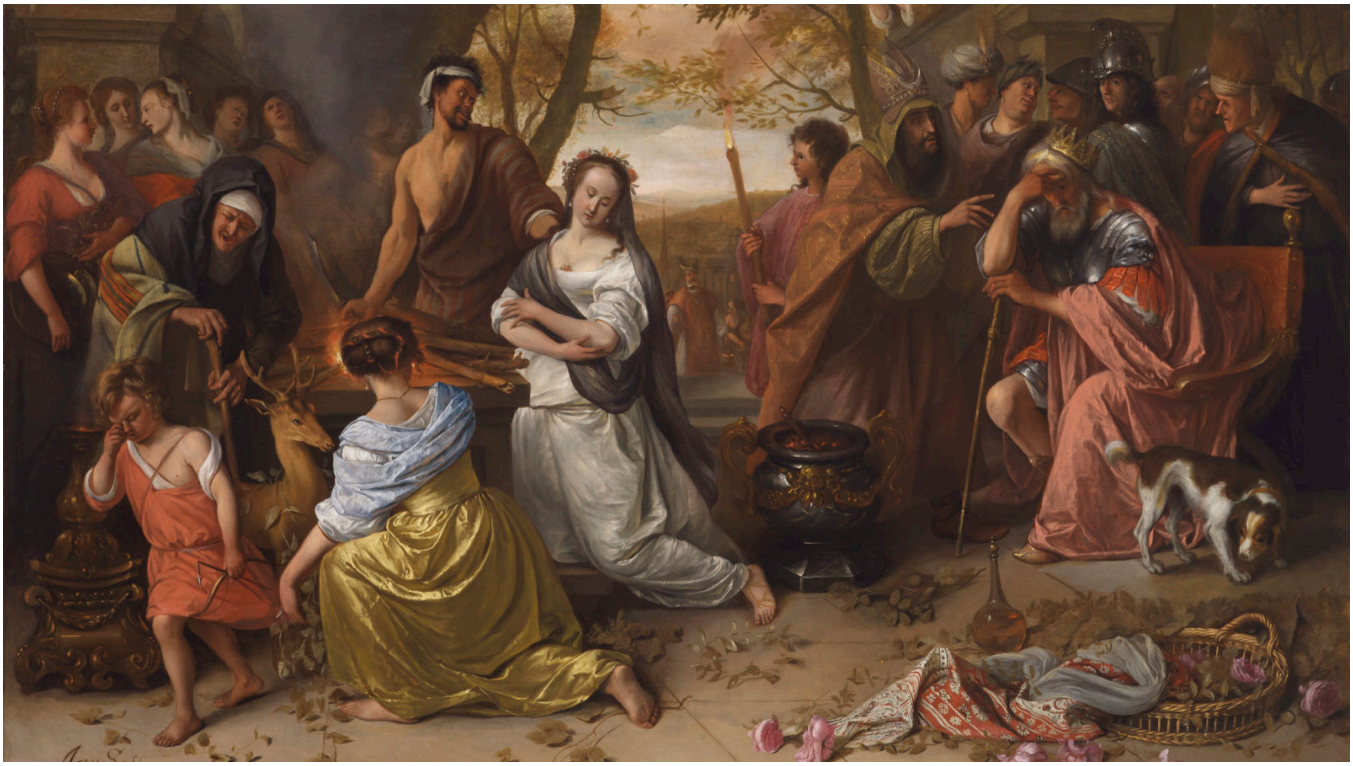

Jan Steen's Histories

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The human condition was an inexhaustible source of inspiration for Jan Steen (1626–79). He painted comical scenes of dissolute households, merrymakers at inns, quack doctors, lovesick girls, children up to mischief, and parents setting a poor example for their offspring. Steen depicted stories and anecdotes about people and their daily concerns, their shortcomings, joys, and sorrows. His paintings are characterized by playful ambiguity and humor. The artist succeeded better than anyone at poking fun at human vices and weaknesses. In fact, his amusing genre scenes made him one of the most popular painters of the Dutch seventeenth century.

Steen's aspirations, however, went even further. He sought his subject matter not only in everyday life around him, but also in written sources: the Bible, the apocryphal books of the Old Testament, classical mythology, and ancient Roman history.[1] In them he found stories, called histories in his day, with which he could expand his repertoire as a figure painter—stories with a variety of characters, like outsize versions of real life. He portrayed a wide range of historical subjects in the course of his career. As in his genre scenes, he lavished attention on the interactions between the many figures and on their emotions. Steen preferred stories with comic as well as moralizing potential, in which someone is mocked and matters get out of hand. He favored scenes of feasts and banquets, tales of love and betrayal. Even more than in his genre scenes, in his histories Steen paraded a motley crew of theatrical characters dressed in colorful costumes. A beguiling young woman is often the center of attention. Children and comical characters appear in secondary scenes, and sometimes—just as in contemporary theater—they make contact with the viewer through their gaze and gestures. With Steen, the line between genre and history is not always sharply drawn.

Born in Leiden in 1626, Steen moved back and forth between his native city and The Hague, Delft, Warmond, and Haarlem (see the full biography by Piet Bakker in this catalogue). Early on, when Steen specialized in the comic genre, he painted only the occasional history scene, usually of a traditional biblical theme like *The Adoration of the Shepherds* **(fig 1)**. It was not until the second half of his career, from the mid-1660s onward, when he lived in Haarlem and later in Leiden again, that Steen's production of histories took off. He preferred major narrative themes from the Old Testament, such as *The Worship of the Golden Calf* **(fig 2)** and *The Wrath of Ahasuerus* **(fig 3)**, and subjects from the New Testament, like the parable of *Lazarus and the Rich Man* in The Leiden Collection **(fig 4)**. Steen also painted mythological stories, such as The Leiden Collection's *Sacrifice of Iphigenia* **(fig 5)**, and subjects derived from Roman history, for instance *Banquet of Anthony and Cleopatra* **(fig 6)**, also in The Leiden Collection, which he depicted four times. The wide range of different subjects Steen treated bespeaks his ambition as a history painter, evincing great creativity in regularly choosing themes that his predecessors had not, or had rarely, portrayed.[2] While he

Fig 1. Jan Steen, *The Adoration of the Shepherds*, ca. 1660, oil on canvas, 53 x 64 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv. no. SK-A- 3509.

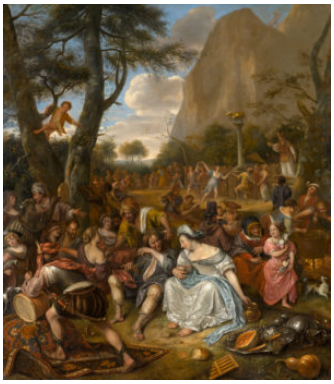

Fig 2. Jan Steen, *The Worship of the Golden Calf*, ca. 1674–77, oil on canvas, 178.4 x 155.6 cm, North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh (acquired with funds from the State of North Carolina), inv. no. 52-958, © Bridgeman Images

Fig 3. Jan Steen, *The Wrath of Ahasuerus*, ca. 1671–1673, oil on canvas, 129 x 167 cm, The Barber Institute of Fine Arts, Birmingham, inv. no. 39.22, © Barber Institute of Fine Arts / The Henry Barber Trust / Bridgeman Images.

depicted some subjects only once, he revisited others repeatedly. Around 75 histories by Jan Steen are still known, representing about one sixth of his extant oeuvre, which is estimated at around 450 paintings.[3]

Steen's three history scenes in The Leiden Collection date from the prolific 1670s, the last decade of his life, when he had settled once again in his native Leiden. This essay focuses on these three major works (described in detail by Wouter Kloek in this catalogue), providing a broader insight into Steen's incomparable oeuvre of lively and colorful history paintings, which, through their theatrical and comic emphasis on human shortcomings, warrant a position of their own within the broad and varied spectrum of Dutch history painting.

A Wide Range of Historical Subjects

Sacrifice of Iphigenia **(fig 5)** is an important touchstone in Steen's oeuvre of history paintings, not only for its monumental size and original, humorous portrayal of the well-known story, but also because it is dated, which is rare for paintings by Steen. He painted this ambitious picture in 1671, a year after he returned to Leiden for the last time in his peripatetic career. Equally exceptional is that we know the identity of the seventeenth-century (presumably the first) owner of the painting, namely Willem Jacobsz van Heemskerk (1613–1692), a prominent Leiden draper who was also active as a glass engraver, poet, and playwright. Given the painting's size, it is, moreover, likely that Steen made it on commission for Van Heemskerk—after all, it would seem pointless for the artist to invest time and money painting such a large and therefore expensive picture if its sale were uncertain.[4]

The painting features the dramatic story of the Greek commander Agamemnon, who was forced by the enraged goddess Diana to sacrifice his daughter Iphigenia so that he could set sail for Troy. Steen used the story to paint a brilliant sacrificial scene set in antiquity, with a motley crew of theatrical figures surrounding the young victim at the heart of the composition. With her arms crossed in front of her body and her eyes closed, Iphigenia kneels before the altar from which a thick plume of smoke rises toward Diana, depicted as a statue sitting at the entrance to her temple.[5] Iphigenia is an anchor of peace in the midst of a crowd of gesticulating figures that are portrayed with a great sense of humor. Primary among these is the executioner who, with a broad grin and bulging eyes animating his face, clearly relishes the idea of cutting Iphigenia's throat with his sharp knife, unaware that Diana will ultimately intervene and have a doe sacrificed instead. On the right, Iphigenia's father, Agamemnon, overcome by remorse and grief, sits hunched over in his throne, seemingly unreachable for the figures crowding around him.

Various printmakers and painters had already depicted the well-known tale of

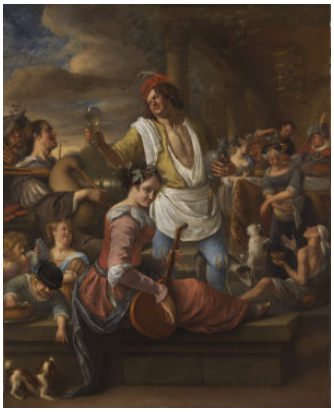

Fig 4. Jan Steen, *Lazarus and the Rich Man or "In Luxury Beware,"* ca. 1677, oil on canvas, 80.3 x 64.8 cm, The Leiden Collection, New York, inv. no. JS-106.

Fig 5. Jan Steen, *Sacrifice of Iphigenia*, 1671, oil on canvas, 134.6 x 172.7 cm, The Leiden Collection, New York, inv. no. JS-112.

Fig 6. Jan Steen, *Banquet of Anthony and Cleopatra*, ca. 1673–75, oil on canvas, 82.1 x 107.8 cm, The Leiden Collection, New York, inv. no. JS-107.

Fig 7. Jan Steen, *The Mocking of Samson*, ca. 1675–76, oil on canvas, 65 x 82 cm, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten, Antwerp,

Iphigenia's sacrifice before Steen executed his imposing work. This episode, which was central to Euripides's play *Iphigenia in Aulis* (translated into Latin by Erasmus), also appears in Ovid's *Metamorphoses.* Importantly for Steen, in 1617 this story was featured in *Iphigenia-treurspel*, a play by the Amsterdam dramatist Samuel Coster (1579–1665), who used it to comment on the conflict between the liberal and orthodox factions in the Calvinist church in the Dutch Republic. In Coster's play, Agamemnon's choice to sacrifice his own daughter served to reference the uncompromising religious politics then imperiling the country.[6] Orthodox Amsterdam clergymen objected strenuously to Coster's play, and in 1630 they succeeded in banning all performances of this theatrical piece. As Wouter Kloek has argued, it is entirely possible that Steen devised the theme of his painting in collaboration with his learned fellow townsman Van Heemskerk, who belonged to the liberal Remonstrant faction of the church. Steen's painting, dated 1671, was likely made as a reference to Coster's forbidden play, although it does not reflect any specific scene from it. *Sacrifice of Iphigenia* may well be a commentary on the precarious political situation at a time when individual freedom of conscience was again at risk in the Dutch Republic.

Apart from its political connotations, the depiction likely contains an erudite reference to the legendary painting of the same subject from antiquity by the Greek painter Timanthes.[7] Various classical and early modern sources praise Timanthes's lost masterpiece as a sublime portrayal of powerful emotional reactions, a skill at which a history painter should excel. Drawing on such texts, Karel van Mander (1584–1606) wrote that in his painting Timanthes expressed Agamemnon's grief by having him cover his face to avoid seeing his child's cruel death.[8] In Steen's work, Agamemnon hides his shaded face behind his hand while looking downward rather than at his daughter at the altar, ignoring the priest bending toward him. Yet the father's grief is not central in Steen's portrayal of the story. Instead, the artist gave the subject his own twist by rendering it as a comical farce around the story's amorous subplot: Agamemnon had lured Iphigenia to Aulis, where the Greek fleet was awaiting a favorable wind to sail, on the pretext that she would marry Achilles.

Steen depicted the moment when the ruse is revealed—at the left, we see the weeping Cupid (not mentioned in any source) walking away holding his bow and a broken love arrow, while being pursued by an old woman whose caricatural appearance embodies the type of comic matchmaker that Steen also depicted in numerous genre scenes.[9] Iphigenia is garbed as a bride in a white gown of silver cloth,[10] a garland of flowers in her hair. The young man looking on behind Agamemnon is most likely the duped groom Achilles; with his oversized helmet and fashionable pointy moustache, he, too, resembles a comic character. In this way, Steen lent the dramatic story an overtly humorous twist, an approach that the painting's owner Van Heemskerk—a theater lover—surely appreciated.

inv. no. 338, © www.artinflanders, photo Hugo Maertens.

Fig 8. Jan Steen, *Samson and Delilah*, 1668, oil on canvas, 67.5 x 82 cm, Los Angeles County Museum of Art (Gift of the Ahmanson Foundation), inv. no. M 8764.

Fig 9. Jan Steen, *Dissolute Household, "In Luxury Beware,"* 1663, oil on canvas, 105 x 145 cm, Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna, inv. no. 178, © Bridgeman Images.

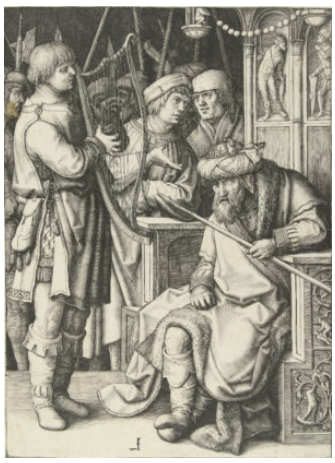

Fig 10. Lucas van Leyden, *David Playing the Harp before Saul*, ca. 1508, engraving, 252 x 182 mm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam, inv. no. RP-P-OB-1601.

The fact that Steen deployed humor in this serious, deeply tragic story about the innocent princess was unprecedented, and for many—including the English painter and art critic Joshua Reynolds (1723–1792)—baffling. The contrast here between the serious subject and the "burlesque" execution (to quote Reynolds) is greater than in most of Steen's other history paintings,[11] perhaps equaled only by his *Wrath of Ahasuerus*, now in Birmingham **(fig 3)**. In Steen's depiction of the fiercely gesticulating Persian king's angry outburst at Esther's banquet, painted with distinctive theatricality, the highlight of the violence is the peacock pie on the table, which almost seems to tumble out of the painting.

A comely young woman often plays a key role in Steen's histories, as they also do in many of his genre scenes. While Iphigenia is an innocent girl and the Jewish heroine Esther the epitome of virtue, in the artist's other works the female leads are not all so virtuous and outwit their male opponents. For example, in another history painting in The Leiden Collection **(fig 6)**, the beautiful and cunning Egyptian queen Cleopatra had her lover, the Roman army commander Mark Antony, completely in her thrall. Their wager over who could stage the most lavish banquet, so brilliantly won by Cleopatra, is legendary: she had one of her precious pearl earrings dissolved in vinegar and then drank the concoction. As far as is known, Steen depicted this story from Roman history, taken from Pliny's *Naturalis Historia* (translated into Dutch in 1662), four times, in each case with Cleopatra as the radiant center of the scene.[12] The story afforded him the opportunity of unleashing his imagination on a banquet scene set in antiquity, with a motley crowd of figures.

The scene in the Leiden Collection version of the subject is situated in a grand gallery, a setting whose theatrical character is reinforced by the red drape raised above the banqueting table, a motif Steen often included in his histories.[13] We see Cleopatra taunting her lover by dangling her second earring, which she also threatens to sacrifice, just out of his reach. From behind the table, Mark Antony vainly leans toward her to intervene. His martial attire, with its quasi-Roman helmet (reminiscent of that of Achilles), makes his powerlessness in the face of Cleopatra even more ludicrous. Many of the figures in this painting belong to Steen's familiar comic repertoire, such as the dwarf with a jester's cap, restrained by a laughing child (also seen, for example, in *The Mocking of Samson* **(fig 7)**).[14] Two of the figures gaze out directly at the viewer, as is often the case in Steen's history paintings: the fat bald man behind Cleopatra, gesturing with his index finger, and the man at the table on the right, picking his teeth with a knife.[15] Jacob Cats's *Trouringh* (1637), a widely read didactic poem about marriage, was probably an important source for Steen. In it, the amorous couple's wager is discussed at length, with Mark Antony being portrayed as the epitome of the soldier who falls prey to feminine wiles.[16] This theme plays a role in various history paintings by Steen—such as his depiction of the treacherous Delilah, who brings about the

Fig 11. Pieter Lastman, *Paulus and Barnabas in Lystra*, 1617, oil on panel, 76 x 115 cm, Rembrandthuis, Amsterdam (on loan from the Amsterdam Museum), inv. no. SA 31443.

Fig 12. Jacques Callot, *Dwarf with Two Poniards*, 1616–21, etching and engraving, 62 x 85 mm, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. no. RP-P-OB-21.024.

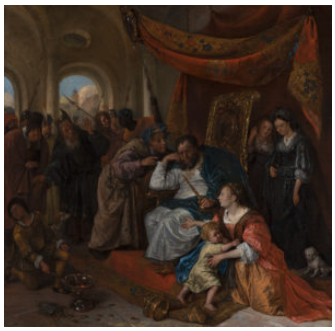

Fig 13. Jan Steen, *Moses and Pharaoh's Crown*, ca. 1670, oil on canvas, 78 x 79 cm, Mauritshuis, The Hague (acquired with the support of the BankGiro Lottery), inv. no. 1167.

downfall of the powerful Samson **(fig 8)** —but also sometimes in his genre scenes.[17]

Even when depicting stories with no female characters, Steen still liked to paint a seductive woman in full view to serve as an eye catcher in his picture. This is the case in *Lazarus and the Rich Man or "In Luxury Beware"* **(fig 4)**, where all attention is centered on the woman with grape vines encircling her head, seated on a stone wall in the foreground, who strums her cittern all the while looking out at us over her shoulder.[18] Together with the man behind her, she forms the center of the festive scene where wine flows freely. The man with a white apron, a jug in the crook of his arm, a raised wine glass, and a white dishcloth over his shoulder is the type of innkeeper who happily supplies everyone with drinks. He is a comic character, underlined by the cock feathers on his red cap,[19] just like the colorful procession of merry musicians and children.

The actual subject of this festive scene—the biblical parable of the beggar Lazarus and the Rich Man (Luke 16:19–31)—unfolds in the right background. Lazarus, dressed in rags, sits on the ground before a table, vainly hoping for some scraps of the sumptuous meal, as a servant refills the turbaned rich man's glass. Only a dog comes to the beggar and licks his sores, as the Bible tells us. Steen compounded Lazarus's misery by including a woman who mocks him by shaking a table cloth with crossed arms, intimating that she would rather give the morsels to a begging *Löwchen* (little lion dog).[20] It is clear that Lazarus, not the rich man, will ultimately be blessed in heaven, a moralizing message underlined in this painting by the inscription on the stone wall below the cittern player: *In weelde siet toe* (In luxury beware).

Steen had previously included the same proverb as a warning in his *Dissolute Household* of 1663 **(fig 9)**, now in Vienna, where an utter mess is the result of the wanton and licentious behavior of young and old while the lady of the house sleeps.[21] Hanging from the ceiling in this overcrowded image is a wicker basket filled with objects that reference the disastrous consequences of the shameless debauchery depicted with such biting humor. In the basket, among other things, are a beggar's crutch and a leper's clapper, called a *lazarusklep* (Lazarus's clapper) in Dutch, referring to the downfall and misery that await these sinners in the future. The moralizing message in this genre scene is the same as in *Lazarus and the Rich Man*. The fact that Steen extended the motif of the Lazarus's clapper from his dissolute household into a full-fledged history painting with the biblical parable illustrates how closely genre and history scenes are interwoven in his work.[22] Various comic types such as the matchmaker, the innkeeper, and the deceived lover appear in both genre and history scenes. These two parts of the oeuvre of the comic figure painter and storyteller can be understood as offshoots of the same tree. That Steen worked in these genres simultaneously, using the same pictorial idiom, was exceptional in the seventeenth

century.

Steen's Literary and Pictorial Sources

From his earliest biographers, the humor that plays such an important role in Steen's work earned him the reputation of libertine and joker himself, as if his farcical paintings were a reflection of his own lifestyle.[23] Yet attention was also paid to another, more serious side of the artist. Jacob Campo Weyerman wrote in 1729: "But however loose Jan Steen's behavior, he was not at all lax in his critical knowledge or in his practice of the art of painting, while he . . . could discuss and reason so profoundly about all the characteristics of that art that it was a joy to witness his reflective discourses."[24] Basing his account on information from the Leiden painter Carel de Moor (1655–1738), who could have known Steen as a young man, Weyerman thus sketched a picture of an artist intensively engaged with the theory and practice of his profession. It is particularly interesting that Weyerman explicitly referred to Steen's history paintings, noting "that he sometimes had highly uncommon and lofty thoughts, in order to render his histories in a wondrous way . . . exerting all the power of his soul."[25]

The son of a brewer, Jan Steen grew up in a Catholic upper-middle-class milieu and was well educated at the Latin School in Leiden. His family had connections in the worlds of art and science. His aunt Marijtje Steen (a sister of his father) was married to Joost Lievens de Rechte (ca. 1606–49), brother of the painter Jan Lievens (1607–74), who had a bookshop on the Rapenburg in Leiden until his death in 1649. As a poetry lover, his uncle Dirck Steen (a brother of his father), an oil miller by profession, had a large library, which he bequeathed to his brothers and sisters when he died in 1633. Jan Steen had other uncles who had studied medicine, and he also counted a pharmacist, instrument maker, and musician among them.[26] Thanks to this cultivated background, Steen must have been exposed to literary and art historical sources from an early age. In part through his family's network, he probably had access to (print) collections early on, allowing him to study the work of his artistic predecessors. Such a privileged background not only was an asset in Steen's intellectual and artistic development, but would also have given him entrée later in life to the circles of wealthy collectors such as Willem van Heemskerck.

Jan Steen mined his sources with remarkable ingenuity, always looking for ways to broaden his repertoire and add to his trove of motifs. He often appears to have closely studied the narrative texts on which his history paintings were based, searching for unusual elements not yet treated by other artists. *Sacrifice of Iphigenia*, for example, is a painting with evident political content that was highly topical at the time. Steen nevertheless managed to give this serious subject a comic twist by foregrounding the

subplot with the aspiring bridegroom Achilles—something no artist had done before him. Although Steen could have become familiar with Erasmus's Latin translation of Euripides's play at the Latin School, he based his rendering primarily on Samuel Coster's *Iphigenia-treurspel*, as discussed above.[27] Steen was undoubtedly familiar with the story of Cleopatra's profligacy from Jacob Cats's impassioned description of the extravagant wager in his poem *Trou-ringh*; however, he could equally have been able to read it in the 1662 Dutch translation of Pliny's *Naturalis Historia*.[28] Steen sometimes ingeniously bent the stories he depicted to his will, always looking for opportunities to depict a scene of mockery. For example, in Steen's rendering of the biblical parable of Lazarus and the rich man, the poor beggar not only gets nothing to eat, but is also scoffed at by the rich man's servant—a detail that is not mentioned in the biblical text.

In addition to his literary sources, Steen also delved extensively into the work of his artistic predecessors and contemporaries, presumably mainly through reproductive prints. Not only for his history pieces, but also for his genre scenes, he derived motifs from masters such as Lucas van Leyden (1494–1533), Maarten van Heemskerck (1498–1574), Pieter Brueghel the Elder (1525/30–69), Jacob Jordaens (1593–1678), and Rembrandt van Rijn (1606–69), as well as great Italian artists such as Raphael (1483–1520), Jacopo Bassano (1510–92), Paolo Veronese (1528–88), and the German Adam Elsheimer (1578–1610).[29] For *Sacrifice of Iphigenia*, Steen adopted various visual elements from a print of the same subject, the design of which was attributed to Michelangelo (1475–1564).[30] With such a quotation, Steen is apprising the knowledgeable viewer that he is familiar with important Italian examples. The figure of Agamemnon on his throne is taken from Lucas van Leyden's print of *David Playing the Harp before Saul* **(fig 10)**, which features King Saul in a pose resembling that of Agamemnon slumped over on his throne trying to contain his rage.[31] For Steen, the work of Lucas van Leyden, his legendary predecessor from Leiden, was an important benchmark and source of inspiration. With his own history paintings, Steen may have wanted to follow in his illustrious footsteps. Sometimes the motif is no more than a quotation—as in *Sacrifice of Iphigenia*—but his monumental masterpiece *The Worship of the Golden Calf* **(fig 2)**, also dating from the 1670s, can be considered as paying particular homage to the great Lucas, an emulation of a famous triptych of the same subject by the latter.[32]

In addition, Steen regularly referred to the work of Pieter Lastman (1583–1633), the Amsterdam history painter who had painted so many stories for the first time.[33] For *Sacrifice of Iphigenia*, for example, Steen was inspired by Lastman's scenes of pagan feasts with people crowding around altars with burning branches and flowers scattered on the ground **(fig 11)**. The artistic sources from which Steen drew were broad and varied. A popular series of prints with grotesque figures by the Frenchman Jacques Callot (1592–1635) **(fig 12)** probably inspired several caricatural dwarfs who feature

with other pranksters in his history paintings, such as in the *Banquet of Anthony and Cleopatra* **(fig 6)**. Moreover, he studied the work of his contemporaries. For example, the woman playing the cittern in *Lazarus and the Rich Man* is based on a figure by the Haarlem artist Cornelis Bega (1632–64), six years Steen's junior.[34]

This skillful borrowing from other artists, incidentally, was a highly recommended practice in the seventeenth century. With his famous aphorism *Wel ghecoockte rapen is goe pottage* (well-cooked turnips make a good soup), Karel van Mander encouraged his readers to "pick and choose" artistic elements to their hearts' content (the Dutch word for turnips, *rapen*, also means to collect or gather), with the aim to incorporate these quotations into their own coherent creation.[35] With apparent ease, Steen playfully introduced all sorts of visual quotations into his paintings, which seem primarily intended to showcase his broad art historical knowledge and expertise. As far as content was concerned, he drew primarily on literary sources, using them at will. The frequency with which he depicted stories that were often also the subject of plays is striking.

Steen and Theater

Because of this fact, combined with the theatricality of many of his depictions, it has often been assumed that Steen's paintings were informed by contemporary stage practice.[36] Yet, with the exception of two renderings of a scene from a play by Gerbrand Bredero (1585–1618), Steen's paintings do not feature specific scenes from contemporary plays or scripts.[37] Whereas in a play, like Coster's *Iphigenia-Treurspel*, the story unfolds in time, in a succession of scenes with characters coming and going, in a painting, all of the elements of an emotionally charged story are condensed into a single tableau.[38] Steen's paintings therefore reflect a more general form of inspiration that he gained from various forms of drama. Dutch art theorists, among them Karel van Mander and Arnold Houbraken, encouraged young painters to study actors to learn how to render emotions by means of facial expressions and body language.[39] In a footnote to his biography of Jan Steen published in 1721, Houbraken elaborated on the theater practices of antiquity, when "mimes and pantomines" were performed between the acts. The actors expressed "*al het geen men hartstogt noemen kan*" (all that one can call passion) by means of "*buigingen van 't Lyf, grimmassen, vreemde sprongen*" (contortions of the body, grimaces, strange jumps). Interestingly, Houbraken advised aspiring painters to look closely not only at actors but also at paintings by Steen, who succeeded as none other in conveying the "essential traits" of his characters.[40] As for actors in plays, it was crucial for history painters to convey convincingly the emotions of the characters in a story in order to get its message across.

The use of colorful costumes is an important parallel between Steen's history paintings

and contemporary stage performances. Steen lavished particular attention on clothing in his history paintings, which include a multitude of exotic, old-fashioned, or antique elements.[41] In these works, as on stage, the costumes of the personages are integral to the portrayal of narrative. This applies equally to Steen's history paintings that do not harken back to a specific play, such as *Banquet of Anthony and Cleopatra*,[42] in which the types of costumes resemble those used, for instance, at the Amsterdam Schouwburg.[43] They range from quasi-Roman military tunics, such as that worn by Mark Antony, to all manner of old-fashioned attire that could be used to place the characters in a different era. As noted previously, the motif of the red curtain tied above the protagonists is also a theatrical device that Steen frequently included in his history paintings as a means, as it were, of enlarging the action and placing it outside its own time and place.

Finally, not only in his history paintings but also in his genre scenes, Steen often introduced characters who act as a kind of intermediary, addressing the viewer directly with their gaze and gestures. Such figures are reminiscent of commentators on stage who took the audience aside, in a manner of speaking, to remark on what was being presented: these could be, for example, speakers in prologues or epilogues or allegorical figures.[44] In *rederijker* plays, so-called *sinnekens* (allegorical characters) came on stage to portray the vices and mock the weaknesses of the protagonists.[45] In *Banquet of Anthony and Cleopatra,* the bald servant with a raised index finger looking out at us from the right behind Cleopatra plays a less-pronounced yet similar role.

Steen could have been exposed to the theatrical practice of his time in many different ways. In the seventeenth century, only Amsterdam had a theater where professional actors staged their shows; however, there were also traveling actors who, for example, performed at annual fairs.[46] Steen may, of course, have read scripts as well, either alone or in reading societies, which were prevalent at the time.[47] A key role in the professionalization of the theater was played by the *rederijkers*, societies of literary amateurs who met for poetry readings, theater performances and tableaux vivants. Steen depicted *rederijkers* declaiming and, invariably, hitting the bottle in various genre scenes.[48] The multifaceted theatrical practice of Steen's time must have been an inexhaustible source of inspiration for him, especially for his explicitly theatrical histories.

The Critical Fortune of Steen's Histories

Steen's popularity as one of the most important seventeenth-century Dutch painters has been based almost exclusively on his genre scenes (including a limited number of portraits in the guise of genre scenes). His history paintings have long been an underappreciated, and therefore less well-known part of his oeuvre.[49] Throughout the

centuries, these works often elicited incomprehension and discomfort, reactions expressed by various authors from the eighteenth century to the present day. Generations of art critics have struggled with Steen's undignified presentation of serious subjects, his humor deemed as inappropriate for these historical themes. In the third quarter of the seventeenth century, when Steen embarked on his career as a history painter, a penchant for dignity and monumentality came to dominate the portrayal of histories. Steen generally did not adhere to contemporaneous art theory's rules for portraying the *"gedenckwaerdichste Historiën"* (most memorable histories), the "*hoogsten en voornaemsten trap in de Schilderkonst"* (highest and most distinguished rung in the art of painting), as Samuel van Hoogstraten (1627–78) put it in 1678.[50] These rules prescribed that the story be rendered in a dignified and plausible manner, with the characters expressing the relevant emotions through facial expressions, gestures and poses, to convey the message clearly. Steen went against the grain by creating an incomparable oeuvre of highly original history paintings, which occupy a unique position within the range of Dutch history paintings because of their emphasis on anecdote and humor.[51]

In the absence of contemporary written sources, it is somewhat difficult to ascertain how Steen's history paintings were received in his own time. Nevertheless, his increased production of relatively large history paintings from the middle of the 1660s indicates that, prevailing art-theoretical notions notwithstanding, a demand existed for them among patrons like Willem van Heemskerck. Judging from prices listed in early eighteenth-century sales catalogues, Steen's history scenes were even among his most expensive works. Tastes, however, would change in the following centuries when a classicizing style of history painting became prevalent and the market value of these works decreased.[52] The best-known representative of the later lack of appreciation is Joshua Reynolds, who described *Sacrifice of Iphigenia* as the ultimate example of how, in his opinion, the painter had gone off the rails on this serious subject and become "perfectly ridiculous."[53]

More recently, the critical fortune of Steen's histories has been revived, particularly in the United States, where since the Second World War, museums in Raleigh, Cleveland, San Francisco, and Los Angeles have purchased important biblical and mythological works by the master.[54] In recent decades, collectors have given other history paintings by Steen to museums in cities such as Phoenix, Memphis, and in Louisville, Kentucky.[55] Between 2006 and 2008, The Leiden Collection acquired the three impressive histories by Steen discussed in this essay. Finally, in 2014, Steen's *Ascagnes and Lucelle (The Music Lesson)*, which had been donated to the Corcoran Museum of Art in 1926, was transferred to the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.[56]

Exhibitions have also emphasized Steen's history paintings. In 1996, a substantial group

of ten history paintings was included in the monographic exhibition *Jan Steen, Painter and Storyteller* at the National Gallery of Art in Washington and the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam.[57] More than two decades later, in 2017–18, the Barber Institute of Fine Arts in Birmingham, England, organized a focused exhibition of Steen's Old Testament scenes,[58] highlighting the Institute's *Wrath of Ahasuerus*, which had been an insightful acquisition in 1939. At the Mauritshuis, despite the very rich holdings of no less than fourteen Steen paintings, there was no history painting by Steen until 2011—due, no doubt, to the fact that these works were long undervalued, especially in European museums. In 2011, this gap in the Mauritshuis's collection was finally filled by the purchase of Steen's *Moses and Pharaoh's Crown* **(fig 13)**, a depiction of an apocryphal story from the prophet's childhood.[59] In 2018, to celebrate this much-needed acquisition, the Mauritshuis organized the exhibition *Jan Steen's Histories*, which offered the first overview of this part of his oeuvre.[60] Each of these exhibitions has been important for the reappraisal of Steen's history paintings, demonstrating not only the rich inventiveness of his narrative approach to biblical and mythological stories, but also his ability to captivate and enchant the viewer in new and unexpected ways.

- Ariane van Suchtelen, 2021

Endnotes

1. For Jan Steen as a history painter, see Baruch Kirschenbaum, *The Religious and Historical Paintings of Jan Steen* (New York, 1977); Lyckle de Vries, "Jan Steen zwischen Genre- und Historienmalerei," in *Niederdeustche Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte* 22 (1983): 113–28; Mariët Westermann, *The Amusements of Jan Steen—Comic Painting in the Seventeenth Century* (Zwolle, 1997), 276–312; Robert Wenley et al., eds., *Pride and Persecution—Jan Steen's Old Testament Scenes* (Exh. cat. Birmingham, Barber Institute of Fine Arts) (Birmingham, 2017–18); Rosalie van Gulick, "Jan Steen's History Paintings and Dutch Art Theory: Comments and Corrections by Gerard de Lairesse," *Simiolus* 39 (2017): 386–97; Ariane van Suchtelen, ed., *Jan Steen's Histories* (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague, 2018), with essays by Ariane van Suchtelen, Wouter Th. Kloek and Mariët Westermann.
2. He was the first to paint the mockery of the vanquished Samson by the Philistines, an Old Testament subject that had never been depicted, even in prints. Ariane van Suchtelen, ed., *Jan Steen's Histories* (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague, 2018), no. 6, fig. 6a; Karel Braun, *Alle tot nu toe bekende schilderijen van Jan Steen* (Rotterdam, 1980), nos. 298 and 365.
3. In his monograph, Karel Braun arrives at 376 paintings, but his B category ("wrongly attributed to Steen") includes many autograph works. See Karel Braun, *Alle tot nu toe bekende schilderijen van Jan Steen* (Rotterdam, 1980).
4. Approximately ten history paintings by Steen have similar formats, which suggests that they were commissioned, but it is very rare that the name of the original owner can be traced. See Ariane van Suchtelen, "A Storyteller of Genius: Jan Steen and the Art of History Painting," in Ariane van Suchtelen, ed., *Jan Steen's Histories* (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague, 2018), 22.
5. The identity of the woman with folded hands leaning out of a window opposite Diana is not clear. She might represent Helen, the indirect cause of all of these troubles. Samuel Coster's 1617 play *Iphigenia-treurspel*, which may have served as a source for Steen, contains no clues as to who she might be. Further discussion follows below.
6. See the entry *Sacrifice of Iphigenia* by Wouter Th. Kloek, in this catalogue.
7. Mariët Westermann, *The Amusements of Jan Steen—Comic Painting in the Seventeenth Century* (Zwolle, 1997), 303.
8. Compare Mieke B. Smits-Veldt, "Bredero en Timanthes," *Spektator* 14 (1984–85): 288–90; Karel van Mander, *Het Schilder-boeck, Den Grondt der Edel vry Schilder-const* (Haarlem, 1604), folio 26r. Van Mander used Valerius Maximus as his source; see Eric Jan Sluijter, *De 'heydensche fabulen' in de schilderkunst van de Gouden Eeuw* (Leiden, 2000), 245n87. For Timanthes, see William Smith, ed., *A Dictionary of Greek and Roman Biography and Mythology*, Timanthes, accessed 15 August 2021, www.perseus.tufts.edu. Other art theorists outside of the Netherlands, such as Leon Battista Alberti, also discussed this tale.

9. Wouter Th. Kloek, "Jan Steen, His Repertoire of Motifs and History Painting," in Ariane van Suchtelen, ed., *Jan Steen's Histories* (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague, 2018), 51.
10. Since the Middle Ages, aristocratic brides had been wed in silver cloth (a white fabric interwoven with silver thread), the color white symbolizing purity and humility. Compare Ariane van Suchtelen, ed., *Jan Steen's Histories* (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague, 2018), 179n17, nos. 11, 12.
11. Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, ed. Robert R. Wark (New Haven, 1975), 236.
12. Karel Braun, *Alle tot nu toe bekende schilderijen van Jan Steen* (Rotterdam, 1980), nos. 283, 287, 306, 364. Also see the entry *Banquet of Anthony and Cleopatra* by Wouter Th. Kloek, in this catalogue; Yvonne Bleyerveld in Ariane van Suchtelen, ed., *Jan Steen's Histories* (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague, 2018), no. 18.
13. Compare Ariane van Suchtelen, ed., *Jan Steen's Histories* (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague, 2018), nos. 3, 5–7, 9–12, 14, 18, 21.
14. In *The Mocking of Samson* (see Ariane van Suchtelen, ed., *Jan Steen's Histories* [Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis] [The Hague, 2018], no. 6), two laughing children restrain the vanquished warrior Samson while, on the right, a grinning dwarf threatens him with a halberd. In various scenes, figures wearing jester's hats emphasize the ridiculousness of the situation depicted, sometimes in a private aside with the viewer (compare Van Suchtelen, *Jan Steen's Histories*, no. 9).
15. In Steen's paintings, the innkeeper (or other servant) carries a white tea towel over his shoulder.
16. For the assumption that Jacob Cats was the source for Jan Steen, see Cornelis W. de Groot, *Jan Steen—Beeld en woord* (Utrecht–Nijmegen), 31–32; Baruch Kirschenbaum, *The Religious and Historical Paintings of Jan Steen* (New York, 1977), 86, 145. See also the entry *Banquet of Anthony and Cleopatra* by Wouter Th. Kloek, in this catalogue; Yvonne Bleyerveld in Ariane van Suchtelen, ed., *Jan Steen's Histories* (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague, 2018), 157. The wager does not occur in two contemporary plays by Willem van Nieuwelandt (1624) and Dieverina van Kouwenhoven (1669); see Yvonne Bleyerveld, entry in *Jan Steen's Histories*, ed. Ariane van Suchtelen (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague, 2018), 183n10.
17. See, for example, Jan Steen, *Samson and Delilah* (Ariane van Suchtelen, ed., *Jan Steen's Histories* [Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis] [The Hague, 2018], no. 5) and his *Card Players* (H. Perry Chapman, Wouter Th. Kloek, and Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., *Jan Steen, Painter and Storyteller*, ed. Guido Jansen [Exh. cat. Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum] [New Haven, 1996], no. 14).
18. Wouter Kloek interprets the scene as an example of the ironic eulogy as found in Erasmus's *In Praise of Folly*, visually worked out in the sixteenth century by Jan van Hemessen and Pieter Aertsen, among others. See the entry *Lazarus and the Rich Man or "In Luxury Beware"* by Wouter Th. Kloek, in this catalogue; and Wouter Th. Kloek, "Jan Steen, His Repertoire of Motifs and History Painting," in *Jan Steen's Histories*, ed. Ariane van Suchtelen (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague, 2018), 48–49. Given the fact that Steen does not depict a still life in the foreground (the ironic eulogy of

subordinate passages as, for example, with Aertsen; compare Reindert Falkenburg, "'Alter Einoutus': On the Nature and Origin of Pieter Aertsen's Still Life Conception," *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 40 [1989]: 56–59), this interpretation does not hold water; there is no paradoxical encomium of the figures in the foreground.

19. The red cap (often with slashes in the fabric) is worn by numerous comic characters in paintings by Steen. For an example with cock feathers, compare *Dancing Couple* in the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. (www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.1220.html, accessed 21 March 2021).

20. In an earlier rendition of the parable dating from 1667, Steen depicted the mocking of Lazarus even more poignantly by having a boy urinate into a drinking jug from which the poor beggar could have quenched his thirst. Karel Braun, *Alle tot nu toe bekende schilderijen van Jan Steen* (Rotterdam, 1980), no. 282; see also Wouter Th. Kloek, "Jan Steen, His Repertoire of Motifs and History Painting," in *Jan Steen's Histories*, ed. Ariane van Suchtelen (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague, 2018), 48–49.

21. H. Perry Chapman, Wouter Th. Kloek, and Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., *Jan Steen, Painter and Storyteller*, ed. Guido Jansen (Exh. cat. Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) (New Haven, 1996), no. 21.

22. Baruch Kirschenbaum, *The Religious and Historical Paintings of Jan Steen* (New York, 1977), 91–103; Lyckle de Vries, "Jan Steen zwischen Genre- und Historienmalerei," *Niederdeustche Beiträge zur Kunstgeschichte* 22 (1983): 113–28; Lyckle de Vries, "Steen's Artistic Evolution in the Context of Dutch Painting," in *Jan Steen, Painter and Storyteller*, H. Perry Chapman, Wouter Th. Kloek, and Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., ed. Guido Jansen (Exh. cat. Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) (New Haven, 1996), 78–79; Ariane van Suchtelen, "A Storyteller of Genius: Jan Steen and the Art of History Painting," in *Jan Steen's Histories*, ed. Ariane van Suchtelen (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague, 2018), 27–28.

23. Lyckle de Vries, "Achttiende- en negentiende-eeuwse auteurs over Jan Steen," *Oud Holland* 97 (1973): 227–39; Mariët Westermann, *The Amusements of Jan Steen—Comic Painting in the Seventeenth Century* (Zwolle, 1997), 16–45; Mariët Westermann, "Steen's Great History Pageant," in *Jan Steen's Histories*, ed. Ariane van Suchtelen (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague, 2018), 55–72.

24. "Hoe los dat dien Jan Steen ook was in zijn gedrag, echter zo min los in de Beschouwelijke kennis, als in de Praktijk van de Schilderkonst, dewijl hy . . . zo weezendlijk redeneerde over alle de Eygenschappen van die konst, dat het een lust was zijn vertoogen by te woonen." Jacob Campo Weyerman, *De levensbeschyvingen der Nederlandsche konst-schilders en konst-schilderessen, met een uytbreyding over de schilder-konst der ouden* (The Hague, 1729), 2: 364.

25. "Dat hy somtijds zeer ongemeene en verheevene gedachten had, om zijne Historien uyt te drukken op een wonderlyke wijze . . . met eene inspanning van alle zielskrachten." Jacob Campo Weyerman, *De levensbeschyvingen der Nederlandsche konst-schilders en konst-schilderessen, met een uytbreyding over de schilder-konst der ouden* (The Hague, 1729), 2: 364.

26. Marten Jan Bok, "The Artist's Life," in *Jan Steen, Painter and Storyteller*, H. Perry Chapman, Wouter Th. Kloek, and Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., ed. Guido Jansen (Exh. cat. Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) (New Haven, 1996), 28.

27. Vondel's translation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* was also published in 1671, the same year Steen painted the picture in The Leiden Collection. However, the sacrifice of Iphigenia during the prelude to the Trojan War is only briefly described in Ovid's text (book 12), without any reference to Achilles. See the entry *Sacrifice of Iphigenia* by Wouter Th. Kloek, in this catalogue, n3.

28. The banquet in question does not occur in two contemporary plays about Cleopatra and Mark Antony; see Yvonne Bleyerveld, entry in *Jan Steen's Histories*, ed. Ariane van Suchtelen (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague, 2018), 183n10, no. 18.

29. For Jan Steen's adoption of motifs, see the essays and catalogue entries in Ariane van Suchtelen, ed., *Jan Steen's Histories* (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague, 2018).

30. Wouter Th. Kloek, *Sacrifice of Iphigenia*, in this catalogue, fig. 3.

31. Steen also used this motif from Lucas van Leyden's print for his *Moses and Pharaoh's Crown* in the Mauritshuis (fig. 13); see Ariane van Suchtelen, ed., *Jan Steen's Histories* (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague, 2018), no. 3, fig. 3a.

32. Ariane van Suchtelen, ed., *Jan Steen's Histories* (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague, 2018), no. 4.

33. See Lara Yeager-Crasselt, "Pieter Lastman's *David and Uriah*: Storytelling and the Passions," in this catalogue.

34. Wouter Th. Kloek, *Lazarus and the Rich Man or "In Luxury Beware,"* in this catalogue, fig. 2.

35. Karel van Mander, *Het Schilder-boeck, Den Grondt der Edel vry Schilder-const* (Haarlem 1604), folio 5r; compare with, among others, Ben Broos, *Intimacies and Intrigues—History Painting in the Mauritshuis* (The Hague, 1993), 16–18.

36. See Oskar Fischel, "Art and the Theatre—II," *Burlington Magazine* 66 (1935): 54–68; Johan B.F. van Gils, "Jan Steen en de rederijkers," *Oud Holland* 52 (1935): 130–33; Johan B.F. van Gils, "Jan Steen in den schouwburg," *Op de hoogte* 34 (1937): 92–93; Sturla J. Gudlaugsson, *Ikonographische Studien über die Holländische Malerei und das Theater des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Würzburg, 1938), 16ff; Albert Heppner, "The Popular Theatre of the Rederijkers in the Work of Jan Steen and his Contemporaries," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institute* 3 (1939–40): 35–44; Cornelis W. de Groot, *Jan Steen—beeld en woord* (Utrecht, 1952), 34–36; Wilhelm Martin, *Jan Steen* (Amsterdam, 1954), 18, 69–71; Baruch Kirschenbaum, *The Religious and Historical Paintings of Jan Steen* (New York, 1977), 77–85; Lyckle de Vries, review of Kirschenbaum 1977, *Burlington Magazine* 129 (1978): 99–100; Mariët Westermann, *The Amusements of Jan Steen—Comic Painting in the Seventeenth Century* (Zwolle, 1997), 35–36; Wouter Th. Kloek, entry *Sacrifice of Iphigenia,* in this catalogue; Nina Cahill, "Staging the Old Testament—Jan Steen and the Theatre," in *Pride and Persecution—Jan Steen's Old Testament Scenes*, ed. Robert Wenley et al. (Exh. cat. Birmingham, Barber Institute of Fine Arts) (Birmingham, 2017–18),

21–33; Ariane van Suchtelen, "A Storyteller of Genius: Jan Steen and the Art of History Painting," in *Jan Steen's Histories*, ed. Ariane van Suchtelen (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague, 2018), 26; Mariët Westermann, "Steen's Great History Pageant," in *Jan Steen's Histories*, ed. Ariane van Suchtelen (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague, 2018), 67–68.

37. For these two depictions by Steen of a scene from Gerbrand Bredero's play *Over-gesette Lucelle* (1616), see Lea van der Vinde, entry in *Jan Steen's Histories*, ed. Ariane van Suchtelen (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague, 2018), 166–69, no. 21.

38. As discussed above, the Leiden Collection's *Sacrifice of Iphigenia*, for example, does not reflect any specific scene from Coster's play, even though the atmosphere of the painting, in which emotions run high, is extremely dramatic and theatrical, just as in the play.

39. Compare Karel van Mander, *Het Schilder-boeck, Den Grondt der Edel vry Schilder-const* (Haarlem, 1604), folio 23r; Samuel van Hoogstraten, *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst: anders de zichtbaere werelt* (Dordrecht, 1678), 109; Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (Amsterdam, 1721), 3: 16–17. Samuel van Hoogstraten advised aspiring painters to practice depicting emotions in history paintings as an actor in front of the mirror; see Ernst van de Wetering, "The Multiple Functions of Rembrandt's Self Portraits," in *Rembrandt by Himself*, ed. Christopher White and Quentin Buvelot (Exh. cat. London, The National Gallery; The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague, 1999–2000), 21.

40. Arnold Houbraken, *De groote schouburgh der Nederlantsche konstschilders en schilderessen* (Amsterdam, 1721), 3: 16–17; Ariane van Suchtelen, ed., *Jan Steen's Histories* (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague, 2018), 178n1.

41. Steen may also have derived his costume models from other sources, aside from the stage, such as prints. Compare Marieke de Winkel's research into Rembrandt's use of costumes; see Marieke de Winkel, "Rembrandt's Clothes—Dress and Meaning in His Self-Portraits," in *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 4, *The Self-Portraits*, Ernst van de Wetering et al., with collaboration of Carin van Nes, Stichting Foundation Rembrandt Research Project (The Hague, 2005), 45–87.

42. See note 28.

43. Nina Cahill, "Staging the Old Testament—Jan Steen and the Theatre," in *Pride and Persecution—Jan Steen's Old Testament Scenes*, ed. Robert Wenley et al. (Exh. cat. Birmingham, Barber Institute of Fine Arts) (Birmingham, 2017–18), 28.

44. Mariët Westermann, *The Amusements of Jan Steen—Comic Painting in the Seventeenth* Century (Zwolle, 1997), 300–301. The use of such commentary figures was also recommended in theoretical publications about the art of painting; see Westermann, *The Amusements of Jan Steen*, 112–15; and Ana Ebert, *Adriaen van Ostade und die komische Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 2014), 37–80.

45. Nina Cahill, "Staging the Old Testament—Jan Steen and the Theatre," in *Pride and Persecution—Jan Steen's Old Testament Scenes*, ed. Robert Wenley et al. (Exh. cat. Birmingham, Barber Institute of Fine Arts) (Birmingham, 2017–18), 31. Compare W.M.H. Hummelen, *De sinnekens in het rederijkersdrama*

(Groningen, 1958).

46. See, for instance, Simon Koster, *Van schout to schouwburg. 500 jaar toneel in Haarlem* (Haarlem, 1970), 113–25.

47. See the entry *Sacrifice of Iphigenia* by Wouter Th. Kloek, in this catalogue, n14.

48. Compare H. Perry Chapman, Wouter Th. Kloek, and Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., *Jan Steen, Painter and Storyteller*, ed. Guido Jansen (Exh. cat. Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) (New Haven, 1996), no. 24; Ariane van Suchtelen, entry in *Genre Paintings in the Mauritshuis*, Ariane van Suchtelen and Quentin Buvelot (The Hague, 2016), no. 48. It is not known whether Steen was a member of a rhetoricians' chamber.

49. Compare H. Perry Chapman, Wouter Th. Kloek, and Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., *Jan Steen, Painter and Storyteller*, ed. Guido Jansen (Exh. cat. Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) (New Haven, 1996), no. 24; Ariane van Suchtelen, entry in *Genre Paintings in the Mauritshuis*, Ariane van Suchtelen and Quentin Buvelot (The Hague, 2016), no. 48. Ariane van Suchtelen, "A Storyteller of Genius: Jan Steen and the Art of History Painting," in *Jan Steen's Histories*, ed. Ariane van Suchtelen (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague, 2018), 29.

50. Samuel van Hoogstraten, *Inleyding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst: anders de zichtbaere werelt* (Dordrecht, 1678), 79.

51. In a sense, Steen's history paintings evoke the spectacular plays by the Amsterdam playwright Jan Vos (ca. 1610–1667), which were still immensely popular in the 1660s and 1670s when Steen was at the height of his activity as a history painter. His paintings may have appealed to the same taste for extravaganza and tragicomedy.

52. Mariët Westermann, *The Amusements of Jan Steen—Comic Painting in the Seventeenth Century* (Zwolle, 1997), 71–72; Ariane van Suchtelen, "A Storyteller of Genius: Jan Steen and the Art of History Painting," in *Jan Steen's Histories*, ed. Ariane van Suchtelen (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague, 2018), 31n73.

53. Sir Joshua Reynolds, *Discourses on Art*, ed. Robert R. Wark (New Haven, 1975), 236.

54. Ariane van Suchtelen, ed., *Jan Steen's Histories* (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague, 2018), nos. 4, 5, 7, 9 and 19.

55. Paintings have also been given to museums in Charlottesville, Virginia, and Jacksonville, Florida. Ariane van Suchtelen, "A Storyteller of Genius: Jan Steen and the Art of History Painting," in Ariane van Suchtelen, ed., *Jan Steen's Histories* (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague, 2018), 31nn79–80.

56. Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., "Ascagnes and Lucelle (The Music Lesson)," National Gallery of Art Online Editions: *Dutch Paintings 17th Century*, December 9, 2019, http://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.195366.html (accessed 21 March 2021).

57. H. Perry Chapman, Wouter Th. Kloek, and Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., *Jan Steen, Painter and Storyteller*, ed. Guido Jansen (Exh. cat. Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art; Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum)

(New Haven, 1996), nos. 11, 31, 32, 34, 36, 39, 43–45, 47.

58. Robert Wenley et al., eds., *Pride and Persecution—Jan Steen's Old Testament Scenes* (Exh. cat. Birmingham, Barber Institute of Fine Arts) (Birmingham, 2017–18).

59. Ariane van Suchtelen, ed., *Jan Steen's Histories* (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague, 2018), no. 3.

60. Ariane van Suchtelen, ed., *Jan Steen's Histories* (Exh. cat. The Hague, Mauritshuis) (The Hague, 2018).