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Duperron, Noemi

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The Figure of Tyranny in *the Glorification of William and Mary*: Reassessing the interpretation of Thornhill's Painted Hall

Noémi Duperron

1 In 1714, James Thornhill (1675-1734) completed the first part of his commissioned work at the Royal Hospital for Seamen, now Old Royal Naval College, in Greenwich. His decorative painting on the more than 4,800 square-foot ceiling of the Lower Hall was finally unveiled after seven years of work (Johns 2004).[1]

2 The restoration in 2016–2019 of the Painted Hall, commonly called Britain's "Sistine chapel", has led to the first and long-awaited monograph about the gallery (Lucas, Johns, Stewart and Paine). The book comes after decades of research ever since Edward Croft-Murray's pioneering inventory and complements the short but important catalogue devoted to Thornhill's sketches and preparatory drawings for the ceiling (Croft-Murray I: 71; Matthews; Percival-Prescott; Balakier and Balakier; Baudino; Hamlett 107–108). Thornhill's masterpiece deserved all these investigations given its important and complex iconography. The vault portrays nearly two hundred figures aiming to showcase the effect of good government upon the British navy, the economy, science and the arts, distributed among three areas distinguished by a trompe-l'oeil architecture. On each side of the refectory, under an arch overlooked by gods, a large vessel encircled by allegories of British cities and rivers pays tribute to the Empire's naval forces. The large central section is pierced by an oval-shaped frame, where an intricate composition celebrates the English constitutional monarchy, and more specifically King William III and his wife, Queen Mary II, who have brought the Glorious Revolution to an end (Figure 1).

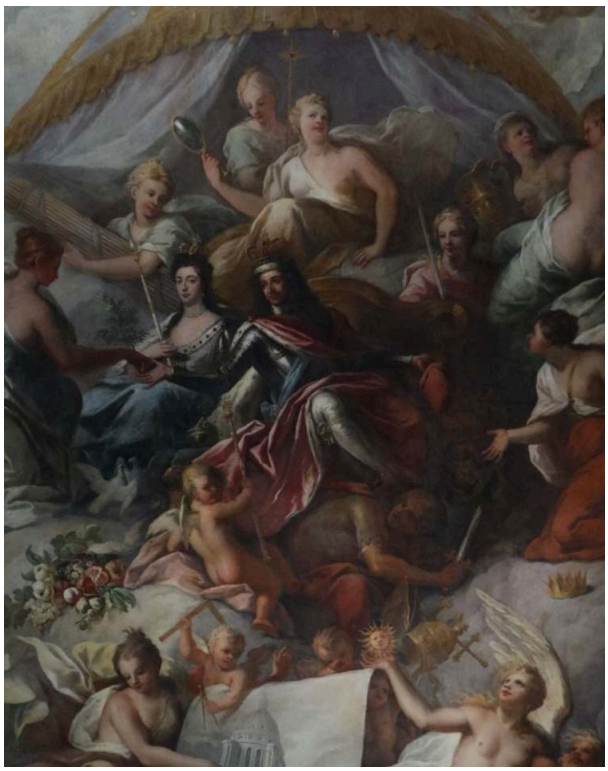
Fig. 1. *The Glorification of William and Mary* by James Thornhill (1675 or 1676–1734), 1708-1714. Oil on plaster, dimensions unkown. Old Royal Naval College, London.

Photograph by the author. Old Royal Naval College, London.

3 This uprising took place in 1688 after King James II's second wife, Mary of Modena, gave birth to a son, James Francis Stuart. If the heir was to access the crown rather than his two older Protestant half-sisters, Mary and Anne, it would have led to the return of Catholic absolutist power to the English throne. To avoid such a situation, the Whig party looked for help among the most important Protestant leaders of the time. At this point, William, the Dutch Stadtholder and Mary's husband, saw an opportunity to unite his country and England, and landed in Brixham to fight the Stuart forces. James II's flight to Saint-Germain-en-Laye, in France, was considered an abdication, and William and Mary were coronated King and Queen of England in 1689. On the ceiling, they are depicted under a canopy, surrounded by a great number of heroes, gods, and allegories that embody William III's constitutional power, as opposed to oppressive authority, a figure of Tyranny, on which he tramples (Matthews 5).

4 The political allegory (Figure 2), depicted at the very centre of the composition, is usually considered as representing Louis XIV, King of France (Matthews; Lucas, Johns, Stewart and Paine 72).

Fig. 2. *The Glorification of William and Mary (detail with the Tyranny figure)* by James Thornhill (1675 or 1676–1734), 1708-171. Oil on plaster, dimensions unkown. Old Royal Naval College, London.



Photograph by the author. Old Royal Naval College, London.

5 This interpretation of the figure is very appealing as France has been Britain's best enemy for centuries – need we remind that the British should "always blame the French" according to the famous adage? It was already the case in the early eighteenth-century, and some of the Greenwich directors, such as William Cavendish, 1st duke of Devonshire, thought that French sovereignty was despotic and considered its abusive power as the exact opposite of Britain's policy. Yet, if we are to take a closer look, this interpretation of the figure of Tyranny could be deemed a little simplistic. In terms of pure pictorial representation, nothing alludes to Louis XIV. The facial features are very dissimilar to the French King's, the clothing is too humble to be royal and the prominent French wig is missing. None of the French King's usual *regalia* is depicted: the dagger hold by the figure of Tyranny cannot represent *Joyeuse*, the magnificent royal sword, and the concealed crown, falling from its head, is very simple, far from an imposing royal tiara. Such details would have been decisive if the painter wanted the viewers to identify the figure from the floor, some twelve metres below, and it was not in Thornhill's habit to avoid these iconographic elements. He was particularly meticulous in his portraits, especially when the conditions of viewing were not optimal. For instance, in the corners of the same ceiling, Tycho Brahe, Isaac Newton, Thomas Weston and John Flamsteed are very clearly depicted: they are quite small as they hold a secondary status in the composition, but they are recognisable owing to the presence of astronomical instruments by their sides (Percival-Prescott 56; Matthews 22). It is hence hardly possible that Thornhill deliberately omitted crucial representational elements if he wanted to point at Louis XIV in the very centre of the composition. Despite this, the assimilation between Tyranny and the French king in Greenwich

ceiling has become a commonplace more agreed upon than questioned (Strunck 310). Based on this painted detail, this article aims to investigate how the history of this mural painting betrays the prevalence of political readings to the detriment of form and of the internal meaning.

6 In order to do so, it is necessary to briefly come back to the context of the artwork production and reception which was particularly unsteady. The building had been conceived by Queen Mary and initiated after her death by William, but it was only under Queen Anne's reign, in 1707, that the decoration of the refectory began. At the time the Hall was ready to be decorated, Thornhill had finished his apprenticeship with Thomas Highmore and had received his first commissions, a scenery for Drury Lane, the decoration of Stoke Edith and, more prestigious, a decorative scheme for Chatsworth (Lucas, Johns, Stewart and Paine 57). It may be this last work that prompted the Hospital directors to think about Thornhill to embellish the new hospital's ceiling, as no competition is documented. The year Thornhill arrived in Greenwich, the Acts of Union brought England and Scotland together, politically uniting Britain. He worked for seven years on the ceiling, a period which saw the rising of the Tory government, characterised by strong monarchist tendencies, in 1710, and the end of the War of the Spanish Succession in 1713. In 1714, the year the ceiling was achieved, Queen Anne died and, as she had no progeny, the Act of Settlement, which ensured a Protestant succession to the English throne, was enforced, and the crown given to the Hanoverian George I. This marked the return of the Whig government, but Anne's stepbrother, James Francis Stuart, acknowledged by the French King as James III since his father's death in 1701, unsuccessfully continued to claim the crown and encouraged Jacobite risings.

7 This paper aims to consider whether the given political and historical background had an impact on the conception of the ceiling and its subsequent readings, and whether they would justify an assimilation between *Tyranny* and the French king. It will adopt a chronological order, from Thornhill's artistic models, his preparatory drawings, and the production background to the ceiling's contemporary reception to understand when and why the association with Louis XIV appeared for the first time.

8 First of all, it seems necessary to question the presence of the French king in Greenwich ceiling models. In his youth, Thornhill had certainly observed the works of Antonio Verrio, who was at the time one of the leading artists in England. The Italian had arrived in London in 1672 after a stay in Paris and had served the most important people, including English kings. He painted for instance the ceiling in St. George's Hall at Windsor Castle for Charles II (Croft-Murray I: 69; Lucas, Johns, Stewart and Paine 55; Johns 175; Brett; De Giorgi, and Johns 2016, 153-176). Destroyed during the refurbishment of the castle for George IV, this fresco is known by a watercolour and a description published in *The Windsor Guide.* It reports: "in a large oval, in the centre of the Ceiling, King Charles II is represented in the habit of the Order of the Garter, with his right foot on a lion's head, attended by England, Scotland and Ireland" (51) (Figure 3).[2]

Fig. 3. *St George's Hall, Windsor Castle* by Charles Wild (1781–1835), *c.* 1816. Pencil and watercolour with touches of bodycolour, 20.2 x 25.4 cm. Royal Collection Trust, London. RCIN 922112.

9 For the Lower Hall at Greenwich, Thornhill clearly drew on this composition adopting an oval frame around the triumphant English king. But it needed some adjustment, since William III could not stand on a defeated lion: the feline evoked his family's coat of arms, the Nassau, and his homeland, the Dutch Republic, of which he was still Stadtholder. Thornhill probably chose to substitute the allegorical Tyranny for the lion to remedy this iconographic challenge without impacting the significance of the representation, and placed the feline hidden in the dark, roaring at the figure of despotic power. This solution may have been inspired by another mural by Verrio showing the triumph of Charles II. Located in the refectory of the Royal Hospital in Chelsea, built by Christopher Wren and founded in 1682 (Figure 4)[3], the painting shows the king on horseback, his mount stepping on a hydra (Brett 10; Cruickshank 48).

Fig. 4. *King Charles II on horseback* by Antonio Verrio (c.1639 –1707) and Henry Cooke (1642–1700), *c.* 1690. Technique and dimensions unknown. Chelsea Royal Hospital, London.

Courtesy of the Royal Hospital Chelsea 2022.

10 The multi-headed monster was then a common symbol of Tyranny used to depict victory over a threatening power.[4] But at that time that danger was coming more from his own rebellious citizens than from France as Charles II and his cousin Louis XIV had sealed a secret alliance, signing the Treaty of Dover in 1670. Even though this coalition was broken when Mary, Charles's niece, married William in 1677, the English king came back to Louis in 1681, looking for some support after having dissolved the Parliament.

11 Apart from these royal murals, Thornhill could also have seen Verrio's paintings for private patrons. The emblems he painted under William III's foot are very close to those painted by Verrio on the Great Chamber's ceiling at Chatsworth House, where Thornhill was employed at the beginning of the following century. For the 1st duke of Devonshire, the Italian had composed a *Return of the Golden Age* in 1691-1692, celebrating the restoration of peace after the Glorious Revolution and representing Queen Mary II as Cybele (Peterson). As in the Greenwich ceiling, an allegory of Fury tramples on the symbols of Catholicism and absolutism at the bottom of the composition. They are symbolised by a mitre, a Bible recognisable by the word "Deus" and two golden crowns which allude to monarchic despotic power. The condemnation of these emblems was more than welcome in the house of the Duke of Devonshire who had been a very active member of the country party, or first Whig party, and who had signed the invitation to William III to intervene in English affairs in 1688. Even if some historians have seen in the jewelled crown and in the sceptre in the background a connection with French monarchy (Peterson), it is much more likely that it refers to the new regalia that Charles II had ordered for his coronation, St Edward's crown and sceptre.

12 In adapting Verrio's iconographic models, Thornhill strengthened his emulation of the Italian master and did refer to the Catholic Church as a threat but did not suggest any direct link with the French king.[5]

13 The only French model for Greenwich is its architecture based on les Invalides hospital in Paris, commissioned by Louis XIV at the end of the seventeenth century. As Wren's

assistant Nicholas Hawksmoor reported in his *Remarks,* the French prototype "should stir up the Emulation of other Nations (especially in cases so profitable as the Encouragement of our Seamen) to imitate this Example" (Hawksmoor 6). Indeed, Christopher Wren owned "a large Port Folio containing finished Drawings of the Hotel des Invalides at Paris" (Strunck 75). The weight of France in this architectural discourse has probably stimulated the interpretation of Thornhill's interior design: it has been underscored that the architectural utterance must have found an echo in the ceiling's decorative scheme. This connection between the exterior and the interior rested on Thornhill's design itself as it presents an allegory of Architecture displaying a drawing of Greenwich Hospital's elevation. Nevertheless, major differences with the Paris model are to be noted. The most readily identifiable one is the transformation of the French single dome, perceived by Wren as the symbol of absolutism, into two cupolas seen as an illustration of the British constitutional monarchy and hence expressing a clear dissociation from French politics.

14 If references to the French monarchy are missing in Thornhill's predecessors' artworks, the figure of Tyranny was not intended either in the painter's earliest preparatory drawings.[6] We know that Thornhill's scheme changed multiple times, notably after having been submitted to the governors of the hospital[7]. In the Minute Book, it is mentioned in July 1707 "that as soon as the Scaffolding in the Hall is ready, Mr James Thornhill do proceed upon the painting therof, by primeing it himself, or servants, and that he make such Alterations in his designe, in inserting what more he can relating to *maritimes affairs*, till the same shall be approved by the Board [sic]" (emphasis added, Croft-Murray I: 71). This order reminded the painter that the Hall was part of a building dedicated to former marines and justifies the preeminent presence of the galleons at the upper ends of the hall, but not the Tyranny figure. As a matter of fact, Tyranny emerged in an oil sketch commonly dated 1707-1708.[8] If it was not to satisfy the governors' request, we must wonder whether contemporary events may have given Thornhill the desire to add a political figure in his composition at that very precise moment. In March 1708, James Francis Stuart, son of James II, proclaimed himself heir to the throne and attempted to invade Scotland. To this end, he received the help of France, the support of Pope Clement XI and the protection of Spain.[9] These troubling circumstances surely shaped Thornhill's plans for his ceiling: falling papal emblems confirm the abhorrence of Catholic power and his faith in the superiority of the Protestant church. But although France played a role in this outbreak, the greatest danger came from the exiled Stuart Pretender. It would have been strange to depict an ally of the foe rather than the foe himself if Thornhill wanted the political message to be unmistakable for the viewer.

15 The decoration of the refectory appealed to the collective memory of the residents, most of whose had taken part in naval battles, especially those of the War of the Spanish Succession. However, France did not play a decisive role on the seas during the conflict as it was not yet an important maritime force, excepted at the Battle of Gibraltar. As it happens, this fight – or the capture of Minorca – is evoked by the vessels facing each other in the fake culs-de-four on each side of the hall. Spanish and English flags on the vessel's bow reveal their origins but France is entirely omitted in this naval iconography. However, these battles guaranteed the preeminence of the English power in the Mediterranean Sea and made way to the most important maritime dominion of the eighteenth century. By extension, it is Queen Anne as "Empress of the Sea" (Gander) who is celebrated at both ends of the Painted Hall (Strunck). At the time of

these military events the two monarchs at the centre of the composition were dead, even though Anne's domination on the seas was made possible as she inherited the throne from her older sister Mary's husband.

16 In fact, the only symbol that could refer to France or Louis XIV at the centre of the composition is two tiny fleurs-de-lis on the base of the dagger held by the Tyranny figure which are barely visible from the ground (Lucas, Johns, Stewart and Paine 72). This motif was closely related to the Capetian dynasty and to the Bourbon kings who had been ruling France since 1589, and of whom Louis XIV was the direct successor. That said, Thornhill's choice to refer to France only through a barely visible flower from the ground is curious as this pattern was highly equivocal. In the eighteenth century, it was a "very frequent" emblem according to James Coat's *New Dictionary of Heraldry,* published in 1725, as "Lys is the Emblem of the Holy Trinity by reason of its three branches" (Coats 150). Hence, lilies – which were also present on the English kings' crowns – were more a sign of Christianity than a reminder of the French kings' coats of arms. The fleur-de-lis pattern is, as a matter of fact, also visible in the red flag on the galley above the entrance of the gallery, the one designated as Spanish and embodying both the Bourbon dynasty and the Catholic church.

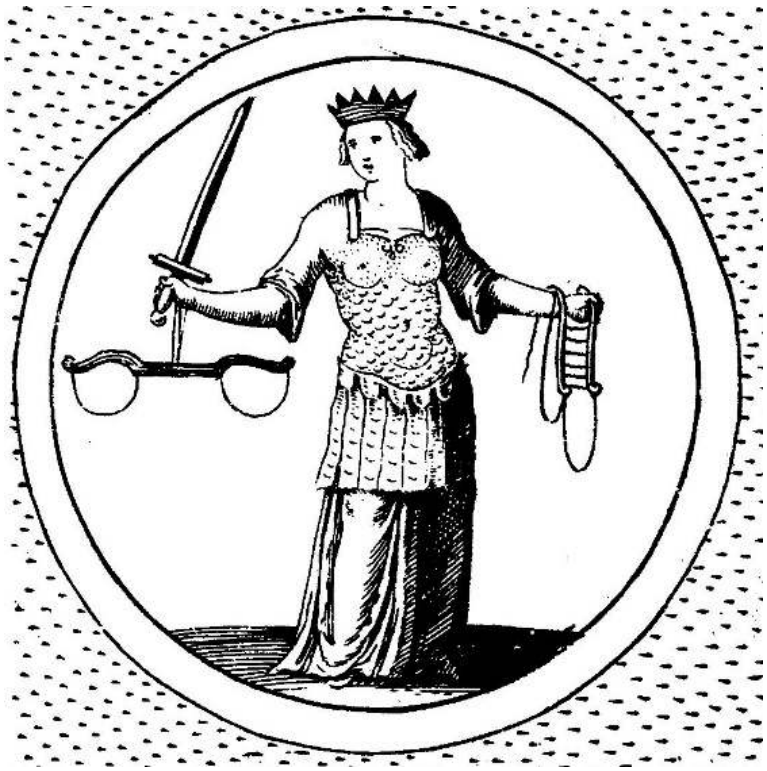
17 If Thornhill did not want to depict an unambiguous emblem of France under the features of Tyranny, he most certainly could have mentioned France in his *Explanation of the painting in the Royal Hospital in Greenwich* published in 1730. The booklet was sold at the entrance of the Hall and served as a guide for the numerous visitors, which must have included many French as the text was bilingual. It did mention the figures of "Tyranny and Arbitrary Power" (Thornhill 10), but it did not allude to France in any way. Furthermore, none of the many eighteenth-century French visitors who recounted their experience of the Painted Hall ever saw any allusion to France, let alone to Louis, in the ceiling. Of all the explanations, travel writings and reports of the refectory known today, only one clearly mentions that "the King tramples Tyranny under his Feet, which is expressed by a French Personage, with his Leaden Crown falling off his Chains, Yoke and Iron Sword broken to pieces, Cardinal's Cap triple-crowned Mistress &c tumbling down" (Steele 1714). The author of these lines published in *The Lover* in May 1714 is the writer and politician Richard Steele (bap. 1672–1729). A member of the Whig party, Steele was far from being politically neutral and had been involved in contentious relations with France for a long time. His Francophobic contempt grew while he attended university and, when he left Oxford in 1692, he stated loud and clear that he would plant "himself behind King William the Third, against Lewis the Fourteenth" (Steele 1720). Steele's dislike of the French was certainly still vigorous, if not stronger, when he visited Greenwich. In 1711, he had published in the *Spectator* a letter criticising Louis XIV's politics and exposing the vanity of his conquests (Steele 1965, 2: 208-212). A few years later, in January 1714, he had written *The Crisis*, a lampoon condemning the support of the opposition party, the Tories, for the Pretender and hence for France, ideas he also developed in *The French faith represented in the present state of Dunkirk* (79-100). These three texts enjoyed enormous success for the simple reason that they made the most of contemporary issues. Indeed, Queen Anne's Tory cabinet was very keen to compromise with Jacobites and France, and the absence of a surviving child to succeed her, who was extremely ill, rendered the threat of a rising even more realistic. This controversial and unstable political environment must have pervaded Steele's gaze when he visited the Painted Hall and distorted his description. Not only did he see Louis XIV in the allegory of despotic power, but he

called the English galleon the "Blenheim Man of War" (Steele 1714) [10]. It was supposedly meant to be a homage to the Battle of Blenheim, even if no ships were involved in the fight as it took place in the South of Bavaria. It could also have been a reference to the new Blenheim Palace, built for John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough, as a reward for his military successes. After having fought during the War of the Spanish Succession and having won decisive battles against France and Bavaria, he was offered a land and a vast amount of money by Queen Anne. At the top of the raised manor's south façade, Churchill placed Louis XIV's bust he had stolen from the *Porte Royale* in Tournai. It was a symbolic way to underline his victory over the French king (Wellington). Perhaps the presence of Louis XIV in Blenheim's visual programme explains the importance taken by the French King in Steele's exegesis, who, surely, was aware of this enterprise. However, Marlborough was no naval officer and he never fought on sea, so the association with the vessel is quite unjustified. In fact, Steele essentially broadcast his own political opinions through Thornhill's celebrated artwork which explains all the irregularities of his comment. His politically biased description would become a selling point: the more the interpretation of the ceiling was discussed, the more *The Lover* and *The Spectator* would have sold and the more the Painted Hall would have been visited, increasing both Steele's and Thornhill's celebrity. The English painter may have been aware of this project as he was very close to the journalist whom he portrayed several times[11], and might have seen in Steele's readers an opportunity to access the increasing market of Whig houses decoration and to position himself as a leading patriot artist. It is, however, impossible to know if Thornhill could have suggested his friend to connect the figure of Tyranny with France. It would have been quite inappropriate for a painter who realised his first public commission in a country where the French artist Louis Laguerre, who followed Charles Lebrun's school, was still greatly appreciated, but it would also have been a way to underline his Englishness, a characteristic that probably helped him to win the competition for St Paul's cathedral a few years later.

18 It appears the allegory of Tyranny in Thornhill's painting was not supposed to depict Louis XIV and the only contemporaneous anti-French interpretation rests on a political standpoint. However, the allegorical figure must now be analysed *per se* to determine whether it was meant to depict someone specifically.

19 For this purpose, Thornhill's painted detail can be compared with the allegory of Tyranny depicted in Cesare Ripa's famous *Iconologia,* initially published in 1593. Ripa's vignette in the Amsterdam version (1698) represents the allegory in a military outfit that leaves her breast visible, holding an iron crown and a dagger, a bit and a yoke (Figure 5).[12]

Fig. 5. *Tyrannie* by Cesare Ripa (*c.* 1555–1622), dans *Iconologie ou Explication nouvelle de plusieurs images, emblems et autres figures*, Paris, chez Mathieu Guillemot, 1644, p. 174.



Public Domain.

20 Thornhill kept some of these symbols – the coronet and the blade – making Tyranny identifiable but transformed Ripa's type to a great extent, beginning with the conversion of the female figure into a male one. This gesture was surely not left to chance as Thornhill cited Ripa's feminine *Truth* very precisely elsewhere in the ceiling (Percival-Prescott 57).[13] The masculinity of Tyranny is in fact a *unicum*, suggesting that the allegory depicts a personage of the male gender.

21 To identity this figure, we must turn to Thornhill's work method at Greenwich. The painter repeated motives to unify the painted surface and, most certainly, to hasten the execution. An inspection of other parts of the Hall reveals a personage identical to Tyranny on the North wall of the Upper Hall that Thornhill painted between 1718 and 1725. The grisaille painting shows the arrival of George I at Greenwich in 1714 (Figure 6).

Fig. 6. *The Arrival of George I at Greenwich* by James Thornhill (1675 or 1676-1734), 1727. Oil on plaster, c. 600 cm wide. Old Royal Naval College, London.

Old Royal Naval College, London. Public Domain.

22 The Hanoverian king is surrounded by the allegorical figures of Religion, Liberty, Truth and Justice and, in the lower left corner, a soldier is falling in front of the cortege. This figure is in the same tumbling position as Tyranny, twisting in an odd way towards the viewer, and wears a similar military outfit (Matthews 31). An inscription on the mural preparatory drawing at the British Museum indicates it is the allegory of "Tyrannick Power & despair"[14]. Therefore, the two figures on the Lower Hall ceiling and the Upper Hall wall are the same, as is the theme of the paintings, both kings' arrival having freed Britain from the threat of a Catholic sovereign.

23 Thornhill's description of the Upper Hall published in 1730 does not explicitly say if this second Tyranny allegory depicts a precise foe, but George I's enemies are well known. His accession to the English throne put an end to all hopes for the Stuart dynasty in 1714 so the tumbling soldier can without any doubt be associated with them (Lucas, Johns, Stewart and Paine 97). Based on that observation, could the allegory under William III's foot symbolise a Stuart, and more precisely, James, the Pretender?

24 It turns out that all the equivocal arguments in favour of an anti-French interpretation of the Tyranny figure on the ceiling can precisely be understood as anti-Stuart. From a historical perspective, the ceiling of the Painted Hall celebrates William III's victory over the Stuarts and their allies during the Glorious Revolution, a victory that marked the beginning of the new lineage, which ensured constitutional and Protestant monarchy over absolutism and Catholicism (Johns 2004, 159). As such, it is coherent that Wren rejected the single dome, and that Thornhill used Verrio's artworks for Charles II as models in order to make Stuart decors outdated (Bird, Clayton and Fryman). The political context of Thornhill's work also favoured an anti-Stuart

message. His decorative scheme had been validated by a Hospital's board committee irritated by James III's invasion attempt in 1708 but most of the work had to be executed after the Whigs' defeat in government in 1710. Thornhill had to work for the Whigs in the context of a Tory government. To resolve this discrepancy, the painter chose to depict all the allegorical figures in pseudo-antique costumes, showing that William III's power and strength were timeless (Baudino 171). Playing down the political message was indeed safer for a painter who could still see his work being submitted to the royal veto and be proscribed (Strunck 23.). It nevertheless allowed political projections such as Richard Steele's who may also have spoken of a "French personage" to allude to the Stuart alliance as he closely associated Stuarts, Jacobites and Tories with France: he referred to the Tory government as the "French administration" in a letter dated 1715 to the Whig minister-to be Robert Walpole (Steele 1809, II: 371). More generally, Whig fellows commonly associated despotic power and Jacobitism at the very beginning of the century, the first even defining the second: "by Jacobitism, I mean the Spirit of Tyranny and Oppression, which reign'd in the Persons of our two Princes before the Revolution", wrote the famous author Daniel Defoe in 1709 (Defoe, *Defoe's Review*, 6.18 (17 May 1709): 71, quoted in Bloom and Bloom 563). Furthermore, the association between the Stuart kings and despotic power had already been suggested in Louis Laguerre's Painted Hall at Chatsworth executed between 1692 and 1694. On one of the murals, the killing of Julius Caesar by his son Brutus is depicted. In accordance with the patron's political ideas, this murder celebrated the end of the Roman emperor's despotic power and, in a more contemporary language, the fall of the Stuart dynasty (Peterson).

25 If the interpretation of Tyranny as a member of the Stuart family is appealing, it nonetheless must be underlined that the allegory does not look like the Pretender: he was a young nobleman and there would have been no reason to depict him wearing a simple fighter outfit when he was the leader of the Jacobite army. It more probably represents a Jacobite soldier: it would not only justify the clothing, but also the numerous hints about the Catholic church, the masculinity of the figure and the link with Tyranny. Such a solution avoided pointing at individual enemies and gave the painting a universal dimension: whoever was the foe, it could be identified with the trampled figure.

26 Revising the anti-French reading which was dominant about Greenwich ceiling so far requires recalling the political scope of the painted scheme, and, more widely of some other English painted ceilings. As a matter of fact, political approaches are almost always historically built and the voice delivering such interpretations should be analysed and not taken for granted. The description of Charles II's apotheosis in Windsor written in 1685 spoke of a "lofty monumental Hall, / Where England's Triumphs grace the shining Wall, / When she led captive Kings from conquer'd Gaul" (Otway, *Windsor Castle*, quoted in Strunck: 128) already revealing an anti-French political bias. It was indeed the author's, Thomas Otway, interpretation, as he truly abhorred everything that had to do with the continent, rather than the king's who had no open Francophobic intentions. This reading was nonetheless revitalised by Alexander Pope at the end of the War of the Spanish Succession. As the Treaty of Utrecht was about to recognise the British dominance, the poet saw in the ceiling the supremacy of Britain on its enemies, as even if "from her roofs when Verrio's colours fall, / And leave inanimate the naked wall; / Still in thy song should vanquish' d France appear, / And bleed for ever under Britain's spear" (Pope 576). The last tumultuous

years of the seventeenth century and the first years of the eighteenth century seem to have favoured personal readings of political decors and among the spectators, some Francophobic eyes fantasised the presence of French symbols. These comments were certainly a way to take some distance with the French production which until then had been an important artistic model. By bringing the English arts into opposition with their enemy's well-established pictorial tradition, it confirmed a sense of "Britishness", it granted the arts a strong political purpose and served to display the economic power of the nation (Colley).

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NOTES

1. I am most grateful to Prof. Jan Blanc and Isabelle Baudino for their helpful suggestions and corrections.

2. A detail of Charles II's portrait is kept in the Royal Collection (RCIN 407412).

3. Richard Jones, Ist Earl of Ranelagh, initially commissioned the mural to Verrio, before the painter had to flee during the Revolution. Henry Cookes finished the work in 1690. See Croft-Murray (I: 66) and Bold (100).

4. This visual motive can for instance be found in Henri IV's portrait by an anonymous artist at the Louvre Museum (Inv. RF 1997-13), in which the French king is shown slaying the Lernaean Hydra, symbolizing the rebellious Catholics.

5. Thornhill's emulation of Verrio's work is attested in the sketches drawn after the Italian's decor for the Queen's Drawing Room at Hampton Court. The booklet is now kept at the British Museum (Inv. 1884,0726.40). See Croft-Murray, I: 70. Verrio died in 1707, at the very beginning of the works at Greenwich, explaining Thornhill's desire to emulate his master. Thornhill probably also wished to defeat his rivals like the painters Marco Ricci and Antonio Pellegrini who arrived in Britain from Italy in 1708. See Johns, 2013: 87. The competition for the painting of the dome at St Paul's Cathedral, won by Thornhill in 1715, was the climax of these artistic aspirations.

6. All the drawings and sketches were published by Matthews in 2016.

7. Tyranny does not appear in the two drawings at the British Museum (Inv. 1884,0726.40.66 and inv. 1884,0726.40.65) nor in those at the National Maritime Museum (Inv. PAH 4058 and Inv. NMM PAH 4060), all dated 1707.

8. The allegorical figure is depicted in the sketch at the Courtauld Collection (Inv. D.1952.RW. 2250) and in an oil sketch at the Victoria & Albert Museum (Inv. Nr. 812-1877).

9. The Spanish King Philip V was a grandson of Louis XIV.

10. The HMS Bleinheim did exist but was launched fourty-five years later, on 5 July 1761.

11. James Thornhill was elected Member of Parliament in 1722 for Weymouth Constituency. A group portrait by James Thornhill showing *Andrew Quicke in Conversation with the 1st Earl of Godolphin, Joseph Addison, Sir Richard Steele, and the Artist* is kept in a private collection. A picture of it can be found in Lucas, Johns, Stewart and Paine 30, fig. 23. Also, see Johns 156.

12. The first English edition published in 1709 decorated with Isaac Fueller's engravings did not include an entry for *Tyranny*.

13. Thornhill also borrowed the figure of Hercules from Piero da Cortona's ceiling in the Salon of Mars at the Palazzo Pitti, Florence. He probably knew it through an engraving by Abraham Bloemart (Matthews 20). The figure of the Wind comes from Andrea Pozzo's ceiling at St Ignazio in Rome, according to Percival-Prescott (48; 61).

14. See Thornhill's drawing kept at the British Museum, Inv. 1865,0610.1353.

RÉSUMÉS

La fresque peinte par Sir James Thornhill sur le plafond du Painted Hall à Greenwich a été réalisée durant le règne de la reine Anne. Les tensions politiques de l'époque se reflètent dans les interprétations de la figure allégorique de la tyrannie, au centre de la composition. Depuis le dévoilement de la voûte, cette personnification a été assimilée au roi de France Louis XIV alors qu'aucun élément iconographique ne vient soutenir cette identification. Dès lors, ce rapprochement semble avoir été plus induit par les orientations politiques des spectateurs que par la peinture elle-même car aucun élément iconographique ne vient soutenir cette identification. Le but de cet article est de comprendre pour quelles raisons ce personnage a été assimilé à Louis XIV et de proposer une nouvelle interprétation, cohérente avec l'ensemble du programme iconographique.

Sir James Thornhill's fresco on the ceiling of the Painted Hall in Greenwich was executed during Queen Anne's reign. The political tensions of the time crystallised in the interpretations of the allegorical figure of tyranny, at the centre of the composition. Since the unveiling of the vault in 1714, this personification has been assimilated with the French king Louis XIV although there is no iconographic evidence to support this identification. Therefore, the comparison seems to have been driven more by the political orientations of the viewers than by the painting itself. The aim of this article is to understand the issues related to the association of this figure with Louis XIV and to propose a new interpretation, more consistent with the iconographic programme as a whole.

INDEX

Mots-clés : James Thornhill, Louis XIV, tyrannie, Painted Hall, Jacobites
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AUTEUR

NOÉMI DUPERRON

Noémi Duperron est assistante diplômée à l'Université de Genève où elle enseigne l'histoire de l'art de la période moderne. Elle conduit une thèse de doctorat sur les représentations et les interprétations de l'*Iliade* d'Homère dans les arts français et britanniques au dix-huitième siècle sous la direction des Professeurs Jan Blanc et Christian Michel. Ses recherches portent essentiellement sur les échanges franco-britanniques, la peinture d'histoire et la réception de l'Antiquité.