

## The Three-Quarter Length Life-Sized Portrait in Seventeenth-Century Holland

THE CULTURAL FUNCTIONS OF *TRANQUILLITAS*\*

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IN seventeenth-century Holland, portraits were everywhere, from finely wrought miniatures enclosed in filigreed locketts and informal sketches in *alba amicora* to imposing life-sized figures of political officials dominating town halls and castles of the nobility; from the genealogical portrait galleries lining the halls of Honselaersdijk, a residence of Frederik Henry, Prince of Orange, to the meeting rooms of such civic institutions as the Amsterdam Kloveniersdoelen displaying Rembrandt van Rijn's *Nightwatch*; from the family portrait collections of Pieter de la Court or Michael de Ruyter, through the interiors of the front rooms of brothels lined with portraits of the women available to clients; to such portrait prints as Rembrandt's etching of the Reformed preacher Jan Cornelisz. Sylvius, all providing to a broad audience images that served as a model of a life well lived for the viewer to admire and imitate. These images of family members, public leaders, and esteemed historic figures fulfilled a wide range of personal, social, and political functions.

Until recently, studies of sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Dutch portraits have been caught in the topos of the portrait itself – that of faithfully recording an individual's physiognomy – which left these cultural functions unexplored. That Dutch paintings do not merely illustrate the world in which the artist lived and worked is fairly well established for most genres of Netherlandish art. Nonetheless, inherited notions of the "realism" of the genre of portraiture have proved tenaciously

resistant to reexamination and has generated two empiricist approaches to the portrait: one reflectionist, and the other expressionist. These were the premises on which Pope-Hennessy based his pioneering study of (mostly Italian) Renaissance portraiture published in 1966 whose opening sentence reads, "Portrait painting is empirical." A similar sentiment underlies Jakob Rosenberg's description, in his monograph on Rembrandt (initially published in 1948), of the portraits by most Dutch painters who "satisfied the primary demands of [Dutch] burghers for a good likeness and realistic rendering of costume."<sup>1</sup>

While describing portraiture as transcriptive, both Pope-Hennessy and Rosenberg attribute to the genre the capacity to reveal the human psyche, the depths of the human soul. Pope-Hennessy devotes a chapter to "The Motions of the Mind," while Rosenberg claims for Rembrandt the ability "to express his [man's] inner life, his spiritual existence . . . [his] portraits strongly reflect Rembrandt's susceptibility to the spiritual side of man and show both his breadth and profundity in the interpretation of human character."<sup>2</sup> Both authors imply that the artist probes their subject's character through a keen attention to empirical detail and

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conveys it through an expressive handling of paint and the effects of light and shadow.

At the same time, both authors acknowledge that in spite of transcribing reality, a portrait may idealize the features of its subject almost beyond belief. Rosenberg notes that "when Sophie of Hanover met Henrietta Maria of England, whom she had known only from Anthony van Dyck's portraits, she was amazed at the queen's crooked and ill-proportioned figure and her ugly, protruding teeth."<sup>3</sup> Pope-Hennessy admires the art produced by idealization, such as the "new poetry and depth" of Titian's portrait of Philip II (whose Hapsburg jaw is softened by shadow), and the elaboration of fine detail in the mannered portraits of Bronzino. Yet he simultaneously accuses the patron of responsibility for any deviance from likeness by the artist who otherwise would have been more honest: "It is important to remember," he writes, "that the determinant in many ruler portraits was the sitter's self-conceit."<sup>4</sup>

Such an empirical approach to portraiture makes possible a-historical conclusions about a sitter's character from the author's interpretation of their face. Projection in the study of portraiture has been a fundamental and longstanding problem, frequently illustrated through a comparison of dramatically variant readings by different authors. For example, the sitters in Frans Hals's *Regents of the Old Men's Alms House* (Fig. 101) and *Regentesses of the Old Men's Alms House* (Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum; c. 1664) were praised by a poet at the end of the eighteenth century as "gods toward humanity" and "wise and beneficent almoners." They were viewed subsequently in a highly negative light from the mid-1870s when J. de Vries described the third figure from the right as portrayed in a drunken stupor, and Eugene Fromentin attributed Hals's free paint handling to a "painter [that] is three-quarters dead." These regents were finally rehabilitated in 1963 by P. J. Vinken and Eddy de Jongh, who plausibly proposed that the countenance of the seemingly drunken regent was due to Hals's faithful transcription of his partial facial paralysis.<sup>5</sup> Both reflectionist and expressionist approaches credit portraiture with providing direct access to the once living subject and artist.

The assumption of portraits' transparency to their sitters' physiognomies follows seventeenth-century Dutch theorists who describe portraits as transcriptions of an objective reality, as unmediated visual analogues for actual persons. It lies behind Karel van Mander's disparagement of portraiture in these oft-quoted lines from his *life of the portraitist* Michiel van Miereveldt, "painter of Delft," who

from among other talents with which Nature abundantly endowed him, chose portrait painting. . . . [In] our Netherlands there is this deficiency or unfortunate situation, especially in these present times, that there is little work to be had that requires composition so as to give the youngsters and painters the opportunity to become excellent at histories, figures and nudes through practice. For it is mostly portraits that they get the opportunity to paint; so that most of them, because of the allure of profit, or for their survival, usually take this side-road of art (that is; portrait painting) and set off without having time or inclination to seek out or follow the road of history and figures that leads to the highest perfection.<sup>6</sup>

Van Mander grudgingly admitted, however, that because it depicted the noble subject of the human body, it should be accorded at least some respect: "One can also make something worthwhile from a portrait: that a face, after all the most important part of the human body, contains quite enough so as to be able to disclose and reveal the quality and efficacy of art."<sup>7</sup> At the end of the century, Samuel van Hoogstraeten disdained "the portrait makers, who can render reasonably good likeness, and properly imitate eyes, noses and mouths, I wouldn't even place beyond, or above the first level [of painting]."<sup>8</sup>

Although the empirical approach represented by the work of Pope-Hennessy and Rosenberg could result in interpretations based on viewers' subjective responses, the work of these authors was instrumental in focusing attention on, and providing a new appreciation for, early modern portraiture as a genre. Their books were followed by a large number of important studies of aspects of the



single-figure Dutch portrait, each of which differently frames its subject. In 1967 A. Wassenburgh surveyed the seventeenth-century portraits produced in the northern province of Friesland from the perspective of attribution and style.<sup>9</sup> R. E. O. Ekkart's publications of early portrait collections and his essays identifying little known artists have given new life to portraits that had languished as attributions to anonymous artists or incorrectly in the margins of the *oeuvres* of better known masters.<sup>10</sup> Important archival discoveries by I. H. van Eeghen and S. A. C. Dudok van Heel in notarized documents and inventories, especially when combined with inscriptions and coats of arms on portraits themselves, have allowed scholars to identify an increasing number of sitters and provide new information about the lives of artists and their patrons. Many of their findings have been published over the past twenty-five years in the Dutch journal *Amstelodamum* and continue to be fundamental for the study of portraiture from nearly all perspectives and methodological approaches. Truus van Bueren has written a physical history of the *Portraits of the Commanders from the Convent of Saint John in Haarlem*, painted in two stages – in 1562 and after 1580 (Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum). This, together with archival investigations of the circumstances of the two periods in which it was painted, furnishes insight into the changing political function of the image.<sup>11</sup> Her work provides a model for the kind of investigations that might be undertaken for portraits of later periods as well. Finally, two recent collections of essays on the Netherlandish portrait consider individual artists, works, and themes from a variety of points of view.<sup>12</sup>

While these methods materially describe and situate the portrait with regard to individuals – the artist, sitter, collector, and patron – the approach to Dutch painting most widely practiced today has been the iconological investigation of the image itself. Among other things, iconology attempts to circumvent the psychological projection behind interpretations made by the assumption that character can be read by the twentieth-century viewer directly from the body and particularly the face.<sup>13</sup>

As originally described by Erwin Panofsky in the 1930s, iconology investigates an image through three steps. First, the “primary or natural subject-matter” of the image is described on the basis of “empirical observation.” Second, the “secondary or conventional meanings” of “symbols” are identified through “iconographical analysis” with recourse to literary (and as practiced today, more broadly cultural) sources. Finally, an “iconological interpretation” is made by specifying the larger cultural systems that may, often unconsciously, have directed the interpretation of the work in its time.<sup>14</sup> As practiced, however, iconology all too often collapses back into iconography. Michael Ann Holly and others have pointed out that studies rarely investigate the larger cultural “assumptions” and “habits of mind” that Panofsky outlines in his third step and that he argues inform the “meaning” of a work.<sup>15</sup>

The leading proponent of this approach to Dutch art, Eddy de Jongh, devoted his earliest investigations to seventeenth-century Dutch portraits.<sup>16</sup> These were followed by a series of detailed iconological[-graphical] studies of themes presented in portraiture by him and several other scholars including P. J. J. van Thiel and Jan Baptist Bedaux published over the last thirty years in the journals *Oud Holland* and *Simiolus*.<sup>17</sup> De Jongh has recently returned to the genre in a masterful study of Dutch marriage portraits that has become a landmark in the field.<sup>18</sup> H. Perry Chapman's recent monograph on Rembrandt's self-portraits employs the basic tenets of this method to investigate the multiple identities that Rembrandt explored through paintings that took himself as their model.<sup>19</sup> Finally, sociologist Erving Goffman describes how our experience of, and communication with others in daily life is mediated through visual codes represented through the body.<sup>20</sup> Citing this work, David Smith has undertaken a number of studies of body comportment, performed in life and reproduced in portraiture, that presented to the viewer communally acknowledged traits of character.<sup>21</sup>

Iconological [-graphical] investigations of Dutch art, and those that follow its paradigm by linking an element in a work with an object or idea in the cul-



ture, assume that at least some elements in a portrait are symbols for traits or ideas that otherwise remain hidden. Iconology is thus also an empirical search for an identifiable meaning, one that exists not in the body nor in the sitter's character but in the realm of ideas. One of the attractions of this method is the apparent security of the interpretive link between the symbol in the image and its meaning. This security, however, is illusory. Art historians frequently accept at face value these cultural referents and do not subject them to the same rigorous analysis that they demand of their investigation of the visual images themselves. An iconographical "meaning" recognized by Panofsky's second step, as well as those systems that an iconological investigation might identify, must similarly be subject to interpretation. The investigation of these systems will never be complete, however, for each investigation establishes another system that must be elucidated. In addition, such investigations run the risk of being circular, for the components of a system that one selects to investigate are already implied by the conventions and signifiers that one seeks to illuminate.<sup>22</sup>

As De Jongh himself was the first to caution, within an iconological [-graphical] system, symbols themselves can bear multiple meanings.<sup>23</sup> The obvious problem of transferring a symbol from one context to another has been recently underscored by Jan Baptist Bedaux, who demonstrates that such methods frequently only identify pictorial homonyms.<sup>24</sup> The only solution offered to prevent the misinterpretations that De Jongh and others recognize are possible – indeed frequent – is to plead restraint.<sup>25</sup> "I may seem to resemble Satan rebuking sin," De Jongh writes, "but I have become increasingly concerned about the craze for interpretation that threatens to run more prudent iconology underfoot."<sup>26</sup> More recently he has articulated a "method" of restraint that limits investigation to only those elements "in semiological terms, with a high signal value."<sup>27</sup> This restricts investigations to facets of a work that appear to the art historian as odd, or apparently unmotivated. It excludes most visual aspects that are so "descriptive" that they do not call attention to themselves in the eyes of the

twentieth-century viewer – precisely the kinds of elements that predominate in portraiture.

Whether viewed as transcriptive or explained by iconology, the portrait is assumed to refer to some external truth. Portraits themselves reinforce this assumption. As the subject of a painting, the represented body has a powerful effect as it creates an imaginative relationship between the subject and the viewer, mediated by the artist. Because we live in bodies ourselves, we believe that we bring a great deal of knowledge about the body to the portrait. This knowledge can overpower our consciousness of the processes through which meaning is produced, stimulating viewers to suspend their awareness of the devices of representation and believe they are in the presence of an actual person. Even when we remain aware of the artificiality of the representation, we respond almost involuntarily to representations of the human body as true, no matter how distorted or schematized they may be. Georg Simmel wrote that when looking at a portrait, the viewer is involved in "a kind of interaction: the bodily appearance, by virtue of its aesthetic unification, evokes the idea of a soul in the mind of the viewer, and this idea in turn works back upon the picture to give it additional unity, firmness, reciprocal justification of features."<sup>28</sup> This process is vividly demonstrated by the numerous examples of treatments of portraits throughout the centuries – from kissing them to damaging them – as if they were actual persons.<sup>29</sup>

As I have described them, then, each of these approaches has one thing in common: They view the portrait as the passive vehicle of a message – understood as the images's "meaning" – from the artist, perhaps in consultation with a patron, to the viewer. The problem raised by De Jongh of multiple "meanings" suggests, however, that we should reexamine the approach itself. The meaning of a portrait at any given moment, both as an object and as an image, does not inhere in the external referent of its symbols but is produced by the infinite number of systems of belief or knowledge – sometimes called discourses – that they help to produce.<sup>30</sup>

Portraits are not only a cultural product but also active participants in a cultural process.<sup>31</sup> In their





Figure 101. Frans Hals, *Regents of the Old Men's Alms House* (oil on canvas, 176.5 × 256 cm). Haarlem, Frans Hals Museum. Photo: museum.

material production, portraits potentially involve more individuals than any other painting genre: an artist, patron, sitter, and viewer (at the same time, the self-portrait can involve the fewest, the artist alone). In the imaginative "space" between the patron, artist, the portrait's human subject, and its assumed viewer, a portrait functions as an interpretive medium, organizing the experiences of their viewers. For each of these individuals, the portrait generates and structures ideas about experience in at least three areas: the sitter's perceived character and history, contemporary social structures and cultural issues, and the visual tradition. The portrait thus participates in setting the terms through which perceptions about the individuals it portrays are produced, the cultural discourses through which they are understood, and the devices and associations of the visual tradition. Each viewer of an image, at each viewing moment, brings a unique perspective to the image and unique experiences to the process of understanding. The effect of any experience of a portrait thus depends upon the rela-

tion of the viewer's position within each of the discourses generated by the experience, and their perceived power and relationship. This creates a distinctive system of associations out of which multiple "meanings" are produced. These meanings are thus always contextual, always contingent, and never completely recoverable.

Moreover, ideas, power relations, and values generated by, and circulating within, discourses are never fixed but are modified by use. Because artists, patrons, and viewers in all periods are experientially embedded within these discursive systems, they may appear "natural," making them difficult to detect or even partially recover. (Not only historical experiences but also contemporary approaches can become so naturalized. For example, the iconological approach to seventeenth-century Dutch painting, while occasionally questioned, has become so familiar that it remains the paradigm within which most other approaches are understood.) These systems can overlap and may contradict one another. The often unperceived slippage

between systems can also hide their effects. We should seek, therefore, not to identify the messages embedded in a portrait by its artist and discovered by a viewer, but to investigate how portraits may participate in creating these larger systems of belief and knowledge and to identify at least some of those that are historically retrievable.<sup>32</sup>

While the matrix of experience and knowledge produced by these systems and their interactions is seamless, we can investigate them only by artificially selecting a limited number of conventions and signifiers within a work and the objects, ideas, and systems to which they may refer in the culture. Moreover, the linear conventions of exposition limit one to a single perspective at a time. One kind of approach investigates the experience of specific individuals – the artist, patron, or viewer (at any historical moment) – either by interpreting empirical records of viewing experiences or by hypothesizing a representative experience formulated through indirect evidence. Another approach – the one I take here – seeks to understand how conventions of signification are selected, valued, and structured to create meaning at any given time and to describe the larger discursive systems within which individual images are embedded. These two (of many) approaches are of course related, and they differ only in focus. The latter, for example, may reveal the range of discourses available at any historical moment – what Hans Robert Jauss has called the “horizon of expectations” at the moment of reception – and thus help illuminate why an individual artist and patron may select a particular constellation of conventions for any particular image.<sup>33</sup> Such a study must be judged by how exemplary appear the conventions of signification and discursive systems investigated, and the coherency of the description of how they may have been related by historical viewers.

I clarify this abstract description and hope to underscore the productivity of such an approach through an analysis of a portrait genre that has been usually viewed as lacking in “meaning.” This is a genre that may be described, in De Jongh’s terms, as having “low signal value:” the three-quarter length life-sized portraits produced in the

Northern Netherlands in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that represent their subjects as having a sober – even impassive – demeanor, a minimum of facial or bodily gestures, and few if any auxiliary objects. As a group, these portraits have been customarily disparaged in studies of Dutch art. They picture their subjects, sometimes with mildly idealized faces, with eyes gazing calmly toward the viewer, their gestures slight, and their bodies almost stiff. The vigor of sitters depicted in physical movement, such as Rembrandt’s *Portrait of a Man Rising from His Chair* (Fig. 102) or his *Portrait of a Seated Man* (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum) are often admired as conveying “character” and “emotion.” In contrast, such icons of static sobriety as Nicolaes Elias. Pickenoy’s *Portrait of Cornelis de Graeff and His Wife Geertruid Overlander* (Amsterdam, Vaderlandsche Fonds), Thomas de Keyser’s *Portrait of Frans van Limborch* and *Portrait of Geertruyd Bisschop* (Figs. 103 and 104), and similar portraits by such artists as Ferdinand Bol,



Figure 102. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Portrait of a Man Rising from His Chair*, 1633 (oil on canvas, 124.5 × 99.7 cm). Cincinnati, The Taft Museum. Photo: museum.





Figure 103. Thomas de Keyser, *Portrait of Frans van Limborch*, 1632 (oil on canvas, 117 × 87 cm). Hull, Ferens Art Gallery. Photo: museum.

Michiel van Miereveld, Johannes Verspronck, and Cornelis van der Voort, all have attracted little attention from students of Netherlandish painting.<sup>34</sup> Situated within a paradigm of stylistic evolution, they are characterized as *retardataire* and often considered only to highlight what is described as Rembrandt's unusual sensitivity to the psychology or character of his sitters. Situated within an iconological system, they appear to display no overtly symbolic elements.

Jacob Rosenberg, for example, writing in 1948, disparaged Thomas de Keyser's *Portrait of a Man* (Kassel, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen) and the *Portrait of Maria Swartenbout* by Nicholas Eliasch. Pickenoy (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum), in comparison with Rembrandt's *Portrait of a Man* (Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum):

Theirs [De Keyser's and Eliasch's] was an unimaginative but fully descriptive style which combined the qualities of good photography with pronounced modelling and a moderate pictorial attraction . . . But how much greater is the coherence of design (in the portrait by Rembrandt) than in any of the portraits by Rembrandt's immediate forerunners, and how much more animated is his characterization!<sup>35</sup>

Similarly, Albert Blankert compared two female portraits of this type by Bol with the pendant to the man so admired by Rosenberg, the *Portrait of a Woman* (Berlin, Staatliche Museen, Gemäldegalerie), which was at the time believed to be by Rembrandt:



Figure 104. Thomas de Keyser, *Portrait of Geertruyd Bisschop* (oil on canvas, 118.4 × 89.6 cm). Brooklyn, Brooklyn Museum of Art. Photo: museum.

In Bol's case this approach led to portraits in which the rendering of the individual personality is almost totally lacking – this can certainly not be said of Rembrandt's portraits . . . The relationship between external appearance and inner emotions, a problem Rembrandt posed time and again, was alien to Bol. This *Portrait of an Old Lady* in East Berlin is so stately, indeed almost hieratic, that even an association with icons is evoked. And the facial expression and attitude of the models in this and his other early portraits is so diffuse – so poly-interpretable, one might say – that one remembers them as images, not as living human beings.<sup>36</sup>

Such evaluations assume that these portraits' lack of "characterization," "personality," and "inner

emotions" is due to the artist's lack of talent, rather than to his or her consciously choosing to depict a static figure or impassive facial expression that may in fact have articulated a meaningful expression of individuality.<sup>37</sup>

Such evaluations also assume that these artists unthinkingly adopted a generic formula, the motionless demeanor that, as has been noted by a number of scholars, became popular during the second half of the sixteenth century.<sup>38</sup> Long after more animated faces and gestures were created by seventeenth-century Dutch artists who are today most highly regarded for "animation and psychological insight," these static portraits continued to be produced by these same masters of some of the most prominent patrons and sitters of their time, and for among the highest prices paid for portraits.





Figure 105. Rembrandt van Rijn, *Portrait of a Man*, 1633 (oil on canvas, 128.5 × 100.5 cm). Kassel, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen. Photo: museum.

Both Rembrandt and Frans Hals, for example, chose at times to portray sitters with little if any facial expression or bodily movement. Rembrandt's *Portrait of a Man* (sometimes identified as the Dutch poet Jan Harmensz. Krul) of 1633 (Fig. 105), and his *Portrait of Marten Soolmans* of 1634 (Paris, Private Collection) – of whose “bland” expressions Horst Gerson complained – should be classified among the type of Dutch portraits today considered expressionless.<sup>39</sup> Similarly, Frans Hals's portraits of Jacob Pietersz. Olycan and his wife Aletta Hanemans of 1625 (The Hague, Mauritshuis) depict their subjects with great dignity and as absolutely immobile.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, the subjects and patrons of many of these static portraits were members of the urban elite, who numbered among the most influential of society's citizens. Finally, this format was one of the most expensive produced in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century: Such portraits could cost as much as five hundred guilders each.<sup>41</sup>

Thus, long after mobile facial expressions and animated bodily demeanor had become part of the vocabulary of seventeenth-century Dutch portrait painting, wealthy members of the urban patriciate continued to commission portraits depicting themselves in this impassive demeanor, suggesting that such a bearing must have continued to articulate a desirable aspect of identity.<sup>42</sup> The standards by which we as twentieth-century viewers have come to judge Dutch portraits – movement of both the body and the face – and the methods through which we have come to investigate them – stylistic analysis or iconology based on emblems and texts – may thus be inadequate. We may assume that elite sitters did not commission costly portraits from skilled artists without some intended purpose. This purpose, however, has no meaning outside of the discourses that the image participated in producing.

In the two disparaging evaluations of three-quarter length life-sized portraits by De Keyser, Elias, and Bol cited previously, animation of the



Figure 106. Antonio Moro, *Portrait of Willem of Nassau, Prince of Orange* (oil on panel, 105 × 81.5 cm). Kassel, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen. Photo: museum.



face and gestures by the body are interpreted by twentieth-century critics as psychologically revealing of their subjects, while the lack of movement is interpreted as displaying only the artist's inability to render the sitter's character or state of mind. Such statements are based on an idea of progress among artists who successively master skills of representation, an idea in which "realism" – here defined as "movement" – is an implicitly privileged term.<sup>43</sup> I believe, however, that the impassive face and body were as highly encoded as active ones. Specifically, for at least some Dutch sitters, the emotional calm and detachment conveyed by a tranquil face and impassive body displayed in portraits of the elite classes across Europe was associated with the neo-Stoic ideal of *tranquillitas* (tranquillity). What I shall argue, however, is that neither this impassive stance nor the neo-Stoic ideal to which it sometimes referred had fixed meanings. Rather, the associations and functions of this demeanor varied according to the discursive frame within which it was interpreted. Moreover, the mobility between these discourses, the potential for viewers to situate themselves simultaneously in more than one discursive frame, potentially exercised political effects.

The following argument develops as follows. First, as represented in portraits, this demeanor helped to define the visible signs of a psychological state described more abstractly in texts. Second, these portraits defined for their viewers the concept of *tranquillitas* as a private discourse of self-mastery available to all for the containment of their emotions. At the same time, they also engaged a second, public discourse of political theory: For a male elite, the ability to control one's emotions was a sign that one had the ability to govern others. As I will elaborate later, the visual realization of these two discourses contradicted one another, potentially producing a powerful political effect. Specifically, the private rhetoric of self-control in these Dutch portraits obscured the political power of its public counterpart. Finally, within this highly mobile, unstable, and heterogeneous society, these images imaginatively created, in sociological terms, a "status group" of individuals who affiliated themselves through the performance of this demeanor, at least in their por-

traits. This inclusive status group, apparently made up of citizens from a variety of backgrounds, helped to weave a social fabric at a time of great social instability and political uncertainty.

Throughout seventeenth-century Europe, men and women were conscious of the body as an eloquent vehicle for personal expression and an indicator of social distinction, a trope that had a long and distinguished history.<sup>44</sup> Signs for character were thought to be revealed not only by physiognomy (body shape and markings) but also through demeanor (posture and movements that could be performed). This was particularly true in court circles, where both informal and complex ritual marked social boundaries. In the Northern Netherlands, particularly during the first half of the seventeenth century, highly codified markers seem to have been less obvious than in the rest of Europe: Contemporary observers from both within the Republic and without commented that the Dutch did not designate class distinctions as obviously.<sup>45</sup> The hundreds of surviving Dutch portraits that do not appear to flatter the bodies of sitters, for example, suggest that idealized physiognomy was not a strong social marker. Attention to the more elaborate aspects of social behavior and demeanor may also have been less self-conscious, for fewer books of civility were published in the Northern Netherlands than elsewhere during this period.<sup>46</sup> We should not conclude from this, however, that dress and body demeanor were not a highly communicative means of expressing social affiliation and distinctions within the Republic; not all evidence for cultural experience must come from texts. As I elaborate later, the limited number of portrait formats and large numbers of sitters displaying similar demeanors suggest that demeanor, at least in portraiture, was highly communicative and may have played a role in social cohesion.

The three-quarter length format of these portraits was a variant of one that had been employed in the sixteenth century for members of the nobility across Europe: by Titian for the Venetian aristocracy, by Antonio Moro for Hapsburg monarchs and members of the nobility (Fig. 106), and by Peter Paul Rubens in Flanders.<sup>47</sup> Not only the for-



mat but also their impassive comportment was also performed by contemporary Spaniards. A Dutch traveler, François Aerssen van Sommeldijck (1630–58), observed that in Spain “gravité naturelle ou affectée” (natural gravity or affectedness) was cherished at court, although he had found the same behavior “fort rogue et fort fière” (very haughty and very proud) among all Spaniards.<sup>48</sup> The *Groot ceremonie-boek der beschaafde zeeden* (Great Ceremonial Book of Civilized Manners), published in Amsterdam in 1735, directed that when walking, one’s gait should be “fixed in the Spanish way, as if not daring to turn one’s head.”<sup>49</sup> Spanish “gravity” was ridiculed by Bredero in his *Spanish Brabander*, and Aernout van Overbeke recorded a number of jokes on the subject.<sup>50</sup>

It is possible that the three-quarter length format of these seventeenth-century Dutch portraits of the urban elite linked their subjects with the prestige of the social and political power of their aristocratic predecessors and contemporaries across Europe. The format and demeanor also had a strong tradition in the Northern Netherlands in portraits of leading citizens (see, for example, Fig. 106).<sup>51</sup> In my opinion, therefore, the format – and certainly its cultural uses – must be understood within the cultural particularities of the Northern Netherlands. Herman Roodenburg has suggested that what little increase in attention to codes of conduct that began to circulate in the Northern Netherlands during the first half of the seventeenth century were inspired by Flemish immigrants bringing their culture north, rather than directly from the court in The Hague.<sup>52</sup> It seems quite possible that the renewed interest in this format may have also been initially prompted by the social needs of this group. The popular ridicule expressed by Bredero suggests that the demeanor was easily recognized in Dutch culture and associated with the Flemish. Such ridicule does not suggest that it was eschewed by native Dutch men and women, however. On the contrary, ridicule helps reinforce boundaries between acceptable and unacceptable versions of the same behavior within a widely understood paradigm.

One of the most powerful signs of character that could be conveyed by the body was this impassive

demeanor, associated with *tranquillitas* of spirit. *Tranquillitas* was an emotional state that became a valued personal ideal in the wake of a sixteenth-century revival of imperial Roman Stoicism. While influential in humanist circles across Europe, the Northern Netherlands was an important center of this movement.<sup>53</sup> Two of its major proponents had lived and worked there; each published influential editions of Seneca’s philosophical works. Desiderius Erasmus’s edition first appeared in 1515 (corrected edition Basel 1529) and another by Justus Lipsius was printed in Antwerp in 1605.<sup>54</sup> Seventeenth-century Dutch culture was pervaded and deeply shaped by Stoic ideals being taught and discussed at the University of Leiden, where Lipsius had been a professor between 1579 and 1591. The single most influential book on the subject was Lipsius’s own *De constantia libri duo alloquium praecipue continent in publicis malis* (Two Books on Constancy, Which Especially Contain Consolation in Times of Public Adversity), first published in Latin in Leiden and Antwerp in 1584. It immediately became an international best-seller, being printed forty-four times in the original Latin, fifteen times in French translation, and in several other European languages including a Dutch translation published the same year.<sup>55</sup> Lipsius followed this with two additional neo-Stoic treatises, his *Manuductionis ad stoicam philosophiam libri tres* and *Physiologia stoicorum libri tres* (Three Books [Concerning] the Natural Philosophy of the Stoics), published both in Antwerp and Paris in 1604.

Stoic philosophy defined four passions, each of which were believed to be produced by concerns about good and evil, in the present and the future. These are distress (the result of concern about evil in the present), fear (the result of concern about evil in the future), delight (the result of concern about good in the present), and lust or desire (the result of concern about good in the future).<sup>56</sup> These passions were generated by man himself as a response to external events. These unleashed passions plunged him into evil and misery. As Erasmus put it, “As the body cannot support pleasures unless it is in good health, so the mind is not capable of true happiness unless free from fear and the other emotions.”<sup>57</sup>



Following ancient Stoics, Renaissance man also believed that although he cannot change the circumstances of his life, the turbulence of the world cannot engender these passions if, through reason, he responds to it with indifference. Such rational control produces Constancy, through which man may confront what Lipsius called "this very sea of calamities."<sup>58</sup> Lipsius elaborated: "By Constancy I mean the correct and immovable strength of a mind that is neither elated by externals nor depressed by change mishaps. I define and understand Strength to be a firmness implanted in the mind, not by Opinion, but by good judgment and correct Reason."<sup>59</sup> The highest possible state of man in his earthly life, then, according to Pierre Charron in a book published in Leiden in 1601, is "tranquillité of the spirit. . . . This is that great and rich treasure, which . . . is the fruit of all our labors and studies, the crowne of wisdom."<sup>60</sup> Tranquillity, the product of rational self-control, was a proud achievement attesting to a state of highest ethical virtue.

The control of the passions was an ideal in wide circulation and, in theory at least, available to all men and women. A broad spectrum of society was exposed to its principles in one form or another. The fundamental tenants of neo-Stoicism run broadly through much of the philosophy, literature, and painting produced in the seventeenth-century Netherlands. René Descartes, who lived and wrote his most influential works in the Northern Netherlands, spelled out the neo-Stoicism behind his *Discours de la method* (Discourse on Method), published by Jean Maire in Leiden in 1637.<sup>61</sup> In a letter to Elizabeth of Bohemia of the summer of 1645, he wrote:

Seneca should have taught us all the principal truths whose knowledge is necessary to facilitate the practice of virtue. . . . It seems to me that every man can make himself content without any external assistance, provided that he respects three conditions, which are related to the three roles of morality which I put in the *Discourse on Method*.<sup>62</sup>

Spinoza's *Ethica* (Ethics) of 1677 similarly describes the passions as responsible for all of man's misery.<sup>63</sup> Contemporary Dutch literature and

drama also promoted these concepts in plays by a number of authors who knew and corresponded with Lipsius directly.<sup>64</sup> Other popular texts such as emblem books and the best-selling moralizing writings of Jacob Cats reinforced the ideal of moderation and self-control. Northern painters, too, demonstrated an interest in Seneca through representations of both the man, of Diogenes, and occasionally Hercules, the subject of one of his plays.<sup>65</sup> Restraint is, of course, one of the themes in Dutch painting most often identified in recent iconological studies. Perhaps the finest tribute to the pervasiveness of the philosophy throughout Europe are the satires and parodies that it spawned, including scenes in Jakob Bidermann's *Cenodoxus*.<sup>66</sup>

Neo-Stoic ideals did not remain in the abstract realm of philosophy, drama, and painting, for Dutch men and women attempted to apply them to daily life. Personal letters reveal the attempt to use Stoic models to weather personal tragedy, frequently expressing the frustration at its failure. At the death of the wife of P. C. Hooft, for example, Tesselschade Visscher wrote of how she was surprised at the depth of his grief: "How now, dear sir, could you who have acquired such a large store of steadfast wisdom, be made miserable by the necessary course of the world?" Hooft replied: "How can he, who has always picked up pins and nails to fix what he loved securely to his heart, when it is ripped from there, be left with anything but unbearable rifts?"<sup>67</sup>

The broad appeal of self-mastery as an idea – even when not specifically identified with the ancient philosophy – is not surprising in this period of great social, economic, and political change. While the Northern Netherlands was relatively free from the war raging across the rest of Europe, for example, the threat of resumed hostilities was never far away. The full title of Lipsius's popular *De constantia libri duo* provides an indication of why neo-Stoic philosophy appealed so strongly to contemporary men and women: "Two Books on Constancy, Which Especially Contain Consolation in Times of Public Adversity."

In contrast to its personal and subjective applications that were in theory available to all, the con-



cept of *tranquillitas* simultaneously participated in a second, public, realm. As Gerhard Oestreich has convincingly argued, neo-Stoicism lay behind much of the political theory of the seventeenth century that originated at the University of Leiden.<sup>68</sup> It posited that men's passions were in need of control by reason, a control provided by state apparatuses. Thus, those who could exercise private self-control possessed the reason necessary to govern others. Seneca's phrase, "He is most powerful who has power over himself," was echoed throughout the literature in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Rabelais, for example, asked, "How shall I be able to rule over others, than have not full power and command of myself?"<sup>69</sup> Philip Massinger asserted in 1624 that "he that would govern others, first should be / Master of himself."<sup>70</sup>

In contrast to the appeal of the philosophy as a discourse of private psychology, this political philosophy was potentially an elitist doctrine and was deployed as such in other parts of Europe. It was generally assumed that the male social elite – the most wealthy and politically powerful members of society – could achieve *tranquillitas* more readily than women and especially the lower classes. The latter, considered to be closer to animals in their inability to control their violent emotions, were believed to be more susceptible to their passions. A "regular and conscious feature of the Stoic prescription for human trouble [was] that it was available only to the few," writes Bouwsma, continuing:

The aristocratic impulses in Renaissance society found support in the powerful analogy between the order of the universe, the order of the human personality, and the social order, which suggested that society too must consist of both a higher rational principle and a lower, duller and less reliable component to which the higher force, personified by an elite, was in the nature of things superior . . . One of the marks of the Stoic humanist was his constant, rather nervous concern to differentiate himself from the vulgar crowd and to reassure himself somewhat in the manner at times discerned in the Protestant elect, of his spiritual superiority.<sup>71</sup>

Throughout the rest of Europe, this ideal was attached to monarchs and aristocrats and a select group of humanists. In the Northern Netherlands, however, exactly who was included in the class of men and women who had the ability to control their passions with their reason, experience *tranquillitas*, and therefore govern others was not clear. Oestreich describes how widely pervasive neo-Stoic ideals were in Dutch public culture, and its impact on both economic and political life:

Neostoicism also demanded self-discipline and the extension of the duties of the ruler and the moral education of the army, the officials, and indeed the whole people, to a life of work, frugality, dutifulness and obedience. The result was a general enhancement of social discipline in all spheres of life, and this enhancement produced, in its turn, a change in the ethos of the individual and his self-perception. This change was to play a crucial role in the later development of both modern industrialism and democracy, both of which presupposed a work ethic and the willingness of the individual to take responsibility.<sup>72</sup>

The broad demographic basis of these ideals was self-consciously articulated at the time. In the Latin oration that he delivered at the opening of the new Athenaeum Illustré (which became Amsterdam University in 1877) on January 8, 1632, Caspar Barlaeus described with pride how the study of philosophy placed the material aspects of life in perspective and fostered self-control among the population as a whole. He praises the "public chair for the study of philosophy and literature . . . [so that] men shall better learn to measure this wealth by its true value, *learning its use from the works of the philosophers*." Barlaeus also admired the results of this study, continuing, "when I behold your city . . . I discover the versatility, the wisdom, of those I am studying, the respect for the laws, the obedience of the *residents, their composure, and first and foremost, their desire for order* [*italics added*]."<sup>73</sup>

As I have suggested, this composure could be expressed on, and read from, the body. Balthasar Castiglione described models in currency in internal court circles when in his *Book of the Courtier* he

praised "a quiet manner as an enviable mark of the grave and dignified man ruled by reason rather than appetite."<sup>74</sup> Across Europe, the ideal of *tranquillitas* remained in circulation well into the seventeenth century. Edward, Earl of Clarendon, similarly praised the "grave" demeanor of Thomas Howard, Earl of Arundel, as that of "the most considerable men all which drew the eyes of most, and the reverence of many, towards him, as the image and representative of the primitive nobility, and native gravity of the nobles, when they had been most venerable."<sup>75</sup>

As a representation of the body, a portrait could also display this ideal. William Heckscher has suggested that the impassive facial expression of Holbein the Younger's portrait of Erasmus of 1523 was a conscious expression of *tranquillitas*.<sup>76</sup> Erasmus's half-length portrait shows the humanist standing behind a desk, his hands on a book, and before an elaborate background that includes an ornamental pilaster and a curtain hanging from a rod pulled back to reveal a shelf piled with books and other objects. The portraits produced in the Northern Netherlands a century later show their subjects in knee-length, displaying few gestures, and standing in a relatively unarticulated space. I believe that such portraits mediated experience and helped to produce a series of frameworks within which individuals could understand themselves and their social relations. It is to these potential cultural functions that I now turn.

By displaying a recognizable demeanor, the sign for an internal state, these portraits provided a model of behavior for their viewers. Seventeenth-century discussions of both literary theory generally and education directly, emphasize that the most effective means of education and of moving men's emotions were through the provision of models of specific individuals in particular situations rather than ideal types or abstract explanations. In his well-known *Ars Poetica* (Art of Poetry), Horace described how this should be accomplished in poetry through empathy. "Not enough is it for poems to have beauty," he wrote, "they must have charm, and lead the hearer's soul where they will. As men's faces smile on those who smile, so they respond to

those who weep."<sup>77</sup> In drama, Daniel Heinsius advocates characterization that uses models and examples, specifically actors who act out their emotions in particular situations rather than characters who declare their intentions and feelings.<sup>78</sup> The book of manners, Giovanni della Casa's popular *Galateo*, initially published in 1546, demonstrates several points by giving examples of a behavior enacted by real persons writing:

The fact is that things are more easily said than done. Also, most men, and especially laymen and uneducated persons like me, are always readier with the senses than with the intellect; therefore, we learn better through specific examples than through general principles and syllogisms (which in the clearer vernacular tongue must mean the reasons) . . . to live by and illustrate in my habits the above-mentioned rules, making of them a visible example. . . . This is so because in matters dealing with manners and customs of men it is not enough to know the theory and the rule, it is also necessary, in order to put them into effect, to practice.<sup>79</sup>

Among the subjects considered by contemporary debates within literary and dramatic theory was that of how to curb the reader/viewer's passions, troublesome both to his or her spiritual comfort and to society's stability. Some argued that the emotions should be aroused in order that men and women may rationally examine them; others that this arousal itself purged them, habituated men and women to the experience of taming them.<sup>80</sup> The educated seventeenth-century viewer would have thus been trained by such conventions to respond more to demonstration than to the description of abstractions. And people on the street would have been familiar with the techniques of demonstration through sermons and popular plays.

While portraits ranked low in the hierarchy of genres because they pictured real men and women rather than abstract ideals, paradoxically it was their representation of distinct human beings that increased their rhetorical power. This was recognized at the time. The Dutch humanist and diplo-



mat Constantijn Huygens, for example, confided to his diary in about 1630 that portraits

perform a noble work, that more than any other is necessary for our human needs, that through them we in a true sense do not die; furthermore as descendants we can speak intimately with our most distant ancestors. This pleasure is so dear to me that nothing more agreeable can befall me than reading or hearing stories about someone's life and character – whether he be a good or bad man – (and this sort of history particularly attracts me) [which] is made easier by looking at his portrait.<sup>81</sup>

That images should actively move or psychically change their viewers was a value that was derived from the parallels drawn between painting and poetry. Joannes Vossius makes this clear in the last chapter of the first book of *De quatuor artibus popularibus, de philologia, et scientiis mathematicis . . . libri tres* (Three Books Concerning the Four Popular Arts, Philology, and the Mathematical Sciences), published posthumously in Amsterdam in 1650, where he compares painting and rhetoric.<sup>82</sup> It was believed that viewing portraits could involuntarily move the viewer and empathetically produce the internal state – here self-control – that was represented.

Portraits such as those under discussion here were viewed in two contexts: Some three-quarter length life-sized portraits of the princes of Orange and their extended families hung in public places like town halls; others of leading citizens hung in guild chambers or other semipublic spaces; pair portraits, those that included women, hung in domestic spaces, including front halls where they would have been seen by family members and friends.<sup>83</sup> As a medium of communication, then, in general these portraits spoke to other members of the same classes from which they were commissioned.

The potential effects of these portraits took place through the interaction of discourses produced in two spheres. First, as I mentioned, *tranquillitas* was an attribute of character in the private

sphere, produced above all by the relation of individuals with themselves. Portraits displaying this trait were often commissioned of a husband and wife (Figs. 103 and 104), underscoring the private nature of the exercise of restraint. These images do not overtly assert power relations. Standing to her husband's left, the viewer's right, the wife reflects her husband's demeanor. These respective positions are very often the only indication of an hierarchic relationship.<sup>84</sup> At most, the husband is a model for his wife; he does not dominate her. Moreover, many of these images show the man hatless – often holding his hat – in the viewer's presence. Their subjects thus do not even assert social rank over the viewer.

As Norbert Elias has observed, power during the seventeenth century was increasingly internalized, moving from agents of material, external, coercion to psychic, internal, discipline.<sup>85</sup> I would like to suggest that these portraits participated in this internalization of discipline, because in presenting a model for behavior, they help to create a standard. By picturing self-discipline they made concrete an abstract concept and an example of comportment for their viewers. The power of this model is generated by the social dynamics of normativity: Paradoxically, men and women achieve their "individuality" not by deviation from a standard but by approximating the ideal state as closely as possible. These portraits promoted personal values that must have helped to transform conceptions of the individual and attitudes toward their behavior in the world, helping to produce a disciplined self that fundamentally altered both Netherlandish society and its political structures.

At the same time, these images functioned in a second, related, sphere: that of social prestige and, for their male subjects, of political power. Simply as objects in their size and support (frequently expensive panel), and as images displaying costly silk and brocade garments, jewels, and lace, these portraits assert their sitters' social and economic status.<sup>86</sup> I have mentioned that elsewhere in Europe the format and demeanor was most frequently employed for male subjects, monarchs, and aristocrats, and thus engaged a political discourse of rulership. In

the Northern Netherlands, this theme was engaged by some portraits in this format as, for example, the series of officer portraits painted by Jan Anthonisz. van Ravesteyn probably for Prince Maurits (The Hague, Mauritshuis). Because women in the Northern Netherlands were excluded from political positions, their appearance in these portraits in larger numbers (usually paired with their husband) emphasizes the ethical and thus social, rather than political, superiority of their class. (Indeed, Dutch men seem to have been relatively reluctant to advertise political power publicly: Members of governmental organizations rarely commissioned public group portraits.)

How any particular viewer related to these multiple referents in both the private and public realms would have depended upon their perceived relationship to these ethical, social, and political systems. Representing an ideal toward which all individuals could strive, these portraits could mirror their viewers' ideals and affirm a sense of self and ethical worth. At the same time, any viewer who knew that they would never hold political office, or attain the wealth or social standing of the individuals pictured, would probably also experience deference. While modelling themselves on such images might promise the viewer equal moral power with the sitter, they could never hope to attain equal social – much less political – rank.

The very instability of the referents of the format and pictured demeanor for a large number of viewers, however, contributed to its power. The precise social, economic, and political positions of many viewers in the Northern Netherlands at this time was unclear: Eminence in these areas was neither always congruent nor fixed. As Peter Burke has observed, the economic elite of major cities at this time were not always the same individuals as the political elite.<sup>87</sup> These indistinct boundaries were not only a quality of social life but were also a characteristic of this genre of portraiture, for they seem to have been commissioned by a relatively broad social spectrum of men and women. At the least they pictured individuals with different religious beliefs, different political affiliations, and different regional origins. Because the names of the subjects

of so many of these sitters have been lost, the actual composition and extent of the group of men and women pictured in this format remain relatively unclear. Of those whose identities have come down to us, many were members of relatively wealthy and influential – although not always regent – families. It is possible that the names of so many other sitters have been lost over the centuries because at least some of them were not members of the economic and political elite.

For the broad segment of the population whose social and political positions were unclear or changing, these portraits could invoke these two apparently contradictory responses, mirroring and deference, simultaneously.<sup>88</sup> On the one hand, the viewer would have to acknowledge the legitimacy of the political power by any regent portrayed. At the same time, these portraits suggest that the viewer actually “ruled him or herself”: Any authority claimed by pictured members of the regent class could be viewed as merely a material formality. Together, these two experiences could unconsciously co-opt the viewer into acquiescing to the legitimacy of the social and political power claimed by members of the regent class while reducing the apparent strength of that power. Specifically, if a viewer believed that they were ethical equals, the economic or political power possessed by another individual is less absolute.

What I am suggesting, then, is that this mobility of meaning between discourses in the public and private realms made these portraits a potentially effective vehicle of community cohesion and social control. The relatively limited number of portrait formats, compositions, and pictured demeanors – particularly before mid-century – appears to correspond with the limited number of codes of class distinction reported by contemporary observers.<sup>89</sup> It seems possible to me that these images may have helped to forge communalities among otherwise disparate social groups, creating what sociologists call a “status group” that was relatively inclusive. They may have created a cohesion among this larger group of individuals who, in this relatively mobile society, wished to see themselves as, and affiliate themselves with, an elite whose boundaries



were very unclear. These portraits, therefore, had the potential to foster among this relatively mobile and heterogeneous group of individuals a class identity that papered-over difference and power. They imply that even if some of their subjects and viewers – particularly women and nonregents – do not actually exercise the economic or political power of others pictured in the format, nonetheless they possess shared interests. These portraits thus produce an imaginary cohesiveness among a heterogeneous group, securing a sense of commonly held concerns that could be marshalled to elide social contradictions. Circulating in pictorial form, this ethos discursively functioned to foster an emerging consensual society.

This process becomes more understandable in light of seventeenth-century demographics and events. First, Dutch society was relatively heterogeneous. It included a high percentage of immigrants from elsewhere in Europe – especially Flanders – and of men and women who moved from their place of birth within the country and frequently from rural to urban areas. This along with the possibility of some social mobility may have resulted in fewer codes generally recognized across class and regional boundaries. Second, although there are individual examples of self-conscious attempts to assert social status, at the same time there must have been a strong incentive to minimize certain kinds of social distinctions, particularly before the Peace of Münster.<sup>90</sup> Widely disparate social groups needed to work together against common enemies,

from the Spanish empire on the one hand to internal divisions that threatened the viability of the Republic on the other. Indeed, social stratification became more apparent only after mid-century, paralleled by the production of a larger number of portrait formats.

This discussion does not mean to suggest that all portraits in this format depict their sitters as self-conscious Stoics. In some cases portraits may have appeared stiff because the artist may in fact not have had the models or the skill to utilize a more complex pose. In other cases, once in circulation the format may have been selected for reasons of fashion. In the end, however, since “identity” can only be understood within a discursive system, control of that system is power. This control was exercised, of course, by those who could afford those portraits, which in turn helped to define the discursive systems that gave them status and power.

Portraits are potential sites of cultural contestation: embodiments of abstract terms, in constant flux, through which identity and power are defined. We will never completely recover how contemporaries experienced these portraits, nor the extent of the political and ethical discourses inscribed within them. Traditional art-historical studies frequently attempt to reduce an image to a single message. The multiple discourses that these portraits engaged, however – at times consciously and directly, at other times unconsciously and by implication – provided the source of their real power in lived experience.

17. Melion 1991, p. 71.
18. Barthes 1972, p. 5.
19. On this painting, see the entry by Bergström in Exhib. cat. Washington 1989, pp. 114–16; Grimm 1988, p. 152; and Brusati 1990–1, pp. 176–8.
20. See the entry on this picture by Bergström in Exhib. cat. Washington 1989, pp. 114–16.
21. It should be noted that in pointing to the representational scope and eye-fooling power of painting, Luttichuys's still life highlights those same defining characteristics of painting articulated somewhat later by his contemporary, Samuel van Hoogstraeten. In his treatise on painting of 1678, Van Hoogstraeten wrote that "Painting is a science for representing all the ideas or concepts that the visible world can produce, and of deceiving the eye with outlines and colors. . . . A perfect painting is like a mirror of nature which makes things that do not exist appear to do so, and deceives in a permissible, pleasurable, and praiseworthy way." [De Schilderkonst is een wetenschap, om alle ideen, ofte denkbeelden, die de gansche zichtbaere Natuer kan geven, te verbeelden: en met omtreck en verwe het oog te bedriegen . . . een volmaekte Schildery is als een spiegel van de Natuer, die de dingen, die niet en zijn, doet schijnen te zijn, en op een geoorloofde, vermakelijke en prijslijke wijze bedriegt.] Van Hoogstraeten 1678, pp. 24–5.
22. Grimm 1988, p. 152, made this same observation but incorporated it into an interpretation of the picture as an "Allegory of Vanity."
23. On the significance of these *trompe-l'oeil* performances, see Brusati 1990–1, pp. 179–82; and Idem 1995, pp. 138–68.
24. For various interpretations of Kalf's *pronk* still lifes, see Exhib. cat. Delft 1988; Alpers 1983, pp. 114–18; Bryson 1990, pp. 124–32.

CHAPTER TWELVE. THE THREE-QUARTER  
LENGTH LIFE-SIZED PORTRAIT IN  
SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY HOLLAND

1. Pope-Hennessy 1979, p. 3; Rosenberg 1964, p. 36.
2. Rosenberg 1964, pp. 36, 37.
3. Rosenberg 1964, p. 347, n. 1, citing the *Memoirs of Sophie of Hanover*.
4. Pope-Hennessy 1979, pp. 165, 178, 183.
5. Vinken and De Jongh 1963, pp. 10–14. See also Exhib. cat. London 1989, nos. 85, 86. Campbell 1990, p. x, writes that "many writers on the subject have been content to make subjective and unsupported statements about portraits which relate to their personal reactions to and apprehensions of the sitters and have little to do with the analyses of the paintings themselves." Ibid., p. 9, describes the facial

expression of Pontormo's *Portrait of a Halbadier* (Malibu, J. Paul Getty Museum) as an expression of "almost orgasmic vacancy," while Pope-Hennessy 1979, p. 110, wrote that the same youth's features are "ravaged by self-questioning." Schwartz 1992 makes a similar point about two readings of Rembrandt's *Portrait of Johannes Wtenbogaert* (Bruyn et al. 1982–, vol. 2, no. A80). In the nineteenth century, before the sitter was identified, the portrait was described variously as a Dutch regent and a burgomaster. Guiseppe Longhi entitled his engraving after the painting (1811) a "Borgomastro Olandese;" John Smith, in his catalogue of Rembrandt's work of 1836, entitled the portrait a Dutch Regent; and in the 1860 catalogue of the Mentmore collection in which it was located, the portrait was entitled "Burgomaster." The portrait was subsequently identified by Bode and Hofstede de Groot 1897–1906, vol. 8, no. 562, as the Remonstrant minister Wtenbogaert. Tümpel 1986, p. 127, described the face as having "almost meditative, wide eyes wherein the depth and wisdom of age appear to lie," hardly a description of a hardened politician. No doubt changes in taste influenced the authors' initial impressions. But the varying interpretations of the sitter's character results from the authors' a-historical reliance on the effect of the portrait on themselves colored by whom they believe the sitter to be.

6. Van Mander 1604, sig. 28r. Van Mander's comments about the financial attraction of portraiture is borne out by the few documents that we have on the subject. In his study of Delft inventories and the records of the Guild of St. Luke, Montias 1982, pp. 142, 146, 193, discovered that portrait painters comprised about fifteen percent of specialists newly inscribed into the Guild of St. Luke between 1613 and 1649, and, among a smaller number of artists, comprised twenty-four percent from 1650 to 1679. Ibid., also points out (p. 244) that the number of actual portraits painted may have been proportionally higher than these percentages indicate, as painters who specialized in other types of paintings also created portraits on occasion.
7. Van Mander 1604, sig. 28r. I have quoted from the English translation in Van Mander 1603–4/1994–.
8. Van Hoogstraeten 1678, p. 87. Similarly, Félibien 1725, vol. 5, p. 311, wrote in 1669 that the portrait painter and the painter of a single figure cannot achieve perfection since "one should represent the great actions as the historians do or beautiful subjects like the poets."
9. Wassenbergh 1967. A similar type of survey of the sixteenth-century Dutch portrait as a whole had been published by De Vries 1934.



10. Including Ekkart 1973; Idem 1976-9; Exhib. cat. Enkhuizen 1990; Cat. Rotterdam 1995. See also De Vries 1982 and Idem 1990a.
11. Van Bueren 1991.
12. Blasse-Hegeman et al. 1990; Falkenburg et al. 1995.
13. De Jongh 1991, p. 128.
14. Panofsky 1962; see Holly 1984, esp. chap. 6.
15. Holly 1984, p. 159.
16. De Jongh and Vinken 1961; Vinken and De Jongh 1963. Other early studies include Panofsky 1934 and Van de Waal 1956. The former is perhaps the best-known early employment of this approach. Panofsky uses the symbolism of cultural traditions rather than emblems as his primary source.
17. Including, among others, De Jongh 1974; Van Thiel 1967-8; Bedaux 1987. See especially *Ibid.*, p. 151, n. 2, for a good, corrective explanation of the methodological use and abuse of emblems.
18. Exhib. cat. Haarlem 1986; see also Exhib. cat. Yamaguchi 1994.
19. Chapman 1990.
20. Goffman 1956; Idem 1959; Idem 1974; Idem 1983.
21. Smith 1982 makes the valuable reference to Goffman. Roodenburg 1991a has also fruitfully employed Goffman for the study of gesture in Dutch painting. An essay on melancholy and the English portrait by Strong 1964 is an early exposition of pose as an iconologic code or sign.
22. For a good discussion of the problem in the larger sphere of semiotics, see Bal and Bryson 1991, esp. p. 177.
23. De Jongh 1975-6; Idem 1991.
24. In an article on fruit symbolism in Dutch portraiture, Bedaux 1987, p. 76, challenges the interpretations presented by De Jongh 1974, a landmark article that interpreted grapes as a symbol of chastity. For a broader critique of some of the principles of iconology in a discussion of semiotics, see Bryson and Bal 1991. For a fine articulation of the view that some seventeenth-century Dutch artists may have been more concerned with visual and financial matters than those of symbolism and status, see the essay by Sluijter reprinted in this volume.
25. See, for example, De Jongh 1974.
26. De Jongh 1991, p. 121.
27. De Jongh 1991, p. 122 (see also p. 126); Becker 1991, p. 158.
28. Simmel 1922, pp. 102-3; cited in translation in Simmel 1971, p. xxxiii.
29. See the examples discussed by Freedberg 1989, pp. 213-20; and Van Bueren 1991, pp. 47-9.
30. Discourses are social: They structure the relations of speaker (here artist, patron, and/or sitter) and viewer, usually to influence in some way.
31. See Geertz 1973, p. 360: "thinking is a public activity." This discussion is also indebted to Pocock 1987.
32. Stimulating new approaches have been introduced in the general study of the genre by Brilliant 1991, and by the analytic essays on several works by Albrecht Dürer in Koerner 1993.
33. Jauss 1982, esp. pp. 22-8.
34. The portrait by Pickenoy (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) is reproduced in Exhib. cat. Haarlem 1986, no. 23. For those by De Keyser, see Adams 1985, nos. 40, 41.
35. Rosenberg 1964, pp. 59-60.
36. Blankert 1982, p. 57, and cat. nos. 117, 120. For the portrait once attributed to Rembrandt but now to his workshop, see Bruyn et al. 1982-, vol. 2, no. C80.
37. Italian portraits in this mode have not been so harshly judged. Oppé 1909/1970, pp. 110-11, writes of Raphael's *Portrait of Castiglione*: "He portrays his sitter in a moment of complete external repose, when all the moods and characteristics of the sitter are in potentially or subdued activity. All action in art is a limitation of character, because to make a moment permanent is to give it over-emphasis, and no motion of so complex a being as man can be an action of the whole . . . all the qualities which mark off the 'Grand Style' from the haphazard, the affected and the obscure - belong immediately and entirely to this thorough comprehension of the whole character of the sitter and the perception, through him, of all that is enduring and dignified in the creation of which he is a part . . . [The painting has] . . . universal value."
38. Susan Barnes, writing in Exhib. cat. Washington, D.C. 1990a, p. 92, notes that Titian, Giorgione, and Lorenzo Lotto in Italy, or Joos van Cleve, Jan Gossaert, and Jan Cornelisz. Vermeyen in the Netherlands, among others, produced portraits depicting their subjects in implied motion, and that subsequently an "international fashion for formality and immobility typified by the work of Moro in Spain and Bronzino in Italy" arose during the second half of the sixteenth century.
39. See Gerson 1968, p. 286, no. 164.
40. See Slive 1970-4, vol. 3, cat. nos. 32, 33.
41. In 1642, a now unknown portrait by Rembrandt of Andries de Graeff (1611-79) was valued at 500 gulden; Bruyn et al. 1982-, vol. 3, p. 302, no. A 129.
42. As, for example, Bartholomeus van der Helst's *Portrait of a Man* dated 1655 (see De Gelder 1921, no. 251, illus. pl. 24) or Ferdinand Bol's *Portrait of a Man* dated 1662 (see Blankert 1982, no. 107, pl. no. 116).
43. For example, the idea that "primitive" styles such as Romanesque or Gothic were once cited as evidence



- of earlier artists' inability to master perspective or volume, or "truthful appearance."
44. See Montagu 1994. Social distinction is, of course, only one of many possible functions of comportment. While at least three positions about the relation of the body to the passions were in circulation in the seventeenth century, all agreed that the passions could be read upon the body. One argued that the body was simply transparent to the passions of the soul; another held that the true nature of the individual could be hidden while signs for other passions or psychological states could be performed; a third, and perhaps most widely held, belief was that the individual could only perform, or perfect, passions to which their nature predisposed them.
  45. While it is very difficult to read seventeenth-century perceptions through texts, especially those written by foreigners, it is notable that the few comments that survive register the lack of formal distinctions. Roodenburg 1991a, n. 61, relays that Gomes van Trier, the Flemish translator of Guazzo's *De civili conversatione* in 1603, concluded that the Dutch were not interested in civility, one of the obstacles being "that very great misunderstanding of some, who (under the appearance of humble people) want to promote equality here in this world." Fynes Moryson, the English tourist who visited the Netherlands in the 1590s, wrote that "The Nobility or Gentry hath long been rooted out by the people. . . . I could not heare of more then some three Families of Gentlemen in Holland and Zeland (for the Lords of Nassaw are strangers), and these Gentlemen lived after the Plebeian manner of the other inhabitants, so as it were in vaine to seeke for any Order of Knighthood among them," Moryson 1617/1907, vol. 4, p. 470 (III.iv.298). As late as the 1730s, Van Effen 1731-5, vol. 7, p. 10, concluded that the consciousness of rank and station that went along with the rules of civility was more natural with strongly hierarchic states than with a "commonwealth" (such as the Netherlands), "where in a certain way all the inhabitants might be seen as each other's equals"; cited by Roodenburg 1991a, n. 62. See also Van Strien 1993, pp. 213-14.
  46. Two fine surveys of the subject are Spierenburg 1981 and Roodenburg 1991a. Roodenburg notes that a revised version of Erasmus, *De civilitate morum puerilium*, was required reading in Dutch Latin schools from 1625, and Stefano Guazzo's *De civili Conversatione* was translated into Dutch as *Van den heuschen burgerlycken ommegangh: een seer sin-rijcke, lieflijcke, ende nuttighe t'samensprekinghe* and published in Alkmaar in 1603. It was only in the second half of the century that additional civility manuals were published in the Northern Netherlands. These include a Latin edition of Guazzo's work published in Leiden in 1650; a Dutch translation of Castiglione's renowned *Libro del Cortegiano*, which appeared in Amsterdam in 1662; [De Courtin] 1672; a Dutch edition of Della Casa 1558/1986 that appeared in 1715; Anon. 1735.
  47. For the court or state portrait in general, see Jenkins 1947. Müller-Hofstede 1983 discusses portraits of this type by Rubens.
  48. [Van Sommelsdijck] 1667, pp. 31, 34-5, cited by Roodenburg 1991a, p. 184 n. 38. Anon. 1670, a free and abridged English translation of an earlier French travel book, pp. 23-4, describes the immobile comportment of the King: "They which have spoken to me . . . tell me . . . that when they speak to him he changes neither look nor posture but receives, hears, and answers them with the same countenance, nothing in all his body being moveable but his lips and tongue."
  49. Anon. 1735. This text is indebted to De Courtin 1672; see Roodenburg 1991a, pp. 156, 184, n. 37.
  50. Bredero 1617/1982, and Overbeke 1991, nos. 783, 1726; cited by Roodenburg 1991a, p. 184, n. 39.
  51. See further the examples in De Vries 1934 (although attributions for a number of these paintings have changed today).
  52. Roodenburg 1991a, pp. 156-7, and n. 22.
  53. Oestreich 1982, p. 37, "around 1600, especially in the France of Henry IV and the Netherlands, Stoicism became the ideology, almost the religion, of educated men." On Lipsius's stoicism, see Saunders 1955; for a good corrective, see Den Boer 1979, esp. p. 532, n. 46; see also Forster 1977. For an excellent history of stoic thought and its subsequent reception, see Røstvig 1962. Humanist thought of the Renaissance is an exceedingly complex issue of which Stoicism is only one pole. Bouwsma 1975 lucidly contrasts neo-Stoicism with Augustinianism, which accepted the passions as an important aspect of life. For a brief overview of the neo-Stoic movement in the late sixteenth century in the North, see the afterword to Lipsius 1965, pp. 19-31.
  54. Erasmus 1529; Lipsius 1605. For the Stoicism of Erasmus's thought, see Christian 1972.
  55. For a list of editions of this important work, see Oestreich 1982, p. 13.
  56. Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations* IV.vii.14; Plato had divided the soul itself into three parts (and Aristotle the soul into two), with the lower being the source of the passions, the higher the seat of rationality. Plato, *Timaeus*, 69c-d; *Republic*, IV.xii.436a-b; *Phaedrus*, 246a-b. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, I.xiii.9 ("the soul consists of two parts, one irrational and the



- other capable of reason"). But Stoics saw passion as error and thus not as a fundamental part of the soul; see Monsarrat 1984, pp. 15–16. Adding a Christian dimension to this philosophy, Renaissance men believed that man's passionate lower nature could at times gain control of his life due to Adam's fall.
57. Desiderius Erasmus in *Parabolae sive similia* (quoted from Erasmus 1974, vol. 23, p. 153).
  58. Skinner 1978, vol. 2, p. 187; see also p. 279.
  59. Latin from Lipsius 1584, quoted by Oestreich 1982, p. 19; I am grateful to David Dodd for the translation.
  60. Charron 1606; quoted by Babb 1951, p. 19. Charron's book was published in numerous other editions in the Netherlands, including in Leiden in 1646, 1656, and 1659, and in Amsterdam in 1662. For Charron and his work, see Kogel 1972.
  61. Descartes 1637. His friend and correspondent Constantijn Huygens advised, coordinated, and apparently even corrected the proofs of the first edition; see Dibon 1950.
  62. Letter of August 4, 1645; see Descartes 1970, pp. 166, 165. Descartes also expresses similar sentiments in his treatise *The Passions of the Soul*, where he writes: "the most feeble souls of all are those whose will . . . allows itself continually to be carried away by present passions" (Descartes 1967, vol. 1, p. 354).
  63. Spinoza distinguishes three stages of knowledge. In the first, Opinion, man is in bondage to the passions; in the second, Reason, the passions lose their power when they are understood; in the third and highest, Intuition, man sees all things in God and God in all things, and feels himself part of the eternal order and in a state of peace; see Gilbert and Kuhn 1953.
  64. Supplementing if not replacing the older *rederijker* dramas both in style and in subject matter, Seneca's tragedies provided models not only in structure but also in theme for authors from the middle of the sixteenth century onward. These include Dirck Volkertsz. Coornhert, Daniël Heinsius, Gerard Vossius, Hugo Grotius, Jacob Cats, Gerbrand Adriaensz. Bredero, Caspar Barlaeus, Pieter Cornelisz. Hooft, Samuel Coster, Joost van den Vondel, and Henrik L. Spiegel. See Worp 1892, chap. 3, pp. 43–57, which gives a survey of the knowledge and study of Seneca during this period; see also Idem 1904–8, vol. 1, pp. 247 ff. Smits-Veldt 1986, pp. 193–204, treats Bredero, Jacob Cats, Coornhert, and Spiegel. For Heinsius, see Meter 1984, pp. 52–3, 73–5, *passim*. Most of these authors, however, relied upon Seneca's work and thought selectively; his impact diminished after about 1630; see Parente 1987, pp. 57–8, 132.
  65. A well-known classical bust of Seneca appeared in numerous drawings, prints, and paintings. Rubens included Seneca's bust in his portrait of *Justus Lipsius* with Peter Paul Rubens, Philip Rubens, and Johannes Woverus, "The Four Philosophers" (Florence, Palazzo Pitti); see Vlieghe 1987, no. 117; Prinz 1973; Morford 1991, pp. 3–13, and *passim*. The artist's *Death of Seneca* dating from about 1609 (Munich, Alte Pinakothek) was widely known through an engraving by Cornelis Galle included in Lipsius's edition of the philosopher's works published in 1615. Jacques de Gheyn drew the death of Seneca, and Gerrit van Honthorst (copy, Utrecht, Centraal Museum), Joachim von Sandrart (formerly Berlin, Kaiser Friedrich Museum), and Matthias Stomer (copy, Catania, Museo dei Benedettine) all created paintings of the subject. Pigler 1974, vol. 2, pp. 430–1, lists thirty-nine versions of the death of Seneca from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Stoic ideals have been ascertained in the work of other Northern artists; see Günter 1986.
  66. See Denys G. Dyer's introduction to the English translation (Edinburgh University Press, 1975), where he discusses parodies and attacks on neo-Stoicism in deathbed scenes.
  67. Hooft 1976–9, vol. 1, pp. 492, 494; cited in translation by Schenkeveld 1991, p. 64.
  68. Oestreich 1982, pp. 34, 64, *passim*.
  69. Rabelais 1532–48/1991, book I, chap. 52.
  70. Massinger 1624, act I, scene 3.
  71. Bouwsma 1975, pp. 31–2.
  72. Oestreich 1982, p. 7.
  73. Caspar Barlaeus cited in translation by Haak 1969, pp. 76–8. One must take these descriptions with a grain of salt. Moryson 1617/1907, vol. 4, p. 467 (III.iv.287), wrote: "at Leyden, myselfe have observed the inhabitants of Villages, . . . High injuries and maines of any member, are punished by the law, which passeth over lighter injuries, not giving such ample satisfactions to the wronged even by word, as the constitutions of the Sweitzers give; so as with them no lesse then in England, quarrels and brawlings are frequent, and often breake out into man-slaughters, wherein those who will revenge themselves by force, first agree between themselves, whether they will strike or stab; and then drawing out long knives, which they ordinarily weare, they wound one another by course, according to their agreement, either by slashes or stabs (which they call *schneiden* and *stecken*)." Whether or not either description was historically accurate is unimportant; the point remains that the rhetoric of self-control was in wide circulation.
  74. Cited by Moffitt 1990, esp. p. 219, associating the phrase with the court portraiture of Moro and Titian. For a suggestive article by an anthropologist on demeanor in court ritual, see McCracken 1982.

75. Earl of Clarendon 1843, p. 23.
76. Heckscher 1967, p. 130. For this portrait, see Rowlands 1985, no. 13, pl. 26.
77. Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 99–104 (quoted from *Horace, Satires, Epistles and Ars Poetica*, Trans. H. Rushton Fairclough, Cambridge [Mass.], 1966, p. 459).
78. Heinsius terms exposition "implicit" that employs models and examples, or acting out of emotions in particular situations; and exposition "explicit" that describes intentions and feelings. See Daniel Heinsius on the subject with regard to tragedy in Meter 1984, pp. 238–44.
79. Della Casa 1558/1986, p. 48. This work was translated into Dutch in 1715.
80. Meter 1984, p. 156; Kern 1949, pp. 58–9.
81. In discussing the portraits of Michael van Miereveld, Huygens 1946, p. 75, states that "Toch verrichten zij een nobel werk, dat meer dan iets anders voor onze menschelijke behoeften allernoodzakelijkst is, omdat wij door hun toedoen in zekere zin niet sterven en nog als nakomelingen met onze verste voorvaderen vertrouwelijk kunnen spreken. Dit genot is mij zoo lief, dat mij niets aangenamers kan te beurt vallen, dan dat het mij bij het lezen of hooren verhalen over ieders leven en karakter – hij zij een goed of slecht mensch – (en dit soort geschiedenis trekt mij bijzonder aan) mogelijk wordt gemaakt zijn portret te beschouwen."
82. Vossius 1650, published a year after Vossius's death by Franciscus Junius; see Rademaker 1981, p. 324.
83. Personal communication with Pieter Biesboer.
84. Exhib. cat. Haarlem 1986, p. 36; see also Woodall 1990.
85. Elias 1982. Elias's now classic study was first published in 1939.
86. See Groeneweg 1995.
87. Burke 1994, p. xv.
88. In psychoanalytic terms, a process known as condensation.
89. Roodenburg 1991a, pp. 154–6. This does not mean that individuals did not also seek to distinguish themselves socially. For example, there are examples of families creating or inventing forebears for just this purpose; see Dudok van Heel 1990, who has identified a number of spurious genealogies for such well-known families as the De Graeffs. Kretschmar 1977 has discovered that coats of arms were not infrequently fabricated. Van Nierop 1984, p. 228, has identified individuals who adopted noble names. This is symptomatic of a more general cultural practice. The point is that class boundaries were in flux and not at all clear.
90. On civil unrest during this period, from the 1580s through the middle of the seventeenth century, see Duke and Kolff 1969; Knevel 1988; and Dekker 1982, respectively.

#### CHAPTER THIRTEEN. HOW TO SIT, STAND, AND WALK

1. Throughout the seventeenth century, three generations of bone-setters practiced not in De Rijp but in the neighboring village of Jisp (possibly Huygens or his wife made a mistake). The oldest of them, Willem Taemsz., nicknamed "the iron thumb," was praised by Jacob Cats in his *Trouwingb* (Wedding Ring) of 1637. See Van Andel 1941, pp. 172–4.
2. For the full story, see Exhib. cat. The Hague 1987, pp. 96–101.
3. It seems likely that Huygens was all the more concerned about the education of his sons, as the family, because of its Brabant origins, did not have access to political office and thereby to the urban regent class. Such offices remained the perquisite of the "natives of this country." For the difficulties of the Huygens family, see Hofman 1983, pp. 28–9.
4. Elias 1982. Elias's now classic study was first published in 1939.
5. [De Courtin] 1733, p. 223. This text was originally published in French in 1617; Dutch editions were published in 1672, 1675, and 1677.
6. The phrase is, of course, Erving Goffman's; see Goffman 1971.
7. See especially Goffman 1959. On my reservations regarding Elias, see also Roodenburg 1991a, esp. pp. 157–64.
8. Castiglione 1528. It was only in 1662 that his book was translated into Dutch; a second edition was published in 1675; see Idem 1675, p. 51. For a history of the rise, decline, and transformation of this famous text, see Burke 1995.
9. [Erasmus] 1678/1969, pp. 17–18. This book, which originally appeared in Latin in 1530, was written for the eleven-year-old Henry of Burgundy.
10. Anon. 1546. The original manuscript is in the collections of the University Library of Ghent (RES 821). I would like to thank my colleague Theo Meder, who kindly lent me his transcription of the text. For a later edition (Antwerp 1587) and also for some extensive quotations, see Schotel 1873–4, vol. 1, pp. 203–10. On the several editions, see Bijl 1978, pp. 187–96; Jansen-Sieben 1985, pp. 249–60.
11. Van L[aar] n.d., (1735), pp. 68, 169, 171, 179.
12. For this argument and for a general, though incomplete, overview of Dutch manners books, see Spierenburg 1981.
13. Cited after Bijl 1978, p. 250. See also Briels 1985, pp. 1, 14.



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REALISM RECONSIDERED

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