

Christiane Hille. *Visions of the Courtly Body: The Patronage of George Villiers, First Duke of Buckingham, and the Triumph of Painting at the Stuart Court*. Munich: Akademie Verlag, 2012. ix + 302 pp. €49.80. ISBN: 978-3-05-005908-2.

The visual depiction of the royal body reached greater extremes during the Tudor era than ever since, producing enduring and iconic images of both Henry VIII and Elizabeth. Holbein created the illusion of Henry as the hypermasculine warrior king, square shoulders and codpiece to the fore. The questionable

legitimacy of her birth and her role as a reigning queen necessitated far more innovative approaches to Elizabeth. They came to include quotations of classical or biblical heroines or surrealistic confections of a powerful and utterly otherworldly female figure. By the reign of Charles I, and more influenced by Italian rather than Northern European models than ever before, portraiture itself had become more naturalistic and refined. Though never quite reaching the extremes of its Henrician and Elizabethan predecessors, it nevertheless invited inspired innovation.

Christiane Hille's *Visions of the Courty Body* finds the characteristic naturalism of Caroline court portraits rooted in the ambient court culture of the era of his early adulthood, and especially in the influence of George Villiers, first Duke of Buckingham. In this account Buckingham broke with others of his and earlier generations of English collectors and connoisseurs. He engaged not merely in collecting fashionable paintings and patronizing fashionable painters, but also in commissioning the likes of Rubens and van Dyck to articulate a new form of the courtly portrait, one which encouraged a more refined and yet casual language of gesture and appearance. These innovations elevated the potential of the portrait as a means of aristocratic self-definition, raising the status of that genre in courtly culture as it did so.

Hille finds it puzzling that art historical scholarship on these issues trips lightly over the intervening reign of James I, in which she feels that portraiture made more modest advances as a vehicle for courtly self-expression. She gives that reign due credit in the evolution of courtly culture not by emphasizing its portraiture but rather by identifying, especially in chapter 2, the court masque as the more dominant cultural form at court and as the most important for nurturing the artistic traditions (including bodily depictions) that would blossom under Charles. The final chapter continues to consider the dialogue between masque and portrait, but emphasizes the ways in which the portrait gave the Caroline courtier his own models for self-representation, distinguishing him from the image of the monarch.

Hille makes a compelling case for the innovative nature of bodily representation in the Caroline court, and provides valuable insights into the culture of its Jacobean predecessor. Her consideration of portraiture in the context of other cultural milieus presents a welcome and rounded examination of court life. But the book should be read with certain cautions in mind. For one, Hille tends to present her targets with more enthusiasm than care. The historian familiar with Roger Lockyer's 500-page standard and authoritative 1981 biography of Buckingham — listed in Hille's bibliography but not cited where it counts — will be surprised to learn that "little has been written on the man" (19). She is also perhaps too quick to dismiss the importance of portraiture in the court culture of the reign of James I, thus implicitly denying the visually sophisticated role of Anne of Denmark in the bargain. Then, too, one wonders whether some of what she attributes to Buckingham's vision may not have emanated from the more general and contemporary English reception of Baroque portraiture and court culture as developed abroad. Some of these lapses accrue from the unfortunate timing of a publication that presumably

precluded consideration of Kevin Sharpe's 2009 *Image Wars: Promoting King and Commonwealth, 1603–1660*, or Catherine MacLeod's stunning 2012–13 National Portrait Gallery exhibit on Prince Henry. She has also been victimized by her publisher, who designed a handsome cover and text, but neglected to provide an index for the work and adopted unconventional and inconvenient forms for notes. But despite these shortcomings, there is much to like here, and certainly much to stimulate further research.

ROBERT TITTLER

Concordia University and Carleton University