

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: ADRIAEN VAN OSTADE'S IMAGES OF IDYLIC RURAL LIFE

Jessica Lynn Hoffman, Doctor of Philosophy, 2013

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Seventeenth-century Dutch artist Adriaen van Ostade (1610–1685) created paintings of rural life that exude life and vitality. The artist devoted hundreds of canvases and panels to depicting rural folk enjoying a dance or a drink, singing songs, and enjoying the pleasures of the pipe. Though he inherited many aspects of the peasant genre tradition from predecessors such as Pieter Bruegel (c.1525–1569), Ostade, a lifelong resident of Haarlem, developed his own type of peasant image by depicting leisure activities in small inns and taverns that presented a sympathetic view of rural inhabitants. Ostade's mature paintings of festive country folk relied on preconceived notions about the peace and beauty of Haarlem's rural environs and were meant to enhance the idea of a peaceful rural escape for urban viewers.

Through a critical examination of Ostade's oeuvre, I will compile a coherent and detailed look at the images of rural festivity that Ostade created throughout his long career. Ostade transformed traditional rollicking kermis scenes into subdued, leisurely celebrations focused on simple interactions along with singing and dancing. He changed the traditional stereotype of the festive peasant from a brutish, crude figure into a rustic, yet idyllic, rural fixture. The content people Ostade depicted in his mature work reflect the desires of an urban bourgeois class in Haarlem that prized their city's rural environs,

which had long been extolled in literature and art. A thorough study of the works and the market for which they were produced illuminates the meaning and function of his animated pictures of rural life.

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Introduction

Throughout his long career, Adriaen van Ostade (1610–1685) devoted hundreds of canvases and panels to depicting rural folk dancing, drinking, singing songs, and enjoying the pleasures of the pipe. The artist's paintings exude life and vitality, and his works range from boisterous and ridiculous to charming and cozy. Ostade's success as an artist attests to the appeal of these lively scenes of humble people enjoying simple activities. While his paintings have long been considered authentic representations of rural life, I will demonstrate that his work presented rural life through a lens colored with pictorial tradition and tropes that conflated the identity of urban viewer and rural subject. Ostade's mature paintings of festive rural inhabitants in rustic taverns relied on preconceived notions about the peace and beauty of Haarlem's rural environs and were meant to enhance the idea of a peaceful rural escape for urban viewers.

Adriaen van Ostade's rural inhabitants are most often described as peasants, and the term itself deserves important consideration, and will be addressed later. He worked within a long and complex Northern European tradition of depicting the "peasant," who sometimes symbolized sin and sometimes virtue. In ancient Greece and Rome Arcadian literature shed a positive light on rural life, romanticizing its simplicity and honesty. From the late Middle Ages through the sixteenth century, festive peasants were often viewed as overindulgent, shown celebrating to a gluttonous excess. Peasants in the landscape, however, were presented in literature and art as humble yet heroic figures who cultivated the crops that sustained society. Ostade captured both positive and negative aspects of peasant representation in the paintings he created for burgher audiences. While

he depicted rural folk enjoying their free time with a drink or a smoke, he was able to imbue such leisurely scenes with the positive rural associations previously linked to landscapes.

Over the course of his career, Ostade transformed traditional rollicking kermis scenes into subdued, leisurely celebrations focused on simple interactions along with singing and dancing. Comparing Ostade's early and mature paintings reveals this transformation. For example, in *Festive Peasants* (Mauritshuis), from around 1638, Ostade paints a scene rife with the exuberance and abandon that characterizes his works of the 1630s (fig. 1). Revelers in a shadowy, rustic village tavern drink and cavort with glee in a group that culminates in a central figure who wields his tankard and his violin with equal enthusiasm. Another man coaxes a woman onto the dance floor while a child in the lower left foreground fills a large jug from the barrel of beer that keeps this celebration afloat. One man, who has fallen down on the right side of the work (vomiting?), has clearly overindulged during this celebration. The painting presents a humorous image of coarse peasant characters that focuses on indulgence in sensual pleasures. Its satirical content reflects a Northern European visual tradition established in the sixteenth century that drew upon even older stereotypes from medieval literature.

In a later painting of *Peasants Dancing in a Tavern* (St. Louis Museum of Art), from 1659, similar activities—drinking, dancing, smoking—abound, but the mood is much different (fig. 2). Replacing the dank interior of the earlier work is a spacious room filled with household objects and furniture. Ostade brightens and enlivens this scene with reds, yellows, and blues in addition to using a more meticulous technique. Further, modest behavior accompanies this refinement in technique, and the physiognomy of his

figures is more detailed. These people are imbued with a humble humanity lacking in the earlier painting. Though one boisterous man raises his pipe to hail the viewer, others converse quietly. In this work Ostade set a tone in both style and subject that is bright and jubilant rather than dark and chaotic. This comparison illustrates a shift in Ostade's representation of rural festivity that was characterized by alterations in both style and meaning. What follows is a thorough study of Ostade's paintings and the market for which they were produced that illuminates the meaning and function of his animated pictures of country life. In this introduction I will discuss the scholarly treatment of Ostade's work with regard to this stylistic progression and provide an outline of the structure of the dissertation with summaries of the chapters.

Scholarship

Adriaen van Ostade was baptized on December 10, 1610, in the Reformed Church in Haarlem, where he lived and worked his whole life.¹ A portrait of the artist by Frans Hals depicts him as a gentleman, wearing the fine clothes and displaying the pose and gestures characteristic of a prosperous burgher (fig. 3).² By the end of his life, through both marriage and inheritance, in addition to his work as an artist, Adriaen van Ostade had managed to establish himself as a successful urban resident. Respected by his artistic peers in Haarlem, the artist also achieved prominence within that city's Guild of St. Luke, earning positions as a commissioner and later as Dean, the Guild's highest office.³ Hals'

¹ Adriaan van der Willigen, *Les Artistes de Harlem* (1870; reprint, Nieukoop: B. de Graaf, 1970), 234–235, as cited in the Haarlem Baptism Registry.

² Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr. *Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1995), 184.

³ Ostade served as a *vinder* in 1647 and again in 1661, and he was selected and served as dean from 1662 to 1663 Van der Willigen, 21 and Hessel Miedema, *De Archiefbescheiden van het St. Lukasgilde te Haarlem: 1497–1798* (Alphen aan den Rijn [Netherlands]: Canaletto, 1980), 2: 665 and 672. *Vinders* acted

portrait of Ostade may have been created in recognition of this achievement. The dignified image of Ostade presented in his portrait accords well with the facts of his life. He was someone more elevated in status and means than the people he generally portrayed in the paintings, drawings, and etchings on which rest his fame.

The longevity of Ostade's career, combined with his prodigious output, distinguish him as a unique figure in the Golden Age of Dutch painting. His importance was recognized by his contemporaries as he figures in several important early histories of Netherlandish painting. Cornelis de Bie's Het Gulden Cabinet der Edel Vry Schilderconst (fig. 4), Antwerp, 1662 gives a short laudatory sketch of his career.⁴ De Bie also presents a poem in which he praises Ostade's powers of observation and his artistic talent. In Arnold Houbraken's De groote schouburgh der Nederlandische konstschilders en schilderessen (figs. 5–8), printed in Amsterdam between 1718 and 1721, the author similarly presents Ostade as a witty observer of peasant festivities.⁵ The biographies of Ostade by both authors will be discussed further in subsequent chapters.

The stylistic transformation of Ostade's images of rural life has been remarked upon by his biographers since the nineteenth century. The first monographic study of the artist's career—Adriaen van Ostade. Sein Leben und sein Kunst by Theodor Gaedertz—was published in Lübeck in 1869. Since Ostade was thought to have been from the German city (per Houbraken), it was a logical place for his story to be told. Gaedertz

as commissioners of the guild and performed various official functions such as collecting dues and levying fines. The leadership of the Haarlem Guild of St. Luke was comprised of four such commissioners who were appointed by the burgomasters on the recommendation of previous commissioners. The Dean was elected by guild members to head the board and serve as liaison to the city council. Hessel Miedema, "De St. Lucasgilden van Haarlem en Delft in de zestiende eeuw," *Oud Holland* 99 (1985): 77–109, 82.

⁴ Cornelis de Bie, Het Gulden Cabinet der Edel Vry Schilderconst (Antwerp: Jan Meyssen, 1662), <http://books.google.com>.

⁵ Arnold Houbraken, De groote schouburgh der Nederlandische konstschilders en schilderessen (Amsterdam, 1718–1721), vol. 1, <http://www.dbnl.org/>.

examined Ostade as an artist who deals with the real world, the “concrete.” He remarked that, “An actual, real art, a composition based on invention, we do not encounter with him.”⁶ Though he paid homage to Ostade’s ability to find poetry in the everyday, Gaedertz saw little beneath the surface of the artist’s works. While he delineated the stylistic differences in Ostade’s paintings, focusing mainly on color, he did not tie them to changes in the meaning of the works.⁷ He, like Ostade’s earliest biographers, considered the paintings only as a representation of rural life.

Later scholars, however, did note the significance of the change from rough to refined in the figures Ostade depicted. Cornelis Hofstede de Groot attributed more than nine hundred paintings to him in his catalogue raisonné of the works of Dutch artists, first published between 1907 and 1928.⁸ Addressing the marked difference between Ostade’s early and mature works, he wrote of the former, “he delights in violent action and in heads that are caricatured,” while of the latter, he observed “the themes become more tasteful, the figures truer to life.” In 1916 Wilhelm von Bode also noted the change in Ostade’s peasants, describing the figures in the works of the 1630s as, “hulking peasants, impoverished by the long wars, in meager, ragged clothes.”⁹ He described the figures in Ostade’s later works, however, as, “clean and well-mannered,” and defined the overall mood of the works as one of “quiet contentment.” Von Bode linked the transformation in Ostade’s representations to a real change in the lives of seventeenth-century Dutch rural

⁶ Theodor Gaedertz, Adriaen van Ostade. Sein Leben und sein Kunst (Lübeck: Rohden, 1869), 33, “Einer eigentlichen, kunstregelrechten, sowie auf der Erfindung beruhenden Composition begegnen wir daher bei ihm nicht.” All translations for which the original text are given are my translations.

⁷ Gaedertz, 62. Gaedertz identifies three periods in Ostade’s development: his early years to 1654, from 1654 to 1672, and from 1672 until his death.

⁸ Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, A Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch Painters of the Seventeenth Century, (Teaneck (N.J.) Somerset House, 1976), 140–435.

⁹ Wilhelm Von Bode, “Die beiden Ostade,” *Zeitschrift für bildende Kunst* XXVII (1916): 1–10, 6, “...das ungeschlachte Bauernvolk, durch die langen Kriege verarmt, in dürftiger, zerlumpter Kleidung...”

inhabitants.¹⁰ For him and many other early scholars, Ostade was the consummate observer, cataloging elements of everyday rural life. Von Bode remarked that, “the artist always moved in those [peasant] circles with open eyes and a pen in his hand, making his life’s work description...”¹¹

This view of Ostade as a simple observer leads to another issue that has impacted analyses of Ostade’s oeuvre. Like much of seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting, his works present an image of a world that looks realistic—and in his case, very simple. By devoting great attention to the characterization of his figures as well as including anecdotal details of daily life, the artist enticed his viewers to behold his paintings as true representations of rural existence and nothing more. The apparent realism of Dutch art guided studies from the eighteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries.¹² In his Old Masters of Belgium and Holland, first published in 1877, French artist and connoisseur Eugène Fromentin articulated this belief:

One thing strikes you in studying the moral foundation of Dutch art, and that is the total absence of what we call now a subject. From the day when painting ceased to borrow from Italy its style, its poetry, its taste for history, for mythology and Christian legends... the great Dutch School appeared to think of nothing but painting well. It is content to look around it, and to dispense with imagination. Nudities, which were out of place in this representation of real life, disappeared. Ancient history was forgotten, and contemporaneous history too, which is the most singular phenomenon.¹³

¹⁰ Von Bode, 8, “...die Stimmung stillen Behagens...”

¹¹ Von Bode, 6, “...der Künstler stets mit offenem Auge und mit dem Stift in der Hand in dem Kreise sich bewegte, dessen Schilderung er zu seiner Lebensaufgabe gemacht hatte.”

¹² Here I use the term “apparent realism” as it was first used by Eddy de Jongh in “Realisme en schijnrealisme in de Hollandse Schilderkunst van de zeventiende eeuw,” in Rembrandt en zijn tijd, eds. H. R. Hoetink, et. al. (Brussels: Palace of Fine Art, 1971), 143–194.

¹³ Eugène Fromentin, The Old Masters of Belgium and Holland 2nd ed., trans. Mary C. Robbins (Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1883), 147.

In early scholarship, a belief that the realism of Dutch painting equaled truthful descriptions of the everyday world was bolstered by the naturalistic works of Adriaen van Ostade.

The assumption that Ostade's works are transcriptions of everyday reality has persisted in modern scholarship on Ostade. A 1987 print dealer's brochure for an exhibition of his work, entitled Country Life in Holland's Golden Age, reads, "The etchings of Adriaen van Ostade constitute a catalog of the countryside population of Holland during the seventeenth century."¹⁴ So typical is this view of Dutch peasant genre that Dutch historian Jan de Vries felt compelled to warn the readers of his chapter on the peasant in Gestalten van de Gouden Eeuw: Een Hollands groepsportret (Figures of the Golden Age: A Dutch Group Portrait) of mistaking peasant genre paintings for realistic representations of rural life. He writes:

Before we begin to understand the peasant world in the seventeenth-century Republic of the United Netherlands, we must first put all of these images out of our minds. Certainly, the images are beautiful, but they are not windows that overlook the actual countryside.¹⁵

Despite his ostensible realism, Ostade's paintings provided a limited vision of rural society that omitted many aspects of seventeenth-century rural existence, such as work, and instead focused on the representation of specific themes, chief among which was the carefree enjoyment of leisure.

Two publications in the 1990s provided the most critical examination of Ostade's subjects to date, an exhibition catalog and symposium essays dealing with his prints. A 1995 exhibition at the Georgia Museum of Art was accompanied by a catalog containing

¹⁴ Theodore B. Donson, "Country Life in Holland's Golden Age: Etchings by Adriaen van Ostade," *Uncommon Prints* 15 (1987), 1.

¹⁵ H.M. Belien, A. Th. Van Deursen, and G.J. van Setten, eds., Gestalten van de Gouden Eeuw: Een Hollands groepsportret (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Bert Bakker, 1995), 282.

reproductions of all of Ostade's etchings.¹⁶ In the exhibition catalog, Linda Stone-Ferrier's essay addresses the repetition of certain pictorial topoi in Ostade's printed works. In step with contemporary scholarship in seventeenth-century Dutch art at that time, she began to dismantle the long-standing notion that Ostade was simply cataloging the daily life of the lower classes and examines the genealogy of several of Ostade's subjects. She demonstrated that Ostade was dependent upon both earlier and contemporary artists, particularly the prints of Rembrandt van Rijn.¹⁷ While Rembrandt's prints exerted a profound influence on Ostade as a printmaker, they also affected his paintings, particularly in the 1630s, a topic I will explore in my discussion of the development of Ostade's subjects and style.

Papers presented at a symposium held in conjunction with the Georgia exhibition laid the foundation for the publication of another group of essays entitled Images of Women in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art: Domesticity and the Representation of the Peasant.¹⁸ Most germane to my subject is Lisa Rosenthal's text, which addresses the meaning of the artist's festive peasants by focusing on two of Ostade's mature kermis prints.¹⁹ She proposed an interpretation that lies somewhere between the traditional polarities of admonishing and comic. Rosenthal argued that Ostade's peasants represent a native "other" in their dress and physiognomy and serve for the urban audience as a counterpoint to their own "civilized" identities.

¹⁶ Patricia Phagan, ed., Adriaen van Ostade: Etchings of Peasant Life in Holland's Golden Age (Athens: Georgia Museum of Art, 1994).

¹⁷ Linda Stone-Ferrier, "Inclusions and Exclusions: The Selectivity of Adriaen van Ostade's Etchings," in Phagan, 1994, 21–29.

¹⁸ Patricia Phagan, ed., Images of Women in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art: Domesticity and the Representation of the Peasant (Athens: Georgia Museum of Art, 1996).

Lisa Rosenthal, "Fairtime Folly and the Taming of Transgression: Adriaen van Ostade's Prints of Peasant Festivity," in Phagan, 1996, 27–39.

In his 2004 study of Dutch genre painting, Wayne Franits addressed the very subject of this dissertation—what he calls the “stylistic and thematic evolution,” of Ostade’s work. He wrote, “As he matured as an artist he increasingly distanced himself from Brouwer’s approach and style and made some truly significant contributions to the depiction of peasants...” Franits attributes this evolution to the changing nature of Ostade’s market. He observed:

...under the burgeoning influence of civility, van Ostade contributed to the introduction of a more tempered rendition, probably reflecting as well as shaping the progressively genteel sensibilities of the urban audiences to whom he marketed his work.²⁰

Franits argued that just as other artists such as Gerard ter Borch (1617–1681) and Gerrit Dou (1613–1675) introduced more genteel and upright subjects, Ostade likewise imbued his rural folk with a relative degree of gentility. While I do not disagree with the agency of the civilizing trend in influencing Ostade’s work, I seek to demonstrate that more factors were involved.

Because his paintings have been so prized for their apparent realism, scholars have not fully explored ties between Ostade’s imagery and artistic and literary traditions. The Northern European tradition of representing peasant festivity—most well-known in the works of Pieter Bruegel the Elder (c.1525–1569)—exerted a profound influence upon Ostade, who transformed the critical, didactic peasant kermises of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries into pleasant visions of leisure. Ostade’s new type of festive peasant was linked to another type of literary and visual tradition as well. In addition, seventeenth-century songs and plays emphasized the virtuous hard work of the peasant and referenced the joy and relief of Sundays and festival days. Though Ostade rarely

²⁰ Wayne Franits, Dutch Seventeenth-Century Genre Painting: Its Stylistic and Thematic Evolution (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 138.

showed peasants at work, the image of the peasant working the land was a deeply entrenched part of landscape iconography since the Middle Ages. These traditions are the root of the ideology that sustained Ostade's new presentation of country life.

Beginning with ancient writers, the countryside was presented as an idyllic locale, an idea that was revived by Dutch scholars in the seventeenth century. The idea was particularly appealing to residents of Haarlem who were living in a crowded urban area. A great boom in Haarlem's population came in the last quarter of the sixteenth and the first quarter of the seventeenth centuries. Just before the Spanish Siege of Haarlem in 1572, the population was around 18,000.²¹ After suffering losses due to the Siege and a fire that tore through the city in 1576, the boom began in earnest so that by 1622, Haarlem had almost 40,000 inhabitants.²² The population remained steady until around 1680 when it began to decline due to economic and political struggles.

By the beginning of the 1640s Haarlem was literally bursting at the seams, the population having reached more than 40,000, and needed to expand beyond the medieval walls that enclosed the city.²³ In 1642, the city council finally commissioned a plan for massive expansion of the city that lie fallow until several decades later due to administrative barriers.²⁴ They later settled on a less ambitious plan to expand the city to the North by demolishing the city walls on that side and backfilling the moat.²⁵ The contrast between two maps of the city further attests to this explosive growth. Thomas Thomasz. 1578 map of Haarlem (fig. 9), issued in 1582, depicts a thriving city center

²¹ Geziena Frouke van der Ree-Scholtens, ed. Deugd boven geweld: een geschiedenis van Haarlem, 1245–1995 (Hilversum: Verloren, 1995), 169

²² Ree-Scholtens, 169.

²³ Ree-Scholtens, 142–143.

²⁴ Ree-Scholtens, 143.

²⁵ Ree-Scholtens, 143.

with less populated areas and even some open spaces near the city walls. In a map from 1646 (fig. 10), however, the dark network of structures reveals the area within the walls is completely populated, and even the areas just outside the city walls appear to be heavily settled.

A hand-drawn map by Thomas Thomasz from 1590 presents a wider view of Haarlem and its environs, including several of the villages just outside the city (fig. 11). Overveen is located less than two miles to the east while Heemstede lies less than three kilometers to the south. Aelbertsburg and Santpoort are northeast of the city while Spaarnwoude is about five kilometers to the northwest. The Haarlemmerhout (Haarlem Wood) lies just south of the city and the Haarlemmeermeer (Haarlem Sea) is located just south of Heemstede. In addition, Thomasz utilized wavy lines and subtle shading to indicate the topography of the dunes that lie to the east. The map encapsulates many of the features that made Haarlem a unique city whose identity extended to the natural features outside its borders.

Ostade changed the traditional stereotype of the festive peasant from a brutish, crude figure into a rustic, yet idyllic, rural fixture. The content figures Ostade depicted in his mature work reflect the desires of an urban bourgeois class in Haarlem that prized their city's rural environs, which had long been extolled in literature and art. Cornelis Aurelius, an Augustinian monk and humanist, described Haarlem as an "earthly paradise" in a treatise published in 1586 and again in 1609. He was neither the first nor the last to depict Haarlem and its surrounding areas in such a glorified way. By depicting a peaceful and prosperous image of the people who lived there, Ostade's paintings provided his

urban audience with a native paradise that existed outside the boundaries of the crowded, bustling life of a city.

Overview of the Dissertation

The foundation for my interpretation of Ostade's works will be a contrast between urban and rural, a topos that has existed in various guises since ancient times. In literature and art, peasants have been used to symbolize many things. As an object of scorn, they have been satirized to reaffirm the urban elite's vision of their own urbane customs. Conversely, rural life has also been idealized to represent simplicity and ease in contrast to the demands of urban, upper class life. Literary historian Herman Pleij has noted that fourteenth- and fifteenth-century references to the peasant in the Netherlands played a role in a process of self-definition on the part of a new urban middle class. He wrote, "It borrowed whatever it needed from cultures past, present, high, and low to reinforce, embody, and foster its interests and ambitions."²⁶ Elites mocked the peasant by characterizing him as a crude, even sinful, figure. One of the strategies employed, according to Pleij, was to, "...caricature rural life as a reverse ethical barometer, presenting the lifestyle of farmers as the clear opposite of that favored by the new urban elites."²⁷ Though this dynamic came into play in the Middle Ages, it continued to be a factor in the relationship between urban and rural in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In his examination of the visual tradition of peasant representation in Northern Europe, Paul Vandebroek has stated that interpretation of peasant images shows:

²⁶ Herman Pleij, "Restyling 'Wisdom,' Remodeling the Nobility, and Caricaturing the Peasant: Urban Literature in the Late Medieval Low Countries," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 32, no. 4 (2002): 689-704, 704.

²⁷ Pleij, 691.

A clear universal mechanism: the establishing of bipolar classification schemes, whose poles are each other's reversals; these schemas are the primary means of representation and ranking for the evaluation of the real or perceived milieu.²⁸

Such poles correspond with the image presented of the peasant and its reaffirming counterpart perceived by the consumer of the image. They are defined by him in a number of ways including, "play versus work," "coarseness versus refinement," and "open-natured versus closed-natured."²⁹

Another set of polarities defines the trope of the "noble peasant" that also emerged during the Middle Ages. The trope of the peasant as a negative figure was one side of an ideological coin whose obverse represented the peasant as a noble, hard-working individual. As Paul Vandenbroeck has noted:

There was... a 'noble peasant' school of thought, which praised the moral superiority of life and work on the land and declared that it was most pleasing to God. This attitude is to be found in both religious and profane literature.³⁰

Further, from the literature of the ancients to that of the seventeenth century, the image of the rural world as an idyllic place from respite from the demands of urban life was a theme that generated a great deal of literary and visual imagery. Beginning in the early seventeenth century, Dutch landscape artists began to depict the humble areas in their cities' environs as a way to offer an escape from urban life.

The dynamics of urban versus rural are important to the interpretation of Ostade's work because the market for Ostade's paintings was largely prosperous middle class

²⁸ Paul Vandenbroeck, Beeld van de andere, vertoog over het zelf: over wilden en narren, boeren en bedelaars (Antwerp: Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, 1987), 149. The author contends that the polarities changed multiple times between the thirteenth to the nineteenth centuries. He enumerates the changing dynamic in chapter three and in his chart on 151.

²⁹ Vandenbroeck, 1987, 151, "Feest/arbeid," "open (natuur)/gesloten (stad/hof)," "grobianisme/verfijning."

³⁰ Paul Vandenbroeck, "Verbeeck's Peasant Weddings: A Study of Iconography and Social Function," *Simiolus* 14 (1984), 83.

burghers that had disposable income because of the booming economy.³¹ Though his work engages this rhetorical dichotomy, I will demonstrate that Ostade's paintings provide a more nuanced relationship between peasant and burgher than the dialectical "us vs. them" approach. Disrupting the cleanly bifurcated mode of interpretation is the diminishing distance between urban and rural society. Haarlem expanded at the end of the sixteenth century with the influx of southern immigrants and continued to grow into the first decade of the seventeenth century. The city thus grew closer to its rural outlying areas, and city and country came into contact with one another more often. The 1646 map above reveals that the city had expanded beyond its walls. An active market economy led burgher and peasant to visit one another's domain to purchase and sell goods to one another. Leisure was also a significant motivation for burghers to travel the rural areas around their cities, with Haarlem having a particularly well-traversed and celebrated rural environment. This diminishing distance was further bridged by Haarlem's embrace of its environs as an important part of its own civic identity.

Despite the more idyllic tone of his mature works, the traditional vein of urban scorn of rural mores is still present in Ostade's representation of rural life. Their broad gestures and hunched postures attest to the enduring vision of peasants as boors. However, the relative improvement in both comportment and surroundings suggest another dynamic at play in urban visions of their rural counterparts. Under these influences, the peasants became both "us"—as native Dutchmen with whom city dwellers interacted—as well as remaining a "them"—in the sense of urban versus rural and refined versus coarse.

³¹ Pieter Biesboer, *Collections of Paintings in Haarlem, 1572–1745, Documents for the History of Collecting. Netherlandish Inventories I*, ed. Carol Togneri (Los Angeles: The Provenance Index of the Getty Research Institute, 2001), 40.

The dissertation is organized into six chapters that trace Ostade's development and examine the context in which he created his works. Chapter one, "Representations of the Peasant before Ostade," discusses the peasant tradition in literature and art. Ancient authors established tropes that presented the countryside in a positive light. In Northern European art and literature of the late Middle Ages and Renaissance, the peasant, when viewed in conjunction with the landscape, was likewise a sympathetic figure. A more critical festive peasant genre tradition begun by early sixteenth-century German artists later flourished among Flemish artists, the most prominent among them being Pieter Bruegel the Elder, who often tempered the riotous gatherings of the German print tradition. Revolving around the kermis celebration, the prints and paintings of Bruegel and his contemporaries ranged from comedic to condemning and often portrayed the peasant as an uncivilized brute, prone to excessive behaviors.

In chapter two, "Adriaen van Ostade: A Haarlem Artist," I outline Ostade's life as a citizen and painter in the city of Haarlem. I examine Ostade's identity as a painter of rural life and the market for which he painted his festive scenes. Based on inventories of the period, I discuss the owners of Ostade's paintings in Haarlem and beyond. As early scholars have suggested, these works likely contain some fidelity to rural life of the time. Therefore, I also discuss the actual existence of rural inhabitants in the seventeenth-century, which will demonstrate that though his later works are more naturalistic than Ostade's early paintings, they still rely heavily on tradition and trends in Dutch genre painting. A discussion of literary and pictorial celebrations of the areas surrounding Ostade's hometown of Haarlem reveals that praise of the picturesque villages and densely wooded areas was the subject of laudatory poems dating back to the Middle Ages.

Haarlem's environs were celebrated as a place of beauty by both foreign visitors and natives alike. Songbooks published in Haarlem contain many tunes that celebrate Haarlem's countryside and its villages. In the beginning of the seventeenth century, Haarlem artists began creating a profusion of prints and paintings depicting their native landscape. Ostade and his peasant images are also inextricably linked to Dutch identity and to Haarlem, and while his pictures were the fruit of his verdant imagination, they were also influenced by these important developments.

In chapter three, "Satire and Adriaen van Ostade's Early Work," I will discuss the extent to which Ostade worked within established pictorial conventions. I also discuss the emergence of interior tavern scenes as well as the function of the rural tavern in the seventeenth-century. The tavern in Northern European art has often been associated with vice and excess. In the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, however, it gained more positive associations, becoming a symbol of a peaceful countryside and leisurely respites from the city. While responding to pictorial traditions, however, Ostade also began to assert his artistic independence. Close scrutiny of his works from the 1630s demonstrates that even in these rowdy images, the artist revealed his interest in presenting a more restrained vision of rural festivity.

Chapter four, "Reshaping the Image of the Peasant," will demonstrate how Ostade began to devote more attention to physiognomy and expression in the 1640s, which gave his figures a greater sense of pathos and enhanced the naturalism of his paintings. Ostade's domestic scenes contributed to the overall change in the representation of rural life that is fundamental to Ostade's career as a painter. A discussion of the social and

cultural changes associated with the establishment of the Dutch Republic sheds light on this new sympathy toward the peasant.

Chapter five, “Leisure in Haarlem’s Countryside,” focuses on Ostade’s mature work to reveal how he broke free from the Bruegel tradition. Ostade capitalized on the trope of the “noble peasant,” which enabled him to turn his festive folk into representations of well-deserved rest and relaxation. I also argue that Ostade’s mature work was intended for an urban audience who purchased and admired his paintings as an ideal of the carefree country life. Ostade blended tradition and innovation in his representation of rural people. Although images of peasants drinking and smoking would previously have been viewed as images of vice, Ostade tempered those associations to depict scenes of leisure and relaxation. The notion of a rural escape and the admiration for Haarlem’s history and environs in addition to a new sympathy toward country folk produced a climate ripe for Ostade’s idyllic paintings.

Chapter six, “Pleasant Scenes in a Time of Crisis,” covers the end of Ostade’s career. He was active until his death, though he more often painted watercolors than works on panel. Despite this change in medium, he continued to depict idyllic scenes of country life. Against the backdrop of the 1673 French invasion and a decline in financial prosperity overall in the Dutch Republic, Ostade persisted in presenting his image of rural inhabitants as a contented symbol of Haarlem’s rural surroundings.

My dissertation addresses the playful and creative nature of Adriaen van Ostade’s paintings as well as the more serious issue of their context. A thorough study of the works and the market for which they were produced illuminates the meaning and function of his animated pictures of country life. Further, it provides the first detailed overview of Ostade’s development as a painter, adding much-needed dimension to the

study of his work. My research on Ostade will enhance understanding of the place of the peasant in his oeuvre and the appeal of his works. In the process, a fuller picture of the artist and his work emerges from behind the veil of easy rustic charm conveyed in his paintings.

Chapter One: Representations of Rural Life before Ostade

Adriaen van Ostade's presentation of the rural life reflects a long and complex literary and visual tradition. Beginning in ancient literature, simple rural existence was presented as an idyllic foil to a sophisticated and complex urban life. The trope of a peaceful arcadia established in ancient writings was revived in early modern European works of literature and art. Not all representations of rural living were so serene. In the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, peasants symbolized both positive and negative ways of life. The term itself implies various negative connotations tied to the literary and visual traditions I will discuss below. In some cases, writers and artists celebrated the peasant as a simple yet integral part of society, providing nourishment to the population. In other representations, however, the peasant was depicted as a sinful, gluttonous figure who was a slave to baser pleasures and, in some cases, even dangerous to society. Both of these types of peasants were presented in the work of such Northern European artistic predecessors as Pieter Bruegel the Elder, and were transmitted as established pictorial conventions to the Northern Netherlands in the beginning of the seventeenth century.

Who are peasants?

The people depicted by Adriaen van Ostade have always been described as peasants in English, while the Dutch word used to describe them is *boer*. It translates to both "farmer" and "peasant," but generally indicates a person who works the land. The term peasant originally derives from the Latin term for a country district, *pagensis*,

signifying any inhabitant of a rural area.³² The more common usage, from the French term *paysan* and its many variations, which emerged in the twelfth century, refers specifically to a farmer.³³ At this time the term also began to connote such negative traits as stupidity, and that derogatory cast has remained a part of its meaning.

Even though the term “boer” can be translated as “farmer,” not all of the figures in Ostade’s paintings were farmers. He also depicted knife grinders, bakers, cobblers, and even a village lawyer, among others. The term peasant implies uniformity of social and economic status, but rural society in the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic actually encompassed a range of social diversity, which will be discussed further in the next chapter. While recognizing the complications of using the term peasant, I will do so when referring to “peasant genre” or other aspects of the visual and literary tradition that are historically associated with that term. It will also appear as part of many traditional titles and descriptions of Ostade’s work. My goal is to avoid describing Ostade’s figures as peasants, but in cases where I do utilize the term, I intend a broader definition that encompasses not only individuals who work the land, but any rural inhabitant.³⁴ What ultimately unites the figures in Ostade’s works is their association with a rural lifestyle.

Arcadian Literature

The roots of the exaltation of the rural scenery and the charms of country life lie in ancient thought. The pastoral works of Theocritus (born c. 300 B.C.) and Virgil (70–19 B.C.) celebrated the ease and simplicity of rural life for elite audiences. The pastoral

³² *OED Online*, s.v. “peasant,” accessed October 27, 2013, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/139355?rskey=OBsqnf&result=1&isAdvanced=false>.

³³ *OED Online*, s.v. “peasant.”

³⁴ Recognizing the negative meaning embedded in the term, I will also attempt to minimize my use of it.

genre was reinvigorated during the Italian Renaissance where sumptuous theatrical performances were presented at court.³⁵ It was then revived in the Dutch Republic in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, particularly in Haarlem. Karel van Mander published a Dutch translation of Virgil's *Georgics* and *Eclogues* in 1597 with illustrations by Hendrick Goltzius (fig. 12).³⁶

In 1603 humanists Daniel Heinsius and Hugo Grotius collaborated on an edition of the works of Theocritus, the Greek poet who was among the first to write in the genre known as the bucolic idyll.³⁷ Bucolic, from the Greek *boukolos*, refers to a herdsman.³⁸ Idyll simply means "little picture" and refers to the vignettes of bucolic life Theocritus presents in his poems.³⁹ The poems tell of song competitions that deal with romantic love, both gained and lost, and include references to the behavior and mannerisms of rustic herders. In one poem two city men encounter a goat herder on their way to a festival honoring the harvest goddess, Demeter. Theocritus writes:

"...you could tell at a glance he was a goatherd; he fitted the part completely: on his shoulders, a hairy, mustard-colored goatskin, smelling of new-set curds; an elderly smock fastened over his breast with a broad band; in his hand a crooked stick of wild olive wood."⁴⁰

The herder, who is "a piper without all peer among herdsmen or reapers," regales the travelers with a song, which he describes as "...a trifling thing I labored over lately on

³⁵ Alison McNeil Kettering, *The Dutch Arcadia: Pastoral Art and Its Audience in the Golden Age* (Montclair [N.J.]: Allenheld & Schram, 1983), 10.

³⁶ Karel van Mander, *Bucolica en Georgica, dat is, Ossen-stal en Landt-werck* (Amsterdam: Zacharias Heyns, 1597). For Goltzius' illustrations, see Nancy Bialler, *Chiaroscuro Woodcuts: Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1617) and his Time* (Ghent: Snoeck-Ducaju & Zoon, 1992), 159–172.

³⁷ William Stanley Macbean Knight, *The Life and Works of Hugo Grotius* (London: Sweet & Maxwell, Ltd., 1925), 46.

³⁸ Theocritus, *The Poems of Theocritus*, trans. Anna Rist (Chapel Hill [N.C.]: The University of North Carolina Press), introduction, 12.

³⁹ Theocritus, introduction, 12.

⁴⁰ Theocritus, 90.

the hillside.”⁴¹ This herder in particular sings of falling in love and living as a rich man, where he will, “...by the fire reclining, drink off a cask of Ptelean wine, with a servant by to roast me beans on the hearth.”⁴² After the shepherd departs, the city dwellers continue to a farm where they celebrate Demeter’s abundance in a manner similar to that described in the poor herder’s song. The exchange highlights the differences between the wealthy, urbane existence of the travelers and the rustic simplicity of the herdsman’s life.

In another of his poems, Theocritus presents a dialogue between two shepherds. One of the men, the elder Milon, berates Boucaeus for neglecting his duties, “cutting a crooked swathe—it was straight enough once—and not keeping up with your neighbor—lagging behind like a sheep behind the flock...”⁴³ Boucaeus laments that he pines for the daughter of another shepherd and sings a song of praise to her:

Would I had all the wealth that Croesus had of old! We’d lie before Aphrodite,
the pair of us, in gold. You with your pipes, an apple—perhaps a rose, and I with
proper sandals and smart clothes.⁴⁴

The elder shepherd answers with a song to Demeter and the work of the farmer, “But let the reapers rise with the rising lark, rest in the heat, and not leave off till dark.”⁴⁵ He goes on to tell the younger man, “Those are songs for men who work in the sun, Boucaeus...”⁴⁶ This idyll and others revolve around the lives of the shepherds, referring often to the care of the animals, the hard work of the farmer, and the uncertain fate of each year’s harvest.

⁴¹ Theocritus, 91.

⁴² Theocritus, 92.

⁴³ Theocritus, 98.

⁴⁴ Theocritus, 99.

⁴⁵ Theocritus, 100.

⁴⁶ Theocritus, 100.

In the *Eclogues*, a series of ten poems influenced by the writings of Theocritus, Roman poet Virgil tells the stories of the herdsmen of Sicily, the remote Greek land of Arcadia, and elsewhere. One shepherd, upon his return from a trip to Rome, says to another:

I used to be silly enough to think the big / City of Rome was comparable to the town / To which we drive our tender lambs to market, / As grown-up dogs are comparable to puppies, / Or grown up goats are comparable to kids, But Rome is as much taller than other cities / As cypress trees than the little viburnums below them.

The shepherd thus confirms for Virgil's urban readers the grand scale and complex nature of city life. He further emphasizes his point later in the series when another shepherd sings:

O come and live with me in the countryside, / Among the humble farms. Together we / Will hunt the deer, and tend the little goats, Compelling them along with willow wands.

He then goes on to describe how they will play the pipes and sing of flowers.

The daily work of the farmer is the subject of Virgil's *Georgics*, a four-part poem written between 40 and 35 B.C.⁴⁷ Virgil dedicates many verses to describing the work and life of the farmer. At times he highlights the mercurial fortunes of farm life:

And don't imagine that, for all the efforts and exertions—man's and beast's—to keep the sod turned over, there's not a threat from plagues of geese, or Strymon cranes, from bitter roots of chicory, nor hurt or harm in shade of trees. For it was Jupiter himself who willed the ways of husbandry be ones not spared of trouble...⁴⁸

More often he extolls the virtues of rural life, saying that:

They're steeped in luck, country people, being far removed from grinds of war, where earth that's just showers them with all that they could ever ask for. So what if he hasn't a mansion with gates designed to impress...so what if their wool's

⁴⁷ Virgil, *Georgics*, trans. Peter Fallon, introduction and notes by Elaine Fantham (London: Oxford University Press, 2006), xiii.

⁴⁸ Virgil, *Georgics*, 9.

merely bleached and not stained with Assyrian dyes, and the olive oil they use hasn't been diluted with that tint of cinnamon—no, what they have is the quiet life—carefree and no deceit—and wealth untold—their ease among cornucopiae, with grottoes, pools of running water and valleys cool even in warm weather, the sounds of cattle and sweet snoozes in the shade.⁴⁹

Like Theocritus, Virgil contrasts the concerns of the wealthy urban dweller with the simple, unadorned life of the farmer. Virgil lauds the countryside and its specific kinds of wealth with an effusiveness not found in Theocritus. In his *Georgics*, Virgil presents rural life as one that consists of hard work that is rewarded by a good harvest and simple pleasures.

Both writers established tropes that colored the pastoral literature of their contemporaries and generations of later authors. Theocritus and Virgil wrote for sophisticated audiences. Theocritus' works were destined for the courts of Syracuse and Alexandria, while Virgil's *Georgics* were said to have been read to Octavian over the course of four days.⁵⁰ The herdsman and farmers of their poems are coarse characters, who, according to Theocritus' description, smell of curds and wear rough cloth. They exist on the whims of Mother Nature and the rule of those outside their ranks, but in the writings of Theocritus and Virgil, they sing of love and enjoy a simple life free of the wealth and obligation of the urban elites.

These ideas were popular and well known in the seventeenth century as is attested to by the translations in circulation. In Goltzius's illustrations for Van Mander's translation of the *Eclogues* and *Georgics*, simple farmers are shown in concert with classical figures. The image that accompanies the first *Eclogue* depicts two shepherds sitting in the countryside as one plays a tune to his love (fig. 13). A small herd of goats

⁴⁹ Virgil, *Georgics*, 43–44.

⁵⁰ Virgil, *Georgics*, xiii–xv.

and a group of cottages behind the figures highlight this rural setting. In *The Veneration of Ceres*, from the *Georgics*, the willowy goddess stands before two shepherds who kneel before her (fig. 14). Their livestock and humble cottage can be seen in the background. Appropriate to the subject matter, Goltzius' illustrations have a very classical feel to them, yet they transmit the idea of both a rural paradise—in the *Eclogues*—and the work associated with a farmer's life—in the *Georgics*.

The “Noble Peasant”

Less idealized than these arcadian visions was the image of the “noble peasant,” which emerged in the Middle Ages with the rise of Christian ethics. This figure personified hard work and provided support for society at large. An example of the noble peasant from medieval literature is a work by Jan van Boendale, poet and Clerk of Antwerp. He wrote of the peasant in his work from around 1330, “Jan’s Testimony” (*Jans Teestyne*). Presented as a dialogue between two friends, the work contains Boendale’s commentary on various aspects of his society. He extolls the importance of the farmer in providing food for everyone, noting that the peasant:

...breaks with his hard work / Land, moors, and deserts, / And wins corn, wine and fruit / Without which there could not be / A world for two years; / For all creatures, / People, animals, young and old, Use it in their nourishment.⁵¹

In 1330 German poet Heinrich der Teichner made a similar commentary when he wrote:

Thus I praise the peasant, / Who can feed all the world. / He labors with his plow, / Who can compare with him?⁵²

⁵¹ P.J. Meerters and Jan H. de Groot, *De Lof van de Boer: De Boerin de Noord- en Zuidnederlandsche letterkunde van de middeleeuwen tot heden* (Amsterdam: C.V. Allert de Lange, 1942), 26–27. “Ende breekt met zij' re pijnen / Land, heiden ende woestijnen, Ende wint koren, wijn ende vrochte, / Daar zonder niet en mochte / Die wereld twee jaar geduren; / Want alle creaturen, / Menschen, beesten, jonk ende oud, / Nemen daar af haar onthoud.”

Such descriptions of the peasant focus on productivity and praise hard work.

The emergence of a landscape tradition in Northern Europe provided a means for representing the working peasant. Visions of the landscape in the Middle Ages and Renaissance depicted the peasant as a rural fixture, as integral to the representation of the countryside as trees or rivers. The genre finds its roots in the courtly art of France and Burgundy, which featured peasants in association with calendrical cycles. Peasants engaged in seasonal labors were standard features of books of hours.⁵³ Indeed, by the early fourteenth century, the occupations of the months were a common subject in manuscripts and architectural decoration.⁵⁴ For instance, an illustration from the calendar of Queen Mary's Psalter features the December pig killing along with a representation of Capricorn (fig. 15).⁵⁵ In 1416, the Limbourg brothers used peasant iconography to illustrate *Les Très Riches Heures* of the Duke of Berry. In their large and sumptuous illustration of June (fig. 16), they present peasants working the fields outside Paris. An early representation of country life in a manuscript miniature by Simon Bening (1483–1561) from the middle of the sixteenth century also depicts the activities associated with the month of June (fig. 17).⁵⁶ Two men shear sheep in the foreground, while in the background a group of people sit at tables outside an inn. Bening creates a peaceful scene that shows both hard work and the reward of rest that follows.

⁵² Paul Freedman, *Images of the Medieval Peasant* (Stanford [CA]: Stanford University Press, 1999), 213. Freedman discusses the medieval praise of the peasant in chapter nine, "Pious and Exemplary Peasants," 204–235.

⁵³ Konrad Renger, "Flemish Genre Painting: Low Life-High Life-Daily Life," in Peter Sutton, ed., *The Age of Rubens* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1993), 171–172.

⁵⁴ Derek Pearsall and Elizabeth Salter, *Landscapes and Seasons of the Medieval World*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 139.

⁵⁵ Pearsall and Salter, 138–139.

⁵⁶ Add. MS 18855, f. 109, British Library, illustrated in Scot McKendrick, *Flemish Illuminated Manuscripts 1400–1550* (London: The British Library, 2003), 153.

Representations of the months and seasons gradually developed into a pure landscape tradition in the sixteenth century.⁵⁷ Landscapes from the early sixteenth century were often a part of religious narratives that included peasants, who became a deeply entrenched part of landscape iconography because they worked the land. For instance, Cornelis Massys (1510/11–1556/7) featured peasants in a landscape in *Holy Family Arriving in Bethlehem* (fig. 18). In this religious subject, Massys gave pictorial prominence to the rendering of landscape and the daily activities taking place in the foreground. Indeed, finding the tiny Biblical figures in the left side of the composition is difficult. In another early landscape, Flemish artist Herri Met de Bles (c.1500–c.1550/9) represented working peasants in the foreground of his 1550 panoramic painting of *The Copper Mine* (fig. 19). Met de Bles filled the bottom quarter of the composition with a busy scene of peasants engaged in various activities outside the mine.

The development of sixteenth-century landscape traditions peaked in the work of Pieter Bruegel the Elder, where peasants play a prominent role in his depictions of the countryside.⁵⁸ He continued the medieval tradition of representing seasonal activities in designs for prints representing the four seasons with their respective labors. His depiction of *Spring* portrays peasants planting and raking in order to perpetuate the cycle of agriculture on which they depended. In his design for *Summer* (fig. 20), peasants harvest wheat while the expansive countryside recedes into the distance. The inscription beneath Pieter van der Heyden's engraving of this scene reads,

⁵⁷ Pearsall and Salter, 138–139.

⁵⁸ This type of representation was established earlier in the work of Flemish artists such as Herri Met de Bles (c.1500–c. 1550/9) and Cornelis Massys. For the sixteenth-century landscape tradition, see Walter S. Gibson, *Mirror of the Earth: The World Landscape in Sixteenth-Century Flemish Painting* (Princeton [NJ]: Princeton University Press, 1989).

July, August, and also June make Summer. Summer, image of youth. / Hot summer brings bounteous harvests to the field.⁵⁹

The inscription exalts the benefits of summer weather, but it also celebrates the labor of the peasant, who is responsible for reaping the “bounteous harvests.” In another seasonal work, *Wheat Harvest*, of 1565, Bruegel incorporated a close-up view of peasants in the foreground, thereby giving them a prominence they had never before enjoyed in any visual medium (fig. 21). *Wheat Harvest* depicts the cycle of work and rest that drove the harvesting of crops. While some figures busily scythe wheat, others rest under the shade of a tree to take some much-needed—and well-earned—refreshment.

In two print series published in Antwerp by Hieronymous Cock in 1559 and 1569, the artist known as the Antwerp Master of the Small Landscapes depicted views of the countryside which, according to the frontispiece to the first edition, were “All portrayed from life, and mostly situated in the country near Antwerp.”⁶⁰ The frontispiece to the second edition noted its views of “cottages, farms, and fields.”⁶¹ One of the prints (fig. 22) features a wide expanse of a village path where a peasant woman walks with her child, while three others seem to be coming in from a hunt. The images suggest a kind of tranquility offered by the countryside around which the inscription prompts the viewer to roam. A sign featuring a swan gives the name of the inn, which sits across from a row of cottages on the right. Walter Gibson has noted that “the Sign of the Swan appropriately terminates the second series with its promise of refreshment after such rural pastimes.”⁶²

⁵⁹ Barbara Butts and Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Printed World of Pieter Bruegel the Elder* (Saint Louis [MO]: The Saint Louis Art Museum, 1995), 87.

⁶⁰ Walter S. Gibson, *Pleasant Places: The Rustic Landscape from Bruegel to Ruisdael* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 2.

⁶¹ Gibson, 2000, 2.

⁶² Gibson, 2000, 9.

The series offered the viewer a vicarious amble through the countryside, many of which include the presence of humble peasants working, strolling, or resting.

Mockery of the Peasantry in the Middle Ages

Beginning in the Middle Ages, the peasant was also mocked in Northern Europe as a brutish and uncivilized figure, and often presented as a slave to his senses. A Flemish song known as “The Song of the Churls (*Kerelslied*),” recorded in a fourteenth-century manuscript, encapsulates this attitude toward the peasant in a particularly vehement way.⁶³ It begins:

Let us sing of the Churls. Their hordes / Would make the devil afeared. / They would subdue the lords. / They wear an unkempt beard. / Their ragged clothes are fit for a sty. / Their hats too small for their heads. / Their hoods are all awry. Their hose and shoes are worn to shreds.⁶⁴

The lyrics present a grotesque picture of the peasantry in which their slovenly appearance is surpassed only by their brutishness, emphasized by the refrain at the end of each verse:

With bread and cheese, curd and gruel / They all day stuff their guts. / That makes the churl such a fool: He never eats but gluts.

The song presents the peasant’s vices in their extreme and uses him as a vehicle for the presentation of gluttony along with the other seven deadly sins.

The attitude toward the peasant in the *Song of the Churls* encapsulates negative feeling toward the peasantry that was a result of social struggles among different classes.

As Paul Vandenbroeck notes:

⁶³ Theo Hermans, ed., *A Literary History of the Low Countries* (Rochester [N.Y.]: Camden House, 2009), 78; *Kerelslied*, *Gruuthuse Manuscript*, Flanders, c. 1395 –c. 1408, fol. 25v (Koninklijke Bibliotheek, The Hague).

⁶⁴ Adriaan J. Barnouw, *Coming After: An Anthology of Poetry from the Low Countries* (New Brunswick [N.J.]: Rutgers University Press, 1948), 48–49.

Ridicule and even hatred of the peasantry began to emerge as a literary theme with the diversification of the social structure and the consolidation of class ideology, which took place in western and central Europe from the twelfth century onwards.⁶⁵

This particular song reflects attitudes that became prevalent after a peasant insurrection in Flanders in the early fourteenth century.⁶⁶ This revolt against the nobility resulted in a bloody battle in which more than three thousand peasant rebels were slaughtered on August 23, 1328.⁶⁷ The battle was a culmination of small acts of rebellion that had begun in 1323 when peasants protested their treatment by the Count of Flanders. A monk who chronicled the revolt characterized it as a “plague of people rebelling against their superiors.”⁶⁸ This revolt and others like it bred a fear and hatred of the peasantry among some members of the upper classes and resulted in these negative stereotypes.

Not all satirical peasant references were so condemnatory. A farce called the *Box-Blower* (*Buskenblaser*), from the same manuscript as the *Song of the Churls*, tells of a foolish peasant man who sells his cow for a chance to appear more desirable to his much-younger wife.⁶⁹ The remedy comes in the form of a box, which, when blown into, will make the man’s gray hair black again. The box, however, is simply filled with soot that covers his head, and the man’s young wife ridicules him for losing their cow. The play opens with the peasant foolishly boasting to the audience:

Look at me, I'm standing here / I mill wheat and love to drink beer. / Purses and gloves I can sew, / Hay and corn I can mow. / Yes, and if I wanted, / I'd be good

⁶⁵ Paul Vandebroek, “Verbeeck’s Peasant Weddings: A Study of Iconography and Social Function,” *Simiolus* 14 (1984), 83.

⁶⁶ The song may have been a direct result of the Flanders rebellion, as argued by Reinder P. Meijer, *Literature of the Low Countries. A Short History of Dutch Literature in the Netherlands and Belgium* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978), 34–35, http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/meij019lite01_01/colofon.htm.

⁶⁷ William H. TeBrake, *A Plague of Insurrection: Popular Politics and Peasant Revolt in Flanders, 1323–1328* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993), 1.

⁶⁸ TeBrake, 1.

⁶⁹ Theresia de Vroom, ed. and trans., *Netherlandic Secular Plays from the Middle Ages: The “Abele Spelen” and the Farces of the Hulthem Manuscript* (Ottawa: Dovehouse Editions, 1997), 147–153.

at buying and selling. / I'm a carpenter too right here! / But it doesn't do much for me. / I'm a miller and I know how to mill, / I'm quick to borrow, slow to pay up. / I can row and chop, / I can brew and bake. / Dams and dikes both can I make, / I can thresh the chaff from the grain. / And I can do a lot more. / Say, is there a woman or a man here / Who'd like to hire me as their servant? / Even though I like to sleep late? / Even though I'm not a hard worker?⁷⁰

He is a man who can do everything but does nothing well, in addition to being lazy and bad with money. The play portrays the peasant as a simpleton who is easily deceived and functions as a cautionary tale to those who would be taken in by fools and magicians.⁷¹

The peasant's wife, upon discovering his folly, says:

I wish I had the money from my cow, / The money you spent so easily! / And I wish that you had taken a dip in a shit hole, / Dirty, old, creep!⁷²

Like the characters presented, the language of the farce is crass and crude, affecting the goal of humorously mocking the peasantry. Simultaneously, the underlying moral message is more universal.

These are just two examples of one kind of negative peasant stereotype from the Medieval period. The palpable scorn in the *Song of the Churls* reflects a more serious social struggle between the peasantry and the upper classes. It is significant that the Hulthem manuscript, in which the farce was recorded, was created by a literary confraternity in Bruges, and may reflect a distinctly urban view of the clash between nobles and peasants.⁷³ In the *Box-Blower*, despite the mocking message, the foolish peasant, the wily swindler, and the shrewish young wife—along with comic asides and

⁷⁰ Vroom, 147.

⁷¹ Vroom points out that several authors have discussed the play in the context of traditional medieval exempla presented in sermons that warn against being taken in by the devil, 42.

⁷² Vroom, 152.

⁷³ On the origin of the Hulthem Manuscript, see Hermans, 78; Herman Pleij, "Restyling 'Wisdom,' Remodeling the Nobility, and Caricaturing the Peasant: Urban Literature in the Late Medieval Low Countries," *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 32, no. 4 (2002): 689–704, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3656151>. Pleij discusses the role of urban identity formation vis à vis the peasant. For a discussion of the peasant as fool, see 695–696.

sexual innuendo—provide comic relief to the cautionary tale.⁷⁴ The blend of comedy and mockery is more characteristic of the visual tradition that emerged in later centuries, although some artists do tread the line of outright condemnation offered by the *Song of the Churls*. The peasant as a symbol of excess was a theme upon which sixteenth-century German and Flemish artists would capitalize to depict peasant revelry.⁷⁵

The Sixteenth Century: Peasants and their Kermises

The theme of the festive peasant in the Netherlands is inextricably tied to the celebration of the kermis. Kermis is a term derived from from church (*kerk*) and mass (*mis*) that denoted an annual celebration on the anniversary of the founding of a church or parish, or in some cases, the feast day of a patron saint. A verse in the *Song of the Churls* makes specific mention of kermis celebrations:

To the kermis goes the lout. / Then he thinks himself a duke. / And there he lays about / With a rusty stave or crook. / He starts to drink of the wine, / And in his drunken drawl / He sings, ‘The world is mine, / City, land, and all.’⁷⁶

His behavior at such celebrations is described as particularly brash and uncultured:

Then he will treat the boys / To the bagpipe's tirrelirrelit. / Lord, what a hellish noise / For decent ears unfit. They jump to their feet and dance, / Their long beards bounce as well. They stamp and run and prance. God send them all to hell.⁷⁷

⁷⁴ Vroom, 57, n. 97. Vroom notes that, “‘Doosje,’ like ‘busken,’ is literally a little box but it is also an obscene reference to a woman's genitals.” The two-sided reference, then, plays on the premise that the man seeks to become more sexually desirable to his young wife.

⁷⁵ Hans-Joachim Raupp has done the most complete recent study of the development of peasant subject matter in northern European works of art. He gives a thorough history of the development of early peasant genre in his, *Bauernsatiren: Entstehung und Entwicklung des bäuerlichen Genre in der deutschen und niederländischen Kunst ca. 1470–1570* (Niederzier: Lukassen, 1986); Keith Moxey has also studied the genesis of peasant representations in his work, *Peasants, Warriors, and Wives: Popular Imagery in the Reformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

⁷⁶ Barnouw, 49.

⁷⁷ Barnouw, 49.

Both visual and textual evidence attest to the fact that such annual celebrations often strayed, or were perceived by some people to have strayed, too far from their Christian roots by turning into riotous affairs.

For example, in Nuremburg, the celebration of kermis was at the heart of a struggle between clergy and town representatives over limiting the number of feast days and other celebrations, which some authorities identified as disruptive and contrary to their religious purpose.⁷⁸ This political struggle provides the backdrop for the development of the work of German artists Sebald (1500–1550) and Barthel (1502–1540) Beham, who popularized large-scale prints of peasant festivities and set a precedent for the representation of kermis celebrations. With prints such as *Large Kermis* (fig. 23) of 1539, Sebald Beham and his brother established the foundation for festival scenes from the mid-sixteenth to the seventeenth century. Beham's village celebrations take place near both church and tavern, a setting that underscores a fundamental contradiction of the kermis.

In *Large Kermis*, Sebald Beham presents a crowded scene where villagers drink until they vomit, gamble, gorge on food, and indulge in lurid displays of public affection. Beham captures the stereotype of the peasant as a symbol of excess, presenting a scene that could serve as a suitable illustration for the *Song of the Churls*.⁷⁹ Various vignettes

⁷⁸ Alison Stewart summarizes these documents in *Before Bruegel: Sebald Beham and the Origins of Peasant Festival Imagery* (Burlington [VT]: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008), 63–70. Though most writers called for either greater temperance during festivals or for their abolition altogether, the author cites a few who discussed it in positive or neutrally descriptive terms.

⁷⁹ Like the Flemish song, the social backdrop against which Beham's images were created may have influenced the artist's views. The German Peasants' War of 1525 was still fresh in the collective memory, a popular revolt linked by many to Luther's radical religious ideas. In an attempt to understand the perspective of the artist, scholars have debated how Sebald Beham's political and religious loyalties affected his view of the peasantry. Sebald and Barthel Beham were temporarily banned from the city of Nuremburg in 1525 for expressing heretical views. In Herbert Zschelletschky, *Die drei gottlosen Maler von Nürnberg. Sebald Beham, Barthel Beham und Georg Pencz. Historische Grundlagen und ikonologische*

throughout Beham's *Large Kermis* make references to the potential for folly offered by the revelry and abandon of the kermis. At the left side of the composition a dentist works on man's teeth while a woman behind him steals his wallet, in the foreground a man vomits, and in the background others fight.⁸⁰ Beham's image incorporates scenes meant to satirize various aspects of this peasant festival. Those who sought to curtail such festivals regarded the prints as a critical commentary on their excesses. Although Beham does depict some of the more sedate activities associated with kermis gatherings, such as a vendor selling purses as well as a wedding procession in front of the church, it seems clear that he sought to emphasize the excessive behaviors of the kermis.⁸¹ There is little equivocation in his depiction of a man vomiting into the mouth of a dog or the two chickens near the tavern *in flagrante delicto*. That he puts the more negative activities in the foreground is telling, but the other activities suggest he was showing, as Alison Stewart stated, "...the dualism between acceptable and unacceptable behavior at kermis..." The overall negative tenor of his images, however, relies upon the brutishness and sensual excesses of his figures.

The Beham brothers were pupils of Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528), who played a decisive role in the popularization of peasant images. Dürer created small prints depicting individuals or groups of peasants, such as his 1514 etching of a *Dancing Peasant Couple*

Probleme ihrer Graphik zu Reformations- und Bauernkriegszeit (Leipzig: Seeman, 1975), the author argues that their anti-establishment religious views indicate they were sympathetic toward the peasantry as well because their expulsion occurred at the height of the Peasant' War. In Moxey, 1989, 29–32, Keith Moxey gives an outline of the varying points of view and asserts that the Beham's failure to acknowledge the Church's authority and practices does not mean they were also opposed to the civic authorities who supported a hierarchy that persecuted peasants. Moxey also gives a concise outline of the varying points of view.

⁸⁰ Beham borrowed this scene from a 1523 woodcut by Lucas van Leyden; Keith Moxey has posited that, "It informs us that not only are peasants a rude lot, but they are not particularly intelligent either," Moxey, 53.

⁸¹ It is this type of more neutral activity that supports Stewart's layered understanding of these scenes. In Stewart, 2008, 309, she suggests that their broad dissemination suggests a popular audience that viewed them as, "tangible records of festivals experienced and enjoyed."

(fig. 24), in which a sturdy man and woman spin across the sheet. In 1902 Heinrich Wölfflin commented on the work that, “in spite of the elephantine stamping of their feet...the peasants are not shown sneeringly as earlier, but as a character study.”⁸² Dürer’s small vignettes of peasant life do have the flavor of character studies. They are rough and clumsy people, but do not portray the indulgence seen in songs and the prints of the Beham brothers. These small studies prompted further interest in this type of picture and likely stimulated Dürer’s pupils to expand upon the theme in their kermis prints even though they opted to present a more storied—and adverse—presentation of peasant festivities.

The tradition of representing peasant festivals was transmitted to the Low Countries, largely through the distribution of prints, particularly after Dürer traveled there in the years 1521 to 1522.⁸³ During the second half of the sixteenth century, the subject became extremely popular in Flanders, and artists began to produce peasant scenes in both paintings and prints. Among the most prolific were Pieter Bruegel the Elder, Pieter van der Borcht (1540-45–1608), Maerten van Cleve (1527–1581), and the Verbeeck family.⁸⁴ Though several aspects of festival imagery became standardized, each artist depicted the subject in his own unique vision. Pieter van der Borcht’s kermis compositions were generally very crowded panoramic scenes in which dancing and carousing peasants recede into the distance. Verbeeck’s strange compositions depicting

⁸² Quoted in Walter L. Strauss, ed., The Complete Engravings, Etchings, and Drypoints of Albrecht Dürer (New York: Dover, 1973), 158.

⁸³ Philip Troutman, Albrecht Dürer: Sketchbook of His Journey to the Netherlands 1520–1521 (London: Elek Books Ltd.), 1971; According to Raupp, another important early artist for peasant genre in the Netherlands is Cornelis Massys (1513–1579). Raupp has demonstrated that the prints of Massys show the influence of the peasant festival woodcuts of the Beham brothers, which were popular with collectors and artists in the Netherlands, 205.

⁸⁴ Raupp, 265. Because several artists named Verbeeck were active during the sixteenth century in the Southern Netherlands, the attribution of specific works is often difficult.

peasant weddings are composed of grotesque and often enigmatic figures.⁸⁵ Maerten van Cleve depicted more intimate outdoor scenes of peasant revelry and even represented a brawl within a tavern interior.⁸⁶

Pieter Bruegel the Elder's visions of peasant festivity became the inspiration for many later artists. In his *Kermis at Hoboken* (fig. 25), Bruegel depicted a chaotic scene filled with debauchery in which peasants celebrate among pigs. Building upon established visual traditions of peasant festivities seen in the work of the Beham brothers, Bruegel masterfully wove a tapestry of chaos mixed with symbolism that covers a gamut of human foibles. The inscription on the print refers to peasants "...prancing around and drinking themselves as drunk as beasts," a moralizing message meant to condemn the overindulgence at kermis celebrations.⁸⁷ As discussed above, this type of censure of peasants in art and literature was familiar to Northern European viewers.⁸⁸

Significantly, the image Bruegel created is less adamant in its condemnation than the inscription on the engraving, which was probably added independently by the publisher. Many of Bruegel's figures simply converse, dance, and play games, a far more positive view of the kermis than that seen in an engraving by Pieter van der Borcht from 1559 (fig. 26). Van der Borcht reveals a scene that has devolved into total chaos, with vicious fighting and gross displays of immoderation. In the foreground, a woman hoists up her skirt to urinate in public while a man helps his child defecate on the ground. Van der Borcht's peasants are literally rolling around in their own waste. Even compared to

⁸⁵ See Vandenbroeck and Walter S. Gibson, "Verbeeck's Grotesque Wedding Feasts: Some Reconsiderations," *Simiolus* 21 (1992), 29–39.

⁸⁶ *Peasant Brawl*, c. 1565–1570, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, inv. no. GG_3565.

⁸⁷ Eddy de Jongh and Ger Luijten, *Mirror of Everyday Life: Genreprints in the Netherlands 1550-1700*, trans. Michael Hoyle (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 1997), 45.

⁸⁸ For some detailed discussions of the peasant as a symbol of vice vis à vis the Flemish artists' works, see Vandenbroeck, 79–124; Gibson, 1992, 29–39; Margaret Sullivan, *Bruegel's Peasants: Art and Audience in the Northern Renaissance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), especially 13–32.

the debauchery in Sebald Beham's *Large Kermis*, these images seem particularly grotesque.

In many of Bruegel's other works, particularly his paintings, judgments regarding the behavior of peasant festivities appear even more ambiguous. In his painting, *Peasant Dance* (fig. 27), from around 1568, Bruegel gives an overview of a village in the midst of its kermis celebration. A tavern with the kermis flag at left is juxtaposed with the church in the distance. Like Dürer's dancing peasants, Bruegel's figures stomp and spin, while others drink, and a couple at right kisses. In contrast to his prints, Bruegel's painting omits even more of the extreme examples of bad behavior, such as wanton displays of sexual promiscuity and gluttonous guzzling.

Scholars have argued vigorously since the 1970s about the intent and reception of Bruegel's images of peasant festivals.⁸⁹ The fruit of this scholarship has been a range of plausible interpretations based upon an analysis of both Bruegel's intended audience and a variety of contemporary texts. Just as those made by his German predecessors, Bruegel's peasant images likely carried a complex amalgam of intended and received meanings that fluctuated from moralizing critiques to humorous or satirical commentaries and many things in between. Largely through Bruegel's works, the representation of the peasant kermis—based upon traditional peasant stereotypes and perceptions of kermis

⁸⁹ The most famous discussion concerning the iconographical content and reception of peasant genre in general, and Bruegel's works in particular was carried out in the pages of *Simiolus* between Svetlana Alpers and Hessel Miedema in the 1970's; see Svetlana Alpers, "Bruegel's Festive Peasants," *Simiolus* 6 (1972–73): 163–176; Svetlana Alpers, "Realism as a Comic Mode: Low-Life Painting Seen through Bredero's Eyes," *Simiolus* 8 (1975–1976), 115–144; Hessel Miedema, "Realism and Comic Mode: The Peasant," *Simiolus* 9 (1977): 205–219; Svetlana Alpers, "Taking Pictures Seriously: A Reply to Hessel Miedema," *Simiolus* 10 (1978–79): 46–50; for a discussion of this debate and a description of various approaches, see Lisa Rosenthal, "Fairtime Folly and the Taming of Transgression: Adriaen van Ostade's Prints of Peasant Festivity," in Patricia Phagan, ed., Images of Women in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art: Domesticity and the Representation of the Peasant (Athens: Georgia Museum of Art, 1996), 29–33.

celebrations—became firmly established in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, the image of the peasant was varied, incorporating both ribald behavior and a lusty joy for life.

The Dawn of the Seventeenth Century—a Bruegel Revival

The sixteenth-century peasant tradition, particularly the work of Pieter Bruegel the Elder, exerted great influence over some Dutch artists in the early seventeenth century. Bruegel's subjects, which had been adopted by artists during his lifetime, persisted in some form or another until the early seventeenth century when a revival of his style and images spurred a host of responses to his work in both the Southern Netherlands and the Dutch Republic. The artist who can be given the greatest credit with furthering the the Brugel tradition is his son, Pieter Bruegel the Younger (1564/65–1637/38), who began his career as an independent master in Antwerp in the 1580s. Pieter Bruegel the Younger is most commonly known for his many copies of his father's compositions, upon which he was able to build a productive career that spanned four decades. Pieter Bruegel the Younger's works no doubt helped spread his father's landscape and peasant motifs and kept the Bruegel tradition alive and thriving after his father's death. As one scholar has noted of the younger Bruegel's copies, "They were the stand-ins that made it possible for Bruegel's art to influence several generations of painters."⁹⁰ In addition, Ostade and other artists were aware of the older master's works through prints. Haarlem inventories from the middle seventeenth century, moreover, list

⁹⁰ Peter van den Brink, ed., *Brueghel Enterprises* (Maastricht: Bonnefantmuseum; Brussels: Musées Royaux des Beaux-Arts de Belgique; Ghent: Ludion Ghent-Amsterdam, 2001), 45.

paintings by Bruegel.⁹¹ One of Ostade's pupils, Cornelis Dusart (1660–1704), owned paintings and prints by Pieter Bruegel the Elder and his son Pieter Bruegel the Younger.⁹²

David Vinckboons (1576–c.1632) was integral to the transfer of the kermis tradition of Pieter Bruegel the Elder to Holland.⁹³ In 1591, at the age of fifteen, Vinckboons immigrated to Amsterdam with his Protestant family when they fled Spanish-controlled Antwerp.⁹⁴ His outdoor merry companies recall the panoramic viewpoint and swirl of activity of the elder Bruegel, whose work he knew from prints and from studying other artists influenced by the Bruegel tradition.⁹⁵ In his painting *Village Kermis* from 1629, Vinckboons presents a village scene bisected by a large tree (fig. 28). Just as in Bruegel's *Peasant Kermis*, a church in the background is set against the tavern and its revelers in the foreground. Vinckboons does not shy away from including the unsavory elements of the kermis, as demonstrated by the activities of some members of the roiling crowd. A man vomits in the foreground, while a woman flings her drink in the air, which will likely soak the small girl standing behind her with beer. Vinckboon's adherence to traditional kermis imagery reveals how paintings, copies of paintings, prints, and the works of contemporary artists ensured that the festive peasant tradition was transmitted to the Dutch Republic.

⁹¹ For instance, the inventory of Abram de Bie and Helena Simons from 1660 showed “3 *ronde ovaeltjes*” by Bruegel, while Ambrosius Guddens 1666 accounting shows a “*Boerekermis*” by the artist, J. Paul Getty Trust, Getty Provenance Index Databases, http://www.getty.edu/research/conducting_research/provenance_index/psep.html.

⁹² Getty Provenance Index. Among the items listed in his estate in 1704 are “14 *stuks prenten van Cortone Breugel en andere*” and “*een duijveltje van Breugel*.”

⁹³ Larry Silver, Peasant Scenes and Landscapes: The Rise of Pictorial Genres in the Antwerp Art Market (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 6. Silver commented on the transmission of the Bruegel tradition: “...not only Bruegel's sons, but his forgers, such as Jacob Savery in his delicate flecked landscape drawings, or else production-line painters of peasant landscapes in his idiom like Jacob Grimmer or David Vinckboons, extended his distinctive ‘brand’ of form and content into the seventeenth century on both sides of the Scheldt border between Flanders and Holland.”

⁹⁴ Peter C. Sutton, Masters of Seventeenth-century Dutch Genre Painting (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1984), 348.

⁹⁵ Sutton, 1984, 351.

Each of the views of the peasant and rural life outlined above had some impact on Adriaen van Ostade's work. The idyllic view of country life would ultimately shape the way he presented Haarlem's "earthly paradise." Flemish presentations of raucous peasant kermises, however, also impacted Ostade's view of rural life. Early in his career, he would take his cue from the rowdy presentation of celebration. Even though his mature works are more refined in their presentation of festivity, they still retain some vestiges of that tradition in their depiction of drinking and dancing figures. My examination of Ostade's artistic development will reveal how each of these visions of rural life affected the production and reception of his works. The next chapter gives a sketch of Ostade's life and audience in Haarlem. I also discuss the life of Dutch rural inhabitants in the seventeenth century to cast more light on the artist's subject and to demonstrate that Ostade combined naturalistic details with artistic tradition.

Chapter Two: Adriaen van Ostade, A Haarlem Artist

Though Ostade would have sold some of his works in other cities, he sold most of his paintings in Haarlem, where he lived and worked his whole life. Ostade's images were likely enjoyed further afield through his etchings. Beginning in the early 1640s, he produced fifty etchings that depicted a range of subjects representative of those in his paintings and, later in his life, his watercolors. Ostade utilized a familiar stock of subjects, blending reality and artifice throughout his career to create works that read as slices of life. He enjoyed a long and productive career, distinguishing himself as a painter of rural life who was widely copied by pupils and other artists.

An examination of the lives of rural inhabitants in the seventeenth-century demonstrates that some aspects of his work do reflect their lives while others rely heavily on tradition and trends in Dutch genre painting. A review of the literature and art that celebrated Haarlem and its surroundings reveals that living in Haarlem greatly influenced Ostade's view of rural life. The city had a unique relationship with its surrounding areas, which were viewed as an important part of its identity. Haarlem's embrace of its rural environs led to a diminished separation between peasant and burgher that fostered Ostade's positive view of the former.

Ostade's Life

Adriaen van Ostade, born in Haarlem, 1610, was the fifth child of Jan Hendricx (d. 1641) and Janneke Hendricx (d. 1640), immigrants from villages in the province of Brabant, in the southern Netherlands. His father, from the village of Ostade near

Eindhoven, had married his mother, who was originally from Woensel, in Haarlem on January 6, 1605.⁹⁶ A map from Joan Blaeu's 1645 atlas, *Theatrum orbis terrarium*, locates Eindhoven and Woensel to the southeast of s'Hertogenbosch (fig. 29).⁹⁷ Little is known of Ostade's upbringing and youthful education. Extant records from the adult lives of Adriaen and his brothers and sisters, however, present a picture of them as prosperous individuals who were ingrained into the fabric of Haarlem's bourgeois class.⁹⁸

The identity of Adriaen van Ostade's teachers has not been determined with any certainty. The only record of Ostade's training comes from the artist's biography by Arnold Houbraken. He begins his life of Adriaen and Isack (1621–1649) van Ostade as follows:

Adriaen and Isack van Ostade. These were, so I understand, Lübeckers by birth, but lived most of their lives in Haarlem. Adriaan was born in the year 1610, and died 1685. Adriaen Brouwer and he were once pupils of Frans Hals, and Isack van Ostade a student of his brother...⁹⁹

⁹⁶ Adriaan van der Willigen, *Les Artistes de Harlem* (1870; reprint, Nieukoop: B. de Graaf, 1970), 235–237. In the marriage register, they are listed as “Jan Hendricx van Eyndhoven” and “Janneke Henderic de Wonsel.” In the Haarlem Baptism Registry for Adriaen, his father is listed as “Jan Hendricx van Eyndhoven.” The Death Registry indicates that a grave was opened for the spouse of Jan Hendricx in the St. Anne Cemetery on May 20, 1640. Jan Hendricx was buried in St. Bavo's on August 24, 1641. Though no documentary evidence of his profession exists, based on the fact that Eindhoven and its surrounding areas were also known for their cloth production, Adriaen's father was likely a weaver who was drawn to Haarlem for its thriving cloth industry, which was initially proposed by Van der Willigen, 237. Further, Adriaen's brother, Jan, was listed as a weaver in a 1650 document drawn up to settle Jan's debts (Jan is referred to as the brother of “Adriaan Ostade,” and he is referred to as a former baker who is now a cloth weaver), Van der Willigen, 235. Since it was common for a son to follow in his father's profession, Jan's vocation further supports the idea that Adriaen's father was a weaver. Ostade's parents may have simply come to the northern Netherlands for its greater financial opportunities in general, as did so many others in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. The bulk of the known archival information on Adriaen van Ostade comes from Van der Willigen. More detailed information about Van der Willigen's sources can be found in Neeltje Köhler, ed., *Painting in Haarlem 1500–1850: The Collection of the Frans Hals Museum*, trans. Jennifer Kilian and Katy Kist (Ghent: Ludion, 2006), 260–261. Köhler, 260, n. 5 indicates that Jan signed his name “Jan Heynircx van Ostaede” when he purchased tickets to support the lottery for the Old Men's Almshouse in 1606.

⁹⁷ Willem Janszoon and Joan Blaeu, *Theatrum orbis terrarum, sive, Atlas novus, Quarta pars Brabantiae cujus caput Sylvaduci*, 1645, University of California at Los Angeles, Charles E. Young Research Library, http://www.library.ucla.edu/yrl/reference/maps/blaeu/qvarta_branbantiae.jpg.

⁹⁸ Köhler, 258. His sister, Mayken was married to the municipal secretary of Haarlem, while his brother Hendrick was the deacon of the Reformed congregation.

⁹⁹ Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlandische konstschilders en schilderessen* (Amsterdam, 1718–1721), 1: 347, <http://www.dbnl.org/>, “Adriaan en Izaak van Ostade. Deze waren, zoo ik

Houbraken's assertion that the brothers Ostade were from the German city of Lübeck has been shown as false. Even though his declaration of Frans Hals as Ostade's teacher has yet to be confirmed, scholars generally accept this idea, as do I.

Haarlem had a long artistic tradition with roots in the Middle Ages. In his *Schilderboeck* of 1604, Karel van Mander chronicled the artists of the Netherlands following the example of Italian theorist Giorgio Vasari. He praised the city's artistic tradition in his description of the lives of a number of fifteenth- and sixteenth-century artists.¹⁰⁰ Further, Van Mander compared Haarlem to the Italian city of Florence to highlight its preeminence as an artistic center in the Netherlands. Van Mander referred to Haarlem as “wet nurse and foster mother of all the ingenious people that have excelled in all the arts.”¹⁰¹ Later, Haarlem chronicler Samuel Ampzing (1590–1632) continued this admiration of Haarlem's artists in his *Beschryvinghe Ende Lof der Stadt Haerlem in Holland*, published in 1628. As just one of the commendable aspects of Haarlem, Ampzing recognized its artists. He mentioned Frans Hals and commented, “How dashingly Frans paints people from life!”¹⁰²

Artists often began their training between the ages of twelve and fourteen. They were required to study for at least three years to gain admission to the Guild of St. Luke

't wel heb, Lubekkers van geboorte, maar hebben hunnen meesten levenstyd tot Haarlem gewoon. Adriaan is geboren in 't jaar 1610, en gestorven 1685. *Adr. Brouwer* en hy waren op een tyd Leerlingen van *Frans Hals*, en Izaak van Ostade een Leerling van zyn broeder...”

¹⁰⁰ Karel van Mander, *The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German painters, from the first edition of the Schilder-boeck (1603–1604)*, ed., trans., and with an introduction Hessel Miedema (Davaco: Doornspriek, 1994).

¹⁰¹ Pieter Biesboer, *Collections of Paintings in Haarlem, 1572–1745, Documents for the History of Collecting, Netherlandish Inventories I*, ed. Carol Togneri, (Los Angeles: The Provenance Index of the Getty Research Institute, 2001), xi.

¹⁰² Seymour Slive, ed., *Frans Hals* (London: Royal Academy of Arts, 1989), 18.

in Haarlem.¹⁰³ They also had to serve at least one year as a paid assistant who worked and earned money in the workshop of a master.¹⁰⁴ Ostade likely began his training between 1622 and 1624. At this time he would have been entrusted with assisting his master with the preparation of panels and canvases as well as cleaning brushes. He would also have learned to grind pigments and mix colors. Later, he would have learned the basics of drawing and painting.

Artists often studied with more than one master, and this is likely the case with Adriaen van Ostade. He started his training with an unknown master and then entered Hals' workshop sometime between 1625 and 1630. Ostade probably painted his first independent works around 1631, at the age of 21.¹⁰⁵ At this time, he was either an advanced student or perhaps working as an assistant in Hals' workshop. The first known mention of Adriaen as an artist is from a June 8, 1632, notarial document in which he declared at the request of Utrecht Goldsmith Gerrit van Allen that he had, "around the month of April last, painted a woman eating porridge and a smoker for the ebony woodworker Corstiaen Pieters."¹⁰⁶ Though no records cite the exact year of his entry into Haarlem's Guild of St. Luke, it was probably by 1632 because, according to guild tradition, artists generally were not allowed to sign and sell their works until they attained membership, though there were some exceptions, as with Judith Leyster at about the

¹⁰³ Biesboer, 19.

¹⁰⁴ James Welu and Pieter Biesboer, eds., *Judith Leyster: Schilderes in een mannenwereld* (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers and Haarlem: Frans Halsmuseum), 1993, 20.

¹⁰⁵ Bernhard Schnackenburg, "Die Anfänge des Bauerninterieurs bei Adriaen van Ostade," *Oud Holland* 85, no. 3 (1970): 158–169, 167. Schnackenburg has convincingly argued for a group of paintings that probably pre-date his earliest signed work from 1633.

¹⁰⁶ From the archives of Notary Jacob Steyn of Haarlem, first cited in Abraham Bredius, "Een en ander over Adriaen van Ostade," *Oud Holland* 56 (1939): 241–246, 244. "Hy, Mr. Adriaen van Ostade omtrent de maent April lestleden voor Corstiaen Pietersz, ebbenhoutwercker geschildert heft sekere pateetster ende toeback drincker." The English translation is from Köhler, 258. The purpose of the document remains unclear.

same time.¹⁰⁷ He was certainly a member by 1634, when he is first mentioned in a contribution list for the guild.¹⁰⁸

If Ostade's time in Hals' workshop, either as a pupil or an assistant, coincided with Brouwer's time in Haarlem, that would put him there sometime between 1626 and 1631. Though primarily a portraitist, Hals did paint some genre scenes that might have resonated with Ostade during the years he studied with him. Hals' *Merry Drinker* from around 1628 to 1630 is a striking and vital figure who engages the viewer (fig. 30). He makes an open-handed gesture with his right hand, while he tenuously holds a glass in his left. Vibrant, loose brushwork enlivens the image, which may be an informal portrait, a representation of the sense of taste, or perhaps a simple genre scene. In another close-up view of a merry drinker, *Peeckelhaering*, from around 1628 to 1630, Hals again imbues a single figure composition with an animation and liveliness achieved through both gesture and execution (fig. 31). Although Hals' images focus on the figures, something Ostade would only begin to do in the late 1630s and early 1640s, the interiors from his earliest years as a painter are filled with the kind of boisterous, drinking figures depicted by Hals.

The joyful spirit of Hals' painting may have affected Ostade's early paintings, but the younger artist seems not to have directly quoted his ostensible master's work. In many cases, pupils were charged with copying a master's work as part of the learning process and then to aid the master in producing works for sale.¹⁰⁹ An examination of pupils' contracts from the seventeenth century, however, reveals that a variety of

¹⁰⁷ Welu & Biesboer, 20. Leyster registered with the Guild of St. Luke in Haarlem in 1633, but her earliest-known signed work dates to 1629.

¹⁰⁸ Hessel Miedema, *De Archiefbescheiden van het St. Lukasgilde te Haarlem: 1497–1798* (Alphen aan den Rijn [Netherlands]: Canaletto, 1980), 2: 420.

¹⁰⁹ Rembrandt certainly worked this way, as scholars still struggle to determine the hand of the artist who created many of the paintings from his workshop.

arrangements between master and student were possible. Some contracts, particularly for younger students, indicated that a pupil's activities revolved solely around his instruction in the art of drawing and painting. Some specified that a student would assist the master in the preparation of palettes and brushes as part of his training. Other contracts, particularly for older students, specified that a pupil paint works to be sold under the name of and on behalf of the master.¹¹⁰ It is possible that Ostade was allowed to paint his own works or perhaps served as an assistant to Hals while in his studio. In this case, Hals' seeming lack of influence on Ostade makes more sense.

Ostade's time in Hals' workshop did bring him in contact with several other artists. In addition to Brouwer, who will be discussed in detail in chapter three, he would have met Jan Miense Molenaar, Judith Leyster, and Dirck Hals. Jan Miense Molenaar likely studied with Hals in the mid-1620s.¹¹¹ His earliest known works date to around 1627 or 1628.¹¹² Four signed works can be assigned the date 1629, though he did not become a master in the Guild until 1634.¹¹³ Molenaar depicted many of the same subjects as did Ostade in the late 1620s. In *Three Children at a Table*, from around 1628 or 1629, Molenaar portrays a group of mischievous young scamps drinking and smoking around a table (fig. 32). A boy in the center harasses the little girl seated next to him while she prepares to beat him with the shoe in her hand. This interaction is similar to that seen in several of Ostade's early paintings where rowdy young children play and fight. Though similar in subject matter, the style of the two artists is strikingly different. While

¹¹⁰ Ronald de Jager, "Meester, leerjongen, leertijd: Een analyse van zeventiende-eeuwse Noord-Nederlandse leerlingcontracten van kunstschilders, goud- en zilversmeden," *Oud Holland Jaargang* 104, no. 2 (1994): 69–110, 74.

¹¹¹ Dennis P. Weller, *Jan Miense Molenaar: Painter of the Dutch Golden Age* (Raleigh, North Carolina Museum of Art), 2002, 11.

¹¹² Weller 12.

¹¹³ Weller, 13.

Molenaer's paintings are crisp and brightly detailed, Ostade's are muted in color and dark. Molenaer also depicted a young smoker and a dentist during this time, subjects also represented by Brouwer and Ostade.¹¹⁴

Brouwer, Molenaer, and Ostade all painted series of the five senses.¹¹⁵ Hals also did a series between 1626 and 1628 in which he represented *Taste* as a young boy drinking from a glass.¹¹⁶ Konrad Renger argued that Brouwer's images that represent the senses became more individual compositions, independent of their position of a part of a series.¹¹⁷ Ostade produced a series of the five senses in 1635. In his representation of *Smell* (St. Petersburg, Hermitage), Ostade presents a mother wiping her child's bottom while a man next to her pinches his nose and recoils at the smell (fig. 33). In a 1637 series, Molenaer depicted a similar image of *Smell* (fig. 34), suggesting that the two artists were aware of one another's work beyond any time they might have spent together in Hals' studio.¹¹⁸

Although the exact nature of Ostade's relationship to Judith Leyster is unknown, Leyster was associated with Hals' workshop around 1630.¹¹⁹ Leyster's single-figured compositions, such as the *Merry Drinker* from 1629, reveal the influence of Hals (fig. 35). Her joyful figure swings his tankard aloft as he grins at the viewer. On the table before him are tobacco and accoutrements that indicate he is indulging in more than one way. Like Hals' *Merry Drinker* or *Peeckelhaering*, the painting conveys an enthusiasm

¹¹⁴ Weller, 63 and 75.

¹¹⁵ Weller, 69–74; No complete series depicting the senses exists by Brouwer, but such series are mentioned in inventories according to Konrad Renger, *Adriaen Brouwer und das niederländische Bauerngenre 1600–1660* (Munich: Hirmer Verlag, 1986), 39.

¹¹⁶ Slive, 205–207.

¹¹⁷ Renger, 38.

¹¹⁸ Weller, 142–147.

¹¹⁹ Welu & Biesboer, 71.

that may have informed Ostade's characterization of celebrating peasants, who make the same kind of bold, celebratory gestures.

According to Houbraken, Dirck Hals had earlier studied with his brother Frans. Dirck Hals' fashionable young burghers seem far removed from Ostade's bulky figures, but Ostade may have found some inspiration in Dirck's merry interiors, where groups surrounding a table drink, smoke, and play games. In Dirck's painting of *A Party at a Table* (fig. 36), a group of young burghers eat and drink in a cramped yet well-appointed room. The easy mien and simple gestures of Hals' figures is echoed by Ostade, who used such interactions to humanize his figures and develop the rapport between them. In Ostade's *Peasants Playing Cards* (St. Petersburg, Hermitage), from 1633, a man on the right casually stands over the group at the table in the same way that the well-dressed man in black observes the group before him in Dirck's painting (fig. 37). Despite living in different worlds, the figures in both paintings suggest the ease and comfort of these gatherings.

Although little is known of Ostade's upbringing and education beyond his artistic training, Adriaen and his siblings were prosperous individuals who were ingrained into the fabric of Haarlem's middle class, which consisted of successful shopkeepers, innkeepers, shippers, and artists among others.¹²⁰ His sister, Mayken, was married to the municipal secretary of Haarlem, while his brother, Hendrick, was the deacon of the Reformed congregation.¹²¹ Records reveal that in 1650 Adriaen purchased a house for

¹²⁰ Pieter Biesboer, *Collections of Paintings in Haarlem, 1572–1745, Documents for the History of Collecting, Netherlandish Inventories I*, ed. Carol Togneri, (Los Angeles: The Provenance Index of the Getty Research Institute, 2001), 10.

¹²¹ Neeltje Köhler, ed., *Painting in Haarlem 1500–1850: The Collection of the Frans Hals Museum*, trans. Jennifer Kilian and Katy Kist (Ghent: Ludion, 2006), 258.

1300 guilders, a typical amount for a middle class home in Haarlem.¹²² The price of his home demonstrates that, although successful, Ostade was less prosperous than members of the aristocracy, wealthy merchants, and an upper middle class of trained professionals such as attorneys and doctors.¹²³

Marriage later improved Ostade's wealth and status. On July 26, 1638, at the age of twenty-seven, he married Macheltje Pietersdochter. Several years later, on March 8, 1642, Ostade and his first wife made their wills and she died in September of the same year. After his first wife's death in 1642, he married a second time fifteen years later, on May 26, 1657, to Anna Ingels who came from a well-to-do family in Amsterdam.¹²⁴ Anna died before their tenth anniversary and, on November 24, 1666, she was buried in St. Bavo's for a fee of twenty-four guilders, an expensive burial for the time.¹²⁵ Ostade's only child, a daughter named Johanna Maria, also married well. She was betrothed to a physician in 1685, just before the artist's death.¹²⁶ Ostade was a member of the St. George Civic Guard Company (*Oude Schuts*) from 1633 to 1669. He was a musketeer in 1636 and 1639 and a pikeman in 1642. Membership as a militiaman and positions in the Guild of St. Luke would not have been forthcoming had he not been a middle class burgher making a comfortable living in Haarlem.¹²⁷

Ostade trained a number of artists over the course of his career, beginning soon after he became a master. His brother Isack van Ostade was probably the first of his pupils, and he began his training any time between 1632 and 1636. Isack is first listed in

¹²² Köhler, 259 and Biesboer, 16.

¹²³ Biesboer, 10.

¹²⁴ Van der Willigen, 237.

¹²⁵ Van der Willigen, 238

¹²⁶ Köhler, 259.

¹²⁷ Köhler, 259. He was not of the upper classes and was therefore not allowed to attain officer status, but he was able to surpass the lowest rank of ensign.

guild records in 1643 but was possibly a member by 1640 when he signed his first paintings.¹²⁸ Thomas Wijck (c. 1620–1677), primarily known as an Italianate artist, may have begun his career in Ostade’s workshop alongside Isack.¹²⁹ According to writer and painter Jacob Campo Weyerman, Jan Steen (1625/26–1679) was Ostade’s student.¹³⁰ Weyerman based his assertion on the testimony of Steen’s artist friend, Carel de Moor (1655–1738). If such an apprenticeship occurred, it would have been in the first half of the 1640s. Steen’s work from this time reveals Ostade’s influence, particularly in his domestic peasant scenes. Later, Ostade would be influenced by Steen’s festive peasant images, particularly peaceful images of recreation outside country taverns.

Cornelis Bega (1631/32–1664), whose first dated paintings are from 1650, was a student in Ostade’s workshop sometime in the 1640s.¹³¹ Bega adopted many of his peasant subjects from Ostade and utilized them throughout his career, though a comparison of the two artists reveals that Bega never adopted the more sympathetic view toward the peasant seen in Ostade’s late and mature works. Ostade’s most prolific pupil was his last, Cornelis Dusart (1660–1704). Dusart entered the Guild of St. Luke in 1679.¹³² In his some of his work, Dusart emulated Ostade’s late style very closely, but at other times he displayed a more satirical edge. Extant evidence reveals Ostade had a

¹²⁸ Kaufmann, 17.

¹²⁹ Bernhard Schnackenburg, “Die Anfänge von Thomas Adriaensz. Wyck (um 1620–1677) als Zeichner und Maler,” *Oud Holland* 106, no. 3 (1992): 143–156. Wijck’s early works show the influence of Ostade’s paintings from the 1630s.

¹³⁰ Guido M.C. Jansen, ed., *Jan Steen: Painter and Storyteller* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 28.

¹³¹ Mary Ann Scott, “Cornelis Bega (1631/32–1664) as Painter and Draughtsman” (Ph. D. diss. University of Maryland College Park, 1984), 1: 8–9.

¹³² Sutton, 1984, 196.

thriving studio throughout his career with several other less well-known pupils—and no doubt unrecorded or undiscovered others as well.¹³³

Ostade enjoyed a prolific and successful career that spanned decades. Though his production as a painter decreased in his later years, several paintings can be dated to the 1670s. In addition, two of his ten dated etchings are from 1671 and 1679, and several others can be dated to this period based on style.¹³⁴ Ostade's work as a draftsman, however, expanded in his later years, with half of his known drawings dating between 1670 and 1685.¹³⁵ He also began to paint vivid watercolors around 1672. A total of fifty are known, and in them, he depicted the same subjects seen in his paintings.¹³⁶

Ostade remained artistically active until his death. On May 2, 1685, Adriaen van Ostade was buried in St. Bavo's Church. An invitation encouraged visitors to pay their respects at two o'clock in the afternoon "as a friend" and "in a long coat" to the New Kruysstraat, the artist's last residence (fig. 38).¹³⁷ On July 19 there was an auction of

¹³³ Arnold Houbraken wrote that Michiel van Musscher (1645–1705), an artist originally from Rotterdam, informed him that he had studied with Ostade for three months in 1667. Van Musscher eventually settled in Amsterdam and painted high life interiors and portraits; Houbraken, 2: 58, Abraham Bredius, "De Schilder Jan de Groot," *Oud Holland* 5, no. 1 (1887): 64–65 and A. Welcker, "Jan de Groot: Leerling en navolger van Adriaen van Ostade," *Oud Holland* 57, no. 5 (1940): 149–159. Houbraken also wrote that Jan de Groot (1650–1726) studied with Ostade in 1666. A little known artist, De Groot's relationship to Ostade is revealed in a few of his drawings, which resemble the subject and style of his master's work; Hessel Miedema, *De Archiefbescheiden van het St. Lukaskilde te Haarlem: 1497–1798* (Alphen aan den Rijn [Netherlands]: Canaletto, 1980), 2: 672. Houbraken also mentions Oudendijck's tutelage with Ostade in his biography of the artist's son Adriaen Evertsz Oudendijck (1677–1704), Houbraken, 3:53. Guild records show that Ostade paid an apprenticeship fee for another lesser known artist, Evert van Oudendijck (d. 1695), in 1663; Sutton, 1984, 196.

¹³⁴ Patricia Phagan, ed., *Adriaen van Ostade: Etchings of Peasant Life in Holland's Golden Age* (Athens: Georgia Museum of Art, 1994), 152–155 (*The Cobbler*, 1671), 94–97 (*The Doll*, 1679); See also 51–52 (*Smoker Leaning on the Back of a Chair*, c. 1671), 76–79 (*Man and Woman Conversing*, c. 1670–73), 83–85 (*Mother with Two Children*, c. 1670s), 98–101 (*The Schoolmaster*, c. 1670s), 138–140 (*The Smoker and the Drinker*, c. 1670s), 141–144 (*The Woman Winding upon a Reel*, c. 1670s).

¹³⁵ Bernhard Schnackenburg, *Adriaen van Ostade, Isack van Ostade: Zeichnungen und Aquarelle: Gesamtdarstellung mit Werkkatalogen*, (Hamburg: E. Hauswedell, 1981), 1: 41.

¹³⁶ Schnackenburg, 1981, 1:41.

¹³⁷ Van der Willigen, 240. For the invitation, see Louis Godefroy, *L'Oeuvre grave de Adriaen van Ostade* (Paris: Louis Godefroy, 1930), 39. Als vriendt...met de Lange Mantel.

Ostade's estate held on behalf of his daughter.¹³⁸ The artist's death marked the end of a career that had spanned more than fifty years and resulted in great financial and artistic success.

A Painter of Peasants and his Audience

Ostade distinguished himself as a painter of peasants early in his career. Just as other artists gravitated toward landscape—or, in the case of Ostade's teacher Frans Hals, to portraiture—he, too, became a specialist. Although he experimented with landscapes and even a religious scene during the late 1630s and early 1640s, his favorite subject was the peasant.¹³⁹ Both De Bie and Houbraken specifically mention his depiction of peasants in their early biographies of the artist. They noted his specialization as a key part of his artistic identity. Cornelis de Bie wrote of Ostade:

His inclination to this liberal art is mostly due to the Peasant Kermis, roughened farmers, houses, stables, and other drolleries of the peasantry. All of which he knew how to paint so nice and pleasantly that they themselves cannot be improved or more life-like.¹⁴⁰

De Bie's reference to painting as a "liberal art" was a standard rhetorical device dating back to the fifteenth century, when artists such as Leonardo da Vinci argued that painting was as noble an undertaking as other liberal arts such as poetry and music. It seems, then, that Ostade's "low" subject matter did not diminish his status as an artist in De Bie's eyes. Houbraken, too, identified Ostade as a specialist. He wrote:

¹³⁸ Van Der Willigen, 240 and Köhler, 259.

¹³⁹ For instance, see *Landscape with an Old Oak*, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. SK-A-4093, Bob Haak, "Adriaen van Ostade, Landschap met de Oude Eik," *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 12 (1964), 5–11 as well as the *The Annunciation to the Shepherds* (fig. 57).

¹⁴⁰ Cornelis de Bie, *Het Gulden Cabinet der Edel Vry Schilderconst* (Antwerp: Jan Meyssen, 1662), 258, <http://books.google.com>, "Zijn gheneghentheynt tot dese vry const is meest vervallen op Boere Kermissen / Boeren gheruygh / huysen stallinghen ende andere snaeckerijen tot landbouvery dienende / allen het welck hy soo aerdich ende aenghenaem weet te schilderen dat de selve niet te verbeteren en sijt oft naerder het leven en connen comen..." My thanks to Henriette Rahusen for her assistance with this translation.

He so wittily and naturally portrayed inns and taverns, with all their equipment, as well as anyone ever had. And the little figures in their clothing, in all sorts of gatherings, so natural and witty, that one wonders how he was able to think of it. In a word, he has painted the whole of peasant life with a paintbrush so naturally...¹⁴¹

Then, as now, Ostade was an artist who was truly identified with the subject of peasants, with which he carved a successful niche for himself in the market.¹⁴²

The rural inhabitants Ostade depicted were far below his own station as a middle class burgher. The buyers of his paintings were primarily middle to upper class individuals from Haarlem who bought these works on the open market, but he also sold works in other cities, particularly Amsterdam.¹⁴³ Artists could sell their works in a public setting in Haarlem only twice a year, on the annual market days of St. John's and St. Luke's feast days.¹⁴⁴ Otherwise, they sold them from their studios and even through dealers. They were also able to sell their works at free markets in other cities and in markets held outside city walls. On August 13, 1641, British traveler John Evelyn visited an art market in Rotterdam. He wrote:

We arrived late at Rotterdam, where was their annual mart or fair, so furnished with pictures (especially landscapes and drolleries, as they call those clownish representations), that I was amazed. Some of these I bought and sent into England. The reason of this store of pictures, and their cheapness, proceeds from their want of land to employ their stock, so that it is an ordinary thing to find a common farmer lay out two or three thousand pounds in this commodity. Their houses are full of them, and they vend them at their fairs to very great gains.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Arnold Houbraken, De groote schouburgh der Nederlandische konstschilders en schilderessen, (Amsterdam, 1718–1721), 347–348, <http://books.google.com>, “Herbergjes en kroegjes, met hun gantschen toestel, heeft hy zoodanig geestig en natuurlyk weten te verbeelden, als ooit ymant gedaan heeft. Als ook de beeltjes in hunnebekleeding, en allerhande bedryven, zoo natuurlyk boers en geestig, dat het om te verwonderen is, hoe hy't heft weten te bedenken.”

¹⁴² Though no catalog raisonné has yet been published for Ostade, the number of works from this period in documented in public and private collections attests to their volume.

¹⁴³ Biesboer, 41.

¹⁴⁴ Biesboer, 42.

¹⁴⁵ John Evelyn, The Diary of John Evelyn, William Bray, ed., (London: M. Walter Dunne, 1901), 1: 19, <http://archive.org/stream/diaryofjohnevely01eveliala#page/19/mode/1up>.

Less affluent middle, and even some lower, class individuals were able to afford paintings as well. British traveller Peter Mundy observed in 1640 that even middle class craftsman displayed paintings. He wrote:

As For the art off Painting and the affection off the people to Pictures, I thincke none other goe beeyond them, there having bin in this Country Many excellent Men in thatt Facullty, some att presentt, as Rimbrantt, etts. All in generall striving to adorne their houses, especially the outer or street roome, with costly peeces, Butchers and bakers not much inferiour in their shoppes, which are Fairely sett Forth, yea many tymes blacksmithes, Coblers, etts., will have some picture or other by their Forge and in their stalle. Such is the generall Notion, enclination and delight that these Countrie Native[s] have to Paintings.¹⁴⁶

These assessments indicate that even some wealthier members of the peasantry were able to acquire works of art. The volume of paintings produced in the seventeenth century reveals that a large cross-section of social classes bought these works.

Commissioned works were the exception in Haarlem and often took the form of history paintings as well as portraits and group portraits for municipal authorities.¹⁴⁷ Portraitists were the only artists who relied on commissions for their livelihood.¹⁴⁸ Nevertheless, artists had other avenues through which to sell their work, including lotteries. Records show that in 1634 a painting by Ostade was raffled by two other artists in a lottery held at a Haarlem inn.¹⁴⁹ In 1641, Ostade and fellow artist Wouter Knijff organized a lottery to sell a number of their paintings.¹⁵⁰ In 1642 Ostade refused to sign a petition against the many lotteries being held in the city, probably because he used them as an outlet for his work.¹⁵¹ The archives of the Guild of St. Luke indicate that Adriaen's

¹⁴⁶ Peter Mundy, *The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia, 1608–1667*, Richard Temple, ed. (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1925), 70, <http://archive.org/details/travelspetermun00mundgoog>.

¹⁴⁷ Biesboer, 23–24.

¹⁴⁸ Biesboer, 24–25.

¹⁴⁹ Köhler, 258. That these lotteries were common occurrences, attested to by the petition seeking to curtail them, suggests that these sales were outside the public sales allowed on specified market days in Haarlem.

¹⁵⁰ Köhler, 259.

¹⁵¹ Köhler, 258.

brother Isack had business with at least one professional dealer, Leendert Hendriksz Volmarijn, but he was from Rotterdam. A 1643 case was brought before the Guild for arbitration over a set of paintings the dealer ordered from Isack.¹⁵² Whereas professional dealers played an important role in the art market in Amsterdam and Delft, works of art in Haarlem were sold mostly by artists themselves, who, hence, also worked as dealers.¹⁵³ Enterprising artists would have kept a stock of paintings by themselves and other artists. The role of artists as dealers was widespread in the Netherlands. For example, both Rembrandt and Vermeer acted as dealers.¹⁵⁴ At the time of his death, Ostade had in his possession more than 200 paintings, by himself and others, indicating that he, too, probably acted as a dealer.¹⁵⁵

Works of art were investment commodities, particularly for members of the middle class since the real estate and bonds markets were dominated by the elite.¹⁵⁶ Paintings could be exchanged for real estate or for other goods and were sometimes even used to settle debts. In 1640, a contract stipulated that Ostade should repay a debt to Salomon van Ruysdael by painting for him for five hours to produce a work worth seven guilders.¹⁵⁷

Seventeenth-century inventories offer some insight into Ostade's buyers. Pieter Biesboer has identified fifty-eight paintings by Adriaen van Ostade in Haarlem inventories between 1662 and 1715. Another twenty-three works are listed only by the

¹⁵² Lea Eckerling Kaufman, "The Paintings of Isack van Ostade 1621-1649" (Ph.d. diss. University of California Los Angeles, 1995), 1: 19.

¹⁵³ Biesboer, 29.

¹⁵⁴ John Michael Montias, "Art Dealers in the Seventeenth-Century Netherlands," *Simiolus* 18, no. 4. (1988): 244-256, 245.

¹⁵⁵ Köhler, 259.

¹⁵⁶ Biesboer, 40.

¹⁵⁷ Köhler, 259. The reason for this debt to Ruysdael is not given, but I tend to agree with Lea Eckerling Kaufman that Ostade may have been paying board and tuition for his younger brother Isack, Kaufman, 112.

name of Ostade and may be the work of Adriaen or his brother Isack.¹⁵⁸ For most inventories at the time, the paintings are listed according to where they were kept in the house. For example, the 1681 inventory of Daniel Cloribus, a prosperous merchant who owned several houses and whose inventory includes forty-seven paintings and many luxury items, listed a painting by Adriaen van Ostade “*inde beste kamer.*”¹⁵⁹ Cloribus displayed Ostade’s painting in the living room alongside his most expensive furniture and paintings, including a piece by Hendrick Goltzius. Ostade’s painting, the subject of which is not listed, is valued at thirty guilders, while Goltzius’ work was worth 120 guilders. Another painting by [Jan] “*van Goijen*” is valued at only six guilders.¹⁶⁰

Biesboer notes that an upper middle class accountant named Gerrit ten Bergh owned sixty paintings in 1669, most of which were valued at ten guilders or less.¹⁶¹ His inventory contains a mixture of landscapes, genre scenes, and still lifes, a mixture typical of Haarlem inventories of the time. Among his possessions was “*Een bedalaer van Adriaen van Ostade,*” [a beggar], valued at ten guilders. Judith Loreijn, the daughter of a merchant who later became a brewer, had five paintings by Ostade. A 1707 inventory reveals that Maria van Strijp, the daughter of a linen merchant, owned two paintings by Ostade upon her death: “*Een trontje*” that was kept in the *voorhuijs*, or front hall, and a “*Een besje,*” that was in the *grootte sijkamer*, an elegant reception area found in larger houses.¹⁶² A 1684 inventory indicates that Aeltje Pieters Begga, daughter of a silversmith and sister to Ostade student Cornelis Bega, owned “*Een schilderij sijnde een copij naer*

¹⁵⁸ Biesboer, 384–385.

¹⁵⁹ Biesboer, 261–263.

¹⁶⁰ The size of a work of art was an important aspect of its price, with larger paintings requiring greater effort and therefore fetching higher prices. Therefore, it is difficult to make comparisons or assessments between the prices of Ostade’s various works, or those by Ostade and other artists, without that knowledge, which is not provided in inventories.

¹⁶¹ Biesboer, 213–215.

¹⁶² Biesboer, 324–325.

Ostade toeback roockers.”¹⁶³ It is possible that the copy was a painting by her brother though twelve paintings in the collection are identified specifically by his name. The notation suggests that Ostade and his style and subjects were well-enough known to distinguish between an original and a copy.¹⁶⁴

Ostade’s penchant for repeating subjects and motifs over the course of several decades confirms his works remained popular among collectors. His many pupils and followers also worked within the framework of his very recognizable style. In discussing genre painters, Pieter Biesboer has observed that, “If the popularity of a master can be judged by how many followers he had and how many copies were made after his work, Adriaen van Ostade and Adriaen Brouwer appear to have been the most successful.”¹⁶⁵ Though his largest audience was likely in Haarlem, Ostade’s paintings also made their way to other Dutch cities. In Amsterdam, the 1664 death inventory of Nicolaes Lenerts lists thirty paintings. The inventory reveals an eclectic mix of mythological and religious scenes, landscapes, portraits, and genre paintings. The only two with an artist’s name attached to them are two works by Adriaen van Ostade, depicting “a horse with a groom” and “a barn with cows.”¹⁶⁶

Ostade painted two commissioned group portraits that depict the kinds of families who owned his works. In a 1654 *Portrait of a Family* (Louvre), Ostade presented ten members of a family in a well-appointed room that boasts four large paintings as well as

¹⁶³ Biesboer, 273.

¹⁶⁴ Biesboer, 273.

¹⁶⁵ Biesboer, 38.

¹⁶⁶ “The Montias Database of 17th Century Dutch Art Inventories,” The Frick Collection, <http://research.frick.org/montias>. “*een paertje met een stal knecht, van Ostade f 16:--:--*” and “*een stal met kojien van item [Van Ostade] f 16:--:--*.”

an ornately carved marble fireplace (fig. 39).¹⁶⁷ In keeping with bourgeois custom of the time, all but two of the young girls wear subdued black velvet clothing with bright white, starched collars. A large bouquet of roses and carnations on the right and several scattered flowers in the foreground attest to the familial love that unites this group. A painting hanging at the left represents *Christ and the Little Children*, no doubt a reference to the Christian context in which the young people in the portrait are raised.¹⁶⁸ The subjects of the other three paintings depicted in this scene are more difficult to discern, but Hofstede de Groot theorized that the largest genre scene might be the work of Frans Hals.¹⁶⁹ The work on the fireplace mantel, too, appears to be a genre piece, perhaps one of Ostade's own paintings, while the smallest painting may be a night landscape. The mixture of subjects—religious, genre, and landscape—is similar to that seen in the inventory of Nicolaes Lenerts.¹⁷⁰

Ostade's only other formal family portrait depicts the *De Goyer Family* of Amsterdam (Museum Bredius), from the 1650s (fig. 40).¹⁷¹ Based upon the 1684 inventory of Geertruyda Questiers, the sitters have been identified as Hendrick de Goyer and his wife Maria, along with her sister Catharina.¹⁷² The inventory also indicates that the fourth figure in the painting is Ostade's self-portrait. Standing behind the three seated figures, he makes a courtly gesture of deference. Three paintings—all of which seem to

¹⁶⁷ Jacques Foucart, *Catalogue des peintures flamandes et hollandaises du musée du Louvre* (Paris: Gallimard, 2009), inv. 1679, 195.

¹⁶⁸ Foucart, 195.

¹⁶⁹ Cornelis Hofstede de Groot, *A Catalogue Raisonné of the Works of the Most Eminent Dutch Painters of the Seventeenth Century*, (Teaneck [(N.J.) Somerset House, 1976), 411.

¹⁷⁰ See note 156.

¹⁷¹ Albert Blankert, *Museum Bredius: Catalogus van de Schilderijen en Tekeningen* ('s-Gravenhage: Dienst voor Schone Kunst der Gemeente 's-Gravenhage, 1980), 95–96.

¹⁷² Abraham Bredius, "Een en ander over Adriaen van Ostade," *Oud Holland* 56 (1939): 241–246, 241; see also Albert Blankert and Th. Van Velzen, eds., *Dutch Masterworks from the Bredius Museum: A Connoisseurs Collection* (The Hague: Bredius Association, 1985), cat. 29, 88–89.

be portraits—adorn the walls of this upper middle class Amsterdam home. As noted by Bredius, Ostade was probably known to this prominent Catholic family by virtue of his marriage to Anna Engels, also an Amsterdam Catholic.¹⁷³

Did Ostade perceive a conflict between his own burgher status and his identity as an artist who represented the rural lower class? A painting depicting *The Artist in His Studio* (Rijksmuseum), probably from the 1640s, offers an interesting perspective on this question (fig. 41).¹⁷⁴ The work presents a humble artist at work in a shabby studio with two young assistants in the background preparing materials. The artist—dressed in outdated Burgundian clothing—leans on a maulstick as he paints his work. The panel shows the outlines of a peasant cottage, not unlike the one seen in *Peasants Outside a Cottage* (Kassel) (fig. 42). A façade surrounded by large tree branches and foliage dominates one side of the panel, while the background recedes into the distance on the other side.

¹⁷³ Whether or not Ostade himself was Catholic is unknown. Van der Willigen, 237. According to the marriage register, his first wife, Macheltje Pietersdochter, was Catholic; Eckerling, 13, suggests that the fact that the two had a civil ceremony (the records were in the Marriage Register of the Gemeentearchief) rather than in the church register attest to the fact that they were of different faiths; Geziëna Frouke van der Ree-Scholten, ed. *Deugd boven geweld: een geschiedenis van Haarlem, 1245–1995* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1995), 205, Cut off from the official Church hierarchy after the Reformation, Catholics assemblies in the northern Netherlands were considered by Rome as mission churches, and Dutch Catholics struggled to organize and form connections with the central church. Though they were forced to operate discreetly, the Catholic community in Haarlem became a center for the development of a structure for the Catholic Church in the Dutch Republic; Köhler, 258, Ostade had been confirmed in the Reformed Church on October 6, 1632, at the age of twenty-two, but he may have converted to Catholicism at the time of either of his marriages; Charles H. Parker, *Faith on the Margins: Catholics and Catholicism in the Dutch Golden Age* (Cambridge [MA]: Harvard University Press, 2008), 68. Records indicate that interfaith marriages did exist in Holland, but they were uncommon. Statistics for Haarlem interfaith marriages are not given, but the author notes that in Amsterdam, a city with both a large Reformed and Catholic community, only 118 interfaith marriages were recorded between the years 1578 and 1700; It is reasonable to think he would have converted, especially after his second marriage, since Anna Engels' family was prominent in the Catholic community.

¹⁷⁴ Annette de Vries, "Professie end strategie. Overdenkingen bij Adriaen van Ostades De Schilder in Zijn Atelier," *De Zeventiende Eeuw* 23 (2007): 179–194. The author notes that proposed dates vary from the late 1640s to around 1663 when a similar work in Dresden is dated, 183. The muted colors and darkness of the work suggest the earlier date, however.

The rustic interior of the artist's studio is similar to the peasant cottages depicted by Ostade during the 1640s. The dingy floor and possessions surrounding the artist and his assistants are much like that seen in *Peasants Drinking and Making Music* (Philadelphia Museum of Art) (fig. 43). A glass window on the left illuminates this largely dark interior, which Ostade rendered in a palette of browns with golden highlights. The artist in the painting uses the bright light from the window to better see his work. A variety of his artist's tools are spread around the room. A glass container, probably filled with oil for mixing colors, sits on the windowsill. It is surrounded by a palette, t-square, and bunches of brushes. Ostade's artist has his back to the viewer, which confers upon him a sense of anonymity. However, the scene provides an interesting view into Ostade's self-perception. With tongue-in-cheek humor, he offers a vision of a painter of peasants, which stands in striking contrast to Ostade's prosperous appearance in Frans Hals' portrait of the artist from 1647 (fig. 3). The image of a well-coiffed burgher holding his leather gloves is worlds away from the grungy artist toiling away in his dank cottage that Ostade depicted.

Artist in His Studio suggests that Ostade contemplated the vast rift between his identity as a Haarlem burgher and the "low" content of his paintings. The subject was important enough to Ostade that he painted two versions of the artist's studio and also made an etching of it. The etching is undated, but it probably dates to the 1660s, two decades after the Rijksmuseum painting and it went through five states during Ostade's lifetime (fig. 44).¹⁷⁵ The crisp, refined etching style reveals a much cleaner and more

¹⁷⁵ Phagan, 168–173. In the fifth through seventh states of the work (the seventh was issued posthumously), a Latin inscription, translated, reads: Though you a painter, paint a painting with Apelles' art which now fools painters, and now the birds. Yet, gnawing envy, unless fortune bless you, will take away the prizes worthy of your talents," Phagan, 171. The poem is a reference to the ancient painting competition between

well-organized studio than that seen in the painting. A larger, brighter window reveals a more architecturally complex space with a winding wooden staircase in place of the simple ramshackle paling in the painting. Despite these stylistic differences, the fundamental elements remain the same. The print depicts an artist in tattered clothing crouched over his panel and leaning on a maulstick. Ostade's artist is an unpretentious craftsman, much like the simple farmers in his paintings. As Annette de Vries has observed, Ostade eschews the tendency to use his self-portrait to aggrandize the profession of painting, a trope used since the Renaissance to cast the work of an artist as a liberal art.¹⁷⁶ Instead of presenting the intellectual gentleman artist, Ostade presented the craftsman, emphasizing the manual labor and the materiality of the painter's work. By including two assistants—one grinds and the other mixes colors—he offered an insight into the menial tasks that were part of an artist's training. Ostade transformed the image of the gentleman artist sought by so many others into a simple laborer, a craftsman ostensibly worthy of the peasants he depicted.

Specialization as a peasant genre painter was a way for Ostade to distinguish himself as an artist in a competitive market. Nevertheless, during the 1640s, as Ostade entered his second decade of productivity, the number of painters registered with the Guild of St. Luke in Haarlem dropped by nearly half the levels reached in Haarlem between 1620 and 1630.¹⁷⁷ These reduced numbers (from forty to twenty-one) reflect a leveling off in the market as the economic boom caused by southern immigration began

Zeuxis and Parrhasius told by Pliny the Elder in which Zeuxis painting of grapes fooled the birds who pecked at its surface, while Parrhasius trompe l'oeil painting of a curtain actually fooled Zeuxis. The second part of the poem is an admonishment to the artist to avoid the vice of envy, which may curtail his successes, and is perhaps a reference to the humble circumstances of this painter.

¹⁷⁶ De Vries, 183.

¹⁷⁷ Biesboer, 40–41.

to stabilize. Some artists, such as Jan Miense Molenaer, left the city to pursue the more plentiful opportunities in Amsterdam.¹⁷⁸ That Ostade began his artistic career at the beginning of this decline makes it all the more remarkable that he was able to prosper as an artist. One way he succeeded was to produce a high volume of paintings, prints, and drawings focused on genre scenes. Specialization reduced costs by allowing for quick reproduction of stock subjects and therefore helped increase productivity.¹⁷⁹ The portrait of Ostade that accompanied his biography in Houbraken included several of his peasant prints below the artist's image (fig. 7). A putto gazes at the portrait and chuckles to himself at the funny antics of Ostade's peasants. The *Artist in His Studio* and its copies and variations suggest he actively cultivated his image as a painter of peasants.

Dutch Rural Life in the Seventeenth Century

What does it mean to refer to a "peasant" in the Dutch Republic? As Jan de Vries has noted, rural society rarely has its own voice.¹⁸⁰ What historians can glean from archival documents generally relates to financial matters, and an understanding of the daily life of the peasant is difficult to reconstruct. Consequently, many scholars have been drawn to Ostade's works as a means of understanding some of the finer points of a peasant household and its activities. In the Dutch Republic, there were various classes of rural inhabitants, some of whom even owned land and rented it to other farmers.¹⁸¹ In some cases, one might have worked and rented land owned by a burgher, making him both tenant and landlord. During the Middle Ages, the Church owned more of the rural

¹⁷⁸ Biesboer, 41.

¹⁷⁹ John Michael Montias, "Cost and Value in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art," *Art History* 10 1987, 462.

¹⁸⁰ Jan de Vries, "De Boer," in *Gestalten van de Gouden Eeuw: Een Hollands Groepsportret*, eds. H.M. Belien, A.Th. van Deursen, and G.J. van Setten (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1995), 282.

¹⁸¹ De Vries, "De Boer," 309.

land than the aristocracy in the northern Netherlands. With the Reformation, this land fell under the control of the civil authorities, who in turn sold it to private parties.¹⁸² In Holland, then, aristocrats owned around ten percent of rural land, leaving the rest to municipal governments, burghers, and the peasants themselves.¹⁸³ In addition, land reclamation projects increased arable land as much as thirty percent in some areas, expanding the potential for farming and profit.¹⁸⁴

Dutch rural society underwent a transition that began in the late sixteenth century and continued well into the seventeenth in which farmers increasingly became “agricultural entrepreneurs,” who focused on one or two crops for sale rather than the broad-based subsistence farming of earlier times.¹⁸⁵ This enterprising way of doing business indicates a sophistication on the part of some farmers that is seemingly absent in Ostade’s paintings. In addition, many rural folk did not make their living from cultivating and selling crops. These individuals worked in support of the life of the villages in and around which farmers lived. Villages and small towns were generally their own self-sufficient entities with a wide variety of goods and services available to support them.¹⁸⁶ Overall, Ostade’s prints, drawings, and paintings reflect some of this rural diversity.

Prosperity varied a great deal among the rural population. The abundance of the Golden Age was shared not only by the upper class urban population, but also by the lower classes. Like many people in the Republic, peasants lived a more comfortable and refined lifestyle than they had previously. Jonathan Israel has observed that, “Even the poorest part of Dutch rural society... experienced increased prosperity and agricultural

¹⁸² De Vries, “De Boer,” 308–309.

¹⁸³ De Vries, “De Boer,” 308.

¹⁸⁴ De Vries, “De Boer,” 309.

¹⁸⁵ This is the term used by Jan de Vries in “De Boer,” 282.

¹⁸⁶ De Vries, “De Boer,” 310.

expansion during the first half of the seventeenth century.”¹⁸⁷ Jan de Vries detailed the growing level of luxury articles in the Dutch peasant household throughout the seventeenth century.¹⁸⁸ He further observed that, “...the seventeenth-century rural population of the region was economically specialized, mobile, educated, and receptive to urban cultural values.”¹⁸⁹ This prosperity was at its height from the end of the sixteenth century until the 1660s when a decline in product and land prices inaugurated a slump in the rural economy.¹⁹⁰ The boom had already been at its apex from the beginning of the seventeenth century through the 1620s and 1630s, suggesting that the transformation of the peasant’s wellbeing in Ostade’s work was not solely a response to the actual character of life among the rural classes.

Convenience and proximity eliminated any gulf that might have separated urban and rural in the seventeenth century, and many members of the urban population probably had more contact with the peasant class during this period than in the Middle Ages. Increased trade among classes and a larger urban population meant that peasants were specializing and producing goods to be brought to the city to sell.¹⁹¹ De Vries has concluded that:

...it cannot be said that animosity characterized the relations between city and country. In most cases the two achieved a sort of symbiosis, or formed an economic continuum.¹⁹²

¹⁸⁷ Jonathan Israel, The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477-1806 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 336.

¹⁸⁸ Jan de Vries, The Dutch Rural Economy in the Golden Age, 1500–1700 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 218.

¹⁸⁹ De Vries, 1974, 235.

¹⁹⁰ Israel, 634–635.

¹⁹¹ Israel, 563; De Vries, 1974, 233–235.

¹⁹² 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), 509.

In a 1616 print by Jan van de Velde of a *City Market*, a couple sit behind their stall with a bounty of produce behind them as many other goods are displayed in other stalls in the background (fig. 45). Ostade, too, depicted a woman selling her wares at such a market stall in *The Fishwife* from 1673 (fig. 46). With a similarly bustling crowd beyond her, a woman pauses in scaling a fish to engage the viewer. With crab and several fish spread before her, she exemplifies the commercial ties that linked urban and rural society.

De Vries has argued that the distinctions between urban and rural were relaxed in the seventeenth century. As travel on roads and waterways became easier and the expansion of cities and towns spread across the small area of Holland, much greater contact existed between urban and rural citizens at the end of the sixteenth into the seventeenth century.¹⁹³ He noted that “the Republic was characterized by a gradual transition from large to medium to small settlements that softened the contrast between city and country.”¹⁹⁴ These economic and social circumstances fostered new attitudes toward rural life and the peasantry that profoundly affected their representation in the visual culture of the period.

The rural population around Haarlem generally lived in multi-function cottages of the type widely found in the northern part of the Dutch Republic around the beginning of the seventeenth century.¹⁹⁵ A large square structure with a wide pyramidal roof provided a space for various uses. The structure generally contained a stable section with stalls for the livestock, a large, open area or loft for hay, and a couple of other rooms dedicated to

¹⁹³ De Vries, “De Boer,” 312.

¹⁹⁴ De Vries, “De Boer,” 310; “...de Republiek gekenmerkt door een geleidelijke overgang van grante naar middelgrote tot kleine nederzettingen die de tegenstelling stad-platteland verzachtte.”

¹⁹⁵ Jan Bieleman, *Boeren in Nederland: Geschiedenis van de Landbouw, 1500-2000* (Amsterdam: Boom), 132.

living space (fig. 47).¹⁹⁶ Many of Ostade's images contain hay or straw tucked into the rafters. In some cases, these bound sheaves of wheat must have been kept for the animals, while in others, they represented degraded sections of the thatched roof. A twentieth century photograph of the interior of a thatched-roof barn built to seventeenth-century specifications reveals the way light penetrates the roof and the areas of a stray piece of wheat than can be seen through the thatching (fig. 48). The makeshift walls that separate different rooms often look like fence palings, delineating the living and working spaces of these structures.

Such cottages were found in the rural villages around Haarlem and their surroundings, as is evident in a pen drawing of a plan of Haarlem and its environs from 1590 (fig. 11). On this map, the villages of Heemstede, Spaarnwoude, Santpoort, and Aelbertsberg (Aalbertsberg), among others, are labeled as well as other notable buildings such as Brederode and the Huis ter Kleef, and the Haarlemmerhout, a forested area south of Haarlem. The administrative unit of rural areas was the 'heerlijkheid,' which roughly translates to manor or seignury. A holdover from the medieval feudal organization of the Counts of Holland, many villages in Holland grew up around large manor houses (called *heerlijkheden*).¹⁹⁷

The village of Heemstede, for instance, which was almost ten kilometers from Haarlem, was near Castle Heemstede, a seat of various rulers of the fiefdom of Heemstede in the Middle Ages. The village grew up around the castle, which was built on the Spaarne River in the thirteenth century by a nobleman who received a land grant

¹⁹⁶ Eloy Franciscus Koldewey, Binnen bij boeren: wonen en werken in historische boerderijen (Zwolle: Waanders, 2003), 151.

¹⁹⁷ Jan de Vries points out that noble land ownership varied greatly in different areas of the Netherlands. In some villages, no nobles owned land, while in others, most of the land was held by them, 35–36.

from Floris V, Count of Holland.¹⁹⁸ Throughout various wars and skirmishes during the Medieval period, the village was destroyed and rebuilt several times. Heemstede was one of several villages outside the boundaries of Haarlem, each of which had its own functioning society with clergy, tradesman of all types, farmers, lawyers, etc.

A 1621 surveying map of Heemstede (figs. 49 and 50), drawn by Balthasar Florisz. van Berckenrode (1591/92–1645), shows the village and the areas around it. The purpose of the map was to section off and label, with the accompanying key, parcels of land according to their owners. Many small cottages and farmhouses were set outside the numbered areas, likely indicating that those were the homes of tenant farmers. The largest structures are the Heemstede Castle and Berckenrode Castle. The Haarlemmermeer and the Haarlemmerhout are labeled, and areas of polder and the dunes are also indicated. The map displays a scattering of farmhouses and cottages around the area, with a concentration at a crossroads just down the path from Heemstede Castle. Flanking Heemstede were the villages of Overveen and Bennebroeck.

Urban citizens had a vested interest in the administration and affairs of their surrounding villages. In some cases, to accommodate growing populations, cities purchased manorial lands from Holland's wealthy families to exploit their resources, control trade practices, or even to expand the cities. Amsterdam, in particular, acquired a large area of land around the city, including four villages purchased from Reinoud van Brederode, a member of Holland's aristocracy, in the mid-sixteenth century.¹⁹⁹ The city of Haarlem did not pursue this type of land acquisition in earnest until the eighteenth

¹⁹⁸ Hans Krol, et al, Heemstede, Berkenrode, Bennebroek: Drie heerlijkheden in Zuid-Kennemerland (Heemstede: Vereniging Oud-Heemstede-Bennebroek, 1992), 11.

¹⁹⁹ De Vries, 1974, 48.

century.²⁰⁰ However, it was able to exert some influence over its rural environs by virtue of an agreement made with William of Orange in 1581 that required the bailiff, the steward-general and the sheriff of these areas to be Haarlemmers.²⁰¹ Thus, it was able to maintain some sphere of influence to protect its interests. Many ties, often financial in nature, bound urban and rural society in the Dutch Golden Age.

Ostade was able to combine elements of reality and imagination to create convincing representations of peasant life. Even the satirical works of the 1630s display this mix. Ostade's cottage/barn interiors accurately reflect the multi-use nature of the residential spaces in the seventeenth century. The familiar fence palings and thatched roofs seen in the works of this period are consistent with traditional rural architecture. Further, Ostade filled his interiors with the trappings of daily life, particularly in his works from the 1640s and later. Jugs, baskets, furniture, glassware, and tools litter the homes and inns he depicted. This preponderance of the evidence of daily life so impressed Houbraken that he commented on how Ostade "naturally portrayed inns and taverns, with all their equipment, as well as anyone ever had."²⁰²

On the other hand, certain elements, such as his figures, suggest that he relied more on pictorial tradition and imagination than depicting the peasants in the countryside around Haarlem. In his works from the 1630s, the animalistic figures careening around the spaces present a greater reflection of stereotype and satirical tradition than peasant life. Beginning in the 1640s Ostade began to depict more naturalistic figures, devoting greater attention to physiognomy and expression. Throughout his career, however,

²⁰⁰ Geziena Frouke van der Ree-Scholtens, Deugd boven geweld: een geschiedenis van Haarlem, 1245–1995 (Hilversum: Verloren, 1995), 144.

²⁰¹ Ree-Scholtens, 144.

²⁰² Houbraken, 1: 347.

Ostade's figures retained a squat, round quality that made them unique and immediately identifiable.

The rapid transformation between Ostade's figures of the 1630s and those of the late 1640s and beyond does not correspond to any real change in rural life. By 1630, those in the countryside were already living in a boom time and rural society had undergone its transformation to become more mobile and sophisticated. These changes continued through the late 1640s when the Treaty of Münster was signed until the 1660s when prosperity began to wane. Thus, Ostade's paintings are not a record of the daily life of rural folk. As they had been for centuries, the people in his works were a tool used by the upper classes to achieve a variety of meanings, some more positive than others.

Haarlem, 'An Earthly Paradise'

The notion of an idyllic rural escape in the picturesque environs near Haarlem produced a climate ripe for Ostade's peaceful paintings. From the early years of the seventeenth century, artists depicted the rural areas around Haarlem in drawings, prints, and paintings, transporting their viewers to the sights and villages around the city. Similarly, Ostade's mature and late works were intended for an urban audience who purchased and admired his paintings of the carefree country life of rural folk. The dichotomy that existed from Antiquity between the demands and responsibilities of urban life and the peaceful simplicity of rural life was present in literature, songs, and works of art in seventeenth-century Haarlem. Several important ancient representations of rural life including the works of Theocritus and Virgil's *Georgics* and *Eclogues* were revived and

printed in seventeenth-century Haarlem, and in them, the life of the peasant often embodied a rustic simplicity.²⁰³

One celebrated point of interest outside Haarlem's boundaries was the Haarlemmerhout (Haarlem Wood), indicated on the map by Thomas Thomasz as *Het Bos* (fig. 11). Referenced as early as 1120 in a financial document from the Abbey of Egmond as *Harlemerwalde*, the Haarlemmerhout had always been associated with Haarlem.²⁰⁴ It was virtually destroyed during the Spanish occupation of the city that lasted from the end of the Siege of Haarlem in July 1573 until 1576. Such was the local pride in the Haarlemmerhout that its restoration was one of the first major projects to rebuild Haarlem.²⁰⁵ The city of Haarlem took control of its administration in 1583, and in the spring of 1585 undertook the first major round of re-plantings. They added more than 18,000 trees and instituted new regulations designed to protect them from damage or logging.²⁰⁶ The castles and villages that were near the Haarlemmerhout and its outlying areas were all the more mythologized because of their having been largely damaged and destroyed by the Spanish. Images of Dutch ruins, such as Willem Buytewech's print depicting the *Ruins of the Castle Huys te Kleef near Haarlem*, from 1616, showed the ravages of war (fig. 51). As Huigen Leeftang has noted:

It is possible that Haarlem citizens had come to appreciate the country even more because its own devastation and their own starvation were still fresh in their memories.²⁰⁷

²⁰³ Karel van Mander, *Bucolica en Georgica, dat is, Ossen-stal en Landt-werck* (Amsterdam: Zacharias Heyns, 1597); Daniel Heinsius, ed., *Emendationes et notae in Theocriti idyllia bucolica* (Heidelberg: Commelinus, 1603).

²⁰⁴ J.J. Temminck, et al., *Haarlemmerhout 400 jaar: 'mooier is de wereld nergens'* (Haarlem: Schuyt, 1984), 9.

²⁰⁵ Koos Levy-van Halm, ed., *De trots van Haarlem: promotie van een stad in kunst en historie* (Haarlem: Frans Halsmuseum, 1995), 116.

²⁰⁶ Temminck, 12.

²⁰⁷ Huigen Leeftang, "Dutch Landscape: The Urban View. Haarlem and its Environs in Literature and Art, 15th–17th-Century," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 48 (1998): 52–115, 66.

The Haarlemmerhout was an important part of the positive reputation of the area outside the boundaries of Haarlem and of the city itself as well.

Literary celebrations of the city's environs, including the Haarlemmerhout, sand dunes, and many villages, were common in the fifteenth through the seventeenth centuries. Dirc Matthijszen wrote a laudatory poem dedicated to Haarlem in 1483.²⁰⁸ He began by saying, "I have seen larger towns... Still, in my opinion Haarlem has everything a good city should have."²⁰⁹ His description of the city's virtues includes the areas surrounding Haarlem. Matthijszen wrote of the "beautiful country," and praised the farmland to the North that produces "fat oxen, butter, and milk."²¹⁰ Humanist Cornelius Aurelius, in his *Defensorium gloriae Batavinae Haarlem* (published in 1586 and 1609), called Haarlem "an earthly Paradise," citing its "forest-like gardens, entertaining hills, safe woods... fertile and marshy meadows, ideal for hunting, bird and fish."²¹¹ Hadrianus Junius, Holland's official historian, wrote in his history of Holland, *Batavia* (published after his death in 1588), that "...Haarlem is thus a particularly suitable place, on all sides surrounded by the blessings of land, water and climate."²¹² Junius also wrote of the Haarlemmerhout that in it were taverns, "where the learned can come together, far away from the city noise and country folk."²¹³

²⁰⁸ J.O. Rutgers van der Loeff, *Drie lofdichten op Haarlem* (Haarlem: F. Bohn, 1911), 13–17. Little is known of Matthijszen. His name is noted as the author on a manuscript containing the poem found in the Utrecht University Library, 4–5.

²⁰⁹ Leeftang, 58.

²¹⁰ Van der Loeff, 13, "Dat rijck ende arm plach te troesten; / Van daer comt vette ossen ende rinder, / Butter, melc, troest der kinder..."

²¹¹ Temminck, 116.

²¹² Nico de Glas, *Holland is een eiland: De Batavia van Hadrianus Junius (1511–1575)* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2011), 320, "Zo ligt Haarlem dus op een bijzonder geschikte plaats, van alle kanten omringd door de zegeningen van land, water en klimaat."

²¹³ Walter S. Gibson, *Pleasant Places: The Rustic Landscape from Bruegel to Ruisdael* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 98.

Karel van Mander wrote that “Haarlems foreest,” was a place where one could go “in order to rejoice the spirit.” He noted the diversions offered in the Haarlemmerhout, where visitors were able to:

...eat, drink, play, read, sing without fear; here melancholy flees; [this place] appears to be a real kermis fest, for people, like a piece of clothing, must sometimes be aired.”²¹⁴

Van Mander refers to city dwellers when he references those who must come to the country to relax, but his list of activities corresponds directly to the types of activities seen in Ostade’s works. Because burghers such as Van Mander associated the country with carefree excursions, the expectation of rural life was accordingly formed to include rest and leisure, even among the peasantry.

Foreign travelers also commented on the beauty of Haarlem’s countryside. Lodovico Guicciardini’s *Descrittione di Lodovico Guicciardini patritio fiorentino di tutti i Paesi Bassi altrimenti detti Germania inferiori*, was first published in 1567 in Antwerp, and translated into Dutch in Amsterdam in 1612.²¹⁵ Guicciardini described his impression of Haarlem:

Haarlem lies three leagues from Amsterdam and it has beautiful buildings within, and outside one finds fair fields and a very gracious woods, so that its air in particular is very salubrious, and all around are to be seen many lovely villages and castles...²¹⁶

British world traveler Peter Mundy visited the Netherlands in 1640 and commented on the plentiful hunting in the dunes and woods around Haarlem:

Within few daies I wentt to Harlem...aboutt which is some rising ground, many pretty groves and woods, Faire long rancks of Trees with pleasauntt walkes betweene, allso Nurseries off smalle trees, For From hence, they say, Amsterdam and divers other places are supplied with them to Furnish their streetes. A little

²¹⁴ Gibson, 2000, 94.

²¹⁵ Gibson, 2000, 34.

²¹⁶ Gibson, 2000, 93–94.

beyond the towne are certaine Sandhills called dounes, where breed store of Cunnies [rabbits], off which many are brought to Amsterdam, etts.²¹⁷

Nicholas de Parival, a French traveler, wrote of Haarlem in his *Delights of Holland* of 1650:

This city is more round than square, & is watered by the Spaarne River; it is well and beautifully situated; and has a very beautiful promenade... All around are beautiful meadows & on the sea coast, the Dunes. There is a beautiful Wood... which serves as recreation and diversion to those living there [in Haarlem] and to those of Amsterdam.²¹⁸

Mundy and Parival note not only the picturesque surroundings but also that they were particularly enjoyed by Haarlem and Amsterdam burghers.

The best known early history of Haarlem is Samuel Amzping's laudatory poem, which was first published in 1616. An expanded and illustrated version called Beschryvinge ende Lof der Stad Haerlem in Holland (Description and Praise of the City of Haarlem in Holland) that devoted an extensive portion to describing Haarlem's countryside appeared in 1628.²¹⁹ Amzping drew upon previous written accounts of Haarlem and its surroundings. He began his description:

God has seeded the earth with herbs and trees / And has by his power brought forth the mountains / And has spread water to and through the land... To the south lies the lake, to the North the IJ, to the West / The great Ocean...²²⁰

²¹⁷ Richard Carnac Temple, ed., The Travels of Peter Mundy in Europe and Asia, v. 4 (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1925), 65; also cited in Gibson, 2000, 95.

²¹⁸ Nicholas de Parival, Les Delices de la Hollande, 2nd ed. (Leiden: Chez Abraham à Geervliet, 1655), 92, <http://archive.org/details/lesdelicesdelaho00pari>, "Cette ville est plus ronde que quarrée, & est arrosée du fleuve Sparen; elle est bien située à merueille; a un tres beau marche... Tout à l'entour ce sont de bel les prairies & du coté de la mer, les Dunes. Il y a un beau bois à un demy quart de lieüe de Leiden, qui sert de recreation & divertissement aux habitás, & a ceux là memes d' Amsterdam."

²¹⁹ Samuel Ampzing, Beschryvinge ende Lof der Stad Haerlem in Holland (Haarlem: Adriaen Rooman, 1628), 70–92.

²²⁰ Ampzing, 70. God die het aerdriek hebt doorlaeyd met kruyt en boomen / En hebt door zijne kragt de bergen voold doen komen / en 't water om en door de aerde hebt gespleyd... Ten Zuyden leyt het Meyr, ten Noorden 't Y, ten Westen/ Den Grooten Ocaen...

The text then leads the reader on a detailed journey throughout the areas around Haarlem, noting the many villages, landmarks, and the natural beauty of the area. Ampzing and others made little distinction between Haarlem proper and its rural environs, choosing instead to view the varied topography and other features as essential parts of the city's beauty.

Haarlem's songbooks also celebrate its many surrounding villages. Songbooks and song sheets were immensely popular in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century. So many were produced that one nineteenth-century Dutch historian commented, "In the seventeenth century, it rained songbooks."²²¹ Several songbooks in multiple versions were published locally in Haarlem. One such book, *Haerlems oudt liedt-boeck* (*Haarlem's Old Songbook*), was first published in 1614 by an anonymous author known as the "Haarlem Soetendaal." The book was so popular that there were eight printings, with some variation between them, between 1614 and 1618.²²²

In *Haerlems oudt liedt-boeck*, the songs referring specifically to the city are gathered at the front. One of these, *Sondag-liet* (Sunday Song), celebrates and specifically refers to the villages around the city and the delights to be found therein. The verses guide the listener on a tour of the rich areas outside Haarlem and make note of the special features offered by each village.

²²¹ Natascha Veldhorst, *Zingend door het leven: het Nederlandse liedboek in de Gouden Eeuw* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009), 15.

²²² E.K. Grootes, "Het liedboekje van 'Haerlem Soetendal'" in *Haerlems Helicon: Literatuur en toneel te Haarlem voor 1800*, E.K. Grootes, ed. (Hilversum: Verloren, 1993), 95. The date of the first printing is in question. Grootes cites evidence that some of the songs were recorded in 1599, well before the ostensible first printing. Songs were often reprinted in multiple songbooks in the Netherlands, and many of them had roots going back to the sixteenth-century Antwerp Songbook of 1544. Anonymous, *Een schoon liedekens. Boeck inden welcken ghy in vinden sult. Veelderhande liedekens* [etc.]. (Antwerp: Ian Roulans, 1544), Dirk Geirnaert et al., eds., 2001, www.dbnl.org/tekst/_ant001antw01_01/colofon.htm. The songs gathered in the *Antwerp Songbook* were likely tunes that had been transmitted as an oral tradition long before they were first recorded.

The area near the sea is on the way, / Very lovely, also along the estuary, / Note Santvoort, and then to the fields / Of Overveen there... // Albertsberg, Bloemendaal already / Sand drifts, with Brederode castle / The Kruidberg cows, among green herbs...²²³

The *Nieu dubbelt Haerlems lietboeck* (*New Doubled Haarlem Songbook*), also from 1643, contains a song in which the Haarlem Soetendaal says goodbye to the city as he leaves for a journey.²²⁴ Beginning in the fifth verse he cites the various villages and his favorite locations, listing them in a way similar to that in the *Sondag-liet*.

Peasant songs, or *boerenliederen*, were popular throughout the seventeenth century and belonged to the same creative impulse that produced peasant farces and Bredero's "boertige" poems and songs. Ostade's paintings and prints were associated with the kinds of activities found in some of these songs as is evident by a 1716 songbook entitled *Het vermaaklyk Buitenleven* (*The Amusing Country Life*) that is illustrated with reproductions of Ostade's prints (fig. 52). The songs provide a sort of nostalgic walk through the genre paintings and prints of the middle of seventeenth century.²²⁵ Ostade's etchings lend themselves beautifully to the amusing and quaint aspects of country life described in such songs. That Haarlemites explicitly associated Ostade's images with Haarlem's environs is reinforced by the fact that another edition of *Het vermaaklyk Buitenleven*, published in Amsterdam in 1716, was illustrated with entirely different images. For instance, in the Haarlem edition, a love song called *The Courtship of Floris and Pleuntje* is illustrated with a 1652 etching by Ostade (in reverse)

²²³ Anonymous, *Haerlems oudt liedt-boeck* (Haarlem: Vincent Castelyn, c. 1640), 37, http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_hae003haer01_01/colofon.php, "Naer Wijck op see is dan den ganck/ Seer lieffelijck oock langhs het stranck / Tot Zantvoort vermelt, En na Bentvelt / T'Overveen daer... // Aelvertsbergh, Blommendael al ree, / 't Stuyf-sandt en 't Huys te Brero mee, / De Kruyt-berg koen, Met kruyden groen..."

²²⁴ Anonymous, *Nieu dubbelt Haerlems lietboeck, gheenaemt den laurier-kranen der amourensen* (Haarlem, Vincent Casteleyn, 1643), 41, http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_nie095nieu01_01/colofon.php.

²²⁵ Jan van Gijzen, *Het vermaaklyk Buitenleven, of de zingende en speelende Boerenvreugde* (Haarlem: Widow of Hermanus van Hulkenroy, 1716).

(figs. 53 & 54), while an image in a stiff sixteenth-century style accompanies the song in the Amsterdam edition (fig. 55).²²⁶

Throughout the Haarlem edition of the 1716 songbook, the copies of Ostade's etchings are paired with songs that seem to have been expressly crafted for them. Both draw their themes from comparable subjects based in seventeenth-century genre prints and paintings. The songbook includes several tunes about peasant courtship and love as well as songs about a country doctor, a quack, and even a schoolteacher. All of these are subjects to be found in the works of Ostade and other artists, demonstrating that these artistic tropes were an important source for the Haarlem publisher of *Het Vermakkelyk Buitenleven*. That the Amsterdam printer used alternate illustrations, however, suggests that Ostade's images in particular were not to necessarily the impetus for the songs themselves.

The Haarlem Landscape Tradition

The rural areas around the city were celebrated in the visual arts with a robust landscape tradition born in Haarlem. A number of scholars have argued that the origin of the Dutch landscape tradition and the predominance of Haarlem in that story is related to the city's history and topography, particularly to its location near the Haarlemmerhout and the sea.²²⁷ Hendrick Goltzius' early drawings of the area around Haarlem are some of the earliest naturalistic representations of Holland. His drawings range from *Brederode*

²²⁶ For Ostade's etching, see Phagan, 166–167, cat. 81. Jan van Gijsen, *Het vermaaklyk Buitenleven, of de zingende en speelende Boerenvreugde* (Amsterdam: Jacobus van Egmont, 1716).

²²⁷ Leeflang, 55–57 summarizes much of this literature. His summary does not, however, include the later important contribution by Gibson (2000).

Castle (fig. 56), to the vast panorama of a *Landscape near Haarlem*, which depicts flat farmland with several small cottages (fig. 57).

The rural environment would have been familiar to the citizens of Haarlem through their own travels around the city, but the many prints and paintings depicting the city's rural environs reinforced these first-hand experiences.²²⁸ Humble, picturesque views of the native countryside were frequently represented by the Amsterdam printmaker and publisher Claes Jansz Visscher, who, in 1611, during the Twelve Years Truce, began representing the mundane and charming surroundings of the countryside around Haarlem and Amsterdam.²²⁹ The latin inscription on the title page of Visscher's series of prints, *Plaisante Plaetsen*, encouraged the viewer to "come, let your eager eye roam these open vistas offered by the sylvan surroundings of Haarlem"²³⁰

Visscher's series of small landscapes depict the villages and roads outside Haarlem, and he included both burghers and peasants in the scenes. The title page of the series prominently features "*Haerlem*," and even includes the city's motto, *Vicit vim virtus*, or "Virtue over Violence (fig. 58)." The series reveals how inextricably bound Haarlem had become to its rural environs. Like the final verses in the *Sondag-liet*, the images guide the viewer through villages such as Zantvoort and Heemstede as well as the ruins of the Huis te Kleef and Brederode. *On the Road to Leiden* depicts a few cottages

²²⁸ Walter S. Gibson gives the fullest account of these print series in *Pleasant Places*, passim; see also, Christopher Brown, *Dutch Landscape: The Early Years* (London, National Gallery, 1986) and Sutton, 1987.

²²⁹ Another sixteenth-century Flemish artist, known as the Master of the Small Landscapes, created a series of landscape prints that featured peasants in the countryside.²²⁹ The series, issued by Antwerp publisher Hieronymus Cock in 1559 and 1561, depicts naturalistic views in and around the city of Antwerp. They are a stark contrast to the Bruegel's landscape topography, a combination of fantastic mountainous panoramas and his native Flanders scenery. As indicated on the frontispiece, the images show "...the many and very attractive places of various cottages, farms, fields, roads, and the like ornamented with animals of all sorts. All portrayed from life, and mostly situated in the country near Antwerp."²²⁹ Most of the prints contain tiny rural inhabitants working and playing in their rustic rural world in the same favorable light as those of Bruegel.

²³⁰ Gibson, 2000, 93.

and windmills along a road travelled by several figures (fig. 59). These include a farmer herding his goats along the road in the foreground, a fashionable burgher couple, identified by the man's cape and hat, out for a stroll in the countryside, a couple promenading in the distance, and a hunched peasant couple walking home from a day of hunting, their catch thrown over the man's shoulder. Another print from the series depicts the road to Heemstede, as it passes through the dense trees of the Haarlemmerhout (fig. 60). A stooped-over peasant herds his sheep in the foreground near a cottage with a thatched roof. Such visions of working and strolling peasants became as important to the rural environs of Haarlem as the buildings and ruins, features of the picturesque landscape.

Visscher's *Plaisante Plaetsen* sparked other series of printed landscapes by artists such as Esaias (c.1590–1630) and Jan (1593–1641) van de Velde and Willem Buytewech. Jan van de Velde etched three series depicting the labors of the months, a popular subject in Northern European art. His 1616 image of *September* offers a panoramic view of Haarlem in the distance with a smaller village in the middle ground (fig. 61). In the foreground, a group of fashionably dressed burghers picnic in the landscape. A 1617 representation of *Spring* includes a *trekschuit*, or horse-drawn boat, transporting a group of travelers through the canal (fig. 62). Van de Velde's images emphasize the importance of urban visits to the country as a means of pleasure and relaxation, highlighting the lighter part of the relationship between city and country. Such print series were issued to provide the viewer with a way to stroll vicariously through the countryside. This phenomenon was related to the literary tradition of ekphrastic description of the local scenery cited above. Integral to these literary and pictorial visions

of the countryside are peasants, cottages, churches, and inns. The cottages and barns depicted by Ostade are the same quaintly degraded country structures that Visscher and others pictured in their village scenes. Ostade offers his viewers an opportunity to step inside these cottages and taverns and “see” a similarly peaceful presentation of country life.

Landscapes near Haarlem were similarly the focus of paintings. Jan van Goyen’s 1626 *Village Landscape* features a simple bridge crossing a stream passing through the center of the composition (fig. 63). A path at the right leads to the center of the village past a large brick inn and a cottage with a shabby fence and thatched roof. One can imagine that the path ends at the distant church. The painting depicts a mix of people, from a peasant family walking to their home away from the village to a group of well-dressed, urban travelers in the boat. Travel was common all over the Dutch Republic, including the area around Haarlem. Later in the century, two major canals, the *Haarlemmervaart* and the *Leidsevaart*, helped facilitate travel near Haarlem when they were completed in 1636 and 1657, respectively.²³¹ Here Van Goyen encapsulates the same quaint view of landscape presented in etching by Visscher, the Van de Veldes, and Buytewech. The presence of the visitors from the city speaks of a leisurely afternoon enjoying the countryside or a stopover on a trip between cities.

Ties between urban and rural were also strengthened by the increasing number of wealthy burghers who were acquiring country houses outside Haarlem. A late seventeenth-century painting by an anonymous artist shows two stately country houses on the Spaarne outside Haarlem, called *Zorgvliet* and *Vlietzorg*, both meaning roughly

²³¹ Gibson, 2000, 96.

“flee [from] care.”²³² Adriaan Pauw, a merchant, diplomat, and statesman from Amsterdam, became Heer van Heemstede in 1620 when he bought the Slot Heemstede, a medieval castle that was the focus of the village.²³³ Finally, country house poems that celebrated the joys of escaping from city cares grew in popularity. The most well-known is Constantijn Huygens’ *Hofwyck*, a poem completed in 1651 that celebrated his country house and estate outside The Hague. In it Huygens extolled the features of the rural setting, the trees and animals as well as the villages surrounding it.

A popular genre of painting in Haarlem was the depiction of travelers resting outside an inn. Adriaen’s brother, Isack van Ostade, painted the theme of travelers resting before a country inn many times during his career.²³⁴ Isack quickly asserted his individuality after becoming a master in 1640 and often depicted outdoor scenes instead of the interiors that Adriaen preferred to paint. Isack demonstrated an affinity for creating luminous visions of the landscape that he populated with comparable rotund and happy peasants.

In *The Halt at the Inn*, 1645, Isack van Ostade strikes a balance between a tender representation of human activity and the depiction of landscape (fig. 64). In the work he merges lively peasant characters with a translucent and glowing handling of landscape. Isack directs the viewer’s eye through the composition with several different pockets of activity. On the left a woman spins yarn while speaking to a man who congenially leans into the conversation and seems to help her with the wheel. More central to the composition, however, is a woman wearing tattered clothing with a peacefully sleeping

²³² Gibson, 2000, 107.

²³³ Hans Krol, et al, *Heemstede, Berkenrode, Bennebroek: Drie heerlijkheden in Zuid-Kennemerland* (Heemstede: Vereniging Oud-Heemstede-Bennebroek, 1992), 77.

²³⁴ Lea Eckerling Kaufmann, *The Paintings of Isack Van Ostade 1621–1649* (Ph. Diss., University of Maryland College Park, 1995), 131.

infant on her back who carries a basket and a jug. As her little son follows behind, she approaches a city dweller, mounted on his horse, who leans over to a boy, perhaps signaling to him which pieces of produce he wishes to buy. Another city dweller with a wide-brimmed hat and a fine white collar prepares to mount his horse while in conversation with two of the country men. Next to them stands a woman with her son peeking out from behind her skirt. A man inside the tavern leans out the window and gazes directly toward the viewer. On the right side two men sit on a bench preparing their pipes while another stands behind them possibly relieving himself near the fence.

The *Halt at the Inn* represents the inn as a place for respite and leisure. The picture type itself—resting travelers—suggests that the rural inn played an important role in the visits to the country. One particular inn called *Paters Herbergh* (fig. 65) was featured in two of Claes Jansz Visscher's prints. Gibson notes that Samuel Ampzing, in his 1616 edition of the *Beschrijvinge ende lof der stad Haerlem*, a poem written in celebration of Haarlem and Holland, mentions the very same inn.²³⁵ Ampzing suggests that Haarlem residents can enjoy a beverage at the Pater inn during their recreational visits to the woods around the city.²³⁶

Adriaen, who never depicted an urban visitor at a country inn, focused on smaller “hole-in-the-wall” inns, inns and taverns that city visitors would have passed by on their way to larger, more well-appointed establishments. One of the appeals of his paintings must have been the sense that he offered viewers a glimpse inside these smaller

²³⁵ Gibson, 2000, 98.

²³⁶ Elisabeth de Bièvre, “Violence and Virtue: History and Art in the City of Haarlem,” *Art History* 11, no. 3 (1988): 303–334, 309; the author quotes the passage from the 1616 version of Ampzing's poem: “Of om een Roomtje gaen/ of voor den dorst te drincken/ Tot Paters, of den kloot door Berg en Dal te klincken/ Of na den tyt van 't Jaar te Kolven met den Bal.,” 329, n. 39.

establishments, thereby allowing city dwellers the opportunity to experience them without the rustic scents and sounds overwhelming their sensibilities.

Ostade's transformation of peasant scenes into idyllic rural scenes was a Haarlem phenomenon. The Haarlemmerhout, the Haarlemmermeer, and the dunes, along with the villages and country denizens that populated these areas were an integral part of Haarlem's identity. From Theocritus and Virgil, to Visscher and Van Goyen, the image of the rural world as an idyllic place free from the demands of urban life was a theme that generated a great deal of literary and visual imagery. From the shepherds "smelling of curds" in Theocritus to the disheveled farmers in Visscher to the hunched and happy figures of Ostade, the trope of the farmer's happy and peaceful life endured.

Chapter Three: Satire and Adriaen van Ostade's Early Work

The exaggerated exuberance of *Festive Peasants* (fig. 1) typifies the works of Adriaen van Ostade's first decade as a painter. The cartoonish conduct of these peasants presents their behavior to an urban audience, providing a cautionary, yet humorous vision. Close scrutiny of his works from the 1630s reveals that even in his youthful paintings, Ostade began to tame the overblown antics associated with traditional peasant satire from the Bruegel tradition. Like Pieter Bruegel the Elder's peasants, Ostade's dance, sing, and drink. Nevertheless, although their clumsy movements and overindulgence reflect the long-standing trope of the peasant as glutton, significant differences exist between Ostade's painting and the kermis tradition stemming from Bruegel's works. His scene is set indoors in a small village tavern rather than a large outdoor celebration. The style of his works is also quite different than that of the Bruegelian model; Ostade's earthy tones and moody lighting are vastly different from Bruegel's airy, bright outdoor kermis scenes. As this chapter will demonstrate, in the 1630s his goal was to create satirical representations of the peasant as a comic and indulgent, sometimes gluttonous, figure. Later, he sought to celebrate the more socially acceptable elements of peasant lives to make them more palatable to his urban audience.

Tavern Interiors

Throughout his career Ostade used the tavern, or inn, as a setting for his peasant works. Strictly speaking, an inn is an establishment that provides lodging as well as food and drink, but there seems to have been little distinction between the terms inn and tavern in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Because the emphasis was so often on food

and drink, the term seems to have been applied to an establishment regardless of whether or not it provided sleeping accommodations. Rural inns provided lodging as well as food and drink, but they also served as important communal spaces, functioning as places for activities ranging from business transactions to holiday festivities. People gathered at inns and taverns for elections, trials, meetings of various types, and also to share news and gossip. Taverns served these functions because rural areas lacked the city halls and other civic structures found in larger cities. Therefore, they were often used for official public and private business in addition to being a place for recreation. Most often, however, Ostade presented the inn as a place for socializing, where peasants could gather to celebrate and play, outside the confines of everyday toil and trouble.

Taverns were important elements in the countryside around Haarlem. Many country taverns welcomed residents on their excursions for rest and relaxation. Not all taverns, however, were destinations for urban visitors. Many lower-class taverns catered only to local peasants, and these tended to be the kinds of taverns Ostade depicted. Inns were of various types and quality. Some inns would simply have been the home of the innkeeper, operating without an official name, so that an inn with a name (and a sign) conferred a higher status.²³⁷ The records of Haarlem and Heemstede tell the stories of a number of inns in and around the Haarlemmerhout, but these records tell only of the inns “with signs.”²³⁸ Official records provide little information about the smaller inns and taverns that would likely have been frequented by peasant villagers. One example is known of some women in the maritime village of Graft who served beer or provided

²³⁷ A.T. van Deursen, *Graft: Een dorp in de polder* (Amsterdam: Bert Bakker, 1994), 244.

²³⁸ Paul van den Brink and J.H. Grabandt-Pieging, “De Herbergen van de Haarlemmerhout,” in J.J. Temminck, et al., *Haarlemmerhout 400 jaar: 'mooier is de wereld nergens'* (Haarlem: Schuyt, 1984), 74–87, gives a listing of the legal documents showing the buying and selling of taverns in and around the Haarlem Woods.

lodging to eke out a living after being widowed.²³⁹ Other married women became innkeepers to earn extra money and were often in charge of the establishment while husbands were at sea. The smaller inns found in Ostade's paintings were probably of this type.

Tavern scenes became extremely popular in the seventeenth century, but their roots lay in the sixteenth-century where the tavern was often shown as a place where one could be led from a righteous path. An early example of the denunciation of dissolute tavern life can be found in the work of Hieronymus Bosch. In his representation of the *Seven Deadly Sins*, created around 1490, the all-seeing eye at the center of the painting, with Christ at its core, accompanies the inscription "Beware, beware, God sees."²⁴⁰ Many of the sins, such as pride and luxury, center on the wealthy or prosperous members of society, but the representation of *Ira*, or anger (fig. 66), features three peasants before an inn. Identified by the prominently displayed red banner featuring a lion on the left side of the building, the inn is clearly the place where activities have taken place that have led to this violent altercation. The man at right, still holding his tankard, wields a large knife, while a woman intervenes and tries to stay his actions. The buffoon at left, with a tripod chair on his head, attempts to brandish his sword, which has become bound up in his rough brown cloak. In Bosch's representation, drink is what has led these two along this path of sin, and the source of this worldly temptation is the inn. The lion on the banner recalls Peter's words: "Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour."²⁴¹

²³⁹ Van Deursen, 244.

²⁴⁰ *Caue caue d[omin]us videt*, translation in Wilhelm Fraenger, *Hieronymus Bosch*, trans. Helen Sebba (Basel: G+B Arts International, 1994), 335.

²⁴¹ 1 Peter 5:8, quoted in Fraenger, 273.

One of the earliest tavern interiors is Lucas van Leyden's woodcut, *Tavern Scene*, from around 1520 (fig. 67). The work, which depicts a young man in an inn with a prostitute and her procuress, has been convincingly interpreted as a representation of the Prodigal Son.²⁴² The younger woman touches the man's chin with her right hand while she reaches into his pocket with her left. An inscription that the fool in the window presents to the viewer proclaims, "Watch the way the wind blows."²⁴³ Later artists such as Jan van Hemessen eventually turned the dissolute life of the Prodigal Son into a more general vision of debauchery.²⁴⁴ In his *Inn Scene* (fig. 68) from around 1540, Van Hemessen depicted a violent outbreak between two of the working women in the doorway of the establishment. The work depicts the interior of a large inn or brothel where patrons have come for food, drink, and sex. At the far left we see a man and woman descending from the loft, while other men are caressed and plied with wine and food around a table. The Antwerp artist Pieter Aertsen also used the inn as locus of sin in his 1551 painting, *The Meat Stall* (fig. 69). Beyond the foreground bounty of products are background scenes that provide the viewer with moral choices for following a righteous or corrupt life. On the left, the Holy Family giving alms to the poor represents the morally upright path, while on the right, patrons seek the erotic services of a woman in

²⁴² Christopher Brown, *Scenes of Everyday Life: Dutch Genre Painting of the Seventeenth Century* (London & Boston: Faber and Faber, 1984), lxiv, n. 63.

²⁴³ Peter C. Sutton, *Masters of Seventeenth-Century Dutch Genre Painting* (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1984), xxvi.

²⁴⁴ In Konrad Renger, *Lockere Gesellschaft. Zur Ikonographie des Verlorenen Sohne und von Wirtshausszenen in der niederländischen Malerei* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1970), the author traces the development of late Medieval folk stories inspired by the parable of the Prodigal Son such as the story of Sorgheloos, meaning 'carefree' in Dutch, a drunk and a spendthrift, who alienates his family and friends, and ultimately ends up in abject poverty; Sorgheloos and related imagery are also discussed in Timothy B. Husband, 'Ick Sorgheloose...' A Silver-Stained Roundel in the Cloisters," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 24 (1989), 173–188.

the interior of an inn. Just outside the inn, a man prepares wine that will fuel this wickedness.

In the seventeenth century, as interiors became increasingly popular in works of art, celebration inside the tavern became an even more prevalent subject type. A popular Haarlem image type was the indoor merry company, which was related to paintings of fashionable outdoor parties that had their roots in medieval Gardens of Love.²⁴⁵ The earliest indoor merry companies originated with Willem Buytewech (c.1591–1624) in Rotterdam around 1620.²⁴⁶ Buytewech had been in Haarlem from 1612 to 1617 and had established ties to a number of artists there, including Frans Hals and his brother Dirck Hals.²⁴⁷ In Haarlem, Dirck Hals was the foremost practitioner of this image type. In his paintings of fashionable young revelers, such as *A Party at a Table* (fig. 36), Hals depicted a group of young burghers eating and drinking in a cramped yet well-appointed room. Various elements of the tableau, such as the painting of the *Betrayal of Christ* on the back wall and the flower blossoms strewn about the floor in the foreground remind the viewer of the ephemerality of the worldly pleasures enjoyed in this scene.²⁴⁸ An engraving from the title page of the 1630 edition of W.D. Hooft's play, *The Contemporary Prodigal Son (Heden-daeghsche verlooren soon)*, represents a similar scene, indicating this image type was still associated with the parable in the minds of seventeenth-century viewers.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁵ For a discussion of the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century tradition of the Garden of Love, see Elmer Kolfin, *The Young Gentry at Play: Northern Netherlandish Scenes of Merry Companies, 1610–1645*, trans. Michael Hoyle (Leiden: Primavera Pers, 2005), 19.

²⁴⁶ Kolfin, 107; Britta Nehlsen-Marten discusses Buytewech's interiors in *Dirck Hals 1591–1656: Oeuvre und Entwicklung eines Haarlemer Genremalers* (Weimar: VDG, 2003), 75–79.

²⁴⁷ Sutton, 1984, 169.

²⁴⁸ For a discussion of this work, see Nehlsen-Marten, 129. The author also sees a reference to the Prodigal Son among the whores in the figure of the host with the bill at right.

²⁴⁹ Seymour Slive, *Frans Hals* (London: Phaidon, 1970), 73.

Brouwer & Bredero and the Peasant Farce

Adriaen Brouwer (1605/1606–1638), the other artist that Houbraken mentioned as a student of Frans Hals, was the first painter in the Netherlands to depict low-life tavern interiors. Brouwer's birthdate is based on a statement by an early biographer, Isaac Bullart, that Brouwer was thirty-two years old at the time of his death in 1638.²⁵⁰ Bullart also stated that Brouwer was "natif d'Audenarde en Flandre," the only record of his possible birthplace.²⁵¹ His father may have been a tapestry cartoonist, and presumably gave him his early artistic training.²⁵²

The first documentary mention of Brouwer places him in Amsterdam in 1625, where he stayed at the inn of a fellow painter, and, in 1626, when he witnessed a sale of artworks.²⁵³ Nothing is known of Brouwer's career before he arrived in Holland nor of his reasons for traveling north. He is believed to have been living in Haarlem from 1626 to 1631 or 1632.²⁵⁴ Houbraken wrongly claimed he was born in Haarlem and that Hals discovered him one day when he was sitting outside his home painting small birds and foliage on fabrics that were then embroidered and sold.²⁵⁵ According to Houbraken, Brouwer studied with Hals, but was not well treated by the master. Because of his great

²⁵⁰ Konrad Renger, *Adriaen Brouwer und das niederländische Bauerngenre 1600–1660* (Munich: Hirmer Verlag, 1986), 9.

²⁵¹ Isaac Bullart, *Academie des Sciences et des Arts* (Brussels, Francois Foppens, 1682), 2: 488. <http://books.google.com>; Renger, 1986, 9. His birth record has not been located, but archives of the town of Oudenarde, southwest of Ghent in eastern Flanders, show several families named Brouwer.

²⁵² Peter C. Sutton, ed., *The Age of Rubens* (Boston: Museum of Fine Arts, 1993), 406.

²⁵³ Sutton, 1993, 406.

²⁵⁴ This assumption is based on the fact that in 1626, Brouwer was listed as a "friend" of Haarlem's rederijkerkamer and in a play by W. Nootman printed in 1627, a dedication in the frontispiece read "the wealthy and world famous young man, Adriaen Brouwer, painter of Haarlem (Den Konstrijken en Wijtberoemden Jongman Adriaen Brouwer Schilder van Haarlem)." Both documents were first cited in J. H. W. Unger, "Adriaen Brauwer te Haarlem," *Oud Holland* 2 (1884): 161–169 and noted in Renger, 9. The length of his stay in Haarlem has been inferred by scholars based on the fact that he did not appear in Antwerp's Guild of St. Luke until 1631 or 1632.

²⁵⁵ Houbraken, 1: 319.

talent and appeal, Hals locked Brouwer in the attic and forced him to paint works for him to sell.²⁵⁶

Houbraken's assertion that Brouwer and Ostade were both students of Hals seems plausible, and if so, they were probably in Hals' workshop at the same time because Ostade's early work clearly demonstrates Brouwer's influence. However, Brouwer's more critical approach to the peasant is typical of his Flemish roots, while Ostade's inherent sympathy toward his subject is rooted in Haarlem's embrace of its rural environs. Both artists' paintings from the time reveal a penchant for the loose, expressive brushwork typical of Hals. Nothing is known of what prompted Brouwer to return to Flanders, but he was there by 1632 when he entered the Antwerp painter's guild as a master.²⁵⁷

Brouwer emphasized the negative effects of drinking and smoking to enhance the comical aspect of his farcical peasant paintings. He painted inspired depictions of bawdy peasants with excessive behaviors who occupied stage-like spaces. Brouwer was familiar with the work of Pieter Bruegel the Elder, most likely from the many prints by and after him in circulation. In Bruegel's *Kermis of St. George*, from around 1559, revelers fill a village panorama with a festival in full swing (fig. 70). Seated around a picnic table outside the inn, several men in conversation gesticulate wildly while a woman buries her face inside a large tankard of beer. The lively peasants who celebrate with abandon are similar to those depicted by Brouwer though he preferred smaller interior gatherings.

Brouwer's works from his time in the northern Netherlands reveal his interest in crowded tavern scenes. In *Peasant Drinking Party* (fig. 71) from around 1626, Brouwer

²⁵⁶ Houbraken, 1: 320.

²⁵⁷ Renger, 1986, 9.

depicts a group of rustic characters seated around a small table. Three men and a woman at left are singing and drinking, though the man at center is flagging due to the effects of tobacco and alcohol.²⁵⁸ At right a rotund figure has fallen asleep in his chair, while a drunken woman is splayed out across the foreground. Brouwer depicts his peasants with a great deal of exuberance, devoting much attention to characterizing their expressions and gestures. Even the ruddy complexion and briskly painted highlights on the face of the slumberous man at the right reveal the artist's gift for expression. Through vivid brushwork and a theatrical presentation, Brouwer imbued his paintings with a vivacity that both Peter Paul Rubens and Rembrandt admired.²⁵⁹

Brouwer's figures perform for the viewer. The theatricality of the broad gestures and stage-like compositions provide the perfect setting for the irreverent activities of his peasants. In *Peasant Drinking Party*, the glassy-eyed man gazes at us with hazy focus even as he barely holds on to his tankard. The woman to his right peeks almost coyly from under her white cap to glance out from the picture. The figure farthest to the left, however, most exemplifies the kind of interaction with the viewer that Brouwer would continue to use throughout his career. The man with a feather in his cap peers out, his mouth open in song, while he refills the pipe in his hand. Brouwer's presentation suggests a stage where this man pauses for an aside to the audience. His bright eyes and toothy grin suggest his awareness of and amusement at our presence. Not content to merely be

²⁵⁸ Gerard Knuttel, *Adriaen Brouwer: The Master and His Work*, trans. J.G. Talma-Schilthuis and Robert Wheaton (The Hague: L.J.C. Boucher, 1962), 87–89; Margaret Klinge, *Adriaen Brouwer, David Teniers the Younger: A Loan Exhibition of Paintings* (Bradford [Eng]: Noortman & Brod, 1982), cat. 1, 32. None of Brouwer's works are dated, but both Knuttel and Klinge place this work during his early period in Haarlem from 1625 to 1626.

²⁵⁹ Sutton, 1984, 161. Both artists owned works by Brouwer.

watched, his expression “also reminds us that, whether through our laughter or outrage, we recognize with embarrassing familiarity the all too human nature of his character.”²⁶⁰

Another work, *Interior of an Inn* (fig. 72) from the late 1620s, contains all of the revelry of the previous painting plus a man vomiting. The intemperate drinking in his paintings recalls the satirical broadsides of the Beham brothers. Brouwer’s paintings also call to mind seventeenth-century discussions on the ills of gorging oneself on alcohol and tobacco, yet they are largely comedic representations.²⁶¹ While representing the foibles of indulging in sensual pleasures, the artist seeks to entertain his viewers with the buffoonery of the lower class. The motley cast of characters in Brouwer’s *Peasant Party* has a farcical feel, and in fact, farces were common fare for the performances of the *rederijkers* of Brouwer’s time. Brouwer’s histrionic affectations are a link to his interest in the theater as evidenced by his association with *rederijkerskamers* in both Holland and Flanders. During his time in Haarlem, Brouwer was listed as a “*Beminnaer*,” meaning friend or perhaps enthusiast of *De Wijngaertranken* in Haarlem and while in Antwerp, he was listed as a “*liefhebber*” in the *Violieren*, that city’s *kamer*.²⁶²

Artists going back to the sixteenth century were often associated with their cities’ chambers of rhetoric. Though Pieter Bruegel the Elder was not recorded as a member of

²⁶⁰ Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., Flemish Paintings of the Seventeenth Century: The Collections of the National Gallery of Art Systematic Catalogue (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2005), 13.

²⁶¹ For a discussion of the history and iconography of tobacco in Dutch art, see Ivan Gaskell, “Tobacco, Social Deviance, and Dutch Art,” in Wayne Franits, ed., Looking at Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art: Realism Reconsidered, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997): 68–77. The iconography of Brouwer’s works is discussed in Renger, 1986, 30–44.

²⁶² Renger, 1986, 9–10; I suggest only that Brouwer’s works reflect the spirit of the theatrical tradition rather than any specific production; The relationship between the *rederijkerkamers* and the visual arts has long been recognized. Walter S. Gibson discusses sixteenth-century linkages between artist and *rederijkers* in “Artists and *Rederijkers* in the Age of Bruegel,” *Art Bulletin* 63 (September 1981): 426–446; in the seventeenth century, the *rederijkers* have been discussed largely in reference to the work of Jan Steen, such as in

The *Violieren* in Antwerp, several of his friends and collaborators were members.²⁶³ In addition, a number of his works display a kinship with *rederijker* productions.²⁶⁴ A *rederijker* stage can be seen in the background of Bruegel's *Kermis at Hoboken*, with eager viewers crowded around to view the performance. In the seventeenth century, a number of artists were also affiliated with their local *rederijerskamers*. Several Haarlem artists, including Frans Hals, were associated with De Wijngaertranken in Haarlem. Jan Steen's work, in particular, has linked to the work of the *rederijkers*.²⁶⁵ Several of his paintings, such as *Rhetoricians at a Window*, from around 1664, feature members of a *rederijerskamer* hanging out a window, below which hangs the blazon for The Hague's *rederijerskamer* (fig. 73).²⁶⁶

Houbraken alludes to Brouwer's association with the theater in several instances. He wrote of Brouwer that, "His art of painting consisted of jest and farce, Which he could apply with his brush with such wit..."²⁶⁷ Houbraken said that after his move to Antwerp, Brouwer lodged with a baker, Joos van Craesbeeck, who offered him housing in return for instruction in art.²⁶⁸ The result of this arrangement would have made a good plot for a farce of the time: "Brouwer not only instructed him in art, so that he became a good painter...but also took care to make him the king of the poultry yard [i.e., make him a

²⁶³ Gibson, 1981, 431.

²⁶⁴ Gibson discusses these in 1981, 440–443.

²⁶⁵ Albert Heppner, "The Popular Theatre of the Rederijkers in the Work of Jan Steen and His Contemporaries," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* 3 (October 1939–January 1940): 22–48 and Mariët Westermann, "Steen's Comic Fictions," in Guido M.C. Jansen, ed., *Jan Steen: Painter and Storyteller* (Washington, D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 1996), 53–67.

²⁶⁶ Jansen, et al, cat. 24, 176–179.

²⁶⁷ Houbraken, 1: 328. "Zyn schilderkonst bestont in snakery en boetsen, Die hy zoo geestig wist met zyn penceel te toetsen..." The translation above is from Hendrik J. Horn, *The Golden Age revisited: Arnold Houbraken's Great Theatre of Netherlandish Painters and Paintresses*. (Doornspijk: Davaco, 2001), 1: 520.

²⁶⁸ Houbraken, 1: 331.

cuckold].”²⁶⁹ Indeed, of Brouwer, Houbraken wrote, “His painting was farcical, farcical was his life. As the man was, so was his work.”²⁷⁰ The scenes featuring his animated and engaging figures would no doubt appeal to a lover of the farces and comedies performed by the *rederijerskamers*.²⁷¹

Several writers produced farces and other plays for The Eglantine rhetoricians’ chamber of Amsterdam, chief among them, Gerbrand Adriaenszoon Bredero (1585–1618).²⁷² Bredero wrote songs, poems, and plays that shone a light on human folly. Bredero excelled at comedic works, and produced several farces, one of which, *The Farce of the Cow*, centers on a gullible peasant.²⁷³ A thief steals the farmer’s cow, and the farmer unknowingly assists him in making his way to the city and selling it. The play is part of the same farcical tradition of the *Box-Blower*, and here a peasant is used to represent the pitfalls of gullibility. The play begins at a farm in Ouderkerk, a village outside Amsterdam. The farmer describes life in his village to the thief:

Oh that it was Sunday, then we would paint the town red, /
Whoa it’s nothing here in the week but business, /
But on feast days the violin is played with the flute, /

²⁶⁹ Houbraken, 1: 331. “Brouwer onderwees hem niet alleen in de Konst, zoo, dat hy een goed schilder weird. . . maar maakte ook dat hy pluimgraaf wierd.” The translation is from Horn, 312.

²⁷⁰ Houbraken, 318 “Potsig was zyn penceelkonst, potsig zyn leven. Zoo de man was, was zyn werk.” *Pots* is another term for farce.

²⁷¹ Erich Höhne, *Adriaen Brouwer* (Leipzig: E.A. Seemann, 1960), 27. Erich Höhne described Brouwer’s early “coarse and offensive (Derbe und Anstößige)” scenes as, “. . . rough and even more disgusting than merely comedic scenes, they were the harlequin of peasant painting with beatings and the playing of ribald jokes such as those in theater pieces, “Derbe und sogar widerliche Szenen noch als komisch, sie gehörten zur Bauernmalerei wie der Harlekin mit Prügel und zotigen Spaßen zum Theaterstück. . .”

²⁷² Theo Hermans, ed., *A Literary History of the Low Countries* (Rochester [N.Y.]: Camden House, 2009), 195. At one point one of Bredero’s fellow rhetoricians lauded their success in raising over 2000 guilders for the old men’s home. This was particularly due to the success of Bredero’s work, indicating the popularity of the new farces, Around 1617 Bredero and others broke with some of the older members of The Eglantine over the content of their plays and eventually formed the Dutch Academy (Nederduytsche Academie) to promote their own work. See Hermans 195 and Arjan van Dixhoorn, *Lustige geesten: Rederijers in de Noordelijke Nederlanden (1480-1650)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2009).

²⁷³ G.A. Bredero, *De Klucht van de koe* in *Kluchten*, Jo Daan, ed. (Culemborg: Tjeenk Willink-Noorduijn N.V., 1971), 61–104, http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/bred001kluc04_01/colofon.htm.

It's so very nice, you'll go wild when you hear it, / Oh how it's pleasing, and there's so many people here, and it's so crowded...²⁷⁴

The play tracks the two men as they make the voyage along the road to market, where they will stop at an inn on the outskirts of the city.²⁷⁵ The hostess at the inn, Giertje, is introduced as she is awakened in the night by a ferryman seeking refreshment. After resigning herself to being bothered so late, she serves the ferryman, gruffly telling him, "You wanted to drink, so drink, let the landlady earn some money..."²⁷⁶ Giertje then begins to tell him of some of her fellow villagers, referring to "Deaf Jas, Lame Klaas, and Drunk Pete," among others.²⁷⁷

Later, in the tavern, after receiving the proceeds of the sale from the farmer, the thief suggests they sing an old song, *Van een loos en Boerman (Of a Carefree Farmer)*. A variation of the song was published in the *Antwerps liedboek (Antwerp Songbook)* of 1544 but the song probably dates to the Medieval period. As is the case with many songs of the period, it was reprinted in a slightly different form in the *Haerlem Oudt Liedts-Boeck (Haarlem's Old Songbook)* of 1630. It tells of a farmer who barter his horse and cart for a night with a wealthy man's wife.²⁷⁸ Ultimately the farmer is able to use his wits to convince the woman's husband to return his property. Unlike the farmer in the song, however, Bredero's will not recover his loss.

The same song inspired another farce by Samuel Coster (1579–1665), a well-known physician by trade. Coster wrote *Teewis de boer (Teeuwis the Farmer)* in 1612,

²⁷⁴ Bredero, 1971, 67, "O datje hier Seundaaghs waert, dan hebben wy sukken hovering, / Ho 't is hier nou niemedallen, inde weeck is hier gien neringh, / Maar alle heylige daeghs gaet hier de Veel met de Fluyt an boort, / 't Gaet so ondeughdelycke moy, jy wilt wild worden dat gy't hoort, / Ho 't is ien lust, ast hier vol volckx, en so wat drock // is..."

²⁷⁵ Bredero, 1971, 33.

²⁷⁶ Bredero, 1971, 72, "Nou wilje drincken, so drinckt, laet de Waerdin haer ploegh // gaen..."

²⁷⁷ Bredero, 1971, 73, "Daer is doove Jas, en mancke Klaas, en droncke Piet..."

²⁷⁸ *Antwerps liedboek (Een schoon liedekens. Boeck inden welcken ghy in vinden sult. Veelderhande liedekens...)*, Antwerp: Ian Roulans, 1544, 19v, http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_ant001antw01_01/colofon.htm.

the same year as *The Farce of the Cow*, about a simple farmer who laments what he perceives as the shortcomings of his peasant wife, Anne.²⁷⁹ In enumerating her traits, he notes that she is, “as white as a mole,” and has “ears like a frozen pig.”²⁸⁰ Teeuwis fantasizes about a tryst with a wealthy woman, whom he believes will be able to better satisfy him with her more refined beauty. After his wish is granted, however, he is disappointed, “I may pity me well, I say ‘one is just like the other,’ and mourn my horse and my wagon.” His statement is related to the proverb that lies at the heart of this farce: *A crooked stick burns as well as a straight one.*²⁸¹ The reference here is to the fact that Teeuwis has discovered that relations with his wife and those with the wealthier woman were just the same. The analogy is further enhanced by the fact that Teeuwis encountered the wealthy woman while he was delivering firewood to her house at the request of her husband.

A staple of both of these farces is the comic and foolish behavior of the peasant. Each presents an underlying lesson and both capitalize on earthy and often bawdy language to amuse the viewers. The figures mentioned by Giertje in the *Farce of the Cow* could just as easily be contained in the group represented by Brouwer in his *Peasant Party*, although making a determination as to the identity of “Drunk Pete” might be difficult. A series of etchings that was printed in several versions in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries shows a similar nicknaming scheme used to characterize peasant figures. The series, issued in several versions attributed variously to either Pieter Bruegel the Elder or Adriaen Brouwer, depicts the heads of peasant women and men, a motley

²⁷⁹ Samuel Coster, *Boere-klucht van Teeuwis de boer, en men juffer van Grevelinckhuysen*, ed. N.C.H. Wijngaards (Zutphen: W.J. Thieme & Cie, 1967), http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/cost001teeu01_01/colofon.htm.

²⁸⁰ Coster, 22.

²⁸¹ Coster, 8, “Krom hout brandt soo wel alst recht, alst by de vyer kan komen.”

crew of characters with varying expressions on their faces.²⁸² In one of the versions of the series, the peasants are given names that generally mock their appearance and personalities. One pair are described as, “Aecht Without Soul,” and “Heectje All-too-Beautiful” (fig. 74).²⁸³ That these little prints were published several times under both Bruegel’s and Brouwer’s names reveal how popular the comedic, farcical view of the peasant was in the seventeenth century and how connected Brouwer’s farcical view of the peasant was to the Bruegel tradition.

Adriaen Brouwer’s spirited representations of tavern life reflected this farcical view of the peasant that was typical of Flemish representations. He used his paintings to poke fun at humanity’s foibles through his representations of over-indulgent figures with a proud disregard for propriety and restraint. Like the farces of his time, he emphasized the humorous, but unlike the theatrical presentations, he did not necessarily seek to educate his audience or admonish them to avoid these foibles. Rather, he used peasant stereotypes to amuse and enliven his paintings of the tavern.

A similar cast of assorted jovial characters is found in Ostade’s early works, which reinforces the sense that the two artists shared a common interest in this type of subject matter, though Ostade extended more sympathy to his peasant even in this early period. In his earliest known dated painting, *Peasants Playing Cards* (fig. 37), dated 1633, the artist depicts a man and woman in the middle of a discussion over a game of

²⁸² The series, whose authorship is complex and highly debated, was issued at least four times, beginning around 1564–65 and was attributed twice to Bruegel as the “inventor” and once to Adriaen Brouwer. For the three series associated with Bruegel, see René van Bastelaer, *The Prints of Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Catalogue Raisonné*, New Edition, trans. and rev. by Susan Fargo Gilchrist (San Francisco: Alan Wofsy Fine Arts, 1992), 314–315 and Konrad Oberhuber, “Pieter Bruegel und die Radierungsserie der Bauernköpfe,” in *Pieter Bruegel und seine Welt: e. Colloquium*, eds. Otto van Simson & Matthias Winner (Berlin: Mann, 1979), 143–147. For the edition attributed to Brouwer, see Horst Scholz, *Brouwer invenit: druckgraphische Reproduktionen des 17.–19. Jahrhunderts nach Gemälden und Zeichnungen Adriaen Brouwers* (Marburg: Jonas, 1985) and Renger, 23. Renger does not believe the series is by Brouwer.

²⁸³ Van Bastelaer, 327.

cards.²⁸⁴ The woman leans in as the man talks and gestures toward her cards; either she cannot hear him or is too drunk to understand him. One can imagine his loud voice, raised above the tavern's din. Two other figures look on, one of whom holds a clay pipe, while, at the far right, a small boy refills a tankard from the spigot on a wooden barrel. Another group resides in the shadowy recesses of the simple room with its rear plastered wall and crossbeams. Straw hangs from the loft above. The rustic scenes of Brouwer and Ostade resonate with the earthy tone and character of the farces.

Ostade's early paintings may have been viewed as analogues to the "boertige" poems and songs of G. A. Bredero in which he offers "entertainment suitable for festive occasions."²⁸⁵ Svetlana Alpers has noted that the titling of the 1622 edition was a play on two words: "...boertig, meaning funny in a broad, rustic way, and boer, peasant."²⁸⁶ Arguing that even Bruegel's paintings of the previous century should be taken in a less overly prescriptive and more comic manner, she writes of Ostade that Bredero, "...is the poet who is consistently cited as a parallel for Ostade" because of their realistic low-life subject matter.²⁸⁷ In his introduction to the song book, Bredero wrote:

I have composed these little follies more out of delight than with troublesome intentions; In order to delight myself and my friends, male and female, at banquets, feasts, weddings, and other recreations, to delight with the refreshment of little novelties...²⁸⁸

²⁸⁴ According to Schnackenburg, in "Die Anfänge des Bauerninterieurs bei Adriaen van Ostade," *Oud Holland* 85, no. 3 (1970): 158–169, 158.

²⁸⁵ Alpers, 1975–76, 117.

²⁸⁶ Alpers, 1975–76, 118. She notes that the title was applied by the publisher after Bredero's death.

²⁸⁷ Alpers, 1975–76, 127.

²⁸⁸ G. A. Bredero, *Boertigh, Amoreus, en Aendachtigh Groot Lied-boeck*, vol. 1, ed. G. Stuiveling, et al (1622; repr. Leiden: Nijhoff, 1975), 19. "Ick hebbe dese malligheytjes meer uyt lust als uyt laster verdicht, om in Bancketten, Gast-gheboden, Waart-schappen en ander uytspanningen des Gemoets, my, en mijne vrienden en vriendinnen wat te verlustigen, met de verquickelijckheytder Nieuwigheytjes." This translation is from Alpers, 1975–76, 142.

Bredero's little novelties, like the paintings of Brouwer and Ostade, emphasized the comic in their peasant works.

In *Drinking Figures and Crying Children* (fig. 75), from 1634, for instance, the artist created a raucous scene where men cavort while children fight on the floor of one farmer's cottage. A man at rear helps a woman hang a heavy pot in the hearth, while three children beat each other about the head with wooden spoons. Three men on the right side gleefully watch this melee. The behavior of these parents contrasts sharply with Dutch standards for child-rearing and proper domestic conduct as outlined in the many contemporary writings on the subject.²⁸⁹ The most popular such manual was written by Jacob Cats, whose 1625 treatise *Houwlewyck (Marriage)* sold more than fifty thousand copies by 1658, an incredible print run for the time.²⁹⁰ Cats urged parents to model appropriate behavior for their children, and in the chapter entitled *Moeder (Mother)*, he informed his readers that a mother, "Does as the nightingale, who teaches her delicate young / How he should hum, or sing from the chest..."²⁹¹ He encouraged parents to exhibit proper moral behavior and piety:

Teach that his Father has found a way, / To pull out our sins by his spirit;
Teach that his eternal Word, the spotless Lamb, / For the good of man came into
the world.²⁹²

The parental blundering in Ostade's work resembles that in Brouwer's *Peasant Drinking Party*. The mother in the foreground of Brouwer's painting dozes while holding her baby,

²⁸⁹ Wayne Franits, "The Family Saying Grace: A Theme in Dutch Art of the Seventeenth Century," *Simiolus* 16, no. 1 (1986): 36–49, 38.

²⁹⁰ Hermans, 232–233.

²⁹¹ Jacob Cats, *Houwlewyck: dat is: de gantsche gelegentheyte des echten staets. Bruyt: wesende eerste deel, van't christelick huys-wyf, hier vergeleeken mette lente* (Zeeland: Barent Adriaensz Berentsma, 1636), 288. "Doet als de nachtegaal, die leert haar teere jongen / Hoe dat er dient geneurt, of uit ter borst gezongen."

²⁹² Cats, 288. "Leerd, dat zijn vader-sorg een middel heeft gevonden, / Om ons door zijnen geest te treken uit te zonden; / Leert, dat zijn eeuwig Woord, het onbevleete Lam, / Ten goede van den mensch hier in de wereld kwam."

and in Ostade's painting, the adults get a kick out of the brawling children on the floor. In both of these works we see the effects of a dissolute household. The image recalls the old Dutch saying, "As the old sing, so pipe the young," as we see these youngsters behaving in a way that is similar to the unrestrained antics of their overindulging role models.²⁹³

Rembrandt's Influence on Ostade

Pieter Bruegel the Elder and Adriaen Brouwer were not the only important influences on the young Ostade. The prints of Rembrandt van Rijn played a significant role in Ostade's artistic development as well. Rembrandt depicted the lower classes in some of his etchings, often representing beggars during his career. Pieter Bruegel had explored the theme and Rembrandt was likely familiar with his work, but he was also influenced by the prints of French artist Jacques Callot.²⁹⁴ In *Beggar Man and Woman Behind a Bank*, Rembrandt portrayed two hunched and pathetic figures walking side by side (fig. 76). Their ragged clothing and scowling expressions attest to the hardship and abject nature of their existence.

Some of Rembrandt's works revealed sympathy toward the poor, which may have balanced Brouwer's more satirical perspective in Ostade's eyes. For instance, Rembrandt's etching of *The Pancake Woman*, from 1635, depicts a family surrounding an elderly woman preparing pancakes in a large pan (fig. 77). The child on the right eagerly peeks around the boy standing next to him to get a glimpse of his soon-to-be

²⁹³ My thanks to Quint Gregory for pointing out this possible interpretation; for a discussion of the proverb and image type, see Guido M.C. Jansen, ed., *Jan Steen: Painter and Storyteller* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996), 172–175.

²⁹⁴ Julius Held, "A Rembrandt 'Theme,'" *Artibus et Historiae* 5, no. 10 (1984): 21–34. Held examines Rembrandt's development of the theme and its origins. See also Willam Halewood, "Rembrandt's Low Diction," *Oud Holland Jaargang* 107, no. 3 (1993): 287–295, 292 and Suzanne Stratton, "Rembrandt's Beggars: Satire and Sympathy," *The Print Collector's Newsletter* 17, no. 3 (1986): 78–82.

treat. Another child on the floor struggles to keep his cake safe from the scruffy intruding dog. The scene displays a playfulness present in some of Ostade's early works. In a painting depicting a *Village Kitchen* from around 1632 (Madrid, Prado), Ostade portrayed two young children in the foreground spoon feeding their dog (fig. 78). In a scene depicting *Strolling Musicians* from around 1635 Rembrandt again represented a peasant family (fig. 79). They lean over the Dutch door of their cottage to listen to the bagpipes being played by an itinerant musician who hopes this family will give him a charitable donation for his song. Ostade depicted a *Hurdy-Gurdy Player Before a Farmhouse* (Private Collection) in 1638 that represents a similar sense of humble enjoyment as a group of children gather round the musician (fig. 80).²⁹⁵

It was Rembrandt's style that really piqued Ostade's creative interest. One of the remarkable features of his works of the 1630s is his use of light, which suggests that he was closely observing Rembrandt's use of chiaroscuro.²⁹⁶ Ostade based his *Annunciation to the Shepherds* (Braunschweig, Herzog Anton-Ulrich-Museum) (fig. 81) on Rembrandt's 1634 etching of the same subject (fig. 82). Ostade used the same overall vertical composition as had Rembrandt and similarly situated the dramatic appearance of an angel at the upper left and a group of befuddled shepherds and animals in the lower right. His broad diagonal strokes of paint emulate the bold cross-hatched lines Rembrandt used to indicate rays of bright light. Just as in the print, the figures in the foreground of

²⁹⁵ Sotheby's New York: May 18, 2006 (Lot 00097)

²⁹⁶ Wilhelm von Bode lists the Ostade brothers as two of many artists influenced by Rembrandt in *Great Masters of Dutch and Flemish Painting*, trans. Margaret L. Clarke (1909; reprint, Freeport (NY): Books for Libraries Press, Inc., 1967), 49; Kurt Bauch, *Der frühe Rembrandt und seine Zeit: Studien zur geschichtlichen Bedeutung seines Frühstils* (Berlin: Verlag Gebr. Mann, 1960), 233–234; Horst Gerson "Rembrandt en de Schilder kunst in Haarlem" in *Miscellanea I. Q. van Regteren Altena* (Amsterdam: Scheltema & Holkema, 1969), 138–142.

Ostade's painting are surrounded on both sides by pools of darkness that shroud the details of the landscape.

A small painting dated 1635 depicting a *Village Tavern with Four Figures* (Salzburg, Residenzgalerie) illustrates the stylistic development of Ostade's articulation of light and space during the early 1630s (fig. 83). In this work the artist depicts a group of four peasants around a table illuminated by a broad swath of sunlight entering the room through the half door at left, a light that is given great emphasis by the darkness that fills the upper right and lower left. Such use of light was demonstrated by Rembrandt in early works such as *Scholar in an Interior with a Winding Stair*, from 1632, where a light source similarly bathes the room in warm tones while leaving the rest of the space in shadow (fig. 84).

Sharp angles and strong diagonals further define Ostade's simple interior, much as they do in Rembrandt's painting, with its dynamic twisting staircase. Ostade echoed the rise of the thatched roof above the door in the supporting beam at right. A golden sheaf of wheat hangs from the loft above along the beam and draws the viewer's eyes down to a leaning man sitting in a barrel chair whose body further echoes the diagonal orientation of the scene. This visual movement, along with the radiant creamy ivory wall in the background, help Ostade bring life to this little scene, where these folks pass time by drinking and talking with one another.

The painting demonstrates Ostade's concern for crafting the atmospheric effect of the interior to create an environment where his peasants appear to fit comfortably in their physical surroundings. Indeed, the articulation of the light and space seems to have garnered more of Ostade's attention than the three men and the woman. The rough hats of

the men obscure most of their faces, and while the woman's eyes can be seen, her other features bear only a faint resemblance to those of a human face. The painting speaks of the rough character of these peasants and the simple, earthy world they inhabit.

The Emergence of Ostade's Personal Style

My discussion thus far has focused on Ostade's adherence to tradition as well as the influence of several contemporary artists, begging the question, what is Ostade's contribution to the image of peasants that evolved in the 1630s? Though initially influenced by the subjects of Bruegel and Brouwer, Ostade soon refocused his images of peasant life to convey a sense of intimacy and simplicity. Although he continued to depict some of the more abject features of the peasant celebration, he progressively portrayed fewer of their unsavory activities. For instance, in *Peasants Playing Cards* (fig. 37) from 1633, Ostade's peasants have no more than a friendly disagreement over their game of cards, rather than an uncontrolled brawl of the type that Brouwer depicted in his works. Ostade subtly adjusted the comportment and activities of his rural inhabitants to achieve a more restrained effect.

By 1635, in *Village Tavern with Four Figures* (fig. 83), Ostade had begun to focus less on peasants' smoking and drinking and more on rendering the interior and the warmth of the light entering the room. Only one tankard is visible, in the hand of the man at right, while the woman spoons porridge from a bowl. It is no doubt a loud scene; we can see the gaping maw of the standing man and the open mouth of the woman who both seem to spout something that amuses the man at right. However, Ostade's painting has a different mood and is far more subdued and relaxed than Brouwer's scenes and his own

earlier work. Even if city viewers might not want to interact with these raffish folks, they might appreciate their sedate pace and easy interaction.

During the 1630s Ostade applied the joviality of Frans Hals and the enjoyment of the merry companies of his brother Dirck Hals (1591–1656) with the representation of peasant festivity to create a new kind of peasant portrayal. As Adolf Rosenberg noted over 100 years ago in his Ostade monograph, “While Frans laughed with all his might, Adriaen van Ostade was a quiet one who laughed to himself or secretly giggled.”²⁹⁷ Few could match the zeal of Hals, but the joyful sentiment is surely present in Adriaen’s work. The exaggeration of the peasants’ antics recalls the comedic aspect of Brouwer’s works, but Ostade did not have the Flemish artist’s sharp edge. Building on the tradition established by so many of his Northern predecessors, in the 1630s Ostade, nevertheless, had already begun to transform images of the lower classes into something much more idyllic in the following decades. This newly sympathetic view of the peasant was shaped by the character of Haarlem and its traditions.

²⁹⁷ Adolf Rosenberg, “Adriaen und Isack van Ostade,” *Kunstler Monographieren* 4 (Bielefeld und Leipzig: Velhagen & Klasing, 1900), 9, “Während Frans Hals sozusagen mit vollem Halbe uas sich herauslachte, war Adriaen ein Stiller, der in sich hineinlachte oder auch nur Heimlich sicherte.”

Chapter Four: Reshaping the Image of the Peasant

Even though Ostade's paintings of the 1630s present a humorous, caricatured view of the peasant, they reveal his inherent sympathy toward his subject. As he asserted his own artistic identity even further during the 1640s, he changed the way he presented peasant life. He relied less on the rowdy peasant tradition inherited from Brouwer, and more on the positive view of the peasant as a simple country denizen. At the same time, Ostade began to devote greater attention to the depiction of his figures and their expressions. Further, he gave his settings a makeover, making them larger, brighter, and generally more open than the dank interiors of the 1630s.

Several reasons may account for this change in perspective. Amid the optimism and celebration of Dutch identity that surrounded the Treaty of Münster in 1648, a mocking view of the peasant was less appealing. A greater sense of community was fostered by the success of the shared struggle of the Dutch of all economic classes against the Spanish during the Revolt. Further, farmers made a valuable contribution to the Dutch economy. The presence of Haarlem's civic identity, intertwined with its rural environs, also affected the way that Ostade perceived and presented his figures. These factors not only influenced Ostade's sympathetic representation of the country life, but also ensured its positive reception by his audience.

Ostade Focuses on His Figures

While Ostade depicted rural life throughout his long career, the style and meaning of his works changed dramatically over time. A large part of this metamorphosis involves his changing attitude toward the types of figures he portrayed, which is particularly

obvious in his works from the 1640s when he began to create more naturalistic figures. He gradually replaced the cartoonish boors of the 1630s with more observant and sensitive renderings of both physiognomy and countenance in the 1640s. The people in Ostade's mature works are characterized by amiable expressions and casual gestures that are amusing and sympathetic. Though they are more genial figures, he did not fully idealize or elevate rural inhabitants beyond his station as a rustic, maintaining a measure of distance between peasant and burgher that was essential to the meaning of his paintings.

One of the ways Ostade engaged more closely with peasant figures was through *tronies*, or character heads, a popular picture type in the seventeenth century. Similar to the etchings of peasant heads variously attributed to Bruegel and Brouwer, these painted *tronies* allowed him to examine types of human physiognomy. For instance, a pendant pair from 1642 (Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen) depicts two rough types, one solemn and the other smiling (fig. 85). The two tiny oval peasant *tronies* have rough, broad features and shabby clothing made of coarse, neutral homespun fabrics that speak to their rustic lives. The tattered white ruffle around the solemn man's neck reminds the viewer of this figure's lack of finery. The largely undefined backgrounds of the paintings are enlivened by Ostade's use of backlighting, which also casts contrasting light and shadow on the figures. The sketchy style of these paintings and the differing expressions of the figures highlight their unique countenances. The appeal of these *tronies* is largely in the amount of character Ostade was able to compress into his small images.

In a *Merry Peasant* from around 1640 (Rijksmuseum), Ostade depicted a single man with a large earthenware jug who smiles broadly at the viewer (fig. 86). The

oversized glove-like hand grasping the jug is similar to the hands seen in earlier works such as *Village Tavern with Four Figures* (fig. 83), but Ostade has here devoted much greater attention to facial detail and expression. Rather than the waxy, caricatured faces in the earlier painting, this work contains more detail and subtle expressiveness. The lively handling of paint lends this diminutive work an exuberance that belies its size. The thinly painted brown background reveals areas of the ground layer, and many details are deftly indicated with only one or two rapid strokes of the brush. Comparatively thick brushes of bright white on the man's collar and the lip of the jug and two slashes of peach on his lips give the work an animated immediacy.

Ostade's single-figured studies were not confined to his paintings. The artist began his successful career as a printmaker sometime in the late 1630s or early 1640s.²⁹⁸ He explored the characterization of his figures in his early prints, one of which is a *Peasant With His Hands Behind His Back* from around 1647 (fig. 87). This small etching depicts a man against a blank background with only some cursory shading at his feet to orient him in space. The relaxed posture and positioning of the figure suggest a

²⁹⁸ Patricia Phagan, ed., *Adriaen van Ostade: Etchings of Peasant Life in Holland's Golden Age* (Athens: Georgia Museum of Art, 1994), 11. Ostade dated only ten of his fifty etchings in the plate, ranging from 1647 to 1679; Adam von Bartsch published the catalogue raisonné of Ostade's etchings in his *Le Peintre Graveur*, published between 1808 and 1821. Adam von Bartsch, *Le Peintre-graveur*, 21 vols. (Vienna: J. V. Degen, 1803–1821), revised and resissued as *The Illustrated Bartsch*, Walter Strauss, ed. (New York: Albaris, 1978–); A number of catalogs of Ostade's etchings have subsequently been published, making his printed work much more extensively studied than his painted oeuvre. S. William Pelletier lists fourteen catalogs of Ostade's etchings in Phagan, 1994, 11; The studies most commonly cited today are Paul Davidsohn, *Adriaen van Ostade 1610–1685: Verzeichnis seiner Original-Radierungen* (Leipzig, C.G. Boerner, 1922), Louis Godefroy, *L'Oeuvre grave de Adriaen van Ostade* (Paris: Louis Godefroy, 1930), and K. G. Boon, ed., "Van Ostade-De Passe," vol. 15, *The new Hollstein Dutch & Flemish etchings, engravings and woodcuts, 1450–1700* (Amsterdam: Mennon Hertzberger, 1965). Suggested dating for the undated etchings varies greatly among scholars of these works. Louis Godefroy put Ostade's earliest etchings in the middle of the 1630s, much earlier than the suggested date of the middle 1640s offered by others. Three works from 1647—depictions of an *Organ Grinder*, a *Barn*, and a *Family*—are the earliest dated etchings. In his depiction of *A Smoker*, Ostade presents a peasant man sitting at a table smoking his pipe in a round format. He uses a consistent pattern of cross-hatching to create dark shadows on the man's clothing and the lower half of the space. The composition and technique are simpler than that of the 1647 works, suggesting it preceded them.

humbleness that is further reinforced by a genial expression achieved with a slight smile and droopy eyes.

Ostade's single-figure etched studies are similar to those of Rembrandt, who he looked to for inspiration as he began his career as an etcher. One of Rembrandt's etchings, *Beggar in a High Cap, Standing and Leaning on a Stick*, from 1629 (fig. 88), represents a scowling and slouching beggar casting a shadow against a plain backdrop, much like Ostade's. The hunched posture and the simple costume of Ostade's *Peasant With His Hands Behind His Back* owes a debt to Rembrandt's beggars, yet he is not a beggar. Leonard J. Slatkes has proposed that he is a village shopkeeper or artisan because of the apron and vest he wears.²⁹⁹ Indeed, although the pose and economy of line, especially in the cursory details of the ground, indicate Rembrandt's influence, Ostade's characterization of the figure is quite different. The rough, forlorn nature of Rembrandt's beggars has little to do with the genial expression of Ostade's figure, who is a much more benign character. The stooped posture suggests a humble mien in contrast to the more contorted poses of Rembrandt's figures. While Rembrandt sought to represent the hardship of the beggar's life in *Beggar Man and Woman Behind a Bank* and *Beggar With his Hands Behind His Back*, Ostade presented a figure who, while rough in mien and clothing, was essentially a representative of a class of decent, productive rural laborers.

Ostade's drawings further reveal his increasing interest in physiognomy and expression. The over 200 drawings by Ostade in Bernard Schnackenburg's catalog include works that range from simple figure studies to completely worked up designs for paintings and prints. Comparison between Ostade's drawings and paintings reveals that

²⁹⁹ Phagan, 1994, 120.

preparatory sketches were an important part of the artist's working process. The sketches read as collections of motifs that he used and reused in different configurations in his paintings. A 1630s sketch of a *Peasant Celebration* (fig. 89) depicts an interior similar to that seen in *Festive Peasants* from the same time (fig. 1).³⁰⁰ A plaster wall in the center of the room is flanked by diagonal beams supporting a high ceiling, while a basket hangs on the wall in the center of each room. The fiddler and the couple reading sheet music are seen in another drawing of the 1630s, *Festive Peasants in a Tavern*, but they are situated in a different interior (fig. 90).³⁰¹ Another drawing (fig. 91), contains figure studies for *Peasants Dancing in a Tavern* from 1659 (fig. 2).³⁰² The three conversing figures in the foreground are more clearly delineated while other elements of the composition are lightly sketched.

Houbraken praised Ostade for creating works that were natural (*natuurlijk*).³⁰³ De Bie, too, noted that Ostade's figures could not be more life-like (*naerder het leven*).³⁰⁴ Although their comments suggest that Ostade's works were realistic images, drawn from life, the term *naer het leven* (from life) was used in contrast to *uit den gheest* (from the imagination). *Uit den gheest* described images given form in the artist's mind rather than transcribed from reality. It is a term applicable to history paintings, with subjects drawn from scripture or literature. Nevertheless, even low-life genre scenes that appear to depict reality were the constructs of an artist's imagination.

³⁰⁰ Bernhard Schnackenburg, *Adriaen van Ostade, Isack van Ostade : Zeichnungen und Aquarelle: Gesamtdarstellung mit Werkkatalogen*, (Hamburg: E. Hauswedell, 1981), 1: 83, cat. 16.

³⁰¹ Schnackenburg, 1981, 1:83, cat. 19.

³⁰² Schnackenburg, 1981, 1:105, cat. 123.

³⁰³ Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlandische konstschilders en schilderessen*, (Amsterdam, 1718–1721), 347, <http://books.google.com>; see chapter two for the full passage and translation.

³⁰⁴ Cornelis de Bie, *Het Gulden Cabinet der Edel Vry Schilderconst* (Antwerp: Jan Meyssen, 1662), 258, <http://books.google.com>; see chapter two for the full passage and translation.

Karel van Mander sought to explain the animated and life-like nature of Pieter Bruegel the Elder's paintings in his biography of the artist. He wrote:

Brueghel often went out of town among the peasants...to fun-fairs and weddings, dressed in peasants' costume, and they gave presents just like the others, pretending to be family or acquaintances of the bride or bride groom. Here Brueghel entertained himself observing the nature of the peasant...which he then most animatedly and subtly imitated with paint.³⁰⁵

Scholars have long regarded this story of Bruegel's travels among the peasantry as a trope Van Mander used to enhance his story, but Bruegel's few surviving drawings indicate that he did create naturalistic landscape and peasant figure studies from life.³⁰⁶ Ostade's paintings, like Bruegel's, are products of his artistic imagination married with naturalistic details plucked from real life. His gatherings are products conceived in the studio on the basis of his observations of the world around him. The working method of painting on the basis of drawings, as seen in *The Artist in His Studio* (fig. 41) is likely how he often worked.

Ostade's life studies—mostly small, rapidly drawn figures have an immediacy that reflects his observations of the world around him (figs. 92 and 93).³⁰⁷ One man gestures with his pipe while another lackadaisically leans back in his chair, his tankard held aloft. Another sheet reveals the artist's study of hands and the face of a small girl (fig. 94). This sheet demonstrates Ostade's ability to note detail with great sensitivity as he captures the sweetness of the little girl's face. It is a simple expression of coyness often repeated in his paintings.

³⁰⁵ Karel van Mander, *The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German painters, from the first edition of the Schilder-boeck (1603–1604)*, ed., trans., and with an introduction Hessel Miedema (Davaco: Doornsprijk, 1994). 1:190.

³⁰⁶ Martin Royalton-Kisch, "Pieter Bruegel as a Draftsman: The Changing Image," in *Pieter Bruegel the Elder: Drawings and Prints*, ed. Nadine Orenstein (New Haven [CT]: Yale University Press, 2001), 13–39.

³⁰⁷ Schnackenburg, 1981, 2:93, cats. 64 and 63.

Few drawings from Ostade's early years survive. Schnackenburg has identified six sheets that can be ascribed to the years before 1636, all of which seem to be preparatory sketches for paintings.³⁰⁸ Some of them, however, are more clearly life studies that reveal the artist's observation of figures. Most surviving examples of such studies can be dated to the 1640s and later. These works are quick chalk studies such as one depicting a *Laughing Peasant* from the early 1640s (fig. 95).³⁰⁹ This period coincides with the stylistic change in Ostade's paintings. As Ostade matured and became more independent, he became more reliant on his own direct observations rather than what he saw in the work of other artists. During his visits to the countryside in search of material for his drawings and paintings, he also started to present a more sympathetic view of rural life.

A New Image of Rural Life

During the 1640s, Ostade utilized his figure studies to fill his paintings with sympathetic and fully developed characters. In *Interior of a Barn, with Peasants and Musicians* (Private Collection), 1643, he depicted a large space with several groupings of revelers (fig. 96). The figures are far different from those in *Festive Peasants* from the 1630s (fig. 1). The gestures are more refined and expressive. The standing man doffs his hat and smiles genially at the woman with the white kerchief. His pose and demeanor are in stark contrast to the standing man in the earlier painting who flings his arms wide as he cajoles the others to join him. The man with the *pasglas* gazes at the musicians, seemingly enjoying their song, while the two figures in the earlier painting seem to

³⁰⁸ Schnackenburg, 36, cats. 1–6.

³⁰⁹ Schnackenburg, 89, cat. 45.

screech the words from the sheet of music before them. The artist also devoted greater attention to the figures' faces than previously, particularly those of the man with the hat and the smoker.

Here, Ostade only cursorily renders the interior space, although he does feature the large central support with protruding crossbeams. On the left a paling has been constructed to section off part of the large room. This wall feels less ragged and improvised than the palings seen in Ostade's works from the 1630s (figs. 1, 33, 37, 75, 78, and 83), in part because he has begun to paint in a more detailed fashion. Modulations of light and shadow are also more subtle than in earlier paintings. Amid the muted tonalities of their surroundings, the figures' brilliant clothes further animate the scene. Areas of blue, red, and green lead the viewer through the composition.

The farmhouse in this painting is still a shabby structure, but the articulation of space is somewhat more complex. Ostade used multiple light sources, highlighting the area behind the paling with a soft glow in contrast to the brighter light cast on the main gathering. To the right a large hog rooting around next to the group speaks to the dual use of this farmhouse. Sixteenth-century artists used pigs to symbolize gluttony and drunkenness, as is evident from the inscription attached to Pieter Bruegel's image of the *Kermis at Hoboken* (fig. 25) that describes the peasants as "drinking themselves as drunk as beasts."³¹⁰ The pig in Ostade's painting does not have such a negative connotation; rather it situates these figures within their farmhouse and reinforces the artist's vision of country life. In Ostade's small grouping, two men smoke their pipes, while the woman at the far left and the man in the center are drinking. None fall down or vomit as they had in

³¹⁰ As noted in chapter 1.

the representations of Beham, Bruegel, Brouwer, and even in some of Ostade's early paintings. Instead they converse and listen to music.

Another painting from the 1640s—*Peasants Drinking and Making Music* (Philadelphia Museum of Art)—reveals a smaller group in an interior (fig. 43). In this intimate yet jovial scene, one man plays the violin while others drink and smoke around a little table. The standing man on the right salutes this cozy group with his glass of beer, poured from the jug in his other hand. A portly man with his arms crossed and his legs splayed is perched upon his tripod chair with an air of contentment. The sleeping dog in the foreground also attests to the peace and comfort of the gathering. A sense of quiet pervades this scene, much different than the loud voices and chaotic movements of the earlier *Festive Peasants* (fig. 1). Like other works from the 1640s, a vestige of the earlier style is seen in the man standing with his pipe in the background. With his cap pulled down over his eye and his open-mouthed expression, he provides a boorish contrast to the amiable expressions of the seated couple. The subject is more similar to the earlier painting *Village Tavern with Four Figures* (fig. 83) in which a friendly gathering speaks to idle time and companionable chatter.

The settings of these works are quite different. Far from the sparse barn-like space of *Festive Peasants* or *Village Tavern with Four Figures*, *Peasants Drinking and Making Music* is set in a comparatively well-appointed peasant cottage. A warm swath of daylight passes through a leaded glass window to illuminate the table. Its rays highlight the silver pitcher on the bench. The pitcher, as well as many other refined objects, including a Delftware plate on the mantle, indicates that this cottage is much more comfortable than that seen in *Festive Peasants* and other early works. This peasant cottage even features a

small landscape painting on the back wall near a curtained bedstead with linens hanging over its side, luxury items for a seventeenth-century peasant. As one of the most expensive items of furniture, a bed indicated a higher level of prosperity among rural populations.³¹¹

In works such as *Peasants Drinking and Making Music*, Ostade began to emphasize the material gains of rural folk. When compared to these relatively prosperous people, the seeming destitution of his early figures constitutes a significant change in focus over a relatively short period of time. As noted above, Jan de Vries' research into the rural economy in the Dutch Golden Age has shown that in the late sixteenth through the seventeenth centuries, the number of belongings among rural inhabitants increased.³¹² He cited inventories that reveal some people living in rural areas had tin plates, delftware, glassware, and furniture. That some of them owned paintings is also evident from inventories. This evidence suggests that the more prosperous figures that Ostade depicted in the 1640s reflects some of the real prosperity attained by them throughout the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century rural transformation.

A pictorial motive, however, also lay behind the artfully displayed possessions in such works. Ostade began to include them at a time when other artists also began to depict the interior décor of lower class dwellings with greater care than they had earlier in the century. Ostade began to present rural life as shabby-chic. Certain signs, such as the belongings in *Peasants Drinking and Making Music* indicate a level of prosperity that links them with their urban counterparts. In *Interior of a Barn, with Peasants and*

³¹¹ Jan de Vries, *The Dutch Rural Economy in the Golden Age, 1500–1700* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 217–218.

³¹² In his examination of inventories of farm households from 1550 to 1750, De Vries noted an increase in the belongings of rural inhabitants in his *The Dutch Rural Economy in the Golden Age, 1500–1700*, 215–219.

Musicians (fig. 94), the presence of the musicians also delineates two social classes within the space. In this case, the peasants are the privileged class, deigning to offer charity to the itinerant musician in exchange for a song. Despite the tattered stockings of the smoker and the torn vest of the man doffing his hat, these figures rest one rung higher than the musician and his son who are beggars. Though they are simple and sometimes unkempt, they are no longer presented as the lowest members of the economic spectrum.

Rural Domesticity

At the end of the 1640's Ostade began to depict more peaceful domestic scenes of rural life. A 1647 painting of a *Peasant Family* (Budapest, Museum of Fine Arts) is set in a cluttered rustic interior (fig. 97). While a mother tends to her baby, a father stirs something in a large bowl, likely the porridge that the young boy standing at the table is consuming. Another young boy plays with the family dog. Using a rough style and dark earth tones, Ostade fills the small cottage with household items that speak to the daily activities of this family. From the baby's bassinette to the unmade bed in the background, to the kitchen implements strewn around the fireplace, Ostade utilized this ostensibly haphazard display of objects to convey the lives of this humble family and their surroundings.

Artistic precedents for this type of lower class family interior are difficult to locate. Bernhard Schnackenburg has suggested that Ostade derived one of his domestic scenes from Rembrandt's depictions of the early life of Christ.³¹³ Even if Rembrandt's etching of the Holy Family were known to Ostade, it appears that the Haarlem artist was

³¹³ Patricia Phagan, ed., Adriaen van Ostade: Etchings of Peasant Life in Holland's Golden Age (Athens: Georgia Museum of Art, 1994), 230–231.

the inventor of the peasant family interior. He was certainly more sympathetic to rural folk than other artists of the time owing to his roots in Haarlem. Hofstede de Groot lists fifty-four domestic scenes among his catalog of more than 900 Ostade paintings. Ostade depicted another simple domestic scene in an etching of a family *Saying Grace*, dated 1653 (fig. 98). The work reflects ideals of behavior in Dutch society, already seen in an anonymous painting of 1627 (fig. 99), but for the first time features a peasant family engaged in such proper behavior. In Ostade's image, a father clasps his hands in a gesture of prayer while he holds his hat between his arms. Learning from his father, the young boy has similarly removed his hat to pray. In this scene a sense of humble pride and peace pervades an intimate image of a poor family in their rustic home.

In making this etching, Adriaen van Ostade drew from a literary tradition that includes Jacob Cats' *Houwelyck*.³¹⁴ Unlike those in *Drinking Figures and Crying Children* (fig. 75), these parents model the appropriate God-fearing behavior espoused by Dutch moralists. In a 1609 print by Claesz Jansz Visscher (1587–1652), an upper class family says grace around the table. The words of Psalm 128 are printed in Dutch and French at the bottom of the print:

Blessed are all who fear the Lord, / who walk in obedience to him. / You will eat the fruit of your labor; / blessings and prosperity will be yours. / Your wife will be like a fruitful vine within your house; / your children will be like olive shoots around your table.³¹⁵

From the late 1640s until the end of his career, Ostade used peasants to illustrate popular notions of seventeenth-century Dutch domestic virtue, quite in contrast to sixteenth-century scenes featuring peasant revelry as a symbol of gluttony or laziness. In these

³¹⁴ Wayne Franits, *Paragons of Virtue: Women and Domesticity in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art*, (Cambridge, University Press, 1993), 5.

³¹⁵ Ps 128: 1-3 NIV.

scenes of domesticity Ostade used rural inhabitants not as a foil to the upper class notion of virtue, but rather as an imitation of it, lending an even greater weight to his humanization of his figures. An inscription accompanying a print after Ostade's work, *The Family*, read, "Yet we love our little child from the heart, and that is no trifle. / Thus we regard our miserable hovel as a splendid mansion."³¹⁶

By presenting these domestic images, Ostade established another facet of his rural subjects' humanity. In earlier imagery, parents modeled the kind of reprehensible behavior that would mold their children into similarly crude adults. In David Vinckboons *Peasant Kermis* of 1629, just two decades earlier, children watch as their parents lose all control (fig. 28). On the right, a baby reaches for its mother, who sits on the ground with her giant tankard of beer and her blouse hanging open. Less egregious examples are found in Ostade's early work, such as *Drinking Figures and Crying Children*, where parents allow their children to engage in the unrestrained, loutish behavior typical of the negative peasant stereotype. Ostade's invention of the domestic peasant scene further punctuates the shift in attitude seen in his work. He elevated rural folk and their mores to the level of their upper class counterparts, worthy of the ideals set forth by Jacob Cats in his treatises.

The Peasant as the "Other"

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the peasant was often viewed as an outsider to the urban world and was used as a foil to the mores and values of Dutch burghers in both art and literature. Ostade began his career fully within this frame of

³¹⁶ Phagan, 1994, 230.

mind and used physiognomy and expression to highlight the crudeness of his figures. During the course of the seventeenth century, however, as the Dutch enjoyed greater peace and prosperity, there was some common ground between burghers and peasants, which contributed to a newly sympathetic depiction of country life.

Dutch urban and rural inhabitants increasingly recognized their shared heritage in having faced a common enemy during the Dutch Revolt. The Dutch, who only established their own political entity as a result of their Revolt against Spanish control, were very conscious of their need to define their own heritage. The effort to trace the history and character of the Netherlands and its people, in fact, even date to the earliest stirrings to establish political autonomy. Hadrianus Junius' *Batavia*, written by 1570 and published posthumously in 1588, for example, is an overview of the origins and history of various cities in Holland. It illuminates the story of the ancient Batavians, a people who inhabited the Northern Netherlands during Roman times and glorifies their role in establishing a grand and glorious past for the Republic.

Dutch villages suffered a great deal at the hands of the Spanish during the Revolt. Situated beyond the protection of city walls, residents of villages were often persecuted and harassed by Spanish soldiers and forced to take up arms to defend themselves.

Constantijn Huygens describes the destruction and heroism of the peasants in part of his *Zedeprinten*:

He lives life the way life should be lived, and is not worried for tomorrow. He knows no fear, until the day he hears the beat of the war drum. Suddenly he looks into the barrel of a gun. Now his money will be extorted. The soldiers are threatening to set fire to the haystack, while others are shearing his sheep, or breaking his flax, or grinding his wheat, or mowing his pasture. As long as they call him the boss, he tries to weather the storm. But all the peasants joined forces and they rebelled, compelled by the need: take cover soldiers! Each stick is a lance, each flail a deadly weapon. In his heart, in his hands, in his eyes, despair

and vengeance fight for supremacy. He hungers for human flesh and is thirsty for the blood of soldiers, so savage is someone who has no other choice.³¹⁷

While Huygens makes no reference to the Dutch Revolt, he no doubt has it in his mind as the *Zedeprinten* were written in 1623, just two years after the end of the Twelve Years Truce. He expresses solidarity with farmers, the Revolt having united the upper and lower classes against a common enemy.

Haarlem was one of the cities targeted by the Spanish forces, and it suffered greatly during the Revolt. The city officially declared itself against Phillip II on July 4, 1572, at which time the king sent an army who put Haarlem under siege on December 11.³¹⁸ Though it resisted for seven months, it was forced to capitulate on July 13 after suffering great duress from having had its supply lines completely severed several months earlier.³¹⁹ Haarlem was forced to host a Spanish garrison until 1577, and upon its departure, much of the city was in ruins with damage estimated at 1.4 million guilders.³²⁰

Not only the city, but also the surrounding areas suffered during this time. In 1628 Samuel Ampzing noted in his *Beschryvinge ende Lof der Stad Haerlem (Description and Praise of the City of Haarlem)*, that prior to the Siege of Haarlem, the Spanish army,

³¹⁷ Constantijn Huygens, “Zedeprinten,” in *Koren-bloemen* (s’Gravenhage: Adriaen Vlack, 1658), 3: 144. “Hij leeft gelijkmen leeft daer ’t Leven leven is, / Daer voor noch achterdenck, daer geen gebeef en is, / Tot dat de Trommel komt, en Lonten die hem tergen / Tot dat hij Daelders sweet’, oft wreken ’t op sijn’ bergen, / Oft scheeren ’t van sijn vee, oft braken ’t uijt sijn vlass, / Oft malen’t uyt sijn Terw, oft maeijen ’t van sijn gras. / Die stormen duyckt hij door soo lang sij hem vermannen, / Maer schept hij uyt den nood het hert van wederspannen / Door Boeren-buren hulp, Soldaten kiest de wijck, / Elck vlegel wordt een Roer, en elcke pols een Pijck. / De wraeck sitt in sijn hert, de Wanhoop in sijn’ handen, / En elck’ in ijeder oog; hij wenschten in sijn’ tanden / Noch Room, noch Schapenkaes voor Menschen vleisch en bloed; / Soo wreed is die het is om dat hij ’t wesen moet.”

³¹⁸ Geziena Frouke van der Ree-Scholtens, ed. *Deugd boven geweld: een geschiedenis van Haarlem, 1245–1995* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1995), 40-41.

³¹⁹ Ree-Scholtens, 41.

³²⁰ Ree-Scholtens, 141.

carrying a large amount of booty, "...burned all of the villages from Albertsburg to Spaarnwoude."³²¹ In describing the ruins of the Huis ter Kleef, Ampzing wrote:

Harsh Spain / you who also pulled down this house / (how can anyone forget all your evils and tyrannies) but think (o noble race!) You were not alone / you experienced these events in common with your city...³²²

A monk named Wouter Jacobsz, who was living in Amsterdam during the siege, visited Haarlem just after it ended. He noted in his journal:

And as I journeyed there, I saw on the way frightful desolation to which the land has come through the troubles in this present year. I found very few houses between Haarlem and Amsterdam that had not been burned... In many places the land was altogether waste without any cattle."³²³

Peasants and burghers alike shared the experience of destruction and rebuilding their lives after the fighting ended.

By 1648 the acceptance of rural residents as an essential aspect of Holland's identity was made explicit in a map of *'t Graeffchap hollandt* (County Holland) by Claes Jansz Visscher (fig. 100). Visscher based his map upon the iconic *Leo Belgicus* map of the Netherlands that originated in 1583.³²⁴ He transformed what was previously a map of both the northern and southern Netherlands into a map featuring Holland. Published the same year as the Treaty of Münster, when the Dutch Republic officially won its independence from Spain, the map allegorically associates the rearing lion with the map of Holland. Surrounding the map are twelve cartouches with panoramic views of the

³²¹ Samuel Ampzing, *Beschryvinge ende Lof der Stad Haerlem in Holland* (Haarlem: Adriaen Rooman, 1628), 514, <http://books.google.com>.

³²² Ampzing, 89. Foeij Spanjaerd / dat gy ook dit Huys hebt neergesmeten / (hoe kan men al sijn quaed en tyrannij vergeten) Maer denkt (o' ed'le stam!) gy waertet niet alleen: Gy had dit ongeval met uwe Stad gemeen... The English translation above is from Catherine Levesque, *Journey Through Landscape in Seventeenth-Century Holland: The Haarlem Print Series and Dutch Identity* (University Park [PA]: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 54.

³²³ Hen van Nierop, *Treason in the Northern Quarter: War, Terror, and the Rule of Law in the Dutch Revolt*, trans. J. C. Grayson (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 3.

³²⁴ H.A.M. van der Heijden, *Leo Belgicus: An Illustrated and Annotated Carto-Bibliography* (Aalphen aan den Rijn: Canaletto, 1990).

province's major cities, including Haarlem. Within this clear statement of independence and Dutch identity, the farmer plays a significant role. Arranged along the top of the map are four prominent groups of figures identified as "Southern Dutch Farmers" (*Agricola Hollandia Australis*), "Dutch Nobles" (*Nobiles Hollandia*), "Merchants or Citizens" (*Mercatores seu Cives*), and "Northern Dutch Farmers" (*Agricola Hollandia Borealis*).

In the cluster of people comprising the "Southern Dutch Farmers," five rural figures stand together with their backs to the viewer. They wear simple clothing and have the hunched postures associated with the lower classes. One man holds a pitchfork, while a woman holds a large basket with a duck in it. On the right side, the "Northern Dutch Farmers," are represented by a man, two women holding marketing baskets, and a milkmaid balancing two buckets of milk over her shoulders. The rural contingent of Dutch society, unlike the other two classes, is twice represented, bracketing the other groups. In their study of the modernization of the Dutch economy, Jan de Vries and Ad van der Woude noted that, "total agricultural production may have tripled in the period 1510–1810, with the great bulk of the increase concentrated before the mid-seventeenth century."³²⁵ During this period, the Northern Netherlands also transitioned from being importers to exporters of foodstuffs, becoming an important source of economic prosperity, a situation reflected in the images on Visscher's map.³²⁶ It defines the rural citizens of Holland as a vital and essential part of its livelihood.

The forging of a Dutch identity, fully realized with independence in 1648, also created a kind of solidarity between peasant and burgher. Ostade was able to create scenes in which the peasant maintained his status as the rural "other," but also gained

³²⁵ 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), 232.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

status as a facet of the civic identity of Haarlem. This new conceptual area in which the peasant became both “us” and “them” was the underpinning of the appeal of Ostade’s depictions of idyllic, happy festive rural folk to an urban audience. His paintings established a new trope of peasant life that blended old and incorporated new visual traditions.

Finally, Dutch burghers like Ostade may have had a more personal reason to extend greater sympathy toward the countryside and its residents. Ostade’s parents had grown up as villagers in Flanders, his father from Ostade and his mother from Woensel.³²⁷ Perhaps these familial roots influenced the artist’s perspective on the people who lived and worked in and around Haarlem’s villages. Ostade would not have been unique in his experience as a first-generation burgher. The boom in urban populations in the Dutch Republic meant that many people were migrating to cities, including Haarlem, to make their homes. A number of Southern Netherlandish immigrants must have come from cities in Flanders, but many others, like Ostade’s parents, would have been coming from villages as well. For them, Ostade’s paintings must have had an additional nostalgic appeal.

The transformation of Ostade’s presentation of rural inhabitants that occurred in the 1640s saw the artist devoting more attention to the characterization of individual figures and their expressive gestures—sometimes boisterous and sometimes demure. From the cursorily executed, animalistic boors of his early work, he developed his figures with more naturalistic detail that imbued them with a greater sense of humanity. The settings for Ostade’s rural folk of the 1630s and those of the 1640s changed as well. This transformation is partly a matter of emphasis. In early works he emphasizes the barn-like

³²⁷ See note 96.

aspect of the peasant cottage whereas in the 1640s he begins to shift focus to the living spaces, almost completely eliminating any hint of their other uses. The result is a dramatic shift in the seeming comfort and prosperity of his figures over a relatively short period of time.

Chapter Five: Leisure in the Haarlem's Countryside

In his mature work, Adriaen van Ostade freed himself from the satirical tradition of Bruegel and Bredero. In many cases he relied on pictorial types with roots in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, yet he put his personal stamp on these traditions by endowing them with a sense of humanity and humble joy. In Ostade's hands, even the activities of the kermis were tamed to present the simple joy of a festival day. Ostade often depicted intimate scenes of couples or small groups that huddle around a tavern table to share a moment of peace and enjoyment, although occasionally he portrayed larger and more robust gatherings, such as weddings or parties. By transforming images of peasant festivity, Ostade presented an idyllic vision of rural life that accorded with Haarlem's earthly paradise.

Beer, Tobacco and Games

In *Peasants in an Inn*, 1662 (Mauritshuis), Ostade depicted two small gatherings of people enjoying the pleasures offered in the tavern (fig. 101). The trio in the foreground provides a succinct catalog of the diversions—particularly smoking, drinking, and playing games—prevalent in such establishments. Even though sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Northern artists often depicted these activities in a negative light, Ostade saw them more as simple amusements and appropriate for quiet and convivial moments of leisure.

Peasants in an Inn is typical of Ostade's mature style from the late 1640s through the 1660s. As in his works from the early to mid-1640s, Ostade continued to use earth tones to convey the dirt floors and rough surroundings of peasant cottages, but he

introduced more bright areas of local color in the clothing to punctuate the brown tones of the interior. In *Peasants in an Inn*, the artist utilized a bright blue for the shirt of one man—mirrored in the little girl’s dress—which is complemented by the red-orange of his companion’s sleeves. The violinist’s eggplant-colored jacket further accents the scene, while at the same time, Ostade’s mastery of chiaroscuro is evident in the warm play of light over the scene. Bright sunlight from the large arched doorway illuminates the room with a softness that gradually recedes into the shadowy areas in the back where a rosy leaded-glass window provides a dusky view of the trees outside.

Ostade imbued this mature painting with a muted collegiality that lends a coziness and refinement to his figures. In *Peasants in an Inn*, one man salutes the others with his glass as the innkeeper’s wife looks benevolently upon their revelry. A similar coterie convenes around the fireplace in the background. The small groups convey a sense of warmth and intimacy that infuse the painting with an overall sense of peace and wellbeing. The little girl sitting in the doorway plays with her dog, who obediently awaits a taste from her raised spoon. Ostade utilized this familiar motif of children and pets interacting many times, giving his scenes a quaint, domestic feel. These childish interactions are much different than the brawling scamps in some of the artist’s earlier works such as *Drinking Figures and Crying Children* (fig. 75). Just as the violent behavior of the children in that painting mimicked the lack of control of the elders, this peaceful mien of the children is a clue to the idyllic, peaceful feel of these gatherings.

Beer flows freely from the barrels, tankards, and glasses in Ostade’s tavern scenes. The abuse of alcohol was cause for condemnation, and in Brouwer’s paintings, its ill effects are apparent. Prints and paintings that featured the consumption of alcohol

generally admonished viewers to avoid the pitfalls of overindulgence. The effects of alcohol are the subject of a poem by the theologian Jacobus Revius (1586–1658):

Beneath this stone lies Gertie Vleer, / Who spent her life drinking beer. / The earthen mug that made her gay / Stand graven on her tomb today. / Her husband, begging on the street, Her children with no food to eat / Cause no grief to Gertie Vleer -- / But that the mug contains no beer.³²⁸

In a scene from a print series from around 1600, *The Consequences of Alcoholism*, by the Haarlem printmaker Jacob Matham, a game of backgammon has gone awry; an overturned goblet and ewer indicate that drink prompted this outburst. A man with two knives plans to stab his opponent as a woman attempts to stay his hand (fig. 102). Other brawls take place in the back of the inn and just outside the front door. The inscription below the print reads, “Gluttonous drinking day and night grives the spirit, Causes violence toward women and angry bloodshed.”³²⁹

The drunken fight over a game of cards was a popular trope. Pieter Bruegel the Younger depicted the ill-effects of such dissipation in a painting, dated 1619, which depicts a group peasants engaged in an all-out brawl over a game of cards (fig. 103).³³⁰ Adriaen Brouwer rendered the subject several times as well. One of his early works— from his time in Holland—depicts a group of peasants in a similar *Fight Over Cards* (fig. 104). In his earlier works, as with *Peasants Playing Cards* (fig. 37), Ostade occasionally depicted this type of subject, but his figures, by comparison, have no more than a friendly disagreement over their game of cards rather than an uncontrolled melee. The smirk on the man’s face at right reveals that he has bemusedly taken note of this disagreement.

³²⁸ Jacobus Revius, “Of a Drunken Wife,” in *Jacobus Revius: Dutch Metaphysical Poet, Selected Poems*, trans. Henrietta Ten Harmsel (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1968), 141.

³²⁹ For the print series, see Konrad Renger, *Lockere Gesellschaft. Zur Ikonographie des Verlorenen Sohne~ und von Wirtshausszenen in der niederländischen Malerei* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann Verlag, 1970), 82–84.

³³⁰ There is some question as to whether or not this painting is based on a lost work by Pieter Bruegel the Elder; for a summary of the debate, see Walter Liedtke, “‘Peasants Fighting Over Cards’ by Pieter Bruegel and Sons,” *Artibus et Historiae* 10, no. 19 (1989), 121–131.

Perhaps he has seen it play out many times. Ostade subtly adjusted the comportment and activities of his rural inhabitants from the kinds of brawls featured by Bruegel and Brouwer.

Artists employed a number of methods to indicate a gluttonous drinker, including the motif of a figure holding a jug upside down to guzzle his drink, as in Brouwer's *Interior of an Inn* (fig. 72). Equally expressive of the desire to drink is the *kannekijker*, or jug-viewer, an example of which can be seen in Jan Miense Molenaer's 1637 representation of the *Sense of Sight*, where a man peers forlornly into his empty jug of beer (fig. 105).³³¹ In Judith Leyster's *Greedy Drinkers*, two men who smoke and drink to excess are joined by a skeleton holding an hourglass, a very straightforward representation of the impending consequences of their vice.³³²

The drinking of beer is very different in Ostade's mature tavern scenes than in those of his earlier career. Beer itself was not necessarily a bad thing.³³³ Beer was one of the staples of seventeenth-century liquid diet in a time when water was largely unsafe for drinking.³³⁴ The danger was overindulgence, as seen in Molenaer's *kannekijker* or Leyster's dire warning complete with skeleton reminder of the ephemerality of life. These particular allusions to overindulgence are not present in Ostade's rowdier works of the 1630s, much less in his paintings from his mature and late periods. In the paintings of the 1630s peasants stomp around, fall down, and sometimes even vomit—as seen in

³³¹ For a discussion of these symbols of gluttony, see James Welu and Pieter Biesboer, eds., *Judith Leyster: Schilderes in een mannenwereld* (Zwolle: Waanders Uitgevers and Haarlem: Frans Halsmuseum), 1993, 130 and 158–160.

³³² Welu and Biesboer, cat. 6, 156–161.

³³³ Richard W. Unger, *A History of Brewing in Holland, 900-1900: Economy, Technology, and the State* (Boston: Brill, 2001), 116. Unger details the pride in the production of beer taken by the Dutch, remarking that even the moralist Jacob Cats made positive mentions of beer.

³³⁴ Unger, 4.

Festive Peasants (fig. 1). Nevertheless, even during his early years, Ostade's emphasis more was on enjoyment, even if he poked fun at the caricatured boors in his works.

Ostade sought to make his viewers smile. Arnold Houbraken noted this quality in his biography of the artist, calling Ostade's work *geestig*. *Geestig* can be translated variously as witty, humorous, or lively. It is a term that Houbraken used to describe Ostade's student Jan Steen as well. Some of Steen's early works reveal his study of Ostade's paintings. Steen's *The May Queen*, from around 1650, depicts a celebration taking place outside a peasant cottage (fig. 106). The composition, with its prominent structure on the right and the receding village street on the left is similar to Ostade's *Peasants Outside a Cottage* from around 1645 (fig. 42).³³⁵ In addition, both paintings exude a sense of humble joy and celebration among their villagers.

Steen's scenes of revelry were likewise created to make his viewers laugh. Houbraken described Steen's work not only as "*geestig*," but also as "*potsig*" and "*klught* [*klucht*]," which can be translated as farcical and farce. His use of these additional terms captures the difference between the two artists, as Steen's humor was more pointed than Ostade's. Steen utilized symbols that referred to proverbs and emblems to enhance the meaning of his works. In Steen's *The Dancing Couple* from 1663, for instance, a party outside a village tavern unfolds with a kermis or fair taking place in the background (fig. 107). The very prominent cut flowers and broken eggshells are *vanitas* symbols that underscore the indulgence in worldly pleasures represented in the scene. Ostade's paintings often include a stray shoe or discarded jug in the foreground, but these are more

³³⁵ As noted by Peter C. Sutton, "The Life and Art of Jan Steen," *Philadelphia Museum of Art Bulletin* 78, no. 337/338 (Winter 1982–Spring 1983): 3–63.

mundane inclusions, meant to heighten the folksy, disorganized nature of his scenes, very different than Steen's sharp reminders.

Overall, Steen's works reveal an intellectual complexity that is purposely absent from Ostade's oeuvre. Steen adhered more closely to the Bruegel tradition in his use of signs and symbols that give his humorous paintings this layer of complexity. Ostade, however, shied away from references to specific occasions, festivals, or symbols. He literally stripped his peasant paintings down to something very simple, even quaint, as a way to lightly amuse and please his viewers. Many of Steen's paintings hold a mirror to human folly, as in the tradition of farce, whereas Ostade shied away from any sort of judgement.

Ostade sought to create pleasant scenes. Though his country tavern scenes are similar to some of his contemporaries, his representations are lighter than those shown by other artists. *Merry Peasant Interior* can be compared to a work by his student Cornelis Bega from the same year (fig. 108). Ostade's group enjoys the warmth of a fireplace in a tavern, while another group of smokers gather around a table in the dimly-lit recesses of the room. Despite being shrouded in darkness, the mood of this gathering retains a brightness that is conveyed in both the colors and the activities of the figures. Bega's *Interior Scene with Six Male Peasants Smoking and Drinking*, where a group of men huddle together in a darkened tavern interior, retains the dark feel of Ostade's early years (fig. 109). In Bega's work, the interior is dark and cramped and the figures wear ragged clothing; one man may be urinating in the back corner of the room. Clearly the stereotype of the rustic peasant still existed in the 1660s when Ostade was painting idyllic scenes of rural life.

Ostade often depicted rural folk smoking tobacco in long clay pipes. Tobacco was touted by some as an herbal palliative for a number of afflictions, while others viewed it as similar to alcohol in its inebriating effects, often referring to the “drinking” of tobacco.³³⁶ In 1614 Roemer Visscher offered his view of tobacco use in one of the emblems of his *Sinnepoppen* (fig. 110). An emblem text placed above a man smoking tobacco reads, “Often something new, seldom something good.”³³⁷ Tobacco eventually became associated with the lower classes and had comic overtones because it dulled the senses.³³⁸ This connotation was appropriate to the work of Adriaen Brouwer, whose representations of smokers may have influenced Ostade. In one of Brouwer’s paintings, smokers savor tobacco (fig. 111). Each of them represents some moment in the process, from the man on the ground with his pouch preparing to smoke, to the standing man in mid-toke, to the figure at right who blissfully exhales. The cat in the foreground is a play on these smokers, who take to their poison in the same way that the kitten laps up his milk.

Ostade often included figures who smoke in a tavern, but he rarely commented on the ills of the activity. In his *Trick-track Players* from around 1634 (fig. 112), he depicted a single smoker in dramatic silhouette against the bright light in the center of the room. More often, however, Ostade paired a smoker with a drinker, thus linking their mutually intoxicating qualities. In other works, smoking is seen as a part of the ambiance in scenes of merriment, leisure, and relaxation.

³³⁶ Ivan Gaskell, “Tobacco, Social Deviance, and Dutch Art in the Seventeenth Century,” in *Holländische Genremalerei im 17. Jahrhundert: Symposium, Berlin 1984*, Henning Bock and Thomas W. Gaehtgens, eds. (Berlin: Mann, 1987): 117–137, 119–121.

³³⁷ Gaskell, 118.

³³⁸ Gaskell, 122–123.

In the eighteenth-century songbook *Het Vermakkelyk Buitenleven*, three songs are devoted to the act of smoking and the love of tobacco. For one of them, a small print depicting a hunched smoker precedes the song itself. The caption reads, “Little Jaapje fumes and smokes at his ease, the air is filled with the delicious odor of his tobacco.”³³⁹ The image and text accompany a smoking song that celebrates the effects of tobacco, “Tobacco you are my only joy, You make me merry and glad.”³⁴⁰ Another song proclaims, “O burning pipe, hot glow!...it makes all cares disappear.”³⁴¹ The lyrics are a celebration of tobacco but also a tongue-in-cheek homage to the fact that there is something artificial about the state it arouses. One is able to escape from all cares, though the listener understands that such a state is only temporary. Like Ostade’s paintings, a harsh judgment about tobacco-smoking is absent, and in its place a lighthearted representation of this pastime is presented.

Playing games figured prominently in the pursuit of leisure for both the upper and lower classes, particularly in taverns. Adriaen van Ostade’s figures often gather to play trick-track or cards, popular forms of leisure in in seventeenth-century Dutch society. Though they were enjoyed by the populace at large, games were often denounced by early seventeenth-century moralists and emblem writers, particularly when gambling was involved. An emblem from Roemer Visscher’s 1614 *Sinnepoppen* depicts a man drinking above cards, dice, chips, and a racket alongside the inscription, “The worst pleases the most” (fig. 113).³⁴² In his 1633 publication, *Mirror of the Vanity and*

³³⁹ Jan van Gijsen, *Het vermaaklyk Buitenleven, of de zingende en spelende Boerenvreugde* (Haarlem: Widow of Hermanus van Hulkenroy, 1716), 28.

³⁴⁰ *Het vermaaklyk Buitenleven*, 29–30.

³⁴¹ *Het vermaaklyk Buitenleven*, 30.

³⁴² Welu and Biesboer, 178–179.

Unrestrainedness of Our Age, Jacob Cats includes an illustration by Jan van de Velde (fig. 114) that represents a man playing backgammon above the inscription:

Didn't I do well! It's all been drunk, all gone, all clinked away. Everything, everything has been gambled, back-gammoned and beggar-my-neighborred. We fight now and again, and I deserve a good drubbing.³⁴³

Card-players, drinkers, and smokers also fare poorly in Cats' treatise. Such critical views of gaming, however, were largely based upon negative views of idleness, which inevitably resulted from overindulging in leisurely pursuits. Just as with the imbibing of liquor and tobacco, artists used game-playing to represent the path toward digressing from a righteous life.

Ostade does not use his images to make pronouncements about the ills of gaming and gambling. Backgammon, which Ostade featured in his etching *Backgammon Players in a Tavern*, probably from the 1650s (fig. 115), is criticized in a song from *Het Vermakkelyk Buitenleven* called *Bad Company Breeds Bad Business (Verkeerde Verkeering Baart Sobere Neering)*.³⁴⁴ The song begins, "Kees sits, since early morning, in the tavern. He doesn't win enough with spade and plow, so there he sits by the Trick-track board..."³⁴⁵ The song informs us that Kees' wife is at her wit's end with his spending all of his time and money in the tavern gambling. In the etching, however, two men focus on a trick-track board while two others casually watch their game. A fifth man stares leisurely out the window as he holds his tankard of beer. Light from this large open

³⁴³ Van Thiel, J.J., "For Instruction and Betterment: Samuel Ampzing's 'Mirror of the Vanity and Unrestrainedness of Our Age'" *Simiolus* 24, no. 2–3 (1996): 182–200, 184. "Is't nu niet moy gemaekt? / 'T is altermael verdronke[n] / 'T is altermael verteerd, 'tis altermael verklonken, / 'Tis al 'tis al verspeeld, verticktackt en verkeerd / Al vechten wy te met, ik dien wel afgesmeerd."

³⁴⁴ Anna C. Knaap, "From Lowlife to Rustic Idyll: The Peasant Genre in 17th-Century Dutch Drawings and Prints," *Harvard University Art Museums Bulletin* 4, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 30–59, 45; Patricia Phagan, ed., *Adriaen van Ostade: Etchings of Peasant Life in Holland's Golden Age* (Athens: Georgia Museum of Art, 1994), cats. 92 and 93, 193–195 discusses the possible date for the etching.

³⁴⁵ *Het vermaaklyk Buitenleven*, 38.

window illuminates the foreground of the image, including the two men at battle over the board. The dire assessment of their behavior in the song does not accord with the easy camaraderie of the scene.

Ostade painted another view of recreation in *Tavern with Tric-Trac or Backgammon Players* in the late 1660s (fig. 116). Without light shining in from windows, the scene could become dank, but Ostade's bright colors and soft handling of the paint create a bright ambiance. One man in the foreground contemplates his next move with focus, but his opponent has stopped to converse briefly with the standing figure and another smokes his pipe and watches the game. Three more figures in the background engage in still more idle conversation in this rustic, yet sympathetic vision of peasant leisure.

In a work from 1668, Ostade depicted the *Interior of a Peasants' Cottage* (Royal Collection), which actually combines recreation with a domestic scene. A group gathers in a richly colored brown interior bathed in golden light from a window at the left (fig. 117). The man sports a pink vest, while the mother wears a blue dress with ruddy sleeves. The foliage seen through the window and the light blue cloth hanging in front of it set a sunny mood for the scene. With a large loaf of cut bread before them, the family becomes a picture of domestic bliss and satisfaction. As the father watches, a boy plays with a dog while his mother holds a doll in front of her baby.

Some elements of the work suggest this home may also have been a village tavern. Beyond the space occupied by the family, two men are seated beyond a wooden partition. Like figures in many of Ostade's tavern scenes, they chat and tend to the fire. Another figure enters the room through the doorway at the rear of the cottage. The father

and mother may be the proprietors of an inn or tavern run out of their home. Nothing in the bearing or manner of the men in the back suggests nefarious behavior, a testament to Ostade's ability to blend peasant recreation and household harmony.

Scenes of Well-Earned Leisure

Many of Ostade's mature scenes of rural life feature small groups, intimately gathered in celebration or conversation. In *Skaters*, from 1650 (Rijksmuseum), a group congregates before the fireplace of an inn or cottage (fig. 118). Cast aside in the foreground are pairs of ice skates that suggest they have been enjoying physical recreation outside this cozy tavern. Ice skating and sledding on the frozen canals that snaked through Holland were popular winter diversions and often the only means of traveling from one village to the next. Having finished their day of skating, this group huddles around the fireplace, whose bright flames can be seen behind the leg of the standing man. Two men hold wooden clay pipes, while the woman holds a glass of beer that has drawn the attention of the little girl beside her. Bread and meat on the table by the window make up this group's repast. The diffuse light passing through the window at left highlights the figures but leaves the background in darkness, emphasizing the intimacy of the group. The style of this painting is typical of Ostade's mature work, particularly his detailed rendering of the silver tankard and the window.

Skaters is an image of leisure. The concept of leisure is generally viewed as an offshoot of the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century, a response to more regimented working schedules in which time was specifically set aside for relaxation. Peter Burke, however, has argued the modern concept of leisure time did exist in pre-

industrial society. He uses Dutch genre painting—and Ostade in particular—as a visual example of the rise of such leisure time.³⁴⁶ Burke characterized European culture in the early modern period as a “festival culture,” in which the kermis or other large celebrations were the concentrated outlet for free time and a respite from work and life’s demands.³⁴⁷ The visual tradition of the kermis certainly attests to the prevalence and importance of such festivals in the Netherlands as breaks from work.

Whether or not the modern concept of leisure existed in the seventeenth century, there were very clear attitudes toward work and rest. Idleness had always been viewed as sinful, closely allied with the deadly sin of sloth. The dichotomy between good and bad leisure is reinforced by the title page to a print series depicting leisure by Abraham Bloemaert (fig. 119). The title page shows a man lying face down on a rock upon which is inscribed the introduction to the series, which reads:

Leisure which restores the tired limbs with new strength provides delight and makes us fit for work. But lazy rest weakens the body with sluggishness and dulls the mind, not allowing it to be virtuous...³⁴⁸

The series, from around 1625, consists of sixteen prints that depict peasant figures resting in the countryside. In some cases the images seem to refer to a pleasant and well-deserved rest. In one, a man woman and child rest on their journey and take a drink from a clay jug (fig. 120). The inscription reads, “When burning thirst wrings the mouth with a dry palate, a gulp of simple water is divine nectar.”³⁴⁹ Their fatigue and the woman’s basket suggest they are working or traveling to or from market. In another image,

³⁴⁶ Peter Burke, “The Invention of Leisure in Early Modern Europe,” *Past and Present* 146 (1995): 136–150, 147, <http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0031-2746%28199502%290%3A146%3C136%3ATIOLIE%3E2.0.CO%3B2-Z>.

³⁴⁷ Burke, 137.

³⁴⁸ Marcel Roethlisberger, *Abraham Bloemaert and His Sons: Paintings and Prints* (Doornspijk: Davaco, 1993), 231, cat. 297.

³⁴⁹ Roethlisberger, 235, cat. 312.

however, a group of peasants have taken their leisure time too far, drinking to excess, so much so that the man in the center vomits on the ground (fig. 121). The inscription for this print reads, “It is vile to fill the body with food and drink of Ceres...”³⁵⁰ While the didactic series warns of the constant threat of over-indulgence in leisure time, it also suggests that some rest is warranted after hard work.

Bruegel’s landscapes were important models for Dutch landscape traditions, particularly in Haarlem where artists drew, etched, and painted views of Haarlem’s countryside. Artists featured the peasant both at work and at rest in these images. In scenes from his *Pleasant Places* series of prints from 1611, Claes Jansz Visscher depicted tiny farmers herding their livestock along a path (figs. 59 & 60). In Jan van Goyen’s 1626 *Village Landscape* (fig. 63), a peasant family makes its way home from market where it has no doubt sold some of its produce and acquired other necessities. Around 1635 Haarlem landscapist Pieter de Molijn (1595–1661) depicted a scene with a weary family resting along a road while in the background a hunter scampers into a stand of trees after his prey (fig. 122).

In 1626 the poet and statesman Constantijn Huygens (1596–1687) celebrated the noble peasant in *Zedeprinten (Characters)*.³⁵¹ In these poems, Huygens’ used an ancient format—character poetry—that had become very popular in England in the early seventeenth century to discuss the beggar, the soldier, the poet, and the farmer (*een boer*). He described the farmer in the following manner:

³⁵⁰ Roethlisberger, 234, cat. 307.

³⁵¹ L. Strenggholt, “Terug naar de Handschriften van Huygens’ Zede-printen,” *Een lezer aan het woord*, H. Duits, et al, eds. (Münster: Noclus Publikationen, 1998): 131–146; Constantijn Huygens, “Zedeprinten” in *Koren-bloemen* (s’Gravenhage: Adriaen Vlack, 1658), 3:111–173, 143, <http://books.google.com>. Huygens wrote his *Zedeprinten* in 1623, but it was not published until many years later in his compilation titled “Cornflowers” (*Korenbloemen*) in 1658.

He is a nobleman, as much as the first man, / Who lived not in a city, and had the whole earth,/ though he only cultivated a small part of it; A gardener in the wild; / A son whose needs are fed by the Mother Earth; An a man who is not but a human being, / And helps others live; A complete man in essence, / He speaks little, and only by accident / Spews forth a very wise word, / From which even a learned man can benefit...³⁵²

Huygens also wrote of the hard toil of a farmer's life and glorified his work ethic. He wrote, "Six days a week he works up a sweat, from when the chariot of the sun climbs / Until the evening stars shine; / So he feeds his lusty body with his hand in the green..."³⁵³ Huygens then suggested such week-long toils are worthy of a day of rest, "He looks forward to Sunday rest, not because he has one day free, but out of habit, because he thinks man's fate in the world is to sweat and toil..."³⁵⁴ Huygens adhered to the positive stereotype of the peasant as a worker, one whose products fuel the world, in the same way that Heinrich der Teichner and other predecessors had suggested.

A sixteenth-century song that was reprinted in the seventeenth century compares farmers to Adam and Eve and lauds them because they enable all other professions to exist by virtue of the food they provide:

As father Adam digs and mother Eve shovels, / What were the gentleman doing, and also the noblemen? / Hear Popes and prelates who considered it a miracle; / Hear great potentates who are of noble birth; / Hear people all together, For Adam

³⁵² Reinder P. Meijer, Literature of the Low Countries: A Short History of Dutch literature in the Netherlands and Belgium (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1978), 145. Although it the genre underwent a revival in the seventeenth century, the composition of character studies as a whole can be traced to ancient Greek philosopher Theophrastus (c.371 –c. 287 BC); see J.W. Smeed, The Theophrastan "Character:" The History of a Literary Genre (New York: Clarendon Press, 1985). Constantijn Huygens, Koren-bloemen (s'Gravenhage: Adriaen Vlack, 1658), 3:143–144, <http://books.google.com>, "Hij is een Edelman, soo wel als d'aller eerste, / Die in geen' Stadt en woond', en, off hij 't all beheerste, / Beploegde's maer een deel; Een Hovenier in 'twild; / Een Soon die om den kost sijn Groote Moeder vilt; / Een mensch die niet en is dan om een mensch te wesen, / En helpen 't andre zijn; een volle man in 't wesen, / In 'tspreken maer een half, 'ten zij bij ongevall, / Soo braeckht hij wel een woord dat wijsen wel gevall', / Soo rispt hij wel een vraeg daer Letter-luij uyt suypen."

³⁵³ Huygens, 144, "Den Sess-dagh sweet hij uyt, van dat de Son te karr klimt / Tot dat de Nacht-bodin, de Minne-Moeder-Starr, glimt; / Soo voedt hij met sijn hand sijn lustigh lijf in 'tgroen..."

³⁵⁴ Huygens, 145, "De sevendaeghsche Rust en wenscht hij niet verschenen/ Om werckens vrij te zijn (gewoonte doet hem meenen / Dat sweeten Mensch zijn is, en arbeit Levens lot..."

was your father. / And why such a wonderful verse for the farmer? / Peasants and lords, they all come from Adam's seed.³⁵⁵

The well-earned leisure of the peasant was also referenced in popular songs. In *Haerlems oudt liedt-boeck*, (*Haarlem's Old Songbook*) published around 1640, one of the songs referred to the leisure of peasants (fig. 123). Called the "Sunday Song," it describes the joy of Sunday, a day free of woe and toil:

Sunday is my desire, / It comes so easily, / I sleep in peace, so long as I want, / Without fuss, / I wish it were always Sunday. // On Sunday all the manual labor is still, / This works so well for us all...³⁵⁶

References to eating, playing music, and romance pepper the song as it celebrates the day of rest. Another popular song, from the late seventeenth century, "Farmer's Joy" (*Boerenvreugde*) also lauds both the work and play that make up the cycle of the farmers life:

We farmer men and women / We work day and night, / We plow and we spin, / And we sing from a power: / Please, dear Lord, our food and clothes, / The Kingdom of Heaven, and no more. // We dig and we shovel / All day long, / We sow and we reap, / And we work to the song...³⁵⁷

The lyrics refer to the deprivation of the peasants who often go without proper clothing and sometimes are unable to fill their tables with food. Along with the joy of Heaven that awaits them, the song also refers to Sunday rest, "We go and drink a pint, / On Sunday

³⁵⁵ J.F. Willems, *Oude Vlaemsche liederen*. (Ghent: F. en E. Gyselynck, 1848), 504, http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/will028ouvl01_01/colofon.php, "Als vader Adam spitte en moeder Eva span, / Waer vont men doen de heeren, oft ook den Edelman? / Hoort Pausen en Prelaten die wonder zijt gheacht; / Hoort groote Potentaten die eël zijt van geslacht; / Hoort menschen allegader, / Want Adam is u vader. / En waerom de boeren soo wonderlijck versmaet? / De boeren en de heeren, 't komt al van Adams saedt."

³⁵⁶ Anonymous, *Haerlems oudt liedt-boeck* (Haarlem: Vincent Castelyn, c. 1640), 36, http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_hae003haer01_01/colofon.php, "Sondag-liet: Den Sondagh is wel nae mijn sin, / Hy komt soo ghemackelijck in, / Ick slaep met rust, / Zoo langh 't my lust, / Sonder misbaer, / Ick wou dat altijd Sondagh waer. // Sondaeghs staet alle hant-werck stil, / Dat gaet soo fraey al naer ons wil..."

³⁵⁷ Willems, 502, *Wy boeren en boerinnen / Wy werken dag en nacht, / Wy ploegen en wy spinnen, / En wy zingen uitter magt: / Geef, lieve Heer, ons kost en klee, / Het Hemelrijk en dan niet meer. / Wy spitten en wy spaeijen / Geheele dagen lang, / Wy zaeijen en wy maeijen, En wy werken by den zang...*; The song was first published in 1684, but more than likely had been in circulation before that, as was the case with many of the songs in popular songbooks.

near noon; / We dance and we drink a toast, / And we sing in the green...”³⁵⁸ Again, a popular song implies that leisure among the peasantry is a well-earned period of rest.

Ostade rarely depicted his figures at work, but he gives clues to their hard lives and labors in their simple, rudimentary surroundings, weathered bodies, and tattered clothing. The literary and visual tradition reveals that peasants can be viewed as slothful and lazy individuals when idle or as hard workers who have earned their rest. The peaceful, jovial nature of Ostade’s mature scenes accords with this second view. They represent the type of rural inhabitant who has earned his rest and relaxation from his labors. In a sense Ostade merged the two halves of the Bruegel tradition—the festive peasant and the landscape. His figures are celebratory, but through their mien and behavior, they are engaged in well-deserved moments of leisure rather than those traditionally presented in kermis and wedding celebrations as overindulging in sensual excess.

An Idyllic Rural World

Depictions of country weddings and scenes of romantic interludes were both popular in seventeenth-century songs and paintings. Despite their difference in mood, both types of imagery recall the shepherd musicians of Theocritus roaming the countryside and musing about the successes and pitfalls of their romantic lives. Ostade utilized his humble characters to create such peasant idylls, which no doubt contrasted greatly to the everyday reality of life.

³⁵⁸ Willems, 503, “Wy gaen een pintje drinken,/ Des zondags naer de noen;/ Wy dansen en wy klinken, / En wy zingen in het groen...”

Ostade presented one such romantic interlude in *Peasant Courting an Elderly Woman*, from 1653 (London, National Gallery) (fig. 124). In a dark tavern interior, a man holding a *pasglas* lovingly places his hand in that of his female companion and gazes at her with a coquettish look and downcast eyes. The woman wears rough homespun cloth, but her cap and collar are a crisp white that sets off her rosy cheeks and plump face. Judging by the clay pipe and small pot that sit before them, this couple has been indulging in “drinking” tobacco.

The subject of peasant love is dealt with in several songs in *Het Vermakkelyk Buitenleven*. The tone of the songs is a gentle mocking of the low-life version of the grand, genteel romances of the upper classes described in the works of such popular poets Pieter Corneliszoon Hooft (1581–1647). Hooft’s arcadian love poem *O Grecian Maid*, reads:

O nymph whilst in the wood you hide, / Effulgent fires burn inside / The fearless hunter you allure. / His fervor does so fiercely flow, / That should you but one touch bestow, / Then no escape you could procure!³⁵⁹

Hooft’s classicizing love poem can be compared to one of the songs of *Het Vermakkelyk Buitenleven*, where an image of an interlude precedes one of the songs about courtship. Part of the caption to the image reads:

The sweet summertime lures Pleuntje outside her door, she is busily working... When here comes Floris, who again, as in his bloom, begins a courtship; the desire to couple, igniting the old glow in their later years.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁹ Pieter Corneliszoon Hooft, “O Grecian Maid!,” in *A Selection of Early Dutch Poetry*, trans. Peter Morris (Wolverhampton [England]: The Black Knight Press, 1980), 16.

³⁶⁰ Jan van Gijsen, *Het vermaaklyk Buitenleven, of de zingende en spelende Boerenvreugde* (Haarlem: Widow of Hermanus van Hulkenroy, 1716), 4–5, “De zoete Zomertyd lokt Pleuntje voor de deur, z’ Is iv’rig ‘aan het werk...gd te kweelen...Met komt ‘er Floris by, die weer, als in zyn fleur, De Vreijery begin; de min, geneigt tot paaren, ontsteekt den ouden gloed in hunne booge jaaren.”

The author chose Ostade's etching of a *Woman Spinning* to illustrate this courtship (fig. 125). In the etching, a woman sits outside her cottage door spinning while a young child plays at her feet. A hunched man with a hat covering half his face stands over the woman as she works. The etching itself does not necessarily connote any express notions of love or courtship. Instead, it appears to be a humble farm scene where a family works amid the tools and trappings of their existence, including two large hogs that slumber at the left. The editor has deftly chosen this quaint scene and used the juxtaposition of male and female figure to turn it into a homespun romance. The classical poetic style of Hooft contrasts sharply with the plain story of country courtship told in the songbook, as the author of the caption and the accompanying song cast a popular poetic subject in a *boertige* light.

Ostade was not above creating a more overtly sexual interplay in his paintings such as that seen in *An Amorous Couple at a Cottage Door* (fig. 126).³⁶¹ Here, a young woman leans on the bottom half of a Dutch door while a man emerges from the dark interior to embrace her and place his hand on her breast. The woman's coy, subdued expression suggests that her hand on his arm is no more than a half-hearted gesture to halt his advance. In a later print with a similar composition, *Village Romance*, the figures have even more pronounced smiles on their faces (fig. 127).³⁶² A stark contrast to this affectionate interaction is a scene by Cornelis Bega, in which man leans over and leers at the object of his affection (fig. 128).³⁶³ In a dank room with a small window, a group of

³⁶¹ Christie's London: July 11, 2001 (lot 00045).

³⁶² Phagan, 1994, 70–73.

³⁶³ Mary Ann Scott, "Cornelis Bega (1631/32–1664) as Painter and Draughtsman" (Ph. D. diss. University of Maryland College Park, 1984), 2: 512, fig. 40.

peasants surround a table. At the far side a man with a gaping maw paws at a woman who pushes him away.

In Ostade's sweet, and sometimes slightly more saucy, romantic interludes, rural folk display such basic human emotions as love. In this respect they differ fundamentally from the overt sexual displays in sixteenth-century kermis scenes where peasants are portrayed as bestial characters, unable to control their baser natures, including sexuality. Ostade cast his figures in a more positive light, endowing them with a humanity that was more palatable to city viewers than the lascivious displays of the kermis.

One outcome of a village romance was marriage, and peasant weddings were popular subjects in both songs and pictorial imagery. An early version of a wedding song appears in the *Antwerps liedboek* of 1544, and such tunes appeared regularly throughout the seventeenth century.³⁶⁴ Bredero included more than ten wedding songs in his *Groot Liedboek*. The *Peasant Wedding (Boere Bruyloft)* from the *Nieu dubbelt Haerlems lietboeck* of 1643 begins:

Wedding, wedding, children hear / Griet Malmonts will continue with Simon, /
She will marry one Sunday: ... / No, certainly it's a funny pair, / No, certainly it's
a funny pair / How do the folks come together: / For she was born crazy, / And he
had even in his first year / Lost his mind.³⁶⁵

As is the case in many peasant songs, the figures are caricatured and mocked. Paul Vandebroek has traced the theme of the peasant wedding in art to the sixteenth-century work of the Verbeeck family of artists, who may have been influenced by unknown

³⁶⁴ "Een nyeu liedeken," in *Antwerps liedboek (Een schoon liedekens. Boeck inden welcken ghy in vinden sult. Veelderhande liedekens...)* (Antwerp: Ian Roulans, 1544), 103v–104r, http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_ant001antw01_01/colofon.htm.

³⁶⁵ "Boere Bruyloft," in *Nieu dubbelt Haerlems lietboeck, ghenamt den laurier-krans der amoureußen* (Haarlem: Vincent Casteleyn, 1643), 37–38, http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_nie095nieu01_01/colofon.php, "Bruyloft, bruyloft, keyeren hoort, / Griet Malmonts geet mit symen voort, / Se sel ien Sundach trouwen...Neen seper 't is ien giestich paer, etc. / Hoe komt het volckje by men kaer: / Want sy is mal eboren, En hy heeft in sen eerste Iaer / Sen sinnen mee verloren."

Bosch paintings. One of these paintings from the middle of the sixteenth-century has an inscription that gives an especially damning view of village weddings:

This mummary is welcome at this feast, which is attended by a crowd of filthy, wrinkled peasants. The bride is an ugly, dirty, licentious beast ...the groom a sturdy, handsome peasant.³⁶⁶

This early example of mocking the bridal couple is echoed in the *Peasant Wedding* song quoted above, indicating that this derisive viewpoint—albeit less stringent—still existed in the seventeenth century.

Not all sixteenth-century visions of the peasant wedding were as grotesque as those offered by the Verbeeck family, however. Ostade did not follow Verbeeck's model, but rather that of Pieter Bruegel the Elder. He popularized the subject of the peasant wedding, which was then copied by his sons and others many times in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Two of Bruegel's compositions in particular provided the model for later peasant wedding scenes—Bruegel's *The Wedding Dance* and *Peasant Wedding Feast*, from c. 1566 and 1568 (figs. 129 & 130). In the *Wedding Dance* a large celebration bursting with activity swirls around the panel. Peasants drink and dance as they celebrate the wedding attested to by the bride against a cloth of honor below a crown. In the *Wedding Feast*, the bride is similarly pictured as peasants gather in an interior to enjoy the feast that follows a peasant wedding.

Ostade's *Peasants Dancing in a Tavern* (fig. 2), from 1659, depicts a large tavern interior that hosts a boisterous wedding celebration. He combines the type of dancing and feasting seen in Bruegel's two works to create one grand celebration of these country nuptials. Two couples dance with their joined hands raised in the center of the room.

³⁶⁶ Vandenbroeck, 82. The author gives an overview of the earliest village wedding representations, from Northern European literature of the fourteenth century, 87.

Around them others drink and eat in salute to the happy couple, who are likely the man and woman embracing near the fireplace. With her head uncovered and her lace collar, she has dressed up for this special occasion. The man in yellow with the feathers in his hat delights in the chance this wedding offers to make merry.

One aspect of Ostade's work that is very different from Bruegel's are the facial expressions of his figures. While some of Bruegel's peasants smile, many of them have bland expressions, even in the *Wedding Dance*, which appears to be a boisterous occasion because of the movement of the figures. Ostade's celebrants, on the other hand, display an ebullience that suggests they revel in these opportunities to make merry. The smiling faces of the man in yellow and the salute of the man on the stairs attest to the joy of the occasion and create an infectious air of enjoyment in the scene.

The wedding song included in the version of *Het Vermakkelyk Buitenleven* illustrated with Ostade's prints has a lighthearted tenor. It begins:

Floris and Neeltje, that sweet lovely pair, go / Now united before the altar, / The whole house is decorated, / While people watch the wedding here / From these two: it is full of joy in this town...³⁶⁷

The song is illustrated on a fold-out sheet that reproduces Ostade's largest etching, *The Dance at the Inn*, from the 1650s (fig. 131). The celebration takes place in a large room with no windows, and the revelers arrive by descending a staircase. While it could certainly be a wedding celebration complete with food, drink, and dancing, there is no cloth of honor or crowned bride to clearly indicate a wedding.³⁶⁸ The print has also been described as a May Day celebration because of the tree in the center of the composition

³⁶⁷ *Het Vermakkelyk Buitenleven*, 1. "Floris en Neeltje, date zoete lieve paar, Zyn te gaer / Nu vereend voor 't Echtaltaar. / 't Heele huis is opgefierd, / Wyl men hier de Bruiloft viert / Van deez' twee: 't is vol vreugde op deeze stee..."

³⁶⁸ Linda Stone-Ferrier, *Dutch Prints of Daily Life: Mirrors of Life or Masks of Morals?* (Lawrence (KS): Spencer Museum of Art and Allen Press, Inc., 1983), 39.

and the branch on the floor. Rather than being integral to a specific iconographic program, however, these may simply be anecdotal elements. Indeed, an ambiguity of subject is typical of Ostade's images of celebration, where symbolism often gives way to simpler, more general scenes of revelry.

Jan Steen, for instance, was fond of depicting peasant weddings, but he did so clearly within the parameters of the Bruegel tradition. In 1672 he depicted an interior with a couple descending a staircase, very similar to Ostade's composition (fig. 132).³⁶⁹ Steen included a vignette taken directly from the Brughelian wedding images: the bride primly seated against a tapestry hung on the wall. As is often the case, Steen retained the iconographical markers of the pictorial tradition, whereas Ostade did not. In another of Steen's paintings, *Peasant Wedding* from around 1670, the celebration has gotten out of control as one man has fallen off his chair (fig. 133).³⁷⁰ While Ostade emphasized a lighter side of celebrations, Steen did not shy away from including more raucous behavior in his depictions.

Jan Miense Molenaer also paid homage to Pieter Bruegel the Elder in his depiction of a *Peasant Wedding Feast* from around 1659 (fig. 134). Using a similar compositional structure, he featured the contented bride seated against the backdrop of a cloth on the far wall. Peasants dance, sing, and drink just as they do in Bruegel's wedding scenes. Nevertheless, for all their similarities, the tone of Molenaer's and Ostade's wedding feasts is somewhat different. Ostade's diminutive figures, with their rounded heads and bodies, look more humble and quaint than the more naturalistic and attenuated peasants in Molenaer's work. The sense of scale is very different as well. While Ostade

³⁶⁹ Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Documentatie (RKD), no. 6384, <http://www.rkd.nl>.

³⁷⁰ RKD, no. 5771.

created a bright, airy, and expansive space for his peasants, Molenaer's are situated in a darker, smaller space. The small size of Ostade's figures lends a quaintness to the scene absent in that of Molenaer. The lack of a specific iconography in Ostade's celebration reveals his separation from Bruegelian traditions to set a simpler, more carefree mood.

In depicting the traditionally idyllic subject of love, Ostade created a world where lighthearted people living in the countryside were preoccupied with ideas of love and marriage. While those in the city may have chuckled at the quaint courting customs of Ostade's figures, the universality of love connected rural and urban residents. Ostade's depiction of the wedding theme demonstrates how he used long-standing pictorial traditions yet changed them to suit his own point of view. Rather than a traditional wedding scene infused with symbolism, Ostade instead depicted more generic country celebrations. In addition, a comparison between the wedding scenes of Steen and Molenaer reveals how much Ostade tamed the behavior and interactions of his rural folk.

Ostade's Kermises

Adriaen van Ostade painted and etched kermis scenes throughout his career. Dutch cities and villages held annual kermises that provided both amusement and markets where all kinds of goods were bought and sold. No longer related exclusively to a celebratory mass, the events became a social and cultural staple. The kermises in The Hague and Amsterdam were wildly popular among all social classes. Though still a place where celebration sometimes turned into wild revelry, the church was relatively tolerant of the kermis. Church councils sometimes sought to curtail some of the activities of the

kermis, but did not propose its abolition.³⁷¹ Nevertheless, the representation of the kermis as a rowdy bacchanalia persisted in Ostade's time, even as he tempered his depictions of kermises and other village celebrations.

In his undated painting of a *Village Kermis* (Private collection), probably dating to the 1660s, Ostade presented a quintessential view of the raucous celebration of kermis complete with the flag hanging from the tavern at left and the church spire rising in the far distance (fig. 135). Market stalls, where goods would have been sold during the kermis, are clustered in the town square. The painting is a blend of jovial celebration and occasional rowdy activity. An overturned trough in the foreground is perhaps an allusion to the momentary cessation of work—feeding the animals—that took place on kermis days. On the right a drunken man has climbed a ladder and stands precariously while others laugh and watch. On the left other peasants gather around a couple to watch them dance. A little boy and girl dance as well, in a charming mimicry of their elders. Like some of Bruegel's kermises the work defies the traditional interpretive polarities of positive and negative. In one sense, Ostade has created an idyllic world where farmers set down their tools to drink and dance together in a grand celebration. In another sense, he presents a group of clumsy bumpkins who drink to excess and enjoy the low humor of watching a man in a drunken stumble on a ladder.

In his etching, *The Fair*, probably from the 1650s, Ostade presented similar scenes of dancing and drinking outside a country tavern (fig. 136). It appears that Ostade took Jan van de Velde's 1617 print, *Peasant Kermis*, as a model since he similarly featured a rundown country tavern with a view of the village, lined with market stalls

³⁷¹ A. Th. Van Deursen, Plain Lives in a Golden Age: Popular Culture, Religion, and Society in Seventeenth-Century Holland, trans. Maarten Ultee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 1991, 107.

receding into the distance (fig. 137).³⁷² Van de Velde presented a more peaceful kermis than had Pieter Bruegel the Elder, but the inscription on his print contains a denunciation of the activities comparable to those seen on Bruegel's images. It seems that in the early seventeenth century peasants gathered in festivity were still viewed through the same critical lens as the previous century. The text reads:

The peasants consider it a scandal to scorn the Bacchanalia... Each one wishes to pass the day with his own delights, and thus in their folly they do not cease eating and drinking. And when they can no longer tolerate the excess of abundance they vomit it up.³⁷³

Some scholars, such as Leonard J. Slatkes, have concluded that the same negative attitude applies toward Ostade's scenes, but such a negative reading of the work is not justified.³⁷⁴ Although one man on the left has fallen down, elsewhere children play while others dance and converse outside the inn. The work accords better with Cornelis de Bie's description of Ostade's kermises:

There, where one hears the kermis fiddle play, / And where the drum is beaten, / Where one rides with the standard / While some dance here and others go a-wooing there / With exuberance and joy, / In the manner of fresh young youth. / A great din is made by all, Merriment is everywhere. / Over there they are guzzling pottage and peas, / And here the nest-egg is being squandered. / Many have their stuck-up ways, / And put plumes and feathers in their hats.³⁷⁵

³⁷² Eddy de Jongh and Ger Luijten, *Mirror of Everyday Life: Genreprints in the Netherlands 1550-1700*, trans. Michael Hoyle (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 1997), 308.

³⁷³ De Jongh and Luijten, 307.

³⁷⁴ Phagan, 240. Slatkes linked the print to such an extreme representations as Pieter van der Borcht's chaos-infused kermises simply by virtue of its subject; De Jongh and Luijten, 310. Ger Luijten mentioned the "satirical tone" of the same print, but he further notes, "although the lack of inscriptions makes it difficult to say precisely what Van Ostade was ridiculing."

³⁷⁵ Cornelis de Bie, *Het Gulden Cabinet der Edel Vry Schilderconst* (Antwerp: Jan Meyssen, 1662), 258, <http://books.google.com>, "Daermen hoort t'kermis veeltjen gaen / En op de trommel wort gheslaen: / En darmen met den standaert rijt / En hier wat danst en dar wat vrijt / Vol uytghelaten, heyl en vreught / Naer de manier der jonghe jeught. / Eeen jeder maeckt een groot gheschal, / Men is daer vrolijck over al / Daer jeder pap en eerten smeert / En daer den spaerpot wort verteert / En veel verwaende kueren doet / Met pluym en veeren op den hoet..." This translation is from De Jongh and Luijten, 309.

De Bie criticizes some of the excess seen in Ostade's kermises, but overall his description is characterized by a humorous indulgence of the peasants' behavior and the "exuberance and joy" found in Ostade's portrayal of festive rural folk.

Lisa Rosenthal has argued that Ostade's two prints representing fairs—*The Fair* (fig. 136) from around 1650 and *The Dance Under the Trellis* (fig. 138) from around 1655 to 1660—are presentations of otherness in which the bourgeois viewers of Ostade's works were able to define themselves. Rosenthal argued that the taming of the transgressive qualities of the fair eliminated the fear wrought by its excesses among the bourgeoisie. According to Rosenthal, "One potent means of coping with that 'deep cultural confusion' was to re-form the fair as a site of pleasure, allowing it to be "envisaged as a discreet entity...unconnected to the 'real' world."³⁷⁶ For her, Ostade's taming of the transgression of the fair was a response to this more general bourgeois fear of the uninhibited celebration of the peasant festival. I agree that Ostade does make the kermis more palatable to the bourgeois viewer, but argue that he did so by depicting it within the parameters of belief in the essential harmony and dignity of rural life.

Rosenthal's argument about the relationship between bourgeois self-definition and Ostade's depiction of peasants is similar to arguments regarding fifteenth- and sixteenth-century literature on the peasant discussed in chapter one. There it is argued that the presentation of the peasant as rough and rude helped establish a contrast with the emerging urban bourgeoisie's conception of itself as refined and urbane. On the other hand, Wayne Franits has argued that a different dynamic was at play in the Dutch Republic. He cites an overall "civilizing process" in which burghers viewed themselves as increasingly mannered and civilized. For Franits, this desire for more a more refined

³⁷⁶ Phagan, 1995, 35.

lifestyle, including works of art, resulted, as well, in a more civilized representation of the peasant.

Franits' interpretation of Ostade's works does engage the interaction between "high" and "low" culture and also reflects the burgher sense of self. I would argue, however, that by the mid-seventeenth century, peasants were not wholly "other," but that they had become a greater part of the Dutch vision of "us." Amid the Dutch quest for self-definition, the pictorial tropes that had been part of their visual vocabulary for over one hundred years must have been familiar and, in a sense, comforting. The decreasing ideological distance between urban and rural in the dynamic social landscape of the northern Netherlands in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries also contribute to a blurring of the line between "us" and "them." This change brought urban and rural closer together and led to identification with the rural among Dutch burghers. Particularly in Haarlem, where the country played such an important role in civic identity, urban buyers of art had an even greater stake in the more refined representation of the peasant. Ostade created images that became part of Haarlem's "earthly paradise" vision of the happy and carefree people who lived there.

Rural Celebrations

Many of the rural celebrations Ostade depicted may be more mundane than a kermis. Some of these scenes represented the regular Sunday fare mentioned by the farmer in Bredero's *Farce of the Cow*: "Oh that it was Sunday, then we would paint the town red..." In *Zedeprenten* from 1621, Huygens mentioned Sunday afternoon frivolity after a long week of work:

On sunny summer Sundays he spends the rest of the day in the company of his neighbors. He hangs a wreath on a tree in order to dance. It goes deep into the night.³⁷⁷

In works like *Peasants Carousing and Dancing outside an Inn* (Private Collection) from around 1660, couples spin and stomp as they dance to the music of the fiddler (fig. 139). As in Dürer's engraving (fig. 24) of a dancing couple, their open gestures and bulky bodies reveal that this is a peasant dance, not that of their more upper class compatriots. Such a distinction is seen in a pair of sixteenth-century prints depicting the upright, courtly and the earthier, more physical characteristic of peasant dancing (fig. 140).

Some of Ostade's contemporaries depicted the rowdier side of peasant festivity. Jan Steen, for example, revisited the theme of peasants outside a tavern several times during his career. While some of his scenes are peaceful and bucolic, others are more boisterous. In *Dancing Peasants at an Inn*, from around 1648 (fig. 141), the ring of dancing peasants in the center seems out of control as the figures stretch their arms and sway from the effects of drinking. Two figures have fallen asleep, with two children watching the woman snooze, ostensibly passed out. In the right foreground two men help balance a woman who is drunk, though their reasons for doing so may be less than noble. This rustic grouping reveals that in this work Steen, more than Ostade, worked within the traditional kermis iconography including the associations of these celebrations and overindulgence of the peasants. In contrast to the children in Steen's painting who watch their mother sleep off her drink, those in Ostade's painting of *Peasants Carousing and Dancing outside an Inn*, including a young boy feeding a dog from a spoon, play happily.

³⁷⁷ Constantijn Huygens, *Koren-bloemen* (s'Gravenhage: Adriaen Vlack, 1658), 3:143–144, “Verlengt de Somer-Sonn zijn achter-Middagh-uren, / Hij schenckt het overschott den naestgelegen' bureen, / En hangter 't Kroontgien uyt, den Avond blijfter bij...”

Jan Miense Molenaer also depicted more grotesque versions of a peasant party, similar to that Bredero described in his *Groot Liedtboek*. His painting of *Peasants Carousing* from 1662 depicts a bursting tavern interior with a roiling crowd in the midst of a party (fig. 142). Dennis Weller has demonstrated that the scene is directly related to Bredero's song about Arent Pieter Gijsen and his friends.³⁷⁸ The song begins:

Arnold Peter Gilson [*Arent Pieter Gijsen*], and Matthew, Jack, and Jane, / And
Nicholas and Colin, they sallied forth in train / To the village of Vinkeveen / For
old Bill Bruce he gave his goose / For the game of catch the crane.³⁷⁹

The song tells the story of a party in which peasants participate in a game of goose-pulling. A goose would be tied up above the road and a peasant speeding by on the back of a wagon would attempt to grab the goose's head (soaked with grease or butter) and pull it down. When various attempts went awry and left someone flailing in the street behind the cart, hilarity ensued. By structuring the party around this grotesque activity, Bredero immediately casts this group of peasants in a negative light. But he also uses humor in telling his story. Later, he referred to a pair of lovers, "But Matthew and Katie, that sweet and simple lass, / Those two sneaked together into the new-mown grass, / Not to say morning mass!"³⁸⁰ This particular peasant party was not the peaceful gathering soon to be offered by Ostade. Bredero ended his song by admomishing the listener:

Ye gentlemen, ye burghers, who don't carouse and reel, / Shun the peasants'
parties, they're never so genteel / But there is blood to spill. / Join me and mine in
a jug of wine, / And steer and even keel.³⁸¹

³⁷⁸ Dennis P. Weller, *Jan Miense Molenaer: Painter of the Dutch Golden Age* (Raleigh, North Carolina Museum of Art), 2002, 175–176. The commissioning document for the work specifies that it is a painting of Arent Pieter Gijsen.

³⁷⁹ Adriaan J. Barnouw, *Coming After: An Anthology of Poetry from the Low Countries* (New Brunswick [N.J.]: Rutgers University Press, 1948), 85. Barnouw has Anglicized the names in the song, which, in the original version, are Arent Pieter Gysen, Mieuwes, Jaap, Leen, Klaasjen, en Kloentjen.

³⁸⁰ Barnouw, 86.

³⁸¹ Barnouw, 87.

Molenaer's tumultuous crowd appears as though it may erupt at any given time into the kind of celebration Bredero warns his readers to avoid. The room is filled almost to bursting and one drunken man has already fallen under the feet of the crowd. Following the more common iconographic tradition, Molenaer included several burghers in sober black clothing and lace collars who stand back and peer at the viewer as if to commiserate over the unruly nature of this gathering.

Ostade's figures congregate in intimate groups, enjoy music and refreshment, and sometimes vigorously dance and celebrate. They enjoy special occasions or the freedom of a Sunday afternoon as mentioned in the Dutch plays and songs. Though Ostade did not invent these themes, he was able to put his personal stamp on them. He negated the overall negative meaning of the festive peasant trope by combining it with the vision of the rural environment as a place of rest and repose.

Ostade conveyed the *idyllic* nature of his rural scenes without *idealizing* of the people within them. Nevertheless, even though Ostade's images became more sympathetic over the course of his career, it is important to note that he retained some of the traditional markers of peasant inferiority. He continued to emphasize what urban viewers would have perceived as the *difference* between rural and urban residents. This distinction is most prominent in his depiction of bodies. Ostade's two burgher family portraits provide the opportunity to compare Ostade's rendering of upper class figures with those of his rural folk. In both family portraits (figs. 39 and 40), the upright posture and bearing of the individuals is appropriate for a portrait, although the figures in the De Goyer portrait have assumed a more relaxed demeanor. In comparison to the figures in *Peasants Dancing in a Tavern* (fig. 2), the refinement of the figures in the two portraits is

obvious. In the latter work hunched postures and large noses abound. Even the man and his bride in the foreground are slightly hunched as they visit with one of their guests. The subdued mien of the portraits is contrasted by broad gestures and clumsy movement in the genre piece.

The works have very different subjects and purposes, which accounts for much of the difference in tenor. A comparison, however, reveals that Ostade's rural folk—even in the more subdued later style—are very different people than the urbane families and likely purchasers of Ostade's paintings. Their gestures and postures speak to the crudeness that characterized the urban view of rustic rural inhabitants and reaffirmed notions of difference between the two. Eighteenth-century artist and theorist Gerard de Lairese commented on the boorish postures and mores of Ostade's peasants. De Lairese expressed disdain for the low characters of artists like Brouwer, Ostade, and Molenaer. He contended that they “imitate [life] more unsightly than nature created it.”³⁸² De Lairese included illustrations that present examples of proper comportment alongside their uncouth counterparts (fig. 143). Although his classicist perspective colored his comments, the contrast between high and low behavior he observes in Ostade's works are virtually identical to those noted by Vandenbroeck and discussed in the introduction. Even at their most benign, Ostade's figures are easily distinguished from the upper classes, and indication of the social divide that existed at that time. He did, however, imbue his scenes with a simple dignity to give the impression of a rustic arcadia in the villages around Haarlem.

³⁸² Herman Roodenburg, “On ‘swelling’ the Hips and Crossing the Legs: Distinguishing Public and Private in Paintings and Prints from the Dutch Golden Age,” in *The Public and Private in Dutch Culture of the Golden Age*, eds. Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. and Adele Seeff (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2000), 64–84, 71.

Chapter Six: Pleasant Scenes in a Time of Crisis

Ostade remained productive during the 1670s until his death in 1685. His late work displays an even greater refinement in style as the artist continued to create his idyllic scenes, even after the *Raampjaar* (Year of Disaster) of 1672, when the French army invaded the Netherlands. Works created during this time further reveal Ostade's images to be representations of an ideal way of country life because they were created against a backdrop of financial decline and political strife in the Dutch Republic.

The latter years of Ostade's career coincided with a period of decline in the Dutch economy overall, and in the production of artworks in particular. Like many other Dutch cities, Haarlem's economy suffered, especially after 1672. Fewer new works of art were sold on the Dutch art market. Amsterdam art dealer Gerard Uylenburgh lamented that:

...paintings and such rarities have greatly declined and slumped in value, as a result of these disastrous times and the miserable state of our beloved fatherland."³⁸³

Further, tastes were changing, and the influence of French style and fashion met a desire for more refined and elegant works of art. An Amsterdam lawyer observed in 1675 that:

Instead of behaving humbly and without pomp according to old and good custom and the common way of all Republican governments, they started to hoist their sails higher and higher and to consider themselves the equals of Crowned heads...Regents and burghers used to be satisfied with the old Dutch clothing, food, and drink...but now they are bewitched by...insubstantial French fashions, which they imitate like baboons.³⁸⁴

³⁸³ Israel, 881–882

³⁸⁴ Petrus Valckenier, *'t Verwerd Europa*, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam: Hendrik & Dirk Boon, 1675), 263–265, <http://www.archive.org/details/tverwerdeuropaof00valk>. "In plaats men volgens de oude en goede gewoonte, en de gemeene manier vaa alle Replibyquaire Regeeringen sich behoorde nederig en sonder uyerlyke pompe te toonen in alle pulyke en solemnele actien, so begon men het zeyl hoe langer hoe hooger in top te trekken , en sich egaal te honden met Gekroonde Hoofden...Regenten en Burgeren lich voormaals vernoeagden met de oude Hollandfe dracht , spijs en drank...so is men nu betovert, door de verfoeyelijke en onbellandige Fransche Modens, dat men die als bavianen en meer-katten na-aapt..." The English translation is from Marjorie Wieseman, *Caspar Netscher and Late Seventeenth-Century Dutch Painting* (Doomspijk: Davaco, 2002), 97–98.

Beginning in the middle of the seventeenth century, more works from outside Haarlem were found in the city's inventories, and some Haarlem artists began to follow the example of more fashionable artists in Amsterdam and The Hague.³⁸⁵

In this new social and political environment, Ostade's paintings must have seemed increasingly reminiscent of a bygone era. Nevertheless, although he continued to depict rural life, his style became even more refined, as is evident in *Resting Travelers* from 1671 (Rijksmuseum) (fig. 144). Ostade's brushwork in the 1670s and early 1680s was extremely refined, especially in the small details. In *Resting Travelers*, the contours of Ostade's forms, particularly the rifle, the clothing, and the furniture, are extremely precise. In this work two men relax outside a rural inn after day of hunting. The *waardin* of this establishment has come by to check on them as one drinks from a tankard while the other smokes his pipe. Two lush trees that cast shade upon the central scene frame this vignette, the dark green underside of the foliage contrasting with the brighter, more iridescent trees in the background. Under a bright blue sky, another group sits around a table enjoying the same fare.

In his later years, Ostade also continued to depict the theme of love. *The Intimate Conversation*, 1672 (Rijksmuseum), features a couple seated at a table in a nondescript tavern interior (fig. 145). The couple leans toward one another, their heads coming together right at the center of the composition. The man's ruddy face is accentuated by the tiny tufts of hair of his beard and under his cap, and small wisps of hair peek from under the woman's cap. While the left side of her body is in deep shadow, her carefully painted hands and fingernails draw the viewer's attention to the wineglass that teeters dangerously close to tipping over. Ostade devoted the greatest level of detail to the man's

³⁸⁵ Biesboer, 29, 43.

tankard, carefully rendering the gradation of light across the silver surface with multiple hues of grey, white, silver, brown, and blue. In this refined late work, Ostade returned, as he often did, to the slow dance that takes place as romance blossoms between man and woman.

In *Village Inn with Backgammon and Card Players*, from 1674 or 1675, several small groups of leisurely figures fill the interior of a bright rural tavern (fig. 146). Illuminated by large leaded-glass windows on the right wall, the interior has a bright, airy feel that is characteristic of many of Ostade's works from the 1670s. Several men hunch over a trick-track board while another group plays cards in the back corner. The figures in the foreground smoke, drink, and converse near the warmth of the fireplace. The warm colors and light impart a softness to the scene. Further, Ostade includes the familiar motif of a child playing with a dog to further punctuate the coziness of the scene.

The year 1672, known as the *Rampjaar* (Year of Disaster), saw the invasion of the Netherlands by the French. Great civil unrest erupted as fear and panic gripped a population seeking to place blame and find a resolution.³⁸⁶ *Franse wreedheden in Bodegraven en Zwammerdam* (French atrocities in Bodegraven and Zwammerdam), 1673, by artist Romeyn de Hooghe (1645–1708) depicts a village being plundered by French forces (fig. 147). The inscription on the print reads “Frans Tyranny gepleegd op de Hollandse Dorpen” (French Tyranny Perpetrated on the Dutch Villages). De Hooghe represented a village devoured by flames as French soldiers torture and kill its residents.

The destruction in De Hooghe's image contrasts sharply with Ostade's serene and domestic image in *The Cottage Dooryard* (National Gallery of Art), also from 1673 (fig.

³⁸⁶ Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477-1806* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 799–803.

148). In this brightly colored work that is typical of his later style, six members of a lower class family are seen in the yard adjoining their cottage. While a seated woman cleans mussels for dinner, two young children play with their dog in the foreground. Another girl cares for what might be a younger sibling while the father watches from the doorway. The painting displays strong areas of bright local color. The intense, bright blue of the sky is mirrored in the shirt of the little girl in the foreground. Various pockets of red and orange—a shirt, a bowl, carrots on top of the pen—lead the viewer’s eye through the composition. A thick cascade of ivy, long a symbol of fertility, tumbles down the side of the cottage to accent this visually pleasing and peaceful domestic setting. The painting presents a quintessentially Dutch vision of peace and prosperity, crafted by Ostade to fit within his vision of a native rural paradise.

Houbraken wrote that Ostade traveled from Haarlem to Amsterdam, “with the intention of fleeing (wary of the French violence)” and there stayed with an art lover named Constantijn Sennepart, who purchased his works and arranged for others to buy them as well:

...he made those artfully colored Drawings, which Mister Jonas Witsen subsequently...bought for 1300 guilders: which I saw several times with great amusement.³⁸⁷

The duration of Ostade’s stay in Amsterdam is unknown, but no records indicate he settled there for any significant length of time. One of his watercolors, *Peasant Festival on a Town Street*, 1674 (Getty), depicts an airy scene whose brightness is enhanced by the medium (fig. 149). Though Haarlem and its surrounding villages were spared such

³⁸⁷ Houbraken, 1:347. ...alwaar hy die konstige gekoleurde teekeningen, die de Heer Jonas Witsen naderhand...voor 1300 gulden gemaakt heft: die ik verscheide malen met groot vermaak beschout heb.” Houbraken lists the date as 1662. Schnackenburg theorizes that Houbraken’s mention of 1662 is a misprint, meant to read 1672. Schnackenburg, 41. Schnackenburg also notes that this story is at least true in part because a 1695 inventory lists watercolors purchased from the collection of Sennepart.

direct involvement in the fighting, the war with France took its toll on the city, particularly in terms of finances. Haarlem's reserves were depleted, and all sectors of society felt the financial straits.³⁸⁸ Nevertheless, the fifty surviving watercolors, executed during the last fifteen years of his career, replicate the joy and celebratory abandon of his mature paintings and prints. Ostade's late paintings betray none of the strife and violence evident in De Hooghe's representation. Even at the close of the Golden Age, images of Adriaen van Ostade's peaceful presentation of simple life were still in demand, perhaps even more so during this time of crisis.

³⁸⁸ Biesboer, 11.

Conclusion

Adriaen van Ostade crafted simple stories centered on the interactions of humble Dutch rural inhabitants. While he moved through the middle class urban milieu of Haarlem as a successful artist, he led his viewers around a quaint rural world that stoked the perception of simplicity outside the city. The course of Ostade's career reveals him to be both a highly creative individual and an astute businessman who developed a signature subject that he successfully exploited for decades. He was a storyteller who transformed the perception of the tavern from a den of iniquity to a place for warm, peaceful leisure activities to create simple, pleasant scenes. Ostade imbued his rural folk with tranquility, coupled with simple pleasures and a dash of naivety that presented the benign interactions of daily life as picturesque scenes. In these scenes, he also made a bold statement about them as humble representatives of the virtues of the Dutch Republic. With humor, but not mocking, his paintings display an ingenuity and skill in representing Holland's country denizens as symbols of the peace and prosperity cherished in his time.

Ostade drew upon a long tradition of peasant representation when creating his tavern scenes, utilizing both the image of the boorish and that of the idyllic peasant. Throughout the course of his career, he transformed scenes of festive peasants from raucous affairs to simple moments of leisure or joyful celebration. The connotations of this type of image were enhanced both by a literary and visual tradition celebrating the rewards for hard work and the pleasure of a simple country life. Adriaen van Ostade's representations of domestic peasant interiors and tavern scenes were endowed with similar associations. The sixteenth-century peasant works of Pieter Bruegel the Elder, which were both humorous and satirical, were the inspiration for many artists' scenes of

festive peasants. Through both prints and a revival of his work in the early seventeenth-century, the Bruegel tradition had a lasting effect on the depiction of peasants, but Ostade had a different slant.

As a prosperous Haarlem burgher, Ostade knew the art market and the attitudes of his fellow city dwellers. Casting his rural figures in a traditional role of being simple and content became a part of this vision of the areas outside Haarlem, one that augmented their perception as an idyllic locale. The specific character and topography of Haarlem was fundamental for the development and understanding Ostade's work. Utilizing the pride in the native landscape and a romanticized vision of its inhabitants, Ostade created a new type of rural character, one that augmented rather than supplanted traditional peasant iconography. He could not have done the same thing in any other location.

Ostade depicted his figures so as to diffuse the association of drinking, smoking, and gaming with sin and to project the benign nature of peasant festivities. Ostade's peasants no longer exemplified the excessive enjoyment of base pleasures, but in his hands, became a symbol of contented simplicity. Ostade represented a new subject—peasant leisure. Leisure had previously been pictured by artists as an occasional festival, where celebration became an overarching pandemonium in the village—a spectacle to be viewed with scorn and humor by the bourgeoisie. Songs demonstrate that the dichotomy between peasant work and leisure was a popular theme though Ostade chose to focus on the enjoyment of that well-earned leisure. He utilized the trope of the happy rural peasant that that originated in classical times and was revived in his own time. Whether they were intimate encounters or large, rollicking celebrations, they project a humble sense of camaraderie that is punctuated by lighthearted gestures and expressions. The way in

which he changed popular tropes of peasant life, however, also demonstrates the novelty of his approach.

Ostade's works were no mere catalog of rural life. The fruit of numerous studies and sketches can be found in the artist's paintings and prints. An examination of his body of work reveals the development, use, and reuse of various motifs in order to create highly contrived scenes that display both his technical virtuosity and his skill in depicting figures. Ostade's paintings are particularly deceptive because they show us the trappings of daily life that suggest verisimilitude. Scholarship surrounding the Dutch art of the seventeenth century reminds the modern viewer repeatedly of the artifice of their naturalistic works. It has been demonstrated that many Dutch paintings of the Golden Age contain complex messages beneath their flawless surfaces. Ostade's charming scenes of peasant life are like the flower pieces by Ambrosius Bosschaert or Jan Bruegel the Elder, whose enchantment with fine detail and smooth surface conceal the artifice of arrangements that could never have existed in nature. Ostade retains just enough of the rustic, earthy mannerisms and surroundings of rural folk to retain the realism of his scenes.

Ostade was a successful artist who pioneered a new type of festive rural scene that appealed greatly to his buyers, judging by the volume of paintings he created. His followers and imitators sought to carve out a piece of this success for themselves by emulating his happy, idyllic peasant images. His animated paintings, prints, and watercolors presented a playful and creative vision of rural folk and their surroundings in the outskirts of Haarlem as a contented group of individuals who enjoyed relative prosperity. Following the development of these colorful presentations of country leisure

reveals the progression of Ostade's style as an artist who matured by taking existing visual tropes and successfully translating them into unique and charming images that suited the mythology and history of Haarlem.

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