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Van Dyck's Portraits in the Prado: The Spanish-Flemish Connection¹

Van Dyck was one of the great portraitists. His works were neither as powerful as those of Velazquez and Rembrandt, nor did he have their depth of insight into human character. We need not go into their many differences here. But his prosopographic range was arguably greater than theirs. He painted in the Netherlands, Italy and England. The range of political figures he portrayed was wider than that of any of his peers. He was the favored portraitist of the Flemish upper bourgeoisie, of the Genoese aristocracy and of the English nobility, but he painted many other leading political and ecclesiastical figures, too. Although he never went to Spain, the works at issue here offer remarkable insight, not only into the connections between Spain and the Netherlands in the 17th century, but also into the international ramifications of Spanish politics. With the possible exception of Rubens, van Dyck was the finest of the Flemish portraitists—and there were many good ones. But by and large, whether one prefers a picture such as Rubens's *Nonnius* over van Dyck's *Snyders*, for example, is a matter of taste. As a portraitist of children, he was almost Rubens's equal. When it came to women, however, van Dyck was notably inferior, except in his Genoese pictures; indeed, to compare the portrait by Rubens of the *Chapeau de Paille* with almost any of van Dyck's female sitters is to see how much the latter's work in this area was wanting, even in the best of cases.

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But to make such comparisons may be unfair. Let us try to get the measure of his achievement in its own terms.

At first sight, van Dyck's faces can seem bland, especially during his English period. But if one considers the works illustrated above, and others such as the great *Bentivoglio*, or the *Elena Grimaldi*, or even the affecting *Jerome Carchopin* or *Virginio Cesarini*, one realizes he was a portraitist of compelling power, insight, and sensitivity. Of all the portraitists in the North, indeed, possibly even of all the portraitists of Europe—that is, of all those painters who devoted themselves to portraiture as their primary livelihood—van Dyck unquestionably enjoyed the highest status during his time. But it is worth remembering that even though the greatest of painters produced fine portraits (one only has to think of Raphael), until the seventeenth century, portraiture itself held a relatively low rank amongst the genres of painting. History painting (that is, religious and mythological painting) ranked vastly higher—and was paid much more generously.

But then the situation changed dramatically. The reasons for this have everything to do with the history of the Netherlands in the sixteenth century, and, more specifically, with the relations between the Netherlands and Spain. But that history, an entirely political one, turns out to be intimately wrapped up with the history of art, in ways that are still not adequately recognized, and that in the end casts dramatic light on van Dyck, his work, and his status. So before I come to the splendid paintings in the Prado, let me give you a sense of why this was so.

Despite the relatively low status—and market values—of portraiture, the painters of the North had always excelled in this domain. In fact, van Dyck's true predecessors

were the fifteenth-century Flemish painters, at least as much as the Italians he later came to admire. Painters like Jan van Eyck and Roger van der Weyden—religious painters above all—produced masterpieces of portraiture such as van Eyck’s self-portrait in the National Gallery in London, or the marvelous portrait of a young woman by Roger van der Weyden in the National Gallery in Washington, to take only two of very many possible examples by them and their peers.

In an age before photography, portraits filled many of the functions they do now, acting as tokens of friendship and memory, and as instruments of politics. Perhaps the finest examples of these uses of portraiture are provided by Holbein’s incomparable portraits of Erasmus and Thomas More, and by his portrait of Christina of Denmark, sent to Henry VIII of England as a means of showing him what a potential spouse might look like. How easy it now seems to understand, if one judges from this beautiful but relatively unsparing work, why Henry might not have fallen in love with her if this was all he had to go by! But how lucky, given his matrimonial history, this was for her! Indeed, it is the portrait by Titian of Philip II of Spain that is said to have caused Mary Tudor to fall in love with him—and we know how badly *that* marriage fared!

Of all the sixteenth-century all-round painters to have produced portraits as well as works in other genres, Titian, of course, was the finest—and it was he who had the most powerful influence on the work of the two great seventeenth-century Flemings, Rubens and van Dyck—along with the great native tradition. But amongst all the sixteenth-century *specialists* in portraiture, however, the most relevant for the topic of this essay is unquestionably Anthonis Mor (or Antonio Moro, as he was known in both Italy and Spain), who was born around 1520 and died around 1576. From his earliest

works on, portraiture in Spain and the Netherlands would always be tied together, since it is inseparable from the complex and often tortured history of the Spanish dominions in the Netherlands.

One may begin with the best-known portraits that offer the clearest tokens of this connection, simply because of whom they represent. There are many examples, beginning, perhaps, with Mor's 1554 *Portrait of Mary Tudor*, painted in the year of the sitter's marriage to Philip II. It is a stiff state portrait of a tough woman, with just a glimmer of the humanity she managed (for the most part) to suppress. But there are also more sympathetic works, such as the beautifully painted portrait of that sophisticated and elegant favorite of Philip II, *Anthonis Perrenot de Granvelle*, quite different in its suavity from the much more tensely painted picture of Philip's half-sister, Margaret of Parma, which, in its firm contours and tight painting, fits more directly into the local tradition of the time.

It is with these portraits that we move directly into the history of the relationship between Spain and the Netherlands. The story that follows may, at times, seem to be very far from the history of art, but art, in fact, stands at the center of the events that form the essential background to the topic at issue here.

Under Charles V, son of Philip and Juana of Castile and grandson of the Emperor Maximilian and Mary of Burgundy, the old Burgundian and Hapsburg domains in the Netherlands came together under the Spanish crown. Charles V himself was born in Ghent and spoke Flemish throughout his childhood. The areas we now call Holland and Belgium were not yet separated, and the entire region was at least nominally Catholic. But from the very beginning of his reign, Protestantism was a threat, and Charles issued

his famous placards against all forms of resistance to the official church, including, for example, anti-clerical plays and bibles published in the vernacular.

But the Protestant movement was unstoppable, and when Charles abdicated in 1555, he left the problems to his son Philip, one year after his unsuccessful marriage to Mary Tudor, who was obliged to enforce even stricter control over the Netherlands. In 1559, he himself left the Netherlands under the regency of Margaret of Parma, illegitimate daughter of Charles, and Antonio Perrenot de Granvelle. The Spanish-Netherlandish connection in the domain of portraiture could not be more clearly manifested than in these two works; but there is more to this story.

Granvelle—beginning a tradition of patronage that would continue until the deaths of Rubens and van Dyck, and long after—himself owned at least two works by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, including his lovely *Flight into Egypt* of 1563. From this radical—and perceptive—form of local patronage, as well as from Mor's insightful portrait, painted with so much more benignity than his picture of Margaret of Parma, we gain some impression of Granvelle's character. But this too, even when fortified into rigor and discipline in the field of politics—such as the tightening of Catholic control over an ever more restless country, ever more at the prey of protestant preachers and other subversive elements—was not enough to prevent the outbreak of rebellion in 1566, and the series of riots that marked the beginning of the revolt of the Netherlands against Spain.

This revolt, as many historians have repeatedly pointed out, was not just a revolt against Spain. It was a revolt against an increasingly repressive government that over the next forty years (and well after) came to be seen as a hostile occupying regime. It was

also a revolt against images. For the Revolt of the Netherlands, which continued for eighty long years, began with a series of attacks on images.

Beginning in the southwest quarter of Flanders, in areas neighboring Charles V's birthplace in Ghent, Protestant rebels gathered in churches—or sometimes riotously broke into them—and tore down every image in sight. Not only paintings, but also sculptures, stained glass, liturgical objects, and even embroidered and woven liturgical vestments. Every figured image had to come down, be effaced, or thrown away. This included even the living images of God; the men who were representatives of the Catholic religion were attacked. Mostly organized, but sometimes spontaneous, the riots spread like wildfire, reaching Antwerp itself on the night of August 22; they continued northward before burning out, at least temporarily, in the remotest province of Friesland.

It was a war against images, but it was not just against images as the symbols of a hated regime, as historians long thought. No; it was the public expression of a set of deep theological reservations concerning images. Scholars have sometimes claimed that theology does not affect the history of art, but the case of the Netherlands in the middle sixteenth century—like Germany in the 1520s—proves how wrong they are. For example, the use of images expressly violated the second commandment: “thou shalt have no graven images before me.” Many members—indeed most—of the reformed religion insisted that if God was uncircumscribable, how could he be depicted in material and circumscribed form? Of course, the Catholic response was that since Christ was incarnate as Man, he could also be represented in material form. Protestants maintained that images could not serve as intermediaries between humans and God; and too many people thought that those who were represented in them were actually present in the

images themselves. The Catholic response, articulated in the final session of the Council of Trent (just three years before the Netherlandish iconoclasm), was not to address the basic principles of the Protestant objections, but to try to eliminate the abuses: to say that it was a mistake to worship the saint in the image, since the honor paid to an image passed to its prototype (the classical view in Byzantine theology); that images should not be the center of extravagant and licentious behavior on Feast Days; that images should not have apocryphal subjects, but adhere to the sacred texts. They made it clear that the churches were to be visited, these rules were to be carried out, and no new images with doubtful or new iconography should be tolerated. The atmosphere controlling the production of new images became stifling, and writers wrote long treatises against images (on the Protestant side) or on what was legitimate to paint (on the Catholic side).

How could all this start a revolt? To ask such a question would be to underestimate how important images of all kinds were to people at the time, and how deeply their content penetrated into daily lives. Furthermore, all the issues around images were exploited by the Protestant preachers whom Margaret of Parma tried so desperately to control in the tense days before the outbreaks of August 1566. They became the focus of popular resentment; it was easy enough to point out, as Marten Luther had often done, that the money the rich spent on the decoration of churches and of the dead would be better spent on the poor—who were, after all, the living images of god.

But what has this to do with *portraiture*? The answer is not as obvious as one might think. In the first place, of course, Protestantism had questioned the validity of images as an adjunct to worship. How could mere pieces of wood and stone adequately represent a saint? The worst, it was alleged, was that people, especially simple people,

often believed the saints to be present in their images, or even to be equivalent with them! But the Catholic authorities themselves realized that this was an error, and they insisted religious images only served as intermediaries between man and god. Still, Protestants and Protestant sympathizers knew better; after all, this was a fine line to draw. All these objections were sufficient to undermine the authority of pictures as an aid to religion and as the books of the illiterate, as the old dictum had it. The status of religious paintings declined rapidly.

But on an even more practical level, the iconoclasts had destroyed a huge number of religious pictures. Who could know—what painter could be sure—that in such a climate his own productions would not be cut down again? The fear was a realistic one, since even after Philip II sent the punitive Duke of Alva to replace Granvelle and Margaret, and to tighten up control in the Netherlands, there were sporadic outbursts of further iconoclasm, particularly in Antwerp. There, a strict Calvinist town council assumed the reins of power between 1580 and 1585, and systematically stripped the images from the churches over and over again.

One can understand how, in this climate, religious painting—the chief livelihood of all painters—could come to be threatened. The great school of Flemish painters practically stopped producing altarpieces in these years, the numbers of devotional paintings diminished, and painters allowed their old skill to flourish in the entirely less controversial area of portraiture. Even after order was restored, religious painting remained feeble, an exhausted genre. But the standard of portraiture, in a country with so strong a tradition, remained high. And so, in the wake of Anthonis Mor, distinguished but little-known painters like Adriaen Thomas Key continued to produce works of the

highest quality. Even famous painters like Frans Floris ended by producing arguably better works of portraiture than religious ones.

These are the kinds of paintings that were in circulation at the time of Rubens's birth in 1577, and van Dyck's in 1599—in the midst of the period when the war with Spain was a central feature of life in the Netherlands. Rubens was born to a father who conducted an affair with Anna of Saxony, wife of the William I of Orange. William was the leader of the resistance, and the man who, above all, was responsible for the creation of modern Holland. The new independent United Provinces of the Netherlands, to call it by its correct name, may be said to have come into being with the 1609 signing of the Twelve Years' Truce, which determined the boundaries between the officially Catholic south and the officially Protestant north—though there, of course, remained clumps of clandestine Protestants in the south, and a majority of Catholics in the north. But painting would never be the same again. New genres emerged, especially in the North, and portraiture garnered still greater esteem. Signed just three years after the birth of Rembrandt, the truce ushered in a period of economic prosperity as well as artistic inventiveness and confidence in areas of painting that were entirely independent of the old tradition.

And it was just a few months before the truce of 1609 that Rubens returned from Rome to Antwerp. From then on he dominated the Antwerp school of painting until his death in 1640. It was also in 1609 that Van Dyck, at the usual age of 10, entered the workshop of Hendrik van Balen. But within a few years he was working for Rubens and producing paintings that, not surprisingly, came entirely under the older master's powerful and ineluctable influence. In these years the churches began to be rebuilt and

adorned anew, particularly under the beneficent eye (and sometimes generous patronage) of Philip II's daughter, the Archduchess Isabella Clara Eugenia. Many new and unexpected opportunities for religious painting arose in the restored and new churches, including, not surprisingly, the new Jesuit church in Antwerp, on which van Dyck famously worked together with his master, Rubens. But it cannot be said that van Dyck's initial efforts in this direction ever reached the level of his portraiture, with only a few exceptions.

In fact, the Prado owns four of these early religious works, three of which are of the highest interest in this regard. The first of them, in fact, is of a subject that could not be of greater significance in terms of the recovery from the terrible depredations of the iconoclasts during the preceding half century or so, for it shows *The Brazen Serpent*. This was the archetypal Old Testament subject always cited in defense of the Catholic use of images against the criticisms of Lutherans and Calvinists alike. Numbers 21 5-9 tells of how God visited the Israelites in the desert with a plague of serpents, to punish them for their dissatisfaction with him and their lot. Then God told Moses to set up a pole with a bronze image of a serpent on it, and declared that all who looked on this image would be saved from the plague. In the Christian tradition, the salvific image of the serpent on a pole was taken through the centuries to symbolize Christ on the Cross, and his salvation of Mankind from its sins. Needless to say, this was used, especially by the Catholic defenders of images during the iconoclastic crisis, as a justification for the use of the images. This was the archetypal image that *worked*, in an age when images were assailed for being useless, for being no more than *dead* images of wood and stone. In this way,

one of van Dyck's very first paintings connects directly to the great controversy from which his much greater work would soon grow.

But in truth, it is still a comparatively awkward painting—though perhaps not as awkward as some of the others made during this period. It is clearly derived from Rubens's composition of the same subject, though it shows an originality and independence from the original composition that are the result of many long labors on it, as testified by the numerous drawings that survive.

Van Dyck's next important religious painting in the Prado, *The Crowning with Thorns*, is a more concentrated and accomplished work, especially if one considers that van Dyck could not have been more than eighteen years old when he painted it! It, too, is clearly indebted not only to Rubens's composition of the subject (and also Titian's to some degree), but also to his master's magnificent treatment of the male body with its undulating, powerfully modulated and colored musculature and flesh. The rich and resonant colors also owe a great deal to Rubens. As evidenced by the large number of preparatory drawings—as well as those made for another closely related composition once in Berlin—van Dyck struggled intensely, both with the composition as a whole and with the depiction of individual figures. Some are indicative of the relationship with Rubens, other still more clearly to Titian. In the end, he arrived at what might have been his finest early religious work, were it not for the fact that the third work of this group in the Prado—the great *Taking of Christ*—is clearly his masterpiece in this genre.

This is a painting in which van Dyck was his own man. It owes almost nothing to Rubens, nor to any other master. It is an exceptionally independent composition, and the largest of his early years. Indeed I know of no other similar treatment of the subject,

except perhaps in engravings which he might have known. The lighting effects are incomparably dramatic, from the way the dramatically flaming torch casts its strong light on the agitated crowd of persecutors below, to the manner in which it glances off the leaves above and illuminates the beautifully calm face of Christ—that face which looks so placid beside the terrifyingly menacing hands immediately above him. From the expression of his captors to Malchus's howl of pain as Peter cuts off his ear; from the hands holding up the torch to the hands about to descend on Christ, registered in the fearful expression of the apostle on the extreme right beside Christ, this work ranks amongst the greatest representations of this subject. No wonder that it exists in so many versions; no wonder that Rubens himself bought this work for his own collection; and no wonder that it was one of the many works which Philip IV acquired for the Spanish royal collections when Rubens died in 1640, for the not inconsiderable sum of 1200 guilders. I should add here that he also bought the *Mocking of Christ* from Rubens's estate for 1000 guilders, and that the earlier *Brazen Serpent* was in the Alcazar by 1666 (though from whom Philip bought it we do not know).

Spain and Flanders remained linked, throughout all periods of turmoil, by the love of painting. The religious works discussed above are all immensely accomplished, and it is too often forgotten how young van Dyck was when he painted them (he would have been under 21 at the oldest). But it was in his sensitive portraits, all painted with a kind of fluidity of brushstroke that was far removed from the firm decisiveness of Rubens's treatment of flesh and contour, that his true talents first emerged. One only has to look at works such as the portrait of Rubens's sister-in-law Susanna Fourment and her daughter Clara to gauge the sensitivity of his response to the physiognomies of his sitters, the

elegance of their poses, and the shimmering paintwork of the drapery. That sensitivity also emerges in the liquid eyes of the great Burgomaster of Antwerp and collector and patron of Rubens, Cornelis van der Geest. In the resplendent portraits of his fellow painter Frans Snyders and his wife, one has a foretaste of the aristocratic elegance with which he was able to invest his sitters. Even Raphael, I think, would have been impressed by the *sprezzatura*, the nonchalant elegance and cool gaze of Snyders.

No wonder, then, that van Dyck should so immediately have appealed to the Genoese aristocracy when he first went there in 1621! The way, of course, had been prepared by Rubens, whose great book on the palaces of Genoa, owned by the very people who would now model for van Dyck, appeared in 1622. Once more, even in the field of portraiture, Rubens had already reached great heights in his pictures of the Genoese nobles, especially their wives, the most famous of which is that of Brigida Spinola Doria in the National Gallery in Washington. She, of course, represented the union of the two most powerful families in Genoa, and it is works such as this one that inspired van Dyck even beyond the capacities we may already have expected from the promising young painter. This particular portrait by Rubens, now, alas, cut down, clearly influenced van Dyck's stupendous portrait of Elena Grimaldi, arguably an even greater work than Rubens's. Then there were a few works which owed little to Rubens but more to his other great hero at the time: Titian. In fact, van Dyck's portraits of Filippo and Clelia Cattaneo offer a kind of homage to the Venetian painter's own wonderful painting of the Strozzi children, and throughout his Italian period (and for many years after), van Dyck was in constant pictorial engagement with Titian, in some ways even more than he was with his inescapable Flemish compatriot.

Of all the van Dyck's Genoese connections, perhaps the most important in the context of this essay was that with the Spinola family itself. This is a name that hardly needs mentioning in the Prado, for Ambrogio Spinola is the central personality of the greatest painting ever made on the connection between the Netherlands and Spain. Already in 1603, he had brought his own army to raise the siege of Ostend, and was swiftly appointed commander in chief of the Spanish troops in the Netherlands against the Prince of Orange. But Spinola's most famous victory of all was, of course, that of the capture of Breda in 1625. It is he whom we see at the very center of Velázquez's painting of *Las Lanzas*, receiving the keys of the town from Justin of Nassau, the illegitimate son of William of Orange. Velázquez shows the aging commander, with the baton and sash of his authority, receiving the keys from Prince Justin with a kind of gentle magnanimity that represents the epitome of Velázquez's insight into character. It is very different from Rubens's brilliant portrait, which in and of itself would be regarded as one of the finest portraits of a seventeenth-century military commander, were it not for the incomparable head painted here by Velázquez.

Unfortunately, the original of van Dyck's own portrait of the commander is lost, though the Prado does have a painting of his daughter Polissena, which is a long way from being one of his finest portraits. For whatever reason, it did not inspire him to the majesty or depths of insight which so many of his other Genoese portraits show him capable of achieving.

It is, in fact, the other works I have discussed which give the measure of van Dyck as a portraitist. To this group we must add the very great portraits of Lady Teresia Shirley, a Circassian noblewoman married to an English adventurer whom van Dyck

painted in Rome at about the time he painted his pedestrian picture of Polissena Spinola and his portrait of Guido Bentivoglio, former papal nuncio to Flanders, historian of the war between the Netherlands and Spain, and narrowly defeated contender for the Papacy by Urban VIII—a defeat that occurred at exactly the time this work was probably painted. To compare the coloristic brilliance of the Shirley painting with the restrained palette of the Bentivoglio portrait is to have the clearest possible sense of van Dyck's chromatic inventiveness. Both pictures testify not only to his sensitivity to character, but also, as evidenced by their shimmering surfaces, his astonishing virtuosity with the brush.

Between 1627 and 1632, van Dyck was back in Antwerp, painting at a critical period for relations between Spain and the Netherlands (Rubens was away on diplomatic missions on behalf of the Spanish regents for most of this time, thus, perhaps, offering van Dyck an additional incentive).

It was shortly after his return to Antwerp that van Dyck painted one of the best and most poignant of his portraits now in the Prado: *Count Hendrik van den Bergh*. At first glance, this work may seem to be a relatively routine display of the artist's now considerable powers as a painter, not just of bold heads, but also of the trappings of war and power, including the brilliantly painted armor, the fine embroidery of the tunic showing through, and the splendid armband, which, taken with the baton and the gesture of command, gives a sense of the sitter's military authority. It is a strong face, the eyes alert but worried; one wonders what it was that so troubled someone invested with such trappings of power and character. Even the clouded and rocky landscape setting seems to convey something of the sitter's mood.

We know from the contemporary engraving of this work by Paulus Pontius that it shows Count Hendrik van den Bergh, who played a role in the complicated relations between the Netherlands and Spain with which this essay began. It is as complex and as emblematic as any of the fraught political and personal relations between the great old power, Spain, and the rising new one—not the Southern Netherlands, but the Northern Netherlands; the area we now call Holland, under the Princes of Orange.

Hendrik van den Bergh was born in 1573 in Upper Gelderland, in the East, at a time when that area was still struggling to become independent of Spain. He was, in fact, a cousin of Prince Frederick Hendrik, son of William I of Orange and leader of the United Netherlands (whom van Dyck would also portray). Everything about van den Bergh's background suggests that he should have formed part of the Protestant resistance to Spain, but at the turn of the century, he converted to Catholicism and soon was to be found fighting under Spinola in the Palatinate. Just before this portrait was painted in Antwerp, he took part in the capture of Breda, and soon rose to become a member of the Council of State in Brussels. When Spinola finally departed the Netherlands in 1628, he left van den Bergh in charge of the Spanish land forces there. But after two serious losses near his birthplace, he was suspected (perhaps unsurprisingly, though no doubt unjustly) of treason and was soon replaced by the Marques de Santa Cruz. Was it this that made him join the conspiracy of Flemish nobleman who entered into negotiations with the United Provinces with a view to enlisting French support and freeing the country from Spanish rule? The uprising never materialized, and van den Bergh fled the Spanish Netherlands in 1632.

We can never know all the ingredients that make strong men become turncoats – (in this case, arguably more than once), but it is entirely characteristic of van Dyck that he should be able to convey, in what otherwise might have been a relatively straightforward portrait of confident power, some sense of the man's divided personality and of the agonies he must even then have been going through.

It is the same sense of being divided, but with even greater and darker intensity, that shadows the brow of Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, the sitter in one of the finest of van Dyck's late portraits, which he produced over a decade later. Here, too, was a commander who changed sides, in this case from the English parliament to his monarch, but who paid dearly for the long commitment to a king who, in the end, let him down and allowed him to go to his death on the scaffold. In this face we find all the premonitions of the fate of power during the English civil war that was to culminate in the hanging of the king himself. In its expression of melancholy reflectiveness on power, or on doubts about the role of the commander, it is even more evocative than the portrait of van den Bergh.

But let me stay, for a moment, with the relations between Spain and the Netherlands. Van Dyck probably also painted a portrait of van den Bergh's successor as commander of Spanish troops in the Netherlands, the Marques de Santa Cruz, but it is too boring even to show you here. This is a painter who needed to know his sitters, and to get a feeling for the complexity of their characters in order to have the best brought out in him. When, for example, we consider his portrait of the next commander in chief of the Spanish troops in the Netherlands, Francisco de Moncada, Marques de Aytona, who took over in 1633, the results are far less compelling than the moody depiction of van den

Bergh. In comparison with the figure of van den Bergh, Moncada is shown here in civilian garb, plump, unwrinkled, and self-confident—self-satisfied, one might say. Not a wrinkle crosses his shiny forehead, and there is none of the doubt that seems to crease the features of Henry van den Bergh in his portrait.

Indeed, beside the portrait of Moncada, even a portrait like that of the Cardinal Infante Ferdinand himself, seems interesting. We have many portraits of him, including those by Rubens. Both painters produced many (and much-copied) versions of their resplendent portraits of the most distinguished representative of Spain in the Netherlands in the years when van Dyck was back in Antwerp. Distinguished and promising he may have been—having become successor to his aunt Isabella at the age of 22 in 1631—van Dyck nevertheless brilliantly manages to convey the young man's shy and soft immaturity, and slightly effete look; it is a look that belies his subsequent military success at the battle of Nordlingen, where he defeated the Swedish army before making a triumphal entry into Brussels in 1634. A year later, Rubens prepared the decorations for the triumphal entry of the Cardinal Infante in Antwerp, one of the greatest of his own late achievements in the field of painting as propaganda.

And so, as always, Rubens is there, from beginning to end. The older master loved the younger one, right from the beginning, and van Dyck's respect for him never ceased. Remember that Rubens's connection with Spain went back to 1602, when Vincenzo Gonzaga, Duke of Mantua, sent him on a diplomatic mission to Philip III. For the first (and by no means the last) time, Rubens's work as an artist was intimately bound up with politics and diplomacy. He went with new and old paintings for Philip and, above all, for his favorite, the Duke of Lerma. Already at this time, Rubens copied

Titian's great portrait of Charles V on horseback, and then, in order to further win Lerma's favor, painted an equestrian portrait of him too, as a kind of artistic response to Titian's work. It is also in the Prado, and it is Rubens's first masterpiece, the first great equestrian portrait of the seventeenth century—indeed, one of the great equestrian portraits of all time. No wonder that it should have influenced van Dyck over and over again. He remembered it in his Genoese portrait of Giulio Antonio Brignole Sale at the age of 21, and then for his equestrian portrait of Moncada, which at least shows him in his role of commander general of the Spanish troops in the Netherlands. But van Dyck was not done with this type yet, for he used it once more, in perhaps the very finest of his equestrian portraits: Charles I of England, painted at a time when Spain and Britain, ironically enough, were at the height of their enmity.

It is in this context, too, that one thinks of Rubens's last major diplomatic effort. In political terms it failed; in pictorial terms it gave the aging painter a new lease on life. For Rubens himself went to Spain in 1628 in an effort to see if he could prepare the way for the peace he himself dreamed about between the Catholic South, where he lived, and the Protestant North. In Madrid, Rubens reacquainted himself with the work of Titian, and copied some of the latter's greatest works. His late style would henceforward testify to the lessons he learned from Titian's own late style, having studied it for hours on end in the Royal Palace and in the Escorial. From Madrid, Rubens went to England in the hope that he might move Charles to enter into an alliance, first with Holland, and then with Spain. There, he painted his last great political work, the ceiling of Whitehall, commissioned by Charles I as a testament to the Solomonic and peace-loving wisdom and beneficence of his father, James. But the longed-for alliance never worked out, and

Rubens retired to his country estate, happily marrying the sixteen-year-old H  l  ne Fourment, and painting as actively as he ever did. It was, incidentally, from there that he directed the preparation of the pictures for Philip IV's Torre de La Parada, which still hang in the Prado today.

Even though the English expedition was a failure, it was once more Rubens who prepared the way for van Dyck. Rubens had barely left England when van Dyck arrived in April of 1632. With him he brought portraits of Marie De Medicis of France, and of the Archduchess Isabella; he obviously hoped that he would instantly be commissioned to paint the King and Queen. It is interesting to note that he should have brought female portraits with him, since it is clear that in England his strength would not lie in female portraiture. Perhaps he found English fashion unappealing; perhaps the women were too stiff; or perhaps our own taste is too substantially different than that of the time. And so we have pictures like the Beatrice, Countess of Oxford (though she was Dutch in origin), which counts, in fact, amongst the best of his English pictures of women.

Van Dyck swiftly married the young Maria Ruthven, who by all accounts was an attractive woman. Already in 1658, William Sanderson, one of the first English writers on painting, wrote (in colloquial English mixed with Italian) that "she was a bouncing *Bona-Roba*, to indure for ever [sic]." Notice, as Sanderson did, that she holds up a rosary to the viewer, as if to caution the viewer from thinking that she was too *much* a good and bouncing thing; to caution one, in other words, against her alleged carnality. Sanderson suggests that she seems to be saying, "At the end of the all, look upon this, Sir, and you shall never sinne [sic]."

All this may have been a little too much for van Dyck, who chose to sin with a young woman named Margaret Lemon who, according to the contemporary engraver, Wenceslaus Hollar, was prone to violent fits of jealousy when society ladies were in her husband's studio (which must have been often). Perhaps this alone prevented him from devoting more than cursory attention to most of his female sitters; perhaps this alone is why these women so often seem curiously un-carnal and unsexy. But this is pure speculation.

What we do know, however, is that Margaret Lemon must have had slightly double standards, for van Dyck seems to have shared her with his best friend, Endymion Porter, who is depicted alongside the artist in the lovely oval portrait in the Prado, where each man holds onto the rock of friendship in the foreground. This is not, in my view, one of his most compelling works, and Endymion Porter, buttoned up in his white silk outfit, seems a little self-satisfied—as perhaps he was indeed. The two seem the very picture of foppish elegance. Porter was a good servant of the king, and had, in fact, accompanied van Dyck to Madrid in 1623, when Charles I hoped to marry the daughter of Philip IV, before finally settling on Henrietta Maria of France. The former union would certainly have changed the balance of power at the time; it might, indeed, have brought about the peace that had so eluded Rubens. Not surprisingly, it was Porter who served as one of Charles's main intermediaries with artists. It was he who sent Rubens's payment for the ceiling of the Banqueting House, and he who first acquired one of Van Dyck's history paintings for the king.

If Porter seems a little stiff and self-satisfied here, he appears more at ease, even rather tender, in his family portrait of about the same time (or perhaps a little earlier). The

original is in a private collection, so I include a slightly awkward engraving after it in the painting's stead. Despite his supposed affair with Margaret Lemon, Porter is also said to have been passionately devoted to his wife and family (five of their twelve children died in infancy); consider how much more sensitively the artist portrays him and the elder boys than he does her! Although the boys shown here did not turn out well, Porter himself looks as if he was a kind man; at least, this is what his physiognomy conveys.

From these works, one has only a limited sense, however, of van Dyck's massive achievement in England. Although some are truly great, his portraits of women often seem to be routine (though perhaps this is because one so often sees one of the many copies that circulate of his English portraits—testimony in itself to their popularity at least at the time). With these portraits, van Dyck reached new heights in conveying the neurasthenic context of the English court. Porter's children give some sense of the fulfilment of the promise of the Cattaneo children in Genoa, although nothing in the Prado, except perhaps the van den Bergh picture and one more I have yet to discuss—the one with which I will conclude—can really match the power, the swagger, or the melancholy of Lord Danvers, Algernon Percy, 10th Earl of Northumberland, or the double portrait of Killigrew and Crofts, the finest of his double portraits—and this is to say nothing of the greatest of his few mythological works, the *Cupid and Psyche* made for Charles I himself.

Perhaps it was the renowned collections of Charles I that inspired him to these heights. Indeed, it was from these collections that the greatest collector of Flemish works in Spain other than the king himself (who would buy so much from Rubens's estate in 1640), the Marqués de Leganés, acquired some of his most important pictures.

According to the inventory of his estate in 1655, the Marqués de Leganés owned no fewer than 1333 paintings, including several great Titians and Rubens, and no fewer than eleven van Dycks, including the picture of the Marques d'Aytona, and, of course, those of himself and his wife, Polissena Spinola. He had, in fact, long been close to Spinola, having fought under him at Jülich, in the Palatinate, and at Breda, and alongside the Cardinal Infante at Nordlingen in 1634 (after which, it is worth noting, he presented Philip IV himself with van Dyck's picture of the Cardinal Infante). He was Privy Councillor, Grand Master of the order of Santiago, and President of the Council of the Netherlands. Soon, he became the favorite of the Conde Duque de Olivares himself, and even adopted his name in 1627, combining it with that of the king to make himself Felípez de Guzman, Marqués de Leganés. In the painting of around 1630, he looks rather tired; the work lacks the penetration of Rubens's drawing and the evident military fire of the splendid engraving by Pontius after van Dyck of a few years earlier.

The only other portraits in the Prado that have yet to be mentioned here are the swaggering and slightly surly portrait of a young man who was once identified as Rubens's engraver, Paulus Pontius, but who is clearly a commander of some sort (given the super-fashionable finery which van Dyck excelled in portraying), and the fine and alert portrait of a man with a guitarrón. The latter is an accomplished symphony in black, as Whistler might have said, to be set in the company of a most interesting small group of very different musicians whom van Dyck painted. They include the portrait of the Antwerp Cathedral organist, Henrique Liberti (the status of the picture in the Prado is debated, though it is certainly of very high quality), the splendid picture of the Master of the King's Music, Nicholas Lanier, who also played a leading role in helping Charles

build his collections, and finally the wonderfully robust portrait of the print dealer and musician—here shown as a bagpiping Savoyard—François Langlois. But time constraints require that I leave the examination of this wonderfully varied group for another occasion.

I want to conclude with what I think is the most moving of van Dyck's portraits in the Prado; that of the Antwerp painter, Maarten Rijckaert. It is a somber, little-discussed work, even though it is one of the artist's finest. Beside it, Rijckaert's own works seem slight. In van Dyck's painting, Rijckaert, though an obscure figure, has the grandeur of a potentate, thanks to his frontal bearing, his fur-lined coat, and the scarlet robe beneath it all. We do not know why, but he seems to be wearing the dress of a Pole. On his head is a fur-rimmed green hat that sinks into the blackness behind him. The scarlet and the fur seem to break out of the dark picture with unexpected brilliance, as does his neatly trimmed but masculine beard, which is more substantial than van Dyck's own goatee. Rijckaert's heavy-lidded eyes at first seem sad, but they are alert and sensitive. In showing these qualities, but above all in conveying an expression of melancholy modulated by sensitivity and insight, van Dyck excelled; he did so nowhere more than in his portraits of other painters, whether rendered in oil or in the famous etchings of his *Iconography*.

At first sight, it's easy to overlook what is missing from this sensitive depiction of a painter: his left hand. He could not have held, as every painter at the time had to do, a brush in one hand and a palette or maulstick in the other. And yet, despite this handicap, as Hans Vlieghe so finely put it in the most recent catalog raisonné of van Dyck's works, "he sits enthroned, on a grand scale, looking the viewer straight in the eye,

for all the world like a self-assured East European magnate. His biography suggests no reason why he should have worn such a costume.”

It has never been noticed what a close resemblance this profound picture bears to that of another painter who loved dressing up, and who showed himself in the dress of some great potentate at precisely the time of his deepest personal and financial distress. I refer, of course to Rembrandt's self-portrait of 1656 in the Frick Collection in New York—one of the great masterpieces in the history of portraiture. Van Dyck's portrait of Rijckaert, I think, holds its own against the Rembrandt. But it is hard not to think of the Rembrandt as offering a kind of homage to van Dyck's portrait. For in that massive hand with which Rembrandt testifies to the very tactility of his painting, in that hand which stands in the same place where poor Rijckaert's should, Rembrandt places a maulstick, the instrument which supported his other hand as he applied the kinds of paint that van Dyck himself strove to avoid throughout his life. And that maulstick, in Rembrandt, doubles as an imperial scepter, a great baton of command, testifying to his pride in being a painter, and, above all, to his sense of the power of painting over all earthly and political power. It is this that he seems to want to restore to the obscure one-armed Antwerp painter. If my hypothesis is correct, then the greatest work of Rembrandt's maturity, painted as a kind of consolation against the blows of fortune, serves as a tribute to the proudest of van Dyck's works in the Prado.