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The Reception of Classical Culture in Britain and Western Europe from the Renaissance to the 19th Century

By Richard Hingley

DILETTANTI: THE ANTIC AND THE ANTIQUE IN EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY ENGLAND, by Bruce Redford. Pp. x + 220, figs. 45, color pls. 105. The J. Paul Getty Museum, the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles 2008. $49.95. ISBN 978-0-89236-924-9 (cloth).

CLASSICAL RHETORIC AND THE VISUAL ARTS IN EARLY MODERN EUROPE, by Caroline van Eck. Pp. xii + 223, figs. 59. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2007. $80. ISBN 978-0-521-84435-2 (cloth).

IMAGINING ROMAN BRITAIN: VICTORIAN RESPONSES TO A ROMAN PAST, by Virginia Hoselitz. Pp. x + 208, figs. 6. The Royal Historical Society, The Boydell Press, Woodbridge, England 2007. £50. ISBN 978-0-86193-293-1 (cloth).

These three books differ considerably in scope, approach, and focus. What unites them is that they explore the impact of classical models on particular early modern or modern societies. There is little in the details of the materials the three authors address to connect these books; they draw on very different theories, methods, and materials. The individual volumes are written by an architectural theorist who explores art and architecture in early modern Europe (van Eck), an art historian taking an anthropological approach to an aspect of 18th-century English society (Redford), and a historian exploring the origins of archaeological knowledge of Roman Britain during the 19th century, drawing, in particular, on some documentary sources (Hoselitz). Two of the books (van Eck and Redford) are explicitly cross-disciplinary. Redford, for example, argues that the dilettanti of 18th-century England effectively crossed what would today be called disciplinary boundaries, since they drew on the past in ways that are not totally contained by the academic boundaries that define our 20th-century approaches (1). I will address the three volumes individually before returning to make some general observations.

EARLY MODERN VISUAL ARTS

Van Eck is professor of architectural theory at Leiden University (the Netherlands). Her previous works cover Renaissance architecture, rhetoric, and artistic theory. This important new study draws on well-selected examples to explore the concepts derived from classical rhetoric in the arts and architecture of early modern Europe (15th–18th centuries). In the Renaissance, classical works on rhetoric—including the writings of Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian—were used to develop appreciation of physical methods that could be used to persuade the viewer. Classical rhetoric provided many strategies to influence audiences, and the rhetorical devices that were of value to the artist included gestures, facial expressions, and vivid description. In this book, van Eck addresses, in some detail, the ways in which such rhetorical devices were adopted into the art and architecture of early modern western Europe.

To consider how architects, painters, patrons, and viewers used rhetoric in early modern times, van Eck conducts a study of visual persuasion in classical rhetoric (2–8), exploring the use of gesture and the influence of physical surroundings. This requires the author to explore a number of works that address classical art and architecture. She then examines how issues of visual persuasion were incorporated into sculptures, architecture, and paintings in

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early modern Europe. The six chapters explore particular instances of visual persuasion in arts and architecture. Van Eck contends that a key to the early modern examples is understanding that persuasion is achieved through "figuration," which means "giving an outward, visible shape to emotions, thoughts or memories that creates the illusion of human life and agency" (9). In art, a sense of shared identity is often created through the use of facial expression on the human figures that are portrayed. Architecture is generally less figurative, and van Eck claims that the illusion of human presence is achieved by drawing on the conception of "a shared past or cultural memory" (9). Van Eck's study aims to draw the material fields of both figurative arts and architecture into a common interpretative frame through the use of reception theory.

The book is divided into three parts, each containing two chapters. Part 1 explores the use of rhetoric in artistic theory, drawing on Alberti's *De Pictura* and the foundations of persuasive architecture. Part 2 explores, in greater detail, the ways in which rhetoric was used in persuasive design, addressing paintings and the creation of memories and identities through the construction of stone buildings. Chapter 4 contains a case study of the manner by which the English architect Inigo Jones aimed to construct a new classical past for Jacobean (early 17th-century) Britain. To help construct his new architectural style, he used the architecture of Stonehenge, which he figured in his work as a classical monument. Van Eck's book makes some important new observations about the role and impact of Jones' work on 17th-century England's conceptions of the ancient past, particularly with regard to the reception of Stonehenge. Part 3 addresses interpretations of the arts and architecture and how these were informed by rhetoric, again dividing art and architecture into separate fields of study. Chapter 6 includes a detailed study of Christopher Wren's work on the Roman Temple of Peace. The final coda discusses whether interest in rhetoric declined during the 19th century as interest in the classical tradition waned.

The material contained in van Eck's volume provides a stimulating account of the dynamic character of representations and the transformation of classical concepts in western Europe during the late 15th–18th centuries. The volume also contains a number of approaches that address aspects of material culture, particularly sculpture and architecture. Van Eck does not discuss in any detail how the discovery of classical objects and sites related to the developing rhetoric of the visual arts, however. Excavating and surveying ruins are topics that are important to the two authors reviewed below, but van Eck is more interested in how discoveries and survivals are perceived by the artists and architects who used them in their works.

THE SOCIETY OF DILETTANTI

Redford, professor of art history and English at Boston University, has published extensively on 18th-century society, on topics such as the letters of Samuel Johnson and the tradition of the Grand Tour. His new book on the Society of Dilettanti addresses the culture of connoisseurship in Enlightenment England, including aristocratic expeditions to visit the classical monuments of the Levant. These were important activities that contributed to the Neoclassical movement and the development of the scholarly study of Greece and Rome. This book is engagingly written, with numerous high-quality illustrations in both color and black-and-white. Redford aims to avoid the reverential character of some past assessments of the society in order to adopt the anthropological model of the observer-participant, "one who seeks both to inhabit and to interpret a tribal society" (10). His methodology involves the collection, description, and analysis of items from the society's archives, including portraits, publications, travel diaries, and some very strange physical objects. For example, the Society of Dilettanti's "Balloting Box" (1737–1738) was inspired by the form of a Roman sarcophagus but included on its front a female figure of Justice, between whose legs the members deposited their "Balloting Balls" (6).

Redford explores the meaning of the term "dilettanti," explaining, "To be a dilettanti is to exhibit *diletto*—pleasure, delight—just as being an amateur is to act out of love" (1). He focuses on the ways in which the society's activities embodied the Enlightenment ideal of the gentleman amateur, and, in so doing, he aims to raise the status of the contribution of the dilettanti of the 18th and early 19th centuries, countering an idea that has arisen since the early 19th century that defines dilettantism as a "depreciatory or even pejorative term" (1). The Society of Dilettanti was founded in London in 1732, and the word "dilettante" enters the English language in the 1730s. The society was formed from a group of gentlemen whose

wealth and social backgrounds had enabled them to take the Grand Tour; members who traveled overseas for professional reasons were scarce in the first decades of the society's existence. Redford explores the origins and guiding principles of this cultural movement by drawing on published works of the society, arguing that one powerful model for the Society of Dilettanti was provided by the Freemasons. He addresses the social life of the Dilettanti in some detail, including some strange initiation ceremonies and requirements of membership, such as a desire to indulge in heavy bouts of drinking. He also explores, in some detail, the rules and regalia of the group, including an elaborate president's chair, the Balloting Box, and other material objects linked to the rituals of membership, items whose peculiarity support Redford's anthropological approach.

This anthropological methodology includes a chapter that conducts a detailed analysis of a "remarkable" set of portraits by George Knapton, the first of a series of painters commissioned to produce images of new society members (10). One condition of membership was that each member commission his portrait for the society; individual portraits were painted by Knapton, Joshua Reynolds, and Thomas Lawrence. Knapton's portraits show a number of members in fancy dress, emphasizing the "animated spirit" of the society during its early years (10). Redford addresses the context and character of many of these mock-classical and mock-religious representations. Redford's book also includes a second chapter on Reynolds' portraits. Both chapters are well supported with many high-quality color photographs of individual paintings.

Redford argues that the Dilettanti moved more to the center stage of elite society when they sponsored the expedition of James Stuart and Nicholas Revett to Greece in 1751–1754. The group's growing interest in the classical architectural and archaeological monuments of Greece resulted in the production and publication of volume 1 of Stuart and Revett's *The Antiquities of Athens* in 1762. Redford states that this publication anticipated the modern archaeological site report by striving for clarity, reliability, and precision (11). A second expedition to Asia Minor (1764–1766) resulted in Richard Chandler et al.'s *Ionian Antiquities* in 1769. Both these significant works are addressed by Redford in some detail. By the 1770s, the Dilettanti had become the foremost advocates of classical art and archaeology in Great Britain, as well as the main exempla of what Redford, drawing on John Brewer, calls "the culture of the connoisseur" (9–10). The Dilettanti continued this important architectural and archaeological work, producing another significant volume, Richard Payne Knight's *Specimens of Ancient Sculpture*, in 1809.

Redford illustrates the important contribution of the Dilettanti to the growing knowledge of classical architecture and archaeology through a detailed and well-illustrated series of case studies. He provides a full survey of activities of the society and their impact on contemporary and later architects and antiquaries. He argues that their publications combined didactics (e.g., detailed investigations into techniques, condition, restoration, and provenance) with connoisseurship, and he addresses the decline of the Dilettanti during the early 19th century.

VICTORIAN ROMAN BRITAIN

Hoselitz's study picks up from around the time the other two books end. The Dilettanti were interested, primarily, in the classical architecture and sculpture of the Mediterranean. However, during the 18th century, a genuine interest was developing among antiquarians in Britain concerning the indigenous classical culture imported as a result of the Roman invasion and conquest of lowland Britain (mid first–early fifth centuries C.E.). Inigo Jones claimed a Roman date for Stonehenge during the 17th century, but it was clear by the 19th century that this henge monument was much earlier; most were beginning to recognize the evidence for a pre-Roman past. Hoselitz's study explores the historical context of the development of knowledge of Roman Britain. This is a topic of increasing interest at the present time, and a number of books published over the past few years explore the history of antiquarians and archaeological studies of Britain's ancient past.[1]

[1] Other accounts of Victorian archaeology include individual chapters in Freeman (2007) and Hingley (2008). While Freeman and Hingley's accounts are archaeological in inspiration, Hoselitz draws more directly on historical approaches.

This small book is the result of a doctorate undertaken at Bristol University. It explores how the dismissive views of ancient barbarians, conveyed by classical texts that addressed Roman Britain (e.g., Caesar, Tacitus), were challenged during the late 18th and 19th centuries by the discovery of significant evidence for classical culture recovered through the excavation of Roman fortresses and towns in Britain. These archaeological discoveries enabled antiquarians to claim the introduction of classical culture to lowland Britain in the early centuries C.E., even if this Roman culture appeared to form a rather pale reflection of the ruins and art available to those who took the Grand Tour to Rome, Italy, and Greece. Most artists, architects, and antiquaries had looked to the ancient monuments of the classical Mediterranean and the Near East, but from the 18th century, greater attention came to be paid to the indigenous context of British society.

Hoselitz's study provides a general background to the study of Roman Britain during the 19th century, exploring the individuals and societies that were involved in the discovery of the ancient past. The focus is primarily on the period from 1840 to 1860, addressing the rediscovery of the evidence for the civil (or lowland) part of the province. Her book provides an original perspective on excavations of the Roman civil and military sites at Caerleon, Cirencester, Colchester, and Chester, during which significant remains of Roman buildings and artifacts were uncovered. This useful and interesting study explores the development of archaeological knowledge in some detail through the use of published sources and extensive archival sources derived from a number of local antiquarian and archaeological societies. A particular strength of the study is that the author brings to the fore the confused and contradictory ideas held by Victorians about the ancient past of England, exploring the processes through which national identity and the role of Britain as an imperial power were influenced by comparisons drawn with the Roman empire.

Although the title of the volume stresses the Victorian rediscovery of Roman Britain, it does not include the excavations at the Roman town of Silchester, close to Reading, that were undertaken at the end of the century. Indeed, Hoselitz does not cover in detail late Victorian developments, when the uses of classical Rome were transformed through a greater focus on analogies with current times provided through ideas related to the decline and fall of empires. The book also does not address in any detail the important new works that were occurring during the second half of the 19th century on Hadrian's Wall and the Roman north. This was the period when a clear distinction came to be made between the Roman civil south and the military north, and the author's focus on information from the lowlands prevents a discussion of this important issue.

By focusing on a particular period in the 19th century and on the study of four particular places, the volume addresses the recovery of Roman Britain in a rather particularistic fashion. However, the focus on individual people and places does enable an original study of the role of the image of Rome and the growing professionalism of antiquarian and archaeological works. This is a useful study that contributes an important new perspective to the development of 19th-century archaeology. Explorations of the efforts of antiquaries and archaeologists at other Roman sites during the 18th–20th centuries—including the Antonine Wall, Cranborne Chase, Bignor, Hadrian's Wall, London, Silchester, and St Albans—would extend and complement the perspectives developed here.

CONCLUSION

These three studies adopt distinct methods and theories to address different agendas. Each provides a significant addition to the published literature, but, in my mind, reading all three raises the importance of communicating across disciplinary boundaries. Evidently, this is a currently popular topic, and it has been explored in a number of published volumes.[2] This reviewer would be fascinated to know, for example, how the theory and method addressed by van Eck might help to inform the materials used by antiquaries when they studied Roman remains in 19th-century London, or how individual Dilettanti employed classical rhetoric in their domestic and public

[2] E.g., Edwards 1999.

lives. There is a wealth of material in all three of these areas of study to warrant considerable further research and publication.

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In this respect, cultural historians owe a debt to the anthropologists who preceded them in the analysis of cultural encounters and their consequences. In return,historians do have, in my opinion, something important to contribute to this interdisciplinary field, focussing as they usually do on processes, especially long-term processes, including hybridization.Â To assess the importance of hybridity in the Renaissance in a thorough manner it would of course be necessary to investigate a diverse range of cultural items â€“ language, literature, painting, sculpture, and even law (the encounter between Roman law and local custom). Such an investigation would be difficult indeed to present in a single lecture. In the 19th century the Romantic movement, the Industrial Revolution and the - largely hostile - interaction between them, combined to create a culture markedly different from the assured and orderly world of the 18th century. The attempt made by European statesmen in 1815 to bottle up the effects of the French Revolution and the reforms of the Napoleonic era looked to be in constant danger of disintegration, especially in the first half of the century. After 1848, growing material prosperity reduced the likelihood of bloody revolution and class war, especially in Britain, but that is only evi The Renaissance. The Italian Renaissance. Urban growth. Wars of expansion.Â Developments in 19th-century Europe are bounded by two great events. The French Revolution broke out in 1789, and its effects reverberated throughout much of Europe for many decades. World War I began in 1914. Its inception resulted from many trends in European society, culture , and diplomacy during the late 19th century.Â Changes such as the Industrial Revolution and political liberalization spread first and fastest in western Europeâ€"Britain, France, the Low Countries , Scandinavia, and, to an extent, Germany and Italy. Eastern and southern Europe, more rural at the outset of the period, changed more slowly and in somewhat different ways. Western culture, sometimes equated with Western civilization, Occidental culture, the Western world, Western society, and European civilization, is the heritage of social norms, ethical values, traditional customs, belief systems, political systems, artifacts and technologies of the Western world that originated in or are associated with Europe. The term also applies beyond Europe to countries and cultures whose histories are strongly connected to Europe by immigration, colonization, or influence. For