Alexander Globe. *Peter Stent, London Printseller Circa 1642-1665: Being a Catalogue Raisonné of His Engraved Prints and Books with an Historical and Bibliographical Introduction*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985. xx, 268 pp.; \$75 (cloth). ISBN 0-7748-0221-9.

The origin of this study was the serendipitous discovery of two broadside advertisements for Peter Stent's wares (p. vii), one of 1653 with 160 entries (reproduced on p. vi) and one of 1662 with 402 entries (reproduced on p. 35), and the subsequent discovery of four briefer advertisements (p. 36). On this foundation Alexander Globe has built a wonderfully extensive factual edifice in which he sets forth for the first time the productions and career of a seventeenth-century printseller. The heart of the book is 'a catalogue raisonné of the 565 engraved portraits, maps, miscellaneous sheets, and books that Stent is known to have printed, as well as 69 other books without his imprint that included plates before, during, or after his ownership of them' (p. vii). The labour involved was formidable. 'Over a million prints and books were examined in an effort to track down elusive Stent items,' and 'almost every entry [in the list of engravings] has been checked against the original' (p. viii).

The factual heart of the matter is very impressive indeed. The book will be of great use to anyone concerned not only with Peter Stent but with his engravers, the subjects of his engravings, seventeenth-century print-selling in particular, or commerce in general. Alexander Globe has performed an important service for all of us.

However, readers need to distinguish clearly between the facts presented economically and persuasively here and the conclusions which Globe bases upon them. Often the evidence does not adequately support his conclusions concerning Stent's career, his aspirations, his customers, his difficulties, and his methods. He says, repeatedly, that 'Peter Stent, whose shop stood outside London's Newgate from about 1642 until his death in 1665, was the first English printseller with a large, diversified inventory of prints [or comprehensive stock]' (pp. vii, 1); but of course a study of Stent will scarcely demonstrate whether he was first or fifth in his field – indeed, it is by no means clear that the evidence survives for such a conclusion. Globe writes that 'from the fifteenth century on [i.e. until today!], engravings influenced European culture almost as profoundly as books' (p. 1). He is least persuasive when dealing with Stent's methods and motives. He states that 'Stent could not afford to hire the best engravers of the day' (p. 3), though we know scarcely anything of his financial resources; all we know is that apparently he did *not* hire the best engravers of the day (who were mostly Continental) or even the best English engravers. He says that 'without wealthy patrons to spread his reputation by word of mouth, Stent issued the first printed advertisements listing an English printseller's stock' (p. 3), but we know scarcely anything of who bought his prints. I don't know why only 'wealthy patrons' can spread a reputation by word of mouth, and it may well be that Stent's apparent priority with printed advertisements is based simply on the fact that no earlier broadside has been found – just as, until Globe's discovery of the two Stent broadsides, no such advertisement for a mid-seventeenth-century printseller was known at all. He says that because of the expense of map-making, 'most map publishers [like Stent] were forced into pirating or reprinting old plates'

(p. 31), though of course they were not 'forced' to pursue a trade which required such practises.

After an apprenticeship learning how to print copper plates, he opened a shop with a substantial stock of old plates bought from the estates of an earlier generation of print publishers. These plates proved popular to a broad working and middle-class clientele who eagerly purchased portraits, maps, military works and copybooks during the early years of his business. As time passed, Stent kept pace with the political climate [*sic*] by altering old plates and commissioning new ones for a range of English and European figures. By the restoration he was wholeheartedly imitating the grand European style, albeit within limited means.

Costs prevented Stent from fulfilling all of his ambitions.... If he could not humour the temperamental Hollar, it was largely because his clientele were more interested in the practical rather [*sic*] than the artistic. (p. 38)

Though there is, of course, *some* evidence for each of these statements, practically every one of them is suspect. We don't know what Stent's ambitions were, and we don't know the extent of his financial resources (it seems to me quite unlikely that 'working class' purchasers formed a very important segment of his customers). We don't know how many copies were sold or, within modest limits, when or how 'eagerly' they were purchased, or whether Stent's wares 'kept pace' with changing political fashions or lagged a little behind them – though they clearly changed.

The book is very generously illustrated, with hundreds of reproductions representing most of the types of plate which Stent published; many of these are in generous quarto size, though some are crowded eight to a page. Some of the most fascinating matter is in these reproductions, for Globe very generously gives us several states of some of the plates. These illustrate the canny though unscrupulous practise of making slight adjustments to a design when its subject was no longer fashionable, in order to make it appeal to a new audience. Thus an equestrian portrait of the royalist Earl of Stamford (ca. 1642) was changed so that it was said to depict Cromwell (ca. 1651, pl. 39-40); a design said to represent Cromwell on horseback (ca. 1658) was alledged in its second incarnation (1660) to represent Charles II (pl. 14-15); and the revolutionary General George Monck (ca. 1659) was altered to represent the royalist Duke of Albemarle (ca. 1660, pl. 25-26). Such practises tell us much about the standards of accuracy demanded in popular representations of public figures in the seventeenth century – and the standards of newspaper photography and cartoons may make us wonder whether we are much more fastidious today.

Globe's *Peter Stent* provides a wonderful fund of fascinating matter, the results of truly extraordinary and successful research. If only he hadn't felt it necessary, in his account of Stent's career, to suppose so far beyond his facts – and to assert so many of his suppositions so confidently.

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