

drenched with sweat, their mustached faces pale under their long and black hair (7). Sévigné transposes into her own words the vigor and rhythm of the workers at the forge: *Illi inter ses multa vi braccia tollunt/ In numerum* (Book VIII, 451-52). Virgil effectively occludes the woman's sidelong glimpse of French military policy and latent social contradiction.

From the beginning to the end of *De l'or de Virgile* the reader discovers the ubiquity and complexity of the Virgilian poem in classical France. The author moves through a variety of authors and situations in which the nature of patrimony and the resistance it inspires give rise to the great works of the seventeenth-century vernacular canon. If any criticism can be brought to this epic study it would be in the paratextual domain. The author, working through myriad authors and works both major and minor, leaves the reader with a half-page index that does little justice to the research. And insofar as the book carries neither acknowledgment nor expression of debt to anyone, the reader wonders if Virgil and the classical age are felt to be of a gloriously self-contained genealogy. In all events every student of Virgil in seventeenth-century France will take this book as an enduring point of reference in the years to come.

Paul Crenshaw. *Rembrandt's Bankruptcy: The Artist, His Patrons, and the Art Market in Seventeenth-Century Netherlands*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. xiv + 221 pp. + 39 illus. \$80.00. Review by H. PERRY CHAPMAN, UNIVERSITY OF DELAWARE.

Rembrandt declared bankruptcy in 1656, when he was fifty years old. Ever since Filippo Baldinucci commented on its rarity, in 1686 (in one of the first biographies of Rembrandt), critics have factored Rembrandt's bankruptcy into their assessments of his life and work, often without fully understanding it. Consequently the interpretation of Rembrandt's *cessio bonorum*—ceding of goods to the municipality to be sold for the benefit of his creditors—serves as a barometer of Rembrandt's shifting critical fortunes. Baldinucci attributed Rembrandt's insolvency to his eccentric, excessive collecting of art and to his buying back his own prints to inflate their prices, which he considered symptomatic of Rembrandt's larger eccentricity. Recent critics, depending on their view of Rembrandt, have interpreted the bankruptcy as, alterna-

tively, the fallout of his social climbing or a mark of his independent genius. Others, wanting to make Rembrandt more like his contemporaries, have treated his “near-bankruptcy” as a minor and not all that unusual episode in an oversaturated art market and declining economy.

In *Rembrandt's Bankruptcy*, Paul Crenshaw provides a detailed, in-depth assessment of Rembrandt's finances and makes sensible suggestions about their impact on his artistic production. The bankruptcy is at the center of his project, which is modeled after the economic approach of—and makes a fine tribute to—the late John Michael Montias. Yet to understand the causes and effects of Rembrandt's financial disaster, Crenshaw investigates Rembrandt's economic life as a whole, drawing on the substantial documentary evidence, as well as on Rembrandt's works. Much of this documentary evidence, whether long-known or more recently discovered by the Amsterdam archivists I. H. van Eeghen and S. A. C. Dudock van Heel, is familiar to specialists and little of it is previously un-published. However, with determined sleuthing and cautious reasoning, Crenshaw makes important new connections and more sense than ever before of a complex puzzle. He details how Rembrandt's bankruptcy was caused by a pattern of financial recklessness: Rembrandt bought and then failed to pay off an expensive house (today's Rembrandthuis Museum); he spent lavish sums collecting art and on the paraphernalia of his studio and *kunstkamer*, even when he was in financial difficulty; and he frequently failed to conform to his clients' expectations or meet their demands. Then, when faced with financial ruin in the mid 1650s, Rembrandt's “manner of evading his responsibility to his creditors was so socially disreputable that laws in Amsterdam were quickly altered to prevent such actions” (2). Crenshaw concludes that Rembrandt was as unconventional in his handling of money as he was in his art. Thus he argues compellingly, as Baldinucci (and others) had maintained from the beginning, that Rembrandt was highly independent and singularly unconstrained by rules, whether artistic or financial.

Crenshaw's first three chapters provide the context for his study. Chapter 1 examines the historiography of Rembrandt's bankruptcy. Chapter 2 establishes the norms of the time by contrasting Rembrandt's financial woes with those of other Dutch artists, some of whom may have similarly chaffed at the constraints of the art market. In 1639, when he settled on his expensive house, Rembrandt, a successful painter in high demand, must have seemed as if he could handle a real estate stretch. Chapter 3 sets out how his circum-

stances changed. A decline in his production and income in the 1640s coincided with both personal misfortune, most notably the death of his wife Saskia, and a broader economic downturn in the Dutch Republic, and was then compounded by behavior that likely “hurt his standing in the eyes of the community.” Though to a large extent Crenshaw here rehearses familiar ground, the overall picture of the relation between Rembrandt’s financial instability and his professional vicissitudes is essential preparation for the next three chapters, which concentrate on the specific factors leading to Rembrandt’s insolvency.

Chapter 4 zeros in on the house and its repercussions. As a young man just starting out, Rembrandt lent 1000 guilders to Hendrick Uylenburgh, the art dealer with whom he worked and lodged between 1632 and 1635; for the rest of his life, however, Rembrandt would be a borrower. While Crenshaw asserts that “Rembrandt’s descent into financial hardship had one clear catalyst: he did not pay off the house on the Sint Antonisbreestraat,” the complexities of his indebtedness necessitate that this chapter be “a biographical account of Rembrandt’s life in his Breestraat home, a period that began with him enjoying the height of artistic fame and fortune, and ended with him reduced to bankruptcy” (44). This chapter entails a scrupulous account of the house’s declining value (its neighborhood was losing its appeal), of the disruption and disputes arising from the replacement of the pilings supporting the house next door, and of the complex of deals into which Rembrandt entered in his ultimately failed efforts to stave off ruin and keep his house. Crenshaw, however, gives relatively short shrift to Rembrandt’s need or desire for such a house. As a result its purchase is made to seem more irresponsible or irrational than it may have been. At a time when distinguished *liefhebbers* (art lovers) were in the habit of visiting artists’ studios, whether to look and converse, to buy, or to have their portraits painted, suitable reception rooms may have seemed as necessary as the spaces needed for Rembrandt’s painting, printmaking, studying (hence the *kunstkamer*), probable art dealing, book keeping, and instruction of many students. Too, in a decade when Rembrandt was intensively crafting his own image through his self-portraits, he must have been well aware that for some renowned artists of the recent past—Raphael, Vasari and, in Amsterdam, Cornelis Ketel—the house had become a mark of professional standing and its decoration had become a vehicle for pictorial art theory. Surprisingly, given Rembrandt’s interest in and emulation of Peter

Paul Rubens during the 1630s, Crenshaw makes no mention of Rubens' grand house in Antwerp.

"Rembrandt's Collecting Habit" is an apt title for chapter 5. The extent and variety of Rembrandt's collection of paintings, prints, and drawings, of antiquities and rarities, and of naturalia have long been known, thanks to the inventory that was made (with Rembrandt's help) at the time of his bankruptcy. Crenshaw's contribution is to spell out just how insatiable Rembrandt was in his acquisition of art. At a time when collecting was in vogue—Rubens had a virtually unsurpassed collection of art and antiquities; it was not unusual for an Amsterdam merchant's house to be hung with 50 to 100 contemporary paintings—Rembrandt stands out for his drive to amass (and spend) more and more, even in the face of alarmingly mounting debts. Given Rembrandt's lack of control and, as with the house, consuming desire—he paid the highest recorded price for a single seashell—Crenshaw might have taken a more expansive approach and looked into the psychology of collecting.

Chapter 6 details Rembrandt's disputes with several prominent clients. From three case studies, Crenshaw concludes that "When faced with challenges to his artistic autonomy and to the quality of his products, Rembrandt retaliated with consistent resolve As a result of his contrary behavior and inconvenient business practices, he offended many patrons directly and made others wary of coming to him at all" (133). In short, Crenshaw argues compellingly that Rembrandt resisted and willfully ignored the constraints that commerce by necessity imposes on art. As Baldinucci and other near-contemporaries recognized, by refusing to play by the financial rules, Rembrandt asserted his artistic autonomy. What this meant in practice is the subject of chapter 7, which looks at some of the complex effects of Rembrandt's money problem on specific works of art and comes to the jarring conclusion that, post-bankruptcy, the paintings and prints that came about because of financial obligations "include some of the master's most acclaimed work" (155). Indeed, Rembrandt used some of these pictures to pay off his creditors.

Rembrandt's Bankruptcy investigates a microcosm of the intersection between the driving forces of the economy and the idiosyncratic needs and desires of an individual artist and thus contributes significantly to our understanding of the intricacies of a small but crucial segment of the newly open seventeenth-century art market.