Good widows
and the sleeping dead:
Rombout Verhulst and tombs
for the Dutch aristocracy

The third quarter of the seventeenth century was an extremely productive period for Dutch funerary art. It saw the erection of not only the largest number of sculpted tombs but also some of the most important ones made that century. It was a time of fruitful experimentation with new funerary themes, visual formulae and iconographies in a development that was greatly influenced by the initiatives of two groups of patrons, the nobility and the central government. It was above all the former, which had taken such a lead in commissioning funerary sculpture in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, that helped introduce some key innovations in Dutch funerary art. This chapter focuses on two tombs executed by the sculptor Rombout Verhulst for aristocratic widows. Not only are they typical products of this period of artistic flowering, but their unusual forms, complex iconography and high standard of workmanship raise questions about the meaning of the sculptures and the intentions of the maker and his patrons.
A monument for Midwolde

In the summer of 1664, Carel Hieronymus van In- en Kniphuisen (1632-1664), a Groningen nobleman and delegate to the States-General, returned ill from an official journey to Flanders. Shortly afterwards, on 31 July, he died in The Hague at the age of 31. Less than two months later his widow, Anna van Ewsum (1640-1714), ordered a tomb for him from the Hague sculptor Rombout Verhulst (1624-1698). The official document awarding him the commission was signed by both parties on 8 September at Nienoord House, Anna’s residence. Verhulst undertook to “execute and instal a tomb in the church at
He completed his task five years later and received the final instalment of his fee, which came to a total of 7,500 guilders. Both Anna van Ewsum's commission and the work that Verhulst designed and executed at Midwolde are unusual in several respects (fig. 163). Not only were private monuments relatively rare in the Dutch Republic, but the grandeur of this one outshone all the others previously erected that century. Its structure was modern and unusual, and its iconography remarkably well-devised and innovative.3

The tomb for Carel Hieronymus van In- en Kniphuisen was erected against the east wall of the church, which entailed bricking up a window in the choir. A rectangular tomb of black marble was installed against the wall on a podium with two risers. On it is a white marble gisant of the deceased lying in state with his hands crossed on a plaited straw mattress and a pillow. Behind him, on a slightly higher plane, is his widow as an accoudée, semi-recumbent and leaning on a Bible with
her left elbow. She holds a winged hourglass with one hand, while the other lies palm upward on her thigh (figs. 164, 165). She was originally flanked by two putti, one with a skull and a mirror, the other with a reversed torch (fig. 166). Around 1709 the latter was removed to make way for the standing portrait statue of Anna’s second husband, Count Georg Wilhelm van In- en Kniphuisen (1635-1709, fig. 167). It had been carved before 1692 by Bartholomeus Eggers, and would originally have stood in a niche in Nienoord House. It must have been transferred to the monument after the count was laid to rest in the tomb below. The putto with the torch led a peripatetic existence before coming to rest in the Groninger Museum. The wall behind the tomb is painted black, and hanging on it is an oval, inscribed tablet set in a laurel wreath and a cartouche with auricular decoration held aloft by four putti. The ensemble is crowned with a fifth putto blowing Fame’s trumpet. At the bottom the cartouche ends in a skull suspended over a burning lamp of life. In a formal sense the seven putti mediate the transition from the free-standing statuary group on the tomb to the flat sculpture against the rear wall, where the 32 quarterings of Carel
ADSTA VIATO
SUB HOC MARMORE TECTUM IACET CORPUS
GENEROSI DOMINI IOANNIS A CHEEL
EQUITIS TOARCLE IN SPANBROECK
SPEERDUX SYNDERMEER &C. DIE XXVII MARTI
ANNO SALUTIS CHRISTIANE MDCLXXVIII
ETATIS SUÆ XLIII. PRÆږROPER FATO AIREPSI
ANIMA COELUM ORIGINEM SUÆ REPTIB
EXPECTANS DIEM NOVÆSSIMUM, QUO IN
CORPUS CLARIFICATUM REMIGRABIT.
Hieronymus and his wife hang from festoons on either side of the tablet. The decoration of the tomb is rounded off with leaf clusters and some funerary accoutrements. The entire monument is surrounded by wrought iron railings that follow its groundplan.

The commission

Anna van Ewsum must have decided to order this imposing memorial for her husband and herself within a very short space of time. Only six weeks passed between Van In- en Kniphuisen’s death and the signing of the contract with Verhulst. It is possible that she hastened to The Hague when she heard that he had died, and got in touch with the sculptor herself. The circumstances, however, suggest that an intermediary was involved.

One of the Zeeland delegates to the States-General in this period was Jacob van Reygersbergh (1625-1675), whose sister was Maria van Reygersbergh, Lady of Katwijk and widow of Baron Willem van Liere. In 1663, a year before the death of Van In- en Kniphuisen, Verhulst had completed a magnificent tomb for this Katwijk widow that is very similar to the Midwolde monument. Here, too, the sculptor used the combination of the widow as accoudée beside the laid-out body of her husband, and again there is a display of quarterings around the wall tablet (fig. 168). The tomb erected in the church at Katwijk-Binnen was one of the earliest private commissions of this magnitude in the second half of the seventeenth century, and would have caused quite a stir, certainly in the predominantly aristocratic and patrician circles in The Hague in which Jacob van Reygersbergh and his sister moved.

Given the connection between Jacob van Reygersbergh and Carel Hieronymus van In- en Kniphuisen it is very possible that the Zeeland delegate mentioned Verhulst’s name to Anna van Ewsum. This theory is made even more plausible by the fact that Verhulst executed a portrait bust of Van Reygersbergh in
1671 (figs. 60, 61, 169), an epitaph for his brother-in-law, Johannis van Gheel, in Spanbroek in 1668, and one for another Zeeland aristocrat, Hendrik Thibaut, in Aagtekerke (figs. 33, 170). Thibaut was also related to the Van Reygersbergh and Van Gheel families by marriage. It seems, then, that Jacob van Reygersbergh was an important intermediary for Verhulst in the 1660s. In addition, the archives reveal that Verhulst was on an intimate footing with Van Reygersbergh. On at least four occasions between 1668 and 1676 he acted as a witness to notarised documents in which either Jacob or Jacoba van Reygersbergh was one of the interested parties.9

Anna van Ewsum’s financial circumstances were anything but healthy when she decided to order the tomb, and she was far worse off than Maria van Reygersbergh had been a few years earlier. The Katwijk widow was an extremely wealthy woman, whereas the Nienoord family was burdened with debts. According to the will of Anna’s second husband, who did his utmost to clear the liabilities, the total was more than 150,000 guilders, a massive sum in those days.10 In 1659, Carel Hieronymus had lent his wife 18,000 guilders so that she could pay off some old family debts. It can neither be proved nor ruled out that she used part of that money to finance the tomb.11 The fact that her straitened circumstances did not prevent Anna van Ewsum from honouring her husband with a sumptuous and costly monument certainly indicates that she was a woman of strong convictions and determination.

Typology

The type of tomb introduced in Katwijk and repeated in Midwolde was new in the Republic. It is a variant of the traditional double tomb, the variation being in the combination of two figures, one recumbent and dead, the other alive and raised on one elbow. Examples of such an unusual programme are known mainly from England, where there was a great deal of experimentation with double tombs in the first half of the seventeenth century.12 Nicholas Stone (c. 1587-1647), who trained in the studio of Hendrick de Keyser, used the formula in the monument for Sir Charles Morison (1630), where the man lies à demi-couchant behind the gisant of his wife, with two of their children kneeling on either side (fig. 171). What is lacking there, though, is any kind of psychological contact between the figures. Stone merely combined two standard models of funerary figures in a single monument, as can be
seen from a comparison with an earlier tomb he made in the same church. Although Verhulst is not known to have visited England, it can be assumed from the numerous artistic connections between England and the Netherlands that he was aware of such innovations in commemorative art.

It is not clear what prompted Verhulst to execute the unusual double tomb programme in Katwijk. Perhaps it was the express wish of the patroness, who features so prominently in the composition. The monument displays some shortcomings, certainly compared to the more ambitious Midwolde tomb, which indicate that Verhulst was still searching for a proper balance between form and content. The widowed Maria is placed on the same level as her husband, with the result that he partly conceals her from the viewer. Verhulst corrected this in Midwolde by placing Anna van Ewsum higher up. Maria’s expression and gestures, too, are not as elaborated as those of the Midwolde widow. She rests her head on her right hand in accordance
with an old-fashioned formula, while her other hand lies calmly in her lap. In addition, the Katwijk ensemble is less cohesive in that the transition from tomb to wall is not as subtly worked out as in Midwolde. Broadly speaking one can say that the tomb in Katwijk is a little less lavish, which also explains the difference in price of more than 1,000 guilders.\(^\text{15}\)

The lack of a Dutch tradition of the double tomb with *gisant* and *demi-gisant* raises the question of why Verhulst opted for such an unusual type in Katwijk and Midwolde. It seems that the answer should be sought in the common background of the two monuments, for both were ordered by young, aristocratic widows who had themselves ostentatiously immortalised on the tombs.\(^\text{16}\) It is not the deceased who are the focal points of the compositions, as one would expect, but their living consorts. Anna van Ewsum is particularly self-possessed (fig. 164), gazing straight at the beholder. Her opened right hand appears to express acquiescence and submission, which are echoed by the objects by her left hand – the winged hourglass as a symbol of the transience of life and the Bible of her trust in God. Such a self-assured form of female presentation was extremely uncommon in the seventeenth century and needs explaining.

**The good widow**

The loss of a husband had major consequences for a noblewoman, and in many cases they were more far-reaching than those for a widow from another social station or class. While she was married she shared with her husband the rights and privileges that flowed from the possession of land and seignories. Upon his death those privileges devolved entirely on her, as did the custody of the material goods and the exercise of the associated rights, which was traditionally a man’s task. Her first priority was to safeguard the family property until a son came of age and assumed the responsibility himself. A widow consequently took the place of her deceased partner, and acted as such in public. Her authority was no longer restricted to the private sphere of house and family. The rights that she exercised in her husband’s name formed the basis of her visible, public authority.\(^\text{17}\) Although there is an idea that a widowed noblewoman remarried as soon as she could in order to transfer these ‘male’ responsibilities to her second husband, there are known cases of widows expressly reserving their new-won economic freedom and status of head of the family to themselves.\(^\text{18}\)
The pressure to remarry was stronger if the first marriage had been childless, for that posed a threat to dynastic interests. Maria van Reygersbergh and Anna van Ewsum illustrate both cases. The former remained a widow (but had many children), the latter remarried within a year, becoming the wife of her first husband's cousin, Georg Wilhelm van In- en Kniphuisen.

The conduct befitting a widow was to some extent codified in the course of the sixteenth century in a number of mirrors of consolation. There are at least five Dutch works of this type, including Erasmus's *De Kersten weduwe* (Amsterdam 1607), the third part of Jacob Cats’s *Houwelyek*, which deals with widowhood (Middelburg 1625). Pieter Janszoon Twisck's *Troost-brief der weduwen* (Hoorn 1630), and finally Franciscus Ridderus's *Historisch sterf-huys* (Rotterdam 1668), one chapter of which is devoted to the consolation of widows. Some of these works are lengthy examples of the antique genre of the *consolatio mortis*, the letter of condolence written to mark the passing of a dear friend.\textsuperscript{10} Needless to say, they are decidedly Christian in tone, and the chief source of inspiration is Paul's recommendations to widows in 1 Timothy 5:3-16. The treatises contain several topoi that are characteristic of the genre, such as the acceptance of the will of God (*voluntas divina*), being moderate in one's display of mourning, imitating exemplary widows from the Bible, and the consolation of piety. Erasmus, for example, urges widows to practise a "piety of the heart" that was directed towards Christ, the immortal bridegroom of all widows.\textsuperscript{20} He alone could ensure that her physical beauty made way for a beauty of heart.\textsuperscript{21} It was from this piety that widows had to take their consolation, and also from the imitation of model Old Testament widows like Judith, Naomi and Deborah. Erasmus actually places the state of widowhood above that of virgins and married women. He also stresses, and here he is followed almost word for word by Twisck, that moderation in sorrow and mourning is the wisest course.\textsuperscript{22} Exaggerated mourning is as misplaced as a total disregard of one's husband's death. "The woman who mourns the death of her husband immoderately – what is she doing but aiming at another marriage, failing to give the slightest thought to how lucky the change is that has come over her husband, who has traded his mortality for immortality. Nor does such a woman give thanks to God, who took her husband away because it was good either for him or for her – or perhaps for both."\textsuperscript{23} All of these manuals for widows, without exception, place great emphasis on the will of God, to which the woman must submit and surrender. Finally, she is exhorted to pray in order to become an
example for others, and to prepare herself for reunion with her husband in the hereafter. "Therefore speak rather thus: 'How sad I am, or to what end is my heart so burdened? O my sweetest one! I have not lost you but have preserved you, for you have gone before to a better place. I shall follow when it please and suits the good Lord, into whose hands I too commend myself entirely'." 24

The humanist Juan Luis Vives adopts a slightly different tone in his *Die institutie ende leeringe van den Christelijcke vrouwe* (Antwerp 1554), the Dutch edition of a widely read work that was translated into many languages, and to which Cats was indebted when writing his *Houwelyck.* 25 Vives was mainly addressing women from aristocratic circles; his book is dedicated to Queen Catherine of England and was written as a guide for the rearing of her daughter, Princess Mary. 26 According to Vives, the good widow had to act above all in the spirit of her dead husband, so that he could consider "that he is happy to leave such a wyfe behynde hym." 27 Vives's good widow continues the policy laid down by her husband, because she is the remaining half of a marital union, the conditions of which were primarily defined by the male half. "Wherfore a good wydowe ought to suppose, that hyr husbande is not utterly deade, but liveth bothe wyth lyfe of hys soule, whyche is the vareye lyfe and besyde wyth hir remembraunce. For our frendes lyve wyth us thoughge they be absent from us or deade if the lyvely image of them be imprinted in our hartes wyth often thynkyng upon theym, and daiely renewed, and theyr lyfe ever wareth fresche in our myndes. And if we forgette theynm, than they die towarde us [...] Than what shoulde a chrysten woman doe; Let hir kepe the remembraunce of hir husbande wyth reverence, and not wyth wepyngye." 28 Cornelis van Alkemade had the following to say about this posthumous bond. He was writing in the early eighteenth century, and demonstrates that Vives's ideas were still current. "In addition, one must not lightly suppose that the one who graced and honoured the family with his union should discard that love towards it now that he has remarried." 29

It was not only Erasmus, Twisck, Cats and Vives who stressed this bond with the dead husband; it was also reflected in contemporary portraiture. Willem Lodewijk van Nassau, Stadholder of Friesland, is known to have had an *ad vivum* portrait of his late wife in his bedchamber, together with a painting of her on her deathbed. 30 Piety and the awareness of approaching death play an important part in the few portraits of widows. 31 Pieter Danckerts de Ry, for example, depicted an elderly woman with a boy who is probably her grandson. She has a
Bible open on her lap, and is resting her hand on a hourglass standing on the table beside her. The boy is pointing at a celestial globe as a symbol of transience. This combination of a widow, a Bible and an hourglass recurs in almost the same form on the Midwolde tomb.

A few portraits show a widow with the portrait of her late husband. These women, mindful of Vives's words, are literally keeping the "remembrance" of their husbands close to them. The portraits therefore fulfil a dual function by simultaneously portraying both the dead man and his wife in her role as the guardian of his *memoria*. By Vives's standards, the women had themselves portrayed as good, virtuous widows. One striking illustration of this from the very highest circles of the aristocracy is Van Honthorst's portrait of Amalia van Solms wearing mourning and holding a posthumous likeness of her husband Frederik Hendrik (fig. 172).

There are also works of art in which the roles are reversed. In a drawing by Jacques de Gheyn II of 1601, a widower stands beside his wife’s deathbed, pointing towards her and at the same time looking
meaningfully at the viewer. A burning torch and a small Bible are the only additional motifs in this funerary portrait. Bartholomeus Spranger’s imposing engraved memorial for his wife Christina Müller, which was executed in 1600, shows the self-assured widower pointing at the medallion portrait of his departed spouse (fig. 173). This complex allegorical print is filled with numerous attributes of transience, death and artistic fame which make it clear that the memoria of the dead woman cannot be separated from Spranger’s own fame. One of the accompanying inscriptions stresses the posthumous bond of love in the spirit of Vives: “Mors iniqua, quid tantum decus rapis? Pietas aequa, quae et mortuam servas” ("Iniquitous death, why do you take away such gracefulness? Gracious love, who also honours her after her death").

The large group portrait of Godard van Reede and his family painted by the brothers Herman and Cornelis Saftleven in 1634 radiates the same awareness of mortality (fig. 174). The entire family of this Utrecht nobleman, including both his wives, is portrayed in a landscape. His future wife, Catharina van Utenhove, is seated amidst
the children of Godard's first marriage, while his deceased first wife, Emerentia Oem van Wijngaerden, is laid out on her 'deathbed' beneath a canopy on the right. Godard himself is seated beside this state-bed, his left hand resting on a skull. Toppled over in the foreground is an hourglass. In the course of his discussion of this portrait, De Jongh drew attention to an important English painting from the same period – the portrait of Sir Thomas Aston and his son by the deathbed of his wife Magdalene (fig. 175). A cradle draped with a mourning cloth identifies the cause of death as childbirth. Magdalene also appears in a pensive pose in the right foreground. She is thus depicted twice: in her 'natural body' (dead) and in her social body, the latter being her position in society (living on after death, and even joining in the mourning). This painting explicitly illustrates the contemporary notion that an individual's social position was not erased with death. One remarkable detail is the cross-staff that Aston is holding, which appears rather out of place in this context. This navigational instrument, which was used to fix one's position at sea by measuring the altitude of the sun or the pole star, is also present as a relief on the side of the Midwolde tomb,
where it is woven into a wreath of laurel and oak (fig. 176). The meaning of the instrument in this funerary context is anything but clear. As a sort of spatial equivalent of the hourglass, it could stand for (measurable) earthly finitude – transience, in other words. An alternative interpretation is suggested by the way the instrument was used. Pointing the cross-piece at the pole star (the lodestar) in order to steer a straight course could be seen as an image of a Christian life directed towards God, who ensures that man steers a steady course through his earthly existence.

The dead and the living are brought together in the most subtle way in a number of group portraits by Jan Mijtens. In the 1643 group of Johan van Wassenaer and his two wives the two women are depicted in the full bloom of life, despite the fact that they had died 33 and 12 years previously (fig. 177). Mijtens even dressed them in the fashions of 1643. In addition to its positive view of death, this portrait appears to express a dynastic awareness that is typical of the aristocracy, and this is further underlined by the inclusion of Duivenvoorde Castle in the background. The dynastic element is presented even more forcefully in

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John Souch, Portrait of Sir Thomas Aston and his son by his wife’s deathbed, 1635, canvas, Manchester City Art Galleries, Manchester
an overmantel in Duivenvoorde Castle that shows Johan van Wassenaer surrounded by his sister, his deceased parents and his dead wives. In a family group that Mijtens painted in 1661, a boy and an older man wearing a night tabbaard or dressing-gown stand off to the left of the main group (fig. 178). The flowering poppy ("sleep buds") in front of this duo is probably a reference to eternal sleep, indicating that the old gentleman and the child (grandfather and grandson, perhaps) are dead.

All these works point to the existence of a modest visual tradition that combined living and dead members of a family in a single, cohesive scene. The tombs in Katwijk and Midwolde are very closely
related to this tradition, which seems to have been particularly popular with the nobility. Maria van Reygersbergh and Anna van Ewsum had themselves immortalised beside their late spouses, just as Amalia van Solms and Johan van Wassenaer did in a painted form. The tombs keep the memories of the deceased alive, and also portray the surviving partners as the keepers of the flame, as the good widows whom Vives held up as an ideal to his aristocratic readers.  

The fact that it was Mijtens who made a contribution to this visual tradition was perhaps not without significance for the two tombs. Mijtens and Verhulst were both members of the Hague Guild of St Luke, and must have known each other well. In addition, they worked for the same group of patrons. The painter portrayed many members of the nobility and patriciate living in and around The Hague – the group to which several of Verhulst’s patrons belonged. It is not inconceivable, then, that he was inspired by Mijtens’s paintings when he designed the Katwijk and Midwolde monuments.  

In Twisck’s consolatory work there is an aside warning against adopting an overly stoical attitude upon losing a loved one. “It is not my intention, dear Lijsbeth Pieters, to change your nature into a solid mass or to make wood or stone of you, or to rob you of all natural movement [...] as if you felt no sadness at the death of your husband, child, father, mother, sister, brother, friends or acquaintances, as it is said of the Stoic philosophers, namely that they were as happy at the
The ideas of Stoic philosophy were indeed very popular in the seventeenth-century Republic. It was due above all to Lipsius's *De constantia*, which had been reprinted and translated many times since its first appearance in 1584, that classical ideas about the steadfast spirit took on a new lease of life and were to some extent made acceptable within a Christian context. Neo-Stoicism became the chic norm and the fashionable ethics of the seventeenth-century lettered class.45

Traces of a Neo-Stoic attitude can also be detected in the Midwolde tomb. In the first place, there is the demonstrative gesture that Anna van Ewsum is making with her right hand, creating a sense of submission and acceptance of fate's dictates. This, combined with the hourglass beneath her left hand, leads one to suspect that there is a Neo-Stoic basis to her pose. Acceptance of one's personal fate in adversity is an important feature of Neo-Stoic philosophy. The hourglass, moreover, was described by Ripa as a symbol of Time in its almost Stoic role as "The teacher of all human passions and turmoils of the spirit." Elsewhere he states that someone once gave a boxed hourglass covered with a mourning cloth to the next-of-kin of the deceased as a symbol of the time that can restore peace of mind and dull sorrow after such a dreadful loss.46 A similar acceptance of fate is
reflected in the motto of Jacob van Reygersbergh, the Zeeland patrician who played a key role in the commission for the Midwolde tomb (fig. 179): “Mea sorte contentus” (I am content with my lot). What is also striking, finally, is the parallel between the motifs on the Midwolde tomb and those in a vanitas still life of 1621 by Jacob de Gheyn II, which contains an unmistakably Neo-Stoic message.

The sleeping dead

The way in which the laid-out body of Carel Hieronymus van In- en Kniphuisen is depicted is decidedly unconventional. He is wearing his most informal clothes: a gown or tabbaard (possibly a night tabbaard), a nightcap and slippers. Such negligé wear, which is also associated with sleep, appears to breach the decorum expected of a portrait. Such an intimate and domestic display accords badly with a public, formal portrait. Were it not for the fact that Carel Hieronymus is depicted in a traditional, laid-out pose with his hands crossed over his body, one might think that Verhulst depicted him asleep. By contrast, the sculpture of Willem van Liere on the Katwijk tomb follows a formal funerary convention. He lies in his state suit of armour to underline his nobility, although his pose is less formal.

Dutch funerary sculpture offers a few other instances of the deceased wearing domestic attire, but it is virtually unknown elsewhere. Only in England are there one or two examples, but they are far less significant. English funerary art is dominated by the depiction of the deceased in his formal, daily dress, in a shroud or in a classical toga.

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Rombout Verhulst, Portrait of Jacob van Reygersbergh, detail of the base, 1672, white Carrara marble, The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles
that vaguely recalls the bedtime or domestic dress shown on Dutch monuments. One interesting exception is the monument for the Duke of Queensberry at Durisdeer (Dumfriesshire, Scotland), which was executed by John Nost around 1711. In the extant design for this tomb, which incidentally has a similar disposition of the figures as the ones in Katwijk and Midwolde, the duke’s deceased wife is shown in her night attire, but on the tomb itself she is wearing a gown, possibly because a nightdress was considered unbecoming.\(^5\)

The earliest Dutch example of this kind of costume is the recumbent likeness of William the Silent on his tomb of 1621 in Delft. Hendrick de Keyser depicted the prince on his deathbed, but not yet lying in state.\(^5\) He is wearing a fur-lined tabbaard, slippers and an embroidered nightcap. His doublet is partly unbuttoned, possibly to remind the viewer of the shot that killed him.\(^5\) De Keyser supplied a formal depiction of the dead prince in bronze on the front of the monument, where the seated William gazes out at the beholder clad as a military commander in his state suit of armour. This twin depiction of William the Silent, dead on his last bed and alive in full military regalia, incorporates the same idea as is found in the painting of Thomas Aston (fig. 175): the death of the natural body versus the continued life of the social body.\(^5\)
There are also engraved versions of the informal, realistic portrayal of the deathbeds of the next two princes of Orange, Maurits and Frederik Hendrik, which indicates that it was common practice at the court to lay bodies out in domestic or night attire.\textsuperscript{55} Since neither prince was given a funerary monument, this iconography of the “Nassau deathbed” is not reflected in court sculpture. There is one more explicit mention of the wearing of a \textit{tabbaard} in connection with death, and

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\caption{Circle of Geertgen tot Sint Jans, \textit{The tree of Jesse}, ca. 1500, panel, Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam}
\end{figure}
that is in the description of the execution of Prince Maurits's chief political opponent. Various eyewitneses reported that Johan van Oldenbarnevelt wore a black satin, night *tabbaard* when he went to the scaffold on 13 May 1619.56

The *gisant* dressed for bed did not reappear in funerary sculpture until the third quarter of the seventeenth century. This time it was on the tomb of the chief forester of Holland and West Friesland, and Lord of Heenvliet, Johan Polyander van Kerckhoven (1594-1660), which Rombout Verhulst erected for his English widow in the Pieterskerk in Leiden in 1663 (fig. 180).57 Van Kerckhoven lies in marble on a mattress and a plump pillow wearing his nightgown over an undershirt or night-shirt, slippers and a nightcap. Although his attire is very similar to that of Carel Hieronymus van In- en Kniphuisen in Midwolde, there is one important difference: Van Kerckhoven is not laid out. He is turned towards the viewer a little, his head resting on his left hand with the eyes closed. His slack right arm rests on his hip. He is sleeping.58 This is the classical pose of sleep, and is fully in keeping with the figure's dress.

Examples of the sleeping pose are found with great frequency in the visual arts of the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Many medieval versions show St Peter asleep in scenes of the garden of Gethsemane, or the sleeping Jesse, often in the predellas of sculpted retables or in works like a panel from the circle of Geertgen tot Sint Jans (fig. 181). The sleeping Odysseus on the island of the sun god appears in the same attitude in a drawing by Johannes Stradanus (1523-1605),59 as does the recumbent female nude in a seventeenth-century cabinet sculpture by Leonard Kern, where the inscription "Mortis Imago" on the plinth establishes a direct connection with death.60 Slumbering *gisants* are also found in funerary sculpture, notably in Italy. The earliest sleeping *demi-gisants* are probably those on Andrea Sansovino's tombs for cardinals Ascanio Sforza and Girolamo Basso delle Rovere in Rome (Santa Maria del Popolo, 1505).61 They were followed by several other tombs for princes of the church, such as Cardinal Giovanni Michiel and Bishop Antonio Orso (both in San Marcello, Rome), and the Dutch Pope Adrian VI and Cardinal Willem van Enkevoirt (both in Santa Maria dell'Anima, Rome).62 In the Low Countries the *gisant* in an attitude of sleep is found on the tomb of Archbishop Johannes Carondelet in Bruges (Cathedral, formerly in the Church of St Donatian, c. 1540-1550).63 The clear preference for this type of sculpture among clerics is referred to in a treatise on architecture published in Bruges in 1599: "And if such a tomb be
Rombout Verhulst, 
*Monument of Adriaen Clant*, 1672, white Carrara marble, red Belgian marble, touchstone, N.H. Kerk, Stedum

Rombout Verhulst, 
*Monument of Adriaen Clant*, detail showing the effigy, 1672, white Carrara marble, red Belgian marble, touchstone, N.H. Kerk, Stedum
made for a religious like an abbot, bishop, cardinal or some other, then the figure shall be rounded, resting on its side, with the hand under the head. If it is a lord, baron, duke, count or the like, then the figure shall lie on its back." The writer was probably thinking of the monument for Carondelet, which he undoubtedly knew, for he illustrated this passage with a print by Ducerceau of a very similar type of tomb. The categorical tone suggests that there was a generally accepted visual tradition for such semi-recumbent tomb statues of ecclesiastics in the sixteenth century. However, the occurrence of similar *demi-gisants* of lay people, particularly in England, demonstrates that there was no deep-rooted visual code. For instance, John Webster mockingly wrote around 1611 that according to the latest fashion, “princes' images on their tombs do not lye as they were wont, seeming to pray up to Heaven, but with their hands under their cheeks, as if they had died of the toothache.” Moreover, it is not always clear that the figure really is supposed to be asleep. The *gisant* of Carondelet, for example, has its eyes open. The practical consideration that a *gisant* turned to one side gave a better view of the figure may also have encouraged the use of this type, irrespective of the iconographic implications.

Rombout Verhulst used the formula of the sleeping *gisant* from the Van Kerckhoven tomb just one more time in a virtually unaltered form on the monument for the Groningen nobleman Adriaan Clant van Stedum, which was commissioned by the dead man's son (figs. 182, 183). Judging by the many similarities between the two figures, Verhulst must have worked from the plaster model that he had made ten years earlier for Van Kerckhoven's tomb. The two figures are almost identical, apart from the drapery folds and the faces. This is well illustrated by the spread right hands of the two *gisants*. The reason for this repetition is not known, but financial considerations may have played a part. The order for the Stedum monument was probably prompted by a desire to compete with the nearby Midwolde tomb, which had been completed three years previously.

There is a third example of this type of sleeping *gisant*, but it is doubtful whether it was made by Verhulst, despite being related to his tombs in Leiden and Stedum. It is on the tomb of Elisabeth van Tuyl van Serooskerke, which was erected c. 1690 in the Church of St Nicholas in Utrecht and demolished during the period of the Batavian Republic. The drawing Van der Lelij made of it in 1745 shows a sleeping woman in a nightgown or shroud with bared breasts and closed eyes resting her head on her arm and a cushion (fig. 184). One
striking detail is the small dog sitting beside the cushion and looking up at the sleeping woman—an adaptation of a motif that was used in France as early as the sixteenth century on Germain Pilon’s tomb for Valentine de Balbiani (Paris, Louvre). Notwithstanding the fact that the dead noblewoman’s pose is related to those of Van Kerckhoven and Clant, and although Verhulst made a tomb in Stavenisse around 1670 for Hieronymus van Tuyl van Serooskerke, a relative of Elisabeth’s (fig. 185), the rather incoherent architectural setting of the Utrecht tomb argues against an attribution to the by now elderly Verhulst.

The associations with sleep in Verhulst’s tombs are rooted in a respectable tradition, for Hypnos and Thanatos had been an inseparable pair since classical times. The dead asleep, often with poppyheads beside them, are found on the lids of Roman sarcophagi. Moreover, this metaphorical play with the concepts of sleep and death was absorbed into the Christian tradition and embodied in formulations of the liturgy and funerary art. In the latter sphere it is above all such epitaphs as “requiescat in pace” or “hic dormit,” which
had been in common use since the Middle Ages, that present death as a form of peaceful repose. The revival of this old sleep metaphor in the visual arts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries was probably associated with a resurgent classicism. Numerous written sources, from the Netherlands and surrounding countries, testify to the general familiarity with this imagery, which acquired a late, demotic variant in the tale of Sleeping Beauty. In contemporary Dutch and English poetry, for example, death is regularly described as an eternal sleep. Vondel used that image in his poem of 1637 on the death of Susanna van Baerle:

![Image of the Monument of Hieronymus van Tuyl van Serooskerken](image)

Rombout Verhulst, *Monument of Hieronymus van Tuyl van Serooskerken*, after 1669, white Carrara marble and touchstone, N.H. Kerk, Stavenisse
“...of the grave wherein his spouse lies
Asleep, waiting for eternity.”

Similarly, in his deathbed poem of 1660 on Joan Banning Wuytters:

“Who lies here dead a-bed as if unmade?
Lord Banning has discharged his debt to death
Yet is not dead: he rests, appears to sleep.”

And Johan van Nyenborgh of Groningen wrote:

“While once I lay asleep
I fancied someone called to me:
‘Remember, sleep is sister to death,
So awake, and sleep not too peacefully.’”

The metaphor is not so common in the visual arts, although there are enough examples to confirm that the classical connotation of death as sleep was still very topical. Van Dyck provided a superb illustration of this with his portrait of Lady Digby on her deathbed, showing her in precisely the same sleeping pose as Van Kerckhoven and Clant on their tombs (fig. 186). All these examples of the deceased in night attire or asleep – on the scaffold or deathbed, in family portraits or on Verhulst’s monuments – have to be viewed in the light of this.
metaphor. As demonstrated by the first quotation from Vondel, they clearly express the hope and desire for the resurrection, the awakening from eternal sleep, thus mitigating the irreversible, terrifying nature of death. The subtle, implicit iconography of “the deceased asleep” can also be regarded as a reflection of a typically Protestant attitude to death. The soul’s final destination, the eschatological prospect is depicted merely as a consoling sleep.77

Surprisingly enough, the metaphor of sleep for death did not leave the two widows in Katwijk and Midwolde unmoved either. Although it is not very apparent to the modern eye, one of the oddest aspects of both tombs is the women’s dress. They are not wearing mourning, as one might have expected, nor do they have the official costume suitable for public display in the form of a tomb sculpture. Both Maria van Reigersbergh and Anna van Ewsum are dressed in no more than their underclothing: whalebone corsets and petticoats.78 To have oneself immortalised wearing such intimate, even pert garments appears to fly in the face of all the conventions regarding of the virtuous, aristocratic conduct of widows. The truth, though, is quite the opposite. This unusual garb has a logical, symbolic explanation in the context of the metaphor of sleep. The two widows are ‘deshabillée’ because they are preparing themselves for the night. They are about to go to bed and put on their night attire. Viewed from this perspective, they are readying themselves for death and reunion with their deceased husbands.79 Since widows were implicitly advised to prepare for their own deaths in the mirrors of consolation, the women’s seemingly unchaste appearance in fact proclaims their virtue. In Anna van Ewsum’s case this idea of preparing for death is reinforced by the accessories around her. The original design for the tomb showed her precisely midway between death and life, which were symbolised by two putti (Death on the left, but now removed, and Eternal Life on the right, with a mirror).80 The symbol of the lamp of life immediately behind her, which is being menaced by a skull, fits into this context, while the hourglass (with the wings of a bat and bird) in her hand is a direct reference to the nocturnal and diurnal sides of life.

Aristocratic self-assertion

In 1659 Simon van Leeuwen noted in his discussion of the Dutch nobility that its exclusive social position was under serious threat from
the rise of a social class with aristocratic ambitions. "Which insidious blight moves and necessitates many nobles to wed their children to rich people, albeit that they are not noble, in order to continue in their station." Regent families with aristocratic aspirations aped the lifestyle of the nobility by buying seignories, assuming semi-aristocratic titles or coats of arms, or by marrying into noble families. The latter was particularly prevalent in the first half of the seventeenth century. 

Members of this burgher elite attempted to better their station in life mainly by acquiring the patents and titles of nobility, sometimes from abroad, by contriving impressive genealogies or by marrying above themselves. Erecting tombs and building mortuary chapels were also part of the adopted aristocratic lifestyle of this upper burgher class. Prosperous individuals took their first steps onto this traditionally noble terrain in Van Leeuwen’s day. Commissioning a tomb, which had long been a privilege of the nobility, was discovered to be an effective way of preserving for posterity the glitter of their newly acquired position. Authors were soon commenting on this phenomenon.

One typical member of this new group of aristocrats was the grand pensionary and diplomat Adriaen Pauw (1585-1653), who bought the castle and manor of Heemstede, taking the title Lord of Heemstede. He picked up an English and a French title while on diplomatic missions abroad, and as a matter of course bore a crested coat of arms. On his death a tomb was erected in the church at Heemstede on which the arms of himself and his wife were prominently blazoned. Johan van Kerckhoven, mentioned above, was another social climber. He came from a regent family in Ghent, acquired a Dutch manor and an English title of nobility, as well as marrying Lady Stanhope, a widowed English noblewoman. Due to this, and to his position as chief forester of Holland and West Friesland, a post traditionally filled by a member of the Dutch nobility, he differed from the true nobles in the Republic only in his origins. The erection of his tomb in 1663, however ambitious it might be, was part and parcel of his aristocratic pretensions (figs. 62, 180). These examples are illustrative of the fact that around 1650 the old nobility found itself confronted with a rapidly expanding and ambitious regent patriciate that was encroaching on the prestige and exclusiveness of the aristocracy.

When, around 1650, Maria van Reygersbergh ordered the first aristocratic tomb to be executed after the middle of the century, she undoubtedly wished it to express, in part, a deep-rooted awareness of the privilege of the noble class. It was no coincidence that her
initiative was soon being imitated. First came the Midwolde tomb in 1664-1669, followed around 1670 by a third monument of this size, the artistically less successful tomb for Count Herman Frederik van den Bergh in the Dominican church at Maastricht (fig. 143). Two more aristocratic orders came Verhulst’s way in the same period: the tomb for Hieronymus van Tuyl van Serooskerke (d. 1669) at Stavenisse (fig. 185), and the one for Adriaen Clant at Stedum discussed above (fig. 182). This small group of monuments, which was followed by a few more around 1700, is indicative of the nobility’s growing need to assert itself against a burgher class with ideas above its station. Apart from the actual erection of tombs, this is demonstrated by the fact that all these aristocratic monuments are lavishly decorated with heraldic devices glorifying the family. Nothing, after all, proclaims the noble descent (“naissance”) of the deceased and thereby the basis of his social position better than his quarterings.

This high birth is also emphasised in the epitaph at Midwolde. Some of the above-mentioned portraits by Saftleven and Mijtens display a similar fixation with ancestry. Perhaps they should be seen as the successors to sixteenth-century family portraits of the nobility, in which so much is made of dynastic continuity.

The widows Maria van Reygersbergh and Anna van Ewsum sparked off a brief flowering of the aristocratic tomb with their commissions from Rombout Verhulst, which promulgated their station in the Republic. They elected to play a prominent part in the sculpted ensembles, of which they were also the patrons. This resulted in two exceptional monuments in which aspects of the perception of one’s own lofty station, the awareness of the role of a good widow and the notion of death as eternal sleep were combined in a new, Baroque visual form that balances between allegory and reality. However, the paradigm of the good widow who watches beside her dead husband and longs to join him only became a regular theme in European funerary art in the following centuries. In that sense, the two Dutch tombs were important precursors of a predominantly eighteenth and nineteenth-century funerary art that gave more space and weight to the role of the surviving spouses.