



HISTORIES OF BRITISH ART

1660-1735 RECONSTRUCTION AND TRANSFORMATION

ABSTRACT: JACQUELINE RIDING

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'Highmore's portrait of The Lee Family (1736)'

This paper will analyse the role of ancestry – both familial and artistic - within Highmore's *The Family of Sir Eldred Lancelot Lee* his most ambitious portrait. It will argue that the portrait is at once a physiological record of a family, a metaphor of motherhood and the fruits of marriage, and an allegory of the perpetual cycle of life and death. And even as it marks the forward movement of time and the process of change and renewal, it pays self-conscious homage to the past through the use of particular pictorial and literary models. Finally, in the context of this conference and the CCC research project, the paper will consider whether this portrait dated 1736 challenges the idea of transition between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and further how the demarcation of art production into arbitrary timescales has distorted our understanding of the early Georgian period.