazlitt had a brief attempt at a painting career, while Northcote became a writer later in life. Both had backgrounds in portraiture and writing- Hazlitt once tried his hand at becoming a professional painter, while Northcote's had become a writer, publishing his *Life of Reynolds* in 1818. Hazlitt's alleged transcription of their conversations from memory reflect on the art of painting and illustrious figures from Northcote's younger days as a pupil and contemporary of Reynolds. Hazlitt's interest in narrative biography from the eighteenth century was in part due to the publications of that time. Hazlitt's role as a cipher for Northcote is made apparent: the Conversations work to challenge the British school of art's hierarchy with Reynolds at the helm. By doing so, they would reveal the stakes of nineteenth-century history of art and its larger engagement by the public. Hazlitt and Northcote's imagined dialogues set public against private, with both entities attempting to give access and stripping it away.

James Northcote's time as an apprentice in Reynolds' workshop from May 1771 to the spring of 1776 resulted in a written account that was less than laudatory for his teacher's aloofness. Northcote's early days as an apprentice were summed up in his letters to his brother, which he detailed how Reynolds gave him preferential treatment, and was shown kindness relative to his fellow students. Later letters during the time which Reynolds was most active at the Literary Club and Streatham park detail a diminishing in social niceties and tuition. Years later, Northcote would confess how little he was noticed: "If Sir Joshua had come into the room where I was at work for him and had seen me hanging by the neck, it would not have troubled him."[183] After leaving Reynolds' studio, Northcote would eventually be voted in as Royal Academician, and foster an art practice of his own. He wrote a memoir-monograph on Reynolds after he died in 1792, working to combine aspects of Vasari and Walpole's writings on artists.[184]

In a series of episodes entitled *Boswell Redivivus*, Hazlitt works to distance himself from the mode of close, "truthful" biography that was tied to James Boswell. He warns the reader of the art history coming from this unreliable narrator: "I have forgotten, mistaken, mis-stated, altered, transposed a number of things. All that can be relied upon for certain is a striking anecdote or a sterling remark or two in each page."[185] Hazlitt is also not just an amanuensis: he is acting as a filter for Northcote's stories. Rather than verifying accounts or anecdotes, the conversational tone between author(s) and reader is the takeaway from Hazlitt and Northcote's discussions on art. The casual tone becomes the only indicator of authenticity, and the stories become something of a

[183] Leslie and Taylor, *The Life and Times of Sir Joshua Reynolds.* p. 507.
[184] Ledbury, "Trash talk and buried treasure: Northcote and Hazlitt" p. 5.
[185] Hazlitt, *New Monthly Magazine.* no. 68, August 1826, p. 113.

mise-en-abyme, placing stories within stories. They mimic the encounters of memories, as Northcote often relays stories which he heard or spoke about with recognizable personalities from his time at the Royal Academy. If we look at one of Northcote's paintings from 1828, this idea is made clearer. In *Portrait of James Northcote Painting Sir Walter Scott*, Northcote's inclusion of himself while painting the sitter speaks to his self-importance, making the argument to viewers that he as the portraitist, was as important as the sitter himself.

Figure 5.1: Attributed to James Northcote: *James Northcote painting Sir Walter Scott*. 1828. Oil on canvas, 71.7 x 54.4cm. Royal Albert Memorial Museum, Exeter.

Usually, Northcote is distanced from the composition of Hazlitt's submissions of *Boswell Redivivus* and the *Conversations*, due to his advanced age and status as unknowing interlocutor. By this time, Northcote had already familiarized himself in authorial maneuvers and tropes which he used to tell his insider's tale of working in Reynolds' workshop. Both Northcote and Hazlitt should be considered as collaborators in the contents of the *Conversations*, helping to elevate and reframe the moment of transition between the Georgian and Victorian periods to becoming more of a dialogue than a linear progression.

Hazlitt's views on Reynolds were not as lukewarm as his conversation partner's, however. His criticism of Reynolds' attachment to the *Grand gout*, or Great Style, depended too heavily on a Continental model of art. Hazlitt's faint praise for the "most original imitator that ever appeared in the world" was balanced by the lack of tradition of interest in the visual arts by literary figures. Criticism and art theory was written by artists, collectors, and connoisseurs. For Hazlitt, William Hogarth was mostly considered in the shadow of Reynolds' establishment of the British Royal Academy, while Hogarth was largely popular with the public. Martin Postle notes that within the still-elite circles of art appreciation and criticism, Hogarth was a prodigy who only had a limited impact on the British school of art. Hazlitt's attempt to broaden the acceptance of art from private to public removes consideration from form and shifted to feeling. He would not attempt to judge Hogarth's pictures "by scientific or technical rules, but to make observations on the character and feeling displayed in them".[186] His attempts to dethrone the construction of a canon of British artists drew the venom of Tory writers in the *Quarterly*

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[186] Postle, "Boswell Redivivus: Hazlitt, Northcote and the British School.". p. 9.

Review of 1817: “If the creature in his endeavours to crawl into the light, must take his way over tombs of illustrious men, disfiguring the records of their greatness with the slime and filth which marks his track, it is right to point him out that he may be flung back to the situation in which nature designed that he should grovel.”[187]

Hazlitt must have been curious of Northcote’s views on late eighteenth-century aesthetics; Hazlitt himself was highly critical of Reynolds’ *Discourses* delivered as President of the Royal Academy. In the third *Conversation*, Northcote is aware of Hazlitt’s dislike, and claims that it is one of his prejudices. Importantly, Northcote praised Reynolds’ intentions and remarks on the popular demand for his pictures. Reynolds’ intentions of showing grandeur and beauty in his portraits resulted in the erasure of defects and peculiarities of the sitter- something that many of his sitters wanted to incorporate into their own image control. Reynolds’ ability to get rid of what was perceived as negative aspects of likeness speak to portrait painting’s concerns with idealization.[188]

The anecdote had become an art form under the care of authors like Thrale, Boswell, and now Hazlitt.[189] Creating a small window through which to eavesdrop into private realms of famous individuals marked the rise of celebrity as a commodity- to be consumed by the public. Northcote’s place as one of the last surviving foundational member of the British Royal Academy artists gave a new generation of gossipmongers a view into the past by way of Hazlitt’s *Conversations*.

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[187] Ledbury, “Trash Talk and Buried Treasure: Northcote and Hazlitt.” p. 8.
[188] Hazlitt, *Conversations Of James Northcote, Esq., R.A. p*p. 364-5.
[189] Hazlitt, “On the old age of artists”, 1826.

What Hazlitt and Northcote's dialogue becomes is akin to a textual portrait. Painted portraits have conversational qualities that prompt conversations among those who make, own, give, and exchange. They respond to other works of art, with which they are in conversation. It is possible that the works converse with each other, while it is certain that the artists do. Hazlitt is like a portrait painter, only working with text- the portraits made by the two are both verbal and visual, real, and imagined. Hazlitt re-writes Northcote in such a way that grants him fame and association by his closeness to figures of authority. Like his painting of Sir Walter Scott, Northcote's distant ties to Reynolds and the foundation of a distinctly British school of art is given a chance to be re-assessed by Hazlitt. In constructing a new portrait of "Northcote" for audiences, Hazlitt frames Northcote's conversation because it portrays candor and lack of pretension which was rare. It is this feeling, or tone which Hazlitt wants to bring forward into the next century- an attempt to mediate art's perceived exclusivity with the public at large.

The eighteenth century's creation for a desire for celebrity remains distinct from the idea of *recognition* (visual and otherwise), to create meaning. The beginnings of fame were laid down in the eighteenth century grew into the nineteenth century's eventual rise in modernity. Its stakes were held in interiorization, private realms and the public's increasing literacy and its heterogeneity. Both were tidally locked, and its continual conflicts would lay the groundwork for modern living.

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