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Rembrandt's *Standard Bearer*. On Costume, Comedy, and Self-Portrayal, circa 1627–1637

Eric Jan Sluijter

At the acquisition of Rembrandt van Rijn's The Standard Bearer (1636), the Rijksmuseum and the Dutch government presented the subject of the painting as a symbol of the heroic fight against the Spanish, decisive for the birth of the independent Netherlands, and as an image of the strength and courage of civic guard companies and the intrepidity of the standard bearer. This article argues that Rembrandt instead presented himself provocatively as a comedian-painter, satirizing the image of the conceited standard bearer, well-known from both reality and comic roles in contemporary theater. Simultaneously, Rembrandt displays an unrivaled virtuoso handling in competition with the admired Frans Hals.

- 1 After its controversial acquisition in January 2022 and a triumphal exhibition tour through all twelve provinces of the Netherlands (fig. 1), Rembrandt van Rijn's *The Standard Bearer*—previously not a familiar masterpiece—has become one of the best-known works of art among Dutch citizens (fig. 2).¹ The Rijksmuseum and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science presented the subject of the painting as a symbol of the heroic fight against the Spanish in the Eighty Years' War, decisive for the birth of the independent Netherlands, and as an image of the strength and courage of civic guard companies and the intrepidity of the standard bearer, their most perilous office.² In this article I examine the painting within the context of theatrical comedy, rather than the framework of military heroism, which leads to an entirely different interpretation.³
- 2 The attribution and quality of *The Standard Bearer*, dated 1636, are beyond dispute,⁴ but other aspects of the painting deserve closer attention. In Part I of this article, I analyze the ensign's pose, dress, and attributes to clarify that we are looking at a standard bearer in a comical role. Subsequently I inquire into the painting's relationship to comedy and farce as performed in the Amsterdam theater and discuss the image of the conceited, bragging standard bearer on the stage. I conclude this first part by demonstrating how Rembrandt (1606–1669) showed off his virtuosity and rivaled Frans Hals (1580–1666) by satirizing the Haarlem artist's magnificently painted “real” standard bearer of the so-called *Meagre Company*.
- 3 In Part II, I discuss the painting within the context of Rembrandt's idiosyncratic early production of self-portraits. The exceptionality of these works—the great self-consciousness and unremitting zeal with which he created them—cannot be emphasized enough.⁵ Accordingly, I situate *The Standard Bearer* within a group of comical self-portrayals in “military” attire, arguing that Rembrandt provocatively presents himself as the vain comedian-painter.

Part I

Costume, Pose, and Banner

- 4 By the 1630s, many group portraits of civic guard companies had been painted in Amsterdam, Haarlem, and other Dutch cities.⁶ In these, the standard bearer (ensign) stands out as the young officer, always a bachelor, responsible for leading a troop of soldiers into battle under his banner in times of war. Some standard bearers had their portraits painted separately in the decades before Rembrandt made *The Standard Bearer*; we know of several full-length portraits and one half-length portrait of men proudly posing with their banners, such as the one painted in The Hague by Evert van der Maes (1577–1656) in 1617 (fig. 3).⁷ The contrast with Rembrandt's painting is striking; the contemporary art lover would have seen immediately that it was an entirely different affair. The standard bearers of the civic guard companies were always dressed in the latest fashion. No *schutter* (civic guardsman), nor any Dutch officer or soldier from the period of the Eighty Years' War, looked like the one painted by Rembrandt. That said, the pose, seen from the side with one elbow akimbo and his face turned toward the viewer, would have been familiar. The shape of the sleeve and the large knot of the white sash on his back were not unusual either, nor was the gorget—though late sixteenth- and seventeenth-century *schutters* wore it with a fashionable collar.⁸ The rest of his appearance, however, would have looked strange, even to those art lovers who knew the fanciful costumes in Rembrandt's work. Connoisseurs would have recognized the fastening of the standard bearer's jerkin with horizontal frogging as exotic Central or Eastern European aristocratic and military dress (fig. 4; see also figs. 13 and 19).⁹ But what signals did the peculiar beret, the huge drooping moustache, and the codpiece convey? And the white banner with a colorless band of ornamental stitching? Art lovers who were acquainted with Rembrandt would have recognized his face, and those who did not would have been told of his identity when they admired the painting.
- 5 This standard bearer bears no resemblance to the contemporary officers and soldiers that collectors knew from the many guardroom scenes and related paintings by artists such as Pieter Codde, Willem Duyster, Jacob Duck, or Pieter Quast—"generic soldiers," as Alison McNeil Kettering called them, stereotypes that referred to professional military men of the time, the second quarter of the century (fig. 5).¹⁰ The connoisseur must also have realized that this standard bearer's dress and pose diverged considerably from the best-known sixteenth-century images of standard bearers in prints by Albrecht Dürer (1471–1528), Lucas van Leyden (1494–1533), and Hendrick Goltzius (1558–1617). Rembrandt, who knew these prints well, deviated consciously from the way those ensigns were represented. Dürer had introduced the image of the standard bearer in about 1500 with the depiction of a lithe young man (fig. 6) standing in a *contrapposto* that refers to the *Apollo Belvedere*, foreshadowing the ideal anatomy of Adam in his engraved *Adam and Eve* of 1504. This youthful standard bearer represents a symbolic image of the *landsknecht* (lansquenet, or mercenary soldier); he holds a fluttering standard with the emblem of the lansquenet.¹¹ His tight jerkin and hose define his body clearly and emphasize the classical ancestry of his posture. Lucas van Leyden soon followed suit (ca. 1508–1512) with a standard bearer as young and slim as Dürer's—his clothes are just as tight, albeit with slits here and there (fig. 7). Lucas depicted his ensign striding forward, thus changing Dürer's classical

contrapposto into a more natural pose suggesting movement. Both soldiers wear the prominent codpiece that had become fashionable.

- 6 Three-quarters of a century later, in the 1580s, Hendrick Goltzius self-confidently emulated both Dürer and Lucas, producing no fewer than five designs of standard bearers: three engraved by himself and two by Jacques de Gheyn II (1565–1629). The earlier two varied on Dürer’s contrapposto (fig. 8); the other three transformed Lucas’s striding ensign into stylized virtuoso performances (fig. 9).¹²
- 7 Unlike Dürer’s and Lucas’s standard bearers, but like most of those in German prints produced between about 1510 and 1560 (discussed below), all five stand or walk with one elbow akimbo. Goltzius’s ensigns, however, no longer wear the lansquenet costume; by his time that attire belonged to another era and culture, although fashionable extravagance would remain characteristic for the standard bearer. The costume of Goltzius’s ensigns resembles the contemporary outfits worn by the officers in civic guard companies, in which the youngest men, among them the standard bearer, wear similar highly fashionable clothes, as shown in the *schutterstukken* by Cornelis van Haarlem (1562–1638), Cornelis Ketel (1548–1616), and Pieter Isaacsz (1569–1625) (fig. 10). Similar poses and modes of dress are displayed by the spectacular standard bearers walking with proud strides in Jacob Savery the Elder’s (1566–1603) huge engraving representing *The Triumphal Entry of Leicester* in The Hague (fig. 11).
- 8 Rembrandt’s corpulent standard bearer, with his large, notched beret and drooping moustache, contrasts sharply with these elegant, fashionable young men. Indeed, he seems to mock their inordinate youthful grace. Rembrandt’s aims must have been entirely different when he conceived of this figure. Nevertheless, the authors of the third volume of *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings* (1989), as well as Pieter van Thiel in the catalogue for the major Rembrandt exhibition in Berlin, Amsterdam, and London in 1991, assumed that the ensigns by Dürer, Lucas, and Goltzius were, even in their costume, Rembrandt’s sources of inspiration.¹³ They also equated the meaning of Rembrandt’s painting with the inscription in Latin under Goltzius’s 1587 print: “I, standard bearer, provide formidable courage and daring: as long as I stand firm, the line holds out, as soon as I run from the enemy, the line will flee.”¹⁴ “Therefore,” Van Thiel concluded, “Rembrandt’s painting should be understood as a symbolic representation of the qualities of every true standard bearer—the courageous hero running the greatest risk (in practice the standard bearers were for that reason always bachelors) and whose intrepidity had to guarantee the valor of the whole troop.” Thirty years later, the Rijksmuseum and the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science connected this misconception to the Eighty Years’ War and “the birth of the Netherlands” in order to supply a nationalistic argument for *The Standard Bearer’s* acquisition.
- 9 The appearance of Rembrandt’s standard bearer has more similarities with the many landsknechte in lesser-known German prints published between about 1510 and 1560, even though his attire deviates in several respects from the distinctive garments of the soldiers in those images.¹⁵ Some characteristics of the typical lansquenet’s garb resonate in Rembrandt’s painting, such as the combination of the large, notched beret, drooping moustache, and codpiece. Volker Manuth and Marieke de Winkel suggest that Rembrandt based *The Standard Bearer* almost

literally on a woodcut after Jörg Breu the Younger (1510–1547) (fig. 12).¹⁶ The woodcut is part of a print series of lansquenets in which each figure bears an absurd name and is characterized, mostly mockingly, in a short poem by Hans Sachs.¹⁷ This one is called *Stoffel Allweg vol* (Stoffel always soused), referring to one of the negative traits associated with the lansquenet, who often embodied all the vices a burgher could imagine: drunkenness, vanity, pride, conceit, extravagance, and dangerousness. *The Standard Bearer's* similarity to this woodcut led Manuth and De Winkel to remark that the humorous nature of Rembrandt's source puts the heroic meaning that has been attached to Rembrandt's *painting* in a different perspective.¹⁸ This pertinent observation leads us in a promising direction and offers an entirely different angle on Rembrandt's intentions and the connotations the painting had for its intended audience.

- 10 Text Even though Rembrandt's standard bearer is similar to Breu's lansquenet in his pose, the shape of his body, and the comparable beret, moustache, and codpiece, we may question whether Rembrandt needed this particular print to arrive at the same solution. Two years earlier, in 1634, Rembrandt made an etching depicting an exotic potentate with a large sword, whose figure has a similar shape and posture but does not seem to be related to *Stoffel* (fig. 13). And does knowledge of Breu's woodcut also underlie the etching of the outrageous *Quack Selling His Wares* of 1635 (fig. 14), in which the figure's pose is comparable and who, like Stoffel, sports the codpiece and unruly moustache as well as the diagonal chain, the scalloped border of the armhole, and the raised arm? It is possible, but a perusal of related images by Rembrandt and the many prints of lansquenets—most of them holding their arm akimbo and wearing a notched beret, and all of them with codpieces—indicates that we cannot pin *The Standard Bearer's* appearance down to this single source. To retrieve some of the associations this painting might have evoked, and Rembrandt's intentions in making it, we need to pay closer attention to his standard bearer's costume and pose.
- 11 The astounding number of German prints with lansquenets, often accompanied by short poems, demonstrate that, in the first half of the sixteenth century, not only the lansquenets' garb but also their free life and deviant behavior had captured the imagination of the art-buying burgher.¹⁹ In the second quarter of the century, the negative, satirizing approach to the lansquenet gained the upper hand in text and image. In the decades after the middle of the century, the often outrageously ornate dressed lansquenets disappeared from the European armies; by 1590 he had become a historical curiosity. However, the mocking and condemning view of lansquenets survived into the seventeenth century. Many elements of their garb lived on in paintings and prints and, in particular, on the theater stage.²⁰
- 12 One of the most striking parts of the costume in *The Standard Bearer* is the large, notched beret. This type of beret, of which the notches create flat loops along the rim, was, in combination with large feathers, a familiar attribute of the lansquenet in prints made between about 1520 and 1560. In most cases, the beret is poised obliquely in an elegant way. Such wide, notched berets do not appear in sixteenth-century Dutch civic guard paintings, nor in other Dutch portraits of that period. Although berets were a part of the typical male costume in sixteenth-century Holland, they were always much smaller, without notches, and placed flat on the head. Rembrandt used the flamboyant notched beret with one or two feathers in several paintings, prints, and drawings

(I am distinguishing it here from the simple, soft beret that is more common in Rembrandt's self-portraits and character-heads). He reserved it for military types or for exotic dress in general, which, like costumes used in the theater evoke past times.²¹ Before 1636, for example, we see it in the so-called *Leiden History Painting* (1626; Museum De Lakenhal, Leiden); in his earliest known character-head, *Man with Gorget and Plumed Beret* of about 1626/27 (fig. 15);²² and, as a soft velvet version, in *Self-Portrait with Saskia as a Soldier and His Sweetheart in a Tavern* (also known as *The Prodigal Son in the Tavern*) of about 1635 (see fig. 40).²³

- 13 We come across it in some drawings as well; a good example is the soldier at the right in *Three Sketches of a Soldier Fondling a Woman* of about 1635 (fig. 16).²⁴ It also appears in etchings: on the head of a threatening soldier behind Christ in *Ecce Homo* (1636) and on his own head in *Self-Portrait with Saskia*, in which both figures are clad in “historical” dress (see fig. 43).
- 14 Rembrandt was not the first artist to use the notched beret of the German lansquenet. It had already been appropriated by Caravaggist painters for roguish soldiers, *bravi*,²⁵ and had been picked up by Jan Lievens (1607–1674) in *The Cardplayers* (ca. 1625; The Leiden Collection, New York).²⁶ The same painters also used them in history paintings as the headgear of brigands and dubious soldiers, often in subjects like the mocking of Christ and the denial of St. Peter. Lievens used this type of beret also in a history painting a year before Rembrandt's *Leiden History Painting*: on the head of Haman in *Banquet of Esther* of about 1625 (fig. 17).²⁷ By the late sixteenth century, the notched beret also appeared regularly in pictures of buffoons, comedians, and quacks: from the left figure in Jacques de Gheyn's *Music Making and Dancing Buffoons* of about 1595–1596 (fig. 18) to the figure of Lecker-beetje in the middle of Jan Miense Molenaer's (1610–1668) *The Final Scene of Bredero's Lucelle* of 1639 (fig. 19), one of the few paintings depicting a theatrical performance.²⁸ Later in the century, comedians in Jan Steen's paintings wear them, including ones with his own face, and later still we see it often in works by such artists as Godfried Schalcken and Carel de Moor.
- 15 Among all the notched berets worn in pictures of lansquenets, bravi, and comedians, however, the beret of Rembrandt's standard bearer stands out. Instead of resting flat on the head or set at jaunty slant, the frontal part of his beret—consisting of three broad, rather messy-looking loops—stands up almost vertically, while at the side the loops hang down, forming a sloppily undulating brim. Rembrandt seems to underscore that the viewer is looking at a comical figure. Closest in appearance is the beret of Pieter Brueghel the Younger's (1564–1638) wide-eyed, *Shouting Lansquenet*—probably a comical representation of *Ira (Wrath)*—painted in the 1610s or 1620s (fig. 20).
- 16 The drooping moustache in Rembrandt's *The Standard Bearer*, which is remarkably like the one in Brueghel the Younger's *Shouting Lansquenet*, has comic connotations as well. Drooping moustaches are rare exceptions in the seventeenth century. We do not see them among military men, either among the generic soldiers depicted in the many guardroom scenes of the 1630s and 1640s, among the scenes of fighting cavalymen,²⁹ or among Caravaggist soldiers, let alone in portraits or civic guard paintings. Large moustaches abound, but they are always of a horizontal shape or curl upward. In the sixteenth century we do find such moustaches in images of

lansquenets, and it was even fashionable among aristocrats for some time.³⁰ In the seventeenth century, however, they appear only a few times, in images of men considered laughable simpletons or misbehaving fools, such as in Jan van de Velde's (1593–1641) *The Drinker* and *The Gambler* in the booklet *Spiegel ofte Toneel der Ydelheid ende Ongebondenheid onser Eeuw* (Mirror or theater of the vanity and profligacy of our age) by Samuel Ampzing, published in 1633 (fig. 21).³¹ In Rembrandt's work there is only one other instance of a drooping moustache: the etching *Pissing Vagabond* of 1630 (fig. 22).

17 A conspicuous part of the standard bearer's costume is the codpiece (or *braguette*); it might have been more visible originally, as in the drawn copy from Rembrandt's studio (fig. 23). A codpiece is also prominent in the theatrical garb of the comical *Quack Selling His Wares* (see fig. 14), a tiny etching of 1635 with which *The Standard Bearer* shares many motifs, several of them deriving from the lansquenet's costume.³² The codpiece had been fashionable among aristocrats and military men during the greater part of the sixteenth century, and we often see quite sizeable ones in German pictures of lansquenets. After the middle of the sixteenth century, a small one still appears every now and then, but by the 1580s they disappear.³³ By the seventeenth century the codpiece had become a comical piece of clothing that, then as now, aroused giggles.³⁴ From the late sixteenth century onward, it appears primarily in costumes of buffoons and comedians. The same fool sporting a notched beret in Jacques de Gheyn's print *Music-Making and Dancing Buffoons* also possesses a sizeable braguette (see fig. 18).³⁵ The codpiece apparently survived on the comic stage in particular. In the elaborate and entertaining print *Village Kermess* by Willem Isaacs van Swanenburg (1580–1612) after David Vinckboons (1576–1632), with numerous carousing peasants, we discern at the right a farcical *rederijkers* parade preparing to go onstage (fig. 24). The first three actors approaching the stage—a soldier in full armor, a drummer, and a peasant-like man carrying the blazon—wear codpieces; there is also a standard bearer with feathered beret who seems to have a codpiece as well. In Rembrandt's work, apart from the droll *Quack Selling His Wares* etching (see fig. 14), we find the codpiece only in a few drawings of comedians, including *The Actor Willem Ruyter in a Peasant Role*, dressed for a performance in a farce (fig. 25).³⁶ In Rembrandt's other drawings of comedians, resembling types derived from the stock "Capitano" or "Pantalone" characters (fig. 26), or funny quacks, all datable to about 1635–1636, we discern protruding forms in their respective crotches.³⁷ All of them hold one arm akimbo, the posture of the proud "renaissance elbow," here used as a satirical motif.

18 The figure's costume makes clear that Rembrandt took care to emphasize that *The Standard Bearer* should be perceived as a comical painting. The banner, which he holds in a peculiar way, not resting on his shoulder, as in all other images of ensigns, also needs our attention. Why should a standard bearer have a white flag decorated with a white strip of embroidered ornament (fig. 27)?³⁸ Another peculiarity is the substantiality of the fabric. Standard bearers' banners were made of thin silk, because they had to be as light as possible.³⁹ The ensign needed to be able to hold it up for a long time with one hand (see fig. 11). In most paintings of standard bearers, the fabric of the banner is clearly rendered as a thin and shiny silk. This one is not, which cannot be ignorance on Rembrandt's part. The lengthwise strip of embroidered ornament comes close to what we see on the bed linen in Rembrandt's *Danaë* (the cushion was painted in 1637) (fig. 28) and the *Woman in Bed* (1647; National Galleries Scotland, Edinburgh).⁴⁰ This raises the question of whether the flag in *The Standard Bearer* is actually a bedsheet. Experts in historic textiles have

confirmed that it, indeed, resembles a large luxury bedsheet, made of fine, supple linen, a material that falls in a way that is similar to the drapery on the standard bearer's arm and hand (figs. 29 and 30).⁴¹ Such bedsheets consisted of two parts that were connected lengthwise by a *tussenzetzel*, a band of detailed ornamental cutwork (*sneewerk*) and/or white-embroidered work (*witborduurwerk*), like the bands at the side of the cushions in *Danaë* and *Woman in Bed*.⁴² The most elaborate ones were made in Friesland. That this standard bearer's banner looks like a large luxury bedsheet might be less unlikely than it sounds.

The Standard Bearer and Comedy

- 19 The many commonalities between the standard bearer's appearance and those of comedians and buffoons, some of them by Rembrandt's hand, as well as the standard bearer's bedsheet-like banner,⁴³ prompts investigation into the role that the character of the ensign played in comedies and farces. Indeed, one finds a reference to standard bearers in one of the most beloved comedies of the time: Gerbrand Adriaensz Bredero's *Moortje*, published in 1617, a play that remained popular throughout the first half of the seventeenth century.⁴⁴ Bredero had adapted Terence's *Eunuchus* (via a French translation) and amplified its characters extensively.⁴⁵ The silly, boasting Hopman Roemert (Captain Rummer) is a familiar stereotype in comedies.⁴⁶ This braggart is in love with the play's central figure, the prostitute Moy-Aal, and plans to lay siege to her house with a militia company made up of tramps. He distributes their respective functions and ranks, such as lieutenant-general, captain of horse, sergeant-major, corporal, and so on. When commanding this mock militia to march, he exclaims: "Where are your proud standard bearers in their liveries and with their sashes? / Raise your banners and unfold your bedsheets, your aprons and diapers. / Go to it, place your people in their full splendor."⁴⁷ The scene is a variation on Terence's example, but this inclusion—and ridiculing—of ensigns with their bedsheets is entirely Bredero's invention.⁴⁸ Part of Bredero's joke might even have been the notion that bedsheets could be used as a white flag that functions as sign of surrender.⁴⁹ We do not know whether Rembrandt had this scene in mind when painting his standard bearer, but it is not impossible that it had captured his imagination.⁵⁰ In any case, the scene demonstrates that, in the context of a satirical image of vain ensigns, the bedsheet banner was an appropriate attribute.
- 20 The musical farce *Singhende klucht van Pekelharing in de kist* (*Singing farce of Pickled Herring in the chest*), a popular play by Isaac Vos, underscores the standard bearer role as a target of ridicule.⁵¹ A ludicrous officer, nameless but clearly indicated as standard bearer (*Vaendrager*), constantly brags about his intrepidity and his numerous heroic deeds. Naturally, he proves to be a coward who runs into trouble when his beloved has to get rid of him on the sudden return of her husband; she had hidden Pekelharing, her other lover, in a chest when the standard bearer arrived. This farce was based on a German comedy published in 1620, which in turn was an elaboration on an English jig, *Singing Simpkin*, of around 1596.⁵² Isaac Vos's play was printed in 1648 and was staged often in the Amsterdamse Schouwburg as of that date.⁵³ It is likely, however, that an earlier version had already been performed for some time without being printed.⁵⁴ Only in the Dutch version is the soldier identified as a standard bearer, and only there do we find his long, blustering monologue. The standard bearer had thus become an object of ridicule as a version of the boasting officer or soldier, a stock figure of farces and comedies since antiquity.

21 In the 1630s Rembrandt demonstrates great interest in comedians and their poses and expressions. *Willem Ruyter in a Peasant Role* (see fig. 25) is one example; additional drawings of the mid-1630s, by Rembrandt and his contemporaries depict the same actor in other comical roles.⁵⁵ Apart from Rembrandt's drawing of an actor as a Capitano-like character lounging nonchalantly in a chair⁵⁶—one can almost hear him bragging—and four drawings of actors in a role resembling Pantalone (see fig. 26),⁵⁷ there are also two funny quack-like actors⁵⁸ and picaresque-like mummers,⁵⁹ as well as actors dressed as “Orientals” (including Willem Ruyter).⁶⁰ In a few drawings of carousing or music-making soldiers with their lovers, one recognizes actors by their distinctive costumes (see fig. 40).⁶¹ Some of these figures might be comedians from Ruyter's group, or from Robert Reynolds's company, “meester van de Engelsche commedianten,” with which Ruyter was in contact.⁶²

The Standard Bearer and Frans Hals

22 We may wonder why Rembrandt chose a standard bearer, looking like an actor in a comedy, as the subject for a spectacular painting that displays his virtuosity as a painter. Frans Hals's standard bearer in *The Civic Guard Company of Reinier Reael and Cornelis Michielsz Blaeuw* (in later times called *The Meagre Company*; fig. 31) comes to mind as an image of a standard bearer flaunting his position and commanding presence. There is little doubt that Rembrandt considered Frans Hals the most gifted painter in Holland, worthy of emulative competition. It is likely that Rembrandt and Hals were in contact around 1634/5, when Rembrandt was still working in Hendrick Uylenburgh's studio. According to Sebastiaan Dudok van Heel, Frans Hals probably worked and lodged in Uylenburgh's house for some time when painting *The Meagre Company*.⁶³ It was then that Hals must have portrayed the standard bearer of the company at the far left of the painting (fig. 32).

23 This splendid figure may have fired Rembrandt's imagination. Hals painted him with bold, seemingly rapid brushstrokes that create a breathtaking vivacity and lifelikeness, displaying a handling—Hals's “signature style,” as Christopher Atkins called it⁶⁴—that was recognized by contemporaries as uniquely his. Theodorus Schrevelius wrote in 1648 that “through an unusual manner of painting that is entirely his own, [Hals] surpasses almost everyone, because there is so much power and life that he seems to defy nature with his brush; all his portraits testify to this . . . which are painted in such a way that they seem to breathe and be alive.”⁶⁵ Hals's standard bearer, identified as the cloth and wool merchant Nicolaes van Bambeeck, is conspicuously dressed in high fashion befitting a wealthy bachelor; he wears a lace collar over a glistening silver-gray silk doublet with a slashed front and sleeves trimmed with gold braid, ribbon rosettes with silver pins hanging down at the tips, and an orange sash tied around his waist. He nonchalantly carries a huge banner of an almost translucent, blazingly orange silk, lightly falling in soft folds on the ground; he holds the outer corner of the flag in his right hand. Hals outlined the figure of the ensign sharply against the black of his neighbor's costume and the smooth greenish-gray stone of the building in the background. This consummate image of a standard bearer defiantly awaited, as it were, a response from the ambitious painter from Leiden, who was almost a quarter of a century younger than the Haarlem master.⁶⁶

- 24 Hals's standard bearer confronted Rembrandt with a virtuoso performance radiating virility and pride. Rembrandt's interest in theater could have inspired him to rival Hals by engaging with the standard bearer's vainglorious image in comedies and farces, as well as with the long tradition of boasting military men onstage and in print. Rembrandt echoed the pose of Hals's standard bearer, which was, as we have seen, highly conventional for military men and other men who wished to be portrayed impressively. Nicolaes van Bambeeck's fashionable hat, with its enormous brim standing up in front, was originally even larger (as can still be observed in the painting today) and must have been downsized, perhaps by Pieter Codde (1599–1678) when the latter finished the painting in 1637, to make this figure a bit less marked in relation to the other men. The ensign's hat seems to have been an easy target: in his own *The Standard Bearer*, Rembrandt replaced it with a floppy notched beret standing up in front (fig. 33). He transformed the ensign's carefully turned-up moustache into a drooping monstrosity and changed the elegant silvery grays of his clothing into a totally unfashionable color, though still of costly material.⁶⁷ The trim, slender body of Hals's soldier was exchanged for a fleshier one,⁶⁸ and a codpiece was added. Hals's eye-catching orange sash has become a rather colorless striped material (that seems strangely unrelated to the knot on the standard bearer's back), and the beautiful orange silk of the flag that Hals painted as resting securely on the shoulder of the standard bearer has been turned into an awkwardly held banner that looks like bed linen. Instead of the austere architecture, the viewer discerns a dilapidated column with dents and cracks, a symbol of crumbling fortitude.
- 25 Rembrandt's main goal, however, was arguably to demonstrate—in competition with Hals—his unique manner, his own “signature style,” which was different from the style of any other painter at that moment. He displayed it in a pointedly matchless way. Although both artists painted in a rough manner, Rembrandt's handling has little in common with Hals's technique, the most conspicuous and distinctive aspect of which is its finishing layer of seemingly rapid, unblended brushstrokes.⁶⁹ Rembrandt's manner, in contrast, is geared toward an exceptionally subtle observation of “broken colors” and *houding*—a breathtaking ability to create space through an infinite differentiation of color and tone.⁷⁰ At the same time, Rembrandt shows off his equally virtuoso use of visible brushstrokes. Connoisseurs and artists would have loved discussing the differences in *handeling* of the two masters, both of whom created “so much power and life” in their figures that they seem “to breathe and be alive,” each of them achieving this “through an unusual manner of painting that was entirely his own.” Apart from enjoying both virtuosity and comedy, Rembrandt's clients might also have been amused to recognize his face in his painted standard bearer. The fact that copies were made (see also figs. 23 and 45) implies that this masterpiece, a novelty in many respects, was a success.⁷¹

Part II

The Standard Bearer and Self-Portrayal

- 26 Rembrandt's face in *The Standard Bearer* is somewhat disguised by the theatrical moustache, slight fattening of the jaw, and ruddy, somewhat saggy skin with which he adapts his countenance to the character of a comical ensign (fig. 34).⁷² That he depicted his own features⁷³ is confirmed by a drawing and several etchings of around the same time (fig. 35).⁷⁴ From his first self-portrayals, Rembrandt showed himself in what his contemporaries would have recognized as

theater dress.⁷⁵ In two early drawings we see the ornamental frogged closures used on costumes associated with exotic, mostly Eastern European military figures from the stage (fig. 36, see also fig. 19).⁷⁶ Thus Rembrandt seems to proclaim through these self-portraits that he, a painter, like an actor, possessed the sensibility and capacity needed to imagine and convey passions, moods, and character, to create an illusion the viewer could believe. But why did he depict himself in this role?

- 27 The singularity of Rembrandt's self-portrayals has been argued by H. Perry Chapman in her groundbreaking book of 1990.⁷⁷ Nonetheless, over the last decades many scholars maintained that, especially with regard to the early heads,⁷⁸ Rembrandt "simply used" his own face, it being the most easily available and patient model for studying and solving artistic problems.⁷⁹ According to this view, Rembrandt generated a market-driven production of self-portraits as collector's items, since connoisseurs appeared to be interested in such works. I agree with Chapman that the uniqueness, endless variation, and "tremendous thought and effort" that Rembrandt put into making his numerous painted and etched self-portraits belie such an interpretation.⁸⁰
- 28 Rembrandt must have been aware of the novelty of studying each slight muscle movement in his face, and how these contributed to conveying affects and moods, while researching the effects of light and shade on his features. He presented these observations with intense dedication through paintings and etchings, creating an audience that enjoyed recognizing, possessing, and interpreting the artist's likeness. Thus, the young Rembrandt discovered the mirror as a means to control and manipulate his image as the uniquely talented and unconventional artist who made the work. This implies an enhanced self-consciousness during the process of making.⁸¹ While doing so, he transformed conventions of self-portraiture and of study and character heads, or *tronies*.⁸²
- 29 Rembrandt chose the still-young tradition of *tronies* as a carrier of his self-portrayals and also made use of aspects of a Caravaggesque type: the anonymous half-figure in theatrical dress.⁸³ Both had been introduced in Leiden by Jan Lievens.⁸⁴ Rembrandt was also aware that in Haarlem this Caravaggesque type had found a distinctive lineage in Frans Hals's work. Moreover, it is evident that he was familiar with the comical character heads of peasants popularized by the Brueghel family, which found its apex in the 1620s and 1630s with Adriaen Brouwer (1605–1638). Brouwer presented them mainly in his series of the Seven Deadly Sins, in which emotions and moods are heavily emphasized in a farcical low-life context.⁸⁵ Merging such existing types, inserting his own face, and producing them as autonomous works of art, Rembrandt radically personalized these depictions of anonymous men and women. The only contextual hold for the viewer was the likeness of the artist himself (that is, for those in the know) wearing costumes that evoked characters in the theater. In his early works, this was often a "military" costume.

30

A Theatrical Type: The Comedian in Military Costume

- 31 Among Rembrandt's single-figured self-portrayals, *The Standard Bearer* stands out not only because of its format and theatrical military dress, but also because the banner gives this figure a
- JHNA* 16:2 (Summer 2024)

specific context. This conspicuous attribute and the figure's comical nature recall two highly unusual self-portraits: the pendants that Louis Finson (before 1574/76-1617) and Martin Faber (1586/87-1648) painted when they were in Aix-en-Provence in 1613–1614 (fig. 37).⁸⁶ Finson, especially, would have been of interest to Rembrandt, whose two masters, Jacob van Swanenburgh and Pieter Lastman, were acquainted with this well-known copyist of Caravaggio.⁸⁷ Finson knew Caravaggio personally and brought important works by him to Amsterdam, where he arrived in 1615; he would die there in 1617.⁸⁸ Rembrandt might have seen a copy of the self-portrait in which Finson presents himself as a comic military figure from a distant past.⁸⁹ Baring his shoulder, chest, and arm, he wears a wide leather belt and a helmet with a large feather, and he holds a mace, a medieval weapon. He smiles slightly, and his gesture and brow express pensiveness, completing the suggestion of role playing.⁹⁰ Finson's singular self-portrait—inscribed "suo se penicillo pinxit"—seems to respond to the provocative self-portrayals that Caravaggio made in his youth, reportedly "from his own reflection in the mirror."⁹¹

32 Hearing about, or seeing, such examples of astoundingly novel ways to depict one's own image could have incited Rembrandt to explore the possibilities of acting and rendering characters and expressions "from his own reflection in the mirror," confronting his audience with unusual, even provocative, images of the artist himself.⁹² To give just one example: Rembrandt's early desire to situate himself into a tradition of such singular artists is apparent from his *Laughing Self-Portrait with a Gorget* in the J. Paul Getty Museum (fig. 38). Although small, it is an ambitious and wittily innovative self-portrait. The choice to make a painted self-portrayal—plausibly his very first⁹³—with this striking expression must have been instigated by Karel van Mander's noteworthy description of two laughing self-portraits by Hans von Aachen (1552–1615) (perhaps Rembrandt saw a copy of one of them).⁹⁴ Von Aachen's paintings are without precedent.⁹⁵ According to Van Mander, the young Von Aachen aimed to show off his exceptional talent with the first of the two.⁹⁶ This painting has been lost, but the one he made a few years later, which adds a woman playing a lute to the composition, still exists (fig. 39).⁹⁷ Rembrandt emulated this second painting, as described by Van Mander, in his 1635 painting, *Self-Portrait with Saskia as a Soldier and his Sweetheart in a Tavern* (fig. 40).

33 Van Mander presents Hans von Aachen's two self-portrayals as highly significant accomplishments in the artist's early career, stressing that he painted his laughing face from life with a mirror. Van Mander's account that Von Aachen later served Emperor Rudolph II, "the greatest and highest placed art lover in the whole world,"⁹⁸ and established a friendly relationship with him, like Apelles and Alexander, would have impressed the young and highly ambitious Rembrandt, who had already won the admiration of important connoisseurs in Leiden and The Hague and sought the attention of the court in The Hague.⁹⁹ The boisterous laugh, with teeth bared, belonged to the tradition of rendering crude peasants, drunks, and children, but the esteemed Von Aachen turned his own image into an uncouth spectacle, inviting the viewer to laugh at his folly.¹⁰⁰ These exceptional works would have been admired as comical inversions, representing the artist as a drinking and carousing rake, which was at that time a familiar stereotype for painters.¹⁰¹

34 Rembrandt understood that, by mocking the pride and vanity of self-portraiture, Von Aachen meant to be admired by contemporaries and future generations. In a self-portrayal, the artist is

trying “in vain” to capture transience through a mirror image,¹⁰² which Van Mander connected to Narcissus admiring his own mirror image.¹⁰³ Like Von Aachen, Rembrandt laughs at his own vanity and simultaneously chooses the role of the comical soldier to frame his self-portrayal.¹⁰⁴ He shows himself as an actor who transformed himself into this vain, swaggering character, the riotous captain, that will make his audience laugh.¹⁰⁵ Art lovers—some of whom might have known Van Mander’s description of Von Aachen’s laughing self-portrait—would have enjoyed and admired such a transgressive self-portrayal by this highly talented young artist.¹⁰⁶

- 35 Rembrandt’s earliest head study, the dashing officer boldly eyeing the viewer (see fig. 15), painted one or two years before his first self-portrayals in a military guise, also represents a comedian. We recognize the soldier’s dress as a theatrical costume, showing remnants of the lansquenets’ garb, while the shining gorget is contemporary. This piece of plate armor, used here by Rembrandt for the first time, gives him a chance to demonstrate “gleaming and shining, reflecting and reverberating [light on metal].”¹⁰⁷ This soldier, who holds a sword under his armpit and sports the notched, feathered beret at a jaunty slant, recalling Jacques Callot’s print representing the Capitano (1619), fits into the long tradition of the swaggering, vainglorious soldier.¹⁰⁸ Naturally, such a soldier hits the bottle, as the reddish nose of Rembrandt’s officer indicates. He represents “the more than foolish pride of the arrogant and supercilious captain, of whose silly conceitedness everyone should take a warning, and humbly recognize one’s shortcomings,” as Bredero describes the role of Hopman Roemert in the introduction to *Moortje*.¹⁰⁹ Bredero thus underscores how a moral is connected to each (stereo)type.
- 36 Although referring to the many comedies and farces in which a vain captain or some other conceited soldier is satirized as a bragging boozer, the Getty painting is at the same time a portrait of Rembrandt himself laughing (see fig. 38), which was, Van Mander warned, a particularly difficult affect to depict.¹¹⁰ In making this painting, Rembrandt seems to have interacted with Fran Hals’s laughing half-figures, in particular Hals’s two compositions of a laughing actor as Pikelharing (presently in Leipzig and Kassel) (fig. 41).¹¹¹ Both are generally dated around 1628–1630. Through the convincingly rendered movement of throwing back his head, and the application of an adventurously visible brushstrokes, in which he seems to compete with Hals, Rembrandt managed to prevent the expression from becoming a frozen grimace—a danger he could not entirely avert in the frontally posed etching of 1630 (*Self-Portrait with a Cap, Laughing*) or the *Laughing Soldier* in the Mauritshuis of around the same year.
- 37 About eight years later, probably in 1635, Rembrandt once again depicted his own laughing face (see fig. 40). By that time, he had made a career in Amsterdam as a highly successful portrait painter. In the same year, he also produced a few unprecedentedly ambitious history paintings.¹¹² In his *Self-Portrait with Saskia as a Soldier and His Sweetheart in a Tavern*, he shows his own countenance in a large painting meant to demonstrate that he could be as brilliant in comedy as he was in scenes of tragedy. After all, ingenuity, naturalness, and passion were considered just as imperative for the depiction of farcical situations as for serious history paintings.¹¹³ He shows himself as a swanky, high-spirited officer inviting the viewer to drink with him, while his sweetheart addresses the viewer with a faint smile.¹¹⁴

- 38 As noted above, Van Mander's description of Hans von Aachen's laughing self-portrait while raising his glass in the company of a courtesan (and perhaps a copy of the painting) must have been decisive for Rembrandt (see fig. 39).¹¹⁵ As in comedies on the stage, the foolishness and consequences of roguish behavior were self-evident for the viewer, who was entertained by comedy built on an obvious moral.¹¹⁶ Again, for those in the know, Von Aachen's and Rembrandt's paintings simultaneously satirize the stereotype of the painter as a drinking profligate,¹¹⁷ as well as the vanity of their self-image-making. In Rembrandt's painting, this underlined by the stuffed peacock sitting on its pie. The artist-comedian and his handsome wife—the latter commenting ironically on this image of foolishness and vanity—directly involve the viewer in this foray into theatrical comedy. Works by Hals, such as the so-called *Jonker Ramp and His Sweetheart* (1623, Metropolitan Museum of Art) and the aforementioned paintings of Pekelharing (see fig. 41), seem to have pushed Rembrandt to depict such boisterous comedy. Seeking to rival Hals, Rembrandt engages the viewer even more pointedly by including his own face and that of his wife.
- 39 In the same year—or the next, 1636¹¹⁸—Rembrandt blew up the single-figure self-portrait in a comical military role into a knee-length format for his brilliant *The Standard Bearer*. The comedy is apparent less through the facial expression than it is through the standard bearer's pose, the shape of his body, and his costume. The face asks for closer inspection. In several earlier self-portraits Rembrandt had experimented with a kind of backlighting.¹¹⁹ In those works, the light falls from a high point at the upper left and heavily shades one side of the face, while hair or protruding headwear casts a shadow over the eyes, hiding the viewer's most important point of connection to the painted face. In *The Standard Bearer*, not only the eyes but also the front of the body are cast in the shadow (see fig. 34). The high light source causes the light to reflect on the floor in front of the figure, slightly lightening up the facial features, especially the eyes, from below. The standard bearer's proper right eye catches a tiny spot of reflected light, which gives his gaze a much stronger focus than that in the workshop painting *Self-Portrait as "Polish" Captain*, in which Rembrandt had done something similar a year earlier (fig. 42).¹²⁰ In *The Standard Bearer*, the figure's eyes draw attention through the suggestion of transparency of the iris around the pupil, and the reflected light on the lower eyelids and between the eyes and eyebrows. The eyebrows are raised, as in the much earlier self-portraits in Nuremberg and The Hague in which Rembrandt portrayed himself as an arrogant officer;¹²¹ in those paintings, the eyebrows play a much more conspicuous role, with the light accentuating a slight frown. They recall Van Mander's statement that in raised eyebrows one may observe especially: "Haughtiness, which has here / Its seat, though it has its origin in the heart, / It has climbed to this highest place, where it has its residence."¹²² This standard bearer's haughtiness, however, seems rather fragile.
- 40 In the year Rembrandt completed *The Standard Bearer*, he featured the same shaded eyes in the etched *Self-Portrait with Saskia* (fig. 43), in which the artist and his wife are, again, both clad in theater dress.¹²³ Rembrandt appears not as a soldier, although the large, notched beret with a feather echoes that association, but as an artist wearing fantasy dress referring to some indefinite past. With a rather sharp turn of his head, and his eyes lighting up a little in the dark, Rembrandt has given himself a tense expression that contrasts markedly with Saskia's calm pose. This concentrated intensity is entirely absent in *The Standard Bearer*, in which Rembrandt's characteristic mouth, with its somewhat protruding upper lip, is not as resolutely closed as in

most other self-portraits—nor do the slightly opened lips suggest that he is on the verge of speaking, as in *Self-Portrait as Warrior* (probably 1634, Gemäldegalerie, Kassel)¹²⁴ or *Self-Portrait with Soft Beret and Fur Collar in Berlin* (fig. 44). In *The Standard Bearer*, his mouth creates an impression of slow-wittedness. This seems to be emphasized by the visibility of the undersides of the rims of the pupils, which, as in the *Self-Portrait as “Polish” Captain* (see fig. 42), appear to make the subject’s gaze a bit glassy, if not drunken. The image of haughtiness and pride is further subverted by the rather fat jaw and the rotund body,¹²⁵ which, as we have seen, contrasts sharply with the elegant, fashionable men that constituted the contemporaneous image of the standard bearer—not to mention the silly beret, the drooping moustache, the codpiece, and the white, bedsheet-like banner, all discussed in Part I. In a seventeenth-century copy in Kassel (fig. 45), the fatness of the chin and the glassiness of the eyes seem to be exaggerated, probably to emphasize this expression of sheepish tipsiness.

41 At the time of its acquisition in 2021, *The Standard Bearer* was approached within the framework of military heroism, which led to a nationalistic interpretation (see fig. 1). I have argued that, to the contrary, this self-portrayal should be considered within the theatrical context of comedy. This hardly makes the painting a less important addition to the collection of the Rijksmuseum and the Dutch State. It remains a brilliant painting, with an exceptional form and content that only Rembrandt could have invented. Rembrandt must have meant *The Standard Bearer* in the first place as a display of unrivaled virtuosity. He proudly showed off how he outstripped even Frans Hals in a breathtaking achievement of paint handling that was entirely his own. At the same time, he satirized the image of the vain ensign, and he also made fun of his own vanity—the undertone of any self-portrayal—while nevertheless promoting himself as comedian-painter. Like “A Comedian” depicted in a poem from Constantijn Huygens’s *Zedeprinten*, Rembrandt transforms his personality temporarily into another character, but “hidden under his guise [he] remains the same man.”¹²⁶ That man is the great painter who is visible in every aspect of this painting. In contrast to the actor’s temporal transformation, Rembrandt’s can still be admired. In many respects, *The Standard Bearer* is the culmination of a group of self-portrayals, some of them in comic roles, that shaped an image of artistic brilliance and provocative unconventionality.

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Biography

Eric Jan Sluijter is professor emeritus of early modern art at the University of Amsterdam (2002-2011). Previously he has served at the Netherlands Institute for Art History/RKD (1972-1976) and Leiden University (1976-2002), and as visiting professor at Yale University (1991), the Institute of Fine Arts/New York University (2002-2007), Università di Roma 'La Sapienza' (1993) and Harvard University (2019). For his publications, see <https://ericjansluijter.nl/publications>. He is an honorary member of the Historians of Netherlandish Art.

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Illustrations



Fig. 1 Schutters company attending the presentation of Rembrandt's *The Standard Bearer* at the Bonnefantenmuseum in Maastricht, March 11, 2023. Photo: Rob Oostwegel, *De Limburger*



Fig. 2 Rembrandt van Rijn, *The Standard Bearer*, 1636, oil on canvas, 118.8 x 96.8 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (artwork in the public domain)



Fig. 3 Evert van der Maes, *Willem Janszn Cock*, 1617, oil on canvas, 200 x 103 cm. Haags Historisch Museum, The Hague (artwork in the public domain)

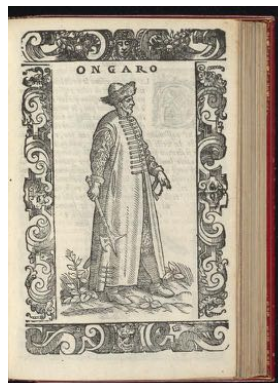


Fig. 4 Cristoph Krieger after Cesare Vecellio, *The Hungarian*, woodcut, 16.7 x 12.5 cm. illustrated in Cesare Vecellio, *Degli Habiti Antichi et moderni di Diverse Parti del Mondo* (Venice: 1590), The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York



Fig. 5 Willem Duyster, *Tric-Trac Playing Officers*, oil on panel transferred to canvas, 31.1 x 41 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam (artwork in the public domain)



Fig. 8 Hendrick Goltzius, *Standard Bearer*, 1585, engraving, 21.3 x 15.5 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



Fig. 6 Albrecht Dürer, *Standard Bearer*, ca. 1499–1503, engraving, 11.6 x 7.2 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



Fig. 9 Hendrick Goltzius, *Standard Bearer*, 1587, engraving, 28.7 x 19.3 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



Fig. 7 Lucas van Leyden, *Standard Bearer*, ca. 1508–1512, engraving, 11.8 x 7 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



Fig. 10 Pieter Isaacsz, *Civic Guard Company of Jacob Hoynck and Wybrand Appelman*, 1596, oil on canvas, 171 x 502 cm. Amsterdam Museum, Amsterdam



Fig. 11 Jacob Savery the Elder, *Triumphal Entry of Leicester in The Hague*, 1587, etching (consisting of 12 leafs), 16.1 x 387.4 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Detail of part of the second leaf, representing the Standard Bearers of the Parade, ca. 15 cm.



Fig. 14 Rembrandt, *Quack Selling His Wares*, 1635, etching, 7.8 x 3.6 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



Fig. 12 Jörg Breu the Younger, *Lansquenet*, "Stoffel Allweg vol," ca. 1520–1530, published between 1575 and 1590 by Joost de Necker, no. 49, woodcut, 28 x 17 cm, Image courtesy www.imageselect.eu



Fig. 15 Rembrandt, *Man with Gorget and Plumed Beret*, ca. 1626/1627, oil on panel, 40 x 49.4 cm. Private Collection



Fig. 13 Rembrandt, *Eastern European Potentate Leaning on a Sabre*, 1634, etching, 19.7 x 16.3 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



Fig. 16 Rembrandt, *Three Sketches of a Soldier Fondling a Woman*, ca. 1635, pen and brown ink on paper, 17.3 x 15.5 cm. Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin



Fig. 17 Jan Lievens, *The Banquet of Esther*, ca. 1625, oil on canvas, 163.8 x 130.8 cm. North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh



Fig. 20 Pieter Brueghel the Younger, *Shouting Lansquenet (Ira?)*, oil on panel, 16 cm diam. Musée Fabre, Montpellier



Fig. 18 Jacques de Gheyn II, *Music Making and Dancing Buffoons*, ca. 1595/96, engraving, 23.8 x 17.1 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



Fig. 21 Jan van de Velde II, *The Drinker*, etching and engraving, 1633, 17 x 11.7 cm. In Samuel Ampzing, *Spigel ofte Toneel der Ydelheid ende Ongebondenheid onser Eeuw* (Amsterdam, 1633), Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



Fig. 19 Jan Miense Molenaer, *The Final Scene of Bredero's Lucelle*, 1639, oil on panel, 81 x 100 cm. Bijzondere Collecties (Collection Theater Institute Netherlands), University of Amsterdam



Fig. 22 Rembrandt, *Pissing Vagabond*, 1630, etching, 82 x 48 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



Fig. 23 Copy after Rembrandt (Ferdinand Bol?), *The Standard Bearer*, ca. 1636–1640, pen and India ink and wash, 22 x 17.1 cm. The British Museum, London, © The Trustees of the British Museum



Fig. 26 Rembrandt, *Actor in the Role of Pantalone*, ca. 1636, pen and brush in brown, 18.5 x 11.9 cm. Kunsthalle, Hamburg



Fig. 24 Willem Isaacs van Swanenburg after David Vinckboons, *Village Kermess*, ca. 1610, engraving, 44.5 x 71.2 cm, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam. Detail of a group of rhetoricians in costume preparing to go on stage



Fig. 27 Rembrandt, *The Standard Bearer* (fig. 2), detail of the banner's strip of embroidered ornament



Fig. 25 Rembrandt, *The Actor Willem Ruyter in a Peasant Role*, ca. 1638–1639, pen and brown ink, 17.7 x 14 cm. Victoria and Albert Museum, London

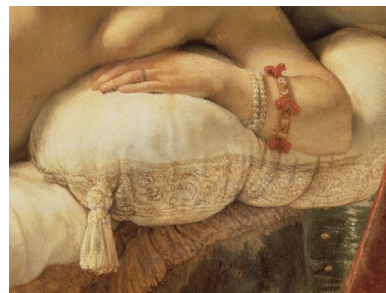


Fig. 28 Rembrandt, *Danaë*, 1636–ca. 1643, oil on canvas, 185 x 203 cm. Hermitage, St. Petersburg. Image from Wikimedia Commons



Fig. 29 Draped corner of a luxury bedsheet of fine linen, 17th century, probably made in Friesland, 268 x 200 cm. Private collection



Fig. 30 Rembrandt, *The Standard Bearer* (fig. 2), detail of the folds of the standard bearer's banner



Fig. 31 Frans Hals and Pieter Codde, *Civic Guard Company of Reinier Reael and Cornelis Michielsz Blaeuw (the "Meagre Company")*, begun 1634, finished and dated 1637, oil on canvas, 209 x 429 cm. Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam



Fig. 32 Frans Hals and Pieter Codde, *The "Meagre Company"* (fig. 32), detail of Nicolaes van Bambeeck as standard bearer



Fig. 33 Rembrandt, *The Standard Bearer* (fig. 2), detail of the standard bearer's head and dress



Fig. 34 Rembrandt, *The Standard Bearer* (fig. 2), detail of the standard bearer's (Rembrandt's) face



Fig. 35 Rembrandt, *Self-Portrait with Soft Beret*, ca. 1637, red chalk, 12.9 x 11.9 cm. National Gallery of Art, Washington



Fig. 36 Rembrandt, *Self-Portrait with Open Mouth*, ca. 1629, pen and brown ink, gray brushwork, 12.7 x 9.5 cm. The British Museum, London



Fig. 37 Louis Finson, *Self-Portrait*, 1613 or 1614, oil on canvas, 81 x 62 cm. Musée des Beaux Arts, Marseille



Fig. 40 Rembrandt, *Self-Portrait with Saskia as a Soldier and His Sweetheart in a Tavern (or The Prodigal Son in the Tavern)*, ca. 1635, oil on canvas, 161 x 131 cm. Gemäldegalerie, Dresden



Fig. 38 Rembrandt, *Laughing Self-Portrait with a Gorget*, ca. 1628, oil on copper, 22.2 x 17.1 cm. J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles



Fig. 41 Frans Hals, *Pekelharing ("Mulatto")*, ca. 1628, oil on canvas, 72 x 57.5 cm. Museum der bildenden Künste, Leipzig



Fig. 39 Hans von Aachen, *Laughing Self-Portrait with "Donna Venusta,"* ca. 1580–1585, oil on canvas, 112 x 88 cm. Private Collection, Italy



Fig. 42 Rembrandt and Workshop, *Self-Portrait as "Polish" Captain*, 1635, oil on canvas, 90.5 x 71.8 cm. Buckland Abbey, National Trust. Copyright Buckland Abbey; Supplied by The Public Catalogue Foundation



Fig. 43 Rembrandt, *Self-Portrait with Saskia*, 1636, etching, 10.4 x 9.4 cm. The British Museum, London



Fig. 45 Copy after Rembrandt, *The Standard Bearer*, ca. 1636–1640?, oil on canvas, 112 x 89 cm. Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Kassel .



Fig. 44 Rembrandt, *Self-Portrait with Soft Beret and Fur Collar*, 1634, oil on canvas, 70.8 x 55.2 cm. Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin

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Endnotes

- 1 The painting was bought by the Rijksmuseum for 175 million euros. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science contributed 150 million euros, the Vereniging Rembrandt (Rembrandt Association) 15 million, and the Rijksmuseum Fund and other institutions 10 million. Wieteke van Zeil wrote the first excellent and critical reaction in a newspaper: “Nederland koopt voor 175 miljoen een Rembrandt: Heeft het Rijksmuseum echt een vaandeldrager nodig?” *De Volkskrant*, December 8, 2021. See also Gary Schwartz, “De Vaandeldrager: Dure aankoop met Rembrandts eigen tronie,” *NRC*, January 15–16, 2021; Sjeng Scheijen, “Musea jagen windhandel in de kunst aan,” *NRC*, December 10, 2021; Pieter van Os, “De schilder en het nationalisme: Rembrandt als vlag,” *De Groene Amsterdammer*, May 25, 2022; and Eric Jan Sluijter, “IJdele kwast,” *De Volkskrant*, April 29, 2022.
- 2 The painting was also promoted as an artistic breakthrough, a turning point in Rembrandt’s oeuvre, a work with which he made his mark in Amsterdam, a missing link in the Rijksmuseum, and Rembrandt’s most important work in private hands. See, for example, the booklet that appeared when the painting began its tour through museums on May 1, 2022: Taco Dibbets et al., *De vaandeldrager van Rembrandt* (Amsterdam: Vereniging Rembrandt and Rijksmuseum, 2022), 14, 35, 36, 56, 65, 77, 79. The video accompanying the tour of the painting voiced the same arguments. In 2023, Jonathan Bikker’s text in the above-mentioned booklet was republished with more illustrations: Jonathan Bikker, *Rembrandt: De Vaandeldrager* (Amsterdam: Rijksmuseum, 2023). More recently a TV program was made about the contribution of the Vereniging Rembrandt: Oeke Hoogendijk, “De Vereniging Rembrandt, een uitzonderlijk jaar,” *Het uur van de wolf*, NTR, aired January 10, 2024.
- 3 I follow Ernst Gombrich’s advice to first establish the category (“the primacy of genre”); Ernst Gombrich, *Symbolic Images: Studies in the Art of the Renaissance* (London: Phaidon, 1972), 1–7. A peer reviewer pointed out this useful tool to clarify my approach. The only one who saw *The Standard Bearer* as a comical figure was Émile Michel, the first author to write about the painting (1886), notes Bikker (Bikker, *Vaandeldrager*, 7 and 20).
- 4 See, among others, J. Bruyn et al., *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 2, 1631–1634 (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1989), 224–231, no. A120; Ernst van de Wetering, ed., *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 4, *Self-Portraits* (Dordrecht: Springer, 2015), 554, no. 147; and Petria Noble et al., “Rembrandt’s *Standard Bearer*: New Findings from Imaging Analyses,” *Rijksmuseum Bulletin* 71, no. 2 (2023): 170–179.
- 5 This was emphasized in H. Perry Chapman, *Rembrandt’s Self-Portraits: A Study in Seventeenth-Century Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), esp. chapters 1 and 2. See also H. Perry Chapman, “Rembrandt, Van Gogh: Rivalry and Emulation,” in *Three Faces of Rembrandt*, ed. Benjamin Leca, exh. cat. (Cincinnati: Cincinnati Art Museum, 2008), 17–49; and H. Perry Chapman, “Reclaiming the Inner Rembrandt: Passion and the Early Self-Portraits,” in “The Passions in the Arts of the Early Modern Netherlands,” ed. Stephanie Dickey and Herman Roodenburg, *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 60 (2010): 233–239. See also n. 79 in this article.

- 6 For Amsterdam, see Norbert Middelkoop, “Schutters, gildebroeders, regenten en regentessen: Het Amsterdamse corporatiestuk 1525–1850,” 3 vols. (PhD diss., University of Amsterdam, 2019); Norbert Middelkoop et al., eds., “Amsterdamse schutterstukken: Inrichting en gebruik van de Doelengebouwen in de zeventiende eeuw,” *Jaarboek Amstelodamum* 150 (2013). For other cities, see Schutters in *Holland: Kracht en zenuwen van de stad*, ed. M. Carasso-Kok and J. Levy-van der Halm, exh. cat (Zwolle: Waanders in association with Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem, 1988).
- 7 Pieter van Thiel enumerated them in his entry on Rembrandt’s *The Standard Bearer* in Sally Salvesen and Henk Scheepmaker, eds., *Rembrandt: De Meester & zijn Werkplaats, Schilderijen*, exh. cat. (Zwolle: Waanders in association with Gemäldegalerie SMPK, Berlin, 1991), 202.
- 8 Only one portrait is known to me of a schutter who does not wear a collar above the gorget: Rembrandt’s *Portrait of Joris de Caullery* (1632, Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco); see Wetering, *Corpus*, 4:516. This is unusual, since his dress is otherwise entirely contemporary.
- 9 In Cesare Vecellio, *Degli Habiti Antichi et Moderni di Diverse Parti del Mondo* (Venice: Sessa, 1598), we find Venetian, Prussian, Croatian, Hungarian, Polish, Moscovian, and Turkish merchants, aristocrats, and military men with such frogged closures (275, 284, 732, 736, 741, 759, 765, 811). See also n. 76 in this article.
- 10 Alison McNeil Kettering, “Gerard ter Borch’s Military Men: Masculinity Transformed,” in *The Public and Private in Dutch Culture of the Golden Age*, ed. Arthur K. Wheelock Jr. and Adele Seeff (Newark: University of Delaware Press), 104–110. The colorful dress of this stock character was directly related to hired soldiers in the army of the State.
- 11 The image on the banner (“Die diagonale gekreuzten Zweige mit den beiden Kronen auf dem Flammenhintergrund”) represents the symbol of the lansquenet: Birgit von Seggern, “Der Landsknecht im Spiegel der Renaissancegraphik um 1500–1540” (PhD diss., Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelms-Universität, Bonn, 2003), 144–146.
- 12 Of the earlier three, one is dated 1585, the other two ca. 1580–1584. The later one, engraved by Goltzius, is dated 1587 and the two engraved by De Gheyn are dated 1587 and 1589.
- 13 J. Bruyn et al., *A Corpus of Rembrandt Paintings*, vol. 3, 1635–1642 (Dordrecht: Martinus Nijhoff, 1989), 229: “There seems to be a link with a 16th-century tradition—embodied in prints by Dürer (B. 57), Lucas van Leyden (B. 140) and Goltzius (B. 217, 218, 125)—of depicting ensigns as types of courage and contempt of death, as inscriptions on Goltzius prints suggest. Rembrandt’s painting has the 16th-century lansquenet costume in common with these prints.” However, Dürer’s and Lucas’s ensigns did not yet have the typical and elaborate lansquenet’s dress that developed shortly after (as in the Breu woodcut). Goltzius’s ensigns wear contemporary, highly fashionable dress that is entirely different from the lansquenet’s costume. See also Van Thiel, catalogue entry for *The Standard Bearer* in Salvesen and Scheepmaker, *Rembrandt*, 200–202.
- 14 Van Thiel, catalogue entry for *The Standard Bearer* in Salvesen and Scheepmaker, *Rembrandt*, 202. Translation from the Latin by Van Thiel. The same attitude is evident in, for example, Hans Sach’s poem accompanying the standard bearer in Erhard Schon’s woodcut *A Column of Mercenaries*; see Keith Moxey, *Peasants*,

- Warriors and Wives. Popular Imagery in the Reformation* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 68–71.
- 15 For many examples of the lansquenet's attire, see Von Seggern, *Landsknecht*, passim. The typical lansquenet's garments are also magnificently represented in Pieter Breugel's *Three Lansquenets* (1568; The Frick Collection, New York).
- 16 Volker Manuth, Marieke de Winkel, and Rudi van Leeuwen, *Rembrandt: The Complete Paintings* (Cologne: Taschen, 2019), 99–100. Marieke de Winkel had referred earlier to an etching by Filippo Napoletano, based on Breu's woodcut: Marieke de Winkel, *Fashion and Fancy: Dress and Meaning in Rembrandt's Paintings* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 171–172; and Marieke de Winkel, "Rembrandt's Clothes: Dress and Meaning in his Self-Portraits," in Wetering, *Corpus*, 4:66–67. If Rembrandt was directly inspired by one of the two, it was Breu's print, as the large braguette, the shape of the body, and the diagonal sash (instead of chain) testify.
- 17 Von Seggern, *Landsknecht*, 103, 600 (Appendix 2, series 2, no. 49). The print is no. 49 of a series of fifty woodcuts of lansquenets, commissioned by David de Necker and drawn between 1520 and 1530 by Christoph Amberger, Hans Burgkmair, Jörg Breu the Younger, and Hans Sebald Beham, but marketed much later by Joost de Necker (1575–1590), with names characterizing them and with short "speaking" poems by Hans Sachs.
- 18 Manuth, De Winkel, and Van Leeuwen, *Rembrandt*, 99. They do not elaborate on this acute observation. For a weak refutation of this idea, see Bikker, *Vaandeldrager*, 20–21, who maintains that contemporaries would have seen the figure as a paragon of virility and courage.
- 19 For the image of the lansquenet in sixteenth-century Germany, see, for example, Moxey, *Peasants*, 68–72.
- 20 In the bookkeeping for the year after the opening of the Amsterdam Schouwburg, 1639, we find "a Swiss costume" (*een switsers kleet*) for 52.18 guilders; this was undoubtedly a lansquenet-like costume that could be used both in comedies and in tragedies situated in the past. J. A. Worp, *Geschiedenis van den Amsterdamschen Schouwburg 1496–1772* (Amsterdam: S. L. van Looy, 1920), 90. See also Fr. W. S. van Thienen, *Het doek gaat op: Vijfentwintig eeuwen in en om het Europese theater* (Bussum: Unieboek, 1969), 1:253 (see also 1:152 and 1:201).
- 21 For the mix of old and contemporary elements, see Van Thienen, *Doek gaat op*, 1:253.
- 22 Around the same time, Jan Lievens painted *Laughing Soldier's Head*, dated ca. 1626 by Bernhard Schnackenburg in *Jan Lievens: Friend and Rival of the Young Rembrandt* (Petersberg: Michael Imhof, 2016), no. 41.
- 23 Other paintings are *Musical Company* (1626; Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), a stiffer version; *Young Man's Head in Fantasy Dress with Golden Chain* (1631; Toledo Museum of Art, Toledo) in black velvet (beret added ca. 1635); *Elderly Man with Gorget and Gold Chain* (ca. 1631/32; The Art Institute, Chicago); and the somewhat later *Soldier with Gorget* (ca. 1636/37; Mauritshuis, The Hague); see Wetering, *Corpus*, vol. 6, nos. 11, 57, 58, 157. We see another type of notched beret in *Self-Portrait as Soldier with a Gorget* (ca. 1633–1636; Gemäldegalerie, Berlin), which was added at a later stage and probably not by Rembrandt (Wetering, *Corpus*, vol. 4, cat.no. 146). Remarkably, we also find it in his first painted portrait of Saskia, *Laughing Saskia* (1634; Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden);

- see Wetering, *Corpus*, vol. 6, no. 94). I will publish a separate article on this painting. In 1642, the large notched beret even ended up in *The Night Watch* on the heads of the swordsman, possibly Jan Adriaenssen Keijser, and of Jacob Jorisz, the drummer at the right; see S. A. C. Dudok van Heel, “Frans Banninck Cocq’s Troop in Rembrandt’s *Nightwatch*: Identification of the Guardsmen,” *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 57, no. 1 (2009): 57, 70–71. See also S. A. C. Dudok van Heel, “The Night Watch and the Entry of Maria de’Medici: A New Interpretation of the Original Place and Significance of the Painting,” *Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum* 57, no. 1 (2009): 33. As in the theater, several of the militia men show a mix of elements from the first half of the sixteenth century and contemporary dress. Their clothing recalls the parades of the Chambers of Rhetoric at *Landjuwelen* (contests of rhetoricians), which also included a standard bearer, drummers, and sometimes (allegorical) swordsmen in fancy dress. See Egbert Haverkamp Begemann, *Rembrandt: The Nightwatch* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982), 97–98, figs. 71–72; and Yvonne Bleyerveld, “De geschilderde intrede van de Dordtse Fonteynisten in Vlaardingen in 1616,” in *Op de Hollandse Parnas: De Vlaardingse rederijkerswedstrijd van 1616*, ed. Bart Ramakers (Zwolle: Waanders, 2006), 126–147, figs. 66, 89, 94, 95. See also the many fold-out engravings in Zacharias Heyns, *Const-thoonende Iuweel* (Zwolle: Zacharias Heyns, 1607).
- 24 Otto Benesch, *The Drawings of Rembrandt* (London: Phaidon, 1973), vol. 1, no. 100, verso of *Lamentation of Christ*. See the magnificent website by Martin Royalton-Kisch, *The Drawings of Rembrandt: A Revision of Benesch’s Catalogue Raisonné*, 2012–, <https://rembrandtcatalogue.net>, who accepts the drawing as by Rembrandt. See also Peter Schatborn and Erik Hinterding, *Rembrandt: Drawings and Etchings* (Cologne: Taschen, 2019), no. D31; and Royalton-Kisch, *Drawings of Rembrandt*, no. 529 (copy after Rembrandt?) and no. 528a (Ferdinand Bol?).
- 25 The literature on Caravaggio and the *Caravaggisti* often includes rather general references to the Commedia dell’Arte and to popular picaresque literature. See, for example, Gert Jan van der Sman, “Caravaggio and the Painters of the North,” in *Caravaggio and the Painters of the North*, ed. Gert Jan van der Sman, exh. cat. (Madrid: Museo Thyssen-Bornemisza, 2016), 15, 70, 120. It seems more likely that it had its roots in the real dress of (north) Italian *bravi*, which was partly a continuation of the lansquenets’ costume. See Rita Randolfi, “Bartolomeo Manfredi e la moda del tempo: Significati e cronologie,” in *Caravaggio e il Caravaggismo*, ed. Giovanna Capitelli and Caterina Volpi (Rome: Bagatto Libri, 1995), 175–182.
- 26 Schnackenburg, *Lievens*, no. 17 (The Leiden Collection, New York).
- 27 Schnackenburg, *Lievens*, no. 26 (North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh). For most Dutch painters, the dress in the theater would have been an important example (see n. 19 in this article).
- 28 On Lucelle, see also notes 32 and 75 in this article. On Molenaer’s depiction of the play’s last scene, see S. Gudlaugsson, “Bredero’s *Lucelle door eenige zeventiende eeuwse meesters uitgebeeld*,” *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 1 (1947): 177–195.
- 29 See, for example, the reproductions in Jochai Rosen, *Soldiers at Leisure: The Guardroom Scene in Dutch Genre Painting of the Golden Age* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University press, 2010); and Michiel P. van Maarseveen, ed., *Beelden van een strijd: Oorlog en kunst*

- vóór de Vrede van Munster 1621–1648*, exh. cat (Zwolle, Waanders in association with Museum het Prinsenhof, Delft, 1998).
- 30 One of the last people always represented with a drooping moustache (albeit combined with a pointed beard) was the much-hated Duke of Alba; see, for example, political prints in James Tanis and Daniel Hors, eds., *Images of Discord: A Graphic Interpretation of the Opening Decades of the Eighty Years' War*, exh. cat. (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans in association with Bryn Mawr College Library, 1993).
- 31 31. Another exception is *The Italian Charlatans* by Karel Dujardin (1657; Musée du Louvre, Paris). Almost all the male figures of Jacques Callot's *Les Gueux (The Bums)* (ca. 1622–1623; etching) have unruly drooping moustaches combined with beards.
- 32 For example, the quack also wears the exotic dagger. Nothing similar can be found in the many pictures of lansquenets or other sixteenth- or seventeenth-century military men. Remarkably, the hilt of sword held by the Polish captain Baustruldes in Jan Miense Molenaer's *Lucelle* (see fig. 19) looks nearly the same. Was this exotic saber a prop owned by the Nederduytsche Academie (after 1628 the Schouwburg)? Bredero's *Lucelle* (1616) must have been performed many times in the 1620s and 1630s.
- 33 *The Choleric* by Pieter de Jode I, after Maarten de Vos, represents the titular figure as a dangerous lansquenet (with a codpiece); it was designed in the late sixteenth century, but it referred to an earlier period. In Zacharias Heyns's costume book, only the peasant still wears a codpiece: Zacharias Heyns, *Dracht-Thoneel waer op het fatsoen van meest alle de kledren* (Amsterdam: Zacharias Heyns, 1601), (no page nos.; p. 24 in pdf: <https://books.google.nl/books?id=8X1oAAAAcAAJ&hl=nl>), n.p.
- 34 Samuel Pepys records that, when visiting the Tower of London, he was annoyed by the “frothiness” of the conversation of the king's companions about the “codpieces on some of the men in armor there to be seen.” Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed. Robert Latham and William Matthews (Berkeley, CA: G. Bell & Sons, 1970), 3:265. I am grateful to the late Irene Groeneweg for bringing this to my attention.
- 35 See, for example, the “aroused” archer in Andries Stock's engraving after Jacques de Gheyn II, *The Archer and His Sweetheart* (1608/12; engraving). In a remarkable print of a group of drinking and vomiting *Pekelharings and Hansworsten* by Cornelis van Kittensteyn, after Dirck Hals (*Drinking “Nobles” Around a Table*, 1650), two codpieces can be seen.
- 36 Benesch, *Drawings*, no. 235; Schatborn and Hinterding, *Rembrandt*, no. D337 (dated by Schatborn ca. 1639).
- 37 Benesch, *Drawings*, nos. 293 recto, 293 verso, 295 recto, 296, and 297; all these drawings have been accepted by Martin Royalton-Kisch in his online catalogue (<https://rembrandtcatalogue.net>) and by Peter Schatborn in Schatborn and Hinterding, *Rembrandt*, nos. D 249, 250, 251, 252, 255 (all dated by Schatborn ca. 1636). The comical *Willem Ruyter as a Quack Doctor(?) with an Old Woman* (Benesch, *Drawings*, nos. 280d, 235; Schatborn D248) seems to show a large purse instead of a codpiece.
- 38 Militia companies with white banners existed, but their flags were decorated with a coat of arms and ornaments in color or gold. See: J. W. Salomonson, “The *Officers of the White Banner*. A Civic Guard Portrait by Jacob Willemsz. Delff II,” *Simiolus* 18, nos. 1/2

- (1988), 13–62. There is one other ensign with an all-white (or pale gray) flag in a painting by Jacob Ochterveld (1665; formerly Galerie Bruno Meissner); see Bikker, *Vaandeldrager*, fig. 11. Like Rembrandt’s work, this is a self-portrait with the artist acting a role; related are a number of small panels in which Ochterveld painted himself in comic roles; see Susan Donahue Kuretsky, *The Paintings of Jacob Ochterveld (1634–1682)* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1979), 63, and figs. 60, 61, 63, 64, 65).
- 39 I am grateful to the late Irene Groeneweg for this detail. This is also evinced by the 1616 commission to Jacob Delff to paint the banner for the Delft Officers of the White Banner, which is specified as nine yards of taffeta (see Salomonson, *Officers*, 54).
- 40 Wetering, *Corpus*, 4:584–586, no. 194.
- 41 I am grateful to Marike van Roon and Sanny de Zoete. The latter owns seventeenth-century bed linen, including a large sheet measuring 268 x 200 cm, probably made in Friesland, with a lengthwise ornamental band connecting two parts (as in fig. 29). When draped on a pole, the linen appears to fall in a similar way to the flag in Rembrandt’s painting.
- 42 The embroidered bands on extant bed linen from this period are much narrower than the one in Rembrandt’s painting, but the strip at the side of Danaë’s cushion also has an exceptional width. Sanny de Zoete is preparing a book with an extensive chapter on seventeenth-century bed linens. The only (very summary) literature to date is A. Meulenbelt-Nieuwburg, *Onder de dekens, tussen de lakens . . .*, exh. cat. (Arnhem: Rijksmuseum voor Volkskunde, 1981). The strip of embroidered ornament does not run along the upper border on *The Standard Bearer’s* flag, as one might think at first sight. Considering the length of the flagpole, it probably runs lengthwise in the middle.
- 43 My observations about *The Standard Bearer’s* appearance and banner rule out Bikker’s proposal that the owner might have belonged to the Delft company of the White Banner (based on the intriguing fact that a *Standard Bearer* by Rembrandt is mentioned in a Delft inventory of 1667). See Bikker, *Vaandeldrager*, 46.
- 44 About the play, see, among others, Pieter van Thiel, “Moeyaert and Bredero: a Curious Case of Dutch Theater as Depicted in Art,” *Simiolus* 6, no. 1 (1972–1973): 46. After the first edition of 1617, it was reprinted in 1620, 1633, and 1646 and also appeared in 1622, 1638, and 1644 in Bredero’s complete works. We know of seven performances in 1637, a year that the box-office receipts were recorded; see Ben Albach, “De schouwburg van Jacob van Campen,” *Oud Holland* 85, no. 1 (1970): 89. On the play’s popularity, see René van Stipriaan, “Bredero laat in zijn komedie Moortje de carnavaleske maskerade herleven,” in *Een theatergeschiedenis der Nederlanden: Tien eeuwen drama en theater in Nederland en Vlaanderen*, ed. R. L. Erenstein (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996), 162–169; and René van Stipriaan, *De hartenjager: Leven, werk en roem van Gerbrandt Adriaensz. Bredero* (Amsterdam: Querido, 2018), 78–79.
- 45 Bredero transplanted the story to Amsterdam in the 1570s. P. Minderaa and C. A. Zaalberg, eds., *De Werken van Gerbrand Adriaensz. Bredero: G. A. Bredero’s Moortje* (Leiden: Martinus Nijhoff, 1984), 35–36 and 119. See the analysis of Moortje by M. A. Schenkeveld van der Dussen, “Moraal en karakter: Lezingen van Moortje,” in *De nieuwe taalgids* 78 (1985): 224–234.

- 46 I am grateful to Frans Blom for drawing my attention to the figure of Roemert. Several of Rembrandt's "military" types seem related to the stock type of the ludicrous "captain" (see n. 108 in this article).
- 47 Minderaa and Zaalberg, *Werken van Gerbrand Adriaensz. Bredero*, 290–291, lines 2226–2228: "Waar blyven u hovaardighe Vaendraghers met haar Levreyen en Sluyers? / Recht nu u stangen op en ontwynt u slaaplakens, u schorteldoecken en luyers. / Wat so! set u volck eens te degen in haar ponctifikale volle krits."
- 48 Compare the scene in which Thraso assembles an army in Terence, *The Eunuch*, trans. John Barsby (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University press, 2001), 403–404. A variation upon the association of banners with bedsheets can be found in Marilyn Monroe's remark about producers: "Their banner was a bedsheet" (Michèle Dominici, dir., *Becoming Marilyn*, 2021).
- 49 Since the sixteenth century it has generally been used as such. In 1625, Hugo Grotius, in *De jure belli ac pacis (On the Law of War and Peace)*, described the white flag as a "sign, to which use has given a signification," as "a tacit sign of demanding a parley, and shall be as obligatory, as if expressed by words" ("White Flag," Wikipedia.org, accessed July 1, 2024, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_flag). At the surrender of Rotterdam on May 14, 1940, a bedsheet was used for safe passage of the negotiators; it still exists and is owned by Museum Rotterdam (<https://museumrotterdam.nl/collectie/item/21063>).
- 50 There might be many more relations with comedies and farces we do not recognize; see Elmer Kolfin, "De regte bootsenmakery: Tijdgenoten over grappige schilderijen uit de Gouden Eeuw," in *De kunst van het lachen: Humor in de Gouden Eeuw*, ed. Anna Tummers, Elmer Kolfin, and Jasper Hillegers, exh. cat. (Zwolle: Waanders in association with Frans Hals Museum, 2017), 33.
- 51 For Isaac Vos, see Frans Blom, *Podium van de wereld: Creativiteit en ondernemen in de Amsterdamse Schouwburg van de zeventiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: Querido, 2021), chapter 9, "Duellieren," 228–265, with further references.
- 52 The story has its origin in Boccaccio's *Decameron*. See René van Stipriaan, *Leugens en vermaak: Boccaccio's novellen in de kluchtencultuur van de Nederlandse renaissance* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 1996), 102–103. For comparisons between the German and Dutch texts, see J. A. Worp, "Isaac Vos," *Tijdschrift voor Nederlandse Taal- en Letterkunde* 3 (1883), 223–227.
- 53 For the performances, see the website "Pekelharing," *Onstage: Online Data System of Theater in Amsterdam*, University of Amsterdam, accessed July 1, 2024, <https://www.vondel.humanities.uva.nl/onstage/plays/335>. For the complete text, see Isaac Vos, *De klugtige tyd-verdryver* (Utrecht: Simon de Vries, 1653), 205–216, via Ceneton, (Census Nederlands Toneel / Dutch Theater Census), "Lijst van toneelstukken die in Ceneton beschreven zijn," updated February 24, 2024, Leiden University Department of Dutch Language and Culture, <https://www.let.leidenuniv.nl/Dutch/Ceneton/LijstCeneton.html#095530>.
- 54 See Ben Albach, "Pekelharing: Personage en potsenmaker," *Literatuur* 7 (1990): 77–78.
- 55 See Benesch, *Drawings*, nos. 120, 230, 235, 280d (Schatborn and Hinterding, *Rembrandt*, nos. 256, 252, 255, 337); all are accepted by Royalton-Kisch (<https://rembrandtcatalogue.net>) and Schatborn. They can be dated ca. 1636, except for

- no. 235, which should be dated ca. 1638–1639. There are also two drawings attributed to pupils: Benesch, *Drawings*, no. 121, attributed to Govert Flinck by Royalton-Kisch and Schatborn; and no. 299r, attributed to Gerbrand van den Eeckhout by Royalton-Kisch and others. On Willem Ruyter, see S. A. C. Dudok van Heel, “Willem Bartel(omeus)sz Ruyters (1587–1639): Rembrandt’s bisschop Gosewijn,” *Maandblad Amstelodamum* 66 (1979): 83–87. Ruyter was “meester van de bataviersche of nederlantsche commedianten” (master of the Batavian or Dutch comedians), the first professional theater company in Holland, established in Leiden in 1617.
- 56 Benesch, *Drawings*, no. 293 verso (Schatborn and Hinterding, *Rembrandt*, no. D249). The same actor also appears in Benesch, *Drawings*, no. 294 recto and verso, attributed by Royalton-Kisch (<https://rembrandtcatalogue.net>) to “Gerbrand van den Eeckhout?” and dated 1636–1640.
- 57 Benesch, *Drawings*, nos. 295 recto, 296, 297, no. 293 recto (Schatborn and Hinterding, *Rembrandt*, nos. D250, 252, 252, 248); all dated ca. 1635–1636 by Royalton-Kisch (<https://rembrandtcatalogue.net>) and ca. 1636 by Schatborn.
- 58 Benesch, *Drawings*, nos. 280d, 294, 418 recto, no. 416 (Schatborn and Hinterding, *Rembrandt*, nos. D255, 257, 258, 259); all ca. 1636. In contemporary farces, the quack appears, for example, in Barend Fonteyn’s *Mr. Sullemans soete vriagi* (Amsterdam: Dirck Cornelisz Houthaek, 1633).
- 59 All of them on horseback, but undoubtedly actors in exotic costumes: Benesch, *Drawings*, nos. 367, 368, 360 verso (Schatborn and Hinterding, *Rembrandt*, nos. D304, 305, 461).
- 60 Benesch, *Drawings*, no. 230 (Schatborn and Hinterding, *Rembrandt*, no. D254); see n. 55 in this article.
- 61 Among them Benesch, *Drawings*, nos. 100 verso, 230 (Schatborn and Hinterding, *Rembrandt*, nos. D31, 247) and Benesch, *Drawings*, no. 399 (Royalton-Kisch as Rembrandt, ca. 1635; not in cat. Schatborn and Hinterding, *Rembrandt*). Their fantasy dresses characterize them as actors. Some of these drawings are probably related to the so-called *Prodigal Son* in Dresden (fig. 40); see also the drawing attributed to Ferdinand Bol (Städel Museum, Frankfurt) (Benesch, *Drawings*, no. 529), which is related.
- 62 Dudok van Heel, “Willem Bartel(omeus)sz Ruyters,” 86; and Albach, “Pekelharing,” 75. Reynolds was married to a Dutch woman.
- 63 S. A. C. Dudok van Heel, “Rembrandt and Frans Hals Paintings in the Workshop of Hendrick Uylenburch,” in *Rembrandt and His Circle: Insights and Discoveries*, ed. Stephanie Dickey (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017), 17–43.
- 64 Christopher D. M. Atkins, *The Signature Style of Frans Hals: Painting, Subjectivity, and the Market in Early Modernity* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2012), 147–157.
- 65 Theodorus Schrevelius, *Harlemias, Ofte, om beter te seggen, de eerste Stichtinghe der Stadt Haerlem* (Haarlem: Joannes Marshoorn, 1648), 383: “Deur een onghemeyne manier van schilderen, die hem eyghen is, by nae alle over-treft, want daer is in sijn schildery sulcke forse ende leven, dat hy te met de natuyr selfs schijnt te braveren met sijn Penceel, dat spreekken alle sijne Conterfeytsels, die hy ghemaect heeft, onghelooflijcke veel, die soo ghecoloreert zijn, datse schijnen asem van haer te gheven ende te leven.” See Atkins, *Signature Style*, chapter 1, “A Liveliness Uniquely His”, 23–84.

- 66 In 1993 Dudok van Heel already assumed that Rembrandt might have studied Frans Hals's standard bearer in *The Meagre Company* and would have considered it a challenge; see S. A. C. Dudok van Heel, "Rembrandt en de vaandrigs van de Amsterdamse schutterij: Diende Rembrandts 'vaandeldrager' uit 1636 als 'modello'?" *Kroniek van het Rembrandthuis* 2 (1993): 18. See also Dudok van Heel, "Rembrandt and Frans Hals," 25.
- 67 Originally the fabric must have been more greenish; see Noble et al., "Standard Bearer," 172–173.
- 68 Bikker maintains that considerable body fat was considered a sign of virile vitality (Bikker, *Vaandeldrager*, 26). However, in paintings of civic guard companies, corpulent men are truly exceptional, and in the rare cases a corpulent figure appears in one of the numerous depictions of military men in guardroom paintings, they are always explicitly meant as comical figures. Bikker refers to Goltzius's painting *Hercules and Cacus* (1615; Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem) (Bikker, *Vaandeldrager*, fig. 26), but his body is of an entirely different (muscular) shape; although bulky, it is not corpulent. See n. 125 in this article.
- 69 On Hals's distinctive virtuoso technique, see Atkins, *Signature Style*, esp. chapters 1 and 2.
- 70 On Rembrandt's handling and use of color, see, among others, Ernst van de Wetering, "Towards a Reconstruction of Rembrandt's Art Theory," in Wetering, *Corpus*, 4:3–140, 4:103–123; and Eric Jan Sluijter, *Rembrandt's Rivals: History Painting in Amsterdam 1630–1650* (Amsterdam: Benjamins Publishing Company, 2015), 59–70.
- 71 For copies, see Bruyn et al., *Corpus*, 3:230. Three are still known; see figs. 23 and 45 in this article and Bikker, *Vaandeldrager*, fig. 44.
- 72 For striking examples (from around the same time) of Rembrandt altering his face to fit a role, see Chapman, *Rembrandt's Self-Portraits*, 42–43, figs. 54–59.
- 73 About the painting being a self-portrait, or not, see Schwartz, "Vaandeldrager." Several authors of earlier catalogues (among them Gerson, Bauch, the Rembrandt Research Project, Wetering, and Manuth, De Winkel, and Van Leeuwen) denied it that status, though the latter two conceded that it showed Rembrandt's features. Schwartz himself called it a "self-not-portrait" (*zelf-niet-portret*). Chapman, in *Self-Portraits*, 42–43, discussed it as a self-portrait.
- 74 See *Self-Portrait with Soft Beret* (1635–1636; National Gallery of Art); Benesch, *Drawings*, no. 437 recto, dated by Royalton-Kisch ca. 1634–1636 (Schatborn and Hinterding, *Rembrandt*, no. D632, dated by Schatborn ca. 1637). For the etchings, see the related *Self-Portrait with a Soft Beret* (ca. 1634), Schatborn and Hinterding, *Rembrandt*, no. E210 (B. 2); *Self-Portrait with a Raised Kris* (1634), Schatborn and Hinterding, *Rembrandt*, no. E211 (B 18 II); and *Self-Portrait with Saskia* (1636), Schatborn and Hinterding, *Rembrandt*, no. E213 (B.19 I). See also the painted *Self-Portrait* of ca. 1637 in the Wallace Collection: Wetering, *Corpus*, vol. 6, no. 154, with a similar view from slightly below.
- 75 Long ago noted by Gudlaugsson, "Bredero's Lucelle," 185; and Kurt Bauch, *Der frühe Rembrandt und seine Zeit* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1960), 176. See also Hans-Joachim Raupp, *Untersuchungen zu Künstlerbildnis und Künstlerdarstellung in den Niederlanden im 17. Jahrhundert* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1984), 176; Winkel, *Fashion and Fancy*, 66 and

67. Pictures of actors wearing stage costumes in the first decades of the seventeenth century are rare, since theater scenes depicted on title pages of plays are all of a later date. Two paintings by Jan Miense Molenaer of the last scene of *Lucelle* (see n. 28 and fig. 19 in this article) are unusual in this respect. For pictures of rederijkers' costumes, see Bart Ramakers, ed., *Op de Hollandse Parnas: De Vlaardingse rederijkerswedstrijd van 1616* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2006); and the fold-out prints in Heyns, *Const-thoonende Iuweel*. See also S. J. Gudlaugsson, *De komedianten bij Jan Steen en zijn tijdgenoten* (The Hague: Stols, 1945); and J. Q. van Regteren Altena, "Buitenlanders zien Amsterdam, voornamelijk rond 1634," *Jaarboek Amstelodamum* 70 (1978): 170–185.
- 76 This seems to indicate that such drawings, like the etchings and paintings, were not entirely private but meant for the collections of art lovers. About the frogging, see n. 9, and see the figure of Capiteyn Baustruldes from Poland in Jan Miense Molenaer's painting of Bredero's *Lucelle* (fig. 19, at left). See also in Rembrandt's drawing, *Willem Ruyter with Three Other Actors as "Orientals"* (Benesch, *Drawings*, no. 230), the second figure from the right. It is probably a characteristic of the "Poolse Rok" (Polish skirt) that had become familiar on the stage (Van Thienen, *Doek gaat op*, 1:253). The many examples of frogging in costume books and the use of them in paintings make clear that this kind of fastening was associated with Eastern European and Middle Eastern countries.
- 77 When discussing Rembrandt's self-portraits one sets foot in a scholarly minefield; see, for example, Ernst van de Wetering, *Corpus*, 4:132–143; and Chapman, "Reclaiming," 233–235. See also n. 83 in this article on the term *tronie*.
- 78 To avoid confusion, I do not use the concept of the *tronie* as a specific art historical category. About the original meaning and its modern use, see Dagmar Hirschfelder, *Tronie und Porträt in der niederländischen Malerei des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 2008); and Franziska Gottwald, *Das Tronie: Muster, Studie und Meisterwerk: Die Genese einer Gattung der Malerei vom 15. Jahrhundert bis zu Rembrandt* (Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag, 2011).
- 79 For a convincing refutation of such notions, see Chapman, "Rembrandt, Van Gogh," 19–20, 28–29; and Chapman, "Reclaiming," 236–238, 256–257. See also Chapman, "Introduction" and chapter 1 "Discovery of the Self" in *Self-Portraits*, 1-9 and 10-33. Such views on the function of Rembrandt's self-portraits were forcefully enunciated since the 1990s by Eddy de Jongh and Ernst van de Wetering in particular. See, for example, Eddy de Jongh, "De mate van ikheid in Rembrandts zelfportretten," *Kunstschrift* 6 (November–December 1991), 13–15, adamantly elaborated on by Ernst van de Wetering in "The Multiple Functions of Rembrandt's Self-Portraits," in *Rembrandt by Himself*, ed. Christopher White and Quentin Buvelot, exh. cat. (Zwolle: Waanders in association with the National Gallery, London, 2000), 17–22 (and in some catalogue entries by Edwin Buijsen), and in Wetering, *Corpus*, 4: xxv–xxiv, 132–139, 158, 172. See also Lyckle de Vries, "Tronies and Other Single-Figured Netherlandish Paintings," in "Nederlandse Portretten: Bijdragen over de portretkunst in de Nederlanden uit de Zeventiende en Achttiende Eeuw," ed. H. Blasse-Hegeman et al., *Leids Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek* 8 (1989): 197; Manuth, De Winkel, and Van Leeuwen, *Rembrandt*, 25; Gottwald, *Tronie*, 108–112; and Christopher Brown, "The Evolution of Rembrandt's Early Style," in *Young*

- Rembrandt*, ed. Christopher Brown et al., exh. cat (Oxford: Ashmolean Museum, 2019), 42.
- 80 Chapman, “Reclaiming,” 236–237. Between about 1628 and 1640, Rembrandt’s face appears in twenty-two paintings, twenty-four etchings and, surprisingly, in only four drawings: two of ca. 1628–1629 and two of ca. 1634–1636.
- 81 Joseph Leo Koerner, *The Moment of Self-Portraiture in German Renaissance Art* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 9. When studying and fashioning one’s own face, Koerner writes, one does this “at once as viewing subject and as thing viewed, as representation’s origin as well as end.” This fundamentally distinguishes the act of self-portraying from looking at and depicting another person.
- 82 See Chapman, *Self-Portraits*, esp. chapters 1 and 2. The unconventionality was also emphasized by Arthur K. Wheelock Jr., “Rembrandt Inventing Himself,” in *Rembrandt Creates Rembrandt*, ed. Alan Chong, exh. cat. (Zwolle: Waanders in association with the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, 2000), 16–19.
- 83 As stated in n. 78 in this article. I avoid the use of the word *tronie* in the modern art historical sense of a category. Rembrandt sidesteps all traditional conventions, making novel kinds of self-representation.
- 84 See Schnackenburg, *Lievens*, nos. 6–8, 10–11 (Lievens’s earliest character-heads), 20–22, 41, 46, 47 (his earliest “Caravaggist” single figures).
- 85 In about 1622–1628, a series of prints by Lucas Vorsterman after Adriaen Brouwer was published. In a series of paintings of about 1634–1637, Brouwer even depicted faces of friends as such; see Karolien de Clippel, “Adriaen Brouwer, Portrait Painter: New Identifications and an Iconographic Novelty,” *Simiolus* 30, nos. 3/4 (2003): 204–212; Elmer Kolfin, “‘Het schuim des volks voor de bloem der natie’: Adriaen Brouwer en zijn publiek in de Nederlanden van de 17de eeuw,” in *Adriaen Brouwer, Meester van Emoties: Tussen Rubens en Rembrandt*, ed. Katrien Lichtert, exh. cat. (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press in association with MOU Museum, Oudenaarde, 2018), 127–138.
- 86 The pendants are at the Musée des Beaux Arts, Marseille. Finson’s self-portrait is dated 1613; the painting by Faber is dated 1614.
- 87 S. A. C. Dudok van Heel, *De jonge Rembrandt onder tijdgenoten* (Nijmegen: Nijmegen University Press, 2006), 84–85. Van Swanenburg had a close connection with Abraham Vinck (who lived with him in Hamburg and was a witness at his marriage in Naples); Vinck was a close friend and business partner of Finson in Naples and Amsterdam. On Finson and Vinck (and relations with Van Swanenburg), see Marije Osnabrugge, *The Neapolitan Lives and Careers of Netherlandish Immigrant Painters (1575–1655)* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2019), Chapter 2 “Talent, Business and Friendship,” 63–122.
- 88 On Finson’s career, see Osnabrugge, *Neapolitan Lives*, 63–115.
- 89 Jasper Hillegers drew my attention to two paintings by Jan Lievens: *Hunter with Dead Birds* and *Farmer with a Spade*, from a series titled *Four Elements and Ages of Men* (ca. 1625/26; Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Kassel), which show in several respects remarkable similarities to these works. For Lievens’s paintings, see Schnackenburg, *Lievens*, nos. 23 and 24.

- 90 Martin Faber, also naked to the waist, holds over his shoulder, like a weapon, a maulstick with brushes tied to it, in the manner of a bundle of Roman fasces. One wonders if they depicted themselves—as if for a carnival-like pageant—as people of savage northern tribes, the *Belgae* and the *Frisii* respectively. In the inscription Finson identifies himself as Belga Brugensis and Faber as Emdensis Frisius.
- 91 Finson’s self-portrait betrays knowledge of Caravaggio’s *Self-Portrait as Bacchus* (the so-called *Bacchino Malato*). Giovanni Baglione writes around 1625 that in his youth Caravaggio “made some other small pictures which were drawn from his own reflection in a mirror. The first was a Bacchus with bunches of various kinds of grapes. . . . He also painted a boy bitten by a lizard which emerges from some flowers and fruits. The boy actually seems to cry out and the whole is carefully executed.” Walter Friedländer, *Caravaggio Studies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 234. Chapman, in *Self-Portraits*, 19, pointed out that Caravaggio also painted his own face to study the passions.
- 92 About Rembrandt’s attitude toward Caravaggio, see H. Perry Chapman, “Rembrandt and Caravaggio: A Question of Emulation,” in *Aemulatio. Imitation and Invention in Netherlandish Art from 1500 to 1800: Essays in Honor of Eric Jan Sluijter*, ed. Anton W. A. Boschloo et al. (Zwolle: Waanders, 2011), 182–194. It is possible that copies of Caravaggio’s self-portrayals were in Amsterdam.
- 93 Van de Wetering dates it ca. 1628 (*Corpus*, vol. 4, no. 18). Dated in the same year are *Study in the Mirror of the Human Skin* (Indianapolis Museum of Art) and *Lighting Study in the Mirror* (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam); Wetering, *Corpus*, vol. 4, nos. 19 and 20 (the titles are Wetering’s). Manuth, De Winkel, and Van Leeuwen place the three paintings in the same sequence; Manuth, De Winkel, and Van Leeuwen, *Rembrandt*, nos. 142–144.
- 94 It is possible that one or more copies or replicas of one of Von Aachen’s self-portraits were in Amsterdam. Pieters Isaacs owned a copy by Von Aachen himself of his *Madona Laura* and a self-portrait that Von Aachen had sent him; see Karel van Mander, *Het Leven der Doorluchtighe Nederlandtsche en Hooghduytsche Schilders, in Het Schilder-Boeck* (Haarlem: Paschier van Wesbusch, 1603–04), fols. 290r and 291r. Isaacs might have made copies after Von Aachen when he was his pupil in Italy. On Isaacs, see Badeloch Noldus and Juliette Roding, eds., *Pieter Isaacs (1568–1625): Court Painter, Art Dealer and Spy* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2007), 75–92. Regarding Rembrandt’s later *Prodigal Son* in Dresden (fig. 40), there might have been a copy after the one made in Rome with “Madon[n]a Venusta” (see n. 115 in this article). Rembrandt’s pose in the *Laughing Self-Portrait* (fig. 38) is remarkably similar to Von Aachen’s second work.
- 95 Since a laughing (self-)portrait was something entirely new and unusual, Van Mander underscores twice that it showed a laughing face (see n. 96 and 97 in this article). Around the same time, we find in the early work of Annibale Carracci a laughing youngster of about 1582, probably a comedian (Galleria Borghese, Roma), and a painting of a very young laughing man (ca. 1588–1590); Collection Lauro-Bona, Bologna). See Daniele Benati and Eugenio Riecomini, *Annibale Carracci*, exh. cat (Milan: Mondadori Electa in association with Museo Civico, Bologna, 2006), nos. II, 9, and 10.

- 96 Van Mander, *Leven*, 289v–290r. “. . . maeckte hy onder ander zijn eyghen Conterfeytsel uyt den Spieghele al lacchende, oft een lacchende tronie, welcke uytnemende verwrocht en wonder fraey gedaen was” ([Von Aachen] made . . . his own portrait from the mirror while laughing, or a laughing face, which was excellently crafted and amazingly beautiful). This portrait, made in Venice, has been lost; see Thomas Fusenig, ed., *Hans von Aachen (1552–1615): Court Artist in Europe*, exh. cat. (Berlin and Munich: Deutscher Kunstverlag in association with Suermondt Ludwig Museum, Aachen, 2010), 88 and 263. See also Hessel Miedema, ed., *Karel van Mander: The Lives of the Illustrious Netherlandish and German Painters* (Doornspijk: Van Coevorden, 1994–1999), 5:251–252.
- 97 Van Mander, *Leven*, fol. 290 r.: “Hy heeft noch hem selven lacchende wijze geconterfeyt, oock neffens hem een Vrouw-mensch, Madona [sic] Venusta geheeten, spelende op een Luyt en hy achter haer staende met een schaels Wijns in d’handt” ([Von Aachen] portrayed himself laughing with and standing next to a woman, named Madon[n]a Venusta, playing the lute; he is standing behind her with a wine coupe in his hand). Stephanie Dickey discussed the painting extensively in relation to the etched *Laughing Self-Portrait* of 1630 and the so-called *Prodigal Son* (fig. 40). Rembrandt’s painted *Laughing Self-Portrait* of ca. 1628 (fig. 38), had not yet surfaced at that time; Stephanie Dickey, “Strategies of Self-Portraiture from Hans von Aachen to Rembrandt,” in *Hans von Aachen in Context*, ed. Lubomír Konecny and Stephan Vácha (Prague: Artefactum, 2012), 71–81.
- 98 Van Mander, *Leven*, fol. 290v: “den meesten en oppersten Const-beminder van de gantsche Weerelt.”
- 99 On Rembrandt’s early success with connoisseurs, see, among others, Eric Jan Sluijter, *Rembrandt and the Female Nude* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), 25–27, with further references. Stephanie Dickey earlier suggested that since Rembrandt was seeking patronage at Frederik Hendrick’s court, Von Aachen’s laughing self-portraiture would have been an inspiring example (Dickey, “Strategies,” 77).
- 100 On laughing about folly as a confirmation of norms, see Kolfin, “Regte Bootsensmakers,” 26–41, with further references. Von Aachen’s laughing self-portrait was a success; he painted himself like this probably even for the emperor Rudolph II in the *Laughing Self-Portrait with a Courtesan* (ca. 1596: Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna); see Fusenig, *Von Aachen*, no. 77.
- 101 About this stereotype, see Karel van Mander, *Den Grondt der Edel vry Schilder-const*, in *Schilder-Boeck*, cap. 1, verse 23 and 24. Also see Hessel Miedema, ed., *Karel van Mander: Den Grondt der edel vry schilder-const* (Utrecht: Haentjens Dekker & Gumbert, 1973), 2:372. In the introductory poem to Philip Angel’s *Lof der Schilder-konst*, painters are extensively described as drunkards, pub-crawlers, and merry-makers; Philips Angel, *Lof der Schilder-Konst* (Leiden: Willem Christiaens, 1642), 3. Later, Arnold Houbraken complains that in the previous century, painters drank too much; Arnold Houbraken, *De Groote Schouburgh der Nederlantsche Konstschilder en Schilderessen* (Amsterdam: Arnold Houbraken, 1718–1721), 3:248. Much information regarding texts and images of smoking, drinking, and carousing artists can be found in Ingrid A. Cartwright, “Hoe schilder hoe wilder: Dissolute Self-Portraits in Seventeenth-

- Century Dutch and Flemish Art” (PhD diss., University of Maryland, 2007), esp. chapters 3 and 4.
- 102 In many self-portrayals, references to vanity and transience are more or less explicitly present; see Raupp, *Untersuchungen zu Künstlerbildnis*, chapter 2.2 “Pictura vana,” 266–287; and Eric Jan Sluijter, “The Painter’s Pride: The Art of Capturing Transience in Self-Portraits from Isaac van Swanenburgh to David Bailly,” in *Modelling the Individual: Biography and Portrait in the Renaissance*, ed. Karl Enenkel, Betsy de Jong-Crane, and Peter Libregts (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1998), 172–196.
- 103 Van Mander, *Leven*, 61v (introduction to the lives of painters from antiquity): “wat mach beter rijmen op de schoon gestaltenis desen Jongelings in de Cristallinige clare fonteyne schaduwende, dan een constich geschildert Beelt uytnemende wel na t’leven gedaan, van een geleerde hant eens Const-rijcke Schilder?” (What can be more similar to the image of the beautiful appearance of this young man [Narcissus] in the reflecting crystal clear well, than a skillfully painted image excellently done from life, by the learned hand of an artful painter?). He adds that this is a wonderful comparison, “bevindende onse Conste alree de schaduw van het ’t rechte wesen, en den schijn van het zijn vergeleken” (considering that our art has already been compared to the shadow of true nature and the appearance of being). Samuel van Hoogstraten repeats Van Mander’s text quoted above; Samuel van Hoogstraten, *Inleiding tot de hooge schoole der schilderkonst* (Rotterdam: François van Hoogstraten, 1678), 25. See Eric Jan Sluijter, “In Praise of the Art of Painting,” in Eric Jan Sluijter, *Seductress of Sight: Studies in Dutch Art of the Golden Age* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2000), 252. About “deceit of the eye” (*oogbedrog*) in general, see Eric Jan Sluijter, *Seductress*, 9–13.
- 104 Rembrandt depicted his own laughing face, aware of his vanity, not only in one of his first self-portrayals but also in one of his last: *Self-Portrait as the Laughing Zeuxis* (ca. 1663; Wallraf-Richartz-Museum, Cologne). In interpretations by Albert Blankert and Ernst van de Wetering, the importance of the notion of vanity has been ignored: Albert Blankert, “Rembrandt, Zeuxis and Ideal Beauty,” in *Albert Blankert, Selected Writings on Dutch Painting: Rembrandt, Van Beke, Vermeer and Others* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2004), 251–259; Wetering, *Corpus* 4:556–559.
- 105 Rembrandt’s first self-portrait with a gorget shows his uninhibitedly laughing face. Although Chapman has argued for the patriotic connotations for this portrait, such connotations for many of the portraits with a gorget seems doubtful to me. See Chapman, *Self-Portraits*, 36–45; the painting in the Getty Museum had not yet surfaced when Chapman wrote her book.
- 106 I borrow the term “transgressive self-portrait” from Stephanie Dickey (Dickey, “Strategies,” 72). A striking comparison with Rembrandt’s painting is the laughing self-portrait by the young David de Haen (ca. 1617–1619; Private collection). He is holding a palette, but his theatrical dress has the large, round buttons of a fool’s costume; the corners are decorated with vine leaves, indicating the Bentvueghels’ ideology that creativity was fueled by wine. On De Haen, see Wayne Franits, *The Paintings of Dirck van Baburen* (Amsterdam: Benjamins Publishing Company, 2013), 12–19, nos. R 16, R 21. On the Bentvueghels and wine, see, among others, Annick Lemoine, “Sous les auspices de Bacchus: La Rome des bas-fonds, du Caravage aux Bentvueghels,” in *Les Bas-*

- fonds du baroque: La Rome du vice et de la misère*, ed. Francesca Cappelletti and Annick Lemoine, exh. cat. (Milan: Officina Libraria in association with the Académie de France, Rome, 2014), 23–42 and 155, fig. f.
- 107 Van Mander, *Grondt*, fol. 33 verso, verse 53. “... sietmen expresse / Glanzen en schijnen teghenstaen en keeren, / . . .” Lievens had used the gorget in 1624/25 for a soldier in his painting, *Tric-Trac Players* (Spier Collection, London); Schnackenburg, *Lievens*, 169–170, no. 9) and again in his so-called *Portrait of Rembrandt* of ca. 1629 (Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam); Schnackenburg, *Lievens*, 256–258, no. 74), and for a tronie of around the same time (Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Dresden); Schnackenburg, *Lievens*, 261, no. 76). The gorget was not part of the costume of “Caravaggist” soldiers and *bravi*. There is one tronie by Rubens of a young man with a gorget (Private collection); see Nico van Hout, *Corpus Rubenianum Ludwig Burckhard*, vol. 20, part 2, *Study Heads* (London: Harvey Miller Publishers, 2020), 1:126–127, no. 36b, and vol. 2, fig. 122. A replica/copy might have been a source of inspiration (the pose might confirm a relation, especially when Rembrandt’s small self-portrayal of 1629 [Alte Pinakothek, Munich] is considered as well). Rembrandt could have seen actual officers wearing a gorget in Leiden and painted ones in Joris van Schooten’s pictures of the Leiden Militia (1626; Lakenhal, Leiden).
- 108 The tradition goes back as far as the Greek comedy writer Menander. Erasmus mentions the soldier as one of the types with a fixed decorum in comedies (*decorum commune*); others are the amorous young man, the coaxing courtesan, the critical old man, etc. See Jeroen Jansen, *Decorum: Observaties over de literaire gepastheid in de renaissancistische poëtica* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2001), 256–263. Pyrgopolynices in Plautus’s *Miles Gloriosus* and Thraso from Terentius’s *Eunuchus* were prototypical. The latter was the most popular play in Latin schools, where Rembrandt might have become familiar with this figure; on school plays, see Anneke G. C. Fleurkens, “Schooltoneel tijdens de renaissance: Meer dan vrije expressie,” *Literatuur* 5 (1988): 75–82; and Jan Bloemendal, *Spiegel van het dagelijks leven? Latijnse school en toneel in de Noordelijke Nederlanden in de zestiende en zeventiende eeuw* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2003), 31–33. Thraso was the model for Bredero’s Hopman Roemert (see n. 46 in this article).
- 109 Minderaa and Zaalberg, *Werken van Gerbrand Adriaensz. Bredero*, 122: “Inhoudt van ’tspel van de Moor” (Content of the play about the Moor): “... de meer als sotte vermetelheyt van den hovaerdighen en overdwaalschen Kapiteyn, van welcker eyghen behaaglycke mallicheyt een yder hem spieghel, en bekenne syne gebreken in aller ootmoedicheyt.”
- 110 Ernst van de Wetering sees it as Rembrandt just using himself as the most patient model (see n. 79 in this article); Ernst van de Wetering, “Rembrandt Laughing, ca. 1628: A Painting Resurfaces,” *Kroniek van het Rembrandthuis* (2007), 18–40, esp. 35–36.
- 111 Seymour Slive, *Frans Hals* (London: Phaidon, 1974), vol. 2, nos. 64 and 65, dated by Slive ca. 1628–1630. See also Noel Schiller, in Tummers, Kolfin, and Hillegers, *Kunst van het lachen*, 78–80, with further references. The model for the portrayals of Pekelharing seems to be the same actor (depicted in “blackface”) as the *Merry Drinker* in the Rijksmuseum (Christopher Atkins in a talk at a symposium at the Frans Hals Museum, January 8, 2022).

- 112 See Sluijter, *Rivals*, 27–59. These include *Abraham’s Sacrifice* (1635; Hermitage, St. Petersburg), *Samson Threatening his Father-in-Law* (ca. 1635; Staatliche Gemäldegalerie, Berlin), and *Belshazzar’s Feast* (ca. 1635; The National Gallery, London).
- 113 See Kolfin, “Regte Bootsensmakery.”
- 114 My paper on this painting (“Rembrandt’s ‘Prodigal Son’ in Dresden (1635) and Comedy”), originally presented at the Rembrandt conference in Herstmonceux July 7, 2023, will be published as an article in 2025. For several decades, the painting has been titled *Self-Portrait as the Prodigal Son in the Tavern*.
- 115 In 1984, Gary Schwartz suggested a connection with Van Mander’s description of Von Aachen’s Self-Portrait with “*donna Venusta*”; Gary Schwartz, *Rembrandt: Zijn leven, zijn schilderijen* (Maarssen: Gary Schwartz, 1984), 192. This was elaborated on by Ernst van de Wetering in *Corpus*, 4:228–229; and Dickey, “Strategies,” 77–79 (see n. 94 in this article). Hans-Joachim Raupp identified Von Aachen’s painting as a precursor to Rembrandt’s work; Raupp, *Untersuchungen*, 315; and Chapman, *Self-Portraits*, 118. In 2015, Wetering saw Rembrandt emulating Van Mander’s description as the *raison d’être* of Rembrandt’s painting.
- 116 See Elmer Kolfin, *The Young Gentry at Play: Northern Netherlandish Scenes of Merry Companies 1610–1645* (Leiden: Primavera, 2005), esp. 248.
- 117 See notes 101 and 106 in this article.
- 118 Wetering, *Corpus*, 4, nos. 18 (ca. 1627/28; J. Paul Getty Museum), 19 (ca. 1627/28; Indianapolis Museum of Art), 30 (ca. 1629; Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg, and Mauritshuis, The Hague), 96 (1633, Musée du Louvre, Paris), 134 (1635; Buckland Abbey, National Trust), 135 (ca. 1635; Gemäldegalerie, Dresden), and 146 (ca. 1633–36; Gemäldegalerie, Berlin).
- 119 Respectively Wetering, *Corpus*, 4, nos. 19 (ca. 1627/28; Indianapolis Museum of Art), 20 (ca. 1628; Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam), 29 (1629; Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston), 31 (1629; Alte Pinakothek, Munich), 69 (1632; Private collection), 122 (1634; Private collection), 123 (1634; Gemäldegalerie, Berlin), 134 (1635; Buckland Abbey, National Trust), and 146 (1633–36; Gemäldegalerie, Berlin).
- 120 Bruyn et al., *Corpus*, 3: no. C 92, reattributed by Wetering to Rembrandt: Wetering, *Corpus*, 4:604, Corrigenda III, no. C92, see also 232–238; and *Corpus*, 4:545, no. 134. Although he attributed it to Rembrandt, Wetering still kept the heading of the entry as “Rembrandt (and workshop?).” I consider it a work by Rembrandt, to which someone in the studio might have contributed the feathers and mantle.
- 121 *Self-portrait with Gorget* (ca. 1629; Germanisches Nationalmuseum, Nuremberg) and *Self-portrait with Gorget* (ca. 1629; Mauritshuis, The Hague). In the Mauritshuis version, Rembrandt moved the head to an even more upright position to emphasize haughtiness. See Eric Jan Sluijter, “The *Tronie of a Young Officer with a Gorget* in the Mauritshuis: A Second Version by Rembrandt Himself?” *Oud Holland* 114, nos. 2/4 (2000): 188–194.
- 122 Van Mander, *Grondt*, fol. 25v., cap. 6, verse 32.
- 123 For Saskia’s dress with a transparent veil, compare the drawing of a woman in theater dress in the Lugt Collection, Fondation Custodia, Paris (Schatborn and

- Hinterding, *Rembrandt*, no. D336, dated ca. 1639). See also the woman in De Gheyn's print, *Music Making and Dancing Buffoons* (fig. 18).
- 124 Gemäldegalerie Alte Meister, Kassel. The signature and date are probably non-authentic, according to Bruyn et al., *Corpus*, 2:529, no. A72, even though 1634 is the most likely date for the painting. They accepted the face, helmet, gorget, and scarf as by Rembrandt. Wetering, in *Corpus*, 4:216–217, considered it a workshop product; it was also de attributed by Gerson and Grimm. In accordance with Bruyn, I am quite convinced that the face, helmet, plumes, gorget, and scarf are by Rembrandt himself, in contrast to the coarsely painted cloak and background.
- 125 Apart from comical peasants, beggars, and quacks, such overweight male bodies appear in Rembrandt's paintings as elderly biblical kings (with negative associations), such as Saul, Cyrus, Belshazzar, Uzziah, or the high priest in Judas Repentant; and in his drawings and prints as elderly Eastern European and "Oriental" figures (or actors in such roles). Twice he depicted a portly Eastern potentate with his own features, apparently in comical roles: in *Self-Portrait with Poodle* (1631; Musée du Petit Palais, Paris) and in the etched *Self-Portrait as "Oriental" Leaning on a Sabre* (fig. 13). See also n. 68 in this article.
- 126 Constantijn Huygens, "Een Comediant," in *Zedeprinten* (1623), published online by Leiden University Department of Dutch Language and Culture, accessed June 30, 2024, <https://www.let.leidenuniv.nl/Dutch/Huygens/HUYG23.html#CH1623015>: "En onder 'tmommen-hoofsteeckt noch de selve mann."