

# RENAISSANCE STUDIES

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## Contents

### Abstracts

### Articles

- America and Amerindians in Sebastian Münster's *Cosmographiae universalis libri VI* (1550)  
SUREKHA DAVIES 351

- Strategies of women patrons of music and theatre in Rome:  
Maria Mancini Colonna, Queen Christina of Sweden, and women  
of their circles  
VALERIA DE LUCCA 374

- Francesco Paciotti, European geopolitics, and military architecture  
IAN VERSTEGEN 393

- 'The compasse of that Islands space': Insular fictions in the writing  
of Edmund Spenser  
TAMSIN BADCOE 415

- After Elizabeth: representations of female rule in Massinger's  
tragicomedies  
LAURA TOSI 433

- Philips's 1628 *Paradisus* and the triumph of the Eucharist  
KERRY MCCARTHY 447

### Review of exhibitions

- Raphael: Cartoons and Tapestries for the Sistine Chapel  
reviewed by Lisa Pon 459

- Salvator Rosa: Bandits, Wilderness and Magic  
reviewed by Edward Payne 469

### Reviews of books 475

- Shannon Miller, *Engendering the Fall: John Milton and  
Seventeenth-Century Women Writers*. (Philadelphia: University  
of Pennsylvania Press, 2008) reviewed by John Flood

- John Julius Norwich *et al.*, *Croatia: Aspects of Art, Architecture and  
Cultural Heritage*. (London: Frances Lincoln Ltd., 2009) reviewed  
by Deborah Howard

Ester Sowernam, this is a slip of the pen less accurate than the more cautious statement that Adam is 'in a possible dialogue with Sowernam' (34). Even this weaker claim demands more support.

There are hints that this lapse might be due to a failure to appreciate fully the long history of conventional writing about women that had accumulated by the seventeenth century. Thus, she incorrectly credits the sixteenth-century Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa with the invention of the argument for Eve's superiority based on her climactic position in creation, an approach widely attested by his time. The anxiety about what a solitary Eve might do was to be found in the Church Fathers, *prima facie* a more likely source for Milton than Speght or Sowernam. Similarly, Adam's castigation of Eve is not peculiar to Milton and is to be found in medieval drama, probably as an outgrowth of Adam's blame of Eve for the Fall when he was confronted by God in Genesis 3. None of this should take from the fact that the authors of Section One can usefully be compared to and contrasted with Milton in the absence of any claims about influence (the strategy of the second section). Although one or two others have done this already, Miller's observations are still interesting and the section remains a valuable one.

Seventeenth-century intellectual history forms an important background of Miller's book. Having explored the *querelle*, she goes on in Section Two to examine the relationship between women and knowledge around the time of the Civil War. Chapter Five deals with the Royal Society and the reaction to it by Milton and Cavendish. Chapter Six includes Mary Chudleigh's incorporation of Cambridge Platonism (although whether she herself can be called a Cambridge Platonist is a nice point). Framing the whole book is a consideration of the relationship between marriage and political philosophy in the thought of Locke and Filmer. The result is a valuable book, albeit one that is not immune from criticisms.

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JOHN FLOOD

John Julius Norwich *et al.*, *Croatia: Aspects of Art, Architecture and Cultural Heritage*. London: Frances Lincoln Ltd., 2009. 224 pp. 266 colour illustrations. £30.00. ISBN: 978-0711229211 (hb).

During the Renaissance, the shores of the Adriatic Sea formed a unified cultural and artistic region. The quarries of Istria and Dalmatia ensured the continual criss-crossing of the sea by stonemasons, a voyage that was easier than the journey westward over the Appennines, while Venetian domination of Istria and Dalmatia sustained artistic links with Italy. Thanks to the rich humanist culture that flourished along the Dalmatian coast in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and the wealth of mercantile contacts, both Latin and Italian were widely understood throughout the region.

For the scholars of today, by contrast, the language barrier presents a real cultural frontier. Croatia's contribution to European art and architecture badly needs reassessment, for since the Second World War it has received only minimal attention outside

Eastern Europe. This beautifully produced volume represents a courageous attempt to remedy the situation. Promoted by Jadranka Beresford-Peirse, founder of the International Trust for Croatian Monuments, the book publishes essays by a team of a dozen contributors, only three of whom are Croatian. It is copiously illustrated with over two hundred plates and maps, almost all in colour. Given its lavish format, the book is very reasonably priced.

Ever since Robert Adam published *The Ruins of Spalatro* in 1764, Diocletian's Palace – the nucleus of modern-day Split – has figured prominently in histories of classical architecture. Later monuments and works of art, however, are less well known. A major pioneer in the field was the English architect T. G. Jackson, whose ambitious three-volume work of the region's architecture, *Dalmatia, the Quarnero and Istria*, was published in 1887. Over a century elapsed before the colloquium entitled *Quattrocento Adriatico*, held at the Villa Spelman in Florence in 1994 and published two years later, revived Western interest in the unity of the Adriatic region. Important exhibitions in Venice in 2001 and Écouen in 2004 brought some of the newly restored art treasures of Croatia to the attention of the Western European public. In general, however, modern studies outside Croatia itself have concentrated on those Dalmatian artists who worked in Italy, such as Francesco and Luciano Laurana, Andrea Schiavone and Giulio Clovio.

The book opens with a useful outline of the history of Croatia by Stjepan Ćosić, Director of the State Archives of Zagreb. Known as Illyria to the ancient Greeks, the region was conquered by the Romans in 168 BC, and although the Roman province was split into the two regions of Dalmatia and Pannonia, the name 'Illyria' persisted – forming the setting of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* for instance. The artistic legacy of the Greeks and Romans is discussed in essays by Branko Kirigin and J. J. Wilkes respectively, although these authors treat the subject in very different ways. Whereas the chapter on the Greeks interweaves geographical, archaeological, literary and artistic aspects, that on the Romans is essentially a catalogue of the remaining Roman artefacts with a Croatian provenance. The end result in the latter chapter is more of a reference work than an essay, for only a few of the works described are illustrated. Nevertheless, the quality of the Roman sculpture is inspiring, especially the funerary monuments in the form of upright stele with relief portraits – ranging from single figures to a whole family – above exquisitely carved inscriptions, sometimes with the 'door to the underworld' depicted beneath. Diocletian's Palace at Split is treated admirably in a separate essay by Sheila McNally, who includes a useful review of the more recent interpretations of the significance of the monuments. Rather than attempting to force the palace into a standardized typology of the Roman imperial residence, she acknowledges the individuality of the complex, offering a subtle analysis of the possible functions of its various elements. Sadly, Istria has slipped out of the picture: neither the important Roman remains of Pula nor the well-preserved Early Christian episcopal centre of Poreč find their place in the volume.

The manuscripts of Croatia are surveyed in the chapter by Christopher de Hamel, who has evidently enjoyed seeking out those still in the possession of monasteries and medieval churches: "There is a lot of knocking on doors and peering through

grilles; one meets nuns, monks, friars and priests; and conversations are slow, in German, French or, if all else fails, in Latin. This is the old way of antiquarianism, and it is a precious survival' (60). A curious characteristic is a group of manuscripts that preserves the ancient Roman cursive script known as Beneventan minuscule, otherwise rarely found outside southern Italy. Because Croatia remained Catholic, its liturgy was distinct from that of Serbia, while Zagreb was even allowed to preserve its own rites. The surviving manuscripts reflect both Hungarian and Italian influence.

Donal Cooper's essay on 'Gothic Art and the Friars in Late Medieval Croatia' is a model contribution, exemplary in its scholarship, clarity and artistic sensitivity. Croatia preserves more Mendicant art and architecture than any other country except Italy, and although the churches are mainly simple aisleless structures their works of art include altarpieces, choirstalls and sculpture of the highest quality from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries. One of Paolo Veneziano's masterpieces, the *Crucifixion* in the church of St Dominic in Dubrovnik, is discussed both here and later in Timothy Clifford's chapter, although their two illustrations under different lighting conditions give surprisingly divergent results (figs. 6.20 and 10.10). The Franciscan and Dominican cloisters of Dubrovnik fortunately survived the devastating earthquake of 1667, although, sadly, the renowned silver altarpieces from these two friaries have been lost. At least one of them was apparently sacrificed to provide funds for the rebuilding.

The Renaissance period is covered in several articles of varying scope and approach. There is some overlap between the chapters, and anyone seeking to research a particular artist would thus need to make careful use of the index. David Ekserdjian's chapter on the Orsini Chapel in Trogir Cathedral opens with a rapid overview of Croatian-Italian connections – of which another version is offered in Timothy Clifford's first essay. The newly restored Orsini Chapel is one of the most remarkable complexes of Renaissance sculpture in southern Europe, and Ekserdjian's brief introduction can only whet the appetite.

The two most important Renaissance painters of Croatia were Lovro Dobricević and Nikola Božidarević. The first of these, active in Dalmatia in the mid fifteenth century, figures prominently in Donal Cooper's chapter on the Friars, although to gain a fuller picture of his activity the reader has to trawl several chapters. By contrast, Božidarević, active in Dubrovnik in the early sixteenth century, is afforded his own chapter, written by Joško Belamarić, one of the foremost scholars of Croatian art. Like Cooper's chapter, his is a fine contribution, which reconstructs the *oeuvre* of this intriguing artist. After a period in Italy in his youth, Božidarević returned to his homeland in 1497 to produce a series of exquisite altarpieces that can only be understood in the particular context of Dubrovnik (the former Ragusa). In this important mercantile centre, lavish material goods had a profound effect on the local visual culture, and the surfaces of Božidarević's paintings are luxuriously adorned with gilding and rich textiles. As Belamarić observes, the artist 'did not paint portraits of saints [. . .]; rather, he portrayed materials in which his saints were clothed' (113).

The last four chapters are different in style and approach from the first half of the book, having the character of enthusiastic travel writing. Two essays by Timothy Clifford, on the Renaissance and Baroque art and architecture of Dalmatia and

Dubrovnik, are arranged geographically rather than chronologically. The visitor to Croatia would be well advised to photocopy these pages, as they are rich in information on a very wide range of art and architecture, including liturgical objects and sculpture. Clifford draws upon his extensive knowledge of European art in all media to make stimulating observations about attributions and connections with other works outside Croatia, and his enthusiasm is infectious. Although presented as the work of an erudite *cicerone*, the research is underpinned by useful scholarly endnotes.

Marcus Binney's chapter on the state of preservation of the castles and manor houses of Croatia is more personal and anecdotal than any other contribution, and its coverage is limited to the area around Zagreb. His intention seems to be to encourage a more respectful attitude towards the conservation of the area's architectural heritage. The rich legacy of Renaissance architecture in Dalmatia, extensively studied by Nada Grujić, is missing from this book, despite the prominence of the humanists and churchmen who commissioned these villas. (The forthcoming book on the humanist culture of Dalmatian villas by Nadja Aksamija will throw new light on this topic.)

The book's final essay is an introduction to the Museums of Zagreb by art critic Brian Sewell, which opens with a devastating attack on the Mimara Museum. Claiming that most of its objects are either fakes or wrongly attributed, Sewell discredits the role of the collector Ante Topić Mimara, former confidant of Marshal Tito. He even argues that Mimara's donation of over eighty works to the more reputable Strossmayer Gallery of Old Masters seriously weakened the latter museum. Following this invective, his account of the other museums is more dispassionate. He has a particular fondness for the house and studio of twentieth-century sculptor Ivan Meštrović. An intriguing treasure of the Archaeological Museum in Zagreb is the fourteen-metre-long linen wrapping from an Egyptian mummy surprisingly inscribed in Etruscan script. The extraordinarily fine *Apoxyomenos*, a bronze nude from the fourth century BC, raised from the seabed in 1999, is a highlight of the same museum.

In conclusion, this book is rich in material of interest to scholars of the Renaissance. As a region with a notable classical legacy and a cosmopolitan spectrum of later artistic connections, especially with Italy and Hungary, Croatia needs to be re-integrated into European art history. The book would have benefited from stronger editorial control to iron out overlaps and harmonize the tone of the essays, although the variety of different approaches is both intriguing and stimulating. Despite the ambitious range of topics covered there are significant gaps, especially the antiquities of Istria and the Renaissance villas of Dalmatia. Nevertheless, the book's energetic, enthusiastic writing, its plentiful colour illustrations and useful endnotes (though no bibliography) make this an invaluable introduction to a field that deserves to be taken very seriously indeed.