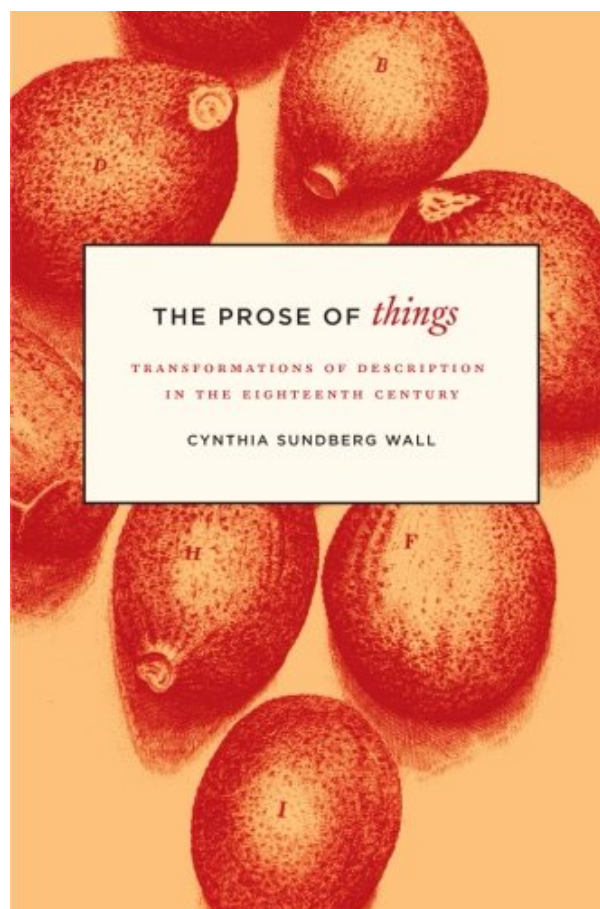
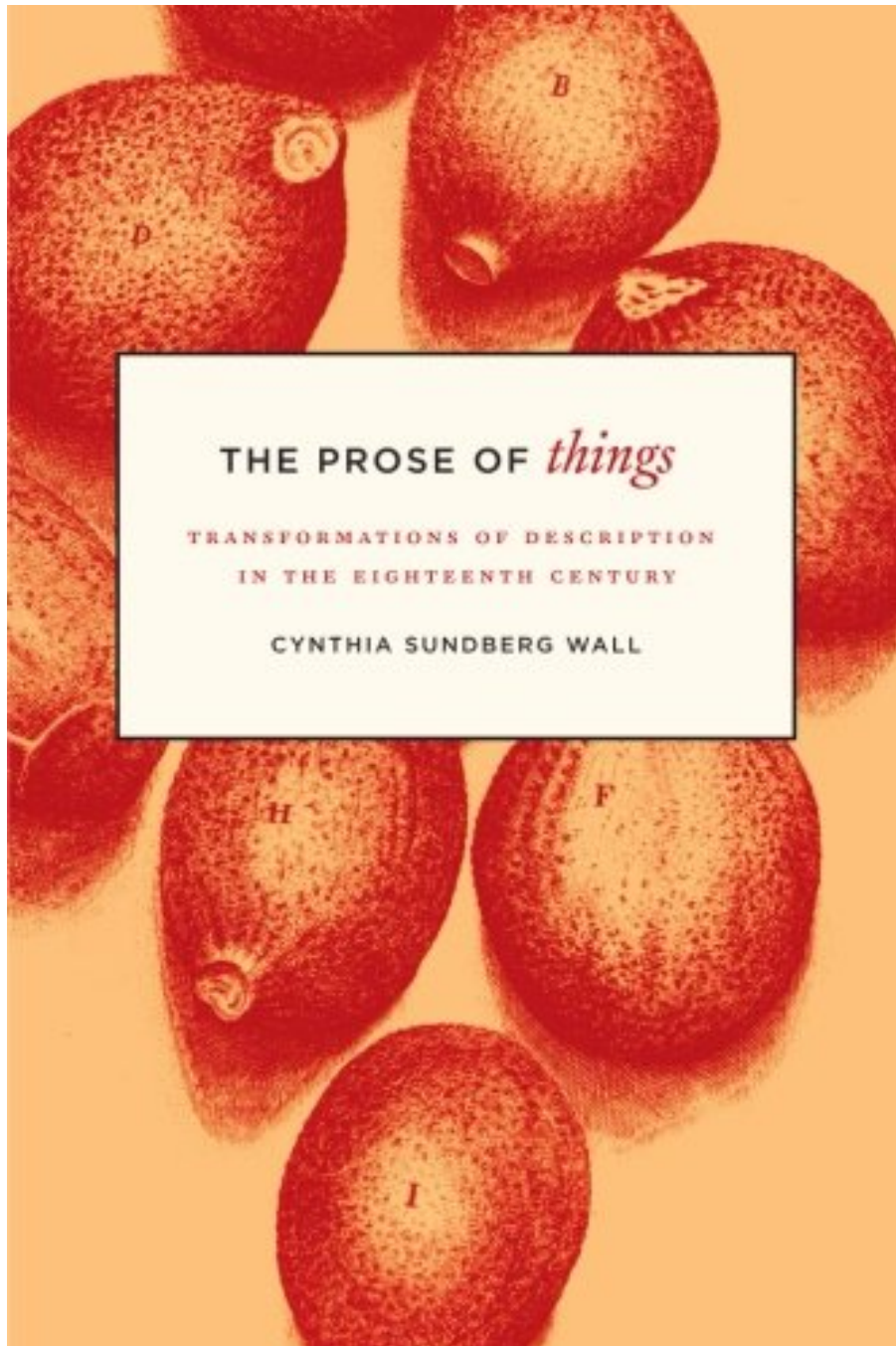


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## Review

"A book that is at once magisterial and charming, generous and shrewd." (Studies in English Literature)

"In this agile, exuberant, and important study, Cynthia Wall observes eighteenth-century British observers and, by reconstructing the changing ways in which they saw and in which they made their seeing legible, helps us to historicize modern habits of perception. *The Prose of Things* tells a new and absorbing story about the evolution of early modern prose as it tracks the literary and cultural ascent of description, the ascent that, by the nineteenth century—the heyday of the prosy, detail-thickened novel—had led to description's 'domestication' in narrative and its 'gentrification' in culture. Panoramic in scope, *The Prose of Things* is nonetheless unfailingly sensitive to details. That is only fitting for a book that will leave its readers with a new appreciation for the skillfulness and brio that enabled eighteenth-century writing to reimagine details into meaningfulness." (Deidre Shauna Lynch, Indiana University)

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Virginia Woolf once commented that the central image in *Robinson Crusoe* is an object—a large earthenware pot. Woolf and other critics pointed out that early modern prose is full of things but bare of setting and description. Explaining how the empty, unvisualized spaces of such writings were transformed into the elaborate landscapes and richly upholstered interiors of the Victorian novel, Cynthia Sundberg Wall argues that the shift involved not just literary representation but an evolution in cultural perception.

In *The Prose of Things*, Wall analyzes literary works in the contexts of natural science, consumer culture, and philosophical change to show how and why the perception and representation of space in the eighteenth-century novel and other prose narratives became so textually visible. Wall examines maps, scientific publications, country house guides, and auction catalogs to highlight the thickening descriptions of domestic interiors. Considering the prose works of John Bunyan, Samuel Pepys, Aphra Behn, Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, David Hume, Ann Radcliffe, and Sir Walter Scott, *The Prose of Things* is the first full account of the historic shift in the art of describing.

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