

Jakob Bogdani's Stuffed Titmouse: Birds, Still-Life Painting and the Global Imaginary

*Lucy Powell*

University of Oxford

Between 1706 and 1710, at the Ranger's Lodge at Little Park in Windsor, Admiral George Churchill, younger brother of the far more illustrious and by all accounts much better liked John Churchill, the first Duke of Marlborough, amassed what was reputedly the most beautiful collection of exotic, or non-native, birds in England.<sup>1</sup> In 1708, he hired the Hungarian still-life painter, Jakob Bogdani, to record the specimens in his aviaries. On Churchill's death in 1710, seven of these paintings were then purchased by Queen Anne, and fourteen Bogdani oils remain in the Royal Collection today. Two are currently hanging in the Garden Room at Clarence House.<sup>2</sup> In this article, I intend to analyse Bogdani's bird paintings from this period in order to newly map the ideas about the global imagination and the facts of British colonial trade that they encode. I suggest that birds, as material objects and as vectors of new modes of natural philosophy, are eloquent actants of the dark underbelly of enlightenment ideals.

Christine E. Jackson's pioneering work has made vital inroads in our knowledge about Bogdani's life and the technical dynamics of his bird paintings.<sup>3</sup> My analysis moves beyond Jackson's by situating Bogdani's images in the febrile context of Britain's rapidly expanding global trade networks. Birds in the eighteenth century speak to the global aspect of European enlightenments in two, separate but related ways. First, in the empirical proof of migration. Well into the eighteenth century, there were a wide range of theories about where migratory birds spent the British winter. In 1703, the mathematician Charles Morton had very seriously offered the suggestion that swallows overwintered on the Moon.<sup>4</sup> In 1768, even so redoubtable a man of reason as Samuel Johnson declared: "Swallows certainly sleep all the

winter. A number of them conglobulate together, by flying round and round, and then all in a heap throw themselves under water, and lye in the bed of a river.”<sup>5</sup> But the influx of empirically observed accounts from Europeans on the ground in Africa, India and East Asia were increasingly rendering these inherited, book-learnt narratives of birds and the natural world obsolete.<sup>6</sup> What had previously been thought of as British (or French or Dutch) birds were discovered to be equally at home for half of every year in Africa and East Asia.<sup>7</sup>

Second, the number of birds known to European ornithology, itself a fledgling discipline, expanded exponentially during this period. This was partly due to enlightenment desires to chronicle and chart the entirety of the natural world, developing standardized taxonomies to enable a pursuit of totalizing systems of knowledge. In part, it was a product of the scores of “new” species that were returned, either as skins, or as live birds from European traders, sailors, slavers and natural philosophers from around the world. This trajectory can be mapped by the number of bird species listed in the Swedish zoologist, Carl Linneaus’ *Systema Naturae*. By some counts, the sixth edition in 1748 contained 260 separate species of bird, 444 were recorded in the tenth edition in 1758, more than 1,000 in the thirteenth edition in 1788, and in excess of 3,000 by 1801.<sup>8</sup>

In both cases, “the global” is a necessary precondition for the pursuit of these enlightenment ideals, of expanding knowledge systems about the functioning of the natural world. The “discovery” of “new” species, and new knowledge about familiar, European birds, were both reliant on territorial expansion of European state powers across the globe. In this way, the ideational enlightenment enabled by such “discoveries” is, of necessity, a “dark” enlightenment, dependent as it is on an expanding, exploitative European presence in colonized spaces, and an increase in traffic along triangulated trade routes between Africa, the Americas and Europe which were fundamentally enabled by the transatlantic trade in enslaved humans. These same conditions pertain to a great deal of the new knowledge

systems being forged and fought over in the European eighteenth century, and yet enlightenment studies has, until recently, proved reluctant to explore the synergy between ideational and materialist expansion. In the words of Dorinda Outram, scholarship has “yet to come to grips with the relation between the Enlightenment and the creation of a global world.”<sup>9</sup> Lynn Festa and Daniel Carey similarly argue that despite a recent turn towards pluralizing “the Enlightenment” into multiple movements and discourses, and a critical insistence on the relatedness of the acquisition of knowledge, power and capital, enlightenment studies “has remained curiously parochial, bound to its European origins and contained within these contexts.”<sup>10</sup>

This article offers a contribution to the necessary realignment of our collective reading of enlightenment as an axiomatically global, materially informed set of practices. In the analysis that follows, I trace the contours of a dark enlightenment as they emerge in the canvases of Bogdani’s bird paintings, both by delineating the exotics and by thinking through the function of the common, European birds that feature there, in particular a bullfinch (*pyrrhula pyrrhula*) and a titmouse, or great tit (*parus major*). These readings attend to the injunction of thing theorist Arjun Appadurai, who writes: “we have to follow the things themselves, for their meanings are inscribed in their forms, their uses, their trajectories. It is only through the analysis of these trajectories that we can interpret the human transactions and calculations that enliven things.”<sup>11</sup> By following the birds that people Churchill’s aviaries, and elaborating the material histories of Bogdani’s paintings of them, the specifics of their relationship to a global imaginary are made evident.

Finally, my analysis explores Bogdani’s borrowings from the still-life tradition, and his vital experimentation with that genre of painting. In her analysis of Dutch still lifes of the seventeenth century, Hanneke Grootenboer has argued that “painting is a form of thinking,” in which the relationship between individual paintings’ “truth, their meaning, and their

appearances” is forged.<sup>12</sup> In this framing, paintings are not inert referents to something that has happened before, and outside of them. They do not show a (performed, already available) truth; rather, they make one. What is important about this methodological starting point is that paintings can be understood to anticipate and encode our interpretations of them in their formal choices, in ways which can function antagonistically. A painting’s truths and its appearances may then be – very deliberately – counteractive. Grootenboer stresses in her analysis of still lifes that “the notion of *reading* should be taken quite literally.”<sup>13</sup> Paintings are texts; material and ideational, which can be mined for readings, and counter-readings. In this essay, I intend to pursue both. Bogdani’s canvases stage European enlightenment ideas and ideals of the natural world in recognizable modes of glorification, but these are contested by a less readily available but no less potent critique.

### **Churchill and Bogdani: The Painter, the Admiral and the Aviary**

During his first years in London, Bogdani, known as “The Hungarian,” was penurious, sought after piecemeal as a painter of fruit and flowers in the Dutch still-life manner.<sup>14</sup> By his death, the engraver George Vertue relates, he had amassed a “pretty fortune,” and “arriv’d to considerable talent in painting, particularly fowles, birds of all kinds & nations.”<sup>15</sup> Bogdani’s transition, from a painter of traditional still-life paintings that featured birds to a specialist in bird pictures which retained elements of still-life painting, occurred between 1700 and 1710. His access to Churchill’s astonishing aviaries was almost certainly instrumental to it.<sup>16</sup>

Bogdani was born in 1658 in Eperjes in upper Hungary (now Slovakia), the son of the painter Lucas Bogdani. By the time he was twenty-six, the young, Protestant painter was documented in Amsterdam, in the company of German still-life master Ernst Stuken, under whom he probably studied. In 1688, Bogdani moved to London and rented lodgings in Great

Queen Street in St-Giles-in-the-Fields, where he would remain for the rest of his life.<sup>17</sup> He married Elizabeth Hemming, and in 1700 became a naturalized English subject.<sup>18</sup> The miniaturist Ozias Humphry relays a conversation he had with Bogdani in October of 1691, in which Bogdani complains, three times, of a lack of “time & treasure” to make “Curious fine Scetches” of flowers in the spring and summer, so that he could paint them out of season.<sup>19</sup> These constraints proved short-lived. In 1694, he was paid £60 to decorate Queen Mary’s “Looking Glasse Closett in the Thames Gallery” at Hampton Court.<sup>20</sup> Vertue relates that Queen Anne, too, was “pleas’d with his performances. & encourag’d him much.”<sup>21</sup> From there, Bogdani came into the purview of the British gentry, who began to commission him. His patrons included William Cavendish, the first Duke of Devonshire, Edward Harley, the second Earl of Oxford, Robert Walpole, the prime minister, and Admiral George Churchill.<sup>22</sup>

George Churchill, a committed Tory, had a fluctuating career as his party’s and his more powerful brother’s fortunes waxed and waned. He retired from active naval service in 1693, but was appointed to the Admiralty in 1699, and later became Admiral of the Blue, which made him one of the highest ranking naval officers in England. He was also an MP for St. Albans, and a gentleman of the bedchamber to Prince George, through which he gained considerable influence at court.<sup>23</sup> On her accession to the throne in 1702, Anne had made Sarah Churchill, George’s sister-in-law who was then the Countess of Marlborough, Ranger of the Great and Little Parks at Windsor.<sup>24</sup> Sarah later recalled that the lodge in Little Park “was no better than such as the under-keepers live in, and I gave it to a brother of the Duke of Marlborough’s, who was so well pleased with the situation, as to lay out five or six thousand pounds upon it.”<sup>25</sup> These improvements were much applauded by Daniel Defoe, on his tour of Britain in the following decade.<sup>26</sup> The position of Deputy Ranger was granted to Churchill for life in 1707, and in 1708 he retired from the navy and parliament and moved to Windsor

permanently. In the same year, he commissioned Bogdani to paint the prize specimens in his aviaries.<sup>27</sup>

The birds in Churchill's aviaries were extraordinarily rare and expensive. One was a purple naped lory from Indonesia, which the bird painter Eleazar Albin reported to have seen sell for 20 guineas in London's Tower Hill.<sup>28</sup> Churchill had invested the vast sum of £2,600 in the Old East India Company in 1694, and exotic animals began to arrive through that company with increasing frequency to London's docks. However, Caroline Grigson has suggested that, given the number of his birds that hailed from the East Indies and South America, he is more likely to have obtained them from the Dutch East India Company, "either directly, or from the dealers who brought consignments of exotic and domestic birds to London from Rotterdam."<sup>29</sup> In support of this, in two of the very few letters relating to Churchill in the National Archives, he is described as having on shore dealings with "Agents of the Dutch" and "Merchants trading to Turkey & in the Levant" during his naval service.<sup>30</sup> Churchill, whose annual income in 1705 was estimated at £3,142, had the means, then, the capacious royal land, and the necessary naval connections, to people the most ambitious aviaries in England.<sup>31</sup>

### **Bogdani's Birds: Past and Future Painting**

By 1708, Bogdani too had the necessary "time & treasure" to make as many sketches as he pleased, and the still-life training, as well as the technical ambition, to render these birds on canvas to startling effect.

<Insert Figure 1 here>

Figure 1 Jakob Bogdani, Still Life with Fruits, Parrots and White Cockatoo (1708-9), oil on canvas, Hungarian Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest, 2022

This is one of three of Bogdani's paintings of Churchill's aviaries, hanging in the National Gallery of Hungary (figure 1). The conventions of still life are clearly informing this painting, primarily in the particularity and centrality of the fruits on display. And while strings of dead game are more common, live birds, too, and red macaws in particular were staples of the genre in the seventeenth century.<sup>32</sup> Yet there are important distinctions between this painting, and earlier still lifes that featured live exotic birds. One example (figure 2) by Bogdani, from 1698-9, is instructive here. *Flowers on a Draped Ledge with a Red-Faced Parrot* was commissioned by William Cavendish, the First Duke of Devonshire for his Chatsworth Estate, where it remains:

<Insert Figure 2 around here>

Figure 2. Jacob Bogdani, *Flowers on a Draped Ledge with a Red-Faced Parrot* (1699), oil on canvas, Chatsworth Settlement Trust, reproduced in Rajnai, *Bogdani*, 4-5.

Here, the small, inquisitive parrot perches at the very bottom of the frame, looking out, beyond it. It is the profusion of flowers that generates the painting's focus. Exotic, rare and expensive blooms, like the semper augustus, red and white striped tulips, which hailed from the Ottoman Empire and nearly toppled the Dutch economy in the tulip mania of the 1630s, together with golden lilies and tuberose, vie with common, English wildflowers: sprays of apple blossom, sprigs of night-scented stock, anemones and ranunculus.<sup>33</sup> The bouquet is held in an ornate brass urn, radiating a golden sheen. The delicate, light-stippled striations on the wilting tulip petals, the momentary poise of the bird on the lintel, speak to the fine,

perhaps even impossible balance between the fleeting, and the seemingly immutable assemblage of things on display. In these formal choices, the painting is thoroughly representative of the still-life genre in which Bogdani had trained in Amsterdam. The name of this form of painting, *stillevan* in Dutch, *nature morte* in French, is indicative of its central, enlivening tension between bloom and wilt, life and death, the transitoriness of a butterfly or the flush of a flower's beauty, and the stasis of stone lintel, brass urn or snail's shell. The still life navigates between the world without, from which these flowers and birds hailed, and the world within, where they are framed for our perusal, our consumption, and our pleasure.

It has long been argued that, in Simon Schama's words, "the material world gradually came to dominate the gently receding presence of moral symbolism" in still-life painting.<sup>34</sup> The earliest examples often functioned as *vanitas* paintings; next to a desirable silver goblet and the mouth-watering wash of white wine, a skull or bubble, a guttering candle or open pocket-watch would remind viewers of the press of mortality, and the consequent senselessness of material gain and sensual pleasure. These motifs of man's fleshly failings were superseded in the 1660s by the *pronk stillevan*, or "show off" still life, in which vast tables host an interrupted feast of silver platters and toppled glass goblets overflowing with fruit, fish, flesh and wine, vying for the eye's astonished and often slightly repulsed attention. For Roland Barthes, writing in 1953, the *pronk* is revealing of the triumphant mechanics of early capitalism, framing man's ascent over the material and quashing of the moral world. Dutch art "has washed away religion only to replace it with man and his empire of things," Barthes laments.<sup>35</sup> The inner life of the object, its hidden meaning had been hollowed out, until only its surface sheen remained. "Behold then a real transformation of the object," Barthes writes, "which no longer has an essence but takes refuge entirely within its attributes."<sup>36</sup> Writing three years earlier, Paul Claudel had argued otherwise, that the still life was directed at the soul, rather than the eye, its profuse assemblages of things, rolling wine

glasses, rumpled tablecloths and tumbling clusters of grapes ever, tellingly, “in imminent danger of disintegration.”<sup>37</sup>

This divide continues to inform art historical debate over the still life. Iconological readings of Dutch art continue, primarily through the work of Eddy de Jongh.<sup>38</sup> Naturalist or formalist interpretations argue instead that the genre is shaped by its historical context: discoveries in technique, pigmentation and glazes, and developments in (the development of) a modern art market.<sup>39</sup> Others point out the impact of scientific, microscopic modes of viewing the world that are replicated in the genre, or else the way that it emphasizes the quotidian stuff of everyday life and its role in structuring reality. More recently, critics have traced the movement from object to commodity that can be read in the *pronk* still life, stuffed as they are with newly available goods from across the globe. The gleaming allure of the things on display can function, as Grootenboer has written, “as an early form of commodity fetishisation.”<sup>40</sup> Schama posed the resonant question of the genre: “is vitality or mortality the sovereign principle here?” Rather than seeking to resolve this tension, between the celebration of shining surfaces (vitality) and the shadowing of inner meaning (mortality), Schama finds that “these qualities might be more persuasively seen in deliberately unstable relation with each other.”<sup>41</sup>

Bogdani’s paintings of Churchill’s aviaries seem at first glance to have shed their meaningful affiliation with this question altogether. In the later painting (figure 1), perhaps the most striking departure is that we are now, conspicuously, outside. Seventeenth-century still life is an artform, above all, of interiors. When it thinks about the global, it does so through the lens of domestication: bringing it home. Here, by contrast, there is no urn to contain the flowers, and no lintel for the domesticated parrot. There’s no bowl for the array of ripe fruits, on offer to stimulate the appetite not only of the viewer, but also of the birds. It is now the birds, rather than the blooms that are foregrounded in a genial, conversational

grouping, convivially vying for the gleaming fruit, of which, again connoting wealth, plenty and satisfaction, there is more than enough. By their vivid colouring the “new-world” birds stand apart from what is a pointedly European parkland setting, the decaying and classical “old world” of the Roman empire, semiotically rendered in the crumbling Tuscan columns and distant Italianate architecture, that is currently acting as their home. The scarlet macaw and array of parrots, a ring-necked parakeet, a sun conure, a sulphur-crested cockatoo, and a yellow-naped amazon, have been gathered from sub-tropical South America, New Guinea in the case of the cockatoo, north America in the case of the northern cardinal flying top left, and, thanks to the diving titmouse, bullfinch and robin below it, common and garden England.<sup>42</sup>

There are a number of ways to read this transition from the claustrophobic interiors of the earlier still life to the soft, rolling countryside of the 1708 paintings, from the birds being accessories to their having become the focus of the image. We can trace in it, for instance, the stirrings of the cultural development in which animals are figured not as appendages to the human world, but in and of themselves. This shift, a vital aspect of enlightenment thinking about man’s distinct, rather than coexistent relationship with the natural world, has been compellingly told by cultural historians like Keith Thomas and Ingrid Tague.<sup>43</sup> Additionally, though, the fact that the birds *have* been caught, taken out of their native environment, transported across the world, and sold to what must therefore be an extraordinarily wealthy landowner, has been newly sublimated in this image. It is not immediately obvious that these birds belong to the commissioner of the painting, that they are objects of trade, bearers of a vast exchange value, rather than creatures to be observed, communing in an open expanse of nature. Melchior de Hondecoeter is often cited as the “unmistakable” influence behind Bogdani’s bird paintings.<sup>44</sup> The Dutch painter’s *De Menagerie*, from 1690, features the same ring-necked parakeet and sulphur-crested cockatoo as appear in the 1708 painting by

Bogdani. Two of the birds in de Hondcoeter's painting, the cockatoo and the purple-naped lory, are visibly chained by the foot to immovable stonemasonry and solid marble. In the Bogdani painting, it is only the excessively hunched spine of the red macaw that renders the fact of its captivity visible to us.

This sublimation is a vital rhetorical strategy at the height of European colonial expansion into the territories from which these birds hailed. The birds on display are in prime condition. There are no nets, no bars, no cages and no conflict anywhere in evidence. There does not seem to be any cost to or contestation over the beautification and natural profusion on display. The violence that is being sublimated into art around the figure of the bird is also being enacted on many other stages that are not immediately visible. On other animals, and also on other humans, for the enrichment of English landed estates. Indeed, and more, it is only the capital, generated by the violence, land appropriation and wealth extraction on unseen global stages that is enabling the aesthetic augmentation of an English estate that we are invited to admire in this image. Churchill's wealth emanated in large part from his stocks in the East India Company, his role in a bellicose Admiralty, and his appointment to the court of a British administration, embroiled in the War of the Spanish Succession over land holdings and slave trading rights to Spanish America.<sup>45</sup> All that is visible of these connections, however, are the harmonious fruits of global trading networks.

That this obfuscation of human agency and sublimation of violence was culturally necessary at this time is indicated by the extent to which it also scores the poem that Alexander Pope was writing at the same historical moment, of the same geographical space, *Windsor Forest*.<sup>46</sup> Begun in 1704 and published in 1713, in the wake of the cessation of the Wars of the Spanish Succession, here, Pope is in Virgilian, pastoral mode, rather than the Homeric satire of *The Rape of the Lock*. The earlier poem sits far less well with his contemporary critics.<sup>47</sup> Near the poem's end, Pope writes:

Thy trees, fair Windsor! now shall leave their woods,  
And half thy forests rush into my floods  
Bear Britain's Thunder and her Cross display  
To the Bright regions of the rising day. (383-6)

The transmutation from living tree to warship bearing a national flag and ambitions of territorial expansion occurs without the imposition of saw, axe or iron nail. The trees appear to uproot themselves, and willingly “rush” into the Thames. Agency for Britain's expansionist policies is likewise diverted away from human actants, and bequeathed instead, senselessly, to the self-assembled warships themselves. Carrying traces of the natural trees they once were, the ships will bear “Britain's Thunder” to the “Bright regions of the rising day,” a twice light-filled circumlocution of “the East,” which will hear (rather than feel) the guns of war as the ordinary and purposeless noise of a passing storm.

This effect is augmented in the following, persistently strange lines:

For me the balm shall bleed, and amber flow,  
The coral redden, and the ruby glow,  
The pearly shell its lucid globe infold,  
And Phoebus warm the rip'ning ore to gold. (391-394)

These bleeding, reddening commodities that hail from across the world are not so much traded for as observed here, in a natural and agentless movement towards Europe. The end words of these lines work to trace the tidal nature of the Thames: “flow” and “glow” of the first lines map the out-breath of the river towards the “East”; in the following couplet

“infol” brings the “gold” of this venture back towards the British capital as a result of natural, tidal forces. The amber, rubies, balm and pearls that form the stuff of this wealth are ripening from an inert state to material perfection “for me,” the European subject. This subject, too, has been sublimated, devoid of human agency, personified into an ancient river. The very rising of an old-world sun – it is the classical *Phoebus* who rises – creates gold in the new in an alchemical process of elemental maturation. And this effect is brought up to the surface of the poem in the ensuing couplet, which contains the telling inversion: “Earth’s distant ends our glories shall behold,/ and the new world launch forth to seek the old” (399-400). The only dynamic that is readily visible here, is one of natural perfectability, mutual benefit and augmentation.

<Insert Figure 3 here>

Figure 3 Jacob Bogdani, *Still Life of Fruit and Birds in a Landscape* (1708-10), oil on canvas, private collection, courtesy of Richard Green Gallery, 2022

In Bogdani’s *Still Life of Fruit and Birds in a Landscape* (figure 3), these strategies are differently in evidence. The landscape here is dun coloured, soft leafed, cloudy skied; it is a deliberately ordinary English countryside. At the centre of the image sits a profusion of imported and native fruit: the pumpkin, at this time a new, exotic fruit from Mexico, together with succulent grapes, tumble against a cluster of very English apples, with all of their Edenic undertones. The birds mirror this assemblage. Of the four that are foregrounded, three are native to England: the bullfinch with the red belly, flying in from the left, the blue-black chough, and the softly-feathered jay. But the bird that steals the attention, not only of the viewer, but of all the other birds in the image, is the new arrival: the yellow sun conure, a neo-tropical parrot native to the Amazon. The intense, glowing yellow of the conure’s

plumage continues through the iridescence of the pumpkin, across the skin of the white grapes, the apples, and in the touch of soft, English sunlight on the tops of the hills. Red streaks down in the opposite direction from the bullfinch's belly, through the chough's beak and feet, in the glowing iridescence of the black grapes, to the ring of tiny red feathers around the conure's eye.

What Bogdani effects with these balanced parabolas of colour across the birds and their setting is the idea that the tropical bird and these exotic fruits are a fitting and natural augmentation to an English landscape. They have come, as if of their own accord, like the rubies and coral offerings of Pope's poem, to brighten and beguile an English landscape. In this image, even the distant country estate and the collapsed Tuscan columns of a fallen Roman empire are missing. The conure, again lacking a chain, a ring or cage, is convivially choosing to make its home in England. As in the first image, here again the piles of fruit insist on the plenty and ease of the birds' grouping. The violence and the capital that brought the conure to England, the restraint necessary to keep it there, have all become invisible.

What we are most forcibly, I think, to understand through this image, is that Churchill possessed the capital and the connections, including local traders, to source birds from deep in the South American Amazon, to keep them alive on long sea voyages, on fruits and seeds just like the ones the bird now perches above, and house them as an ornamentation to his English estate. The extent of his collection demonstrates at one and the same time the extent of his knowledge about exotic birds, in that he was able to identify and request them from overseas, sustain and naturalize them in England, and the extent of his capital, both of which are inextricably intertwined with his colonial interests. And, just as the birds are beautifying and enriching his gardens, so Bogdani's representations of them will mirror and amplify the cultural capital of his house. It no longer seems appropriate to ask whether the principle of

vitality or mortality is predominant here. No longer “*nature morte*” or “still life”; it is all “*nature*”, all “life”.

### **Badly Stuffed Birds: Bogdani’s Shadow Painting**

I want to argue, however, that Bogdani’s eighteenth-century bird paintings continue to function as *nature mortes*, and that they do so both in terms of what is elided from the images and as a result of contrapuntally reading what is present in them.<sup>48</sup> Looking again at Bogdani’s still life of the sun conure (figure 3), what becomes clear is the distance between the mode in which the Amazonian bird is rendered and that of the English bullfinch, flying in lumpen fashion from the left-hand of the frame. The same disjuncture occurs in figure 1, between the sulphur-crested cockatoo, for example, and the misshapen titmouse with dangling feet, the two-dimensional bullfinch and the immobile English robin below. Despite being extremely common in England at this time, the titmouse looks like it has been painted from a badly stuffed model. In fact, as Jackson has pointed out, the same titmouse reappears in a surprising number of Bogdani’s otherwise astonishingly accurate bird paintings.<sup>49</sup> In *Two Macaws, Cockatoo and Jay with Fruits* (figure a, below), the bird stares mournfully at its claws atop a light-filled cluster of grapes, and recurs in the same posture in *Papillon* (figure b), now in the David Roche Foundation in Adelaide.<sup>50</sup> Again, as though sullenly examining the skin of a peach beneath it, the titmouse recurs, still curled up over its feet in *Still Life with Birds and a Capuchin Monkey* (figure c), and it clings precariously to a twig in *Farm Birds with Macaw, and a Tom Tit in a Tree* (figure d).



(a)



(b)



(c)



(d)



(e)<sup>51</sup>

<Insert figures a-e here as reproduced above>

The flat, red-bellied bullfinch from the first image also recurs. In *A Salmon Crested Cockatoo with Other Birds, in a Landscape* (figure e, above), another Churchill commission, the flying bullfinch is again anatomically wholly inaccurate. Its body shape would render it incapable of flight: its musculature is misshapen, and its legs and feet trail behind it in a posture that most living birds would not adopt in flight. It contrasts glaringly with the respiring glory of a salmon-crested cockatoo, clawing at an overly ripe pumpkin that sits by its side in the painting.

How are we to parse these birds that clog Bogdani's otherwise luminous canvases? One interpretation might be taxonomic. Some of the birds in Churchill's aviaries were so rare that Bogdani's representations of them would have functioned not only as an opportunity to depict their uncommonly resplendent plumage, but also to accurately render their size and markings for future taxonomic identification. This was manifestly not the case with the bullfinch or the titmouse, which, besides inhabiting British hedgerows all year round, were readily available to buy in London's extensive bird markets.<sup>52</sup>

Yet if they were not of interest to Bogdani, and by extension to natural philosophy, why did he so insistently include them? From their posture, and their manifest unlikeness to life, we can infer that Churchill's aviaries did not include these native birds, since these have been painted not from life, but from death, either from stuffed models that Bogdani owned, or, at one remove, from sketches that were made from such models, or from skins. The detailed feathering on the titmouse, and the fact that it appears across numerous canvases, stuck in the same, hunched posture, makes it likely that it was painted from a stuffed specimen. The flat feathering and undifferentiated colouration of the bullfinch suggest that in this case, Bogdani was working from an illustration; but here, too, the shape of the bird's

body, and its unnaturally trailing legs imply that the model for the sketch was dead – either stuffed, or else a skin.

Bogdani did possess artistic “models” in his studio. His will of 1723 reads “all my modells I give to my said son William Bogdani, and my said son-in-law Tobias Stranovius and his wife, and I will that the same may be divided between them by Lots and not be publikly disposed of.”<sup>53</sup> Both his son and his Transylvanian son-in-law were painters, and so this constitutes a professional bequest.<sup>54</sup> “[M]odells” could refer to stuffed birds or other animals, their skins, or else to sketches, although in 1691, in the conversation that Ozias Humphry transcribed, Bogdani had lamented his lack of “Curious fine Scetches” rather than “models” with which to paint flowers out of season. The different term in his will may, then, refer to animal remains. Bogdani clearly held these models to be of some worth; he did not want them sold publicly. He was also suspicious that they might be.

Despite being unable to paint them from life, and despite the fact that their ungainly presence risks disrupting the celebratory, vivified dynamics of the most ambitious and innovative paintings of his career, these native birds continue to puncture Bogdani’s bird portraits. The immediate effect of their inclusion is two-fold. Firstly, since they are non-migratory, they function topographically, situating the exotic birds in northern Europe. The birds are necessary to the image not in spite of, but precisely because of their ubiquity and determined ordinariness. This in itself is indicative of just how central its ideological work is to the perceived efficacy of the image. It is more important to stress that the sun conure is preening itself here, in contemporary Windsor, than to display its novel beauty, unencumbered by unconvincing bullfinches. Moreover, these birds are not supplanted or threatened by the exotics; they move towards them, signalling their curiosity and willingness to cohabit. These new, global, familial groupings are convivial, rather than suspicious or

territorially aggressive. The fruits of this enlargement are literally made evident, plentiful and available to all.

On this reading, Bogdani's bird canvases work to wholeheartedly endorse colonial and enlightenment projects. The exotic birds, in the aviary and in the artistic rendering of them, function as proof of the untapped natural wealth of the "new world". At the same time, they form new subjects of European natural philosophy, generating a discourse of global animal traits and taxonomic differentiation. These birds, in settings that rekindle and promise to rebuild both the Roman Empire, in the architectural remains in figure 1, and a return to Eden, with the focus on succulent, fallen apples in figure 3, do more than augment the beauty and variety of England. These birds thrive, they flourish in an old-world setting, apparently choosing to remain amid this soft-skied, fruitful plenty.

Yet Bogdani's canvases cannot or else do not entirely erase the forceful extraction of animals, humans and natural resources that underwrote these entwined enlightenment projects. *Morte* continues to shadow *nature* in these paintings. Bogdani's badly stuffed birds cannot help but remind the viewer of the elided acts of violence that are in reality necessary in order to stage a compelling portrait of enlightenment ideals. These cheap, common native birds, not being commodities in a global trade network, are unavailable to Bogdani as live, caged specimens. Their inclusion in his bird paintings is nevertheless necessary in order to place the non-native birds in England, and to demonstrate the congruity and geniality of their collocation. However, the distance in the exactitude and care of their rendering illuminates not only this surface intention, but also its flat impossibility as a natural scene. They present instead a profoundly *unnatural* depiction of bird life, and by extension of the natural world. These manifestly dead birds are arranged on the canvas in a crude imitation of life, flying in the case of the bullfinch, or in the case of the titmouse, eating. No bullfinch would fly with its legs trailing behind it. A titmouse would not ordinarily eat the fruit that Bogdani repeatedly

arranges at its feet; they are primarily insect eaters. Only a stuffed or starving titmouse would show so much interest in a peach, and the portrait's pretence at keen-eyed observation of the natural world is therefore unmasked, and shown to be sheer stagecraft.<sup>55</sup>

Finally, this slippage of the painting's celebratory dynamic is evident in the *trompe l'oeil* effect that Bogdani deploys to render the eyes of his living birds. Jackson thinks this "the most remarkable feature" of Bogdani's bird paintings: "the eyes of his birds ... look like small beads that could easily be picked off the canvas."<sup>56</sup> This effect generates a disquieting animation to the painting, since the gaze of the birds appear able to follow the viewer's movements before it. Yet this shift from the extreme naturalism of the still life to the illusionism of the *trompe l'oeil* destabilizes our interpretative gaze: it is uncanny. We are aware that this effect is a painterly trick. It brings into play the question of what is true, and what is designed to deceive, which then refracts across everything else in the frame. Additionally, in their resemblance to glass eyes, they speak to the trappings of taxidermy, rather than to inner animation.

The birds in these paintings are suspended between the objects of earlier still-life and the subjects of later nature painting, which would develop in the ensuing century, and between commodities and creatures. It is an instructive interstitial state. The violence that has been enacted both on "new-world" birds, and on the peoples whose geography and, very often, ships and "owners" they shared is made evident in Bogdani's canvases, albeit in elusive and shadowy ways. The golden glow of "liberating", European reason is assuredly present in these celebratory canvases of enlightenment ideals. But in their uncanny or ungainly elements, so, too, is the dark stain of its blood-tinged underbelly.

### **Conclusion: Birds and the Global Imaginary**

Bogdani's bird canvases demonstrate the inextricability of expanding markets for luxury goods and the intellectual endeavours of new modes of European natural philosophy. They also underline the global, and therefore colonially dependent, aspect of those endeavours. The exotic birds that dominate Bogdani's bird paintings function as proof of the untapped natural wealth and beauty of the "new world", and as instantiations of the reach and power of European trade networks and zoological knowledge. As Partha Chatterjee has argued, we should be unsurprised by this since, "[f]rom at least the middle of the eighteenth century, for two hundred years, Reason has travelled the world piggyback, carried across oceans and continents by colonial powers eager to find new grounds for trade, extraction and the productive expansion of capital."<sup>57</sup> Yet it is the interdependence between high, enlightenment ideals and the grubby, material facts of colonial trade that Daniel Carey, Lynn Festa and Dorina Outram have all argued that enlightenment studies has proved reluctant to explore, and to which this article offers a corrective.

Bogdani's paintings take delight in, and demand that their viewers similarly wonder at, the spectacular, plumed beauty of the "new world", transported to, and enriching in every sense the old. The global imaginary that they stage is convivial and golden, carrying the promise of new colours, sensations and knowledge about the natural world to a European spectator. But they also, crucially, demonstrate that this *is* an imaginary; that it *is* staged. Bogdani's bird paintings repeatedly mark out in negatively visible contours the violence and death that is attendant on their singing celebration of global trade and enlightenment ideals. These ideas pitch against one another across the canvases with neither finally subsuming the other. I want to end by suggesting that it is fruitful to resist situating Bogdani's birds in a single generic iteration, as the subjects of new modes of nature portraiture, or as objects of a formal still life. In allowing them their interstitial position, the processes, the coming-into-

being of colonial commodification and a colonized resistance to these practices, may become visible.

This is so in part because the *trompe l'oeil* effect of the bird's eyes produces a simulacrum of a gaze that gazes back at us. The birds' eyes are endowed with animation, exactly in so far as they illusionistically resemble the inanimate glass eyes of stuffed birds. The *trompe l'oeil* gaze thus endows the global imaginary itself with a returning curiosity which is attendant on a loss of animation and living, creaturely status, and infecting our gaze with an insecurity about the "truths" revealed elsewhere. Barthes concludes his 1953 essay on the still life with the allusive observation that "[d]epth is born only at the moment the spectacle itself slowly turns its shadow toward man and begins to look at him."<sup>58</sup> Bogdani's bird paintings assuredly revel in the bright glow of enlightenment ideals and the commodification of creatures that Barthes so bemoaned about the Dutch still life as a genre. But they also shadow that celebration with the violence and death that is necessarily attendant on it. They "look back" at us, decentering our triumphant pre-eminence, our dominance over the interpretative gaze, our epistemological and animalistic distance from the creatures on display. What looks back at us is a creature in the moment of its own objectification. In the dead, glass-eyed gaze of living birds, a global enlightenment begins to take shape.

---

<sup>1</sup> "Admiral Churchill led a private life, at a pleasant villa in Windsor-Park, where he collected the finest aviary that was ever seen in Britain." Frederic Hervey, *The Naval History of Great Britain: From the Earliest Times ...*, vol. 5 (London, 1779), 303. Hervey is the first of many to comment on George Churchill's flagrant bad temper, *ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> Oliver Miller, *The Tudor, Stuart and Early Georgian Pictures in the Collection of Her Majesty the Queen*, vol. 1 (London: Phaidon, 1963), 164-6; See Royal Collection Trust, <https://www.rct.uk/collection>.

---

<sup>3</sup> Christine E. Jackson, *Bird Painting: The Eighteenth Century* (London: Antique Collector's Club, 1994), 30-36.

<sup>4</sup> Charles Morton, *An Essay Towards the Probable Solution ...* (London, 1703), 38.

<sup>5</sup> James Boswell, *Boswell's Life of Johnson*, ed. R. W. Chapman (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), 393.

<sup>6</sup> See Richard Garnet, "Defoe and the Swallows," *TLS*, 13 February 1969, 161-62.

<sup>7</sup> See Thomas Pennant, *Zoology*, vol. 2 (London, 1768), 248-51. Pennant writes: "It is now known that swallows take their winter quarters in Senegal", (ibid. 2:242) on the basis of the report of the French naturalist, Michel Adanson whose *Voyage to Senegal*, was presented before the French *Academie*, and translated into English in 1759, Michel Adanson, *Voyage to Senegal*, trans. anon., vol. 1 (London, 1759), 121.

<sup>8</sup> See Jackson, *Bird Painting*, 13. Linneans dispute the precise number of different species in the *Systema Naturae*, complicated by the fact that the definition of what constituted a species was itself being formulated at this time. See Ernst Mayr "The Number of Bird Species," *The Auk* 63, no. 1 (1946): 64-69. Certainly, however, the scale and speed of the increase in "known birds" is unarguable. Compare Caroli Linnæ, *Systema Naturæ*, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. (Stockholm, 1748), 35-85 with Caroli a Linné, *Systema Naturæ*, 13<sup>th</sup> ed., vol. 1 (Leipzig, 1788-93), 233-500.

<sup>9</sup> Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 8.

<sup>10</sup> Daniel Carey and Lynn Festa, "Some Answers to the Question: 'What is Postcolonial Enlightenment?'," in *The Postcolonial Enlightenment: Eighteenth-Century Colonialism and Postcolonial Theory*, ed. Daniel Carey and Lynn Festa (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 3-4. For two of many important exceptions see Charles W. J. Withers, *Placing the Enlightenment: Thinking Geographically about the Age of Reason* (Chicago: University of

---

Chicago Press, 2007); Anthony Pagden, *European Encounters with the New World: From Renaissance to Romanticism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993).

<sup>11</sup> Arjun Appadurai, 'Introduction', in *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 6.

<sup>12</sup> Hanneke Grootenboer, *The Rhetoric of Perspective: Realism and Illusionism in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Still-Life Painting* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 10, emphasis added. The idea is Hubert Damisch's, *The Origin of Perspective*, trans. John Goodman (Cambridge, MA: MIT press, 1995), 446.

<sup>13</sup> Grootenboer, *Rhetoric of Perspective*, 10.

<sup>14</sup> Miklós Rajnai, introduction to *Jacob Bogdani c.1660-1724* (London: Richard Green Gallery, 1989), not paginated. Bogdani's name is spelt in multiple ways. The Hungarian National Gallery uses Jakab Bogdány; the *ODNB* has Jacob Bogdani (Diana Brooks, "Bogdani, Jacob (1658–1724), Still-Life and Bird Painter," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 September 2004, accessed 15 April 2022, <https://ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2648/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-2764>). In his own time, Ozias Humphry's notebooks contain the variants Bocdan, Bodane, and Bodon (Ozias Humphry, "Notebooks" BL Add. MS 22.950, 41v, 42v, 43r, v). George Vertue names him "James Boǵdane" ("Vertue Notebooks", *The Eighteenth Volume of The Walpole Society*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930), 127), while Horace Walpole has "James Bogdani" (Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., vol. 3 (London, 1782) 270-1), which is the form in which it appears in Bogdani's will (NA Prob 11/595/325). Bogdani himself alternated between Jakab, Jacob, Jakob and James. I follow Jackson and Susan Morris in using Jakob Bogdani, signalling as it does the confluence of his Hungarian and English identities. Susan Morris, "Bogdány [Bogdani], Jakob," *Grove Art Online*, 2003, accessed 11 July 2022, [23](https://ezproxy-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

---

prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:3218/groveart/view/10.1093/gao/9781884446054.001.0001/oao-9781884446054-e-7000009588. Jackson, *Bird Painting* 8.

<sup>15</sup> Vertue, *Notebooks* 1:127.

<sup>16</sup> See Rajnai, “Introduction” n.p.

<sup>17</sup> Brooks, “Bogdani”, *ODNB*.

<sup>18</sup> As was usual at the time, Bogdani’s name was added to an Act to naturalize other foreign nationals, probably John Bourges and others, on the 4<sup>th</sup> April, 1700 (as James Bogdaine), and having been passed by both the Commons and the House of Lords, this Act gained royal assent on 11<sup>th</sup> April, 1700. *The Manuscripts of the House of Lords, 1699-1702* (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1908), 168; *Journal of the House of Lords: Vol. 16, 1696-1701* (London: His Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1767-1830), 578-80; *Journals of the House of Commons, Vol. 13, 1699-1702*, (London: 1702), 313. Private Acts no. 35, 11.Will.3 in *The Statutes at Large*, vol. 10, (Cambridge: Danby Pickering, 1762), xi. See Stephanie DeGooyer, *Before Borders: A Legal and Literary History of Naturalization* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2022) for an explanation of this process in the early eighteenth century.

<sup>19</sup> Humphry, “Notebook”, BL Add. MS 22.950, 43 v, 42 r.

<sup>20</sup> Miller, *Tudor, Stuart and Early Georgian Pictures*, 165.

<sup>21</sup> Vertue, *Notebooks*, 1:127.

<sup>22</sup> Brooks, “Bogdani”, *ODNB*.

<sup>23</sup> John B. Hattendorf, “Churchill, George (bap. 1654, d. 1710), Naval Officer,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 September 2004, accessed 15 April 2022,

<https://ezproxy->

prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk:2648/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-5399.

- 
- <sup>24</sup> Jane Roberts, *Royal Landscape: The Gardens and Parks of Windsor* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1997), 154.
- <sup>25</sup> Sarah Churchill, the Duchess of Marlborough, “Account of her Conduct from her First coming to Court till the Year 1710,” 1742, *The Blenheim Papers*, vols CCCXIV-CCCLXXX “The Correspondence of Sarah Churchill”, BL Add MS 61414-61480, 61479/219, r.
- <sup>26</sup> Daniel Defoe, *A Tour Thro’ the Whole Island of Great Britain*, vol. 2 (London, 1724), 90.
- <sup>27</sup> Hattendorf, “Churchill”, *ODNB*.
- <sup>28</sup> Eleazar Albin, *A Natural History of Birds* (London, 1731), 90. Albin thought the bird came from Brazil.
- <sup>29</sup> Caroline Grigson, *Menagerie: The History of Exotic Animals in England, 1100-1837* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 74.
- <sup>30</sup> NA ADM 106/577/208; NA Add Ms 29, 591/197.r.
- <sup>31</sup> “Churchill, George (1654-1710), of Windsor Little Park,” in *The History of Parliament: The House of Commons 1690-1715*, ed. D. Hayton, E. Cruickshanks, S. Handley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), available online <http://www.histparl.ac.uk/volume/1690-1715/member/churchill-george-1654-1710>.
- <sup>32</sup> Parrots were some of the earliest exotic birds to survive long sea voyages, since they ate fruit rather than insects, and were hardy enough to endure the cramped, caged conditions of northern European bird-keeping in the early-modern period. See Jackson, *Bird Painting*, 13.
- <sup>33</sup> Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age* (London: Harper Collins, 1988), 435.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>35</sup> Roland Barthes, “The World as Object,” in *Calligram: Essays in New Art History from France*, ed. Norman Bryson, trans. Richard Howard (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 106.

---

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 108.

<sup>37</sup> Paul Claudel, *The Eye Listens*, trans. Elsie Pell (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 48.

<sup>38</sup> See Eddy de Jongh, “The Interpretation of Still-Life Paintings: Possibilities and Limits,” *Still-Life in the Age of Rembrandt* (Auckland: Auckland City Art Gallery, 1982), 27-38.

<sup>39</sup> See Peter Hect, “Dutch Seventeenth-Century Genre Painting: A Reassessment of Some Current Hypotheses,” in *Looking at Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art: Realism Reconsidered*, ed. E. Franits (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 88-97, and Elizabeth Honig, “Making Sense of Things: On the Motives of Dutch Still Life,” *Res* 34 (Autumn 1998): 166-83.

<sup>40</sup> Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing: Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century* (London: J. Murray, 1983); Norman Bryson, *Looking at the Overlooked, Four Essays on Still-Life Painting* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1990); Hal Foster, “The Art of Fetishism: Notes on Dutch Still Life,” in *Fetishism as Cultural Discourse*, ed. Emily Apter and William Pietz (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 251-65; Grootenboer, *Rhetoric of Perspective*, 15.

<sup>41</sup> Simon Schama: “Perishable Commodities: Dutch Still-Life Paintings and the ‘Empire of Things’”, in *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. John Brewer and Roy Porter (Routledge: London and New York, 1993), 483.

<sup>42</sup> Rajnai, *Bogdani*, 7-8. The cockatoo has been identified as a yellow-crested cockatoo, native to Indonesia. I concur with Rajnai’s identification of a sulphur-crested cockatoo due to the bird’s size relative to the sun conure and its elongated tail feathers. See Heather Dalton, Jukka Salo, Pekka Niemelä and Simo Örmä, “Frederick II of Hohenstaufen’s Australasian Cockatoo: Symbol of Detente between East and West and Evidence of the Ayyubid

---

Sultanate's Global Reach," *Parergon* 35, no.1 (2018): 35-60 for a discussion of the cockatoo's origins, arrival in Europe, and misidentification in early-modern scholarship.

<sup>43</sup> Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England, 1500-1800* (London: Allen Lane, 1983); Ingrid H. Tague, *Animal Companions Pets and Social Change in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (University Park, P.A.: Pennsylvania State Press, 2015).

<sup>44</sup> Rajnai, "Introduction", n.p.; Brooks "Bogdani", *ODNB*.

<sup>45</sup> Of the many histories of Britain's enrichment from colonial trade and the rule of Empire, see, for one of the most compelling: James Walvin, *Black Ivory: Slavery in the British Empire* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001). Churchill's wealth would have been augmented by his position as an MP and his proximity to the throne, both on his own account, and through his brother John, the Duke of Marlborough, and his wife, Queen Anne's favourite, Sarah, the Duchess of Marlborough.

<sup>46</sup> Alexander Pope "Windsor Forest", in *Pope: Poetical Works*, ed. Herbert Davis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 37-52.

<sup>47</sup> See, for instance, Laura Brown, *Alexander Pope* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), 6-45 for a brilliant argument of the poem's endorsement of slavery. It is defended on the same score in Howard Erskine-Hill, "Pope and Slavery," *Proceedings of the British Academy* 91 (1998): 27-53.

<sup>48</sup> The strategy is Said's: Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1993), 66.

<sup>49</sup> Jackson, *Bird Painting*, 30.

<sup>50</sup> I am grateful to Alison Inglis from the University of Melbourne, whose work on the *Papillon* painting was instrumental to my thinking on Bogdani's place in the history of animal portraiture, in the DNS2020 conference, and in private correspondence. Jakab Bogdány, *Two Macaws, Cockatoo and Jay with Fruits* (1708-10) oil on canvas, Hungarian

---

National Gallery, Budapest, 2022; Jacob Bogdani, *Papillon* (1708-1710) oil on canvas, David Roche Foundation, Adelaide.

<sup>51</sup> These thumbnails of the paintings are reproduced here in the order in which I mention them. All except the first two, cited above, are now in private collections, and have been photographed from the Richard Green catalogue of the only solo exhibition of Bogdani's paintings in England to date, Rajnai, *Bogdani*, 6-26.

<sup>52</sup> Thomas, *Man and the Natural World*, 111.

<sup>53</sup> NA PROB 11/595/325 1v

<sup>54</sup> Tobias Stranover, as he is more often known, became a bird painter in the manner of his father-in-law, while William Bogdani went on to work in the Ordinance Office, with some success. See Rajnai, "Introduction" n.p.; and Brooks, "Bogdani", *ODNB*.

<sup>55</sup> The tit family feed primarily on caterpillars, earthworms and spiders; in winter, they will also eat nuts and seeds. They would eat fruit only if these preferred foods were unavailable for prolonged periods. A painting of a titmouse consuming a peach is therefore an image of environmental catastrophe, the collapse of insect populations, rather than the celebration of Edenic plenty it appears to be. See 'Great Tit', RSPB, <https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/wildlife-guides/bird-a-z/great-tit/>, accessed 25 July 2022.

<sup>56</sup> Jackson, *Bird Painting*, 30.

<sup>57</sup> Partha Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1986), 168.

<sup>58</sup> Barthes "The World as Object," 115.