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Review

Reviewed Work(s): *Theatrum Humanum: Illustrierte Flugblätter und Druckgrafik des 17. Jahrhunderts als Spiegel der Zeit: Beispiele aus dem Bestand der Sammlung Valvasor des Zagreber Erzbistums* by Pelc

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Theatrum Humanum: Illustrierte Flugblätter und Druckgrafik des 17. Jahrhunderts als Spiegel der Zeit: Beispiele aus dem Bestand der Sammlung Valvasor des Zagreber Erzbistums. Milan Pelc.

Studia Jagellonica Lipsiensia 12. Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2013. 204 pp. €46.

Theatrum Humanum is an abundantly illustrated and detailed publication for specialists in the field of seventeenth-century European graphics. It focuses on early modern prints that were once in the possession of Johan Weichard, Baron (Freiherr) von Valvasor (1641–94). This well-traveled nobleman and polymath owned a castle in Krain (Carniola, Slovenia), where he established a private printing press in 1678 that he used to illustrate his (many) own publications, assisted by several painters and engravers. Furthermore, he was a diligent collector of prints. From Valvasor's huge *Ikonotheek*, which fortunately is still safely preserved, art historian Milan Pelc selected the illustrated broadsheets and explored them as a "mirror of [their] time" ("Spiegel der Zeit").

The first chapter starts with the necessary background information about Valvasor himself and his collection of graphics, followed by a justification of Pelc's selection. In chapter 2, Pelc describes the professionals who were involved with the processes of the production and the distribution of Valvasor's prints during the seventeenth century: the publishers, the engravers and etchers, and the authors

of the texts that usually accompanied the images. This chapter concludes with a section that offers an overview of the text-image (in)equality in the diverse subgenres of broadsheets that Pelc identifies: satirical and genre broadsheets (text less important than image); straightforward, informative broadsheets (text more important); and allegorical and similarly enigmatic broadsheets (equal importance). In the extensive chapter 3, Pelc discusses the morally instructive function of the examined broadsheets from the perspective of various contemporary moral themes, genres, and ideas. The first theme is “the play of the sexes” (“das Spiel der Geschlechter”), which was represented from a male point of view by the makers of the broadsheets. The broadsheets aimed at instructing the public in an entertaining way on the appropriate division of gender roles and tasks, on suitable and unsuitable behavior of youths in love, on the disadvantages of unequal love (based on extreme age differences between the lovers), and on outrages caused by the sexual desires of old people (for instance, graybeards who try to buy love from reluctant young girls). Next, the related theme of typical female and male vanities is discussed, followed by that of “war and credit.”

Then Pelc considers the wide domain of satire, the depictions of peasants and beggars, the theme of *memento stultitiae* as represented by jesters and fools, the theme of the *mundus inversus* (the world upside down), animal allegories, the idea of *memento mori*, and, finally, the representations of vices and virtues that are related with the consecutive stages in human life. Chapter 4 considers the many Valvasor broadsheets that served as a medium for distributing actual information, not only about the political and dynastic happenings in contemporary Vienna and Hungary, but also (mainly around 1683) about the Ottoman War. The final chapter discusses some minor thematic groups of the investigated broadsheets: professions, table games, natural and unnatural phenomena, witches, monsters and monstrous births, and three *memento* sheets.

The main quality of this book lies in its in-depth information on the contents of the selected Valvasor broadsheets. Readers who expect the author to depart from state-of-the-art discussions on the early modern themes, genres, and ideas that he distinguishes in order to frame his own contribution will be disappointed. The book lacks an adequate base of reference on widely investigated (and complicated) subjects, such as — to mention only a few interrelated examples — humor, satire, and the *genus iocosum*. Also missing is an explanation of the connections with the bimodal genre of emblems, of which especially love emblems contain many of the moral themes regarding “the play of sexes.” Finally, it is rather surprising that there is no mention at all of relevant websites, while, for instance, <http://www.valvasor.org> (launched in 2010 by the State Library of Victoria, Melbourne) provides information on Valvasor and links to, for example, the complete digital reproduction of Valvasor’s main work, *Die Ehre des Hertzogtums Crain* (The glory of the duchy of Carniola; 4 vols., Nürnberg, 1689).

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