

Oxford Graduate Symposium in Spanish Golden Age Studies

Looking at the World Sideways: Perspective in the Spanish Golden Age

Saturday 16 January 2010
University of Oxford
Keynote speaker: Prof. Jeremy Robbins

The Renaissance saw a flourishing, both conceptually and technically, in the understanding of perspective, taken in the Baroque to new extremes of distortion and dynamic movement. In contrast to the modern conception of a 'right way' in which to perceive things, artists and authors in the Golden Age worked with multiple perspectives, allowing for different interpretations from different audiences, challenging their readers to decipher several meanings, consistently treading the fine line between illusion and reality. In modern usage, the term is far more frequently applied to the visual arts than to literary texts; to poetry, prose or drama. However, the definition of perspective as 'a figure designed to appear distorted or confused except when viewed from a certain position' is just as applicable to satire or literature written under censorship as it is to visual illusion. The description of 'a device for producing an unusual optical effect, e.g. the distortion of an image' is relevant to our reading of *culteranismo*; its use as 'a picture drawn according to the rules of perspective, (esp. theatrical backdrop) appearing to enlarge or extend the actual space' can apply both to dramatic language and scenography, as well as to the architecture of churches and palaces. Moreover, the Spanish definition, 'apariencia o representación engañosa y falaz de las cosas', implies as much for our readings of Cervantes, Quevedo or Calderón as it does for our interpretations of Velázquez or Coello.

Throughout the symposium, we will be working with these, and other definitions of perspective in order to answer the following questions: Are ideas of perspective applied to the visual arts also relevant to literature? How does this affect our understanding of the relationship between different modes of perception? What are the implications for our understanding of perspective(s) in the Early Modern Hispanic World? How can we extend the idea of perspective beyond the visual arts to provide a more holistic definition encompassing ways of envisioning the world, articulating experience and inhabiting spaces in the Golden Age?

Topics may include, but are not confined to, the following:

- Censorship and subversion
- Critiques of kingship and panegyric
- The effect of the Counter-Reformation on modes of perception
- Satire
- *Ut pictura poesis*
- Language and scenography in the theatre
- *Culteranismo*
- The interplay of illusion and reality
- The use of physical spaces: theatres, churches, palaces
- Private and Public spheres

Please submit proposals of up to 250 words for papers of no more than 20 minutes, in English or Spanish, to alice.brooke@merton.ox.ac.uk or naomi.walker@exeter.ox.ac.uk no later than 30th October 2009.