

Ann Jensen Adams. *Public Faces and Private Identities in Seventeenth-Century Holland. Portraiture and the Production of Community*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. 398 pp., 73 b&w illus. \$100. REVIEW BY LARRY SILVER, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA.

Portraits could be found everywhere in seventeenth-century Holland. While today we assume that representation of one's likeness remains a privilege restricted to the rich or famous, or to those of higher social status from an earlier period, the sheer quantity of painters and pictures in Holland's Golden Age assured that portraits, too, could be commissioned and obtained. Using documents as well as recent studies by economic historians, especially the late John Michael Montias, this book assesses the new demand and market for portraits, a steady source of reliable income for Rembrandt and a specialty for some painters, notably Frans Hals.

Ann Jensen Adams, a specialist in this country and period, has made this portrait phenomenon her special field of expertise across her entire career, starting with her dissertation on Thomas de Keyser, the leading Amsterdam portraitist before Rembrandt. So this long-awaited, wider cultural study comes out to much anticipation, and it does not disappoint (except in its paucity of chosen images and their lack of sharpness, especially in such an expensive publication—qualities which must be debited against a once-great university press for art books). Also, many pictures that are discussed are not illustrated.

Adams begins by distinguishing between portraits of individuals and another category of pictures, head studies (called *tronies* by the Dutch), often with exotic or colorful costume. Because this book was years in the making, it appeared too soon to take advantage of a pair of recent German dissertations on *tronies*, one by Dagmar Hirschfelder (Munich/Berlin, 2008), the other (in press) by Franziska Gottwald. One of the most difficult determinations to make concerning a face—going back to the origins of portraiture in the later fourteenth century—is to discriminate between a particular, personal portrait and a more generalized type, even at the very outset of the tradition in painting (Stephen Perkinson, *The Likeness of the King: A Prehistory of Portraiture in Late Medieval France*, Chicago, 2009). Of course, questions of personal identity in relation to role arise around any portrait and

pose the larger question—ultimately tied to Burckhardt's arguments about the Renaissance individual—of just what comprises the modern "self." Adams addresses this conundrum in her "Introduction," considering identity within a new social mobility of the seventeenth century, especially in Holland. Certainly the self-portraits of Rembrandt, well studied by Perry Chapman (Princeton, 1990) and Harry Berger (Stanford, 2000), embody this heightened self-consciousness.

Some of Adams's conceptual locutions, e.g. discourse and *mentalité*, seem artificially applied to her analysis of the portrait viewing experience, especially with viewer interaction, which she terms "translation." Adams quite properly calls to task either the simple assumption that portraits transcribe reality and the communicative body of their sitters, or, alternatively, that analysis of their iconographic motifs and settings can be any more empirical. Sometimes her "Introduction" sags under the gravity of its adopted theories and histories of ideas as well as analogies to other images, especially religious works. But the great value of this book remains firmly lodged in consideration of the qualities of portraiture in general as well as the particular kinds of portraits: individuals, family, history portraits (usually called histori-ated portraits), and civic guard groups, which comprise the remaining chapters, each of them focused on a select few portraits in depth. Adams's larger purpose is explicit: "I have taken as my subject how the portrait functioned to structure concepts of identity and social relations in seventeenth-century Holland." (55-56) It entails triangulation—between biography, contemporary culture, and pictorial tradition with assumptions about viewing.

Discussion of individual portraits focuses on considerations of communicating character: the importance of likeness and the imputed transparency of character through either the whole body or the particular forms of physiognomy. Of course, wealth and status played roles in the more idealized presentation of individuals. Artists, too, were constrained by basic appearances and decorum in their task. Physical and mental actions enjoyed particular favor, especially from Rembrandt, but many Dutch individuals convey restraint and sobriety through dress and pose. Adams locates this cultural value in Stoic tranquility and self-discipline (80-93). Similar control also appears in international court portraits. Facial expressions and gestures

also receive attention, conveying emotion through physical motion (Rembrandt's *beweechgelickheijt*, or Leonardo's "motions of the mind," pp. 100-01), often interrupted, suggesting mental activity. These portraits create "a self that is subjectively constituted; they provide models for demeanor; and they offer the viewer an experience of himself in the experience of viewing" (111.)

Family portraits, the topic of the third chapter, address social questions of class more directly, assigning status through lineage as either patrician or petty bourgeois. In a place of considerable social mobility the family provided both stability and a model of the larger state. Related to contemporary family portraits is the use of historical narratives with inserted portraits for ancillary characters: "history portraits," the subject of Chapter Four, the finest discussion in English of this peculiarly Dutch phenomenon. For the history portraits—encompassing both religious and ancient history narratives—the human animation or relevance of the event is enhanced, often to associate a family with particular virtues but also sometimes by implication to situate them within contemporary political and/or religious controversies. For example, Werner van den Valckert's large *Christ Blessing the Children* with the (possibly Catholic) family of Michiel Poppen and even the artist himself (fig. 43) anticipates Rembrandt's *Hundred Guilder Print* etching of a generation later, by using Christ's mission as a neutral model for contemporary piety and family values, stretching back in Dutch art and religion to the late fifteenth century. In similar fashion the use of a Roman model, the Continnence of Scipio, exemplified both magnanimity as well as good leadership and might have signaled political allegiance with the ruling house of Orange. Obviously, to discuss more examples would have further swelled and longer delayed the production of this book, and works presented here will still provide foundations for future understanding of Dutch portraits in their society. But because both family portrait chapters restrict themselves to a principal pair of case studies, they raise doubts about the wider validity of Adams's broad claims, such as typologies, for these portraits as symbolic forms: "the history portrait potentially provided a canvas upon which the viewer might actively survey himself, his life, its meaning, his relationship to God, and his role in society." (209)

The final chapter on group portraits of civic guards offers fewer surprises perhaps, but it deftly posits the significance in Dutch cities of these free associations of power, where wealthy citizens enacted the role of corporate commitment to the commonwealth. Adams does raise provocative questions (254-58) about those groups, such as the Dutch East India Company (VOC), which did not commission similar group portraits about public service.

Adams's book bears the marks of its considered deliberation and is punctuated by numerous useful references to learned writings and leading ideas of seventeenth-century Dutch culture. While she may strive too hard to make connections to Calvinist thought per se, as well as to ends with a theoretical proclamation about the effect of portraits as sites for psychological identity formation (259-71), in the process of her analyses she skillfully and cumulatively builds upon well-founded interpretations of a neglected genre and its associated Dutch values.

Roget Freitas, *Portrait of a Castrato: Politics, Patronage, and Music in the Life of Atto Melani*. Cambridge University Press, New Perspectives in Music History and Criticism, 2009. 431 pp. \$99. Review by R. BURR LITCHFIELD, BROWN UNIVERSITY.

This well researched and well written study is a biography of Atto Melani (1626-1714) as a specimen of a seventeenth-century singer. It is based primarily on Atto's correspondence for the periods it exists, and a catalogue of letters is in Appendices A and B. But the author has supplemented these well with contemporary works and recent scholarship. His discussion of Atto's career is illuminating.

Atto rose from middle class origins (his father was in the service entourage of the Bishop of Pistoia in Tuscany), to prominence, wealth, social standing, and nobility, through singing. He made a sacrifice to do this. He and four of his brothers were castrated when they reached their early teens. The Roman Catholic Church in this period did not allow women to sing in church (a prohibition from the letters of St. Paul), so for the high notes it used boy sopranos, and if their voices were good it tolerated the castration of some of them to keep their