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Romeyn de Hooghe’s Emblem Books*

Paul Hazard proposed, in The European Mind 1680–1715, that, although
the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have been intensely studied,
the years between 1680 and 1715 remain ‘...a sort of no-man’s-land,
in which all kinds of discoveries and unlooked-for adventures may
await the explorer.’¹ For this exploration the more than 3,500 prints
by Romeyn de Hooghe (Amsterdam 1645–Haarlem 1708) provide an
unequaled visual atlas of late Baroque Europe on the threshold of the
Enlightenment.²

Considering the breadth and depth of De Hooghe’s achievement in
many areas, the art historian Otto Benesch stated:

Romeyn de Hooghe . . . is not only the greatest Dutch etcher of the second half of
the century, but the only great artist Holland produced at the end of her classical era.
He was one of the greatest illustrators of all times and comprehends within himself
all the various faculties of the universal mind of the Baroque. He was etcher, painter,
sculptor, engraver of coins, designer of all kinds of crafts, scholar and Doctor of Law.
His work is the last apotheosis of the grand Baroque spirit before its dissolution.³

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preparation of this material.

¹ P. Hazard, The European Mind 1680–1715 (Harmondsworth 1964), p. 7 (originally
published as La Crise de la conscience européenne (Paris 1935)).

² J. Landwehr catalogues over 2,800 prints in Romeyn de Hooghe as Book Illustrator
(Amsterdam 1970), and 320 prints in Romeyn de Hooghe the Etcher (Leiden 1973).
Landwehr’s projected supplement to the book illustrations will add at least several
hundred more prints to De Hooghe’s known oeuvre. Landwehr’s publications should
be used with caution; in the biographical information, for example, the information
is summarized from that in the Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek, which
is less complete than that in Van der Aa, Biographisch Woordenboek der Nederlanden,
vol. viii/2 (Haarlem [1867]), pp. 1138–42. For further information see F.G. Waller,
213–16, with bibliography. My own studies of De Hooghe’s book illustrations have
added c. 100 more than those listed by Landwehr (see William H. Wilson, The Art
of Romeyn de Hooghe: An Atlas of European Late Baroque Culture; Ph.D. diss., Harvard
University, 1974). ‘L’ in the text and notes that follow refers to Landwehr’s Romeyn
de Hooghe as Book Illustrator.

³ Otto Benesch, Artistic and Intellectual Trends from Rubens to Daumier, As Shown
In addition, De Hooghe was active as a political pamphleteer, designer of triumphal architecture, publisher and art dealer. He served as William III's Royal Commissioner of Mines for the County of Lingen, was ennobled by the King of Poland, organized a drawing school with a detailed curriculum for the city of Haarlem and served various civic and charitable organizations in that city.4

Romeyn de Hooghe's considerable achievements as a printmaker and illustrator, however, interest us the most today. Almost two-thirds of his etchings were made as book illustrations. (Landwehr lists over 2,800.) By his death in 1708 he had illustrated well over one hundred books covering a wide range of man's intellectual activity: history, science, poetry, literature, philosophy and religion. There are the frontispieces and illustrations which he made for works by classical authors including Livy, Lucretius, Petronius and Epictetus. There are also De Hooghe prints made for his contemporaries writing on classical themes—a book on ancient burial practices by Johannes Kirchmann (L. 20), another by the same author on finger rings, a work on gymnastics in the ancient world by Hieronymus Mercurialis (L. 22) and a publication describing the building of triremes by Marcus Meibomius (L. 13). Romeyn was involved throughout his career with illustrating works by Dutch authors and poets including Hugo Grotius, Frans van Hoogstraten, Constantine Huygens the Elder, Anthony van Leeuwenhoek, Antonides van der Goes and Nicolas Chevalier.

Works by non-Dutch writers (Gilbert Burnet, Marguerite de Valois, Trajanus Boccalini, A.M. Mallet, David de la Vigne, Jacob Merlo Horst and Jean Subligny, among others) were illustrated by De Hooghe. In 1685 he etched the first illustrations for De La Fontaine's *Contes et Nouvelles en vers* (L. 62). The publication was an instant success prompting the French print dealer and publisher C.H. Jombert to note in 1774 that Romeyn de Hooghe's illustrations to De La Fontaine and Boccaccio (L. 88, 1697) were important influences in the development of French Rococo book illustration.5

Together, De La Fontaine and Boccaccio illustrations and the plates made for A. de Wicquefort's *Advis Fidelle aux Véritable Hollandais* (The Hague 1673) (L. 30) are among De Hooghe's best-known works. The *Advis Fidelle* prints depict the brutal treatment of Dutch citizens by French soldiers during Louis XIV's invasion of the United Provinces in 1672, and while made in outraged reaction to a specific event, serve as indictments of inhumanity in the spirit of Callot, Goya and Dix.