This is a translation of Arnold Houbraken's 'Life' of Hoogstraten from De Groote Schouburgh der Nederlantsche Konstschilders en Schilderessen. Waar van 'er veele met hunne beeltenissen ten Toneel verschynen, en hun levensgedrag en Konstwerken beschreven worden: zynde een vervolg op het Schilderboek van K. v. Mander (The Great Theatre of Dutch Painters and Painteresses. In which many appear with their portraits depicted, and the conduct of their lives and their Art works described: Being a successor to the Painters' Book of Karel van Mander), Amsterdam, 1718-21, vol. II, pp. 155-70; you can download the original Dutch (and/or scans of an early edition of the book) at: http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/houb005groo01 01/houb005groo01 01 0256.php.

So it is that in imitation of the examples of the ancient Writers, one delivers from uncertainty the memory of men and the extraordinary things performed in their lifetimes, and by means of the pen and the Printing Press binds them to the shackles of Eternity, obtaining this in the first place for such, as have achieved things of service and use to all, by Arms, Art or the Pen; under the last can be named SAMUEL van HOOGSTRATEN Painter and Writer of the Painter's Book, called the *visible World*. And so it is that my pen will be somewhat more expansive in the writing of this life, than others, and in greater detail, on account of the obligation, that I have borne in my bosom, since I had the honour of his instruction in Art; I shall now confess, since it is no shame to say it, that he was my teacher, and I am indebted to him for the foundations of everything I know in Art.

He was born in Dordrecht in the year 1627. whether he had yet more masters in his earlier years except for his Father I do not know, but I know for certain that he studied Art with Rembrandt (for he nominates him as, after the Death of his father Theodoor, his second master. In his Book of The Art of Painting p. 257), whose

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manner of painting he maintained for some time, and eventually, turning away from it, he finally took up a wholly different manner of painting, also he turned to painting portraits, in which he made happy progress, both in The Hague, where he lived for a number of years, and in Dordrecht. And just as Pictura embraced him with favour and profit, so too did the Goddess of Poetry flatter him with glory. Both seemed to treat him equally lovingly, and likewise he loved the first in return and did not despise the second. To the first he gave up his best hours, to the second his leisure, as he explained unambiguously to any critics in the preface to his little Book the beautiful ROSELYN printed in 1650. Here I bring Roselyn to the stage, even though it is hard to submit her beauty to the judgment of others. The great Poet, who hones his morning song the whole day long, does not remain above criticism; how then shall I, who have served another Goddess for the whole of the day, and has his first thought of Rosalyn after disrobing, remain free from it? And a little further down: For that reason I have allowed just as little time to be expended, as in all modesty would incline you to take pleasure. Poetry is sister to my Goddess Pictura, therefore I have certainly changed the manner of presentation, but I have not changed what is meant to be

understood, judiciously and reflectively the distinguishable motions and emotions of mankind.

He was driven by an especially ambitious Spirit to contest with Artists, not as it often happens (which is to be condemned) on account of an outburst of a feeling of hatred towards the Person and their glittering successes, but out of a keen

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desire, and because he could not suffer that anyone should push on ahead of him along the path of Art towards the Honour of the Laurels. As regards that there was no part of Art, in which others could appear to advance ahead of him, but that he followed them straightaway at the heels. Architecture, Landscapes, windy Sea, still Waters, Animals, Flowers, Fruit, and Still Lives (which he painted so naturally that he deceived many with them) and what ever else there may be, he set off after it and made it his own. I have seen the still remaining evidences at his house: here an Apple, Pear, or Lemon on a shelf: over there a mule, or a shoe painted onto a small cut-out board, and set in a corner of the Chamber or under a chair, and also a salted dried sole, painted on a prepared canvas, and cut out, and hung here or there behind a door on a nail, which were so deceptively painted that one was completely fooled, and would take them to be real dried soles. I must ask my Reader to accept on my word this story of how he made himself notorious with the Emperor and the whole Court with something like this that he had painted with his brush. On the 6th of August 1651 at the Viennese Court while he was seeing to the installation of his Art, the Emperor, Empress, the Hungarian King, and an Archbishop were also at the same time in attendance. There were three pieces. Firstly a Nobleman's portrait, secondly Christ crowned with thorns; to which they all gave the highest praise; but in particular when the third piece (being a Still Life) was displayed, it seemed that the Emperor was enamoured of it, he

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looked at it for a long time, since he found himself deceived by it, and said of it:

This is the first Painter who has fooled me. And announced furthermore: That as a

punishment for that deception that piece could not be removed, but that he would keep

it for ever, and hold it in high esteem. And since paintings of suchlike things,

earned a good profit in those days, he showed the greatest spirit, in stopping

painting them, predominantly busying himself painting Portraits, Histories and

Perspectives in Rooms {Perspectiven in Kamers} (in which a hole was made in the wall

on the outside so as to see in). I have seen various of these, painted on a small

scale, representing a whole palace, with arches soaring overhead, and Galleries,

supported on marble columns. He had a commendable manner {behandeling} in his

portraits, and was fortunate in hitting a recognisable likeness, as appears notably in

the later piece showing the Masters of the Mint in Dordrecht, which was painted during
the time, that I was training under him, all of whom I have known, and some of whom

still live. Most of all he had a technique of painting the colour in a fat way, a

method of working, by means of which the paintings retained for a long time their perfect force and colour. As regards his Histories, they are usually commendable, well composed {welstandig}, and well balanced {van een goed houding}, and connoisseurs have never expressed any objections, except that, especially in the draperies, the colouring is too localised {enkel} and unmixed, and in the last years of his life, in order to flatter the ignorant to his profit, he sometimes put things into his pieces, which he criticised in his Book of

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the foundations of The Art of Painting. Who is without faults? indeed the most celebrated Masters, even among the first Italians, had their failings. But our pen has already gone too far off course. We must first with our pen accompany our *Batavier* (this was his Bent-nickname) to Rome, and see him return to the Fatherland from Vienna with an Imperial gift to the glory of his Art, before we close up the links of his life's work at the end; whoever turns halfway (as the saying goes) does not arrive.

The World goes on in permanent transformation, and we are driven by the same yearning, indeed enquiry has shown us that most People live by change, and thereby make their pleasure. This humour also haunted our *Batavier*; it made him take the trip to Rome. They say that he was wounded by love, and that in the urge to cope with it, he followed his desire to travel. Be it whatever it was, he made up his mind, and took on the journey, leaving Dordrecht on the 16th of May 1651. His Poet's pen described the Daily doings at Vienna in Austria in Verses. Thus we shall accompany him in rhyme beyond the Sticht {of Utrecht}; so as not to stray from our purpose. Whoever wishes to go further can follow the rhyme in *Thalia* or the fifth Book of his *visible World* on pag. 201. He begins thus:

As in the time of flowers, the Crane

Follows the Sun, and beats his swift feathers,

So did I: I left my City, to travel

Far abroad and pass time with strangers.

I mounted on Horseback, my courage armed

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With nothing less, than Dagger and Pistols,
And set off on my journey, three times I stopped
And looked back, saying: Where will I wander?
Do I not love my Fatherland?
Where can one enjoy more delight?
Why was my soul so sad? and my spirit
So much dismayed? Why does my strength falter?
The nightingale replied: Come, oh come,
And delight in pastures and meadows;
Freedom is a worthy kingdom,

Go and seek it now in faraway lands.

With a sigh, I gave the last farewell to my City:

I shook the reins, and pricked the steed with my spurs;

It foamed and sweated, and galloped, fleet of foot,

Along dyke and valley, through meadow and field of Corn,

As far as Utrecht, in the widely-famed Sticht,

To the Veluwe, through irregular blasts

In storm after storm, accompanied by lightning,

But soon sweetened by May-times beautiful days.

Thus I reasoned etc.

The desire for Italy, the Cabinet where ancient Sculpture and Painting is to be seen, remained with him truly, and neither the favour of Emperor Ferdinand the 3rd, nor his gifts, nor the links of an eight-times doubled golden chain, were powerful enough, to detain him from his intention, nor to obstruct his journey to Rome: there with an open mouth (methinks, I see him), astonished, in the most beautiful Palaces of Farnese, Lodovise, Montalto, Aldobrandini, and many others, in front of the incomparable marble statues, and paintings of Raphael, Michelangelo, Parmegianino, Titian, Carracci, Guido Reni, Paulo Veronese, and Lanfranco, standing and looking, and around all the beauty (he who must chose,

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is anxious) not knowing which he should choose as the most artistic.

After this he also made a Journey to England, with regard to which the witty Poet Heiman Dullaert, who like him also painted artistically, wrote these lines:

To the Wind.

O bear him swiftly, a hero of art rich in radiance,
Who is accustomed to paint by the noble light of Princes' favour,
Fortune is obliged to wait with open arms:
So that he, whose brush gives an everlasting life
To so many others, may give it to yet more,
May not by Death's revenge be ruined by shipwreck.

He was also commemorated by his friend Abraham van Groeningen, a fine talent, who wished him luck on his journey with a witty Sonnet. With Honour and Profit, the aspiration of Artists, he returned to his Fatherland, for the rest of his days, averse to any further upheaval, and happy with his lot, practicing Art and producing his writings. Meanwhile he was busy completing his two Books, the *Visible* which was printed, and\* the *Invisible World*. [\*Footnote: Which is as yet set to one side, until I have completed this project, when I shall put the final touches to it, in order to publish it.] When I was under his supervision; I had the honour, to etch plates for him for the Book of the Art of Painting, another Pupil,

who contested that privilege with me gave cause that his was not used, after I made as a trial a print now facing pag. 269.

In my time he seldom went to visit anyone except for Masters Cornelis Pompe van Meerdervoort, Knight, Sheriff {Opperschout} of the City of Dordrecht, and Willem van Blyenburg, Magistrate {Schepen}, (who also frequently came to see him, and loved him for his skills and knowledge {wetenschappen},) also the Mint Masters, but that was ex officio as they say, for he was Provost\* of the Holland Mint. [\*Footnote: There were two of these who annually exchanged responsibility for most of the Mint's administration: also in disputes between Masters or between Masters and Servants, or where mistakes had been committed, they were employed as Magistrates {Schepenen}, in which situations the Lord Warden who remained in place, and the two who were sworn-in {Geswoornen, i.e., the two Provosts?} adjudicated.]

His Lessons, or Rules of Art were established on secure foundations, his instruction always proceeded by means of examples, his teaching was unruffled and serious, and his explanations were readily understandable, and if what he said was not at first understood, he patiently and calmly explained his meaning. It happened once that one of his Pupils presented to him the sketch of his composition (which each had every week to do), but he had given little attention to the proper actions {werkinge} of the figures, that he had drawn. Straight away he declared, Read the Text: and asked, Is that how the Figure would look at that moment? and if they answered Yes, he would say: Now imagine that I am that other Person, to whom you have to speak; speak to me. If they then spoke according to

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the letter of the Text, without expression, with their hands in their pockets, or spoke like statues, he would say: pockets were made so that when you carry money it will not slip through your fingers: and stand up suddenly from where he was sitting and had the Pupil sit down, saying: Now I shall do it for you, pay attention to the Gestures\*, the manner of standing, or turn of the body, while I am speaking, and he mimed it (as the saying goes) with finger and thumb. [\*Footnote: In order to make a more lasting impression on his Pupils, concerning these gestures and movements which properly accompany an Artistic Presentation, and to encourage them more in it; he chose the most able of his Pupils (as he lived in the grandest House, which has since then become the Dordrecht Oranjeboom Brewery, where in the spacious upper floors he was able to have a whole Play performed) and gave them each a Role to play from one of his own Plays, or one by someone else: which they then urged their Parents and acquaintances to attend, as spectators of the Play, over which S. v. Hoogstraten presided like a second Francius {Pieter de Frans}.

In order that his Pupils should distract their cramped thoughts, he occasionally made them perform a shadow dance, or shadow play; this served not only for pleasure, but in

particular enabled them to understand by means of such an activity, the manifold alterations and lengthenings or shortenings of the changing shapes of the shadows produced by the light, (according to their nearness to or distance from the light). He explained the apparatus for this, next to an illustrational print, in Melpomene or the VII Book of his Art of Painting on pag. 260.

Such entertainments are much more praiseworthy than those one finds with Bacchus. And one aptly invokes them with the saying, *Prodese & Delectare* {i.e., 'to instruct and delight', Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 333-334}.]

It once happened, that I made a proper sketch, on a scriptural subject, and showed it to him, while

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filling-in the background I had added some incidental detail as embellishment, intending most likely thereby to show off. But my trousers were not as new as I thought: for first of all (pointing to the details) he asked, what does that mean? I replied, I meant it for the look of it: at which he said, You cannot do things for the look of it; for everything you create give reasons for having made it, otherwise do not make it. He always had sayings, or some story to point the moral, ready to hand, should we do something that displeased him, and for any given circumstances. It happened (while I was then involved in a Church convention {Kerkkollegie} or assembly) that I had written down the theme, which was to be dealt with on the following Sunday, on a small piece of paper, which I had left thoughtlessly on the board of my Easel, rather than putting it away somewhere else. My Master took it up and read the contents, which were: Whether Adam's fate was a necessary one: and if God knew of it beforehand. He put it down again; but before he went away from me he said: When I was young I did the same, and thought, it passes the time; but when I became wiser, I discovered that the time was wasted.

He was a thoroughly quiet and steady spirit; and if something occurred among his Pupils, which annoyed him, or he had to settle some disturbance, as one is sometimes required to do with youngsters, he did not lose his temper with them; but sought to moderate the sourness of his criticism with the sweetness of calm conciliation. Reader

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do not let it annoy you, I have to relate one case here as an example.

I was at one time the oldest Student among his Pupils, set above his Painting Studio, the others in a room below above the courtyard, so that we frequently chatted with each other, I from above, and they from below, whenever he went out. They pestered me at one time about a bunch of muscat grapes, that I should help them to get them, as the Grapevine had grown up above the Dormer window; which I was unable to do prudently, since fallen leaves and grapes were seen by the maid, and she called the Master; he then came up to me and said: that he could see how much we all wanted to be

together, but that calling to them from the window, might give offence to the Neighbours, as if one were snooping into their privacy, (without once mentioning the grapes) wherefore he found it advisable for me to sit with them, which is what happened. What to do now? the means of reaching the grapes, which still tickled our tongues with their taste of Muscat, was hereby cut off, and the Grapevine had too long a trunk for them to be reached from the ground. Therefore it was decided after a general discussion, to tie a Penknife to the stick of a Cobweb duster, so as to reach the bunch and cut it off. The decision was good, but the stick was too short, thus it was necessary to use an empty beer barrel to stand on, which task was allotted to me, with two others standing on either side, so as to catch, the fallen bunches that dropped down, harmlessly in their smocks, together

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with the leaves; so that nothing should fall down into the yard, which would betray what we had been doing. And thus the operation continued; but on account of the rustling of the leaves I could not hear as well as the others, who were standing below, and as a consequence they had all cleared off at the arrival of Hoogstraten, before I realised, and I was seen by him, still standing in that posture, through the Kitchen window, and then I became aware, dropped the stick, and took off like the wind from the yard. Now the plan was uncovered, and each of us was terrified of the punishment: but it turned out better than we had anticipated. After the passage of half an hour Hoogstraten came in with the stick first to my friends, and then afterwards into my room, and walked dragging the same stick behind him three times around the Easel at which I was sitting before saying anything; then (after standing a while behind me) he called to my fellows, proffering the stick, to which the Penknife was attached, and said: What was this tool made for? A Penknife tied like a hook onto a Cobweb brush? but no one gave an answer, and we stood with our eyes to the ground, just like criminals in the Courthouse. Eventually (after he had swept the stick, to which the Penknife was attached, half a dozen times about to look at it) he said: Look, this is very cleverly contrived I wonder who the inventor is? it would be just the thing to reach Grapes, if they were hanging a little to high up, and if he were not tall enough, one could get an empty Barrel, and stand on that. But do you know what, (he added) to do such a thing is fraught with danger, for the bottom of Barrel could easily

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collapse, and whoever was stood on it break an arm or a leg. Therefore (in order to prevent such a misfortune) I have arranged to have a bolt made for the outside of the door to prevent such a thing, which is what happened. Thus we emerged from it more happily than the Lad in the Farce of the Grape-thief. In one word: he admonished with gentleness, and instructed with wisdom. After I left him to go and practice Art from nature by myself, he no longer tired himself with the education of Pupils and even lost much of his enthusiasm for painting, but only he completed some pieces that remained on his hands as and when he wished to. Then slowly from an infirmity (or

bodily complaint) that he had, it became apparent that before long he would have to follow the way of all flesh to Eternity. He died in Dordrecht on the 19th of October in the year 1678. and his Wife Sara Balen followed him in the same year on the 21st of November. His Brother's son David van Hoogstraten wrote this epitaph on his self portrait:

Hoogstraten painted himself thus from life,
But better still in such a succession of Paintings
Full of Art, which will deliver his name from mortality.
The Maid of Dordrecht spills her tears upon his grave.

His Brother François van Hoogstraten honoured him with a Eulogie, in which he introduces him as if speaking

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with the intention having it of inscribed on a Panel, and have it hung in the Mint Chapel, where he lay buried; but envy prevented this. One can certainly number him among the lucky Painters of his Age, since he was blessed by Fortune, and mostly sailed before the wind.

His Brother Johan, or Hans van Hoogstraten, (for thus he preferred to be know) younger than him, was also an Artist, I found his name included in the List of the St. Luke Companions in Art of Dordrecht in the year 1649. He was at the Court in Vienna like his Brother where also he died. In the Miscellaneous Poems of F. v. Hoogstraten I found this epitaph.

Memoir of

JAN van HOOGSTRATEN

In the Gallery of the Church of the Cross in Vienna.

I held Art up high

Until a Harpie\* brought me down:

Death, then robbed me of glory,

My youth untimely overwhelmed.

[\*Footnote: Quaedam species morbi comitialis. {A certain kind of epilepsy}]

A certain Artistic Sculptor in Marble, a friend of S. v. Hoogstraten, dignified his Gravestone with a Marble child, representing the transitoriness of Human life.

It was painful for my Master that such

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a promisingly fruitful shoot from the trunk of Art was torn off; and it is to be lamented that the youngster from whom much good was to be expected (since he had from the first accustomed himself to working directly from life, for the improvement of his

Art), was so untimely brought down. We would like to tell a funny story of something that happened to him which springs to mind. When in Vienna, he had begun painting a liberation of Peter. The bold Serving girl was finished. But he lacked a Model for a timid Peter; to this end he went to the Market square, there he found a several to chose from, and said to one whom he judged would serve the purpose, that he should follow him. The good man in hope of kind-hearted charity followed as far as the house; but Jan van Hoogstraten (despite still being faulty in the German Language) had to make it clear that he should follow him: which he did right up to the painting studio. But no sooner did he see the strange objects, here a Death's head, there a headless body, than he was entirely startled and began to tremble and shake. However affectionately he was treated, and whatever fine promises were made to him, that he would be well paid, if he only went and sat so that he would allow himself to be painted, the beggar would not listen, but looked about him with Eagle eyes, to find the best means of getting out of there, he took his chance, and leapt down the stairs, as far as the door, so as to escape. Fortunately S. v. Hoogstraten came in, who stopped him, while his Brother Jan chased down after him. Not knowing the circumstances, he asked the reason for such an uproar. The Beggar in the most extreme anxiety, pleaded that they

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were trying to murder him, and to let him through, as he had done nothing wrong. At this clamour some people rushed over, who after they had heard what it was about, helped reassure the Beggar, and explained it all to him so well, that he was eventually willing, to let himself be painted, although reluctant, and slow, as the condemned mount the ladder, to be dubbed Knights of the Hempen Cord.

Then with much persuasion they got the Beggar to sit, in such a posture as was required by the sketch on the canvas: and he posed with such terror, and fear, it was as if it was St. Peter himself; and whatever promises anyone afterwards gave, to sit on another occasion, he would not return, to where he thought he had seen the Devil and Death.

One can see both of their Portraits in Plate G. that of S. v. Hoogstraten above, and that of his Brother below, together with the portrait of Johannes Lingelbach, to the right.