THE BIRKBECK EARLY MODERN SOCIETY

BULLETIN

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Early Modernists,

Welcome to the thirteenth edition of our bulletin. We've had a busy autumn term in which we have heard papers from Roger Mettam, Karen Hearn and Quentin Skinner, all of who spoke lucidly about their respective subjects and attracted large audiences. Quentin Skinner's paper was followed by our annual Christmas party, which as usual was lively and fun. At the party the committee presented our outgoing secretary, Laura Jacobs, with a bouquet and a nice bottle of wine: Laura has been a stalwart officer for over three years, and will stay on the committee. We also welcome our new secretary, Anne Byrne.

Looking forward to the spring term, Alex Walsham will speak to us about the status of relics after the Reformation, Tim Knox – the director of Sir John Soane's Museum – will speak about Soane, and Birkbeck's Michael Hunter returns to the society to discuss the decline of magic. We will also plan trips to museums and galleries, and the Globe Theatre, so if you would like to propose a trip with an early modern theme then please let either Anne Byrne or myself know your suggestion. Our annual students' conference will take place in the summer, probably July, so watch this space for news of its theme.

I hope you all have an enjoyable Christmas and New Year, or holiday break, and look forward to seeing you at our January event.

Best wishes,

Stephen Brogan

President, Birkbeck Early Modern Society

http://www.bbk.ac.uk/hca/current/societies/#earlymodern

http://www.emintelligencer.org.uk/

THE BULLETIN: EDITOR'S WELCOME

Welcome to Issue Thirteen of the *Birkbeck Early Modern Society Bulletin.* Once again, in this edition, we have a fascinating range of articles, reports and reviews and I hope that you find it just as interesting and entertaining as previous editions.

It is always pleasing to receive articles from non-committee members and our 'Visits' section is an ideal opportunity for an article. Likewise, why not submit a book review, fiction or non-fiction, for inclusion the next *Bulletin*? Or perhaps a recent event, for instance, the revelations about the site of the battle of Bosworth, has stimulated some thoughts that you would like to put in writing?

As yet another year beckons we can reflect upon another successful year for the Society and look forward to further stimulating events next year. The Society continues to evolve and each year attracts a further range of prestigious lecturers covering a wide variety of subjects. I hope that the *Bulletin* continues to reflect this high standard and, along with our excellent website, complements our range of events and adds a bit extra.

As the year ends, let me wish everyone a very happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year; 2010 will surely be another busy and productive year for the Society.

John Croxon
Editor
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RECENT EVENTS

DR.ROGER METTAM: ABSOLUTE MONARCHY AND PROVINCIAL IDENTITY IN LOUIS XIV'S FRANCE, 22ND OCTOBER 2009

The old notion of France as a cultural unity in the seventeenth century is now regarded as old hat. France was, and perhaps still is, a collection of provinces and in Louis' reign there was an added distinction between the old core France and the recently acquired periphery. Moreover Louis was not interested in the minutiae if they did not impede his basic requirements: the raising of taxes and the waging of war. In many areas the old provincial estates were still going strong so the crown ruled through these institutions, bargaining when it had to over taxes. Royal officials were, except for the higher nobility and the bishops, distrusted by the provinces. The high status personages themselves depended on the crown for promotion. Linked both to their areas and to the crown, these individuals often acted as go betweens in complex back stairs negotiations in which the interests of the crown and the provinces were to some extent reconciled. The Princes de Condé performed this role in Burgundy. Burgundy, the County of Burgundy also known as the Franche Comté, and Brittany were among the more recent acquisitions. The Franche Comté had been a possession of the Burgundian Valois and their Hapsburg successors who retained some loyalty from their former subjects. In the Languedoc the crown was able to play off the two capitals against each other. Across the realm it benefited from rivalries between bishoprics and archbishoprics. Languages entirely distinct from Isle-de-France French were spoken in the new conquests such as Provençal, Bretton, Alsacisch and Catalan. Colbert, in his endeavour to make France an economic unit, alienated people. France was not a single trading entity. The South, including Lyon, was Mediterranean and there was trade with northern Spain.

Louis XIV spent 46 years at war but this had a limited impact on the attitudes of some of his subjects. The people of Alsace did not want to be at war with the Empire, while the people of Northern France traded with the Netherlands and wished to be exempt from wartime trade barriers. Louis revoked Colbert's new tariff in his new Netherlanish territories. The French Catalans had good relations with their compatriots across the Pyrenees despite repeated Franco-Spanish wars. As a rule provinces resisted recruitment within their borders either because they were remote from the theatres of war or, when next to the scene of operations, friendly with the "enemy". Seventeenth century French vocabulary had no words like "nation" or "fatherland". "Étranger" meant from outside the town or village. "Pays" was never applied to France. "Patrie" was used but not as today and not of the whole of France. The French consul in Tunis, for instance, when he wrote to his native area of Dauphiné addressed his correspondents as "amis et compatriots", "compatriots" applying exclusively to inhabitants of the province. "Nation" was never used of a political entity but of a cultural area. Mazarin was referred to as an "Italien par nation, meaning that he came from the Italian cultural area. Louis XIV himself did use "royume" and état. The latter he applied to the royal prerogative and to the best interests of the state, as in the case of canal construction.

Subject to royal pressure, the provinces expressed their identity in thoroughly usual ways. In Lyon, where the municipality spent about one third of its revenues in embellishing the city, the authorities retained Italian, or Italian trained, architects, not what they were supposed to do. In the school on one side of the great square only Italian was taught, emphasizing links with the peninsula. The main room in the Hôtel de Ville was a version of the Galleria in the Palazzo Farnese in Rome. Lyon is older than Paris, the bishopric, dating from 117 AD, being the former primatical see of France. The Hôtel de Ville had pictures of the first thirteen Louis not so much because

they were kings of France but because their name was claimed to derive from the name of the town. “S.P.Q.L.” was used on inscriptions, linking the town to ancient Rome and its S.P.Q.R.. Toulouse Town Hall has illustrations of local history in the form of huge paintings, but, leaving aside the expulsion of the Hugenots, none of events after the incorporation of the city in the royal domain. A St. Louis is shown, not Louis IX, but the bishop saint, St. Louis of Toulouse.

The Peace of the Pyrenees gave France Catalonia north of the mountains, a situation that suited both Louis and Philip IV as it divided a tiresome people. Louis XIII for a time was count of Barcelona and as such respected local customs while his less tactful son had real difficulties with the Catalans. The people of Catalonia, who had been loyal to the father did not similarly defer to the son because the latter had split them from their compatriots by the terms of the peace of 1660. The Pyrenees turned out not to be an effective natural frontier as the locals on both side knew all the passes. Catalonia was very religious causing real problems where ecclesiastical and political jurisdictions overlapped. Rousillon, now added to France, was, from the French point of view, as part of an archdiocese, Taragona, on the wrong side of the border. Louis’ bishops dared not even go to Rousillon when under the Concordat of Bologna he tried to appoint them. The local chapter fell back on local tradition, two vicars-general being appointed to Perpignon. In an extreme case when ordered to pay a “free gift” to meet the exceptional expenditure of the crown, the clergy had the temerity to send the takings to the Corts in Barcelona because this was where they had always sent free gifts. The Catalans refused to speak French and ruthlessly exploited soldiers billeted on them. As a precaution all over French Catalonia there were Vauban fortifications. Later when under the Family Compact the borders were opened normal relations between the two parts of Catalonia resumed. The Basques in the Province of Bayonne continued to enter into a contractual relationship with the crown at each coronation up to that of Charles X. More work needs to be done in this last area.

Louis XIV was still a child when France gained control of bits of Alsace. By negotiation she got most of the rest including, in 1681, the city of Strasbourg. The Lutherans in Alsace were treated very leniently compared to the Calvinists in the rest of France. Louis understood that Lutheranism taught deference to authority. A rare exception to the policy of acceptance of existing patterns of worship was the re-Catholicisation of the great Cathedral of Strasbourg. The Chapter of Strasbourg continued to elect their bishops even if Louis tried to exert influence and the bishops continued to attend the Reichstag. The King ruled in this Rhineland territory as Landgraf of Alsace rather than as King of France and as such claimed a seat in the Imperial Diet. People said they would rather go to the Imperial Council in Spire rather than the newly set up Parlement in Metz. Louis’ problem was that he didn’t know anyone in Alsace and thus the normal patterns of patronage and influence could not be employed. Throughout the kingdom Louis to some extent cut himself off from former traditional channels of communication by discontinuing progresses, which his father had still made. It must not be assumed that France was in all respects the centralized state with the advantages others lacked. For instance it was regarded as a great strength of England and Sweden that in these countries the crown could conscript people directly into the army rather than having to ask the nobility to do it.

Timothy Alves

Karen Hearn

Tudor and Jacobean Pregnancy Portraits

12th November 2009

Karen Hearn is the Curator of 16th and 17th Century British Art at Tate Britain and has presided over several exhibitions including *'Anthony van Dyck: the image of the aristocrat', 'Van Dyck and Britain'*, and *'Rubens, The apotheosis of James I and other studies'.* In addition, she has written a number of publications including 'Nathaniel Bacon: artist, gentleman and gardener', 'Sir Anthony van Dyck : 'Portrait of Sir William Killigrew', 1638', 'Marcus Gheeraerts II: Elizabethan artist in focus', 'The art of the country house', and *'Dynasties: painting in Tudor and Jacobean England 1530-1630'.*

On a wet November evening she captivated a good-sized crowd with a fascinating talk on the surprising English genre that developed during the Tudor and Jacobean periods, the pregnancy portraits.

Using visual images of pregnant women in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to illustrate her talk Karen Hearn spoke of how most pregnancy portraits were commissioned by the husband and that this process reflected a desire to display the fertility of the union and to illustrate the joint heraldry of the parents being passed on to the child growing in the womb. Sometimes both husband and wife were painted as companion pieces; in these cases the man is inevitably placed in the position of higher status, on the left as seen by the viewer, a practice almost certainly derived from the rules of heraldry.

However, there were some paintings commissioned by the woman herself and in these cases it was often the reason that with a high degree of death in childbirth the woman might want to present an image of herself to their child should they not live. This was part of the cult of memento mori and would allow the child to see what his/her mother looked like. This may also be accompanied by a letter which the mother would write to her as yet unborn child detailing a number of things about herself and the family.

Karen discussed the idea of Elizabethan and Jacobean portraits of pregnant women as evidence of maternity wear at this time. In English art of the sixteenth and early-seventeenth centuries, there does appear to have been a tendency for ladies, and one must remember here that one had to have a certain degree of wealth in order to be able to afford to engage the services of an artist, to be depicted as clearly pregnant. With the main body of such portraits dating from the late 1580's to around 1630 when these portraits seem to have stopped being produced. However, it is entirely possible that the attire as depicted in this type of portrait may not in reality have looked this way in real life; what may be shown is the sitter's richest formal attire, loosely draped over the bulging stomach for the purpose of the portrait alone, whereas, in reality, it could have well been worn completely differently.

Karen used several slides, by various artists, showing pregnant Tudor and Jacobean women. One of these artists, Marcus Gheeraerts, produced some of the most haunting and beautiful portraits in British art and his most famous sitter was Queen Elizabeth 1. Karen used one of his pictures, 'Portrait of an Unknown Lady', as a good example of the pregnancy portrait.

Portrait of an Unknown Lady by Marcus Gheeraerts

Within the confines of the one hour lecture, Karen Hearne managed to explore in great depth the subject of Elizabethan and Jacobean pregnancy portraits and her talk produced a large number of questions and an enthusiastic response from the audience.

John Croxon

Professor Quentin Skinner

"Word and Image in the work of Thomas Hobbes"

10th December 2009

Back by popular demand, Professor Skinner returned to the Early Modern Society on his second visit for our final event of this term. There was an excellent turn-out for the lecture and no one was disappointed in his absorbing presentation which, having set out some elements of context, culminated in a masterly exposition on the well-known frontispiece of *Leviathan*.

Suggesting that Hobbes is usually considered in the context of the scientific revolution, Professor Skinner was at pains to delineate the humanist content of Hobbes' early education. During his time at Oxford, 1604-1609, he would have been immersed in the humanist rhetorical tradition. This had rather a practical focus on the future employment of students in the church or in parliament. They were rigorously trained in the arts of persuasion through appealing to the emotions, using figures of speech and, in a Renaissance innovation, using actual illustrations. Even today scholarly books are illustrated by 'figures', an inheritance from this influential style of teaching.

The exploitation of illustration in publishing can be traced through an Italian novelty in the form of emblem books. About 1200 of these moral and religious works were published with each left-hand page containing an illustration of the edificatory poem printed on the right-hand page. A 1531 volume, simply entitled *Emblemata,* was one of the greatest best-sellers of the sixteenth century and this style of work long remained popular.

Though scholars have not yet pinpointed the precise moment of the emergence of frontispieces in printed volumes, they seem to have appeared as a new feature in the late sixteenth century book around the same time as the emergence of steel-engraving. They were prominent in the humanist wave of translated works appearing at this time, given the humanist emphasis on language acquisition as a mark of learning. Professor Skinner illustrated this point with a number of frontispieces from sixteenth century translations of the classical greats. The contrast between the earlier woodcuts and later engraved pages was marked. As engraving allowed for greater precision and detail, the frontispieces came to feature heavily encoded iconographical figures and scenes which provided a summary of the content of the volume. They usually had a pillar structure supporting the title on either side and also offered a sort of threshold, inviting the reader into the depths of the book.

In 1629, Hobbes' first publication was an ambitious translation of Thucydides' Peloponnesian War. The handsome frontispiece is conventional in its arrangement and sets out for the reader the main lines of the argument, showing in pictures the locations and personalities involved. The illustration quietly shows why Sparta won (in Hobbes' view): their restrained form of government victorious over the democratic rabble of Athens.

In 1642, Hobbes' *De Cive* was widely circulated in manuscript form with an illustration derived from a sketch he himself had made for the presentation copy which he gave to his patron in 1641. Beneath a representation of the last judgement marked 'Religio', the page has a strong vertical division into two halves presided over by the symbolic figures of 'Imperium' and 'Libertas', supporting the title on either side. The serene, crowned Imperium draped in flowing robes, holds the scales of justice and rules over a land of prosperity and plenty. Libertas, face contorted by rage or misery, holds a bow and arrow and is poorly dressed against a backdrop featuring uncultivated wilds in which human sacrifices are taking place. Iconographically, Professor Skinner said, it was very unusual to show a negative image of Libertas at this time. What is intriguing is that Hobbes seems to have derived some of his ideas for this image from illustrations of travel narratives to the New World. His Libertas figure seems to owe much to images circulating at the time of 'free but uncivilised' Native Americans. The clear message of this frontispiece is that, given the choice, submission to one ruler is in our best interest.

Professor Skinner then turned to the famous frontispiece of *Leviathan.* First published in 1651, this image has not been well understood due to a lack of understanding of the context regarding frontispiece conventions and the humanist tradition. It can be said that Hobbes was involved, at least, in choosing this familiar image since the manuscript copy on vellum which was presented to Charles II featured the same illustration.

The frontispiece of *Leviathan* completely departs from the humanist conventions of illustration. Unlike *De Cive*, there is no religious power placed over all. To drive this point home, above the figure of the colossus the Latin inscription reads 'no power over the earth can compare to him'. He holds both the sword and the crozier and seems to derive his authority from the mass of tiny figures looking up towards him and composing his body. Whereas *De Cive,* in the rhetorical tradition, offers the viewer a choice, in *Leviathan* there is no choice. There is no force or figure opposed to the colossus who stares straight out at the viewer from his place dominating the centre of the page. There is no threshold welcoming the reader into the book. This confrontational, aggressive image is a dramatically different frontispiece which forewarns the reader of the explosive nature of the contents. Hobbes broke free of the conventions of Renaissance illustration even as he broke free of the constraints of Renaissance political thinking.

It emerged during the question and answer session that there was little discussion of the image at the time of its publication. There were no iconographical response as it was a very expensive image to produce and intended for the top-end of the market. While Cromwellians received the book very favourably, since it endorsed the notion that 'if you are protected by a power, you are obliged to obey', there is no evidence on Cromwell's own thoughts on it. Certainly, Hobbes was later accused of writing a pro-Cromwell work and he had, on return from self-imposed exile in Paris, made a formal act of submission to the Council of State. Overall, though, this is not a work about Cromwell. The thrust of Hobbes' argument was about the mutual relation between protection and obedience, rather than who provided that protection, and the need to suppress civil strife and disagreement in order to obtain peace.

The members of the society applauded Professor Skinner long and loud, and then adjourned for a festive celebration.

Anne Byrne

VISITS

Berrington Hall

Leominster,

Herefordshire

Berrington Hall was created by Thomas Harley, who made his fortune as a banker and government contractor in London but had family links with Herefordshire. He bought the estate from the Cornewall family in around 1775. Harley commissioned Capability Brown to landscape the park and, in 1778, he called in Brown's son-in-law, Henry Holland, to design a new house in the French Neo-classical style. Harley had no son but in 1781 his daughter Anne married the son of the great naval commander Admiral Lord Rodney. Upon Harley's death in 1804 the house passed to the Rodney family who lived there for the next ninety-five years. After accruing gambling debts, the family were forced to sell the Hall to Lord Crawley who redecorated the house in considerable sympathy with the Georgian model. It was acquired by the National Trust in 1957.

The Hall is built of red sandstone and presents a rather severe appearance. Entrance is by the west front with its tetra-style portico with huge Ionic columns. With one's back to the Hall one is presented with acres of parkland and a large lake as laid out by Capability Brown.

The Marble Hall is typical of the formal entrance halls in eighteenth-century country houses. The ceiling gives the appearance of being domed but is in fact a flat circle and is echoed in the circular pattern of the floor, made from black and white marble.

The Drawing Room was once Thomas Harley's principal sitting-room. The white marble fireplace has a chimneypiece carved from white Carrara marble and features a Greek frieze. The late-eighteenth century steel grate is decorated with Wedgewood blue jasper cameos. The fireplace is flanked by two commodes with the Regence Boulle writing desk holding the Comte de Flahaut's pen tray to the fore. The exquisite ceiling contains decorative plasterwork and medallions of Greek heroes.

Drawing Room

Lady Cawley's Room was used by her as a sitting-room until her death in 1978, and has since been rearranged to commemorate the Cawley family's life since 1901. Previous to their occupancy it was called the Sportsmen's Room.

Lady Crawley's Room

The Dining Room is the largest room in the house and has an exceptionally high ceiling which allowed Harley to hang full-length portraits on the walls of Admiral Rodney and George and Martha Drummond that he commissioned from Gainsborough, both of which were sold by the Rodney family to pay debts. What does survive are four large battle pictures depicting episodes of the War of Independence, in which Admiral Rodney played a prominent role by defeating the French and Spanish fleets supporting the rebellious American colonists. The central painting on the ceiling of the Dining Room depicts a composite scene borrowed from 'The Council' and 'The Banquet of the Gods' by Raphael in Rome.

The central painting on the ceiling of the Dining Room

The Library at Berrington Hall has fitted bookcases, designed by Henry Holland, to resemble classical facades with shallow pediments and delicate Ionic pilasters united by a frieze of square Greek key pattern. Harley had assembled a large collection of books but these were sold by the 7th Lord Rodney who then turned the library into a billiard-room. The 1st Lord Cawley removed the billiard-table and re-filled the shelves with books. He also had the walls painted duck-egg blue, pink and beige which survive to the present day. The ceiling has medallions painted to imitate high-relief stucco sculpture and represent English men of letters. From the fireplace proceeding clockwise are Matthew Prior, John Milton, Alexander Pope, William Shakespeare, Geoffrey Chaucer, Isaac Newton, Francis Bacon and Joseph Addison. In order to protect the fragile ceiling from footfalls, the floor of the ceiling above was raised slightly. The fireplace is cast with the arms of Thomas Harley and the floor is covered with a beautiful Axminster carpet in blue and pink. Hanging from the ceiling is a finely carved and gilded eighteenth-century chandelier.

The Library

Also on view at Berrington Hall are some of the servants quarters and working areas. Both the National Trust and English Heritage are now keen to show what life was like downstairs at the properties and this provides a stark contrast to the opulence on display in the grand house.

Prior to refrigeration and rapid transport, it was important that great estates such as Berrington should be able to produce their own cream, butter and cheese. The Dairy was designed by Henry Holland and it remains almost unchanged since 1780 as one of the finest examples of the Louis XIV style in Britain. The plain tiled walls are divided into alternating broad and narrow panels by thin green bands in Neo-classical 'Greek-key' pattern.

The Dairy

Berrington Hall boasts fine views to the west and north across a broad valley. Capability Brown created an open sweep of grassy parkland, and if one views it from the west front of the house, beyond a ha-ha, one can look down to a fourteen-acre lake, in which Brown built a four-acre wooded island.

In addition to the parkland, Berrington has a walled garden and a woodland garden. The brick walls of the Walled Garden are covered with purple wisteria as is the pergola on the south-facing exterior wall. Herefordshire is famous for its apples and inside the walls the National Trust has cultivated large numbers of pre-twentieth century varieties of apples. For someone like myself who loves old varieties such as 'Russet' and detests the new tasteless varieties that fill our supermarkets, this was a real pleasure to see. On the north-east wall pears are trained as cordons, and plums, morello cherries, figs, mulberries and quinces are also grown here, making it a fruit-lovers delight.

The gate to the walled garden

I have only described some of the rooms inside the hall and a few of the features outside. So if you are in Herefordshire or the surrounding area at any time why not pop along and see Berrington Hall for yourself, it is well worth a visit.

John Croxon

ARTS REPORT

THEATRE

The Winter's Tale

The Rococo Players

Berkeley Castle, Berkeley, Gloucestershire

As I am currently working on a project down in Gloucestershire I don't tend to get to the theatre during the week, not because of any lack of venues, after all, Bristol and Bath are both fairly close by, but because a lack of resolve after a day's work to travel the twenty miles to a theatre and return late at night with the thought of rising early to go to work. Besides, every weekend I am back in London with the beckoning delights of the West-End. However, when the Rococo Players announced plans to stage *'The Winter's Tale'* at Berkeley Castle, in the town where I work, it was an opportunity that I could not pass by.

The Great Hall in Berkeley Castle provides a magnificent venue for a Shakespeare play. A quick estimate suggested some one hundred people in the audience and as we took our seats with a great fire roaring in the hearth I thought of the Elizabethan and Jacobean age when bands of wandering actors would have played here and I wondered whether Shakespeare himself ever acted in front of Lord and Lady Berkeley.

I have seen a number of productions of this play over the years, in Britain and abroad, but this was the first time that I had seen it performed by a non-professional troupe. Some twenty years ago the Gloucestershire Drama Association was set up to provide training courses on all aspects of theatre for aspiring and existing actors in the county of Gloucestershire and, as a means of combining the talent of the county further, it was decided to stage an annual open-air summer production based upon the Shakespearian repertoire. After a series of venues were tried the annual production settled at the Rococo Gardens at Painswick. When the GDA could no longer fund the annual event a small group of those who had participated in previous productions got together and formed the Rococo Players, playing their first summer show in 2001. The players have also performed at other venues in Gloucestershire most notably Berkeley Castle, Warwick Castle, Woodchester Mansion and Cheltenham Ladies College. In 2010 they are to perform at Oriel College, Oxford and Gloucester Cathedral.

All the action took place in the centre of the hall, travelling from one end to the other using the two doors as entrances/exits with the audience either side, and this worked remarkably well, proving once again that to stage Shakespeare a production does not need elaborate scenery.

The Winter's Tale is a delightful story of magic, jealously and regrets that conveys the audience on a captivating journey through the seasons and emotions. Leontes, King of Sicilia racked with jealously, accuses his wife Hermione of an affair with his long-time friend Polixenes, King of Bohemia and has her tried and thrown into prison where she apparently dies after giving birth to a baby girl. The new baby is taken across the seas to Bohemia where she is left on a hillside and is found by a shepherd who brings her up as his daughter. The action switches to sixteen years later when the girl has grown to become a beautiful young shepherdess, Perdita, living amongst a happy rural community. Perdita is in love with Florizel, Prince of Bohemia. When the King of Bohemia forbids his son to continue his romance with a commoner the young lovers flee to Sicillia and to the court of a repentant Leontes, still mourning for his lost queen. The denouement sees Perdita revealed as Leontes daughter, the lovers match blessed by both fathers, and the life-like statue of Hermione brought to life and reunited with Leontes.

Staged in traditional costume, this production stuck to a tried and tested formula that worked extremely well. Barry Page was superb as Leontes, skilfully traducing the different emotions felt by the king as the play progresses. His awaking jealousy grows into blind rage followed by despair and anguish at the loss of his wife. A long period of mourning is broken with the reunification with his daughter and renewed friendship with his friend Polixenes, which all leads to his amazement and intense happiness at his wife's miraculous appearance.

Chris Moore subtly and expertly portrays the councillor Camilo as a strong and wise voice, guiding his two lords through the troubles of kingship and advising the young couple in their hour of despair. Rachel Darcy portrayed deep anguish as Hermione and Antoinette Wilson gave a strong emotive performance as Paulina. Dan Johnson gave a entertaining performance as the rogue Autolycus while Ross Hutchinson was hilarious as the gormless son of the shepherd.

However, there were others in the cast who were less successful with the occasional line forgotten and the diction indistinct, and there were times when the differences between professional and semi-professional acting were clearly apparent. This production also ultimately lacked the feeling of magic and mystery that really top class productions of this play can evoke and was a rather unadventurous staging, which is not always a bad thing. But overall this was a good, solid production that retained the attention of the audience throughout.

The appearance of the bear can be funny or embarrassing and is frequently played for laughs but here it was played straight and extremely well, and the most famous stage direction in theatre history ‘exit, pursued by a bear’ was carried off with panache.

Overall, I enjoyed this production, played in a lovely setting, and I look forward to seeing their performance of Edward II at the same venue next year.

For details of forthcoming performances by the Rococo Players see www.rococoplayers.co.uk

John Croxon

OPERA

Duke Bluebeard's Castle
By Bela Bartok

English National Opera

The Coliseum, London

Clive Bayley, with Michaela Martens in Duke Bluebeard's Castle

Bela Bartok's disturbing operatic masterpiece is based on a story by Charles Perrault first published in 1697. In Perrault's tale, Bluebeard is a fabulously rich duke, with a richly furnished and tapestry hung castle, a golden coach, and caskets of precious jewels, gold and silver. His new young wife marries him despite his bad reputation after he lavishly entertains her and her mother. The mercenary marriage concluded, Bluebeard goes away leaving his wife with the keys to the castle, but forbids her to open one door. Eventually she can contain her curiosity no longer and opens the forbidden door, inside are the murdered bodies of Bluebeard's previous wives. Although she locks the door, she finds that the key is stained with blood and no amount of scrubbing will clean it. When Bluebeard returns and sees that she has disobeyed him, he draws his sword and is about to kill her when luckily she is rescued by her brothers who come riding to her rescue. The origins of the story go back even further, and the model for Bluebeard is often supposed to be Gilles de Rais, a Breton nobleman born around 1404. De Rais became a Marshal of France and fought for Joan of Arc. However, he was also infamous for the kidnapping and murder of numerous women and children.

Bartok wrote Duke Bluebeard's Castle in 1911 when he was only 21. He, and his librettist and friend, Bela Balazs, conjured up a much bleaker psychological world without Perrault's happy ending. Within Bluebeard's gloomy castle, his new bride, Judith, sees seven locked doors which he says must stay locked. Not satisfied with this, Judith vows that 'softly, gently' she will unlock them all and let the light in. Although there are only two human characters in the opera, the castle becomes a third character in its own right as it sighs and moans as its secrets are gradually uncovered. Undaunted by what she finds behind the first five doors – Bluebeard's torture chamber, his treasury full of jewels dripping in blood, his armoury, his secret garden watered with blood, his kingdoms represented by a group of terrified children – she demands that the last two doors are opened.

ENO's Bluebeard is a grisly production. When Judith having prepared herself to see the dead bodies of Bluebeard's former wives is confronted by a much more horrible truth, it is somewhat unnecessarily shocking to watch. The programme gives an idea of some of the inspiration behind the staging with its photographs of Josef Fritzl's basement, Fred West, and Peter Sutcliffe. By the end, there is little of the mystery conjured up at the start of the performance by a single street lamp film noirishly casting its light on a solitary door.

Clive Bayley and Mchaela Martens portray their respective roles convincingly. Judith's refrain of 'Oh my Bluebeard' is particularly hauntingly sung by Martens. Bayley's is a dark brooding Bluebeard, and despite his passionate cries of 'love me Judith' after the sixth door is opened, his cold evilness is no surprise. Edward Gardner conducted ENO's orchestra with energy and drew from the work Bartok's sense of its escalating darkness and violence.

Duke Bluebeard's Castle is a very powerful opera, full of darkness and horror. The visual impact of this production, although making it memorable, perhaps detracted somewhat from Bartok's music which conjures up the descent into darkness, both literal and psychological, more convincingly than any stage set could do.

Sue Dale

CONCERT

Messiah

The 18th Century Concert Orchestra and Choir

Theatre Royal, Bath

Billed as an authentic performance of Handel's oratorio this concert, by the 18th Century Concert Orchestra and Choir, was one of the many performances of Handel's masterpiece staged throughout the country during December 2009.

The 18th Century Concert Orchestra began performing in 2001 and quickly established itself as one of the finest exponents of baroque music in the country. Specialising in popular baroque music in full period costume, by candlelight and on period instruments, their performances re-create the sights and sounds of the eighteenth century. Since its foundation the orchestra has played in theatres, concert halls, churches and stately homes right across the UK and has also performed a two week tour of Canada. In addition, the orchestra's performance of Handel's *Messiah* was filmed for two television programmes in the recent Channel 4 series *Georgian Underworld.*

The event began with Mr Holt, dedicated Master of Ceremonies, lighting the candles in readiness for the appearance of the choir, attired in bright red gowns and the orchestra in their strikingly colourful costumes. Mr Holt presented a bit of a lonely figure, pacing up and down at the back of the stage and occasionally presenting a chair or music stand for one of the orchestra.

I was a little bit surprised to see a small choir of just eight but I need not have been concerned as they produced a strong and beautiful rendition of *Messiah*, in harmony with the music both tender and, during the *Hallelujah Chorus,* bursting forth with rousing exuberance.

The assembled orchestra; comprised of violinists, harpsichord, woodwind and percussion instruments, produced a clear and magnificent performance, communicating the brilliance and drama of baroque music. The combination of period instruments, candlelight and resplendent eighteenth-century attire to present a uniquely atmospheric recreation of eighteenth-century musical life and a good indication of how the first performance of Handel's *Messiah* must have looked and sounded. Solos were beautifully performed, with all the musicians playing with wonderful clarity, and the collective sound produced passages of exquisite subtlety and energy.

Handel's *Messiah* has remained a firm favourite amongst generations of concert-goers since it was written in 1741 and first performed in Dublin in 1742, and this gloriously atmospheric concert by the 18th Century Concert Orchestra superbly recreated Handel's great masterpiece with a masterfully polished performance.

John Croxon

ART EXHIBITIONS

GORE AND AWE: THE SACRED MADE REAL

THE NATIONAL GALLERY (until 24/1/10)

The Sacred Made Real, the third in what is becoming a National Gallery series of Spanish Golden Age exhibitions, lives up to the standard set by those on El Greco and Velázquez. Works that in the literature are reproduced as the ultimate instances of their type and which have never left the setting for which they were intended, or which are normally part of daily worship, have been brought to London and will go on to Washington. The decline of all religion means that long explanations of an alien ideology are no longer needed in the way that used to be the case because all religions, including that which once contributed to forming English opinion, are an increasingly closed books. However there may be some biases, originally derived from Protestantism, that need to be overcome such as that, to give another example, against the Late German Baroque which Pevsner, Clark and Blunt tried to dispel. It is probably still the case that major South German eighteenth century churches are, on most people's list of cultural priorities, well below say French cathedrals or Greek temples. British people gawp at the goings on at Holy Week in Seville in which fully coloured statues are carried but how many seek out the extraordinary polychrome wooden sculptures in Spanish churches? More conventionally reticent or solemn processions take place in Castile.

The cultural prejudices that may have to be suspended in order to understand this exhibition include a disdain for too much realism and, more specifically, against coloured sculpture. These preferences have spread in our culture well beyond the diminishing area influenced by faith. We prefer our violence to be aestheticised, the mass killing scene in the film "La Reine Margot", screened by the EMS, being a case in point. We all know that only the likes of teenage louts playing their dreadful video games want to see it as it is. Our news outlets censor the aftermath of bombings as Arab channels do not. However in Golden Age Spain reality was seen as a spur to faith. Colour in sculpture is a more specific problem for us. Since the decline, but not absolute cessation, of the production of polychromed religious carved images in Italy in the Renaissance, we prefer monochrome sculpture. Winckelmann's writings, and the weathering to which old, formerly fully coloured works were subjected, merely reinforced this bias. The monochrome mode might it could be thought have received an early stimulus from Flemish fifteenth century polyptychs in which the trompe l'oeil sculpture on the outer panels was treated as unadorned stone. Many of these works went to Spain either immediately or to get them away from the sixteenth century Netherlandish iconoclasts. Philip II built up a fine Netherlandish collection as he lost the consent of the people of the area to be ruled by him. Clearly Spanish artists and patrons knew of and rejected unpainted sculpture as objects of veneration. In a Flemish polyptych the outer faces of the shutters were merely the everyday prelude to the coloured main scenes opened only on great occasions. In the case of the Rogier van der Weyden "Deposition" acquired by Philip II by inheritance only after he had ordered a copy from Michel Coxcie the culminating scene of what was formerly a triptych itself looked like a polychromed sculpture.

Ancient Greek and Medieval sculptures were coloured. In rare survivals of Greek bronzes, the inlaid whites of eyes, or lips of a different metal, give us some idea of what has been lost. The great arrays of Gothic jamb statues were all painted. Spain, after France, is perhaps the country best endowed with these ranks of figures and, in the Counter-Reformation period, some of the colour must have lingered however battered by time. So used are we to the conventions of Impressionism and what followed that we want art to look like art, paintings to look painterly and sculpture to bear the marks of chiselling or moulding. Brushwork should show and skin not really bear too much examination. Sculptural flesh should we implicitly believe be abstracted or show the textures left by the process of making it.

Simulation for us in our time is all right so long as close up, or when we are in some states of mind induced by its abstraction, it dissolves. The paintings and the sculptures in the exhibition do not follow this convention. As the opening paragraph of the catalogue says of the huge Zurbarán (cat. no. 25) currently on the end wall of the exhibition's largest room, quoting the "Spanish Vasari", Antonio Palomino (1653-1726), "there is a crucifix from his hand which is shown behind a grill [reja] of the chapel (which has little light), and as everyone who sees it and does not know believes it to be sculpture". Modernism has taught the doctrine of truth to materials. Here the art is to conceal art and only Velázquez, in debatable circumstances (cat. no. 1) in the present National Gallery display, conforms to our expectations.

Where the virtual rules of recent art surprisingly help us it is in the "mixed media" creations of Spanish Golden Age sculpture, to use an anachronistic term. Seized cloth, for instance, is used for the clothing of the life sized figures of St. Ignatius Loyola, 1610 (cat. no. 15), and St. Francis Borgia, ca. 1624 (cat. no. 14), both sculpted by Juan Martínez Montañés and polychromed by Francisco Pacheco, and the loin cloth of Gregorio Fernández's "Ecce Homo", before 1621 (cat. no. 18). Like Cellini's marble "Christ Crucified", ca. 1556-7, now in the church of San Lorenzo in the Escorial, or El Greco's exquisite, wooden polychrome sculpture of the "Risen Christ", 1595-8, in the Hospital Tavera in Toledo, the "Ecce Homo" was carved in the nude. Interestingly the polychromer for Montañés' works "The Virgin of the Immaculate Conception", 1606-8 (cat. no. 7), "St. Ignatius Loyola", 1610, and "St. Francis Borgia", ca. 1624, the latter two already mentioned, is none other than Francisco Pacheco (1564-1644), best known as Velázquez's father-in-law and a writer on art, who is also represented by his own painting of "Christ on the Cross", 1614 (cat. no. 2). Zurbarán is known to have painted sculpture and may in his early years as an artist perhaps carved a Crucifixion himself (cat. p. 160). Mention should be made of Alonso Cano, who was not only a sculptor and painter of canvasses but also an architect, in which capacity he designed the façade of Granada Cathedral. His contributions to the exhibition include the carved head of "St. John of God", ca. 1660-5 (cat. no. 6), possibly once on a body covered in seized cloth, and the deliciously Freudian painting the "Lactation of St. Bernard", 1657-60 (cat.10). In the latter the saint drinks from a squirt of milk dispensed from the Virgin's breast on a statue.

It is refreshing that Velázquez for once is given a rest from his usual position on the pedestal so it can be taken by Zurbarán. The latter's "St. Luke Contemplating the Crucifixion", 1630s (cat. no. 4) in which the saint holds a palette and brushes, is an interesting test case of the degree of artificiality to be found in works of art of the period. Is the combined evangelist and artist, as medieval legend asserted he was,

contemplating the Crucifixion or more specifically his just completed painted image of it which is so close to him that the edge is not visible? Or, most apposite in this exhibition, is he about to put the finishing touches on the incomplete polychromy of a graven image that he also adores, hand on breast, as a cult object? The saint's skin and attire are in subdued tones but polychromatic compared to Christ, the Cross and the landscape. Moreover the only colours on the artist's palette and brushes, red, orange and white, that stand out are those of a taper's flame (sadly this does not come out very well in the catalogue reproduction): to paint is both to worship and literally to light up. In Velázquez's "Las Meninas" layers of meaning are conflated. For this artist being a painter and being a courtier merge, while levels of reality and illusion are suggested by the king and queen reflected in a mirror which should reveal the viewer.

Velázquez's "Portrait of Juan Martinze Montañés", 1635-6 (cat .no. 1), is a non-religious image that has been sneaked in because it is of the sculptor hero of the exhibition. As in the cases of works by Michelangelo and Cézanne there is scope for a serious debate on whether the seemingly incomplete condition of the work could in fact be very deliberate. In the same period Poussin depicted a dead body less convincingly than the live ones in one of his two versions of "Tancred and Erminia", and somewhat earlier the loosely constructed dead Christ in Titian's late "Pieta", 1570s, Accademia, Venice, can be read as a debate on the combined spiritual and physical nature of Christ. Greater finish can literally imply life. The head, shoulder and chest, of what Velázquez's sitter's tool tells us is a clay sculpture, seem to grow out of the background tones of the canvass as though the distinguished sculptor is literally making something out of nothing, as, in a sense, artists do. Part of the arm disappears behind the void of the unformed clay (and painted surface) and re-emerges at the cuff, visible at the top of the head, somewhat as objects, people and the landscape are in places obscured by raised dust in Velázquez's "Tela Real", mid 1630s, upstairs in the National Gallery. The sculptor's arm and the edge of the cape descending from it define a rectangle as though they were part of the frame of a portrait on canvass. A portrait, but in another medium, is what the lump of clay will become. Making Man out of clay is an almost divine attribute. Poussin also played with the idea of frames in his "Self-Portrait", 1649-50, Louvre, in which his own image is emphasized by stacked frames behind him. Poussin's frames, including one on a door or window, do not surround his face but are interrupted by it.

A major reason for temporary exhibitions is to bring together comparable works long separated or never seen before. In this exhibition sculpture is not just coloured but has exquisite painterly qualities while paintings look like paintings of polychrome sculpture. One of the first instances of a painting virtually illustrating a sculpture and vice versa is the pairing of Velázquez's painted "The Immaculate Conception", 1618-9 (cat no. 8), with Montañés'and Pacheco's sculpted equivalent, 1606-8 (cat. no. 7). The contraposto poses and praying hands are all but identical. The fine present base with volutes of yet another three-dimensional version, ca. 1628, attributed to Montañés (cat. no. 9) is close to that on which the squirting statue of the Virgin and Child stands in Cano's canvass of the "Lactation". The painting follows a preferred Spanish type with a figure kneeling or otherwise officiating at an altar seen from the side. The painting for all its realism has a diagrammatic quality. Diagrams were important to Counter-Reformation imagery, such as in the examples of the trigram of the Jesuits, the IHS, or the "jellies" of the Easter Mountain. The linear liquid stream crosses the image diagonally and nearly intersects with a ray of divine illumination

descending on the saint from behind. Furthermore the illuminated edge of the rear lateral altar hanging on the picture plane creates a cross effect with the jet of milk. Both lateral hangings and the partially picked out gold on the altar frontal establish a series of partial veiled effects as though we were looking through transparent layers. Grills play an important part in the settings of Spanish religious art.

"Dead Christ" by Gregorio Fernández

A very special instance of the interplay between the arts of painting and sculpture is found in Zurbarán's "The Virgin of Mercy of Las Cuevas", ca. 1644-55 (cat. no. 11). The format of the painting is taken not from a single sculpted figure, but instead translates into early Spanish Baroque language the entire format of a great High Medieval cathedral's portal. The Virgin is the trumeau figure; the monks, separated from her by gaps like portals on either side of the trumeau, are the jamb statues modified by kneeling; the horizontal flap of the Virgin's mantle held by angels is the lintel; and the heavens are the tympanum complete with the mandorla (here of putti heads and clouds) linking the dove of the Holy Ghost and Mary rather than enclosing a Gothic Christ. The composition in which figures shelter under the Virgin's mantle also incorporates the type of the Madonna della Misericordia, most frequently displayed in Italy, and possibly modified by printed variations such as Schelte Bolswert's "St. Augustine as Protector of the Clergy", 1624 (cat. ill. 75).

As do other works, Pedro de Mena's sculpted "St. Francis Standing in Ecstasy", 1663 (cat. no. 33), illustrates something in the rival medium, in this case Zubarán's two paintings of the same title, both ca. 1640 (cat. nos. 31-2). The sculpted habit's hood is like one of those things people put around their dog's head to limit vision (and control behaviour). Here the saint, long dead but eyes cast upwards, seems to devote his whole attention on God. The story goes that the body was found in its resting place in the presence of Pope Nicholas V (in another capacity a major Renaissance patron). It was standing up, eyes open looking heavenwards, each hand in the opposite sleeve and the blood in the wounds of the stigmata fresh (cat. p. 178). Interest in this episode was not confined to Spain: there is a painting of this period by Laurent Le Hayre of "Pope Nicholas V Visiting the Tomb of St. Francis", 1630.Louvre (Allen, "French

Painting in the Golden Age", ill. 85), though some sources give the pope as the considerably earlier Nicholas IV (cat. p. 180, n. 1). Perhaps as a result of the gallery's lighting the eyes in de Mena's sculpture are most disconcerting, the specs of real light not being in equivalent points in each eye.

The "Dead Christ" by Gregorio Fernández and an unknown polychromer, 1625-30 (cat. no. 27), as displayed by the National Gallery can be walked around. It is in effect, to the modern viewer, something we should not see, like the body on the mortuary slab, as is the gruesome, horizontal, severed "Head of St. John the Baptist" by Juan de Mesa, ca. 1625 (cat. no. 5), complete with neatly severed oesophagus, trachea and a vertibra. Seventeenth century people habitually witnessed all sorts of things we shrink from. The "Dead Christ" looks pathetically human and vulnerable. One leg is twisted to the other, probably resulting from the three nails version of Christ's posture during His ordeal, preserved as rigor mortis sets in. The eyes have not been closed. From behind the left shoulder, with the head lolling to block the view of the opposite shoulder, the chest looks thin and underdeveloped. There is hardly any trace of the Greek athlete who is behind so many Italian versions of Christ. The catalogue (p. 164) emphasizes this very point, explaining that earlier depictions of the same subject by the sculptor, including one commissioned in 1609 by the then privado (all-powerful chief minister) the Duke of Lerma, for the Dominican monastery of San Pablo, conformed to the Italianate model. The feet, hands and lips in the National Gallery exhibition are turning a ghastly colour. This Christ really is dead and subject to the full horrors of mortal corruption. After extensive practising the polychromer must have stood the image upright to obtain the accurate dribble effect showing what would have happened to trickling blood as the body hung on the Cross. The congealed blood in the interior of the wounds is made of squashed in cork painted red (cat. p.164).

"Christ on the Cross" by Zurbarán

Fernánadez, or his advisers, have gone probably as far as they could in theological innovation, turning the canonical five (major) wounds into an apparent eight, though obviously with warrant from the bible and tradition. The three "extras" are the knees, with the skin entirely gone, not from the breaking of these joints at the end of the crucifixions, to which the two thieves, but not Christ, were subjected, but from Christ's falls on the way to Calvary and, again with the skin entirely gone, the area between the shoulder and the neck on the left side. The latter would have been gouged away by the grain and splinters of the cross as Christ carried it.

Hardly any impression is made by Christ on the very hard looking luxury cushion. Another strangely incongruous indulgence (no theological pun intended) is further suggested by the apparently watered silk, pale blue, loin clothe. This surprising texture is surely made by the actual grain of the wood of the sculpture. Wood for luxury and wood for pain: a commentary on and by the mere materials themselves that have a sound bite precision that Damien Hirst, brought up a Catholic but lapsed, would have been proud to achieve. Presumably fewer (or no) preliminary layers have been laid on the wood for the cloth, unlike that for the body, so what we see is not so much the final surface of meticulously built up coatings, as on the skin, but stained wood.

This image is so disturbing, even to the non-religious viewer like the present writer, that it makes the "Lamentation Over the Dead Christ", by Ribera, early 1620s, from the National Gallery's own collection (cat. no.28), behind the sculpted "Dead Christ" as you enter the room, look sanitized. This body has been cleaned up. Appropriately in the same room, as it were as a single sculptural choric mourner for the isolated corpse sculpted to be on its own rather than the centre of a Lamentation, is Pedro Mena's "Mater Dolorosa", ca. 1673 (cat. no. 21b). She consists of head, upper torso and arms only and golden, glistening tears. From one side her veil hides her face entirely, from the other only the nose protrudes so that the head-on view is totally controlled, and the cynic might say controlling. It can be compared to the deep cowl around the face of Mena's "St. Francis Standing in Ecstasy", 1663 (cat. no. 33), in a previous room. The "Mater Dolorosa" is not a sculpture to be prowled around and thought about: it demands our total, face-to-face, emotional commitment. The pink and red shiny tunic is like the innards in a deep, fatal, wound.

The high point of the exhibition has to be the largest room full of images of the tormented and crucified Christ with one apparent exception "Mary Magdalene meditating on the Crucifixion", 1664, by Pedro de Mena (cat. no. 23). She, however, in profile can be seen to recoil, almost as from a knife turned against herself, from the crucifix she holds, making this too an image of Christ's Passion. Dominating the room are two Christs Crucified, one being the sculptor Juan Martínez Montañés' "Cristo de los Descaparados", 1617 (cat. no. 24). The painter is unknown. The interlocking strands of wood on the stem and beam of the Cross in places form motifs like gaping wounds. This is, in contrast to the body by Fernández, for this Christ is much less damaged. The face looks too refined and aristocratic to experience the pain he must be suffering, a late case of the Mannerist expression of feeling by incongruously not expressing it. This Christ, the wound in the side already there, is of course already dead. The Crown of Thorns is so dense that it is almost like a turban. The agitation is displaced onto the loin clothe in the densest late Hellenistic damp fold manner with knobs on, a cross-section of a tornado or a failed tourniquet, which has

failed to staunch the flow of blood. The sheer artistry of this loin clothe is made clear when it is contrasted with that in Juan de Mesa's in "Cristo de la Buena Muerte", 1620, Chapel of the University of Seville, (cat. ill. 2) with an intermediate position on this scale being occupied by Montañés' and Pacheco's "Cristo de la Clemencia", 1603-6, Museo de Bellas Artes, Seville, on long term loan to the Cathedral in Seville (cat. ills. 10, 20). The Cathedral's sculpture is the best known of the type. The latter is shown as though by a look reprimanding Canon Mateo Vázquez de Leca, archdeacon of Carmona, the patron, of his sins (cat. p. 25), but as executed not too menacingly. The lack of overt emotionalism in the face and body of the "Cristo de los Descaparados" as a result of emotional displacement is as Mannerist as the slight astonishment that plays across the features of the canon's image.

The works in the exhibition may show the influence of Caravaggio, or be parallel to his masterpieces, but have not the barest trace of Rubens' powerful rhetoric. The effect of Rubens, the greatest painter who was a subject of the Spanish monarchy aside from Velázquez, did not come till later. The massive knot and voluminousness of the loin clothe in the exhibited Montañés Crucifix brings to mind the sashes worn by kings and high ranking officers in paintings if not in the hurly burly of battle. The concave curve of the abdomen, and the blood flowing in conformity with it, form a pattern with the counter-curve of the clothe. Just below the arch of the rib cage at the top of the held in abdomen is a shadowed hollow (at least in the exhibition lighting) that is close to a dark, similarly placed triangle in the Zurbarán painting to which we will come shortly. These things are like wounds created from the delicate tormented body not inflicted on it. This Christ, though ostensibly dead, is still in control. The full but symmetrically curled beard adds to the sense of authority. This is a sculpture about self-command and is a command to the faithful.

The parallel counter image here is Zurbarán's "Christ on the Cross", 1627 (cat. no 25). He is thicker set than Montañés figure but the delicacy in this image comes not primarily from the anatomy but from the play of light on smooth surfaces, always Zurbarán's strongest asset. The beard is wispy and the hair, plastered with sweat, seemingly crudely hacked. This is a real peasant/carpenter Christ depicted with a refinement that the French seventeenth century Le Nain brothers did not apply to actual peasants. This Christ and Montañés' are a pair of opposites as much as the famous rival representations by Donatello and Brunelleschi. The face, hands and feet have stated to turn colour but there is little blood; that would destroy the delicacy of Zurbarán's surfaces. As well as the superscription there is a torn cartiolo stuck to either the cross or to the canvass, raising questions about the layering of reality already encountered in the St. Luke painting by the same master. The wood is shown to have been crudely adzed using Christ's own craft to prepare the principle instrument of His torment and to enable the bits, the stem, the cross arm, superscription and the bracket/ledge for the feet to fit together. There is a careful gradation of nail sizes, from the bracket, to the main joint, to the superscription as though they had been issued from a tightly controlled Roman government stores depot – another case of the banality of evil commented upon by people who have talked to serial killers and top Nazis. The loin clothe with its great hanging flap is as much the surprising centre of attention as that diagonally opposite by Montañés in the gallery hanging. The painted loin clothe has additional qualities of the depiction of light, shadow, reflections involving skin and cloth and, in the cloth, apparent, but not actually depicted, transparency. There is something about this, incredible in the

context, of “tasteful” soft porn, as uniform in its procedures then as now as Velázquez’s “Rokeby Venus” demonstrates. The depiction of the anatomy, though by any normal standards more than adequate, is rather generalized.

But for the arms the pose is reduced to as close to a solid lump as a body stretched to breaking point can be. There is an almost straight line down the to the side of the body to our right and to the left as close to a single diagonal as can be managed in the circumstances of deep encroaching shadows. The rigid parallel legs, held down by the two nail solution (there was much debate on the question of three nails or four for the entire body), conform to the rest of the posture, unlike the bent lower limbs, foreshortening of the thighs and reduction of the base at the feet to a delicate point in Mantañés’ variation on the one nail option. Zurbarán, when dealing with more than one object, tended to line them up as in his delightful little still lifes, one of which, “The Cup of Water and a Rose on a Silver Plate”, ca. 1630, hangs in the National Gallery, or in the Virgin of Mercy of Las Cuevas”, ca. 1644-55 (cat. no. 11), where the two groups of monks become solid white blocks which, with the Virgin between them, become two of three distinct entities. The control of intervals is as perfect as in the still lifes such as “Still Life with Lemons, Oranges and a Rose”, 1633, Norton Somon Foundation, Pasadena, California. In the National Gallery painting there are so few objects, in effect the right side of the Norton Simon work standing on its own, that the lit side of the hollow in the plate is used to balance the rose. Had he been allowed a vision into the future one wonders if the artist might have fully understood Brancusi’s “The Kiss”, the ultimate realization of aligned blocks.

This characteristic solidity is carried a stage further in the same artist’s “St. Serapion”, 1628 (cat. no. 35), the last work in the exhibition, in which only the hands protrude from the roughly rectangular mass of drapery. Even the hairline is used to reinforce the geometry of the pale rectangle on the picture plane that takes in the face. The English Peter Serapion, 1178-1240, was dismembered, disembowelled and only partly decapitated, presumably to draw out his agony, by English pirates operating in Scotland. The ill-judged raid on Cadiz that set off in September 1625, instigated by the English privado, the Duke of Buckingham, serving a Scottish dynasty, may perhaps be related to the choice of Zurbarán’s subject with off stage, evil English characters and a Caledonian setting. Too much wine was consumed between the seventeenth century expeditionary force’s landing and its objective by people who must, to the Andalusians, have been indistinguishable from a pirate rabble. Serapion’s journey to Spain had been for the far more commendable purpose of joining the crusade under Alfonso IX against the Moors, a united Christian effort against the infidel rather than a raid by heretics on the faithful. Once in Spain Serapion joined the Mercedarians, an order who offered themselves as hostages for captured Christians in danger of loosing their faith. He failed to extend his order into England. If this interpretation of the painting is correct, the saint would stand in allegorically for the intended victim, seventeenth century Spain or Cadiz, though the expedition was a military disaster from the point of view of the aggressors.

In the reticent language that Zurbarán preferred the hands that are outside the rectangle, the lolling head and the deep shadowy valleys in the fabric hint at the appalling violations that are to befall the resigned, tied up saint at any moment. In an exhibition full of brilliant juxtapositions by the curators, a sequence of works of art that begins with the creation of a human image from clay ends with immanent total

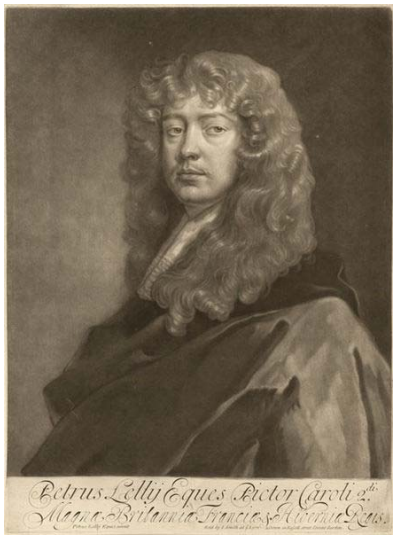
self-abnegation and physical destruction. This is as close to perfection as a parable of human life that the great Golden Age saints would have thought we poor, miserable sinners can achieve.

Timothy Alves

Sir Peter Lely: Artist and Collector

The National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh

13th November 2009 to 14th February 2010



Sir Peter Lely

Self-Portrait

Mezzotint engraving by Isaac Beckett and John Smith

{{PD-Art}}

Sir Peter Lely (1618-1680) was Charles II's court painter from 1660 until his death. His huge studio operated on an industrial scale. He and his assistants painted the royal family and the leading lights of the age. Lely's clients could choose their poses from pattern books and only needed to sit for the artist long enough for him to record their faces. Lely's assistants helped with the backgrounds and the clothes – he'd never have completed his numerous commissions otherwise. Lely's work also had popularity outside the court. His paintings were converted into mezzotints and thereby reached a much wider audience. Lely was aware of this and worked with mezzotint artists to ensure that the quality was controlled.

Lely was also a serious art collector. His collection of 10,000 prints and drawings and 600 paintings was in his own words the ‘best in Europe’. The collection served as inspiration for his art and he re-interpreted Renaissance images into Baroque ones. The collection was auctioned after Lely’s death but items from it are easily identified by a small stamp reading ‘P.L.’ which appears on the works.

This exhibition includes works by drawings by Lely, mezzotints from those who followed him, and items from Lely’s impressive collection. It is a small show but one that is well worth a look.

The Lely portion of the exhibition shows the artist’s skill and range. The Lely drawings show his skill as a draftsman. The elegant draperies that appear in his paintings are here in charcoal and pencil. Among the mezzotints are images of Sir William Temple (by Peter Vanderbank) and of Anne Hyde, Duchess of York (by Pierre Lombart). The Duchess of York’s image remained a popular print well into the eighteenth century. A line engraving of Nell Gywn (by Gerard Valck) admitted the limitations of the form with a statement reading ‘The Sculpters part is done the features hitt of Madam Gwin, No Arte can shew her Witt’. The semi-topless pose of the engraving was a bit racier than the Lely painting which inspired it and the result proved to be a popular image.

The items from Lely’s collection show that he unsurprisingly had a good eye for quality and that he used the works to inspire his own. An example of this is a drawing by Frederico Zuccaro (1542/43-1609) of a ‘Female Figure in Armour’ which may have inspired Lely’s depiction of Barbara Villiers as Pallas Athena. Villiers, at least, is holding a similar javelin in her portrait. Some of the other featured drawings have a simple charm. Paolo Farinati’s (c. 1524-c. 1606) ‘Five Putti Playing on the Branches of a Tree’ gives the mythical children monkey-like qualities. ‘The Holy Family outside the Stable’ a pen and ink drawing by Dominico Campagnola (c. 1500-1546) has the unlikely detail that Joseph is reading a book. Was this the first-ever Christmas best seller?

Although it is small, this exhibition provides a good introduction to the art of Lely and some insights into his collecting activities.

Karen Baston

Paul Sandby: Picturing Britain

The National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh

7 November 2009 − 7 February 2010

The Royal Academy of Arts, London

13 March 2010—13 June 2010

Portrait of Paul Sandby

Francis Cotes (1761)`{{PD-Art}}`

This exhibition celebrates Paul Sandby's bicentenary. Born in Nottingham, Sandby (*bap*. 1731-1809) started his artistic career as a draftsman on the Military Survey of North Britain in the 1740s. He was captivated by the scenes and people of Scotland and his work soon went beyond map making. Sandby worked with his brother on the 'Great Map' of the Highlands of Scotland. When he wasn't working on his cartography, Sandby was creating landscape scenes, castle views, and street scenes from Edinburgh. He was a master at using watercolour to create vivid pictures. Even his maps included vignettes of the places the map recorded and details about what people were doing. Thus a castle in the distance might be fronted with an image of Jacobite prisoners being marched to their destination.

When he returned to Edinburgh, Sandby took on the Old Town as a subject. (The New Town, of course, did not yet exist.) His drawings are full of tiny details like a wee sign reading 'Good eating down this close' as a guide for hungry visitors in an image of 1751. By the late 1750s, Sandby was back in England and ready to take on the art world. He engaged in a feud with William Hogarth by ridiculing the latter's 'line of beauty' theory. Sandby created a series of prints depicting Hogarth acting foolishly and nearly always featuring a sidekick called 'Pugg'. The works come across as rather bitter and Sandby later distanced himself from these works. Sandby continued to develop his landscape style while also working on city scenes. His 'Twelve London

Cries Done from the Life' of c. 1759-1760 is a series of portraits of London workers. Unlike traditional images which tend to show cheerful characters going about their work, Sandby's figures are a bit scary and surly. The fish vendor, for example, is so frightening that she's even able to scare a cat who would surely be interested in her wares.

Sandby was incredibly prolific. He next turned to travelling throughout England, Wales and Ireland to capture views of towns, abbeys, castles and country houses. He used his camera obscura to good effect but his drawings and watercolours always have a feeling of movement and light. He also did full scale paintings. His depiction of *The Rainbow* (c. 1800) which is usually in Nottingham is marvellous and harks back to the Dutch Old Masters. (Sandby is particularly good at painting animals.) Sandby's 'Views' from his travels were collected and published in *The Virtuosi's Museum* (1778-1782) but each print was also available separately as a monthly instalment.

The Rainbow

Paul Sandby

{{PD-Art}}

Paul Sandby: Picturing Britain is an exhibition which should do a lot to restore a virtually forgotten artist to his rightful status. I have been to the exhibition in Edinburgh twice now. But, be warned, it is free here and you'll have to pay to see it in London!

A selection of highlights from the National Gallery of Scotland version of the exhibition is available online at:
http://www.nationalgalleries.org/whatson/exhibition/5:368/8821/9038.

Karen Baston

Authority, Agency and the Scottish Church in the Mid-Seventeenth Century

Dr Laura Stewart (Birkbeck College)

Scottish History Seminar, Edinburgh

19th November 2009

It was a windy and wet evening when the Scottish History Seminar convened to hear Laura Stewart's paper on the above title. Happily, this was a homecoming for Stewart and the warm and friendly atmosphere inside more than made up for the (typical?) Scottish weather outside. The relationships within the Scottish Presbyterian of the mid-seventeenth century were the main points for exploration. In the 1640s Presbyterians performed balancing acts between radicals and moderates and between the lay community and the clergy. The time was influenced by the reception of the National Covenant of 1638 and the godly needed to work out what the document meant and what its implications were for their communities. As Stewart is happy to point out, it's difficult to like many of the characters involved. But there is plenty of human interest – and even humour – to be found throughout the period.

During the era of the Covenant, the Presbyterian lay community was centred on family units. These groupings were responsible for the religious instruction provided within their families. Various 'Books of Discipline' and 'Family Exercises' were published for home use. Families were tested by the parish to see that the level of teaching was up to scratch. While this was a good thing because it got the community involved in the practices of the faith, it also blurred the boundaries between the laity and the clergy. The household began to act as a rival to the church. The clerics were not slow to realise that purifying the church would eliminate the need for the household centres.

The National Covenant had its first public reading in the spring of 1638. Individuals were encouraged to make a personal commitment and soon Scotland was swamped in congregations who signed the document with 'tears of joy'. Parishioners, meanwhile, found a way to make the Covenant work for them. They could fire any ministers who refused to accept the Covenant.

The Covenant was approved by the Parliament in June 1640 and from 1643 anyone who refused to swear to it could have their property and estates taken from them. The Covenant had won the day but it was still not universally accepted. One in ten of parish clergy were deposed between 1638 and 1648 (although many were later re-admitted). The National Covenant did not encourage a closer personal relationship with God. It rather acknowledged the supremacy of the General Assembly.

The power of the parishioner continued to grow and by 1647 all new clerical appointments had to have the approval of the congregation. A key issue of the time was the place of patronage within the system. Landowners had traditionally had the power and influence to appoint ministers to parishes within their control. The 1640s changed this and the congregations took control of the selection of their clergy.

The parish of Glassford was an example of the changes that were taking place. A new church was established there in 1633. The minister, Robert Hamilton, was deprived when he declined to support the Covenant. The suggested replacement had the support of the local landowner, Archibald Campbell. The congregation, however, refused to accept the replacement because they were not consulted. (This, to my mind at least, shows just how petty the players could be.) It was an example of parishioner power.

Glassford Graveyard and Old church

But all was not well among the 'Godly'. Rival General Assemblies to the one in Edinburgh were set up in St Andrews and Dundee. Radicals called 'The Protesters' insisted that not everyone in the church was sincere in committing to the Covenant and that 'corrupt brethren' were going to ruin everything. Others returned to the Calvinistic idea that it was not up to individuals to decide who was a member of the church. Separatists meanwhile turned to the English puritans for inspiration.

It *is* hard to like the Covenanters, but when their stories are told with verve and the implications of what they were attempted are so well explained as in this paper, they are just about tolerable.

Karen Baston

FORTHCOMING SOCIETY EVENTS

Events 2009-2010

All events start at 6.30p.m. unless otherwise stated, and are followed by refreshments and questions

29th January 2010: Prof. Alex Walsham (Exeter), ''Skeletons in the Cupboard: Relics after the English Reformation', Malet Street, room to be confirmed

5th March 2010: Tim Knox (Director, Sir John Soane's House), 'The Strange Genius of Sir John Soane', Malet Street, Room 415.

25th March 2010: Prof. Michael Hunter, 'The Decline of Magic', subtitle to be confirmed, Malet Street, Room B30

April 2010: Dr Richard Williams, 'Text and Image in Reformation Visual Culture', Malet Street, date and venue to be confirmed

May 2010: Dr Malcom Jones, 'Death in Early Modern English Prints and Book Illustrations', Malet Street, date and venue to be confirmed

June 2010: Prof. Julian Swann, title, date and venue to be confirmed

For further information on membership and activities contact the secretary, Anne Byrne: Membership is £5 for the year. Non-members may attend events at a cost of £3 each.

Film Night

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.

Film Night has been running for a while now and has proved a popular event for our members. Why not come along, see a great film and meet other members. We show a variety of British and foreign films, all dealing with subjects associated with the Early Modern era. Film Night is free to members and we also provide wine and snacks.

For further information on Film Night contact Laura Jacobs at: l.jacobs@english.bbk.ac.uk

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

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

Henry VIII: Dressed to Kill
The Tower of London

Until January 2010

Telephone: 0844 4827777

The Tudor monarch is battle-readied in this exhibition that features various examples of his armour and weapons. The objects are beautifully made and are designed both to impress and to serve a functional purpose.

The Historical Association

Central London Branch

Meetings are at the Institute of Historical Research, Senate House

Contact the secretary, Bill Measure on
measure@btinternet.com or 020-85585491

Saturday, 14th January 2010, 2.00 p.m. Dr Alastair Duke (University of Southampton) "A fair bird suited with godly borrowed plumage?" The economic and cultural contribution of Southern Netherlanders to Holland's Golden Age, c. 1585-1630.

EMPHASIS

(Early Modern Philosophy and History of Science Seminar), 2009-2010

Venue: Room G34 [Ground Floor] Senate House, South Building, Malet Street, London WC1E. *Time*: Saturday, 2-4pm. Refreshments provided.

3 October 2009
Steven Walton (Pennsylvania State University and Leverhulme Visiting Professor, Leeds), 'Practical Mathematics and the Military Gentleman'.

7 November 2008
Anthony Ossa-Richardson (Warburg Institute), 'Pomponazzi and the Rôle of Nature in Oracular Divination'.

5 December 2009
Mediaeval alchemy
Jennifer Rampling (HPS, Cambridge), 'George Ripley (d. c.1490): medicine and the royal alchemist'.
Peter Jones (Kings College, Cambridge), 'John Argentein (c.1443-1508): alchemy and the royal doctor'.

9 January 2010
New perspectives on Francis Bacon:
Cesare Pastorino (University of Indiana), 'The Role of Technological Invention in Bacon's Philosophy of Experiment'
Kathryn Murphy (Jesus College, Oxford), 'History, Miscellany, Encyclopaedia? *Sylva Sylvarum* and the Forms of Natural Knowledge'
Sophie Weeks (University of Leeds), 'What is Baconian Magic?'

6 February 2010
Elizabeth Scott-Baumann (Oxford Brookes)
'Nature unbowels herself: Margaret Cavendish, print and the scientific imagination'.

6 March 2010 [NB **ST275, STEWART HOUSE]**
John Henry (University of Edinburgh):
'Gravity and *De gravitatione*: The development of Newton's concept of action at a distance.'

17 April 2010
Pamela H. Smith (Columbia University)
'What is a "How-To Book"? Technical Writing in early modern Europe'.

15 May 2010
Wouter Hanegraaff (University of Amsterdam)
'Historians of Error: The Protestant Attack on Platonic Orientalism'

5 June 2010
Early Modern heterodoxies
William Poole (New College, Oxford): 'Early-modern scientific innovation and heterodoxy: only connect?'
Richard Serjeantson (Trinity College, Cambridge): 'Heterodoxy and the natural history of religion, 1641–1757'.
Rhodri Lewis (St Hugh's College Oxford): 'Heterodoxy and scribal culture in and around the early Royal Society'.

For the most up-to-date information on the seminar please consult the seminar website:
http://ies.sas.ac.uk/events/seminars/Emphasis/index.htm

To be added to the EMPHASIS e-mailing list, please contact the organiser:
Dr Stephen Clucas: s.clucas@bbk.ac.uk

PRE-MODERN TOWNS CONFERENCE 2010

Saturday, 30 January 2010
Institute of Historical Research, Senate House, London WC1

PROTEST AND UNREST

We would like to invite you to the 32nd annual meeting of historians, geographers, archaeologists and others working on the medieval and early modern town. This year's meeting will be held on Saturday 30 January 2010 at the Institute of Historical Research, Senate House, London, WC1. Postgraduate students are particularly welcome.

9:45-10:15 Registration

10.15-11.30 Hannah Skoda (Merton College, Oxford) 'Theatres of Violence: Urban Uprisings in North-East France, c.1270-1320'

Jan Dumolyn and Jelle Haemers (Ghent) 'Political Factions and Revolts in Late Medieval Flemish Towns'

11.30-12.00 COFFEE

12:00-1:15 Andy Wood (UEA) 'Conceptualizing Popular Politics in Jacobean Malmesbury'

Laura Stewart (Birkbeck) 'Urban Protest and the Civic Community in Mid-Seventeenth Century Scotland'

1:15-2:30 LUNCH

2:30-3:05 Martyn Powell (Aberystwyth) 'Houghers and Chalkers: Maiming the Military in Eighteenth-Century Dublin'

3.05-4.00 Sam Cohn (Glasgow) 'Popular Revolt: The Late Medieval-Early Modern Divide'

4:15 END--**please note that we have to clear the Institute by 4:30**

There is a registration fee of £22.00 (£12.00 for registered students and the unwaged), to include coffee and biscuits, and lunch of sandwiches and fruit. Water and wine will be on sale by the glass. It is essential to book in advance, by returning the slip below.

SLIPS AND CHEQUES (made out to Ian Archer) should be sent by **23 January 2010** to Dr Ian Archer, Keble College, Oxford, OX1 3PG.

Ian Archer (Keble, Oxford), Caroline Barron (Royal Holloway, London), Jonathan Barry (Exeter), Peter Borsay (Aberystwyth), Vanessa Harding (Birkbeck, London), Christian Liddy (Durham), Julia Merritt (Nottingham), Roey Sweet (Leicester)

.....

BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE

I shall/shall not be attending the Pre-Modern Towns Group Meeting on Saturday, 30 January 2010.

I enclose £22.00/ £12.00 (students) for registration and lunch. (delete as appropriate)

Please make cheques payable to Ian Archer.

If you cannot come to this meeting but wish to remain on the mailing list, please return the slip to Ian Archer at Keble College, Oxford, OX1 3PG

Name:_____

_____

Address in full_____

_____

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_____

E-mail address_____

_____

Postgraduate student/staff/other (please specify):

Main research interest:

Society, Culture and Belief, 1500-1800

The programme for the academic year 2009-10 concludes our series on *The Senses*, with the theme:

Sound and Hearing

Convenors: Surekha Davies (Birkbeck), Laura Gowing (KCL), Kate Hodgkin (University of East London), Michael Hunter (Birkbeck), Adam Sutcliffe (KCL).

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

21 January 2010 ***Dr Michael Fleming (University of Huddersfield)***

'Old English viols': what they were and where they went

4 February 2010 Dr Penelope Gouk (University of Manchester)

Theories of hearing in the Enlightenment: some English examples

18 February 2010 ***Katherine Hunt (London Consortium)***

From 'allowed ceremonie' to 'enchanting melody': the changing sound of church bells in the English Reformation

4 March 2010 ***Stefan Putigny (KCL)***

'Sounding British'; Song culture and British nationhood, 1718-63

18 March 2010 ***Dr Caroline Warman (Jesus College, Oxford)***

'Ouïe difficile à expliquer': Diderot and the difficulty of explaining hearing
***from the* Lettre sur les sourds et muets *(1751) to the* Eléments de physiologie**
(c.1780)

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

Roger Crowley, *Empires of the Sea: The Final Battle for the Mediterranean, 1521-1580*, (Faber & Faber, London, p.b. 2009). 341p.p.

A subtitle for this book might have been 'Ottoman vs Hapsburg'. It might also be called, 'East vs West', or 'Islam vs Christianity'. Do not be deceived if these appear to be misleading, reductionist, headlines. For these represent just three themes behind a monumental war fought between sixteenth-century superpowers. (The edition published in the United States is even titled: *Empires of the Sea: The Siege of Malta, the Battle of Lepanto, and the Contest for the Centre of the World).*

This is a history of an ocean and two conflicting empires: Hapsburg Spain and Ottoman Turkey. Over sixty years these two empires fought for control of the Mediterranean, which formed the boundary between them. Control of the Mediterranean was vital to each others interests. If either side seized control of this strategic ocean, they could advance, destroy their opponents and expand their territory. Within the vast bulk of the Mediterranean, two relatively small islands were of vital importance: Rhodes and Malta. Their importance lay not in their size, but their location. So much so, that as Roger Crowley explains, they were fulcrums on which the dynamics of the conflict were balanced.

Over the course of twenty-two detailed chapters Roger Crowley charts the ebb and flow of victory and defeat as the fortunes of either side waxed and waned. The narrative is fast moving and packed with graphic description. Roger Crowley has considered the needs of the reader and thoughtfully included maps of the Mediterranean in 1560, the Siege of Malta in 1565 and the Battle of Lepanto in 1571. Sixteen illustrations, some in colour, add an extra dimension to the text.

Both sides appear to have mutually agreed one rule: few prisoners would be taken. This was a fight to the death. It was also a long-winded fight. When war broke out in 1521, the Turks were headed by Sultan Suleiman I and Holy Roman Emperor Charles V was the king of Hapsburg Spain. Nearly sixty years later, the peace negotiations would be carried out by the representatives of Sultan Selim (Suleiman's heir) and Philip II of Spain.

As Roger Crowley points out in his epilogue, by the late 1570s both sides had been, to a certain point, overtaken by events. Each side had its own problems. Philip II of Spain became preoccupied with rebellion in the Spanish Netherlands, which was linked with another problem: England. Meanwhile the flood of gold coming from the New World devalued the money supply in Turkey. Furthermore, both England and the Netherlands were expanding their mercantile interests both east and west, a factor that helped undermine both Hapsburg Spain and Ottoman Turkey.

This was not the last great war fought in the Mediterranean. Events during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars, and World War Two, to take two examples, demonstrate the strategic military importance of the 'tideless sea'. The scale of this war, however, is impressively narrated. Recommended.

Empires of the Sea was judged 'Sunday Times History Book of the Year' in 2008.

Roger Crowley is also author of *Constantinople: The Last Great Siege 1453,* (Faber & Faber, London, p.b. 2006). 320p.p.

Robin Rowles

If you liked this book, why not try:

Paul Strathern. *Napoleon in Egypt,* (Jonathan Cape, London, p.b. 2008). 480p.p.

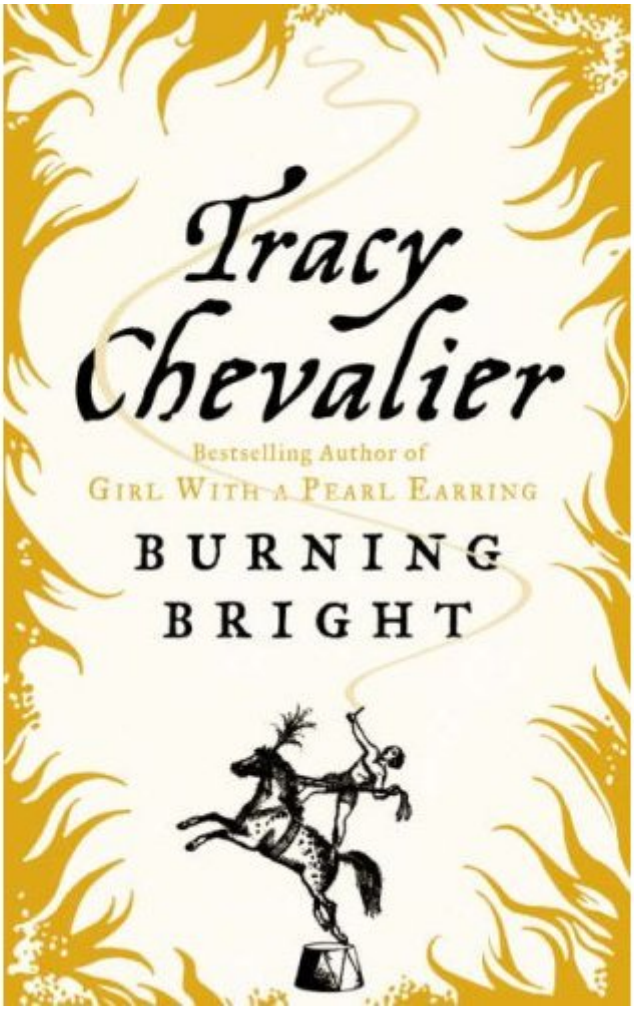
In 1798, at the height of the French Revolutionary Wars, Napoleon Bonaparte launched an invasion of Egypt. It was meant to bring Western and in particular, French, values to the Middle East. What the intellectuals who accompanied Bonaparte discovered, however, were to become the roots of Egyptology, via the deciphering of the Rosetta Stone and other mysteries. Includes a gripping narrative of the sea-chase between Horatio Nelson's British and Bonaparte's French fleets and its dramatic conclusion at the Battle of the Nile.

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

Tracy Chevalier, *Burning Bright* (London: Penguin, 2007)



Tracy Chevalier's phenomenal success with her *Girl with a Pearl Earring* has paved the way for the reception of her new historical novel, *Burning Bright.* In it, as the title, borrowed from one of Blake's most famous poems, "The Tyger" suggests, we do have a portrayal of eighteenth century London that is bright and vivid. However, this novel about William Blake, the great English poet who stood on the cusp of eighteenth and nineteenth century, the inheritor of Milton and the predecessor of the Romantics, is shadowy in its portrayal of the poet at first. Thus it intrigues the readers and draws them deeper into the plot.

In this novel Chevalier employs the same techniques that she uses in her earlier bestseller, the one about the artist Vermeer. In *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, she invents the character of a servant called Griet, who is an unlikely source of inspiration for Johannes Vermeer's masterpiece. The presence of a poor and unobtrusive maid, all eyes and ears, helps us to gain a glimpse of the artist's inner life through a clear lens. Griet, secretly in love with her master, poses as a model for his picture while discovering unknown aspects of his character that nobody, not even his wife knows. Her secret love for him remains unacknowledged and she marries the son of a butcher. But as a marginalised presence in the household, she provides the best glimpse of the artist at work, his commitment to the creative life that stands apart from everything.

In the same way, in *Burning Bright,* there are the two fictitious characters, Jem Kellaway and Maggie Butterfield who seem to throw light on the shadowy figure of Blake. The poet, artist and revolutionary who depicts in his poetry the passion for the downtrodden and the defenseless, the orphans, the chimney sweepers and the beggars that crowd the pages of his *Songs of Experience* and *Songs of Innocence*, seems to come alive in the vision of a country boy, fresh-faced and eager, and a street-savvy, cynical girl growing up in London slums. They, together get to know the poet on an intimate footing simply because they are his next door neighbours.

Blake however, appears quite late in the novel. At first it seems to be the story of the Kellaways, escaping from the confines of a small village of Dorset, bewildered by London, its vastness, crowds and poverty. Chevalier pits a girl from a dysfunctional family, Maggie against the Kellaways, who, grief-stricken because of the death of a son, escape from the memories of Piddletrenthide to find success and change in London. The change however, is in many ways for worse instead of better. At first the circus that provides work for the members of the Kellaway family seems to be quite spectacular, and in a way distracting for Anne Kellaway, a grieving mother; but soon the charm begins to fade, for Jem at least. He discovers in the hidden alleyways many kinds of vice. If it had not been for the steadying hand of Maggie, an unlikely guide thoroughly distrusted by his parents, he would have lost his way entirely in "Cut Throat Lane," formerly named as "Lover's Lane" where a hideous crime is committed that changes its name forever.

Gender roles are somewhat reversed in this story where the country-bred, shy lad Jem is somewhat weak, whereas his constant companion and guide, Maggie is tough and invincible. However, like Blake, Jem soon discovers that beneath the veneer of toughness and cynicism, there remains at its core, an innocent child whom he must unmask, for it is that creature he loves. However, it is not Jem but the poet with his eye that glances from heaven to earth and from earth to heaven that completes this task. He and his wife, Kate, a compassionate and gentle woman, shelter and protect the child Maggie when she is being ill-treated by her family. The reprieve however, is too brief. The summer ends and Maggie has to go back to work in a factory that makes people work under inhuman conditions. She later flees to another factory where things are hardly better.

Like the factories, the circus is also is very exploitative. Philip Astley, the owner of the circus is a ruthless man and when he is described in the following words by Maggie's father, all the evils of capitalism are exposed:

> Philip Astley showers you with attention, gets you customers, bargains, jobs and free tickets—until he leaves . . . . He comes and helps you out, brings in business, gets people settled and happy, and then comes October and poof!—in a day he's gone, leaving everybody with nothing. He builds a castle for you and tears it down again. Grooms, pie makers, carpenters, coachmen or whores—it happens to them all.

It is no wonder that at this moment, the members of the Lambeth Association, the supporters of the English monarchy who endorse this deadly and exploitative system appear. The distant thunderclap of the French Revolution has at last borne home. These men have always regarded Blake with a jaundiced eye because he wore the *bonnet rouge* and supported the revolution abroad. Now they attack him and all others who have sympathy for this cause. At this point the novel's pace quickens and the crescendo gathers to culminate in a shattering climax when Blake confronts the crowd and we are afraid that he is going to be arrested. It is merely the intervention of the children, their warning which saves him. As he magnificently defies the tyrants and cites one of his verses, we see how vividly he brings to life the faces he sees all around him in the London slums:

I wander through each chartered street

Near where the chartered Thames does flow

And mark in every face I meet

Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

The childless Blake understands children better than anyone else, even their own parents. And only they understand his poetry, as he shrewdly observes. Thus it is only they who support and help him so he is spared the disgrace of imprisonment. He in his turn helps them, when he discovers in these children, stepping forth into the threshold of adolescence, a hidden love that constitutes one of his songs. In that unspoken declaration of love in one of Blake's poems, Jem and Maggie discover that they love each other with a sweet and innocent love which only Blake, the visionary could notice. Then they blush and Kate Blake admonishes her husband, but at this moment the children encounter a moment of revelation and wonder.

Thus it is finally Blake the poet who brings the children together, after many partings and farewells. They stand in the garden of the Blakes and experience a moment of joy and rapture, embrace in the Lover's Lane only to be parted by a rude awakening, and finally at the end of the novel, reunite. At the end, they come together in the quiet green countryside, hushed and awed by the peace of the evening. It is finally a moment of precious calm, after much storm and turbulence. Thus the novel ends on a note of quiet, final triumph of innocence over woes.

Bansari Mitra

Petrie Harbouri, *The Brothers Carburi* (London: Bloomsbury, 2001)

The Republic of Letters is elegantly brought to life in this story of three Enlightenment era brothers who travel throughout Europe to make their fortunes. Three brothers of the Carburi family of Cephalonia are the foci of this engaging novel. Giovanni Battista (or 'Gio:Batt:' as he's known) is the oldest and possibly the wisest. His success as a physician leads to a post in the French royal household and the Fellowship of the Royal Society of London. The next brother is 'black sheep' Marino who ultimately finds success as an engineer in the service of the Empress of Russia. His main task was moving the famous 'thunder stone' which now rests under the 'Bronze Horseman' statue of Peter the Great in St Petersburg. Finally there is Marco who becomes an influential professor of chemistry at the University of Padua. Although there are younger children in the family, these three have an unbreakable bond that spans time and distance. . Gio:Batt: and Marco lead respectable lives while Marino becomes an adventurer. As their various careers unfold they communicate by correspondence. But this is not just a work of epistolary fiction. It is a well observed interpretation of real lives. Harbouri has a great skill for reading between the lines and her liking for the historical people whose stories she tells is evident. Although they are forced to read letters to know how they are getting on, we are right there with them when the letters arrive.

The Transportation of the Thunder-stone in the Presence of Catherine II

(c. 1770)

{{PD-Art}}

Although the tone of the book is gentle – the prose is like the motion of waves on sandy shores at time - we know that tragedy is eminent. We know from the very first paragraph that Marino will be the first of the brothers to die and that his dearest relatives are too far away to bury him. I hadn't heard of the Carburi brothers before reading this and I deliberately stopped myself from trying to find out more about them until I'd finished the novel. I was so hoping they were real that it would have ruined my enjoyment of the book if they weren't. The epilogue showed that they were real and their life dates were supplied – what a relief!

Throughout their lives it is Giovanni Battista who assumes the role of protector and giver of advice. Not that Marino and Marco always appreciate his efforts. He is his mother's favourite child and he has a deeply ingrained sense of responsibility for his siblings. His success at the French court means he is able to use a certain amount of influence to help Marino when he accidently murders a woman in Venice (it happens) and has to flee to Russia. We forgive Marino his crime because he was goaded into it and because he goes on to lead an interesting and useful life. His own tragedies and his own eventual murder seem to make his criminal past a youthful indiscretion which is more than made up for during the rest of his days. Marino is in many ways the main character in the novel Marco has the closest bond with Marino. They are like twins and they completely understand each other.

Along with this family tale, we are treated to glimpses of the brothers' various environments. Giovanni Battista's elegant velvet suits, Marino's complicated machinery, and Marco's award of a medal from the Republic of Venice all help to place this story firmly in the eighteenth century. Gio:Batt: concerns himself with such matters as the arrangement of libraries and passes his findings on to his brothers. The brothers are very much of their time. They love to share information and drawings about their latest scientific studies and findings. Harbouri refrains from giving them modern sensibilities and this helps to make the novel an exploration of eighteenth century attitudes. Gio:Batt:, for example, is always aware of keeping up appearances and even in times of sadness cannot put aside his professionalism. His complicated relationship with his servants is also an interesting theme. Marino's relationship with his son is touching and realistic. His grief at the latter's death is almost too much for him to bear. His affair with and then marriage to a French courtesan results in his banishment from Giovanni Battista's care. Marco seems to be the most well adjusted of the brothers by modern standards. Once he has established himself in his career he stays put and gets on with his work.

Harbouri has achieved something special with this book. Her occasional wry asides stop the reader from taking it all too seriously. This is a rich and rewarding book that would stand up to a second reading.

Karen Baston

THE WINTER QUIZ

1. What was John Howard created on Saturday, 28th June 1483?

2. Who founded the Society of Jesus?

3. Whom did Edward IV secretly marry in 1461?

4. Who died leading the vanguard for Richard III at Bosworth?

5. What arrived in London on the 15th November 1514?

6. Which Oxford college did Thomas Wolsey attend?

7. Which legal measure came into force in England on the 1st February 1535?

8. What was attempted at the York House Conference in February 1626?

9. What was Thomas Wentworth, earl of Strafford appointed in December 1628?

10. Why was Sir Robert Heath, chief justice of the common pleas, dismissed from office in September 1634?

11. What was William Juxon, bishop of London, appointed in March 1636?

12. Why were there riots in St Giles's Church, Edinburgh in July 1637?

13. Who wrote the novel *'Pamela'* in 1740?

14. To what office was the politician and social reformer John Wilkes elected?

15 What did Tom and Moll King run in Covent Garden in the first half of the eighteenth century?

16. Who wrote the stage comedy *'The Beaux Stratagem'* in 1707?

17. Which major British artist painted *Cupid as a Link-Boy* in 1774?

18. Moll Hackabout is the main character in which series of Hogarth paintings?

19. Who wrote *'A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed*' in 1734?

20. What was written between the 22nd August and 12th September 1741?

Answers on the following page

ANSWERS TO THE WINTER QUIZ

1. Duke of Norfolk and Earl Marshal of England
2. St Ignatius of Loyola
3. Eleanor Talbot
4. John Howard, 1st duke of Norfolk
5. Thomas Wolsey's red cardinal hat
6. Magdalen
7. The Treason Act
8. To defuse the religious controversy over Arminianism
9. President of the council of the north
10. Opposition to Laudianism
11. Lord Treasurer
12. In protest against the English Prayer Book
13. Samuel Richardson
14. Lord Mayor of the City of London
15. A coffee house
16. George Faarquhar
17. Sir Joshua Reynolds
18. The Harlot's Progress
19. Jonathan Swift
20. Handel's *Messiah*

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