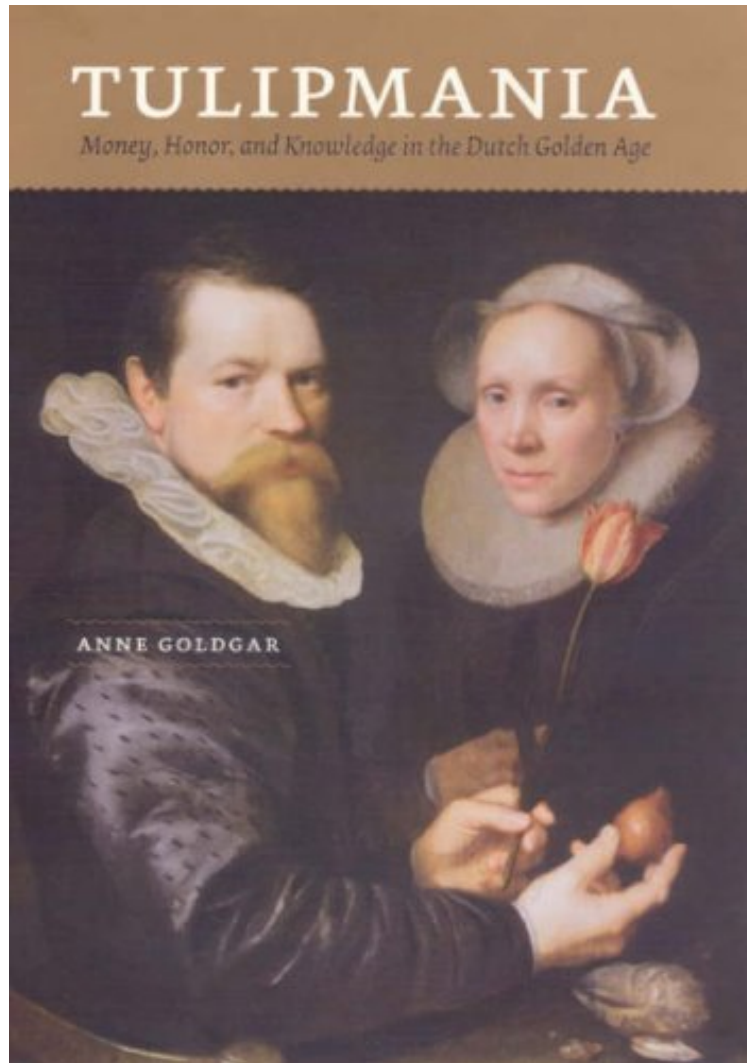


Tulipmania: Money, Honor, and Knowledge in the Dutch Golden Age

Anne Goldgar

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Anne Goldgar : Tulipmania: Money, Honor, and Knowledge in the Dutch Golden Age before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Tulipmania: Money, Honor, and Knowledge in the Dutch Golden Age:

22 of 25 people found the following review helpful. Good, but could have been better By William N. Ostrove After reading Tulipmania, I feel that the book could have been better than it was. Goldgar claims that she used firsthand sources that no one else has used to study the topic of Tulipmania before, allowing her to draw conclusions that no one has previously done. Essentially, Goldgar questions the traditional interpretation throughout history of Tulipmania, particularly the effect that the crisis actually had on Dutch society. Even though these new sources shed new light on

the topic, I felt that the book could have been delivered in a much better way. Goldgar quickly becomes bogged down with the minutia of the tulip trade. She did talk about overall trends; however, I think the book would have been much more interesting if she didn't spend as much time writing about individual transactions or individual meetings between buyers and sellers. These are necessary to establish the validity of the argument, but I think that the book would be more enjoyable with a few less of these examples. The book also could have been improved with some overall statistics about Dutch society at the time. For example, (without giving too much away) claims about the economic conditions in the Netherlands during the early 17th century could have been backed up with more than just assertions from the author. In addition, the book does not spend a lot of time on some key issues, particularly, why the prices suddenly collapsed. This may have been out of the scope of the book, and the author does state that the issue is extremely complex and has no easy answer. But I think it would have added to the book to spend a bit more time discussing a few of the possible reasons. This is not to say that the book had no positives. Simply by looking at new primary sources, the author has done a great service to anyone interested in Tulipmania, the Netherlands, or early modern Europe. Goldgar uses actual records from the transactions that took place at the time, rather than the pamphlets written by third parties at the time of and shortly after the crash in tulip prices. The author put a lot of research into the book, using those records to come up with an extensive list of buyers and sellers within the tulip trade. By doing this, she develops an accurate image of who was involved in the tulip trade and how far reaching the trade was into society. Another strong point of the book was the description of Early Modern Dutch society. An entire chapter is dedicated to art in Holland at the time and how that relates to tulips and other collectable items in Dutch society. The book also draws a number of interesting conclusions about how business was conducted in Dutch society. As the title suggests, money, honor, and knowledge were all very important themes in the Netherlands. The last chapter and the epilogue were the most interesting parts of the book to me. It is here that the author begins to use the enormous amounts of detail to draw some conclusions about Tulipmania. She explains why Tulipmania was thought to be of such great economic performance, why she feels it was not, and why she feels that the effects of the event were distorted. The epilogue ties everything together with a discussion on values and knowledge within a society. I recommend this book if you are interested in Tulipmania and/or the Netherlands during the early seventeenth century. However, be prepared to slog through minute details to get to the good stuff.

0 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Read this before you buy this book

By L. Hoover It is definitely a college-level textbook for a European History or a Netherlands History class. Save your money and read it from the library. The rating I gave it is for the scholarship and not the readability. I expected more from the large number of illustrations included--very, very few had tulips in them!

14 of 19 people found the following review helpful. Is Tulipmania a good book?

By S. N. Kras Is Tulipmania a good book, I was left wondering after having finished it. I guess to ask this question is to answer it. Still, by researching the tulip trade in the Dutch Golden Age, Anne Goldgar hit on archival gold. A massive amount of previously ill researched primary source material is combined with an impressive body of secondary literature. She combines insights from both historians and art historians. And with this wealth of material, Goldgar tells a concise and insightful story. As a nice topping, on every other page or so the book displays plates an illustrations from the period. But very often, one is left slightly baffled by Goldgar's train of thought. One is more or less ready to follow Goldgar when she argues that well-to-do Dutchmen liked to have collections tulips and shells because both could be linked to the (apparently) highly-esteemed marble. Of course, there is no way of knowing whether this was true, but the connection is interesting. When from there on, she starts a discussion on the laquo; soul-like raquo; qualities of pets and tulips in paintings opposed to paintings of cars and shells, she is clearly off the mark. Irritatingly, in books like these, Michel Foucault is never far away. When two neighbours in a neighbourhood of merchants have an informal chat about the price of tulips at their doorstep, in Goldgar's words they strenghten hierarchies of knowledge within constrained physical, cultural and commercial boundaries. And when these people go to the baker to buy a loaf of bread and discuss flowers over there, the customer, the baker *and* the bakery all may be identified as (being in the centre of) nodes of information. As for the historical narrative, despite all the insights of Tulipmania, I thought many themes were left ill explored. For example, what struck me, is that paintings depicting only tulips are hard to find. Did the "bloemisten" then really only engage in tulips as Goldgar suggests? In 1600, tulips were largely a matter of a European elite dominated by botanical specialists like Clusius. In the 1630's, it seems as if a shift occurred to the Dutch burghers. Did the academical world entirely vanish? Moreover, I thought the quantitative material was not presented very convincingly. Goldgar claims statistical correlation in the geographical spread of "bloemisten", where really I could see none. And unfortunately she chose not to include tables to present her statistics. Finally, I was frankly disappointed with the last two chapters in which Goldgar isn't able to make much of the judicial source material, fails to explain the laquo; futures trade raquo; convincingly, and is repetitive on many occasions. I suppose that these and other issues might be explored in future histories on tulips in the Dutch Golden Age, for which Goldgar's "Tulipmania" will be a mandatory starting point.

In the 1630s the Netherlands was gripped by tulipmania: a speculative fever unprecedented in scale and, as popular history would have it, folly. We all know the outline of the story; how otherwise sensible merchants, nobles, and

artisans spent all they had (and much that they didn't) on tulip bulbs. We have heard how these bulbs changed hands hundreds of times in a single day, and how some bulbs, sold and resold for thousands of guilders, never even existed. Tulipmania is seen as an example of the gullibility of crowds and the dangers of financial speculation.

"Tulipmania is in every way a model of historical scholarship, an exemplary piece of historical craftsmanship. Every page is rife with rich human detail, and Goldgar's lively and elegant style carries the reader, enthusiasm and curiosity undimmed, to the stimulating conclusion. Above all, this is revisionist history of the best kind."
(Anthony Grafton, Princeton University)"This is wonderful book, beautifully written and sustained by archival scholarship of the highest order. Its devastating and original demolition of the myth of Tulip mania, the fineness of historical judgment and the painstaking reconstructions so effortlessly conveyed on the page make it a pleasure to read."