

inability to mobilize and control funds, or even to budget rationally, lay at the centre of each of the individual problems tackled in the bulk of the text. Full comprehension of the author's case is thus denied the frustrated reader until he has digested a whole series of incomplete judgements, judgements conditioned by material denied him by an organizational structure better suited to a detective thriller than an historical monograph.

Overall, Pritchard's case is convincing, but his work is as much an example of the weaknesses of the institutional approach to history as it is a splendid example of the genre at its most sophisticated. Throughout the text individual failures are set against the dark background of a crumbling Bourbon state and an overwhelmingly strong enemy presence off the coast. Yet the author makes no systematic attempt to work either factor into his analysis. He proves conclusively that institutional shortcomings, particularly those of a financial nature, lay at the heart of the navy's poor performance in the crisis years of 1758-59, but his limited brief prevents him from understanding the relationship between these shortcomings and important external factors. Occasional references to the stultifying effects of general governmental failure and British naval might only serve to convince the reader that full understanding of the collapse of French maritime policy is only possible outside the confines of institutional analysis. If the administrative structure of the Bourbon navy impeded reform, the relative strengths of the state behind it and that state's major adversary ultimately rendered long-term progress impossible.

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G.D. Ramsay — *The Queen's Merchants and the Revolt of the Netherlands: The End of the Antwerp Mart, Vol. II*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986. Pp. 231.

This straightforward, closely focused, and solidly researched narrative by G.D. Ramsay is, as he says in his preface, the second volume of an "enquiry into the end of the Antwerp mart in English history." "English" should receive the emphasis because, despite the implications of the title, this book is really not an analysis of the Dutch Revolt, or an analysis of the multiple causes of the decline of the Antwerp mart in European history. Throughout the book, the author interweaves two processes: the economic and political. The longstanding trade in unfinished woolen cloths from England to the Low Countries, chiefly in the hands of the Company of Merchants Adventurers (the 'Queen's Merchants' of Ramsay's title), was crucially important to the English economy, increasingly so in the sixteenth century as the volume of this trade increased sharply. It was no less essential for the English monarchs who drew a healthy proportion of their budget from customs revenues generated by the trade. Thus, any interruption of Anglo-Netherlands trade had serious economic and political ramifications. Since such trade was twice interrupted in the 1560s, it is here that Ramsay focuses.

The 'Ancient Amity' inherited from the fifteenth century between the house of Burgundy (which by the 1560s meant Spain) and the English crown was a political alliance with economic shorings, institutionalized in an agreement called 'The Intercourse.' First formulated in 1496 and reaffirmed several times in the sixteenth century, the Intercourse gave the English Merchants Adventurers a privileged position at Antwerp, of no small moment as Antwerp became the dominant entrepot of northern Europe. So, if the lords of Antwerp, Philip, Elizabeth and her Merchants had so much to gain by continuing the 'Amity' and the Intercourse, why, Ramsay ponders, did things fall apart in the 1560s? Despite his concern to show the interconnections between economics and politics, his explanation is distinctly political in its coloring, and not simply, he asserts, because of the nature of the evidence that he employs (his argument leans heavily on dispatches of ambassadors and other political papers). He admits that "there were limits to political action set by social and

economic developments," but argues that it is politically determined...The business of the merchant was deeply affected by international political alignments and agreements" (198).

Of course, by 1566 the political situation in the Low Countries was becoming tense. The popular unrest and outbreaks of iconoclasm shook the confidence of the Merchants Adventurers, and after August economic activity in Antwerp came to a standstill. Bad as 1566 was for business, it was only a squall before the storm, to use Ramsay's metaphor, that burst in late 1568; together they were catalysts to the gradual freeing of the English economy from its heavy dependence upon the Netherlands. In 1567 the Merchants, with the Queen's support, were already shopping for an alternative mart to Antwerp and signed an agreement with Hamburg.

From late 1568 until 1572 Anglo-Netherlands (and Spanish) relations were poisoned. During this critical period in the long-term development of the English seagoing economy, fate set the stage, but, as Ramsay explains it, villains, blunderers and bunglers determined the outcome of the play. A long series of diplomatic misunderstandings commenced in 1568, bringing further damage to the Antwerp mart. Elizabeth fortuitously found herself in possession of a shipload of bullion destined for Alva and his soldiers but driven to English harbor by Huguenot pirates in the channel. To force its release, Alva unwisely ordered the arrest of English merchants in the Netherlands, which simply goaded the Queen into impounding the fortune in the Tower. Suspicion of the evil intent of the other fueled the fires of discord in Anglo-Netherlands relations (one cannot help but recall Lacey Baldwin Smith's recent portrait of Tudor politics), and men like the Spanish ambassador to England Despes fanned the flames. This "zealot" wished to force England back to Catholicism by using an economic whip. He surmised England's dependence upon the Netherlands, and it was he who advised Alva to arrest the merchants and to suspend all commercial dealings with England so to bring it to its knees. Ramsay's obtuse villain did not reckon the impact such a plan would have on Antwerp and the stability of the Netherlands, but his advice was only part of a series of blunders by bungling agents of Philip. To reopen trade, Alva was prepared to offer an olive branch to the Queen (he realized — too late — that Antwerp needed English commerce perhaps more than the English needed Antwerp), but the carrier he chose was the tactless Assonleville, whom Ramsay calls an Anglophobe, and so "what the misplaced zeal of one diplomatic agent had precipitated, another in his ineptitude had failed to mitigate" (109).

If economically England and Antwerp still needed each other, subsequent events kept them apart. With the departure of Despes in 1572, the chief obstacle to reactivating the Intercourse was removed, but by now "the fate of the Antwerp mart was passing beyond international agreement" (178). When the Sea-Beggars installed themselves at the mouth of the Scheldt, there was no question of Antwerp returning to its former position of importance. "The agony of the Antwerp mart" (174) was compounded by the Spanish Fury in 1574, and the days of Antwerp's economic primacy were clearly coming to an end.

Ramsay's methodology will not dazzle, and nowhere does he refer to scholarship on the emergent European world-economy, the shifting division of labor, or nascent capitalism, but, ironically, this book does find its place in that literature. Historiographically strange bedfellows employing different terminology, Ramsay and Immanuel Wallerstein, for instance, might concur that Antwerp emerged as a 'core' which could not retain its position due to the 'failure of empire,' though Ramsay is much more inclined to explain events as products of the actions of individuals than structural forces. According to Ramsay, the actions of princes and their bungling agents, like Despes and Assonleville, "toppled Antwerp down from an epoch-making summit of prosperity in the space of a couple of decades" and he cautions that "this should not be taken to indicate that the princes could ultimately get the better of the merchants. Exactly the opposite was the case" (204). Merchants could, and did, move their capital around, beyond the grasp of kings, and, in the late sixteenth century they moved it to "the free Netherlands" (204).

That such independence from the control of one state was of profound economic importance historians of the emergent world economy and Ramsay again are likely to agree, though for different reasons. One senses that for Ramsay this period was a turning point toward some future notion of

freedom of trade, while for others its significance might lay in the emergence of global capitalism and European hegemonic domination.

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Dennis Romano — *Patricians and Popolani: The Social Foundations of the Venetian Renaissance State*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987. Pp. x, 220.

The myth of Venice as the ideal republic, stable, just and united, has informed the imaginations of historians from the period of the Renaissance. In particular, that aspect of the myth that identified the social cohesion of the republic and the absence of civil discord attracted observers from all across Europe, observers who hoped that the example of the Serenissima might be replicated in their own fragmented polities. Of course this image of Venice was indeed a myth, as the conspiracies of Bajamonte Tiepolo and Marin Falier indicate; however, it was a myth with a certain degree of truth. It is the purpose of Dennis Romano's book to investigate that basis of truth and place it in the changing social context of the Venetian republic.

Romano has chosen the dates 1297 and 1423 to contain his analysis, that is, from *serrata* that closed the Great Council until the election of Francesco Foscari as doge and the muscular pursuit of an "Italian" policy, and the abolition of the *arengo*, the ancient popular assembly which had once elected the doge himself. Between those dates Romano sees a fundamental alteration of the Venetian social fabric from one in which horizontal structures of social and class interaction gave way to vertical concepts of hierarchy, or "...exclusivity and hierarchy replaced older, freewheeling tendencies. In guilds, scuole, even in family life, a more hierarchical, status conscious ordering of Venetian society overwhelmed the more open associations of the trecento" (11).

In order to prove this contention, Romano leads his readers through a carefully crafted synthesis of the Venetian state in the early Renaissance. The government, guilds, *scuole*, workshops, religious devotions, friendships, patron-client relations, families, neighbourhoods and class are all exceptionally well reduced to their essential characteristics and investigate to illustrate Romano's thesis. This is not to say that the broad brush of statistical and prosopographical methods is used to the exclusion of the more intimate aspects of individual histories. Indeed, Romano argues himself for the importance of the examples of individual experience in supporting his wider contentions. And, generally, these specific examples are well integrated into the larger argument.

The sources Romano uses to support his position are the basic documents maintained by the republic. The vast wealth of the *archivio di stato di Venezia* are creatively and effectively mined; and the materials of *notarile*, in particular, are employed to very good purpose. These documents, together with a very well digested knowledge of the considerable scholarship in the area, provide Romano's conclusions with a degree of authority not easily achieved in the complex kind of historical research he undertook. The book clearly began as a doctoral dissertation; but it has superseded that original purpose inasmuch as it is easily accessible to general scholars in the field and the conclusions are broad and provocative; nevertheless, the meticulous attention to detail and the heavy use of scholarly apparatus remain to permit the specialist to pursue any aspect of the material.

If there are elements of the book which might be strengthened they are few. The one I might note is how the use of particular examples remains restricted, although the author makes the case effectively for their importance. I am convinced that Romano's contention that the increasingly hierarchical, aristocratic and exclusive values of the fifteenth century republic can be illustrated from the late fourteenth century through the study of *grazie*, wills, and various agencies which crossed class bounds (e.g., *scuole*, neighbourhood and parish organizations). Indeed, much of the excellent