



SIMON SCHAMA'S POWER OF ART

BBC Two, 9pm

This series got off to a catastrophic start last week, with clumsy dramatisations all but drowning out the voice of the master storyteller. But tonight's superb episode represents some sort of miraculous levitation in both style and substance. The director has allowed Schama to take centre stage and talk with eloquence, humour, knowledge and passion about the life of Gian Lorenzo Bernini, with restrained dramatisations kept well in the background. The programme begins and ends with Bernini's masterpiece — the *Ecstasy of St Theresa* in the church of Santa Maria della Vittoria. Schama doesn't mince his words when it comes to describing the overt sexuality of a sculpture that combines physical craving and spiritual transcendence. Like the programme itself, it is an expression of pure bliss.