

departures in lay piety will, this study makes clear, turn to the Lübeck evidence in vain.

Certain striking trends Noodt is indeed able to locate, particularly in the social distribution of pious bequests; but what they may signify proves less easy to adduce. Gifts to parish churches, including the great burgher church of St Mary, became over the course of the century increasingly the preserve of the wealthiest merchant families. Major bequests to the poor, and the main innovations in pious giving, can be linked particularly with rising families and with wealthy outsiders. What to make of such patterns? Noodt herself is wary of unfolding a lurid account of escalating social divisions, concurring, for example, with an earlier Lübeck historian, Ahasver von Brandt, that no distinct patriciate can be found developing there in the fourteenth century. She also finds support in the testaments for von Brandt's picture of a 'healthy' social structure, with a substantial middling stratum of property owners. What her evidence proves less able to explain is why this 'healthy' society became gripped, after 1380, by a succession of protracted and highly disruptive internecine conflicts and constitutional upheavals, which, in their bitterness, stand out even among the many disorders which shook German towns at the time. These disturbances, the first phase of which occurred within the period covered by this book, have left only the faintest and most uncertain of traces in the last wills of Lübeck burghers, many of whom would have been, in one way or another, close to the centre of the storm.

If Noodt's analysis raises more questions than it can answer, the main explanation for that lies in the nature of her materials. She has nevertheless written a work of immensely detailed and careful scholarship, which will have lasting value, and which deserves to find readers far beyond her native land. Her meticulously documented findings include things of interest to all historians concerned with urban society, familial solidarities and lay piety in the fourteenth century.

*University of Durham*

LEN SCALES

*Eyewitnessing: The Uses of Images as Historical Evidence.* By PETER BURKE (London: Reaktion Books, 2001; pp. 224. £25).

THE author of this book has done a great deal to reconcile art history with general history. As long ago as 1972 he published *Culture and Society in Renaissance Italy, 1420–1540* – not mentioned among the references in this new book – which was remarkable particularly for its crisp analysis of the culture's concepts of nature, order, richness, feeling and skill, their bearing on art and their wider social resonance. Since then he has continued to use images as historical evidence, most programmatically in *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* (1992).

*Eyewitnessing* offers itself primarily as a summary conspectus of the last century's methods of deriving historical information from visual art. It is developed from a course for first-year Cambridge students and briefly touches a great many bases, pointing to issues and suggesting initial further reading. Procedures sketched range from Panofskian Iconology and Lukács-derived Marxism in the 1920s and 1930s to late-model post-structuralism of the more

academic kind. Principal historical topics are the varieties of cult image, the personification of ideas and the idealization of personages, depictions of material culture, social typing of the child or woman or peasant, negative stereotypes of Others, and contemporary and retrospective representations of events, including representations in movies.

It is brutal to summarize summary, but quite early in the book Burke sets down three initial principles: (1) 'art can provide evidence for aspects of social reality'; but (2) it 'is often less realistic than it seems and distorts social reality rather than reflecting it'; and (3) 'the process of distortion is itself evidence'. (It should be said that he is aware that the idea of 'social reality' has problems.) And then near the end he sees in the cases he has surveyed four recurrent conditions: (1) 'images give access not to the social world directly but rather to contemporary views of that world'; (2) their testimony needs to be placed in a full range of contexts, both artistic and social; (3) 'a series of images offers testimony more reliable than that of individual images'; (4) the historian should be alert for the small details and absences that tell of knowledge or assumptions the makers were not aware of having. These are good tips.

Inevitably and unfairly, some readers will react as to an airline meal: instead of so many packaged mini-stuffs could we not have just one decent sandwich. But here Burke could properly point to his own *The Fabrication of Louis XIV. Eyewitnessing* is simply a different sort of book. Still, even on its own terms it does seem awkward that there is at no point room really to work a case through: the taste and feel and difficulties of detailed systematic situations – the site where discovery actually happens – never quite emerge. On the other hand, long-focus inspection of so many different rationales does bring out some basic general matters, and one, I think, is an issue of whether 'testimony' (or 'document', 'witness' or 'evidence') is really a viable description for the informative relation of art to historical fact.

Burke's position is that the image is a document of a past social reality, a tricky document whose distortions we both correct and learn from. He is even-handed in his survey of ways to un-distort it, but one cannot help feeling that much depends in practice on prior knowledge of the social reality from other sources. Indeed, that is how we come to put to that informatively distorted image the particular question about social typing or political event or whatever it may be. If one fiddles with the type questions by substituting a term – 'How trustworthy is Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimentale* as evidence of class structure in the France of Louis-Philippe?' 'How reliable is the testimony on its circumstances of 'Lillibullero'?' – one gets a hint of how the question may be, not idiotic, but ill-posed in the sense that one is not going to get a straight answer which respects the interest, as informant, of book, song or picture. There has been a short circuit and the image has become an imperfect illustration of something. And that has to do with the relation of a complex particular to multiple generals, of an idiosyncratic individual to 'social facts'.

So it is not just a play on words to suggest it would be more natural to approach the image, less as tellingly flawed evidence of a social reality, than as itself a deposit or bit of social reality – seen in a section that may not be the one most convenient to the historian. That is to say, someone of a specific formation (class; metropolitan or provincial; schooling) has made an object (availability of materials, level of technique and intellection; format and subject-matter) in a situation (craft structure, market, institutions for exposure, forms of

negotiation, initiative and control) where values (identity, beliefs, prized skills, manners, coterie loyalties) and a public's visual resources (symbolism and stylistic coding, vernacular visual skills) are mobilized to an end (problem conception and paradigm solution). The image is constituted of the cultural stuff here bracketed – some of the same stuff as can interest general historians, I take it, but sliced at a different angle with a different sort of instrument and displaying different order and emphasis.

An issue then becomes: 'How much of its own social and cultural constitution does this image, when seen comparatively with other images, authentically exhibit?' Good practice by various of the methods mentioned by Burke suggests it can exhibit quite a lot, but perhaps not the particular social reality you are seeking at the moment, and probably not in the terms of the question you are asking about it. Images, like tax-rolls or ambassadors' despatches, generate and most gracefully answer questions in their own terms, in the first instance, though the eventual complex answers can then engage with other matters. *Eyewitnessing* is well-informed and fair-minded, and it prompts one to ponder.

*University of California, Berkeley*

MICHAEL BAXANDALL

*Richelieu's Army: War, Government and Society in France, 1624–1642.* By DAVID PARROTT (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P., 2001; pp. 599. £60).

His earlier articles have already established David Parrott's reputation as a specialist in the military history of the period of the Thirty Years' War; but this book has been eagerly awaited. As the author himself admits, 'this book has been long in gestation' and the result, if not quite a reappraisal of all aspects of the interaction of the French government with society in this period, is something which is not far short of it. The book is organized thematically in three sections: the military context; the administrative context; and responses and reactions.

The military context considers successively the French art of war during Richelieu's ministry, the aims and methods of the period of the *guerre couverte* to 1634, the period of the *guerre ouverte* between 1635 and 1642 and, finally, the question of the size of the French army (where there is considerable disagreement with the earlier work of John A. Lynn). The French 'art of war' is considered in both its theoretical and practical aspects. Parrott correctly emphasizes the importance of the veteran component of armies, which was critical in winning battles in the Thirty Years' War when there was often no great difference in size between the opposing forces. Reliance on foreign mercenaries was encouraged both by the significant proportion of veterans in such armies and also the unacceptably high levels of desertion among ordinary French units when they crossed the frontiers. Parrott notes that successful armies in the Thirty Years' War tended to have a high proportion of cavalry. In contrast, French commanders found themselves chronically short of such forces. Rocroi in 1643 marks a shift in emphasis: it was 'a decisive victory won by the French cavalry led by the duc d'Enghien (later known as the great Condé). Had the French cavalry not been strong and confident enough to break through the Spanish horse of the left flank, the outcome of a battle dependent on the respective infantries was far less likely to have been a French victory (p. 65).