CrossMark

Crime and Illusion: The Art of Truth in the Spanish Golden Age. Felipe Pereda. Trans. Consuelo López-Morillas. Harvey Miller Studies in Baroque Art. London: Harvey Miller, 2018. 334 pp. €60.

This extraordinary book offers a new framework for understanding the powerful naturalism of early modern Spanish painting and sculpture. For Pereda, sacred art in seventeenth-century Spain was not an expression of faith, but rather a vehicle for countering doubt, transforming spectators into eyewitnesses to religious truth. A central theme is the relationship between *engaño* (deceit) and *desengaño* (undeceit) and the question of whether proof of divine mysteries could be established by the experience of images or the senses. Pereda delves deeply into multiple domains of knowledge and practice, including legal discourse and procedures, Inquisition trials, Scholastic theology, artistic theory, rhetoric, semiotics, and the history of science. He also adds an important voice to recent arguments challenging the paradigms that have distinguished the premodern era of images from an emerging, secular era of art.

Most of Pereda's nine chapters focus on images of Christ. The introduction uses paintings of Christ at Emmaus and of the doubt-ridden Thomas to examine issues of sight, belief, and proof. Pereda then investigates the debate sparked in 1619 when the Seville painter Francisco Pacheco portrayed Christ crucified with four nails (rather than three), adding an unusual inscription at the top of the cross. Some contemporaries denounced these features as unorthodox novelties. The titulus, beginning "HIC EST" (in Latin, Greek, and Aramaic), was indeed an innovation with scant foundation in scripture. By declaring Christ's presence to the viewer, however, the deixis exemplified Pacheco's position that the function of religious images was persuasion and that likenesses of Christ merited the reverence due to Christ himself.

Pereda next devotes two chapters to evidence as explored by Diego Velázquez. The artist's *Jerónima de la Fuente* is identified by its inscription as a "true portrait": a faithful likeness and a "testimonial and historical record" of the saintly nun (108). The sources Pereda brings to bear upon the painting are largely familiar to specialists, but he further argues that the portrait's obscure background and ambiguous perspective, far from being flaws in the composition, reinforce Jerónima's status as a living image of Christ. Pereda then considers *Joseph's Bloody Coat*, which depicts Jacob's sons feigning emotion while proffering Joseph's blood-stained garment. Moving beyond previous scholarship, Pereda relates Velázquez's interest in fabricated evidence to skeptical philosophy as practiced in his native Seville. Velázquez gave the lie to the proof afforded by the cloak. Moreover, he alluded to the deception inherent in painting itself, replacing Joseph's multicolored garment with a white cloth that resembles a painter's canvas.

https://doi.org/10.1017/rqx.2021.114 Published online by Cambridge University Press

False testimony is also central to Pereda's account of the notorious execution in 1632 of five Portuguese conversos accused of destroying a crucifix. Analyzing records from the trial, Pereda elucidates inquisitorial methods in manufacturing evidence. Years later, Francisco Rizi and others created paintings for a chapel on the site of the alleged desecration, reproducing the Inquisitors' evidence to establish proof of events that never transpired. Pereda turns next to the evidence of divine presence in Francisco de Zurbarán's depictions of Veronica's veil, examining the paintings in relation to relic images of Christ, such as copies of the holy shroud. Zurbarán's "radical naturalism" testified to the persuasive power of both pictorial illusionism and the *vestigia* of Christ's body (199).

The following two chapters focus on crucifixes supposedly made by Nicodemus and on early modern works shaped by their example. Beyond their wondrous origins, the authority of the Nicodemus sculptures emanated from their material qualities: their naturalistic polychromy, wigs, and garments. Pereda sees these images as direct precedents for Gregorio Fernández's polychrome sculptures of the recumbent Christ. These include a stunning reliquary, in which a gash in Christ's side bears an inscription identifying its content: "SANGRE DEL XPO," which Pereda reads as a reference not to Christ's blood, but rather to blood shed by Christ's images. Spanish churchmen hailed thaumaturgic objects, no less than the blood of Christ, as vital tools of conversion. Likewise, paintings and sculptures thematized the salvific function of images and of blood by depicting the blind Longinus seeing the light of faith after his eyes are touched by liquid from Christ's wounds.

A short review cannot do justice to the rich complexity of Pereda's arguments. Indeed, this is an unquestionably brilliant book. Yet the author does not always sufficiently acknowledge the contributions of other scholars. He is not the first to suggest that "the status of images" remained problematic during the Catholic Reformation (67); Michael Cole and Rebecca Zorach, Marcia Hall, John O'Malley, and others have also explored this issue, and their work may have helped to elucidate further the differences between images as understood in Spain and elsewhere in the Catholic world. Pereda's book should also be appreciated as part of a visual-culture turn among historians of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Spanish art (including María Cruz de Carlos, Javier Portús, and Cécile Vincent-Cassy) who have studied sacred objects alongside celebrated paintings and sculptures. Consuelo López-Morillas's translation will ensure that Pereda's arguments reach audiences beyond specialists in the Iberian world. Finally, the beautiful photographs in the English edition will help readers—like the early viewers posited by Pereda—to serve as witness to the themes portrayed.

Tanya J. Tiffany, *University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee*
doi:10.1017/rqx.2021.114

https://doi.org/10.1017/rqx.2021.114 Published online by Cambridge University Press