

The proposed narrative of “privatization of conscience” also employs a rather Habermasian notion of the “public sphere.” The distinction between public and private sins had been employed as early as the sixteenth century. But, Reinhardt utilizes Max Weber’s “vocation of politics” and Habermas’s conceptualization of the “public sphere” to assess the changing roles of the royal confessors: “At the turn of the eighteenth century the king’s private sins, traditionally of no great concern to the moral theological concept of ‘royal sins,’ came into focus to a degree unknown before. ‘Privatization of royal conscience’ thus operated in two directions: the first was one by which the royal conscience was increasingly defined and explored as a sphere of the king as a private man” (371).

Voices of Conscience: Royal Confessors and Political Counsel in Seventeenth-Century Spain and France makes a significant contribution to political theory and to the history of early modern European political culture by demonstrating the entanglement of religion and royal politics in early modern states and court societies. Far from being confined to obscure theological debates, royal confessors shaped morality at the Spanish and French royal courts and provided monarchs with direct advice on matters of conscience, both personal and public. This is a welcome reminder that religion and politics can never be separated, since conscience constantly shapes decision-making.

Dalia Judovitz. *Georges de La Tour and the Enigma of the Visible*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2018. xiv + 158 pp. + 25 color illus. + 4 figs. \$30.00 (paper) Review by HEATHER MCPHERSON, UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM.

The enigmatic paintings of Georges de La Tour (1593-1652), rediscovered by Hermann Voss in 1915, have continued to fascinate and perplex art historians and the modern public. Beyond his surviving pictorial corpus, almost nothing is known about La Tour’s artistic training or professional life. Although scholars have traditionally distinguished the daylight works from the nocturnes and profane and sacred subjects, the division is not absolute and his works fall outside conventional genres. Compounding the lack of historical evidence, La

Tour scholarship is plagued by attribution problems and the lack of firm dates, complicated by the existence of multiple versions of many compositions, muddying the distinction between original and replica. Although La Tour's art is strongly indebted to Caravaggio's tenebrist style, we do not know where he encountered it or how he arrived at the mysterious lighting effects that permeate his nocturnes. Dalia Judovitz's extensively documented, theoretically informed interdisciplinary study analyzes La Tour's paintings, especially the function of light, in relation to the Catholic Reform and the debates surrounding the role of sacred images, underscoring the opposition between the visible and the invisible and Judovitz's interrogation of spirituality and broader meta-reflection on the nature of painting.

The introduction provides a brief overview of the state of La Tour scholarship and discusses the innovative naturalism and distinctive treatments of light and shadows that define his pictorial style. As Judovitz observes, for La Tour, the transcendental is often evoked through the faithful representation of things seen (3). The five chapters that follow examine these central issues through close visual analysis of thematically related works and detailed explication of their relation to religious texts and early modern religious thought as well as through the lens of contemporary theoretical discussions about the phenomenology of painting and the role of the beholder.

Chapter One considers the enigma of the visible as evidenced in La Tour's allegorical depictions of blind hurdy-gurdy players and his parallel representations of the penitent St. Jerome, with his averted meditative gaze and bloodied scourge, which evoke seeing and hearing and repetition through performance, undermining the image's uniqueness and, Judovitz argues, challenging the vanity of painting. In the four devotional nocturnes of the repentant Magdalene, among La Tour's most celebrated works, light and darkness are subtly orchestrated, bridging the gap between the human and the divine and physical and spiritual vision. The illumined profile and blank gaze of the contemplative Magdalene, absently fingering a skull, is juxtaposed with a flickering candle and in two of the versions, a mirror, emblematic of vanity and Christ's double nature, which Judovitz suggests, functions as a metaphor for the duplicity of painting.

Chapter Two focuses on the transformation of the concept of spiritual passion in the seventeenth century and the betrayal of painting as evidenced in La Tour's depictions of St. Peter, which affirm spiritual passion through their dual emphasis on Peter's denial and the iconography of repentance. Judovitz links the renewal of interest in St. Peter to his foundational role in the formation of the Catholic Church and his role as forerunner of the papacy. In the *Denial of St. Peter* (1650), La Tour's last signed and dated painting, the sacred and the secular are dramatically juxtaposed through the inclusion of the soldiers gambling for Christ's clothes, recalling the display of trickery in the *Card Cheats*, which Judovitz links to the betrayal of painting. The competing sources of light and reflection demonstrate La Tour's consummate mastery of lighting effects.

Chapter Three examines visibility and legibility, focusing on the presence of books and the act of reading, recurring tropes in La Tour's depictions of *St. Jerome Reading* and the *Education of the Virgin*. Judovitz links the enigmatic act of reading to spiritual illumination, underscoring Mary's ambiguous status as both messenger and message that holds the candle and points to the Bible, serving as a gateway to pivot back and forth between past, present, and future. In the *Discovery of St. Alexis*, the interface between the visible and the legible is thematized and the vision of the beholder is decentered. La Tour represents the moment of discovery whose true meaning was only revealed by reading the note clutched by St. Alexis, which recasts legibility by insisting on the beholder's participation.

Chapter Four interrogates the vanity of painting through La Tour's puzzling *Flea-Catcher* and his late depictions of blowers of light in which the rekindling and the transfer of light are foregrounded. Judovitz suggests that the humble but luminous *Flea-Catcher*, which has been linked to Dutch genre painting, is actually imbued with Biblical references, arguing that the woman appears to hold a rosary (rather than a flea), and linking the red chair and burning candle to the Virgin's role as spiritual portal. Likewise, she suggests that the blowers of light possess religious significance through their association with the rekindling of the spirit.

Chapter Five considers the notion of painting as portal in relation to the legacy of iconoclastic destruction and post-Tridentine devotional

painting. Judovitz analyzes the ambiguous shifts between the secular and the sacred in the *Newborn Child* and the *Adoration of the Shepherds*, which, she suggests, seek to evoke the mystery of Incarnation through the juxtaposition of spiritual as opposed to physical illumination and the double illumination of the Christ child and the candle. Shadows also play a preponderant role in *St. Sebastian Tended by Irene*, in which his spiritual passion and martyrdom are evoked through a single arrow and a drop of blood, functioning as a punctum, which reaches out of to directly engage the beholder. For Judovitz, *St. Sebastian* both recalls the martyrdom of painting provoked by iconoclasm but also offers hope for renewal and redemption through its hidden geometric scaffolding.

In the epilogue, Judovitz addresses the insoluble dilemma of the reception and impact of La Tour's paintings during his lifetime due to the absence of historical evidence. Writing a century later, Dom Augustin Calmet noted that La Tour's *St. Sebastian* was held in high regard by Louis XIII (105). Although the glowing illumination, humble naturalism, and spiritual dimension of La Tour's paintings continue to resonate with twenty-first-century viewers, it is impossible to gauge their impact on his contemporaries. Judovitz's densely argued, meticulously researched, and beautifully illustrated study opens the door to the broader artistic, religious, and philosophical implications of La Tour's mysterious paintings through her insightful readings and broad interdisciplinary perspective.

Giancarla Periti. *In the Courts of Religious Ladies: Art, Vision, and Pleasure in Italian Renaissance Convents*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2016. ix+ 294 pp. \$75.00. Review by ALLIE TERRY-FRITSCH, BOWLING GREEN STATE UNIVERSITY.

Giancarla Periti's engaging and well-illustrated book on the visual culture surrounding patrician religious women in Renaissance Italy investigates the inherent contradictions between rules of monastic decorum that were understood to guide female religious communities in the late medieval and early modern period and the material splendor once actively promoted within their conventual spaces. Based on analysis of extant artistic and architectural evidence largely