

THE PAINTINGS WITHIN ~ *Tim Wilks*

Whereas the objects on the table – the statuette, and the paper and pen – were always part of both the *invenzione* and the *disegno* of the Lanier portrait, the two pictures in the upper right corner (fig. 31) are additions, though they are all but contemporary with the larger painting. One might come to this conclusion from normal viewing alone, as these pictures seem inessential to the composition, but objective confirmation has recently been provided by the technical report, which reveals that both pictures were painted over the background.

Cleaning has also made a little more distinct some ruled lines which have been over-painted, apparently marking the stone jamb and cill of a window. It appears, therefore, that a window was originally intended for the area where the pictures are now placed, though there are no traces of any other features of this window, or of a view through it. This suggests an abandonment of a design, rather than a later revision, and that at least one of the background pictures was painted immediately after the main portrait. The inclusion of such a window, often yielding a recognisable view, was a standard feature of the more intimate Venetian portraits painted around 1585–1615 and of the Tintoretto studio in particular, and examples brought back by diplomats and travellers during this period inevitably influenced northern portrait painters and their patrons.¹

In other respects, however, the Lanier portrait retains the Venetian formula for the chamber portrait, where the basic elements – half-length sitter in foreground; covered table with objects; window with view – still permitted the inclusion of significant items to confirm the sitter's individuality. In Rubens' early work, *The Four Philosophers* (1611–14), we see the formula exploited to the full (fig. 32).² Although a certain simplicity and unity of composition was sacrificed when the additions were made to the Lanier portrait, in gaining two extraordinary pictures it became, for its first owner, a far more complex pictorial document, and now, for us, it demonstrates the deeper capacities of the early seventeenth century portrait.

To consider the matter of priority, to the eye it seems that the oval picture was painted first. If we imagine it without its companion, it seems to sit comfortably in the space between the sitter's head and the right-hand edge of the panel, and we may well believe that when it was being painted the thought had not yet occurred that another picture should sit alongside it. The second picture seems to have been painted after it was noticed that there remained enough space in the top right corner for a further inclusion. When the dimensions of this second picture were drawn, they were made as large as the space allowed, to the extent that its lovingly detailed, ebonised and gilt-lined frame just touches the pegbox of the lute beneath.

The oval picture, which is immediately identifiable as a Liberation of St Peter, calls to mind the work of Hendrick van Steenwijk the Younger (c.1580–1649), and close inspection reveals that it is, in fact, an autograph work: signed S [] WICK, and dated '1613'.³ Within the Lanier portrait, therefore, we have a small version of a subject that Steenwijk seemed to enjoy painting and which never fell out of favour with his clientele, as he is known to have painted more than seventy versions throughout a long career, varying in size, medium, and the details of design.⁴ This, however, is an unusual instance of Steenwijk having painted a picture within a picture, though he was frequently given

1. During this period, John Chamberlain, Sir Dudley Carleton, Sir Henry Wotton, and Lord Roos are reported as having been painted by Domenico Tintoretto, while the portraits of John Finet and Sir Francis Wenman are extant; according to Ridolfi, Wotton was also painted by Leandro Bassano, see Carlo Ridolfi, *Maraviglie dell'arte, ovvero le vite de gl'illustri pittori veneti, etc.*, Venice, 1648, 11, pp. 168 & 260. No doubt, more Englishmen were painted, not to mention itinerant Dutchmen.

2. Florence, Palazzo Pitti, inv. 85. This work, an imagined *conversazione* in which Rubens portrays himself with his brother, Philip, Jan van der Wouwer (Waverius), and their teacher, Justus Lipsius, with Seneca (in sculpture) presiding, overcomes problems of time and space to convene a meeting of souls using much the same set of assumptions as to the transcendent potential of the portrait as those which underlie the portrait of Lanier.

3. For Steenwijk the younger, see Jeremy Howarth, *The Steenwyck Family as Masters of Perspective*, Tournhout, 2009. Howarth can shed light on the precise moments of Steenwijk the younger from the time of his father's death in 1603 and 1617. From the latter year comes the first evidence of his presence in London. He would stay until 1617. Of the intervening period, Howarth suggests that he may have remained in Frankfurt 'for some years', but that he paid increasingly frequent visits to Antwerp. He certainly collaborated with Jan Breughel as early as 1609, and is known also to have worked with Frans Francken I and II (Howarth, pp. 7–10). The specialised nature of his work made it necessary for him to travel between the principal Flemish and Dutch studios, though we do not know when he first extended his range to London.

4. See Howarth, *op. cit.*, pp. 52–4



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~ detail of the pictures in the background



work on parts of paintings requiring the architectural ‘perspectives’ in which he specialized, which, when completed, would bear the brushwork of two or even three painters. Another perspective, also in an oval frame, appears on the background wall of a George Villiers, 1st Duke of Buckingham by Daniel Mytens, painted in 1626/27.⁵

At what level are we to perceive this work? Steenwyck has given his smallest *Liberation of St Peter* such wonderfully fine detail and finish that it cannot be categorised on the grounds of indistinctness as a mere representation of a picture, as are those seen in great numbers within Antwerp *Kunstkammer* paintings; this is a Steenwyck. It would, indeed, be possible (however inadvisable) to excise it from the painting, after which it would stand as an independent work. Such a drastic measure was actually proposed for the Duke of Buckingham by a would-be purchaser during the Commonwealth states of the collections of Charles I, which says as much about the enduring interest in Steenwijk’s perspectives in the early 1650s as it does about the total disregard for the memory of the once dominant favourite.

In the context of the Lanier portrait, therefore, are we to see Steenwijk’s contribution as, literally, a superficial feature? Certainly, as Sir Roy Strong has observed, the two internal pictures have something of the *album amicorum* about them, and it is possible to conceive of both pictures adding meaning to that of the Lanier portrait, yet for neither of them to function within it. There are, however, features that suggest that the internal pictures are not to be understood as sitting on the picture plane ‘postage-stamp’ fashion,⁶ but as hanging on the wall of the chamber. These include a curtain rod, or possibly a picture rail, running above the two internal pictures, evidence of some overpainting of the background that appears to be contemporary with the two pictures, and some veined marbling. Simply stated, the two pictures and the lutenist share the same world.

It does not seem credible that Steenwijk would have sold a separate *Liberation of St Peter* to Lanier, and then copied it into the larger painting. There would seem little sense in undertaking such effort and expense for a duplicate, and, besides, it would change the larger painting into a portrait of a collector, which, it has been argued, the statuette does not. The remaining possibility, which is to be preferred, is that Steenwijk painted a unique version of the *Liberation of St Peter* – (his *oeuvre* suggests an inexhaustible capacity to produce variants of the Apostle’s dungeon escape) – especially for the portrait. The portrait, therefore, purports to show an owned picture, though, in fact, it had no existence beyond the portrait itself. By contributing this *Liberation of St Peter*, Steenwijk participated in the creation of a simulacrum: a believable yet feigned setting. Realization of this allows the viewer, by means of the painting, to ponder matters of resemblance, reality, and time.

Much of the attraction of a *Liberation of St Peter* for both painter and purchaser lay in the visual potential of its setting. Steenwijk’s skill both in painting architecture according to the principles of linear perspective and night scenes, enabled him to create an illusion of cavernous space framed by massive columns, vaulted ceilings, and broad flights of stairs, within which small figures enact the drama of the escape – St Peter, having been unshackled by an angel, walks past the sleeping guards to freedom. Pieces of perspective were much sought after in the early years of the seventeenth century and, in England, were still wondered at and admired, as the English were yet to become accustomed to seeing the correct perspective in their paintings, while English painters were still failing to achieve a convincing sense of space in their work.

A very small number of works by Steenwijk’s influential forerunner in this genre, Hans Vredeman de Vries, had arrived in England prior to 1613. There may have been at least three examples in the collection of Henry, Prince of Wales, and it is at his court that we find an upsurge of interest in perspective and its underlying mathematical principles.⁷ Prince Henry’s engineer, Salomon de Caus, published his expensively illustrated treatise, *La perspective*, for his patron in 1612, and it is not unlikely that Steenwijk, already the most desired provider of perspectives to the Flemish art market, had met de Caus, the renowned theorist-practitioner, while the latter still worked at the grand-ducal court in Brussels.⁸ A few months before de Caus’s publication, Prince Henry’s painter, Robert Peake, almost in apology for the insular style in which he painted, funded the English translation and publication of Serlio’s *First Book of Architecture* (London, 1611), while the Prince’s surveyor of works, Inigo Jones, had been introducing the English court to linear perspective with his masque designs since 1605, achieving new standards of

5. Euston Hall, Duke of Grafton; see O. der Kuile, ‘Daniel Mytens’, *Nederlands Kunsthistorisch Jaarboek*, XX (1969), pp. 1-106 (50-1); O. Millar, *The Age of Charles I*, Tate exhib., London, 1972, no. 22, pp. 26-7.

6. I owe this vivid phrase to Jeremy Wood.

7. On Prince Henry’s court, see Roy Strong, *Henry Prince of Wales and England’s Lost Renaissance*, London, 1986; Timothy Wilks (ed.), *Prince Henry Revived: Image and Exemplarity in Early Modern England*, London, 2007.

8. On de Caus and *La perspective*, see *ibid.*, Alexander Marr, ‘A *Duque graver sent for*’: Cornelis Boel, Salomon de Caus, and the production of ‘*La perspective avec la raison des ombres et miroirs*’, pp. 218-38; also Timothy Wilks, ‘Forbear the Heat and Haste of Building’: Rivalries among the Designers at Prince Henry’s Court, 1610-1612’, *The Court Historian*, 6, 1 (2001), pp. 49-65.

architectural complexity with his settings for Oberon in 1611. Steenwijk's contribution to the Lanier portrait, therefore, caught the new fascination perfectly.

If Prince Henry lived on, Steenwijk might have been induced to begin his permanent residence in England somewhat sooner than he did. However, the drying up of patronage (it should be remembered that the 'Collector' Earl of Arundel, Thomas Howard, was also absent from England for much of 1613/1614) denied Steenwijk the opportunity to establish himself in London. Only in late 1617, after the English art market had started to pick up, stimulated by Arundel's example and by the stirring interest of the new favourite, Buckingham, did Steenwijk move to London and, thereafter, make his particular contribution to the visual re-education of England. The architectural perspective that he provided for Mytens' Charles I as Prince of Wales (c.1620), covering one quarter of the large canvas, is an example of his association with another leading London-based Dutch artist that endured for at least seven years, and probably much longer.⁹ Whereas Mytens eventually fell out of favour with Charles I (eclipsed only by van Dyck), numerous Steenwijks maintained their place in the collection of a king who would not hesitate to dispose of pictures as his taste became ever more refined.¹⁰

While any early seventeenth century connoisseur would have appreciated a Liberation of St Peter by Steenwijk (fig.33) for its technical qualities and sense of drama, for some owners such a subject might also have served as a reminder of an improbable upturn in fortune that had occurred in their lives. One might pause to consider, therefore, whether its story is analogous to any episode in Lanier's life; had he ever been delivered from any sort of confinement by his own guardian angel? At this oint, it becomes necessary to deal with an assertion that Lanier was briefly detained by the Roman Inquisition while accompanying William Cecil, Lord Roos, on his tour of Italy in 1608.¹¹ In a contrast of fortunes, Roos's tutor, the unfortunate Mr Molle, detained at about the same time, would die in a Roman prison after thirty years' captivity. This claim would give a very specific significance to the picture, but it must be dismissed, as the arrested individual, reported to be one 'Lanee', on deeper investigation proves not to be Lanier but a certain Mr Lane of Ashborne.¹²

It seems probable that Lanier was never held under lock and key in his life. We would do better to consider how, around the time his portrait was painted, he might have conceived his soul to be enchained, and what, he believed, would set him free. There appear to be some similarities between the message to be derived from the *Liberation of St Peter* and the epigram inscribed on the paper: VT RElevet MIserum FA^{ct}um SOLItosque LABores. Both, in their different ways, speak of a release. This, Lanier obtains through devoting all his energies and his mental powers to his music. Not to do so would be to allow his mind to brood on his 'miserable fate', which probably meant for him a near-disastrous loss of patronage.

Lanier was taken into the household of Robert Cecil, 1st Earl of Salisbury, as a singing boy at about the age of thirteen, and at the time of Salisbury's death in May 1612, the Earl was still the only patron Lanier had ever known.¹³ Lanier, therefore, had grown up in service, but had been a servant of the most privileged kind, given an extremely rare opportunity to devote himself to music within the security of a noble household. Lanier's commitment to the 'new music' and to that Anglicisation of the stilo recitativo, the declamatory ayre,



33 ~
detail of Steenwijk's
'Liberation of St Peter'

made him the centre of attention when he sang his profound and poignant verses. This, inevitably, drew him into the elite social circle for which he performed. For one such as Lanier, the loss of a great patron would have curtailed regular opportunities to perform in a household setting; to play and sing to one's patron's friends and family. Unaccustomed inactivity and an enforced retirement from social intercourse could easily tip a Jacobean gentleman's mind into melancholy and introspection, a kind of imprisonment of the mind. We know that for many months after Salisbury's death Lanier was unsure what to do; whether, as he put it, 'to turne Courtier or Cloune'.¹⁴ He mentioned his dilemma in a brief note of remembrance to Sir Dudley Carleton, the English ambassador in Venice, which he pressed upon the returning embassy secretary, Isaac Wake. Lanier had last seen the Carletons when visiting Venice two years previously. Since then, not only had his patron Salisbury died, but Prince Henry also, who in a short space of time had become a munificent patron of the arts. Though the Prince had previously heard him perform, Lanier seems not to have sought his favour in the intervening summer and autumn of 1612, aware, no doubt, that his household already had a full compliment of musicians. The crisis of patronage which followed these deaths was masked for a while by the nuptial celebrations in London of Frederick, Elector Palatine, and Princess Elizabeth, but after their departure for Heidelberg in May 1613, Lanier seems to have found himself in a

9. Statens Museum for Kunst, Copenhagen; see Karen Hearn, *Dynasties*, exhib. Tate Britain, Timothy Wilks, London, 1995, no. 142, p. 121.
10. See Timothy Wilks, 'Paying special attention to the adorning of a most beautiful gallery: the pictures in St. James's Palace, 1609-1649', *The Court Historian*, 10, 2, December 2005, pp. 149-72.
11. Rachele Chiasson-Taylor, 'Musicians and Intelligence Operations, 1570-1612', unpublished Ph.D. diss. McGill University (2007). Chiasson-Taylor's thesis that Lanier had a parallel career as an agent is unconvincing.
12. See Richard Gibbings, 'The Annals of the Inquisition', *The Catholic Layman*, VII, no. 73, 15 January 1858, pp. 6-7.
13. See Lynn Hulse, 'The Musical Patronage of Robert Cecil, First Earl of Salisbury (1563 - 1612)', *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, CXVI, No. 1 (1991), pp. 24-40.
14. Rachele Chiasson-Taylor, 'Musicians and Intelligence Operations, 1570-1612', unpublished Ph.D. diss. McGill University (2007). Chiasson-Taylor's thesis that Lanier had a parallel career as an agent is unconvincing.
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14. W. N. Sainsbury, *Original Unpublished Papers Illustrative of the Life of Sir P. P. Rubens as Artist and Diplomat* (London, 1859), p. 322, note 50.



34
~ detail of the 'Portrait of an Artist'

large pool of under-employed practitioners of the arts.

Courtiers now presented their suits to James I's favourite, Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, while musicians and poets dedicated their works to him. Somerset attempted to do what was expected of him, which, inter alia, was to become England's new Maecenas, but, had he not been brought down by the Overbury scandal in 1615, his poor intellect and education would probably have prevented him from ever becoming either an inspirational or a discerning patron.¹⁵ Did Lanier estimate that his performance amid Somerset's wedding celebrations at the end of 1613 was so significant for his future that he could think of it as being led up out of the dark confinement? If so, Lanier's *Liberation of St Peter* may, indeed, be interpreted as a reference to his rescue by a new patron. Yet, for Lanier to celebrate it within this portrait, there remained at most three months (and only if Steenwijk had decided to comply with the English practice of continuing the year until the twenty-fifth day of March). It seems unlikely.¹⁶

The second picture (fig.34) creates worlds within worlds; for it is of an artist, brush and palette in hand, putting the finishing touches to a portrait. The gaze of the sitter in that portrait passes through four worlds separated by three picture planes to meet our own. More questions of identity arise, as the painter and sitter are undoubtedly individuals known to Lanier. The painter, wearing a ruff of two or three layers, is the model of refinement, the *pictor doctus*. His dark hair is cropped, short, with a short fringe and bare ears in the Italian fashion; otherwise, his only distinguishing feature is a long, heavy nose. He is certainly not an old painter, and he is right-handed. The sitter, whom we see only in his portrait, wears, in marked contrast to the formal attire of the gentleman who is painting him, an open shirt: the negligent attire associated with love-madness and also melancholy.¹⁷ It was commonly held in the Renaissance and Baroque periods that the former complaint often progressed to the latter. In the poem *Diaphantus* (1604), for example, the eponymous character, we are told, 'Puts off his cloathes, his shirt he only wears, Much like mad-Hamlet; only passion teares'.¹⁸ Possibly more relevant to our inquiry, the artist, was believed to be susceptible to a kind of melancholy: that of the imagination, and when so afflicted was, again, recognisable by his disordered dress.¹⁹

The Lanier portrait is a private portrait, and its concerns are those of identity, not status, and friendships, not hierarchical relationships. These friendships embrace the artists responsible for both the portrait and its internal pictures; indeed, it is hard to account for Steenwijk's *Liberation of St Peter* if not as a gift. The adjacent picture, of portraitist and sitter, may be a similar offering, though it is tempting to consider the possibility that Lanier, whom we know to have been an amateur painter, painted it himself. Its painter clearly took delight in lining the wall shelf with vessels of liquid and books (signifying the erudite artist), and in including the liver-coloured knots of the dealwood easel. As to the identities of portraitist and sitter, if the picture shows an antecedent that the Lanier portrait seeks to emulate, the possibilities are wide and various, going back to the ever exemplary Sir Philip Sidney sitting to Veronese in 1574.

It is more probable, however, that the small picture refers to the personalities involved with the larger portrait, connecting the various elements and memorialising Lanier's inclusion within a painter's studio fraternity. Despite the difficulties of working on such a small scale, an attempt at a true resemblance of the sitter appears to have been made. We note a thin face, long, unruly hair and, most noticeably, dark eyes with a stare of concentration that might be characteristic of the person. Might this be none other than Steenwijk, whose portrait, (fig. 36) showing similar features but in an older man, was drawn by van Dyck in the early 1630s and later engraved by Paulus Pontius for van Dyck's *Icones Principum Virorum (Iconographia)* series?²⁰ This would place Steenwijk's image, appropriately, next to his own work, the *Liberation of St Peter*. To continue with this hypothesis that the small picture refers only to the context of its larger host, it follows that the painter depicted at his easel is also the painter of the Lanier portrait. This need not imply that the painter of Lanier also painted the second small picture (even though it may contain his own portrait); in other words, the small picture may or may not contain a self-portrait, but whichever is the case, the depicted painter may still represent Lanier's portraitist. We find ourselves contending with various convoluted, tongue twisting possibilities, which would surely amuse those who were involved in the making of Lanier's portrait.

15. See Timothy Wilks, 'The picture collection of Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset (c.1587–1645), reconsidered', *Journal of the History of Collections*, 1, no. 2 (1989), pp. 167–77; A. R. Braunmüller, 'Robert Carr, Earl of Somerset, as collector and patron', in L. L. Peck (ed.), *The Mental World of the Jacobean Court* (Cambridge, 1991), pp. 230–50.

16. This was, of course, when the law year began. New Year was certainly celebrated, and gifts given, at the beginning of January. A Dutchman's calendar, in any case, ran twelve days ahead of an Englishman's.

17. Raymond Klibansky, Erwin Panofsky, and Fritz Saxl, *Saturn and Melancholy* (London, 1964), identifies Marsilio Ficino's *De vita triplici* (1482–89) as being primarily responsible for this Renaissance conviction. For a more recent discussion, see Douglas Trevor, *The Poetics of Melancholy in Early England* (Cambridge, 2004); and for the representation of melancholy in portraiture, Roy Strong, *The Elizabethan Image. Painting in England 1540–1620* (Tate: London, 1969), VI: 'Elizabethan and Jacobean Melancholy', pp. 65–8; The open-shirted young man is found in English portraiture, including miniatures, from the late sixteenth century, e.g., Nicholas Hilliard, *Man Against a Flame Background*, London, V & A, inv. PS-1917; Nicholas Hilliard, *Henry Percy, 9th Earl of Northumberland, c.1595*, Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum.

18. 'An. Sc.', *Diaphantus* (1604), (E4v), quoted in Charles Whitney, *Early Responses to Renaissance Drama* (Cambridge, 2006), p. 145. Whitney suggests that this description is 'based on memory of performance' [of Hamlet].

19. See Ingrid A. Cartwright, 'Hoe Schilder, Hoe Wilde: Dissolute Self-Portraits in Seventeenth-Century Dutch and Flemish Art', unpublished PhD diss., University of Maryland, 2007).

20. Anthony van Dyck, portrait of Hendrick van Steenwyck, Black chalk, brush and grey ink, Frankfurt, Städtisches Kunstinstitut, inv. 791



35
Sofonisba Anguissola ~
Bernardo Campi
c.1550s
© Photo Scala, Florence -
courtesy of the Ministero
Beni e Att. Culturali/Siena Pinacoteca
Nazionale, Siena

36
Sir Anthony van Dyck ~
Hendrik van Steenwijk the Younger
c.1632-1635,
Graphische Sammlung, Städel Museum
Frankfurt am Main. © U. Edelmann -
Städel Museum - ARTOTHEK

37
Johann von Aachen ~
*Self-portrait with Adrian de Vries
and Paulus van Vianen*
after 1596
© LWL-Landesmuseum für Kunst und
Kulturgeschichte Münster/
Sabine Ahlbrand-Dornseif



A musician of Lanier's sensitivity shared the same transcendent imagination as the best painters and the best poets of the age. Melancholy might have been the price they had to pay for their ability to reach into the metaphysical, but it is this ability to slip easily through one world of their creating into another, and then another, which the modern mind struggles to comprehend, yet envies.²¹ Artists of the period occasionally created within their portraits planes of reality reserved for themselves, from where they gaze back at the viewer with impunity, sometimes communing with other figures on intermediate or even deeper planes. In the early 1550s, Sofonisba Anguissola painted her friend and mentor, Bernardo Campi, painting her; a self-portrait (fig.35) which misleadingly records another painter's responsibility for it; alternatively, a double portrait, half of which claims to paint the other half.²² Closer to the Lanier portrait in time (c.1590) and school, the painter, Johann von Aachen, (fig.37) in a roundel only 10 centimetres wide, turns his head away from the portrait he is completing of the sculptor and painter, Adrian de Vries, to meet the eye of the viewer, while behind, Paulus van Vianen, the goldsmith and medallist, observes from his own framed portrait.²³ All three friends, artists at the court of the Emperor Rudolf II, somehow overcome their internal separation to look out as a group from the actual painting. Like these paintings, the Lanier portrait, with its inner pictures, is a memorial of fellowship between artists, constructed using the very gifts of imagination that bound them together and set them apart from others.

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21. For the icon as not mere representation but a medium to a real presence, see most recently Wilks, *Prince Henry Revived*, pp. 10-19; also Roy Strong's definitive study, *The English Icon: Elizabethan and Jacobean Portraiture*, London, 1969.
22. Siena, Pinacoteca Nazionale.
23. Münster, LWL – Landesmuseum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte.