

**Deric Regin, *Traders, Artists, Burghers: A Cultural History of Amsterdam in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century*. Amsterdam, Van Gorcum, 1976. 214 pp., 8 illus.**

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the chronology of the execution of the Planetary Rooms. The second consists of a 'Document Catalogue,' which, going much beyond Geisenheimer's archival findings of 1909, provides a rich source of new information. The third is the 'Catalogue of Drawings.' Campbell expresses the hope, and expectation, that new drawings will come to light, and a new one in the Gabinetto Nazionale, Rome, has indeed turned up within the last year (*Disegni di Pietro da Cortona e Ciro Ferri*, Rome, 1977, no. 8).

Curiously, a figure study in the Uffizi published ten years ago (*Disegni Italiani della Collezione Santarelli*, Florence, 1967, p. 71, fig. 80; and again *Burlington Magazine*, CIX [1967], 108), and associated by Maria Fossi Todorow with the early stages of the design of the Sala di Venere (a subject considered in detail by Campbell) is absent altogether from his list. In discussing the related compositional drawing in Budapest, Campbell comments that the sheet appears not 'to have produced any progeny' (p. 96, n. 104), which makes the Santarelli drawing a very neglected child indeed.

In contrast to Martin's *Farnese Gallery*, only a selection of the related drawings is reproduced in Campbell's *Pitti Palace*. A great number not reproduced are of course readily available in the same author's Uffizi catalogue, but others (e.g. cat. no. 50) are reasonably new to the literature, and to the literature not specially on Cortona at that. To reproduce only those drawings related to the arguments of the text provides support for those arguments, but deprives the reader the full means of constructing others. On the other hand, the many reproductions of details of the decorations and of related projects are very welcome, even if the matte finish, much favoured by Princeton University Press, produces a singularly deadening effect.

Closer to home, the painting in the Art Gallery of Ontario of *Antiochus and Stratonice*, which made a rare appearance in the recent *Heroes and Heroines* exhibition, is

not 'unattributed' as Campbell states but is given to the Austrian artist in Italy, Daniel Seiter. His name and the date 1680 were discovered on the back of the old canvas when the painting was re-lined in 1959. This information was published by no less an authority than Stechow in the *Art Gallery of Toronto News and Notes* (VI [1962]), but that it was overlooked merely points out the difficulties in retrieving information from such ephemera. That Stechow repeated the same material in the *Bulletin du Musée National de Varsovie* (V [1964], 1 ff.) only underlines the situation.

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DERIC REGIN *Traders, Artists, Burgers: A Cultural History of Amsterdam in the 17th Century*. Amsterdam, Van Gorcum, 1976. 214 pp., 8 illus.

In his foreword, the author clearly sets out his purposes and methods: 'The present work narrates the development of the first autonomous bourgeois culture in modern history. Relying chiefly on original sources of art, architecture, literature, pamphlets, diaries, sermons, letters, contemporary travel reports, as well as archival documents, I have attempted to synthesize the multifarious aspects of seventeenth century Amsterdam in a historical perspective.'

'In addition to the descriptive task,' Regin continues, 'I have . . . tried to analyse the notion of the bourgeois culture *in essence*. . . . The question will be raised, what the constituent factors were that made for the bourgeois era. How within an age, dominated by courtly grandeur, did Amsterdam become an isolated center of intimate Baroque? Under what conditions did it emerge, and why was its cultural eminence so short-lived? What were the reasons for its lapse into comfortable elegance, as its authentic burgher style faded?'

The history of the city is examined at 'pivotal dates', 1578, 1603, 1617, 1642, 1650, and 1697. In the course of his examination, Regin makes use of a great deal of Dutch literature. For those who cannot read the language of Vondel in the original, Regin's book provides many treats in the form of translations. There are, for example, Jeremias de Decker's lines on the *Beurs* (the Stock Exchange, Fig. 1):

Here rises upward from the Amstel's depth a place  
Where many people mill around on afternoons,  
A park, where Moors can trade with Scandinavians,  
A church, where Jew and Turk and Christian come together. (p. 98)

Or there is Vondel's majestic rendering of the opening of the 137th Psalm:

When shackled each day more in Babylon we grieved,  
Hung up our harps on willow trees, that cast green-leaved,  
Their shadows on the never reconciled Euphrates. (p. 65)

There are the splendid debunking lines of young Focquenbroch (who died at the age of thirty-three in Africa), supposedly eulogizing ancient times:

Thou old venerable wonders . . .  
How can one see thy treasure eaten by Time's kiss,  
Where once thy glory shone, there dogs now come to piss. (p. 56)

And there are the many quotations from popular lyrics.

Thus the relationship between Dutch literature and Amsterdam is superbly explored. But when it comes to art, it is a different matter. 'It is an embarrassing commentary,'



FIGURE 1. The *Beurs*, Amsterdam. Regin, pl. 5.



says Regin, 'on the ability of the contemporary mind in general, to have to point out that the foreign visitors in Amsterdam at that time [i.e. ca. 1650] elaborately concentrating on matters of commerce and politics, almost entirely ignored the arts of the city. . . . The magnificent fruit of Amsterdam's society was hidden from the contemporary eye. The Amsterdammers themselves, of course, valued their artists better, and esteemed Rembrandt highly. If they failed to distinguish uniqueness, they had this in common with the contemporary mind of most ages' (p. 157).

Much of this is questionable. Rembrandt was internationally famous from an early date. His etchings were widely collected, as were his pictures. The Sicilian nobleman Don Antonio Ruffo, for example, ordered several great works from him, and Cosimo III, Grand Duke of Tuscany, on his tour of northern Europe in 1667, sought him out especially in his studio. Moreover, it is surely evident that Dutch painters and painting have been tremendously popular in Europe from the seventeenth century on.

Regin describes Rembrandt as a 'failed bourgeois,' and appears to ascribe the decline of his popularity to his virtual financial bankruptcy in 1658. Yet a short while later he goes on to point out that both 'bourgeois' and official commissions still came to Rembrandt in his later years, e.g. the group portrait of the Syndics, and the *Conspiracy of Julius Civilis*. It appears that in some ways Regin is a victim of his own terminology. In many passages, 'bourgeois' appears to mean something quintessential. Yet he is aware that Amsterdam society 'comprised a number of middle classes, each vying with the other in the dynamics of social melioration' (p. 135).

Regin points out many illuminating comments and analyses of Amsterdam society and its relationship to the arts. He points out, for example, that 'burgher life was, among other conditions, strongly determined by the awareness of the home. The concept of the home,

from a mere family shelter developed into a category of cultural authority, which played a seminal role well into the nineteenth century, until the force of mass consciousness broke it up' (p. 141). He then goes on to analyse genre pieces by Nicolas Maes and Gabriel Metsu, relating them to the home, and associated eating and drinking customs.

If much of the 'descriptive task' which the author imposed upon himself seems very well carried out, this reviewer remains unconvinced about some of the answers to the larger questions set out at the beginning. I suspect that the root of my discontent is with the use of the word 'bourgeois,' with all its Marxist, determinist associations. The classical Marxist interpretation of the contrast between the Northern and Southern Netherlands (as seen, for example, in writings of Arnold Hauser) stresses the freedom, democracy and 'bourgeois' character of the North as against the courtly, aristocratic character of the South. Hence the twin poles of the art of Rembrandt and that of Rubens. But this sociological interpretation was exploded by Frans Baudoin in his brilliant essay 'Rubens and his Social and Cultural Background' nearly fifteen years ago, and recently reprinted in his *P.P. Rubens*. By analysing Rubens's commissions in the decade after his return from Italy, Baudoin showed that Rubens received most of them from middle-class Antwerp citizens, not, as had been supposed, from the Archduke Albert and Archduchess Isabella, the Flemish aristocracy, nor Churchmen. In other words, he worked for basically the same class as did Rembrandt and other Dutch artists in the North, i.e. the rich middle class. The really significant differences between the art of the Northern and Southern Netherlands are to be found not in social factors, but in the cultural and religious character of the Antwerp and Amsterdam middle classes.

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KERRY DOWNES *Vanbrugh*. *Studies in Architecture*, vol. xvi. London, Zwemmer, 1977. 291 pp., 180 illus., £ 28.00 (\$50.00).

Over the years the regal blue and gold volumes of Zwemmer's *Studies in Architecture* series have been marching across shelf after library shelf. The book under review is the sixteenth to join the phalanx, and more are on the way. Unfortunately, since the series began those desirable bindings have become less and less within the ordinary scholar's reach. When Zwemmer issued Kerry Downes's weighty *English Baroque Architecture* in 1966, the book cost slightly more than £ 7. Eleven years later, his *Vanbrugh*, a comparable book in terms of its large size and high-quality production, has quadrupled in price.

In spite of this, one remains eager to read the latest that Downes has written, and is not disappointed. Among his impressive list of works, this most recent one, devoted to the English architect Sir John Vanbrugh (1664-1726), seems to be the most original in approach. Within the traditional monographic framework, Downes has discarded strict chronological sequence in favour of a freer, thematic organization. He thereby avoids at the outset the tedious recitation of date and place of birth, and instead explores Vanbrugh's own home, the so-called 'goose pie house,' ridiculed by Dean Swift. In a way this unusual building serves as a microcosm of the man himself: first soldier, next playwright, lastly architect, and always social-climber. These and other aspects of his varied life are artfully woven into an unfolding story.

*Vanbrugh* is not an unusually long book. In any event, the architectural part of Vanbrugh's career spanned only some twenty-eight years, during which time he produced relatively few, if important, buildings. The first half of the text (126 pages), which chiefly concerns this reviewer, involves his biography. The rest, nearly as long again, contains information about