



Pieter Codde

(Amsterdam 1599 – Amsterdam 1678)

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Pieter Codde, who was the fourth of nine children, was born in Amsterdam in 1599 to Maria Jans and Jacob Pietersz Codde. His father served as a *paalknecht*, a city official whose responsibilities included collecting port fees, registering vessels coming into Amsterdam, and delivering mail to and from shippers and merchants.^[1] Because of his official position, the family resided in the Paalhuis (no longer extant) near the river IJ on the Nieuwe Brug. In 1623, Pieter married eighteen-year-old Maritgen Arens. Shortly thereafter, the couple had a child, Clara, who was baptized in April 1624. By 1630, they were living in a comfortable house on the Sint Anthoniesbreestraat, in a neighborhood well known as an artists' quarter.^[2]

At the time of his marriage, documents list Codde's occupation as "painter."^[3] Unfortunately, because records from the Amsterdam Guild of Saint Luke have been lost, the identity of the artist (or artists) with whom Codde trained is unknown.^[4] He likely began his training as a portrait painter, producing both single and group portraits throughout his career. Codde's pursuits in this period were not limited to painting but extended to literature as well. In 1627, the playwright Elias Herckmans (1596–1644) mentioned Codde in the dedication of his play *Tyrus*, based on a military campaign of Alexander the Great, while in 1633, a love poem by Codde appeared in the publication *Hollande Nachtegaelken*.^[5] These texts suggest that his literary interests ranged in subject matter from classical to amorous themes, as was also the case in his paintings.

Codde is best known for his genre scenes, which he executed throughout most of his career. Building on the popularity of similar subjects depicted by forerunners like Willem Buytewech (1591/92–1624) and Dirck Hals (1591–1656), and by his contemporary Willem Duyster (1599–1635), Codde produced pictures of elegant yet spare interiors featuring musical parties, soldiers at leisure, and merry companies. Within this area of specialization, Codde's works are distinctive for his use of a restricted palette featuring silvery tones of grays and browns, and for his compelling groupings of figures with carefully detailed accoutrements such as musical instruments, weapons, and domestic items. The significant number of surviving copies after his genre scenes testifies to the commercial success of his imagery.^[6] Aside from his genre subjects, Codde also made portraits and history paintings, including *The Continnence of Scipio* in The Leiden Collection.^[7] Though he did not generally date his paintings after 1645, evidence suggests that Codde continued to remain active in artistic circles for much of his life. In 1672, he was among a group of professionals that the dealer Gerrit Uylenburgh (1626–79) asked to certify a number of Italian paintings.^[8]

A picture unique in Codde's oeuvre is the *Militia Company of District XI under the Command of Captain Reynier Reael and Lieutenant Cornelis Michielsz Blaeuw*, 1637, known as the "Meagre Company."^[9] Codde completed this large-scale group portrait of an Amsterdam militia company after Frans Hals (1582/83–1666), who had begun painting it in 1633, abandoned the commission because of a conflict with his Amsterdam patrons.^[10] Codde was likely hired to finish the group portrait because of his reputation as a portrait painter and, as well, because he resided in the same Amsterdam district as the militia company.^[11] It is probable that Hals and Codde both worked on the "Meagre Company" in the sizeable studio space belonging to Hendrick Uylenburgh (1587–1661) on Sint Anthoniesbreestraat, where Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–69) was also active in the early 1630s.^[12]

While Codde found great professional success as an artist, his personal life was fraught. Notarial accounts describe how in 1625, at a gathering of artists including Barend van Someren (1572–1632) and Michel van de Sande (1583/84–ca. 1630), he had an altercation with Duyster.^[13] A decade later, in 1635, Codde's young daughter died. In the following year Codde's



maidservant, Aefge Jans, accused the artist of rape.^[14] Soon thereafter, Codde separated from his wife, at which time an inventory was made that lists fine household goods like porcelain, silver, and silk, as well as paintings. Many of these paintings, some of which were unframed, were by artists with ties to Haarlem, among them Frans Hals, Pieter Claesz (1596/97–1660), and Jan van Goyen (1596–1656), which suggests that Codde was an art dealer as well as an artist.^[15] He remained married after the separation, and in 1651 he asked witnesses to report on his wife's relationships with other men; among those mentioned was artist Pieter Potter (ca. 1597–1652), presumably the father of Paulus Potter (1625–54), who lived nearby.^[16]

Throughout this turmoil, Codde remained financially secure, purchasing a home on the Keizersgracht in Amsterdam in 1657. He died in 1678 and was buried at the Oude Kerk in Amsterdam. In his will, Codde left the house on the Keizersgracht to his housekeeper, Barentje Willems, who sold it in 1679 for 2,500 guilders.^[17]

- Elizabeth Nogrady, 2024

Appendices

Appendix 1

Transcription and translation of a notarial account, dated July 1st, 1625, describing an altercation between Pieter Codde and Willem Duyster at a gathering of artists, including Barend van Someren and Michel van de Sande. Below transcription was taken from Caroline Bigler Playter's PhD dissertation, "Willem Duyster en Pieter Codde: The 'Duystere Werelt' of Dutch Genre Painting, ca. 1625–1635" (Harvard University, 1972), skillfully edited and refined by Piet Bakker. Katy Kist and Jennifer Kilian provided the translation.

The original document is preserved in the Amsterdam City Archives (Notarial Archives, Notary W. Cluijt, no. 5075, inv. 351B, fol. 239r–40v, July 1, 1625). This document is a copy of the original testimony by the same notary (Notarial Archives, Notary W. Cluijt, no. 264, inv. 369A, fol. 264r, July 1, 1625). This original deed, partially illegible due to water damage, is signed by Louwijs du Pree and Barent van Someren.

Transcription

Op huyden den eersten Julij anno 1625 Comp[areer]de voor mij Louwijs du Pree oudt omtrent 34 jaren tegenwoordich luitenant in dienst van de R[epublique] van Venetien ende Michael van de Sande oudt omtrent xlii iaren woonende binnen deser Stede, ende hebbe bij waere Christelijcke Woorden in plaetse ende onder presentatie van eede solemneel ten versoecke van Willem Duijster getuycht, verclaert ende geattesteert hoe waer is dat sij getuijgen opten tweeden pincster dach lestleden met eenich ander geselschap vergadert sijn geweest inden hoff genaemt Meerhuijsen daer Barent van Someren huijrdre van es ende dat aldaer mede gecomen sijn geweest Pieter Codde ende zijne huijsvrouwe ende naerdat sij luijden bij den anderen eenigen tijdt geweest ende diversche propoosten tusschen beijden gevallen waren Soo ister onder anderen tusschen de Comp[arant]en gepratet geweest van eenen Pieter Raes Ende heeft de producent onder anderen geseijt dat hij eenigen tijdt daer te vooren metten voorseijde Pieter Raes questie gehadt hadde, waer op de voorseijde Codde seijde doen ter tijdt was ick noch u vrient heeft de producent geantwoort ghij waert mijn vrient niet ick soudt u anders connen bewijssen waerop Pieter Codde replicerende seijde ick hebbe anders niet geseijt dan dat ghij te wijs waert daer over de prod[ucen]t dupliceerde latet daer bij blijven wij hebben noch questie noch onmin metten anderen dat sullen wij op een andermael met malcanderen wel affmaecken waer op de voorseijde Codde seijde als ghij wilt heeft de producent daer op geseijt zijt ghij een rechtschaffen carel compt morgen als ghij wilt met een wackere pedarm ende soo verre ghij nieten compt soo houde ick u voor een schelm Waerover de voorseijde Codde opgestaen es ende heeft den producent met een aerde canne voor t'aangesicht seer vehementel[ijck] gestooten hebbende voorts de voorseijde P[iete]r Codde een thinne wijs pint den prod[ucen]t int gesichte geslagen sulcx dat het bloet over des prod[ucen]ts cleederen heen sparte Indien voegen dat de prod[ucen]t in duijssing geraect zijnde de voorseijde P[iete]r Codde door eenige van de Comp[arant]en uijtten huijse gestooten is om voorder swaricheijden te voorcomen. Gedaan te Amsterdam ter p[rese]ntie van Pieter Rodenburgh mede notaris alhier ende Rochus de Witte getuigen.

Translation

Today, the first of July in the year 1625, appeared before me Louwijs du Pree, about 34 years old, currently serving as a lieutenant in the service of the Republic of Venice, and Michael van de Sande, about 42 years old, residing within this city. And with true Christian words, in situ and under the presentation of solemn oath, at the request of Willem Duyster, testified, declared, and attested to the truth of the matter. On the second day of Pentecost, the witnesses, together with several others, gathered at the abode called “Meerhuysen,” where its tenant, Barent van Someren, resided. Also present were Pieter Codde and his wife, and they spent some time together discussing various topics. One of the subjects was a certain Pieter Raes, and the claimant [Duyster] stated that he had a dispute with Pieter Raes some time before. To this, Codde remarked, “At that time, I was still your friend.” The claimant replied, “You were not my friend; I can prove otherwise.” To which Pieter Codde retorted, “All I said was that you were too know-it-all.” The claimant responded, “Let’s leave it at that; we have no quarrel or ill-will towards each other. We can settle this issue next time we meet.” Codde then said, “If you wish.” The claimant then replied, “If you are an honorable man, come tomorrow if you dare, with a suitable sword, and if you don’t come, I’ll consider you a scoundrel.” Upon this, Codde stood up and vehemently struck the claimant in the face with an earthenware jug, then hit him in the face with a pewter tankard, causing blood to spatter over the claimant’s clothes. Eventually, the claimant became dizzy, and Codde was kicked out of the house by some of the bystanders to prevent further problems. Formally recorded in Amsterdam in the presence of Pieter Rodenburgh, also a notary here, and witness Rochus de Witte.

Appendix 2

Transcription and translation of a notarial account, dated October 30, 1651, in which several witnesses, at the request of Pieter Codde, testified about his wife’s relationships with other men. Codde had separated from his wife soon after 1635. Among those mentioned in the document is artist Pieter Potter (ca. 1597–1652), presumably the father of Paulus Potter (1625–54), who lived nearby.

Below transcription was taken from Caroline Bigler Playter’s PhD dissertation, “Willem Duyster en Pieter Codde: The ‘Duystere Werelt’ of Dutch Genre Painting, ca. 1625–1635” (Harvard University, 1972), skillfully edited and refined by Piet Bakker. Katy Kist and Jennifer Kilian provided the translation. The original document is preserved in the Amsterdam City Archives (Amsterdam City Archives, Notarial Archives, Notary J. Hellerus, no. 5075, inv. 2047, fol. 65v–66r, October 30, 1651)

Transcription

Op huijden den dertischsten Octobris anno xvic-eeenvijftich Compareerden voor mij Jo[hann]es Hellerus notaris publ[icus] bij den hove van Hollandt geadmitteert t’Amsterdam residerende Jan Valois dienaer van den E[dele] heer Cornelis van Outshoren, heer van Outshoren Schout deser stede, out 52 jaren ende Cristina Anseel desselfs huijsvrouw, out 66 jaren, ende hebben ten versoecke van Sr. Pieter Codde schilder wonende hier ter stede geattesteert ende getuijgd hoe waer is, dat nu ontrent thien a elf jaren geleden sij deposanten sijnde buijren van Maria Schilt alias haer huijsvrouw van de voorseijde Pieter Codde op de Egelantiersgraft alhier seer goede ende familiare kennisse met de voorseijde Maria Schilt gehad ende gehouden hebben als

wanneer de voorseijde Maria Schilt tegen haer deposanten verscheijden malen geclaeght heeft, dat Sijmon Hop alsdoen jongman sijnde de welcke met haer den tijt van ontrent drie jaren geconverseert ende ommegegaen hadde als man ende vrou, haer hadde verlaten getuygd hij Jan Valois noch alleen dat hij de voorseijde Maria Schilt vragende waerom dat zij droevich was dat de voorseijde Symon Hop haer hadde verlaten de wijle sij wel wist dat sij een getrout man hadde, zij Maria Schilt daerop antwoorde soude ik niet droevich wesen ick hebbe tweemael van hem swaer geweest ende veel gelt aen hem gespendeert, getuijgen sij deposanten tsamen noch dat daerna ten huijse van de voorseijde Maria Schilt gewoont heeft seker jongman gen[aem]t Willem Blau de welcke met de voorseijde Maria Schilt den tijt van een half jaar langh geduijrende de continuelijck ommegegaen ende als man ende vrouw metten anderen op een bedde geslapen hebben getuygd hij Jan Valois noch alleen, dat de voorseijde Maria Schilt ende voorseijde Willem Blau alsdoen op een morgen tegens hem deposant roemden ende verclaerden dat sij tot vijf verscheyden malen snachts tevoren metten anderen vleeschelijck geconverseert hadden Getuijgd Cristina Anseel noch alleen, dat eenigen tijt voor het voorseijde half jaer dat de voorseijde Blau als vooren familiareljck met de voorseijde Maria Schilt verkeerde zij deposante op een morgen vroegh ten huijse van voorseijde Maria Schilt gecomen is als wanneer sij deposante de voorseijde Maria Schilt ende eenen genaemt de Potter sijnde schilder op den bedde gevonden heeft dewelcke de Potter uijt het bedde voorts gecomen zijnde sij Maria Schilt int bedde noch leggende tegens haer deposante seijde, vertoeft noch wat wij sullen terstond de kandeel eeten, gelijk sij deposante alsdoen oock nevens de voorseijde Maria Schilt ende de Potter kandeel gegeten heeft, presenterende sulx des nood ende versocht sijnde bij eede te stercken gedaen t' Amsterdam jnt bijsijn van Sacharias de Vos ende Gerrit van Eijck als getuijgen.

Translation

On this day, the 30th of October in the year 1652, before me, Johannes Hellerus, a notary public admitted by the Court of Holland and residing in Amsterdam, Jan Valois, 52 years old, servant of the noble gentleman Cornelis van Outshoren, Lord of Outshoren and bailiff of this city, and Cristina Anseel, his [Valois'] wife, 66 years old. At the request of Mr. Pieter Codde, a painter residing in this city, they, testified and declared to the truth of the matter.

They stated that, about ten or eleven years ago, they, the deponents, being neighbors of Maria [Arents] Schilt, alias the wife of the aforementioned Pieter Codde, on Egelantiersgracht in this city; both having a very good and cordial acquaintanceship with the aforementioned Maria Schilt during the time when Maria Schilt complained on several occasions to them, the deponents, that Sijmon Hop, a young man at the time who had consorted and lived with her for about three years as husband and wife, had deserted her. Jan Valois testified alone that he asked aforementioned Maria Schilt why she was sad that aforementioned Simon Hop had left her, while she knew that he was married man, Maria Schilt replied: "Should I not be sad? I have twice become pregnant by him and spent a lot of money on him." The deponents together also testified that later, a certain unmarried man named Willem Blau lived in Maria Schilt's house for about six months, and that he and Maria Schilt continuously consorted as husband and wife, sleeping together in the same bed. Jan Valois further stated on his own that one morning, Maria Schilt and Willem Blau boasted and declared to him that they had engaged in carnal relations together five times the previous night. Cristina Anseel alone testified

that some time before the aforementioned six-month period during which the aforementioned Blau associated familiarly with the aforementioned Maria Schilt, she, the deponent, came early one morning to the house of the aforementioned Maria Schilt, where she found the aforementioned Maria Schilt and a man named De Potter, who was a painter, in bed. After De Potter got out of bed, Maria Schilt, still lying in bed, said to her, the deponent, “Stay a while, we will eat *kandeel* [an Old Dutch egg liqueur] soon,” and the deponent then ate *kandeel* together with the aforementioned Maria Schilt and De Potter, presenting this in case of necessity and being requested to confirm it by oath, done at Amsterdam in the presence of witnesses Sacharias de Vos and Gerrit van Eijck.

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