"The wise surveyor": surveying and representation in British house and estate portraiture, c.1650-1715

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Abstract

This dissertation discusses the development of English house and estate portraiture in Britain, c.1675-1715. It argues that paintings described the landscape in such a way as to suggest that the land was naturally composed into the co-ordinated forms perceived by landowners when surveying their property. The work begins with an introduction setting out the subject matter and argument, supported by a survey of recent literature on house and estate portraiture and landscape painting. The introduction is particularly concerned with the question of the historically contingency of pictorial description. Chapter one asks why different continental portrait methods were taken up unilaterally in Britain when the tendency abroad was to use many different styles simultaneously. It relates the development of styles in Britain to ideas about viewing and describing the land in late-seventeenth century county histories and topographical surveys, which included many engraved estate and house portraits. Chapters two and three follow the development of the estate portrait in the paintings of Jan Siberechts. The chapters observe how in the 1690s Siberechts produced images of an increasingly descriptive and co-ordinated quality, following the natural-philosophical and landowning interests of his most important patron. The argument is that as Siberechts was faced with the pressure to describe the landscape he drew on the precedents of Flemish artists, as earlier engravers had done in county histories and topographical surveys. The fourth and final chapter looks at the sustained climax to estate portraiture's development in Britain, seen in Britannia Illustrata, 1707. It considers this work against the background of Joseph Addison's essays. Addison theory of the imagination (1712) suggested that social distinction was part of the natural world's design, something that is also signified in Britannia Illustrata's view of the landscape. The thesis's aim throughout is to consider the historical nature of description and how images of the natural world objectify socially subjective experiences and conceptions.
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NUL: Nottingham University Library, Department of Manuscripts and Special Collections, Nottingham.
Introduction

Description and denotation: historical problem or philosophical category?

The problem defined

The period between the 1670s and the second decade of the eighteenth century saw a great change in the style of house and estate portraiture in Britain. Portraiture produced in Britain during the 1670s tends to describe a view of a house and its immediate grounds from a low or moderately high viewpoint. The house is typically set in the centre of the view and nearer to the viewer rather than further away. Later portraiture, by contrast, uses much higher viewpoints to denote the appearance of a house and its grounds. The house is usually set deep in the pictorial space, with the result that a much greater expanse of its grounds can be described. The high viewpoint also enables a large expanse of the surrounding terrain to be depicted, placing the house and its grounds in a topographical context. The unilateral nature of this change is partly accounted for by the arrival in Britain later in the period of artists who practised different methods of composition, but it is clear that some artists also changed their methods of composition. Hendrick Danckerts is perhaps the clearest example of an artist who painted many views of houses in the 1670s using the formula of a low centralised viewpoint. The draughtsman and engraver Michael Burghers also denoted the appearance of the overwhelming majority of his subjects using a similarly low and centralised viewpoint. In the 1690s and 1700s the work of new artists appeared in volumes of history and topography (often the two were intimately connected) that contained portraits of the gentry's seats. These images tended to follow exclusively the aerial or bird's-eye compositional format. Artists such as John Drapentier, Leonard Knyff and Jan Kip replaced the older style with pictorial descriptions of estates from higher and more dramatic viewpoints.

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2 Burghers's work will be discussed more fully in Chapter One.
3 Drapentier's work for Henry Chauncy will be examined in Chapter One, and Knyff and Kip's 1707 publication *Britannia Illustrata* is discussed in Chapter Four.
But the change in style cannot be accounted for in the comings and goings of continental artists from Britain, for two reasons. The first is that some artists worked throughout the two booms in house and estate portraiture, in the 1670s and from c.1690-1715. Individuals such as David Loggan, who published large volumes of plates in 1675 and 1690, maintained a consistent style: Loggan was perhaps the most technically gifted draughtsman and engraver of architecture seen from an aerial viewpoint. Others, however, changed their style, and chief among these is the Flemish draughtsman and painter Jan Siberechts. Siberechts’ earlier paintings describe a view taken from a medium-high viewpoint. The facade of the house is depicted in great detail but it is close to the foreground and so only a glimpse of the grounds is given, and little of the distant scenery can be described in any great detail. In his later paintings however, Siberechts uses a much higher viewpoint to denote the plan of the house and layout of the grounds as well as the wider topographical context. The change in his style is consistent and developed in a number of works in the period, as the following chapters will argue.

The second reason why the change in British house and estate portraiture cannot be reduced to the presence of given artists is that with very few exceptions all the painters and engravers were from abroad and were familiar with the wide range of styles used in continental portraiture. Some, like Johannes Vorstermans, had direct family connections with the many different styles engraved for topographical publications abroad. Others would almost certainly have seen these volumes or the images published as single prints. Moreover, as Chapter Four will argue, both styles - the low, prospect view and the bird’s-eye view - invariably used centralised perspective as the compositional method, otherwise known as one-point perspective. Although the aerial leaves less margin for error its effects are derived from the same pictorial principle as that of the prospect view, something that contemporary treatises on perspective amply demonstrated in their illustrations.

Earlier and contemporary continental portraiture seized on the potential for variety offered by the manipulation of a single compositional method. Publications from France and Flanders used an immense range of styles, and even expensive and conservative volumes given over almost entirely to full-page images such as Nicolas

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*Siberechts’ work is discussed at length in Chapters Two and Three.

*Chapter Three discusses briefly the printing and retail as single sheets of engravings designed for publication in a volume format.
Introduction

Langlois's *Vueues des Belles Maisons de France* comprise a salad of methods. But even in British publications that openly acknowledged their debt to foreign precedents, the compositional format remained constant. Foreign artists, familiar with the range of styles produced abroad in earlier and contemporary publications, and possessing the technical competence to reproduce these styles, did not do so.

British house and estate portraiture witnessed a more or less unilateral change in style in the period c.1670 to c.1715, the time between Danckerts's paintings and the second publication of Knyff and Kip's *Britannia Illustrata*. The nature of these changes are in direct contrast to the sustained eclecticism of continental styles in the same period, in spite of the fact that foreign artists working in Britain would have known about this work and in some cases were intimately connected with it. This dissertation will seek to explain not only the reasons for change but also its apparent uniformity.

The thesis

The thesis put forward by this dissertation to deal with the problem set out above, is that the images were primarily descriptive, and that description is historically contingent. The reasons why this thesis is proposed will be set out now.

In looking at bird's-eye views of houses and estates it is quickly apparent that in both their painted and engraved forms the views were members of a much wider family of images than their own numbers suggest. The evidence of one bird's-eye view, Jan Siberechts' *Wollaton Hall*, is that it was just one of a number of large paintings completed by the artist for the patron, Sir Thomas Willughby. What is known of Siberechts' work for other patrons such as the Maitland family, Dukes of Lauderdale, suggests that this was the case with other commissioned projects. Moreover topographical publications published engravings of bird's-eye views and prospects of houses alongside a variety of images. These included maps, aerial town views or *plats*, images of monuments and engravings of natural phenomena. As the following chapters will argue these images were not randomly compiled. What they had in common was their denotive function. They were highly descriptive: the engravings were detailed and the paintings full of tiny figures and pin-like church spires. But as the texts accompanying the images themselves make clear, the denotation of an object was inseparable from the circumstances in which it was
Introduction

experienced. Wishing to describe the land as a piece of terrain with identifiable co-ordinates, Siberechts had little choice but to denote that it was seen from the grounds of one or other of the gentry's estates around Nottingham, because that was the condition of the observed terrain's conception as a view. William Dugdale could claim his Antiquities of Warwickshire Illustrated to be like a perambulation or a survey because the county as an object worthy of description was conceived of in the terms of land management - making itineraries and maps.

It is important to state at this point that the gentry were not, by commissioning or publishing bird's-eye views, maps and so on, denoting an object within their realm of subjective experience fully aware that they could describe the same object considered objectively. It was the very experiences of that class in making maps and itineraries or recording differences between birds and fish that first enabled them to conceive of such a thing as an estate view, or a prospect of landscape looking out from one's estate. What this dissertation argues is that an engraving's or painting's description of an object or group of objects was not simply a description of an objective entity. Denotation is an artist's referring not to a thing but to a concept of that thing - such as a landscape view - that corresponds to the concept held by the viewer. As Stuart Hall has said, an image is not identifiable with an object: a painting of a hill is not a hill itself. What the image does is refer to the concept of a hill. A viewer recognises a painting to be of a hill because she has in her head a concept derived from experience of what a hill is like. The way in which denotation refers to conception rather than an object is seen at a parent's evening, when a pupil's mother or father interrupts the teacher's catalogue of absences and late homework to ask, "are we talking about the same boy?". The point is not whether or not the boy exists, it is that the conception of the boy is not shared by parent and teacher, rendering the description unrecognisable.

This dissertation argues that denotation takes place at this conceptual level. The bird's-eye views and other landscape paintings describe landscape as far as the gentry conceived there to be such a thing. A view of the Trent valley that draws the eye to the horizon via a series of buildings and prominent trees acting as co-ordinates is not therefore a misrepresentation, because the gentry really did conceive of a landscape view in terms of buildings that acted as spatial markers. Again, when
Francis Willughby and John Ray described a dissected fish as though it were a map, in terms of "site" and "prospect", they are not carefully choosing their words to emphasise one aspect of their visual experience. Rather, it should be argued that they could only conceive of describing an object using the vocabulary of map-making and topographical measurement.

The thesis that denotation takes place at the conceptual level points to the historical contingency of concepts. Denotation can only work if the author and the reader share the same conception of the object described. Seventeenth century emblem books require interpretation today more than when they were published because the reader does not recognise what they denote. The communicative nature of denotation suggests that its significance lies at the level of the historically contingent concept rather than the denotive act itself. The painter's view or author's description is understood not by means of the words used or the brush-strokes themselves, but by historical and arbitrary codes that bind certain words and images to certain concepts. In Hall's terms, meaning is not put into language (images or words) by the speaker, but instead constantly resides in the language, with the result that it is the language that "speaks us". Because description refers to concepts and these concepts have to be shared in order for the description to be understood, the codes or langue that bring words and concepts together is the structure on which all denotations (the joining of image to concept) depend. The communicative nature of denotation is one aspect of the bird's-eye view that associates them with other seemingly disparate images such as maps. By concentrating on the codes of which each image is a manifestation, rather than on the images alone, the bird's-eye view can be seen as part of a larger and structurally related family of images.

The thesis that denotation takes place at the conceptual level also indicates description's ideological nature. It has been proposed above that the structure of word and concept determines the form of any denotive act such as a descriptive engraving or a bird's-eye view painting: the image refers to the concept. But in an image that communicates a shared meaning between artist and viewer, the meaning is understood to reside in the image. The viewer who sees and recognises a hill in a painting does

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7 See Chapter Two.
8 But not, it is important to note, of objects themselves.
9 Hall, op. cit.
not think that it corresponds to the image he has of it in his head, but instead sees that image as an objective description. A description objectifies the concept, suggesting that the meaning is inherent in the world of objects and is not the product of subjective experience. This dissertation will look closely at the ideological nature of description, what two historians have called an "objectifying resource".\footnote{Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, \textit{Leviathan and the Air-Pump: Hobbes, Boyle and the}}

The thesis of this work is therefore that an image should be considered as a denotation of a concept and not a reflection of something objective, "out there" in the real world. Each act of denotation is a speaking of a code, or dialect, that arbitrarily associates the linguistic unit - a word or picture - with a concept. The extent to which this code or dialect is shared determines the clarity of the denotation. Finally, the dissertation argues that denotation objectifies the concept. The viewer does not reflect on the fact that what they recognise in the image is a subjective and contingent language of forms. Instead they see meaning as belonging to the object that appears in the image.

\textit{Methodology}

The linguistic tone of the above thesis indicates that the approach taken in the dissertation owes a great deal to the idea of the image as a text, expounded by Roland Barthes, rather than a reflection of an objective world. This is partly the case: the tools of semiotic analysis have helped to frame the terms of this thesis, even if it is barely referred to in the chapters that follow. The work as a whole owes greater debt to the proposal of the historical contingency of denotation in John Barrell's \textit{The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840: an approach to the poetry of John Clare}, published 1972, and this thesis' declamation (though not in response to Barrell) in Svetlana Alpers's \textit{The Art of Describing: Dutch art in the seventeenth century}, 1983. Since this constitutes a response only to two books, the thesis cannot be thought of as participating in a debate about description. Moreover, neither the work of Barrell nor Alpers touches on the subject matter of this dissertation, and nor does any literature on the bird's-eye view engage with the issues raised in the thesis outlined above. It is a consequence of the methodological differences between this work and existing literature, that the subject matter taken in its entirety - written
descriptions, paintings, maps, anatomical sketches, poetry, *plats* and so on - has not ever been looked at together, or thought of as in any way related. Since there is neither historiographical or methodological debate to speak of, this section will first examine the theses proposed by Barrell and Alpers before moving on to consider the literature relating to the subject matter of this dissertation, primarily that of the bird's-eye view. This too will involve a critical look at the methods used to define the subject matter as well as a look at what is said about the pictures.

As stated above, the thesis aims to place the denotive act (such as a descriptive painting) in a historical context. In so doing, it hopes to contribute to a critical approach to the idea of landscape in poetry and painting proposed about thirty years ago by John Barrell. Barrell opens his book *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place* by fixing the problem under consideration as one of denotation: "[t]here is no word in English which denotes a tract of land, of whatever extent, which is apprehended *visually* but not, necessarily, *pictorially*". He goes on to ask whether the term "landscape" denoted either "countryside represented in a picture", or "a piece of countryside considered as a visual phenomenon", or land "considered with regard to its natural configuration". As Barrell points out, the difference between the second and third meanings is that the latter assumes all natural scenery to have a pictorial character, "whether or not a piece of it is actively being considered as if it were a picture". He says that the third meaning of landscape arose because of the influence of Italianate landscape painting on the cultivated sections of English society in the mid-eighteenth century. To think of all scenery as having a pictorial character was to have taste which could be exercised in recognising when a view was at its most correctly composed.

What is significant about *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place* is that it says that the development of this taste was not a self-conscious act on the part of those who exercised it. Although the idea of landscape as *a priori* pictorial was not inherent in the natural world itself, the fact that "it had to be learned" does not give it a secondary, connotive status against which can be placed a true meaning of

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12 Ibid., p.2; Barrell is quoting the *Oxford English Dictionary* in the final definition.

13 Ibid., p.2.

14 See ibid., p.5.
landscape. The natural world being conceived of as having a pictorial character became fixed in language, so that "landscape" denoted this conception rather than any object itself. Barrell notes that what was significant about a copy of Claude was the fact that it denoted precisely what the cultivated classes understood to be meant by the term "landscape": "the names are trade marks for [the patron], which guarantee a style of conception but not a quality of realisation". The visual qualities of a Claudean composition became inseparable from the language of landscape, so that each individual "landscape", pictorial or verbal, was determined by the underlying conception. As Barrell notes,

[Formal appreciation] expressed itself in a specialised vocabulary, and a grammar, as it were, of landscape patterns and structures, established so thoroughly in his language and imagination that he became less and less able to separate any one landscape from any other, because he applied the same visual and linguistic procedures to them all. A landscape was fitted into the established set of landscape patterns, and so became part of the universal landscape, which included any tract of land the connoisseur chose to examine.

Barrell therefore sees "landscape" as a historically contingent category of perceiving the natural world, because a landscape is not perceived, as by the sight, it is conceived: each viewer has in their head a "universal landscape" composed in the language of Claude's paintings. By way of brief illustration of Barrell's argument it is worth looking at how he uses this thesis to bring a critical focus onto poets and artists. In particular he is anxious to argue against the criticism of poets and painters according to an ahistorical antithesis, such as the balance between nature and civilisation. Such antitheses position the work of the artist against an objective standard, the result being that an artist is charged with misrepresenting the landscape. This is not the case, Barrell argues:

Against this antithesis I can only argue that if, for Uvedale Price, Claude and nature were the same thing, it was because Price was so saturated in Claude's way of seeing and composing landscape, that he could see it himself in no other way: what he really was able to see was landscape artificially composed.

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15 Ibid., p.6.
16 Ibid., p.6.
17 Ibid., p.7; Barrell's italics.
18 Ibid., p.16; Barrell's italics.
The point about landscape is that as a word or image it denotes a concept, not an object. A viewer or painter only perceives a landscape insofar as he is able to conceive of it. Landscape is not a fixed notion but is contingent on circumstances, and a painter's efforts should not be measured against an objective standard, because for them the concept learned from Claude was this standard.

Barrell then moves on to examine how each "landscape" poem or picture is determined by this underlying conceptual structure. As the title of his book suggests, the problem he perceives is not simply the historical and conceptual nature of denotation but the creation in landscape poetry of a "sense of place". The idea of landscape was resisted by the individuality of place. But this is not to say that the poet or painter apprehended a view as it really was: what made a painting or a poem of landscape communicable was that the association of word/image and concept was governed by a code shared by many people, namely those familiar with Claude's landscapes. A poet could not apprehend a landscape separate from the concept he had and the words and images associated with it: in other words, the linguistic code that made the term "landscape" meaningful and "epacsdnal" meaningless. Synthesis between place and landscape is therefore incipient in the linguistic code or procedure, because whilst a poet may describe the particulars of a view, the linguistic procedures determine the form of the description, that is to say the formal patterns of the painting or the syntax of the verse. Barrell notes: "the form of this synthesis is, precisely, the form of the syntax in each passage [...] and [...] the form of the syntax of each description is also, of course, an analogue of the form of each landscape as Thomson apprehends it". The significance of each individual description of a landscape is understood by Barrell to rest in how the colour, lines or syntax of the composition are determined by the linguistic codes that enable the concept to be denoted by words or pictures. His thesis of denotation taking place at the conceptual rather than the objective level indicates that "place" is always subsumed within "landscape" in eighteenth century painting and poetry.

Barrell developed his ideas in a later work, *English Literature in History 1730-80: an equal, wide survey*. In this he held to the idea that denotation was predicated on concepts and given a voice in a linguistic procedure, a "cant" or

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He took his thesis a step further by saying that not only were denotive acts determined by this language, but the code worked - in the eyes of those who used it - to privilege some descriptive acts while discrediting others. The problem manifests itself as one of syntax: some people use the right words, others the wrong ones. But the underlying problem is one of shared meaning: because a word denotes a concept, argues Barrell, the wrong words suggest that the author is not simply thinking of the wrong concept, but that they do not understand the entirety of meaning contained in the association of word and concept. A listener will not think that syntax is inappropriate because it refers to a different concept of landscape; instead they will think that the author does not know the meaning of "landscape" at all, as they themselves understand it.

Barrell is concerned to historicise "the authority of the language of the gentleman" in mid-eighteenth century English literature. Society, he argues, was conceived of as a set of economic relations. It is this conception that was signified when authors spoke of society. The authority of the gentleman derived from his linguistic procedures: only the gentleman used words uninfluenced to a distorting degree by the language of any particular trade, and thus intelligible to other gentlemen as well as those in "specialised" occupations. Despite being a specialised position itself, the gentry enjoyed the illusion of being able to speak objectively, suggesting that they perceived the world as it really was.

The thrust of Barrell's thesis in both books is that denotation and description is not the outcome of perception, but of conception. What was at stake when the terms "landscape" or "society" were used was a seemingly objective meaning. Failure to use the appropriate syntax in denoting an object was seen as a failure to comprehend at all. Two points can be made here. The first is that although Barrell confines "denotation" to his first book and "description" to his second, it is arguable that he means a similar thing by both: both are the outcomes of a linguistic procedure that invests words and pictures with conceptual significance. This dissertation too uses denotation and description in a similar sense. Denote is derived from the Latin notare, to mark, and in a topographical sense (which is what this work will largely discuss) to mark has a similar connotation to to write down. The following chapters

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21 See Barrell, The Idea of Landscape, pp.1-2; English Literature in History, pp.17-19, 34.
will suggest that when authors such as the Oxford natural philosopher Robert Plot quoted from the book of Joshua, chapter 8 verse 6, "Ye shall describe the land, and bring the description hither to me", he was referring to the marking of its boundaries, as a map maker would note the boundaries of a field as a physical presence as well as on paper by means of word or image. This is not to say that description and denotation are identical: a description is a work, whereas denotation is a quality of that work. What Barrell does, and what this dissertation will also do, is to consider description primarily in its denotive sense. It is by seeing description as denotation that it can be problematised as a historical phenomenon rather than as a function of objective perception.

The second point that can be made about Barrell's approach is that his emphasis on the conceptual nature of apprehension and denotation makes the eye subordinate to the mind. For him there is no such thing as naïve perception, because meaning is generated in language, it is not inherent in objects. At the risk of putting words into his mouth, a corollary of his argument might be that the view of London from the zenith of the London Eye means much more to a person acquainted with the London A/Z than to someone who has no conception of spatial relationships between objects, as they are portrayed on a map. Indeed, I suggest that Barrell would say that two such people would actually see different views, because for him the act of seeing is cognitive rather than purely physical. Paradoxically, the London Eye attracts Londoners precisely because it is not simply about the eye, but also about the mind as well.

An antithetical thesis to that in Barrell's work, and one whose logic is in agreement with the naming of the London Eye, is that put forward by Svetlana Alpers in her book *The Art of Describing: Dutch art in the seventeenth century*, published in 1983. Alper's thesis is that description is a mode of picturing that is incipient in the very physicality of the act of viewing. Dutch art, she says, is marked out from Italian art by virtue of a "pictorial distinction": "central aspects of seventeenth-century Dutch art - and indeed of the northern tradition of which it is a part - can best be understood as being an art of describing as distinguished from the narrative art of Italy". These distinctions have their history within European art, but she goes on to

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22 It should be noted that the OED takes this verse in Joshua in a similar sense, *to make a mark of*, rather than *to mark*; see infra., Describe.

imply that they are inherent in the very nature of viewing: "[t]he stilled or arrested quality of [descriptive] works is a symptom of a certain tension between attentive description and action: attention to the surface of the world described is achieved at the expense of the representation of narrative action".\textsuperscript{24} The balance is one between mind and sense. Alpers notes that

\begin{quote}
[T]here is a long tradition of disparaging descriptive works. They have been considered either meaningless (since no text is narrated) or inferior by nature. This aesthetic view has a social and cultural basis. Time and again the hierarchy of mind over sense and of educated viewers over ignorant ones has been summoned to round out the argument for narration with a blast at art that delights the eyes.\textsuperscript{25}
\end{quote}

The problem here is that her observation that description "delights the eyes" would seem to admit that the distinction is not primarily social and cultural, although these conventions might uphold a bias, but rather they are objective. Alpers unites the quality of a description with the effect it will have on the viewer. "Dutch pictures", she says, "are [...] dazzling".\textsuperscript{26} They "represent pleasures", and the art "offers a delight to the eyes".\textsuperscript{27} In uniting the quality of a painting with its effect on the viewer she holds viewing to be entirely a physical act, or a mental act. This in turn suggests that representation is essentially mimetic, reflecting the objective state of the world, either as it is physically perceived at the point of the eye or as it is conceived on a mental level by the mind. As she argues, it was the ends of imitative skills that formed the crux of the distinction between northern and Italian painting.\textsuperscript{28}

It is on the basis of the ahistorical and objective nature of pictorial distinctions that Alpers is able to liken Dutch art to modern. She sees the similarities primarily in the terms of consumption:

\begin{quote}
Its societal role was not far from that of art today: a liquid investment like silver tapestries, or other valuables, pictures were bought from artists' shops or on the open market as possessions and hung, one presumes, to fill space and decorate domestic walls.\textsuperscript{29}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., p.xxi.  
\textsuperscript{25} Ibid., p.xxi.  
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., p.xxi.  
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid., p.xxii.  
\textsuperscript{28} See ibid., p.xxi.  
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., p.xx11.
Dutch art was handled "like silver" precisely because it meant no more to the viewer than a physical effect, as its hanging "to fill space" indicates. Alpers proposes that description is so removed any need for interpretation that we have to learn how to distance ourselves from it, rather than understand it: "the problem faced by a modern viewer", she says, "is how to make this art strange, how to see what is special about an art with which we feel so at home, whose pleasures seem so obvious". For Alpers, description is about perception rather than conception. It reflects the objective state of the world. Her thesis rests on the notion that seeing is a purely physical act. Descriptions are not liable to misinterpretation because as perceptions rather than conceptions they are not historically contingent.

One of the key issues raised in Alpers's book that this dissertation will concern itself with is the influence of culture on the making of images. Alpers sees that description is part of a visual rather than a verbal "mode of understanding the world" that in the United Provinces "is fully and creatively realised in the making of images". Her model of pictorial distinctions suggests that cultural influences were simply the occasion for either descriptive or narrative images, and not their cause. Discussing Kepler's theory of seeing in his description of the eye, Alpers points out, "I am not claiming a source for or influence upon the art, but rather pointing to a cultural ambience and to a particular model of a picture that offers appropriate terms and suggests strategies for dealing with the nature of northern images". The very term "ambience" points to the ahistorical nature of Alper's thesis, indicating as it does not only to the idea of Kepler's description as simply a background, but also as something that circulates: ambient derives from the French *ambire*, go round. The definition of Kepler's work as a "model" suggests again its reproducible nature. The Dutch pictorial descriptions might be historically specific but they are seen by Alpers as recurrent themes and not historically contingent.

In contrast to Alpers, as has been seen, Barrell has argued for the historicity not of examples of descriptive picturing but of description itself. The descriptive act is a signifying act, referring through the word or image to a concept. A quality of a painting only has an effect on the viewer to the extent that they recognise its form to refer to the concept of a thing that they know as the result of experience. Barrell

30 Ibid., p.xxii.
31 Ibid., p.xxv.
Introduction

argues that the term "landscape" denoted a concept arrived at in the mid-eighteenth century through the experience of Italianate landscape painting. Alpers, on the other hand, sees in a cultural and social phenomenon such as Baconian science the return of a recurrent philosophical problem that manifests itself also in the periodic stress on one or other pictorial distinctions.33

How then did cultural phenomena exercise an influence in the making of images? This dissertation will agree with Barrell in arguing that description is a conceptual tool and that social and cultural practices were instrumental in the formation of concepts and their association with words and images - the linguistic code which speaks, that is determines, the descriptive act. Siberechts, it will be argued, could not have revised his depiction of Henley in two paintings between c.1690-93 had he not had his way of seeing changed, possibly at the behest of a patron. His paintings of the 1690s are functions of a linguistic procedure that understood land as a spatial entity, and landscape as a co-ordinated view that gave form to this entity. If his paintings seem banal to us it is because we think that it is vulgar to conceive of land in terms of distance, and a landscape (whether in paint or as natural scenery) as a circumscribed area: for us, a description of a landscape view does not stop once it reaches Derbyshire, but it did for Siberechts.

The challenge of this thesis is to redefine the problem set out above as one of underlying causal and historically contingent structures. To what concepts do these descriptions refer? How are these concepts emmeshed in a linguistic procedure, or dialect, and to what other concepts do they relate, in this capacity? What are the common grounds of experience, the realms of social practice for the gentry from which these procedures could emerge as the lingua franca? How much significance can be accordingly given to the artist's own intentions? What are the relationships between other "denotive" acts such as maps, and the painter of the bird's-eye view? Through whom were these relations mediated? It is these questions and others relating to the historical and conceptual nature of description that the dissertation will see as necessary to the tackling of the problem outlined at the beginning to this introduction.

Historiography

33 On Bacon, see ibid., chapter one, and on the periodicity of descriptive art see ibid., p.xxi.
Paying attention to the wide historical context and nature of description means that the subject matter of the dissertation is broadened. The central tenet of this thesis is that bird’s-eye estate and house views can be seen as manifestations of a deeper and wider structure of conceiving of how land ought to be viewed and described. The dissertation will therefore examine a wide range of images such as maps, descriptions of fauna and landscape views that do not fall into the canon of the country house view. There are good grounds for examining bird’s-eye views in such a varied pictorial arena: engraved bird’s-eye views were published in books dealing with chorography (a collection of related topographical views) and natural history, and patrons of Flemish bird’s-eye view painters commissioned maps, owned chorographical publications, and in some cases pursued an interest in natural history. To separate bird’s-eye views from these other images is to take them out of the context in which they were published and hung. But it is impossible to see these other images not simply as accompaniments to the melody provided by the bird’s-eye view. The thesis argues that bird’s-eye views, maps and so on are all products of a historically contingent dialect of viewing the land. They all share a common conceptual structure, and it is for this reason that they are considered together in this work.

This dissertation is the first to attempt a discussion of the historical nature of description in the bird’s-eye view. The approaches to bird’s-eye views have so far fallen roughly into two camps. By outlining these approaches an attempt can be made to provide a rationale for this work.

The first line of approach, and the older, has been to trace the development of the bird’s-eye view from artist to artist, and within the corpus of each artist. The chief exponent of this method has been John Harris, whose monumental book *The Artist and the Country House: a history of country house and garden view painting in Britain, 1540-1870* is probably the single most referenced work in this dissertation. That it is so is to some extent a vindication of Harris’s approach. His main aim is "to distinguish the house painters [...]; to study their works in relation to landscape and topographical painting in general; and to bring together a corpus of illustrations that would serve as a visual quarry for historians of architecture and gardening".34 His

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34 Harris, *op. cit.*, p.ix.
methods are therefore pursued with archaeological ends in mind: of putting names to works, and of identifying the houses in each work. He separates the works according to medium as well as date, and his analysis of each work is primarily intended to embellish these distinctions.\(^{35}\) This has its drawbacks. Painters are separated from engravers and the development of one implicitly distinguished from the other, when (as this dissertation argues) painters and engravers freely drew on engraved precedents when pressured to produce more descriptive images. Each medium is further seen as having its own logic of development. For the engraved view in particular Harris sees a culmination in Leonard Knyff and Jan Kip's *Britannia Illustrata*, which Harris argues exerts the pull of a "tradition" on the works of engravers such as Henry Winstanley and Michael Burghers whose work preceded Knyff and Kip's.

*The Artist and the Country House* fills an obvious gap in British art historical literature, attributing works and placing the artists in a wider artistic context. But it assumes the estate or house portrait to be a self-generating mode of representation. It is perhaps unfair to level the charge of ahistoricity at what is obviously so compendious and detailed a catalogue. Even so, the focus on the artist to the exclusion of historical context, whilst achieving so much, still suggests that painting and engraving have their own internal history. Here, Harris follows other British art historians in taking an exclusive and to some extent teleological view of estate portraiture in Britain: these shall be discussed slightly later.

More critical analyses of individual bird's-eye view paintings have been given by Karen Hearn and Malcolm Warner. Whilst Warner pays close attention to the archaeological value of the images he also acknowledges the historical conditions of description: the paintings signified a concept of landscape as an orderly arrangement of property.\(^ {36}\) Hearn pays more prolonged attention to the archaeological value of the paintings than Warner, but like him she suggests that the paintings should be seen in a historical context in which the connotations of the painting as an image of order, and as an expensive investment, should be understood.\(^ {37}\) Nigel Everett's book *The Tory View of Landscape* also sees estate portraiture as meaningful. "Most images of the

\(^{35}\) See ibid., chapters two and three.


country house," he writes "allow the spectator to assume that those who
commissioned the scene wished to present the mansion as a contribution to an idea of
social order and organising culture". Denotation refers the viewer to concepts; the
meaning of an image is inseparable from the form of the image, in the eyes of a like-
minded spectator.

Everett follows the much earlier example of Michael Rosenthal’s British
Landscape Painting, which argues that in estate views, visual description acts as a
mediator "between the intellectual control of the landscape about the house and the
more random appearance of the rest". Estate views point to a concept of landscape
that was contingent on social imperatives. Rustic figures, for example, are "typical
incidents, signifiers of the philosophy of country life in which the patrons of these
pictures liked to believe". It is indicative of Rosenthal’s method of seeing paintings
as part of a wider system of signs, that he is able to take estate views out of the box
into which they had been assigned by earlier "internal history" historians. The
prospect landscape painting, he argues, "is effectively the county house painting
minus the country house". A recent essay by Georgie Roberts also emphasises that
images describing the topography of an estate signified an "ideal vision" of civic
order, "produced by, and for, the ruling elite".

The different methodological approaches taken by art historians indicate the
course of the debate, such as it is, on bird’s-eye estate views. Whereas Harris is
concerned to distinguish the artist and their works and build up a better picture of
artistic context, later historians have been unanimous in seeing the pictures as
producing meaning in a wide socio-historical context. The language of signification
has been seen as the means by which these paintings connoted an aura of stability, a
myth of social harmony in inequality necessary for widespread prosperity.
This dissertation is sympathetic to the approaches taken to paintings in the literature
produced since Harris’s book. It will follow Rosenthal and others in seeing images as
meaningful in a specific historical context. Where it differs from the more critical art
historical literature is in drawing attention not to myth but to the basic linguistic unit,
that is to say, not to connotation but to denotation. Most writers have been prepared, not unreasonably, to accept that a painting of Wollaton Hall does indeed depict Wollaton Hall. It has been the connotive level of meaning that has interested them: Rosenthal's early work, cited above, is a prime example of this.

What the thesis of this dissertation proposes is that denotation itself is problematic. The very notion of looking at the natural world was deeply bound up with practices specific to the landowning class. Bird's-eye views served a denotive function to the viewer already familiar with seeing land described in maps and related imagery. The thesis will therefore pay less attention to connotation and the creation of myth in the images because it will seek to question, or seek to historicise, the procedures of denotation in the paintings and other visual sources.

A corollary of this dissertation thesis is that a wide variety of pictures will be closely examined. The reasons for this are twofold. Primarily it is because the methodological approach pays attention not to each single image but to the deeper, structural factors whereby a signifying language of images and concepts was built up. The estate map, for example, denoted not an estate but a concept of land as what a historian has called "emptiable space". Its association of visual form and concept was to be read as a code by its viewers. The concept inhered in the image, and vice versa, but this procedure is of course arbitrary and historically contingent. This thesis will argue for the existence of such a linguistic code. It therefore makes sense to see bird's-eye views as individual acts belonging to this deeper structure, and I suggest that it is distorting to do otherwise.

The second reason for looking at a variety of images is that bird's-eye views were engraved and published, engraved and (I contend) displayed alongside other images such as landscape prospect views and maps of administrative areas such as estates and counties. To treat bird's-eye views in isolation is to ignore the context not only of their consumption, but also of making and meaning as well. This dissertation proposes that it is not the place of the painting in the commissioner's collection that is of primary importance: instead, it is dialect that speaks the images and words and determines their appearance in descriptions that needs to be looked at. The fact that county histories for example contained a wide range of illustrations within a book

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often titled "survey" suggests that the existence of common meanings and a class-bound langue that spoke their conception of viewing the land in the bird's-eye view.

Justifying the choice of subject matter

Having pointed out that the methods of recent art-historical approaches prefer to see underlying historical structures that create meaning, rather than looking at the artistic context for its own sake, the fact that this dissertation takes only a selective look at late seventeenth-century bird's-eye views should not require further explanation.

Even so, the focus of this work on Jan Siberechts in Chapters Two and Three asks for justification, not in terms of its selective exclusivity as regards other artists, because a panoptic view is contrary to the aim of seeing these images as historically problematic, but in terms of how it might help a discussion of the historically contingent nature of the denotation of visual appearances.

The paintings by Siberechts that are examined mainly come from the 1690s, though he worked in Britain from c.1672-1700. Siberechts' work in the 1690s comprises three groups: bird's-eye estate views, prospect landscape views and pastoral scenes of milkmaids and livestock, usually fording a stream. Of these categories, the former two were innovations of this decade on the artists' part. As noted above, Siberechts' earlier portraits were taken from a much lower viewpoint, but he ceased producing these at the end of the 1670s. These two groups fall into two further categories. Many of the estate views and landscapes are of the land round the Trent valley in the immediate vicinity of Nottingham, while other of the landscapes are of the topography around Henley-on-Thames, Oxfordshire. The significance of these groupings, which are not chronologically distinct, is that they enable Siberechts' treatment of spatial recession and co-ordination to be observed as a development that spans more than a single sub-genre. In other words, they suggest that Siberechts is developing a syntax of view painting that is common to all his topographical views, whether of houses and estates or otherwise.

A related reason for looking at Siberechts is that his paintings of the Trent valley and one also of Henley remain in the family collection of the man who originally commissioned them, Sir Thomas Willughby. This is itself significant as it

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44 The dates of the Trent paintings are c.1695-c.1698, and the Thames pictures, c.1690-1698.
helps build up a pictorial context. In the case of the Willughby family a large manuscript collection is an additional incentive, as it provides evidence of their other pictorial interests, and contributes to a greater understanding of the "dialect" of concepts that these images collectively spoke and in which the paintings might be seen as extra voices. The dissertation uses these manuscripts and argues the existence of such a visual *lingua franca*. Other documentation belonging to families whose estates feature in views taken around the Trent valley by Siberechts enable a further examination of attitudes towards the representation of property and land in the period.

In spite of so many sources relating to Siberechts' work, the existing literature on the artist is thin in quantity and content. He is a familiar figure in the literature on British art and landscape painting, being characterised primarily, if not entirely accurately, as an exponent of "the Dutch topographical tradition". But his familiarity has not engendered any meaningful research on any significant section his work in the last sixty years. T. H. Fokker's monograph of 1931 remains the sole major work on the artist. Fokker pays close attention to Siberechts' English work, but tends to reduce his pictures to an analysis of the artist's personal response to the landscape.

More recent work has sought both to contribute to the sum of knowledge we have on the artist's estate views, and to place his work in a wider historical context. John Harris discusses (very briefly) no fewer than twenty four of Siberechts' property portraits, landscapes and pastoral scenes, and both he and Karen Hearn point to the relationship between the development of his estate views and his changing base of patronage after his move to England in 1674. Hans Vlieghe has paid attention to the social historical context of Siberechts' pastoral scenes from before 1674 in his recent book *Flemish Art and Architecture, 1585-1700*. Vlieghe's volume is a rewriting for the Yale/Pelican history of art series of H. Gerson and T. H. Ter Kuile's 1960 book *Art and Architecture in Belgium, 1600-1800*. The changes in art-historical methodology between then and now are clear, for where Gerson and Ter Kuile discuss Siberechts' "personal vision" Vlieghe examines the wider "significance" of pastoral

45 See for example Andrew Hemingway, *Landscape Imagery and Urban Culture in Early Nineteenth-century Britain*, Cambridge, 1992, p.220. This is not a criticism of Hemingway, as earlier historians have stressed Siberechts' Dutch character: see H. Gerson and T. H. Ter Kuile, *Art and Architecture in Belgium, 1600-1800*, London, 1960; but it shows how he has become compartmentalised in the recent flood of literature on British landscape in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.
46 T. H. Fokker, Jan Siberechts: Peintre de la Paysanne Flamande, Brussels and Paris, 1931
imagery in the period. Such a revision has not been forthcoming in British art-historiography. The result is that the only literature that doesn't simply mention him in passing, remains that which considers him as a painter of "English landscapes", whose pictures are "recognisably English". Ellis Waterhouse notes that in his pastoral scenes "occasionally a hint of the English scene creeps in". These comments suggest an incipient native style, as though the physical landscape had pictorial qualities of its own, to which painters responded. It is on the assumption that art has its own internal history, that Waterhouse proceeds to note: "[Siberechts] has better claims than anyone to the title of the 'father of British landscape'. Henry and Margaret Ogden's *English Taste in Landscape in the Seventeenth Century* takes an iconographical approach to landscape paintings. Whilst avoiding the teleological and exclusive view of painting put forward by Waterhouse, the book pigeonholes Siberechts' work in distinct categories and fails to see his paintings in any interpretative unity.

It is noticeable that in the literature on Siberechts, his work in Flanders is often appealed to as a means for exploring his pastoral scenes produced in England. But his Flemish background is never seen as offering a starting point for thinking about his English scenes, unless it is to explain their un-Englishness. This dissertation disagrees with this approach and argues that Siberechts' topographical views, a category of work developed after the artist came to England in 1674, should be seen with reference to his training and early career in Antwerp. In particular, the landscape paintings of Peter Paul Rubens offer a number of striking parallels with Siberechts' work, and Chapter Three proposes that Rubens's position as a large scale property-holder led him to develop a pictorial vocabulary of spatial co-ordination similar to that seen in Siberechts' views of the 1690s. Indeed, Siberechts' Antwerp background offers the chance to think about his paintings as picking up a dialect being constantly used and revised by the landed gentry in both England and Flanders in the period.

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49 This is despite its being anticipated by Michael Kitson; see his introductory essay to the fourth edition of Ellis Waterhouse, *Painting in Britain, 1530-1790*, New Haven and London, 1994, p.xii.
52 Ibid., p.118.
54 See Whinney and Millar, *op. cit.*, p.270.
Outline of the dissertation

Having set out the methodological approach taken by this dissertation, the implications this has for the subject matter under consideration, and the methodological and historiographical positions held by the extant literature, there should be no need to give any detailed narrative of each chapter of the work. What follows is therefore brief and meant primarily as a source of information.

Chapter One examines the development of estate portraiture in county atlases published in the mid- and late-seventeenth century. It argues that the denotive function of maps and estate views serves as a means to objectify the experiences of landowners in the period. The ideological potency of the engravings produced by artists such as Burghers, Loggan and Drapentier lay in their suggestion to the spectator that their historical and socially subjective practices were incipient in the constitution of the natural world itself. Chapter Two will look at Siberechts' huge painting *Wollaton Hall*, painted in 1695. It situates the developing vocabulary of the bird's-eye view in Flemish precedents, but argues that these were only made meaningful in the light of the premium placed on detailed denotation of appearances and the perceived trustworthiness of the senses in Baconian experimental philosophy. The signifying qualities of this pictorial dialect are further explored through reference to other pictorial sources in Chapters Two and Three, namely manuscript maps and drawings. Chapter Three also broadens the argument by suggesting that the vocabulary of description and spatial co-ordination is voiced in Siberechts' topographical landscapes of the Trent and Thames valleys. Chapter Four concludes by looking at Joseph Addison's *Essay on Virgil's Georgics* and his series on *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, published in 1697 and 1712 respectively. I argue that the significance of Addison's essays is that, as with the contemporary county history and other collections of images looked at in the thesis, they reveal that description and perception are in fact functions of a historical class-based subjectivity. As with the earlier images it is through spectatorship that social identity is objectified and its practices seen as qualities of the natural world itself.
Chapter One

"I shall now take the county by survey or prospect": house and estate portraiture and ideology in the late-seventeenth century county history

Introduction: setting the problem

The years between the restoration of the Stuart monarchy in the British Isles in 1660 and the accession of George I to the British throne in 1714 witnessed a flourishing of house and estate portraiture. The period did not see the first house portraits, and nor did it see the last.¹ But it is noteworthy because of the increased volume of both engraved and painted portraiture produced in its course. Of special note are two booms in portraiture during the period, the first in the 1670s and the second, lesser boom in the first fifteen years of the eighteenth century. A brief analysis of engraved portraiture gives a numerical scale by which to quantify the increase. Over the period 1656-1715 over fifteen titles featuring engraved house and estate portraits were published.² Of these, six were published during the 1670s and five during the period 1700-15. Painted portraiture experienced similar booms in these years though overall output seems to have remained at a more constant level.³ Tim Clayton has pointed out that some publishing ventures were projected but failed to materialise, for lack of sponsorship.⁴ The figures for this period cannot therefore be taken as a transparent indicator of interest in portraiture. Nevertheless the overall pattern of development based on two periods of strong growth is clear.

The most important feature about late Stuart house and estate portraiture is the steady change in subject matter, method and style in the period. There is a prominent switch from the representation of the house alone to the representation of both the house and the grounds in which the house is situated. This change is not marked by a

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² 1656 was the year in which William Dugdale’s *The Natural Antiquities of Warwickshire* was published. 1715 saw the second edition of Leonard Knyff and Jan Kip’s *Britannia Illustrata*. For reasons I shall make shortly the dates 1712-15 mark a suitable point at which the analysis of change in this thesis can be terminated.
³ It should be noted that a number of significant painted house and estate portraits remain unidentified of attributions, and so firm dates are harder to come by. See for example the paintings attributed to Jan Siberechts in Harris, op. cit.
Chapter One

particular date. It is arguably with the publication of the bird’s-eye views in Sir Henry Chauncy’s *Historical Antiquities of Hertfordshire* in 1700, Leonard Knyff and Jan Kip’s bird’s-eye estate views in *Britannia Illustrata* in 1707 and Jan Siberechts’ paintings of the 1690s that the method becomes dominant in portraiture.

The changes had begun in the 1670s when bird’s-eye views were used as a means of representing a unit of land that incorporated a number of buildings that could not be satisfactorily seen from one point of view alone. Earlier in the period, views of houses had been given from low or moderately elevated viewpoints. Wenceslaus Hollar’s views for Dugdale’s *Warwickshire* in 1656 and Robert Thoroton’s *The Antiquities of Nottinghamshire* typically depicted a house in a single view from low down, as in Hollar’s view of Clifton House in Thoroton’s *Nottinghamshire* (see Plate 1). The more elaborate of Hollar’s views in Thoroton and Dugdale (such as Clifton House) are wide enough to incorporate the principle outbuildings and main features of the terrain surrounding the house. Stripped to its bare essentials, however, a view typically offers a low prospect of the house and adjoining buildings, usually the stables, as in Hollar’s view of Aston House (see Plate 2). Michael Burghers’ illustrations for Dr. Robert Plot’s *Natural History of Staffordshire* published in 1686 also follow similar conventions. His prospect of Trentham Hall is taken from within the immediate grounds of the Hall (see Plate 3). With a low viewpoint the west face of the Hall is imposing but the high walls mean that very little of the grounds can be seen. Burghers makes only passing reference to them in the trees and church to the left. The same near-exclusive focusing of attention onto the house occurs in painted portraiture in the period. Jan Siberechts’ painting of Longleat House of 1675 places the viewer at a moderately elevated viewpoint that takes in the house, stables and walled gardens but little else (see Plate 4).

By the 1690s a bird’s-eye view of an estate was becoming the established format for both painted and engraved portraiture. David Loggan’s 1675 technical *tour de force, Oxonia Illustrata* depicted the grounds of Oxford University’s colleges from a high aerial viewpoint (see for example Plate 5). The aim of each engraving was to establish the internal topographical co-ordination of each college’s grounds. His plates are accompanied by a key corresponding to letters imposed onto the view, serving to indicate the location of features such as the refectory and the library. His later 1690 publication *Cantabrigia Illustrata* retained this format but made greater use of the key in order to point out still more features. Loggan was the first artist in
Britain to make the bird’s-eye view his principle method, and an estate or campus rather than a single building his main subject.

By 1712 Jan Kip’s engravings for Sir Robert Atkyns’s The Ancient and Present State of Glostershire [sic] concentrated exclusively on bird’s-eye views of large estates. His views take in the house and the immediate grounds as well as a considerable amount of land outside this domestic sphere. Kip had earlier engraved the views drawn by Leonard Knyff for Britannia Illustrata published in 1707. In a surviving contract made in 1697 with John Holles, 3rd Duke of Newcastle upon Tyne Knyff undertakes the "drawing engraving and printing" of Houghton Hall with "the prospect to be regularly taken about a mile about ye house". The resulting print is similar enough to the others to suggest that this was a standard distance for taking the view (see Plate 6). The terms of the contract suggest that by the turn of the century the primary concern of the patron was to have a view made that incorporated a wide expanse of land. Perspective treatises in the period assumed the viewer’s angle of vision to be ninety degrees. If this was assumed by Knyff then a view of a house taken at a distance of one mile would command a breadth of two miles with the house in the centre. An aerial view could reasonably be expected to command a view of a mile further behind the house as well. The evidence presented by Kip’s engravings is that the bird’s-eye view was developed in order that the artist could depict the great breadth and depth of an estate within a single image. This change is also seen in painted portraiture in the 1690s. Jan Siberechts’ Wollaton Hall is a wide and deep view in which an imposing Elizabethan prodigy house is reduced to the principle element within an expansive view (see Plate 7).

The change in subject and method in the period is traceable from the 1670s and reaches sustained fulfilment in the period after 1707. The bird’s-eye view was not exclusive to artists working later in the period. Working in the 1650s, 70s and 80s, Hollar and Burghers used the method although Burghers’s views do not incorporate the wider estate as with those done by Knyff and Kip. For their part, later artists also continue to produce the prospect views of buildings so popular earlier in the period: only Kip concentrates solely on bird’s-eye views. Generally speaking it may be said

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5 NUL, Cavendish and Holles MSS Pw.2 f.572.
6 See especially Jean Dubreuil, Perspective Practical; or, a plain and easy method of true and lively representing all things to the eye at a distance, by the exact rules of art, trans. Robert Pricke, London, 1678.
that later artists more frequently use earlier methods than earlier artists do later methods.

As well as subject and method of representation, the style of engraved portraiture also changes in the period. As the bird's-eye estate view develops in the work of Loggan, Knyff, Kip and others a plainer and more linear style begins to be used. This change is perceptible, but not a rule. Kip's work for Atkyn's Glostershire is rather sketchy when compared to his work for Britannia Illustrata. On the other hand Burgher's work in Plot's Staffordshire and Charles Leigh's 1700 The Natural History of Lancashire, Cheshire and the Peak in Derbyshire is very plain and bold. Shading is kept to a minimum and only used to accentuate the planar qualities of the walls and ground. On the whole the emphasis in bird's-eye views is to inscribe spatial recession onto the landscape itself by means of centralised or one-point perspective. It is arguably the need to suggest depth within the context of an aerial view that engenders the development of a linear style (see for example the diagram of linear perspective from Jean Dubreuil's Practical Perspective, Plate 8). Ground-level prospects on the other hand lend themselves to a heavier use of shading as a means of suggesting the spatial depth of single bodies. Hollar gives the clearest examples of this tendency. In Aston House the details of the building's lower storey are almost completely obscured by the heavy shading used to pick out the foliage immediately in front of the house (see Plate 2).

Another change in house and estate portraiture, especially in engraved portraiture, is the size of the images. Generally speaking the size of the engravings increases in the period. Hollar's images are inserted into the text of Dugdale and Thoroton's publications, and are often no larger than 15 x 25cm, and frequently much smaller. Knyff and Kip's images on the other hand fill an entire folio leaf and measure around 35 x 50cm. Early in the period the factor determining size was often the question of whether the prints appeared in a volume dedicated to portraiture alone or whether they were illustrations in a county history that was comprised mostly of text. Henry Winstanley's series of prints of Audley End produced in the 1670s, contained eighteen plates mostly measuring around 30 x 40cm. Thoroton's near-contemporary Nottinghamshire on the other hand was comprised of plates that were a similar size to those in Dugdale's Warwickshire.

Later in the period the size of engravings in the county histories became closer to those in volumes devoted to portraiture alone. Knyff, Kip and Henry Hulshburgh
(who engraved plates with Kip for Dr. John Harris's 1719 book *The History of Kent*) produced engravings for both county histories and special portrait-only folios such as *Britannia Illustrata* that were almost identical in subject, method, style and size. Special folios became relatively more frequent after 1690. They account for five out of eight publications featuring portraits from 1690 to 1715, compared to only three out of eight before this date. This increased popularity and especially the success of *Britannia Illustrata* may account for the increased size of portraits in text-based publications later in the period, such as Chauncy's *Hertfordshire*. In more general terms it can be said that more effort and expense is put into house and estate portraiture as the period progresses.

Changes in the subject, method, style and size of engraved house and estate portraiture are exemplified in Knyff and Kip's *Britannia Illustrata*, a volume of eighty large views. The images in the folio are predominantly bird's-eye estate views of country estates. They are engraved in a plain style, with very little shading, and published in a single volume consisting of eighty plates, a title-page and an index. This was not the first time a volume of this size had been projected. Abraham Slezer's 1696 publication *Theatrum Scotiae* consisted of 60 plates, when in fact more had been planned. But the republication of *Britannia Illustrata* in 1708 under the title *Nouveau Theatre de la Grande Bretagne* and the publication of a two-volume expanded edition in 1715 indicates that a mode of portraiture had been established that was consistently to the satisfaction of the buying public. The fact that Atkyns's *Glostershire* and Harris's *Kent* both incorporated bird's-eye views confirms that the mode was something of a sustained climax to earlier changes.

Continental topographical engraving provided a vast body of different styles, subjects, methods and formats with which British-based artists were familiar. William Dugdale pointed out in the Preface to his *Warwickshire* that the works of people like the Ghent scholar Antonious Sanderus were examples for him of

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77 The five volumes in question are David Loggan's *Cantabrigia Illustrata*, 1690; Abraham Slezer’s *Theatrum Scotiae*, 1696; and three editions of *Britannia Illustrata* (one being a French translation, *Nouveau Theatre de la Grande Bretagne*) in 1707, 1708, 1715. The three volumes before this date are Loggan's *Oxonia Illustrata*, 1675; and Henry Winstanley's series of views of Audley End in Essex and Longford House in Wilts. In some cases Winstanley's views were collated into one volume. His views of Audley End were published as a volume with a dedication to James II in 1688.

78 Seventy two out of the eighty images in the first edition are bird's eye views of country estates.
"discourses of this kind". He pointedly made references to the engravings, noting that Sanderus "hath most exquisitely represented, by curious cuts, the cities, towns, monasteries, colledges, and gentleman's houses of note, in these parts, for the better ornament of his storie". Dugdale was probably referring to Sanderus's *Flandria Illustrata*, published in two volumes in 1641-44. A similar two-volume book on Brabant's religious institutions appeared in 1659-63, titled *Chorographia Sacra Brabantiae*. Sanderus's artists and engravers use a range of methods and styles that would appear in Britain over the following half-century.

The influence of *Flandria Illustrata* is not difficult to trace in Dugdale's *Warwickshire* and even in publications as late as Thoroton's *Nottinghamshire* in 1677. Plates such as *Compton House* are inserted into a page of text (see Plate 9). The plate itself is provided with a key, underlining the supremacy of word over image as a means to understanding. It is strikingly similar to the anonymous engravings of Eecke and Everghem printed side by side in *Flandria Illustrata* (see Plate 10). The prospect of Eecke is taken from a low view similar to that of Compton House. Although it does not have a key the presence of one in the image of Everghem and the insertion of the images into a printed page hints again at the primacy of verbalised access to meaning. Sanderus was an example to those in Britain who produced the written histories and present states of counties. His method of combining image and text in relating the history of Flanders was taken up by those involved in similar projects such as Dugdale.

Sanderus's related interest was in ecclesiastical institutions and was paralleled in David Loggan's views of the cloisters of Oxford and Cambridge colleges. The bird's-eye view used so extensively in Loggan's work appears in Sanderus's also. In *Flandria Illustrata* it is used to provide detailed views of churches, chapels and the adjoining complexes of buildings that would not have been possible from a lower viewpoint (see Plate 11). Eighteen years later Sanderus had begun to use large folio sheets for each engraving. However the images are only accompaniments to the text like those in *Flandria Illustrata*. Jacob Neef's engraving of Philip Fruytiers's drawing of the monastery at Mons develops the earlier bird's-eye views of *Flandria Illustrata* both in its size and level of detail (see Plate 12). The view is embellished with coats

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9 William Dugdale, *Antiquities of Warwickshire Illustrated; from records, leiger-books, manuscripts, charters, evidences, tombes and armes; beautified with maps, prospects and portaitures [sic]*, London, 1656, Sig. A4r.

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of arms, scrolled heading and cartouche figures and is accompanied by a lengthy key. The partial exclusion of exterior topography in the earlier engraving has now become more complete. All these later features were to establish themselves in Loggan’s work and change very little between his first publication in 1675 and his second in 1690. The subject matter, method and style of his engravings strongly suggest that he had made a close study of the prints in Sanderus’s *Chorographia.*

In addition to these influences, Sanderus’s publication of the facades of prominent civic buildings was taken up in Britain where civic interest was replaced with images of private buildings. The anonymous engraving *Curia Nova Gandavensis* in *Flandria Illustrata* was only one of many in Sanderus’s volumes (see Plate 13). In Britain it was paralleled by Hollar’s etchings of Richard Hall’s drawings of prominent Nottinghamshire seats in Thoroton’s *Nottinghamshire* and Loggan’s engravings of Trinity College Library in *Cantabrigia Illustrata* (see Plates 14 and 15). Sanderus’s work also included plans and prospects of whole towns, and maps of wider expanses of the countryside. His use of prospects was taken up by Loggan, Dugdale, Thoroton, Slezer, Knyff and Kip, and his use of maps was echoed in the majority of British publications on county topography, as shall be seen later.

One especially interesting feature of the images in Sanderus’s work is the combination of distinct topographical sub-genres in a single image. When the subject was a large geographical area a map and a bird’s-eye view were placed on the same plate and embellished with single prospect views of the principle buildings. An example of this is seen in Lucas Vorsterman II’s engraving of Jan van Archer’s exceptional image of Beveren in *Flandria Illustrata* (see Plate 16). But sometimes these views were combined into composite images. In a print of the town of Stegers in *Flandria Illustrata* the engraver has drawn a prospect of the town at the head of the plate (see Plate 17). Below it is a view of the town taken from a great height. The view is almost so high as to suggest that the view is what publishers called a *plat* (Dutch for "flat"), that is to say a plan of the town’s layout that incorporated bird’s eye views of the buildings. Corresponding images of Warwick seen in a low prospect view and from a very high viewpoint were used in Dugdale’s book in a manner that suggests some influence of Sanderus’s work (see Plate 18). However, Vedastus du Plouich’s engraving of Roesbrugghe combines both a prospect and a scenographic.

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10 Ibid, Sig. A4r.
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plan of the town using the same format of his earlier image of Stegers, but getting rid of the borders (see Plate 19). Chapter Four will demonstrate that stemming from the work of artists like Vorstermans this method was improved upon and grounded in perspective theory in *Britannia Illustrata*. Earlier artists seem to have followed the simple example of engravers like du Plouich. The anonymous engraving of Annesley Park in Thoroton's *Nottinghamshire* combines a plan of part of the park with a scenographic bird's-eye view of Newstead Abbey and a prospect view of Ansley Park (see Plate 20). At the same time various features in the park as well as all the trees are depicted as though seen from a very low viewpoint. The awkwardness of the composition suggests that the artist was copying the method from another source.

Throughout the period Flemish engraving used a variety of methods within the context of one project and sometimes within one image. Although the images in Sanderus's work become larger and become more detailed and lavishly decorated they clearly comprise a diverse body of images identifiable with a number of different sub-genres of topography.

French topography also provided a contemporary example of a number of different styles being used concurrently. Nicolas Langlois's *Veües des Belles Maisons de France*, engraved by Adam Perelle and published c.1685, contained prospect views of royal palaces, and homes belonging to government officials and nobility. Plates such as the plan of the gardens around the Chateau de Clagny use the same combination of plan (ichnographic perspective) and bird's-eye view (scenographic perspective) seen in Flemish topography (see Plate 21). As in the work done for Sanderus's publications, plats rub shoulders with prospect views, seen for example in a prospect view of Clagny (see Plate 22). As John Harris has noted, "examples of important compositional styles can be selected almost at random [in French engraving]."  

French engraving differs from Flemish in its use of whole volumes devoted to views of properties in the country and dispensing with written accompaniment to the images. Plates such as *Le Chateau d'Ancy-le Franc* are smaller than many of those in Sanderus's later works, but are not encumbered by lavish scrollwork, a key, or elaborate cartouche designs (see Plate 23). The plates are plain and the elevated view

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11 See also the later compilation of earlier engravings including plates by Hollar, Perelle and Vorstermans in Baron Jacques Le Roy's *Castella et praetoria nobiliium Brabantiae*, Amsterdam, 1696.
12 Harris, *op. cit.*, p.6.
enables a large number of figures to be included, emphasising the social pleasures and significance of the house whilst its ornate garden designs were described in a separate plate. This development of a less verbal image of country living arguably foreshadows the popularity of the large album format in Britain that had already been used by Henry Winstanley in his plates of Audley End in the 1670s but which attained widespread success only with the publication of *Britannia Illustrata*.

Throughout the period 1660-1715 continental house and estate portraiture consistently used a number of different methods and depicted a number of different subjects. There does not appear to be any apparent logic relating the subject depicted to the method used to depict it. Volumes devoted to different subjects such as Sanderus's *Chorographia* and Langlois’s *Veües des Belles Maisons* both use a selection of techniques. The image one gets of continental portraiture is one of sustained eclecticism. It contrasts with the general picture of British portraiture which consisted of trends that found sustained fulfilment in the bird’s-eye estate view of the early eighteenth century.

The overall image of the relationship between domestic and foreign topography is one of a selective use of continental precedents. English authors, and engravers based in the British Isles were aware of continental methods. In the case of artists such as Vorstermans and Hollar they worked on the continent and in England as well. In some cases, the subject and methods of a continental project are taken and paralleled in England. This happens to some extent in Loggan’s views of Oxford and Cambridge colleges. *Britannia Illustrata* too, although not dwelling on royal palaces still provides an English counterpart to the up to date architecture and image of genteel and sumptuous living seen in Langlois’s work. But even here, Knyff and Kip are rigorously selective in their use of method, whereas Perelle uses prospects, plans and bird’s-eye views in equal measure.

Why British portraiture is so selective in its use of continental techniques is something of a historical puzzle. The problem is compounded by the fact that many engravers and painters working in the genre in England were foreign. Loggan, Hollar, Vorstermans, Siberechts, Jacob and Leonard Knyff, Kip, Burghers and Slezer are just some of the artists that came to Britain from countries where topographical portraiture...
flourished in the mid-seventeenth century. Moreover the full range of continental topography would have been known to royalist exiles during the Interregnum. On their return, royalty and nobles sponsored many county histories: Plot's *Oxfordshire* was dedicated to Charles II, his *Staffordshire* to James II, both of whom were exiles. Leigh's *Lancashire* was dedicated to William Cavendish, 1st Duke of Devonshire who travelled abroad in the Interregnum; Loggan dedicated both his volumes to the reigning monarchs. Henry Winstanley made great play of the fact that Audley End was a royal palace, and his dedication to James Howard, 3rd Earl of Suffolk argued that Audley be seen in the same light as the much-viewed palaces of France and Germany. Furthermore, most of the larger plates published in the period were dedicated to - and paid for by - nobles in inscriptions of varying lengths.

But in spite of British exposure to continental topography in the period, and also in spite of many foreign artists working in Britain, British portraiture is characterised by unilateral changes in style and method rather than the continuous eclecticism of foreign works. It is evident that the antecedents for British portraiture lay in continental works, but to what extent they were precedents remains unclear.

The historical problem might therefore be framed as follows: what were the factors determining the selective use of foreign methods, styles and subjects in British house and estate portraiture? Why didn’t British portraiture parallel the eclecticism that characterised foreign portraiture throughout the period? And perhaps more importantly for British art, why did the bird’s-eye estate view flourish in the period c.1690-c.1715 when it had been an established feature of the continental corpus since the mid-seventeenth century?

*The wider context of published portraiture in Britain, c.1660-1715*

It is clear from a brief look at British topographical images in the period that house and estate portraiture was only part of a family of images that also included maps, *plats* and town prospects. House and estate portraiture itself was done in prospect and bird’s-eye views from a variety of heights and from a number of distances. Moreover, prospects and other forms of topographical image such as the *plat* were sometimes

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13 On the spread of portraiture out of Holland to Germany and France, see especially Harris, *op. cit.*, p.4.
14 On William Cavendish, see DNB.
combined in a composite image. Although the broad direction of change in the period is from a low house prospect to an elevated, bird’s-eye estate view, portraits continue to appear as part of a large family of images until the end of the seventeenth century. These other images have to be taken into account in addressing the problem outlined above.

The majority of the engravings that constituted much of British portraiture prior to 1700 appeared in county histories. Dugdale, Thoroton, Plot, Chauncy and Leigh all included portraits in their histories. In addition to this corpus, Loggan's *Oxonia Illustrata* was intended as an accompaniment to Anthony à Wood's *History of Oxford* published in 1674: the engravings contain page references to Wood's work.\(^{16}\) In all these publications portraits appear alongside maps, *plats* and town prospects, as well as frequently sharing space with engravings of notable antiquities and natural phenomena.

In county histories prior to 1700 it is the map that takes precedence in the author's scheme of things. Plot boasts about the map in his book in the Preface to *Oxfordshire*: "I dare to promise the reader that it far exceeds any we had before".\(^{17}\) County histories such as Thomas Philipot's *Villare Cantianum: or Kent surveyed and illustrated* (1659) contained a map but no portraits, as did Richard Blome's *Britannia: or, a geographical description of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1673) and Plot's *Natural History of Oxfordshire* (1677). As well as emphasising the accuracy of their maps, the authors pointed out how much they contained, including as they did not only towns, parishes and villages but also the seats of the gentry. Philipot's map was inscribed:

> A New Description of Kent [...] comprehendinge as well the cities; the usual market townes; and the portes [...] as also such of the houses of the nobylities and gentrye as the platt could conveniently receave.\(^{18}\)

Plot drew attention to the scales of the map in his book, "by which divisions, 'tis easy to know to a minute of a degree, nay almost to a second, in what latitude every town,

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16 Howard was a godson of Charles I and was promoted by Charles II: see DNB.
17 See DNB, Loggan.
As a visual overview of the subject a map could witness to the accuracy of the author’s work as well as emphasising the human features of the terrain rather than the geographical, and the social aspects of these features in particular.

House and estate portraits can be seen as accompaniments to the maps which drew attention to the social and geographical co-ordinates of a county. Many of the portraits note the geographical context of the house and in particular the direction the view is taken from. This is fitting with the desire for accuracy in using longitude and latitude in maps. Moreover, the plat serves as a mediator between the map and the portrait. Its frequent use suggests a continuity of purpose between map, plat and portrait. Loggan’s Oxonia Illustrata contains a large scenographic town plan that recalls his use of scenographic perspective in the composition of his bird’s-eye views (see Plate 24). His Cantabrigia Illustrata on the other hand displays a plan of Cambridge drawn in ichnographic perspective, that it to say with no illusion (in theory) of spatial depth (see Plate 25). It recalls the maps of hundreds and counties, such as Robert Vaughan’s map of Kineton Hundred in Dugdale’s Warwickshire (see Plate 26). Both the plate of Cambridge and the map in Dugdale’s work have scenographic effects, such as the castle and the trees. This use of different modes of perspective in one image demonstrates the inter-functionality of maps, plats, bird’s-eye views and prospects that is suggested in their juxtaposition in the county histories.

As the titles of county histories suggest, they also served as vehicles for promoting the study and claims of antiquarian and natural history. A consequence is that alongside portraits, maps and plats are engravings of statues, tombs, inscriptions and natural phenomena. Plot’s Natural History of Staffordshire is the most prominent example of the natural historian’s participation in county history, although not the first. It contains equal numbers of plates of natural phenomena (see Plate 27), and of prospects of gentry’s houses such as Trentham Hall (see Plate 3). The differences in subject matter are obvious, and so too are the differences in conception of the illustration itself. In Trentham Hall the perspective is used to create an illusion of space, in particular the depth of the gardens and the projecting bays of the building itself. In the other plate, each object is depicted in isolation and with a different scale: there is no formal or illusive unity to bind the images together.

19 Plot, op. cit., Sig. B2v.
There are also similarities between the plates in Plot's *Staffordshire*. Both classes of plate are inscribed with dedications to the local gentry, indicating perhaps a degree of prestige in sponsoring the project as a whole, but also an interest divided equally between viewing houses and uncovering the mysteries of nature. The way in which various items are laid out for the viewer's inspection in the latter plate is also echoed in the bird's-eye views in Plot's volume. His plate of Ingestre Hall presents a view that contains more information than the view of Trentham Hall (see Plate 28). Each item is depicted as a separate form from its neighbour and drawn distinctly. The context is still one of illusive space, but there is a greater interest in examining each body on its own, inducing the viewer to piece together topographical co-ordinates and relationships of each figure. This suggests that its formal similarity to the plate depicting natural phenomena was complemented by a formal and functional similitude to the large map in the front of the volume.

Plot's juxtaposition of portraits and illustrations of natural phenomena is unique in the period, but his association of the study of natural history with the interests of the gentry class is not. Charles Leigh and Gerard Boate both wrote county histories from the point of view of natural history. A more prominent figure in the period, Richard Blome drew attention in his *Britannia* to an "alphabetical catalogue of the names, titles and seats of the nobility and gentry that each county in England and Wales is (or lately was) enobled with". Blome's well-known *The Gentleman's Recreation* included essays on topics as diverse as agriculture, hunting and the Game Laws; he also published books on heraldry. William Dugdale published a large book on the drainage of fens. John Ray and Francis Willughby's *Ornithology* of 1678, sponsored by the Royal Society, juxtaposed detailed comparative examinations of birds with essays on the gentlemanly pursuits of fowling and falconry. Portraits did not appear in all these volumes but the author's interest in natural history is seen in the light of an awareness about the interests of the gentry class.

Another context in which portraits were printed was as part of the antiquarian study of a county's history. Dugdale's *Warwickshire* claimed to be compiled "from records, leiger-books, manuscripts, charters, evidences, tombes and armes" and

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contained many engravings of the latter two items (see Plate 29). Thoroton’s Nottinghamshire was "extracted out of records, original evidences, leiger books, other manuscripts and authentic authorities" and was likewise accompanied by similar images. Thomas Philipot drew attention to the fact that his survey of Kent was taken from old records. One of the principle attractions of antiquarian study was that it enabled its author to trace the history of the gentry in the county. Chauncy showed an interest in the past and present state of the gentry when he published The Historical Antiquities of Hertfordshire... describing... the several Honors, Mannors, Castles, Seats, and Parks of the Nobility and Gentry; and the succession of the lords of each manor therein. Philipot’s survey consisted of "an exact description and survey of all the parishes, boroughs, villages, and other respective manors included in the county of Kent; and, the original and intermedial posessors of them, even until these times". Blome justified his survey of Britain and catalogue of the gentry’s seats by noting how "the face of the kingdom [is] so much changed from what it [...] was, I mean to the families of the gentry in each county".

If the practical end of antiquarian study was to record the history of the gentry’s families the authors still proclaimed their calling in rather loftier terms. Philipot noted how "[a]ntiquity is the great luminary of time, which dispels those clouds, that like a gloomy skreen, interspersing between the object and the understanding, cast it into error and misapprehension". Henry Chauncy presented a more substantiated claim to enlightenment when he associated his Historical Antiquities of Hertfordshire with the inductive method of natural history pursued by Francis Bacon and latterly by the Royal Society. He noted that:

[The age] will be apt to expect, the descriptions I here present to the world should have been delivered in the most elegant and lively language [...] but [...] the theme I've been engaged

22 William Dugdale, The History of Imbanking and drayning of divers Fens and Mashes, both in forein parts and in this kingdom; and of the improvements thereby, London, 1662.
23 Dugdale, Warwickshire, title-page.
24 Robert Thoroton, The Antiquities of Nottinghamshire, extracted out of records, original evidences, leiger books, other manuscripts and authentic authorities, beautified with maps, prospects and portraictures, London, 1677, title-page.
27 Philipot, op. cit., title-page.
28 Blome, Britannia, Sig. A2v.
29 Philipot, op.cit., Sig. Av.
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upon, in respect of its so vastly different ingredients, seems to me, of all others, the least capable of rhetorical flourishes, and a smooth, methodical conduct [...] History, so far as I'm capable of judging, has but rarely appeared in the Poliest dress.31

Chauncy claimed that he wrote his history according to the evidences as he found them. He was not able to use one method of enquiry, because to do so would have signified a fixed subjective viewpoint. Because of "vastly different ingredients" he has had to adapt his view to the evidence, rather than vice versa, avoiding the "rhetorical flourishes" that he hints are the prevailing fashion, as noted in his reference to "history" rarely appearing "in the politest dress". This is perhaps an acknowledgement that natural history and antiquarian study share a common purpose insofar as both claim to draw their conclusions from the evidence rather than from a preconceived point of view. Chauncy's claim that his approach was determined by "vastly different ingredients" recalls Burgher's illustrations of natural phenomena in Plot's Staffordshire. There too an array of diverse objects was juxtaposed with an image of leisure and order at Trentham Hall, whose elaborate garden walls spell out the names of monarchs and proclaim an interest in humanist history that opposes the natural historian's claim to rise above the limits of human-centred perception.

In Chauncy's book, published in 1700, the themes of antiquity, natural history and social history are brought together. His work exemplifies the association of the gentry's interests with the study of natural and antiquarian history that was a constant theme of late seventeenth-century county history. House and estate portraiture appeared alongside maps, plats, natural history illustrations and antiquarian objects. The underlying theme of all these images was means to a new and more certain knowledge about the county; the accuracy of the maps in particular proved a favourite source of distinction between the publications. But this theme was always closely associated with the social makeup of a county. Maps took great pains to point out the seats of the gentry and nobility. Antiquity and natural history was associated with the history, pastimes and land-owning interests of the gentry. It is in this visually diverse, discursively complex and socially pointed context that the development of portraiture must be considered.

The relationships between portraiture, surveys and county histories

31 Chauncy, op. cit., Sig. B2v.
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The common theme running through the county histories of the period is the characterisation of a book as a survey done for gentlemen. The notion of a survey was ill-defined, being confused with topography and description and their visual counterparts, prospects and maps. Richard Kilburne indecisively titled his book "Topographie or survey of the countie of Kent", betraying an uncertainty over precisely what each word signified. This uncertainty is compounded through his use of the word "description" as an adjective for a verbal examination of each parish in the county. Thomas Philipot likewise used "survey" and "description" interchangeably in the title to his book. He further confused the issue by inscribing his map "A new description of Kent" and then stating in his Preface "I shall now take the county of Kent by survey or prospect". He suggests that description can be linked with visual as well as verbal activity. He is joined by Hugh Plat, who modestly titled his 1675 book on husbandry:

The Garden of Eden: or, an accurate description of all the flowers and fruits now growing in England, with particular rules how to advance their nature and growth. By that learned and great observer, Sir Hugh Plat Kt.

Plat evidently conceived that a skill in observation acted as guarantee for the accuracy of his descriptions. In his Preface Plat elaborates on the connections he perceived between observation and the value of his work, calling his book "a pretty volume of experimental observations" that he "wrung out of the earth by the painful hand of experience". The experimental dimension of description and survey is further supported by Dugdale, who in a Preface dedicated to "the gentrie of Warwickshire" suggests that his book follows in a tradition of county histories with titles such as The Perambulation of Kent, The Survey of Cornwall and The Description of Leicestershire. His language places his book and the notion of survey, in particular, into a register of land-owning interests. A perambulation was a journey on foot.

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32 Philipot, op. cit., Sig. A2v.
33 Hugh Plat, The Garden of Eden: or, an accurate description of all the flowers and fruits now growing in England, with particular rules how to advance their nature and growth, London, 1675, title-page.
34 Plat, op. cit.
35 William Lambard's 1576 Perambulation of Kent, containing the description, Hystorie, and Customs of the Shyre had last been published in 1596; Richard Carew published The Survey of Cornwall in
around a property for the purpose of compiling an itinerary that could be worked up into a full list of parcels of land - a survey - or into a written description - a terrier. As Catherine Delano-Smith and Roger Kain point out, perambulation was a skill "needed by what we would call a land agent" rather than a cartographer, for whom method of triangulation (a series of intersecting measurements taken from one spot) had surpassed the laborious perambulation. But the inclusion of maps, prospect views and town plats in Dugdale's work would have made the relationship between land-owning terminology and visual material clear enough.

The remarks of Dugdale, Kilburne, Plat and others suggest that they conceived the notion of survey to encompass a number of visual, verbal and other practices associated with land-owning and improvement. Within the context of county history too they were also concerned with natural history and antiquarian study as the means to newer and more accurate knowledge of the objects under their scrutiny.

Historians have pointed out that the late seventeenth-century gentry relate the need for new and certain knowledge to practices of mapping and surveying in the service of rendering their land-owning into a profitable economic concern. Delano-Smith and Kain note the rise of the English county atlas in the period replacing new surveys and single-sheet maps. As has been seen, county atlases placed great value on their maps, but drew attention to both their accuracy and their location of the gentry's houses rather than to their novelty per se. Maps were supplemented with prospect views and written descriptions of the precise location of each parish and gentleman's house. Delano-Smith and Kain argue that:

[T]he economic imperatives of the new capitalism encouraged developments in the science of surveying [...] the need for a landowner to "know his own" was felt strongly in the seventeenth century. The phrase [...] recurs like a motif from surveying manual to surveying manual.

The full significance of estate maps will be seen in the following chapters. For now it is only necessary to indicate that economic thought associated with acquisitive practices in land-owning was reflected in a sharpened focus on the country seat in the

1602; William Burton's *The description of Leicester shire: containing matters of antiquitye, historye, armorye, and genealogy* appeared in 1622.
37 Ibid., p.78.
38 Ibid., p.117.
county history and a concern with precise, determinable topographical location consistent with an interest in knowing one's own property as a quantifiable area.

Andrew McRae has drawn attention to "a gathering wave of English husbandry writing" in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries that addressed itself to "manorial lords" rather than to lesser husbandmen. He places particular historical significance on the "innovative empiricism which shapes agricultural writing in the seventeenth century." His thesis is that the empiricist bias of husbandry engendered not only a practical but also an intellectual position with regard to the relationship between the improving and acquisitive landowner and the more traditional social structure of the manorial lord and his dependants. McRae notes:

In the course of the seventeenth century, the discourse of agrarian improvement is consolidated in a form which would underpin representations of land well into the eighteenth century. Most importantly, texts [on husbandry] demonstrate [...] the rise of a language of reason in application to both farming practices and tenurial relationships; and the consolidation of social and economic 'freedom' as a dominant ideal.

This language and ideal was reconciled in the notion of the freeholder in which the ingenuity of the improver who wished to enclose his land was framed as a question of reason rather than acquisition. This notion of reason in turn "converges upon a rhetoric of economic freedom" where economic restriction and social obligation become obstacles to the exercise of this reason. McRae argues that the significance of an economically driven idea of reason for issues of representation is that:

[These ideals of economic freedom and strict legal definition of individual rights combined further to inform an appreciation of the central importance of "freehold" property [...] The contemporary estate surveyor consistently proclaimed the need for every person to "know one's own" and this assumption of title strongly definable in legal and spatial terms eroded the perception of "land ownership" as a bundle of rights rooted in custom.]

36 Ibid., p.138.
37 Ibid., pp.156-7.
38 Ibid., p.162.
39 Ibid., pp.163-4.
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The practical implications for representational practices hinged on the surveyor's understanding of the verb "to know". McRae argues that "it assumes a social and economic order in which rights to the land can be clearly and objectively determined". Reducing land-ownership to "facts and figures" heralds a "new spatial rationalism", a "representation of land as a commodity easily transferable within the market economy".

McRae points out the important relationship between the concerns of the landowning classes and the need for a new and certain knowledge of the land. This relationship between epistemology and the interests of the gentry has already been seen in the county histories in the period. Publications such as Chauncy's Hertfordshire and Philipot's Kent claimed that their value lay in how the objects they studied were not given "rhetorical flourishes" or made to appear "in the politest dress". Keith Thomas has called the creation of new classificatory systems in the period a "revolution in perception". Thomas argues that in the seventeenth century naturalists in particular "developed a novel way of looking at things, a new system of classification and one which was more detached, more objective, less man-centred than that of the past". Scientific ideas "that nature and human society were fundamentally distinct" can also be seen in the practices of surveying outlined by McRae, where economic imperatives determined the conceptual alienation of land from social structures, the quantifiable from the unquantifiable.

The objectivity striven for in maps and other visual documents therefore derives from the separation of the geographical from the social. The claimed separation of the categories of social and natural is something of a fiction because as has been seen maps contained details of the seats belonging to nobles and gentlemen. Genealogies too emphasised the social prestige of families as much as their long-standing association with one place. By holding up a map or genealogy as an objective document free from the impositions of human preference or influence, the

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44 Ibid., p.178.
46 Ibid., p.186.
47 See Chauncy, op. cit., title-page.
49 Ibid., p.52.
50 Ibid., p.91.
51 See, for example, Thoroton's discussion of the Clifton family of Clifton, Nottinghamshire: Thoroton, op. cit., pp.55-7.
county history colluded with the naturalist's wish to construct "a detached natural scene to be viewed and studied by the observer from the outside, as if peering through a window". The critical point to recognise is that by separating man and nature and proposing the objective status of previously socially-defined rights such as landowning, the county history publication constructed a notion that the properties of the nobility and gentry were not social phenomena but rather belonged in the category of natural phenomena. Their class and its property were co-existent with the land itself.

The published late-seventeenth century county history therefore put into practice the ideals of the surveyor in the service of legitimising a new economically productive and socially contentious mode of landowning in the period. The changes observed earlier in painted and engraved house and estate portraiture arguably enjoy a close relationship with this discourse of landowning and the surveyor. This relationship is twofold. On the one hand the development of the bird's-eye view is a transition from depicting the house to depicting the estate that reflects the growth in mapping estates in order to "know one's own" in the seventeenth century. A bird's-eye view offered a full and near-complete knowledge of an estate, just as earlier continental bird's-eye views offered a detailed view of an estate or town and an expanse of land surrounding it. In the same way, maps were understood to offer a visual consolidation of property identified in a survey. They also reproduced much of the survey's written information, anticipating the bird's-eye view's use of a key.

The similarities between bird's-eye views and estate maps should not be over emphasised. Estate maps recorded only the owner's land, and the rest of the paper was simply left blank. Moreover, they recorded which parcels of land belonged to whom, what their precise acreage was, and the rent paid on the land. In only a few cases did the estate map actually depict the landlord's manorial seat, as often the maps accompanied surveys of land that lay at a distance from the landlord's seat. On the other hand, bird's-eye estate views invariably centred on the family seat and often a large portion of the surrounding environment depicted as ornamental gardens rather than rented agricultural land. Although the land is sometimes depicted as being farmed it is never clear by whom it is cultivated. It was also a consequence of using one-point perspective that a view inevitably included glimpses of land that didn't...
belong to the gentleman or nobleman in question, or that it excluded nearby land that
did belong to the landowner. Either way, centralised perspective claimed to
reproduce the physical conditions of viewing with no respect for the significance of
what was seen.^^

The second aspect of the relationship between estate mapping and bird’s-eye
views takes the form of a question over the status of the images themselves.
Publications on surveying looked closely at the role of maps in an acquisitive
landowner’s conception of his property. William Leybourne’s *The Compleat Surveyor*
of 1653 included a model map (see Plate 30). This map showed an area of land in the
middle of which was the landowner’s seat. Maps had become contentious objects
because they effected a distinction between the geographical and exclusive conception
of space, and a social and inclusive conception in which authority was defined in
terms of social relations. McRae points out that maps offered the “potential for
allowing the landlord to withdraw from the society of his manor”. They “replac[ed]
the constant patrol of the lord’s feet with the ‘suddaine view’ from the manor house”. The model map in Leybourne’s book presents an image of land and landowner from
which society has been excluded. Equally significant is the fact that the map
supercedes the actual land itself as the object of visual attention. As has been seen,
historians such as Dugdale and Chauncy insisted on the accuracy of their publications
with respect to their maps and transcription of historical records. They also stressed
how their descriptions were grounded in experience – whether perambulations (an
older style of land management) or observations (a newer, more detached style). This
might be seen in part as a palliative to those who were wary of maps and their
associations with new economic imperatives. But it could also be seen as an
identification of description with experience, a means of transferring the
acknowledged value of the latter onto the former. This function would be fitting with
the pattern of the landlord’s withdrawal from society insofar as his land and rights
became enshrined objectively rather than in social custom. This was certainly the fear
of tenants in the period. As the surveyor’s apologist John Norden had two
protagonists complain in his 1612 *Surveyor’s Dialogue*:

53 Although linear perspective nominally depicted everything seen from the foreground to the far
horizon, Chapter Four will show how artists in the latter part of the period manipulated it in order to
place the horizon on the edge of the estate boundary, suggesting that the respective limits of vision and
of the estate were commensurate.

54 McRae, *op. cit.*, p.192.
[W]e country-men doe not thinke it good to have our lands plotted out, and me thinks indeed it is to very small purpose: for is not the field itself a goodly map for the Lord to looke upon, better than a painted paper?  

Norden's "countrey-men" project the attributes of the map onto the field. Arguably their doing so hints at an insecurity that a map would be understood by the landlord not simply as an image of the field, but as a substitute object of visual contemplation. The map objectified the landlord's rights over his property. By replacing the field with the map an individualist and acquisitive rather than a social and custom-based conception of ownership was engendered.

The transferral of values garnered through experience to description and visual documents is something undertaken by naturalists as much as map-makers (as Chapter Two will argue) as part of a process of objectifying their systems of classification. At present, the point to be made is that insofar as maps take on themselves the attributes of experience they become objects of attention in their own right. Rather than being simply a means to visualisation of a written survey they assume an objectifying function.

Within the context of country histories the transferral of the attributes of experience to the images themselves must also be taken seriously. Although county histories do not deal with estate maps per se they still insist on the natural place of the gentry within a county and associate family and place in much the same way that estate maps identify land with ownership. Moreover many county histories insist on the objectivity of their researches, just as apologists for surveying claimed that maps offered a fuller and more complete knowledge of the land than had hitherto been available. The close association of maps with house and estate portraits, and county histories with maps suggests that portraits, maps and plats contained in county histories were not simply regarded as a means to "ornament" and "beautify" a book. Bird's-eye views contained many of the formal attributes of estate maps such as written content, comprehensive imagery and (later) an exclusion of land not part of the estate. More importantly the ontological status of estate maps was in question and

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55 Ibid., p.193.  
58 Dugdale, *op. cit.*, Sig. A4r, title-page.
this raises possibilities for thinking that the bird's-eye view was not simply thought of as a pictorial illusion.

The ideological context of surveying: Gilbert Burnet's Travels (1686)

The justification behind the compilation of the county history was that it provided a thorough and verifiable knowledge of the county. This justification was based on the principle that land was something that could be viewed in a detached manner as a sphere of nature to be distinguished from the human world. This principle was important in suggesting that land could be seen as the alienable property of a gentleman. County histories suggest that land demands to be looked at in such a way.

In claiming an objective outlook county histories incorporate certain economic and social assumptions into their representations. As sympathetic but more overtly ideological pieces of literature, Gilbert Burnet's hugely popular Travels of 1686 and his sermon at Robert Boyle's funeral in 1692 are good examples of how the assumptions that lay behind surveying and the county histories were objectified. Burnet shares the empiricist and social bias of county historians. The Travels are addressed to Robert Boyle and constitute a continuous series of observations in the manner of a perambulation as Burnet travels from place to place. Like those historians such as Dugdale who invoke the perambulation in their prose surveys Burnet places political importance in the landowning classes. On an ideological plane, Burnet and the county historians both claim the givenness of the rural social order in the design of nature and recall their experience of nature to back this up. The Travels follow many county histories by introducing the broader conceptual claims of natural philosophy to a social and economic context and give ideological substance to the economic principles of surveying. The overall significance of the Burnets work for house and estate portraiture is that it engages with many of the issues around surveying raised by county histories and go on to outline a coherent ideology of surveying.

At the outset of the Travels the tone is established with a disclaimer:

I will not describe the valley of Dauphine [a province on the Rhône in south-east France], all to Chambey, nor entertain you with a landskip of the country, which deserves a much better pencil than mine, and in which the height and rudeness of the mountains, that almost shut in upon it,
together with the beauty, the evenness and fruitfulness of the valley that is all along watered
with the river of Liserre, make such an agreeable mixture, that this diversity of objects, that do
at once fill the eye, gives it a very entertaining prospect.59

The description has a theatrical air about it. The view is taken in at one glance, from a
fixed spot from where the mountains, valley and river "make such an agreeable
mixture". It is an "entertaining prospect" that is "shut in" like a natural theatre. The
language Burnet uses is rhetorical: "rudeness [...] beauty [...] fruitfulness [...] agreeable [...] entertaining" are calculated to contrast his description with those of
more talented artists. It recalls Chauncey's criticism of the "smooth methodical
conduct" of rhetoricians.

The distancing from rhetoric in the Travels is accompanied by an interest in
practical matters. Burnet's evident awareness of husbandry is signified in the
language of later passages in the book. Travelling through the Roman Campagna
Burnet writes:

All the way [ie. the country] from Florence, through the Great Duke's country, looked so sad,
that I concluded, it must be the most dispeopled of all Italy: but indeed, I changed my mind
when I came into the Pope's territories, at Pont Centino, where there was a rich bottom, all
uncultivated, and not so much stocked with cattle, but as I passed from Mount Fiascone to
Viterbo, this appeared yet more amazing; for a vast champain country lay almost quite
deserted, and that wide town, which is of so great a compass, hath yet so few inhabitants, and
those looked so poor and miserable, that the people in the ordinary towns in Scotland, and in
its worse places, make a better appearance. When I was within a day's journey of Rome, I
fancied that the neighbourhood of so great a city must mend the matter; but I was much
disappointed; for a soil that was so rich, and lay so sweetly, that it far exceeded anything I
ever saw out of Italy, had neither inhabitants in it, nor cattle on it, to the tenth part of what it
could bear: the surprise that this gave me, increased upon me as I went out of Rome on its
other side, chiefly all the way to Naples, and on the way to Civita Vecchia; for that vast and
rich champain country, that runs all along to Terracina, which from Civita Vecchia is a
hundred and twenty miles long, and is in many places twelve or twenty miles broad, is
abandoned to such a degree, that as far as one's eye can carry one, there is often not so much
as a house to be seen [except] on the hills, that are on the north side of this valley[.]

59 Gilbert Burnet, Letters, containing an account of what seemed most remarkable in travelling through Switzerland, Italy, and some parts of Germany &c in the years 1685 and 1686 (hereafter referred to as Travels), Amsterdam, 1688, p.4.
60 Ibid., pp.131-2.
It is worth noting Burnet's repeated, deliberate observations on husbandry and economics. He takes care to emphasise time and again the potential bounty of the region. The soil is "a rich bottom [...] a vast champain country [...] rich [...] [a] vast and rich champain country". Closely following these notes are comments on the low population. The land, says Burnet, "must be the most dispeopled of all Italy [...] not so much stocked with cattle [...] lay almost quite deserted [...] hath yet so few inhabitants [...] had neither inhabitants in it, or cattle on it [...] is abandoned to such a degree".

The size of the population was a cause for considerable concern in late seventeenth-century England, which believed its own population to be in numerical decline. More generally speaking, Burnet's description of poverty amidst nature's bounty constitutes a radical departure from the tenets of Virgilian georgic poetry. Abraham Cowley's translation of Virgil's second Georgic, published in 1668, incorporates most of the elements to be found in Burnet's description but with different sentiment:

Oh happy, (if his happinesse he knows)
The Countrey Swain! On whom kind Heav'n bestows
At home all Riches that kind Nature needs;
Whom the just Earth with easie plenty feeds
[...] his kind and harmless life
Free from th'allarms of fear, and storms of strife,
Does with substantial blessedness abound,
[...] and his ground
With lowing Herds, and bleating sheep does sound;
[...] Here a well hard'ned active youth we see,
Taught the great Art of chearful Povertie.\(^{61}\)

The landscape in Burnet's description is not "happy", does not "sound" with "lowing herds, and bleating sheep". The effortless bounty and "active youth" of Cowley's vision contrast with the "uncultivated" landscape and "miserable" inhabitants of the Campagna. Burnet claims to mercilessly expose the harsh reality of rural economics, sharpening his point with a contrast to Cowley's georgic ideal.

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Another aspect of Burnet's description is that it may be said to operate within a georgic register itself. In Joseph Addison's words the georgic "consists in giving plain and direct instructions to the reader".\(^6^2\) Burnet does this to some degree. His description has one scene merging into another. The features of the landscape are listed as though he was compiling a brief itinerary, constructing an internal picture of the landscape rather than an image of its external situation. As Delano-Smith and Kain point out, this was the purpose of a landlord or surveyor performing a perambulation. The quality of the soil is noted, as well as the number and possessions of the inhabitants, as though they were tenants on an English landlord's property. It was an analogy he was never far from making: in another part of the *Travels* he notes of the Villa Borghese, "I thought I was in an English park, when I walked over it".\(^6^3\) His description is an itinerary compiled in a workmanlike manner rather than a "prospect" that he can "entertain" someone with. By placing his description within a tradition of Georgic instruction he draws attention to the practical experience informing his itinerary without resorting to the rhetorical aspects of the georgic ideal.

The practical orientation of Burnet's description is its most significant feature. It becomes important when Burnet uses the description as part of a critique of Papal absolutist rule. Burnet labours his practical-mindedness in the conclusion to his narrative of the state of the Roman countryside:

> In a word, it is the rigour of the government that hath driven away the inhabitants; and their being driven away, hath now reduced it to such a pass; that it is hardly possible to repeople it: for such as would come to drain and cultivate it, must run a great hazard, and few can resolve on that, when they hope for no other reward for their industry, but an uneasy government [...] [A]n hereditary prince is induced to consider his posterity, and to maintain his people, so that those who come after him may still support the rank they hold in the world: but an elective prince hath nothing of that in his eye [...] and thus a Pope, who comes in late to this dignity, which by consequence he cannot hope to hold long, doth very naturally turn to those councils, by which his family may make all the hay they can during this sunshine [...] so that he is the most absolute Prince in Europe.\(^6^4\)

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\(^6^3\) Burnet, *Travels*, p. 164.
In general, the *Travels* tout a political line that equated "protestantism with prosperity and popery with poverty and slavery". On a personal level they form a critique of James II's Roman Catholicism and absolutist inclinations, and of the regime in general, from which Burnet had exiled himself in 1683 and 1685. On a deeper level, Burnet is drawing attention to the relationship between the land and a particular form of government. Absolutist government and agricultural prosperity do not mix, he says. His description pointedly contrasts rural plenty and Papal rule, and this in itself is a significant comment when seen in the light of Cowley's repeated emphasis on the happiness of the swain "on whom kind Heav'n bestows / [...] all riches". Papal domination is a cruel inversion of heavenly munificence.

But Burnet does not simply invoke the georgic register to show how absolutism is a parody of rural bliss. His use of the georgic mode enables him to suggest that he has first-hand experience of agricultural matters and enables him to hint at a familiarity with nature and a knowledge of her designs. The hands-on aspect of his description suggests a privileged and reliable first hand knowledge of the subject itself. His pragmatism is clearest in a passage at the beginning of a supplement to his *Travels* first published in 1688:

> Those Italians that have seen the wealth and abundance that is in England, and Holland, tho' their sun is less favourable, and their climate is more unhappy, and that come home to see their towns deserted, and their inhabitants in rags, speak of [...] the difference between Holland and Italy like men affected when they compare the two soils and climates together. The one is a soil divided between sand and surf, preserved from the inundations of land-floods, and the overflowing of the sea, at a vast charge, suffering often such losses as would ruin other states, and paying great and constant impositions: and yet with all these inconveniences, and all the disadvantages of a feeble sun, a stagnating and phlegmatic air, violent colds, and moderate, or at least very short heats, this country is full of wealth and people; and there is in it such abundance of great towns and considerable villages, and in all these there appear so many marks of plenty, and none at all of want: and the other has a kind sun, long and happy summers, and mild winters; a fruitful and a rich soil, and everything that the inhabitants can wish for on nature's

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Burnet compares Dutch pragmatism in the face of an unfavourable environment with the kind Italian environment and the meanness of the clergy. The Dutch have built sea barriers and an impressive drainage system "at a vast charge". The result is that in spite of "suffering often such losses as would ruin other states" they prosper. On the other hand Italy has "everything that the inhabitants can wish for on nature's part", but fail to realise the promise of their environment.

The key sentence in the passage is the one that states "[a]nd as much as the Dutch seem to have acted in spite of nature on the one hand, in rendering themselves much more considerable than she has intended they should be; so the government of Italy seems to have [reversed] the design of nature as much on the other hand, by reducing the inhabitants to such a degree of misery, in spite of all her bounty: upon this subject, the Italians will talk more freely than upon matters of religion, and do not stick to say that [...] priests have not souls big enough, nor tender enough, for government: they have both a narrowness of spirit, and sourness of mind, that does not agree with the principles of human society."

Beneath the sectarian polemic is a strong defence of a practical empiricist approach to managing the landscape. In Britain it would have found strong resonance with publications such as William Dugdale's *The History of Imbanking and drayning of divers Fenns and Marshes* (1662) and the seventeenth century drainage projects in eastern England. By not making the most of what nature has given them, the Italians "have [reversed] the design of nature". Burnet is evolving his empirical approach into a conception of "nature" as a distinct entity separate from the human sphere by focusing on nature's allowance for human intervention in the course of improving the landscape.

Burnet's description is a suggestion that pragmatic approaches to land management are invited by the very constitution of nature itself. Here there is a

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67 [Gilbert Burnet], *Three Letters concerning the Present State of Italy, written in the year 1687 [...] being a supplement to Dr Burnet's Letters*, [hereafter referred to as *Supplement*], [London], 1688, pp.4-6; "[reversed]" is actually given "reserved" in the text; I have taken this to be a typsetting error. The
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theme of bringing nature's order out of chaos. Hierarchical as well as classificatory distinctions are at work. Dutch rationalism is seen as the bridge between the natural and human spheres and also between physical reality and metaphysical ideality. The "inundations of land-floods, and the overflowing of the sea" in Holland is seen as part of "the design of nature" that demands and elicits a particular response.

The doctrine of nature's design in Burnet's descriptions was probably derived from the work of Henry More and other neo-platonist philosophers in the mid-seventeenth century. Following Rene Descartes, More argued that the conceptions a person formulated in their mind, such as a belief in the absolute certainty of God and self, were the only truths of which a person could be sure. Mental conceptions of abstract phenomena, such as geometric shapes, were more perfect than could ever be met with in reality. But More did not make mutually exclusive distinctions between mind and matter. Defining both spirit and matter as substance, More said that both substances existed in spatial extension, "for to take away all extension is to reduce a thing only to a mathematical point, which is nothing else but pure negation or non-entity". Arguing against a conception of the physical universe as composed solely of self-sufficient matter, More proposed that the relation between material and spiritual substance was an intimate union, which:

[D]oes not arise from any gross mechanical way as when two bodies stick one in another [...] but from a congruity of another nature, I know not better how to term than vital: which vital congruity is chiefly in the soul itself [...] but is also in the matter.

More's philosophy thus proposes a definition of reality that has a particular spiritual significance, denying matter any degree of self-sufficiency, and imbuing it with active spiritual principles. This is not just a case of matter being improved by spirit, but also a proposition that spirit must have a local sphere of action, rather than being a universally present and indivisible substance.

Supplement was published anonymously but Clarke and Foxcroft hold that Burnet wrote it from "materials provided by H. Sidney and Dr. Hutton"; Clarke and Foxcroft, op cit., p.535.


Ibid., p.270.


62
As Margaret C. Jacob has pointed out, there was nothing inherent in the natural philosophy of More, his contemporaries or successors, to link it to social or political theory. Any linkage that is evident, she argues, arises "from historical reasons", in other words, it is circumstantial. This is arguably the case with Burnet's Travels. But it is still important to remember that at the very heart of Burnet's descriptions lay an emphasis on the practical and the experiential that gave them some objective substance. His empiricism serves as a means of producing objective proof that nature had a purposeful design and was far from being a purely physical substance. This in turn suggested that there were right and wrong ways of perceiving and conceiving the natural world. Burnet did not hesitate to extrapolate from this and expose Papal absolutism as unnatural because it lacked spiritual substance and engendered a materialist philosophy. His approach broadly parallels that taken by the county histories, which argued for a new objective classification of nature but which still incorporated existing social structures and political assumptions.

The wise surveyor - Burnet's sermon at Robert Boyle's funeral (1692)

Burnet's Travels give ideological justification to the social, economic and epistemological assumptions about surveying the land in the period. County histories propose that the interrelationship between the environment, society and its rulers is inscribed in the constitution of nature itself. Nature is made an object of study supposedly distinct from the sphere of human assumptions and ideas and is viewed as having certain qualities that demand it is approached in certain ways. These approaches have implications for social and economic policy and are framed by both Burnet and the county historian in such a way that makes land and the landowner the point of contact between the spheres of nature and society, and the site in which their relations are determined.

But what does Burnet, as a man who like Francis Bacon "elevate[s] to a coherent intellectual system what had hitherto been the only partially spoken assumptions of practical men" say about the surveyor himself? The answer lies in the sermon he delivered at Robert Boyle's funeral on 7 January 1692. The Travels

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73 Ibid., p.25
74 McRae, op. cit., p.158.
had been written as a series of letters to Boyle and it is fitting that at his funeral
Burnet should outline their corollary in the shape of the man who acts in concert with
nature.

The *Travels* use the twin concepts that nature was an object to be studied and
that it had a design to it. Burnet developed these themes in the Boyle sermon. He
said that wisdom consisted in exercising an objective and detached judgement. He
proposed:

\[
\text{[T]he chief acts and instances of true wisdom, are once to form right judgements of all things; of}
\text{their value, and of their solidity; to form great and noble thoughts of God, and proper ones of}
\text{ourselves; to know what we are capable of, and fit for, to know what is the true good and}
\text{happiness of mankind, which makes societies safe, and nations flourish.}
\]

This may seem to be a somewhat vague definition of wisdom. But in order to see
how Burnet understood the means to make a "right judgement of all things" it is
necessary to refer to a sermon Burnet gave to Queen Mary in 1690. In this sermon
Burnet had argued that visual perception was essentially passive. He had wondered
how it was that:

\[
\text{through so small a passage as the pupil of the eye, such a vast variety of objects should enter at}
\text{once, and open themselves within the body of the eye, without confusion, and there be}
\text{represented to us in their just figures, with their distance from us, and from one another.}
\]

In the act of looking, a person did not so much look at objects, as receive them. The
result of this theory was that vision was seen as a means of the mind's reception of
data regarding the objective state of the world. It was a means to objective
perception. This is not to say that Burnet was simply equating wisdom with vision: he
was not. When he said in Boyle's funeral sermon that wisdom also consisted in
judgements of value and solidity, he was arguably referring to the "active sagacity" of
the mind, the workmanlike quality of spirit's conception of a more ordered state of
nature. In other words, he was talking about a man's active powers, rather than his
passive faculties such as vision. This active sagacity comes to the fore when Burnet

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76 Gilbert Burnet, *A Sermon Preached before the Queen at Whitehall on the 16th day of July, 1690, being the monthly fast*, London, 1690, p.7.
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says that wisdom will be of obvious beneficial use to the various spheres of human life, arguing that it will let us "know what is the true good and happiness of mankind, which makes societies safe, and nations flourish".77

A pragmatic and improving attitude to the natural environment is therefore understood by Burnet to be incipient in the faculties that enable man to engage with this environment. He suggested that this was a state of affairs brought about by design rather than chance. But in order to consolidate his thesis that nature's design was intended for mediation to the human sphere through the relationship between object, eye and reason, Burnet had to reconcile vision with spiritual principles in a distinct working relationship. This he proceeded to do, saying:

[T]he more extended and exact, the more minute and severe, the enquiry be, the soul grows to be therefore the more enlarged by the variety of observation that is made.78

This quotation relates the observation of the material world to the growth of the soul. The language of "enquiry" is reminiscent of the analytical properties that Burnet earlier ascribed to visual perception. Here, he makes the connection between vision and abstract thought a lot clearer. He went on to note: "[the good man] has a larger size of soul, and vaster thoughts, that can enter into the theories of the heavenly bodies; that observe the proportion of lines, and numbers, the compositions and mixtures of several sorts of beings".79 The language again suggests confusion between observation of the external world and the epistemological certainties of the conceived world: to "observe the proportion of lines" is an activity that hints at the positive certainties understood to be the preserve of mathematics. The recurring theme is a metaphysical proposition that man, the physical world and the positive certainties of God are all linked together, "the golden chain of the platonic succession".80

Burnet is driving at a conception of the viewer as a surveyor and also as a sage-like figure. This is best reflected in a passage closely following the two previously cited:

77 Burnet, Boyle, p.12.
79 Ibid., p.15.
80 Mackinnon, op. cit., p.xix.
This world, this life, and the mad scene we are in, grow to be but little and inconsiderable things, to one of great views and noble theories: and he who is upon the sent of real and useful knowledge, has always some great thing or other in prospect; new scenes do open to him, and these draw after them discoveries [...] in all those, a man feels as sensibly, and distinguishes as plainly an improvement of the strength and compass of his powers [...] this enlarges a man's empire over the Creation, and makes it more entirely subject to him by the engines it invents to subdue and manage it, by the dissections in which it is more opened to his view [...] in a word, this lets a man into the mysteries of nature.

The result of wise and practical judgement is the acquisitive exercise of physical and technological power. The wise man "feels [...] an improvement of the strength and compass of his powers" because he is able to exercise physical power for the purposes of technological advancement: "engines" are invented by the "dissections in which [Creation] is more opened to his view".

The wise man's power engendered a set of social relations in addition to a set of physical relations. The text of the Boyle sermon was from the Book of Ecclesiastes, ch.2,v.26: "[f]or God giveth to a man that is good in his sight wisdom, knowledge, joy". The sermon is about how King Solomon is "happy" to discover a subject trying to "find out the thread of nature, and the plan of its great author." Burnet therefore immediately hints that social relations are engendered in God's plan that is mapped out to be discovered in nature. Boyle's own life reflected God's plan so well, that he:

may be considered as a pattern of living; and a pattern so perfect, that it will perhaps seem a little too far out of sight, too much against the hopes, and by consequence above the endeavours of any that might draw after such an Original: which must ever be reckoned amongst the masterpieces of that Great Hand that made it.

Burnet proceeds to show how it was that Boyle had succeeded in imitating "such an Original" in so perfect a manner. The means by which he became a perfect pattern of living was through the useful disposal of his wealth. Boyle "had a great and noble fortune, but it was so chiefly to him, because he had a great and noble mind to employ

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81 Burnet, Boyle, pp.15-16.
82 Ibid., p.5.
83 Ibid., p.5.
84 Ibid., p.21
The working of a "noble mind" is seen in his contribution towards the distribution of Bibles in Malaysia, the East-Indies, and Turkey, and also, nearer to home, Wales, Ireland and Scotland. In so doing, Boyle was seen to be bringing a degree of spiritual substance to uncivilised and poor regions. He was also charitable, giving more than a thousand pounds a year away to distressed individuals such as those who lost an income through the improperation of church lands in Ireland, and "learned men" in difficulty. Boyle was, of course, master of his own body too. Burnet argues that his actions spread from a desire to live out a life compatible with a broad version of Christianity, rather than becoming involved in doctrinal disputes. This conviction itself had its roots in "an amiable view of that Holy Religion", the truths of which were furnished Boyle by a discovery of "the works of God" in nature, and a "search into physical truths". Boyle's life is a demonstration of how wisdom and knowledge garnered through the study of God's creation was understood to cultivate the growth of a great and noble mind that would use wealth wisely to bring stability to society.

But it is also important to note Burnet's suggestion that the acquisition of physical and technological power, and the notion of acquisition itself, was inherent in the actual Creation. Once again, the use of words such as "views", "prospect" and "scenes" are used to imply a link between theoretical knowledge, signified by words such as "noble theories" and "great thing", and an intimacy with the physical world, signified by "discoveries [...] dissections". Nature is treated as a purely physical object to be surveyed, just as a map-maker might treat the land. It has been seen that this attitude was also taken by a number of the land-owning gentry who determined their way of looking at the land according to economic imperatives. But Burnet suggested that the principles of detached surveillance were built into the visual faculty itself. The objectivity claimed by county historians was a fact of vision and experience. Burnet was therefore able to argue that the self-proclaimed rational attitudes towards the environment that consisted in arguments for improvement and enclosure were actually part of the "thread of nature". What was so ideologically potent about Burnet's outline of the wise surveying figure was that his actions of

85 Ibid., p.23
87 See ibid., pp.27, 31
88 Ibid, p.23
89 See ibid., pp.25-6
surveillance, inductive reasoning and exercise of power was "natural". Burnet's writings succeed in naturalising a particular social and economic outlook. The wise surveyor is presented as a philosophical inevitability whose strength lies in his unrivalled intimacy with "the thread of nature, and the plan of its great author".

Conclusion: images as "objectifying resources"

Earlier it was suggested that county histories insisted strongly on a new and certain means to objective knowledge. They placed their own projects in this category of epistemological progress. By placing county histories in this category it was further suggested that the images in them (including the house and estate portrait) be seen in a register of work that was valued because of its epistemological transparency. Historians such as Chauncy spoke of their work as empirically based and objectively true. It was proposed that the development of house and estate portraiture in the period be seen in the context of the claims made for the publications in which they appeared.

It was further suggested that the formal changes in portraiture could also be seen in the light of new ideas about landowning and surveying. On one hand the assertion of objective rights of ownership over land gave impetus to practices of surveying and map making. The fact that a bird's-eye view described the topographical situation of a house emphasises the proximity of portraiture and maps and suggests that later portraiture be viewed in a similar discursive context. On the other hand maps and portraits had their ontological status challenged. The empiricist empirical foundations of surveying land and quantifying land ownership in the form of a map placed a premium on the epistemological value of experience. County historians drew attention to the experience that lay behind the creation of their books and the maps inside them. In so doing they endowed their visual and written surveys with the epistemological aura of objective truths. Estate and county maps and county histories take on themselves the status of objects rather than signs that signify an exterior object.

It was then argued that the importance of objectivity-claims lay in their means of incorporating the epistemological methods of socio-economic imperatives into a

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98 Ibid., p.25
wider metaphysic of nature's "thread" or God's plan. This notion of nature's design turned the inductive method of empirical philosophy on its head whilst retaining its social and economic consequences. Gilbert Burnet's *Travels* place the authority of his observations in the extent of his experience of the subject. He distances himself from the more rhetorical strains of travel writing. His observations become identifiable with his experiences rather than simply a relation of them. In so doing he implies that the observer is a transparent medium, a notion he was later to make explicit in discussing the physiology of viewing. Through this conception of the surveyor the descriptions in the *Travels* become epistemologically equivalent with the object. In so doing, the burden of Burnet's socio-economic subjectivity is shifted onto the description and then back to the object. As has been seen, in Burnet's writings nature has attributes that are definable in specific social and economic terms. The subject is no longer the viewer but the object whose attributes (transferred from the viewer's subjectivity) render it subject to classification.

The corollary of transferring subjectivity from viewer to object is given in Burnet's notion of the wise surveyor. In Boyle's funeral sermon it was claimed that the wise man is a figure of technological and social power. But his economic and social subjectivity is an attribute not of his own acquisitive nature, but rather of the natural world. The wise surveyor enjoys an intimacy with nature. Burnet suggests that the empirical method of natural philosophy succeeded in inducing subjectivity rather than being its effect.

At this point it is necessary to make links between these suggestions and propose that the objectivity claimed for county history publications in general, and maps, plans and prospects in particular, was imbued with ideological value. Already it has been seen that historians who claimed special truth-value for their publications stressed the experiential basis of their researches. In many cases these experiences were ones specifically associated with landowning practices, such as perambulation. Methods that called on experience as a means of epistemological validation therefore embodied the social assumptions of the community that shared these experiences. County histories addressed the history of only part of the population whilst claiming to maintain a wholly detached and objective outlook, ratified by empirical investigation grounded in experiences which had particular social and economic resonance. Any suggestion of the changing ontological status of images must
therefore be accompanied by an awareness that as objects images objectify the socio-economic identity of the people who make them.

In the illustrations that are part of wider claims to truth and objectivity it can be seen that economic attitudes and social forms become objectified. As shall be seen, in the following chapter Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer have referred to visual images as "technologies" geared towards sustaining a "form of life". As objects themselves rather than images that signified the objects they represented, visual documents became "objectifying resources", sublimating social attitudes within the object itself. The object suggests that certain economic and social imperatives are in fact given in the constitution of the object itself and the logic of reception that it demands. The objectivity claims of written and verbal descriptions in the period draw attention to their epistemological value as objects in their own right. This helps situate them in a particular ideological context.

This is arguably an important point because it suggests that descriptions do not simply reflect new social, economic and epistemological assumptions but are ideological agents themselves. The following chapters will explore the status of images as illusions, signifiers and objects as well as the nature of their objectifying function.

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92 Ibid., p.77.
"That the reader might be sure of our meaning": issues of objectivity and the historical nature of viewing in Jan Siberechts' Wollaton Hall, 1695

Introduction

The previous chapter asked the question of why bird's-eye views of country estates flourished in Britain in the period 1690-1715 when the technique and subject matter had been an established feature of continental topography since the early seventeenth century. It aimed to situate bird's-eye portraiture as part of a larger family of topographical images including maps and plats of towns. These images were often marketed as a survey done for landowning gentlemen in the form of a country history. The chapter argued that the class-bound experiences of these landed gentry were subsumed into the descriptions of the topography. Practices such as perambulation were appealed to as evidence of a description's reliability and objectivity. It was suggested that bird's-eye views enjoyed a close formal similarity with maps and enjoyed similar epistemological claims. Their increasing popularity in Britain was seen against the background of the gentry's desire for new and certain forms of knowledge.

This chapter will examine the development of the bird's-eye view in the work of one artist, Jan Siberechts (1627-c.1703). Siberechts worked for the Willughby family of Wollaton, Nottinghamshire in the 1690s, and painted the giant canvas of Wollaton Hall for Thomas Willughby in 1695 (see Plates 31-5). The chapter will ask the question: why did Siberechts begin to paint bird's-eye views when he did? It will try to relate the development of Siberechts' work and the interests of his patrons to the larger questions bearing on house and estate portraiture as outlined in the previous chapter. In turn it will also attempt to clarify the issues examined earlier and place them in a specific context.

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1 For Siberechts' life and related bibliographical discussion, see Introduction.
In order to begin to see why *Wollaton Hall* is significant, we must look at earlier bird's-eye view paintings of country seats from the years between the Restoration and the 1688 revolution. These paintings share certain characteristics. An examination of these will help us see what is significant about *Wollaton Hall*.

I want to begin by looking at Siberechts' painting of Longleat House, Wiltshire from c.1678 (Plate 4). The painting bears a close formal resemblance to paintings such as Lucas Vorstermans II's *Althorp* (see Plate 36) as well as to many of the engraved house portraits produced for county histories in the period, and may be considered typical of the portraiture produced in the 1670s. The most obvious initial comment to make about Siberechts' painting is that it is a rigidly symmetrical painting composed using one-point perspective. Taking as the vanishing point a spot halfway between the tops of the central chimneys the artist has projected a receding plane that fills the entire width of the canvas at the bottom edge but which appears to recede only into the middle distance (Plate 37). Behind this, at least as far as the viewer is permitted to see, the steady recession indicated by a Renaissance-like grid of pathways and grass gives way to a loosely painted valley in which trees, herds and even a hunt are sketched in without too much conviction. The orderliness of the foreground is created by a use of linear perspective that is contrasted with the atmospheric perspective of the painting's background.

The use of different modes of perspective corresponds to different zones within the painting. The symmetry of the walled gardens, which all take their precedent from the repetitive bays and wings of the house, extends even to the wardens at the gate as well as to the ivy and is only broken by the irregular shape and arrangement of banqueting rooms on the roof. On the other hand, the shepherd-less flock in the right middle distance and the hunt in full cry on the left do not seem to belong to the orderly and regular sphere dominated in the foreground by the house front. What is so noticeable about the foreground is that the use of perspective creates a series of strong horizontal lines that serve to divide the space into zones of increasing domestic intimacy. First there is the road outside Longleat's walls, and then the grounds and stables, and then the House itself with an arboured walk on its immediate left. The effect of these zones is not so much to suggest the existence of a hierarchy of space, although this doubtless exists, but rather to marshal all the animate
objects into a relationship with the House which is congruous with its own regularity and harmony of form. For example, the coach and six moves in a horizontal direction, and this movement is complemented by the gesturing sportsman and hounds on the right hand side. Further away from the House the zones become less rigid until in the background the recession of space becomes wholly atmospheric and indistinctive of spatial hierarchy.

The aim of Siberechts' use of linear and atmospheric perspective in *Longleat House* is to draw the viewer into perceiving meaning through the arrangement of the figures in the landscape context. The perspective is used as a whole to create the impression of receding space. The linear aspect of the grounds creates a series of lines converging towards a single point as they get further away from the foreground. Further back the trees and the fields become fainter in tone and less distinct in form until in the far distance the land can barely be distinguished from the sky. In addition to creating the illusion of space the perspective also serves to indicate the presence of the viewer and the direction of their gaze. In the theory of centralised perspective the vanishing point was taken to be the point of infinite recession of the viewer's gaze. As such it was placed on the horizon, and signified the direction in which they were looking. The vanishing spot served a technical need as it enabled the artist to project objects and figures into a perspective view in such a way that they would appear to lie in a space continuous with that in which the viewer stood. Linear perspective therefore created the impression of spatial recession and also fixed this receding space in relation to the viewer.

Italian Renaissance theory argued that the ultimate aim of establishing the illusion of a visual continuum between viewer and figures in the painting was to move the viewer. Alberti said that centralised perspective would aid the artist in the composition of the *istoria*, that is a single scene from a dramatic narrative. Longleat House cannot really be said to act as a stage for moving human actions. But it may be seen as one view from a dramatic sequence which the viewer is expected to follow, and which provides an impulse to see the elements in the painting in a meaningful unity that complements its formal unity.

In both Siberechts' and Vorstermans' paintings, the dramatic content is provided by the sportsmen in the foreground, and in the hunting seen in progress in

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the middle distance. Stephen Deuchar has argued that in the late seventeenth century fragments of sporting imagery were deployed in paintings such as *Longleat House* in order to supplement a rural ideal of elegance and nobility. The nature of the supplementary value that this sporting image provides is paternalistic. In another painting of hunting at Longleat (possibly designed to be hung in a similar setting) the hunt is seen returning through the village to the House in the distance (see Plate 38). An oak tree dominates the scene, towering over fragments of the village houses and a glimpse of Longleat itself. It also frames the figure of the mounted nobleman supervising the hunt. He is the centre of attention, occupying the centre of the canvas space in the same way that Longleat House occupies the central space in its portrait. Also in common with *Longleat House* is the surrounding landscape: in contrast to the central visual attraction it is a presence glimpsed but not described in detail.

The indifference to the appearance of the landscape allows the viewer's attention to be relayed back to the House while giving activities associated with the house a particular symbolic value. The rural seat is thus cast as a patrician oak, a force for stability and security. It was an important means by which an established family could consolidate and spread their local political influence. Lord Halifax spoke of law as being like a “tree [...] from which we expect shade and shelter”, which must have pleased the rural elite who were seen by Abraham Cowley as shelter for the “plebian underwood”. Far from imposing on the landscape, the house protects the local environment, so much so that politicians, poets and painters alike spoke of it as though it grew up from the very soil itself and, thus nourished, would continue to grow.

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4 The width of *Longleat House* is 152 cm. and the width of *A Huntsman near Longleat* is 155 cm. This suggests that both paintings might have been hung as overmantels over doors or mantels of a similar size. John Harris has argued that *A Huntsman near Longleat* is in fact of Brethy Park, Derbyshire: Harris, *The Artist and the Country House: a history of country house and garden view painting in Britain, 1540-1870*, London, 1985, p.78. The prominence of the banqueting rooms on the roof of the partially hidden house in the distance suggests that it is Longleat. The date of this and other Longleat paintings support this.
5 The nobleman is probably Thomas Thynne (d.1682), who had inherited the Longleat estates from his uncle in 1670: see DNB.
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The deployment of linear and atmospheric perspective in *Longleat House* is designed to make the viewer infer the significance of the House as the centre of rural magnificence that acts as a pretext for symbolic domination. Roland Barthes has argued that the profusion of possible meanings suggested in an image is limited by the logico-temporal sequence imposed by the actions represented. In *Longleat House* the House is the centre of the viewer's attention but it is also a part of a wider scenic setting. The House and the surrounding landscape are visually disparate: the House facade is orderly and neat whilst the landscape beyond seems to lack any formal structure. But in looking at the painting as an illusion of space the viewer is invited to think that they share a common spatial and temporal context. The actions depicted are sequences within this context. As well as being the centre of visual attention the house therefore accrues significance as the source and terminus of the hunting activities. It is the house that is the semantically charged component of the painting, as it reconciles nobility, elegance and wealth. The land and the local population, a presence signified but not seen, act as a symbolic whole over which Longleat extends its paternal influence.

*Longleat House* may be considered as a representation of Longleat's power over the surrounding environment rather than a simple portrait. The use of linear perspective establishes a close inter-relationship between the viewer and the figures in the painting. Considered as a system of signs the painting should arguably be thought of as the sum of this relationship.

**Wollaton Hall**

I now want to turn and consider Siberechts' house portrait of *Wollaton Hall*, painted around twenty years after the images so far examined, in 1695. The view looks from the east, over the park that lay to the west of the Hall. The fields that are represented are part of the park at Wollaton, enclosed in 1492 and 1511 before the Hall was built in 1588 and mined for coal, the source of family wealth. A couple of idling stags can

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be seen in the bottom left of the painting. It is not known where the painting originally hung in Wollaton Hall.\textsuperscript{11} In an early twentieth-century photo it hangs in the Great Hall, though not as a centrepiece.\textsuperscript{12} There is no evidence from the nineteenth century to suggest where it might have been originally displayed, and writing about Wollaton Hall in 1797, historian of Nottinghamshire John Throsby devoted a lengthy paragraph to the collection of paintings held there but failed to mention any works by Siberechts.\textsuperscript{13}

Perhaps the most obvious difference between \textit{Wollaton Hall} and the previous images is the area of land that is shown in the later painting. The Hall itself is small, as for example is Althorp House in Vorsternman's painting. But the viewpoint in \textit{Wollaton Hall} is higher than in older house portraits, and the horizon is therefore much higher, with the consequence that the viewer is permitted to see a much greater surface area of land. There also seems to be a greater sense of continuity between the gardens near the house, and the wider landscape. Whereas the previous paintings used one-point perspective to divide the space up into horizontal bands, perspective in \textit{Wollaton Hall} is used to place the house and the gardens along the axis of a diagonal thrust stretching from the vanishing point in the top left to the bottom right. In the older paintings the house and its immediate grounds were ordered by the use of linear perspective so that they filled the entire width of the painting and created a sense of disjunction between foreground and background space. In \textit{Wollaton Hall}, the diagonal thrust is used to place the Hall and its formal gardens in a contextual relationship with the wider environment, as the dynamic of spatial division is back-to-front, rather than side-to-side. The result is that the appearance of the Hall and its grounds is less confrontational than in \textit{Longleat House}. In fact, we are permitted to bypass the Hall completely and see the direct continuity of the land beyond the Hall to the land nearest to us.

Linear perspective is used to present a view of Wollaton Hall in its topographical context. Indeed, "context" may well be thought of as a key word for

\textsuperscript{11} The Middleton MSS contain no relevant inventories: see NUL/Mi.I.
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Wollaton Hall, for the high viewpoint allows the viewer to consider every object in its relationship to other objects. The artist's depiction of pathways, road, parterre and hedgerow is especially noticeable insofar as it allows the viewer to trace spatial relationships that are not only given in the perspective or implied in a narrative but are actually inscribed on the terrain itself. By this means, the viewer is led to inspect not only the spectacular and dominant fabric of Wollaton Hall itself, but also the village to its right, and the topographical detail further up to the right on the horizon. We are also guided round to the points of interest in the gardens: the viewing tower adjoining the bowling green, and the low brick greenhouse built to winter the orange trees standing on the parterre onto which it faces. Steps lead us down into the kitchen gardens to the left of the parterre, and a path illuminated through a darkened doorway invites our interest in a walled garden further back. Figures walking on these paths and roads indicate that these are the ways we should take in our own visual exploration.

The objects in the painting seem to be autonomous components of the landscape; they are all co-ordinates in a spatial context, and as such they appear to enjoy a formal equivalence. As each object is considered as a distinct feature, they each seem to resist the domination of the Hall. In both respects Wollaton Hall is dissimilar to the paintings so far considered, for whereas the earlier pictures showed little attention to a landscape whose presence was signified but not seen, here the land surrounding Wollaton Hall, which for the most part belonged to it, is described in some detail.

In Wollaton Hall the use of atmospheric perspective is kept to a minimum and is restricted to the hills in the far distance. Wollaton's gardens and the fields beyond are laid out according to the diagonal perspective arrangement, thereby identifying them as spaces annexed to the Hall, bowling green and parterre. Given the greater reliance on linear perspective than in the earlier portraits it is therefore surprising to find that it has been used rather arbitrarily. As a diagram will indicate, the vanishing point has been located at a spot some way below the horizon (see Plate 39).

Siberechts had also placed the vanishing point below the horizon in Longleat House:

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14 See, on the greenhouse, County houses and gardens old and new: Wollaton Hall, Nottinghamsnhire, in Country Life, VIII, no. 198, 1900. Wollaton may have just received the new greenhouse, which was apparently the first of its kind in the country; this may explain its prominence in the painting. For the viewing tower, see Pamela Marshall, Wollaton Hall: an archaeological survey, Nottingham, 1996; Marshall calls it a "new garden house" (op cit, p.31).
the implication was that the land behind gently ascended above the plane of the house and grounds. But in Wollaton Hall no such association seems to have been intended, and the effect is not of a piece of rising ground overlooking the Hall. (In fact the Hall sits on the edge of a cliff ridge that runs north of the Trent on an east-west axis and is clearly visible from some miles away even today; it is certainly not overlooked by any hills to the east).

Another puzzling aspect of the centralised perspective in Wollaton Hall is that it is not used to place the Hall in the viewer's central line of vision. In earlier house portraits there is a repeated pattern of placing the house in the central line of vision, so as to make it become the main object of our attention. In Wollaton Hall the central line of vision, perpendicular to the horizon and the base of the picture plane, runs through the outer gardens without crossing any objects of interest, whereas in the older paintings it was always identified with the main house. In the earlier paintings the visual focus was also the focus of meaning. But rather than being used as a component in a narrative, the perspective in Wollaton Hall appears to have been used simply as a standard way of arranging the display of a lot of detail. The Hall occupies the centre of the canvas space (in fact the south door looking out onto the parterre and fountain is more or less the centre of the painting) but the perspective is not used to make it occupy the centre of our visual attention.

The subject matter of Wollaton Hall also contributes little to embellishing any narrative content. In Siberechts' Longleat and Vorstermans' Althorp, the narrative content was relayed through the hunting scenes, and this feature of country house painting was to continue into the eighteenth century. Siberechts' View from Richmond Hill and Jacob Knyff's Durdans House, Epsom both showed carriages on a journey or preparing to leave for one (see Plates 41 and 61). In both hunting and travelling scenes, the depiction of imminent action signified the subordination of the terrain through the symbolic extension of the house, in the person of the hunters or the coach, over the surrounding land. Subjection would be complete when the hunt or journey had been successfully concluded and the action had returned to its source, the house. But in Wollaton Hall, a carriage is shown arriving at the house, rather than setting out. Likewise, the accompanying horsemen are arriving with it, and not setting out on a hunt. The journey is over, and there is no narrative potential left in
the subject. The other figures in the painting are engaged in activities that hardly encompass the terrain as a whole. The game of bowls, the walk along the parterre and even the walk to the village to the north-west are all actions that will keep the figures within the bounds of the painting. Even the cattle near the village huddle together and do not seem to be in danger of wandering.

The important point to draw from these observations is that the tableau created through the relationship of viewer and painting in *Longleat House* is not evident in *Wollaton Hall*. This is not to say that there is no coherent sign system in the later painting. The painting depicts a landowner's property and his house remains the central visual attraction. Its power consists in its size and the means by which it has imposed itself onto the landscape, modelling its topography in order to accommodate the leisurely pursuits of the county elite, most notably in the terracing at the head of the bowling green. Close examination of the gardens reveals a number of men working, which is in itself a signifier of power. Louis Maran has argued that a body dressed in elegant clothes “is multiplied by signs into a social or a political body”, as a clothed body shows that the adorned man has many people work for him. His power is that through his clothes, his body is multiplied in a very real sense, because he has many pairs of arms work for him, and “the more arms one has, the stronger one is”. The viewer may be expected to infer that the greater the area of ground modelled for leisure purposes, the greater the degree of this refinement and the greater the power of the man whose house stands in the grounds. It is interesting that *Althorp* also takes care to show a gardener by the extensive grounds.

But in spite of these features the perspective does not engage the viewer to look at the Hall. Nor does the subject matter contribute to any potential narrative content. Arguably the use of one-point perspective is for cosmetic purposes: it aims to display the features of Wollaton's grounds and establish their topographical co-ordination. This in itself generates meaning in the image. However these meanings are arguably generated less through the participation of the viewer than in the earlier paintings.

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17 Ibid., p.27.
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The artist's use of perspective and the absence of a dominating signifying subject makes Wollaton Hall a rather frustrating painting to look at. On the one hand, the presence of a clear perspective framework suggests a given relationship of the objects to the viewer, and with each other. Both viewer and objects occupy the same space, and the viewer is fixed in this space. Indeed, Alberti recommended that the viewer's position relative to the picture plane itself had to be ascertained if the picture was to be viewed correctly. On the other hand, the diminishing of the Hall through its displacement in the perspective scheme and the use of linear perspective to establish a topographically co-ordinated image creates in the viewer an impulse to examine each object on its own. The tension exists in the fact that to do so would be to militate against the central premise of centralised perspective, which was that it signified the viewer's presence and the direction of their gaze.

Hunting, towers and surveying the landscape in the early seventeenth century

Examining the development of linear perspective in country house portraits reveals the changing nature of the function filled by the viewer in seeing a meaningful relationship between the house, the figures and the landscape setting in these paintings. This is arguably important because there were historical precedents for treating a view of the countryside, house and human activity as components of dramatic narrative. These precedents were based on the viewing practices of the landed classes in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, especially that of watching stag-hunting. An analysis of these developments might suggest a historical context for the changing use of perspective in house portraiture.

In this period, deer were hunted in parks that were enclosed with large fences. The hunt was often a tame affair. Rather than being a chase as depicted by Flemish artists such as Thomas Wyck, the deer were often rounded up and herded into an open space where, in the presence of spectators, they were shot with crossbows, or killed with hounds. Historians have noted the theatricality of stag-hunting, and its widespread nature. Fynes Moryson estimated in 1617 that “every gentleman of above 500-1000 pounds rent a year hath a parke”. This means that feasibly every

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18 Alberti, op cit., p.57 and passim.
gentleman with a title hunted deer on his own private land, and it has been estimated that parks covered, on average, 8 per cent of the land in the period.\textsuperscript{20} There were still many parks by the early eighteenth century.\textsuperscript{21}

Parks and hunts were observed from purpose-built towers, some temporary, but many incorporated into the fabric of the seat adjoining the park. Banqueting rooms often served a similar purpose.\textsuperscript{22} These were small rooms where company retired after a meal while the evening entertainment was prepared. They can be seen on the roof of Longleat, and the corners of Wollaton Hall, and in the prospects and plans of Longford Hall and Audley End, published in the 1670s and 80s (see Plate 40). Galleries and halls were also used for viewing the landscape after stag-hunting’s demise.\textsuperscript{23} The hunt, emanating from and bringing its fruits back to the house, established the subordination of the landscape to the house. In following the progress of a hunt, the spectator would take account of the individuality of the terrain, but would keep it subordinate to the pattern that the hunt established, and which invariably ended with the venison being served at the table. The natural and human worlds were established as a seamless whole through the agency of the country seat. The whole was presided over by the landowner; it was he who displayed his credentials as gentleman, the head of the house and master of the land in the carving of the meat.\textsuperscript{24}

So important was the surveillance and subordination of an individual landscape view to a general image of ownership and control, that James Howell wrote to Daniel Caldwell in 1619 that having watched hunting from the gallery of Melford Hall, Essex, he could see how the “vertuous [sic] and regular” house dominated the “rustic” environment, and was convinced that the Hall “would serve as a choice pattern to build and contrive a house by”.\textsuperscript{25} It was his surveillance of a private park

\textsuperscript{21} Despite the destruction wrought in the Interregnum there were at least 16 parks in Nottinghamshire in 1714; see \textit{A New Map of Nottinghamshire}, H. Overton, London, 1714. Wollaton is one of the parks marked.
\textsuperscript{23} The central hall at Wollaton commanded views almost to Leicestershire: see John Murray’s \textit{Handbook for travellers in Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, and Staffordshire}, London, 1865.
\textsuperscript{24} On carving see Manning, \textit{op. cit.}
\textsuperscript{25} Quoted in Barry L. Wall, \textit{Long Melford through the Ages}, Ipswich, 1986, p.77f.
that enabled him to conceive of a social order inscribed in the terrain where the spectatorial subject was elevated above the “rustic” type.

Although widespread hunting is more of a seventeenth-century than an eighteenth-century phenomenon, the Game Act of 1671 enshrined hunting as the privilege of the wealthy.\(^\text{26}\) It has been noted that in this period a deer park was “as much a symbol of aristocratic privilege as a country house”.\(^\text{27}\) This may well be because watching the hunt established an understanding of property ownership that conceived of it as a pattern of consolidation and domination to which practices of surveillance made an important contribution. The vogue for hunting towers came in the midst of a growth in large-scale property-holding. It is interesting that tastes for viewing property and hunting scenes are revived in the house portraits produced in the late seventeenth century when large-scale land-owning was again on the rise after a period of decline.\(^\text{28}\) The relationship of surveillance and ownership is also illustrated by the case of landowners who actually purchased single fields so that they could be owners of all they surveyed.\(^\text{29}\)

Returning to the painting of Longleat House with these observations in mind it is possible to understand why Siberechts did not feel compelled to go to the trouble of depicting much of the land that adjoined the House. In the hunting activity that was represented, domination and subordination of land to house was signified but not represented in full. Arguably, it would not have been in the patron’s interest to describe the park in full, as the suggestion that the House was the centre and mediator of order required the signified presence of a limitless space to which an ever expanding order was constantly mediated. The rhetoric of property ownership was voiced through channels other than that of straightforward display.

Understanding the relationship between surveillance and land-ownership may also help us understand why there seems to be so little apparent continuity between the orderliness of the House and walled grounds, and the meandering flock and hunt in full cry in the loosely described park behind. It is somewhat puzzling that the


\(^{27}\) Manning, *op. cit.*, p.123.


\(^{29}\) Clay, *op. cit.*, p.184.
signification of wealth and elegance does not extend into the presentation of lavishly laid-out grounds. Longleat is shown with a gleaming new Baroque portico and entrance stairs. The company within the grounds rehearse formal gestures of greeting and conversation, and the coach and six arrive in stately fashion from the neat and dung-free stableyard. But the gardens are not given much attention. Admittedly, Vorstermans' Althorp does pay the gardens more attention, including a gardener to the left of the bridge in front of the house. Contemporary house portraits also sometimes highlight the gardening schemes of more modest houses, such as Jacob Knyff's 1673 painting of Durdans House, Epsom (see Plate 41) where the desire to highlight is given literal manifestation. But in general the ornate garden schemes which were then in vogue, and other displays of private land in general do not seem to have formed part of the rhetoric associated with rural elegance and hospitality.

The change in Siberechts' portraiture from prospect to bird's-eye view is therefore more than simply a choice of a different method of representing the same subject. The key difference in Wollaton Hall is the use of linear perspective in place of a balance between linear and atmospheric perspective in the earlier paintings. The use of linear perspective establishes a greater degree of topographical co-ordination in the painting. What is significant in Wollaton Hall is that this co-ordination is accompanied by a displacement of the Hall from the central line of vision. The apparent formal equivalence generated through co-ordinating objects with each other is accompanied by a degree of semantic leniency. Although the presence of the Hall in the centre of the canvas heralds the theme of rural elegance that is echoed in much of the subject matter, the perspective itself does not signify that the viewer is looking directly at the Hall. This discontinuity between perspective and subject matter differs Wollaton Hall from earlier paintings where the house was both the most prominent subject and also the centre of attention and focus for meaning as signified by the one-point perspective.

An analysis of the historical precedents for viewing the landscape in the period suggests that these formal differences relate to wider issues of viewing. The use of centralised perspective to create a low prospect view corresponds to a particular historical viewing identity. Arguably the semantic burden carried by the house in Siberechts' earlier paintings corresponded to the burden of identity carried by the viewer who observed the hunting from the house. The viewer's looking at the house might be seen as a reflective act. In the bird's-eye view paintings the house is no
longer the centre of the viewer's attention. It seems as though formal equivalence is generated at the expense of viewer-centred meaning. Although this is arguably not the case it does bring into question the historical identity of the viewer. The earlier historical correspondence of house and viewer has been terminated in the later paintings.

The question of why Siberechts changed his pictorial methods therefore has a bearing on a more fundamental issue. The map-like aspects of his bird's-eye views suggest an increased interest in form at the expense of the tableau. Rather than being a purely art-historical question it is arguable that these changes relate to the issue of the viewer's historical identity. The presence of a viewer in Wollaton Hall is signified through the use of centralised perspective; but this perspective is used to create topographical co-ordinates and negate narrative meaning. The larger question should therefore be: does this mean that the bird's-eye view also serves to nullify the viewer's historical subjectivity? And can tensions regarding modes of spectatorship explain the patron's choice in opting for a bird's-eye view?

Linear perspective in Wollaton Hall

In Wollaton Hall it is possible to see a tension developing between a use of perspective that signifies the viewer's presence, and a use that nullifies it. The issue at stake here is the viewer's subjectivity. The historical background to viewing meaningful action in the landscape suggests that a specific historical viewing subjectivity was signified in paintings such as Longleat House. The absence of the tableau in bird's-eye views suggests the absence of a conception of the viewer as a subject with a specific historical identity.

Earlier it was suggested that bird's-eye views grew in popularity amongst publishers and historians in the 1690s. It is possible to look at the issue of perspective, and the viewer as a historical subject, in the light of this context. As has been seen, historians were interested in the idea of obtaining objective knowledge about the natural and historical environment. Chapter One suggested that bird's-eye views could be seen in the discursive context of the county histories in which they were published. In particular it was suggested that bird's-eye views had a formal similarity to maps. This kinship was sometimes played upon, as when maps and town plats were juxtaposed. In addition maps were agents in promoting new ideas about
landowning based on the supposition that they provided clear and comprehensive information about the land under the owner’s control.

There is arguably little ground for trying to answer questions about perspective by trying to perceive intrinsic relations between bird’s-eye views and the imperatives governing mid- to late-seventeenth century county histories. This is because low-level prospect views were also produced in great numbers during this period, and though they receded as bird’s-eye views grew in popularity they were still produced into the first decades of the eighteenth century. Instead the best approach to the question of the viewer’s subjectivity is to ask: did Siberechts’ patron himself pursue interests similar to those promoted in the contemporary county history? That is to say, were his landowning and natural-philosophical interests such that he might have identified with the epistemological and pictorial methods promoted in the county history? And secondly, is there evidence that there is a medium of visual culture around his patron that could have helped translate his interests into pictorial form? Is there any culture that might have suggested an affinity with the bird’s-eye view more than the prospect? Finally, the wider question presents itself, of whether the viewer’s historical subjectivity was something that the bird’s-eye view tried to nullify.

In trying to deal with questions related to the use of linear perspective and the viewer’s identity it is probably not possible to offer any more than suggestions. But the question of why Siberechts began to paint large bird’s-eye views in the 1690s should arguably be approached by looking at the historical context examined in Chapter One, because this context dealt with many similar issues.

An interest in the formal qualities of objects was a theme that had been developed in visual culture of experimental philosophy earlier in the seventeenth century. Wollaton Hall had a claim to a footnote in the history of this culture. The owner at the time of Siberechts’ painting, Sir Thomas Willughby (Lord Middleton, 1711) (d.1729), was an amateur naturalist and the second son and heir to the well-known naturalist and member of the Royal Society, Francis Willughby (d.1672).  

Francis had worked closely with a fellow FRS in the sixties, John Ray, who also acted as tutor to Thomas.  

What is of interest here are the influences that can be seen to develop between a mode of observing nature that was particular to experimental and

30 On Francis Willughby, see DNB.
natural philosophy, and a way of viewing the wider landscape in Siberechts' paintings of Wollaton Hall.

Ray and Francis Willughby had collaborated on a couple of projects to publish the natural history of animals. This resulted in the posthumous publication of Willughby's *Ornithology* in 1678, and his *De Historia Piscium* 8 years later. Both volumes consisted of detailed verbal descriptions of many species and sub-species of bird and fish, and these descriptions were accompanied by large and high quality engravings of each bird or fish thus mentioned (see Plates 42 and 43). The engravings are very similar in style to those done by Burghers for Robert Plot's natural histories of Oxfordshire and Staffordshire. A large number of cuttings in the Middleton manuscript collections in Nottingham University suggest that Willughby and Ray were heavily influenced by the engravings in Adriaen Collaert's *Piscium Viviae Icones* (last published 1634) and *Avium Vivae Icones* (last published 1625), Nicolaes de Bruyn's *Libellus Genera de Piscium* (last published 1630) (see Plates 44, 45, 46). Collaert's and de Bruyn's engravings are sometimes embellished but are generally faithful to the object and pay close attention to their formal identification.

In common with Burghers and Collaert, the engravings in the *Ornithology* and *de Historia Piscium* are characterised by a clear, linear style. Shading is used only to model the object's form, rather than to create any atmospheric effect. This must have been a conscious decision and one issued to the engravers, for the preliminary drawings for the *de Historia Piscium* in particular are characterised by a range of styles and degrees of finish. Some of the drawings are in pencil and red chalk, whilst others are done in oils, and water colour, some with body colour and silver leaf added. In part the development of a linear style must have been in the interests of uniformity, as the sketches are done by a variety of different hands. But the transition from preliminary sketch to finished line engraving parallels the concern with clear and legible modes of visualising knowledge seen in the county histories of the period. There too a general shift had taken place in house portraiture between Hollar's

32 See *The Ornithology of [Francis Willughby] [...] Translated into English, and enlarged with many additions [...] To which are added, Three discourses, I. Of the Art of Fowling. II. Of the ordering of Singing birds. III. Of Falconry. By J. Ray*, London, 1678; and *De historia piscium libri quatuor [...] totum opus recognovit [...] supplevit, librum etiam primum et secundum integros adjecit J. Raius*, London, 1686.

33 See NU/Mi.LM.25, and NU/Mi.LM.24. Ray and Willughby appear to have cut out nearly all the plates as well as the title pages of these publications.

34 See NU/Mi.LM.25.
atmospheric prospects and Kip's crisp bird's-eye views in Britannia Illustrata. This change can also be seen in Siberechts' development of a map-like view in his work of the 1690s, of which Wollaton Hall is the most ambitious example. The linear style of the engravings in the Ornithology and de Historia Piscium may have been a practical expedient, but it is also in tune with debates in Britain about new epistemological certainties and the role of images in communicating these.

In the preface to the Ornithology, Ray explained how their intention had been to present their subjects in a manner that paid the most attention to their individual identity, and made the author's own comments and the illustrations as transparent a medium as possible. He said:

[O]ur main design was to illustrate the history of birds, which is [...] in many particulars confused and obscure, by so accurately describing each kind, and observing their characteristic and distinctive notes, that the reader might be sure of our meaning, and upon comparing any bird with our description will not fail of discerning whether it is the described or no.\(^{35}\)

Engravings of the birds were included to "illustrate and facilitate the understanding of our descriptions".\(^{36}\) As Ray's comment on description indicates, the illustrations that accompanied the Ornithology and the De Historia Piscium were supposed to be examined in a detached manner. The "meaning" in the object was taken to be inherent in the description, because description was understood to consist in a question of accuracy and a reproduction of the particular features of the actual object. As such, the viewer was not to bring any additional meaning to the viewing of the illustration. Ray records how the authors themselves had gone to pains to avoid "homonymous or synonymous words, or the divers [sic] names of birds, hieroglyphics, emblems, morals, fables, presages, or ought else appertaining to divinity, ethics, grammar, or any sort of humane learning".\(^{37}\) In seeking to rid the descriptions of the taint of "humane learning", Ray argues that semantic unity bringing the objects together was not as important as noting formal distinctions between the objects. Indeed, the two impulses were mutually exclusive, and the presence of the "human" could only work to perceive additional meanings to those given in the description.

\(^{35}\) Francis Willughby and John Ray, Ornithology, sig. A3v.

\(^{36}\) Ibid, sig. A4v.

\(^{37}\) Ibid, sig. A4r.
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The expunging of viewer-centred meaning in the illustrations in natural histories did not necessarily imply that illustration had to be an exercise in complete formal isolation of the object concerned. On the contrary, Ray argued that the addition of circumstantial detail to description was desirable, as it lessened the likelihood of generality or ambiguity in description leading to error in the reading of description, a point earlier made by Robert Boyle. It is a valuing of prolixity in the *Ornithology'*s description of long-eared owls that creates a formal unity between the visual subjects at the same time as sustaining an impression that the objects are "simultaneously available", and free from an overarching semantic structure that governs their reception (see Plate 47). The formal unity is created by the branch and trunk of an oak tree, and continued in the rather cursory description of the ground.

Yet the spatial recession is not arranged according to a presupposition of the viewer's line of sight. The owls exist prior to the viewer's examination of them, unlike a painting such as *Longleat House*, where the viewer's presence is presupposed in the representation of dramatic action. The engraving of the owls does not suppose a viewer, and has no viewer-related logic in its construction. Indeed, it seems to have been composed primarily in such a way that would evenly fill the page on which it is printed. Attention is thus drawn to the surface on which the description is inscribed, in contrast to the ideal of one-point perspective representation, where the picture plane was treated as a window through which the viewer looked out onto the action presented behind it.

In another plate in the *Ornithology*, birds and heads are again so arranged as to fill the page as fully as possible (see Plate 48). The conception of the page is different from that of the picture plane as a window. Far from fixing the viewer in a determinate relationship to the objects, as happens in Albertian perspective theory, the scale of the objects varies greatly and allows a large amount of detail to be recorded, especially on the two larger heads. The lack of a determined scale within a fixed spatial recession indicates that the position of the viewer can no longer be fixed with relation to the objects in the representation. The conception governing the earlier house portraits, of a viewer watching other men with whom he is meant to identify in a spatial as well as a humane sense, is not appropriate in these illustrations.

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Francis Bacon’s conception of empirical knowledge

It is an impulse to consider objects as formally but not semantically unified along with the challenges that this impulse presents to humanist conceptions of the viewer that is at work in Wollaton Hall. Ray and Willughby’s projects were arguably heavily influenced by Francis Bacon’s conception of empirical knowledge.³⁹ Bacon had denounced an intellectual and systematic approach to the natural world that used prior assumptions to deduce explanations and theories regarding natural phenomena: he claimed that the mind of man was always prepared to perceive more unity between objects than actually existed. In place of an epistemology that gave priority to the authority of the ancient written word he offered a model of reasoning based on induction of principles from first-hand experience. Bacon said that reason should not begin with an awareness of its own content. Instead, intellectual inquiry should value the senses in their own right, and build on the information they offered to the mind. He argued:

The sense, which is the door of the intellect, is affected by individuals only. The images of those individuals fix themselves in the memory, and pass into it in the first instance entire as it were, just as they come. These the human mind proceeds to review and ruminate; and thereupon simply rehearses them, or makes fanciful imitations of them, or analyses and classifies them. Wherefore from these three fountains, memory, imagination and reason, flow these three emanations, history, poetry and philosophy; and there can be no others.⁴⁰

Bacon’s understanding that the senses act as a medium for objects to fix themselves in the memory like seals on molten wax, "entire as it were, just as they come" is significant. It is arguably this conception of knowledge that lies behind Ray’s assumption that the descriptions in the Ornithology were faithfully and objectively mediated by the author to the reader. As Ray notes, "we did carefully describe each bird from the view and inspection of it lying before us".⁴¹ But it would be misleading to insist that Bacon understood inquiry into the natural world to consist simply in the

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⁴¹ Ray, op cit, sig. A3v.
shedding of one mode of viewing for the sake of another, a choice reflected in the mode of description in the Ornithology. The viewer of the natural world could not simply put on his Baconian hat when he sat down to read the works of the Royal Society, and put on his humanist hat when he put these works down and took up his Homer instead. Bacon's conception of the senses challenged the very idea of the viewer as a pre-conceived reasoning human body.

Just how radical Bacon's reconception of the viewer actually was, may be seen when we look at his own hopes for his new system of philosophy. As Marjory Purver has shown, Bacon conceived of "a true and lawful marriage between the empirical and rational faculty":

The practical skills and diligence which characterised the approach of the artisan, freed from an attachment to immediate ends, must be carried into the realm of the intellect, itself freed from subservience to preconceived opinion. In this way the range of man's research might become the whole universe, and the object of his investigation the causes of natural phenomena.

This process was to be continuous. Practical experience was to be set free from utilitarian ends and valued for the insights it offered into principles of nature. Once established, laws were to be used in order to refine the means to man's experiment, or experience (the words were equivalent in the seventeenth century) of the world. As Bacon said:

[F]rom the new light of axioms, which having been educed from those particulars by a certain method and rule, shall in their turn point out the way again to new particulars, greater things may be looked for. For our road does not lie on a level, but ascends and descends; first ascending to axioms, then descending to works.

How well this philosophy worked therefore depended on how well new experiments worked that were devised from axioms induced from previous experimental observation. Ultimately, it was the creation of a "true model of the world, such as it is in fact, and not such as a man's own reason would have it be" that was the test of Bacon's project. In other words it was the degree to which man could separate the

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42 Purver, op cit., p.35.
43 Ibid., p.35.
mechanism of the senses from the government of the mind and adjust them instead to
the measure of the things perceived in the natural world, that showed how well
Bacon’s philosophy had worked.

The purpose of this radical divorce of mind and sense was so that the mind itself
may be likewise governed by truly objective measures. In Bacon’s scheme the
methodical collection of data and the right use of the senses may "enlarge or dilate the
human understanding to the size of the world, so that it be able to become its exact
and polished mirror". In particular, Bacon saw a barrier to his new science in that
the body of man tended to provide the viewer with a criterion of scale against which
he might measure the information passed onto the mind by the senses. As he noted:

[I]t is a false assertion that the sense of man is the [true] measure of things. On the contrary, all
perceptions as well of the sense as of the mind are according to the measure of the individual
and not according to the measure of the universe.

It goes without saying that the fixed relationship between viewer and object as
established by Albertian perspective theory was anathema to Bacon’s idea of the
correct mode of visual perception, because the presupposition of the viewer’s presence
pre-empted a truly objective approach to the world. Indeed, it could be said to
disregard the idea of any "approach" at all, as perspective theory placed the burden of
activity on the performers rather than on the passive audience.

It is this Baconian understanding of measure and new conception of the viewer
that informs the sharp changes in scale and the discontinuous representation of space
in the Ornithology. The irregularity of scale is a consequence of taking away from the
viewer the privilege of imposing their own sense of measure onto everything within
their view. It may be for this reason that the illustrations in the Ornithology draw
attention to the medium of their representation. As accurate and detailed engravings
carefully fitted onto the page they prove the success of the whole project in reducing
the viewer to the measure of the image, that is to say of the objects described.

The qualitative differences in these modes of representation and viewing have
long since been recognised in art historiography. Svetlana Alpers in particular has
looked closely at the nature of northern art in the seventeenth century, and the Dutch

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47 Bacon, *op cit.*, p.54.
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response to Bacon and other writers (including Hooke) who explored the relationship between visual perception and knowledge.

Alpers' thesis in her book *The Art of Describing* is based on arguing a qualitative difference between Italian and Dutch art of the period. Late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century estimates of Dutch art found it wanting in comparison to Italian art, she says, because commentators looked at it with an eye trained to perceive a human measure in the representation of all objects. Alpers notes that the Dutch fascination with optical instruments, especially the microscope, should warn us against assuming that Renaissance humanist concerns were central to Dutch art. She notes, "[i]t followed, as part and parcel of the primacy granted to sight, that the issue of scale or the estimation of relative size became a pressing one". As has already been seen, the use of viewing instruments to improve sight "raises the question of the truth or status of vision". Alpers argues that a Baconian ideal lay behind Dutch conceptions of what it meant to view a painting or drawing, and argues that common notions of seeing posited on the "attentive eye" united the artist and the microscopist as members of the same visual culture. Both, she says, saw the world in terms of multiples, that is to say minute formal distinctions within classes of subject, and divisibles, wherein a single body may be broken down and these small bits enlarged.

The dramatic changes in representational scale implied in these notions indicate that there was no impulse for the viewer to impose their own sense of scale onto the object. In contrast to the Italian Renaissance theory of linear perspective, Dutch art (Alpers argues) treated space with an "additive approach":

No need is felt to pull together, assemble or in some way reduce individual views into a unified sense of a whole. The attitude is conditional on a double fragmentation: first, the viewer's eye is isolated from the rest of his body at the lens; second, what is seen is detached from the rest of the object and from the rest of the world.

Alpers sees such an "additive approach" as not simply a consequence of the Dutch interest in optical devices, but as an integral part of the Baconian scheme of experimentation in order to induce principles about the natural world. She notes that in seventeenth-century northern Europe, "art does not simply imitate nature, nor is it a

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49 Ibid, p.22.
50 Ibid, p.85.
play of the imagination, but rather it is the technē or craft that enables us, through constraint, to grasp nature". The point she argues is that representation did enjoy a special place within the Baconian ideal in the United Provinces as its additive approach enabled nature to be constrained in a way that a quotidian experience of an object would not allow. Bacon had said, "I contrive that the office of the sense shall be only to judge of the experiment, and that the experiment itself shall judge of the thing". Alpers sees this conception of the senses as forming the basis of a set of assumptions that proposed that art could be equated with experiment, rather than being taken as a representation of an object. It is almost a mode of experiment, as it is "located at that place where the world and the human crafting [i.e. constraint, experiment] of it meet. This conjunction defines representation, which is credited with giving us the capacity to comprehend the world".

Seen from within the context of seventeenth-century experimentation and optical instrumentalisation, Alpers proposes that Dutch art is a form of representation that is believed in. In other words it is seen to have a truth value equivalent to any derived from direct experience with the object itself. As her analysis of Bacon's influence in Dutch art indicates, pictures could themselves be understood as offering a particular "grasp of nature": "pictures [...] serve, like words, as representations of the concrete world of things. But they also serve as models of making". By this she indicates that they could be received as equivalents of experiment or experience, and as meaningful in their own right. This is arguably a significant point, because it suggests that the relationship between new epistemological methods and visual culture not only forged a new way of looking at pictures, but conferred on images a completely new status.

Alpers' conception of the formal properties of art in seventeenth century Dutch culture, and its autonomy from the object it copies, is predicated on an assumption that the system of knowledge to which it related, that is to say the Baconian project, was taken as being given, at least within the culture. In other words, in The Art of Describing Bacon's ideas are unquestioningly seen as being widely and perhaps universally accepted in Dutch educated culture. Her thesis rests on seeing in Dutch Baconianism a "cultural ambience, and [...] a particular model of a picture that offers

51 Ibid, pp.103-4.
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appropriate terms and suggests strategies for dealing with the nature of northern images.\(^5^5\)

As this quotation suggests, Alpers looks to Baconianism as an interpretative thesis for relating many different genres of painting and drawing to other cultural developments. It is a useful thesis for dealing with the images in Willughby and Ray's work. The *Ornithology* can be linked with institutional Baconianism as a book published under the imprint of the Royal Society. It can also be linked with cultural Baconianism as a project that seems to have grown from close study of the illustrations in Dutch natural histories that Alpers identifies as being so influenced by Baconian ideas.

What the thesis in *The Art of Describing* does not do is suggest how Baconian attitudes were mediated to the level of art-making. It posits that Bacon's ideas were more or less given in Dutch educated culture. The influence of Bacon's interest in purely formal distinction is evident in the linear quality of the illustrations in the *Ornithology* and the *de Historia Piscium*. But how does this influence relate to Dutch painting or a work such as *Wollaton Hall*? Arguably the bird's-eye view shows an interest in form that parallels the close observation of formal difference in works of natural history. But it cannot be argued that a "cultural ambience" lies behind an interest in form in completely different genres, or that vague cultural impulses make these genres in some way complimentary. There is the question of how Siberechts, a painter of Flemish rural fantasies, would have come into contact with Bacon's work. More particularly, it has been seen that in the Preface to the *Ornithology* Ray has to argue specifically for the necessity of the viewer consciously displacing their "humane" subjectivity. This suggests that Baconian theories of vision existed in constant tension with humanist theories of perception. Ray's plea looks less like "cultural ambience" and more like recognition of the viewer's historical subjectivity. Even if his critique is based on Baconian ideas (which it arguably is) there is still the question: if Baconianism has an influence in shaping the representation of the natural world in natural histories, how does it relate to painting, if at all?

*Contending with the viewer as historical subject*

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\(^{5^4}\) Ibid, p.99.
The problem of how Baconian ideas influenced painting arguably centres round the problem of whether Baconian theories of vision can be viewed as historical developments. Alpers argues that they can’t; they are just a given aspect of Dutch seventeenth-century culture. But Ray’s comments indicate that Baconian theory had to contend with the problem of the viewer’s subjectivity. This chapter has argued that the viewer should be seen as a specifically historical subject. Their historical identity as a member of a social class was a factor taken into account in the composition of earlier house portraits. An analysis of how Bacon’s ideas were mediated to the level of art-making should therefore centre around the question of how the viewer in natural history illustrations can also be seen as a historical subject. By seeing natural history illustrations in a historical context it should be possible to see the points of concern they shared with paintings.

A series of four preparatory drawings for one of the plates from *de Historia Piscium* offers indications of how images from natural histories might be seen as historical objects. The drawings are of a skate (see Plate 49). In each drawing the whole body is drawn in faint pencil outline, and the dissected area is coloured in grey watercolour and outlined in ink, making it more prominent. Each drawing is carefully executed and the dissected intestines are subtly modelled with the watercolour washes. None of the drawings is highly finished.

Each drawing is accompanied by manuscript text, and it is these texts that indicate the historical nature of illustrating natural history. The notes on the reverse of the final illustration in the series are the longest, and most interesting. In them, the dissector (either Willughby or Ray) notes:

This last [drawing] hath liver intestines spleene [?] all adhering to [?] removed yt everything under them might appear in their p per site, except the left testicle wch was purposely removed, yt the inverant side might give a faire prospect. That adioynes to the epididymis and seemes darker coloured is the kidney to wch is annexed a vescia wch discharges itselffe into the intestine / [Y]ou finde of the appendices the rima or extremity of the left, [?] the upper part of the right opened wch I tooke to be a scrotu / [W]hen I had opened the thorax that the heart might appear in its site + the branchia my workman was tired & willing to finish them + give over.\(^{56}\)

\(^{56}\) NU/Mi.LM.25.f.14v.; my italics.
The text explains the image by noting what each feature is, along with its physiological function and relation to the other intestinal parts. But the text is also notable because it uses the language of topographical location and mapping that was used in the county surveys of the period. The use of "site" appears as a code-word for accuracy. The author's concern that "the heart might appear in its site" demonstrates a regard for topographical context that parallels the much-discussed topics of accuracy and circumstantial detail in contemporary county maps. It is important to note that the author thinks "prospect" is a proper term for use in this context: it contrasts with the use of the term to denote a ground-level view in house portraiture. It seems to suggest a quantitative rather than a rhetorical value in the context of the dissection. The author can call it "faire" not because it is beautiful but because of the comprehensiveness of the view it offers the viewer.

In addition to their explanatory function and topographical language the texts are also noteworthy because they stress the experiential aspect of the dissection process. Each illustration is accompanied by a note explaining not only what is seen in the drawing but also what has been taken away. The first illustration's text points out: "[T]he first sight of the abdomen of a male its overture being turned upward", and the second text notes: "[T]he second sight of a male the liver being removed". In the final illustration the text points out the absence of the left testicle and says that it "was purposely removed". In addition, he finishes the commentary with the note: "my workman was tired & willing to finish + give over".

These notes may be complements to the explanatory tone of the commentary in general, helping to indicate which intestines lie on top of which. But the notes also point out what happened in the dissection process itself. As well as explanatory notes they are testimony to the historical event of the dissection. They do not say, "this is how to do it": they say, "this is how I did it". The text relates the image to the fact of historical experience.

Chapter One examined how county histories performed a similar operation of emphasising the experiential basis of their observations. It argued that the emphasising of experience was achieved through the use of class-orientated terminology, such as "survey" and "perambulation". The images in these histories,
and maps in particular, were marketed by their publishers as faithful mediators of these experiences, and as having a high epistemological value in the context of empirical science.

In the notes accompanying the sketches for Willughby and Ray's *de Historia Piscium* it is evident that the fact that experience lies behind the production of these images is not a given assumption. Instead, the terminology used in the texts is carefully chosen. The dissector's interventions are clearly recorded in the narrative as always being directed towards offering the viewer a clearer sight of the anatomical details: "[T]his last hath liver intestines spleene [...] removed yt everything under them might appear in their p per site". As has been argued, terms such as "site" and "prospect" relate to class-bound realms of experience and assumptions regarding a conception of the natural environment as a separate entity from the human sphere, and how it could be viewed and visualised. A corollary to this use of terminology might be that the dissection was an extension of these practices and therefore historically subjective insofar as they were the preserve of a particular class. The commentator's narration of the experiences behind the production of the image enables it to be historicised, because experience was arguably a historical phenomenon rather than a universal one, as Bacon conceived it to be: certain experiences were the preserve of certain classes.

This does not explain why the terminology of description was so carefully chosen, however. What the terminology achieves is to transfer the historical subjectivity of the dissector onto the object itself. It suggests that the actual activity of dissection was a class activity, congruent with surveying and progressive landowning. But rather than admit to his historical subjectivity the narrator suggests that the act of seeing itself be thought of in terms of "prospects" and the object as a series of "sites" as successive layers of intestine are revealed. This enables the narrator to maintain the fiction of an observer free from the sense-distorting taint of "humane learning". In other words the narrator is able to present the acts of dissection, observation and (by implication) visual recording as a-historical and unburdened by the assumptions of class.

The manuscript sketches and text demonstrate the historical nature of the production of images in natural history. The key issue that prevents the images being seen as the outcome of a "cultural ambience" is the displacement of the author's
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historical subjectivity. The illustrations are arguably products of a social group seeking to transfer their imperatives from themselves to the objects of their study.

It was suggested earlier that the historical nature of natural-historical illustration offers a means for tracing a route of mediation to other pictorial genres. As has been seen these illustrations shared a published context with maps and house portraiture. An example of the mixing of descriptive genres is the description of fictitious landscape in John Ray’s 1691 bestseller *The Wisdom of God Manifest in the Creation*. Arguing the evidences of God’s existence in the natural world, Ray concludes an account of God’s bounty by saying:

Methinks by all this provision for the use and service of man, the Almighty interpratively speaks to him in this manner: I have placed thee in a spacious and well-furnished world [...] Till and manure thy fields, sow them with thy seeds, extirpate noxious and unprofitable herbs, guard them from the invasions and spoils of beasts, clear and fence in thy meadows and pastures; dress and prune thy vine [...] plant thee orchards, with all kinds of fruit trees, in such order as may be most beautiful to the eye, and most comprehensive of plants; gardens for culinary herbs, and all kinds of salleting; for delectable flowers, to gratify the eye with their agreeable colours and figures, and thy scent with their fragrant odours; [...] dispose them in that comly order, as may be both pleasant to behold, and commodious for access. I have furnished thee with all materials for building, [...] Deck and bespangle the country with houses and villages convenient for thy habitation, provided with out houses and stables for the harbouring and shelter of thy cattle, with barns and granaries for the reception, and custody, and storing up thy corn and fruits.  

The passage recalls God’s showing Adam how man was to be lord over the Creation in the Book of Genesis, ch.2 vv.26-7. For Ray, a nonjuring clergyman after 1662, Genesis might have found more contemporary expression in John Milton’s *Paradise Lost*. In the eighth book of Milton’s poem God takes Adam to the top of a hill and says to him:

This Paradise I give to thee; count it thine
To till and keep; and of the fruit to eat;
Of every tree that in the garden grows
Eat freely with glad heart; fear here no dearth.  

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Milton's description combines description with injunction in much the same way as Ray's narrative. It succeeds in showing the viewer what is in the landscape and what their relationship to it is, whilst suggesting that the viewer is only a passive agent and that his engagement with the natural environment is the design of higher powers.

Closer observation of Ray's description reveals that the passage is saturated with the language of ownership and cultivation. Ray discusses new agricultural methods, enclosure, horticulture, and manorial rights amongst other things. An explicit aspect of the description is his notion of what Andrew McRae calls a "new spatial rationalism", that is viewing the land as a quantifiable space rather than a "bundle of rights" rooted in social custom. This classification of the environment in its abstract and social categories continues: Ray describes the landscape as divided between fields, meadows, pastures, orchards, gardens, and vineyards on the one hand, and houses, villages, stables, barns and granaries on the other. The distinction suggests that the productivity of the land and the needs of society are held in tension rather than being concomitant aspects of the Creation.

The extent to which order is a product of unequal social relations is further suggested in the language used to describe the viewing of the landscape. Ray indicates that the order of the landscape arises from a dynamic perceived from the site of the house and which is resolved in practice when it relates back to the house. In particular, order consists in a disposal of trees, plants and livestock in such a way that it is both pleasing to look at and easy to reach. This suggests that both a site for looking at the landscape, and a literal entrance onto it, were located at the same spot. If we recall the use of temporal and spatial logic in the painting of Longleat House, we may suggest that the same semantic structure is being employed here, and that it is the house that constitutes the hub of meaning in the description.

If Ray's description suggests that the viewer bears a historical identity, it also tries to nullify this subjectivity. Social identity is effaced in Ray's description of the viewer as simply "man". The language of property-ownership, agricultural and horticultural development, and acquisition is made common to all mankind. In this respect, the historical conditions of viewing are effaced. They are replaced with a universalised Baconian conception of vision and its place in inductive reasoning. Some of Ray's injunctions are to traditional agricultural activities such as tilling and

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62 See McRae, op. cit.
sowing. But an interest in dressing and pruning, as well as organising a collection of "all kinds of fruit trees" demonstrates an interest beyond the level of everyday needs. Ray himself had published books on plants native to England and plants found abroad. This interest in classification arguably complements the Baconian project of identifying formal distinctions begun in the *Ornithology*.

Ray's interest in form continues in his commands to organise the topography of the landscape. The orchards are to be planted "in such an order as may be most beautiful to the eye" and flower gardens are to be disposed "in that comly order". Moreover a greater adaption to formal arrangement is to be made as the viewer is told to "clear and fence in thy meadows and pastures". This interest in topographical form may be related to Bacon's theories of vision propagated by experimental philosophers. It also hints at a wider process of establishing order that envisages the reforming landowner as working in concord with nature's design. As John Barrell has noted, "[t]o enclose a place, just as much as to make it into a landscape garden, means to work it into a structure more or less ordained elsewhere - and thus - as far as that place is concerned - an arbitrary one". Guiding the viewer's attention to formal aspects in the landscape therefore suggests that the shaping of the landscape is actually part of a larger ordained design. Again, the suggestion is that the viewer's historical subjectivity as an agent of improvement is nullified, as improvement is elided in favour of the notion of design.

Ray's description of the landscape takes on the characteristics of the illustrations in his natural-historical projects. The language of land-owning and improvement is designated as being in the realm of all men's experience, and its historical background is denied. The overtly rhetorical aspects of the description make it unlikely that Ray had it in mind to equate his description with the epistemological value of first-hand experience as he did with the engravings accompanying the *Ornithology*. But it is arguable that the viewer's historical subjectivity is transferred onto the landscape. Ray suggests that far from being a historical condition the viewer's subjectivity is a condition inherent in the viewing of the natural world itself. It is after all the Creator who speaks to man thus, says Ray.

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63 See John Ray, *Observations, topographical, moral, & physiological; made in a journey through the low-countries, Germany, Italy and France: with a catalogue of plants not native in England, found spontaneously growing in those parts*, London, 1673.
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The place of description in empirical epistemology

An analysis of Ray and Willughby’s natural-historical projects enables a Baconian conception of description to be placed in a historical context and seen as a historical product. The *Ornithology* and *de Historia Piscium* reveal knowledge of terminology used in surveying and mapping the land. Ray’s description of the landscape takes the form of a detailed itinerary of the improvements made to animal husbandry, agriculture and horticulture by the acquisitive landowner. These evidences demonstrate that this culture of description should be seen as the result of historical social relations.

Taking a broader view it is possible to see that the Baconian theory of vision on which this culture was based was also a historical phenomenon. In calling for sense-experience to inform the induction of abstract principles, Bacon was arguably replacing the socially circumscribed category of experience with a universalised conception of sense. Bacon’s theory of vision could therefore argue for the notion of sight as a physiological phenomenon and the act of viewing as a-historical. The manuscript and published writings examined above demonstrate that observation and experience were guided by the imperatives of social class. What Bacon’s theory did was to suggest that experience was a function of epistemology rather than class. He thereby displaced the observer’s subjectivity onto the object they were describing. In arguing that Ray’s descriptions should be seen as historical products it is therefore necessary to say that their wider intellectual context was itself a function of historical social relations.

It is important not to overlook the implications of Bacon’s theory for the status of description. Bacon’s followers suggested that the observer could faithfully relay sense-data in such a way as to provide an objective, undistorted description of the object they had observed. Hence Ray: "[o]ur main design was to illustrate the history of birds [...] by so accurately describing [...] and observing [...] that the reader might be sure of our meaning". Description here assumes an epistemological equivalence with experience itself.

The significant point here is that Ray gives special significance to his description. The observer’s supposed objective mediation of experience gives their

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64 Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape*, p.84.
description a status in the process of inductive reasoning above that of "homonymous or synonymous words, [...] hieroglyphs, emblems, morals, fables, presages [...] or any sort of humane learning". The reification of description in turn enshrined the historically subjective experience as the epistemological equivalent of any experience, because it was an experience faithfully recorded on the senses and impressed on the memory. What was the subjective experience of the member of one class became a universally knowable experience through the mediation of description.

The function of description can be seen as what Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer have called an "objectifying resource". They argue that as a concept "objectivity" is a "historical product", a "category" of perception belonging to a certain social group. Scientific method (they propose) crystallises social form: the empirical Baconian method of the Royal Society presented a practical solution to the problem of social interaction by providing the conditions for consensus on matters relating to experience, the basis of experimental science. Shapin and Schaffer take a specific interest in how the social conditions of scientific categories and methods relate to the scientific text. They argue that within this context the text embodied the assumptions of the social group. It became itself an object of consensus, what Shapin and Schaffer call an object of "virtual witnessing", that is to say a substitute for the object described by the text. They note:

In order to understand how Boyle deployed the literary technology of virtual witnessing, we have to reorient some of our common ideas about the scientific text. We usually think of an experimental report as the narration of some prior experience: it points to sensory experiences that lie behind the text. This is correct. However, we should also appreciate that the text itself constitutes a visual source.

This idea of the text as visual source corresponds to Ray's identification of the engravings in the *Ornithology* as a parallel of actually seeing the birds themselves.

What is significant about Shapin and Schaffer's thesis is that it pinpoints what this chapter has already argued, that there is a basis for a qualitative distinction between descriptions for natural histories, and prospect views. In the engravings and drawings for Ray and Willughby's projects the signifying power of the image is

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67 Ibid., p.61.
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ostensibly nullified as it becomes the epistemological equivalent of the object. Extrapolating from this distinction it is possible to see how bird’s-eye views and prospects differed. Bird’s-eye views share many of the formal characteristics of the illustrations produced for natural histories. They were more linear in style than the low-level prospect view, which was often heavily atmospheric. The higher viewpoint of the bird’s-eye view also enabled the objects to be topographically co-ordinated with each other by means of the arrangement organised by one-point perspective. In Wollaton Hall it was seen that this co-ordination drew attention to the formal qualities of the landscape: the apsed bowling green and the parterre are an important means of directing attention from the foreground to the Hall and then further into the distance. The interest in form seen in the bird’s-eye view served the purpose of displaying the landowner’s possessions but it also militated against the interaction of viewer and subject seen in the prospect tableau.

The bird’s-eye view also served the same function as the description in the Ornithology or Ray’s Wisdom of God. The description suggests that experience lies behind the production of the image, and that the viewer’s eye passively receives the impression of the image just as the observer’s eye received the impression of the object. But these experiences are arguably class-bound. As noted, the topographical nature of the image recalls the premium placed on the picturing of space in county and estate maps in the period. If Wollaton Hall has any experience behind it, it is arguably that of the survey of an estate. Willughby’s stake in landowning suggests that a survey was a realm of experience that his circle could relate to. Seen in this social context, the descriptive aspects of Wollaton Hall might be understood as a substitute object of experience. In describing the landscape in formal and detached terms the description mediated the observer’s experience in such a way that the viewer could be understood to share in this experience.

Some conclusions

The evidence of the Willughby family’s interest in natural history points to the suggestion that description offered a means of displacing their social and economic subjectivity from the act of observation to the object observed. As has been seen, description concentrated on the formal aspects of figures. The bird’s-eye view was a means of depicting the formal aspects of a house and its grounds as well as the wider
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estate. As the Baconian notion of description claimed it objectively relayed an observer’s sense-experiences to a reader or viewer, the potency of the bird’s-eye view lay in the idea that it was a description rather than a representation of a scene. The view was significant as a collection of “individuals” capable of making impressions on the senses exactly like those made by the original object.

The importance of description for people like Willughby and Ray was that it enabled them to claim that their own class-bound way of seeing was a quality of the viewed object rather than the viewing subject. As observers they could not separate their acts of observation from their historical identities as members of a certain class with certain experiences behind them. Terms such as "site" and "prospect" refer to the class-bound nature of viewing. But in the language of empirical science the viewer’s historicity is elided. The Baconian conception of sense as a detached and purely physiological function transfers the burden of terms like "site" onto the object itself. It tends to say that the object had to be seen in such-and-such a way. The language of description thereby becomes a transparent mediator of sense-experience rather than a sign of the observer’s subjectivity. It thereby succeeds in conferring a certain disposition on the viewer or reader. The description of Wollaton Hall, or the dissection of a fish, uses language to suggest that the object demands to be surveyed, like a map. The viewer in their act of looking or reading actually surveys rather than gazes or explores. They have the observer’s own historical dispositions conferred on them through the objectifying function of the description. The language of description is the means by which the observer’s subjectivity is elided and made to seem a quality of the object itself.

Are these the reasons the Siberechts chose to depict Wollaton Hall using a bird’s-eye view? It is extremely doubtful. Although a technically very proficient painter there is no evidence that he had prolonged exposure to natural-historical ideas, or any regard for the concerns of progressive landowning. What this chapter has tried to suggest is that the function of description originated in the inter-related social and economic imperatives of Bacon’s followers: those who "elevated to a coherent intellectual system what had hitherto been the only partially spoken assumptions of practical men".68 Visual and verbal description mediated this system by putting its assumptions into practice. The function of description was therefore historical: as

68 McRae, op. cit., p.158.
Shapin and Schaffer point out, both "objectivity, and proper method" are "accomplishments, [...] historical products, [...] actor's judgements and categories". Description serves a class and cultural function, and this was mediated through the visual and verbal imagery of late-seventeenth century natural history.

Although it is not possible to say why Siberechts elected to depict Wollaton Hall using a bird's-eye view, I wish to suggest that its descriptive nature parallels the function of description in sublimating the viewer's historical subjectivity. This parallel was arguably the joint outcome of the patron's familiarity with a body of visual description, and the artist's awareness of another body of work, that of continental portraiture. The formal aspects of Wollaton Hall recall the priority given to form in Bacon's theories and the appearance of the birds and fish in the work of Willughby and Ray. Moreover, Wollaton Hall is noticeable within Siberechts' oeuvre for its use of perspective to create a topographical arrangement. The perspective creates an elevated view and uses the central line of vision to direct the viewer's attention away from Wollaton Hall itself. Both features militate against the establishment of a relationship between viewer and subject in the pictorial tableau.

These features are not an innovation on Siberechts' part. He would almost certainly have been familiar with continental bird's-eye engravings, and Loggan's work produced in Britain. What is significant is that Siberechts chose to use them for his work for Thomas Willughby. The descriptive nature of the bird's-eye view coincides with the reification of description in the works of the Willughby circle and of Bacon's followers more generally. The significance lies in the fact of coincidence, for as has been seen Siberechts used other methods in his portraiture, and the continental corpus did not specify that one method was especially suited to one subject or purpose. The valuing of visual description in natural history can't be used as a direct causal explanation for Siberechts' descriptive depiction of Wollaton Hall. What can be argued, is that the discourse around description as well as the descriptions themselves provided the patron with an imperative for his portrait that the artist met with the use of a new format taken from continental examples of portraiture.

Summary

This chapter argues for the historical nature of description and claims to objectivity. It began by examining the changing use of centralised perspective in Siberechts' house
and estate portraiture from the mid-1670s to the mid-1690s. Earlier paintings such as *Longleat House* used linear perspective to create a dramatic tension whereas later paintings such as *Wollaton Hall* used it as a means for spatial co-ordination and topographical description. The issue at stake in the deployment of perspective was the painting's admittance or otherwise of the viewer's historical identity. Pictures that depicted a narrative implied that the scene was looked at as one would follow a hunt from a house. Later bird's-eye views of houses and estates emphasised description more than narrative tension and appeared to militate against a notion of the viewer as a historical subject.

The question was then asked of whether there was an intrinsic relationship between the use of centralised perspective and what the painting signified about the viewer. Bacon's conception of description implied that the natural world could be looked at objectively: the viewer could reduce themselves to the scale of the objects rather than *vice versa*. Did the use of perspective to describe an object imply that the thing was described objectively? Linked to this question was the issue of how Bacon's ideas were mediated to the art world and the level of making art objects such as *Wollaton House*. Was the relationship between Baconianism and art simply one of "cultural ambience", reflecting the a-historical conception of viewing in Bacon's inductive epistemology?

The chapter argued that Baconian scientists in the period were acutely aware of the problem presented to a science based on inductive reasoning by the fact of the historicity of experience. Dissections of animals and descriptions of landscape both suggest that scientists described their experiments using the language and assumptions of their class-bound experiences: Willughby and Ray described their views of a dissected fish with terms taken from mapping and landowning. The result was that descriptions objectified the historically subjective nature of viewing by representing the object from the point of view of the viewing subject.

The potency of the bird's-eye view was that it was a depiction of an estate in the style of natural-historical description. Its detail and formal clarity implied an objectivity absent in earlier house and estate portraits. What is significant is that as a description the bird's-eye view suggested that the act of viewing an estate was not a class-bound experience and that an understanding of the place of the estate in a landscape was not the outcome of these practices. In contrast to earlier portraits, where the view of the estate and landscape was based on an admission of the viewer's
social subjectivity in a historical context, the later views transfer the viewer’s historical experiences onto the landscape itself. They suggest that the spatial terms in which the landscape is described by Siberechts is the *a priori* condition of the landscape rather than a representation of it as perceived by one social group. Class-bound practices are claimed in the paintings as a quality of the object itself.

The chapter ended by examining the historical nature of the mediation between Baconian ideas about description, and painting. Both forms dealt with the historical nature of viewing. It was argued that while Siberechts wouldn’t have known about Bacon’s theories, his patron would have expressed a wish for a descriptive image of his property, because it was in description that his landowning and improvements could best be represented as incipient in the landscape. It was such a wish for description that drove Siberechts to turn to the format of the bird’s-eye view that he used to great effect in *Wollaton Hall*. 
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"First a brave place and then as brave a mind": sublimating surveying in the idea of landscape as objective form in Siberechts' Nottingham from the East, c.1698

Introduction

The previous chapter examined how Siberechts' representation of Wollaton Hall sublimated the historical origins of surveying as a practice of acquisitive landowners. This chapter aims to address the developments, precedents and pressures behind representation of the landscape in Siberechts' topographical paintings in the 1690s. It is intended to expand on the subject matter of the previous chapter and develop the issues it raised.

Siberechts' Nottingham from the East, c.1698

Jan Siberechts' late work Nottingham from the East is the kind of painting one wants to pore over (see Plate 50). It is a view of the Trent valley from Colwick Hill one mile to the east of Nottingham, looking west towards what is now Beeston, about three miles to the west of the city. It measures 58.4 x 120.7 cm, and was probably painted c.1698-1700. This wide format means that a considerable amount of detail can be included of the land to the north and south of the River Trent. The painting was probably painted for Sir Thomas Willughby, later 1st Lord Middleton, for whom Siberechts had painted a huge canvas of Wollaton Hall in 1695. The Hall itself appears in the distant right of the painting. Although not signed by Siberechts the swooping magpies to the right of the painting suggest that it is by him: they also appear in Wollaton Hall.

The amount of topographical detail in the painting is incredible. The painting depicts an array of grand houses belonging to a number of wealthy Nottinghamshire families. In the right foreground the terracotta hue of Pierrepont House stands out,
belonging to the Pierrepont family who held extensive lands in Nottinghamshire. \(^1\) Behind this and to its left sits Nottingham Castle, seat of the Dukes of Newcastle-upon-Tyne who resided principally at Welbeck Abbey in the north of the county. \(^2\) To its right lies Wollaton Hall, seat of Sir Thomas Willughby, and over to the left near the centre in the far distance is Stanton Hall. On the left of the painting situated at the top of the wedge of rock rising out of the Trent is Clifton House belonging to the Cliftons, one of the oldest Nottinghamshire families. \(^3\) Other principal buildings in the painting include St Mary's church in Nottingham, seen rising brightly out of the city on the right. Over to the left on the other side of the river is St Wilfred's church in the parish of Wilford. In addition the painting details a host of lesser buildings and some settlements. Houses lead into Nottingham from the centre foreground along to the right of the painting. On the extreme right further in the background it is possible to see Wollaton village and in the centre distance a small building lies at the foot of Stanton Hill as it rises from the valley. Further to the right above St Wilfred's is a small white spire. Clifton House and St Wilfred's are surrounded by the roofs of Clifton and Wilford respectively. There are also two bridges, one over the Trent on the left and another over the River Leen by Nottingham on the right. There is a landing stage by the Trent bridge.

The painting hangs at present in Nottingham Castle Museum. Viewed from 12 feet away its detail is unclear and it can only be really satisfactorily viewed from 3 feet distance. This is in part due to the small size of the buildings, which draws the viewer in to examine them more closely. It is also due to the human activity the artist represents. Microscopic figures reap, sail, shepherd, load and unload, walk and wash. Most easily distinguished are the six reapers harvesting wheat in the bottom right of the painting. To their left a shepherd drives a flock of sheep into Nottingham and a woman bleaches her clothes in a field by the road: another shepherd and flock appear on the road into the city from the Trent bridge. Three or four figures walk into Nottingham from the Trent. On the river itself three boats are loading or unloading cargo by the quay at the northern end of the bridge. Six figures and a small number of livestock cross the bridge, two travel south and the rest go north towards the city. Nearer the foreground a laden boat with two men sails out of the view. In the field to

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their left a well-dressed couple walk on the path. In the meadows in the distance lies a field of haycocks, whilst nearer the viewer a thin spread of sheep and cattle are grazing. More sheep graze near Clifton and two figures walk down the hill.

The viewer's examination of this profusion of tiny detail is guided by Siberechts' use of light and dark contrasts in the painting. The light shines from the south and lightens the left part of the sky. A particularly bright patch of field is also depicted on the extreme left at the base of Clifton Hill. The eye is attracted to the light on the left but is also brought to the foreground by the dark tree acting as repoussoir, diffusing the light coming from the left and balancing the brightness of St Mary's church on the right. From the foreground, which slopes sharply away from the viewer into the valley, the eye wanders back over the terrain to the bright strip of light over the top of the landscape in the far distance.

The light on the left encourages the viewer to bring their eye immediately from the foreground to the background, and then back to the foreground over the landscape. In this pattern of viewing the function of the light is assisted by the raised viewpoint. In the painting the viewer looks down on the terrain and has a view of the horizon that is unbroken save for the tree in the immediate foreground. The raised viewpoint enables the eye to travel over the land with the minimum of visual obstruction. Notably, there is nothing punctuating the horizon that might cause the eye to leap from a spot in the landscape to the horizon, thereby literally overlooking the detail depicted in the valley or surrounding hills.

The structural elements of the composition also guide the eye over the terrain. Looking at the painting in situ one is aware of a strong diagonal running from the bottom left up to the middle right just below the horizon. The line runs along the cliff edge to St Mary's church, separating the darker foreground from the lighter middle ground. It then continues into the background as a thickly painted hedgerow. It guides the eye from the foreground through the principle topographical features into the distance. The diagonal thrust is balanced by a central vista bounded by the serpentine curves of the Trent on the left and by the equally curvaceous sweep of cliffs on the right side of the painting. The vista runs from the foreground down into the valley and into the distance, guiding the viewer's eye over the topography of the valley. A third major structural component in the painting is the horizontal line

On the Clifton family see especially Wood op. cit., p.39, 191-2.
formed by the Trent bridge, the road into Nottingham and the walls of the garden at Pierrepont House. The effect of this horizontal is to emphasise the stretched format of the painting. But in spite of its presence the spatial dynamic in Nottingham from the East is one of depth rather than width as the eye is lead from the foreground into the distance.

The consequence of the use of light and composition in Nottingham from the East is that the eye is lead over the terrain to examine the detail in a spatial context. Although each detail is an attraction in its own right, sense is made of the sheer amount of detail by seeing each piece in a spatial relationship with the other pieces as the eye travels over the land from object to object. Because the eye travels in an even and measured way over the terrain rather than jumping from large objects in the foreground to adjacent objects in the distance, the objects have a clearly perceptible distance from each other. The wings formed by the Trent and the cliffs around Nottingham give greater definition to this space: the converging banks of the river and the diminishing size of the buildings around the cliffs serve as markers that co-ordinate the space and help build up a network of spatial contexts around each architectural detail.

The overall impression of Nottingham from the East is that it is an extremely detailed and highly co-ordinated treatment of the Trent valley as it recedes to the west. The sheer amount of microscopic depiction draws the viewer into the painting. But the light and the raised viewpoint are used in such a way that the eye is lead to travel over the terrain. In this manner the spatial context of the whole is preserved and does not disappear under a mass of individual description.

The original hanging of the portrait is not known, and so it is uncertain what (if any) role this painting played in the patron's collection and what relationship it might have enjoyed to other paintings. Siberechts is not known to have painted any painting of comparable dimensions in the 1690s although this chapter will argue that its topographical character is the culmination of a decade of developing topographical views. However in spite of its dimensions (its length is twice its height) the painting

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arguably wasn’t an overdoor. It is a large painting. Its height in particular renders it rather large to be hung over a door. An overdoor that is known to have been painted by Siberechts in 1674 is only as quarter as high as it is wide. More compelling evidence as to the role of the painting comes from the detail of the work itself. The painting contains nine local landmarks and no less than ten different figure groups. Siberechts has painstakingly depicted the equestrian statue above the east door of Nottingham Castle and the fountain, viewing tower and battlements at Wollaton Hall. In the first place, it is unlikely such effort would have gone into a painting that was not intended to provide prolonged visual interest for its owner. In this sense to use it as an overdoor would have neglected its purpose. Moreover its composition is designed to co-ordinate a mass of detail rather than present a simple view that would retain clarity when seen from a distance. In the painting only St. Mary’s church and Wollaton Hall are distinguishable from twelve feet away.

More important perhaps is the fact that the view is taken from Colwick Hall, the seat of the Musters family. The hall had stood in an enclosed park since the thirteenth century. The historian and physician Charles Deering noted in 1751 that from the meadows just below Colwick "there is a prospect of Wollaton Hall, and on the left the eye is feasted with a gay view of Clifton Hills". It is not clear whether the view is taken from within the park. But whether it is or not the painting constitutes a survey of the seats belonging to the principle landowners and political figures of Nottinghamshire. Much of the land that is seen was owned by the Clifton, Willughby, Pierrepont, Musters and Gregory families. The painting is a celebration of their wealth and political eminence: members from all families bar the Musters were

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5 Vertue referred to Sib’s work for Lord Dover as "furniture": see The Age of Charles II, Royal Academy exhibition catalogue, 1960, cat. 351.
6 The Musters family are known to art historians through their later patronage of George Stubbs. Colwick Hall, which appears in some if his paintings, was rebuilt in 1776. See John Throsby, Thoroton’s History of Nottinghamshire: republished with large additions, [...] and embellished with views of seats of the Nobility and Gentry, towns, villages churches and ruins, 3 vol. Nottingham, 1790, vol.I, p.113.
7 Ibid.
8 Charles Deering, Nottinghamia Vetus et Nova; or, an Historical account of the ancient and present state of the town of Nottingham, Nottingham, 1751, p.72.
9 On the Clifton’s ownership of land, see John Curtis, A Topographical History of Nottinghamshire from actual survey, London, 1843, p.61, and Deering, op. cit., pp.224-5; on the Willughby family, see The Thoroton Society, Record Series no. 2, The Domesday of Inclosures for Nottinghamshire, ed. and trans. I. S. Leadham, 1904, p.39; on the Pierrepont lands see especially BL Egerton MSS 3564 f.4r; on the Musters family, see Beckett ed., op. cit., p.202; and on the Gregory family see Beckett ed., op. cit., p.115. The meadows in the painting were "periodically common"; Beckett ed., op. cit., p.152.
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involved in national or local government in the period. This power is reflected in their topographical eminence: the family seats all look out over the valley. It is a celebration of their power from the point of view of one of their own kind, if the viewpoint is taken to be the Musters estate. As such the painting arguably deals with too important a subject to be consigned to hanging over a door. At the very least its detail and subject matter suggest that it would have hung in a space where guests would be able to take note of it and give it the visual attention it invites and the regard it demands.

The date of *Nottingham from the East* is not certain, but it is probably a late painting dating from c.1698-1700. It is close in composition, subject matter and dimension to *A View of Henley from the Wargrave Road*, one version of which is signed and dated 1698 (see Plate 51). In particular the topographical character of the image and a bold receding diagonal from the bottom left to the horizon on the right resemble Siberechts' painting of Nottingham. Whilst *Nottingham from the East* measures 57.4 x 120.7 cm., his views of Henley measure 83 x 126 cm. and 90 x 121 cm. respectively. The relatively upright compositional format of the second version of Henley in particular indicates that *Nottingham from the East* evolved from relatively large landscape compositions that were too big to hang as overdoors.

*Nottingham from the East in the context of Siberechts' landscapes*

The 1690s witness the inception and development of Siberechts' interest in wide and deep topographical views. *Nottingham from the East* and *A View of Henley from the Wargrave Road* are the final paintings known to be by him and represent a culmination of his topographical interests, for in these paintings his treatment of spatial recession is at its most fluid. Siberechts' *oeuvre* had until 1690 consisted of prospect views of country houses and pastoral fantasies featuring buxom milkmaids and livestock fording through streams. These interests were continued in this decade.

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10 On Thomas Willughby's time as M.P. for Nottinghamshire, see Wood, *op. cit.*, p.228; on the Clifton family, M. P.s for Nottinghamshire, see Wood, *op. cit.*, 206-7. The Pierrepont family were Earls of Kingston-upon-Hull having bought the peerage in 1627: see Wood *op. cit.*, p.151; they also had a role on local government: Wood, *op. cit.*, p.207. On the Gregory family's serving as mayors, see Beckett *op. cit.*, pp.115, 151-4.

11 There are two versions of this painting. One, sold Sotheby's, London 16 November 1988 is signed and dated "J. Siberecht 16". The other, due for auction at Bonhams and Brooks, London, July 2001 is signed "J. Siberechtsfr. 1698".
but gradually gave way to a concurrent interest in the topographical forms of the landscape, developed through a number of representations of the Thames and Trent valleys in the period c.1690-1700.

The suggestion that Siberechts' landscapes "developed" can be seen by comparing Nottingham from the East with what is probably the first of his topographical paintings, Tate Britain's Landscape with Rainbow (see Plate 52). The painting shows Henley in Oxfordshire from the north-east. The painting is unsigned but is painted in Siberechts' rather feathery style. A tentative dating of c.1690 has been assigned to it. It is a comparable size to Siberechts' later paintings of Nottingham and Henley, measuring 81.9 x 102.9 cm. Its original patron is not known and there is no evidence to suggest one person in particular.

The painting is the first in a series of five paintings of Henley. It marks a departure in Siberechts' work in as far as it is the first view of landscape to be taken from a specific site. The viewpoint is Fawley Court, one mile north-east of Henley. Fawley Court was in the possession of Sir William Whitelock. It adjoined what was reputedly the oldest deer park in Oxfordshire, and in 1634 Sir William's grandfather Bulstrode had built a banqueting house on the site. The presence of the banqueting house indicates that its topographical situation might have been appreciated as a site for viewing the landscape. Taking a viewpoint as a prominent spot on an estate was to be a feature of nearly all Siberechts' subsequent topographical landscape paintings.

An important feature of Landscape with Rainbow is the way light is used. As with Nottingham from the East the light enters from the left, lighting up the sky as well as a field in that part of the painting. Immediately below these bursts of sunlight is painted a dark mass of trees and below this is the bright colour of a boat travelling towards Henley. These light and dark contrasts serve as a means of bringing the eye down from the horizon to the foreground. The viewer is encouraged to scan the light strip of foreground pasture and follow the direction of the barge being pulled by five brightly shirted men into Henley, towards the focal point of the brightly lit tower of St. Mary's church. As in Nottingham from the East a bright church tower provides a balance of light from the illuminated passages of terrain and sky on the left. From St. Mary's tower bright patches of light in the centre middle ground and hill behind take

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12 See Emily J. Climenson, *A Guide to Henley on Thames*, Henley, 1896, p.88. At the time of the painting, the park was rented out; see Climenson op. cit., p.91.
the eye further back into the landscape, following the deep recession of the river back to the horizon on the left.

The subject matter of *Landscape with Rainbow* also anticipates Siberechts' later work. The painting is a view of a town by a river. Boats sail to the town and are loaded and unloaded at a busy quay. Here, they probably carry coal from London or corn and malt back to the capital, and draw attention to Henley's importance situated on a navigable river. More cargo can be clearly seen stockpiled by the quays in one of the versions of *A View of Henley from the Wargrave Road*. The themes of trade and urban prosperity are complimented by scenes of rural bounty. In the foreground of *A Landscape with Rainbow* cattle, sheep and horses graze contentedly. A milkmaid milks a cow whilst in the meadow on the other side of the river stand large haystacks and more grazing livestock. The artist has intimated the directions in which the fields on the hill rising behind the town have been ploughed. In addition to the men pulling the barge in the foreground and the milkmaid, a number of tiny figures work and ride on the quay and walk down the side roads into the town.

Like *Nottingham from the East* the view is topographical in character but draws heavily on pastoral imagery to present its subject in an agreeable light. As the viewer is drawn into the painting to examine the detail of the tiny figures the productive pastures suggest a theme of easy rural abundance suggesting that the trade it stimulates is also effortless. The rainbow confirms that the scene is one of divine blessing, recalling God's renewal of His covenant with Noah after the Flood. It is significant in this respect that the view is overlooked by a church. Siberechts had used rainbows in his earlier paintings and they had been established in the iconography of Flemish and Dutch landscape in the period, for example in Peter Paul Rubens' *Landscape with Rainbow*, c.1636 and Jacob van Ruisdael's *Jewish Cemetry*, c. 1653-4. It is unlikely that the rainbow's Biblical significance would have escaped Siberechts' British patrons. In addition, books such as Henry Peacham's *Garden of Heroical Devises* of 1612 educated the viewer on the meaning of the rainbow in the

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14 See the book of Genesis, ch. 9 vv. 13-16.
context of visual imagery, associating it with the promise of "grace for such, as will
offend no more" (see Plate 53).16

In spite of similarities with later works in terms of viewing spot and subject
matter, Landscape with Rainbow is noticeably different because it does not guide the
eye over the terrain of the landscape. Its viewpoint is much lower than in later
paintings, hindering the extent to which the eye can scan over the surface of the land.
The viewer's eye is attracted to the left distance prior to being guided to the
foreground and across to St Mary's church on the right. The bright east face of the
tower brings the eye up the picture plane from the foreground and establishes a tonal
balance with the bright fields on the extreme left of the painting. This helps establish
a lateral dynamic to the painting and emphasises the width within a relatively upright
format. A further consequence of the tower's prominence is that the eye is taken
immediately from the foreground to the level of the horizon via the tower. The eye is
led to jump from the tower immediately to the sunlit hill behind and then further left
to the horizon. The effect is that the painting is considerably flattened. In the process
of establishing a lateral balance the artist has created a considerably foreshortened
depth.

Landscape with Rainbow is a much less topographically co-ordinated painting
than Nottingham from the East. In the earlier painting the demand is for pictorial
effect in the form of a tonal balance that maximises the lateral dimensions of the
painting. In the later painting a raised viewpoint diminishes the capacity of the
prominent tower of St. Mary's in Nottingham to lead the eye up towards the horizon.
A lateral balance is maintained but it is not at the cost of pictorial depth. St. Mary's
church becomes a topographical feature within the landscape. As noted above, it co-
ordinates the spatial recession of the Trent valley. In the painting of Henley, St.
Mary's does not so much co-ordinate recession as emphasise the panoramic nature of
the view. Although similar in subject matter and composition, Nottingham from the
East and Landscape with Rainbow differ in their treatment of topographical features
and choice of viewpoint in relation to the surrounding topography.

The wider context of change in Siberechts' topographical work

16 Henry Peacham, Minerva Britanna, or a Garden of Heroical Devises, London, 1612, p.77.
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The differences in the treatment of space between *Nottingham from the East* and *Landscape with Rainbow* become clearer when the paintings are considered in the context of Siberechts' other work in the 1690s. Both paintings contain the same fundamental ingredients of topographical view viewed from the estate of a local gentry family, and include pastoral imagery. But one is a panorama, whilst the other is a fluidly co-ordinated topographical image. The main distinction is the treatment of space. Analysis of the difference between the earliest and last of Siberechts' topographical landscapes from the 1690s establishes the parameters of change in his representation of landscape.

Siberechts' topographical landscapes in the 1690s can be divided into two thematic groups. The first group consists of three paintings of the Trent valley. Two can be dated c.1695, the third - *Nottingham from the East* - three to five years later. The earlier paintings are *Nottingham and the Trent*, and *Lenton Mill*, both in the collection of Lord Middleton (see Plates 54 and 55). They are companion pieces painted for Sir Thomas Willughby. Each one measures 107 x 144cm. which makes them slightly larger than most of Siberechts' work but still comparable in size and dimension.

*Nottingham and the Trent* is a view of the Trent valley from Clifton, the site of the seat of Sir William Clifton: it can be seen on top of the cliff to the immediate left of the Trent in *Nottingham from the East*. The painting shows Nottingham Castle and Nottingham itself viewed from the south-west. Rising behind the town and brightly lit by sunlight is Colwick Hill. Nearer the foreground is the Trent with St. Wilfred's church and the village of Wilford lying to its right. In the foreground pastoral figures act as *staffage* in the heavy shade provided by a tree on the extreme right balancing the mass of hills on the left. A road runs from the foreground to the middle ground along by the river. Yellow strips of wheat on the right of the river and grazing livestock on the left suggest a productive environment. A boat is pulled out of the view by a team of men in the foreground. The river recedes first to the right and then to the left, and near Nottingham in the distance turns again to the right and out of sight.

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17 The Trent is shallow enough for cattle to stand in, and they were a feature of river views into the nineteenth century: see E. S. Cooper, *Shaw's Picturesque Guide to Nottingham and its environs*, London, 1878, p.61.
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Lenton Mill is also a view of a landscape with an estate in the distance. It is taken from a ford in the River Leen as it flows to the Trent. Lenton itself belonged to the Gregorys, a prominent Nottingham family who had enlarged their holdings in 1650 after initially purchasing the land in 1609. A turf cart enters from the left foreground of the painting between a group of cottages that act as a wing for the view that opens out on the right. In the foreground of the vista up to Wollaton are some cattle, and packhorses walk back into the middle ground along the shallow river. Beyond them more cattle and some sheep graze on the rising ground. A milkmaid and travellers walk across the middle ground and behind them a shepherd leans on his staff to talk to his seated female companion (see Plate 56). Behind them is a long thin strip of ground being ploughed by three horses and a figure in a white smock. Beyond this are tiny sheep and thickening clumps of trees reaching to the horizon. Although the presence of the ploughman in the middle distance suggests a cultivated environment the free-wandering cows in the foreground establish the tone of the painting as one of pastoral ease and unsupervised work.

Not only are Nottingham and the Trent and Lenton Mill similar in their representation of estate views in a pastoral context, they are also close in the way they both lead the viewer’s eye over the terrain. Lenton Mill enjoys a clear view from a low viewpoint across a ford that extends into the middle distance and up a steady incline to Wollaton Hall in the far distance. The Hall itself is strongly illuminated by a low sun and is set against a greying sky. In Nottingham and the Trent too the eye is first attracted to an object in the far distance but comes slowly back to the foreground.

An important departure from the compositional scheme of the earlier Landscape with Rainbow is that neither painting has any objects save for the repoussoir that punctuates the horizon. In Lenton Mill the foreground cottage acts as a balance to Wollaton Hall on the right. In Nottingham and the Trent the large foreground tree serves as a balance to Nottingham Castle and likewise brings the eye to the foreground. But aside from these features there is no object that lifts the eye up to the horizon. In this respect the companion pieces anticipate the depth in Siberechts’ last painting, Nottingham from the East. The eye has no choice but to pass over the terrain in order to reach the horizon. It is noticeable that in contrast to the lateral

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19 The Gregory family who owned Lenton were graziers and had disputes with the corporation of Nottingham over the intensive use of land for cattle and sheep: see Beckett ed., op. cit., pp. 151-4.
dynamic in *Landscape with Rainbow* all three views of the Trent valley landscape are structured around a diagonal that runs from the bottom left of the painting to the horizon on the right, thereby emphasising the depth of the view. The paintings of Nottingham and Lenton arguably mark a point of transition in the fluent spatial coordination that Siberechts developed fully in *Nottingham from the East*.

The second group of landscape paintings produced by Siberechts in the 1690s provides equally if not more substantial evidence of how he moved away from his earlier panoramic views to a topographically co-ordinated image of landscape. This second group consists of five paintings of Henley-on-Thames. Three have been examined above: *Landscape with Rainbow* and two versions of *A View of Henley from the Wargrave Road*. The remaining two are *A View of Henley*, signed and dated 1693 and in the Middleton collection, and *A View of the Thames Valley towards Henley*, signed and dated 1697, sold Sotheby's, London, 30 November 2000 (see Plates 57 and 58). The former painting measures 30 x 40 cm. whereas the second painting measures a huge 181 x 160 cm. It is not known for whom they were painted; Thomas Willughby possibly bought the smaller painting as a non-commissioned work, as it seems to have been painted two years prior to any view of Nottingham done for Willughby.

*A View of Henley* is of greater interest for the present discussion because it suggests how it was that Siberechts abandoned the flat panoramic scheme of *Landscape with Rainbow* for greater spatial depth and co-ordination. It may called a direct descendant of *Landscape with Rainbow* because the earlier view is reproduced in the right hand side of *A View of Henley* (compare Plates 52 and 57). Although the bend of the river is less sharp, it is likely that Siberechts copied the earlier view and reproduced it in this slightly later painting. The view is compromised from its earlier starkness by being accompanied by a foreground view of a shepherd, female labourer and small mixed herd of cattle, goats and sheep ambling along a lane towards the viewer (see Plate 59). Behind them a packhorse disappears down the hill. The lane is heavily wooded over by ancient trees through which a view of Henley is glimpsed. In the far distance a small house or tower can be seen and nearer the foreground men build haystacks (see Plate 60). These are the only additions to the topography of Henley in *Landscape with Rainbow*, painted about three years earlier in 1690. The

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20 The measurements for *A View of Henley* are only approximate.
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lane is on inclining ground which gives a spatial context to the view. The scene is viewed from within the grounds of Fawley Court. On the extreme right can be seen a whitewashed wall and darkened window of Phyllis Court, the seat of the Whitelock family.21

The significance of *A View of Henley* is that with the inclusion of a foreground in the form of pastoral *staffage* and with the tower in the distance the artist establishes a spatial co-ordination between foreground, middle ground and background. The raised viewpoint gives depth to the view that is taken from the foreground in a giant serpentine curve through to the horizon, glimpsed between the hills that overlook the Thames. In addition to the composition of the foreground the light is also used to create depth in the painting. Incandescent patches of sky shine through the woolly foliage of the tree, and the bright green hue of the hill on the far side of the river also glows through creating a stark contrast with the dark boughs of the centre tree. Luminous strips of sunlit land are visible beyond this hill and in the far distance as well.

In *A View of Henley* Siberechts uses the foreground to establish a degree of spatial co-ordination that is wholly absent in *Landscape with Rainbow*. In particular his treatment of depth is achieved at the expense of a lateral dynamic. This cause is helped by devoting only half the picture to the prospect: as with *Lenton Mill*, Siberechts has channelled the viewer's gaze down the right side of the painting. It is notable too that the recession of space in marked by three prominent pointers: the tree in the foreground finds an echo in the tower of St. Mary's and beyond this is the tower rising near the horizon.

*A View of Henley* may be thought of as a revision of the composition of *Landscape with Rainbow*. In this reworking Siberechts introduces the features that would characterise his developing treatment of space in the 1690s: a bold foreground, prominent spatial markers and an unobstructed view to the horizon. These are all themes that would be revisited in later landscape paintings of Nottingham and Henley. In these paintings the elevated foreground (or inclining middle and far distance) assures that objects in the view don't punctuate the horizon and allow the eye to jump to the far distance. *Staffage* in the immediate foreground is used to establish a spatial context that connects the viewer's standpoint to the distance. The sense of depth is

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21 On Phyllis Court, see especially John Southerden Burn, *A History of Henley on Thames*, London.
further suggested by keeping the foreground in shadow whilst highlighting the
distance.

The small array of gentry seats in A View of Henley provide the locations for
markers that measure, or pace, the journey of the eye from the foreground to the
horizon. In A View of Henley the eye travels straight to the light on the horizon and is
guided back over the landscape via the tower on the horizon, the tower of St. Mary's
and Phyllis Court, to the tree in the foreground. This pattern of guiding the eye over
the landscape is repeated in all Siberechts' subsequent landscapes from the 1690s, and
reaches a climax of fluidity and descriptive content in Nottingham from the East.
This last painting is arguably the most confident treatment of spatial recession and the
most intricately co-ordinated topographical work by Siberechts.

Precedents in subject matter and composition

Siberechts' work from the 1690s shows an attempt to work out a topographical
representation viewed from the property of local gentry and co-ordinated through
views of other seats. His own work provides evidence of his developing treatment of
spatial recession but his paintings also suggest that he looked to earlier landscape
paintings by Flemish and Dutch artists in the course of this development. It is
arguable that the story of Siberechts' landscape painting in the 1690s resembles the
growth of bird's-eye estate portraiture in late seventeenth-century Britain where
Flemish precedents were drawn upon as the taste for estate portraiture developed. If
this is the case it will be important to analyse the precedents for Siberechts' work and
follow this up with an examination of the pressures facing artists that made them turn
to specific precedents.

The recurring feature of Siberechts' topographical paintings is the appearance
of rivers. All his paintings feature views of the Trent or Thames rivers or their
tributaries. Although fords and streams had been a regular motif in his work up till
then the depiction of an identifiable river had only occurred once previously, in a
painting for the 1st Duke of Lauderdale in 1677 (see Plate 61). A source that would
have made rivers acceptable to Siberechts' patrons and might well have been a
catalyst for the 1690s commissions was Sir John Denham's poem Coopers Hill,
Coopers Hill anticipates the imagery that appears in Siberechts' topographical landscapes of a fecund countryside fed by a river, overlooked by a lord, blessed by God and creating wealth for the city.

Denham describes the Thames as a river distributing its bounty:

His genuine, and less guilty wealth t'explore
Search not his bottom, but survey his shore;
Ore [sic] which he kindly spreads his spacious wing,
And hatches plenty for th'ensuing Spring.
Nor then destroys it with too fond a stay,
Like Mothers which their infants overlay.
Nor with a sudden and impetuous wave,
Like profuse Kings, resumes the wealth he gave.
No unexpected inundations spoyl
The mowers hopes, nor mock the plowmans toyl [167-176]

His description of the flooding Thames recalls the flooded river in Siberechts' earlier painting for Lauderdale. In addition the suggestion of a bountiful harvest provides an antecedent for the image of golden wheat by the river in *A View of Henley from the Wargrave Road* and in *Nottingham and the Trent*. The river's fertilisation of arable land was a theme touched upon by contemporary poets. Andrew Marvell's *Upon Appleton House* pictured the flooding River Denton as the culmination of a bountiful harvest that might also have suggested the theme to Siberechts' patrons.24

Denham expands on his theme, describing the importance of the Thames to the nation's trade:

Nor are his blessings to his banks confin'd,
But free, and common, as the Sea or Wind;
When he to boast, or to disperse his stores
Full of the tribute of his grateful shores,
Visits the world, and in his flying towers
Brings home to us, and makes both Indies ours [179-184]

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22 On this painting see Harris, *op. cit.*
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As with the previous lines Denham's language is carefully chosen and has the effect of hiding the social context of the "mowers" and "plowmans" labour for the "luxury, and wealth" of the city. The near-feudal basis of society is subsumed within the imagery of the landscape. Denham suggests that rather than being the product of labour, the harvest and trade are in fact "blessings" to the "grateful" inhabitants of the shores. Yet even then the bestowal of wealth to the countryside and town is not the action of "profuse Kings" but rather the righteous deed of a Godly lord:

But God-like his unwearied Bounty flows;
First loves to do, then loves the Good he does. [177-178]

The use of "Good" recalls the use of the term in the account of Creation in the book of Genesis. Denham's Thames valley is in an almost antedeluvian state. The theme of God's blessing a scene of trade and harvest arguably anticipates the appearance of the rainbow in Siberechts' Landscape with Rainbow. Although Siberechts is likely to have drawn on artistic precedents it is arguable that the image of God's blessing of trade and harvest based around a river was a theme made particularly acceptable through the more recent imagery in poems such as Coopers Hill.

Specific topographical features found in Denham's poem are also reproduced in Siberechts' paintings. The city was a theme closely linked to the river. Denham noted that "the City [of London] seems at this distance but a darker cloud" which "like a mist beneath a hill doth rise" [25, 28, 26]. The city and the river were in turn linked to Windsor Castle, which overlooked the whole scene:

Windsor [...] above the Valley swells
Into my eye, and doth itself present
With such an easie and unforc't ascent,
That no stupendous precipice denies
Access, no horror turns away our eyes:
But such a Rise, as doth at once invite
A pleasure, and a reverence from the sight [39-46]

Taken together, the height of Windsor and the image of the city as a mist beneath a hill find their echoes in the prominence of Nottingham Castle, Wollaton Hall and Clifton House on the cliffs above the Trent valley in Siberechts' paintings. Windsor
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Castle in *Coopers Hill* overlooks the blessings bestowed on the countryside and town by a gracious deity. As an estate view it anticipates the image of the estate in Siberechts' topographical landscapes that surveys a fertile valley and prosperous town.

Poetical images of the estate's role in a prospering landscape blessed by spiritual powers also appeared in Virgil's *Eclogues*. Virgil's works had appeared in English throughout the seventeenth century but in 1684 the first of a new series of translations appeared in a volume titled *Miscellany Poems: The First Part* which included all the *Eclogues*.25 As lines from the opening stanza of the first *Eclogue* (translated by "John Caryll, Esq.") make clear, the poems addressed the theme of estates and their roles in times of political unrest. The shepherd Melibeus bemoans his departure from his estate:

> We leave our home and (once) our pleasant fields;  
> The native swain to rude intruders yields [3-4]

Melibeus's position was similar to those of the Nottinghamshire and Berkshire gentry for whom Siberechts worked: because he backed the wrong side in the Civil Wars (Brutus rather than Octavian [Augustus]) he has had his estate confiscated.26 As well as praising Octavian's allowing Virgil to keep his land the poem points out the more fundamental importance of the estate as an agency of stability. As the shepherd Tityrus Virgil recalls going to:

> [...] Mantua, where on market days  
> We drive our well-fed Lambs (the Shepherd's praise) [29-30]

Rather than being an acquisitive farmer, Virgil's estate is run for the town's benefit. He laments his thankless task as maintainer of the common-weal:

> Though often I had made my cheese-press groan,  
> Largely to furnish our ungrateful Town,  
> Yet still with empty Hands I trotted home [45-47]

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25 The series was initially edited by John Dryden and continued until 1709, with volumes appearing in 1684, 1685, 1693, 1694, 1704, 1709. In addition to this, Dryden's *Works of Virgil* (discussed in the following chapter) was published in 1697.

The imagery of lambs being driven from the estate pasture to the town suggests a source for Siberechts' careful depiction of flocks being herded into Nottingham in *Nottingham from the East*. But as in *Coopers Hill* the historical nature of social power and land ownership even in times of civil discord is displaced onto an image of the landscape that is blessed by the gods. Melibeus envies Tityrus because his current prosperity is a sure sign of blessing:

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Thrice happy Swain! guarded from Sirian beams,
By sacred Springs and long-acquainted Streams.
Look on that bordering Fence, whose Osier trees
Are fraught with Flowers, whose Flowers are fraught with Bees:
How with their drowsie tone, the whistling Air
(Your sleep to tempt) a consort does prepare.
At further distance, but with stronger Lungs
The Wood-man joyns with these his rustick Songs:
Stock-Doves and murmuring turtles tune their Throat,
Those in a hoarser, these a softer Note [66-75]
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As in *Coopers Hill* the river acts as a sacred guardian and bestower of blessings. Also anticipating Denham's image of the countryside is the presentation of social difference as a divinely endowed order. Virgil represents enclosure ("bordering Fence"), game birds and rustic "Wood-man" as a musical harmony. Rather than being the product of acquisition the estate is depicted as a variety in which each sound has its given place. Virgil also discusses improvement twice in his short dialogue but ultimately the ownership and management of the estate is a mark of personal virtue blessed by the gods. Thus Melibeus sees confiscation as a spiritual as much as an economic calamity:

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Is my eternal Banishment decreed
From my poor Cottage, rear'd with turf and reed?
Must impious Soldiers all these grounds possess,
My Fields of standing corn, my fertile Leyes?
Did I for these Barbarians plow and sow? [90-95]27
```
Personal piety makes for a life of blessing by the gods, and effortless bounty.

Coopers Hill and late-seventeenth century translations of the Eclogues use pastoral imagery as a vehicle for discussing issues relating to land ownership. Both the first Eclogue and Coopers Hill are given specific topographical settings, of Mantua and Rome, Windsor, London and the Thames respectively. Both poems also refer to contemporary events: Augustus’s rise to power and Charles I’s government. John Caryll’s introduction to his translation of the first Eclogue refers to the function of pastoral verse as a means of addressing contemporary issues. He notes:

The reader may be pleased to observe, that Virgil, under the name of Tityrus, personates himself, newly saved by the favour of Agustus [sic] Caesar [..] The drift of this Eclogue, is to celebrate the munificence of Augustus towards Virgil, whom he makes his titular God [sic]; and the better to set this off, he brings in Melibeus, viz. Mantuan neighbours, pathetically relating their own deplorable condition, and at the same time magnifying the felicity of Tityrus.\(^{28}\)

The marriage of pastoral imagery to topographical references was therefore openly recognised in the late seventeenth century as an acceptable means of engaging in socio-political discourse.\(^{29}\) Caryll’s remarks and the poetry of Virgil and Denham suggest a precedent for Siberechts’ paintings of estates in the midst of scenes of effortless bounty, and point to a socio-political agenda behind these images.

The subject matter of Siberechts’ paintings therefore finds an authoritative precedent in contemporary poetry. But the socio-political content arguably derives from the methods used by the poets to survey and describe the landscape rather than the subjects of the imagery itself. In Coopers Hill Denham stands on the eponymous hill and looks out over the surrounding terrain. Addressing Coopers Hill at the outset he says:

Nor wonder, if (advantag’d in my flight
                                                                                       By taking wing from thy auspicious height)

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\(^{27}\) “Leyes” is a term for meadow, further suggesting the presence of a river or rivers.


\(^{29}\) It is significant that a slightly earlier view of Ham House and the Thames from Richmond Hill was painted for John Maitland, 2\(^{nd}\) Earl and 1\(^{st}\) Duke of Lauderdale (d.1682), in 1677. Maitland’s grandson Richard, 4\(^{th}\) Earl (d.1695) himself published translations of Virgil’s poetry in the second volume of Miscellany Poems in 1685. It is arguable that familiarity with the conventions of pastoral gave the
Through untract ways, and aery paths I fly,
More boundless in my Fancy than my eie [sic]:
My eye, which swift as thought contracts the space
That lies between [9-14]

Denham is referring in part to his fancy taking flight in imitation of ancient poets
guided by the Muses dwelling on Mount Parnassus, the name he gives to Coopers
Hill. But he is also indicating the physical advantages to be gained from "thy
auspicious height", suggesting that a high viewpoint is as advantageous as to the eye
as the Muses are to the "Fancy". His eye thereby becomes "swift as thought" and able
to "contract[] the space" in the same way that the Muses were able to lead the
imagination back and forth in time and place. From his viewpoint Denham is able to
survey not only London but also Windsor and St Annes Hill, from where:

My eye descending from the Hill, surveys
Where Thames amongst the wanton vailles strays [159-60]

Denham's viewpoint enables him to place the seat of the King and the valley in a
complimentary contrast. He casts Windsor as a senatorial presence whilst the Thames
is more goddess-like:

[...] his curled brows
Frown on the gentle stream, which calmly flows,
While winds and storms his lofty forehead beat:
The common fate of all that's high or great.
Low at his foot a spacious plain is plac't,
Between the mountain and the stream embrac't:
Which shade and shelter from the Hill derives,
While the kind river wealth and beauty gives [219-226]

The image here is clearly familial, suggesting that it is a combination of the king's
protection and the Thames's fecundity that benefits the mowers and ploughmen on the
"low [...] spacious plain". Geographical form acts as a metaphor for social balance.
The pyramid-like appearance of the hill and plain echoes the numerical composition

Lauderdales an authoritative precedent for representing their property in an extensive pastoral
landscape setting.
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of the social hierarchy. Denham's description of how the eye "contracts the space" to a distant hill and then descends down onto a plain suggests that the landscape is composed into certain forms. The concomitant thesis is that society too is composed into certain well-defined forms. From his viewpoint he is able to see these forms distinctly but also as a whole:

And in the mixture of all these appears
Variety, which all the rest indears [227-228]

Seen as a single entity the landscape allows Denham to infer that he himself is not a part of this variety. He identifies himself with Windsor by virtue of his "auspicious height" and likewise looks down onto the manual labourers. But his viewpoint also means he can conceive of the "mixture" as a single objective "Variety". Whilst he does not deny the social standing signified by his viewpoint on top of Coopers Hill he also suggests that to treat the landscape as an object and to survey it is an action demanded by the landscape itself. He surveys the terrain not because he is a powerful landowner but because it asks to be viewed thus, as that is how it is composed. His social identity is de-historicised as Denham suggests that the act of surveying the landscape is affirmative: it confirms that his social subjectivity derives from the given composition of the natural and social worlds.

Pictorial precedents

Denham's treatment of space in Coopers Hill would have been acceptable to landowners because it acknowledges and upholds their social standing by suggesting that the actions associated with it are inherent in the very landscape. It recalls the use of such loaded concepts as "perambulation" and "survey" in county histories to authenticate the objectivity of research by referring to the practices of the landed gentry. Such use does not elide the class-bound nature of these practices. Instead it suggests the historical nature of claims to objectivity.

There is evidence to suggest that Siberechts composed his topographical landscapes with the same ends in mind as Denham. This is not to say he was aware of Coopers Hill, although it is inconceivable that patrons such as Lauderdale were not. But his paintings develop a treatment of pictorial space that is similar to that in
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Coopers Hill. Siberechts arguably drew on the work of artists who were also anxious to represent the act of surveying an estate as an act informed by natural rather than historical circumstances. The following section will examine pictorial precedents for the treatment of space that parallel similar precedents in topographical and pastoral poetry.

It has been noted above that Landscape with Rainbow, c.1690, is a turning point in Siberechts' oeuvre. Previous to this painting Siberechts' English work consisted of statuesque milkmaids and livestock or portraits of the gentry's seats. This latter was a genre developed since the artist's arrival in England specifically for patrons; it has been argued that he continued producing scenes with milkmaids specifically for the market as he had done in Flanders. In Landscape with Rainbow, Siberechts brings the pastoral and topographical elements of his oeuvre together.

Both the topographical and pastoral subject matter and the compositional scheme of Landscape with Rainbow find precedents in the Italianate panoramic views of Aelbert Cuyp. Cuyp's A Distant View of Dordrecht in the National Gallery (here referred to by its nickname The Large Dort) is particularly noticeable for the parallels between its compositional scheme and Siberechts' own painting (see Plate 62). Cuyp's work is much larger than Landscape with Rainbow, measuring 157.5 x 197 cm. as against 81.9 x 102.9 cm., but they are similarly proportioned with height to width ratios of 4:5.

In Cuyp's view of Dordrecht the eye is attracted to the brightest patch of sky, on the lower left near to the horizon. Below the light a large dark cow near to the viewer forms a sharp contrast of light and shadow, bringing the viewer's eye to the immediate left foreground. To the right of this cow lie its companions, one of them a strong golden tone. Further still to the right stands a milkmaid dressed in a red bodice with white sleeves reflecting the sun. The whiteness attracts the eye from the left foreground and brings it up from the foot of the canvas. Behind the milkmaid stands a hillock with a couple of figures that serve to draw the eye further up the height of the canvas. From this point the eye is attracted to the sight of Dordrecht as it stands saturated in golden sunlight to the left of the milkmaid. Beyond Dordrecht the luminosity of the sky draws the eye into the far distance.

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The group in the right foreground of The Large Dort provides a balance of light and colour for the illuminated sky and city to its left. In the same way Siberechts has the whiteness of St. Mary’s church tower provide a pictorial balance for the sunlit fields on the left hand side of Landscape with Rainbow. Wolfang Stechow has observed that pictorial balance was identified as a problem for painters of panoramic landscapes in early and mid seventeenth-century Dutch art. He notes that since two repousoirs in the painting threatened to destroy the lateral extension that characterises a panorama, "it is hardly surprising to find that the compromise of one lateral group of trees (or a corresponding device) was occasionally employed". Stechow sees Cuyp’s work as an example of the one-wing panorama prior to Ruisdael’s and Konincks’s large "wingless" views. Cuyp attempts to deal with the problem of balance in a distant view of Dordrecht by using light and colour on each side of the canvas. His strategy for dealing with the problem finds a sympathetic response in Siberechts’ panorama of Henley.

It is significant that with the desire to preserve the lateral extension of the painting Cuyp has sacrificed the depth of his work. The movement in The Large Dort is lateral, beginning in the left distance and moving to the foreground and across to the right. In the figure of the milkmaid it then moves up above the level of the horizon and up to the hillock before moving laterally left to the Grote Kerk in Dordrecht and then to the Vuilpoort and the distance. The critical movement of the eye is when it rises above the horizon as it views the figures on the right, for then it is ready to leap from the immediate foreground to the distance in one quick movement. The perception of depth is made subordinate to a lateral dynamic: the sweep of the eye from left to right incorporates the jump from foreground to distance in its action.

The subordination of depth to lateral movement is echoed in Siberechts’ panorama Landscape with Rainbow. As observed above the movement of the eye from St. Mary’s church to the fields behind constitute a big jump in depth in what is only a fraction of a lateral movement. Rather than bringing the eye back into the distance over the terrain the artist has it leap from foreground to background. It is important to note that in both Landscape with Rainbow and Cuyp’s The Large Dort there is no middle distance. The views are composed of structured foregrounds.

32 Ibid., p.40.
(Cuyp's being much closer to the viewer) and carefully lit backgrounds without any middle ground to connect the two.

It is not clear how well acquainted Siberechts was with Cuyp's work. Hans Vlieghe was noted that Siberechts' bold modelling of his milkmaids, "seems to provide a kind of Flemish counterpart to Cuyp. As with the latter, it may be wondered how much the accentuated plasticity of Siberechts' figures [...] owe to his affinity with the Italianising landscapists". Cuyp's work of the 1650s exemplifies a re-emphasis on colour and light contrasts and bold modelling of foregrounds identified by Stechow as a "new structural style" in response to Jan van Goyen's fluid forms and pallid colouring of the 1640s. These are themes that find echoes in Siberechts' work, which developed a bolder tonality in the late 1650s and has been noted for its "broad palette". Siberechts' affinity to Dutch pastoral artists such as Adam Pynacker suggests he was familiar with Dutch Italianate works and he may well have come across Cuyp through this connection. Moreover as a member of the Antwerp Guild and resident in that city Siberechts was near to Cuyp's base of Dordrecht, and Cuyp himself travelled widely in the United Provinces. His work was not to be widely collected in Britain until the end of the eighteenth century. Siberechts' earlier work also indicates a familiarity with the pastoral scenes of other artists and his later topographical landscapes provide evidence that he drew on these too. Vlieghe and John Harris both note that his paintings of milkmaids and peasants owe something to Rubens: "the question arises whether this strongly modelled and even rather heroic appearance [of peasants] has been influenced to some extent by the comparable characterisation given by Rubens to these country folk, as he painted them in his earlier landscapes". Vlieghe is here probably thinking of paintings such as Rubens' Farm at Laken, c.1618. Here the women in the foreground create impressively modelled and almost statuesque figures and provide a mass of foreground detail accentuating the distant view. Such compositional

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32 Vlieghe, op. cit., p.197.
33 Hearn op. cit., p.7.
34 On Pynacker, see Laurie Harwood, Revelling in Contemplation: Adam Pynacker (c.1620 - 73) and British Collectors, Country Life CLXXVIII, Aug. 22 1985, pp.486-8.
36 Vlieghe, op. cit., p.197; see also Harris, op. cit., p.46.
techniques find an echo in the works of Cuyp and Pynacker. But as Siberechts' topographical work following *Landscape with Rainbow* gives greater emphasis to spatial depth inscribed on the terrain, so his reference to precedents turns to works that deal with recession as well as lateral balance.

Siberechts' move away from a panoramic to a topographically co-ordinated image of specific sites arguably derives from Rubens' later landscapes. In particular his small *A View of Henley* bears similarity in many points to Rubens' *Wagon Fording a Stream*, c.1635, in the National Gallery (see Plate 63). A smaller version of this painting was owned by George Villiers, 2nd Duke of Buckingham and is not thought to have been included in the sale of his works in Antwerp in 1648: Siberechts may well have seen when he worked for Villiers in 1672-4. Rubens' painting is a sketch worked up into a slightly smaller painting the same year. In the sketch a road fills the foreground and descends over a bank to a large ford or pool before reappearing to the left of the painting and receding back and to the right in a long deep avenue of trees. Through gaps in the trees on the left and by the ford on the right snatches of prospect can be seen that attract the eye to the sunlit fields near the horizon. The raised viewpoint on the road prior to its descent into the ford allows the eye to travel uninterrupted over the landscape to the horizon. Although the bright fields in the far distance encourage the eye to flick there quickly they do so over the terrain in such a way that invites them to acknowledge its depth.

John Barrell has written that the way a verbal or visual description is composed serves to "arrange" a landscape. He sees in James Thomson's poem *The Seasons* a meaningful structure that attempts to arrange the features of the landscape in order that the eye might whisk over the prospect to the horizon and then return more gradually over the objects to the foreground. Rubens' *A Wagon Fording a Stream* arguably anticipates Thomson's attempts to arrange the landscape. Through breaks in the trees a prospect is revealed that invites the eye to the horizon. His use of light and particularly the whitish-yellow distant fields played off against the cooler...
blues and greens of the trees and sky can be seen as a pictorial equivalent of the poet's choice of vocabulary. Barrell notes that Thomson's vocabulary "presents a landscape as an orderly arrangement of objects - a design; and the words which did tend, in this way, to reveal a design in nature, were preferred by most writers to those which did not". Thomson uses words to suggest that the energy that pulls the eye across the landscape is transferred to the eye itself "which, even as it is pulled across the horizon, is organising and controlling what it sees". If it is not clear that there is a design to Rubens' landscape it is arguable that his drawing attention to the depth of the prospect encourages the viewer to scan their eye over it in such a way that allows them to co-ordinate the foreground and the background and perceive in the whole a spatial cohesion. As the eye is attracted to the horizon from the foreground by the distant light it arguably accrues an energy to bring the foreground and the distance into a spatial continuum as a way of "organising and controlling what it sees".

Siberechts' *A View of Henley* arguably uses the compositional format of *A Wagon Fording a Stream* to the same effect. Like Rubens' painting, the viewer looks down a road leading from the foreground to the left and then disappearing from sight as it curves to the right. The lane is wooded but through gaps between the trees on the right the viewer gets a view of a prospect stretching back to the horizon. At the far distance sunlight plays off the fields to attract the eye. In both paintings the viewpoint is raised above the surrounding topography. In Rubens' painting this rise is subtle but it is much more obvious in Siberechts' piece. Both paintings are similar in size: the finished version of Rubens' *Wagon* is 49.5 x 54.7 cm. whereas Siberechts' work is 30 x 40 cm.

The use of light, the raised viewpoint, the receding foreground and deep prospect view as well as the size all suggest that Siberechts may well have turned to Rubens' painting to create the topographical co-ordination that is absent in his earlier *Landscape with Rainbow*. Siberechts' later topographical landscapes bear many points of comparison with Rubens' own late landscape paintings. The evidence of his *Nottingham and the Trent* and his final piece *Nottingham from the East* points to the possibility that as he developed a more fluid treatment of space in his paintings Siberechts repeatedly turned to Rubens to see how to deal with issues of spatial continuity and co-ordination.

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42 Ibid., p.42.
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Rubens and Siberechts both lived and worked in Antwerp. Siberechts was elected a member of the Antwerp Guild in 1648, eight years after Rubens had died. Many of Rubens' late landscapes were auctioned off after his death, in 1642 in Antwerp. Siberechts (then aged 15) may have witnessed this auction but it is equally possible that he might have known the works in the collections of local families: his own family was relatively prosperous. Some of Rubens' landscape paintings had been engraved and it is certain that Siberechts possessed or at least knew about these. In a small pastoral scene in the Ashmolean Museum (see Plate 64) he depicts a shepherd couple found in Rubens' *Pastoral Landscape with Rainbow*, c.1635 and engraved by Schelte à Bolswert (see Plate 65). The painting is dated 1694 and Siberechts must have used the engraving as his source, as the figures face the same way and are very closely modelled on it.

In Rubens' large landscapes *A View of Het Steen in the Early Morning* (National Gallery) and *Landscape with Rainbow* (Wallace Collection) it is possible to see a development of his treatment of space. *Het Steen* and *Landscape with Rainbow* are estate views. As Siberechts was to do, Rubens paints a number of distant estates from a viewpoint itself situated on an estate. In *Het Steen* the viewer stands on an inclining foreground that gently drops away into a distant prospect in which churches and large houses appear as dabs of paint (see Plate 66). In the centre distance the town of Mechelen (Malines) can be seen on a prominent plateau (see Plate 67). As in his *Wagon Fording a Stream* Rubens uses the right side of the painting to display the prospect. On the far right distance of the painting a rising sun attracts the eye. A strong diagonal line runs from the right foreground to the distance. It starts with the creeping hunter in the foreground and runs through the large stump in front of him, some untidy foliage and then along a receding row of trees into the distance. This

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^1^ Ibid., p.44.

^2^ See Hearn, op. cit.


^4^ See Hearn, p.7. Of the paintings discussed here, *Het Steen*, *Landscape with Rainbow*, and *A Sunset Landscape* were inventoried with the Rubens estate in 1640 (see: Adler, *Corpus*, pp.160, 163, 181). The whereabouts after 1640 of the National Gallery's *Wagon Fording a Stream* and *Landscape in Flanders* is unknown (see Adler, *Corpus*, pp.166, 169). One version of the *Pastoral Landscape* was owned by a "Sieur de Barchon" in Antwerp (see Adler, *Corpus*, p.131) and the 2nd Duke of Buckingham is thought to have remained in possession of the finished version of *Wagon Fording a Stream*. It should be noted that none of Rubens' landscapes is recorded in England in the late seventeenth or early eighteenth centuries.

^5^ On the painting and engraving, see Adler, *Corpus*, Cat.39a, pp.133-4.

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diagonal gives a form to the landscape and helps the eye establish a spatial context as it flits to the background attracted by the glow of the sun. It is an important means of helping the eye make sense of a thickly wooded mass that is not composed into any perceivable form. It also serves to emphasise how the raised viewpoint enables the viewer to draw their eye over the terrain as it wonders back down from the horizon to the foreground.

In addition to Rubens' inclusion of detail that enables the eye to organise and control the landscape *Het Steen* includes a number of topographical features that co-ordinate this space. A church spire on the left and a country house (Flemish *lusthoven*, pleasure house) on the extreme right of the painting in the middle distance form points that correspond to the group of tall trees in the foreground and also to the tower of *Het Steen* itself on the left. The tower forms an especially strong visual counterpoint to the great tower of Mechelen clearly visible in the distance. These topographical features assist the eye as it travels over the landscape from the foreground to the horizon and back. They enable the maintenance of specific points of spatial reference as the eye builds up a larger spatial framework in an attempt to perceive some formal coherence to the view.

The capacity of the eye to control the terrain is a theme Rubens developed in later landscapes. His *Landscape in Flanders* is an example of such a landscape on a scale similar to Siberechts' *Nottingham and the Trent* (see Plate 68). The lightness of the fields in the middle and far distance lead the eye immediately to the horizon. From here the eye travels over the topography to a dark and richly coloured foreground. A zig-zag formation of low trees and hedges on the left of the painting underscores the spatial relationships between the foreground and the distance that the eye perceives in its flight from one to the other and slower journey back to the front.

Schelte à Bolswert's engraving of Rubens' painting establishes a greater degree of topographical co-ordination between the viewpoint and the distance (see Plate 69). His inclusion of a church spire in the distance to the left of the wood in the centre, and then another spire even further back on the right enable the eye to organise the landscape with reference to specific topographical points. As a third co-ordinate

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48 On the town’s identification, see Brown, *op. cit.*, p.62.
49 The size of *Landscape in Flanders* is 89.8 x 133.8 cm.; Siberechts’ companion pieces each measure 107 x 144 cm.
Bolswert has given added prominence to the foreground tree on the right by placing its white trunk against a dark mass of trees behind it.

There is no concrete proof that Siberechts had referred to either Rubens' painting of Het Steen or Bolswert's engraving of the Flemish landscape when he painted Nottingham and the Trent. But as with his slightly earlier A View of Henley there is evidence that he learnt some lessons from Rubens about the recession and coordination of space. In Nottingham and the Trent the appearance of Nottingham Castle, Colwick Hall and St. Mary's church echo the distant town, houses and church spires in Het Steen. Siberechts' composition of the Trent receding in a diagonal also parallels the diagonal of trees used by Rubens to guide the eye over the landscape and give topographical inscription to the viewer's attempts to perceive distance. Most notable of all is the massing of trees in Bolswert's engraving on the right and foreground to direct the eye to an open central space that gives way to low inclining land in the far distance. The mass of trees on the foreground right and a little farther back in the centre guide the eye to the central plain over which the eye travels towards the horizon. A further similarity between Bolswert's engraving and Nottingham and the Trent is the diagonal zig-zag of trees to the right of the engraving. The trees arguably suggest a precedent for the dynamic zig-zag of the Trent as it comes out towards the viewer seemingly from the base of a sunlit Colwick Hill in Siberechts's painting. The trees themselves are a development of the diagonal avenue in Het Steen. Bolswert's engraving suggests a point of mediation between the earlier painting and Siberechts' work. Since there is strong circumstantial evidence that Siberechts used Bolswert's engravings it is not unreasonable to see the latter's treatment of space in the engraved version of Landscape in Flanders appearing in Nottingham and the Trent.

It is significant that in both Het Steen and Landscape in Flanders Rubens provides a model for Siberechts by keeping his horizons clear. In neither painting does any object punctuate the horizon save for the trees in the immediate foreground which co-ordinate the viewer's position with the distance. At the same time the clear horizon allows the eye a free and unobstructed passage from the distance to the foreground. The composition recalls the portrayal of depth in Coopers Hill, where Denham pointed out that Windsor had:

[...] such an easie and unforc' t ascent,
That no stupendous precipice denies Access [42-44]

As noted above the presence of other objects punctuating the horizon encourages the eye to move laterally with no regard for the volume of space between near and distant objects. In his later paintings Rubens has made the perception and co-ordination of depth his primary concerns.

The evidence of Siberechts' later topographical landscapes *Nottingham from the East* and *A View of Henley from the Wargrave Road* suggest that he retained and developed these solutions to the treatment of depth and the co-ordination of space. In these paintings the artist composes a recession that is much more sudden than the serpentine curves of the river in *Nottingham and the Trent*. Most bold of all is the composition of his last painting *Nottingham from the East* where the furrows of the ploughed foreground field lead the eye straight down the central vista of the valley between the Trent on the left and an array of country seats on the right.

Without stating too much in a comparison it is possible to see strong similarities between these late paintings and *A Sunset Landscape*, itself one of the last (if not the last) of Rubens' landscapes (see Plate 70). In *A Sunset Landscape* the eye is pulled to the bright glow of the sun whose orb visibly imposes onto the distant hills. Sunlit patches of meadow bring the eye down from the distance to the foreground. Two small clumps of trees to the left and right of the foreground break through the horizon and frame the sun-dappled vista. To the extreme right of the painting some farm buildings, a castle with a tower and onion spire and a church can be seen, one receding behind the other into the middle distance. In the centre distance of the vista a spire reflects the sunlight as it touches the horizon.

The basic compositional premise of *A Sunset Landscape* is of the eye being attracted by the sun and journeying back down to the foreground down the central plain of the painting. It is possible that Siberechts had recourse to this painting when composing *Nottingham and the Trent*, where the golden hue of Colwick Hill acts as a substitute for the sun in Rubens' work. The central vista and positioning of topographical features on the right of *A Sunset Landscape* point to a stronger affinity with the later *Nottingham from the East*. It is particularly noticeable that the speed

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50 Christopher Brown suggests it is one of Rubens' final landscapes: Christopher Brown, *Making and Meaning: Rubens' Landscapes*, London, 1997, p.82.
with which the eye is snatched to the horizon by the sun is counterbalanced by the array of topographical features on the right margin of the painting. Taken together with the church spire in the centre distance they allow the eye to co-ordinate and organise the landscape. The threat posed by the sun to exert a control over the eye is countered by the eye’s establishment of co-ordinates as a means of imposing control on what it sees. Together with the two foreground clumps of trees the eye imposes its own order and resists the sun’s control over its action.

The arrangement of the topographical detail recalls the composition of *Nottingham from the East*, where the gentry seats and church towers and foreground *repousoir* enabled the eye to co-ordinate its progress down the deep Trent valley to the horizon. Moreover Rubens appears to encounter the paradoxical necessity of having to use a stretched format for his painting in order to create a deep and immediate recession down the central vista. This is also characteristic of *Nottingham from the East*. In order to create a deep central plane to take the eye to the horizon Siberechts has had to append margins in which he arranges the topographical features that help the eye co-ordinate the recession of landscape.

Siberechts’ landscapes of the 1690s show evidence of a developing approach to the issue of how to compose a topographical view. Part of this approach comprised reference to the way in which earlier artists had dealt with the problem. Siberechts’ earliest topographical landscape *Landscape with Rainbow* shows the influence of Cuyp’s panoramas. A later version of the same view however suggests that he turned his attention to the task of co-ordinating the foreground and background instead of submerging the problem of spatial recession into the need for lateral balance. The evidence of his later landscapes is that Siberechts was at the very least aware of Rubens’ tackling of this problem and that he drew on at least one work connected with Rubens to formulate his own solution. His final landscape *Nottingham from the East* reveals not only an increasingly confident handling of space but also a stretching of the painting in order to arrange the points of topographical co-ordination in a manner that recalls the development of Rubens’ own last works.

*Pressures: mapping and triangulation*

What were the pressures that drove Siberechts to draw on Rubens’ work as a precedent for what he was trying to achieve? Although Siberechts’ acquaintance with
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Rubens' work would have continued for the entirety of his professional life there is evidence to suggest that his topographical landscapes faced him with problems that made him return to Rubens' work. Having examined the nature of these problems it is now time to ask where they came from.

What distinguishes Rubens' earlier landscapes from his later ones and what unites them to Siberchts's work is their concern with property in the sense of land ownership. Christopher Brown has observed that Rubens' late landscapes provide the viewer with a survey of the land around Het Steen: "Rubens surveys the surrounding countryside, as if from the tower adjoining the house". The view can be thought of as two parts. The one to the left is a view of the house whilst the prospect on the right is the view taken from the house itself. Subsequent Rubens paintings can be seen as views from the tower at Het Steen. His Landscape in Flanders from which Bolswert took his engraving is viewed from the tower. This landscape is one of a number in which Rubens uses light and topographical form and objects to both attract the eye and allow it to co-ordinate its progress over the landscape, so that rather than being controlled by the landscape it is the eye that does the controlling.

It is arguable that Rubens' development of landscape forms originates in his viewing of the countryside from his property. Svetlana Alpers has noted of Het Steen, "[i]t is the possession of such a house that gives one the authority of this prospect". In one very real sense his topographical interests centre on his use of a raised viewpoint which the tower provided. But in a more interpretative sense it is arguable that his ownership of property extended into an emphasis of the viewer's control of the objects in his view. The major innovation of his paintings is the way that topographical features and foreground objects are arranged so as to enable the co-ordination of the view from the immediate vicinity of the viewer. The relative size of the trees in Rubens' foregrounds signify their proximity to the viewer and it is therefore starting from the viewer's own standpoint that the eye gains control over the landscape. In the context of Rubens' works it is possible to understand the eye's co-ordination of the view as being a co-ordination originating from his property. The logic of the formal appearance of Rubens' landscapes and the perception of spatial relations is that the viewer looks out from a fixed standpoint as one co-ordinate

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51 Brown, op. cit., p.63.
52 Brown, op. cit., p.63.
53 Alpers, op. cit., p.151.
amongst a minimum of three. In practise the standpoint that co-ordinates the view in many of Rubens' later landscapes is the tower on his estate of Het Steen.

All of Siberechts' topographical landscapes of the 1690s are taken from viewpoints on estates belonging to the local gentry. Of these only Lenton Mill and A View of Henley from the Wargrave Road are taken from a spot not in the immediate vicinity of the gentry's seat (although as both show, they are still relatively near to other seats). In Siberechts' other Nottingham views, Nottingham from the East was taken from Colwick Hall and the earlier Nottingham and the Trent from Clifton House. In addition to being viewed from Sir William Clifton's seat Nottingham and the Trent also depicts his land that lay on both sides of the Trent. Referring to the "prospect of Nottingham" from Clifton Charles Deering said: "This house [...] looks down upon a carpet of luxuriant meadows on the north side of the Trent belonging to its lord, who enjoys also Wilford lordship, which affords him a passage through his own ground on both sides of the river from the boundaries of the county to the town of Nottingham". The view is therefore a view of the Clifton's lands as well as from their seat. Nottingham from the East also depicts much of this land, as well as some belonging to Evelin Pierrepoint, 2nd Earl of Kingston-upon-Hull and owner of Holme Pierrepont, a manor to the immediate south of Colwick and very near Pierrepont House, seen in the foreground. In 1694 Evlelin commissioned an extensive and lavishly produced survey of his property. Holme Pierrepont was the first manor surveyed. Totalling over 737 acres, with a family seat, it contained 23 tenants and was worth £823.18.8 p.a. Nottingham from the East not only views the Pierrepont seat but also provides a visual survey of part of their lands. In viewing the landscape the viewer seeks to control and organise profitable land belonging to a wealthy manor; their co-ordination of the view is far from gratuitous.

Similar themes emerge in Siberechts' views of Henley. It has been noted above that both A View of Henley and the earlier Landscape with Rainbow are views taken from Pawley Court. Fawley belonged to the Whitelock family who also owned Phyllis Court. The two versions of A View of Henley from the Wargrave Road are taken from the site of what was to become Park Place, residence of Frederick Prince of Wales, son of George II. In the 1690s a farm stood at the foot of the hill and the

54 Deering, op. cit., pp.224-5.
55 See BL Egerton MSS 3564 f.4r.
land was known as "Park's Place"; its presence suggests that the land wasn't common or waste ground.\(^{56}\)

A fifth view of the Thames valley is taken from Lady Place in Berkshire, the seat of John 3rd Baron Lovelace of Hurley, a governor of New York. Lady Place was bought from the Lovelace family in 1693 for 41,000\(l\).\(^{57}\) The view from Lady Place looks west down the Thames towards Fawley Court. It is not known whether Siberechts painted his view for the new owners or not. Lady Place contained paintings probably taken from engravings by Antonio Tempesta but there is no evidence of Siberechts' association with the place.\(^{58}\)

The paintings of the Thames valley therefore comprise a group taken from local properties and including (with the exception of *Landscape with Rainbow*) prospects of gentry's seats in the distance. Joan Dils has noted that it was in the 1690s that the fortunes of the Berkshire gentry began to revive following the confiscations and compounds (fines paid to keep lands) imposed during the Civil Wars.\(^{59}\) Seen in this light it is understandable that the paintings celebrate a prosperous countryside from the point of view (literally) of the land-owning gentry.

In Siberechts' work it is evident that his attempts to represent wide and deep prospects over which the eye could exercise its control was closely related to the fact that his paintings were views of property taken from other properties. The significant point is that in all Siberechts' later landscapes the eye co-ordinates its passage over the land to the horizon with reference to a prominent foreground co-ordinate in the form of a tree (or the cottages in *Lenton Mill*). In other words the view is co-ordinated from a specific viewpoint on the estate itself. In *Nottingham from the East* and *Nottingham and the Trent* it is possible to establish this viewpoint as being in the immediate vicinity of the house itself. The design of a co-ordinated landscape that Siberechts' views reveal is therefore specifically property-based, centred around the holdings of the landed gentry.

\(^{58}\) An auction of paintings at Lady Place took place in the mid nineteenth century; I can't now find the reference to the catalogue. No paintings by (or attributable to) Siberechts were recorded. On Tempesta, see C. Höper, "Tempesta", in Jane Turner ed., *The Dictionary of Art*, London, 1997, vol 30, p.428. Tempesta had links with Dutch artists in Italy which might point to the artist working at Lady Place also being Dutch. The date of the paintings is not known.
\(^{59}\) Joan Dils, *op. cit.*, p.58.
John Barrell has noted that in choosing to represent the land in such a way that it reveals a design, the poem or painting "demands that the land be thought of as itself composed into formal patterns". This observation may be applied both to Rubens' and Siberechts' views: they suggest that rather than being carefully composed with regard to the elevation of viewpoint, view of horizon, disposal of light and placing of topographical features, the landscape itself is to be seen in terms of its spatial co­ordinates. The viewer therefore surveys the land not because they own it but because that is the way it asks to be looked at. The notion that property can be thought of as a formal pattern recalls the thesis proposed in Chapter One that representations of the topography and history of an area suggest that social and economic imperatives are inherent in the object itself. In late seventeenth century county histories it was seen that maps in particular offered a means of sublimating the historical nature of class division within an image of the county that suggested that social difference was a given aspect of local topography. The experience of perambulation or observation that lay behind the production of a visual or written survey served to objectify the values of the landed classes who used these actions in the course of surveying the land they owned. Maps objectified as formal patterns what were in reality socially divisive and economically acquisitive practices.

Is there evidence to suggest that Siberechts' landscapes were appreciated because their formal co-ordination held a graphic resemblance to maps? Andrew McRae has noted how the contemporary surveying treatise "replaces the constant patrol of the lord's feet with the 'suddaine view' from the manor house". They enabled an estate to be viewed all at once from a room in the manor house. Maps were also richly coloured. Cyprian Lucar suggested in 1590 that the map maker use "diverse good and thinne water colours, to shew a difference in your mappe betweene meadows, pastures, arable land, wood land, hilles, valleies [sic], and grounds belonging to sundrie tenements and persons". The comments suggest that estate maps were objects of close visual attention rather than serving a decorative function. It was also argued above that Siberechts' paintings included a wealth of detail that suggests they too were carefully scrutinised by their owner. They served a decorative purpose, in contrast to the functionality of a map that distinguished different modes of

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60 Barrell, op. cit., p.3.
62 Quoted in McRae, p.190.
land use and geology. But they weren't wholly decorative: their detail suggests that they weren't used as overdoors or overmantels.

It is notable that in Siberechts' *A View of Henley from the Wargrave Road* the artist presents himself as a draughtsman with paper rather than as an artist with canvas or board and small easel (see Plate 71). A comparison with Jan Both's painting of *Italianate Landscape with Draughtsman* in the Amsterdam Rijksmuseum makes the point clearer. Here, an artist and a draughtsman sit side by side (see Plate 72).

Anecdotes of painters in Italy painting outside may well have been known to Siberechts through his association with the Dutch Italianate painters. It is very likely that he would have been aware (even if his patron's weren't) of the associations invoked by representing himself as an artist in the manner of the Dutch Italianates. His decision to cast himself as a draughtsman interested primarily in the linear and formal qualities of a view must be seen as significant.

His paintings are indeed draughtsman-like. They are topographically accurate and there can be little doubt that they are the product of careful observation. Karen Hearn has noted that there are no *pentimenti* in Siberechts' *A House in Belsize*, a "complex and very precisely painted composition".\(^{63}\) She points to topographical drawings such as the one of Bretby in Derbyshire (British Museum) to argue that Siberechts must have used preparatory drawings in his painted compositions.\(^{64}\) In addition to circumstantial evidence that draughtsmanship lay behind the composition of his works, the paintings themselves show some of the qualities Lucar gives in his advice on how to colour maps. Siberechts often distinguishes arable land from pasture, most notably in the view of the near-most fields in *A View of Henley from the Wargrave Road* where the various stages of harvest - cutting wheat, laying it in strips, tying it into haycocks, and the produce of malt (on the boats in the foreground) and hay - are painstakingly described. He is also careful to distinguish between different fields by describing some as ploughed one way, and some another. It is not clear that his paintings succeed in describing "grounds belonging to sundrie tenements and persons". Nevertheless the level of detail makes it possible to trace the limits of a landlord's holdings.

A more significant connection between Siberechts' paintings and contemporary mapping is the method of co-ordinating the view in Siberechts'

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\(^{63}\) Hearn, *op. cit.*, p.7.
Chapter Three

paintings. The buildings in each view can be used as spatial markers, denoting the position of one point to another and building up a framework of spatial references. This method of co-ordinating the topography recalls the method of triangulation used in map-making. Catherine Delano-Smith and Roger Kain have noted how triangulation used a base-line and two positional points to begin building up "a great many angles to construct a framework of points accurately defined in relation to one another". Imported from the continent and used with growing frequency in the seventeenth century, triangulation was significant because it took over from the use of astronomy and perambulation to project topographical locations onto a map. Delano-Smith and Kain argue that: "it would have seemed almost miraculous to contemporary surveyors, accustomed to tramping all over an estate measuring distances between significant positions, that an entire map could be built up from a single linear measurement". Richard Kilburne's 1659 *Topography or Survey of the County of Kent* used triangulation in its verbal descriptions, following the methods used by a map-maker. Kilburne noted: "[a]nd as to the distances of parishes (herein specified) be pleased to know that I mean the same by a straight line from church to church, taking the station for the view at Newenden, being the middle of the south side of the county, as they stand in that best map thereof extant, made by Master Philip Symonson". The significance for estate owners as for Kilburne and Symonson was that a manor house or suitable viewing spot could be used as a site for building up a spatially co-ordinated image of property.

A "station for the view" is arguably what is intimated in Rubens' paintings. From the tower adjoining Het Steen Rubens uses towns, church towers and houses to co-ordinate the view. In so doing he builds a picture of his estate as an entity viewed in spatial terms. The tower raises him literally and metaphorically above the surrounding landscape but it also enables him to conceive of his land as a precisely defined area over which he might exercise dominion.

Unlike Rubens and map makers Siberechts doesn't use only one spot for his views of the Trent and Thames vallies. Even so his prospects are still based on a framework of points that cover the area depicted. From each of these points a view towards one or more of the other points enables the artist to build up a picture of the

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64 Ibid., pp.6-7.
66 Quoting J. A. Bennett; Ibid., p.59.
terrain that is primarily spatial in character. The buildings are used to co-ordinate the space from the viewpoint to the distance, enabling the viewer to conceive of the view as a space whose limits are bounded by topographical features.

An example of the importance of buildings in both maps and paintings may be seen in a map from a single volume of over 150 maps belonging to the Duke of Newcastle. The map is of four parcels of land in Wilford, the parish to the south of Nottingham by the Trent. In common with contemporary estate maps the sole objects depicted are the parcels belonging to the owner, and rivers or streams: in this case, the Trent, which spans the width of the map. Interestingly, the map also includes two small buildings next to the river. One is labelled "Wilford Ferry" and the other is unmarked. Both consist of one storey and include one door and one window. Although maps tended to depict buildings typographically it can still be inferred that these were small buildings.

Why were the buildings included? It is not evident that they belonged to the Duke of Newcastle, and the map indicates that the land on which they stood did not. They may well have belonged to the Clifton family, large landowners in Wilford. The same buildings appear in Siberechts' *Nottingham and the Trent*, behind a ferry being pulled upriver. The farther and brighter of the buildings stands out prominently from the dark green pasture in which it is situated (see Plate 73). It is placed almost exactly in the centre of the painting. Its position makes it impossible to ignore. Not only is it in the centre of the painting it is the sole point of visual attention in the middle distance of the view. It helps co-ordinate the eye's progress from background to foreground and places the extensive meadows in some sort of spatial context. Although insignificant as a structure the building serves an important function in determining how well the painting can be read as an image of spatial relations. Likewise it is likely that the buildings were included in the map because they function as spatial markers. In building up a wider picture of the Duke's lands the buildings may well have acted as a means of fixing the precise location of the area viewed. Both the map and the painting use the buildings as points of spatial reference, co-ordinates for the single view and also as part of a set of views representing a wider topography.

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67 Richard Kilburne's, *Topography or Survey of the County of Kent*, London, 1659, Sig. A2v-A3r.
68 Unfortunately it has not been possible to obtain a reproduction of the map in question. Its reference is, Nottinghamshire Archives, DDP Newcastle maps f.35.
Chapter Three

Pressures: late seventeenth-century chorography in the county atlas

Siberechts' paintings suggest that the artist built up his picture of the landscape using buildings as co-ordinates in the same way that map makers used churches in the process of triangulating the landscape. In spite of this apparent sharing of assumptions about treating land as an area to be measured there is no evidence that Siberechts' paintings were intended to serve the function of maps. The circumstances surrounding Siberechts' work for Sir Thomas Willughby does not suggest that an interest in maps or mapping had a bearing on the composition of the views of the Trent valley. As was seen in the previous chapter Thomas's father Francis and his colleague John Ray used the language of the county history to relate their experiences of dissecting fish and observing their particular features. Ray was also familiar with the practice of surveying and ordering the layout of an estate from a vantage point in the manor house as his descriptions of landscape show. But there is nothing to suggest that the Willughbys owned or were interested in maps themselves.  

The cartographic inactivity of the Willughby family in the seventeenth century may be compared to the mapping interests of another prominent Nottinghamshire family, the Pierreponts. Evelin, Duke of Kingston-upon-Hull had two elaborate maps of Fletbrough and Thoresby in Nottinghamshire done on parchment in 1690 and four years later had an elaborate survey taken of all his properties. Both the maps contain brightly coloured land plots, scrolled inscriptions and an elaborate compass showing the cardinal directions. Both are a comparable size to Siberechts' near-contemporary paintings, measuring 50 x 100 and 60 x 90 cm. respectively. Another member of the Pierrepont family, Samuel Pierrepont, had maps of his lands in Derbyshire produced in the period. Like Evelin Pierrepont's maps they depict only the land held by the owner and are brightly coloured. Both are done in parchment and measure 70 x 60 and 55 x 75 cm. respectively. Three of these Pierrepont maps depict an area of around 400 acres and the fourth, of Thoresby, site of the family seat, an area of c.3000 acres. It is interesting to note that two of the maps include detailed

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69 See Deering, op. cit., pp.224-5.
70 The Middleton MSS contain no maps from the seventeenth century.
71 For the maps, see NUL/Ma.2P.59; Ma.4P.19.
72 See NUL/Ma.2P.211, 238. The maps are of Calow and Oldcoates and dated 1682 and 1688 respectively.
ink drawings of the respective seats of Evelin and Samuel.\textsuperscript{73} The map of Thoresby shows a house of three storeys with seven bays and three banqueting rooms on top surrounded by lawns and formal gardens. Samuel outdoes Evelin by having a house in "Oldcoates" with four storeys and seven bays.

Both the sizes of the maps and the depiction of houses in the midst of elaborate grounds suggest an affinity with the form and subject matter of Siberechts' paintings. But in spite of physical similarities and a shared concern for topographical accuracy, contemporary household inventories point to the fact that maps were not thought of as belonging to the same pictorial genre. The 2\textsuperscript{nd} Duke of Kingston's house at Holme Pierrepont contained a "drawing roome hanged with tapestry and a picture" and "a mapp of England", valued (with other contents) at "£3.18.00". But his estate maps were extremely lavish productions, signed and dated by the surveyor. McRae suggests it was maps like these that would have hung in the lord of the manor's study.\textsuperscript{74} They were rare pieces of work and their present pristine condition is perhaps testimony to the value placed on them by their owners. Paintings in the other hand were not rare pieces of work. An inventory from "the House of my Lord Duke's [of Newcastle]" taken in 1691-2 summarily notes: "6 dozen of paintings 4 mapps".\textsuperscript{75} This indicates a numerical disparity paralleled in the Duke of Kingston's house at Holme Pierrepont with only two maps but over a dozen paintings.\textsuperscript{76} A few years later the Duke of Newcastle's successor ordered from Leonard Knyff the: "drawing printing and engraving three seats of the said Duke's" along with "four hundred prints of such houses and seats as ye sd Duke shall chuse and ye sd. Duke to pay for ye same twenty pounds".\textsuperscript{77} Although these are engravings, the price paid for so many prints as well as three new plates suggests that images of houses and estates and paintings by topographical artists cannot be expected to have fetched high prices.

This is not to say that Siberechts' paintings for Thomas Willughby weren't relatively expensive items. Karen Hearn has noted that: "Siberechts was a real professional and knew what he was doing" when selecting the pigments for his paintings. His \textit{House at Belsize} of 1696 contains valuable lapis lazuli and azurite,
"the most expensive and durable method" of obtaining durable and intense colours.78
The paintings are also large objects, measuring around an average 80 x 120 cm.
Nevertheless the evidence points to the fact that topographical paintings weren't
highly valued. The Duke of Newcastle paid only twenty pounds for four hundred
prints, whilst the Pierrepont family owned "Mr Thynn on horseback a fine portrait of
Sir Peter Lely" valued at "25.0.0".79 Moreover the sheer numerical abundance of
paintings contrasts with the extreme scarcity of maps in the recorded possessions of
wealthy Nottingham families. Their collections suggest that they conceived of maps
as distinct from paintings: the purchase of one was probably not seen in the same light
as the commissioning of the other. If topographical landscapes were appreciated or
read through eyes accustomed to maps it was not because they circulated in equal
numbers. Pictures were common whereas maps of any kind appear to have been
extremely rare.

The evidence provided by inventories and contracts points to the fact that
Siberechts' landscape views would not have been seen by contemporaries as pictorial
equivalents of estate maps. On the other hand their treatment of space shouldn't be
completely dissociated from that of maps. Delano-Smith and Kain point out that in
the late seventeenth century single sheet maps were superceded or rivalled by the
county atlas.80 The county atlas or history may be considered a different genre of
survey to maps, and often they were titled "survey". Chapter One argued that
although county atlases usually included a large map of the county they also
incorporated smaller maps as well as prospects and bird's-eye views of towns or
gentry seats. Despite being seen as "rivals" to maps and employing different pictorial
modes and subject matter the county atlas still observed the same premise, namely
that land and especially property was spatially quantifiable and open to representation
as such. Moreover, as a corollary of seeing land as a quantifiable space, county
atlases followed maps and paralleled Siberechts' paintings in seeing that land was
naturally composed into estates. In measuring landed property as space county atlases
arrived at a description of the landscape that was in effect a description of the
collective holdings of the local gentry and nobility.

78 Hearn, op. cit., p.7.
79 BL/EG.3652 f.191r.
80 Delano-Smith and Kain, op. cit.
The key difference between single-sheet maps and county histories is that the latter were chorographical. Rather than depicting a single topography they conducted the reader around a series of views of houses, towns and administrative areas such as hundreds. As Chapter One argued, the format was taken from Flemish publications such as Antonius Sanderus's *Chorographia Sacra Brabantiae*, 1659-62.

Chorographies depicted a series of views that could not be taken in with any single view. As seen in Kilburne’s *Kent*, county atlases built up their descriptions from a single "station for the view" using the method of triangulation. Delano-Smith and Kain have referred to triangulation as a form of "intervisibility" in which the use of buildings as point linking one view to another provides for the visual continuum of a county: one point may mark a point of co-ordination within a multiplicity of different views. With their prospects of houses interspersed between views of towns and maps county histories manifest an almost literal "intervisibility". Rather than being thought of as an anthology of randomly selected views the atlas presents views in the context of maps that are themselves built on a number of measurements taken from one station. The very word "station" signifies something of the static nature of viewing using the method of triangulation. Rather than a walking tour around the county the atlas presents the reader with the luxury of a number of interconnected views related to a single viewpoint. Like single-sheet maps they replace the "patrol of [...] feet" with a "suddaine view".

It is as chorography that Siberechts' paintings of Nottingham and of Henley should be seen. As a small number of views in each case they offer a greater amount of visual detail than could be taken in a single topographical view. On the other hand they do not cover an area so large as to be called geographical. The spatial co-ordination and quantification encouraged by the paintings has been noted above. Based around a number of prominent buildings the paintings offer their own "intervisibility" of the Trent valley at Nottingham. It is very likely that Thomas Willughby was aware of the exigencies of mapping in the county atlas. A catalogue "of the library of Francis Willughby + son" in the Middleton MSS records that the Willughbys owned a number of county histories. Not only would Willughby have

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81 Delano-Smith and Kain, *op. cit.*
82 NUL/Mi.I.17. These histories were: William Dugdale, *Antiquities of Warwickshire Illustrated*, London, 1656 (Mi.I.17 f.65); Robert Plot, *The Natural History of Oxfordshire*, Oxford, 1678 and *The Natural History of Staffordshire*, Oxford, 1686 (Mi.I.17 f.53); Robert Thoroton, *The Antiquities of*
been familiar with the assumptions and the chorographical format of the county atlas he would also have known the prospect and bird's-eye views of houses and estates in volumes such as Robert Plot's *Natural History of Staffordshire*.

Thomas Willughby's familiarity with these views might explain why he had views painted of the Trent valley from Clifton House and Colwick Hall. The county atlas testifies to the desire of the gentry not simply to "know one's own" but also to know the surrounding area. For Willughby to conceive of the Trent valley in spatial terms as a number of properties bordering on one another would have been the instinct of a gentleman familiar with the contemporary county atlas. Moreover, his possession of histories might explain the odd nature of the Nottingham paintings. As noted above they appear to have been painted over a period of up to five or six years. Siberechts' views of Henley span a period of around eight years. A reason for this might be that the essentially additive nature of triangulation as a method of mapping would have made it easy for a patron first to commission one or two views and then later some more of the same or an adjoining area. None of the views of the Trent or Thames valleys are disconnected from the others: each looks out from or towards a site depicted in the other views. It is also notable that Willughby follows the county history in having a single large bird's-eye view of his seat included in his collection of interrelated topographical views. Prior to the publication of *Britannia Illustrata* in 1707 bird's-eye views were published alongside other prospect views and maps, and varied in size.

In addition to Thomas Willughby's familiarity with the contemporary county atlas it is almost certain that Siberechts would have been well acquainted with the format. It is especially likely that he would have known his fellow Fleming Sanderus's *Flandria Illustrata* and *Chorographia Sacra Brabantiae*. Siberechts also "moved in the circles of Netherlandish immigrant artists who had come to England to service the increasingly wealthy elites". It is likely that he would have known men like Burghers, perhaps Loggan, and especially Leonard Knyff and Jan Kip, at this time working on *Britannia Illustrata* and also Jacob Knyff and Lucas Vorstermans II, fellow house portraitists from the late 1670s. The chorographies of Flanders and the

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*Nottinghamshire*, London, 1677 (Mi.I.17 f.61); Thomas Philipot, *Villare Cantianum*, London, 1659 (Mi.LP.28) and two anonymous books, *Of Surveighing and Surveighor’s Perambulator* (Mi.I.17 f.59).


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English counties would very likely have provided models for Siberechts to draw on in his paintings of the estates along the Trent and Thames valleys.  

As well as acting as pictorial models for Siberechts the late seventeenth-century chorography also provided a conceptual model of representation for his patrons. Both the county history and the painted estate view objectified class-bound experiences in their representation of the landscape. The chorography was a pictorial function of the gentry’s desire to "know one’s own" that historians have argued to be the cause of a rise in estate mapping and local topographical publications. It was set against a background of mapping and the authors of county histories used the language of visual and written surveying: prospect, perambulation. But if chorographies were consumed by the same gentry who had an active interest in estate mapping, they were not necessarily consumed in the same way. The catalogue of the Willughby library suggests that county histories belonged in libraries rather than estate offices or studies where maps were hung. They were consumed in the same zones of leisurely contemplation as paintings: drawing rooms, dining rooms, staircases, all rooms that could only be found in the properties of the very wealthy such as the Pierreponts, Willughbys and Cliftons. Chorographies were meant to be carefully scrutinised. Authors such as Robert Plot made the accuracy of their maps the chief feature of their books. But it was a leisurely scrutiny. Chorographies separated text and image, in contrast to the functional nature of estate maps that combined visual clarity with a profusion of written information. It is arguable that as objects of visual contemplation chorographies were to be consumed within the same leisurely atmosphere as paintings. Siberechts’ paintings of the Trent valley are taken from seats neighbouring Wollaton Hall. It is easy to imagine that they were partly designed to flatter these neighbouring gentry, and that they were viewed in an environment that would allow for relaxed contemplation of one another’s estates. In much the same way the contemporary county history was often addressed to all the gentry of a county, as a single audience.

So were Siberechts’ estate views commissioned as an exercise in vanity?

Based on a genre of mapping written by and for the gentry, having the gentry’s seats

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84 Plate 80 of *Britannia Illustrata* is a very close copy of Siberechts’ painting and suggests that Siberechts, Knyff and/or Kip were in contact with each other’s work. The Middleton collection contains a copy of Siberechts’ *Wollaton Hall* with the gardens slightly updated, suggesting a date after 1695; it has been traditionally attributed to Kip: see Alice T. Friedman, *op. cit.* More work needs doing on Siberechts’, Kip’s and Knyff’s activities in Nottingham c.1695-1705.
as their subject and viewed by the gentry, the paintings point to more than a small
degree of self-awareness. But they were arguably more than this, as this chapter has
suggested. The paintings referred primarily to the gentry's experiences of surveying
their land from their estates. These class-bound experiences were objectified in
representation, because the paintings represented the land in the terms provided by
these experiences. The paintings paid great attention to topographical detail. As
objects designed to attract visual attention they re-present the experience of surveying
the landscape as the actual condition of the landscape. Since the practices of a
particular class are taken as the determining factors of a representation it is inevitable
that this representation will then claim these experiences to be an inherent quality of
the very landscape itself. Siberechts' paintings suggest that surveying and the
perception of co-ordinated form related to an estate is simply the viewer's response to
the landscape. His topographical landscapes de-historicise the practices of a
particular group. This is not to say that his representations of the Trent and Thames
topographies deny that surveying is empowering and the preserve of a particular
social group: they do not. The point is, that his paintings give surveying the status of
an objective practice. They suggest that a topographically co-ordinated landscape is a
priori existent in nature, and that it is the job of surveying to take this formal
appearance as its object.

What then happens to the spectator of the paintings? As noted above, the
paintings signify that the spectator (as surveyor) is simply responding to the formal
appearance of the landscape: it is the achievement of the paintings to suggest that all
landscapes have an identifiable objective formal appearance, independent of who
looks at them or from where. The practices of surveying are taken out of their
historical context whilst remaining the preserve of the landed classes. What happens
is that the surveyor retains his class identity but this is now seen as the effect rather
than the cause of his practices. If surveying takes the appearance of the landscape as
its object it claims to take an objective view of the landscape. That is to say the
surveyor claims that he stands outside of the landscape and surveys it in a detached
manner. It should be emphasised that the paintings do not deny the social position of
the surveyor. They are arguably more subtle than that: they suggest that the landed
class is itself a foreseen element within the landscape. The surveyor responds to the
objective formal appearance of the landscape. The landed classes appeal to this
appearance of the landscape as justification that their own exclusive practices are
incipient in the very Creation itself. Social practices are justified by an appeal to the a priori existence of their object in nature.

In commissioning paintings of other estates the gentry were reflecting on the "given-ness" of the landed classes. By viewing other estates as part of the single "Variety" of the landscape they were musing on the idea that their socially bound practices were an anticipated effect of the landscape. This in turn gave credit to the view articulated in contemporary poetry that social inequality and the ownership of large estates was a foreseen and desired outcome of Creation. In the same way John Denham is reflecting on the naturalness of his own surveying of the Thames valley when he looks at Windsor Castle and notes that:

[...] Nature design'd  
First a brave place, and then as brave a mind [73-74]

Denham puts into words what the viewers of Siberechts' paintings must have thought. Both poem and paintings suggest that surveying is a fitting response to Creation. They do not hide the class background to the practices. Instead they sublimate the historical nature of surveying and of the class as a whole when they say that both are incipient in a priori existence of the landscape as an object with a formal appearance.

Summary

The aim of this chapter has been to consider the development of spatial recession and the co-ordination of space in Siberechts' topographical landscapes of the 1690s. It has proposed that the late painting Nottingham from the East represents a culmination of these developments. Precedents for the combination of pastoral and topographical imagery can be seen in contemporary poetry and translations as well as in Flemish and Dutch landscape painting. Painting and poetry also provide precedents of a developing treatment of the prospect view that draws the eye over the terrain of the landscape and acknowledges both its depth and its objective unity.

It has been suggested that pressures drove Siberechts to draw on Rubens' treatment of landscape in order to produce an increasingly co-ordinated image of the landscape. These pressures derived in part from poetry but also from contemporary maps and county atlases. Such representations of the landscape objectified the
experiences of the landed gentry. Chorographies in particular provide a conceptual as well as pictorial linkage between maps and landscape paintings. Their prospects, bird's-eye views, maps and town plans represent the landscape as composed into the formal appearances that a map might be thought of as imposing on it. In depicting a wider area than could be viewed at once in reality, they are also examples of the additive approach to representing the landscape that is seen in Siberechts' views of the Thames and Trent valleys.

Finally, it has been argued that Siberechts was not consciously trying to objectify the experiences of the landed gentry. It is only in the interaction of the viewer with the painting that the practice of surveying becomes a response to the appearance of the landscape rather than the subjective and historical preserve of acquisitive landowners. In developing a more map-like representation of topography Siberechts was arguably responding to an ideology of representing estates, rivers, cities and labour that already existed in the form of maps and county atlases.
Chapter Four

Perspective, description and the "consumate gentleman"
in Britannia Illustrata and the Spectator

Introduction

Having considered different modes of viewing the natural world in late seventeenth-century painting, it may be useful to turn to early eighteenth-century house portraiture to see whether these modes were reconciled in any way, or whether the mode of viewing objects advocated by natural historians became a taste that discarded the associations of property ownership and interest inherent in earlier visual culture. In this context, the most significant images of landscape and country estates are the eighty engravings in the first edition of Leonard Knyff's and Jacob Kip's Britannia Illustrata, 1707.

The use of perspective in Britannia Illustrata, 1707

Britannia Illustrata, re-issued the following year as Nouveau Theatre de Grande Bretagne, is important because it follows on from Siberechts paintings insofar as the engravings combine a consistent use of a centralised perspective method with a highly visual descriptive mode of representation. The format is very similar to Wollaton Hall but the combination of perspective and description is more confident and mutually reinforcing and in this aspect as well as others it recalls Nottingham from the East. This chapter will focus on one of the engravings in Britannia Illustrata, of Longleat House (see Plate 74). Many of the engravings in Britannia Illustrata are similar in their use of perspective and their extremely detailed descriptions of the grounds of a house and the surrounding countryside. Only eight out of the eighty engravings can be said not to conform to the programme of perspective and inclusion of detail that is established in the other engravings. The view of Longleat in plate 40 of the 1707 edition is representative of the way in which this programme is taken up in the project.

The most significant aspect of the images in Britannia Illustrata is the way in which the perspective is used to organise the description of massive geometrical
garden arrangements, and at the same time to present the view as being taken from
great heights that in most cases simply weren’t attainable in reality. Rather than
focusing on the motives for making an elaborate display of the gardens in the prints it
is of greater relevance for this thesis to pay attention to the method of perspective
construction in the images. The prints all appear to have a kind of distorted
perspective. That is to say, the lines of the perspective, marked out boldly by great
avenues of trees and lengthy boundary walls do not seem to match to the horizon.
This is contrary to what we might expect with a one-point perspective, where the
vanishing point had traditionally been placed on the horizon in keeping with the
assumption that the horizon marks the point of infinite recession. In *Britannia
Illustrata* however the receding lines of the perspective do not meet at a point on the
horizon. The effect is that the topography appears to lie on an ascending incline that
terminates suddenly at the horizon, at which point it becomes no longer visible to the
viewer. According to the rules of centralised (or one-point) perspective the result
should be that less topography should be visible in proportion to the image as a whole,
as it cannot be seen to the point of infinite recession. But in *Britannia Illustrata* the
image has been framed at a downward-looking angle, so that the view is cut of just
above the topographical horizon, leaving only a narrow band of sky above and behind
it. In other words, it is as though Knyff had drawn the bottom third of a one-point
perspective view in which the vanishing point was placed centrally. The overall result
is that rather than less land being depicted, the selection of only part of a perspective
view ensures that the image is almost wholly taken up with topographical description.

In addition to this, the termination of the terrain well below the point at which
the vanishing point is projected ensures that the topography right up to the horizon
can be described in great detail without being squeezed into ever more acute angles of
recession. In the view of Longleat the hexagonal plantation surrounding the gazebo
near the top of the image is depicted with its shape clearly evident, even though it is
the feature nearest the horizon. This is because the horizon has been arbitrarily
determined rather than lying at the vanishing point. Recalling *Wollaton Hall*, it is
possible to see that the farthestmost parts of that garden were difficult to see with
respect to their shape (see Plate 75). This is because the pace of their recession was
quickened by bringing the vanishing point to a point just below the horizon, or rather,
raise the horizon above the vanishing point. In *Britannia Illustrata* the dislocation of
horizon and vanishing point creates the impression of an inclining plane on which
topographical features can be displayed without compromising their formal identity by squeezing them into an ever-receding space.

The repetition of this dislocation in *Britannia Illustrata* indicates that it was a technique practised by Knyff and Kip rather than a topographical feature peculiar to one specific location. The method seems to have been taken from one used by Lucas Vorstermans the Younger. In a drawing of a view of Castle Huldenburgh near Brussels Vorstermans places his vanishing point at the top of the paper, near the centre (see Plate 76). From there he projects lines which are used as the basis for the receding grid-like patterns of the gardens and the square plan of the house itself. The horizon however is placed some way below the vanishing point. Its recession is signified by the diminishing of detail and the increasing faintness of the topographical markings. In the drawing a continuous spatial recession is depicted using two different modes of perspective. What results is that the land appears to lie on an ascending incline from the foreground, where people stand among an avenue of trees in the bottom right, until it reaches the middle distance, whereupon it levels out. The ascending incline and then the level are clearly demarcated by the angles of the road that travels down the centre left of the image. For a distance from the foot of the image it follows the lines projected from the vanishing point but at a spot just after Castle Huldenburgh it tapers off and becomes fainter. It is evident that Vorsterman's use of perspective enables him to introduce a dramatically inclining plane into a broad view where atmospheric perspective and a level place do not allow for minute topographical description. The inclining plane compensates for this by letting the view be seen from a greater angle. It seems to introduce an element of orthography into an image reliant on atmospheric perspective to suggest spatial depth. Description of the formal qualities of an object in the landscape seems to be contrasted with the description of a landscape view.

Vorsterman's drawing recalls Boyle's wish for natural history, the objective description of natural phenomena, to avoid unnecessary language that would introduce superfluous atmosphere into a piece of prose. Vorsterman's drawing may be said to go some way to distinguishing two such modes of representation. Indeed, the way in which the inclining plane on which Castle Huldenburgh stands seems to contrast with the landscape further behind, insofar as the former fills up the paper

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1 See Boyle, *A Proëmial Essay*, in Hunter and Davies eds., *op. cit.*
while the latter occupies only a fraction of the space. In the engraving of Longleat House in Britannia Illustrata the paper is also filled; in fact the horizon almost seems to have been placed with regard to the dimensions of the paper than the logic of recession in one-point perspective. This attention to the medium as an object recalls the engravings of the owls in Willughby and Ray's Ornithology. There, the logic of perspective was disregarded for the sake of making the page into a source of visual information in its own right, and drawing attention to its objectivity. By fitting the owls, and Longleat, and Castle Huldenburgh as well, to the size of the paper, the artists suggest that the image itself is an object by virtue of its being a perfect transcription of an object before the artist's own eyes. The logic of perspective is not followed in its entirety because to do so would signify the prior presence of a spectator, and would detract from the reliability of the recorded impression of the senses that Boyle, Ray and others deemed to be central to modern natural history.

It is therefore possible to see that within the discursive context of natural history and the reliability of the visual sense Knyff and Kip may have viewed Vorstermans's method with some interest, insofar as it lent itself to the view that a drawing or engraving might be less a subjective record of a view more an objective description. But it is important to recognise that Vorstermans's method actually preserves the illusionistic qualities of representation that natural scientists such as Boyle disapproved of. By using perspective Vorstermans, Knyff and Kip were all acknowledging that the view they presented presupposed a viewer's presence. This is particularly evident in Vorstermans' drawing. Here, the description of Castle Huldenburgh is plain, detailed and inclining towards an orthographic plan but is still fitted into an overall image whose far distance is atmospheric and whose foreground on the left is composed of strongly shaded pastoral staffage and a tree acting as repousoir. Admittedly the spatial disjunction between the foreground on the left and on the right is particularly jarring. But as the transition from middle to far distance indicates, the use of centralised perspective is only one means of signifying spatial recession, and as an illusionistic device it works well with other techniques such as atmospheric perspective. The divorce of the vanishing point from the horizon allows for detailed description that inclines towards a disembodied and almost orthographic perspective. But the fact that the vanishing point still acts as a means of creating an illusion of recession indicates that the view is human-centred and not objective.
It should not be thought that Vorstermans invented this method, or that Knyff and Kip acquired it from him. It had been widely used in continental estate portraiture prior to Britannia Illustrata's conception in c.1696, most recently in the 1696 volume titled Castella et Praetoria nobilium Brabantiae (which featured older engravings by Lucas Vorstermans and Wencleslaus Hollar, amongst others) in which aerial views which employed inclining planes were alternated with low views, which emphasised the aspect and size of the house rather than its plan and environment (see Plate 77). The technique had been used in England by David Loggan in 1675, and was to be used with modifications and to differing extents in Robert Plot's The Natural History of Staffordshire, 1686, Loggan's Cantabrigia Illustrata in 1690, Abraham Slezer's Theatrum Scotiae, 1693, and Sir Henry Chauncy's Historical Antiquities of Hertfordshire in 1700. It was therefore well established in British estate portraiture and topography (Slezer's volume in particular is primarily topographical) even by the time Knyff began the preparatory drawings for Britannia Illustrata in c.1696.²

It should also be noted that there is no suggestion that either Vorstermans or Knyff and Kip were using this method with specific reference to the natural historian's belief in the reliability of sense-perception. Having said this, it would be unwise to ignore the development of estate portrait in the later seventeenth century in its engraved form. In this development it is arguable that there is a questioning of the ends of visual descriptions of a house or estate, and what mode of perspectival representation is most appropriate to these ends. This debate closely follows the change and tension in and between modes of viewing seen in Siberechts' paintings in the period.

The cultural context of perspective

It is easy to see the engravings in Chauncy's Historical Antiquities as being inconsistent in their use of perspective. But perspective treatises themselves did not always advocate a use of one mode only. The evidence of these treatises is that perspectivists themselves were far from making hard and fast distinctions regarding the implications of representation in one mode of perspective or another.

² For the dates of Britannia Illustrata's conception and inception, see John Harris and Gervase Jackson-
The mode of representation that Robert Hooke referred to as "ad oculum", or 'to the eye' was known by perspectivists as either orthography or ichnography. Ichnography was defined by Joseph Moxon as "the base or bottom whereon any building is erected". Orthography was taken to be a plane that lay at a perpendicular angle and at an infinite removal to the line of sight, to the extent that the rays of light from the object to the eye were taken as being parallel, and not converging. Scenography or centralised perspective was the result of taking the ichnography and orthography and projecting them onto a plane and declining them to a fixed point, taken to indicate the direction of the viewer's gaze. Ichnography could also be declined to a fixed point on its own, to give the illusion of looking at a plan in perspective; this was called scenographic ichnography. When it did not decline, it enjoyed the same qualities as orthography and was called geometric ichnography.

As the very idea of scenographic ichnography indicates, the relationship between ichnography and scenography was well established in the technical literature of the period. Plate L of Moxon's treatise shows that with the use of a central vanishing point and a distance point the plan of a building could be projected (albeit as a mirror image) onto a scenographic plane that declined from the viewer (see Plate 78). As a mode of perspective ichnography had the virtue of either assuming a viewer's presence, when used scenographically, or not, as when it was used geometrically. Orthography on the other hand militated against the assumptions of scenographic perspective insofar as the notion of parallel rays projecting from the object contradicted the convergence of rays to the viewer's eye in scenography.

There is evidence to suggest that the perspectivists assumed orthography to correspond to a notion of the eye as a detached instrument rather than an embodied viewer. Moxon noted that "whatever lies right before the eye is to be described orthographically". His comment recalls Hooke's notion of objects appearing not in scenographic perspective, but "to the eye" ("ad oculum"). But interestingly Moxon did not see orthography and scenography as incompatible, even within the context of a single image. Whilst noting that an object drawn in perspective should have its facing side drawn orthographically, he wrote, "if you behold any thing decline, from

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5 Moxon, op. cit., p.3.
6 Ibid, p.2.
this orthographic front, though it be in the fabric a line parallel to the horizon, you are
to draw it scenographically. Within the confines of perspectival logic this is
impossible, because rays cannot be parallel and converging at the same time.
Moreover, it hints at an uncertainty over the nature of the viewer: should their
presence be taken as being presupposed or not? But it does foreshadow Chauncy's
use of an orthographic aspect for the house which is then declined using scenographic
perspective (indicated by the recession of the chimney stacks) and even then is placed
within the context of an aerial scenographic view. What Moxon's comments indicate,
is that in keeping with Hooke, Ray and Willughby, Plot, and Chauncy, he did not
conceive that different representational technical modes were mutually exclusive on
account of what they might have signified about the nature of viewing.

The less technical and more discursive side to the study of perspective also
served to entertain conflicting notions as to whether linear perspective signified a
viewer's position and therefore assumed his presence, or whether it was a means to
replicate the qualities of the object itself, having the image make the same impression
on the eye as the object. These two conceptions are not necessarily exclusive, but
they do indicate that the purposes of linear perspective were far from being agreed
upon. There is evidence that in the period there was a growing idea that projection
could replicate the bare appearance of an object to the eye when this faculty was taken
in a purely physiological sense.

Bernard Lamy's *A Treatise of Perspective, or, the art of representing all
manner of objects, as they appear to the eye in all situations* (1702) asserted that "the
design of painting is to represent on a flat body [...] whatever is desired". In Lamy's
opinion the image was not simply a facsimile of the object. He continued, "[t]his can
never be done, if the view of the picture makes not the same impression on the eyes,
as if they saw the things themselves". A conception of the eye as a physiological
instrument provided the conditions for suggesting that a painting or engraving could
not simply represent an object but could replicate its very qualities. Humphrey Ditton
disagreed with Lamy insofar as he argued that people "ought to conceive a difference,

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7 Ibid., p.49.
8 Ibid., p.49.
9 Bernard Lamy, *A Treatise of Perspective, or, the art of representing all manner of objects, as they
10 Ibid., p.6.
between the projection, and the bare appearance, of an object to the eye".11 But he shared with Lamy a notion that perspective could accurately transcribe an object "as it appears".12 But in his distinction of projection and appearance Ditton noted that the cause of distinction was the distance of the eye from a projection, "[f]or the situation of the object, and of the eye, continuing, the appearance is still the same: but though the eye and the object should retain their position, yet if the plane alters its situation, the projection will not be the same, but very different".13

Jean Dubreuil also noted that projections made different impressions on the eye according to the situation of the plane.14 In concentrating on projection the perspectivists drew attention to centralised perspective's presupposition of a viewer's presence at a fixed position, because it was in light of the fixed position of the object and eye, and the changing position of the picture plane, that projection was distinguished from appearance. But as Ditton's, Lamy's and Moxon's works testify a perspective of position and projection as distinct from appearance did not necessarily discredit the veracity of sense impressions. Instead, perspective seems from the evidence to have offered a means of transcribing the appearance of an object rather than being a source of contention regarding different modes of representation.

A further context in which variant modes of perspective had the potential to conflict with one another was the theatre. The perspective used in the staging of Restoration theatre was very similar to that used in Vorstermans' drawing, in Burgher's engraving and throughout Britannia Illustrata. It is seen clearly in Christopher Wren's design for a theatre produced c.1670 (see Plate 79). In the drawing a large stage of almost fifty feet in depth bisected midway by the proscenium arch. Behind the arch are moveable wings and shutters, which form the graphic backdrop to the action depicted. The interesting feature of the drawing is the section of the stage that is in front of the arch and surrounded by the stalls. This protruding part of the stage was known as the apron. Attention should be drawn to the apron itself, but the way in which it declines from the level of the stage at the arch to a lower level by the pit. The manner in which the stage comprises a level plane farther back, and then a descending plane as it projects forward towards the spectator in the pit or

11 Ditton, op. cit., pp.ii-iii.
12 Ibid., p.iv.
13 Ibid., p.iii.
14 Dubreuil, op. cit., p.15.
stalls, is similar to the arrangement of planes in *Britannia Illustrata*, and in the plates in Chauncy and Plot.

The illusionistic effect of such a stage arrangement must have been similar to the impression created by the images in *Britannia Illustrata*, that is to say of an elevated view. But like *Britannia Illustrata*’s predecessors, it is far from clear that the theatre strived for this illusion as the sole end it its perspective constructions. There is no doubt that such illusion was the desired effect. Jocelyn Powell has commented on "the natural gravitation of the actor to the fore-stage". Montague Summers has also said: "it should be remarked that the greater part of the action took place upon the apron and there are continually to be noted stage directions which bid a character to 'come forward'." In the light of this it is reasonable to see the inclining apron as a means of creating an effect of looking in on the action. Moreover, the wings and shutters increased the illusion of depth, and Powell notes that Wren tried still further to heighten the illusion by creating a false perspective by altering the gallery pillars. But as Summers points out the protrusion of the apron beyond the proscenium arch renders impossible the illusion of the stage as a space behind a window whose frame would be the arch itself, and which could be looked into from outside. The use of the apron by the actors and the playwrights indicates too that the disruption of any illusionistic effect was not disruptive to the spectacle per se.

It is interesting that it was Wren, who had a thorough grounding in perspective and architecture, who should have thought that illusion was of great importance. Indeed as Powell indicates, the scenes painted on the wings and shutters did not necessarily contribute to creating the impression of receding space: "[t]he scenic illusion is not an environment for the actors, as in the modern theatre: it is simply a background for them". The result was that "the Restoration playhouse preserved a presentational ambience [...] the scenic effects of the Restoration theatre were in the emblematic tradition of the Elizebethan stage, for all their grander scale". The inclining apron that we see in Wren’s drawing is not therefore conclusive evidence that theatrical spectacle, and indeed perspectival arrangement in its wider sense was

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17 Summers, *op. cit.*, p.95.
18 Powell, *op. cit.*, p.56.
19 Ibid., p.57.
associated with the idea of presenting an illusion of space at a given distance from the viewer.

Powell has a thesis that the use of perspective to create an illusion and the disruption of illusionistic spectacle through the apron's coming in front of the proscenium arch was intentional. She argues that the Restoration theatre strove to create the effect of an object more than that of an illusion.

The need to organise dramatic structure as a demonstration, almost as an experiment, in moral argument is crucial to the style of the period. The poet contrives an object for the audience's contemplation, an object that operates by recognisable laws.²⁰

She argues that this need arose not from within the development of dramatic form itself, but rather from the inductive method of reasoning adopted by natural historians and experimental philosophers. Illusion is subordinated in favour of a series of objects for the audience to contemplate:

In response to the questing and defining habits of mind that dominated the period, the great Restoration dramatists do not try to give the illusion of events actually taking place before our eyes. Their method is perhaps more subtle [...] The plays proceed by mathematical 'demonstration', and present not a developing action but a pattern of ideas brought into significant juxtaposition by the often conventional mechanisms of the plot.²¹

Although the evidence suggests that natural historians such as Ray would have preferred to contemplate something more tangible than a "pattern of ideas", the substitution of demonstration for illusion and juxtaposition for development smacks of their inductive, observational method. Again, we are reminded of Siberechts' work, and the illustrations to the Ornithology. In both these works, as well as in the developing genre of the engraved house portrait, the illusion of the represented object is under constant pressure to give way in favour of the image's value as an object of study in its own right.

What is significant about the Restoration theatre is that it shows how perspective was used in a particular context. It is arguably important to bear in mind the "presentational ambience" of the theatre when considering Knyff and Kip's images.
in *Britannia Illustrata*. The theatre seems to provide a concrete example of what is suggested in the perspective treatises in the period, namely that there were no hard and fast rules or agreements as to what was signified by the use of one mode of perspective or another. Above all, the evidence of the Restoration stage is that a use of aerial perspective was not reserved for the creation of purely illusionistic effects.

*Changing notions of description*

Returning to the house portrait engravings it may be possible to see their use of centralised aerial perspective from the point of view of object-contemplation, along the lines proposed by Powell as existing in the Restoration theatre. Joseph Addison's *An Essay on Virgil's Georgics*, published in 1697 develops the idea of description from the Baconian concept of a transparent mediation of sense experience. As suggested in the use of "Georgic", his definition of description was formed with regard to both the sensible experience of husbandry and the detached observation associated with property ownership. The significance of his Essay is that it acknowledges sense experience as necessary in the process of inductive reasoning but argues that sense alone is not enough to make a man a natural philosopher or property holder. His opinion is a development of those held by Bacon's immediate followers in the Royal Society such as Ray.

Addison begins his *Essay* (hereafter referred to as *Georgics*) by noting that the subjects of Virgil's poems are "the precepts of husbandry" and its setting is in the countryside. The *Georgics* "fall under that class of poetry, which consists in giving plain and direct instructions to the reader". Interestingly, Addison notes that "precepts and instructions", although plain and direct", "are not to be delivered with the simplicity of the ploughman, but with the address of the poet". In contrast to the natural scientists of the Restoration such as Boyle, Addison does not associate simple instruction with plain and unembellished description. "Natural philosophy", he continued, "has indeed sensible objects to work upon, but then it often puzzles the

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23 Ibid., p.249.
24 Ibid., p.249.
reader with the intricacy of its notions, and perplexes him with the multitude of its disputes". 25

If Addison was attacking the minuteness with which experimental philosophers examined the natural world, he was not in favour of abandoning the senses entirely as a means to instruction: "[p]recepts of morality, besides the natural corruption of our tempers, which makes us so averse to them, are so abstracted from ideas of sense, that they seldom give an opportunity for those beautiful descriptions and images which are the life and soul of poetry". 26 As he indicates in his praise of poetry, "the address of a poet" seems to fall somewhere between the examination of particulars in the realm of taste and the coldness of abstract reasoning.

In perceiving a relationship between poetry and the imagination, Addison fastened his understanding of poetry to an established notion of the imagination as a faculty that operated between the sensible and abstract spheres. But he was making new assertions about "plain and direct instruction" when he introduced them to the arena of poetry and imagination. In doing so, he also invoked new assumptions about description. The Georgic, he wrote, "raises in our minds a pleasing variety of scenes and landscapes, whilst it teaches us; and makes the dryest of its precepts look like a description. A Georgic therefore is some part of the science of husbandry put into a pleasing dress, and set off with all the beauties and embellishments of poetry". 27 He argues that "description" contrasts with the dryness of precepts insofar as the former both delights and teaches the reader. The Georgic is like a description because it has sensible objects to work upon: "the most delightful part of nature", "part of the science of husbandry". But the Georgic is not pleasing simply because is subject is the realm of sensible objects. Addison's empiricism is qualified by a belief similar to Burnet's that the images taken in by the senses are worked upon by the mind. The Georgic "raises in our mind a pleasing variety of scenes and landscapes, whilst it teaches us". Not only does the poem present objects for the senses, it also exercises the mind.

The qualified empiricism behind Addison's idea of description is further outlined in a passage which hints at the ground that description occupied between exhaustive visual examination and distanced survey in estate portraiture. He notes:

25 Ibid., p.249.
26 Ibid., p.249.
27 Ibid., pp.249-50.
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Where the prose-writer tells us plainly what ought to be done, the poet often conceals the precept in a description, and represents his countryman performing the action in which he would instruct his reader. Where the one sets out as fully and distinctly as he can, all the parts of the truth, which he would communicate fully to us; the other singles out the most pleasing circumstance of this truth, and so conveys the whole in a more distinct manner to the understanding.  

Addison is arguably placing poetry on the same epistemological basis as the inductive method of natural history, that is to say a full and prolix description being worked upon by the understanding, only that poetry selects the most pleasing aspects of an object. In his epistemology Addison followed Francis Bacon, who as we have seen established that imagination and reason and their respective "emanations" of poetry and philosophy flowed first from the impressions that "individuals" make on the senses. But in setting description on the side of dramatic action and opposing it to a full and distinct setting out of the object, Addison critiques the inductive method insofar as it appears incapable of detaching itself from sensible experience. He hints that mental activity has a place within a broadly empirical epistemology.

It should be noted that in Addison's conception of description, there's an uncertainty as to whether images are raised in the mind through experience of the object itself or are the minds own invention. What seems to be the case is that the words of the poem raise the images: "[the Georgic] raises in our minds"; "Virgil's descriptions [...] naturally rise out of the principle design of the poem"; "we receive strong ideas from his words". It should be pointed out that in Addison's Georgics, description is like poetry and has to do with what Henry More referred to as the "active sagacity" of the mind as it works on the impression made by the senses by an object. Description, in Addison's conception, therefore avoids setting out the subject in full. Instead, whilst being grounded in immediate experience, it only serves to represent that experience. As Addison notes, the difference between the natural scientist who dwells in the realm of immediate experience and the poet who stands at a distance is that the former gets his hands dirty whilst the latter does not: "where the prose-writer tells us plainly what ought to be done, the poet often [...] represents his

28 Ibid., pp.250-1.
29 See Kusukana, p.52.
30 Ibid., p.249, 252, 254.
countryman performing the action. Description is therefore about experience of sensible objects, but it is experience at a distance. In Addison’s thesis the Georgic therefore has something of the stage about it, insofar as it is a representation of action, at the same time as agreeing with and participating in a discourse about natural science and the need for gentlemen to concern themselves with agricultural improvement.

Addison’s comments on description within the context of a debate on poetry and its place within an empiricist epistemology may recall the contrast between visual incident and the distancing techniques of centralised perspective in Britannia Illustrata, and also between illusive space and the immediacy of objective presence in the Restoration theatre. In the engravings as well as on the stage distance is preserved and the view is orientated to the viewer’s assumed presence. But at the same time the perspective works to bring the subject out into a sphere of immediate experience. The image is somewhere between a representation and an object of interest in its own right. This is what Addison seems to hint is the status of description in poetry. Interestingly, a year after Britannia Illustrata first appeared it was re-issued with a new title-page that relates it both to the theatre and to notions of description that have been discussed above. The title-page said: "Nouveau Theatre de la Grande Bretagne: ou description exacte des Palais de la Reine, et des maisons les plus considerables des signeurs et des gentlehommes de la Grande Bretagne". The title-page suggested a correspondence of the presentational ambience of the theatre with notions of description that arose in the genre over the previous twenty years. It might refer to the dramatic form of the theatre and the theme of detached spectatorship at the same time as evoking the notion of exact description as practised by natural historians.

The use of "theatre" and "description" in the title arguably evidence a change in ideas about description that had been articulated in part through the genre of the engraved house portrait. As the previous chapters have tried to show, sub-genres of landscape painting such as the estate portrait and pastoral often used perspective to signify a mode of viewing associated with the property that the paintings depicted. At the same time however issues surrounding natural history intruded into the context of property ownership, with the result that two seemingly disparate modes of viewing became blurred: an interest in particular features and the assumed veracity of optical perception vied with a human-centred survey of the land. In Addison’s Georgics we see that within the context of a broadly empirical philosophy a notion of description is
proposed that aligns itself to poetry but at the same time clearly resonates with natural philosophy's reliance on sense experience. The place of poetry between sense and reason had been well established in Bacon's writings, which Addison later cited approvingly. Addison's emphasis on description as belonging to the realm of representation based on experience is arguably a means of bringing the central tenets of natural philosophy into the domain of representation and illusion and making it manifest in such modes as the theatre and poetry.

*Description in Addison's The Pleasures of the Imagination*

In the *Georgics* Addison proposes that description is a genre that fits into an empirical epistemology. Although it is grounded in experience it belongs properly to the imagination and finds a correspondence in poetry. It is thus removed from the realm of pure sense-perception and its corresponding genre of history. But the experiential bias implied in the term description suggests that the empirical basis of the imagination was an overwhelmingly important factor in the essays on the arts, politeness and spectatorship that Addison was to write for the *Tatler* and the *Spectator* in 1709-12. By considering how his notions of description developed over the period 1697-1712 it is possible to see a discursive context that corresponds to the "presentational ambience" of the Restoration theatre and the engravings in *Britannia Illustrata*.

The most important piece that Addison wrote on poetry, description and imagination was his series of eleven consecutive essays on *The Pleasures of the Imagination*, published in the *Spectator* in 1712. The essays begin with a defence of the imagination was a faculty dependent on the truths of sense-perception, and in particular the sight. "Our sight", Addison begins, "is the most perfect of all our senses". The sight is a faculty through which ideas enter into the memory, such as the ideas of the "extension and shape", "number, bulk and distance" and "figures" of objects. Images "paint themselves on the fancy", and "we cannot [...] have a single image in the fancy that did not make its first entrance through the sight," for "it is this

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31 See *Tatler* 108.
32 Joseph Addison, *Spectator* 411, in *Works*, vol.4 (since the *Spectators* and *Tatlers* have been printed in many other editions I will only give their number, without referring to the page reference in Tickell's edition of the *Works*).
33 Ibid.
sense that furnishes the imagination with its ideas; so that by the pleasures of the imagination or fancy [...] I have in mind such as arise from visible objects".34 Addison’s conception of vision is reminiscent of Burnet’s, in which objects "entered in at the eye in their just and proper figures, with their distance from us and from each other".35 He proposes that the sight is something that perceives according to the measure of its objects. This is an understanding of vision that corresponds to an understanding of inductive reasoning, where the understanding is reduced to the measure of the accidents and phenomena it observes in the natural world. The uniqueness of the imagination lies in the fact that it is this power that gives "the power of retaining, altering and compounding those images, which we have received, into all the varieties of picture and vision that are most agreeable to the imagination".36

This was not a new observation on Addison’s part. What he does seem to have done is to stress the reliance of the imagination as a mental faculty on the unquestioned veracity of sense-perception. His argument assumes that the exercise of mental faculties does not distort visual impressions. Our senses are reliable, he says, and it is the mind that alters and compounds the impressions we receive. The imagination therefore occupies a place between sense and understanding and is consistent with the empirical inductive method by which reason and experience were linked by an "up and down road".37 Imagination grows out of experience, and is wholly dependent on the unquestioned truths that sense-experience supplies.

Painting, description and other arts belong to the imagination because they recall experience, but are not identifiable with it. If we repeat a quote given above only this time reproduce it in full we may see the place occupied by description and painting:

It is [vision] which furnishes the imagination with its ideas; so that by "the pleasures of the imagination", or "fancy" (which I shall use promiscuously) I mean such as arise from visible objects, either when we actually have them in our view, or when we call up their ideas into our minds by paintings, statues, descriptions, or any the like occasion."38

34 Ibid.
35 See Burnet, A Sermon Preached before the Queen, 1690, p.7.
36 Spectator 411.
37 Bacon, quoted in Purver, op. cit, p.35.
38 Ibid.
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It is because art forms associated with the imagination are not identifiable with experience that Addison is able to distinguish them from precepts and demonstrations that in a Baconian method of induction do proceed directly from experience. Whilst emanations of the imagination such as description, poetry and painting are evidently grounded in experience, they do not necessarily proceed from it. The imagination "fills the mind with splendid and illustrious objects", distinguishing them from those that are perceived externally. Addison is here quoting from Bacon's essay On the Regiment of Health. When Addison says that "[a] man of polite imagination, is let into a great many pleasures, that the vulgar are not capable of receiving" it is likely that he has in mind Bacon's notion that the objects of the imagination is a form of knowledge that comes from God. In Bacon's own view, imagination has more to do with the soul than sense and is a counterbalance to experience rather than its by-product. He proposed that:

Poetry, especially heroical, seems to be raised altogether from a noble foundation which makes much for the dignity of man's nature. For seeing this sensible world is in dignity inferior to the soul of man, poesy seems to endow humane nature with that which history denies; and to give satisfaction to the mind, with at least the shadow of things, where the substance cannot be had.  

Addison reproduced a lengthy passage from Bacon's Advancement of Learning, of which this is the opening section, in Tatler 108. Bacon seems to be claiming that poetry is antithetical to sense and experience because it contrasts the sensible to the spiritual, and substance to shadows. It may therefore appear that Bacon's understanding of imagination contradicts Addison's empiricist outline of its qualities. But Bacon qualifies his definition of poetry by stating that its contrast to history proceeds not so much from the diametrical opposition of soul to sense but from the extent that sense is acted upon by the soul. He noted:

So as poesy serveth and conferreth to delectation, magnanimity, and morality; and therefore it may seem deservedly to have some participation of divineness, because it doth raise the mind, and exalt the spirit with high raptures, by proportioning the shows of things to the desires of the mind; and not mind to things, as reason and history do.

39 Francis Bacon, The Advancement of Learning, quoted in Tatler, 108
40 Ibid.
Poetry therefore acts on sense impressions, the "shews of things", but does not necessarily proceed from sense and experience "as reason and history do".

The difference between poetry and history would seem to consist in the role of the mind in regard to the images received by the senses. In the case of poetry the soul appears to have free play with the perception of sense impressions, whereas with reason and history the mind is obliged to adapt itself to the measure of the objects perceived. This recalls Addison's comment in the *Georgics* that a description is a selection of circumstances rather than an exhaustive setting out of each and every aspect of an object. As Bacon indicates, the basic metaphysical assumption that undermines the absolute writ of sense experience is a divine spirit that also constitutes the soul of man. In Bacon's and Addison's theses spirit does not react against sense experience but instead acts upon it. It is the proportion of divinity that a man is capable of bringing to his sense impressions that appears to determine his politeness or vulgarity. In this way, painting and description are initially based on the impressions of the senses but are not identifiable with it.

Addison's conception of painting and description within the framework of his theory of the imagination derives a lot from Bacon's ideas about soul and sense. Moreover, they are also similar to mid-century neo-Platonism such as that of More which viewed matter and spirit as co-extensive, rather than irreconcilable substances. But there is plenty of evidence that Addison did not rely solely on older philosophy to explain the workings of the imaginative faculty. His emphasis on the empirical basis of the imagination would appear to undermine Bacon and More's (and Burnet's) reliance on spirit as the means by which the viewer of an object could conceive of its perfection, as Addison claims the imagination can do. Instead of using older metaphysical notions Addison turns to a more empirical idea, of what John Yolton has termed the "way of ideas" based on the philosophy of John Locke.\(^\text{41}\) Using Locke's philosophy of idea, Addison is able to introduce an extra-experiential dimension into the act of looking.

It is evident throughout the *Pleasures of the Imagination* that ideas have a representative capacity. Ideas are perceived through sense-impression but they are not necessarily identifiable with the object sensed. For example, Addison notes that

the eye can "give us a notion" of extension, shape, number and distance. Many of these ideas are inherent in the object itself. That is to say, the ideas we have are exact resemblences of a given quality of the object itself and are shown to be so by the fact that the same idea is perceivable even though it may come through more than one sense. But Addison notes that taken alone, such ideas "make but a poor appearance to the eye". The mind also perceives light and colours that are "ideas [...] different from anything that exists in the objects themselves".

The notion that the mind could perceive ideas not actually in the objects themselves came from John Locke's *Essay concerning Humane Understanding*, drafted twice in 1671, and again in 1688 and published in 1690. Locke argued that when the mind perceives the idea of an object from something that has been apprehended by the senses it should take care to distinguish the idea as a perception and not the object itself. As a rule, ideas are to be understood as representations of qualities in the objects. He said:

> We may not think (as perhaps usually is done) that they are exactly the images and resemblences of something inherent in the object; most of those [ideas] of sensation being in the mind no more the likeness of something existing without us, than the names, that stand for them, are the likeness of our ideas, which yet upon hearing, are apt to excite in us.

But Locke is not arguing that all ideas of external objects are conventionalised norms, He divides ideas up into primary and secondary ideas. Rather confusingly, given his assertion that ideas are to be distinguished from objects, he then asserts that the ideas of primary qualities in bodies "are resemblences of them, and their patterns really do exist in the bodies themselves". Such primary qualities are things like bulk, number, motion, and our ideas of bulk or number are ideas of real qualities in the objects. The representative capacity of primary ideas is therefore very limited, as such ideas represent one simple quality of the object. Secondary ideas by contrast do not correspond to an inherent quality of the object. The secondary qualities of an object consist in the power to produce an idea by means of the primary qualities.

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42 *Spectator* 411.
43 *Spectator* 413.
44 Ibid.
46 Ibid., II.8.xv
47 See ibid., II.8.x
Secondary ideas perceived by the mind therefore "have no resemblance to [the qualities] at all". Locke claimed that secondary ideas such as colour and taste were produced by the physiological body of the viewer or taster. Such ideas are therefore effects of the subject rather than the object. Addison uses this notion of secondary ideas not being actual qualities themselves, to identify them with a kind of metaphysical realm:

We are everywhere entertained with pleasing shows and apparitions; we discover imaginary glories in the heavens, and in the earth, and see some of this visionary beauty poured out on the whole creation; but what a rough unsightly sketch of nature should we be entertained with, did all her colouring disappear, and several distinctions of light and shade vanish?

But he indicates that "visionary beauty" is to be taken in a physiological and psychological rather than a metaphysical sense. It is not beauty from God, although the Creator is indeed the final cause. Rather, it is a "pleasing delusion" in the sense that secondary ideas "are only ideas in the mind, and not qualities that have any existence in matter", but are nevertheless caused by these qualities.

The significance of the theory of secondary ideas is that it enables Addison to suggest how the appearance of an object might be proportioned to the play of the mind. The theory of ideas as put forward by Locke said that even secondary ideas were the result of the impression of primary qualities on the senses, though they could not be identified with these qualities themselves. But although grounded in actual experience the perception distinct secondary ideas were the effect of the subject rather than the object. In Addison's hands secondary ideas became a "visionary beauty" that is like a spell that will sooner or later break up. In the theory of ideas Addison finds a means to play off the mind of the spectator against the appearance of an object within the overall context of empirical philosophy.

The idea of the natural property-holder in Addison's work

How does the way of ideas contribute to a revised notion of description in Addison's works? It helps Addison formulate an idea of polite and vulgar modes of description.

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48 Ibid., II.8.xv
49 Spectator 413.
50 Ibid.
The theory of ideas allowed for the complete agreement of experience between people on the level of primary ideas. But it has been seen that the representative capacity of ideas varied according to whether they were primary or secondary ideas. Everyone perceived primary ideas, but not everyone perceived secondary ideas. Addison’s thesis annexed pleasure to the perception of secondary ideas, seeing pleasure and secondary ideas as a means to lead the viewer to form a notion of the Creator as the final cause of experience. Secondary ideas, and the "pleasures" in *Pleasures of the Imagination* were consequently argued to be more refined than the pleasures of sense, as strictly speaking they were the pleasures of perception rather than sense even though they were grounded in experience. Being a Baconian, Addison proposed that history belonged to sense experience, whereas poetry belonged to secondary ideas. Corresponding to these distinctions were qualitative notions that we do not find in Bacon’s works. Addison saw sense and history as "vulgar" whereas more refined, subjective pleasures of secondary ideas were seen as being "polite". Description, like painting and poetry was seen to have a representative capacity. As Locke had pointed out, there was no inherent resemblance to objects in words and images themselves. They shared a scope for representation with secondary ideas. The way of ideas therefore served to remove description from association with sense-experience.

Interestingly, Addison introduces his ideas of politeness and vulgarity in the context of discussing the pleasure derived from the ownership of land:

"A man of polite imagination"] meets with a secret refreshment in a description, and often feels a greater satisfaction in the prospect of fields and meadows, than another does in the possession. It gives him, indeed, a kind of property in everything he sees, and makes the most rude uncultivated parts of nature administer to his pleasures: so that he looks upon the world as it were in another light, and discovers in it a multitude of charms, that conceal themselves from the generality of mankind.

He appears to contrast the politeness of pleasure with the vulgarity of ownership, noting how a man of polite imagination can receive pleasure where others cannot. But Addison is not denigrating property ownership *per se*. He notes how a polite imagination only serves to increase the property holding of such a man. It is unclear

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51 *Spectator* 411.
52 Ibid.
by the end of the paragraph whether a polite man’s increased ownership or his
politeness is the factor that exalts him above “the generality of mankind”. Certainly
property and imagination go together insofar as they “make the most rude
uncultivated parts of nature administer to [the polite man’s] pleasures”. What the
association of property and imagination seems to confirm is that a man of imagination
and ideas is not a different species from a man who relies wholly on sense-experience.

When Addison discusses ideas and the possession of property it is arguable that
he has in mind people such as John Ray who had earlier given an outline of the
natural scientist’s relation to landscape and property. Ray’s ideal was a man who
improved nature through reasoning induced by experience. In The Pleasures of the
Imagination Addison uses the way of ideas to suggest that a man of imagination also
has a claim to property that is built into the constitution of the natural world itself. In
this respect he echoes Ray’s implicit claim that although the world was given to “the
generality of mankind”, those who actually inherit it are those who take the natural
scientific and historic approach to God’s Creation. Addison is claiming that men are
natural philosophers, as God intended them to be. The attainment or rediscovery of
such a natural state is the preserve of a group who have the leisure to rest from
physical or intellectual labour or needs of any kind. Addison notes:

There are indeed but very few who know how to be idle and innocent [...] A man should
endeavour, therefore, to make the sphere of his innocent pleasures as wide as possible, that he
may retire into them with safety [...] Of this nature are [pleasures] of the imagination, which do
not require such a bent of thought as is necessary to our more serious employments, nor, at the
same time, suffer the mind to sink into that negligence and remissness, which are apt to
accompany our more sensuous delights; but like a gentle exercise to the faculties, awaken them
from sloth and idleness, without putting them upon any labour or difficulty.53

He was not therefore claiming that experimental philosophy was a bad thing, and that
the imagination was an alternative to empiricism. On the contrary his essays argue
that the imagination supersedes a simple chain of sense and understanding insofar as
it provides the condition for many more ideas to be received from experience than
could occur through the senses alone. In fact, the imagination was the faculty that
supported the idea of man as a philosopher whose responses to the natural world were
given in the actual physical constitution of the world itself. What Addison was
arguing when he claimed that "a man of a polite imagination" is given "a kind of property in everything he sees" was that those who used their imagination - a limited group - are the natural owners of the earth.

Addison had earlier argued what role poetry and the imagination might have to play within the context of a discourse on the social significance of natural philosophy and experimental science. At the end of the *Georgics*, he compared Virgil with his predecessor Hesiod, and alluded to the character of their epistemologies and the merits of these with respect to their control over the land. To begin with Hesiod:

He had much more of the husbandman than the poet in his temper: he was wonderfully grave, discreet, and frugal, he lived altogether in the country, and was probably for his great prudence the oracle of the whole neighbourhood. These principles of god husbandry run through his works.\(^\text{34}\)

Although Addison refers to Hesiod as an "oracle" he is not saying he is superstitious. On the contrary, Addison thinks that Hesiod is too absorbed in his subject and too literal:

He is everywhere bent on instruction, avoids all manner of digressions, and does not stir out of the field once in the whole Georgic. His method in describing month after month with its proper seasons and employments, is too grave and simple; it takes off from the surprise and variety of the poem, and makes the whole look but like a modern almanack.\(^\text{35}\)

Hesiod is the model of the Baconian scientist who works solely from experience to precepts. Addison does not criticise him for how he goes about his husbandry, but notes that it is too exhaustive to give any sense of a wider picture. Using literary genres as an illustration, he notes that although Hesiod is nominally a poet his works in fact resemble almanacks rather than poems. His problem lies in his approach to description:

His descriptions indeed have abundance of nature in them, but then it is nature in her simplicity and undress [...] Thus does the old gentleman give himself up to a loose kind of tattle, rather than endeavour after a just poetical description. Not has he shown more of art or judgement in

\(^{\text{33}}\) Ibid.
\(^{\text{35}}\) Ibid., pp.254-5.
the precepts he has given us, which are sown so very thick, that they weaken and clog the poem too much, and are often so minute and full of circumstances, that they weaken and un-nerve his verse.\textsuperscript{56}

Addison is arguably commenting on the fact that although Hesiod follows the principles of using description as a means of transcribing sense-impressions of natural phenomena, he does not pay attention to the relationship between sense and idea. Addison likens his poetry to a view taken from one point only, and comments that in order to improve the poetry, the poet must not have one view only but rather a more refined perception that is based not on improved sense-impression but on the mental act of conception. He closes his examination of Hesiod's work as follows:

But after all, we are beholden to him for the first rough sketch of a Georgic: where we may still discover something venerable in the antickness of the work; but if we would see the design enlarged, the figures reformed, the colouring laid on, and the whole piece finished, we must expect it from a greater master's hand.\textsuperscript{57}

It has been seen that Locke's notion of secondary ideas was taken up by Addison as a means of marrying conception and mental activity with sense perception, within the wider context of empirical philosophy. The critique of Hesiod concludes by noting that within the context of empirical philosophy Hesiod's poetry falls short of its full potential because it makes too little of sense experience. It becomes absorbed by its objects. What it should be doing is giving the mind free play with its objects and allowing a measure of distance from them whilst maintaining a complete trust in the senses.

Addison then turns to Virgil. His treatment of Virgil is much briefer than of Hesiod which might indicate that whilst he had developed a critique of Baconian philosophy in the light of Locke's \textit{Essay} he had yet to formulate a coherent theory of sense and idea that could provide a counterpart to the absorption in natural phenomena that Bacon's philosophy encouraged. Even so, he is sure of the merits of Virgil's poetry when compared to Hesiod's:

Virgil has [...] so raised the natural rudeness and simplicity of his subject with such a significance of expression, such a pomp of verse, such variety of transitions, and such a solemn

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., p.255.
air in his reflections, that if we look on both poets together, we see in one the plainness of a
downright countryman, and in the other, something of a rustic majesty, like that of a Roman
dictator at the plow-tail.  

As Addison indicates, the merits of Virgil’s poetry consists in the degree to which it
develops the signifying capacity of ideas. Husbandry is characterised as a "rude and
simple" subject, that put into words becomes more significant, that is to say, signifies
something other than itself. Addison was here thinking of Locke’s theory of complex
ideas. In a later Spectator essay Addison characterised complex ideas as those which
supersede the ideas perceived by the mind directly through the senses: "[a]s we look
on any object, our idea of it is, perhaps, made up of two or three simple ideas; but
when the poet represents it, he may [...] give us a more complex idea of it".  

As he noted, the senses provide simple ideas, either of a primary or secondary nature. The
painter or poet has the means at his disposal to intensify these ideas and combine
them in such a way that their signifying capacity is increased. Addison seems to have
taken the notion of complex ideas to mean a greater degree of signification and
equated them with secondary ideas:

Words, when well chosen, have so great a force in them that a description often gives us more
lively ideas than the sight of things themselves. The reader finds a scene drawn in stronger
colours, and painted more to life in his imagination, by the help of words than by an actual
survey of the scene he describes.

Complex ideas developed the empirical notion of simple ideas. As Addison
understood the principle in the Georgics and the Spectator secondary and complex
ideas provided a means whereby poetry and painting could be related to a philosophy
of sense-experience and made to improve on the ideas perceived in the mind by initial
sensitive activity. Addison noted at the end of Spectator 416 that a man with a
deficient imagination was like one with deficient sight, modifying Boyle’s criticism of
those who might paint the lens of a microscope.

Returning to Virgil, it is possible to see that Addison’s praise of him rests on a
theory of the improvement made on simple ideas by complex ideas. At the most basic

\[57\text{Ibid.}\]
\[58\text{Ibid., pp.255-6.}\]
\[59\text{Spectator 416.}\]
\[60\text{Ibid.}\]
level, Virgil's superiority consists in the fact that he has more ideas, in the Lockean
cognitive sense, than Hesiod. The representative capacity of ideas meant that
although Virgil used his mental capacities more and his physiological faculties less,
his perception was nevertheless greater than Hesiod's. He says: "[w]e may see how
judiciously he has picked out those [prognostications] that are most proper for the
husbandman's observation; how he has enforced the expression, and heightened the
images he found in the original". It is important to note that Virgil's superiority does
not consist in his judiciousness per se. Rather, it is because of how he deals with the
subject. Addison proposes that the greater amount of ideas leads to a greater mastery
over the subject. As has been seen, a greater number of ideas proceeds from mental
apprehensions that play on the impressions that objects make on the senses, but which
perceives ideas not inherent in the object itself. The perception of secondary and
complex ideas consists in a seemingly contradictory combination of mental activity
with sense, and detachment of experience. It is the dependence of mental action and
detachment on sense and experience that contributes to the unusual and rather
confusing image of control and mastery as "a Roman dictator at the plow-tail". This
personification of Virgil's virtues arguably attempts to account for the necessity of
sense-experience in order to attain complete mastery of nature. The notion that in this
figure there is "something of a rustic majesty" suggests that Addison is thinking of
Virgil as the pinnacle of power within that particular environment.

In a later essay for the Spectator Addison suggested that poets leave the
countryside and acquaint themselves with courts and palaces. As his essay on Virgil
itself noted, the "subjects, which the Georgics go upon, is I think the meanest and
least improving". But within the context of the Georgics themselves Addison
asserts Virgil's superiority, perhaps qualifying this in the Spectator by suggesting that
such a man is equipped for civic roles. In so doing he argues that mastery of the land
is a natural thing and furthermore that the distinctions between "downright
countryman" and "rustic majesty" are inscribed within the very constitution of nature
and the means by which man perceives it.

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The idea mirrors Shaftesbury's notion of nature as the "object consummate". Arguably, Addison is proposing an idea of nature that sees the conditions for a conception of perfection as inherent within the constitution of the natural world, and in the way in which man perceives this world. The *Pleasures of the Imagination* suggest the notion of a consummate gentleman that corresponds to the notion of the Creation as "object consummate".  

**Social background of Addison's theory of the imagination**

Addison's theory of the imagination therefore had social implications. His use of Locke's philosophy of ideas proposed that a latent social structure lay in the constitution of man and the way he was made to engage with the natural world. The summit of this structure was a notion of detached experience, that is to say of purely mental activity combined with physical experience of the exterior world. This notion was embodied in Virgil's poetry and Virgil himself.

But it is important to recognise that the purpose of the *Georgics* was not to praise either Virgil or his poetry. The comparison between Virgil and Hesiod and the critique of Virgil's epistemology suggests that the *Georgics* was intended to outline a social structure of dictators, countrymen and those below and to argue that this chain of superiority was given in nature itself. In *The Pleasures of the Imagination* Addison suggested rather more briefly that this critique of man, nature and society be related to questions of property. Maintaining his critique of empirical philosophy Addison proposed that the man of a polite imagination was not only a natural philosopher, but that in his mastery over nature he was a natural property-holder. If he did not hold real property (and it is difficult to see that the requisite freedom from labour and need could mean that he didn't) then he at least held property in nature by virtue of his control over it. Nature rendered him a property owner. The notion of control and ownership was proposed as being inherent in the experience of, and reflection upon, nature.


This is not to say that Addison and Shaftesbury fully agreed with each other. For example, Addison argued that nature was governed by Providence, and that there was an end to the act of appreciating beauty in nature; whereas Shaftesbury argued more systematically that the means was the end.

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I want to suggest that Addison's notion of a natural property-holder and its relation to the essentially empirical theory of the imagination is significant because it points to a social and political source for his work. The idea that a polite imagination gives a man "a kind of property in everything he sees" is important because it ties together two socially significant discourses that we have seen clashing with one another in the estate portraiture of the period. These are, a discourse of viewing and property, and a discourse of natural philosophy.

Addison's theory of the imagination argues a case for a natural social structure in which property holding and experimental philosophy are both implicit and compatible within the framework of Creation's constitution. This suggests that the theory of the imagination was grounded in social problems, namely the apparent incompatibility of natural philosophy which objectified a new social order and advocated a new visual culture, and property ownership, which nursed older visual practices and notions of land management and social order. The social implications of Addison's philosophy of imagination and ideas may be seen as rooted in existing social and cultural tensions.

John Yolton has used a similar thesis with regard to Locke's philosophy.\(^{65}\) He argues that faced with "difficulties encountered in religious discussions" Locke turned to the philosophical tradition he inherited from his predecessors that was based on a "phenomenological analysis of knowledge".\(^{66}\) His doctrines were seized on by his contemporaries in order to solve the religious problems they faced. Neal Wood has taken Yolton's thesis and used it to argue that Locke's Essay is also about politics in a contemporary social context as well as religion. He says that "the Essay, far from being a non-political work transcending considerations of interest, is firmly rooted in a particular social outlook [...] The Essay helped to educate a class and, by implication at least, called for class action".\(^{67}\) Its outlook was determined by social problems existing in mid seventeenth-century England. In particular:

The book was a Baconian natural history of the psyche impregnated with the 'liberal' social attitudes of the moderns, for Locke's commitment to Baconian science was much more than an act of intellectual conviction - it was testimony to a decided political persuasion, a commitment

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\(^{65}\) See Yolton, op. cit.
\(^{66}\) Ibid., pp.207, 205
Wood sees conflict between the established order and the new "bourgeois" as historically inevitable, but we might also recall M. C. Jacob's thesis that mild social reform along enlightened lines was called for by clergy of the established church as a guard against Hobbesian materialism. Locke's Baconianism, Wood argues, must be seen as a "weapon of the socially progressive moderns", a "testimony" of political persuasion. As a product of a social situation it should not be seen as an act of purely "intellectual conviction".

It is in the light of the social and political sources of Locke's philosophy that Wood points out the social implications of the *Essay*. The most significant of these for this discussion are Locke's "embryonic sociology of knowledge" and "the ideal of the rational man", what Wood refers to as Locke's "new-model gentleman".

Locke's Baconian empiricism suggested that "men tend to view the world through the distorting spectacles of false ideas generated by the social groups to which they belong, particularly religious parties and sects". To overcome this blindness Locke outlined his psychology of ideas. But as has been noted above in Addison's own analysis of Locke, "to follow Locke's prescriptions [men] must possess the social advantages of leisure and education, such, for example, as many of the members of the bourgeois, among others, had acquired". Locke's position on the development of the human psyche not only conforms to the ideals of socially progressive groups, but is designed so that they may be the beneficiaries of the improvements that his philosophy suggests can be made to the individual acting in concert with nature. His "sociology of knowledge" therefore leads to the notion of a socially dominant figure. Not only is this hero the man who follows Locke's advice when many are incapable of doing so. He is also the man who recognises reinvigorates his social position, by turning from his old ways and spending his resources more profitably. Wood suggests that Locke had the gentry in mind: "Locke's new-model gentleman, as one discovers clues to his identity scattered throughout the *Essay*, substantially differs from the traditional ideal found in books

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68 Ibid., p.5.
that for so long had been the standard manuals for gentlemanly deportment".\textsuperscript{72} The new-model gentleman "was certainly compatible with the agrarian capitalism beginning to dominate the English countryside".\textsuperscript{73} He was socially dominant insofar as he and his class were in the vanguard of social and economic development.

Wood’s thesis of the social and political implications of the *Essay* is based on an assumption of the historical inevitability of class friction and action. Within this scenario he is able to argue that Locke’s *Essay* outlined a notion the "new-model gentleman" that he hoped would act as a catalyst for action on the part of the landowning classes, as well as the bourgeois that would assert a "modern work ethic" in the face of an older notion of rational conduct that found its outlet in a "traditional warrior ethic".\textsuperscript{74} An analysis of Addison’s use of Locke’s philosophy reveals that broadly speaking such a tension is indeed evident. Wood says that the new-model gentleman was a figure of Baconian reason who personified "mental and manual labour, the practical and useful, industry, perseverance, enterprise, thrift and sobriety" and set this against an older ethos of "great souledness or magnanimity, generosity and liberality, nobility, grace and courage".\textsuperscript{75} I have argued so far that, perceiving an acute social and cultural tension, Addison draws up a theory of the imagination that looks to Locke but is meant to supersede the Baconian gentleman that Wood sees in the *Essay*.

The evidence of Addison’s own essays in the *Tatler* and *Spectator* is that he was concerned with a seeming disparity between Baconian empiricism and traditional land ownership. Both categories had their accompanying stereotypes in his periodicals. The Baconian was cast as a revived satirical figure from Thomas Shadwell’s 1677 play *The Virtuoso*, Sir Nicholas Gimcrack, and the landowner was the patriarchal country squire Sir Roger de Coverley. As with the earlier outline of Hesiod and Virgil, the critique is more developed than the solution; the ideal gentleman is considered only vaguely, in the form of Sir Andrew Freeport.

Addison developed the figure of Sir Nicholas Gimcrack in the *Tatler*. In particular, he took up the Baconian theme he had raised in *Tatler* 108, of the contrast

\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., pp.5-6.
\textsuperscript{72} Wood, *Agrarian Capitalism*, p.102.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., p.103.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
between poetry and history, soul and sense, dignity and meanness, and discussed it within the context of estate management. Sir Nicholas' widow says of him:

When I married this gentleman, he had a very handsome estate; but upon buying a set of microscopes, he was chosen a fellow of the Royal Society; from which time I do not remember to have heard him speak as other people did, or talk in a manner that any of his family could understand him.\textsuperscript{76}

Sir Nicholas' absorption in natural phenomena shows itself in the running of his estate. His widow continues:

[H]e gave me positive orders to turn off an old weeding-woman that had been employed in the family for several years. He told me at the same time, that there was no such thing in nature as a weed, and that it was his design to let his garden produce what it pleased; so that you can be sure that it makes a very pleasant show as it now lies.\textsuperscript{77}

The problem seems to be that, following Bacon's distinctions, Sir Nicholas began to submit his mind to things, rather than vice versa. This is reflected in his disregard of beauty as much as of other matters. His interaction with the natural world, even on the quotidian level, took on a ludicrous nature:

About the same time he took a humour to ramble up and down the country and would often bring back home with him his pockets full of moss and pebbles.\textsuperscript{78}

The climax of his submission to the chance happenings of the natural world occurs when he happens on a rare butterfly. Giving pursuit, he "continued the chase over hedge and ditch until about sun-set, at which time, as I was afterwards told, he caught the butterfly, as she rested upon a cabbage, near five miles from where he first put her up".\textsuperscript{79} Addison is parodying Sir Nicholas by using a hunting metaphor; "put her up" was a hunting term. In contrast to the huntsman who demonstrates his domain over the countryside, Sir Nicholas demeans himself by chasing a small insect. It is not surprising that while Addison praises Sir Nicholas' honesty and innocence, a means of

\textsuperscript{76} Tatler 221. It is possible that Addison's portrait of Gimcrack was based on Joseph Dandridge, a collaborator of John Ray: see David Elliston Allen, \textit{The Naturalist in Britain: a social history}, Princeton, 1994, p.11.

\textsuperscript{77} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{78} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid.
preserving civil peace, he casts him as "a little weak", wasting his estate to "but those strange baubles" such as the microscopes used by natural historians.  

Sir Nicholas is neither dignified or noble in character, as his title and estate suggests he may or should be. Nor is he productive, as his interests ought to lead him to be: he is interested in the rare butterfly rather than the wholesome and earthy cabbage. Addison contrasts Sir Nicholas with Sir Roger de Coverley in the *Spectator*. Sir Roger does not waste his estate. As his name suggests, he preserves it. In contrast to Sir Nicholas' dismissal of his weeding-woman, a sign of his misplaced wastefulness, Sir Roger's household "consists of sober and stayed persons; for as the knight is the best master in the world, he seldom changes his servants".  

Sir Roger's hunting also differs him from Sir Nicholas. Addison notes the physiological benefits of country exercise, and riding in particular:

\[
\text{I might here mention the effects which [riding] has upon all the faculties of the mind, by keeping the understanding clear, the imagination untroubled, and refining those spirits that are necessary for the proper exertion of our intellectual faculties, during the present laws of union between soul and body.} \]

Here Addison suggests that the country life achieved a union of soul and body that appears to have been lacking in Sir Nicholas' pursuit of purely physical phenomena, a pursuit criticised in the *Tatler*: "certainly the mind of man, that is capable of so much higher contemplations, should not be altogether fixed on such mean and disproportioned objects".  

There is however a note of gentle teasing in Addison's comments on hunting. If he praises it because it prevents the complete abandonment of the imaginative faculty, he doesn't go so far as to suggest that this faculty is actually exercised. He continues his parody, noting that nature is ordered so as to have us exercise all our physical and intellectual parts, and suggesting that our own welfare in this respect is concomitant with that of the natural and social spheres:

\[
\text{Providence furnishes materials, but expects that we should work them up ourselves. The earth must be laboured before it gives increase; and when it is forced into its several products, how} \]

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79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.
81 *Spectator* 106.
82 *Spectator* 115.
83 *Tatler* 216.
many hands must they pass through before they are fit for use! Manufactures, trade and agriculture naturally employ more than nineteen parts of the species in twenty.\textsuperscript{84}

Addison notes that Sir Roger "has been an indefatigable man in business of this kind, but it is business without the intellectual application:

The walls of his great hall are covered with the horns of several kinds of deer that he has killed in the chase, which he thinks the most valuable furniture of his house, as they afford him several topics of discourse, and show he has not been idle.\textsuperscript{85}

The business of manufacture is contrasted with the idleness of the country life; Sir Roger's "furniture" is very different from that whose production employs "many hands". Addison also indicates that Sir Roger's servants have little to do.\textsuperscript{86}

Nevertheless Sir Roger's country life maintains a union between spirit and matter that imparts the dignity that Bacon saw as so vital to human nature. Sir Roger's preservation of his estate is a means to preserving social order. In church, "[a]s Sir Roger is landlord to the whole congregation, he keeps them in very good order".\textsuperscript{87} At the assizes Sir Roger makes a speech which is "little to the purpose" and "not so much designed to inform the court, as to [...] keep up his credit in the country".\textsuperscript{88} Neither so bent on the examination of physical minutiae as to chase a butterfly like a fox, nor so reliant on subsequent abstractions to say there is no such thing as a weed, Sir Roger provides a more traditional figure to counterbalance the excesses of modern natural philosophy exemplified in the figure of Sir Nicholas.

What Addison is commenting on is the position of the gentry. Sir Roger represents the traditional magnanimous landowner whose nobility preserves peace but depends on social convention. Sir Nicholas represents an opposing ideology of natural reason that consumes his estate and leaves him hopelessly removed from worldly concerns. The medium between the two arguably appears in the forms of Will Wimble, younger son of a country baronet, and Sir Andrew Freeport, a merchant who purchases an estate. Wimble's life manifests itself in "humanity", "industry" and "application to affairs".

\textsuperscript{84} Spectator 115.
\textsuperscript{85} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{86} See Spectator 106.
\textsuperscript{87} Spectator 112.
\textsuperscript{88} Spectator 122.
Chapter Four

He hunts a pack of dogs better than any man in the country, and is very famous for finding out a hare [...] He makes a may-fly to a miracle, and furnishes the whole country with angle-rods [...] He carries a tulip-root in his pocket from one to another, or exchanges a puppy between a couple of friends that live perhaps in opposite sides of the county [...] He now and then presents a pair of garters of his own knitting to mothers or sisters.89

What is significant about Wimble's character is that it combines the attention to necessity seen in Sir Roger, with the inductive reasoning of Sir Nicholas. Wimble hunts, as do both the knights in their various ways, but he also applies himself to improving his performance in this, which the knights do not. He is involved in the selective breeding of plants and animals, and provides a domestic echo of the voyages overseas of natural scientists such as Willughby and Ray. Finally, Wimble is involved in the manufacture of clothes and hunting equipment. His efforts are useful to himself, unlike Sir Nicholas, and beneficial to others, unlike Sir Roger.

The object of Addison's critique is the refusal of the gentry to let their younger sons enter areas of commerce and trade, a theme Addison spoke on before.90 But behind this concern is another one, namely that the two kinds of gentry personified in Sir Nicholas and Sir Roger are being reconciled in figures such as Wimble but are not being given the outlets they need to develop their potential. Both Sir Nicholas and Sir Roger are killed off within the course of the Tatler and Spectator, whereas Wimble "is now between forty and fifty".91 But far from inheriting an estate or going into business, he is "extremely well versed in all the little handiworks of an idle man".92 The thrust of Addison's analysis of the gentry suggests that it is a man of Wimble's thoughtful practicality who is the real social hero of the Spectator, but he is denied this chance by social convention that prevents this class from reinvigorating itself a reasserting its social position in a changing socio-economic climate.

Addison therefore turns to a third knight, the newly retired merchant Sir Andrew Freeport, who at the close of the Spectator purchases an estate. Sir Andrew is represented as personifying the combination of mental and manual labour that Addison earlier proposed was constituted in nature for the welfare of man and society.

Sir Andrew's purchase will, he says:

89 Spectator 109.
90 See Spectator 21.
91 Spectator 109.
[G]ive me great opportunity of being charitable in my way, that is, in setting my poor neighbours to work, and giving them a comfortable subsistence out of their own industry. My gardens, my fish-ponds, my arable and pasture grounds, shall be my several hospitals, or rather work-houses, in which I propose to maintain a great many indigent persons, who are now starving in my neighbourhood. I have got a fine spread of improveable lands, and in my own thoughts am already ploughing up some of them, fencing in others; planting woods, and draining marshes. 

Addison’s characterisation of Sir Andrew’s schemes for his estate are in many ways a Whig ideal, based on the notion that private profit is useful to the public at large. But it is significant that Addison sums up this ideal in terms which refer to beauty, as well at to utility:

In fine, as I have my share in the surface of this island, I am resolved to make it as beautiful a spot as any in Her Majesty’s dominions; at lest there is not an inch of it that shall not be cultivated to the best advantage, and do its utmost for its owner. 

What has beauty to do with profit and maximisation of resources? What Addison is arguably getting at is that although Sir Andrew is new to his estate he is in fact a natural gentleman. His getting his neighbours to work using the natural resources of his estate in such a way that also improves his land, recalls Addison’s earlier analysis of the social and economic order that unfolded with the exercise of man’s natural physical and spiritual constitution. In this, Sir Andrew mirrors the qualities of Will Wimble whose industry was beneficial to others and in keeping with the exercise of both his hands and his head. Addison informs us that Sir Andrew is a self made man, whereas Wimble is born into a family of wealth. Although he argues that Wimble, in many was the natural gentleman, should be allowed into trade he is also pointing out that there is a crisis in the ranks of the gentry. Wimble is not allowed to practise his mental and manual dexterity in such a way that would enable him to re-invigorate his social position and class. On the other hand Sir Andrew rises from the lower class of merchants, and even lower than this, up into the ranks of the gentry. He forms a

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92 Ibid.
93 Spectator 549.
94 Ibid.
95 See Spectator 115.
96 See Spectator 2.
contrast with Sir Roger's inheritor, Captain Sentry who accedes to the de Coverley estate at the same time that Freeport purchases his. Captain Sentry aims to "keep up" the patriarchal figure that Sir Roger struck.\textsuperscript{97} The projection is that the Freeport estate will prosper, whilst stagnate or at best improve only slowly.

Addison's picture of Sir Andrew's shaping of his estate is only outlined briefly in the \textit{Spectator}, and is limited in comparison with his critique of the gentry in the figures of Sir Nicholas, Sir Roger and by implication in Will Wimble. This suggests that as with the \textit{Georgics} his identification of the problem was clearer than any definite solution. \textit{The Pleasures of the Imagination} are arguably a more thorough analysis of an antidote. They re-cast the deeper questions perceived to underlie the social problems as they are outlined. A suggestion is put forward that the natural world's constitution offers the conditions for an ideal of natural property ownership. But Addison's identification of this ideal with Sir Andrew Freeport is only tentative: he has Sir Andrew see his property in terms of beauty as well as utility, but does not elaborate on the basis for this association. Even so, I would argue that the \textit{Spectator} and the essays on the imagination in particular should be seen in the light of this social discourse. The essays deal with a social problem, or question, about the gentry. In his critique of natural scientists and patriarchal landlords Addison is saying that the gentry just aren't using their estates to make the most of the advances made through natural philosophy in such a way that might render them more productive and re-establish their social pre-eminence on revised principles. At the same time Addison considers the question of social flux with relation to strengthening the gentry's position. Sir Andrew amasses capital and wants to invest it in land; Will Wimble needs to be put into a position where he can amass capital in the first place. As a Whig Addison broadly supports the increasing stake that non-landed money might have in land ownership and government; he followed this path himself.\textsuperscript{98} Both Sir Andrew and Will Wimble represent means whereby the gentry may be re-energised as the source of political leadership and social stability within the context of social change.

Addison is dealing with fundamental questions of social order within the context of problems within the gentry class itself. His earlier comparison of Virgil with Hesiod has grown in complexity. Hesiod's absorption in physical minutiae is

\textsuperscript{97} \textit{Spectator} 517.
Chapter Four

reflected in Sir Nicholas, and his rustic wisdom and patriarchy in Sir Roger. But as with the Georgics Addison proposes an example of what the present situation calls for, an ideal where the necessary requirements are proposed as being given in the make-up of the natural world. The Pleasures of the Imagination show the figure of the natural property-owner and with it a conception of wider social order as it was perceived to be inscribed in nature, in much the same way that the Georgics outlined an ideal of rustic majesty. Sir Andrew is the outline of the man who would have read Addison's essays on the imagination and subsequently improved himself, paying greater attention to the perception of beauty in nature. He is a contemporary Virgil.

It is important to remember that Addison was only turning to Locke's philosophy and formulating his theory of the imagination because he was presented with problems within his own society. The social implications of his theories of sense, imagination and understanding and their corresponding outlets in history, poetry and philosophy are outlined in his periodical essays as social characterisations. He does not dwell on the subjects of history, poetry and philosophy per se. This is because the philosophical basis of these subjects within the context of empirical science are themselves rooted in pressing social issues.

Conclusion

How does Addison's theory of the imagination relate to developing ideas of description in house portraiture and particularly in Britannia Illustrata? This chapter has argued that description in Knyff and Kip's work takes the form of object-contemplation. In Addison's work, the imagination is seen to be a mode of extra-experiential ideas based on direct experience. In both Britannia Illustrata and the Spectator a direct experience of the object is coupled with a contemplative, detached idea of mental activity.

In Knyff and Kip's work the perspective works to create a viewer-centred, but highly visual image. Its use of perspective is similar to that employed in the Restoration theatre. The image in Britannia Illustrata wavers in its status as either a representation of something, or an object for study in its own right. The spectator is unsure of their position relative to the image: is their presence pre-supposed and

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indicated by the perspective, or do they approach the image as they would an object, with their presence not supposed in the constitution of the object itself? But perspective treatises of the period confirm that ambiguity was not seen as a particular problem, and necessarily to be avoided. They advocate a mixing of perspective modes for the sake of visual effect. In Britannia Illustrata we arguably see a development of perspective that contains previous uncertainties within the form of a satisfactory image. Perspective is not used to define difference and to assert one principle of viewing over another. Instead, it serves as a harmonising force.

In Addison's work we see the imagination as an empirical category. The Pleasures of the Imagination and the Georgics use Locke's theory of ideas to shrug off the notion that ideas that are not directly derived from observable phenomena and correspondent to them are forms of Divinely-imparted knowledge. Addison outlines a theory that more expansive ideas than are evident in the exterior world as it is sensed can nevertheless be gained through the use of the senses and the action of the imagination on ideas imparted by the senses. In Addison's work, contemplation as a mode of mental, speculative and idealistic activity begins with sense-perception and never fully abandons the realm of experience. In the Pleasures of the Imagination and the Georgics Addison succeeds in reconciling two different categories of philosophy, namely intuitive truths and moral truths. Using Bacon's conception of these categories as distinct and different by virtue of their origins, he reconciles them through an empirical epistemology deriving from Locke's theory of ideas.

Addison's work is therefore similar to Knyff and Kip's insofar as he brings together mutually opposing tendencies, as they also do. However it would be wrong to perceive any intrinsic correspondence between the two categories of philosophical inheritance, and the two modes of representation and viewing that revolved around different modes of perspective. But there is evidence that they were not unconnected. Wood has pointed out how notions of moral truth centred around ideas of the dignity of man belonged to the older class of landed gentry in the period. Likewise he argues that the newer empirical philosophy was aligned with newer social forms; Shapin and Schaffer have also argued this.99

A broad division has also been observed in estate portraiture between modes of viewing associated with land ownership and its established pursuits such as

99 See Chapter 2.
hunting, and visual culture orientated round natural history and more recent ideas regarding land cultivation. In *The Pleasures of the Imagination* Addison is arguably outlining an idea of a new gentleman that combines two older philosophical categories. He argues that the constitution of the natural world is such that this gentleman is a *natural* gentleman; his social position is inscribed in the make-up of the natural word itself. Moreover, this natural gentleman is a figure whose practices of viewing embody something of both modes observed in earlier estate portraiture. Knyff and Kip are arguably engaged in a similar project. The engravings in *Britannia Illustrata* combine two older modes of viewing and representation of country estates. The views are human-centred, as indicated in their strong use of centralised perspective, and also highly visual and very detailed. Through their use of centralised aerial perspective *Britannia Illustrata* suggests that both modes of viewing are given within the very act of looking itself. The perspective programme in Knyff and Kip's work signifies a notion of viewing that combines both traditional surveillance practices as well as an analytical and object-orientated mode. The suggestion in *Britannia Illustrata* is that the viewer is both surveyor and man of natural philosophy; both a natural philosopher and a natural property-holder. He looks at estates and houses in both capacities, simultaneously.

*Britannia Illustrata* uses perspective to invoke different modes of viewing associated with different social groups. Can we therefore see it as a response to a particular social situation? We should be careful about doing so. Undoubtedly the 1707 volume was a publishing venture first and foremost. It followed Slezer's *Theatrum Scotiae* and its second edition even borrowed this title. Knyff was already involved in auctioneering and was probably well placed to judge the probable success of a publishing *coup*. But the background to the project, and in particular its use of perspective, was arguably a concern over the state of the gentry. This is not to suggest that Knyff and Kip were directly involved in this concern. But the evidence of *Britannia Illustrata* is that they were sensitive to it. I suggest that they turned to their artistic heritage, and in particular the development of the house portrait 1670-1700 and its relations to natural historical publications, as well as the established landowning class, in order to mediate these concerns. Knyff and Kip didn't deal directly with the problems facing the gentry, as they were perceived by Addison. But the impetus for the use of perspective in *Britannia Illustrata* arguably came from the discursive context of the gentry's position within a new socio-economic environment.
Chapter Four

This context is one that we have seen develop in Siberechts' works, mediated though the use of perspective. The significance of *Britannia Illustrata* lies in the fact that it appears to reconcile these previous tensions in its confident handling of perspective to both present a staged view and to describe the country seats and estates in detail. Like Addison's theory of the imagination *Britannia Illustrata* arguably suggests the idea of a natural gentleman whose social and philosophical identity was inscribed in the natural world itself and manifest through the act of looking. Siberechts, as has been seen, could not resolve these tensions; his paintings only serve to develop them in spite of attempts to bring them together harmoniously. The enduring popularity of *Britannia Illustrata*, reprinted over a number of following years, as well as the *Spectator*, suggests that Knyff and Kip, and Addison, were successful in their invoking the figure of a natural gentleman in order to resolve these social tensions within their respective artistic and philosophical frameworks.
Epilogue

This thesis has tried to show what went on between images and their viewers in the paintings of Jan Siberechts, the natural histories of John Ray and Francis Willughby, and contemporary county histories and maps. The argument has been that because the natural world was represented in these formats by a certain social class - the landowning class - against an empirical-philosophical background of trusting the senses, images of landscape were taken as being 'true'. In this capacity, they objectified socially subjective views of the natural world. A landscape painting might be composed according to the methods used for map-making, as this was how the landed classes often conceptualised what they saw. But the painting would suggest that the land itself was composed into such a pattern of spatial co-ordinates. In Siberechts' pictures the viewer is told that although they survey the land depicted, as the eye is invited to flit from landmark to landmark as it scoots to the horizon, their surveying is in fact natural, because that is how the land itself is formed.

In John Wooton's painting Distant view of Henley-on-Thames, c. 1737 (see Plate 80), Frederick, Prince of Wales and his party come up to enjoy a view of the Thames valley from the grounds of Park Place. The site is very close to that taken by Siberechts in his two paintings of View of Henley from the Wargrave Road forty years previously. Wooton's picture bears many similarities to Siberechts' work. The topographical subject matter, the depiction of haymaking and the size of the painting all echo Siberechts' earlier images. As it is not known where Siberechts' work was displayed, it is uncertain whether Wooton would have been influenced by his paintings of Henley or not.

But there are also differences between Siberechts' and Wooton's work. The later view is not as topographically coherent as Siberechts' views of Henley, where the space between foreground and horizon is co-ordinated with increasing fluidity. More striking is the presence of a large party of well-dressed figures in the foreground. On the right two of the figures gesture towards the others but implicitly out to the Thames valley as well, indicating the good view to be had from the grounds of Park Place. Their presence is in marked contrast to the figures harvesting in the field behind to the right. Rather than looking out at the view, the labourers are a part of the landscape, just as much as St. Mary's church tower is.
It might be tempting to see the foreground figures in Wooton's work as an imposition onto an otherwise faithful topographical description, narrative elements within a view that would otherwise be of purely visual interest. On the contrary, it is arguable that Wooton's picture incorporates into its representation of landscape the historical conditions of the very idea of landscape itself. The notion that land could be composed into formal patterns was historically contingent: it arose out of the practices of surveying property in the seventeenth century. The aristocracy's surveying of the Thames valley in Wooton's painting is therefore part and parcel of the very concept of landscape as developed over the previous eighty years: it took the landed to conceive of landscape. Changes in the representation of the landscape, and the inclusion of the landed classes at leisure in the work of Wooton, George Lambert and Richard Wilson are consequences of the historical conditions of describing the natural world. Their presence, as spectator of the painting or figure in the image itself, is assumed in the very idea of the landscape view as developed in late-seventeenth and early-eighteenth century Britain.
* All sources from before 1800 have been classed as primary sources. Subsequent editions of works dating from before 1800 have been classed as primary sources only when the edition has reproduced an author's work in its entirety.

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THE ANTIQUITIES OF

The Church being given by Henry de Newburgh Earl of Warwick, as a Prebend, for the maintenance of one Canon in the Church of our Lady at Warwick, was confirmed thereto by Walter Durand Bishop of Coventry in King Stephen's time; as also by Guy de Beauchamp Earl of Warwick in 4 E. 2, and in anno 1291, valued at viii. marks. But in 26 H. 8, not stated, taken notice of, other than as appropriated to the Collegiate Church of our Lady in Warwick, and S. A. eq. j there ratified: So that there have not ever been any Presentations thereto, excepting those of the Earls to the Prebend in the said Collegiate Church.
Liber Quartus

E verghem amplissimus est ad primum urbem lapidem & Castellum Audenbergi maxime pagum, patriastrium S. Bavonis, Comitatus unus nobile, Æ rione de Gaver & Beatrice ejus uxor an. 1282, partim acquisitum. Hugo quoque Angius dicus de Sontingen Castellarius Gandavensis Cornoblo S. Bavonis de confide uxor uxor van-

E verghem

Hermicus Franciscus vonder Burgh Gandavensis, tum Anno 1315. Inter Everghem ambitum vostra furit & furunt

Vsius
The Grand plot of the South East Corner of Ashley Park with the Ryeings 8c.

Part 1.

[Diagram of a landscape with labels such as 'Redworth', 'Alde', 'Rye', and 'The Ridings around the hall' marked on it.]
CLAGNI, qui nous dit que le Roy, il y a si longtemps, y a plus de Bruxelles, pour le domaine de Paris, de quelque manière qu'il en soit, il y a plus de la commande du Roy qui y a plus de considération depuis 1676. Il a été, en plusieurs parties, agréable et même plus agréable en son beau jardin, accompagné d'arbres et de statues.

À Paris, chez Langlois, rue d'Enfer. De la main de l'auteur.
LE CHÂTEAU D'ANCY-LE FRANC qui appartient à Monseur le Comte de Turenne est une Maison de Plaisance des plus belles et des mieux situées de la Bourgogne, elle est à 7 mille 6 lieues d'Anvers, et la première de la noblesse des prés.

Paris, chez M. Largiliére rue St Jacques, à la Porte de St.-Germain du Bœuf.
The Mapp of KINETON Hundred.

PART OF BARICHWAY HUNDRED

PART OF Glou.cester SHIRE

PART OF OXFORD SHIRE

The Scale of Miles
Monuments in the Chancell.

All this ladies by the hand of Sir William Fielding, knight, earl of Derby, Shrewsbury. Which were made in September 1621. Then 20. years. Had three daughters, 2 eldest daughters, and 2 eldest gate daughters.

Here under lies the body of Sir William Fielding, knight, earl of Derby, Shrewsbury. Which were made in September 1621. Then 20. years. Had three daughters, 2 eldest daughters, and 2 eldest gate daughters.

Arms in the Church windows.

1. Earl of Lonsdale
2. Knebworth
3. Ely
4. Ayley
5. Walsingham
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9. Neville
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These things being well performed, your plot will be a neat Ornament for the Lord of the Manor to hang in his Study, or other private place, so that at pleasure he may see his Land before him, and the quantity of all or every parcel thereof without any further trouble.

Also in your plot must be expressed the Manor-house according to its symmetry or situation, with all other houses of note, also all Water-mills, Wind-mills, and whatsoever else is necessary, that may be put into your Plot without confusion.

For farther explanation of what hath been delivered in this Chapter, I have here added the figure of a small Manor, which will be sufficient for example sake.
Chrysaetes Gamæti.
The Golden Eagle.

Haliæetus Clusi Qiisfrayæiædrow.
The Sea Eagle or Osprey.
Raja tāvita undulata seu Cinerca.
The Skate or Flair

Tab. C. N. 5.
Bubo.
The Great Eagle Owl.

Owne sine Ario.
The Horn-Owle.

Scops Aldrov.
The Little Horn Owl.
Rhinocerotis oris Rostrum
1a varietas.

1a varietas

Rhinocerotis
Aldrov. caput

Corvus Indicus

TAB XVII
Picture of a landscape with a note: "Close to figure in this painting!"
OF orient hew, a Rainebow doth containe,
An hideous flower, within her Circlet round,
Refembling that great punishment of raine,
The Lord inflicted when the world was drown'd:
The Rainebow, of his Mercy, heere a signe,
Which with his Justice, he doth ever loine.

For though we howevely, doe the Lord provoke,
By crieng Sinnes, to bring his vengeance downe,
The faile he tempers, while he strikes the stroke,
And joines his favor, with a bitter frowne:
To let vs know, that wrath he keepes in store,
And grace for such, as will offend no more.

Quod violenta nequit, mandataque fortius vrget
Imperiosa quies

--- Peragit tranquilla potestas

Sine