Early Modern Passions (Wolfenbuettel 2.-5.4.2003)

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2-5.4.2003)

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The Passions in the Early Modern Period

11th Tri-annual meeting of the Wolfenbuetteler Arbeitskreises fuer Barockforschung Herzog August Bibliothek Wolfenbuettel

2nd to 5th April 2003

Organising Committee
Conference chair:Johann Anselm Steiger (Hamburg)
Co-organizers: Barbara Bauer (Bern), Guillaume van Gemert (Nijmegen), Carsten-Peter Warncke (Goettingen)

Conference Description

Wolfenbuettel Baroque Conferences have always aimed to promote the study of Early Modern topics by encouraging cross-disciplinary discussion in historical fields. At the 2003 conference scholars in cultural and literary history, historical theology, music history, medical history, art history and the history of science will be given an opportunity to engage in interdisciplinary discussion on the connections between suffering, emotion and passion.

One of the major themes will be the treatment of the Passion of Christ in sacred poetry, in sermons, in rhetorica sacra, devotions, songs and hymns, emblems, and the tradition of the Baroque Passion, both before and after J.S. Bach. A focus of interest will be the common and specific features of the arousal of "affectus fidei" (compassion/grief, hope/joy etc.) within the multimedia characteristic of the era - i.e. through the medium of language, via rhetoric, homiletics, and poetic strategies as well as in the use of new methods of hermeneutics in music. The increase in exchange between scholars of literature, historical theology and music over the past decade will certainly facilitate this discussion.

In addition we shall be focussing on the stimulation of emotions and the role of passion in the pictorial media, in art, in school and court drama, and opera, broadening the scope to a European dimension

including French and Italian sources and their intercultural influences. Court festivities will be of particular interest here. The aim will be to channel new insights from recent research and to focus on the following questions: was it considered particularly desirable in analogy to the stylistic ideal of argutia to find a special and individual mode of expressing feelings? And vice-versa does the stylistic ideal of brevitas correspond to the neo-stoical ideal of dissimulatio of emotions? Are there indications which show that there was a positive evaluation and a cultivation of emotions during the Baroque era or do techniques of sublimation predominate for emotions considered potentially uncontrollable? How do societies and institutions cope with emotions and how is the cultivation of emotions portrayed in the various arts? What levels of style correspond with what moods? How are levels of style mixed in order to evoke certain moods and emotions? What themes are associated with which emotions? How do theme, content and artistic execution relate to one another? As in the first section, particular attention will be paid to the connection between picture and imagination, depiction and performance, imagination and reception.

Beyond this, and underlying all other thematic concerns, we want to highlight the philosophical,aesthetic, medical, and scientific treatment of the topic of "emotion and passion". How did science and the arts react to signs of changes in modes of expression of emotions? How were the physiology of the emotions and the interaction between the senses and the brain described in the early modern physiology of the senses and in theories of sense perception? What gender attributions were employed? On which anthropological-philosophical and medical premises are early modern theories of style, art and music based?

Despite the diversity of its themes the main aim of the conference is to focus on unknown or little-used sources and to encourage innovative aspects of enquiry which will forge trans-disciplinary links in the study of Baroque culture and highlight both its many perspectives and its international nature.

The following thematic sessions have been planned. It is hoped to solicit papers on the relationship between theory and practice in rhetoric, poetics, the physiology of the senses, psychology, medicine, etc. which will be spread over all four sessions and provide an extra link between the four main themes. Session I The passions in theology, sermons, rhetoric, devotions and sacred poetry. Session II The musical Passion tradition of the Baroque. Session III The passions in theatre, opera, ballet and festival culture. Session IV The passions: theoretical, historical and gender constructions (examples

from the pictorial arts, secular poetry and literature, architecture etc.)

Call for papers

Previous planning which has already taken place for Sessions I and II means that our call for papers relates to the following:

1. Sessions III and IV
2. contributions dealing with the underlying historical framework of philosophy, psychology, anthropology, physiology, medical history and aesthetics. Please submit a proposal (max. one page A4, with your name, affiliation and your probable point of departure to the conference). The deadline is 15th October 2001.

Send your proposal to:
Geschaeftsstelle des Wolfenbuetteler Arbeitskreises fuer Barockforschung, Dr. Jill Bepler, Herzog August Bibliothek, Postfach 1364, D-38299 Wolfenbuettel, Germany or by email to: forschung@hab.de

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Reference:
CFP: Early Modern Passions (Wolfenbuettel 2.-5.4.2003). In: ArtHist.net, Aug 16, 2001 (accessed Nov 4, 2026), <https://arthist.net/archive/24568>.