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## Sex and Drugs before Rock 'n' Roll

Roberts, Benjamin B.

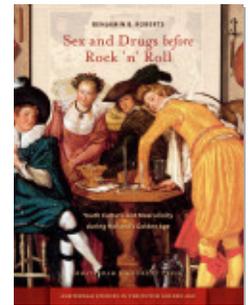
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Roberts, Benjamin B.

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CHAPTER 7

RECREATION BEFORE  
ROCK 'N' ROLL



## CHAPTER 7

### Recreation *before* Rock 'n' Roll

During the 1950s and 1960s, the notion of Rock 'n' Roll became synonymous with the recreational indulgences of young people, usually done in excess. It would be anachronistic to refer the leisure habits of young people in the 1620s and 1630s with the same terminology and verve. On the other hand, we cannot disregard the fact that young people in the early seventeenth century did indulge in extravagances that in some cases resulted in excessive behavior. In the re-worked seventeenth-century tourist guide *Amsterdam voor vijf duiten per dag* [Amsterdam on Five Pennies a Day] (2011), Maarten Hell and Emma Los argue that young visitors to Amsterdam could find entertainment and leisure in numerous playhouses, museums of private collections, and even zoos. Unfortunately, their work focuses mostly on the late seventeenth century.<sup>1</sup>

There is one revealing source that gives us a glimpse of the naughty pleasures of young people of the early seventeenth century. In the foreword of the 1662 edition of his popular emblem and songbook *Bellerophon, of Lust tot Wysheid* [Bellerophon, or Desire for Wisdom], the 78-year-old author, Dirck Pietersz. Pers (1581-1659), expressed his wish that 'the youths [of the 1660s] should stay away from randy and dirty books'.<sup>2</sup> When Pers first published *Bellerophon, of Lust tot Wysheid* in 1614, he was 33 years old and a successful publisher of books for young people in Amsterdam. His publications combined entertainment and good morals. On the title page, the book was dedicated to the 'whimsical youths who indulge in their desires'. Pers urged his readers to focus on more divine matters. However, like many authors of the early seventeenth century, he used this as a ruse to suggest that the book had edifying qualities in order to soothe parents who might have been alarmed by its somewhat provocative content.<sup>3</sup> In most countries in early modern Europe, song was the most feared vice of young men after wine and women. However, that was not the case for Dutch youths during the early seventeenth century. Singing in the Dutch Republic was a favorite pastime for the Dutch and a welcomed form of recreation for young and old alike. Singing and songbooks were an integral part of leisure culture. According to Alessandro Arcangeli, the Italian historian of recreation, many moralists were anxious

about the excess of leisure time and expressed concern about the moral and physical risks that idleness might prompt. Recreation was a recommended cure, a 'prescription against inactivity'.<sup>4</sup> According to the extensive research of Louis Grijp, the Dutch historian of music for the early modern period, singing played an important role in the culture of the Northern Netherlands, and inherently the Southern Netherlands, more than surrounding countries in Europe. The Dutch produced a large volume of songbooks unknown in countries like England and Germany where songs were primarily published on inexpensive broadsheets and *Flugblätter*. In this period, songbooks, books with songs, and broadsheets with ballads were popular consumer items. With the economic wealth that was generated in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, consumer patterns for many in Dutch society changed. Besides having spending money, youngsters of the urban elite had more leisure time at their disposal than the previous generation before them. One of the most characteristic traits of the generation of young people from the 1620s and 1630s was their interest in songbooks.<sup>5</sup>

Books that contained songs were by no means a new phenomenon, however. During the 1610s and 1620s the size, scale, and production of elaborate editions of songbooks changed as never before. New songbooks were published for the growing young audiences of Holland's cities. These books not only were a form of entertainment but also were important mediums in conveying ideas about gender identity and portraying regional, if not national, identities. Subliminally, the songbooks of the 1620s and 1630s presented a cohesive youth culture and identity for young people throughout Holland and the Republic, with the occasional regional difference. Young people were informed of what other youths in the rest of the Republic did for leisure activities. This chapter will address how the books published for young people in the 1620s and 1630s reflected the youth culture of that generation and expressed notions of masculinity for young men.

### Youth literature

Before embarking on songbooks, let us first look at other books that were published for young people in order to understand the themes they were preoccupied with. Already in the late sixteenth century, book production in the Dutch Republic had started to influence the leisure activities of the youth of Holland's urban elite. Because the Dutch Republic officially lacked a state church and had a liberal economic climate, the country had become a publishing mecca for Europe. Religious or politically sensitive works that were banned elsewhere found a publisher in the Republic. For the domestic market, publishers produced a wide range of reading material for a socially and economically diverse public. They made inexpensive prints that were affordable by the middle and lower classes. According to a ship's inventory in 1622, the common sailor had access to a wide selection of reading material, ranging from Bibles and devotional works such as *Spiegel der Jeught* [Mirror of Youth] to propaganda literature including *Spaensche Tirannijen* [Spanish Tyrannies]. For the youth market, publishers printed a large variety of secular reading material from poetry novels, emblem books, almanacs, and broadsheet ballads to songbooks. Po-

etry novels had already become popular with young people in the sixteenth century. These novels were often romance stories about a man and woman whose love was hindered by various complications and struck by tragedy. The male main character often possessed chivalric-like traits.<sup>6</sup>

One popular poetry novel in the 1620s that attracted young Dutch readers was *Wonderlicke Avontuer van twee goelieven* [The Marvelous Adventure of Two Lovers] (1624). Published in Leiden probably for the students, this 36-page story must have been exciting reading material for students to enjoy in their leisure time and to read together with young women. The story was adventurous, the backdrop was war, and the main theme was a romance that included a love affair between a man and woman whose parents had arranged for her to marry an older man.

Young people could easily identify with the story because it was situated in the Thirty Years' War with all its problems such as the conflict between Protestants and Catholics, the war against Spain, and general social unrest, famine, and death. *Wonderlicke Avontuer* had all the makings of a classic love story. The main characters, a young woman named Wintergroen [Wintergreen] and her beau Waterbrandt [Waterburns], fall in love. Their names Wintergroen and Waterbrandt already presage a tragic love story because in winter it is never green and water never burns. Indeed, the couple was not allowed to marry because Wintergroen's parents had already arranged her to marry an elderly rich man. This was by no means an uncommon plight that plagued young women whose parents sought financial security for their daughters. Since Antiquity artists and audiences were fascinated with the theme of unequal lovers. In the late Middle Ages and Renaissance, they became popular again in literature and art as a satire on love, and symbolized the contrasts of young and old, beauty and ugliness, rich and poor.<sup>7</sup> Because Waterbrandt considered his chances of marrying Wintergroen to be hopeless, he became a mercenary soldier and left for Germany, probably around 1618 when the Thirty Years' War broke out in the German territories. Afterwards, Wintergroen fell into a canal and was thought to have drowned. As everyone thought she was dead, Wintergroen decided to take on a new life and identity. She disguised herself as a man and joined the Frisian army. She set off with the troops to find Waterbrandt in Bohemia, where the army was fighting. In Bohemia, the two were reunited and married but shortly thereafter had to part again. They experienced numerous adventures. Wintergroen gave birth to their child, and Waterbrandt was wounded in battle and taken prisoner. Afterwards he escaped and joined his regiment again. Then he boarded a ship that was later shipwrecked. Finally, the two lovers met each other in Zeeland and returned to Friesland only to discover that soldiers had pillaged the home of Wintergroen's family. In search of fortune, Waterbrandt set off for the West Indies and later returned for Wintergroen. This time the couple departed together for the West Indies, and thus the story had a happy ending. It is no coincidence that the author incorporated the couple's future in the West Indies in the story. Shortly before *Wonderlicke Avontuer* was published, the Dutch West India Company had been founded, and the Dutch had claimed their stake in the New World. There was an optimistic view of the future for young people and the world.<sup>8</sup>

## War

In 1622, a happy ending to a love (and war) story appealed to readers in the Dutch Republic. One year earlier, the Twelve-Year Truce with Spain had ended, and the war had resumed. By the time *Wonderlicke Avontuer* was published, the Republic had already been at war with Spain for more than 50 years. For the older generations, the war against Spain and independence for the United Provinces had become a way of life, but for the younger generation, and the generation of young people during the 1620s, the war probably represented their own struggle in the transition to adulthood.

There was a widespread interest in the daily events of the war. Since the beginning of the Revolt in the late sixteenth century, the news from battlefronts was made known to the public by rebel songs known as *geuzenliederen*. They were an important communication medium because the events of the war and stories of the various battles were made into verse for known melodies and conveyed to civil populations. *Geuzenliederen* kept the general population informed about the war developments and often emphasized (or exaggerated) the atrocities of the Spanish army. In this era prior to daily newspapers, lyrics put to known melodies could easily be remembered and relayed to others by trekkers traveling from one town to the next. Many of these songs honored the brave deeds of rebels and made national heroes out of them.

The rebel songs were compiled and published in the *Geuzenliedboek* (rebel songbook). Throughout the war this songbook was extremely popular. It was reprinted many times and anonymously due to the political and anti-Spanish nature of the lyrics. In the early years of the war, any information referring to the bravery of rebels could be incriminating. For example, the 17-year-old street-vendor Cornelis Pietersz was arrested when he sang out the lyrics, 'who would like to hear a new song about something that happened in sixty-seven, listen and I shall tell you ...' The number sixty-seven referred to 1567, the year that the Revolt broke out, and the rebellious opposition to the Spanish authority in the Low Countries started.<sup>9</sup>

Since the start of the Revolt and up until the late seventeenth century, at least 32 rebel songbooks had been published or reprinted. These songs played an important role in creating a national awareness and establishing a unified identity in the newly founded Dutch Republic. One song that was published in 1631 in the pamphlet *Kleine Jan* (Little John) was about two noblemen, Egmond and Horne, who were accused of treason and beheaded in 1568 by the Spanish general and governor, Alva. This song was not published in a regular rebel songbook but was compiled together with two spiritual songs and a love song. The distinction between songbook and other book genres was not always obvious. In 1617 Pieter Bor published *Den Oorspronck, begin ende aenvanck der Nederlandtscher Oorlogen* [The Origin, Beginning and Start of the Dutch Wars], a combination of history and songbook written for the enjoyment of women and young people of the Republic. He felt this group was not especially fond of reading but did want to know everything about the war. It was a combination of rhymed text and songs. Bor – a historian who presumed that the magistrates of The Hague would never have time to read his book – thought it would be better to register the events of the war for the wives and children of the regents, and thus put the happenings of the war in lyrics. He believed that the memories of the

war needed to be revived, especially of the early days of the war, which at the time of publication were 50 years earlier.<sup>10</sup>

Adriaen Valerius's *Nederlantsche Gedenck-clanck* [Dutch Memorial Sound] (1626) was another songbook that aimed to educate Holland's youth about the war for independence. In contrast to Bor's more sober edition with stuffy psalm-like tunes, Valerius's songbook was more elaborate and included rebel songs that were put to music by using catchy international melodies. Valerius appealed to the growing trend among wealthier youths of the Republic who bought lavish emblems and songbooks. Despite the difference in appearance and price of these two songbooks, both authors had a similar didactic message. They hoped to raise awareness about the origin of the war among the country's young people. As was commonly done by humanist writers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, Bor and Valerius combined learning and pleasure when conveying their message. The melodies were entertaining, and the lyrics were educating. On the title page, Valerius expressed the intention that his book would teach Dutch youths about the Spanish carnage done to their forefathers so that it would remain etched in the memories of his readers, and he hoped that the inhumanities inflicted by the Spanish would never be forgotten.<sup>11</sup>



Illustration 27 'Flamboyant young men dressed in bright-colored outfits, drinking and smoking tobacco. In the background hangs a horizontal map of the Dutch Republic' in: Willem Buytewech, *Merry Company* (1620-1622)

## Adventure

At the same time, war also represented adventure to young men. In the early seventeenth century the public's curiosity for adventure was growing. The discovery of territories in the New World and the expertise of Holland's mapmakers such as Willem Jansz Blaeu who started selling maps and globes for the merchant marines around 1600 probably whetted the appetite of adventure among the general public, and young men in particular.<sup>12</sup> Writers and publishers played an important role in this development. Adventurous accounts such as *Waerachtighe Beschryvinghe van drie seylagien* [Authentic Descriptions of Three Voyages] (1597) romanticized the dangerous expedition to the East Indies by way of the North Pole. This tantalizing story was about the acclaimed explorer, Willem Barentsz., who departed from Amsterdam in May of 1596 in search of a new route to the Far East. A quicker and easier passage to the Far East was needed for various reasons. During the last decade of the sixteenth century, Spain conquered Portugal, and Dutch merchants seized the opportunity to take hold of the trade in the Far East dominated by the Portuguese. Instead of sailing along the coast of Africa and being confronted with hostile Spanish and Portuguese ships, Dutch explorers hoped to find a navigable route along the Arctic Circle during the summer months when the ice had melted. The journey turned into a disaster when the ships became hindered by ice. One ship was able to return but the ship that Barentsz. was on became lodged in the ice, and the crew was forced to spend the winter on Nova Zembla. In June of the following year, they were able to escape with a few rescue boats and returned to Amsterdam in November. By that time, Barentsz. had already perished, but one survivor, Gerrit de Veer, recorded the great hardships that the crew had endured. They were published, and within a few months De Veer's accounts became a bestseller in the Republic, and his publisher translated the story into French and Latin. Stories about adventurous journeys to exotic destinations captured the imagination of people in general, but particularly young men.<sup>13</sup> Throughout Europe, adventure-seeking adolescents and young men – and sometimes women – found their way to the recruiting offices of the Dutch East and West India Company in Amsterdam where they sought employment.<sup>14</sup> There are at least 83 known cases of women who worked for the Dutch East or West India Company, and dressed and acted like men in order to pursue a career as a soldier or sailor. In many cases their true sexual identity was only revealed after their death.<sup>15</sup>

## Love emblem books

Along with war and adventure, love played an important role in the lives of young people. During the first two decades of the seventeenth century, *emblemata amatoria* or love emblem books became popular among wealthy youths. *Emblemata amatoria* elaborated on a tradition of emblem books that combined entertainment with moral lessons and emphasized amorous themes. Readers were amused by an entertaining depiction while at the same time they would be given a moral message with a caption underneath. In this genre, Cupid – the symbol of love – played center stage. Crispijn de Passe the Elder published various *emblemata amatoria* texts and also provided the engravings for many of the works. Affluent youths of the Republic were already

familiar with the works of De Passe, who printed many books for young people. His *Academia sive speculum vitae scholasticae* [The University, or Mirror of Student Life] (1612), for example, was an entertaining guidebook for prospective students. The text and illustrations informed young men on how to be diligent students, encouraged them to learn the arts of fencing and dancing, and warned them about frequenting pubs and gambling.<sup>16</sup>

During the 1610s a new development started to become evident in love emblem books. In this period, publishers made alterations in their size, quality, and content. They started producing more elaborate editions that were larger in size (often printed in a quarto oblong shape). The content of love emblem books began to include more wedding poems and songs that were written by more acclaimed, contemporary songwriters. The style of the lyrics and poems changed as authors began to write in a modern Renaissance style in the form of sonnets and elegies.

The melodies were also modified. Progressively more modern songs were included that were composed by poets who had become influenced by French *airs de cour*. New melodies were borrowed from French music books and replaced the older traditional tunes that had been used previously. Furthermore, illustrations became more prominent and were important attention-grabbers for consumers. New production techniques made it possible for publishers to illustrate books with emblems more cheaply.<sup>17</sup> Between 1600 and 1620 well-known love emblem books such as *Den nieuwen Lust-hof* [The New Paradise] (1602), Boudewijn Wellen's *'t Vermaeck der Jeucht* [Entertainment for the Young] (1612 and 1616), and *Cupido's Lusthof* [Cupid's Paradise] (1613) were published in this style, and many more followed. For a greater part, these books were composed, compiled, and published by young people. Dirck Pietersz. Pers, for example, was a young and innovative publisher who played an essential role in this development by knowing what the public wanted and selecting poets and engravers to produce it for him. Pers – who was an immigrant bookseller, publisher, and author in Amsterdam – became a key initiator in the expansion of the market for love emblem books. He stumbled upon Amsterdam's affluent youth group as a hole in the market, and tried to publish what young people liked. He marketed these books by giving them catchy titles such as *Den Bloem-hof van de Nederlantsche Jeught* [The Flower Garden of Dutch Youths] (1608; 1610) and *Emblemata amatoria* (1612). They contained collections of love songs, marriage poems, and sonnets, and were elaborately illustrated.<sup>18</sup> Pers sought out well-known authors such as Vondel to write the captions to accompany the engravings. In 1614 Pers wrote and published his own emblem book, *Bellerophon, of Lust tot Wysheid* [Bellerophon, or Desire for Wisdom], a compilation of amusing sonnets and songs accompanied by emblems. The book was a fitting combination of amusement and education for Dutch youths, and it became a trendy emblem book that was reprinted 13 times between 1614 and 1695. On the title page, the book was dedicated to the 'whimsical youths who indulge in their desires'.<sup>19</sup>

## Song culture in the Republic

During the 1600s the genre of songbooks was marketed side by side with love emblem books. In the next decade the quantity of songbooks grew rapidly when numerous luxurious songbooks were compiled, especially for young people of the cities of Holland. Although there is no exact data on how many songbooks were published and reprinted, there are indications about the market of potential buyers. In the period 1600-1625, for example, there was an average of about 800 young people in Amsterdam who could afford expensive songbooks each year. This does not imply that this group was only interested in secular songbooks. There were also those who were more likely to purchase spiritual works and religious songbooks and, of course, the group of young people who bought both.<sup>20</sup>

In order to understand the impact songbooks had in the early seventeenth century, we should realize the importance of melody in early modern Dutch culture. For the competitive publishing business in the Republic, this era was a transitional period from expensive books that were only attainable for the wealthy to cheap books and pamphlets that were affordable for the poor. In time, the reader's relation with the book changed from a collective and social setting (reading or singing together) to a more individual activity (reading alone). Singing alone was not uncommon in this period, which was a tradition that is still upheld today by some professions such as construction workers.<sup>21</sup> For the early modern period, we have to assume that singing was primarily a group activity, done in the company of others, and a favorite form of entertainment after dinner and at garden parties.<sup>22</sup>

Singing in the Dutch Republic had become more integrated in daily life after the onset of the Reformation when Protestant groups started to produce psalms and other religious songs for congregations to sing.<sup>23</sup> In a period when paper and printed matter were considered luxury goods, rhyming words was the most common mnemonic device that helped jolt the memory to retrieve whole passages. Reciting verse and lyric were so prominent in Dutch society that it became a national pastime. In the public sphere, poetry could be found everywhere from the inscriptions on the top of buildings to the inside covers of schoolbooks. In the private domain, poetry was written for almost every passage of life. Family and friends composed poems to commemorate life milestones such as the wedding celebration for Manuel Colyn and Catharina Cloppenburg in 1622 when the famous poet Jan Jansz. Starter was hired to compose one. Poems were also written for funerals. When loved ones died, mourners did not confide their grief in diaries, a practice that became more common in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, but poured their hearts out in poetry.<sup>24</sup>

Rhyming, playing with words, and composing poetry were not only a pastime of the educated. All strata of Dutch society expressed themselves through poetry from the simple street-peddler trying to sell his wares and attract the attention of customers with catchy slogans to acclaimed poets such as Vondel and Bredero who earned a living composing eloquent poetry for Holland's elite. No wedding celebration or appointment to a high rank was complete without a poem that was specially composed for that event. The great quantity of poems found in family archives indicates that children in the Republic learned to compose poetry from an early age, or at least were exposed to it.

Rhyming was a vital tool in the early modern educational method. In *Regel der Duytsche Schoolmeester* [Rules of the Dutch Schoolmaster] (1591), Dirck Adriaensz Valcooch advised schoolmasters to examine their pupils at a lectern and have them speak out loud and learn in rhyme. Educationalists believed that especially younger pupils would learn subjects easier if the words sounded sweeter and more pleasant to the ear.<sup>25</sup> This was a didactic instrument that boys used at the Latin School and a device they continued to use when they joined literary societies like the chambers of rhetoric, which had local chapters in most towns and cities throughout the Republic. During the weekly meetings, their poetic skills were fine-tuned in a special ritual that required each member to address the chairman – called the prince – of the local chamber. The last word of each remark had to rhyme with the word ‘prince’.<sup>26</sup>

Besides writing poetry, youths enjoyed putting them to music with an existing melody. According to the Dutch historian of early modern music Natascha Veldhorst, singing was second nature to Dutchmen in the seventeenth century. The Dutch were avid singers and sang at almost every occasion, especially weddings. Many of the songs that were compiled in songbooks in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries had existed for a long time and had survived by being sung repeatedly. By putting them in songbooks, an oral tradition of song was canonized.<sup>27</sup>

### Religious songbooks

During the 1610s and 1620s, the most prevalent types of songbooks were religious and secular. According to the Dutch linguist D.F. Scheurleer, who categorized and made an extensive inventory of songbooks published in the Netherlands between the late Middle Ages and 1800, thousands of songbooks were published and reprinted during this period. There was not always a clear distinction between the religious and secular forms since the two genres tended to overlap.<sup>28</sup> Some songbooks were quite clearly of one type, such as Cornelis Pietersz. Biens’s *Handt-boeckken der Christelijcke Gedichten* [Handbook of Christian Poems] (1627). This devotional songbook provided Dutch Reformed youths with a wide variety of religious songs that ranged from gratitude to God and his great wonders to songs about how pious Joseph was and about consolation and suffering. In comparison to I. Teerincx, the author of *Den Amsterdamschen Geestelijcke Lust-hof* [The Comical Paradise of Amsterdam] (1637), Biens’s religious songbook was moderate. Teerincx seemed more rigid in propagating his beliefs.<sup>29</sup> Besides providing young readers with songs dedicated to every part of the day and circumstance of life (i.e. the morning prayer song, prayer song before eating, prayer song after eating, gratitude song for receiving good health, a song to be sung during periods of pestilence), Teernicx aimed to awaken piety among young people by providing them with songs that addressed the desires and weaknesses of the flesh and forewarned about worldly evils and raised questions about the prosperity of heathens. There were numerous other songbooks that aimed to enlighten the hearts and souls of young people and to keep them devoted or convert them into pious Christians.<sup>30</sup>

## Secular songbooks

Between the spiritual and secular songbooks existed a vast gray zone of songbooks that contained a moral message but were neither entirely devotional nor purely entertainment. These books were often presented as amusement books but also had a didactic and religious or moral fiber. Many authors and composers of devotional and secular songbooks knew their market well and aimed to attract youthful readers by sugarcoating their moralistic agenda. No one knew this method better than Jacob Cats, the author of numerous moralistic advice books. He believed that young people would not be interested in a book if it had a devotional title. They would not even bother to look at it. But if the cover contained an attractive illustration with Cupid and the title made some allusions to love, then youths would be more interested. Cats acted upon this observation, which partly explains his popularity in the seventeenth century. He wrapped his moral lessons up in amusing and entertaining poems and packaged them with appealing illustrations. With this sugar-coated pill approach, Cats was thus able to convey practical advice with moral content to young people.<sup>31</sup> Various compilers and composers in the early seventeenth century presented their songbooks in a similar fashion. They were considered to be secular, but their content was not entirely void of religious matter. The most prominent secular songbooks were known as local or regional songbooks because their titles alluded to the name of a city or region. The oldest known local songbook was *Antwerp's Lietboek* [Antwerp's Songbook] from 1544, and among the first of this genre in the Republic were *Aemstelredams Amoreus Lietboek* [Amsterdam's Amorous Songbook] (1589), *Nieu Amstelredams Lied-boeck* [New Amsterdam Songbook] (1591), and *Nieu Groot Amstelredams Liedtboeck* [New Great Amsterdam Songbook] (1605). The lyrics were not specifically about Amsterdam nor were their contents only for young people.

## Women and songbooks

During the 1620s and 1630s there was a new development in songbook production when books were produced just for young people. Title pages addressed young people directly, and primarily young women. In this regard title pages are quite informative about the marital status of young women; for example, the *Amsterdamsche Pegasus* [The Pegasus of Amsterdam] (1627) addressed 'the damsels of Amsterdam' and the title page of *Amstelsche Linde* [Amstel's Linde] (1627) was dedicated to 'the nymphs of Amsterdam'.<sup>32</sup> An important clue is revealed about gender in the early seventeenth century. In general, women were recipients of songbooks because they liked to sing, and singing was a way of winning a man's heart. Young men, on the other hand, were givers of songbooks, and singing was more of a feminine character trait than a masculine one. This gender distinction was also commonly portrayed in paintings and emblems.<sup>33</sup> The differentiation between female and male in songbooks becomes more evident in the foreword of the popular song and poetry book, *Minne-kunst, Minne-baet* [The Art of Love, the Benefit of Love] (1626), written by Johan van Heemskerck (1597-1656). The author stated that a book was a lovely gift for a young man to bestow on his beloved, and remarked that amorous songs sung by a woman were a good means of conquering a young man's heart. In other words, in the courting ritual of the

early seventeenth century, a beautiful voice was a godsend and an asset for a young woman.<sup>34</sup> In the early correspondence of Constantijn Huygens, he referred to his love-interest, Dorothee van Dorp, as *Songetgen*, 'little song'. Although it is not certain why he referred to her as *Songetgen*, most likely it meant she could sing well.<sup>35</sup>

### Song culture produced *by* and *for* the young

By examining the producers of songbooks, it becomes evident that youth culture in the early decades of the seventeenth century was produced *by* and *for* young people. Or at least those who were young at heart and could easily identify with young audiences. Let us first examine the importance of this notion for a moment. Many of the writers and compilers of well-known songbooks had a celebrity-like status and probably fulfilled a role model-like position for young men to a certain extent, similar to smoking soldiers. Young men who had attended the Latin school and university and were members of a chamber of rhetoric had a fondness of language and were likely to appreciate and admire the poetic talents of songwriters.<sup>36</sup> Gerbrand Adriaensz Bredero (1585-1618) was an author with an idol-like status. He was one of the most popular authors of songbooks in the 1610s and early 1620s, and by the time he published his own songbook, proudly entitled *Bredero, Amsterdammer* (1617), he had already written numerous songs for other emblem books and songbooks. During this period Bredero was one of Amsterdam's most prized young poets and writers, and he could relate to young people, which was why his audience could easily identify with him. Many attest that Bredero's themes about love were exemplary of the Renaissance love poetry style based on Petrarch. However, his inspiration could also have been autobiographical. The 32-year-old poet-author was unmarried and had a reputation for falling in love with beautiful women who eventually broke his heart. Bredero's songs and poems referred to at least eight different women. The most famous heartbreak was caused by Maria Tesselschade, the daughter of the poet and writer Roemer Visscher who had named her after a shipwreck of one of his grain ships that had been lost at sea near the island of Tessel: hence the name *Tessel* and *schade* (loss). Tesselschade was acclaimed for her charm, beauty, and intellect. She was also pursued by other writers such as Huygens and Barlaeus. However, she never wanted any of them, and eventually married a navy serviceman.<sup>37</sup>

Magdalena Stockmans was the last woman to break Bredero's heart. In 1617 the poet tried his luck with Magdalena, who was known to be 'a beautiful, browned-eyed blond'. The 19-year-old girl fancied his attention but turned him down to marry Isaac van der Voort, a 41-year-old wealthy silk merchant from Antwerp. In June 1618 the newlyweds set off for Naples where they would take up residence. Bredero was still not over Magdalena and felt perhaps betrayed that Magdalena had not followed her heart and chose the financial security and social standing of the older merchant. He sent the following poem to her expressing his grief:

*Oogen vol majesteyt  
Vol grootse heerlyckheden*

*Hoe comt dat ghy nu scheyt  
 Van U eerwaerdicheyt  
 En soete aerdigheyt  
 Laes wat lichtvaerdigheyt  
 Anneemdy sonder reden*

(Eyes full of majesty,  
 Full of great delightfulness,  
 How can it be that you depart  
 From your venerability  
 And sweet charm  
 Alas, what thoughtless assertion  
 Do you take for granted, without reason)

By the time the poem reached Magdalena in Naples in late September of 1618, it was too late. Bredero had died a month earlier. The exact cause of his death is unknown. Nineteenth- and twentieth-century literary historians have speculated – and often romanticized – that the 33-year-old poet died from a neglected case of pneumonia after falling through the ice, consumption, syphilis or even a broken heart.<sup>38</sup>

Within hours after the poet's death, Bredero was honored with the laurel reef, the highest honor that could be bestowed on a poet. More than 20 fellow poets commemorated him in a funeral anthology that accompanied one of his plays. The anthology included a portrait of Bredero framed in a laurel reef. His tragic love life and early death must have struck a note especially among Amsterdam's young people, who had known the poet from the city's streets, taverns, and theater. His plays and farces were already popular during his life and became even more celebrated in the years that followed his death. This was a reason for Cornelis Lodewijcksz. van der Plasse to request the sole privilege of publishing the rest of Bredero's unpublished work from the States-General. Many of the songs and poems that he had been working on at the time of his death were published in *Geestigh Liedt-Boeckken* [Comical and Spirited Songbooks] three years posthumously. The compilation became a bestseller and had to be reprinted three more times that year to satisfy demand. Based on the success of that songbook, Van der Plasse published an elaborate edition entitled *Groot Liedt-Boeck* [Great Songbook] in the following year. This edition featured 22 illustrations by six well-known artists including Hessel Gerritsz., Michel le Blon, Willem Buytewech, Pieter Serwouters, David Vinckboons, and Jan van der Velde, and cost one guilder and 70 cents (the average artisan earned around one guilder a day). With this exclusive publication Van der Plasse hoped *Groot Liedt-Boeck* would appeal to Amsterdam's wealthy young people who could afford the fancier version.

It would be incorrect to suggest that Van der Plasse had profited from Bredero's notoriety and tragic love life.<sup>39</sup> However, Bredero's fame and idol-like status grew with his death and the publication of his last songbook. Van der Plasse used good marketing techniques when

selling *Geestigh Liedt-Boecxken* and *Groot Liedt-Boeck*. In the latter he used the same engraving of Bredero by Hessel Gerritsz that ornamented his funeral anthology and depicted Bredero as a handsome, young poet, sporting a mustache, and goatee beard, which were fashionable facial hair for that generation of young men in the 1620s.<sup>40</sup> His head was crowned with a laurel reef, signifying his status as an acclaimed poet. Above his head was engraved the title of Bredero's last poem '*t kan verkeeren*' [Things Can Happen], which he dedicated to Magdalena Stockmans.

The lyrics and poetry dealt with rejection, unequal love (mainly older men with younger women), and the leisure activities of young people.<sup>41</sup> Besides writing about heartbreaks, Bredero had an affable side and wrote lyrics about lighter matters. He believed, as many did in the seventeenth century, that singing and making music in general were a good remedy against melancholy.<sup>42</sup> In *Zeeuwsche Nachtegael* [The Nightingale of Zeeland] (1623), the writer and acclaimed engraver, Adriaen van de Venne, remarked that 'I had a good lute for my entertainment, to soothe my melancholic temperament'.<sup>43</sup> Bredero, who was a proud citizen of Amsterdam, enjoyed poking fun at Haarlem, the city's rival. He was a member of the civic guard and challenged Haarlem's guard to a drinking competition in his lyrics. In the course of the song, Amsterdam's guard naturally wins. Bredero also showed levity in his farcical songs depicting peasants in unsavory predicaments.



Illustration 28 "The beloved poet and songbook writer, Bredero, posthumously honored with a laural reef and dressed as in the fashion of the 1620s' in: Hessel Gerritsz, Title page of *Lijkgedichten* of Garbrant Adriaansz. Bredero in: G.A. Bredero, *Geestigh liedt-boecxken* (1621)

In the famous song 'Arent Pieter Gysen', the lyrics portray a peasant festivity that erupts into murder and manslaughter. With these stories, the author and others like him employed the same theme to portray Amsterdam as a haven of civility, and a contrast to surrounding towns and areas inhabited by peasants engaged in tumult.<sup>44</sup>

Jan Jansz. Starter was one of Bredero's greatest admirers. Starter was a fellow poet, playwright, and member of the d'Eglantier (the rival chamber of rhetoric to Bredero's). Starter gained fame after his songbook, the *Friesche Lust-Hof* [Frisian Paradise] (1621), was published. The work featured a special ode to Bredero and became the most popular songbook of the 1620s, and eventually the entire seventeenth century. This compilation included emblems, verses, wedding poems, and drinking songs. Its general gist was about finding a suitable marriage partner, and all the predicaments that young people endured in their search for the right spouse, including unrequited love and courting activities. Pictured on the title page, Starter – similar to Bredero – was dressed with trendy long hair, mustache, and goatee and donned a laurel reef on his head symbolizing his status as a poet.<sup>45</sup> Opposite the title page, Cupid is illustrated, positioned at the rudder of a boat drawn by two large swans.<sup>46</sup> In the middle of the vessel we see a large portrait of the book's 27-year-old author.

Starter's title page makes it clear for whom the book was intended. The illustration shows young people singing, dancing, and playing music on Leeuwarden's main square – the capital of Friesland. Besides the title and engraving alluding to Friesland, Starter also dedicated the first verse to the young women of that province, and included a few verses in the Frisian language. Despite *Friesche Lust-hofs* regional reference, it was popular throughout the Republic. Between 1621 and 1634 the compilation was a bestseller and was reprinted 31 times. If we assume that 500 copies were produced for each reprint, a conservative estimation would be as many as 15,500 copies.<sup>47</sup> Luxurious editions cost between one and two guilders, while inexpensive versions were sold for only three stuivers (fifteen cents).<sup>48</sup>

At first glance, *Friesche Lust-Hof* appealed to wealthy young people for various reasons. The first editions were luxurious and accompanied by elaborate illustrations. These copies contained popular love songs, and perhaps the handsome face of its author captured the attention of young women, who would want it as a gift. But on a second glance, we can speculate that the success of *Friesche Lust-Hof* was due to good marketing. Starter had the compilation published in Amsterdam instead of Leeuwarden, where he lived at the time. He had literary contacts in Amsterdam, which was the publishing heart and distributor for the Republic. As the talented son of poor English immigrants who had settled in Amsterdam in the late 1590s, Starter grew up in the city during the heyday of Dutch poetry and cultural growth, especially between 1600 and 1620s, when Amsterdam was the Republic's cultural metropolis. In this period, the city was home to Vondel, Hooft, Bredero, and Visscher, who were some of the most famed poets, playwrights, authors, and songwriters of that day, with whom Starter was probably associated with, as well as influential publishers such as the Cloppenburgs and Colyns for whom he composed a marriage poem in 1622.

When *Friesche Lust-Hof* was first published, Starter was living in Leeuwarden where he

worked as a publisher. Due to the popularity of *Friesche Lust-Hof* and his satire, *Jan Soetekauw* – a play so successful that it was reprinted 19 times – Starter had become a celebrity especially among Amsterdam's affluent young people.<sup>49</sup>

His popularity had parallels with Bredero's. For seventeenth-century standards, Starter lived an adventurous and somewhat bohemian lifestyle. His personal life was chaotic. He had his fair share of failed business ventures, was involved in numerous lawsuits, and even had to declare bankruptcy. His plays, which often glorified romance and excessive drinking, were banned several times by ministers who protested about their corrupting content. In 1625 at the height of his success, Starter died on the battlefield at the age of 32. We can speculate that he either must have been consumed with the political and religious conflict of the Thirty Years' War and joined the forces of the Protestant Count von Mansvelt to become his army reporter, or sought out adventure and was in awe of Von Mansvelt as a masculine role model, or perhaps a combination of both.<sup>50</sup> In any case, Von Mansvelt was an esteemed hero in the Republic in the 1620s. David Beck, a schoolmaster in The Hague, noted in his diary in October 1624 that he and his children watched the count eat his dinner in an inn for an hour.<sup>51</sup> For Starter to join Von Mansvelt's forces should not come as a surprise, therefore. In the supplement to *Friesche Lust-Hof* entitled *Boertigheden* [Farces], Starter dedicated a drinking song to the German count, which honored him for fighting the Spaniards and Frederick of the Holy Roman Empire, and bringing 'Protestant' freedom to Germany.<sup>52</sup> Similar to the contemporary love story *Wonderlicke Avontuer* (1624), Starter was passionate about the Protestant cause and also sought adventure. When he died young just like his esteemed Bredero, this factor must have contributed to his fame among young people.

### Arcadian songbooks

During the 1620s and 1630s a new sub-genre of songbooks became popular. The Arcadian songbook was known for its idyllic lyrics and illustrations of pastoral settings. This genre was part of a growing theme in literature and art as well. A school of painters oriented especially around Amsterdam, Utrecht, and Haarlem produced numerous works that featured Arcadian surroundings and were considered modern and popular among the art-buying public. Although foreign painters also produced pastoral paintings, they never surpassed the quantity of the paintings produced in the Republic during the seventeenth century. Holland's elite was especially fond of paintings that depicted pastoral settings. Around 1650 an estimated 30 to 40 percent of all the paintings produced were landscapes.<sup>53</sup>

In the early seventeenth-century Dutch Republic, the idolized version of Arcadia was a shrill contrast to the untamed nature of the Middle Ages, when remote areas such as forests symbolized shelter and escape and had been known to be a haven for social outcasts and criminals. By the early modern period, residents of urbanized areas of Europe, especially the densely populated and highly industrialized Republic, yearned for Arcadian surroundings – or at least a *tamed* version of it. These settings radiated a magical ambiance that was romanticized in literature.<sup>54</sup> However, for the dwellers of the province of Holland, there was little nature left untouched. De-

spite its medieval name which derived from *holt-land*, meaning 'wooded country', seventeenth-century Holland was not a forested area and did not have many natural landscapes, let alone Arcadian settings inspired by landscapes of Ancient Greece. With the exception of the sandy area around Haarlem, the province was primarily urbanized and intensively farmed. The little nature in the Dutch countryside was pruned, prodded, and meticulously cultivated by farmers and engineers who had drafted plans for reclaiming land from inland lakes and inclosed pockets of water from the North Sea. The few wooded areas and pastoral surroundings in Holland were crowded locations, especially on Sunday afternoons when urbanites sought leisure and relaxation outside the city.<sup>55</sup> The pastoral setting adjacent to Amsterdam offered physical and mental relief to its residents in the early seventeenth century when the city was undergoing a building boom and its geographic size more than doubled as the city's three major canals (Herengracht, Keizersgracht, and Prinsengracht) were built. The constant noise from construction, traffic, and the stench of polluted canal water during the warm summer months must have been unbearable, let alone the constant threat of social tumult when residents were forced to sell their property to municipal authorities for less than market prices.<sup>56</sup> Inhabitants of Haarlem sought refuge in the nearby dunes and Haarlemmerhout woods. Local writers such as Karel van Mander praised the natural beauty of the white dunes near his hometown, known as the Witte Brink [The White Crest]. He compared them to the mythological Greek mountain of poetry, the Helicon, where the Muses resided. In the seventeenth century the Witte Brink were the highest dunes (thirty meters high) and formed a sharp contrast to the monotonous flat landscape of the rest of Holland. For Dutch poets the Witte Brink became an inspirational source and initiated a new trend in poetry. It was based on the classics but was written in Dutch and used local subjects and landmarks found in the Dutch topography.<sup>57</sup> Even Haarlem's Calvinistic minister, Samuel Ampzing, lauded the recreational areas (woods, lakes, and dunes) in his *Beschryving ende lof der stad Haarlem* [Description and Praise of the City of Haarlem] (1628) as being a part of the great 'earthly paradise' of that city. In this work, which was fashioned in the classic tradition of city descriptions popular in the early seventeenth century, Ampzing colorfully accentuated how Haarlem's residents traveled to nearby beach towns where they frolicked in the sand and enjoyed eating fresh fish.<sup>58</sup>

The illustrations in songbooks seldom portrayed groups of young people situated in an urban setting or interior, which would have been the natural habitat for young people more than three-quarters of the year. It is imaginable that these pastoral themes pictured in songbooks had a similar effect to modern glossy-covered travel brochures. By depicting good-spirited, fashionably dressed young people enjoying themselves in idyllic locations on a warm, summer days, buyers – young and old alike – would have been apt to purchase such a book. As songbooks usually contained a few wedding songs and May songs that praised springtime, it is likely they were sung on festive occasions such as wedding parties, picnics, and social gatherings that took place outdoors during the spring and summer. In the Zaan region of Holland, young women carried songbooks in a special *mopsjestrommel* (moppet box). These wooden boxes had an ornately decorated handle and lid, and were the pioneer of the women's purse.<sup>59</sup>

It is also possible that young people sang from songbooks more during the long months

of winter instead of during the spring and summer months. The early seventeenth century was known as the 'Little Ice Age'. The winters of 1620-1621 and 1621-1622 were severely cold with long periods of below-freezing temperatures, sometimes as lasting as long as eight weeks. Canals and waterways were frozen for months, and during the long winter evenings the sentiments about summer suggested by songbooks must have been a welcome joy and relief.<sup>60</sup>

### Boat trips

For the Republic's youth, the countryside in the early seventeenth century must have represented freedom from the watchful eye of authorities such as city guards, schoolmasters, and parents. While municipal ordinances regulated and restricted the gathering and congregating of young people on the streets and squares of Dutch cities, the countryside was open. Beyond the city limits lay the domain where young people could be alone with their peers and members of the opposite sex. In songbooks about Amsterdam, for example, the lyrics idealized the tranquility and archaic beauty of the outer surroundings of the city. Lyrics often described young people strolling through the countryside and taking boat trips on the Amstel, Amsterdam's main river. In a country rich with canals, rivers, and lakes, taking boat excursions on a nearby waterway was a common leisure activity for youths living in the cities of Holland. On the title page of the songbook *Schoonhoofs Lust-Prieelken* [Schoonhoven's Summer Joy] (1624), which was published for the 'happy maidens and youngsters of Schoonhoven', the engraver illustrated a sailboat filled with young people fishing, singing, and being merry. The '*Mei-lied?*' (May Song) was accompanied by an illustration of Cupid, who was shown as the captain of a boat filled with young people. In this illustration the artist stressed that love and matters of the heart dominate the month of May and the life phase of youth. The lyrics also emphasized love and youth:

*De Speeljacht van Venus d'Godinne*  
*'k Sagh daer docht my met d'Jeught verselt*  
*Daer Cupido d'regent der Minne*  
*Als Meester was aen 't roer ghestelt.*

(In the pleasure yacht of the Goddess Venus  
 I saw myself in the same boat with the youth  
 Where Cupid, the regent of love  
 Is put as a skipper at the rudder.)<sup>61</sup>

For the youths of Dordrecht, a city located on the Merwede River, Abraham Aertsz. Plater wrote *Dordrechts Lijstertje* [Dordrecht's Lark] in 1624. The songs were mainly farces, and the young people of the city could easily identify with the lyrics because they emphasized the city's customs, culinary specialties of eating duck and salmon and drinking Rhine wine, which reminded readers of Dordrecht's long history as the staple market for Rhine wines in northern Europe. On the

title page, young couples were portrayed strolling in the countryside with the city's church towers looming in the background.<sup>62</sup>

### Country rides

In the poem entitled 'Assorted poetry of idyllic' which was included in the songbook *Minne-kunst, Minne-baet*, Johan van Heemskerk romanticized the fresh air outside the city and taking rides in the countryside. Young men traveled in a cart, known as the *speelwagen*, the recreation wagon. This vehicle was often decorated with branches and leaves and usually had moss growing on the sides and was commonly depicted in many love emblem books. To take a long ride in the country was a popular recreational activity for young people.<sup>63</sup>

For some young men, the ride was the most pleasant part of the outing. The poet P.C. Hooft recollected that in his youth he enjoyed sitting in the backseat of the recreation wagon because that was the best place to cuddle and kiss without being seen by others.<sup>64</sup> This suggests that physical contact between young men and women – without the presence of parents or chaperones – was an accepted part of Dutch courting practices in the early seventeenth century. As long as the kissing and cuddling did not lead to anything else, parents were lenient with their daughters, who were left in the company of young men without adult supervision.

However, this does not imply that sexual desires did not arise. In *Eerlycke Tytkorting* [Honest Recreation] (1634), Jan Harmensz. Krul portrayed the burning desire that a young man felt during the trip. The poem describes the agony of a young man sitting next to a girl in the recreation wagon who has no desire for him. The young man longs to kiss her, yet she continues to ignore him, and he ponders whether his fate will be the same as Acis, the lover of the Greek nymph Galatea, who turned him into a river after hearing his pitiful cries.<sup>65</sup>

The lyrics of songs in the songbook *Haerlemsche Duyn-Vreucht* [The Pleasure of Haarlem's Dunes] (1636) imply that there was sexual tension between young men and women in the wagon during the journey. The author, Wesbusch, ranted about Haarlem's youth going to the beach in Zandvoort and how excited young men became while they sat next to their girlfriends and kissed them. After they reached Zandvoort, the young people swam and cooled down their aroused state from the journey.<sup>66</sup>

Numerous songbooks referred to and included illustrations of the *speelwagen*, but the most defining evidence that this wagon was associated with being young – and part of the youth culture in the early modern period – came from the statesmen and poet, Jacob Cats. In his *Spiegel van den Ouden ende Nieuwen Tijd* [Mirror of Old and New Times] (1632), Cats noted how an elderly farmhand suddenly became nostalgic about his own youth when he heard the galloping of horses, cracking of whips, and roar of laughter when a recreation wagon with young people passed. At that moment the old man reminiscences about his own youth and yearns to steer the horses and ride fast through the fields of heather, and to scream along with the young people as they ride over every bridge.<sup>67</sup>



Illustration 29 'Amorous young couples singing in the recreation wagon while traveling through the dunes' in:  
Johan van Heemskerck's *Batavische Arcadia* (1647/1637)

### Merrymaking at the beach

In *Batavische Arcadia* [Batavian Arcadia] (1637), Van Heemskerck also idolized the enjoyment young people had while journeying in a *speelwagen* through the idyllic Dutch countryside. The story, which was drafted in 1626 or 1627, probably recounted Van Heemskerck's own experiences as a young man in his late twenties who traveled with a group of wealthy young people from The Hague and Leiden on a summer day. During the trip, they stopped at an inn, sang songs, and found their way to the beach, where they continued their merrymaking. According to Van Heemskerck, it was not uncommon for young women who were talking too much to be carried off and thrown into the water.

This horseplay among Dutch youths was known as '*in zee dragen*' (carrying off into the sea) and was another sort of innocent physical contact between the sexes and part of the courting game. Of course, the finely dressed young ladies did not go willingly. They yelled and screamed as they were dragged into the water. This whole performance of carrying the young women into the sea tempered the passions for both the young men and women who had become sexually excited from the kissing and cuddling that occurred during the ride. After having been plunged into the water, the young men carried them back to the beach where they helped them dry off in the sand. For some couples, this kiss-and-make-up interlude was foreplay before they headed towards the dunes and nearby woods.<sup>68</sup>

Besides danger, forests and rustic areas also radiated an ambiance of sexual excitement, especially under the auspices of darkness. The adjoining forest near The Hague known as the Haagse Bos and the woods near Haarlem, Haarlemmerhout, were not only common meeting places for young couples to be alone, but also locations where men sought sex with prostitutes.<sup>69</sup>

Moralists were well-aware of the dangers of the freedom that young people had when they played on the beach and or ventured into the woods. According to Gillis Quintijn's moralistic treatise, *De Hollandsche-Lijs met de Brabandsche Belij* [Holland's Tortoise with Brabant's Greenhorn] (1629), groups of young people from Haarlem's immigrant community partied into the early hours of the morning. At dawn the festivities dispersed, and the crowds of young people roamed the streets as they headed towards the dunes and beaches where the young men would splash the blouses of women and carry them into the water. As the story progressed, the innocent fun of Haarlem's youth from the lower social ranks turned into foreplay, and the couples retreated to the dunes where they had sex.<sup>70</sup>

### Boundaries for the young

In actuality, there is no evidence of what really took place between young men and women in the recreation wagon, or in the dunes and woods. It should also be taken into account that paintings, engravings, and literary works such as songbooks did not always portray everyday life but sometimes manifested a cliché of early modern courting rituals in which young people were supposed to find a suitable marriage partner. However, we can assume that these were the parameters within which young people were allowed to manoeuvre in early modern society. Seventeenth-century painters and writers only echoed these rituals in their works and elaborated on prevailing artistic traditions in combination with what buyers wanted, and thus projected an ideal of youth. As a commodity, depictions of well-dressed, carefree young people in love who were picnicing or boating sold well on the market.<sup>71</sup> It would be wrong to conclude that these portrayals of affluent young people went any further than perhaps heavy petting. In this regard, Dutch parents from the upper and middle classes were more indulgent in allowing their children freedom without supervision than, for example, English parents, who would have their daughters chaperoned when out courting with young men. However, parents only permitted children to interact with the opposite sex because they knew their offspring were aware of the accepted boundaries. Young men and women of Holland's regents knew the consequences of premarital sexual relations. In the world of the Republic's urban elite families, having children marry into other economically and politically powerful families was a means of securing their own family's wealth and position. Sexuality outside the realm of marriage for young people risked not only their own future but also that of their families. If both were from families of the same financial class, then an extramarital pregnancy would be tolerated provided it resulted in a prompt marriage. But if the young man or woman in question was from another social standing, the wealthier family's future was jeopardized. In general, the chastity of young elite women was safeguarded, and young women were not sexually active until after marriage, or at least until they were engaged.<sup>72</sup> Young men, on the other

hand, were urged to suppress their carnal urges or channel them. If young unmarried men had sex, then it was usually with women from lower social backgrounds, and never with women who were social equals.<sup>73</sup>

However, that does not imply there was no *permitted* physical contact between unmarried, wealthy young people. In the ritual of courting, young people flirted, touched, kissed, and innocently roughhoused. Similar to the illustration of the recreation wagon where a girl picks grass, this time the artist depicted five young women playfully throwing grass on a young man who is lying on the ground. As a result of horseplay, the young man is overtaken by the women, hence the Dutch expression for this scene: *te grazen nemen* (to be grassed under). In *Moortje* – a farcical play about the life of commoners – Bredero also referred to the custom of rolling around in the grass with a woman named Trijn.

*Hoe plech ick onse Trijn  
Int lange gras te graeslen'*

(How can I get our Trijn  
for a romp in the tall grass).<sup>74</sup>

The caption reads:

*Ick bin int soet gewellt,  
en leg nu onverbaest/  
Neer in het groene wellt,  
Alwaer ick werd gegraest*

(I am pleasantly rolled up,  
and now lie unsurprised/  
down in the green field  
where I am being grassed under).

Besides romping around, the most common innocent physical activity that young unmarried men and women did together was make music and sing. In *Ultrajectina Tempe ofte S. Jans Kerck-of versch wandel-groen* (1640), Regnerus Opperveldt described Utrecht's youth dallying in the courtyard of Utrecht's medieval Saint John's Church during the evening hours, where the city's young people gathered to listen to flute music or a lute player accompanied by a singer.<sup>75</sup>

The lute was a popular instrument for young men to play. A common depiction in emblems and paintings in the early seventeenth century usually portrayed a young man playing the lute accompanied by a young lady singing. In the *Musical Company* (c. 1630) by Antonie Palamedesz., affluent youths are depicted in a landscaped garden. The division of men playing the lute and



Illustration 30 'Young man and women enjoy innocent roughhousing' in:  
Gerard ter Borch, 'To Get Grassed Under' (c. 1620)

women singing becomes clear here. In this popular painting genre, which had its heyday between 1590 and 1630, the act of a young man and woman playing music initially represented the life phase of youth, the earth, a sanguine character, and the sense of hearing, which were each associated with love, and love was a matter for the young. This act also symbolized what the young were looking for: harmony in marriage and between partners. This was the essence of the whole courting ritual.<sup>76</sup>

In the depiction, a dashing gentleman in a broad-brimmed hat plays the lute while his female companion sings from a songbook. Three stages of love are portrayed: on the left, the first flirtation; in the middle, the kiss; and on the right, the harmonious companionship of the music-making couple. Perhaps Palamedesz. was inspired by the pictorial tradition of the garden of love in which young men and women in idyllic surroundings are more prone to surrender to the power of love.<sup>77</sup>

The harmony and compatibility between potential marriage partners also became evident while playing games. During winter months when people were confined indoors, playing games was a popular pastime. Jan Jansz. Starter's *Steeck-Boecxken, ofte't vermaak der jeugdelijker herten* [Pin Book or the Pleasure of Youthful Hearts] (1624) was a well-known game book and ideal for courting couples. Starter, who had published his best-selling songbook *Friesche Lust-Hof* [Fri-



Illustration 31 'Merry-making young men and women drinking' in:  
 Antonie Palamedesz, *Merry Company in a Chamber* (1633)

sian Paradise] three years earlier, now offered young audiences an alternative to playing cards, checkers, or the goose game. Starter's pin book could be played by groups of six to eight young people at wedding parties, dinners or picnics. The object of the game was to stick a long needle at random in the side of the book. On each page that was pricked, a character trait of a young man and woman were described. The facing page was decorated with a heart and other attributes that referred to the depicted character, and the players had to say if the character sketch was correct or not.<sup>78</sup> This pin book was by no means unique. It was part of the emblem book genre known as *ars amatoria* that was popular in the 1610s. In many respects, Starter's *Steeck-Boecxken* resembled Jan van de Velde's *Openhertighe Herten* [Open-Hearted Hearts] (c. 1618), which was also a game book for parties of wealthy young people.<sup>79</sup> In the foreword Starter encouraged his young joy-seeking readers 'to be virtuous and to keep the savior Jesus Christ faithfully in their hearts'. He was not providing his readers with an edifying or spiritual work, however. If the portrayal of the player fit, then the whole group would laugh, but even if the account was completely incorrect, it could be equally hilarious, especially because the rhymes in each description and the accompanying illustrations were often scabrous and had sexual innuendoes. According to the description on page 102, the word 'birding' meant 'copulating'.

*'Ik dis wel gaeren met een hoek  
 Als bijten wil de baers of snoek  
 Maer of ik nog zo gaeren dis  
 Wanneer der maer te vogelen is  
 Daer is mijn hert meer toe gezind  
 Als 't gene mer ter wereld vind'*

(I love to fish with the hook  
 If the pike or perch are biting,  
 But whether I would love fishing so much  
 I'd rather be birding instead,  
 That thrills my heart more,  
 Than anything else in the world.)<sup>80</sup>

If a young man stuck a pin on page 133 he would have seen a tennis racket, tennis balls, and a tennis court. On the facing page he reads:

*Hoe wel 't een vreugd is in de baen  
 Te kaetzen en de bal te slaen.  
 Zo is 't nochtans veel meer plezier  
 Te kaetzen met een Venus-dier.  
 Ja zulken baen, daar koord nog, Net  
 Dan doen is/ maer het zagte bed.*

(Even though it is a pleasure to be on the court  
 To chase after and hit the ball  
 It is even more delightful  
 To chase after a woman  
 Yes such a court, would be a catch  
 Then to do it, in a soft bed).

Similar to the songbooks, the descriptions in Starter's pin book were risqué, which was an aspect that young people enjoyed. Parents most likely disapproved of such books with their sexual undertones. Alas, there are no surviving copies of *Steek-Boecxken* from the seventeenth century, but from a 1725 edition we get the impression that Starter must have intended his readers to enjoy this book in secrecy. Its minute size (10 x 8 cm) suggests that young people could easily have hidden the book under a skirt or placed it in a pocket to hide it from disapproving parents.<sup>81</sup> This game book added to Starter's growing fame in the 1620s. Boat trips, country rides in the recreation wagon, horseplay at the beach, making music, and playing games at parties defined the courting boundaries of youth culture during the 1620s and 1630s. It became the accepted physical domain where urban elite youths courted and discovered if a partner was compatible for marriage.

## Conclusion

In the realm of gender, the songbook was a token given by young men to their sweethearts. Singing was a feminine trait, and young men usually accompanied their female companions by playing the lute. This was the essence of becoming a harmonious couple. Before harmony could be found, a young man had to find a partner through trial and error by using specific courting practices. Young acclaimed songwriters such as Bredero and Starter voiced the ups and downs they endured in the quest to find the ideal marriage partner. Especially in cities such as Amsterdam, these songwriters were commonly seen in the streets, taverns, at the local chamber of rhetoric or as honored guests at wedding parties. Contemporaries revered them as celebrities. After the 1640s the originality and vigor of this youth culture went into decline. The songbooks produced since the 1610s and 1620s with their new size, scale, and elaborate editions had a profound impact on that generation of young people. They were specially compiled for young audiences, manifested a distinctive urban youth culture and helped mold a Dutch national identity. With their themes of boating, taking rides in the recreation wagon, merrymaking at the beach, and singing and playing at garden parties, songbooks were instrumental in creating a cohesive identity for young men growing up in the cities of the Holland, and perhaps also in the rest of the country as well. The recreational acts described in songbooks helped cast a notion of 'youth' behavior and leisure activities that were related to being young, as well as a sense of camaraderie or oneness with young people in other towns. Youths throughout the Republic could easily identify with other young people from the recreational activities described in songbooks. After 1640 the number of new songbooks published declined drastically. The same songbooks were either reprinted, or more spiritually oriented songbooks were produced for youths.

By the 1650s the pastoral theme went out of fashion and was replaced by topics about fairs and drinking binges. Moreover, in the 1670s and 1680s a new genre of books on the clandestine market started to attract the interest of young men, namely pornographic novels like *De Haagsche Lichtmis* [The Courtesan from The Hague] (1679), *De Leidsche Straatschender* [The Street Offender of Leiden] (1679), and *D'Openhartige Juffrouw* (1680) – a translation of *The London Jilt*. In many respects these autobiographical novels with revealing sex stories left little to the imagination of young men and resembled the twentieth-century version of *Xaviera Hollander's Happy Hooker*.<sup>82</sup>

