

Socio-Economic Aspects of Netherlandish Art from the Fifteenth to the Seventeenth Century: A Survey

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This survey begins with a brief history of the rediscovery in the nineteenth century of the church, guild, and other secular archives that supplied the foundations for the contemporary study of the social and economic environment of Netherlandish art. The second section discusses the various methods — some more sophisticated, some less — that have been, or can be, applied in putting the facts collected in archival research in a wider context and in directing the search for more useful data. In the third section, I discuss and criticize the more important syntheses devoted to the sociology and economics of Netherlandish art by various scholars from the time of Hanns Floerke on. The fourth section reviews recent work on economic factors in fifteenth- and sixteenth-century art in the southern Netherlands. The article concludes with an outline and discussion of quantitative research carried out in the last few years on the guilds and on the "arts industries" in the Dutch Republic.

1. The Gathering of the First Harvest

The rediscovery of the social and economic background of fifteenth- to seventeenth-century Netherlandish art began in earnest in the 1860s. From that decade on, the guild archives of the major artistic centers of the erstwhile seventeen provinces of the Netherlands were published *in extenso*, at least to the extent they had not been destroyed in the previous half century when heavy losses occurred. Progress was also made about this time in bringing to light the accounts of expenditures made by churches, monasteries, and municipalities for works of art. A diligent search was first carried out in the second half of the nineteenth

century in the archives of Antwerp, Bruges, Brussels, Ghent, Kortrijk, Louvain, and Malines in Belgium, and in Alkmaar, Amsterdam, Delft, Dordrecht, Haarlem, The Hague, Middelburg, and Utrecht in the Netherlands, for the written records of the artistic guilds that had once flourished in these towns.¹ Starting in the 1880s with the pioneering studies of Abraham Bredius, works of art in inventories found in notarial and orphan chamber archives were transcribed, recorded, and published.

The process of rediscovery is still going on. In Belgium, for example, the first systematic publication of works of art in Antwerp inventories began only in 1984.² After Bre-

I am grateful to Lynn F. Jacobs for the bibliography of publications on southern Netherlandish art that she kindly prepared for me.

¹ For Belgium, see the sources in L. Campbell, "The Art Market in the Southern Netherlands in the Fifteenth Century," *Burlington Magazine*, cxviii, 1976, 188-198. Note that J.B. van Straelen had already published a number of guild documents for Antwerp as early as 1855 (*Jaerboek der gilde van Sint Lucas*, Antwerp, 1855). Most of the guild regulations and membership lists for the Dutch Republic were published in F.D.O. Obreen, *Archief voor Nederlandsche kunstgeschiedenis*, 7 vols., 1877-90. S. Muller Fz. published large extracts of the Utrecht guild archives separately (*Schilders-vereenigingen te Utrecht; Bescheiden uit het gemeente-archief*, Utrecht, 1880). Material on the Flemish guilds frequently appeared in *Le Beffroi* (Bruges, 1863-72), and on the Dutch guilds in *De Nederlandsche spectator* (Arnhem and The Hague, 1860-1908). In recent years, H. Miedema has edited a complete transcription of the Haarlem guild records for the 17th century (*Archiefbescheiden*). For a comprehensive summary of guild regulations in all the larger towns of the southern and northern Netherlands from the 15th to the 18th century, see G.J. Hoogewerff, *De geschiedenis van de St. Lucasgilden in Nederland*, Amsterdam, 1947. For

more recent research on the Amsterdam guild, see I.H. van Eeghen, "Het Amsterdamse Sint Lucas gilde in de 17de eeuw," *Jaarboek Amstelodamum*, LI, 1969, 65-102. Important material on the painters' guilds (and on studio practice) is contained in W. Martin, *Het leven en de werken van Gerrit Dou beschouwd met het schildersleven van zijn tijd*, Leiden, 1901.

² E. Duverger, *Antwerpse Kunstinventarissen uit de zeventiende eeuw*, I and II, Brussels, 1984, 1985. A selection of Antwerp inventories had already been made fifty years earlier by J. Denucé (*De Antwerpsche "Konstkamers." Inventarissen van Kunstverzamelingen in Antwerpen in de 16e and 17e eeuwen*, Antwerp, 1932). The extraordinarily rich accounts of the dealer Matthijs Musson, which contain hundreds of attributed paintings, were first published by Denucé (*Na Pieter Pauwel Rubens, Documenten uit den kunsthandel te Antwerpen in de 17de eeuw van Matthijs Musson*, Antwerp and The Hague, 1949), and later by Duverger ("Nieuwe gegevens betreffende de kunsthandel van Matthijs Musson en Maria Fourmenois te Antwerpen tussen 1633 en 1681," *Gentse Bijdragen tot de kunstgeschiedenis en de Oudheidkunde*, XXI, 1969).

dius's *Künstler-inventare*, seven volumes of which came out between 1915 and 1922,³ few inventories were published.⁴ This leaves a gap because Bredius focused on artists' and dealers' inventories and selected only a small sample of the collectors' inventories that he had noted while going through notarial and other records, notations he had made for over thirty years before publishing his major work. Bredius's handwritten notes on inventories are preserved in the Rijksbureau voor Kunsthistorische Dokumentatie in The Hague. The *Künstler-inventare*, as great an achievement of scholarship as they represent, also suffer from defects in the accuracy of transcriptions and from serious omissions.⁵

The collection of inventories has been accelerated in the last few years in Amsterdam, Delft, and Dordrecht, but relatively few have been published. A hopeful sign is that the Getty Provenance Index is planning to publish in the near future a selection of the more important collectors' inventories in Amsterdam, containing numerous attributions to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century artists.

Many of the earlier publications were in raw form: they set forth the material and let it speak for itself. The publication of the membership lists and accounts of the Antwerp Guild of St. Luke, edited by P. Rombouts and T. van Lierius between 1864 and 1876,⁶ was exceptional in that it sought to identify from other contemporary records each one of the hundreds of artists and artisans who appeared in the lists and accounts. It is remarkable that out of 156 new masters or masters with newly registered apprentices listed in this source from 1453 to 1472, when virtually none of the names given in the original manuscript were associated with a designation of craft or occupation, Rombouts and Van Lierius were able to find correlative information in other archives about eighty-one masters, and discover their craft. (Of these, forty-four were painters, six illuminators, eleven sculptors, and eleven glaziers or glassmakers.) This patient work of matching different sources to identify guild members has never, to my knowledge, been done in any sustained manner for the guilds of the northern provinces, either for the sixteenth or the seventeenth century.⁷ So much has been discovered about artists and their

milieu since the time of Rombouts and Van Lierius that the work should now be much easier to do, and a much more complete record should emerge than it was possible to compile over a century ago.

The search for biographical data on Netherlandish artists has been going on for over 150 years. Church records (baptism, betrothal, and burial books and lists of new members of the Reformed Community and of other religious groups), municipal records of real estate transactions and of loan contracts made before aldermen, citizenship records, and judicial archives have been ransacked in every town of the Netherlands that attracted artists for vital data about the painters and sculptors whose names are mentioned in these records. The well-known books of Karel van Mander (*Het Schilder-Boeck*, 1604), Cornelis de Bie (*Het gulden cabinet van de edele vry schilderconst*, 1662), Joachim van Sandrart (*Teutsche Academie der Edelen Bau- Bild- und Mahlerey-Künste*, 1675), Samuel Hoogstraten (*Inleyding tot de Hooge Schoole der Schilderconst*, 1678), Arnold Houbraken (*De Grootte Schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen*, 1718-21), Jacob Campo Weyerman (*De levensbeschryvingen der Nederlandsche Kunstschilders*, 1729-69), and Jan van Gool (*De Nieuwe Schouburgh der Nederlantsche Kunstschilders en schilderessen*, 1750-51) were all mined for the information they contained touching the lives of Dutch and Flemish artists.⁸

Much, but by no means all, of this information was incorporated in Thieme-Becker's *Allgemeines Lexicon der bildende Künstler*, published between 1907 and 1950. Nowadays no monograph on an artist is considered complete if its author does not make some attempt to find in the archives of one or more towns new biographical information supplementing what previous research had already brought to light. To be mentioned among such recent archival forays are those of I.H. van Eeghen, Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann, S.A.C. Dudok van Heel, and P.J.M. de Baar on Rembrandt, Christopher Brown on Fabritius, Gary Schwartz and Marten Jan Bok on Pieter Saenredam, Barbara Gaehtgens on Adriaen van der Werff, and my own work on Johannes Vermeer.⁹

³ A. Bredius, *Künstler-inventare: Urkunden zur Geschichte der Holländischen Kunst des XVIten, XVIIten, und XVIIIten Jahrhunderts*.

⁴ One of the few exceptions I can cite is the work of J.G. Briels, *De zuidnederlandse immigratie in Amsterdam en Haarlem omstreeks 1572-1630: Met een keuze van archivalische gegevens betreffende de kunstschilders*, Utrecht, 1976.

⁵ Among many examples, a *Susanna* by Rembrandt was omitted from the inventory of the dealer and collector Johannes de Renialme in Vol. 1.

⁶ P. Rombouts and T. van Lierius, *De Liggeren en andere historische archieven der Antwerpsche St. Lucasgilde onder zinspreuk: 'Ut ionsten ver-saemt'* (Antwerp-The Hague, 1864-76), 2 vols., Amsterdam, 1961.

⁷ In general, the articles by Bredius and others on the guild records of various Dutch towns in Obreen's *Archief* contain very few explanatory notes. For partially annotated lists of guild members, see H. Miedema, "De St. Lucasgilden van Haarlem en Delft in de zestiende eeuw," *Oud Holland*, xcix, 1985, 101-106, and Montias, 1982, 34-35, Appendixes A and C.

⁸ Alexander Nijstad has compiled a very useful index of all the names of artists that appeared in the pre-1700 publications listed in the text (as well as in a few other 17th-century sources) in *Nederlands schilders in publikaties voor 1700: Een register*, The Hague, 1978. See also R.J.A. Te Rijdt, *Index op: Johan van Gool, De Nieuwe Schouburgh . . .*, Leiden, 1984.

⁹ W.L. Strauss and M. van der Meulen, *The Rembrandt Documents*, New York, 1979; G. Schwartz, *Rembrandt, His Life, His Paintings*, n.p., 1985; E. Haverkamp-Begemann, *Rembrandt: The Nightwatch*, Princeton, 1982; S.A.C. Dudok van Heel, "Doopsgezinden en schilderkunst in de 17e eeuw-Leerlingen, opdrachtgevers en verzamelaars van Rembrandt," *Doopsgezinde Bijdragen*, n.s., vi, 1980, 103-123; I.H. van Eeghen, "Drie portretten van Rembrandt (Bruynigh, Cater, Moutmacker)," *Jaarboek Amstelodamum*, lxx, 1977, 55-72; G. Schwartz and M.J. Bok, *Saenredam*, 1989; C. Brown, *Fabritius*, Oxford, 1981; B. Gaehtgens, *Adriaen van der Werff*, Munich, 1987; J.M. Montias, *Vermeer and His Milieu: A Web of Social History*, Princeton, 1989.

In contrast to the flurry of research on artists' biographical statistics, little progress was made until quite recently in assembling data on collectors. Neither Bredius's nor Duverger's selections of inventories include biographical data on the collectors who bought the works of art they recorded. Among the recent exceptions I may mention are E. Haverkamp-Begemann's book on Rembrandt's *Night-watch*, which discusses in detail the members of the civil militia who had themselves portrayed in the painting; Jan van der Waals's extensive catalogue-monograph on the collector Michiel Hinloopen; Hugo Postma's article on Herman Becker; Anne-Marie Logan's book on Gerard and Jan Reynst; and Marten Jan Bok's continuing study of the collectors cited in Karel van Mander's *Schilder-boeck*.¹⁰ Research on collecting in the southern provinces has also been advanced of late by Zirka Filipczak and Jeffrey Muller.¹¹ The selection of Amsterdam inventories that will be published in a year or two by the Getty Provenance Index will supply the basic information available in the Amsterdam archives about each of the collectors represented.

2. Method

A very small part of all the scholarly effort based on archival material and other contemporary sources has been devoted to answering questions about artists' communities of the Netherlands as a whole or about the socio-economic background of the arts in general, as distinguished from the lives and careers of individual artists. To clarify the distinction, I may invoke an example from my own research on Delft. I wished to find out whether guild regulations prescribing membership in the guild for individuals engaging in certain trades were actually enforced.¹² This question concerned all the artists and artisans practicing trades covered by the Guild of St. Luke who happened to be living in Delft in the period I chose to investigate (1620-80). To answer it, I first had to ensure that guild lists were reasonably complete; second, I needed to collect a sample of names of individuals who actually engaged in trades under the guild jurisdiction to verify whether all were actually members of the guild. This second task required me to look into hundreds of transactions involving the sale or commission of paintings, the decoration of houses by broad-brush painters, the repair of glass windows, the sale of tin-glazed faience objects, the printing and sale of pamphlets and books, and similar guild-regulated activities in archival sources. This information, which had never, to my knowl-

edge, been systematically collected previously, was then applied to answer the specific question I had posed. Counting the results — the number of individuals who complied and the number of individuals who did not comply with membership requirements — was an integral part of the exercise. (As it turns out, very few failed to comply.)

In studying the entire membership of an "arts industry" — of which guild-registered masters made up one part, their apprentices and journeymen another — it is also essential to be aware of the work done by economic historians regarding other crafts and industries. Whether artists, on average, were well or badly off can only be judged on the basis of comparisons with earnings in other occupations. Such comparisons are made only too seldom.¹³

Although research on the entire membership of a guild may be considered in some sense to be more advanced than the random assemblage of data about artists and artisans with no specific, immediate purpose, it is still only a step on the way to a more penetrating economic or sociological analysis of an arts industry. At a more mature stage of research, one would wish to formulate hypotheses based on explicit assumptions about the behavior of members of the industry or about the outcomes of their activities, and then to test these hypotheses on the basis of data, which might have to be collected afresh. As an example, consider the evolution of the prices of tonal paintings in the northern provinces. Assume first that the costs of producing these works consisted almost entirely of artists' labor, and, second, that the markets on which they were sold were perfectly competitive. The intuitively plausible hypothesis can then be formulated that any innovation increasing the productivity of artists — the number of paintings they produced of a given size and dimension per time period — would drive down the prices of their works.¹⁴ Since an innovation of this type took place in the first quarter of the century — the development of tonal painting, first in landscape, then in still life and other subjects — one would expect the average prices of paintings to have fallen, particularly of those representing subjects in which the tonal style predominated. This hypothesis can be tested on a time series of prices, preferably corrected for changes in the average price level of a standard basket of goods consumed in the period. Since a random sample of prices of paintings from 1600 to 1650 by subject categories is not yet available, it has not yet been possible to make a rigorous test of the hypothesis.

¹⁰ Haverkamp-Begemann (as in n. 9); J. van der Waals, *De prentschat van Michiel Hinloopen*, exh. cat., Amsterdam, 1988; H. Postma, "De Amsterdamse verzamelaar Herman Becker (ca. 1617-1678): Nieuwe gegevens over een geldschieder van Rembrandt," *Oud Holland*, cii, 1988, 1-21; A.M. Logan, *The "Cabinet" of the Brothers Gerard and Jan Reynst*, Amsterdam, Oxford and New York, 1979.

¹¹ Z. Filipczak, *Picturing Art in Antwerp*, Princeton, 1987; J. Muller, *Rubens as a Collector*, Princeton, 1990.

¹² Montias, 1982, 77-87.

¹³ Bengtsson (p. 65) was one of the very few art historians to make use of the extensive material collected by N.W. Posthumus on the wages of

skilled and unskilled workers and on the prices of staples (*Nederlandse prijsgeschiedenis*, Leiden, I, 1943). Since Bengtsson's work was published in 1952, a number of excellent works have appeared on the economic history of the Netherlands. These include, for the south, H. van der Wee, *The Growth of the Antwerp Market and the European Economy*, 2 vols., Louvain, 1963, and, for the north, J.G. van Dillen, *Van rijkdom en regenten: Handboek tot de economische en sociale geschiedenis van Nederland tijdens de Republiek*, The Hague, 1970, and J. de Vries, *The Dutch Rural Economy in the Golden Age*, New Haven, 1974.

¹⁴ For this hypothesis and some partial evidence supporting it, see my article, "Cost and Value," 1987.

All this may sound complicated and intellectually numbing. But the ultimate message is simple: every notion, idea, hypothesis must be confronted with evidence. If a question derived from a hypothesis can be answered quantitatively, the evidence should, if at all possible, rely on more than anecdotal information: it should be based on central tendencies (averages, measures of dispersion). In the realm of early modern Netherlandish art, where virtually all the evidence comes from archival work, this is where research should be directed.

In general, progress in studying the socio-economic background of art has been carried out in ascending order, starting with the more or less brute-force collection of relevant data, to annotated publications where the raw data were put in context (as in the Rombouts and Van Lerijs study of the Antwerp *liggeren*), to studies where new data were gathered to answer specific questions (as in my work on the guild in Delft). We are now reaching the stage where statistical regularities may be established and causal analysis attempted. Another dimension of progress in analyzing the raw data dredged up from the past consists in moving from the simple description of the socio-economic environment in which art developed to the exploration of the influence of factors in this environment on style.

In the next three sections, I will review some of the research done along all these fronts.

3. Syntheses

We owe the first important synthesis of the archival work done in the second half of the nineteenth century to Hanns Floerke in the form of a *Promotionschrift* he completed at the Philosophical Faculty of Basel in 1901 and 1902.¹⁵ In 182 pages of text and 378 footnotes, the young author placed in its art-historical context the most important information that had been gathered until the time of his writing about the art market, dealers, exhibits, prices, studio practice, and guild regulations, both in the southern and the northern Netherlands, from the days of Jan van Eyck to the late eighteenth century. His gleanings from *Oud Holland*, the *Antwerpsche Archief Bladen*, the works of J. van den Branden, A. Bredius, W. Martin, and a host of other sources are relevant and judicious. His book is still a useful starting point for almost any conceivable research on the subjects he covered. This is a remarkable achievement, considering that, as far as I can ascertain, he never discovered a single document on his own. He never seems to have set foot in any Dutch or Belgian archive. Floerke's strength lies in collating the material discovered by earlier researchers, in interpreting it, and in trying to illuminate questions he considered important. It does not lie, how-

ever, in analyzing statistically the data he had assembled, even at the most elementary level. He never adds one observation to another to create a sample. He calculates no averages, let alone any measures of intra- or inter-sample variation. A more serious problem with his attempts to generalize or theorize is that he never questions whether a particular observation, drawn from the archives or from a contemporary diary, was broadly representative of a phenomenon, and thus could be used as a proper basis for a generalization. He also is not always clear about the assumptions he makes when he does generalize, or about what constitutes adequate support for a hypothesis.¹⁶ On his use of evidence, I will only cite his dependence on the oft-quoted entry in John Evelyn's diary about the pictures he saw in Rotterdam's yearly market in 1641.¹⁷ Evelyn had conjectured that the reason for the abundance and cheapness of pictures in Holland was to be sought in the lack of land in which to invest money. As a result, he wrote, it was a common thing for a simple peasant to lay up £2-3,000 in paintings; their houses were filled with them, and they sold them at a great profit at the yearly markets. Floerke adds: "As astonishing as it may seem, we have no ground for doubting the general veracity of Evelyn's claims, all the less so as they fit in with all the features already described of the art trade at the fairs and yearly markets." He then goes on to cite Bredius to the effect that "almost every Dutchman in the seventeenth century owned a small gallery; there were lots of pictures hanging in the houses of citizens, from the most distinguished to those of the plainest status."¹⁸ Even if Bredius were right — and the evidence at hand suggests he was grossly exaggerating¹⁹ — it does not support the main claims made by Evelyn: first, that people had no attractive outlets for their savings because they could not invest in land; second, that "simple peasants" had surplus money to invest; and, third, that such simple peasants laid out large sums of money in pictures with the hopes of reselling them at a profit. All three claims are open to serious doubt. There was a great demand for capital at every level of life, including for buying land. Municipalities and the great trading companies issued debentures and shares to finance their expenditures; entrepreneurs borrowed heavily to finance the drying up of marshes, the creation of polders, and various proto-industrial activities; and ordinary citizens with savings to spare could go to any notary and ask him to invest the money for him (that is, to find a borrower and sureties to back the loan). There was, if anything, a dearth of capital, which can be observed, *inter alia*, in the rather frantic attempts of faience manufacturers in Delft to find investors to lend them the capital they needed for expansion in the third quarter of the century. Secondly, "simple peasants," on the basis of the inventories I have seen,

¹⁵ H. Floerke, *Studien zur niederländischen Kunst- und Kulturgeschichte*.

¹⁶ In particular, Floerke's arguments for the growth of private collecting in the 16th and 17th centuries seem to me quite unconvincing (pp. 1-6). On Brulez's work, see also M.J. Bok's review of his book in *Simiolus*, xviii, 1988, 63-68.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 20-21.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, n. 46, 189.

¹⁹ Households with an assessed value of movable goods of less than three hundred guilders, both in Delft and Amsterdam, rarely had more than a few prints hanging on the wall or five or six cheap little "bortjes" (panels), which can hardly qualify as a gallery.

owned few or no pictures.²⁰ Finally, if there had been as many paintings as Evelyn asserts and if they were so cheap, why should they have been a good vehicle of speculation? Floerke points out, in another part of his book, that in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when most of the great Dutch masters were already dead, dealers speculated in the works of the past,²¹ precisely because their supply could not be augmented. This behavior seems much more likely than that "simple peasants" bought cheap pictures at the Rotterdam fair to sell them at a high mark-up in other towns, for these cheap pictures were produced in almost *all* Dutch cities, and there is no reason to believe that works that could be so easily reproduced would be significantly more expensive, on average, in one town than in the next.²² My hunch is that Evelyn was impressed by the large number of paintings at the fair and hanging in the people's homes that he visited (which I doubt were of the "simplest") and that he mistakenly generalized from a story he heard about a rich farmer who speculated in pictures. He was, after all, only writing an entry in his personal diary.

My lengthy charge against Floerke's uncritical endorsement of Evelyn's claims still leaves the value of his work substantially undiminished: within the limitations of its time and methodology, it remains a model of concise synthesis.

The second example in the genre, a lengthy article by the Soviet art historian Shelly M. Rosenthal, is cited here not because of its influence — for it had none, at least in the West — but for its pioneering attempt to construct a serious materialist interpretation of Dutch seventeenth-century art in the Marxist tradition.²³ Unfortunately, Rosenthal did not have the empirical data to sustain her hypotheses: isolated as she was in Moscow, she did not have either Bredius's *Künstler-inventare* (1915-22) or the forty-odd volumes of *Oud Holland* that had been published until 1926 when her article appeared. She did have Floerke's book to rely on, which of course gave her indirect access to the bulk of the literature published before 1905.

Rosenthal begins her essay with an admonition about the pitfalls confronting a Marxist interpretation of artistic styles: "To establish a direct causal connection between economic and artistic forms is hardly possible; there are many intervening links that in and of themselves become determining factors in the development of art; this complicates the task of a Marxist interpretation of art all the more because a Marxist history of art should be built up

inductively and should not subsume evidential facts under ready-made *a priori* hypotheses."²⁴ She defines her specific task as that of explaining how different types of art — Flemish and Dutch — grew on different socio-economic bases and how different conditions of social existence gave rise to different subject categories and different means of conveying images and themes. The concept of style, she goes on, is not exhausted by artistic form, in the sense of a set of formal signs. It must also include the subject matter of artistic production and contemporary interpretations, both of which are especially conditioned by economic factors and by the ideological premises that issue from them. These methodological premises provided Rosenthal with a rigorous way of organizing her facts and focusing her research. If the results are disappointing, the fault lies in her attempts to come up with more generalizations than the few facts at her disposal allowed.

After completing a cogent summary of political and economic developments in the northern and southern Netherlands in the period 1560 to 1680, Rosenthal begins her investigation of the causes of the extraordinary proliferation of Netherlandish artists and pictures, a phenomenon she traces to mid-sixteenth-century Antwerp but which reached its high point in the north in 1620-80. She acknowledges that a part of the explanation lies in the "high cultural level of the population, the general artistic culture and tradition" of the Netherlands. But she claims that the "demand for pictures" was at least as important a factor as the "epoch of commercial capitalism turn[ing] pictures into commodities."²⁵ She sees this surge in demand as emanating from the widening tendency, particularly in the North in the seventeenth century, for private individuals to collect pictures, but also in the speculative inclinations of Dutch and Flemish burghers who bought pictures for resale at higher prices. Pictures were not only "objects of art esteemed by amateurs" but they were also "a commodity with a rising value, for which good profits could be made." The price of paintings "could only rise, never fall." The evidence for speculation in paintings comes from an observation by the French traveler Sorbière (cited first in an article by W. Martin, cited again in Floerke, and finally picked up by Rosenthal) about the Dutch "spending a great deal of money on pictures in order to obtain even more from their resale," and from Evelyn's remarks, which I have already alluded to. But neither Sorbière nor Evelyn ever said, to my knowledge, that prices of paintings could

²⁰ Jan de Vries reports from his study of peasants' inventories in West Friesland that, "by the 1640s, 30 to 40 percent of the larger farmers (those with at least ten cows) . . . left *schilderijen*, an average of three or four each. However, those were often described as *planken* — painted wooden boards — rather than canvases, and of very little value" ("The Reality of Peasant Life in the Golden Age," paper presented at the symposium "Images of the World: Dutch Genre Painting in Its Historical Context," Royal Academy of Arts, London, 9-10 November 1984, 9). Bengtsson, writing in 1952, was the first to cast doubt on Evelyn's observation (p. 48).

²¹ Floerke, 101-103.

²² This argument does not exclude the possibility of arbitrage by profes-

sional dealers, with detailed knowledge of the conditions of supply and demand in local markets. See my article, "Art Dealers in Seventeenth Century Netherlands," *Simiolus*, xviii, 1988, 246-247.

²³ See Frequently Cited Sources. Professor Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann kindly brought this essay to my attention. The only citation of Rosenthal work I have found in Western literature is in Hoogewerff (as in n. 1), 233, n. 69. Hoogewerff called the study "important," even though it was not accessible to him.

²⁴ Rosenthal, 93.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 96.

never fall. In fact, two pages farther on in her essay, Rosenthal contradicts this claim. Here she asserts that as a result of the "overproduction of pictures," competition led to the "decrease in the prices obtained by artists for their paintings." Even though "all people collect pictures, deal and trade in them, many pictures remain unsold in the hands of artists."²⁶ She goes on to cite evidence from Floerke about the low prices that Dutch artists received for their paintings. At this point she makes three highly dubious, unsupported claims. (1) Because the highest prices were paid for portraits and "histories," these were more profitable than landscapes or still lifes. (2) The higher the social stratum of the collector, the more likely he was to buy Italianate paintings and histories, while "the landscapes of Van Goyen, Ruisdael, Hobbema, van de Velde and Cuyp had no success and were bought by the petty bourgeoisie, the peasantry and craftsmen." (3) Among the buyers just cited, pictures were considered a means of exchange, and there was a tendency to evaluate them by the number of hours the artist expended on them multiplied by an average craftsman's pay.

The first claim ignores the possibility that portraits and histories took longer to make and were therefore more expensive than most landscapes and still lifes. (They were not necessarily more profitable, nor were their practitioners better off than their colleagues.)²⁷ The evidence from Amsterdam inventories shows that paintings by Jan van Goyen, Jacob van Ruisdael, and Adriaen van de Velde were frequently bought by wealthy collectors.²⁸ Since very few of the collections put together by craftsmen, peasants, and lower middle-class people contained attributed paintings, we have no way of ascertaining whether representatives of the "national school," so esteemed by Rosenthal, were more likely to be found in these strata than at the upper end of the scale. The partial evidence at my disposal suggests that buying patterns depended largely on prices: less well-off households bought cheaper pictures. Thus it may be true that Van Goyens, which were cheaper than Berchems or Dujardins, were more likely to be found in estates with a total value of movable goods of a thousand guilders or less than were these Italianate painters. In any case, I doubt the preference was based on ideological grounds, as Rosenthal suggests it was. The third claim — that the petty bourgeoisie was likely to evaluate a painting in terms of the hours

it took to produce it — is unsupported by evidence. In the few cases we have of artists charging by the hour (Rubens, Dou, Frans van Mieris), the patrons were very rich and the rates they paid were many times higher than ordinary craftsmen normally received; and the question is begged as to what determined the hourly rates in the first place. The small sample I have gathered of artists' earnings and the indirect estimates I have constructed indicate that even run-of-the-mill artists — those much less successful than Rubens, Dou, or Van Mieris — earned three to five times as much as ordinary craftsmen.²⁹ These three examples illustrate the pitfalls of generalizations based on a narrow evidential base.

Rosenthal's essay becomes even more speculative as it proceeds. On the basis of the most fragmentary evidence, she infers that Flemish artists were chiefly drawn from a rich bourgeoisie, while Dutch artists stemmed from a craft milieu. ("Ostade was the son of a weaver, Lievens of a tapestry maker, Rembrandt of a miller. . . .") The evidence about the social origins of artists-painters collected by A. Bengtsson for Haarlem, by M.J. Bok for Utrecht, and that I gathered for Delft³⁰ is fairly compelling: most Dutch artists came either from an artistic milieu or from the middle classes. I suspect that the majority of Flemish artists came from the same milieu. In Holland, the sons of ordinary apprentices and journeymen ("knechts" and "gesellen") very rarely became full-fledged guild masters. The invocation of Rembrandt's name shows how wide Rosenthal was off the mark. Rembrandt's father was a prosperous mill owner with seven houses in Leiden. He must have belonged to the wealthiest five percent in the city.³¹

In her discussion of the market for "drolleries" — the peasant scenes pioneered by Adriaen Brouwer, the Van Ostade brothers, and Jan Mienze Molenaer — Rosenthal is surely guilty of ignoring her own methodological admonition. She twists the available evidence and conjures up new facts to fit her preconceptions. Recalling Evelyn's remarks about viewing many such drolleries at Rotterdam's yearly kermess, she goes on to claim that "the peasantry had an interest in these pictures, as did most probably the petty urban bourgeoisie; we may infer that pictures of this type did not enjoy success among the higher bourgeoisie from their low prices and from the fact that they were traded only at the fairs."³² In fact, the most casual perusal through

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 98.

²⁷ On p. 99, Rosenthal suggests that painters whose pictures brought low prices were badly off. This again ignores the productivity factor. The idea that the time required to complete a picture differed according to style and subject is further developed in my article "Cost and Value," 1987. See also below, p. 371.

²⁸ However, landscapes by Hobbema and Albert Cuyp are very rarely found in Amsterdam collections. I have no explanation in the case of Hobbema. As for Cuyp, I suspect that his reputation was strictly Dordrecht-based. See also n. 59 below.

²⁹ This calculation is made in my unpublished paper, "Estimates of the Number of Dutch Master-Painters, Their Earnings and Their Output in 1650."

³⁰ A. Bengtsson, 35-36; Montias, 1982, 149; M.J. Bok, "Artisans or Gentlemen-Painters? The Social Background of Utrecht Painters in the Early Seventeenth Century," paper delivered at Annual Meeting of the College Art Association, New York, February 1987.

³¹ See the accounting of Rembrandt's mother's estate in W.L. Strauss and M. van der Meulen (as in n. 9), 191-196.

³² Rosenthal, 101.

the inventories of wealthy Amsterdam collectors will uncover peasant society pieces by J.M. Molenaer, Adriaen and Isaac van Ostade, Harmen Hals, and other practitioners of the genre.³³ Their prices were indeed comparatively low, typically ten to fifteen guilders, but these sums still represented the equivalent of two to three weeks' wages for an ordinary craftsman at the time.³⁴ It simply is not true, moreover, that peasant genre scenes were only traded at the fairs. Even the high-class dealer Johannes de Renialme had eight of them in stock,³⁵ as did most of the other dealers whose inventories have been preserved. Whether there were more peasant society paintings in the inventories of the "petty bourgeoisie" than in those of rich citizens is an empirical question that Rosenthal could not resolve, given the paucity of materials at her disposal. My cursory study of the question suggests there were not.

To end my review of Rosenthal's essay on a more positive note, I will refer to a theme that she alludes to at several points and that informs her conclusions, namely the difference in artistic style that prevailed in the Dutch Republic and in the southern provinces under Spanish suzerainty. "Each epoch," she writes, "represents itself as it wants to appear; in Flanders, the feudal structure calls for heroization, while the bourgeoisie inclines toward realism and corporeality."³⁶ While she has no problem tracing major differences in the style to the entrenched feudalism of the south and the dominant role of the bourgeoisie in the north, she finds it much harder to explain the major points of similarity between the art of the north and the art of the south, which come down, in her view, to a common adherence to the principles of the Baroque. She thinks that this commonality has its roots in the general phenomenon of "mercantile capitalism and rapid economic change" of the seventeenth century. But she admits that the empirical evidence is still lacking to establish the link.³⁷

Few art historians or sociologists of art have dared to tackle such broad questions lately. They are perhaps "problèmes mal posés" that are not susceptible to any resolution. Still, the questions raised by Rosenthal have component parts that do have empirical content. We might ask, for

instance, whether seventeenth-century collections in the south differed significantly in the subject matter of the works of art they contained from collections in major Dutch cities belonging to individuals of comparable wealth and status. My impression, based on the repertoires of Antwerp collections published by Denucé and Duverger and my own work on Delft and Amsterdam inventories, is that they did so differ, but I have not performed rigorous tests to prove it.³⁸

In sum, Rosenthal's ideological *Weltanschauung* induced her to ask interesting questions about the influence of economic and social factors on Netherlandish art. It is easy to understand how her curiosity then prompted her to rush to conclusions that had either too little empirical justification or none at all.

The next synthesis that I wish to discuss is the best known: Arnold Hauser's chapter on the "Baroque of Protestant Bourgeoisie" in his famous *Social History of Art*.³⁹ The sources used by Hauser were much the same as Rosenthal's: W. Martin, H. Floerke, A. Rosenberg, John Evelyn, and a few general historians of Dutch culture. Like Rosenthal, he wishes to explain the differences in the Baroque style that arose "almost simultaneously under quite similar conditions" in the north and south. He considers the analysis of these differences "which allow us to exclude all non-sociological factors" a "supreme test case for the sociology of art."⁴⁰ His explanations are very similar to Rosenthal's: in the south, an aristocratic or pseudo-aristocratic upper class dependent on the court wins power, leading to the "victory of court culture over urban-middle class culture, whilst in the North the achievement of national independence meant the preservation of bourgeois culture."⁴¹ However, he places far more emphasis than Rosenthal does on the secularization of Dutch culture as its *differentia specifica*. He claims that Bible stories "retain only a relatively modest place alongside secular subjects" in Dutch households.⁴² He concedes, however, that the new middle-class nationalism of the Dutch "attempts not only to make spiritual things visible, but all visible things a spiritual experience."⁴³ Hauser is convinced that reality is pal-

³³ In my sample of 340 Amsterdam inventories, I found seventy-six paintings of peasant genre pieces in the forty-six inventories dated 1631 to 1676 whose contents had been appraised. The average evaluation of the total worth of all movable goods in twenty-seven of these inventories was 2,972 guilders; the total evaluation of the works of art in forty-four of these inventories was 557 guilders. Both of these averages significantly exceed the average value of movable goods and the average value of art works in a random sample of inventories. Among the forty-six collectors, there were twenty-one merchants, one burgomaster's widow, one attorney, and one surgeon. There were only four collectors who could more or less plausibly be called craftsmen.

³⁴ In the sample of seventy-six paintings of peasant genre pieces referred to in the above note, the average evaluation was 11.8 guilders. However, twenty-nine of the paintings were evaluated at five guilders or less.

³⁵ Bredius, 234-235.

³⁶ Rosenthal, 106.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 107.

³⁸ Denucé (as in n. 2) and Duverger (as in n. 2). W. Brulez in his book *Cultuur en getal; Aspecten van de relatie economie — maatschappij — cultuur in Europa tussen 1400 en 1800*, Amsterdam, 1986 (pp. 64-65), observes that the percentage of religious works among paintings exported by the Antwerp firms of Forchoudt and Musson was higher than in the Delft collections I had analyzed for the first half of the 17th century. But, as he notes, the greater demand on the part of Catholic Spain and Austria may have been the factor accounting for this difference.

³⁹ Hauser, 456-475.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 458.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 459.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 462. The evidence on this point is mixed. In the first quarter of the century, the percentage of religious subjects is very high, as much as thirty to forty percent of all subjects represented in Delft and Amsterdam; it then falls steadily to fifteen percent or less by the 1670s, for which period Hauser's claim has more justification (cf. Montias, 1982, 242).

⁴³ Hauser, 462.

pably present in Dutch paintings, "as if this reality were being discovered, taken possession of and settled down in for the first time."⁴⁴ This faith in realistic representation leads him to make false inferences about the status of the people who bought the paintings. Just as Rosenthal thought peasants purchased peasant society pieces, so he argues that "Metsu and Netscher obviously work for the most distinguished and richest strata of the bourgeoisie, Pieter de Hooch and Vermeer van Delft for a somewhat more unassuming circle, whereas Jan Steen and Nicolaes Maes probably have customers in all classes of society."⁴⁵ These assertions, which are based on visual evidence alone, assume that the finer the costume and the wealthier the decor, the more likely the painting will be bought by a correspondingly rich person. The correlation between the luxury of the surroundings depicted and the wealth of collectors is not at all obvious. Was De Hooch's clientele for his late, very elegant society pieces richer than that for the more modest interiors of his Delft period? Perhaps half of Vermeer's mature paintings were sold to a patron who called himself "heer van Spalandt" and would presumably have thought himself a social equal to any of Ter Borch's clients.⁴⁶

Since relatively few paintings by the "fijn schilders" mentioned by Hauser have turned up in any Amsterdam inventories dated before 1680 (the end-point of my study) and fewer still of these are evaluated, I cannot test Hauser's assertions statistically, but the casual evidence at my disposal — such as that cited above — does not support his claims.

Hauser, like Floerke and Rosenthal, makes much of the "overabundance of capital" and the speculation in pictures that John Evelyn had noted in his diary. Hauser goes further than his predecessors in inferring from this very fragmentary evidence that Dutch burghers "bought pictures, above all, because there was nothing else to buy" and in concluding that "the least decisive reason why [better-placed people] bought pictures was to satisfy their thirst for beauty."⁴⁷ All this seems extremely unlikely to me. Works of art normally represented three to ten percent of the value of movable goods in evaluated estates.⁴⁸ They competed with very fine clothing, silverware, porcelain, and jewelry in rich people's purchases; and it was only serious collectors who had more money tied up in paintings than in jewelry and silver. The massive and enduring passion for collecting pictures among richer citizens could hardly have been motivated and fed by the expectation that they would increase in prices, considering the state of "overproduction" of works of art and their low prices that Hauser mentions at a later point in the chapter.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.* Hauser's views on the middle-class preference for realistic art in various periods are not always consistent (see E.H. Gombrich's review of Hauser in the *Art Bulletin*, xxv, 1953, 80).

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 463-464.

⁴⁶ Montias (as in n. 9), 205.

⁴⁷ Hauser, 465.

⁴⁸ Montias, 1982, 263. Similar percentages hold true for Amsterdam.

⁴⁹ Hauser, 467.

Hauser's Marxist preconceptions bubble to the surface in the part of his chapter concerning guild regulations and market practices. He argues, citing N. Pevsner's *Academies of Art*, that "the dissolution of the guilds and the fact that artistic production ceases to be regulated by a court or by the state allow the boom on the art market to degenerate into a state of fierce competition, to which the most individual and the most original fell victim. There were artists living in cramped circumstances in earlier times, but there were none in actual want. The financial troubles of the Rembrandts and the Hals are a concomitant of their economic freedom and anarchy in the realm of art, which now comes on the scene for the first time and still controls the art market today."⁴⁹ In a subsequent passage, he deplores the "mediation of the art trade," which "leads the artist to become estranged from the public. . . . People get used to buying what they find in stock at the art dealer's and begin to regard the work of art as just as impersonal a commodity as any other."⁵⁰ Is it really true there were no artists in earlier times living "in actual want"? Was Rembrandt, one of the most financially successful artists in the Netherlands and a bankrupt because of his compulsive extravagance, a "victim of competition"? This is quite fanciful. Suffice it to say that run-of-the-mill painters and sculptors in the 1550s earned daily wages that were perhaps fifty percent greater than those of ordinary workmen, whereas, a century later, when the market for art had greatly expanded, the ratio was more like three or four to one, as I have already indicated.⁵¹ A sixteenth-century artist with several children could easily go hungry when the local harvest failed. The greater freedom artists enjoyed in the seventeenth century should, in any case, be reckoned as a plus: they were not as dependent on the good will of one or two local churches for their employment; guild regulations were less restrictive; they were more mobile, due to improvements in transportation by canal and by road; and they had more outlets, including dealers, to choose from in marketing their output. It is quite possible — although this too would have to be shown empirically — that there was more variance in artists' earnings in 1650 than a century or two earlier.⁵² But one would have to have a strong aversion to inequality to infer from this alone that artists on the whole were worse off in later times than they were in the late Middle Ages.

Hauser is convinced that the market economy of the seventeenth century provided less security, at least for major artists like Rembrandt, than the aristocratic, authoritarian order that preceded it, and so ends his analysis of the Northern Baroque era by condemning it as one of those

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 469.

⁵¹ For the 1550s, see Montias, 1982, 20.

⁵² A few 16th-century artists, including Maarten van Heemskerck and Jan van Scorel, were able to play one ecclesiastic patron off against the other and secure highly remunerative contracts. (See, for example, Montias, 1982, 25, 27.) But it is uncertain whether the exceptionally high prices they obtained had a significant effect on the variance of the distribution of artists' earnings.

periods "farthest removed from the ideal of a synthesis of freedom and security."⁵³ A good part of this adverse judgment rests on his notion that the market was unable to recognize the true artistic qualities of the "national school," from Rembrandt to Jacob van Ruisdael. (He shared the prejudices of many of his contemporaries regarding Mannerist and Italianate painting.) But he does not explain why court or ecclesiastic patrons would have done better at picking out the long-term winners in the art-historical derby.

Another sociological approach to Dutch art history, this one not of the Marxist persuasion, is that of F. van Heek, who taught sociology at the University of Leiden from 1948 to 1972. He sets out to explain why the Dutch school of landscape painting represented an original, unprecedented achievement, which flourished for about half a century — from roughly 1620 to 1670 — and then faded away.⁵⁴ He asserts that the members of the school formed a "separate mentality group with a common style and a preference for a given subject, in this occurrence, landscape." His main thesis is that it was "thanks to its cultural isolation vis-à-vis international artistic styles, primarily Baroque and classicism, which were especially appreciated by the highest social strata, that this art form spontaneously developed."⁵⁵ Again, as with Rosenthal and Hauser, the claim in support of this thesis is advanced that the landscape painters of the national school — he mentions specifically Jacob and Salomon van Ruysdael, Jan van Goyen, Hobbema, Aert van der Neer, Salomon de Koninck, and Aelbert Cuyp — sold their paintings mainly to the lower middle class, the "petty bourgeoisie," at low prices. The school disintegrated when its artistic isolation was broken in the wake of changes in the social structure and culture of Dutch civilization after 1670, as the patriciate fell under the sway of French taste and culture. This, as Van Heek recognizes, was not necessarily serious since, according to him, the patriciate did

not buy the products of the national school anyway. But they did influence taste and they helped, together with the drawing academies established in the 1680s, to bring about the dominance of academic classicism, for which landscape was at best a subsidiary genre.

My primary objections to Van Heek's thesis are of an evidential character. I do not believe that Holland's landscape painters were culturally isolated. Nor do I think that they sold their works chiefly to craftsmen and the lower middle class. There is a consensus among the historians of Dutch art that Van Goyen's teacher, Esaias van de Velde, played a key role in the development of the "national school" of landscape. But Van de Velde was far from culturally isolated. He was deeply immersed in the Haarlem artistic milieu, in contact with artists as varied as Hendrick Goltzius and Claes Jansz. Vischer, and under the influence of out-of-town painters including Elsheimer in Rome and Vinckeboons in Amsterdam.⁵⁶ By excluding the Italianate landscape artists (Berchem, Jan Both, J.B. Weenix, Karel Dujardin *et al.*) from the national school, Van Heek is able to substantiate the claim that the true representatives of the latter did not visit Italy and become corrupted by Italian artistic norms.⁵⁷ Thus the painters whose works are said to be artistically pure — the true Dutch masters — were themselves uncontaminated by contact with other schools. Those who were contaminated — the Italianates — were somehow inferior to those who were not. From this it follows — by circuitous reasoning — that insulation is a salutary thing.⁵⁸ The other part of Van Heek's thesis seems even less well founded. There is a good deal of evidence from extant inventories that even the most distinguished and wealthy collectors owned paintings by members of the "national school" — along with examples by Italianates and, less frequently perhaps, by Mannerists.⁵⁹ Van Heek would have built up a better case if he had limited his claim to the assertion that, after 1650, Italianate landscapes became ex-

⁵³ Hauser, 473.

⁵⁴ F. van Heek, 127-143. Professor Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann kindly referred me to this source. Van Heek claims that the originality of the Dutch school of landscape painting resided in the "nuancing of the atmosphere and the spatial organization of sky and horizon" (*ibid.*, 128-129 and 142).

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 129. Van Heek's thesis is in part derived from J.L. Price's *Culture and Society in the Dutch Republic during the 17th Century*, discussed below.

⁵⁶ W. Stechow, *Dutch Landscape Painting of the Seventeenth Century*, Edinburgh, 1966, 20-21.

⁵⁷ On the fluctuating appreciation of Italianate painting from the 17th century to our day, see A. Blankert, *Dutch 17th Century Italianate Landscape Painters*, repr., with new trans., of the 1965 ed., Soest, 1978, 46-47.

⁵⁸ The example of Aelbert Cuyp, who never visited Italy but was deeply influenced by Jan Both who did, shows how arbitrary is the distinction between what is truly national and what is not.

⁵⁹ Among published examples, I may cite the outstanding collection of Herman Becker (Postma, as in n. 10, 1-21). The Becker collection included landscapes by Simon de Vlieger, Allaert van Everdingen, Philip de Koninck, Jacob van Ruisdael, Paulus Potter, Esaias van de Velde, Govert Jansz. Mijneer, Steven van Goor, and Hercules Seghers, artists who all may be

said to belong to the national school. But the collection also included paintings by Italianate artists such as Paulus Briel, Jan Lap, Cornelis van Poelenburgh, and J.B. Weenix. The only evidence cited by Van Heek in support of his thesis concerns the Kretzer collection, which is known in part through a poem of ninety-eight lines by Lambert van den Bos (Floerke, 167). It is indeed true that paintings by Italian and Italianate artists were the most often cited in the poem. Van den Bos had something to say about only four primarily landscape or marine artists, three of whom were Italianates (Jan Both, J.B. Weenix, and Pieter van Laer) and one who was typically Dutch (Porcellis). The near-absence of representatives of the "national school" of landscape in the Kretzer collection, or its reflection in the poem, is hardly sufficient ground for the claim that upper-class collectors neglected the "truly Dutch" landscape artists. Alan Chong, who has studied 17th-century collections of landscapes owned by collectors of different wealth and status, reports that Italianate landscapes appear with some frequency in the collections of wealthy individuals, whereas works by Van Goyen, Porcellis, Pieter de Molijn, Allaert van Everdingen, Jacob van Ruisdael, and Steven van Goor are more frequently encountered in middle-class collections. On the other hand, Cornelis Vroom, who surely belongs to the national school but whose paintings were expensive, chiefly showed up in "elite collections." (See A. Chong, "The Market for Landscape Painting in Seventeenth-Century Holland" in *Masters of 17th Century Dutch Landscape Painting*, ed. P. Sutton, exh. cat., Amsterdam, Boston, and Philadelphia, 1987, 110.)

tremely popular and displaced their "true Dutch" counterparts in many prominent collections.

Van Heek's thesis about the beneficial impact of cultural isolation on creativity is probably untestable, at least directly. If I had to guess, though, I would argue just the opposite: that innovation thrives on cross-fertilization among groups of intensively interacting individuals — groups large enough to ensure a critical mass. This is surely the lesson of technological innovation in science and industry. I think it also applies to Dutch landscape painting, whose practitioners were numerous, specialized, and culturally enriched by their contacts with fellow guild-members, their travels to other centers of artistic activity, and their frequent opportunities to study the products of other towns and other schools.⁶⁰

In an essay of 1979 on economics and the Dutch national style, Erik Larsen boldly proposed to "explain the relationship between art and capitalism in the Dutch Republic."⁶¹ His general concept of *Umstandsentstehung* aims at finding the link between "the origin of given stylistic forms and concepts shaped by exterior circumstances." In the case of Dutch art, the exterior circumstance was the "accumulation of capital in the hands of a large new stratum of traders and/or minor capitalists."⁶² To put Larsen's thesis in different words, the evolution of the national style was driven by demand. Who were the buyers of art who exercised this demand? They were the middle-class burghers with their "anti-classical and anti-humanist tendencies," who wanted "visual recognition of the land around them and verisimilitude."⁶³ They sought realistic depictions of their environments, which artists of the national school were only too glad to sell them. Larsen resists every attempt to reinterpret this "realism" as the surface appearance of deeper-lying things, à la Eddy de Jongh.⁶⁴ He rejects the notion of "over-sensitive art historians" that the realistic peasant scenes may have been "moralizations or elucidations of proverbs." They are, rather, an expression of the "innermost psyche of the newly prosperous middle class."⁶⁵ He plays down the importance of religious art.⁶⁶ Calvinism, in his view, showed the way toward "an art more preoccupied with secular objects and compositions than with the religious subjects."⁶⁷ "Naturalistic and realistic rendition," in Larsen's judgment, was what Dutch burghers wanted and what they got. In the last quarter of the seventeenth

century, men with inherited wealth came to dominate the market. French taste intruded, the classical-humanistic style came into vogue, and Dutch art fell into decay.⁶⁸

Larsen, starting from very different premises, ends up with conclusions that are quite compatible with Van Heek's supply-side thesis (the notion of the isolated artist as the creator and bearer of an original artistic style). Van Heek deprecates the contaminating influences of Italian and French classicism on the artist to arrive at what is properly Dutch (and thus worthy of our admiration). Larsen, after discarding from Dutch art the subjects (religious, mythological) and the styles (classical, symbol-laden) that do not emanate from the Dutch burgher's "innermost psyche," is left with much the same residue as Van Heek. Both, in my view, are too prejudiced in favor of certain kinds of art and against others to qualify as objective historians. This is not to deny that there is partial validity in Larsen's point that changes in artistic styles were related to changes in demand (new types of buyers coming from different socio-economic strata). What is missing from his analysis is the interplay between factors of supply and demand that in the last analysis shape and modify style.⁶⁹

J.L. Price's synthesizing chapter on Dutch art, characteristically titled "Painting — the Artist as Craftsman," in his well-known book on Dutch culture and society,⁷⁰ supplies a fitting conclusion to this section, even though it was actually published a few years earlier than the Van Heek and Larsen essays. It shares many of the features, and especially the prejudices, that we have already encountered in all the syntheses so far discussed. Price's preferences are very strong and he makes no bones about exhibiting them. Like Van Heek and Larsen, he rejects the Italianates and deplores the influence of the Renaissance literary tradition, which made better educated Dutch citizens incapable of appreciating "the worth of the Dutch school."⁷¹ He adds to this aversion an abhorrence for the influence of the "Flemings" on the *stadhouders* and their court, which manifested itself in the decoration of Huis ten Bosch and Honselaarsdijk, and on the Amsterdam patriciate, who made the unfortunate decision to call on the Flemish sculptor Artus Quellinus to decorate the new Town Hall and did not have proper appreciation for Rembrandt's *Claudius Civilis*. Price also rails against the Dutch poets who, in lavishing their praise, "did not choose painters who were typical of the

⁶⁰ This is not to discredit Erik Erikson's more appealing hypothesis (which Van Heek does not mention) to the effect that certain great innovators, particularly among religious and political thinkers, have benefited, at critical junctures in their lives, from a turning inward and a withdrawal from civil society. I do not know of any major artist, however, of whom this can be said. (On Erikson's views, see *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History*, New York, 1958, chap. 4.)

⁶¹ Larsen, 59.

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 62.

⁶⁴ For De Jongh's views, see his "Inleiding" to *Tot Lering en Vermaak*, exh. cat., Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, 1976.

⁶⁵ Larsen, 61.

⁶⁶ For a contrasting view of the importance of religious art and the humanistic tradition in Dutch 17th-century art, see *Gods, Saints and Heroes: Dutch Painting in the Age of Rembrandt*, exh. cat., Detroit Institute of Arts, 1980.

⁶⁷ Larsen, 59.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 63.

⁶⁹ See below, p. 373.

⁷⁰ Price, 119-169.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 129.

Dutch School."⁷² Along with Larsen, he traces the decadence of Dutch art in the third and fourth quarters of the seventeenth century to the growing impact of the taste of the Regents for classical French and Italian models, which gradually penetrated "the lower regions of society."⁷³ Price's ideas on the cultural isolation of Dutch artists are similar to Van Heek's, except that he stresses their craft or non-theoretical training as the determining factor.⁷⁴ But he also shares with Larsen the thesis that it was the demand on the part of "the middle and lower-middle classes" that sustained this sort of craft-painting. As Price puts it, "the majority of painters found their purchasers among the less wealthy and less educated sections of Dutch society — chiefly merchants of modest wealth, small traders, shopkeepers and artisans in the towns of Holland." These painters were thus not influenced by the tastes and attitudes toward art common among the wealthier merchants and more aristocratic regents, but were able to develop their traditional styles and approaches in the direction encouraged by the tastes of those for whom their pictures were intended.⁷⁵ I have already questioned the empirical basis for the similar views of Rosenthal and Hauser. Price's hypotheses are no more defensible than theirs — given the evidence at our disposal now.

4. Recent Work on the Southern Netherlands

In contrast to the heroic speculation and casual empiricism of the syntheses I have discussed in the preceding section, the scholars who have recently studied social and economic aspects of art production and consumption in the southern Netherlands — chiefly in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries — are distinguished by the solidity of their scholarship and the modesty of their conclusions.

Jean-Pierre Sosson's succinct and richly documented article of 1970 on the Bruges Painters' and Saddlemakers' Guild is a good starting point.⁷⁶ Sosson shows that the number of newly inscribed masters and apprentices in the guild, the great majority of whom were painters, stagnated from 1454 to 1530, in contrast to Antwerp where they both in-

creased. Sosson infers from the extreme concentration of new apprentices' inscriptions with a very few masters — only forty percent of the known masters seem to have had any apprentices at all, and five percent of the masters engaged thirty-six percent of the new apprentices — that art production was organized in large workshops, in which both free masters and apprentices worked.⁷⁷ This is (weakly) confirmed by a few contemporary documents implying workshop collaboration⁷⁸ and by some indications that Bruges workshops were producing on a larger scale.⁷⁹ While the evidence on the concentration of apprentices with a few masters is suggestive, it is not entirely compelling. One would like to be able to study comparative material for other towns and other periods. Also, the measure of concentration assumes that the data are as complete (or incomplete) for the registration of masters as for that of apprentices, which is by no means certain. (Is it possible that no apprentices registered after about 1505, while registrations of new masters continued, albeit at a low rate?) Neither am I entirely satisfied with the explanation given for the increased concentration: that it was due to the "raréfaction probable des effectifs du métier et l'augmentation de la demande," the latter supported by a footnote referring to the enormous production of painted panels around 1500.⁸⁰ Why should demand (that is, the number of panels demanded on the Bruges market at any price) have increased in a town that was suffering a contraction, if anything, in its business activity? If we grant that the concentration of production in a few workshops actually took place, then we may infer that labor productivity rose, prices fell, and the number of panels demanded increased in response to the drop in prices.⁸¹ With these minor defects, Sosson's article is still a pioneering and valuable contribution to our knowledge of the art trades in the late Middle Ages.

Lorne Campbell's article on the production and marketing of art works in the southern Netherlands in the fifteenth century⁸² is much more general and descriptive than Sosson's or those I will discuss subsequently. It is not based,

⁷² *Ibid.*, 125-128 and 138-139. On p. 125, Price lists "unfamiliar" (read mediocre) names who decorated the Huis ten Bosch: among them, Soutman, De Grebber, Cesar van Everdingen, and Claes Pietersz. He probably did not recognize Berchem's name as the last on the list. (Berchem was invited to participate but, for some unknown reason, actually did not.) Many historians of Dutch art would now place Pieter de Grebber and Cesar van Everdingen, along with Berchem, in the first or second category of Dutch masters.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 129-130.

⁷⁴ "The Dutch craft painters were to a great extent isolated from the rest of Europe in two ways: physically as they had neither the wish nor the means to travel outside the land; and socially as their origins and their place within Dutch society drastically limited their contact with the cosmopolitan atmosphere of court, intellectual and patrician circles . . ." (*ibid.*, 140). On Dutch artists' craft training, see *ibid.*, 132. I am not persuaded by these arguments, which underrate the social level of artists, their origin, and their contacts.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 134.

⁷⁶ J.-P. Sosson, "Une Approche des structures économiques d'un métier

d'art: La Corporation des Peintres et Selliers de Bruges (XVe-XVIe siècles)," *Revue des archéologues et historiens d'art de Louvain*, III, 1970, 91-100.

⁷⁷ Sosson does not explicitly state that the masters who had no apprentices worked for other masters in workshops, but I think this must be the logic of his argument. For a study of the quantitative relationship between the number of master painters and their apprentices in the 17th century, see M.J. Bok, "Nulla dies sine linie. De opleiding van schilders in Utrecht in de eerste helf van de zeventiende eeuw," *De zeventiende eeuw*, VI, 1990, 59-66.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 91-92.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, n. 24.

⁸⁰ Sosson (as in n. 76), 93.

⁸¹ I am distinguishing here between an outward shift in the demand schedule (a true increase in demand) and a movement along the schedule (an increase in the quantity demanded as the price falls).

⁸² Campbell (as in n. 1).

as most of these others are, on new archival research. But its survey is so packed with facts and its conclusions are so persuasive that it deserves a place here. He draws five main conclusions. The art market in this early period was highly organized and the commercialization of artistic production was already well underway (which might have surprised Hauser). Second, few pictures were commissioned; the proportion that were constantly declined. Third, there was extensive collaboration among artists. Fourth, specialization among artists was increasing; some artists specialized themselves out of their craft altogether by becoming full-time dealers. And finally, the guilds were beginning to relax some of their monopolies and control over production and were coming to accept the existence of dealers.⁸³ All this seems very likely to me, although of course one would wish to verify these points statistically.

Jean Wilson's article on the Bruges "pandt" market in the first half of the sixteenth century⁸⁴ is directly based on original archival research. She shows how many painters — a maximum of eleven in 1514 and a minimum of one in 1543 — rented the stalls in the pandt during the annual fair from 1512 to 1550 and what proportion of total pandt receipts they accounted for (maximum 14.7 percent in 1514, minimum 1.3 percent in 1530). She shows convincingly that the stalls were used mainly by painters whose shops were located outside the city limits or in the less commercial parts of the city (which accounts for the absence from the pandt accounts of a number of famous Bruges artists with well-established shops, including Gerard David). Some reputed painters may have been represented by salesmen or dealers. She ascribes the drop in stall rentals, from about 1532 on, to political and religious turmoil, the displacement of economic activity from Bruges to Antwerp, and the gradual decline in the importance of fairs as a major outlet for luxury goods, as opposed to permanent shops, in the course of the century. In her very short article, she may not have had space to discuss the competition among different crafts, including the sculptors', for rental space, which might have revealed something about the relative importance of painters in the Bruges artistic community.

Dan Ewing's archival research on "Marketing Art in Antwerp"⁸⁵ can be discussed as a sequel to Jean Wilson's, since it deals in large part with the Antwerp "Our Lady's Pandt," an outlet for artistic wares during the city's two annual fairs (later on a year-round basis), comparable to the Bruges pandt. It covers the history of the Antwerp pandt in exhaustive detail from 1460 to 1560. The pandt exhibited books, prints, paintings, and joiners' work, including sculptured retables. The heart of the study is in the analysis of trends in stall rentals. Ewing argues that the growing

importance of Our Lady's Pandt rentals in the years 1465-1540, compared to receipts from glovers and from the stall house (reflecting commercial and handicraft activities), testifies to the growth of the artistic trades in the period. Our Lady's rentals varied in the same direction as the general trends in business activity, but more intensively than they did. This is as it should be for a branch of commerce dealing in luxury goods, whose consumption may be expected to rise and fall more than proportionally with income. Ewing uses simple correlation analysis to track the statistical association between the number of places rented (and some other independent variables) and total rent paid. The positive correlation he observes helps to demonstrate that "the volatility of income" was largely determined by swings between years when payments for rental were in arrears and years when those arrears plus current dues were paid.⁸⁶ The exercise is not extraordinarily illuminating, but it does mark a methodological advance over previous work.

Two complementary pieces of research have jointly made a breakthrough in our understanding of patronage and market in the southern Netherlands in the sixteenth century. One is Steven Goddard's investigation of repetitive patterns in painting altarpieces, the other is Lynn F. Jacobs's study of the standardization of carved altarpieces.⁸⁷ Both show, with a rich abundance of details, that the mechanical repetition of parts and patterns, in painting and sculpture, was a standard cost-cutting device for workshops producing "on spec" for the market. Patrons who commissioned altarpieces generally demanded more individual attention to detail and eschewed stereotyping. They also exercised more influence on the liturgical contents of the religious works they ordered.

Finally, Zirka Filipczak's *Picturing Art in Antwerp*, published in 1987, brings us back to the role of the guilds and to the efforts of artists to emancipate themselves from the fetters of *officio mechanico*.⁸⁸ While Filipczak does not focus directly on the socio-economic environment in which art developed, her insights into the guilds and the wealthy patronage of Antwerp form an indispensable background to any socio-economic study.

5. Recent Studies of Socio-Economic Aspects of Dutch Art

Åke Bengtsson, to whose 1952 monograph on the rise of realistic painting in Haarlem I have already referred twice in this survey, devoted a substantial part of his essay to what he called "the conditions of art in Haarlem."⁸⁹ His aim was to establish whether and to what extent the new structure in landscape painting was "conditioned by the particular situation in Haarlem,"⁹⁰ by which he meant the cultural and socio-economic environment that prevailed in this town

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 198.

⁸⁴ J.C. Wilson, "The Participation of Painters in the Bruges 'Pandt' Market, 1512-1550," *Burlington Magazine*, cxxv, 1983, 476-479.

⁸⁵ To appear in a forthcoming issue of the *Art Bulletin*.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, n. 118.

⁸⁷ S. Goddard, *The Master of Frankfurt and His Shop*, Brussels, 1984, and *idem*, "Brocade Patterns in the Shop of the Master of Frankfurt: An

Accessory to Stylistic Analysis," *Art Bulletin*, lxxvii, 1985, 401-417; L.F. Jacobs, "The Marketing and Standardization of South Netherlandish Carved Altarpieces: Limits on the Role of the Patron," *Art Bulletin*, lxxi, 1989, 203-229.

⁸⁸ Filipczak (as in n. 11), 16.

⁸⁹ Bengtsson, 33-66.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 33.

in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. He first surveys the main industries — bleaching, weaving, breweries — and concludes that, due to the disintegration of the guilds and the proto-capitalist conditions that obtained in these industries, it was unlikely that the clients for the town's artists were recruited among their workers. He then divides the town's population into five income groups: the wealthy bourgeoisie belongs to groups 1 and 2; small-ware dealers, iron-mongers, surgeon-barbers, city-employed master carpenters, and masons, goldsmiths, notaries, schoolmasters, most artists, and lower town officials are in group 3; craftsmen organized in guilds, including ordinary carpenters, masons, and skilled textile workers earning about one guilder per day are in group 4; the last group is made up of extremely low-paid spinners and "home workers." He argues, by comparing typical incomes in each of these groups with the prices of paintings cited in contemporary sources, that only the first three groups can have earned sufficiently to buy paintings by guild-registered masters.⁹¹ He also breaks down the population of Amsterdam on the basis of tax records of 1631 to show what might have been the approximate distribution of wealth (not income) in the two top classes. He infers from some quotations of prices obtained by Haarlem painters that the Mannerists and academists (Pieter de Grebber, Salomon de Bray, *et al.*) were "rather well off" during the first decades of the century, "as were the modernists" (Esaias van de Velde and his followers).⁹² While Bengtsson turned out to be correct on this point, we should not put too much store in his comparisons of the prices of art works with contemporary weekly or monthly wages. As I have reiterated in this essay, these comparisons must take into account how long an artist took to complete a picture. A Mannerist producing one picture per month worth fifty guilders might have been less prosperous than a "modernist" polishing off eight pictures a month at ten guilders each.⁹³

Finally, on the basis of a small sample of twenty-six painters from Haarlem and Amsterdam born in the years 1575-1600 whose social origin could be determined, Bengtsson calculates that sixty-nine percent stemmed from social group 3 (of whom nearly half came from artists' families) and thirty-one percent from the top two groups. These findings are consistent with those I arrived at for Delft artists.⁹⁴ If anything, I would object to Bengtsson's conflation in group 3 of widely disparate types of income earners. In

the case of Delft, the artists pooled in group 3 came from families in which the father was engaged in highly paid crafts (including goldsmiths), from the solid bourgeoisie (notaries, apothecaries), or from an artistic milieu:

Even though Bengtsson's work marked substantial progress over his predecessors', he did not quite succeed in his task of relating the "Haarlem style" to the artistic environment of the town. He is probably correct in his judgment that the Haarlem guild was much more cohesive than Amsterdam's, but he has no evidence to support the claim that because the guild "stood behind the painters, there was no need to feel themselves delivered into the hands of their customers."⁹⁵ Nor is it evident that Amsterdam's heterogeneity, its lack of cohesiveness as an artistic community, should account for its backwardness, compared to Haarlem, in overcoming the legacy of Mannerism and in developing a modern style.⁹⁶

E. Taverne studied the Haarlem guild about twenty years after Bengtsson but from a very different point of view.⁹⁷ He observed, as Bengtsson apparently never did, that the guild was dominated by Roman Catholic painters (De Grebber *père et fils*, Salomon de Bray), whose academic style was far removed from that of the modernists, who played a key role in the emergence of the "true Dutch" school of landscape, genre, and still life. Taverne, as Miedema noted a couple of years later, laid excessive stress on an ordinance proposed in 1631 by the leaders of the guild, which would have divided the membership into an upper class of artists, architects, and mathematicians and an underclass of craftsmen. According to this proposal, the former were to be given exclusive control over the governance of the guild. But the proposal was actually rejected by the municipal authorities, a fact that Taverne apparently did not know.⁹⁸ He perhaps also exaggerated the ideological cohesiveness of the artists who played a paramount role in the guild leadership. The "modern" landscapist Pieter de Molijn and the Protestant Pieter Saenredam were, after all, among the guild's prominent headmen (*vinders*).

Miedema's publication of the complete records and accounts of the Haarlem guild in 1980 marked a very significant contribution to scholarship.⁹⁹ His transcriptions are a model of the kind. Granted these virtues, it is perhaps churlish to criticize his introduction for failing to cover other topics besides the problem of the artist's emancipation within and without the guild, fascinating as that may

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 34-36.

⁹² *Ibid.*, 48. Bengtsson criticizes historians who have "exaggerated the poverty of painters," including Hauser who is said to have relied on obsolete sources.

⁹³ For this reason, I cannot accept the inference from the fact that Mannerist and academic paintings were better paid than those of the modernists that the modernists must have had a "strong love for the new motifs — landscape, still life" to compensate them for the lower pay they received (*ibid.*, 51).

⁹⁴ Montias, 1982, 149-154.

⁹⁵ Bengtsson, 55.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ E. Taverne, "Salomon de Bray and the Reorganization of the Haarlem Guild of St. Luke in 1631," *Simiolus*, vi, 1972-73, 50-69.

⁹⁸ Miedema, *Archiefbescheiden*, 16.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, *passim*.

be.¹⁰⁰ A close study of the economic interests — partly congruent, partly divergent — of the guild masters in various trades, of their apprentices and journeymen, and of the city authorities, together with the strategies each group pursued in furthering these interests, still has not been carried out for Haarlem or for any other city.¹⁰¹

In 1980 a new genre appeared in the socio-economic literature on art (new at least for the Netherlands) with the publication of Linda Stone-Ferrier's study of the inter-relationship between the production and consumption of textiles and the making of art in seventeenth-century Holland.¹⁰² Like Bengtsson,¹⁰³ Stone-Ferrier attempted to describe in precise detail the environment in which a particular style of painting emerged. But her focus, instead of being just a city, is an industry — the bleaching, spinning, weaving of textiles in Haarlem and Leiden, the silk industry in Amsterdam — and its reflection in the painting of the period. While offering rich material to study this connection, her work is perhaps more suggestive and evocative than quantitative and demonstrative in its approach.

I have already referred at several points in this survey to my archival study of the Guild of St. Luke in Delft and on its membership, which first appeared in *Simiolus* in 1977 and 1978-79,¹⁰⁴ and later in my book *Artists and Artisans in Delft*, published in 1982. In addition, this research covered the following areas: (1) the relationship between the number of guild masters and the number of their apprentices and journeymen in seventeenth-century Delft;¹⁰⁵ (2) the economic status of guild members, based on the real estate taxes they paid, the prices of the houses they bought or sold, and the donations made after their deaths to the Camer van Charitate;¹⁰⁶ (3) the contributions made by various crafts to the finances of the guild;¹⁰⁷ and (4) the subjects of paintings and their attributions in Delft collections.¹⁰⁸

The research done on the guilds and on the economic status of artists by Miedema and myself, complementing earlier studies by Bredius, Hoogewerff,¹⁰⁹ S.A.C. Dudok van Heel, and I. van Eeghen,¹¹⁰ was soon incorporated into

Ernst van de Wetering's scholarly investigation of Rembrandt's workshop practice,¹¹¹ which itself represents a component part of the vast and ambitious "Rembrandt Project." Van de Wetering's work of course extends beyond the application of earlier findings on the socio-economic environment of Dutch art to Rembrandt and his pupils; it is especially penetrating in its research on painting techniques.

In the fall of 1987, two articles appeared — one by Hessel Miedema and one by myself¹¹² — whose main themes coincided to a remarkable extent, without either author having knowledge of the other's work along these lines. I have already referred to my contribution,¹¹³ in which I attempted to show that the painterly, tonal innovations in early seventeenth-century art — first applied by Esaias van de Velde and Jan van Goyen to landscape painting — had the effect of reducing the time required to complete a picture and, given the fact that time was the main component of cost, of reducing the cost and hence the prices of such works. Miedema, as a by-product of his wide-ranging study of the guilds, showed in his article that cost-cutting techniques of the sort I had described had actually been introduced as early as the mid-sixteenth century. The prohibition by the guild of 's-Hertogenbosch in 1546 against the use of panels that were not first "dead-colored" ("gedootverfd") suggests that the bypassing of the dead-coloring stage in the preparation of panels — the direct working-up of the painting — was already a device painters had found to cut costs, at the expense of quality.¹¹⁴ What seems to have happened in the first decades of the seventeenth century is that a painterly, tonal technique was introduced that had artistic value in and of itself. It was no longer just a short-cut but an evocative way of rendering landscape that appealed to a wide public — a public that was enlarged by the very cheapness that the new technique rendered possible.¹¹⁵ This penetration was then the vector outcome of forces of supply and demand: new production techniques lowered supply costs, on the one hand, and, on the other, new products

¹⁰⁰ Miedema argues strenuously that artists as a group, as distinguished from successful individuals within the group, did not succeed in establishing themselves as a privileged category superior to ordinary craftsmen, either in Haarlem or in any other town (*ibid.*, 12). In a later, more nuanced article, in part based on his students' research, he modified this view. (Miedema, "Kunstschilders, gilde en academie. Over het probleem van de emancipatie van de kunstschilders in de Noordelijke Nederlanden van de 16de en 17de eeuw," *Oud Holland*, ci, 1987, 1-34.)

¹⁰¹ Some partial evidence for such a study can be found in Miedema (as in n. 100, 3-9) and in Montias, 1982, 93-100 and chap. 9.

¹⁰² L.A. Stone-Ferrier, *Images of Textiles: The Weave of Seventeenth-century Dutch Art and Society*, Ann Arbor, 1980 and 1985.

¹⁰³ Bengtsson's book is not included in the Stone-Ferrier bibliography.

¹⁰⁴ J.M. Montias, "The Guild of St. Luke in 17th-Century Delft and the Economic Status of Artists and Artisans," *Simiolus*, ix, 1977, 93-105, and "Painters in Delft, 1613-1680," *Simiolus*, x, 1978-79, 84-114.

¹⁰⁵ Montias, 1982, 106-111.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 112-135.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 110-111.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 242, 247.

¹⁰⁹ Cited in n. 1.

¹¹⁰ See the sources listed in n. 9.

¹¹¹ E. van de Wetering, *Studies in the Workshop Practice of the Early Rembrandt*, Amsterdam, 1986.

¹¹² H. Miedema, "Over kwaliteitvoorschriften in het St. Lucasgilde: Over 'doodverf,'" *Oud Holland*, ci, 1987, 141-147, and Montias, 1987.

¹¹³ See above, p. 360.

¹¹⁴ Relevant here are the techniques used by the three artists in the anecdote told by Hoogstraeten regarding the competition between François Knibbergen, Jan van Goyen, and Jan Porcellis, as to who could complete the best painting within a day (described in my article "Cost and Value," 1987).

¹¹⁵ Miedema is quite explicit on the relation between the time spent by an artist on a painting and its price (Miedema, as in n. 112, 144). In his 1980 edition of the Haarlem guild records, he had already pointed out that there is "an enormous difference" between the price paid in the 17th century for a "simple landscape by Jan van Goyen" and a "very carefully worked out invention" by Dou (*Archief bescheiden*, 11). However, his emphasis in this earlier work was less on time spent than on the difference in intellectual input required by these two types of painting.

were accepted by a broad public, including a middle class that was benefitting from the economic prosperity of the country.

In the last few years, economic historians with a bent toward quantification have been attracted to the problems evoked in this survey. W. Brulez's book, published in 1986, uses a wide gamut of sources to analyze statistically a number of cultural phenomena in early modern European history.¹¹⁶ His interest in the number of artists and the number of paintings produced in the Netherlands from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century makes his work relevant here. Brulez is a strong believer in back-of-the-envelope calculations to arrive at reasonable orders of magnitude. His results are not always convincing. Take, for example, his estimate of 17 million paintings produced in Europe between 1400 and 1800 and his calculations suggesting that less than one percent of these paintings have survived to this day.¹¹⁷ He arrives at these results as follows. First, he estimates the number of European artists active in the period 1400 to 1800 from Thieme-Becker's *Allgemeines Lexicon der bildende Künstler* on the basis of a one-third sample of all the European painters listed in that source. (The sample yields 10,938 painters; multiplied by three it supplies an estimate of 33,000 painters for the period.) (2) To check on the completeness of the Thieme-Becker census, he begins with Guicciardini's famous observation that there were three hundred painters and sculptors in Antwerp in 1560. Assuming the same ratio of painters to sculptors as in his sample from Thieme-Becker, it follows that there were 225 painters in Antwerp in Guicciardini's time. (3) He doubles this number to 450 to encompass the number of painters in the southern Netherlands at this time (without adducing any corroborative evidence to justify this extrapolation). (4) He then supposes that the number of painters remained constant and that half the number of original painters were replaced every twenty-five years. This implies that the total number of painters in the southern Netherlands over the entire period 1400-1800 was 3,825 (450 plus fifteen times 225, where fifteen is the number of quarter-centuries that elapsed in this period, and 225 is half of 450). (5) For the same area, the one-third sample from Thieme-Becker yielded 981 painters active during this period, or roughly three thousand for the entire dictionary. (6) A comparison of the estimate from Thieme-Becker (three thousand) with the estimate derived from Guicciardini (3,825) indicates that Thieme-Becker covered seventy-seven

percent of all south Netherlandish painters active over the four centuries (to be exact, 78.4 percent). (7) Applying this percentage coverage to the painters of all European nationalities yields his estimate of 43,000 (i.e., 33,000 divided by 0.77). (8) With this number in hand, he is ready to tackle the total output during the period. Assuming artists were active for forty years¹¹⁸ and that they produced ten paintings per year,¹¹⁹ the total number of paintings produced from 1560 to 1800 must have been about 17 million (forty times ten times 43,000).

Brulez then goes on to estimate the fraction of the 17 million paintings that may be left today. He finds that there were some three thousand paintings preserved in the Musée du Louvre that were painted during the period 1400-1800. He supposes there were ten museums with approximately the same number of paintings as the Louvre and that all the smaller museums in the world together possessed as many paintings as the ten largest museums. This yields a total of 60,000, which he then doubles to account for all the paintings in private collections and in churches, to arrive at 120,000, or a maximum of 150,000. By this reckoning, less than one painting in one hundred survived (150,000 out of 17 million).

Is this a correct order of magnitude? Could the actual ratio of paintings that survived to the number painted be one per thousand, or eight percent instead of one percent? Without going into excessive detail, let me say that the true ratio could easily fall anywhere in that range. The check via Guicciardini's estimate on the Thieme-Becker count for the southern Netherlands is, in my opinion, devoid of any validity.¹²⁰ The assumption that the number of painters remained constant from 1400 to 1800 is so far off the mark that it should not even be used as a starting point. The number of paintings produced per year per painter could well have been ten times greater than Brulez has estimated.¹²¹ The number that have survived in museums, private collections, and churches could be far greater than Brulez makes out. It could also be smaller. Though I believe in making rough estimates, I do not think a purpose is served by building them on such weak premises. Some of Brulez's other calculations are ingenious and interesting, but too many are flawed by the lavish use of biographic dictionaries that contain biased samples of the population of artists.¹²² These defects notwithstanding, Brulez's is still a pioneering book, which deserves careful study.

The Dutch economic historian Ad van der Woude star-

¹¹⁶ Brulez (as in n. 38).

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 55.

¹¹⁸ This is based on the lifespan of a sample of fifty Netherlandish artists of the 17th century, from which twenty years were subtracted, to arrive at the length of their productive career. My own detailed research on Delft artists suggests a shorter period of activity, closer to twenty-five years.

¹¹⁹ Brulez cites my estimate of fifty paintings a year that a 17th-century landscape painter could produce. He also alludes to an estimate by A.T. van Deursen that Mierevelt produced about ninety portraits a year over a career span of fifty-four years (*ibid.*, n. 93). But I do not understand how he reached an estimate of ten paintings a year from these figures.

¹²⁰ Brulez might have made a stab at gauging the coverage in Thieme-Becker by checking how many of his estimated 225 painters in Antwerp in 1560 were listed in that source. This still could not be extrapolated to the rest of the southern Netherlands, however, because the coverage in the dictionary of artistic centers in the other provinces was very uneven. It would appear, for example, that a far smaller percentage of the artists in Malines, which was known as a center for the production of cheap paintings in the 16th century, are known by name today than in Antwerp.

¹²¹ See below, n. 125.

¹²² Dictionaries of fine artists and musicians tend seriously to overrepresent the residents of the country in which they are edited.

tled a conference of art historians at the Getty Center in April 1987 by advancing the claim that the total production of paintings in the Dutch Republic, from 1580 to 1800, was on the order of 8 to 9 million.¹²³ This was eventually based on estimates of the number of paintings owned by Delft citizens of four wealth groups in the eighteenth century.¹²⁴ The results appear reasonable to me — and they are within the order of magnitude of my own estimates based on quite a different method.¹²⁵ In spite of this approximate coincidence, Van der Woude's calculations, in my view, rest on weak ground: there is no reliable way of deriving a cumulative rate of output from eighteenth-century stocks of paintings when nothing is known about the turnover of collections (or, for that matter, about Delft's decline as an artistic center relative to the rest of the country). Since he first brought out his initial estimates in 1987, Van der Woude has refined his calculations and generated comparable results, starting, as I did, from an estimate of the number of artists active in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century.¹²⁶ Both Van der Woude's calculations and mine are still based on tenuous assumptions and should only be considered preliminary attempts at measuring the aggregate output of Dutch painters.

The reader who has patiently followed this survey will have noted the gradual acceleration in the rate of publication of research on socio-economic aspects of Netherlandish art in the course of the last decade. This crescendo is likely to last at least a few more years if we may judge by the research presently under way.¹²⁷ As more data accumulate and as these new data are analyzed with greater sophistication than was possible in the past, it will become increasingly evident that the syntheses of Rosenthal, Hauser, Larsen, Van Heek, and Price were premature. Their contribution, as it turns out, was to ask important questions, not to answer them. A great deal of empirical work along the lines suggested in this survey remains to be done.

¹²³ Van der Woude's paper, "De schilderijen-productie in Holland tijdens de Republiek. Een poging tot kwantificatie," will be published in *Kunstzaken. Particulier en overheidsinitiatief in de wereld van de beeldende kunsten*, ed. H. Dagevos, Rotterdam, 1990.

¹²⁴ These estimates were made by T. Olthuis-Wijzenbeek in her book, *Achter de gevels van Delft: Bezit en bestaan van rijk en arm in een periode van achteruitgang (1700-1800)*, Hilversum, 1987.

¹²⁵ I begin by estimating the number of guild-registered painters in the Dutch Republic in 1650 (700-750 individuals). I then estimate their yearly earnings (from some actual citations in the literature and by extrapolating from a sample of house rents paid by artists-painters.) My estimate comes to approximately 1,400 guilders a year. I then build up an average of prices evaluated in Amsterdam inventories. (An alternative estimate of this average price was also calculated from a large sample of paintings sold at auction in 1647.) I arrive at an average of 8.5 guilders per painting. The average productivity per artist is then obtained by dividing the average price per painting into the estimated average yearly earnings of painters (after subtracting receipts other than from the sale of paintings). This comes to about three paintings a week. Corrections were then made for portrait and history painters whose productivity is believed to have been significantly lower than that of the landscape and still-life painters, whose works predominated in the samples of prices of paintings at my disposal.

J.M. Montias is the author of *Artists and Artisans in Delft: A Socio-Economic Study of the Seventeenth Century* (Princeton, 1982), *Vermeer and His Milieu: A Web of Social History* (Princeton, 1989), and *other studies on economics and art in the Netherlands* [Department of Economics, Yale University, New Haven, CT 06520].

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The average thus corrected is reduced to two paintings per week, or a total of 68,000 to 78,000 per year for the whole Dutch Republic. The estimates for 1650 are then projected over the whole period covered by Van der Woude (without making any adjustment for the suspected decline in the rate of output after 1670). This reconciliation is only meant to generate an order of magnitude for comparison with Van der Woude's results ("Estimates . . .," as in n. 109).

¹²⁶ These new results will be incorporated in his paper in the Dagevos volume cited in n. 123.

¹²⁷ Among the doctoral dissertation projects in the field may be mentioned those of Marten Jan Bok on Utrecht and John Loughman on Dordrecht. Klaske Muizelaar is writing a *Doctoraalscriptie* on paintings in inventories recorded in Amsterdam around 1700. Bok is primarily an economic historian while Loughman and Muizelaar are art historians, but all three will delve into the social and economic conditions in which art developed in the towns they have chosen. The first published products of Bok's outstanding scholarship were cited in nn. 30 and 77 above. Comparative statistical material from artistic centers beyond the borders of the Netherlands is also accumulating. Among studies of 16th- and 17th-century France in this domain, Philip Benedict's research on Metz and Nathalie Z. Davis's on Lyon may be singled out.