

Courtesy and its discontents:
Frans Hals's *Portrait of Isaac Massa and
Beatrix van der Laen*

For Son-Mey

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Thirty-five years ago Hans Kauffmann ended a distinguished essay on Rubens with an afterthought on Frans Hals. The subject of his study was the Flemish master's *Self Portrait with Isabella Brant* of 1609 in Munich (fig.2), and he had brilliantly demonstrated the painting's sources in a tradition of courtly, poetic love imagery that had its roots in the chivalric culture of the High Middle Ages. By the subtlest and seemingly the most natural of means, Rubens has lifted himself and his new wife out of the descriptive context of their everyday lives into the symbolic ambiance of the *Liebepaar*. The honeysuckle bower they sit beneath is an emblem of the garden of love, and their right hands are joined in the symbolic nuptial gesture of *dextrarum junctio*.¹ To Kauffmann the painting represented a liberating expansion of the vocabulary of portraiture. By crossing generic boundaries and tying his portrait to the formal and thematic conventions of courtly love, Rubens could explore meanings and associations that lay beyond the scope of likeness alone.² Looking ahead to the impact Rubens's invention had on Dutch portraiture in the ensuing years, however, he felt that its full value had been lost, as the symbolic, mythic dimension gave way, once again, to prosaic description. In his opinion, the painting that set Dutch portraiture on this path was Frans Hals's *Portrait of a Couple* in the Rijksmuseum (fig.1):³

"...das Ehebild streifte seine Förmlichkeit ab und verallgemeinerte sich zum Bildnispaar; nur in der Landschaftsferne hielten sich noch kleine Liebesgartenrequisiten (darunter Pflaue der Juno). Dabei brach offenste Lebensunmittelbarkeit herein. Die Porträtfigur wurde aus sich heraus gesprächig und machte sich vordergründig interessant. Eine Augenblickssituation – jedoch nicht etwa die Stiftung des Ehebundes –, ein zufälliges Stück aus ihrem Leben Seite an Seite wurde eingefangen, und die Beiden lachen miteinander: auf solche Präsenz spitzte sich das 'Glück der Liebenden' zu. Es ist Alltag, nicht Liebesfrühling, wir bekommen etwas 'Gewöhnliches' zu sehen, nicht etwas 'Bedeutendes' und nichts von höherer Ordnung wie bei Rubens".⁴

The casual informality with which Hals's sitters confront the viewer certainly differs from the refined self-possession of Rubens and Isabella Brant. The latter couple are 'composed' not just in a social and psychological sense, but in the

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Frans Hals, *Portrait of Isaac
Massa and Beatrix van der Laen*,
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
(photo: Museum).



artful *contrapposto* by which Isabella's figure, narrow at the top and broad at the bottom, intertwines with her husband's broad superstructure and narrow base. That they are bound together by their joined right hands creates, moreover, a close alliance between artistic and symbolic form. In contrast, a simple, relaxed proximity alone seems, at first sight, to define the relationship of Hals's couple. If Hals got the inspiration for his portrait on a visit to Rubens's studio during his trip to Antwerp in 1616, as has usually been presumed, it appears likely that the differences between the two works reflect a conscious decision on the Dutch artist's part.⁵ Conscious or not, these differences would seem to reflect what have long been seen as larger contrasts between the two artists' styles and their views of the relation between art and reality. Rubens's mingling of reality and archetype as well as his refined sense of formal artifice show his deep roots in Renaissance classicism. Hals's portrait, on the other hand, shares the aura of direct and spontaneous naturalism that modern critics have valued so highly in his art since the mid-nineteenth century.⁶

Fidelity to appearance, however, is not a neutral quality, least of all in portraiture. If most commentators have praised Hals's naturalism and his informality, there nevertheless have been a few voices of disapproval. What Kauffmann found merely trivial in the Rijksmuseum double portrait, Eugène Fromentin, for example, found irritatingly 'impertinent' and 'much too easy-going.'⁷ Fromentin's disapproval undoubtedly reflects what Meyer Shapiro has shown to be his conservative view of connections he saw between aspects of Dutch art and the radical changes taking place in French art in 1875, the year he wrote *Les Maîtres d'autrefois*.⁸ In recognizing his bias, however, modern



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Peter Paul Rubens, *Self-Portrait with Isabella Brant in the Honeysuckle Bower*, 1609, Alte Pinakothek, Munich (photo: Museum).

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Andrea Alciati, *Amicitia etiam post mortem durans*, woodcut (from *Emblematum Libellus*, 1536).

4

Daniel Heinsius, *Ni mesme la mort*, engraving (from *Emblemata Amatoria*).

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scholars and critics should not lightly discount it. If we value Hals's 'easy-goingness' much more highly, we should, in fairness, admit that we are scarcely less conditioned by the democratic social and political values of Thoré-Bürger, the reviver of the painter's modern reputation, than his contemporary Fromentin was by old-world standards of genteel decorum. More to the point, we should recognize that many of the Haarlem master's contemporaries probably would have found the social tone of his portrait just as controversial, if not more so. For the degree of informality he has given his sitters is virtually unprecedented in early-seventeenth-century Dutch marriage portraiture.

It is important to stress that the casualness and the apparent absence of convention in this painting are problematic because recent scholarship has largely disregarded this issue. Those who have focused on the couple's appearance, such as Seymour Slive, have noted the originality and the vitality of Hals's characterizations, but in a tone of unmingled appreciation and celebration.⁹ Others have tended to see questions of appearance as secondary. In a long article published on the eve of the great Frans-Hals exhibition in Haarlem of 1962, Eddy de Jongh and P.J. Vinken have significantly altered our perspective on the picture. They have been able firmly to identify the sitters as Isaac Abrahamsz. Massa and Beatrix van der Laen, a couple who were married on April 25, 1622, a date that corresponds to that which had been assigned to the portrait on stylistic grounds.¹⁰ As so often happens, the introduction of definite names and biographical particulars has cut short the tendency imaginatively to speculate upon, and sometimes to romanticize, the personalities of the portrait's subjects. Fromentin, for example, had assumed that they were the artist

AND. ALCI. EMBLE. LIB.

Amicitia etiam post mortem
durans.



Ærentem senio, nudam quoq; frondibus ulmum,
Complexa est uiridi uitis opaca coma.
Agnoscitq; uices nature, & grata parenti
Efficij reddit mutua iura suo.
Exempliq; monet, tales nos querere amicos,
Quos ne que disiungat fœdere summa dies,

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himself and his wife; others had suggested that they were his brother, Dirck, and his wife.¹¹ In any case, to de Jongh and Vinken the facts of likeness and identification more or less exhaust the question of appearance as such. Of more interest to them are questions of hidden symbolism. Challenging Hans Kauffmann, they have suggested that Hals's portrait is much closer to the spirit and meaning of Rubens's *Self Portrait with Isabella Brant* (fig. 2) than he had imagined. Where he had thought that Hals had relegated the imagery of love to the garden of love in the background to the right, they show that these meanings have shaped the foreground as well. The key symbol is the vine-encircled tree immediately behind and between Massa and his wife. Just as the poses of Rubens and Isabella Brant echo the clinging, 'embracing' vines of the honeysuckle, so the manner in which Beatrix van der Laen leans on her husband's shoulder reflects the vine's dependence on the tree's support.¹² Both the motif and its marital meanings are derived from the traditional marriage topos of the elm and the vine. Invented by the Roman poet Catullus and common in antiquity, the metaphor had been rediscovered and revived by Renaissance humanists. Hals may have discovered it in Andrea Alciati's emblem *Amicitia etiam post mortem durans* (fig. 3) in his *Emblematum Libellus*, first published in 1531. But the conceit was sufficiently commonplace by the early seventeenth century for him to have resorted to any of a number of other sources, among them the Dutch scholar Daniel Heinsius's emblem *Ni mesme la mort* (fig. 4) in his *Emblemata Amatoria* of ca. 1607. Be that as it may, the image alludes to the fact that the elm and the vine need one another to bear fruit, just as the husband supports his wife, who in turn bears him children. As the mottos of both Alciati and Heinsius indicate, the tree and the plant also are symbolic of the immortality of married love, since they cling to one another after death.¹³ This last meaning was especially favored by Renaissance Neoplatonism.¹⁴ But for a slightly different choice of emblems, Hals's meaning, in short, appears to be essentially the same as Rubens's. In both paintings love and marriage,

symbol and portrait, myth and reality are no less harmoniously joined than the husband and wife. De Jongh and Vincken's essay has become an early classic in the iconographical scholarship that has dominated the historiography of Dutch art for a quarter of a century. Useful as their approach has been, however, it has also tended to stress problems of symbolism at the expense of problems of representation. In a later work de Jongh has even referred to Dutch naturalism as '*schijnrealisme*', explicitly asserting the primacy of symbol over appearance.¹⁵ There can be no denying that Hals and his contemporaries took a more metaphorical view of the world than have their modern descendants. But whether the symbols in his *Portrait of Isaac Massa and his Wife* provide a self-sufficient statement of the meanings of this couple's marriage is another question. In fact, the configuration of symbols in the portrait is more complex and certainly less harmonious than de Jongh and Vincken would have us believe. Moreover, these iconographic tensions relate directly to the contrasts Kauffmann saw between the prosaically casual appearance of Hals's sitters and the courtliness and the mythic temper of Rubens's *Self Portrait with Isabella Brant*. Only by relating symbol to appearance can the conflicts in the Rijksmuseum painting be resolved and the full significance of Hals's message made clear.

As de Jongh and Vincken recognize, there are two other important botanical symbols in the foreground. These are the thistle to the left of Massa and what appears to be a strand of ivy trailing along the ground to the right of Beatrix van der Laen. Both were established erotic symbols, and their placement in Hals's composition seems to identify each with one or the other sex. The thistle, which had a reputation as a 'thirsty' plant and an aphrodisiac, could be associated with either male or female sexuality, but its popular name, *Männertreu*, explains why the artist placed it next to Massa. The 'clinging' character of the ivy, on the other hand, made it exclusively a feminine symbol. To de Jongh and Vincken, these sexual meanings represent an expansion and an enrichment of the marital symbolism of the elm and the vine, adding, as it were, some of the more immediate delights of matrimony to the values of fruitfulness and enduring fidelity. They are able to cite examples in both art and literature where the thistle and the ivy are associated with marriage. Indeed, in some cases the ivy takes the place of the vine in embracing a tree.¹⁶ Nevertheless, the meanings of the two images remain fundamentally different, nor is the one as inherently marital as the other. In fact, many of the literary and pictorial examples that de Jongh and Vincken cite deal not with marriage, but with courtship and romance. And those that do touch on marriage are concerned with sexual matters alone.¹⁷ It is revealing, moreover, that they use the wrong source for Catullus's original metaphor. The image of the elm and the vine first appears in *Carmen* 62: 49-58, the so-called 'Greek' epithalamium, in which a group of boys use it to counter the argument of a group of girls that marriage is a cruel fate for their sex. The two Dutch scholars, however, have turned to a passage in the 'Roman' epithalamium, *Carmen* 61: 97-106, in which the vine embraces an unnamed tree in a simile for the passionate abandon of the wedding night.¹⁸ Here the vine is indeed interchangeable with the ivy, which in another stanza of the same poem (lines 31-35) is likened to an eager bride, 'full of desire for the bridegroom,' in twining itself around another nameless tree.¹⁹

With such examples it can certainly be argued that the meanings of the vine and the ivy in Hals's portrait are essentially the same. From this perspective, however, it seems somewhat redundant to include both. It is significant, therefore, that unlike the mutually supportive elm and vine, the thistle and the

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Jacob Cats, *Ut strangulet, ambit*,
engraving (from *Emblemata
Moralia et Aeconomica*, 1627).

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Jacob Cats, *The Course of Life*,
engraving (from *Houwelick*,
1625).



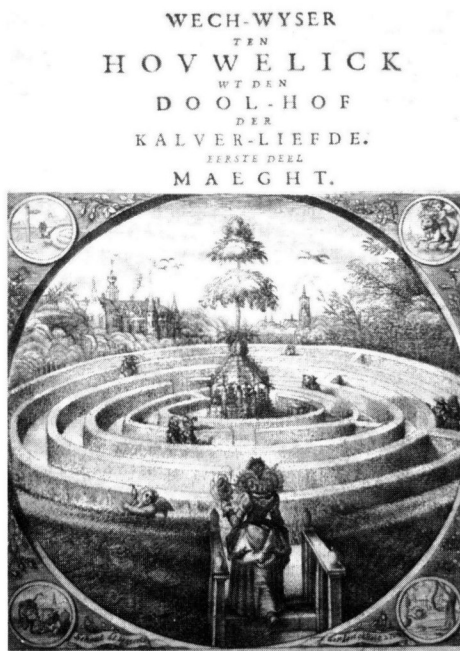
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ivy remain separate from one another. Given the importance of the relationship of the two plants in the first metaphor, the separation of the other two suggests contrasting rather than complementary meanings. As Peter Demetz has shown, the interchangeability of the ivy and the vine in the sexual imagery of Catullus's *Carmen* 61 has little or no relationship to the marriage topos of the elm and the vine in *Carmen* 62. On the other hand, there is a strong tradition in Renaissance literature that contrasts the sexuality of the ivy to the fertility of the vine. For unlike the vine the ivy is sterile, and its effect on the trees it embraces is decidedly negative. Hence, it becomes a metaphor for faithlessness and the corrupting power of illicit passion.²⁰ Hals would have discovered this message in Jacob Cats's emblem *Ut strangulet, ambit* (fig. 5), first published in his *Monita amoris virginiei* of 1618. His dead tree entwined with an ivy that 'strangles as it embraces' is remarkably similar to Heinsius's image of an enduring relationship that 'not even death' can end (fig. 4). Similarly, it is not easy to distinguish botanically between the vine and the ivy in Hals's painting. Hals was no botanist, and he does not seem to have been particularly sure of what an elm looks like either.²¹ But even if the plant trailing along the ground beside Beatrix van der Laen is a vine tendril, the meaning would be essentially the same. For in Catullus's *Carmen* 62, the vine that clings, 'unmated', to the ground is sterile.²² The likelihood that this plant is, however, an ivy rests on what seems to be its explicit association with mortality. It wreathes itself around a tree stump and two earthen pots that de Jongh and Vinken have interpreted as symbols of death, based on Isaiah 29: 16.²³

In these scholars' mistaken association of the fruitful interdependence of marriage with the sexual passion of romantic love, one recognizes modern understandings of matrimony. Nevertheless, I would hesitate to label their study anachronistic. Rubens, after all, had made just this association in his *Self Portrait with Isabella Brant* (fig. 2). If he has tempered the passions of desire in the interests of propriety and decorum, he has retained the idyllic mood and the



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courtly refinement that had traditionally attended the sentiment of romantic, 'courtly' love in medieval and Renaissance culture. The couple's elegant clothing is not simply fashionable, but, like the painter's sword, a bearer of aristocratic identity in a world where only gentlemen and ladies woo. By coupling this mythic ambiance with the realities of portraiture and wedlock, Rubens has created a synthesis of love and marriage that had an inevitable appeal for many of his contemporaries and one fraught with significance for the social history of the modern world.²⁴ In light of his example, it is easy to see why de Jongh, Vinken, and others as well have assumed that the same message could be found in Hals's *Portrait of Isaac Massa and Beatrix van der Laen*. Whether or not they have detected tensions or contradictions in the Rijksmuseum portrait, virtually all scholars who have discussed this picture in the recent past, myself included, have taken it for granted that the scene takes place in a garden of specifically marital love.²⁵ But Hals's symbolism should remind us of how innovatory Rubens's synthesis is. There are many contemporary sources that distinguish quite clearly between marriage and romantic love, and in them the image of the garden is usually associated with the latter. The frontispiece of Jacob Cats's *Houwelick* of 1625 (fig. 6), for example, illustrates the course of life, and in it the married couple standing beside the elm and the vine follows the emergence of another younger and presumably newly-married pair from the garden of love in the lower left. It is impossible to say whether the tendril trailing along at the feet of the lovers still promenading in this garden is an ivy or a chaste 'unmarried' vine. But Cats's attitude toward this stage of life is made clear a few pages later in a print accompanying a long poem entitled 'Wech-Wyser ten Houwelick wt den Dool-Hof der Kalver-Liefde' (fig. 7). In it the concentric circles of the garden in the frontispiece expand into a labyrinth of hedges, into which Cupid leads a young lady. The poem describes this garden of love as a place of temptation and illusion, out of which it is perilously difficult to find one's way:

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Jacob Cats, *Wech-Wyser ten Houwelick wt den Dool-Hof der Kalver-Liefde*, engraving (from *Houwelick*, 1625).

8
Jacob de Gheyn after Karel van Mander, *The Prodigal Son Wasting his Inheritance*, 1596, engraving, Rijksprentenkabinet, Amsterdam (photo: Museum).

9
Jan Saenredam after Hendrik Goltzius, *Marriage Blessed by Cupid*, engraving, Rijksprentenkabinet, Amsterdam (photo: Museum).

10
Jan Saenredam after Hendrik Goltzius, *Marriage Blessed by Christ*, engraving, Rijksprentenkabinet, Amsterdam (photo: Museum).



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Het los en dom gewoel dat jonge lieden plegen,
Is juist gelijk een hof met duysent omme-wegen:
Een hof, een lustigh hof, en konstigh afgemaelt,
Een hof, een listigh hof, en daer een ieder dwaelt;
Een hof, een schoon preeel, daer alle tuynen bloeyen,
Maer des al niet-te-min oock suere fruyten groeyen;
Een hof, daer over al veel schoone rosen staen,
Maer diese plucken wil, die vint' er prickels aen...
Een hof, een rechte fuyck, een winckel van bedrogh,
Daer ieder over klaeght, en ieder blijft' er nogh...²⁶

In short, Cats sees the path from courtship to marriage as a tortuous one, on which not everyone journeys successfully. In referring to romance as '*kalver-liefde*', the Dutch equivalent of 'puppy love', he shows a playful tone that partly mitigates his customary moral rigor. But the term nonetheless marks a sharp distinction between this sentiment and the mature love of husband and wife. Others of Cats's contemporaries took a dimmer view of the amorous dalliances of youth. Jacob de Gheyn's engraving of 1596 after Karel van Mander's *The Prodigal Son Wasting his Inheritance* (fig. 8), for example, uses a garden of love as the setting for a parable that was popular at the time as a warning against youthful extravagance and vice.²⁷ Here the aristocratic elegance and refinement that Rubens prized so highly have been transformed by van Mander and de Gheyn's mannerist idiom into lurid decadence. And the courtly love traditionally associated with the bower and the Cupid fountain in the upper right has become the mere lust of ladies in scandalously low-cut dresses and their fondling suitors. By including the fool in the lower left, van Mander underlines the sorry fate of the prodigal son, dancing in the center of the composition, but in the background cast out of a ruinous house of ill repute.²⁸ Even more revealing are two engravings by Jan Saenredam after designs by



11
detail of figure 1.

12
Dirck Hals, *Party in a Garden*,
Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam
(photo: Museum).

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Hendrik Goltzius, entitled *Marriage Blessed by Cupid* (fig. 9) and *Marriage Blessed by Christ* (fig. 10). In the first the couple taking their vows have the same lurid elegance of dress and mannered sensuousness of bearing as their counterparts in de Gheyn's print. The background scene of naked couples carousing in a bower makes explicit the sexual message underlying their courtly mating ritual. In contrast, the couple who are married by Christ wear simple burgher attire, and each looks down soberly and humbly. Their relationship is based not on sexual polarity, but on fidelity and interdependence. Unlike Cupid in the other print, Christ looks toward the husband, confirming his authority, and the wife, holding a palm of honor, reappears in the background, crowning her husband in a pavilion.

Though Goltzius's imagery is certainly more heavy-handedly didactic, it nevertheless closely parallels that of Hals's marriage portrait. The alluring beauty in *Marriage Blessed by Cupid* has a distinctly predatory air that calls to mind the symbolism of the ivy, just as her counterpart in *Marriage Blessed by Christ* has 'vine-like' qualities of modesty and submissiveness. The contrast between the two prints also parallels the relationship between the foreground and the background of Hals's painting. At first sight, the latter's naturalistic style would seem to contradict his predecessor's vision, which distinguishes not only morally, but also stylistically, between the two types of relationship. But if the couples promenading in the garden behind Isaac Massa and his wife lack



the mannered contrivance of the immoral lovers of Goltzius and van Mander, they do seem to carry some of the same meanings and associations (fig. 11). The early Dutch realists of Hals's generation were no less interested in the theme of the garden of love than the Dutch mannerists had been, and in many of their works, it takes on the same negative connotations found in de Gheyn's engraving of *The Prodigal Son*.²⁹ A familiar example is Dirck Hals's *Party in a Garden* of about 1628 in the Rijksmuseum (fig. 12).³⁰ There are suggestive similarities between the fanciful Italianate chateau, the fragments of classical architecture, and the statue of a female figure in Dirck's painting and corresponding details in his older brother's portrait.³¹ For my purposes, however, the most important similarities are between the occupants of these two gardens. The couples in both pictures are elegantly posed and are decked out in the most fashionable of brightly-colored garments, which belong to an aristocratic milieu not unlike that of the lovers in de Gheyn and Goltzius's prints. Their elegance also has a mannered quality about it, which conveys the same air of affectation found in the earlier artists' works even if it is not a function of the mannerist style as such. Social and artistic manneredness cannot easily be separated however. The standing man in the left foreground of Dirck's painting, who looks out at us so self-consciously as his lady friend calls him to our attention, is based on an etching entitled *German Nobleman* (fig. 13) by Willem Buytewech. It is the second in a series of prints of seven foreign noblemen (VdK 14-20) that the latter produced around 1615. In them he uses artificially-attenuated proportions and languorously decadent demeanors to satirize not so much the nobility itself as the fashion prints that were popular at the time as models of good taste for burghers aspiring to courtly affectations.³² Elsewhere in the painting too, Dirck borrows from Buytewech. Both the shaggy dog at the man's feet and the woman standing with her companion on the far right have been copied directly



¹³
 Willem Buytewech, *German Nobleman*, etching (from *Willem Buytewech, 1591-1624*, pl. 88).

¹⁴
 Willem Buytewech, *Fashionable Courtship*, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (photo: Museum).

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from the other artist's *Fashionable Courtship* in the Rijksmuseum (fig. 14).³³ Here too the setting is a love garden, and the two young couples are no less mannered and elegant in pose and dress than those in Dirck's picture. Both artists also take care to associate these qualities with immorality. De Jongh has shown that the spider's web attached to the escutcheon in the upper left of Buytewech's scene is an emblematic warning against the entrapments of Venus.³⁴ In Dirck Hals's *Party in a Garden*, the symbolic cue is the fettered ape in the center foreground, which is a common symbol of enslavement to sin.³⁵ We can assume that the foppish dandies and their girlfriends in these two garden parties are scarcely more upright than those in de Gheyn's more explicitly moralistic image.

By themselves, of course, elegance of pose and dress need not suggest negative meanings. Rubens and his wife (fig. 2), after all, are equally modish. In the absence of apes and spiders, one might suppose that Frans Hals's interpreta-



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tion of the garden of love is similarly benign. But what ties his vision of the garden to the more negative associations of the image is the contrast in dress and demeanor between Isaac Massa and Beatrix van der Laen and the couples behind them. Just as the presence of the elm and the vine makes more specific the meaning of the thistle and the ivy, so the dark, sober dress and seemingly unposed, matter-of-fact attitude of Hals's sitters associates the courtliness and elegance of the other figures with extravagance and prodigality. Though these contrasts have so far escaped the notice of modern critics, contemporaries would easily have recognized their implications.

The aristocratic status or aspirations of the lovers idling about around the fountain are especially explicit in a detail that his brother, Dirck, neglected, though Buytewech did not. Namely, each of the two men wears a sword, a weapon that was virtually a badge of knightly rank and had been since the middle ages.³⁶ But almost every other feature of these figures' attire places them at the courtly apex of society. The wide, flat ruffs of the women, for example, and the way their outer skirts have been hiked up to reveal more colorful underskirts obey the latest dictates of contemporary high fashion.³⁷ Another, specifically courtly touch is their lack of the caps that were a standard part of the middle-class Dutchwoman's costume; instead, each has adorned her hair with brightly-colored ribbons.³⁸ The disapproval that aristocratic dress of this sort could inspire in Hals's contemporaries is well-documented in the moral writings of the time. Thus, in the second book of *Houwelick*, Jacob Cats has the newly-married Sibille warn her unmarried friend Rosette against the temptations of courtly extravagance in The Hague. A proper, moral girl, she says, should shun the stylish, foreign fashions favored by the ladies of the court: 'Een kleet dat net is sonder pracht,/ Dat houd' ick voor de beste Dracht...'³⁹

And in the fourth book of his treatise, which offers advice to the married woman, Cats returns to the subject of clothing once again, this time to warn his readers against finery that might either inspire lust or impoverish their husbands.⁴⁰

Cats's tone seems rather temperate and restrained, however, compared with that of his colleague Constantijn Huygens. In his *'t Kostelijk Mal* of 1622, which he dedicated to Cats, Huygens launches what can only be called a tirade against the elegant and extravagant dress of the court society to which, like Cats, he himself belonged.⁴¹ His discourse ranges from complaints about shoes that resemble satyrs' hooves (line 8) to the theological implications of the fig leaf (lines 57-60, 440). Especially interesting from the point of view of Hals's portrait is what he has to say about the use of color in contemporary dress:

't Verheugelicke licht van 's hemels Water-boogh
 Bekittelt onsen lust. Sou daer het rood staen blaeken,
 In 't geel, in 't blaeuw, in 't groen, en in ons mantellaeken,
 In onse rocken min? Neen mensche, lijdt het niet.
 Waer voor heet ghy den aep die na-maectt wat hy siet?
 Knoopt aen den naem de daed. Daer moet de wol verdrincken,
 Daer moet de zijd' in 't sop; daer moet het lijnwaet stincken
 (Men pleit noch op 't geschil, welck schoonst te noemen zy)
 Of naer den geelen Rijs, of naer den blaewen bry.
 Wie sou sich in 't gewaet met een' verw laten paeyen,
 Daer 't soo breed' weiden is? Ecn' Aeckster by de Kraeyen
 Is veel te schoonen Dier; wat is 't swart van de Kauw
 By 't glimpen van een' Specht, by 't vlammen van een Pauw?
 (lines 200-212)⁴²

Huygens's disparaging reference to the gaudy plummage of the peacock seems especially telling in light of the two peacocks strutting amongst the promenading lovers in Hals's garden. Heretofore, these birds have been interpreted as symbols of Juno, goddess of marriage.⁴³ This is certainly one of their meanings, but it is not a very common one in the art of the time. Far more often peacocks are symbolic of pride. Theodor de Bry's print of *Superbia* (fig. 15) shows one of their species standing beside the richly-dressed allegorical figure of *Pride*, and, significantly, the background scene is a garden with a bower and a fountain, and populated by elegant, aristocratic couples much like those in Hals's portrait.⁴⁴

Isaac Massa and Beatrix van der Laen were surely not entirely remote from this wealthy, upper-class society. She was the daughter of a burgomaster of Haarlem; he was a prosperous merchant, who had served as the Dutch ambassador to Russia and hence had connections with The Hague.⁴⁵ Nevertheless, Hals's portrayal of them clearly sets out to distinguish them from the courtly image of the figures behind them. Though their clothing is thoroughly respectable by middle-class standards, its dominant note is one of understatement. Lace has been kept to a minimum, and the cap Beatrix van der Laen wears in accordance with bourgeois custom also seems to reflect a deliberate restraint, despite its trimmings of pink ribbon and gold lace. For this is an undercap, which ordinarily would have been worn beneath a more elaborate headpiece.⁴⁶ Equally subdued are the black and purple colors of her dress; and her husband has chosen black alone, eschewing the white and red stockings of his more stylish counterparts in the garden behind him. In choosing black, he allies himself with the crows and jackdaws that Huygens contrasts to more

15
Theodor de Bry, *Superbia*,
engraving, Rijksprenten-
kabinet, Amsterdam (photo:
Museum).



16
Frans Hals, *Portrait of Isaac
Massa*, 1626, Art Gallery of
Ontario, Bequest of Frank
P. Wood, 1955, Toronto
(photo: Museum).



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colorful – and more vain – birds. Had Massa worn white stockings, Huygens presumably would have likened him to a magpie, ‘much too beautiful a beast.’ The general character of the image they present perhaps best reveals itself in a comparison with the seated couple on the far left of Dirck Hals’s painting (fig. 12). Their poses and dress are similar, and it is conceivable that Dirck meant to allude here to his brother’s work, as he evidently did in other respects. But Isaac Massa, one assumes, would never have adopted the pink-and-gray color accord of the other man’s hose and pantaloons, nor does his relaxed pose have the jaunty flair that makes Dirck’s figure akin to the seated dandy on the far left of Buytewech’s *Fashionable Courtship* (fig. 14). Their relationships with the women beside them also differ. Where Beatrix van der Laen sits upright in a casually friendly, but respectable, way, her counterpart drapes herself on her companion’s arm and fondles his hand, evidently preferring romance to propriety. Isaac Massa confirms the soberer character of his relationship to his wife by placing his right hand on his heart in a symbolic gesture of fidelity.⁴⁷ Considering the nature of the other comparisons with aristocratic mores Hals makes in this portrait, he probably also meant it to be a gesture of honesty.

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II

This interpretation of the *Portrait of Isaac Massa and Beatrix van der Laen* raises a number of broader questions. In the evaluation of Hals’s achievement, the issue of appearance has regained the central place it held for earlier generations of scholars and critics. But though the artist clearly strived to create just the effect of naturalism and spontaneity that has long been prized in his work, this naturalism can no longer be understood simply in terms of virtuosity of description. Painting this portrait involved him in crucial affirmations about morality and the social order. And it is just where the picture is most naturalistic in the sense that a nineteenth-century critic such as Thoré-Bürger would have understood the term that it is socially and morally most problematic. For this reason, ironically, complex emblematic allusions proved more necessary here than in others of Hals’s works. The social and artistic norms and conventions of the Renaissance portrait tradition could not express the meanings he had in mind. Indeed, this portrait not only differs from those conventions; far more than Rubens’s *Self Portrait with Isabella Brant* (fig. 2) or most of the artist’s

own portraits, it challenges them. To understand fully the nature of Hals's choices and intentions, the picture needs to be considered within the larger framework of that tradition and its underlying ideals.

In their article de Jongh and Vinken contend that the seventeenth century had a 'non-psychological' orientation,⁴⁸ and in a subsequent study they further assert that a portrait cannot show character at all, but only an external likeness, which at most is touched by the fragmentary emotions of a passing moment.⁴⁹ It is certainly true that seventeenth-century portrait painters had little interest in the symbolic or expressionistic devices by which the modern 'psychological portraits' of artists such as van Gogh or Kokoschka attempt to reveal a sitter's inner psyche. But they nevertheless were deeply concerned with the problem of character. The Renaissance vision of the self was, however, inherently a more social one than that which prevails today, and where ours tends to be novelistic, centered on biographical cause and effect, theirs was fundamentally theatrical. As Wayne Rebhorn says:

"Constant social interaction was the norm for Renaissance men and...they found it difficult to imagine life without the continual presence of society. The modern distinction between public and private was less sharply defined in sixteenth-century society, when one's 'family' included servants and retainers as well as relatives, and when there was no room in one's house into which one could withdraw in order to enjoy complete privacy... In response to this almost totally public, social world, many Renaissance writers... conceived of it as theatre. They assumed that men were always on display, and that whether they played their roles or not, others would judge them and respond to them in terms of those roles".⁵⁰

This sense of life as a social theatre, in which the individual is an actor, was especially acute at the Renaissance court, where most of the portrait conventions used by Hals and his contemporaries originally were created. There the courtier's status and all that it entailed in the way of power and prestige hinged upon the success with which he played his role before both his prince and his peers. Courtesy books such as Baldassare Castiglione's *The Courtier* were written to provide their readers with advice on polite dress, etiquette, and conversation, as well as to portray a moral and intellectual ideal of civilized humanity.⁵¹ Inevitably, the conventions of Renaissance portraiture echo both these ideals and their rhetorical mode of expression.⁵²

Though Hals's portrait parts company with courtly ideals in a number of ways, he nevertheless has retained their sociable character and rhetorical mode. In looking out at us, Massa and his wife engage us in a social encounter, and his symbolic gesture of fidelity is no less conventional and declamatory for the informality of his pose. As we have seen, virtually every other aspect of dress and deportment in the painting also contributes to the rhetorical image presented by the figures, both those in the foreground and those in the background. Hidden symbols such as the elm and the vine and the thistle and the ivy have indeed provided us with clues to the significance of these details, but a seventeenth-century viewer probably would have considered the symbols to be of secondary importance – footnotes, as it were, to the main text. This is not so much because appearance is more important than symbolism as because appearance is itself symbolic. It is also true, of course, that the image of honesty and forthrightness that Hals has striven to create implies a sufficiency of appearance in this portrait that tends to preclude a modern viewer's questions about the 'inner selves' that lie behind the social masks. To answer such questions, we would need a biography, not a portrait. But it is well to remember

that the word ‘person’ derives from *persona*, the Latin word for ‘mask’. As the historical sociologist Norbert Elias says, defending the Renaissance’s social and theatrical vision of the self in his fundamental work, *The Civilizing Process*: ‘This courtly art of human observation – unlike what is usually called ‘psychology’ today – is never concerned with the individual in isolation, as if the essential features of his behaviour were independent of his relations to others, and as if he related to others, so to speak, only retrospectively. The approach here is far closer to reality, in that the individual is always seen in his social context, *as a human being in his relations to others, as an individual in a social situation*’ (Elias’s italics).⁵³ The conventions of pose and dress that Hals has used are not simply a social veneer, but carriers of moral implications that bear directly on these people’s characters. And though they are to a large degree normative, for this very reason they can frame the facts of likeness within the image of a social self such as Elias describes. Nor is normativeness either simple or psychologically reductive here. Isaac Massa and his wife clearly found themselves confronted with choices between conflicting social ideals, and in making their choices they express their individual characters and personalities. These conflicts and choices also led Frans Hals into some novel departures in the art of portraiture.

The originality of the composition does indeed seem to reveal as much about what we know of the character and personality of Isaac Massa as it does about the inventive genius of Hals. We have good reason to assume that they collaborated closely on the project, for the two men were apparently friends. Massa served as a witness at the baptism of one of the painter’s children in 1623, and as they were about the same age and were both emigrants from Antwerp, they probably had much in common.⁵⁴ Whether or not the patron played a major part in formulating the portrait’s iconography, as has been suggested,⁵⁵ he had good reason to see himself as an outsider in the courtly world of high fashion. Despite his financial success and his considerable attainments as a linguist, geographer, writer, and diplomat, Massa was very much a self-made man and combatively proud of it. In the dedication that he wrote to Prince Maurice for his account of his experiences in Russia, he claims that he had taught himself to read and write, never having been to school. And in the same passage he goes on to criticize ‘those wanting for nothing, who are rich and live in luxury.’⁵⁶

This same self-conscious independence helps to explain the unconventionality of Hals’s portraits of him. In addition to the Rijksmuseum double portrait, the artist painted three others, two of them in the 1620’s.⁵⁷ One of these, the portrait at Chatsworth (fig. 24), I shall discuss at a later point in this paper. More relevant in the present context is the portrait in Toronto of 1626 (fig. 16), which has been justly praised as one of Hals’s liveliest and most original inventions.⁵⁸ By throwing his arm over the back of his chair, Massa creates an unusually informal social ambiance, one far removed from the rhetorical ceremoniousness of the prevailing conventions of Dutch portraiture.⁵⁹ To be sure, this pose quickly became a conventional type in Hals’s portrait repertory; he was to use it time and again throughout his career for a wide variety of sitters.⁶⁰ In this respect the pose represents a rhetorical type and a social mask rather than a unique response to a particular person at a particular time and place.⁶¹ Nevertheless, in this first variation on the theme, Hals does seem to have set out to undercut the conventions of Renaissance portraiture. For in looking over his shoulder as though speaking to someone on the viewer’s left, Massa bypasses the rhetorical encounter with his audience that is the basis of



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the theatrical vision of the self. Not surprisingly, diverted glances of this sort are quite unusual in Dutch portraits of single individuals, and they are rarer still in Hals's work.⁶² It seems plausible to presume that this departure reflects an ambivalent attitude toward formality of self-presentation and the norms of social decorum underlying it.

In this respect the Toronto portrait seems closely akin to the double portrait in the Rijksmuseum, the informality of which Kauffmann thought so contrary to the meanings of Rubens's portrait (fig. 2) and which Fromentin found so annoyingly impertinent. Perhaps because the double portrait addresses the social institution of matrimony and hence has a soberer ethical purpose, Hals has, however, tempered its informality somewhat in comparison to the Toronto portrait. Massa and his wife engage in a social encounter with the viewer, and they also fit a portrait type, albeit an unconventional one of the painter's own devising. Their poses correspond quite closely to those of the father and mother in the *Family Portrait in a Landscape* (fig. 17), which Hals apparently painted about two years earlier.⁶³ As Slive has shown, this composition, which was originally part of a larger work, is itself quite novel by the standards of the time. Other Dutch portraits of families in the country from the early seventeenth century customarily show the parents, and often the children as well, in formal poses, as though they stood on the public stage of the court or the city.⁶⁴ The painter apparently meant the landscape to liberate this family from such constraints, allowing them to engage in a casual moment of child-centered domestic life. In using this image as a model for his marriage portrait, Hals

17
Frans Hals, *Portrait of a Family in a Landscape*, private collection, on loan to the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff (photo: Museum).

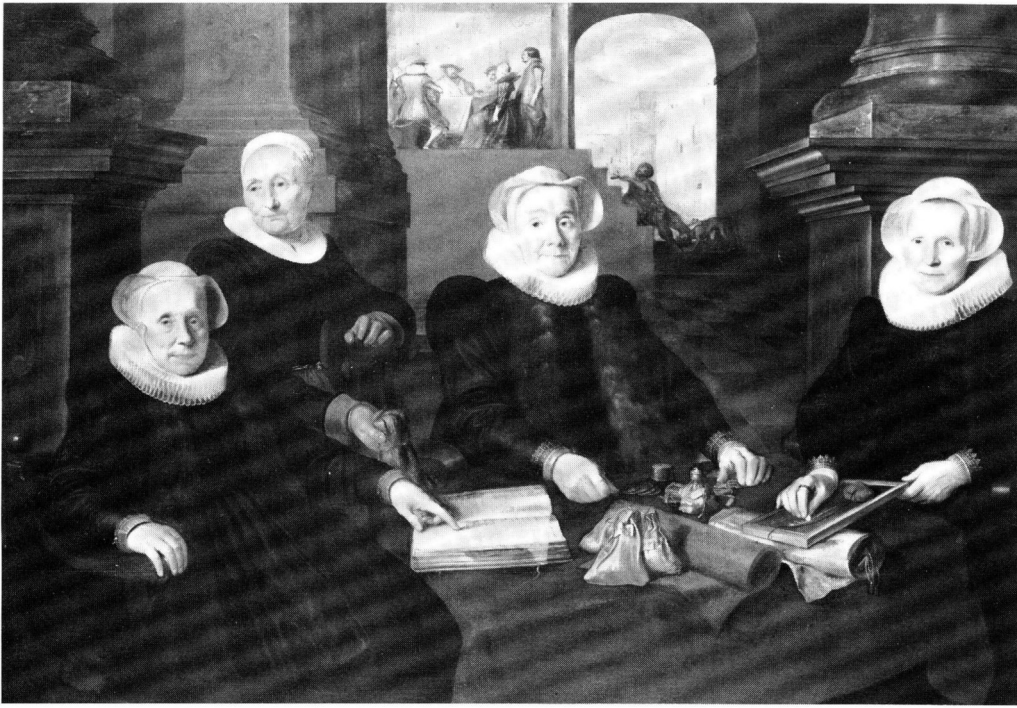
18
Isack Elyas, *Merry Company with Married Couple*, 1620, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (photo: Museum).



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borrowing its middle-class, domestic ethos and affirming an association of nature and informality that differs considerably from the relaxed elegance of Rubens's garden of love (fig. 2).

The contrasts Hals has drawn between foreground and background also reflect larger conventions in Netherlandish art. They are a familiar feature of genre painting, particularly in the later sixteenth century. There it is most often the background that provides the moral exemplum, as in the kitchen and market scenes of Pieter Aertsen and Joachim Beuckelaer, where a distant, easily-overlooked Christ with the adulteress or with Mary and Martha contradicts the worldliness of the foreground image.⁶⁵ It is understandable, of course, that a portrait painter would want to place virtue in the foreground with his sitters. Just because virtue in portraiture is therefore more accessible, however, there is much less need for contrasts with vice. There are few, if any, precedents for Hals's invention in sixteenth-century art.⁶⁶ But in the early decades of the seventeenth century, other Dutch portraits of this sort do appear. One example is Isack Elyas's *Merry Company* of 1620 (fig. 18), in which a staid and decorous young married couple stand on the right while a group of fashionably-dressed merry-makers who apparently represent the five senses cavort around a table in the center of the composition. The husband and wife, who are more soberly-dressed than the other figures and who are almost certainly a portrait, clearly serve as a countervailing image of virtue.⁶⁷ Even closer in some respects to the *Portrait of Isaac Massa and Beatrix van der Laen* is Werner van den Valckert's *Portrait of the Regentesses and the Housemother of the Amsterdam Leper Asylum* of 1624 (fig. 19).⁶⁸ In the background behind these black-clad matrons, van den Valckert has painted a banquet scene of rich people in brightly-colored garments not unlike those of the inhabitants of Hals's garden of love. Below them at the foot of the stairs, Lazarus futilely begs for alms. Though the moral issue at stake here differs somewhat from that in Hals's portrait, the pictorial device



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Werner van den Valckert, *Portrait of the Regentesses and the Housemother of the Amsterdam Leper Asylum*, 1624, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (photo: Museum).

20
Jan Miense Molenaer, *Allegorical Marriage Portrait*, 1633, Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Gift of Mrs. A.D. Williams, Richmond (photo: Museum).

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is almost identical and so is the moral distinction between social classes and social ideals. The regentesses, as pillars of the middle-class establishment, are obviously far more attentive to their social responsibilities than the courtiers behind them. To be sure, the formal bearing that they share with Elyas's couple shows that they lack Isaac Massa's apparent discomfort with the norms of social decorum. But in view of the two pictures' common moral perspective, this contrast only serves to lift the issues involved here above the level of personal eccentricity. Whatever the personal sources of Massa's antipathy to the *beau monde* may have been, the meanings of Hals's portrait reflect larger developments in contemporary sociability. Discussing the emergence of a sense of middle-class identity in this period, Norbert Elias speaks revealingly about the conflicts that Hals and van den Valckert evidently felt called upon to address:

"Bourgeois groups emphasize more and more their specifically bourgeois self-image; they oppose their own codes and manners more and more confidently to the courtly-aristocratic ones. Depending on their particular situation, they contrast work to aristocratic idleness, 'nature' to etiquette, the cultivation of knowledge and morals to that of good manners and conversation... Above all they counterpose 'virtue' to 'courtly frivolity'. The regulation of sexual relations, the fences surrounding the sexual sphere of libidinal life, are far stronger in the middle and rising bourgeois classes, in keeping with their professional position, than in the courtly-aristocratic upper class..."⁶⁹

At the same time, however, one recognizes that these conflicts were far from fully resolved in Dutch middle-class society in the early seventeenth century. Were the competition of aristocratic ideals not so keenly felt, these painters probably would not have thought it necessary to introduce these moral dichotomies into portraiture; nor, for that matter, would Huygens and Cats have needed to attack aristocratic fashions so stridently in their writings. The shifting, unstable character of the Dutch perception of courtly, aristocratic ideals reveals itself when Hals's marriage portrait is compared to one from the



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following decade, Jan Miense Molenaer's *Allegorical Marriage Portrait* of 1633 in the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (fig. 20). This picture, which has been exhaustively analyzed by P.J.J. van Thiel, also deals with marriage in terms of contrasts between virtue and vice. In this case, the virtue is temperance, symbolized by the harmony of the musical company and by the traditional emblematic image of a figure pouring water into wine. Opposed to them are a variety of vices: the monkey embracing a cat stands for lust and elicits a suitably shocked growl from a nearby dog, here symbolic of marital fidelity; the page looking into an empty beer mug is a glutton – a '*kannekijker*'; and in the background two fighting peasants are symbolic of discord.⁷⁰ As in Hals's portrait, the moral distinctions are also social distinctions, but in this case vice is associated with the lower-class figures of the page and the peasants. Virtue, on the other hand, has a distinctly courtly flavor. The scene takes place on the terrace of an aristocratic chateau not unlike those in the backgrounds of the paintings by the two Hals brothers (fig. 11 and 12). And the young married couple entering on the right are dressed, like the musicians, in the brightly-colored height of fashion. In ceremoniously doffing his hat, the husband, moreover, explicitly acknowledges the social bonds of courtesy and etiquette.

In all likelihood Molenaer's sitters were members of the middle class rather than the aristocracy. Certainly, their setting, if not their clothing, is fanciful, a symbolic prop for a courtly *persona*. It is hardly surprising, of course, that a bourgeois couple would want to associate themselves with courtly '*civilité*' nor that an aspiration to ascend the social hierarchy would entail an antagonism

toward the lower orders of society. Middle-class assaults on the bastions of aristocratic prestige are a recurrent feature of European social and political history in the early modern period.⁷¹ Lest these aspirations be dismissed as mere status-seeking and social-climbing, however, it is well to remember that aristocratic ideals carried strong ethical imperatives, which in large part explain their crucial role in the shaping of European civilization. Temperance, for example, is one of the key virtues of the ideal courtier.⁷² And ironically, nearly all the courtly attributes that Hals criticizes in his double portrait carry virtuous connotations from an aristocratic point of view. As Fokke Veenstra reminds us in his study of aristocratic ethics in P. C. Hooft's *Geeraerd van Velsen* of 1613, the prerogatives of nobility were not simply a product of wealth and political power. They rested on a widely-held hierarchal conception of society and the universe alike, in light of which 'virtue and social rank went together.'⁷³ Cosmological considerations aside, these assumptions were justified on carefully-considered social and ethical grounds. Thus, a nobleman could be expected to be more virtuous and intellectually more cultivated than his social inferiors because he grew up in a more civilized milieu, where he was exposed to examples of these qualities among his elders.⁷⁴ And where members of the lower classes, it was thought, practiced virtue out of fear of punishment, an aristocrat did so to safeguard his honor and that of his family.⁷⁵ Honor, in fact, was the cornerstone of his ethical code. At root honor lies in the high esteem in which one is held by others, and hence it is closely bound up with the theatrical, rhetorical mode of self-presentation discussed above.⁷⁶ From this perspective we can understand that the elegant conventions of pose and decorum that Hals and his patron evidently associated with the sin of pride could, in other eyes, be eloquent expressions of honorableness. Likewise, the lavishly stylish dress of the courtly lovers in the background of the Rijksmuseum portrait (fig. 11) reflects an aristocratic imperative for grandeur and splendid display as a token of the stateliness and liberality that are essential attributes of honor. Courtliness could not abide miserliness.⁷⁷ And what middle-class Dutchmen like Isaac Massa must have considered the idleness of garden parties and the like was, to the nobility, the leisure necessary for the cultivation of the virtue and social graces that are so closely bound together in Molenaer's painting.⁷⁸ Even van den Valckert's group portrait (fig. 19) pays homage to aristocratic values in its classical architectural setting, so foreign to the realities of contemporary Amsterdam. As van Thiel has suggested, these surroundings are meant to invoke an association with classical learning and virtue, which in the early seventeenth century were still almost inextricably linked to the humanistic attainments of the Renaissance courtier.⁷⁹ The courtly ethos stems directly from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* and Cicero's *De Officiis*.⁸⁰

As Rubens's *Self Portrait with Isabella Brant* (fig. 2) shows, the courtly 'art of love' could also be accommodated to a rigorously moral vision. But it is equally important to recognize that it could exist relatively independently of moral considerations as well. For while, as we have seen, Hals and Massa were hardly alone in criticizing aristocratic ideals of courtesy and romance, this imagery nevertheless retained its allure as a pattern of fashionable behavior. As Elise Goodman-Soellner has shown, the social aspirations that made French fashions so widely imitated in the seventeenth century were closely – and positively – associated with gallantry and poetic passion.⁸¹ The attraction these standards of elite dress and behavior exercised on Dutch young people is manifest in the opposition they aroused among contemporary moralists. Nor should we

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Frans Hals, *Portrait of Willem van Heythuyzen*, Alte Pinakothek, Munich (photo: Museum).



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assume that the artists were necessarily less subject to these temptations than those who, after all, were often their clients. In this respect it is significant that moralistic themes such as the prodigal son or mankind before either the Flood or the Last Judgment become increasingly less common in Dutch 'merry company' scenes in the early decades of the seventeenth century.⁸² In large part, no doubt, these changes simply reflect the growing naturalism of Dutch art; certainly we have ample evidence that many of these pictures retain the moral message of their biblical antecedents. But where there are no specific symbolic cues, such as the ape in Dirck Hals's *Garden Party* (fig. 12) or the spider's web in Buytewech's *Fashionable Courtship* (fig. 14), or where the figures are not excessively foppish, we should leave open the possibility that a Dutch banquet or party scene is primarily a celebration of fashionable high life.⁸³

It should be noted too that Frans Hals himself celebrates aristocratic ideals and courtly love in his *Portrait of Willem van Heythuyzen* in Munich (fig. 21), a picture probably painted around 1625, only a few years after the Rijksmuseum double portrait.⁸⁴ This is his only full-length, life-size portrait of a single figure, and its monumentality matches the sitter's image. De Jongh and Vinken perceptively observe that van Heythuyzen's pose almost exactly matches that of the courtier standing behind the fountain in the background of the Massa double portrait (fig. 11).⁸⁵ And the same aristocratic imperatives associated with the latter and his companions also account for the former's grandeur of scale, for his fashionable dress and conspicuous sword, and for the van-Dyckian curtain that buttresses his self-consciously theatrical air. Though van Heythuyzen was a Haarlem merchant, not a nobleman, the records show that he lived a stylish and lux-

urious life. In addition to several houses equipped with expensive furniture and household effects, he left behind a sumptuous wardrobe, a large library, and extensive collections of paintings, maps, and coins.⁸⁶ In short, he seems to have been just the sort of man who would aspire not just to social status, but to the aristocratic ideal's associations with cultivation and refinement. Surely, it is these aspirations that account for the couple sitting in a bower in the background of the portrait. Regardless of whether these lovers refer in some way to the romantic career of van Heythuyzen, who never married, or the bower to his country estate, Middenhout, they carry the same connotations of gallantry and ennobling love that inspired Rubens's *Self Portrait with Isabella Brant* (fig. 2), which hangs nearby in the same museum.

Scholars have, of course, recognized the similarity of the background scenes in the van Heythuyzen portrait and that of Isaac Massa and Beatrix van der Laen. Ironically, however, a number of them have suggested that the lovers in the Munich painting bear negative meanings, even as they assume that those in the Amsterdam picture bear positive ones. Resorting again to botanical symbolism, they argue that the rose bush and the plucked rose at van Heythuyzen's feet are symbolic not only of love, but of worldly vanity.⁸⁷ Like de Jongh and Vincken, they have made the mistake of separating symbolism from appearance. The romantic vignette is inextricably bound up with the courtly ethos that pervades every aspect of the sitter's image and demeanor; to associate these lovers with vanity and illicit passion would be to attack the man himself – something he could hardly be expected to tolerate, much less pay for. To be sure, the love symbolism of the rose refers to both its sweetness and its thorns, and the transience and mortality that the flower can also allude to might be considered one of its thornier attributes. But love and death have a long and poetic relationship in the imagery of courtly love. If these roses carry a melancholy meaning, it is surely the conventional lover's melancholy of Petrarchan *cortezia*.⁸⁸

The *Portrait of Willem van Heythuyzen* and the *Portrait of Isaac Massa and Beatrix van der Laen* represent opposing extremes, both in Frans Hals's portraiture and in that of early-seventeenth-century Dutch art as a whole. They reflect genuine conflicts in contemporary social ideals, which undoubtedly raised pressing questions in the minds of many of the artist's fellow citizens. Had there not been men of van Heythuyzen's sort in Haarlem, Isaac Massa might not have asked Hals to create the provocative moral polarity that he did in the Rijksmuseum painting. Many modern observers will hope, no doubt, that the painter felt himself more closely allied with Massa than with his other, more courtly and seemingly more pretentious client. All things considered, this may well have been the case. But the fact that he could paint both portraits without evident strain suggests that his own moral perspective on courtliness was more than a little ambivalent. Looking at his more conventional portraits of the 1620's, such as his companion pieces of Jacob Pietersz. Olycan and Aletta Hanemans of 1625 in the Mauritshuis (figs. 22 and 23), one recognizes conventions of pose and decorum that differ only in degree from those of the van Heythuyzen portrait.⁸⁹ Though of a slightly different cut, Olycan's dress resembles the latter's in its rich, black brocades and elaborately frilly ruff. His pose, too, is quite similar, even if by taking off his hat and dropping his right hand to his side he makes a more moderate impression. Like his demure, but richly-clad, wife, Olycan seems to have made his peace with the aristocratic *persona*, retaining its air of civility and genteel sophistication while maintaining his credibility as a sober member of the burgher class.

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Frans Hals, *Portrait of Jacob Olycan*, 1625, Mauritshuis, The Hague (photo: Museum).

23

Frans Hals, *Portrait of Aletta Hanemans*, 1625, Mauritshuis, The Hague (photo: Museum).



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There are a great many portraits of husband and wife of this sort in Dutch art.⁹⁰ Though recognizably bourgeois in character, they demonstrate how permeable was the boundary between the aristocracy and the middle classes in contemporary sociability. Indeed, it is almost impossible to speak of the middle-class self-image in the seventeenth century outside of the framework of courtly values. Just as the Renaissance court portraiture of artists such as Titian established much of the vocabulary of the genre for subsequent periods, the courts themselves set prevailing standards of civilized behavior – of what a gentleman or a lady should be.⁹¹ That these ideals and conventions could be transformed to suit a distinctively middle-class sociability in seventeenth-century Holland reflects their essential flexibility, which arises in large part from a disposition toward understatement. For the restraint and self-composure common to all these portraits carries with it a presumption of hidden reserves of talent and intellect. To Castiglione the courtier's ability to maintain an air that would at once seem unaffectedly nonchalant and yet convey an air of gracefulness and accomplishment was one of his most important attributes; for this quality he coined the term *'sprezzatura'*.⁹² And as Elias says, speaking of the influence of courtly standards on social behavior: "The more the strong contrasts of individual conduct are tempered, the more the violent fluctuations of pleasure or displeasure are contained, moderated and changed by self-control, the greater becomes the sensitivity to shades or nuances of conduct, the more finely attuned people grow to minute gestures and forms, and the more complex becomes their experience of themselves and their world at levels which were previously hidden from consciousness through the veil of strong affects."⁹³

Even the Massa double portrait shows the impact of these courtly imperatives. Ironically enough, the dark, somber clothes that set the couple apart from the dandies behind them reflect an aristocratic convention. Though the importing of French fashions meant that it was a rule often broken in early-seventeenth-century Holland, Castiglione had decreed that gentlemen should wear black, again as a token of understatement and restraint.⁹⁴ I have also mentioned that the portrait's rhetorical mode reflects Renaissance portraiture's vision of a social self. That rhetorical vision likewise provided Hals with a means of articulating the very quality of informality that otherwise seems so contrary to the notion of courtesy and etiquette. For only insofar as he was acutely conscious of the expressive possibilities of posing could he create a form, so to speak, for informality.⁹⁵ Naturalism alone was not enough. If it were, we might expect to find equally casual poses in the bourgeois portraiture of the early Northern Renaissance. But their description almost invariably is channelled into the most static and restricted of portrait conventions. Only as northern artists become familiar with Italian portraiture in the course of the sixteenth century do they liberate themselves from these conventions and expand their vocabulary.⁹⁶ By the same token, Hals's portrait reveals its debt to the conventions of courtesy in the subtlety and nuance of its characterizations. They are addressed to an audience accustomed to savoring the delicate rhetoric of courtly performance, of which Elias speaks. If modern scholars have not always recognized the social and moral implications of Massa's insistent informality, this only testifies to a failure of historical perspective and perhaps to the state of contemporary manners and civilization. Certainly, it is significant that Eugène Fromentin, a man who still had at least one foot firmly planted in the Renaissance tradition, could recognize the portrait's socially provocative character, even if he mistook Hals's intentions.

There is good evidence that Isaac Massa, no less than Hals, found himself in an ambivalent relationship to courtly ideals. The painter's portrait of him at Chatsworth (fig. 24), which is dated 1622, apparently the same year as the double portrait, is just as original and provocative as his other likenesses, but strikingly different in character.⁹⁷ In crossing his arms as he looks out at us, he adopts a pose that is articulately inarticulate. In effect, he seems to have withdrawn within himself, self-consciously refusing to communicate with us, rhetorically or otherwise.⁹⁸ It is not surprising that this pose is sometimes associated with melancholy in Renaissance portraiture, though its intentional inexpressiveness understandably meant that it was rarely used in any context.⁹⁹ We have seen it before, however, in Buytewech's *German Nobleman* (fig. 13) and in the figure in the left foreground of Dirck Hals's *Party in a Garden* (fig. 12). There the posture is manifestly associated with the most elegantly self-conscious courtliness. And particularly in Buytewech's print mannered aloofness and haughty disdain are the dominant impressions it conveys. As the pointing woman in Dirck's painting seems to suggest, it is also very much a contrivance, an assumed pose, rather than a 'natural' expression of an inward state.¹⁰⁰ Whether or not his brother, Frans, had Buytewech's image in mind when he painted the Chatsworth portrait, he certainly conveys an air of elegance and artifice in the gold embroidery of Massa's sleeves and in the picture's oval frame. The directness of the sitter's frontal stance and the seriousness of his expression do prevent us from associating his inwardness with aloofness or disdain. But Hals's artful treatment of the frame and Massa's crossed arms has the effect of suggesting that courtliness is a mask that is a barrier. Similar assumptions seem to lie behind the Toronto portrait (fig. 16) and the

double portrait. There Massa strips off the mask to present himself as an unassuming, forthright character. Here he withdraws behind it, underscoring the cleavage between the inward man and his outward image.

The Chatsworth portrait shows Hals and his patron to have been unusually sensitive to ironies that are almost inherent in the conventions of courtesy. It is significant in this respect that Massa was closely, if sometimes turbulently, connected with the Stadholder's court in The Hague.¹⁰¹ The gold medal he wears in this portrait may well be the one he received from the States General in 1616 for his diplomatic services in Russia.¹⁰² This close contact with courtiers and their ways can only have sharpened the ambivalence toward the aristocracy that he obviously shared with many other members of his class. For this ambivalence was also shared by the courtiers themselves. As many Renaissance men were acutely aware, the notion of selfhood as a performance left open rich opportunities for sham and deceit. Venstra notes the distinctions that contemporary writers on courtesy make between inner and outer honor and between a true nobility of virtue and a false nobility of birth alone.¹⁰³

As we have already seen, one such writer who could be especially critical of courtly theatricality was Constantijn Huygens. His position is especially telling, for even more than Isaac Massa, he was both an insider and an outsider, a middle-class lawyer's son who grew up in close proximity to the court. Unlike Massa, however, he remained there throughout his life, and perhaps for this reason his perspective is less one-sided and more ironic. His ambivalence and his irony appear especially clearly in *Zede-Printen*, which he wrote in 1623-24, shortly after *'t Kostelijk Mal*. Apparently modelled on English examples, the book is a series of character sketches of various social and professional types.¹⁰⁴ Among them the courtier occupies a unique position, for he alone is dealt with in terms of a good and a bad version. As might be expected, the latter, 'Een sot hovelingsh,' is a flatterer and a fraud, much given to impiety and lust.¹⁰⁵ But Huygens evidently found 'Een wys hovelingsh' more difficult to define, for this is by far the longest section of the book, consuming fully 505 lines. The sheer numerousness of his virtues aside, the chief cause of the lengthiness of this discourse seems to lie in the variety of his roles and the difficulty of reconciling so many qualities in one character. Perhaps inevitably, Huygens resorts to paradox and oxymoron in describing so protean a figure:

Hy is een' stille Lamp in ydelheden wind,
Die op sijn stadigheid geen slingeren en vindt;
Een dienstigh Ydel man; een volger die kon leiden,
En konnen sal als 't hoort, en dan noch een van beiden;
Een vriendelicke Leew; een Schaep dat bijten kan;
Een' Joffer, daer hy wil, en daer hy moet, een Man;
Vol levens onder 't stael, van Marmer in de kleeren,
Vol ongevoelickheits van kostelicke veëren... (lines 1-8)¹⁰⁶

The last two lines allude to the coolness of the social mask that allows the courtier to keep his integrity and his inner self intact while sustaining a virtuoso performance of such a multitude of roles. And a few lines later Huygens also notes the dangerously unstable nature of the princely court, the demanding stage that makes such virtuosity necessary:

So dringht hy drooge-voets door 't modder van den Hof
Daer bloemen onkruid zijn, en meest de vruchten stof... (lines 13-14)¹⁰⁷

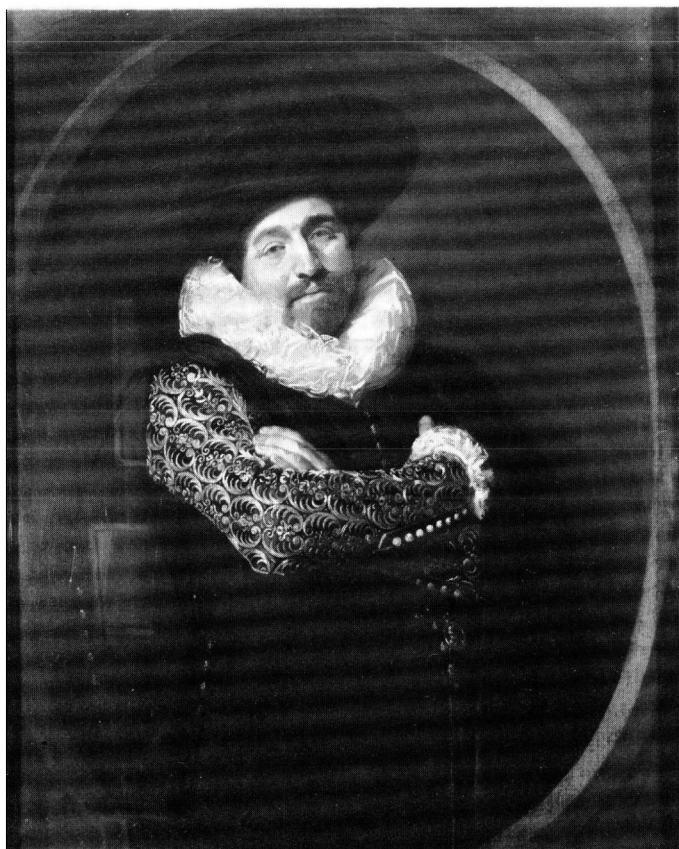
Yet one also recognizes how easy it is to slip into the mud. The reference to '*kostelicke veëren*' recalls, of course, the scornful comparisons between gaudy

plummage and courtly fashions in *'t Kostlijk Mal*, which are quoted in the first section of this paper. Perhaps Huygens changed his mind about the desirability of elegant dress in the two-year interval that separates these works. If so, however, it can only have been in the direction of a deepening awareness of the demands and pitfalls of courtly performance, and with it a richer sense of irony. As Eduardo Saccone has observed, irony is one of the special attributes of the courtier's art. For his performance is directed toward two audiences, the larger public, which takes his image 'at face-value,' and his fellow courtiers, who recognize and admire the artifice with which he plays his role. The irony lies in this recognition.¹⁰⁸ Unlike Constantijn Huygens Frans Hals was no courtier, but he evidently shared the former's ironic perspective even more than Isaac Massa did. As a portrait painter, after all, he was both the audience and the creator of his sitter's performances. Hence he enjoyed the privileged position of an 'inside-observer' of what has been called 'Renaissance self-fashioning.'¹⁰⁹ We can account for his willingness to strip off the trappings of courtesy in the *Portrait of Isaac Massa and Beatrix van der Laen* in terms of middle-class values quite different from those of the court. But the novelty – we might even say the radicalism – of his invention suggests an acute awareness, akin to Huygen's, that, for better or for worse, courtliness is a mask that he could see beneath. Nevertheless, he also had a vested interest, as Isaac Massa presumably did not, in the inherited portrait conventions that are so closely bound up with Renaissance ideals of civilized humanity, and he accepted their social and formal boundaries in the great majority of his works. His ability to alter and enliven these conventions and to move deftly between them testifies, however, to the independence of his stance.

The picture that most eloquently reveals the irony underlying Hals's manipulation of portrait convention is *The Laughing Cavalier* of 1624 in the Wallace Collection (fig. 25), which he painted in the middle of the brief span of years to which all the works by him discussed in this paper belong.¹¹⁰ The artfulness of the painting's silvery tonalities and vivid color are, of course, almost legendary. Equally artful, however, is the young man's *persona*, for unlike the Isaac Massa of the Chatsworth portrait (fig. 24), he plays his cavalier's role with great panache. Both kinds of artifice are centered on the sitter's lavishly-ornamented clothing, which features elaborately-worked lace, slashed sleeves, and, inevitably, a sword. With the bright red and gold embroidery on his gray jacket, these fashionable accoutrements unmistakably identify him as the same sort of courtly dandy found in the background of the Rijksmuseum double portrait (fig. 11). As Slive has shown, there are also symbols hidden in the embroidered sleeve he thrusts out toward us, and these too place him in the ambiance of the garden of love. In addition to Mercury's cap and wand, which are emblems of fortune, there are bees, winged arrows, lovers' knots, flames, and flaming cornucopias, all emblems of love.¹¹¹ As we have seen, related symbols and images define the courtly attainments of Willem van Heythuyzen (fig. 21). Where the cavalier differs from his older counterpart is in the lavish exuberance of his self-display and in the more problematic nature of his encounter with his audience. It is commonplace to remark that *The Laughing Cavalier* is not laughing, and, indeed, the picture's misleading title is fairly recent.¹¹² But it is only an exaggeration of the more subtle humor in a smile that can only be called ironic. The source of his irony is manifest in the structure of his pose, whereby he flourishes his glittering elbow, with all its artful and emblematic courtly associations, in our direction, even as he himself remains aloof, slipping away, as it were, along the retreating arc of his hat. In Huygens's terms the cavalier's clothes trans-

24
Frans Hals, *Portrait of Isaac Massa*, 1622, Devonshire Collection, Chatsworth, reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the Chatsworth Settlement (photo: Courtauld Institute of Art).

25
Frans Hals, *The Laughing Cavalier*, 1624, reproduced by permission of the Trustees, Wallace Collection, London (photo: Museum).



24



25

form him into a work of art, like a marble statue, 'vol ongevoelickheits van kostelicke veëren.' In calling attention to the art through the sheer bravura of the man's image, Hals reveals his own irony as well. His mastery of the social form and artistic convention displayed here allowed him to create a grand role for Willem van Heythuyzen or a more temperate one for Jacob Olycan (fig. 22), both of whose poses are quite similar to the Laughing Cavalier's. Olycan and van Heythuyzen, however, evidently expected to be taken at face-value; theirs are formal, official portraits, directed toward a public audience. Because Hals, in his 'backstage' role, recognized the interval between art and reality in courtly performance, he could also move in the opposite direction. It is only a short step from the irony of *The Laughing Cavalier* to the satire in Buytewech's *German Nobleman* (fig. 13) or in the promenading couples in the background of the *Portrait of Isaac Massa and Beatrix van der Laen* (fig. 11). And from satire Hals could move quickly to another kind of affirmation, using his art to unveil what Isaac Massa at least considered a more wholesome reality.

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NOTES

An abbreviated version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the College Art Association in February, 1986.

¹ Kauffmann, pp. 258-71.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 271-73.

³ Slive, vol. 3, pp. 11-12, no. 17.

⁴ Kauffmann, p. 274.

⁵ Slive, vol. 1, p. 68; de Jongh and Vinken, 1961, p. 145.

⁶ For an insightful comparison of Hals's and Rubens's double portraits, see Grimm, p. 84. On Hals's place in early modernist criticism, see Frances Suzman Jowell, 'Thoré-Bürger and the Revival of Frans Hals,' *Art Bulletin* 56 (1974): 101-17.

⁷ Eugène Fromentin, *The Masters of Past Time*, ed. Horst Gerson (London, 1948), p. 167.

⁸ Meyer Shapiro, 'Fromentin as a Critic,' *Partisan Review* 16 (1949): 42-49. See also Jan Bialostocki, 'Eugène Fromentin critique de l'art d'autrefois,' in *Etudes d'art français offertes à Charles Sterling* (Paris, 1975), pp. 337-39. Shapiro's remarks are directed toward Fromentin's criticisms of Rembrandt; Bialostocki's, toward his neglect of Vermeer and his antagonism toward Thoré-Bürger. But Fromentin also associates his criticisms of Hals with his disapproval of contemporary French art: 'Today the name of Hals is reappearing in our school at the moment when the love of the natural is coming back into it with some little noise and no little excess. His method

serves as a programme for certain doctrines, in virtue of which the most commonplace exactitude is wrongly taken for truth, and the most perfect practical carelessness is taken for the last word in knowledge and taste' (p. 167).

⁹ Slive, vol. 1, pp. 66-67.

¹⁰ De Jongh and Vinken, 1961, pp. 146-47. This identification has been disputed by Slive, vol. 1, p. 67; by Gudlaugsson, pp. 8-9; and by Grimm, p. 85, no. 34, who dates the portrait around 1627. De Jongh, however, has reaffirmed his belief that Massa is the sitter in a review of Slive's and Grimm's books in the *Art Bulletin* 57 (1975): 585. Others who identify the sitters as Isaac Massa and his wife are Trivas, no. 13; van de Waal, p. 25a; Baard, p. 86; and van Thiel, 1976, p. 256. I entirely agree with de Jongh, Vinken, and their allies. The facial structure of the man seems virtually identical with that of Massa as we see him in Hals's firmly-identified portrait of him in Toronto of 1626 (fig. 16). Especially telling is the similarity of the slightly-bent, aquiline nose in the two portraits. Moreover, the coincidence between the date of the couple's marriage and the widely-accepted dating of the picture's style is persuasive evidence that should not be lightly disregarded. Slive, vol. 3, p. 12, suggests that certain idiosyncracies of Hals's style have led his colleagues to confuse a 'family likeness' with an 'identical likeness'. But one can just as easily argue that changes of format and an interval of several years have produced slight changes in the rendering of Massa's face, which have led Slive and his supporters astray. Surely the experience of Rembrandt's self-portraits should remind us of how differently an artist can portray even the face most familiar to him at different moments.

¹¹ Wilhelm von Bode and M.J. Binder, *Frans Hals, sein Leben und seine Werke* (Berlin, 1914), vol. 1, p. 19.

¹² De Jongh and Vinken, 1961, p. 140.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 118-127. See also Demetz, pp. 521-29.

¹⁴ Edgar Wind, *Pagan Mysteries of the Renaissance*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1968), pp. 111-12.

¹⁵ De Jongh, 1971, pp. 143-46.

¹⁶ De Jongh and Vinken, 1961, pp. 127-37.

¹⁷ See, for example, the poetic evocations of the ivy in contemporary literature cited on pp. 127-29, especially those in poems by Jacob Cats and Otto van Veen. In their discussion of the thistle on pp. 129-37, de Jongh and Vinken concede the primarily erotic, and sometimes distinctly negative, connotations of the plant in classical literature and contemporary folklore. Its specific associations with marriage are, for the most part, vague and marginal.

¹⁸ *The Carmina of Catullus*, trans. Barriss Mills (Lafayette, Ind., 1965), p. 91: 'Your husband will not choose/ (lightly given to some wicked adulteress and pursuing/ shameful lusts) to sleep alone./ parted from your tender breasts./ but like the spiralling vine/ that twines closely about a tree/ will be twined in your embrace./ But the day is going by./ Come forth, newly married girl.' (non tuus leuis in mala/ deditus uir adultera./ probra turpia persequens./ a tuis teneris uolet/ secubare papillis./ lenta sed uelet adsit/ uitis implicat arbores./ implicabitur in tuum complexum./ sed abit dies./ prodeas noua nupta.)

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 89: 'Call to her house the lady/ full of desire for the bridegroom./ Bind her heart with love, as ivy,/ clinging, spreading here and there,/ twines itself around a tree.' (ac domum dominam uoca/ coniugis cupidam noui./ mentem amore ruinciens./ et tenax hedera huc et huc/ arborem implicat errans.)

²⁰ Demetz, pp. 528-30. See also Mario Praz, *Studies in Seventeenth-Century Imagery*, 2nd ed. (Rome, 1964), p. 217. Demetz notes that the ivy and the vine are sometimes combined so as to ally sexuality to marriage. But the tendency to contrast them is stronger. De Jongh and Vinken, 1961, n. 8, cite Demetz as a source for the classical tradition of the elm-and-vine image, but they take no account of his discussion of its Renaissance mutations.

²¹ De Jongh and Vinken, 1961, n. 5, note that Hals's representation of the vine is not botanically accurate. A proper vine grows vertically up a tree rather than spiralling around its trunk.

²² Catullus, lines 49-55, p. 99: 'As an unwedded

vine grows up/ in an empty field – it never/ lifts itself up, and never/ produces a full-blown grape./ Its slender body, bent down/ by its own weight, twists along/ the ground, and the highest branch/ almost touches the root. No farmer/ and no oxen cultivate it./ But if it happens to be mated/ with a husband elm, many farmers/ and many oxen tend it.' (Vt uidua in nudo uitis quae nascitur aruo,/ numquam se extollit, numquam mitem educat uam./ sed tenerum prono deflectens pondere corpus/ iam iam contingit summum radice flagellum./ hanc nulli agricolae, nulli coluere iuueni:/ at si forte eadem est ulmo coniuncta marito./ multi illam agricolae, multi coluere iuueni...) See also Demetz, p. 525.

²³ De Jongh and Vinken, 1961, p. 140. It is evident that we must identify the plants in Hals's painting on the basis of emblematic tradition rather than botanical accuracy, for this is apparently the procedure he himself followed. There are obvious pitfalls in this approach, since both the species and the symbols are so close to one another. The most problematic of these concerns the tendril growing on the tree, which Slive, vol. 1, p. 67, and Baard, p. 86, identify as an ivy. But if, as I believe, it is correct to associate the ivy with death, it cannot take on an association with marriage, erotic or otherwise. Though we cannot identify the tendril on the tree as a vine in botanical terms, the symbolic antithesis between fertility and death would seem to prove that Hals meant it to be so understood.

²⁴ On the relationship between marriage portraiture and the imagery of romantic love in Dutch art and in the Renaissance tradition and on the crucial role of Rubens's double portrait in the unfolding of this relationship, see Smith, pp. 145-63.

²⁵ Kauffmann, p. 274; de Jongh and Vinken, 1961, pp. 137-38; van de Waal, p. 25b; Slive, vol. 1, p. 68; Grimm, p. 83; Baard, p. 86; Smith, p. 153.

²⁶ Cats, p. 143: The wild and foolish turmoil in which young people engage/ Is exactly like a garden with a thousand spiral paths:/ A garden, a merry garden, and artfully contrived,/ A garden, a tricky garden, and there everyone roams;/ A garden, a pretty bower, where flower-beds all bloom,/ But all the same, sour fruits do grow there too;/ A garden, over which lovely roses bloom,/ But he who plucks them finds thorns there as well.../ A garden, an honest trap, a boutique of deceit,/ About which all complain, and all remain there still...'

²⁷ Clifford S. Ackley, *Printmaking in the Age of Rembrandt* (Boston, 1981), p. 23; Würtemberger, pp. 12-16, 30-32; Banks, pp. 160-66; Keyes, pp. 77-79.

²⁸ Stechow, p. 171. See also Keith P.F. Moxey, 'The Master E.S. and the folly of love,' *Simiolus* 11 (1980): 125-48, and Banks, p. 158.

- ²⁹ Keyes, pp. 79-84; Banks, p. 172.
- ³⁰ Van Thiel, 1976, p. 255, no. A1796.
- ³¹ De Jongh and Vinken, 1961, p. 140, identify the architectural fragments in Frans Hals's portrait as symbols of death, and Grimm, p. 83, sees them as a *vanitas* motif. Presumably, they carry the same meaning in Dirck Hals's painting.
- ³² Egbert Haverkamp Begemann, *Willem Buytewech* (Amsterdam, 1959), pp. 33-34, no. VG 11; *idem*, *Willem Buytewech, 1591-1624* (Rotterdam and Paris, 1974-75), pp. 100-02, no. 126; Banks, p. 173.
- ³³ Begemann, 1959, p. 28, no. 1V; *idem*, 1974-75, pp. 3-5, no. 1. See also Smith, pp. 33-35.
- ³⁴ E. de Jongh, *Zinne- en minnebeelden in de schilderkunst van de zeventiende eeuw* (Amsterdam, 1967), pp. 25-26; *idem*, 1976, pp. 65-67.
- ³⁵ De Jongh, 1976, p. 125, no. 27.
- ³⁶ Robert J. Clements, 'Pen and Sword in Renaissance Emblem Literature,' *Modern Language Quarterly* 5 (1944): 131-141.
- ³⁷ Van Thienen, pp. 34-36, 41-44, 73-74. He notes that ruffs of the sort seen in Hals's scene were especially favored by young, unmarried women.
- ³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27, n. 1. He notes that these were specifically aristocratic fashions.
- ³⁹ Cats, p. 162: A dress that's respectable without splendour, / That, I believe, is the best attire.
- ⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 231-32.
- ⁴¹ On the place of 't *Kostlijk Mal* in Huygen's work and in larger trends in contemporary culture, see Colie, pp. 35-46.
- ⁴² The joyful light of the rainbow in the heavens / Excites our desire. Should there the red be burning, / And the yellow, and the blue, and the green, and in our mantles, / In our cloaks the less? No, man, suffer it not, / Why do you call the ape he who mimicks what he sees? / Bind the deed to the name. There must the wool drown, / There must the silk in the soup; there must the linen stink / (Men argue over which to name the prettiest) / Either by the yellow dye or by the blue slush. / Who would rest content with a garment of one color, / Where there is so much choice? A magpie beside the crow / Is much too beautiful a beast; what is the black of the jackdaw / Beside the glittering of a woodpecker, beside the flaming of a peacock?
- ⁴³ Kauffmann, p. 274; de Jongh and Vinken, 1961, p. 138; Slive, vol. 1, p. 68; Grimm, p. 83; Baard, p. 86.
- ⁴⁴ De Jongh, 1976, p. 274.
- ⁴⁵ De Jongh and Vinken, 1961, pp. 147-48.
- ⁴⁶ Van Thienen, pp. 29-33, 70. For a general discussion of distinctions between courtly and bourgeois dress in the portraits of this period by Rubens, see Justus Müller-Hofstede, 'Höfische und bürgerliche Damenporträts: Anmerkungen zu Rubens' Antwerpener Bildnismalerei 1609-1620,' *Pantheon* 41 (1983): 315-18.
- ⁴⁷ De Jongh and Vinken, 1961, p. 145.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 117.
- ⁴⁹ E. de Jongh and P.J. Vinken, 'De boosaardigheid van Hals regenten en regentessen,' *Oud Holland* 80 (1963): 5-24.
- ⁵⁰ Rebhorn, pp. 25-26.
- ⁵¹ Elias, 1982, pp. 258-319 *passim*; *idem*, 1983, pp. 78-145; Stephen J. Greenblatt, *Sir Walter Raleigh, The Renaissance Man and his Roles* (New Haven and London, 1973), pp. 34-41; *idem*, 1980, pp. 162-69; Rebhorn, pp. 23-51.
- ⁵² Smith, pp. 7-11, 13-19, 27-36.
- ⁵³ Elias, 1982, p. 274.
- ⁵⁴ De Jongh and Vinken, 1961, pp. 147-48.
- ⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 137, 149-50.
- ⁵⁶ Massa, pp. 4-5.
- ⁵⁷ The identification of Massa is based on an engraving by Adriaen Matham after Hals's portrait of him from around 1635 in the Fine Arts Gallery of San Diego. Slive, vol. 3, p. 58, no. 103, suggests that this portrait, only 21 x 20.2 cm. in size, was done as a modello for the engraving.
- ⁵⁸ Slive, vol. 1, pp. 54-58, vol. 3, pp. 25-26, no. 42; Grimm, pp. 60-63, no. 22; Baard, p. 94. The portrait is inscribed with the date and the sitter's age, 41, which corresponds to that of Massa in 1626.
- ⁵⁹ On this quality see especially Grimm, pp. 60-62.
- ⁶⁰ Slive, vol. 3, nos. 86, 155, 166, 167, 186, 206, 216, and 217.
- ⁶¹ Smith, pp. 91-93.
- ⁶² Among Hals's single portraits, the only sitters, apart from Massa, who do not look out at the viewer are Stephanus Geraerds and Isabella Coymans, whose companion pieces lamentably are divided between Antwerp and Paris (Slive, vol. 3, pp. 97-99, nos. 188 and 189).
- ⁶³ Slive, vol. 1, pp. 61-66, vol. 3, pp. 10-11, nos. 15 and 16. Slive has shown that this picture was cut down from a larger work, another part of which, *Three Children in a Landscape*, is in the

Musée Royale des Beaux-Arts in Brussels. He also shows that the child in the lower left corner is a later addition by Salomon de Bray, who signed the figure 1628. For a discussion of the *Family Portrait's* relationship to the portrait of Massa and his wife, see Grimm, p.83. Grimm, pp.47-50, nos. 12-14, also discusses the picture in some detail in its own right and has discovered what he believes is yet another fragment of the original composition. Gregory Martin, 'The Inventive Genius of Frans Hals,' *Apollo* 94 (1971): 243, suggests that the composition is related to sixteenth-century Venetian images of *The Rest on the Flight into Egypt*. Martin also questions the date of 1620 that Slive has assigned to this portrait, noting that the interval of eight years between this year and that in which de Bray added the child in the lower left seems too long for 'those pill-less times.' Slive, vol. 3, p. 10, concedes that 'the point is well taken.' But it is difficult to say exactly how much this observation affects the dating of the picture. Did the husband, as Martin suggests, go to sea for several years? How many children might have been born and died in the interval? How old is the child added by de Bray? It is possible that the *Family Portrait* was influenced by the double portrait, rather than the reverse; but it is no less likely that the former did, in fact, come first, especially since we have no assurance that the latter was painted precisely in 1622, the year of the couple's marriage. They might have waited a year or two before commissioning a marriage portrait.

⁶¹ Slive, vol. 3, p. 10. For an example of the more conventional formula for Dutch family portraits in a landscape during the early seventeenth century, see the *Family Portrait* by Jacob Gerritsz. Cuyp in Lille, illustrated in vol. 1, p. 65, fig. 45.

⁶⁵ See J. A. Emmens, 'Eins aber ist nötig' - Zu Inhalt und Bedeutung von Markt- und Küchenstücken des 16. Jahrhunderts,' in *Album Amicorum J. G. van Gelder*, eds. J. Bruyn, J. A. Emmens, E. de Jongh, and D. P. Snoep (The Hague, 1973), pp. 93-101. For a discussion of Aertsen and Beuckelaer's influence on Haarlem genre painting in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see J. Bruyn, 'Een keukenstuk van Cornelis Cornelisz. van Haarlem,' *Oud Holland* 66 (1951): 45-50, and Scott A. Sullivan, *The Dutch Gamepiece* (Montclair, N.J., 1984), pp. 9-15.

⁶⁶ One of the very few precedents of any sort that comes to mind is the Master of the Antwerp Family Portrait's *Portrait of the van Gindertaelen Family* of 1559 in the Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten in Antwerp. Through the window behind the sitters appears a scene of the Fall of Man. But presumably the background scene here is not intended as a contrast to the foreground figures; instead, it must be a reminder of their own sinfulness. In any case, it is highly unlikely that Hals was familiar with this portrait.

⁶⁷ Van Thiel, 1976, p. 220, no. A1754. On the picture's symbolism see J. Richard Judson, *Dirck Barendsz., 1531-1592* (Amsterdam, 1970), pp.

97-98; de Jongh, 1971, pp. 146-49; *idem*, 1976, pp. 113-14, no. 23; and Smith, pp. 33, 127.

⁶⁸ Van Thiel, 1976, p. 554, no. C419; *idem*, 1983, pp. 166-67; and Sheila D. Muller, *Charity in the Dutch Republic* (Ann Arbor, 1985), pp. 14-20.

⁶⁹ Elias, 1982, pp. 315-16.

⁷⁰ P. J. J. van Thiel, 'Marriage Symbolism in a Musical Party by Jan Miense Molenaer,' *Simiolus* 2 (1967-68): 90-99.

⁷¹ Veenstra, pp. 20, 27; Elias, 1982, pp. 256-57.

⁷² Veenstra, pp. 56-62.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 33-36, 42, 70-71.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22; Elias, 1983, pp. 95, 103.

⁷⁷ Veenstra, pp. 32-33.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁷⁹ Van Thiel, 1983, p. 167. On the association of courtliness with the classical style, see Elias, 1983, p. 112.

⁸⁰ Veenstra, pp. 23, 40.

⁸¹ Elise Goodman, 'Rubens's *Conversatie à la Mode*: Garden of Leisure, Fashion, and Gallantry,' *Art Bulletin* 64 (1982): 247-59.

⁸² Würtemberger, pp. 36-72; Banks, pp. 166-76.

⁸³ Stechow, p. 173.

⁸⁴ Slive, vol. 1, pp. 52-54, vol. 3, pp. 20-21, no. 31; Grimm, pp. 57-60, no. 21; Erich Steingräber, 'Willem van Heythuysen von Frans Hals,' *Pantheon* 28 (1970): 300-08.

⁸⁵ De Jongh and Vinken, n. 49.

⁸⁶ Marjan Boot, 'Über Willem van Heythuysen, seinen Nachlass und die symbolische Bedeutung des Porträts von Frans Hals in München,' *Pantheon* 31 (1973): 420-22.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 422-23; Slive, vol. 1, p. 54.

⁸⁸ For a discussion of the theme of love and death in Petrarchan love poetry and of its broader fascination with antithesis and oxymoron, see Leonard Forster, *The Icy Fire: Five Studies in European Petrarchism* (Cambridge, 1969), pp. 3-8, 13-20.

⁸⁹ Slive, vol. 3, pp. 21-22, nos. 32 and 33; Smith, pp. 96-99.

⁹⁰ Smith, pp. 37-56, 91-100.

- ⁹¹ Elias, 1982, pp. 251-58, 300-19.
- ⁹² Baldassare Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. George Bull (Baltimore, 1967), Book 1, p. 67. See also Rebhorn, pp. 33-40.
- ⁹³ Elias, 1982, p. 297.
- ⁹⁴ Castiglione, Book 2, p. 135.
- ⁹⁵ For a discussion of the relationship between artifice and informality in Hals's work, see Smith, pp. 102-10.
- ⁹⁶ Paul Philippot, 'Le portrait à Anvers dans la seconde moitié du XVII^e siècle,' *Bulletin, Musées Royaux des Beaux Arts* 14 (1965): 163-89.
- ⁹⁷ Slive, vol. 3, pp. 12-13, no. 18, and de Jongh and Vinken, 1961, pp. 146-47, dispute the identification of the sitter as Massa. Those who recognize him as the same man seen in the Toronto portrait (fig. 16) include Trivas, nos. 9 and 13; Gudlaugsson, pp. 8-9; and Grimm, pp. 43, 85, no. 16. The likeness seems quite compelling to me and is supported, moreover, by the inscription of the sitter's age, 36, on the portrait. As in the Toronto portrait, his age matches that of Massa in the year the picture was painted, 1622. Such a coincidence cannot easily be overlooked, all the more so as the novelty of the composition would seem likely to reflect the kind of personal relationship between painter and client such as Hals and Massa enjoyed and which led to similar novelties in the Rijksmuseum and Toronto portraits.
- ⁹⁸ Slive, vol. 1, p. 52, suggests that the gesture connotes inexpressiveness.
- ⁹⁹ *Ibid.* Roy Strong, *The Elizabethan Image: Painting in England, 1540-1620* (London, 1969), pp. 65-66, nos. 140 and 141, confirms Slive's reading of the pose as an emblem of melancholy. Of the two pictures cited here from his catalogue, one is a portrait of the youthful John Donne (no. 140). Whether Massa's expression can be understood as melancholic is less certain, however. He seems to lack Donne's distracted, love-sick (?) air.
- ¹⁰⁰ I see no reason to accept the suggestion made in de Jongh, 1976, p. 125, no. 27, that the woman's gesture indicates that the man with crossed arms is a self portrait of the artist. The moral tone of the picture argues against such a self portrait, and, in any case, we have no identified portraits of Dirck with which to compare it. Given the satirical approach Dirck takes here toward elegant, self-consciously courtly poses, it seems much more likely that the woman's gesture is ironic.
- ¹⁰¹ For a discussion of Massa's diplomatic career, see Massa, pp. xi-xx.
- ¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. xiv.
- ¹⁰³ Vecnstra, pp. 24-25, 40-44.
- ¹⁰⁴ Colic, pp. 46-51.
- ¹⁰⁵ Constantijn Huygens, *Zede-Printen*, ed. H.J. Eimacl (Groningen, 1891), pp. 27-31.
- ¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-43: He is a quiet lamp in the wind of vanities;/ Which finds no wavering in his constancy;/ A useful loafer; a follower who can lead;/ And will be able as he needs, to be the one and then the other;/ A friendly lion; a sheep that yet can bite;/ A lover when he wants, and when he must, a man;/ Full of life under the steel, in his clothes, a marble statue;/ Full of the unfeelingness of costly feathers... Note: the term 'Edelman' in line 3 is, of course, an ironic play on the word 'Edelman' - nobleman.
- ¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 31: So pushes he dry-footed through the mud of the court/ Where flowers are weeds, and most of the fruit, dust...
- ¹⁰⁸ Eduardo Saccone, 'Grazia, Sprezzatura, Affettazione in the Courtier', in *Castiglione: The Ideal and the Real in Renaissance Culture*, ed. Robert W. Hanning and David Rosand (New Haven and London, 1983), pp. 55-64.
- ¹⁰⁹ Greenblatt, 1980. It is worth noting that Rembrandt, the other great genius of Dutch portraiture, often takes a similarly ironic perspective on the courtly conventions of the Renaissance portrait tradition and sometimes transforms them to suit middle-class meanings. See Smith, pp. 117-44, and *idem*, 'Rembrandt and the Portrait Tradition,' in *600 Years of Netherlandish Art: Selected Symposium Lectures* (Memphis, 1982), pp. 43-63.
- ¹¹⁰ Slive, vol. 3, pp. 19-20, no. 30; Grimm, p. 56, no. 17.
- ¹¹¹ Slive, vol. 1, pp. 21-23.
- ¹¹² *Ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 19.