

the latter's arguments for a nobleman's dual education in arms and in arts, and demonstrates that for Peacham some of his ideals were embodied by Thomas Howard, the Earl of Arundel, and one of the earliest English patrons of Van Dyck. The discussion then moves to Franciscus Junius's *Paintings of the Ancient*, in which this librarian and admirer of Arundel revived the notion of *sprezzatura* as he embraced *grace* as a crowning quality of artistic expression that perfectly balances ingredients such as proportion, color, and so on. The study's first part concludes with the dissemination of Castiglione's ideas into art theory and how this, in turn, informed Bellori's narrative on Anthony van Dyck in his *Lives* of 1672, as well as an anonymous French biographer, who touches on the artist's transformation into a gentlemen's painter.

The three chapters of the book's second part examine selected portraits of noblemen by Van Dyck. The intriguing *Portrait of George Gage with Two Men*, now believed to have been painted in Rome in 1622, is the starting point of a discussion that moves on to Van Dyck's courtly portraits and double portraits made in England in the 1630s. Peacock argues convincingly that Van Dyck, sometimes in close discussion with his patrons, developed highly original, sometimes contrasting representations that commented on—and helped shape—the very nature and self-image of nobility.

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Poussin's Women: Sex and Gender in the Artist's Works. Troy Thomas.

Visual and Material Culture, 1300–1700. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2020. 386 pp. €119.

For students and lovers of Poussin's work, Troy Thomas's book on Poussin's paintings of women has something to offer almost everyone. A rich and fully illustrated compendium that features iconographical analyses of sixty-two artworks, the book includes examples of mythological, historical, literary, and religious subjects, all selected on the basis of their treatment of themes elucidating Poussin's understanding of women. Although I wondered at times whether an individual work merited inclusion in a study of women (sometimes the rationale seemed somewhat forced), there is no denying that the pages of the volume provide enriching and informative examinations of famous and at times lesser-studied examples of the artist's work.

The book is divided into three main sections. The first is a brief introduction to the themes in which Poussin revealed his understanding of women, and includes an overview of some basic scholarship on gender and sexual themes in the early modern era. The second focuses on contextualizing Poussin in terms of the time period, the cultural and social issues that have bearing on how women were perceived. The meat of the book lies in the third part, where the sixty-two paintings and drawings that Thomas discusses

are grouped into chapters with overall summary titles that refer to the role or dominant characteristic of the female protagonists featured in the works: "Killers, Transgressors," for example. The titles and groupings did not, to my mind, offer insights or further the understanding of the subjects under discussion. Several times, the assigned titles seemed to obfuscate the author's interpretations.

The analyses that Thomas offers are, in large part, detailed and illuminating. Particularly rich and nuanced were the discussions of *Diana and Endymion*, *Orpheus and Eurydice*, and the *Sacrament of Marriage*. Many of his readings of imagery are extremely subtle, sometimes based on the expression of a face, or a background landscape detail. All of these may be accurate readings, but the author never verifies the condition of any of the works he discusses. Having spent a lot of time in front of Poussin paintings trying to ascertain whether there is any evidence of wear or overpaint, I would argue that it is crucial that the good condition of the painting under review be confirmed, or at least be accompanied by an acknowledgment that there has been some wear. Such an approach is especially needed in an example such as his description of the figure of Echo in *Echo and Narcissus* (Louvre) as "disappearing into the rock on which she leans" (272). The first question a reader may ask is how certain we are that the surface is fully intact.

Thomas brings the identities of the patron(s) or early owners into many of his discussions. However, it is not always clear to what extent the patron's ideas may have influenced the particular interpretation that Poussin provided, and how often the result reflects the attitudes of the artist himself. In many cases, Poussin's compositional solutions to the depictions of some of his narratives are original, not conforming to the established representations for the subjects at hand. The book would have benefited, in my view, from some acknowledgment of the traditional representations so that it is made clear how original Poussin's interpretations were. Thomas does this in some cases, although in far too few. One instance in which several other examples are compared is Poussin's *Esther and Ahasuerus*, yet that is arguably one of the most traditional of Poussin's compositions and was one used by several of the artist's contemporaries.

Thomas misses a valuable opportunity to delve fully into issues of gender roles in his analysis of Poussin's two versions of *Achilles among the Daughters of Lycomedes*, based on Achilles's attempt to avoid service in the Trojan War by living disguised as one of Lycomedes's daughters. Surprisingly included in the chapter titled "Victims," which he based on the fact that the daughters had been fooled by Achilles, he gives an unfortunately cursory discussion of one of the most interesting narratives treated by any artist in the seventeenth century. Although Thomas does acknowledge the complicated story line in which Achilles rapes one of the daughters, there is a great deal more about the narrative that relates so integrally to the subject of his book.

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