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CULTURAL EXCHANGE IN
EARLY MODERN EUROPE

VOLUME IV

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*Dancing in the Dutch Republic: the uses
of bodily memory*

Herman Roodenburg

People of standing have a certain *savoir faire*, which distinguishes them from the multitude and which is so to the manner born that it even reveals their birth when dressed as peasants and under quite divergent circumstances. Indeed, there is even distinction in their features, in the shape of their bodies: something delicate, something uncommon, or how shall I name it?¹

Thus wrote Willem Anthonie Ockerse, a Dutch minister and man of letters, at the end of the eighteenth century. Such sentiments were far from uncommon during the *ancien régime*; in many ways, Ockerse merely echoed what many observers all over Europe had expressed before. But what was this *savoir faire*? What exactly distinguished 'people of standing' from the 'multitude'? The minister had no name for it, and that was also a commonplace. It describes a talent to please, we read in an eighteenth-century manual of civility, but that talent 'depends on something I do not know how to name and which the French call *je ne sais quoi*, or, I do not know'. It is 'hard to describe', the author continues, but one thing is certain: it 'cannot be imitated, it is inbred . . . all effort is in vain'.² But if this *je ne sais quoi*, this

¹ W. A. Ockerse, *Ontwerp tot eene algemeene characterkunde*, 3 vols. (Amsterdam, 1788–97, vol. III, p. 18: 'Lieden van aanzien hebben een zeker *savoir faire*, dat hen onderscheidt van menigte, en zoo aangeboren is, dat het hunne geboorte verraadts zelfs onder eene boersche kleding, en in geheel ongelijksoortige omstandigheden . . . daar is zelfs iets fatsoenlijks in hunne natuurlijke gelaatstreken, in den vorm hunnen ligchaams; iets fijns, iets ongemeens, of hoe zal ik het noemen?'

² C. van Laar, *Het groot ceremonie-boek der beschaafde zeeden, welleevenheid, ceremoniel, en welvoegende hoffelykheden* (Amsterdam [1735]), pp. 98, 101: 'Dit talent hangt af van iets, hetgeen ik niet weet te noemen, en dat de Fransche de naam geeven van *je ne*

mysterious *savoir faire*, is something one simply has, or not, why would anyone need a manual in the first place? If it is inbred, aren't all efforts to acquire it in vain? And why do we encounter this paradox in almost every guide to manners, beginning with one of the oldest and most famous of them, Baldesar Castiglione's *Il Libro del cortegiano*, published at Venice in 1528?

As has been noted, the first users of this *je ne sais quoi* are found in Renaissance Italy. It denoted an indefinable grace, an elusive quality that Cicero already described as *venustas* or *suavitas*, and Quintilian as *gratia*. But it is a grace, according to Agnolo Firenzuola, 'which is not in our books' and which is, 'as one says of things that we do not know how to express, *un non so che*'.³ Thanks to Castiglione, the notion soon spread to Spain, France, England, and a host of other countries. As Cesare Gonzaga, one of the characters in Castiglione's famous dialogue, put it, it is a grace or seasoning (*sangue*) that should accompany all the courtier's actions, gestures and habits – in short, his every movement. And Cesare concludes, 'who has grace finds grace', which we may construe as the central idea behind the dialogue and, indeed, of all the civility texts, all the *arts de plaire*, that followed in Castiglione's footsteps.⁴

The *Cortegiano* was an overwhelming success, finding an enthusiastic audience among all the elites of Europe, nobles and non-nobles alike. Its audience included the Dutch elite, more so than historians have hitherto assumed.⁵ Apparently, these European readers wanted

sçai quoi, of, ik weet niet wat . . . ; alle moeiten doet'er niets toe'; 'dit Air en die zwier . . . kan niet nagebootst worden, maar is met ons gebooren: Dezelve valt moeijelijk te beschryven . . .'

³ Quoted in Samuel Holt Monk, 'A grace beyond the reach of art', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 5 (1944), 139; cf. Domna C. Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art: A Study of the 'Honnête Homme' and the 'Dandy' in Seventeenth- and Nineteenth Century French Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), pp. 207–11.

⁴ Baldesar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*; the Singleton translation, an authoritative text criticism, ed. Daniel Javitch (New York and London: W. W. Norton, 2002), p. 30 (book 1, ch. 24).

⁵ Herman Roodenburg, *The Eloquence of the Body: Studies on Gesture in the Dutch Republic* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2004), esp. pp. 35–76; Peter Burke, *The Fortunes of the Courtier: The European Reception of Castiglione's 'Cortegiano'* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995).

to know about grace and how to acquire it for themselves, but that, of course, was the rub. In Gonzaga's words, such grace is 'often a gift of nature and the heavens'. Count Ludovico Canossa, the character who describes the whole notion of grace, concurs: 'it is almost proverbial that grace is not learned'.⁶ As a matter of fact, Castiglione confronts us with a double paradox. He professes to teach what cannot be learned and he aims, though not exclusively, for an audience, the court nobility, that supposedly needs no teaching, but simply possesses grace.⁷

This essay focuses chiefly on the first paradox. How could Castiglione and his numerous imitators all over Europe speak of 'nature', of something 'inbred', while still dealing with it as something socially acquired? Was this also a paradox for them, or did they see matters in a different and far more subtle way? Part of the answer, I believe, lies in what at least one inhabitant of the seventeenth-century Dutch Republic called 'corporeal memory', meaning the many ways in which the past leaves sediment in our bodies. Taking the Dutch Republic as an example, and borrowing a few notions from Pierre Bourdieu, Paul Connerton and Diana Taylor, I hope to show that the elites of early modern Europe were at least implicitly aware of a bodily memory; indeed, that taking such a memory for granted, they spared no effort to mould or 'fashion' their own and their children's bodies in order to acquire this prized *je ne sais quoi*. For centuries, nobles and commoners strove to master this courtly ideal, to make it durably present in all they said or did. So this essay examines the elite's physical graces, particularly the graces of dancing. No one aspiring to join the upper reaches of society could neglect the gracefulness of personal carriage. Nor could he (or she) acquire such grace simply from leafing through manuals of civility. It was first and foremost a matter of bodily memory.

GRACE, SPREZZATURA AND BODILY MEMORY

How did such moulding or fashioning work? How did the European elites cultivate their bearings in such a way that every gesture, stance

⁶ Castiglione, *Book of the Courtier*, p. 31 (1, 25).

⁷ Burke, *The Fortunes of the Courtier*, p. 32.

or movement conveyed an impression of 'naturalness', of being truly 'inbred'? First, as Georges Vigarello pointed out, their bodies should be upright. Indeed, parents spared no trouble or expense to correct a child's stooped posture or other physical defects such as a drooping head or bandy legs. If need be, orthopedic appliances and even surgery were called upon to remedy such situations. Children without such shortcomings were also taken in hand, and as early as possible. If a deformity showed itself right after birth, the mother, midwife or a doctor, would mould the still pliable limbs into shape. Then, in the first months of life the children were firmly wrapped in swaddling clothes, after which they were dressed in tight-fitting children's corsets until the age of five or six. From then on the boys, embarking on their first physical exercises, could abandon such appliances. Instead they were trained, often by private masters, in the arts of dancing, fencing and horseback riding – practices that, in addition to their social and recreational functions, were explicitly aimed at developing a natural and upright posture. Elite girls were generally excluded from such exertions, condemned to use stays or corsets for their entire lives. Of course, they had dancing lessons, like the instruction for boys, aimed at acquiring a gracious, upright bearing. Still, theirs was always a softer, more gentle grace than the robust and muscular variety expected of their brothers.⁸

Following Michel Foucault, we might interpret all this physical moulding as part of a pan-European process for increasing social discipline, offering another instance of how the body, far from being a natural entity, was socially constructed by differing disciplinary regimes. But this ascribes an essentially passive role to the body, in which moreover issues of gender have hardly any place.⁹ In reality, the body played a far more active role. It was a matter of tradition, of a bodily expressed transfer of cultural values. Central to this training was bodily memory: the body's ability to 'remember', as part of daily

⁸ Georges Vigarello, 'The upward training of the body from the age of chivalry to courtly civility', in M. Feher et al. (eds.), *Fragments for a History of the Body* (New York: Urzone, 1989), pp. 149–96.

⁹ L. McNay, 'Gender, habitus and the field: Pierre Bourdieu and the limits of reflexivity', *Theory, Culture and Society* 16.1 (1999), 95–117, here 96–8.

practices at a largely 'doxic' or pre-discursive level, a wide variety of skills or habits. This purpose inspired most physical exercises.

From a different and somewhat provocative angle, it has been suggested that reading the *Cortegiano* was like learning to ride a bicycle. Challenging the traditional view of the *Cortegiano* as an idealistic Neoplatonic tract, Richard Lanham wrote that Castiglione does not teach 'a pattern of concepts, of whatever sort, but a skill'.¹⁰ This comparison is an interesting one. Riding a bicycle is one of the 'bodily techniques' discussed by the anthropologist Marcel Mauss in arguing how a kind of habitual memory is sedimented in the body. Once we have learned to ride a bicycle (or to dance, fence or ride a horse, one might add) we just do it, without reflection; it becomes a pre-reflexive, habitual process. In short, Lanham suggested that a courtier's grace, formed from habit, becomes itself a habit or an habitual state.¹¹

This argument removes Castiglione's paradox. Once these techniques were physically incorporated through sufficient fashioning or cultivating, they seemed 'natural' and 'inbred'. It all centred on 'grace' or, following Castiglione, on *sprezzatura*, a kind of effortlessness in which no exertion or intentionality was ever apparent. In Dutch, this term was generally translated as *lossigheid*, a term also used in contemporary art theory to denote the virtuoso brushstrokes of painters.¹²

However, is it anachronistic to speak of a 'bodily memory' when describing elite lifestyles under the *ancien régime*? Was the term ever

¹⁰ R. Lanham, *The Motives of Eloquence: Literary Rhetoric in the Renaissance* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976), pp. 149–50; E. Saccone, 'Grazia, sprezzatura, affettazione in the Courtier', in R. W. Hanning and D. Rosand (eds.), *Castiglione: The Ideal and the Real in Renaissance Culture* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), pp. 51–2.

¹¹ Lanham speaks not of a pre-reflexive but merely of an 'intuitive response'. Cf. Saccone, who interprets the courtier's grace as an Aristotelian 'virtue, resulting from habit, become in itself a habit: a habitual state', p. 52.

¹² Eddy de Jongh, 'Review of B. Haak, *Hollandse schilders in de Gouden Eeuw*', *Simiolus* 15 (1985), 65–8; for a different view on *sprezzatura* and *ruw* painting in the Netherlands, see Maria-Isabel Pousao-Smith, 'Sprezzatura, nettigheid and the fallacy of "invisible brushwork" in seventeenth-century Dutch painting', in J. de Jong et al. (eds.), *Virtue, Virtuoso, Virtuosity in Netherlandish Art (Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek / Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art 55 (2004))* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2005), pp. 259–80.

used then? Admittedly, no contemporary text on civility seems to employ it. However, two seventeenth-century documents show that it was not entirely unknown. One is a letter written to the French mathematician and musical theorist Marin Mersenne in 1640 by a lover of the lute, a Frenchman who lived in the Dutch Republic for twenty years. In it, he professes his belief that 'all our nerves and muscles' serve the memory. He continues, 'a lute player, for instance, has a part of his memory in his hands; for the ease of bending and positioning his fingers in various ways, which he has acquired by practice, helps him to remember the passages which need these positions when they are played'.¹³ The author was René Descartes. He had expressed a very similar idea in an earlier letter to the physician Lazare Meyssonier, asserting that 'some of the species which serve the memory can be in various other parts of the body, for instance the skill of a lute player is not only in his head, but also partly in the muscles of his hands'.¹⁴

Such observations could be expected from a musician, perhaps especially a lutenist or, in our own times, a jazz pianist.¹⁵ But hearing them from a philosopher known primarily for his 'dualism', for having introduced a strict separation of body and mind, comes as something of a surprise. However, we must remember that during the seventeenth century and long afterwards, body and mind were hardly conceived of as separate entities. Until the end of the *ancien régime*, as Roy Porter and others have shown, medical science adhered to what we would now call a psychosomatic universe. Descartes was definitely part of that world and he still recognised the utter interdependence of mind and body. To him, one's intellectual memory was the more important, but he was enough of his time to also acknowledge a 'corporeal' or,

¹³ René Descartes, *The Philosophical Writings*, trans. John Cottingham et al., vol. III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 145–6 (1 April 1640).

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 143–4 (29 January 1640); cf. T. J. Reiss, 'Denying the body? Memory and the dilemmas of history in Descartes', *Journal of the History of Ideas* 57 (1996).

¹⁵ For the view of a jazz pianist and ethnomethodologist, see David Sudnow, *Ways of the Hand: The Organization of Improvised Conduct* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1978). Louis Grijp, both a colleague and professional lutenist, believes that the lute may evoke such observations more than any other instrument.

as he termed it, 'material memory' – the phenomenon he described to Meyssonier and Mersenne.¹⁶

GARDENING METAPHORS

Another amateur lute player and a close friend of Descartes was the Dutch poet and courtier Constantijn Huygens (1596–1687). In his autobiography (written at the age of eighty-two) Huygens recalls his first lessons on the instrument in terms reminiscent of Descartes. He complains that from the age of seven on he was taught for two whole years, having to exercise over and over again. At eighty-two, Huygens still did not see the point. As he wrote, once the fingers know what they must do, just let them play: 'Directed by the score, the fingers, alert as they are, will gradually discover which should be placed where and which string should be struck by the right thumb, having inclination [*habitus*] and diligence [*studium*] as their master'.¹⁷

The fact that Huygens speaks of *habitus* in discussing an educational issue should not surprise us, for terms such as 'habit', 'inclination' or 'disposition' were frequently used, both in the pedagogical literature of the time and in civility texts. They were part of what Rebecca Bushnell called 'gardening metaphors', images that compared the raising of children to the horticultural practices of pruning, bending and weeding.¹⁸ For instance, in his *De civilitate morum puerilium*, the little booklet that together with Castiglione's *Cortegiano* would launch the tradition of lay and secular civility texts, Erasmus likened 'young bodies' to 'young shoots . . . which come to maturity and acquire the fixed characteristics of whatever you determine for them with a pole

¹⁶ Reiss, 'Denying the body?', 598–9.

¹⁷ Constantijn Huygens, *Mijn leven verteld aan mijn kinderen*, ed. Frans R. E. Blom, 2 vols. (Amsterdam: Prometheus/Bert Bakker, 2003), vol. 1, p. 68: 'Exerce digitos dudum sua munera doctos; / Inuenient agiles ipsi, monstrante papijro, / Quos quibus imponas fidibus, quas pollice dextro / Percutias, habitu sensim studioque magistris.' My own translation differs somewhat from Blom's, preferring 'inclination' as the translation of 'habitus' to Blom's 'motivation'. With thanks to Arie Wesseling.

¹⁸ Rebecca W. Bushnell, *A Culture of Teaching: Early Modern Humanism in Theory and Practice* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), esp. ch. 3.

or trellis'.¹⁹ Similarly, Castiglione speaks of the hidden 'seeds' and 'virtues' in all men, the sprouts of which must be tended correctly even among the nobility.²⁰ Interestingly, as Keith Thomas has noted, the metaphors applied not only to the 'dressing' of children but to that of horses as well.²¹

Bushnell identified two sides in humanist pedagogy. Repression (one might say social discipline) formed one side, with respect for the plant's, child's or horse's 'nature', 'seeds' or 'inclinations', on the other. Erasmus claimed that 'nature' is present from the first, requiring parents or teachers to start their pedagogy of pruning, bending and weeding as early as possible. Unless cultivated from the outset, the weeds will grow wild: bad rather than good inclinations will harden into habits. Not only the child's mind but also its body, gesture and manners should be shaped. Just as a pole or trellis leads a plant, emulation would steer a child.²² Typically (though not exclusively), the nobility needed bending the least. As Nicolas Faret tells us in *L'Honnête Homme*, borrowing generously from Castiglione, 'those who are well-born ordinarily have good inclinations, which others only rarely have; it seems that they come naturally to those of good birth whereas they are found in others only by accident, for in the blood flow the seeds of good and evil, which sprout in time to produce all the good and bad qualities that cause everyone to love or hate us'.²³

At the root of this pedagogy lay the rediscovery in fifteenth-century Italy of Cicero's *Tusculanae Disputationes* and his particular use of the term 'cultura'. Rather than a matter of training according to some

¹⁹ *Collected Works of Erasmus: Literary and Educational Writings*, vol. III, ed. J. K. Sowards (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985), p. 277; cf. the chapter by Knox in this volume.

²⁰ Castiglione, *Book of the Courtier*, p. 21 (I, 14), p. 216 (IV, 13).

²¹ Keith Thomas, *Man and the Natural World: Changing Attitudes in England 1500-1800* (London: Allan Lane, 1983), p. 200; also quoted with Bushnell, *Culture of Teaching*, p. 91.

²² Bushnell, *Culture of Teaching*, pp. 89-103.

²³ Nicolas Faret, *L'Honnête homme ou l'art de plaire à la court*, ed. M. Magendie (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1925), p. 10; I have taken this English translation from Mark Motley, *Becoming a French Aristocrat: The Education of the Court Nobility 1580-1715* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 12.

pre-established model determined by tradition and status, education became a question of nursing the child's natural growth, of tilling the seeds already present.²⁴ One of the first humanists, Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini (1405-64), phrased it as follows in his *De Liberorum Educatione*:

As regards a boy's physical training, we must bear in mind that we aim at implanting habits that will prove beneficial through life . . . A boy should be taught to hold his head erect, to look straight and fearlessly before him and to bear himself with dignity whether walking, standing, or sitting . . . Games and exercises which develop a person's muscular activities and general carriage should be encouraged by every Teacher. Such physical training not only cultivates grace of attitude but also secures the healthy play of bodily organs and establishes one's constitution.²⁵

Piccolomini wrote his manual for King Ladislas of Bohemia and Hungary. When the philosopher John Locke published a similar educational tract in the last decade of the seventeenth century, dedicated in this case to an English commoner (his friend Edward Clarke), the tilling of civility had lost none of its importance. Locke opposed burdening children's memories with rules and precepts; instead, he preferred to make them repeat an action more than once. Such constant practice has two advantages. First, it allows us to observe whether it is an action a child is able to perform, and, second:

by repeating the same Action, till it be grown habitual in them, the Performance will not depend on Memory, or Reflection, the Concomitant of Prudence and Age, and not of Childhood; but will be natural in them. Thus bowing to a Gentleman when he salutes him, and looking in his Face when he speaks to him, is by constant use as natural to a well-bred Man, as breathing; it requires no Thought, no Reflection. Having this way cured in your Child any Fault, it is cured for ever: And thus one by one you may weed them out all, and plant what habits you please.²⁶

²⁴ H.-U. Musolf, *Erziehung und Bildung in der Renaissance: von Vergerio bis Montaigne* (Cologne and Weimar: Böhlau, 1997), pp. 264-9.

²⁵ Quoted in William H. Woodward, *Studies in Education during the Age of the Renaissance, 1400-1600* (New York: Russell & Russell, 1967), pp. 137-8.

²⁶ John Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, ed. John W. and Jean S. Yolton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), p. 120.

A page further, Locke returns to this issue and cautions:

But pray remember, Children are *not* to be *taught by Rules*, which will be always slipping out of their Memories. What do you think necessary for them to do, settle in them by an indispensable practice, as often as the occasion returns; and if it be possible, make occasions. This will beget Habits in them, which, being once established, operate of themselves easily and naturally, without the assistance of the Memory.²⁷

Of course, what Locke discusses here is grace: how, resulting from habit, it becomes a habit or habitual state; or, to put it differently, how it may be incarnated in a child's body and how subsequently in pleasing others it may find 'grace' by winning the favour of one's betters and peers. Reminiscent of Castiglione's *sprezzatura*, Locke speaks of a 'Beauty, which shines through some Men's Actions, sets off all they do, and takes all they come near'. Children may fall into such grace, 'when, by a constant Practice, they have fashion'd their Carriage, and made all those little Expressions of Civility and Respect, which Nature or Custom has established in Conversation, so easy to themselves, that they seem not Artificial or Studied, but naturally to flow from a sweetness of Mind, and a well turn'd Disposition'.

Perhaps most striking is Locke's explicit stating of the doxic, pre-reflective dimensions of learning: 'It requires no Thought, no Reflection.' There is no talk here of a bodily or material memory. Instead, memory is equated with thought and reflection, with what Descartes described as intellectual memory. Like Piccolomini, Locke speaks of 'planting habits' and offers perhaps one of the best instances of how early modern elites in raising their children seem at least to have assumed a corporeal memory, a bodily situated transfer 'on the hither side of words and concepts', as Pierre Bourdieu phrased it. As we shall see, Huygens and presumably many other members of the Dutch elite similarly assumed such a habitual memory.

THE ARCHIVE AND THE REPERTOIRE

In the past twenty years many disciplines, from philosophy and literary criticism to history, cultural anthropology and cultural studies, have

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

shown a striking interest in the body, but due to the so-called 'cultural' or 'linguistic' turn in the humanities much of this work has been dominated by mentalist, strongly language-based assumptions. As a critical observer complained, 'There is so much written about the body, but it all focuses on such a recent period. And in so much of it, the body dissolves into language. The body that eats, that works, that dies, that is afraid – that body just isn't there.'²⁸

A number of more recent studies on the body and embodiment in general have instead opted to emphasise a different approach, a 'performative turn'. They focus on the kinds of knowledge situated within the body and often employ concepts such as Marcel Mauss's techniques of the body, Bourdieu's notions of *habitus* and *hexis*, or Connerton's idea of bodily or habitual memory.²⁹ These authors argue that language-based perspectives provide a partial view of the body which omits other and equally important elements. In the humanities, the body is often reduced to a 'text' or 'sign', a passive bearer of multiple gender, social and political meanings; but bodies may also be construed as agents, active keepers of the past. As Connerton notes, both perspectives perceive bodies as socially constituted. However, the first generally studies the body in terms of its symbolism (one thinks of Mary Douglas), of attitudes towards it (Norbert Elias), or of discourses

²⁸ Quoted in Caroline Bynum, 'Why all the fuss about the body? A medievalist's perspective', in V. E. Bonnell and L. Hunt (eds.), *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), p. 241.

²⁹ For a recent introduction see Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (London and New York: Routledge, 2002). See especially Andrew Strathern, *Body Thoughts* (Ann Arbor, MI: Michigan University Press, 1996); Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2003); Jürgen Martschukat and Steffen Patzold (eds.), *Geschichtswissenschaft und 'Performative Turn'. Ritual, Inszenierung und Performanz vom Mittelalter bis zur Neuzeit* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2003). For some related studies see Paul Stoller, *Embodying Colonial Memories: Spirit Possession, Power and the Hauka in West Africa* (New York and London: Routledge, 1995); Joseph Roach, *Cities of the Dead: Circum-Atlantic Performance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Jo-Anne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000.). I wish to thank Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, who, at an ESF meeting preparing this volume, introduced the participants to the relevance of performance studies and of the performative turn in general.

about it (Michel Foucault). In the second, Connerton argues, the body is seen as socially constituted by being culturally shaped in its performances, in its actual practices and behaviour. Instead of emphasising texts and signs, it is the performing and understanding body, the body 'that works, eats and is afraid', that is foregrounded.³⁰

Diana Taylor, a scholar in American performance studies, distinguishes between what she calls the 'archive' and the 'repertoire'. Whereas archival memory exists as documents, maps, literary texts, letters, archaeological remains, bones, videos, films or compact discs, the 'repertoire' exists as embodied memory, in performances, gestures, orality, movements, dancing and singing.

Distinctions such as these become vital when assessing the role of written culture. We should be aware, for instance, that one of our main sources, manuals of civility, were basically prompts to performance, nothing more than mnemonic devices. According to Roger Chartier, these and other texts, like popular writings on the 'art of conversation' or even the *artes moriendi*, 'had the precise function of disappearing as discourse'.³¹ In such cases, transmission ultimately depended far more on embodied culture, on performances, gestures, orality, etc., than on written culture. As we will see, early modern elites understood this, even making it the base of their own continuance. Few if any 'civility' manuals failed to drive the message home: no one would ever grasp the codes of civility simply by reading a couple of civility texts. In this regard, the upper classes of the *ancien régime* were far less wedded to the word than we often suppose.

As Taylor points out, the archive/repertoire divide exceeds that of written versus spoken language, for the archive encompasses more than written texts (think of the numerous paintings owned by the Dutch elite), just as the repertoire contains both verbal and non-verbal performances. What separates them are the means of transmitting knowledge (archives through supposedly enduring materials; repertoires through embodied action of individual people),

³⁰ Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 104.

³¹ Roger Chartier, *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 6; on the art of conversation see Peter Burke, *The Art of Conversation* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), pp. 98–112.

and of course the requirements of storage and dissemination. The relationship between the two modes of transmission, Taylor concludes, is not sequential. The repertoire does not disappear as the archive gains ascendancy; on the contrary, they usually work in tandem. Nor should we construe the relationship as one of true versus false, unmediated versus mediated, or primordial versus modern – qualifications sometimes employed by historians such as Jacques le Goff or Pierre Nora.³² Clearly, by making us look beyond written culture, a 'performance' perspective helps us both understand the elites' enduring interest in moulding and exercising their bodies and grasp the role of embodied or habitual memory, of an active and unfolding body, within all this cultivating.

THE HUYGENSES

This section will address one particular Dutch family. It included the poet and courtier Constantijn Huygens and two of his children: a courtier and amateur artist, Constantijn Huygens the Younger (1628–97); and a mathematician, astronomer and physicist Christiaan Huygens (1629–95).³³ Using several memoirs left by Constantijn the Elder (referred to here by his surname, Huygens), we will sketch the father's and children's upbringing and examine the central significance to the family's continuance of physical exercise, in particular the father's and his sons' dancing lessons.³⁴ Of course, like so many other sons of the European elites, they also had fencing and riding lessons, two no less important vectors for incarnating civility.³⁵ Nor should we forget how not only corsets but clothing in general, from shoes to collars, could permeate their wearers.³⁶

³² Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire*, pp. 18–22.

³³ Huygens had three other children, Lodewijk (1631–97), Philips (1633–57) and Susanna (1637–1725). About Susanna's upbringing we know little. Though she was quite gifted and intelligent, it was never the father's intention, as he put it, to make her 'into anything else than a decent and not ignorant little girl'. After she reached the age of seven, he therefore stopped chronicling her progress, but he continued keeping notes on his sons.

³⁴ On dance and embodiment, see also Nordera's chapter in this volume.

³⁵ Roodenburg, *Eloquence of the Body*, pp. 92–109.

³⁶ Cf. the chapters by Paresys and Rublack in this volume.



Figure 80. Adriaen Hanneman, *Constantijn Huygens Surrounded by his Five Children*, 1639. The Hague, Koninklijk Kabinet van Schilderijen Mauritshuis

The Huygenses, who were not of noble origin, may have been ahead of other families of commoners. They certainly found themselves in a more anxious situation, for the family's prominence was far from secure. Since positions in government were simply barred to newcomers, most of the wealthy families having fled the southern Netherlands after the fall of Antwerp in 1585 were compelled to

continue in trade. However, this was not an option for Huygens's father, who was born in Flanders but was appointed secretary at the court of William of Orange. After the prince's death in 1584, he was appointed first secretary to the republic's newly erected council of state.

However, the council was not the most important Dutch institution. Power rested mostly with the states-general and with the provincial states, especially those of Holland and Zeeland, which were dominated by the urban regents. No wonder that Huygens's father fostered the ties with Prince Maurits, who had succeeded his father as stadholder of Holland and Zeeland in 1584. He became one of the prince's confidants, and the stadholder became godfather to his first-born son, Maurits. Ties remained strong, not only with Prince Maurits but also with his half-brother, Count Justinus of Nassau, who became one of the godparents for his second son, Constantijn. There were other bonds of friendship with Louise de Coligny, widow of William of Orange and daughter of Gaspard de Coligny, the famous Calvinist leader who was murdered in 1572 in the massacre of St Bartholomew. The Huygenses must have realised that their prospects in the republic depended closely on the house of Orange, on the court in The Hague and its cosmopolitan surroundings. This was their social and cultural horizon and it was for that world that they were raised and educated, developing a *habitus* of their own. Huygens himself became a secretary to the princes Frederik Hendrik, William II and William III of Orange; his son Constantijn succeeded him in the latter's service.

DANCING, ELEGANCE AND UPRIGHTNESS

While the daughters of the elite continued to wear stays, their brothers were freed from corsets for the rest of their lives after graduating to breeches at the age of five or six (a milestone recorded by Huygens).³⁷ Instead, boys were encouraged to strengthen their bodies through all

³⁷ Constantijn Huygens, Huygens, 'De jongelingsjaren van de kinderen', ed. Ed de Heer and Arthur Eyffinger, in Arthur Eyffinger (ed.), *Huygens herdacht. Catalogus bij de tentoonstelling in de Koninklijke Bibliotheek ter gelegenheid van de 300ste sterfdag van Constantijn Huygens* (The Hague: Koninklijke Bibliotheek, 1987), p. 111.



Figure 81. Pieter Codde, *The Dancing Lesson*, 1627. Paris, Musée du Louvre (photo: Réunion des Musées Nationaux)

sorts of exercise, and to incarnate the desired uprightness through dancing, fencing and riding. Such exercises (dancing, of course, was also taught to girls) were particularly important, because they also fostered elegant movement.³⁸

In the southern Netherlands, we find some early views on the subject in an educational treatise written for Count Johann I of Nassau-Dillenburg in 1583 by Philips van Marnix, seigneur of St Aldegonde (1540–98). Though published only in 1615, it seems to have circulated, like so many contemporary manuscripts,³⁹ among a restricted circle of

³⁸ Vigarello seems to exclude the importance of movement. Cf. Mark Franko, *The Dancing Body in Renaissance Choreography (c. 1416–1589)* (Birmingham, AL: Summa Publication, 1986).

³⁹ On manuscript networks, see vol. III of this series, and in this volume Rublack, p. 276.

friends. Christiaan Huygens I (1551–1624) may have been one of them; he and Marnix were both secretaries to Prince William of Orange.⁴⁰

Slightly earlier than one of the most influential educational tracts of the period, François de La Noue's *Discours politiques et militaires*, Marnix's *Ratio instituendae iuventutis* summarised many of the new humanist ideas on aristocratic education, combining military training (including geography and military mathematics) with a wide-ranging knowledge of the liberal arts, completed by a choice among physical exercises to invigorate the body and incorporate a 'natural' physical grace.⁴¹ Discussing the soul, the mind and the body, Marnix explains that health and vigour are indispensable to a nobleman, as are 'a pleasant bearing, a refined voice, and an elegant gait and posture'.⁴² He also includes a list of desirable exercises. At the age of ten, boys could take up such pursuits as horseback riding, running and jumping. At twelve, they could engage in discus and javelin throwing contests; at sixteen, hunting, the handling of arms and trick riding; and at eighteen, fencing and equestrian tournaments.⁴³ Surprisingly, Marnix condemned all dancing, though six years earlier, when still a courtier in the service of William of Orange, he had openly defended the art, finding no harm in the 'honest dances' of his time. As he confesses, he often used to dance himself and was always happy 'to exert his body in walking, jumping and even clownery . . . or, if there was music, in dancing'. Although in his later years Marnix became an ardent supporter of Calvinist austerity, protagonists of dancing often

⁴⁰ Constantijn Huygens, 'Fragment eener autobiographie van Constantijn Huygens, medegedeeld door Dr J. A. Worp', *Bijdragen en Mededeelingen van het Historisch Genootschap* 18 (1897), 36.

⁴¹ On Marnix's educational views, see Willem Frijhoff, 'Marnix over de opvoeding', in H. Duits and T. van Strien (eds.), *Een intellectuele activist: studies over leven en werk van Philips van Marnix van Sint Aldegonde* (Hilversum: Verloren, 2001), pp. 59–75.

⁴² Philips van Marnix van Sint Aldegonde, *De Institutione Principium, ac Nobilium Puerorum* (Franeker: Doyema, 1615), p. 13: 'formae venustatem, vocis elegantiam, oris et cultus decentem'.

⁴³ Philips van Marnix van Sint Aldegonde, *Marnixi Epistulae: de briefwisseling van Marnix van Sint-Aldegonde, een kritische uitgave*, ed. A. Gerlo and R. de Smet, 3 vols. (Brussels: Brussels University Press, 1990–6), vol. II, p. 59.

referred to this defence in order to vex Calvinist ministers; in 1649 they even translated and published it in a letter to a Dordrecht minister, Gaspar van der Heijden. Interestingly, William of Orange expressed concern that the ministers' condemnation of dancing might discourage the nobility from joining the church.⁴⁴

Huygens relates that his father had observed the manners deemed proper for young people of rank at William's court and thus decided 'to put this behaviour into practice at home with his children'.⁴⁵ In fact, the son's early autobiography (written when he was about thirty-three years old) is one of the first documents revealing how this basically aristocratic programme was appropriated by a family of commoners.

In objecting to the ministers' prohibition of dancing, William of Orange may have recalled their comments on the dancing at his own nuptials in 1576, when he wed Charlotte de Bourbon. The prince and his family were all keen dancers. Even his son Maurits, among historians mostly known as a dour war-horse, was far from averse to the art. In 1603, he and his stepbrother Frederik Hendrik attended the wedding of the nobleman and diplomat Cornelis van der Myle to Maria Johanna van Oldenbarnevelt, daughter of the grand pensionary of Holland. One of the other guests, Louise de Coligny, proudly reported that Maurits 'had triumphed by dancing all sorts of dances, in order to show me that he had forgotten nothing'. To her chagrin, her own son, Frederik Hendrik, had only danced *allemandes* – all gravity in her eyes – which he must have learned in Germany.⁴⁶ Young Frederik Hendrik obviously favoured *allemandes*: at age ten, he had attended

⁴⁴ Brief, *geschreven van Philips van Marnix, Heer van St Aldegonden: aengaende de kerckelijcke tucht ende het danssen* (Dordrecht: Dircksz., 1649); the letter was written in 1577; for the Latin original, see Marnix, *Marnixi Epistulae*, vol. II, pp. 82–3.

⁴⁵ Huygens, 'Fragment', 29–30.

⁴⁶ *Lettres de Louise de Coligny, princesse d'Orange à sa belle-fille Charlotte-Brabantine de Nassau, duchesse de la Trémoille*, ed. P. Marchegay (Les Roches-Baritaud, 1872), pp. 27–38: 'le bal où votre aîné triompha de danser toutes sortes de danses, pour me montrer qu'il n'a rien oublié; mais mon fils ne danse plus rien que des allemandes. Vous n'avez jamais rien vu tant sur la gravité: je pense qu'il a appris cela en la Germanie.'

another wedding party and danced them for six days till all hours, as he boasted to his half-sister Charlotte-Brabantine.⁴⁷

Of course, Louise de Coligny understood not only the educational but also the conversational or favour-seeking functions of dancing,⁴⁸ and was all the happier having witnessed her son's performance at the baptismal celebration of 'Alexandre Monsieur', the second son of King Henri IV and Gabrielle d'Estrées. As she noted, he had been 'among the first and among those who were lauded most' for their accomplishments.⁴⁹ This time it was a court ballet, *le grand ballet des étrangers*, and 'Henry de Nassau', then thirteen years old, was one of several nobles dancing in it. Indeed, he perfected more than his dancing skills during his stay at the French court in 1597–8. He was also one of the first pages to attend the newly launched academy of Antoine de Pluvinel in order to refine his equestrian skills.⁵⁰

Clearly, it was such elegance, or what he as a commoner saw of it, that Huygens's father tried to impart to his children. It was all about gracefulness and uprightness, especially in movement. In 1610, when his sons were fourteen and fifteen years old, he chose to teach them to dance himself, rather than hire a dancing master. He was promptly chided by one of the ministers, his old friend Werner Helmichius. But he answered that he failed to understand why Helmichius or his colleagues made such a fuss about dancing. To him it was essential that his children 'from early on would get used to those things that create beauty in appearance and posture and make the gait elegant and unconstrained'.⁵¹

Three or four years later, the boys were taken in hand by the Frenchman Noel du Breuil, a dancing master and composer at the court of Prince Maurits, who was instructed to teach them the 'rules

⁴⁷ Jules Delaborde, *Louise de Coligny, princesse d'Orange*, 2 vols. (Paris: Fischbacher, 1890), vol. I, pp. 307–8; in 1618 the classicist Joannes Meursius dedicated his *Orchestra sive de saltationibus veterum*, a treatise on the dances of the Ancients, to van der Myle, apologising that the subject might not suit the dedicatee's dignity.

⁴⁸ For this distinction, see below, p. 352. ⁴⁹ *Lettres de Louise de Coligny*, p. 5.

⁵⁰ P. J. Blok, *Frederik Hendrik, Prins van Oranje* (Amsterdam: Meulenhoff, 1924), pp. 15–16.

⁵¹ Huygens, 'Fragment', 21–2.

of the more recent elegance', because the steps their father had taught them were now outmoded or had even been forgotten by his children. Looking back, Huygens in no way regrets these accomplishments: he had both the muscles for this 'fairly robust exercise' and the necessary 'gracious control' of his limbs. Thus, in partner dances he was 'one of the smartest masters' and in performing 'the so-called *capriole* one of the swiftest'. Here he is obviously referring to the *basse danse* or rather its conclusion, the *tourdion* with its '*cinq pas*' (three hops, a jump and a pose). If the jump included leg beats, it was called a *capriole*, and, at least for the men performing it, the *basse danse* was a robust exercise. Having over-exerted himself in his enthusiasm, his elder brother Maurits, with a weaker constitution, would even catch a pulmonary disease – in a way, confirming the ministers' view that rather than invigorating the body, dancing might weaken and even exhaust it.⁵² This, though, did not prevent Huygens from teaching Constantijn, then ten years old, the same *cinq pas*, 'which he grasped immediately and performed with an exceptional disposition and grace of the legs, jumping very good *caprioles*'.⁵³

Huygens's intentions in having his children learn to dance were identical to his father's. In 1644 he arranged for Constantijn and Christiaan, then around fifteen years old, to take dancing lessons 'in order that the body was put so much the better into good shape'.⁵⁴ Fifteen years later, writing instructions for the recently appointed governor of Prince William III, Huygens again stressed the ideals of elegance in movement. The prince, then eight years old, should learn to dance 'to fashion his bearing and the fine movement of his entire body'.⁵⁵

This is what the boys' dancing was about, namely lending their bodies a gentle yet muscular uprightness and elegance. In the first decade of the seventeenth century, when Huygens received his own lessons, such aims were still contested. However, a generation

⁵² *Ibid.*, 107–8.

⁵³ Huygens, 'Jongelingsjaren', p. 124: 'Soo dat ick Constantin de cinq pas begonde te wijsen, dat hij strax begreep, ende met een' sonderlinghe dispositie ende gratie van beenen uyt voerde, springende mede seer goede capriolen daerbij.'

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 140.

⁵⁵ *Mémoires de Constantin Huygens*, ed. Th. Jorissen (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1873), p. 172.

later, most of the regent and other wealthy families in the Dutch Republic probably shared his views. In 1644, the famous minister Gisbertus Voetius even complained that such arguments were repeatedly foisted upon him by parents who told him that the art of dancing would enhance their children's 'beleeftheyt der manieren', their civility of manners.⁵⁶

Voetius's colleague, Guiljelmus Saldenus, saw this as mere pretence, and an old one at that. In his engaging dialogue between Dina, a young and attractive woman, and Apollos, a fatherly minister, Saldenus articulated the minister's view on dancing and the theatre. At the end, Dina admits the moral depravity of dancing, though initially she has few if any objections to it. She relates how a certain gentleman, hoping to dance with her, commended the art as a way 'to keep the body in proper shape', and how he also explained to her that 'nowadays many fine people have it deliberately taught to their children so that they may keep themselves mannerly in the courteous elegance of modern civility'. According to him, some moderate practice was admissible and even necessary. Without such exercising, one would seem a peasant in the company of ladies and gentlemen.⁵⁷

When Saldenus published his cautionary dialogue in 1667, such arguments must have been standard. Defending the establishment of a dancing school at the University of Franeker, a pamphlet pointed out that 'the principles of dancing are necessary for "conversation" . . . for making one's appearance . . . among all sorts of people of either sex and at all sorts of meetings, displaying a proper, decorous and effortless carriage of the body'. Parents would hesitate to send their children to 'places where, in addition to the *bonae litterae*, they would not have "exercise" of the body and politeness'.⁵⁸ Similarly, in 1722,

⁵⁶ Gisbertus Voetius, *Een kort tractaetjen van de danssen, tot dienst van den eenvoudigen* (Utrecht: Strick, 1644), p. 79.

⁵⁷ G. Saldenus, *d'Overtuyghde Dina, of Korte en nodige waerschouwingh tegen 't besien van de hedens-daegsche schouw-spelen* (Utrecht: Van Havert, 1667), pp. 34–7: 'om 't lichaem in een behoorlijck fatsoen te houden; om sich in de aerdighe swier van de hedendaegse beleeftheyts-plichten manierlijck te kunnen houden'; a first edition of the book was published in 1665.

⁵⁸ *Dansmeester van Franeker geheekelt ende geholpen* (Leeuwarden: Nauta, 1683), p. 19: 'dat de beginselen der dankunt nootwendig sijn tot de "conversatie", om met een

echoing Saldenus, another minister contested the notion that dancing might be conducive 'to keep[ing] the limbs of the body in proper shape and thus to minister a good disposition of manners'. He also dismissed the demurrer that without such *welleventheit* one would be ridiculed as an unmannered boor in the company of ladies and gentlemen.⁵⁹

Was it all pretence, as Saldenus maintained, or was dancing far more deeply embedded within codes of civility than he or his colleagues were willing to acknowledge? Interestingly, in refuting Dina's objection that without it one might be considered a peasant in proper company, her minister invokes the simplicity of former times. Poor ancestors, so he exclaims, daring to appear in 'honest companies' without having mastered the art of dancing! Dina retorts that perhaps courtesy then did not yet require such carriage, but that times had changed: 'each age has its particular style and manner of civility'. Of course, her opponent will not hear of it, because it is not the times but the words of Christ that should be the touchstone of our morals. Dina, though, clearly has a point.⁶⁰ Dance historians agree that the history of dance is essentially the history of manners; and Renaissance dance, especially the *basse danse* of late sixteenth-century France, offers a case in point. In 1589 Jean Tabourot (under the anagram of Thoinot Arbeau) published his *Orchésographie*, one of the most famous dance manuals of the time. In it, dancing and civility were one.

The *Orchésographie* presents a dialogue between 'master Arbeau' and a pupil tellingly named 'Capriol'. At the beginning 'Capriol' complains that as a student at Orléans, he neglected learning civility and that he now finds himself in companies 'without speech and without

goede mijne, met een propre, nette, ongedrongene postuire van lichaem, by alderhande slag van lieden beider sexe, en allerhande vergaderingenen, te kunnen verschijnen, en wel te leeren . . . De ouders stieren hare kinderen niet geerne ter plaetse, dat sy weten, datse neffens de goede kunsten, geen "exercitie" van 't lichaem en van beleeftheit kunnen hebben.'

⁵⁹ Daniel Le Roy, *Oordeelkundige aanmerkingen over de dansseryen* (Rotterdam: Korte, 1722), pp. 405–6: 'dat het een zeer bequaam middel is, om de leden des ligchaams, in een behoorlyk fatzoen te houden, en dus vervolgens dient tot een goede geschiktheit der maniereo'.

⁶⁰ Saldenus, *d'Overtuyghde Dina*, p. 37.

feet', passing in effect 'for a piece of wood'.⁶¹ He mastered fencing and also the *jeu de paume*, thereby winning the esteem of men, but fears that without knowing how to dance he will never be able to please a lady and find a bride, and entreats Arbeau to put his knowledge into writing 'so that he will learn this civility'.⁶² Other manuals of the period discerned a similar bond between dancing and civility. To Archange Tuccaro, for instance, the ideal dance should always agree with the precepts of modesty and *honesteté civile*. Similarly, Fabrizio Cornazano's *Il ballarino* included advice on how to deal with one's cloak and sword, how to bow, and so on.⁶³

The *basse danse*, as Arbeau explains to his pupil, opens with a reverence to the chosen damsel. Mark Franko points out that the movements implied – removing one's hat or bonnet, followed by a slight bending of the knees (or only of the right knee) and the whole body – are almost identical to those prescribed by Hours de Calviac in a popular adaptation of Erasmus's booklet on civility.⁶⁴ The *basse danse* itself consists of walking hand in hand with one's lady, with nine halts for movements in place. Both steps and movements should be slow and solemn (*pesants et graves*).

It concluded, according to Arbeau, with a *tordion* (or *tourdion*), a series of faster and lighter steps called *les cinq pas*. As the feet remained close to the ground, the *tordion* was slightly less energetic than the very similar *gaillard*. As described above, the steps consisted of three hops, a jump and a pose, the hops coming in a wide variety, because they

⁶¹ Thoinot Arbeau, *Orchésographie*, ed. Laure Fonta (Paris: Vieweg, 1888), p. 1: 'i'ay negligé d'apprendre la civilité . . . , car estant de retour, je me suis trouvé ez compaignies, où je suis demeuré tout court sans langue et sans piedz, estimé quai vne buche de bois'.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 4: 'mectez en quelque chose par escrips cela sera cause que i'apprendray ceste civilité'.

⁶³ Arcangelo Tuccaro, *Trois Dialogues de l'exercice de sauter et voltiger en l'air* (Paris: De Monstr'oeuil, 1599), p. 28v., quoted in Franko, *Dancing Body*, on whose excellent analysis the following paragraphs are based; see also Peter Burke, 'The language of gesture in early modern Italy', in J. Bremmer and H. Roodenburg (eds.), *A Cultural History of Gesture from Antiquity to the Present Day* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), p. 75.

⁶⁴ See also François de Lauze, *Apologie de la danse*, ed. J. Wildeblood (London: Muller, 1952), pp. 84–6.

might be done either on the right leg or the left and, while one leg hopped, the other might swing front, back or sideways or else tap the floor or actually change places with the hopping leg. The jump or *sault majeur* might be embellished with leg beats, in which case it was called a *capriole*. As his name suggests, Arbeau's student had a special talent for it. A *capriole* demanded strength as well as effortlessness, making it not too different from the solemnity of the first steps and movements. Since the *tordion* could be repeated indefinitely, such *négligence* or *sprezzatura* required perfect mastery. If we can believe Huygens, he and his son Constantijn had it all.⁶⁵

Leafing through the *Orchésographie*, it is not difficult to identify both poles of contemporary civility: on the one hand, the educational practices represented in the children's manuals descended from Erasmus; on the other, the conversational or favour-seeking practices as represented in *arts de plaire* descended from Castiglione.⁶⁶

In 1728, Nicolas Baudoin argued that 'I would put dance into the early formative years to accustom a young Gentleman to walk with grace, to stand correctly on his feet, to do the reverence decently and to seem free, natural and unconcerned'.⁶⁷ Standing correctly on one's feet was one of Arbeau's first lessons: 'Keep your head and body erect and appear assured.' He adds that one's posture should be gracious, finding a means between rigidity (Capriol's 'piece of wood') and the slightest hint of effort: 'Keep your hands at your sides, neither hanging limp as if dead, nor moving nervously'.⁶⁸ In addition, one should not stand with the feet apart. Arbeau identifies two basic positions: *pieds largyç* (feet and legs apart) and *pieds ioincts* (joined feet), pointing out that in the latter position one of the feet may support the weight of the body, with the other foot held at an oblique angle: *pied ioinct oblique*. To him this was the most beautiful position, 'because we observe in ancient medals and

⁶⁵ Franko, *Dancing Body*, pp. 48–9, 54–6.

⁶⁶ For this helpful heuristic distinction, see *ibid.*, p. 37; of course, both adults and children could be addressed within single texts.

⁶⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, p. 34: 'Je placerois la danse dès les premières années de l'éducation, afin d'accoutumer un jeune Seigneur à marcher de bonne grâce; et à se bien tenir sur ses pieds; à faire la révérence avec décence, et avoir un air libre, naturel et dégagé.'

⁶⁸ Arbeau, *Orchésographie*, pp. 2r and 63r; Franko, *Dancing Body*, p. 47.

statues that figures resting upon one foot are more artistic and pleasing'. Ever since Alberti, painters and sculptors had expressed a similar opinion, adopting the so-called *contrapposto* and praising ancient sculpture.⁶⁹ Moreover, actors also favoured the *pied ioinct oblique*.⁷⁰

Gracious movement was the next lesson in learning how to dance. The first thing to learn, according to François de Lauze in his *Apologie de la danse* (1623), is to walk in a straight line, 'without bending the knees, the toes pointed outwards so that movement proceeds freely from the haunches'. Indeed, it is essential 'to keep the body straight from the chest to the eyes, always looking straight ahead, without bending either the waist, or the knees inwards, so that a firm and straight body always accompanies these movements, without swaying from side to side as some people do, whether from affectation or bad habits'.⁷¹ Apparently, young Christiaan Huygens never had 'this advantage of posture', as he was 'always inclined to turn the feet a bit inwards and the knees forwards'.⁷² This gave his father cause to worry about his dancing skills, and rightly so: this was a central tenet of all dancing masters, and the manuals of civility concurred. When walking, according to De Courtin, one should keep the feet 'turned out by half, the two heels separated by about four fingers'.⁷³ As Franko concludes, there is hardly anything here that distinguishes dancing from walking as prescribed in the manuals, with one notable difference: we may learn to walk by learning to dance, but we don't walk by dancing – one cannot walk on the tips of the toes!⁷⁴ In the end,

⁶⁹ John Shearman, *Mannerism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967); David Summers, 'Maniera and movement: the *figura serpentinata*', *Art Quarterly* 35 (1972), 269–302, and *Michelangelo and the Language of Art* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 91–2; Michael Baxandall, *Painting and Experience in Fifteenth-Century Italy: A Primer in the Social History of Pictorial Style* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), pp. 18–19; cf. Roodenburg, *Eloquence of the Body*, pp. 113–46.

⁷⁰ Cf. Roodenburg, *Eloquence of the Body*, pp. 147–66.

⁷¹ De Lauze, *Apologie de la danse*, p. 98; also quoted in Motley, *Becoming a French Aristocrat*, p. 149.

⁷² Huygens, 'Jongelingsjaren', p. 124.

⁷³ [Antoine de Courtin], *Nieuwe verhandeling van de welgemanierdheid, welke in Frankryk onder fraaye lieden gebruikelijk is* (Amsterdam: Ten Hoorn, 1672), p. 42.

⁷⁴ Franko, *Dancing Body*, pp. 34, 48.

it was all about one's *je ne sais quoi*. As de Lauze phrased it, 'there are some actions so full of grace that they are impossible to describe'.⁷⁵

What about the conversational or favour-seeking dimensions of the dance? To Arbeau, drawing a popular parallel, dancing 'is a kind of mute rhetoric through which the Orator can, by his movements, without uttering a single word, make himself understood and persuade spectators that he is spirited (*gaillard*) and worthy of being praised, loved and cherished'. Dancing is essentially 'an address he delivers for himself'.⁷⁶ As dance historian John Schikowski summarises, 'The end of dance was . . . directed to the exhibition of one's own person. The effort of he who danced was to show dignity, gracefulness and the exact knowledge of rules of decorum and propriety.'⁷⁷ Such views had already been expressed by Castiglione; his courtier should maintain a certain dignity, though tempered with a fine and airy grace.⁷⁸ In short, dancing was integral to social success, a message well understood by Sir Christopher Hatton, performing before Queen Elizabeth, but also spelled out by Arbeau, recounting the story of Cleisthenes of Athens who, seeing his daughter's suitor dance impudently, commented drily that he had just 'undanced his marriage' (*dédansé son mariage*).⁷⁹

Calvinist ministers tried hard to fight dancing, but they certainly lost this battle in the province of Holland.⁸⁰ The Dutch elite, nobles and non-nobles alike, cherished their celebrations and to them, weddings and dancing were almost synonymous. Seeing that the prominent families of their congregations largely ignored their admonitions, Dutch ministers had little choice but to grudgingly tolerate dancing. In the first decades of the republic, they still reprimanded such families, perhaps to set an example for the other members of the congregation. In

⁷⁵ De Lauze, *Apologie de la danse*, pp. 82–4; also quoted in Motley, *Becoming a French Aristocrat*, p. 141.

⁷⁶ Arbeau, *Orchésographie* (1888 edn): 'persuader aux spectateurs qu'il est gaillard digne d'estre loué, aymé, et chery . . . une oraison qu'il fait pour soy-mesme', p. 4.

⁷⁷ Quoted in Franko, *Dancing Body*, p. 33.

⁷⁸ Castiglione, *Book of the Courtier*, p. 75 (II, 11).

⁷⁹ Franko, *Dancing Body*, p. 33, who quotes both Arbeau and Schikowski.

⁸⁰ On the church's attitude to dancing, see F. G. Naerebout, "'Snoode exercitien": het zeventiende-eeuwse Nederlandse protestantisme en de dans', *Volkskundig Bulletin* 16.2 (1990), 125–56.

Amsterdam they apparently focused on the responsible heads of newly arrived merchant families from the south, summoning them before the consistory relatively more often than those of other families. In 1604 the Flemish-born Jan van Baerle, Huygens's future father-in-law, was confronted with the workings of church discipline because guests had danced at the wedding of his daughter Jacomina.⁸¹

By then, dancing schools were mushrooming in all the country's major and minor towns. Their popularity emerges indirectly from the records of the Dutch Reformed Church, in particular through the countless protests to its authorities from local congregations and provincial synods. Ecclesiastical records are rife with such complaints. In some cases, for instance in the province of Utrecht, such protests evoked an official decree prohibiting dancing schools altogether. They were less successful in the province of Holland, where dancing schools were suppressed solely on the Lord's Day – a law observed only partially. In 1625 Nicolas Vallet, a French composer and lutenist, opened a dancing school in Amsterdam that became famous. He gave lessons on weekdays as well as Sunday afternoons. Vallet also led an ensemble that performed at *aubades*, banquets and weddings and, of course, at his own lessons.⁸² He was probably friends with the Flemish fencing master Girard Thibault; both men may well have served the same Amsterdam circles.⁸³

In 1623 even Frederick V and his wife Elizabeth Stuart, the so-called Winter King and Winter Queen, were lectured about their dancing straight from the pulpit before the entire congregation. A furious Elizabeth threatened to bring the minister to trial. Generally, though, such sermonising had little or no effect.⁸⁴ Both courts in The Hague

⁸¹ On dancing and the Amsterdam Calvinist consistory, see Herman Roodenburg, *Onder censuur: de kerkelijke tucht in de gereformeerde gemeente van Amsterdam* (Hilversum: Verloren, 1990), pp. 321–9.

⁸² Louis Peter Grijp, 'The ensemble music of Nicolaes Vallet', in Louis Peter Grijp and Willem Mook (eds.), *Proceedings of the International Lute Symposium Utrecht, 1986* (Utrecht: Stimu, 1988), pp. 65–6.

⁸³ H. de la Fontaine Verwey, 'Gerard Thibault and his *Academie de l'espée*', *Quaerendo* 8 (1978), 294.

⁸⁴ Mary Anne Everett Green, *Elizabeth, Electress Palatine and Queen of Bohemia* (London: Methuen, 1855), pp. 225–6. Although the king was lectured in the

loved their masques, which were introduced by the two Stuart daughters, and court ballets, introduced from the French court by Maurits and Frederik Hendrik. Ten years earlier, in 1613, Prince Maurits had already given a court ballet in honour of Frederick V and his wife, then en route to the Palatinate. When Frederik Hendrik organised another court ballet in honour of them in 1624, the text, including all the necessary classical and allegorical figures, was written by the young Huygens. While neither court could present anything equalling what could be found at the French or English courts, some of their ballets were impressive. Cosimo de' Medici described the splendid *Ballet de la Paix*, organised by Prince William III in 1668 to celebrate the recently concluded peace between England and the Dutch Republic. Rehearsals took several months. The prince danced among the allegorical figures as Mercury, and also impersonated burlesque figures (with the appropriate postures and gestures?) such as a peasant and a countrywoman. This kind of travesty was a long-standing tradition within court ballets.⁸⁵ The festivities were concluded by a ball with French dances for all of the nobility present.

THE GRAND TOUR

All the moulding and exercising served a single purpose: crafting a handsome young man who in entering the world would not be hampered by a lack of physical grace, and whose 'inbred' ease and elegance would win him favours from his peers and betters – essential matters for parents and those who might further the young man's career. As their letters and memoirs testify, physical grace afforded one a distinct advantage. For example, having met Dionysius Vossius, the scholar Claude Saumaise wrote to his father, Gerardus Vossius, praising the

Kloosterkerk, it was his wife who had danced at a masque organised by Frederik Hendrik. According to the minister, the masque had solicited God's wrath, provoking a flood near the town of Vianen.

⁸⁵ Claudia Schnitzer, *Höfische Maskeraden: Funktion und Ausstattung von Verkleidungsdivertissements an deutschen Höfen der frühen Neuzeit* (Tübingen: Narr, 1999); Johan Verberckmoes, 'Parading hilarious exotics in the Spanish Netherlands', in H. Roodenburg et al. (eds.), *Picturing the Exotic 1550–1950: Peasants and Outlandish People in Netherlandish Art (Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek / Netherlands Yearbook for History of Art 53 (2002))* (Zwolle: Waanders, 2003), pp. 53–6.

gracefulness of the boy's countenance, gait and bearing, in short, of everything he said and did.⁸⁶ Similarly, Huygens was well pleased in 1644 that Constantijn had become 'strong and manly for his age, also having a handsome countenance and bearing', and concluding that his son could now be presented to the 'World' 'without anxiety'.⁸⁷ Part of that presenting was the grand tour, the 'formative' educational trip to France or Italy or sometimes to England or Germany.

The Huygens children were largely taught at home, much like their noble contemporaries. Often as part of their education at *illustre scholen* or universities, other young men also visited one of the numerous dancing and fencing schools or the occasional riding school. One such institution, started in Dordrecht in 1630, taught dancing, fencing and mathematics. If we can believe Jean de Parival, Leiden was full of *maîtres d'exercice* offering instruction in handling weapons, mathematics, dancing, drawing or music. As one father wrote, his boys should seriously continue their 'exercises of singing, fencing and dancing', so that they would not 'deteriorate'.⁸⁸ In addition, there was, at least after 1650, a military academy in The Hague.

Such schools and masters offered a first course in applied social skills before special academies and social circles in Paris and elsewhere provided the final touches. 'Paris les peut former', as the Dutch ambassador in France wrote to Johan van Oldenbarnevelt, who had sought his advice as to how his sons (already in Geneva) might best continue their tour. The boys should focus on their *exercices*, on 'mathematics, horse-riding, the handling of arms and other functions of the nobility, but above all on conversation, frequenting the court . . . and often visiting the grandees'. Both young men actually sojourned in Paris for over a year, in 1608–9, favouring the tennis court and Pluvinel's academy above more intellectual exercises.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ F. F. Blok, *Isaac Vossius en zijn kring: zijn leven tot zijn afscheid van koningin Christina van Zweden, 1618–1655* (Groningen: Forsten, 1999), p. 18.

⁸⁷ Huygens, 'Jongelingsjaren', p. 141.

⁸⁸ Anna Frank-Van Westrienen, *De Groote Tour: tekening van de educatiereis der Nederlanders in de zeventiende eeuw* (Amsterdam: [?], 1983), pp. 230–2.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 207: 'aux Mathematiques, à monter à cheval, tirer des armes, et autres fonctions de noblesse, mais sur tout, aux conversations frequentans la Cour . . . et s'accoutoumans a hanter les plus grands . . . '.

Some forty years later, Paris counted numerous such private educational institutions and many others had been started in provincial towns. They attracted the sons of both the sword and robe nobilities in France, and in the Protestant academies of Angers, Saumur and Orléans the sons of German, Dutch, English or other elites, offering a now widely accepted curriculum of military mathematics, geometry and fortification, combined with exercises in dancing, music, drawing, fencing, wrestling and horsemanship. After the end of the sixteenth century, notes Mark Motley, these academies had become 'a vector for the code of graceful behaviour derived from the Italian Renaissance', emphasising in particular 'the exhibition of the body as a sign of social status'.⁹⁰ They were all about moulding the students' social and physical graces. In Paris boys could learn everything, as one Dutch parent phrased it, 'that may fashion the mind and the body, enlighten the former through conversation, and develop a good bearing, agility and vigour through the latter'.⁹¹

For such 'exercises', many sons of the Dutch elite, both noble and non-noble, visited one of the French academies, mostly for a short period as part of their grand tour, staying for a few months or perhaps a year before travelling to southern France, Switzerland or Italy, seeking in all the towns they passed (if they took their tour seriously) the proper social circles in which to exercise *la bonne et belle conversation* or, as one of them wrote, 'a Hanter les honestes gens et a aprendre L'Aijr du monde'.⁹² It was a largely oral, physical and extremely expensive education, but that was exactly the point. As the boys' parents were all too aware, it ensured the exclusivity of graceful movement, the heart of the elite's 'inbred' superiority. Indeed, written culture could be acquired by merchants and their children, but 'embodied' culture was something exclusive.

⁹⁰ Motley, *Becoming a French Aristocrat*, pp. 123–4.

⁹¹ Frank-Van Westrienen, *De Grootte Tour*, p. 216: 'ce qui peut façonner l'esprit et le corps, et donner de belles lumières à l'un par la conversation, et un beau port, de l'adresse et de la vigueur à l'autre'.

⁹² For the academies and the Dutch interest, see Frank-Van Westrienen, *De Grootte Tour*, ch. 6.

CONCLUSION

Leafing through the Huygens's memoirs, one almost forgets they were a family of commoners, for their strategies were strikingly similar to those adopted by the European nobility of the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Realising that merely looking after one's material resources (landed wealth and monetary investments) would no longer suffice, that their economic capital had to be enhanced by social capital (noble titles, patronage networks) and by symbolic or cultural capital (honour, reputation), many noble families devised new educational strategies, combining, as Karin MacHardy observes, an 'explicit, institutionalized education at school and universities with implicit, diffuse socialization in an aristocratic, court-like setting at home and abroad'.⁹³ The strategies developed by the Huygenses were clearly predicated on such ideas, if only in their recognition that serving the crown presented the best opportunities for converting their social and cultural capital into economic security.

Like much of the European nobility, the Huygenses realised the benefits to be gained, not from formal academic instruction (though their sons were sent to university) but from a far more diffuse and informal training aimed at transforming the necessary cultural competency into *habitus*, literally incorporating the symbolic reflections of one's 'inbred' superiority. Whatever could be learned at school and university was one thing; social and physical grace were another. These were aspects of an exclusive embodied culture, a world of family tradition and parental advice, of private tutors, of making a grand tour or even serving at court. Compared to this 'repertoire', manuals of civility seem no more than mnemonic aids. As Mark Motley observed, 'From the point of view of the aristocracy, the relative difficulty and expense of imitating these exercises was a considerable advantage, for it was much harder to usurp graceful movement than the exterior signs of nobility such as dress or arms.'⁹⁴ MacHardy concurs: 'Although

⁹³ Karin J. MacHardy, 'Cultural capital, family strategies and noble identity in early modern Habsburg Austria 1579–1620', *Past and Present* 163 (May 1999), 43.

⁹⁴ Motley, *Becoming a French Aristocrat*, p. 141.

well-to-do commoners or new nobles could easily emulate the outward appearance of nobility, cultural capital in the form of an effortless superiority in lifestyle and manners took generations to cultivate.⁹⁵

As these studies suggest, such bodily transfer was an international phenomenon. Throughout Europe, the elites who adopted these codes of civility were acutely aware of the uses of bodily memory, of this 'repertoire'. Far from being a passive process, it was a mode of cultural (re)production. As civility spread throughout Europe, each nation would defend its own traditional simplicity and claim superior manners (less apish, less ceremonious, less effeminate) for itself. As Anna Bryson notes, it was not nationally defined elites whose divergent codes of behaviour were bridged only by fashion. What this nationally competitive attitude suggests is that this period saw the rise of an internationally oriented elite sharing sufficient common ground to exchange judgements and counter-judgements on the civility displayed in every nation.⁹⁶ In this sense, we may view bodily transfer as a specific but unduly neglected mode of cultural exchange.

⁹⁵ MacHardy, 'Cultural capital', 58.

⁹⁶ Bryson, *From Courtesy to Civility*, p. 78; on such aspects, see also Burke, 'The language of gesture in early modern Italy'; for the Dutch Republic: Herman Roodenburg, 'The "hand of friendship": shaking hands and other gestures in the Dutch Republic', in Bremmer and Roodenburg (eds.), *Cultural History of Gesture*, pp. 160–1; cf. Knox, this volume, pp. 290–3.