Clusters of Private Buyers

A cluster, by which I mean a set of interacting individuals, may be strong – when the individuals in the set interact frequently and significantly – or weak – when the interactions are only slight or occasional. My criterion of “significance” is that the interaction is likely to be intense enough to suggest that the individuals in the set had some influence (or power) over one another, of the kind that might have an impact on their decision to purchase works of art at auction.

Nuclear families make up strong clusters. When in-laws, godparents, and witnesses to the children’s baptisms are added to the nuclear family, the cluster is weakened but its coherence is still stronger than it is in most other groups – such as business partnerships, signatories to petitions, members of militia units, guilds and other civil associations and so forth, that I will deal with in this chapter. This was surely the case in the 17th century when even distant relatives (vrunden) mattered more than they do today.141

In this chapter we shall examine all sorts of clusters of very different degrees of coherence, some with high proportions of buyers of works of art at auction, some not. I will study, in addition to extended family clusters, the complete list of subscribers who bought shares in the United East Indies Company (V.O.C.) in 1602, the list of signatories of a 1608 petition to rescind a regulation that prohibited private deposit banking, freighters of ships in overseas trade, and several other groups of various sizes, some of which yielded relatively high numbers of buyers and some relatively low. I conclude with a digression on the affinity between two clusters – amateurs of art and purchasers of tulip bulbs – on the basis of documents collected during the “tulip mania” of 1636-1637. I postpone until the next chapter an analysis of the cluster formed by signatories of the Remonstrant petition of 1628, a group of like-minded Amsterdam citizens that I wish to examine in the context of the religion of buyers.

A large number of buyers were relatives (husband, wife, brother, sister, uncle, nephew, or in-law) or guardians of the children (or both) of the deceased owners whose estate was sold at auction. I noted 118 instances of such a relation in the period 1597-1619 and 175 in the period of 1620 to 1638.142 In many such cases, nothing else is known about the buyer, who is often identified only by his or her first name, accompanied or not by a patronymic (e.g., “Trijntje de suster”, “Willem Reyersz. de soon”, “de weduwe”). Widows, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters very frequently bought back the art objects that had belonged to their relatives.143 We will see below that members of the guild to which the late owner of goods sold by the Orphan Chamber belonged were also frequent buyers.
If many buyers were relatives of sellers, they were also frequently related to each other. Among buyers active in the entire period 1597-1638, I found 85 fathers or sons, 156 brothers or sisters, and 185 in-laws (brother-, father-in-law, etc.) Thus at least 20 percent of the buyers (and a larger percentage of the identified ones) were closely related. More generally, there were 404 cross-linkages of all sorts among buyers in the first period 1597-1619 and 491 cross-linkages in the second. In other words, (nearly) every other buyer is known to have had some sort of family, business, guild or other social tie to another buyer.

Many auction-frequenting families were tied by blood or marriage to artists. We shall see in the second part of this book (Chapter 17) how the Van Maerlen family – several of whose members were prominent jewelers – produced, or intermarried with, artists through several generations of the 17th century. Among many others, we may also cite the brothers Abraham and Cornelis de Bruijn, both merchants and buyers at auction. Cornelis was married to Catharina Savery, the daughter of the painter Jacob (Jacques) Savery, the older brother of the better known Roelandt Savery. Catharina’s sister Maria married another buyer at auction the printmaker Hendrick Lambertsz. Roghman. The children of Hendrick and Maria were the painter Roelant Roghman and the printmakers Geertruyd and Magdalena Roghman.

For a particularly rich example of an extended family with many auction buyers – but with only one tenuous connection with the artistic world – we may consider the Van Valckenburgs, the Cobbauts, and the Van Welys, who were all related by marriage. Jan van Valckenburg, born in Antwerp, had migrated to Amsterdam by 1585, where he ran a very successful silk cloth business. When he died in 1603, he and his wife Elisabeth Verlaer left eight children: Anna, married to the merchant Arnout Cobbaut (II); Margerita, married to the merchant Marcus de Vogelaer; Elisabeth, married to the poet and pensionary Jacob Cats; Maria, married to the jeweler Willem van Wely; Susanna, married to the attorney Fabiaen van Vliet; Lucas, married to Susanna Coymans; Marcus, married to Catharina Quingetti; and Matheus, married to the English woman Isabelle Eyre. Five out of eight of the children (or their husbands) were buyers at auction (Arnout Cobbaut II; Margerita, after the death of her husband Marcus de Vogelaer; Willem van Wely; Lucas and Matheus Valckenburg). One more relative by marriage, Guilliam van Eyndhoven, also a buyer, declared in a deposition that he had very well known Jan van Valckenburg, who had migrated to Amsterdam in 1585 and had died in 1603, leaving eight children.144 Arnout Cobbaut II, born in Oudenaarde in the Southern Netherlands in 1555, who was married to Anna van Valckenburg, also left numerous children: Elisabeth, married to the merchant Pieter de Schilder; Judith, married to the sugar refiner Hans de l'Hommel; Arnout (III), married to Anna Cruypenninck; Barbara, married, first, to Balthasar van der Veecken, and, second, to Toussain Blanche; Susanna, married to Pieter Stas; Anna, married, first, to Michiel Verbeeke and, second, to the merchant (and probably part-time art dealer) Gillis Smissaert; Sara, married to the merchant Balthasar de Visscher; and Gillis “innocent” (simple-minded). Of these, Pieter de Schilder, Gillis Smissaert,
and Balthasar de Visscher were buyers. We have seen that Willem van Wely had
married Maria van Valckenburg. Of his two brothers, the jeweler Hans (Jan) van
Wely II, was, like Willem, an important buyer; the other, Thomas van Wely, who was
not himself a buyer, married Anna Maria Isaacks, the daughter of the painter Pieter
Isaacksz. on 9 November 1634.¹⁴⁵ She, like her father, was a buyer at auction (actually,
at the auction of her father’s estate.) Jan van Wely III, the son of Jan van Wely II,
who was assassinated in The Hague in 1616,¹⁴⁶ was also a buyer. Finally, it may
be mentioned in passing that Anna van Wely, the sister of Jan van Wely III, married
Kilian van Rensselaer, a director of the West Indies Company, and a founder of the
colony of New Amsterdam.¹⁴⁷ (Kilian van Rensselaer, as far as we know, never
bought at auction). Altogether then, in the three related families we have examined,
over half – 13 out of 23 members (not including the simple-minded Gillis Cobbaut) –
were buyers at Orphan Chamber auctions. This is a far greater proportion than the
average for individuals with this level of wealth (25 to 35 percent, as we saw in table
6.3).

The Colijn family and the families that it was linked to by marriage also constitut-
ed a rich pool of buyers. Jan Colijn, a glove maker and merchant, born around 1548,
bought several lots at auction in 1601. After his death in 1607, an auction was held of
his possessions that was attended by several of his numerous children. At least two
sons (Michael and Emanuel) were booksellers and were friends of poets.¹⁴⁸ Michael
married the daughter of the well-known book dealer Jan Evertsz. Cloppenburg, who
was himself a buyer. David Colijn/Colyn became a painter with a long and fairly suc-
cessful career. The siblings Michael, Giertge, Emanuel, Hendrick and David Colijn
all acquired works of art either at the auction of their father’s estate or at other auc-
tions. As is often the case with families whose members frequented auctions, a
painter was brought into the fold through marriage: Hendrick’s daughter Elsje mar-
rried the painter Adriaen Backer, the nephew of the better known Jacob Adriaensz.
Backer. Jan Colijn’s sister Clara married Rombout Jacobsz. de oude. Not only he but
his son Pieter Indische Raven I and his grandsons Pieter Indische Raven II and
Christoffel Indische Raven were all buyers. Interestingly enough, Christoffel Indis-
che Raven married the daughter of the Orphan Chamber auctioneer Gerrit Jacobsz.
Haringh. This gave him entrée into another cluster of buyers: Gerrit Jacobsz.’s cousin
Jacob Huuygh Thomas, who was auctioneer of the Desolate Boedelskamer, was a buy-
er. So was Gerrit Jacobsz.’s other son-in-law Jan Hendricksz. Admirael (who married
his daughter Dorothea). Admirael was an important tulip grower whose name will
appear again in the present chapter. Jacob Rombour’s daughter Clara, married to Ar-
tus Kemp, was the mother of Henrick Aertsz. Kemp, another important buyer. Rom-
bout’s other daughter Catharina married Rochus Pietersz. van der Capelle, also a buyer. At a minimum, the interrelated Colijn, Indische Raven, Haringh, and Clop-
penburg families yielded sixteen buyers.

The reader may readily assume that buyers were fairly evenly scattered through-
out Amsterdam’s wealthy families, but this is not so. There are many distinguished
families living in the first half of the seventeenth century who seem not have generated a single buyer at auction, at least among their closest relatives. These auction-isolated families include the Hasselaers, the Hinloopens, the Quingetts, the De Graeffs, the Bartolottis, the Van Vlooswycks, the Jacobs, the Van Weesicks, the Dronckelaers, the Van Geelvincks, and the Van Heemskercks, among many others. Some of their members may have bought works of art at Desolate Boedelskamer sales or other auctions, but we have no knowledge of these purchases. Buyers were also rare among the top regents. Only one burgomaster in office, Hendrick Cromhout, is known to have bought at Orphan Chamber auctions. Very few aldermen did so. Of course, we must keep in mind that the regents in the first half of the 17th century were almost all Holland-born, among whom, as we have seen, there were relatively fewer buyers than among Southerners, at least until 1620.

From all this we may conclude that the chances of buying at auction if your father, your older brother, or one of your in-laws had already been a buyer were far greater than a random incidence would lead one to predict.

Family links were frequently strengthened by business ties. While I have not made a systematic study of the latter, I can cite two typical instances. Symon Willemsz. van der Does (alias Verdoes) was the son of Willem van der Does, the sheriff (schout) of Amsterdam, whom he succeeded in 1621. He was in business with Hans Bultel, who was apparently his brother-in-law (he was married to Maria Bultel). At the 1617 sale of the goods left by Jacob Huygh Thomas, the “concierge” of the city in charge of executive sales of bankrupt estates, Hans Bultel bought a little landscape for 8 gulden. His business partner, Symon van der Does, bought the next lot consisting of two paintings of robberies (roverijen) for 38 f and 5 st. Robberies, of course, were a most appropriate subject for the future sheriff. My second instance concerns two individuals who were almost certainly not related. Jacob Schaep, a member of the Reformed community, and Jan Stuver, a Roman Catholic, appeared together and apparently on the same side of a dispute in a deposition of 1602. They were probably doing business together. Seven years later they made their only known purchases of works of art at auction. Schaep, who was 49 years old in 1609, bought a painting of the prophet Elias for 3 f and 16 st. The next lot in the sale, a portrait of the Emperor Charles V was knocked off for 4 f and 5 st. to Jan Stuver, who was 37 years old at the time. Were these coincidences? I am more inclined to think that Bultel and Van der Does in 1617 and Schaep and Stuver in 1608 were sitting next or close to each other and were quite aware of one another’s bidding.

The clusters I will now discuss were made up of individuals who, in one way or another, were connected with each other, possibly through blood or marriage ties, but also through business dealings, joint notarial depositions, and other social-economic activities.

We first examine a cluster around the central figure of the painter and broker Adriënn van Nieulandt, who was very densely interconnected with other buyers. The network of his connections is reconstructed from three sources: the baptisms of his
children in the presence of numerous witnesses of different social status; his signature in the Album amicorum of the fencing master Gerard Thibault, along with 15 other Amsterdam citizens who must have been fellow-pupils of Thibault; and two depositions. I counted 17 direct connections with buyers,\textsuperscript{150} 23 connections with one degree of separation,\textsuperscript{151} and 24 connections with two degrees of separation, all, I repeat, with other buyers at auction (without duplication).\textsuperscript{152} It is remarkable that Gerrit van Schoonhoven, one of the richest men in Amsterdam; Margriete Reynst, the daughter of Gerrit Reynst, who became governor general of the Dutch East Indies; and the clock-maker Hendrick Verstegen were all members of the same set of fairly closely connected individuals. Clockmaking, the trade in which Adriaen van Nieulandt’s brother-in-law was engaged, was no doubt a highly skilled occupation, but it was far down the social scale from the status of a Van Schoonhoven or a Reynst. Artists such as Van Nieulandt forged links between very wealthy citizens and the middle- and lower-middle classes to which they themselves belonged.\textsuperscript{153}

It should not be surprising to learn that the network of known Rembrandt connections with other buyers was denser than that of Adriaen van Nieulandt, since, for nearly 150 years the archives of Holland have been combed through for mentions of his name. There are so many direct contacts of Rembrandt with buyers that, to keep the search manageable, I will first look at a single degree of separation and count each individual buyer who was known to have had a direct or indirect contact with Rembrandt only once. I also restrict myself to the following relationships: 1) portraits of known individuals (Nicolaes Ruts, Johannes Wtenbogaert, Samuel Wallens, Jan Pellicorne, Thomas Jacobsz. Haringh, Samuel Smijters, Pieter de la Tombe, Jeremias de Decker); 2) pupils or fellow-collectors (Lendeert van Beyeren, Jacob Swalmius,\textsuperscript{154} Govaert Flinck, Guilliaem van Neurenburgh)\textsuperscript{155}; 3) artist colleagues known to have been in direct contact with Rembrandt (Pieter Lastman), and 3) business or other professional contacts (Hendrick van Uylenburgh, Marten Kretser, Abraham Anthonisz. Recht, Johannes de Renialme, Marten van den Broeck,\textsuperscript{156} Adriaen Hendricksz. de Wees, Dirck Dircksz. Grijp, Cornelis Gysbertsz. van der Goor, Jacob van Beeck, Cornelis Abba, Pieter Cloeck). These direct contacts involved a total of 24 buyers. The buyers portrayed yielded only seven buyers at one degree of separation.\textsuperscript{157} The Rembrandt pupils who bought lots at auction added even fewer – only four: Leendert van Beyeren was of course in contact with his father Cornelis Aertsz. who bought at auction, Jacob Swalmius lodged with the painter Gillis de Hondecoeter and the ivory carver Schelde Dirricx; and Govaert Flinck is known to have had dealings with the patrician-buyer Cornelis Bicker. The contacts of Rembrandt’s teacher Pieter Lastman tap into a veritable reservoir of artist-buyers: Adriaen van Nieulandt, Jacob van Nieulandt, Louis du Prée, Willem van Bundel, Barend van Someren, and Françojs Venant, in addition to his brother the goldsmith Zeger Pietersz. and his mother the uitdraagster Barber Jacobs – eight buyers in all. Some of Rembrandt’s direct business relations were in contact with a fair number of buyers: Hendrick Uylenburgh was in contact with Claes Moyaert, Hans van Coninxloo III,
Jan Hendricksz. Admirael, and Anthony Auckema; Abraham Anthonisz. Recht with Pieter Ruttens, Willem Kemp, Dr. Anthonijs Bruijn, Daniel van Kerckhoven, Melchior Bouwer, Pieter Coningham, Christoffel Barentsz., Dr. Daniel Arminius, and Abraham van der Sluijs; Marten van den Broeck, with Gregorius van den Broeck and Abraham Soolmans; Cornelis Gysbertsz. van der Goor with Jan van Baerle II, Cornelis Martsz. Pronck, Abraham de Ligne, Jean (de la) Court, Jeronimus de la Croix, Abraham de Decker, and Salomon de Vogel. Altogether, Rembrandt’s business and professional contacts led to 41 buyers with one degree of separation. To the 65 names of buyers who were either in direct contact with buyers or separated from him by only one degree may be added 15 names of buyers who were linked directly to non-buyers with whom Rembrandt was in direct contact: Willem Six, Hans le Meer, and Pieter le Febre linked to Rembrandt via Ann Wijmer, portrayed by Rembrandt; Gillis Dodeur and Hans Barentsz. Bontemantel, via Paulus van Schoonhoven who was portrayed in the Night Watch; Louys Victor, via his son, the Rembrandt pupil Jan Victor; Abraham de Decker via his son the poet Jeremias de Decker, portrayed by Rembrandt; Abraham de Goyer (with important links to other buyers through his activities in the tulip trade) via the painter Paulus Hennekin, who was a co-signer of a deposition with Rembrandt; Outgert Pietersz. (Spiegel) who was the father-in-law of Louijs Crayers, the guardian of Rembrandt’s son Titus van Rijn; Willem Claesz. Leydecker, via his brother Jan Claesz. Leydecker, portrayed in the Night Watch; Hendrick Hooft I linked to Rembrandt through his son Hendrick Hooft II, the commissioner for marital affairs before whom Rembrandt was summoned to appear; Pieter Belten I, via Christoffel Thijsz. who was Rembrandt’s long-term creditor; Paulus van Hertsbeeck (paint dealer), via his brother Isaack van Hertsbeeck, likewise Rembrandt’s creditor; Sieuwert Pietersz. Sem via his business partner Jan Rijcksen, portrayed by Rembrandt; and the out-of-town buyer Cornelis Boissens via Rembrandt’s pupil Isaack Jouderville.

Clearly then, the set of Rembrandt’s direct and indirect contacts with one degree of separation included more individuals than Adriaen van Nieulandt’s (83 versus 65), but this difference may be due at least in part to the more intensive canvassing of Rembrandt’s name in known contemporary sources. There is also a qualitative difference between the two networks. One is struck by the minimal role that family connections played in the case of Rembrandt and the major role that these connections played in the case of Van Nieulandt. None of the witnesses (godparents and other) at the baptisms of Rembrandt’s children were even remotely connected with buyers, whereas most of Van Nieulandt’s were so connected. Perhaps the difference is rooted in the fact that Van Nieulandt was born in Amsterdam while Rembrandt was an immigrant from Leiden. Another possible explanation, suggested by Paul Crenshaw, was that Van Nieulandt understood the importance of networking for his career, whereas Rembrandt generally neglected this means of advancement.

A common geographic origin could forge social ties that influenced buying decisions. I was able to find the origin of 263 buyers who made their first purchase at auc-
tion between 1597 and 1619 or about one-third of all the buyers in this period. Of these, 54 percent (141 buyers) came from the Southern Netherlands, including 98 (31 percent) from Antwerp alone. There were only 82 buyers (31 percent) born in the Dutch Republic (42 in Amsterdam and surroundings, five in Haarlem, four in Rotterdam, the rest scattered throughout the Republic). Finally 16 came from Germany (three from Hamburg, two from Cologne, Dantzig and Emden, the rest scattered). Some of the buyers born in Germany were of South Netherlandish origin. No doubt, there is a selection bias in that many of the buyers without last names whom I have not been able to identify (perhaps one-third of all buyers) were of Northern Netherlandish origin. If we restrict ourselves to merchants who were buyers at auction, we find, in this first period, that 83 were born in the Southern Netherlands out of a total of 139 (60 percent). Thanks to Gelderblom’s research, this percentage can be placed in a more general context. In the years 1590 to 1609 (a period that begins just a few years earlier than the period of my own investigation), 30 percent of the merchants identified in a more or less random sample of notarial acts in Amsterdam were of South Netherlandish origin. Of 764 merchants who opened an account at the Wisselbank when it was founded in 1609, 32 percent were of Southern origin. Thus, the proportion of merchants of Southern origin among merchant-buyers was nearly twice as high as among all merchants. After making every allowance for the biases in the available data, we can still conclude that, in this early period in the history of Amsterdam auctions, the Southern Netherlandish origin of buyers in the first period of this study (1597-1619) was overwhelming.

The picture changes radically in the second period, 1620 to 1638. Here, out of 357 buyers of known origin whose first purchase occurred in this period, only 78 (22 percent) were born in Southern Netherlands (48 in Antwerp, 30 in other localities). 209 buyers were born in Amsterdam or other towns in the Dutch Republic (59 percent). Of these, 125 were born in Amsterdam and 84 in the other provinces of the Republic. There is also a marked increase in the number of buyers born in Germany: 39 compared to 16 in the previous period (11 buyers from Cologne, 10 from Aachen, 5 from Hamburg, 4 from Emden, and 9 scattered throughout Germany). Four were born in England. Virtually all the buyers from Germany and England were merchants of South Netherlandish origin; their parents had left Flanders or Brabant in the 1580s in the great diaspora of those years and spent some time in German and English cities before migrating to the Dutch Republic. Finally I found four Sephardim among the buyers in this period, including Bento Osorio, the richest Jewish merchant in Amsterdam at the time, who bought several landscapes at auction, Abraham Pina, who collected, among other subjects, portraits of French kings and queens and of princes of the House of Nassau, and a mysterious “Portuguese with one eye” named Joris Thomas. The marked decrease in the percentage of buyers of Southern Netherlandish origin (54 percent in the first period and 22 percent in the second) and the corresponding increase in buyers of North Netherlandish origin was not only due, in my opin-
ion, to the decline in migration from the South after war with Spain was resumed in 1621.164 This decline was much more pronounced than that observed by Gelderblom for the category of merchants as a whole (who were of course heavily represented among buyers).165 It looks very much as if Southerners initiated the trend for buying art at auction but that, starting in the 1620s, native-born Dutch men and women, or at least those among them with some means, followed their example and gradually caught up with them.

This conclusion holds, by the way, even if all the buyers born in Holland but whose parents had immigrated from the Southern Netherlands are included in the Southern contingent. I found 37 of these sons of immigrants. If we add this number to the number of buyers who were actually born in Southern Netherlands during this second period, we obtain 115 buyers in the first and second generation of immigrants, or 32 percent of the sample of buyers of known origin. This is still a good deal less than the 54 percent I estimated earlier for buyers of direct South Nethelandish origin in the first period.

The immigrant buyers frequently cohered in groups with family, business or religious ties. Many immigrants from German cities like Hamburg and Bremen, for example, tended to be Lutheran (perhaps because they had elected to migrate to Lutheran Germany in the first place.) They frequently appeared as godparents and witnesses at the baptisms of each other’s children in the Lutheran Church. The buyers from Cologne, some of whom were Calvinists, also married each other and formed business links. Among the 11 buyers from Cologne in the second period may be mentioned Gillis and David Ruts, Pieter and Carel (de) Latfeur, Nicholaes Sohier, Bernard and Hendrick Omphalius.

Membership in a merchants’ or craft guild was another form of social relation, which, even though it was much looser than the family ties and business associations we have already considered, also affected the behavior of individuals, including their decision to attend, and possibly buy at, auction. Three illustrative examples will give an idea of these relations. At the auction sale of the jeweler Jan van Maerlen of 1637 that I have already mentioned, many valuable jewels belonging to the estate were offered for sale. A fairly large number of jewelers, goldsmiths, and silversmiths – no doubt, fellow guild members of the late Van Maerlen – were present for the occasion, most of whom bought jewelry. Six of them stayed to buy paintings at the sale: Adriaen and David ter Haer, Johannes de Renialme, Thomas de Kemel, Adriaen Van Breen and Jan van Maerlen’s son-in-law Gerrit van Rijksen. But the attraction of a specialized sale of interest to colleagues was not a necessary condition for the presence of fellow-members of the guild. At the distinguished sale of the goods that had belonged to the wine dealer Elbert Martsz., there was no wine sold. Nevertheless, four of his wine-dealing colleagues bought paintings at the sale, not counting Elbert Martsz.’s son Witmer Elbertsz. who was also a wine dealer. The buyers who were wine-dealers were Anthony de Lange, Frederick Leecker, Wouter van Lennip, and Gerrit Luls. Similarly, at the January 1628 sale of the late Willem van Ghys, skipper on a boat to Leiden, five
skippers bought lots (none of them works of art). It would appear that buying goods at a colleague’s post mortem auction sale was akin to attending his funeral – which was a guild obligation. Such purchases were a favor to the widow and the orphans of the late colleague who eventually received the net proceeds of the sale.

Close neighbors – sometimes living “next door” to the deceased owner – were often cited as buyers at sales. To cite only one example, in the sale of the late Abraham Lefebvre, which was held in his house on the Rokin on 18 April 1637, the buyers other than family members were three neighbors of the defunct seller. We know about them because all three appeared in a deposition of 30 July 1638, in which they testified, at the request of the Substitute Sheriff, about “loose women” (ontuchtige vrouwen) who plied their trade in a couple of inns in a little alley off the Rokin familiarly referred to as the “Whores’ Path”.

I will cite one last social relation that may have influenced the decision to buy at auction. Many members of militia companies (schutters) were buyers. I noted 54 schutters for the entire period 1597 to 1638 – many of them captains and lieutenants of companies – but I suspect that there were many more. In Thomas de Keyser’s group portrait of the korporaalschap of Captain Allart Cloeck, for example, four out of 16 of the individuals portrayed were buyers at auction.

In general, merchants, fellow guild members, and the officers of militia companies represented overlapping sets. All three categories also overlapped with the inhabitants of richer neighborhoods (the Warmoesstraat, the Rokin, the Fluweele Burgwal, the Herengracht). But the different categories of buyers must be studied separately because the overlap was never complete.

From this point on, my study of clusters of buyers will follow a related but distinct strategy. I shall select various groups (individuals sharing an occupation, merchants freighting ships, signers of a petition, the inhabitants of a certain street, the members of a literary or other circle) to ascertain what fraction in each group consisted of buyers at auction.

In Chapter 6, we already examined the purchases at auction of the largest investors in the first and second subscriptions for V.O.C. shares. We now consider all 1,143 investors in the first subscription for shares of the United East Indies Company (V.O.C.) in 1602. Note that this great group of people formed only a loose cluster. I would warrant that most of them did not know each other, especially if they lived in towns other than Amsterdam, as many did (see below), or if they did not belong to the top layer of Dutch merchant society. But, lacking any other wealth data for this early period, I plan to use the acquisition of shares, inscribed in the great ledger of the V.O.C., as a proximate indicator of wealth.

First, some remarks are in order about the inscriptions. Because the plague raged in the year 1602, many subscribers had fled Amsterdam to a country place or to another town when the subscriptions were collected and had a relative or friend subscribe on their behalf. More relevant to our inquiry, many subscribers lived in towns that had no chamber of the V.O.C. and had little choice but to subscribe in Amster-
These towns included Utrecht, Leiden, Dordrecht, Gouda, Deventer, Alkmaar, and Haarlem whose citizens contributed substantially to the total sums gathered. It may be supposed that most of the subscribers living out of town were not acquainted with subscribers in Amsterdam or, for that matter, in other cities but their own. I also recall that very few buyers at auction lived in towns other than Amsterdam during the period covered in my investigation so that the chances of finding buyers among out-of-town subscribers were close to nil. Including everyone on the list, 8 percent of the subscribers were buyers of works of art at Orphan Chamber auction, a fairly feeble fraction. When out-of-towners are excluded, the proportion of buyers rises to 10.7 percent. This is a minimum, considering that I have not excluded from the list many subscribers who, I suspect, were probably residents of other towns but who were not identified as such in the great ledger.

The proportion of out-of-towners was not spread evenly throughout the list: all but 6 of the 81 biggest subscribers (7.4 percent), who bought shares for 10,000 f and more, lived in Amsterdam. The proportion of out-of-towners rose to about 30 percent for subscribers who bought shares for less than 1,000 f. If we exclude these minimum numbers of external residents, we find the following proportion of buyers in the different subscription classes: 19.1 percent of subscribers for over 10,000 f, 15.1 percent of those from 5,000 to 9,999 f, 13.7 percent of those from 1,000 to 4,999 f, and 6.4 percent of those subscribing for less than 1,000 f.\textsuperscript{171} The overall proportion, as already mentioned, was 10.7 percent. Assuming a statistically significant correlation between the wealth of subscribers and the total value of the shares they bought in the subscription,\textsuperscript{172} we find that these figures confirm our earlier finding, based on the tax records for 1631: the proportion of auction buyers among Amsterdam citizens increased substantially in higher wealth categories.

We now come to a real cluster, the members of which must have known each other, if not directly — meeting at the stock market, at the notary’s office, when signatures to the petition were gathered — then indirectly, at one or at most two degrees of separation. This cluster consisted of 75 signatories to a petition by Amsterdam merchants addressed to the municipal authority of Amsterdam (Vroedschap) in 1608, six years after the first subscription for V.O.C. shares was opened. The background of the petition is of considerable interest for the economic history of Holland. In 1604, the Vroedschap had issued an ordinance prohibiting merchants from accepting deposits in gold or silver, in bullion or specie, and effecting debt transfers on the basis of these deposits. At a time when a Bank of Exchange had not yet been created, this taking in of deposits amounted to private banking. The authorities objected to various shady practices that these merchants/changers engaged in, including the practice of hoarding “heavy” money (with a full-value gold or silver content) and sending it to illegal (private) mints, which then issued money with a smaller gold or silver content. They then helped circulate this “light” money in the market, through letters of credit and other monetary instruments.\textsuperscript{173} On 12 July 1608, the acceptance of deposits and the money transfers that accompanied the practice, which had apparently been taking
place despite the prohibition, was again forbidden. Less than two weeks later, 75 Amsterdam merchants addressed their petition to the Vroedschap calling for the revocation of the prohibition on depositing money with cashiers (kasiersbedrijf). They claimed, with some justification, that, in the absence of a bank of exchange, the taking in of deposits and the money transfers – to extinguish debt and for other reasons – greatly facilitated commerce, especially in a large city where creditors could not always collect debts in person that they were owed. The Amsterdam Vroedschap, which must have been impressed by the number and the quality of the petitioning merchants, responded almost immediately by mitigating – in fact, virtually rescinding – the prohibition. Less than six months later a bank of exchange (the Wisselbank) was created, which essentially monopolized deposit banking and bank transfers. This bank facilitated money transfers and the extension of credit but ruled out the underhand practices that had given rise to the 1604 regulation in the first place.

Of the 75 petitioning merchants, 25, exactly one out of three, were buyers of works of art at Orphan Chamber auctions. This was an astonishingly high proportion since the petitioners, as a group, did not belong to the top echelon of the merchant class of Amsterdam, at least as far as we may judge from the subscription for V.O.C. shares in 1602. The buyers among them represented an even less wealthy subgroup. Among the 13 petitioners/buyers who had invested in the first subscription for shares of the V.O.C. six years before, only two (Pieter van Geel and Jasper Coymans) were among the investors who had bought shares for more than 10,000 f. Counting a total of 36 petitioners who had invested in the V.O.C. but were not necessarily buyers at auction, we find that 12 (one-third) had bought shares for over 10,000 f, nine had bought shares for 5,000 to 9,999 f, 13 for 1,000 to 4,999 f and two for less than 1,000 f. If the percentages of buyers in each bracket had been the same as among investors in V.O.C. shares as a whole (excluding, as far as possible, out-of-town investors), we would expect that 19.1 percent of the 12 petitioners/investors in the highest bracket (above 10,000 f) would have been buyers, which comes to 2.3 buyers. (Fractions of buyers are of course meaningless as such, but they acquire meaning when several fractions add up to unity). Rounding off the expectation to 2, our expectation was realized, considering that there were two buyers in this bracket. In the next bracket, from 5,000 to 9,999 f, we would have expected 15.1 percent of the nine petitioners/investors to be buyers, or 1.4. There were actually 4 buyers in this bracket, a surplus of 2.6. In the bracket of petitioners/investors from 1,000 to 4,999 f, we would have expected 13.7 percent to be buyers or 1.8. There were actually 6 buyers in this bracket, a surplus of 4.2. Altogether, a total of 5.6 buyers were expected, and there were 13, or more than twice as many. These are small numbers and the discrepancies between expected and actual numbers may be due to chance, but they are quite suggestive.

To what factors can we attribute the relatively high fraction of buyers (one third) among the signatories of the 1608 petition? Gender differences are one significant factor. All the petitioners were males. Many of the investors in V.O.C. were widows.
seeking to get a return on the money they had inherited. Relatively few women (other than uitdraagsters) bought works of art at auction. Investors in V.O.C. shares included numerous instances of fathers buying for their children, each of whom I counted as a separate investor. Few of these children bought works of art at auction. There were probably many more out-of-town investors than I have estimated, of whom only a negligible number bought at auction. Women and under-age investors and uncounted out-of-towners depressed the percentage of buyers, thus reducing the statistical expectation, in each bracket. On a more speculative note, I would argue that the petitioners represented a group of dynamic merchants, many of them engaged in overseas trade, with a higher-than-average propensity – given their level of wealth – to buy at auction.

In table 7.1 I have assembled data from several samples containing relatively high numbers of buyers – freighters of ships in overseas trade, members of a chamber of rederijkers (rhetoricians), members of a fencing club, a circle of amateurs of poetry – and relatively low numbers – soap-boilers, wine distributors, tanners, and residents of poor neighborhoods. Some of them are groups rather than clusters (freighters, inhabitants of certain streets, guardians of orphans) but I have listed them because they make for an interesting comparison with true clusters like the members of an association or club or the wine distributors, soap boilers, and leather tanners who met regularly to administer matters of importance to the “trade”.

**Table 7.1**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups of Individuals and the Proportion of Buyers Among Them</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Of Which, Buyers</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Freighters of ships</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1601-1608</td>
<td>291</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>16.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1609-1616</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1617-1625</td>
<td>224</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>19.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rederikker members of “de Egelantier” 1616</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>30.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signatories Album amicorum of Gerard Thibault (c.1615)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends of the poet Jan Jansz. Starter</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soap boilers in 1607-1608 (owners of works)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soap-boilers in 1615-1631 (exercising the nering)</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wine distributors (wijinverlaters) in 1625</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master chamois-leather tanners (seemleerbereiders)</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inhabitants of the Bloemstraat, ca. 1613-1625</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orphan Chamber sample</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Only buyers identified with near-certainty have been included. The percentages should be considered a minimum. Freighters of ships who signed contracts in more than one period are counted only in the first period in which they occurred. A few of the individuals who promised to provide a subsidy for Jan Jansz. Starter were probably not from
Amsterdam. But because of the uncertainty of determining which ones these were, all signatories have been counted. In the case of the Album amicorum of Gerard Thibault, only Amsterdam residents are included in the count (since most of the inscriptions in the album are accompanied by the place where it was made, the out-of-town signatories were conveniently excluded.) The Orphan Chamber sample is based on the Inbrengregister of the Chamber. Three samples of 105 individuals and one sample of 100 individuals were taken, all in the years 1624 to 1626.


A glance at the table should convince the reader that the incidence of buyers in different groups was far from random. Clearly, wealth had something to do with the percentages. Merchants who freighted ships were much more likely to be buyers than wine distributors (wijnenverlaters), the inhabitants of a relatively poor neighborhood such as the Bloemstraat and its surroundings, or a random sample of the fathers of orphans.

Yet this cannot be the whole story. The rederijkers were not particularly wealthy. Nor were the signatories of the Album amicorum (and presumed disciples) of the fencing master Gerard Thibault, although some of them undoubtedly belonged to the jeunesses dorée of Amsterdam. The friends of the poet Jan Jansz. Starter who each promised to give him two Flemish pounds as a subsidy on the condition they would have first access to his poems, came from prosperous families, but they were certainly not as rich as the men who pledged to invest 10,000 f or more in V.O.C. shares. Being part of a literary circle or a fashionable fencing club undoubtedly raised the likelihood that an individual might buy at auction. A wine distributor, a soap boiler, a master chamois-leather tanner, even though he might be relatively prosperous, was a less likely buyer.

There is one low-yielding group that deserves to be commented on. I did not find a single buyer among the eminent poets, men of letters, and playwrights of the period (Jacob Cats, Constantijn Huygens I, Joost van den Vondel, Samuel Coster, Jan Jansz.
Starter, Mattheus Tengnagel, Pieter Cornelisz. Hooft, Casper van Baerle, Jan de Vos etc.). Most of these were men of some means, who were clearly capable of buying art at auction. I find it hard to believe that this “empty set” is just the result of random selection among cultivated people in Amsterdam of certain means. I can think of only one explanation. Many of these men of letters had painter friends. They wrote laudatory poems on their friends’ paintings which had been ordered by wealthy patrons. Their artist friends may have given them at least small paintings in appreciation. This dispensed them from spending their hard-earned money at auction.

The last cluster in this chapter consists of auction buyers who were also involved in the business of growing and trading in tulips and other flower bulbs. The story of the tulip mania has been told a number of times, but, to my knowledge, it has not so far been linked with the art trade, let alone with the buyers at Amsterdam auctions.

Tulips, imported from Turkey, had been grown in Holland since the last years of the 16th century, most probably in the University of Leiden’s botanical garden. They at first attracted chiefly amateur horticulturists. By the second decade of the 17th century, trade in tulip and other bulbs had grown into a serious business in the hands of professionals. It is worthy of note that Emanuel (or Manuel) Sweerts, the author of the first widely circulated book on horticulture, with numerous illustrations of tulips, published in 1612, was himself a buyer of art at auction, where he acquired several paintings and a number of prints (all without titles). His book, *Florilegium*, published in Frankfort, was a catalogue of the rare flowers he offered for sale. Born in 1552 in Zevenbergen, he died in Amsterdam in 1612. Emanuel Sweerts was connected with several distinguished Antwerp/Amsterdam families. His brother Lenard Sweerts I, an attorney, was first married to Anna Rombouts, the sister of Hans and Jacques Rombouts, prominent merchants of Antwerp origin. Lenard’s son Willem (a buyer at auction) was married to Janneken du Pire, whose sister Marie had married into the important De Wilde family. But Emanuel was also connected with the world of artists and artisans. His son Jeronimus (also a buyer) became a still-life painter. His daughter Marie married the gilder Cesar Winnen. Another daughter named Elizabth married the printer and publisher Pauwels van Ravesteyn. Emanuel Sweerts, whose family reached out to the mercantile and artistic worlds, played the same pivotal role in a wide network of connections at disparate social levels as the painter Adriaen van Nieulandt, whose “degrees of separation” from other buyers we examined earlier.

Tulips and other bulbs were regularly auctioned in an inn called “The Mennonite Wedding” (De Menniste Bruyloft) on the Oude Brugsteeg, next to the Warmoesstraat, on the Old Side of Amsterdam. The records of these auctions, if they were ever kept, have long been lost. The only auction of bulbs in Amsterdam that has left a record was that of the stock in the estate of the florist Pieter Pietersz., which was held by the Orphan Chamber on 25 September 1625. Pieter Pietersz. had been in business with another garden-man named Marcus Cornelisz. since 1619 when the
two men had contracted to buy and sell nursery products and flowers in places as far distant as Prussia and Poland. Fourteen out of 21 of the buyers at this auction – 67 percent – were buyers of works of art at other Orphan Chamber auctions. This proportion, I need hardly stress, was extraordinarily high. Among these buyers of bulbs and works of art may be noted the merchants Abraham Castelijn, Abraham de Schilder, Abraham van der Slijs, Adam Bessels, and Mathijs Gerritzs., who were all engaged, in one way or another, in the tulip trade in subsequent years.

Two weeks after the Pieter Pietersz. sale, Isaack Casteleijn, a buyer of art at auction who was probably the cousin of Abraham Casteleijn who had bought bulbs at the Pieter Pietersz. sale, sent a notary to the house of seigneur Marcus Cornelisz. (Flora) to notify him of the following complaint. Casteleijn claimed that, in June and November of the preceding year, he had sold to Marcus Cornelisz. 200 flowers (probably bulbs) for 20 gulden for which he had only been paid 10 and one half gulden. Marcus Cornelisz. told the notary that the flowers were not what they were supposed to be. However, he was willing to pay for two of the Admirals (tulip bulbs) and return the rest. I cite this “insinuation” for the modesty of Casteleijn’s claim. In later years, after the speculation started in earnest, no one would have mobilized a notary for such a small sum.

Even in this early period certain rare tulip bulbs were offered at prices that were as high or higher than the most valuable paintings traded in the market (and much higher than the highest auction prices of the period for which the Orphan Chamber notebooks have been preserved). In 1625, 1,200 gulden were asked for a bulb of Semper Augustus, one of the most desirable tulips grown in this period. But it is by no means certain that the bulbs actually changed hands at this very high price.

Before the frenzy in trading started, trade was still confined mainly to professional growers and relatively wealthy amateurs. As the fever heated up, more and more people who knew nothing about the tulip business were pulled into the vortex of the market. Speculation was fed by the increasing tendency, from 1634 on, to sell the bulbs in the ground, for delivery at the beginning of the summer and by the resale of buyers’ I.O.U.’s for bulbs that stood to be delivered some months hence.

On 17 May 1633, an auction of tulip bulbs took place in Amsterdam, apparently under the auspices of the Orphan Chamber, which gives us an idea of the problems auctions could give rise to. My guess that it might have been an Orphan Chamber auction – the records of the Chamber auctions for 1633 are lost – rests on the conditions of the sale, which, word for word, are those spelled out in the introductions to most voluntary sales of the Orphan Chamber. In this notarial notification (insinuatie), all three of the men cited were buyers of art at auction. At the 1633 auction, two tulip bulbs had been sold at the request of Abraham de Schilder to Abraham de Goyer (1 “Paragon Schilder” for 50 f and one “Paragon dito [Schilder]” for 41 f). Abraham de Schilder, merchant in Amsterdam, from Middelburg, was 27 years old when he was betrothed on 2 May 1623 to Cathalina Metsu, the daughter of Philips Metsu, also cited in the document. Abraham de Goyer, who was 53 years old when the
auction took place, was initially a retail merchant in silk cloth, but, by the 1630s, he seems to have been made his living chiefly in the tulips trade and in dealing in garden land. On 19 December 1634, Abraham de Goyer lodged his complaint against Philips Metsu, the father-in-law of Abraham de Schilder, who had given Metsu power-of-attorney. De Goyer alleged that the tulips he had bought at the 1633 sale were similar in color but “quite unequal in value” to “Paragon Schilder” tulips. De Schilder had promised, via his father-in-law, that he would make it up (sou’t effenen) to De Goyer, but he hadn’t. De Goyer stated that he would keep the bulbs but would hold De Schilder responsible for any losses (in resale) or damage that he might suffer, “it being that the tulips have been paid in full to the auctioneer”. Abraham de Goyer, of all the buyers at auction who bought or sold flower bulbs or were in any way connected with the tulip trade, is the only one who is known to have bought a painting of flowers at auction.

If we can trust a very realistic-sounding poem about “the wonderful year of the flower-growers, anno 1637” by Gerret Kock, who claims to have bought various tulips (probably in bulbs) from Abraham de Goyer for 60 to 72 f a piece, De Goyer’s tulip business was extremely profitable. Kock tells us that De Goyer was “a great flower grower who owned a very large flower garden on the Singel near the Regulierspoort”. In a single year – presumably 1637, “the wonderful year of the flower-growers” – he had sold 20,000 f worth of tulips. From the proceeds, he had spent 10,000 f on a fine manor (hofstede) in Maarssen. The remaining 10,000 f he had invested in the purchase of more tulips. He claimed to Kock that he had himself spent 1,200 f on a single tulip (bulb). As we shall see in chapter 13, none of the art dealers about whose affairs we have information made that kind of money.

How outsiders were prompted by professionals to engage in the nascent speculation in tulip bulbs is illustrated by the following story. Reymont de Smith (a buyer of art at auction) was a tulip dealer, who was on friendly terms – perhaps in business – with Jeronimus Victorij, a well-known horticulturist, whose name has already been mentioned. On 21 March 1635, Francojs Heldewier declared that he had come some time ago to Amsterdam from Brussels with no means of his own. He had gone with his wife and sister to Reymont de Smith, who was a family member (probably, a rather distant one). De Smith had lent him 1,800 f to start a tulip business of his own. Heldewier also received clothing and lodging, all of which were to be paid from the proceeds of the business. The story is reminiscent of a passage in the dialogue between Waermont and Gaergoedt “on the rise and fall of Flora”, a famous pamphlet published in 1637, where Gaergoedt, an ardent speculator, had told a sceptical Waermont about the great profits that one could earn, even while one slept, in the highly profitable tulip trade. In 1644, Heldewier had to acknowledge that he still owed De Smith 1,800 f for one loan and 4,455 f for another, for tulip bulbs that De Smith had given him. De Smith retained the rights to all the bulbs and their eventual buds or outgrowths.

The famous amateur (liefhebber) of art Marten Kretser, whose collection was
sung by the poet Lambert van den Bos, was another one of those outsiders who could not resist the lure of speculation in tulip bulbs. Significantly, he had chosen as his supplier of bulbs Jan Hendricksz. Admirael, a professional grower, who, as we have already seen, was himself a buyer of works of art at auction and an art collector. On August 17, 1635, toward the beginning of the bull market, Admirael had a notary notify Kretser of the following complaint. Four days earlier, a decision had been made by arbiters about a dispute the two men had submitted to them. The decision was that Admirael would deliver certain tulip bulbs plus 180 £ to Kretser, who in turn would give Admirael 11 paintings by various masters and a print by Lucas van Leyden. Admirael had delivered the bulbs, but Kretser had only handed over one painting. Admirael was willing to pay Kretser the money as soon as Kretser had delivered the remaining paintings. Kretser responded to the complaint by saying that he was ready to hand over the paintings but Admirael would first have to show that the tulips conformed to the arbiters’ decision. By this Kretser probably meant that the bulbs, which were still in the ground, would have to be precisely the same, when they were dug up, as the arbiters had described in their decision.

Exactly a month later, on September 17, Jan Hendricksz. Admirael, from Amsterdam, 28 years old, contracted with the florist Jeronimus Victorij to deliver a very valuable bulb, named “de Generaal Gouda” to Victorij on the following conditions. If the fortress of Schenckenschans, now in enemy hands, were to be retaken within six months, Victorij would have to pay Admirael 650 £ for the bulb. If not, Victorij could have it free. Bets of this type were fairly common in 17th century Holland. Those who made them evinced a certain “risk preference”, which speculators in tulips may have shared with buyers at auction. Another dispute arose in 1636 between Admirael and Simon van Poelenburgh, an etcher, brother-in-law of the famous print-maker Jacob Matham. Van Poelenburgh was born in Haarlem but had lived in Amsterdam at least since his marriage in 1625. On April 24, Notary Van Zwieten, at Van Poelenburgh’s request, went to the house of Sr. Cornelis van Breugel to notify him of the following “insinuation”. Van Poelenburgh alleged that, according to a contract dated 6 December 1635, he had bought three bulbs from Admirael, namely, an “English Admirael”, a “General Veryck”, and an “Admirael Lieffkens”, all planted in Van Breugel’s garden. Van Poelenburgh now requested, in a friendly manner, that the bulbs be delivered to him or at least that they should not be handed over to Admirael except in his presence. Cornelis van Breugel responded to the notary by saying that Admirael did not possess the bulbs “which belong entirely to me”, claiming that Admirael had sold to Van Poelenburgh tulips that neither belonged to him in part or in whole (die hem in’t geheel noch deel toebehoren). A couple of weeks later Van Poelenburgh addressed a new complaint, this time directly against Admirael. He repeated Van Breugel’s contention that the three bulbs belonged to him. To which Admirael answered non-committally “I hear and I see”. This was evidently a time when prices were still going up: sellers procrastinated or equivocated to delay or cancel delivery as buyers tried to force them to deliver.
The bubble burst on the third of February 1637. After that a deluge of notarial complaints came down on buyers who refused to take delivery of bulbs and their buds at previously agreed upon prices now that the market prices for bulbs had come down. Finally, ordinances had to be issued in various towns releasing buyers from the obligations they had incurred or permitting them to pay only a portion of the agreed upon price. Among the buyers of works of art who were involved in tulip speculation we find both sellers (Jan Hendricksz. Admirael, Abraham van der Sluijs) and buyers (Jan Pietersz. Neckevelt and, probably, Hans Conincxloo III) who incurred losses in the wake of the crash.

An “insinuation” lodged on 11 February 1637, a few days after the turnaround in the market, cites a certain Jaques de Poer, who is probably identical with Jacques de Pours, whose bankrupt inventory was sold after his death on court order on 14 November 1657. The document gives us a glimpse of how tulip bulbs were actually auctioned in Amsterdam’s inns at the time. (This, together with the vignette of the porcelain auction cited in chapter 3 is about as close a description of an event at an auction in the first half of the 17th century as I have come across.) The auction took place in the previously mentioned “Menniste Bruyloft” on the Oudebrugsteeg. The auctioneer, Jan Jeuriaensz. de Meyer, 24 years old, who was the deponent in this act, had placed on the table various bulbs that he had been requested to sell to the highest bidder (aen de meest biedende). The deposition was made at the request of the otherwise unknown David van de Cruys, who had asked De Meyer to sell a pound of tulip bulbs, called “Switsers”. De Meyer had stipulated that the person who would call out the highest bid for the pound of tulips would get a schelling (six st.) as “draw-money” (treckgelt). After various florists, bid after bid, had raised the bidding to 1,060 gulden, the bulbs were sold at this price. Whereupon, Jaques de Poer had gotten up on a bench and made a bid of 1,065 gulden. Van de Cruys, the seller, had approved the sale and congratulated De Poer, who had taken the schelling (in recognition that the deal had been consummated). This was the first known complaint made after the crash against a buyer who had failed to pay up on a purchase.

Yet the crisis had not damped all hope of profit. It appears from a later document that, on May 9, 1637, Jan Hendricksz. Admirael had lodged a complaint against Paulus de Hooghe, the future father of the print-maker Romeyn de Hooghe (II), probably because De Hooghe had not paid for certain bulbs that Admirael had sold him. It would appear Admirael had promised De Hooghe that he could earn a 20 percent return on the bulbs within a year. Six days later De Hooghe dispatched a notary to Admirael to notify him that he had accepted to pay for the bulbs and to take delivery on that condition but that Admirael had not fulfilled his part of the bargain. A month later Admirael “insinuated” De Hooghe again, claiming that De Hooghe, last January (just before the crisis), had bought from him various tulips planted in his garden. Apparently, the agreement proposed in May had not gone through, and Admirael was now urging De Hooghe to collect the bulbs in his garden, “since it was now dry time and very necessary to get the tulips out of the ground.”
Our last document featuring Jan Hendricksz. Admirael refers to his efforts to collect money from a customer, probably again for tulips delivered. The customer, Hans van Conincxloo III, is of special interest to us because he was both a painter/art dealer and a buyer of art at Orphan Chamber sales. On 13 May 1639, Admirael signed an agreement with Van Conincxloo in the wake of a dispute concerning the repayment of several debts that Van Conincxloo owed him. Admirael claimed that a court had awarded him two judgements against Van Conincxloo calling for the latter to pay him 740 f plus interests and court costs. In addition the two men, pursuant upon the mediation of “good friends”, had agreed that Van Conincxloo should pay Admirael another 340 f. Van Conincxloo undertook to pay Admirael “without appeal”. The art dealer Hendrick van Uylenburgh was expected to oversee the repayment of the debts, until Admirael had expressed his satisfaction (contentement). The nature of the debts was left unspecified. It is very probable that the transactions between Admirael and Van Conincxloo involved the exchange of tulip bulbs for paintings or other works of art. This speculation is based on Admirael’s known transactions, including the exchange of tulips against paintings with Marten Kretser in 1635, and the presence of Uylenburgh as an arbiter in the dispute. That Van Conincxloo now had to deliver paintings to Admirael to acquit himself of his debt is apparent from another document, drawn up a little more than a year later, on 24 October 1640. Admirael now acknowledged having received 625 f in capital and interest from the merchant Hans van der Putte, corresponding to the debt that Van Conincxloo owed him. He thereby discharged Van Conincxloo from any further obligation and transferred to Van der Putte all the paintings, drawings, prints and other furniture that Van Conincxloo had ceded to him. The appendices to the act, one of which was signed as early as 26 July 1639, listed works of art and other furniture that were being held by Admirael. Ten of the paintings and drawings and one kunstboeck had been evaluated by Hendrick van Uylenburgh and Frans Kaersgieter (for 239 f). These included a drawing by Willem Buytewech (5 f), a painting by Jan van Bylert (40 f), another by Dirck Hals (12 f), and a tronie by Lucas Cran (probably Cranach) (10 f). The kunstboeck consisted of prints by Aldegraver, Sebald Beham, and Georg Pencz (altogether 280 sheets for 20 f). To make up the principal sum, many other works of art had been thrown in, including a copy after Pieter Claesz. (10 f), a little tronie by Flinck (10 f), a piece by Pieter Aertsen (8 f), a copy of Rembrandt’s Samson (15 f), a judgement of Mydas (20 f), a seascape (25 f), a painting of a lady after Rembrandt (25 f), and 35 or 36 paintings, “copies and otherwise”, and unpainted and dead-painted panels (all for 100 f). There was also some exotic material (Japanese canes, sticks of ebony wood, Brasilian boughs, for a total of 118 f), and miscellaneous art works (40 f). The sum of all these items amounted to 635 f, which was more or less the amount of the debt. But there were also many other prints and paintings that were not evaluated at all, including Rembrandt’s etching of Ecce Homo, Italian drawings, a tronie after Rembrandt, and many prints by Lucas van Leyden, Beham, and others. Van Conincxloo had apparently turned over these items
as collateral for the debt he owed to Admirael. In an appended act of 19 November 1639, Van Conincxloo’s wife, Sara de Vogelaer, acknowledged that she had received from Admirael a bed with its pillows (included in the furniture that had been transferred to him), which she could keep at his discretion (in precario). This acknowledgement makes it more than likely that Van Conincxloo had turned over all his worldly possessions, including his dealer’s stock, to Admirael as a pledge for his debt. The pawning of the couple’s furniture, including their bed, must have been particularly hard on Sara de Vogelaer, who came from a distinguished family of Emden jewelers.

From this small sample of documents, it emerges clearly that the set of buyers of art at auction and the set of buyers and sellers of flower bulbs intersected in significant ways. But there is also a tantalizing relation between artists (and individuals with a close relation to the artistic world) and the tulip trade. We have seen that the etcher Simon van Poelenburgh was a bulb buyer, as was the father of Romeyn de Hooghe. I mentioned earlier that the brothers Abraham and Cornelis de Bruijn had married daughters of the painter Jacob Savery and were the brothers-in-law of the print-maker Hendrick Roghman. Cornelis de Bruijn lodged a complaint in May 1637 against Abraham Wachtendonck who had bought bulbs from him but had not taken delivery. The drogist Govert van der Hoeven (a buyer of art at auction), who was the brother of the painter Felix van der Hoeven, bought bulbs at the Pieter Pietersz. sale in 1626. Abraham de Goyer, who played a major role in the tulip speculation of 1637, was the guardian of the painter Paulus Hennekin, whom he assisted on the occasion of his betrothal in December 1636. His son, Barend, is said to have become a painter. Finally, Hans van Conincxloo III, who, if my speculation is valid, appears to have been ruined by the tulip speculation, was a painter as well as an art dealer (as the dead-painted panels he turned over to Admirael testify).

Was the affinity between buyers of tulip bulbs and buyers of art at auction a matter of taste or was it a common attitude toward risk? I suspect that it was a little of both, although I have no evidence to confirm this – aside from the bet on the liberation of Schenckenschans made by Jan Hendricksz. Admirael, tulip grower and buyer of art at auction.

In the next chapter, I introduce one final cluster – the signatories of the Remonstrant petition of 1628 – which is so interwoven with the early history of Dutch society that I thought it deserved separate treatment.