vagrants” and nothing more (242). Much of the existing lacuna in vagrancy historiography ought to be accounted for by exactly these important differences between Gypsy and vagrant lived experience that Cressy is right to highlight. Gypsies were “heirs to a tradition” (243), and that tradition assuredly deserves dedicated historical attention. Second, it is misleading to suggest that “nobody but ne’er-do-wells welcomed vagrants into their communities” (244), even for rhetorical effect. Constables, parish officials, alehouse keepers, and local community members of all sorts did welcome vagrants in, begrudgingly or otherwise, and gave them shelter and relief, charity, and even employment.

Cressy offers some important and insightful correctives to previous academic work on Gypsies, though these corrections are offered to anonymized “historians” or “scholars” until the final section. For example, when Cressy muses, “a consensus seems to have emerged among English historians” that Gypsies were “indistinguishable from home-bred vagrants” (273), it would seem important to know exactly to whom he is referring, yet no names are provided. It is as if the problematic position of Leo Lucassen—that Gypsies were not so much a people as “persons labelled as such” (275)—has been extended to cover other historians who disagree with it. Only in his bibliographic note does Cressy consistently address other scholars by name, though it seems likely this is due both to intended audience and to editorial convention. It is, however, quite right to chide scholars for not paying as much attention to Gypsies as they ought to have done.

In summary, David Cressy’s Gypsies: An English History is an important and illuminating account of a marginalized and itinerant people. Richly detailed, confidently written, and clear in its central mission, this book will prove to be an important departure point for all scholars looking to consider histories of marginal peoples in England and elsewhere. Readers will arrive at the end of the book with that satisfying sense that they have genuinely learned a great deal about both the specifics and the generalities of Gypsy experience. They will capitalize Gypsy in their own work with a clear understanding of the debates over identity and terminology. They will hear Gypsy voices more clearly in other histories. In his introduction, Cressy noted that for Gypsies, “a comprehensive history is wanting” (xi). Not anymore.

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The past several years have seen new techniques and approaches brought to bear on the study of English Renaissance art, and of portraiture in particular. Gone are the days when attribution of a conventionally unsigned painting of this era could be based almost entirely on perceived visual affinities with other known works. The technical analysis of pigments and supports, the far more extensive use of archival sources, and the willingness to extend investigations outside the social circles of the court or the geographic range of the London metropolis have brought a new and impressive refinement to such study. This fourth modern biography of Nicholas Hilliard, easily the greatest English-born painter of his time, admirably demonstrates the consequent possibilities. Elizabeth Goldring brings to her task a keen nose for archival research, an appreciation of new technology for the examination of material objects, and a willingness to engage with non-English sources in producing this now definitive account. In several respects, her efforts produce a much more closely observed and nuanced discussion of the subject than we have had before.
Goldring notably sets Hilliard firmly in his childhood experiences in Exeter, where his father was a senior member of that city’s active community of goldsmiths. She proceeds to explore in full detail his adolescent years spent in France and Geneva in the ex-patriot household of the Marian exile John Bodley. Though it is said that youth may be wasted on the young, it is nevertheless the case that by the time Hilliard returned to England at the age of thirteen, those two experiences served to shape the course of his adult life. On that return, Hilliard’s father arranged apprenticeships for Nicholas and his brother John with the London goldsmiths Robert Brandon and Edward Gylberd. Brandon’s circle as Royal Goldsmith brought extensive contacts with émigré goldsmiths who had by that time flocked to London, thereby extending Hilliard’s close contact with foreign ideas and craftsmanship through the years of his apprenticeship and beyond. Along the way, he had absorbed enough about painting to make his own way in that field as well, eventually abandoning goldsmith’s work almost entirely. Beyond what it may have taught him about the ambient visual culture of the era, these formative experiences, both in England and abroad, imparted the linguistic skills and personal refinement that afforded him a comfortable entrée into English courtly circles. He returned to France for some of the most formative years of his early adult life—an episode not wholly appreciated by earlier biographers. Both at home and abroad he actively sought out and absorbed continental ideas about visual representation, taking in the work of people like Albrecht Dürer, Jean de Court, François Clouet, Goltzius, Zuccaro, and others, easily befriending continental painters either abroad or on their sojourns in England. That continual absorption of approaches that were new to his native land allowed him to advance his skills well beyond those of his native contemporaries, and it made his career. In addition to acknowledging Hilliard’s admiration of Dürer, Goldring raises the intriguing but well-founded possibility that the enormously talented and well-connected émigré Lucas De Heere, resident in England between 1566/7 and 1577, may have played a particularly direct and influential role in Hilliard’s development.

The middle chapters of the work offer a detailed, if conventional, narrative of patrons and production over the years. But they also allow Goldring to bring recent scientific analysis of painting and pigments to bear in sorting out the Hilliard oeuvre. She constructs the most definitive idea to date of what he did and did not do and of how he went about his work. She brings a finely honed sensitivity to the complexities of workshop practice and to the possibilities of collaboration between artisans and artists in and around Hilliard’s long-term residence and workspace in London’s Gutter Lane. We also see Hilliard, his career and his work, in the context of contemporary court painters: among these, his former apprentice Rowland Lockey, his informal pupil and eventual rival Isaac Oliver, and contemporaries like George Gower and Jan de Critz are the most significant.

Finally, Goldring’s Hilliard is a man in all his mortality. Hilliard’s interactions with his brother John and his son Laurence are sensitively treated. So is his uneasy, lifelong, and eventually disastrous relationship with money: a constant drag on his life that led to the eventual loss of his Gutter Lane home and workshop and a brief imprisonment for debt brought to an end only when the kind intervention of a well-heeled patron, probably Lord Burghley, came to the rescue. Hilliard’s latter years, like those of the queen whose public image he did so much to create, were those of steady decline—not only of wealth and dignity but also of health and the companionship of valued contemporaries. Unlike Elizabeth, he died in very straitened circumstances, never finding his feet at the Stuart courts as firmly as he had long done at the Elizabethan.

This is more than an exemplary biography. Richly researched, abundantly thoughtful, and engagingly written, Goldring’s Nicholas Hilliard represents a paragon of modern historical biography itself. An Alp of a book, it will not be superseded for a long time to come.

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