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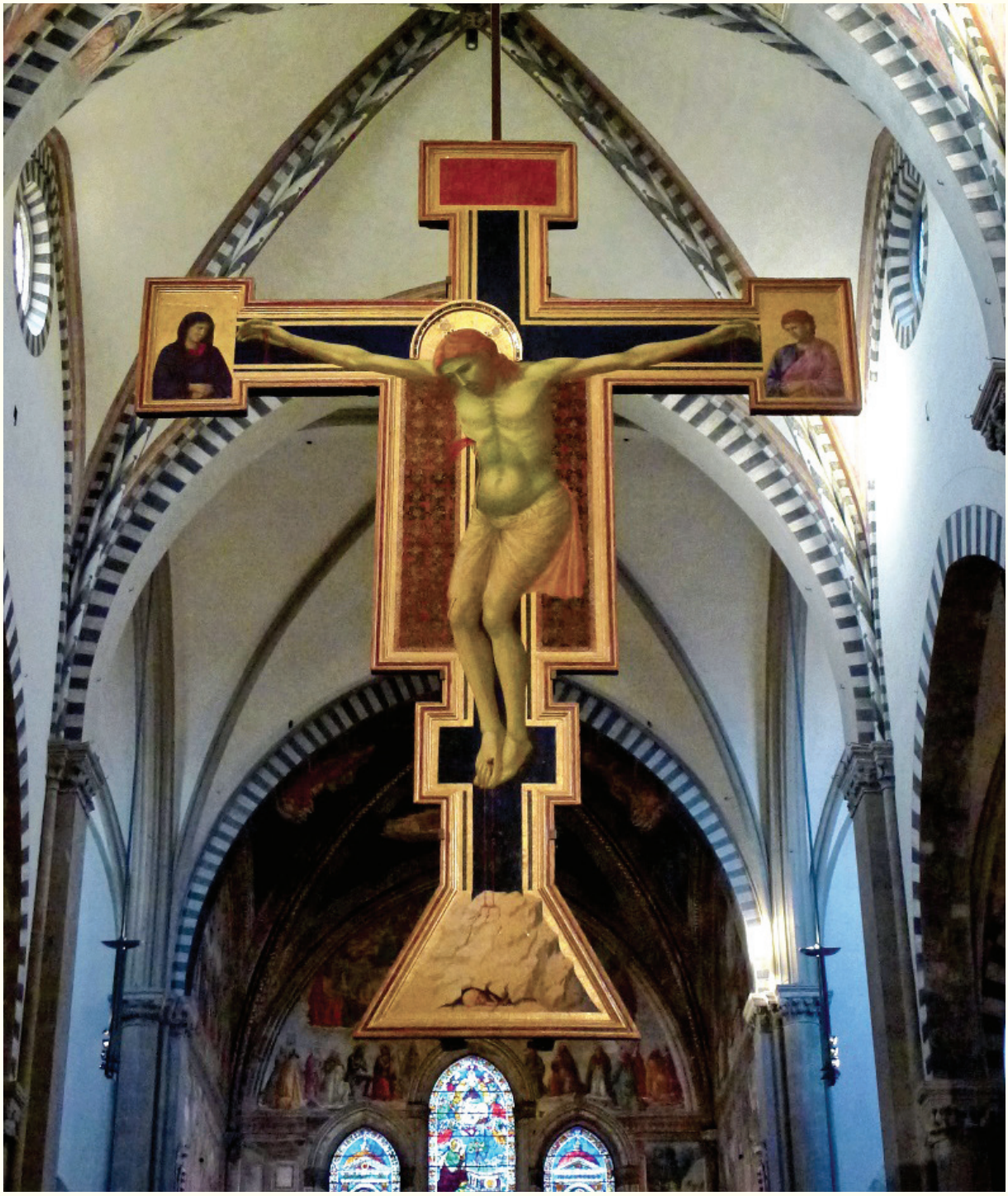
Review 2019



IN THIS ISSUE

Leonardo da Vinci's drawings
The Bauhaus legacy
Natalia Goncharova
The Madonna di Mongiovino
Harry Clarke: stained-glass artist and illustrator
Looking for Giotto
Richard Newton's *A Paper Meal with Spanish Sauce*
London Art History Society: Programme 2019-2020

Contents

3 Leonardo da Vinci's drawings for the *Battle of Anghiari*
Francis Ames-Lewis

6 The Bauhaus legacy
Andrew Spira

8 Natalia Goncharova and women artists of the Russian avant-garde before the First World War
Natalia Murray

10 Enshrining the miraculous image in Renaissance Umbria
Dorigen Caldwell

13 Harry Clarke: stained-glass artist and illustrator
Jessica O'Donnell

16 Looking for Giotto
John Renner

18 A feast for the eyes: Richard Newton's *A Paper Meal with Spanish Sauce*
Nicholas Babbington

20 London Art History Society: Programme 2019-2020

From the Editor

To mark the five-hundredth anniversary of the death of Leonardo da Vinci this year, Professor Francis Ames-Lewis writes on his preparatory drawings for the *Battle of Anghiari* mural in the Palazzo della Signoria in Florence.

Looking back over one hundred years since the founding of the Bauhaus, Andrew Spira examines its global spread and influence. Natalia Murray looks at the life and career of Russian artist Natalia Goncharova, the subject of a major retrospective exhibition at Tate Modern this summer. A sixteenth-century Italian church, built to house an earlier miraculous fresco of the Virgin Mary, is the subject of research by Dorigen Caldwell. Visitors to the Hugh Lane Gallery in Dublin will be reminded of the remarkable stained-glass windows of the Irish artist Harry Clarke by Jessica O'Donnell's article. John Renner poses questions of attribution of works by Giotto di Bondone.

The winner of the 2018 London Art History Society Prize for Best Modern Period Masters Dissertation at Birkbeck, Nicholas Babbington, writes about the response of a caricature artist to a financial crisis in late eighteenth-century Britain.

I would like to express my appreciation to our contributors for their articles, to our designer Pat Burtenshaw and to my colleagues on the editorial panel.

Barrie MacDonald

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FRONT COVER: *Giotto di Bondone,* Crucifix, *c. 1288-90. Tempera and on panel with gilded glass, 530 x 400 cm. Santa Maria Novella, Florence. Photograph © John Renner*

Leonardo da Vinci's drawings for the *Battle of Anghiari*

Francis Ames-Lewis

During this year, the five-hundredth anniversary of Leonardo da Vinci's death in 1519, several exhibitions of Leonardo drawings have been mounted. Among these was a series of small displays in twelve UK cities of drawings held in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle, a major exhibition currently at the Queen's Gallery in Buckingham Palace and later in the year to travel to Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh, and an exhibition at the Venice Accademia of their Leonardo holdings. This article acknowledges these and other anniversary displays of Leonardo drawings, while concentrating on the small group of drawings that survive from Leonardo's preparatory work on his unfinished and now lost mural of the *Battle of Anghiari*.

The story of the débacle that was Leonardo da Vinci's painting of the 'Fight for the Standard' episode in his planned *Battle of Anghiari* mural for the Sala di Gran Consiglio in the Florentine Palazzo della Signoria is well known. The 'Fight for the Standard' was to be the central section of Leonardo's battle scene, showing a young Florentine soldier tearing the Milanese standard from the hands of the Duke of Milan's mercenary captain. Leonardo had agreed with the Signoria on the commission by 24 October 1503, but a revised contract was agreed on 4 May 1504, which probably means that he had failed to meet a deadline set in the original agreement. Further payments over the next months track his progress in preparing the wall in the Sala di Gran Consiglio that he was to paint. Materials bought in April 1505 indicate that Leonardo intended to work not in the traditional *buon fresco* mural technique, but rather using oil-based pigments – as for a painting on panel – on dry plaster. According to his own account, on 6 June 1505 the weather broke, and pouring rain caused his cartoon to come unstuck from the wall.[1] A near contemporary wrote that his experimental technique, perhaps using ill-prepared linseed oil, led his pigments to run after he lit a fire to dry them out.[2] It is not known whether, after these setbacks, he made any further progress on his battle scene before leaving Florence for the last time, travelling to Milan in May 1506. But enough remained of the mural, albeit in ruinous condition, or of the cartoon and other drawings, for both Michelangelo and Raphael to make brief, sketched copies of sections of the whole composition very soon after Leonardo had abandoned the project.

All that now survives of Leonardo's work on this great project is a series of copies, and a few autograph drawings. Of the latter, the principal two groups offer outstanding evidence of the exploratory novelty and versatility of his draughtsmanship. Three sheets now in the Venice Accademia (Venice 215, 215A and 216) show Leonardo's vigorous handling of his pen early in the process of preparation of the 'Fight for the Standard',

Fig. 1: Leonardo da Vinci, Studies for the Battle of Anghiari*, c. 1503. Pen and ink on paper, 16.4 x 15.2 cm. Gallerie dell'Accademia, 215 recto. By kind permission of the Ministerio dei beni e delle attività culturali, Gallerie dell'Accademia di Venezia*

Fig. 2: Leonardo da Vinci, A Cavalcade*, c. 1503-5. Black chalk on paper, 16.0 x 19.7 cm. Windsor, Royal Library, 912339. Royal Collection Trust © Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II*

Fig. 3: Leonardo da Vinci, Study for the Heads of Two Soldiers*, c. 1504. Black chalk on paper, 19.2 x 18.8 cm. Múzeum Szépművészeti, 1775. Budapest, Múzeum Szépművészeti*

Fig. 4: Leonardo da Vinci, Study for the Head of a Young Soldier*, c. 1504. Red chalk on paper, 22.7 x 18.6 cm. Múzeum Szépművészeti, 1774 recto. Budapest, Múzeum Szépművészeti*

in brisk sketches of battling soldiers and horsemen.[3] Now in the Múzeum Szépművészeti in Budapest are two sheets, one drawn in red chalk and the other in black, from considerably later in the preparatory process.[4] On these, Leonardo studied in fine detail heads of soldiers who were shown brutally involved in hand-to-hand conflict. A few other miscellaneous studies appear to record stages in the preparatory process lying between these two poles.

Produced probably at the very start of Leonardo's process of creative invention, as his first ideas (*primi pensieri*) for the battling soldiers of the 'Fight for the Standard', the sketches on Venice 215 recto (Fig. 1) show Leonardo at his most vigorously experimental. He jabbed his pen into the paper to generate fleetingly sketched, angular figures in battling poses. He seemingly followed his own advice on how to compose a narrative painting: 'Therefore, painter, decide broadly upon the position of the limbs of your figures and attend first to the movements appropriate to the mental attitudes of the creatures in the narrative rather than to the beauty and quality of their limbs…'.[5] In the lower half of this sheet he rapidly sketched some ten figures which twist and turn as they threaten to strike each other with their weapons. Focus is on their twisting torsos which are shown essentially in outline with only occasional light hatching to suggest three-dimensionality. Leonardo repeated some contours to suggest forceful movements, whereas he did little more than hint at extremities such as the figures' lower legs and feet. Above these lightly but speedily sketched warriors is a more fully realised pen and ink compositional study that anticipated the final grouping of the 'Fight for the Standard'. Here Leonardo explored more fully the volumetric qualities of the horses' stomachs and rumps. He worked with brisk curvilinear pen and ink hatching over an almost obliterated black chalk sketch that seems to have outlined the horsemen astride their rearing steeds.

This sketch preceded and stimulated several intermediary chalk drawings that include soldiers astride galloping horses, such as the so-called 'Cavalcade' in the Royal Library at Windsor Castle, currently on display in the Queen's Gallery exhibition at Buckingham Palace (Fig. 2).[6] Here a considerable number of horses charge or rear up as though preparing to go into battle: dust, suggested by brief chalk hatching, rises from the ground beneath the rearing horses' hooves, and banners fluttering in the breeze reinforce the sense of dynamic activity. These effects pictorially echo Leonardo's description of battle in his *Trattato della Pittura*, where he advises the painter 'if you depict horses galloping out of the throng make little clouds of dust set as far apart from each other as the gap between the horses' strides…'.[7]

On the verso of the Budapest study in red chalk Leonardo made a more worked-up but still sketchy study for one of the battling horsemen in the 'Fight for the Standard'.[8] This, also in red chalk, focuses on the soldier's head and arms, with some emphatically repeated strokes in the soldier's left hand that holds the pole of the contested standard, and special focus on the soldier's open-mouthed profile and expressive left eyebrow. The recto of this sheet (Fig. 4) is probably the final study for this profile, at about half the size of the head in the final cartoon. This is matched, in scale and in function, by studies in black chalk (Fig. 3) for the heads of two older soldiers, notably that of the Milanese captain in three-quarter view to the right. In both the main studies Leonardo concentrated on the facial features at their full expressive vigour, while leaving the rest of each head undefined within its light contours.

I once wondered whether Leonardo's use of different coloured chalks for these two brilliant studies was pure chance: that in each instance he had dipped into his pocket to find a stick of chalk and worked with whichever colour came first to hand. But

in fact surely he was keenly calculating in his chalk selection here. He used black chalk for the older man's head (Fig. 3) so that he could take advantage of the greater contrast between deep-toned shadow beneath the jaw and around the eyes, for instance, and the spared paper around the mouth. This allowed him to characterise the surface textures of the elderly man's skin and eyebrows, to show the wrinkles and the variable relief of his cheek's ageing and somewhat flaccid flesh, subtly described through the black chalk's tonal modulations, and to characterise forcefully the expressive intensity of eyes and mouth. Leonardo used red chalk (Fig. 4) to define the softer, more youthfully buoyant surface texture of the young soldier's skin, generating a smoother transition from the highlights below the soldier's eye to the rich depth of warm-hued shadow on his jaw and neck. The red chalk suggests the glow and impetuosity of the soldier's youth as he glares intensely at his adversary. These two virtuoso studies in ferocious expression extrapolate from Leonardo's earliest handling of red chalk for exploring facial expression, his series of studies for the heads of Apostles in his *Last Supper*, drawn around 1497.[9] Interestingly, at much the same time, Raphael was developing his own innovatory use of black chalk for studying facial foreshortening and expressiveness in his group of full-scale so-called 'auxiliary cartoons' made in around 1503-04 for his Vatican *Coronation of the Virgin*.[10]

Leonardo's drawings for the lost *Battle of Anghiari* are original in technique and handling, experimental in exploring how to represent dynamic action, and highly imaginative in interpreting human feelings. The pity of it is not only that his use of an untested technique for executing the mural led to its early ruin, but also that a good many drawings will have been lost over the decades and centuries following their creation. For it seems very likely that these Venice and Windsor sheets are but meagre survivors from Leonardo's vigorous and creative early preparatory process, and that the Budapest sheets were two of many finely polished physiognomical studies that Leonardo made for a spoiled project that might have brought him enduring fame and recognition.

On his retirement from Birkbeck University of London in 2005, Francis Ames-Lewis was Pevsner Professor of the History of Art. He has published several books on Italian Renaissance art, most recently Isabella and Leonardo: the artistic relationship between Isabella d'Este and Leonardo da Vinci *(New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2012)*.

Notes

1 Martin Kemp, *Leonardo da Vinci: the marvellous works of nature and man* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 230.

2 Carmen C. Bambach, ed., *Leonardo da Vinci, master draftsman,* exh. cat. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 22.1.2003 – 30.3.2003 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 503.

3 Venice, Accademia, 215, 215A and 216; *see* Carmen C. Bambach ed., *Leonardo da Vinci, master draftsman*, exh. cat. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 22.1.2003 – 30.3.2003 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 477-85, cat. nos. 81-3.

4 Budapest, Múzeum Szépmüvészeti, inv. 1774 and 1775; see Carmen C. Bambach, ed., *Leonardo da Vinci, master draftsman*, exh. cat. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 22.1.2003 – 30.3.2003 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 500-8, cat. nos. 90-1.

5 Martin Kemp, ed., trans. Margaret Walker, *Leonardo on painting: an anthology of writings by Leonardo da Vinci* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 222.

6 Royal Library RCIN 912339; see Kenneth Clark, *The drawings of Leonardo da Vinci in the collection of Her Majesty the Queen at Windsor Castle*, 2nd ed. (London: Phaidon, 1968), I p. 34; Carmen C. Bambach, ed., *Leonardo da Vinci, master draftsman*, exh. cat. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 22.1.2003 – 30.3.2003 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), pp. 485-7, cat. no. 84 recto.

7 Martin Kemp, ed., trans. Margaret Walker, *Leonardo on painting: an anthology of writings by Leonardo da Vinci* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989), p. 229.

8 Carmen C. Bambach, ed., *Leonardo da Vinci, master draftsman*, exh. cat. New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 22.1.2003 – 30.3.2003 (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2003), p. 502; see also image at www.hu.museum-digital.org/portal/singleimage.php?imagenr=165719.

9 Martin Clayton, *Leonardo da Vinci: the divine and the grotesque* (London: Royal Collection, 2002), pp. 132-41 cat. nos. 51-5.

10 Paul Joannides, *The drawings of Raphael* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1983), pp. 44-5 and 144-5, cat. nos. 48-50.

Celebrating the genius of Leonardo da Vinci

This year London is host to two major exhibitions of Leonardo da Vinci's drawings at the British Library and The Queen's Gallery to mark the five-hundredth anniversary of his death in 1519.

The British Library in London has mounted an exhibition, entitled *Leonardo da Vinci: A Mind in Motion*, of three of his remarkable notebooks; the Codex Arundel, Codex Forster and Codex Leicester, showing highlights of his handwritten notes, drawings and diagrams from his tireless pursuit of knowledge and observations of scientific and natural phenomena. Widely considered to be one of Leonardo's most important scientific notebooks, the Codex Leicester is being show in this country for the first time since it was acquired by Bill Gates. And, among other highlights in this exhibition are preparatory studies for his painting *The Virgin of the Rocks*. The exhibition runs from 7 June to 8 September.

For *Leonardo da Vinci: a Life in Drawing*, a nationwide event, the Royal Collection has loaned to each of twelve regional venues in the United Kingdom in Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol, Cardiff, Derby, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Sheffield, Southampton, and Sunderland, a selection of twelve major drawings to reflect his full range of interests from anatomy, architecture, engineering, botany, cartography, painting and sculpture. Following these regional showings, the drawings were then brought together to form part of a magnificent exhibition of over 200 sheets at The Queen's Gallery in London, the largest exhibition of Leonardo's work in over 65 years. The exhibition runs from 24 May until 13 October 2019, when many of them will then travel to The Queen's Gallery, Palace of Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh for display from 22 November to 15 March 2020.

The Bauhaus legacy

Andrew Spira

The Bauhaus, arguably the most influential art school of the 20th century, was founded 100 years ago this year. Its purpose was to combine the creativity and imagination of artists with the practical wisdom and integrity of craftsmen, and to put them at the service of industry for the sake of a war-torn society. But having been founded in Weimar by Walter Gropius, the school was soon squeezed out under pressure from advancing Fascism and, in 1925, it relocated to purpose-built premises in Dessau (Fig. 1). In 1932, it was on the move again, following the withdrawal of state funding for the same political reasons – whereupon it became a private school and moved to Berlin. However, the political climate in Germany continued to deteriorate, making its survival impossible and, after a year in Berlin, it closed for good.

Fig. 1: The Bauhaus Building in Dessau, Germany, 1925. Photograph © Detlef Mewes. Wikimedia Commons

The Bauhaus was a holistic school, based on experiment and experience. It typically required students, called 'apprentices' and 'journeymen', to attend a general preliminary course for six months, before moving to a specialist workshop and becoming a 'master'. Students were not required to pursue preconceived ideals or copy historical styles, as were their equivalents at academies; they were encouraged to develop an awareness of design principles by exploring the nature of materials *practically* – in relation both to their costs and availability on the one hand, and to the function of objects on the other. In this way, they were being prepared to provide society with designs for a wide range of utilitarian objects that were functional, aesthetically pleasing and cost-effective.

The utilitarianism of the Bauhaus and its eschewal of historicist references (widely perceived to perpetuate subtle dependence on systems of social exclusivity) are often seen to epitomise inter-war Modernism. But the school had its own very distinct identity which clearly differentiated it from its equivalents in neighbouring countries. At one end of the Modernist spectrum lay the *Art Déco* style, especially promoted in France. With its explicit references to eighteenth-century precedents and its indulgent use of luxury materials (animal skins, exotic woods, ivory, etc.), the *Art Déco* style made few claims to social responsibility. Basking in the pleasure of world peace, it was an innately optimistic and hedonistic style but, given that memories of the war were still fresh, it also delighted in dissociating, sometimes ostentatiously, from Teutonic functionalism. The fact that Germany was absent from the Paris World Fair of 1925 (the 'International Exhibition of Modern Decorative and Industrial Arts', from which the *Art Déco* style derived its name) was no accident.

At the other end of the spectrum were the newly Soviet Russians who, as allies against Germany in the war, were invited to the Paris World Fair but whose utilitarian approach to design was more extreme than that of the Bauhaus. Indeed some Russians went so far as to say that any aesthetic activity that was not applied to a utilitarian end – in the spurious name of 'art' – was a bourgeois counter-revolutionary indulgence. This ideological approach to design was taught at the 'Higher Art and Technical Studios' (Vkhutemas) in Moscow which flourished from 1920 to 1930 and whose teaching staff included Kasimir Malevich and Alexander Rodchenko. The Vkhutemas bore some resemblance to the Bauhaus, on account of their shared sense of social responsibility, and exchanges between staff and students at the schools were not uncommon. But to the extent that it sympathised with the ideals of communist Russia, the Bauhaus was vulnerable to external criticism. This danger came to a head in 1930. Hannes Meyer, who succeeded Walter Gropius as director of the school in 1928, had been appointed on the grounds that he would intensify its orientation towards socially productive industry, but his leanings towards socialism were eventually perceived to be excessive and he was sacked two years later. Significantly, he spent the next five years in the USSR designing communist cities.

Fig. 2: Joost Schmidt, Staatliches Bauhaus Ausstellung, Weimar, Juli-Sept, 1923. *Poster. Wikimedia Commons*

Fig. 3: Erich Dieckmann, Chair with moveable back, c. 1924. Photograph © Sailko. Creative Commons, GNU Free Documentation License

The Bauhaus occupied a space between these two extremes. On the one hand, it sought to nurture and use the fruits of artistic creativity, uniquely rooted in the inspiration of individuals. For this reason, it took the unusual step of employing celebrated artists as faculty members – for instance, Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee and Lyonel Feininger (imagine Picasso as a staff member in an art school!). On the other hand, it sought to generate designs for products that were sufficiently uniform and utilitarian to serve a large and diverse public indiscriminately. Especially during its earliest years, when the enervating effects of the recent war were still overwhelming, the expressionistic and even therapeutic potential of craftsmanship took priority. In the footsteps of the British Arts and Crafts movement, explicit references to medieval precedents – in iconography, techniques and nomenclature – were made, to provide a national, moral and spiritual context for the enterprise. This dimension of the course was especially developed by the 'spiritualist' Johannes Itten who, under the direction of Gropius, was the first leader of the school's foundation course. In 1923, when the school realised a new confidence in its social mission, Itten was replaced by László Moholy-Nagy whose interest in constructivism qualified him to steer the course away from subjectivity and self-expression towards objective functionalism (Fig. 2). Any traces of historicism and 'artisanalism' that lingered in the course programme were erased; designs for electrical appliances and furniture became common (Fig. 3). The move of the school from Weimar, where it occupied historic buildings, to a new purpose-built building in Dessau in 1925 facilitated this shift – as did the arrival of the radical Hannes Meyer as director in 1928 and of Mies van der Rohe two years later. But despite their sincere and frequently-voiced determination to subject individuality to a higher, communally-oriented end, it is arguable that it was precisely the way the school remained able to strike a balance between the lively vibration of individualism and the uniform functionality of communalism that raised its legacy above the level of an ideology or style, destined to be superseded, to that of a vital principle.

Ironically, although it was the integrity and pertinence of the Bauhaus' teaching programmes that became legendary, it was as a direct result of its suppression in 1933 that its influence promptly spread all over the world to the point at which it came to pervade the 'modern' environment globally. Many of its Jewish students, for instance, emigrated to Israel, whereupon the new city of Tel Aviv, then rising up out of the sand, became the site most densely packed with Bauhaus buildings in the world (Fig. 4). Under the same kind of pressure, Walter Gropius, founder of the Bauhaus and its first director, left Germany for Britain in 1934. In 1937, both he and Mies van der Rohe, the third and last director of the school, emigrated to the United States, where they propagated Bauhaus ideas and methods for over thirty years. Other *bauhäusler* went to South America, Asia and Australia. Bauhaus teaching was eventually allowed back into Germany in 1953 when a Bauhaus-based school, directed by an ex-Bauhaus student, opened in Ulm – but, by this time, however, the 'damage' had been done. Bauhaus ideas had become mainstream in all progressive art education institutions. In a world in which individuality is continuously being threatened by the levelling effects of mechanical technologies and mass production, it is no wonder that its example – short-lived though it was – continues to resonate.

Fig. 4: Bauhaus Museum, Tel Aviv, Israel, c. 1934. Photograph © Yair Talmor. Creative Commons, GNU Free Documentation License

Andrew Spira studied at the Courtauld Institute, before working at the Temple Gallery, London (specialists in Byzantine, Russian and Greek icons) and the V&A. He was subsequently Programme Director at Christie's Education for 14 years. He is the author of The avant-garde icon: Russian avant-garde art and the icon painting tradition *(Aldershot: Lund Humphries, 2008). His recent research has focused on the relationship between personal identity and cultural conventions, due to be published by Bloomsbury Academic in November 2019.*

Natalia Goncharova and women artists of the Russian avant-garde before the First World War

Natalia Murray

Russian avant-garde women artists were young, immensely creative, ready to break all the accepted boundaries, to be provocative and free. Described in 1913 by the Social Democratic feminist, Alexandra Kollontai, as 'gainfully employed, self-confident, ambitious', they were 'the centre of their own dramas, not the object of men's'.[1]

The dynamic presence of women in Russia in all fields of art and science during the decades from 1910 to 1930 shows that, in addition to the artistic avant-garde, there was an innovative and radical approach in the field of demands for social equality.

One of the reasons for the cultural prominence of female artists in twentieth-century Russia rests in the early availability of artistic education to women. The Imperial Academy of Arts in St Petersburg began to admit women students as early as 1871, and soon the more liberal Moscow Institute of Painting, Sculpture and Architecture followed suit. As a result, the first generation of professional women artists was already formed in Russia by the 1880s. To add to what was available in established institutions, private art courses were first offered to women in the 1870s and in 1911 female graduates in St Petersburg, Moscow, Kiev and Kazan were allowed to sit for state examinations. By 1914 women constituted thirty per cent of students in institutions of higher education.

Even early in their lives and careers women artists were far from untravelled provincial young ladies. Predominantly middle-class women, they not only knew each other, but were united by a common purpose; they supported and inspired one another, and developed into mature artists. They formed an intense and energetic group. They attended Moscow and St Petersburg exhibitions, read the latest journals, and studied Post-Impressionism in private collections (such as those of Sergei Shchukin and Ivan Morozov).

The leading figure of the Russian avant-garde was Natalia Goncharova (1881–1962). In her *Self-portrait with yellow lilies* (Fig. 1), the artist confronts the viewer with a direct glance – withholding nothing, proud of her paintings behind her. Her feminine blouse is countered by a rather muscular hand emerging from it. Natalia Goncharova was determined to blur or erase the line between male and female artists. She dressed in men's clothes and lived in a civil partnership with a fellow artist, Mikhail Larionov.

Russian poetess Marina Tsvetaeva wrote about Goncharova: 'Straight features and a straight gaze, a serious expression on her face, without being stern. Someone who takes everything seriously. Rarely smiles, but when she does – what a lovely smile!'[2]

Natalia Goncharova was the oldest in the group of female avant-garde artists and served as a sort of matriarch. She was a trend-setter and the first Russian avant-garde artist to win over the public and gain recognition, as Sergei Diaghilev

Fig. 1: Natalia Goncharova, Self-portrait with yellow lilies*, 1907. Oil on canvas, 77 × 58.2 cm. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2019. Photograph © Art Collection 3 / Alamy Stock Photo.*

recalled: 'The most famous of these progressive artists is a woman. The young crowd both in Moscow and St Petersburg bows to her. But the funniest thing is that they don't just emulate her as an artist, they imitate her appearance, too. It was she who made the shirt dress fashionable – black and white, blue and ginger. But that was still nothing. She drew flowers on her face. And soon enough, both the nobility and the bohemians started showing up with horses, houses, and elephants on their cheeks, necks and foreheads. This does not stop her from being an important artist.'[3]

Natalia was born into the old Russian nobility and grew up on a country estate in Tula Province. Hence the main theme of Goncharova's oeuvre was rural life with its traditional cycle of manual labour and annual peasant festivals. Inspired by Russian icons and folk art, she blended Russian Primitivism with Fauvism and Cubo-Futurism. Under the influence of Gauguin,

Goncharova produced a series of landscapes which depict the Russian version of the Garden of Eden. Unlike her French predecessor she inhabited her idyllic landscapes with Russian peasants – dressed in colourful traditional costumes, they look like beautiful flowers on the green background (Fig. 2). After her visit to Tiraspol, Goncharova wrote: 'Between the trees and close to the houses is the sky… blue, blue. Tahiti can be found in Russia too.'[4]

Natalia took up oil painting around 1905 and by 1913 had produced 761 works which were exhibited at her retrospective in Moscow. She was only thirty-two years old but already a most prolific artist. The diversity of her work impressed the viewer as strongly as its quantity. Goncharova was constantly changing her stylistic preferences, effortlessly moving from Impressionism to Futurism, from Primitivism to Cubism.

In 1912, Natalia began producing paintings in the Cubist style using unusual angles and different coloured blocks to form her compositions and a year later she experimented with Italian Futurism. The following year, she started to work in the Rayist style (invented by Larionov) in which subjects in her paintings would appear as illuminated rays of colour and light.

In 1914, at Sergei Diaghilev's invitation, Goncharova left Russia and settled in Paris. She arrived in Paris to attend the gala opening of Diaghilev's production of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Le Coq d'Or* at the Opéra. It was her first time in the city, and the spectacular sets and costumes she had created for this opéra-ballet were a dazzling success. A month later, an exhibition of more than fifty of Goncharova's paintings opened at the Galerie Paul Guillaume. In his essay for the catalogue Guillaume Apollinaire called her art 'a revelation of the marvellous decorative freedom that has never ceased to guide Oriental painters amid their sumptuous treasure of forms and colours.'[5]

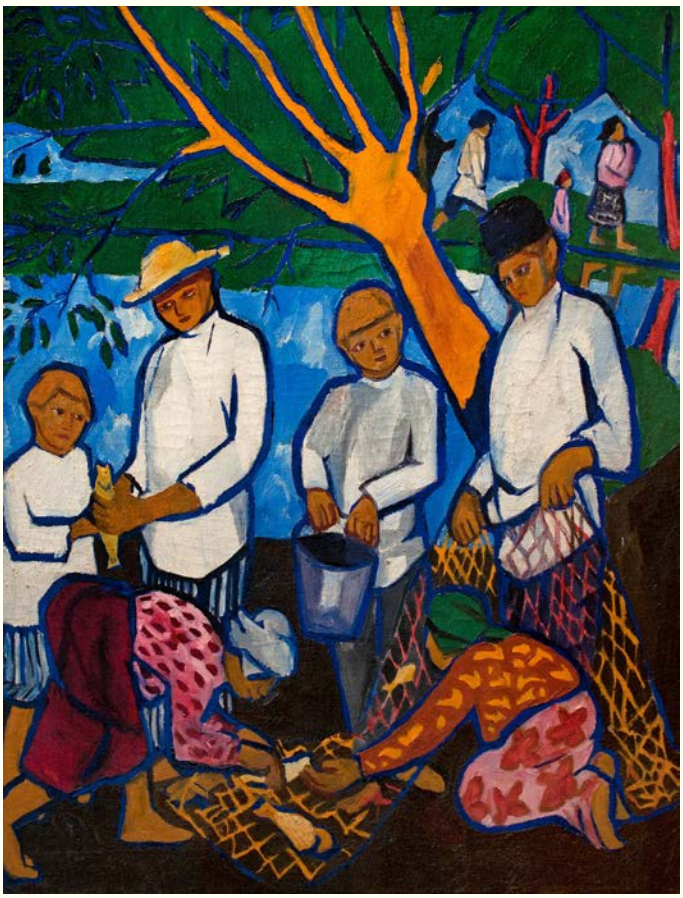

Fig. 2: Natalia Goncharova, Fishing (Fishers)*, 1909. Oil on canvas, 112 x 99.7 cm. Carmen Thyssen-Bornemisza Collection on loan at the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza, Madrid. © ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London 2019. Photograph © Peter Horree / Alamy Stock Photo.*

Fig. 3: Alexandra Exter, Florence*, 1914-1915. Oil on canvas, 100 x 146 cm. State Tretyakov Gallery, Moscow. © Estate of Alexandra Exter. Photograph © Godong / Alamy Stock Photo.*

Goncharova graced Diaghilev's enterprise with her talent and never returned to Russia, but although during the First World War she was the leading Russian female artist who resided in Paris, almost ten years before her arrival this throne had belonged to another star of the Russian avant-garde – Alexandra Exter (1882-1949) (Fig. 3). After graduating from the Kiev Art Institute and marrying a successful lawyer, she travelled to Paris where she studied at the Académie de la Grande Chaumière and became a friend of Guillaume Apollinaire, Georges Braque, Fernand Léger, Pablo Picasso and Ardengo Soffici.

By November 1908 Exter had joined Natalia Goncharova in an exhibition of the work by young Ukrainian and Russian artists called *Zveno* [The Link], which opened with great aplomb in Kiev. At this exhibition, for the first time, works by Goncharova were shown next to those of Exter and surrounded by eleven women artists who exhibited alongside their more famous male colleagues. Two years later Alexandra Exter and Natalia Goncharova were represented in the inaugural show of the Union of Youth – an association of progressive artists in St Petersburg – and in the first *Jack of Diamonds* exhibition of avant-garde artists in Moscow. Here their works were displayed next to those of German and French modern artists, which placed their names on the list of leading European artists and secured Goncharova's inclusion in Roger Fry's ground-breaking exhibition *Manet and the Post-Impressionists*, which opened in November 1910 at the Grafton Galleries in London (although here Goncharova was still believed to be a man and her name was misspelled Goncharoff).

Two years before Goncharova arrived in Paris, Lyubov Popova

(1889-1924), Vera Pestel (1886-1952), Nadezhda Udaltsova (1885-1961) and Sofia Karetnikova (1887-early 1930s) had followed Exter's example and left Moscow for Paris. The women stayed at a *pension* run by Madame Jeanne (who famously catered for her new clientele by serving Russian food), where Exter was already living. Their apparent freedom was due in part to the fact that most of them were already married and enjoyed financial security and the social protection of their husbands.

These women artists enrolled at La Palette, where Henri Le Fauconnier, Jean Metzinger and André Dunoyer de Segonzac gave lectures and drawing lessons. There the artists acquired the basis of the Cubist style which would influence their work. They studied works of Picasso, Renaissance art at the Louvre and applied art at the Musée Cluny.

Working almost entirely within the male exhibition-and-sales paradigm, these women considered themselves artists first and became zealous participants in a great aesthetic revolution. Revolutionary in their art and politics, they had seized the freedom of the first decades of the twentieth century to pave a remarkable path from Primitivism to Cubism and from representation to abstraction.

A major exhibition of Natalia Goncharova's work is currently on at the Tate Modern in London, finishing on 8 September.

Dr Natalia Murray is the world's leading specialist in the history of Russian art. She is a visiting lecturer at the Courtauld Institute of Art and a senior curator. In 2017 she curated a major exhibition Revolution: Russian Art 1917-1932 *at the Royal Academy of Arts in London and is currently working on an exhibition of Malevich and Kandinsky in Paris.*

Her books and articles extend across the wide field of nineteenth- to twentieth-century Russian art, and she has featured in films dedicated to the Hermitage museum and the Russian Revolution and in programmes for BBC Radio 4 and the BBC World Service. Natalia is also a trustee of the Russian Avant-Garde Research Project – a UK-based charity which shares one of her aspirations to reduce the number of fakes on the Russian art market.

Notes

1 Quoted in Laura Engelstein, 'Between Old and New: Russia's Modern Women', in John Bowlt and Matthew Drutt (eds), *Amazons of the Avant-Garde* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1999), p. 67.

2 Marina Tsvetaeva, 'Natalia Goncharova (Zhizn' I Tvorchestvo)', *Prometei*, vol. 7, Moscow, 1969, p. 153.

3 *Natalia Goncharova. Mikhail Larionov. Vospominaniya sovremennikov*, compiled by G.F. Kovalenko (Moscow: Galart, 1995), p. 64.

4 Quoted in Gleb Pospelov, 'Early Goncharova and Gaugain' in *The Tretyakov Gallery Magazine*, #1, 2014/42, p. 32.

5 Guillaume Apollinaire, quoted in Leroy C. Bruenig (ed.), *Apollinaire on Art 1902–1918* (New York: Viking, 1972), p. 413.

Enshrining the miraculous image in Renaissance Umbria

Dorigen Caldwell

A number of recent studies on Renaissance Italy have highlighted the prevalence during this period of devotional cults centred on miracle-working images.[1] While the paintings and statues at the heart of these cults were generally of little artistic merit, their miraculous status could act as a catalyst for the commissioning of significant architectural structures and decorative programmes to enshrine them. Indeed, from the later fifteenth century right through the *Cinquecento* one finds a proliferation of new churches built around pre-existing images, mostly of the Virgin, that suddenly revealed themselves to be miraculous.

An intriguing example that has received little scholarly attention to date, despite an extensive surviving archive, is the Santuario della Madonna di Mongiovino near Lake Trasimeno in western Umbria (Fig. 1).[2] Begun in 1524, and designed by the Northern Italian architect Rocco da Vicenza, the church was built to enshrine a late *Trecento* fresco of the Virgin and Child that had started to perform miracles towards the end of the

Fig. 1: Il Santuario della Madonna di Mongiovino, Panicale, Umbria. Photograph © Dorigen Caldwell.

Fig. 2: Unknown artist, Virgin and Child*, fourteenth century. Fresco. Il Santuario della Madonna di Mongiovino.*

fifteenth century (Fig. 2). With its centralised Greek-cross plan, the Madonna di Mongiovino conforms to a type that was by then well-established for Marian shrine churches, following the model of S. Maria delle Carceri in Prato, designed by Giuliano da Sangallo in the 1480s.[3] The centralised plan, both at Prato and Mongiovino, allows for a processional route through the church, from one side entrance to the other, past the miracle-working image on the altar. At Mongiovino, this lateral axis is particularly evident, due to the absence of an entrance to the liturgical west, and the insertion of a monumental arcaded structure between the main space of the church and the high altar chapel (Fig. 3). This rather unusual structure acts as a barrier between the devotee and the image, enhancing the enshrinement process by signalling the special, sacred nature of what lies within.

The resulting separation of the image from the worshippers who came to venerate it constituted a marked contrast to the original siting of the fresco, in a humble roadside shrine. Indeed, the foundation miracle of the cult involved the Virgin in the painting talking to a young peasant girl, and it was precisely this kind of direct and unmediated communication that was most appealing about cults such as the one at Mongiovino, which sprung from a popular and very local form of devotion. Through her apparition, the Virgin shows herself to be present and accessible, blessing this particular site over others. As soon as the image was brought in from the cold, as it were, this direct relationship would necessarily have been eroded, but the local population could continue to claim ownership by participating in the lay confraternity set up to administer the cult. By the later sixteenth century, however, the Tridentine call for greater control over all modes of worship led to miraculous images such as this one being re-framed and re-contextualised to provide a more orthodox interaction with the worshipper.

At Mongiovino, these concerns are especially evident in the painted and sculptural decoration of the interior church space, which dates almost exclusively to the period after the Council of Trent. In the main centralised area, which would have been accessible at all times to pilgrims and devotees, it is notable that three of the four corner altarpieces, all commissioned in the 1560s, depict scenes linked to the theme of salvation through Christ: the Crucifixion, the Resurrection (Fig. 4) and the Ascension. This seems deliberately designed to contextualise veneration of the image within an unambiguous framework, so that it is clearly Christ, not the Virgin, who is the font of grace. The cult of the Virgin continued to be defended and indeed championed by the Catholic Church, but her role was defined as Mediatrix, not as Co-Redeemer. And since most image cults involved paintings or sculptures of Mary, these lines could be blurred for the average devotee, so additional guidance would have been considered imperative.

The Christological focus continues in the sculptural programme of the dividing screen at the entrance to the chapel housing the miracle-working fresco. While this architectural structure was erected at the same time as the church, and bears the date of 1525, the statues occupying the niches on the upper storey date to the 1570s. These can be identified as Christ in the centre, flanked by Moses and Elijah: in other words, the Transfiguration (Matthew, 17:2). This is an unusual subject for a Central Italian church, particularly in a position in front of the high altar, where one would more traditionally expect to find a representation of the Crucifixion. It is unclear precisely why this subject was chosen, but it is my contention that it has to do with the theme of revelation, and was linked to the way in which the miraculous image was viewed and experienced. We know from a variety of sources that images such as the one at Mongiovino would have been veiled most of the time, and there is evidence that this was the case here. But on certain occasions the image would have been revealed to the worshippers, in a ritual unveiling, as referenced by the pair of angels drawing back painted curtains on either side of the

Fig. 3: Arcaded screen before the altar. Il Santuario della Madonna di Mongiovino. Photograph © Dorigen Caldwell.

architectural screen. This stripping back of veils could be seen as an allusion to the tearing of the Temple Veil, which occurred at the death of Christ. This occurrence was traditionally interpreted as signifying the truth of revelation granted to man by Christ's sacrifice, in contrast to the veiled mysteries of the Old Testament. A parallel theme was surely inherent in the choice of the Transfiguration – the first time in the Bible where Christ is revealed as divine – for the arcaded screen through which the worshippers would experience that unveiling.

The decoration of the chapel beyond the screen was also carried out in the later years of the *Cinquecento*, and provides further context for understanding the miraculous image enshrined on the altar. The stone, gilded tabernacle altarpiece itself was installed in 1570, and provides a fitting repository for the once-humble fresco, now removed from an everyday setting to reflect its special status (Fig. 5). The walls of the chapel meanwhile are elaborately painted with scenes from the life of the Virgin, culminating in the *Assumption*, which is repeated in the vault above the altar. There, a standing Mary holding the Christ Child – clearly the Madonna di Mongiovino – is welcomed by God the Father, and crowned as Queen of Heaven. Behind the altar, the walls of the apse are painted with the miracles performed by the image, while above these sit the Sibyls, foretelling the coming of Christ. The whole programme fits together to provide a clear framework for the miracle-working image: Mary in the fresco, who spoke to the peasant girl, is the Biblical Mary, Mother of Christ, who is in Heaven with her son, and can intercede for the faithful. Because of the truth of the revelation of the New Testament, as first revealed at the Transfiguration, Christ will answer their prayers, and it is through His sacrifice – as clearly stated in the altarpieces in the central space of the church – that humankind can gain salvation.

Fig. 4: Niccolò Circignani (aka Niccolò Pomarancio), Resurrection*, 1569. Il Santuario della Madonna di Mongiovino. Photograph © Dorigen Caldwell.*

Fig. 5: Golden tabernacle altar. Il Santuario della Madonna di Mongiovino. Photograph © Wolfgang Sauber. Wikimedia Commons, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike License.

Dr Dorigen Caldwell is Senior Lecturer in Italian Renaissance Art at Birkbeck. Having completed her PhD thesis at the Warburg Institute, she went on to conduct a postdoctoral project in Rome, and taught at UCL before being appointed to Birkbeck. In recent years, her research has largely focused on Roman art in the later years of the sixteenth century, although she has also been working more broadly on Marian devotion during the Catholic Reformation. As part of this project, she is currently writing two articles on the Madonna di Mongiovino; and is working towards a book on the cult of Loreto in early modern Rome.

Notes

1 See, for instance, *The miraculous image in the late Middle Ages and Renaissance*, eds. Erik Thuno and Gerhard Wolf (Rome: L'Erma di Bretschneider, 2004; Megan Holmes, *The miraculous image in Renaissance Florence* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013); Robert Maniura, *Art and miracle in Renaissance Tuscany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

2 The only monographs on the church are in Italian and are limited in scope: Fiorenzo Canuti, *Il Santuario di Mongiovino* (Perugia: Tip. G. Donnini, 1954); Franco Bozzi and Laura Teza, *Il Santuario di Mongiovino* (Ellera Umbra: Era Nuova, 1998).

3 On the use of centralised plans for shrine churches, see the seminal study of Paul Davies, 'S. Maria delle Carceri in Prato and Italian Renaissance Pilgrimage Architecture', in *Architectural History*, 36, 1993, pp. 1-18.

Harry Clarke: stained-glass artist and illustrator

Jessica O'Donnell

Born in Dublin on 17 March 1889, Harry Clarke is one of Ireland's most brilliant and original artists of the twentieth century. He excelled as a stained-glass artist and illustrator and his awareness of developments in art internationally places him to the fore among Irish artists engaging with modernism.[1] The son of Joshua Clarke, a stained-glass maker and church decorator whose business he eventually took over, Clarke studied at Dublin's Metropolitan School of Art, where he was awarded prizes and scholarships for his work, enabling him to travel to France and England to study the magnificent stained glass in the medieval churches there. A superb draughtsman and voracious reader, Clarke's illustrations to authors such as J. M. Synge, W. B. Yeats, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats, Alexander Pope and Oscar Wilde were shown by the artist to numerous London publishers leading to a prestigious commission from George G. Harrap & Co. to illustrate the *Fairy Tales by Hans Christian Andersen* (1916). The exquisitely-coloured watercolours for the *Fairy Tales* now in the National Gallery of Ireland reveal the influence of the Ballets Russes, the allure of the East then popular in the decorative arts, ballet, cinema and painting, as well as the similarly sumptuous book illustrations by artists such as Kay Nielsen and Edmund Dulac (Fig. 1). Harraps also commissioned Clarke to illustrate Edgar Allan Poe's *Tales of Mystery and Imagination* enabling the artist to indulge his love of the fantastical, decadent and macabre. Published in 1919, Clarke's illustrated Poe, with its pen and ink drawings abounding in microscopic natural forms and marine motifs, was a huge success both critically and commercially.

Not only were Clarke's much-praised illustrations increasingly in demand but his exceptional achievements in stained glass, both ecclesiastical and secular, were widely establishing his reputation and renown. He produced over 130 stained-glass windows, mostly religious, throughout Ireland, notably the Honan Chapel in University College Cork, and in England at St Mary's Church in Sturminster Newton in Dorset, St Cuthberts Durham, and probably the greatest of his English windows, seventeen lights in all, for the Convent of the Order of Notre Dame at Wych Cross in East Sussex (now the Ashdown Park Hotel), amongst others.

In April 1923, a wonderful opportunity arose for Clarke when Harold Jacob asked him to design a stained-glass window for the landing of his father's house in Ailesbury Road, Dublin. Now in the collection of the Hugh Lane Gallery in Dublin, Harry Clarke's stained-glass masterpiece *The Eve of St Agnes* (1924) is a stunning example of an enlightened act of secular patronage in the early years of the Irish Free State (Fig. 2).[2] The subject of the window is inspired by John Keats's celebrated poem *The Eve of St Agnes* composed in 1819. A legend had grown up that if on St Agnes's eve, maidens fasted and prayed, and went to bed early in silence, and without looking behind them, they would dream of their future husbands. A great admirer of Keats, Harry Clarke not only responded to the vivid imagery in Keats's sensuous and evocative poem, but greatly enriched it through his own immense visual imagination, brilliant draughtsmanship and superb technical skill. In Keats's narrative romance Madeline had been forbidden by her father, Lord Maurice, to marry Porphyro. Despite this, Porphyro secretly enters her family's castle and, with the help of Madeline's nurse, Old Angela, goes to find Madeline. As it is

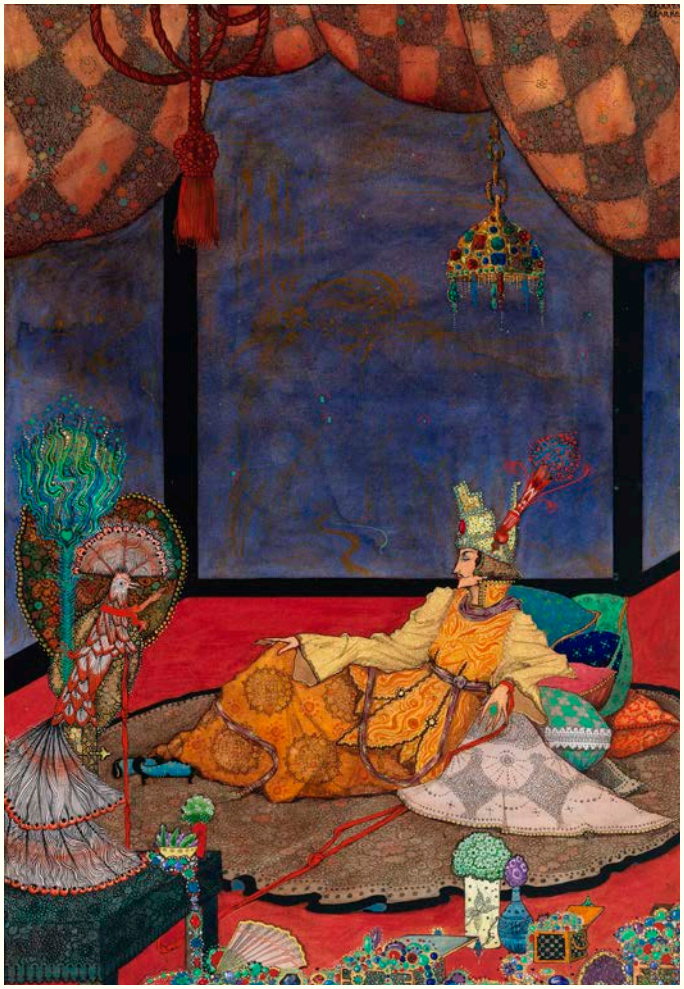

Fig. 1: Harry Clarke, The Nightingale, *Ink, graphite, watercolour, gouache and glazes, with bodycolour highlights, 40.7 x 28 cm. National Gallery of Ireland Collection (NGI.2008.89.3). Photograph © National Gallery of Ireland.*

Fig. 2: Harry Clarke, The Eve of St Agnes*, 1924. Stained glass, 157.5 x 105 cm. Hugh Lane Gallery, Dublin.*

the eve of St Agnes, Madeline had gone to bed hoping to dream of her future love. When Porphyro's music wakes her, she is unsure whether she is dreaming or awake. Porphyro reassures her that it is not a dream and they flee from the castle and away across the moors.

While 'Night and Morning' and 'Summer and Winter' were initially suggested by Jacob as potential subjects, Clarke's proposals included Keats's poem *The Eve of St Agnes*, the fairy tales *Bluebeard* and *Sleeping Beauty* as well as J. M. Synge's play *The Playboy of the Western World*. His suggestions reflected his aforementioned love of the fantastical and the romantic together with his admiration for contemporary Irish writing.

References to blue, shades of purple, rose, red, gold, silver and white throughout Keats's poem are reflected in the brilliant colours of Clarke's window. In order to achieve this jewel-like quality, antique flashed blue glass, gold-pink glass and flashed ruby glass were acided, stained and painted by the artist with intricate details incised directly onto the glass surface. In doing so, Clarke was using the best materials and most sophisticated techniques possible. With the exception of *An Túr Gloine* (The Tower of Glass) established in 1903 and the Clarke Studios, most stained glass in Ireland at that time was mass-produced and imported. Clarke was justly proud of the *St Agnes* window and when his other secular masterpiece the *Geneva Window* (1929) (Wolfsonian Museum, Miami) was being commissioned by the Irish Government he advised officials to view the *St Agnes* window to appreciate fully the beauty arising from his method. Originally made for the *Geneva Window*, and now in the Hugh Lane Gallery, the sweeping diaphanous fabric and pink hues achieved in the *Mr Gilhooley* panel demonstrate Clarke's exceptional abilities as a stained-glass artist (Fig. 3).

In *The Eve of St Agnes* the skilful distilling by Clarke of Keats's poem into jewel-like panels surrounded by decorative borders that cleverly hide the lead surrounds is a remarkable feat of composition. The exquisite details, architectural spaces and successive progression of the narrative room by room liken the *St Agnes* window to an elaborate dolls' house. In Madeline's chamber, for example, minuscule objects include her prayer book on a chair at her bedside and miniature perfume bottles on top of a realistic representation of an inlaid cabinet by the Dublin cabinet maker James Hicks. Revelling in his craft, there are wonderful depictions of stained glass within stained glass throughout the *St Agnes* window creating an illusion of depth in these imagined interior spaces. Not only is moonlight suggested by Clarke's acid-etched and painted lines, but light glows too from lanterns, starlight and tapered candles, all conjured up by the artist's hand.

Clarke's superbly imaginative and inventive depiction of fabrics, shoes and accessories throughout his oeuvre and the *St Agnes* window, with all their luxurious detailing and hauteur, chime perfectly with illustrations reproduced in contemporary fashion magazines such as *La Gazette du Bon Ton* and *Comœdia Illustré*. The plumes and tiaras of Keats's poem have been transformed by Clarke into extravagant marine inspired costumes with ornately coloured fish-scales, gills and seashell

Fig. 3: Harry Clarke, Mr Gilhooley *1929. Stained glass, 30 x 29 cm. Hugh Lane Gallery, Dublin.*

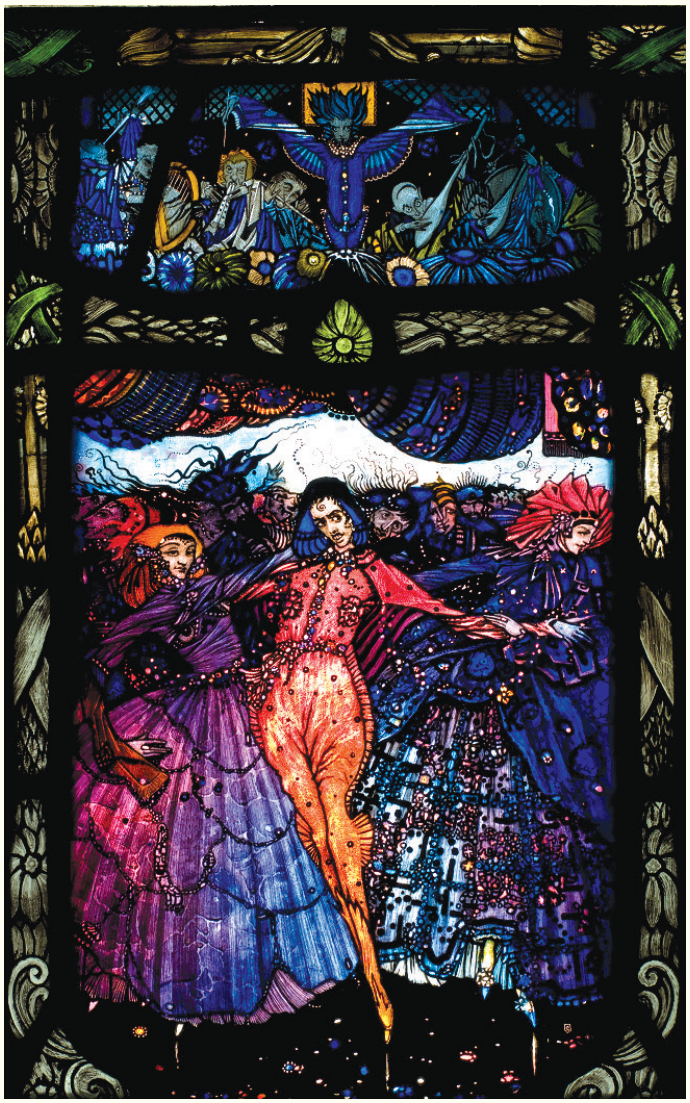

Fig. 4: Harry Clarke, 'At length burst in the argent revelry, With plume, tiara and rich array…', The Eve of St Agnes *(detail), 1924. Hugh Lane Gallery, Dublin.*

details. (Fig. 4) Seaweed-inspired headdresses wave and move as though viewed under water. The strange opulence of Clarke's 'undersea' ball is reminiscent of the aquatic costumes designed by Natalia Goncharova for the Ballets Russes's under-water fantasy *Sadko* (1916) as well as the French filmmaker George Méliès's fantastical sub-aquatic scenes in his silent film *A Kingdom of Fairies* (1903). Perhaps inspired by his time on Inisheer in the west of Ireland, Clarke's handkerchief designs for Sefton Fabrics made in 1918-20 abound with butterflies, jellyfish, sea urchins and sea anemones and these creatures reappear in the decorative borders and two lunettes of the *St Agnes* window. Porphyro's graceful purple cloak, tartan garments, jewels and insignia as well as his fish gill shoes all attest to his high-born rank and *beau monde* style. Clarke also excelled when portraying the cool purity of Madeline through the majesty of her white, silver and blue coloured clothes. The regal courts of Siam are suggested by Clarke in the *St Agnes* window by the pointed headdress and layered costume adorned with gold threads, silver and gems worn by Madeline. Again revealing the influence of the Ballets Russes, her dress is reminiscent of Vaslav Nijinsky's costume for his *Danse Siamoise* in the Ballets Russes's production *Les Orientales* (1910). Notwithstanding its ostensibly medieval setting, it is remarkable how Clarke brings to the *St Agnes* window a contemporary and international aesthetic reflective of his breadth of vision. While he looked to many visual sources including art history, the natural world, contemporary culture, fashion, ballet and cinema he combined very different ideas and visual inspirations with his own vivid imagination to create a vision that was very much his own.

Despite the onset of tuberculosis Harry Clarke continued to work exceptionally hard on numerous commissions. He succumbed to the disease in 1931, dying at the young age of forty-one while on his return to Ireland from Switzerland where he had been receiving treatment. However, one hundred and thirty years after his birth, the unique brilliance of Harry Clarke's art continues to enthral.

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Notes

1 For an in-depth study of Clarke's artistic career see Nicola Gordon Bowe, *Harry Clarke: the life and work*, (Dublin: The History Press, 2012).

2 The themes relating to *The Eve of St Agnes* discussed here stem from my published research: see Jessica O'Donnell, 'A Gorgeous Gallery of Poetic Pictures': Harry Clarke, Harold Jacob and John Keats's 'The Eve of St Agnes' in Angela Griffith, Marguerite Helmers and Róisín Kennedy (eds.), *Harry Clarke and artistic visions of the new Irish state*, (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2018), pp. 46-71.

The Hugh Lane Gallery, Dublin

The Hugh Lane Gallery houses one of the foremost collections of twentieth-century Irish art. Established in 1908 by Hugh Lane, a Cork-born art dealer and collector, with the support of Dublin Corporation and an influential body of cultural, political and artistic figures. The founding collection reflected Hugh Lane's aim of showing the best of Irish art and international art together. Considered to be one of the earliest galleries of modern art in the world, the Hugh Lane Gallery's collection has continued to evolve and grow in significance and includes works by Corot, Courbet, Édouard Manet, Berthe Morisot, Monet, Degas, Auguste Rodin, Jack B. Yeats, Agnes Martin, Harry Clarke, Henry Moore, Sean Scully, as well as Francis Bacon's renowned studio.

Looking for Giotto

John Renner

'Perhaps no artist has been, and remains so controversial as Giotto di Bondone. Perhaps no art-historical debate has been more divisive than that of attempting to define Giotto's artistic personality': thus wrote the American art historian Hayden Maginnis, himself a distinguished exponent of what has come to be called the 'Anglo-Saxon' tradition of Giotto scholarship, in contradistinction to the mainstream of Italian writers.[1] While the nationalist character of the debate has, thankfully, lessened in recent years, the divisions remain real. They are founded on our ignorance of all but a few facts about the career of an artist so famous in his lifetime that his contemporary Dante used his name as a byword for celebrity: 'O empty glory of human powers…! In painting Cimabue thought to hold the field and now Giotto has the cry, so that the other's fame is dim'.[2] At the time of his death in 1337 Giotto was *capomaestro* or Chief of Works for Florence's new cathedral, notably responsible for the work begun on the campanile in 1334, and all other civic projects, and renowned less for his record as an architect than for the glory brought to his native city by his reputation as 'the supreme painter of the age', as a contemporary chronicler called him. By the fifteenth century he was credited as the innovator who changed the language of Italian painting 'from Greek into Latin': that is, from a formulaic Byzantine style to a newly realistic idiom based on the imitation of nature and the art of classical antiquity. The young Michelangelo drew figures from Giotto's Peruzzi Chapel frescoes. Giotto's place in art history as the founder of modern western painting has been secure since the first edition of Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the Painters, Sculptors and Architects* in 1550.

Fig. 1: Giotto di Bondone, The arrest of Christ (Kiss of Judas) *from* Scenes from the life of Christ, 1303-5. *Fresco, 200 x 185 cm. Arena (Scrovegni) Chapel, Padua. Wikimedia Commons. Photograph © Geoff Wren.*

But while Giotto's name lived on, the man himself, and his works, slipped into oblivion. Already by Vasari's day so much early Italian painting had been lost (not least to the wholesale modernisation of Florentine church interiors by Vasari himself) that Giotto's name could be attached to anything that seemed old. The canon of optimistic attributions expanded further in the nineteenth century, when a shift in taste brought the Italian 'Primitives' back into fashion, with store-rooms scoured for ancient panels and church walls stripped of whitewash and Baroque ornamentation to uncover fragments of medieval fresco, including those figures copied by Michelangelo. In the mass of 'Giottos' appearing on the art market and in museum catalogues it was impossible to discern any identifiable artistic personality, let alone the genius who had virtually single-handedly, in Vasari's account, revived the art of painting. It is not surprising that Giotto scholars in the modern age have seen their task to be the establishment of a secure body of work for the historically-existing artist, such that the nature of his achievement might be defined and evaluated. It was that laudable enterprise that led to the great schism in Giotto studies.

The 'Anglo-Saxon' Giotto is one whose hand can be seen in only a very few surviving works, characterised by a classical austerity of form revealing universal qualities or ideals. Its epitome is the Arena (Scrovegni) Chapel in Padua, frescoed with scenes from the lives of Christ and the Virgin between 1303 and 1305, early in Giotto's career (Fig. 1). Richard Offner, in a famous pair of polemical articles in 1939, described Giotto's concern there as 'establishing the dignity of human fate through the material significance of the human figure'.[3] Such a rarefied peak of achievement could hardly be maintained across the wide range of paintings traditionally ascribed to Giotto in Italian art-historical writing, and the scholars who have taken their lead from Offner are accordingly parsimonious in their attributions. John White's magisterial survey of early Italian art, a handbook for generations of students in the English-speaking world and still indispensable today, only accords autograph status to one of the many panel paintings that have been attributed to Giotto: the *Ognissanti Madonna* now in the Uffizi (Fig. 2). The three panels inscribed with Giotto's name are relegated to his workshop. And excluded altogether are the works at the heart of the controversy: the twenty-eight frescoes of the St Francis cycle in the Upper Church of the Basilica of San Francesco at Assisi, whose revolutionary naturalism in the depiction of the contemporary world was held by White, as by Offner before him, to be incompatible with the painter of the Arena Chapel.[4] However, for most Italian art historians, and many others, the attribution of those frescoes to Giotto has been an article of faith since Vasari's time.[5]

The landscape of Giotto studies has, though, seen changes in recent years, and the more extreme positions of both camps have proven untenable. Some works long in doubt have been

Fig. 2: Giotto di Bondone, Ognissanti Madonna and Child (Maestà)*, c. 1306-10. Tempera and gold on panel, 325 x 204 cm. Gallerie degli Uffizi, Florence. Photograph © John Renner.*

restored to Giotto after conservation and cleaning – none more significant than the enormous crucifix dominating the nave of the Dominican church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence (Front Cover). Nearly 19 feet high, this early work marked a stunning advance in the depiction of the human body as a three-dimensional form in space. Seeing it now, after a painstaking campaign of conservation completed in 2001,[6] it is hard to understand how twentieth-century British and American scholars were so reluctant to identify it as the 'crocifixo grande di Giotto' recorded in the church as early as 1312; but it reminds us that past attributions often relied, perforce, on distant views of dirty or overpainted works. Striking similarities between the figure style of this crucifix and some of the frescoes at Assisi strengthen the case for Giotto's participation there, especially now that long-standing controversies about the dating of those scenes have been largely resolved through the research of Janet Robson and Donal Cooper, convincingly placing them in the early 1290s – far enough away from the Arena Chapel frescoes, arguably, to account for the differences in style between the two programmes.[7] Technical examination of the Assisi frescoes has also helped to nuance the old 'Giotto/non-Giotto' polarity of the debate by demonstrating that workshops under three distinct masters were involved in their execution, even if the cycle must have been planned and coordinated as a whole.[8] And the concept of authorship itself has been redefined in the light of advances in our knowledge of how artists actually worked in the years around 1300. No longer do we expect to find a work by Giotto 'that he and none other painted', in Offner's anachronistic test of authenticity.[9] Any 'Giotto' could more accurately be labelled '…and workshop'.

The fact remains, though, that there is much about Giotto's career that is still obscure, and even unsettling. How did this Florentine artist learn to paint in such a 'Roman' way? What can explain the abrupt changes of style and quality between so many of the paintings attributed to him? Should we see Giotto as a fourteenth-century equivalent of today's star architects (as has been suggested), presiding over a number of studios of skilled craftsmen to whom he delegated the execution of his initial designs or concepts? Should we go so far as to abandon any attempt to pin down a distinct artistic personality? Successive generations of art historians have reinvented Giotto through their own 'period eye' (Giotto the *trompe l'oeil* illusionist, Giotto the painter of Christian truths, Giotto the designer of abstract forms, Giotto the master of psychological realism) but latterly there seems to have been a collective loss of confidence in even trying. There has been no substantial monograph on Giotto for years. He is scarcely mentioned in two recent major books on the frescoes in Assisi, which both deliberately avoid the vexed question of their authorship, concentrating instead on the less trodden and perhaps more fertile ground of iconography, patronage and reception.[10] It is undoubtedly important to consider these and other works of art in their own right and to analyse all the complex factors that led to their creation, rather than treating them as the expression of one man's genius. But Giotto's name and achievement remain foundational to the history of Western art, for good or ill. We must keep looking for him.

John Renner is an Associate Lecturer at the Courtauld Institute of Art where he took his PhD, after an MA in Art History at Birkbeck. His teaching, research and publications focus on Italian art of the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance, especially the visual culture of the mendicant orders. In addition to teaching on undergraduate, postgraduate and public programmes at the Courtauld he has lectured extensively at other academic and cultural institutions, including Birkbeck and the V&A. He is leading a series of study days on Early Italian Art 1250-1400 for the London Art History Society in the summer of 2019.

Notes

1 Hayden Maginnis, 'In search of an artist', in *The Cambridge companion to Giotto*, ed. by Anne Derbes and Mark Sandona (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 10-31 (at p. 10).

2 *Purgatorio* Canto XI, in *The Divine Comedy*, trans. John D. Sinclair (New York: Oxford University Press, 1939).

3 Richard Offner, 'Giotto, Non-Giotto', *Burlington Magazine* 74 (1939), pp. 259-68 (at p. 260); 75 (1939), pp. 96-113.

4 John White, *Art and architecture in Italy 1250-1400*, 3rd edn. (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993, first publ. 1966), pp. 309-48.

5 For a recent detailed analysis affirming Giotto's authorship, see Serena Romano, *Giotto's O* (Rome: Viella, 2015).

6 See Marco Ciatti and Max Seidel (eds.), *Giotto, the Santa Maria Novella crucifix* (Florence: Edifir, 2001).

7 Donal Cooper and Janet Robson, 'Pope Nicholas IV and the Upper Church at Assisi', in *Apollo 157* (February 2003), pp. 31-5.

8 See Bruno Zanardi, 'Giotto and the St Francis Cycle at Assisi', in *The Cambridge companion to Giotto*, pp. 32-62.

9 Offner, 'Giotto, Non-Giotto', p. 260.

10 Donal Cooper and Janet Robson, *The making of Assisi: the Pope, the Franciscans and the painting of the Basilica* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013); Chiara Frugoni, *Quale Francesco? Il messaggio nascosto negli affreschi della Basilica superiore ad Assisi* (Turin: Einaudi, 2015).

A feast for the eyes: Richard Newton's *A Paper Meal with Spanish Sauce*

Nicholas Babbington

In early 1797 the Bank of England was running out of money. A weak economy, high military spending and large subsidies to Britain's anti-revolutionary allies had drained its reserves of gold and silver coinage to such an alarmingly low level that it was becoming difficult to support the promise to exchange its banknotes for 'real' metal cash on demand. The Bank approached collapse in February when news of a French landing in South Wales arrived in London, triggering a bank run. The government was forced into an unprecedented intervention in the privately-owned and notionally independent Bank and on 26 February the convertibility of the Bank's notes was suspended without warning.[1]

Whilst this 'Restriction,' as it came to be known, certainly avoided catastrophe in the short term, the manoeuvre undermined the principles by which paper circulated as money. For the public it was both a material and a conceptual rupture. Paper, even that in their possession, was divorced from its signification of actual coinage and, concomitantly,

Fig. 1: Richard Newton, A Paper Meal with Spanish Sauce*, 1797. Hand-coloured etching on paper, 35 x 24.6 cm. © Trustees of the British Museum*

coin disappeared from everyday transactions amidst a flood of new small denomination notes. Seven years before Restriction Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) had articulated the theory behind Britain's paper economy. For him paper's legitimacy was premised in trust and 'the total exclusion of all idea of power from any [...] transaction' so that 'not one shilling of paper-money of any description is received but of choice.'[2] Burke's description of money as autonomously generated by the market and its networks of trust, credit and rational speculation emphasised the symbiosis of social and commercial liberty. Restriction up-ended this societal foundation. Furthermore, Restriction was haunted by the memory of the recently abolished French Revolutionary paper currency, the notorious *assignat*, whose disastrous collapse now seemed a premonition of Britain's future. Despite the government's insistences that Restriction was temporary and assurances that the credit of the Bank of England remained solid it was only with concerted effort that public faith and the economy did not collapse, and the country transitioned to a paper economy until 1821.[3]

On 14 March 1797, sixteen days after Restriction, Richard Newton published his print *A Paper Meal with Spanish Sauce* (Fig. 1). My research has shown that, when carefully contextualised, many of the caricatures of the period not only reveal themselves as polemics charged with economic connotation and nuance, but also evidence an audience aware of and conversant in the sophisticated financial apparatus which defined Britain as an imperial power. When put to such an examination Newton's print is a prime example of a caricature which negotiates between contemporary subject matter and the public sphere in complex and surprising ways.

The key to interpreting *A Paper Meal with Spanish Sauce* lies in deciphering its title. The 'Paper Meal' denotes a forced, repulsive and harmful 'feeding' of paper money into the body-politic, tapping into fears that an unconstrained and unsupported supply of paper money would, like the *assignat*, lead to a deterioration of the corpus of the nation. In the image, John Bull's universal attribute, his girth, becomes a corpulent waistcoat straining-swelling. Instead of gourmand prosperity, this paunch signifies congestion. A significant detail is that the arm with which Prime Minister William Pitt forces paper shillings into John Bull's open mouth seemingly disappears into its victim. This ambiguous elision of the arm and hand serves to ascribe a transgressive quality to Pitt's reach, implying a nauseating, abject plunge through mouth and down throat. This, then, is a representation of a violence which transcends the surface, whose repulsive harm is conceived at the structural (intestinal) level of corporeality, economics and liberty.

This foregrounding of political intervention is not, however, the most interesting aspect of the print. If the 'Paper Meal' connotes transgressive and tyrannical violence, then the 'Spanish Sauce'

connotes deception: it is a ruse with which the government mitigates the consumption of paper money. The deceptiveness attributed to these coins is most clearly articulated through the print's own unstable identification of them variously as 'DOLLARS,' 'SPANISH COAL' and 'SPANISH SAUCE'; a repeated inconsistency illustrative of their suspect nature. Whilst this multiplicity of aliases demonstrates Newton's hostile scepticism towards the coins, we can also observe a deliberate care taken in their representation. The exploration of this paradox uniquely illustrates the circumstances around the print's production.

These coins represent those issued in one of the emergency policies of early 1797 (Fig. 2). On 3 March, the Royal Mint began countermarking Spanish silver dollars supplied by the Bank of England and these coins, legitimised with a tiny stamped portrait of George III, apparently supplemented monetary circulation.[4] However, the introduction of these hybridised coins almost constituted a fiasco in its own right. A notice in *The Times* of 6 March announced the coins' value as four shillings and six pence but after recalculations this was revised to four shillings and nine pence only three days later. Such uncertainties plagued the authority of the coin. In particular, a threat of melting down arose whenever the value of the coin's silver content approached or exceeded their 'face' value.[5] Newton's print, appearing a week after the debacle of the dollars' revaluation, clearly targeted them. However, if we focus on the contradictions in the print's conflicting attitude towards, and representation of, the Spanish coins we can move beyond the blunt rhetoric of the print and consider its deeper social engagement.

The first contradiction arises from the question of how a coin, objectively valuable in terms of its silver content and authoritatively stamped twice with portraits of European monarchs, both the original King Charles III of Spain and the over-stamped George III, could be held in such contempt? My example (Fig. 2) shows that these coins were substantial pieces of metal, intricately detailed and iconographically distinguished. Such hard currency, one would think, would command respect in a time of scarcity. The second contradiction: how, if these coins are lumps of coal or drops of sauce, if they are dubious and disdained, can the detail with which Newton represents them be explained? While the twenty shilling notes are generic visual props, these coins are *recognisable* representations. Coins in caricatures are rarely as detailed, seldom imitating the likeness of specific currency. Mostly they appear as golden motes too small for detailed faces. In *Spanish Sauce* however, despite its hostility towards them, the silver coins are large and unmistakably correspond to their real-world referent. A coin on top of the pile faces the picture plane with a recognisable semblance of the Spanish coat of arms. Once we have registered this, the print's indistinctly yet obsessively detailed plethora of coins might justifiably be said to suggest very rough sketches of the Spanish kings. These coins reaffirm their referent.

Newton's satire denounces these coins whilst it indulges in reconstituting their semblance. It is a puzzling contradiction which we can explain if we consider this semblance as *hollow*: an image disconnected from its substance; signifer from signified. Newton could, it appears, rely on the *image* of the coin even while, to him, its value was void and its use harmed the public. The question then arises: what could the hollow image of these coins signify?

Fig. 2: George III oval countermark upon a Spanish Reales of King Charles III, 1778. © Sovereign Rarities Ltd., www.sovr.co.uk

The way in which Newton represented the semblance of the coins, even in the midst of vituperating against them, made an appeal to objective, shared and – most significantly – public reality. Newton reclaimed visual experience to contest the government's claims over authority and value. Restriction was an existential crisis of the public sphere, which produced not only anxiety for the money in pocket or bank account, but disrupted the foundations of the commercial and civil society which Britain increasingly imagined itself to be. To counter this Newton latched on to the only thing about the coins which could be trusted: their appearance. He dwelt on the vague semblance of the coin while de-emphasising their materiality and their value. He weaponised this semblance as part of the vocabulary of everyday life. Even as he luridly described their invidious role in oppression, he claimed the coins' objective image for satire in a way which called attention to the resilience and resistance of 'modern' society.

Despite this polemical print's overriding scepticism it cannot be called nihilistic. It is in essence, as all political caricatures are, an appeal to the public. Its denunciation of governmental intervention in the operation of money supply was an enjoinder to a citizenry. Newton's print, seen as part of this tradition, reflects the developing struggle between public and state; between the germinating ideology of the autonomous market and its archaic other: centralised power. In this struggle between the dream of a society built on social bonds of trust and the nightmare of a society controlled by autocratic compulsion caricature casts itself as the most authentic conduit of public opinion.

Nicholas Babbington is the winner of the London Art History Society Prize for Best Modern Period Masters Dissertation for Exuberant Paper and Bizarre Anatomies: Caricature in Response to the Bank Restriction Crisis of 1797. *In the Autumn he commences his PhD, continuing his exploration of the dynamics between economic discourse and satirical caricature, at UCL, when he is a recipient of the Department Research Studentship.*

Notes

1 Hiroki Shin, 'Paper Money, The Nation, and the Suspension of Cash Payments in 1797', in *The Historical Journal,* 58, (2015), pp. 415-16.

2 Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London: Penguin, 1986), p. 357.

3 Shin. pp. 423-34.

4 H.E. Manville, 'The Bank of England Countermarked Dollars, 1797-1804', in *The British Numismatic Journal*, 70, (2001), p. 104.

5 ibid. pp. 105-7.

PROGRAMME 2019-20

LECTURES

Tuesday 8 October 2019
Samuel Palmer and the English pastoral
Malcolm Andrews

Saturday 30 November 2019
14:00 AGM
15:00 The Maria Shirley Lecture
Art and the creation of the landscape garden at Painshill
Michael Symes

Tuesday 14 January 2020
Donatello: the greatest of them all
Jim Harris

Tuesday 4 February 2020
Arabic script in Christian contexts in the medieval Mediterranean
Clare Vernon

Tuesday 3 March 2020
The British Mosque: an architectural and social history
Shahed Saleem

Wednesday 1 April 2020
David Bomberg's lost legacy: a master painter and his students
Kate Aspinall

Monday 11 May 2020
The use of light in ecclesiastical upper spaces during the Middle Ages
Toby Huitson

Lectures are free to members, and are held at The Art Workers' Guild, 6 Queen Square, London WC1N 3AT, starting at 18:00, excepting the Maria Shirley Lecture which follows the AGM which begins at 14:00 on Saturday 30 November 2019.

COURSES

3 October-31 October 2019
Thursdays 14:00-16:00
(five weeks)
Works of Byzantine art and architecture
Leader: **Lyn Rodley**
Venue: Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church

8 October-5 November 2019
Tuesdays 14:30-16:30
(five weeks)
Art and photography: a cultural history
Leader: **Tim Satterthwaite**
Venue: The Art Workers' Guild

11 November-9 December 2019
Mondays 14:30-16:30
(five weeks)
Rembrandt 350: a commemoration of his life and work, 1606-1669
Leader: **Clare Ford-Wille**
Venue: Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church

7 January-10 March 2020
Tuesdays 14:30-16:30
(ten weeks)
Mannerist and Baroque art in Europe, 1550-1700
Leader: **Anita Sganzeria**
Venue: Brockway Room, Conway Hall

22 January-26 February 2020
Wednesdays 11:00-13:00
(six weeks)
Another six English cathedrals in context
Leader: **John McNeill**
Venue: Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church

4 March-1 April 2020
Wednesdays 11:00-13:00
(five weeks)
Personal objects of the Mughal Emperors in London collections
Leader: **Ursula Weekes**
Venue: Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church

SEMINARS, SERIES AND SCHOOLS

Wednesday 7 August 2019
11:00 – 16:30
Early Italian art 1250-1400: Florence, Giotto and the roots of the Renaissance
Leader: **John Renner**
Venue: Friends House

Friday 6 September 2019
11:00-16:30
Early Italian art 1250-1400: little-known fresco cycles from Pomposa to Trento
Leader: **Clare Ford-Wille**
Venue: Friends House

STUDY DAYS, VISITS AND WALKS

Wednesday 4 September 2019
11:00-13:00
Visit: *Stanley Picker's House and Garden Gallery, Kingston Hill*
Guide: **House Guide**

Monday 9 September 2019
11:00-16:15
Study Day: *Natalia Goncharova and women artists of the Russian avant-garde*
Lecturer: **Natalia Murray**
Venue: Bloomsbury Central Baptist Church

Monday 30 September 2019
11:00-13:00
Walk: *Kings Cross and St Pancras*
Guide: **Andrew Davies**

Monday 21 October 2019
11:00-16:00
Study Day: *Thinking about Abstraction*
Lecturer: **Linda Bolton**
Venue: Brockway Room, Conway Hall

Wednesday 30 October 2019
11:30-13:00
Visit: *Royal Geographical Society Art Collection*
Guide: **Eugene Rae**

Wednesday 18 December 2019
11:00 – 16:15
Study Day: *Matisse*
Guide: **Ben Street**
Venue: Keynes Library

STUDY TOURS

11-16 September 2019
Study Tour: *Bauhaus*
Leader: **Tom Abbott**

9-12 November 2019
Study Tour: *Basel: 1000th anniversary of Basel Cathedral exhibition* Gold & Glory: Gifts for Eternity
Leader: **Alexandra Gajewski**

15-19 January 2020
Study Tour: *Renaissance & Baroque Bologna*
Leader: **Michael Douglas-Scott**

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