Elektronischer Sonderdruck aus:

Barock – Moderne – Postmoderne:

ungeklärte Beziehungen

Herausgegeben von
Victoria von Flemming und Alma-Elisa Kittner

(Wolfenbütteler Arbeiten zur Barockforschung Bd. 50)
ISBN 978-3-447-10019-9

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden 2014
in Kommission

Umschlagentwurf unter Verwendung von:
Joan Costa, Veronica Taylor in Red (2003), © Fundacion Martinez Guerricab, Valencia.

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek

Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über http://dnb.dnb.de abrufbar.

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek

The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at http://dnb.dnb.de.

www.harrassowitz-verlag.de

Gedruckt auf alterungsbeständigem, säurefreiem Papier.
Druck: Memminger MedienCentrum Druckerei und Verlags-AG, Memmingen
Printed in Germany

ISBN 978-3-447-10019-9
ISSN 0724-472X

Inhalt

Frances Suzman Jowell

Thoré-Bürger and the Modernity of Seventeenth-century Dutch art

(with special reference to Frans Hals)

In the spring of 1868 a French art-historian from Paris, accompanied by a German collector from Aachen, arrived in Brunswick to visit the superb collection of Dutch and Flemish paintings in the local museum. They were joined by an aspiring young art historian from Brunswick whose early acquaintance with the art collections in his native town had recently inspired his shift from law to art history. This encounter would prove to be consequential for all three of them.

The French visitor was the art critic and historian Théophile Thoré, who was at that time known as W. Bürger, (**Fig. 1**) – a pseudonym adopted since the mid-1850's. As W. Bürger he was internationally recognised as a leading authority on old master paintings, especially renowned for pioneering researches into seventeenth-century Dutch art since 1857. These were published in wide-ranging reviews of private and public collections in England, Belgium, Germany and Holland, or as specialised articles in various art journals and newspapers. His two volumes on the Dutch museums, the Musées de la Hollande (published 1858–1860) had virtually inaugurated a new era in the historiography of the seventeenth-century Dutch school.[1]

One of the important collections he had studied and publicised belonged to his present travelling companion Barthold Suermondt – (**Fig. 2**) – a collector Bürger continued to advise until the end of his life.[2] The third person, the young man from Brunswick who guided them through the museum, was the twenty-two year old Wilhelm von Bode (who also accompanied them to their next destination, Kassel.) Bode was already an avid reader of Bürger's

1 On Thoré's pivotal role in the historiography of Dutch art see Peter Hecht: Rembrandt and Raphael back to back: the contribution of Thoré. In: Simiolus. Netherlands quarterly for the history of art 26, 1998, pp. 162–178 and Frances Suzman Jowell: From Thoré to Bürger: the image of Dutch art before and after the Musées de la Hollande. In: Bulletin van het Rijksmuseum 49, 2001, pp. 45–60.

2 W. Bürger: Etudes sur les peintres hollandais et flamands. Galerie Suermondt, à Aix-la-Chapelle avec le catalogue de la collection par le Dr. Waagen. Paris, Bruxelles, 1860; Nouvelles Etudes sur la galerie Suermondt à Aix-la-Chapelle. In: Gazette des Beaux Arts, 1969, deux. pér. I, pp. 5–37 and 162–187.

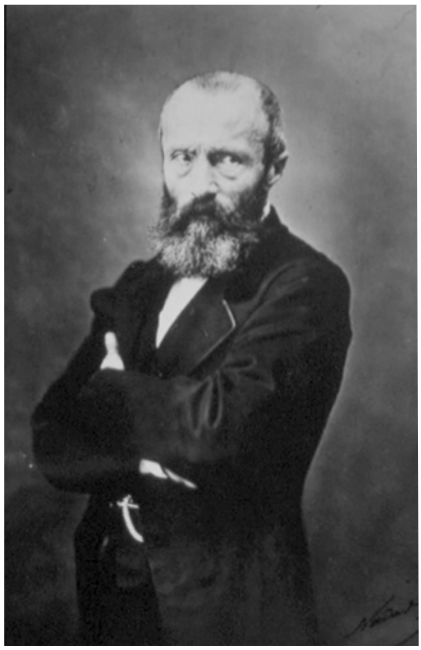

Fig. 1: F. Nadar, Portrait of Thoré-Bürger, Photograph 1862.

publications, but he also later recalled in his autobiography that he found the Frenchman's spoken commentary even more exciting and inspiring.[3]

Bürger's earlier description on at least one painting they viewed – Vermeer's *Glass of Wine* (Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz) – gives an idea of his lively commentary. Bürger had first seen the painting some ten years earlier, when it was still mislabelled Jacob van der Meer. Bürger had immediately added the work to his growing list of paintings by the little known Jan van der Meer of Delft – an artist he 'rediscovered' and whose works he determinedly brought to light, culminating in his study and catalogue of 1866.[4] His account in 1860 opens with a lighthearted preamble on its theme of courtship and seduction: the animated young coquette smiling conspiratorially at the viewer, while her lascivious amorous suitor guides her hand and wine glass to her lips, and the excluded

3 Wilhelm von Bode: Mein Leben. 2 vols. Berlin 1930, vol. 1, p. 26. See also Thomas W. Gaehtgens: Wilhelm von Bode and Dutch painting. In: Bulletin van het Rijskmuseum 49, 2001, pp. 61–71, esp. pp. 62 f.

4 W. Bürger: Frans Hals. In: Gazette des Beaux-Arts XXIV (1868), pp. 219–230 and 431–448. On Hals's critical fortunes see Frances S. Jowell: Thoré-Bürger and the Revival of Frans Hals. In: The Art bulletin 57 (1974), pp. 101–117 and Frances S. Jowell: The Rediscovery of Frans Hals. In: Seymour Slive (ed.): Frans Hals. Exhib. Catalogue London (Royal Academy) 1989–1990, pp. 61–86 [in German: Die Wiederentdeckung des Frans Hals im 19. Jahrhundert. In: Frans Hals. Ausst.-Kat. München 1989, pp. 61–86.].

Fig. 2: Barthold Suermondt, Lithograph undated.

third figure leans sulkily at the table in the background; Bürger describes its stylistic qualities: the careful composition, the colours and textures, the light falling through the half-open transluscent window. He concludes by placing the painting in the context of the artist's then little known oeuvre:

> "Je ne connais pas de plus délicieux tableau de genre dans toute l'école hollandaise du dix-septième siècle … Ici, van der Meer n'est plus le peintre brusque de son paysage du musée de La Haye; ce qu'il cherche, ce n'est plus la fermeté et le caractère de la Laitière de la galerie Six; c'est la suprême élégance dans cette coquette aux formes fines et allongées, à la physionomie attrayante, voluptueuse, spirituelle. L'exécution est sobre, serrée, sans empâtements, si ce n'est quelques petites touches de rehaut dans les clairs et les accessoires."[5]

This painting is here singled out primarily to introduce Thoré-Bürger, for he is perhaps best known for his rediscovery of Vermeer.[6] However, for the purposes of this context, I will focus on his interpretation of different Dutch artist: Frans Hals, who was particularly well represented at their next des-

5 W. Bürger: Musées de la Hollande, 2 vols. Bruxelles et Paris 1860, vol. 1, pp. 73–75.

6 See for example, Frances S. Jowell: Vermeer and Thoré-Bürger: recoveries of reputation. In: I. Gaskell and M. Jonker (eds.): Vermeer Studies. Washington (National Gallery of Art) 1998, pp. 35–41.

Fig. 3: Frans Hals: Singing Boys, 1623–25, Gemäldegalerie Alter Meister, Kassel.

tination – the museum in Kassel. Hals was of special interest to Bürger as critic and art historian, to Suermondt as collector, and to Bode as student whose current doctoral research was on Frans Hals and his School.[7]

Bürger's reappraisal of Hals since late 1850's had contributed to Hals's recent popularity. His researches culminated that very year, 1868, in his pi-

7 Wilhelm von Bode: Frans Hals und seine Schule. In: Jahrbuch für Kunstwissenschaft IV, Leipzig 1871, pp. 1–66.

oneering articles in the Gazette des Beaux-Arts[8] – copies of which he presumably gave his younger companion. One of the paintings, *Singing Boys* (**Fig. 3**), was reproduced in the small engraving that headed his articles although the work itself was mentioned only in passing – referring his reader instead to his description of a comparable work then in Suermondt collection, *Boy with Flute*, (Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz):

> "Vive étude sabré de premier coup. Il n'en fait jamais d'autres. Tous ses coups de brosse marquent, lancés justement et spirituellement où il faut. On dirait que Frans Hals peignait comme on fait de l'escrime et qu'il faisait fouetter son pinceau comme un fleuret. Oh! L'adroit bretteur, bien amusant à voir dans ses belles passes! Parfois un peu téméraire sans doute, mais aussi savant qu'il est hardi."[9]

A few months after the encounter in Brunswick, Bode made his first trip to the Netherlands to explore the Dutch museums. En route he stopped off in Aachen to visit Suermondt and his collection – where, among Suermondt's other works by Hals, Bode would have viewed the recently acquired *Malle Babbe* (Gemäldegalerie, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin – Preußischer Kulturbesitz). It had been introduced to the public by Bürger, and lauded for its audacious naturalism, its boldly chosen ugly subject, its violence of brushstroke and strangeness of tone revealing the full *furia* of his genius.[10]

Bode's visit would stand him in good stead, for in 1874, two years after his appointment as assistant to the Director (Dr. Ludwig Meyer) at the Gemäldegalerie of the Royal Museum in Berlin, he was instrumental in the museum's acquisition of the entire Suermondt collection (some 275 paintings and 188 drawings). This constituted a significant addition to the museum – especially to the Dutch collection for which Bode had a special affinity.[11]

After leaving Aachen, Bode continued his journey to the Netherlands carrying Bürger's *Musées de la Hollande* under his arm – a work he claimed to know almost by heart.

It is not surprising that his researches on Frans Hals and his School owed a great debt to Bürger. In fact Bürger's interpretation of Dutch art gener-

8 See above, n. 4.

9 W. Bürger: Galerie Suermondt (as note 2), pp. 13 f.

10 W. Bürger: Frans Hals (as note 4), p. 443.

11 For a full account see Herbert Lepper: Kunsttransfer aus der Rheinprovinz in die Reichshauptstadt. In: Aachener Kunstblätter des Museumsvereins 56–57 (1988–1989), pp. 183–342.

ally was of enduring importance to Bode – as has been shown by Thomas Gaehtgens and Peter Hecht.[12]

However, (as far as I know) they did not meet again in person, for Bürger died a year later – on April 30, 1869, aged 62. Fragmentary reminders of their encounter in Brunswick are to be found in the pages of the *Zeitschrift für Bildende Kunst* in 1868–1869 first, Bürger's series of short articles (accompanied by W. Unger etchings) on masterpieces from the Brunswick gallery and then, a few months later, Bode's posthumous tribute to Bürger for having been the first to establish a scholarly treatment of Dutch art, thereby laying the foundations for the future study and general recognition of this school: "Er hat als erster eine wissenschaftliche Behandlung der Holländischen Kunst begründet und dadurch den Grundstein für eine allgemeine Anerkennung derselben gelegt."[13]

Thoré-Bürger's scholarly connoisseurship provided foundations for future researches and revisions of the next generation of art historians – but he also established a new canon which endured well into the 20th century and for which he claimed a retrospective modernity. In this canon the triumvirate of Hals, Rembrandt and Vermeer held sway, together with a host of other 'naturalist' painters of genre, portraiture and landscape. It was also, of course, a canon of exclusion – one that excluded the *fijnschilders*, adamantly excluded Italianate landscape painters, and all classical mythological and allegorical history painting on grounds of being irrelevant not only to their own era but also to future generations.

For the hall mark of authentic national Dutch school of the seventeenth-century, as laid down by Bürger, was the naturalistic depiction of contemporary life. As he explained in his wide-ranging and influential *Musées de la Hollande* (1858–1860) the Dutch school painted:

> "La vie, la vie vivante, l'homme, ses moeurs, ses occupations, ses joies, ses caprices. Les uns ont pris le citoyen en action pour la chose publique, qu'il se livre à l'exercice des armes ou à la délibération des affaires; les autres ont pris les familles chez elles, ou dans leurs distractions extérieures; ceux-ci les classes distinguées, ceux-là les classes laborieuses, ou les classes excentriques. D'autres ont représenté le milieu où s'agite la vie commune, les mers et les plages, avec les épisodes de l'existence maritime, si chère au pays; les campagnes et les forêts, avec les dompteurs de la terre et les dompteurs des animaux; scènes agrestes et scènes de chasse; les canaux et les ruisseaux, avec des moulins, des barques, des pêcheurs; les villes, places et rues, où la population circule avec toute sa variété. Partout l'anima-

12 See above notes 1 and 3.

13 Wilhelm von Bode: Meisterwerke der Braunschweiger Galerie. In: Zeitschrift für Bildende Kunst (1869), p. 160.

> tion, la vie présente, qui est aussi la vie éternelle, – l'histoire du peuple et du pays."[14]

Bürger attributed the emergence of this new school to the hard-won political and religious freedom of the Dutch republic and to the independence and energy of its citizens. Not only had they secured their land from the threatening sea, they had "by a spontaneous outburst of national genius" re-created their society and their moral and intellectual world. Bürger rejected the traditional linking of Flemish and Dutch art was nothing short of historical heresy, for unlike their Flemish neighbors, the Dutch had thrown off the yoke of Catholic Spain and set up a democratic Protestant republic. Thus Rubens, who lived among the oppressed, painted Catholic and mythological pictures for church and state, and portrayed princes and prelates, while Rembrandt – the great visionary naturalist – was a free man, inspired by the full range of his society.

In the wider European context, the Dutch school, with Rembrandt at its head, is characterised as a decisive rejection of the past Italianate Renaissance tradition, as represented by Raphael. Dutch naturalism rejected the arcane religious, classical, and mythological subject matter that served rulers and church. Instead, their new art, naturalism, was of and for the entire society: it was *l'art pour l'homme*. Thus defined as the first school to renounce the past and to envisage future art, the Dutch school was deemed the legitimate ancestor of contemporary art – specifically of the naturalistic art of the future. By implication, it is an exhortation to Bürger's contemporaries to aspire to the freedom and independence of the Dutch republic.

The special urgency behind his insistence on the democratic Dutch republic and its art as exemplary for his own time could be seen as a substitute for earlier failed political campaigns – as a thinly disguised art-historical protest against the triumphant Second Empire in France from the exiled republican. Certainly one reader of his groundbreaking *Musées* in 1858 read Bürger's championship of Dutch art as a surrogate political manifesto: his old ally and fellow exile, the socialist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, who praised both the positivist probity of the author and the political implications of his work: "[…] en nous parlant d'art, et d'art hollandaise, il nous a fait rêver d'autre chose […] Ce qui est sûr, c'est que nous avons cru, voir, toucher, sentir, nous avons vu le progrès de l'humanité."[15]

A brief biographical digression will perhaps explain the context of these dreams of "other things […] the future of humanity." Thoré-Bürger was a life-long republican and his political ideals informed all his work. Dur-

14 W. Bürger: Musées (as note 5), 1858, pp. 322 f.

15 Pierre-Joseph Proudhon: Musées de la Hollande: Amsterdam et La Haye. Études sur l'école hollandaise par W. Bürger. In: Revue trimestrielle, janvier 1859, pp. 277 – 289.

ing the July monarchy (1830–1848), Thoré alternated between art criticism and politics – for both promoted what he considered to be progressive and modern. His activities in Paris were briefly interrupted by a year in prison 1840 after contravening censorship laws. But a more drastic interruption was to follow. For at the outbreak of the 1848 Revolution, *le citoyen* Thoré (**Fig. 4**) abandoned art criticism for political activism in support of extreme left-wing factions of the revolution. An abortive demonstration in June 1849 resulted in political exile for a decade. By 1855, after years of fugitive and futile political pamphleteering, he gave up hope of revolution in France. Stimulated by reports of the Universal Exhibition in Paris, (and encouraged by a new journal *La Revue universelle des arts* in Brussels), *le citoyen* Thoré again took up his pen as writer on art. But he was proscribed from publishing in France and so adopted a pseudonym – W. Bürger – with obvious reference to *citizen/citoyen*. (It was also intended, he wrote to a friend, to convey the presumed seriousness or *gravitas* of German art historians and philosophers!)

The cosmopolitan W. Bürger now put his faith in an impending universality that would inexorably lead humanity to a new fraternal unity. With improved communications, the movements of people across the world, great universal exhibitions, and a new cosmopolitanism, he asked rhetorically, how could one continue to be imprisoned by narrow systems of philosophy, religion, politics, symbols, mythology? He envisioned old stigma of race, old superstitions, divisive religious and national barriers evaporating in the face of this new universal mankind. And this universally harmonious society would produce a universally understood art – naturalism – whose alphabet would be mankind itself – in short, *l'art pour l'homme* – a phrase originally derived from a quasi socialist religion of Pierre Leroux – *l'Humanité* – which envisaged a future unity and fraternity of humankind.[16]

How could Thoré, now W. Bürger, further these ideals? From his exile he could not participate in current critical debates about Courbet, avant-garde realism in Paris. Instead he turned his attention to the art of the past, to a universal history of art. This meant two things: first – facts, dates, particularities, documentation and attribution – in short, the positivist probity which Proudhon applauded and which, from a different standpoint, was the "scholarly foundation" to which Bode referred. The second was to under-

16 On Leroux's evangelical socialism see Pontus Grate: Deux Critiques d'Art de l'Epoque Romantique: Gustave Planche et Théophile Thoré. Stockholm 1959; Frances S. Jowell: Thoré-Bürger and the Art of the Past. New York and London, 1977 (Phil. Diss. Harvard University, 1971), pp. 24–116; Neil McWilliam: Dreams of Happiness. Princeton 1993, pp. 165–187.

Fig. 4: Le citoyen Thoré, Lithograph undated.

stand the special achievements of different schools of art, their relationships to each other and to the general progress of humanity.

The great Art Treasures exhibition in Manchester of 1857 provided him with his first opportunity, for this huge exhibition was hung (mainly under the influence of Gustav Waagen) according to various national schools of European art since the Renaissance. In his wide-ranging review first pub-

lished in the Paris newspaper *Le Siècle* and then as a separate volume[17], Bürger suggested the emergence of an innovative naturalism dating from the seventeenth-century – but most comprehensively realised in the Dutch school of the 17th century (which happened to be particularly well represented at Manchester.) And therefore, while knowledgeable about all the major European schools, Bürger chose to concentrate on the elucidation of the art of the Dutch republic, Rembrandt and his school, not only because it was relatively little studied but also because it was:

> "[…] la plus délibérée, la plus originale, la plus varieé, la plus révolutionnaire, la plus naturelle, et la plus humaine à la fois; c'est assurément celle qui est la plus dégagée du passé, qui adhère la plus à la nature, et qui par là signale le mieux une des tendances de l'art à venir."[18]

Thoré-Bürger was not the first – or the last – to characterize Dutch art in terms of political context and descriptive naturalism: it can be found in most commentaries on Dutch art – from Hegel on. But what was new was his insistence on its pivotal art-historical position and on its prophetic role for future art, its essential modernity. He popularised this idea through his prolific writings as art historian and critic. He was therefore a key figure in establishing the terms in which the seventeenth-century Dutch school was viewed and valued by its modern audiences of the late 19th century.

Furthermore Thoré-Bürger's lifelong familiarity with the procedures of painting gave his critical or aesthetic judgements special weight. Naturalism in his view did not rely solely on subject matter (the what) but also on the execution (the how). Thus seemingly trivial familiar subjects could be imbued with as much significance and poesie as elevated narrative themes – but only through what he considered to be the essential means of painting – colour, light and chiaroscuro (rather than the linear or sculptural draftsmanship of *dessinateurs*). For only these essentially painterly means could convey the artist's personal response and a heightened sense of life and nature. His critical language included terms such as originality, sincerity, truth to oneself.

While the entire Dutch school as construed by Bürger was championed for its modernity and as a source of inspiration for contemporary artists, this paper will focus on Frans Hals who was, according to Bürger, the leading artist of the first generation of the authentic Dutch school.[19] It is interesting

17 W. Bürger: Trésors d'Art exposés à Manchester, 1857. Paris 1857.

18 W. Bürger: Salon de 1861. De l'avenir de l'art. In: Revue Germanique 15 (1861), pp. 248 – 260.

19 See Frances S. Jowell: Impressionism and the Golden Age of Dutch Art. In: Inspiring Impressionism. The Impressionists and the Art of the Past. Exhib. Cat. Denver Art Museum with University Press. Newhaven and London 2008, pp. 79 f.

that only a few years earlier, in Charles Blanc's mammoth publication *Histoire des peintres de toutes les écoles* Hals (because of his place of birth, Antwerp) was classified as a Flemish painter. This would have been inconceivable after Bürger's reappraisal of the artist during the 1860's.

Bürger not only conferred new status on Hals in the history of the Dutch school, he reappraised his style, located Hals's dispersed paintings throughout Europe and most important for the purposes of exploring 'modernity' of the Baroque era, he argued for the contemporary – that is, modern – significance of Hals's paintings in both subject matter and technique.[20]

Bürger challenged the traditional disapproval of Hals on every ground of his ill-repute: he debunked the anecdotes about Hals's alleged drunken debauchery and fecklessness that had been a theme/topos in all the traditional accounts of Hals since Houbraken. Instead he recast Hals as a highspirited, sociable and witty character, an adventurer, a stylish Bohemian, as portrayed in the then presumed self-portraits of Hals and his wife (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum) – the "outrageous" fellow and his vivacious wife painted with a youthful exuberance which sent his brush "frolicking" over the canvas.

Thus Bürger assumes that the image arose from the artist's direct experience of the world around him, unencumbered by symbolism and unmediated by iconographical conventions – such as the positioning of the man on the dexter side, the allusions to marriage vows of fidelity in the symbolic thistle or gesture of hand on heart; the allusions to steadfast love that survives after death – such as the symbolic vine clinging to the tree, a motif subtly echoed by the woman's ring hand on her husband's shoulder.[21]

For it was the seeming accessibility of images from contemporary life that made Dutch art a model for contemporary art.

Hals had long been censured for his apparent impetuousness. Bürger countered traditional criticism from disapproving Academicians such as Sir Joshua Reynolds who (1774) warned students that while Hals's ability to portray a strong marked character of individual nature was admirable, it was regrettable that Hals had not also had "[…] a patience in finishing what he had so correctly planned." During the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries prominent dealers lamented Hals's low prices on the market and warned contemporary artists to avoid Hals's slapdash procedure and lack of finish.

By the time Bürger was writing, taste had changed. Unlike earlier writers, he revelled in Hals's construed impetuosity and advised artists to emulate Hals's procedure:

---

20 The following account is taken from the articles referenced in note 4.

21 See Seymour Slive (as note 4), no. 12, pp. 162–165.

> "Il a tant peint! Il peignait si vite – et si bien! Il n'y a pas la moindre peinture de lui qui ne soit attirante pour les artistes et qui ne leur offre des enseignements. De lui, tout est instructif, ses défauts autant que ses qualités; car ses défauts sont toujours d'un grand praticien. Dans ses brusqueries exagérées, dans ses contrastes hasardés, dans ses négligences trop sans façon, il y a toujours la main d'un peintre généreusement doué, et même le signe d'un certain genie, assez superficiel il est vrai, et provoqué par l'aspect extérieur des choses, par le mouvement, la tournure, la couleur, l'effet, par ce qui remue et brille, plus que par les caractères secret et intimes de la vie, – assez vulgaire même, si l'on peut parler ainsi du génie, – mais franc et brave, irrésistible comme l'instinct."[22]

Bürger also urged his contemporaries to follow Hals's example in subject matter – such as the commemorative civic group portraits which, since 1862, were on display in the Frans Halsmuseum Haarlem. The museum soon became a popular destination for artistic pilgrimage from all over the world – from Russia in the East to America in the West.[23]

Here Hals's great life-size group portraits (eight in all – portraying some eighty-four animated figures) revealed the spectacular sweep of Hals's career, from the early animated and colourful group civic portraits to his powerful *ultima maniera*. As Bürger wrote:

> "Ces tableaux hollandais représentant la vie contemporaine des artistes font songer aussi très-naturellement à l'art de notre époque, […] D'abord, ce qui est aujourd'hui sera de l'histoire demain; […] Qui empêche de faire un chef d'oeuvre avec une assemblée de diplomats assis autour d'une table, de même que Rembrandt à fait un chef-d'oeuvre avec les Syndics des la corporation des drapiers? Avec un orateur à la tribune des deputés, un professeur au milieu de la jeunesse; avec une scène des courses, une sortie de l'Opera, une promenade aux Champs-Elysées; ou simplement avec des hommes qui travaillent à n'importe quoi, des femme qui s'amusent à n'importe quoi."[24]

Bürger's dream would indeed be realised during following decades by French Impressionists' depictions of contemporary life: scenes of everyday leisure and work in Paris and its outskirts; urban and country views; portraits and genre – familiar secular subjects, all with seemingly minimal reference to traditional composition or procedures.[25]

---

22 Bürger, Musée (as note 5).

23 Petra ten-Doesschate Chu: Nineteenth-century visitors to the Frans Hals Museum. In: Gabriel P. Weisberg and Laurinda S. Dixon (eds.): The Documented Image. Visions in Art History. Syracuse University Press 1987, pp. 111–144.

24 Bürger, Hals 1868 (as note 4), p. 436.

25 See Frances S. Jowell (as note 4).

Hals, in particular, both for his subject matter and procedure, was frequently cited as a source of inspiration by a wide range of artists who considered themselves 'modern'. Hals's apparent spontaneity and gestural brushwork, which both animated his figures and brought the painting process to the fore, was increasingly identified with aesthetic values of the self-styled avant-gardes in different centres.

In 1866, for example, Manet's friend, the painter and critic Astruc wrote of Hals:

> "La réputation de ce maître devra beaucoup à l'école moderne qui le prise singulièrement et lui fait partout fêté comme à un inspirateur. La vérité est qu'il représente une côte d'étude sain et fortifiant, qu'il ne ment point à sa vision, et que c'est le moment où jamais de suivre les voies sincères si l'on veut que la domaine de l'art français se fortifie pour s'aggrandir."[26]

A few years later, an allusion to Hals was read into a painting by Manet that was executed soon after the artist's return from a visit to Holland. His *Bon Bock* of 1873 (Philadelphia, Museum of Art) was generally considered to be a Halsian paraphrase of the *Merry Drinker* (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum). Manet's general affinity to Hals was frequently commented on by his contemporaries: Degas reportedly quipped facetiously that Manet "never painted fingernails because Frans Hals did not depict them." More seriously Antonin Proust claimed that Hals's works inspired Manet's ambition to paint the Paris of his own time: "[…] la hardiesse des parties pris de Franz (sic) Hals lui causa, en Hollande, une telle impression que, revenue à Paris, armé de tous ces souvenirs, il se décida à aborder franchement les divers aspects de la vie parisienne."[27]

In 1873 the Dutch art historian Vosmaer, attributed Hals's increasing popularity to the modern preference for "les créations originales et frappés au coin d'une forte individualité bien au-dessus des œuvres plus réfléchies, plus travaillées, fruit d'une culture plus avancées, peut-être, mais par la même moins spontanées et moins naturelles. Plus ses productions trahissent l'inspiration première, plus fraîche et vibrante elle jaillessent du cerveau de l'artiste, et plus elle éveillent chez nous d'intérêt et de sympathie."[28]

Ten years later, (1883) an avant-garde Belgian art journal published an article entitled *Le modernisme de FH* in which the anonymous writer asserts that the seventeenth-century Dutch painter expressed current preoccupa-

26 Zacharie Astruc: Trésors d'art de Paris. L'Etendard, July 23, 1866.

27 Antonin Proust: Edouard Manet. Souvenirs. Paris 1913, p. 88.

28 W. Unger (ed.): Carel Vosmaer: Etsen naar Frans Hals avec une étude sur le maitre et ses oeuvres. Leiden 1873.

tions of contemporary painters: "Frans Hals est un moderne. Son esthétique, son coloris, son dessin, ses procédés appartiennent à notre époque."[29]

But how to define their "époque"? And which painters? For responses to the prophetic 'modernity' conferred on Hals may be found during the last four decades of the nineteenth century in the works of a wide range of artists with varying ideological and aesthetic standpoints, and in different artistic centres.[30]

The presence of several Hals paintings in Paris from the 1860's on initially attracted the attention of the Parisian avant-garde. Manet's positive and subtle responses to the Dutch master's subject matter and style have already been noted – especially after his visits to the Netherlands. A very different personal response is evident in Gustave Courbet's bravado copy of Suermondt's recently acquired *Malle Babbe* (today Berlin) in 1869 when it was first exhibited (together with four other works by Hals) at the first *Internationale Kunstausstellung* in Munich. He later claimed that he replaced Hals's painting with his own (Hamburger Kunsthalle) and that no one noticed the difference – an unlikely story![31]

Munich became an important centre for the Hals's posthumous critical fortunes. The Munich painter Wilhelm Leibl was particularly impressed by Hals's works at the 1869 exhibition. His *Gipsy Girl* (Cologne, Wallraf-Richartz Museum), painted after visiting Paris later that year (at Courbet's invitation) could be seen as his tribute to Hals. Hals's paintings continued to inspire Leibl (**Fig. 5**) and his circle who venerated his bold brushwork, his freedom of handling, his individual style and *alla prima* painting as an example of how the technical means of painting and painterly performance could express individual temperament and personal expression of "Geist".[32]

Several American painters studying in Munich during the 1870's and early 1880's shared this aspiration to emulate Hals – artists such as William Merritt Chase, Frank Duvenek and Frank Currier. They too adopted Hals's experimental *bravura* concerning brushwork and unfinish as a self-con-

29 The influential art journal *L'Art Moderne* (Brussels) was the semi-official organ of the avant-garde Belgian group *Les Vingt*.

30 For a full discussion of critical and artistic responses during the late nineteenth century, from which this brief account is taken, see Frances S. Jowell: Wiederentdeckung (as note 4), pp. 71–78.

31 This is highly unlikely, since he invented his own date for the painting. For a suggestion that the painting could possibly have been painted in homage to Thoré-Bürger see Frances S. Jowell: Politique et esthétique: du citoyen Thoré à William Bürger. In: La Critique d'Art en France, 1850–1900 (Actes du colloque de Clermont-Ferrand 1988). Saint Etienne 1989, pp. 25–41.

32 Eberhard Ruhmer: William Leibl and his Circle, 1871–1873. In: Richard v. West (ed.): Munich and American Realism in the 19th Century. Exhib. Cat. Munich, Sacramento 1978, pp. 15 f.

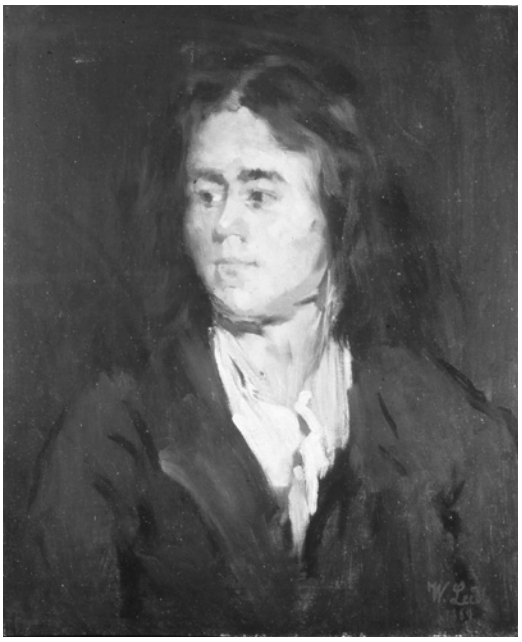

Fig. 5: Wilhelm Leibl, Gipsy Girl, 1871.

scious modern challenge to conservative taste. The important American contingent included other artists such as John Singer Sargent, Alden Weir, Whistler and others. This is well illustrated in an etching after a lost portrait of Duvenek by Merritt Chase (**Fig. 6**): it shows the sitter, dressed in a superb Halsian hat, leaning over the back of a chair in imitation of the informal poses of several of Hals's sitters, smoking a pipe and holding a etching after Hals's *Malle Babbe*.

For the Berlin painter, Max Liebermann (also a close friend of Bode) Hals was an inspiring example: "[…] dieser Meister wurde ein Vorbild, gab ihm einen Maßstab wie kein anderer Maler unter den Alten und Neuen" – as encapsulated in his famous comment: "[…] vor den Bildern des Frans Hals bekommt man Lust zum Malen, vor denen Rembrandts verliert man die Lust daran."[33] His admiration for Hals led him to copy several works, such as the early exuberant *Gipsy* (Paris, Louvre) in 1873 and the poignant details of figures from the late paintings in Haarlem (**Fig. 7**). Although Hals's procedure was important to Liebermann, it seems that he was also sympathetic to the social and political values attributed to Hals's naturalism in the early revivalist accounts. These would have been familiar to him through his friend Wilhelm von Bode.[34]

33 Max Friedlander: Max Liebermann. Berlin n. d. [1924], pp. 48 f.

34 For further discussion see Gaehtgens (above n. 3), pp. 64–66.

Fig. 6: Copy after W. Merrit Chase, Portrait of Frank Duvenek (lost), Etching by Unger.

In a very different vein, the Belgian painter Ensor seems almost to abduct Hals's figures into his own eerie and estranged world of 1883. Thus Hals' elderly women *Regentesses* become distorted, mutilated, with tense and grimacing expressions and Hals's homely woman messenger is replaced by a likeness of the artist himself as a weird intruder in his drawings after Hals's *Regentessen*, (Antwerp, Koninklijk Museum voor Schone Kunsten).

What of Hals's compatriots? – let's turn to van Gogh whose intense interest is expressed in letters and demonstrated in his paintings: He looked to Hals for how to paint, for what to paint, for his artistic and national identity, and for an understanding of modernity: Van Gogh's views on the procedures of painting and his passionate insistence that modern art should portray its own society are reminiscent of Bürger's writings – which he knew and admiring once noting of Bürger "everything he says is true!"

This was his response to Hals's *Fisherboy* (Antwerp): "To paint in one rush, as much as possible in one rush. What a joy to see such a Frans Hals –

Fig. 7: Max Liebermann, Copy of one of Hals's Regentesses, 1874–75.

how different it is from those pictures where everything has been carefully smoothed down in the same way."[35]

He was also eloquent about Hals's subject matter:

> "Let's talk about Frans Hals. He never painted Christs, annunciations, angels, resurrections; He did portraits and nothing, nothing else […] Portraits of soldiers, gatherings of officers […] portraits of matrons [...] wearing white caps and dressed in wool and black satin, discussing the budget of an orphanage or an almshouse. He painted the drunken toper, the old fishwife in a mood of witchlike hilarity, the pretty gipsy whore, the dashing self-indulgent nobleman with his moustache, top boots and spurs. He painted himself, together with his wife on a bench on a lawn. He painted vagabonds and laughing urchins. He does not know greater things than that, but it is worth as much as the Michelangelos and Raphaels."[36]

His various portraits, such as of *Postman Roulin* (Boston, Museum of Fine Arts) could be seen as an acknowledgement of his debt to the great innovator of the Dutch school and an assertion of their shared modernity.

35 The Complete Letters of Vincent van Gogh, 3 vols., London 1958. Here vol. 2, letter 427 (October 1886), p. 419.

36 Ibid., vol. 3, letter B13, p. 506.

In conclusion: Thoré-Bürger's influential writings played an important role in establishing the construed modernity of seventeenth-century Dutch school. Although the political and social commitment behind his version of artistic production of the Dutch republic may not have been shared by all his contemporary readers or by later generations, his aesthetic and art historical preferences were sustained well into the twentieth-century. His judgements were accepted by leading critics, art historians and curators – including Wilhelm von Bode.

In the case of Frans Hals, it also involved a dramatic reversal of the artist's posthumous critical, historical and commercial fortunes. His paintings were seen as the artistic expression of the independence, individuality, boldness and liveliness of the new freedom-loving republic – in both subject matter and handling. For contemporary artists Hals became a source of instruction, inspiration or emulation – depending on their particular interests and values, and their various artistic identities and definitions of what constituted the modern. And of course these modern artists, in their individual encounters with the art of the past created a reciprocal relationship between the past and present, conferring retrospective modernity on old masters. To use Baxandall's words: "Arts are positional games and each time an artist is influenced he rewrites his art's history a little."[37] And it should also be mentioned, perhaps in parentheses, that on the art market the financial value of his works reached unprecedented heights as collectors and curators competed for his paintings. The nineteenth-century revival of Hals was dependent on many different factors – some of them quite mundane. They include the physical survival and accessibility of paintings, the fluctuating fortunes and changing taste of collectors and museum curators; the various ideological and aesthetic values implicit (or explicit) in changing historical and critical interpretations. And in the case of Hals, although the original ideological or political moorings of his earliest champions may have become less important to his later audiences, they were crucial to his initial revival.

Thus, among the multiple and diverse sources of late nineteenth-century interpretations of the 'modernity' of seventeenth-century Dutch art and of its construed relevance to 'modern' art – we should not forget the life-long hopes and labours of an exiled French republican with a German name, nor should we underestimate the importance of an encounter in the museum at Brunswick in the spring of 1868.

37 Michael Baxandall: Patterns of Intention. On the Historical Explanation of Pictures. New Haven and London1985, p. 60.