

can and should take to eradicate rape. *Disgrace* offers a nuanced, clear, and necessary historical, sociological, and feminist analysis of modern and contemporary sexual assault, which is accessible for many readers and offers at least a glimmer of hope in dark times.

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Julie De Groot, *At Home in Renaissance Bruges. Connecting Objects, People and Domestic Spaces in a Sixteenth-Century City* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2022). 288 pp. ISBN 9789462703179.

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Julie De Groot's first book explores the houses of Bruges's 'middling sorts' in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. It joins a burgeoning line of scholarship on consumption which analyzes how social identities are negotiated and expressed via the medium of domestic material culture. Like much of this work, *At Home in Renaissance Bruges* seeks to understand 'the way behaviours were located within the material environment' (p. 31) through inventory evidence. What makes this book innovative are De Groot's chronological and thematic parameters. Her analysis encompasses non-elite households in a city undergoing a period of economic decline, thus offering a welcome alternative to the typical focus of consumption studies on affluent households in flourishing luxury centers. Additionally, the book's chronological scope, being based on inventories sampled between 1438 and 1600, successfully bridges the false divide between medieval and early modern studies which many scholars call for, but few have attempted.

After a technical introduction in which De Groot deftly dispatches the theoretical underpinnings of the book, outlines its research questions, and introduces the inventories it is based upon, the book is split into two parts. The first takes a spatial focus, with De Groot combining inventory and visual evidence to examine the 'domestic geographies' (p. 44) of Bruges's houses. An opening chapter explores the integration of retail and production spaces into the wider house. There is a laser sharp focus on context throughout this section, and De Groot's analysis of how spaces were used in different household types is grounded in an understanding of the practicalities of individual trades and the guild regulations they were subject to. The next chapter

examines the *contoor*, or study, and fills an important lacuna between scholarship on Italian Renaissance *studioli*, which explores their use for humanistic reflection and study, and work on the later *Kuntskammer*, which emphasizes how these rooms often acted for public display. De Groot finds that unlike the more culturally aspirational connoisseurial collections of later *Kuntskammer*, in sixteenth-century Bruges the *contoor* was a primarily commercial space, containing objects designed to articulate ‘the owner’s status as a trustworthy, honourable and competent business person’ (p. 97). The final spatial chapter moves to the domestic spaces of the house and examines the specialization of rooms for eating, dining, and sleeping. De Groot convincingly argues that there were definite boundaries between the commercial and domestic spaces of these houses, contributing an important interjection into the debate surrounding the public/private nature of the pre-industrial home.

The second section turns to focus on objects and opens with a chapter on paintings. De Groot exploits the textual hierarchies of inventories to recreate the location of these paintings and their associated objects to deduce how they may have been used. A particular strength here is De Groot’s comparison between her Bruges inventory evidence and that of Antwerp, as well as her emphasis that ‘locality is an important factor in the study of material culture’ (p. 165). The final chapter explores household textiles and their associated furniture and is, for me, the most exciting section of the book. With her recognizable keenness for exactitude, she highlights that household textiles enabled a multiplicity of functions and meanings for other objects and spaces. She finds that, in addition to being used differently by households of differing socio-economic status, the use of these objects also changed over time; it reflects new forms of sociability specific to these urban households, which emerged from the ‘prevailing civic culture’ (p. 209).

While the title of this book nods to art-historical scholarship on the domestic in Renaissance Italy, peers for *At Home in Renaissance Bruges* are better sought in the quantitatively grounded historiography of Northern European household material culture. De Groot’s extensive and meticulous statistical analysis of inventory evidence, focus on the middling sort, and her interest in how identities were created and displayed via everyday household objects locates her work firmly among English scholarship on the home. This book sits comfortably alongside important studies such as Jeremy Goldberg’s work on ‘bourgeois domesticity’ in York, or the recent monograph *Household Goods and*

*Good Households in Late Medieval London* by Katherine French. *At Home in Renaissance Bruges* is a meticulous piece of scholarship based upon comprehensive sampling and statistical analysis of 502 pre-modern inventories. There is a commendable emphasis on contextualization throughout the book and a tendency for caution in her interpretation of the data. For instance, De Groot found a lack of paintings in her early fifteenth-century inventory sample, though cautions that this may be a false absence, caused by the nature of those inventories and the specifics of guild regulations at that time (p. 137). Her statistical analysis is augmented by rich passages exploring the micro-historical details of the spaces and objects under discussion and by 31 full-colour plates of images and objects which bring these houses vividly to life.

There are some relatively minor issues with the readability of the book throughout. Quotations given in the original language are not consistently translated to English (e.g., *schilderie* p. 146, '*neffens d'bedde eenen setel*' p.178), and there are portions of the text with somewhat awkward phrasing and grammatical slips. These issues do not, however, detract from the overall usefulness of this work, which is methodically compiled and thoroughly researched. Each chapter intercedes meaningfully in a debated subject, and there is a consistent emphasis on individual context and specificity throughout the text. *At Home in Renaissance Bruges* eschews a singular grand narrative and instead reminds the reader of the multiplicity of ways the home could have been used across social classes, time, and locations. The final striking feature of this book for me is De Groot's inclusion of so many questions throughout her analysis: a fitting choice, as I believe this excellent book is certain to prompt further scholarship on the multiple subject matters it touches upon.

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