

## (Un)Like Intermedia Portraying Practices (London, 3 May 19)

King's College London, The Centre for Life-Writing Research & The Centre for Enlightenment Studies, May 03, 2019

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(Un)Like. Intermedia Portraying Practices, c. 1700 to the Present  
CLWR/CESK

Portraiture and life-writing have long been understood as genres that, for all their differences, share key concepts. As both genres are concerned with the individual figure, they rely on particularities and specificities, on telling events and characteristic anecdotes and, most importantly, on a representative depiction of the subject in question which was similar or like. Resemblance, similarity, likeness – these were the terms by which works were judged. A letter to the *Daily Gazetteer* remarked in 1742: 'I think it is agreed on all Hands that in Biography, as it is in Portrait Painting, a likeness is to be preserved, if we would give satisfaction in either Science.' Importantly (and to complicate the study of likeness), the media concerned with likeness were likewise considered to be alike. The art theorist Jonathan Richardson famously wrote in 1715: 'to sit for one's Portrait is like to have an Abstract of one's Life written and published, and to have one consigned over to Honour or Infamy'. Richardson referred to the long tradition of inter- or multi-media portraying and life-writing practices, the linking of literary with visual portraits for mutual benefit and the reciprocal bolstering of genres by providing additional information or another perspective. Next to resemblance and medial proximity, Richardson introduces a third aspect: appreciation or emotional response to portraits and biographies. Samuel Johnson would later write in the *Idler* no. 45 (1759) that 'Every man is always present to himself, and has, therefore, little need of his own resemblance; nor can he desire it, but for the sake of those whom he loves, and by whom he hopes to be remembered'. Likeness, it appears, therefore intersects with the representation's potential to make a person not only like, but also likeable, to have third parties appreciate both the individuals and their representations. This notion of recognition – understood as identification – being closely linked with respect and social approval still shows in such phenomena as Facebook and Instagram, where 'to like' equals acceptance, affirmation, or recommendation, signalling approval of the online persona.

This one-day workshop on 3 May 2019 seeks to address the different layers of likeness – resemblance, multimediality, appreciation – in portraits and life-writing in Europe since the beginning of the eighteenth century. We welcome studies on established genres but we are particularly interested in papers that explore hybrid, informal or unusual portraying practices while considering their socio-historic implications.

Topics may include:

- 'portraying' as a multimedia concept
- portraiture negotiations and portraits as negotiations
- the notion of 'character' and 'the self' in different media
- the role of character sketches, descriptions of persons, and drawings in social interaction and the public sphere
- the 'good likeness' and adjacent terms and concepts
- recognition, appreciation, sympathy, affection, or antipathy in discourses on likeness
- reversing concepts: unlikeness, dissimilarity, difference, dislike
- economies of production
- portraiture in paratexts
- publicity, celebrity and portraying

Proposals that draw on materials from the King's College London/Royal Archives collaboration Georgian Papers Programme (<http://georgianpapersprogramme.com/>) are especially welcome.

We look forward to receiving abstracts (c. 300 words) for papers not exceeding 20 minutes or proposals for preformed panels and a brief academic bio by 30 November 2018. Contributors will be notified by December 15, 2018. Please direct your proposals and any enquiries to [pahl@mpib-berlin.mpg.de](mailto:pahl@mpib-berlin.mpg.de).

Convenors:

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