

It was certainly no simple coincidence that an equally comprehensive modernist, the painter Diego de Velázquez, stepped in the decoration of the Torre cycle to complement Rubens's mythological inventions with his allegorical portraits. Georgievska-Shine and Silver underscore Velázquez's mock-heroic rhetoric as the corresponding narrative force to Rubens's mythological inventions (195). In kinship with his Flemish counterpart, Velázquez relayed the meeting of oppositions as a mode for portraying, for instance, the ambivalent character of Mars in his dual stance as the god of war and the lover of Venus. Yet the portraits of courtiers, jesters, and dwarfs illustrate Velázquez's ability to convey a sense of separateness from the world, an intentional withdrawal or a natural alienation that enhances the coloristic effects of oppositions among the populace at the royal court (214, 215). Persuaded much like Rubens by the demystification of the gods as the dominant theme at the Torre de la Parada, Velázquez presents Philip IV's portrait as a hunter whose ordinary appearance departs from an ideal image of the ruler while stressing the pronounced Habsburg physiognomy and aplomb (217).

The book stands out in Spanish art historical literature and simultaneously paves the way for further insights into the culture of early modernity. It recommends that original thought return to art history, with a vehemence only comparable to Eugenio d'Ors's *Three Hours in the Prado Museum* (1923), which believed in breaking traditional norms to advance visual interpretation. D'Ors argued that classical antiquity ceased to hold sway over modern art and that artists referred back to it in allegorical, not literal modes.

Livio Pestilli. *Paolo de Matteis: Neapolitan Painting and Cultural History in Baroque Europe*. Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2013. 502pp. + 108 color and 112 b & w illus. \$119.95. Review by EVE STRAUSSMAN-PFLANZER, DAVIS MUSEUM, WELLESLEY COLLEGE.

Livio Pestilli has succeeded in producing an important, albeit voluminous, recuperative monograph on the Neapolitan artist Paolo de Matteis (1662–1728). Born on February 9, 1662, in Piano del Cilento (modern day Piano Vetrale) to Decio and Lucrezia Orico, he

went to Naples at an early age to learn the rudiments of art. The book, which contains an impressive number of illustrations, begins with an introduction and is divided into three parts. Part I “Framing the Artist” consists of two chapters; Part II “Paintings” is composed of ten chapters; Part III “Drawings” is comprised of one chapter. The book ends with an epilogue, bibliography, two appendices of documents, and an index. In the acknowledgments, Pestilli thanks the editor at Ashgate (Erika Gaffney) for her “foresight and belief in a book that falls outside current publishing trends” (xvii–xviii). At this moment in art history, one must draw attention to the rarity of the monographic treatment of an early modern artist.

In the introduction, Pestilli explains that Paolo de Matteis was the “most acclaimed artist” (1) in Naples at the beginning of the eighteenth century. Scholars most often accord this position to Luca Giordano (1634–1705) or Francesca Solimena (1657–1747). He finds it “an astounding reality that, in spite of recent interest in his work, no monograph has been devoted to this important Neapolitan artist” (1). But he dutifully pays homage to the scholars who have worked to shed new light on de Matteis in published studies, including those working in Italy, Spain, France, Germany, and Canada. Notable is the absence of American scholarship on de Matteis specifically and seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Neapolitan art more broadly—even though his work features in significant collections in the United States such as the Detroit Institute of Arts.

Pestilli inserts the present study into this academic trajectory by proposing to contribute “to these [past] efforts by focusing on the cultural, historical, and iconographic significance” (2) of de Matteis’s *oeuvre*. While certainly hampered by a dearth of extant archival documents pertaining to the artist, one can find much matter to chew over in Bernardo De Dominici’s *Vite de’ pittori, scultori, ed architetti napoletani* (1742–1745). It is, however, littered with prejudicial statements and regional pride, much like Vasari’s better known *Vite* from the sixteenth century. Pestilli proposes to provide a “typological” (2) approach to de Matteis. One wonders whether typological is the correct terminology. Although the chapters do cover specific categories, the logic for their selection is not revealed.

Pestilli offers a biographical sketch—taken from De Dominici—of Paolo de' Matteis in the introduction. In brief, after his well-to-do father brings him to Naples, he studies with an unnamed painter of no great merit before independently seeking to draw from masterpieces in Neapolitan churches. His father decides that young Paolo would be better served with a formal education in the liberal arts. Aided by several noblemen, de Matteis is eventually apprenticed to Luca Giordano, who recognizes his latent talent. Don Filippo Macedonio, who introduces Paolo to Giordano, moves to Rome and takes Paolo with him. In Rome, like in Naples, de Matteis copies works by the great masters until he is discovered by Don Gaspar de Haro y Guzmán, Marquis of Carpio. The Marquis provides for the artist and places him under the instruction of the Roman painter Giovanni Maria Morandi (1622-1717), a prominent member of the Accademia di S. Luca. When the Marquis is made Viceroy of the Kingdom of Naples (1683–1687), he takes Paolo back to Naples, where he again works under Giordano. He paints in Naples for the better part of nineteen years. When Philip V comes to Naples in 1702, accompanied by Comte Victor-Marie, Duc d'Estrées, the Comte invites de Matteis back to Paris, where he stays for three years. In 1711, de Matteis begins an important working relationship with Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury (1670–1713). From 1723 to 1726, Paolo again works for three years in Rome at the behest of Cardinal Francesco Acquaviva. Paolo de Matteis dies in Naples on July 26, 1728, at the age of 66.

Part I (Framing the Artist) begins with chapter 1 “A Fabricated Life” in which Pestilli equates de Matteis’s penchant for fancy dress with his rather boastful nature. Although Pestilli offers several examples of his conceit, one telling example will suffice. De Dominici donated a sheet to de Matteis purportedly by Correggio; however, the artist took it upon himself to “improve” the drawing with his own hand stating: “And what difference is there between a Paolo de Matteis and a Correggio” (10)? Next, Pestilli traces the roots of De Dominici’s *Vite* and cites many instances where his stories of Neapolitan painters bear a resemblance to authors such as Pliny the Elder. He rightly notes that while many have analyzed Vasari’s debt to earlier sources, this same systematic treatment has yet to be applied to De Dominici. He goes on to note astutely that “an implicit *raison d’être* for his work

was also that of the exaltation of Christian values and the Christian way of life" (14); he further contextualizes that De Dominici, like the Florentines Vasari and Filippo Baldinucci (1624–1697), felt the need to celebrate certain artists, in this case two—Luca Giordano and Francesco Solimena—as the apex of Neapolitan art. De Dominici's life of de Matteis, on the other hand, is the complete opposite in tone. According to Pestilli, "Hubris, then, was the artist's flaw, and this aspect of his character was to influence the biographer's overall assessment of his artistic output and personality" (19). He ends the chapter noting, "the relative neglect that de Matteis began to suffer after his death in 1728 was no less due to De Dominici's denigrations than to the diminished appeal of the type and quality of his paintings for later generations of art lovers" (26). Thus begins Pestilli's complex re-evaluation of de Matteis; throughout, one is aware of the author intellectually wrestling with the importance and place of this neglected Neapolitan painter within the canon.

In the second chapter "Enter the Critic," Pestilli tackles Paolo de Matteis's stay in France between 1702 and 1705, and the critical reception of the artist that followed in the publications of Germain Brice's *Description de la ville de Paris et de tout ce qu'elle contient* and Pierre-Jean Mariette's annotations to Antonio Orlandi's *Abecedario pittorico*, among others. In both instances, the authors focus on how de Matteis's speed trumped the quality of his conceit; they employ his example to caution other artists to avoid the realm of mediocrity by way of assiduous study and forethought. Although Piganiol de la Force offers a more positive view of de Matteis's French stay, we are limited in our assessment of his work in this period due to the subsequent destruction of the four fresco cycles he executed there. Extant from his Parisian period is an *Allegory of Night*, now at the Musée des Beaux-Arts, Quimper, an *Apollo and Galatea*, now Pavlovsk Palace, St. Petersburg, a *Danae* in a British private collection, and an *Adoration of the Shepherds* auctioned at Sotheby's in 1990. The author goes on to suggest, I think rightly, that French connoisseurs disliked de Matteis's work due to a "pan-European change in late Baroque aesthetics" (47) that favored light and airy classicizing compositions over bold Baroque executions. Pestilli ends the chapter with mention of de Matteis's brief stop in Genoa on his way back from Paris en route to Naples.

Carlo Giuseppe Ratti's *Lives of the Genoese Painters* tellingly praises de Matteis's Genoese paintings in manuscript form as "the wonder of all connoisseurs" (50). But, he then backtracks in the published version—a clear indication of De Dominicis's negative and dominant critical reach in the early modern period.

Turning to Part II: Paintings. Chapter 3 "Napoli Nobilissima," Pestilli opens with the witty and evocative remark that: "Paolo de Matteis was very fond of allegories, almost as much as he was fond of himself" (63). Pestilli then takes de Matteis's negative critical reception a step further; he suggests that it was not the artist alone who is critiqued, but rather that in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries "regional prejudices . . . were fundamental to the assertion and characterization of regional identity" (63). In other words, it is not just de Matteis's vanity that is attacked, but what some "northern" authors like the Umbrian Giambattista Passeri saw as pan-Neapolitan defects. He compares the artist's *Allegory of Knowledge and the Visual Arts Crowning Parthenope* from the Blaffer Foundation, Houston, with its preparatory drawing in Darmstadt to demonstrate de Matteis's preoccupation with the nobility of painting in general and his advocacy of Neapolitan painting in particular. It is one of the earliest dated works by the artist, likely executed in the first half of the 1680s, when the artist could very well have been living outside of Naples and experiencing nationalistic prejudice firsthand. Pestilli could take this argument a bit further and lay claim to an early modern bias with both the north and south proclaiming their superiority—a proclamation that still has sway and power in the present.

In chapter 4 "Circa 1700," Pestilli focuses on two "masterpieces" by de Matteis—*Allegory of a Hoped-for Alliance between France and the Kingdom of Naples* (Landesmuseum Mainz) and *St. Bruno Interceding with the Madonna on Behalf of Humanity* (Certosa di San Martino, Naples)—to better understand the political climate of circa 1700 and the artist's appeal for French aristocrats. Pestilli speaks to the pro-Austrian sentiment that pervaded Naples in this period and their aversion to the French. The Mainz *Allegory* was executed, as Pestilli plausibly asserts, for a French-Hispanic patron between the death of Charles II (November 1, 1700) and the arrival of Philip V in Naples (April 17, 1702) and excludes any reference to England, as has been

previously thought. Pestilli puts forward Victor-Marie Duc d'Estrées as the most probable patron—de Matteis's strongest link to France.

In chapter 5 "Naples Again," the critical fortune of Neapolitan painting—which was aided in the seventeenth century by the arrival of Caravaggio and other foreigners of the likes of Domenichino and Lanfranco—is the focus. Giordano reigned supreme in this period and spread the "Neapolitan" style abroad in Florence and then Spain, where he was invited in 1692 and from where he did not return until 1702. Unlike Solimena, Pestilli argues that de Matteis seems to have benefited more from Giordano's absence from Naples in the first decade of the eighteenth century. Also, unlike Solimena, there is "a lack of clear, linear development in Paolo de Matteis's art," which "is a stumbling block in trying to date his paintings." "For," Pestilli continues, "if these are not dated or documented by an external archival evidence, many of them could be as easily given to a period of his career as another" (100). De Matteis exhibited two main stylistic tendencies: one indebted to his time in Rome and Carlo Maratta's classicism and the other oriented towards Giordano's palette and frenetic brushwork. What follows are, according to Pestilli, examples of de Matteis's stylistic variance in which these two stylistic tendencies are used interchangeably throughout the remainder of his career.

In chapter 6 "A Herculean Feat," Pestilli explores Paolo de Matteis's painting of *The Judgment of Hercules* for Anthony Ashley Cooper, Third Earl of Shaftesbury. Shaftesbury, by all accounts, favored art that led to moral good and uplift best expressed in his *Second Characters or The Language of Forms*, compiled between 1711 and 1713. In Shaftesbury's *A Notion of the Historical Draught or Tablature of the Judgment of Hercules* (1712), he outlines Hercules's choice in such prodigious detail that it almost leaves no room for the artist. Not surprisingly, he privileges *decorum* above all. Of the numerous drawings de Matteis must have executed to satisfy the demands of his patron, only two are known: one in the Musée du Louvre and another recently on the art market. De Matteis then produced an oil sketch, now in Munich. By comparing, the oil sketch with the painting (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford), one sees Shaftesbury's mindset assert itself in the diminishment of detail in favor of the austere expression of subject. The patron was pleased with the final result, paying the artist 60 more ducats for

the work than initially agreed upon, and subsequently commissioned a smaller version from the artist (Leeds City Art Gallery) and had it engraved by Simon Gribelin. There are two differences between the two painted versions—the removal of Pleasure’s bracelet in the second and the inclusion of a small branch at the feet of Hercules.

In chapter 7 “The Celebratory Self,” Pestilli charts Paolo de Matteis’s self-portraits. Ultimately, he concludes that they all emanate from his sense of “self-celebration” (148)—nowhere more evident than in his impressive apartment on Via Toledo where his *Allegory of the Peace of Rastatt and Utrecht* with its prominent self-portrait adorned the main gallery. In fact, the apartment housed a wealth of pictures executed by the artist’s own hand. Pier Leone Ghezzi’s fascinating simian caricatures of de Matteis are discussed and reflect the caricaturist’s sense of the artist as “a true master . . . the very embodiment of a noble artist” (151). This discussion of de Matteis’s likenesses would have benefited from comparative examples of self-portraits by other Neapolitan artists, such as the wealth of self-portraits by Luca Giordano and those of Francesco Solimena. Circa 1700, it was common for artists to represent themselves in a variety of guises with a wealth of different meanings. Luca Giordano, for example, created enough self-portraits to rival Rembrandt.

Chapter 8 “Supporting Authorship” explores the wealth of visual sources that the artist drew upon to execute his paintings from Correggio to the Carracci to his contemporary, Luca Giordano. Chapter 9 “The Skill of a ‘Valentuomo’” focuses on Paolo de Matteis’s skill as a fresco painter, which was considered more difficult than easel painting and, therefore, often considered by painters such as Michelangelo and Lanfranco as a more “manly” pursuit. While many of his frescoes were praised, they also garnered lukewarm and even critical responses. Pestilli seems defensive when de Matteis’s *invenzione* is called into question, remarking that “one must remember not only that his extant church frescoes have been penalized due to heavy repainting while some others have disappeared altogether, but also that Paolo’s style was a perfect match for the devotional and aesthetic needs of his patrons and the society they represented” (188). Pestilli neglects, however, to acknowledge that early modern artists commonly painted

works of differing quality (and even style) depending on the wishes of the patron or the price paid for the work.

Chapter 10 “Portraying Cathusian Values” explores de Matteis’s relationship with the Carthusian order in Naples for which he executed numerous works including those in the Certosa di San Martino. The Certosa was originally consecrated to the Virgin Mary, with references to the first Carthusian convent of St. Bruno, and then to St. Martino, Bishop of Tours and to all saints. De Matteis worked on the Chapel of St. Joseph—one of the most significant projects executed in Naples between 1707 and 1734. Pestilli stresses the importance of his innovative compositions in this chapel. In chapter 11 “Campanian Connections,” Pestilli delineates de Matteis’s stay in Rome between 1723 and 1726, where he escaped to overcome his insomnia in Naples. Here, Pestilli quotes the entirety of de Matteis’s one surviving letter from Rome to his friend Matteo Egizio in Naples. Pestilli proposes that, in addition to escaping personal problems, de Matteis likely went to Rome in search of commissions for the upcoming Jubilee year in 1725, as business had proved quite slow in Naples. Through Francesco Acquaviva, Spanish ambassador to the Holy See, who had lived in Naples until the Spaniards were ousted by the Austrians in 1707, de Matteis secured commissions from Pope Innocent XIII and Pope Benedict XIII. The rest of the chapter explores de Matteis’s Roman commissions, concluding that “the 64-year-old artist shows as sure a control over his pictorial means in 1726 as he had exhibited in earlier decades” (234). In chapter 12 “Remains of the Day,” de Matteis’s return in 1723 to Naples, where the artist created his last documented works, the four paintings for the Church of S. Paolo d’Argon, is explored. The artist was buried sitting upright—a last eccentricity—in the Chiesa de’ Padri Crociferi in Naples.

Part III of Pestilli’s expansive tome is devoted to Paolo de Matteis’s drawings. Unlike the study that has been devoted to Roman and Florentine drawings of the same period, as Pestilli notes, Neapolitan drawings have not been as widely or comprehensively studied. Pestilli argues that, unlike Passeri’s anecdotes that criticize Neapolitan artists for their want of drawing, Neapolitan artists were accomplished draftsmen. He rightfully points to the strength of Ribera, Preti, Giordano, and Solimena in this regard. De Matteis’s few autograph drawings



are reviewed for their quality and some further tentative attributions made. Ultimately, Pestilli concludes that de Matteis “could oscillate in his drawing style from a very polished, classical technique ... to the almost abstract” (284). The author also refutes the previously held belief that de Matteis’s graphic output evolved seamlessly from “an earlier Giordanesque to a later Marattesque style” (284) and rightfully concludes that “the Vasarian organic approach in mapping an artist’s drawing style, from one of vibrant growth to subsequent decline, is as invalid a tool for defining Paolo de Matteis’s draftsmanship as it is for assessing Florentine painting” (292).

Lastly, the “Epilogue” covers a summation of Pestilli’s views of the artist: he was appreciated in his time and then overlooked by subsequent generations due to the “rise of new aesthetic goals in eighteenth-century Europe,” (307) which favored a greater classicism, ushering in the Neoclassical period. While the volume could have been more succinct, one can only marvel at the time and thought that went into this thorough study. Thanks to Pestilli, Paolo de Matteis has been placed back onto the map of early modern Neapolitan art—a region and period worthy of further inquiry, especially by American art historians.

W. Scott Howard, ed. *An Collins and the Historical Imagination*. Farnham, Surrey and Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2014. xiv + 255pp. + 4 illus. \$149.95. Review by KAVITA MUDAN FINN, INDEPENDENT SCHOLAR.

With only one extant copy of her *Divine Songs and Meditations* (1653) housed at the Huntington Library and next to nothing known about her life, it is not entirely unsurprising that An Collins has remained in the background for many discussions of seventeenth-century woman poets. W. Scott Howard’s edited collection *An Collins and the Historical Imagination* does a great deal to remedy this situation, gathering together a wide variety of essays, including updated versions of three previously published articles, into a volume that “celebrates Collins’s writing within her own time and ours through a