





# An Interpretation of the *Still Life with Books, Jug, Glass and Bread Roll*, Attributed to Jan Lievens

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Let's get straight to the point: the books that feature so prominently in the Rijksmuseum's magnificent *Still Life with Books, Jug, Glass and Bread Roll* are not ordinary bindings, as has always been assumed, they are ledger bindings (fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> This is remarkable, for bindings like this virtually never appear in seventeenth-century book still lifes, let alone play a starring role as they do here. This extraordinary still life contains other unusual objects, too. The oddest is the lute case; lutes are found in book still lifes now and then, but the wooden case in which the instrument is kept – never. The surprising ensemble in the foreground is also quite singular, composed as it is of an Amsterdam pewter jug,<sup>2</sup> a Berke-meyer glass holding white wine<sup>3</sup> and a white bread roll on a pewter plate. These items form what is essentially a different still life within the book still life, somewhat reminiscent of a breakfast piece. All this is presented in a bright light, rapidly fading towards the back, on a thick stone slab, slightly damaged in places, that runs parallel to the picture plane and angles forward on the left. In the semi-darkness of the background we can make out two globes, celestial and terrestrial, and some artist's materials. A bundle of brushes lies beside a small bowl and a half-full sealed flask on a shelf on the back wall. Below it, a maulstick rests

Fig. 1  
JAN LIEVENS  
(ATTRIBUTED),  
*Still Life with Books,  
Jug, Glass and Bread  
Roll*, c. 1627/28.  
Oil on panel,  
91 x 120 cm.  
Amsterdam,  
Rijksmuseum,  
purchased with  
the support of  
the Stichting tot  
Bevordering van  
de Belangen van  
het Rijksmuseum,  
SK-A-4090.

horizontally on two nails in the wall. A palette hangs from the left-hand nail.

## Ledger Bindings

Typologically ledger bindings come into the category of limp bindings.<sup>4</sup> They have very little structure and consequently deform easily, unlike a normal bound book, with its strong, hardwearing construction.

An ordinary book (in board binding) consists of a text block to which stiff boards are attached, after which the whole thing is covered with parchment or leather. The text block is composed of quires that are stitched together. On the back there are sewing supports placed transversely and protruding sideways, to which the boards are attached. The sewing structure causes backswell. This is eliminated by rounding and backing the back, which gives the book its permanent shape.

A ledger binding has no text block. It consists of a leather or parchment cover, to which the quires are secured – one at a time and not connected to one another – with twisted parchment tackets, typically in three places. The cover is usually reinforced in these places with leather or parchment spine stiffeners or overbands. The two protruding ends of the tackets are twisted together, like twine. A ledger binding often has a fore-edge flap with strap fastening. The strap around the





Fig. 2  
Concave distortion  
of the spine of a  
ledger binding, 1546.  
Ljubljana, Archiv

Republike Slovenije.  
From Szirmai 1999  
(note 4), p. 312,  
fig. 10.24.



Fig. 3  
Detail of Marinus van  
Reymerswaele, *The  
Moneychanger and his  
Wife*, c. 1540. Panel.  
Copenhagen, Statens  
Museum for Kunst,  
National Gallery of  
Denmark. © SMK Photo.

cover is created by extending the middle overband on both sides. The strap is secured by lacing it to the upper and lower part of the cover and the fore-edge flap. An unstructured binding like this has the annoying habit of collapsing or rolling in on itself along the back (figs. 2 and 3). In an attempt to alleviate this shortcoming, binders used an alternative method to primary tacketing (fig. 4a). This method, indirect tacketing, employs concealed interior supports, usually flat sticks (fig. 4b).

Another type of ledger binding, which we also see in the still life, is the binding with laced-in support slips and tightened limp cover.<sup>5</sup> In this binding the quires are fastened to narrow parchment thongs, which are threaded to the outside through small slits in the parchment cover and then pushed in again a few millimetres further along and pulled tight (fig. 5). The backs of these bindings roll in, too, creating similar concave distortion.

Figs. 4a and b  
Direct (a) and  
indirect (b) tacketing.  
From Gnirrep et al.  
1992 (note 4),  
nos. 52.10 and 52.11.

Fig. 5  
Laced-in covering.  
From Gnirrep et al.  
1992 (note 4),  
no. 52.8/9.

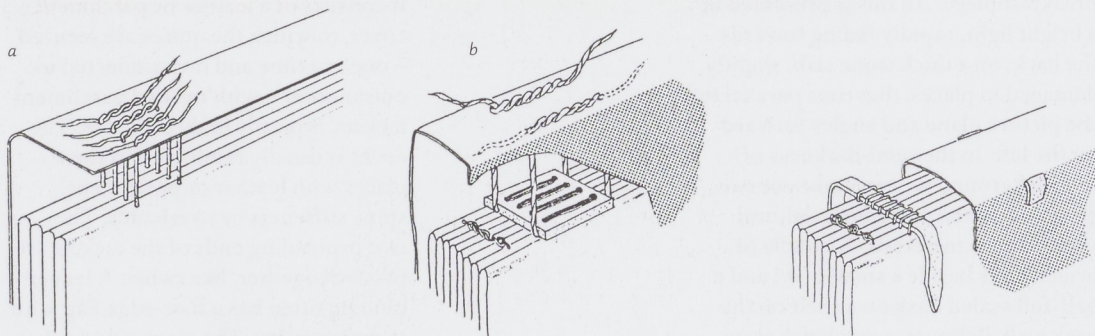
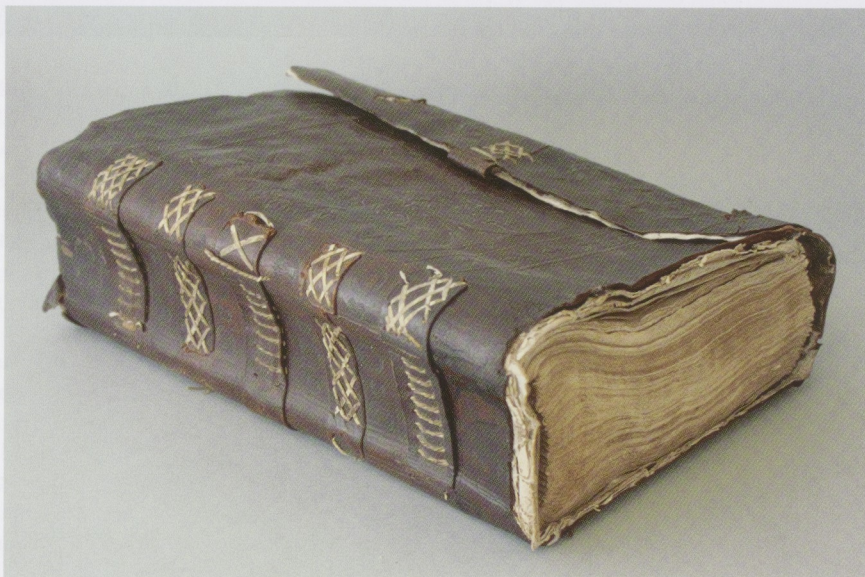






Fig. 6  
Detail of fig. 1

Fig. 7  
Ledger binding.  
The fastening strap  
and buckle have  
come away from the  
centre spine stiffener.  
The two strips  
with interweaving  
between the three  
spine stiffeners are  
decorative. Civiele  
Sententiën Vierschaar  
(register 1554-1558).  
Bruges, Stadsarchief.  
Photograph Marijn de  
Valk, Middelburg.



### The Bindings in the Still Life

Armed with this knowledge about books, we can now confidently identify the large book on the right of the still life (fig. 6) as a splendid example of a leather ledger binding with a fore-edge flap and strap fastening (fig. 7). The long end of the strap passes through the buckle, and the rest is folded back on the cover. The other two spine stiffeners are overbands. The back of the band has collapsed slightly so that the shoulders bulge. Each spine stiffener has five tackets. The modest number of tackets and the fact that the back is only slightly concave would seem to suggest that this is a case of indirect tacketing.

Lying crosswise under this rather scuffed leather ledger binding with its slightly damaged overbands is a similar binding. This one is in a dire state. The quires have twisted sideways away from the back, and the leather is badly damaged at this point, although a small part of a spine stiffener with tackets can still just be made out. At the front the fore-edge flap is folded out flat on the stone slab. Leaning half against the two ledger bindings there is a book that has sagged backwards,





Fig. 8  
Detail of fig. 1

at the same time tipping forwards, with the page edges to the fore. It has just six thick, roughly cut quires. It is probably a parchment cover with laced-in support slips. The binding rests partly on two smaller parchment bindings, apparently regular books, one with turned edges, the other with ribbons for fastening.

On the left (fig. 8) there are two parchment bindings with laced-in support slips, one on top of the other. The back of the one underneath has become so concave that the shoulders are almost touching. The open book on top of it also has a deformed back. It is very obvious here that limp bindings

like these do not have boards. The very wide turn-ins with a blank sheet of paper placed between them are striking. A plain lining like this was inserted because parchment is translucent. On the extreme left, finally, is a sheet of paper, curling up on the left, with simulated handwriting on one side.

#### The Problematic Genesis of the Painting

The historical reliability of a composition is a precondition for fruitful iconological research. Has it survived complete and unchanged, without loss of image as a result of reduction or alterations to the picture through over-



painting? In the case of the book still life this latter question, changes to the image, is problematic. The extraordinarily complicated x-radiograph of the painting (figs. 9a and b)<sup>6</sup> reveals that the jug, the glass and the roll and plate were painted in part over some books and the lute case. This is odd, because painters usually reserved figurative elements in the foreground while they were working up the monochrome design with colour. They began by completing the background, then the middle ground, and only after this did they paint in the elements in the foreground. The obvious conclusion is that the jug, glass and bread roll were added after the painting was finished. Initially it was assumed that this was an addition by another artist.<sup>7</sup> A peculiar idea, for although specialists in different genres quite often worked together – for instance, an architecture painter with a figure painter or a landscape painter with a cattle painter – the notion that a still life painter would add something to the work of another still life painter seems far-fetched. Nowadays some authorities believe that this is ‘a late inspiration’ of Jan Lievens himself.<sup>8</sup> This view is supported by the fact that the ensemble is very well integrated into the composition and – allowing for the adjustment to the



*Figs. 9a and b*  
x-radiograph of  
fig. 1 and detail  
(lower left).





portrayal of the materials pewter, glass and bread, which differ from those in the rest of the picture – the handling of the paint is not significantly different from that in other areas.

The x-radiograph does, admittedly, lead one to suspect an addition, but then again certain physical characteristics one would expect to find in such a case were not observed.<sup>9</sup> It is conceivable that the painter of the book still life departed from the usual working methods – something that did happen from time to time.<sup>10</sup> The supposed addition would, incidentally, have been accompanied by a change in the composition, because according to Wallert's non-committal digital reconstruction of the still life 'before the breakfast was added', the stone slab originally ran straight across on the left-hand side.<sup>11</sup>

Whether this is a later addition to the painting or an uncharacteristic working method adopted by the artist in this instance, in terms of interpreting the composition it is extremely important to establish in any event that no meaningful object vanished from the picture as a result of overpainting when the jug-glass-roll ensemble was painted, since this would change not only the image but possibly the moral message it contained as well.<sup>12</sup>

#### Former Interpretations of the Meaning of the Painting

Teasing out the meaning of this still life with books is at least as tricky a job as reconstructing its genesis. The painting has been regarded as a Vanitas still life since its discovery in 1960.<sup>13</sup> In 1999, in the catalogue of their memorable exhibition of Dutch still lifes, Alan Chong and Wouter Kloek pointed out that there are no Vanitas symbols, such as a skull or an hour-glass, in this work.<sup>14</sup> In the combination of artist's attributes with 'worn-out' books, globes and a lute (they did mention the case in their description of the composition, but discussed it as if

it were the instrument itself), they saw all things that 'belong to the world of the studio and the study' and hence not a reference to the Vanitas concept but an allusion to the reflective side of art.

Arthur Wheelock, the most recent authority to appraise the painting, took Chong and Kloek's interpretation further by bringing in the objects in the foreground, which these authors had ignored. He sees in this element an unmistakable reference to the Eucharist,<sup>15</sup> which leads him to the conclusion that 'Lievens created an image that includes the spiritual and intellectual realms essential for nourishing both body and soul.' This culinary interpretation of the still life with books falls down immediately, if for no other reason than that Jesus is highly unlikely to have proclaimed 'this is my blood' with a glass of white wine in his hand.

In their interpretation Chong and Kloek ignored the 'simple meal', as they described the group in the foreground, perhaps because they regarded this element of the present picture as a later addition to the original composition, 'a late inspiration' on the part of the artist – in their view, evidently, a meaningless one. Wheelock, on the other hand, who remains vague about the authorship of the addition, allows the meaning he reads into it to weigh heavily in his interpretation of the still life as a whole. None of these authors has addressed the question as to how a later addition of this kind can be reconciled with the art theoretical idea prevailing at the time that artists conceived a complete image of a finished work in their heads before they embarked on it, and then painted it in accordance with this mental concept.<sup>16</sup>

#### A New Interpretation

The identification of the books as ledger bindings and the acceptance of the lute case as a case, not a substitute for a lute, oblige us to seek another interpretation of the book still life.



Ledger bindings differ from ordinary books not just in appearance but in function. They are files. They do not contain works of scholarship, they hold practical information – notarial documents, court records, patents, minutes, resolutions and accounts. Their contents are usually handwritten, seldom printed. Bindings like these have featured in pictures of lawyers, moneychangers and tax collectors in their offices and in portraits since the sixteenth century.<sup>17</sup> In both cases their function is representative, not symbolic. They are sometimes found in still lifes, but they are never the principal motif.<sup>18</sup> Very occasionally history painters – including Lievens and Rembrandt – would use them. Lievens put them into the series of *Evangelists* of around 1627/28 in Bamberg attributed to him<sup>19</sup> and the *St Paul in Kingston*;<sup>20</sup> Rembrandt had them in his *St Paul in Prison* of 1627 in Stuttgart (fig. 10)<sup>21</sup> and his 1628 *Two Old Men Disputing* in Melbourne.<sup>22</sup> The two artists probably saw these strange bindings as the distant forerunners of the book bindings of their own age and imagined that this was what books looked like in Christian Antiquity.<sup>23</sup> Lute cases never appear in still lifes, but we do find them in a portrait by Holbein, in an allegory by Adriaen van de Venne and in various genre works – always with a lute.<sup>24</sup> Their symbolic meanings in these instances are difficult to establish with any certainty. It has been suggested that Holbein used the case as a symbol of empty rhetoric.<sup>25</sup> Genre painters may have ascribed an erotic meaning to it.<sup>26</sup> There is no lute in the Amsterdam still life with books, just a lute case. It is consequently reasonable to assume that this lute case, appearing in its own right, conveys a meaning that the lute itself, notwithstanding its wide-ranging symbolism, does not have. The only emblematiser who ever paid any heed to the pathetic qualities of the ugly lute case<sup>27</sup> is the Hungarian humanist Joannes Sambucus

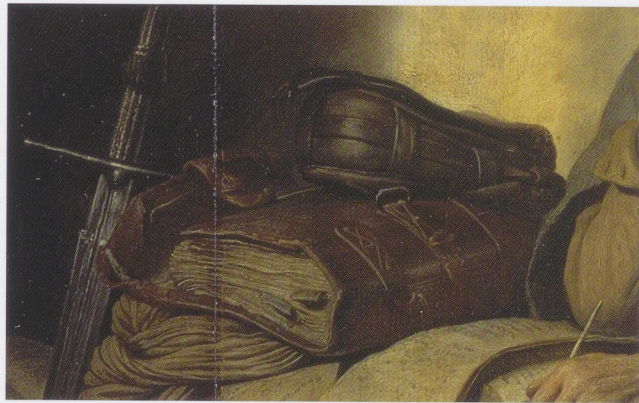
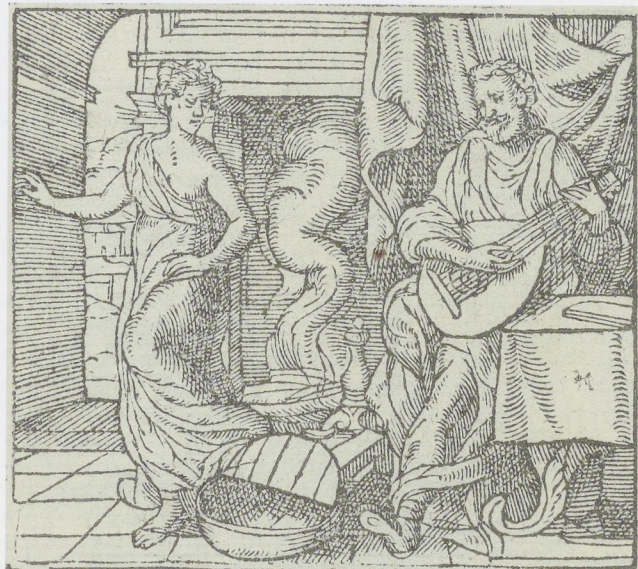


Fig. 10  
Detail of Rembrandt  
Harmensz van Rijn,  
*St Paul in Prison*, 1627.  
Panel. Stuttgart,  
Staatsgalerie.

(1531-1584). In his Latin *Emblemata* of 1564, rapidly followed by the Dutch edition in 1566, he presented such a case in the epigram to his emblem with the motto 'Degeneres' (The Degenerates).<sup>28</sup> The verse contrasts the depraved man with the virtuous man. The icon (fig. 11) shows an interior with a seated man playing a lute and a woman dancing by an open fire. On the floor lies a lute case with its lid open, for this case speaks. I may look like a lute, but I am not a lute, it complains, and I cannot make a sound. All I can do is protect a lute, but as soon as there is anything amiss with

Fig. 11  
Joannes Sambucus,  
icon of the  
'Degeneres', woodcut  
in *Emblemata*,  
Antwerp 1564, p. 179.  
Amsterdam,  
Rijksmuseum  
Library.





me, they use me for firewood. As I am, so are degenerate people. They boast of their noble origins, but do not live up to them. They are a shadow of the noble nature of their forefathers, who succeeded in enhancing their honour by living a virtuous life.<sup>29</sup>

A new theme: degeneracy. Evidently the important thing about these scuffed and battered ledger bindings is not their function as books, but their ruinous state. In fact they are no more books than ruins are buildings. Might they symbolize degenerate people with their false pretences of excellence? As a *clavis interpretandi*, the lute case leaves us no other choice, for this object very probably has only one emblematic connotation – the concept of ‘degeneracy’.<sup>30</sup> Logically, the import of the objects lurking in the semi-darkness behind these degenerate books must also be pejorative. And they can indeed be interpreted in this way, for the brushes and the palette, of course, signify *Pictura*, painting, and she is not virtuous because she imitates and is not what she pretends to be. ‘*Pictura*, a shadow of the true being’, noted Karel van Mander in the margin of his *Schilder-Boeck* alongside the passage in which he discussed the origins of painting.<sup>31</sup> The celestial and terrestrial globes give this aspect and probably the moral of the still life as a whole a universal character.<sup>32</sup>

In the epigram to the emblem the degenerate man is confronted with the honest, righteous man, vice with virtue. The same contrast would seem to be visualized in this painting. The flawless jug, the gleaming glass of white wine and the fresh white roll are distanced from the rest of the composition physically – and in terms of their meaning, too, may represent the opposite of all that corruption. Wine and bread perhaps symbolize God’s blessings.<sup>33</sup> After all, God’s blessings rest on the heads of the righteous.

I am inclined to regard this visualized complex of meanings with its

inherent antithesis as an integrally envisioned mental entity, but it is conceivable that the positive element was added to the negative component as an afterthought. In principle, after all, the latter could function independently as an *exemplum in malo*, an example of misconduct. Be this as it may, the ingenious composition places an art theoretical idea (*Pictura*, a shadow of the true being) in the context of an aspect of the Christian-Humanist ethic (God’s blessings rest on the heads of the righteous). Sometimes the meaning of such complicated, hard to fathom still lifes is elucidated in an inscription. Jacques de Gheyn II once used ‘*Servare modum, finemque tueri, naturamque sequi*’ (practise moderation, contemplate your end and follow nature), Jan Davidsz de Heem ‘*Non omnis moriar*’ (I shall not wholly die) and Hendrik Hondius ‘*Finis coronat opus*’ (the end crowns the work).<sup>34</sup> There is no text in the Amsterdam still life with books. Perhaps the painting was commissioned by an erudite person – a true lover of the art of painting would surely have known his Classics, in this case *Sambucus*.



## NOTES

- 1 Purchased from the H. Jüngeling gallery, The Hague, in 1963. Literature: [Editors], 'Schenken en aankopen', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 11 (1963), p. 63, with ill. on the cover (as possibly studio of Rembrandt and J.Jsz. den Uyl). B. Haak in *Verlagen der Rijksverzamelingen van Geschiedenis en Kunst: afd. Rijksmuseum* 85 (1963), pp. 18-21 (as workshop of Rembrandt and J.Jsz. den Uyl). B. Haak, *Rembrandt, zijn leven, zijn werk, zijn tijd*, Amsterdam 1968, pp. 68-69 (as Rembrandt and J.Jsz. den Uyl). Cat. *All the paintings of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam*, 1976, inv. no. A 4090 (as milieu of Rembrandt). Kurt Bauch, 'Zum Werk des Jan Lievens', *Pantheon* 25 (1967), pp. 160-70, 259-69, esp. pp. 260-62, fig. 13 (as Jan Lievens). H. Schneider and R.E.O. Ekkart, *Jan Lievens, sein Leben und seine Werke, mit einem Supplement von R.E.O. Ekkart*, Amsterdam 1973 (*editio princeps* Haarlem 1932), p. 354, no. s 380 (as Jan Lievens). Werner Sumowski, *Gemälde der Rembrandt-Schüler*, 6 vols., Landau 1983-95, vol. 3 (1986), no. 1300 (as Jan Lievens). J. Bruyn, review of Sumowski 1983-95, vol. 3 (1986), *Oud Holland* 102 (1988), p. 327 and p. 333, note 22 (as Jan Lievens and Jan Jansz den Uyl). Alan Chong and Wouter Kloek, *Het Nederlandse stilleven 1550-1720*, cat. Amsterdam (Rijksmuseum)/Cleveland (The Cleveland Museum of Art) 1999-2000, no. 18 (as Jan Lievens). Arie Wallert, 'Drie halen, één betalen', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 54 (2006), pp. 145-53 (as Jan Lievens). Arthur K. Wheelock Jr et al., *Jan Lievens: A Dutch Master Rediscovered*, cat. Washington (National Gallery of Art)/Milwaukee (Milwaukee Art Museum)/Amsterdam (Rembrandthuis) 2008-09, no. 11 (as Jan Lievens).
- 2 The original name for this type of flagon or jug is unknown, but since the nineteenth century it has been known as a Rembrandt jug. *Keur van tin uit de havensteden Amsterdam, Antwerpen en Rotterdam*, cat. Amsterdam (Museum Willer-Holthuysen), Antwerp (Provinciaal Museum Sterckshof)/Rotterdam (Museum Boymans-van Beuningen) 1979, p. 27 (introduction by B. Dubbe) and no. 126 with fig.
- 3 A Berkemeyer has a broad, hollow shaft with prunts on a ringed foot and a wide, conical bowl (a Roemer has a narrow foot and a bulbous bowl). Sam Segal, *Jan Davidsz. de Heem en zijn kring*, cat. Utrecht (Centraal Museum)/Braunschweig (Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum) 1991, p. 167.
- 4 J.A. Szirmai, *The Archaeology of Medieval Bookbinding*, Aldershot (Ashgate) 1999, chap. 10 (Limp Bindings) and 10.6 (Ledger Bindings). Peter Goddijn, *Westerse boekbind-technieken van de Middeleeuwen tot heden*, Amsterdam 2006 (2nd edition), chap. 3 (Bindmethoden met omslag, zonder harde platkernen). W.K. Gnirrep, J.P. Gumbert, J.A. Szirmai, *Kneep en binding. Een terminologie voor de beschrijving van de constructies van oude boekbanden*, The Hague 1992, section 52.
- 5 Not to be confused with the more robust parchment binding known as a laced-on binding. Goddijn, op. cit. (note 4), p. 154.
- 6 In 1963, the year it was purchased, x-radiography revealed that the panel had originally been used, in upright format, for the portrait of a woman dressed in the fashion of around 1620 (fig. 9a). The panel was turned a quarter-turn to the right for the still life. Wallert, op. cit. (note 1), pp. 147-50, figs. 2, 7 and 8 (a wide strip on the left is missing in fig. 2).
- 7 Haak 1963, op. cit. (note 1), Haak 1968, op. cit. (note 1) and Bruyn, op. cit. (note 1) attributed the 'addition' to Jan Jansz den Uyl.
- 8 Chong and Kloek, op. cit. (note 1), p. 146. A few years later Wallert, op. cit. (note 1), p. 147, again had it as an addition 'by another artist'. Arthur Wheelock's opinion in Wheelock et al., op. cit. (note 1), p. 102, is rather vague. He feels that the addition was painted 'with the same energetic brushwork as the rest of the painting' and leaves open the question of the attribution of the addition.
- 9 Wallert, op. cit. (note 1) does not report a layer of varnish and dirt between the original paint layer and that of the supposed addition. Melanie Gifford, who examined the painting in July 2007, found that 'pitcher, glass, and plate with roll were executed in a single paint layer, as distinct from the complex layering of the books and other still-life elements' (Wheelock et al., op. cit. (note 1), p. 102). This means that these three objects in the foreground were executed as an ensemble, not that they were done later. I myself did not find any significant difference between the craquelure of the paint layer of the passage in question and that of the rest of the picture.
- 10 Ariane van Suchtelen, 'Hendrick ter Brugghe's *Bacchante with an Ape*;



- the painter's working method and theme', *The J. Paul Getty Museum Journal* 19 (1991), pp. 35-41, established that in this painting dating from 1627, the table with a monkey, some grapes, a walnut and a pear on it was painted over the dress of the half-length female figure. A century earlier Maerten van Heemskerck painted the spinning-wheel in his 1529 *Portrait of a Woman* over her clothes (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, SK-A-3519). See also E. van de Wetering, 'Painting materials and working methods', in J. Bruyn et al., *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 1, The Hague/Boston/London 1982, pp. 11-33, esp. pp. 25-31 (The 'working-up') and Ernst van de Wetering, *Rembrandt; The Painter at Work*, Amsterdam 2000, pp. 11-44, esp. pp. 32-44.
- 11 Wallert, op. cit. (note 1), p. 147, fig. 3. Of course, a digital reconstruction of this kind proves nothing. It simply shows how its maker interpreted the x-radiograph. Wallert's elimination of the part of the slab that angles forward and his addition of an area of damage to the slab on the extreme left are not, to my mind, justified by the x-ray image.
- 12 Wallert, op. cit. (note 1), p. 147, fig. 3. According to Wallert, the paper lining of the parchment binding protrudes beyond the edge of the unfolded turn-in in a way that is reminiscent of the open flap of an envelope. In terms of bookbinding technique this is unlikely. The nature of this light shape is obscure but it is manifestly not an object in its own right.
- 13 *Dordrechts Museum. Vijf aanwinsten: bruiklenen en aankopen*, cat. Dordrecht (Dordrechts Museum) 1960, no. 1 with fig. (as Leiden School). *Nederlandse stillevens uit de zeventiende eeuw*, cat. Dordrecht (Dordrechts Museum) 1962, no. 5 with fig. *Ijdelheid der ijdelheden; Hollandse Vanitas-voorstellingen uit de zeventiende eeuw*, cat. Leiden (Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal) 1970, no. 25 with fig. (as Rembrandt). Jan Bialostocki, 'Books of Wisdom and Books of Vanity', in *In memoriam J.G. van Gelder 1903-1980*, Utrecht 1982, p. 45, fig. 6. Jacques Foucart, 'La peinture hollandaise et flamande de vanité: une réussite dans la diversité', in Alain Tapié et al., *Les Vanités dans la peinture au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*, cat. Caen (Musée des Beaux-Arts) 1990, p. 61, fig. 9. Christiaan Vogelaar, "'Ars longa, vita brevis': Het boek in de Leidse schilderkunst van de Gouden Eeuw', in A. Bouwman et al., *Stad van boeken; Handschrift en druk in Leiden 1260-2000*, Leiden 2008, p. 277, fig. 10.
- 14 Chong and Kloek, op. cit. (note 1), p. 147.
- 15 Wheelock et al., op. cit. (note 1), p. 102. Wallert, op. cit. (note 1), p. 146, also regarded the wine and bread as symbolic of the Eucharist. This strange idea comes from Ingvar Bergström, 'Dordrecht impressions', *Apollo* 77 (1963), p. 453.
- 16 E. van de Wetering, 'Leidse schilders achter de ezels', in *Geschildert tot Leyden anno 1626*, cat. Leiden (Stedelijk Museum De Lakenhal) 1976-77, pp. 21-31. Van de Wetering, op. cit. (note 10), pp. 75-89 (chapter 4 'The Creation of the Pictorial Idea').
- 17 See fig. 3. In terms of portraits, see for instance Maerten van Heemskerck's *Portrait of a Man* of 1529 (Rijksmuseum, SK-A-3518), Zacchia di Antonio da Vezzano's *The Clavichord Player* of c. 1560 (Rijksmuseum, SK-A-503), the anonymous *Double Portrait of Two Deacons of the Guild of St George in Hoorn* of 1589 (Hoorn, Westfries Museum, A 36) and *The Regents of the Amsterdam House of Correction* by Cornelis van der Voort of c. 1618 (Amsterdam Museum, A 3040).
- 18 The examples I know of are the anonymous *Still Life with Books* in the Alte Pinakothek in Munich (recently erroneously attributed to Jan Lievens; see Bernhard Schnackenburg, 'Knabe im Atelier und Bücherstilleben, zwei frühe Gemälde von Jan Lievens und ihr Leidener Kontext: Rembrandt, Jan Davidz. de Heem, Pieter Codde', *Oud Holland* 117 [2004], pp. 38-39, fig. 3) and Gerard Dou's *Still Life with Globe, Lute and Books* of c. 1635 in the Mr and Mrs Michal Hornstein Collection in Montreal (Ronni Baer, *The Paintings of Gerrit Dou (1613-1675)*, New York University 1990, cat. no. 19).
- 19 Bamberg, Historisches Museum. Bauch, op. cit. (note 1), pp. 260-262, figs. 17-19, 21. *Jan Lievens, ein Maler im Schatten Rembrandts*, cat. Brunswick (Herzog Anton Ulrich-Museum) 1979, cat. nos. 10-13 with fig. Wheelock et al., op. cit. (note 1), pp. 98-99, nos. 9-10 (only *St Matthew* and *St John*).
- 20 Kingston, Agnes Etherington Art Centre (gift of Alfred and Isabel Bader). Wheelock, op. cit. (note 1), pp. 88-89, no. 4 with fig.
- 21 Stuttgart, Staatsgalerie (Bruyn et al., op. cit. (note 10), cat. no. A 11). The ledger binding lies on the apostle's right with its back towards him; the strap is unfastened and the fore-edge flap hangs open. A second binding on the extreme left of the painting is fully open with the flap hanging down.
- 22 Melbourne, National Gallery of Victoria (Bruyn et al., op. cit. (note 10), cat. no. A 13).



- A ledger binding lies on top of the leather bag in the lower right (for the bag see my article, 'De bijzondere iconografie van Rembrandts *Bileam*', *Oud Holland* 121 [2008], pp. 197-213, fig. 8b). Several more ledger bindings lie in the semi-darkness behind the candlestick on the high table.
- 23 To judge by the ledger binding in *St Jerome in his Study* from the workshop of Marinus van Reyerswaele (Rijksmuseum, SK-A-3123) this idea had already existed for a long time.
- 24 The earliest example I know of is the lute case with the half-open lid in *Lute Player and Harpist* by Israhel van Meckenem of around 1490/95 (the first print in the second six-part series of the twelve-part series *Couples from Everyday Life*). This lute case may have an erotic connotation. Jan Piet Filedt Kok, 'Een gravure van Israhel van Meckenem: de Kerkgangers', *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 38 (1990), pp. 288-99, figs. 1 g and 7.
- In Hans Holbein II's *The Ambassadors* of 1533 (London, The National Gallery) there is a lute case half hidden on the floor under the lower shelf of the what-not, on which there is a lute.
- Around 1550 Frans Huys depicted a lute case in his engraving *Master Jan Slechthoofd*. This picture deals with a decidedly erotic aspect of the multi-faceted symbolism of the lute. The case itself does not appear to be part of this. E. de Jongh and G. Luijten, *Spiegel van alledag; Nederlandse genreprenten 1550-1700*, cat. Amsterdam (Rijksmuseum, Rijksprentenkabinet) 1997, no. 5 with fig.
- The very earliest seventeenth-century example is the *Allegory on the Truce of 1609* of 1616 by Adriaen van de Venne (Paris, Louvre), in which a lute player rests his foot on a large lute case. All the other seventeenth-century examples I know of date from the early sixteen-thirties: P. Codde (circle), *Interior with Company Making Music* (RKD images, artwork no. 65302). W. Duyster, *Lady and Gentleman with Musical Instruments* (Berlin, Jagdschloß Grunewald; B. Haak, *Hollandse schilders in de Gouden Eeuw*, Amsterdam 1984, p. 94, fig. 154). D. Teniers, *Lady Playing a Lute and Boy Blowing Bubbles* (Turin, Galleria Sabauda; E. de Jongh, *Kwesties van betekenis*, Leiden 1995, p. 81, fig. 35). H.G. Pot, *Allegory of Mortality* (Haarlem, Frans Halsmuseum, cat. 2006, no. 377 with fig.). An erotic connotation can be presumed in some of these cases.
- 25 According to Julia Craig-McFeely, *English Lute Manuscripts and Scribes 1530-1630*, Oxford 1993, chapter 8: 'The signifying serpent: seduction by cultural stereotype in seventeenth-century England' ([www.ramesescats.co.uk/thesis](http://www.ramesescats.co.uk/thesis); unpagged), the lute on the shelf and the half-concealed lute case indicate that the ambassadors want to conduct 'an open and honest discourse' and will abandon 'their superficial ambassadorial rhetoric', for a lute is 'truthful in its expression of the player's feelings'.
- 26 See note 24.
- 27 During a masquerade in *Much Ado About Nothing* (II, i, 92), Shakespeare has his heroine Hero reply to Don Pedro, who has asked her on what conditions she would walk with him: 'When I like your favour [face]; for God defend the lute should be like the case!' In other words, God forbid that your face should turn out to be as hideous as your mask (Joost Daalder, 'The Thatched Visor in *Much Ado About Nothing* and Viola's Beard in *Twelfth Night*', *AULA*, vol. 102 [2004], pp. 1-12 (<http://hvol.handle.net/2328/328>; unpagged)).
- 28 Joannes Sambucus, *Emblemata, cum aliquot nummi antiqui operis*, Antwerp 1564, p. 179. Dutch edition: *Emblemata I. Sambvci. In Nederlantsche tale ghetrouwelick ouergheset* [by Marcus Antonius Gillesz van Diest], Antwerp (C. Plantyn) 1566, pp. 174-75. In 1567, finally, a French translation was also published. See Mario Praz, *Studies in Seventeenth-Century Imagery*, Rome 1964, pp. 486-87. See also the site 'French Emblems at Glasgow' for an electronic edition of the original.
- 29 The Dutch text reads:  
 D'ontaeerdende.  
 De Luytekoker spreec.  
 [icon]  
 Niet dan t'fatsoen en heb ick van een luyte,  
 Besluitende in my de clinckende snaren,  
 Die mijn niet en zijn, des ic ooc geen stem en  
 geef uyte.  
 Zijnde haers gelijc gemaect tot een bewaren.  
 Och had my de meester eenigen vois sonder  
 sparen  
 Ghegeuen, so datmen my so schandelic int  
 vier  
 Niet en wierpe, gebroken zijnde in corte iaren.  
 Die hen beroemen van hen ouders en  
 geslachte fier,  
 En selfs metten wercken die niet en volgen  
 een sier,  
 En zijn maer een schaduw met al haer edel  
 heyt  
 Van haer voorsaten, diese met deuchden hier  
 Verworuen hebben, ende door sulcken feyt  
 D'edele altijt sijns selfs eere soect en verbreyt  
 Dies men met recht van Scipiades hant track



Den rinc daer in sijns vaders forme vaillant  
stack

The last lines refer to the story of Lucius Cornelius Scipio. Because of his poor government, his family wanted to remove the ring with the likeness of his father, Scipio Africanus, from his finger. Valerius Maximus, *Factorum et dictorum memorabilium libri ix*, III 5, 1.

- 30 My assumption is based on the fact that the lute case appears just once (no. 1301) among the 3,713 emblems in the manual by Arthur Henkel and Albrecht Schöne, *Emblemata. Handbuch zur Sinnbildkunst des XVI. und XVII. Jahrhunderts*, Stuttgart/Weimar 1996 (Tachenausgabe; editio princeps 1967-76).
- 31 K. van Mander, *Het Leven der oude Antijcke Schilders*, Alkmaar 1603, fol. 61v. H. Miedema, Karel van Mander; *The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painters*, 6 vols., Doornspijk 1995-99, vol. 6, p. 127, comment at 300v14, found that at the end of his *Schilder-Boeck* Van Mander links this image of painting as a shadow of reality with symbols of mortality.
- 32 Each of the globes in itself symbolizes the transient and the eternal, and together they stand for the whole of creation. T.A.G. Wilberg Vignau-Schuurman, *Die emblematischen Elemente im Werke Joris Hoefnagels*, 2 vols., Leiden 1969, pars. 248, 256, 304.  
Given the deceptive character of *Pictura* discussed here, one might be tempted to see the two globes as replicas, false shadows of heaven and earth, but I cannot justify this interpretation.
- 33 According to the list of figures or characters ('Beelden, oft Personagien') who took part in the ceremonial entry of one of the Haarlem Chambers of Rhetoric, one of the allegorical figures wore on his head a wreath of ears of corn and grapes signifying God's blessing ('Op't Hooft een kransken van Koorenayren ende Wijndruyven, beduydende Gods Zeghen'). *Vlaerdings Rederijck-bergh*, Amsterdam 1617, fol. F2r. See also Bart Ramakers et al., *Op de Hollandse Parnas; De Vlaardingse rederijkerswedstrijd van 1616*, Zwolle 2006, p. 97, fig. 45. Cf. J.J.M. Timmers, *Symboliek en iconographie der christelijke kunst*, Roermond 1947, no. 33 ('Aan Gods Zegen is alles gelegen.').
- 34 Jochen Becker, 'Das Buch im Stilleben, das Stilleben im Buch', in *Stilleben in Europa*, cat. Münster (Westfälisches Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte) & Baden-Baden (Staatliche Kunsthalle) 1979-80, pp. 448-78, esp. 455-56. Bialostocki 1982 (note 13), pp. 37-67, esp. pp. 45-46.

Sabine Schwarz, *Das Bücherstilleben in der Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts*, Wiesbaden 1987, pp. 50-51. For De Gheyn's still life see B.A. Heezen-Stoll, 'Een vanitasstilleven van Jacques de Gheyn II uit 1621: afspiegeling van neostoïsche denkebeelden', *Oud Holland* 93 (1979), pp. 217-50.



