A Selection of the Poems of Sir Constantijn Huygens
(1596-1687)

Amsterdam Studies in the Dutch Golden Age

A Selection of the Poems of Sir Constantijn Huygens (1596-1687)

A parallel text
translated, with an introduction and appendices by

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and
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For Kate and Janey

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Preface

It seems strange that, more than four hundred years after his birth, Constantijn Huygens, the Dutch polymath, poet, composer, statesman and translator, should need to be re-introduced to readers on both sides of the Narrow Seas. But this would appear to be the case: hardly any of his work is in print in the Netherlands, despite recent scholarly attention paid to it there, and his name is known only to a very few English-speaking readers as a historical figure, as the father of a more famous son, or as the friend and translator of John Donne. One poignant example of this neglect: Johannes Worp's monumental edition of Huygens' poems appears to have slumbered undisturbed for the last thirty odd years in the University Library at Cambridge, ever since, if the reservation slip marking one of the Donne translations is to be believed, E.M. Forster last closed volume three at some point in the 1950s.

This act of re-introduction is the prime directive of this book: we feel that the range and diversity of *The Cornflowers of the Lord of Zuilichem* are overdue for reconsideration in an Europe increasingly interested in its international past. For the English-speaking reader, this book will, of necessity, be in the nature of a first introduction to an unfamiliar, if compelling, voice of late Renaissance Europe. In some respects, it also looks at the complexities of the culture out of which that voice speaks.

The visual culture of the seventeenth century in the United Provinces needs no introduction, but particularly for the English-speaking reader, this book offers a first insight into the complementary literary, architectural and musical continuum out of which the paintings came. There is no single figure better fitted to act as a representative of this culture than Constantijn Huygens: his long life as a writer spanned the crucial century of the consolidation of the Dutch Republic. This can be expressed in terms of the English culture with which he was much concerned throughout his life. His first visit to England was as a young man moving in the most cultivated and outward-looking circles of Jacobean England; he was knighted by James I, and he enjoyed the friendship of John Donne. His last visit to England was in 1671, in the retinue of the future King William III; amongst his last poems, written in the 1680s, are a few epigrams addressed to William's consort Mary. Apart from the length and productivity of his life, his achievements were centred in those areas of cultural endeavour where the new Dutch Republic interacted most influentially with early modern international culture. He patronized and corresponded with some

of the leading painters of the Low Countries. His work is rich in poems about painting and metaphors drawn from the visual arts. He was intensely involved with those botanical and horticultural innovations which affected the whole of Europe. He lived to the full as a citizen of a society which in many ways anticipated the eighteenth-century enlightenment, not only as the supportive parent of the natural philosopher Christiaan Huygens, but also as the friend and correspondant of Descartes, Mersenne and many others. Much of the evidence for Huygens' musical activities is now lost to us, but it is possible to deduce from the surviving *Pathodia* that he was active in furthering the experimental styles of the emergent Baroque, particularly in explorations of the possibilities of word-setting.

Given Huygens' vast output in all these fields, it is impossible for a volume of this scope to provide even an introduction to the full range of his activities. Questions of inclusion and exclusion have been a constant focus for debate while making the selection of poems (forty-two out of, literally, thousands). To some extent, we have inevitably been influenced by the canon of Huygens' work as it has established itself in the Dutch speaking countries: thus, *Batava Tempe*, *Hofwijk*, the sonnets on the festivals of the Christian year and The Day's Work have their place, as it were, by right. Next, we have attempted to demonstrate something of Huygens' stylistic and linguistic range: to sample his many-sided mind at work on questions of music, theology and aesthetics; to emphasize his support for, and interaction with, the distinguished women writers of early modern Holland. Above all, we have tried to give a sense of a writer who was very much the product of an unique society within Europe: that Dutch Republic which can in one sense be perceived as anachronistically diverse, tolerant and relaxed, and in another sense as irretrievably alien in the inflexible Calvinism of many of its elite members.

All selections naturally distort the complete picture, but we have attempted to include enough of Huygens' diversity to suggest at least his breadth and individuality. At this point we would like to clarify the principles followed in the translations. For the Dutch-speaking reader, these should serve as glosses wherever Huygens' early modern Dutch, so much modelled on humanist Latin, diverges most acutely from the language of today. For the English-speaking reader, the intention has been essentially to preserve as far as possible the sense of the original, even if this should lead occasionally to the unavoidable use of an archaism or inversion to secure the true rendering of an idea. Throughout an attempt has been made to translate line for line and to keep what might be called interpolated glosses, paraphrases and explanations out of the texts themselves by confining

them to the footnotes. After much experimentation, rhyme was reluctantly abandoned in the translations. At their best Huygens' poems are extraordinarily dense of texture, as dense as the poems of Donne in English, and any attempt to rhyme consistently seemed to result in a poor compromise, in the abandonment of whole layers of meaning to the exigencies of diction. Within these limitations, the translations try to be readable, to convey something of the richness of diction and phrasing of their originals. A single exception has been made to the rule of metrical fidelity: the iambic hexameter reads generally so ploddingly in English that a variant of the pseudo-classical hexameter of Elizabethan poetic experiment has been employed for variety.

A summary discussion of Huygens' interactions with the English literature of his day will be found in Appendix III. Appendix II gives some account of his achievement as a writer of English. Appendix I demonstrates his extraordinary abilities in other European languages. By gathering this material in appendices, we have tried to disencumber the text of excessive annotation, exclusively directed to the English-speaking reader. For the same reason, the introductory material addresses itself particularly to those readers, giving a brief description of Huygens' cultural context and a rather more extended account of his life. We were always acutely aware that two distinct sets of readers, with widely differing needs, were being addressed. While it is hoped that English-language readers will find most of the material needed to understand the texts, we must ask the indulgence of Dutch-speaking readers if too much material is included which is to them common knowledge.

There remains the pleasant task of acknowledging the generous help which we have received with the compilation of this book. In the Netherlands, Ton Harmsen of the Leiden University Dutch Department kindly guided us through those regions of early modern Dutch where the dictionaries deserted us; Peter Liebregts and Frans Blom piloted us through uncharted regions of Baroque Latin where reason and conjecture failed alike; Ad Leerintveld gave us the benefit of his meticulous scholarship and much encouragement; Martina Noteboom offered inspired solutions at moments of linguistic stalemate; Ineke Verbeek-Kremer was uncommonly generous in obtaining texts and material; Alastair Hamilton, Bart Westerweel, Robin Smith, Ruud Hisgen, Matthijs Engelberts, Alexander Schimmelpenninck and Jane Mallinson offered friendship and support. In Warwick, Jane Stevenson constantly furthered the project as historian, latinist and reader of the images of Renaissance Europe (it is hard to quantify how much this book owes to her); Dominic Montserrat offered

his unique knowledge both of the ancient languages and of the operation of consumer societies; Kate Chedgzoy read the English versions to their great improvement. Dr Malcolm Carpenter, acting for the University of Warwick itself, helped the project immensely in obtaining grants for travel and secretarial assistance. Joanna Callaghan undertook secretarial duties with uncomplaining efficiency. In Oxford, Nigel Smith as usual gave generously of his knowledge of early modern England; Sandra Raphael was the Dodonean oracle on all matters to do with plants and gardens. In London, Theo Hermans gave considerable assistance. In Scotland, Bob Hendrie gave generous help with the Latin. In Amsterdam, Saskia de Vries has been the most efficient and the most encouraging of publishers. We thank them all.

Peter Davidson/Adriaan van der Weel
Warwick/Leiden,
October 1995

For this revised edition we have taken the opportunity to correct errors noted by reviewers of the first edition, to revise a few details of the translations, and to add new texts and versions of a few of Huygens' poems about the visual arts of his era (Appendix IV).

Peter Davidson/Adriaan van der Weel
Edinburgh/Leiden,
January 2015

Textual Note

There is no single modern edition of Huygens' poetic works. We have chosen to use J.A. Worp's monumental nine-volume edition based on the manuscripts (referred to as Huygens 1892 to Huygens 1899) as our main text, departing from it only where modern scholarly editions are available (Huygens 1968; Huygens 1973; Huygens 1974; Huygens 1976; Huygens 1977). Line numbering and titles generally follow the editions used, but the square brackets used by Worp to show that a title was not in the MS have been omitted. The poems are given in chronological order, following Worp's dating.

The spelling of i and j, and u and v, which were fully interchangeable in the seventeenth century, has been made to conform to today's usage. Some textual problems, notably in the Spanish poetry, have been solved by emendations between square brackets. Obvious errors and some few confusing spellings in the modern editions have been silently corrected for the convenience of the reader.

For the texts and titles of the poems by John Donne discussed in Appendix III, we have used Helen Gardner's Clarendon Press editions of *The Elegies and Songs and Sonnets* (Donne 1965) and *The Divine Poems* (Donne 1978).

Introduction

Dutch Society in the Seventeenth Century

It is a cliché to describe any individual as a child of his time. Yet Constantijn Huygens demonstrates continually in his writing an overwhelming sense of being the product of a particular place at a specific historical moment. He is conscious of being the remarkable product of a remarkable nation: the Dutch Republic in the seventeenth century. Holland had invented itself at the end of the sixteenth century when the Low Countries, a group of loosely federated provinces and dukedoms with no history of political independence, individually or collectively, coalesced into nationhood under the leadership of William of Orange. If William was the father of the new Republic, then it could reasonably be said that Constantijn's father, William's secretary, was one of its godparents. The political life of his country was, for Constantijn Huygens, neither an accomplished fact nor a distant, recessive background to his personal concerns. He was a child in a household that lived and breathed the politics of a new nation which was labouring in the process of self-fashioning. His father's aspirations as both patriot and parent were profoundly interrelated; and thus Constantijn was deliberately moulded and shaped as the ideal son of the new Republic.

Such a sense of effective centrality to national concerns would be, for anyone, a heady atmosphere in which to come to maturity. In Huygens' case it was all the more so because the new nation was realising spectacular success by flouting every political rule of early modern Europe. The achievements of the new Dutch Republic were dizzying, unprecedented, colossal; yet the whole trend of medieval and Renaissance thinking about the operations of fortune meant that so remarkable an exercise in creating prosperity and liberty out of beleaguered adversity could not be considered secure: … the joys which fortune grants us / Are raised up unto their highest / When they're nearest to their fall. Especially in the Golden Age of the Dutch Republic, Holland's educated population can be imagined at various moments in their lives to be counting under their breaths, as it were, awaiting the crash.

What were the peculiar features of this Dutch civilization which formed Huygens and shaped his immense poetic oeuvre? Only a few relevant features can be suggested, one of the most noteworthy being an assimilation towards the middle. We think, generally, of early modern societies as sharing the general characteristics of the Ancien Regime in France: a fixed

chasm dividing a wealthy and confident aristocracy from a numerous and downtrodden peasantry, with a small mercantile and professional class existing between these extremes. It is not appropriate in this context to pursue the extent to which this picture is or is not a cliché; the point here is that it is in no sense true of the United Provinces of the Netherlands. By the standards of France, England and Spain, the aristocracy was relatively small, weak and impoverished, making up at most 1% of the total population, even including what would in Ireland be called squireens, and in Scotland, bonnet-lairds (Parker 1977, p. 48). Thus, it was unable to impose its class interests on those of the state as a whole. At the same time, the standard of general prosperity was high. The poor, both rural and urban, were better fed than in any other country of early modern Europe, and their diets far more varied. Certainly there were shortages from time to time, but famine and mass starvation did not visit the Netherlands as they visited France. The Dutch population was unusually literate and unusually urban. Women were, in general, better off than in other states: domestic violence was an offence consistently punished by law, and women, particularly widows, had legal rights which they did not enjoy in other countries. There were few witchcraft trials in the Netherlands, an important index of collective sanity. The Dutch were the first to make a practice of religious toleration; this brought the most able marginal groups of all nations, from Portuguese Sephardim to English Calvinists, either to the Dutch universities or into the commercial life of the Dutch cities.

The Dutch Republic's emphasis on freedom (in the modern sense of the word and including freedom of conscience), one of the driving forces behind its anomalous development, was not always regarded with much understanding, let alone sympathy, by foreign observers. One of those who both understood and sympathized was the Englishman Sir William Temple (ambassador to the Republic, 1667-1670), who observed its everyday guise as 'general liberty and ease, not only in point of conscience, but all others that serve to the commodiousness and quiet of life, every man following his own way, minding his own business, and little enquiring into other men's' (*Observations upon the United Provinces of the Netherlands*, Cambridge, 1932, p. 134, quoted by Israel 1995, p. 4).

The structure of Dutch society has been described by Schama as 'institutional incoherence': 'to be Dutch was to be local, parochial, traditional and customary' (Schama 1987, pp. 65, 62). The new state, in its evolution, had not overturned the traditional structures of its different and extremely varied components: there were some 700 local legal codes in the Netherlands in the late sixteenth century, jealously guarded as defences for local 'liberties' and

'privileges' (Parker 1977, p. 34). Any centralization in the political structure of the Republic was limited to an astonishing degree. It thus could not claim the right to interfere unduly with the lives of its citizens. One result of this was that the Dutch state possessed no effective mechanisms for interfering with freedom of speech, a cause of deep offence to foreign powers, notably England, which watched without pleasure the development of a vociferous group of Royalist refugees in The Hague in the 1640s and 50s. In a Europe of absolutist states, the Dutch Republic avoided prescriptive centralization, accepting the right of provincial town councils to order their territory by custom and negotiation. The Republic was ruled, in effect, by consensus rather than force, and achieved this by the condition once recommended by Edward Gibbon as the central maxim of good government, 'a benign and salutary neglect'.

In its economic as in its political life, the Dutch Republic stood apart from its rivals. It grew and prospered where other European states declined, or struggled, and did so by breaking every received axiom of seventeenth-century economics (Schama 1987, p. 223). The Dutch state was a type of federation, at a time when political economists insisted that a centralized state under the leadership of an absolute ruler was the only workable form of political life. Its population trebled from 1550 to 1650, while the populations of other European nations remained static, or even declined. It was considered axiomatic by the European mercantile community that only high rates of interest could preserve a sufficiency of coin to keep commerce afloat, but the Dutch republic both accumulated capital and circulated it at the very low rate of three per cent. The lack of a strong, centralized government, rather than weakening the young Dutch state, actually made it remarkably flexible in meeting emergencies of all kinds.

The wealth of the Republic was derived largely from trade and industry, from use of the sea and of its network of rivers and inland waterways: the deltas of three major European rivers, the Rhine, the Maas, and the Scheldt. The wealth of the Republic was therefore bourgeois, and urban. In both England and France, prosperous individuals sought, as rapidly as possible, to become landed gentry, to transmute wealth, however it had been gained, into estates so that they (or at least their heirs) could live off their rents, like aristocrats. This was not a Dutch pattern. While the ownership of handsome country houses, such as the splendid villas built along the river Vecht, between Amsterdam and Utrecht, was understandably a desideratum for urban Dutch merchant princes, merchants they remained. The result was that the intellectual, cultural and political life of the country was shaped primarily by an urban, mercantile patriciate rather than by

a rural, rentier aristocracy. This resulted, on the whole, in an unusually homogeneous culture. For example, the patrician poet Jacob Cats enjoyed a contemporary reputation which spread far beyond his own class. His works were published in expensive quarto volumes, with engravings, and simultaneously in much larger editions, in small octavo volumes decorated with inexpensive woodcuts, which were widely circulated. The shapers of Dutch culture were not merely at pains to *demonstrate* that they shared the hopes, interests and aspirations of the majority, like the self-consciously 'democratic' leaders of more recent times, there seems every reason to believe that they actually did so.

It must be conceded here that, however he may have perceived his own centrality, Huygens himself stood, in some respects, at an oblique angle to the life of the Republic. His ambiguity is, essentially, defined by an ambiguity within the structure of the Republic itself: although a Republic, the constituent provinces had princely *stadhouders*, and among these the *stadhouder* of the dominant province of Holland held a position of some considerable power. It was at the modest Princely Court of Holland that Huygens passed the greater part of his working life. This is not the place for a disquisition on the nature of the *stadhouderschap* of the Province of Holland held by successive Princes of the House of Orange (for which see, for example, Israel 1995, pp. 300-306), but a definition of Huygens' own position as courtier follows from the unique position of the Dutch *stadhouder*. While the *stadhouder* held a position of true symbolic, executive and military importance, his place within the structure of the state itself was strictly circumscribed: his position was not modelled on that of a king, but rather on that of the royal provincial governors who had governed Holland on behalf of the Spaniards in earlier generations, and answering, in rough theory, to the abstraction of the States General, which held sovereign power (Parker 1977, pp. 144-45 and 242-43). Huygens, therefore, was a courtier within a democracy, a royal secretary within a republic. He had little personal involvement in the mercantile life of his country, however central he might have been to those intellectual Dutch circles which drew the majority of their members from the mercantile elite. He was technically an aristocrat, though a self-made one – a *homo novus* – the Lord of Zuilichem, but an aristocrat on a scale as modest as that on which his masters were princes. This modesty of scale, this status as a democratic aristocrat, is affirmed by the houses which Huygens built for himself, and by the way in which he wrote about them: his handsome house in the centre of The Hague was one of the finest houses in the place, comparable to the Mauritshuis itself in style and dimensions, but in sharp distinction to elite houses elsewhere

in Europe, it is very much a house in a street, not seeking to withdraw itself from the daily life of the town. In equally sharp distinction to the mentality of elite poets elsewhere in Europe, it is contiguity and familiarity with his fellow-citizens which Huygens celebrates in his early poem on The Hague, *Batava Tempe* (no. **2** in this collection). Despite the elite nature of his own house (and the family house in the Voorhout which had preceded it), it is the communal and public space under the lime-trees which the poem describes and enjoys. Similarly, Huygens' country-house of Hofwijk, for all its extensive gardens, does not withdraw into Edenic solitude: the public road crossed the gardens near the house, and the Vliet waterway passes under the windows of the house itself. In terms of size, it is again modest, much smaller than most of the country-houses of the Netherlands, a single tower only three bays wide and deep. Again, Huygens' poem *Hofwijk* (no. **30**) does not see the country-house as a place of withdrawal from communal life, but only as a personal place of withdrawal from the responsibilities of the Court: Huygens' gardens and the road and canal through them are peopled with travellers, farmers and bargemen as well as with the virtuosi who have come to see a house which is expounded as an inclusive rather than an exclusive place.

Thus, although in some ways marginal to the central project of the Dutch Republic, it is clear that Huygens, in many others, perceives himself as a citizen amongst citizens, sharing common systems of belief and expectation. The Dutch culture of the seventeenth century includes a number of almost universal tropes and preoccupations, common reference points which surface inevitably in his poems. One is the question of the origins of the Dutch state: two mythic structures, the historical and the religious, intertwined in the communal attempt to consolidate a myth of origin for a new country. Historically, the Dutch chose to look back to the Batavians who, according to the Roman historian Tacitus in the first century AD, maintained their independence from the might of the Roman Empire; an obvious parallel to, or precedent for, the recent Dutch struggle for independence from Spain. This, then, was a myth of hard-won sovereignty. Religiously, in common with their fellow-Calvinists elsewhere in Europe, the Dutch identified themselves with the Chosen People, the Jews in the time of the Old Testament. Like them, the Dutch had come from slavery and idolatry under the hegemony of Catholic Spain (as the Jews came from slavery and idolatry in the Land of Egypt) through an immense struggle of heroic self-definition to freedom and godliness in the Land of Canaan (the Netherlands). In such a reading, the Dutch were a people favoured by God, but the story of the Jews (who, of course, ultimately lost their sovereign independence) made this myth a

source of anxious determination to stay on the path of righteousness rather than a cause for any sort of complacency. This shared metaphor surfaces in Huygens' remarkable sonnet 'Easter' (no. **23**) which adds a third layer to its mapping of the events of Passover onto Christian redemption through the sacrifice of Christ: the metaphoric exposition of the Dutch nation as the pilgrim Israelites, as the paradigmatic Christian people, coming out of slavery through the waters of the Red Sea, waters which stand ready to flood and chastise them should they break their covenant.

It is possible to explore further into the culture of the seventeenth-century Netherlands, and Huygens' own place within it, by further examination of the Republic's governing metaphors. Dutch writers and artists repeatedly represent their state as a garden, the Hollandse Tuin, not walled, but surrounded by a modest fence of hurdles, guarded by the Dutch Lion, and sometimes containing the female personification of Holland, the Hollandse Maagd (Schama 1987, pp. 69-73). This metaphor, of course, finds rich and complex echoes in Huygens' poem *Hofwijk*, but it is also worth thinking about in itself. Representing the state as a garden rather than a fortress suggests a particular stance towards it. Gardens require constant work and upkeep, the art of the gardener requires the exercise of viligant expertise to keep the garden from returning to a state of nature. Gardens are civilized, their associations are of innocent enjoyment and healthful recreation rather than of exclusive productivity. The Hollandse Tuin suggests a state that thinks of itself as existing for the pleasure as well as the profit of its members. Gardens are not free, moreover, from otherworldly associations. 'Paradise' is simply another word for garden; and long before the Hollandse Maagd was to be discovered in her flowery arbour, many images of the Virgin Mary placed her in a garden among the roses. The botanical garden (one of the world's first was founded in Holland in the seventeenth century, at the University of Leiden) was specifically and consciously referential, in its Edenic plan, to the Earthly Paradise from which Adam and Eve had long ago been expelled. In a sense, therefore, the Hollandse Tuin was itself an earthly paradise; a kingdom of the saints upon earth. These ideas are not only echoed in *Hofwijk*, they are realized in the democratic Arcadia of *Batava Tempe* and elsewhere in Huygens' work.

Another governing metaphor of seventeenth-century Dutch literature is, inevitably, water, since the country owed its continued existence to human ingenuity in repelling the sea. Following this, it is easy to see the importance of the concept of *overvloed* (both 'drowning' and 'surfeit') to the Dutch mentality. To assiduous readers of the Bible who saw in the Old Testament a shadow of themselves, Noah's flood spoke, not metaphorically

but actually, to a real anxiety that their land could simply be washed away. The collapse of a dike was a very real threat to lives and livelihoods. The seventeenth century was an era of heroic reclamation, but this must be set against a background of the continuing threat of disaster. Under these circumstances, it is very easy to see the Hand of God in tide, storm and high water:

> the waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid: the depths also were troubled.
> The clouds poured out water: the skies sent out a sound: thine arrows also went abroad (Psalm 72, 16-17).

In Huygens' works this metaphor finds its inevitable place: in the imagery of the Red Sea in 'Easter', in the desolate sea-imagery of the conclusion of *The Day's Work* (no. **14**), in the late, spontaneous celebration of the retreat of the waters in 'Stillness and Snow after Storm and High Water' (no. **41**).

The Dutch might think of themselves as a chosen people, but God had scourged, cleansed and punished his first chosen people often enough. The Dutch read the metaphor of water simultaneously as threat and as renewal, the possibility of cleansing and a fresh start as well as of destruction. Water is cleansing, whether on the scale of the Almighty washing human evil from the earth or of the housewife scrubbing her already immaculate doorstep. The importance of enjoying prosperity circumspectly, without undue extravagance, and certainly without any display of God-offending *hubris*, is expressed in a wide variety of Dutch literature. The idea of washing and cleansing appears repeatedly in the poems of Huygens: continually, his metaphor for repentence, for a 'fresh start' in the Christian sense, is that of clean clothes. This image provides the mainspring of the sonnet 'New Year' (no. **19**), and is also powerfully present in the poems on the Holy Communion, particularly in 'Again on the Holy Communion' (no. **29**). The possible multivalency of the idea of scrubbing clean is further illustrated by an emblem from Roemer Visscher's *Sinnepoppen* (Schama 1987, p. 379): a great hand, wielding a scrubbing brush, emerges from the clouds poised over a generalized landscape: the motto is 'Afkomst seyt niet' ('pedigree counts for nothing'). The Dutch, as a nation, had wiped the slate clean. Any aspirant individual could 'start clean', unencumbered by the past, as Huygens continually evokes with the image of a literally clean start in his poems of religious repentence. But at the same time, the world could be scrubbed clean of the Dutch at any time when God chose to do so. If

pedigree counts for nothing, then what you do in the present, and intend to do in the future, matters very much indeed.

The last crucial metaphor of the Dutch Republic to be considered here is that of the family. In a sense this metaphor concludes an inevitable sequence: with the enemy and the waters at the gates, within the garden of the just and prosperous Republic, the inevitable unit of social organization and of thought about society is the family. Rather than devolving power down from a king, as observed above, the Dutch state evolved power up from the family unit, on the principle classically expressed in the first book of Aristotle's *Politics*. The family was the fountain and source of authority; a microcosm of the state. Father stood at the head, with Mother as his principal lieutenant, subordinate but with a proper authority of her own. Then came children and servants: figures on mean household size suggest remarkably few of either, by the standards of other early modern nations; consequently, they would appear to have held a significantly high value as individuals. It was the particular job of the household to create order, dignity and cleanliness out of the potential chaos of human life in crowded towns: one expression of this is the way in which responsibility for the cleanliness of the street, as well as of the house, devolved upon the household. Huygens, incidentally, demonstrates that he shares this national interest in cleanliness by discussing his ideas for the cleaning of London's streets with King Charles (see Appendix II).

The epicentre of dirt, disorder and raw appetite within the household is, of course, the human child: a paradox which Dutch thinkers of the seventeenth century took very seriously. A member of Huygens' circle, Jan van Beverwijk of Dordrecht, remarks that 'Republics that set most store by their good citizens give most attention to the upbringing of their children'. By the standards of other nations, many elite Dutch men spent a positively unnatural amount of time with their own children. Constantijn Huygens' own father, at a time when he was actively engaged in one of the most onerous jobs at the Court of the *stadhouder*, undertook his sons' early education himself: it is probably true to say that he saw his efforts on the national and domestic scale as macrocosmic and microcosmic expressions of the same constellation of virtues. Constantijn, in turn, was to do the same. The inculcation of a civic sensibility was so important it had to be done by those who felt it most acutely; it should not be entrusted to outsiders. The family is a microcosm of the state, and on its success in the processing of human raw material into responsible individuals, the collective physical and social survival ultimately depends. Throughout his works, concern with family and children is perhaps the subject, after religion, to which Huygens

devotes his most intense attention. *The Day's Work*, which after the death of Huygens' wife turns itself naturally into a lament and her great memorial, centres on the quotidian, on death breaking the ordered progress of the household and its day; many of Huygens' poems focus particularly on the education of his sons, including the moving Latin epigram 'The Lake' (no. **17**); one of Huygens' chief prose works, the Latin *Autobiography* was written for the instruction of his sons. In many other poems (*Hofwijk* and 'Again on Painting', nos. **30** and **33**) the idea of the household and the family, the continuance of the nation through the continuance of the family, is subtly omnipresent. It is significant that the first sacrifice which Huygens offers to the suffering Christ in 'Good Friday' (no. **20**) is that, literally, of 'my hearth and my house', the central element of his own life.

Constantijn Huygens

As might be expected of a man who seems effortlessly to command the full range of humanist skills and concerns, Huygens was the child of educated and internationalist parents, who had played no small part in the formation of the Dutch republic. His father, Christiaan Huygens, was born in 1551, the youngest of the five sons of Cornelis Huygens of Ter Heide, near Breda, in Brabant. His grandmother, Geertruyd Bax, was also from a distinguished Brabant family conspicuous for its service to the house of Nassau. Christiaan read law at Douai, then took a position serving the Chancellor of Brabant. In 1578, when he was twenty-seven, he became one of the four personal secretaries of William of Orange-Nassau ('William the Silent': 1533-1584). This put him at the absolute centre of the Dutch struggle for independence. After William's assassination, Christiaan Huygens continued to be a man of considerable importance in the life of the Republic, since he then became one of the five secretaries to the Raad van State (State Council), an advisory body to the Staten-Generaal, which played an important part in the Treaty of Nonsuch, to give England some (temporary) say in Dutch affairs in return for military aid against the King of Spain (Parker 1977, pp. 217 and 242-43; Israel 1995, pp. 219-30; 293). From 1585 to 1587 this governing body had Elizabeth's favourite Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, as its president. It consisted of Maurits of Nassau and his cousin Willem Lodewijk, twelve delegates from the provincial States, and other principal office-holders. It also included two English members, one of whom was Sir Thomas Bodley, far better known as the creator of the Bodleian Library in the University

of Oxford. Thus, Christiaan Huygens was brought into contact with the English from a very early stage in his career.

In August 1592, in his fortieth year, Christiaan married the thirty-one-year-old Suzanna Hoefnagel, youngest daughter of Jacques Hoefnagel and Elisabeth Vezeler. The Hoefnagels were a rich family of merchants and painters originating from Antwerp, who had arrived in Holland as refugees. Their first child, Maurits, was born on 12 May 1595, and their second, Constantijn, was born on 4 September 1596. His name, like that of his older brother, was chosen for political reasons. Maurits was named in compliment to the House of Orange. Constantijn's reflects Christiaan's birth in a village within the jurisdiction of the city of Breda, in Brabant, a city which was one of the staunchest supporters of the House of Orange in its struggle against Spain, and which had as a result acquired a reputation for unparallelled constancy. Christiaan, writing to the Burgomasters and Councillors of Breda, declared that 'in view of their worshipful Constancy', he wished his son 'to bear the memory thereof in his name' (Bachrach 1962, p. 35).

Both names therefore underscore Christiaan's faithful service to the Dutch state; and that of Constantijn also reveals the personal quality which he most valued. Constantijn Huygens' very name inscribes him in the emergence of the Republic, and he demonstrates throughout his oeuvre his awareness that this act of naming was meaningful, not arbitrary. It is also very clear that this meaning is one which he accepted into the definition of his own life and its significance, not merely one which he felt his father imposed on him.

Christiaan's family was completed by four daughters following each other in quick succession, Elisabeth (b. 1598), Geertruyd (b. 1599), Catharina (b. 1601), and Constantia (b. 1602). Elizabeth and Catharina died young, at fourteen and sixteen, respectively, but Geertruyd and Constantia lived on: Constantijn had an affectionate relationship with all of them, and sincerely mourned the death of Catharina, which occurred during his first visit to England. Like a number of sixteenth-century fathers of humanist tendencies, Christiaan took a personal and conscientious interest in his sons' education (it is not clear whether he concerned himself in the same way with his daughters, whose education was perhaps supervised by their mother). The boys were taught Latin by means of a rhymed grammar which he had compiled himself. He is also known to have owned a copy of the 1571 edition of *The Scholemaster* by Roger Ascham, the tutor of Queen Elizabeth I, and also another English educational work, the *Arte of Rhetorique* (anonymous) in the 1584 edition. It may be worth noting that the *Arte of Rhetorique* gives an account of a central part of the Renaissance

educational programme, the Art of Memory: the technique for building an artificial and extensive system of memorization, which gave the humanists their awesome, if schematic, powers of recall. This educational foundation inevitably leaves traces in the poems; *Hofwijk* on some levels cannot avoid becoming a palace of memory as well as a microcosm (see Appendix III). The point of departure of most of the religious sonnets seems to lie in techniques of visualization analogous to those of Jesuit meditation. The English strain in Constantijn's education is therefore clearly evident even from his schoolbooks. He also learned French thoroughly, beginning at the age of seven. The first professional tutor of Maurits and Constantijn, Johannes Brouart, took up his post when they were nine and eight, respectively, and Christiaan insisted that lessons should be held exclusively in French. Brouart left eighteen months later. His place was taken by two instructors, Jacobus Anraet and Johannes Dedel (Dedel was part of the household from 1606 to 1613, though Anraet, like Brouart, only stayed for eighteen months). Now lessons had to be held in Latin. At thirteen, Constantijn began to learn Greek. In 1612, when he was seventeen, a fourth tutor entered the boys' lives, George Eglisham: a Scot, a Latin poet, a doctor of medicine, and a patriotic controversialist, dedicated to the support of the theological views of James VI and I, who came to The Hague from Paris. The curriculum at this point broadened to include Spanish, and perhaps English, logic, physics, riding, dancing, wrestling and swimming. Constantijn also began Italian in 1614, when James I's special envoy to Holland, Sir Henry Wotton, arrived at The Hague accompanied by an Italian protegé, Giovanni Francesco Biondi, and found himself a near neighbour of the Huygens family. The somewhat Anglophile Christiaan promptly made friends with Wotton's household, and one outcome was Biondi's offer of Italian lessons for the young Constantijn; a further indication, if any were needed, of Christiaan's tendency to seize on anything which might advance or extend his sons' intellectual horizons and international contacts.

Constantijn's projected future as a cultivated and international figure was also encouraged by more direct methods. When he was fifteen, his father took him along on a trip to Brussels. They stayed in the house of a well-known history-painter, Raphael Coxie (who may, perhaps, have become known to them through the artistic connections of the Hoefnagel family), a visit which was commemorated by a portrait of young Constantijn (the first of many). But apart from going out to see the world, Constantijn was in a position where a good deal of the world came to him. The family home in The Hague was also quite obviously chosen for more than its merely domestic virtues. In 1614, Christiaan moved from his house in Nobelstraat

to the Voorhout, near the dwelling of the *stadhouder* Maurits (now the Mauritshuis); something of a diplomat's quarter. The establishment of friendly relations with Sir Henry Wotton's household has already been mentioned, but the other neighbours included François van Aerssen, who, as we shall see later, was to give young Constantijn one of his first positions of responsibility (Worp 1918, pp. 10-11).

All this education and forethought was, in Constantijn's case, being lavished on an intrinsically gifted and precocious child. He was only two when he startled his mother by repeating after her Clement Marot's rhymed version of the Ten Commandments: she had doubtless hoped that he would learn them, but can hardly have expected such a rapid success. Constantijn's earliest surviving Latin verse dates from 1607, when he was only twelve. His father's concern to push this very talented son as hard as possible is evident: this and subsequent short poems repeatedly state that Christiaan had demanded them from him.

His education in other aspects of humanist culture was not neglected. He must have shown his interest in music at a very early age, for he was learning to play the zither at the age of five. He had a few lessons on the bass viol when he was six (an instrument from which he derived great pleasure in later life). He started the lute at seven, and the organ and clavecin at ten (perhaps because only then were his hands big enough to manage the keyboard). This concern for music was not clandestine or incidental, but part of his father's plan for the boys' development: Constantijn's autobiography preserves a vignette of Christiaan helping his sons to learn musical scales on the buttons of his doublet (Bachrach 1962, p. 45). By the age of twenty, Constantijn's abilities as an executant musician were virtually on a professional level: he was, for instance, able to play his viol with 'some English noblemen, great experts on the instrument, who were living next door in the household of Henricus Wottonius' without disgracing himself (Bachrach 1962, p. 67). His interest in music went as far as actual composition: in a letter dated 19 March 1676 (Huygens 1917, pp. 374-75), he claims to have composed 769 pieces, only a fraction of which survives, most notably the collection entitled *Pathodia Sacra et Profana* (1647: see Huygens 1957). He regarded the musical culture of the Netherlands as extremely unsophisticated, and instead sought inspiration and comments on his own compositions from the numerous composers and musicians he corresponded with all over the continent of Europe. His sensitivity to music is witnessed throughout his work (and often appears in the poems), but is particularly clear from an anecdote in his treatise on the use and mis-use of the organ in Dutch churches:

> I must openly admit what happened to me unexpectedly in England, when, during the singing of the psalm after an afternoon sermon, I was so moved by it that I would wish from the bottom of my heart that my soul might always be lifted so far from the earth (Huygens 1964, p. 73).

His English experience must have contrasted sharply with the Dutch Protestant practice of communal unaccompanied psalm singing, which Huygens abhorred.

Huygens' awareness of the visual arts is also an important part of his character, and one which he seems to have derived from his mother's side of the family. Several of the Hoefnagels were artists, notably the miniaturist Joris Hoefnagel, Constantijn's great-uncle, who travelled and sketched in England in the 1570s (his most important work was illustrating Abraham Ortelius's six books of *Civitates Orbis Terrarum*, a sort of early travel-guide or account of foreign peoples and places). Constantijn learned sketching from Joris Hoefnagel's son Jacob (Huygens 1987, pp. 69- 73) and owned a manuscript treatise on the art of miniature-painting, full of practical hints and professional tricks of technique, quite possibly by Jacob (KB MS XLVII, ff. 592-601; published in De Heer 1988, pp. 53-62). He also bought an English painters' manual, *A Tracte Containing the Arte of Curious Paintinge*, translated from the Italian by Lamazzo, published in Oxford in 1598, which suggests that his interest in drawing was considerably more than casual and focused on acquiring practical skills, not merely on connoisseurship. He learned to draw competently and make watercolour sketches. His oilpainting was limited to clandestine dabbling, because it was so time-consuming a craft that his father would not have approved, but he was capable enough in watercolours to present sketches with confidence: he mentions in his autobiography that he distributed drawings as mementoes among his English friends. A silverpoint self-portrait from an *Album Amicorum* survives, dated 'Londini, Juno 1622' (printed in Strengholt 1987, p. 42); technically quite accomplished and expressive, it is pleasantly amateur rather than professional, but certainly not embarrassing.

Constantijn's formal education extended beyond the formidable grounding received in his father's house. He went up to the university of Leiden in 1616, at the age of twenty-one, and spent three terms there. A laconic diary-entry for 20 May 1616 records

> Leidam – ars mem. semina ling. Angl.cae. Dechiffrere varie exercui.

So his studies in Leiden included the Art of Memory (which, as suggested earlier, he must have begun under his father's tuition). He started English (*semina*: 'seeds', suggests that he was still learning the rudiments rather than polishing an already sophisticated command of the language). He was also taught to crack codes. This last, together with the stress on the acquisition of modern languages in his education, suggests that the overall thrust of Christiaan's intentions for his son was that he should follow him in the service of the state, perhaps as an ambassador. Creating and deciphering documents in code is directly an aspect of Renaissance statecraft, and therefore sheds a particular light on an educational programme which might otherwise be seen simply as the creation of a well-rounded individual. Even his command of the arts of music and painting were not merely private recreation; they gave him straightforward means to ingratiate himself effortlessly with the powerful, and to ensure that he was remembered as an individual.

The main focus of Constantijn's brief experience of university life was, however, the study of law, which had become the usual course to prepare for a career in the service of the state. He and his brother both made the acquaintance of an important Dutch humanist scholar, Daniel Heinsius (a friend of their father's: see poem no. 4), as well as a number of friends of their own age, in Constantijn's case, an interestingly international group (Worp 1918, p. 11-12). The fact that he stayed in Leiden for only fourteen months should not be interpreted to mean that he did not take a degree, as would have been the case in the nineteenth or twentieth centuries. Rather, it should be interpreted as a testimony to the impressiveness of his intellectual training at the hands of his father, and the speed at which he could absorb information, since he underwent a public, oral examination on 1 August 1617, disputing *De Fidejussoribus* in front of a panel headed by Professor Cornelis van Swanenburg, and passed. Thereafter, he continued his training in law in a less theoretical way. His father sent him for private tuition to a famous Dutch advocate, Antonie de Huybert, at Zierikzee, who worked him hard and taught him a great deal about the practice of law and also some mathematics (a discipline for which, the reader may be relieved to know, the offensively polymathic Constantijn displayed little aptitude). Law remained both a professional necessity and a personal interest throughout his life. He owned, at the time of his death, 249 legal books, covering everything from Roman law to contemporary analyses of controversial issues.

In 1618, Constantijn's intensive study of law was pleasantly interrupted when he was offered his first opportunity for independent foreign travel. He had a chance to visit England in the entourage of the cultivated Sir Dudley