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THE PROTRACTED PORTRAIT OF A LADY:
EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY CARICATURE PORTRAIT NEGOTIATIONS

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Abstract: Known, among others, as a “culture of appearances” (Roche 1989), the eighteenth century is a time of accelerated individual comfort and the age of luxury par excellence, combining “leisure and pleasure” (Margetson 1970). As the London of the day goes French, in an effect of “fearful symmetry” to the inceptive Anglomania on the Continent, the secular portrait becomes an asset in its own right, with “hanging the head” (Pointer 1993) as a current legitimation practice. Pride of place is held by fabulous hairdos out of tune with any sense of proportion and, as such, favourite caricature subjects. In its historical embeddedness of the same kind and character as genre painting and the novel, the caricature portrait confirms the Blumenberg-Löwith debate on the (il)legitimacy of modernity, or what I call “the collapse of the isomorphic model”. It functions as a modern negotiation of the ἐργὸν and πάρεργον, while it is an identitary narrative of the play of power, a form of “consumption of culture” (Bermingham 1995), and an assertion of the emerging “public sphere” (Habermas 1994) of the late 1700s. This paper is a case study based on research at the Lewis-Walpole Library, Farmington, Connecticut. The demonstration ends up with The Flower Garden (1777) portrait as a pro-tracted rather than por-tracted image – the triumph of fashion over common sense: an aristocratic lady carrying a garden of a coiffure on her head, in the culture that had produced The Rape of the Lock.

In a bout of satirical energy, The Lady’s Magazine of 1777 published an anonymous poem that could serve as an illustration of the classic and neo-classic principle ut pictura poesis. In the reverse direction between the two arts, it suggested the visual effect that a fabulous coiffure and attire of the highly libertine 1770s must have made on the viewers. Ut poesis pictura or, better say, like the public text, so the public portrait, could present a case in point. “The Ladies’ Head-Dress” provided a persuasive image of an extravaganza of the day:

Give Chloe a bushel of horsehair and wool Of paste and pomatum a pound Ten yards of gay ribbon to deck her sweet scull And gauze to encompass it round. Let her gown be tucked up to the hip on each side Shoes too high for to walk or to jump And to deck sweet charmer complete for a bride Let the cork cutter make her a rump. Thus finished in taste while on Chloe you gaze You may take the dear charmer for life But never undress her, for out of her stays You’ll find you have lost half your wife.

This fashionable Chloe was the owner of a social identity separating the public from the private self quantifiable in proportion of two to one, as we read in the final line of this doggerel sonnet. The body “as a site of cultural production and staging of the self” (Rosenthal 1) appeared to the readers of the said highlife publication as a semiotically organized carrier of cultural materials, whether sartorial, cosmetic, or downright physical. This portrait violated every bit of Vetruvian proportion. It could remind cultivated readers of Swift’s Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed, albeit with none of the sarcasm embedded in the latter. Corinna had been voyeuristically spied on while detaching from her public body a set of false teeth, false eyebrows, plumpers and dugs. Chloe instead was the recipient of the latest cry in fashionable looks not to be stripped from her outward apparel. Her body was “a key medium for the communication
of social meanings, the expression of erotic desire, and the enunciation of symbolic values” (1). She was not to be restored to her natural shape as merely a person. Her public persona took the upper hand.

No secondary role in this sophisticated construction of identity was played by the lady’s coiffure, a lexeme in the same semantic field as coif (< LL cofia < Gmc. “coif”), by which was designated a lady’s cap or headdress. Similarly a white skullcap was worn by lawyers as a sign of public respectability. Thus, to coiffe meant to arrange somebody’s hair attractively. Coiffer, an operation of beautification, goes back to OF coife “inner part of the helmet”, with its military associations. And so, coiffure pointed to the symbolic protection offered one in “the age of leisure and pleasure” (Margeton 1). In the 1770s coiffures had become taxinomically relevant, class, political identity, sexual and moral, as well as religious and civic values being encapsulated in their appearance. Aristocratic female identity was coextensive with the coiffures advertised, as was Bellinda’s in The Rape of the Lock.

The literature maintains that, while eighteenth-century male wigs were assertively a marker of socio-professional rank, female hairdos were symbols of “the luxurious consumption of goods and time” (Rosenthal 9). What had been called a bigwig under the Stuarts became a Head under the Hanoverians, with ladies performing hair spectacles “at the boundary of self-expression and social identity, of creativity and conformity, and of production and consumption” (Powell & Roach 83). Anthropologically, such text(ure)s of hair were “more than simply foils for an act of cultural figuration, but rather owe[d] their existence to it, while also semantically regulating a visual cultural language” (Endres 18). The “expanding culture of appearances served by social mechanisms” (Roche 502) was the result of a complex passage from the natural to the cultural body. Luxury gave a new dimension to “the pleasure of shopping [as] a new cultural institution” (Maurer 11). The stage and the page, themselves key public spaces, hosted a profusion of eye-catching dress, in Fielding’s definition, “the Principal Accomplishment of Men and Women”, as we read in “A Modern Glossary” published by The Covent Garden Journal. And even the learned conservative Dr. Johnson had come to confess to Boswell that many things which are false and transmitted from book to book gain credit in the world, like ‘the cry against the evil of luxury’, despite luxury “producing much good” (Sekora 110).

As a paragon of the good life, finery and frivolity became assets and ladies leaders in material culture, as gentlemen kept their pre-eminence in intellectual life. Sartorial and cosmetic distinction were perceived as the “materialization of attraction” (503), communicability depending a lot on such spatial forms of social recognition as the theatre, the public garden or the fashion press. There was then the craze of portraiture, which the aristocratic had practised after royal circles, while themselves emulated by the affluent middle classes. Impressive amounts of portraits have come down to us as so many visual documents of the age’s profile. Among these, caricature portraits acquainting us today with the follies of the time feature as insignia of cultural identity to be decoded in their own key.

Caricatura, literally “a laden image”, in the Italian original, was an early seventeenth-century invention by the Caracci brothers busy to depict travellers to Rome, usually for pilgrimages. Their sui generis manner of drawing charged rather than realistic portraits was a success story and it soon became a matter of honour for sitters to the two artists to be included in the gallery of comic types. In the eighteenth century, this pictorial species was adapted by literati and connoisseurs to ridicule actors and opera singers. The fashion also spread for various other eccentrics to be depicted as subjects of caricature, such aristocratic ladies in love with French follies, Grand Tour extravagances, landscape gardening sociability, dancing and promenade pastimes, coffee taking, salon gaming, drawing room and private garden conversation and so forth. That dress expressed status in dancing and promenade pastimes, coffee taking, salon gaming, drawing room and private garden conversation and so forth. That dress expressed status in the pleasure of shopping and transmission from book to book gain credit in the world, like “the cry against the evil of luxury”, despite luxury “producing much good” (Sekora 110).

But first, to the concept of portrait. MF portraire < OF pourtraire “to portray” < L. pro- “forth”, trahere “to draw”, all point to the face in its centre being pulled into the foreground. In the painter’s
vocabulary, a portrait is a negotiation between the ἔργον “work, that which is worked” and the πάρεργον “by-work”. Its dignity in modern (art) history is a historical switch: after the Biblical ban on visual image(s), medieval and early Renaissance narratives in mystery and miracle plays provided accessible illustrations of the life of Jesus; Renaissance secular portraiture showing royal, princely or theological characters was followed suit by portraiture of middleclass and tradesmen. While the traditional Christian scene put forth the sacred body of the Saviour as the ἔργον and left allegorical/ized nature as background πάρεργον, Italian Renaissance painting displayed the ideal(ized) paradigm of universal values, supplanted by the true-to-life Flemish manner, with time as worldly value and space as referential reality.

The collapse of the isomorphic model in our vocabulary, la crise de la conscience européenne in Hazard’s (1935), brings in images of mortality, transience and passage as manifestations of time. Nature is promoted from the status of allegorical πάρεργον to that of referential ἔργον. A renegotiation between the two components of the portrait takes place, with the canvas inundated by images, shapes and colours of the reality “out there”. Unlike history pictures, large and hard to carry, portraits, relatively small, portable and affordable, gain in dignity. Costumes and props provided by the sitter, backgrounds at times copied from engravings, and standard postures go into the making of a thriving portrait industry as an indication of power relations in the eighteenth century, requiring painters to be “socially skilled, well organized, artistically talented” (Lippincott, in Bermingham 80). The commentary of the world as a stage and a market gains central place in an age of commodity pleasure, the age of the novel that takes over “the protean man of modernity, plastic, polymorphous, performative” (Agnew 14). The production and consumption of non-essentials such as luxury items entail changing social roles and encourage new social identities, as “culture and commerce are enmeshed” (Bermingham, in Bermingham 5).

From a material culture viewpoint, the Enlightenment has been regarded as a mirror-mad time: looking glasses line up the royal and aristocratic public habitat and the toilet settles down as a sine qua non private space. Its obsession with luxury transforms extravagance into a norm: burdensome clothing, uncomfortable footwear, peculiar hairdos and head dresses, and wigs of the most extraordinary size, shape and pattern lie heavy on the body. Nor does the body reject this symbolically validated slavery. One suffers to gain respectability in the public sphere. Wigs take precedence over natural hair. Combinations of animal or fake hair, added meshes, wool or cotton fashioned into breath-taking coiffures are secured with glue, diluted sugar, honey, cages, bones, pins and no small amounts of white powder. Glamorous as the looks of ladies promulgating mountainous hairstyles may have been, the dubious hygiene of such portraits vivants has not escaped critical assessments.

The prestige of faces “drawn forth” in serious portraits of the age rises at the crossroads of individual identity and a supra-individual addition making for representativeness. A metonymic relationship holds between the portrayed individual and his/her class. Pride of place is held by portraits of Horace Walpole or the life-size portrait of Mr. and Mrs. William Hallet as The Morning Walk by Gainsborough (1785). They were the delight of the dilettante, whose love of classic ancient art dovetailed with aesthetic pleasures culled from Grand Tour experiences.

Caricature portraits were largely prompted by the mounting attack on the excessive taste for excessive demeanours and deportments. The way of wearing one’s hair was such a one. Portraits of aristocratic ladies and gentlemen caught up in their own world of awkward sophistication serve now as a chapter in cultural history cutting across areas and disciplines, from cultural anthropology and semiotics to sociology, mentalities, discourse theory, collective psychology and material culture. The philosophy behind them percolates into bourgeois portraits in the top-down emulation that is part of modernity/modernization. Hogarth’s is a seminal influence owing to his obsession with the seamy and very often seamier side of things, moral comments on human and social categories, satiric scenes and rich caricature illustrations. The sartorial revolution accompanying early and classic modernity could not fail to find its visual foil. Caricature portraits of the subaltern classes – valets, maids, cooks maids, chimney sweepers, farmers’ wives and so forth – give more depth yet to the images that we have collected of an extravagant age. Likewise, caricature portraits of children wearing wigs, pompous hairdos or huge hats, or of animals trimmed to show the same social dignity as their affluent masters by their hair being curled, powdered or covered in ribbons complete a whole societal portrait.
To sum up, caricature portraits produced especially in the late 1770s constitute a generous subject for the cultural historian’s perspective. Following the Caracci brothers’ slogan “pittoresco veramente più che poetico”, they display an exciting play between nature and art, whose tandem undergoes meaningful changes from the fairly realistic lateral detail to the overwhelmingly exaggerated central details of the portrait. Like satire, whose etymology makes explicit its mechanism (L. satura was a sweet dish made from a rich assortment of fruits seasoned with a variety of spices and covered in honey, hence the association with “saturation, satiation”), caricature is a species operating with surplus, exacerbation, excess, all deliberate and put to critical use. In Bergson’s acceptance of laughter as “du mécanique plaqué sur le vivant”, they capitalize on defects, flaws and shortcomings, deplorable in themselves, to turn them into enjoyable matter. Couched in it is the classic and neo-classic principle ridendo castigat mores.

Portraits were used “to create and reinforce social attitudes” (Crown 138). Not only were they revelatory of status. The fact of purchasing, collecting and displaying them was a highly significant cultural gesture. More than likeness to the sitter, the portrait was valuable “as a collective cultural work embedded in a system of class, politics, and gender” (139). “Hanging the head” (Pointon 1993) in one’s drawing room was in itself a noteworthy strategy of increased recognized sociability. Caricature portraits instead circulated in periodicals, but could also be bought as originals and displayed for domestic enjoyment and serve as propagators of the latest styles to a frivolous female public. Putting up a face “to meet the faces that you meet”, in Eliot’s words, was an act of public legitimation in pre-photograph(y) times.

In the LWL collections there are caricature pictures showing gentlemen and ladies, for that matter, at home, wigs removed, for a lapse of relaxed privacy. At the other end from the face-saving protocols of public wig-wearing, these betray a sense of face-losing. In another subcategory aristocrats admire expensive wigs in their toilet looking glasses. Meant to cheat the viewer into taking them for natural hair, these wigs appear too good to be true, so that the wearer feels as embarrassed as if completely deprived of her hair: Nobody could think it was a Wig, Sir!, the title of one such, introduces an apprehensive and insecure elderly lady. The HeadAche by Cruikshank (1830) is a metaphor of social recognition. It represents a gentleman severely battered on his bare bald head by six demons sprightly jumping on top of his armchair as well as of himself, by the fireplace. For all the coziness of the domestic ambiance, he is an easy victim, since utterly undefended by his public coif(fure) shield. Equating physical unease with public frailty is the clue here.

The twenty first-century visitor to museums and art galleries displaying busts or death masks of famous eighteenth-century authors, say Swift or Pope, may experience the same weird feeling. What they see is new to them, simply because these heads are bared of the expected wigs in which history of literature portraits have been advertised. In Slight of Hand by a Monkey, or the Lady’s Head Unloaded (c. 1770) a lady’s stunning heart-shaped coiffure is snatched by a monkey, to the amusement of a butcher boy and of the tricky primate itself (sic). Laughing matter to her social, professional and biological inferiors, she is reduced to a minuscule status, as the ironic implication in the title suggests: she can be disposed of. As can the lady in Miss Prattle, consulting Doctor Double Fee about her Pantheon Head Dress, a print of 1772, in which the characters in the ἐφρυον area are classified by their own names. The “Pantheon” head dress strikes a sharp contrast with the lady’s communicative faculties as mere babble. More of pandemonium creatures, a pair of monkeys in a picture on the wall behind show that the πάρεργον area ripples off a satirical message. These monkeys are respectable because they take tea and hold an intellectual conversation, like the fashionable couple in the foreground, but it would be hard to tell who apes whom, given the humans’ quantitative hugeness but qualitative paucity. Likewise, Gillray’s Progress of the Toilet. The Wig (1820) represents a lady as a person in her intimacy. She enjoys Madame de Staël’s Delphine and takes furtive looks at herself in the mirror. Her private universe comprises her maid engaged in trimming her wig, vials, little bottles and boxes of scents, powder and pomade sitting on the toilet, and her pet resting on a stool. This intimacy will be curbed when she has been fashioned into a public persona by the wig being set on her bobbed hair as she steps out in her complete dress. An elderly couple caught in tender embraces on a sofa look scared by discovering each other’s hairless skulls after their wigs have fallen off onto the floor (Mrs Runnington’s Wig).
While wigless heads send the signal of social, professional or emotional frailty, headless wigs also convey a message. They can function as metonyms, as in Head of a Judge, in which a full-bottom wig with the sides reaching down to the waist is stood firm on a flat surface, as if it were a full human figure, while a profile juts out of its left top. It is an idea of a human being, yet more than an indication of professional belonging. Stern against the black background, it ironically suggests that a judge’s head is no more than an empty wig with the crown of the head an obvious hole. The wig as such is currency to pass from hand to hand, from artisan to customer, as in The Wig. Here the jolly gentleman receiving his ordered badge of clubbability seems to ignore the macaroni wig-maker’s tongue-in-the-cheek attitude. It is a suggestion of who depends on whom in the public sphere, with its specific code (Habermas 1994). Likewise, The Razor’s Levee, or Heads of a New Wig shows an aristocratic customer fretting among wigs on wooden heads stuck on sticks. Seated on a chair, a tankard of ale in hand, hat tilted back, the wig seller watches the scene, a vague look on his face. Lady Friz at her Toilet does the trick the more astutely. Not only is there a lady in a sumptuous coiffure, not only is this doubled by the image in the mirror, there is a gentleman admiring this scene in her boudoir. This treble image is reduced to just wigs by the three heads bearing on top V-shaped wavy hair and ribbons reduplicated on the mirror top. Everything is mere illusion.

Portraits of professionals dignified in their wigs make up another subcategory of caricatures in the LWL collection. Such an item is The Musico-Oratorical Portrait, a print of the mid-century in which the protagonist advertises his occupational status in the ēργον foreground, while his instruments and furniture in the πάρεργον aside compete with his wig. Cruikshank’s Debating Society: Substitute for Hair Powder (1795) is a memento of the tax on hair powder imposed by the Prime Minister, William Pitt the Younger. Bewigged heads and heads wearing their natural hair mingle in the tempestuous scene in which a heated speaker at the rostrum is doubled by a wolf’s head insinuating the Hobbesian homo homini lupus. A vociferous debater utters the rhetorical question: “Whether a Man’s Wig should be drest with Honey or Mustard”.

Role-players are tremendously useful actants in this society. In The Boarding School Hair-Dresser the occupational function of “hair engineer” is discharged by a young gentleman not indifferent to the charm of his female student, whom he prepares for a public show. The protocols of societal acceptance are more convoluted in Boarding School Education, or the Frenchified Young Lady, in which the main protagonist is assisted by an elderly matron and a dancing teacher doubled by a pet dog. On its hind legs, the latter dances to the accompaniment of odd music produced on a tool-like instrument by a dwarfish monkey. The age’s is a “culture of mondaianes choices enjoying gaming sessions, chats replete with proverbs and citations, indoor spaces furbished with oriental objects and objets, grotesqueries and tea sets” (de Goncourt 60). Hold up your head, Miss Tol Lol de Rol places the violin teacher in front of a shy girl introduced to the trick of facing highlife from a high stance. The early nineteenth-century Grandfather’s Wig portrays aristocratic children in the attire and hairstyle of two generations before, to give supplementary prestige to too relaxed a contemporaneous attitude.

The aim of such beautification practices transpires from The English Lady in Paris. Here a considerably wrinkled daughter of Albion stoically suffers the spraying of white powder on her elaborate hairdo by an astute “engineer”. Both their zoomorphic copies we discern in a picture on the back wall, in a couple of monkeys performing the same chic act. Further ironic symmetry obtains from The French Lady in London, or the Head Dress for the Year 1771 signed Grimm, J.H., a replica to an earlier image of the same title. Variations on the same theme, the imagological ingredients are prominent in both. The lady steps into a fashionable drawing room at an almost right angle, to get in a coiffure of same size as her body! She frightens a fashionable gentleman out of balance, as she does the unmissable pets, both salon four-legged and birds. Everything else is reversed by her pervers(ed) anatomy: the tea table, the engraving on it, the gentleman’s tricorn hat. The same crazy victory of culture over nature is the message of The Folly of 1771. A pastor and agricultural scenes in the lady’s vicinity are a feeble presence compared to her huge hairdo almost touching the ceiling as it is being trimmed by a hair engineer on top of a ladder some tow thirds the room height: elevation of soul gives up in front of the elevation of hair, which becomes a cosmic event of mythical purport in The Rape of the Lock.
Social ranks assume visual identity by resort to similar procedures. In *The Finishing of an Alderman’s Picture* the town functionary in a πάρεργον portrait is promoted to cuckoldry as his wife’s lover attaches a pair of horns to the victim! Drawn forth to the ἐργον area, his marital picture is finished in more than one sense. *High Life below Stairs*, or *Mungo Addressing My Lady’s Maid* is a reduplication of roles at servant class level. Societal spaces up and down Fielding’s “ladder of dependency” stand in a metaphoric relation to the lady’s manor stairs. Under them the white chamber maid is wooed by two black valets in livery and tricorn hats! Betty the Cook Maids Head Drest makes a display of professional pride out of the heart-shaped pyramid hairdo. This servant’s occupational status, on a par with her lady’s, is the literal double of her figure: her huge hairdo is equipped with kitchen utensils, vegetables and a range up on top forming a space of their own as if independent of herself! *The English Farmer’s Wife Converted to a Lady during his Absence* is the more daring as a confirmation of social climbing. The miserable husband comes back home to find a lady in a high head dress reading not the Bible but Ovid’s *Art of Love* with the local pastor in her marital drawing room. This caricature re-reading of the Francesca-Paolo episode makes of the scene a more than human comedy. Lying on the table a volume called Acting appears in sharp contrast with the natural scene behind the open door through which a hunting hound has rushed in: ἐργον artificiality obliterates πάρεργον naturalness. The chimney sweeper in *Licens’d to Wear Hair Powder* beams with joy in his white powdered wig. *The one in Hair Brooms* proudly carries his professional tools along a neoclassic façade.

A set of portraits from 1776 have come down to us under the generic title *The Ridiculous Taste* with the subtitle *The Ladies’ Absurdity* attached to two of them. In the middle of her elegant drawing room, the lady’s seated body looks about the same size as her gigantic coiffure taken thorough care of by two gentlemen: here is a naval engineer holding a sextant in one hand and taking the latitude of its top (sic), while flanking her on the other side, a “hair engineer” on the top rung of a ladder gives final touches to the side curls of her multilayered hairdo. The ἐργον is all human figures, the πάρεργον all the private locale. In effect, given the proportions of the hairdo, it itself is the ἐργον, a metonym of the lady and/as ladyship. The floral pattern in the carpet, the salon furniture and pictures only add the aristocratic ambiance, while the whole scene falls on deaf (ab- “to” surdus “deaf”) ears, the ears of irrationality. The two variants of the same caricature portrait are symmetrically drawn as in an ironic doubling of the day’s craze. In *Ridiculous Taste* the increased contrast of light and shade brings into more obvious relief the portraits and looking glass hanging from the room walls in a yet subtler reduplication of the absurd profession of hair engineering!

*Oh. Heigh. Oh. Or a View of the Back Settlements* of 1776 is a clever allusion to Ohio, so a politically charged portrait. It offers a detailed view of a coiffure back, with layers of curls and meshes adorned with gems and feathers suggesting colonial might. *The Preposterous Head Dress*, or the Feathered Lady of the same time alludes to a much less political, yet much more polite strategy, that of cultivating the heart-shaped pyramid and ostrich feathers. Both the lady and her maid advertise the said hairstyle, while a “hair engineer” standing on a stool enriches the ornithological improvement by the minute. Facing her alcove glass, the lady toys with the cosmetic boxes on her toilet table as the maid holds a plate on which pile exotic fruits. A belated visual illustration to Bellinda’s toilet scene, one would think, with colonial ingredients turned libertine frivolity as a sign of identity construction. While this is the ἐργον of the whole picture, the exuberant and utterly out-of-scale hairdo in *The Extravaganza or the Mountain Head Dress* of 1776 (Figure 1) beats any record. The lady’s heart-shaped hairdo takes up nine tenths of the portrait, her head, down on the bottom tenth, looking like a mad reversion of a human figure. Profusely powdered, her hairdo is mountainous not only size-wise, but also as carrier of vegetal richness. An artificial mountain though, it naturally (sic) carries ostrich feathers, too, all hanging down loosely. Leaving behind the classic proportion of equality and cultivating the “romantic” disproportion or diseconomy of features” (Lynch 117), the mid-late century capitalizes on the portrait chargé or ritratto carico as a new manner of unveiling nature’s secret ways.

This is the crux of the matter in *The Flower Garden* (Figure 2), namely the consummate rearrangement of the ἐργον–πάρεργον pair. An extremely elaborate hairdo shown in profile rises from a lady’s head, her bust about one seventh of the portrait height. Everything else is hair improved on with
additional horsehair pads, wool and cotton made into layers of highly decorated curls, abundantly powdered and skillfully designed. The mile-high hairdo here is the aggressive ἐργόν of the portrait, nature as such being swallowed up by it. Art as “nature still, but nature methodiz’d”, according to Pope, is the formula. “Big hair” (Powell & Roach 79) is the catchword of public prestige, indeed. The bigger the coiffure, the more impressive the prestige is the success formula. What can be guessed from this lofty hairdo is the heavily starched stiffness of the hair, as well as its artful moulding, on, presumably, cages and wires placed inside the colossal coiffure. The amount of time spent on having such an ornament placed on one’s aristocratic head is calculable by the hours, to say the least, enduring by the weeks, and problematic by the same quantification in terms of hygiene and health care. Imaginative designers or the ladies commissioning designs from them were not alien to all kinds of extravagant patterns added to fashionable coiffures. And here we have one, as a flower garden, in which tendrils and stems, flowers, buds and leaves hanging from the hairdo back just vanish out of sight, when the viewer’s eye focuses on the hairdo top: a French-style garden geometrically symmetrical and orderly lies there, as a gentleman at one end (right above the lady’s forehead) is about to start walking to the opposite end (above the lady’s neck), where a garden temple with a mythical figure seems to await him. This protracted portrait of a lady could serve as a poetic art of eighteenth-century taste, counterbalancing the inner, psychological portrait that we have inherited from James. His art of fiction is here paralleled by a peculiar art of painting the joys of which make of classic modernity aka the Enlightenment a time for our own entertainment.

Works Cited


Figure 1: The Extravaganza or the Mountain Head Dress of 1776
Figure 2: The Flower Garden (1777)