

the technical complexity and the intricacies of Murillo's brushwork. Dorothy Mahon and Silvia A. Centeno speak of Murillo's ability to sketch with the brush and black paint on a brown background, as revealed by the infrared reflectography pointing to the hair, facial features, and preliminary modelling of the face (116). Nicole Ryder noticed the peculiarity of Murillo's choice of the material quality of his painting, namely, the clay from Seville's Guadalquivir river, which ensured the shimmering qualities of many seventeenth-century Sevillian paintings, as Francisco Pacheco admitted (129).

*Murillo: The Self-Portraits* certainly undertook significant steps into studying his skill as a consummate portraitist, one at the forefront of Sevillian artists who impressed contemporary and subsequent generations of painters and art collectors alike. While the volume carefully includes many statements on Murillo's legacy over the centuries, a stronger emphasis on the Sevillian humanism would have been desired for a study that focuses on one of the most powerful local artists. Seville at midcentury 1640–1660 was a town brimming with academic tradition. Murillo's well-informed brushwork is not an isolated episode, but the outcome of a highly intellectual environment in matters of Renaissance and Classical cultures. Murillo's leadership became actively involved when, together with Francisco de Herrera the Younger, he established the drawing academy of Seville in 1660.

Brian Howell. *The Curious Case of Jan Torrentius*. Düsseldorf: Zagava, 2017. (First limited edition, Summer 2017). 6 volumes. €136. Review by MEGAN N. PEARSON, TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY.

Brian Howell's *The Curious Case of Jan Torrentius* is a series of historical tales about Johannes Symonsz van der Beeck, alias Jan Torrentius (1589-1644). Torrentius was a Dutch painter whose problematic, libertine lifestyle landed him in trouble; he was arrested and tortured in 1627 as a religious non-conformist, blasphemer, and an alleged Rosicrucian adherent with atheistic and Satanic beliefs. When he was arrested, his paintings were ordered to be destroyed, and thus Torrentius's only surviving work is "Still life with Bridle," which features within the text of Howell's work with a different sec-

tion of the painting occurring opposite the title page of each volume. Torrentius was rescued from prison after two years by King Charles I of England, an admirer of his work, and hired as court painter. After twelve years he returned to Amsterdam in 1642, where he remained until his passing in 1644.

Howell's fictionalization of Torrentius's life and involvement in Rosicrucianism is told in the form of a manuscript collection of letters, purported to have been published by the Dutch physicist, mathematician, astronomer and inventor Christiaan Huygens; the physical text is broken into six hardback volumes with a slipcase to fit them. The preface "written" by Huygens tells the reader that he inherited the collected manuscript from his father Constantijn Huygens (the famed poet) and has only changed the title (which reflects Howell's title change between the first three volumes and the last three volumes) as well as added a concluding section. Otherwise, he presents his father's manuscripts as he found them. Constantijn Huygens's preface to the manuscripts tells the reader of the wish to "compile an account of this man, Jan [Torrentius], and to this end I have collected together five accounts, if I include my own, by those persons most knowledgeable about, and, indeed, decisive in, their contact with him." The following four accounts are from Cornelis Drebbel; Dudley Carleton, Lord Dorchester; Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Bohemia; and John Donne D. D., each account being a volume of the text. The final account and volume is from the view of Torrentius himself, recounting his arrest and release into the court of King Charles I. The volumes are titled *Ex Anglia Reversus*, *Cornelis Drubelsius Alcmariensis*, *A Small Picture of Torentius Hand*, *The Vowell That Makes So Sweet a Consonant*, *All States and All Princes*, and *Vandike and I*.

In general the format works well for the material story, as Howell's use of biased, varying recollections reflects the uncertainty of the life story of Torrentius; however, in the case of imitating the supposed authors, the style falls short. Donne's prose section is flat and unmoving, without any of the wit or stylistic features that Donne's readers appreciate and love. Likewise, there is license taken with the Rosicrucian leanings: there is no evidence to suggest that Donne or Lucy Countess of Bedford were involved with the Rosicrucians. While the text is modernized (the only early modern spelling occurs in direct

quotes from seventeenth-century material, e.g. Donne's sermons and poetry), it is easily accessible and tells an entertaining and possible (if not improbable) story of Jan Torrentius. The story is well researched; in the final volume Howell lists many of his sources, including works by scholars such as Nadine Akkerman, R. C. Bald, Frances A. Yates, and Stanislas Klossowski de Rola. The gathering of the brotherhood attributed to Donne in the novel is taken directly from the *Fama Fraternitatis* (1614), and the secret emblem given in the book (see below) is taken from historical alchemical symbols (the base is Mercury, with a sun symbol for a face, a moon symbol instead of mercurial horns). Cornelius Drebbel's *camera obscura* is a central focus in Torrentius's interest in and plan to assist the military efforts of Elizabeth Stuart and her husband Frederick V during his brief reign as the winter King of Bohemia, though it seems the concept of optography has been introduced a couple centuries too early. All in all, *The Curious Case of Jan Torrentius* is an enjoyable read.

