Patricia Phillippy.

Painting Women: Cosmetics, Canvases & Early Modern Culture.

Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006. Pp. xii, 258.

Aileen Ribeiro.

Fashion and Fiction: Dress in Art and Literature in Stuart England.

New Haven and London: published for The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art by Yale University Press, 2005. Pp. ix, 387.

Ann Hollinshead Hurley.

John Donne's Poetry and Early Modern Visual Culture.

Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2005. Pp. 248.

Early modern European visual culture—which means just about anything that was routinely or habitually visible in societies, from make-up to city-planning, from trade signs to page layout, from festivals to maps, from scientific illustrations to embroidered silks, from fine paintings to flower arrangement, from signs of gender, race, and class to heraldic insignia, from arithmetical charts to diagrams of new technology—was rich, broad, multiform, and omnipresent. Many recent works of scholarship draw on visual materials as adjuncts to their main argument, but the field of visual culture studies is relatively new; we can expect to see much more work in the area in the coming years.

As a new and interdisciplinary field, the study of early modern visual culture does not include works that might be called cornerstones. It does have touchstones, however, and if I were asked for a brief list of these, I would include works from art history by Svetlana Alpers, Michael Baxandall, Norman Bryson, David Freedberg, and Marcia Pointon; English studies, by Harry Berger, Jr., Stephen Orgel, and Kevin Sharpe; social history, by David Howarth and Linda Levy Peck; print history, by Antony Griffiths, Adrian Johns, Ruth Samson Lubrosky, Sheila O'Connell, and Tessa Watt; the history of scientific and medical illustration, by William B. Ashworth, Samuel Y. Edgerton, Sachiko Kusukawa, Martin Kemp, and Jonathan Sawday; and collections such as *Early Modern Visual Culture*, edited by Peter Erickson and Clark Hulse (2000). But this list is as idiosyncratic as it is eclectic; the field is too wide and varied for a definitive list, and my interests (in English printed imagery of the seventeenth century) have led me to particular sources and threads.

In historical studies of visual culture, there is no single or established theoretical model to follow or emulate. Most commonly, scholars seek to establish attitudes from the period towards visual culture and the relationship of materials within it

to other aspects of the culture. Because such dispositions are most cogently and profusely articulated within elite discourse, this approach tends to emphasize elite attitudes and practices, and has the added irony of interpreting the visual through the verbal matrix of educated communication. Scholars will need to draw on a wide range of theoretical resources, including ideas from popular culture studies, visual rhetoric, social semiotics, and information design, and work to reconstruct the social context for non-elite visual culture in future efforts to better understand visual cultures of the past.

One reason why the field of early modern visual culture studies will grow is that our own culture is so ubiquitously and relentlessly—even restlessly—visual, and we can and should visit the past to help make sense of the present. But it will also grow because the availability of evidence is increasing: *Early English Books Online*, for instance, makes book and print illustration from the English early modern era accessible to most researchers, and large research projects such as *British Printed Images to 1700* (which promises to make 10,000 discrete images available in digital form by 2009, and will make long inroads into cataloguing and describing the vast collection of prints at the British Museum), will stimulate research by both established scholars and graduate students. The continued interest in the material history of the book, shown by a substantial increase in the number of faculty positions and graduate programmes over the last decade, will also stimulate research, as will large collaborative and interdisciplinary research projects that seek to map out broad swathes of early modern culture, such as the Making Publics project based in Canada.

Scholarship about visual culture is usually interdisciplinary because it must establish visual materials as significant beyond the audience or purposes for which they are nominally and narrowly conceived. For instance, in order to make claims about the importance of scientific illustration within visual culture, one would have to substantiate claims that scientific illustration had some impact on viewers outside of those explicitly interested in scientific texts, or that the impact it had on the intended viewers extended beyond their perception of particular scientific instruments or phenomena. These are problems of evidence, and are normally dealt with by showing that players in the sphere of science also had knowledge or effect in other spheres. But there are other problems. The best-known of these is methodological: the economist deals with data differently than the social historian, and for one of them to engage with materials that normally belong to the other field, there has to be a melding, or at least a rapprochement, between methodologies which can be difficult to bring about. Less noticed is the problem of audience: bringing together

painting and poetry, for example, means that a scholar is projecting his or her work towards an audience with knowledge of both. Within one nationality and period, this may be a safe presumption, but it may not be when the chronological range is 200 years, several national cultures are involved, and evidence is drawn from diverse genres and forms. Because many of these works of scholarship will be read by people with disciplinary experience in one of the fields represented, not both or all, it is difficult to pitch the discourse. Analysis of materials within the reader's disciplinary frame by someone coming from outside the discipline, or with the necessarily limited knowledge that interdisciplinary training entails, can sound naive and even condescending, while analysis within the same work of materials outside the reader's frame of reference can be, if not inscrutable, at least untestable: a student of Renaissance English literature is unlikely to know the scholarship that belongs to Italian baroque painting, even if he or she is familiar with the paintings themselves. Those works in the field of visual culture that manage to overcome the handicaps that interdisciplinary scholarship begins with are to be commended; that the works under review here do not is evidence that if we are to engage in such pursuits (and they seem to be intellectually propitious, and are certainly institutionally encouraged) we must do so with all of the due diligence required of mono-disciplinary scholarship, or adjust our standards for evidence, methodological coherence, and effective communication with the audience. We are all aware of the challenges of doing interdisciplinary scholarship, but we must also come to terms with the challenges of absorbing it and making use of it in further work.

These three books are about relationships between aspects of visual culture and other features of contemporary society, such as poetry, courtly culture, and ideologies of gender, conduct, and class. Patricia Phillippy's book, *Painting Women*, looks at a very wide range of materials: painting, drama, poetry, and varieties of prose including aesthetic theory, biography, character sketches, poetics, and court testimony. Phillippy's intention is to discover conjunctions within these works that will illuminate early modern conceptions of femininity and subjectivity, and she uses the touchstone of cosmetics, or face-painting, to focus her discussion. The book is recommended reading for anyone interested in the female artists it treats, or in the range of debates and contexts for the use of cosmetics in the early modern period.

The book is strongest in the sections that concern the female painters with whom it deals: Lavinia Fontana (1552–1614) of Bologna, the daughter and employee of Prospero Fontana; Elisabetta Sirani (1638–1667), also of Bologna, who was assistant to Guido Reni; and Artemisia Gentileschi (1593–c. 1653), born in Rome. The treatments of Sirani and Gentileschi are extended, but even the brief analysis of

Fontana's *Christ and the Samaritan Woman* (1607) is valuable and interesting, as Phillippy overlays Fontana's expression of the perceptive and creative capacities of the female subject and the female artist with debates about the status of painted "idols" within the counter-Reformation church. "If Reformation discussions of the nature of religious images and ceremonies foster suspicions of the painting woman," writes Phillippy, "they also afford women writers and artists the means to imagine this new femininity by troubling the rupture between surface and substance, colors and essence, which is fundamental to the iconoclastic debate." Phillippy's close readings of literature, especially Shakespeare's *Rape of Lucrece* and *Measure for Measure*, are also very good: the interpretation of *Measure for Measure*, for example, highlights the play's concern with "ocular proof," and shows the ways in which the problem of the authenticity of surfaces affects anxieties around virginity, marriage, and female compliance. That these anxieties are both cultural and artistic, that they persist throughout the early modern period, and that female artists such as Gentileschi used strategies to turn ideological contradictions to advantage in establishing their own artistic authority are all well documented and expressed in *Painting Women*.

Of the three books under review, this suffers the most from the potential problems of interdisciplinarity—predictably, perhaps, in that it treats the widest range of genres, national cultures, and time periods. When propitious, Phillippy uses a very elastic concept of "early modern" as a homogenous or at least continuous culture, that allows for the pairing of pieces of evidence that are widely separated in space and time; Margaret Cavendish, a late seventeenth-century English writer, scientist, and noblewoman, and Juan Luis Vives, an early sixteenth-century Spanish humanist, writer, and educator, help make similar points on one page of the book, without note of the differences in time, space, class, purpose, or audience between the two writers. Further, because the differentiating edges have to be removed in order for such disparate pieces of evidence to sit comfortably together, it is rarely clear that the discourses around cosmetics are any different from the cultures' general way of talking about women—from their pervasive, if not perfectly seamless, misogyny. Nor is it proved that introducing painters to the mix alters what we have learned about the discourse of cosmetics and its importance to the conceptions of gender from, say, Frances E. Dolan's fine *PMLA* article of 1993, in which she writes that the two discourses of poetry and face-painting constitute "a single debate that constructs complexly gendered limits on creativity." In addition, the mixing of methodologies and theoretical vocabularies can lead to rather opaque verbal formulations. For instance, in the opening chapter Phillippy writes that the book asks "How can

painting help to construct the feminist body of early modern women?" What is, or could be, "the feminist body of early modern women"?

Ann Hollinshead Hurley's book, *John Donne's Poetry and Early Modern Visual Culture*, is more successful than Phillippy's, not least because it deals with a narrower range of materials and maintains a primary focus on Donne's poetry and his world. This book will be required reading for students of Donne, particularly those interested in contextualizing his work in a broader field that includes both works of visual art and visual impact, and also writings about the function of art in the courtly, theological, and erotic ideologies of the period. Each chapter takes a visual phenomenon as its starting point (portraiture; festival, ritual, and ceremony; representations of the city; Reformation and recusant religious imagery; and the art collection), continues with discussion of contemporary theories about those phenomena, and concludes with readings of selected poems from a range of genres in which Donne wrote. Hurley succeeds in proving several points that illuminate Donne's poetry and reinforce our sense of the literary and artistic cultures of his world as deeply and complexly interconnected. She shows, for instance, that forms of self-representation, whether in portraiture or poetry, were media of exchange, which articulated and enhanced social bonds and relative positions; that verbal strategies used to portray inner states of being have analogues in the dramatic strategies used in community theatre and spectacle; that Donne's description of spiritual conflict and truth reflected post-Reformation debates over the status and meaning of the image in worship; that Donne was intimately connected with the first group of English art connoisseurs, and that his poetry reflects their interest in techniques and craftsmanship in representation. Even though much of her discussion is more tentative than is ideal ("it seems," "it could be," and "it is reminiscent of" are all frequent locutions), Hurley shows us that knowledge of the visual culture of Donne's period should be integral to our understanding of how the poems work, how they were intended to circulate, and how they represent the speaking, suffering, loving, praying, or social self.

Aileen Ribeiro's book, *Fashion and Fiction*, is a sumptuous survey of the records (paintings, engravings, inventories, conduct books, commentaries, plays and poems, sketches) we have of courtly fashion in clothing in seventeenth-century England, and will become a standard reference work for the topic. Ribeiro's strength is in the thoroughness of her knowledge of elite fashion during the reign of James I, that of Charles I, the "Interregnum," the reigns of Charles II and James II, and the reign of William and Mary. Chapters are devoted to each of these. There are dozens of delightful details in her accounts: pre-Civil War tailoring was very poor,

for example, so that clothes were shaped to the wearer with laces, pins, and buttons; theft of clothing was the most common type of theft tried at the Old Bailey in the latter part of the century; the ready-to-wear clothing business developed toward the end of the century, while the secondhand clothing market remained important throughout the period; men might wear their hair longer on one side than on the other, as Charles I does in several portraits. The greatest strength of the book is its illustrations, almost all of which are full-colour reproductions, sometimes in detail, of paintings, many of which are not often seen.

The weakness of the book lies in its lack of engagement with the history and culture of the period outside of elite, courtly fashion. Like Phillippy and Hurley, Ribeiro aims to bring together more than one topic of cultural enquiry (ideas about clothing in non-literary discourse; literary representations of clothing; and practices related to clothing) and discuss those within a broader social and historical context. The book's presentation of the history of the period, however, is not finely nuanced or deeply informed, which leads to naive, awkward, and crude characterizations. There is very little in the book about the clothes of the gentry or the working-class. Likewise, there is little about non-visual representations of clothing except in the third chapter: without a courtly culture to study for the years 1642 to 1660, Ribeiro rather abruptly shifts to discussion of "moral attitudes to dress" and middle-class commentary as if these were ushered in with the collapse of the monarchy. Ribeiro also shows little interest in the economics of elite fashion, which Linda Levy Peck has so carefully anatomized in *Consuming Splendor*. Indeed, what comes across most fully in the book is the ostentation of the costumes of the elite, the exoticism and fetishistic nature of the choices, and the leisure the wearers must have had, as even getting dressed would have taken hours. One hopes that Ribeiro's work will provide stimulus and ground for others to pursue the topics on which she has least to say.

One further note, Hurley's book, while perhaps the most satisfying of these three, has *no* illustrations. As it discusses a number of paintings, maps, and spectacles (a reproduction of the Lothian portrait of Donne in the first chapter would be especially helpful), the only possible reason that it does not have illustrations is cost. Indeed, it is a poorly printed book; the type in the review copy unaccountably compresses in the middle of the page, and wavers about three-quarters of the page down on most pages. Phillippy's has several nicely reproduced black-and-white illustrations, but colour would have been more informative for the paintings. Ribeiro's book is gorgeously designed, with nearly 200 full-colour reproductions, cleverly framed and enlarged details, and endearing cut-outs from examples of decorative arts used as elements of the composition of the pages. It may seem gratuitous to

mention this, but only the support of the Paul Mellon Centre and Foundation could produce such a book, as the costs of permissions and reproductions are prohibitive for other publishers and organizations. Without relaxation, or at least regularization, of the schedule of costs for permission and reproduction, books in the growing field of visual culture will be very hard to publish. And the conventional format of academic books, with illustrations printed on isolated pages, will not suit the kind of detailed analysis of visual artifacts that should be produced in the future. Publishers and copyright-holders must work together to bring down barriers that will prevent the free flow of knowledge about visual culture, both in the past and in the present.

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Michael C. Questier.

Catholicism and Community in Early Modern England: Politics, Aristocratic Patronage and Religion, c.1550–1640.

Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Pp. xxii, 559.

At the centre of this book is the story of three or four generations of one major Catholic family, the Brownes of Cowdray in Sussex. Sir Anthony Browne was an intimate friend of Henry VIII, whom he survived by a year, dying in possession of nearly twenty thousand acres in southern England. His son Anthony was ennobled as Viscount Montague (or Montagu) on the marriage of Mary Tudor to Philip of Spain, spoke against the Supremacy Bill in Elizabeth I's parliament of 1559, mustered men to defend the realm against Spain in 1588, and died in bed in 1592. It was said of Montague's second wife, Magdalen Dacre, that "the priests everywhere did extol her as the worthy patroness of the holy faith and the singular ornament of the Catholic religion in England"; she was the subject of a hagiographical life by Richard Smith, a member of her household and subsequently vicar apostolic of the Catholic church in England. Montague's grandson inherited the viscountcy and the family fortune, and despite some awkward moments—Guy Fawkes had briefly been one of his servants, and he was imprisoned briefly after the Gunpowder Plot—he lived and died undramatically. Questier describes his unpublished "Apologeticall Answer," a 701-page defence of Richard Smith against his Catholic opponents, as surely "in the running for a prize for the most boring book ever written," which makes one want to go out and read at least part of it (the manuscript is at Downside, and there is a microfilm in the West Sussex Record Office, so the work is accessible, but cannot be