I

THE CULTURAL POWER OF PORTRAITS: THE MARKET, INTERPERSONAL EXPERIENCE, AND SUBJECTIVITY

In seventeenth-century Holland portraits were everywhere, from highly wrought miniatures enclosed in filigreed lockets and informal sketches in *alba amicora*[1] to life-sized figures of political officials dominating town halls and castles of the nobility. These portraits were displayed in a wide variety of contexts. Images of family members and European aristocrats lined the halls of several of the residences of Frederik Henry, Prince of Orange, situating the prince socially within his noble lineage and politically among other European rulers; these included the Stadhouder's Quarters at the Binnenhof, The Hague (where the rooms of Amalia von Solms were hung with 25 portraits); their house at Noordeinde, The Hague (with 120 portraits); the palace of Honselaarsdijk (in which more than 100 portraits adorned the walls of a single room); and the country residence of Ter Nieuburg (with at least 28 portraits along the first-floor galleries). The portrait gallery of Paleis Het Loo purchased by Stadhouder Prince Willem III in 1684 gives some idea of these spaces (Figure 28, p. 114).[2] A municipal equivalent of the royal portrait gallery lined the burgomaster's chambers of the town hall in Delft, where the portraits of the Princes of Orange and their cousins symbolically located city government under the protection of the state represented by the House of Orange.[3]

Portraits of family members, public individuals, and admired historical figures hung in private homes in large numbers. These ranged from portraits and portrait pairs of single individuals in bust, three-quarter, or full length, such as Thomas de Keyser's three-quarter-length pair portraits of *Frans van Limborch* and his wife *Geertruyd Bisschop* (1632; Figures 18, 19, pp. 80, 81) or Rembrandt's *Portrait of a Man Rising from His Chair* of 1633 and his wife, *Portrait of a Young Woman with a Fan* (Figures 25, 26, pp. 102, 103), to family portraits in interior or exterior settings as, for example, the families of *Dirck Jacobsz. Bas* (ca. 1637; Figure 30, p. 116), *Frederik V and Elizabeth Stuart, King and Queen of Bohemia* (ca. 1624; Figure 31, p. 117), or

Vice Admiral Michiel de Ruyter, (1662; Figure 38, p. 143) and portraits of individuals who present themselves in the guise of historical figures such as the *Family of Michiel Poppin* shown in the biblical story of Christ blessing the children (1620; Figure 43, p. 162) or *Wouter Willemsz. Oorthoorn and His Wife Christina van Dien* who are painted as participants of the narrative of the Continence of Scipio (1658; Figure 50, p. 183).

Portraits were also commissioned for the meeting rooms of civic institutions including shooting companies, guilds, and charitable organizations. Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp* of 1632 (Figure 24, p. 100), his *Company of Frans Banning Cocq and Lieutenant Willem van Ruytenburch* more popularly known as *The Nightwatch* painted for the Kloveniersdoelen in Amsterdam in 1642 (Figure 60, p. 213), or Frans Hals's *Regents of the Old Men's Alms House* in Haarlem of 1664 (Figure 9, p. 47) are among only a few of the many portraits of leaders and members of community organizations that both affirmed the portrayed individuals' membership in those organizations as well as offered viewers a material statement of the importance of those organizations in the life of their cities.

Following the example set by aristocrats, monarchs, and princes of the church, some of the wealthiest Dutch families assembled substantial portrait collections of their own, as for example, the brothers Gerrit (1599–1658) and Jan Reynst (1601–1646); Willem Vincent, Baron van Wyttenhorst of Utrecht (1613–1674), the Leiden cloth merchant and author Pieter de la Court (1618–1685), and several generations of the Amsterdam family van Loon – to name only a few of the better known.[4] Portraits were also pictured – as paintings within paintings – in the background of many images of domestic interiors. They appear, for example, on the wall behind Adriaen van Ostade's *Self Portrait with the de Goyer Family* from 1650 to 1655 (Figure 1).[5] This work depicts Hendrick de Goyer, steward of Heemstede, and his wife Anna Questiers flanking the latter's sister Catharina Questiers, poet and etcher, with van Ostade standing nearby. On the wall over the door is a bust-length portrait of Prince Maurits and to its right is one of Prince Frederik Henry, wearing a broad orange sash. A letter written by Ostade's contemporary J. van der Burgh confirms Goyer's "passion for paintings, sculpture and other cultural things."[6]

The title-page print in Crispijn II de Passe's *Le Miroir des plus Belles Courtisanes de ce Temps* (A Looking Glass of the Most Beautiful Courtesans of These Times) of 1630 pictures an imaginary interior of the front room of a brothel lined with portraits of the women available to clients (Figure 2); the pages of the book itself portray, in pairs, a gallery of prostitutes each accompanied by a brief verse summarizing her charms, making publicly available for private consumption the fantasies

1. Adriaen van Ostade, *Self Portrait with the de Goyer Family*, 1650–55, panel, 63 × 51 cm, Museum Bredius, The Hague.

of pleasure they offer to their male viewers.[7] Although their veracity as portraits is unclear, several surviving paintings have been tentatively identified with such brothel portraits, including Frans Hals's so-called *Gypsy Girl* (ca. 1628–30; Louvre, Paris) and Gerard van Honthorst's *Smiling Girl Holding an Obscene Image*; the latter image shows a medallion on which is inscribed the words, "Who knows my ass from behind?" (Wie kent mijn naers/Van afteren; 1625; City Art Museum, St. Louis).[8] In his description of his travels through the Lowlands in 1681, Jean François Regnard remarked upon the practice by which the client made his selection from a portrait, seeing the woman only after he had paid for his visit. "Tant pis pour vous," he adds, "si la copie a été flâtée" (too bad for you if the copy flattered her).[9] The practice itself apparently survived into the nineteenth century.[10]

On another side of the cultural spectrum, portrait prints such as Rembrandt's etching of the Reformed preacher *Jan Cornelisz. Sylvius* provided to a broad audience images that served as a model of a life well lived for the viewer to admire and imitate (Figure 8, p. 45).[11] Finally, folio collections of portrait prints of well-known historical and cultural figures were a popular genre in the Netherlands, such as Hendrick Hondius's *Pictorum aliquot celebrium* of 1610, or the six editions of Anthony van Dyck's *Iconies principvm vivorvm doctorvm* published between 1632 and 1660.[12]

This book investigates some of the historically retrievable responses to portraits by seventeenth-century Dutch viewers, and their functions in both the lives of individuals as well as the collective cultural imagination in the northern Netherlands in the seventeenth century. My project is to recover at least some of the effects of visual representations of individuals, their families and friends, their leaders and cultural heroes, upon the men and women who created, commissioned, sat for, and viewed these works. Of particular interest to me are the conceptions of self and personal identities, communal structures, and social ideologies articulated by portraits in seventeenth-century Holland, and the psychological processes by which portraits helped to produce them. Indeed, I propose that these participated in the creation of new forms of subjectivity and the communal structures that accompanied them that in turn played an important part in producing the political and economic miracle that was seventeenth-century Netherlands.[13]

This high demand for what today we term the portrait (in Dutch *portret*) existed long before there was a unique classificatory word for the genre. In inventories, letters, treatises on art, and sales catalogues, the pictorial form that was created, usually on commission, to represent a specific individual either living or deceased is variously referred to as a *tronie*, more often as *conterfeytsel* or *afbeeldsel*, and

2. Crispijn van de Passe, frontispiece to *Le Miroir des plus Belles Courtisannes de ce Temps* (A Looking Glass of the Most Beautiful Courtesans of These Times), 1631, engraving, 11.2 × 15.1 cm, Research Library, The Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles.

occasionally, but less frequently until the end of the century, as *portret*.[14] These same terms, particularly *tronie* and *conterfeytsel*, were also employed for what today we identify as a separate genre, but for which we do not yet have a good name: an image of a head or half-, even three-quarter-, length figure whose primary referent was not to a specific living or historical individual, but which nonetheless could have relatively specific physiognomic features.

References to unidentified single figures appear frequently in seventeenth-century inventories, some of which were simply unidentified portraits, but many of which are recognized today as paintings of heads or half-length figures that are not portraits per se. *A Man in a Gorget and Plumed Cap* by Rembrandt, or an immediate member of his circle, well exemplifies this form (ca. 1630–31;

Figure 3).[15] The same model appears in many paintings and prints by Rembrandt and members of his circle from this time.[16] The nonportrait status of this in-between genre is documented in a diary entry by Constantijn Huygens, secretary to the Stadhouder, of about 1630, where he described a figure in oriental costume by Jan Lievens in the Prince's collection as a Turkish monarch for which a Dutchman had served as the model (ca. 1628; Potsdam-Sanssouci, Bildergalerie).[17] The nonportrait head in drawings, prints, and painted form was a popular genre in the seventeenth century. Scholars have observed that many of these heads wear fanciful or exotic dress, ranging from pastoral garments to references to military clothing (as Rembrandt's *Man in a Gorget*) or oriental costume (as Lieven's half-length of a Turkish monarch). Their faces and expression may be idealized, but more frequently they represent the picturesque qualities of poverty or old age. Many bear more pronounced facial expression than is customary in portraiture, leading some students of Dutch art to term them "character heads."

One explanation for the production of these heads has been that they were originally study pieces, or models for genre or history paintings. But recent research has demonstrated that these nonportrait heads, half-length and sometimes three-quarter-length figures in drawings, etchings, and painted form, were a popular genre in their own right. Indeed, a document concerning a dispute between Rembrandt and a patron over a portrait commission suggests that Rembrandt believed he could sell on the open market a work originally commissioned as a portrait.[18] In addition, Volker Manuth has suggested that Rembrandt created portraits of himself and family members for public sale, although Michael Montias proposes that these paintings reached the market when the artist was forced to sell them to raise cash.[19]

In 1960 Kurt Bauch distinguished between Rembrandt's portraits and "heads and faces," while Albert Blankert shortly thereafter proposed identifying the word *tronie* with the nonportrait figure and *conterfeytsel* with the portrait, terms which scholars – with relief – began to use.[20] But a variety of students of Dutch art have pointed out that in practice these terms were not employed with consistency in the seventeenth century. *Tronie* customarily meant head, and originally could also be a term of derision.[21] In seventeenth-century documents, it might also accompany the name of a figure such as Christ, a contemporaneous person, or even a subject such as flowers and fruit, so that it frequently simply meant "an image."[22] *Conterfeytsel* was more often associated with an image created "naar het leven" (from life), but it also sometimes accompanied the name of a person.[23] Thus Karel van Mander, for example, described "*tronien na t'leven*," "*afbeeldingen naar het leven*," "*het conterfeyten nae t'leven*, or even "*conterfeytsel . . . wel ghedaen zijn, is boven alverwonderlijckde tronie . . .*," (a portrait . . . well executed, the face

3. Attributed to Rembrandt van Rijn or a member of his immediate circle, *A Man in a Gorget and Plumed Cap*, ca. 1630–31, panel, 65 × 51 cm, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.

is admirable above all).[24] The more generic term *afbeeldingh* and its variants – meaning representation – were occasionally used associated with the name of a specific individual.[25] The word *portret* – which derived from the French word *pourtrait* or *portrait* – began to appear in Dutch texts around 1640. Perhaps not surprisingly, it was employed more frequently after France invaded the Lowlands in 1672 and eventually became the term by which the portrait in the Dutch language is known.[26] Like *tronie*, *counterfeytsel*, or *afbeelding*, however, *portret* might in the seventeenth century also mean pictured from life or refer more generally to a head.[27]

This lack of a specific term is of course not unique to the portrait. Numerous students of Dutch art have observed that seventeenth-century documentary references to images tend to be more descriptive than classificatory.[28] Nonetheless, seventeenth-century theoretical treatises on art implicitly distinguished genres enough to hieratically relate them, placing history paintings at the top with portraiture far below. Karel van Mander's well-known disparagement of Hague portraitist Michiel van Miereveld's penchant for taking on commissions for portraits rather than history paintings clarifies his reference to history paintings (*historien*) with the terms "figures and nudes" (*beelden en naeckten*):[29]

> In our Netherlands there is this . . . unfortunate situation . . . that there is little work to be had that requires composition so as to give the youngsters and painters the opportunity to become excellent at histories, figures and nudes through practice. For it is mostly portraits that they get the opportunity to paint; so that most of them, . . . usually take this side-road of art (that is: portrait painting [*te weten / het conterfeyten nae t'leven*]) and set off without having time or inclination to seek out or follow the road of history and figures that leads to the highest perfection.

In 1678 Samuel van Hoogstraten ranked *Historyen* at the top of his three ranks of genre, but painters of the human body are spread across all three; he places *konterfeyters* "who make reasonably good likenesses, and prettily imitate eyes, noses, and mouths," on the lowest rung of painting.[30] Arnold Houbraken went even farther and compared portrait painters to grave diggers: "The one seeks his money through life, the other through Death; But in this they are the same; They both love *Lyken*" (a pun, meaning both "to resemble" and "corpses").[31] But, as Ben Broos has pointed out, even "what, precisely is to be understood by a history piece was never clearly enunciated by the older theoreticians."[32]

To be sure, those who commissioned what today we call a portrait knew that they were buying an image of themselves, a family member, or an identifiable figure. But few genres have been so difficult for twenty- and twenty-first-century students of Dutch art to identify in seventeenth-century documents and texts as the portrait. In some cases, the identity of a sitter has been lost to history, so that their portrait may be now viewed as having been painted as an unidentified head; in others, heads may now be assumed, incorrectly, to be portraits. But the very flexibility of these seventeenth-century terms is importantly revealing.

I would like to suggest that the lack of a unique term for the portrait, along with the popularity of the nonportrait head, provides insight into two issues: first,

the relationship of the portrait to the market; and second, as I discuss later, the more exaggerated facial expression of nonportrait heads may help us understand the imaginative psychological and social function of portraits themselves.

I

A broad spectrum of the population was in a position to view portraits, but those individuals who had the financial means to commission a portrait of themselves, family members, friends, or well-known public figures were a more restricted segment of seventeenth-century Netherlandish society. A comprehensive study of the market for portraits in the Netherlands has yet to be written, in large part because we lack surviving data for the poorer segments of the population. From surviving data about portrait costs, income levels, and inventories of household goods, it appears, however, that at least half of the inhabitants of urban areas would have been able to afford at least a modest portrait.

Until recently, authors have repeatedly quoted the observations of numerous seventeenth-century travelers to the Netherlands who reported that just about everyone owned paintings. When Englishman Peter Mundy visited the Lowlands in 1640, he recorded in his diary:

> As For the art off Painting and the affection of the people to Pictures, I thincke none other goe beyond them, . . . All in generall striving to adorne their houses, especially the outer or street roome, with costly peeces [of painting], Butchers and bakers not much inferiour in their shoppess, which are Fairely sett Forth, yea many tymes blacksmithes, Coblers, etts., will have some picture or other by their Forge and in their stalle.[33]

In a trip to Rotterdam on August 13, 1641, John Evelyn visited

> their annual mart or fair, so furnished with pictures (especially landscapes and drolleries, as they call those clownish representations), that I was amazed . . . it is an ordinary thing to find a common farmer lay out two or three thousand pounds in this commodity. Their houses are full of them, and they vend them at their fairs to very great gains.[34]

(It is hard to know if Evelyn was exaggerating for effect: £3,000 in 1641 was the equivalent of around £362,386 or about $709,769 in 2008.)[35] In 1662 the Frenchman Jean Nicolas de Parival, who had worked as a schoolmaster in Leiden for twenty years, published his impressions of the Lowlands. He wrote that "the

houses are filled with very beautiful paintings and no one is so poor as not to wish to be well provided with them."[36] In 1686 William Aglionby commented that "the *Dutch* in the midst of their *Boggs* and ill *Air*, have their *Houses* full of *Pictures*, from the *Highest* to the *Lowest*."[37] Such voices from the past seem to provide overwhelming evidence of the broad extent of painting ownership in the Netherlands. These, in addition to the riches he found in his own archival research at the end of the nineteenth century, led Abraham Bredius to claim in 1891 that "every artisan had a veritable little gallery of paintings," and Hanns Floerke to follow suit in 1905.[38]

Although seventeenth-century visitors were correct in observing that collecting was more widespread among middle-class households than elsewhere in Europe, and paintings were being sold in an open market setting – at fairs and through dealers – the Delft and Amsterdam inventories analyzed by John Michael Montias, as well as important archival research undertaken by others, do not support the impression that even the "*Lowest*" households owned paintings.[39] Montias points out that these well-heeled travelers' impressions were inaccurate because they would have been based primarily on the pictures they saw in the homes they best knew – those inhabited by the wealthier segments of society.[40]

Ad van der Woude has estimated that somewhere between five million and ten million paintings were produced in the Netherlands during the course of the seventeenth century.[41] From his statistical analysis of the surviving evidence, Montias concludes that as many as half of the households in Amsterdam possessed at least a few paintings, the average number nearly doubling during the first half of the century.[42] His research shows that up to two-thirds of the inhabitants of Delft lived in homes with paintings on their walls, the number of which also increased significantly over the course of the century.[43] Marten Jan Bok has found a similar trend for Utrecht.[44] This must have been due in part to the rising purchasing power of the broad middle class,[45] and perhaps also to the many immigrants, particularly from Flanders, who settled in the country and brought with them not only their talents, but also their wealth and a taste for paintings.[46] In his study of peasants' inventories in Friesland, Jan de Vries found that "[o]ne finds references to paintings in the seventeenth century peasant inventories, but with only a few exceptions the notaries' valuations indicate that they were not oils. They were, rather, decorative boards and hangings . . . valued at a few stuivers apiece."[47] Serious collecting was undertaken by only a small number of the very wealthy.

A large number of inventories of household goods survive from the seventeenth century, providing a rich source of information about household contents. These