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*Becoming Bourgeois: Merchant Culture in the South,
1820-1865 (review)*

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binding society together through mutual engagement in both domestic and public social reform. These ideals were reflected in patronage for the visual arts, as well-known figures such as Nicholas Longworth and other individuals commissioned paintings and also supported libraries, children's schools, mechanics' education, the Humane Society, and arts organizations such as the Western Art Union and the Cosmopolitan Art Association. This social climate, Katz argues, supported hopes for a diverse citizenry engaged in mutually agreeable social improvement, yet she is careful to observe that these were predominantly middle-class values; such affirmations obscured economic barriers to class membership while pressuring both elites and workers to conform to their codes (9).

Katz sees the works of three well-known artists with links to the city—Lilly Martin Spencer, Robert Duncanson, and Hiram Powers—as illustrating these complex civic goals although none was born or stayed there; Spencer moved to New York, Duncanson traveled in Europe, and Powers eventually set up a sculpture studio in Italy. Yet Katz ties each artist's themes to the city's cultural affirmation of harmonizing and egalitarian cultural ideals. She suggests that Spencer's genre paintings of lively women and children explore the tensions within contemporary discourses of democratic egalitarianism, educational improvement, and gender propriety. She positions Duncanson's landscape paintings in relation to beliefs in nature as a source of both spiritual and moral improvement, and addresses Hiram Power's Neoclassical figures of nude yet morally idealized women as exemplifying contemporary codes of civility and honor in relation to slavery and freedom

With detailed references to wide-ranging cultural and civic developments, *Regionalism and Reform* offers a rich trove of fascinating details and thoughtful interpretations. Katz's thoroughly researched book is an important study and a model for further scholarly efforts to locate individual artists and works within the complex scope of American social and political values played out among varied classes in specific geographical settings.

American University Helen Langa

BECOMING BOURGEOIS: Merchant Culture in the South, 1820–1865. By Frank J. Byrne. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky. 2006.

In this carefully researched book, Frank Byrne analyzes the culture of antebellum southern merchants and their families. Using not only business documents and newspapers but also diaries, letters, and family papers to uncover their worldview, he finds a group bound “into something approaching a class with distinct interests . . . a dynamic, self-identified community” (3). Although southern merchants “did not produce” (3) a distinct ideology, they shared habits, aspirations, and attitudes that set them apart. Playing an economic role that was distrusted in the Old South, they encountered enormous hostility during the Civil War but emerged, nevertheless, equipped to prosper in the New South.

Merchants “tended to establish themselves in more wealthy, settled regions of the South” (16) and their economic interests tended to align them with the planter class and the Whig Party. But the requirements of their business forced many to travel frequently to the North and such separations “inevitably weakened patriarchal authority” in families whose domestic relations “were evolving into something more akin to those found in northern homes” (36, 78). These families “readily embraced the developing capitalist market economy” and exhibited “behavior historically associated with the northern middle classes” (93). But they were merely in the process of *becoming* bourgeois. Their dedication to slavery, patriarchy, and a conservative evangelical Christianity “proved a critical barrier to the kind of intellectual transformation necessary for them to become

truly bourgeois" (102). Still, merchants' social standing "remained tenuous" as "the region's farmers, planters, and artisans often viewed the merchant's commercial world" with "suspicion or outright hostility" (40).

If the merchant operated "within a cultural and economic no-man's-land" (75) in the antebellum period, he became "the ultimate outsider in the embattled Confederacy" (179). Merchants were often reluctant to secede, as they accurately foresaw the disruption that war would bring to their business and their families. They probably could not foresee the hostility and "flow of abuse" that by 1863 condemned them as "rapacious, unpatriotic, and alien" in a Confederate society suffering from shortages and rampant inflation (187). Yet merchants were an important element of continuity between the Old South and the New South and were ready at war's end to "embrace the same goals as 'bourgeois' New York businessmen." Byrne suggests that scholars have "underestimated the economic continuity that bound the antebellum, Confederate, and postbellum South into a commercial whole" (208).

An appendix summarizes Byrne's analysis of merchants in twenty-two counties selected from nine states in the 1850 census. Averaging only 1.8 percent of the free population, these merchants (virtually all of whom were male) were predominantly southern in origin, tended to be in their thirties, averaged \$2,542 in real estate, and had an average family size of 4.5. Roughly one-quarter had a clerk living in their homes. Nearly one-quarter owned slaves, and the average size of their slaveholdings was 7.9 (209-14).

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GEORGE INNESS AND THE SCIENCE OF LANDSCAPE. By Rachel Ziady DeLue. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. 2004.

The painter George Inness is known for hazy atmospheres, soft colors, and blurred forms in prosaic landscapes that seem quite unlike the detailed and dramatic vistas of his peers in the Hudson River School of landscape painting. While Inness's career followed similar patterns to theirs, Rachel Ziady DeLue ascribes his divergent style to his unique "scientific" system of painting. DeLue's book successfully restores awareness of what contemporaries considered the strangeness and idiosyncrasy of Inness's art. She argues that Inness is important because his very oddities demonstrate that American nature was a place open not only to statements of national identity, but to artists and writers who wanted to theorize how the world worked, by experimenting with science, religion, and the limits of perception.

The book is not a biography, nor organized chronologically, as DeLue believes sociopolitical circumstances say little about picture-making. Instead, the first three chapters offer an intellectual history of Inness's philosophy, painstakingly uncovering his construction in words and paint of a model for "spiritual sight" (3). As a self-proclaimed metaphysician, Inness's artistic theory and practice drew on both Emanuel Swedenborg's doctrine of correspondences between the spiritual and the natural, and contemporary optics. By literally reforming vision, DeLue argues, Inness intended his art to bring the viewer's perceptions closer to the divine. DeLue sympathetically and comprehensively accounts for the convoluted psychological and physiological strands informing Inness's thought, and is equally attentive to how his process of painting exemplified his aims. Subsequent chapters turn to Inness's earlier, more conventional picturesque and allegorical pictures, on which she can then project the same struggle—albeit through poetry and moral associationism—to create an alternative model for acquiring knowledge of the world. DeLue's analysis of the terms of nineteenth-