

A Dutch Republican Baroque: Theatricality, Dramatization, Moment, and Event.
Frans-Willem Korsten.

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A Dutch Republican Baroque offers a vigorously interdisciplinary account of a historical period, written against traditional periodization. No mere intermediary between the Renaissance and neoclassicism, Korsten's version of the Baroque is defined along two axes, between the theatrical and the dramatic, between a moment and an event. Korsten likewise troubles the term *republican*, recasting it as "a politico-aesthetic attitude or way of being in the world" (22). This succinct study moves rapidly between the work of playwrights and poets (Vondel, Vos, Focquenbroch), painters (Maurits, Brisé, Knüpfer, Verschuier, Hals, Rembrandt, Quast), politicians (Maurits, Oldenbarnevelt, the brothers De Witt, Grevius), scholars, scientists, and philosophers (Rumphius, Grotius, Vossius, Spinoza). Korsten's method is to extrapolate from specific historical instances to broader theoretical vistas. His second chapter, for example, moves from the execution of Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, in May 1619, to the fascinating question of how the Dutch Republic situated itself in relation to the Roman model, troubled by its connection to the Catholic Church, "which for many Protestants was equated with tyranny" (46).

The third chapter relates the execution of the De Witt brothers to "the political issue of the coexistence of, and the necessary political but ultimately cruel choice between, not just different but incompatible worlds" (77). Here, as elsewhere, there is much in Korsten's argument that would bear further exposition; he treads carefully around the difficult moral questions of torture and slavery, for instance, but admits there is much more to be said. The latter cannot be bypassed as the product of a "pre-colonial" moment, I would suggest (104–05).

Karel van Mander's observation that "it is incredibly difficult to catch the difference between laughter and sobbing in paint" (85) signals a rather abrupt move from tragedy to comedy in the fourth chapter, which brilliantly places the paintings of Frans Hals within a treatment of the relationship between comedy and the sublime, an undertheorized topic, as Korsten notes. He is fascinating here on early modern genre theory (Heinsius, Vossius, and Sidney all make an appearance), and particularly Vondel's "generic problem": his struggles to write the epic that such reiterations of classical literary theory demanded of him. A creature of the republic, which "embodied the split between a monarchical and republican way of organizing the world" (90), Vondel is drawn instead to drama as "the best generic form to present choices, in their dramatic reality and potential, between two equally real worlds" (94).

Chapters 5 and 6 extend the disciplinary range of this study yet further, the former encompassing legal theory (Grotius on the juridical status of the seas), architecture (the dramatic layout of early modern Amsterdam), and the origins of theater. Korsten's argument here operates at a level of abstraction that (perhaps inevitably) leaves many

questions unanswered. This is further the case in the sixth chapter, where the nuances of early modern scientific narrative are somewhat elided, as the different ways of encountering the world offered by looking through a telescope, reading a text, and examining a specimen through a microscope are rendered synonymous. At times Korsten tends toward a grand periodizing narrative of the kind he initially rejected, as in his treatment of the commonplace tradition and related list-making practices, here characterized rather unquestioningly as “medieval” (139).

A final pair of chapters return to drama, and the political role of the theater in particular. Charting the *theatrum mundi* metaphor through the Dutch Republic reveals (rather late in the day) that there are in fact many different Baroques at work here. An analysis of the relationship between the theater and the city, dating back to the Greek city-states, is provocative but needs to be more firmly anchored to the specific historical moment of the Dutch Republic. What we lose in clarity of focus in these closing pages we gain in accumulation of provocative insights; Korsten continues to introduce new theoretical models (such as Sarrajac’s model of retrospection) right up until the end, articulating his own “philosophical framework” for the study most explicitly in its final pages (179–80). In the astonishing breadth and vigor of Korsten’s method, we find a fitting analogue for the Baroque moment he surveys.

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Holbein’s “Sir Thomas More.” Hilary Mantel and Xavier F. Salomon.

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For the mansion he built on Fifth Avenue, the industrialist Henry Clay Frick acquired a portrait of *Sir Thomas More* by Hans Holbein the Younger, in 1912, and three years later he bought the same artist’s *Thomas Cromwell*. They can be viewed today where Frick originally hung them on either side of the fireplace in the sumptuous Living Hall of his house, now world-famous as the Frick Collection. *Holbein’s “Sir Thomas More”* is an elegant, lavishly illustrated volume that launches the Frick Diptych Series, in which an essay by Xavier F. Salomon, the Frick Collection’s chief curator, is paired with one by the celebrated historical novelist Hilary Mantel.

In his discerning essay, Salomon records that despite his pressing legal business, More sat for Holbein more than once in 1527, when both men were still rising in their careers. Holbein’s has been one of the best documented for any Northern European artist of the sixteenth century, not least for his creation of indelible images for Erasmus and Henry VIII, but Salomon provides fresh contextualization for his