

Nevertheless, when the time comes to update this guide, it would be worth looking at ways of breaking down what might appear, to the less committed reader, to be large chunks of text.

George Bernard's vast experience of researching and teaching history in higher education and also speaking to students about the nerve-racking process of applying to university is put to good use throughout this readable book. In the preface, he clearly sets out his aims, which are to sketch out what modern universities are about and what being a student involves. He sees his audience as being parents, sixth-form teachers and university lecturers – all of whose views have in one way or another been incorporated into this review.

Studying at university is divided into three parts, although the book is also designed to be dipped into as, and when, the need arises. Part I looks at how universities began; I found this whistle-stop tour fascinating but perhaps my nephew was less enamoured by this part. Part II considers what universities are about and in doing so asks why some universities are better than others. The short disquisition about why university league tables are misleading is excellent and in particular the critique of performance indicators is insightful. This book is more than just a commentary on studying at university, for in many ways it is a biography of a history academic, where the particulars of personal experiences are used to illuminate the changing generalities of university life. Part III provides a useful commentary on 'How to make the most of your studies'. Specifically, Bernard writes about 'Getting started' and 'Routines of study' – these should be compulsory reading for all students. The chapters on 'Lectures and lecturers' and 'Classes, seminars and tutorials' were for me timely reminders of what it is like to be a student on the receiving end of all this and it was good to hear Bernard exhorting students to turn up on time. The tips and approaches to study which are offered are useful guides to reassure students about what is expected of them, but he also stresses that the art of learning ultimately rests with the individual student. Hence I shall be sending my review copy post-haste to my nephew, urging him to read the chapters on 'Revising for examinations' and 'Examination technique'.

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PLEASURES AND PAINS

Goya. Robert Hughes, 2003. London: Harvill Press; ISBN 1 843 43054 1, 429 pp., £20.00.

One of the main fascinations of this important new study of Goya is the author's relationship with the artist and his works. As a school-boy in Australia Hughes's first purchase of a work of art was one of Goya's 'Caprichos' etchings. Goya made him realize that extremity of tragedy could be portrayed in a small etching. Having intended to write a book on Goya for many years and although a prolific and admired writer on other art topics, Hughes found himself with a block in relation to Goya. This continued until a dramatic car accident in 1999, which smashed his body 'like a toad's' and left him in a coma for five weeks. During this period Goya and an attendant gang of 'heavies' visited him in hallucinatory dreams. The prosthetic brace applied to his shattered leg became a contraption of torture administered by Goya. On his return to health, Goya had assumed such importance in his consciousness that Hughes managed to overcome his block and write this comprehensive volume about his life and work.

Hughes states that Goya could portray pleasure and sensuousness, beauty and the enjoyment of the best things in life. However, he could also describe powerfully the depths of physical pain, torture and humiliation wreaked by humanity upon itself. Hughes cites Goya as one of the few artists who could convincingly handle both pleasure and pain.

The historical background of Goya's life is meticulously presented. Sometimes one loses sight of the works in a detailed sea of dates and battles, but this was a turbulent and complicated period, which bears patient explanation. Goya's on/off relationship with the court of the Bourbon rulers of Spain is explored. Hughes claims the famous group portrait of the family of Carlos IV in the Prado (1800) has been constantly misunderstood. He sees no satirical intent in Goya's unflatteringly frank portrayal of the royal family, saying that satire requires an audience and this painting was only intended for the court circle; and if in fact satire had been detected, Goya's career as a court artist would have ended abruptly. Goya made more than 10 preliminary studies for the group portrait, all of which would have required the approval of their subjects.

Another interesting feature of the book is the comparisons Hughes makes with the present day. He likens the guerrilla warfare carried out by the Spanish peasants against Napoleon's invading army to that experienced by the American forces in Vietnam. The effect of the banning of the wearing of the long cape and broad-brimmed hat in 1759 by Carlos IV's Minister of Finance is likened to what would happen if sunglasses and ski masks were banned in present day California. Goya's financial success in 1785 enabled him

to buy a two-wheeled 'English carriage', compared by Hughes to the equivalent of today's Ferrari or Lamborghini. Hughes also plays the 'what if' card, conjecturing what would have happened if Spain had accepted the Bayonne Constitution and the rule of Napoleon in 1809. Would it have brought Spain into a modern Europe and avoided the legacy of the decades of chaos and tyranny that followed?

The principal paintings are well detailed and discussed, but where the book excels for me is in Hughes's examination of the place of the series of etchings and aquatints as a hugely important part of Goya's oeuvre. 'Los Caprichos', 'The Disasters of War', 'La tauromaquia' and 'Los disparantes' are all examined in detail and set against the turbulent times in which they were produced. Goya portrays the horrors of war very convincingly in 'The Disasters of War'. He notes that Goya showed atrocities carried out by both sides of the conflict; the victims invariably being the innocent members of the peasant population. The artist drives home the message that there is nothing noble about war. Goya's implacable opposition as a passionate humanist towards the Inquisition and its pursuit of supposed witchcraft and the corruption of the Catholic Church is also discussed as it plays an important part in the content and imagery of many of his etchings series. Hughes himself finds a synergy in Goya's attitude towards the Church, saying that Goya helped turn him against his own Catholic faith, 'an essential step' in his 'growth and enlightenment'. Surprisingly, many of Goya's etchings did not reach the public during his lifetime; his Disasters of War and Disparantes series were not published until well after his death.

Goya's importance as a seminal artist is emphasized throughout this thoughtful book. His influence on Manet, the Surrealists, Picasso and Modernism are all explored. Goya is quoted in 1792 as emphasizing the importance of spontaneity and saying 'There are no rules in painting', and Hughes helps us understand the importance of the work of this artist as an important influence on the art of subsequent generations.

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