

## Renaissance and Reformation Renaissance et Réforme



### Bass, Marisa Anne. Insect Artifice: Nature and Art in the Dutch Revolt

Marco Malvestio

Volume 42, numéro 4, automne 2019

Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469–1533): Faith, Antiquity, and the Witch Hunt

Gianfrancesco Pico della Mirandola (1469–1533) : Foi, Antiquité et chasse aux sorcières

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1068590ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1068590ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Iter Press

ISSN

0034-429X (imprimé)

2293-7374 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

Malvestio, M. (2019). Compte rendu de [Bass, Marisa Anne. Insect Artifice: Nature and Art in the Dutch Revolt]. *Renaissance and Reformation / Renaissance et Réforme*, 42(4), 198–200. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1068590ar>

© All Rights Reserved Canadian Society for Renaissance Studies / Société canadienne d'études de la Renaissance; Pacific Northwest Renaissance Society; Toronto Renaissance and Reformation Colloquium; Victoria University Centre for Renaissance and Reformation Studies, 2020

Ce document est protégé par la loi sur le droit d'auteur. L'utilisation des services d'Érudit (y compris la reproduction) est assujettie à sa politique d'utilisation que vous pouvez consulter en ligne.

<https://apropos.erudit.org/fr/usagers/politique-dutilisation/>

érudit

Cet article est diffusé et préservé par Érudit.

Érudit est un consortium interuniversitaire sans but lucratif composé de l'Université de Montréal, l'Université Laval et l'Université du Québec à Montréal. Il a pour mission la promotion et la valorisation de la recherche.

<https://www.erudit.org/fr/>

figures and nonconformist leaders. Writers like Augustine and Origen, Calvin and Bucer, Hobbes and Spinoza, and other reformed theologians from France, Germany, and Italy are also recorded influences in Baxter's writing. Argent notes that Baxter's network "transcended national boundaries and prejudices" (8), because he was concerned for "both the saving of souls and the saving of bodies" (7).

Argent's detailed annotations comment on whether the treatises were included in the Thomas or Black catalogues and whether they are cross-referenced with other treatises in Argent's catalogue. The annotations also provide brief summaries of the contents of each treatise, a physical description of the treatise, and the full titles—many of which were revised by Baxter at a later date. Argent's catalogue is a wealth of information framed by a critical introduction that expounds Baxter's passions, inspirations, and character. What Argent does so well is organize a complex system of thought in a way that represents Baxter's voice without overcoming it—or being overcome by it—so that contemporary readers can engage productively with the carefully ordered treatises.

SHEENA JARY

McMaster University

**Bass, Marisa Anne.**

***Insect Artifice: Nature and Art in the Dutch Revolt.***

Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019. Pp. xi, 297 + 192 colour ill. ISBN 978-0-6911-7715-1 (hardcover) US\$65.

It is quite uncommon, in the work of a scholar, to find a book that can be read not only with academic interest but also with genuine passion. Such is the case, however, with Marisa Anne Bass's latest book, *Insect Artifice: Nature and Art in the Dutch Revolt*. Bass's book is a compelling study of the cultural, political, and artistic landscape of the late sixteenth-century Low Countries and Europe. Bass uses as a case study the life and work of Joris Hoefstael, a Dutch intellectual, merchant, erudite, and polymath. Born in Antwerp in 1542, Hoefstael was forced to leave the Low Countries in 1576 by the harshness of the Spanish repression against the Dutch revolt. He then travelled across Europe, taking jobs as a painter and drawer, settling eventually at the Habsburg court.

While the book is rich in detailed and insightful readings of the style and the meaning of Hoefstapel's illustrations, Bass offers more than a stylistic analysis of his work. She provides a meticulous reconstruction of the historical, artistic, philosophical, and literary dimension in which Hoefstapel, a Calvinist and a humanist, lived and worked. Several pages are devoted to the explanation of the causes of the Dutch revolt and of the duke of Alba's cruel but ineffective repression, and to the description of the diaspora of Dutch intellectuals in Europe. Bass traces Hoefstapel's literary and artistic influences on the long fortune of classical poetry in Europe, on the recent developments in Dutch arts (especially Brueghel), and on the international network of Hoefstapel's friends. Indeed, *Insect Artifice* shows how the work of Joris Hoefstapel is the product of an international, intellectual upbringing made possible by his frequent travels abroad and the resurgence of humanism in the Low Countries. In her analysis, Bass describes Hoefstapel's work not simply as craftsmanship, but rather as a multimedial compendium of texts and images, highlighting the complexity of his biographical parable and of his network of relationships. In this sense, it has to be noted also that the book is richly and splendidly illustrated. Almost every page is decorated with figures mentioned in Bass's argumentation, and it comprises almost a hundred pages of replicas of the folia of Hoefnagel's *Natural Elements*.

The book is divided in two parts, completed by an introduction and an epilogue. Part 1 takes into account Hoefstapel's work as a miniaturist and drawer, while part 2 focuses entirely on the central topic of the book, his four-volume manuscript *Natural Elements*, on which he worked from 1570 to his death. Each chapter in part 1 is dedicated to a specific aspect of Hoefstapel's artistic work. Chapter 1 concerns Hoefstapel's practice of self-fashioning through mottoes, from *dum extender* ("until I am forged") to *genius duce* ("genius as his guide") to the more famous *natura magistra* ("Nature as teacher"). Chapter 2 is focused on the album of emblems *Patientia*, on the theme of patience and suffering, merging poetry and illustration. Chapter 3 is dedicated to Hoefstapel's work as a natural and urban landscape drawer. Hoefstapel realized several drawings of cities and landscapes during his travels in Europe, which later served as a model for the engravings of Ortelius's *Theatrum orbis terrarum* (1570) and Braun's *Civitates orbis terrarum* (1572–1618). Chapter 4 is dedicated to the pictorial genre of the *alba amicorum*, albums carefully designed and decorated as an homage to a friend. This chapter, together with the previous one, analyzes

extensively Hoefstigel's wide net of intellectual friendships. Part 2 of *Insect Artifice* studies in depth the organization, both physical and ideological, of Hoefstigel's *Natural Elements*, highlighting the artistic and literary influences behind the division of the animal kingdoms according to the four natural elements.

What is most interesting in Bass's book is that her digressions on European history and culture are meant not simply to provide a context for Hoefstigel's work but rather to interpret it. Although famously centred on small details and natural curiosities, this artist's oeuvre is always in touch with, and influenced by, the dramatic changes of his times. As Bass writes, Hoefstigel grappled "with nature through art—not for its own sake, but for the sake of understanding the tensions and transformations around him" (14). By focusing on private forms of art such as illustrated manuscripts, Hoefstigel meant to create a space for personal reflection while the world he knew was being shattered by the violence of war. In delineating carefully both his personal and artistic path, *Insect Artifice* proves to be a convincing and moving book that, merging accurate scholarly study and narrative effort, offers a profoundly humane view on an exceptional artist.

MARCO MALVESTIO

University of Toronto

**Belin, Christian, Agnès Lafont et Nicholas Myers, éd.**

***L'Image brisée aux XVI<sup>e</sup> et XVII<sup>e</sup> siècles.***

Rencontres 412 / Colloques, congrès et conférences sur la Renaissance européenne, 103. Paris : Classiques Garnier, 2019. 321 p. ISBN 978-2-406-06820-4 (broché) 36 €.

Entre le XVI<sup>e</sup> et le XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle, le geste iconoclaste de la Réforme a donné lieu à des actes de destruction auxquels prirent part toutes les strates sociales. Ces violences iconoclastes, contestées par Calvin et condamnées par le Concile de Trente (1545–1563), ne sont pas sans rappeler les scènes de la Querelle des images qui secoua l'Empire byzantin aux VIII<sup>e</sup>–IX<sup>e</sup> siècles. L'injonction des réformateurs protestants à « briser les images » (au sens littéral et figuré), motivée par un discours et des politiques hostiles à l'icône pieuse qui « incite à