



DEPRESSED EYES

‘Allegory of Winter’ painted by Caesar van Everdingen, ca 1650

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1. Introduction

When visiting the Rijksmuseum, it seems that all that tourists want to see is Rembrandt's *'Night Watch'*. However, before arriving at the right spot, they pass a painting which makes nearly everybody stop and look. What attracts their attention is a beautiful but mysterious lady with her eyes cast down. She is dressed in a wonderfully coloured cape and her hands are holding a cloth over a brazier (illus. 1). The very attractive colour of her costume and the expression on her face are fascinating. Questions come to mind: Why is she so sad? What is the meaning of the painting? Who is the painter? The card on the wall next to the painting says that it is entitled *'Allegory of Winter'* and painted by Caesar van Everdingen (1616/17-1678). It is described as an excellent example of Dutch seventeenth-century classicism.

2. *'Allegory of Winter'* by Caesar van Everdingen, c. 1650

Van Everdingen's painting shows a woman, depicted half-length. She is bending forward in a slightly oblique direction, her left shoulder lower than the right one. She is richly dressed in a pink, fur-lined cape and she wears a white scarf trimmed with lace, tied in a knot behind her head. A strong light enters the frame from top left and the white headscarf stands out strongly against the dark background. The light creates a strange shadow on her lower lip but there is a small spot of light on her chin. She wears good jewellery: a double string of pearls around her neck and golden earrings, each featuring a cameo and three pearl drops. She seems to be looking downwards at the green and blue cloth, which she is holding over a brazier filled with glowing pieces of coal. The picture is signed at bottom centre with the monogram CVE. The edge of the stone or table is the only straight line in the painting. All the other dominant lines are curved. The contours of her head, shoulders and cloth are all curved in the same direction. It seems as if all the lines are arranged around the brazier, making it the focal point.

A detail of the headscarf shows that the upper fold presents more graduation in its shadow than the lower ones, where the headscarf is bound more tightly around the woman's head (illus. 1a). A second detail, taken from the shadow side of her neck,

shows the beautiful light reflection from the cape (illus. 1b). The earring is painted just in front of the light reflection. Because she is leaning forwards, the earring comes out of the shadow and itself catches some light. The earring on the other side is also finely painted, just in front of the white lace (illus. 1c). This detail shows even better the shadow on her slightly pronounced bottom lip. The lower edge of the cape is trimmed with embroidery (illus. 1d). The brazier contains pieces of glowing coal. However, in the darkness above the coals no details can be distinguished. The picture is painted in a fine, smooth way with great attention to detail and unusual colours.

Besides the beautiful colour of the cape, which attracts everybody's attention immediately, the expression on her face is even more impressive. Lady Winter's face is marked by grief and sorrow and her eyes are cast down in a depressed way. In a close-up, you can almost feel the tears behind her eyelids. This interpretation is quite different from other descriptions. Albert Blankert, who has published quite a lot on Caesar van Everdingen, describes Lady Winter as 'inward looking' and the Rijksmuseum has adopted this description on its website. Wouter Kloek and even Huys Janssen likewise interpret the downcast eyes as expressing self-absorption. The difference between my view and the generally accepted interpretation is striking, but this is not the only point on which I differ. A second difference is that most authors describe the woman as lifting up her skirt or at least lifting up some part of her clothing. In my opinion, this is not realistic. The following paragraph quotes three examples of such descriptions.

Albert Blankert says the woman is lifting up her skirt to feel the heat on her body: *'Met haar handen onder haar rok heeft zij die opgetild om er een soort boven de kooltjes gespreid afdakje van te maken. Zo vangt zij op haar handen en lichaam zoveel mogelijk op van de gloed die er af straalt'*.¹ The Rijksmuseum website gives a similar description: *'A young woman is warming herself by a brazier, a pot containing glowing coals. Her dress forms a screen above the fire trapping and spreading the heat. She is clearly engrossed in what she is doing and her eyes are cast downward.'*² Likewise, Wouter Kloek states: *Haar handen die zij verborgen houdt onder een blauw-grijs kleed, vermoedelijk haar rok, warmt zij aan een vuurtest, die op de rand van een tafel of een muurtje voor haar staat. Haar ogen heeft zij neergeslagen, in zichzelf gekeerd en*

¹ Blankert 1991, p. 513.

² http://www.rijksmuseum.nl/aria/aria_assets/SK-A-4878?lang=en

*geconcentreerd op de aangename warmte van het vuur.*³ [Her hands, which she keeps hidden under a piece of blue-gray cloth, probably her skirt, she warms at a brazier, set before her at the edge of a table or stone wall. Her eyes are cast down, self-absorbed and focused on the pleasant warmth of the fire.]

These three descriptions can only have their origin in male fantasy. They clearly illustrate a gender difference. No woman would ever lift up her skirt over an open fire to warm her body; this is a completely ridiculous idea. My opinion on this point was confirmed by the reactions of other women during the presentation in class.

Albert Blankert also suggests associations between the glow of the coals and the glow of love.⁴ He refers to one of the Roemer Visscher's 'Sinnepoppen' in which a foot stove is called a 'Mignon des Dames' and is related to the fire of love on cold days.⁵ He also states: *'Hun schijnsel (van de kooltjes) is zo zwak dat het onder de rok van de vrouw donker blijft, zodat ook duister is of zij nog kleren er onder draagt.'*⁶ [The light of the coals is so weak that it remains dark under the woman's skirt, so that it is unclear whether she is wearing anything underneath.] His interpretation goes even further when he states: *'Op het schilderij van Van Everdingen is de rechte steel van het vuurtestje niet te zien en is dus naar het lichaam van de vrouw toegericht.'*⁷ [In Van Everdingen's painting, the straight handle of the fire test cannot be seen and therefore is turned towards the body of the woman.] In my opinion he is going too far in reaching such conclusions. Associations in art history should be based on visible entities and not related to the invisible world.

3. 'Principael' or copy

The Rijksmuseum bought the painting in 1991 at the Glerum auction rooms in The Hague and it was judged to be a valuable acquisition for the museum and a fine example of Dutch classicism.^{8,9} Initially there was confusion with a similar painting that had

³ Kloek 1992, p. 16.

⁴ Blankert 1991, p. 513.

⁵ De Jongh 1976, pp. 96-97.

⁶ Blankert 1991, p. 514.

⁷ Blankert 1999, p. 175.

⁸ Kloek 1992, p. 16.

entered the art market earlier. The connoisseur and art dealer Vitale Bloch (1900-1975) drew attention to this other painting in the journal *Oud Holland*.¹⁰ A year later, in 1937, he sold the painting to the museum in Southampton.¹¹ When Bloch describes the copy in Southampton he says: *‘Schön und wahr stossen diesmal nicht aufeinander, ergänzen sich vielmehr’*.¹² [On this occasion, beauty and truth are not in conflict, but, rather complement each other]. It is worth reading the rest of his description, because it not only gives an indication of the quality of the painting, which must be very high, but also clearly expresses his personal appreciation of it:

‘Stillebenmässig, mit liebevoller Sorgfalt ist das Jäkchen über die Schulter der Frau gelegt, ein Rosa, das, mit Ausnahme von Barent Fabritius, in der holländischen Malerei kaum je verwendet worden ist. Mit gleichem Gefühl für das ‘stille Leben’ ist die weise Haube gemalt. Dieser behutsamen Behandlung der Materie, dieser Besorgtheit um jede Falte widerspricht das mit freierem Pinsel in warmen Tönen gemalte Gesicht. Die Augen, von dichten Wimpern umsäumt, sind niedergeschlagen: eine bürgerliche Frau, kein billiges Modell hatte der Künstler gewiss vor sich’.

[As if in a still life, with loving care, the cape is laid over the shoulders of the woman, a pink colour that has hardly ever been used in Dutch painting, except by Barent Fabritius. The pale skin is painted with the same feeling for its quality as a 'still life'. This careful treatment of matter, this concern for every wrinkle, contrasts with the way the face is painted, with freer brushstrokes and in warm tones. Her eyes, fringed with thick eyelashes, are cast down: the artist has certainly painted a bourgeois woman, not a cheap model.]

Both paintings, the one in the Rijksmuseum and the one in Southampton, are of high quality but there are small differences. These are described by Blankert in the

⁹ Xander van Eck stated, when reviewing the exhibition *God, Saints and Heroes* in 1980-81, that the term ‘Dutch classicism’ had never before been applied to the work of the group of painters gathered together in that exhibition. He said that, according to Blankert, classicism in Dutch painting repeatedly manifested itself as a reaction to some ‘extreme’ movement in other art: Mannerism in Haarlem, Caravaggism in Utrecht and the Rembrandt school in Amsterdam. It is an art intended to be Italian-like, but always remaining recognizably Dutch. This classicism appears time and again in the seventeenth century as a trend and as a reaction against anything perceived as caprice or excess. (Van Eck 2000, p.75; Blankert 1980, p.15.)

¹⁰ Bloch 1936, p. 260.

¹¹ Kloek 1992, p. 18; Huys Janssen 2002, p. 79.

¹² Bloch 1936.

Rijksmuseum Bulletin (illus. 2).¹³ In the Southampton painting the face looks a little smaller and the background is patchy, while in the Rijksmuseum painting the background is even in colour. In Southampton the brown curly hairs around the earring are missing and the fold in the lower part of the cape is turned inward, unlike the one in de Rijksmuseum painting, which is turned outward. The brazier is also depicted in a different way; in particular, the line of shadow is straight, while in the Rijksmuseum it follows the structure of the brazier. However, the most important difference is the monogram CVE, which is missing in the Southampton picture. In view of these differences and because of the painted monogram, the work in the Rijksmuseum is regarded as the original or '*principael*' and the Southampton painting as a copy.

In Blankert's opinion, the quality of the Southampton painting is so high that it must be by the same artist, maybe prepared as a 'modello' for the original.¹⁴ Other people suggest that it is a copy made by a pupil. In an inventory of pictures left by the artist (published by Dresch in *Oud Holland*), two paintings by the artist are described as 'een Winter'.¹⁵ They were valued at (no.17) 18 and (no.19) 12 guilders. It is very likely that these are the same paintings. However, the problem with old inventories of paintings is that their measurements are not given, so it is impossible to say this with any certainty. The fact that Van Everdingen kept both paintings all his life strongly suggests that they must have been of great emotional value to him. So who was Caesar van Everdingen? What do we know about him?

4. Caesar van Everdingen (1616/17-1678), his life and work

Caesar van Everdingen spent most of his life in Alkmaar, the town where he was born. There is no documentary evidence of the date of his birth, but the year must have been 1616 or 1617 because there are documents that say he died in 1678 at the age of 62.¹⁶

¹³ Blankert 1991, pp. 509-510.

¹⁴ Blankert 1991, p. 511.

¹⁵ Dresch 1935, 52: p. 44.

¹⁶ In an old catalogue of the museum in Alkmaar, the author (Dresch) suggests that two Cesar (or Caesar) van Everdingens may have existed: a Cesar and Cesar Boetius van Everdingen (Dresch 1932). Archival research has not clarified this suggestion. Huys Janssen rejects this idea and believes that there was only one person of this name (Huys Janssen 2002).

He was the eldest son of Pieter Cornelis van Everdingen (1575-1662) and was a child of his second marriage, to Aechje Claesdr Moer (c. 1585-1640). His father was a widower and already had six children. His mother, also a widow, had a son from a previous marriage. The couple would have five children together, although one of them – the twin sister of Allaert (the later landscape painter) – died after only a few months. It must have been a busy home with so many children around.

It is unknown who gave Caesar his first lessons in drawing and painting, but he entered the Alkmaar Guild of St Luke at a very young age in 1632. In 1636 he painted portraits of his parents (illus. 3,4). He met Jacob van Campen (1596-1657) when he was working in the Great Church or Sint Laurenskerk in Alkmaar. Houbraken mentioned in 1719 that Caesar van Everdingen was probably trained in Utrecht by Jan Gerritsz Bronckhorst (c. 1631-1661). Caesar's mother died in 1640 and he subsequently lived in Amersfoort for several years (1641-1644), in the house of Jacob van Campen. With the help of the latter, he got the commission to paint the organ shutters of the Great Church in Alkmaar. His painting *'The Triumph of Saul after David's Victory over Goliath'* is still in place. In 1644, at the age of seventy, his father married for the third time. The next year, Caesar made a trip to France with his youngest brother Scipio. After returning home to Alkmaar in 1646, he married Helena van Oosthoorn (1624-1694), the daughter of his new step-mother.

With the help of Jacob van Campen, Caesar was invited to take part in preparing the decorations for the Oranjezaal in Huis ten Bosch (The Hague). These were designed to celebrate the life and work of Stadholder Frederik Hendrik, who had died in 1647. The resulting painting, *'Four Muses and Pegasus on Mount Parnassus'* (illus. 5), is generally regarded as the best work he ever made. At that time, Van Everdingen was living with his wife in Haarlem, in the house of his brother Allaert van Everdingen (1621-1675), who was a famous landscape painter. In Haarlem he was connected with a group of painters, the most important of whom were Jacob van Campen, Salomon de Braij, Pieter Grebber and Soutman. Others were Leendert van der Cooghen, Dirck Helmbreker and Jan de Braij.¹⁷ The work for the Oranjezaal was completed in around 1651-1652.

¹⁷ Lammertse 2004, pp. 263-264.

This time in Haarlem was the most productive period in his career. He painted famous works like *'Diogenes Looking for an Honest Man'* (1652), now in the Mauritshuis Museum, and *'The Holy Family'*, dating from around 1650-1655 and now in the possession of the Catharijnen Convent (illus. 6). This last painting is odd because of its explicitly Catholic theme. Caesar and his wife were devout members of the Reformed Church and it is not clear why he chose this subject. In 1657-1659 he painted a few large militia pieces for the Alkmaar Civic Guard.

He had been living in Haarlem for nearly fifteen years when he moved for a short period to Amsterdam. Probably he was hoping to obtain a commission to decorate the city's town hall after the death of Govert Flinck. When he did not get it, he returned to Alkmaar in 1662. This was also the year in which his father died. In Alkmaar he painted many portraits until his own sudden death in 1678. He was buried in the town's Great Church, where his tombstone bears the characteristic monogram CVE, which he was already using before 1640 to sign his paintings.¹⁸

Huys Janssen gives full details of what happened to the painter's estate. His description is quoted here in full: 'After Caesar van Everdingen's death, an inventory was drawn up of the art in his estate: fifty-six lots of paintings and several hundred drawings, nearly all by his own hand. Most of his property went to Janneke Cornelisdr Brouwers, the widow of Allart van Everdingen, and her children, including Cornelis and Pieter van Everdingen, who were also painters. From the document with the list of art works and studies, it appears that the Van Everdingens wanted to gain possession of as much of Caesar's work as possible and that they were successful in their efforts. Helena van Oosthoorn relinquished most of the art she had inherited, including all the drawings and prints, keeping only about ten paintings.'¹⁹

Caesar van Everdingen earliest work dates from 1636 and his last from 1674. His active career therefore extended over more than three decades. Huys Janssen's estimate of the artist's oeuvre comes to about a hundred pieces. In his catalogue raisonné he describes sixty-one autograph paintings and three replicas.²⁰ Thirty-three works – more than half of Van Everdingen's known oeuvre – are still preserved in the

¹⁸ Huys Janssen 2002, p. 52.

¹⁹ Huys Janssen 2002, p. 52.

²⁰ Huys Janssen 2002; De Vries 2002.

Netherlands, fifteen of them in his native town of Alkmaar.²¹ Caesar van Everdingen's style changed little over the years and his development is difficult to capture in words. His paintings are characterized by clear compositions in which the figures have idealized bodies, while the heads are rather individualised. The artist showed a great love of naturalistic detail and wonderful skill in his treatment of textures and surfaces.²² Albert Blankert mentions in particular his subtle use of colour, fluent style and mild eroticism.²³

Seven months after the death of her husband, in April 1679, Van Everdingen's widow, Helena van Oosthoorn, married again. This marriage was not a success; from 1687, she lived apart from her husband. She died in June 1694 and was buried in the Great Church in Alkmaar. In her will, she specified that a scholarship fund for students of theology was to be set up in her memory. Moreover, a house was to be bought where two impecunious elderly women could live out their lives. The paintings of her husband and the portraits of his parents were to hang in this house.²⁴ The house still exists and the paintings are now in the Alkmaar Museum.

5. Allegorical representations of winter

In seventeenth-century paintings, winter is usually depicted allegorically as an old man. The relationship between the last phase in life and the final season of the year is easy to understand. In Van Everdingen's painting in the Rijksmuseum, however, winter is apparently represented not by an old man, but by a young woman. This raises the question of whether there are more female winters. A quick search has shown that they do indeed exist. There are two from about the same time. The first is a painting by Abraham Janssens (active 1590-1632) and is part of a series showing the four seasons. In the winter scene, three figures are depicted with the zodiac signs for Capricorn, Aquarius and Pisces above their heads, indicating that this is the winter season (illus.7). Although the painting is described by Van Straaten as representing three women, a

²¹ Buvelot 2003, p. 224.

²² Lammertse 2004, p. 265.

²³ Blankert 1987, p. 254.

²⁴ Bedeaux 1982.

close inspection casts doubt on this view.²⁵ The whole series of four seasons would need to be studied to decide whether the three figures in the winter scene are all women or not. At least one of them is certainly female.

More convincing is an etching made by Wenceslaus Hollar (1607-1677). This Bohemian artist produced a notable group of prints representing allegories of the seasons, uniquely personified by female figures in contemporary dress (illus. 8).²⁶ The etching representing winter dates from around 1643-44 and is now in the British Museum in London. The lady is depicted full-length, dressed in a long fur coat, and the inscription below the etching clearly underscores her allegorical status.

These findings suggest that there is a tradition of female figures representing the winter season. By extending the search over a longer period, another two examples were found from a later date: allegorical winters by Lorenzo Tiepolo (1736-1774) (illus. 9) and Jan van Beers (1852-1927) (illus. 10). It is very likely that a more extensive search would reveal other female winters. However, this was ruled out by lack of time.

Winter may also be represented by the element of hand-warming. The best example is the painting by Abraham Bloemaert (1566-1651) which must date from around 1625-30 (illus. 11). The position of the sitter is the same as that in Van Everdingen's painting. Both show subjects bending forwards in a slightly oblique direction and holding their hands over a brazier. Another example of hand-warming is in a work by Hendrick Bloemaert (1601-1672), dated 1631 (illus. 12). This painting no longer exists; it hung in the office of the burgomaster of Middelburg until 1940 but was destroyed by warfare.²⁷

6. What is the meaning of the painting?

In Van Everdingen's *'Allegory of Winter'*, the brazier is the focal point of all the curved lines in the painting. So the element of hand-warming must be important. The difference between my reading of the painting and Blankert's interpretation (that the woman is lifting up her skirt) has already been discussed. His view of Lady Winter's behaviour seems to me highly unlikely; after all, draping a cloth over an open fire is very

²⁵ Van Straaten 1977, p. 39.

²⁶ Monteyne 2006, p. 414.

²⁷ Source: RKD

dangerous. Besides, the body-warming interpretation was rejected and judged to be ridiculous by a number of women during the presentation. Anyway, a close look at the painting doesn't reveal a woman lifting up her skirt, but rather a lady covering a brazier with a cloth. Of course, in reality this would be dangerous too. But is this supposed to be real life? Why shouldn't we look in a different direction to find the meaning of the painting? Why not a psychological interpretation of the 'covering' process?

7. 'Covering' in a psychological sense

In a psychological sense, 'covering up' is a way to deal with a problem: the opposite of exploring it. By covering up a problem, you hide it from your conscious mind. But the emotions relating to the problem live on in the subconscious. The subconscious is the part of your mental processes you are not aware of. However, it is an important part of them because it influences your opinions, behaviour and actions. This is also the part of your mind which powers creativity and those who are artists may express hidden emotions in their creative work. The artist is unaware of this process; he or she is just creating or, as in this case, just painting.

In the seventeenth century, this was unknown but the psychological process of dealing with problems was the same then as it is today. Therefore, it is possible to hypothesize that, when Caesar van Everdingen painted a beautiful lady covering up a brazier, he was expressing his own covered-up feelings, even though he was unaware of the source of them and of the mechanism he was using.

8. Look-alike of Lady Winter

Albert Blankert claims that Lady Winter looks very like a female figure in another painting by Caesar van Everdingen: he feels that her posture, gesture and features resemble those of the muse on the right in *'The Four Muses and Pegasus on Mount Parnassus'* (illus. 5).²⁸ As already noted, this painting was created for the Oranjezaal in Huis ten Bosch and is considered to be the most important in the artist's entire oeuvre. I disagree with Blankert's claim. The hair colour is different, the forward-bending

²⁸ Blankert 1991, p. 519.

position of the head is different and only the oval form of the face and the light on her nose may present some similarity.

Searching Caesar van Everdingen's oeuvre for similarities, I did however find a better candidate. *'The Holy Family'* is now in the Catharijnen Convent in Utrecht and I was able to study the painting closely because it was in depot. The Virgin and child both look outward at the viewer, while Joseph sits next to them as if he had no relation with either. In my opinion, Mary's face shows similarities with that of Lady Winter. The round form and dark hair are similar. The faces of Mary and the child are painted in an idealized way, using a very fine, smooth technique. The graduation of the colours in the skin is fluently painted. The face of Joseph, however, is rougher and darker in colour. The depiction of Joseph seems more down to earth.

An important detail is mentioned by Huys Janssen in his *Catalogue Raisonné* of Caesar van Everdingen's works. On page 122 he says: *'When the piece (The Holy Family) was donated to the Bisschoppelijk Museum in 1870, the depiction was interpreted as a portrait, in which case a family would have had themselves portrayed as the Holy Family.'* Huys Janssen suggests that Joseph may represent the man who commissioned the painting.²⁹ More research would be required to establish whether this could indeed be the case.

However, there is evidence that points in a different direction. Eight years before Caesar died, he painted his own self portrait (illus. 13). Comparing the face in that painting with Joseph's in *The Holy Family* reveals remarkable similarities (illus. 14a and 14b). Of course the comparison is restricted by age difference, but the form of the ear and especially the earlobe completely concur. The hairline on the forehead, the form of the nose and the two vertical lines at its base, the form of the moustache, the upper lip and the slightly pronounced bottom lip and chin are all similar. Even the characteristic dimple in the cheek in van Everdingen's self portrait is matched in the face of Joseph in *'The Holy Family'*. This dimple is also present in the portrait that Caesar painted of his father (illus. 3). The dimple should therefore be seen as a family characteristic. So Caesar painted the holy family as if it was his own family. The Virgin and child are idealized but the child has the family characteristic too. Taking into account that Caesar's marriage was childless, it may be that he painted not only his own

²⁹ Huys Janssen 2002, pp. 49 and 122.

portrait in an idealized family group, but also that of the child he never had. Following this line of thought, it is reasonable to hypothesize that *Lady Winter* is the expression of the artist's subconscious grief and sorrow over his childless marriage.

When I was studying '*The Holy Family*' in the depot of the Catharijnen Convent, people there agreed with my interpretation of the painting. Indeed, they even went further in associative thinking and one of them suggested the possibility of a dead child from the artist's marriage. While one should always be extremely careful about unbiased interpretations, the couple could indeed very well have lost a child.

9. Arguments for the grief and sorrow theory

'*Allegory of Winter*' was clearly important to Caesar van Everdingen and his wife. There are several arguments to support this statement. First of all, the painting was copied. Secondly, Caesar van Everdingen kept both the copy and the original all his life. And the paintings are listed in the estate of Helena van Oosthoorn some time after her husband's death.³⁰

Apart from these facts of ownership, there is also the remarkable chronological relationship with a life event. '*Allegory of Winter*' is not dated but is judged by the Rijksmuseum to have been painted around 1650, while Huys Janssen in his catalogue raisonné traces its origin to around 1645-1650.³¹ So the painting was probably produced some years after the marriage, which took place in 1646. The marriage was childless. Caesar and his wife were both devout members of the Reformed Church, which regards it as a duty to have children. He himself came from a large family and had many nephews and nieces. In view of all this, their childless marriage might be expected to have burdened the couple and caused them sorrow and grief.

In his article published in *Oud Holland* in 1935, Dresch gives details of the will made by Van Everdingen and his wife Helena van Oosthoorn on 5 November 1655. Since they named each other as sole heir, they obviously did not expect to have a child. '*Ten overstaan van den Haarlemschen notaris Jacob Steyn maakten op 5 nov. 1655 Van*

³⁰ Dresch 1935, p. 44.

³¹ Huys Janssen 2002, p. 78.

Everdingen en zijn vrouw hun testament. In deze uiterste wilsbeschikking wezen zij over en weer de langstlevende tot universeel erfgenaam aan.^{32,33}

All the above arguments are based on fact, but an important aspect is missing: no letters from Caesar van Everdingen or from his wife Helena van Oosthoorn are known to survive and there is no written source on this highly personal subject of their childless marriage. If there are no personal documents, is this the end of this line of enquiry? No, it is not. Another possibility is to examine the whole painted oeuvre of Caesar van Everdingen and search it for ‘psychological clues’.

10. The *Venus* and *Adonis* paintings

Two paintings which are even more impressive than ‘*Allegory of Winter*’, are ‘*Still Life with Statue of Venus*’ (illus. 15) and ‘*Still Life with Statue of Adonis*’ (illus. 16). Both appear to have been kept by Van Everdingen in his own home all his life, since the artist’s estate included two paintings described as “Twe pieces, Venus and Adonis, graau” [two pieces, Venus and Adonis, grey]³⁴ And it seems likely that these are the paintings now in The Hague and Cape Town.³⁵

The first person to describe the paintings was the art dealer Vitale Bloch. He called them wonderful works of illusion and described them as ‘breathing statues’. In his description of Venus he says: ‘*Wobei er (Caesar van Everdingen) um die Schulter der Büste eine zarte rosa Draperie gelegt hat, wobei er das Licht so spielen liess, dass die Zuschauer sich des Eindrucks einer atmenden Antike nicht erwehren können.*’³⁶ [Where he has placed around the shoulders of the bust a delicate pink drapery, where he made the play of light so that the audience cannot help feeling that this is a breathing woman of antiquity.] Both paintings were on the market around 1911-1912. The *Adonis* painting was bought for a museum to be created in South Africa. The *Venus* painting was acquired by Vitale Bloch and he tried unsuccessfully to sell it to Schmidt Degener,

³² Dresch 1935, p. 42.

³³ The family Steyn is depicted by Van Everdingen in the painting entitled ‘*Diogenes Looking for an Honest Man*’ which is in the Mauritshuis, The Hague.

³⁴ Dresch 1935, p. 44.

³⁵ Van Leeuwen 1992.

³⁶ Bloch 1936, p. 261.

director of the Rijksmuseum. A few years later he sold it to the Dutch collector Staring for £ 150.³⁷

Both paintings radiate a deathly stillness. They are the only surviving works by Van Everdingen with no living subjects. The bust of Venus is accompanied by a head interpreted as Cupid. She has also been said to be looking at Cupid. In my opinion, however, she is gazing some way over the head, which looks more like that of a dead child and could therefore fit perfectly well with the grief and sorrow theory. As already stated, Caesar seems to have kept the *Venus* and *Adonis* paintings all his life, so they must have been important to him. These two paintings may be seen as psychological clues. However, as already stated, the problem is the lack of written sources.

11. Chronological order

If there are no written sources to confirm it, the grief and sorrow theory must always be regarded as a hypothesis. However, putting the paintings in chronological order makes the hypothesis seem extremely acceptable. The Van Everdingens married in 1646. *'Allegory of Winter'* was painted in ca. 1650 and *'The Holy Family'* originates from the 1650-1655 period. So both paintings date from the period following their marriage. The *'Venus'* and *'Adonis'* pendants are both signed and dated. *'Venus'* is dated 1665 and *'Adonis'* 1666. Both paintings were made in the last phase of the artist's life. And around 1670, eight years before he died, Caesar painted a self portrait with references to his father: the same dimple in his cheek and wearing the same ring on his hand as his father did when he portrayed him. Looking at this chronological order, it is tempting to see a link with a psychological process of dealing with an emotional problem (i.e. the childlessness of the artist's marriage, and maybe a dead child).

A number of doctoral theses have been written on Caesar van Everdingen. Given the limited time available to prepare this essay, they could not be studied, nor could further attempts be made to uncover more psychological clues in his oeuvre. More research needs to be done and may produce relevant material.

³⁷ Van Leeuwen 1992, pp. 95-96; Fransen 1996, pp. 102-103.

12. Conclusion

There are strong indications that Caesar van Everdingen's *'Allegory of Winter'* is related to the artist's personal grief and sorrow. Further archive research needs to be done. A psychological approach to a painting is an important way of revealing unconscious aspects and helping to interpret the image.

13. Summary

'Allegory of Winter' (c. 1650) by Caesar van Everdingen (1616/17-1678) can be interpreted in a psychological way and the lady's face may be regarded as depressed, showing grief and sorrow. In the reality of everyday life, her gesture of placing a cloth over a brazier full of glowing coals is highly unlikely. However, the covering process can be interpreted in a psychological way. The covering-up gesture could relate to the suppression of an emotional problem. Arguments for this grief and sorrow theory are: 1) the chronological relationship between the painting and the date of the artist's marriage, 2) the childlessness of his marriage, 3) the provenance of the painting and 4) 'clues' in other paintings by the artist. These justify the hypothesis that Caesar van Everdingen expressed the burden of his personal grief in his art, while he himself remained unaware of the source and the mechanism he was using. This unconscious psychological mechanism is discussed.

APPENDIX I

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APPENDIX II

List of illustrations**Illus. 1**

Caesar van Everdingen (1616/17-1678)

Allegory of winter, c. 1650, oil on canvas, 97 x 81 cm, signed in monogram at lower centre: CVE, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, SK-A-4878

Illus. 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d

details

Illus. 2

Copie: Caesar van Everdingen (1616/17-1678)

Allegory of winter, oil on canvas, 91.8 x 71.2 cm, Southampton, City Art Gallery.

Illus. 3

Caesar van Everdingen (1616/17-1678)

Pieter Cornelisz van Everdingen, 1636, panel, 94 x 74.6 cm, inscribed at lower right: Aetatis 61, Anno 1636, inscribed at upper left: VICTRIX FORTUNAE SAPIENTIA, Alkmaar, Stedelijk Museum, inv.nr. 20929

Illus. 4

Aechje Claesdr Moer, 1636, panel, 94.1 x 74.3 cm, inscribed at lower left: AETS.51(?) ANO 1636, Alkmaar, Stedelijk Museum, inv.nr. 20930

Illus. 5

Caesar van Everdingen (1616/17-1678)

Four muses and Pegasus on Mount Parnassus, 1649-1650, oil on canvas, 340 x 230 cm, signed in monogram at lower right on the bass gamba: CVE, The Hague, Royal Palace Huis ten Bosch, Oranjezaal.

Illus. 6

Caesar van Everdingen (1616/17-1678)

The Holy Family, 1650-1655, oil on canvas, 129 x 105 cm, signed in monogram at lower centre: CVE, Utrecht, Museum Catharijnen Convent, inv. nr. S115

Illus. 7

Abraham Janssens (working period 1590-1632)

Allegory of winter, oil on canvas, 119.5 x 98 cm, private collection.

Source: RKD

Illus. 8

Wenceslaus Hollar (1607-1677), *Winter*, 1643-44, etching, 26.5 x 18.5 cm, London, British Museum.

Illus. 9

Lorenzo Tiepolo (1736-74)

Allegory of winter, 1762, pastel, El Paso Museum of Art.

Source: Wikimedia Common

Illus. 10

Jan van Beers (1852-1927)

Allegory of winter, c. 1900

Source: Art Prints

Illus. 11

Abraham Bloemaert (1566-1651)

Allegory of winter, 1625-30, oil on canvas, 70 x 57 cm, Paris, Musée du Louvre.

Illus. 12

Hendrick Bloemaert (1601-72)

Old man as winter, 1631, lost during WOII at Middelburg.

Source: RKD

Illus. 13

Caesar van Everdingen (1616/17-1678)

Self-portrait, c. 1670, oil on canvas, 94.3 x 74.5 cm, Alkmaar, Stedelijk Museum, inv.nr. 20931

Illus. 14

Caesar van Everdingen (1616/17-1678)

Details: illus. 6 and illus. 13

Illus. 15

Caesar van Everdingen (1616/17-1678)

Still life with bust of Venus, 1665, oil on canvas, 74 x 60.8 cm, signed in monogram and dated at lower left: CVE AN° 16.65, The Hague, Mauritshuis, inv.nr. 1088

Illus. 16

Caesar van Everdingen (1616/17-1678)

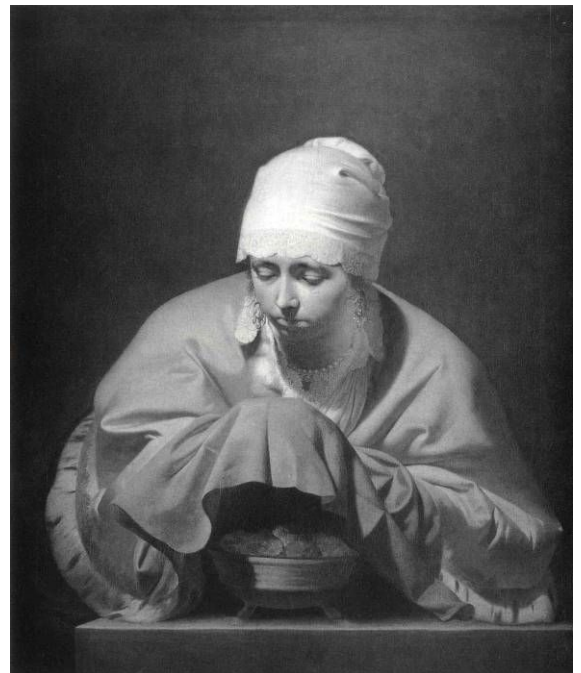
Still life with bust of Adonis, 1666, oil on canvas, 73.7 x 60 cm, signed in monogram and dated at lower right: CVE AN° 16.66, Cape Town, Michaelis Collection, inv.nr. 14/20



Illus. 1 *Allegory of Winter*, c. 1650, Rijksmuseum



Illus. 2 *Allegory of Winter*, Southampton



Illus. 1 *Allegory of Winter*, Amsterdam



Illus. 1a



Illus. 1b



Illus. 1c



Illus. 1d



Illus. 3 *Pieter Cornelisz van Everdingen, 1636*



Illus. 4 *Aechje Claesdr Moer, 1636*



Illus. 5 *Four muses and Pegasus, 1649-50*



Illus. 6 *The Holy Family, 1650-55*



Illus. 7
Abraham Janssens



Illus. 8
Wencel. Hollar, 1643-44



Illus. 9
Lorenzo Tiepolo, 1762



Illus. 10
Jan van Beers, c. 1900



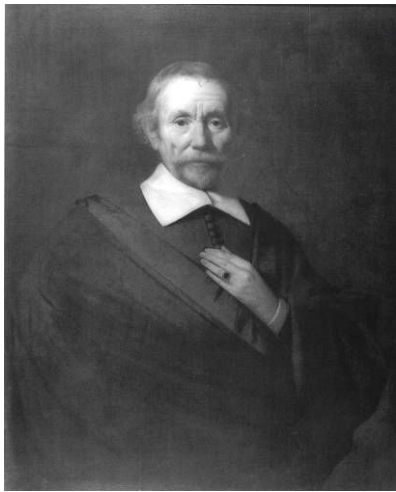
Illus. 1 *Van Everdingen, c.1650*



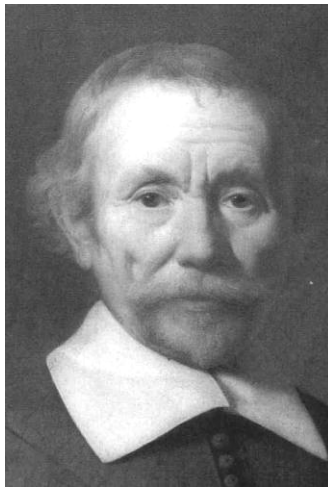
Illus. 11 *Abrah Bloemaert, 1625-30*



Illus. 12 *Hendrick Bloemaert, 1631*



Illus. 13 Caesar van Everdingen Self-portrait, c. 1670



Illus. 14a detail illus. 13



Illus. 14b detail illus. 6



Illus. 15 *Still life with buste of Venus*, 1665



Illus. 16 *Still life with buste of Adonis*, 1666