



4. Girolamo Zane as Procurator and as Captain General of the Sea. 1568. Vellum, 29.5 by 21 cm. (British Library, London; King's MS 156 fols.11v-12v).

Benedetto Bordone shows Paolo Nani as Captain of Bergamo in 1521 wearing a toga of purple *pavonazzo* instead of the more usual crimson); on the administration of the Venetian empire; and on the tensions and gradual changes within patrician ideology during the period. Especially valuable is the enhancement of our knowledge of the biographies of a number of prominent patricians who, besides being portrayed in *ducali*, were commemorated in other major works of art. The above-mentioned Girolamo Zane, for example, was represented in an imposing three-quarter length portrait by Parrasio Michiel and was responsible for commissioning a highly ambitious altarpiece in sculpture by Alessandro Vittoria for his altar in the church of the Frari. Similarly, Francesco Duodo, whose succession of offices is celebrated in no fewer than four surviving



illuminations, appears again in a portrait bust by Vittoria Alessandro (before 1592; Ca' d'Oro, Venice) and in his altarpiece by Tintoretto for S. Maria del Giglio (c.1580-82).

It is to be hoped that Yale University Press will continue its tradition of producing art-historical books of such elegant design and excellent scholarship.

Albrecht Dürer: Documentary Biography

By Jeffrey Ashcroft. 2 vols. 1216 pp. incl. 70 b. & w. ills. (Yale University Press, New Haven and London, 2017), £65. ISBN 978-0-300-21084-2.

by ARMIN KUNZ

The publication of the book under review came as something of a surprise to the field of Dürer scholarship. For, although Jeffrey Ashcroft is a distinguished scholar and has published articles on Dürer, he is not an art historian but a linguist. His wide-ranging

interests include the literature and ideology of the crusades, medieval German and Latin love lyrics and German historical semantics. Yet Ashcroft's linguistic background is precisely what equipped him to undertake this ambitious project.

It was not the author's intention merely to provide an English translation of the three volumes of Dürer's *Schriftlicher Nachlass* (literary estate), edited by Hans Rupprich between 1956 and 1969.¹ Although he incorporates the majority of that material, Ashcroft expands texts that were presented only in excerpts by Rupprich and adds many others unknown at the time. He also discusses works of art that bear an inscription and those 'exceptional cases [where] a contemporary description or critique survives' (p.5). The most important difference, however, lies in Ashcroft's decision to present all the texts in a strictly chronological order, thus tracing the evolution of Dürer's thought process. Although Ashcroft provides a concordance, it only compares Rupprich's compendium to

Ashcroft's order of texts and not the other way around. For scholars looking for the translation of a passage from Rupprich, this can lead to a cumbersome search and one can only hope that the 'electronic version' announced in the introduction (p.6) will amend this problem. The lengthy bodies of published works by Dürer (corresponding to Rupprich's third volume) and the surviving drafts for the latter, including for his unpublished *Manual of Painting* (Rupprich's second volume), could have been more conveniently presented in thematic sections, and by arranging the material chronologically within these sections the biographical emphasis would have been preserved. As it is, within the strictly chronological order, the surviving draft versions appear in different places throughout the two volumes: the first drafts for the projected *Manual of Painting* are assigned to the years 1508–09 (pp.243–56; cat. nos.51.3–51.4) and 1512–13 (pp.364–85; nos.82–84, where Ashcroft notes that 'until 1512 [Dürer] did not date his drafts of the introduction to the handbook'). An important text, 'The nature of beauty and the judgement of painting', is discussed in the section relating to the period 1512–15 (pp.376–78, no.83), but Ashcroft notes that all four surviving manuscript versions 'draw strongly on the early drafts of the introduction to the handbook on painting', which appear more than one hundred pages earlier. He suggests his own chronological order for these four versions, of which he translates the third as 'the only complete version in this sequence'.²

However, once the system of cross-references is understood (helped by sixty-five pages of detailed indices), the reader is richly rewarded by Ashcroft's critical apparatus. He provides astute introductions, for instance, to Dürer's theoretical writings, to his poetry, to sections on 'Ten letters from Venice to Willibald Pirckheimer', to the 'Nine letters to Jakob Heller' and to his *Netherlandish Diary*. He further contributes elucidating notes and additional commentaries that succinctly summarise scholarship to date, for example, on Dürer's trip to Venice in 1505–07, on individual documents or on selected works of art, such as his famous *Self-Portrait* of 1500 and the *Rhinoceros* woodcut of 1515. Ashcroft's philological insights go well beyond a strictly art-historical perspective. The brief yet brilliant introduction reminds us that our 'long historical remove' from Dürer can make translation (and equally, for that matter, the understanding of his writing for a modern German speaker) highly treacherous. In many

cases we need to carefully 'establish which of its possible senses a word carries in a given context'. Perhaps the most important and most problematic word

is the noun *kunst* (Latin *ars*, English 'art') [. . .] Etymologically *kunst* is related to German *können* ('can') and *kennen* ('know' [. . .]). Its main sense circa 1500 [. . .] is 'knowledge' and 'ability based on knowledge'. The shift to the principal modern senses of *kunst* and 'art', creative skill and its aesthetic, imaginative products, came about in the eighteenth century (p.15).

To this day it is the latter, Romantic notion that determines our understanding of 'art'. Ashcroft, on the other hand, remains acutely aware of the dependence of the texts on their specific historical context throughout his translation. In the case of Dürer this is crucial given his position at the very beginning of what would later become aesthetic discourse in the modern sense. He was one of the first artists (and the only one outside Italy at the time) to feel 'his way towards the threshold of the modern conception of art which combines acquired knowledge (in increasingly theoretical and scientific forms) with creativity and inspiration' (p.15). Ashcroft recapitulates Dürer's singular efforts to establish a language for such aesthetic concepts, noting that he derived by 'semantic loan' from the Italian *sublime* the word *erhaben* (which in the same figurative sense would not be used again in German until the eighteenth century) and coined the word *widererwaxung* to describe the revival of the art of Antiquity, 'recorded nowhere else in German and not paralleled even in Italian until Giorgio Vasari's *rinascita*' in 1550 (p.14).

When it comes to documentary sources other than Dürer's theoretical writings and their many drafts and re-drafts, Ashcroft's decision to order them strictly chronologically certainly presents us with a fascinating 'life as told in written record' (p.1). He manages to strip away five centuries worth of biographical narratives that make it too easy to forget how little we actually know about Dürer's life, especially about his early years. Only some forty documents survive from the entire first half of the artist's life; they fill all but thirty-two of Ashcroft's more than one thousand pages. For example, the only statement we have by Dürer about his journeyman years is a single sentence in the *Family Chronicle* written in 1524: 'And having set out after Easter in the year 1490, it was

after Whitsun 1494 that I returned' (p.35). We are made aware that the lengthy chapters on the artist are merely reconstructions based on circumstantial evidence. The same is true of a presumed first trip to Venice in 1495; in fact, Dürer might have reached only the Alps and not ventured further. As some recent scholarship has shown – notably the exhibition *The Early Dürer* at the Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, in 2012 and the results presented in its accompanying catalogue³ – still more revisions of the existing biographical constructions and interpolations might be necessary. Ashcroft's well-informed and philologically circumspect translation of all the relevant historical records now provides a solid new basis for such investigations. His corpus will surely prove indispensable to anyone interested in Dürer's life and art.

¹ H. Rupprich, ed.: *Dürer: Schriftlicher Nachlass*, Berlin 1956–69.

² For the German originals, see *ibid.*, II, pp.115–26, where they are numbered II.B.6, 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3 respectively, with 7.2 providing the basis for Ashcroft's translation.

³ Reviewed by Robert Suckale in this Magazine, 154 (2012), pp.596–97; and D. Hess and T. Eser, eds.: exh. cat. *The Early Dürer*, Nuremberg (Germanisches Nationalmuseum) 2012.

Van Dyck's Hosts in Genoa: Lucas and Cornelis de Wael's Lives, Business Activities and Works

By Alison Stoesser. Two vols, 1028 pp. incl. 40 col. + 683 b. + w. ills. (Brepols, Turnhout, 2018), £212.50. ISBN 978-2-503-53175-5.

by TIMOTHY STANDRING

How ultramarine, the expensive pigment produced from lapis lazuli that was mined in Afghanistan and imported into Venice, made its way into Italian artists' studios throughout the middle of the seventeenth century is now more clear, thanks to Alison Stoesser. The pigment was one of the items that the Flemish artist *marchand* Cornelis de Wael (1592–1667) traded with his vast commercial network of close and extended family members, friends and associates in his native Antwerp and adopted residence of Genoa, where he lived from 1625 until 1657. He then transferred to Rome, remaining there until his death.

Cornelis and his brother Lucas (1591–1661), best known as the hosts of Anthony van Dyck during his sporadic visits to Genoa between November 1621 and 1627, were able to undertake international commerce through