

DOWNLOAD PDF DELICIOUS HARMONY : MARRIAGE AND THE DOUBLE PORTRAIT

Chapter 1 : An Elegant Unrest in Portraits by Rembrandt van Rijn and Thomas Eakins

Introduction Chapter 1 'A Sort of Sex in Souls': Marriage and the Pendant Portrait Chapter 2 'Delicious Harmony': Marriage and the Double Portrait Chapter 3 'A Title of so much Tenderness': The Art of Motherhood Chapter 4 'Think not the Nursery's care beneath your notice': The Art of Fatherhood Chapter 5 Family History and the Politics of Dynasty Chapter 6 The Battle of the Pictures Conclusion.

More recently, the painting has been the focus of writers dealing with methodological concerns and has elicited revisionist interpretations representative of postmodernist points of view. Yet despite all the attention the picture has received or perhaps more accurately, in part because of it, the meaning of the painting has proved elusive, with opinion presently divided on exactly what the panel depicts. But in the case of the double portrait this cognitive link between past and present has been severed, and the painting itself has become enigmatic. Bearing witness to this perceptual change, virtually every independent interpretation of the London panel during the past four hundred years, while generally relating the picture to a matrimonial context, has offered a different explanation of what the painting more specifically represents. Consequently, what the couple are doing becomes difficult to explain. She is thus quietly receptive to his advances. But surely there is no little irony in the careful and costly modern restoration of pictures so as to return them as nearly as possible to their original state, if the same works are then verbally varnished and overpainted with little respect for their integrity as historical objects that can provide the receptive viewer with a more authentic experience. For by signing the panel on the pictorial surface with the Latin equivalent of "Jan van Eyck was here" and including his own reflected image in the mirror below, the artist compels us to take cognizance of his special relationship to whatever the imagery was intended to represent. By their ritualized gestures, the couple in turn appear to engage in some action not normally encountered in a portrait, its unusual character apparently confirmed by what the signature inscription and reflected mirror image imply: The thesis of this book is straightforward enough. My aim is to apply to the microcosm of the painting and its problems an inverted version of the "total history" methodology espoused by the French Annales school. Where possible, I use this contextual material in a comparative way to verify and confirm, or to challenge and invalidate, an interpretation or a conclusion. I also try to be cognizant of the limitations of any historical methodology. Certain questions, although of great interest, cannot be adequately addressed for lack of evidence; in such situations my aim is to avoid unfounded speculation. I took my cue from a remark by E. Gombrich to the effect that iconography must begin with a study of institutions rather than symbols. The problems of relating this material to the double portrait have been complicated by differences in the way the ritual for marriage evolved in Italy and in transalpine Europe during the Middle Ages. The traditional Western marriage ceremony had its origin in the betrothal practices of late antiquity. But in the south—at least for upperclass families—the rite continued to take place in a domestic setting well after the time of Van Eyck, and the public authority who officiated was a notary. Since the couple portrayed in the double portrait are believed to have been of Italian descent, the evolution of the Italian rite needs to be considered alongside the marriage practices of medieval Flanders. For although local tradition was supposed to prevail even when the bride or groom came from some other region with different uses, it is hypothetically possible that the families of the presumed sitters, who resided in Bruges and Paris but were originally from Lucca, might not have followed local conventions. Chapters 2 and 3, which set forth this material, are intended as a broad-based account of the development of medieval betrothal and marriage customs in both Italy and northern Europe. Integrated into this narrative is a study of the iconography of marriage between late antiquity and about, including new evidence that challenges widely held assumptions about both the ancient *dextrarum iunctio*, or joining of right hands, as the prototypical marriage gesture of the West and the supposedly civil character of medieval Italian marriage rites witnessed by a notary. My debts to individuals and institutions are so numerous as to preclude individual acknowledgment, but that in no way diminishes my gratitude for help so generously given. I do,

however, wish to express my appreciation to Dr. Special thanks are due to those who made the book a reality, including James Marrow as well as Deborah Kirshman, Stephanie Fay, and Nola Burger of the University of California Press, and above all Horst Uhr, without whom it might not have been written. The domestic subject matter doubtless makes the painting psychologically more accessible in a secular age, and the inherent interest this creates for the modern viewer is reinforced by the uniqueness of the picture as the earliest extant representation of two living individuals in a realistically defined interior space. Standing before the picture is a riveting experience for any but the most insensitive viewer, and something at least of the spellbinding effect the painting can have on the beholder survives even in photographs and reproductions. Further arousing our fascination and curiosity, the picture is pervaded by a mysterious solemnity that seems accentuated by the extreme realism with which each detail has been rendered. While the sense of enigma doubtless intensifies our interest in the picture, it needs to be emphasized at the outset that nothing in the work suggests that the painter consciously intended to puzzle us, although critics have commonly assumed the contrary. This air of mystery is really no more than an accidental consequence of the passage of time, which severely restricts what a modern viewer readily brings to an intellectual perception of the painting. We will probably never know who this man was, why he was called Timotheos, what the inscription "Leal Souvenir" was intended to convey, or why the picture was signed in a quasi-legal way: From early in the sixteenth century until the eve of the French Revolution, the London double portrait is well documented in inventories of Hapsburg collections, giving the painting an unusually secure provenance prior to Besides preserving important historical information apparently transmitted earlier by an oral tradition, these sources illustrate a deteriorating understanding of what the picture represents. For a time the panel remained in Flanders, belonging at first to Margaret of Austria and then passing at her death in into the collection of Mary of Hungary. Respectively a daughter and granddaughter of Mary of Burgundy the last direct descendent of the Burgundian ducal line , these illustrious women were also the aunt and sister of Charles V, whom they served with considerable distinction, administering in succession the Netherlandish territories of the Hapsburg empire as regent-governor during the first half of the sixteenth century. The relevant entries establish that the panel was a gift to the regent from Don Diego de Guevara, a prominent figure at Hapsburg courts in both Spain and northern Europe. That Margaret herself was personally concerned for the safekeeping of the panel is apparent from a marginal notation in the inventory that a lock was to be placed on the shutters as "Madame had ordered. The choice of Giovanni di Arrigo rather than any of the other Arnolfini known to have been active in Bruges at the time is plausible simply because he was the most prominent member of the family in the fifteenth century and the one most likely to be called Arnoulphin without further qualification. A great merchant capitalist who enjoyed close commercial and financial ties with the Burgundian court for half a century, Giovanni Arnolfini was eventually also knighted and naturalized as a Frenchman by Louis XI, and he served this king of France as well as Philip the Good and Charles the Bold of Burgundy in various important positions. Along with more than a dozen other families from Lucca, the Arnolfini and the Cenami had been active in northern commerce and finance since the middle of the fourteenth century. Paris and Bruges were the centers of this activity, which consisted in purveying luxury goods—tapestries, textiles, gold plate, and jewels are mentioned in the sources—and lending money to the French and Burgundian courts as well as to Netherlandish communes such as Bruges. Since Giovanni di Arrigo and his wife were still well remembered in Bruges in the eighteenth century, it is unlikely that a man so famous could have been forgotten or confused with someone else in the short time that elapsed between his own death in or that of his widow in and the early sixteenth-century inventories, especially since during at least part of the interval between and the picture was in the hands of the important collector Don Diego de Guevara. The principal interest of the inventory, which also provides the earliest reference to the mirror reflecting the man and woman seen from behind, is an annotation that Mary intended to take the picture with her. And this certainly did happen, for after her death in the Arnolfini double portrait entered the Spanish royal collection and remained there at least until , when it is documented for the last time as being in the Royal Palace in Madrid. In his book on Netherlandish antiquities

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first published in , Marcus van Vaernewyck mentions the double portrait as a work by Van Eyck once possessed by Mary of Hungary. And he also describes its subject matter in a brief passage, whose ambiguity can be suggested at the outset by a closely literal translation: The female figure is now described as "a pregnant German lady. But the Arnolfini double portrait had somehow made its way back to the Netherlands by , when a British army officer, Colonel James Hay, discovered it in the lodgings in Brussels where he was convalescing after being wounded at the battle of Waterloo. Following his recovery, Hay purchased the picture and took it to England, where he apparently tried to arrange for its purchase by the prince regent, for the picture is documented in Carlton House records part of the time in an attic between and . Failing to sell the panel, Hay left it with a friend, who hung it for some years in a bedroom while the colonel pursued his military career abroad. Assuming that the woman was pregnant, one critic of repute, Louis Viardot, suggested that chiromancy was the theme of the painting: Other nineteenth-century writers were usually more circumspect, contenting themselves with a descriptive analysis of the composition and displaying little concern, beyond recognizing that the artist had depicted a married couple, about the specific action portrayed. Van Eyck, he thought, had in this bizarre but ingenious way formalized "a natural marriage already well advanced," thereby "hallowing his good faith with a masterpiece. The subject of lively discussion during the next two decades, the theory has no serious supporters today. It is of interest only as another example of how the picture continued to be discussed apart from its historical context, for by the early s the self-portrait hypothesis, in its fully developed form, required nothing less than a rejection of the documentation on the double portrait in the early Hapsburg inventories. Further compromising the theory was the continuing need to force the signature inscription into the unacceptable reading "Jan van Eyck was this one," which had troubled Eastlake when he first proposed that the picture represented the painter and his wife. Their *Life and Work* , the earliest scholarship on Van Eyck that remains useful, gives only the Latin text, neither translating nor interpreting it. Since there are significant differences between the two versions, it seems useful to summarize the argument by drawing from both accounts. And in his final summation of the thesis Panofsky went so far as to claim that in the London double portrait Van Eyck had "demonstrated how the principle of disguised symbolism could abolish the borderline. Not surprisingly, his interpretation of the painting soon acquired an authority that few thought to question. Often without specific mention of Panofsky, authors of textbooks and other works directed toward a larger audience have repeated it with only minor variations based on their own predilections or misunderstandings of what Panofsky actually said, so that doubtless many who know all about the "Arnolfini Wedding" would not recognize Panofsky by name.

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Chapter 2 : Jan van Eyck: Flemish Painter

The art of domestic life: family portraiture in eighteenth-century England, Kate Retford. (cl-cloth: alk. paper), Toronto Public Library.

UK News Artist reunited with his hated other half Rejoined in matrimony: Francis Hayman and his first wife in the picture of harmony he created, then destroyed By Nigel Reynolds But for a really visceral act of spite, it perhaps takes an artist. An astonishing discovery in a provincial saleroom in America has revealed the last hateful rites of the marriage of Francis Hayman, one of the most prominent artists in early Georgian England, a founder-member of the Royal Academy and the man who taught and inspired Thomas Gainsborough. He painted himself at work "with palette and brush in hand" but otherwise his picture is horribly composed. Who or what was he painting? Why is only a sliver of the canvas on which he is working visible? And why on earth is his right knee "and the lower portion of both legs" missing? Hayman, then living in Exeter, was either having an extremely bad paint day or.. Yesterday, the West End art dealer Philip Mould said he believed that he had found the answers. The self-portrait is just half the left-hand half of the picture. Mr Mould says he has discovered a previously unknown right-hand section "revealing that the picture was in fact a double portrait, showing Hayman painting his first wife. Wanting no memory of his young wife, he cut the canvas in two "not a straightforward task if it meant dismembering his own legs, but a decision perhaps easily made if he was in a rage" finished the image of himself and disposed of the incomplete wife. Mr Mould bought the "lost" half at an auction in rural New Hampshire recently where the portrait was advertised as "Circle of Hogarth". After shipping it back to Britain, he had later over-painting removed and the knee of a man wearing brown trousers suddenly appeared in the bottom left-hand side of the picture. Mr Mould suspected that he had bought only one half of a portrait. The rest of the canvas is there, and his knee, and his legs lost in the folds of her dress. Hayman was certainly not a kindly man, to women at least, and cutting the painting in two appears to fit a pattern of misogyny. His second wife, Susanna, wrote to him from France, where she had been ordered by doctors for her health, beseeching him to fetch her. Later, he was presented with the bill for her funeral. He told a friend: From what we know of him, he seems to be an irascible sod. But is it wise to reunite the pair in death when they wanted to be apart in life? The interests of art history take precedence over any bad karma that Mr and Mrs Hayman may now give off in Exeter, says Mr Mould.

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Chapter 3 : Battista Sforza, Countess of Urbino: An Illustrious Woman (Part One) – Renaissance Mother

'A sort of sex in souls': marriage and the pendant portrait -- 'Delicious harmony': marriage and the double portrait -- 'A title of so much tenderness': the art of motherhood -- 'Think not the nursery's care beneath your notice': the art of fatherhood -- Family history and the politics of dynasty -- The battle of the pictures.

Dutch Art of the 17th century VA 16 November What does the group portrait tell us about Dutch social and domestic institutions? Hals Isaac Massa and his Wife c. Jacobsz Portrait of a Group of Guardsmen c. Mijtens Willem van den Kerckhoven and his Family c. Helst Double Portrait c. This narratives, symbolical imaginary or realistic, communicate a certain message about sitters, their social status and qualities. In the seventeenth century Holland portraiture became accessible to a wider social layer³ and flourished as never before⁴, although the costs were still prohibitive for ordinary manual workers or urban proletariat, especially group portraits, as the prices were partly calculated by head⁵. Even in 1 R. Weidenfeld and Nicholson, , p. Westermann, *The Art of the Dutch Republic*, p. Smith, *Masks of Wedlock*: UMI Research Press, , p. To such a degree, studies of group portrait can tell us about Dutch Republic: The evidence of everyday activities of such institutions are enclosed only in some of the examples, and only to a certain degree. This essay to a certain degree will touch on such institutions as marriage, family, friendship, various guilds and charitable institutions whilst providing a variety of group portraits that best exemplifies what group portraiture can tell us about Dutch social and domestic institutions. Group portraits can be divided into two categories: First category represents family and marriage portraits. Ekkart, *Dutch Portraits* The Hague: Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis, , p. Ekkart, *Dutch Portraits*, p. Maes *Family Portrait* c. Portraits of married couple that were commissioned in later years, often already with their children, constitute a wider category of family portraits According to Westermann they were less common than double portraits of married couples¹¹, because, as stated earlier, the price was partly calculated by head and, in case of family portraiture, paid by a single patriarch who 9 R. Ekkart, *Dutch Portraits* 11 M. Despite an enormous diverse of family group portraits, they still relied on meaningful conventions Smith argues in his book *Masks of Wedlock*: Cambridge University Press, , p. Smith, *Masks of Wedlock*, p. The unconventional composition presents a modern note - showcasing the marriage based on love Smith in *Masks of Wedlock* proposes that the artist could make the theme of romantic tole acceptable only by transferring his 19 M. Berger, *Manhood, Marriage, and Mischief*: Tempel Portrait of David Leeuw and his Family c. In family group portraits, while details attributes spoke of nobility and sometimes wealth, symbols were likely to present such values as harmony in family 25 D. A motif of a family joined in a musical harmony perfectly embodies such values. In the Portrait of David Leeuw and his Family fig. The painting is constructed that way so to showcase musical education of his children. His wife in a modest pose with the youngest child on her knees portrays an exemplary virtuous mother figure. However, in the painting by Molenaer fig. It is significant that Dutch painters ignored the genre of friendship portrait, although Flemish and Italian artists paid more attention to such category Van Dyck introduced this genre to the court portraiture, but it never became popular among 27 N. The family and the home maintained an almost exclusive hold on Dutch social life, as marriage and domesticity were assuming increasing importance in European sociability in the seventeenth century. As Smith writes in his book: The second category of portraiture, that this essay neglected so far, is constituted by group portraits that were on display in town halls and other public buildings. Professionals seldom worked in isolation. On the grounds that it would be impossible to mention and recognise the great diversity of economic and charitable institutions that commissioned portraits in one essay, the focus will be assigned on the group portraits of the members of surgeon guild, cloth makers guild, and hospitals. In contrast to family portraits, where one of the reasons for commissioning was the will to commemorate the loved ones for the times when they are away or dead, the reason to be in a civic group company was a great prestige that comes with it. Fuchs, *Dutch Painting*, p. Rembrandt *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr.* For example, the governors of charitable and economic institutions

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are mostly portrayed in meeting halls - a suitable place for them to be gathered - often around the table and engaged in a discussion. The most famous exceptions are the anatomy 39 R. Dissection or the examination of a skeleton were so precisely depicted that in most cases it is viable to identify the exact lesson taught in the painting. Accordingly, The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. In family portraits each figure has a certain identifying role - that of a mother, father, or, for instance, daughter. In comparison, in civic company portraits the only roles of people in such institutions that one can identify are roles of a professor and the colleagues that he is lecturing to as in The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Getty Research Institute, , p. Likewise, in the portraits of civic guard companies you can distinguish captain or lieutenant - the leaders of the group. These portraits represent this sphere as dominated by men of property, thus excluding women and poor In the portraits of both civic guards and guilds show us that women were not involved with such institutions, as their roles were assigned in domestic sphere and household Those portraits are another product of patriarchy. When it comes to Dutch social and domestic institutions in the seventeenth-century, group portraiture of that time appears to be a distinguished source of historical understanding. As such, it provides an insight that other genres can not. Due to the nature of public display, it demonstrates the terms upon which upper- and middle- classes wanted to present themselves, and thus presents the values that were prevailing in the society. Group portraiture is, perhaps, the only genre in the art of Dutch Republic that was exclusively contingent on self-presentation and status. However, the interrelations are more detectable in family group portraits and marriage double portraits, and less distinguishable in portraits that present individuals as professionals. Portraits manifest the power structures, or in the second case, the equality of the members of the group. The historical information embedded in the group portraits advocates the alternative value of such paintings. Moreover, the obvious scarcity of the paintings in this genre can also be telling, like in terms of friendship portraits, scarcity points out to the underestimation of the cult of friendship in Dutch Republic. The distinctive characteristics of Golden Age group portrait can reveal the distinctiveness of the Dutch institutions and Dutch Republic as a society, as well as tendencies generally prevalent in Europe. Portraiture and the Production of Community United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, Berger, Harry, Manhood, Marriage, and Mischief: Royal Picture Gallery Mauritshuis, Howard, Maurice, Session 4: Getty Research Institute, UMI Research Press, Weidenfeld and Nicholson, Northwestern University Press, Franits, Wayne, Paragons of Virtue: Haak, Bob, The Golden Age: The Golden Age Cambridge: Rosenberg, Jakob Kuile and S. Seymour, Dutch Art and Architecture: Schama, Simon, The Embarrassment of Riches: Nicolaes Maes, Family Portrait, , oil on canvas, Rembrandt, The Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp, , oil on canvas,

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Chapter 4 : P. S. KrÅ,yer's paintings of Marie - Wikipedia

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June 2, Long before I became aware that artists think about principles like selection and unity, I was captivated by seemingly simple paintings of people. My eyes fixed on a quiet tilt of a head, a tension at the corner of a mouth, a posture that implied an emotional state. Oil on canvas, 44 x The Metropolitan Museum of Art. The volumes in space, the almost invisible transitions of darks into the light, the color, the air. The varieties of texture. Areas of calm punctuated by activity elsewhere. All woven together with restraint, in harmony: For me, though, it is the marriage of these perfections with a kind of awkwardness that Rembrandt captures, which makes the painting achingly beautiful and which speaks of real life. The poor woman looks so uncomfortable, wrapped in her impossibly ornate and bloated dress. The incredible millstone collar against her sublimely straightforward face; a face without a touch of glamour, and so breathtaking in its simplicity. The formality of the pose gives way to an almost imperceptible imbalance. And her other arm is straining, just a bit, to hold on to the edge of the table. It all looks slightly out of kilter, somehow, as though she is a soul ill-at-ease. Yet she stands with such fine posture. How dignified she is in her quiet perseverance. My interpretations are conjecture, of course, and personal. Portrait of a Woman appears to have been initiated as a commission. But because Rembrandt was exquisitely sensitive to an inner life and responded to small moments which hint of that life, he transcended the potential artificiality of a commissioned portrait and tells of a rich human presence that resonates. Great paintings stimulate thoughts and feelings that take us beyond the four corners of the canvas and then they bring us back; we crave to see the image again and again, our responses only deepening with time. Oil on canvas, 30 x 23 in. But this quote is a serious statement. But I think the opposite is true. He never turns away. He probes the cool colors of Mrs. His love for what he observes is evident, and his expression, so sensual. The content of this painting is personal. Susan McDowell was an artist, too, and had been a star student of Mr. When they married, she put aside her painting and devoted herself to his care. Respectfully, he places her at the center of his own study: Her head, tilted toward her book of paintings, turns to Mr. Her eyes and hand are open to her husband. He is the beneficiary of her strength. This is a portrait of complex and intimate connection. Thomas Eakins has painted a fully-realized portrait of his dog, Harry. No mere accoutrement to Mrs. Eakins, Harry is an essential member of the household, the weight and warmth of his presence unsentimentally conveyed. Brush in hand, a portrait painter stands before his or her model and embarks on a solitary voyage. The desire to connect is fundamental and powerful, and there are moments when the possibility feels beyond reach. When I look at these two paintings, so full of emotion, I feel the artist striving to connect and to give shape, on his canvas, to his compassion. Rembrandt and Thomas Eakins are artists of enormous scope who were absorbed in sincere and penetrating contemplation. For all their mastery of their tools and their understanding of the natural world, they never hand us grandiose performances. Instead, they employ their understanding in pursuit of an ever-deepening insight. Their paintings are records of watchful artists at work, striving to touch upon something true in their subjects. For me, that is their greatest beauty.

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Chapter 5 : The Arnolfini Marriage - Jan Van Eyck help? | Yahoo Answers

The half-length double portrait is a format that was popularised in the Low Countries in the early seventeenth century and much used by Van Dyck, who brought the tradition with him from the continent and adapted it with creative enthusiasm, developing it into perhaps the most 'English' of his formulas.

National Gallery, London Q. What is this painting about, and who are the people in it? The painting is a double portrait of a man presumed to be Giovanni Arnolfini and his wife. Although the figures occupy most of the space, we can see details of the room in which they are standing, and a few of their possessions. What is so great about this painting? The Arnolfini portrait was created at a time when many artists were still dealing in religious iconography, with their treatment of perspective and texture being more symbolic than realistic. Jan van Eyck was a pioneer of painting with oils, which produced much more natural and convincing effects than would be achieved with the commonly-used tempera. Because oil dried slower than tempera, it was easier to render exquisite visual details. In fact, van Eyck depicts a variety of surfaces realistically: He also uses perspective and the harmony between light and shade to evoke a real space, while the carefully controlled composition avoids the realism becoming too contrived and obvious. Which are the symbolic objects, and how do they create meaning? Mrs Arnolfini appears to be pregnant, but she is probably just holding up the numerous folds of her dress, the excess fabric a sign of having much money. The oranges on the windowsill are expensive fruits. Little dogs were fashionable pets for courtly women. The dog also is a symbol of fidelity, supporting the marriage between the two. What is special about the mirror? The room has the effect of being a three-dimensional space, and this is achieved through perspective. In this painting, the perspective lines can be drawn along the existing lines of the wooden floor, and they meet at the mirror on the back wall. The mirror is thus the vanishing point in this work. But the most unusual thing about the mirror is that there is more shown in it than in the painting itself: What do the words say above the mirror? Or, he may simply be signing the painting to ensure that any credit remains unambiguously his.

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Chapter 6 : Tudor Faces: New Impressions On The Brandon Wedding Portrait

-double portrait for their marriage:facing each other (pastimes painting) -Frederico always shows left side of face because of war injury on his right eye -Frederico= Duke of Urbino (hilly area).

It forms a full-length double portrait, believed to depict the Italian merchant Giovanni di Nicolao Arnolfini and his wife, presumably in their home in the Flemish city of Bruges. It is considered one of the most original and complex paintings in Western art, because of its beauty, complex iconography,[1] geometric orthogonal perspective,[2] and expansion of the picture space with the use of a mirror. A simple corner of the real world had suddenly been fixed on to a panel as if by magic For the first time in history the artist became the perfect eye-witness in the truest sense of the term". The painting was bought by the National Gallery in London in 1881. Van Eyck used the technique of applying layer after layer of thin translucent glazes to create a painting with an intensity of both tone and colour. Van Eyck took advantage of the longer drying time of oil paint, compared to tempera, to blend colours by painting wet-in-wet to achieve subtle variations in light and shade to heighten the illusion of three-dimensional forms. The medium of oil paint also permitted van Eyck to capture surface appearance and distinguish textures precisely. He also rendered the effects of both direct and diffuse light by showing the light from the window on the left reflected by various surfaces. It has been suggested that he used a magnifying glass in order to paint the minute details such as the individual highlights on each of the amber beads hanging beside the mirror. The illusionism of the painting was remarkable for its time, in part for the rendering of detail, but particularly for the use of light to evoke space in an interior, for "its utterly convincing depiction of a room, as well of the people who inhabit it". It is indeed tempting to call this the first genre painting "a painting of everyday life" of modern times". Description Detail showing the male subject, probably Giovanni di Nicolao Arnolfini The painting is generally in very good condition, though with small losses of original paint and damages, which have mostly been retouched. Infrared reflectograms of the painting show many small alterations, or pentimenti, in the underdrawing: The room probably functioned as a reception room, as it was the fashion in France and Burgundy where beds in reception rooms were used as seating, except, for example, when a mother with a new baby received visitors. The window has six interior wooden shutters, but only the top opening has glass, with clear bulls-eye pieces set in blue, red and green stained glass. The furs may be the especially expensive sable for him and ermine or miniver for her. He wears a hat of plaited straw dyed black, as often worn in the summer at the time. His tabard was more purple than it appears now as the pigments have faded over time and may be intended to be silk velvet another very expensive item. Underneath he wears a doublet of patterned material, probably silk damask. Her dress has elaborate dagging cloth folded and sewn together, then cut and frayed decoratively on the sleeves, and a long train. Her blue underdress is also trimmed with white fur. It would probably have had a mechanism with pulley and chains above, to lower it for managing the candles possibly omitted from the painting for lack of room. The convex mirror at the back, in a wooden frame with scenes of The Passion painted behind glass, is shown larger than such mirrors could actually be made at this date "another discreet departure from realism by van Eyck. There is also no sign of a fireplace including in the mirror, nor anywhere obvious to put one. Even the oranges casually placed to the left are a sign of wealth; they were very expensive in Burgundy, and may have been one of the items dealt in by Arnolfini. Further signs of luxury are the elaborate bed-hangings and the carvings on the chair and bench against the back wall to the right, partly hidden by the bed, also the small Oriental carpet on the floor by the bed; many owners of such expensive objects placed them on tables, as they still do in the Netherlands. Scholars have made this assumption based on the appearance of figures wearing red head-dresses in some other van Eyck works e. The dog is an early form of the breed now known as the Brussels griffon. The inscription looks as if it were painted in large letters on the wall, as was done with proverbs and other phrases at this period. They suggested that the painting showed portraits of Giovanni [di Arrigo] Arnolfini and his wife. The rear wall seems to refer to the Arnolfini Portrait of forty years earlier,

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containing many of the same objects like the convex mirror and in particular the painted inscription on the wall. Edwin Hall considers that the painting depicts a betrothal, not a marriage. She argues that the painting depicts a couple, already married, now formalizing a subsequent legal arrangement, a mandate, by which the husband "hands over" to his wife the legal authority to conduct business on her own or his behalf similar to a power of attorney. The claim is not that the painting had any legal force, but that van Eyck played upon the imagery of legal contract as a pictorial conceit. While the two figures in the mirror could be thought of as witnesses to the oath-taking, the artist himself provides witty authentication with his notarial signature on the wall. Jan Baptist Bedaux agrees somewhat with Panofsky that this is a marriage contract portrait in his article "The reality of symbols: Bedaux argues, "if the symbols are disguised to such an extent that they do not clash with reality as conceived at the time Harbison argues that "Jan van Eyck is there as storyteller Harbison urges the notion that one needs to conduct a multivalent reading of the painting that includes references to the secular and sexual context of the Burgundian court, as well as religious and sacramental references to marriage. Lorne Campbell in the National Gallery Catalogue sees no need to find a special meaning in the painting: Only the unnecessary lighted candle and the strange signature provoke speculation. Art historian Maximiliaan Martens has suggested that the painting was meant as a gift for the Arnolfini family in Italy. It had the purpose of showing the prosperity and wealth of the couple depicted. He feels this might explain oddities in the painting, for example why the couple are standing in typical winter clothing while a cherry tree is in fruit outside, and why the phrase "Johannes de eyck fuit hic" is featured so large in the centre of the painting. Herman Colenbrander has proposed that the painting may depict an old German custom of a husband promising a gift to his bride on the morning after their wedding night. He has also suggested that the painting may have been a present from the artist to his friend. A non-married woman would have her hair down, according to Margaret Carroll. Arnolfini looks directly out at the viewer, his wife gazes obediently at her husband. His hand is vertically raised, representing his commanding position of authority, whilst she has her hand in a lower, horizontal, more submissive pose. However, her gaze at her husband can also show her equality to him because she is not looking down at the floor as lower class women would. They are part of the Burgundian court life and in that system she is his equal, not his subordinate. Is it a marriage contract or something else? Panofsky interprets the gesture as an act of fides, Latin for "marital oath". He calls the representation of the couple "qui desponsari videbantur per fidem" which means, "who were contracting their marriage by marital oath". Some scholars like Jan Baptist Bedaux and Peter Schabacker argue that if this painting does show a marriage ceremony, then the use of the left hand points to the marriage being morganatic and not clandestine. A marriage is said to be morganatic if a man marries a woman of unequal rank. The more cloth a person wore, the more wealthy he or she was assumed to be. Another indication that the woman is not pregnant is that Giovanna Cenami the identification of the woman according to most earlier scholars died childless,[32] as did Costanza Trenta a possible identification according to recent archival evidence ;[14] whether a hypothetical unsuccessful pregnancy would have been left recorded in a portrait is questionable, although if it is indeed Constanza Trenta, as Koster proposed, and she died in childbirth, then the oblique reference to pregnancy gains strength. Moreover, the beauty ideal embodied in contemporary female portraits and clothing rest in the first place on the high valuation on the ability of women to bear children. Harbison maintains her gesture is merely an indication of the extreme desire of the couple shown for fertility and progeny. Furthermore, the brush and the rock crystal prayer-beads a popular engagement present from the future bridegroom appearing together on either side of the mirror may also allude to the dual Christian injunctions ora et labora pray and work. According to Jan Baptist Bedaux, the broom could also symbolize proverbial chastity; it "sweeps out impurities". The mirror itself may represent the eye of God observing the vows of the wedding. According to one author "The painting is often referenced for its immaculate depiction of non-Euclidean geometry",[38] referring to the image on the convex mirror. Assuming a spherical mirror, the distortion has been correctly portrayed, except for the leftmost part of the window frame, the near edge of the table and the hem of the dress. Many wealthy women in the court had lap dogs as companions. So, the dog

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could reflect the wealth of the couple and their position in courtly life. Her white cap could signify purity , but probably signifies her being married. Behind the pair, the curtains of the marriage bed have been opened; the red curtains might allude to the physical act of love between the married couple. The single candle in the left-front holder of the ornate six-branched chandelier is possibly the candle used in traditional Flemish marriage customs. The oranges which lie on the window sill and chest may symbolize the purity and innocence that reigned in the Garden of Eden before the Fall of Man. It could be a sign of fertility as well. At some undetermined point before it came into the possession of Don Diego de Guevara d. Brussels , a Spanish career courtier of the Habsburgs himself the subject of a fine portrait by Michael Sittow in the National Gallery of Art. He lived most of his life in the Netherlands, and may have known the Arnolfinis in their later years. The item says in French: It is clearly described in an inventory taken after her death in , when it was inherited by Philip II of Spain. A painting of two of his young daughters, "Infantas Isabella Clara Eugenia and Catalina Micaela of Spain" Prado , commissioned by Philip clearly copies the pose of the figures. In a German visitor saw it in the Alcazar Palace in Madrid. Now it had verses from Ovid painted on the frame: In promises anyone can be rich. The Alcazar was rebuilt in the eighteenth century as the Royal Palace of Madrid , but the painting remained in the royal collection, and by had been moved to the "Palacio Nuevo". He claimed that after he was seriously wounded at the Battle of Waterloo the previous year, the painting hung in the room where he convalesced in Brussels. He fell in love with it, and persuaded the owner to sell. The Prince had it on approval for two years at Carlton House before eventually returning it in Around , Hay gave it to a friend to look after, not seeing it or the friend for the next thirteen years, until he arranged for it to be included in a public exhibition in The shutters have gone, along with the original frame. *Artibus et Historiae*, Vol. The Art Bulletin, Vol. Early Renaissance Painting in the National Gallery, page National Gallery Publications, Harbison , 37 Hall , 4; Crowe and Cavalcaselle , 65â€”66 Weale , 27â€”28 ; Campbell , Campbell , Koster Also see Giovanni Arnolfini for a fuller discussion of the issue See the Giovanni Arnolfini article for the portrait.

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Chapter 7 : Arnolfini Portrait | Revolvry

Jan van Eyck, Double Portrait of Giovanni Arnolfini and His Wife, mirror of the world, secular and sacred Rogier van der Weyden, Deposition, from an altarpiece commissioned by the crossbowmen's guild, Louvain, Belgium, before , poss. ca.

For a list of the highest priced works of art sold at auction, see: Top 20 Most Expensive Paintings. He frequently aimed to deceive the eye by using mirrors to reflect actions taking place off canvas. This can be seen in the Arnolfini Portrait, where the mirror on the rear wall reflects 2 figures entering the room, one is probably Van Eyck himself. It was almost a version of early graffiti art. This work is a portrait of Giovanni di Nicolao Arnolfini and his wife, but is not meant as a record of their wedding. Mrs Arnolfini is not pregnant, as is so often thought, but holding up her full-skirted dress, as was the fashion at the time. Another reflected self-portrait , can be seen in the shield of Saint George in the Virgin of Canon van der Paele, Eyck was able to manipulate paint to create fleeting clouds and light reflections on different surfaces from metal to glass, dull to luminous. Other important works include the The Stigmata of St. Jerome, Detroit Institute of Art, Detroit. As was common practice at the time, Van Eyck had a workshop in Bruges with assistants who made exact copies, pastiches and variations of his completed panel paintings for the market. He influenced a generation of Flemish artists and after his death, his large volume of works went on to influence artists all over Europe. He was chiefly a portraitist. Much of the last sixteen years of his life was spent in travel as a confidential agent for the Duke of Burgundy. For these years we have twelve pictures, mostly tiny portraits and small altarpieces, with whatever he may have painted on the Ghent Altarpiece. It is a very scanty production, even allowing for pictures now lost, and it suggests that Jan had little creative urge, but depended on occasion. We start with four miniature religious paintings which are often ascribed to Jan - God the Father Enthroned, the Lamentation, the Agony in the Garden and the Crucifixion. The reason for the attribution is a drastic and even vulgar realism, and a handling of drapery in angular folds based on wood sculpture. Such characteristics set these miniatures apart from the nine ascribed to Hubert. It is of course possible that he may have had an assistant, other than Jan, who did this work, but since the miniatures are of a technical excellence entirely worthy of Jan, to ascribe them to him seems the reasonable course. He was probably about twenty-five years old when they were painted. Since this mural decoration may have been on secular themes, its destruction is much to be regretted. We may only guess that Gothic tapestries of the moment give the general look of such work. From now on Jan was frequently employed on secret missions for the Duke, often to distant parts. The event takes place in a Gothic church which, while fantastic in design, recalls the high naves of French churches of about 1450. Upon this interior Jan lavished work and attention. Everything is accounted for - stained glass, mural painting, pictured tiles, complicated stone carving. The details are marvellous, but the feeling of interior light is only feebly conveyed, the figures are badly out of scale with the architecture and in perfunctory relations to each other. George in the Van der Paele Madonna. It is a trait which suggests an artist trying to express a feeling which he does not really experience. Except for the Portrait of Cardinal Albergati, early in the century, there are no signed pictures of Jan for these years, and it looks as if he were too busy to make them. During these years he was also far too deep in other matters to have painted or even finished any considerable portion of the Adoration of the Lamb, and whatever he did to it was probably done in the year or so preceding the unveiling on May 6, 1432. He painted the whole of the backs of the shutters, excepting perhaps the portrait of Jodoc Vyd, which was probably done by Hubert, and of the open altarpiece surely carried to completion the Adam and the Singing Angels, and probably most of the figures on the left-hand panels. Now great portraiture sets one to wondering what the sitter thinks and does when not a sitter. His men and women are eternally frozen in the aspect he caught in his studio. It is precisely because the companion Portrait of Jodoc Vyd subtly and almost humorously blends the episodic humility of a devotee with the habitual cunning of a man of great affairs, that one imagines it was created it was created not by Jan but by Hubert - a psychological difference

which is confirmed by differences of physical construction. One feels that the attitude of Jodoc is prayerful, while Elizabeth is merely in an attitude of prayer. Before considering them it may be well to survey his few religious pictures other than his early Annunciation, The charming little Madonna , is entirely disarming in a richness which paradoxically expresses a homely domesticity. To make the Divine Mother simply a rich and youthful Flemish matron, to enthrone her richly and conventionally under a brocade canopy in her own home, while leaving her equally indifferent to its well-furnished cleanliness and to the infant playing with her prayer book on her knee - this was surely a very novel and picturesque invention. There is something comfortable and even delightful about the assurance with which Jan insists that no better symbol of the Blessed Virgin can be found than a prosperous Flemish housewife who, without fuss or undue concern, keeps both her home and her babe in order. It is really a miniature, about nine by six inches, and the fastidiously elaborate rendering of the accessories is entirely proper to the scale. A little later Jan enlarged and changed the composition in the Madonna at Frankfurt-am-Main, and though a sumptuous picture, it is also a rather stiff and empty one. The altarpiece of Our Lady and Child with St. Of the larger panels of the moment no other is so profusely enriched. Stuffs, embroidered and jewelled borders, polished and curiously carved stone-work, elaborately fashioned metal, translucent glass, are juxtaposed, with hardly a gap to rest the eye or release the imagination. As painting, in a harsh and metallic way, it is magnificent. He was in his mids and at the height of his powers. The little unfinished St. Had he finished it, doubtless he would have painted out much of the charm. The exceptional attractiveness of this little picture depended on a very simple decision - to give St. Barbara an actual tower in process of building instead of the usual tiny emblematic tower. She sits meditatively over her book of hours, oblivious of the work going on in her honour behind her. The elaborately lovely Gothic structure rises lightly. Workmen are busy on ledges, on scaffolds and about the base. Jan either had great talent for architectural design, or, as is more likely, thriftily and tastefully used the sketch of an architect friend. Beyond the tower there are receding, gently drooping and rising lines of hills, punctuated by single trees and coppices. There is much about this picture that makes one wish Jan had been an engraver; the point rather than the brush seems the tool really congenial to him. As showing the way in which an early Flemish picture was prepared, this little panel is indeed precious. When we think of parts of the Adoration of the Lamb left unfinished by Hubert, we must imagine them like the St. Barbara, elaborately drawn out on the panels and needing only to be coloured. The tiny panel of Our Lady and Child by a Fountain, dated and at Antwerp, has evident relation to the garden pictures of the Rhenish school. Jan has worked out the details of vines, flowers and the fountain with the most loving care, and the very small scale of the picture, as always, has been favourable to him. For the Madonna he has chosen a type which is at once exceptional and wholly his own, in a Mary who is humble and tender without aristocratic pretensions, while he shows an unusual vivacity of observation in the naturally flung attitude of the active Christchild. In the Burgundian court he found magnificent sitters with faces shaped by character, often grotesquely. Merely to treat such masks as still life was to make very interesting pictures, and this in the main is what Jan did, simply animating the face by some trick of suggesting aggressive intentness in the eyes. Generally the faces he painted cannot be conceived as moving, as being other than they are. They hold the eye, but they do not enlist the imagination. The earliest is that of Nicholas Albergati, saintly Cardinal of St. Cross, who was in Bruges December , on a peace mission. This learned and devout Carthusian would have preferred the quiet of his Roman cell, but his friendly tact and diplomatic ability made him a wanderer about Europe. At Bruges he stayed with his fellow Carthusians, and at the charterhouse Jan van Eyck must have persuaded him to sit for a couple of hours. The result was one of the most precious relics of early Flemish art, the silverpoint drawing of the Cardinal with annotations of the colours, in the print room at Dresden. It is of small scale, very sensitively caressed by the silver stylus, and it suggests much of the humility, benignity and shrewdness of the prelate whom the Pope described to Charles VII as "free from all passion. The forms have hardened and frozen. One senses a man of moral dignity and force, but not the various gifts of the diplomat Cardinal. And this raises the issue already posed by the unfinished St. Barbara, whether all the portraits of Jan do not represent the loss of some drawing much finer

than the painting we now see - whether, in short, his gift as a draughtsman was not superior to his gift as a painter. However that be, the procedure of painting a portrait not from the sitter but from a carefully prepared drawing remained standard for Western Europe for over two centuries. It was the method of Hans Holbein , of the Clouets and their successors. It had many advantages over the practice of painting from the sitter, which grew up during the era of Renaissance art. The final character of the portrait was established in a single intent act of observation. To attain this character, the significant forms had to be sought strenuously, and eliminations and syncopations made unsparingly. On such intense initial observation the artist stood firmly. The painting was guided as to colour by notes on the drawing and by memory. Consequently colour and lighting were somewhat generalized. The painting went on confidently and one may imagine almost mechanically. There was no concern with small particularities of colouration, no confusion from change of mood or shifting of light. Such portraiture was not precisely true to any momentary appearance, but it had a timeless sort of truth of its own, taking the sitter out of a changing world into a realm that is changeless. Simply as records, the portraits painted in this way seem to me the best and truest we have, if only because there is no division of interest in making them. The great portraiture of the later Renaissance - by the Venetian Titian , the Dutchman Rembrandt and the Spaniard Velasquez - had to cope with the appearance, with actual illumination, with decorative fitness, with intimate interpretations, and while the harmonizing of these many endeavors produced much greater works of art than the late Gothic portraits, I doubt if it really produced, in the narrower sense, better portraits. The portrait of a scholar labeled in Greek letters Tymotheos, at London, is dated October 10, Its general stiffness is at once enhanced and relieved by the awkward but natural action of the hand holding a scroll. The expression is searching, if a little worried and pathetic. As an apparition it is astonishingly real, and the workmanship is of the finest. The tension of the modeling and the unpleasant bricky ruddiness of the hue are, for me, sufficient evidence that within a year of this work Jan could not have painted much on the Ghent altarpiece. Its easy modelling and the lightness of its carnations are of quite a different sort. Dated about a year later, the portrait of a Man in a Red Turban , in the National Gallery, London, differs only in being more linear and in the transparency of the shadows.

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Chapter 8 : double portrait “ Renaissance Mothers

Van Eyck, Arnolfini Portrait, , National Gallery London This week's post moves away from Renaissance Italy to look to the art of Northern Europe. Jan Van Eyck's iconic work the Arnolfini Portrait (also called the Arnolfini Wedding), dating from and located in the National Gallery London, is one of the earliest examples of oil painting in Europe.

The picture, which exists in two versions the collection of the Earl of Yarborough, and that of the Duke of Bedford , shows the Duke of Suffolk with his third wife Mary Tudor. Collection of the Earl of Yarborough Their marriage was out of the pages of a fairy tale. But like so many royal princesses, Mary was destined for the foreign marriage market. Mary, duty bound to her brother and to her country, made ready for France. Should Louis die, she would be free to choose her next husband herself. Confident that she could have Brandon one day “ after all, how long could the year-old Louis elderly by the standards of the time last? Louis, eager to meet his lovely young bride, waylaid the English entourage on its way to Abbeville, on the pretext of a hunting trip. What Mary at 19 really thought of Louis - a gent old enough to be her father - she kept to herself. Louis was evidently pleased with his wife. She played the part of the adoring trophy wife until Louis, exhausted by his nubile young wife some snickered, died on January 1, However, as a King first and a brother second, Henry had other plans for his newly single sister. She must again fulfill her obligation to England and wed a foreign prince and stranger. Already suspecting her brother would renege on his promise, Mary grew frantic. When Brandon arrived in France in late January to take her home, she desperately begged him to marry her. Unable to resist her tears “ he had never seen a woman so weep, Brandon later recalled - and that their chance at a life together might never come again, he wed Mary in secret. His closest friend and his favorite sister had both betrayed him. They were eventually forgiven and allowed to return to England. There, the couple held a public wedding, and the joyous occasion was even graced by Henry VIII himself. The Suffolks went on to have four children though only two “ Frances, the mother of the tragic Lady Jane Grey, and Eleanor - survived into adulthood until Mary succumbed to a fatal illness in Charles, who went on to marry yet again, died twelve years later. Inscribed onto the Yarborough version is a poem: Cloth of gold, do not despise, Tho thou art matched to cloth of frize. Cloth of frize, be not too bold, Tho thou art matched to cloth of gold. Though the verses may have been added later¹, they do emphasize the unusual pairing of Charles and Mary. More likely, it was meant as a symbol of love and fecundity. Artichokes were said to be sacred to the goddess Venus. Another classical allusion can read in the caduceus. This was the winged staff borne by the god Mercury. According to legend, as a boy, Mercury had chanced upon two battling snakes. Wanting to make peace between them, the youth separated the belligerent pair with a stick. The two serpents then entwined themselves around it in harmony. Historians have paid little attention to her costume. Past observations have been limited to the fashionable French attire she wears, and that she was loaded with jewels probably given to her by her late husband King Louis. Katherine of Aragon, attributed to Lucas Horenbout. Collection of the Duke of Buccleuch and Queensbury. Her cap, with a lower billament of a row of pearls, and an upper level consisting of diamonds set in gold interspaced by double pearls, is comparable to that worn by Anne Boleyn. The caps have no upper and lower billaments, only a rim of decorative metalwork arching the face and extending below the chin. Mary, had she have painted in or shortly afterwards, would have been sporting this variant of the French hood, not the later type as seen her portrait with Charles Brandon. Anne Boleyn, by an Unknown Artist. It seems unlikely that the Duke and Duchess would have waited that long “ almost two decades “ to finally commission such a work. The picture was thus a celebration of the marriage, and a memorial to it. Why the portraits then - after his wife was gone? Whether they were done in circa or some twenty years afterwards as it is suggested here, can finally be determined. In a manuscript honoring the accession of her son Francis I to the French throne, she was hailed as Madame Concorde. The caduceus was also associated with Francis as a symbol of kingly eloquence. While Hayward is correct in assuming that Mary introduced French fashions to the English court upon her return from France, she could not have brought the

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later variant of the French hood as depicted in the Yarborough and Bedford portraits. Roy Strong Tudor and Jacobean Portraits, vol. Years later, when Mary I was Queen, there was talk of declaring their granddaughters, Lady Jane Grey and her two sisters, as bastards, and thus incapable of inheriting the throne. This was almost certainly a reference to the validity of the Suffolk marriage. Iconographic Medievalism as a Legitimation Strategy. Montoya, Sophie van Romburgh and Wim van Anrooij ed. Dictionary of Symbols and Imagery, by Ad de Vries. Cross River Press, Rivals in Power, edited by D.

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Chapter 9 : Q&A Art. The Arnolfini portrait | Anastasia Fontaine

Painted to celebrate the marriage of Lord Cornbury - the eldest son of Lely's most important patron, Edward Hyde, 1st Earl of Clarendon (), Chief Minister to King Charles II - and Theodosia Capel in , this bravura double portrait is the greatest and most sophisticated conversation piece the artist ever produced.

With the help of Leonard Kopp, solid citizen of Torgau and supplier of foodstuffs to the monastery, they made their way to Wittenberg by 7 April. Legend has it that Kopp concealed the renegades in barrels used for storing herring, which would have been a rather smelly experience. Once they reached Wittenberg, the nuns came under the protection of Martin Luther, the leader of the Reform movement in Germany. He agreed to help them, even though the penalty for aiding runaway nuns was death under both Canon and Civil Law. Soon, some of the women rejoined their families, some became governesses, and some married. At twenty-four years of age, Katherine von Bora was past the normal age for marriage. Being vivacious, she still managed to attract a suitor, Jerome Baumgartner, whom she also loved. Late in efforts began to find Katherine another suitor, efforts that she firmly resisted. Then, suddenly, she stated her willingness to marry either Luther or his associate, Nicholas von Amsdorf. A hitherto confirmed bachelor, Luther agreed that at the age of forty-two, the time was right for him to wed. So on June 13, , the ex-monk and the ex-nun wed. Laughing Angels, Weeping Devils The wedding of Martin and Katherine was not done lightly, nor was it without controversy. Luther thought long and hard about whether he should get married. Some of his friends and family supported the marriage. Hans Luther, his father, greatly desired his son to marry and produce sons. Ultimately, Luther came to the opposite conclusion. No Misogyny in this Household On some matters, Luther was very much a sixteenth-century male. He believed that the man was the head of the family and should be in charge of government as well. But unlike many of his contemporaries, he did not support the high level of misogyny that characterized the intellectual worldview of the Renaissance. Luther gave Katherine von Bora control of the family finances and the running of the household. She was more practical and grounded â€” not the simple housewife preferred by most men of the time. The Luthers lived in the Black Cloister, the former home of the Augustinian monks in Wittenberg and the place where Luther had lived before the Reformation. While the other monks, one by one, began to abandon the cloistered life, Luther staked a claim on the property by making it his family home. Katherine von Bora supported her family by gardening, making wine, raising livestock, and brewing. Being a former monastic residence, the Black Cloister had many small rooms, which the Luthers rented to students or visiting clergy. These visitors and guests ate at the Luther table, with every meal seemingly overflowing with hungry seekers, acolytes, and fellow rebels. Some guests were not paying customers either, which put a strain on the family resources. In effect, Katherine von Bora was running a boardinghouse to provide additional income for the family. Luther showed his regard for his wife Katherine in other significant ways. On one occasion, he put her on a search committee to hire a new pastor. In those days it was unheard of to allow a woman to be part of such a decision. To the grumblers Luther commented that his wife would show better judgment than he would. He also let Katherine handle much of his business with publishers. Frequently, Luther also took her advice on intellectual and political matters. It made Katherine von Bora his sole heir. In Saxony, it was common practice to make the children the heirs of a deceased male. The heirs were then expected to take care of their surviving mother. Luther wanted his wife to be economically secure and independent in her widowhood. The marriage of Martin Luther and Katherine von Bora initially appeared to create an odd couple. Luther was a former monk in his early forties with habits not too akin to domestic harmony. During one period of his bachelor days, he went for two years without changing the sheets on his bed. It is unclear whether that particular set of sheets was laundered or burned afterward. The Von Boras were members of the knightly class, a proud but declining segment of German society. Luther came from peasant stock. His father Hans was a miner who got involved in the business side of the mining and became well-to-do. Initially Luther considered Katherine to be overly proud, but he quickly grew to love her.

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The Luthers had an affectionate relationship. Luther liked to joke with his wife. Elizabeth died in before she reached eight months, a tragedy that greatly saddened the Luthers. Since she was another daughter, Magdalene took the place of the deceased Elizabeth for Martin and Katherine. Sadly, she died when she was only thirteen years old. Thus she gave up the ghost in the arms of her father. Her mother [Katherine] was in the same room, but further from the bed on account of her grief. Still, it grieved the bereaved parents every bit as much as it would sadden a mother and father to lose a child in our day and age. Despite these tragic losses, the Luther household was a happy one for Martin and Katherine and their children. The Luthers were strict but loving parents who allowed their children plenty of time to play. Friends and partners they were, but both were also possessed of strong personalities, leading to occasional episodes of quarrelling, as is normal for married couples. Their biggest source of disagreement was money. Luther liked to spend it and Katie liked to save it. This observation is not to imply that Luther was a spendthrift. His monetary failing was his generosity. He allowed many who were in need to lodge at the Black Cloister as boarders without paying rent, and he willingly gave money to friends in need. Publishers made handsome profits from his books while the popular author saw little to no income from his writing. Unfortunately, historians have few sources that provide insights into the mind of Katherine von Bora. Only a few of her letters survive. Otherwise, we are dependent on how others describe her. Luther liked to tease Katherine and she gave him back as good as she got. He gave so much of himself in service not only to one town or to one country, but to the whole world. Yes, my sorrow is so deep that no words can express my heartbreak, and it is humanly impossible to understand what state of mind and spirit I am in. I can neither eat nor drink, not even sleep. God knows that when I think of having lost him, I can neither talk nor write in all my suffering. War in the region of Wittenberg had forced to her to flee with her family. The cold, the damp, and possible internal injuries caused her to sicken. Deathly ill, she was taken to Torgau by her children, where she died and was buried.