admission to view the Book of Kells, more than half a million visitors provided around €600,000 to College funds.

Tourism is not the Library’s purpose, of course. It has always had a custodial role and the Book of Kells is only one of its treasures. When, in 1802, the College purchased the library of the Fagel family, it acquired a collection containing such jewels as a hand-coloured copy of Jan Commelin’s *Horti medici Amstelodamensis*, its title-page enriched with gold; a very rare, annotated catalogue of tulips sold at Alkmaar on 5 February 1637; as well as the famous manuscript of the journal of Simon van der Stel’s expedition in 1685 at the Cape of Good Hope.

From its inception TCD Library contained books on natural history probably because among the subjects in the intended curriculum was medicine. The earliest extant catalogue of the library indicates that it contained Graeco-Latin commentaries on Dioscorides and others, along with Gesner’s *De piscibus* and *De avibus*. Fox notes that these works are still in the collection.

TCD is a legal deposit (or “copyright”) library entitled to request a copy of every work published in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, a right it has asserted and protected with varying degrees of vigour despite the enormous problems that the influx entails. English publishers have dissented, especially after the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922, yet the right remains in force. Fox is excellent in his exposition of the benefits and problems legal deposit has posed for TCD.

While not a book about natural history, I commend this excellent history of Ireland’s finest library. It contains an intriguing “what if?” – what would have been the Library’s later history had David Webb been appointed College Librarian in 1949? Webb instead became the internationally renowned Professor of Botany. And there are morsels of more than passing interest. Among the titles mentioned by Fox only a few are natural history books. Why did the eccentric geologist Sir Charles Giesecke sell nine volumes of *Flora Danica* to TCD in 1823 for £100? In 1841, TCD paid John Gould £43 6s. 6d. to colour its copy of *The birds of Europe*, although under legal deposit legislation the Library should have received a copy “of the same quality as those issued to the public”. Moreover, TCD had to threaten “legal action if he continued to refuse”.

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E. CHARLES NELSON


Helen Macdonald’s recent successful memoir *H is for Hawk* (2014) has shown the wider public that the appeal of falconry is not limited to history books. Ingrid De Smet’s detailed critical edition of the French parliamentarian Jacques Auguste de Thou’s poem of falconry, *Hieracosophion* (first published in 1582 in Bordeaux), gives an insight into the significance of falconry for an earlier audience. But De Smet’s work is much more that a critical edition. The work consists of three parts: a substantial introduction, the Latin poem and its parallel French translation, and copious commentaries on the work.

As with many of Librairie Droz’s books, De Smet’s introduction is a thorough historical and sociological investigation of its subject, falconry in early modern France. It begins by presenting the author of the poem, a clergyman turned historian, politician and family man. De Thou (1553–1617) was born into a learned family of “parlementaires”, and lived through one of the most turbulent periods of French history, that of the wars of religions. De Smet then describes the cultural context in which the poem was written. She does not limit herself to the history of falconry, but shows the importance of hunting as a sport, a pastime, and a school for war, at the court of French Renaissance princes from Francis I, the “roi veneur” (hunting king) to Louis XIII, “dieu de la fauconnerie” (god of falconry). The sociological study of hunting and falconry reveals that many social groups other than the aristocracy
hunted with birds, including the clergy (which practice met with disapproval). Hunting was a way of reflecting one’s ascension of the social ladder. The economic impact of hunting is also analysed, from the effect on bird populations – especially migratory species – to the protection of forests as hunting grounds. This socio-historical analysis builds a platform for De Smet to follow with an analysis of the literary significance of falconry. De Thou’s poem belongs to a rich tradition of writing on falconry, both in manuscript and in print: falconry treatises, instructing how to raise, train and maintain falcons in good health; natural history works dealing with classification and bird descriptions; and hunting poems, within the genre of rustic poetry or even love poetry. De Thou’s poem sits at the junction between poetry and hunting treatises, and belongs to the well-established genre of scientific poetry.

The poem’s structure follows the traditional arrangement of falconry books: starting with a description of the different species of birds, followed by their training and the practice of flying the birds, and finally dealing with their health and illnesses. The Latin poem has been skilfully translated into French prose, making the text extremely readable and entertaining. Anecdotes and references to myths and legends pepper the text: it is said, for instance, that feathers of an eagle will act as a magnet to other birds’ feathers, reflecting the eagle’s predatory nature, much like a drum made out of a wolf skin will silence a drum made of sheep’s skin (p. 239). The poem reflects the unsettled times its author was living through, with frequent references to civil war. De Thou issues a stern warning about the possibility of two lanner falcons hunting together and suddenly turning one against the other, a type of “conflit civil” which must be proscribed (p. 252).

The commentaries in the third section of the work provide elucidation on de Thou’s varied sources, from Antiquity to Renaissance falconry treatises, on the meaning of certain expressions, and on the identification of some birds (although the scientific name is not always given, even for well-known birds such as the peregrine falcon, Falco peregrinus, which might disappoint some scientific readers).

Like other critical editions published by Droz and previously reviewed in Archives, De Smet’s is an impressive and solid historical and literary work, which sheds an invaluable light on the meaning and value of falconry in Renaissance life and literature.

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Isabelle Charmantier


The golden age of botanical art, written by the editor of Curtis’s Botanical magazine Martyn Rix, gives an overview of the art of botanical illustration focusing on its most eminent era, roughly between 1750 and 1850. Illustrated with 250 rarely seen and extraordinarily beautiful colour plates from the archives of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, it will enjoy a unique position within its field. Although the book’s main emphasis is on the so-called “golden age” of botanical art, Rix guides the reader from the beginnings of European botanical art to modern times, tracing influences and developments from overseas. Throughout the many chapters, Rix not only covers works by well known artists from different eras, such as Leonardo da Vinci, Albrecht Dürer, and Robert Thornton; but also delves into the sketchbooks of explorers and less well known artists; demonstrating the influence of scientific expeditions, to places as far off as Russia, Japan and South America, on the art of botanical illustration in Europe. It is particularly interesting to see how this art, always on the border between scientific accuracy and artistic freedom, still flourishes now, in the age of photography. To readers of Curtis’s Botanical magazine this will come as no surprise.

Rix’s strong visual focus will appeal both to experienced botanists who will value it as a useful resource, and to general readers who want to learn more about the artists covered in the book. Since it provides a broad overview of the history of botanical art it does not go into great detail except for the chapters referring to the Golden Age. A similar work is Wilfrid Blunt and William Stearn’s The art of