

De gemeenschap die zou zijn geproduceerd door zeventiende-eeuwse portretten ligt bij Adams op een hoog abstractieniveau. Zij ziet de populariteit van het familieportret bijvoorbeeld als een respons op de voortdurende bedreiging van de sociale stabiliteit binnen de jonge Republiek.

Het *portrait historié*, een subgenre waarin de geportretteerde een rol speelt in een klassieke of bijbelse historie, raakt uiteraard aan allerlei aspecten van representatie en zelfrepresentatie van de zeventiende-eeuwer. Maar Adams maakt het zichzelf en de lezer onnodig ingewikkeld door bijvoorbeeld te veronderstellen dat Michael Poppen, de opdrachtgever van Werner van de Valckerts voorstelling 'Laat de kinderen tot mij komen' (Catharijneconvent, Utrecht) katholiek zou zijn, hetgeen op gespannen voet zou staan met de weergave van de toren van de Amsterdamse, gereformeerde Zuiderkerk in de achtergrond. Adams presenteert vervolgens een complexe theorie over de publieke en politieke dimensie van de doop en ziet in het schilderij zelfs een mogelijke oproep tot tolerantie van een katholiek in een door gereformeerden gedomineerde stad. Een snelle blik in Elias' *Vroedschap* (nr. 88) en in de DTB-gegevens van Amsterdam leert echter dat het huwelijk van Poppen in 1602 in de publieke kerk is afgeroepen, dat zijn kinderen in gereformeerde kerken zijn gedoopt en dat Poppens schoonvader in 1566 om den gelove het katholieke Amsterdam verliet om daar pas na de Alteratie van 1578 terug te keren.

Een vergelijkbaar bezwaar, namelijk dat van een te ambitieuze, op indirecte bronnen gebaseerde interpretatie, kleeft aan Adams' behandeling van het *portrait historié* van een echtpaar in de historie van de grootmoedigheid van Scipio door Gerbrand van den Eeckhout uit 1658 (Toledo). In plaats van de overtuigende identificatie van de hoofdrolspelers door Volker Manuth (1998) en de positie van dit schilderij in het voorhuis als uitgangspunt te nemen voor een nadere beschouwing van hun gerepresenteerde identiteit, filosofeert de auteur over de oranjekeurige kleding van Scipio, om de aan hem toegeschreven deugden vervolgens te

verbinden met de delicate positie van de Oranjes in het Amsterdamse politieke krachtenveld in de jaren 1650-1660. Zelfs als deze vindingrijke redenering valide is, zou de lezer willen weten welke positie Wouter Oorthoorn en zijn vrouw in dit debat innamen, maar daarover blijven we helaas in het ongewisse.

Dit is een fraai uitgegeven boek met een ambitieuze, maar moeilijk te operationaliseren doelstelling, een aantal interessante perspectieven en stimulerende observaties. Die zouden grotere vrucht hebben kunnen dragen als de auteur meer recht had gedaan aan de gemeenschappen waarin de geportretteerden direct en aantoonbaar functioneerden, zoals de familie, de buurt, de kerk, de schutterij, de stad, en meer systematisch onderzoek zou hebben gedaan naar de plaats van en documenteerbare contemporaine reacties op Nederlandse zeventiende-eeuwse portretten in het private of publieke domein.

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Peters, Marion, ***De wijze koopman. Het wereldwijde onderzoek van Nicolaes Witsen (1641-1717), burgemeester en VOC-bewindhebber van Amsterdam*** (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 2010, 519 blz., ISBN 978 90 351 3412 6).

Marion Peters has given us with an impressive study of Nicolaes Witsen an example of the early modern Dutch 'wijze koopman'. The phrase is taken from Caspar Barlaeus' *Mercator sapiens*, his inaugural address to the leading members of the city in 1632. In it, he praised Amsterdam's leaders for encouraging learning, and indicated the main subjects that they should cultivate: to their classical educations he wanted them to add the study of geography, natural history, astronomy, languages, and peoples. Born less than a decade after Barlaeus' speech, Witsen epitomized his ideal almost perfectly.

This is a rich intellectual biography that connects Witsen to the events of his time and shows him to have been not only a learned person in his own right but a very influential patron, too. Somehow, neither Witsen's inner life nor the ways in which he was shaped by fate are entirely in focus, nor does he fully become an example of the values of the regents more generally, but that is due to the strategy Peters has chosen for presenting her investigations into his complex activities, striving for precision more than generalisation. She divides her work into three parts: Witsen's life, his studies, and his support for the advancement of knowledge. This organization allows Peters to explore various aspects of his efforts with clarity and gives scope to present the enormous research she has carried out not only into Witsen's life but into the lives of many of the learned men in his network.

Witsen, whose motto was *labor omnia vincit*, rose from a wealthy family of Muscovy merchants into the lower ranks of the Amsterdam regents. He received formal education among the Cartesians of Leiden (including the anti-Voetian, Johannes Coccejus), studied law, was one of the members of student circles who later became well-known for their contributions to the 'new philosophy', and then obtained some seasoning as a member of a delegation to Moscow before embarking on a Grand Tour of France and Italy and a couple of short trips to England. He obtained seats on the Amsterdam city council and board of the VOC. In 1717, he died after a long decline of body and mind.

Peters explores Witsen's indefatigable efforts to acquire knowledge, and to assimilate and re-distribute some of it through publication. Peters notes that Witsen's efforts could only have been undertaken by a person of the wealth, contacts, and authority of a regent, despite the press of other business. It is no surprise, perhaps, to discover that Witsen cared a great deal for matters having to do with ships, land and sea routes and maps, languages and peoples. He is best known for his books on shipbuilding. In addition, Witsen promoted expeditions to Namaqualand in southern Africa and

to the maritime 'southland' (western Australia, or Nieuw Holland), and was a patron of many men of learning and the arts. There can be no doubt that Witsen was a true 'Mercator sapiens'.

Witsen's more general importance through his support for learning is the aim of the third section. Clearly, many of his interests were practical and utilitarian concerns that flowed from his position as a regent and merchant, but Peters notes that Witsen also occasionally referred to the responsibility to acknowledge God through his creation. Exactly what Witsen's religious views were would be interesting to know, although as with so many of his regent contemporaries it is a difficult matter to assess. His sizeable but not outstanding library, she demonstrates, was for his use and for the collection of information rather than for speculative philosophy or display. Moreover, he sat at the apex of a pyramid of informants and agents who answered his numerous and exacting questions and funneled objects, specimens, illustrations, lists, and manuscripts to him, such as the three-volume 'Codex Witsenii' from southern Africa. Most significant of all are the passages in which Peters comments on Witsen's emphasis on finding out facts and ascertaining the 'truth' of things in the midst of misinformation, rumor, and legend. To probe the world in this way he not only assessed his agents and compared accounts, but took account of pencil-sketches of people, places, and things.

Peters has therefore produced an important modern study of a very important figure in the world of early modern learning, in which one can clearly see some of the reasons for the development of the new science, which depended so much on the personal interests and patronage of merchants and governors who concerned themselves with truths arising from matters of fact. Although she writes in the biographical mode, by carefully documenting Witsen's relationships with a host of other people of learning, she restores the work and effects of this particular Maecenas to our attention. I am sure that I am not the only one who is grateful for her efforts.

Levillain, Charles-Edouard, ***Vaincre Louis XIV: Angleterre, Hollande, France. Histoire d'une relation triangulaire 1665-1688*** (Collection Epoques; Seyssel: Éditions Champ Vallon, 2010, 452 pp., ISBN 978 2 87673 527 9).

This is an important book that provides a new interpretation of French foreign policy and strategic interests from the perspective of two of France's rivals, England and Holland. The focus is on a triangular relationship (England-Holland-France) as opposed to a bipolar approach (France-England, France-Holland, England-Holland). The chronological range of the book is from the Second Anglo-Dutch War (1665-1667) to the outbreak of the Revolution of 1688, although the introductory section cleverly extends back to earlier developments in the seventeenth century covering key events and themes from 1609. The book is organised into three main parts covering France between two maritime powers: the Second Anglo-Dutch War (part one), the Third Anglo-Dutch War (1672-1674) and the problem of universal monarchy (part two), and Between arbitration and arbitrary: Charles II and William III against the wars of Louis XIV (1674-1684) (part three). Thereafter there is a general conclusion that covers the years 1685-1688. Useful appendices to the text are also provided. Brief biographies of the key protagonists are given, although there is a strong emphasis on English personalities compared to the other two countries. Chronological appendices take the form of the History of England and international relations, 1665-1688, based on internal politics and wars and treaties, with another appendix listing the key dates in the History of the United Provinces, 1559-1688. Further appendices include two maps of Britain and the key area of Europe relevant to the book, and two genealogical tables relating to the respective Houses of Orange and Stuarts.

One of the major strengths of this book is the range and breadth of its research base and archive coverage. The author has consulted 25 libraries and archives in Europe, Britain and the United States. An exhaustive range of sources have been consulted,

including personal diplomatic correspondence and parliamentary debates. Indeed, the coverage is all encompassing, embracing maritime, political, military, institutional and social history (in the context of examining the triangular relationship also in terms of internal domestic issues. The Dutch context of this was particularly striking for me in terms of internal Dutch social and political history).

For this reviewer, the importance of this book is how it should impact on historians of early modern British history, albeit it has an anglocentric focus. 'The New British History' of previous decades has tended to concentrate on the period 1637-1651, and the Pocockian model that includes The First War of the Three Kingdoms in its terminology. Such a model moved away from a traditional emphasis on the English Civil War to include greater analysis of events in Scotland and Ireland. It would be fair to say, however, that recently there has been not only a return to the English Civil War as the dominant event in the eyes of several English historians, but also more generally a retreat into national histories. The 'Second War of The Three Kingdoms', circa 1688-1691, as defined by the Pocockian model marked a move away from a traditional triumphalist anglocentric assertion of the 'Glorious Revolution' to look at the wider Scottish and Irish dimensions of the Williamite war in Ireland and the First Jacobite Rising in Scotland.

The 1688-1691 period received less attention than the earlier period, but in recent years there has been a refocusing on the latter period, most notably in the work of Tim Harris (with two large books covering the period from the Restoration to 1720), Edward Vallance, Steve Pincus (with Pincus arguing that 1688 was the first modern revolution) and Lisa Jardine (with a broader social contribution on the Dutch impact on English life). Levillain's detailed study of the triangular relationship between England, Holland and France 1665-1688 therefore makes an invaluable contribution to these historiographical developments on the later period. There is no direct engagement with this in the book, however, and Scotland and Ireland are