

embedded in *Godly Letters* and which would have benefited from more direct exposition in a more slender volume.

Not that this is a new thesis, of course. Studies of the many narrative failures of Bradford's history—"the dramatic posing of his problem is more moving than anything his prose can conclude" (146)—have long ago set a pattern for exploring the fault lines of early Puritan literature. Such narrative instability, we now know, can be inadvertent or deliberate, even both simultaneously. Congregationalists practiced a decorum of imperfection, Charles W. Mignon's pertinent phrase for the self-conscious management of literary defects akin to the intentional design flaws found in Puritan quilts and woodwork.

But the good news about *Godly Letters* is that some of the books reviewed in it have never before been treated as worthy of special attention. Colacurcio, who is extremely well-informed on recent insights into the triumph of the preparationists over their more mystical peers, produces reliable, rich paraphrases and redactions of these books. In fact, his summaries and sidebar comments, often speculating about what an author is thinking, are far more enjoyable to read than the original works. It would be good indeed if the enthusiasm and energy he has lavished on these books proved to be contagious.

*Godly Letters* is a deeply informed resource for anyone with a keen interest in the theological hairsplitting, the twists and turns of early colonial Calvinist arguments. The center of the book, nearly 200 pages long, is aptly titled "Doctrine."

Eric Jan Sluijter. *Rembrandt and the Female Nude*. Amsterdam University Press, 2006. 448pp. + 100 color, 250 b/w illus. \$74.50/59.50 Euros. Review by LARRY SILVER, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA.

Some scholarly projects have a vitality of their own, progressing from particular studies to a richly layered synthesis. This book is one of those projects, a masterwork by a mature and leading scholar fully in control of his materials. Eric Jan Sluijter, professor of Dutch and Renaissance art history at the University of Leiden, wrote his earlier studies exploring the Dutch visualization of Greco-Roman myths as well as interpretive issues concerning the

female nude in Dutch art. Now, in a culmination of his research interests, he turns his attention to Rembrandt, focusing on his mythic, including biblical, stories that expressly focus on the nude. Most of these chapters elaborate upon a shorter published essay on the separate subjects: Andromeda, Susannah and the Elders, Diana and Actaeon, Danaë, and Bathsheba, but they are interspersed with erudite discussions (*intermezzi*) on such topics as Dutch cultural attitudes towards the nude and artistic practices of producing the nude from female models.

What makes this book so valuable—aside from the clarity of exposition and cogency of interpretations by Sluijter—is his wide-ranging comparisons to artists beyond Rembrandt. Visual inspiration from Italy, especially Titian, and from Netherlandish images of myth, particularly by Goltzius and his generation as well as the Rubens circle, provided the solid foundations—often through engravings—on which Rembrandt built. These and other sources enable the author to discern what was unique and distinctive about Rembrandt's female nudes, which soon elicited quite scathing criticisms. Sluijter also examines that contemporary verbal critical and theoretical prose, both pro and con, to situate both the general controversies concerning depictions of nudes as well as the particular assessments of Rembrandt's own, seemingly anti-classical nudes.

An example of Sluijter's procedure is his short opening chapter on Andromeda, which outlines the visual tradition, from Titian through Goltzius and Rubens (including an image on his own house), as well as the poetic and allegorical, usually political, interpretations of the scene that Rembrandt would have known. But he then discusses Rembrandt's "drastic deviations" (90), excluding allegory entirely by omitting both Perseus and the monster as well as stressing not the beauty but the awkwardness and fright of the solitary heroine. This is an emphatically non-classical, non-conventional, un-stylishly vulnerable naked damsel in true distress. At once more linked to the verisimilitude of early Netherlandish nudes, e.g. van Eyck or van der Goes, than to the more recent, Italianate beauties, this nude is also more life-like in appearance, and it conveys emotions emphatically. Sluijter's first *intermezzo* explores Rembrandt's depiction of the passions as a maturing artist in the 1620s and 1630s as a context for the ambition in his own *Andromeda* (ca. 1630-31; The Hague), a textbook nude subject for display of his artistic talents for capturing the natural and the human. In the process he provides one of the best

introductions to a rhetorical art theory, expounded by later Dutch art writers, as well as the first decade of the painter's own experimentation with biblical subjects and emotions, exemplified by another mythology, the *Rape of Prosperina* (ca. 1631; Berlin).

Because of the author's own prior accomplishments, his every assessment carries true authority. This is a book of crucial importance for Rembrandt scholarship (though in some ways prepared by Sluijter's earlier publications), but also for assessments of the classical heritage in Dutch culture or even European culture more widely. The inclusive roster of images, especially of engravings and of mythologies by other, less familiar Dutch painters makes this study all the more useful and comprehensive.

Even when Rembrandt adopts the model of Rubens and the ultimate source in antique statuary for his imagery, such as the 1636 *Susannah* (1636; The Hague), he shows the figure isolated and vulnerable as well, subject now to the gaze of the (male) viewer and emphatically unclassical in her anatomy and proportions. Sluijter also advances the novel hypothesis that the 1647 but more conventional *Susannah and the Elders* (Berlin) was actually begun first and only reworked and completed more than a decade later. For this subject, the current extromission theory about the power of a returned gaze by a female (in contrast to downcast eyes and modesty) leads him to the next *intermezzo*, a reprise of his essay, *Seduction of Sight*, on "Moral Disapproval and Erotic Impact," concerning the arousal of desire by a picture of a nude and the inherent threat such desire poses to morality. In the lifelike painting tradition of the Netherlands, this danger of vision was all the more provocative and acute. Sluijter is one of the few scholars who is willing to examine the erotic power of images in the period both frankly and historically (154-63). He makes clear that Rembrandt's paintings of female nudes all would have had conscious voyeuristic appeal.

His third *Intermezzo* examines Dutch art theory of the seventeenth century concerning the role of the "natural," to argue that the supposed posthumous, classicist criticisms of Rembrandt's nudes were actually part of a heated dialogue during his own lifetime, in which the artist advocated both the painterly and the natural over the rule-based selection of the beautiful. Titian, an artist frequently adopted by Rembrandt in this book, especially for his subject of Danaë, formed the prototype for the "lifelike" painting camp already by the 1604 theorizing by Karel van Mander in his *Schilderboeck*. While appropri-

ately focused in a book on Rembrandt and his nudes, Sluijter's discussion will hold wide interest to all scholars of Dutch painting of the century, particularly for its knowledge and thorough use of all kinds of sources, including pamphlets (Jacques de Ville, 1628), anatomy lessons (Jacob van der Gracht, 1634), and especially the critical, even condescending, views of Rembrandt's achievement in the artistic treatise of painter Joachim von Sandrart (1678 but based on Amsterdam years, 1637-45). It richly complements and corrects the classic earlier studies by Slive (1953) and Emmens (1979).

In many respects the *Danaë* chapter is the centerpiece of the volume, and Sluijter is extremely thorough in his consideration of the models for the picture as well as the ambitions (especially relative to the previous nudes) that Rembrandt exerted in its making over two campaigns (Sluijter does, however, belittle modern scholars, including this reviewer, who could still see lingering medievalist allegory along with the new eroticism in the sixteenth-century rendering of the subject by Jan Gossaert, 1527, fig. 201—must the conversion be all or nothing and overnight?). This nude exerted an immediate influence on Dutch painters, especially Jacob van Loo. But chiefly it marked a turning-point for Rembrandt himself, to which Sluijter does full justice.

His next three discussions, also *Intermezzi*, address contemporary art production: the first examines artistic competition and emulation (*ruipen*, “stealing” or “borrowing”); the second focuses on drawings and prints of the female nude, including images of sleepers and models posing in the studio; the third considers the fraught relationship between artist and model. All three of these are major new contributions by Sluijter and valuable for dispelling clichés and commonplaces about models in the period as well as inherited ascriptions in the Rembrandt oeuvre, particularly to the face of his common-law wife, Hendrickje, as model. Sluijter, like Stephanie Dickey on the “Saskias,” finds a decidedly mixed grouping of types, albeit with some close overlaps of features, so he quite sensibly abandons the standard identification of Hendrickje as the sitter for the great *Bathsheba* (1654, Louvre).

The life-sized *Bathsheba* forms the other node of this volume with *Danaë*. Sluijter also articulates the prehistory of this picture through prior models and earlier versions by Rembrandt himself as well as his contemporaries. Here he underscores (355) what had been an observation for earlier chapters—that the viewer “inescapably” takes the place of King David as a voyeur of this

beautiful nude. This perceptual and psychological engagement is one of the reasons why Rembrandt strove so mightily for palpable flesh and lifelike bodies, as discussed above—in appeal to both empathy and erotic desire, as with the *Danaë*, his other life-sized nude, but now in a religious scene of moral temptation. Rembrandt thus makes his images immediate in accord with their subjects, but also in emulation of the great artists of tradition, from Titian through Goltzius to Rubens, and in defiance of moralists from Erasmus to Jacob Cats.

A final note is that this large book offers good value. It is handsomely produced and lavishly illustrated (though comparative photos are often minuscule), and it remains a pleasure to read, even spiced with contemporary references. Certainly it is already a primary resource in course readings, including undergraduate classes, where the larger relevance as well as the perennial significance of Rembrandt himself makes this wide-ranging but closely focused study indispensable. This is the kind of book every library should own, the kind of book that every scholar enviously wishes s/he could have written.

Aileen Ribeiro. *Fashion and Fiction: Dress in Art and Literature in Stuart England*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005. x + 387 pp. + 100 b/w + 80 color illus. \$65.00. Review by ROZE HENTSCHELL, COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY.

Early in the introductory chapter to Aileen Ribeiro's *Fashion and Fiction*, an ambitious survey of seventeenth century English dress, the author describes several surviving garments from the period. That this list is so brief indicates the challenges faced by the early modern fashion historian. Ribeiro's turn, then, to visual representations of the clothing of the period is a necessary one and it is clear why she would look to the wealth of visual depictions of dress, mostly portraiture of royalty and aristocrats, to give a sense of how fashions emerge, develop, and shift throughout this tumultuous period. Ribeiro is a renowned art historian at the Courtland Institute of Art and she carefully analyzes seventeenth century imagery. The book includes scores of sumptuous color reproductions in a gorgeous, oversize format. The form of her book, however, belies what makes it a fresh and important contribution to early modern studies at large: Ribeiro also takes *textual* representations seri-