It is a shame that her book has taken so long to appear. In origins a thesis submitted in 1981, the Preface indicates that the book was completed in virtually its present form in 1984, but it was only published in 1988. Unfortunately too, the book carries an errata slip apologizing for three substantial typesetting errors. One feels that after the delay Dr Field deserved better from her printers. Perhaps non-mathematicians should be advised that like Kepler she expects her readers to put some effort into it but she generously illustrates her exposition with diagrams and tables, and relegates the toughest geometry to appendices. She has also provided a very full bibliography.[2] Certainly her book rewards persistence and is lightened and enlightened by her helpful tone. Eventually the reader should come away with a full appreciation of Kepler's guiding principle that 'his cosmological theories should be in a good numerical agreement with measured properties of the observable universe'. It was a change in the acceptable structure of such theories, rather than more accurate observations, which led scientists later in the seventeenth century to abandon his polyhedra and his harmonies.

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Mary D. Garrard, *Artemisia Gentileschi: The Image of the Female Hero in Italian Baroque Art*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1989. 607 pp. 332 black and white illustrations, 24 colour plates. $49.50. ISBN 0-691-04050-8.

Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-1652) can certainly stand, without qualification, as one of the finest painters of the middle years of the seventeenth century. Her earliest known work, the signed and dated *Susanna and the Elders* in Pommersfelden, shows her as a talented, self-assured and stylistically independent artist at age seventeen. She appears to have had a successful career throughout her life, finding great favour with virtually all of the noble houses of Europe. The reason why Artemisia's paintings were attractive to contemporary patrons is obvious. Her style demonstrated a sophisticated blend of the finest aspects of Italian art spanning the previous century: Caravaggistic realism and dramatic lighting, bold compositions reminiscent of Bolognese classicism and High Renaissance Rome, and the sumptous details and surfaces of the mid-sixteenth-century Tuscan Maniera. Furthermore, her innovative approach to religious and classical iconography would have pleased those patrons who yearned for a taste of 'the new'. In short. Artemisia managed to capture all that was best in contemporary Italian art in her paintings.

Having trained with her father, the painter Orazio Gentileschi, in Rome - her apprenticeship most likely dating from 1607 to 1610 - Artemisia left the city in 1614 to settle in Florence. She was awarded membership of the Accademia del Disegno in 1616 and appears to have received more than one commission from

[2] Curiously, while Luther's German version of the Bible and the Greek Septuagint are listed in the bibliography as 'Bible trans,', yet 'Bible Authorised version, London 1611' appears thus, without the 'trans.', as do later English versions. Surely Dr Field is not one of those who thinks the Bible was really written in English!

Duke Cosimo II de' Medici and his wife Maria Maddelena of Austria. She left Florence in 1620, probably first joining her father in Genoa, and then travelling on to Venice, before returning to Rome in 1622. Between 1630 and 1638 she worked in Naples, where she was busily employed not only by the local aristocracy, such as the Empress Maria of Austria, but also in long-distance projects for the Cardinals Barberini in Rome (via commissions secured by her friend, the antiquarian and humanist Cassiano del Pozzo), the Grand Duke Ferdinando II de' Medici, Philip IV of Spain and Duke Francesco I d'Este of Modena. In 1638 Artemisia journeyed to England to serve at the court of Charles I and Henrietta Maria for the next two or three years. During this period, she helped her father finish his series of nine paintings for the central hall of Inigo Jones's newly built Queen's House at Greenwich. Artemisia returned to Naples in 1642, where she continued to paint until her death in 1652.

Mary D. Garrard's *Artemisia Gentileschi* is the first monographic study of the artist. In her introduction, Garrard argues that the reason why Artemisia has not received much-deserved scholarly attention previously is due to her sex. This is a false issue. Seventeenth-century Italian art is notoriously understudied. To take one example amongst many, the fact that a figure of such stature as the sculptor Alessandro Algardi has only just recently been the subject of a monographic study shows how relatively far behind art historians are in researching the lives and works of artists who worked between 1600 and 1700. A comparable situation with regard to Renaissance or Modern art is unthinkable.

Garrard has a flair for talking about paintings. She has a very good eye for the details in a work of art and a delightfully precise vocabulary for describing colours and their effects. Her text is easy to read, its tone inviting and the flow of ideas nicely paced. Moreover, she manages to convey the impression that she actually likes Artemisia and is excited about her work. Her esteem for Artemisia is infectious. The prime delight of Garrard's book is its shared sense of discovery. She manages to convince the reader that he or she wants to know more about Artemisia. Unfortunately, however, one comes away from reading this book curiously dissatisified.

The primary cause of frustration with Garrard's study is its structure. Quite laudably, she tries to blend the newer trends of 'feminist art history' with the brass-tacks business of conventional, old-fashioned 'positivistic art history'. But neither branch of the profession is likely to be happy with the results. Feminist art historians will claim Garrard has betrayed the cause in trying to place a woman artist within a traditional historical framework. They will disparage her claim that Artemisia is a great artist, since the principle of greatness only 'reflects the parochial values and standards of the male culture' (cf. T. Gouma-Peterson and P. Mathews, 'Feminist critique of art history', *Art Bulletin*, 69, no. 3 (1987), 326–57, esp. p. 328). Conventional art historians will complain that Garrard fails to provide any sort of reference apparatus. There is no *catalogue raisonné* of Artemisia's works (an unfortunate omission from any monographic study). Relevant documents are presented in English translation with only excerpts from the original language sources scattered throughout the footnotes. There is scanty evidence of any new archival material, let alone any archival references to help the curious scholar find his way back to the primary source material. As a result, Garrard's book is extremely difficult to consult; one is constantly forced to return to earlier studies in order to find out very basic

information, such as dates, names, provenance of works, a history of previous attributions or original language versions of letters and documents.

Despite a chapter entitled 'Artemisia Gentileschi in Her Time', Garrard makes only a limited attempt to set Artemisia's work within the wider artistic context of seventeenth-century Florentine, Roman or Neapolitan painting. A chronology of sorts is provided, but Artemisia herself is repeatedly presented as somehow above the fray, *hors de combat*. She is seen as the trend-setter, the individualist, the inventor, the genius - with little sense conveyed as to how Artemisia's contacts with fellow painters may have influenced her own artistic development. This seems particularly surprising given Artemisia's repeated success in collaborative schemes, such as with her father in Rome, England and, possibly, Genoa; with the numerous Florentine artists working in the Casa Buonarroti, or in her very interesting collaborations with Viviano Codazzi and Bernardo Cavallino in Naples.

Furthermore, Garrard criticizes contemporary, seventeenth-century (male) chroniclers for their extravagant praise of Artemisia's talents. Such hyperbole, she argues, demeans 'women-in-general' because it sets up the talented individual as the exceptional phenomenon. But, as often seems the case in this book, the 'feminist line' Garrard has chosen to adopt generates some awkward contradictions. If Artemisia is a woman like any other, then the reader deserves a clearer picture of what is meant to be an 'ordinary woman painter' during the first half of the seventeenth century. But Garrard barely mentions two women artists whose works are in many ways comparable to Artemisia's - Lavinia Fontana and Elisabetta Sirani. It is particularly striking that Sirani's work is not discussed, since she seems to have painted precisely the same sort of heroic female. Note, for example, Sirani's vigorous *Portia Wounding Her Thigh* in New York, or the reference to her lost painting of *Timoclea*, a subject in which both the strength and honour of womankind is exalted. In failing to discuss Artemisia's female contemporaries, Garrard herself reinforces the myth of Gentileschi as an isolated phenomenon, a freak of nature.

The central thesis of Garrard's study is that women artists construct a painting differently than male artists do. This is because 'the sexes have been socialized to different experiences of the world' (p. 5). Garrard maintains that Artemisia's 'consistent adoption of a female perspective' (p. 6) manifests itself as an 'expressive' quality in her art. Moreover, this expressive quality is sufficiently distinctive to serve the connoisseur as the basis for a reliable attribution - except for works from Artemisia's later career, when she reputedly sold out and became 'more and more self-consciously a woman painter' (pp. 136-7). It seems peculiar, however, if Artemisia were searching for a style with which to express her feminist vision, that she would utilise Michelangelo's works as a touchstone throughout her early and middle career. Artemisia's reliance on Michelangelo is clear: his *David* can be seen in Artemisia's *Judith with Her Maidservant* in the Palazzo Pitti; his *Moses* in her *Madonna and Child* in the Spada Gallery in Rome; and his figure of the punished Haman from the Sistine Ceiling in Artemisia's Queen Esther in the Metropolitan Museum's *Esther before Ahasuerus*. Such borrowings from the master are typical of an early seventeenth-century artistic education. Artemisia, like any artist of her age, was turning to Michelangelo because he was the acknowledged master of form and composition. Garrard informs us, though, that the genius of these borrowings lies in Artemisia's

ability to draw 'cross-gender inspiration' from Michelangelo (p. 78). It is not the case of an artist being influenced by the art of a master; but one of a female artist creating female figures using the male figures painted by a man as a model. This is all a bit confusing. From the evidence presented, one wonders why Michelangelo's own use of male models for his female figures is never seen as feminist triumph.

Garrard also argues that one of Artemisia's unique strengths – still typical of her greatness as a *woman* painter – is the extent to which she empathizes with the plight of the heroines in her pictures. For Garrard, empathy is iconography and iconography is another connoisseur's tool. We can attribute paintings to Artemisia by the extent to which we are allowed to 'feel' the narrative. Of course, this 'feeling' is a strictly feminine prerogative. For example, Artemisia's three early *Judiths* are the only credible Judiths in the whole history of art (the Detroit *Judith* seems to be excluded from consideration due to her 'antiheroic' physiognomy (p. 328)). Having taken this stance, however, Garrard must then defend her position by discrediting all other contenders: Caravaggio's *Judith* in the Palazzo Barberini is 'emotionless' and 'mannequin-like' (p. 291); Valentin's *Judith* in Malta is too virginal, therefore too 'good' to be a real heroine (p. 72); and Allori's truly splendid *Judiths* in the Pitti and at Hampton Court are dismissed altogether because each represents, to varying degrees, an allegorical self-portrait of the artist and his mistress. One is often inclined to disagree with Garrard's readings. But regardless of whether every aspect of her argument can be maintained, if one accepts the premise then one must question Artemisia's status as a great artist since the disadvantage of this particular skill of painting-by-intuition is that Artemisia apparently could not paint a figure convincingly with whom she did not empathize, such as the Magdalen. To quote Garrard: 'Gentileschi was clearly not temperamentally attracted to the heroine of the contemplative life . . . and her failure to develop a fully decisive Magdalen indirectly demonstrates the artist's need to identify personally with her characters in order to bring them to life' (p. 47). This is a serious charge. Is any other painter so hampered by his or her personal experiences? I would argue the case differently. If Artemisia's *Magdalen* seems an unconvincing figure, then perhaps it could be that like many male artists of the period she was simply better at portraying active figures than contemplative ones. Rather than use the interpretation of a painting to show Artemisia as an exception to her trade, it seems more prudent to note that in many instances she actually parallels her contemporaries.

At one point Garrard assures us that 'autobiographical implications are at most an undercurrent' in great paintings (p. 330). Nevertheless, as her eighty-page English translation of the Rape Trial of 1612 seems to imply, there was one event in Artemisia's life which coloured virtually every aspect of her subsequent existence. As a scholar, I find this single-minded insistence that the trauma of Artemisia's rape by Agostino Tassi was the determining event of her life misguided. As a woman, I find it offensive. In the first instance, it predetermines our responses to other potentially contradictory aspects of Artemisia's life and personality. Her letters, for example, show Artemisia to have been quite tough and often manipulative. She seems to have abandoned her husband, and (a point somewhat underplayed by Garrard) apparently to have had a second, illegitimate daughter. If one can deduce Tassi's character as a sociopath and liar from the trial transcripts, then one can also suggest that Artemisia herself sounds

sullen and belligerent. We have extensive information regarding one episode in Artemisia's life from which we have crafted a whole persona. In truth, we know very little of Artemisia's personality. Perhaps the two very violent pictures of *Judith Slaying Holofernes* in Naples and Florence are evidence of the 'cathartic expression of the artist's private, and perhaps repressed, rage' (p. 311). But the likelihood that the picture of *St. Catherine* in the Uffizi reflects a 'passive reaction to the trauma of the rape, the trial, and their aftermath' (p. 48) or worse, that Artemisia's *St. Mary Magdalen* in the Pitti illustrates a 'lingering psychic resistance to submission, even submission to Christ' (*ibid.*) seems to carry what is essentially a literary analogy too far. Garrard rightly chastises those (male) art historians who have thought the subject of Artemisia's rape was a cue for schoolboy sniggering or the 'clever' *double entendre*; but insisting that the whole of Artemisia's life and work betrays the scars of her teenage experience seems equally damning. It perpetuates the male myth that a woman is completely 'undone' by rape. In using the rape as the basis for her own metaphorical fantasies and pop-psychologizing about the style and content of Artemisia's paintings Garrard, - no doubt unwittingly - contributes to the diminution of her subject. Artemisia is not allowed to be simply 'a painter'; nor even 'a female painter'. She is branded forever as '*the* female painter who was raped'.

The crucial point that Garrard seems to miss is that Artemisia was not a victim. She was an extremely successful painter who made her own way despite the obstacles strewn in her path. Furthermore, she made her living by painting sensational paintings - violent, sexy, provocative, brutal. Perhaps this sensationalism reflects Artemisia's 'feminist vision'. In the end, however, what really matters is that Artemisia obviously painted images which pleased her patrons. How does it square with feminist doxology that regardless of the pained facial expressions of her Lucrezia, the protective posture of her Susannah or the supposed allegorically redemptive attributes of her Cleopatra, each figure still panders to the voyeur and each remains naked? It is indeed telling that Garrard claims she is unable to understand the significance of the lines addressed to the subject of one of Artemisia's more explicit paintings:

> Dimmi, chi più t'offende
> Casta donna infelice:
> Il marito, l'amante, o la pittrice?

The message seems clear enough. In depicting violation, the artist violates. The question of the sex of the artist is not an issue.

Garrard's version of Artemisia Gentileschi hinges on the qualities she attributes to Artemisia, won by virtue of her sex. The criteria which seem to free her study from being labelled as 'sexist' are that all the qualities she attributes to Artemisia are good ones and, perhaps, that Garrard herself is a woman. This may be good feminism, but regardless of her method, Garrard has still failed to present a persona which accounts for the content of Artemisia's paintings. Perhaps good feminism is not what is needed to appreciate Artemisia Gentileschi's genius.

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