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Thursday, May 15, 2014

The Byzantium In All of Us

Silvia Ronchey and Jason Goodwin



What is Byzantium? What do we mean by the term "Byzantine"? Is it right to use it in a pejorative sense to define something that is "irretrievably decadent"? Isn't there rather a contemporary lesson in the millennium of civilisation (4th to 15th centuries) which has been described as an "endlessly protracted decline"? A useful lesson for the present? Isn't it possible that precisely in the "Roman" civilisation of Byzantium, in the enormous mosaic of ethnicities and religions that made up the immense, multi-ethnic empire of Constantinople we might uncover the key to understanding our time, its renewed conflicts, and what we now call the "clash of civilisations"?

Writers and essayists **Silvia Ronchey** and **Jason Goodwin**, authors of books that have fascinated a large public of readers – on the Byzantium Empire the former, on the Ottoman one the latter – will answer these and other questions.

Silvia Ronchey is Professor of Byzantine Civilization at the University of Roma 3. She has written several specialist essays on Byzantium, and has made translations from Byzantine Greek, for instance that of the *Cronografia* by Michele Psello (Mondadori). She has also written books of wider appeal, which have won literary awards, such as *L'Aristocrazia bizantina* (Sellerio) with Alexander Kazhdan; *Lo Stato Bizantino* (Einaudi; Premio Capalbio 2003); *L'enigma di Piero* (Rizzoli; Premio Elsa Morante 2006); *Il guscio della tartaruga* (Nottetempo); *Il romanzo di Costantinopoli* (Einaudi); *Ipazia, la vera storia* (Rizzoli, Premio Pisa 2012); *Storia di Barlaam e Ioasaf. La vita bizantina del Buddha* (Einaudi). She writes for the newspapers *La Stampa* and *Il Sole 24 Ore*, and works for cultural programmes broadcasted by RAI TV.

Jason Goodwin is a novelist, historian and traveller, winner of the JLR/Mail on Sunday Prize for *On Foot to the Golden Horn* (Chatto & Windus), and of the Edgar Award for Best Novel with his first Yashim mystery, *The Janissary Tree* (Picador), an international best-seller. The fourth book in the series, *An Evil Eye*, was published in 2011 to critical acclaim, and *The Baklava Club* will be published on 5 June in the US and the UK. His books are translated into 40 languages, they include: *The Gunpowder Gardens: Travels in China and India in search of Tea* (Argonaut) and *Lords of the Horizons: A History of the Ottoman Empire* (Vintage). His latest novel is *Greenback: the Almighty Dollar and the Invention of America* (Argonaut).

Information

Date: Thursday, May 15, 2014

Opening times: 6:30pm

Venue: Italian Cultural Institute

Organised by: Italian Cultural Institute

In collaboration with:

Free admission, booking essential

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