THE PROCEEDS OF PROSPERITY: IMAGES OF DOMESTIC MONEY MANAGEMENT AND EXCHANGE IN DUTCH GENRE PAINTING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

by

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Doctor of Philosophy

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to those who believed I could complete it. Their encouragement, occasional cheerleading, and concern reinforced my efforts. A special recognition goes to my children, who have never known their mother as anything other than a student.

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I would like to acknowledge the assistance and support of all of those who encouraged my efforts. Special acknowledgement goes to the kind assistance and encouragement of Linda Stone-Ferrier, my advisor, who was an essential actor throughout my journey to become an art historian, and without whose patience and advice this document would have never been completed.

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INTRODUCTION

"Bread is made for laughter,
and wine gladdens life,
and money answers everything."
-Ecclesiastes 10:19

The Proceeds of Prosperity: Images of Domestic Money Management and Exchange in Dutch Genre Painting in the Middle of the Seventeenth Century aims to provide a comprehensive study of genre paintings of household money management and exchange produced in the Netherlands in the middle of the seventeenth century. The range of imagery dealing with money management and exchange is extremely limited; the specific themes portrayed in this well-defined category of painting determine the organization of the chapters within this dissertation.

A focus on genre paintings of money management and exchange is, primarily, a focus on how artists and patrons at the middle of the seventeenth century in the Netherlands chose to portray and view their relationship with wealth. During the course of the seventeenth century in the Netherlands the rising urban burgher class forged a new relationship to their monetary status, one that was both reflected in and shaped by the images they chose to display in their homes.

Genre paintings of money management and exchange provide a unique perspective into the contemporary mindset surrounding the practices portrayed. As Gregory Clark states in *A Farewell to Alms: A Brief Economic History of the World*, "income is more powerful than any ideology or religion in shaping lives. No God has commanded worshippers to their pious duties more forcefully than income as it subtly

directs the fabric or our lives."[1] The manner in which the seventeenth-century Dutch chose to view their peers relating to money, painted in the contemporary metaphor of domestic, gendered household scenes of daily duties, serves as a locus for the exploration of the larger early modern economy and society as a whole.

Within this dissertation the paintings are explored thematically. The first chapter, "Taking Stock: Money Weighing and Account Keeping," examines images of money weighing and account keeping. Paintings such as Vermeer's *Woman Holding a Balance* encouraged contemporary viewers to prudent business practice through the didactic metaphor of domestic economic duty. Mid-century depictions of money weighing and account keeping reveal a society that held complex and conflicting views of the changing socio-economic roles portrayed within the paintings. Just as the subjects "take stock," their viewers were encouraged to do the same, not only of the viewers' own monetary situations, but also of their morality.

Chapter two, "Domestic Duty: Expectations for Household Expenditures," explores genre paintings of the purchase of comestibles. Paintings such as Pieter de Hooch's *A Woman Giving a Coin to a Maid* participated in a dialogue on the socio-economic relationships of different classes within seventeenth-century Netherlandish society. The paintings emphasize the interdependent nature of the social order, and thereby legitimize the activity of the merchant class. The purchase of food becomes a metaphor for other economic interactions, celebrating the merchant class as the

[1] Gregory Clark, *A Farewell to Alms: A Brief Economic History of the World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 4.

patrons not only of art, but also of business in general, their largesse providing the coin necessary to drive the contemporary economic boom.

Chapter three, "Civic Charity: Expectations for Private Giving," explores the limited number of paintings of scenes of private charity produced at mid-century. Images such as Gabriel Metsu's *Woman Giving Alms to a Boy* and Jacob Ochtervelt's *Street Musicians at the Door* explore the subject of individual charitable giving, revealing and reflecting the redefinition of social roles within the contemporary society. In addition to the attempt to acculturate the poor through the regulation of relief by strictly governed social institutions, mid-seventeenth-century genre paintings of charitable giving also participated in a redefinition of socially appropriate gender roles. Such paintings presented a didactic depiction of women as the arbiters of youthful male behavior with responsibility for the instillation of a work ethic in young boys.

Chapter four, "Mercenary Money: The Purchase of Illicit Love," explores images such as Gerard ter Borch's *Soldier Offering a Young Woman Coins.* In such paintings, the viewer is allowed to contemplate the similarities of licit and illicit affairs. Sex, money, and alcohol tie the experiences together and emphasize the tension between titillation and didactic narrative allowing the contemporary viewer to contemplate the roles appropriate to both genders in sexual and financial relations. The images allowed viewers to consider the activities depicted, and evaluate their own behavior in relation to the painted scene. In light of contemporary social

practices, these depictions both reflect and partake in sculpting the seventeenth-century urban upper class perceptions of acceptable intimate relations.

These four chapters are tied together by the subject matter of the paintings discussed (genre images from the middle of the seventeenth century that address the exchange of money), but also through the use of gender as a metaphor to establish social control. Dutch genre paintings of the domestic utilization of money do not simply reflect contemporary economic practices in a journalistic manner. Rather, they responded pictorially to selected social pressures felt by the urban upper class through a visual demarcation of public and private realms marked also by divisions of class and gender.

Genre scenes of individuals interacting with money are simultaneously informed by multiple factors -- not only are they influenced by views of gender and class, but also by ideas about religion, ethics, civic duty, and morals, as well as the impact of these beliefs upon proper economic activities. The relatively small number of paintings that include the depiction of money, combined with the fact that there are comparatively few print images of these same subjects, indicate a limited audience for such subject matter.

The depiction of monetary activities is a category of subjects for which the traditional pictorial conventions were in flux, reflecting the changes occurring in society. When attention is focused on the selectivity of subject matter and the initial ambiguity of meaning, the interpretation of paintings of money management and

exchange reveals a society with complex views of monetary transactions and the individuals involved in such economic activities.

CHAPTER 1

TAKING STOCK: MONEY WEIGHING AND ACCOUNT KEEPING IN MID-SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY DUTCH PAINTING

Framing the Discussion: An Outline

During the economic and artistic prosperity of the middle of the seventeenth century in the Netherlands, Dutch genre painters produced a small number of images of individuals "taking stock" of their specific economic situation, either by weighing coins in order to evaluate their true worth, or recording transactions in a ledger, that provide a distinct perspective on the seventeenth-century Dutch assessment of prosperity. Paintings such as Johannes Vermeer's *Woman Holding a Balance*, Pieter de Hooch's *Woman Weighing Gold*, Cornelis de Man's *A Man Weighing Gold* and Nicolaes Maes' *The Account Keeper* (figures 1-1, 2, 3, and 4) present members of the Dutch urban merchant class in affluent domestic settings as they conduct everyday acts of economic evaluation. As purported representations of everyday economic activities, such images provided the viewer with a locus for the exploration of contemporaneous views of economic prosperity.

As selective depictions of commonplace activities, genre scenes provided a site for artists and viewers to explore the relative prosperity of the society through the metaphor of a well-run domestic household. The images allowed their affluent viewers to relate to the activities performed by the anonymous subjects, and evaluate the economic prosperity of their own household and society in relation to the image.

The subject matter, that of comparing the perceived value of an object (the face value of a coin, or stated balance of an account) with its actual value (the material value of a coin, or the actual value of payments received) and domestification of these monetary activities within well-furnished affluent households, allowed contemporary concerns about the quickly changing early modern economy to be displaced onto the moral action of the individual. Paintings of "taking stock" took part in the social pressure to conform; through the didactic metaphor of domestic economic duty, viewers were encouraged to prudent business practice.

Figure 1-1: Johannes Vermeer, *Woman Holding a Balance*, canvas, c. 1662-64, National Gallery of Art, Widener Collection, Washington D.C.

Figure 1-2: Pieter de Hooch, *Woman Weighing Gold*, canvas, c. 1664, Staatliche Museem zu Berlin-Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin.

Figure 1-3: Cornelis de Man, *A Man Weighing Gold*, canvas, c. 1670-75, private collection.

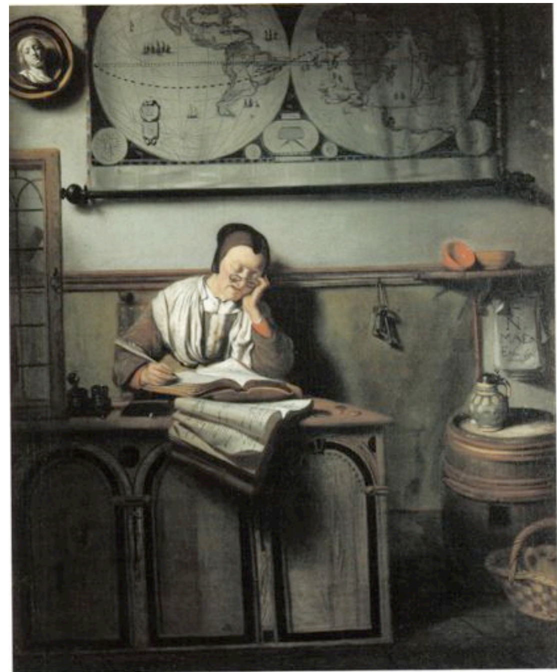

Figure 1-4: Nicolaes Maes, *The Account Keeper*, canvas, 1656, St. Louis Art Museum, St. Louis.

Most mid-century paintings of “taking stock” are remarkably similar, as Dutch artists chose to portray the actually commonplace actions of money weighing and the maintenance of accounting records in very selective terms. Differences in gender, age, and social status were utilized to convey nuanced and complex views about the contemporary economic and social milieu. While the paintings were created during a time of remarkable economic expansion and the rapid growth of private wealth, this period of economic fortune was also one of economic instability. Consequently, mid-century paintings of “taking stock” tend to convey affirmative views of proper money management while simultaneously conveying a sense of concern about the rapidly changing socio-economic climate.

The careful selection of the particular acts depicted, as well as the details of the manner of portrayal, focus the viewer on certain aspects of the contemporary socio-economic situation. Figures are shown in acts of evaluation, not quantification, as they weigh coins rather than count them. The act of weighing is one of assessment, as the actual value of an item, rather than its perceived, or face value, is evaluated. Further, the beneficial effect of the prudent management of money on the individual and larger society finds emphasis through the domestication of monetary activity within the upper-class mercantile household, well-furnished with the comforts that result from the proper and ethical economic activity of the merchant class.

Mid-century Dutch paintings deliver a subtle didactic message that economic evaluation is both a moral and civic duty. The scenes depicted are explicitly domesticated and removed from any sort of an open, public atmosphere. Often

women, and not men, perform the acts depicted. While paintings of "taking stock" do accurately depict commonplace activities, the artists have narrowed the focus through the depiction of these acts in a domesticated, private, upper-middle-class setting. However, the paintings address the necessity of the well-run society through the metaphor of the well-run domestic household and its presumably resultant prosperity.

Mid-century paintings of money weighing and account keeping reveal a society with complex and conflicting views of the changing socio-economic roles portrayed within the paintings. Not only do the subjects "take stock," but viewers are encouraged to do the same, both in regards to the viewers' own monetary situation and morality. In the case of Vermeer's *Woman Holding a Balance* (figure 1-1), the call to individual assessment displayed through the depiction of prudent management of finances was also utilized as a contemporary parallel for the religious act of contemplation. Just as the subject of the painting makes a careful assessment of value, the viewer is called to evaluate his/her own integrity. As will be discussed subsequently, by focusing the viewer first on the act of perception, then on prudent action, and subsequently, through subtle references to the example of the penitent Mary Magdalen, Vermeer created a complex layered allegory that emphasized the moral undertones of an everyday task. While the religious references to Mary Magdalen found in Vermeer's painting are singular within this category of painting, images of "taking stock" convey didactic messages to their viewers about expected social and economic duties.

Mid-seventeenth-century Dutch paintings of money management depict an historical activity not readily apparent to the modern viewer, for which a set procedure and pictorial vocabulary had been developed. Paintings of economic evaluation have often been considered as examples of immoral behavior. A fresh evaluation of images of "taking stock" requires a clarification of two previously misunderstood aspects of depictions of money management. The consideration of paintings such as Pieter de Hooch's *Woman Weighing Gold* (figure 1-2) as a metaphor for proper conduct and morality requires an accurate historical understanding of the activity depicted. In turn, an exploration of the nuances of the pictorial vocabulary for the depiction of the subject of money management provides a framework for the evaluation of the meaning of mid-century paintings.

The precise subjects chosen and the details of their depiction in images of "taking stock" reveal that contemporary views of economic activities were also extremely nuanced. Laudatory views of the proper conduct of business and resultant prosperity were combined with a simultaneous unease about the consequent rapid changes in social roles. Carefully selected and explicitly domesticated images of economic evaluation compensated for the societal discomfort by creating a restrained metaphor for the larger commercial world.

Defining the Subject: The Measurement of Wealth

Previous interpretations of Vermeer's *Woman Holding a Balance* (c. 1662-64, figure 1-1) have focused upon the action of the young woman holding a balance before a table with boxes, coins, pearls, and chains upon it, and attempted to

determine which of the objects, if any, she is about to weigh, and what meaning her action carries.[2] However, the balance that the young woman holds would have made clear to the contemporary viewer which of the objects upon the table she intends to weigh. The size and form of the pans of the balance indicate that it is the type of scale (figure 1-5) used in the seventeenth century to weigh coins.[3] One pan, the farthest to the left in the painting, is rounded, and in this pan the brass weight appropriate to the denomination of the coin would be placed.[4] The other pan, to the right, with its three shorter strings, is triangular in shape, and would hold a single coin.[5] This form of balance was particular to money scales used for the evaluation of coins.[6] The box of coin weights placed upon the table in the painting further confirms the activity that takes place.

Coin scales, coins, and weight boxes are also depicted in other paintings of the period (figures 1-2, 1-3).[7] The figures portrayed in these paintings have assembled the items upon the tables before them with the intention of weighing coins in order to

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[2] There has been much debate over what is in the balance; the painting has been variously titled as a gold weigher or a pearl weigher. Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., *Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 372, asserts that microscopic analysis has revealed that the pans of the balance are empty, as the paint is not consistent with the way in which Vermeer represents gold or pearls elsewhere in the painting.
[3] Bruno Kisch, *Scales and Weights: A Historical Outline* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1965), 42, 70, provides a detailed description of money scales, as well as several illustrations of extant scales from the seventeenth and eighteenth century.
[4] Ibid., 70.
[5] Ibid. Coins in the seventeenth century, while expected to have a certain weight according to the denomination, did vary -- they could be over or under weight.
[6] Ibid., 139. Marc Shell, *Art and Money* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 107, discusses how the history of valuation of coins gradually shifted from a value based solely on material value to an intellectual value, where the face value was accepted regardless of the material worth.
[7] For a complete discussion of coin scales, the boxes that housed them, and the details of their use, see Kisch, *Scales and Weights*.

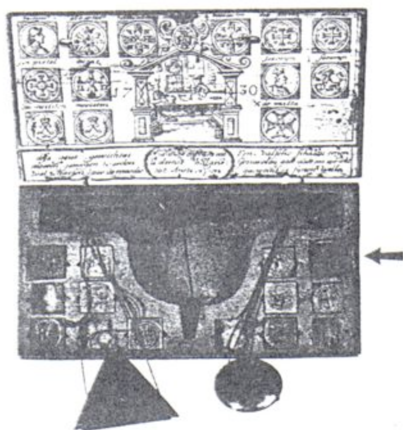

Figure 1-5: Weight and Scale Box, Antwerp, 1730.

evaluate their true worth.[8] The activity was a commonplace, necessary and prudent economic behavior because of the specific contemporary economic situation.

Currency in the Netherlands during the seventeenth century was irregular. As paper money did not develop in Europe until 1690, the currency in use was metal coins.[9] Coinage, however, was plagued by multiple problems. First, there was not a singular minting establishment controlled by the central government.[10] There were fourteen active mints in the Netherlands, and while the Union of Utrecht in 1579 authorized the central government to set uniform monetary policy, the government did not have direct control over the mints in each province.[11] The central government

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[8] This action was also previously misinterpreted in the case of de Hooch's *A Woman Weighing Gold*. See Peter C. Sutton, *Pieter de Hooch* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 96, where he suggests that she is actually weighing gold coins against silver coins (instead of using coin weights). Such an activity would serve no practical purpose.

[9] Niall Ferguson, *The Cash Nexus: Money and Power in the Modern World, 1700-2000* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 146.

[10] Jan de Vries and Ad van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy: Success, Failure, and Perseverance of the Dutch Economy, 1500-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 281.

[11] Ibid., and Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall, 1477-1806,* Oxford History of Early Modern Europe (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 295.

set a standard weight and fineness (metal content) for Dutch coins, yet it was up to each mint to regulate its own production.[12] Debased ("clipped" or under-weight) coins resulted.[13]

To further complicate the situation, there were further variations in the coins utilized in trade. Foreign coins, both of full value and debased, were widely circulated.[14] The coins utilized in foreign trade also varied; Spanish coins were often traded early in the century.[15] When Dutch coins were substituted later in the century, the weight the government set for the guilder was different for foreign trade than that allowed for domestic transactions.[16]

The actual value of coins used for everyday transactions varied greatly. In order to deal with the resultant confusion, coins were routinely weighed in order to assess their true material value.[17] The apparatus necessary was a small scale (figure 1-5) designed exclusively for weighing coins and several weights that conformed to the prescribed weights of the various denominations.[18] A small wooden box that could be easily carried in a pocket housed the coin scales and weights.[19] The boxes were

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[12] De Vries and Van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy*, 282, Israel, *The Dutch Republic,* 295, and Raymond W. Goldsmith, *Premodern Financial Systems: A Historical Comparative Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 212.
[13]De Vries and Van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy,* 82.
[14] De Vries and Van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy*, 82, and also J. A. van Houtte, *An Economic History of the Low Countries 800-1800* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), 211-212, and Goldsmith, *Premodern Financial Systems*, 211-212.
[15] For the use of Spanish coins, see Van Houtte, *An Economic History*, 200, and Goldsmith, *Premodern Financial Systems*, 212.
[16] On the variation in the allowable weight of the guilder, see Ferguson, *The Cash Nexus*, 146.
[17] Keith Moxey, "The Criticism of Avarice in Sixteenth-Century Netherlandish Painting," *Netherlandish Mannerism: Papers Given at a Symposium in Nationalmuseum*, Stockholm, September 21-22, 1984, ed. Gorel Cavalli-Bjorkman (Stockholm: Nationalmuseum, 1985), 22.
[18] For a complete discussion of the history of coin scales, and the details of their use, see Kisch, *Scales and Weights*.
[19] Kisch, *Scales and Weights*, 134-137.

common household objects in the seventeenth century.[20] Designed for ease of use, each weight was labeled, sometimes by the reproduction of the face of the coin on the weight.[21]

Money scales followed a standard form in the Netherlands with one rounded pan for the brass weight appropriate to the denomination of the coin and a triangular pan that would hold a single coin.[22] This form was particular to balances used for evaluating coins.[23] The box in which the scales and weights were kept carried not only the name of the maker of the box, but also of the weights, and the balance.[24] The government regulated the manufacturers of money scales, and to further encourage their prudent use, many of the boxes were marked with biblical passages from Deuteronomy and Leviticus that emphasized just weighing.[25]

During a period when the actual value of a coin was based on its material value (or metal content) rather than face value (or denomination), weighing coins was a necessary and sensible business practice.[26] Similarly, the maintenance of paper records of business transactions in account books was also part of the prudent

[20] Eddy de Jongh, "On Balance," in *Vermeer Studies*, ed. Ivan Gaskell and Michiel Jonker, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 361.
[21] Kisch, *Scales and Weights*, 132.
[22] Ibid., 70.
[23] Ibid., 139.
[24] The same individual neither necessarily nor usually manufactured the components. Ibid., 137.
[25] Ibid., 5. Deuteronomy 25:15 reads, "A full and just weight you shall have, a full and just measure you shall have; that your days may be prolonged in the land which the Lord your God gives you." Leviticus 19:35-36 reads, "You shall do no wrong in judgment, in measures of length or weight or quantity. You shall have just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin." *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with Apocrypha, Revised Standard Version,* ed. Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).
[26] A modern parallel might be the act of reconciling, or "balancing" one's bank statement.

merchant's daily routine.[27] The evaluation of business and personal accounts necessitated accurate written records of transactions. Many previous art historical interpretations of mid-century Dutch paintings of "taking stock" do not acknowledge that the activities depicted were an integral, necessary, and commonplace part of business practice. The accurate description of contemporary circumstances calls into question the assumption that all depictions of money weighing and account keeping provide examples of how not to behave. Rather, as will be argued here, a careful examination of nuances and details of each depiction reveals multi-faceted views of the activities portrayed.

Previous art historical interpretations of mid-seventeenth-century Dutch paintings of "taking stock" have also relied upon comparison to numerous examples from the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century pictorial tradition that depict the sin of avarice. However, examples within the pictorial tradition that depict the fair and prudent use of money scales also exist. Dutch artists from the mid-sixteenth through the early seventeenth century refined the pictorial vocabulary for the depiction of money management established during the sixteenth century. While Flemish artists created strident allegorical depictions of the sin of avarice, their Dutch counterparts created images that conveyed messages about proper behavior in more restrained genre scenes. Mid-sixteenth through early seventeenth-century Dutch artists replaced overt symbols of sin and wrongdoing with a nuanced understanding of the precise

[27] Van Houtte, *An Economic History*, 207, discusses how the actual records and methods of keeping them varied; while double-entry bookkeeping was known in the seventeenth-century Netherlands, it was not widely utilized.

actions necessary in order to perform the activity depicted in the proper manner. A deeper understanding of the pictorial traditions out of which mid-seventeenth-century Dutch paintings of "taking stock" arose reveals a strong debt of seventeenth-century images to mid-sixteenth-century through early seventeenth-century depictions of prudent business practice.

A Visual Vocabulary: The Relationship to Pictorial Precedent

During the sixteenth century, figures weigh coins or evaluate accounts in secular scenes. Paintings produced by Quentin Metsys and his circle include both depictions of prudent business conduct as a model of moral behavior and derogatory depictions of tax collectors and lawyers. Sixteenth-century portraits of merchants also transmit favorable views of good business practice.

The Moneylender and His Wife (1514, figure 1-6) by Quentin Metsys exemplifies the sixteenth-century pictorial tradition of depicting the act of money weighing as a responsible business practice.[28] In *The Moneylender and His Wife* a man holds a coin scale delicately in his left hand. He weighs one coin from a carefully sorted pile in front of him on the scale as he holds the next coin to be weighed in his right hand. He works by the bright light of day, revealed by a reflection of vividly illuminated windows in the small mirror in the foreground. His eyes downcast and heavily lidded, he carefully scrutinizes the balance. The woman on

[28] For discussions of the painting as a depiction of a professional act performed in a responsible manner, see Moxey, "The Criticism of Avarice in Sixteenth-Century Netherlandish Painting," 21-34, p. 22, and Larry Silver, *The Paintings of Quinten Massys* (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield, 1984), 136. This interpretation is augmented by the fact that the frame of the painting had an inscription on it from Leviticus 19:36, "Let the balance be just and the weights equal."

the right, briefly pausing from her prayerbook as she turns the page, watches his action attentively.

Figure 1-6: Quentin Metsys, *The Moneylender and His Wife*, panel, 1514, The Louvre, Paris.

The contemplative actions of the woman remind both the moneychanger and the viewer of the moral responsibility inherent within an act of evaluation.[29] In Metsys' conception of *The Moneylender and His Wife*, the worldly activities of a businessman (here depicted during an act of an economic evaluation performed with care and scrutiny) display how proper moral behavior can be exercised within a worldly profession.[30]

[29] Elizabeth Alice Honig, "Counting out Their Money: Money and Representation in the Early Modern Netherlands," *Leidschrift* 13:2 (1998), 31-66, pp. 40-41, discusses Metsys' painting as a depiction of just weighing which emphasizes the religious significance of the act portrayed.
[30] Silver, *The Paintings of Quinten Massys*, 136.

Portraits of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century merchants also portray the responsible exercise of economic activities.[31] Maerten van Heemskerck's *Portrait of a Merchant* (1529, figure 1-7) depicts a well-dressed man who counts coins with one hand, while holding open an account book with his other hand. Jan Gossaert's *Portrait of a Banker* (c. 1530, figure 1-8) similarly depicts a male figure who writes in an open account book with an array of coins, money scales, papers, and other accoutrements of his occupation surrounding him. While such portraits of individuals at work were not extremely common in the seventeenth century, a few examples are extant.

Figure 1-7: Maerten van Heemskerk, *Portrait of a Merchant*, panel, 1529, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Figure 1-8: Jan Gossaert, *Portrait of a Banker*, panel, c. 1530, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

[31] Portraits of merchants with coins and other accoutrements of their profession are discussed by Honig, "Counting Out Their Money," and Basil S. Yamey, *Art and Accounting* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 18-30. Yamey, 20, notes that portraits of merchants performing economic activities were rare. On this point, see also David Smith, "Rhetoric and Prose in Dutch Portraiture," *Dutch Crossing* 41 (1990), 165-166.

Bartholomeus van der Helst's *Portrait of Daniel Bernard* (1669, figure 1-9) continues the tradition of depicting the merchant busy at his account books, giving evidence that the seventeenth-century viewer also held a positive view of the actions necessary for a properly led business life.[32] Pendant portraits from the studio of Rembrandt depicting Jan Pellicorne and Susanna van Collen offer an even more telling example of the positive views held by the seventeenth-century Dutch regarding proper money management (figures 1-10, 11). Jan Pellicorne hands his son a bag of money, and Susanna van Collen hands her daughter a coin. These portraits display the pride the upper middle classes felt in their ability to prudently manage money and their professional and domestic economic duties.[33]

Figure 1-9: Bartholomeus van der Helst, *Portrait of Daniel Bernard*, 1669, Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam.

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[32] Yamey, *Art and Accounting*, 20.
[33] Honig, "Counting Out Their Money."

Figure 1-10: Studio of Rembrandt van Rijn, *Jean Pellicorne and his Son Casper*, c. 1632-34, The Wallace Collection, London.

Figure 1-11: Studio of Rembrandt van Rijn, *Susanna van Collen, Wife of Jean Pellicorne, and her Daughter Anna*, c. 1632-34, The Wallace Collection, London.

The individuals depicted in portraiture with reference to their roles as merchants, bankers, and moneychangers were almost exclusively men. However, in *Girl Weighing Gold* (c. 1530-35, figure 1-12), Jan van Hemessen depicts Margaret of Parma, the illegitimate daughter of Emperor Charles V, seated at a table with a box of weights before her, a balance held delicately in her right hand.[34] Her knowledge and skill in economic matters convey the favorable view of such ability held by the wealthier class.[35]

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[34] On Jan van Hemessen's *Girl Weighing Gold* as a portrait of Margaret of Parma, see Burr Edgar Wallen, *Jan van Hemessen: An Antwerp Painter Between Reform and Counter-Reform* (UMI Research Press: Studies in Renaissance Art History, 1983), 32, figure 18. Margaret of Parma was raised in the Netherlandish court under the care of Margaret of Austria and Mary of Hungary.

[35] Wallen, *Jan van Hemessen*, 32.

Figure 1-12: Jan van Hemessen, *Girl Weighing Gold*, panel, c. 1530-35, Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen, Berlin.

However, portraits that reference individuals' abilities to conduct business prudently vary from the genre scenes examined here in a significant manner; the identity of the sitters is known, and, presumably, a patron would not desire to be depicted in a negative manner. The depiction of anonymous individuals allows for a fuller range of interpretation.

Sixteenth-century Netherlandish artists also created satirical depictions of monetary activity inspired by a now lost paining by Quentin Metsys.[36] Marinus van Reymerswaele's *The Tax Collectors* (c. 1540, figure 1-13) satirizes the activities of

[36] Silver, *The Paintings of Quinten Massys*, 138.

corrupt tax collectors.[37] An old man with meticulously described wrinkles records the receipt of tax payments in an open account book before him, as a second male figure grimaces at the viewer.[38] A large pile of coins sits on the table before the two men. Numerous similar paintings by van Reymerswaele and his contemporaries contain the same basic composition, with one elderly male figure recording receipts, while the other grimaces grotesquely in the context of a tax collector's or lawyer's office.[39]

Figure 1-13: Marinus van Reymerswaele, *The Tax Collectors*, c. 1540, National Gallery, London.

[37] Ibid.
[38] Yamey, *Art and Accounting*, 51, discusses the text depicted within the account book.
[39] For a detailed discussion of the paintings, see Moxey, "The Criticism of Avarice."

While an adequate explanation for the precise meaning and patronage of these paintings remains elusive, most scholars agree that the depictions criticize avarice.[40] Keith Moxey has proposed that the very groups portrayed might have purchased paintings like *The Tax Collectors* as a defense of their own individual virtue as, unlike the extremely caricatured figures depicted in antiquated costumes, they resisted such temptation.[41] Moxey has also noted that sixteenth-century pictorial satires are limited to tax collectors and lawyers; they do not include depictions of merchants, perhaps indicating that merchants were not seen unfavorably.[42]

A Diversity of Depictions: The Pictorial Range in the Seventeenth Century

During the seventeenth century, the range of depictions of economic activities widened. Within seventeenth-century Flemish painting, strident depictions of avarice included obvious markers of sin to create critical images with religious overtones. During the same period, Dutch painters adopted and adapted the vocabulary of their sixteenth-century predecessors to create more ambiguous scenes, which require careful consideration by the viewer to evaluate the activities depicted. Some previous interpretations of mid-seventeenth-century paintings of "taking stock" have, as will be argued here, *incorrectly* associated them predominantly with the critical tradition most powerfully exemplified in seventeenth-century Flemish painting.[43]

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[40] See Silver, *The Paintings of Quinten Massys*, 138, Moxey, "The Criticism of Avarice," 30, and Yamey, *Art and Accounting*, 53.
[41] Moxey, "The Criticism of Avarice," 31.
[42] Ibid., 28.
[43] Vermeer's *Woman Holding a Balance* has been connected to the tradition of the depiction of avarice, greed, and *vanitas* by multiple authors. See Albert Blankert, "Vermeer's Modern Themes and Their Tradition," *Johannes Vermeer* (National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C., 1996), 42; Silver, *The*

David Rijckaert III's *Woman Weighing Gold* (figure 1-14) typifies the seventeenth-century Flemish tradition of depicting avarice -- or greed. An elderly woman sits at a table upon which rest a box of coin weights, papers, a large bag and a second box of gold coins. She grins rather broadly as the coin she has placed in the triangular pan of the balance outweighs the weight on the other side; she delights in the fact that the coin's material value is more than its face value, indicating that she has been overpaid by an unwitting customer. In the background a pig-headed demon stores a moneybag upon a shelf. The woman's facial expression, her tilted balance, the large quantity of money, and the presence of the demon in the background indicate avarice.

Other Flemish depictions of avarice are consistent with Rijckaert's *Woman Weighing Gold*. In David Teniers' *The Covetous Man* (c. 1648, figure 1-15) an elderly woman, balance in hand, sits behind a table covered with large quantities of coins, bags of money, papers and an hourglass. An elderly man sits on the right side, greedily clutching the phallic handle of his moneybag. In a print after this painting a skeleton with an hourglass in his hand was added in the background (figure 1-16).

Paintings of Quinten Massys, 136; and Herbert Rudolph, "Vanitas: Die Bedeutung Mittelalterlicher und Humanistischer Bildinhalte in der Nederlandischen Malerie des 17 Jahrhunderts," *Festschrift Whilhelm Pinder zum 60 Geburstag* (Leipzig: Seemann, 1938), 130. Rudolph also sees de Hooch's *Woman Weighing Gold* as a *vanitas*. For a similar negative interpretation of de Hooch and Vermeer, see Leonard J. Slatkes, *Vermeer and His Contemporaries* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1981), 130. For a negative interpretation of de Man's *A Man Weighing Gold*, see Walter Liedtke, Michiel C. Plomp, and Axel Ruger, *Vermeer and the Delft School* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art; Yale University Press, 2001), 310. For Maes' *Account Keeper*, see Peter Sutton, *Masters of Seventeenth-Century Dutch Genre Painting* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1984), 241; Eddy de Jongh, "Vermommingen van Vrouw Wereld in de 17de Eeuw," in *Album Amicorum J. G. van Gelder* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1973), 202; and Mariet Westermann, "Subject and Value in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting," in *A Moral Compass: Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century Painting in the Netherlands*, Grand Rapids Art Museum (New York: Rizzoli International Publications, Inc., 1999), 40.

References to the passage of time, large quantities of money and negative facial expressions convey pejorative connotations regarding the sin of greed.

Figure 1-14: David Rijckaert III (1612-61), *Woman Weighing Gold,* Musée de Lyon.

Figure 1-15: David Teniers, *The Covetous Man*, c. 1648, National Gallery, London.

Figure 1-16: Engraving, after David Teniers, *Weighing Gold*.

Joachim von Sandrart's *Allegory of Avarice* (figure 1-17), while the work of a German artist, also utilizes the standard seventeenth-century iconography for an allegorical depiction of avarice.[44] The central figure of a wrinkled old woman looks out at the viewer as she weighs coins by lamplight in a darkened interior. The wall behind her is cluttered with account books and moneybags. The man behind her looks over her shoulder anxiously, while the figure in front of her, horns revealing his true nature, spills his bag of coins onto the table. In each of these works, the facial expression, age, large quantities of money, and the inclusion of elements

Figure 1-17: Joachim von Sandrart (1606-88), *Allegory of Avarice*, Staatsgalerie, Kassel.

[44] While Sandrart was a German artist working in Amsterdam, the painting in question belongs to a series depicting the Vices, and is a typical allegorical depiction of avarice. Yamey, *Art and Accounting*, 93.

associated with death and condemnation, such as the demon and skeleton, indicate that the figures with their tightly clutched money bags and tipped scales are indeed greedy. Such depictions of avarice provide the viewer with examples of overtly corrupt behavior. In contrast, many Dutch paintings of similar activities place the focus on the details of monetary evaluation, creating a more subtle vocabulary to convey favorable or unfavorable opinions of the activities depicted.

Sight and Evaluation in Early Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting

During the early seventeenth century, Dutch artists refined the pictorial vocabulary for the depiction of coin weighing, as the determination of whether or not an individual acted prudently or avariciously in the evaluation of economic value was displayed through his/her use or misuse of proper tools and techniques. Seventeenth-century Dutch painters adopted and adapted the pictorial vocabulary akin to that utilized by Quentin Metsys in *The Moneylender and His Wife*; the careful use of the proper materials, in the bright light of day, with care and scrutiny characterize the depiction of prudent behavior, while their absence characterizes the depiction of avaricious behavior. Rather than provide stridently obvious indicators of improper behavior, these artists allowed the viewer to weigh the subjects' behavior through examination of the details of depiction.

Images that display the improper technique emphasize the unreliability of utilizing sight alone in the evaluation of coins. Rembrandt van Rijn's painting, *The Money Changer (Parable of the Rich Man)* (1627, figure 1-18), displays the improper technique of evaluation. Rembrandt depicts an elderly man wearing a cap seated in a

darkened interior surrounded by accounting records.[45] A large moneybag sits atop an account book on his right as he scrutinizes a single coin by the light of a candle. A jumbled pile of coins, a box of weights, and money scales lie on the table in front of him. He wrinkles his brow as he peers down his nose through his spectacles at a single large coin, emphasizing not only his folly in accumulating massive earthly wealth as told in the parable, but his foolishness in attempting to ascertain the value of a coin by mere sight, when the proper tools (the scales and weights) lie discarded on the table before him.

Figure 1-18: Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Money Changer (Parable of the Rich Man)*, panel, 1627, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin-Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin.

Gerard van Honthorst's painting, *An Old Woman Examining a Coin* (1624, figure 1-19), also conveys a critical view of the ignorance of attempting to use sight

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[45] For a brief discussion of this painting, and of the biblical parable of the Rich Fool found in Luke 12:13-21, see Christopher Brown, Jan Kelch, and Pieter van Thiel, *Rembrandt: the Master and his Workshop, Paintings* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), catalogue number 2, 128.

alone to evaluate a coin. A wrinkled old woman wearing a turban-like headdress pushes her spectacles up as she squints at a single coin held up to the light of a candle in a darkened setting. She clutches a large moneybag in her other hand, and a smaller bag spilling coins hangs out of the collar of her shirt. Her headdress and age, emphasized by her wrinkles and need for spectacles, suggest the figure of a procuress. Her identity further augments a critical view of her behavior as she foolishly attempts to evaluate the worth of a coin by sight alone.

Figure 1-19: Gerard van Honthorst, *An Old Woman Examining a Coin*, 1624, private collection.

Adaptation and Transformation: Mid-Century Dutch Paintings

Mid-century Dutch artists further refined the pictorial vocabulary of depicting figures in acts of economic evaluation. However, the shift in focus that occurred in the seventeenth century resulted in a new type of conception. Mid-century paintings of “taking stock,” rather than relying on allegorical or historical themes such as the

Parable of the Rich Man, focused attention on the specific behavior of economic evaluation in a contemporary domestic setting. The change in the depiction of money management paralleled a simultaneous evolution in the society towards an early modern economy with a revised view of wealth.

Some paintings produced in the middle of the seventeenth century clearly continue the tradition of moral admonition; however, the extreme negative tone of sixteenth-century secular and seventeenth-century allegorical depictions is softened. Quiringh van Brekelenkam's *The Goldweigher* (1668, figure 1-20) depicts an elderly man who weighs coins in a darkened interior. While he initially appears to be depicted sympathetically as he observes the balance he holds with care and has neatly sorted the coins on the table, other elements within the picture indicate that the subject of van Brekelenkam's painting is *vanitas*. The ledge of the foreground arch is decorated with a relief of a putto resting on a skull; musical instruments, a vase of flowers and a large moneybag, the handle of which points to the old man in the background, indicate a preoccupation with earthly pleasures. The skeleton that appears from behind a curtain in the background confirms an unfavorable evaluation.[46]

A second, similar painting by van Brekelenkam (c. 1655, figure 1-21) substitutes a pocket watch on the ledge for the references to the brevity of life in the flowers, skeleton, and skull found in the previous painting. Like the art of his

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[46] A similar painting by Jan Steen is discussed in Sutton, *Masters*, 246. Sutton states that, "Jan Steen…depicted a terrified old gold weigher confronted by an image of death in the form of a skeleton looking in at the window." The painting is in the Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen, no. 680. I have been unable to locate a reproduction of Steen's painting.

predecessors, van Brekelenkam's paintings utilize the elements of an aged figure and details that convey the brevity of life, such as the skeleton, as well as an emphasis on money, to suggest concern over the preoccupation with earthly wealth. However, it should be noted that van Brekelenkam's paintings are less strident in their mood and message than the paintings of avarice previously discussed.[47]

Figure 1-20: Quiringh van Brekelenkam, *The Gold-Weigher*, panel, 1668, Bayerische Staatsgemaldesammlungen, Alte Pinakothek, Munich.

Figure 1-21: Quiringh van Brekelenkam, *The Gold-Weigher*, panel, c. 1655, present location unknown.

The depiction of figures utilizing sight in conjunction with the proper techniques of evaluation results in a very different interpretation. In Salomon

[47] A similar mid-century painting also exists by Cornelis de Man. *The Old Gold Weigher* certainly seems to also be cautionary, as again an elderly male figure is depicted with a large moneybag and strong box with many more bags in it on the floor next to him. However, as the current location of this work is unknown, and the available reproductions are small, definite conclusions regarding this work cannot be made. See Sutton, *Masters*, 246, and Liedtke, Plomp, and Ruger, *Vermeer and the Delft School*, 310.

Koninck's *The Gold Weigher* (figure 1-22) an elderly man wearing a dark cap evaluates a coin.[48] But where Rembrandt's elderly figure squints through spectacles at a coin by candlelight, Koninck's bearded man carefully contemplates a balanced coin scale illuminated by daylight that enters through an open window. The man holds the scale delicately, his small finger lifted, echoing the gesture seen in Metsys' *The Moneylender and His Wife*. His brow is unfurrowed, despite the intensity with which he attends to his task. His surroundings are spare: a box of weights, a small bag of coins, and two account books neatly stacked upon the table at which he works.[49] His environs contrast strongly with the wild accumulation of papers

Figure 1-22: Salomon Koninck (1609-56), *The Gold Weigher*, Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam.

[48] Yamey, *Art and Accounting*, 97-98, suggests that *The Gold Weigher* is an allegory of sight.
[49] Yamey, *Art and Accounting*, 98.

surrounding the elderly man in Rembrandt's *The Money Changer (Parable of the Rich Man)*. Rather than representing a moral admonition of the evaluation of coins by sight alone, Koninck's *The Gold Weigher* shows the correct method of evaluation by utilizing the proper scales and weights in the light of day while exercising care and scrutiny.[50]

Gabriel Metsu's *The Usurer* (1654, figure 1-23) also depicts an elderly male figure weighing coins. Metsu, similar to van Brekelenkam, depicts his subject in a darkened interior; a drape separates the pictorial space from that of the viewer. A strong box and large quantities of coins cover the table before him. He looks with distaste at the young woman standing next to him, who wipes her eye as if weeping. Metsu's painting has been interpreted by Franklin Robinson as admonitory, based on an argument that the painting on the back wall of a nude figure with a sack represents greed.[51] While the darkened interior, unclear light source and strange expression on the old man's face are consistent with a negative interpretation, the complexity of Metsu's painting suggests a larger narrative that has not yet been adequately explained. What is the relationship between the male figure and the young woman? Is she attempting to arrange a loan, or having difficulty with repayment of a debt?

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[50] Yet another depiction of an old man weighing gold by Gerrit Dou is in the Louvre, Paris. This painting, however, is more critical in its depiction, as the elderly man again sits in the dark, and stares absently out into space rather than attend to the coins he is weighing.

[51] Franklin W. Robinson, *Gabriel Metsu (1629-1667): A Study of His Place in Dutch Genre Painting of the Golden Age* (New York: Abner Schram, 1974), number 10. See also Linda Stone-Ferrier, "From Shrew to Poetess: Two Non-Traditional Female Roles Evoked by a Curious Painting by Gabriel Metsu," in *Saints, Sinners and Sisters: Gender and Northern Art in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Jane L. Carroll and Alison G. Stewart, ed. (Burlington: Ashgate, 2003), 223-243.

Metsu's ambiguous painting allows for multiple interpretations of the scene depicted, as well as the behavior of the people involved within it.

In contrast to these depictions of elderly men, Cornelis de Man's *A Man Weighing Gold* (c. 1670-75, figure 1-3), with its young man weighing coins, bears a strong resemblance to Metsys' *The Moneylender and His Wife*, and provides a favorable view of prudent business practice.[52] In *A Man Weighing Gold*, soft light

Figure 1-23: Gabriel Metsu, *The Usurer*, 1654, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

from the left reveals a longhaired, thin-mustached young man wearing a heavy housecoat and hat stooped over a table. He holds a coin scale delicately in his right hand as he balances himself with his left upon the table. A box of coin weights and a neat arrangement of carefully sorted coins lie on the bare surface before him. A young woman sits opposite, her arms crossed as she tucks her cold hands into her fur-

[52] See Sutton, *Masters*, 245-247, and Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., et al. *The Public and Private in the Age of Vermeer* (Osaka: Osaka Municipal Museum of Art, 2000), 166.

trimmed jacket. She gazes across the table, her face framed by the loose ends of her white headscarf, carefully following her husband's activities. A boy places peat into the large unlit fireplace. Rondels depicting Christ and the Virgin accent the impressive mantel, over which hangs a portrait of Prince Maurits.[53] Along the adjacent wall a bed stands empty, the bedding piled on a chair. In the lower right hand corner of the composition sits a large open trunk, with only one small white bag visible inside.

While the overall composition and placement of figures within de Man's *A Man Weighing Gold* differ from those in Metsys' painting (figures 1-3, 1-6), the central actions of man and wife are highly similar. De Man not only echoes the focused, downcast gaze of the male figure on the task before him found in *The Moneylender and His Wife*, but the young merchant also works under the sidelong, watchful gaze of his wife, as does Metsys' banker. De Man also portrays a young man who is a diligent businessman.

Peter Sutton has argued that the activity of money weighing in de Man's painting indicates proper behavior.[54] Sutton not only draws upon the youth of the male figure, but also the presumably early hour (surmised from the details of the boy building a fire and piled up bedclothes) as indicative of industrious business practice. Further, Sutton associates de Man's *A Man Weighing Gold* with an emblem from Johann Mannich's *Sacra Emblemata* of 1625 (figure 1-24), which depicts the scales

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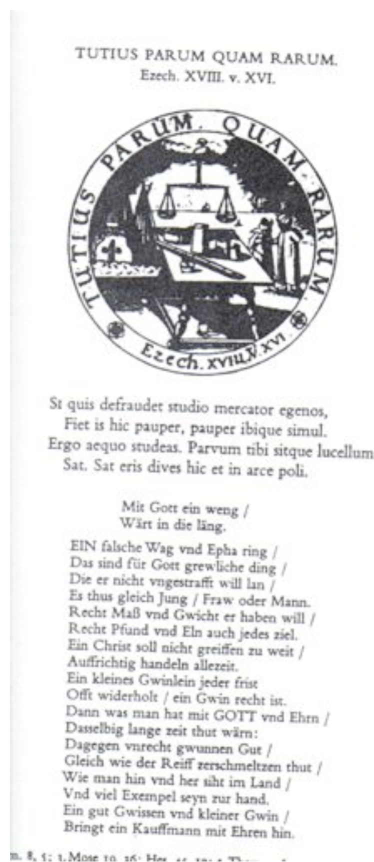
[53] Sutton, *Masters*, 246.
[54] Sutton, *Masters*, 245-246.

as a “symbol of the honorable and fair businessman.”[55] In the emblem, the scales, placed beneath the eye of God, are suspended above a table with weights and measures, while two figures conduct business in the background. The text relates how a false scale is undesirable to God and a prudent businessman uses an equitable measure.[56] The paintings of Prince Maurits and Christ and the Virgin within de Man’s painting (above and on the mantel) intensify the favorable interpretation; de Man’s coin weigher literally works under the watchful eye of God and country.[57]



TUTIUS PARUM QUAM RARUM.
Ezech. XVIII. v. XVI.

St quis defraudet studio mercator egenos,
Fiet is hic pauper, pauper ibique simul.
Ergo aequo studeas. Parvum tibi sitque lucellum
Sat. Sat eris dives hic et in arce poli.

Mit Gott ein weng /
Wärt in die läng.

EIN falsche Wag vnd Epha ring /
Das sind für Gott grewliche ding /
Die er nicht vngestrafft will lan /
Es thus gleich Jung / Fraw oder Mann.
Recht Maß vnd Gwicht er haben will /
Recht Pfund vnd Eln auch jedes ziel.
Ein Christ soll nicht greiffen zu weit /
Auffrichtig handeln allezeit.
Ein kleines Gwinlein jeder frist
Offt widerholt / ein Gwin recht ist.
Dann was man hat mit GOTT vnd Ehrn /
Dasselbig lange zeit thut wärn:
Dagegen vnrecht gwunnen Gut /
Gleich wie der Reiff zerschmeltzen thut /
Wie man hin vnd her siht im Land /
Vnd viel Exempel seyn zur hand.
Ein gut Gwissen vnd kleiner Gwin /
Bringt ein Kauffmann mit Ehren hin.

Figure 1-24: Emblem from *Sacra Emblemata,* 1625, Nuremberg.

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[55] Sutton, *Masters*, 247. *Sacra Emblemata* was published in Nuremberg. The emblem and its accompanying text are reprinted in Arthur Henkel and Albrecht Schöne, *Emblemata: Handbuch zur Sinnbilkunst Des XVI. und XVII Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart: Wiemar, 1996), 1436.
[56] Henkel and Schöne, 1436.
[57] Sutton, *Masters*, 247, and Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., et al. *The Public and Private*, 166.

However, important differences exist between Metsys' sixteenth-century and de Man's seventeenth-century conceptions of the prudent businessman. While both men work diligently under the scrutiny of their wives, the context in which they conduct their business differs. In Metsys' painting, the money-changer works in a public setting. The small mirror in the center foreground not only reflects the source of light under which he works, but presumably, the client with whom he conducts business. The reflected windows allow a view of the city beyond and additional figures can be seen through the door in the background.

In contrast, de Man depicts his figures within a confined domestic setting. No visible windows or doors lead the viewer out of this domestic space; rather the planes of floor, ceiling, and walls intersect in the center of the painting and enclose the pictorial space completely. The piled up bedclothes and attire worn by husband and wife also indicate that the man conducts business at home.[58]

Where the female figures in *The Moneylender and His Wife* and *A Man Weighing Gold* observe their husbands' actions, in Vermeer's *Woman Holding a Balance*, de Hooch's *Woman Weighing Gold*, Metsu's *Gold Weigher*, and Maes' *The Account Keeper*, the woman herself performs the action, furthering the domestification of the subject matter of "taking stock." Gabriel Metsu's *The Gold*

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[58] Most people during the period conducted at least part of their business at home. The outfit worn by the man (the heavy house-coat, drooping stockings, and loose cap) is highly similar to that seen in other paintings of the period, such as Maes' *The Jealous Husband* (figure 1-29). The wife's fur-trimmed jacket and white headscarf are at-home informal wear of the middle and upper classes. See Marieke de Winkel, "The Interpretation of Dress in Vermeer's Paintings," *Studies in the History of Art* 55 (1998), 329. See also P. T. A. Swillens, *Johannes Vermeer: Painter of Delft 1632-1675* (New York: Studio Publications, 1950), 88.

Weigher, c. 1654 (figure 1-25), is the earliest of such mid-century depictions.[59] Metsu depicts a woman before a small round table with coins and a moneybag upon it. Isolated within a darkened interior, she focuses on the balance she holds. The visible details of the painting, the relatively few coins, her focused expression, and white capelet that signifies an early hour, do not indicate in any obvious way that her action is anything but prudent.[60] Only the fact that her balance tips causes her role as weigher to be ambiguous; does she evaluate prudently?

Figure 1-25: Gabriel Metsu, *The Gold Weigher*, 1654, private collection.

In contrast, the balance held by the young woman in de Hooch's *Woman Weighing Gold* (c. 1664, figure 1-2) is in equilibrium. An open window admits bright

[59] See Robinson, *Gabriel Metsu,* 20, and Blankert, "Vermeer's Modern Themes," 42.
[60] On the white capelet as a garment worn at night and early in the morning see de Winkel, "The Interpretation of Dress," 329.

daylight into the dark interior; the light glints off the rich gold tooling of the gilded leather that decorates the back wall.[61] In this suffused, golden light, a young woman in a pale blue fur-trimmed jacket and white headscarf stands before a table, upon which sit a box of weights and carefully sorted coins. She gazes down at the balance as she prepares to place a coin upon it.

Unlike Metsu's figure, she stands in a brightly lit room, in the act of placing a coin in the balance, her downward gaze one of contemplation. X-radiography reveals the original presence of a man seated in a chair behind the table, which de Hooch painted out.[62] The original presence of a male figure, combined with the balance in equilibrium, suggests that de Hooch's work, like de Man's *A Man Weighing Gold,* was intended to depict fairness and prudence in the context of a married couple. De Hooch originally conceived a depiction of a wife working under the scrutiny of her husband. The subsequent removal of the man suggests that prudent conduct could also be expressed in terms of the single, female figure of a Dutch housewife performing economic duties prudently.

De Hooch's composition bears a strong similarity to that of Vermeer's *Woman Holding a Balance* (c. 1662-64, figure 1-1).[63] Vermeer's painting also depicts an interior scene, with sunlight entering through the window on the left. The undrawn curtains and closed shutters indicate an early hour. In a patch of sunlight

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[61] For the identification of the material on the back wall as gilt leather, see Peter C. Sutton, *Pieter de Hooch, 1629-1684* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998) 52, and Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., ed., *Johannes Vermeer* (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1996), 145.
[62] Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., ed., *Johannes Vermeer,* 142.
[63] This similarity of composition led Sutton, *Pieter de Hooch,* 96, to assert that the Vermeer inspired the De Hooch. However, because of evidence that there was originally a man seated at the table, Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., ed. *Johannes Vermeer*, 142, concludes that this is unlikely.

stands a young woman in a dark, fur-trimmed jacket and long skirt.[64] A white headscarf frames her face, the ends trailing loosely over the fur trim at her bosom. She focuses her attention upon the small balance held delicately in her right hand, extended above the table. She places her left hand upon the edge of the table to steady herself. The cloth covering of the table has been pushed back towards the wall on the left, and various items rest upon the bare wood surface, including three small gold coins, two short stacks of silver coins, and the small open box housing the coin weights. Upon the back wall, directly behind the woman, hangs a painting of the Last Judgment in a black frame accented with gilding.

Vermeer's female figure does not perform her task of weighing in a greedy manner; the coins before her are few and her balance is in equilibrium, showing the fairness of her assessments. She has risen at an early hour, as evidenced by the still-closed shutters and white headscarf that she wears over her undressed hair. [65] Like de Man's weigher, she performs her duties prudently. Further, the presence of the Last Judgment on the wall behind her recalls the concept of just weighing under the watchful eye of God, suggested similarly by Sutton in the case of de Man's *A Man Weighing Gold*. Here, however, the woman works literally underneath the figure of

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[64] There has been much debate as to whether the young woman in *Woman Holding a Balance* is pregnant or just displays the fashion in costume of the period. There does not seem to have been a pictorial convention in the seventeenth century for portraying the physical effect of pregnancy. Nanette Salomon, "Vermeer and the Balance of Destiny," *Essays in Northern European Art Presented to Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann on his Sixtieth Birthday* (Doornspijk: Davaco, 1983), 216 assumes pregnancy. Other authors argue that her appearance is due to the fashion of the time. See Wheelock, *Dutch Paintings,* 376; Albert Blankert, John Michael Montias and Gilles Aillaud, *Vermeer* (New York: Rizzoli, 1988), 181; Wheelock, ed., *Johannes Vermeer,* 144; de Winkel, "The Interpretation of Dress," 332; and Anne Hollander, *Seeing Through Clothes* (New York: The Viking Press, 1978), 109.
[65] For the white headscarf worn with its ends untied before dressing the hair, see Swillens, *Johannes Vermeer,* 88. He notes that it could be worn after the hair was dressed, but then the ends would be tied.

Christ as Judge represented in the painting behind her. The image of the Last Judgment further recalls the scripture of Deuteronomy 25:15: "A full and just weight you shall have ... that your days may be prolonged ...".[66] Vermeer's woman utilizes proper judgment and deals prudently with finances.

Similarly, Nicolaes Maes' *The Account Keeper* (1656, figure 1-4) also portrays a woman who executes a comparable economic task. An elderly woman, seated behind a large desk, utilizes the natural light coming in an open window to conduct business affairs. Rather than evaluating the few coins placed on the corner of the desk before her, pen in hand, she records transactions in an open ledger. Another large open ledger and inkwell fill the surface of the desk. Behind her hang a set of keys, a large map and a small bust of Juno.

Despite her firm grasp upon the pen, her downward gaze through heavy glass spectacles, balanced on the end of her nose, has caused previous authors to assume she is asleep.[67] However, comparison with the similar downcast gazes in the previously mentioned works calls this assumption into question (figures 1-1, 2, 3, 4, and 6). Upon further comparison with other paintings of women of a similar age, the assumption that she is asleep becomes even less probable. Other mid-century artists depicting elderly female figures busy at tasks that require careful visual scrutiny also depict the heavy-lidded downward gaze through spectacles seen in Maes' *The Account Keeper*. For example, this same facial expression is also seen in the figure in

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[66] Kisch, *Scales and Weights*, 5, notes how such biblical phrases were often inscribed on coin-weight boxes.

[67] See Westermann, "Subject and Value," 40, where the idea that the figure is asleep is utilized to argue that she is neglecting her financial duties, or Sutton, *Masters*, 241, where her apparent state of sleep is used to argue that the work portrays the sin of sloth.

Quiringh van Brekelenkam's *Woman Combing a Child's Hair* (1648, figure 1-26), and in the same artist's *Old Woman Reading* (1652, figure 1-27). The depiction of activities that require careful visual scrutiny, such as delousing a child's hair and reading, utilize the same heavily-lidded expression of concentration found in Maes' *The Account Keeper*.

Figure 1-26: Quiringh van Brekelenkam, *Woman Combing a Child's Hair*, panel, 1648, Stedelijk Museum "De Lakenhal," Leiden.

Figure 1-27: Quiringh van Brekelenkam, *Old Woman Reading*, panel, 1652, Private collection, Germany.

The bust of Juno on the wall above the figure mirrors the downward gaze of the woman in Maes' *The Account Keeper*.[68] The classical goddess of commerce also watches carefully, further emphasizing the importance of diligent visual scrutiny and evaluation of the economic matters which Maes' figure conducts. The emphasis on the act of looking, accurate evaluation, and judgment seen in this work further indicates that the figure is prudent in her economic actions.

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[68] The identification of the bust as Juno can be concluded because of its appearance in other paintings by Maes, such as *The Eavesdropper* in Apsley house where "Juno" appears beneath the bust. For the identification, see also Westermann, "Subject and Value," 40.

Maes' female figure sits in the *comptoir*, or designated male office space of the seventeenth-century home.[69] Her keys, a reference to her domestic duty, have been neatly hung on the wall behind her.[70] She does not attend to traditional feminine domestic duties, but rather sits beneath a map of the world and a bust of the classical goddess of commerce, while she conducts public business within a domestic setting. While the black cap she wears contrasts with the white headscarf and capelet worn by the three other women previously discussed, her fur-trimmed jacket still indicates domestic attire.[71]

However, Maes' conception of a woman performing business tasks in the *comptoir* is singular during the period.[72] In contrast, in Cornelis Bisschop's *The Listening Maid* (c. 1660, figure 1-28), the open door of the *comptoir* is visible behind the central figure of the listening housewife. (Despite the title of the painting, the wife, identifiable by her attire, is depicted spying on the maid's illicit behavior in the space below.) Her husband, unaware of the actions that occur down below, sits with his back facing the viewer in his designated space. His attire reiterates that his actions occur within a domestic, rather than a public, setting, as he wears the same type of hat seen in de Man's *Man Weighing Gold*. His specific actions are not visible to the

[69] See Martha Hollander, *An Entrance for the Eyes: Space and Meaning in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 107, for a description of the seventeenth-century *comptoir* as well as its designation as a male space.
[70] On keys as an indicator of domestic duty, see Wayne E. Franits, *Paragons of Virtue: Women and Domesticity in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 70.
[71] On the identification of these elements of costume, see de Winkel, "The Interpretation of Dress," 328-329, and Paul Zumthor, *Daily Life in Rembrandt's Holland* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 60.
[72] Richard Helgerson, "Soldiers and Enigmatic Girls: The Politics of Dutch Domestic Realism," *Representations* 58 (Spring 1997), 55, comments on the absence of male householders from mid-century Dutch genre painting. However, there are a small number of occasions where male householders are depicted in relationship to the space of the *comptoir*.

viewer. Nicolaes Maes' *The Jealous Husband* (c. 1656, figure 1-29) also depicts the male householder in a similar context. Here the husband himself spies on the behavior occurring below and leaves his business unattended.

Figure 1-28: Cornelis Bisschop, *The Listening Maid*, canvas, c. 1660, Norwich Castle Museum, Norfolk.

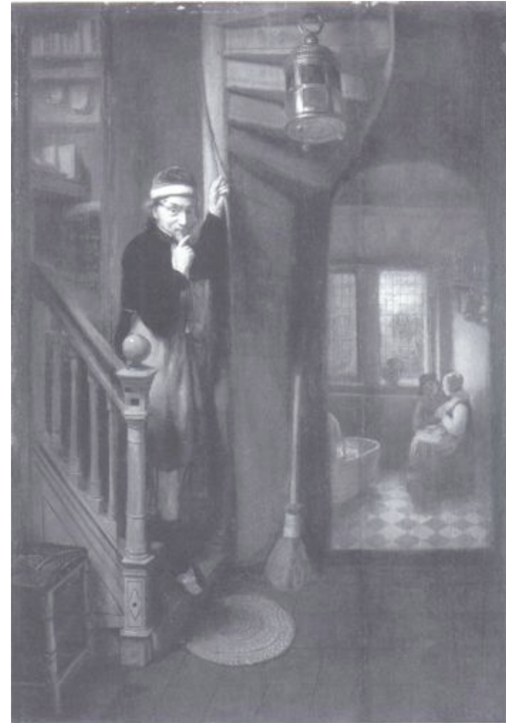

Figure 1-29: Nicolaes Maes, *The Jealous Husband*, panel, c. 1656, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

These examples of other depictions of the *comptoir* reveal a startling contrast to *The Account Keeper*. The two depictions of a male figure in connection to this space do not focus attention on his competence in his economic and moral duty as head of the household. Rather, in one case he is unaware of the illicit behavior of the maid below; in the second case he smiles knowingly as the maid ignores the cradle

she should attend in favor of the visitor seated next to her.[73] Rather than focus on the proper behavior of the male householders, these works focus on the questionable behavior of maids (women) within the house, and their ability to disrupt the well-run household.

The same space, desk, account books, inkwell, shelf and keys seen in *The Account Keeper* also appear in Maes' *The Lacemaker* (1655, figure 1-30), but in a different context. In *The Lacemaker* the depiction of a woman in a male designated space also conforms to standard gender roles; rather than deal with the financial matters indicated by the account books on the desk and large moneybag that hangs on the wall, the woman attends to a domestic duty (making lace) as a small picture behind her stands in for the absent male. Again, the scene presented in Maes' *The Account Keeper* contrasts starkly. The *Account Keeper*, in its unusual depiction of a woman in the place of the absent male, reflects the actual contemporary circumstance that necessitated such action as husbands traveled or women were widowed.[74]

The placement of the woman in the *comptoir* beneath the map of the world has caused previous authors to connect her with the figure of *Vrouw Wereld*,

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[73] This figure is an older woman, dressed in attire consistent with depictions of women who served as providers of medical services such as blood letting, and also often engaged in fortune telling. On the identification of the type of attire these figure are depicted in, see the examples discussed by Elizabeth Alice Honig in, "Jeugdige Nieuwsgierigheid en Oudewijvenpraat in Pendant Schilderijen van Quirijn Gerritsz van Brekelenkam (ca. 1620-1668)," in *Antiek* 23 (1988), 142-149. On the historical activities of these women and their role in society, see Rudolf Michael Dekker and Anne Epstein, "Getting to the Source: Women in the Medieval and Early Modern Netherlands," *Journal of Women's History* 10:2 (Summer 1998), 165.

[74] In discussing the space of the *comptoir*, Hollander, *An Entrance,* 180, asserts that, "women who took over their husbands' business in their absence would also make use of the *comptoir*, although this custom is rarely, if ever, depicted."

Figure 1-30: Nicolaes Maes, *The Lacemaker*, 1655, National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa.

indicating a preoccupation with earthly luxury.[75] However, *Vrouw Wereld* also had a reverse interpretation in the seventeenth century. *Dame Hollandia*, "the allegorical figuration of Holland itself," rather than personify luxury, illustrated the success of the Dutch political and mercantile enterprise.[76] A woman who writes in account books in a *comptoir* beneath a map of the world and bust of Juno could also be a fitting metaphor for the mercantile success of the Netherlands.

The choice to exclude the male figure in the performance of his designated business tasks in favor of a female figure within a domesticated setting provides a

[75] de Jongh, "Vermommingen," 202.
[76] Helgerson, "Soldiers and Enigmatic Girls," 66.

very selective view of economic practices of the time. An understanding of the way in which contemporary viewers would have reacted to such portrayals requires an understanding of the contemporary socio-economic situation and the expected gender roles within it.

Setting the Scene: The Socio-Economic Context

The remarkable economic prosperity reflected in mid-seventeenth-century Dutch images of "taking stock" resulted from a substantial increase in private wealth made possible by a variety of factors.[77] The increase led to a new social attitude towards money and commerce that favorably evaluated the desire to accumulate wealth.[78]

New financial institutions heightened the atmosphere of economic optimism found in the Netherlands during the seventeenth century. Merchants could trade not only directly in goods, but also in commodities contracts, government bonds, options, futures, and shares in trading monopolies like the *Vereenigte Oost-Indische Compagnie* (Dutch East India Company).[79] The establishment of public banks that allowed merchants to utilize bills of exchange in addition to cash augmented the

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[77] See Goldsmith, *Premodern Financial Systems*, 198 and 203 for a discussion of some of the remarkable aspects of the economics of the Netherlands in the seventeenth century.
[78] For example, A. Th. van Deursen, *Plain Lives in a Golden Age: Popular Culture, Religion and Society in Seventeenth-Century Holland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 67, discusses the contemporary eagerness to make investments. See also Erik Larsen and Jane P. Davidson, *Calvinistic Economy and Seventeenth Century Dutch Art* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Publications, 1979), 9.
[79] See Ferguson, *The Cash Nexus*, 310, for the types of trading which took place in the Amsterdam Bourse. The same text also discusses the VOC on page 110. See also Van Houtte, *An Economic History*, 198, for a discussion of how the VOC was a government-endorsed monopoly.

positive atmosphere.[80] The success of this system allowed for a steady drop in interest rates over the century.[81]

In the optimistic economic climate of the period, mercantile status became the socially defining factor for the urban elite.[82] The paintings discussed here must be situated within this socio-economic atmosphere. The artists chose to portray the urban mercantile class, the class that benefited from the flourishing economy, rather than the less wealthy members of seventeenth-century urban society, as the subject of paintings of figures "taking stock." Within the affluent class, the ideal socially assigned roles, especially for women, underwent revision during the period.

Simon Schama, in *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age,* asserts that Dutch women in the seventeenth century took an active role in financial matters, and that wives often handled business and money affairs.[83] While women's specific property rights varied by geographical area within the Netherlands, women did have rights to property both within and outside of marriage.[84] Women also had legal access to the documents necessary for business

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[80] Van Houtte, *An Economic History*, 215, and Ferguson, *The Cash Nexus*, 109, discuss the establishment of public banks in the Netherlands. Bills of exchange (payable at a bank) were used for amounts over *f*600. In Amsterdam, merchants were required to maintain accounts at the Wisselbank; see Goldsmith, *Premodern Financial Systems*, 205.
[81] Interest rates were around 3% in the 1670's; see Ferguson, *The Cash Nexus*, 172, and Goldsmith, *Premodern Financial Systems*, 204.
[82] Michael North, *Art and Commerce in the Dutch Golden Age*, translated by Catherine Hill (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997), 43.
[83] Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 407. For a similar argument, see Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 152-155.
[84] Alice Clare Carter, "Marriage Counseling in the Early Seventeenth Century: England and the Netherlands Compared," in *Ten Studies in Anglo-Dutch Relations,* ed. Jan van Dorsten (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 125.

dealings, such as commercial contracts.[85] Women of all social classes were active within the business community at a level not seen in other countries at the time.[86]

While women could and did act financially in the public sphere, their idealized economic role resided within the domestic sphere. The advice literature of the period prescribed definite and gendered roles within the household economy: the husband as provider, and the wife as administrator of the household budget.[87] A 1663 advice book by Johannes Colerus stated that, "A housewife needs to take care of what her husband brings home, to put it in its proper place and obediently take only what is needed; but what needs to be saved should be locked up."[88] Similarly, Jacob Cats, in *Houwelyck*, stressed the importance for a housewife of the "ability to shop wisely… since the money her husband provided had to be prudently spent for the good of the family."[89]

However, the gendered division of public and private economic duties was a fairly new conception during the seventeenth century, and even the advice books recognized that some women might not follow their husband's lead as easily as others. Men were advised that they should choose a wife for her maturity and ability to manage the household economy, but cautioned not to marry an experienced woman

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[85] Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, 407.
[86] See Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, 407, J. L. Price, *The Dutch Republic in the Seventeenth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 124; De Vries and Van der Woude, *The First Modern Economy*, 599; and Van Deursen, *Plain Lives,* 82.
[87] Franits, *Paragons*, 68 translates the text from Johannes Colerus' *De vermeerderde wyse jaer-beschryver*.
[88] Franits, *Paragons*, 68. The Dutch reads, "*Een huys-moeder sal hete gene/welck haren man t'huys brengt/wel bewaren en op-leggen op sijn behoorlijcke plaets/en gewilligh daer of halen wat men verteeren: maer wat men behouden wil/wech sluyten.*"
[89] Franits, *Paragons*, 92.

who would not be subservient.[90] Genre images of domestic scenes participated in the shaping of social views, with increasingly gendered divisions between public and private realms.[91] The contemporary concern with the proper division of men's and women's economic roles is evident in mid-century paintings of women "taking stock."

Beneath the Surface: A Domesticated Metaphor for the Urban Economy

The isolation of business activity within the home in the paintings discussed so far does accurately describe part of contemporary financial matters, as individuals did often conduct business at home. However there is a marked lack of painted depictions of equivalent business practices conducted in public. For this reason, Emanuel de Witte's uncommon painting of just such a subject, *Courtyard of the Amsterdam Stock Exchange* (1653, figure 1-31), provides a civic counterpoint to images of "taking stock."[92]

The open-air, colonnaded structure of the Bourse divides the space of de Witte's painting.[93] The grand clock tower, prominently featured against open sky seen through the arch, calls to mind the limited hours of official Bourse operation from noon to two.[94] Large numbers of men, dressed in their public attire of cloaks and

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[90]Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled,* 58.
[91] Franits, *Paragons,* 64.
[92] Aside from de Witte, the only other painting of the Amsterdam Bourse that I have been able to locate is a later version by Job Berckheyde, illustrated in Bryan Jay Wolf, *Vermeer and the Invention of Seeing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 92, figure 38.
[93] For a description of the architecture of the Bourse, see Wolf, *Vermeer and the Invention,* 91.
[94] For the hours of operation, see ibid., 91.

broad-brimmed black hats, completely obscure the floor of the exchange.[95] In the foreground space defined by the arches of the architecture stand five figures; an elegant man with a feathered cap and red cloak turns his back to the viewer as he gestures, glove in hand, to the less flamboyantly dressed man before him. The other man gestures in return, one hand at his chest, the other pointing down. They appear to arrange business dealings by their gestures. A third man in the center of the composition looks outward at the viewer, and calls attention to the activities of his similarly dressed counterparts beyond. The two additional figures in the foreground -- by their attire, a foreigner and a representative of the clergy -- stand before a column on which a dog urinates, and perhaps provides editorial commentary.

Figure 1-31: Emanuel de Witte, *The Stock Exchange in Amsterdam*, 1653, Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam.

[95] It is interesting that de Witte's portrayal of the stock exchange, while crowded, has been characterized as a highly restrained version of the actual reality. Raucous behavior was quite common. See Hollander, *An Entrance*, 196.

De Witte's description of public business dealings within the appropriate, government sanctioned setting does not actually portray any single individual business exchange. While the figures' gestures suggest negotiation, no coins, contracts, bonds, shares, or legal papers of any sort are actually shown being exchanged. Depictions of the business of the period that led to the very prosperity that, in turn, allowed for the consumption of the paintings that this discussion addresses were not produced.

The view of contemporary economic dealings provided in paintings is instead revealed in domestic scenes of singular individuals acting in private settings. In this manner, visual imagery removes the focus from the public arena and places it instead on the moral behavior of the individual. The act of weighing coins, as seen in de Man's *A Man Weighing Gold*, metaphorically stands in for other economic activities. The inability to evaluate coins by their face value, and consequent need for care and scrutiny in their evaluation, echoes the inability to evaluate commodities contracts, bonds, options, futures, and shares of stock, and the need for scrutiny in the ownership of such new forms of exchange. The fact that all of these forms of exchange held a socially defined value rather than an intrinsic one required all individuals involved to subscribe to the recognized social order. Paintings of "taking stock" participate in the social pressure to conform; through the metaphor of domestic economic duty, viewers are encouraged to prudent business practice.

The social pressure for prudent action is displaced from the male member of the merchant class onto the female figures in mid-century depictions. Rather than

critique the male merchant actively taking part in the risky new trading economy, a subtle domestic metaphor applies social pressure through a call to prudent economic action, voiced through domestic scenes, placing the larger, social necessity for economic responsibility in the less socially volatile arena of individual moral responsibility.

The isolation of the figures and their context, with only one figure shown recording accounts, and several figures weighing coins, draws the focus inward, to the singular, individual business act. The evaluation of the true value of coins places emphasis on a judgment of individual worth -- an assessment that is both of moral and of socially determined value. Through the placement of the responsibility for proper business practice on individual moral reasoning, and specifically the discrimination of the female individual, the contemporary male public actors, who are for the most part not depicted, are left free from such scrutiny. Rather than focus on moral tensions related to the trading of paper stock and bills, the value of which was not concrete, this concern is transferred to the evaluation of coins, whose face value is also not clear, but can be easily discerned through the proper use of scales.

Domestic practices depicted in such a manner suggest, metaphorically, the commercial world. Not only does de Man’s figure work under the scrutiny of church and state, or Maes’ *Account Keeper* under the watchful eye of the goddess of commerce, but their careful activities also signify the prudent exercise of personal morality within the larger world of commerce. The choice of subject – that of evaluating the material worth of a coin versus accepting its face value – addresses one

of the central issues of a modern economic system. The dichotomy of perceived (face) and actual (material) value reveals the need for clear and socially accepted assessments essential to the accumulation of wealth on a modern scale.[96] However, in paintings of "taking stock," rather than focus on the problematic nature of abstraction present in the new forms of exchange, the images transfer the discomfort to a more familiar activity that has clear boundaries and established moral guidelines. The moral aspects of these guidelines are, however, taken one step further by Vermeer.

A Religious Reference: Perception, Prudence and Penitence in Vermeer

Vermeer's *Woman Holding a Balance* in the National Gallery of Art in Washington D.C. (figure 1-1), while characteristic of the genre images of "taking stock," possesses a higher level of complexity. The intricacy of meaning present in *Woman Holding a Balance* has resulted in much debate regarding the interpretation of the painting. Daniel Arasse has described *Woman Holding a Balance* as a picture that "defies all unambiguous interpretation."[97] According to Arasse, a "precise definition… (of the meaning of the painting) is impossible."[98] His conclusion is not surprising in light of the large number of possible and conflicting interpretations of the painting that have been put forth by many authors.[99] However, he bases his

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[96] See Shell, *Art and Money*, 134, regarding the necessity of an abstract concept of value for the accumulation of material wealth.
[97] Daniel Arasse, *Vermeer: Faith in Painting* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 27.
[98] Ibid.
[99] Rudolph, "Vanitas: Die Bedutung," 405-433, discusses the painting as a representation of *vanitas*; Ivan Gaskell, "Vermeer: Judgment and Truth," *Burlington Magazine,* XXVI/978 (September 1984), 557-561 interprets the painting as a representation of divine truth; Salomon, "Vermeer," 216-221, interprets the work as a Catholic view of human destiny; Richard Carstensen and Marielene Putscher, "Ein Bild von Vermeer in Medizinhistorischen Sicht," *Deutsches Arzteblatt-Artzliche Mitteilunger,* 68 (1971), 1-6 interprets the woman's action to relate to a folk practice of determining the sex of the

conclusion on the preconception that a painting should and does have a singular, clear narrative, meaning, and art historical interpretation. This conception is not necessarily appropriate for all paintings, including *Woman Holding a Balance*. Rather, as this discussion will assert, *Woman Holding a Balance* conveys to the viewer different, yet interconnected messages.

Woman Holding a Balance, moves the viewer to contemplation: first through the manner in which it is painted, and in the mood it conveys; second through its presentation of a didactic scene drawn from daily life; and third through its reference to faith, by depicting the female figure not only as a seventeenth-century housewife, but also with reference to the iconography of the penitent Mary Magdalen. This is not to say that Vermeer's painting is a straightforward depiction of the contemplative Mary Magdalen in the same sense as an historical painting of the saint. Rather, the painting evokes in the viewer a contemporary parallel of the contemplation of worldly and spiritual virtue through elements within the painting that allude to the contemplative Magdalen. The painting encourages the viewer through positive means to contemplate this world and his/her perception of and place within it, as well as the religious ramifications of his/her own spiritual status revealed by such examination, in place of a critical message about what not to do.

Vermeer depicts a darkened interior scene. Sunlight enters the top portion of the window on the left, filtered through a gold-colored curtain, and illuminates the

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unborn child by weighing two pearls; Albert Blankert, Rob Ruurs, and Willem L. van de Watering, *Vermeer of Delft: Complete Edition of the Painting,* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1978), 44, draws a parallel between a condemnation of earthly vanity revealed in the woman's actions and the Last Judgment painting in the background; while, de Jongh, "On Balance," 360-361, sees the work as asserting the need to examine one's conscience in line with Jesuit spiritual practice.

corner of a room. The darkness of the lower portion of the window indicates that it remains shuttered.[100] The closed shutter and curtain suggest both a private space, closed off from the world beyond, as well as an early hour -- the curtains not yet drawn, the shutters not yet opened to let in the bright light of morning. In this diffused light stands a young woman in a dark fur-trimmed jacket over a long skirt. She focuses her attention upon the small balance held delicately in her right hand, extended above a table, her left hand placed upon the table's edge to steady herself. The cloth covering of the table has been pushed back towards the wall on the left, and various items rest upon the bare wood surface. Three small gold coins, two short stacks of silver coins, a strand of pearls with yellow ribbon ties, a small open box, and a larger box with gold chains and pearls spilling over its edge lie on the table before her. Above the crumpled mass of table covering, a small dark framed mirror reveals a small grey slit of its surface. Directly behind the woman hangs a painting of the Last Judgment in a black frame accented with gilding. Between this painting and the window, the diffused light illuminates the white wall of the room and reveals a nail and adjacent nail hole.

The overall mood of the painting is of quiet and stillness. Vermeer's figure stands motionless, her action arrested, maintaining the equilibrium of the pans of the balance. She does not gaze outward at the viewer, but rather her heavily lidded eyes focus downward, towards the balance held so delicately. Combined with the

[100] In representations of the exterior of Dutch seventeenth-century homes, often the lower portion of the window is shuttered, and the upper portion is not. See, for example, Vermeer's *The Little Street* (c. 1658, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam).

semidarkness of the room, the absence of motion, and her lack of awareness of the presence of the viewer give her an air of quiet contemplation, which encourages the viewer to mimic her action, and to consider the painting with the same scrutiny and care.

Through the evaluation of *Woman Holding a Balance* the viewer becomes aware of the painting as a painting; while it represents a scene from daily life, it also simultaneously reminds the viewer of its reality as a painted perception of that world. This is achieved in a variety of ways. Mieke Bal, in *Reading Rembrandt: Beyond the Word-Image Opposition,* notes the nail and adjacent nail hole in the wall in the upper left portion of the painting.[101] For Bal, the nail, and its apparent repositioning, emphasizes the viewer's act of looking; the movement of the nail in the room demonstrates that the painted space, as a depiction of an imaginary space that shows its own alteration, has been manipulated.[102]

The contrast between the dark space and the diffused light that enters through the window also causes the viewer to be aware that the act of perception is subjective. First, the contrast between the darkened space and the diffused light reminds the viewer of the act of seeing; one cannot see without light. In the dark space depicted, colors become difficult to identify. The fur-trimmed jacket worn by the young woman

[101] Mieke Bal, *Reading Rembrandt: Beyond the Word-Image Opposition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 1-3 discusses Vermeer's *Woman Holding a Balance* as a work whose "surface . . . tells the story of its making."
[102] Ibid., 1-3.

has often been identified as blue.[103] However, when the viewer observes the sleeve on her right arm, which enters the area of diffused sunlight, the color of the garment is less easily identified as blue -- rather, it appears green.[104] A similar lack of clarity of color can also be noted in the skirt of the woman. The bottom portion of the skirt appears to be a light brown tone. However, the small, well-illuminated portion visible at the woman's abdomen is of much brighter yellow and orange tones, again evoking the difficulty of the eye to perceive the world accurately.[105]

The style in which Vermeer paints reveals little in the painting with precise clarity, yet simultaneously evokes detail. The work presents a painted perception of what the eye might see in a darkened room, a generalized view, rather than one that reveals the same degree of detail for each element. For example, there is a lack of definition in the way the pearls are painted, as well as in the Last Judgment painting in the background, where figures are loosely defined and no details can be ascertained. A similar lack of clarity appears in the depiction of the frame of the

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[103] See, for example, Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., *Vermeer and the Art of Painting* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) 97; and Eugene R. Cunnar, "The Viewer's Share: Three Sectarian Readings of Vermeer's *Woman with a Balance,*" *Exemplaria* 2 (1990), 501.

[104] There is other evidence to confirm that the jacket may very well be meant to be green; in the 1676 inventory of the estate of Vermeer's widow, the yellow fur-trimmed jacket that appears in many of Vermeer's paintings is listed, and, "an old green mantle with white fur trimmings." See John Michael Montias, *Vermeer and His Milieu, A Web of Social History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 339. *The Concert,* formerly in the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, also depicts a young woman in a green jacket with white fur trim. While it has been observed that in some paintings by Vermeer elements that now appear blue are due to fugitive pigments that were originally green, I do not believe this to be the case in *Woman Holding a Balance*, as the tonality of the color is not consistent with those cases. Rather, the ambiguity of hue arises out of the darkness of the setting. For a discussion of fugitive pigment in *The Little Street*, and *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, see Jonathan Janson, "Fugitive Colors," in *Essential Vermeer*, available online at http://essentialvermeer.20m.com/index.html.

[105] Comparison with other works within Vermeer's oeuvre reveals that this skirt is the same as the one depicted in *Mistress and Maid,* (c. 1667, The Frick Collection, New York), of yellow fabric with orange trim down the center.

painting of the Last Judgment. Arthur Wheelock has argued that Vermeer depicted the frame on the left hand side of the painting higher than on the right hand side, providing a larger, white background area for the scales.[106] The actual boundary of the frame is not clear; the dark shape that extends further down the wall on the right side of the painting may merely be the shadow cast upon the wall by the frame.

The mirror on the wall, as it only reveals a narrow grey slit of its surface, echoes the unreliability of the viewer's perception. Rather than providing the viewer with a reflection of the woman and the space that she inhabits, as in Vermeer's *The Music Lesson* (c. 1662-64, figure 1-32), this mirror refuses reflection and thereby reveals the ambiguity of reflection, of seeing, and of the necessity of light for sight. These disparate elements make the viewer conscious of the nature of the depiction as a painted work. *Woman Holding a Balance* was not simply intended as a decoration to be hung on the wall and admired, but as an image to be contemplated.

Figure 1-32: Johannes Vermeer, *The Music Lesson,* c. 1662-64, Collection of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

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[106] Wheelock, *Vermeer and the Art of Painting,* 100.

The knowledge that a case enclosed the painting in the seventeenth century furthers the conception of *Woman Holding a Balance* as a work to be contemplated. Documents from the 1696 sale of paintings formerly in the possession of Jacob Abrahamsz. Dissius describe *Woman Holding a Balance* as "*Een juffrouw die goud weegt in een kasje*" (a young woman weighing gold in a small case).[107] The exact nature of the case, or whether Vermeer painted *Woman Holding a Balance* with the intention that it be placed in such a case, is not known. Cases also enclosed other small-scale paintings of the period, such as the works of Dou.[108] The placement of *Woman Holding a Balance* in a case could have been meant to protect the painting, and/or to stress its value, both as a precious object as well as an object for contemplation. The act of opening the case for viewing would have increased the viewer's awareness of the act of looking, as the light of day revealed the dark scene within.

Just as the mood of the picture and the manner in which Vermeer painted it direct the viewer toward contemplation, so too does its subject matter. As discussed previously, the act of weighing coins is one of carefully considered evaluation, and one that moves the viewer to evaluate his/her own actions. The call to examine one's

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[107] Albert Blankert, Rob Ruurs, and Willem l. van de Watering, *Johannes Vermeer van Delft (1632-1675)* (Utrecht: Uitgeverij Het Spectrum), 73. See also Montias, *Vermeer*, 363. Jacob Dissius was the son-in-law of Pieter Claesz. van Ruijven, who Montias speculates was a patron of many of Vermeer's works. There were three paintings by Vermeer in the 1682 Dissius inventory listed as, "in kasjes."

[108] Keil Buström, "Peep-show or Case," *Kunsthistorische medelingen van het Rijks-Bureau voor kunsthistorische documentatie,* 4 (1949), 21-24, discusses *Woman Holding a Balance* and its case in light of two paintings by Dou. The cases of the Dou paintings had painted *vanitas* still lives on the covers. He speculates on this basis that the cover of the case that housed *Woman Holding a Balance* also had a still life painting on it. This speculation cannot be confirmed, as the case is no longer extant, and no record of its appearance exists.

own conscience, however, is taken a step further by Vermeer's paralleling this action with references within the painting to the penitent Mary Magdalen.

While the connection of a depiction of a woman weighing coins to the penitent Mary Magdalen may seem unusual, there is a pictorial precedent for such a portrayal. Jan van Hemessen's *Girl Weighing Gold* (c. 1530-35, figure 1-12) portrays Margaret of Parma in an historiated portrait as St. Mary Magdalen.[109] The ornate chalice placed in the foreground, right at the table's edge, reveals her identity as the Magdalen.[110] The female in *Woman Holding a Balance* also suggests Mary Magdalen. But where Jan van Hemessen portrayed Mary Magdalen through an historiated portrait, in *Woman Holding a Balance*, Vermeer created a painting of a scene of daily life that subtly evokes the model of the Magdalen.

The simultaneous evocation of a religious and secular image is not uncommon in the seventeenth century. For example, Linda Stone-Ferrier, in *Dutch Prints of Daily Life*, discusses how Ferdinand Bol's etching of *The Holy Family in a Room* (c. 1645, figure 1-33) can be seen at the same time as "an anonymous, humble seventeenth-century family *and* as the Holy Family."[111] The depiction of both a genre and a religious image simultaneously creates a work that functions on separate levels,

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[109] Burr Edgar Wallen, *Hemessen - Style and Iconography* (New York University, Ph. D. Dissertation, 1976), 71. The image of St. Mary Magdalen enjoyed great popularity in the 1520's and 1530's. Laurence Gowing, *Vermeer* (London: Faber and Faber, 1952), 136, note 101, states that the subject matter of Vermeer's paintings, women playing musical instruments, reading, and here, weighing, is similar in tone to the sixteenth-century depiction of these half-length Magdalens.

[110] Wallan, *Hemessen - Style and Iconography*, 71.

[111] Linda Stone-Ferrier, *Dutch Prints of Daily Life: Mirrors of Life or Masks of Morals?* (Lawrence: The Spencer Museum of Art, University of Kansas, 1983), 21.

as it allows the viewer to choose an interpretation, and encourages contemplation of the correlation between domestic and religious interpretations.

Figure 1-33: Ferdinand Bol, *The Holy Family in a Room,* etching, c. 1645.

The depiction of the religious figure of Mary Magdalen in the context of a genre scene began in the sixteenth century.[112] Around 1530, artists such as Quentin Metsys, Jan Gossaert, Bernard van Orley, Jan Metsys, and the Master of the Female Half-lengths created large numbers of paintings of the half-length figure of Mary Magdalen, seated in an interior, reading, writing, or playing a musical instrument.[113] Some of these paintings, like Jan van Hemessen's *Girl Weighing Gold,* were

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[112] See Max J. Friedlander, *Early Netherlandish Painting* (Leyden: A. W. Sijthoff, 1967), Volume 12, 47; and Craig Harbison, "Lucas van Leyden, the Magdalen, and the Problem of Secularization in Early Sixteenth Century Northern Art," *Oud Holland,* vol. 98, no. 3 (1984), 123. The first dated example of the popular half-length depictions of Mary Magdalen is a 1519 painting by Jacob Cornelisz.

[113] Friedlander, *Early Netherlandish Painting,* volume 12, 47, and Harbison, "Lucas van Leyden," 124. Harbison also details the contemporary religious view regarding the Magdalen, 120-121.

portraits.[114] It has been suggested that noble women's portraits in the guise of Mary Magdalen provided these women with a model of domestic virtue and tranquility.[115]

In contrast to the immaculate and sinless Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalen was seen as a more accessible model for women.[116] Depictions of the Magdalen reading or playing music display her exemplary role as an illustration of the contemplative life.[117] St. Ignatius Loyola (1491/5 - 1556), in *Spiritual Exercises,* listed the conversion of the Magdalen both as one of the events of Christ's life to be meditated upon and as a model of conversion.[118] The sixteenth-century paintings of Mary Magdalen "hold high the notion of the repentant sinner: the Magdalen has her ornate ointment jar to remind us of her former life of luxury, as well as its redirection in a humble, Christian fashion."[119]

In Vermeer's *Woman Holding a Balance*, the woman's act of contemplation, the box upon the table spilling gold chains and pearls, the mirror on the wall, and the light that illuminates the scene, rather than the presence of an ornate ointment jar as in the sixteenth-century paintings, provide a reference to the iconography of the

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[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid., 128, note 27, reads, "James Mundy is preparing a study on the interesting possibility that these images might have been commissioned by husbands in order to provide models of domestic virtue and tranquility for their wives and daughters." I was unable to locate any such publication by James Mundy. Harbison also notes that images of Mary Magdalen were popular as the Magdalen was seen as an accessible model for women, 120-121.
[116] On Mary Magdalen as a more accessible model, because she, like Eve, was subject to sin and the moral dilemmas that women faced, see Susan Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Company, 1994).
[117] Ibid., 198.
[118] Ibid., 253-254.
[119] Harbison, "Lucas van Leyden," 124.

Magdalen.[120] Whereas sixteenth-century artists portrayed Mary Magdalen after her conversion, seventeenth-century artists, including Vermeer, developed a new iconography to show Mary Magdalen at the moment of her conversion.[121] While Vermeer used multiple elements of the iconography of Mary Magdalen to create a unique conception of her conversion, as will be shown in the following discussion, his painting also shared many elements in common with those of other artists of the seventeenth century.

The heavily lidded, downcast eyes of Vermeer's woman, as well as the spilled pearls, also appear in Caravaggio's *Repentant Magdalen* (c. 1594-95, figure 1-34). The motif of spilled pearls and jewels is also present in Peter Paul Rubens' (1577-1640) *St. Magdalen Repentant* (figure 1-35), as Mary Magdalen, in the foreground, her foot upon a box of overturned jewels, gazes upward with a rapt expression. Her sister, Martha, sits in the background, further indicating that the scene shows Mary's conversion through the persuasion of Martha from the worldly life of a prostitute (signified by her ornate clothing, loose hair, and the box of jewels) to a life of faith.

The Conversion of the Magdalen (1597-98, figure 1-36) by Caravaggio also depicts Mary with Martha in the moment of Mary's conversion. Here, the gesturing Martha is shown in her attempt to sway Mary Magdalen to Christ. Mary Magdalen is shown at the moment of divine revelation, as she points "to the paradigm of light in

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[120] Gowing, *Vermeer,* 136, note 101, notes the presence of the pearls in this painting as well as in others by Vermeer, and their association with Mary Magdalen: "There is a further, and barely perceptible, overtone in the melancholy of Vermeer's pearl pictures, arising from the association of the casket spilling its jewels with the iconography of the Magdalen." However, he does not see this as evidence that any of Vermeer's "pearl pictures" are associated with Mary Magdalen.

[121] Haskins, *Mary Magdalen,* 257.

the mirror… a symbol which stands for divine truth…" taken from I Corinthians, 13.[122] The text of I Corinthians 13:12 reads, "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood."[123]

Figure 1-34: Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *Repentant Magdalen,* c. 1594-1595, Galleria Doria-Pamphili

Figure 1-35: Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640), *St. Magdalen Repentant*, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

Vermeer's *Woman Holding a Balance* also utilizes the symbolism of light in the mirror. The mirror on the wall in *Woman Holding a Balance* takes the text of I Corinthians 13 even more literally; its grey surface reveals no reflection of the space outside of it. The mirror into which Mary Magdalen formerly gazed at herself in

[122] Fredrick J. Cummings, *Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (1573-1610): The Conversion of the Magdalene* (Detroit: Detroit Institute of Arts, 1973), 2.
[123] May and Metzger, ed., *The New Oxford Annotated Bible*.

Figure 1-36: Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio, *The Conversion of the Magdalen,* 1597-98, Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit.

vanity before her conversion is now revealed in its falsity of reflection. Instead, the woman holds the balance, a tool of evaluation, that captures her gaze in the sunlight that pierces the darkness of the room. In the diffused sunlight she sees the balance more truly than she can see in the reflection of the mirror; and through her contemplation of its equity and power for true evaluation, the equity and triumph of faith are revealed.

The figure of Christ, surrounded by a halo of light, is depicted in the painting of the Last Judgment directly above the head of the woman, revealing the triumph of the resurrected Christ. While other interpretations of *Woman Holding a Balance* have viewed the presence of the balance, in combination with the Last Judgment, to refer to the psychostasis, or weighing of souls, the psychostasis had disappeared from Last

Judgment images of the period.[124] The mood of the painting, rather than emphasizing the harsh justice of the Last Judgment, suggests that the balance in equilibrium represents, in the Magdalen's contemplation of its equity, the justness of the victorious risen Christ. This understanding is augmented by the knowledge that Mary Magdalen, as the first person to see Christ after His resurrection, "brought the knowledge that through Christ's victory over death, life everlasting was offered to all who believe."[125]

Vermeer's message would have carried special significance for the Protestant viewer of the time, as Christ's judgment was viewed as an act not of justice, but of God's love.[126] The concept of predestination meant that rather than looking only to good works for salvation, Calvinists must "examine their own conscience … in order to determine their spiritual status."[127] Assurance of faith and salvation could be obtained through such examination.[128] Vermeer's image, and its references to Mary Magdalen, an exemplar of the contemplative life, combined with her contemplation of the balance in the context of the Last Judgment, conveys this message eloquently.

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[124] For the balance representing the weighing of souls, see Craig Harbison, "Reformation Iconography: Problems and Attitudes," *Print Review* 5 (September, 1974), 83; Gowing, *Vermeer,* 135; Blankert, Ruurs, and Van de Watering, *Vermeer of Delft*, 44; and Silver, *The Paintings of Quinten Massys*, 136. On the disappearance of the psychostasia during the sixteenth century in depictions of the Last Judgment, see Craig Harbison, *The Last Judgment in Sixteenth-Century Northern Europe: A Study in the Relation Between Art and The Reformation* (New York: Garland Publishers, 1976), 132.
[125] Haskins, *Mary Magdalen,* 4.
[126] Harbison, *The Last Judgment,* 92.
[127] Cunnar, "The Viewer's Share," 522. Cunnar interprets *Woman Holding a Balance* as a depiction of the Virgin Mary in triumph over Satan, based on the curling form of the table support which he interprets as a depiction of a dragon/snake indicating the Virgin trampling Satan, and the shadow on her headscarf, which he interprets as Christ's blessing hand. While I find Cunnar's interpretation of these elements unlikely, his statements regarding Protestant theology are informative.
[128] Ibid.

Several paintings in Vermeer's oeuvre depict the figure of Mary Magdalen. Not only did Vermeer evoke Mary Magdalen in *Woman Holding a Balance*, but also portrayed her in *Christ in the House of Mary and Martha,* and a now lost *Visit to the Tomb.*[129] Further, the figure of Faith in *The Allegory of Faith* has also been suggested to represent Mary Magdalen.[130] The repetition of images of Mary Magdalen suggests an interest on the part of the artist, and/or on the part of his patron(s). The image of Mary Magdalen as a model for behavior in sixteenth-century art may have continued into the seventeenth century, at least among the circle of Vermeer. His *Allegory of Faith* is thought to have had a Catholic patron.[131] Further, the name of a relative of Vermeer's Catholic mother-in-law, Maria Thins, was Aleydis Magdalena van Rosendael, indicating that Mary Magdalen was still seen as a model for young Catholic women in the Netherlands.[132]

Mary Magdalen may have also continued as a model for Protestant women, as her examination of her own conscience at the moment of her conversion echoes the Protestant call to examine one's own spiritual status. The daughter of Pieter van Ruijven, the man thought to have been Vermeer's principal and most regular patron, was also named Magdalena, suggesting an interest on the part of van Ruijven in the

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[129] For the reference to the now lost *Visit to the Tomb,* see Montias, *Vermeer,* 140.
[130] This argument is made by Valerie Lind Hedquist, "The Real Presence of Christ and the Penitent Mary Magdalen in the *Allegory of Faith* by Johannes Vermeer," *Art History* 23, no. 3 (September 2000), 343. The figure of Faith not only takes the pose (gazing heavenward) in which the repentant Magdalen is often depicted, but she physically replaces the image of the Magdalen at the base of the cross in the Crucifixion painting behind her.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Montias, *Vermeer,* 174.

example of the biblical figure of Mary Magdalen.[133] Magdalena Pieters van Ruijven married Jacob Abrahamsz. Dissius in 1680; Vermeer's *Woman Holding a Balance* is known to have been in his possession in 1683.[134]

In this context, perhaps *Woman Holding a Balance,* through its questioning of initial perception, its encouragement of prudence, and its emphasis on contemplation through references to the penitent Magdalen, was commissioned by Pieter van Ruijven for his wife, Maria de Knuijt, or for his daughter Magdalena, as an object of contemplation. *Woman Holding a Balance* may have been meant first as a genre image to move the viewer towards right judgment in economic roles, and second, through references to the contemplative Mary Magdalen, to ensure the equity of the viewer's conscience.

Reframing the Discussion: Conclusions

While the allegorical meaning present in the Vermeer is unique within the category of images of "taking stock," all of the paintings discussed here do share central characteristics. Mid-century depictions of money weighing and account keeping reveal a society that held complex and conflicting views of the changing socio-economic roles portrayed within the paintings. Not only do the subjects "take stock," their viewers were encouraged to do the same, not only of their monetary status, but also of their morality.

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[133] Ibid., 251.
[134] Ibid.

The call to examine one's own morality was multi-faceted, as viewers were encouraged to evaluate their economic conduct as a spiritual and civic duty. A powerful message was conveyed subtly through the comforts of the proceeds of the prosperity that resulted from the very conduct being reinforced. The messages were transmitted through the familiarity of home rather than through the arena of public commerce, allowing for a greater sense of security, rather than anxiety. Images of "taking stock" set down and reinforced the social order of the day through this domestic metaphor.

CHAPTER 2

DOMESTIC DUTY: EXPECTATIONS FOR HOUSEHOLD EXPENDITURES

Framing the Discussion: An Outline

During the economic prosperity of the middle of the seventeenth century in the Netherlands, Dutch genre painters produced a number of paintings of their contemporaries shopping for household comestibles. These paintings of the domestic utilization of money form a unified set of highly selective images of household commerce. Paintings such as Pieter de Hooch's *A Woman Giving a Coin to a Maid*, Jacob Ochtervelt's *The Grape Seller*, and Quirin van Breckelenkam's *The Fish Wife* (figures 2-1, 2, and 3) portray similar interactions. Housewives -- or occasionally, their merchant husbands, maids, and/or children -- and the purveyors of fish, fowl, fruits, and vegetables act, react, and interact in various ways as they select and bargain over fresh foodstuffs. Within carefully depicted settings, the painted images convey polyvalent meanings, displaying how a seemingly routine act reveals the interdependence of seventeenth-century Dutch society on many levels. Within the paintings, not only do buyers and sellers rely upon one another, but servants and masters, children and parents, and citizens and society are also depicted in such a way as to demonstrate their interconnected relationships.

Figure 2-1: Pieter de Hooch, *A Woman Giving a Coin to a Maid*, c. 1668-72, Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

Figure 2-2: Jacob Ochtervelt, *The Grape Seller*, 1669, State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.

Figure 2-3: Quiringh van Brekelenkam, *The Fishwife*, 1661-65, Suermondt-Ludwig Museum, Aachen.

Mid-century paintings of domestic commerce fall into three basic categories that trace the trail of money from the household purse to the purveyors of goods, and those goods back to the household. Scenes occur either within the household, as the upper-middle-class merchant housewife gives coin and instruction to the maid before going to market (figures 2-1, 7, 8, 9, and 10), or checks her purchases upon return (figures 2-11, 12, 13, and 14); or alternatively in the entry area of the house, as the maid, housewife, or husband selects from the wares of the fish, poultry, vegetable or fruit seller (figures 2-2, 16, 17, 18, 19, and 20); or, finally, within the marketplace at the vendor's stall, as items are selected and paid for by the housewife, husband, or maid (figures 2-3, 22, 23, 24, and 24). These images bear a striking resemblance to one another, as the housewife monitors the careful selection of basic food items and their subsequent entry into the household, as well as the concomitant monetary outlay.

Scenes of household commerce allow a multitude of possible interpretations, as the seemingly recognizable subject matter is deceptively complex, both in the choice of the specific subject depicted, and in the details of how that subject is portrayed. This discussion considers the manner in which such paintings took part in a conscious definition of expected social and economic relationships. The separation of public and private spheres during the seventeenth century, and the demarcation of domestic roles, especially as gendered roles, increased during the time period.[135] The

[135] Joan Kelly, *History and Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 11, makes the argument that, historically, as a society moves towards a division between public and private spheres and towards a clear demarcation of domestic roles, the inequality of the sexes increases, subordinating

well-ordered upper-middle-class urban household, as depicted in these paintings, created a controlled, gendered (female) realm, allowing for a careful, non-confrontational exploration of the fluctuations that occurred in social and economic expectations of the day.[136]

First, through their depiction of economic exchange, such paintings describe social relationships in essentially economic terms. However, the figures depicted behave in carefully prescribed manners, based on gender, age and class, maintaining social norms. While modern evaluations of the market emphasize economic exchange as simply defined by its monetary aspects, the acts of exchange depicted in these paintings were dependent upon the social context in which the acts occurred and in which the paintings were created.[137] The location of the scenes within public and semi-public spaces, where class mixing is acceptable and expected, eased any latent tensions about the unequal relationships of the figures depicted. All of these elements, combined with a notable didactic tone in the paintings, create and reinforce contemporary expectations about proper social behavior, as diligent selection of goods and careful expenditure of money are emphasized.

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women and domestic duties to a male dominated public order. On how paintings begin to depict this emerging idea of domesticity, see H. Perry Chapman, "Women in Vermeer's Home: Mimesis and Ideation," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 51 (2000), 239.

[136] On how some seventeenth-century Dutch genre scenes represent an attempt to control cultural anxieties through the representation of gendered roles, see Bryan Jay Wolf, *Vermeer and the Invention of Seeing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 50-51.

[137] See Michèle de La Pradelle, *Market Day in Provence*. trans. Amy Jacobs (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 2, for a discussion of how all exchanges are not only economic acts, but should also be considered in the larger social context of the society in which they occur.

The Pictorial Range of Scenes of Household Commerce

In the middle of the seventeenth century, Dutch genre painters created a new category of subject matter; scenes of household commerce, specifically the purchase of food items, became the central focus of a sub-set of genre scenes.[138] This sub-set of genre scenes traces the journey of foodstuffs from the market to their preparation for the family table. Despite the variance found in the many scenes produced during the seventeenth century, those depictions discussed here that focus on the monetary transaction involved in the purchase of household comestibles fall within three basic categories, as the housewife instructs the maid regarding purchases, purchases wares from a seller at the door, or purchases goods at the market.

This discussion will focus on images that either include obvious reference to coins, or reference directly the exchange of goods for monetary compensation with an implied, if not visible, presence of monetary exchange. Due to the large quantity of images related to the sale and purchase of food, this discussion does not seek to provide a comprehensive survey of all images of marketing. Scenes that do not focus on the direct exchange of goods for money are not included here, nor does this discussion include larger market views where no single interaction is emphasized. Less frequent depictions of artisans within their shops, whether or not visited by a customer, also fall outside of the scope of this discussion.

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[138] Linda Stone-Ferrier, in "Gabriel Metsu's Vegetable Market at Amsterdam: Seventeenth-Century Dutch Market Painting and Horticulture," *Art Bulletin* 71:3 (September 1989): 428-452, addresses the "unprecedented" nature and large number of images of vegetable markets. The domestification of market imagery that occurs in the middle of the seventeenth century, is, however, taken even further in the category of images discussed here.

Dutch genre painters in the middle of the seventeenth century created highly selective and standardized tableaus tracing the trail of domestic purchases of food items. The scenes consist mostly of women, maids, and children, performing the daily tasks associated with the purchase and preparation of food for the family table. Men of the household are less frequently depicted, yet often referenced by other elements within the paintings.[139] While each of these categories of depiction has its own idiosyncrasies, as a whole, pictures describing the purchase of daily fare share many characteristics. The traditions from which each of these types of paintings draw, the paintings themselves, and their concomitant issues of interpretation reveal nuanced views of contemporary socio-economic relationships.

Defining the Subject: The Purchase of Daily Fare

The individuals depicted in paintings such as Pieter de Hooch's *A Woman Giving a Coin to a Maid*, Jacob Ochtervelt's *The Grape Seller*, and Quiringh van Breckelenkam's *The Fish Wife* (figures 2-1, 2, and 3) specifically purchase fresh produce for the table. The depiction of the selection and payment for food, and in particular specific categories of comestibles while other categories of goods are excluded, has ramifications for the import of the paintings. The members of the wealthy households are depicted surrounded by every luxury of urban affluence of the period exemplified by rich furnishings, gilt-framed mirrors, large-scale paintings, imported rugs, pottery, furniture, and even the elegant attire of the subjects

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[139] See Richard Helgerson, "Soldiers and Enigmatic Girls: The Politics of Dutch Domestic Realism," *Representations* 58 (Spring 1997), 55, on the absence of male householders in mid-century Dutch genre paintings.

themselves. However, they are not depicted purchasing these same luxury goods. Instead, the burghers carefully select the highest quality fish, fowl, fruits, or vegetables hawked by their lower-class countrymen.

The choice by these seventeenth-century Dutch genre artists to depict (and by extension, their patrons to purchase) almost exclusively the purchase of certain non-processed food items is truly remarkable. Food, both in general, and as depicted by Dutch genre painters, holds a unique place as a category of consumption.[140] Food is *the* essential commodity; because it is necessary for sustaining life. Every individual, regardless of age, gender, or class considerations must eat, and hunger and the need for food is more constant throughout the human experience than any other desire.[141] Food is also unlike many other commodities in its transitive nature. Food is purchased, prepared, and consumed within a very short period of time, and once consumed it is gone.[142] Food also leaves no permanent marker of its purchase. While one might tell others of a particularly well-prepared meal, or maintain a pleasant plumpness from overindulgence, food is not a commodity that can be enjoyed or

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[140]Sidney Mintz discusses food as a unique category of consumption, both in general and specifically in the seventeenth century in Europe in, "The Changing Roles of Food in the Study of Consumption," *Consumption and the World of Goods*, ed. John Brewer and Roy Porter (New York: Routledge, 1993), 261.
[141]Ibid., 261-262. For this reason, food is also a commodity that is universal in its consumption. However, expectations regarding the types and relative cost of foods that should be consumed were regulated by social status during the period. See Anne McCants, "Meeting Needs and Suppressing Desires: Consumer Choice Models and Historical Data," *Journal of Interdisciplinary Histor*y, 26:2 (Autumn 1995), 192-198 for a discussion of how social expectations according to station were reflected in consumption patterns of food and other goods.
[142]Mintz, "The Changing Roles of Food," 262. The transitive nature of foodstuffs itself could have also had an influence upon the frequency of the depiction of its purchase. Prior to refrigeration, there was a necessity for purchasing fresh foodstuffs on a daily basis, unlike other, durable goods.

consumed over an extended period, nor can it be invested in, as a durable commodity can be.

Food holds two possible socio-economic functions; it is a necessity, but also, in the case of certain foods, a rarity. The foods depicted by mid-seventeenth-century Dutch artists in scenes of domestic expenditure fulfill aspects of both of these purposes. The foods depicted (fish, fowl, fruits, vegetables) are common to the region. They are fairly simple fare, not exotic or extravagant (in contrast to citrus fruits, peacocks, or pastries).[143] Some of them, however, are seasonal, such as asparagus or cherries. The purchasers take great care in the selection of their produce. This suggests a degree of variability in the quality of the foodstuffs available, revealing the need for a diligent household manager to monitor both the outlay of the household budget and the quality of items -- not just commodities but by extension, individuals -- allowed into the household.[144]

The fact that mid-seventeenth-century artists mostly limited the depiction of household consumption to specific foodstuffs also raises further issues. The selection of fish, fruit, and vegetables, and even the category of fresh produce itself, indicates a degree of local and regional pride. This pride is evident in the depiction of the availability of superior quality and quantities of agricultural products, and also in the

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[143] See R. E. Kistemaker, "The Public and the Private: Public Space in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam," trans. Ms. Wendy Shattes, in *The Public and the Private in Dutch Culture of the Golden Age* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2000), 17, for an example of the legal measures taken to preclude unnecessary extravagance in foodstuffs, aimed at preventing the lower classes from what the Amsterdam town council viewed as wastefulness.

[144] Linda Stone-Ferrier, "Gabriel Metsu's *Vegetable Market at Amsterdam*: Seventeenth-Century Dutch Market Paintings and Horticulture," 428-452 mentions the regulations meant to prevent the sale of inferior goods.

choice of specific products.[145] The most frequently depicted foodstuff, fresh fish, further recalls the maritime (and by extension, mercantile) success of the Republic, a success that not only shapes their diets, but also is reflected in the furnishings of the households depicted.[146] The comparison of this important industry (fishing) with another important industry also dependent on maritime success (trade), evident in the rich furnishings such as rugs and pottery, displays how the industries are similar, both in terms of potential risk and profit.[147]

A sense of pride in region and nation evident in the choice of commodity is also reflected in a further way within some of the paintings. Often, landscape paintings, or occasionally a map of the region, hang prominently on the walls of the interiors depicted, suggesting the native, rural origins of the items being purchased.[148] The inclusion, in an urban interior, of a reference to the rural countryside or the geography of the region in combination with the purchase of foodstuffs suggests pride

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[145]Ibid., also discusses the subject of pride in local agricultural products.

[146] See Fred G. Meijer, "Fish Still Lifes in Holland and Flanders," in *Fish Still Lifes by Dutch and Flemish Masters 1550-1700*, Liesbeth M. Helmus, ed. (Utrecht: Centraal Museum, 2004), 17, on the role that fish played not only in the diet, but the economy of the region, and how this impacted still life painting. For a discussion of the general abundance of food, relative to previous time periods and other regions, see Peter G. Rose, "Dutch Foodways: An American Connection," in *Matters of Taste: Food and Drink in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art and Life*, Donna R. Barnes and Peter G. Rose, ed. (Albany: Albany Institute of History and Art; Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2002), 17-27.

[147] On the risk and profit of the fishing industry and its effect on the economy, see Julie Berger Hochstrasser, "Feasting the Eye: Painting and Reality in the Seventeenth-Century 'Bancketje'," in *Still-Life Paintings from the Netherlands 1550-1720*, Alan Chong and Wouter Kloek, ed. (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum; Zwolle: Waanders Publishers, 1999), 78.

[148] Such elements are seen in many of the works discussed here, such as Jacob Ochtervelt's *The Grape Seller* (figure 2-2), Ochtervelt's *Lady and Maid Choosing Fish* (figure 2-14), Quiringh van Brekelenkam's *Interior with a Housewife, Maid, and Fishmonger* (figure 2-28), the same artist's *Fishwife and Shrimp Seller Offering their Wares* (figure 2-17), *Fishwife and Shrimp Seller* (figure 2-26), and *Housewife Choosing Fish, with a Maid* (figure 2-27). See also Eddy de Jongh, "The Symbolism of Fisherman, Fishing Gear and the Catch," in *Fish Still Lifes*, 88, on the association of the farmer and fisherman with the natural world.

in the ability to generate high quality agricultural products from the land.[149] In this case it is a direct relationship, as the foods are not processed, and therefore directly reference the fertility of countryside and sea. Rather than a land of milk and honey, the Dutch celebrated their abundance of fish, vegetables, and fruit.[150]

The patronage of the purveyors of basic comestibles displays the manner in which upper-middle-class urban merchants support the local economy at the most basic level, as they purchase the products of the natural world, nurtured by the class that makes its living off the native land. By portraying unprocessed foods, the abundance of the native land (vegetables, fruit, game, and poultry) is emphasized.[151] The sellers of such goods are linked, metaphorically, to the land that produced them, and the urban merchant class, portrayed as benefactors through this purchase, is shown in the splendor of the resultant wealth without appearing avaricious. National pride in both agricultural and mercantile abundance is tied together through the depiction of both the class that fed the nation and the class that supplied the capital. Both are portrayed as essential to the nation's success. However, it should also be

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[149] If one considers the possibility that the urban merchant might be a landowner and the seller a tenant, this reference to the rural countryside takes on an added notion of pride in ownership. On the urban upper-class' ownership of rural estates, see Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches: An Interpretation of Dutch Culture in the Golden Age,* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 290-294. On tenants supplying goods to their landlords, see Christopher Dyer, "The Consumer and the Market in the Later Middle Ages," in *Economic History Review* 42:3 (1989), 312.

[150] I would also argue that the preference for depicting unprocessed foods is directly related to pride in local agriculture. While there was also pride in the nation's ability to produce quality bread, cheese, and beer, these do not demonstrate the same direct connection with the native soil and sea that fresh produce and fish do. For a brief discussion of the importance of fish and other foodstuffs, including beer and bread, see Hochstrasser, "Feasting the Eye," 73.

[151] The abundance was also praised in other art forms; for example, see Alan Chong, "Contained Under the Name of Still Life: The Associations of Still-Life Painting," in *Still-Life Paintings from the Netherlands*, 20, on the popularity of poems which praised the abundance and variety of agricultural and rural food products.

noted that some of the very products in which the area was rich, such as dairy and grain products, are not depicted.[152] While their predecessors, such as Pieter Aertsen and Joachim Bueckelaer (figures 2-4 and 5) had included the depiction of bread, eggs, and meat, the emphasis in mid-seventeenth century Dutch artists' paintings differs significantly.

A Visual Vocabulary: Previous Depictions of Domestic Expenditure

Depictions of the individual purchase of foodstuffs grew, in part, out of northern European sixteenth-century depictions of the abundance of goods in a market setting, such as in the paintings of Pieter Aertsen (1535-1607) and Joachim Bueckelaer (1530-73).[153] Sixteenth-century paintings, such as Aertsen's *Market Woman at a Vegetable Stand* (figure 2-4), or Bueckelaer's *Market Scene* (figure 2-5), focus on the abundance of goods and the seller(s) of those products. These scenes overflow with many varieties of foodstuffs, and some include items like eggs, cheese, meat, and other foods that are noticeably absent in the mid-seventeenth-century genre scenes examined here. This striking change shows a greater emphasis not only on items of particular regional pride, but also emphasizes a more frugal approach to consumption, as rich foods are replaced by more meager unprocessed ones. Additionally, the mid-seventeenth-century Dutch paintings examined here focus on the individual act of economic exchange, rather than the abundance of goods and

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[152] See Elisabeth De Bièvre, "The Urban Subconscious: The Art of Delft and Leiden," *Art History* 18:2 (June 1995), 229, on the richness of dairy and grain production.

[153] Elizabeth Alice Honig, in *Painting and the Market in Early Modern Antwerp* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), provides a thorough discussion of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century precedents of the market scenes discussed here. While her central focus is on Flemish paintings, she does also include early Dutch market scenes.

manner of their sellers. The depiction of the isolated, singular, explicitly monetary transaction is particularly Dutch in origin, and begins early in the seventeenth century.[154]

Figure 2-4: Pieter Aertsen, *Market Woman at a Vegetable Stand*, Staatliche Museen, Stiftung Preussicher Kulturbesitz, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.

Figure 2-5: Joachim Bueckelaer, *Market Scene*, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

[154] Ibid., 167, on how the inclusion of money in market scenes is particularly Dutch.

Jacob Gerritsz. Cuyp's *Fish Market* of 1627 (figure 2-6) raises many of the interpretive issues raised by in mid-seventeenth-century Dutch genre paintings of domestic commerce.[155] Here, an act of monetary exchange has already occurred and is both the literal subject and the compositional focus of the scene. However, despite his receipt of coin, the elder male fish seller does not yet proffer the item the elegant female customer has indicated she desires. His direct gaze indicates that the transaction is, at the moment, under his control. Despite the greater social and economic status of the female customer, he determines if the coins she has given are adequate compensation for the goods she seeks.[156] The maid who accompanies the lady on this shopping trip looks directly out of the composition at the viewer, rendering the viewer's interaction with her an echo of the interaction between buyer and seller. Thus, viewer and subjects partake in a circle of exchanged glances, displaying the social and economic commerce occurring between each as goods (both food and art) are purchased and consumed.

The precedent set by this display of the complexity of contemporary economic interactions between subjects of differing age, gender, economic and social status is adapted by Cuyp's successors to create images that not only reveal the interdependence and economic relationship of buyer and seller, but also show the

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[155] Ibid., 166 mentions this work as one of the earliest seventeenth-century Dutch market scenes of an individual transaction focused on monetary exchange.

[156] Ibid., 167 notes the leveling that occurs in the market place. However, economic exchange does not occur in a social vacuum. Economic behavior is influenced in a variety of ways by the past, present, and anticipated future social relations of the actors partaking in an act of exchange. See de la Pradelle, 2-5, and Aafke E. Komter, "Introduction," in *The Gift: an Interdisciplinary Perspective*, Aafke E. Komter, ed. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996), 3-5, for discussions of some of the social dimensions that affect exchange relationships.

Figure 2-6: Jacob Gerritsz. Cuyp, *Fish Market*, 1627, Dordrecht, Dordrechtmuseum.

importance of their economic interactions to each other and society. Where Cuyp's painting displays the necessity of agreement of both parties on values, his successors created images that revealed not only the necessity of agreement on economic value within the literal individual transaction depicted, but also within the figurative social transactions of seventeenth-century Dutch society as a whole.[157] Through the pictorial language of these scenes, social and class relationships are translated into economic ones, where the enforcement of social norms benefits those involved and society as a whole, thereby reinforcing and validating the social order of the time.

The painters of such images in the middle of the seventeenth century created a new vocabulary that allowed for the depiction of such interactions. They employed

[157] Honig, *Painting and the Market*, 167, discusses how, in Cuyp's painting, "both parties must agree on…values," in the transaction depicted.

not only the traditional market setting for their scenes, but more frequently removed such interactions to the confines of the upper-middle-class urban merchant household, thereby essentially reversing the power relationship depicted by Cuyp.[158] In many mid-century domesticated scenes the focus is transferred from the seller to the buyer, thereby altering the import of the social dialogue. As will be discussed here, the change in location allowed for factors relevant to the changes occurring in society to be played out and discussed through non-confrontational scenes of everyday activities.

The regulation and control of public and private spaces and behaviors are engaged through the details of the portrayed subjects in liminal locations. Statements regarding socioeconomic status and social relationships were conveyed to contemporary viewers by the use of a carefully selected visual vocabulary. The artists reworked the market tradition of their predecessors, freely adapting the subject to meet the need to redefine social and economic roles. The social roles were depicted in a manner meant to satisfy the expected audience of upper-middle-class urban burghers. The discussion here will reveal that the upper-middle-class householders who are portrayed act appropriately to their means, and are shown due deference by the lower classes supplying their needs. In turn, their affluence allows consumption that simultaneously benefits their suppliers, by providing the lower class purveyors

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[158] See Martha Hollander, *An Entrance for the Eyes: Space and Meaning in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 2, on how the interior of the urban house became the preferred setting for many scenes, especially during the middle of the century.

with the coin needed to satisfy their less ample needs.[159] This message is conveyed through three distinct types of depictions of household commerce.

Supervision of Domestic Expenditures

In the first category of mid-seventeenth-century Dutch scenes of domestic commerce, the upper-middle-class urban lady of the house gives coin and instruction to a maid about to go to market, or the lady checks the maid's purchases upon return to the household. Scenes such as Pieter de Hooch's *Woman Giving a Coin to a Maid*, Quiringh van Brekelenkam's *Woman and Maid*, and Michiel van Musscher's *Lady and Maidservant* (figures 2-1, 7, and 10), focus on the delivery of careful instruction and coin to the maid by the housewife. Paintings such as Pieter de Hooch's *A Woman with a Maid with a Pail in a Courtyard*, Quiringh van Brekelenkam's *Maid Showing Poultry to a Young Woman at the Spinning Wheel*, or Jacob Ochtervelt's *Lady and Maid Choosing Fish* (figure 2-11, 12, and 14), portray the subsequent inspection of produce as the maid returns with the daily purchases.[160]

In Pieter de Hooch's *A Woman Giving a Coin to a Maid* (c. 1668-72, figure 2-1), sunlight enters through an open window and illuminates the tiled entrance space of a wealthy urban household. An elegantly attired young housewife momentarily sets aside her sewing and gives instruction to a maid. She proffers a single coin, as she

[159] See McCants, "Meeting Needs and Suppressing Desires," 197, for a discussion of how expectations for proper expenditure were reflective of rank. The upper classes were expected to maintain their households according to a different model from that of the lower classes.
[160] The second category of painting, of the inspection of produce by the wife, notably does not include money; however, as such paintings are a continuation of the transaction between housewife, maid, and the (unseen) seller, they are included here. They do, through the housewife's diligent inspection, reveal concern regarding whether or not the coin provided was spent wisely.

looks directly into the face of the more modestly attired woman. Rather than return her gaze, the maid deferentially averts her eyes down towards her hand as she accepts the coin, the slight nod of her head and attentive manner an indication that she listens carefully to the housewife's directions. The maid holds a market pail in her left hand, both indicating the task at hand and providing a means by which to carefully convey her purchases back to the household from the market. A young child, silhouetted against the dark fireplace in the background, tugs at her skirt, eager to accompany her on the outing.

The space thus occupied is neatly and richly attired. A symmetrical arrangement of fruit, pottery, and a large-scale painting of a reclining Venus and Cupid decorate the large mantel in the background. A large gilt framed mirror hangs above an empty chair, reflecting the decanter, glass, and carpet on the table in the foreground. The window on the left lets in the sunlight that illuminates the handsomely tiled interior space, and also allows the verdant vines growing on the exterior of the house entry into the domestic space.[161]

This carefully defined interior possesses many of the characteristics typical of such scenes. The housewife pauses from an appropriately domestic task (in this case, sewing) to give instruction, as well as coin, to the maid regarding the daily purchases

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[161] I have not been able to ascertain a satisfactory explanation for the presence of the vines on the interior of the house, other than as a general reference to fertility. Vines do occur in interiors in a few other paintings of the period, such as Quiringh van Brekelenkam's *Fishwife and Shrimp Seller*, c. 1665, Kunsthaus Heylshof, Worms (figure 2-19). Jan Steen's *Grace Before a Meal*, reproduced in Simon Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, 47, also contains vines. In all three examples here, the context involves the purchase or consumption of food, and it seems appropriate to emphasize the fertility of the land that provided the food by including such a verdant example of abundance.

at the market.[162] In addition to her performance of a necessary household errand, the maid also serves as chaperone for a small child. The scripted behavior of these three figures makes clear each individual's role within the household and family. Further, the setting, through rich and immaculate furnishings, indicates the economic success of the family that lives within. The housewife is similarly immaculate, with her perfect curls and spotless satin attire, and her pristine white shoes, unsoiled by the street outside. The dutiful and attentive maid similarly attests to the wife's capable management of the household, and even the child's desire for an excursion provides an opportunity for a lesson in household management.

De Hooch's painting also cleverly references what (or who) is not present. The presence of the empty market pail intimates both the products that will soon fill it, and the affluence of the region that allows for such consumption on a daily basis. In this way, the seemingly simple act of money changing hands displays the interconnectedness of society. Similarly, the viewer is allowed to contemplate the role of the absent male member of the household, referred to by his assumed role as provider, husband, and father.[163] This absent male householder is dependent upon his (depicted) wife for her prudent management of the household, while she, in turn is dependent on his (not depicted) business dealings for the coin that sustains the

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[162] In this, and similar domestic images, sewing is representative of a diligent and industrious domestic task. See Linda Stone-Ferrier, *Images of Textiles: The Weave of Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art and Society* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985), 92; and Wayne E. Franits, *Paragons of Virtue: Women and Domesticity in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 17.
[163] As will be discussed in connection with other examples, some similar paintings include portraits of the male householder, and while certainly less common, occasionally the man himself is depicted.

household.[164] Further, the maid depends upon the wife for her board and wages, the child on the mother and maid for his/her education, and the unseen seller of produce on the urban family for the coin that, in turn, allows the purchase of other necessities. Any discomfort that might arise from such interdependent relationships is not referenced, as it is subsumed by the focus on a routine, daily chore in the most pleasant setting and manner possible.

The elements defined in this painting by de Hooch are also found in those of his contemporaries. In Quiringh van Brekelenkam's *Woman and Maid* (1663, figure 2-7), the stylish housewife again sits by an open window, a coin in hand as she gives instruction to the maid bearing a market pail. The maid stands deferentially, her hands neatly folded. A slightly older child stands attentively at her mother's side, as she looks out at the viewer, drawing attention to the delivery of instruction. Another young woman sits, dutifully tending to her sewing. A portrait of a man hangs on the wall, directly behind the housewife, and stands in for the absent male householder, as the female members of the household maintain domestic order.

Pieter de Hooch's *Mother and Infant with Maidservant and a Child* (1663-65, figure 2-8) provides a variation on the same theme. A richly attired housewife sits in an interior room nursing an infant by the warmth of the fire. A slightly older child pulls the hand of the maid in the direction of the brightly lit street beyond. However, the maid, coin in hand, pauses for the housewife's final instruction before departing from the private quarters for the city and market beyond. The same artist's *Interior of*

[164] Franits, *Paragons*, 68 discusses the idealized role for women as explained in Johannes Colerus' *De vermeerderde wyse jaer-beschryver*. See also Ozment, *When Fathers Ruled,* 58.

Figure 2-7: Quiringh van Brekelenkam, *Woman and Maid*, 1663, Kunsthaus, Zurich.

a Dutch House of c. 1680, and Michiel van Musscher's *Lady and Maidservant* (figures 2-9, and 10) utilize a similar vocabulary of depiction. Elegantly decorated spaces, connected to the towns beyond literally through the depicted doors and windows, and figuratively by the activities of the figures, provide a setting for the delivery of instruction and coin. The housewife attends diligently to necessary tasks (tending the hearth, sewing), as maids are sent to the market for the daily purchases. The maids, coin in hand, listen carefully to the housewives' instruction. The emphasis of the activities in such images is on the diligent exercise of socially dictated domestic duties.[165]

[165] For a similar interpretation of other genre scenes of the period, see Franits, *Paragons,* 64.

Figure 2-8: Pieter de Hooch, *Mother and Infant with Maidservant and a Child*, c. 1663-65, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

Figure 2-9: Pieter de Hooch, *Interior of a Dutch House*, c. 1680, Boston Museum of of Fine Arts, Boston.

Figure 2-10: Michiel van Musscher, *Lady and Maidservant*, location unknown.

Similarly, scenes of the maid returning from her trip to the market emphasize the prudent expenditure of the household budget and the importance of the housewife's role in monitoring the items brought into the home. In Pieter de Hooch's *A Woman with a Maid with a Pail in a Courtyard* (1661-63, figure 2-11), a woman seated in an open courtyard pauses from her sewing to inspect the fowl presented by the maid in the marketing pail. Her skeptical expression is answered by the maid's concern, shown in the lowering of her brow.[166] The housewife's unimpressed response emphasizes the need for her to supervise the presence and behavior of the maid within the household.[167]

The necessity of monitoring the entrance of non-family members into the household is also subtly referenced within the painting by the presence of a strolling couple seen through an open gate. Their presence, seen through the courtyard and doorway, suggests the possibility of ingress of outsiders into the domestic space. However, their separation by the intervening canal, and their supervision by the woman in the doorway of the house beyond demarcate the separation of the private domestic realm from that of the public street. The housewife is thus encouraged to

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[166] Aside from the necessity to inspect the quality of the purchases, the housewife's vigilance could, in part, also be related to a concern over the economic relationship that a maid could develop with the tradespeople who supplied the necessities of daily life. On the possibility of maids taking kickbacks from tradespeople to supplement their wages, see Marybeth Carlson, "A Trojan Horse of Worldliness? Maidservants in the Burgher Household in Rotterdam at the End of the Seventeenth Century," in *Women of the Golden Age: An International Debate on Women in Seventeenth-Century Holland, England and Italy*, Els Kloek, Nicole Teeuwen, and Marijke Huismer, ed. (Hilversum: Verloren, 1994), 94.

[167] The cautious attention of the housewife to the behavior of the maid, not just in reference to daily purchases, was advocated in household manuals of the time. See Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, 457.

monitor the interactions of these two realms. With proper care and vigilance, her household will flourish like the potted plant on the balustrade.

Figure 2-11: Pieter de Hooch, *A Woman with a Maid with a Pail in a Courtyard*, c. 1661-63, State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.

In other paintings, the housewife appears more pleased with the purchases of the maid. The housewife in Quiringh van Brekelenkam's *Maid Showing Poultry to a Young Woman at a Spinning Wheel* (1667, figure 2-12) also works diligently, yet pauses to inspect and comment upon the quality of the fowl in the maid's marketing basket. In a visual counterpart to the caged bird above her head, the housewife has remained sequestered behind the closed windows of her domestic space. Rather than venture out into the public space of the market, she has sent the maid, who functions as an intermediary between the public space of the market and the private space of the household. The presence of the wife within the sanctity of the household functions

simultaneously to preserve the purity of the home through her protection, as the household also protects her from outside influences.

Figure 2-12: Quiringh van Brekelenkam, *Maid Showing Poultry to a Young Woman at the Spinning Wheel*, 1667, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin-Dahlem.

Maids, then, are an intermediary figure between the corruptible elements of the market, and the purity of the home. They may do their job well, as in Quiringh van Brekelenkam's *Housewife and Maid with Fish* (c. 1663, figure 2-13), where the young housewife smiles slightly as she pauses from her task, looking at the well-chosen large fish held up by the maid. The maid's open mouth and energetic expression cause the viewer to imagine that the maid comments on the fineness of the fish she selected. In other paintings, such as Jacob Ochtervelt's *Lady and Maid Choosing Fish* (figure 2-14), the role of the housewife as supervisor is further

emphasized as she instructs the maid further, seemingly on the evaluation of the cut of fish, or on the manner in which it should be prepared.

Figure 2-13: Quiringh van Brekelenkam, *Housewife and Maid with Fish*, c. 1663, present location unknown.

Figure 2-14: Jacob Ochtervelt, *Lady and Maid Choosing Fish*, private collection, England.

However, as a figure that has contact with both worlds, maids are not completely trusted, and must be monitored. One reason behind the need for careful monitoring of the maid's purchases is intimated by another painting of the period. In Nicolaes Maes' *Maid with Fish* (figure 2-15), the maid has paused on her way back from the market to speak with a neighbor. In her excitement over the latest gossip, she unwittingly dangles the piece of salmon in her hand before the eager nose of a dog. The maid's irresponsible behavior makes evident one reason behind the implied

necessity for vigilance and diligence regarding the commodities being purchased, and the individuals entrusted with their care.

Figure 2-15: Nicolaes Maes, *Maid with Fish,* Dordrecht, Dordrechts Museum.

The maid's ability to perform her duties well indicates the wife's ability to choose the maid well, which in turn reflects on the husband.[168] The household, as a microcosm of the overall social order, also further reflects on society. This sense of social responsibility on the part of the upper-middle-class justifies not only the success of the merchant household, but ties it to the success of the nation. The members of the merchant classes are displayed not only as good arbiters of wealth, but also of domestic morality. The responsibility for the maintenance of morality is assigned through expectations for the upper-middle-class urban housewife. The role of a woman as a household manager was not a new one; the innovation is in the

[168] Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, 457.

newfound singularity of this role for the upper-middle-class urban housewife. The depiction of these women in this manner, however, does not necessarily provide an accurate description of the actual circumstances of the time. In the paintings, the wife's role within the house becomes exclusive; she does not balance it with another occupation.

Most women, despite admonitions to the contrary, could not afford to stay at home.[169] Women dominated the arena of the market, because women were often the purveyors of goods as well as the purchasers.[170] The market was a locale where women of various classes could mix, not only to sell and purchase wares, but for social exchange.[171] Therefore, this category of painting, where wives do not venture out and interact directly with sellers, provides a limited view of the shopping practices of the period. In the other two categories of painting discussed here, the presence of the seller provides a slightly different, yet analogous, conception.

Sellers at the Door

The second category of paintings of exchange continues to emphasize the necessity for careful inspection and monitoring of the people and items that are allowed entry into the household. In Jacob Ochtervelt's *The Grape Seller* and *The*

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[169] For an example of how women were admonished to stay home, see Lia Van Gemerd, "The Power of Weaker Vessels: Simon Schama and Johan van Beverwijk on Women," in *Women of the Golden Age*, 46. On the inability of most women to exclusively manage a household (as opposed to working at another occupation in addition to that of wife and mother), see Lotte C. Van de Pol, "The Lure of the Big City: Female Migration to Amsterdam," in *Women of the Golden Age*, 74-75. On both issues, see also Price, 122-124.

[170] See Merry Wiesner-Hanks, "Women's Work in the Changing City Economy, 1500-1650," In *Connecting Spheres: European Women in a Globalizing World, 1500 to the Present*, Marilyn J. Boxer and Jean H. Quataert, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 89, on the dominance of women in the market.

[171] Ibid., discusses the market as the location for the exchange of information and news.

Poultry Seller, and Quiringh van Brekelekam's *Fishwife and Shrimp Seller Offering their Wares at a House* (figures 2-2, 16, and 17), the vendor has come to the door of the upper-middle-class household, offering his/her produce to the affluent customer. The economic interaction occurs at the entry area of the house as the maid, housewife, or husband selects from the comestible wares of the fish, poultry, vegetable or fruit seller. Not all of the paintings in this category include a visible depiction of the physical exchange of coin, but all included here focus on the exchange of goods for monetary compensation.

Figure 2-16: Jacob Ochtervelt, *The Poultry Seller*, present location unknown.

Figure 2-17: Quiringh van Brekelenkam, *Fishwife and Shrimp Seller Offering their Wares at a House*, 1662, present location unknown.

In Jacob Ochtervelt's *The Grape Seller* (1669, figure 2-2), an elegantly attired housewife stands at the apex of a hierarchical arrangement of figures, coin in hand, in the brightly illuminated entry space, or *voorhuis*, of a wealthy burgher home. Directly in front of her, a more somberly dressed maid kneels, holding a bowl to receive the grapes being weighed by the elder saleswoman in the doorway. A young child has selected a grape and proffers it to the maid, allowing the opportunity to evaluate the quality of the goods at hand. The child's hoop rests against the wall in the foreground, as a small dog barks in excitement. The space is spare, yet elegant, enlivened by an expensive tile floor and an empty chair placed below a large-scale map of the Netherlands.[172]

Here the relationship between buyer and seller has been reversed from that of earlier depictions of marketing. Where Cuyp (figure 2-6) assigned the ultimate decision about fair value in the transaction to the seller, in Ochtervelt's scene, the upper-class housewife literally and figuratively takes the lead position. The seller not only is relegated to a subservient position in having come to the door of the buyer, but is held within the space of the doorway.[173] While her goods (the basket of grapes) have been allowed entry, she remains in the juncture of outside and inside, denied the privilege of entry. Further, her individual identity is without importance, as her hat and the fall of light deny a clear view of her face. In contrast, the housewife and child

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[172] The map has been identified as C. J. Visscher's "Germania Inferior," which depicts the seventeen provinces. See Susan Donahue Kuretsky, *The Paintings of Jacob Ochtervelt (1634-1682)* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1979), 69.

[173] See Dyer, "The Consumer and the Market," 312-321, on the various practices that might bring the seller to the buyer's door. These included purveyors who were tenants of landowners providing their landlords with specialty goods, buyers who have ordered specialized products, and also sellers seeking out new, wealthy customers.

are brightly lit, sweet-faced individuals to whom the anonymous purveyor caters. This reversal of roles conveys a very different image of the social and economic relationships between these individuals.

Additionally, the seller's status is further diminished as her visit's value as entertainment is given prominence through the behavior of dog and child. However, the sales acumen of this older figure is also revealed in her utilization of the child as a tool to persuade her customer. Through the "giving" of a sample, the seller not only allows the buyer to verify the quality of the goods proffered, but also creates a sense of obligation, as some of the goods have already been consumed.[174] Further, the delight of the child in the product is a powerful inducement for the doting mother. Similar attempts at enticement are depicted in other scenes of sellers at the door of urban households.

Ochtervelt's *The Poultry Seller* depicts a similar scene (figure 2-16), as the housewife holds out a coin to the seeming delight of the male seller. His pleasure is echoed by the expression of the maid, who displays the chosen fowl, noting the broad breast of the meaty bird. The dog sniffs the bird eagerly as the young child reaches out to touch the soft feathers of another bird held up by the woman crouching outside the doorway. The delight of the maid and child again create a sense of a pleasant entertainment as much as of an act of economic exchange. Decorum, however, is maintained by the artist's arrangement of the figures in a strict hierarchy. The housewife stands inside the house, her upright posture and elegant attire indicating

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[174] For a discussion of the social effect of obligation in gift- and other forms of exchange, see Komter, *The Gift,* 3-8.

her position, while the poultry sellers remain outside of the entry, their postures submissive. Even the maid bends forward as she displays the heavy bird for inspection. Here, the roles of each individual are clear; social position is described pictorially as a matter of class, age, and economic status.

Paintings by contemporary artists echo Ochtervelt's hierarchical relationship of the participants. On the rare occasions when the sellers are allowed actual physical entry into the house itself, their relative social and economic position still remains clear. For example, in Quiringh van Brekelenkam's *Fishwife and Shrimp Seller Offering their Wares at a House* (1662, figure 2-17), attention focuses on the housewife. She reaches into her purse as the fish seller kneels on the floor, carefully selecting gleaming fish from her basket. The youthful shrimp seller stands respectfully next to the door through which the two will soon exit.

The open door, which physically connects the town with the inside of the home, reminds the viewer that these individuals belong to the area outside of the room, rather than to the private household space, which is rightfully inhabited by the housewife, empty chair, and landscape painting.[175] Similar paintings within this category of depiction also display regimented compositional choices, as the door and doorway area define the limited space in which those who do not inhabit the household can enter, yet not penetrate further.

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[175] The issue of the frequent use of the liminal space of the doorway, entry hall, courtyard, and street in front of the house has been addressed by Hollander, *An Entrance*; Elizabeth Alice Honig, "The Space of Gender in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting," in *Looking at Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art: Realism Reconsidered*, Wayne Franits, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 187-201; and Heidi de Mare, "The Domestic Boundary as Ritual Area in Seventeenth-Century Holland," in *Urban Rituals in Italy and the Netherlands*, Heidi de Mare and Anna Vos, ed. (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1993), 108-131.

Pieter de Hooch's *An Asparagus Vendor, with Two Women and a Man*, (1670-80, figure 2-18) also displays the connection of individuals with the respective spaces of expected habitation.[176] Here, two women, one who sits upon a small platform by the window sewing, while the other woman takes center stage, inhabit the entrance space of the home. She narratively negotiates between the other spaces of seventeenth-century life suggested within the painting. The dish in her hand functions not only as a receptacle for the asparagus being sold by the vendor at the door, but also suggests the kitchen, where the produce will be transformed into sustenance.[177] Her other hand reaches back, petitioning coin for the purchase from the man descending the stairs on the right. The man's attire and descent down the stairs suggest that he has been disturbed from the performance of his business duties.[178] Here, the respective gender roles are made clear, as the merchant provides coin to the women for the purchase. In return, the purveyor, who waits patiently at the half-open door, her wares inside the house while she stands visually held within the threshold, receives coin with which to supply her own needs.[179]

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[176] De Mare, "The Domestic Boundary," 110-112, discusses the space of the single-family home in seventeenth-century Holland as a space marked by gendered boundaries.
[177] Ibid., 111-112 also discusses the kitchen as the center of the transformation of nature into culture, mediated by the housewife.
[178] Often, the home's office, or *comptoir,* was located up a flight of stairs. See, for example, Nicolaes Maes' *The Jealous Husband,* illustrated in chapter one, figure 1-29. De Mare, "The Domestic Boundary," 110, also discusses the spaces assigned to the male member of the household and the frequent relationship to stairs. See also Hollander, *An Entrance*, 107, for a discussion of the office space of the seventeenth-century Dutch home.
[179] De Mare, "The Domestic Boundary," 110-112, also suggests that customs and habits dictated how boundaries were to be negotiated. The depicted custom of the seller remaining within the space of the doorway seems to be one manner of maintaining boundaries within an activity that necessitates the crossing of otherwise established boundaries.

Figure 2-18: Pieter de Hooch, *An Asparagus Vendor, with Two Women and a Man*, c. 1670-80, private collection, Minneapolis.

The purveyors depicted in Quiringh van Brekelenkam's *Selling Fish*, and Ochtervelt's *The Cherry Seller* (figures 2-19 and 20), are similarly held outside of the main space of the entrance by the bottom of a partially-opened Dutch door. The physical separation marks the social removal of these women from one another. Aside from their relationship as buyer and seller, these individuals would not interact. If it were not for the purchase of daily fare, the urban upper-middle-class housewife would have little need to speak with the seller of fish; nor would the elderly fruit seller be openly welcomed into the urban home without her goods. Necessary economic activities dictate the interaction of these individuals at a moment of a transgression of spatial and class barriers.

Figure 2-19: Quiringh van Brekelenkam, *Selling Fish*, c. 1665, Kunsthaus Heylshof, Worms.

Figure 2-20: Jacob Ochtervelt, *The Cherry Seller*, Museum Mayer van den Bergh, Antwerp.

The manner in which space and the relationships between individuals of differing social classes are portrayed in these paintings impacts the interpretation of paintings of domestic commerce. The utilization of places of ingress and egress, of the intersection of the outside and inside, of public and private, increases awareness of the issues of interaction between individuals of differing class, age, and gender, rendering the economic traffic in ingestible commodities also a traffic in social relationships. This is a fitting parallel, as social relationships during the period could be as transitive as the commodities being purchased. As such, the artists utilize space to reinforce two opposing notions -- the notions of separation and connection. The separation of individuals is reinforced by the noted requirement for vigilance and inspection, while the location of the purchase of foodstuffs, as well as the behavior of

the actors within liminal locations, simultaneously emphasize the interconnectedness of the spaces and classes within the urban environment.

The described spaces are recognizable and familiar: the urban households of Amsterdam and surrounding cities, which convey a sense of pride in identity. Space, as described in mid-seventeenth-century Dutch genre paintings of domestic commerce, simultaneously functions to enclose and frame the subjects, while also demonstrating the interconnectedness of the home and the city beyond. This reinforces expected social roles, as the exercise of private morality has ramifications that extend into the larger context of the society.

In Jacob Ochtervelt's *The Cherry Seller*, the public dimension of a private purchase is emphasized by the view through the brightly illuminated doorway behind the seller (figure 2-20).[180] Two figures walking in the city street outside are placed in the very center of the painting. These passersby on the street beyond literally stop to observe the actions of the figures in the doorway. This subtle, almost subliminal reminder of the watchfulness of one's neighbors creates awareness of the audience of the larger society just outside the confines of the domestic space. In other paintings, similar views through the door to civic or religious buildings (figures 2-2, 15, 16, and 29), or a view of houses (figures 2-3, 8, 9, 11, 22, 24), render the space of the city beyond omnipresent. Viewers of paintings of domestic commerce are often reminded of the presence of neighbors and town beyond the space of the interaction. Whether offered a simple view through the door to a church tower, or a more complex view

[180] Honig, "The Space of Gender," 198, points out the scripted nature of the interaction of the women depicted in this scene.

through spaces and doorways to a canal and figures beyond, viewers are reminded of the larger society just outside the borders of the household entrance.

In this context, the buyers are very much on display within the space of their own homes. The surveillance of their behavior by neighbors, in the close spaces of the Dutch seventeenth-century city, was a form of social enforcement, and an accepted construct during the period.[181] Privacy, in the crowded space of Dutch cities, is granted, but not physically guaranteed. In an atmosphere of closely situated homes, where one can literally see into one's neighbor's home from the street, or across the canal, privacy is a matter of social consideration, rather than physical barriers. The viewer is encouraged to mimic the positively depicted actions through the social pressure of the watchfulness of one's neighbors.

The interconnected spaces described here create settings for scenes of economic exchange that simultaneously indicate the interconnectedness of city and countryside, inside and outside, and suggest the dependence of the inhabitants of the spaces upon one another, while also acknowledging their separation. While the urban merchant household is dependent upon, and connected to, the purveyors of the countryside's produce, literally for its sustenance, the sellers are also dependent upon the merchants for the goods and coin which their business interests produce.

Another painting by Quiringh van Brekelenkam in the Rijksmuseum (figure 2-21) portrays the consequences of nonconformance to socio-economic norms. This

[181] As an example of social vigilance utilized as a means to enforce social norms, see Hollander, *An Entrance,* 44, for a discussion of how most court cases involved the participation of members of the neighborhood.

painting depicts the office of an urban keeper of accounts. He is visited by a rural tenant farmer, come to pay his rents. The farmer, lacking the coin of modern exchange, has arrived to pay -- not with a purse on his belt, but rather a chicken. The urban businessman gestures tellingly, as he gives a meaningful glance to the viewer. It appears that he would greatly prefer the coin with which he is familiar, rather than a chicken, which seems more properly to belong in the kitchen -- the domain of women. In contrast, in the third category of images of exchange discussed here, scenes within the public market, conform to expected behavior.

Figure 2-21: Quiringh van Brekelenkam, *The Tenant Farmer's Rent*, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Purchases at the Market

While depictions of sellers at the door of affluent households were perhaps the most common, the exchange of coin for household goods was also depicted within the marketplace at the vendor's stall. While many broader, multi-figured market scenes

produced during the period exist, as noted previously, the focus of this discussion is upon those paintings that concentrate upon individual economic exchange.

Framed by the roof of the market stall behind, Quiringh van Brekelenkam's *The Fishwife* (1661-65, figure 2-3) directs the viewer's attention to the interaction between the housewife, a pail filled with the day's purchases on her arm, and her daughter, who holds out her hand to receive the coins that her mother carefully counts out. Not only does this interaction provide a narrative for the scene, but also serves a didactic purpose as the daughter receives a lesson in the evaluation of fair exchange value. In contrast to the youngster's attentiveness, the elderly fish seller looks down, seemingly uninterested and trusting in the judgment of her customer. By transferring the focus of the painting to the interaction between mother and child, rather than on the negotiation between buyer and seller, the image diminishes the importance of the seller. The depicted purchase supplies the opportunity for an upper-middle class family lesson in household management.

In the same artist's *Vegetable Seller* (1665, figure 2-22), the seller, with her wares artfully arranged before her, carefully counts and evaluates the coins given her by the maid. The distracted young woman sniffs a flower (perhaps to counter the smells of the marketplace). In contrast, a well-dressed young male watches the monetary evaluation carefully. Here, the lack of concern on the part of the maid, juxtaposed with the care of the seller, reiterates the need for care and surveillance, and perhaps explains the presence of the young man accompanying her.

Other depictions of the purchase of fresh produce at the market from the period are similar in construction. Quiringh van Brekelenkam's *The Fruit Seller* (1661, figure 2-23), much like Ochtervelt's *Grape Seller*, utilizes the narrative of a sweet treat for the young member of the household. The housewife here, however, appears reluctant to make a purchase. The older fruit seller calls out to her potential customer, her gestures appearing to claim the quality of her produce. The young child cradles a sample of the cherries in her apron. However, this effort at plying the child with a treat in an effort to persuade the mother may not succeed. Within the more egalitarian space of the market, this woman, her pail already filled with the day's purchases, seems to be uninterested in the more indulgent treat of cherries. Unlike the depictions of sellers at the door, the outcome of this interaction is unresolved.

Figure 2-22: Quiringh van Brekelenkam, *Vegetable Seller*, 1665, Detroit Institute of Arts, Detroit.

Figure 2-23: Quiringh van Brekelenkam, *The Fruit Seller*, 1661, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin-Dahlem.

Painted scenes within the space of the market also reveal the potential for conflict in the negotiation between the desires of buyer and seller. In these paintings representatives of the urban merchant class are depicted on their everyday shopping trips, purchasing fresh produce for the table. With little exception, these scenes portray the representatives of affluent households, bargaining with the less affluent purveyors of goods.[182] These scenes, due to their placement within the marketplace, set the actors on a more even footing.[183] Sellers are more proactive, as in van Brekelenkam's *Fruit Seller* (figure 2-23) or Metsu's *Poultry Seller* (1662, figure 2-24), where the old man utilizes the attention of the lady's dog to playfully intimate the pleasure the lady will take in the consumption of a lovely fowl.[184]

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[182] Gabriel Metsu's *Woman Selling Fish* in the Narodni Gallery in Prague, and *Fish Seller* in the Wallace Collection, London, and Jan Steen's *Pancake Woman*, Memorial Art Gallery, University of Rochester depict less affluent individuals purchasing goods. All three also appear to occur in less urban settings.

[183] Honig, *Painting and the Market*, 167 asserts that the act of economic exchange places the actors on equal footing. However, factors other than money would have been involved, as the buyer and seller were not anonymous to one another. Their negotiations would also include consideration of the social status of the two individuals, and the seller and buyer would also weigh the likelihood of future patronage.

[184] Elizabeth Alice Honig, in "Desire and Domestic Economy," *Art Bulletin* 83:2 (June 2001), 294-315, has suggested a sexual reading of the man's placement of the fowl. While I do not disagree with her assertion of the overwhelming atmosphere of sexual innuendo present in the scene, the man's age relative to that of the woman, combined with her facial expression, seems to me to reverse the joke. Her doubtful gaze indicates that, despite the coin in her hand, perhaps she is contemplating how his abilities, as opposed to his desires, are not similar to that of the live fowl he holds up, but rather the plucked one whose head dangles from a limp neck behind him. See also Eddy de Jongh, "Erotica in vogelperspectief. De dubbelzinnigheid van een reeks 17de eeuwse genrevoorstellingen," *Simiolus* 3 (1968-69), 22-74.

Figure 2-24: Gabriel Metsu, *Poultry Seller,* 1662, Gemäldegalerie, Dresden.

Figure 2-25: Quiringh van Brekelenkam, *Fishwife*, 1664, Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum, Braunschweig.

Some images, such as Quiringh van Brekelenkam's *Fishwife* (1664, figure 2-25), despite yielding the higher position to the male merchant customer, still allow the fishwife the authority to reject his proffered coin, as she bargains regarding the value of her product. In such paintings, the relative roles of buyer and seller remain closest to the previous tradition of depicting the negotiation of the value of the product in relationship to the desire of the buyer.

Regulation of Consumption in the Household Economy

As discussed within the descriptions of the three categories of depiction of domestic economic expenditure, household consumption is most frequently portrayed

as an arena of female activity. In genre paintings, in contrast to the maids and sellers of goods, who move easily between market and neighborhood, the affluent housewives venture out infrequently. They ensconce themselves in their spotless homes, monitored by their vigilant neighbors, maintaining the purity of home and family.[185] The aspect of economic exchange that these women are allowed pictorially is that of consumption.[186] These women, encouraged to be active household managers, are removed from any role in the production of wealth.[187] This division was also advocated in writings of the period.[188] These images put forth a model of expected behavior; for the most part, the players submit themselves to their expected roles.

In this manner, mid-seventeenth-century Dutch paintings of domestic commerce transform the home into a domestic economy, distinct from the business world, separating consumption from production. Such a concept mandates social dependence, as the urban merchant makes money, his wife spends it, and the maids

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[185] Giesela van Oostveen, "It Takes All Sorts to Make a World: Sex and Gender in Bredero's *Farce of the Miller*," in *Women of the Golden Age*, 62, argues that, for a woman at least, honor was dependent on the judgment of the outside world regarding her physical and mental purity. Honor could be maintained as long as there was no public shame. This is also intimated in the discussion of Elizabeth Alice Honig, "Desire," regarding Metsu's *Poultry Seller* (figure 2-24).
[186] See Marilyn J. Boxer and Jean H. Quataert, et al. *Connecting Spheres: European Women in a Globalizing World, 1500 to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 22 for a discussion of how consumption was viewed as a proper sphere of female activity.
[187] See Martha Moffitt Peacock, "Geertruydt Roghman and the Female Perspective in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Genre Imagery," *Woman's Art Journal* 14:2 (1993-94), 8, on the expectation that women be active in the determination and execution of household economics.
[188] Mariet Westermann, "'Costly and Curious, Full of Pleasure and Home Contentment': Making Home in the Dutch Republic." *Art and Home: Dutch Interiors in the Age of Rembrandt* (Denver: Denver Art Museum, 2001), 49.

and sellers depend upon it. The carefully crafted ideal of social relationships turns market values into domestic and political values.[189]

Figure 2-26: Quiringh van Brekelenkam, *Fishwife and Shrimp Seller*, 1666, Museum der Bildenden Künste, Leipzig.

Figure 2-27: Quiringh van Brekelenkam, *Housewife Choosing Fish, with a Maid*, 1664, City Art Gallery, Manchester.

One can argue that the depiction of the importance of the housewife's role in maintaining the social order affirms the importance of the domestic roles of women for the overall society. However, the domestic role of only the upper-middle-class is depicted.[190] There is no consideration of the domestic lives of the other classes

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[189]See Kelly, *History and Theory,* for an economic and political reading of such a demarcation of social roles. Dutch depictions of class differences in the context of domesticity bear a striking resemblance to the discourse that occurred during the social reorganizations that occurred in America in the nineteenth century, as the "social was seen to be split into public and private activities and concerns, with men associated with the former and women with the later." For the nineteenth-century depictions, see Cara Mertes, "There's No Place Like Home: Women and Domestic Labor," in *Dirt and Domesticity: Constructions of the Feminine* (New York: Whitney Museum of Art, 1992), 61. Further, the separation of classes during the seventeenth century provides precedent for the utilization of the cult of domesticity as a means to define the differences between the upper class and lower class, with the lower classes and women associated with the idea of "dirt" and the necessity of monitoring the "cleanliness" of the household.

[190] See Martha Moffitt Peacock, "Domesticity in the Public Sphere," *Saints, Sinners, and Sisters: Gender and Northern Art in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, Jane L. Carroll and Alison G.

represented (sellers and maids). Further, the maintenance of these social norms is assigned a specific social value, as the affluence of the country is ascribed to it.

During the seventeenth century the partitioning of society into classes was primarily an issue of economic division, with the rich merchant and industrial burghers at the top, shopkeepers and tradesmen below, and laborers, mariners, and domestics at the bottom.[191] The mercantile status of the urban burgher household was the factor that differentiated it from that of the more humbly dressed agricultural counterparts.[192] During a period of fluctuation in class identity, barriers were rendered permeable through the accumulation or loss of wealth. Society simultaneously had come to doubt the validity of accepting the simple appearance of things, as distinctions became difficult to draw.[193] In this context, as class became permeable and the observable world was not always to be taken as it seemed, the identity of individuals, and the respective roles they held within society, were no longer so immediately evident.

Yet, for the most part, within depictions of household expenditure, the role that each individual plays is clearly delineated. Confusion of identity is limited to that of mistress and maid, as (on occasion), the maid's attire is insufficiently plain to make

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Stewart, ed. (Burlington: Ashgate, 2003), 45 on how images of domesticity affirmed the importance of domestic roles. Honig, "The Space of Gender," 198-199, also draws attention to the fact that the majority of depictions of domesticity are of a minority class of women.

[191] On the divisions of class by economic status, see Bertha Mook, *The Dutch Family in the 17th and 18th Centuries: An Explorative-Descriptive Study* (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1977), 2-3, 7.

[192] See North, 43.

[193] Ibid., 7. This is reflected, for example, in the burgeoning understandings of science.

her identity absolutely known.[194] The upper-middle-class merchant's role is made clear; he is either dressed to face the business world (figures 2-25 and 28), or ensconced in his office with his account books (figure 2-18 intimates this), whether seen or unseen. The proceeds of the prosperity he has created through his activities are abundantly evident in the imagined elegantly tiled entranceways, household furnishings, and the sumptuous clothing worn by the well-fed wives and children portrayed.

The role of the housewife, is however, perhaps the most elucidated in paintings of domestic commerce. The upper-middle-class urban housewife is not expected to earn a living in the same manner as the women of the lower classes. She does not venture out hawking wares, nor does she sustain a business of her own. Instead, she stays home, tending the hearth, sewing, spinning, or nursing a child (figures 2-1, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11). That she ventures out infrequently, and in doing so must delicately maintain her decorum, displays an important shift in the role of the upper-middle-class woman. Unlike her less affluent counterparts, she is not to soil her shoes with the filth of the market, nor her reputation with the gossiping of maids. In depicting the seventeenth-century Dutch upper-middle-class urban housewife, genre painters created a distinction not only between genders, but also between classes.

[194] For example, the maid (as I have identified her) in Quiringh van Brekelenkam's *Vegetable Seller* of 1665 (figure 2-22), could be construed as a young housewife. Her attire is highly similar to that worn by the housewife in the same artist's *The Fruit Seller* of 1661 (figure 2-23). On how such confusion of identity could occur during the period, see Israel, *The Dutch Republic,* 2.

Figure 2-28: Quiringh van Brekelenkam, *Interior with a Housewife, Maid and Fishmonger*, c. 1664, Schloss Ehrenburg, Coburg.

Figure 2-29: Jacob Ochtervelt, *Fishmonger at the Door*, c. 1667-1668, Mauritshuis, The Hague.

These scenes of upper-middle-class urban dwellers purchasing daily fare were primarily targeted at the wealthy class they depict.[195] While a greater number of people could afford paintings during this period, the majority still did not own them.[196] However, the popularity of genre scenes, particularly those of women, maids and children, around the middle of the seventeenth century has been linked to a presumed increase in the market for paintings among upper-middle-class city dwellers.[197] As the economy at mid-century began to tighten, the affluent class sought to draw the divisions of class more clearly, and the works created by genre painters of domestic commerce met this need.

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[195] H. Perry Chapman, "Propagandist Prints, Reaffirming Paintings: Art and Community during the Twelve Years' Truce," in *The Public and the Private in Dutch Culture of the Golden Age* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2000), 44.
[196] Marten Jan Bok, "Society, Culture, and Collecting in Seventeenth-Century Delft," in *Vermeer and the Delft School,* Walter Liedtke, Michiel C. Plomp, and Axel Ruger, eds. (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Yale University Press, 2001), 205-206.
[197] See, for example, Walter Liedtke, "Genre Painting in Delft after 1650: De Hooch and Vermeer," in *Vermeer and the Delft School*, 132 and 137; or Wolf, *Vermeer and the Invention,* 151.

These depictions of urban purchasers of foodstuffs display the urban merchant class in the most positive terms; the homes are neat, the housewives, maids, and children are well behaved, the purchases frugal. At the same time, the wealth that has arisen out of the activities of the merchant class allows benefits to other members of seventeenth-century Dutch society. By providing coin for the purchase of goods, the urban merchant is depicted as a benefactor of the society at large. The wealth of the urban merchant is justified by the sense of national pride in the rise of the economy and by the direct benefit upon those with whom the merchant class interacts economically in these paintings. The affluence of the merchant class is shown as beneficial to the larger society, through the depiction of the merchants as good stewards of the national economy.

Such paintings would have flattered their likely viewers in several ways; they not only show how the affluence that resulted from the activities of the merchant class benefited the individual family and the community, but also the larger society. In this manner, genre paintings of household expenditure support social attitudes that were greatly influenced by personal economic interests. The production of idealized depictions that celebrated the role of the upper-middle-class household within the native economy is not surprising in the atmosphere of collective nationalist art produced during the period.[198] Further, like the chairs, beds, cupboards, and mirrors that fill the depicted spaces, the paintings themselves became markers of status.[199]

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[198] On the image of the Republic as nationalist, see Chapman, "Propagandist Prints, Reaffirming Paintings," 44.
[199] On household furnishings as markers of social status, see Schama, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, 316.

Through the purchase of scenes of appropriate behavior based on class/economic status, affluent patrons helped to create a notion of civility to suit their new identity.[200] The paintings reflect political attitudes, which in turn reflect their economic connections to trade.[201] The upper-middle-class consumption of the images of upper-middle-class consumption, then, becomes a sign legitimizing social differences based on economic status.[202]

Reframing the Discussion: Conclusion

Rather than function as simple, straightforward depictions of everyday grocery shopping, mid-seventeenth-century Dutch paintings of domestic commerce participated in the description of the socio-economic relationships of different members of society. The paintings emphasize the interdependence of members of society and thereby legitimize the activity of the merchant class, rendering their occupation respectable and beneficial. The purchase of food becomes a metaphor for other economic interactions, celebrating the merchant class as the patrons not only of art, but also of business in general, their largesse providing the coin necessary to drive the contemporary economy.

[200] Wayne Franits, "'For People of Fashion:' Domestic Imagery and the Art Market in the Dutch Republic," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 51 (2000), 295.
[201] See Peter Burke, *Venice and Amsterdam: A Study of Seventeenth-Century Elites* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), 67 regarding the economic and political makeup of the Amsterdam elite during the period.
[202] Franits, "'For People of Fashion'," 308.

CHAPTER 3

CIVIC CHARITY: EXPECTATIONS FOR PRIVATE GIVING

Framing the Discussion: An Outline

Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum explained the purchase of Jan Steen's then-titled *Burgomaster of Delft and his Daughter* (1655, now titled *Adolf and Catharina Croeser on the Oude Delft*, figure 3-1) by hailing the painting as "a characteristic depiction of the mentality of the Dutch burgher in the Golden Age."[203] In reality, as a genre portrait that depicts a possible act of private charity, Steen's painting is quite unusual. However, the genre elements of Steen's portrait share much in common with a miniscule number of genre scenes from the middle of the seventeenth century that portray acts of private charity.[204] The number of such genre scenes is remarkably limited, and their pictorial vocabulary strikingly restricted. Images such as Gabriel Metsu's *Woman Giving Alms to a Boy* or Jacob Ochtervelt's *Street Musicians at the Door* (figures 3-2, 3) depict members of the upper-middle-class urban household who consider and participate in acts of private charity, as they supply coin to young boys and itinerant musicians in exchange for their services. The scenes emphasize both the generosity of the upper classes and the necessity of proper behavior for the recipients

[203] Taken from "Acquisitions 2004: Masterpiece by Jan Steen," website of the Rijksmuseum, http://www.rijksmuseum.nl/collectie/aanwinsten2004?lang=en. The renaming of the painting, following study by Frans Grijzenhout and Niek van Sas, is discussed on the website of the Rijksmuseum, http://www.rijksmuseum.nl/steen?lang=en and the site of the University of Amsterdam, http://www.hum.uva.nl/english/object.efm/objectid-19B270CC-7C1F-4073-A14D861DBBCD5FC0, as well as in the online version of the *Art Newspaper* at http://www.theartnewspaper.com/article01.asp?id-585.

[204] Steen's genre portrait is considered here alongside the "pure" genre scenes, as the depiction shares crucial common elements with the genre paintings, and furthers our understanding of the contemporary view of such images of private charity.

of their beneficence. As depictions, "of the mentality of the Dutch burgher," these images reveal a society with a complex view of private charity.[205]

Figure 3-1: Jan Steen, *Adolf and Catharina Croeser on the Oude Delft*, 1655, canvas, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Despite the limited range of mid-seventeenth-century Dutch genre scenes of private charity, the paintings are deftly nuanced in the specifics of depiction. Scenes such as Metsu's and Ochtervelt's focus on two categories of poor; solitary young boys expected to provide some small service in return for the burgher household's donation, and musicians, usually a young boy and an older man, who provide

[205] The complexity of contemporary views of charitable giving during the period is not surprising in light of the remarkable flourishing of the Dutch economy in spite of a rising population. On the Netherlands as a striking exception economically to the pressure of increasing population see Clark, *A Farewell to Alms,* 104. For a discussion of how charitable giving was, pre-1800, actually economically detrimental, see the same author's discussion of how transfers to the poor reduced overall economic standards by increasing population pressure, 5.

Figure 3-2: Gabriel Metsu, *Woman Giving Alms to a Boy*, panel, Staatsgalerie, Kassel.

harmless entertainment for children in exchange for coin.[206] The second category implies an expectation of service (entertainment). Comparison with other works from the same period and historical studies suggests that a similar expectation of service exists in the first category of paintings as well. The exchange of some small task in exchange for a donation renders the charitable act into a lesson, as the depicted youngsters learn the importance of work in exchange for money. This lesson, supported by the coin of the upper-middle-class urban housewife, emphasizes her role

[206] On the "harmless" nature of musicians, especially as depicted in these paintings, see Charles H. Parker, *The Reformation of Community: Social Welfare and Calvinist Charity in Holland 1572-1620* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 48.

as an arbiter of proper behavior to the larger society, and transforms her private, charitable act into a civically and socially important one.[207]

Figure 3-3: Jacob Ochtervelt, *Street Musicians at the Door*, 1665, Saint Louis Art Museum.

The highly limited view of charity during the period provided in painted genre scenes not only carries an expectation of service, but also emphasizes the positive and redeemable aspects of those in need of charity. The discussion of poverty is limited, rendering the poor (as depicted) as innocuous and controllable; the larger questions posed by the presence of urban poor are neglected in favor of redeemable boys and harmless entertainers. Rather than address the larger issues of poverty, or display the

[207] The point I make here, and which will be elaborated on later, is two-fold. First, the depictions convey that there are societal benefits to the private charitable acts that occur in these scenes. The housewife's exchange of coin for the performance of small chores or an entertaining diversion for the children of the household provides a larger benefit to society; not only does the housewife receive a reprieve, either in the completion of a household chore or a momentary diversion from the constant care of children, but the provider of the service is also reinforced in the effort to work for a living. Secondly, as has been argued in previous chapters, the emphasis on the role of women as arbiters of economic acts and of morality reinforces the increasingly gendered structure of seventeenth-century Dutch society.

effectiveness of the often-praised Dutch institutions for poor relief, such images focus on industrious young boys and incidental entertainers and thereby render issues of poverty as either didactic episodes or amusing societal phenomena. In each case, the burden of poverty can be assuaged through the simple beneficence of the upper middle class.[208]

Paintings such as Gabriel Metsu's *Woman Giving Alms to a Boy* (figure 3-2) and Jacob Ochtervelt's *Street Musicians at the Door* (figure 3-3), utilize sharply demarcated social roles based on age and gender in order to convey messages about the role and responsibility of the individual within society. The two types of scenes depicted, that of young boys requesting donations, and musicians playing at the door of a house, each provide an entertaining locus for the discussion of the role of private charity during the period. The import of individual life decisions, and the consequent impact on economic standing are emphasized, making moral choices a matter of both personal and civic duty. Moral and civic concerns are elucidated through the example of both individuals in need of charitable support and those who provide such support.

The extreme limitation of subject matter provides a window into the contemporary upper-middle-class mindset regarding charitable giving. A primary focus on charitable acts enacted by upper-middle-class housewives, directed at young males, renders personal choices as civic issues through the implied impact of private acts. The choice to depict young, presumably orphaned, boys requesting aid, renders

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[208] See A. Th. van Deursen, *Plain Lives in a Golden Age: Popular Culture, Religion and Society in Seventeenth-Century Holland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 44, regarding the seventeenth-century notion that poverty was insolvable. On the celebrated nature of Dutch institutions, see Israel, *The Dutch Republic,* 353.

the subject more pitiable. The youth of these figures suggests that they can be "employed," taught to work for their needs, and transformed into productive adult citizens. For the contemporary viewer, these images would have served as reminders of the need for the education of children, the need for diligent work, the care with which one must make life decisions, such as the choice of one's mate (in both social and economic terms), and the necessity for diligence in the management of the household budget, all while also reminding the viewer of the frailty of affluence. In this manner, the limited subject matter also allows for the contextualized discussion of the civic import of personal behaviors and choices.

Through the expectation of work in exchange for a donation, the paintings also emphasize the necessity of diligence, training, and education, directed and overseen by an adult. The paintings serve as an admonishment about economic responsibility, expressed in civic terms. The images demonstrate the positive effect of private charity on society and stress the importance of the need for personal involvement in civic issues. This, thereby, transforms the seemingly minor act depicted into an act with larger public consequences. In this manner, the positive civic role of the upper middle classes is stressed, flattering the contemporary viewers of the paintings.

Further, by depicting the upper-middle-class-urban housewife in the role of donor, educator, and arbiter of social responsibility, the social and civic responsibility of caring for the poor is cloaked in the mantle of feminine (motherly) duty. In a manner not unlike other domestic scenes of the period, paintings of charitable acts

reinforce the contemporary notion of the upper-middle-class housewife, fortifying the increasingly gendered structure of seventeenth-century society.

The discussion that follows outlines contemporary charitable practices and the pictorial tradition of depicting charitable acts. Seventeenth-century genre images of private charity are situated within this context, in comparison with and in contrast to other similar genre paintings from the period. The social impact of depictions of charitable giving is then considered. A reconsideration of Jan Steen's unusual genre portrait (figure 3-1) follows, as the singular inclusion of a genre scene of a private charitable act within a portrait provides a unique perspective on the motivations of patrons of similar genre paintings of charitable giving.

Charitable Giving in the Seventeenth-Century Netherlands

Mid-seventeenth-century Dutch genre painters created images of private charitable acts that simultaneously reflected and sculpted socially regimented expectations and life experiences of charitable giving and receipt. The Dutch developed a well-ordered and often praised system of civic poor relief.[209] The establishment of Dutch charitable institutions arose from a variety of intertwined economic, civic, social and religious factors.

In the seventeenth-century Netherlands, charitable institutions were civic institutions. They also functioned simultaneously as social, religious, and economic

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[209] Israel, *The Dutch Republic,* 353.

organizations.[210] As civic institutions, charitable establishments operated as the creation and pride of each city or town. As social organizations, they benefited both the needy (directly) and the wealthy (indirectly), as the method of governance served to reinforce the social and political status of the wealthy class. As religious institutions, charities identified along confessional and social lines. As economic associations, charitable institutions provided a source of labor in the form of the poor they supported.

Regulations regarding the receipt of poor relief reflect concerns about all of these varied factors. The notion that those in receipt of poor relief must be "deserving" is often cited as chief among these concerns.[211] Foremost on the seventeenth-century Dutch conscience as "deserving" were those individuals deemed unable to provide fully for their own needs; specifically children, widows, the infirm, and the elderly.[212] In an effort to insure that the poor truly deserved charity, elaborate

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[210] Various aspects of Dutch charitable institutions are discussed by a variety of authors. For historical and social overviews, see Israel, *The Dutch Republic*; van Deursen, *Plain Lives*; Parker, *The Reformation of Community*; and Anne E. C. McCants, *Civic Charity in a Golden Age: Orphan Care in Early Modern Amsterdam* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997). For evaluations of the institutions relative to the art produced in relation to them, see Sheila D. Muller, *Charity in the Dutch Republic: Pictures of Rich and Poor for Charitable Institutions* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1985); Michiel Jonker, "Public or Private Portraits: Group Portraits of Amsterdam Regents and Regentesses," *The Public and the Private in Dutch Culture of the Golden Age,* ed. Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., and Adele Seeff (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2000); and Kees van der Wiel, "Delft in the Golden Age: Wealth and Poverty in the Age of Johannes Vermeer," Donald Haks and Marie Christine van der Sman ed., *Dutch Society in the Age of Vermeer* (Den Hague: The Hague Historical Museum, Zwolle: Waanders Publishers, 1996).

[211] Those deemed to be deserving of relief were called *rechte armen*. See Muller, *Charity in the Dutch Republic*, 76.

[212] See Muller, *Charity in the Dutch Republic*, 121; Sheila D. Muller, "Jan Steen's *Burgher of Delft and His Daughter*: A Painting and Politics in Seventeenth-Century Holland," *Art History* 12:3 (September 1989), 274; and Lucinda Kate Reinold, *The Representation of the Beggar as Rogue in Dutch Seventeenth- Century Art* (Ph.D. Diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1981), 1.

rules and institutions were developed to regulate the proper use of civic charitable funds.[213]

Ordinances were in place that outlawed begging and prohibited private almsgiving, forcing those in need of aid and those giving aid to operate through official, sanctioned channels.[214] The official institutions were numerous, and divided along social lines of both those who donated and those who received aid. Foremost among these divisions was that of civic identity. While charitable organizations split along confessional and communal lines, the care of the poor was a civic duty.[215] Each town set up its own institutions for its own citizens.[216] Contributions from wealthy citizens funded the charitable activities of these organizations, which were often housed in former monastery buildings.[217] The involvement of the town government transformed the efficiency and implied morality of these institutions into issues of civic pride.[218]

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[213] Van der Wiel, "Delft in the Golden Age," 61, notes the creation of yearly lists of those eligible for aid.
[214] Muller, *Charity in the Dutch Republic*, 121.
[215] Muller, "Jan Steen's *Burgher of Delft and His Daughter*," 270, and Parker, *The Reformation of Community,* 119.
[216] Citizenship was a frequent requirement of relief. Regarding the civic charitable institutions of the period, see, for example, Sherrin Marshall, "Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish Women in the Early Modern Netherlands," in *Women in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1989), 133; and Israel, *The Dutch Republic,* 354-56 for discussions of the nature of Dutch charitable institutions. See also Muller, "Jan Steen's *Burgher of Delft and His Daughter*," 270 on the political implications of the local government's right to administer civic affairs, such as charity.
[217] Jonker, "Public or Private Portraits," 207.
[218] Israel, *The Dutch Republic,* 356, discusses the subtle rivalries that developed. See also Jonker, "Public or Private Portraits," 222.

Committees of regents, or prominent citizens, administered the institutions.[219] These regents often had group portraits created to commemorate their civic involvement.[220] While these portraits often include narrative details of the regents depicted busily recording accounts, or other activities of governance, such as in Bartholomeus van der Helst's *Regents of the Walloon Orphanage* (1637, figure 3-4), or Johannes Verspronck's *Regentesses of the St. Elizabeth Hospital* (1641, figure 3-5), most do not depict the recipients of the charitable beneficence. Jacob Backer's *Regentesses of the Burgerweeshuis* (figure 3-6) is an example of the exception, as Backer depicts one of the orphans presented to the regentesses.[221]

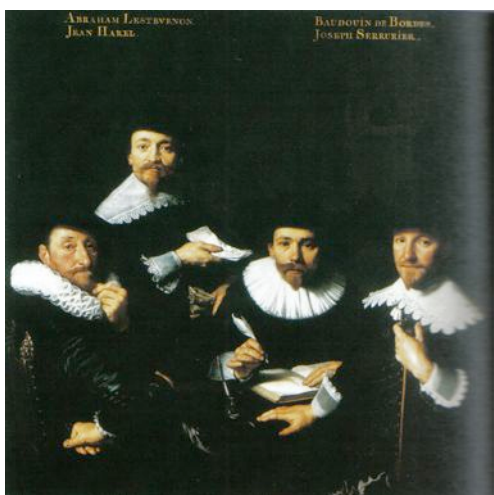

Figure 3-4: Bartholomeus van der Helst, *Regents of the Walloon Orphanage*, 1637, Amsterdam, Maison Descartes, on loan from the Regence Hospice Walloon.

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[219] Israel, *The Dutch Republic,* 356, also notes that while there was no remuneration for such a post, it did accrue social benefits to the individual.

[220] Jonker, "Public or Private Portraits," 207-208 discusses group portraits of regents, and how such positions were ones of social prominence and potentially political influence.

[221] It is also notable that the orphan depicted here wears the split color uniform characteristic of orphans. This two-color outfit does not appear in the genre scenes. On the uniform, see Jan Baptist Bedaux, and Rudi Ekkart, ed., *Pride and Joy: Children's Portraits in the Netherlands, 1500-1700* (Amsterdam: Ludion Press, 2000), 104; and Benjamin B. Roberts and Leendert F. Groenendijk, "Moral Panic and Holland's Libertine Youth of the 1650s and 1660s," *Journal of Family History* 30:4 (October 2005), 334.

Figure 3-5: Johannes Verspronck, *Regentesses of the St. Elizabeth Hospital*, 1641, Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum, on loan from the Elizabeth Hospital, Haarlem.

Figure 3-6: Jacob Backer, *Regentesses of the Burgerweeshuis*, Amsterdam.

The poor presented a pressing civic issue for a number of reasons aside from compassion and moral obligation. Organized charity provided a means to assert social control over the poor. The provision of poor relief within an institutional setting served to sanitize the situation, by removing the process and the poor from the streets

to institutions.[222] At the same time, the regulations criminalized those judged to be "undeserving" and isolated them from the community through bans on begging.[223] Restrictions against begging and private almsgiving attempted to ensure that only those deemed deserving received aid through the authorized channels.[224] Regulation and monitoring of the poor were allowed through their registration with the institutions that provided relief. A sculptural plaque of the *Registration of the Poor* from 1649-50 by Albert Jansz Vinckenbrinck in the Rijksmuseum (figure 3-7) depicts the process, as the "deserving poor" (widows, children, the elderly) petition before two male officials behind an elevated registration desk.

Figure 3-7: Albert Jansz Vinckenbrinck, *Registration of the Poor*, 1649-50, relief, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

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[222] See McCants, *Civic Charity in a Golden Age*, 10.
[223] Parker, *The Reformation of Community,* 14.
[224] Muller, *Charity in the Dutch Republic*, 73.

While poverty was a social concern, and charity provided some measure of societal control of the recipients, the governing elites viewed the organizations and their participation as similar to the roles of Christian parents.[225] However, requirements that recipients belong to the community distributing the aid resulted in some poor not qualifying to receive assistance -- often the most impoverished individuals.[226]

Concomitant with the acceptance of charitable relief was an expectation of work.[227] The social imperative of a civic responsibility to care for the poor combined with the notion that any able-bodied poor should be required to work.[228] The managers of most charitable institutions viewed work not only as a means to reform those who received aid, but also as a requirement for the receipt of relief.[229] For those not in an institution, charitable supplements provided insufficient amounts of aid to even provide for all basic needs, making it essential for the poor to find ways to seek additional funds -- through work -- to meet their needs.[230] Intrinsic within this work ethic was the fact that labor was often in short supply during the period, and the labor

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[225] Parker, *The Reformation of Community,* 15, 18.
[226] Parker, *The Reformation of Community,* 17; and McCants, *Civic Charity in a Golden Age*, 28 regarding both civic and religious community membership; and Marshall, 133; and McCants, *Civic Charity in a Golden Age*, 28, on the poorest members of society being most likely to go without assistance.
[227] Aafke E. Komter, "Introduction," in *The Gift: an Interdisciplinary Perspective*, Aafke E. Komter, ed. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996), 3-10 explores the social, historical, and anthropological aspects of gift giving and exchange, noting the necessity of some sort of reciprocity in order for the social relationship to endure. This notion fits in well with the Dutch seventeenth-century expectation of work for those receiving charitable relief.
[228] Bronislaw Geremek, *Poverty: A History* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994), 185, cites Erasmus as a source for some of these notions.
[229] Muller, *Charity in the Dutch Republic*, 76-77, Parker, *The Reformation of Community,* 77, and McCants, *Civic Charity in a Golden Age*, 7.
[230] Van der Wiel, "Delft in the Golden Age," 61.

potential of orphans and the poor was a valuable commodity that could not be ignored by the larger society.[231]

In the case of orphans, social expectations demarcated the type of labor along gender lines.[232] Boys in the orphanage learned a trade, and were apprenticed between the ages of twelve and fourteen.[233] While boys were apprenticed outside the orphanage, girls often worked within the orphanage, supporting the textile industries.[234] The provision of work for boys outside of the orphanage, and for girls inside, resulted in greater visibility of male orphans within the community. This is reflected in the paintings discussed here, all of which portray young males.[235]

Religious and moral imperatives also influenced charitable donation, the rules that governed giving, and the expectation of labor. While labor shortages contributed to the contemporary views, religious and moral opinion mandated that the young were to be taught skills appropriate to their gender and social class in order to support themselves at maturity.[236] Older, able-bodied poor were only provided small amounts of assistance, meant merely to augment what they earned by working.[237] Society expected the poor to receive this limited aid graciously and gratefully, and to work

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[231] Israel, *The Dutch Republic,* 355, and Parker, 12.
[232] On the cultural expectation of children to support themselves, even at a young age, see Rudolph Dekker, "Children on Their Own: Changing Relations in the Family -- the Experience of Dutch Autobiographers, Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries," *Private Domain, Public Inquiry: Families and Life-Styles in the Netherlands and Europe, 1550 to the Present* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1996), 64.
[233] McCants, *Civic Charity in a Golden Age*, 63-70 discusses the practice of apprenticing young boys. See also Anne McCants, "Meeting Needs and Suppressing Desires," 199, on the placement of orphan boys with local craftsmen.
[234] Parker, *The Reformation of Community,* 95; and McCants, *Civic Charity in a Golden Age,* 25.
[235] McCants, *Civic Charity in a Golden Age,* 38 discusses the greater relative freedom of orphan boys during the period.
[236] Boys were apprenticed, and girls were taught to spin and sew. See Parker, *The Reformation of Community,* 95.
[237] Van der Wiel, "Delft in the Golden Age," 61.

diligently to support themselves with a minimum of resources.[238] However, gratitude from the poor was matched by the obligation of the rich to share their bounty with the needy.[239] While the contemporary fragility of economic status meant that no one was immune to the possibility of requiring charitable aid at some point, the recipients of poor relief were expected to behave in a prescribed manner that minimized their dependence on charitable aid.

A Visual Vocabulary: Charitable Giving in the Pictorial Tradition

Mid-seventeenth-century genre paintings of acts of private charity, while comparable with other visual images of poverty and charity, such as the seven acts of mercy, depictions of decrepit beggars, poor itinerant salesmen, and group portraits of regents, are also strikingly different from each of these other categories of paintings. Genre scenes of private charitable donations from the middle of the seventeenth century are distinct from other images dealing with the practices of charitable giving due to their isolation of charity as an individual, domestic monetary act.

Sixteenth-century depictions of charitable giving focus on the religious aspects of charity. For example, Pieter Aertsen's 1551 painting, *A Meat Stall with the Holy Family Giving Alms* (figure 3-8), depicts -- within a background vignette, framed by the bounty of a butcher's stall -- the Holy Family stopping momentarily to give alms (in the form of food) to a beggar.[240] However, Aertsen's allegory of

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[238] Parker, *The Reformation of Community,* 124.
[239] Ibid., and van Deursen, *Plain Lives*, 44.
[240] See Charlotte Houghton, "This was Tomorrow: Pieter Aertsen's *Meat Stall* as Contemporary Art," *Art Bulletin* 86:2 (June 2004), 277-300, for a discussion of Aertsen's painting and the four extant

salvation bears very little resemblance to mid-seventeenth-century genre scenes, such as Metsu's *Woman Giving Alms to a Boy*.[241] The relationship between Aertsen's and Metsu's depictions of charitable giving is tenuous, as the charitable donation set into the background of Aertsen's painting addresses a more direct need (bread, to sate hunger) than the coin depicted in seventeenth century works (which can be utilized to obtain a variety of goods and services or even be saved). Further, the charitable deed enacted by the Holy Family, rather than by an anonymous urban burgher, carries more obvious religious significance.

Figure 3-8: Pieter Aertsen, *A Meat Stall with the Holy Family Giving Alms*, 1551, panel, North Carolina Museum of Art.

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versions of the composition. Houghton sees Aertsen's painting as a work that recognizes its own innovative nature and confronts its own "modernity."

[241] The depiction of the Holy Family giving alms during the flight into Egypt, in combination with a procession of individuals on their way to church, contrasted with a tavern scene, all foregrounded by the still life of a meat stall, has been interpreted as an allegorical representation of salvation. See James Snyder, *Northern Renaissance Art: Painting, Sculpture, the Graphic Arts from 1350 to 1575* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1985), 8.

Images of acts of charity or mercy, such as Pieter Brueghel the Elder's 1559 print of *Charity* (figure 3-9) compare more readily to the seventeenth-century genre paintings, at least in the identity of the benefactors.[242] Here, urban burghers provide food, clothing and shelter to the poor. However, again the image's connection to the mid-seventeenth-century genre paintings examined here is limited, as the figures who give and receive aid are multiple and seem to be part of a carefully prescribed and socially sanctioned event. Further, the donations given and received are in the form of the immediate physical needs of food, clothing, and shelter, not currency. Similar depiction of the provision of food, clothing, and shelter was continued through the seventeenth century in a variety of pictures.[243]

Sixteenth-century images of beggars also reveal important differences from the mid-seventeenth-century Dutch genre paintings discussed here. Lucas van Leyden's engraved *Wandering Beggars* of 1520 (figure 3-10) depicts an itinerant couple accompanied by no less than six small children.[244] As Larry Silver has noted, the image draws attention to the negative stereotype of the dishonest beggar, who

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[242] The print is one of a series of the Seven Virtues. See Larry Silver, *Peasant Scenes and Landscapes: The Rise of Pictorial Genres in the Antwerp Art Market* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 64-65.

[243] Muller, *Charity in the Dutch Republic*, illustrates multiple examples, including Jan Victors' *Mealtime in the Diaconieweeshuis*, Amsterdam, c. 1660, and the same artist's *Clothing the Orphans of the Diaconweeshuis*; both in the Amsterdams Historisch Museum, reproduction numbers 50 and 51, Nicolaas Knüpfer's *The Seven Works of Mercy*, c. 1650, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Kassel, reproduction number 57, Jan Steen's *The Seven Works of Mercy*, c. 1644-48, Collection V. de S., The Netherlands, reproduction number 63, or Jan de Bray's *The Works of Mercy*, 1663, Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, reproduction number 72.

[244] That the couple has six young children, all of such a young age, suggests that the children cannot all possibly belong to the couple, further suggesting deception on their part and exploitation of the children to solicit charitable donations. See Silver, *Peasant Scenes and Landscapes*, 62.

attempts to deceive the urban audience into supporting his unproductive lifestyle.[245] While *Wandering Beggars* does share some characteristics with some mid-seventeenth-century Dutch images (the depiction of a music-making beggar and pitiable children), it is still dissimilar in its setting and specific narrative from the genre paintings considered here.

Figure 3-9: Pieter Brueghel the Elder, *Charity*, 1559, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam.

245 See Silver, *Peasant Scenes and Landscapes*, 62. For an overview of the beggar's transformation in the pictorial tradition, see also Reinold, *The Representation of the Beggar.*

Figure 3-10 : Lucas van Leyden, *Wandering Beggars*, 1520, copper engraving, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Seventeenth-Century Dutch Prints of Beggars and Poor Tradesmen

Seventeenth-century genre paintings of acts of private charity do, however, share some pictorial characteristics with seventeenth-century prints of beggars and poor itinerant tradesmen. Images of poor tradesmen are similar to images of beggars. However, through the inclusion of a pictorial reference to the effort to sell goods or services, these images begin to soften the image of the beggar, and offer a more redeemable image of the working poor in need of assistance.[246] The seventeenth-century view of providing charity, as will be argued here, included the purchase of goods and services from the poor who supplemented through work the meager subsistence provided by charitable institutions. Therefore, depictions of beggars and

[246] As considered here, images of poor tradesmen have a similar theme of charity to those less fortunate; itinerant musicians and tradesmen were often depicted in the same vein as beggars.

poor salespeople hold much in common. The differences that do exist in the location, identity and behavior of the actors between images of beggars and itinerant salespeople produced in earlier and mid-seventeenth genre paintings reflect a tempering of the portrayal of poor in visual media.

Lucinda Reinold has argued that the seventeenth-century public drew a division between the deceptive, or roguish beggars depicted in images like Lucas van Leyden's *Wandering Beggars* and the honest poor, seen in Vinckenbrinck's plaque (figures 3-10 and 3-7).[247] She also traces an increasingly sentimentalized depiction of poor in the art of seventeenth-century Dutch genre painters.[248] Rembrandt and his contemporary, Adriaen van Ostade, laid the foundation for this transition in the prints they produced. Where some images depict those beggars who are deceptive and not deserving of charity, others depict the humble, working poor, deserving of the charity of their neighbors.

Rembrandt's etching of *The Peg-leg* continues the pictorial depiction of a deceptive beggar (c. 1630, figure 3-11). Like Lucas van Leyden's *False Pilgrim* who claims children who are not his own to elicit sympathy, Rembrandt's cripple appeals to the compassion of others through deception, as he attempts to fool his potential benefactors by tying up his functional leg to mimic an amputee.[249] His depicted ruse, meant to solicit the charity of others, displays the justification for the mistrust of beggars, reinforcing the need for regulation of poor relief through sanctioned

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[247] Reinold, *The Representation of the Beggar,* 1-2.
[248] Reinold, *The Representation of the Beggar,* 8.
[249] See Christopher Brown, Jan Kelch, and Pieter van Thiel, *Rembrandt: The Master and his Workshop, Drawings and Etchings* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), 174-176. See also Stone-Ferrier, *Dutch Prints of Daily Life*, 81.

channels. Rembrandt's beggar does not endeavor to work to better his lot; instead he turns to deception, revealing himself as corrupt, rather than redeemable.

Figure 3-11: Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Peg-leg*, etching, c. 1630.

However, in Rembrandt's later etching of *Beggars Receiving Alms* (1648, figure 3-12), the need of the depicted supplicants for charitable assistance appears more genuine; they humbly ask for charity without resorting to deception. The attire and demeanor of these beggars suggests "the honest poor."[250] Their humble behavior, characterized by bowed heads, and the maintenance of a respectful distance from their benefactor, begins to liberate these figures from negative associations. This humble demeanor, combined with the suggestion of the possibility of a small service (musical entertainment) should the alms-giver request such in return, further frees the

[250] Brown, Kelch, and van Thiel, *Rembrandt: The Master and his Workshop, Drawings and Etchings*, 239-241.

depicted beggars from traditional pictorial associations with deceptive behavior.[251] Rembrandt's sympathetic depiction of the honest poor seeking private assistance set an important precedent for the pictorial display of the worthiness of those in search of charitable assistance.

Figure 3-12: Rembrandt van Rijn, *Beggars Receiving Alms*, etching and drypoint, 1648.

Other images of poor, itinerant tradesmen at the doorway in print media also maintain a concern with the behavior of those approaching the homeowner. Rembrandt's *Rat Catcher* (1632, figure 3-13), while similar to *Beggars Receiving Alms* in setting and even in the physical appearance of some of the figures, depicts a

[251] Stone-Ferrier, *Dutch Prints of Daily Life*, 82, notes that the object carried by the man in this print cannot be clearly identified as a hurdy-gurdy. However, the elderly male figure, in his misdirected gaze, posture, and suggestion of a held object, is consistent with other pictorial representations of elderly, blind, male hurdy-gurdy players from the period. See, for example, Nicolaes Maes' *The Hurdy-Gurdy Man*, figure 3-16.

very different reaction on the part of the homeowner.[252] Here, rather than respond in a positive manner with coin, the male homeowner attempts to dismiss the salesman of dubious services who fails to behave in an appropriately subservient manner.[253] Questions about the honesty and appropriate behavior of the poor at the doorway render these figures undeserving of the charitable patronage of a potential benefactor.

Figure 3-13: Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Rat Catcher*, 1632, etching, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

However, in a similar, later doorway scene by Adrian van Ostade of the spectacle seller, who was also often regarded as disreputable by contemporary viewers, the portrayal of the poor tradesman is more sympathetic. In contrast to *The Rat Catcher*, van Ostade's *Spectacle Merchant* (1646, figure 3-14), receives a more

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[252] The arch-shaped, columned doorway and bearded old man, as well as the youthful assistant, are similar in both images.

[253] Stone-Ferrier, *Dutch Prints of Daily Life*, 74, notes the rat catcher's physical resemblance to the rats he carries. The reaction of the homeowner suggests that the rat catcher's presence is equally undesirable to that of the vermin he catches.

positive response from his potential client, an elderly woman who leans out the open upper portion of a Dutch door in order to examine his wares.[254] The poor itinerant salesman here maintains a respectful distance, holding out a pair of spectacles at the woman's request. The young boy accompanying him bends forward subserviently, as he watches attentively, learning the necessities of his trade. While van Ostade leaves the outcome of the depicted narrative unresolved, he significantly softens the criticism of the itinerant salesman from the negative view found in Rembrandt's *Rat Catcher*. Images such as these contributed to an overall tempering in the portrayal of the poor in scenes of private charity.

Figure 3-14: Adriaen van Ostade, *Spectacle Merchant*, 1646, etching, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

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[254] Stone-Ferrier, "Inclusions and Exclusions: The Selectivity of Adriaen van Ostade's Etchings," in *Adriaen van Ostade: Etchings of Peasant Life in Holland's Golden Age*, Patricia Phagan, ed. (Athens: Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia, 1994), 25 discusses the similarities of these images. See also Stone-Ferrier, *Dutch Prints of Daily Life*, 80, on the possibility of both negative and positive associations of spectacles during the period.

Itinerant Salesmen and Musicians in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting

A small number of painted scenes from the seventeenth century in the Netherlands are similar to those of Rembrandt and van Ostade's prints of itinerant salesmen and their young male apprentices soliciting charity. These paintings illustrate how a few highly selective images of domestic charity – both negative views of disreputable poor, and more positive views of the humble poor – moved from print imagery into genre paintings, leading to the images that depict the actual distribution of coin in similar contexts.

The painted images also vary, as some are less than sympathetic towards the poverty of the itinerants depicted. Jan Steen's *A Peddler Selling Spectacles Outside a Cottage* (c. 1650-55, figure 3-15) resembles van Ostade's print image in its depiction of an itinerant spectacle seller at the door of an elderly woman who inspects his merchandise. However, the behavior of the children and laughing male figure that surround the spectacle seller (whose scraggly beard and tall hat lend him an uncanny resemblance to Rembrandt's rat catcher), suggest a critical view of the salesman and his wares.

Similarly, Nicolaes Maes, in *The Hurdy Gurdy Man* (figure 3-16), surrounds the elderly, blind hurdy-gurdy player with figures who smile and gesture at the viewer. The blind player seems unaware of the attitude of the small crowd, while his attendant scratches his head, having just removed his hat in order to solicit donations. The blind man and the young boy exude an impression of ignorance and filth, rather

than an elicitation of charity. Maes' painting continues the traditional negative view of itinerant musicians seen in Lucas van Leyden's print (figure 3-10).

Figure 3-15: Jan Steen, *A Pedlar Selling Spectacles Outside a Cottage*, c. 1650-55, panel, National Gallery, London

Figure 3-16: Nicolaes Maes, *The Hurdy-Gurdy Man*, canvas, The Hague Rijksdienst Beeldende Kunst.

However, Steen's and Maes' paintings differ in a few distinct ways from the small number of genre paintings that focus on the charitable distribution of coin. Mid-seventeenth-century Dutch genre paintings of monetary charitable donations alter the specifics of setting, the social identity of the benefactors, and the number of figures portrayed, as the images move towards a more positive view of the humble poor and their wealthy benefactors.

The number and range of mid-seventeenth-century genre paintings that depict a concrete exchange of coin between figures in an assumed charitable context is extremely limited, raising questions about the choice of such a narrow range of depictions in scenes of charitable giving, and their relationship to similar paintings

which do not include the exchange of coin. Metsu's *Woman Giving Alms to a Boy* (figure 3-2) and three paintings by Jacob Ochtervelt of musicians at the door (figures 3-3, 17, and 18) focus on the giving of coin. One other painting, *An Old Man Giving Alms to a Boy* (figure 3-19) by an anonymous artist, also depicts the receipt of coin.[255] However, the closely cropped composition and the attire and attitude of the elderly man and young boy suggest that *An Old Man Giving Alms to a Boy*, which is similar in these aspects to Aert de Gelder's *Wandering Musician* of the 1690s (figure 3-20), may be of a slightly later date than previously ascribed. The fact that so few images that portray the actual exchange of coin exist -- and those that do exist posses an extremely limited vocabulary of depiction -- raises questions about the specifics of the subjects portrayed and the contemporary views of private acts of charity.

Figure 3-17 : Jacob Ochtervelt, *Itinerant Musicians*, 1660-65, Gemäldegalerie, Berlin.

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[255] Robinson, *Gabriel Metsu,* 46, lists the work as by "a follower of Maes" and as in the collection of Michael and Renate Hornstein. I was unable to identify the current location of the painting. As the available reproductions are poor, no clear conclusions about the painting's date or author can be drawn.

Figure 3-18: Jacob Ochtervelt, *Entrance Hall with Street Musicians*, c. 1670-75, canvas, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Figure 3-19: Follower of Nicolaes Maes, *An Old Man Giving Alms to a Boy*, 1656?, canvas.

Figure 3-20: Aert de Gelder, *Wandering Musician*, 1690s, canvas, State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburgh.

Selective Reduction: Depictions of the Private Charity of Wealthy Households

Most images of private charity from the middle of the seventeenth century in the Netherlands do not depict the actual exchange of coin. Therefore, individual acts of charitable giving as seen in Metsu's *Woman Giving Alms to a Boy*, stand out as unusual in the visual realm. In their depiction of the entrance of an urban, upper-middle-class household, and focus on the delivery of coin, these works share certain characteristics with images of produce sellers at the door discussed in the previous chapter. Like the rural purveyors of produce seen in the contemporary paintings discussed in chapter two, the young boys and musicians occupy the liminal space of the front entry, interacting with representatives of the urban, wealthy class. In their placement of the scene at the doorway, these images also share certain characteristics with the depictions of itinerant tradesmen in print media by Adrian van Ostade and Rembrandt van Rijn. However, the change in location from a middle-class or rural entry to the upper-middle-class urban doorway and an emphasis on youthful supplicants alters the emphasis and import of these paintings in significant ways.

Where previous images provided "a negative antitype to the positive characteristics of urban bourgeois behavior," the mid-century genre scenes that depict young, clean, polite supplicants to the wealthiest urban class provide a distinctly different view.[256] Instead, the genre depictions of private charity reinforce the

[256] Taken from Silver, *Peasant Scenes and Landscapes*, 62, in his discussion of sixteenth-century images of itinerant beggars.

advantageous aspects of urban upper-middle-class behavior by displaying the potential positive impacts of upper-middle-class beneficence on society.[257]

Gabriel Metsu, in *Woman Giving Alms to a Boy* (figure 3-2) departed from previous conventions to create a very innovative depiction of charity. In Metsu's painting, an elegantly attired young upper-middle-class urban housewife holds audience seated on her front stoop. Before her, on the lower level of the street, stands a young boy attired in a drab brown jacket and breeches, loose stockings, and worn shoes, his hat respectfully doffed and head bowed slightly. The lady prepares to drop a coin, removed from the purse in her lap, into his proffered hat. While neither speaks, the gazes exchanged suggest a prior dialogue. Aside from the small dog at the lady's side, the tree-lined street, replete with a church spire in the background, appears empty, and the open door does not reveal the interior of the home beyond. The painted image provides no further clue to the exchange depicted here, leaving the determination of the exact interaction occurring to the viewer's discretion.

It has traditionally been assumed that the young boy in Metsu's painting receives alms, or a charitable donation, from the woman.[258] The figure's extension of his hat for the receipt of the coin certainly supports this understanding, but no specific element of the painting indicates with certainty that a simple, strictly

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[257] This conclusion is similar to that drawn in the previous chapter regarding the interaction of upper-middle-class customers with the lower-class purveyors of produce at their door. Such a construct simultaneously flatters the presumed upper-middle-class patrons of mid-seventeenth century genre scenes, and reinforces the emergent social structure.
[258] See, for example, Muller, "Jan Steen's *Burgher of Delft and His Daughter*," 282; or Robinson, *Gabriel Metsu,* 46.

charitable donation occurs. While the boy's attire suggests he occupies a lower social station than the lady with whom he interacts, he does not wear tattered rags, nor the two-toned uniform of an orphan.[259] I suggest that another possible interpretation of this interaction exists: the boy may have agreed to perform some small errand or chore in exchange for payment.[260] The employment of a less prosperous boy could also be construed as a charitable act; the two understandings are not mutually exclusive.[261]

Another painting from the period, *A Boy Asking Alms of a Lady* (1659, figure 3-21), depicts a young boy approaching two women, one of whom carries a market pail. The implied narrative suggests the possibility of an offer to assist with the collection of household goods in exchange for a small remuneration. Another image from the period, Pieter de Hooch's *A Boy Bringing Bread* (c. 1650-65, figure 3-22) suggests the possible outcome of the hesitation and meaningful glances in *Woman Giving Alms to a Boy* and *A Boy Asking Alms of a Lady*. De Hooch's painting depicts a young boy at the entrance of an upper-middle-class house, delivering a basket of

[259] As noted previously, orphans often wore uniforms, with the right and left portion of the breast of different colors in accord with the institution. See Bedaux and Ekkart, 104; or Roberts and Groenendijk, "Moral Panic," 334.

[260] An errand that included some small household purchase could justify the receipt of coin prior to the completion of a task. See also Muller, "Jan Steen's *Burgher of Delft and His Daughter*," 282, on young boys, in particular orphans, performing small chores in order to supplement what they received as apprentices; and Rudolf Dekker, *Childhood, Memory and Autobiography in Holland: From the Golden Age to Romanticism* (London: Macmillan Press, Ltd., 2000), 9, on the employment of children in general, and particularly to perform errands.

[261] A modern parallel for this kind of charitable act might be the employment of a neighborhood child to perform yard work or the purchase of sale items to benefit a school or social association – e.g. the cookie sales of Girl Scouts. Such payments are not strictly "charitable donations," but do afford the giver the sense of having benefited society as well as themselves.

bread to the lady of the house. In this context, the boys depicted in *A Woman Giving Alms to a Boy* or *A Boy Asking Alms of a Lady* (figures 3-2 and 21) could be expected to perform some small chore or errand in exchange for a monetary "donation."

Figure 3-21 : Follower of Nicolaes Maes, *A Boy Asking Alms of a Lady*, 1659, panel, Zurich, E. Haab-Escher.

Figure 3- 22: Pieter de Hooch; *A Boy Bringing Bread*, c. 1650-65, canvas, The Wallace Collection, London.

Work was a necessity for children of the lower classes during the period. Young orphan boys who were apprenticed to learn a trade often received remuneration insufficient to provide for their most basic needs.[262] Young boys, whether poor or orphaned, would perform small chores and odd jobs to supplement wages earned from other work. While the boy depicted in de Hooch's painting is much

[262] Muller, "Jan Steen's *Burgher of Delft and His Daughter*," 282.

more elegantly and neatly dressed than the boy in Maes' *Woman Giving Alms*, he suggests the importance placed on teaching young boys to work. Additionally, most orphans of the period maintained a connection to extended family within the community.[263] In this context, the possibility exists that the donors depicted in genre scenes could have been understood by contemporary viewers as members of an extended community, and even possibly as members of an extended family.

A few other paintings of the period suggest the contributions made regularly by youngsters to the labor force. For example, Quiringh van Brekelenkam's *The Tailor's Workshop* (1661, figure 3-23) includes two young boys seated on a platform, sewing clothing by the sunlight entering through a set of windows. The same artist's *Fishwife and Shrimp Seller* (1666, figure 2-26) also depicts a boy at work -- in this case as a seller of shrimp. While these images merely begin to suggest the types of jobs boys actually held during the period, they do affirm the notion that contemporary viewers would have perceived the labor of a young boy as a normal occurrence. However, specific expectations varied in accordance with social and familial status.

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[263] McCants, *Civic Charity in a Golden Age*, 33, cites evidence that the majority (94%) of the orphans in Amsterdam's Burgerweeshuis had extended family that participated in the devolution of property. It is possible that in some cases these extended family members could have additionally felt an obligation towards further supporting the orphan, even if that obligation did not extend to taking the child into their home. I am suggesting that some viewers from the period might have speculated some degree of familial connection between the giver of alms in Metsu's *Woman Giving Alms to a Boy* and the recipient.

Figure 3-23: Quiringh van Brekelenkam, *The Tailor's Workshop*, 1661, canvas, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Social Class, Labor, and Education

Maes' painting of *The Virtuous Woman* (c. 1655, figure 3-24) is also often interpreted as a depiction of a young boy asking for alms. An upper-middle-class housewife pauses from her sewing by a window, gesturing, hand outstretched to the viewer as a small boy raps on her window, his face narrowly visible through the glass. The lady's expression indicates recognition, if not of the specific identity of the boy, then of the request he is assumed to be making. Her outstretched hand indicates that he seeks a monetary donation, but many aspects of the narrative remain ambiguous.

Figure 3-24: Nicolaes Maes, *The Virtuous Woman*, c. 1655, panel, The Wallace Collection, London.

In addition to the possible interpretation that the young boy depicted here requests a donation and/or work, he could also be more intimately connected to the depicted household. Painters often portrayed children in images playing outside the entrance of a house, such as in Jacob Ochtervelt's *Fishmonger at the Door* (c. 1667-68, figure 2-29). In this context, Maes' young boy may have interrupted his mother's sewing by rapping at the window. Her smiling expression, and gesture to the viewer, may reflect a need for training the young male.

This interpretation is consistent with other genre paintings of mothers and boys from the period. Another painting by the same artist, *The Naughty Drummer* (figure 3-25), depicts a housewife seated in a similar setting, scolding a boy of a

similar age, whose playful activity has disturbed the younger sibling in a cradle at the mother's feet. In these two paintings, Maes lightheartedly intimates the interruptions in the daily duties of a housewife caused by the care of children, and concomitantly the need for parental guidance of young children. Maes' depiction is in accord with the contemporary notions that training was required in order to mold the child into a productive adult.[264]

Figure 3- 25: Nicolaes Maes, *The Naughty Drummer*, canvas, Madrid, Fundacion Colleccion Thyssen-Bornemisza, inv. No 1930.56.

Jan Steen's painting of a *Boy Waiting for Bread from a Kitchenmaid* (c. 1659, figure 3-26) reveals how the playful nature of the young boy, here suggested by the hoop lying discarded on the floor, should be redirected into the adult world through

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[264] See Wayne Franits, *Pieter de Hooch: A Woman Preparing Bread and Butter for a Boy* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2006), 36-40, 58, on the need for training and education of the child; and Benjamin Roberts and Leendert F. Groenendijk, "'Wearing out a pair of fool's shoes': Sexual Advice for Youth in Holland's Golden Age," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 13:2 (April 2004), 155, on how the Dutch concept of training advocated negotiation and education rather than harsh reprimand in order to educate youngsters.

education and work.[265] The young boy's expression of solemn disappointment at being required to abandon his play is balanced by his meek, bowed head, respectfully folded hands, and doffed hat, as he awaits the receipt of bread and cheese. The male figure seen from the back through the doorway suggests that this boy is about to depart the (feminine) domestic realm for the (masculine) realm of formal education and work.

Figure 3-26: Jan Steen, *Boy Waiting for Bread from a Kitchenmaid*, c. 1659, current location unknown.

Pieter de Hooch's 1668 *Mother and Child with a Schoolboy Descending a Stair*, and 1660-63 *A Woman Preparing Bread and Butter for a Boy* (figure 3-27, 28), also depict youngsters, albeit slightly older, as they prepare to depart the company of their mothers. In *Mother and Child with a Schoolboy Descending a Stair*, the books

[265] The presence of the hoop on the floor is noted by Mary Frances Durantini, *The Child in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983), 223. Durantini, 47-52, also evaluates similar scenes of the preparation of a meal for a boy going off to school as a continuation of other scenes of feeding children in connection with motherly duty (such as nursing).

that the boy carries indicate that he prepares to go to school. In *A Woman Preparing Bread and Butter for a Boy*, the dark silhouetted form of a male figure outside the window behind the female figure, in combination with the prominent sign of a school seen beyond, suggest the same scenario.[266] In Steen and de Hooch's painted depictions of schoolboys, the boys' respectful manner and attire suggest their readiness to accept the education appropriate to their station and subsequent entrance into the world of work. This is held in common with their less affluent counterparts seen in Metsu's *Woman Giving Alms to a Boy* and the anonymous *Boy Asking Alms of a Lady* (figures 3-2 and 3-21), revealing a contemporaneous concern with the education of young boys into their socially appropriate station.

Figure 3- 27: Pieter de Hooch, *Mother and Child with a Schoolboy Descending a Stair*, 1668, H. Bischoff, on loan to Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne.

[266] De Hooch's painting also includes a child's toy lying discarded on the floor -- in this case a top. See Franits, *Pieter de Hooch*, 1.

Figure 3-28: Pieter de Hooch, *A Woman Preparing Bread and Butter for a Boy*, 1660-63, canvas, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

In both the scenes of charity and the departure of schoolboys, the central female figure of the upper-middle-class housewife is presented as the director of the male child's exit from the domesticated locus of childhood activity and entry into adult productivity. While Steen's and de Hooch's painted scenes of schoolboys awaiting their daily bread include a male figure, he is physically and psychologically removed from the scene through his pose. The delineation between the (feminine) domestic space and the (masculine) exterior space of school and work, and the transition of the boy from one space to the other, overseen by the figure of the housewife, reinforces the increasingly gendered expectations of the period.

The expectation of education and entry into work for young boys follows the social reality of the period. For most children of the period, work was necessary and began early.[267] Among the lower classes, children commonly left the parental home to learn a trade as young as age six.[268] This early participation in the labor market was natural during the period, and contributed to the contemporary economy.[269] The wearing of trousers between the ages of five and seven visibly marked the departure from infancy into the phase of childhood that included education in work.[270] The ubiquitous hat (often depicted doffed in respect to the female householder) depicted by seventeenth-century painters conveyed respectability.[271]

For the males of the upper class, affluence did not remove the burden of education and work. The business of capitalism required knowledge of advanced arithmetic and accounting, which necessitated schooling for middle- and upper-middle-class boys to learn these essential skills.[272] When appropriate, Latin school began around the age of twelve, while less affluent boys were apprenticed to craftsmen at the same age.[273] This was also the age at which youngsters would be excluded from traditional children's festivities, marking their departure from the world of childhood

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[267] Rudolf Dekker, *Childhood, Memory and Autobiography*, 6, 103 discusses the necessity of labor for children, even at a young age.
[268] Ibid., 6.
[269] Ibid., 9 and 102.
[270] On the change in attire for boys, see Jeroen Dekker, Leendert Groendijk, and Johan Verberckmoes, "Proudly Raising Vulnerable Youngsters: The Scope for Education in the Netherlands," from *Pride and Joy*, 50; and Rudolf Dekker, *Childhood, Memory and Autobiography*, 5.
[271] Dekker, Groendijk, and Verberckmoes, 50.
[272] Ibid., 46.
[273] Ibid., 50.

and entry into adulthood.[274] This transition is noted in Jan Steen's *Boy Waiting for Bread from a Kitchenmaid* and Pieter de Hooch's *A Woman Preparing Bread and Butter for a Boy* by the toys discarded on the floor.

Training of young men in a trade is also a shared concern with the remaining mid-seventeenth-century Dutch genre paintings of scenes of private charity – specifically in portrayals of another class of male workers – the itinerant musician traditionally associated with beggars. In Jacob Ochtervelt's *Street Musicians at the Door* (1665, figure 3-3), in the open doorway of an elegantly tiled entryway of an upper-middle-class urban home, a young musician bends down, putting himself at the level of the child elegantly attired in blue satin. The child looks up at the maid with delight, as she gestures to the instrument being played. The housewife sits, enthroned in her chair against the wall, a single coin in her hand, held out towards the child. The intersecting directions of gestures connect the members of the household, while the two musicians are held within and outside of the doorway by the front step, in front of a view into the street beyond, which includes a prominent spire.[275]

Again the monetary exchange involves a young child, but this time, the image emphasizes the youngest member of the household as the giver of charity, rather than the young supplicant (the musician), shifting slightly the focus of the image. While the upper-middle-class urban household still makes a charitable donation (in

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[274] For girls, the trajectory differed somewhat. There was less of a visible transition in dress and activities, as their work often occurred within the domestic setting. For some girls these domestic duties became more formal work as they served other households as maids; and other girls worked outside the home in the textile and mercantile realm. However, it is notable that other forms of female employment outside the home are also rarely depicted.

[275] The spire of a church, present in the distance in many of these scenes of charity, is often seen as a reference to the religious duty to charitable giving. See, for example, Robinson, *Gabriel Metsu,* 45.

exchange for entertainment), the charitable episode also functions as a lesson for the young member of the upper-middle-class household. This child learns the value of both education and services rendered in exchange for payment. Just as the young entertainer has learned his trade from the older musician, the young member of the upper-middle-class household gains a lesson in money management. This is not to say that the contemporary viewer might not have made a negative moral judgment regarding the purchase of sensual indulgence; however, the charitable nature of the expenditure softens the stigma. Further, the child also learns about his place in contemporary society.

A similar image, *Itinerant Musicians* (1660-65, figure 3-17), also by Ochtervelt, depicts an identically tiled entry space. Here the emphasis on the nurturing and teaching of children finds greater emphasis through repeated images of instruction. As the young housewife, her top open from nursing, holds the leading strings of a younger child who in turn attempts to calm the dog, the "young master" of the house, baton in hand, pays the entertainers for their services.[276] Again the narrative provides lessons, both in how to give money in a charitable fashion, and of the power inherent in wealth. The interlocking gazes of the young musician and the "little master" of the house call attention to the older boy's subservient position, as he and his adult companion bow their heads to the power of the coin held in the small child's hand.

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[276] The specifics of the child's attire, in particular the hat he wears, indicate that this is a male child, not yet "breeched."

In a third painting, *Entrance Hall with Street Musicians* (c. 1670-75, figure 3-18), Ochtervelt allows the musicians physical entry into the home. Again, the young musician and his older companion provide entertainment for a small child as the housewife counts out coins. The entry of these individuals, combined with their deferential behavior and relegation of their services as suitable only as entertainment of the very young, reveals a transition from earlier images of begging musicians. Ochtervelt's portrayal of these musicians reveals, in correlation with the seventeenth-century Dutch regulation of poverty, a pictorial transformation of the poor, itinerant musician from a dangerous, deceptive threat to social order into an innocuous participant in the indulgence of the upper class, reinforcing the subservience of the poor. In this manner, mid-century genre paintings of itinerant musicians support the contemporary efforts to sanitize and remove the stain of poverty from the sight of the wealthier classes.[277]

Setting the Scene: The Socio-Economic Context

Dutch artists produced an extremely limited number of painted genre scenes of upper-middle-class families engaged in private charity during the seventeenth century. As the urban population grew and social mobility increased, so too did the effort to define and reinforce divisions between different classes of urban dwellers.

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[277] Where previous authors, such as Reinold, *The Representation of the Beggar,* 121, or Muller, *Charity in the Dutch Republic*, 121 have seen this pictorial shift as an improved regard for the hurdy-gurdy player, or a reflection of praise for the musician's effort to provide a service in exchange for charity, I am arguing that the cleaned-up version of the itinerant musician is equally subversive. However, rather than blatant criticism, these images disguise the actuality of poverty, in essence, "sweeping it under the rug," and thereby denying the reality of poverty and social inequity.

The emphasis on the performance of work in exchange for donations in mid-seventeenth-century Dutch genre paintings of private monetary donations supported the urban upper-middle-class need to define the upper-middle-class' position at the height of economic prosperity.

The subject matter, like that of the images discussed in the previous chapter in which the upper-middle-class patronizes lower-class purveyors of produce, reveals a desire to assert social control through the notion of indebtedness. The pictured donation of the upper class served to solidify the subservient relationship of the lower classes, providing an illustration of seventeenth-century social control through gratitude. This notion is in accord with the social practice of exchange, which creates and reinforces social relationships.[278]

While the works do seemingly depict an example of altruism in the form of charity, the act of charitable giving, combined with the purchase of services, ties the symbolic and economic relationships between those involved in such exchanges.[279] Charitable giving, both through institutional and private channels, allowed the elite members of society both an assuagement of conscience and a means of social control.[280] However, the miniscule number of such depictions reveals some discomfort with such a direct representation of the giving of coin in a charitable context. Perhaps the social acceptance of the regulation of poor relief that reflected

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[278] For a socio-anthropological summary of the practice of giving and exchange, and how it "cements" social relationships, see Komter, *The Gift*.
[279] Ibid., 10-11.
[280] McCants, *Civic Charity in a Golden Age*; Ferguson, *The Cash Nexus*, 1; and Parker, *The Reformation of Community,* 145.

the efficiency of the system was sufficiently effective, and did not require active visual reinforcement of the status quo.[281]

Charitable Giving Reconsidered: Jan Steen's Unusual Genre Portrait

Contemporary opinions regarding the upper-middle-class obligations to individual charitable giving also find expression in Jan Steen's unusual genre portrait, *Adolf and Catharina Croeser on the Oude Delft.* Since the painting, signed and dated 1655, appeared on the cover of Simon Schama's *The Embarrassment of Riches*, multiple scholars have sought to analyze the meaning of the painting.[282] Curious to the modern viewer in its defiance of the strict categories of portraiture, genre, cityscape, and still-life painting with which historians today label seventeenth-century Dutch painting, Steen's portrait is discussed here both because of its inclusion of a genre scene of a request for charitable aid and the perspective it reveals on the motivations of patrons of charitable genre paintings.

Adolf and Catharina Croeser on the Oude Delft ostensibly addresses the issue of charitable giving through its insertion of a scene highly similar to the genre scenes just examined within a portrait of a man and his daughter. Previous interpretations have focused on the ramifications of the implied beneficent act of Adolf Croeser, and

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[281] Dekker, *Childhood, Memory and Autobiography*, 8, counts almost 4,000 orphans in the city's orphanages. McCants, *Civic Charity in a Golden Age*, 2, notes how the success of these orphanages reduced death rates and removed beggars from the streets.

[282] See, for example, Liedtke, Plomp, and Ruger, *Vermeer and the Delft School*, 343-346; Pierre Vinken, "Een Emblem van Coornhert als bron van Jan Steens zogenaamde *Burgermeester van Delft*," *Oud Holland* 112:4 (1998), 253-258; Muller, "Jan Steen's *Burgher of Delft and His Daughter*," 268-297; and H. Perry Chapman, Wouter Th. Kloek, and Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., *Jan Steen: Painter and Storyteller*, Washington: National Gallery of Art, (1996), catalogue number 7; as well as Schama's own interpretation, *The Embarrassment of Riches*, 575.

the consequent moral, social, and political repercussions on him and his contemporary society. Through the depiction of a scene that draws to the viewer's mind an act of charity, Steen also explored the boundaries between personal choices and their public consequences. *Adolf and Catharina Croeser on the Oude Delft*, through the spatial arrangement of elements within the painting and the relationship of figures within and to this space, conveyed messages to the seventeenth-century viewer about both personal and public social and economic duties.

While the painting is remarkably consistent with genre scenes of private charity, it is also strikingly different in its primary function as a portrait of a man and his daughter that includes a genre scene. As a simultaneous portrait and genre painting, this image renders even more immediate the didactic messages about charitable giving, one's place in society, and one's civic duty for those depicted and the viewers who were acquainted with Adolf and his daughter. The unusual choice of the patron to have a portrait created that included an anonymous charitable request provides a unique opportunity to explore the contemporary views that could have supported such a conception.

The evocation of social and economic duties is accomplished through the use of sharply demarcated class and gender roles in the painting, which display the responsibility of the individual within society. The juxtaposition of a family portrait of a wealthy widower and his daughter with an anonymous (presumably) widowed woman and young boy, emphasizes the civic and economic responsibilities of both men and women throughout all stages of life.

That the private actions of Adolf Croeser and his daughter have larger social and economic repercussions is emphasized not only through the contrasts of social, economic, gender, and age-related status, but also through the depiction of space within the painting itself. By placing the combination portrait and genre scene within the transitional space between private and public realms, that is, on the front stoop of the burgher's affluent home, juxtaposed against the public space of the street and the identifiable landmarks of the city beyond, the intersections of private and public realms are emphasized.[283] In this manner, the seventeenth-century viewer of Steen's painting was confronted not only with a depiction of a request for charitable aid, but also was allowed to contemplate the impact that the choice to give or not give might have both on the individuals depicted and on the larger society. The personal consequences would have been furthered for the viewer who knew and recognized the two figures that are portrayed -- Adolf Croeser and his daughter Catharina.

In Jan Steen's *Adolf and Catharina Croeser on the Oude Delft*, the elegantly attired Adolf Croeser takes center stage, his social and economic status instantly visible. His elegant outfit of black satin and white linen trimmed in lace portrays him as a member of the upper echelons of Delft society. He sits authoritatively, a paper in his left hand, his right hooked through the side of the bench on which he sits, his elbow akimbo.[284] He looks down confidently from his elevated perch on the front stoop of his impressive home at the woman standing on the street to his left.

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[283] Kistemaker, "The Public and the Private," 20, notes that the steps and sidewalk in front of the home were viewed as an extension of the private space of the home.

[284] Joneath Spicer, "The Renaissance Elbow," in *A Cultural History of Gesture*, Jan Bremmer and Herman Roodenburg, ed. (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), 84-128, suggests that the elbow

She leans forward, lowering her head in deference, her right hand extended, palm up, in a beseeching gesture. Her pose and dress are in complete contrast to that of the burgher she approaches. Where his elegant, tailored attire and manner speak of wealth and authority, her subservient pose and ill-fitting, worn clothing, tattered shoes, and wooden cane define her significantly lower social position. The young people present to the right of each of these two figures echo the contrast between the man and the woman who approaches him. The small boy beside the woman places his hands deferentially in his torn hat, as he looks up at the burgher, patiently and attentively awaiting the response of his potential benefactor.[285] In contrast, Catherina Croeser looks out directly at the viewer. She is caught in the act of stepping down off of the front stoop upon which her father sits, as one stylishly adorned white shoe peeks out from under her gown. Her elegantly detailed outfit, complete with pearl necklace, earrings, bracelets, and fan contrasts markedly with the tattered, torn, and ill-fitting attire of the woman and boy. The spotless white shoe and carefully held fan illustrate the comparative ease of her life.

A fifth figure stands witness to the unfolding scene. An ostentatiously dressed man watches the scene, standing directly above a sculptural relief of the crest of the city of Delft, on a bridge spanning the Oude Delft canal.[286] His head turned, he carefully observes the scene before him. Further in the background, the spire of the

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akimbo pose frequent in Renaissance and Baroque portraitures is a gesture both of bravado and command.

[285] His respectful pose is similar to that seen both in the previously discussed images of private charity and of waiting schoolboys.

[286] For identification of the location and surrounding building, see Muller, "Jan Steen's *Burgher of Delft and His Daughter*," 268-297; and Chapman, Kloek, and Wheelock, catalogue number 7.

Oude Kerk in Delft is visible on the right. Just over Adolf Croeser's right shoulder, the Kamer van Charitaten, one of the civic charitable institutions for which the Dutch were well acclaimed in seventeenth-century Europe, is also visible.[287] Croeser's impressive home sits amidst a row of large houses located on the Oude Delft. A vase of flowers rests on the sill of the home's open window.[288]

Just as the half-open shutter visually holds within the space of the house the flowers spilling out of the windowsill, the figures within the painting are also held in carefully defined spaces. The first is the transitional space of the *plavesiel*, or exterior front entrance area of the burgher's home.[289] The second is the public street just beyond; and the third the background space, elements of which firmly situate the foreground scene in the specific location of the Oude Delft canal in the city of Delft. The depicted architecture carefully confines the figures in Steen's painting within these three spaces.

Adolf Croeser, his left elbow resting upon the railing of his front stoop, is literally fenced into the space he occupies.[290] The very same railing holds back the woman and boy before him. Similarly, the watching figure on the bridge in the background leans on its edge, his lower half not only confined, but also obscured by

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[287] Muller, "Jan Steen's *Burgher of Delft and His Daughter*," 281.

[288] There is a notably similar detail in Maes' painting *The Virtuous Woman* (figure 3-24) of a vase of flowers in the windowsill. The precarious placement of the vase in Steen's painting, rather than suggest a simple depiction of a bouquet that just happened to be placed in the front window of an urban house, suggests that there is some as of yet inadequately explained significance to the presence of the bouquet in the window in conjunction with a scene of private charity in these two paintings.

[289] The space of the *plaveseil* is identified by Muller, "Jan Steen's *Burgher of Delft and His Daughter*," 276.

[290] Two other paintings depict this same type of bench built into the railing surrounding the front steps of the urban household; Metsu's *Woman Giving Alms to a Boy* (figure 3-2) and another painting by Steen, *Street Musicians*, 1659, Ascott, The National Trust, reproduced in Durantini, *The Child,* number 162, 291.

its architecture, tying him to the city depicted in the background. Only Catharina challenges the sense of spatial confinement, as she steps down, off of the front stoop to the lower, street level portion of the *plavesiel*.

Her act of looking out, engaging the viewer, as she steps down onto the level of the street causes the viewer to imagine that she just exited the open doorway behind her, as she prepares to enter the public space of the street beyond. The tension of this act, as she prepares to exit the private space ruled over by her father and enter the public space beyond (watched over by the figure on the bridge), draws the viewer's attention not only to the division between private and public spaces depicted, but also to her specific interaction with and within the public space of the city.

Spatial tension focuses on the young woman whose gaze specifically engages the viewer. Her relationship (or non-relationship, as she seemingly ignores all else but the viewer) is key to an understanding of her role. The four foreground figures depicted by Steen vary widely in age, from the quiet young boy to the young adult daughter to the mature male householder and elderly woman.[291] This juxtaposition of both youthful and elderly figures, both male and female, suggests the transitions made through various stages of life. The specific identity of each figure only furthers this conception, as a broad spectrum of ages, social, and economic stations in Dutch

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[291] The boy depicted in Steen's painting appears younger than those depicted in the similar genre paintings, except perhaps Maes' *The Virtuous Woman*. His extreme youth renders him more pitiable. See Jan Baptist Bedaux, *Pride and Joy: Children's Portraits in the Netherlands, 1500-1700*, Jan Baptist Bedaux and Rudi Ekkart ed. (Amsterdam: Ludion Press, 2000), 14, on how images of children, through utilizing the characteristic child's shape of a large head with a protruding forehead, large eyes, and a body with short, fat limbs, elicits a distinctive response in the viewer.

seventeenth-century society is represented. Even the flowers in the open window serve to remind the viewer of the transitory nature of existence.

However, I do not think that Steen's portrait of Adolf and Catharina would have been simply understood as an evocation of *vanitas*. Instead, the figures serve to remind the viewer of the interconnectedness of members of society and of the consequences of life decisions. The as of yet unmade decision by Adolf regarding his willingness to provide some form of aid to the young boy in front of him will have a profound impact upon the youth.[292] By extension, his choice will also have an effect on the woman advocating for the youngster. Adolf's assessment will also affect the larger society (represented by the fifth figure and landmarks in the background), as the young boy would be given the opportunity to grow into a responsible citizen. The watching figure in the background, physically connected to the city beyond and specifically to the church and civic charitable institutions draws attention to the public burden brought about both by happenstance and poor choices. Again, the seemingly private decision about whether Adolf should assist the young boy brought before him has larger consequences; the contemporary understanding of poverty specified that if the young child could be taught the benefits of hard work, his economic situation need only be temporary.[293]

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[292] His reluctance may also be explained in comparison to the previously discussed genre scenes, where the housewife takes the lead in acts of private charity. This may also reveal Catherina's action in a different light as she enters the street – does she enter the public space as the proper representative of the household in response to this charitable request?
[293] As argued previously, if the young boy were employed in exchange for a charitable donation, this, according to seventeenth-century notions, would serve to instill an understanding of the necessity of work.

However, the burgher's actions are not the only focus of the painting. Because of her interaction with the viewer and seeming movement from the private space of her father's home towards the street beyond, the decisions that Catherina will make as she enters the public realm are also brought to the forefront of the viewer's attention. Consequently, the viewer is encouraged to consider the possibility that her personal choices, particularly if made poorly or brought to ill through misfortune, could bring her to a position similar to that of the woman on the street. The necessity and importance of the decisions she will make, such as her choice of a marriage partner, are thereby emphasized.[294] If she chooses well, and makes prudent economic decisions in her life, her fate will echo that of her father; if not, it may echo that of the widowed woman before him.

In this sense, the fate of the young boy also echoes another assumed facet of Catherina's life's role -- that of a mother. Not only her future hinges upon the decision that she makes as she enters the world, but also those of her potential children. In this way the woman and child serve to remind Adolf and his daughter of the consequences of their behavior on their current and future family members. Adolf's status as a widower furthers the poignancy of this message.

In the context of a society where fortunes were made and lost rapidly, Steen's portrait of *Adolf and Catharina Croeser on the Oude Delft* could have served several purposes. Not only does it function as a statement of Adolf's wealth and authority,

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[294] This understanding would seem appropriate to a father's commission of a family portrait including a daughter of Catherina's age, as a reminder to her of the need for continued parental guidance. Regarding the contemporary concerns over the suitable choice of a marriage partner, see Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her,* 63-155.

through his depiction as a benefactor of his society, but it could also carry specific messages to his daughter. For her, this painting was not only a reminder of the benefits which her father had provided for her, but also of the importance of the decisions she will make (hopefully under the guidance of her father) as she exits his home. For other viewers of the time the work could also serve to remind them of the interconnectedness of the decisions that they make in their private lives and the public impact that they can have.

Beneath the Surface: A Domesticated Metaphor for the Urban Economy

In Steen's genre portrait, as in the other mid-seventeenth-century Dutch genre scenes of private charity discussed here, the manner in which charitable giving is depicted reveals a society where social roles were undergoing redefinition. In addition to the contemporary attempt to acculturate the poor through the regulation of charitable relief by strictly governed social institutions, mid-seventeenth-century genre paintings of charitable giving also participated in a redefinition of socially appropriate gender roles.[295]

Through a didactic depiction of women as the arbiters of youthful male behavior with responsibility to instill a work ethic in young boys, gender is utilized as a socially acceptable illustration of social control – the social pressure to control the poor and young is transferred into the realm of feminine domestic duty.[296] As was revealed in the previous chapters, mid-seventeenth-century Dutch genre paintings of

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[295] Parker, *The Reformation of Community,* 14, discusses how early modern social welfare policy was part of an attempt to acculturate the poor.
[296] Wolf, *Vermeer and the Invention,* 49-51 makes a similar argument about domestic scenes in general.

the domestic utilization of money selectively reveal the social pressures felt by the urban upper class, rather than simply reflect contemporary economic practices in a journalistic manner. These social pressures were responded to through a greater demarcation of public and private realms indicated visually by divisions of class and gender within the painted scenes.

CHAPTER 4

MERCENARY MONEY: THE PURCHASE OF ILLICIT LOVE

Framing the Discussion: An Outline

The mid-seventeenth-century Dutch genre paintings explored in the first three chapters of this dissertation (money-weighing, shopping for comestibles, and private charity) pictorially address the socially accepted domestic utilization of the household budget. Where the previous images emphasize diligence, prudence, and charity, in the final category of mid-seventeenth-century genre paintings sexual innuendo, alcohol, and monetary exchange become entangled bedfellows in depictions of questionable interchanges between genders.

Paintings such as Gerard ter Borch's *Soldier Offering a Young Woman Coins*, Jacob Ochtervelt's *The Offer*, Jan Steen's *Tavern Scene*, and Pieter de Hooch's *A Soldier Paying the Hostess* (figures 4-1, 2, 3, and 4), portray men offering money to women and/or women soliciting money from men. The narrative of such scenes varies, as mid-seventeenth-century Dutch genre painters created highly selective and nuanced images that allow for multiple interpretations, rather than provide straightforward representations of contemporary practices of payment for prostitution, entertainment, or lodging. These images recognize and exploit the blurring of identity possible in all elements depicted -- from the location of the scene (inn, tavern, brothel, or private home), to the subject of the composition (settling a bill for lodging, purchasing alcohol, purchasing sexual favors, or courting) to what is exchanged

(money for food, drink, lodging or sexual services).[297] Paintings of men and women who negotiate an exchange of money for lodging, entertainment, and/or sexual favors vary along these three axes, allowing the images to suggest multivalent meanings.

Figure 4-1: Gerard ter Borch, *Soldier Offering a Young Woman Coins*, c. 1662-63, canvas, Musée du Louvre, Paris.

[297] Despite the oft-cited fact that the consumption of alcoholic beverages such as beer was safer than drinking water, the presence of conspicuous alcohol consumption is certainly deliberate in the mid-seventeenth-century Dutch genre scenes discussed here. On alcohol being safer than water, see Benjamin Roberts, "Drinking like a Man: The Paradox of Excessive Drinking for 17th Century Dutch Youths," *Journal of Family History* 29:3 (July 2004), 239.

Figure 4-2: Jacob Ochtervelt, *The Offer*, c. 1671-73, present location unknown.

Figure 4-3: Jan Steen, *Tavern Scene*, c. 1670, panel, State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg.

Figure 4-4: Pieter de Hooch, *A Soldier Paying the Hostess*, 1658, private collection, London.

The discussion that follows explores the range of meaning and the tension thus generated by possible interpretations of scenes of monetary negotiation between individuals of the opposite sex. Pictorial tension arises both from the depiction of a moment of unresolved negotiation and from the similarity in depiction of acceptable and unacceptable intimate exchanges from the period.[298] Nanette Salomon admonishes, particularly in the case of *bordeeltjes*, that the modern viewer should not view the paintings as "mirrors of reality," but instead consider such images as part of a "discursive web" of social culture.[299] In the case of many of these images, such as Gerard ter Borch's painting previously titled inaccurately as the *Paternal Admonition* (c. 1655, figure 4-5), the tension created by the ambiguity of the subject and setting has resulted in multiple and conflicting interpretations of the painting at both extremes of licit and illicit subject matter.[300]

Comparison of images of the "purchase of illicit love" with pictorial precedents from the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, and with contemporaneous images of courtship and marriage reveals a complex dialogue about

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[298] As will be discussed within this chapter, the pictorial images of courtship and solicitation do possess striking visual similarities. I am also asserting, however, that there is a further narrative similarity here, as in the course of courtship and marriage there is also a financial negotiation as the partners assess one another's economic position and prepare to share "bed and board." As will be discussed, this similarity was strong enough during the seventeenth century that confusion between the solicitation of sex and the promise of marriage could occur.
[299] See Nanette Salomon, "Vermeer's Women: Changing Paradigms in Midcareer," in Nanette Salomon, *Shifting Priorities: Gender and Genre in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), 110.
[300] The composition exists in two highly similar paintings, one in Amsterdam and the other in Berlin. Alison McNeil Kettering, in "Ter Borch's Ladies in Satin," *Art History* 16: 1 (March 1993), 96, 107 provides a synopsis of both the various interpretations of the images as well as the discussion as to whether the man in either version of the painting holds up a coin between his finger and thumb. Kettering argues that there is no coin in his hand, and that the image is a scene of courtship, not a depiction of prostitution.

the financial relationships between men and women which included intimate relations. Mid-seventeenth-century Dutch genre paintings of the exchange of sex and money invited viewers to engage with the activities depicted and evaluate their own behavior in relation to the images. The subject matter of many of the paintings -- the exchange of intimate relations for money -- allowed contemporary concerns about the proper relationship between men and women to be considered implicitly through comparison with the depicted baser behavior. Such genre paintings participated in the social dialogue of the day, and reminded viewers to contemplate, if not exercise, caution in their choice of drinking and romantic partners.

Figure 4-5: Gerard ter Borch, *The Paternal Admonition*, c. 1655, canvas, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Simultaneously, and similarly to the paintings discussed in previous chapters, an important shift in the age, gender, and class roles depicted also occurred. The subjects of mid-seventeenth-century Dutch genre paintings appeared as young upper-middle-class urban burghers -- only their actions revealing their questionable identity and morals. This shift in the subjects depicted both allowed the contemporary viewer a more immediate connection to the subjects portrayed, and called into question the ease with which one could establish the identity and trustworthiness of others in an urban environment that allowed unprecedented social mobility.

For contemporary viewers, sexual relationships were simultaneously economic relationships, whether illicit or legitimate. Seventeenth-century painters exploited this tension to create engaging images that allowed the viewer to explore the full range of economic and intimate relationships between individuals of the opposite sex. In this manner, the paintings both playfully suggest illicit behavior and entertain issues of licit sexual relations, identity, class, and the choice of a marriage partner.

While the activities depicted in mid-seventeenth-century Dutch genre paintings of "the purchase of illicit love" may seem easily decipherable to the modern viewer, there are nuances of behavior and practices that may not be readily apparent. The scenes may occur in public settings with multiple figures, or private settings with only a single man and woman present. Scenes may portray an open exchange of money, a referenced request for money, or a much less specific suggestion of either monetary or gift exchange (euphemistic of financial support or

commitment). Images also vary in their portrayal of blatantly illicit sexual behavior, ambiguous, questionable behavior, or behavior that can be construed as licit. Paintings of the "purchase of illicit love" range along this multi-dimensional continuum, allowing the images to suggest multivalent meanings.

As the rapidly changing economy rendered class permeable, and the observable world was not always a reliable guide to the identity of individuals, the resultant difficulties could be signified through gendered economic relationships. Through a combination of elements from the previous pictorial traditions, interwoven with elements from the depiction of licit relations, mid-seventeenth-century Dutch painters created images that addressed the potential concerns of the contemporary audience regarding the intimate relationship between men and women.

A Visual Vocabulary: Painted Depictions of Illicit Relations

In Gerard Ter Borch's *Soldier Offering a Young Woman Coins*, a man extends his hand, palm up, filled with coins, subject to the scrutiny of the woman seated next to him, who seems to evaluate the worth of his offering (figure 4-1). By extension, she also measures both her worth and his against the hard metal circles of the proffered coins. The woman pauses, an empty glass in one hand and decanter in the other. Her interrupted activity, filling a glass, and his offer, a handful of coins, occur in a domestic setting complete with a curtained bed in the background. The elements that are both present and implied in this tableau -- the consumption of alcohol, amorous activity, and the exchange of money -- draw upon the sixteenth-century pictorial traditions of images of ill-matched lovers and of the Prodigal Son. However,

mid-seventeenth-century images of monetary exchange between the sexes also differ strikingly from their sixteenth-century precedents. Through the adaptation and transformation of these two earlier traditional pictorial themes to reflect the changing realities of and attitudes about relations between the genders, seventeenth-century Dutch artists reveal a society with complex views of love, sex, economics, and morality.

The following discussion begins with the pictorial vocabulary for the depiction of illicit exchanges found in sixteenth-century depictions of ill-matched lovers and the parable of the Prodigal Son. This tradition was then taken up and reshaped by early seventeenth-century Dutch genre painters, who sometimes remained mostly faithful to the tradition, but often recast the scene through changes in age, location and narrative context. These changes reframed the discussion of illicit relations, allowing the images to be less stridently didactic about the evils of lust and greed. Rather, they began to focus on the individual moral and economic choices inherent in the depicted interactions between the genders.

Mid-seventeenth-century Dutch genre painters then diversified the range of topics and broadened the pictorial dialogue. Selected elements -- overt expressions of lust, blatant offers of money, clear references to taverns or brothels -- become obscured, even replaced, forcing the viewer to evaluate the depicted interaction based on cues which vary from subtle to obvious. This requirement of observant and careful judgment by the viewer highlights and echoes the contemporaneous difficulty

inherent in judging the character and intentions of potential sexual partners in a rapidly changing society where class distinctions are mutable.

The Relationship to Sixteenth-Century Precedents

Quentin Metsys' *Ill-Matched Lovers* of the 1520s characterizes the sixteenth-century pictorial tradition of the portrayal of an ill-matched couple; an unattractive elderly man, overcome by base lust, fondles an enticing young woman (figure 4-6).[301] She, in turn, takes advantage of his lecherous weakness, as she relieves him of his entire purse, handing his wealth to the fool behind her. This young woman is wise in the ways of the world while the elderly client serves as the dupe, deceived by her physical beauty and his own bodily depravity. He either remains oblivious to the lifting of his purse or, his economic sense overcome by lust, he parts with it willingly. The *Ill-Matched Lovers* are driven by base desires and the outcome of their interaction is a foregone conclusion.

A similar interaction between another couple of disparate ages, described in equally graphic terms, appears in Lucas Cranach's *Ill-Matched Couple* (1531, figure 4-7). Again, an elderly man embraces a young woman dressed in scarlet. Her hand reaches into his purse, as she openly fondles (and evaluates) the contents. The physical location of his purse provides a proxy for his genitals, rendering the exchange of sexual favors for money visually explicit. In this context, it appears that

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[301] The man's large nose not only contributes to his unattractive appearance, but also would have had sexual connotations during the period. See Alison Stewart, "Large Noses and Changing Meanings in Sixteenth-Century German Prints," *Print Quarterly* 12:4 (December 1995), 342-360, on the association between large noses and a sensual nature.

the measure of this man is the size of his purse. Cranach's composition leaves the viewer without doubt of the depravity of the couple depicted.

Figure 4-6: Quentin Metsys, *Ill-Matched Lovers*, c. 1520-25, panel, National Gallery of Art, Washington D.C.

Figure 4-7: Lucas Cranach the Elder, *Ill-Matched Couple*, 1531 tempera on wood, Akademie der bildenden Künste, Vienna.

The vivid depiction of a blatant exchange of illicit relations for money continued into the early seventeenth century. In Hendrick Goltzius' *Unequal Lovers*, the young woman again grasps the purse offered to her by the elderly man, placing emphasis on the carnal nature of the exchange depicted (1615, figure 4-8). The wrinkled, unattractive old man embraces the young woman, as he literally hands over his purse to her grasp. As in the sixteenth-century images, the artist depicted a foregone conclusion; artist and viewer are complicit in the assumption that the young woman's lust for money equals the old man's sexual lust. He will give up his wealth readily, and she, in turn, will provide him with illicit attentions.

Figure 4-8: Hendrick Goltzius, *Unequal Lovers*, 1615, canvas, private collection.

However, in some seventeenth-century images, changes in the portrayal of male and female roles render this assumption less certain. Jacob Goltzius' print after

another composition by Hendrick Goltzius takes a small step in this direction, as the young woman seemingly pushes away the old man who pursues her (figure 4-9). However, as she has folded her shears and smiles knowingly, the viewer does not doubt that she will soon fondle the man’s money that he now caresses, and which is provocatively placed at his genitals.

Figure 4-9: Jacob Goltzius after Hendrick Goltzius, *Young Woman Resisting the Caresses of an Old Man*, engraving, Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Figure 4-10: Jan Steen, *Man with Viol*, 1670-1700, panel, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

While the blatant mismatched exchange of illicit attention for money continues in mid-seventeenth-century Netherlandish images like Jan Steen’s *Man with a Viol* (1670-1700, figure 4-10) where again a young woman reaches into the purse of an inebriated older man, many other mid-century images favor the depiction

of a younger clientele, more in accord with a second sixteenth-century tradition -- that of the depiction of the Prodigal Son. Steen's image also demonstrates this widening breadth of images possible, as the scene expands the topic of the elderly man relieved of his coin by the alluring young woman to include multiple figures and music making, rather than only addressing the direct exchange of money for illicit relations.

Sixteenth-century images such as Jan van Hemessen's *Parable of the Prodigal Son* focus primarily on the debauchery of the Prodigal Son in the brothel, consuming his inheritance with the purchase of wine and women (1536, figure 4-11).[302] While other components of the story appear in smaller background vignettes, reinforcing the admonitory nature of the tale, the focus of van Hemessen's composition is the scene of drinking and erotic foreplay that occurs in the foreground. The exchange of money in the scene is obvious, as the young woman in the center passes off the coin paid by the amorous bearded man to a second young woman. An elderly procuress smiles approvingly, and a similar interaction occurs behind the table, as another man eyes the coins in his hand under the watchful gaze of another young prostitute.

[302] In early modern Europe the consumption of alcohol was associated with amorous activities, both licit and illicit. For an overview of the views of alcohol consumption across gender, class, and geographic lines during the period, see A. Lynn Martin, *Alcohol, Sex, and Gender in Late Medieval and Early Modern Europe* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 2001). On the relationship of alcohol to both licit and illicit sexual activity, see Martin, 1, 52-53, 69, 81-82, 86, and 91. On the danger that alcohol consumption posed to young men, specifically as regards encouraging promiscuity, see Benjamin Roberts, "On Not Becoming Delinquent: Raising Adolescent Boys in the Dutch Republic, 1600-1750," in Pamela Cox and Heather Shore, ed., *Becoming Delinquent: British and European Youth, 1650-1950* (Dartmouth: Ashgate, 2002), 48.

Figure 4-11: Jan van Hemessen, *Parable of the Prodigal Son*, 1536, panel, Brussels, Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts.

Van Hemessen's image focuses on the foreground scene of excess, but also includes the resultant loss of wealth and subsequent time in the sty in the background to emphasize the admonitory nature of the biblical narrative depicted. In contrast, early seventeenth-century artists chose to focus exclusively on the episode in the brothel. Gerrit van Honthorst's painting of *The Prodigal Son* (1623, figure 4-12) depicts lusty, wine-fed merrymaking. The prostitutes and procuress smile knowingly while the young, gaudily dressed man peers into his empty jug that he has just drained of its contents. The motifs echo the foreground scene in van Hemessen's painting, including the cheerful prostitutes under the attentive eye of the procuress and even the client's drunken gaze into the empty wine jug.

Figure 4-12: Gerrit van Honthorst, *The Prodigal Son*, 1623, canvas, Staatsgalerie, Schleissheim.

Dirck van Baburen's *The Procuress* utilizes both traditions of the Prodigal Son in the brothel and the ill-matched lovers by combining a scene of merry making and a reduced composition that focuses on the woman as a commodity with a price (1622, figure 4-13). The painting borrows its reduced composition from images of ill-matched lovers, further emphasizing the lustful nature of the exchange depicted. However, in contrast to the money-hungry women in Metsys or Cranach's ill-matched couples (figures 4-6, 7), the woman enthusiastically acquiesces to the young man's advances, causing the elderly procuress to remind her to take the coin proffered as payment in exchange for her attentions. While this man exercises some measure of restraint in his actions, as he embraces the young woman loosely and offers a single

coin rather than his entire purse, the young woman makes up for any reduction of lust on his part through her tightly bound, bulging bosom and intent, ruddy-faced gaze.

Figure 4-13: Dirck van Baburen, *The Procuress*, 1622, canvas, Museum on Fine Arts, Boston.

Some mid-seventeenth-century images continue, with little alteration, this tradition of a blatant exchange of coin for sexual favors, as in Johannes Vermeer's painting *The Procuress* (1656, figure 4-14).[303] As the madam oversees the transaction, Vermeer's image conveys the man's intentions explicitly, as his left hand cups the breast of the young woman, while her expectation of payment, indicated by

[303] While there is no specific pictorial reference in Vermeer's painting to the biblical story of the Prodigal Son, because of its continuation of elements of the pictorial tradition, contemporary viewers still could have made the connection to the story. See Leonard J. Slatkes, "Utrecht and Delft: Vermeer and Caravaggism," in *Vermeer Studies*, Ivan Gaskell and Michiel Jonker ed. (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1998), 86.

her outstretched hand, is answered by his proffered coin. However, other seventeenth-century Dutch painters expanded the pictorial vocabulary of images of “the purchase of illicit love” to include scenes where the outcome was not clearly decided.

Figure 4-14: Johannes Vermeer, *The Procuress*, 1656, canvas, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Gemaldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden.

The sixteenth- and seventeenth-century paintings discussed thus far have a central commonality – they portray lust-driven men and lust- or greed-driven women who partake in clearly licentious behavior. In the course of the seventeenth century, however, Netherlandish genre painters revised and diversified subject matter in a manner whose results range from clearly illicit behavior (similar to the sixteenth-century images) to clearly licit behavior (scenes of courtship and marriage), as well as

the intersection of the two spheres. In the latter, identities and intentions overlap, and reveal the array of possible behavior judged by society as honorable or dishonorable.

Diversification of Depiction in Early Seventeenth-Century Paintings of Propositions

Judith Leyster's *The Proposition* has garnered much attention as a painting by a woman artist; however, it is perhaps most innovative in the manner in which it portrays the economics of intimate relations between men and women (1631, figure 4-15).[304] In *The Proposition*, Leyster transforms the traditional depiction of the purchase of illicit love into a contemporary domestic scene. Leyster breaks from the tradition of ill-matched lovers and depictions of the Prodigal Son, replacing the clear narrative of the purchase of willing illicit affections with a more ambiguous image that focuses on the woman's evaluation of her worth. Leyster creates a depiction of an illicit proposition that also draws parallels with contemporary images of licit courting activities to highlight the paradoxical similarities between licit and illicit intimate relations.

Leyster depicts a darkened interior, illuminated by the yellow light of an open flame. A woman concentrates on her stitching, rather than attend to the man who leans over her shoulder, his handful of coins strategically positioned in the light of the lamp, his left hand upon her shoulder. Rather than depict a buxom prostitute rosy-cheeked from wine, Leyster has portrayed a young working woman, busy with her

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[304] See, for example, Frima Fox Hofrichter, *Judith Leyster: A Woman Painter in Holland's Golden Age* (Doornspijk: Davaco, 1989), catalogue 16; and James Welu, and Pieter Biesboer, eds., *Judith Leyster, A Dutch Master and Her World* (Worcester: Worcester Art Museum, 1993), catalogue 8.

sewing. Whether she will turn from her diligent activity to the temptation presented to her by the handful of coins thrust into the lamplight is left to the interpretation of the viewer.

Figure 4-15: Judith Leyster, *The Proposition*, 1631, panel, Mauritshuis, The Hague.

The Proposition also presents a contemporary story of the tenuous economic situation of single women, rather than a foregone conclusion about the acquiescence of the woman to the man's proposition. Single women during the period were at an economic disadvantage, as their employment options were limited, and often restricted to low wages.[305] Consequently, some women supplemented the meager wages earned in the textile industry with occasional prostitution -- providing a

[305] On the difficulty for seventeenth-century women to secure sufficient income and status outside of marriage, see van de Pol, "The Lure of the Big City," 78. Regarding the low wages women earned in the textile industries, see Peter Earle, "The Female Labour Market in London in the Late Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries," *The Economic History Review* 42:3 (August 1989), 342.

plausible storyline for the scene that occurs in Leyster's painting, and leaving the viewer to wonder if this diligent working woman will be tempted by the illicit offer made by the man.[306]

In addition to the thinly veiled reference to the contemporary economic reality of women's labors, Leyster's innovative painting draws upon a parallel tradition of the depiction of licit proposals.[307] Leyster's composition visually parallels contemporary images of licit courting activities, specifically the presentation of a *trouwpenning*, or traditional courting gift. Thus, Leyster draws attention to the peculiar similarities of licit and illicit relations.

In *A Man Offering a Woman Money* (1630's, figure 4-16), Jacob van Velsen depicts a seated woman in a domestic interior, who looks earnestly at the man who stands before her, which suggests a licit negotiation. He grasps her hand with his right hand, beneath his extended left hand, which holds a single large coin. The restrained demeanor of both figures and their clasped hands suggest the depiction of a marriage proposal. Van Velsen's composition is highly similar to that depicted in a print of the *trouwpenning*, or traditional courting gift, by Salomon Saverij (figure 4-17).[308]

The compositions of Saverij's print and van Velsen's painting share commonalities of setting (the corner of a room, before a table, with a map on the wall above the female figure), attire (his broad brimmed hat topped with a feather,

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[306] On the frequency of women who were arrested for prostitution also being employed, especially in the textile and clothing industries, see Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her,* 323-332. Hufton, 314, also specifically addresses how Leyster's image directly relates to the contemporary situation for some women who turned to prostitution to supplement their incomes.
[307] The similarity of Leyster's painting to a print by Salomon Saverij of the presentation of a *trouwpenning,* or traditional courting gift, is pointed out in Welu and Biesboer, *Judith Leyster,* 171.
[308] On the *trouwpenning* as a traditional courting gift, see ibid.

elaborate attire complete with a bow in the back, her white collar and apron), gestures (the restrained hand clasp, and tilted, interlocked gazes) and the offer of a large single coin. Thus, in contrast to the illicit offer (characterized by a handful of coins) portrayed by Leyster, van Velsen and Saverij's images depict a contemporary courting ritual, where the man presents a ceremonial gift to the woman whom he is courting.[309]

Figure 4-16: Jacob van Velsen, *A Man Offering a Woman Money*, 1630s, wood, current location unknown.

Figure 4-17: Salomon Saverij after Pieter Quast, *Trouwpenning*, etching, Rijksprentenkabinet, Rijksmusuem, Amsterdam.

While some of the elements within Leyster's painting are similar to those in both van Velsen and Saverij's depictions (standing male figure with coins in one hand, seated female figure in an interior), distinct story lines are implied by the specifics of the interactions: a hand clasp versus a hand on a shoulder, one woman's attentiveness versus the other's inattentiveness, and the direct address of one man

[309] Ibid.

versus an approach from the back of the other. The viewer interprets the action in van Velsen's painting as likely licit, while in Leyster's image the proposition being made is more likely illicit. Leyster's composition generates, therefore, a sense of mystery, sexual tension and unclear identities, which create for the viewer a heightened sense of titillation regarding the outcome of the depicted exchange. The discussion that follows examines how mid-seventeenth-century Dutch painters continued to exploit a diversity of storylines, many of which capture this tension, albeit without Leyster's particular sensitivity to the economic plight of the working woman.

Mid-seventeenth-century Dutch genre painters produced a wide variety of images that embody aspects of the pictorial traditions of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, while they simultaneously expand the range of subjects surrounding the exchange of money between men and women. As in Leyster's *The Proposition*, many mid-seventeenth-century Dutch genre paintings leave elements of the interaction ambiguous and unresolved. Thus, images of "paying the hostess" (men settling their bill at a tavern or inn), images of prostitution (men offering a coin or coins to a female figure in an interior setting), and related subjects that less explicitly reference financial compensation for affections address contemporary concerns with regard to the ambiguity of social and economic relationships.

An Array of Mid-Century Depictions

Mid-seventeenth-century genre scenes of monetary exchange and negotiation between men and women vary in their settings, narrative, specific pictorial elements, and the behavior of the figures depicted. The following exploration of this branching

web of depictions of gendered exchanges reveals that they vary not only in their content – some appear more to depict licit activities, others more illicit – but also in their relative level of ambiguity, that is the degree to which the final interpretation is left undetermined. Both singularly and in concert, this varying continuum of depicted storylines provides insight into how the contemporary society framed concerns about judging identity and intent through appearance. As in the previous discussions of weighing coins, bargaining for produce, or evaluating the worthiness of poor supplicants, the viewer is asked to read the paintings on the basis of the depicted location and the figures' behavior in addition to their appearance. The images demonstrate the difficulty of making judgments of moral/immoral behavior based solely on appearances by leaving to the viewer the judgment as to whether the scene depicts proper behavior or not.

Images such as Ludolf de Jongh's *A Soldier Paying the Hostess* look back to depictions of the Prodigal Son in their setting (a tavern/inn), yet contrast starkly with the sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century depictions just examined by focusing on what may be a legitimate transaction (c. 1650-55, figure 4-18). De Jongh's painting is at the fairly innocuous end of the spectrum, as a portrayal of the request of a woman for payment from a soldier related to a presumed stay at an inn. The male figure prepares to depart from an inn with his entourage. Confronted by a woman who gestures, palms open, he reaches into his pockets, seemingly for payment. A figure smokes in the foreground, and looks out at the viewer, hand to his nose, indicating

that someone is quite possibly being duped.[310] Has the man, like the Prodigal Son, squandered more than he can pay?

Figure 4-18: Ludolf de Jongh, *A Soldier Paying the Hostess*, panel, c. 1650-55, private collection.

Pieter de Hooch's *A Soldier Paying the Hostess* depicts a similar scene, set in an interior space that also raises the possibility of illicit activity, but also allows for a licit interpretation (1658, figure 4-4).[311] A woman confronts the male figure as he prepares to depart. She holds out her right hand, as she ticks off the expenses the man owes; her left hand underneath awaits payment. The man reaches into his pocket, as

[310] The connotation of this gesture is pointed out by Michiel Kersten in "Pieter de Hooch and Delft Genre Painting 1650-1675," in *Delft Masters: Vermeer's Contemporaries*, Michiel C. C. Kersten and Danielle H.A.C. Lokin ed. (Zwolle: Waanders Publishers, 1996), 168.

[311] The similarity of de Hooch's composition to de Johngh's has been pointed out previously. See, for example, Kersten, 167. See also Liedtke, Plomp, and Ruger, *Vermeer and the Delft School*, catalogue number 32; and also R. E. Fleischer, "Ludolf de Jongh and the Early Work of Pieter de Hooch," *Oud Holland* 92 (1978), 49-67, on the similarity of de Jongh and de Hooch's images.

he searches for a few more coins with which to pay his bill. The smoking men at the table beyond the curtained partition pay no attention, instead focusing on the young female attendant. While the setting of de Hooch's painting suggests a tavern or lodging establishment, it is unclear whether she asks the man to pay for food and lodging, or more entertaining expenditures. The male figure, however, does appear surprised in the bright morning light at the total cost of his previous evening's purchases, allowing for the possibility of an illicit interpretation.

De Hooch treated the subject of payment at an inn once again in his painting from the mid 1670s titled *Paying the Hostess* (figure 4-19). The stabled horse and table visible behind the elegantly attired man convey that the scene occurs at an inn. The young woman appears to tick off a list of expenses with one hand, as she holds out the other for payment. The man looks at her a bit dubiously, as he reaches for his purse. The composition provides few cues as to whether the transaction between these two figures involves any illicit behavior. By leaving to the viewer the judgment as to whether the scene depicts proper behavior or not, the image illustrates the difficulty of making such judgments based solely on appearances.

In contrast to the relatively innocuous scenes of payment depicted by de Jongh and de Hooch, other images are more clearly illicit in nature, displaying the broad continuum of possible connotations of the depiction of an exchange of money between men and women present in mid-seventeenth-century visual culture. Jan Steen's *Tavern Scene* (c. 1670, figure 4-3) portrays a similar tableau to de Jongh and

Figure 4-19: Pieter de Hooch, *Paying the Hostess*, mid 1670's, canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

de Hooch's images of paying the hostess, but maintains more ties to the sixteenth-century tradition of the Prodigal Son. An increased focus on the gamblers at the table and the presence of the aged procuress provide relatively straightforward cues that the woman asks the gentleman to provide payment for illicit, rather than legitimate, services.

Frans van Mieris' *Inn Scene* broadens the range of depictions even further, moving towards more clearly illicit behavior (1658, figure 4-20). Van Mieris transforms the motif of payment at the door into a disguised background detail rather than the focus of the scene, as the body of the woman requesting payment visually blocks the view of the interaction. The composition focuses instead on the teasing manner of the man in the foreground, as he challenges the young woman to fill the glass he holds carefully positioned, forcing her to bend forward and providing him

with a clear view of the cleavage spilling out of her bodice. Van Mieris included a cabinet bed spilling its linens, and, perhaps more notably, a pair of copulating hounds, providing clues to the viewer that while the figures here may not behave in as blatant a manner as the lusty old men and greedy young women depicted in sixteenth-century scenes of ill-matched lovers, the activity here still may be less than sanctioned.

Figure 4-20: Frans van Mieris, *Inn Scene*, 1658, panel, Mauritshuis, The Hague.

Similarly, Jacob Ochtervelt's *Musical Company in an Interior* relies upon the narrative details of the depicted setting and the subtle gesture of the female figure in a background doorway to provide clues to the viewer that these seemingly upper-class urban merry makers may not be as proper as they seem (c. 1670, figure 4-21). Only the upturned palm of the woman in the doorway provides any pictorial evidence of a

possible request for money within Ochtervelt's seemingly licit scene of music making. However, as has been shown through comparison to a 1631 print image of a brothel (figure 4-22), the row of portraits present high on the wall behind these figures would have allowed the contemporary viewer to easily identify the location of this merry-making scene as a *musico*, or brothel.[312] Ochtervelt's painting encourages the viewer to look beyond the initial appearance of the figures depicted in order to evaluate the true intent and import of their actions.

Figure 4-21: Jacob Ochtervelt, *Musical Company in an Interior*, c. 1670, canvas, The Cleveland Museum on Art, Cleveland.

312 See Wayne Franits, "'For People of Fashion'," 301.

Figure 4-22: Frontispiece from Crispijn de Passé the younger, *Miroir des plus belles courtisans de ce temps*, Amsterdam, 1631, The Hague, Koninklijke Biblioteek.

Johannes Vermeer's c. 1658-60 *Officer and Laughing Girl* also provides tension between a seemingly innocuous scene, and the titillation of the woman's palm-up gesture and direct gaze at the man with whom she drinks (figure 4-23). The resulting ambiguity allows the viewer to contemplate, even if a definitive resolution is not possible, whether the painting portrays an honorable woman being courted by this gallant figure in his broad hat with his elbow akimbo, or if this is a scene of prostitution, replete with a request from the young woman for remuneration for anticipated illicit activities. The interior depicted provides no clear clue of whether the scene actually occurs in a brothel or in an upper-middle-class home, as only a map upon the wall behind the woman decorates the space.[313] Instead, this painting provides the viewer with an opportunity to contemplate what is not depicted as much as what is depicted, and to consider the intersection of licit and illicit activities.

[313] The map has been identified as one of Holland and West Friesland by Balthasar Florisz. Van Berckenrode, published in 1620 by Willem Jansz. Blaeu. See Wheelock, *Vermeer and the Art of Painting*, 55.

Figure 4-23: Johannes Vermeer, *Officer and Laughing Girl*, c. 1658-60, canvas, The Frick Collection, New York.

In such paintings, the suggested conflation of possible prostitutes with female figures who might also be construed as honorable single young women reflects, in some measure, the social reality of the time. Where in previous times, towns in Europe had set regulations on the dress of prostitutes and the location of brothels, which rendered them easier to identify, in the seventeenth-century Netherlands, the profession came to be dominated by poor single women.[314] These women worked out

[314] Regarding brothels and prostitutes in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, see Renée Pigeaud, "Woman as Temptress: Urban Morality in the 15th Century," in *Saints and She-Devils: Images of Women in the 15th and 16th Centuries* (London: Rubicon Press, 1987), 41. On the social identity of prostitutes in the seventeenth century, see Wayne Franits, *Dutch Seventeenth-Century Genre Painting:*

of a variety of locations, including many small-scale brothels, which made it more difficult to readily distinguish prostitutes.[315]

Thus, judgments of identity based solely on appearance could be deceptive. This interpretive conflict is even apparent in the few mid-seventeenth century images that do depict a blatant offer of coin. Gerard ter Borch's c. 1662-63 *Soldier Offering a Young Woman Coins*, like Vermeer's *Officer and Laughing Girl*, depicts a stylish longhaired soldier in the company of an elegantly attired young woman in what could be a private upper-middle-class home (figures 4-1 and 4-23). However, in contrast to Vermeer's woman, rather than ask for payment, ter Borch's woman is surprised by the man's offer of a handful of coins as she prepares to refill her glass, registering neither acceptance nor rejection of the offer.

Vermeer's and ter Borch's scenes share an important characteristic with Leyster's *The Proposition* (figure 4-15): the tension of an unresolved negotiation. Will the man and woman depicted in each painting agree on a price? Will the man's offer be sufficient for the young woman in each scene to accept? As has been pointed out by Elizabeth Honig, the woman in ter Borch's painting has been, "caught in paint at the moment when a handful of coins transfixes her gaze… counting, reckoning the costs and benefits of forsaking her domestic virtue."[316] Ter Borch has captured a moment of intense valuation. The woman evaluates not only the worth of the metal coins held out for her inspection, but also the man who presents the coins. She

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Its Stylistic and Thematic Evolution (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 68. See also van Oostveen, 58.

[315] On the widespread and inconspicuous nature of prostitution during the period, see Israel, *The Dutch Republic,* 680-683; and Franits, *Dutch Seventeenth-Century Genre Painting*, 69.

[316] Honig, "Counting Out Their Money," 54.

simultaneously assesses the monetary worth of her own morality. The viewer is left to explore the range of possible narratives, as the young woman's face indicates awareness of the offer made, but her decision in response is not clear.

The viewer is similarly left to decide the import of the extended left hand of the young woman in Jacob Ochtervelt's *The Offer* (c. 1671-73, figure 4-2). As the attractive young woman presents a drink to the casually seated man, he offers her a handful of coins. His gesture and meaningful glance both convey his desire to purchase more than a drink from the satin-attired young woman who stands before him; like the fellow in van Mieris' inn scene, it seems that he also views this server of drink as an illicit object.[317] On the other hand, the young woman's gesture in return leaves to the viewer the narrative decision as to whether her left hand extends open in surprise or in anticipation of the receipt of the proffered coins. Neither ter Borch nor Ochtervelt provide the viewer with a definitive conclusion as to whether the young women depicted are honorable ladies mistaken for prostitutes by the men depicted – or if they are indeed prostitutes, bargaining the price for their illicit services.

However, not all similar Netherlandish genre paintings from the middle of the seventeenth century focus on either a clear offer or a subtle request for monetary remuneration in exchange for affections. In some images, an implication of negotiation, and the exchange of economic support in return for affections are conveyed through references to the traditional exchange of courting gifts or other

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[317] Women who served alcohol in drinking establishments were often viewed as morally suspect. See Ruth Mazo Karras, "Women's Labors: Reproduction and Sex Work in Medieval Europe," *Journal of Women's History* 15:4 (Winter 2004), 153.

forms of financial support. Negotiation, as an integral component of both the licit courting process and the illicit exchange of sex for monetary remuneration is implied through a variety of visual means within mid-seventeenth century genre paintings. References to negotiation range from the inclusion of rhetorical gestures to the intricacies of introduction and intimate conversation, and from tender, longing gazes to gestures replete with sexual innuendo.

Why might seventeenth-century Dutch genre painters have chosen to portray images of socially acceptable courting and of prostitution in similar ways? The answer may be found in an alteration that had occurred during the seventeenth century in how marriage was regarded. While procreation was still one object of marriage, love and companionship were also expected.[318] This further heightened the importance of the choice of a marriage partner. Now, not only should the couple belong to the same social and economic class, religion, and age group, but they should also be romantically compatible.[319] This contemporary change in the social view of marriage freed sexual relations within marriage from a sole focus on procreation, to allow love and pleasure to be considered, and images of courtship and marriage reflect this change.

The conflation of images of courtship and prostitution found in mid-century images reflects the consequent contemporary concern regarding the selection of a

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[318] Manon van der Heijden, "Secular and Ecclesiastical Marriage Control: Rotterdam, 1550-1700," in *Private Domain, Public Inquiry: Families and Life-Styles in the Netherlands and Europe, 1550 to the Present*, Anton Schuurman and Pieter Spierenburg ed. (Hilversum: Verloren, 1996), 42.
[319] On the importance of class, age, and religion in marriages, see, for example, Kettering, "Ter Borch's Ladies in Satin," 104. On the importance of love within the relationship, see Ruth Mazo Karras, "Women's Labors: Reproduction and Sex Work in Medieval Europe," *Journal of Women's History* 15:4 (Winter 2004), 156.

marriage partner who was compatible, and the need for careful negotiation as part of this process. As previously noted, Gerard ter Borch's so-called *Paternal Admonition*, in both versions (figures 4-5 and 4-24) portrays two women and a man in an interior with a prominently placed curtained bed. The man's elevated gesture with his right hand, and women's slightly bowed heads, serve to suggest, at a minimum, intent conversation, and intimate some sort of negotiation, whether licit or illicit.

Figure 4-24: Gerard ter Borch, *Paternal Admonition*, c. 1654-55, canvas, Gemaldegalerie, Staatliche Museen Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, no. 791.

The gesture of the male in this painting has been interpreted to have various connotations.[320] While it has been argued that the man holds a coin in his hand, his gesture contrasts with other images examined here previously in which male figures

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[320] See Kettering, "Ter Borch's Ladies in Satin," 96, 107.

clearly offer coin. For example, he does not mimic the open palmed offer of a pile of coins seen in Leyster's *The Proposition* or in ter Borch's *Soldier Offering a Young Woman Coins* (figures 4-15 and 4-1). Neither does he mimic the thumb and forefinger presentation of a coin with the remaining fingers slightly curled below depicted in Vermeer's *The Procuress* or Baburen's painting of the same title (figures 4-14 and 4-13). Nor does the gesture resemble the presentation of the ceremonial *trouwpenning* in the way it is depicted by van Velsen or Saverij (figures 4-16, 4-17). Instead, this gallant male figure presses thumb and forefinger together as the other fingers splay upright.

The man's gesture as depicted by ter Borch, however, does resemble a variation on the gesture of an offer of a courting gift, an act that is representative of the economic support in traditional marriage relations. The kneeling male figure depicted in Caspar Netcher's *Presentation of the Medallion* holds his right hand in a similar gesture (1650's, figure 4-25). At the same time, significant differences exist in the two paintings. The elegantly clad young woman in Netcher's painting sits, her gaze directed at the young man who kneels deferentially before her, as another woman looks on at the young boy who pours a celebratory drink.[321] The man in Netcher's painting holds a medallion, an object presented in an act of courtship, while ter Borch's man does not clearly hold anything in his hand.

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[321] Traditionally, drinking was associated with engagements and marriages, and the sharing of drink and exchanging of gifts was part of the sanctioned courting process. See Martin, *Alcohol, Sex, and Gender,* 52-53, 81.

Figure 4-25: Caspar Netcher, *Presentation of the Medallion*, 1650's, canvas, Museum of Fine Arts, Budapest.

Unlike ter Borch, Netcher renders the import of his scene transparent. The man behaves with great restraint as he presents a gift to the woman whom he courts. In contrast, the man in both versions of ter Borch's painting behaves in a much less modest manner, as he sits while the woman stands, his leg crossed casually and even carelessly across his lap, placing the toe of his boot in contact with the delicate white satin of the young woman's dress. Rather than convey respect, his arrogant gesture assumes dominance.

The similarities -- and ambiguities -- of ter Borch's two highly comparable paintings have caused some to argue that they depict courtship scenes.[322] However,

[322] See, for example, Kettering, "Ter Borch's Ladies in Satin," 95-124, and also Kettering, "Gerard ter Borch and the Modern Manner," in Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., ed., *Gerard ter Borch* (National Gallery of Art, Washington, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 27.

the parallels between ter Borch's composition and images of both prostitution *and* images of licit courting make for an open-ended scenario with unclear identities, which allows the viewer to posit his/her own narrative. Unresolved elements in ter Borch's paintings – the man's gesture that indicates some sort of evaluation or negotiation, the seated woman who hides her smile in her wine glass, the dog that tucks its tail between its legs in the Amsterdam version, and the complete concealment of the standing woman's face – reveal the difficulty of rendering an evaluation of individuals and their behavior based on visual cues.

Comparison with still other images of romantic relations that do not involve exchange demonstrates further how the depictions of intimate encounters could simultaneously evoke both licit and illicit relations. Paintings of courtship, flirtatious behavior, and private conversation vary greatly in their specifics of depiction, and allow the viewer the latitude to interpret the images as foreplay for illicit activities, or lively play with licit courtship. Thus, a few images that do not include money enrich the understanding of the behaviors that might be depicted in contemporary scenes of courtship.

Gerard ter Borch's *The Introduction* (c. 1662) and Quiringh van Brekelenkam's *Gallant Conversation* (c. 1663) both display the ambiguity inherent within some of these mid-century scenes (figures 4-26 and 4-27). The images possess an air of propriety, as the sumptuous fabrics of the women's gowns are matched by elegantly coiffed hair and a delicate manner. The men appear as dashing dandies, with their long

curls and military-inspired garb.[323] Either image could be interpreted as an innocuous scene of introduction or conversation necessary to the expected courting process.[324]

Figure 4-26: Gerard ter Borch, *The Introduction*, c. 1662, canvas, Polesden Lacey, The McEwan Collection, The National Trust.

Figure 4-27: Quiringh van Brekelenkam, *Gallant Conversation*, c. 1663, panel, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Conversely, one could view the music-making party replete with an older woman in the background of *The Introduction* as a scene within a *musico* – or brothel – watched over by a madam. Quiringh van Brekelenkam's *Gallant Conversation* is also ambiguous -- the woman delicately holds a drink in one hand as she speaks, and a simple rotation of her wrist would transform her hand gesture to that of a request for

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[323] Long hair became popular, particularly among young, wealthy men, and was accordingly viewed as vain and frivolous, much like certain types of ostentations attire. See Roberts and Groenendijk, "Moral Panic and Holland's Libertine Youth," 330, and Alison McNeil Kettering, "Gentlemen in Satin: Masculine Ideals in Later Seventeenth-Century Dutch Portraiture," *Art Journal*, 56:2 (Summer 1997), 41.

[324] See Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., ed, *Gerard ter Borch*, 124 for an analysis of *The Introduction* as a courtship scene with admonitory overtones.

payment. Yet her suitor appears to listen intently to her speech, transferring the sensual interest of music making to a more serious interest of companionship.

Images of courtship and companionship also portray, if not an economic negotiation, then a negotiation of affections. Rather than exchange money for intimacy, the men depicted provide tender affection and loving adoration. An interest in companionship becomes a critical part of the depiction of scenes of courting; the man's adoration is depicted as assurance to the woman of his affections and desire to share bed and board and the support of a household.

Jacob van Loo's mid-century depiction of a man courting a woman emphasizes the negotiation of physical attraction between the two individuals depicted not through the graphic terms of lustful behavior, but rather through the compassionate gazes of the two figures as they lean close to one another, without actually touching (c. 1650, figure 4-28). The tenderness of the two figures in van Loo's *Wooing* resembles the gentle manner of Abraham del Court in a marriage portrait by Bartholomeus van der Helst, as he gently cradles the arm of his wife, Maria de Keersegieter, while the married couple lean in towards one another (1654, figure 4-29).

However, van der Helst's painting does differ significantly from the other scenes of courtship in that it portrays two known individuals, and their behavior, while tender, is placed within the traditional context of a garden of love, and rendered

Figure 4-28: Jacob van Loo, *Wooing*, c. 1650, canvas, Mauritshuis, The Hague.

Figure 4-29: Bartholomeus van der Helst, *Abraham del Court and Maria de Keersegieter*, 1654, Museum Boymans-Van Beuningen, Rotterdam.

completely licit by the vows of matrimony. While the attire of the figures indicates the relative wealth of the married couple, there is no direct reference to monetary relations. The loving gaze of this woman's husband reflects her value, not a handful of coins. In this manner, the negotiation for a lasting relationship, rather than a short-term encounter, must be not only economic, but also emotional.

A few other paintings of the period that focus on other forms of "gift" exchange also display the interconnection of economic and intimate interaction between men and women found both in the images of courtship and prostitution. The similarity of some images of illicit relations to representations of symbolic gift-giving in the context of courting demonstrates how the exchange of gifts in a licit relationship parallels the economic exchange in prostitution. This similarity could cause the

acceptance of the traditional courting gifts by a woman from a suitor to be misconstrued as improper behavior.[325] While the exchange of gifts was an important component of courtship, women who accepted gifts risked being seen as venal, or even being seen as prostitutes.[326]

Gabriel Metsu's *The Hunter's Gift* takes a very novel approach to both the economic and sexual relationship between the man and woman by utilizing a metaphor for sexual relations that simultaneously also references the man as a provider for the household (c. 1658-60, figure 4-30).[327] This reminds the viewer that even licit relations maintain a component of economic and intimate exchange also found in illicit relations. Metsu depicts an elegantly attired young woman seated in an interior who tends to her sewing in the company of a small lap dog. A hunter, just returned from the hunt, his gun and a goose placed upon the floor, his hat doffed, presents a partridge to the reluctant seated woman. While the hunter's gesture abounds with contemporary innuendo about intimate sexual relations, he also literally offers her the product of a hunt -- a fowl for the dinner table -- displaying his ability as a provider. This reference demonstrates again the similarity of outward signs of licit and illicit relations. A necessary and expected part of the courting process would be an evaluation of the economic standing of a potential partner, as the two prepare to set

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[325] Karras, "Sex and the Singlewoman," 135. This confusion was even cited in court cases. Marshall discusses the example of a woman (Geertruyt) whom had exchanged gifts with her lover (Elbert), according to the woman, with matrimonial intent.
[326] Karras, "Sex and the Singlewoman," 134-35.
[327] Another similar painting by Metsu of a hunter presenting a fowl to a woman hangs in the Uffizi gallery.

up a shared household. Similarly, the prostitute evaluates the offer made to her by her client, determining if it is sufficient to support her in exchange for services.

Figure 4-30: Gabriel Metsu, *The Hunter's Gift*, c. 1658-60, canvas, The City of Amsterdam, on loan to the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam.

Another type of contemporary genre scene also emphasizes the dependence of the depicted woman on male support. The vulnerable young beauty in Frans van Mieris' painting *The Cloth Shop* acquiesces to the overtures of a bold client who appears more interested in her than her wares (1660, figure 4-31).[328] While he does not obviously offer her any money, his act of touching the young woman's chin harkens back to the physically aggressive elderly men in sixteenth-century images of unequal lovers (figures 4-6, 4-7). This client seems to exploit the dependence of the elderly shopkeeper on his business, as he examines more than the offered wares.

[328] On the innuendo within van Mieris' image, see Franits, *Dutch Seventeenth-Century Genre Painting*, 111.

Figure 4-31: Frans van Mieris, *The Cloth Shop*, 1660, panel, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

Additionally, van Mieris' image again reiterates the need to evaluate carefully the identity of individuals in order to avoid deception. His elegant male figure epitomizes the masculine yet stylish dandy, as he wears an ostentatious, expensive outfit with not just one feather on his hat, but a whole fringe of them, an elegant jacket and sash, ruffled cuffs, long curly hair, and large boots.[329] His appearance and actions lead the viewer to wonder if he is a womanizer -- or *lichtmissen* -- who not only takes pleasure in fine fabrics, but also in women. Such men, in the literature of the times, purportedly exercised deception, even promised marriage (without the intention of actually marrying) in order to have sex with the woman.[330] Contemporary

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[329] See Roberts and Groenendijk, "Moral Panic and Holland's Libertine Youth," 330, and Kettering, "Gentlemen in Satin," 41.

[330] Martin, *Alcohol, Sex, and Gender,* 86 discuses the ploy of promising marriage in order to have sex.

rhetoric argued that a woman, either inexperienced or under the influence of drink, would be more easily swayed, and subject to misjudgment of a man's intentions.[331] These "womanizers" were reputed to tempt young maidens, married women, and even prostitutes with falsehoods.[332] Such behavior was seen as a threat to the order of contemporary society.

Beneath the Surface: A Metaphor for Licit Relations and Urban Identity

For the early modern society, relations between the sexes carried social importance, as marriage was the primary foundation of community.[333] However, the contemporary social factors meant that both lived and depicted relations between the genders possessed plentiful opportunities for confusion and misrepresentation to occur. While most intimate relations occurred within sanctioned relationships, the contemporary concern over the potential for illicit activity found its way into the mid-seventeenth-century scenes of daily life examined here.

Young people were urged to find a marriage partner whose wealth, status, age, and temperament matched.[334] However, as in other early modern European countries, the Netherlands experienced a surplus of women and cities had high concentrations of single young people.[335] Premarital sex was both known and frequent.[336] Accusations

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[331] Ibid., 134.
[332] Benjamin Roberts, "On Not Becoming Delinquent," 51.
[333] Erin Griffey, "Pro-Creativity: Art, Love and Conjugal Virtue in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Artists' Self-Portraits," *Dutch Crossing* 28 (2004), 29.
[334] Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her,* 65.
[335] Van de Pol, "The Lure of the Big City," 78. See also Roberts and Groenendijk, "Moral Panic," 328. During the period, men from their teens through their twenties, and women from twelve to twenty-five

of sexual activity could be leveled against unmarried couples that drank together, and independent single women were often conflated with prostitutes.[337] Immigrant women in particular, who married two to four years later than their local counterparts, risked being identified as prostitutes.[338]

Changes in the legal and social parameters of the operation of brothels rendered the conflation of sexually active single women with prostitutes more possible. Brothels sought to be less conspicuous in their operation due to increasing public pressures.[339] This resulted in the toleration of widely dispersed brothels throughout Dutch cities, as long as they operated without overt disturbance to the local neighborhoods.[340] While measures did exist that gave wives the ability to charge their husbands if they visited prostitutes, in reality prostitution was widespread, and quietly accepted.[341]

Mid-seventeenth-century Dutch genre paintings reflect a selected portion of the social complexity that existed within intimate relationships during the period.

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were considered young adults; see Roberts and Groenendijk, "'Wearing out a pair of fool's shoes'," 139.

[336] Roberts and Groenendijk, "'Wearing out a pair of fool's shoes'," 145.

[337] B. Ann Tlusty, "Drinking, Family Relations, and Authority in Early Modern Germany," *Journal of Family History* 29:3 (July 2004), 266; and Karras, "Sex and the Singlewoman," 130, discusses how the conflation both slandered women and denied the possibility of "independent, noncommercial sexual activity on the part of singlewomen," restricting the social possibilities for women's sexual activities to those of the virtuous housewife and venal prostitute. Karras argues that this conflation has limited our knowledge of single women's sexual activities.

[338] Maryanne Kowaleski, "Singlewomen in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: The Demographic Perspective," in *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800,* Judith M. Bennet and Amy M. Froide ed. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990), 58.

[339] See Franits, *Dutch Seventeenth-Century Genre Painting*, 69.

[340] Israel, *The Dutch Republic,* 683.

[341] Israel, *The Dutch Republic,* 682, and Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her,* 315, address the legal redress of wives against husbands accused of "fornication." It is also noteworthy that even the *stadhouders* of the Netherlands frequented brothels; see Roberts and Groenendijk, "Moral Panic," 338-340.

Paintings of il/licit relations purport to depict one of the most complex aspects of private life -- that of intimate relationships between men and women, which include some form of exchange. These relationships between men and women occurred within an increasingly urbanized society where social identity was both complex (determined by many factors, including class, gender, age, and religion) and of critical importance, as an individual was defined and his/her worth evaluated based on the networks to which he/she belonged.[342]

An urban environment that allows social mobility in a period of rising wealth creates its own difficulties. In a society that marks class identity by dress, fashion becomes a tool of social mobility.[343] However, the ease with which one could "dress the part" simultaneously results in a problem of identity -- how does one know whether the self-presentation of a stranger encountered on the street accurately reflects his/her identity? Does dress reflect status, occupation, origin, or moral character? How should these characteristics be divined? In response, behavior and location become important factors in determining identity. It is through one's

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[342] See Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson, "Lest Power Be Forgotten: Networks, Division and Difference in the City," *The Sociological Review* (2002), 505-516, on how identity is an "exertion of networks," through which an individual is identified; it is not "who you are," but rather, "who you know" that counts in the urban environment. The complex intersections of all facets of social identity constitute sameness and difference, allowing those living in urban environments to draw social connections.

[343] Karen Halttunen applies this idea to middle class culture in nineteenth-century America. I believe it to be equally applicable to seventeenth-century Dutch culture. See Karen Halttunen. *Confidence Men and Painted Women: A Study of Middle-class Culture in America, 1830-1870* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), 64. While there are striking differences in the nineteenth-century America discussed by Haltunnen and the seventeenth-century Dutch society, there are also striking similarities in the newly urban environment dealing with a burgeoning middle class.

behavior and ties to home and familial identity (the domestic) that an individual can be evaluated.

Within this context, the focus of many mid-seventeenth-century genre paintings of men and women who appear to be of the upper-middle classes, yet who behave in questionable ways, displays the inability to identify social and moral character based on visual appearance.[344] However, the paintings only present a small aspect of possible relations between men and women. Their fiction only reveals a narrow selection of the multiple facets of the contemporary character. [345]

The depictions base social judgments of women in part on reputation and their ability to maintain an image as chaste and honorable women.[346] Such images draw into question the tension between the idealized emotional relationship between men and women (a model sexual relationship – or marriage) and the actual economic relationship. This dichotomy of expectations based on gender seen in the images echoed the contemporaneous expectations for young people. Society insisted that young single women remain both sober and chaste, and young men engage in a period

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[344] See Nanette Salomon, "Vermeer's Women," 110 on how images of prostitution focus on the upper classes.

[345] See Nanette Salomon, "Early Netherlandish Bordeeltjes and the Construction of Social 'Realities,'," in *The Public and the Private in Dutch Culture of the Golden Age* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2000), 56 for a similar argument regarding images of prostitution in the Netherlands during the seventeenth century.

[346] See both van Oostveen, "It Takes All Sorts," 62; and Maria-Theresia Leuker, "Women's Sphere and Honour: The Rhetorical Realism of Bredero's Farces," in *Women of the Golden Age: An International Debate on Women in Seventeenth-Century Holland, England and Italy*, Els Kloek, Nicole Teeuwen, and Marijke Huismer ed. (Hilversum: Verloren, 1994), 69 on the notion of honor and the interaction this social judgment had with women's sexuality in the seventeenth century.

of “youthful folly” during their late teens and early twenties.[347] During this period, the young men would learn from their mistakes, which might include drinking and premarital sex.[348] For men -- unlike women -- drinking, gambling, and womanizing were regarded as markers of masculinity and even adulthood.[349]

The men depicted bargain for the women with whom they interact, while the women are purchased by the coin produced by the man’s labors. Genre paintings of the purchase of illicit love exploit the tension of this relationship between the genders to create engaging images that allow the viewer to explore the full range of economic and intimate relationships between individuals of the opposite sex. In this manner, the paintings both playfully suggest illicit behavior and entertain issues of licit sexual relations, identity, class, and the choice of a marriage partner. Within the context of a rapidly changing society, the seemingly entertaining, provocative, and didactic images of alcohol, sex, and money call into question the ease with which one can establish the identity and trustworthiness of others in an urban environment that allowed unprecedented social mobility.

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[347] On the standard for women, see Martin, *Alcohol, Sex, and Gender,* 134. On a period of youthful folly being accepted, see Roberts and Groenendijk, “’Wearing out a pair of fool’s shoes’,” 145, 152. See also Benjamin Roberts, “Drinking like a Man,” 238 and 245 for how excessive drinking was seen as a rite of passage.
[348] Roberts, and Groenendijk, “’Wearing out a pair of fool’s shoes’,” 145, 152.
[349] Roberts, “Drinking like a Man,” 245.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation addresses a previously unexplored aspect of mid-seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting: domestic scenes of money management and exchange. These images have not been examined previously in reference to their portrayal of the relationship to wealth of the seventeenth-century, upper-middle class despite the fact that the paintings quite literally depict the affluent urban burghers of the day interacting with the "proceeds of their prosperity." As these paintings were created and consumed within a society where both income and civility defined social status, such images spur an intriguing dialogue regarding the seventeenth-century viewers' attitudes about their own prosperity.

A core set of questions has guided the framework of this discussion of scenes of money-weighing and account management, domestic expenditures, charitable giving, and illicit relations. What actually occurs in these painted scenes? Why would a painter depict a scene where individuals interact on the basis of economic exchange? Why would seventeenth-century viewers purchase such images and hang them in their homes? What does the selection of these themes and the degrees of exactitude of their depiction reveal about the seventeenth-century viewers' notions regarding the socially acceptable place of money and wealth? In order to answer these questions, the paintings have been examined in the context of the contemporary historical and economic activities depicted, the prevalent attitudes regarding those activities of exchange and related issues within society, and in reference to their

similarity with and dissimilarity to previous and contemporary depictions of comparable subject matter.

Through this examination of depictions of economic interactions, a few commonalities have been elucidated. First, the choice of subjects of all of the paintings under discussion and the manner of their depiction are highly selective. The mid-seventeenth-century Dutch genre painters in question depicted upper-middle-class urban burghers, who partake in a limited range of activities. Painters did not depict certain common subjects, such as the purchase of household furnishings or attire. Depictions of the purchase of foodstuffs are limited in the range of items included.

As discussed throughout the examination of these paintings, they reflect a new, more positive attitude towards the accumulation of wealth, which contemporary society credited to hard work and prudent practice. The shift in the attitude towards wealth supported the early modern economy as financial systems began transitioning towards capitalism. However, simultaneously, the images also re-framed most of the depicted economic interactions, first as domestic relationships, and second as activities presided over by women rather than men. The concentration on domestic interactions focused the discussion of economic responsibility narrowly through the contemporary perception of the diligent housewife.

By equating economic interactions with domestic duty, mid-seventeenth century genre paintings of monetary evaluation and exchange allowed social questions and community norms to be defined in terms of personal morality within

the household. The paintings also stressed concerns about the assessment of identity and intention based upon appearance. The depictions of weighing coins, bargaining for produce, the evaluation of the worthiness of poor supplicants, or interaction with potential sexual partners ask the viewer to evaluate what occurs in the scene based not only on appearance, but on location and behavior. The images stress the inability to assume, and the concurrent need to evaluate assiduously. The paintings examined here encourage the viewer to scrutinize with care the subject of economic exchange in the paintings just as the figures within the scenes evaluate diligently their depicted monetary relationships. As class became permeable and the observable world was not always to be taken as it seemed, the identity of individuals and the respective roles they held within society were no longer so immediately evident.

The selectivity of subject matter and ambiguity of narrative present in these mid-seventeenth-century Dutch genre paintings allowed contemporary viewers the license to interpret paintings of domestic money management and exchange in accord with their personal, complex views of monetary transactions and the individuals who enacted them. Through adaptations of previous pictorial traditions to the contemporary social milieu, these artists created compositions that allowed for a variety of interpretations of the appropriate societal roles of gender, class, religion, ethics, civic duty, and morals, and the impact of the beliefs inherent in these roles upon proper economic activities.

In their adaptation of traditional pictorial formulas, images of exchange participated in the widespread diversification and domestication of subject matter in the mid-seventeenth century. Like images of housewives cleaning, children playing, or other daily activities, the paintings of money management and exchange did not function as straightforward depictions of everyday activities. Instead, the Dutch paintings of economic evaluation and exchange invoked the ambiguity and resulting discourse with regard to the social relationships of different members of society.

The paintings often conveyed subtle, but powerful messages through the familiarity of hearth and home. Didactic depictions of women as arbiters of social norms utilized gender as an acceptable illustration of communal control. They displaced the collective societal pressure to regulate the economy onto the realm of feminine domestic duty. Such paintings of the household utilization of money, however, do not simply reflect contemporary economic practices in a journalistic manner. Rather they selectively reveal the social and economic pressures felt by the urban upper-middle class. A greater demarcation of public and private realms marked visually by divisions of class and gender resulted in part from such stresses.

Portraiture has served as a frequent foil throughout this discussion of genre scenes and the differences in depiction between the two categories of painting tellingly demonstrate how certain topics could be more freely explored in scenes of daily life than within the framework of other genres. From depictions of the negotiation of the

domestic budget, to efforts to better the community through disciplined work and private charity, to financial and intimate relations, the paintings examined here reveal a society attempting to re-frame its own culturally determined economic perceptions to suit the rapidly changing social order. As depictions of anonymous individuals with whom the viewer could choose or not choose to identify, genre painting became a safe arena for the re-definition of economic expectations.

As such, seventeenth-century Dutch images of money management and exchange reveal a narrow slice of the complexity of views held by urban burghers regarding their relationship to the "proceeds of their prosperity." Prosperity provided both the opportunity and the necessity for a re-evaluation of the personal and social relationships to wealth and the utilization of that wealth within a community.

Through the acceptance of the "proceeds of prosperity," such images helped to set the stage for a move from a moralistic relationship with wealth towards a pre-capitalist society. As stated in the quotation that began this discussion:

> Bread is made for laughter, and wine gladdens life, and money answers everything. (Ecclesiastes 10:19)

In the mid-seventeenth-century Dutch genre paintings examined here, money does indeed "answer everything," as the dialogue regarding the mid-seventeenth-century relationship to wealth has been re-framed.

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