THE BIRKBECK EARLY MODERN SOCIETY

BULLETIN

Issue 3
Summer 2007

CONTENTS

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Early Modernists,

Welcome to the third edition of our bulletin. Since our last, spring edition we have had four very successful events: Munro Price has spoken about the events of July 1789; Karen Chester has taken us on guided walk of Pepys' London; Brian Vickers has spoken about *Othello*; after which we then attended the Globe's performance of *Othello*. All events were well attended and lively, and reflect the trans-disciplinary nature of the society.

Our next event is on 28 June, when Filippo de Vivo will be speaking about rumours and politics in Venice, and then on Saturday 7 July I am delighted to say that we have our first student conference, 'Centres and Margins'. Full details of the programme, and details of how to book a place, can be found in this edition of the bulletin, and it reads as very exciting, with sessions that focus upon gender, ideas and controversies, visual culture, and texts. I would like to thank Birkbeck College for generously supplying us with a venue, and Julian Swann who has been very encouraging throughout, and seen to it that the School of History provided us with sponsorship.

The conference will be followed by our AGM, to be held at 6.30pm on 20 July, in room 152. And then on Saturday 28 July we round up the year with Karen Chester's Harlots and Harridans Walk, which will be organised on the same lines as her previous walk.

Events for the next year, 2007-8 are looking very promising, and we hope that the speakers will include Ronald Hutton, Vanessa Harding, Laura Stewart, Susan James and Richard Williams, with subjects ranging from Spinoza to the visual culture of the English Reformation.

Finally, I wish to thank the committee members for their hard work, and the staff in the Students' Union and History offices for their help in promoting our events.

I look forward to seeing you at on 28 June.

With best wishes,

Stephen Brogan
President, Birkbeck Early Modern Society
http://www.bbk.ac.uk/hca/current/societies/#earlymodern
http://www.bbk.ac.uk/susocieties/earlymodern/index.htm

THE BULLETIN: EDITOR'S WELCOME

Welcome to Issue Three of the *Birkbeck Early Modern Society Bulletin.* A number of academics, members and non-members have made some kind comments about the *Bulletin*, but for this publication to grow it is important that as many members as possible contribute. I am therefore pleased to report that more people have volunteered to write for this edition and I hope that as the year rolls on more of you will feel sufficiently encouraged to contribute an article or a review. The *Bulletin* has doubled in size since our first issue last year, with the introduction of several new features and the lengthening of existing ones. It is my intention that by Issue Six this publication will number some fifty pages, which I feel is about the right size for a society such as ours. I want to make the *Bulletin* a publication that we can be proud of, interesting to read and pleasant to look at, full of news and views, with informative and thought-provoking articles.

In Issue Three we have reviews of past society events, theatre, opera, television and art exhibitions, plus book reviews and a quiz, as well as notification of forthcoming events both by this society and other comparable bodies. We also have an Early Modern problem page (sic) and reviews of two recent Society events that were free to members: a guided walk on Pepys and a visit to the Hogarth exhibition at Tate Britain.

I hope that this publication is of interest to all those fascinated by the Early Modern era and that it will provide information to our membership on what the Society is doing. Please contact me for any information regarding the *Bulletin.* The next issue will be out in the Autumn of 2007.

Have a really wonderful summer and I hope to see many of you at one or more of our events.

John Croxon
Editor
John M Croxon/Environmental Services/Berkeley/BNFL@BNFL

RECENT EVENTS

A Review of Prof. Munro Price (Bradford University) 'July 1789: A Reappraisal' 19 March 2007, Birkbeck College, University of London

'What happened on 14 July 1789?' Of course we all know that the Bastille was stormed and the French Revolution was ignited. Prof. Price challenged the very Whiggish view that the Revolution was a progressive move by taking a fresh look at primary sources and reappraising the people and events of the summer of 1789. Traditional views leave a central paradox unexplained: Why did Louis XVI take the political offensive while remaining militarily defensive on 11 July 1789?

Three powerful royals, Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette, and Charles Phillipe, comte d'Artois, were at the heart of events with d'Artois playing a bigger role than he is usually credited with. Price's thesis is that a court-led conspiracy of July 1789 to restore order in Paris went wrong when d'Artois pushed for the dismissal of Jacques Necker. The Paris mob was galvanized and, with rumours of a general uprising flying, the military leadership knew that the 30,000 or so troops they had were not enough to contain the city (and prevent an attack on Paris). They might have needed as many as 100,000 troops.

Price's research took him back to original correspondence, especially that of the Baron de Breteuil. Breteuil was the court party's choice to replace Necker and he advised caution. But d'Artois ignored his recommendation to keep Necker in place until enough troops could be gathered to enforce order and the result was the storming of the Bastille. The court conspirators sprang their plan too soon and Parisians had time to organise. The Breteuil correspondence provides proof of a complicated court conspiracy. Another useful source is the diary of the Marquis de Bombelles. Bombelles was Breteuil's secretary and protégé and his memoir provides evidence of the attitudes of Breteuil and the court party during and following the events of July 1789.

Possibly because Louis was afflicted with clinical depression as the crisis unfolded, he was unable to take charge of the situation. Louis was sympathetic to the Third Estate and willing to consider constitutional reform. Marie Antoinette was unreliable and d'Artois was set against constitutional reform. D'Artois took charge of the situation and damaged Breteuil's careful planning. The events of 14 July were the result of d'Artois's premature dismissal of Necker which in turn was the result of d'Artois's fear that Louis would accept the loss of the absolute power of the monarchy.

KAREN BASTON

Professor Munro Price (centre)

The audience settle down prior to the Munro Price event

A Review of Prof. Brian Vickers (School of Advanced Studies, Univ. of London) 'Trust in *Othello*' 16 May 2007, Birkbeck College, University of London

Although Prof. Vickers described *Othello* as 'the most depressing play in the English language', his discussion of the question of trust in the play made for an entertaining and lively lecture.

Vickers examined the actions of Shakespeare's characters from historical, sociological, psychological, and philosophical standpoints. The main focus was, of course, on Iago. To us, his actions are untrustworthy and devious but to the characters in the play he is a paragon of trustworthiness. Shakespeare's audience would have been shocked to see a person of Iago's position – an ensign – behaving in such a negative way. A key to understanding the play is recognising that everyone in the play is 'Iago's dupe' until the very end when his wife Emilia realises that her husband is a liar.

Vickers called on studies in social relationships to show how *Othello* provides excellent examples of damage to reputations, deception, betrayal, and mistrust as Iago creates a state of chaos. Act 3, scene 3 is 'pure Shakespeare' as Iago destroys Othello. Othello can no longer trust anyone and his world collapses. His fit in Act 4, scene 1 shows that the chaos is complete and that Othello believes only Iago.

The play's trust situations can be represented using triangles diagramming the current holder of trust and for most of the time this is Iago who continues to maintain the power derived from others' trust in him throughout. [If it weren't for his asides, we'd probably trust him, too!]

Vickers provided a useful handout with quotes from sociologists and philosophers to help define the idea of trust and its role in human relationships. Far from being an issue only for the world of literary study, the question of trust has relevance in our modern world of spin. How can we tell what is true and who do we trust to tell us the truth?

The reason the play is the 'most depressing' is that there is no consolation for anyone and what Coleridge called Iago's 'motiveless malignancy' has destroyed lives.

Prof. Vickers has given us an excellent introduction to *Othello*. Those of us going to see the play on 1 June at the Globe will have much to continue to discuss!

Karen Baston

Pepys Guided Walk

On a bitterly cold morning in March, just over twenty members of the Birkbeck Early Modern Society gathered together on Tower Hill for a guided walk devoted to the celebrated diarist Samuel Pepys. Our guide was fellow Society member Karen Chester, a registered City of London Guide and MA history graduate.

Karen began by detailing a few facts about Pepys and then we were on our way. The walk covered a number of different areas in the City associated with Pepys; Seething Lane where he both lived and worked, St Olave's where Pepys worshiped and where he and his wife Elizabeth are buried, the site of London's first coffee house, the George and Vulture pub, Simpsons Chop House, and many more.

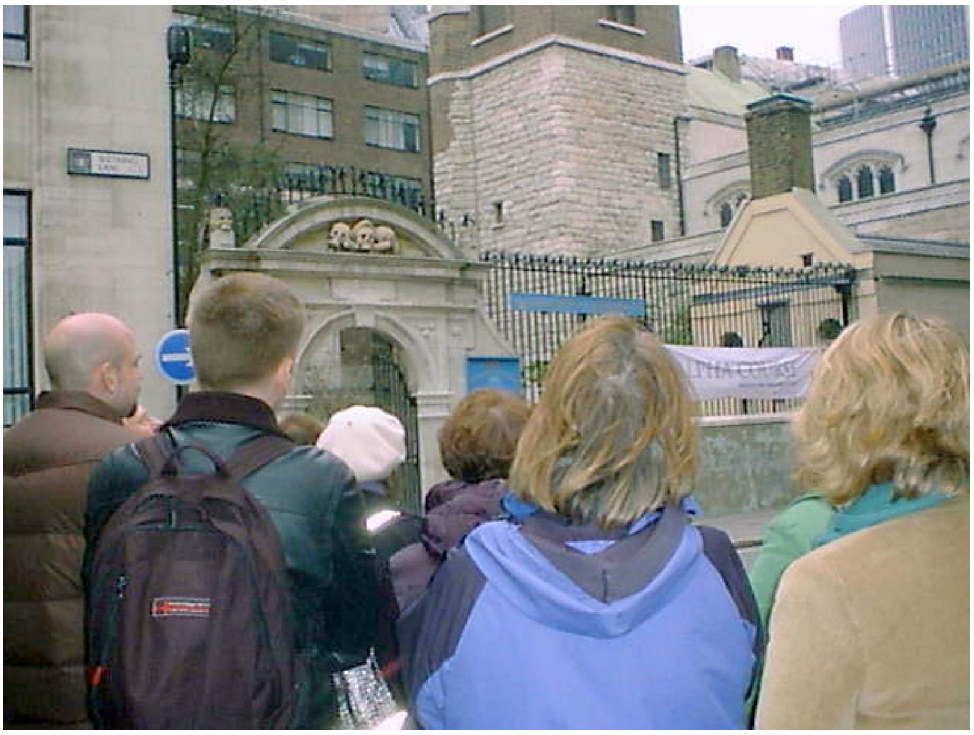
The walk lasted some three hours with a break about two-thirds through. I can honestly say that I enjoyed all of it. There was only one thing wrong, the weather… it was freezing!!! I am not sure if I have ever been so cold in my life. At one point I spied a vent system emitting warm air into the street and I rushed to stand by it and feel, for just a few precious minutes, some warmth return to my frozen body. I kid you not, this was weather that would have discouraged Shackleton.

When the time came to go into the pub we almost sprinted there; everywhere around me people ordered coffee laced with brandy, all except for two idiots, one female one male (okay, that was me), who drank cold pints of London Pride. I can only plead that the cold must have affected our brains.

Karen provided us with a wonderful collection of anecdotes about Pepys' life and times; his personal, with its many extramarital liaisons, illnesses, his love of music, dancing, drink and of course sex, and his professional life with his rise up the greasy pole until he fell from favour and was incarcerated in the Tower, his rise to heights again, and then his resignation following the fall of James II. She also gave us a glimpse of his personal observations upon marriage, corruption, the Commonwealth, the return of the Stuarts, court life, war, the Great Fire, public executions and much more. It is worth noting that Pepys was a Londoner through and through, and this coloured his attitude to life. Pepys was an intriguing man and it was clear from Karen's tour that she found him such. This was a marvellous walk, with Karen able to bring to life an absorbing and fascinating character. She managed to elicit Pepys' charm, wit, decency and his dedication to his work, explaining his motivation and raison d'ètre. If only it hadn't been quite so cold! When we do another one of Karen's walks it is going to be in the summer!

At the end of the walk some of us returned to the pub where we thanked Karen for a really enjoyable day and where we toasted Samuel Pepys. Pints of London Pride now seemed somehow fitting.

If you wish to join one of Karen's walks independently from the Society then there are a number to choose from, many covering topics and people from the Early Modern era. Her web site is: bigsmokewalks.com and her e-mail address is: info@bigsmokewalks.com
John Croxon



St Olave's Church

We are dismayed to find that the George and Vulture Pub is shut…

Karen explains, we listen

A welcome shelter from the cold

ARTS REPORT

THEATRE

The Crucible: The Gielgud Theatre, London

This was an incredibly powerful production of Arthur Miller's classic tale of the Salem Witch Trials of the 1690's, famously written during the anti-Communist McCarthyism of 1950's America and intended by Miller as a comment upon the parallels of the two events.

I was delighted to find that this production was in period dress. There is nothing wrong with setting a production in a different era, and indeed, that can produce incredible results, but for all its modern parallels, setting this play in 1690's Salem seems to bring out the sheer energy of the play and the intensity, frenzy and terror of the townsfolk and of the age in which they lived.

We are confronted with girls dancing in a phosphorescent forest, who feel the displeasure of the Puritan zeal of the town when they are discovered. In an effort to avoid blame, the girls start to denounce others for inciting them to Devil worship and panic begins to spread throughout the town. Miller superbly depicts the temptation to confess and name names, particularly when it allows the opportunity to settle old scores, and this is depicted with catastrophic force.

Abigail, the niece of Reverend Parris, names Elizabeth Proctor as a witch in revenge for her dismissal as a maid after an affair with John Proctor. John tries, increasingly desperately, to clear his wife's name and end the witch trials, which brings him into conflict with the authoritarian leaders of the community. When he in turn is named, his spell in prison where he is tortured makes him sign a false confession. But at the last moment he recants and tears it up. His commitment to the truth and his refusal to betray himself are more important to him than his life. His realises that if he complies with the authorities then he is effectively signing away his status as a free man.

Some people will see plenty of parallels with modern conflicts but sensibly this production does not over-emphasise this; rather, it concentrates upon the events in Salem, demonstrating how suppression of freedom and religious and political intolerance can rip a community apart.

This is a fantastic production; the set is wonderful and all the cast give superb performances, but central to the play is Iain Glen's magnificent portrayal of John Proctor. Glen confronts us with passion, intelligence and dignity as the flawed but heroic Proctor. When I left the theatre I felt drained; this was an outstanding production that bombarded my thoughts and clawed at my heart, and it proved a true testament to one of the greatest playwrights of the twentieth century.

John Croxon.

Twelfth Night: The Old Vic Theatre, London

'In *Twelfth Night*, on the island of Illyria nothing is quite what it seems. Shipwrecks, storms, late night drinking, duels and broken hearts make fertile ground for Shakespeare's most beautiful and haunting of comedies. Trapped in the whirligig of time, a woman has her love for a man awakened by a woman. A man dressed as a woman disguises himself as a boy. What you will is what you are, and true nature is revealed by deception. Over the course of the play, Shakespeare takes us on a journey that constantly reminds us that the opposite is always true.

Propeller mix a rigorous approach to the text with a modern physical aesthetic. Their work, which imbues Shakespeare's stories with a freshness that appeals to young and old alike, has received acclaim around the world.'
The Old Vic description of Twelfth *Night* as performed by Propeller.

Propeller are an all male company that have performed Shakespeare to critical acclaim, not least because the female roles are played by men in women's clothes as opposed to convincing cross-dressers. By playing with gender, biological sex and sexuality in this manner, they are able to raise many complex issues, and tease out numerous subtleties from within the text. This liberationist attitude makes for compelling theatre, and it is not surprising that they have a cult following. Their *Twelfth Night* was energetic and refreshing, and a pertinent reminder that Shakespeare doesn't 'belong' to the middle classes that frequent Stratford Upon Avon.

For more information see http://www.propeller.org.uk/current-productions.htm

Stephen Brogan

OPERA

Thomas Adès's Opera 'The Tempest': Royal Opera House, Covent Garden

At the age of 35, Thomas Adès has become a major new opera composer. Adès's first opera 'Powder Her Face', a dramatisation of the life of Margaret, Duchess of Argyll, was first performed in 1995, whilst his second, *'The Tempest'*, was premièred at Covent Garden in February 2004. *'The Tempest'* recently returned to the Royal Opera House with Adès again conducting the work himself and the same excellent cast of singers. Adès's opera refashions Shakespeare's play to create a powerful operatic version of the famous story of the magician Prospero in love with his books and his innocent daughter Miranda on their magical isle. Although the essence of the story is retained, rather than producing a direct setting of the play, Adès and the librettist, Meredith Oakes, have instead opted to draw out certain aspects such as Prospero's autocratic nature, whilst condensing others to allow the music to flow.

The opera opens with a surge of music reflecting the developing storm, the stage revealing a dark forbidding sky lit by sharp fluorescent outlines within which a luminous ship gradually descends. This, the first example of the continued clever use of lighting, conjures up a magical world on the semi-abstract stage set. Prospero, sung superbly by Simon Keenlyside in a tattered suit, half top-coat and half lounge suit,

with heavy Adam Ant style eye make-up, is a commanding, yet tormented, presence on stage. Throughout the opera, the brass signalling Prospero's authority is opposed by the strings of the genuine magic of the island implying that it is never quite under his control. Caliban, played outstandingly by Ian Bostridge, is wonderfully weird, but also very much aware of his noble background. Ariel, in striking black and acid yellow from head to toe, was sung by Cynthia Sieden in a startling and ethereally high coloratura that was completely otherworldly in sound and which must make her hard to replace in this role.

At the end of Act 1, the drama is set in motion when the King of Naples's son, Ferdinand (sung by Toby Spence as a conventional romantic hero), enters the enchanted world and meets the virginal Miranda (sung by Christine Rice as a more unusual mezzo-soprano heroine). In Act 2, the King of Naples (Philip Langridge) and his courtiers appear shipwrecked and bewildered by their strange experience that has left them unharmed. There is a poignant aria from Naples as he laments the seeming loss of his son, actually confined by Prospero in an unseen cage around which the unsuspecting court wander. Caliban also has a deeply felt and beautifully lyrical aria as he sings bewitchingly to tempt two foolish soldiers to do his bidding and kill Prospero for the fair Miranda and rule of the island. The Act closes with a moving and sensual love duet between, the now freed, Ferdinand and Miranda.

Act 3 opens with the increasingly desperate court wandering through dreamlike surroundings. Starving, they are enticed by Prospero with a magnificent feast then, bent on revenge, he punishes them as the vision bursts into flames. As the work draws to a close, Adès's music changes to sweeter sounds with a quintet of reconciliation as Prospero accepts the union of Ferdinand and Miranda and releases the court from the island's spell. Although on stage, and musically, the tension with his brother, Antonio, remains unresolved. The opera concludes with a wonderfully evocative song by Caliban as he awakes from his dream and surveys the world of which he is ruler, whilst Ariel melts into the air celebrating her freedom with her stratospheric and unforgettable sound.

I saw 'The Tempest' at its original première in 2004 and again this year and on both occasions it received a deservedly tremendous reception. Adés's music wonderfully conjures up Shakespeare's enchanted island and its inhabitants and, particularly with such a marvellous cast, 'The Tempest' makes a truly magical evening.

Sue Dale

ART EXHIBITIONS

Hogarth: Tate Britain

Members of the Birkbeck Early Modern Society began congregating from just after 9.00 a.m. at Tate Britain in Pimlico. By 9.30 a.m. everyone but one had turned up; quite a feat for those of us suffering gigantic hangovers. Two and half hours later the last few members drifted out of the exhibition, an exhibition that had fulfilled everyone's expectations.

This is a huge exhibition, encompassing ten rooms full of Hogarth's works. I was struck by two thoughts: one being the sheer range of the artist; political and social satire, portraiture, engraving and history painting; the other is his modernity. Yes, Hogarth defined one particular period of time, the 18th century, like no other British artist before or since, but his work also resonates with the early 21st century with its focus upon sexuality, social integration, political corruption, drunkenness, religion, credulity, city life, crime, the rich, the poor, charity and patriotism.

William Hogarth endured a miserable early life, living in debtors' lodgings near the Fleet Prison; perhaps it was this that enabled him to cast such a keen eye upon society. Certainly, these observations dominate the exhibition and nearly all the favourite works are here, including A Rake's Progress, Marriage-A-la-Mode, Beer Street and Gin Lane. The satire still bites after all this time, and despite the profusion of satire since the 1960's there is still no-one to match Hogarth's deliciously cruel wit. Witness the attack upon the freemasons with their Grand Master having his arse kissed by a novitiate, or the observation upon the Mary Tofts case where quite eminent and learned people actually believed her claims to have given birth to rabbits. Although these prints attract the eye, one must not ignore the portraiture. David Garrick as Shakespeare's Richard III on the eve of Bosworth, the full-length portrait of Thomas Coram the founder of the Founding Hospital which brings out the bluff, solid decency of the man. The Coram Children who are shown not formally but at ease and with a vivid, animated cat in the background staring at a caged bird.

Hogarth was a Londoner, he only went abroad once, to Calais where he was arrested as a spy and quickly returned to England. He didn't even venture very far around this county. His work reflects this; he was a truly English and a London painter. What this exhibition also proves is that Hogarth was an adept and superb artist, able to paint a range of subjects.

Put aside lots of time for the Hogarth exhibition; there is so much to see that you will be there for hours. As the Society members drifted off for Sunday lunch, all effused enthusiastically about the exhibition, and all were in agreement that Hogarth was a truly great British artist.

John Croxon.

A New World: England's First View of America: The British Museum

At the heart of the British Museum's *A New World* exhibition is a set of watercolours made by John White on voyages with Martin Frobisher in search of the Northwest Passage in the late 1570s and with Sir Richard Grenville to Virginia in the 1580s. These remarkable drawings record a lost world but also reflect the culture of the artist. The Inuit and Algonquian peoples are depicted as (mostly) friendly, welcoming, and, although not Christian, civilised. White poses some of them in the familiar postures of Elizabethan pageantry but some of these are portraits of individuals as well. White, along with his fellow artist Thomas Harriot, also recorded the flora and fauna of the new land revealing an abundant world which was ripe for colonisation and crying out for future colonists.

In 1587 White became the Governor of the 'City of Raleigh' and attempted to establish a colony on Roanoke Island with 115 colonists including his daughter, the future mother of the first English child to be born in the New World, Virginia Dare. White returned to England for supplies and reinforcements; he was unable to return to Roanoke until 1590 when he found the colonists had disappeared. Even as Theodor de Bry published *A brief and true report of the new found land of Virginia* with engravings based on White's drawings, the first English attempt at colonisation failed. It wasn't until 1607 that Jamestown provided lasting colonial success.

The story of Roanoke and subsequent American history give White's drawings a poignant quality. The drawings show an ideal world that never was and never would or could be. Although some of the drawings were damaged over time, they still provide a vivid, captivating and immediate snapshot of a lost world and a lost opportunity.

The paintings are joined by maps showing the known world, instruments of navigation, the equipment the artists used to create the watercolours, and Dr Dee's obsidian Aztec mirror. This is not a large exhibition - you will be able to see everything in about an hour - but it is impressive and thought provoking.

A New World is on display until 17th June. It is supported by a programme of events at the British Museum including lectures, concerts, a conference, and a film season. See the British Museum website:
http://www.thebritishmuseum.ac.uk/anewworld/events for details.

Karen Baston

Citizens and Kings Portraits in the Age of Revolution, 1760-1830:
Royal Academy of Arts

This is an enthralling exhibition, containing a wide variety of artists such as Goya, Reynolds, David and Delacroix, with portraits of kings, emperors, statesmen and children, divided into nine categories: Rulers; the Status Portrait before, during and after the Revolution; the Cultural Portrait; the Artist, image and self-image; the Portrait after the Antique; the Family Portrait; the Allegorical Portrait; Nature and Grace, the Figure in the Landscape; Restoration, Romanticism and Realism.

The huge portraits that greet one upon entrance to the exhibition are of rulers; George III, Queen Charlotte, George IV, Louis XVI, Catherine the Great, and Napoleon, and it is the sheer size of the portraits that dominates one's first thoughts. However, with the juxtaposition of such portraits other subtleties can be seen. Louis and Catherine are presented as symbols of absolute monarchy, whilst the dominance of the coronation chair to George III hints of the constitutional limits imposed after 1688. Napoleon is crowned in all his imperial majesty with a nod to Charlemagne and perhaps to Christ. Then we are confronted with the soberly dressed Washington, presented as a legislator, with inkwell and volumes.

The formality of the former portraits is replaced by a more intimate depiction, perhaps best shown by Reynolds' affectionate portrayal of Georgina, Duchess of Devonshire with her daughter.

It is though David's extraordinary iconic picture of the dead Marat in the bath that stayed with me long after I had left the exhibition. It was both a very familiar image and yet still a breathtaking one.

This was a wonderful exhibition of portraiture, fascinating in its journey from baroque to romantic, taking in image and propaganda and finishing with a more unpretentious and intimate portrayal of people, as well as chronicling both the changes from absolutism to a more democratic form of government, and the steady advancement of a middle class.

John Croxon.

***Canaletto in England: A Venetian Artist Abroad 1746-1755*.**
Dulwich Picture Gallery, January 24 to April 15, 2007.

Giovanni Antonio Canal, better known as Canaletto, is perhaps best known for his paintings of the Venetian scenery. Canaletto was born in 1697 and died in 1768, (making him a contemporary of William Hogarth, whose works were recently displayed at Tate Britain).

Between 1746 and 1755, Canaletto produced fine paintings in England of England and elsewhere. These paintings are celebrated in a fine display at Dulwich Picture Gallery. The eighteenth-century was a period of intense Anglo-Venetian cultural exchange. English appreciation of Venetian arts, acquired through the 'Grand Tour', had created a buoyant art market back home. Canaletto cleverly exploited this with the help of his agent, Joseph Smith, who as British Consul to Venice was ideally placed to promote Canaletto's work.

The exhibition at Dulwich consists of sixty drawings and paintings with topics ranging from London scenes, country houses, vistas of Italian cities and *capriccio*, or fantasy pictures. Thus, for example, the viewer can admire *Westminster Bridge, with the Lord Mayor's Procession on the Thames* (1746-47) and *Warwick Castle, seen from the South Front* (1748-49) and *Capriccio of a Renaissance Triumphal Arch seen from the Portico of a Palace* (1753-55) in one exhibition. At time of writing (June 2007) these were viewable by accessing the internet link below:

Writing as a non-expert, I found Canaletto's pictures to be beautiful and detailed. Their collective display was very impressive. The exhibition was well laid out and the viewing notes provided were detailed and informative.

Internet Links:
www.ycba.yale.edu/information/pdfs/mediakits/06-**canaletto**-release.pdf
www.dulwichpicturegallery.org.uk/

Robin Rowles

TELEVISION

'The Shakespeare Code'
AN EARLY MODERN ADVENTURE WITH DOCTOR WHO

Doctor Who is no stranger to the early modern period. He's on first name terms with Leonardo da Vinci, his TARDIS escaped from the flames of Pudding Lane in 1666, and just last series he 'snogged Madame de Pompadour'. Given that *Doctor Who* has a target audience of children, this episode featuring witchcraft owes more to J. K. Rowling than to Keith Thomas.

It's 1599 and three witchy women are keen to see a new Shakespeare play called *Love's Labour's Won*, the sequel to *Love's Labour's Lost*. Are they hopeless romantics or is something more sinister afoot?

Meanwhile, the Doctor is showing Martha Jones the life of the time traveller. London in 1599 proves not to be so very different from its 2007 incarnation. The Doctor points out ethnic diversity and recycling, and equates a prophet's prediction that the world will end in flames with global warming.

The TARDIS has materialized near the Globe Theatre and a Shakespeare play is on. It's a treat for Martha but the Doctor also relishes the chance to see 'the most human human who ever lived'. Shakespeare is lively, has hair, and bounds onto the stage, plays to the crowd and promises them the new play sooner than expected.

The Doctor and Martha meet the author and are soon involved in an adventure featuring witchcraft (or at least something that looks like it), period settings including the Globe, lots of quotes from Shakespeare's plays, and an attempt to take over the earth by a race of aliens called the Carrionites. Martha gets a little help from Harry Potter to save the day and there's even a cameo by Gloriana herself.

'The Shakespeare Code' is not a masterpiece of early modern history but it is fun and it shows a side of Shakespeare that is often lost in traditional historical and literary contexts. Shakespeare is portrayed as smart, funny, and confident. He's an appealing character and very unlike his stiff portraits.

The use of quotes from Shakespeare's plays is carefully thought out and accurate for 1599. When Martha remarks that Shakespeare wrote a play about witches, the Doctor corrects her since *Macbeth* had not been written yet. Shakespeare is also mourning his son, Hamnet, and thinking about the play that will become *Hamlet*. Even the youngest Shakespeare scholars will enjoy recognising quotes and words from the plays.

The 'witches' conform to their early modern stereotype and have all the traditional trappings some of which are used in the plot.

Doctor Who Confidential: Trivia
'The Shakespeare Code' is the first drama to be filmed in the Globe. To recreate Elizabethan England, director Charles Palmer filmed in London and Warwick.

Love's Labour's Won is a lost Shakespeare play dating from *c.* 1598-1603. Up to 1,500 printed copies may have been in circulation but possibly without the author's name on the title page, as was the case with many of the early editions of Shakespeare's plays.

KAREN BASTON

FORTHCOMING SOCIETY EVENTS

Events 2006-7

All events start at 6.30pm, and are followed by refreshments and Questions

- 28th June 2007 - Dr. Filippo de Vivo (Birkbeck College), 'News on the Rialto: Rumours and Politics in Renaissance Venice', Room B35, Birkbeck College, Malet Street

- 7th July 2007 – Conference: 'Centres and Margins' Room 152, Birkbeck College, Malet Street
- 20 July 2007 Early Modern Society AGM Room 152, Birkbeck College, Malet Street
- 28th July 2007 – Guided Walk: Karen Chester Big Smoke Walks 'Harlots and Harridans' St Paul's Underground Station

For further information on membership and activities contact the secretary, Laura Jacobs: l.jacobs@english.bbk.ac.uk

Membership is £5 for the year. Non-members may attend events at a cost of £3 each.

Big Smoke Guided Walks

Big Smoke Walks take place whatever the weather, rain or shine. Walks last approximately two to two and a half hours, including any breaks.

The pace is gentle and most walks cover more history than mileage. You'll discover secret back alleys and hidden treasures that even Londoners have missed.

To join a scheduled walk simply turn up at the appointed time and meeting place and pay your guide at the start of the walk.

Karen Chester: bigsmokewalks.com

The Birkbeck Early Modern Society

News on the Rialto: Rumours and Politics in Renaissance Venice

A lecture by Dr. Filippo de Vivo

6.30 pm, 28 June, Room B35, Malet St.

Free to members £3 non-members £5 membership

BIRKBECK EARLY MODERN SOCIETY CONFERENCE

CENTRES AND MARGINS

Saturday 7th July 2007, 10.00-16.30

Room 152, Birkbeck College, Malet St, London WC1E 7HX

Birkbeck Early Modern Society is delighted to announce our first student conference. We aim to provide a safe and constructive space for students to present their research, network and exchange ideas with peers from a range of disciplines. The day promises to be an ideal forum to showcase student research and to provide an opportunity to practise presentation skills.

The theme, 'Centres and Margins' is open to broad interpretation, and will include the following speakers:

Stephen Brogan MA (Birkbeck College) - A 'monster of metamorphosis' reassessing the Chevalier/Chevalière d'Eon's change of gender

Karen Chester MA (Birkbeck College) - On the Trail of Moll Cutpuse

Alexander Douglas - Human Nature in Early Modern Political Philosophy

Oliver Harris MA History Student UCL - Shakespeare's Early Triumphs: The Iconography of Conquests in *Titus Andronicus* and *Henry VI*

Laura Jacobs MA (Birkbeck College), 3rd year PhD student - John Foxe (1516/17-1587) and English Anti-Semitism

Paul Lay BA History Student Birkbeck - The Influence of Venice on England's Troubles: Restoring the Balance

Nadiya Midgley Birkbeck research student - The 'Sacred Theory of the Earth' and the 'Anatomy of the Earth': using data and controversy to form Early Modern geological ideas

Jan Ravenscoft Birkbeck 3rd year PhD student - Imagining monsters: a reinterpretation of Bartolomè Gonzâlez's portrait of Queen Margarita of Austria with her Dwarf, c 1603 (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches)

Richard Tilbury - The Renaissance of the Bearded woman: 'An examination of Ribera's problematic portrait of Magdalena Ventura

For tickets or further information contact the secretary, Laura Jacobs: l.jacobs@english.bbk.ac.uk

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

This section concerns those events staged by other societies which we feel might be of interest to our membership.

London Aesthetics Forum: Institute of Philosophy Meetings

- 13th June 2007, 5.00 p.m. – Kendall Walton (Michigan), 'Poets, Musical Personae and Speechwriters' Room MB532, Main Building, Birkbeck College
- 28th June 2007 4.00 p.m. - Jerrold Levinson (Maryland), 'Beauty in not One: The many species of Beauty' Room ST275 Second Floor, Stewart House, 32, Russell Square WC1

Birkbeck Early Modern Reading Group

- 12th June, 6.00 p.m. – 'Thomas Hobbes The Leviathan, Part 1, Chapter VI, and Part II, Chapter XVII' Room 503, 30, Russell Square

The Renaissance of Subjectivity (one day conference)

- 19th June – Graham Holderness, John Lee, Russ McDonald, Simon Palfrey, Tiffany Stern, Richard Wilson, 'The Self in Shakespeare's Renaissance and Ours' Royal Holloway University of London, Egham, Surrey

Guided Walk

- Friday, 8th June, 7.00 p.m. – Karen Chester, Big Smoke Walks, The Bloody, Awful Pub Walk: murderers and martyrs, ghosts and gore, revolutions, executions, graverobbers and poltergeists, St Paul's Underground Station

John Coffin Memorial Lecture/Recital

- 12th June, 7.00 p.m. – Lucie Skeaping and Robin Jeffrey, 'Have I Got News For Thee: English Broadside Ballads of the Seventeenth Century' London House, Goodenough College

Symposium on Milton and the Law

- 29th June, 9.30 a.m. – Thomas Corns, Joad Raymond, David Harris Sacks, Lynne Greenberg, Rosanna Cox, Martin Dzelzainis, Peter C, Herman, 'Milton and the Law' Queen Mary, University of London

BOOK REVIEW

I hope that many of you will send in your reviews of newly published books and the odd old book. The only criteria being that it deals with a subject within the Early Modern period, roughly the end of the fifteenth century through to the end of the eighteenth century and that the book is still in print.

John Croxon

The Invention of Childhood, by Hugh Cunningham with The Voices of Children by Michael Morpurgo, BBC Books

In this book Hugh Cunningham presents a complete chronological history of British childhood over the past one thousand years. He uses a huge amount of primary sources, such as diaries, letters, newspaper reports and nursery rhymes to explore the personal stories of families throughout the ages.

The book shows how the lives of children were influenced by religious changes, mortality, economic factors, books and notions of what is acceptable within society. Ideas of when childhood starts and ends, and how it differs from adulthood, have undergone huge changes over the centuries, producing major transformations in the lives of children. Although childhood has always been recognized as a distinct phase in life, the prolonged version children now enjoy is something relatively recent. The book highlights both the way the lives of children in the past differed from those of today and the similarities between past and modern childhoods.

The Invention of Childhood was a major Radio 4 series and this book is accompanied by an audio book. Both book and radio series are interesting but the book can be somewhat dry whereas the radio series adds a certain immediacy with its use of different voices that bring the story of childhood to life, and if you are interested in this subject I would probably recommend the audio book over the written page.

Coram's Children: The London Foundling Hospital in the Eighteenth Century by Ruth K. McClure, Yale University Press, 1981

More than twenty years after its publication this book continues to be a key study of the development of the Foundling Hospital. McClure provides a detailed account of the development of Thomas Coram's plans for a Hospital for foundlings in London and the way in which these became reality.

McClure offers an explanation of the way in which the State and the Church in many other European countries sought to address the needs of foundling children. She argues that these efforts were motivated by a desire to produce fit young people to serve the State as soldiers and to preserve infant's souls through baptism. In England, she believes, this motivation was undermined by Calvinist influences.

McClure describes the persistence with which Coram pursued his objective of establishing a hospital for foundlings and the success with which his efforts were rewarded. She records the impressive list of benefactors he attracted, which included Hogarth and Handel and many members of the aristocracy. She explores the influence that political and economic forces had on the growth and subsequent retrenchment of the care provided.

McClure's account of the conditions which led to children being left at the hospital is illustrated by the poignant evidence of the tokens attached to the clothing of infants abandoned at the gates of the hospital. The original items are available for examination in the Billet Books held at the London Metropolitan Archive. Her research provides detailed information about the daily lives of the children, their clothing, diet and medical care. The arrangements made for the placement and supervision of young children with families in the country and their care and training when they returned to the Hospital are described, as is their subsequent binding as apprentices or their placement in other employment. Throughout the book the reader is acutely aware of the way in which the fortunes of the Hospital and its residents were intimately linked to economic realities as well as changing ideas about the nature of society.

McClure draws attention to the principles espoused by the Hospital's Governors which included the belief that the standard of physical care, education, religious and moral instruction should be kept high but suitable to the children's station in life. The Governors also believed that they should experiment in new ways of doing things but not to change for the sake of change. The introduction of inoculation against smallpox in 1744 was an example of this principle in practice. Perhaps one of the most important principles underpinning the care provided for children was that each child should be known by their name and not by the number allocated at the time of their admission.

This book offers a detailed yet accessible analysis of the development and running of the Foundling Hospital and the waxing and waning of its fortunes.

Nigel Carter

Anne Neville: Queen to Richard III by Michael Hicks, Tempus

Michael Hicks is an astute historian who usually writes thoughtful and interesting books. This unfortunately, is not one of them. I have to admit to initial misgivings when discovering that the foreword is written by the dreadful Alison Weir. The biggest problem is that so little is known of Anne Neville's life, a fact that Hicks acknowledges early in the book. Time and time again he states 'we cannot know', 'doubtless she did', 'we do not know', 'surely she did', 'perhaps she would' and 'we have no detailed knowledge', and the same topics reappear with wearying regularity throughout the book. In the preface Hicks laments the lack of records concerned with Anne, however, anyone as closely associated with Richard III as Anne will sell books, something publisher and historian cannot resist.

Hicks suggests that Anne's intercession was not sought because she was marginalised with no influence, yet, two pages later he states that she deputised for Richard when he was away campaigning in France and in Scotland and at other times, and later he refers to how Sir William Knyvet thought it worthwhile paying her to escape punishment for treason.

When Hicks ventures an opinion he makes bold assertions that he fails to back up; such as stating that Richard was an egotist without specifying why he makes this claim, or he contradicts himself as when he states that Anne was another of Richard's victims whom he uses, exhausts and discards, but then goes on a page later to write that 'Anne and Richard enjoyed a genuinely companionate marriage'. This leads to one of Hicks most outlandish claims, that Anne enjoyed 'plenty of sex' on the grounds that she and Richard often slept in the same bed and continued to try for more children.

Every book like this has to have a new big point; Hicks' big point is the validity of Richard and Anne's marriage and his assertion of incest. Hicks makes the mistake of thinking that there was an impediment to two brothers marrying two sisters when in fact the law of affinity only prohibited one brother from successively marrying two sisters or two cousins. Hicks also states that Richard and Anne only applied to the Papacy for one dispensation and therefore deliberately lived in sin, whereas, it was inconceivable that they married without seeking to secure these essential permissions.

This book will sell because people are interested in Richard III and his life and times but it does very little to add to that knowledge. It is really only for War of the Roses enthusiasts. It will take its place on my bookshelves but then I have one whole shelf devoted to the fifteenth century alone, however, I cannot see it being taken down and opened very often.

John Croxon

The House by the Thames and the people who lived there
by Gillian Tindall, Pimlico

If one walks across the Millennium Bridge from St Paul's towards Southwark, one is confronted by, on the right the old Bankside Power Station now transformed into Tate Modern and on the left by the new Globe Theatre, sandwiched neatly between these two goliaths is an old and elegant house. It has stood there for some four hundred and fifty years and over those centuries it has witnessed many changes. From its windows, people have watched ferrymen convey Elizabethans to and from the pleasures of Southwark, gazed in horror at the ravages of the Great Fire, seen fields and meadows turn into housing and industry, seen wharves and workshops built and then destroyed, seen the blitz light up the sky, and seen the area transformed by tourism.

This is a fascinating tale of one part of London, of a house, and of the different characters who lived there. Gillian Tindall draws upon a mountain of research to breathe life into past events and in doing so captures the rich variety and changing nature of just one small part of the Capital. She chronicles how the house and Southwark has experienced 'ups and downs', she explains why this house survived when those all around it were demolished, and how it became a home for merchants, clerks, and even a film star.

Tindall is a miniaturist historian who gradually reveals the secrets of one house like a clever detective. In doing so she provides a captivating insight into just one part of London's past.

John Croxon

Exorcism and Enlightenment: Johann Joseph Gassner and the Demons of Eighteenth-Century Germany byH.C. Eric Middelfort Yale, 2005

Johann Joseph Gassner (1727-1779) was a Catholic priest who discovered that he had an extraordinary ability to perform exorcisms. However, he claimed to be able to use his power to cure human ailments such as anxiety, epilepsy, lame limbs, nausea and tremors, all of which he attributed to the devil. His practice involved a spectacular initial procedure: he called on the devil to show himself, after which Gassner re-directed the pain or ailment in order to provide empirical proof of possession; and so for example, a swelling in a neck visibly moved around to other areas of the body, accompanied by the dramatic cries and contortions of the 'patient'. Only once he had proved the reality of the devil's presence did he then perform the exorcism. He treated thousands of people, rich and poor, Protestant and Catholic.

Midelfort's book is carefully written, erudite and engaging. He uses Gassner as a case study through which to analyse numerous conceptual issues associated with the German Enlightenment. He has chapters that address the political reality of the Hapsburg Empire, the place of magical thinking within society at this time, and the experience of healing; and he teases out the theological problems that were raised by Gassner and the devil for both Protestants and Catholics. Furthermore, he demonstrates the flaws within histories that seek to present a neat and tidy, theoretical Enlightenment, and that argue for the emergence of a disenchanted society. His discussion of Gassner as debated within the public sphere is a reminder that the counter-Enlightenment was a powerful force, and his comments on Habermas' model are stimulating. This book is essential reading for anyone who wishes to gain an understanding of the complex ideological battleground that was the Enlightenment.

Stephen Brogan

John Stubbs, John Donne: The Reformed Soul (London, Viking: 2006)

A Londoner, John Donne (1572-1631) was born and raised a Catholic. He studied at Oxford and the Inns of Court. Indeed his writing shows the influence of his training in the law and rhetoric, for example, *Pseudo- Martyr*, runs a highly competent technical defence of the 1605 Oath of Allegiance, urging Catholic compliance, whereas *Biathanatos*, a sustained treatise on the merits and demerits of self-murder, deploys the genre of paradox so successfully that it is extremely difficult to ascertain the author's opinion.

No one knows exactly when Donne became a Protestant but his conversion was likely to have occurred before he sailed with Essex to Cadiz in 1596. Donne became an MP in 1601 and by 1603 he was Secretary to the Lord Keeper, Sir Thomas Egerton. Arguably none of these prominent roles would have been granted to a person known to be attached to the Roman Church. Stubbs proposes that Donne's early acceptance of the Protestant faith may have been for political reasons. By contrast, Donne's heartfelt adoption of reformed theology was to develop slowly.

If Donne's conversion to Protestantism aided his career, his clandestine marriage to Anne More immediately consigned him to many years of struggle and disgrace. Donne's opportunity to re-enter public life came via the Church, and he regained favour and prominence as Dean of St Paul's. Donne had always been deeply aware of the suffering of those who had been persecuted for their faith, including members of his own family and was critical of sectarianism and religious intolerance.

Today, Donne is best known for his poetry, yet his verse was not printed until after his death. During Donne's lifetime, poems were steadily copied and circulated, surfacing in miscellanies and anthologies.

John Stubbs' literary biography registers Donne's continual struggle to reinvent himself during a lifetime beset by periods of ill health, financial insecurity and spiritual crises. *John Donne: The Reformed Soul* is a highly readable account of the life, the work and the times. Stubbes walks us through the houses, streets, taverns, theatres and churches of Donne's' London as well as providing some close readings of poems, sermons and treatises. This book is also an excellent study of the shifting allegiances and the rapid pace of change that characterised London during Donne's life. Best of all, this book is almost guaranteed make you want to read Donne writings themselves.

Laura Jacobs

Ask Agonistes: Birkbeck Early Modern Society's very own Agony Aunt

Dear Agonistes,

I am very worried about the effect that studying might have on my health. I have heard that 'students are most commonly troubled with gouts, catarrh, rheums, cachexia, bradypepsia, bad eyes, stone, colic, crudities, oppilations, vertigo, winds, consumptions, and all such diseases as come from over much sitting. My fellow students are for the most part, lean, dry, ill-coloured, they spend their fortunes, lose their wits, and many times their lives, and all through immoderate pains and extraordinary studies'. [1] *Can you help me?*

Democritus Jnr.

Dear Democritus Junior,
You are right to be alarmed. Studying is beset with perils. Marcilio Ficino wrote on the dangers of a sedentary existence and arduous mental effort that are so much a part of student life. Studying is a breeding ground for the melancholic humor. According to Ficino, melancholy is an evitable effect of too much study. Although I am somewhat sceptical about self help manuals, I heartily recommend Ficino's *De Studiosorum Sanitate Teunda*, originally published in 1482. You will have to learn neo-Latin to read it, but it repays study because it is full of helpful tips on how the student can keep her melancholy happily tempered. For example, if natural melancholy is properly mixed with warmer humors; precisely eight parts of blood, two of yellow bile and two of black bile, something wonderful happens. Your melancholy humor will be kindled, without overheating or burning, and will shine brilliantly. Tempered melancholy glows softly with a colour rather like gold tinged with purple. The good news is that the spirits that arise from it are most conducive to wonderful thoughts.[2] The active members of Birkbeck's Early Modern Society are living proof of this. Remember Thomas Elyot's uplifting message in his *Castel of Helth* (1541) that 'the natural melancholy kept in temperance profytheth moche to true judgement of the wyt'(fol. 73r). So you see, Democritus Junior, it is possible to do something about the melancholy that is caused by studying. However, I sense that you are not convinced, in which case you could always do as Timothy Bright, the inventor of shorthand and author of the first major treatise of melancholy in English, suggests. Bright says that 'studies have a great force to procure melancholy, if they be vehement, and of difficult matters, and high mysteries'. He recommends that you give up your course. However, Bright refuses to give any guarantees that removing the cause of the melancholy will bring about a complete cure, but there is a chance that, 'in the mind set free from such travail, the spirits which were before were partly wasted, might be restored', but then again they might not. [3]

Good luck with your studies
Aunt Agonistes

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[1] Holbrook Jackson ed. Robert Burton , *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (New York : New York Review Books) p. 302
[2] For a discussion of desirable aspects of melancholy see Lawrence Babb, ' The background of "Il Pensoroso" , *Studies in Philology*, 37 (1940) pp. 262-3
[3] Timothy Bright, *A Treatise of Melancholy* 1586 p. 236

Durer's icon of Melancholy portrays the dangers of obsessive study. Note the many symbols of mathematics and alchemy.

THE SUMMER QUIZ

1. What was the nickname of Cecily Neville?

2. Who was the father of Anne Neville?

3. Who painted ‘Marriage-A-la-Mode’?

4. Which Act was first passed in Britain in 1689?

5. Where was the house that Samuel Pepys lived until it burnt down in 1673?

6. What influential book on economics and philosophy was published in 1776?

7. Who married Catherine of Braganza in May 1662?

8. Which writer and satirist was born in Dublin in 1667?

9. Where is Samuel Pepys buried?

10. Who relieved the Siege of Gloucester in 1643?

11. What took place on Palm Sunday, 29th March 1461?

12. What did Sir Francis Drake do on the 19th April 1587?

13. Which two monarchs allied themselves against the Holy Roman Empire in the Treaty of Westminster in April 1527?

14. Who was beheaded for treason on Tower Hill in April 1747?

15. Which novelist founded the Bow Street Runners?

16. What was founded on the 24th May 1607?

17. Who died on her birthday on the 11th February 1503?

18. Who died on the 3rd September 1658?

19. What Act of parliament invalidated Edward IV’s marriage to Elizabeth Woodville and therefore disbarred their children from the throne?

20. Who was appointed Secretary to the Admiralty Board in June 1673?

Answers on the following page

ANSWERS TO THE SUMMER QUIZ

1. The Rose of Raby
2. Richard Neville (Warwick the Kingmaker)
3. William Hogarth
4. The Mutiny Act
5. Seething Lane, London
6. Wealth of Nations by Adam Smith
7. Charles II
8. Jonathan Swift
9. St Olave's Church, London
10. The earl of Essex
11. The battle of Towton
12. Attacked Cadiz in what became known as 'singing the king of Spain's beard'.
13. Henry VIII of England and Francis I of France
14. Simon Fraser, 11th Lord Lovat
15. Henry Fielding
16. Jamestown, Virginia
17. Elizabeth of York
18. Oliver Cromwell
19. The *Titulus regius*
20. Samuel Pepys

THE BIRKBECK EARLY MODERN SOCIETY

FOUNDED 2006

This society was founded in the belief that more study, discussion and interest in the Early Modern period is required. The society aims to promote, encourage and stimulate new research and discussion into a wide range of themes, including art and images, consumption, gender roles, literature, magic, politics, religion, science, sexuality and, travel and exploration.

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