

THE BIRKBECK
EARLY MODERN
SOCIETY

BULLETIN

Issue 6
Spring 2008



CONTENTS

Section	Page
Message from the President	3
The Bulletin: Editor's Welcome	4
Recent Events	5
Visits	17
Arts Report	24
Theatre	24
Opera	25
Art Exhibitions	27
Film/DVD	33
Music	35
Interview	37
Review of Study Workshop	39
Forthcoming Society Events	41
Forthcoming Events (non-society)	43
Book Review	47
Non-fiction books	47
Fiction books	49
Ask Agonistes: Birkbeck Early Modern Society's Agony Aunt.	52
Spring Quiz	53
Answers to Spring Quiz	54
Society personnel and contacts	55

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Early Modernists,

Welcome to the sixth edition of our bulletin. Details of our events can be found inside – can you believe that we only have two academic papers left on this year's programme? On 5 May Birkbeck's own Dr Laura Stewart will be speaking about Anglo-Scottish relations in the mid-seventeenth century; and on 30 June Emeritus Prof. Natalie Zemon Davis (Princeton) will be speaking about the methodological issues connected to her latest book, *Trickster Travels: A Sixteenth-Century Muslim Between Worlds*. This book tells the story of al-Hasan al-Wazzan, a diplomat for the Sultan of Fez who was captured by pirates in 1518, and imprisoned by Pope Leo X. When he converted to Christianity, al-Hasan was released and given a new name: Leo Africanus. For the next decade Leo lived in Italy and worked with Christian scholars. It was during this time that he wrote his *Description of Africa*, a famous text that would be reprinted throughout Europe. Davis' book retraces al-Hasan's/Leo's life and how he was able to bridge the two different worlds of Islamic Africa and Christian Europe. This promises to be a particularly busy evening, and we will forward details concerning arrangements for ensuring a seat.

Last week the committee met to decide how best to spend the time and money left to us this summer term. I am delighted to say that the second students' conference will be held in July (probably Saturday 12th), and has the theme 'Journeys and Encounters'. We hope that this open theme will produce a day as stimulating as last year's 'Centres and Margins' event – call for papers details will be sent out shortly.

We are also working on our events programme for 2008-09, so if you would like to recommend anyone then please let me know soon.

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 Six of the *Birkbeck Early Modern Society Bulletin*. Firstly, I am pleased to report that this issue has reached (and exceeded) fifty pages which I think is probably the correct length for a publication of this nature. We will keep it at this size and I do hope that it continues to contain many things of interest for you all.

Issue Six contains all the usual items; reviews of past society events, theatre, opera, television and art exhibitions, plus book reviews and a quiz, as well as notification of forthcoming events both by this Society and other comparable bodies, plus a new feature 'Visits' in which there are accounts of three separate visits to places with early modern associations. Many of us like to visit an English Heritage or National Trust property or a house associated with a prominent figure from the period, and I hope that in future editions some of you will feel able to send in an account of a visit to somewhere associated with the early modern period such as a stately home or a field of battle.

Another new item provides us with a review of each of the first two Society Film Nights. As a committee, we are continually looking to introduce new events for our members to enjoy and a regular monthly Film Night is just the latest of these innovations. I do hope that as many of you as possible will come along and support this event. In a third new feature, Robin Rowles begins a series looking at recordings of early modern music and makes some recommendations for listening. Then, in yet another addition to our range of articles, Nadiya Midgley gets acquainted with the history of science and attends some history study workshops.

For centuries in this country, and for much of the period covered by this Society, the New Year began on Lady Day, 25th March, when work could begin again after the winter. March and April were the months for ploughing and harrowing so that the land could be sown ready for harvesting in the Autumn. I should therefore wish you all a Happy New Year, instead, I will content myself with offering you all best wishes for the Spring.

Please contact me for any information regarding the *Bulletin*. The next issue will be out in the summer of 2008.

John Croxon

Editor

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RECENT EVENTS

**A Review of Doctor Vanessa Harding's 'Research into the family in Early Modern London', Wednesday, 23rd January 2008 8th March 2008,
Birkbeck College, University of London**



Dr Vanessa Harding

We were pleased to welcome the New Year with a talk by Professor Vanessa Harding on the structure of the London family from 1500 to 1700. Harding has been researching family and community since the 1980s and her work is a natural progression from her well-known work on death. Her talk gave an overview of three recent research projects: The AHRC project 'People in Place', 'Housing Environments' for the Wellcome, and 'Social Life in the Suburbs' which awaits ERSC funding.

'People in Place' identified and tracked London households from 1540 to 1710 and the results are available online on a website of the same name. The Wellcome project studied health and environment in detailed local studies. Together the studies show changes over time.

Harding's starting point was tracing the sense of crisis of late 17th Century London to its origins. Was the London family always in crisis and was the London crime-wave of the 1690's part of a larger pattern?

Late 17th Century Londoners felt that they were living in crisis times. Gregory King noted that people were increasingly reliant on charity and that the poor were in a state of distress. Irregular marriage patterns show a society in flux. Men abandoned marriage and the institution itself became more casual with private weddings and marriages outside parishes on the increase. Less regulation meant increasing charges of bigamy. Unmarried couples were rarely called to account.

Divorce was difficult but not impossible. Adultery on the part of the wife was more likely to provide grounds for divorce. Domestic disorder was common and wilful nagging wives exchanged blows with abusive husbands in relationships of mutual hatred. Wife beating was not stigmatised until the 18th Century. Even Samuel Pepys admitted abuse.

In such conditions it seems fortunate that the average duration of an early modern urban marriage was thirteen years. Widows formed a significant proportion of London's population. They had few opportunities of re-marriage and tended to be poorer than average. Some women turned to crime to make ends meet and this immoral behaviour was blamed on a failure in religion.

Child abandonment was out of control in the 1690s as poor parents were unable to support their children. Interestingly, there was not an increase in infanticide and abandoned children were meant to be found and cared for. Londoners who kept their children came in for criticism. London parents were accused of not having enough children; they were too busy working and/or having fun to invest in family life. Women who did have children were criticised for sending their babies to wetnurses for feeding. However, with 60% of women aged 35-55 supporting themselves through their own work, their labour was essential to the household.

Loss of children through death was common and most did not get beyond the age of 15. Perhaps not surprisingly, London parents were told they were too affectionate and indulgent with their children

But is 1690s London any different from the London of earlier times?

An exploration of the London of 1500 makes for an interesting comparison. In the early 16th century, London was growing. Higher wages drew in migrants but the city they flocked to was an unhealthy place to live. Plague, pestilence and epidemics can be documented from the 1490's on.

As in later times, irregular marriages were common. The right words said anywhere would do and this laxness left space for dispute. Trial marriages were negotiable and forced marriages were enough reason for dissolution in themselves. London church courts ruled on the validity of marriages. Cruelty gave grounds for legal separation and a woman in fear of her life who could provide witnesses would be successful in court.

The courts policed moral conduct. Adultery cases were common in London with 506 cases brought before the courts in just two years. But conviction rates were low. Priests dealt leniently with long-term co-habitors. Many cases were brought by neighbours rather than either of the partners. Conviction was also low in cases of fornication.

Gossip and rumour were common but people could prosecute their tormentors for slander to defend themselves. Moral norms were supported without too much repression.

Marriage was a fragile state and high rates of mortality meant that people could expect to have multiple spouses. Remarriage was speedy. Two-thirds of remaining spouses with small children remarried within 6-12 months. Widowhood, however, could be a long state with widows on their own for 26 years or more.

The amount of children was low and family lines died out regularly. Not enough male heirs survived to carry on the family. Children were only rarely mentioned in wills;

when they were they were underage. Guardians or widows were appointed to look after young children. Stepmothers or even older siblings could take on this role.

Where the late 17th century was marked by child abandonment, the 16th century had a culture of care. Alms were given to support poor children and wills provided the alms. But by 1700 a change in migration patterns meant more poverty and more child mortality. The male apprentices of the 1500's were replaced by female migrants in the 1600's and this meant that the late 17th century situation was indeed more critical than that of the previous century.

Harding answered questions after her talk, a lively discussion ensued. Some of the following points were made:

London was a more free society by 1700 but this freedom came at the cost of more atomised communities in which people took less responsibility for each other.

Widows were a point of interest for the group. Harding explained that widows could carry on businesses and could claim alms and pensions in times of trouble. They also had access to parish funds. Widows had life interest in property to support themselves. Alms could also be earned by widows performing duties for the parish.

Ideas of privacy were very different from our own. London households seem to have had enough beds to make sharing unnecessary but poorer houses employed hot bedding or social sleeping to make the best use of space. Our modern desire for privacy puts up invisible barriers, for example, when we're on the Tube, and early modern people probably had similar ways of coping with the lack of privacy.

Sexual assault on servants reflected structures of households in which the rule of the master was all. Relationships were based on exploitation and availability.

Harding's talk was an excellent and stimulating start to the year.

You can visit the 'People in Place' website at <http://www.history.ac.uk/cmh/pip/index.html> or follow the link on the Early Modern Society website <http://www.emintelligencer.org.uk>.

KAREN BASTON

**A Review of Doctor Malcolm Gaskill, 'The History of Witchcraft:
Where do we go from here?'**

Monday, 11th February 2008 2008, Birkbeck College, University of London



Stephen Brogan introducing Malcolm Gaskill



Dr Malcolm Gaskill

Dr Malcolm Gaskill presented a draft version of his forthcoming article for the *Historical Journal* called 'The Pursuit of Reality: Recent Research into the History of Witchcraft'. The review article considers nine books to determine the state of witchcraft studies in the contexts of law, society and politics. This review will concentrate on the general ideas and the discussion on the night while leaving the specific book reviews for the *HJ*. Readers who would like a list of the books discussed may request one from karen@emintelligencer.org.uk.

Witchcraft is a subject with a turbulent historiography. From the first history of witchcraft in 1701 to the present, the debates have not settled. Historians and commentators have used witchcraft to further their own agendas. The witch-craze era provided polemical ammunition against the Catholic church. Romanticism recognised the fantastic possibilities of witches and in Britain Walter Scott and his fellow novelists indulged in gothic flights of fancy. James Frazer and Margaret Murray hailed witchcraft as the authentic religion of the people. Pagans and feminists claimed the subject as part of their social sciences. Alan Macfarlane and Keith Thomas brought social anthropology and history to witchcraft studies but their work had limited applicability outside England. From the early 1990s, revisionism recognised

the diversity of approaches. Throughout the 1990s conferences addressed questions of witchcraft studies.

Witchcraft is an endlessly expanding subject and it is particularly useful to take an interdisciplinary approach. Community, society, gender, medicine, faith, law and philosophy are all parts of witchcraft studies. Traditional frameworks are under pressure. Witchcraft resists unification and distorted perceived realities need to be reconciled. A big question is 'how does it all hang together?'. The idea of a 'witch hunt' implies a systematic approach which just didn't happen.

Ronald Hutton supports collaboration but recognises problems with the approach. Our assumptions are often wrong and even insulting. Historians need to tread a middle way. Rationalism, romanticism, and relativism all help with the recovery of meaning. We need to be analytical in approach because we can only go so far into the psychic realm. The reality of Satan to early modern people is difficult to understand but it is an important consideration.

Where do we go from here? There is no straightforward answer. There are no agreed definitions – even 'witch' has no conclusive definition. It is, however, important to recognise witchcraft's connectivity to other aspects of early modern life. Robin Briggs and Alison Rowlands are models of a good approach: they combine work with archival sources, hard work and good historical imaginations. Mary Beth Norton's recent *In the Devil's Snare: The Salem Witchcraft Crisis of 1692* is a fine example of a good approach.

Studying early modern witch hunts helps us understand modern ones and we can gain impressions of what might be happening in modern contexts by studying the past.

A question and answer session followed the lecture. Here are some of the discussion points:

Witchcraft is real today. Two hundred people in India are accused of it each year and even in England, as the recent case in Hackney shows, witchcraft is very real. A global perspective in combination with local studies is needed.

The economics of witch hunting is also an interesting way to approach the subject. Witch hunting was an expensive business and more research needs to be done in this area.

Our stereotypes about witch hunters need to be challenged. For example, the Spanish Inquisition could take a tolerant approach and was not immune to common sense.

Why did witchcraft intensify in the early modern era? The chronology is difficult but new inquisitional methods, accusatory justice, and the Reformation are all factors. From the distance of time we tend to think the events occurred suddenly but they took place over a long period of time. The negative energies of religious conflict also impacted events.

It is hard to work out what was really happening. Was magic actually being done? Witchcraft was real to people of the time. There was not an organised cult but belief

was very real. Witchcraft has a reality problem that the multi-disciplinary approach can help with but staying synch with other disciplines is a difficult and challenging. Witchcraft is an ancient idea and it is complex. There is no consensus anywhere as to what a witch is and this makes its study a challenge.

This talk was an interesting springboard for the future of witchcraft studies. I look forward to the full paper in the *Historical Journal*.

KAREN BASTON

**A Review of Ronald Hutton's 'Famine and Plague in Early Modern England',
Thursday, 8th March 2008, Birkbeck College, University of London**



Professor Ronald Hutton makes a point



Professor Ronald Hutton does it 'just like that'



Professor Ronald Hutton at the Question and Answer Session

Professor Ronald Hutton, in trademark waistcoat, delivered a polished lecture on plague and famine. He explained that he wanted to revisit themes from his earlier works, *The Restoration: A Political and Religious History of England and Wales, 1658-1667* and *The Rise and Fall of Merry England: The Ritual Year, 1400-1700*. He is currently at work on a new textbook which will be released later this year which will explore the socio-economic ingredients of plague and famine.

Plague and famine studies were hot topics 20-30 years ago but they are not popular among young academics today. The potential Bird Flu crisis failed to revive interest but the questions still need to be answered and studied.

Hutton opened by defining plague and famine in their early modern contexts. Tudor and Stuart England had a rapidly growing population which strained the economy. The strain meant deaths and between 1530 and 1630 parishes experienced an average of four crisis mortality events in which burials increased to more than double the usual rate. Because parish registers did not record cause of death consistently until 1810, we need to use vague indications to guess why people were dying in crisis numbers. Famine could be indicated by increased food prices, plague can be assumed if the deaths occur in summer and flu or typhus if the deaths happen in winter. The nature of crisis events also means that deaths may have been occurring too fast for them to be recorded.

We need to take care when assigning these guesses. For example, the bloody flux could be dysentery but, as we can see from the famines in Ethiopia, the last stage of starvation is marked by similar symptoms.

Where you live is important to your potential survival in early modern England and the diversity of environments and the level of social control made a difference. In Cambridge, for example, three different zones meant three different chances for survival. If you lived on the clay plateau of the south west with its stable parish government, your chances stayed level. If on the chalk hills of the south east, your chance of death increased slightly. If you were a Fen-dweller, you were in the wilds environmentally and governmentally and your chance of early death increased.

Epidemics occurred every fifty years or so and, interestingly, the most lethal year of the 17th Century was not the 'plague year' 1665 but 1657-8 when people, including Oliver Cromwell, fell victim to a long-lasting lingering lurgy.

That established, it was time for a 'Journey into Nightmare'. While famine only killed the poor, disease killed most people. Flu travelled up and down society with 'Jack Fisher's Flu' acting with the least concern for social position. Cardinal Pole was a prominent victim and this flu decimated Mary I's regime spreading quickly then vanishing.

Plague remained in the population and terrorised the early modern population. A fifth to a quarter of the population could expect to die of plague. We can trace the population's reactions to plague in churchwardens' accounts. These also supply gruesome implications of the realities of the plague experience.

Churchwardens' accounts give details of the supplies needed to fight a plague outbreak. Padlocks and nails were purchased to shut up houses. Red paint was needed to daub the doors of the houses of victims with the message 'Lord have mercy on us'. Watchmen were hired and equipped with halberds so that they could cut off the fingers of those who tried to escape their shut houses. Searchers were hired to find plague and inspect corpses. A sedan chair was fitted with scraps to confine raving plague victims found in the streets. The accounts also record the setting up of pest houses patrolled by 'camp guards'. The supply of nurses and medicines are not found in the accounts. Ten to twenty percent of plague victims survived.

In large cities, the dead were buried at night to avoid infection and demoralising the population. Coffins were re-used. Bells were rung to warn others to avoid the area. There was a burial problem as churchyards rose above their normal level. Plague pits were dug in the suburbs and the bodies were tipped in like faggots. The pits also caused a spiritual terror as the ground was not consecrated: it was like being a criminal or a suicide. Loved ones disappeared without regular burial services or marked graves. One chilling plague pit example was found at Broad Street in London where victims were buried with shoes but no coffins – were they found in the streets?

Plague also caused an economic downturn as communities ceased trading and shops shut down. But local governments had emergency funds to help cope with crisis. They also had tried and tested means to help the community survive.

Infected communities were isolated. London, for example, rigidly enforced routes in and out. In 1665 in Yorkshire, a man was shut up with friends who travelled from London and in Lancashire, straw which travellers slept on was routinely burned. In Bedfordshire, local children who tried to return to their home village were made to stay outside the village limits until they were confirmed as free of plague. Fumigation by burning sulphur and salves with insecticidal properties worked to keep plague at bay.

Why did the horror of famine and plague disappear in England by the end of the 17th Century? There was no more famine in England after 1623. The population levelled off and a wage economy developed alongside a greater variety of crops and more

efficient farming. People also started families later and this stabilised the population. Hutton's thesis is that communities worked within themselves to control their numbers.

Plague's disappearance from England after 1670 is also a controversial area. Two traditional explanations exist. First, that black rats became immune to the plague bacillus in England. Second that a type of 'Volvo-driving brown rat from Scandinavia' drove out the black rats. Neither of these theories is provable (and I seem to remember from a certain Birkbeck MA course on 'Death Disease and the Early Modern City' that participants would automatically fail if their final essays used the words 'rats' or 'fleas' in relation to plague!).

Is community action, therefore, the answer? The poignant example of the village of Eyam provides a case study for the sort of thing Hutton means. In 1665, the village received infected goods from London. The people of Eyam sealed their boundaries with the result that two thirds of parishioners died and six-sevenths of villagers perished. Lists of the dead are still outside their cottages. (See John Croxon's article on Eyam elsewhere in this *Bulletin* for more on this tragic village.)

What Eyam shows is that quarantine was the most effective way to prevent the spread of plague. Entire countries took action to prevent the spread of plague. The last great western plague occurred in 1721 when the port of Marseilles allowed a ship from Smyrna to dock which had been denied entry by four other European ports. A fifth of the population died.

The answer to the end of plague, therefore, is that people cooperated to take charge of their collective destiny. The actions were not top-down decrees but the result of ordinary people coping with crisis over generations. As communities became more efficient, ruthless and productive, plague and famine were defeated.

In England specifically from 1650-1700 the defeat of plague and famine shows that people working together had the ability to change their lives. And for that we may be thankful!

KAREN BASTON

FILM NIGHT



The Return of Martin Guerre (1982)

Directed by Daniel Vigne and starring Gerald Depardieu and Nathalie Baye.

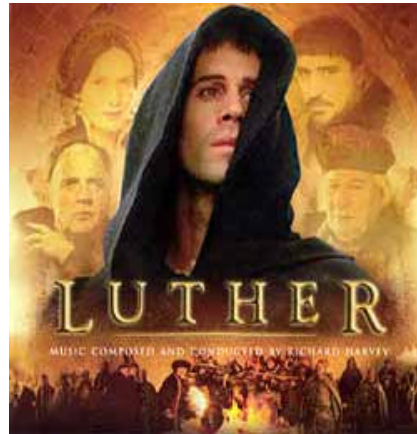
As a Society we are constantly looking at ways of extending our scope and entertaining our membership, one such innovation is a monthly film night, held on a Friday and shown in one of the lecture theatres at Birkbeck.

The first film to be chosen was *The Return of Martin Guerre* starring Gerald Depardieu. Filmed in French with English sub-titles *Martin Guerre* proved to be a popular choice. The story is based upon real events that took place in 16th Century France, when a young peasant suddenly left his family and his home village not to be seen nor heard of for a long time. Then, several years after he had left his family, a man claiming to be Martin Guerre took his place and lived seemingly happily with Guerre's wife and son for three years. Some of the villagers then became suspicious and after a trial, during which the real Martin Guerre returned, the imposter was unmasked as one Arnaud du Tilh and executed.

The story was re-told by Hollywood as *Somersby* but the French original, made in 1982, is the superior film with fine performances by both Depardieu and Baye. The film was very true to the events as we know them and Daniel Vigne's strong direction successfully portrayed sixteenth-century French village life and ensured that the film held one's attention throughout.

Eighteen members turned up to the event and during the discussions over wine after the film had ended it seemed like the first film night had proved a big hit. Indeed, such was the enthusiasm of those present that it was unanimously agreed that this would become a regular monthly event. Great thanks must go to our Secretary Laura Jacobs who first proposed the idea of a film night, arranged the event, produced a synopsis, and then on the night introduced the film. The monthly Film Night has now become yet another successful innovation of the Society and one that I hope as many of you as possible will take advantage of the Film Night is free to all members of the Society and wine and snacks are provided.

John Croxon.



Luther (2003)

Directed by Eric Till and starring Joseph Fiennes, Alfred Molina, Bruno Ganz, Claire Cox and Peter Ustinov

Luther (2003), directed by Eric Till, is a biopic of Martin Luther (1483-1546) starring the gorgeous Joseph Fiennes in the title role, supported by Bruno Ganz, Peter Ustinov and a host of revolting peasants straight from central casting. The film opens with Luther's decision to become a monk in 1505 and shows his subsequent journey to Rome where he is troubled by the spectacle of priests frequenting whores, selling indulgences and worshiping dodgy relics, such as a skull believed to be that of John.

Back home, Luther watches as the simple peasants are browbeaten into buying indulgences they can ill afford. He takes to the pulpit and denounces the practice then nails his 95 theses to the church door. These are quickly printed and circulated. Luther is summoned to Augsburg and questioned by Church officials. Pope Leo X orders Luther to be delivered to Rome, but Frederick the Wise and Charles V, Holy Roman Emperor insist that Luther be tried at Worms. After the trial Luther is forced into hiding and his former teacher Karlstadt, incites the peasants to revolt. Shocked, Luther encourages the princes to suppress the rebellion. We see Luther in hiding translating the Bible into German and later falling in love with Katharina von Bora, a former nun whom he marries. Charles V summons the electors of the Holy Roman Empire to Augsburg to force them to outlaw Protestantism and the vernacular Bible. The nobles refuse and the rest, we are told, is history.

There are some inaccuracies in the film for example Luther refers to Bible passages by book, chapter, and verse. However, the Bible was not divided into verses until 1546, and even then the divisions were not commonplace until the advent of the Geneva Bible.

Andreas Karlstadt is depicted as radically distorting Luther's views but the reforms orchestrated by Karlstadt were more peaceful and included vernacularisation of the Mass.

The film shows all the nobles, including the elector princes, defying Charles V. However most of the princes were still Catholic. Only two of the seven electors made a stand at Augsburg, the Margrave of Brandenburg and the Duke of Saxony.

Finally, Luther is shown presenting his translation of the Bible to a grateful Frederik of Saxony (Ustinov) even though the two never met.

This non-Hollywood feature comes highly recommended and is the second film to be shown by Birkbeck Early Modern society this year. Please email any suggestions for films you would like us to screen to Laura Jacobs at l.jacobs@english.bbk.ac.uk

Laura Jacobs

ATTENTION

ALL EARLY MODERN SOCIETY MEMBERS

The Film Night is just one of the many ideas that the Society is trying in order to provide new and innovative ways to broaden our appeal to our membership and provide a good night out. All films are shown on a large screen in one of the lecture theatres at Birkbeck College in Malet Street.

So the next time that we hold a Film Night why not come along and see a good film, meet other members, and have a good time. The Film Night is free to members of the Society and wine and snacks are provided.

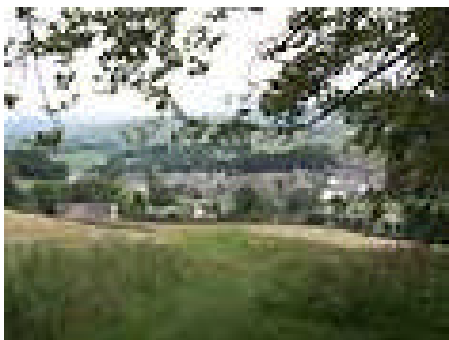
If you have a film that you would like the Society to screen then please send your suggestion to Laura Jacobs at l.jacobs@english.bbk.ac.uk

VISITS

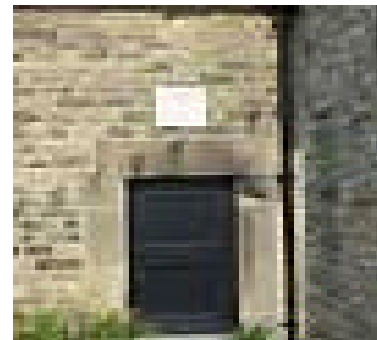
Eyam Village and the Great Plague

Following Ronald Hutton's scintillating lecture to the Society at the beginning of March in which he intriguingly suggested that the common people were instrumental in taking charge of events in order to combat both plague and famine, and cited the incidents at Eyam as one example, I had the idea of travelling up to Derbyshire in order to see for myself the setting for the incredible happenings of 1665.

Driving into Derbyshire in March, with the fields sodden and the occasional hill top still covered in a light sprinkling of snow, it is difficult to imagine that the quiet village of Eyam, just off the A623, could have such a fascinating, yet tragic story to tell. Yet, at the end of August 1665 bubonic plague arrived at the house of the village tailor George Vicars, via a parcel of cloth from London. The cloth was damp and was hung out in front of the fire to dry, thus releasing the plague infested fleas. On the 7th September 1665, George Vicars, the first plague victim, died of a raging fever. As the plague took hold and decimated the villagers it was decided to hold the church services outdoors at nearby Cucklett Delf and, on the advice of Rector William Mompesson and the previous incumbent Thomas Stanley, villagers stayed within the confines of the village to minimize the spread of the disease. Cucklett Delf was also the secret meeting place of sweethearts Emmott Sydall, from Eyam, and Rowland Torre, who was from a neighbouring village. They would call to each other across the rocks, until Emmott Sydall herself became a victim of the plague. In all, six of the eight Sydall family died, and their neighbours lost nine family members.



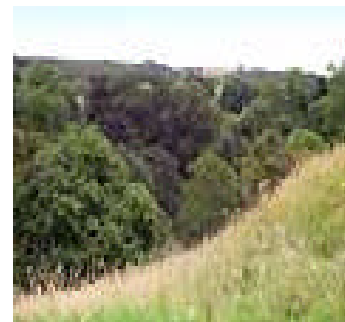
The village of Eyam



George Vicar's house



Church Street, Eyam
The Plague Cottages



Cucklett Delf, Eyam
scene of outdoor services

To minimize cross infection, food and other supplies were left outside the village, at either the Boundary Stones, or at Mompesson's Well, high above the village. The Earl of Devonshire, who lived at Chatsworth House, freely donated food and medical supplies. For all other goods, money, as payment, was either purified by the running water in the well or was left in vinegar soaked holes. The Riley graves, close to Riley House Farm and approximately half a mile from the village, house the bodies of the husband and six children of farmer Elizabeth Hancock. All died within a week of each other. Because of the high risk of infecting her neighbours she had the traumatic task of burying them all herself. Even more tragic is that the infection probably came to her family when she helped bury the body of another villager. Twelve months after the death of George Vicars, the plague was still claiming its victims, and on 25th August 1666 Catherine Mompesson, wife of the recently appointed rector William Mompesson, died of the plague. She had loyally stayed with her husband and tended the sick, only to become a victim herself.



Mompesson's well.
Food and medicines were left here.



Mompesson's well.
The water disinfected the coins left as payment.



The Riley Graves,
on the hillside above Eyam



Seven members of the Hancock family are buried here.

The plague in Eyam raged for fourteen months and claimed the lives of at least 260 villagers. By the 1st November 1666 it had run its course and claimed its last victim. Eyam's selfless villagers, with their strong Christian convictions, had shown immense personal courage and self-sacrifice. They had prevented the plague from spreading to other parishes, but many paid the ultimate price for their commitment.

Catherine Mompesson's tomb is in Eyam churchyard. It is decorated with a rose entwined wreath every year on Plague Sunday as this is the Sunday closest to Catherine Mompesson's death and the outbreak of the plague. Other families had to bury their own dead, in either fields or in their garden.



The Parish Church of St Lawrence,
Eyam



The tomb of Catherine
Mompesson

The plague houses are private residences and one can only view them from outside. However, each house has a plaque naming who dwelt there during those fateful years of plague, and the lists of names are a salutary reminder of the tragic events of the plague years. The church, plague cottages and a museum are all close to each other but it is a hard walk up the hill to the well (especially after days of rain!), but worth it for the breathtaking views of the surrounding countryside. I would also recommend a visit to Eyam Hall where a guided tour allows visitors a chance to view the very fine rooms and provides details of the various members of the Wright family who have owned the building from its construction in 1671 right up to the present day. Refreshments can be had at the Hall or at the one pub in the village, the Miners Arms, built in 1630 that serves good ale and good food. The name of the pub derives from the many meetings that the local mine owners used to have here.



Eyam Hall



The Miners Arms

Eyam is a lovely village set in picturesque countryside and on a day trip it is hard to imagine the awful events of 1665 and 1666. Yet, being aware of the story means that one does experience a sense of sadness and it is virtually impossible to visit this unspoilt Derbyshire village and not be moved by the tragic events that took place there. The people of Eyam displayed enormous altruism and their story of self-sacrifice is yet another noble act in this country's proud history. Whether people today would be prepared to enact such self-sacrifice is open to conjecture. However, the locals have certainly not forgotten and almost 350 years later a remembrance service is still held every Plague Sunday (the last Sunday in August) at Cucklett Delf, Eyam. If you fancy a day out or are travelling north and have time to stop off for a few hours then visit Eyam and experience a little piece of English history.

John Croxon.

An Easter Visit to Denis Severs' House, 18 Folgate Street, London, E1 6BX



This restored red-brick Georgian terraced house, built in 1724, was owned by American-born Dennis Severs, who died in 1999. Here, at 18 Folgate Street, the eccentric designer and performer recreated a historical interior that takes the visitor on a journey from 1685-1919.

The hot cross buns and the bucket of boiled eggs are sitting on the sideboard in the basement kitchen patiently awaiting the return of the Jervis family from their Easter

Sunday service. The fire crackles in anticipation of cooking the family's Easter feast and the house is inhabited by ghosts of a future time.

A magician has been at work. He has left messages for the time-travelling visitors from 2008. He commands them to be silent and to 'pay attention'. They are witnesses and they are participants. Their faces reflect back at themselves from ancient mirrors and the panes of glass that protect precious images and scripts. They are there but yet they are not there. They are interlopers but they are also welcome to see. Nothing is hidden. The chamber pot in the corner of the room is only to be emptied once a day. The ashes are to be left in the fireplace and the cobwebs are not to be smoothed away.

The painted, varnished floors creak as the explorers move hushed from room to room. Treasure troves are displayed for them. Set pieces, theatrical sets, and representations of what the past might have been like. Is it art or is it history? Whatever it is, it is magic.

The hush continues – no one breaks the silence. They hear creaks and fire crackles. The hiss of the gas light and the sounds of people on other floors. Who are they? Are they the residents scampering away before they can be seen?

The first rooms speak of comfort. Glasses of port and piles of tobacco fill an elegant gentleman's table. His notice board offers evidence of party invitations and attendance at sermons. His canary hops in its cage and looks benevolently on the scene. The room next door can be glimpsed through heavy curtains, is more feminine. Collected objects overwhelm the gas-lit space and a comfortable sofa tempts but cannot be touched.

Up the stairs to find a lady's room readied for tea. The proportions are elegant. Her portrait is on the wall and all her things are in place. But she is gone. It is a message for the future ones for it will happen to them, too, as it happened to her.

But we needn't be too pensive – a party has also happened in the house. Hogarth's painting with its overturned bottles and empty punchbowl has come to life. The chairs have fallen and dumped their occupiers into oblivion.

Another lady lives nearby. Her boudoir has already witnessed its tea ritual and her concerns seem curiously modern. She has labelled a dress with a tag on its waistline 'Let Out Here'.

But as the travellers move up the stairs they also move in time. Prosperity did not stay in Spitalfields and the top floor of the house is a climactic horror. Hope, yes, as a new queen takes the throne but those who have gone to see her have left a room with its ceiling falling in as cold and damp take over. The messages say that those who are thinking of Dickens are on the right lines and that Tiny Tim and Little Nell knew this scene. They are fictitious and so is the rest.

The smell is of cabbage and cold and the future visitors fight within themselves not to flee back to the worlds of rock candy, tea and potpourri, and roaring fires below. When they do, it is with a sense of relief. Back through time down the stairs and then back to 2008 in the street. The tour is over.

A visit to Denis Severs' House in Spitalfields is an amazing experience. Although its historical veracity can be questioned, the House asks its visitors important questions

about the human experience of the past. It is also a very different experience than visiting a traditional museum. Visitors are part of the exhibition as they move within the spaces – there are no ropes blocking off any areas and, because all the objects are all within reach, there is an increased sense of responsibility. We are being trusted to attach value to the overall effects and not to tamper with them. It is a mysterious and interactive experience and comes highly recommended by

KAREN BASTON

Pub Review

The Jerusalem Tavern

55 Britten Street

EC1M 5UQ

Monday-Friday 11am-11pm (Closed Saturday & Sunday)

Although the Jerusalem Tavern only dates from 1996, its feel is completely historic. The building was originally a merchant's house which dates from the creation of Britten Street in 1719. If Denis Severs had branched out to create a pub to go with his famous house at 18 Folgate Street, the result might have been something like the Jerusalem Tavern.

The pub is quite small and prone to crowding but plan your visit for late afternoon or early evening and you'll find a delightful vision of an 18th century coffee house complete with open fires, snugs, and antique tiles and paintwork. The beer is by the St Peter's Brewery of Suffolk and is served in traditional bottles based on a design dating from the 1770s. Empties are recycled to make oil lamps which you can purchase for £15.

The atmosphere at the Jerusalem Tavern is amazing. You can imagine Hogarth strolling in to enjoy the fine English beer or Johnson cloistered with a group of friends in that corner over there. The windows at the front of the pub postdate such luminaries as they date from 1810 but their warped age makes them seem older.

The overall effect is traditional but not staid. The locals and visitors are lively and the sounds of conversation bounce off the ceiling and walls to create a pleasant buzz. This is clearly a well-loved place by both the owners and the users and it is well worth a visit.

Find out more about the Jerusalem Tavern at the St Peter's Brewery website where they proudly, and rightly so, describe 'Our London Pub':

<http://www.stpetersbrewery.co.uk/london/>

KAREN BASTON



The Jerusalem Tavern, 55 Britten Street

ARTS REPORT

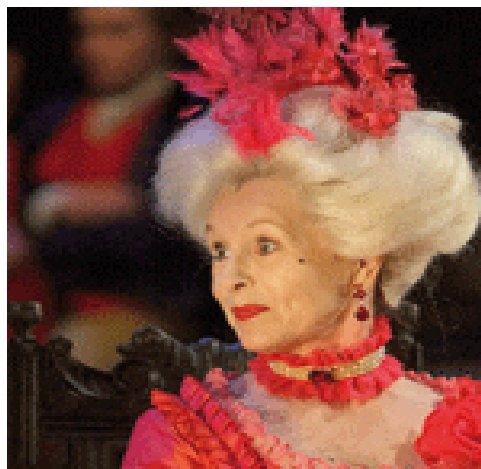


THEATRE

She Stoops To Conquer: The Cambridge Arts Theatre, Cambridge



Oliver Goldsmith



Liza Goddard in She Stoops To Conquer

This revival of Oliver Goldsmith's classic 1773 comedy of manners is a Birmingham Repertory Theatre production touring the regional theatres, and the excellent Cambridge Arts Theatre is a delightful venue in which to stage it.

She Stoops To Conquer is a rumbustious tale about two young men, Charles Marlow and George Hastings, and their hilarious attempts to court Kate Hardcastle and her friend Constance Neville. Sent to the country by his father to woo the daughter of one of his father's old friends, Marlow is shy when in the company of ladies but is rather more brash when conversing with barmaids. Kate has to disguise herself as the latter in order to get Marlow to overcome his chronic shyness. Meanwhile, Hastings tries to steal the willing Constance away from the house and off to France. Simultaneously, the two friends are misled by the young man of the house, Tony Lumpkin, that the house is in fact an inn and that Mr Hardcastle is the inn-keeper.

This is an extremely funny production which cleverly evokes Goldsmith's use of deceits, schemes, comic ruses and turns of plot. The bawdy dialogue and humorous mix-ups are played out along the way until the play concludes with two happy marriages. The play contains some great lines such as "*I wonder why London cannot keep its own fools at home*" and "*Those who have most virtue in their mouths, have least of it in their bosoms*". Goldsmith's great comic creation, Tony Lumpkin, is superbly played by Jonathon Broadbent who gives a lively portrayal of the young county squire determined to enjoy himself despite the best efforts of his mother to control his behaviour. Mrs Hardcastle and her second husband, Mr Hardcastle, are both expertly portrayed by Liza Goddard and Colin Baker, and Dorothea Myer-Bennett is quite wonderful as Kate Hardcastle. Indeed, it is impossible to criticise any member of the cast, all of whom were marvellous in this wonderful production. The only drawback for me was the inclusion of a new prologue and epilogue by Bryony Lavery. I found the prologue particularly tiresome and I really could not see the point of including it. However, these are merely the beginning and the end and do not detract much from the enjoyment of the play itself. So if you fancy a great laugh then make sure that you see this production as it tours around the country.

John Croxon.

OPERA

Benjamin Britten's 'A Midsummer Night's Dream' **Linbury Studio, The Royal Opera House**

A Midsummer Night's Dream was one of Benjamin Britten's favourite Shakespeare plays. After deciding to write a full-length opera to premiere at the 1960 Aldeburgh Festival, and having less than a year to do so, using a work he knew well like the *Dream* was an obvious choice. He worked with Peter Pears, his long-term partner, to cut Shakespeare's text in half to fashion a libretto of reasonable length. He commented on this process, and the composition of the opera, in an article some time later:

I do not feel in the least bit guilty at having cut the play in half. The original Shakespeare will survive. Nor did I find it daunting to be tackling a masterpiece which already has a strong verbal music of its own. Its music and the music I have written for it are at two quite different levels. I haven't tried to put across any particular idea of the play that I could equally well express in words, but although one doesn't intend to make any special interpretation, one cannot avoid it.

The *Dream* was an immediate success for Britten and remains one of the most popular of his operas. Written for a medium sized orchestra it is accommodated perfectly by the smaller space of the Linbury Studio at the Royal Opera House.

This performance was a revival of the 2005 production by Olivia Fuchs. A severely minimal setting in the intimate space of the Linbury surprisingly seemed to work. Evocative lines from the play ran around the auditorium's balcony in blue neon light. Projected backdrops were simple and, importantly, relevant to the performance on stage which seems to be increasingly not the case in new productions. The stage set itself consisted merely of a box, a set of shelves, a rope suspended from the ceiling and an old armchair yet, with a little imagination, they managed to conjure up the enchanted wood with strange effectiveness.

Britten's entrancing music, played ably by the City of London Sinfonia and conducted by Rory MacDonald, evokes the world of the forest with its sighing and creaking and rustling. The natural and supernatural worlds are softly distinguished with humans and fairies characterized by their own sound worlds – harps, percussion and harpsichord accompany the mysterious world of the fairies; strings and woodwind the lovers; whilst the rustics are defined by bassoon and other bass instruments. Surely Thomas Ades must have got inspiration from this work for his own beautiful setting of *The Tempest*.

Jami Reid-Quarrell's athletic Puck performed striking acrobatic feats using the suspended rope and was suitably mishchevious in this non-singing role. William Towers's Oberon was a magnetic figure who sang hauntingly with an other-worldly quality, but also with an underlying, more human, malevolence. Gillian Keith's Titania was somewhat less enchanting and it was hard to believe in her drug-induced passion for the transformed Bottom, although her 14 fairy minions played by the Tiffin Boy's Choir were appropriately charming. The two central pairs of lovers were nicely cast as a group - Ed Lyon's Lysander contrasting with Jacques Imbrailo's smoother Demetrius, Katie van Kooten (Helena), with her marvellous despairing wail 'I am as ugly as a bear!', and Daniela Lehner (Hermia) particularly impressive as they fought each other. The mechanicals were rather less convincing and funny than they should have been, however, Matthew Rose's rich bass was well cast as Bottom.

On the whole this was a good production offering some strong performances that evoked much in the way of Shakespeare's nocturnal world, both supernatural and real. Ultimately, it was, however, perhaps not quite fully as enchanting an interpretation as Britten's beautiful, fractured work demands.

Sue Dale

ART EXHIBITIONS

Pompeo Batoni Exhibition, The National Gallery, London (Until the 18th May 2008)

Best known in this country for portraits of Grand Tourists, Pompeo Batoni (1708-1787) is shown in the current National Gallery exhibition to have been a much more versatile artist. He falls into an interesting phase of Art History, not quite Neo-Classical but not yet fully Baroque or Rococo. His position is analogous to that of Lord Burlington (1694-1753) whose Palladianism is not as austere as true Neo-Classicism but sometimes, as in the late proposal for a façade for the Houses of Parliament on a single vast curve, comes close to it. Burlington inevitably was a Grand Tourist, who would have been one of Batoni's stock-in-trade sitters had he been younger. Those able to pay the Italian master were not always the most interesting people. Several strike the required poses with a disconcerting lack of conviction. Many Grand Tourists were young and, like students today on a school trip to Florence, or participants in a gap year programme, not always fully able to appreciate what they were experiencing. Burlington was exceptional in that he became a serious architect in spite of the crippling disadvantage and severe limitations on what was acceptable behaviour as a result of being an earl. His story demonstrates all too clearly how unprepared the younger travellers could be. Having returned to England, he suddenly realized he had missed what he should have been looking for and dashed back to Venice and Vicenza to snap up as many Palladio drawings as he could lay his hands on. Simply because they were rich and powerful, or would be, or born to rule, some of Batoni's sitters are of historical interest. "Frederick Lord North, later 2nd Earl of Guildford" [ca. 1753-6, National Portrait Gallery] appears as a reasonably good-looking young man, minus the seriously protuberant eyes, lips and belly, a gift to the caricaturists of a quarter of a century later, and not yet "the man who lost America".

The "Lord North" is a restrained but good example of Batoni's habitual use of bright tones against a darker ground. Here the table against which the young man writes and his dull-coloured breeches and stockings, as well as the dark tones of what is behind him remove distractions around the lighter upper body. The vertical band of pale waistcoat and shirt aligned with his head draw the viewer's attention to a not unintelligent face. Batoni may not be a great painter but he is at least as bright as, and more talented than, his sitters and in his allegorical works knows how to make good use of the imagery that comes to hand. The habitual contrast of dull and bright tones is used to brilliant effect in "Prometheus Fashioning Man from Clay" [1740-3, private collection, Milan] in which in very special circumstances there is a dull area in the middle of the important part of the painting. The very orange and pink Prometheus, pulsating with life, looks up at Minerva, having completed the purely sculptural part of his work. Judging by the suspended position of his instrument he appears to have completed his labours in the genital area, perhaps linking, in the viewer's mind, creation and procreation. Coloured like neon in the night against a dark rock, one of the sculptor's hands circles around behind the newly-modelled man's back. At the same moment the lifeless smaller figure's dull grey clay hand, gesturing at the same level in the opposite direction, is in front of Prometheus's much brighter mantle. The live and the lifeless are contrasted in the two hands with an effectiveness that goes well beyond the often rather conventional imagery of the period. The most clunking

instance of such imagery in this exhibition is the rather early “The Triumph of Venice” [1737, North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh]. Not only does the colour of the monuments not reflect the true tone of their Istrian stone but the figures look like the cast of a rather contrived carnival float. In the rational 18th century, allegory ceased to inspire real conviction. It was only through the exceptional panache of Tiepolo or the telling detail in the mature Batoni that it could be revived. A little boy with dividers, symbolizing architecture, is about to prick Neptune’s leg. For some reason the Doge is Leonardo Loredan, who reigned 1501-21, far better represented in the National Gallery’s portrait of him, the virtual icon of the Dogeship, by Giovanni Bellini. The modelled man has been so well done by Prometheus that his clay hair, which should be hard and damp, is positively fluffy.

Athena extends an arm over Prometheus’s head as he looks imploringly at her for divine inspiration and to impart the life. Her hand extends a butterfly, symbol of the soul, towards the clay statue. The treatment of the subject suggests that the forcefully stabbing gesture of Michelangelo’s God the Father is too strong for Batoni’s taste. The patron in this case let him choose his subject. A more appropriate comparison is probably with Burne-Jones’s Pygmalion series of paintings [the later set, 1878, Birmingham City Art Gallery] in which a goddess again has to intervene to animate a sculpture. Not a painter to ignore the customer’s wishes, Batoni has given Athena a sexy variation on her traditional snake-trimmed aegis, which only covers one breast so that the free one can swell with mild suggestiveness under her tunic. The lower part of her body, far from the centre of attention around the newly made man, is as unimportant as Lord North’s legs. Her right, seemingly flat, leg has an edge as thin as a rope which could be taken from the Virgin’s outstretched arm in Titian’s late “Pietà” [unfinished at the artist’s death in 1576, Accademia, Venice]. As we shall see, Batoni shows an acute awareness of the Italian tradition.

The “Prometheus” is a pendant to “The Death of Meleager” [1740-3, private collection, Milan]. In this work Meleager’s mother stretches her arm across the upper part of the painting to thrust a log into a fire to bring about the fulfilment of a prophecy of the hero’s death. This is, compositionally and thematically a reversal of Athena’s arm in the “Prometheus”: one gesture brings life, the other death. Such extended arms appear so often in Batoni’s oeuvre as to almost become a cliché, though the artist must be given credit for getting such mileage and so many nuances out of it. The curators missed a trick in not hanging the National Gallery’s own “Time Orders Old Age to Destroy Beauty” [1745] next to the Milanese pair. Again an extended arm reaches across, here so the old crone, on Time’s instructions, can draw her nails across Beauty’s flawless face. There could be a reference to a work such as the National Gallery’s “Venus, Cupid, Folly and Time” [probably 1540-50] by Bronzino. For compositional reasons, and because of its non-specific allegorical nature, this painting, though not of the same commission as the other two would make a better companion piece to the “Prometheus” and its basic creation myth set before individual human stories. The sizes of the canvasses are almost the same. The boar’s head in the “Meleager”, another vital part of the myth, has shed a discrete, tasteful ruby of a drop of blood on the ground to inform us that it is dead. Batoni is a representative of a generation for which moderation and restraint were important objectives. They had left behind the blood-and-guts horror depicted with enthusiasm by the Counter-Reformation artists, except where they were obliged to use it in altarpieces. The messy and the repugnant is otherwise always carefully controlled and

edited out. In “Alexander Gordon, 4th Duke of Gordon” [1763-4, National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh] a gutted hare’s (?) leg is hooked over the eviscerated abdomen. Batoni would not have approved of Rembrandt’s “Slaughtered Ox” [1655, Louvre] or Gericault’s series of severed heads and limbs. Incidentally, as one of the hunting dogs starts to embrace his master’s leg, another area is concealed by a rifle butt. In many respects this is a sanitized art for an increasingly polite age, though not without a degree of suggestiveness.

The familiar extended arm in the “Alexander Gordon” holds a hat with which the duke appears, inexplicably, to be blocking his horse’s view of what he, Gordon, is looking at. Compared to Stubbs, the subject of a fairly recent National Gallery exhibition, Batoni’s approach to animals is almost sentimental or sympathetic depending on your point of view. In “Thomas Dundas, later 1st Baron Dundas” [1763-4, The Marquess of Zetland] the sitter’s dog, who appears to have accompanied him into the then new Museo Pio-Clementino at the Vatican, laps water from a fountain. This is a richly allusive painting in which the dog plays an unexpected part. The sitter’s usual extended arm echoes that of the Apollo Belvedere in the background. Now regarded as a tame piece of Roman classicizing sculpture this work was in Batoni’s time highly esteemed. Dundas’s rather improbable balletic pose, of which more later, leaving aside the arm, is not at all classical. In addition to the “Apollo”, littered about the background are the “Laocoön”, the “Antinoüs” and, further forward, the “Ariadne/Cleopatra”, the probable identity of which has changed over the years. Their sizes are somewhat indeterminate and they are arranged in a classicizing space of a curiously improbable shape, complicated by the foreground architectural features. Batoni is no Canaletto, architecture being the weaker part of those works in which it appears. These statues are all antique if not all of the same style as Winckelmann was discovering. The Duke of Gordon retained the services of the Art Historian as a Cicerone (guide) but could not be induced by the great man to descend from his carriage to take a closer look at anything.

A version of Bernini’s “Tritone” (or an antique prototype) here with two conch shells or other water spouts, is in a shadowy niche under the “Ariadne” as a small fountain figure. The Bernini is actually outside in a huge shell basin on a major fountain. By reducing the “Tritone” and putting it in a niche Batoni has taken several rather worrying steps on the way to plastic reductions of Michelangelo’s “David”. The dog should be a statue. The Capitoline/Vatican collections have sculpted dogs of this type but this one is portrayed as real, and probably was. The owner’s balletic pose may in part refer to the writhings of the “Laocoön” group but may simply be a sign of friskiness inspired by thoughts of less agonized contortions. The “Ariadne” has very snaky draperies. She also appears in another full-length Batoni, “Thomas William Coke, later 1st Earl of Leicester” [1773-4, Holkham Hall], not in the exhibition. In this painting her facial features are said to have been modified to resemble those of Louise von Stolberg, Countess of Albany, wife of the Young Pretender, with whom Coke is supposed to have had an affair. Sexual tourism was an important part of the Grand Tour experience, though seldom taking place at such a high social level. Dundas points to, or may even, by implication, be about to flick away, a coiling strand of Ariadne’s drapery while his sword hilt is arranged so as to be highly suggestive. The same setting and configuration of male statues seen in the “Dundas” appear two years later in “Count Kiril Grigojewitsch Razumovsky” [1766, private collection,

Vienna], not in the exhibition. Although the “Ariadne” has been moved to the lower left the sitter still gestures towards her in a possessive way.

The balletic pose is used again in “Colonel the Hon. William Gordon” [1765-6, The National Trust for Scotland, Fyvie Castle, Aberdeenshire] but for once the raised extended arm, so important in the “Dundas”, is omitted. Dundas’s other arm holds a cane and hat; Colonel Gordon, in army uniform with campaign medal, uses the arm to flex his sword on the ground. The other hand rests on his hip, its arm bent away from the statue of “Roma”. She, seated, helmeted and demure, extends an orb and holds a wreath. Fame and power clearly await the Colonel. He wears a kilt, then banned by Act of Parliament in the United Kingdom. It has been suggested that it is a silk version to make it bearable in the Roman climate and in deference to his surroundings it has a suspicious resemblance to a rather dishevelled Roman toga. The statue of Roma also appears in “The Holy Roman Emperor Joseph II and Grand Duke Leopold of Tuscany” [1769, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna], also not in the exhibition. Joseph, the highest-ranking secular person in Europe, though at this stage firmly under the influence of his mother, holder of the family’s hereditary titles, nonchalantly lays his arm across Roma’s lap, in a sense his possession as Emperor. There is an interesting contrast between the posturing Scottish Colonel and the calmer Emperor, though both the latter and his brother have faces denoting somewhat neurotic characters. Batoni, though not so tactless as to insult his sitters, usually manages to tell us quite a lot about their personalities. The full height of the Colosseum, revealed across its ruined side, curves behind Colonel Gordon like a great unroofed exedra as does the wall to the rear of the space behind Dundas.

As on the one hand Batoni edged his way in the general direction of Neo-Classicism, on the other he also fell back on earlier models. The distance he had to travel to reach what we, with hindsight, think of as the inevitable stylistic destination was considerable. The somewhat cluttered “Death of Meleager”, already discussed, makes a telling contrast with the stark simplicity of David’s “The Death of Marat” [1793, Musées Royaux, Brussels]. The centrally-placed bright colours tend to diminish in the later works and some of the portraits from this period have fewer props than the earlier examples. Batoni’s use of a figure reclining in the landscape shows him keeping ahead of his times. “Sir Humphry Morice” [1761-2, Sir James and Lady Graham, Norton Conyers, North Yorkshire] reclines outside as do the later National Gallery “Sir Brooke Boothby” [1781] by Joseph Wright of Derby and “Goethe in the Campagna” [1787] by Johann Heinrich Wilhelm Tischbein [Städelches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt]. In several instances Batoni reverts to what Freedberg would call Mannerist “febrility” as in “Meekness” [1752, The Featherstonhaugh Collection, Uppark (The National Trust)], or “Cleopatra and the Dying Mark Anthony” [1763, Musée des Beaux-Arts de Brest Métropole]. The latter again seriously downplays the blood and guts.

The exhibition organizers in the accompanying film emphasize Batoni’s debt to Guido Reni with considerable justification in the Roman environment in which the later artist worked. However, I think there may at least sometimes be a more direct link to the precedents of the 16th century as in Burlington’s architecture, dependent on Palladio, or Tiepolo’s paintings based on Veronese’s. The 18th century experienced a serious Mannerist revival. Parmigianino and Correggio come to mind as sources for our artist. The allegorical or historical women and their profile, or near

profile, heads often seem especially close to Parmigianino. This is particularly the case with the profiles in the “Death of Meleager”, “Cleopatra and the Dying Mark Anthony” and the “Holy Family” [ca. 1760, Pinacoteca Capitolina, Rome]. “The Marriage of Cupid and Psyche” [1756, Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin] bears a distinct resemblance to a Giulio Romano bedroom scene, such as the “Embracing Couple” [1530s, Hermitage, St. Petersburg] or Correggio’s “Danaë” [ca.1531, Borghese, Rome]. “The Sacrifice of Iphigenia” [1740-2, private collection on loan to the National Gallery of Scotland] is an inventive adaptation of the traditional format of a Presentation of the Virgin, as used by Titian among others, with fewer steps. St. Jerome looking over his shoulder in “The Marriage of St. Catherine with Sts. Jerome and Lucy” [1779, Palazzo del Quirinale, Rome] must be taken from the Correggio St. George in “The Madonna and Child with St. George” [1520s, Gemäldegalerie, Dresden]. In a sentimental touch, Jerome’s lion, used as a footstool as is the severed dragon’s head by Correggio’s St. George, looks up indulgently at his master. In the Batoni in a concession to a gory convention St. Lucy’s eyes are on a plate as well as in her head. The overall format of “The Blessed Bernardo Tolomei Attending a Victim of the Black Death” [1745, Basilica di San Vittore al Corpo, Milan] must surely reflect Domenichino’s “Last Communion of St. Jerome” [1614, Vatican Museums]. Batoni did not confine his references to the 16th century and was open to many influences. The Baroque ones are rather more obvious. There is a telling comparison to be made between “Aeneas’s Flight from Troy” [1748, Marchese Poschi-Meuron, Lucca], not in the exhibition, and Federico Barocci’s version of the same subject [1598, Borghese, Rome]. Barocci was a late Mannerist who managed a partial transition to early Baroque. As a transitional artist himself he presented Batoni with what must have been an accessible form of the earlier style combined with the emerging Baroque.

The exhibition brings together works from diverse collections and venues in addition to the English country houses in which so many of Batoni’s pictures hang. The National Gallery is to be congratulated on borrowing works from the Italian presidential collection in the Palazzo Quirinale and a major Milanese church. Batoni is not quite in the same league as Tiepolo, Canaletto, the Guardi or Piranesi. His portraits are instantly recognizable as his, but perhaps not the other works. His quite well known “Education of Achilles” [1746, Uffizi, Florence] looks like a typical, highly competent mid-century mythological painting, not that this is a criticism. By contrast “Pope Clement XIII” [1760, Palazzo Corsini, Rome] breaks with the tradition of Raphael and Titian to rise from the papal chair and give a half-hearted blessing. This is an exhibition worth visiting for the range of work and the fairly frequent inspired improvements on conventional treatments of people and subjects.

Timothy Alves

Brilliant Women: 18th Century Bluestockings (Free)
National Portrait Gallery, London, 13 March – 15 June 2008

For a brief time in the mid-18th century, female intellectuals enjoyed a prominence among the educated London elite. These ‘modern muses’ wrote, painted and commissioned art and architecture but perhaps more importantly their salons provided expression for the characteristic informal sociability of the time.

The 'Bluestocking Circle' did not exclude men but it was primarily based on female friendships who based their association on a shared love of learning of all kinds. The term 'bluestocking' actually derives from woollen stockings normally worn by working men instead of the formal white silk which the men who met with the Muses would be expected to wear. Benjamin Stillingfleet, whose portrait is included in the exhibition, sadly not full length to display his less than fashionable socks, was therefore technically more of a bluestocking than his female friends.

The Bluestockings sought to balance reason with feeling and they delighted in their knowledge of classical learning. One of their number, Hannah More, expressed their feelings in a couplet:

'The noblest commerce of mankind
Whose precious merchandise is MIND!'

Sharing of knowledge was essential to the Bluestocking way of thinking. They saw themselves as the equals of men and adopted male conventions in depicting themselves. More, for example, appears in a painting by Frances Reynolds (Joshua's sister) in a traditional 'man of letters' pose of dishevelled 'undress'. More's protégé Ann Yearsley, a.k.a. 'Lactilla', the milkmaid poet, appears with a 'knowing state' in her portrait which reflects the same confidence as her male counterparts.

Artists were important to Bluestocking propaganda and two female artists – Mary Moser and Angelica Kauffman – were Bluestockings found among the first intake of the Royal Academy.

By the end of the century the Bluestocking tradition was rocked by scandal as two of its final and finest exponents lives were rocked by the scandal of their unconventional sex lives. Catherine Macaulay was lauded as a fine historian and political commentator whose taking on of these 'masculine' roles was tolerated until 1778 when her elopement with a man half her age brought about her intellectual downfall.

Macaulay was not forgotten by one admirer. The equally if not more controversial Mary Wollstonecroft wrote her a fan letter in 1790 in which she praised 'Mrs Macaulay Graham because she contends for laurels whilst most of her sex seek only for flowers'.

The Brilliant Women of the Bluestocking circle are certainly worthy of this small but comprehensive exhibition.

The NPG's website at <http://www.npg.org.uk/live/wobrilliantwomen.org> has more information about these intriguing people and their friends.

The accompanying conference of 25-26 April is already fully booked but those interested can contact Emma Middleton with urgent inquiries including inquiries about ticket returns on 020 7312 2483.

The ODNB has free access to the people featured in the exhibition:

<http://www.oxforddnb.com/public/bluestockings/>

KAREN BASTON

FILM/DVD



The Libertine (2005)

Johnny Depp stars in *The Libertine* as the scandalously decadent John Wilmot, 2nd Earl of Rochester, who achieved literary acclaim only after his lingering death aged thirty-three, ravaged by syphilis and alcohol. Hard drinking, debauched and callous, Rochester was also literate, witty, romantic and courageous. *The Libertine* explores the final year of his drunken life as he drifts away from his wife (Rosamund Pike), woos a young actress (Samantha Morton), and is himself enticed by the King (John Malkovich) to write a great play that will impress his political connections and foreign dignitaries. But the earl of Rochester is a self-loathing man, so consumed by his own thoughts and brilliance that he is bored by the world around him, his cynicism means that he is unable to allow happiness into his life. Instead of writing a work of homage to Charles II, he devises a scurrilous play which bawdily lampoons the very monarch who commissioned it, attacking Charles for being obsessed with sex at the expense of his kingdom, an act which leads to Rochester's eventual downfall.

The opening monologue of the film has him declare to the audience that we will not like him and the sheer self-indulgence and waste of a talented life might lead one to that view. Yet, as the man is laid bare before us, it is hard not to like him. Much of the film is shot in a kind of sepia, perhaps signifying the man dying before us. It contains some amusing dialogue; Rochester takes on a servant named Allcock, which leads one of his friends to remark "*like master like servant*". A trip to the theatre results in the following exchange: "*Did you miss me?*" "*I missed the money*". "*Good. I love a whore with sentiment*". During the extravaganza that he produces for Charles II giant penises are waved suggestively around by dancing girls.

There is an attempt to show what Rochester was capable of and what he could have become when he opposes the supporters of the Exclusion Bill who wanted to debar James duke of York from the throne. Even here, the film makers have him make a defiant stand for individuality and bloody-mindedness: when after the successful outcome of the vote Charles II says that at last he has done something for him, Rochester replies that he “did it for himself”. Whether Rochester would ever have risen to great heights (or if he had wanted to) should he had lived longer is a debatable point. Certainly, his importance to the outcome of the vote has been inflated in the film. Also, one is torn between admiring his devil-may-care attitude with disgust at yet another privileged aristocrat able to live such a decadent lifestyle. Yet, in real life he displayed enormous courage in the sea-wars against the Dutch, and in literature his published works display a wide range of learning from contemporary French writers to classical authors, and demonstrate real talent, for example, his poem *A Satyr Against Mankind* is a scathing denunciation of rationalism and optimism that contrasts human perfidy against animal wisdom. In addition, he contributed scenes, prologues and epilogues for a number of Restoration plays and, as shown in the film, his coaching of his mistress Elizabeth Barry began her career as the greatest actress of the Restoration stage. Posthumous printings of his most famous work *Sodom, or the Quintessence of Debauchery*, gave rise to prosecutions for obscenity and were destroyed.

This is a good film but a somewhat uneven one, there are times when it loses its way but never for long, and ultimately it holds our attention. Johnny Depp almost always gives a great performance and he is superb as Rochester, ably supported by Samantha Morton, Rosamund Pike and John Malkovich. Here, Rochester is portrayed as doomed right from the very beginning, and the film heartbrokenly charts every step towards his demise. Depp skilfully portrays a clever man bored to death with life and all the pleasures that life has laid before him.

The final monologue has Rochester asking the audience if we like him now. The answer is that despite some of his unpleasant characteristics, yes, he is likable. Possibly the more appropriate question is why did he not like himself more? Perhaps we should leave the final word to William Hazlitt who wrote “*his contempt for everything that others respect almost amounts to sublimity*”.

John Croxon.

MUSIC

Robin Rowles begins a new series by taking a look at music in Early Modern England.

A Layman's Guide to Early Modern Music: Part 1: Seventeenth-century England

Students of the early modern period wishing to familiarise with their chosen period, or simply wishing to chill out between essays, could do worse than sampling some music of the time. This series will present a few suggestions. It must be emphasised these are not reviews. It is not claimed that these are the best recordings, or are the best examples of a composers output for two reasons: firstly, as a non-musician, my opinion is that of the layman. Secondly, the recordings I will describe are from my music collection and not selected after many hours comparative listening. A further caveat should be made. Although at the time of writing (March 2008), most of these recordings were obtainable, either new or second-hand, this does not guarantee their future availability.

La Renaissance Anglaise: Music in early 17thC England, (Harmonia Mundi, HMA 190219), is a compilation of works by three English composers: Thomas Weelkes, Thomas Tomkins and Orlando Gibbons. Thomas Weelkes (1576?-1623) was organist at Winchester in 1598. On completing his musical degree in 1602 he became organist and choirmaster at Chichester. He was reportedly dismissed from this post because of drunkenness in 1617. Frustratingly little else is known about his life. In the context of this recording, 'The Cries of London', in which a London grocer advertises his wares by singing to passers-by, is particularly interesting. By 1622 Weelkes had been reinstated at Chichester, but spent much of his time in London where he died in 1623. Weelkes was buried at St. Brides, Fleet Street.

The second composer featured on this recording, Thomas Tomkins (1572-1656), was master of choristers at Worcester in 1596. Tomkins was appointed organist at the Chapel Royal in 1621 and composed part of the coronation music for Charles I. In 1628 he returned to his previous post at Worcester, which he retained until 1646 when, at the end of the English Civil War, parliamentarian forces captured the city and removed the organ from the cathedral. Tomkin's music was religious and political: 'Pavan and Galliard' was dedicated to the memory of Earl Stafford. A very late work, 'A Sad Pavan for these distracted times' was written in 1653/54 and reflects Tomkins unhappiness during the interregnum. These are available on *Consort Music for Viols and Voices*, (Naxos, 8.550602).

The third of this trio, Orlando Gibbons (1583-1625), sang as chorister at King's College, Cambridge between 1596 and 1598. In 1605 Gibbons was appointed organist to the Chapel Royal and also played at Westminster from 1623. Gibbons' career ended in dramatic fashion, when he collapsed and died during ceremonies marking Charles I official reception of his queen Henrietta Maria. The tracks 'Behold thou hast made my days' and 'Great King of Gods' are examples of his sacred music.

Henry Purcell (1659-1695), needs little introduction. Born in the last year of the Cromwellian Protectorate, his music may be described as one of the defining sounds of the Restoration. Chorister at the Chapel Royal from 1673, he progressed to the important post of assistant keeper of instruments. Purcell was appointed organist at the Chapel Royal and wrote coronation music for James II and William III. His *Suites and Transcriptions for Harpsichord*, (Naxos 8.553982) and *Fantazias*, (Naxos, 8.553957) represent a cross-section of his instrumental compositions during this period. Those seeking an introduction to Purcell's choral works may wish to sample *Ode for St. Cecelia's Day/Te Deum* (et al), (Naxos, 8.553444). Unfortunately, it appears this recording has been deleted from the current Naxos catalogue, so a little detective work may be required to source this. Purcell was instrumental in founding the St. Cecilia festival in 1683. Saint Cecilia was a Christian martyr (d.176) who was adopted as the patron saint of music in the fifteenth century. Purcell's reconnection of music with its historical roots therefore echoes the revival of courtly music during the Restoration.

John Blow (1649-1708), became chorister at the Chapel Royal at the Restoration in 1660 and was appointed organist at Westminster Abbey in 1668. Other appointments followed: gentleman of the Chapel Royal, Master of Choristers at St. Paul's Cathedral, and Composer to the Chapel Royal. More importantly, Blow tutored and influenced Henry Purcell. After Purcell's untimely death in 1695, Blow took over his former pupil's position as organist at Westminster Abbey.

In 1697, Blow was commissioned to write music celebrating peace and reconstruction. The Treaty of Ryswick had ended eight years of war between the Grand Alliance of England, Holland, Austria and Spain, and Louis XIV's France. The other notable event that year was the re-opening of the chancel of St. Paul's cathedral, which was the first part to be rebuilt by Christopher Wren. Thirty years after its destruction in the great fire, St. Paul's resonated to Blow's anthem 'I was glad', a piece that was specially written for this double celebration. 'I was glad' may be heard on *Coronation Anthems/Anthems* (Decca, 436 256-2). The *Coronation Anthems* on this recording were written, of course, by George Frederick Handel, whose music will feature in a later article in this series.

In the next part of this series, I will survey the music of seventeenth-century France.

Robin Rowles

Sources:

'Weelke's Texts'. *The Musical Times*, Summer 2002,
<http://www.musicaltimes.co.uk/archive/0202/weelke.htm>
Dictionary of Music. (Ed) Alan Isaacs and Elisabeth Martin, (London, 1991)
Who's Who in Europe 1450-1750. (Ed) Henry Kamen, (London, 2000)
Who's Who in Stuart Britain. (Ed) C.P. Hill, (Revised edition, London, 1988)
www.last.fm/music for images and biographies of the composers featured

An History of (Early Modern) 'Science' Interview

Historians of Science, whatever period they specialise in, are not a huge bunch of people, and they are scattered about the world – some in dedicated HPS departments (History & Philosophy of Science), some in History departments, and some in other, less immediately obvious-sounding departments. This is particularly true of the very small group of people working on Early Modern topics. Often they turn up in unusual corners of the academic world, and some interesting work on Early Modern 'Science' is taking place outside academia. (I use the term 'science' in the Early Modern context with a lot of flexibility, mainly because the discipline still uses the term Science, and to list all the aspects of philosophical thought involved, many of which are nothing to do with modern science, would unnecessarily complicate this introduction!)

I decided to find out more about what sort of Early Modern HPS work is going on. My first interview was with Valentina Pugliano, a PhD student at Oxford. Incidentally, she is organising a student conference this summer as well, more details on that below.

First of all, I was interested in where and how she was working on her PhD. Every department and every University seems to have very different systems in place, and in a small field like the one Valentina and I are part of, it is interesting to see how connected or isolated individuals feel.

I wanted to know whether her department was specifically focused on HPS. Valentina's reply was, "Oxford does not really have a Department for History and Philosophy of science. This can be both a disadvantage and an advantage. At times I feel like a rare creature, and realise that students of Early Modern science and European history are quite a commodity across the University. On the other hand, this means that I have to go out and look for them, and therefore mix with people from other units and departments and participate in interdisciplinary seminars, etc."

I wanted to know more about whether she interacts with students from other departments and Universities, and as indicated above, she does, mainly with those of the Wellcome Unit for the History of Medicine and the English faculty, (at her own University). Valentina is also about to spend next term at the HPS Department in Cambridge, and is looking forward to experiencing the difference.

So clearly, from this first interview, it looks like communication and interaction within the field is encouraged and strong. After all, Valentina is far from isolated. She said, "Well, if I had to describe what I'm actually doing, I would probably say it's a mix of Intellectual History and History of Science/Medicine. I find the label of History of Science quite appealing, but at the same time I don't feel completely represented by it. At the moment, moreover, being a Historian of Science seems to be quite the trendy thing and the category ends up being applied to almost anything (you just need to translate 'scientia' into knowledge...)"

So let us turn to her work. I asked Valentina about her PhD Topic, and she replied, “I am currently working on England and the Republic of Venice over the period 1550 to 1630. My analysis is an attempt to document and compare the textual representation of monstrous births in English ephemera and their actual exhibition across town and country, with the botanical and collecting activities of a number of knowledgeable (and now forgotten) apothecaries working in Venice and the Veneto as well as London.

The idea is that behind both practices there is a specific 'epistemology of vision' at work, spectacularising its object and simultaneously demanding a closer, more sober, and more experiential look at it. This epistemology, I believe, is one of the premises on which the period turned the study of nature into a discipline and then into a science.

I asked her whether the term ‘science’ applied to her particular project, and her thoughts were, “Well, my historical subjects called their field (natural history) ‘science’, if they ever gave it a name. It certainly was something different from what we term modern science today, or even from the scientific practices of the later seventeenth century.”

Finally, I wanted to know what was really fascinating her about her work at the moment, and her answer was, “I like the fact that most of it, from the activities of Venetian and London apothecaries to the exhibition of incongruous bodies, has not really been looked at before and is based on uncharted archival and manuscript material. The fun of discovering things...”

Valentina has just organised a one-day graduate conference with her fellow Jan Machielsens. The conference is entitled "On the fringes of science? Natural knowledge and its practitioners in early modern Europe, 1450-1650," to take place on Friday 27 June at All Souls College, Oxford. The deadline for the call for papers is the 10th May, and the details are all available on the Early Modern Society Blog, as well as the BSHS and IHR websites.

Nadiya Midgley

**A Review of the Resources and Techniques for the Study of Renaissance and
Early Modern Culture Workshops,
run by the Warburg Institute and the University of Warwick**

Part 1

The Warburg Institute and the University of Warwick collaborate each year to organise a series of three workshops, supported by the AHRC, which focus on Resources & Techniques for the Study of Renaissance & Early Modern Culture (for PhD students). The first one-day session is held in January, at the University of Warwick, the second and third at the Warburg Institute in February and April. So far I have attended the first two sessions, and overall, the organisers have certainly put plenty of thought and effort into the programme, and they are definitely worth checking out. I certainly learned a few things, although the programme is really great for Art-Historians, and less focused on History of Science. Most Early Modernists have very little to do with History of Science, and should get more out of the sessions. I loved the images and information we focused on in the Workshops, but most (not all) of it was not relevant to my work. Having said that, the insight into Early Modern society, politics, religion and culture was relevant to all of us, and the resources we learned about will be useful too.

Workshop 1 focused on Electronic Resources and Workshop 2 was on Images – here is where the Art History students really got their £50 worth! Workshop 3 in a few weeks is on Texts, and I will report back on that session in the next *Bulletin*.

The real downside to attending Workshop 1 was the journey to Coventry, in order to get to the University of Warwick! Sadly, Coventry Station itself was not *the place to be* and finding our way out of the station to the bus stop was a real mystery! The University itself was lovely, particularly the atmosphere – students really seemed to like being there, there was plenty going on, and their facilities were good. The sessions were arranged so that all the students attending had a chance to meet and chat before the first presentation, as well as at various points in the day, and it was great to meet others interested in Early Modern history – again, most of the group were Art-Historians, I am not sure if this is the case every year. As a group we were working on very interesting projects – for example, ‘Representing London in Lord Mayor’s Day Pageants in the early seventeenth century’, ‘The Galleria of the Palazzo Farnese: emulative and imitative use of sculpture and myth in the Roman Renaissance’ and ‘Locating music and visual art in country life: Alfonso Ferrera c. 1520’ to name just three.

We listened to talks on database design, were given plenty of information and instructions in our handouts, and had a chance to play a bit on the computers, making up our own basic databases. Not all of us had a particular need for a quantitative database, but we obviously all had data management issues to deal with, and just observing the lecturers way of looking at the huge swathes of potential data and showing us how she comes up with organisational criteria was a useful exercise.

Most of the day was spent learning more about Bibliographic sources available to us online, including the Warburg Library collection, the collections of libraries all over Europe and the rest of the world, various digital collections, electronic journals and databases. We went into a lot of detail, and spent the sessions exploring our options using the computers. Those of us used to the Birkbeck online resources are aware of how to access quite a few of these resources, but the Warwick University system is far more extensive, and they have a huge section specifically focused for their Centre for the Study of the Renaissance (they were the department hosting the Workshop).

A month later we were all reunited at the Warburg Institute for Workshop 2, on Images. The tour around the Library, including the floor with all their Images was interesting, even for someone who spends a lot of time at that library. Their collection is quirky, large sections of it having been collected by people working on very specific topics, but that does not detract from how wonderful some of their images are.

The lectures and presentations were on Visual Resources, Knowledge of Antiquity (in the Early Modern & Renaissance period), Religious and Secular Iconography, Mythology, and Interpreting philosophical and scientific images. The talks varied a great deal and were very interesting, with plenty of time devoted to looking at some famous and beautiful images. We learned a great deal about the Institute and how the people there like to think – which was interesting in itself!

The Workshops weren't groundbreaking of course, and attending them won't change your life or cause you to immediately rush off and write three of your chapters, but they were interesting, informative, well planned, and depending on what each of us were working on for our PhDs at that time, were quite stimulating in one way or the other. The range of resources available to us are pretty extensive, and it was good to see that for areas I didn't know about, and great to be reminded of sources I hadn't used in a while, or hadn't made the most of yet.

Nadiya Midgley

FORTHCOMING SOCIETY EVENTS

Events 2007-2008

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

- 3rd April 2008 - Dr Richard Williams, 'Lucas Cranach at the Court of Saxony' Room B36, Malet Street, Birkbeck College
- 7th May 2008 - Dr Laura Stewart, 'Serving God and Mammon: the Anglo-Scottish Relationship in the Mid-Seventeenth Century'. Room 538, Malet Street, Birkbeck College
- 30th June 2008 - Prof Natalie Davies, 'Pursuing "Leo Africanus" and other Enigmas: Some Thoughts on Historical Method' Room 101, Clore Building

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 Birkbeck Early Modern Society

Lucas Cranach at the Court of Saxony

Dr. Richard Williams

3rd April, 6:30pm

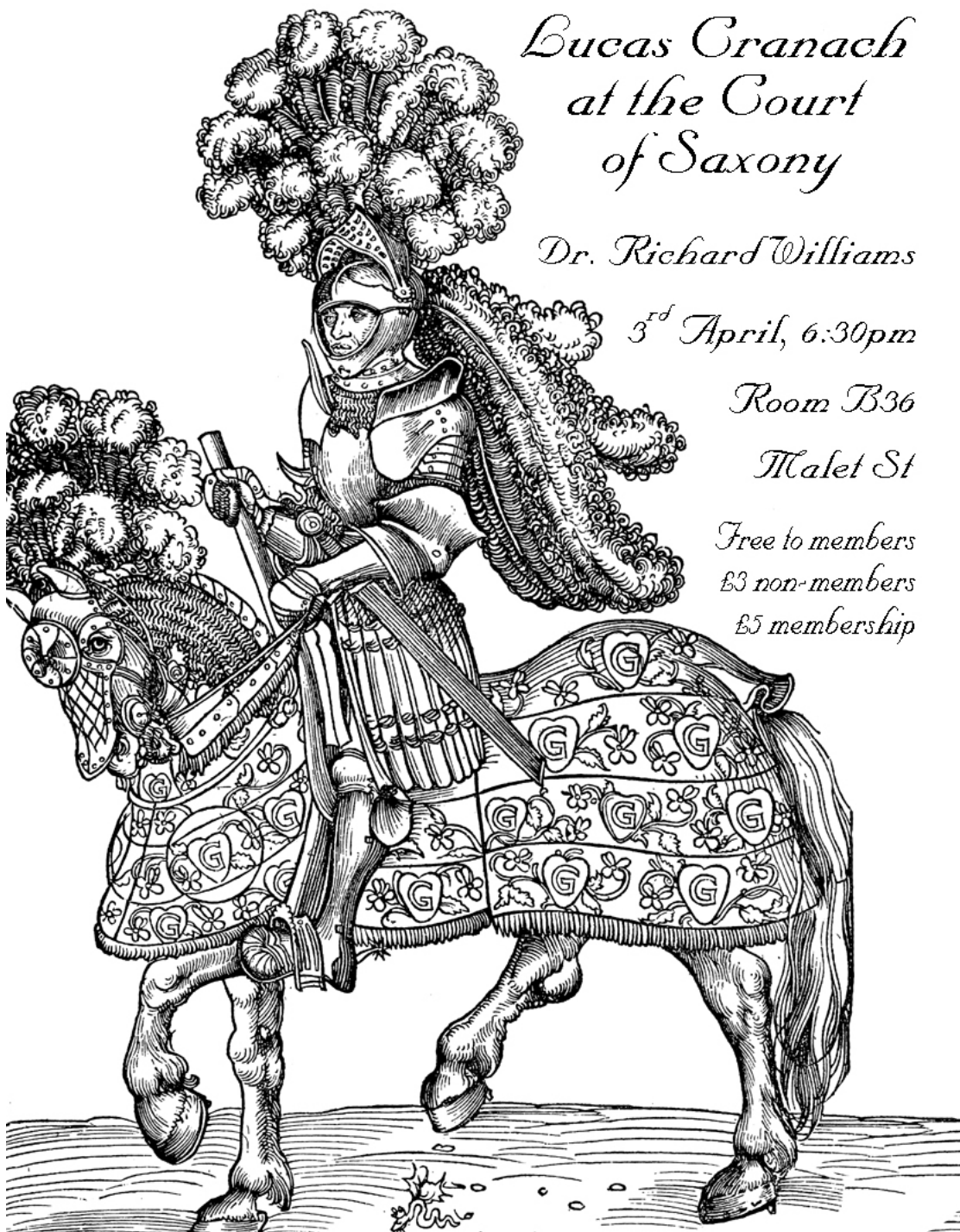
Room B36

Malet St

Free to members

£3 non-members

£5 membership



FORTHCOMING EVENTS

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

Brilliant Women: 18th Century Bluestockings National Portrait Gallery, London

13th March – 15th June

The term ‘Bluestocking’ started as a reference to a group of female British intellectuals but was soon applied to learned women everywhere. This exhibition explores the movement’s London roots and expanding network before considering the impact of the French and American Revolutions upon women’s movements in Britain.

Cranach Royal Academy of Arts, London

8th March – 8th June

This is the first major exhibition of German artist, Luca Cranach the Elder (1472-1553) to be staged in Britain, featuring around seventy works of art.

The French Revolution in Print UCL Art Collections, London

Until 18th April

Discover how artists represented the French Revolution through a series of prints from the UCL collection.

Amazing Rare Things The Queen’s Gallery, Buckingham Palace, London

14th March – 28th September

This exhibition highlights the fact that prior to television documentaries artists were crucial in broadening our understanding of the natural world. Featured here are a range of artists, botanists and antiquarians, such as Leonardo da Vinci, Cassiano dal Pozzo and Alexander Marshal.

The New London and Heavenly Jerusalem
Gresham College, London

23rd April

A lecture from Allan Chapman of Oxford University to mark three hundred years since the building of St Paul's Cathedral.

Handel and the Divas
Handel House Museum, London

30th April – 16th November

This exhibition recalls the great divas that worked with Handel, containing portraits, artefacts and musical scores from the time.

THE HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION

Central London Branch

All meetings at 2.00 p.m. on a Saturday at the Institute of Historical Research, Senate House, University of London, Malet Street, London. WC1E 7HU.

Saturday, 26th April 2008 Dilwyn Knox (Department of Italian, UCL),
Ancients versus Moderns in the Renaissance

Contact: Bill Measure measure@btinternet.com



New Approaches to the Battle of Naseby
A day conference organised by the Centre for English Local History
University of Leicester
Kelmarsh Hall, Sunday 29 June 2008



Programme

09.30 – 09.50 Registration and Coffee

9.50 – 10.00 Dr Andrew Hopper (Leicester) Welcome

10.00 – 11.00 Prof. Martyn Bennett (Nottingham Trent), ‘ “...None are to share with Him”: Cromwell, Naseby and God’

11.00 – 12.00 Dr Jason Peacey (UCL), ‘Opening the King’s Cabinet: Propaganda and Public Opinion after Naseby’

12.00 – 12.15 Coffee

12.15 – 13.15 Glenn Foard (Project Officer, Battlefields Trust), ‘Recent Advances in Battlefield Archaeology: the Implications for Naseby’

13.15 – 14.30 Lunch

14.30 – 16.30 Martin Marix Evans (Chairman, Naseby Battlefield Project) ‘Battlefield Tour: Interpreting the Landscape of the Battle of Naseby’

16.30 – 17.00 Afternoon Tea

17.00 – 18.00 Closing Lecture: Prof. Ian Gentles (Tyndale University College, Toronto), ‘The Legacy of Naseby’

Conference Details

This conference will investigate the past, present and future of Naseby. It will link the recent successful approaches to the battle by academic historians, archaeologists and landscape analysts, encouraging them to engage with a public audience. It will celebrate and look to build upon the exciting developments made in recent years by the Naseby Battlefield Project: <http://www.naseby.com/>

Registration

To register for the day please send your name, address, email and contact details in an envelope marked 'Naseby day Conference' to the Centre for English Local History, no later than 1 June 2008. Please enclose a cheque payable to 'The University of Leicester' for £29.50 per person. This will cover admission to Kelmarsh, buffet lunch, refreshments and the battlefield tour. Please bring waterproofs and sturdy footwear in case of poor weather.

Ms Lucy Byrne
Centre for English Local History
Marc Fitch Historical Institute
5 Salisbury Road
Leicester, LE1 7QR
<http://www.le.ac.uk/elh/>

Please send queries to the conference organiser, Dr Andrew Hopper: ajh69@le.ac.uk

Directions to Kelmarsh

Kelmarsh Hall is 5 miles south of Market Harborough's railway station. The journey time from London St Pancras is just 75 minutes. The Hall is easy to reach by road. Exit the A14 at J2 and head north on the A508 towards Market Harborough. The Hall's entrance gates are on the Kelmarsh crossroads, just 500m north of the A14. Naseby battlefield lies just 3 miles west of Kelmarsh Hall.

<http://www.kelmarsh.com/>

Accommodation

Northamptonshire holds proof that there is more to a good night's sleep than just a roof over your head. Visit www.explorenorthamptonshire.co.uk for special offers and discounts at a full range of accommodation in the county, some with online booking.

BOOK REVIEW

NON-FICTION BOOKS

I hope that many of you will send in your reviews of newly published books and the occasional 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

London: The Biography by Peter Ackroyd, Vintage

Peter Ackroyd is a Londoner: he was born in the city and has lived in the capital all his life. I confess I am a fan. Maybe it is because like him I was born in Acton and I feel some connection, but I think that it is more likely that I just admire his writing.

There is no doubt that Ackroyd loves London; if you were to wound him he would bleed its streets, parks and buildings, and although most of his books are immensely readable: think of *Hawksmoor*, *The Thames*, *The Plato Papers*, and his short biographies of *Dickens and Newton*, it is this, his opus to London that we will first remember him by.

London: The Biography contains a lifetime of research but it reads as written with an effortless flair of one who is both in love with his subject and also truly understands it. He takes us through the streets of the old city and introduces us to its glorious past; the folktales, the urban myths, the history. He recounts facts about plague, fire, sewage, rebuilding, executions, suicide, the London Mob, the law, the inns, and most of all, the people. Every street he leads us down has a story to tell, every monument a fact, every courtyard an anecdote. This is a journey both historical and geographical but also one of the imagination, for Ackroyd successfully conjures up the smells, the colours, and the sheer vitality of London life. For those who love London this is a book to wallow in and to savour.

John Croxon

Marc Bloch, *The Royal Touch: Sacred Monarchy and Scrofula in England and France*, trans. J. E. Anderson (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973). First published as *Les Rois Thaumatourges: Etude sur le Caractere attribue a la Puissance Royale particulierement en France et en Angleterre* (Strasbourg and Paris: Istra; London and New York: OUP; 1924; reprint: Gallimard, 1983).

Marc Bloch (1886-1944) founded the *Annales* school with Lucien Febvre (1878-1956) and their vision has helped to re-shape the discipline of history. They eschewed the privileging of high politics studied via documents and favoured economic and social history and a wide range of primary source material. This methodology has now become an academic norm and Bloch's *The Royal Touch* is regarded as a seminal twentieth-century history book. *The Royal Touch* traces the history of the healing of scrofula, or the King's Evil, as practiced by the monarchs of France and England by the ritualistic laying on of hands in accordance with Christ's instructions to his disciples, Mark 16:8, 'They shall lay their hands on the sick and they shall recover.' Bloch has demonstrated convincingly that this form of spiritual healing began in France around the beginning of the eleventh century with Robert the Pious, and in England during the early-twelfth century with Henry I and Henry II, although it was and is sometimes erroneously assumed that it began with Edward the Confessor (Shakespeare referenced the Confessor's healing by touch in *Macbeth* Act 4, scene 3). Its practice fluctuated until the seventeenth century when, with the strengthening of the theory of divine right monarchy, it reached its apogee. The surgeon John Browne wrote about the royal touch in his *Adenochoradologia* (1684) and estimated that Charles II had touched over 90,000 people. According to Bloch, the healings stopped abruptly in England with the accession of the Lutheran Hanoverians, although it had become anachronistic after 1688 when parliament decided the succession; and it petered out in France due to the Enlightenment.

Bloch focused on a hitherto marginal subject and demonstrated the centrality of charismatic leaders to early modern societies. *The Royal Touch* features many of the characteristics of the *Annales* school: it is a comparative history, albeit with emphasis placed on France; it is a history of the long durée; and it seeks to address a problem: the belief in miracle-working kings. Every scholar that has written about the royal touch since Bloch has re-worked his thesis that prioritised the necessity of a mass belief in thaumaturgical rulers and the powerful political value of the ceremony.

Bloch's intellectual rationale was informed by the sociology of Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) who was interested in mass beliefs, and the philosophy / anthropology of Lucien Lévi-Bruhl (1857-1939) who had argued that modern European society was the opposite of primitive societies which were based on pre-logical mysticism. This, together with Bloch's French intellectual training meant that his book took a highly rationalist approach to the royal touch: its practice relied on the illogical belief in wonder-working kings. Bloch's text is permeated with phrases that reveal his bias, and so although the breadth and depth of his study remain breath-taking, at the beginning of the second millennium there is sense that this subject needs to be studied with impartiality. Who are we to say that the royal touch was nonsensical when there are so many documented cases of its efficacy? Furthermore, Bloch's 'mass belief' thesis means that he has all but ignored pre-Enlightenment scepticism, and his privileging of the political value of the royal touch ignores the need for politics to be

underpinned by a belief system: the rite was only of use, say, to the restored Charles II if enough people believed in the possibility of him curing their scrofula. Today, scholars have a very different understanding of the early modern period, and utilise different conceptual tools, and so it seems that the time is ripe for a reassessment of this important aspect of sacral monarchy.

Stephen Brogan



**Mary Tudor touches a scrofulous boy,
from Westminster Cathedral Treasury, MS 7, Mary Tudor,
taken from Raymond Crawford, *The King's Evil*, facing p. 68**

FICTION BOOKS

The criteria for fiction books 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

Dark Fire C.J. Sansom, Pan Books

The year is 1540 and it is the hottest summer of the 16th Century. Matthew Shardlake, believing himself out of favour with Thomas Cromwell, is busy trying to maintain his legal practice and keep a low profile. But his involvement with a murder case, defending a girl accused of brutally murdering her young cousin, brings him once more into contact with the king's chief minister and a new dangerous assignment.

For centuries the secret of Greek fire, the legendary substance with which the Byzantines destroyed the Arab navies, had been lost, but now an official of the Court of Augmentations has discovered the formula in the library of a dissolved London monastery. When Shardlake is sent to recover it, he finds the official and his alchemist brother murdered, with the formula nowhere to be seen. Shardlake must now try to follow the trail of Greek Fire across Tudor London, whilst simultaneously attempting to prove the innocence of his young client. Time is against him with both cases; if he cannot find new evidence then the girl could be executed, and if he fails to discover the whereabouts of the remaining Greek Fire then Cromwell could fall from power and with him the Protestant Reformation.

This is the second in the series of books by C.J. Sansom, about the hunchback lawyer Mathew Shardlake. The first in the series '*Dissolution*' will soon be brought to your television screens in an adaptation starring Kenneth Branagh.

Sansom successfully captures the grim reality of Tudor life and in this book he manages to convey the sense of urgency of Shardlake's mission and the despair that he feels when he fails, and as he is forced to choose between helping his master, Thomas Cromwell, and preventing mass loss of life by denying the tyrannical King Henry the destructive powder that Cromwell has ordered him to find. These books are a great read and Mathew Shardlake's popularity can only increase as more people become aware of the series.

John Croxon

The Other Bolyen Girl by Phillippa Gregory, Harper Collins.

I know that I should have read this book before I read '*The Boleyn Inheritance*', the second book in the series, but that was the one available at the time so that was the one that I read first. However, as it turned out this didn't spoil my enjoyment of either book.

The Other Bolyen Girl is a marvellous evocation of life at the Tudor court. When Mary Boleyn comes to court at the age of fourteen her beauty is soon spotted by the king. She becomes Henry's mistress and is dazzled by the glamour of the king and his court. Yet, she gradually becomes aware that she is merely a pawn in the ambitions and dynastic schemes of her family, and when Henry's interest in her wanes, Mary is instructed to pass on her knowledge of how to please the king to her sister Anne.

Henry becomes captivated by Anne, finding her charms irresistible, and Mary can do nothing but look on as her sister rises to great heights. From now on, Mary will be just the other Bolyen girl. Yet, beyond the court there is a man, William Stafford, who is willing to challenge the hold her family has over her and to offer Mary a life of happiness, away from the bitter and dangerous rivalries of court. As the enemies of the Howard/Bolyen faction begin to gain ground at court, the question is whether Mary has the courage to break away before she is entangled and brought down along with her sister and brother.

Beginning with the bloody execution of the duke of Buckingham, and told in the first person by Mary Bolyen, *The Other Bolyen Girl* is a wonderful account of the dramatic events at the Tudor court during the turbulent 1520's and 1530's. This is an immensely readable novel and one that I would have no hesitation in recommending that people buy. Phillippa Gregory manages to combine genuine historical knowledge with a real ability as a storyteller, and this book keeps you interested until the very end. The film of the book has just been released and I am certain that it will lead more people to read this book and similar stories. Historical fiction needs a chronicler to possess the ability to combine excellent writing with a good grasp of the facts. In Phillippa Gregory we have her.

John Croxon.

Problem Page

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

Dear Aunt Agonistes,

I am keen to continue my studies but need some help. I don't want to study philosophy. It seems that to dispute well is logic's chiefest end. Medicine might make me rich, but it cannot make men to live eternally, or being dead, raise them to life again. Law [be]fits a mercenary drudge, who aims at nothing but external trash. As for theology, all I can say is, 'Divinity, Adieu!'

Do you know of any evening classes in something really worthwhile like flying or necromantic arts?

Faustus

Dear Faustus,

I am sorry to read that you find philosophy odious and obscure. It seems you consider law and physic for petty wits, and divinity the basest of the three. Birkbeck offers a part time MA degree in Renaissance Studies which has an option module in Magic, Science and Religion. This will ravish thee if Faustus be resolute and sell his soul to pay the fees. You need to make an application to the Arch-regent and Commander of all Spirits, Department Of English and Humanities, Birkbeck University of London

Good luck with your studies!

Agonistes

(To find out how Birkbeck changed Faustus's life, read Christopher Marlowe's *Dr Faustus*, 1592).

THE SPRING QUIZ

1. Which infamous highwayman was hanged at Tyburn in November 1724?
2. Which famous artist, poet and visionary was born in November 1757?
3. Which Methodist preacher and hymn writer died in London in March 1788?
4. Where was the future King Richard III born on the 2nd October 1452?
5. Which French prison fell to revolutionaries on the 14th July 1789?
6. Which 17th Century Italian astronomer coined the phrase 'diffraction'?
7. Which 18th Century French philosopher wrote '*The Social Contract*'?
8. At which battle in August 1704 did John Churchill, later the duke of Marlborough, triumph over the French?
9. Which royal palace burnt down in January 1698?
10. Published in November 1648, which document declared Charles I a 'man of blood',
11. Which former queen of England died in Bermondsey abbey in 1492?
12. Which German painter, engraver, printer and mathematician died in Nuremberg on the 6th April 1528?
13. Who was involved in a famous mortuary dispute with the Church in 1511?
14. Which judge gave a famous judgement on Ship Money in 1637?
15. Which playwright wrote *The Country Wife* in 1675?
16. Which composer wrote the Brandenburg Concertos in the early eighteenth century?
17. Which famous artist and satirist painted *Gin Lane*?
18. Which infamous smuggling gang, named after their home village, terrorised Kent and Sussex during the 1730's and 1740's?
19. Who was executed at the Tower of London on the 13th June 1483?
20. Who wrote the opera *The Coronation of Poppea* in 1643?

Answers on the following page

ANSWERS TO THE SPRING QUIZ

1. Jack Sheppard
2. William Blake
3. Charles Wesley
4. Fotheringhay Castle
5. The Bastille
6. Francesco Grimaldi
7. Jean-Jacques Rousseau
8. The Battle of Blenheim
9. Whitehall Palace
10. Remonstrance of the Army
11. Elizabeth Woodville
12. Albrecht Durer
13. Richard Hunne
14. Sir George Croke
15. William Wycherly
16. Bach
17. William Hogarth
18. The Hawkhurst Gang
19. William, Lord Hastings
20. Claudio Monteverdi

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, music, sexuality and, travel and exploration.

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