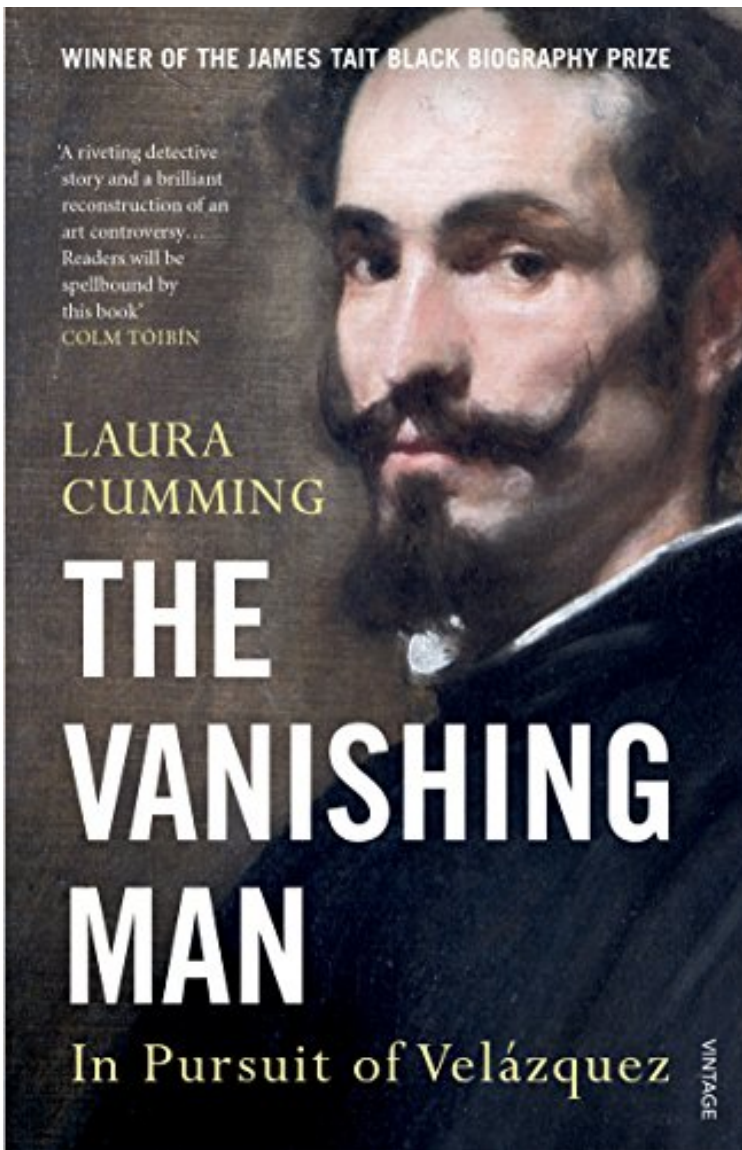


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# The Vanishing Man: In Pursuit of Velazquez



*Par Laura Cumming*  
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## Description :

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LONGLISTED FOR THE BAILLIE GIFFORD PRIZE FOR NON-FICTION  
In 1845, a Reading bookseller named John Snare came across the dirt-blackened portrait of a prince at a country house auction. Suspecting that it might be a long-lost Velzquez, he bought the picture and set out to discover its strange history - a quest that led from fame to ruin and exile. Fusing detection and biography, this book shows how and why great works of art can affect us, even to the point of mania. And on the trail of John Snare, Cumming makes a surprising discovery of her own. But most movingly, The Vanishing Man is an eloquent and passionate homage to the Spanish master Velzquez, bringing us closer to

the creation and appreciation of his works than ever before. Revue de presse "The Vanishing Man is a riveting detective story and a brilliant reconstruction of an art controversy, but it is also a homage to the art of Velzquez, written by a critic who remains spellbound by his genius, as readers will be spellbound by this book" (Colm Tibn) "Sumptuous... A gleaming work of someone at the peak of her craft" (New York Times) "An extraordinary story ... This terrific book is many things, a study in obsession, a paean of praise to an artist of genius, a detective story and, for the author, an exorcism of grief. Writing like Helen Macdonald in *H is for Hawk*, in the wake of the death of her father, Cumming pours heart and soul in *The Vanishing Man* and she has produced something of which her artist father, James Cumming, would be more than proud" (Spectator) "Laura Cumming twists several genres around her supple fingers in order to tell the extraordinary story of how Snare fell under the spell of a painting and sacrificed everything - prosperity, reputation, a respectable death surrounded by loving family - so that he might live with it like a love ... The detective story [...] gusts the plot along at a cracking pace... You put down *The Vanishing Man* not quite sure how Cumming has been able to bring off this particular magic trick, but happy and grateful that she has." (Guardian) "In this superb and original book, Cumming interweaves the gripping story of Snare with that of Diego Velzquez himself, painting at the court in Madrid in the 17th century.. Like Donna Tartt's novel *The Goldfinch*, this is about the particular forms of obsession that only art can generate... This enthralling book is about what it means to create art so luminous that others would fight just to get close to it" (Sunday Times) "This is an absorbing dual biography inspired by the author's passion for Velzquez... Cumming brings her subject alive and writes with empathy and insight" (Tatler) "A real-life detective story involving an Old Master portrait of an ill-fated English king and an art obsession that would lead to the ruin of one of the book's two mysterious protagonists: one a humble 19th-century printer and bookseller from Reading, John Snare; the other the great 17th-century Spanish court painter named in the title ... Interwoven into the narrative of Snare's tribulations, and of beautifully compelling accounts of Velzquez's paintings, are moving snippets of biography that reveal Cumming's own relationship to the great Spanish master" (Independent) "Simultaneously art historian and detective, Cumming skilfully weaves together the lives not only of Velzquez and Snare, but also of the ill-fated king and of the man who unknowingly sparked her interest in the Spanish artist her late father, the painter James Cumming." (Anna Godfrey Financial Times) "Ingenious... intriguing... [Cumming] subtly interweaves the two narratives - that of Snare and that of Velzquez - so that they illuminate each other in surprising ways." (Mark Hudson Daily Telegraph) "The painter, writes Cumming, allowed every sinner 'his privacy, his secrecy, his full mystery' even when revealing them for all to see and in this accomplished and touching book she allows her two subjects theirs" (Michael Procter Evening Standard)

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