THE BIRKBECK

EARLY MODERN

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CONTENTS

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Early Modernists,

Welcome to the fourth edition of our bulletin. I hope that you have had enjoyable summers and, if you're returning to or starting studies at Birkbeck, that you are ready and energised for the new term. I feel confident that our programme of events for 2007-8 will help to provide everyone with a stimulating agenda. In the autumn term our speakers address Macbeth and witchcraft, and Holbein at Henry VIII's court, and we have a Christmas party scheduled in too. The spring and summer term events provide subjects as diverse as researching the early modern family, plague and famine, and the Anglo-Scottish relationship during the mid-seventeenth century.

On behalf of the society, I wish to thank all of the speakers who have agreed to participate; and I am particularly delighted that two eminent and very busy academics have found time in their schedules for us. Prof. Ronald Hutton will be speaking in March about plague and famine, and Prof. Natalie Davis will be speaking in June about methodological issues connected to her 'Leo Africanus' work. Prof. Hutton appears regularly on television documentaries and is the author of numerous books ranging from a biography of Charles II to a history of magic in the modern period. Prof. Davis is known for her work on Martin Guerre – and was the principle historical adviser for the celebrated 1982 film – and for her ground-breaking book, *Fiction in the Archives*.

Full details of events can be found in this bulletin and at the Society's website.

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 on 26th October.

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 Four of the *Birkbeck Early Modern Society Bulletin.* In the previous issue I stated that I wanted the publication to grow to fifty pages by Issue Six. I am therefore pleased to report that this issue has seen yet another large increase in the number of pages and that we are on course to meet my objective of making the *Bulletin* a publication that we can be proud of.

In Issue Four we have all our usual features; reviews of past society events, theatre, opera, film and art exhibitions, plus book reviews, a quiz, an Early Modern problem page as well as notification of forthcoming events both by this society and other comparable bodies. We have reviews of two recent Society events that were free to members: our first ever conference and a guided walk through the City with the theme of *Harlots, Harridans and Heroines*. We also have a new feature which is reviews of historical novels. It is all too easy for academics to become condescending about these books but many are well researched and well written and if we are serious about widening the appeal of history then we should embrace this genre.

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. This Society is growing fast and it is vitally important that our members are kept informed of all new developments. Please contact me for any information regarding the *Bulletin.* The next issue will be out in the winter of 2007.

After the dismal summer I trust that you are enjoying a warm autumn and hope to see many of you at one or more of our events.

John Croxon
Editor
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RECENT EVENTS

A Review of Filippo De Vivo's 'News on the Rialto: Rumours and Politics in Renaissance Venice', Thursday, 28 June 2007, Birkbeck College, University of London

The Early Modern Society's last lecture of the academic year was a treat. Filippo De Vivo's talk on the spread of information in Venice was entertaining and intriguing.

Renaissance and early modern Venice was a lively place not unlike modern 21st century London. It was a crowded multi-cultural city and a huge centre of investment and entertainment. Venice was unique in Europe. A republic in a time of monarchies and a bridge between east and west in trade, the city was a magnet for travellers.

Rumour in Venice was not gossip about private affairs; it was about politics and events. Rumours spread about the issues that touched everyone in the community. De Vivo has done impressive work in tracking down rumours and how they spread from diaries, letters, and travellers' accounts. By cross-referencing the sources he has been able to work out what various 'clumps and clusters' of people were talking about in Venice and where and why they were doing it.

Dr. De Vivo gave an example of what he means by a rumour. In 1501, reports came in to Venice that the Portuguese had discovered a new spice route to rival the overland route which Venice dominated. This was bad news for Venetian merchants and it caused a panic not just in spice prices but overall. The news could have serious consequences and people needed to be well informed.

Venice was a city teeming with spies and by the early-seventeenth century, the Venetian government set up a counterintelligence network to keep an eye on foreign ambassadors and other spies. De Vivo's interest concentrates on 1600-1625 when the Inquisitors of State were fully active in tracking down spies and information. Their investigations left a huge mass of evidence about the spread of information in Venice. Long before the development of the London coffee house as a centre of information exchange, Venetians had their own information network. The Venetian apothecary shop was the place to visit for anyone seeking information.

Why the apothecary shop? In an age of custom-made medicines, customers had to wait for their prescriptions to be made on the spot. A good apothecary would provide comfortable chairs and a welcoming environment to attract custom. Good perks meant repeat business and one of the perks could be information.

All sections of Venetian society visited apothecary shops. They didn't just provide medicines. They were also the source of spices, condiments, pigments, and poisons so there was always a reason to visit. Pharmacies became meeting places for people at all levels of society. One report of the customers of the pharmacy at the Sign of the Sun listed people from all levels of society and included an army captain, two soldiers, a Contarini family patrician, a painter, a newswriter, and some carpenters. Newswriters put together manuscript newsletters based on the information they gathered which were copied out by scribes and sent to customers.

Spies observed the comings and goings from the apothecary shops and their reports give us a better idea of the popular culture of Venice but one which complicates our view of political history.

'News on the Rialto' was a fascinating talk and the good news is that Filippo De Vivo's book, *Information and Communication in Venice: Rethinking Early Modern Politics,* from which this paper was derived is out on 24 September from Oxford University Press.

Karen Baston

Dr. Filippo de Vivo

Birkbeck Early Modern Society Conference

The first EMS conference saw a wealth of thought-provoking papers complimented by enthusiastic debate, discussion and the opportunity to swap Early Modern anecdotes over a glass of rosé. The theme of Centres and Margins proved at once apt and broad. Karen Chester kicked off proceedings, bringing her skills as a City of London Guide to bear as she drew the notorious pick-pocket and cross-dresser, Moll Cutpurse, out of the marginal shadows and onto centre stage. Stephen Brogan kept the theme of gender ambiguity in play with his entertaining reappraisal of the Chevalier/Chevalière d'Eon (and the equally curious academics who have studied his/her case). Nadiya Midgley ended the morning with an enlightening take on competing geological theories in the late-seventeenth century.

After a fine lunch, Jan Ravenscroft and Richard Tilbury led us into the haunting and sometimes grotesque world of Spanish portraiture. Jan explored the significance of a little-known painting, *Queen Margarita of Austria with her dwarf*, while Richard took for his analysis Ribera's *Bearded Woman*, setting it in the context of other hirsute portraits of the period. Laura Jacobs explored the significance of one of John Foxe's lesser-known, but illuminating writings, *A sermon preached at the Christening of a certaine Jew*, exploring the matyrologist's place in the history of English anti-semitism. Oliver Harris presented some results of his ongoing research into Shakespeare's use of the Roman ceremonial triumph, while Paul Lay wrapped things up - again forging a unique approach to a key issue – arguing for the importance of Venice to English republicans long before the Civil War period with which it is usually associated.

Huge thanks are due to all those who ensured the day went so smoothly, from the handy individuals who knew how to operate the projector and automatic blinds to the team that arranged a generous spread of wine and nibbles with which to conclude. Testament to this initial conference's success was talk (not entirely wine-fuelled) of possibly extending it over more than one day in future. Watch this space.

Oliver Harris

Our Conference speakers, from left to right: (standing) Oliver Harris, Stephen Brogan, Nadiya Midgley, Laura Jacobs, Paul Lay, Karen Chester, (kneeling) Jan Ravenscroft, Richard Tilbury.

Guests and speakers at the reception after the conference

Half of the committee. The other half were playing in coloured shirts!
Sue Dale, John Croxon, Nigel Carter

Harlots, Harridans and Heroines:
A walk through the City with Karen Chester, 28th June 2007

One of the many brilliant things about London is that there is always more to learn about it. In this themed walk Karen Chester, a City of London Guide and committee member of the Early Modern Society, showed us some of the places where women made an impact on London's history. What follows is a sample of some of the highlights. Nothing can replace actually seeing the places and hearing the stories as told by Karen.

We met on 28th July outside the Blackfriars pub. This proved an inspired meeting place as the pub marks the location where Henry VIII's divorce proceedings against Katherine of Aragon took place. From there we were only minutes away from the infamous Bridewell Prison, a former palace of Henry VIII, where disorderly women were flogged for their transgressions.

A more positive role model lent her name to the oldest London church. St Bride's was named for St Bridget who founded the church in person. She was a popular saint in London and had the power to turn water into beer. If the Early Modern Society ever decided to have a patron saint, she'd have to be in the running for that attribute alone! St Bride's was the local church of the notorious thief, pimp, cross-dresser, and distinctly unsaintly Moll Cutpurse, whose house had an entrance to the churchyard and who was buried in the churchyard – face down and in men's clothing – in 1658. St Bride's was rebuilt by Christopher Wren with an elaborate steeple after the Great Fire. Many women around the world can thank him, along with some help from the local baker, Mr Rich, for providing the design for their tiered wedding cakes.

St Brides is near what was Alsatia, an anarchic area of London which had loads of criminals, fencing masters, and a private enclosed theatre. The playwright Aphra Behn had a house there. Another local resident was Elizabeth (Bess) Broughton. Bess was so beautiful that her father tried to lock her up to protect her from the advances of men. But Bess had other ideas and came to London with the express purpose of becoming a courtesan. She was very successful but she eventually lost her looks and succumbed to the pox.

A more edifying London woman was the heroine Elizabeth Forster who campaigned with her husband to reform prisons. Elizabeth's husband, Stephen, was possibly in Ludgate Prison when they met. She regularly visited prisoners and took them food. Stephen later became an MP and a Mayor of London.

Also at Ludgate Hill was the tavern La Belle Sauvage. In 1616, a celebrity in the very modern sense of the word stayed there when Pocahontas visited on her ill fated attempt to return to the New World.

A new building, rather prisonish in appearance, sits on the site of the old Fleet Prison. Like Ludgate Prison, the Fleet Prison was mostly for debtors. The Fleet had its own rules including legally binding 'Fleet Marriages'. For the poor a 'Fleet Marriage' was better than no marriage at all but one woman pushed the system to the limit. When Theresa Constantia (Con) Philips, a courtesan and condom merchant, published her

memoirs in 1749 there was a huge outcry. In addition to listing everyone she'd ever slept with, Con mentioned that she'd had four Fleet Marriages. Her revelations led to the Marriage Act of 1753. Undeterred, Con eventually moved to Jamaica and married three more times.

The most awful of the London prisons was Newgate. This was where the worst criminals were sent including murderers and thieves. One of its inmates was the elegant Mary Young, a.k.a. Jenny Diver. Young had had a gentle upbringing but fell in with a gang of pickpockets and found she was good at and enjoyed picking pockets. Her posh appearance meant she could target society ladies without suspicion. She was transported for her crimes twice and she came back twice. Caught in her 40s, Young was held at Newgate until her execution. She wore her best clothes and made an elegant end which was reported in the Newgate Chronicle.

Another place of punishment in London was Paul's Cross in St Paul's churchyard. This was a place for sermons and announcements but also a place of penance. The 'notorious baggage' Moll Cutpurse was made to do penance there for the indecency of appearing on stage in 1612. Edward IV's 'merriest courtesan', Jane Shore, did penance for witchcraft charges in 1483 but was well treated by the London crowd who appreciated her charity work.

One area where women did well in business was in publishing. Although they could not own businesses, they could run them as widows. They could also be writers. Mary de la Rivière Manley wrote books with lightweight titles which were really political statements. The phrase 'no time like the present' comes from her play, The Lost Lover.

Our adventure through London officially finished at the skeleton of a Wren church at Greyfriars. This huge church was destroyed in the Great Fire and again in the Blitz. The harridan Isabella, 'the she-wolf of France', wife of Edward II was buried there as was the notorious Venetia Digby. Their grand tombs were destroyed in the Great Fire.

Unofficially, we made our way back to the Blackfriars for a post-walk pint. We hope Karen will be leading another walk for us this autumn.

To book a walk with Karen Chester, visit her website at http://www.bigsmokewalks.com or click on the link on the Birkbeck Early Modern Society blog http://www.emintelligencer.org.uk.

Karen Baston

ARTS REPORT

THEATRE

Othello: The Globe Theatre, London

'The republic of Venice employs Othello, a self-made man and a Moor, to defend its overseas territories against the Turks. But for all his military success, Othello remains an outsider in the city, an object of racism, envy and mistrust. As the Turkish threat gathers and Venetian forces are despatched to Cyprus, Iago, a junior officer secretly enraged by his lack of promotion, exploits Othello's ambiguous position and ingenuous nature, driving him into a passionate and uncontrollable jealousy. Performed for the first time at the Globe, *Othello*, with its racing concentrated plot and intense dramatic details, is one of Shakespeare's most exciting, atmospheric and heartbreaking plays.'

Thus says the Globe, via its website which also has a glowing list of testimonials: the Independent, the Telegraph and Time Out all praise the production, and so it was an excited group of Early Modernists that went to see this play on 1st June. Unfortunately, we could not agree with the critics. The characters, particularly Iago, were unconvincing largely because they shouted their way through the script, which in turn gave this member of the audience the feeling that he was watching an early, bad rehearsal. Certain scenes and speeches that cried out for dramatic emphasis were played down, and it was difficult to decide if this was poor quality post-modernism, or just poor. Either way, the result was the same. The director, Dominic Dromgoole, was responsible for last year's equally wooden *Anthony and Cleopatra*, but also for the stimulating *Coriolanus*. It is therefore difficult to know what to make of Mark Rylance's successor, but perhaps the playwright Joe Orton can help. In 1964 his *Entertaining Mr Sloane* was directed by Patrick Dromgoole (who I'm assuming is a relative – father, uncle?) and Orton was so horrified by his mediocrity that he started to use 'Dromgoole' as a shorthand term for anything that was weak, patchy or twee (see John Lahr's biography, *Prick Up Your Ears*). The Globe deserves better than this.

Stephen Brogan

The crowd asks for moor…

Hanging Hooke: Maltings Arts Theatre in St Albans

I saw *Hanging Hooke* at the Maltings Arts Theatre in St Albans earlier in the year, and was very impressed. It's a new play by Siobhan Nicholas and stars Chris Barnes. The play features a cast of just one, and it really showcases Barnes' extraordinary abilities. He brings Robert Hooke (of *Micrographia* fame, for those who can't place the man immediately) to life by playing him as well as playing the artist John Hoskins for half of the play. Hoskins had been a kind of mentor to the young Hooke.

Robert Hooke's career brought him into a central position in the early Royal Society, he also worked closely with Robert Boyle. He'd had a difference of opinion with the young Newton early in Newton's career, which led to bitterness in all their subsequent dealings (which were necessarily quite a few, their paths could not but cross, often). He was great friends with Christopher Wren, whom he worked very closely with, and with Samuel Pepys, and several other people still famous in history, actually. Hooke's story links in with the stories of several other interesting characters, and Nicholas makes full use of that fact in her script.

After his death, Hooke was, for a number of reasons fairly systematically passed over in the history books. In the last few decades historians have made a big effort to (successfully) resuscitate his reputation, and uncover as much as possible about his work. His personality and likeness have likewise been investigated as thoroughly as possible over the last decade or so – a lot of the play deals with the fact that no portrait of Hooke had been available since his death. The play questions whether Hooke's reputation as a querulous grouch was justified. One has to wonder how much was due to his ill health and physical disabilities. Was he really suspicious of everyone, suspecting plagiarism everywhere? Was he actually a great guy to hang out with, gregarious and welcoming and keen to collaborate with all his peers? Was his keen mind and extraordinary ability open to those around him?

Hooke has a large fan base these days, and for good reason. This play applauds Hooke, and does all it can to big him up. Boyle and Newton are the designated 'baddies' in the play, and Hooke is the misunderstood, much maligned and abused hero. That aspect of the play is loosely based on a lot of current historical research, including some recently found papers of Hooke's that are still being dealt with by researchers, but of course the good guy/bad guy set up is simplified and amplified in order to make the play interesting and engaging. This is in fact a really good play, gripping and entertaining, you really root for Hooke and want him to be plucked from oblivion and loved and appreciated. There is a section of the play when Barnes, as Hooke, delivers parts of Hooke's famous lectures, and at that point more than any other, I think really brings Hooke into the room. Hooke as he surely was, and that's really good to see. Complete with sentimental ending and brimming with a healthy feel-good factor, *Hanging Hooke* is still on at a number of venues this year, and worth checking out.

See http://www.takethespace.co.uk/hooke-outline.htm for details.

***Tour Dates*:**
September - Havant Arts Centre, Hants; Central Studio, Basingstoke**;** The Grange Leisure Centre, Midhurst.
October - The Capitol Studio Horsham; The Miskin Theatre at North West Kent College**.**
November - The Nightingale Theatre, Brighton.
December - The Old Town Hall**,** Hemel Hempstead**.**

Nadiya Midgley

OPERA

George Frederic Handel's Oratorio 'Samson' Nereid Gallery, British Museum

At the end of June, Handel's oratorio 'Samson' was performed in the wonderful setting of the Nereid Gallery in the British Museum. 'Samson' is Handel's musical working of John Milton's poem 'Samson Agonistes' based on the biblical account of the Israelite warrior Samson. The Nereid Gallery, home to a monumental tomb dating from c.390BC and constructed in the style of the Ionic temples of the Acropolis, was a very fitting and atmospheric venue for a splendid performance of the work. The performers were the British Library & British Museum Singers, the Canonbury Chamber Choir and the Whitecross Orchestra, and they were conducted by Anthony Milledge.

Handel began work on 'Samson' after he completed 'Messiah' on the 14th September 1741. With typical alacrity he had largely finished his new composition just over 6 weeks later by 29th October. The genesis of the work lay two years previously, however, when Handel's circle of wealthy supporters had urged him to consider settings for two of Milton's works. The first was the two contrasting poems 'L'Allegro' and 'Il Penseroso', and the second was 'Samson Agonistes'. On 24th November 1739, the 4th Earl of Shaftesbury wrote to the philosopher, James Harris

> "I never spent an evening more to my satisfaction than I did the last. Jemmy Noel read through the whole poem of Sampson Agonistes and whenever he rested to take breath Mr Handel (who was highly pleas'd with the Piece) played I really think better than ever, & his Harmony was perfectly adapted to the sublimity of the Poem"

Handel put 'Samson' to one side, however. whilst he wrote two Italian operas and then 'Messiah', before returning to the setting to music of Milton's meditation on the legend of Samson. The task of adapting and abridging the lengthy poem to construct arias for the principal characters and give voice through the chorus to the Philistines and Israelites was undertaken by Newburgh Hamilton who had worked with Handel previously. Despite its rapid completion (although Handel was to continually revise the work throughout his lifetime), 'Samson' had its first performance a year and a half later in February 1743 at Covent Garden. A few days after the premiere, the politician Horace Walpole, a devotee of Italian opera, wrote to Horace Mann

> "Handel has set up an Oratorio against the Operas, and succeeds. He has hired all the goddesses from farces and singers of Roast Beef from between the acts at both theatres, with a man with one note in his voice, and a girl without even an one; and so they sing, and make brave hallelujahs; and the good company encore the recitative, if it happens to have any cadence like what they call a tune"

Despite Walpole's scathing remarks, the première was a great success and in its first season the work was performed seven times. For contemporary audiences 'Samson' was one of Handel's most popular oratorios, however it is not one that is frequently performed today.

Milton's poem 'Samson Agonistes' covers the last day in the life of the great Hebrew warrior. Samson is tricked by Dalila, a Philistine woman and Samson's wife (in Milton's version), into revealing the secret of his strength. On this last day he is a prisoner of the Philistines, blinded and held in chains in a public square. Interestingly, Milton wrote 'Samson' in his later years when he too was blind and Handel composed his musical setting of the work at a time when his sight was also failing. Their shared experience perhaps providing extra insight into the torment of the blind Samson.

The entire oratorio takes place in the square in Gaza where Samson is chained, with the action taking the form of a series of confrontations between the various characters. In Act I, Samson becomes a humiliated bystander to the Philistine celebration of a feast dedicated to their god Dagon. He laments to his friends, including Micah, about succumbing to Dalila's wiles and his loss of strength and sight: 'Whom have I to complain of but myself/ Who Heaven's great trust could not in silence keep/ But weakly to a woman must reveal it!' His father, Manoa, arrives to console him and tell him of his negotiations for Samson's ransom.

The Israelite chorus prays for Samson's deliverance at the end of Act I. The presence of the two peoples, the Philistines and the Israelites, allows Handel to present two very different styles of choral music. The Israelites are given an exalted, almost ecclesiastical, tone, whilst contrastingly the Philistines are much less restrained and more musically extravagant. Contrasts in musical style are also employed by Handel to define the main characters; Dalila has a well-practised seductiveness, the Philistine

champion Harapha is arrogant as well as cowardly, whilst Samson is given a sober dignity.

In Act II, Dalila enters the square and a painful scene is played out with Samson as Dalila asks forgiveness and attempts to seduce him again with her charms. Recrimination abounds, however, and the couple part with a duet of mutual loathing. Dalila: 'Traitor to love! I'll sue no more'; Samson: 'Traitress to love! I'll hear no more'. Micah, angry at his friend's subjugation, passionately denounces women: 'So much self-love does rule the sex/ They nothing else love long', whilst the Israelite chorus adds its support with 'To man God's universal law/ Gave power to keep the wife in awe'. The Philistine giant Harapha appears and taunts Samson who accepts his challenge, but Harapha now refuses the combat singing with disdain: 'Honour and arms scorn such a foe/ Though I could end thee at a blow/ Poor victory, to conquer thee'. At the end of the Act, the differing choral styles of the Israelites and Philistines are set effectively against one another in the ensuing war of words.

Act III begins with Samson refusing Harapha's attempts to persuade him to demonstrate his strength at another pagan feast. Sensing the impending danger, the Israelites make an impassioned plea to God: 'With thunder arm'd great God, arise! Help Lord, or Israel's champion dies!' Samson now changes his mind and decides to go with Harapha to the Philistine celebration and in the distance the Philistine chorus can be heard glorying in the submission of the Israelite hero. Their loud rejoicing is contrasted with a simple and touching aria of paternal love sung by Manoa. Suddenly, a terrible noise rents the air and to the Philistines' cry, 'Death! Ruin! Fall'n!', a messenger arrives to tell of the death of the sons of Gaza destroyed by the temple Samson has pulled down on their heads. Samson's body is borne to the square accompanied by a Dead March and the oratorio ends with an Israelite hymn of praise

> "Let the bright Seraphim in burning row
> Their Loud, uplifted angel-trumpets blow.
> Let their celestial concerts all unite,
> Ever to sound his praise in endless blaze of light".

Sue Dale

MUSIC

BACH FESTIVAL, THE CHURCH OF ST ANNE AND ST AGNES, GRESHAM STREET, CITY OF LONDON

Following the exertions of Karen Chester's walk and a few drinks in the Blackfriars pub, four of us went to the Bach recital which was the closing event of this year's annual Bach Festival, held in the lovely surroundings of St Anne and St Agnes Church in Gresham Street. This is one of Wren's churches and before the performance began our eyes searched walls, ceilings and the interiors, taking in the beautifully crafted interior of one of Wren's minor masterpieces.

The performance was given by the Sweelinck Ensemble who are the resident ensemble at the church. The ensemble, founded by Martin Knizia, was a finalist at the

1999 York Early Music Network Competition and has performed at many major venues including St Martin in the Fields, St James's Piccadilly, the Brompton Oratory and the London Bach Festival. The ensemble was also a finalist at the Wingfield Early Music Network Showcase and has been broadcast on Radio 3 and throughout Europe on the Euroclassic Notturno station.

The evening consisted of five pieces of music with a ten minute interval between the second and third piece, three pieces by Bach and one by Zelenka and by Telemann.

The evening began with, the Brandenburg Concerto No. 1 in F major, BWV 1046. Bach's Brandenburg concertos were dedicated to Margrave Christian Ludwig of Brandenburg in 1721 but were written over a considerable period up to that date whilst Bach was in the employment of Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cothen. The Brandenburg concertos are one of the most famous set of concertos in the history of music and reflect the Italian influence that had deeply affected Bach during the previous decade at the ducal court in Weimar and then at Cothen. Prince Leopold hired Bach to be his director of music and gave him considerable latitude in composing and performing, but he was a Calvinist and therefore did not use elaborate music in his worship; thus, Bach's work during this period was mainly secular.

Concerto No. 1 is scored for two horns, three oboes, bassoons and violins and Sweelinck Ensemble's recital of Concerto No. 1 was exquisitely performed with Geoffrey Coates' oboe leading us with delightful simplicity though this familiar melody.

This was followed by a second Bach piece, Concerto for harpsichord in A Major, BWV 1055. This is a transcription of a now lost concerto for oboe d'amore. The harpsichord is not a popular instrument these days but Bach was a superb keyboard player and playing the instrument tonight was the founder of the Ensemble, Martin Knizia, and it was wonderful to hear the beauty and range of the instrument in such expert hands.

Following a short interval the Ensemble played Capriccio in D Major by Jan Dismas Zelenka, a Czech composer of both sacred and secular music who spent the majority of his life in Dresden. His range of compositions demonstrates an original style which was admired by other composers, including Bach. The Capriccio's were composed in Vienna in 1717-1718. Here, the Ensemble produced another lovely piece of music which highlighted their understanding of Zelenka's unique compositions.

We then heard music from a third composer, Georg Philipp Telemann. Telemann was a contemporary and friend of Bach's, and during his lifetime was considered to be one of Germany's most important composers, constituting a link between late baroque and early classical music. His works were played widely and display a strong French influence. The Ensemble played his Concerto in B flat Major for three oboes and three violins and they brought out the clear melodic lines of his composition.
He
The finale was a return to Bach and his Concerto for violin in A minor, BWV 1041. The violin concerto in A minor dates from the Leipzig years of the 1730's when Bach was not only Cantor of the Thomasschule but also in 1729 been made director of the Collegium Musicum, a body composed of professional musicians and university

students founded by Telemann in 1701, which gave regular concerts. Despite the difficulties of being governed by the faction-striven Leipzig Council, this was an astonishing period of creativity for Bach which saw him produce a large amount of work including five annual cantata cycles in his first six years in the post. Bach himself was an excellent violinist and his violin works are considered among the very best of those written for the instrument. Almut Schlicker's lead violin beautifully reflected the craft and genius of his work, and with her colleagues, she managed to enthral the audience.

This was a wonderful evening with the Ensemble showing great sympathy and empathy with the works and in doing so completely captivating the audience. There were moments when I found myself smiling, so perfect was the music and so enjoyable was the experience. It was also brilliant to see just how much the musicians enjoyed performing these pieces; indeed, Geoffrey Coates beamed each time he paused for breath, and all the performers played with great gusto, panache and subtlety. Afterwards refreshments were provided and as the audience slowly and reluctantly left the church and stepped into the light drizzle of a London evening, I knew that I would definitely return.

John Croxon.

ART EXHIBITIONS

Dutch Portraits The Age of Rembrandt and Franc Hals: The National Gallery

I enjoyed this exhibition of Dutch portrait artistry in the seventeenth century. A number of artists are brought together, including many of the more obscure artists, but it is the two mentioned in the title of the exhibition that tend to dominate. This exhibition provides us with a chance to look at some wonderful work by Rembrandt and Hals. However, other artists are featured and this exhibition proves that their work deserves more recognition.

My one small criticism of the exhibition is that apart from Room 4, which features civic pride, there is a certain lack of shape about this collection and it is hard to see why certain paintings were placed in certain rooms.

The main element that binds these portraits together is the celebration (perhaps that is too strong a word for sober Dutch portraiture?) of public achievement and service, charity, intelligence, and a loving commitment to marriage and family. Confident, dynamic people stare back at us from across the ages, assured in the new Protestant nation, presenting a refined ideal of the wealthy.

Black dominates the dress of these people, but it is a sumptuous black that displays both affluence and austere dignity within the confines of the Calvinist religion. Apart from one portrait, an informal portrait of Charles I of England, wearing green and looking relaxed, merchants, lawyers, surgeons and civic worthies dominate. Indeed, Gerrit van Honthorst's picture of Charles seems strangely out of kilter with the rest of the exhibits, both in the colours used and in its subject.

A strong feature of this exhibition is the individuality of the sitters. Hals' portrait of Willem van Heythuysen shows his nonchalance as he tips back in his chair. Rembrandt's wonderful picture of an elderly couple, poignantly captures the intimacy and ease of their long-standing relationship, as she hands him a letter. They have no need of dazzling clothes or fancy baubles as Rembrandt touchingly shows. Hals' portrait of Isaac Massa and Beatrix van der Laen beautifully captures the happiness of a young newly married couple. Gerald ter Borch's 'Portrait of a Young Man' demonstrates the creativity of the age. Although dressed in conventional black the sitter wears an outfit that could have emerged out of one of Vivienne Westwood's shops in the 1980's.

Room 4 provides the most sense of cohesiveness with its emphasis upon civic pride and achievement. It is dominated by Frans Hals' life sized portrait of the officers and gentlemen of the civic guard of Amsterdam, all jostling to the front, keen to display their finery. The same room features another of Hals' large paintings 'Regents of St Elizabeth's Hospital' which shows these city worthies discussing the distribution of charitable requests, emphasising the importance to Dutch Protestantism of civic responsibility and charitable giving. Next to it is Rembrandt's depiction of members of the clothworkers guild about to discuss the grading of dyed cloth. Instead of all sitting around a table, the picture is given immediacy by one member about to sit down as four others stare straight at the viewer. These portraits would have hung in the semi-public buildings of institutions and communicated pride and authority.

If there is one thing that struck me more than another it is Rembrandt's evocative use of light to illuminate a feature. Nowhere is this more evident than in 'The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Nicolaes Tulp'. The sombre outfits of the students who watch Tulp's dissection of a corpse blur into the surrounding dimness as a dramatic white glow illuminates the corpse.

This show is well worth seeing and whilst Rembrandt and Hals naturally dominate, other artists do jostle for your attention. The extraordinary beauty and flair of these paintings present a powerful introduction to the Dutch Golden Age.

John Croxon.

TELEVISION/DVD

"By the Sword Divided" (BBC, 1983).

20 x 50 minutes episodes. DVD available from BBC Worldwide

John Hawkesworth's series charts the experiences of two families, the Laceys and the Fletchers during the English Civil War. The two families are joined by marriage but separated politically: the Laceys are die-hard royalists but the Fletchers choose the parliamentarian cause. This is a fictionalised account of the Civil War as it affects these families, so don't expect an accurate account. 'Real' events such as the battle of Edgbaston, or the Siege of Colchester, provide the background, but it is the interaction of the characters as they deal with the issues that drive the plot. Therefore the real history is left undisturbed. Period detail is strong and the dialogue is livened up with genuine quotes from the period, although these have been reformatted to suit the plot.

Former students of Professor Barry Coward's B.A. History option *The English Revolution* will enjoy identifying these. Characterisation is good and the characters are played by many recognisable actors from British television (see cast list on link below). This is an enjoyable series, although I thought that it romanticised the royalist position, but should not be viewed as serious history.

Robin Rowles

Links: http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0092712/

MEMORIAL SERVICE

Cromwell Day - 3rd September 2007

The Cromwell Association was founded in 1935 to remember the life and legacy of Oliver Cromwell and to promote an understanding of the history of the mid-seventeenth century, including the Civil War, the Commonwealth and the Protectorate. Every year, the Association pays tribute to the memory of this famous Puritan statesman, remembering the service he rendered the country in his day.

This year's annual service of commemoration for Oliver Cromwell took place on Monday afternoon, September 3rd, the anniversary of his death in 1658. Members of the Association were given special permission to gather around the statue of Cromwell by Hamo Thorneycroft that stands on Cromwell Green in front of the Palace of Westminster.

The weather was especially fine, bright and sunny. The Rt. Hon The Lord Naseby, a Vice-President of the Association, gave an address on the subject of Cromwell's record as a Member of Parliament. Prof. Barry Coward, President of the Association and much-missed at Birkbeck since his retirement last year, laid a wreath at the foot of the statue. Hymns were sung, prayers were said, and a bugler played The Last Post and The Reveille.

Heaven only knows what the crowds of tourists watching from the public pavement overlooking the lawn made of the whole scene!

For more information about The Cromwell Association, see their website at: www.olivercromwell.org

Karen Chester

FORTHCOMING SOCIETY EVENTS

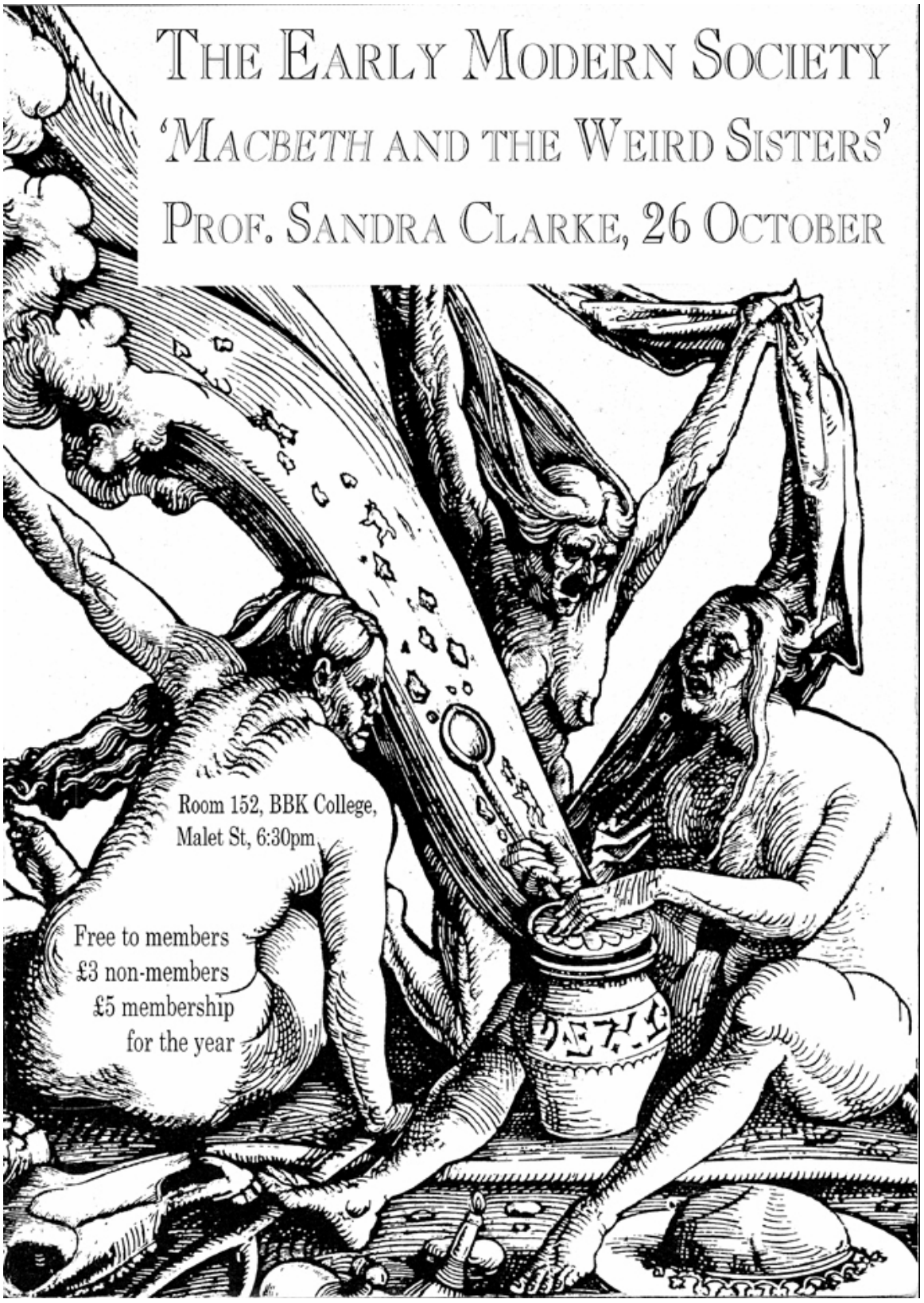
Events 2007-2008

All events start at 6.30pm, and are followed by refreshments and Questions (this excludes the guided walk)

- 26th October 2007 – Professor Sandra Clarke 'Macbeth and the weird sisters', Room 152, Malet Street, Birkbeck College
- 31st October 2007 - Guided Walk: Karen Chester Big Smoke Walks 'Halloween Pub Crawl' St Paul's Underground Station
- 12th December 2007 - Dr Richard Williams, 'Holbein at the court of Henry VIII' Room 101, Clore Building followed by Christmas Party
- 21st January 2008 - Dr Vanessa Harding, 'Research into the family in Early Modern London'
- 11th February 2008 - Dr Malcolm Gaskill, 'The History of Witchcraft: Where do we go from here?'
- 6th March 2008 - Professor Ronald Hutton, 'Famine and Plague in Early Modern England' Room 407, Malet St, Birkbeck College
- 7th May 2008 - Dr Laura Stewart, 'Serving God and Mammon: the Anglo-Scottish Relationship in the mid-seventeenth century'.
- 30th June 2008 - Prof Natalie Davies, 'Pursuing "Leo Africanus" and other Enigmas: Some Thoughts on Historical Method' (venue to be confirmed)

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.


THE EARLY MODERN SOCIETY
'MACBETH AND THE WEIRD SISTERS'
PROF. SANDRA CLARKE, 26 OCTOBER
Room 152, BBK College,
Malet St, 6:30pm
Free to members
£3 non-members
£5 membership
for the year

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

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

THE GREAT FIRE OF LONDON

How true are the established 'facts' about The Fire of London?

Did only six people die in the fire? Did the fire stop the plague? Leading experts will discuss these and other questions about London's infamous disaster in this study day at Museum in Docklands.

Saturday 6th October 10am-5.30pm
Tickets £20 (£15 concs)

For further information or to book, call 0870 444 3855 or email info@museumindocklands.org.uk

Museum in Docklands, West India Quay E14
DLR: West India Quay, Tube: Canary Wharf

Museum in Docklands Study Day

The Great Fire of London: Myths and Realities

6th October 2007

10am – 5.30pm

How true are the established 'facts' about the Great Fire of London? Did only six people die in the fire? Did the fire really bring about a revolution in London's architecture? Did the fire stop the plague? Leading experts will discuss these and other questions about London's infamous disaster. Can we tell myth from reality?

10.00 Registration

10.15 **Introduction**, Meriel Jeater, Museum of London

10.30 **How many people died in the Great Fire?,** Neil Hanson, author, and Gustav Milne, University College London

11.30 **Did the fire radically change London's architecture?,** Stephen Porter, author, and Dr John Schofield, Museum of London

12.30 Lunch (provided for speakers)

13.30 **Why was it claimed that the fire was started by a Catholic conspiracy?,** Dr Colin Haydon, University of Winchester

14.30 **Did the fire stop the plague?,** Professor Justin Champion, Royal Holloway, University of London

15.30 Coffee

16.00 **How has London coped with fires since 1666?,** Alex Werner, Museum of London, and Phil Butler, Fire Borough Commander for Enfield

17.00 Final questions and close

Each session will include a panel discussion and time for questions. The day will be chaired by Dr Vanessa Harding of Birkbeck, University of London.

Tickets: £20 (£15 concs). For further information and to book tickets call: 0870 444 3855, email: info@museumindocklands.org.uk

Society, Culture and Belief, 1400-1800

The programme for the academic year 2007-08 continues our series on *The Senses*, with the theme:

Taste

Convenors: Laura Gowing (KCL), Michael Hunter (Birkbeck), Miri Rubin (Queen Mary), Adam Sutcliffe (KCL).

Seminars will take place in the Ecclesiastical History Room at the Institute of Historical Research on the following Thursdays at 5.30 p.m. All are welcome!

11th October 2007 Professor Diane Purkiss (University of Exeter)
Crammed with distressful bread': the horrible history of what went wrong with English bread making

8th November 2007 Dr Mark Jenner (University of York)
A seventeenth-century physician tastes his world: Sir John Floyer's senses

6th December 2007 Dr David Gentilcore (University of Leicester)
Taste and the tomato in Italy

17th January 2008 Dr Beat Kumin (University of Warwick)
Tavern fare: food, drink and consumer taste in early modern public houses

31st January 2008 Professor Miri Rubin and Professor Peter Marshall (University of Warwick)
Tasting God's body

28th February 2008 Dr James Shaw (University of Sheffield)
The taste for sweetness: the consumption of confectionery in Renaissance Florence

13th March 2008 Professor Paul Freedman (Yale University)
Infatuation and anxiety: the taste for spices?

Institute of Historical Research
European History 1500-1800

Roger Mettam, Philip Broadhead, Julian Swann, Peter Campbell, Filippo de Vivo
Mondays at 17.00 in the Low Countries Room of the Institute of Historical Research (University of London), Senate House, Malet Street, LONDON WC1E 7HU

AUTUMN TERM 2007

This year there is going to be a special emphasis on comparison every other session in order to encourage greater discussion from a wider audience.

8th October Professor I.A.A. Thompson (Keele) 'Rebranding the Nation, Santiago or Santa Teresa? Changing patron saints in seventeenth-century Spain'

22nd October Professor Peter Burke (Cambridge), 'Uses and Abuses of comparative history' *(comparative)*

5th November Alan Ross (Oxford) 'A teacher and his pupils in Zwickau-Saxony. A case study in the social and intellectual history of 17th c. education.'

19th November Professor Brian Pullan (Manchester), 'The War on Begging in Early Modern Italy' *(comparative)*

3rd December Dr Frank Tallett (Reading) 'The priest as Shylock; the clergy and credit in old regime France'

HENRY'S HORRID HISTORY

LEEDS CASTLE, KENT

From Monday, 22nd October until Sunday, 28th October 2007

A living history event where Henry VIII delves into some of the more unpleasant aspects of Tudor life

Telephone: 0870 6008880

www.leeds-castle.com

THE PUTNEY DEBATES 1647:
CHURCH OF ST MARY THE VIRGIN PUNTEY, LONDON

From Friday, 26th October until Friday, 2nd November 2007

A week of events to mark the 360th anniversary of the Debates, with talks, re-enactments and debates.

Telephone: 020 87884414

www.putneydebates.com

SYON AND THE BATTLE OF BRENTFORD

SYON HOUSE, LONDON – SUNDAY, 28TH OCTOBER 2007

Re-enactments and activities for all the family to commemorate the Civil war clash that took place nearby

Telephone: 020 85600882

www.syonpark.co.uk

THE RICHARD III SOCIETY NORFOLK BRANCH STUDY DAY
THE ASSEMBLY HOUSE, THEATRE STREET, NORWICH
SATURDAY, 10TH NOVEMBER 2007

Witnessing War, Diagnosing Defeat: the domestic impact of the Hundred Years War reconsidered by Dr David Grummitt

Generalship in the Wars of the Roses by Matthew Bennett

John Lord Talbot, a Medieval War Hero? By Dr Michael K. Jones

The Military Reputation of Warwick the Kingmaker by Professor A.J.Pollard

Telephone: 01603 6644021

BOOK REVIEW

NON-FICTION BOOKS

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 from the Renaissance (the middle of the fifteenth century) through to the end of the Napoleonic Wars, and that the book is still in print.

John Croxon

Catherine de Medici by Leonie Frieda, Orion Books

Orphaned in infancy, imprisoned in childhood, heiress to a vast fortune of the infamous Florentine banking family, Catherine de Medici is a controversial figure in French history. As a teenager, she was married by her uncle, the pope, to the future French king, Henry, duke of Orleans. During her marriage she suffered from, to coin a famous phrase from another royal coupling, 'three people in the marriage' as Henry was dominated by his older mistress Diane (sic) de Poitiers. When Henry died in a jousting accident in 1559, Catherine took over the reins of power, outmanoeuvring the royal council and beginning her political dominance of France that would last some thirty years.

This is a largely sympathetic portrayal of Catherine; Frieda justifiably argues that she was a pragmatist, was approachable, courageous and decisive, a shrewd political operator, Frieda writes approvingly of her as a Machiavellian figure, a woman of action. On the minus side she also calls her a spendthrift, and deeply superstitious; all of which the author has convinced me. She also makes a strong case that early in her regency Catherine strove for religious toleration. However, she goes on to try to use this early moderation in order to obscure Catherine's involvement in what has stained her name for centuries; the St Bartholomew Day Massacre on the 24th August 1572, when thousands of French Protestants were slaughtered, a process which started with the killing of the Huguenot leaders, instigated by Catherine herself.

There is no way that Catherine can escape the charge of genocide. She plotted and planned the killing of the Huguenot leaders, and did not try stop the mob from continuing the killing, or show any regret afterwards. Frieda is correct in stating that Catherine had no religious motive for the killings; her intention was, as ever, to protect the Valois dynasty. Frieda does her best to portray Catherine's involvement in a positive light, but I found myself give an involuntary laugh when I read that "Catherine became aware that the real victims of the massacre were the monarchy and herself". I'm sure the families of the thousands of murdered Protestants had much the same thoughts in their minds!

Catherine had many positive qualities but also many negative ones. She was a murderer, a hypocrite and a liar, desperate to preserve the Valois monarchy at any cost. She was willing to marry her daughter to a psychopath if it extended Valois

influence and later had her imprisoned. She dominated her sons who were generally weak, and all defective in personalities and in their genes, and all hated each other. Yet she was happy to stage phoney theatricals to show them as a loving united family and cared not that there was not a sole who believed it. Her favourite son presided over a dissolute court, rejoicing in its erotic excess. All her sons were greedy and ambitious. She worked tirelessly for them yet it was her blood that gave them the tuberculosis that three died from.

She was finally dismissed from power by her youngest son, the odious, ugly, pot-marked, crippled dwarf, who so attracted Elizabeth 1st. He was to be the last of the family, and he died at the hands of an assassin, and was not mourned.

Catherine herself predeceased only her youngest son. She died in 1589, unloved by her people and the Parisians refused to allow her burial in the capital.

This is undoubtedly a wonderful biography, superbly written and highly informative, it is a compelling read, lifting Catherine out of the dusty archives of French history and attempting to present her as a heroic figure, rising above a cruel, barbarous age. Certainly Catherine possessed a great many qualities; she was a shrewd intelligent woman. Yet I cannot agree with Frieda's assertion that she was "a great prince and a great woman". Surely, to become that, one would have to have elevated the country and its populace. Catherine was not concerned with the greatness of France; her spendthrift ways near bankrupted the nation. Her sole concern was the preservation of the Valois dynasty. And even with this she failed; her sons failed to produce an heir and the French throne passed onto the Bourbons.

John Croxon

Miracles in Enlightenment England by Jane Shaw,
Yale, 2006 £25.00

In this clearly written and engaging book Jane Shaw argues that during the war of ideas in revolutionary and post-revolutionary England the debate concerning miracles was not the result of abstract, intellectual theorising. Rather, it was the corollary of what she calls 'lived religion'; that is to say, the large number of religious sects that appeared during the 1640s and 1650s emphasised the individual's ability to have unmediated contact with God, which in turn produced a proliferation of miracles - and especially miraculous healing – to an unprecedented degree. This phenomenon precipitated a debate at grass roots level, which then travelled to intellectual circles. Shaw's thesis is validated by her thorough use of case studies, and a cogent discussion of the flaws within many of the secondary sources.

This is an ambitious book because scholars of intellectual history have tended to ignore lived religion, and to take the Protestant doctrine of the cessation of miracles at face value. Shaw demonstrates convincingly that there was an intra-Protestant debate concerning whether or not the Age of Miracles had passed; this debate was largely unresolved, she argues, and was the result of an anxiety concerning the popish nature of miracles. She therefore cautions against confusing prescription with practice. Her chapters address the culture of the early English Enlightenment, which experienced a sort of religious frenzy during the Civil War and Interregnum; miracle workers and

healers, in which she describes the royal touching for scrofula practice; Valentine Greatrakes, the Irish healer and stroker, and the new philosophy; fasting women; the Protestantisation of miracles; and the philosophical debate. Her work will be of interest to people concerned with the history of belief and miracles, and more broadly, of ideas, religion, culture, and science.

That said, there are three weaknesses within this book. First, she has little to say about miracles in the context of the 'decline of magic', and so, for example, her discussion of Robert Boyle's use of Greatrakes' glove to heal a tinker could be expanded upon (pp. 89-90). Secondly, she has not analysed any images that relate to her study. Thirdly, although she is convincing in her discussion of case studies, she is sometimes teleological when she attempts to place them within their intellectual context. Thus, for example, changing attitudes are for her a natural consequence of the emergence of polite society, which she accepts unequivocally and without discussion (see p. 153). The intellectual context is further weakened by her lack of robust definitions, and so for example she writes about deism without fully elucidating her term. But this is an interesting book, and it is hoped that her work will inspire further work in this field.

Stephen Brogan

Trafalgar: The Men, The Battle, The Storm by Tim Clayton and Phil Craig, Hodder and Stroughton

2005 saw the three hundredth anniversary of the battle of Trafalgar and the death of one of Britain's greatest military figures, Horatio Nelson. With the anniversary came a plethora of books, articles and television programmes about the battle. This book stands out; superbly researched and written, it provides us with an insight into just why Nelson was such a great man and to the huge importance of the outcome of the battle.

However, the battle, although the main feature of the book, is not its entire focus, the authors provide us with background to the conflict, the political and military build up to the battle, the lives of many of those involved in the conflict, on both sides, and to the aftermath of the encounter.

It could be said that Nelson was the first 'celebrity' except of course, unlike most modern day luminaries, his fame was well merited. He therefore is of course the dazzling star of the story, and Clayton and Craig have used letters, diaries and official documents to demonstrate how incredibly well planned was Nelson's attack, and the immense risks and breathtaking audacity of his strategy. Nelson forced the enemy to fight with the growing threat of a hurricane and with six of his ships absent seeking fresh provisions. It is so easy in this shallow age to be cynical about military heroes of the past but Nelson is someone to celebrate; he treated his men well, he was incredibly brave, intelligent, charismatic, and he was a brilliant military leader.

Yet this book is much more than Nelson, it is, above all, the story of the ordinary people involved in Trafalgar; the sailors on both sides in the conflict, the loved ones

on shore who waited for news of the outcome of the battle and the fate of their husbands, boyfriends, fathers or sons. The authors have utilized material from British, French and Spanish archives to give a more rounded perspective to the conflict and shown that Trafalgar produced heroes on both sides.

The book grippingly describes how the British and French blazed away at each other with their guns and then fought frantically in hand to hand combat as their ships crashed into each other. Then, in the aftermath to the battle, Clayton and Craig describe how the British attempted to tow the captured ships away during raging storms.

This is a compelling account of a vitally important period of European history. Brilliantly told, it is as exciting as a thriller and also very moving as it explores the real heroism, sacrifice, and tragedy of war.

John Croxon.

England's Mistress: The Infamous Life of Emma Hamilton by Kate Williams, Arrow Books

I knew very little of Emma Hamilton prior to reading this book. I thought that she was fat and insignificant, had a ménage á trois with Nelson and Hamilton, and died in debt. This absorbing biography convinced me that there was far more to her than that.

The first thing to say is that this truly was a rags to riches story. Emma Hamilton was born into squalid poverty in Cheshire as Amy Lyon in April 1765; her story is one of a great escape from grinding poverty that saw her in many guises; as a maid, model, actress, exotic dancer, prostitute, fashion icon, mistress, mother, sex symbol, spy, wife of the British Ambassador to Naples, debtor, and lover to the Nation's hero and one half of the first celebrity couple the world had ever seen.

Aged twelve, she was sent to work as a maid but after only a few months she was dismissed, so she did what many others did, she travelled to London to seek a better life. There she started as a maid but left and got a job in the theatre, then she slipped into prostitution. However, she then managed to get a job in the absurd Temple of Health. Began by the entrepreneur, James Graham, it was a town house just off the Strand where Graham would lecture on sexual matters and the power of electricity to cure all ills, featuring explosions, smoke, fireworks, music, and scantily covered girls. It was probably here that Emma learned how to pose and act. She then became the mistress of first Sir Harry Fetherstonhaugh (with whom she had a child) and then Charles Grenville.

Some historians have suggested that Emma was somewhat fat; in fact, she was beautiful. She was painted by many of the great artists of the day and George Romney made her his muse, creating a huge number of paintings of her in different guises. These paintings made Emma a household name and women started to cut their hair and wear their clothes like her.

Eventually, Grenville became weary of his high maintenance teenage mistress and he palmed her off on his uncle, William Hamilton, the British Ambassador to Naples. Hamilton treated her well and took her into his house first as a protector and friend then as his mistress. Emma gradually won Hamilton's love and despite the huge difference in ages, they married and she became Lady Hamilton. At Naples she befriended the king and queen and under tutelage of Sir William she slipped easily into the life of the dissolute court. She promoted British interests and was more influential than her husband, and with the French Revolution and then Napoleon threatening Naples she became an unofficial spy for Britain.

It was at Naples that she first met Nelson and she soon fell for the hero of the British fleet, throwing herself into his arms as he disembarked. Emma and Nelson became besotted with each other and they set up a ménage ? trios in Naples and then back in England.

This is a sympathetic biography, it is clear that Williams likes her subject, and this book has certainly changed my opinion of her. However, when Emma strongly supported Nelson's unusual harshness in quelling a rebellion and executing about one hundred rebels, Williams attempts to excuse Emma on the grounds that she could not influence Nelson in this matter. However, she submitted names of suspected rebels to the court, including the names of friends. This is a real stain on both Nelson's and Emma's characters, the only defence being that both thought that they were doing the best to defend English interests and democratic values against French despotism. Emma was also fiercely loyal all her life and she saw the rebellion as an attack on her friend Queen Maria Carolina.

Britain was in thrall to their naval hero and Emma led the way in Nelson mania. She decorated her clothes with Nelson motifs and the country followed suit. Nelson and Emma became the first modern day celebrity couple; people would mob Nelson wherever he went and women copied whatever Emma wore, while the press wrote about whatever they were doing and commented on their lifestyle and goings-on. When they bought the large house in Merton, she filled the house with pictures of Nelson and Nelson artefacts, and held extravagant parties. Let us be clear, both Emma and Nelson adored living in the limelight, both were ambitious and craved sensation. It was like Posh and Becks or Brad and Anjolie, except of course Nelson had real talent and did something meaningful with his life. When Nelson died she was devastated and broke. Yet she continued to spend and eventually had to flee the country to escape her creditors. All the glory, money and rewards went to Nelson's brother who kept everything for himself. She died in France in January 1815, still spending beyond her means. She had contracted amoebic dysentery in Naples which had developed into an abscess of the liver and she died in great pain, aged forty-nine. The newspapers fought to be first to report her death.

Emma's poverty-stricken youth left her desperate for love and determined to steal the limelight. She was fiercely ambitious and led an intense, dazzling life. Kate Williams has produced a wonderful book that reveals Emma as a beautiful, intelligent, glamorous and ambitious woman. She craved the protection of men and the acceptance and adoration of society. One might wonder what worthwhile thing she actually did but women in the eighteenth century, unlike today, were limited in what they could achieve and in dragging herself up from appalling poverty she transformed

her life. Williams has done a thorough job in researching and presenting the lives of her subjects and the events they participated in. She has utilized documents, diaries and letters and written a fascinating and hugely enjoyable biography and in telling the tale of Emma Hamilton Williams has given us real insight into eighteenth century life.

John Croxon.

Newton by Peter Ackroyd, Vintage Books

Peter Ackroyd is a hugely prolific writer; part of his output is a series of short biographies, one of which is of Isaac Newton.

Newton was the greatest scientist the world has ever seen, who made his finest contributions to original thought before the age of twenty-five. Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge, an MP, Master of the Mint and President of the Royal Society, Newton was a genius. He was the author of *Principia*, one of the most important books in the history of science, and he was fascinated by calculus, the planets and the 'laws of motion'. Newton was also a product of his age and he was passionate about astrology as he was about astronomy and held a life-long interest in alchemy, while his faith in Christianity was never undermined by his science.

Newton was born on Christmas Day, 1642, outside an obscure village called Woolsthorpe-by-Colsterworth in Lincolnshire. His father, a yeoman farmer, had died four months before the child was born. Newton was a premature and sickly infant and there is no reason to suppose that this child of the soil was destined for genius.

Ackroyd brings his subject to life and he traces the difficult and mercurial Newton as he progresses through a childhood where he proved too bright for his schoolmasters, through to his great advances in mathematics and science far beyond the reach of his contemporaries, to his later life as Master of the Mint and President of the Royal Society.

Newton was absorbed in his work and convinced of his own greatness and was not an easy man to get on with. He could not bear to be criticised and nursed a perceived slight for years. Throughout his life, Newton attracted sworn enemies as well as lifelong friends devoted to him and his work.

Wonderful stories attached themselves to Newton, none more famous than the apple falling on his head. There are four versions of this story, all originating from Newton himself. No doubt an apple did fall upon his head and trigger a thought but it was accompanied by much labour of thought and calculation, and whilst conducting his experiments he ate little in order to concentrate his mind and was meticulous in his note-keeping. These experiments with the reflection and refraction of light would revolutionise the discipline of optics.

He also excelled in administration and was a great success at the Mint and revolutionised the character and reputation of the Royal Society. When he died in 1727 he bequeathed the world a lifetime of genius.

John Croxon.

The Small House in Eighteenth Century London by Peter Guillery, Yale University Press, 2004

This large and impressive study analyses the development of vernacular housing in London during the eighteenth century. At the outset Guillery makes it clear that the housing with which he is concerned is that which was built by those of modest means, the skilled artisans who comprised the top one third of the working population.

The book is divided into five sections; the first two chapters are a general survey which considers the social make-up of London, its topography and the way in which the style of architecture in this category reflected continuity. There are then a series of case studies which look at housing in, Spitalfields, Southwark and Bermondsey, Mile End and Kingsland Road and the communities of Deptford and Woolwich. Guillery then turns his attention to London's outlying communities from Highgate in the north to Sydenham in the south and from Twickenham in the west to Eltham in the east. Consideration is then given to the way in which urban vernacular housing in London had echoes in communities across England and in America. Finally, the impact of building control legislation during the second half of the eighteenth century and the move toward standardisation is reviewed.

Guillery uses a wide range of sources to show how communities grew, the way which houses were constructed, how they were utilised, as homes and in many cases, as working environments. He demonstrates the way in which, in some instances, design reflected the requirements of multi-occupancy whilst how, on the other hand, design and detailed finishes revealed the aspirations of residents. He also notes the way local materials and skills were used in houses. For example, he provides an illustration of an ornate doorcase detail on a house in Deptford which, he suggests, indicates the presence of ship's carvers. He describes the details of construction methods and the way in which these and the organisation of the building workforce evolved during the course of the eighteenth century.

This section of the built environment is not as well preserved as that of housing for the elite community. Guillery has, however, brought vernacular housing in London to life by use of a very comprehensive range of illustrations, including contemporary maps, eighteenth and nineteenth century watercolours and engravings, photographs from the late-nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries as well as many plans and perspective reconstructions of individual houses.

The picture of vernacular housing which emerges from this study reveals that throughout the eighteenth century the majority of houses were built as part of small schemes by local men. Traditional designs and construction methods persisted widely until the more rigorous application of building control legislation after 1774 began to bring about changes. Towards the end of the century building became more standardised and although most development continued to be on a very small scale there were significant changes in the way in which the work force was organised.

Nigel Carter

The Strange Laws of Old England by Nigel Cawthorne, Portrait Books

In this book Nigel Cawthorne conveys the reader on an entertaining tour of the more weird parts of the British legal system. Delving into documents he has unearthed an extraordinary collection of the strangest and arcane laws that have been legislated over the centuries, some of which, even more bizarrely, are still in existence.

Did you know for instance that it is against the law to check into a hotel in London under assumed names for the purpose of making love? Or under a Tudor law Welshmen are not allowed into the city of Chester after dark? Or that in Bristol, lovers are not allowed to kick a dog out of bed if it gets in the way during intercourse as it has the right to be a voyeur? Or that in Newmarket in was against the law to blow your nose in the street?

This is an extremely amusing and interesting book. It is not something that one would want to read from cover to cover but it is something that one would take off the bookshelf every so often to check on a fact, or just to have a good laugh.

John Croxon.

READING THE CITY: KAREN CHESTER ASSESSES BOOKS ON LONDON

Being a City of London Guide, I am often asked to recommend 'a good book on the City'. There is certainly a bewildering selection of books about London displayed in every bookshop. Most of them cover all of Greater London with only one chapter, sometimes even only a couple of pages, on the City. The vast majority of the books on offer are superficial and unhelpful. Do you really need to spend £12.99 to get the locations of every branch of Wagamama in town?

But if you're willing to invest in 'a few good books about the City', here are some that I've found to be absolutely indispensable.

Getting Started

The Buildings of England : London I : The City of London by Simon Bradley and Nikolaus Pevsner. Yale University Press (2002) ISBN:0 300 09624 0

Nikolaus Pevsner, a Birkbeck man by the way, spent his life compiling an architectural critique of just about every single building in England. Published in 46 volumes, The Buildings of England is an awe-inspiring epic of scholarship. There are six volumes alone concerned with London, all of them regularly revised and updated. Whenever I'm starting the research for a new walk, Pevsner's volume on the City is the first book I reach for. It describes everything that you can actually see right now on the streets of the City, street by street, building by building.

The London Encyclopaedia edited by Ben Weinreb and Christopher Hibbert Papermac (last revised in 1993) ISBN:0333576888

This book is almost 15 years old now and so, not surprisingly, it's out-of-print. It covers all of Greater London, not just the City, and it weighs a tonne - even in paperback. But it is still the best book I know for self-guiding in the City. It not only gives you information about the City as it appears today, but includes listings for all the things that used to be here; lost rivers, pubs, shops, churches, cemeteries. There are entries on water supply, street lighting, statues, entertainments, policing - everything you need to reconstruct the City past.

The City Churches

An understanding of the City Churches is essential to an understanding of the history and character of the City itself. Pevsner gives you an architectural summary of each one. But if you are left wanting to know more, check out any or all of these.

The Visitor's Guide to the City of London Churches by Tony Tucker. (2007) ISBN: 0955394503

A brand new book written and published by Tony Tucker, the current chairman of the City Guides Association. It's the perfect size to tuck into your pocket and pull out for quick on-the-spot reference. There are pictures of each church, inside and out, with essential information laid out in bullet points. It's available for sale at bookshops, museums and churches in the City.

A Guide to London's Churches by Mervyn Blatch
Book Club Associates (1979)

This is the best book on churches that I've come across so far. It talks about churches all over Greater London, and every City Church is written up in fine detail: saints' dedications, history, architecture exterior and interior, furnishings, organs, fonts, royal arms, stained glass, pulpits, lecterns, altars, tables and rails, screens, paintings, chandeliers, sword rests, statues, monuments, brasses, even associations with famous people. Another book that is, sadly, out-of-print at the moment. But most libraries have a dog-eared volume and second-hand copies can sometimes still be found online. I got mine from a shop in the Outer Hebrides (no joke!) from www.abebooks.co.uk.

Vanished Churches of the City of London by Gordon Huelin
Corporation of London Guildhall Library Publications (1996) 0 900422 424

Before the Great Fire of 1666, there were over a hundred churches in the famous Square Mile. Their names still echo through the City's corporate consciousness in the names of streets, in the shapes of little gardens, in the parish markers high up on the walls of modern buildings. This terrific book gives you the story of all of the churches that have been lost over the centuries due to fire, war, terrorism and ... City planners!

Conjuring up the Early Modern City

A Survey of London by John Stow
Sutton Publishing (2005) 0 7509 42401

Written in 1598, this book has never out of print since. Ward by ward, street by street, John Stow leads you around the pre-Fire City of London. Just like Pevsner, he describes the houses, the churches, the livery companies, the markets. The book is a fabulous compendium of the Elizabethan City. It's astounding to see how little the street plan of London has changed since medieval, even Roman, times! However, I do find it best to have a map to hand when reading Stow, as his prose can be a little confusing.

Finally, I'd recommend any of Liza Picard's books on life in the many Londons past. Elizabethan London, Restoration London, and Dr Johnson's London are all published in paperback by Phoenix Books. Picard has an insatiable appetite for the minutia of everyday life and it's all here: waste disposal, house interiors, furniture, lighting, medicine, dentistry, clothes, housework, privies, cookery, sex, food and drink, churchgoing, education, dialects, etiquette, crime, money. The sights, the sounds, the smells; these books really help you to people the streets. There is a companion volume on Victorian London as well.

Karen Chester

The Friends of the City Churches

As mentioned above, before the Great Fire of London in 1666 there were over 100 churches within the walls of the City of London. After the conflagration, 51 were rebuilt by Christopher Wren, and new ones were built in the 18th and 19th centuries. But as people moved out of the City, the churches suffered a decline in their numbers of regular worshippers. Consequently, many of them were pulled down by the Victorians, and the Blitz of the 1940s destroyed many more.

The Friends of the City Churches was originally formed after the Second World War as a non-religious charity to support the rebuilding and restoration of the City churches. Once that work had been completed by the 1970s, The Friends became inactive and faded away into obscurity. However, a new threat came along in 1994 when The Templeman Report, commissioned by the then Bishop of London, recommended reducing the number of active Anglican City churches to twelve. The City would then have had well over two dozen redundant churches standing on valuable real estate. It was unlikely that these empty, unused churches would be allowed to stand for much longer.

Consequently, The Friends of the City Churches was revived in 1994 and began a concerted campaign to make sure that these drastic proposals would not be implemented. Teams of volunteer watchers were organised so that more churches could be opened to the public on a regular basis. The charity now has over 1000 members and volunteer watchers are provided in thirteen churches. There is a full

programme of events including Annual City Churches Walks, participation in the annual Open House event in September, lectures, visits and concerts.

Today there are 42 places of worship situated within the famous Square Mile of which 39 are Anglican churches, all listed either Grade I or Grade II*. Together, they constitute one of the most significant collections of early modern buildings anywhere in the country.

For more information, check out The Friends of the City Churches' website:
http://www.london-city-churches.org.uk/

Karen Chester

Special Offer to Members of the Early Modern Society

The Friends have produced a handsome and handy guide to the City Churches, giving a description of each one and suggested itineraries for visiting them. If you would like a free copy (while supplies last!), send a stamped addressed envelope to Karen Chester, Friends of the City Churches, The Church of St Magnus The Martyr, Lower Thames Street, London EC3R 6DN Please quote reference EMS2007. Your address will not be kept on file or used for any other mailings.

FICTION BOOKS

This is a new feature which I hope you will enjoy and respond to. Historical fiction is a hugely popular and growing feature of modern publishing and it is something that we, as a society, should embrace.

The criteria is the same as that for non-fiction book reviews; that it deals with a subject within the Early Modern period, roughly from the Renaissance (the middle of the fifteenth century) through to the end of the Napoleonic Wars, and that the book is still in print.

John Croxon

Quicksilver By Neal Stephenson (Arrow Books 2004)

Neal Stephenson's *Quicksilver* is a truly entertaining book – it tells several stories, some of them historical, some pretty fantastic. Pirates, famous politicians, philosophers and early members of the Royal Society all feature in the novel. The main fictitious characters – Daniel, Eliza and Jack are very good characters, engaging and realistic. Daniel's a natural philosopher of some ability, the son of a Quaker, a contemporary and close associate of first Isaac Newton and then G W Leibniz. The book begins with his story and then leads on to Eliza's and Jack's. They both come from deprived and unfortunate beginnings, and work their individual ways up (sometimes together as a team). Eliza starts off as a slave girl and Jack as a street urchin. Stephenson made a serious attempt to portray a kind of person, a level or section of society via these personalities, and managed the task quite well. They

feature alongside Newton, Pepys, Hooke, Charles II, William of Orange and a host of other characters.

Quicksilver is the first of a trilogy (volume one of Stephenson's 'Baroque Cycle'). The chapters are arranged so the reader reads three different stories consecutively – Daniel's, Eliza's and Jack's. It becomes very clear that these stories have points of conjunction and that certain characters move in and out of each tale. The following two volumes of the trilogy contain the remainder of these stories, and out of the three books I think Quicksilver is the most amusing, most thoughtful, and most self contained. The characterisation of Royal Society members and their interaction with the wider world is done very well, and is very funny. Certain aspects of early modern natural philosophy such as alchemy, vivisection and innovative networks of communication have obviously caught Stephenson's attention, and his interest developed into these three books. The intriguing world of codes, secret languages and espionage is woven through the novel too. He is fascinated by Sir Isaac Newton's job at the Royal Mint, and so brought his own fictitious ideas about how and why this turn in the great man's career came about. The result is a creative, involved exploration of the history of early modern science as well as early modern financial systems. The Newton-Leibniz relationship and the careers and motivations of the two men are explored thoroughly, with Daniel as the medium as well as a point of comparison for two very different lifestyles. Through this process Stevenson's come up with a brilliant way of describing a whole lot of serious academic scholarship.

There's a lot going on in this book, extended in many different ways into the sequels too. The most interesting thing is that despite having many plots and characters fitted into the hefty 927 pages, *Quicksilver* does not get itself tangled up into knots. It's an interesting, well written body of work. From a historical point of view it's nothing ground breaking or startlingly original, but then nor is it particularly out of date in its historiographical leanings. Above all it does not disappoint. It's full of history, lively characters and swashbuckling adventure. I took as long as I could reading it, as I didn't want to reach the last page! That was despite knowing I had the sequels waiting for me on the shelf.

Nadiya Midgley

The Bolyen Inheritance by Phillippa Gregory, Harper Collins.

I suppose that I should have started with *'The Other Boleyn Girl'*, the previous book in the series, but that wasn't on the shelves and this one was included in the 'three for two' book promotion, so choice made I took it home to read.

Firstly, let me say that I was pleasantly surprised at just how good this was. I wasn't sure what to expect but Phillippa Gregory is a good writer and in *'The Bolyen Inheritance'* she presents a vivid picture of the scheming, violent Tudor court. The action takes place in 1539 when Henry VIII decides to take another wife. The story is told in the first person by three women at the court and the person telling the tale changes at each chapter. The three are Anne of Cleaves, brought over to marry Henry, at first happy to escape the dreary, parsimonious court of her brother but once married she realises that life in England and with Henry is not what she imagined. The second is Katherine Howard who manages to flirt her way to the throne. The third is

Katherine's kinswoman Jane Boleyn, who is haunted by her past and the Boleyn inheritance of suspicion, betrayal and death. In the dangerous surrounds of the Tudor court these three women must attempt to survive.

Gregory paints a vivid portrait of the Tudor court; her Anne is more knowing than how she is normally perceived, whilst her Katherine is a posh, brainless teenage tart. A number of female faces floated in front of me as I read Katherine's first person account but as I don't want to be sued I will not name them, but I am sure you can think of a few names yourself. Jane Boleyn is a scheming woman who appears cunning and conniving but ultimately just as vulnerable as Katherine.

Gregory brings us a vivid picture of Tudor life, which I read quickly, not wanting to put it down. She evocatively recreates the emotional landscapes of sixteenth-century England and draws us into the terrifying times of Henry, Anne, Katherine and Jane.

John Croxon.

The Plato Papers (A Prophecy) by Peter Ackroyd (1999 – not in print in the UK right now, but readily available on Amazon, as it is in print in the USA)

The Plato Papers is Ackroyd's commentary on the present as well as how we look back on the past. As is to be expected, London features prominently in the novel. It's a very short book, and worth reading when you have a free afternoon or evening and want to think about some of the themes the book covers: I read it sometimes when self-doubt encroaches on my efforts to unearth the secrets of early modern natural philosophy! *The Plato Papers* is about a man called Plato, and it may or may not be a prophecy, as in the events could be about the future. It's not a description of a clear-cut futuristic dystopia of the *1984/Brave New World/Children of Men/Handmaid's Tale* variety. It's not standard old-school Sci Fi. It's a look forwards and backwards at our thoughts, in literature as well as history/history of science, about the ancient, medieval, Renaissance/early modern and enlightenment periods, basically. Plato is an oral historian and public performer, which is apparently the only kind of historian in the world in which he lives. Plato and the other 'people' in the story are unlike us in that they emit their own light, and they also have very different values and ideas about life, and a different way of living, all of which is alluded to rather than explicitly outlined for us. Their differences from us provide the reader with a way of assessing Ackroyd's main point: Plato, in the future, is telling people our history and he's getting it all wrong, what does that say about history in any age? The things Plato gets wrong are very funny. It's a fun book to dip into if you're not interested in the burning issues Ackroyd tries to bring to light in the rest of the book. Watch out for Charles Dickens as author of *The Origin of Species* and Freud as a stand-up comedian. Come on, do you need any MORE reasons to flick through the book?

Plato's glossary of old words are funny, and his speeches contain more of the same humour. They are meant to be poignant as well – never a truer word etcetera. Ackroyd is commenting on modern society and our current obsession with (ultimately pointless) high-speed communication technology and the sadism inherent in what is considered media-worthy, and in his commentary he is scathing. Aside from taking a stand on today's world, Ackroyd explores how far we can take our attempts at historical accuracy, how we can assess possible depths of interpretation. Plato

converses with his own soul in a number of passages, and in these sections Plato's own doubts about his abilities as a truthful and accurate interpreter of evidence are aired. Plato's soul never fails to reassure and support him. As the story progresses, we see Plato's fellow Londoners are less supportive, and at one point he's put on trial. The way the story pans out is odd, as it is counter intuitive to the way these things progress in our time, and in the way they used to progress in past ages. In some ways the society and Plato's activities are modelled on standard ideas about ancient Greece, his journey into our world is loosely like Dante's journey, his trial is based on trial from previous centuries – it is not like modern media-focused legal scenarios. Most of the ideas about how the world actually works are based on early modern Aristotelain ideas, or early mechanical philosophy. This book is about history, not just about London, and it is the most interesting kind of comic novel.

The Plato Papers is not a purely early modern-related novel, but it is as much to do with that period as any other. For people interested in how we look at the past it's a book I'd recommend, specially if they like reading Peter Ackroyd anyway. Don't read it in a bad mood – the simplistic bits might well fail to delight you and just incite scorn instead, which would be a waste of a potentially entertaining, amusing book.

Nadiya Midgley

Sovereign by C.J. Sansom, Pan Books

I had not read any of Sansom's history books, only his novel set in twentieth century Spain, *Winter in Madrid*, which I thoroughly enjoyed. It was the recognition of his name and the realisation that he normally wrote historical fiction that lead me one day to pick this off the bookshelves at Waterstones and take it home.

Sovereign is set in 1541 during the reign of Henry VIII when the king has set out on a spectacular Royal Progress to the North in order to attend an extravagant submission by his rebellious subjects in York.

Already in the city are London lawyer Matthew Shardlake and his assistant Jack Barak. In addition to helping with the huge number of petitions to the King, Shardlake has reluctantly agreed to undertake a special mission for Thomas Cranmer, the Archbishop of Canterbury, to ensure that an important but dangerous conspirator is conveyed safely back to London for interrogation.

However, the murder of a York glazier leads Shardlake to become immersed in much deeper mysteries that have their origins in the end of the previous century and involve the legitimacy of the Tudor royal family itself.

This is an absorbing, well researched and well written book, and although fiction, Sansom has based his story on historical truths. At the heart of the matter is the legitimacy of the Tudor dynasty and the Act of *Titulus Regulus* issued during the reign of Richard III. Sansom grippingly recreates the dreadful, brutal and frightening Tudor years, with their corruption, increased use of torture and social deprivation. For anyone interested in the sixteenth century this book is well worth reading.

John Croxon.

Problem Page

Ask Agonistes: Birkbeck Early Modern Society's very own agony aunt.

Dear Aunt Agonistes,

I am a Duchess from a noble family and was widowed in my teens. My brothers refuse to let me take a husband so I secretly married my manservant. I am heavily pregnant and the strain of having to keep my condition a secret is becoming unbearable. My brothers' spies are everywhere. What shall I do?

Your Grace,

Why not try to tell the Court that you are suffering from a hysterical condition called "the mother", which is characterised by a feeling of swelling and suffocation.

According to Edward Jorden, *A briefe discourse called the suffocation of the mother* (1603) the cause of "the mother" is monstrous blood corrupted, and an evill vapour breaking out from the womb. For the most part it is caused by the woman's seed that is sent to the wombe, and therein detained and corrupted. Sometimes it is caused by corrupt humours which remain there.

In order to act like a woman suffering from "the mother" you need to say things like "I grow fat" and "I am exceeding short winded". Complain a good deal. Tell them, "my tedious lady attendant's breath smells of lemon peel", and "I swoon under her fingers". Finally, announce "I am so troubled with the mother". That way, they will never suspect that you are pregnant!

However, what ever you do, avoid eating apricots that have been ripened in horse dung, or you will give the game away.

Agonistes

(To find out how the Duchess got on, read John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*)

THE AUTUMN QUIZ

1. Where was Isaac Newton born?
2. In which month in 1805 was the battle of Trafalgar fought?
3. Jane Shore was one of the many mistresses of which English king?
4. Who published the *95 Theses* in Wittenberg in 1517?
5. Which great Italian painter died in Venice in 1576?
6. Why did the birth of Virginia Dare in 1587 mark a new beginning?
7. Which road traffic plan was introduced in London in 1607?
8. Which great civil engineer was born in 1757 near Westerkirk in Scotland?
9. To which European state was Sir William Hamilton British ambassador?
10. Where did Nelson, Emma and William Hamilton set up home in England?
11. What Government position was Isaac Newton appointed to in 1698?
12. *The Spinstress* is a portrait of Emma Hamilton by which English artist?
13. Which father and son were reburied at Fotheringhay in July 1476?
14. Which supernatural incident enthralled Londoners during 1761-1762?
15. What former favourite of Elizabeth I was executed in February 1601?
16. The Somerset House Conference of 1604 ended what war?
17. Who was the military governor of Gloucester during the siege of 1643?
18. Richard Neville, earl of Warwick, died at which battle in 1471?
19. What was the name of the ship that brought home news of the death of Nelson?
20. Which future English king was born in October 1537?

Answers on the following page

ANSWERS TO THE AUTUMN QUIZ

1. Woolsthorpe-by-Colsterworth in Lincolnshire
2. October
3. Edward IV
4. Martin Luther
5. Titian
6. She was the first child born to be born of English parents in the Americas
7. One-way-streets
8. Thomas Telford
9. Naples
10. Merton in Surrey
11. Master of the Mint
12. George Romney
13. Richard, duke of York and Edmund, earl of Rutland
14. The Cock Lane Ghost
15. The earl of Essex
16. The war with Spain
17. Edward Massey
18. The battle of Barnet
19. HMS Pickle
20. Edward VI

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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