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“Painting upon the Life”: Colour Knowledge and Colour Practice in English Art Writing and Cosmetic Treatises of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*

Since Ovid in his *Ars Amatoria* declared face-painting to be *art*, it was linked with painting in its literal sense, both in theory and practice.¹ Unified by colour, painting on the human face and on canvas merged in terms of techniques of the brush and painting material, as well as in terms of phenomenology.² Women’s painted faces were compared with painted canvases and women who applied make-up on to their faces were analogised with painters.³

Unique to European visual culture, English cosmetics writings interweave traditional criticism of pictures – and the artificial – with actual art theory and experiences of artisanal practice. Moreover, England’s iconoclastic periods of the 1530s and 1640s fostered examinations of ancient image disputes in cosmetics treatises and art writings.⁴ In this way, they provided a critical discourse on the status of pictures and the visible world. This raises the question of what kind of colour these writings were talking about, as well as questions about materials and pigments, light and vision, and about colour in terms of optics, aesthetics and technique.

The first linking of painting and face-painting in English art writing came in a 1598 English translation by the English scholar and physician Richard Haydocke (c. 1569/70–1642) of the Italian artist Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo’s (1538–1600) treatise on painting.⁵ Haydocke’s book is well known to art historians for being one of the primary art writing texts in England,⁶ and to literary scholars and historians for com-

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1 Ovid, *Ars amatoria* 3: 200–234. See Myerowitz 1985, 129–149.

2 See Lichtenstein 1993.

3 On the link between art and cosmetics, see Pichler 1999; Foster 2005; Tassi 2005; Ribeiro 2011; Weststeijn 2013.

4 See O’Connell 2000, 55–58; Tassi 2005.

5 Haydocke 1598.

6 Hard 1940; Houghton 1942, 66; Pope-Hennessy 1943; Salerno 1951; Moffat 1975; Harley 2001 (1970); Baxandall 1990; Severi 1991.

binning art and cosmetics writing.⁷ In fact, Haydocke translated and commented on Lomazzo's first five books on proportion, passions, colour, light and perspective (omitting those on composition and iconography), and added a "Brief Censure of the Book of Colours", including chapters on face-painting, to Lomazzo's book on colour.⁸ Providing both a theoretical and a practical account of make-up, including a definition of colour, his chapters on colour are key passages for the question of the relationship between cosmetics colours and the artist's colours in seventeenth-century writings. This paper will discuss Haydocke's translation in terms of his concept of face-painting and colours – from the level of materiality to aesthetic theory, and artisanal and cosmetics practice – and will outline the potential of cosmetics colour to be used as a vehicle by Early Modern art theory to examine the meanings of colour. Before going into Haydocke's text, however, a short overview of face-painting and paints in the Early Modern period is required.

Early Modern Make-Up

The ideal Renaissance face was a compound of white, pink and red – writers and painters praised even and whitened skin, accented by rose-coloured cheeks and lips, and framed by golden hair.⁹ Queen Elizabeth I (1533–1603) famously represented and reproduced this ageless ideal in portraits such as the *Darnley Portrait* in the National Portrait Gallery in London (see Plate 1).¹⁰ The unknown artist depicted the queen's complexion as a smooth, flawless white, accentuated by the red of her lips and a layer of rose on her cheeks. The image politics of the queen set long-lasting standards of beauty in English culture, ones which included her mask-like make-up.¹¹

A pigment analysis of the portrait has identified lead white, charcoal black, crimson lake and ground vermilion in the paints used for the flesh, and traces of thin

⁷ Tassi 2005, 60–61; Karim-Cooper 2006, 44–46; Phillippy 2008, 31; Hanson 2008, 39–52; B. Smith 2009, 62–63; Ribeiro 2011, 134; Snook 2011, 99, 34

⁸ On Haydocke's omissions, additions and adaptations for the English Protestant audience, see the preface to Haydocke 1598, n. p.; and Henson 2008, 40.

⁹ On the colours of female beauty, see fundamentally Cropper 1976, 383, and, more recently with further reading, Snook 2011, 2–6; on colours and cosmetics, Gunn 1973; Bitsch 2008; Ribeiro 2011; Stevens 2013; Weststeijn 2013. On the colours of the flesh and the face in art theory, see Bohde/Fend 2007; Lehmann 2008; Koos 2010.

¹⁰ Queen Elizabeth I, c. 1575. Oil on panel, 113x78.7 cm. National Portrait Gallery, London. See Strong 1985, 85–89; National Portrait Gallery 2013.

¹¹ Ribeiro 2011, 82; Riehl 2010, with further reading.

red lake glaze in the cheek areas.¹² The following brief discussion of the origin, production and trade in white lead and vermilion will show that these pigments were also used as ingredients in make-up of the time.¹³

Ingredients

One of the most widely diffused cosmetics ingredients in the Early Modern period up to the eighteenth century was white lead (ceruse).¹⁴ Made by dissolving lead in vinegar,¹⁵ it was among the most convenient of painting materials. Although lead white was toxic and caused multiple lead poisoning effects,¹⁶ and even though less harmful powders using starch, alabaster or crushed mother-of-pearl were obtainable, lead white was popular because it was easy to apply, it was opaque, and it created the effect of a smooth complexion.¹⁷

White lead was also used for face powders, and mixed with colours, as paint.¹⁸ For example, it could be added to red paint for cheeks and lips, or mixed with dyes such as ochre, madder, sandalwood and henna.¹⁹ The most famous of all reds was cochineal, made from the dried bodies of insects, which live on the coccus cacti in Mexico (they were first brought to Europe in the 1520s). As Spain held the first monopoly of cochineal, the country became famous for its rouge.²⁰

Besides exotic and costly ingredients, such as sandalwood, for high-quality paint imported from abroad, rouge was also made of minerals and metals.²¹ Catherine Lanoë notes in her study of Early Modern cosmetics in France that a large quantity of rouge was made of vermilion (red mercuric sulphide), and red lead (minium) – at

¹² National Portrait Gallery 2013.

¹³ See Phillippy 2006, 31.

¹⁴ Lanoë 2002; Lanoë 2007; Lanoë 2008, 28–48; Ribeiro 2011, 78–81.

¹⁵ Harley 2001, 166–172. For techniques of lead white production, see Gettens 1967.

¹⁶ For concerns with the lead poisoning of people involved in the production process in seventeenth-century England, see Harley 2001, 168–171. On the concept of painting as *pharmakon*, Leonhard 2011.

¹⁷ Cf. Lanoë 2008, 31–32.

¹⁸ Ribeiro 2011, 85.

¹⁹ Ribeiro 2011, 85. For rouge, see Lanoë 2003. Lanoë 2008, 48–62.

²⁰ Ribeiro 2011, 85. For cochineal trade and use in Europe, see Lee 1948; Lee 1951; Phipps 2010; Baskes 2012. Vice versa, Lozier 2012 shows that transatlantic trade and exchange impacted American face-painting practices among indigenous people so that Dutch and later English manufactured vermilion was imported on a large scale.

²¹ Lanoë 2008, 54.

least by the first half of the eighteenth century.²² The 1665 cosmetics treatise *Artificiall Embellishments*, for instance, includes a recipe for red paint:

Or in case of necessity use Pomatum and Vermilion made of cinnaberis. Or, Take red Saunders' bruise and steep it for 3 dayes in Aqua Vita, then boile it for an hour over a gentle fire adding a little allum and gum arabick, than strein it and bath the parts therewith. Thake rock allum unc. 1 boile it in a pinte of running water, when it is dissolved take it off from the fire, let it coal, then adde to it Vermilion finely powdred one ounce, boile them againe to a consumption of half, streine the decoction and keep it for your use.²³

Using either vermilion or the more precious sandalwood for the red hue, the recipe describes two representative procedures for rouge requiring the extraction of a colour and the binding of it with gum arabic or alum.²⁴ Assuming that the former was produced from the latter, it distinguishes between artificially produced vermilion and the natural red mineral cinnabar. However, Rosamond Harley notes in her survey of colour recipes and colour pigments in early English books and manuscripts that both "cinnabar" and "vermilion" were used interchangeably up to the eighteenth century.²⁵

Vermilion was popular both as a flesh colour for the face and for the canvas. For instance, the Dutch art writer Karel van Mander (1548–1606) noted in the chapter on colouration of his *Schilder-boeck* that the pigment "makes all the flesh parts glow".²⁶ In Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo consideration of the effect of vermillion, canvas and skin merged:

Vermilion and lake make the colour of ripe strawburies, roses, redlippes, rubies, bloud and skarlet; the same mixtures with white, make the colour of red cheekes, of faire carnation and damaske roses.²⁷

Vermilion had been manufactured in Europe since the Middle Ages by melting and subliming mercury and sulphur.²⁸ Although these ingredients were easily available

²² Lanoë 2008, 54–55.

²³ Christoph Heyl 2003, doubts the attribution to Thomas Jameson; see also Snook 2011, 187, n. 45.

²⁴ Cf. Lanoë 2008, 54.

²⁵ Harley 2001, 125.

²⁶ "Carnaty en can niet lijfverwigh bloeyen, maer vermillioen doet al vleeschigher gloeyen." Mander (1604) 1969, 49r. English quotation after Vermeylen 2010, 361. For the semantic implication of creation and production, see Frank Fehrenbach's approach, e. g. Fehrenbach 2003.

²⁷ Haydocke 1598, III, 104. "Il cinabro, & lacca fanno uno colour di fragole mature, di rose, di labra colourita, di rubini di sangue, & di scarlaro; & questi medesimi meschiati co'l bianco, fanno il colour delle guancie, colourite d'una bella carne, & anco di rose chiare." Lomazzo 1584, III, 195.

²⁸ For production techniques of vermilion, see Thompson 1933; Gettens 1972; Schendel 1972 Harley 2001, 125–128; Resenberg 2005; and Smith 2010, bringing together material knowledge, manufacturing practice, and metallic theory.

from apothecaries and although vermilion recipes had often been compiled in recipe collections of pigments and drugs since the Middle Ages, the process of sublimation required chemical instruments and vermilion-making was a dangerous and complicated process.²⁹ Therefore, Harley doubts if painters produced their vermilion themselves.³⁰ Cennino Cennini states in his treatise on painting around 1400 that the pigment is artificially produced and that he has left out “time-consuming” explanations of cinnabar recipes.³¹ Instead, he warns against adulterated material and emphasises the importance of recognising the quality of the pigment; it should, he says, be bought in lumps and not in ground form.³² Still, by the sixteenth-century in England vermilion was a mid-price commodity retailed by apothecaries,³³ who obtained their material from local manufacturers or via international trade.³⁴

Lead white and vermilion were manufactured on a large scale in seventeenth-century England. When a monopoly for the production of white and red lead was awarded in 1622, four fabrication facilities already existed.³⁵ Even though there was a considerable amount of colour manufacturing in England, the reputation of English vermilion, for instance, was poor because it was often diluted with red lead.³⁶

High-quality and expensive pigments were imported.³⁷ Venice had specialised in manufacturing and exporting pigments such as white lead – the famous *bianco di Venezia* – red lead and vermilion since the Middle Ages.³⁸ The best vermilion produced in Europe was known as Dutch vermilion. It was traded via Antwerp throughout Europe and was regularly imported to England.³⁹ Beside being artistic and arti-

29 See the description in P. Smith 2010 of vermilion-making from a recipe in the seventeen-century Pekstok papers.

30 Harley 2001, 127.

31 “There is a red colour called cinnabar; and this colour is made by a chemical process (alchcemy), performed in an alembic, in a manner which would take too much time to explain. And if you would labour at it yourself, you may find many recipes, especially among the friars.” Cennini 1844, 23. For Cennini’s manuscript of the *Libro dell’Arte*, see Löhr 2008; Eamon 1994; Brafman in this volume.

32 “But I advise you, that you may not lose your time in making experiments, to purchase what you want at the apothecaries, and I will teach you how to buy it, and to distinguish good cinnabar. Always purchase whole cinnabar, unbroken and unground; the reason for this is, because it is often adulterated with minium (red lead), and with pounded brick-dust. Examine the whole lump of cinnabar, and that which is convex on the top and covered with needle-shaped filaments is the best.” Cennini 1844, 23.

33 P. Smith 2010, 39. On the research lacuna on pigment production and pigment trade, see Matthew 2011. On the English pigment retail trade, see Kirby 2010, 349–353.

34 Kirby 2010; see also Matthew 2011.

35 Harley 2001, 166–167. On the English production of lead white and red lead, see Kirby 2010, 342.

36 Harley 2001, 127. Nevertheless, earth pigments and chalk were manufactured in England, and red ochre was even exported. Kirby 2010, 341.

37 Kirby 2010, 342. Matthew 2011, 306.

38 Matthew/Berrie 2010; on pigment production and trade in Venice, see Krischel 2002; Matthew 2002; Krischel 2011.

39 Harley 2001, 127; Matthew 2011, 307. On Dutch vermilion, see Schendel 1972; Vermeylen 2010.

sanal nuclei, both cities were known as centres of dyeing and cloth manufacture where raw material was imported, completed with high-quality colouring materials, and shipped throughout Europe. Antwerp was the main international trading port for London within Europe until its siege by Spanish troops 1584. The focus of the English merchants then spread and north-western European ports such as Emden, Hamburg and Amsterdam supplied London with goods.⁴⁰ The ships transported mercury, ash, gum arabic resin, alum and dyes such as fenugreek, kermes, madeer, gallnuts, cochineal and brazilwood.⁴¹ Among the pigments listed were white lead, red lead, verdigris, vermilion, yellow ochre, orpiment and realgar.⁴²

Thus, white lead and vermilion were available via apothecaries from both local manufacturers and international traders but varied in quality and price. As pigments and painting material such as bindings were retailed by apothecaries, pigments were used as ingredients for colour materials, make-up preparations and medical drugs.⁴³ Richard Haydocke discussed this three-fold use in his 1598 translation of Lomazzo's art writing and integrated it into his art concept.

Haydocke's Translation – Turning Cosmetics into Art Writing

The English translation of Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo's treatise on painting was one of the first books on painting to appear in England. Influencing writers such as Henry Peacham, Franciscus Junius and Horace Walpole, it was often copied and referred to in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English art writing.⁴⁴ Its translator, Richard Haydocke, published *A tracte containing the artes of curious painting* in 1598, only thirteen years after the first edition of the Italian text.⁴⁵

Lomazzo's Italian *Trattato dell'arte della pittura* treated colour in the third and sixth book.⁴⁶ Discussing colours in terms of knowledge, material, technique and semantic meaning, Lomazzo provided a comprehensive approach that included three

⁴⁰ Kirby 2010, 342–343; Matthew 2011, both with references to further reading.

⁴¹ Though the origin of cochineal and brazilwood were not specified, Matthew suggests that they came from the New World. Matthew 2011, 313.

⁴² Matthew 2011, 307.

⁴³ Kirby 2010, 353.

⁴⁴ Pope-Hennessy 1943; Salerno 1951, 249; Baxandall 1990; Harley 2001, 5; Hanson 2008, 51–52.

⁴⁵ For further reading on Haydocke, see notes 6–7. Haydocke also engraved the frontispiece with a profile bust of Lomazzo above the title cartouche in the centre and his self-portrait below. "To de ingenuous reader", Haydocke 1598, n. p. On Haydocke's engravings, see Gordon 1967; Höltingen 1978; Höltingen 1990, 215; Hanson 2008, 42–45.

⁴⁶ Lomazzo 1584. On Lomazzo's colour concept, see Baraš 1978, 135–209; Kemp 1990, 269–272.

meanings of colour, as Moše Baraš notes in his study of colour in Renaissance art theory: Lomazzo considered colour from a peripatetic aspects as well as from materialistic and symbolic standpoints.⁴⁷ Eight chapters on individual colours, including a chapter on the alchemist peacock’s colour (*color pavonazzo*), provide an overview of their meaning in terms of hermeneutics, optics and natural history. Lomazzo’s colour concept also stressed workshop experience.⁴⁸ Discussing colour material and how to apply it, the fourth chapter, “Of the Matters of colours”, referred to artisanal knowledge – “the Alchymy of the Venetian painters”.⁴⁹ White, for instance, was made of “gypsum, Ceruſe, white-lead, and the pouder of white marble”.⁵⁰ Red paints were made of “the 2 cinnabars called Vermilions Natural and Artificial, and of the red earth called Maiolica”.⁵¹ Vermilion, red-lead and ceruse were described as artificially produced paints.⁵² Haydocke translated Lomazzo’s third book on colours, but added additional chapters on colour, wall-painting, and face-painting.⁵³

Although Harley has suggested that Haydocke had no or little practical colour experience, on the grounds that he was unsure how to translate many of the Italian colour names,⁵⁴ Haydocke’s interest in colour may have been that of the *virtuoso* than of a workshop-experienced practitioner (implying a focus on ready recipes).⁵⁵ In fact, in his preface, Haydocke notes that he had practiced painting for “mere pleasure and recreation”.⁵⁶ Hee had artistically (basic) skills that allowed him to engrave, for instance, the frontispiece of his book. Concerning his practical knowledge of painting materials, he specified in his chapter on face-painting that he spoke “partly like a Physition, and partly like a Painter”.⁵⁷ Craig Ashley Hanson states that this affiliation with both medicine and art was common among seventeen-century virtuosi, “learned

⁴⁷ Baraš 1978, 160.

⁴⁸ Baraš 1978, 164. On colour knowledge that is based on the workshop tradition and practice, see Shapiro 1994, and the concept in P. Smith 2004, 8, of “artisanal epistemology”.

⁴⁹ Haydocke 1598, 99. “E questo è l’alchimia dei pittori Venetiani.” Lomazzo 1584, 191, in the fourth chapter “Quali siano le materie, nelle quali si trovano i colori.” Moreover, Lomazzo’s sixth book is dedicated to workshop practice. Haydocke did not translate this book.

⁵⁰ Haydocke 1598, 99, “il gesso, la biaca, il bianco & il marmo trito”, Lomazzo 1584, 191.

⁵¹ Haydocke 1598, III, 99, “i due cenapri, cioè di Minera, & artificiale, & la terra rossa, detta maiolica”, Lomazzo 1584, 191.

⁵² Lomazzo 1584, 192. Haydocke 1598, III, 100.

⁵³ Haydocke 1598, III, 125–133. Hanson 2008, 39–52, reads Haydocke’s translation, especially the preface, thoroughly in terms of its adaptation from Catholic Italy to Protestant England and, in respect to the relation of art and medicine, but leaves out alchemy. B. Smith 2009, 62–63, notes Haydocke’s chapters on face-painting concerning his position towards paints and the human skin, i. e. “antipathetical to living flesh”. Id., 63.

⁵⁴ Harley 2001, 5.

⁵⁵ Houghton 1942, 66; Hanson 2008, 39–52.

⁵⁶ Haydocke 1598, n. p.

⁵⁷ Haydocke 1598, III, 129. Cf. Phillippy 2006, p. 31.

polymaths” of all professions who were interested in both theoretical and empirical aspects of art and science.⁵⁸

However, Haydocke introduces his independent chapter on colour, “A Briefe Censure of the Book of Colours”, with an explicit reference to Lomazzo’s paragraph on colour pigment:⁵⁹

*Colour is a materiall substance, indued with a qualitie diversly affecting the eie, according to the matter wherein it is founde. That it is a materiall substance he [Lomazzo] prooveth chap. 4. where he handleth the matters whereof colours are made, shewing that some of them are taken from minerals and earths, some from the vegetables, and some from the animals. All wich, because they are of diverse natures, require a severall handling, as wel in their working, as in their mixtures.*⁶⁰

At the beginning of his “Censure”, Haydocke states that his description of colour as a “material substance” whose physical condition determines visual perception was a conclusion reached from Lomazzo’s approach towards colour.⁶¹ In his discussion of colour as a visual phenomenon, Lomazzo had defined colour – traditionally – as having both material and visual qualities.⁶² Haydocke stressed the materialistic concept of colour in Lomazzo by focusing on artists’ workshop practice: the visual perception of colour hues depends on the light refraction of the colour material, its binding and mixtures.⁶³ This allowed him to synthesise Lomazzo’s more theoretical chapters about the colour scale, the mixtures,⁶⁴ and the passages about technique and colour regarding practice and painting material.⁶⁵ After that, Haydocke adds chapters on painting techniques for both wall-painting and face-painting – the latter is entitled “Of the painting of women” – followed by his “Discourse of the artificiall

⁵⁸ See Hanson 2008, p. 2–8. For Haydocke’s concept of colour and thoughts on pigments of medicine, cosmetics and art, see also Sammern 2015 (forthcoming).

⁵⁹ Haydocke 1598, III, 125.

⁶⁰ Haydocke 1598, III, 99. Emphasis in original.

⁶¹ Haydocke 1598, III, 99.

⁶² “Colore come dice Aristotile, è la estremità della cosa guidata da visibile in corpo terminato, overo è qualità visibile terminata nella estremità del corpo opaco, laquale innanzi che sia allumata, è visibile in potenza, è per beneficio del lume sie vene inatto.” Lomazzo 1584, III, 190. See Baraš 1978, 160. “Aristotle defineth Colour to be a visible qualitie limited & bounded in the surface or extremity of a darke body, which before it be lighted is visible onely in possibility & by the benefit of the light may be actually seen.” Haydocke 1598, III, 198.

⁶³ “We shall finde it not altogether so apt for the use of the unexperienced Painter, aswell in regarde of the definition of colour, as also of the division thereof; both which are meere Philosophical, expressing rather the conceived nature of Colour, by way of abstraction from the sense [...],” Haydocke 1598 III, 125. Cf. Hanson’s 2008, 41, discussion.

⁶⁴ Chap. VI–VIII, Haydocke 1598 III, 101–105.

⁶⁵ Chap. IV–V, Haydocke 1598 III, 99–100.

beauty of women” and a chapter on the ingredients of colour recipes and their consequences for the human skin.⁶⁶

Haydocke’s chapters on cosmetics referred to a classical tradition of recipes ranging from Dioscorides *Materia medica* over Plinius’ *Historiae naturalis* and Ovid’s *Medicamina Faciei Femineae* to sixteenth-century publications on natural history and books of secrets.⁶⁷ Haydocke himself mentioned two sources for his make-up chapters⁶⁸ – first, the popular medical handbook *Dello Specchio Di Scientia Universale* of the Italian physician Leonardo Fioravanti (1517–1588), first published in 1564 in Venice.⁶⁹ Haydocke translated Fioravanti’s chapters on cosmetics ingredients (“belletti”). Secondly, a book on cosmetics recipes *The ornaments of women* by “John Modonese Doctor of Physicke’s”, which refers to the treatise on beauty of the physician Giovanni Marinello of Modena.⁷⁰ These sources cover an important field of early modern writings on cosmetics, including printed recipe collections in ‘books of secrets’. The term refers to the genre of early modern collections of empirical knowledge in the vernacular – “how-to books” that flourished in the second half of the sixteenth century.⁷¹ Additionally, Haydocke may also have referred to cosmetic recipes from alchemic handbooks such as the sixteenth-century *Magiae naturalis* by the Neapolitan physician Giambattista della Porta (1535–1615), which included a detailed chapter on cosmetics and face-paint.⁷² Providing an important medium for the description, transmission and development of empirical knowledge regarding early modern medicine, alchemy, pharmacy, cookery and technology, this tradition continued in England with publications such as Hugh Platt’s book of secrets *The jewell house of art and nature*,⁷³ and popular cosmetics books of physicians like *Artificiall embellishments*,⁷⁴ or translations of German *Kunstbüchlein* such as Johann Jacob Wecker’s *Arts master-piece or, the beautifying part of physick*.⁷⁵

Furthermore, Haydocke was using art theoretical *topoi* as well as art theoretical terms such as “arte of colouring”, “naturall” and “artificial” to describe make-up. Haydocke defines face-painting as “Painting upon the Life” in contrast to the painter’s “Colouring by the life”.⁷⁶

⁶⁶ Haydocke 1598, III, 127–133.

⁶⁷ On the medical tradition in books of secrets, see Eamon 1994; Snook 2011, 22–26.

⁶⁸ Haydocke 1598, III, 129. On (Italian) text traditions of cosmetics treatises, see Phillippy 2006, 5–7.

⁶⁹ Fioravanti 1564. See Eamon 1994.

⁷⁰ Haydocke 1598, III, 129. Marinello 1562. On Marinello, see Gadebusch Bondio 1999.

⁷¹ See Eamon 1994; Eamon 2011; and, with further reading, Leong/Ranking 2011.

⁷² Della Porta 1560. On paint ingredients in the *Magiae naturalis*, see Phillippy 2006, 5–7.

⁷³ Platt 1594. See Harkness 2007 and Mukherjee 2011.

⁷⁴ [Anonymous] (1665).

⁷⁵ Wecker 1660. See Snook 2011, 23.

⁷⁶ Haydocke 1598, III, 127. Cf. Hanson 2008, 41.

Painting upon the Life

Surprisingly, Haydocke introduces his chapter on face-painting with a story in the style and tradition of humorous artist anecdotes (as found in Boccaccio's *Decameron*, for example).⁷⁷ Emphasising his in-depth knowledge of Italian art literature,⁷⁸ this tells of the dialogue between an Italian artist and a curious gentleman:

A conceited gentleman meeting with an Italian Painter asked him this question; whether was the hardest, to imitate a painted patterne, or to follow the live; who made answere he could not well tell: and being farther demaunded the reason, how a man of his practise, in a country where the arte is so famous, could be ignorant of that, he replied that hee thought he had scarce ever drawne any by the life, and therefore could not iudge, because he never came time enough, but that some other Painter had bin upon the face, before he came at it.⁷⁹

In this humorous dialogue between the Italian artist and the vain gentleman, the ready, witty response of the artist succeeds without difficulty. The “other Painter” is referring to *deus artifex*, god as creator, which had been a common argument against painting and cosmetics since Late Antiquity.⁸⁰

Richard Haydocke might have found inspiration for this anecdote in his copy of the 1568 edition of Giorgio Vasari's *Lives of the artists*.⁸¹ Giorgio Vasari had adapted popular anecdotes from Boccaccio's *Decameron* and Sacchetti's *Novels* for his biographies of artists. Beside the confrontation of an artist and a *virtuoso*, the anecdote stresses the question of imitation of nature. Imitation is both, a key term of Italian art theory – and for the iconophob writers of Elizabethan culture.⁸² For example, one of the seventeenth-century's most famous critiques of artificial beauty was the iconophobic and anti-cosmetics treatise of 1616 *Discourse against painting and tincturing of women* by the English cleric Thomas Tuke (1580–1657).⁸³ This treatise is a good

⁷⁷ On the topical superiority of the artist, see Kris/Kurz 1980, 131–146, and for Vasari's use of anecdotes, Barolsky 2010.

⁷⁸ Haydocke had traveled abroad after his M. A. in 1595, probably to Italy. From the Benefactor's Register of the Bodleian Library in Oxford, we know that in 1601 he donated Sebastiano Serlio's *Architettura*, 5 vols., Venice and Paris, 1545–1547; and Giorgio Vasari's *Vite de' piu eccellenti Pittori*, 3 vols, Florence 1568. Interestingly, he also gave a copy of Gabriele Paleotti, *De imaginibus sacris et profanis*, Ingolstadt 1594, that proofs Haydocke's interest in the religious disputes on the functions of images. He also gave a copy of his translation of Lomazzo and a so-far unidentified *Fabrica Instrumentorum Histanice*. See Höltingen 1978, 18; Marr 2003, 131–132. For books on art in English Renaissance libraries, see Gent 1981, 66–78.

⁷⁹ Haydocke 1598, III, 128.

⁸⁰ Bogen 2003, 129–132.

⁸¹ See note 77 above.

⁸² See, e. g., Vasari 1568, proemio, 71: “l'arte nostra è tutta imitazione della natura principalmente”.

⁸³ Tuke 1616. See Dolan 1993; Tassi 2005, 48; Phillippy 2006, *passim*; Ribeiro 2011, 96; Stevens 2013, 71–74.

example for comparison with Haydocke's text, because its broad perspective entails all the crucial aspects relevant for the debate around painting and face-painting. For instance, like Haydocke, Tuke links the female face with art: "She is a creature, that had need to be twice defined; for she is not that she seemes. And though shee bee the creature of God, as she is a woman, yet is she her owne *creatisse*, as a *picture*."⁸⁴ The woman wearing make-up is characterised as a picture according to Plato's famous critique of the *Politeia*: "They look like they are; however they surely are not in truth."⁸⁵

Referring to Plato's definition of pictures as mere copies of "truth", Tuke connects make-up with a core argument of picture critique. The painted face is situated at the edge of art and nature and questions the origin and perception of beauty. Hence, he sets face-painting in relation to major issues of aesthetics and art theory, specifically the meaning of art and the question of mimesis in relation to art and nature.

Discussions about the painted human face in seventeenth-century cosmetics literature challenged the relationship between art and nature in the process of artistic creation.⁸⁶ Tuke's negative views, however, are based on the ontological double nature of women's make-up: identifying the painted face as a product of an artistic effort, it addresses both God and the woman as the artist. His interpretation follows his translation of a passus from Ambrose's treatise on the six days of creation:

If any man adulterate the worke of God, he committeth a grievous offence. For it is an hainous crime to thinke that man can paint thee better then God. It is a grievous thing that God should say of thee, I see not the image, I see not the countenance, which my selfe have formed, I reiect that, which is not mine. Seeke him that hath painted thee, deale with him, take grace of him to whom thou haft given a reward. What answer will thou make him?⁸⁷

Here, Tuke refers directly to a key problem of make-up, that is, the distortion of the human face. In his view, the act of painting falsifies the divine creation of humanity in the image of God. Thus, the negative meaning of face painting is explained through the act of painting, which falsifies the divine creation by covering it with paint.⁸⁸

Haydocke's dialogue is a reference to this conflict. However, as it is an artist who gives the subtle and humble response of being conscious of the relationship of art and nature, Haydocke's position is not purely critical. Referring to artistic practice, he

⁸⁴ Tuke 1616, 57.

⁸⁵ Plato, *Republic* 596e.

⁸⁶ O'Connell 2000; Tassi 2005; Stevens 2013.

⁸⁷ Tuke 1616, 3, translating a passus from the sixth day of creation: "Grave est enim crimen; ut putes quod melius te homo, quam Deus pingat. Grave est ut dicat de te Deus: Non agnosco colores meos, non agnosco imaginem meam, non agnosco vultum, quem ipse formavi, rejicio ego quod meum non est. Illum quaere qui te pinxit: cum illo habeto consortium: ab illo sume gratiam, cui mercedem dedisti. Quid respondebis?" Ambrosius, *Hexameron* 6: 3.47. Cf. Löhr (forthcoming), n. p.

⁸⁸ "Faciamus hominem ad imaginem et similitudinem nostram [...]." Gen. 1:27. See Lentes 2002, 206.

stresses that it depends on how make-up is put on the face, a skilful technique and craft. This fits in with his definition of face-painting: “Painting upon the Life where a knowne naturall shape is defaced, that an unknowne Artificiall hewe may be wrought thereon.”⁸⁹ Haydocke’s point was not against cosmetics and face-painting itself, but its abuse, as well as against ignorance about the ingredients of cosmetics.

The Practice of Face-Painting

Face-painting refers to the ancient *ars comptoria*, i. e. those techniques of embellishing the external appearance by applying paint.⁹⁰ *Ars comptoria* contrasts with the antique *cosmetica medicamenta*, which meant adding (medical) substances of care on to the skin. In the Early Modern period, cosmetics writings distinguished terminologically between cosmetics and paint. Although the terms sometimes overlapped, “cosmetics” referred to commendable efforts to improve one’s physical appearance. “Paint”, on the other hand, was usually discouraged, because its ingredients were often harmful to human health.⁹¹

Accordingly, Haydocke distinguishes between *ars comptoria* and *cosmetica medicamenta*, between face-paint and skin treatments, as he explained:

This Arte consisteth of a twoofold method; either by way of preparation and abstertion [abstention], of some naturall or adventitious imperfections of the skinne, which is done with fomentations, waters, ointments, plaisters [plasters], and other matters, which I meane not to prescribe, or by a more grosse illiture [from illinere: spread] and laying on of materiall colours; whereby such unpleasing defectes are rather covered then abolished and taken away.⁹²

Haydocke’s purpose is to discuss the “nature” of cosmetics ingredients to avoid further damage caused by a lack of knowledge about their physical consequences. He therefore provides short chapters on quicksilver, white lead, alum, citric acid (“lemon juice”) and potash (“tartaric oil”), as well as niter (“salnitrum”) and, “of all such thinges as are enemies to health, and hurt full to the complexion”, especially those “paintings and embellishings which are made with minerals, and corrosives”.⁹³

After giving emphatic advice not to harm the delicate complexion of the skin with such substances, he concludes the book on colours with a brief list of what may be

⁸⁹ Haydocke 1598, III, 127.

⁹⁰ Cf. note 1 above, and Ovid, *Ars amatoria* 3: 200–234. However, Samuel Johnson defined “cosmeticks” in his English dictionary as “the power of improving beauty”. Johnson 1755–56, n. p.

⁹¹ On the history of this concept, see Saiko (2005), and for the Early Modern period, Gadebusch Bondio (2005).

⁹² Haydocke 1598, III, 127.

⁹³ Haydocke 1598, III, 132. On harmfulness as a trope in cosmetics writings, see Phillippy 2006, 7–9.

applied without health risks. This list is based on the integral qualities of a person that will beautify the physical appearance. According to Haydocke, contentment, health, honesty and wisdom will always outshine cosmetics.⁹⁴ However, it is notable that virtue is preferable for medical reasons, not for moral ones.

However, Haydocke uses terms from artistic practice and theory in his descriptions. For instance, he writes that “it is not the red and white which giveth the gracious perfection of Beauty, but certaine sparkling notes and touches, of amiable cheerefulness, accompanying the same.”⁹⁵ These “sparkling notes and touches” meant the visible, though perceptible, signs of ideal personal qualities of the facial complexion. However, he describes these physiological appearances of the skin with terms from art writing when he writes of, for instance, the “touch” and flow of a brush.⁹⁶ This reference to painting plays with different meanings of colour – as painting material and as visual quality – and turns his anti-cosmetics conclusion from *cosmetica medicamenta* into an aesthetic praise of *natura* the artisan, whose brushstroke creates virtue’s living blush. Operating always on the margin of art and nature, canvas and face, face-painting includes both artisanal practice and aesthetic theory. This may characterise the potential of face-painting for art and theoretical image-related questions.

To conclude, the description of Anthony van Dyck’s (1599–1641) portrait of his wife Mary Ruthven (d. 1645) (see Fig. 1) in William Sanderson’s drawing manual *Graphics or The use of the Pen and Pencil or, the most excellent Art of Painting* of 1658 stresses this oscillation between art and nature:

This figure (you see) side-way; [...] Yet hath he given her Grace to her good Face, which she turns from the bodies posture and shews it at the best three-quarter. She is fair and full, not fatsplump, and with good features to her length; Not over-tall, nor too slender. See, see, how pretily she is busied to wreath her Lilly flowr’d branch into a Chapelet which signifies her innocent mind intent to Nature, not Art, holding it forth as an Embleme [...]. A light brown hair; handsomely curl’d; not too forward upon the face. Her fair che[e]cks and pure complexion need not her locks, for shadow, themselves will bear out all censures and the better, for she used no Art to make them Red, nor hath the artizan painted them at all.⁹⁷

Van Dyck painted Mary in 1639, the year of their marriage.⁹⁸ He depicted her half-length facing three quarters to the left with a chaplet bracelet on her wrist. She wears

⁹⁴ See Snook 2011, 2–6, with further reading.

⁹⁵ Haydocke 1598, III, 133.

⁹⁶ On the brush as a representation of artistic virtuosity, see Suthor 2008; Suthor 2010.

⁹⁷ Sanderson 1658, 39. Dundas 1993, note E, 247–248, briefly discusses this passage.

⁹⁸ Anthony van Dyck: Mary Ruthven, c. 1639. Oil on canvas, 104 × 81 cm. Museo del Prado, Madrid. Barnes 2004, 433–434, n. IV.7. Larsen 1988, vol. 2, 386, n. 983; *Van Dyck & Britain* 2009, 142. Schelte Bolswert engraved the painting for van Dyck’s portrait-project *Iconographia*. Schelte Bolswert after Anthony van Dyck: Mary Ruthven, 1639. Engraving, 248 × 170 mm. Turner 2002, n. 86.



Fig. 1: William Faithorne after Anthony van Dyck and Schelte Bolswert: Mary Ruthven. Plate to William Sanderson, *Graphice*, 1658.

a lustrous dress, pearl jewellery and oak leaves in her hair, and gazes out at the viewer. The description was published next to a print of van Dyck’s painting by William Faithorne (1616–1691) as examples worthy of praise.⁹⁹

The passage opens with formal considerations describing the portrait’s formal position, the “side-way figure” and the face, which is depicted with “grace” – a key term from both portrait theory and normative for female beauty.¹⁰⁰ In this way, the *ekphrasis* of the artwork switches to a description of the sitter’s physical condition, and again to Mary, whose beauty is reflected in the colours of her face by showing “Nature, not Art”. The stereotypical tribute to Mary’s virtue, which is honest and pure and needs no face-paint, inverts its subject and turns it into artistic praise, because her face is indeed a product of van Dyck’s art. The paint in the face of Mary becomes invisible to the admiring beholder; her painted complexion is turned into “natural” skin, not “painted at all”. Through the colours of the face it sets van Dyck’s portrait beyond art and nature.

To sum up, Haydocke’s concept of colour considers the level of the material and of art theory, as well as artisanal and medical practice. Oscillating between face-painting and painting, and art and nature, artisanal skill and nature’s bravura, it sets colour in relation to major issues of aesthetics and artistic practice, specifically the meaning of art and the question of mimesis in relation to art and nature.

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⁹⁹ William Faithorne after Anthony van Dyck and Schelte Bolswert: Mary Ruthven. Engraving, 238 × 165 mm. Plate to William Sanderson Graphice. Turner 2002, n. 86, copy a.

¹⁰⁰ See Cropper 1976; Müller Hofstede 2003.

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