ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: FORMATIVE FIGURES: ELDERLY WOMEN IN THE ART OF REMBRANDT AND HIS LEIDEN CIRCLE

Alyssa M. Hughes, Doctor of Philosophy, 2024

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This dissertation examines the roles of personal connections as well as social and cultural influences in the paintings, etchings, and drawings of elderly women that Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–1669) and his circle made in Leiden. Together, as part of the creative exchange they developed during the 1620s and early 1630s, Rembrandt and his early comrade Jan Lievens (1607–1674) created many images of aged women that are exceptional in their compassionate character. Rembrandt also shared his fascination with these subjects with his first student, Gerrit Dou (1613–1675), whose later genre scenes that feature older women, from the 1650s and 1660s, are similarly humane. Through an examination of their portrayals of these subjects in their *tronies*, history paintings, and scenes based on everyday life, and the interactions they had in Leiden, this dissertation seeks to provide a greater understanding of the body of influences that shaped these artists' distinctly sympathetic approach to elderly women in their art.

FORMATIVE FIGURES: ELDERLY WOMEN IN THE ART OF REMBRANDT AND HIS LEIDEN CIRCLE

by

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Dedication

For my parents, my husband, my grandmother, and my friends.

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women in Dutch art, and to Lloyd DeWitt for his conversation and insights on Jan Lievens.

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Introduction

Richly attired in a fur mantle and a lustrous aubergine-hued hood, an aged woman, traditionally identified as Rembrandt's mother, sits stoically posed looking out towards the viewer with a dignified expression [Figure 1:1]. Against a dark background, Rembrandt (1606–1669) eloquently illuminated this woman's countenance. The naturalistic appearance of her delicate creped skin is a masterclass in the refined painting technique that he achieved during his Leiden years. The consummate skill with which he captured the emotional presence and expressive qualities of this woman's weathered face is a testament to his fascination with the elderly, even as a young artist.

Rembrandt found creative possibilities in the representation of the aged, both male and female, in *tronies*, portraits, genre scenes and in stories from the Bible and mythology that he executed during all periods of his career. Rather than exploring the full scope of these images, this dissertation focuses more narrowly on the master's many depictions of elderly women that he and members of his circle made in Leiden during the 1620s and 1630s, and later in the 1650s and 1660s. Rembrandt's interest in rendering the elderly in Leiden was shared by his equally ambitious early comrade Jan Lievens (1607–1674), and his first student Gerrit Dou (1613–1675). After Rembrandt left Leiden for Amsterdam in 1631, Dou continued to develop his approach to elderly women in his *tronies* throughout the 1630s and later in his genre scenes from the 1650s and 1660s. In this dissertation's last chapter, the evolution of

Gerrit Dou's approach to aged women is considered in the broader context of Leiden's influence.

The initial chapters of this dissertation examine the personal, social, and cultural reasons that elderly women figured so prominently in Rembrandt's and Jan Lievens' early works, a subject that has not been sufficiently studied in the past. This discussion marshals evidence for the woman called Rembrandt's mother's identity, and considers what Rembrandt's numerous paintings and etchings of her convey about his artistic personality and the significance of this woman as a model for the young artist.

Another facet of this dissertation is a discussion of Leiden's charitable establishments that housed and cared for elderly women in a sympathetic manner, and whose founding principles reflected broader cultural attitudes. Within this framework, it explores the role of these social institutions in the development of Rembrandt and Lievens' fascination with elderly female subjects. Finally, this dissertation discusses these artists' images of aged women in the cultural context of Netherlandish literary and visual traditions and argues that the way they emphasized their humanity and individuality transformed the stereotypical treatment of elderly women in art.

My scholarly interest in the elderly women that Rembrandt and his Leiden circle portrayed was encouraged by my own formative experiences in the city. In the summer of 2017, as a master's student interested in the young Rembrandt, I had a funding opportunity that allowed me to travel to Leiden to study Dutch, and to learn more about the city's history. One afternoon, on a walking tour, I was introduced to Leiden's *hofjes*. Immediately drawn to the rich history and charm of these courtyard

communities–that most often housed and tended to women over fifty years of age–I began to consider how elderly women, as prominent subjects for Rembrandt, Lievens, and Dou, were a part of these artists' lives in Leiden, and the ways in which their presence informed their art. From this experience, I developed a fascination with the elderly women these artists portrayed and this dissertation, which addresses the significance of these subjects in Leiden.

Rembrandt and His Leiden Circle

During the 1620s and early 1630s, Rembrandt and Jan Lievens developed a lively, and at times competitive, professional exchange that led them to explore similar styles, techniques, and subjects.[1] Though both artists were born in Leiden just over one year apart, the dates and locations of their training and development differed slightly. Lievens started his artistic training around six years before Rembrandt. In the dynamic of their relationship, Lievens played a significant role as an initiator of

[1] In comparison to Rembrandt, less work has been done on Jan Lievens. Noteworthy sources on the artist include Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. and Stephanie Dickey, *Jan Lievens: A Dutch Master Rediscovered* (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2008); Lloyd DeWitt, "Evolution and Ambition in the Career of Jan Lievens (1607–1674)," *PhD diss.*, (University of Maryland, 2006); Bernhard Schnackenburg, *Jan Lievens: Friend and Rival of the Young Rembrandt: With a Catalogue Raisonné of His Early Work 1623–1632* (Petersburg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2016). Though their friendship and professional exchange are topics covered in a number of works that broadly consider one or the other artist, the following sources are noteworthy in their focus on both artists: Christiaan Vogelaar et al: *Rembrandt and Lievens in Leiden* (Leiden: Waanders, 1991); Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., "Making Faces: The Development of the *Tronie* in Seventeenth-Century Leiden," in *Anonymous Portraits: Dutch Seventeenth-Century Tronies* (New York: Nicholas Hall, 2019). The latter source provides a meaningful assessment of the character and evolution of the *tronies* both artists made in the context of their creative back and forth.

certain stylistic and thematic developments that are present in both artists' formative works.[2]

At the precocious age of eight, Lievens began his artistic training with the Leiden portraitist Joris van Schooten (c. 1587–1652/53), with whom he spent two years. Then, at the age of ten, he traveled to Amsterdam where he studied for another two years, from the winter of 1617/18 to the winter of 1619/20, with the Amsterdam history painter, Pieter Lastman (1583–1633).[3] After training with Lastman, Lievens possibly also traveled to Utrecht to learn from the Caravaggesque painters there before returning to Leiden as an independent artist in 1621.[4]

Even though it is not documented, Lievens' additional study in Utrecht is supported by the young artist's near immediate rejection of Lastman's characteristically expansive narrative compositions and small-scale figures in his paintings.[5] Though he did retain Lastman's expressive gestures, bold palette, and affinity for elaborate costumes, Lievens' early compositions incorporate large-scale half-length figures that are closely cropped and expressively illuminated by strong *chiaroscuro* lighting effects. These elements are characteristic of the notable painters Gerrit van Honthorst (1592–1656) and Dirck van Baburen (1595–1624), both of

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[2] Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., "Jan Lievens: Bringing New Light to an Old Master," in *Jan Lievens: A Dutch Master Rediscovered* (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2008), p. 2.

[3] Wheelock, "Jan Lievens," p. 5.

[4] Wheelock, "Jan Lievens," p. 6.

[5] Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr. noted that the compositions and figures in only a small number of Lievens' earliest drawings demonstrate the influence of Lastman's style; Wheelock, "Jan Lievens," p. 6.

whom had only recently returned to the Utrecht in 1620 after a sojourn in Rome to learn Caravaggio's distinctive style.[6] These distinguishable stylistic features in Lievens' early work suggest that he spent a period of time working in Utrecht before returning to Leiden.

After receiving a humanist education at the city's Latin School and foregoing his enrollment at Leiden University, Rembrandt started his training in 1621, when he was around fifteen years old.[7] His first teacher was the Leiden history painter Jacob van Swanenburgh (1571–1638), who was best known for his fiery portrayals of Hell. The young artist studied with him for around three years, and then subsequently, he too traveled to Amsterdam to learn from Pieter Lastman for a six-month period.[8] Rembrandt and Lievens' creative exchange began around the time Rembrandt returned to Leiden from Amsterdam in 1624/25. The formation of their relationship is signaled by Rembrandt's history paintings and genre scenes from that period that integrate Lastman's drama and palette with the compositional style and lighting effects of the Utrecht Caravaggisti that occupied Lievens.

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[6] For more information on the styles and themes of the Utrecht Caravaggisti see the exhibition catalogue: Joaneath A. Spicer et al., Masters *of Light: Dutch Painters in Utrecht During the Golden Age* (Baltimore: Walters Art Gallery, 1997).

[7] In the following source, Amy Golahny provides important scholarship on Rembrandt's education and training: Amy Golahny, *Rembrandt's Reading: The Artist's Bookshelf of Ancient Poetry and History* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2003), pp. 49–74.

[8] The following sources are significant studies that consider Rembrandt's early life, art, and ambitions in the context of his influences, stylistic developments, and the market in Leiden: Christopher Brown et al., *Young Rembrandt* (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 2019); Jacquelyn N. Coutré et al., *Leiden Circa 1630: Rembrandt Emerges* (Ontario: Agnes Etherington Centre, 2019); Roelof van Straten, *Young Rembrandt: The Leiden Years, 1606–1632* (Leiden: Foleor Publishers, 2005); Alan Chong, ed., *Rembrandt Creates Rembrandt: Art and Ambition in Leiden, 1629–1631* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2000).

From the mid-1620s, the pair also explored similar subject matters, notably using many of the same props, costumes, and models. Their *tronies* of elderly men and women– which Lievens made from the early 1620s and Rembrandt created beginning in the latter half of the decade–closely follow stylistic and thematic precedents by Honthorst and Baburen. These figures also recall subjects that the Flemish court artist and diplomat Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640) depicted in his history paintings. While Rembrandt and Lievens would have been acquainted with Rubens' compositions through widely disseminated prints, they might also have known his painting of *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*, c. 1616, that was owned by the head of Leiden's Latin School, Theodorus Schrevelius (1572–1629).[9] Notably, this painting depicts an elderly woman acting as Judith's attendant. Additionally, Rubens painted several *tronies*, though unlike Rembrandt and Lievens, he did not view these images as finished products for the open market.[10] While it is uncertain whether Rembrandt and Lievens knew Rubens' *tronies*, the prevalence of elderly subjects in these artists' works suggests that Rubens' interest in studying old age was influential on Rembrandt and Lievens.

Two notable sources provide detailed biographical information on Rembrandt and Lievens and important insights into their early artistic strengths: Jan Jansz Orlers,

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[9] Peter Paul Rubens, *Judith with the Head of Holofernes*, c. 1616, oil on canvas, 120 x 111 cm, Braunschweig, Herzog Ulrich Anton-Museum. Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., "Jan Lievens: Bringing New Light to an Old Master," In *Jan Lievens: A Dutch Master Rediscovered* (Washington D.C.: The National Gallery of Art, 2008), pp. 8–9.

[10] For more on Rubens' *tronies* see: Nico van Hout, *Part XX (2) Study Heads and Anatomical Studies*, 2 vols. *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burchard* (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2020); Julius S. Held, *Rubens* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1954).

Bescrijvinge der Stadt Leyden (1641), and Constantijn Huygens' autobiography, which he wrote in the early 1630s.[11] Orlers' brief account is almost strictly biographical. It describes both artists' family situations, artistic training, and professional achievements until 1641. After meeting Rembrandt and Lievens in Leiden in 1628, Huygens wrote about his impressions of the artists in a private autobiography that was published posthumously. In it he described the artists as a "pair of young and noble painters."[12] He portrayed them as geniuses and protégés, and he expressed his admiration for their great skills given their humble backgrounds.[13] In Huygens' eyes, Rembrandt and Lievens possessed very different artistic strengths. He praised Rembrandt's "sure touch and liveliness of emotion," and his achievements specifically working on a small-scale.[14] For Lievens, he extolled his

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[11] Jan Jansz Orlers, *Bescrijvinge der Stadt Leyden* (Leiden, 1641). For Huygens' relevant text, see: Christiaan Vogelaar et al, *Rembrandt and Lievens in Leiden* (Zwolle: Waanders, 1991), pp. 128-134. Jan Jansz Orlers (1570–1646), was Burgomaster of Leiden and a Lievens family acquaintance, and Constantijn Huygens (1596–1687), was Secretary to the Stadholder and an art connoisseur. See also: P.J.M. de Baar's, *De Leidse verwanten van Rembrandt van Rijn en hun Leidse afstammelingen tot heden* (Leiden: Gemeente-Archief, 1992). This work is a valuable genealogical study of Rembrandt, Lievens, and their family's that clarifies a number of the biographical matters that this dissertation takes into account; P.J.M de Baar, "Rembrandt's Mother Cornelia ('Neeltgen') Willemsdr van Zuytbrouck," in *Rembrandt's Mother: Myth and Reality*, ed. Christiaan Vogelaar and Gerbrand Korevaar (Leiden: Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal, 2005), p. 81; and Walter R. Strauss and Marjon van der Meulen, *The Rembrandt Documents* (New York: Abaris Books, 1979). This source provides a compilation of documents associated with Rembrandt that were created during his life.

[12] Christiaan Vogelaar et al., *Rembrandt and Lievens in Leiden* (Zwolle: Waanders, 1991), p. 132.

[13] Vogelaar et al, *Rembrandt and Lievens,* p. 132.

[14] Huygens specifically wrote about the efficacy of Rembrandt's, *Judas Repentant, Returning the Thirty Pieces of Silver*, 1629, oil on panel, Private Collection. Vogelaar et al, *Rembrandt and Lievens,* pp. 132–33.

"inventiveness and audacious themes and forms," that he so ambitiously and astutely captured on a large-scale.[15]

The distinct styles that Rembrandt and Lievens developed in Leiden are indicative of the different ways they depicted older women in their paintings, etchings, and drawings.[16] Rembrandt created twenty-six images of elderly women in his genre subjects, *tronies*, and biblical scenes from the late 1620s to the early 1630s, while elderly women appear similarly in nineteen of Lievens's pictures from that same period.

The elderly women that Rembrandt and Lievens depicted fall into two categories: a woman commonly identified as Rembrandt's mother, and other women whose identities are not known. Rembrandt portrayed his mother fourteen times, in studies that are impressive in their refined pictorial and emotional character. Lievens only represented Rembrandt's mother four times, but he depicted more unidentified women than did Rembrandt. In particular, Lievens included elderly women in eleven large-scale, thematically inventive paintings during his Leiden period, some of which I discuss in chapters two and three.[17]

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[15] Vogelaar et al, *Rembrandt and Lievens,* pp. 132–33.

[16] For Rembrandt's images of older women in the appendices, I used: Volker Manuth et al., *Rembrandt: The Complete Collection of Paintings* (Cologne: Taschen, 2019), and Volker Manuth et al., *The Complete Collection of Drawings and Etchings* (Cologne: Taschen, 2019). For Lievens' images of older women in the appendices: Bernhard Schnakenberg, *Jan Lievens: Friend and Rival of the Young Rembrandt: With a Catalogue Raisonné of His Early Work 1623–1632* (Petersburg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2016).

[17] The following sources complement this dissertation's theoretical framework that draws connections between Rembrandt and Lievens' personal relationships with, and knowledge of, the elderly women around them and their art. Julius Held, *Rembrandt Studies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991); Stephanie Dickey, "Rembrandt and Saskia: Art Commerce, and the Poetics of Portraiture," in *Rethinking Rembrandt* (Zwolle: Waanders

Gerrit Dou was another member of Rembrandt's Leiden circle who depicted older women.[18] On February 14, 1628, at the age of fifteen, Gerrit Dou embarked on his apprenticeship with Rembrandt in Leiden as the master's first student. In the artist's studio, Dou fostered his meticulous and descriptive *fijnschilderij* (fine-painting) technique, and he was also introduced to the subject called Rembrandt's mother. Dou created several *tronies* of her throughout the 1630s, notably continuing to portray her in this manner even after Rembrandt moved to Amsterdam around 1631. His early images of this woman are significant not only because they followed Rembrandt's example in terms of subject matter, but also because they reflect Dou's early interest in creating highly descriptive paintings that also recall well-known ideas and symbolism–elements that he mastered in his paintings from around 1650 onwards. His later genre scenes that feature older women are exceptional in their focus on showcasing elderly feminine virtue and interactions with younger members of society.

The innovative and compassionate character of Dou's later genre scenes was particularly influential on the Leiden-based artists: Frans van Mieris I (1635–1681), a student of Dou's *fijnschilder* school, and Quiringh van Brekelenkam (1622–1668), a prolific follower of Dou. Together, Dou's, Van Mieris', and Van Brekelenkam's

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Publishers, 2002); Richard Verdi, *Rembrandt's Themes: Life Into Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

[18] For more information on Gerrit Dou see: Ronni Baer, "The Paintings of Gerrit Dou (1613–1675)," 3 vols. *Ph.D. diss.* New York University, 1990; Ronni Baer, *Gerrit Dou, 1613–1675: Master Painter in the Age of Rembrandt*, edited by Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000); The Leiden Collection Online Catalogue is also an exceptional source for rich biographical and object-based research on Rembrandt, Jan Lievens, and Gerrit Dou.

portrayals of elderly women in their scenes of everyday life are significant in this dissertation's last chapter as they demonstrate the continued social influence of Leiden.

Chapters

Chapters one and two explore connections between the elderly women in Rembrandt's and Jan Lievens' lives and their art. Chapter one focuses on Rembrandt's images the woman commonly referred to as Rembrandt's mother. It begins by marshaling all the evidence, pro and con, for her identity. This chapter explores the significance of this woman as a model for the young artist, and it concludes that the evidence for her identity as Neeltgen van Zuytbrouck is strong enough that in this dissertation I will refer to her as Rembrandt's mother. It also presents evidence that Rembrandt's sensitive depictions of his mother reflect his admiration for her.

Chapter two examines the role of Leiden's charitable institutions in the development of both Rembrandt's and Jan Lievens's fascination with elderly female subjects. It explores how characteristics of Leiden's distinct social environment inspired these artists to portray many elderly women, and it describes the city's *hofjes*. Widespread across Leiden, these secluded courtyard homes were largely inhabited by elderly women. This chapter identifies a relationship between Leiden's *hofjes* and Rembrandt and Lievens' images of older women that appear to be inspired by their knowledge of, and contacts with these people. It concludes by discussing

connections between these artists and Leiden's charitable establishments, as well as the people associated with them.

Chapter three considers Rembrandt and Lievens' images of older women within the framework and influence of attitudes towards the elderly in prevailing literary and visual traditions. It begins by tracing the evolution of cultural beliefs in Europe about the moral, physical, and spiritual character of women as they aged. It examines how these ideas tended to coalesce in popular literary sources and artworks as both negative and positive stereotypes. For example, these sources often represented elderly women as being piously virtuous, but they also could view them as personifications of vices such as lust. This chapter discusses a few examples that would have been familiar to Rembrandt and Lievens and it demonstrates that these traditions suppressed humanity in favor of accepted stereotypes. It concludes with an assessment of how Rembrandt and Lievens emphasized the humanity and individuality of older women in ways that transformed the traditional stereotypical approach to elderly women in art.

Chapter four primarily examines paintings of elderly women by Gerrit Dou that he made following Rembrandt's introduction to the subject in the late 1620s and early 1630s. It considers Rembrandt's influence and the various ways Dou developed his own distinct approach to aged women in his *tronies* in the 1630s and in his later genre scenes from the 1650s and 1660s. It also examines how Dou's later genre scenes were influential on the Leiden-based genre painters Frans van Mieris I and Quiringh van Brekelenkam. This chapter concludes by asserting that in the context of Leiden's distinct environment of charitable institutions, Dou, Van Mieris, and Van

Brekelenkam's genre paintings of elderly women appear to respond to the city's attitude of respect and care for the aged. Thus, they demonstrate similar artistic tendencies as Rembrandt and Lievens did in the 1620s and early 1630s.

Elderly Women in Rembrandt Scholarship

Surprisingly few art historical sources focus on older women. There has never been a comprehensive scholarly study on elderly women that Rembrandt and his circle portrayed. The exhibition catalogue *Rembrandt's Woman* (2001) by Julia Lloyd Williams provides important information about Rembrandt's depictions of his mother and the other elderly women that he studied in his works on paper later in his career.[19] The majority of discussions of older women by Rembrandt and his circle appear in scattered references in essays, books, and exhibition catalogues.[20] These references typically mention these artists' affinity for aged subjects, and often point out that they portrayed them sympathetically. They also frequently focus on the formal description of works, noting these artists' ability to render elderly women's features or expressions. When appropriate, these texts discuss religious symbolism as it relates to

[19] Julia Lloyd Williams, *Rembrandt's Women* (Edinburgh: The National Gallery of Scotland, 2001), cat nos. 1–5, 47, 52, 55, 56, 60, 62, 101.

[20] Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., "Jan Lievens: Bringing New Light to an Old Master," In *Jan Lievens: A Dutch Master Rediscovered* (Washington D.C.: The National Gallery of Art, 2008), cat nos., 1, 4, 20–27, 61, 71, 77, 96; The introductory essay and catalogue raisonné from: Bernhard Schnakenberg, *Jan Lievens: Friend and Rival of the Young Rembrandt: With a Catalogue Raisonné of His Early Work 1623–1632* (Petersburg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2016); Ronni Baer, *Gerrit Dou, 1613–1675: Master Painter in the Age of Rembrandt*, edited by Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), from this source see also cat nos., 2, 4, 5, 11, 25, 34.

an older woman's pious appearance.[21] While these sources make significant contributions in identifying nuances of specific images of older women, they rarely concentrate comprehensively on the importance of personal relationships and the social and cultural influences that impacted these artists' approach to rendering elderly women.

Rembrandt's mother has often been a focal point in scholarly research on Rembrandt's depictions of elderly women. Gary Schwartz addresses Rembrandt's mother in his *Rembrandt, his life, his paintings* (1985) and in *The Rembrandt Book* (2005). In both books he discusses her in the context of identifiable models in Rembrandt's work.[22] The most extensive study on this topic is *Rembrandt's Mother: Myth and Reality* (2005) edited by Christiaan Vogelaar and Gerbrand Korevaar. This catalogue provides important information on the history of Rembrandt's mother's identity.[23] Additionally, Anouk Janssen's essay in that catalogue, "The Iconography of Old Age and Rembrandt's Early Work," provides a significant analysis of Rembrandt's, Lievens's, and Gerrit Dou's early images of elderly people. She argues, contrary to the conclusions I have reached in this dissertation, that the images of the

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[21] The symbolism of piety in images of older women is a focal point of Wayne Frantis' book. He discusses a small number of paintings by the circle of Rembrandt: Wayne E. Franits, "Weduwe," in *Paragons of Virtue: Women and Domesticity in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 161–194, 240–246.

[22] Gary Schwartz, *Rembrandt: his life, his paintings* (New York: Viking Press, 1985), pp. 18–19, 57–66; Gary Schwartz, *The Rembrandt Book* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2005), pp. 47–65.

[23] Gerbrand Korevaar, "Rembrandt's Mother Rise and Fall of a Myth," in *Rembrandt's Mother: Myth and Reality*, eds. Christiaan Vogelaar and Gerbrand Korevaar (Leiden: Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal, 2005), pp. 33–52.

elderly that these artists made were consistent with earlier pictorial traditions.[24] While I agree that these artists were influenced by cultural attitudes, I argue their emphasis on humanity and individuality is entirely different from the stereotypical approach characteristic of that earlier pictorial tradition.

Anouk Janssen has done considerable research on the iconography of old age and its relationship to social beliefs about the spiritual, physical, and moral character of elderly people in popular literary sources and artworks. Her book *Grijsaards in Zwart-Wit: de verbeelding van de ouderdom in de Nederlandse prentkunst* (1550–1650) (2007) explores how these pervasive ideas influenced images of older women and men in Netherlandish print culture from the mid-sixteenth-century to the mid-seventeenth-century.[25] In *Paragons of Virtue: Women and Domesticity in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* (1993) Wayne E. Franits is similarly informative on the iconography of old age, although, as opposed to Anouk Janssen, his text focuses on women.[26] In his chapter, "Weduwe," Franits considers several phases in women's lives following the textual format of Jacob Cats' *Houwelyck* (165) , which was a popular moral emblem book found in many Dutch households that addressed girls, brides and wives, mothers, and widows. Finally, the essays in *Women, Aging, and*

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[24] Anouk Janssen, "The Iconography of Old Age and Rembrandt's Early Work," in *Rembrandt's Mother: Myth and Reality*, eds. Christiaan Vogelaar and Gerbrand Korevaar (Leiden: Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal, 2005), pp. 53–66.

[25] Anouk Janssen, *Grijsaards in Zwart-Wit: de verbeelding van de ouderdom in de Nederlandse prentkunst* (1550–1650) (Zutphen: Walburg Pers, 2007).

[26] Wayne E. Franits, "Weduwe," in *Paragons of Virtue: Women and Domesticity in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 161–194, 240–246.

Art: A Crosscultural Anthology (2021) edited by Frima Fox Hofrichter and Midori Yoshimoto, broadly consider the relationship between elderly women in art–with particular emphasis on early modern examples–and cultural perceptions.[27]

Elderly Women in Social Historical Scholarship

Elderly women have been treated in a social historical context by several scholars, most prominently Ariadne Schmidt, Leiden University Professor of History and Urban Culture, whose doctoral thesis, "Overleden na de dood. Weduwen in Leiden in de Gouden Eeuw," (2001) illustrated how older women and widows in the city were perceived in seventeenth-century society and culture.[28] Her recent work is more broad-reaching in its focus, though it continues to be useful in understanding the living conditions and agency of Leiden's elderly women during the early modern period.[29] Other sources like Lynn A. Botelho's, "The 17th Century," in *A History of Old Age* (2005) discusses when one was considered to be old and what that

[27] Frima Fox Hofrichter and Midori Yoshimoto, eds., *Women Aging, and Art: A Crosscultural Anthology* (New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021).

[28] Ariadne Schmidt, *Overleven na de dood: weduwen in Leiden in de Gouden Eeuw* (Amsterdam: Prometheus/ Bert Bakker, 2001).

[29] Ariadne Schmidt, *Mensen maken de stad. Gender en diversiteit in de geschiedenis van de Leidse stadscultuur* (Leiden University: 2020); Ariadne Schmidt et al, "Unmarried and Unknown: Urban Men and Women in the Low Countries Since the Early Modern Period," *Journal of Urban History* 42, no. 1 (2016): pp. 3–20; Ariadne Schmidt et al, "Introduction: Single and the City: Men and Women Alone in North-Western European Towns since the Late Middle Ages," in *Single Life in the City 1200–1900* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015): pp. 1–24.

experience was like in Europe.[30] Another significant source is *The Prime of Their Lives: Wise Old Women in Pre-Industrial Europe* by Anneke B. Mulder-Bakker and Renée Nip, which examines the various roles of mature women in European society. This work focuses on women around the age of fifty, which was also typically the age when women became eligible for entry into *hofjes*– charitable institutions which I discuss in chapter two.

A considerable amount of literature exists on the history of Leiden's charitable institutions. The localized interest in this topic reflects how significant establishments like *hofjes* and *gasthuizen* are for the city's social and cultural history. Frits Boersma and Greet Dusseldorp-Kingma's *Regenten en kuise maagden: 350 jaar Eva van Hoogeveenshofje* (2007) focuses on the history of a single *hofje* in Leiden. It traces the history of regents in the Eva van Hoogeveenhof, and details what it was like for women to live there. This book also includes accounts of individuals who lived there after 1737, the year in which they began recording residents' names.[31] Other books like Herman Kleibrink and Ruud Spruit's *Hofjes in Leiden* (1979) and Ine Leermakers and Frouke I. Welling's *Door gangen en poorten naar de Leidse Hofjes* (1997) consider all of the city's *hofjes* and *gasthuizen*.[32] These works are

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[30] Lynn A. Botelho, "The 17th Century," in *A History of Old Age,* ed. Pat Thane (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2005), pp. 113–173. Another very similar source is: George Minois, *History of Old Age: From Antiquity to the Renaissance* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

[31] Frits Boersma and Greet Dusseldorp-Kingma, *Regenten en kuise maagden: 350 jaar Eva van Hoogeveenshofje* (Leiden: Stichting Eva van Hoogeveen, 2007).

[32] Herman Kleibrink and Ruud Spruit, *Hofjes in Leiden* (Leiden: De Kler, 1979); Ine Leermakers and Frouke I. Welling, *Door gangen en poorten naar de Leidse Hofjes* (Leiden: Barabinsk, 1997).

especially helpful in understanding the diverse character of *hofjes* that were founded by private patrons with different religious and social priorities.[33] Henk Looijesteijn's essay "Funding and founding private charities: Leiden almshouses and their founders, 1450–1800," (2012) also focuses specifically on individuals who founded *hofjes*, and the factors that motivated them to do so.[34] Additionally, Looijesteijn's *Hofjes als paleizen: Stichters, bouwers en bewonder in de 17de en 18de eeuw* (2014) and *Bevorderaars van het goede: Een kleine bestuursgeschiedenis van het Nederlandse hofje* (2016) are excellent studies that broadly address the history of *hofjes* throughout the Netherlands.[35] Significantly, although many of these authors include images of the elderly by Rembrandt and his Leiden circle, they do not discuss how these artworks reflect the social framework of *hofjes*.

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This dissertation contributes to Rembrandt scholarship by providing an analysis of the full scope of personal, social, and cultural reasons why aged women figures so prominently in the art of Rembrandt and his Leiden circle. It also demonstrates how these influences not only led Rembrandt and Lievens to develop an

[33] Another book by Leermakers and Wietske Donkersloot reflects on the character of *hofjes* in Leiden before and after the Reformation. See: Ine Leermakers and Wietske Donkersloot, *Wonen om Gods wille in Leidse hofjes* (Leiden: Barabinsk, 2007).

[34] Henk Looijesteijn, "Funding and founding private charities: Leiden almshouses and their founders, 1450–1800," in *Continuity and Change* 27, no. 2 (2012): pp. 199–239.

[35] Henk Looijesteijn, *Hofjes als paleizen: Stichters, bouwers en bewonder in de 17de en 18de eeuw* (Den Haag: Uitgeverij van Stockum, 2014); Henk Looijesteijn, *Bevorderaars van het goede: Een kleine bestuursgeschiedenis van het Nederlandse hofje* (Den Haag: Uitgeverij van Stockum, 2016).

approach to elderly women that was distinctly different from Netherlandish visual and literary tradition, but also how the character of Leiden informed artists' approach to elderly women throughout the seventeenth-century.

Chapter 1: Rembrandt's Mother: A Revered Subject

Introduction

Around 1629, Rembrandt painted this *tronie* of a strikingly stoic older woman [Figure 1:1]. Under a thick fur mantle, she wears a delicately embroidered, high-necked chemise, whose fine craftsmanship is second only to the lustrous cloak of deep purple that cascades over her head and shoulders. Rembrandt concentrated his light around the woman's face. Its warm glow articulates her features and the weathered texture of her creped skin. Light also glimmers off the delicate metallic thread and beadwork on the inside of her hood. The luxury quality of this garment and the refined visual and emotional character of this image imply that this painting is no mere character study of an everyday elderly woman, but rather a portrayal of someone important to the artist depicted in the guise of an aged Biblical or historical figure.

This painting is one of fourteen images that Rembrandt made of a woman historically identified as his "mother."[36] During his Leiden years, Rembrandt depicted her in six paintings and eight works on paper. In this work, and in the other *tronies* and history paintings that are discussed in this chapter, Rembrandt took great care to portray this woman's dignified demeanor in such a way that suggests she was significant to him and someone he admired.

[36] This chapter focuses primarily on a number of Rembrandt's paintings and etchings of her. For a complete list of these images, including those that are not discussed in this chapter, please refer to Appendix I: Rembrandt's Mother.

"Rembrandt's Mother" or Rembrandt's Mother?

Was the subject traditionally identified as, "Rembrandt's mother," the artist's actual mother?[37] What little we do know about this woman comes from impersonal documents concerning birth, marriage, burial, and financial matters. While these extant records offer a view of the major milestones in her life, lost to history are details of her character, accomplishments, and the nuances of her mother and son relationship with Rembrandt. Matters are further complicated by the fact that she was identified as "Rembrandt's mother" in only one seventeenth-century document, dated 1679, more than ten years after Rembrandt's death.[38] Before turning to the images that convey how significant this woman was as a model for the young artist, it is first necessary to marshal all the evidence for her identity to prove the strong likelihood that she was indeed Rembrandt's mother.

[37] Gerbrand Korevaar, "Rembrandt's Mother Rise and Fall of a Myth," in *Rembrandt's Mother: Myth and Reality*, eds. Christiaan Vogelaar and Gerbrand Korevaar (Leiden: Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal, 2005), p. 50. In this chapter, Korevaar considers a number of the issues that arise around this woman's identity.

[38] On the contrary, Rembrandt's father was cited as a subject in two seventeenth-century inventories. Christiaan Vogelaar, "Rembrandt in Leiden: His Town, Workshop and Models," in *Rembrandt's Mother: Myth and Reality*, ed. Christiaan Vogelaar and Gerbrand Korevaar (Leiden: Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal, 2005), pp. 20–21. See also: Walter L. Strauss and Marjon van der Meulen, *The Rembrandt Documents* (New York: Abaris Books, Inc., 1979), pp. 240, doc. 1644/1 (Leiden, GA. Records of the notary Willem van Leeuwen, NA 785, doc. 13, unpaginated, 23 February 1644). Wherein the following is cited, "An Old Man's *tronie*, a portrait of the father of Mr Rembrandt," was documented in the 1644 inventory of Sybout van Caerdecamp. Vogelaar noted that Van Caerdecamp was the brother of the Van Rijn family notary, and must have been personally acquainted with the family including Rembrandt's father. Vogelaar also cited a, "portrait by Rembrandt of his father," in the painter Jan van de Capelle's (1626–1679) collection.

Cornelia "Neeltgen" Willemsdr van Zuytbrouck

Rembrandt's mother was named Cornelia Willemsdr van Zuytbrouck (1568–1640). She was born in Leiden sometime during the year 1568. Neeltgen, as she was called, was the third of six children born to Lijsbeth Cornelisdr Vinck and Willem Adriaensz van Zuytbrouck.[39] Her two older siblings were Adriana and Cornelis, and her younger siblings, all girls, were Geertgen, Maritgen, and Elisabeth.[40] In her youth, she and her siblings learned to read and write, although later in life she often signed official documents with an "X" or a squiggle.[41]

On October 8, 1589, when she was in her early twenties, Neeltgen married Harmen Gerritsz van Rijn (1567/68–1630) in Leiden's Reformed St. Pieterskerk.[42] The couple had ten children. Their five sons were Gerrit (1589/97–1631), Adriaen (1597–1652), Cornelis (d. 1622–1640), Willem (d. 1655), and, of course, Rembrandt (1606–1669). Their daughters were Machtelt (d. 1625), Elisabeth (d. 1655), and one other whose name is not known, and who passed away in 1609. Neeltgen lost two

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[39] P.J.M De Baar, *De Leidse Verwanten van Rembrandt van Rijn en hun Leidse Afstammelingen tot heden*, 2nd ed. rev. (Leiden: Gemeentearchief, 1992), 2. See also: Walter L. Strauss and Marjon van der Meulen, *The Rembrandt Documents* (New York: Abaris Books, Inc., 1979), p. 31, doc. 1581/2 (Leiden, GA. Bevolkingsregister, fol. 6 1581).

[40] P.J.M de Baar, "Rembrandt's Mother Cornelia ('Neeltgen') Willemsdr van Zuytbrouck," in *Rembrandt's Mother: Myth and Reality*, ed. Christiaan Vogelaar and Gerbrand Korevaar (Leiden: Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal, 2005), p. 81. De Baar clarifies that Geertgen and Elisabeth died while they were still very young.

[41] P.J.M de Baar, "Rembrandt's Mother," p. 81.

[42] P.J.M De Baar, *De Leidse Verwanten van Rembrandt van Rijn en hun Leidse Afstammelingen tot heden*, 2nd ed. rev. (Leiden: Gemeentearchief, 1992), 2. See also: Walter L. Strauss and Marjon van der Meulen, *The Rembrandt Documents* (New York: Abaris Books, Inc., 1979), p. 35, docs. 1589/3 (Leiden, GA. Pieterskerk, Marriage Register DTB 12, fol. 6, 8 October 1589) and 1589/4 (Leiden, GA. Pieterskerk, Marriage Register, DTB 12, fol. 61, 23 September 1589).

more children, whose genders are not known, in 1604 and 1609. They died in infancy or early childhood.[43]

Rembrandt was born when Neeltgen was thirty-eight years old. From the mid-1620s to early 1630s, the years in which Rembrandt depicted the woman called his "mother," Neeltgen was in her late fifties to early sixties. After her husband Harmen died in 1630, and Rembrandt moved from Leiden to Amsterdam around 1631, Neeltgen lived for another nine years, passing away at the age of seventy-two. She left behind a large sum of 10,000 guilders to be divided among her children.[44]

The Case for Her Identity

Compelling evidence that the model called "Rembrandt's mother" was an individual as opposed to a generic type is the way Rembrandt repeatedly rendered her large round eyes, aquiline nose, and distinctive jawline and jowls in his paintings and etchings [See Figure 1:1]. Rembrandt's close observation of her facial features further suggests that she was someone with whom he had frequent access. Moreover, since so many of Rembrandt's renderings of this woman are highly-detailed, demonstrating close study, it is evident that she acquiesced to posing for extended periods of time.

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[43] P.J.M De Baar, *De Leidse Verwanten van Rembrandt van Rijn en hun Leidse Afstammelingen tot heden*, 2nd ed. rev. (Leiden: Gemeentearchief, 1992), p. 2.

[44] De Baar, "Rembrandt's Mother," 2005; See also: Walter L. Strauss and Marjon van der Meulen, *The Rembrandt Documents* (New York: Abaris Books, Inc., 1979), pp. 191–196, doc. 1640/9 (Leiden, GA. Records of the notary Adriaen Paedts, NA 200, doc. 155, 16 October 1640).

The idea that this woman was Rembrandt's mother is further supported by the artist's practice of depicting family members throughout his career, among them his wife Saskia, his son Titus, and his later partner Hendrickje Stoffels. Rembrandt rendered his mother's likeness in prints, drawings, and paintings, much as he did with Saskia.[45] Rembrandt specifically identified Saskia in a silverpoint sketch with the handwritten message, "This is drawn after my wife when she was 21 years old, on the third day we were married. June 8, 1633," [Figure 1:2]. Unfortunately, Rembrandt did not create a comparable identifying image of his mother.

It was a common practice for early modern Netherlandish artists to use family members as models. Painters often portrayed themselves and their family members so patrons could get a sense for their skill.[46] The large number of times Rembrandt depicted himself and his mother indicates he was aware of this practice. The persuasive naturalism of his work would have been particularly impressive to local collectors who knew the artist and his family.

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[45] Stephanie S. Dickey, "Rembrandt and Saskia: Art, Commerce, and the Poetics of Portraiture," in *Rethinking Rembrandt*, eds. Alan Chong and Michael Zell (Zwolle: Waanders Publishers, 2002): pp. 17–48.

[46] Stephanie S. Dickey, "Rembrandt and Saskia: Art, Commerce, and the Poetics of Portraiture," in *Rethinking Rembrandt*, eds. Alan Chong and Michael Zell (Zwolle: Waanders Publishers, 2002): p. 17. See also: Christiaan Vogelaar, "Rembrandt in Leiden: His Town, Workshop and Models," in *Rembrandt's Mother: Myth and Reality*, eds. Christiaan Vogelaar and Gerbrand Korevaar (Leiden: Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal, 2005), pp. 20–28. Many Netherlandish artists used family members as models before and after Rembrandt's Leiden years. Vogelaar's essay focuses primarily on Leiden artists who were connected to Southern Netherlandish artists. He discusses Isaac van Swanenburgh (1538–1614), the father of Rembrandt's first teacher; Otto van Veen (1556–1629), a pupil of Isaac van Swanenburgh and later teacher of Rubens; Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640); and Jacob Jordaens (1593–1678). This practice is also seen in other Dutch artists, including Gerard ter Borch (1617–1681), Jan Steen (1626-1679) and Frans van Mieris I (1635–1681).

Rembrandt's many portrayals of this woman may also reflect the competitive and aspirational character of his artistic personality.[47] He would have been aware of the accolades that Jan Lievens received for the portrait he painted of his mother in 1621 [See Figure 3:9]. Lievens' success was described by Jan Orlers in his *Bescrijvinge der Stadt Leyden* (1641): "In 1621, at the age of fourteen, [Jan Lievens] portrayed his mother so well and with such great skill that everyone was astonished by it."[48] Rembrandt would also have been familiar with Karel van Mander's reference to Albrecht Dürer's (1471–1528) portrait of his mother Barbara Dürer (1452–1514) [Figure 1:3]. In his *Schilder-boeck* (1604), Van Mander stated, "Many beautiful pictures by Dürer are in the city hall of Nurnberg, the city where he was born…The portrait of Dürer's mother can be seen, too; and there is a small self-portrait, also, in which he painted his face with long hair on it, hanging down…"[49] This reference indicates the significance Van Mander placed on Dürer's family portraits since he only specifically identified them in the context of the many paintings by the artist in the Nuremberg town hall.[50]

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[47] Rembrandt, for example, aspired to the artistic legacy established in Leiden by Lucas van Leyden (1494–1533). For more on Rembrandt's admiration of this artist see: Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., "The Influence of Lucas van Leyden on Rembrandt's Narrative Etchings," in *Essays in Northern European Art Presented to Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann on his Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Anne-Marie Logan, 291–296 (The Netherlands: Davaco, 1983).

[48] "Inder Jare 1621. Out zijnde 14. Jaren, heeft by zijn Moeder so wel ende konstich geconterfeyt, dat yder hem daer over verwondert heeft." Christiaan Vogelaar et al, *Rembrandt and Lievens in Leiden* (Leiden: Waanders, 1991), p. 136.

[49] *Karel van Mander, Het leven der doorluchtige Nederlandsche en eenige Hoogduitsche schilders* (Haarlem/Alkmaar, 1604); Karel van Mander, *Dutch and Flemish Painters*, trans. C. van der Wall (New York: Ward McFarlane, 1936), p. 40.

[50] For discussions of these paintings see: Christiaan Vogelaar, "Rembrandt in Leiden: His Town, Workshop and Models," in *Rembrandt's Mother: Myth and Reality*, eds. Christiaan

As far as is currently known, the name "Rembrandt's mother," appeared on record only once in the seventeenth-century, ten years after the artist's death. The 1679 inventory of Amsterdam print dealer Clement de Jonghe (1624/25–1677) listed a copper plate titled, "Rembrandt's moeder," among seventy-three others by the artist.[51] From 1658, De Jonghe owned a shop called the Gekroonde Konst en Kaartwinckel on Kalverstraat in Amsterdam.[52] There he printed and sold impressions from his collection of Rembrandt etching plates until his death in 1677.[53] *Old Woman with a Hand on her Chest,* 1631 is thought to originate from the plate that De Jonghe identified as depicting the artist's mother [Figure 1:4].[54] This early impression depicts a bust-length elderly woman wearing a dark hood. Her hand grips the lapel of her robe as if pulling it more snug around her. Visually, she shares much in common with the figure known as "Rembrandt's mother," such as the similar shape of her face, aquiline nose, and round eyes.

Vogelaar and Gerbrand Korevaar (Leiden: Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal, 2005), pp. 21–22; Lotta Brand Philip and Fedja Anzelewsky, "The Portrait Diptych of Dürer's Parents," *Simiolus* 10, no. 1 (1978–1979): p. 5.

[51] Gerbrand Korevaar, "Rembrandt's Mother Rise and Fall of a Myth," in *Rembrandt's Mother: Myth and Reality*, eds. Christiaan Vogelaar and Gerbrand Korevaar (Leiden: Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal, 2005), p. 36.

[52] Erik Hinterding, "The History of Rembrandt's Copperplates, with a Catalogue of Those That Survive," *Simiolus* 22 (1993–1994): p. 260.

[53] Gerbrand Korevaar, "Rembrandt's Mother Rise and Fall of a Myth," in *Rembrandt's Mother: Myth and Reality*, ed. Christiaan Vogelaar and Gerbrand Korevaar (Leiden: Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal, 2005), p. 36.

[54] D. de Hoop Scheffer and K.G. Boon,"Nogmaals de inventarislijst van Clement de Jonghe," in: *De Kroniek van Het Rembrandthuis* 4 (1972), p. 126. The plate is tenth in De Jonghe's original inventory.

The exact date that De Jonghe acquired the copper plate is not known, although Erik Hinterding suspects that he purchased the majority of his plates from Rembrandt while the artist was still alive.[55] When De Jonghe opened his shop in 1658, he had already worked in Amsterdam's art world for more than a decade.[56] The notion that the artist and dealer at least had an established business relationship is widely accepted.[57] De Jonghe's identity of the model as "Rembrandt's moeder" in his inventory, thus, presents compelling circumstantial evidence that the identity is correct since Rembrandt likely mentioned it to him.[58] Consequently, in this dissertation I refer to this woman as Rembrandt's mother.

A Revered Subject

Rembrandt's mother's significance to the young artist is evident from the number of times that he chose to depict her. In total, he portrayed her in six known

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[55] Erik Hinterding, "The History of Rembrandt's Copperplates, with a Catalogue of Those That Survive," *Simiolus* 22 (1993–1994): p. 260–261. His strongest point that the two at least had a business relationship with one another relates to De Jonghe's ownership of the plate for *St. Jerome Reading in an Italian Landscape* (B. 104), which Rembrandt etched in 1653. Hinterding suggested that few impressions of the plate were made by the time it reached De Jonghe, making it highly unlikely that he acquired it 16 years after it was created by the time Rembrandt died.

[56] Hinterding, "Rembrandt's Copperplates," pp. 260–261. He worked first as a map colorer in 1647, then as an art dealer in the Nieuwe Waag in 1656.

[57] Additionally, there is little evidence to support the notion that Rembrandt etched a portrait of Clement de Jonghe. The image typically identified as such depicts a man who appears much older than 26, which was De Jonghe's age in 1651. Also, the etching's plate is not mentioned in his 1679 inventory. Hinterding, "Rembrandt's Copperplates," pp. 260–261.

[58] Christiaan Vogelaar, "Rembrandt in Leiden: His Town, Workshop and Models," in *Rembrandt's Mother: Myth and Reality*, ed. Christiaan Vogelaar and Gerbrand Korevaar (Leiden: Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal, 2005), p. 21.

paintings, seven etchings, and one drawing. The remainder of this chapter considers the various ways he presented her in these works. Aside from being an important model and subject for the young artist, she was also a person that he valued and revered. The following section explores how Rembrandt's images of his mother suggest aspects of their personal connection.

The Gilded Series

With precise detail, Rembrandt depicted his mother's countenance and attire as she prays in a painting on gilded copper dated ca. 1629–1630 [Figure 1:5]. She wears a golden-yellow shawl that is tucked into her dress, a brown fur cloak over her shoulders, as well as a vibrant red hood. Her eyes are closed and her palms are pressed together. Her mouth is relaxed and open, giving the impression that she is reciting her prayers.

The use of copper plates for paintings was exceptional in Rembrandt's early *oeuvre*. His interest in the method likely grew out of his recent involvement with etching toward the end of 1628, when he would have had several copper plates at his disposal. He also would have been aware of other oil paintings on copper. One example that he could have known is Frans Hals' (1582–1666) oval-shaped portrait of Theodorus Schrevelius (1572–1629) holding a book.[59] When Hals painted this work in 1617, Schrevelius was working at Haarlem's Latin School. However, he was

[59] Frans Hals, *Portrait of Theodorus Schrevelius*, 1617, oil on copper, 15.5 x 12 cm, Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum. See also: Gary Schwartz, *Rembrandt: His Life, His Paintings* (New York: Viking Press, 1985), 52.

expelled from this position a few years later in 1620 because of his Remonstrant beliefs. In the same year, he began working as the Director of Leiden's Latin School, around the same time that Rembrandt was finishing up his studies there.[60] It is possible that as a result of becoming acquainted with Schrevelius, Rembrandt learned about this portrait on copper by Hals.[61]

Rembrandt took his paintings on copper one step further than Hals by gilding them. Roelof van Straten asserted that the source of Rembrandt's inspiration to work with this combination of materials is not known, but that he was likely emboldened by his urge to explore creative possibilities.[62] However, in the full context of Rembrandt's early work, he used the gilded copper very little because it was expensive to do so, particularly for a young artist.[63] Aside from this painting of his mother, he used it three other times.[64] He created a stand-alone self-portrait in 1628

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[60] Gary Schwartz, *The Rembrandt Book* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 2006), p. 40; See also: Amy Golahny, *Rembrandt's Reading: The Artist's Bookshelf of Ancient Poetry and History* (Amsterdam: University of Amsterdam Press, 2003), pp. 51–58.

[61] For more on a similar portrait by Hals on copper see: Liedtke, Walter A. "Portrait of Samuel Ampzing" (2017). In *The Leiden Collection Catalogue*, 4th ed. Edited by Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. and Elizabeth Nogrady with Caroline Van Cauwenberge. New York, 2023–. https://theleidencollection.com/artwork/portrait-of-samuel-ampzing/ (accessed February 17, 2024).

[62] Roelof van Straten, *Young Rembrandt: The Leiden Years, 1606–1632* (Leiden: Foleor Publishers, 2005), p. 145. He also suggested that Rembrandt would not have applied the gold-leaf to the copper plates himself, but rather he likely had the coppersmith from whom he purchased his etching plates do it for him.

[63] Rembrandt's economical attitude towards copper plates is further evidenced by his routine use of a single plate for multiple images.

[64] Beyond the series, he used a gilded copper plate only one other time for a painted self-portrait of around 1628 that is now in the J. Paul Getty Museum. Pieter van Thiel, "An old Woman at Prayer (commonly called 'Rembrandt's Mother,'" in *Rembrandt: The Master and His Workshop* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), p. 140. See also: Roelof van

and two other paintings that share dimensions with the image of his mother. These latter three works are believed to constitute a series.[65] Considering the precious nature of these paintings, Rembrandt was likely selective about who he chose to depict.

It is probable that Rembrandt used his family members as models for this series [Figures 1:5–7]. Other than his image of his mother, this series includes a self-portrait and a portrayal of a laughing man, whose identity is not certain [Figures 1:6–7]. In the 1916 edition of *A catalogue raisonné of the works of the most eminent Dutch painters of the seventeenth century*, Hofstede de Groot identified the laughing man as being Rembrandt himself [Figure 1:7].[66] Indeed, the figure has a similarly large bulbous nose and a head full of unruly brown curls. Rembrandt depicted himself in a number of guises throughout his career.[67] He even painted himself wearing a gorget several times during his Leiden years.[68] In 1936, Abraham Bredius, concluded that Hofstede de Groot's identification was incorrect, but he offered no alternative

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Straten, *Young Rembrandt: The Leiden Years, 1606–1632* (Leiden: Foleor Publishers, 2005), p. 143.

[65] Roelof van Straten, *Young Rembrandt,* p. 143.

[66] Hofstede de Groot, *A catalogue raisonné of the works of the most eminent Dutch painters of the seventeenth century,* vol. 6 (London: Macmillan, 1916), p. 269, no. 543.

[67] The following sources discuss Rembrandt's self-portraits, the genre where he explored depicting himself as different characters. Pascal Bonafoux, *Rembrandt: Self-Portrait* (Geneva: Skira, 1985). Others include: Fritz Erpel, *Die Selbstbildnisse Rembrandts* (Berlin: Henschel Verlag, 1967); Christopher Wright, *Rembrandt: Self-Portraits* (New York: Viking Press, 1982).

[68] Los Angeles, J. Paul Getty Museum, 2013.60; Indianapolis Museum of Art (C10063); Nürnberg, Germanisches Nationalmuseum, GM391; Florence, Gallerie degli Uffizi (00186869).

suggestion.[69] Not only because of similarities with the artist's appearance, but also because of the man's pronounced mustache and goatee, I propose that the model for the laughing man was one of Rembrandt's older brothers. While Rembrandt often portrayed himself in his Leiden self-portraits with a mustache in various stages of growth, he never depicted himself with a goatee and his mustaches are not nearly as thick or styled as that of the laughing man.

This series is striking in the range of techniques and emotions it expresses. Whereas Rembrandt used a refined manner for depicting himself with a serious expression, he heightened the effervescent qualities of the laughing man with animated brushwork, and deepened the resonance of his mother's meditative mood with a heavily-worked style. Rembrandt's range of emotional and stylistic expression in this series is exceptional and was likely related to his personal connections with his models. In his self-portrait Rembrandt depicted himself looking directly at the viewer with a slightly furrowed brow, while modeling his face with delicate brushstrokes [Figure 1:6]. Light illuminates the left side of his face, while the right side is in deep shadow. Rembrandt often used this strong contrast of light and dark on the face to lend a sense of mystery to his subjects. He used this technique as a means to invite the viewer to reflect upon their inner lives and thoughts. In his rendering of the laughing man, Rembrandt used much livelier brushwork [Figure 1:7]. Individual pink and flesh-toned strokes are visible on the man's face, while swift curling strokes capture the sense of his unruly hair. The hairs of the man's prominent mustache and beard are

[69] Abraham Bredius, *The Paintings of Rembrandt* (Vienna: Phaidon-Verlag, 1936), p. 6, no. 134.

especially expressively rendered, as Rembrandt used the blunt end of his brush to scratch through the wet paint to reveal the gilded copper plate below. Here, using a model who was likely his brother, Rembrandt explored the relationship between a light-hearted emotional state and a Halsian manner of paint application, which might have been intended as an ode to Hals, as Rembrandt possibly knew his painting of Schrevelius on copper. Rembrandt's mother is by far the most precisely rendered subject in the series [Figure 1:5]. In stark contrast against the painting's dark background and her rich jewel-toned garments, the woman's face is fully lit. The glowing countenance of her wrinkled face, modeled with a close network of brushstrokes, is the visual focus of the painting. With precise detailing, rendered using a fine painting technique, and careful manipulation of light using the luminous effects of the gilded copper, Rembrandt presented a highly compelling image of his mother in a personal state of prayer. He captured a sincere moment that does not seem posed, but rather one that he likely knew from personal experience.

The Etchings

Rembrandt made seven small etchings of his mother in the late 1620s and early 1630s that reflect how he viewed her aged appearance, dignified demeanor, and quiet stoicism as a source of inspiration.[70] In these images, he meticulously captured her weathered skin and her restrained expression with a signature combination of

[70] He depicted her frontally in the smaller, postage stamp sized etchings, and somewhat larger in the etchings that portray her in profile view.

free, sketch-like strokes, and more heavily wrought ones.[71] He portrayed her primarily in contemporary clothing, although in one etching she wears an elaborate Oriental-styled headdress similar to those seen in his later biblical and mythological paintings, drawings, and etchings.

Rembrandt's mother provided the young artist with the opportunity to explore the challenges associated with depicting old age, a matter that fascinated him during his Leiden years. In *The Artist's Mother Seated at a Table Looking Right: Three-Quarter Length*, ca. 1631, his focus on rendering the nuanced textures and patterns of her aged skin is evident [Figure 1:8]. Along her forehead, he moved his burin fluently, making broken sketch-like lines to suggest rows of wrinkles. He used similar strokes between her eyes and around her lips, chin, and jowls, although the lines are darker in these areas because of her deep-set wrinkles. Rembrandt also used diagonal hatching to convey the angularity of his mother's nose and the planes of her cheeks. Additionally, he placed cross-hatchings in the shadowed areas of her cheekbones and the right side of her face. Rembrandt similarly animated his mother's garments with numerous hatch marks, capturing the lay of her headscarf, the fabric of her dress, and the rich texture of her fur cloak. Nevertheless, his overarching concern was with his mother's countenance. This etching reflects how Rembrandt's meticulous etched studies of his mother's face aimed to faithfully capture her features and aspects of her distinct inner character.

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[71] Roelof van Straten, *Young Rembrandt: The Leiden Years, 1606–1632* (Leiden: Foleor Publishers, 2005), p. 80. Rembrandt began etching in the second half of 1628. Lievens was experienced in the medium, having made etchings during 1625–1626. He might have influenced Rembrandt's decision to start experimenting with prints.

In a small etching that Rembrandt later retouched and worked up with black chalk, the artist once again captured his mother's distinct features and humanity [Figure 1:9]. Rembrandt fully etched his mother's face and shadowed the area around her eyes cast by the hood, which he later added with the black chalk lines. Rembrandt often portrayed figures with their eyes in shadow to invite the viewer to consider the sitter's inner emotional life. The fact that Rembrandt returned to the etching to add the hood in chalk demonstrates that he wanted to capture the fullest sense of her distinctive personality.

Rembrandt used similar etching techniques in *The artist's mother seated, in an oriental headdress*, 1631 to evoke the essence of her advanced age and emotional presence [Figure 1:10]. Posed in full-profile, he showed her wearing the same highly textured fur coat and dress as in the previous etching, although, in this instance, she also wears a foreign-looking headdress. The garment appears to be a large swath of fabric that is tightly wrapped around a bun fashioned at the crown of her head, allowing the remaining material to cascade down her back. In the late 1620s and early 1630s Rembrandt became increasingly interested in depicting Orientalized characters in his etchings.[72] Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640) and Pieter Lastman (1583–1633), Rembrandt's former teacher, set important precedents for portraying Biblical figures in Turkish-looking clothing.[73] Following in their influence, Rembrandt, in addition to in his history paintings, which are the focus of the following section, etched several

[72] His early comrade Jan Lievens, who becomes a part of the conversation in chapters two and three, also depicted numerous Orientalized characters during their Leiden years.

[73] Christian Vogelaar, "Orientals in Etchings and Drawing," in *Young Rembrandt* (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, 2019), pp. 270–273.

subjects in Orientalized guises.[74] This is the only known etching by Rembrandt of his mother that depicts her in this manner. Her quiet stoicism and headdress, which recalls the Turkish-style garments he depicted on other Orientalized subjects, suggests that he intended to portray his mother in this etching as the Prophetess Hannah from the Bible–a steadfast figure that Rembrandt aligned his mother with on more than one occasion.

Determining creative solutions for capturing old age fascinated Rembrandt during his Leiden years, and he often turned to his mother to work out many of the challenges associated with this task. Rembrandt always presented her in a stoic, restrained state, which suggests that this was a part of her personality, and one that inspired him. Aspects of Rembrandt's mother's emotional character apparently were well-suited to a variety of historical characters that the artist sought to portray, including in two early Biblical scenes that are discussed in the following section.

Rembrandt's Mother in the Master's Early History Paintings

From the very beginning of his career, Rembrandt wanted to become a well-known history painter like Peter Paul Rubens or the celebrated Italian Renaissance masters. After spending four years training with established Dutch artists in this field–Jacob van Swanenburgh (1571–1638) in Leiden and Pieter Lastman in

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[74] Rembrandt and Lievens' etchings of Orientalized figures found success on the market. This is why they likely created such a large number of these images. Vogelaar, "Orientals in Etchings," pp. 270–273. See also: Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., "Making Faces: The Development of the Tronie in Seventeenth-Century Leiden," in *Anonymous Portraits: Dutch Seventeenth-Century Tronies* (New York: Nicolaes Hall, 2019), pp. 22–23.

Amsterdam–he returned to Leiden to create several paintings that explored historical and Biblical subjects. In this formative period, he portrayed his mother twice as different Biblical matriarchs in *Tobit Accusing Anna of Stealing the Kid*, 1626 [Figure 1:11] and *Simeon and Hannah in the Temple*, 1628 [Figure 1:12]. That he depicted her this early in his career reinforces the notion that she was an important model for him. These paintings also demonstrate how highly he regarded her, since in each instance he portrayed her as an arbiter of truth.

Rembrandt based *Tobit Accusing Anna of Stealing the Kid*, 1626 on a story from the apocryphal Book of Tobit [Figure 1:11].[75] Set in a simple domestic space, Rembrandt's painting features the seated Tobit and Anna, his devout wife, who stands holding a young goat. Rembrandt's mother was the model for Anna. She is recognizable by her distinctly aquiline nose and round eyes.

The Book of Tobit begins by explaining that Tobit, an Israelite and member of the Naphtali Tribe, along with his wife Anna and their son Tobias were taken captive by Assyrians and made to live in the walled city of Nineveh.[76] Early in the story Tobit is portrayed as a just and pious Jewish man:

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[75] The Dutch Bible, or the *Statenvertaling*, that was ordered at the Synod of Dordrecht 1618 was not published until 1637, and it was based on the King James Version. This means that in 1626 and 1628 respectively, Rembrandt read the following stories either in the Vulgate or in Luther's Bible translated into Dutch. Luther's Bible was first translated into Dutch in its entirety in 1526. The Luther Bible and the King James Version are similar in that both texts were translated, mainly by committees, into the vernacular of their region. Sabine Hiebsch, "Luther in Dutch," *Lutheran Quarterly* 36, no. 1 (Spring 2022), p. 39. For the purposes of this dissertation, I use the King James Version of the Bible to reference specific Biblical passages. Additionally, it should be noted that the King James Version included the apocryphal books in the early seventeenth-century, but they were eventually phased out of the text. David Ewer, *A General Introduction to the Bible: From Ancient Tablets to Modern Translations* (Grand Rapids: Zonderva, 2010), p. 104.

[76] Tobit 1:1-2 KJV.

> I Tobit have walked all the days of my life in the ways of truth and justice, and I did many almsdeeds to my brethren, and my nation, who came with me to Nineveh, into the land of the Assyrians (Tobit 1:3 KJV).

Tobit was a charitable figure who supported his family and neighbors with food and money after the Assyrians took them from their homes. Tobit traveled by himself to Jerusalem on religious holidays to offer, "the firstfruits and tenths of increase, with that which was shorn," as the laws of Moses commanded.[77] Tobit also was known to provide fellow Jews with proper burials when they were not permitted one in Nineveh. One night after a burial, he chose to sleep outside, at which time several sparrows defecated into his eyes rendering him blind.[78] After his misfortune, his family fell on hard times and Tobit became embittered. With her husband in a miserable state, the steadfast Anna took up the responsibility of providing for him and their son, Tobias.

One day when Anna returned home from work with a young goat, Tobit falsely accused her of theft. The Biblical account states:

> And when it was in my house, and began to cry, I said unto her, From whence is this kid? Is it not stolen? Render it to the owners for it is not lawful to eat anything that is stolen. But she replied upon me, It was given for a gift more than the wages. Howbeit I did not believe her, but bade her render it to the owners: and I abashed at her. But she replied upon me, Where are thine alms and thy righteous deeds? Behold, thou and all they works are known. (Tobit 2:13–14 KJV).

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[77] Tobit 1:6 KJV.

[78] Tobit 2:10 KJV.

Rembrandt's composition depicts the moment after the accusation and Anna's pointed retort when she, who, with eyes bulging, reacts in shocked silence to her husband's betrayal of trust. Tobit, responding to her lament, lifts his unseeing eyes toward heaven and raises his clasped hands in prayer. He begs God for forgiveness and pleads that He grant him his death.[79]

Anna, whom Rembrandt modeled after his mother, plays a powerful role in this painting. Standing over her husband, she is responsible for bringing him to prayer. She challenged Tobit by asking where are your charitable deeds now? In asking this question she forced him to see the truth, that he had forsaken his former righteous self in response to his current hardships. His prayers for forgiveness were not only spurred by his guilt in not believing Anna, but also for allowing himself to become embittered by being blind, which caused him to lose sight of himself. Given the powerful role Anna plays in this painting's visual narrative, it is clear that Rembrandt felt that his mother's dignified demeanor was fitting for this protagonist. This painting also brings about compelling parallels between Rembrandt's own life and the theme of blindness. This work is the earliest known expression of his interest

[79] Tobit 3:1–6 KJV. The moment that Rembrandt's painting depicts is unique. It was more typical to portray the couple in the midst of their argument, as Jan van de Velde did in an etching after Willem Buytewech. (*Anna berating Tobit for accusing her falsely of stealing the kid*, c. 1620–1641. Etching on paper, 193 x 110 mm. London, The British Museum) Pieter van Thiel, "Tobit and Anna with the Kid," in *Rembrandt: The Master and His Workshop* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1991), pp. 125–126. Gary Schwartz also suggested that Rembrandt based Tobit's pose on a print by Willem van Swanenburgh after Abraham Bloemaert (*The Repentant St. Peter*, c. 1611. Etching on paper, 276 x 175 mm. New York, The Morgan Library and Museum) Gary Schwartz, *Rembrandt: his life, his paintings* (New York: Viking Press, 1985), pp. 44–45. It is clear that Rembrandt was highly selective in the material that informed the composition of this painting.

in this subject, which he would explore numerous times during his career.[80] Julius Held has suggested that Rembrandt was interested in this theme because his father, Harmen Gerritsz van Rijn (1567/68–1630), became blind in old age.[81] If Rembrandt's father's blindness was one reason he was drawn to Tobit's story, Rembrandt likely recognized in his mother a dedication to caring for her family that made her well-suited as the model for Anna in this painting.

Rembrandt depicted his mother again in *Simeon and Hannah in the Temple*, 1628 [Figure 1:12]. He based this scene on events described in the Gospel of Luke.[82] Simeon, a just and devout man, had been told by the Holy Ghost that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Christ.[83] Inspired by the Holy Ghost, Simeon went to the temple where he took the baby Jesus in his arms and blessed God, saying, "Lord, now lettest thou servant depart in peace, according to thy word, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation…".[84] He then blessed the Virgin Mary and Joseph, and said: "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign

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[80] Notable examples of blindness in Rembrandt's art include his images of blind beggars; *The Blinding of Samson*, 1636, oil on canvas, 219.3 x 305 cm, Frankfurt, Städel Museum; *The Hundred Guilder Print*; *The Conspiracy of Claudius Civilis*, c. 1661/62, oil on canvas, 196 x 309 cm, Stockholm, Swedish National Museum; Rembrandt and his pupils also depicted this subject numerous times in their drawings.

[81] For more discussion on Rembrandt's interest in the theme of blindness and its possible correlations to his own life see: Julius S. Held, *Rembrandt Studies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991). See also: Richard Verdi, *Rembrandt's Themes: Life into Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014).

[82] Luke 2:25–38 KJV.

[83] Luke 2:25–26 KJV.

[84] Luke 2: 27–32 KJV.

which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed."[85]

In his painting Rembrandt portrayed Simeon holding the Christ Child and speaking with Mary and Joseph. Behind this group one sees the Prophetess Hannah, with hands raised in jubilant worship at this moment of divine revelation.[86] Modeled after Rembrandt's mother, Hannah was a devout woman who had been widowed for eighty years. Since her husband's death she had served each day in the temple. Rembrandt emphasized Hannah's importance to this Biblical narrative by situating her at the apex of the painting's triangular composition. The exuberance of her gesture and expression are particularly poignant as she fully recognizes the implications of this historic moment.

Hannah, like Anna, was a devout and steadfast figure. Rembrandt associated his mother's character with these Biblical matriarchs not only in his early religious scenes, which were important to him because of his aspirations to become a history painter, but also in his later etchings. In both *Tobit Accusing Anna of Stealing the Kid*, 1626 [Figure 1:11] and *Simeon and Hannah in the Temple*, 1628 [Figure 1:12] Rembrandt portrayed his mother as a central figure that drives the narrative and reveals powerful truths. His depictions of her in the guise of two exceptionally strong, faithful, and devout women from the Bible reinforce the idea that she was someone about whom he cared deeply.

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[85] Luke 2:34–35 KJV.

[86] Luke 2: 36–38 KJV

The Royal Collection *Tronie*

Around 1629, Rembrandt painted *An old Woman called 'The Artist's Mother'* [Figure 1:1].[87] This painting was likely commissioned by the Stadholder Frederick Hendrick (1584–1647) to be given to Sir Robert Kerr (1578–1654), who presented it to King Charles I of England (1600–1649) along with two other paintings–a self-portrait by Rembrandt and Jan Lievens' image of a scholar by a fire.[88] As described earlier in this chapter, this painting of Rembrandt's mother is deeply moving in its heightened visual and emotional character. It is the pinnacle of Rembrandt's achievement in depicting his mother, not only in his mastery in rendering the texture of her skin, but also in capturing her dignified demeanor. The imaginative character of her clothing, moreover, elevates her to the status of an historical figure like the Prophetess Hannah.

When Frederick Henry, Prince of the Palatinate (1614–1629), and eldest son of the exiled King and Queen of Bohemia, died on January 7, 1629, Sir Robert Kerr went to The Hague to offer condolences to the boy's parents on behalf of King

[87] The following sources address the history and character of *tronies* and those created by Rembrandt. Dagmar Hirschfelder, *Tronie und Porträt in der niederländischen Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 2008); Franziska Gottwald, *Das Tronie: Muster-Studie-Meisterwerk: Die Genese einer Gattung der Malerei vom 15. Jahrhundert bis zu Rembrandt* (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2011).

[88] Rembrandt's, *Self-Portrait with a Cap and Chain*, c. 1629 is located in Liverpool in the Walker Art Gallery. Unfortunately, Jan Lievens' painting of a scholar is now lost. See also: Orlers, *Bescrijvinge der Stadt Leyden* (Leiden, 1641), p. 377 for a description of the lost Lievens painting as, "a young Scholler [scholar]...reading a booke by a Seacole [turf] fire."

Charles I. [89] Upon his arrival, the Stadholder gifted Kerr with the Rembrandt self-portrait, and *tronie* of his mother, as well as Lievens' painting of a scholar.

Some of this history is found in Jan Orlers' 1641 edition of his *Bescrijvinge der Stadt Leyden*. Orlers noted that the Stadholder purchased Lievens' image of a scholar as a gift for the British ambassador.[90] Later, Hans Schneider discovered a document from April 10, 1629 that contained Lievens' request for furlough from the city's civic guard so that he could complete a painting commissioned by the Stadholder.[91] Though no such primary documentation is known to exist in reference to Rembrandt's *tronie* of his mother and self-portrait, it is likely that he, like Lievens, received a commission from the Stadholder for them.

As a portrayal of quiet humanity and elderly feminine virtue, Rembrandt's *tronie* of his mother was as an appropriate gift for the collector King. The painting is deeply moving and invites the viewer to consider her inner emotional life. She appears as Rembrandt saw her, as a dignified woman and the embodiment of virtue. Such an image, Rembrandt recognized, would be valued by the *Liefhebber* community. That Rembrandt's *tronie* of his mother was part of a gift that the Stadholder gave to Sir Robert Kerr who presented it to King Charles I, two of the greatest collectors of their day, demonstrates not only that Rembrandt valued the power of his mother's image, but also that others admired it as well.

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[89] Walter L. Strauss and Marjon van der Meulen, *The Rembrandt Documents* (New York: Abaris Books, Inc., 1979), pp. 179–180, doc. 1639/11 (Oxford, Bodleian Library, ms. Ash. 1514, fols. 78 and 82). The prince perished at the age of fifteen in Amsterdam following a tragic boating accident.

[90] Orlers, *Bescrijvinge der Stadt Leyden* (Leiden, 1641), p. 377.

[91] Hans Schneider, *Jan Lievens: Sein Leben und Seine Werke* (Amsterdam: Israel, 1932), p. 3.

Conclusion

In addition to the strong circumstantial evidence of Clement De Jonghe's identification of the sitter in one of Rembrandt's etchings as "Rembrandt's mother," visual evidence from Rembrandt's early prints and paintings supports the identification of this woman as, Rembrandt's mother. Though the particulars of their relationship have been lost to history, the sensitive and reverent nature of Rembrandt's images of this woman suggest that they resulted from the bond of a mother and her child. Rembrandt brought his mother to life in his art in ways that indicate that that the pair had a strong personal connection. His *tronies* and history paintings of her demonstrate that she was someone he valued, and someone who inspired him. She was an important model for Rembrandt not only because she offered formal and emotional qualities that he admired, but also because her strength of character made her capable of commanding equally powerful and moving historical figures central to his artistic goals.

Rembrandt's painted and etched images of his mother provide an important foundation for the next two chapters of this dissertation, which consider, more broadly, the depictions that he and his colleague Jan Lievens made of elderly women during their Leiden periods. While Rembrandt's access to his mother provided many opportunities to study and master her likeness, I argue that he was also inspired to look beyond the boundaries of his home to render, in comparably sensitive ways, other elderly women in his surroundings. Chapters two and three demonstrate that he and Jan Lievens were equally captivated by the older women they observed in Leiden.

Chapter 2: Leiden's Charitable Establishments and Their Influence

Introduction

Sometime during his Leiden years, Jan Lievens painted this *tronie* of an elderly woman holding a key [Figure 2:1]. Shown in full-profile, the woman wears a hooded green cloak that is pulled back to emphasize her slightly bowed head and contemplative, forward-facing expression. This is one of eight painted *tronies* by Lievens that depict older women whose identities are not known. Rembrandt also created a number of similar etchings and drawings of unknown elderly women during this period.[92] This chapter considers what inspired these young artists to depict these women. In particular, it considers the question of how Leiden's distinct social environment would have led Rembrandt and Lievens to pursue these interests. This chapter explores Leiden's *hofjes*, a facet of Northern Netherlandish society that has not been sufficiently considered by art historians, and one that potentially played a defining role in Rembrandt's and Lievens' images of these older women.

Hofjes, which were widespread across Leiden, were largely inhabited by single or widowed elderly women. *Hofjes* provided their residents with shelter, humble resources, and authority over their own lives. In return the residents were expected to behave in a quiet, pious, and contemplative manner both inside and outside of *hofje* walls. The artists' images of older women, such as the painting by Lievens mentioned above, indicate that they knew about these dwellings and had

[92] For a full list of images, please see: Appendices I–III.

contacts with their residents. This chapter aims to provide a framework for understanding *hofjes* as one reason why they created a large number of images of elderly women.

A Dutch Institution

The direct translation of the term "hofje" into English is "little courtyard." While this designation accurately describes the central spaces of a majority of these structures, the significance of "hofjes" as charitable establishments is lost in translation. Localized in the Northern Netherlands, they were a distinctly Dutch institution that aimed to provide shelter and resources to "deserving" elderly people in need.[93] The first *hofje* was founded in Haarlem in 1395.[94] Leiden's first, the Jeruzalemshofje, followed less than one hundred years later.[95] Today, Leiden has more *hofjes* than any other city in Holland, and the majority of them were built in the seventeenth-century during a period of rapid growth that was spurred by the city's evolving textile industry.[96] As Herman Kleibrink and Ruud Spruit explained in their

[93] Ine Leermakers and Frouke I. Welling, *Door gangen en poorten naar de Leidse Hofjes* (Leiden: Barabinsk, 1997), p. 14. Also, the term, "deserving poor," came from the Medieval period. It referred to individuals who were poor but not destitute. In other words, it highlighted people who were poor not by their own doing, but as a result of events like injury or aging.

[94] Ine Leermakers and Wietske Donkersloot, *Wonen om Gods wille in Leidse hofjes* (Leiden: Barabinsk, 2007), p. 39. The first *hofje* in Haarlem was the Bakenesser Chamber.

[95] Henk Looijesteijn, "Funding and founding private charities: Leiden almshouses and their founders, 1450–1800," in *Continuity and Change* 27, no. 2 (2012): p. 225; Founded in 1463 by Wouter IJsbrantsz (d. 1467), the Jerusalemshofje was built in 1467.

[96] Herman Kleibrink and Ruud Spruit, *Hofjes in Leiden* (Leiden: De Kler, 1979), p. 4. There are thirty-five *hofjes* in existence in Leiden today. See also: Looijesteijn, "Funding and

book, *Hofjes in Leiden* (1979), economic prosperity meant that the city housed several wealthy merchants and manufacturers who could afford to establish *hofjes*.[97] Because of their abundance, *hofjes* were a significant component of Leiden's social fabric–a consistent feature of Rembrandt's and Lievens' everyday lives. Before exploring their connections to this world and its potential influences on their art, it is necessary to first understand the main characteristics of this institution.

Private Foundations

Hofjes, though all founded to shelter and support elderly people, varied in character because they were established privately. Because of this fact, there were often several *hofjes* in a single municipality, as was the case in Leiden. It also meant that founders enjoyed independence in determining their *hofje's* mission. The foundation process typically began as a decree in a last will and testament.[98] Here, the founders described what their structure's religious denomination should be, the types of people to be housed, and the resources that residents should incrementally receive. After a founder's death, family members assumed organizational roles in service of the *hofje*, building structures, enforcing wishes, and managing the property as

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founding," p. 201, "Leiden contained a sizable 19% of all almshouse foundations in Holland before 1800, and the foundations there also peaked in the seventeenth century."

[97] Herman Kleibrink and Ruud Spruit, *Hofjes in Leiden* (Leiden: De Kler, 1979), p. 4.

[98] As a result, *hofjes* were not typically constructed until after the founder's death, though this was not always the case.

regents.[99] Although they shared similar charitable values, all *hofjes* were individual, their own microcosms, shaped by the precepts that their founder determined.

Several reasons could lead an individual to found a *hofje*. In those situations where a founder was a family's last living descendent, the *hofje* became a monument to that charitable individual and their family.[100] As living monuments, *hofjes* carried forth a family's legacy. It was also common for a founder to establish a *hofje* out of concern for the welfare of their family members as they reached old age. Founders might also have been inclined to protect members of their religious communities. For example, the social historian, Henk Looijesteijn, discussed how Gerrit Frankensz. van Hoogmade (d. 1630), founder of *Hofje Bethlehem*, was particularly interested in protecting Leiden's elderly Waterland Mennonites.[101] He created a place for them to live so that they did not end up in city-run institutions, where they might be forced to convert to the Reformed faith.

Founding a *hofje* also positively impacted a family's social status. The benefit of elevated social standing was experienced mostly by regents, who were, as earlier noted, typically related to the founder.[102] Regents were usually well-educated,

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[99] Ine Leermakers and Frouke I. Welling, *Door gangen en poorten naar de Leidse Hofjes* (Leiden: Barabinsk, 1997), pp. 11–12; 16. The founder's family members were typically appointed as regents. As such, they took on the administrative tasks of running the *hofje*.

[100] Henk Looijesteijn, "Funding and founding private charities: Leiden almshouses and their founders, 1450–1800," in *Continuity and Change* 27, no. 2 (2012): pp. 214–217.

[101] Looijesteijn, "Funding and founding," p. 218.

[102] Regents did not engage in daily interactions with *hofje* residents. Their meeting quarters, often called the Regentskamer, were often separate from the *hofje* structure. Their role was focused mostly on managing the finances of the establishment. They also sought to enforce the original wishes of the founder.

meaning that they attended Latin school and University, and in some cases were even privileged enough to study abroad.[103] Aside from the personal reward of participating in the charitable work of a *hofje*, being a regent elevated one's social standing. Furthermore, this role was viewed as a stepping stone for higher positions in local government, even to that of the burgomaster.[104]

Charitable Character

At the heart of a *hofje*'s mission was the preservation of its residents' dignity. Henk Looijesteijn defined this facet of their makeup as establishments "founded to allow elderly, honest people of modest means to live out their lives with dignity, preventing them from descent into disgraceful poverty through failing strength and diminished resources."[105] For many, financially preparing for old age was an insurmountable obstacle. During the early modern period it was difficult for members of the lower-middle class to save enough money to sustain themselves in their

[103] F. Boersma and Greet Dusseldorp-Kingma, *Regenten en kuise maagden: 350 jaar Eva van Hoogeveenshofje* (Leiden: Stichting Eva van Hoogeveen, 2007), p. 12.

[104] Boersma and Dusseldorp-Kingma, *Regenten en kuise maagden,* p. 13.

[105] Henk Looijesteijn, "Funding and founding private charities: Leiden almshouses and their founders, 1450–1800," in *Continuity and Change* 27, no. 2 (2012): pp. 199–200.

twilight years.[106] *Hofjes*, though not plentiful enough to shield all from falling into extreme poverty, were a favorable option for many in this situation.[107]

Even though they were charitable establishments, *hofjes* were no place for the destitute. In other words, residents were not members of the poorest social strata.[108] Those living in *hofjes* needed to have some sort of income, savings, or financial support to supplement the resources or *preuven* provided in the founder's will.[109] *Preuven* included essentials such as bread, cheese, beer, and peat during the winter months. Residents received these resources from regents at regular intervals throughout the year.[110] While these everyday items were necessary for a comfortable existence, it would have been difficult to survive on them alone. In addition to supplementing their *preuvens*, residents needed money for other reasons. For

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[106] Henk Looijesteijn, *Hofjes als paleizen: stichters, bouwers en bewoners in de 17de en 18de eeuw* (Den Haag: Uitgeverij Van Stockum, 2014), pp. 94–96. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the lower middle-class and the wage dependent class made up approximately 60% of the population in the Netherlands. According to Looijesteijn, the lower middle-class was composed of farmers, low-ranking officials, schoolmasters, boatmen, shopkeepers, and craftsmen, and others. These individuals earned an average annual income of 350 to 600 guilders, making it difficult for them, in many cases, to save for old age. The wage-labor class consisted of soldiers, sailors, unskilled craftspeople, textile workers, and others. They earned less than their lower-middle class counterparts, coming in at only around 300 to 350 guilders per year.

[107] Looijesteijn, *Hofjes als paleizen*, pp. 95–96.

[108] Those individuals typically sought poor relief from public, or city-run institutions.

[109] Ine Leermakers and Frouke I. Welling, *Door gangen en poorten naar de Leidse Hofjes* (Leiden: Barabinsk, 1997), p. 15.

[110] Herman Kleibrink and Ruud Spruit, *Hofjes in Leiden* (Leiden: De Kler, 1979), pp. 15–16. Additional *preuven* were often provided during Christmas and other significant holidays. For example, residents of the Jeruzalemshof in Leiden received a new shirt for Christmas each year. New shirts were common extras, but there were also instances in which residents would receive specialty loaves of bread during such holidays.

example, it was common in the seventeenth century for *hofjes* to charge an entrance fee.[111] Prices for entry varied, and the money collected was typically cycled back into funding *hofje* maintenance and *preuven*. Because of these demands it was essential for *hofje* residents to be financially independent.

Female Residents

Women have always factored into the *hofje* equation because they were trusted authorities on domestic affairs. In order to live successfully in a *hofje*, one needed to be able to run one's own household.[112] *Hofjes* were originally constructed to house elderly couples, but by the early modern period they were mainly founded for and inhabited by older women [Table 2:1].[113] These women were typically unmarried–either widows or spinsters–and they hailed most often from the middle-class. In their younger years they might have been domestic servants, midwives, or other small trades people like bakers or textile workers.[114] Unfortunately, more descriptive accounts of these women–their names, etc.– have rarely survived.

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[111] Leermakers and Welling, *Leidse*, pg. 15. In certain fortunate cases, resident's employers paid their entry fee. Kleibrink and Spruit, *Hofjes in Leiden*, p. 14.

[112] Kleibrink and Spruit, *Hofjes in Leiden*, p. 14.

[113] Henk Looijesteijn, "Funding and founding private charities: Leiden almshouses and their founders, 1450–1800," in *Continuity and Change* 27, no. 2 (2012): p. 202.

[114] Herman Kleibrink and Ruud Spruit, *Hofjes in Leiden* (Leiden: De Kler, 1979), p. 14. In a number of fortunate cases, employers would either reserve a home in a *hofje* or pay the entrance fee for women in their charge, both acts may be likened to a modern-day pension

Registering this type of information did not become common practice until the eighteenth-century.[115]

Behavioral Standards

Residents living in *hofjes* had to conduct themselves in a particular way. In their book, *Wonen om Gods wille in Leidse hofjes* (2007), Ine Leermakers and Wietske Donkersloot summarized that residents had, "To have impeccable conduct and adhere to strict rules drawn up for the founder or regents. If violated, the resident could be removed without mercy."[116] It was common for founders to specify how residents should act using terms like honorable, virtuous, and honest. These instructions were closely aligned with cultural attitudes about the proper behavior of older women.

Women's behavior was a popular subject among some of the most renowned writers of the early modern period. For example, Desiderius Erasmus (d. 1536) discussed the path of the "true" or righteous widow in his, *Vidua christiana*, which was originally published in Latin in 1529, and, in 1607, was reprinted in Dutch as *De Kersten Weduwe*. Other prominent writers followed in Erasmus' footsteps, the most

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[115] F. Boersma and Greet Dusseldorp-Kingma. *Regenten en kuise maagden: 350 jaar Eva van Hoogeveenshofje* (Leiden: Stichting Eva van Hoogeveen, 2007), p. 30. Henk Looijesteijn gave a compelling account of Maria Kouwenhoven's life. She was a Haarlem hofje resident that lived to be over one-hundred years old. Henk Looijesteijn, *Hofjes als paleizen: stichters, bouwers en bewoners in de 17de en 18de eeuw* (Den Haag: Uitgeverij Van Stockum, 2014), pp. 90–95.

[116] Ine Leermakers and Wietske Donkersloot, *Wonen om Gods wille in Leidse hofjes* (Leiden: Barabinsk, 2007), p. 9.

notable of which was Jacob Cats (1577–1660). Cats' *Houwelyck* (1625) presented proper moral behaviors for women in all stages of life, and was a staple in the numerous literate households of the Dutch Republic.[117] Like Erasmus, Cats aligned widowhood with old age, though not all elderly women were widows.[118] Indeed, they largely aimed their advice for widows to all older women, whom they instructed to live pious, withdrawn, and contemplative lives.[119] As mentioned above, these behavioral standards were reflected in the codes of conduct drawn up by *hofje* founders.

Three of Leiden's early modern *hofjes* provide excellent case studies. For example, in 1563, Agatha van Alckemade (d. 1573), a widowed noblewoman and land proprietor, founded and constructed the Bethaniënhofje (also called the Emmaushofje) on Leiden's Kaiserstraat [Figure 2:2].[120] She determined that the *hofje's* thirteen homes should shelter virtuous people that should live in the manner of a saint or a hermit.[121]

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[117] Wayne Franits, "Weduwe," in Paragons of Virtue: Women and Domesticity in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 161–194.

[118] Ariadne Schmidt, *Overleven na de dood : weduwen in Leiden in de Gouden Eeuw* (Amsterdam: Prometheus/Bakker, 2001), p. 12. Schmidt points out that widows made up a significant minority group in early modern Leiden. "...according to the 1622 census of Leiden, 13% of households in the city were headed by a widow."

[119] Schmidt, *Overleven na de dood*, p. 28.

[120] Henk Looijesteijn, "Funding and founding private charities: Leiden almshouses and their founders, 1450–1800," in *Continuity and Change* 27, no. 2 (2012): pp. 225–230.

[121] Herman Kleibrink and Ruud Spruit, *Hofjes in Leiden* (Leiden: De Kler, 1979), p. 63.

Later, in 1598, Cathrijn Jacobsdochter (d. 1601), the widowed wife of a tailor, founded and constructed the Cathrijn Jacobsdochterhofje on the Kaarsenmakerstraat [Figure 2:3].[122] She specified that her *hofje* should primarily house honorable widows, but, if none were in need, it may also accept married couples and virgins over fifty.[123]

In the early seventeenth-century, Jan de Latere (d. 1612), a childless merchant, founded the Jan de Laterehofje, which was later constructed in 1616 on the Tweede Binnenvestgracht.[124] He expressed his desire that his *hofje* would house honorable married or unmarried people. He also wrote that those people should behave as quiet, honorable, pious, and devout individuals, and that they should not visit indecent places like inns or taverns.[125] In each case, founders valued humble, spiritual, and morally-just people–the kinds of people who mirrored the behavioral ideals popularized in moral and didactic literary sources. For residents to maintain their home they had to uphold these paragons, not only within *hofje* walls but also out in society.[126]

Despite the demands placed on residents, one could gain a lot from living in a *hofje*. By their very nature, *hofjes* established small peer-based communities where

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[122] Looijesteijn, "Funding and Founding," pp. 225–230.

[123] Kleibrink and Spruit, *Hofjes in Leiden*, pp. 65–66.

[124] Looijesteijn, "Funding and founding,", pp. 225–230.

[125] Kleibrink and Spruit, *Hofjes in Leiden*, p. 76. "De bewoners werden geacht zich "stil, errlic, vroom ende Godvruchtich" te gedragen en zich niet op te houden in "eenige herbergen, tavernen of andere onbehoorlyke plaetsen."

[126] These behavioral standards were enforced in all cases including minority *hofjes* that also took in married men.

residents could bond over shared experiences. Neighborly relationships developed, and there are accounts of residents stepping in to assist fellow community members if they became too ill to properly provide for themselves.[127] Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, *hofje* communities honored the independence and individuality of their residents. They facilitated environments in which elderly people could continue to exercise authority over their own lives at home and in society. This type of charitable establishment was unfamiliar outside of the Northern Netherlands.

Hidden Homes and Gardens

Just as fascinating as their distinct approach to charity is the masterful way *hofjes* were incorporated into Leiden's urban landscape. Though unobtrusive, they are easy enough to spot, if one knows where to look. Existing *hofjes* appear just as they did in the seventeenth-century: large doorways, decorative portals, or gates conceal quaint collections of modestly-sized homes grouped around gardens and tucked behind street-level businesses and dwellings. Today in Leiden, visitors are welcome to explore many of these small urban sanctuaries, but in the seventeenth-century this would not have been possible. As a result, the interiors in *hofjes* remained off limits to most in Rembrandt and Lievens' era. The following section describes how two of Leiden's *hofjes* currently appear to the outside world and explores some characteristic features of their hidden interior spaces.

[127] Ine Leermakers and Frouke I. Welling, *Door gangen en poorten naar de Leidse Hofjes* (Leiden: Barabinsk, 1997), p. 14.

From the Outside

Hofje entrances are typically accompanied by descriptive markers. They appear above or in the vicinity of the portal, and often bear distinguishing information like the name of the *hofje*, its founder, or the year of its foundation. Most markers follow this minimal script though there are more detailed examples, as in the case of Leiden's Eva van Hoogeveenhof (founded in 1650 and constructed in 1659) [Figure 2:4].[128] The Latin text on the lintel over the *hofje's* portal reads:

> D. Eva AB Hoogeveen
> Filia Alberti Domini de Hoogeveen
> Virgo Castissima Et Lavdatissima
> Has Ædes Deo Virginibvs Castis Vidviqve
> Honestis D. D. C. Testamento Volvit
> Defvnctam Lavda Spectator
> Anno Et Imitare 1659

In English the text reads:

> Lady Eva van Hoogeveen, daughter of Albertus van Hoogeveen, a very chaste and praiseworthy virgin, founded this structure in 1650 in honor of chaste virgins and honorable widows. Praise the deceased, learn from her, imitate her. 1659.

Not only does this text name the founder, but it also describes her as an honorable virgin and notes that she established this structure to house women like her. This portal is one of the most ornate of all Leiden *hofjes*.

[128] Henk Looijesteijn, "Funding and founding private charities: Leiden almshouses and their founders, 1450–1800," in *Continuity and Change* 27, no. 2 (2012): pp. 225–230.

From the Inside

In the seventeenth-century, *hofje* entrances were manned by porters. As lesser extensions of the regents, they maintained order and security by monitoring residents and other authorized personnel as they came and went during the day.[129] Today, Leiden's *hofjes* no longer employ porters, and visitors are generally welcome to enter during the day so long as they behave respectfully towards residents. Entering Leiden's *hofjes* as a non-resident today is an immensely gratifying experience. Shielded from the bustle of city life, these spaces are peaceful, and the notion that they provided early modern residents with a sense of safety and calm is visceral.

Most *hofjes* in Leiden followed a similar ground plan where homes were organized around a central garden.[130] Sometimes, however, because space was sparse in the city, homes were organized in a row, such as at Leiden's Sint Stevenshofje (founded in 1484 and constructed in 1487) [Figure 2:5–6]. Nevertheless, even though homes in this *hofje* were constructed in a row, it still contained a garden, which was a necessary feature of *hofjes*.

Hofje gardens could be functional, decorative, or a combination of the two. Ine Leermakers and Frouke I. Welling suggested in their book, *Door gangen en poorten naar de Leidse Hofjes,* that gardens were most commonly used as bleaching fields where residents dried their laundry.[131] One must also understand them as places

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[129] Ine Leermakers and Frouke I. Welling, *Door gangen en poorten naar de Leidse Hofjes* (Leiden: Barabinsk, 1997), p. 14.

[130] Each *hofje* interior shown to this point has demonstrated the use of a central garden plan.

[131] Leermakers and Welling, *Leidse Hofjes,* p. 14.

where useful and beautiful plants, flowers, and herbs were grown. They also served as communal spaces where residents went to collect water from a shared pump. An eighteenth-century ground plan drawing of the Eva van Hoogeveenhof provides a detailed view of a space like this [Figure 2:7]. The *hofje's* original French garden is characterized by three distinct areas including: the central field (number 6), the walking path (number 5), and the soil beds which follow the garden's perimeter (number 4).[132] About three quarters of the way into the *hofje* (number 7) is a water pump topped by a sculpture of sheep in memory of the Van Hoogeveen family and its coat of arms [Figure 2:8–9]. Though not always physically so, gardens were very much central to *hofje*-living.

This eighteenth-century ground plan depicts twelve small homes running parallel to the garden, with six on the east side and six on the west [Figure 2:7]. *Hofjes* always contain at least twelve homes. This number is based on Jesus's twelve apostles.[133] There are also cases where *hofjes* were constructed with either thirteen or fourteen homes, a number that not only refers to the apostles, but also to Jesus and/or the Virgin Mary.[134] This religious framework of twelve to fourteen homes is consistent across Leiden's *hofjes*, whether they were Catholic or Protestant. In several

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[132] F. Boersma and Greet Dusseldorp-Kingma. *Regenten en kuise maagden: 350 jaar Eva van Hoogeveenshofje* (Leiden: Stichting Eva van Hoogeveen, 2007), p. 5.

[133] Ine Leermakers and Wietske Donkersloot, *Wonen om Gods wille in Leidse hofjes* (Leiden: Barabinsk, 2007), p. 9.

[134] Leermakers and Donkersloot, *Wonen om Gods*, p. 9. Similar or the same number of homes were also used in medieval monastic foundations. In these cases, an abbot or abbess and twelve monks or nuns represented Jesus and his twelve apostles. Convents and Beguine houses were founded around this principle beginning only in the fifteenth century.

cases, the number of homes in *hofjes* today have been altered to accommodate the demands of the modern age.[135]

The ground plan of the Eva van Hoogeveenhof reveals that each of the small houses has a nearly identical layout [Figure 2:7]. The front door opens onto a small living area. On the back wall of each home is a bed box, a cellar door entrance, and a small staircase leading to an upstairs area. Each home also has a chimney located on the wall adjoining the adjacent home. According to Ine Leermakers and Frouke I. Welling, this relatively small layout was typical with the cellar for food storage, and an attic for storing peat, which was used to heat the home in colder months.[136] In some cases, *hofje* homes also had a small kitchen area, but not always. They also typically relied on residents to supply most of their own furnishings. As extremely modest spaces, they did not offer a life of luxury. However, they did offer something else that might have outweighed the lure of luxury: domain over one's own space.

As unassuming as they appear to passersby strolling the streets of Leiden, *hofjes* are a distinctive feature of the city's urban landscape. While there are more opportunities today to develop an intimate knowledge of their interiors, this does not mean that they were any less intriguing when Rembrandt and Lievens lived in Leiden.

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[135] Many *hofjes* now act as Leiden University housing. In many cases, the overall number of homes have been reduced by knocking down original walls to increase space.

[136] Ine Leermakers and Frouke I. Welling, *Door gangen en poorten naar de Leidse Hofjes* (Leiden: Barabinsk, 1997), p. 14. They also note that the houses were similar to typical working-class homes from the periods in which they were constructed.

Charitable Institutions and Their World

In 1632, around the time that Rembrandt and Lievens left the city, Leiden had twelve *hofjes* [Table 2:1].[137] Of the eight founded between 1464–1598, seven were Catholic and one, the last one to be founded during that time span, was Calvinist. The following four *hofjes* were founded and constructed during the years that Rembrandt and Lievens lived in Leiden. The Cathrijn Maertensdochterhofje, a Calvinist establishment, was founded in 1608 and later constructed in 1621 on the Pasteurstraat along the Nieuwe Rijn [Figure 2:10]. The Jan de Laterehofje, a French Walloon establishment, was founded in 1612 and later built in 1616 on the Tweede Binnenvestgracht in the northwestern area of the city [Figure 2:10]. The Barbarahofje, a Catholic establishment, was founded and constructed in the year 1615 on the Wielmakersteeg between the Levendaal and Hogewoerd streets [Figure 2:10]. Finally, Hofje Bethlehem, a Mennonite establishment, was founded and built in the year 1630 on Levendaal street in the southeastern area of Leiden [Figure 2:10]. Three more–the Van Assendelfhofje, the St. Salvatorhofje, and the Van Brouchovenhofje–were founded before Rembrandt's and Lievens' departure from Leiden, though they were not constructed until later in the century.

All the *hofjes* that existed in Leiden between 1606–1632 were well within the young artists' reach. Seventeenth-century maps of Leiden created by Pieter Bast (1600) and Frederick de Wit (1690–1699) allow one to understand the locations of

[137] Data for this Table collected from: Henk Looijesteijn, "Funding and founding private charities: Leiden almshouses and their founders, 1450–1800," in *Continuity and Change* 27, no. 2 (2012): pp. 199–239; Herman Kleibrink and Ruud Spruit, *Hofjes in Leiden* (Leiden: De Kler, 1979).

contemporary streets and canals. Through Google Maps, it is also possible to determine approximate walking times from the artists' homes to each of these structures [Figures 2:11–12]. From Rembrandt's home on the Weddesteeg on the western edge of the city, the Cathrijn Jacobsdochterhofje was the furthest away. It would have taken Rembrandt approximately twenty minutes to walk from his homes to this *hofje*. Several *hofjes* including: the Jeruzalemshofje, the (Groot) Sionshofje, the St. Stevenshofje, the St. Annahofje of Joostenpoort, the Bethanienhofje, and the Jan de Laterehofje, were much closer and would have taken him ten minutes or less to reach by foot.

Jan Lievens lived with his family in two locations during his Leiden years, on the Pieterskerkchoorsteeg and later in a larger home on the Breestraat.[138] Both locations were more centrally located than Rembrandt's home. For Lievens, the northernmost *hofje*, the Cathrijn Maertensdochterhofje, and the easternmost *hofje*, the Cathrijn Jacobsdochterhofje, were the farthest away from his home, though he could have reached each of them with a walk of only about a thirteen minutes. The remaining *hofjes* were a ten minute or less walk away from his homes. Because of their proximity to these structures, Rembrandt and Lievens were probably aware of them. During their approximately twenty-six-year period in the city, they would have not only encountered the *hofjes*, but also their residents and other individuals who associated with the residents on a daily basis.

[138] Lloyd de Witt, "Evolution and Ambition in the Career of Jan Lievens (1607–1674)," *PhD diss.*, (University of Maryland, College Park, 2006), pp. 25–26.

Visual Connections

It is not known whether any of Rembrandt or Lievens' images of older women depict actual *hoffje* residents. Compounding factors make identifying subjects who are not Rembrandt's mother difficult. On the one hand, the figures they depicted in their *tronies* are largely anonymous. This is because these types of images, like the one painted by Lievens described at the beginning of this chapter, were character studies and not portraits. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the names of *hoffje* residents were not recorded until the eighteenth-century. Though the identities of these individuals may never be uncovered, similarities in the character of the older women that Rembrandt and Lievens portrayed and the residents of *hoffjes* are compelling. Importantly, moreover, both Rembrandt and Lievens had connections with charitable institutions during their Leiden years.

Jan Lievens', *Old Man Holding a Skull*, c. 1630, reveals that the artist was acquainted with a man who was associated with an institution that shared similarities with *hoffjes, a gasthuys*. [Figure 2:13]. The closely cropped composition depicts an elderly man in three-quarters pose peering out at the viewer while holding a human skull. Set against a dark background, light enters sparingly from the left, bathing the right side of the man's face and the smooth surface of the skull. In 1640, Jan Orlers listed this painting in his inventory, describing the subject as, "de coster van't Gasthuys meet een Dootshooft in den arm," or, "the keeper of the gasthuys with a skull in his hand."[139]

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[139] E. Pelinck, in *Jaarboekje voor Geschiedenis en Oudheidkunde van Leiden en Rijnland*, XXXIII, 1941, p. 198. See also, R.E.O. Ekkart, in his *Supplement* to H. Schneider, *Jan Lievens. Sein Leben und seine Werke*, revised ed., Amsterdam 1973, p. 353.

The term "gasthuys" has occasionally been translated as "almshouse," which is inaccurate.[140] *Hofjes* and *gasthuizen* were separate entities with similar charitable motivations but ultimately different missions. In his revised description of Leiden (1641), Orlers wrote an entire chapter on the various social welfare institutions in the city.[141] In it, he covered *gasthuizen* and *hofjes* in separate sections. Thus, it is likely that "the keeper of *gasthuis*," described a man who worked either at the St. Elisabethgasthuis or the St. Catharinagasthuis.

Gasthuizen had two functions. They were places where poor people could seek medical treatment, and, in this sense, they were like hospitals where ill citizens of little means could regain their strength. Patients were provided with regular meals and often made to pray a certain number of times a day in efforts to also promote their spiritual wellness.[142]

Gasthuizen also functioned as shelters. They took in itinerant people and beggars for a short period of time before they were banished from the city.[143] In this sense, they oversaw these types of people. In a further measure of order, Leiden

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[140] Meredith Hale, "Old Man Holding a Skull, in *Jan Lievens: A Dutch Master Rediscovered* (Washington: National Gallery of Art, 2008), pp. 124–25. See also, "Lot 56," Christie's, accessed September 1, 2023, https://www.christies.com/en/lot/lot-5017458. The term "almshouse" in this context is misleading because it is also frequently used to discuss Dutch *hofjes*.

[141] Jan Jansz. Orlers, "Bescrijvinge van alle de Gasthuysen, 't Weeshuys, 't Dolhuys, 't Pesthuys, 't Leproos-huys, ende verscheyden andere plaetsen tot onderhoudinge der armen gesticht: waer gelegen/ hoe ghenaemt/ waer toe ghebrouckt/ ten laetsten van eenighe wanneer/ ende van wie gestichtet." In *Bescrijvinge der Stadt Leyden* (Leiden, 1641), pp. 124–171.

[142] Herman Kleibrink and Ruud Spruit, *Hofjes in Leiden* (Leiden: De Kler, 1979), p. 78.

[143] Kleibrink and Spruit, *Hofjes in Leiden*, p. 79.

gendered their *gasthuizen*. The St. Elisabethgasthuis on the Ceciliastraat looked after women, and the St. Catharinagasthuis on the Breestraat cared for men. The decision to place the St. Catharinagasthuis on the Breestraat was intentional. This street was also where Leiden's Town Hall, the city's governing seat, and a small jail were located should any of the *gasthuizen* short-term occupants get out of hand.[144] The planned location for this *gasthuis* indicates a need for oversight, and it was perhaps in this capacity that the keeper in Lievens' painting worked.

Like *hofjes*, the artists also lived near both of Leiden's *gasthuizen.* During their Leiden years, both Rembrandt and Lievens depicted beggars, but Rembrandt was far more invested in the subject.[145] It is possible that another yet undefined inspiration behind Rembrandt's numerous drawings and etchings of beggars, the majority of which were completed around 1630, was his proximity to these institutions.[146] Maps indicate that he lived around the corner from the St. Catharinagasthuis and only a few blocks from the St. Elisabethgasthuis [Figures 2:11–12]. Near such *gasthuizen* he likely encountered people like those in his

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[144] Kleibrink and Spruit, *Hofjes in Leiden*, p. 79.

[145] Lievens etched a number of *tronies*, some of which may have been based on beggars. Bernhard Schnackenburg, *Jan Lievens: Friend and Rival of the Young Rembrandt: With a Catalogue Raisonné of His Early Work 1623–1632* (Petersburg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2016). pp. 341, 410–420.

[146] Extensive literature exists on Rembrandt's beggars. Elisabeth Sudek, *Bettlerdarstellungen vom Ende des XV. Jahrhunderts bis zu Rembrandt* (Strassburg: Heitz, 1931); Suzanne Stratton, Robert Baldwin, "'On earth we are beggars, as Christ himself was': The Protestant Background of Rembrandt's Imagery of Poverty, Disability, and Begging," *Konsthistorisk Tidskrift* 54, no. 3 (1985): 122–35; Peter Schatborn, " Notes on Early Rembrandt Drawings," *Master Drawings* 27 (1989): pp. 118–127; Stephanie Dickey, Begging for Attention: The Artful Context of Rembrandt's Etching Beggar Seated on a Bank," *Journal of Historians of Netherlandish Art* 5.2 (Summer 2013).

drawing, *Beggar Woman Leaning on a Stick* [Figure 2:14]. With his bold yet restrained brushwork, Rembrandt captured this woman who at once appears vigilant and worn down. One could imagine that Rembrandt came upon this woman, who, after traveling on foot for some time, given her walking stick, floppy sun hat, and water skin that hangs from her belt, may well have been waiting outside the St. Elisabethgasthuis on Ceciliastraat to see if there would be space for her that night. Rembrandt's etching, *Ragged Peasant with His Hands behind Him, Holding a Stick,* depicts a male figure of a similar station [Figure 2:15]. The portly older man wears tattered pants and a partly unbuttoned shirt. His facial expression suggests that he is either focusing intently on something to his left or deep in thought. His posture appears relaxed as he holds his walking stick behind his back. The use of a walking stick suggests that this man was itinerant. Rembrandt and Lievens most likely encountered a great number of people like these in Leiden.

Founders as Patrons

In one case, patronage links Rembrandt and Lievens to the family of the founder of a Leiden *hofje,* the cloth merchant Gerrit Frankensz. van Hoogmade, who established Hofje Bethlehem.[147] According to Jan Orlers, this *hofje* was constructed

[147] For the death date of Gerrit Frankensz. van Hoogmade see, Henk Looijesteijn, "Funding and founding private charities: Leiden almshouses and their founders, 1450–1800," in *Continuity and Change* 27, no. 2 (2012): p. 225.

in 1630, which was the same year as Gerrit Frankensz. van Hoogmade's death.[148] Located on the northern end of the Langegracht, it is accessible through a street level doorway. Inside the courtyard are twelve small apartments originally intended to house elderly men and women of the Waterland Mennonite congregation.[149] Gerrit's motivation for founding the *hofje*, discussed earlier in this chapter, was to protect older members of his faith from having to seek assistance at city-run institutions.[150]

Piet Bakker proposed that members of the Van Hoogmade family were likely early patrons of Rembrandt and Lievens because several of their works appear in three of the family's inventories.[151] The estate of Gerrit van Hoogmade (c. 1633–

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[148] Orlers, *Bescrijvinge*, pp. 154–56. In 1964, the canal along the Langegracht was filled in. It is now a roadway. Also in his 1641 description of Hofje Bethlehem, Orlers cited the importance of Jan de Pla, Pieter Reyniersz., and Pieter Willemsz. Knotter in the establishment and construction of the *hofje*. Jan de Pla is especially important as he married Johanna (Jannetje) Baltensdr. La Pla (née van Hoogmade) in 1643 and would have been aware of the large Rembrandt and unspecified Lievens painting listed in Johanna's 1687 inventory.

[149] The "Waterlanders" originated in Friesland and were one of two dominant branches of the Anabaptist Church. Unlike their counterparts–that began in the southern Netherlands and adhered to strict codes of organization, doctrine, and lifestyle–Waterland Mennonites were more liberal. That is, they, "stood for less total submission of the individual to the congregation." Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic: Its Rise, Greatness, and Fall 1477–1896* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 396. They valued autonomy in their belief system which meant that they led less isolated lives than their more conservative Mennonite brethren. Their liberal point of view likely played a role in their willingness to work with Rembrandt and Lievens.

[150] Henk Looijesteijn, "Funding and founding private charities: Leiden almshouses and their founders, 1450–1800," in *Continuity and Change* 27, no. 2 (2012): p. 218.

[151] Piet Bakker, "Rembrandt and the Emergence of the Leiden Art Market," in *Leiden circa 1630: Rembrandt Emerges* (Ontario: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 2019), p. 81. Bakker made clear the difficulty in determining acquisition dates. According to his research, inventories contain attributions that span the entire seventeenth-century. His hypothesis that the Van Hoogmade's purchased artworks by Rembrandt and Lievens during their Leiden period appears to be based solely on the quantity of works listed in their inventories by both artists.

1683), grandson of Gerrit Frankensz. van Hoogmade, lists a self-portrait by Lievens and a painting by Rembrandt.[152] Additionally, the inventory of his granddaughter, Johanna (Jannetje) Baltensdr. La Pla's (née van Hoogmade, c. 1622–c. 1687), includes a large Rembrandt painting and another unspecified work by Lievens.[153] A small *tronie* by Rembrandt is also listed in his son's, Pieter Gerritsz. van Hoogmade, 1652 collection inventory.[154] Pieter was also one of the *hofje's* first regents.[155] Though it is not clear who Pieter's *tronie* depicted, the likelihood is strong that it was an elderly person as the vast majority of Rembrandt and Lievens' Leiden era *tronies* depicted these types of people.[156]

Other Founder-Patron Examples

As early as the late fifteenth-century, around the time that Leiden's first *hofjes* were established, founders and regents of *hofjes* collected works of art that were closely related to their charitable deeds. Before the Reformation, altarpieces that

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[152] ELP, NA, notary J. van Boeckweyt, inventory 1404, deed 44; Found in Bakker, "Leiden Art Market," p. 93.

[153] ELO, NA notary J. van Eycke, inventory 1002, deed 6; See also Bakker, "Leiden Art Market," p. 81. Here he noted that the La Pla's were another prominent Leiden Mennonite family. He suggested that they were "interwoven" with the Van Hoogmade's.

[154] Walter L. Strauss et al., *The Rembrandt Documents* (New York: Abaris, 1979), p. 288 (doc. 1652/3).

[155] Orlers, *Bescrijvinge*, p. 155. Here Orlers named Pieter Gerritsz. van Hoogmade as one of the *hofje's* first regents.

[156] Christiaan Vogelaar, "Rembrandt in Leiden: his Town, Workshop and Models," in *Rembrandt's Mother Myth and Reality* (Leiden: Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal, 2005), p. 17.

included the benefactors' portraits were frequently commissioned, but also stained and painted glass windows.[157] A noteworthy example of painted glass windows is found in Leiden's St. Annahofje, which was founded in 1491 and constructed in 1492 to house poor women.[158] In the chapel of the *hofje* are two grisaille painted glass window panes that depict scenes from the life of St. Anne, mother of the Virgin Mary.[159] One of these windows depicts the Virgin and Child enthroned with the elderly St. Anne leaning in to share a tender grandmotherly moment with the Christ Child [Figure 2:16].[160] These windows were likely based on designs by Aertgen van Leyden (1498–1564) and created around 1540, making them the earliest examples of painted glass in the Northern Netherlands.[161]

After the Reformation, commissions for portraiture became more fashionable. Rudi Ekkart described how the rise in demand for likenesses initially occurred during

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[157] Rudi Ekkart, "Portraits in the Golden Age," in *Dutch Portraits: The Age of Rembrandt and Frans Hals*, ed. Quentin Buvelot (The Hague: Royal Picture Gallery, Mauritshuis, 2007), p. 11. Ekkart's discussion of the shift in vogue from religious imagery to portraits and what that says about the changing social, religious, and economic tides of the Northern Netherlands is particularly enlightening in this context.

[158] Herman Kleibrink and Ruud Spruit, *Hofjes in Leiden* (Leiden: De Kler, 1979), p. 40.

[159] Ine Leermakers and Wietske Donkersloot, *Wonen om Gods wille in Leidse hofjes* (Leiden: Barabinsk, 2007), pp. 152–153.

[160] The other known pane depicts the meeting of St. Joachim and St. Anna at the Golden Gate. The glass in this example is also painted in grisaille. The best available image is present here: Leermakers and Donkersloot, *Wonen om Gods*, p. 171.

[161] A. van der Boom and E. Pelinck, "Aertgen van Leyden en de Glasruiten van het Leidse Anna-Hofje," *Oud Holland* 69, no. 3 (1954): pp. 181–182. A. van der Boom believed that the stained glass windows were made around 1540, "after designs by Aertgen van Leyden." E. Pelinck believed that it was possible that they were made in the seventeenth century based on older models; In his *Schilder-boeck* (1604), Karel van Mander noted that Aertgen van Leyden made hundreds of designs for stained glass.

the 1580s and continued into the seventeenth-century.[162] He also noted the appeal of this type of work to the rising social elite.[163] An example of this would be Joris van Schooten's (c. 1587–1652/53) 1646 portrait of Eva van Hoogeveen (1594–1652) [Figure 2:17].[164] In 1652, Eva founded the Eva van Hoogeveenhof, discussed at length earlier in this chapter. Her *hofje* was dedicated to sheltering twelve to thirteen honest, unmarried women. To this day, her portrait hangs in the *hofje's* regent room.[165] Eva appears in three-quarters pose looking out at the viewer with whom she holds a sober gaze, leaving little doubt of her austere deportment in life.

Conclusion

Hofjes, and the elderly women that lived in them, were central to the tapestry of Rembrandt's and Lievens' days in Leiden. The images that they made of older

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[162] Rudi Ekkart, "Portraits in the Golden Age," in *Dutch Portraits: The Age of Rembrandt and Frans Hals*, ed. Quentin Buvelot (The Hague: Royal Picture Gallery, Mauritshuis, 2007), pp. 11–12.

[163] Rudi Ekkart, "Portraits in the Golden Age,", pp. 11–12.

[164] Joris van Schooten was Lievens' first teacher. Mentioned in the dissertation introduction.

[165] Piet Bakker, "Rembrandt and the Emergence of the Leiden Art Market," in *Leiden circa 1630: Rembrandt Emerges* (Ontario: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 2019), p. 81; Gerrit Aelbrechtsz. van Hoogeveen (1587–1665), Eva's brother, was also a patron of the artists, though it is not known when he purchased works from them. An art lover, he amassed a collection of around 160 artworks, which included three paintings by Rembrandt, one by Jan Lievens, and several more by other prominent painters such as Jan van Goyen (1596–1656) and Carel Fabritius (1622–1654). By trade, Van Hoogeveen was a Leiden University educated physician. He practiced for a time as Ceciliagasthuis, discussed earlier in this chapter. Through his family and marriage, he enjoyed connections to Leiden's circle of intellectual elites. His uncle was the well-known humanist writer, Petrus Scriverius (1576–1660), who also likely owned works by the artists, and his wife was also the aunt of Johan de Bye (1621/22–167–72), who was a prolific collector of Gerrit Dou's paintings.

women appear to be influenced by their knowledge of these women and how they were charged to behave. Though Rembrandt and Lievens would not have had intimate knowledge of *hofje* interiors, this does not mean that they were not intrigued by them and the women that called these places home. Moreover, Jan Lievens' painting of a *gasthuis* porter and Rembrandt's, as well as Lievens', drawings and etchings of itinerant beggars supports the notion that they were not only aware of Leiden's charitable institutions, but also that they were inspired to portray the individuals associated with them. That their works, additionally, were found in the collections of a founder's family is further compelling because it ties them to the long-standing relationship between *hofje* founders and artists. This chapter, which has proposed Leiden's social environment as a leading cause for Rembrandt and Lievens' numerous portrayals of elderly women, provides a foundation for the following chapter, which analyzes how Rembrandt and Lievens' images of these women were distinct in Netherlandish literary and visual traditions.

Table

Leiden's Hofjes 1464–1640

Hofje	Year Founded	Year Constructed	Religious Denomination	Location (Street Name)	Types of Residents
1–Jeruzalemshofje	1464	1467	Catholic	Kaiserstraat 49	Thirteen honorable men, could be married
2–(Groot) Sionshofje	1458	1480	Catholic	Sionssteeg 4	Fourteen elderly

					couples
3–St. Stevenshofje	1484	1487	Catholic	Haarlemmerstraat 50	Thirteen men and their wives
4–St. Annahofje (Aalmoeshuis)	1491	1492	Catholic	Hooigracht 9	Thirteen women
5–St. Annahofje of Joostenpoort	1496	1503	Catholic	Zegersteeg 14	Thirteen honorable widows no younger than forty
6–St. Janshofje Rebuilt in 1565 and renamed Van der Laenshofje	1504 1565	1504 1565	Catholic Catholic	Haarlemmerstraat 264	Seven homes for single women, and six married couples
7–Bethanienhofje (Emmaushofje)	1563	1563	Catholic	Kaiserstraat 43	Thirteen homes for decent poor people
8–Cathrijn Jacobsdochterhofje	1598	1598	Calvinist	Kaarsenmakerstraat 1	primarily meant to house honorable widows, but if none were in need it may also accept married couples and virgins over fifty years of age
11– Cathrijn Maertensdochterhofje	1608	1621	Calvinist	Pasteurstraat 2a	Twelve men, women, or couples
10–Jan de Laterehofje	1612	1616	French Walloon	Tweede Binnenvestgracht 13	honorable married or unmarried people

9–St. Barbarahofje	1615	1615	Catholic	Wielmakersteeg	Elderly women
15–Van Assendelfthofje	1624	1681	Calvinist	Langegracht 49	Fifteen households for poor people
13–St. Salvatorhofje (Salvator Mundihofje)	1625	1636	Catholic	Steensstraat 17	Honorable women or widows
12–Hofje Bethlehem	1630	1630	Mennonite	Levendaal 109–111	Honorable, elderly Waterland Mennonites
14–Van Brouchovenhofje	1631	1640	Calvinist	Papengracht 16	Honorable members of the Reformed faith

Table 2:1 *Leiden's Hofjes 1464–1640*

Chapter 3: A Different Kind of Elderly Female Subject

Introduction

There was nothing novel about being elderly in seventeenth-century Europe. In the Low Countries, before the end of the century, nearly nine percent of the population was over sixty years old.[166] This demographic is similar to that in early twentieth-century Europe and America.[167] The process of aging, much as today, was individual. The rate at which one matured depended on factors such as the quality of one's diet and the physical demands of one's occupation–both of which related to one's social status. Wealth afforded access to comforts such as nutrient-rich foods, hospitable living conditions, and less strenuous means of employment that minimized some of the harsher physical realities of aging which readily affected those who were less fortunate.[168]

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[166] E.A. Wrigley et al., *English Population History from Family Reconstitution, 1580–1837* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), pp. 614–615.

[167] Lynn Botelho, "Old Women in Early Modern Europe: Age as an Analytical Category," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, Allyson M. Poska, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 297–315.

[168] For more on growing old in the seventeenth-century see: Lynn A. Botelho, "The 17th Century," in *A History of Old Age* (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2005), pp. 113–173. For broad surveys of old age in Europe see: Albrecht Classen, ed. *Old Age in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: Interdisciplinary Approaches to a Neglected Topic* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007); Pat Thane, "Social Histories of Old Age and Aging," *Journal of Social History* 37 (2003): pp. 93–111; D. Troyansky, "The History of Old Age in the Western World," *Ageing and Society* 16 (1996): pp. 233–243; For old age and poverty see: M. Pelling, "Old People and Poverty in Early Modern Towns," *Society for the History of Medicine Bulletin* 34 (1984): pp. 42–47; Joseph T. Freeman, *Aging in History and Literature* (New York: Human Sciences Press, 1979).

Despite its individual experience and pace, aging was culturally characterized in early modern art and literature in a highly structured way.[169] Moreover, both men and women were affected by age, and both were characterized in comparable ways. When portraying aged subjects, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century artists and writers drew from a handful of conventional literary and visual traditions that were shaped by cultural ideas originating in Antiquity about old age and the proper, or improper, behaviors that accompanied this phase of life. Representations of the elderly, thus, merged around positive and negative stereotypes. For example, aged people were often portrayed as piously virtuous or wise, but they could also be depicted as vices such as lust or greed. With an aim to provide a broad scope of characterizations of the elderly in the European cultural context, the first section of this chapter recognizes a number of ways aged men were represented in art and literature before turning its focus on older women.

Rembrandt and Lievens created images of elderly people during their Leiden years that were unique in early modern Netherlandish culture. Breaking away from the stereotypical treatment of these subjects, they sought to capture the underlying humanity and individuality of elderly people in their paintings, etchings, and drawings, in ways that are not found in works by other artists. In particular, their images of elderly women are remarkable, as traditionally these subjects were more profoundly stereotyped than men. This chapter, thus, provides a framework for

[169] Though there is no real sense for when people were considered old, whether that was age forty or sixty for example. For speculation on this issue see: Steven R. Smith, "Growing Old in an Age of Transition," in *Old Age in Preindustrial Society*, ed. Peter Stearns 191–208 (New York: Holms and Meier, 1982).

recognizing and understanding the dimensions of Rembrandt and Jan Lievens' novel approach to elderly women in their art.

Portrayals of Aging in The Early Modern Period

In his speech in William Shakespeare's *As You Like It*, Jacques poetically expressed the widely held belief that from the cradle to the grave, life's course followed a series of stages:

> All the world's a stage/And all the men and women merely players/ They have their exits and their entrances/ And one man in his time plays many parts/ His acts being seven ages. At first the infant/ Mewling and puking in the nurse's arms/ Then the whining schoolboy, with his satchel/ And shining morning face, creeping like snail/ Unwillingly to school. And then the lover/ Sighing like furnace, with a woeful ballad/ Made to his mistress' eyebrow. Then a soldier/ Full of strange oaths, and bearded like the pard/ Jealous in honor, sudden and quick in quarrel/ Seeking the bubble reputation/ Even in the cannon's mouth. And then the justice/ In fair round belly with good capon lined/ With eyes severe and beard of formal cut/ Full of wise saws and modern instances/ And so he plays his part. The sixth age shifts/ Into the lean and slippered pantaloon/ With spectacles on nose and pouch on side/ His youthful hose, well saved, a world too wide/ For his shrunk shank, and his big manly voice/ Turning again toward childish treble, pipes/ And whistles in his sound. Last scene of all/ That ends this strange eventful history/ Is second childishness and mere oblivion/ Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans everything.[170]

In this moving passage, Shakespeare referenced the popular literary and pictorial concept of the ages of man. He divided life into seven stages from infancy to old age, though it was also common to see constructions that specified three, four, ten, or even

[170] William Shakespeare. *As You Like It*, Act 2, Scene 7. Barbara Mowat, Paul Werstine, Michael Poston, Rebecca Niles, eds. (Washington, DC: Folger Shakespeare Library, n.d.), accessed [December 19, 2023]. https://folger.edu/explore/shakespeares-works/a-midsummer-nights-dream/.

twelve different ages.[171] Iterations of this scheme appeared prominently in the early modern world, but the idea to represent life in this manner was not new.

The framework for the ages of man had its origins in Antiquity, when numerous authors deeply considered the various stages of human existence, typically in a sequence of three or four phases. For example, in his *Rhetoric*, from the fourth-century BCE, Aristotle discussed youth, prime and old age as the three stages of life.[172] Around 15 BCE, in *Ars Poetica* Horace provided writers with descriptive advice on how to portray different characters during four phases of life: childhood, youth, adulthood, and old age.[173] Around one hundred years later, Ovid similarly identified four life stages in his *Metamorphoses* (15 CE) that focused on transformations of the aging body.[174] These early writings established the structure for the ages of man theme, which persisted throughout the Medieval, Renaissance, and early modern periods.

[171] I mainly focus on schemes that represent 3 and 4 ages. For more on the significance of all the schemes see: Max J. Okenfuss, "The Ages of Man on the Seventeenth-Century Muscovite Frontier," *The Historian*, vol. 56, no. 1 (Autumn 1993): pp. 92–97; For old age and masculinity in Shakespeare see: A. Ellis, *Old Age: Masculinity and Early Modern Drama: Comic Elders on the Italian and Shakespearean Stage* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007).

[172] J. H. Fresse, ed. Aristotle, *Rhetoric 2.12*, accessed December 15, 2023, http://data.perseus.org/citations/urn:cts:greekLit:tlg0086.tlg038.perseus-eng1:2.12.

[173] Cornelia G. Harcum, "The Ages of Man: A Study Suggested by Horace, Ars Poetica, Lines 153–178," *The Classical Weekly* 7, no. 15 (February 7, 1914): pp. 114–118.

[174] Nikolopoulos, "Tremuloque gradu venit aegra senectus: Old Age in Ovid's "Metamorphoses," *Mnemosyne*, vol. 56, no. 1 (2003): pp. 48–60.

The trajectory of the ages of man in literature and art was also influenced by an analogous world view, which similarly had ancient roots.[175] Anouk Janssen explained:

> In this configuration there were still no demarcation lines between astrology, astronomy and medicine and it was generally assumed that the microcosm (man) and the macrocosm (the world surrounding man) were connected entities and could therefore be compared.[176]

Associations were commonly made between the four ages and the four seasons, the four biological humors, as established by the Greek physician and philosopher Galen, or the four elements.[177]

Both the ages of man and the analogous world view's influence is especially evident in Netherlandish allegorical imagery, particularly in series', from the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries. In an engraving from 1580 after Hans Bol, Johann Sadeler portrayed an elderly man as a personification of winter. This print belongs to a series of four that depict men of appropriate ages as different seasons of

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[175] For more on the analogous world view see: R. Klibansky, E. Panofsky and F. Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy: Studies in the History of Natural Philosophy, Religion and Art* (London: Nelson, 1964): pp. 3–15; J. A. Burrow, *The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988); E. Sears, T*he Ages of Man: Medieval Interpretations of the Life Cycle* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019).

[176] Anouk Janssen, "The Iconography of Old Age and Rembrandt's Early Work," in *Rembrandt's Mother Myth and Reality,* eds. Christiaan Vogelaar and Gerbrand Korevaar (Leiden: Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal, 2005), p. 57

[177] In the sixteenth century, it became fashionable, especially among humanist circles, to divide life into seven stages, due to the scheme's relationship with science and new knowledge, especially in astronomy. The foundation for seven ages came from Ptolemy's *Tetrabiblo*s of the second-century CE, in which he charted the influence of the planets, being: The Moon, Mercury, Venus, The Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn, on human life. Max J. Okenfuss, "The Ages of Man on the Seventeenth-Century Muscovite Frontier," *The Historian*, vol. 56, no. 1 (Autumn 1993): p. 92; J. A. Burrow, *The Ages of Man: A Study in Medieval Writing and Thought* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), pp. 37–38, 198.

the year [Figure 3:1]. Seated atop a hill before a fire, the old man, as winter, turns toward a heavenly beam of light that focuses on the plate of food to his right. According to the print's inscription, the man earned the provisions that surround him through a long life of hard work.[178] The expansive winter landscape in the background depicts pig farmers, hunters, and merry ice-skaters, all of which metaphorically take part in enjoying the fruits of his labor.

In 1644, more than a half century later, the Flemish painter David Teniers (1610–1690) treated the same subject in a small series of four men, of corresponding ages, that personify the seasons on copper. His painting of winter, similarly, shows a seated old man dressed in heavy clothing [Figure 3:2]. Warming his hands over a brazier, it also portrays cheerful ice-skaters in the background. The contrast in attitudes between the skaters and the reserved elderly man likely intended to reference the sober demeanor that elderly people were encouraged to assume.

In early modern literary and visual culture, representations of the elderly, such as those described above, stressed the natural order of things. "To every thing there is a season, a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted."[179] This verse from the Old Testament Book of Ecclesiastes reinforces the significance of structure as an underpinning for cultural perspectives on old age.

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[178] Wayne E. Franits, "Weduwe," In *Paragons of Virtue: Women and Domesticity in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University of Art, 1993), p. 168.

[179] Ecclesiastes 3: 1–3. KJV.

Elderly Women in Netherlandish Art and Literature

Netherlandish artists depicted elderly women in ways that reflect shared beliefs about their moral, physical, and spiritual character. Writings from Antiquity, especially those that were medical, religious, or didactic in nature, played a formative role in shaping later ideas about what constituted appropriate behavior for aged women. Over time these beliefs developed into discernible visual and literary traditions that tended to coalesce around negative and positive stereotypes.[180] The positive characteristics were few, and primarily featured piety and wisdom in older women. Negative characteristics, however, were plentiful, and included lust, greed, and laziness. The following discussion considers the close relationship between literary and pictorial traditions, particularly in prints that would have been known to Rembrandt and Lievens.

Lust in Older Women

Lust in old age was viewed negatively because it was considered to be outside of the natural order of things. Cultural ideas about aged women who acted out on their sexual desires began to form in Europe with Hippocrates, a fifth-century BCE Greek physician and philosopher, and Galen, a second-century CE Greek physician and philosopher, who devised the theory of the four temperaments. Galen's principles

[180] Lynn Botelho, "Old Women in Early Modern Europe: Age as an Analytical Category," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to Women and Gender in Early Modern Europe*, Allyson M. Poska, ed. (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 305–306.

remained relevant in the study of medicine throughout the seventeenth century.[181] The temperaments, or humors as they are often called, are sanguine, choleric, melancholic, and phlegmatic. Galen believed that they corresponded to a range of emotions and behaviors and were determined by different levels of fluid in the body.[182] Young women were thought to have a cold and moist, or phlegmatic, constitution.[183] However, based on Hippocrates' conclusions on the physicality of post-menopausal women, they were believed to dry out as they aged.[184] Thus, it was widely accepted that older women who became lustful did so by seeking out sex to counteract their increased dryness.[185]

Beyond the field of medicine, this topic received popular treatment in early modern art and literature, especially in satirical works and prints.[186] In both, lecherous elderly women were commonly portrayed as foolish. This characterization resonated

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[181] For more on women's bodies in ancient medical studies see: L.A. Dean-Jones, *Women's Bodies in Classical Greek Science* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[182] Men were also represented in relation to lust. This is because men's bodies were believed to undergo the same loss of heat and increased dryness as women. However, women were more profoundly characterized in this category because their lust was viewed as dangerous. Lynn A. Botelho, "The 17th Century," in A *History of Old Age*, ed. Pat Thane (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2005), p. 127.

[183] Lynn A. Botelho, "The 17th Century," p. 127.

[184] D. Shafer, Old Age and Disease in Early Modern Medicine (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2011), p. 164; L ; S. Mendelssohn and P. Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 23.

[185] Shafer, *Old Age* (2011), p. 172 Botelho, "The 17th Century," p. 127. For more on menstruation and menopause in the seventeenth century see: P. Crawford, "Attitudes to Menstruation in Seventeenth-Century England," *Past and Present* 91 (1981): pp. 47–73.

[186] E. De Jongh and Ger Luijten, *Mirror of Everyday Life: Genre Print in the Netherlands, 1550–1700* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 1997), pp. 80–84.

with cultural attitudes that condemned this behavior as inappropriate, immoral, and even predatory. The recipients of little compassion, lust-crazed older women were often cast as grotesque creatures for the purpose of amusement and warning.

A prominent early sixteenth-century treatment of this subject was Erasmus' (c. 1469–1536) *In Praise of Folly* (1511). In this satirical work, he provided a not so thinly veiled criticism of aged women who cavort about and flirt as if they were much younger:

> And what is yet more comical, you shall have some wrinkled old women, whose very looks are a sufficient antidote to lechery, that shall be canting out, *Ah, life is a sweet thing*, and so run a caterwauling, and hire some strong-backed stallions to recover their almost lost sense of feeling; and to set themselves off the better, they shall paint and daub their faces, always stand a tricking up themselves at their looking-glass, go naked-necked, bare-breasted, be tickled at a smutty jest, dance among the young girls, write love-letters, and do all the other little knacks of decoying hot-blooded suitors; and in the meanwhile, however they are laughed at, they enjoy themselves to the full, live up to their hearts' desire, and want for nothing that may complete their happiness.[187]

The narrator of his work, Folly, creates an unflattering caricature of a hideous, oblivious, and morally reprehensible woman. Quentin Massys' (1465/6–1530–1530) *The Ugly Duchess*, created two years after the publication of *In Praise of Folly*, is an apt visual counterpart to Erasmus' text [Figure 3:3].[188] In addition to exaggerated, caricature-like features such as a plethora of deep-set wrinkles, a prominent wart, and

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[187] Desiderius Erasmus, *In Praise of Folly*, trans. W. Kennett (London: R. Dodsley, 1740), p. 59. Erasmus', *In Praise of Folly* (1511) satirized many different types of people. It was especially effective in calling attention to corruption in the Catholic Church.

[188] This painting has a companion called, *An Old Man*, ca. 1513, oil on paper laid down on canvas, 48.4 x 37 cm, Paris, Institut de France, Musée Jacquemart-Andre (MJAP-P 829).

no teeth, this woman also wears a low-cut bodice that is inappropriate for her age.[189] Her bodice, along with the red rosebud that she holds between her thumb and forefinger, leaves little doubt that she is unaware of her grotesque appearance, and that she fancies herself a seductress.[190] The woman's ideas about herself are amusing, which was indeed the aim of works such as this: to veil condemnations of lustful folly of elderly women with humor.

A popular theme in European visual culture that depicted lustful elderly women was that of the ill-matched couple.[191] One of its first instances appears in a drypoint print from around 1480–1490 by Ishrahel van Meckenem after the Master of the Housebook [Figure 3:4]. The minimal scene depicts an aged woman who is humbly dressed in comparison to the younger man by her side whose curled hair and

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[189] It is possible that the *Ugly Duchess* is afflicted by something called Paget's Disease. The rare ailment causes bone hypertrophy that typically affects the skull and sometimes the jaws as well as other facial bones. Emma Capron, "Quintin Massys and the Art of Satire," In *The Ugly Duchess: Beauty and Satire in the Renaissance* (London: The National Gallery, 2023), p. 30. See also: Charlotte Wytema, "The Afterlife of an Old Woman," In *The Ugly Duchess: Beauty and Satire in the Renaissance* (London: The National Gallery, 2023).

[190] For more on Massys' engagement with lustful subjects see: Lawrence A. Silver, "*The Ill-Matched Pair* by Quentin Massys," *Studies in the History of Art* 6 (1974): pp. 104–123. For more on the subject matter in general see: Alison G. Stewart, *Unequal Lovers* (New York: Abaris Books, 1977); W.A. Coupe, "Ungleiche Liebe–a Sixteenth-Century Topos," *Modern Language Review* 62 (1967): pp. 661–671.

[191] Lucas van Leyden (1494–1533) treated this theme in a print which he utilized both etching and engraving. Lucas van Leyden, *A Fool and a Woman*, 1520, etching and engraving, 10.3 x 7.3 cm, New York, The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Van Leyden was significant as a major influence on Rembrandt's prints. For more on this subject see: Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., "The Influence of Lucas van Leyden on Rembrandt's Narrative Etchings," in *Essays in Northern European Art Presented to Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann on his Sixtieth Birthday*, ed. Anne-Marie Logan, 291–296 (The Netherlands: Davaco, 1983; Ger Luijten, "Rembrandt the printmaker: the shaping of an *oeuvre*," in *Rembrandt the Printmaker*, 11–22 (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers, 2000).

opulent attire suggest that he is up-to-date on the current fashions. The exchange portrayed conveys an elderly woman propositioning a younger man for sex. She holds what is likely a money bag, and attribute commonly included in portrayals of lust that also implied the sin of avarice.[192] The young man's gesture suggests that he refuses the woman's advances, which was typical for this manner of imagery. Though not accompanied by an inscription, this print contains empty banderoles so the text may be written in by hand.[193]

In the late sixteenth-and early seventeenth-centuries, Hendrick Goltzius and his circle often treated the ill-matched couples theme.[194] Jacob Goltzius' (1574–1630) pendant engravings of *Ill-matched Couples*, c. 1600, after designs by his brother Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1617) is one example.[195] In his depiction of the elderly

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[192] Jane Kromm, "Anger, Envy, and Aging: Early Modern Transgressive Old Women," in *Women, Aging, and Art: A Crosscultural Anthology*, eds. Frima Fox Hofrichter and Midori Yoshimoto (New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts), p. 50; Ellen S. Jacobowitz and Stephanie Loeb Stepanek, "The Fool and the Woman, 1520," in *The Prints of Lucas van Leyden and His Contemporaries*, 204–205 (Washington D.C.: The National Gallery of Art, 1983).

[193] E. De Jongh and Ger Luijten, *Mirror of Everyday Life: Genre Print in the Netherlands, 1550–1700* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 1997), pp. 80–84.

[194] De Jongh and Luijten, *Mirror of Everyday,* pp. 80–84.

[195] The unequal lovers theme continued to be popular as a means to criticize and poke fun at elderly people for lustful behavior into the seventeenth century, where it commonly appeared in moral emblem books and prints. In his *Sinne-en minnebeelden* of 1627, Jacob Cats (1577–1660) wrote on the subject. Accompanied by an engraving created by Adriaen van de Venne (1589–1662) of an older man and a younger woman at a fish market watching as an eel is cleaved in two, Cats wrote, "Old age cannot tolerate foolishness. Although the eel's body is disfigured and no longer has a head, the poor animal jumps about. Oh fool, prepare yourself to die and stop playing the lover. It is senseless for an old man to behave in such a manner." "De ouderdom verdraagt geen dwaasheid. Hoewel het lijf van de paling verminkt is en hij geen kop meer heeft, maakt het arme beest sprongen. Ach dwaas, bereid je voor op je sterven en hang niet meer de minnaar uit. Het is redeloos wanneer een grijsaard zich uitgelaten gedraagt." Anouk Janssen, *Grijsaards in Zwart-Wit: de verbeelding van ouderdom in de Nederlandse prentkunst (1550-1650)* (Walburg Pers: Zutphen, 2007), p. 248.

woman searching for love from a younger male, the woman is portrayed with a hooked nose and a severely pointed chin [Figure 3:5].[196] In addition to giving her mercilessly haggard features, Goltzius also dressed her in a pointed hood and a front-laced bodice similar to the style of dress worn in the Middle Ages, totally different from the dashing clothes worn by the young man, a contrast that further emphasized her absurd character.[197] Offering up her coins that are precariously arranged in her lap, she rests a hand high on the young man's thigh, though his contorted posture and attempts to push the woman away indicate that he is not interested in her predatory advances. The inscription reinforces the message that the print conveys: "Let the cold old woman be gone, youth is drawn to the youthful. I won't be trapped by money, love is made sweet by love." [198]

Piety in Older Women

Daniël van den Bremden's engraving after Adriaen van de Venne exemplifies characteristic portrayals of aged female piety in Netherlandish art [Figure 3:6]. Seated at a desk, the woman–who shares caricature-like features with the above-described

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[196] This print has a pendant that depicts an elderly male pursuing a younger woman: Jacob Goltzius (II) after design by Hendrick Goltzius, *Unequal Lovers*, 1584–1630, engraving, 141 x 184 mm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum; E. De Jongh and Ger Luijten, *Mirror of Everyday Life: Genre Print in the Netherlands, 1550–1700* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 1997), pp. 80–84.

[197] Anouk Janssen, *Grijsaards,* p. 248.

[198] "Wijckt oudt cout vel al sijt ghy rijcke, the Juecht verheucht in huers gelycke."

works, such as a hooked nose, gnarled over-sized hands that appear to be affected by rheumatoid arthritis, and uniformly wrinkled skin–adjusts her *pince-nez*, as she thumbs through the book before her. Given its clasps, the book is probably a Bible or other private devotional text.[199] In addition to her glasses, which signal failing eyesight, other objects around the woman reference her advanced age and spiritual acumen. For instance, resting atop the table is a distaff and spindle. The distaff was used to hold together unspun fibers of wool or flax.[200] Portrayals of women that incorporate these instruments typically symbolize domestic virtues, such as temperance. In this work, they offer an added layer of significance as they relate to the print's inscription, which reads, "Before the threads of gray old age can be pulled apart, the woman consults the sacred matters of life and God."[201] Under the aegis of the cultural belief that piety was an estimable trait for the elderly, this print asserts the importance of devoting time to spiritual engagement in the last stage of one's life.

Pious characterizations of elderly women such as this stemmed from the idea that with the physical weakening of the body came a greater capacity for intellectual

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[199] Rembrandt painted a similar book in his *Old Woman with a Boo*k, 1637, oil on canvas, 109.7 x 91.5 cm, Washington D.C., The National Gallery of Art (inv. 1937.1.73). I do not intend to suggest that Rembrandt painted a similar book because he knew this specific print, but rather that Bibles were often bound this way.

[200] For an interesting study on European spinning practices see: Mary Ann Megan Cleaton et al., "Recreating Historic European Spindle Spinning," *Exarc Journal*, no. 2021/22 (May 2011).

[201] Anouk Janssen, *Grijsaards in Zwart-Wit: de verbeelding van ouderdom in de Nederlandse prentkunst (1550-1650)* (Walburg Pers: Zutphen, 2007), p. 179. Translated from Latin to Dutch by Arnoud Visser.

and spiritual awareness.[202] In 1607, in a moral emblem featuring a bespectacled old man, Otto van Veen (1556–1629) paraphrased the ancient Roman stoic philosopher Seneca, stating, "The eye of common sense only begins to see keenly, /when the eye in the body begins to weaken."[203] Van Veen used this passage to point out the awakening of wisdom with bodily decay as a benefit to aging.[204] The other side of this belief, which related to enhanced spiritual growth, was a popular theme in religious commentaries.

In the twelfth-century, Bernard of Clairvaux, a Cistercian monk whose theological approach influenced Protestant reformers, among them Martin Luther and John Calvin, related that, "The old body is weak, it brings one nearer to God by its suffering and pain, and because it has become free of lust. It is no longer the seat of temptation. It signals to its owner that he or she must prepare the soul for the next world, so that it will be ready when the time comes."[205] Bernard's observations on the

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[202] Wayne E. Franits, *Paragons of Virtue: Women and Domesticity in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p.163. See also: Lynn A. Botelho, "The 17th Century," in A *History of Old Age*, ed. Pat Thane (Los Angeles: The J. Paul Getty Museum, 2005), p. 131.

[203] Anouk Janssen, "The Good, the Bad, and the Elderly," in *Old Age in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance: Interdisciplinary Approaches to a Neglected Topic*, edited by Albrecht Classen (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2007), 458. Translated from Latin to Dutch by Arnoud Visser. Janssen suggested that the paraphrase originated from Seneca's *Brieven aan Lucilius*, no. 26, par. 1–3; Otto van Veen, *Quinti Horati Flacci Emblemata* (Antwerp: Hieronymous Verdussen, 1607), pp. 162–163.

[204] Increased wisdom with age was significant to older women especially in the context of virtuous instruction, which I discuss in more detail in chapter four.

[205] Shulamith Shahar, *Growing Old in the Middle Ages: 'Winter Clothes Us in Shadow and Pain* (London: Routledge, 1997), 54. Shahar did not provide the original source for this quotation from Bernard Clairvaux. For more on Clairvaux and Luther see: Theo M.M.A.C. Bell, "Luther's Reception of Bernard Clairvaux," Concordia Theological Quarterly 59, no. 4 (October 1995): pp. 245–277; For Clairvaux and Calvin see: W. Stanford Reid, "Bernard

weakening state of old age as a time for elevated spiritual engagement would have resonated within the Dutch Republic.

Jacob Cats, in his *Houwelyck*, published in 1625, provided advice to women about how to behave at different stages of life, from girls, to brides (or wives), mothers, and widows. His last chapter on widows contains two sections. The first, as Wayne Franits describes, "Examines the transience of human existence (best illustrated by the decrepitude of the elderly) and the need to repent, to reject earthly matters in favor of spiritual ones."[206] The second section addressed widows and considered appropriate behaviors as they pertained to daily life and remarriage. As has already been discussed in chapter two, Cats aligned old age with widowhood, even though not all elderly women were widows.[207] Thus, he intended his widow-specific advice on piety and virtue to instruct all aged women on how to behave.

An engraving made around 1625–1630 by Cornelis Bloemaert (1603–1692) after a lost painting by his father Abraham Bloemaert (1564–1651) offers another view of an aged woman as the embodiment of piety [Figure 3:7].[208] Humbly dressed

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Clairvaux In The Thought Of John Calvin," *Westminster Theological Journal* 41, no. 1 (Fall 1978): pp. 127–128.

[206] Wayne E. Franits, *Paragons of Virtue: Women and Domesticity in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 161.

[207] For information specifically about widows in social and visual culture see: Ariadne Schmidt, "Van de Lusten geproefd: Wellust in het Weduwbeeld in de Vroegmoderne Periode: Twee Eeuwenoude Weduwebeelden, "*Jaarboek voor vrouwengeschiedenis* 20 (2000): pp. 65–83; A. Levy, ed. *Widowhood and Visual Culture in Early Modern Europe* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003).

[208] Though created in the early 1630s, the following painting provides a point of reference for Abraham Bloemaert's works of this type see: *Masters of Light: Dutch Painters in Utrecht during the Golden Age* (Baltimore: The Walters Art Gallery, 1997), cat. no. 33.

in a tunic and head wrap, the elderly woman bows her head in prayer as she holds a rosary, a symbol of Catholic devotion.[209] The rosary is important in the print's interpretation: the inscription reads, "What the hoop is for the child, the hunting spear for the youth, the sword for manhood, is the weapon of piety [the rosary] for old age."[210] This text references Catholic belief that the rosary was an important tool, or weapon, for the elderly in the final phase of one's life. Piety among the aged, however, was no less valued by Protestants than by Catholics.

A Novel Approach to Elderly Women in Art

It is important not to underestimate the extent to which Rembrandt and Lievens interacted with and were impacted by these beliefs and traditions. Evidence of their influence is perhaps most explicitly demonstrated by the many times they portrayed elderly women, some they knew and others they did not, behaving piously. They often looked to the Bible or other religious texts as sources of inspiration for paragons of aged female piety that they used in their *tronies* and history paintings. Their approach to portraying the elderly, however, was distinct. In their paintings, prints and drawings, they captured the underlying humanity of the elderly in ways

[209] For more on Utrecht as a largely Catholic city in the Dutch Republic, see: Benjamin J. Kaplan, "Confessionalism and Its Limits: Religion in Utrecht, 1600–1650," in *Masters of Light: Dutch Painters in Utrecht during the Golden Age* (Baltimore: The Walters Art Gallery, 1997), pp. 60–71.

[210] Anouk Janssen, *Grijsaards in Zwart-Wit: de verbeelding van ouderdom in de Nederlandse prentkunst (1550-1650)* (Walburg Pers: Zutphen, 2007), p. 179. Janssen credits translation from Latin to Dutch to Marcel Roethlisberger and M.J. Bok, *Abraham Bloemaert and his Sons: Paintings and Prints* (Doornspijk: Davaco, 1993), no. 485.

that are not found in images by other artists. The discussion in this dissertation has thus far focused on how Rembrandt's images of elderly women convey this humanity. The following section also features a few of Jan Lievens' paintings of elderly women to demonstrate how he similarly transformed the traditional stereotypical treatment of elderly women in his work.

Old Woman Praying

Rembrandt's painting of his mother on gilded copper, discussed in chapter one, and Bloemaert's engraving of an *Old Woman with a Rosary* both depict elderly women engaged in spiritual devotion [Figures 3:7–8]. Although the woman in Bloemaert's print was Catholic and Rembrandt's mother was not, the focus on spiritual piety of an elderly woman in these works is identical.[211] However, they differ in the degree to which reflect stereotypical portrayals of aged female piety. The woman in Bloemaert's print has stereotypically exaggerated features. The plethora of uniform wrinkles along her neck and on her face, take on a caricature-like appearance that, in conjunction with the inscription, broadly recall beliefs and traditions about the spiritual character of elderly women. Rembrandt's painting differs in that he emphasizes his mother's individual character by detailing her countenance and contemplative expression [Figure 3:8] While Rembrandt does accentuate his mother's

[211] P.J.M de Baar and Ingrid W.L. Moerman, "Rembrandt van Rijn en Jan Lievens, inwoners van Leiden," in *Rembrandt and Lievens in Leiden* (Leiden: Lakenhal, 1991), p. 38. De Baar and Moerman clarified that Rembrandt's family was likely Remonstrant and Lievens' family were Counter-Remonstrant, however the artists had contacts among both Protestant groups. They also had contacts with Catholic people, such as their teacher, Pieter Lastman, and Lievens, as I later show, likely spent time in predominantly Catholic Utrecht.

age, he focuses on her personal qualities rather than aligning her with stereotypical depictions of piety.

Old Woman Reading

Jan Lievens' *Old Woman Reading,* c. 1621–1623 captures what appears to be an ordinary moment in this woman's life as she sits in a warmly lit space, wrapped in a richly textured ermine cloak [Figure 3:9]. The brilliant white and dappled black fur contrasts with her vivid red tunic. Seated at a table that is laid with colorfully embroidered cloth and several leather-bound books, the woman peers down on a small book, perhaps a Bible, through a *pince-nez* perched on her nose.

Speaking to Lievens' precocious talent in his *Bescrijvinge der Stadt Leyden* (1641), Jan Orlers wrote, "In 1621, at the age of fourteen, he portrayed his mother so well and with such great skill that everyone was astonished by it."[212] Some scholars, finding it difficult to believe that this painting could be the work of an adolescent, have dated it around 1625.[213] However, other scholars, including Lloyd DeWitt

[212] "Inder Jare 1621. Out zijnde 14. Jaren, heeft by zijn Moeder so wel ende konstich geconterfeyt, dat yder hem daer over verwondert heeft." Christiaan Vogelaar et al: *Rembrandt and Lievens in Leiden* (Leiden: Waanders, 1991), p. 136' Roelof van Straten, *Young Rembrandt: The Leiden Years, 1606–1632* (Leiden: Foeleor Publishers, 2005), pp. 22–23; See also Lloyd DeWitt, "Evolution and Ambition in the Career of Jan Lievens (1607–1674)," *PhD diss.*, (University of Maryland, 2006), pp. 42–43.

[213] Bernard Schnackenburg, *Jan Lievens Friend and Rival of the Young Rembrandt: With a Catalogue Raisonné of his Early Leiden Work 1623–1632* (Petersburg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2016), pp. 177–178.

support Orlers' date. They convincingly distinguish it stylistically from Lievens' c. 1625 *Prophetess Reading*, (which likely portrays Rembrandt's mother).[214]

Old Woman Reading demonstrates how Lievens worked to assimilate the stylistic innovations of the Utrecht Caravaggisti upon returning to Leiden in 1621 after spending a period of time in Utrecht. where he would have seen paintings by Gerrit van Honthorst (1592–1656) and Dirck van Baburen (1595–1624).[215] Honthorst and Baburen, after having trained with Abraham Bloemaert and Paulus Moreelse (1571–1638), respectively, traveled to Rome where they studied Caravaggio's (1571–1610) revolutionary painting style.[216] In 1620, when they returned to Utrecht, their paintings reflected the influence of Caravaggio's realism, *chiaroscuro* lighting effects, bold palette, and closely cropped compositions.[217]

Both artists excelled in capturing a dramatic sense of realism, which they heightened by working on a large scale and by tightly cropping the picture plane.

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[214] Lloyd DeWitt, "Evolution and Ambition in the Career of Jan Lievens (1607–1674)," *PhD diss.*, (University of Maryland, 2006), pp. 42–43; Kurt Bauch, "Zum Werk des Jan Lievens I," Pantheon 25 (1967): 161; Roelof van Straten, *Young Rembrandt: The Leiden Years, 1606–1632* (Leiden: Foeleor Publishers, 2005), pp. 22–23; Jan Lievens, *Old Woman Reading*, ca. 1625, 81 x 69 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, SK-A-4702.

[215] Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., "Jan Lievens: Bringing New Light to an Old Master," in *Jan Lievens: A Dutch Master Rediscovered* (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2008), p. 6.

[216] Wheelock, "Jan Lievens," p. 6.

[217] Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., "Gerrit van Honthorst," Dutch Paintings of the Seventeenth Century, NGA Online Editions, https://purl.org/nga/collection/constituent/4378 (accessed March 2, 2023). On the homecoming reception thrown for Honthorst see: Marten Jan Bok, "Artists at Work: Their Lives and Livelihood," in Masters *of Light: Dutch Painters in Utrecht During the Golden Age* (Baltimore: Walters Art Gallery, 1997), pp. 86–87.

Honthorst was particularly renowned for his extreme *chiaroscuro* effects and his bold palette, whereas Baburen was known for his broad, forceful brushwork.[218] The specific works of Honthorst and Baburen that Lievens likely encountered during his brief stay in Utrecht until 1621 are not known, however elements of each of their styles are evident in *Old Woman Reading* [Figure 3:9].[219] In addition to working on a large, closely cropped scale, Lievens also used warm earthy tones and brilliant shades of red that recall Honthorst's palette in such works as his 1621/1622, *Boy Blowing on a Firebrand.*[220]

Precedents in Honthorst's work are also found here for Lievens' strong *chiaroscuro* lighting effects, which he used in modeling the woman's face. Lloyd DeWitt noted that the confidence and forcefulness of Lievens' brushwork–especially in the woman's ermine cloak and the long expressive strokes that he used to define her wrinkles–readily recall Dirck van Baburen's painting technique.[221] Though modeled in a much smoother manner, the creases along the forehead of Baburen's

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[218] Masters *of Light: Dutch Painters in Utrecht During the Golden Age* (Baltimore: Walters Art Gallery, 1997) cat. nos. 35–36, 38.

[219] Lloyd DeWitt proposed that Lievens could have also encountered works by these artists in Amsterdam while he trained there with Pieter Lastman. Lloyd DeWitt, "Evolution and Ambition in the Career of Jan Lievens (1607–1674)," *PhD diss.*, (University of Maryland, 2006), p. 37.

[220] Gerrit van Honthorst, *A Boy Blowing on a Firebrand*, 1621/22, oil on canvas, 75.5 x 64.5 cm, Art Institute of Chicago (2018.135). Honthorst painted another scene of a Soldier and a Girl with a Firebrand around 1622. See: *Masters of Light*, cat. no. 36. This theme also appears in Lievens' Leiden work three times. See: Bernhard Schnackenburg, *Jan Lievens: Friend and Rival of the Young Rembrandt: With a Catalogue Raisonné of His Early Work 1623–1632* (Petersburg: Michael Imhof Verlag, 2016), cat. nos. 20-22.

[221] Lloyd DeWitt, "Old Woman Reading," in *Jan Lievens: A Dutch Master Rediscovered* (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2008), pp. 82–83.

elderly procuress in *The Procuress* demonstrate his broad, vigorous painting technique [Figure 3:10].[222]

In his *The Procuress* of 1622, Dirck van Baburen portrayed three highly-realistic figures in a brothel scene [Figure 3:10]. The man's desire is visceral as he gazes upon the young, voluptuous woman who sensuously plucks the strings of her lute. With one hand, the man eagerly caresses her shoulder, and with the other, he presents her with a coin. Not so fast, the elderly woman almost seems to say, as she dominates the right side of the composition. Pointing to her hand, she announces her role in the painting as a procuress, an expert on all matters commercial sex, and she is here to get her money. The tenor of the painting is light-hearted in the characteristic manner of Caravaggesque paintings depicting scenes of sensual pleasure.[223] However, the procuress' gesture towards her palm, recalls the sin of avarice often associated with elderly women. As with lust, greed in elderly women was thought to reflect an imbalance in the bodily humors. Portrayals of aged women demonstrating greedy

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[222] Throughout the early to mid-1620s, Jan Lievens also distilled a number of themes commonly treated by the Utrecht Caravaggesque painters such as: tightly cropped religious scenes, genre scenes that explore sensual pleasure, musicians, and card players, as well as a number of single-figure studies that were often allegorical in nature. For more see: Wheelock and Dickey, *Jan Lievens: A Dutch Master Rediscovered* (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2008), cat. nos. 2-3, 5-7, 9-10, 12-13, 15.

[223] Lynn Federle Orr, "The Procuress," in Masters *of Light: Dutch Painters in Utrecht During the Golden Age* (Baltimore: Walters Art Gallery, 1997), pp. 244–246; See also Wayne Franits, "Emerging from the Shadows: Genre Painting by the Utrecht Caravaggisti and Its Contemporary Reception," in Masters *of Light: Dutch Painters in Utrecht During the Golden Age* (Baltimore: Walters Art Gallery, 1997), pp. 114–120.

behaviors were popularly satirized and warned against both in literary and visual traditions.[224]

In his passage on Lievens' *Old Woman Reading* from his 1641 city description of Leiden, Orlers stated that the subject of the painting was Jan Lievens' mother.[225] However, as Lloyd DeWitt astutely noted, the woman in the painting appears far older than Lievens' mother, Machtelt van Noortsant, who would have been around 35 to 40 years old when this painting was created.[226] Instead, DeWitt suggested that the woman was Lievens' paternal grandmother, Margaretha Smunx, who lived in Leiden with Lievens and his family, and who died in 1639.[227] Like Neeltgen van Zuytbrouck, Rembrandt's mother, only impersonal documents of birth, marriage, and burial remain for Margaretha Smunx, so little is known about her personality.[228] Still, the sensitive and expressive manner in which he rendered her in

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[224] Jane Kromm, "Anger, Envy, and Aging: Early Modern Transgressive Old Women," in *Women, Aging, and Art: A Crosscultural Anthology*, eds. Frima Fox Fox Hofrichter and Midori Yoshimoto (New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021), pp. 48–61; One year after Baburen's The Procuress, Honthorse painted *Old Woman Examining a Coin by a Lantern* (Sight or Avarice), 1623, 60 x 75 cm, Amsterdam, The Kremer Collection. An exquisite example of a nocturnal single-figure study, Honthorst similarly portrayed an older woman as greed, counting coins by the light of a lantern.

[225] "In the year 1621, being 14 years old, he painted his mother so well and skillfully that everyone was amazed by him because of it." Lloyd DeWitt, "Evolution and Ambition in the Career of Jan Lievens (1607–1674)," *PhD diss.*, (University of Maryland, 2006), p. 42.

[226] DeWitt, "Evolution and Ambition," p. 42; DeWitt, "Old Woman Reading," p. 82.

[227] DeWitt, "Evolution and Ambition," p. 42.

[228] Margaretha Smunx was from Ghent. With her first husband, Joos Hendricks, she had one child, Lievens' father, Lieven Hendricksz (d. 1642). Joos died at some time in Ghent, but we do not know what year. The next record we have of Margaretha is her remarriage to Andries Appelman on May 30, 1591. Together with her son Lieven, the couple immigrated out of the Spanish Netherlands, as protestants, to Leiden, though the timeline for their move is also not clear. Andries died in December 1626. He was buried at Leiden's Hooglandse Kerk near

this equal parts genre scene and portrait suggests that she was someone about whom he cared deeply.

In chapter one, I argued that Rembrandt's reverent portrayals of his mother reflected his personal connection to her, and I propose that the same argument may be applied here. These personal connections were important in Rembrandt's and Lievens' abilities to view these elderly women in such compassionate ways, ones in which they broke through the traditional stereotypical approach to depicting aged women in art. The woman in Lievens' painting is engaged in an activity that was viewed at that time as virtuously pious [Figure 3:9]. However, his painting offers more than a conventional image of a woman reading: it conveys an intimacy, familiarity, and humanity as she sits quietly with her book.

The Elderly Magdalene

Fingers knitted and resting on a skull, the elderly woman in Jan Lievens' painting looks up to the left with a contemplative expression [Figure 3:11]. While the model for this picture is not known, the subject is traditionally identified as the penitent Mary Magdalene as an aged woman.[229] During his Leiden years, Lievens

several other members of the Lievens family. Although Margaretha's second husband was not yet deceased in 1621, she had already been widowed, and would have, as was customary, worn a black mourning veil. From: P.J.M. de Baar, *De Leidse verwanten van Rembrandt van Rijn en hun Leidse afstammelingen tot heden* (Leiden: Gemeente-Archief, 1992), p. 16.

[229] Mary Magdalene is referred to by name in all four gospels. (Luke 7:36–50 KJV) One example from the Gospel of Luke tells of Jesus' first meeting with the Magdalene. In it, Jesus attends a dinner in the home of one of the Pharisees. While his host did not offer him water to wash his feet upon entering, the Magdalene, who was also there, wept before Jesus, pouring

painted this subject twice, which is unique as she was more commonly portrayed in the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries as a youthful long-haired beauty with references to her sinful past as a prostitute.[230] Lievens likely learned about her later years from the legend of Mary Magdalen or *The Golden Legend*.[231] The latter was originally published in 1265 but it was reprinted numerous times in many different languages.[232] Despite some variation, both tales describe similar events in the saint's life after Christ's ascension, including her living for many years in seclusion.[233]

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perfume on his feet. Jesus speaks of her actions and forgives her of her sins for her display of love. See also: David de Witt, "The Penitent Magdalene," in *Jan Lievens: A Dutch Master Rediscovered* (Washington D.C.: The National Gallery of Art, 2008), 128.

[230] David DeWitt, *The Bader Collection: Dutch and Flemish Paintings* (Ontario: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 2008), pp. 196–197. Lievens painted this subject twice in Leiden. I only focus on one. For the other: Jan Lievens, *The Penitent Magdalene*, 1625, oil on panel, 68 x 55 cm, Douai, Musée de la Chartreuse (inv. no. 140).

[231] According to Christopher Witcombe the legend of Mary Magdalen emerged as early as the seventh century. He also described that Mary Magdalene's story was conflated with that of Saint Mary of Egypt in *The Golden Legend*, which was written by the Italian author Jacopo da Voragine (ca. 1230–1298). Both tales lack any scriptural basis. Christopher Witcombe, "The Chapel of the Courtesan and the Quarrel of the Magdalens," *Art Bulletin* 84, no. 2 (2002): pp. 279–280.

[232] The Princeton Art Museum has a leaf from an early Dutch edition of *The Golden Legend*, dated ca. 1485 with seventeenth-century additions (x1951-135).

[233] The legend of Mary Magdalen describes how after the ascension, Mary retreated to the desert because she could no longer look at any men. She stayed in the desert for thirty years, living naked and without food or water, though she never felt the negative effects of these circumstances. Christopher Witcombe described, "At the canonical hours angels came down from heaven and took her up in the air, where she was nourished by the heavenly joys. The angels then returned her to her cave in the rocks. After thirty years a holy priest came upon her in the desert; he lent her some clothes and directed her to his church, where he gave her the sacrament. She then died and the priest buried her." Witcombe, "The Chapel of the Courtesan and the Quarrel of the Magdalens," p. 279. *The Golden Legend* states that, "after living as a prostitute for seventeen years in Alexandria, Mary traveled by ship (paid for by selling her body to all the men on board) from Egypt to Palestine where, through the intercession of the Virgin Mary, she repented and retreated to the desert. She lived there for many years on three loaves of bread. Eventually her clothes wore out and she lived naked."

The elderly Magdalene's life as a hermit may have been of particular interest in the context of Leiden. Though the older women living in Leiden's *hofjes* were not viewed as repentant in the same way as the elderly Magdalene, they behaved in a quiet, pious, and contemplative manner. They were also expected to conduct themselves in the manner of a saint or a hermit, as is evident in documents connected to the Bethaniënhofje,.[234] It is not known the extent to which Lievens knew about specific rules of a *hofje*, however, he probably observed the hermit-like lives led by Leiden's *hofje* residents. His unconventional and compassionate rendering of the elderly Magdalene, thus, likely reflects his knowledge of, or perhaps contacts with, these types of people in his immediate environment.

Conclusion

The manner in which Rembrandt and Lievens imbued qualities of humanity and individuality in their portrayals of aged women is exceptional in the cultural context of Netherlandish visual and literary traditions. Their compassionate treatment differed greatly from the stereotypical one found in the images made by most Dutch and Flemish artists of the sixteenth- and seventeenth centuries. While they interacted with popular themes, such as elderly women praying or reading, they did not play into the conventional approach that portrayed aged women as positive or negative types,

[234] Henk Looijesteijn, "Funding and founding private charities: Leiden almshouses and their founders, 1450–1800," in *Continuity and Change* 27, no. 2 (2012): pp. 225–230.

such as lust, avarice, or piety, that broadly recalled cultural ideas and traditions about their moral, physical, or spiritual character.

Moreover, as this dissertation has shown throughout chapters one, two and three they portrayed elderly women because they were fascinated by them, and they sought to bring to life the depth of character and humanity that they identified in their personal relationships with them and in their observations of them in their daily lives in Leiden. The artistic goals and the circumstances of their surroundings forged their distinct respectful, and compassionate attitude towards elderly women that resulted in a number of remarkable images from their Leiden periods.

Chapter 4: Elderly Women after Rembrandt in Leiden

Introduction

On February 14, 1628, at the age of fifteen, Gerrit Dou (1613–1675) began his apprenticeship with Rembrandt in Leiden. By that time, he had already trained with two different artists. Six years earlier, in 1622, he was sent to the local engraver Bartholomeus Dolendo (ca. 1570–1626), with whom he studied the principles of draftsmanship for one and a half years.[235] According to Jan Orlers, he then spent the following two and a half years learning from the Leiden glass-painter, Pieter Couwenhorn (ca. 1599–1654).[236] After Couwenhorn, Dou's father, Douwe Jansz., owned the second most in demand church glass workshop in Leiden.[237] The course of his training, and the appearance of his name in both the 1625 and 1627 *glazenmaker's* guild books, suggest that the hope was for him to continue in his father's line of work.[238] However, this was not the direction he ultimately pursued. Orlers described how the young Dou was reckless in the way he handled and installed glass, which led

[235] Rudolf Ekkart, "Leidse schilders, tekenaars en graveurs uit de zestiende en het begin van de zeventiende eeuw," *Leidse Jaarboekje* (1974): pp. 171–96.

[236] "By den Kunstigen Glaes-schrijver Mr Pieter Couwenhorn, op dat hy deselve konst mocht leeren." Jan Orlers, *Bescrijvinge der stad Leiden* (Leiden, 1641), p. 377. For Couwenhorn see: Egbert Pelinck, "Pieter Couwenhorn, glasschrijver te Leiden," *Oud Holland* 68 (1953): pp. 51–56.

[237] Ronni Baer, "The Life and Art of Gerrit Dou," in *Gerrit Dou 1613–1675: Master Painter in the Age of Rembrandt*, edited by Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 29.

[238] Baer, "Gerrit Dou," p. 29.

his father, who feared for his safety, "to send [his son] to learn the art of painting" instead.[239]

As a teacher, Rembrandt left an indelible impression on Dou. The master's formative influence is connected to Dou's development of a meticulous and descriptive painting style that he would evolve into his characteristic *fijnschilder* (fine painting) technique. Dou's training as a draughtsman and *glasschrijver* meant that he had an aptitude for producing small, delicately executed images.[240] Rembrandt probably recognized Dou's talent in these regards, as he too favored small-scale imagery and a refined manner during these years.[241]

Rembrandt's influence is also evident in Gerrit Dou's subject matter. Throughout the 1630s, Dou depicted Rembrandt's mother in his *tronies* with a variety of attributes, and outfits even after Rembrandt moved to Amsterdam in 1631. Christiaan Vogelaar clarified that the artist's mother likely did not continue to pose for Dou, but rather, he probably created variations by referring to earlier *tronies* that he made of her under Rembrandt's tutelage.[242] In the early years of the 1640s Dou

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[239] "Hem te besteden om de Konste van't Schilderen to moghen leeren." Jan Orlers, *Bescrijvinge der stad Leiden* (Leiden, 1641), p. 377.

[240] Ronni Baer, "The Life and Art of Gerrit Dou," in *Gerrit Dou 1613–1675: Master Painter in the Age of Rembrandt*, edited by Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 29.

[241] Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (Amsterdam, 1719; rev. ed., The Hague, 1753; reprint, Amsterdam, 1980), pp. 2–3.

[242] Christian Vogelaar, "Old Woman Reading a Lectionary," in *Rembrandt's Mother: Myth and Reality*, eds. Christiaan Vogelaar and Gerbrand Korevaar (Leiden: Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal, 2005), p. 120.

moved away from depicting elderly women, mainly because he became preoccupied with portraiture during this period.[243] However, around mid-century, he returned to the subject with renewed vigor at the same time that he dedicated himself to creating genre scenes, likely in response to the new market developing for these types of images of daily life.[244]

Gerrit Dou and Rembrandt's Mother

Old Woman Reading, c. 1631–1632 is an exceptional example of Dou's early style of painting [Figure 4:1]. This work is distinct in his *oeuvre* because of its relatively large format and breadth of execution. With a delicate hand, Dou sensitively rendered each fine crease on Rembrandt's mother's skin, treating the varying textures of her fur coat and cap with great precision. He extended his highly descriptive technique to the leather-bound book she holds, which is thought to be a Catholic lectionary opened to the beginning of chapter nineteen in the Gospel of St. Luke.[245]

A comparison between this work and a Rembrandt depiction of his mother from approximately the same date demonstrates these artists' differing goals [Figures

[243] Ronni Baer, "The Paintings of Gerrit Dou (1613–1675)," 3 vols. *Ph.D. diss*. New York University, 1990, pp. 38–40.

[244] Dou was probably influenced by Gerard ter Borch whose high life genre scenes that dealt with themes of love were popular around this time. For more on Ter Borch see: Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., ed. *Gerard ter Borch* (Washington D.C.: National Gallery of Art, 2004).

[245] Rotermund clarified that this was a popular devotional book in the home by the sixteenth-century. Hans Martin Rotermund, "Rembrandt's Bibel," *Netherlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 8 (1957): pp. 134–138.

4:1–2]. In his bust-length portrayal, Rembrandt depicted his mother seated with a large tome across her lap. She is wearing Orientalized clothing, an imaginative manner of dress that aligns her with a Biblical matriarch such as the Prophetess Hannah [Figure 4:2]. While Rembrandt's painting reflects his broader associations with history painting and the inventive way he explored creative possibilities for depicting his mother as a Biblical subject, Dou's painting demonstrates his focus on everyday reality, an inclination which indicates his basic lack of interest in rendering history paintings [Figure 4:1].

Although both artists executed their paintings in a refined manner, they sought differing effects. Rembrandt's skillfully modulated passages of light and shadow not only direct the viewer's gaze, but also engage his or her emotions [Figure 4:2]. Rembrandt focused light on the large tome lying open in his mother's lap as her hand tracks the words she reads. From here, the viewer's eye shifts naturally to consider the woman's countenance, which the artist has cast in full shadow, a technique that Rembrandt often used to invite the viewer to consider the inner workings of a figure's mind.

As opposed to Rembrandt, Dou cast an even light over his image, thereby using his refined manner of painting for both descriptive and thematic effect [Figure 4:1]. As Christiaan Vogelaar has proposed, Dou's careful rendering of Rembrandt's mother's advanced age and the luxurious quality of her garments have *vanitas* connotations about the transience of worldly existence.[246] Vogelaar noted that the

[246] Christiaan Vogelaar, "Old Woman Reading a Lectionary," in *Rembrandt's Mother: Myth and Reality*, eds. Christiaan Vogelaar and Gerbrand Korevaar (Leiden: Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal, 2005), pp. 119–120.

Biblical chapter the elderly woman reads focuses on the story of Zacchaeus–a wealthy tax collector who ultimately renounced his possessions as a show of his good intentions.[247]

Dou treated Rembrandt's mother and the *vanitas* theme again later in the 1630s in a characteristically small and detailed painting in the Dresden Gemäldegalerie [Figure 4:3]. This compelling oval panel painting shows the elderly woman reading, but here the viewer is unable to determine what passage has captured her attention. Nevertheless, the delicate beaded chain draped across her shoulders and the silver tazza and money bag lying on the round stone table beside her indicate that this painting, too, is concerned with the transience of worldly possessions.[248] These early images of Rembrandt's mother by Dou demonstrate how he balanced a sensitive approach to her appearance with his interest in creating highly descriptive images that evoked associations with well-known ideas and symbolism.

Gerrit Dou's Mature Approach to Older Women

When Rembrandt moved to Amsterdam in 1631, Dou remained in Leiden where he continued to develop his signature *fijnschilderij* style, as in the previous painting, dated c. 1635. Dou's remarkable ability to portray, "small, subtle, and

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[247] Vogelaar, "Old Woman," pp. 119–120.

[248] Two examples of paintings like this include: *Old Woman Reading a Book*, c. 1635, oil on panel, 24 x 19.5 cm, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister (inv. no. 1720); *Old Woman Reading a Pamphlet*, c. 1635, oil on panel, 12.3 x 9 cm, Dresden, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister (inv. no. 1719).

intricate things," was quickly recognized, and led to early success as an independent artist even though he was only in his early twenties.[249] One of his most remarkable successes occurred in 1635 when Pieter Spiering (1595–1652), the Swedish ambassador to the Dutch Republic, acquired the first right of refusal to his paintings.[250] The proprietary nature of this arrangement is indicative of the market that developed around Dou's paintings.

To say the artist was particular about his practice is an understatement when one considers the level of obsession he demonstrated in each facet of his painting process in pursuit of perfection. Following a visit to Dou's studio in 1640, Joachim von Sandrart reported that Dou did not work on bad weather days for fear that wind might blow dust into his paints, an occurrence he took added precautions to prevent by nightly stowing his palette and brushes in a chest near his easel.[251] Additionally, and perhaps more compulsively, Dou sat quietly in his stool for minutes before painting to allow dust in the air to settle in his studio. For his meticulous and drawn out manner of production, the artist charged an exorbitant hourly fee, which made his

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[249] "Een uytnemend Meester, insonderheydt in cleyne, subtile ende curieuse dinge." Jan Orlers, *Beschrijvinge der stad Leyden* (Leiden, 1641), p. 377. Philips Angel, a Leiden artist and associate of Dou, also described his early success in his *Lof der Schilderkonst* (Leiden, 1642).

[250] Piet Bakker, "Gerrit Dou" (2017). In *The Leiden Collection Catalogue*, 4th ed. Edited by Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. and Elizabeth Nogrady with Caroline Van Cauwenberge. New York, 2023–. https://theleidencollection.com/artists/gerrit-dou/ (accessed February 14, 2024).

[251] Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr., "A Reappraisal of Gerard Dou's Reputation," in *The William A. Clark Collection* (Baltimore: The Pridemark Press, 1978), pp. 61–68; Joachim von Sandrart, *Teutsche Academie der Edelen, Bu-, Bild, und Mahlerey-Kunste*, ed. A.R. Peltzer (Munich, 1925), pp. 195-196.

work attainable only to the elite.[252] Ronni Baer argued that the exclusive patronage Dou developed allowed him to expand on a range of subjects because he did not have to paint for the open market.[253] Perhaps for this reason, Dou returned to the subject of elderly women in the 1650s, but, instead of focusing on *vanitas* motifs, he shifted his focus to depict scenes that emphasized the virtues exhibited by elderly women in the context of everyday life.

One such painting is a small night scene from around 1655 is *Old Woman Cutting Bread* in the Boston, Museum of Fine Arts. In this painting Dou depicted two boys with a kindly older woman, presumably their grandmother who cuts bread for their meal [Figure 4:4]. An oil lamp on the table casts a seductive warmth over the figures and their modest supper, which creates a peaceful ambiance for the scene. The seated boy who peers out toward the viewer grips the handle of his bowl eagerly eating his portion of soup. His brother stands in front of him, hat in hand, as though he had just rushed in to take part in the evening meal. He waits patiently for his slice of bread with a longing expression that Dou illuminates with light from an oil lamp. The direction of his gaze draws the viewer's focus to the elderly woman, who is also illuminated, albeit more softly, by this same light source.

Nurturing, guiding, and in some cases, disciplining the young were roles that older women often assumed in seventeenth-century Dutch households. Virtuous

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[252] Von Sandrart also recalled that he complimented the skill with which Dou had rendered a broomstick in one of his paintings. In response to this, Dou remarked that he still needed to work on the broom for three more days. Von Sandrart, *Teutsche,* pp. 195-196.

[253] Ronni Baer, "The Life and Art of Gerrit Dou," in *Gerrit Dou 1613–1675: Master Painter in the Age of Rembrandt*, edited by Arthur K. Wheelock, Jr. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), p. 42.

instruction was a popular theme that was treated by a number of the leading genre painters of his day, namely by Gerard ter Borch (1617–1681), and closer to home by Dou's pupil, Frans van Mieris I (1635–1681), and follower Quiringh van Brekelenkam (1622–1668).[254] As with Dou, their paintings depicting elderly women often feature small family gatherings at meals and resting during evening hours.

Another painting in which Dou explored the theme of virtuous instruction is his later *Herring Seller and Boy,* ca. 1664, although he introduced a more disciplinary tone in this scene [Figure 4:5]. Here, an elderly woman and a young man stand behind an illusionistic stone window ledge on which are arrayed vegetables, a striped, somewhat ragged cloth, and a shallow wooden barrel of fish. The type of hat worn by the boy identifies him as a fisherboy, which suggests that he has brought his catch from the Vismarkt to the old woman. This was likely a familiar scene for Dou since he lived just around the corner from Leiden's centrally located fish market along the river Rijn.[255]

Resting one hand on the brim of the barrel, the woman looks to the boy with a rather severe expression as she holds the tail of a herring between her thumb and

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[254] Gerard ter Borch, *Old Woman and Boy Take a Modest Mea*l, c. 1648, oil on panel, 28.9 x 22 cm, Frankfurt, Städel Museum; Quentin Buvelot, *Frans van Mieris 1635–1681* (Zwolle: Waanders Publishers, 2005), cat. no. 3; "Saying Grace,"; Quiringh van Brekelenkam, *Old Woman Combing a Child's Hair*, 1648, oil on panel, 57 x 53.5 cm, Leiden, Lakenhal Museum (S 47). For more on the theme of virtuous instruction see: Wayne E. Franits, *Paragons of Virtue: Women and Domesticity in Seventeenth-Century Dutch Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 191–194.

[255] Similar hats are worn by young men in paintings by Frans Hals and Jan Steen. Ronni Baer, "Herring Seller and Boy" (2017). In *The Leiden Collection Catalogue*, 4th ed. Edited by Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. and Elizabeth Nogrady with Caroline Van Cauwenberge. New York, 2023–. https://theleidencollection.com/artwork/the-herring-seller-and-boy/ (accessed February 27, 2024).

forefinger. Her displeased expression suggests she is not happy with the quality or quantity of fish that he brought her. Despite her chiding, the boy respectfully hears the woman out. Even with its stricter tone, this painting is alluring both because of the relatability of the exchange and the engaging way the figures are framed within this illusionistic window. These genre scenes from the 1650s and 1660s demonstrate that more than thirty years removed from Rembrandt's studio, Gerrit Dou continued to develop his approach to rendering older women, which shifted from associations of transience and *vanitas* to tender images of virtuous guidance of younger members of society.

Gerrit Dou and Leiden's Charitable World

One wonders whether Leiden's charitable institutions played a role in Dou's engagement with elderly subjects. The artist not only created several images of aged women, but also several elderly male hermits. He spent his entire life on the Kort Rapenburg–just a few minutes' walk from his childhood home. Dou was likely impressed upon by the city's expansive charitable establishments that tended to aged people, which were so influential to Rembrandt and Lievens. It is possible, given the exclusivity of his well-heeled patrons, that Dou recognized that paintings of the aged could appeal to elite clientele who were also connected to Leiden's charitable institutions.

Johan de Bye (c.1621/1622–before 1672) was one such potential patron. After Pieter Spiering died in 1652, he became the largest collector of Dou's paintings. By

1665, De Bye had 27–29 of Dou's works in his possession.[256] Through family and his own efforts, De Bye was involved in a number of Leiden's charitable causes. By marriage, he was related to Eva van Hoogeveen (1594–1652), the founder of a *hofje* dedicated to widows and spinsters over the age of fifty by the same name that was also established in 1652.[257] Unfortunately, however, nothing is known about the nature of De Bye's connection with Eva. In any event, De Bye was likely familiar with her brother, Gerrit van Hoogeveen (1587–1665), who collected works by Rembrandt and Lievens. In addition to his connection with this *hofje*, De Bye also worked at the St. Elisabethgasthuis.[258] Between 1663–1664, he was a regent at this institution, which provided poor women with medical treatment and sheltered itinerant women for short periods of time. Importantly, when De Bye exhibited his collection of Dou paintings on the Breestraat in 1665, he charged visitors and potential buyers a modest fee that he planned to donate to the poor.[259] Given De Bye's connections to Leiden's charitable world and his status as a collector of Dou's

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[256] Piet Bakker, "Gerrit Dou and His Collectors in the Golden Age" (2017). In *The Leiden Collection Catalogue*, 4th ed. Edited by Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. and Elizabeth Nogrady with Caroline Van Cauwenberge. New York, 2023–. https://theleidencollection.com/essays/gerrit-dou-and-his-collectors-in-the-golden-age/ (accessed February 14, 2024).

[257] Eva's uncle was the well-known humanist writer, Petrus Scriverius (1576–1660). His wife was Johan de Bye's aunt. Piet Bakker, "Rembrandt and the Emergence of the Leiden Art Market," in *Leiden circa 1630: Rembrandt Emerges* (Ontario: Agnes Etherington Art Centre, 2019), 81. I discussed the Eva van Hoogeveenhof at length in chapter two.

[258] Piet Bakker, "Gerrit Dou."

[259] Ronni Baer, "The Paintings of Gerrit Dou (1613–1675)," vol. 1. *Ph.D. diss*. New York University, 1990, pp. 104–105.

work, it is possible that Dou painted elderly subjects because they appealed to patrons like him.

Dou's Influence and The Continued Influence of Leiden

Dou's genre scenes of elderly women were also quite influential on his pupil Frans van Mieris I and his follower Quiringh van Brekelenkam. Both Leiden-based artists were fascinated by the subject matter, portraying older women in their numerous domestic scenes. Amidst the growing market for paintings of everyday life developing in the Republic around mid-century it is intriguing to observe the various ways these artists rendered elderly women.

Frans van Mieris I and Quiringh van Brekelenkam's Elderly Women

Frans van Van Mieris trained with Gerrit Dou in the early 1650s, and the master's decisive influence on his early work demonstrates how he quickly assimilated his meticulous and fine manner of painting as well as an interest in modest domestic scenes.[260] Even before joining Leiden's Guild of St. Luke on May 14, 1658, Van Mieris painted several masterful scenes based on everyday life, a

[260] Similar to Dou, Van Mieris started out training as a craftsman, specifically as a goldsmith, as this was his father, Jan van Mieris' profession. In 1651 he created a small painting of St. Eligius for the Leiden guild of goldsmiths and silversmiths. Around that time he apprenticed with the art teacher and glass painter, Abraham van Toorenvliet, and then he later worked in Gerrit Dou's and Abraham van den Tempel's studios. Before 1655, he returned to Dou's studio as an apprentice. Quentin Buvelot, "Frans van Mieris' Reputation," in *Frans van Mieris 1635–1681* (Washington: The National Gallery of Art, 2005), pp. 13; Buvelot, "Saying Grace," p. 76.

number of which portrayed elderly women. *Saying Grace*, c. 1650/55, is one such lovely example [Figure 4:6]. Seated before a boy, perhaps her grandson, and her spinning wheel, an old woman pauses to ensure the boy is saying grace properly before she continues to cut him a piece of bread. Van Mieris likely created this painting in response to Dou's *Old Woman Cutting Bread* in Boston [Figure 4:4]. In his take on this theme of virtuous instruction Van Mieris portrayed an open, unadorned interior that focuses attention on the figures' exchange, and the elderly woman's authority, as a virtuous role model, in raising the young man.[261]

A slightly later genre scene by Van Mieris, *Sending the Boy for Beer*, c. 1655–1657, captures a loving exchange between a boy and his grandparents [Figure 4:7]. Set in a simple peasant interior, the boy stands holding an empty wooden tankard before the seated grandmother figure. Pausing her work of scraping carrots, a theme that Dou treated in a genre scene with a similar setting around 1645–1650, the woman looks at the boy with a soft, kind expression, offering him a coin for beer.[262] Beside the woman stands a doting grandfather figure, who, with a warm smile, reaches into his jacket, likely for another coin so the boy may also get himself a treat on his errand.[263]

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[261] Dou also portrayed a similar exchange between an elderly woman and a young boy in the background of a niche genre piece from around 1640. It is possible that Van Mieris also viewed this work as a means for inspiration see: Gerrit Dou, *Maidservant at a Window*, c. 1640, oil on panel, 38 x 28 cm, Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen.

[262] For Dou comparanda see: Gerrit Dou, *The Carrot Scraper*, c. 1645–1650, oil on panel, 47 x 36 cm, Montpelier, Musée Fabre.

[263] Quentin Buvelot, "Sending the Boy for Beer," in *Frans van Mieris 1635–1681* (Washington: The National Gallery of Art, 2005), pp. 92–94. Buvelot noted how Van Mieris borrowed the figure of the man slipping his hand into his jacket from Adriaen van Ostade, a low-life genre scene painter whose images of peasant family scenes were particularly influential on the artist during the mid to late 1650s.

Unlike Van Mieris, Quiringh van Brekelenkam was probably not a Dou pupil, although the identity of his teacher is not known.[264] He emulated themes Dou portrayed, among them elderly women praying or performing household chores. However, unlike Dou he did not paint in a detailed manner. He painted quickly and his works are quite repetitive, which means that the prices he charged for his work were low. Wayne Franits noted that they, "Probably sold for 8 to 12 guilders each, far less than the immense sums netted by Dou and Van Mieris. Thus, the artist's clientele consisted principally of collectors of more modest means."[265] Franits noted that many of Van Brekelenkam's paintings of elderly women are listed in the inventories of Leiden's collectors, which confirms the popularity of this subject in Leiden.[266]

Van Brekelenkam's *Saying Grace*, 1648–1654 depicts a pious older woman in her home [Figure 4:8]. Seated at a table laid with a modest meal of bread, butter, and cheese, the woman clasps her palms together in prayer as she balances a bowl of soup on her knees.[267] To her left is a spinning wheel as well as a distaff and a spindle

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[264] Van Brekelenkam joined Leiden's Guild of St. Luke on April 11, 1648, the same year it was founded see: Angelika Lasius, *Quiringh van Brekelenkam* (Doornspijk: Davaco, 1992), p. 8; Wayne E. Franits, *Dutch Seventeenth-Century Genre Painting: Its Stylistic and Thematic Evolutions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 131.

[265] Wayne E. Franits, *Dutch Seventeenth-Century Genre Painting: Its Stylistic and Thematic Evolutions* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), p. 131; See also: Eric Jan Sluijter, "Schilders van 'cleyne, subtile ende curieuse dingen'; Leiden 'fijnschilders' in contemporaine bronnen." in *Leidse Fijnschilders: van Gerrit Dou tot Frans van Mieris de Jonge, 1630–1760*, ed. Eric Jan Sluijter, Marlies Enklaar, and Paul Nieuwenhuizen (Leiden: Museum De Lakenhal, 1988), p. 41.

[266] Franits, *Dutch Seventeenth-Century Genre,* p. 131.

[267] Angelika Lasius noted the similarities between this painting and Nicolaes Maes' later *Old Woman Saying Grace*, c. 1656. Indeed these works share in their focus on pious older women before a meal, and both artists used a vertical format. They also both depict small gray tabby cats and women wearing black bodices, white collars, and red sleeves. Iit is possible that,

laying on the floor next to a tabby cat who appears to be waiting for fallen scraps. The theme of this painting recalls Dou's *The Spinner's Prayer*, c. 1645, in Munich, which similarly shows an older woman praying before a meal beside a spinning wheel and pet, though in Dou's case he portrayed a resting white dog.[268] Both women wear similar garments consisting of a black bodice, white collar, and red sleeves, typical dress of the lower classes.[269]

A further example of Van Brekelenkam's repertoire is *Old Woman Cleaning a Herring*, ca. 1650 [Figure 4:9]. This small minimal scene depicts a charmingly simplistic vision of domesticity. Seated at a table arrayed with a modest spread of bread, carrots, spring onions, and a pewter flagon, the content elderly woman in a black cap prepares fish for her meal. The woman's placement behind a table in a niche-like setting and the arrangement of food in the foreground as still-life elements, especially the spray of carrots, also recall Dou's genre scenes from this period.

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given Van Brekelenkam's high output, Maes encountered a similar work back home in Dordrecht where he began his career as a genre scene painter after leaving Rembrandt's studio in Amsterdam in 1653. See: Angelika Lasius, *Quiringh van Brekelenkam* (Doornspijk: Davaco, 1992), p. 23. For more on Nicolaes Maes see: William R. Robinson, *The Early Works of Nicolaes Maes, 1653 to 1661*," vol. 1. Ph.D. diss. Harvard University, 1996. For the Maes painting in question see: Nicolaes Maes, *Old Woman Saying Grace, Known as 'The Prayer without End*,' c. 1656, oil on canvas, 134 x 113 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

[268] Gerrit Dou, *The Spinner's Prayer*, c. 1645, oil on panel, 27.5 x 28.5 cm, Munich, Alte Pinakothek; Gerrit Dou, *Dog at Rest,* 1650, oil on panel, 16.5 x 21.6 cm, Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

[269] For the mention that this manner of clothing typified that of the lower class see: Ariane van Suchtelen, "Genre–Picturing Everyday Life" in *Nicolaes Maes* (The Hague: Mauritshuis, 2020), p. 60. For examples of Dou's women wearing this style of clothing see: *Old Woman Saying Grace*, 1645–1650, oil on panel, 27.7 x 28.3 cm, Munich, Alte Pinakothek; *The Quack*, 1652, oil on panel, 112 x 83 cm, Rotterdam, Museum Boijmans van Beuningen.

In addition to Dou's influence, Leiden's distinct social environment likely played an important role in Van Mieris' and Van Brekelenkam's interest in portraying scenes of aged women engaged in their daily activities. A strong argument can be made that these artists depicted virtuous, pious, and contemplative elderly women so frequently because such individuals were central to the tapestry of life in Leiden. Indeed, between 1636 and 1660 Leiden gained six more *hofjes*, and by the end of the century nine more were established.[270] The compassionate character of Dou's, Van Mieris', and Van Brekelenkam's depictions of elderly women, as well as the, demand and quantity of such works, reflects the same respect towards the aged in Leiden's society evident in Rembrandt's and Lievens' works from the late 1620s and early 1630s.

[270] Henk Looijesteijn, "Funding and founding private charities: Leiden almshouses and their founders, 1450–1800," in *Continuity and Change* 27, no. 2 (2012): pp. 225–226.

Conclusion

Rembrandt's fascination with rendering old age is the subject of much intrigue and acclaim. Throughout his career, in his *tronies*, portraits, genre scenes, and stories from the Bible and mythology, the artist found creative possibilities in the representation of elderly people, capturing them with consummate skill and compassion for their moving emotional presences and expressive qualities. Through my own formative experiences in Leiden, I developed a fascination with the role of elderly women in the lives and the art of Rembrandt, his early colleague Jan Lievens, and his first student Gerrit Dou. In addition to being motivated to undergo this study by the prospect of contributing to early Rembrandt scholarship, I also invested myself in these artists' Leiden era portrayals of older women because I, like so many other people, am deeply moved by these images. Thus, I wanted to learn more about them: their character, their appeal, and what shaped them.

As the most recognizable elderly woman that all three of the focal artists of this study depicted, Rembrandt's mother has received the most scholarly attention, and for good reason. As I demonstrated in chapter one, she was an exceedingly significant model, especially for Rembrandt, whose images of her show she was someone he valued and who inspired him. While Rembrandt's mother was a favorite model among these artists, she was by no means the only elderly woman to capture their attention.

The connections that Rembrandt, Jan Lievens, and Gerrit Dou had with elderly women outside of their homes resulted from Leiden's distinct social and cultural character. Leiden had a relatively rich charitable world compared with other

major cities in the Dutch Republic. During the seventeenth-century, the number of charitable establishments, such as *hofjes* that primarily housed and tended to women over the age of fifty, grew exponentially in Leiden because of economic prosperity in the city. This study proposes that Rembrandt's, Lievens', and Dou's many images of unknown older women were shaped by their knowledge of, and proximity to, these structures, and by their interactions with residents and those who founded and ran these establishments.

The compassionate way Rembrandt, Lievens, and Dou depicted elderly women is another significant theme of this study. In addition to the large number of times they portrayed such individuals, the sympathetic character of their images makes them noteworthy in the context of seventeenth-century Dutch art. The compassionate character of their images is often attributed to two factors: their fascination with old age, and their interest in portraying people they encountered in daily life. In this dissertation, I provide a more in depth context for the emotional and sympathetic character of these artists' depictions of elderly women by considering more fully their place in these artists' lives, both at home and more broadly in society.

The four chapters of this study present evidence for how the elderly women in Rembrandt's, Lievens', and Dou's lives in Leiden informed their art. In chapter one I review the evidence for the identity of Rembrandt's mother, the elderly woman that he most frequently represented early in his career. This chapter demonstrates how the artist's sensitive depictions of his mother reflect her formative significance in his life. Chapter two examines the role of Leiden's charitable institutions in the development of Rembrandt's and Jan Lievens' fascination with elderly females. It notes the artists'

proximity to establishments like *hofjes* and *gasthuizen*, and identifies specific instances in which the artists were connected to Leiden's charitable institutions. Chapter three demonstrates how Rembrandt and Lievens transformed the traditional stereotypical approach to these subjects in Netherlandish art through the humanity and individuality of their depictions of older women. Finally, chapter four, which focuses largely on the elderly women that Gerrit Dou portrayed in Leiden during the 1630s and later during the 1650s and 1660s, shows that the city's distinct social and cultural environment, which fostered an attitude of respect towards the aged, continued to be an important influence in the way artists depicted older women.

Because of this project's limited scope, I was unable to pursue every avenue of interest, even within the art of Rembrandt and his Leiden circle. For example, Rembrandt, Lievens, and Gerrit Dou frequently portrayed elderly men as well as older women, and I would like to examine this aspect of their artistic interests. Another subject of interest are possible connections between the many depictions of hermits in these artists' works and references to hermits in the founding principles of Leiden's charitable institutions. As with images of older women, these depictions of elderly men and hermits may reflect a respect towards the aged that was fostered in Leiden during the seventeenth-century.

Another related avenue of research I would like to pursue is to expand the scope of my investigations of elderly women in Dutch art beyond Leiden. I would like to revisit the works of Nicolaes Maes and his morally attuned yet often humorous genre paintings of older women, which I examined in my master's thesis. A question that I now have is whether the character and number of charitable institutions in

Dordrecht differed substantially from those in Leiden, which might help explain Maes' distinctive approach to rendering elderly women.

The overarching dignity of Rembrandt's, Jan Lievens', and Gerrit Dou's portrayals of elderly women is a question that has not previously been addressed in relation to social and cultural aspects of Leiden during the seventeenth-century. I am indebted to scholars and archivists who have made it their mission to bring to life Leiden's distinct character and history as a rich artistic center. I am also grateful for the opportunities that allowed me to cultivate my own experiences and knowledge of the city and the significance of elderly women to its legacy. I am pleased that there is an emerging interest in art history in elderly women at conferences and in recent publications, and I hope that my study provides fertile ground for further investigations into the elderly in Dutch art. The way this subject contributes to illustrating artists' worlds is fascinating, and I look forward to pursuing further research in this realm.

Appendices

Appendix I: Rembrandt's Mother

I. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Tobit Accusing Anna of Stealing the Kid*, 1626, oil on panel, 39.5 x 30 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. SK-A-4717).

II. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Simeon and Hannah in the Temple*, 1628, oil on panel, 55.4 x 43.7 cm, Hamburg, Kunsthalle (inv. 88).

III. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Musical Company*, 1626, oil on panel, 63,4 x 47.6 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. SK-A-4674).

IV. Rembrandt van Rijn, *An old Woman called 'The Artist's Mother,'* c.1627–1629, oil on panel, 61.3 x 47.4 cm, London, Royal Collection Trust (RCIN 405000).

V. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Old Woman Praying*, c. 1629–1630, oil on gilded copper, 15.5 x 12.2 cm, Salzburger Landessammlungen Residenzgalerie (inv. 549).

VI. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Old Woman Reading a Book* (so-called) *Prophetess Anna*, 1631, oil on panel, 59.8 x 47.7 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. SK-A-3066).

VII. Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Artist's Mother, Head only, Full Face*, 1628, etching, retouched with black chalk by Rembrandt, 63 x 64 mm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. RP-P-OB-747).

VIII. Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Artist's Mother, Head only, Full Face*, 1628, etching, 63 x 64 mm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. RP-P-1961-1195).

IX. Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Artist's Mother, Head and Bust, Three-quarters Right*, 1628 etching with some drypoint, 65 x 63 mm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. RP-P-OB-749).

X. Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Artist's Mother Seated in an Oriental Headdress, Half Length*, 1631, etching with some burin, 145 x 129 mm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. RP-P-1962-177).

XI. Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Artist's Mother Seated at a Table, Looking Right*, c. 1631, etching and burin, 149 x 131 mm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. RP-P-OB-731).

XII. Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Artist's Mother with Her Hand on Her Chest, Bust,* 1631, etching, 94 x 67 mm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. RP-P-1961-1192).

XIII. Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Artist's Mother in a Cloth Headdress, Looking Down, Head only*, 1633, etching, 42 x 40 mm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. RP-ON-746).

XIV. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Portrait of Rembrandt's Mother, Neeltje van Zuytbrouck,* c. 1628, pen and brown ink, brush in brown and white, 120 x 105 mm, Ulmer Museum, Sammlung Strölin (inv. 2009.9752).

I. Jan Lievens, *Job in His Misery,* 1631, oil on canvas, 171.5 x 148.6 cm, Ottawa, National Gallery of Canada (inv. no. 4093).

II. Jan Lievens, *Profile Head of an Old Woman ("Rembrandt's Mother")*, c. 1630, oil on panel, 43.2 x 33.7 cm, Ontario, Queen's University, Agnes Etherington Art Centre (inv. no. 48-002).

III. Jan Lievens, *Half-Length Figure of an Old Woman with a Headscarf in Profile*, 1631, etching, 14.6 x 12.2 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. RP-P-OB-12.575).

IV. Jan Lievens, *Bust of an Old Woman with Headscarf, Posed Frontally*, 1629, red and black chalk on light yellow prepared, framing lines in pen and brown ink, 108 x 84 mm, New York, The Leiden Collection (inv. no. JL-103).

Appendix II: Unknown Older Women

I. Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Unconscious Patient (Allegory of Smell)*, ca. 1624–25, oil on panel, 21.5 x 17.7 cm, New York, The Leiden Collection (inv. no. RR-111).

II. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Three Musicians (Allegory of Hearing)*, ca. 1624–25, oil on panel, 21.5 x 17.7 cm, New York, The Leiden Collection (inv. no. RR-105).

III. Rembrandt van Rijn, Spectacles Seller (Allegory of Sight), ca. 1624, oil on panel, 21 x 17.8 cm, Leiden, Museum De Lakenhal (inv. no. S 5697).

IV. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Old Woman Seated in a Cottage, with a String of Onions on the Wall*, c. 1629, etching, 128 x 85 mm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. RP-P-OB-224).

V. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Elderly Beggar Woman with a Gourd*, c. 1629, etching, 103 x 46 mm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. RP-P-OB-395).

VI. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Bust of an Old Woman in a Furred Cloak and Heavy Headdress*, c. 1629, etching with some burin, 59 x 53 mm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. RP-P-1969-139).

VII. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Woman with a High Headdress Wrapped Around the Chin*, Bust, c. 1630, etching, 71 x 72 mm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. RP-P-OB-757).

VIII. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Standing Woman with Stick*, c. 1629, pen and brush in brown, 135 x 120 mm, Washington D.C., National Gallery of Art, Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection (inv. 1943.3.7050).

IX. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Head of an Old Woman,* c. 1629, etching, 35 x 43 mm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. RP-P-OB-761).

I. Jan Lievens, *The Soothsayer*, 1631, oil on canvas, 161.2 x 142.3 cm, Berlin Staatliche Museen Preußischer Kulturbesitz, Gemäldegalerie (cat. no. II. 300).

II. Jan Lievens, *Bathsheba Receiving King David's Letter*, 1631/1632, oil on canvas, 135 x 107 cm, Studio City, Collection Terrence and Jeannine Cooney.

III. Jan Lievens, *Old Woman Reading*, c. 1621-1623, oil on oak panel, 68.7 x 64.6 cm, Philadelphia Museum of Art, John G. Johnson Collection (inv. cat. 487).

IV. Jan Lievens, *Bust of an Old Woman with Eyes Cast in Shadow*, 1624/1625, oil on panel, 59.7 x 47.5, Paris, Private Collection.

V. Jan Lievens, *The Penitent Magdalene*, 1625, oil on panel, 68 x 55 cm, Douai, Musée de la Chartreuse (inv. no. 140).

VI. Jan Lievens, *Old Woman with Striped Headscarf Reading*, 1626, oil on panel, 81 x 69 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. no. A 4702).

VII. Jan Lievens. *The Penitent Magdalene*, 1629, oil on canvas, 63.5 x 49.5 cm, Ontario, Queen's University Agnes Etherington Centre (inv. no. 18-126).

VIII. Jan Lievens, *Half-Length Figure of an Old Woman with a Hood*, 1629, oil on panel, 47.5 x 37 cm, Dresden, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister (inv. no. 1580C).

IX. Jan Lievens, *Bust of an Old Woman with Headscarf with Decorative Border*, 1630, oil on panel, 26.6 x 19 cm, Stamford/Lincolnshire, The Burghley House Collection, Lady Exeter (inv. no. 214).

X. Jan Lievens, *Young and Old Woman*, 1631, oil on panel, 66 x 53 or 68 x 51.5 cm (location not known since 1939).

XI. Jan Lievens, *Tronie of an Elderly Woman*, no date, oil on panel, 71 x 58 cm, Private Collection.

XII. Jan Lievens, *Small Bust of an Old Woman with Heavy Headscarf*, 1631/1632, etching, 7.7 x 6.3 cm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. RP-P-OB-12.584).

XIII. Jan Lievens, *Bust of an Old Woman in Strict Profile*, 1631/1632, etching, 5.8 x 5 cm.

XIV. Jan Lievens, *Bust of an Old Woman in Profile*, 1629, pen and brown and grey ink, 142 x 130 mm, Boston, Maida and George Abrams Collection.

XV. Jan Lievens, *Bust of an Old Woman in Contemporary Dress*, 1631/1632, black and red chalk, gray wash on the face and background, 140 x 126 mm, Frankfurt am Main, Städel Museum (inv. no. 3295).

Appendix III: Etchings of Unknown Older Women in Groups

I. Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Presentation in the Temple with the Angel: small plate*, 1630, etching, 103 x 78 mm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. RP-P-OB-790).

II. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Beggar Man and Beggar Woman Conversing*, 1630, etching, 78 x 66 mm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. RP-P-OB-381).

III. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Beggar Man and Beggar Woman behind a Bank*, c. 1630, etching, drypoint and burin, 113 x 80 mm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum (inv. RP-P-OB-386).

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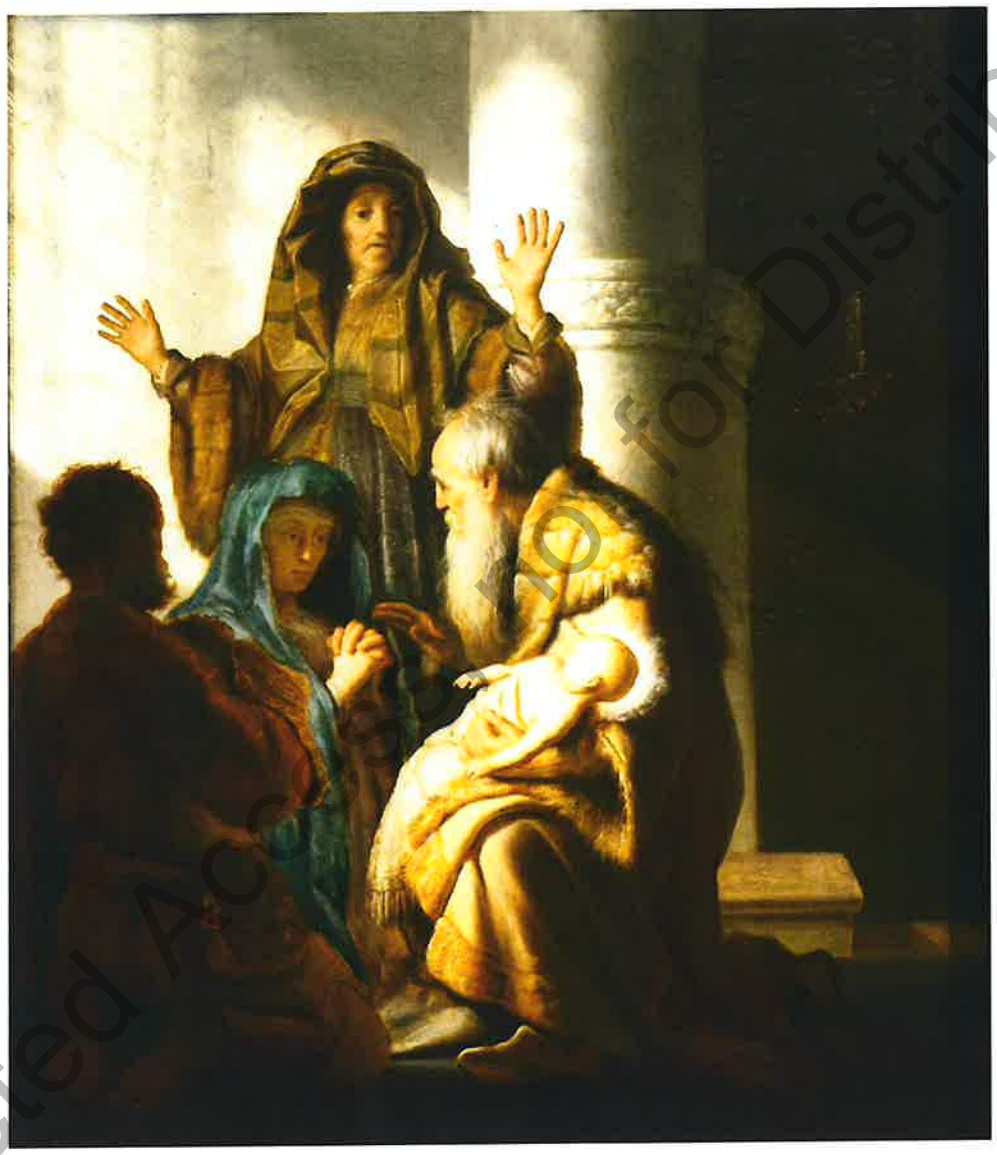

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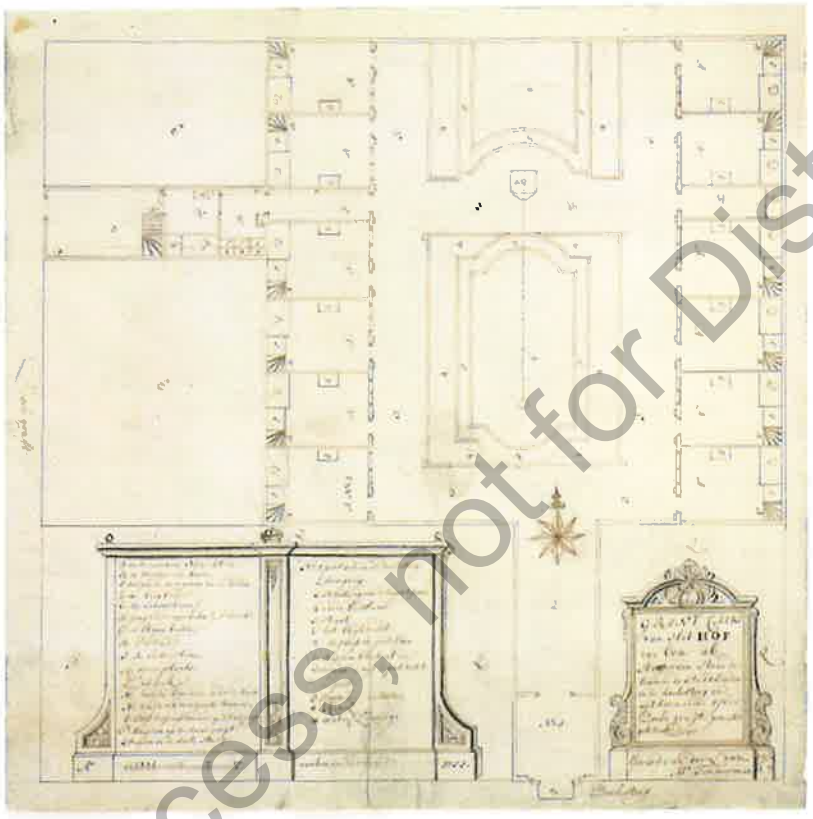

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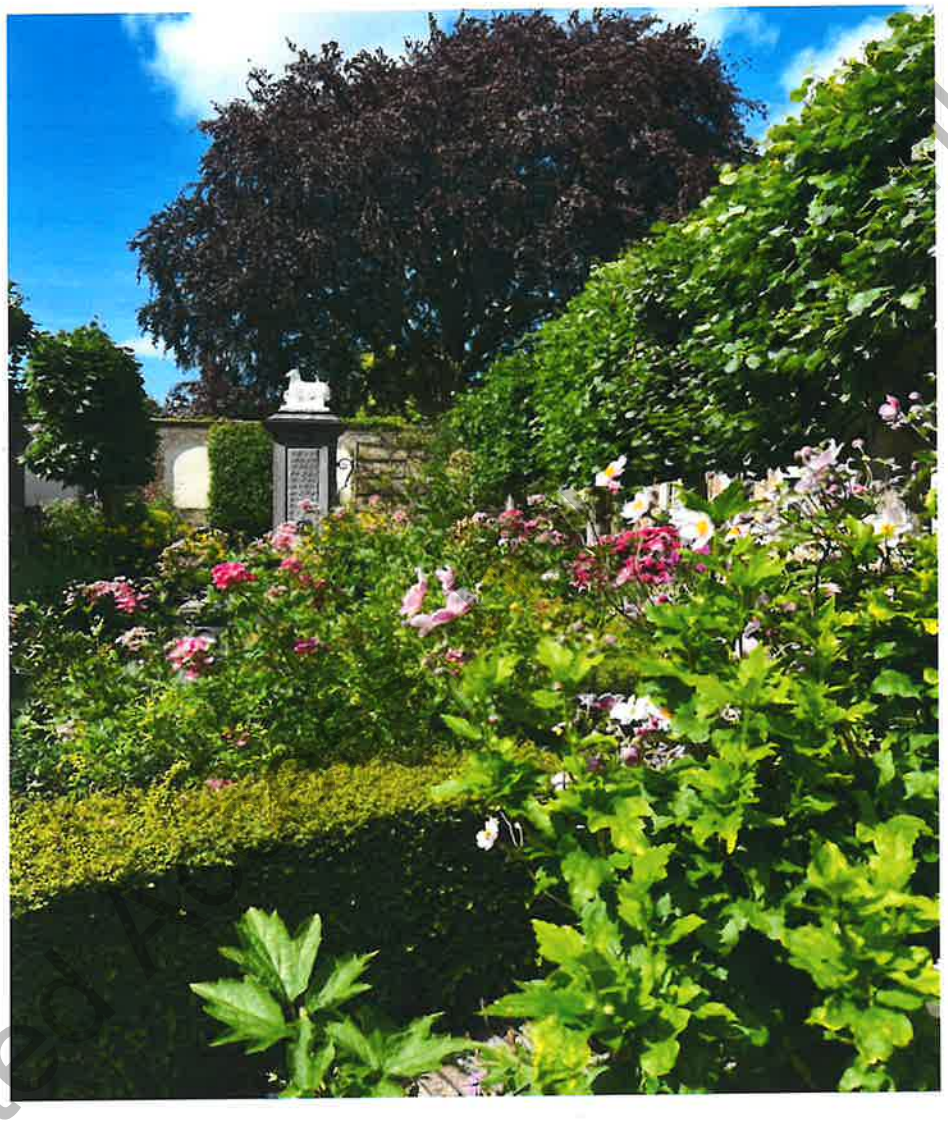

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Figure 2:12 Frederick de Wit, *Lugduni Batavorum vulgo Leyden sic ultimo amplificati delineatio; Leyden,* c. 1690–1699, 49 x 60 cm, Cambridge, Harvard University.

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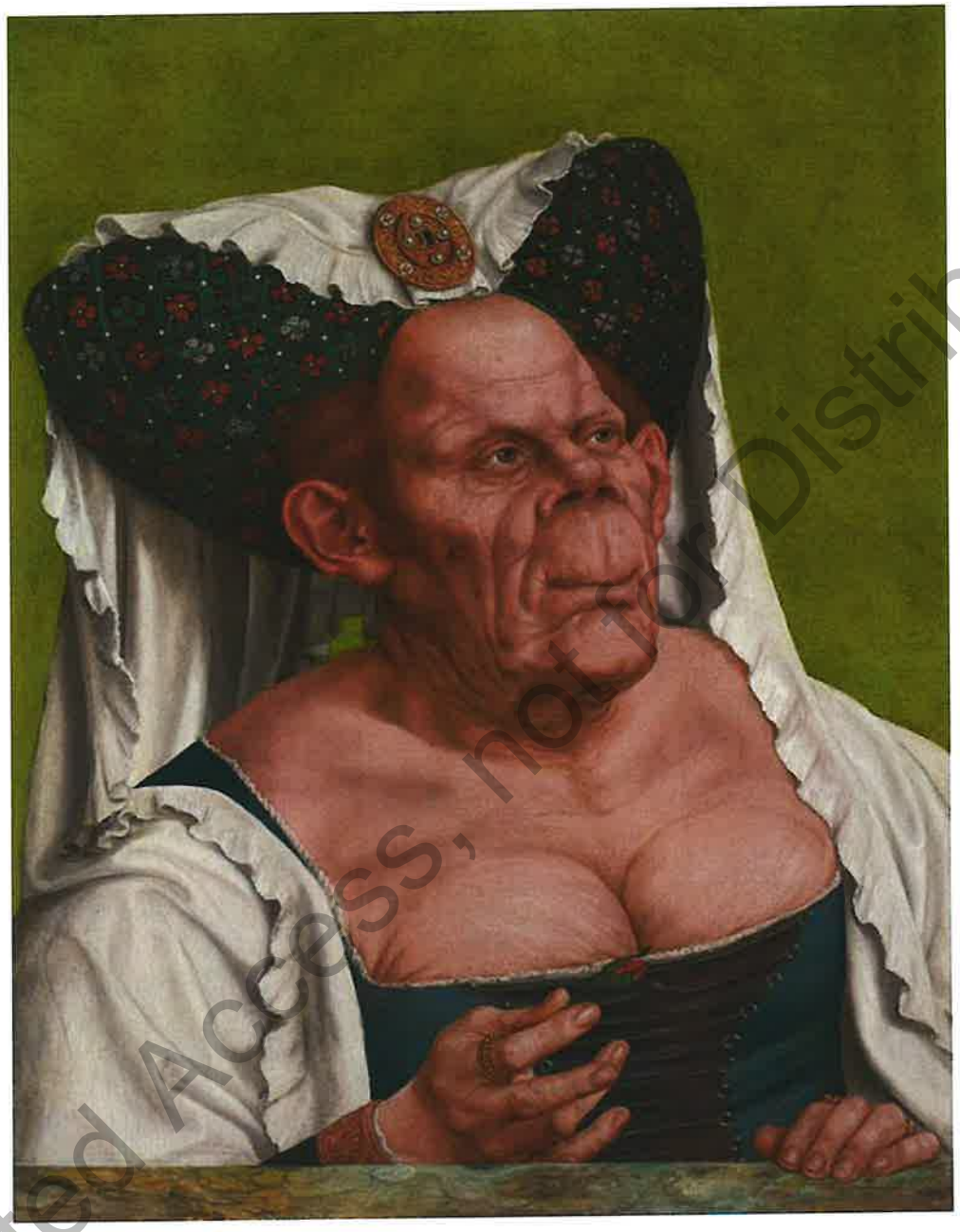

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