

## Franciscus Junius: Philology and the survival of Antiquity in the art of northern Europe

Review of:

*Art and Antiquity in the Netherlands and Britain. The Vernacular Arcadia of Franciscus Junius (1591 - 1677)* by Thijs Weststeijn, Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2015, 452 pp., 178 colour & b/w illus. €129,00/ \$164.00, ISBN13: 9789004283619, E-ISBN: 9789004283992

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The early modern Dutch claimed as their forbearers the Batavians, a Germanic tribe described by Tacitus as located in the far reaches of the Roman Empire. Writings about art produced by the seventeenth-century descendants of these provincial peoples were proud but defensive as they continued to treat Rome as the centre of civilization. In 1632 Constantijn Huygens, secretary to northern Netherlands stadtholder Prince Frederik Henry, confided to his diary that he wished the promising artists Rembrandt van Rijn and Jan Lievens had travelled to Italy to learn from the art of antiquity and the Renaissance masters who had absorbed its lessons. But, he noted, the two young men felt that there were plenty of Italian works to be seen conveniently enough in The Netherlands. He then lavished praise on a figure of Judas by Rembrandt that he felt powerfully expressed the kind of universal truths promulgated by Latin art. Indeed, he wrote, '[... ] all honor to you, Rembrandt! To have brought Ilium – even all of Asia Minor – to Italy was a lesser feat than for a Dutchman [...] to have captured for The Netherlands the trophy of artistic excellence from Greece and Italy.'<sup>1</sup>

Through the first three quarters of the twentieth century this ambivalent stance toward the art of northern Europe has run like a red thread through art history as it developed as a professional discipline identified with, and defined by, the Italian Renaissance's revival of antiquity. After a brief appreciation of classicizing Netherlandish art at the turn of the eighteenth century, derision for its so-called naturalism overtook the criticism until, in the nineteenth century, Netherlandish art began to be celebrated precisely for its non-classicizing attention to naturalistic detail. Whether attention was focused upon classicizing traits or naturalism, in the hands of Netherlandish artists both were viewed as derivative and thus somehow inferior to art produced in Italy. In *The Art of Describing* published in 1983 Svetlana Alpers articulated a northern model of seeing to counter this Italian dominance as she argued for an alternative, equally compelling, value system based upon visual description rather than

<sup>1</sup> J. A. Worp, 'Constantyn Huygens over de schilders van zijn tijd,' *Oud Holland* 9 (1891), 106-136, esp. 123-131; excerpt transl. Gary Schwartz, *Rembrandt, his life, his paintings*, New York: Viking, 1985, 73-77, esp. 74.

idealism and classical narratives.<sup>2</sup> This influential book, however, perpetuated the historic polarization of the two traditions. By this time, Dutch artists who worked in a classicizing style or Netherlandish art that made reference to antiquity had long been treated as ‘not Dutch (enough)’ or, at the most, as a separate tradition. Moreover, artworks that transported classical subjects to early modern settings, such as Jacob Jordaens’ *Satyr in a Peasant Cottage* (Alte Pinakothek, Munich), or depicted non-canonical figures such as Rembrandt’s *Rape of Ganymede* (Gemäldegalerie, Dresden), which represents what is usually an idealized adolescent as a squalling baby pissing with fear, had been set aside as merely idiosyncratic and provincial – outside of the idealizing classicizing tradition altogether.<sup>3</sup>

Beginning from about twenty years ago Netherlandish classicizing painting finally began to receive its due in exhibitions such as *Dutch Classicism* in 1999-2000, and most recently *Caesar van Everdingen* in 2016.<sup>4</sup> This was an important development for, as Thijs Weststeijn points out in the book under review, understanding the reception of classicism in the Netherlands provides an important balance to the traditional study of classicism in Latin countries because of its different, non-aristocratic, audience. While appreciation of the classical tradition in Italy was limited to the elite, interest in and valuing classicism in the early modern Netherlands ran across a much broader spectrum of social classes. It is thus significant that the formerly polarized debate comes full circle with this important book which examines the classical international humanist strain in Netherlandish art appreciation and art writing. Weststeijn’s wide-ranging study does so through the lens of a text by the German-born philologist Franciscus Junius the Younger (1591 - 1677), its cultural foundations and context.

Junius grew up in the shadow of Leiden University where his father had been appointed Professor of Theology. After studying there himself he moved on to service of English Thomas Howard and Alethea Talbot, Earl and Countess of Arundel. In England and subsequently in The Netherlands, he was their librarian and later their curator of the most important collection of ancient artefacts north of the Alps. Junius returned to Oxford at the end of his life where he died. Although also recognized for his later strictly philological studies, he has been known among specialized art historians for his *De pictura veterum* first published in 1637, a collection of ancient texts

<sup>2</sup> Svetlana Alpers, *The Art of Describing*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983.

<sup>3</sup> Jacob Jordaens, *Satyr with Peasants*, Alte Pinakothek, Munich, Germany, inv. no. 425; Rembrandt van Rijn, *Rape of Ganymede*, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden, inv. no. 40-03-04/8.

<sup>4</sup> *Dutch Classicism in Seventeenth-Century Painting*, Albert Blankert et al. exh. cat. Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam; Städelsches Kunstinstitut, Frankfurt am Main, Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 1999; *Painting Beauty: Caesar van Everdingen (1616/1617-1678)*, compiled and edited by Christi M. Klinkert and Yvonne Bleyerveld, exh. cat. Stedelijk Museum, Alkmaar, Zwolle: Waanders, 2016.

with extensive commentary on ancient art. Junius translated his text into English as *On the Painting of the Ancients* the following year and then into Dutch as *De Schilder-konst der Oude* in 1641 (reprinted in 1659).

Fifty years ago, however, Franciscus Junius was not even mentioned in the *Pelican History of Dutch Art and Architecture 1600-1800* (1966).<sup>5</sup> The essay 'Theories of Art' by Beatrijs Brenninkmeyer-de Rooij in Bob Haak's survey of *Golden Age Dutch Painters* (1984) gives him one brief biographical paragraph with the estimation, 'As a scholar, Junius had little knowledge of or interest in 'modern' art.'<sup>6</sup> He has been overlooked in part because of the lack of interest in northern classicism. More substantially, however, the twenty- and twenty-first centuries' prizing of the linear thinking of scientific reasoning makes ancient texts structured by the conventions of classical rhetoric through the multiplication of examples appear redundant and tedious. Indeed, the editors of the important scholarly edition of the 1638 English translation published in 1991 described the book as 'somewhat of a tangle of quotations bunched in paragraphs, each supporting the others with a music that is also an echo.'<sup>7</sup> For this reason, Junius' work has been difficult for the non-specialist to comprehend: it had the feeling of a commonplace book of excerpts of ancient texts whose selection seemed miscellaneous, the large number of which drown any nuanced argument.

The first serious attention paid to Junius in the twentieth-century had already been undertaken by Allan Ellenius in his 1960 study of the background and sources of seventeenth-century Swedish art writing in Latin.<sup>8</sup> Ellenius downplayed Junius' authorial role, however, asserting that his 'book was written under the immediate surveillance of the latter [Vossius]' who may even have penned part of it.<sup>9</sup> Junius and his thought has since been examined in fits and starts. In a number of important articles published since 1987, Colette Nativel has examined Junius' text for its roots in classical rhetoric, ideas of imitation and the sublime, and the relation of art to Antiquity and the Latin tradition. The extensive annotations to the English edition of 1991 began to clarify Junius' language as well as provide detailed references to his classical literary sources. Its fifty-one page introduction gave a brief biography of Junius' life, relations with

<sup>5</sup> Jakob Rosenberg, Seymour Slive, and E. H. ter Kuile, *Dutch art and architecture, 1600-1800*, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966.

<sup>6</sup> Beatrijs Brenninkmeyer-de Rooij, 'Theories of Art,' In Bob Haak, *The Golden Age: Dutch painters of the seventeenth century*, New York, H.N. Abrams, 1984, 60-70, esp. 61.

<sup>7</sup> Keith Aldrich, Philipp P. Fehl, and Raina Fehl, *The Painting of the Ancients: According to the English Translation (1638) = De Pictura Veterum*, 2 vols., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, lii-liiii.

<sup>8</sup> Allan Ellenius, *De Arte Pingendi; Latin Art Literature in Seventeenth-Century Sweden and Its International Background*, Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksells boktr, 1960. I am grateful to Richard Woodfield for reminding me of this important book.

<sup>9</sup> Ellenius 48-49.

Arundel, publication histories and reception of these works. The most comprehensive group of essays on Junius, his life, his work and his thought until now originated in a symposium on the author at Leiden University and published in 1998.<sup>10</sup> Among these is an essay by Nativel who carefully examined Junius' relationship with Vossius, touched upon responses to his text by humanists and artists, and traced its impact upon subsequent art writing particularly in France.<sup>11</sup> All of these have left the interested reader hungry for both a close analysis of the work as well as an understanding of the larger biographical, intellectual, and cultural context of its production. Junius has since begun to appear in some surveys of art theory and a few specialized articles. Among these have been Thijs Weststeijn's own contributions which are now magnificently fleshed out in this fulsome study has now addressed this need.

Weststeijn's investigation uses Franciscus Junius' *Painting of the Ancients* as a lens through which, in his words, to tackle the issue of the 'introduction of the Ancients into a geographically peripheral painterly tradition.' Weststeijn locates its format, a lengthy essay argument supported by a multiplicity of examples drawn from ancient texts, in the classical rhetorical tradition. His detailed comparative analysis of the texts of the three editions clarifies their differing audiences and uses. Throughout he argues that Junius' text was not only a response to ideas about the art of antiquity but viewed those ideas as still contemporary. Understanding this collapsing of the distance between antiquity and 'modern' life provides a significant perspective not only on Junius' text but also explains important aspects of Netherlandish art and literature.

As attention has turned to the international character of Dutch visual culture and its world-wide reach, research projects are underway that examine cross border exchanges with Flanders, Dutch connections with Scandinavia, and more recently Asia, the Americas, and Africa. While studies of individual Netherlandish artists working in England have appeared, we still lack an understanding of the larger intellectual and artistic exchanges between the two countries. Weststeijn's first chapter begins to fill this gap. In England, Thomas Howard and Alethea Talbot actively acquired antique sculpture and inscriptions, coins and carved gems, seeking to compete with the antique collections of Italy. At the same time, their aim was to create an alternative center of antique learning north of the Alps. Junius' book was part of this project. The published work was originally envisioned as an introduction to a much larger, encyclopaedic enterprise that would collect all known ancient texts to be illustrated with engravings including objects from the Arundel collection. Junius' ambition was to join

<sup>10</sup> *Franciscus Junius F.F. and His Circle*, edited by Rolf Hendrik Bremmer, Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1998.

<sup>11</sup> Colette Nativel, 'A Plea for Franciscus Junius as an Art Theorician,' in *Franciscus Junius F.F. and His Circle*, edited by Rolf Hendrik Bremmer, Amsterdam and Atlanta: Rodopi, 1998, 19-34.

antiquarianism and philology undergirded by a comparative history of languages and the visual arts. The first audience for the Latin and English editions was the Arundels and their aristocratic circle of learned humanists who engaged in amateur conversations in and about their collection. These were ultimately part of his larger project of locating an alternative history of antiquity and culture closer to home, with a focus upon the Teutonic inhabitants at the edges of the Roman Empire.

The text is a patchwork, with his annotations and comments, of all of the Latin and Greek texts about ancient art known to Junius, including Philostratus the Athenians' *Eikones (Images)*. Chapter 2 masterfully analyzes its sources together with the differences between the Latin, English, and Dutch editions, explained by their divergent audiences. As the editors of the 1991 English edition already noted, Junius organized his quotations according to a pattern established by Quintilian. Weststeijn closely analyzes the structure thus dictated, along with the larger argument Junius makes as he adapted fragments from Cicero and Quintilian on rhetoric, substituting references to texts with comments on the visual arts. In the process, these adaptations often modified the meaning of the original.

As he worked through his translations, Junius added quotations and commentary. Both translations are longer than the original Latin edition of 1637: the English text of 1638 is 35% longer, while the Dutch text published in 1641 was enlarged by a full 70% over the Latin original. Weststeijn's comparative analysis of the language of the different editions provides us with important insight into Junius' intentions and thought. Weststeijn points out that Junius' theory of translation was liberal rather than literal, allowing for a concept central both to text and image: that of emulation. In particular, Junius invented Germanic-rooted words for ideas and practices expressed in his Latin original, which created a vernacular terminology for sophisticated conversation about paintings.

The English translation was dedicated to Alethea Talbot and directed to the aristocratic collectors in the Arundel circle. Weststeijn's analysis of the longer and more elaborate Dutch edition is particularly useful for students of Netherlandish art, since – due in large part to the Fehl edition – until now it has been the shorter English edition that has been most frequently used by scholars. As the last edition, and in Junius' native language, the Dutch edition of 1641 is the most comprehensive expression of Junius' life-long project to support and enrich a native language for discussions of art. Weststeijn argues that this Dutch edition was created with contemporary artists in mind, a much different audience than the humanist aristocrats for which the English edition was published. It provides insight into Netherlandish painting studio practice and the viewing of art by Netherlandish art lovers.

Among the Dutch terms Weststeijn analyzes is Junius' use of 'acuity perspective' (blurred outlines, or in Italian, *sfumato*), a term more often used by scholars of Italian art. While there is no documentation that Rembrandt read or was indebted to Junius, Weststeijn suggests that its more general circulation in Netherlandish circles may in part explain Rembrandt's use of the technique.

Chapter 3 locates Junius' project in the larger context of sometimes disparate and fragmentary efforts by northern contemporaries to recover a substantially invented, Anglo-Dutch Germanic past. In spite of his passion for antiquity, Junius knew the past only through texts and the artefacts that had made their way north of the Alps; he never travelled to Rome. With few material remains of antiquity in Germanic lands, texts were central to reconstructing this ancient world. As articulated by the Catholic Englishman Richard Verstegan in 1605, Dutch was the purest Germanic languages and linked the cultures of England, the Netherlands, the German states and Scandinavia.<sup>12</sup> Junius' project, then, included developing a native Teutonic language in Dutch as a counterweight to the Romance languages that predominated discussions of art and art theory.

Weststeijn traces in the visual arts two of the subjects which northern authors used to complement their philological scholarship: the Batavian tribe and their goddess Nehalennia, one of the few Germanic gods and goddesses included in the Roman pantheon. He suggests that the latter may have in part accounted for the popularity of shepherdesses in antique dress, such as Rembrandt's *Flora*. This Germanic past, however, seems to have supported differing points of view, depending upon the Catholic or Protestant context. The Dutch reception of Verstegan's *English Antiquities* emphasizes that while the Romans worshiped idols, the Batavians venerated only the natural or visible world - an idea promoted by Samuel van Hoogstraten and others. As Henri van de Waal pointed out, Dutch authors praised the perceived simplicity of their ancient forbearers.<sup>13</sup> Weststeijn elaborates upon the idea, already suggested by Nicholas Courtright and others, that the 'rough' or 'simple' style of artists such as Rembrandt may be associated with classical rhetoric and the ideals put forward in Junius' text.<sup>14</sup> While the invasion of The Netherlands by France in 1672 and the collapse of the art market cut short the further development of these ideals and their Germanic

<sup>12</sup> Richard Verstegan, *A Restitution of Decayed Intelligence: In Antiquities: Concerning the Most Noble and Renowned [sic] English Nation*, Antwerp: Robert Bruney, 1605.

<sup>13</sup> Henri van de Waal, *Drie eeuwen vaderlandsche geschied-uitbeelding 1500-1800: een iconologische studie*, 2 vols, The Hague: Nijhoff, 1952, vol. 1, 172-210.

<sup>14</sup> Nicholas Courtright, 'Origins and Meanings of Rembrandt's Late Drawing Style,' *Art Bulletin* 78/3 (1996), 485-510.

associations in Netherlandish art, Weststeijn traces their descendants to some corners of Scandinavia and the eighteenth-century sculptures at Stowe in England.

Presentation copies of the Latin edition of Junius' text, along with correspondence about the text, itemized in Table 2 of the appendix, provides a picture of its international reach among humanists. The Dutch edition participates in Junius' attempt to bridge the gap between the philological tradition and the vernacular. Chapter 4 provides a close analysis of a text by Gerardus Vossius (1577 - 1649), a substantial portion of which Weststeijn publishes for the first time in English translation. Vossius is best known as a Protestant minister who engaged in a public debate over predestination. Less well known is that, in his capacity as an educator committed to promoting education for the well-rounded humanist citizen, he penned a tract 'De graphice, sive arte pingendi' (*Graphice, or the Art of Painting*, 1650).<sup>15</sup> Vossius' text provides an insight into, and participated in, the wider dissemination of Junius' work to a broader educated audience of both art lovers as well as artists in their studio practice. The author's familiarity with Junius stemmed from being, as the husband of Junius' sister Elizabeth, Junius' brother-in-law. Eleven years older and described by Weststeijn as an 'intellectual mentor,' Vossius had introduced Junius to the Neo-Latin tradition of writing about the figurative arts. Along with Caspar Barlaeus, Vossius delivered one of the two opening lectures of the Athenaeum Illustre of Amsterdam in 1631. As an educator, he championed the inclusion of painting in the humanist curriculum of the ideal citizen, important for ethical development. Since the paintings of antiquity did not survive, the truths they expressed could still be found in ancient coins and inscriptions, best absorbed through copying in linear drawings. Vossius' thirty-page tract on the importance of *graphice* – drawing in its larger sense – was largely a popular summary of Junius' ideas on the subject. Weststeijn's careful analysis of the text's language parallels in sophistication the textual analyses of Junius' original. These texts were created for a world in which antiquity was not a distant time and place but thought to provide a guide for politics, daily life, and the role of art in culture. Central to Junius' understanding of antiquity, and circulated by Vossius, was the seamless link between antiquity and 'modern' art through the concept of emulation, linking the past and the present through references to lived experience. Classical philology was thus used to underpin a northern taste for references to everyday life including secular subjects, non-heroic imagery, and the minor genres.

<sup>15</sup> Gerardus Joannes Vossius, 'De graphice, sive arte pingendi,' in Gerardus Joannes Vossius, *De quatuor artibus popularibus ; De philologia, et scientiis mathematicis ; cui operi subjungitur, Chronologia mathematicorum, libri tres*, Amsterdam: Joannes Blaeu, 1650, 61-94.

Junius was cited by all of the subsequent major tracts on art by Netherlandish authors including Philips Angel, Cornelis de Bie, Samuel van Hoogstraten, Gerard De Lairesse, Arnold Houbraken, and Willem Goeree. Chapter 5 deals with a concept implicit in many of these authors' works which Junius is perhaps the first to discuss in detail, that of 'the beholder's share.' Most clear in the Dutch edition *tegenwoordigheydt*, or 'presence,' may be understood as the empathetic meeting of the artist and viewer in the work. Quoting Pliny, Junius argues that art lovers may be also called artists because of the constitutive role of viewer's imagination. Specifically, the work is only completed with its active recreation by the viewer in his or her mind. Engaging all of the senses, this recreation supplements the image with additional thoughts of the moments leading to that depicted, and those to come. Scholars have long discussed the importance of the viewer's imagination in the narrative turning point, or moment of 'realization,' in Rembrandt's work. But its source in antique thought, as introduced by Junius, has not before been so clear.<sup>16</sup> Weststeijn here identifies the roots of Junius' discussion in the Second Stoic writings of Philostratus whose ideas on evocative description, combined with Quintilian's rhetorical vocabulary, produce a coherent theory of artistic efficacy.

Junius engaged and promoted an antique past which could be claimed by The Netherlands and which remained alive for the 'modern' world. Weststeijn's final chapter stresses that this collapse of antiquity with contemporary life did not, however, allow for the artist's or viewer's imaginations to run wild. Rather, guided by the Stoic tradition, the imagination was to be controlled through 'lifelikeness' or references to the known in the contemporary world, based upon experience and training. In using the vocabulary of contemporary life to express ancient subjects, the conventional disparity between *nae t'leven* (after life) and *uyt den gheest* (from the imagination) was simply not relevant to Junius. This returns Weststeijn to his original observation of what is to our eyes the anachronistic combinations of contemporary and antique subjects and sites, the transportation of Holland to Latium in such works as Rembrandt's *Ganymede* or Jordaens' *Satyr*. Weststeijn concludes with a few remarks on the understanding of art in the larger culture, as an important component of civic humanism: a refuge from social turmoil, in gift exchange, a place where political enemies can find common ground, and the central role artists such as Rubens played in diplomacy.

Junius' text was the third important theoretical treatise on art published in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century after those by Karel van Mander of 1604 and

<sup>16</sup> Christian Tümpel, 'Studien zur Ikonographie der Historien Rembrandts,' *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 19 (1969), 107-98; see also Svetlana Alpers, *Rembrandt's Enterprise. The Studio and the Market*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988, esp. 34-57.

Philips Angel's shorter lecture published in 1642, and had a significant impact upon his contemporaries. Studies of van Mander, Angel, and nearly all of the subsequent Netherlandish theorists - Samuel van Hoogstraten, Gerard De Lairese, Arnold Houbraken, and Willem Goeree – have already been published. Weststeijn's thoughtful analysis of Franciscus Junius is thus highly welcome. The appendices which include a substantial excerpt from Gerardus Vossius' 1650 *De graphice, sive de arte pingendi* (The Art of Painting), an enumeration of documents tracing the seventeenth- and eighteenth-century reception of Junius' treatise, and a detailed list of the major differences between the English and Dutch editions are a priceless resource for future scholarship. The book is beautifully designed, with 178 color illustrations. In his own analysis of texts, Weststeijn is a superb stylist. His lucid and engaging prose is a pleasure to read as it vividly brings to life the people and ideas of the seventeenth century. Ranging across not only art writing but also history and literature, this book will be useful to art historians of the Dutch Golden Age and England of the mid- to late 17<sup>th</sup> century, literary scholars of the Republic of Letters, and historians, particularly those interested in the reception of antiquity in the mid- and late 17<sup>th</sup> century.

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