

find the interpolations rather helpful. And, for George Villiers's "The Lost Mistress," a poem with several variant versions, he produces twenty lines of detailed bibliographic explication to justify one substantive decision. The book includes a list of secondary works—but no list of primary works, which must be gleaned from the Notes—and an Index.

H. Rodney Nevitt, Jr. *Art and the Culture of Love in Seventeenth-Century Holland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. xvii + 302 pp. + 89 b&w illustrations. \$80.00. Review by HANNEKE GROOTENBOER, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY.

Art and the Culture of Love in Seventeenth-Century Holland by H. Rodney Nevitt explores the dynamic between imagery of love and its intended audience, the Dutch youth of the Golden Age. One of the goals of this book is to reconstitute that audience's response in order to find "a closer joining of moral content and sensual pleasure than has generally been described by scholars" (18) in the so-called merry companies by Willem Buytenwech (c. 1591-1624), the garden parties of David Vinckboons (1576-c. 1632) and his follower Esaias van de Velde (1590-1630), couples observing peasant scenes by Jan Miense Molenaer (1610-1668), outdoor portraits by Frans Hals (1582-1666), as well as in prints included in *vrijerijboeken* (courting books) and songbooks. Nevitt imagines the Dutch youth as engaged viewers who respond to moralizing messages with an ambivalent mixture of humor, self-recognition, and moral judgment, and who did not find the union of instruction and delight these pictures convey at all contradictory. In contrast to the apparently laid back youth he investigates, Nevitt considers the intertwining of morals with pleasure in pictures of flirting adolescents highly problematic. Each of the three chapters of this book deals with ambiguous motifs, gestures, and tropes in various sub-genres of love imagery that challenge iconographic interpretation.

Chapter 1, entitled “The New Garden of Love,” discusses problems of interpretation in the “modern” garden of love, a new pictorial type invented by Vinckboons and Esaias van de Velde. These presumably carefree depictions of young couples amusing themselves out of doors contain moral clues such as a crucifixion in the far background and a statue of Fortuna partly “hidden” in the depth of a cultivated garden which confront the viewer with the issue of how to read them. More obvious clues can be found in the gesturing of the figures in their playing music and singing from songbooks, a clear reference to courting and sex. Examining several popular seventeenth-century songbooks, Nevitt states that they are as varied and ambiguous as the depictions of Dutch youth using them, but does not push the point any further. Regrettably, the strict iconographic method he employs does not allow for the songbooks to be used as anything other than clarifying texts. The dialogue he tries to set up between the songbooks and the paintings is therefore not productive enough to lead him out of the impasse of ambiguity. A clear attempt to broaden the meaning of the more subdued garden parties by Esaias Van de Velde that lack explicit moral references also leads to a somewhat weak conclusion in which the tender interactions between Esaias’s figures are read as melancholy reflections on the transience of youth and lost love.

Chapter 2 on “The Morals of Love” discusses several merry companies by Buytenwech, young couples observing peasant scenes by Miense Molenaer, and portraits set against gardens of love by Frans Hals. Nevitt argues that these various images have a moral framework in common that is less straightforward than that of the garden parties discussed in the previous chapter. Consequently, this framework leaves more room for ambiguity, but Nevitt does not clarify the usefulness of such approach. Nevitt’s analysis of Buytenwech’s delightful scenes of arrogant and bored looking young men and women playing music, smoking, or not doing anything at all, does not provide an alternative or unorthodox reading of these images. It appears as if Nevitt is guided by the obfuscation he observes, with the result that too many different sources are consulted that evoke too many possible contexts (the

Biblical parable of the Prodigal Son, prostitution and tavern scenes, fashion and manners, the Dutch *vry-gevochten* [independent] nature, to name a few) for a plausible interpretation to be formulated. In a similar gesture, Nevitt states that the hilarious scenes of Miense Molenaer where young civilized couples, as typical outsiders, observe peasant habits are more ambiguous in their message than has been previously assumed. Again, he fails to demonstrate why acknowledging the ambiguity in these scenes may lead to a greater insight either in Molenaer's paintings, in love imagery in general, or in the practice of interpretation as such.

Chapter 3 has a slightly different perspective on the topic as it discusses two landscape etchings by Rembrandt, each of which, upon close inspection (and with a magnifying glass I presume), reveals a pair of lovers hiding in the vegetation. Not the moralizing clues but the lovers themselves are hidden here from sight, turning the images into treasure maps and us, viewers into detective-voyeurs. These etchings have a great potential for addressing the status of ambiguity as such, as well as related problems of artistic intention, the speculative role of the seventeenth-century beholder versus the prohibition on speculation for today's scholar; the invisibility of meaning, and the question as to how significant early modern moral frameworks are for the current art historical practice. Nevitt misses a brilliant opportunity by maintaining within the narrow limits of the traditional iconographical method of interpretation. He starts suspecting several elements of being potential clues that link the hidden couples even more strongly to the discourse of love. The clues are genuinely obfuscated: a lonely peasant on the Amstel shore, an elderly couple fishing, a rowboat filled with people. Do these elements partake in a larger iconographic program or do they refer to an actual culture of love? Nevitt's description of the Amstel river and its shores as actual gardens of love that were intensively used by the Amsterdam youth for their *spelereisjes* (fun trips) is fascinating to read in relation to the etchings. It reveals a true aspect of the culture of love in the first half of the seventeenth century. In the end, however, not the etchings themselves, but Nevitt's readings of them remain obscure.

Nevitt's project positions itself firmly in the now classic debate in Dutch art history as to whether images celebrate or proscribe the sensual pleasures they depict. This debate reached its climax in the late 1980s and has been continued ever since by scholars who address the same crucial question to a new corpus of material. Nevitt's book demonstrates that the core problem lies in the method of interpretation rather than in the ambiguous paintings; however, it makes no clear attempts to break out of the rigid framework that Dutch iconography imposes. Therefore, the purpose of this book has not entirely become clear.

One reason why the book's purpose remains partly obscure lies in the author's heavy dependence on texts for illuminating the iconographic ambiguities he encounters. Another reason may be found in the slightly arbitrary selection of material. The book focuses exclusively on works produced in the first half of the seventeenth century. A puzzling fact is why the merry companies of Dirck Hals have been omitted from the discussions. In the Introduction, Nevitt makes the intriguing claim that these early works are crucial for the understanding of the better-known tradition of paintings of love of the second half of the century, of which Vermeer and Ter Borch are the most prominent exponents, a claim that remains underdeveloped. The cover illustration of Vermeer's *The Concert*, therefore, is misleading as it presents a promising example of a celebrated tradition of love imagery that the book precisely does not address.

S. Mutchow Towers. *Control of Religious Printing in Early Stuart England*. Woodbridge, U.K.: The Boydell Press, 2003. viii + 296 pp. \$75.00. Review by STEVEN MATTHEWS, THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA.

What effect did Archbishop Laud's policy of religious censorship have on the actual production of the presses? To readers unfamiliar with the topic of censorship in Stuart England this question can seem narrow to the point of irrelevance. This is especially true if it is assumed, as S. Mutchow Towers herself has summarized the