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WHAT IS A PORTRAIT?

HANS MAES

What I will aim for in answering the title question is extensional adequacy, that is, I will try to formulate an account that captures as much of the extension as possible of what we ordinarily think counts as a portrait. Two philosophers have recently, and independently from one another, embarked on the same project. Cynthia Freeland's theory of portraiture, as it is developed in her book *Portraits & Persons*, is discussed in sections 1 and 2 of this paper. Sections 3 and 4 offer a critical exploration of Paolo Spinicci's phenomenological study of portraiture. Finally, in sections 5 and 6, I present an alternative account of portraiture, one that will hopefully address all the objections raised against the two competing theories.

1. Portraiture, Likeness, and the Act of Posing

'Over the centuries artists have painted portraits as a way of recording a person's likeness.'[1] This is the first sentence of the first chapter of the portrait book *Chuck Close: Up Close*. It immediately introduces the word that is used most often in definitions of portraiture: 'likeness'. However, simply stating that a portrait records a likeness is not

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[1] J. Greenberg and S. Jordan, *Chuck Close: Up Close* (New York: DK Ink Book, Dorling Kindersley Publishing,

very informative. The notion needs further unpacking, especially since there are many ways to capture a person's likeness that do not result in a portrait (think of CCTV images). This unpacking is precisely what Cynthia Freeland aims to do in *Portraits & Persons*.[2] She spells out three conditions for something to qualify as a portrait and it is the third condition in particular that makes her account compelling and original. But let's look at the other two conditions to begin with.

According to Freeland, a portrait is 'a representation or depiction of a living being as a unique individual possessing (1) a recognizable physical body along with (2) an inner life, i.e. some sort of character and/or psychological or mental states'.[3] Freeland is clearly echoing other characterisations of portraits here. For instance, in Shearer West's influential book on the history of portraiture, it is observed how 'all portraits represent something about the body and face, on the one hand, and the soul, character, or virtues of the sitter, on the other'.[4] In comparison with West, however, Freeland is a bit more precise and careful in her formulation and this is important when one attempts to delineate portraits from other sorts of images.

The first condition is what sets portraits apart, not only from the generic bodies of anatomical drawings or the idealised figures of so many anonymous nude statues, but also from allegorical, pastoral, and symbolist paintings. Unlike, say, Francois Boucher's *An Autumn Pastoral* (1749), El Greco's *Allegory: Boy Lighting Candle in Company of Ape and Fool* (1589-92), or George Frederic Watts' *Hope* (1886), a portrait will depict a unique individual possessing a recognisable body. It is precisely because of this that portraits 'nearly always require the presence of a specific person, or at the very least an

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[2] Cynthia Freeland, *Portraits & Persons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
[3] Ibid., 5.
[4] Shearer West, *Portraiture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 21.

image of that person'.[5] When exactly is a sitter's body 'recognisable' in a picture? Freeland does not say, but one may assume that this is the case when those who are able to identify the sitter in real life, are also able to identify her/him in the picture. And since people are recognised most readily by their faces, it is not surprising that the face will figure prominently in the vast majority of portraits – with a few notable exceptions (see below).

The recognisability condition does not entail that portraits must be executed in a highly realistic style. There are impressionist, post-impressionist, and expressionist portraits (great examples that come to mind are Kokoschka's portrait of Adolf Loos, 1909, or Munch's portrait of Friedrich Nietzsche, 1906). But this first condition does impose limitations on what can count as a portrait. For instance, it's hard to imagine that a simple stick figure drawing could serve as a portrait. Incidentally, recognisability is often considered to be not only a classificatory but also an evaluative criterion for portraits. For those who have commissioned the portrait – the sitter or someone who knows the sitter very well (husband, wife, lover, parent, …) – it may even be the *only* standard against which the quality of a portrait is judged. Hence the notorious quip by John Singer Sargent, who must have dealt with his share of dissatisfied customers in his career: 'a portrait is a likeness in which there is something wrong about the mouth'.[6]

The sketches that are made in life drawing classes will also depict a unique individual with a recognizable physical body, and yet people often don't consider these to be portraits. Similarly, if X is playing the part of a foolish customer in a commercial, she might be recognised on TV by her friends, but that doesn't mean that the commercial will be a portrait of X. Here's where Freeland's second condition proves

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[5] Ibid., 11.
[6] G. Glueck, 'Revival of the Portrait', *New York Times*, 6 November 1983, 52.

useful. Portraits will try to capture the inner life of the sitter. Life drawings don't always have that aim, nor is the commercial designed to capture the character or personality of X. To underline the importance of this aspect of portraiture theorists will sometimes appeal to the etymology of the term. E. Heier, for instance, says that to portray someone is 'to point out the major features which characterize a personality as is indicated from its derivation: Latin "protrahere" and old French "pourtraire" - to draw forth'.[7]

Still, a problem remains. A paparazzi photo of a visibly annoyed Johnny Depp ducking and running towards a waiting limousine is not a portrait, notwithstanding the fact that Depp is recognisable and his inner life is manifest in the picture. So, what is missing? According to Freeland it is this: 'the portrait subject must actually "look back" at the artist, allowing itself to be viewed'.[8] The third condition for something to count as a portrait is that the subject consciously presents a self to be conveyed in the resulting picture. Unlike Depp's paparazzi photo, and also in stark contrast with CCTV imagery, portraiture always 'involves an act of posing or of self-presentation'.[9] Now, if one considers prototypical examples of portraits – think of paintings by masters of the genre such as Velázquez, Van Dyck, Rembrandt, Goya, David – it will indeed appear that they share this feature, which can be seen as lending plausibility to Freeland's summary definition of a portrait as 'an image that presents a recognizably distinct individual who has emotional or conscious states, and who is able to participate in the creative process by posing'.[10] However, Freeland's account seems to run into problems when one considers some less prototypical examples.

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[7] E. Heier, '"The Literary Portrait" as a Device of Characterization', *Neophilologus*, Vol. 60, 1976: 321-333, at 321.
[8] Freeland, *Portraits & Persons*, 21.
[9] Ibid., 17.
[10] Ibid., 284.

2. Difficult Cases

Adopting Freeland's definition of a portrait would lead to the exclusion of many works that have been labelled as portraits (by critics, curators, art historians or by the artists themselves). For example, one would have to exclude from the category of portraiture Gary Schneider's *Genetic Self-Portrait* since it does not present us with a recognisable body;[11] or Warhol's *Marilyn Diptych* (1962) since it does not reveal anything about the interior life of the actress.[12] Moreover, following Freeland's account there can be no animal portraits because animals do not pose. They can have mental states, and sometimes it may look *as if* they are posing, but no animal is interested in the end product, the portrait, or in the image they project. The same is true for very young babies. So, Evan Kafka's famous baby portraits should strictly speaking not be referred to as portraits, nor should George Stubbs' portrait of the prizewinning horse Whistlejacket (1762) be called such.[13]

One could think that this makes Freeland's account unacceptably restrictive. Yet there is a straightforward way to respond to this form of criticism. While in each of the abovementioned instances the term 'portrait' has routinely and often unthinkingly been

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[11] From the website of the University Art Museum (University at Albany) where the work was exhibited in 2003: '*Genetic Self- Portrait*, an internationally acclaimed photographic installation in which New York-based artist Gary Schneider employs various medical-imaging techniques to depict his entire physical makeup from the inside out. By making art that reveals the invisible world of his own cells, chromosomes, and DNA sequencing, Schneider contributes to the larger discourse that surrounds the impact of genetics on our daily lives.'

[12] 'Warhol began with a publicity photograph, an invented image that masks the real person. The "mask" was then progressively enhanced through the addition of garish colour, forcing a further disruption with reality. The final portrait is a metaphor for fame: a fabricated persona, in which the "real" person has become enmeshed with their "image'' (Paul Moorhouse, *Pop Art Portraits*, London: National Portrait Gallery, 2007, 110). Note that this author still refers to the work as a portrait. Freeland, by contrast, rejects the label: 'Just as I would not refer to most of Warhol's celebrity multiple silk-screens as "portraits" in my sense, neither would I use this term for the works of Sherman and Morimura.' (*Portraits & Persons*, 269)

[13] Stubbs' painting was selected as 'portrait of the week' in the *Guardian* newspaper of 22 April 2000.

used, one could argue that these are metaphorical extensions of that term. As with so many other words taken from ordinary language, there are bound to be borderline cases where it may not be entirely clear whether the word 'portrait' is appropriately used. And here Freeland could make the case that it is actually a virtue of her account, not a weakness, that it creates clarity where there previously was none and that it allows us to sift the metaphorical from the literal.

However, this sort of response is not really available when we turn to a different range of examples: paintings, photographs, sculptures that seem to fall squarely and undeniably within the category of the portrait but that would not qualify as portraits on Freeland's account. In fact, as I will try to illustrate now, each of the three conditions gives rise to its own set of difficult cases.

If we take the third condition at face value, there can be no portrait painted from memory or made in the absence of the subject of the portrait.[14] Yet, we know that Nietzsche did not sit for the famous portrait that Munch made of him. Similarly, Karl Meersman has made many witty portraits of film directors and rock stars even though he has not met a single one of them. The 'posing'-condition also excludes all photographs of people caught unawares. But a blanket exclusion of this sort is not unproblematic. For instance, we would have to discount one of the most famous portraits in recent history: Alberto Korda's iconic portrayal of Che Guevara (which was taken at a mass demonstration attended by Sartre and de Beauvoir, and for which Che certainly did not pose).[15] In addition, one wonders what Freeland would say about

[14] On a more charitable interpretation, Freeland could account for such counterexamples by insisting, not that 'both participants are aware of the process' (*Portraits & Persons*, 17), but only that a portrait tries to capture the way people project themselves. This would in effect bring her account very close to that of Spinicci which is discussed in section 3 and 4.

[15] It is 'the portrait with which we are most familiar' according to art historian Martin Kemp (*Christ To Coke: How Image Becomes Icon* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 178). And Fidel Castro famously said about Che: 'his ideas, his portrait, and his name are banners in the struggle against injustice' (Ibid.,

Philippe Halsman's portrait of Edward Steichen or of the literary critic Stanley Hyman – both part of his celebrated 'jump series'. Halsman asked his subjects to jump precisely with the aim of subverting any attempt to pose or self-present. As he explains: 'When you ask a person to jump, his attention is mostly directed toward the act of jumping and the mask falls so that the real person appears.'[16]

The second condition is put under pressure by the existence of deathbed portraits. In the Low Countries of the 16th century the subgenre even had its own name, 'doodtconterfeitsels', with 'Rogerius De Jonghe op zijn sterfbed' (anonymous, ca 1579) and 'Portret van Andries van Dinter op zijn sterfbed' (anonymous, ca 1600) as beautiful examples. Later instances by well-known artists include Anthony Van Dyck's 1633 deathbed portrait of Venetia Stanley and Monet's 1879 portrait of his wife Camille. More recently, Daphne Todd, the former president of the Royal Society of Portrait Painters, painted her deceased mother on her deathbed in 2010. The painting won the BP Portrait prize even though it does not depict 'an individual who has emotional or conscious states'. Likewise, portraits that do not represent the face of the sitter often contain no suggestion of an inner life. A classic example is Nadar's portrait of Marie Laurent (1856), turned away from the camera, hair upswept in a beguiling bouffant. In contemporary photography one could point to work by John Coplans (e.g. *Self-Portrait: Back and Hands,* 1984) and Nicholas Nixon (e.g. *Bebe and I, Lexington*, 1998). Worth mentioning also, perhaps, is Richard Hamilton's *Portrait of Hugh Gaitskell as a Famous Monster of Filmland* (1964). It was made in protest against the Labour leader's controversial stance on nuclear weapons and shows him as the Phantom of the Opera, with his face (and any facial expression) hidden behind a mask.

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167) I cite Castro and Kemp just to illustrate how natural it is to use the term 'portrait' for this iconic image.
[16] Philippe Halsman, *Philippe Halsman's Jump Book* (New York: Abrams, 1986), 8.

Freeland's first condition, with its insistence on there being a recognizable physical body, calls into question the legitimacy of portraits executed with a high level of abstraction, such as Erich Wichman's *Self-Portrait* (1925). For it seems quite unlikely that the people who were able to recognise Wichman on the street would have been able to identify the subject of this painting just as easily.[17] And what if both the artist and the viewer are basically ignorant of the physical appearance of the subject of a painting? Take Rembrandt's *Aristotle Contemplating The Bust of Homer* (1653). For Freeland this could not possibly count as a portrait. Others, however, might resist that conclusion. As we will see in the next section, Paolo Spinicci actually thinks this *is* a portrait of Aristotle, although we are not in a position to verify whether the philosopher looked like the person depicted by Rembrandt.

To sum up, none of the conditions spelled out by Freeland appear to be absolutely necessary for something to count as a portrait. Furthermore, even if the three conditions, taken together, are met, there seems no guarantee that we are in effect dealing with a portrait. A quick snapshot of a happy tourist in front of the Eiffel tower is 'an image that presents a recognizably distinct individual who has emotional or conscious states, and who is able to participate in the creative process by posing'.[18] But we may not consider it a portrait. Or take Giorgione's pictorial meditation on the passing of time, *La Vecchia* (c1508). It shows an old woman pointing at herself and holding a piece of paper that says 'Col Tempo' ('With Time'). With the passing of time, Giorgione seems to be saying, we will all age and come to have a wrinkled old body just like the woman in the painting. As one critic notes:

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[17] Philip Glass's *Musical Portrait of Chuck Close* (2005) and Katherine Sophie Dreier's *Abstract Portrait of Marcel Duchamp* (1918) raise a similar difficulty, though some might argue that the degree of abstraction is too high here and that these only count as portraits in the metaphorical sense.
[18] Freeland, *Portraits & Persons*, 284.

everything suggests that the model here is a particular person, a real individual, closely observed from life. But despite this, it is not a portrait - it's not a picture of someone, painted for that someone or their peers. The old woman is poor and dishevelled and open-mouthed. (No portrait of this period is open-mouthed.) She is "in a state" ...[19]

Notwithstanding the fact that each of Freeland's conditions appears fulfilled, the painting is not regarded as a portrait. The same point could be made using *The Peasant and the Birdnester* by Pieter Bruegel the Elder (1568). It is very well possible that this painting depicts two particular individuals who posed for Bruegel and would have been recognised by people in the artist's environment. But that is not enough to make this morality painting a portrait. Thus, speaking more generally, Freeland's three-pronged definition does not suffice to distinguish portraits from certain genre paintings. This is one of the problems – the problem of individuation – which the author discussed in the next section attempts to address.

3. Animals, Fictional Characters, and the Problem of Individuation

Paolo Spinicci's essay 'Portraits' was written around the same time as Freeland's book.[20] But despite a clear affinity of ideas – both authors stress the centrality of the pose in portraiture – neither seems to be aware of the other's work. This is likely due to the fact that they belong to different philosophical traditions, with a marked difference in

[19] Tom Lubbock, 'Giorgione: Old Woman', *The Independent*, 14 July 2006.
[20] Paolo Spinicci, 'Portraits: Some Phenomenological Remarks', *Proceedings of the European Society for Aesthetics* (2009), 37-59.

methodological approach. While Freeland's study is firmly rooted in the analytic tradition, Spinicci clearly sees himself as continuing the phenomenological tradition of thinking about art (his essay carries the subtitle 'Some Phenomenological Remarks').[21] Illustrative of this is how he begins one of the important arguments in the essay with the observation that portraits are 'boring':

> Portraits are boring in the way they depict their subjects: to be portrayed, people have to stop walking, playing piano, reading books, writing letters, painting pictures and in general they have to put aside, at least for one moment, activities in which they are involved. The time of portraits is the time of temporary inaction.[22]

But this phenomenological observation ultimately leads him to a view that is very similar to Freeland's. For that temporary inaction, which is the outcome of the subject's conscious decision, is nothing other than the pose. In taking up a pose, Spinicci explains, subjects suspend their usual behaviour in order to stage that behaviour. They take a step back from the pressures of everyday life and assume an attitude and posture in which they want to be seen. As such, portraiture always involves a 'first-person narration of the self'.[23]

What then about the counterexamples that were raised against Freeland's account: portraits that do not involve any act of posing, that are made in the absence of the sitter? Spinicci anticipates the problem and proposes a solution that is simple but

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[21] I would like to underline here, as should be clear from the title and subtitle of both Spinicci's essay and Freeland's book, that their investigation into the nature of portraiture goes significantly beyond the mere attempt to define what a portrait is.

[22] Ibid., 47.

[23] Ibid., 49.

elegant. The crucial element of portraiture is not so much the actual posing of the sitter. It is rather that the subject of the portrait must be depicted *as posing.* So, 'the first-person narration is not about the real person himself, but about this person *as he is represented by the picture*'.[24] For instance, Serge Gainsbourg may not have presented himself as a cool but sensual rock star to Karl Meersman, but he is depicted as projecting himself as such in Meersman's portrait of him.

Spinicci's looser interpretation of the posing condition gives him more flexibility in dealing with difficult cases. Recall that Freeland has to deny the existence of animal portraits across the board, because animals do not have the ability to pose for a picture. Many people will find this conclusion unpalatable and indeed Freeland herself has difficulties biting that bullet as she herself keeps referring to paintings of pets as portraits.[25] No such difficulties arise for Spinicci. As long as a dog or cat is convincingly depicted *as* posing, it can make sense to call the resulting picture a portrait.

Spinicci's account of portraiture appears more flexible in other respects as well. If the artist and the viewer have no knowledge of the physical appearance of the subject of a painting, as was the case when Rembrandt painted *Aristotle Contemplating The Bust of Homer* (1653), there can be no portrait, according to Freeland. Spinicci, by contrast, does not immediately discount portraits of this kind. A portrait, he thinks, has to be suitable to its subject, but there are at least two different types of suitability.[26] There is *perceptual suitability* when the face we see on the canvas is similar to the face of the sitter. But there is also *imaginative suitability*. This is when the portrait seems to fit with everything we know of the subject, so that we feel that the person must have had an

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[24] Ibid., 50.
[25] A few passages from her book to illustrate this: 'assessing the nature and merits of portraits, whether of humans or of animals' (21); 'I still deny that animal portraits meet the third condition of portraiture' (24); 'Sir Edward Landseer who painted a number of portraits of Queen Victoria's favorite pets' (36).
[26] Spinicci, 'Portraits', 44-45.

appearance similar to the one we see in the portrait. If that is the case, it might be legitimate after all to call such a painting a portrait.

This brings us to a tricky issue we have left unmentioned so far: portraits of fictional characters. Can there *überhaupt* be such a thing? Again, many will consider it an advantage of Spinicci's account that he allows for this possibility. But only under certain conditions: 'portraits can refer to fictional entities if and only if features and characters of their fictional subjects are stated by a tradition *which preexists the act of painting*'.[27] That way one can check whether the portrait is imaginatively suitable. So, a portrait of Don Quixote is possible, but only because 'Don Quixote fictionally exists in a well known book which gives (and gave) a norm to the many painters who have tried to portray him'.[28]

To address the problem of individuation and the distinction between portraits and certain other genre paintings, Spinicci recommends moving attention away from the context of creation to the context in which the picture is used:

> What turns a picture into a portrait of x is the customary use we make of that picture as an image which is just about x and represents x in a particular way. Individuality of reference depends on using this picture as a picture portraying a person we know.[29]

Bruegel's *The Peasant and the Birdnester* may depict two men that the artist knew personally, but critics and viewers normally do not approach this painting as a double

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[27] Ibid., 47.
[28] Ibid.
[29] Ibid., 43.

portrait, but rather as an illustration of the old Dutch proverb ('He who knows where the nest is, has the knowledge; he who robs it, has the nest.'). Hence, it is not a portrait.

4. Absorption, Allegorical Portraits, and Intentionality

If one is willing to grant that there are portraits of fictional subjects, why not also grant that some of these subjects may not 'preexist' the act of portrayal? Take Eduardo Paolozzi's *One lamp only* (1959). In this collage, one critic observes, 'two half-fragments from a pair of unrelated photographs are combined, producing a new category of portraiture in which the subject is part-real and part-invented'.[30] Likewise, Nigel Henderson's *Head of a Man* (1956) is a large photographic collage in which images of a decaying city landscape are arranged in the form of a man's head and shoulders. This fictional character has only come into being through the collage, but one may still want to call it a portrait (it is included, with a full page illustration, in the book *Pop Art Portraits*). More recently, one of the nominees for the Turner Prize 2013, Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, was repeatedly described in the media as the 'imaginary portrait painter' since her paintings focus on fictional figures that, in her own words, 'exist outside of specific times and places'.[31]

But this is only a minor problem for Spinicci. More serious objections arise when we turn to his central claim that portraits depict a person as posing. This thesis entails the impossibility of deathbed portraits. So, following Spinicci, Daphne Todd's portrait of

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[30] Paul Moorhouse, *Pop Art Portraits* (London: National Portrait Gallery, 2007), 59.

[31] In an interview with Nadine Rubin Nathan, Yiadom-Boakye describes her compositions as "suggestions of people…They don't share our concerns or anxieties. They are somewhere else altogether." Both quotes are taken from her gallerist's webpage (Jack Shainman Gallery: http://www.jackshainman.com/artists/lynette-yiadom-boakye/.)

her dead mother, instead of winning the BP Portrait prize, should have been disqualified from the competition. And the heartbreaking *Portrait of the Artist's Dead Son, Otto Zimmermann* (1902) by Gustave Klimt should really be given a different title.[32] One also wonders what Spinicci would make of Philippe Halsman's portrait of a jumping Edward Steichen – a photograph that deliberately avoids depicting the subject as posing and where the temporary inaction characteristic of other portraits is absent.

One way to circumvent objections of this sort is to weaken the central claim and, indeed, Spinicci does precisely that when he acknowledges that the pose is only an essential ingredient of *paradigmatic* examples of portraits.[33] But this move does not lead him out of the woods entirely. For there are many paradigmatic examples of portraits where the subject is not depicted as posing. Spinicci himself mentions Titian's portrait of cardinal Pietro Bembo (1545-46). It shows Bembo lost in contemplation:

> He is *alone* in his meditative stance and we can understand his deep melancholic mood which is able to disclose for us his true nature and character only if we do not try to read in his face the desire to look the way it looks. … Pietro Bembo is not staging a pose.[34]

Other examples include Chardin's portrait of the painter Joseph Aved (1734) and Jean Baptiste Greuze's portrait of Claude Henri Watalet (1763).

In an attempt to make room for this tradition of portraiture Spinicci introduces a distinction, inspired by Michael Fried, between 'portraits in absorption' and 'theatrical

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[32] Similarly, Spinicci deems it inappropriate to call Ferdinand Hodler's painting *The Dying Valentine Godé Darel* (1915) a portrait (Spinicci, 'Portraits', 53).

[33] 'I really believe that pose is an essential ingredient in the fundamental and paradigmatic form of portraits' (Ibid., 54); 'the concept of pose which seems to be the essential feature of the greatest family of portraits — those paintings which are on the one hand paradigmatic examples of what we labeled as portraits and which seem to be, on the other hand, the manifestation of a desire: the depicted subject looks as if she wanted to stage her own nature in the painting' (Ibid., 48-9).

[34] Ibid., 55.

portraits'.[35] In encountering the latter, the spectator 'has to understand himself as the addressee of a message whose content is a first-person narration which discloses the nature and character of the depicted subject'.[36] With portraits in absorption there appears to be no communicative intention of this sort. The subjects in the paintings of Titian, Chardin, Greuze do not seem to present themselves in any particular way to an audience. However, Spinicci is quick to emphasise that 'there is still something in their nature which reminds us of the concept of the pose and which seems to result from pose as a peculiar behavior':

> portraits in absorption still ask for the *temporary inaction* of their subjects — and temporary inaction has to be understood as an *intentional* behavior, as the outcome of the subject's decision to step back from the cares and opportunities of life and to rise above the pressure of what impinges on him from the world.[37]

That is why he thinks it is still justified to give such centrality to the concept of the pose. And just as the pose is meant to disclose the nature and character of the depicted subject, the 'step back from opportunities and cares of life, which is so characteristic of the melancholic mood of absorption, seems to relieve the *true nature* of the depicted subject from the burden of life'.[38] The viewer gets to see Pietro Bembo as he appears to be beyond all the contingencies of the moment and so, to use the cardinal's own words, experiences a likeness that is more like him than he is himself.[39]

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[35] Michael Fried, *Absorption and Theatricality: Painting and Beholder in the Age of Diderot* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

[36] Spinicci, 'Portraits', 55.

[37] Ibid., 56.

[38] Ibid., 56-57.

[39] Cardinal Bembo reported in a letter to a friend that 'the portrait which our Rafaello made of Tebaldeo is such an amazing likeness that it is more like him than he is himself' (quoted in Ernst Gombrich, 'Portrait Painting and Portrait Photography', in P. Wengraf (ed.), *Apropos Portrait Painting* (London: Lund Humphries, 1945), 3).

It should be clear, however, that in acknowledging this tradition of making portraits in absorption, Spinicci is in effect acknowledging that the pose is *not* an essential ingredient of all paradigmatic examples of portraits, let alone of portraits *tout court*.[40] Moreover, Spinicci seems to assume that portraits in absorption will always show someone being absorbed in thought, elevated above the pressures of everyday life in a moment of temporary inaction. What he forgets is that one can also be absorbed in a particular *activity*; and if a subject's activity is connected to, or revealing of, their personality or public identity, the portrait artist may very well try to capture such activity. An extraordinary example of this is George Lemmen's neo-impressionist portrait of the dancer Loïe Fuller (1893-94). *Zidane; a 21st Century Portrait* (2006) is another striking example. In this film, made by Douglas Gordon and Philippe Parreno, 17 cameras follow every movement of the legendary football player Zinedine Zidane during the game Real Madrid - Villarreal on April 23, 2005. While in an ordinary match report the ball, and not any individual player, will be the focal point of attention, that convention is turned on its head here. We as viewers never lose sight of Zidane and what we see is decidedly *not* someone who has taken a step back from the opportunities and pressures of his everyday life. On the contrary, we see 'a man just doing his job,' as the filmmakers themselves put it.[41] There is no temporary inaction here. Quite the opposite. In an essay with the telling title 'Absorbed in the Action' it is Michael Fried himself who argues that the designation of the film as a 'portrait' (instead of, say, a biopic) is entirely appropriate and that it should be considered a supreme example of

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[40] Besides 'portraits in absorption', it might be interesting to make room for 'portraits in distraction' – distraction being absorption's traditional nemesis (see Michael Fried, 'Absorbed in the Action', *Artforum*, September 2006.). Yousef Karsh's famous portrait of an angrily distracted Churchill could serve as an example (Karsh snatched Churchill's cigar from his mouth right before taking the picture). Such portraits in distraction could also be used to put pressure on the idea that the pose is essential element of portraiture.

[41] T. Griffin, 'The Job Changes You', *Artforum* (September 2006).

the absorptive tradition in portraiture.[42]

Finally, what I consider to be the most problematic aspect of Spinicci's account is his idea that what turns a picture of x into a portrait of x is 'the customary use we make of that picture as an image which is just about x'.[43] If we interpret this strictly, there can be no allegorical portraits because an allegorical portrait of x is never *just* about x. The same would go for the 'portrait historié' which depicts individuals in the guise of biblical, mythological, or literary personages and provides in effect a synthesis of history painting and portraiture (e.g. Werner van den Valckert's *Let the Children Come to Me: Michiel Poppen and his family*, 1620). Even if we disregard such special cases, other unacceptable implications come into view. For instance, it seems to me that portrait photographs of young soldiers in World War I do not simply lose their status of portraits once they are put on display in exhibitions to illustrate, say, the different uniforms of the era. Conversely, if it is found out that an antique bust that was thought to be of a famous philosopher is in fact a generic portrayal of old age, it would appear reasonable to stop regarding that bust as a portrait – even if it had routinely been used and displayed as such in previous decades (this is more or less the story of *Pseudo-Seneca*, the marble bust that was once owned by Rubens and features in many of his sketches and paintings).[44]

According to Spinicci, the context of creation is not important in determining whether something counts as a portrait. Here is how he argues for this:

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[42] Fried, 'Absorbed in the Action.' What makes the film especially interesting for Fried is that it 'lays bare a hitherto unthematized relationship between absorption and beholding--more precisely, between the persuasive representation of absorption and the apparent consciousness of being beheld--in the context of art, a relationship that is no longer simply one of opposition or complementarity but that allows a sliding and indeed an overlap' (Ibid.).

[43] Spinicci, 'Portraits', 43.

[44] Rubens brought what he believed to be the antique marble bust of the Roman philosopher Seneca back to Antwerp from Italy in 1608. The real portrait of Seneca was only discovered in 1813. For more information, see M. Vickers, 'Ruben's Bust of Seneca', *The Burlington Magazine* 119 (1977), 643-645.

A few scholars have maintained that the Mona Lisa by Leonardo looks like its author and we could conjecture (as a joke) that Leonardo, painting this canvas, had ... the hidden desire to depict himself in women's clothing. Now, it is plainly impossible to know what crossed Leonardo's mind five centuries ago, but even if we could find that this was Leonardo's secret thought while painting his Mona Lisa, this would not be a reason to refuse to this picture its usual subject and function: this famous painting is a portrait of a woman because it was used from the beginning as a portrait of a woman.[45]

I'm inclined to take the opposite view. If we were to find out that Leonardo meant to make a self-portrait of himself in women's clothes, then this would indeed force us to re-interpret the painting. So, unlike Spinicci, I do think that the artist's intentions matter. To that extent I agree with Richard Brilliant who notes that 'the viewer's awareness of the art work as a portrait is distinctly secondary to the artist's intention to portray someone in an artwork'.[46] However, Brilliant's own definition of portraits as 'art works, intentionally made of living or once living people by artists, in a variety of media, and for an audience'[47] proves too thin as it is unable to distinguish portraits from life drawings or other genre paintings.[48] So, in the next section I will propose a more robust and elaborate account of portraiture in which the intention to create a portrait figures nonetheless as the most important cornerstone.

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[45] Spinicci, 'Portraits', 41.
[46] Richard Brilliant, *Portraiture* (London: Reaktion Books, 1991), 7.
[47] Ibid., 8.
[48] On Brilliant's account, *La Vecchia* and *Peasant and Birdnester* would qualify as portraits. By contrast, the portraits by Nigel Henderson or Lynette Yiadom-Boakye would not qualify as such, since they do not depict living people or people who were once alive.

5. The Portrait as a Non-Institutional Artifactual Kind

In developing an alternative account of what a portrait is, I will make use of Amie Thomasson's influential work on artifactual kinds. In particular her ontological account of non-institutional artifactual kinds that correspond to what she calls "essentially artifactual terms" may help to provide an adequate answer to the central question of this paper. Let me begin with a few clarifications.

First, an object is an *artifact* '"only if it is intentionally produced by an agent under some description of the object," where at least one of these descriptions must be a sortal description' – that is, a description that determines the identity of the object and the criteria with which it can be distinguished from other objects.[49] Portraits fit the bill. While one can make a photograph of X by accident, there can be no accidental portrait of X. Portraits are intentionally made under a broadly sortal description which provides criteria for distinguishing portraits from other artifacts, such as mirrors, wall-paper, tables, chairs, landscape paintings etc. People may not be able to clearly articulate the relevant criteria (more about this later), but nevertheless they can fairly easily distinguish portraits from tables or chairs, even in the absence of a clearly articulated sortal concept of portraits.

Second, *non-institutional* artifacts are ones that do not require some special human institution to create and sustain them. Institutional artifactual kinds, by contrast, do require such institutions. An example of the latter is the Canterbury Residents Card, which only exists by virtue of Canterbury City Council. Now, while there are certain institutions that buy, collect and put on display portraits, portraits as such do not

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[49] Amie L. Thomasson, 'Realism and Human Kinds', *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* LXVII (2003), 580-609, at 592; quoting in part R. Hilpinen, 'On Artifacts and Works of Art', *Theoria* 58 (1992), 58-82.

require these institutions to bring and keep them in existence. In that respect the role of The National Portrait Gallery is fundamentally different than that of Canterbury City Council. So, it makes sense to think about portraits as non-institutional artifacts.

Third, *essentially* artifactual terms have in their extension all and only artifacts, considered as intended products of human action.[50] Examples of such terms include 'computer' and 'corkscrew', but not 'path' or 'village' since some of the things in their extension may not be things intentionally created under some description. 'Portrait,' I contend, is an essentially artifactual term. A cloud may be shaped in such a way that one could see in it, say, the profile of Friedrich Nietzsche, but that does not make the cloud a portrait of Nietzsche.

Within the class of non-institutional artifacts that correspond to essentially artifactual terms, we need to introduce one more distinction, namely that between 'strict artifactual kinds', which follow a single concept uniformly accepted by the makers (Peking Duck is the example that Thomasson gives), and 'loose artifactual kinds' which do not consistently follow a single concept but undergo great changes over a period of historical development. Portraits clearly belong to this second category. The making of portraits does not involve very strict criteria that must be known and closely reproduced by all portrait makers. On the contrary, the genre has undergone great changes over time. Portraits have been made in different media (painting, sculpture, photography, printmaking, film, various new media), of different subjects (from kings and queens to peasants and workers), in different materials (from the ancient Egyptian portraits on wooden panels to Marc Quinn's self-portrait in blood), and with different end purposes (West 2004 devotes an entire chapter to the multiplicity of pragmatic, decorative, social, and political purposes of portraiture, distinguishing, for instance,

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[50] Ibid., 593.

between the portrait as document, the portrait as biography, the portrait as work of art, the portrait as proxy, the portrait as gift, the portrait as commemoration).[51] This variety of purposes is worth emphasising because it suggests an insurmountable problem for any straightforwardly functional account of portraiture.

In her search for an ontological principle that would cover both strictly and more loosely defined artifactual kinds, Thomasson finally arrives at the following 'Dependence Principle':

> Necessarily, for all x and all artifactual kinds K, x is a K only if x is the product of a largely successful intention that (Kx), where one intends (Kx) only if one has a substantive concept of the nature of Ks that largely matches that of some group of prior makers of Ks (if there are any) and one intends to realize that concept by imposing K-relevant features on the object.[52]

We can now apply this to portraits. In accordance with the Dependence Principle, I propose the following account of portraits (PA):

> Some object *x* counts as a portrait only if *x* is the product of a largely successful intention to create a portrait. The maker of the object intends that *x* is a portrait only if (a) they have a substantive concept of the nature of portraits that largely

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matches the substantive concept held by a group of prior portrait makers, if there are any, and (b) the maker intends to realise that substantive concept by imposing portrait-relevant features on the object.

The portrait-relevant features through which one intends to realize this substantive concept need not involve a set of necessary and sufficient conditions. They may instead be formed as a cluster concept.[53] That is to say, possession of such features will *count towards* classification of the object as a portrait, and if a significant cluster of properties is instantiated as the result of the intention to create a portrait, then the object very likely *is* a portrait. But – and this is important -- none of the features is individually necessary for something to qualify as a portrait.[54]

Looking at the work of such major portrait artists as Goya or David, I venture to suggest that it is part of their substantive concept of a portrait that it represents Y, or a group of Y's, where Y is considered to possess selfhood and a capacity of self-presentation, in such a way that Y's looks, inner life, social standing and/or public identity are revealed. This concept is one that evidently matches, at least to a very large extent, the substantive concept held by Velázquez, Van Dyck and Rembrandt, who were active in the genre more than a century before Goya and David, as well as that held by Rineke Dijkstra, Steve Pyke and Jitka Hanzlová, who are making masterful portraits in the present day, almost two centuries after Goya and David. Now, while PA does not stand or fall with an exhaustive list of portrait-relevant features – which might in

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[53] Ibid., 598.

[54] There are distinct parallels between PA and Berys Gaut's cluster account of art ('The Cluster Account Defended,' *British Journal of Aesthetics* 45 (2005), 273-288). But there are also important differences. For Gaut, 'being the product of an intention to make a work of art' is only one of the ten criteria that counts towards an object being art, whereas intentionality has a more crucial part to play in PA. Moreover, I should note here that I want to steer clear of the 'art' question in dealing with portraiture. While it appears to me that not all portraits are works of art, I present an account that is in principle compatible with a theory of art that would rank all portraits as art.

principle be functional, structural, aesthetic, or historical in kind, and are liable to change over time (see below) – it will be clear that each of the criteria and qualities discussed in the previous sections is an obvious candidate to feature on such a list: depicting a recognisable physical body and face; being expressive of a person's emotions, character, personality; representing a posing individual or an individual *as* posing. As such, it seems that the insights of philosophers who have previously worked on this topic could be neatly integrated into this new account of what a portrait is.

Before discussing any further advantages of PA in the final section of this paper, it might be necessary to dispel a few worries. One such worry may be that certain photographs qualify as portraits even though they do not seem to involve any of the relevant intentions. One could think here of pictures produced by a Photomatic machine – the kind of coin-operated photo booth one finds in train and bus stations all over the world. Many photomatic pictures do indeed qualify as portraits.[55] But an obvious point to make is that these pictures are not produced accidentally. When a person sits down on the stool in the photo booth, selects the sort of photo she wants to make, puts money in the slot, straightens her hair and clothes, strikes a pose, and then presses the green button, she clearly does all of this with the intention to create a portrait of herself. Granted, she is assisted in her endeavor by a machine. But more traditional portrait makers are likewise relying on tools such as cameras or paintbrushes to carry through their intentions. The fact that the process is partly automated in the case of the

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[55] I am grateful to an anonymous referee for raising this issue. Of course, not all pictures resulting from a Photomatic machine will count as portraits (if due to a malfunctioning the machine produces a picture of an empty booth the resulting photograph is not a portrait). But many will. Some artists have even made use of Photomatons to create interesting artistic portraits. Famous examples include Cindy Sherman's *Untitled*, 1975 and Gerhard Richter's *Portrait of Dr Knobloch,* 1964. A less well-known but no less intriguing example is the collage 'As I Can' by the Belgian artist Hoykoe – a series of self-portraits made with the use of a Photomaton and put together in a large frame that cleverly references Walker Evans' *Penny Picture Display, Savannah* (1936).

Photomatic machine does not constitute a fundamental difference and hence does not pose a fundamental problem for PA.

Another worry concerns what one might call 'prototype portraits'. Doesn't the reference to prior portrait makers in PA make it impossible for the first portrait ever to be created, one might wonder. The answer is no. If there *are* prior portrait makers, one would indeed expect later portraitists to have a concept of the nature of portraits that largely matches the concept held by those portrait makers that came before them. But PA can also handle makers of prototype portraits. For the first portraitists ever to be able to make a portrait, they needed to intend to make a portrait, and for this, PA stipulates, they must have had a substantive notion of what a portrait is supposed to be, determining the success criteria for their creative activity.[56] To see how the latter is necessary, it may suffice to imagine the following dialogue:

"What are you making there?"

"A whitzool"

"What's a whitzool?'

"One of these."

This is only a bad joke, but when said in earnest, as Thomasson rightly points out,[57] one would seriously start to doubt that the supposed creator is really involved in the intentional making of any kind of thing (as opposed to just 'messing around'). Thus, the

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[56] The origins of portraiture are sometimes traced back to ancient grave paintings, more specifically to the mummy portraits of Roman Egypt (see S. Walker and M. Bierbrier, *Ancient Faces: Mummy Portraits from Roman Egypt*, London: British Museum, 1997). However, some scholars have argued that the genre is much older than that (Irene Winter makes the convincing case that some royal images of the ancient Near East, dating back to 2110 BCE, qualify as portraits; see her paper 'What/When Is a Portrait? Royal Images of the Ancient Near East', *Proceedings of the Americal Philosophical Society* 153, 2009). Others insist that it was the Renaissance or the practice of adding donor portraits to altar paintings that gave birth to the genre (for an overview of this controversial issue, see West, *Portraiture*). This is not the place to assess the merits of these different historical accounts. But the general hypothesis that the intentions to create portraits gradually evolved out of the developing intentions to create other sorts of images with certain variations seems very plausible. (I am grateful to an anonymous referee for suggesting this point.)
[57] Thomasson, 'Realism and Human Kinds', 597.

intention to make a portrait must be based on a declarative intention associating this kind of object with a number of criteria that would constitute success at creating a portrait and involving a number of portrait-relevant features that the creator intends to impose on the object. Parenthetically, this does not presuppose that makers of prototype portraits must also invent a new term for their activity, let alone be able to give a precise definition of that term. On the contrary, we have every reason to believe that the first portraits were made before the term 'portrait' (or its equivalent in another language) came into existence.

6. Continuity in Change

The great strength of PA is that it is broad enough to include all *bona fide* portraits, without being meaninglessly broad. The last part of this claim might seem especially doubtful, so let me begin by showing that what I propose is not an 'anything goes' theory that compels us to accept as portraits things that we would in fact want to exclude from that category.

According to PA, one intends to make a portrait only if one has a *substantive* concept of the nature of portraits that *largely matches* the substantive concept held by a group of prior portrait makers (if there are any). So, if a madman were to describe his hand-made wooden recorder as the successful result of an attempt to create a portrait, we have good reason to suspect that his understanding of portraits is fundamentally different from our own. His misinformed and misdirected attempt to make a portrait clearly does not in and by itself make the recorder a portrait.

Similarly, PA stipulates that the intention to create a portrait must include the intention to impose portrait-relevant features on the object. There's at least one well-documented instance that I know of where the latter intention seems completely absent. In 1961, Robert Rauschenberg was invited to participate in a special exhibition at the *Galerie Iris Clert*. All the invited artists were to create a portrait of the owner, Iris Clert, but Rauschenberg had left things until the last minute and finally decided to just send a telegram with the message: 'This is a portrait of Iris Clert if I say so / Robert Rauschenberg'. The story goes that Iris Clert, in a fit of anger and disappointment, first threw the telegram in the rubbish bin, only to appreciate the audacity of Rauschenberg's gesture at a later stage, after which she retrieved the crumpled piece of paper from the bin and gave it a prominent place in the exhibition. To me, it seems obvious that Rauschenberg's telegram is a work of art, but not a portrait. There's something so deliberately ludicrous about his neo-dada-ish effort that makes it difficult to view this as a serious, let alone successful, attempt to make a portrait (though Rauschenberg's conceptual outlandishness is no doubt one of the main reasons why it's considered a work of art).[58] Thus, while PA can account for the historical changes that the genre of portraiture has undergone, it does not allow for sudden ruptures or stark departures.

A plausible account of portraits should capture as much of the extension as possible of what we ordinarily think counts as a portrait, but should stop short of what are clearly metaphorical extensions. PA does just that, I think. Let me illustrate this with

[58] This would be the difference between Rauschenberg's telegram and, say, Wichman's abstracted *Self-Portrait*. The latter may not present us with a recognisable body or face (as specified above) but it does contain other portrait-relevant features (such as the pose or the fact that it is exquisitely expressive of the emotional state and personality of the artist) in virtue of which it can be recognised as a serious and, I would contend, successful attempt to make a portrait. Rauschenberg's work, by contrast, seems to contain no portrait-relevant features whatsoever. Admittedly, other cases will be less clear-cut. It is up for dispute, for instance, whether Schneider's *Genetic Self-Portrait* or Dreier's *Abstract Portrait of Marcel Duchamp* possess enough portrait-relevant features to count as portraits. Because of the uncertain status of these works, I have avoided making them in any way central to my argument. (Thanks to two anonymous referees for pushing me to clarify this.)

another work by Rauschenberg, the abstract combine painting *Trophy V (for Jasper Johns)*. Here we have the counterpart of his portrait of Iris Clert in the sense that the artist did not propose this as a portrait, but it was received as such by at least one critic, Paul Moorhouse, who includes it in his book on portraiture arguing that it successfully 'evokes the presence of another individual'.[59] Surely, though, this kind of evocation can't be sufficient for a painting to be labelled a portrait. Mike Bidlo's *Not Warhol (Brillo Boxes)* from 2005 powerfully evokes the presence of Andy Warhol, but that does not make the exhibited work a portrait of Andy Warhol. Similarly, I submit that *Trophy V* is only a portrait in the metaphorical sense – something that is more or less acknowledged by Moorhouse when he later points out that 'the Trophy series announces a vein of metaphorical portraiture that was to characterize the subsequent work of a number of Pop Artists'.[60] This fits with PA which states that a portrait (in the literal sense of the word) can only be the result of an intention to create a portrait.

Furthermore, and most significantly, PA is able to acknowledge and account for the boundary between portraits and other genre paintings. As such, it proves more restrictive, but advantageously so, than Freeland's account. Freeland had difficulties explaining why *La Vecchia* by Giorgione or *The Peasant and the Birdnester* by Pieter Bruegel the Elder are not portraits since they appear to satisfy all three conditions laid down in *Portraits & Persons*. With PA, by contrast, there is no such difficulty since one can refer to the artist's intentions in making those works.[61]

While in some respects PA is more restrictive than the definitions offered by Freeland or Spinicci, in other respects it turns out to be more inclusive making it overall more extensionally adequate than these alternative accounts. Unlike Freeland and/or

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[59] Moorhouse, *Pop Art Portraits*, 69.
[60] Ibid.
[61] PA can also explain why Achille Laugé's *Portrait of the Artist's Mother* (1894-95) is a portrait, despite the striking thematic and formal similarities with *La Vecchia*.

Spinicci, PA can allow for portraits with a high degree of abstraction; portraits drawn from memory; portraits of people caught unawares; deathbed portraits; 'faceless' portraits; jump portraits; portraits of fictional characters or imaginary subjects; portraits of people who are not depicted as posing; allegorical portraits; and the 'portrait historié'. It goes without saying that not all deathbed photographs, 'faceless' pictures, or representations of non-posing individuals will count as portraits. But some may, and the fact that PA can account for Daphne Todd's portrait of her deceased mother, Nadar's portrait of Marie Laurent, or Gordon and Parreno's portrait of Zidane can only be considered a strength of the account.

According to PA the portrait maker should have a substantive concept of the nature of portraits that matches to a considerable extent the substantive concept held by a group of prior portrait makers (if there is such a group), though there need not be a perfect match. This allows for a gradual shift in portrait-relevant properties, while preserving a certain continuity in the concept shared by makers. In the previous section I drew attention to the ostensible overlap in the concept of portraiture employed by artists like Rembrandt, Goya, and Dijkstra. Separated by centuries they nonetheless seem to share the idea of a portrait as representing Y, or a group of Y's, where Y is considered to possess selfhood and a capacity of self-presentation, in such a way that Y's looks, inner life, social standing and/or public identity are revealed. Accordingly, a similar set of portrait-relevant features can be discerned in their paintings and photographs. The portraits made by these artists all depict the recognisable physical body or face of a posing individual and are expressive of the sitter's character, personality, or emotions. However, when one turns to earlier portrait-making practices, or to some of the most recent experiments in this genre, notable divergences and

developments in the concept and in the cluster of portrait-relevant features come to the fore.

Take the standing sculptures of Gudea, ruler of Lagash, dating back to ca. 2110 BCE. Based on detailed lexicographical and iconographical research, Irene Winter makes the plausible claim that these statues, with their recognisably broad face and chin, large ears, and muscular arms, were intended as portraits.[62] If this is correct, we can start to think about some of the ways in which the substantive concept of portrait makers in ancient Mesopotamia was different from the one I have just outlined.

The first thing to note is that these are all royal images. So, unlike Dijkstra who makes portraits of 'ordinary' adolescents she happens to meet on the beaches of Europe, or Rembrandt who made several portraits of his young son Titus, the portraits that come to us from the ancient Near East are always images of people of prominence and influence. (The same can be said of other early portrait-making practices – think of the portrait busts of ancient Rome or the donor portraits in medieval altar paintings.) This leads one to surmise that in the early days of portraiture it was part of the concept of a portrait that any sitter Y does not just possess selfhood and a capacity of self-presentation but is also a figure of note and influence – someone who is important enough to be presented to the viewer as a model ('exemplum') and as worth remembering ('memoria').[63]

Another interesting difference emerges when one considers Gombrich's claim that 'a real portrait aims ... to bring out the very complexity and depth of a

[62] Winter, 'What/When Is a Portrait?'

[63] M. Van Wamel lists 'memoria' and 'exemplum' – the purpose of commemorating and inspiring by example – as the two most basic functions of 16th century portraiture. ('De functie van het portret' in Till-Holger Borchert & Koenraad Jonckheere (eds), *Renaissance-portretten uit de Lage Landen*, Brussel: Bozar Books, 2015, 58-69.)

personality'.[64] When one thinks only of familiar portraits by Rembrandt or Goya one will be inclined to agree and some may even see this as part of very concept of portraiture. However, it will be clear that any such aim is absent in the portrait sculptures of Gudea. Here there is no attempt to reveal the inner life of the sitter. The statues are not expressive of emotions or individual character traits and so the sculptures miss some of the portrait-relevant features listed above. (Again, this is true of portraits of rulers in other eras as well. For instance, most portraits of Queen Elizabeth I of England are static, stylized, and symbolic, emphasising her regal authority over any emotions or inner life.[65])

Winter also makes the case that the statues probably do not reveal what the ruler of Lagash actually looked like – which points to yet another development in the substantive concept of portraiture (that a portrait should capture a person's likeness had become part of the very concept that Rembrandt and Goya employed). Certainly, Gudea must have been immediately identifiable for contemporaries looking at these statues. But that was not, Winter argues, because these statues accurately depicted his physiognomy. It would be misguided to assume naturalism in these representations. Instead, there was the clear intention to reference a particular individual and that intention was successful because it was accompanied by symbolically coded and socially accepted criteria for identification (the broad chin and face, muscular arms and large ears functioning as unmistakable symbols of regal power).

Turning now to the present day and to some of the more radical experiments that have been taking place within the genre in recent years. The artists who are responsible, we may assume, have a substantive concept of portraiture that largely

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[64] Gombrich, 'Portrait Painting and Portrait Photography', 4.
[65] West, *Portraiture*, 72-73.

matches that of artists in preceding decades and centuries. What is distinctive of their efforts, however, compared to say the portraits that have come to us from the time of Gudea or Goya, is that they very deliberately strip their work of one or more of the traditional portrait-relevant features, either in the search for a new form of portraiture that would fit with these new times, or else in an endeavour to probe and question the boundaries of the concept of portraiture (with some of them possibly crossing those boundaries). I have already mentioned a few examples elsewhere in this paper – think of the work of Gary Schneider and Gordon & Parreno. But let me add two more instructive examples here, both of which are included in the overview exhibition *European Portrait Photography since 1990*.[66]

First, Denis Darzacq's series *Casques de Thouars* (2007-2008) presents portraits of young motorcylists with their helmets on. There is no recognisable face or body in these pictures. But each photograph does depict a posing individual and because of the striking differences in colour, shape and style of the helmets these photographs become curiously expressive of the sitter's personality and the image they want to project. By contrast, in Luc Delahaye's series *L'Autre* (1995-97), a collection of close-up portraits taken secretly in the Paris Metro, we see recognisable faces but no posing (the photos were made with a hidden camera). In his accompanying essay, Jean Baudrillard observes how Delahaye's photographs seek to undercut the artificiality and predictability of the pose in order to break through to the so-called 'real': 'the image...shows itself for what it is: the exaltation of what the camera sees in its pure self-evidence, without intercession, concession or embellishment'.[67] This is not to say that Delahaye is out to capture the real essence or the 'air' of the people he encounters. He

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[66] For the catalogue, see F. Giertsberg, ed., *European Portrait Photography since 1990* (London: Prestel, 2015).

[67] Jean Baudrillard, 'Poetic Transference of Situation,' in Luc Delahaye, *L'Autre*, (London: Phaidon, 1999), unpaginated.

does not seem interested in that at all. As Baudrillard puts it: 'There is no bringing of these people into psychological "focus", then. We cannot imagine what they are thinking'.[68] If anything Delahaye's photos aim to show how in our modern world people deliberately shield themselves off from others by putting on a straight-faced impenetrable mask. (In that regard, Delahaye's series serves as a poignant counterpart to the *Casques* series, as well as to Walker Evans' study *Many Are Called* (1938-41) in which New York subway passengers were photographed without their knowledge.[69])

Whether such experiments with portrait-relevant features as one sees in the work of Darzacq or Delahaye (the former abandoning recognisability, the latter doing away with the pose) are harbingers of a fundamental and permanent shift in the substantive concept of portraiture is difficult to tell since so much will depend on the further uptake of these and other experimentations. But what this brief historical digression into the latest and earliest portrait-making practices does demonstrate is how crucially important the flexibility and openness of PA is in accommodating the change and continuity in this constantly evolving genre.

Finally, it should be noted that PA only lays out a necessary condition for membership in the category of portraits. It does not specify necessary and sufficient conditions. One reason for this is the unpredictability that comes with future developments of the genre. Concepts, we know, may evolve in two or more different directions so that the same word may end up referring to groups of artifacts that are so radically different in form and function that one is reluctant to categorize them as the

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[68] Ibid.

[69] Whereas Delahaye's cropped pictures make no attempt to capture his subjects' unique individuality, this appears to have been one of Evans's central aims. As his collaborator James Agee noted in the introduction to the catalogue: 'Each … is an individual existence, as matchless as a thumbprint or a snowflake. Each wears garments which of themselves are exquisitely subtle uniforms and badges of their being' (Walker Evans, Luc Sante, James Agee and Jeff Rosenheim, *Many Are Called*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

same artifactual kind (e.g. 1850s knickerbockers gradually developed into knee-length sporting trousers as well as petite undergarments[70]). If this were to happen to the genre of portraiture – and who knows where artistic experimentation, the development of new technologies, or the current fad of the selfie will lead us – the question may arise how to mark the breaking point of change in the artifactual kind. I consider it an advantage of PA that it remains silent on this issue. So much will depend on how big the changes are and on how our interests in the genre will evolve. But because PA does not spell out the sufficient conditions, we will at least not be forced on principle to counterintuitively include a certain range of objects within the category of portraits. Thus, speaking more generally, PA offers the sort of account that can accommodate the fluid boundaries and grey areas that often characterise our actual classificatory practices. Admittedly, this introduces some vagueness to the account, but that should not be held against it. As always, it is better to be vaguely right than precisely wrong.[71]

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[70] Thomasson, 'Realism and Human Kinds', 601.