

Charles-Alphonse Dufresnoy. *De Arte Graphica (Paris, 1668)*. Edition, translation and commentary by Christopher Allen, Yasmin Haskell, and Frances Muecke. Geneva, Librairie Droz S. A., 2005. 560 pp. SF 158.00. Review by JOHN A. GALLUCCI, COLGATE UNIVERSITY.

This is a book of rich and important scholarship. Its subject is a slender, difficult, fascinating, and influential Latin poem on the art of painting. This edition provides the first truly authoritative text of the poem, with a clear and precise English translation *en regard*. Commentary and introductions provide the means to appreciate and interpret this poem with depth and understanding. Clearly written, this edition of Dufresnoy will be of major interest to all scholars of art history and literature.

Why should a poem only 549 lines long deserve so much attention from scholars today? The answer is simple: Dufresnoy's poem was an object of enormous attention and influence in its own time, quickly becoming a fundamental reference point for artists and poets and remaining so for over a century in many different lands. This valuable edition brings home to the modern reader this influence, providing or rather restoring a crucial chapter in the history of European art.

It is difficult to do justice to a book that explores in such detail the world of the artist in these centuries. Speaking of its method in general, one can say that the unique qualities of the *De arte graphica* are made clear through the marshalling of classical, Renaissance and contemporary writings on art, and through the study of Dufresnoy's own role as a source of inspiration for poets and painters of the eighteenth century. The three authors provide original assessments of this poem in these contexts. This work's overall thesis can be summed up by Christopher Allen's statement, which this edition demonstrates amply and convincingly: "[Dufresnoy's poem] constitutes perhaps the best and most economical way into the practical and theoretical concerns of artists of the Renaissance and the seventeenth century. And far from being of merely antiquarian interest ... [Dufresnoy's poem] contains much to interest painters who come after modernism and after post-modernism, and who are asking, once again, fundamental questions about the art of picturing the world" (62).

The Latin text provided is authoritative. As no manuscript exists, the text of Dufresnoy's poem is based on the first edition of the poem in 1668 by Dufresnoy's friend Pierre Mignard. A critical apparatus allows one to follow various textual changes in subsequent editions. It also includes Dufresnoy's spare and important Latin notes. The translation is clear and precise and will provide for modern readers helpful access to Dufresnoy's technical vocabulary.

The first chapter introduces us to Dufresnoy's life, his long residence in Rome, his friendships and professional relationships, and his own work in painting. Christopher Allen also provides the most likely theory of the poem's origin: it seems to have begun as a series of apothegms that were subsequently transformed into a more finished work. There is a valuable discussion of how the poem may be understood within the received Renaissance tradition and the variations introduced by the Venetian painters. The chapter closes with discussion of the poem's reception in France. Published by Mignard in 1668 in Latin, translated into French by Roger de Piles in 1668, the poem and its author became a part of the polemics between Mignard and Le Brun, as well as the unacknowledged source of Molière's poem celebrating Mignard's *La gloire du Val-de-Grâce* and a possible source for Boileau's *Art Poétique*.

The second chapter introduces us to an important understanding of the neo-Latin tradition in poetry. Dufresnoy's use of Latin is not simply antiquarian but a fundamental part of the poem's creation and appeal, and helps explain its success. Yasmin Haskell discusses Dufresnoy's choice of Latin, the poem's style and mode of composition. She provides valuable remarks on the poem's use of Greek and Latin terms. Of especial interest is the discussion of the relation of *De arte graphica* to Renaissance models, such as Vida's *De arte poetica*, and to contemporary sources that help nuance Dufresnoy's relationship to the Horatian tradition of *ut pictura poesis*. This chapter concludes with a discussion of how Dufresnoy's Latin poem itself engendered a new direction in European Latin poetry. This chapter is especially valuable in its demonstration of the vitality of neo-Latin writing.

The third chapter discusses the fascinating influence and fortune of Dufresnoy's poem in Europe over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, its "European dissemination." Dufresnoy's poem, in short, was "ubiquitous." Frances Muecke is also interested in why the poem became so successful as it made its way throughout Europe in Italy, Germany, Austria,

England and the Netherlands, everywhere accompanying the creation of art academies and the discussion of the role of the artist and the definition of fine art. Translated by Dryden, read by Pope and Benjamin West, Dufresnoy was “a household name” among the elite in England. In England the first effective challenge to Dufresnoy’s theorizing took place in the essays of the English artist Sir Joshua Reynolds. The chapter extends its remarks into the nineteenth century with a discussion of Turner’s use of Dufresnoy and color theory.

Christopher Allen’s lengthy Commentary forms the major part of this book. He divides the poem into sections, which are then discussed within a wide range of aesthetic writings from Classical, Renaissance and contemporary discussions of art. The poem’s difficulties and vocabulary are illuminated usefully as the reader is informed not only of aesthetic theory, such as that of Alberti, but of actual practice by various painters. Each section is therefore discussed within several layers of context: these will be of major help as scholars come to study further Dufresnoy and work toward developing new interpretations of *De arte graphica*.

The six Appendices provide documents that are fundamental for the appreciation of the importance and meaning of *De arte graphica*. One has at hand documents demonstrating the poem’s reception and biographical documents important for understanding the poem’s origins. Of especial value are remarks by Dufresnoy himself, in French, some of which have only been recently discovered. Two French translations of the *De arte graphica* are also included, one published here for the first time and completely unknown until discovered by the authors in 1997.

Overall, we have a work remarkable for its careful erudition and usefulness. The writing of the three editors of this text remains clear and eminently readable throughout. The result is a thorough introduction to a poem and its essential connections to the development of European painting, and a demonstration of the importance of the neo-Latin poetic tradition.

Charles M. Natoli. *Fire in the Dark: Essays on Pascal’s Pensées and Provinciales*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2005. ix + 145 pp. \$ 75.00 / £ 45.00. Review by SUSAN READ BAKER, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA.