

Submission Details

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The Exotic Otherness of Early Modern Imagery and Emblematism

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Abstract

The Stirling Maxwell Collection of emblem books and of works related to visual arts, currently housed at the University of Glasgow's Archives and Special Collections, constitutes a unique resource for the study of emblems, iconography, and Golden Age Iberian art. In amassing his vast collection (including one of the largest collections of Spanish art outside of Spain) Sir William Stirling Maxwell (1818-1878) exercised a healthy curiosity about art in Iberia, its artists and subjects, as well as their social, political, and historical context. His *Annals of the Artists of Spain* (1848) set new standards in the field of History of Art, with a substantial focus on Spanish Golden Age art that reflected his own private collecting practice and values. Informed by key works in the collection, this session will interrogate Otherness and Exoticism in the context of (but not limited to) slavery, colonisation, blackness, and Christians and Moors and Ottomans in Early Modern Iberia and its overseas dominions, and the Hapsburg Iberian and Austrian empires.

Since their inception in 1531, emblems were often an integral part of the visual and textual discourses. Their assimilation into a literary and iconographic language does not fill a void, but rather complements and adds to a pre-existing common framework of meanings where 'verba significant, res significant' (Alciato: 1536). Permeations of emblematic iconography surface in other art forms, such as drama, poetry, and 'novelas' (short stories). They appear also in festivals and other important events in the social and political life of Early Modern Europe. Festivals and pageants, in particular, brought together a host of artists and crafts (from poets to printers, painters to architects, sculptors to musicians, and many others), collaborating to promote the central tenet of the event. A common worldview, therefore, is endorsed, which, being public art for immediate consumption, also simplifies and polarizes perspectives of radical Otherness.

Aligning with the symposium theme of 'Welcoming the radically other (tout autre)', we explore how early sixteenth-century language of love in 'novelas' can be seen as othering non-conforming individuals in Iberia. We will interrogate known and established visual representations of the varied gamut of Otherness present in Early Modern Spain to show degrees of conformity. Concurrently, leading Spanish artists (painters such as the painters Juan de Valdés Leal and Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, but also sculptors, architects, and a range of other craftsmen) collaborated in an uncompromising display of a radical Counter-Reformation idealized society. Parallel to this, however, we also find surprising occasions of celebration of acceptance of Otherness in the Habsburg Austrian Empire, evidence that the expected opposing views of Us vs Others was not always as simplistic as is often portrayed.

Our Session, however, also straddles into the symposium themes of 'Decolonial thinking (different modes of "writing back" to the Empire)', to interrogate Early Modern views of the Other in Latin America and Brazil, their passive acceptance into the present day welcoming discourses of otherness, proposing an alternative perspective (indeed, frame of mind) to interpret inherited terminology and descriptors in the digital medium.

Presentations of the Symposium

Translated Casualties of Emblematic Love

Véronique Duché ✉ (U of Melbourne)

Narratives focussing on the 'materia de amore' were popular in late medieval Spain, as well as in sixteenth century Europe by virtue of their many translations. The story at the heart of these sentimental fictions was mainly about the misfortune of an unhappy lover in a courtly setting, where festivals and court celebrations are often depicted in the background of the action. The characters engage with dances, songs and diverse pastimes, and clothes are also often described in great detail.

In this paper we examine the emblematic content of these 'novelas sentimentales'. The 'letras de invencion' (personal motto in a poetic form) in particular will be studied, as well as the woodcuts illustrating these short novels. A special attention will be paid to Question de amor, an anonymous novel published in 1513, and its translations. While some aspects of the Spanish culture were embraced by the anonymous translator and their readers, others were fiercely rejected and denigrated. The backdrop of the story (the Italian Wars and the battle of Ravenna, 1512) undoubtedly influenced the translators and their worldview. The cultural shift from one language to the other will be investigated, highlighting elements in the translation which were perceived as exotic Otherness at that time.

Otherness in Golden Age Spain: Visual Representations of Moriscos, Marranos, African Slaves, Gypsies, and Foreigners

Rafael Iglesias ✉ (Benedictine U)

This presentation will explore the way ethnic, racial, and religious minorities were depicted during the so-called Spanish Golden Age period in literature as well as in various forms of visual arts representation such as paintings, emblems, book illustrations, and wood carvings.

Special attention will be paid to some groups of people that were seen with suspicion or were discriminated against, including Moriscos ("New Christians" of Muslim ancestry), Marranos ("New Christians" of Jewish ancestry), African slaves (both from North Africa and Sub-Saharan Africa), Gypsies, and non-Catholic residents or visitors from other European countries.

In a worldview aligned to events that led to, and followed, the Counter-Reformation, and obsession with religious conformity and "purity of blood", we will interrogate these representations to explore variant degrees of observance and divergence.

Moros y cristianos: The Triumph over Otherness in the Celebrations for the Canonization of St. Ferdinand in Seville Cathedral (1671)

Carmen González-Román ✉ (U de Málaga), Hilary Macartney ✉ (U of Glasgow)

Festivals of 'Moors and Christians' are some of the most colourful in the calendar of festivities in Spain each year. The continuing stereotyping and othering of 'moros' in popular culture reflects the complexity of Spain's relationship both with Islam and with its neighbours across the Strait of Gibraltar. In this paper, we examine the partisan and propagandist representation of the political and religious conflict in medieval Spain in the celebrations for the canonization of King Ferdinand III of Castile held in Seville Cathedral in 1671. Ferdinand captured Seville, then the capital of Muslim Spain or al-Andalus from its Almohad rulers following a long siege in 1248.

The rare volume of *Fiestas de Sevilla*, which provides a valuable record of the celebrations, is considered to be one of the finest books of the Spanish Baroque. Its text and accompanying etchings record the ephemeral architecture and decoration carried out for the Cathedral

chapter. The artists and designers involved in the constructions in wood, plaster and painted canvas were amongst the best-known in the city, and included the painters Juan de Valdés Leal and Bartolomé Esteban Murillo, the architect Bernardo Simón Pineda and the sculptor Pedro Roldán. The etchings, by Valdés Leal and Matías de Arteaga, combined with the visual sensibility of Fernando de la Torre Farfán, author of the text and one of the canons of the Cathedral, conveyed the aspirations and the challenges of realising the scheme. The main monument, or Triunfo, designed by Valdés Leal and Simón Pineda, was erected between four pillars of the central nave just inside the great doors of the Cathedral and could be seen from the street outside. The collaboration between artists involved in the construction and decoration resulted in one of the most impressive ephemeral monuments of the Spanish Early Modern period. The paintings, sculptures, emblems and inscriptions displayed on it promoted an uncompromising Counter-Reformation and anti-Islamic view of history. In our paper, we seek to recover these through the large folding plate representing the Triunfo and accompanying text and related images in Torre Farfán's *Fiestas de Sevilla* volume.

The Fascination of Exoticism: A Few Viennese Examples of Early Modern Festivals of the Hapsburgs

Rudi Risatti ✉ (*Theatermuseum*)

Similarly to the imagery of Festivals of the Early Modern Iberia, also that of the 'eastern' half of the Hapsburg Empire reflects a keen interest for Otherness and Exoticism. From the perspective of the imperial dynasty, the Ottoman advance from the Balkans in the second half of the 15th century were a serious political threat, but their presence at the doors of Vienna indirectly also nurtured the curiosity for exotic images and traditions. The vivid Exoticism in the arts of the Austrian regions of the 16th, and even more of the 17th century, flourished in a context of extreme uncertainty in internal politics and in foreign affairs. However, contrary to the general assumption, this climate did not produce an imagery mirroring only enmity or repugnance towards the Other as the logical result of a supremacist, colonial approach. It also produced an iconography underlying the fascination with different and remote shapes and colours, which must have been perceived as new and intriguing by rulers and scholars, and sometimes even by the popular class. In this perspective, it is not rare to find ennobling depictions of 'foreigners' in festivals, such as royal entrées or tournaments. In fact, their analysis show that they are not uniquely negative or denigrating. In the festivals of that time, the affirmation of the own superiority through allegories was preponderant, but, at the same time, the conforming and non-conforming visualisation of Otherness indicated the character of a time which was far more international, heterogeneous and somehow more open to an idea of a 'wide world', than expected.

Some of the precious holdings of the Theatermuseum and Kunsthistorisches Museum, as well as of other collections in Vienna, indicate such tendencies. In a series of drawings named Pageant in Honour of Saint Jacob (dated around 1580), among angels, Greco-Roman gods, dryads riding on bears, and naked nymphs, there appear also wonderfully dressed Moorish knights, equipped with golden spears. Later, evening receptions at the court of Emperor Leopold I, called *Wirtschaften*, in which the guests had to disguise themselves as gardeners, villagers, ancient Romans and Germans, we find also guests dressed up as Turks, Chinese, Mongols, Persians, Ethiopians, and so on. For these disguises the theatre engineer Lodovico Ottavio Burnacini (1636–1707) had to draw hundreds of figurines and costumes, in which appear even people from the Far East or people of colour. Evidently free from prejudice, these disguises were the triumph of a penchant for exotic taste and there was no harm, for members or guests of the imperial court, in taking the likeness of a Mongolian Grand Khan or an Ethiopian noblewoman, a Shah of Persia or of a wealthy Gypsy matron, just as it was not reprehensible to disguise oneself as popular or bucolic figures. Beyond colonial thinking, these and some other examples show, that the Early Modern views of the Other could also have a positive connotation and reflect a particular fascination of Exoticism.

Decolonizing Iconology: The Problem of Early Modern Images of the Americas in Digital Collections

Pedro Germano Leal ✉ (*The John Carter Brown Library*)

Iconology is often referred to as a method to interpret images, their meanings and cultural significance. Although the term is etymologically close to 'the discourse of the images', it came to comprise the 'discourse about the images' — in other words, any text used to describe images falls into the realm of iconography.

There are, therefore, at least two discourses at play: one, the silent message of the picture; and the other, the way it is textually perceived throughout history. And they can be radically different and even contradictory, especially in the context of images produced in colonial contexts.

This can be easily perceived in the way that images are indexed and retrieved in digital collections. Not rarely, one comes across images of maroons in the Americas being labelled as 'slaves' or 'enslaved' peoples. One troubling example is the only visual representation of inhabitants of the Quilombo dos Palmares (a vast maroon in Northeast Brazil), which illustrates the map *Praefecturae Paranambucae pars Meridionalis (Rerum per octennium in Brasilia, Amsterdam: Joan Blaeu, 1647)*. The fishermen pictured in the map are frequently described as 'slaves' in digital collections and websites.

Historically inaccurate descriptors such as this are particularly problematic in digital medium, because these images are easily accessed, shared and published together with wrong descriptions, perpetuating the problem.

In this paper I will outline this problem and discuss the alternatives that are being developed for the John Carter Brown Library's new digital platform, one of the finest collections of books, maps and manuscripts about the early Americas.

Remarks / Messages

Remark/Message from the Authors:

All papers are in English, though speaker Carmen González-Rámon might prefer to use Spanish.